

Provides for a comprehensive system of articulation and transfer of credit between and among public secondary and postsecondary educational institutions as follows:

Requires the postsecondary education management boards, the State Board of Elementary and Secondary Education (BESE), and city, parish, and other local school boards to jointly develop and implement articulation and transfer programs and agreements that facilitate and maximize the seamless transfer of credits between and among public secondary and postsecondary educational institutions and that make the most efficient use of faculty, equipment, and facilities. Encourages regionally accredited independent colleges and universities that are members of the La. Assoc. of Independent Colleges and Universities (LAICU) to participate.

Creates the Statewide Articulation and Transfer Council, appointed by the commissioner of higher education in consultation with the BESE and the higher education management boards, which shall have the following powers, duties, and responsibilities:

- (1) Coordinate, oversee, and monitor the seamless articulation and transfer of credit between and among secondary schools, technical colleges, community colleges, and four-year colleges and universities.
- (2) Monitor the development of interinstitutional agreements between and among public schools, technical colleges, community colleges, and four-year colleges and universities to facilitate interaction, articulation, acceleration, and the efficient use of faculty, equipment, and facilities.
- (3) Develop a statewide articulation and transfer agreement to govern the transfer of credits between and among educational institutions at all levels.
- (4) Oversee the development of a statewide core curriculum for lower-division course work that will be fully accepted in its entirety and creditable to the baccalaureate degree by all four-year colleges and universities. Such curriculum shall be comprised of specified general education courses and common degree program prerequisites.
- (5) Oversee the development, implementation, and maintenance of a statewide course numbering system.
- (6) Establish committees or advisory groups composed of secondary and postsecondary faculty members to determine course comparability, facilitate articulation in subject areas, and as otherwise necessary to carry out the council's duties and responsibilities.
- (7) Approve common degree program prerequisites across program areas and course and credit-by-exam equivalencies, and establish passing scores and course and credit equivalencies for exams administered pursuant to accelerated programs including the Advanced Placement, International Baccalaureate, and College-Level Examination Program.
- (8) Develop policies to align articulation and transfer policies established by educational institutions, including admissions criteria, student guidance and counseling, and grade forgiveness.
- (9) Provide for end-of-course testing, if necessary and appropriate.
- (10) Establish monitoring, compliance, and reporting systems based upon uniform data collection and reporting methods to facilitate and ensure statewide and institutional compliance with statewide articulation policies. Data collected shall include:
  - (a) The number of students enrolled in associate degree transfer programs.
  - (b) Each student's rate of progress through transfer programs.
  - (c) The number and percentage of students who complete associate degree transfer programs.

- (d) The number of students earning associate degrees that transfer to four-year colleges and universities.
  - (e) The number of credits earned, degrees awarded, and time to completion of degree for students who have previously transferred associate degrees.
- (11) Establish an appeals process to resolve disagreements between transferring students and receiving educational institutions regarding the transfer and acceptance of credits earned at another institution.
  - (12) Ensure that all articulation and transfer policies and practices approved by the council comply with the rules and regulations of all appropriate accrediting bodies as recognized by the U.S. Dept. of Education.
  - (13) Periodically, but at least annually, review articulation and transfer policies and make recommendations to the commissioner of higher education who shall then make recommendations to the legislature for needed revisions.
  - (14) Perform such other duties as may be provided by law or the commissioner of higher education.

Provides that the council membership shall provide for equitable representation of all educational systems and levels.

Requires the Board of Regents(BoR) and BESE to enter into a statewide articulation agreement that shall govern the articulation and transfer of credit between and among the state's public secondary and postsecondary educational institutions that shall, at a minimum:

- (1) Guarantee the transfer of general education courses and common degree program prerequisites.
- (2) Guarantee that every graduate of a community college awarded an associate of arts or an associate of science degree approved by the council for transfer to a 4-year postsecondary educational institution shall be deemed to have met all general education and other core curriculum requirements and must be granted admission to the upper division of at least one state public four-year college or university, in accordance with each institution's general transfer requirements, except to a limited access program or a program that has audition or other specialized admission requirements, as approved by the Board of Regents.
- (3) Provide that graduates of council approved associate degree programs who transfer to a four-year college or university shall not be required to take any additional general education courses to fulfill baccalaureate degree requirements.
- (4) Provide that graduates of council approved associate degree programs shall receive priority for admission to a state four-year college or university over out-of-state students.
- (5) Guarantee the statewide articulation of appropriate career and technical education programs and workforce development programs and transfer of course credits between secondary schools and technical and community colleges.
- (6) Provide for acceptance by postsecondary educational institutions of credits earned in accelerated programs such as dual enrollment and the Advanced Placement, International Baccalaureate, and College-Level Examination programs.
- (7) Guarantee the transfer of equivalent courses under the statewide course numbering system.
- (8) Establish a common college transcript.

