

The Secrets to Transferring Successfully

TIPS ON MOVING ON FROM COMMUNITY COLLEGE

Thousands of students in Massachusetts transfer from community colleges to four-year institutions every year. But, just because it's common, don't think of the college transfer process as one-size-fits-all. Course requirements and transfer credits can vary considerably, and a successful transition between schools requires careful deliberation and preparation of an individualized strategy.

In fact, as Mary Olenick, coordinator of transfer and articulation at Cape Cod Community College (CCCC) sees it, students who think they may want to transfer need to start charting their direction as soon as possible.

"It's never too early to plan for transfer," Olenick says. Just as students start planning for college as freshmen in high school, students who start as "freshmen" at a community college should be thinking about their future and planning for it. "Some students have very specific interests, like a particular major and/or college," she explains. "Others have specific requirements like, 'I don't want to travel far or at all,' and those are the students for whom it is most important to plan early, so they can get to where they want to go."

Gregg Meyer, director of admissions at Bridgewater State University, agrees. Bridgewater accepts more than 1,000 transfer students each year, and about half of them come from community colleges in Massachusetts.

The challenge, he says, is to plan your academic schedule knowing which credits will transfer, which won't, and what degree requirements can be fulfilled at the community college level. Students need to think about where they would

like to transfer (consider issues such as location, costs, etc.). In addition, they need to decide what degree they want to complete once they get there.

"Connect with a counselor at your community college as soon as possible, or go directly to the school where you are going to transfer and talk to someone there," Meyer advises. "Communication is key. Don't wait until the last minute."

The Massachusetts College of Liberal Arts (MCLA) in North Adams is another school that welcomes community college transfers. Each year, at least 25 percent of students join MCLA from other schools. Like many of the state colleges, MCLA has agreements with community colleges like Bunker Hill, Roxbury, Middlesex, Cape Cod, and Mass Bay that recognize the maximum transfer of credits so students don't risk losing status.

"As the recognized liberal arts college for the state, we find that students are drawn to our campus by the quality of our teaching," says Denise Richardello, vice president of enrollment and external affairs. "We're located in the Berkshires, so most of our students live on campus and they really enjoy the opportunity to have a true college experience, especially in a region that is so beautiful and culturally rich."

Four-year colleges and universities use a variety of criteria when selecting transfer students for admission. Boston University, for instance, considers the following factors: college performance (course selection, as well as GPA), high school performance, standardized test scores (SAT or ACT), instructor evaluation and college official's report, other per-



sonal qualifications (special skills, talents, and accomplishments), and an application essay.

Certain undergraduate programs at BU accept transfer applicants; others do not. Students need to be mindful of specifics like these, and use all available resources when making plans, CCC's Olenick says. Community colleges host transfer fairs for students to meet admissions officers from four-year colleges and universities, she adds.

For many students, community colleges provide a welcoming, affordable, and convenient option to earn the college credits that form the foundation of a four-year degree.

"The community college gives a student an opportunity to transfer even when his or her high school grades last year, or 20 to 30 years ago, were less than stellar," Olenick concludes. "They can come to the community college, do well, and have the opportunity to transfer and be admitted to wherever they would like, public or private." •

Program Provides Assists for Transfer Students

MassTransfer is a statewide initiative that provides the full transfer of credit, guaranteed admission, and a tuition discount to community college students who complete approved associate degrees and enroll in specific MassTransfer programs. For full details and qualifying information, visit the MassTransfer website at www.mass.edu/mastransfer. These MassTransfer programs are available at any of the 13 institutions within the Massachusetts public higher education system. The benefits for community college graduates who participate in this program include:

Minimum Final GPA - 2.0 GPA
No admission fee or essay; guaranteed, full transfer of credits applied to the bachelor's degree; and automatic satisfac-

tion of the general education requirements at the receiving institution, with the receiving institution able to add no more than six additional credits/two courses, if admitted.

Minimum Final GPA - 2.5 GPA
All of the above benefits, plus guaranteed admission

Minimum Final GPA - 3.0 GPA
All of the above benefits, plus a 33% tuition waiver

MassTransfer also provides any student in the Massachusetts public higher education system who completes the MassTransfer Block with the benefit of satisfying the general education/distribution/core requirements at any other public higher education institution (with the receiving institution able to add no more than six additional credits or two courses).

Source: Cape Cod Community College 2010-2011 Admissions Bulletin

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