Requires the BoR, in accordance with council policy and with the utilization of appropriate faculty committees, to develop, coordinate, and maintain a statewide common course numbering system for postsecondary and dual enrollment education in all public secondary

and postsecondary educational institutions as a means to facilitate program planning and the transfer of students and course credits.

Provides for prioritized, phased-in development and implementation of the statewide common course numbering system as follows:

- (1) All courses required for completion of council approved transfer associated degree programs. Requires that common course numbers be developed for general education courses first and then for common course prerequisites.
- (2) All lower division courses.
- (3) All undergraduate courses.

Requires the commissioner of higher education, in collaboration with the higher education management boards, to appoint faculty committees representative of all participating institutions to recommend the appropriate level for each course, including postsecondary career and technical education courses, included in the system. Additionally provides that:

- (1) A course designated as an upper-division level course must be characterized by a need for advanced academic preparation and skills that a student is unlikely to achieve without significant prior course work.
- (2) A course that is designated as a lower-division level course may be offered by any community college.
- (3) The BoR shall approve the course level designations for all courses included in the statewide numbering system.
- (4) The statewide course numbering system shall include the courses at the approved levels.
- (5) Courses that have the same academic content and are taught by faculty with comparable credentials shall be considered equivalent courses and shall be given the same course designation.
- (6) Equivalent courses shall be guaranteed to transfer to any educational institution participating in the statewide course numbering system.
- (7) The BoR shall provide that credits to be accepted by a receiving institution are appropriately evaluated to ensure that the faculty possess credentials that are comparable to those required by the accrediting body of the receiving institution.
- (8) Provides that the award of credit by receiving institutions may be limited to courses that are entered in the statewide course numbering system.
- (9) The course catalog and registration process for each postsecondary education institution shall include the courses at their designated levels and statewide course number.
- (10) Every public and nonpublic educational institution that participates in the statewide course numbering system must be fully accredited by the appropriate education accrediting body.
- (11) Each educational institution that awards council approved transfer associate degrees and each four-year institution that admits graduates from such programs must be accredited by the Southern Association for Colleges and Schools-Commission on Colleges.
- (12) Encourages regionally accredited independent colleges and universities that are members of LAICU to participate in the statewide course numbering system.

Requires the Board of Regents, in collaboration with the postsecondary education management boards, to:

- (1) Identify the degree programs offered by public colleges and universities and the postsecondary career and technical education programs offered by community colleges, technical colleges, and city, parish, and other local school boards.
- (2) Identify those courses that meet general education requirements within each major area of study, which shall be identified by their statewide course number. Provides that all public postsecondary educational institutions shall accept such general education courses.
- (3) Identify all courses offered by colleges and universities and accepted for credit toward a degree and appropriately identify them in the statewide numbering system as either general education or required as a prerequisite for a degree.
- (4) Identify common degree program prerequisite courses and course substitutions for degree programs across all postsecondary education institutions. Provides that common degree program prerequisites shall be offered and accepted by all postsecondary institutions, except in cases approved by the Board of Regents.
- (5) Develop a centralized database containing the list of courses and course substitutions that meet the prerequisite requirements for each postsecondary certificate, industry-based certification, and associate and baccalaureate degree program.

Requires the postsecondary education management boards to identify their core curricula. Further requires public technical colleges, community colleges, and four-year colleges and universities to work with BESE and public schools and school districts to assure that high school curricula coordinate with the core curricula and to prepare students for college-level work.

Provides that the core curricula for associate in arts and associate in science degree programs approved by the council for transfer to a four-year postsecondary educational institution shall be approved and adopted by the BoR.

Requires the BoR to monitor and regulate the standard number of credits required to complete each baccalaureate degree program and to establish a standard number of credits required to complete council approved associate degree programs for transfer to a four-year postsecondary educational institution.

Provides that baccalaureate degree programs shall not require more than the number of credits established by the board for degree completion without approval from the board.

Provides that associate in arts and an associate in science degrees shall require no more than 60 semester hours of college credit, including 39 hours of general education course work and 21 hours of course work that constitute prerequisites for a baccalaureate degree.

Requires the commissioner of higher education to appoint faculty committees representing community and technical colleges and public high school faculties to recommend criteria, including a standard program length, for each postsecondary career certificate program, diploma, and degree offered by a technical college or a community college.

Requires the BoR to develop and maintain a comprehensive web-based system to provide information to students, advisers, and faculty regarding statewide articulation. Provides that the system include information relative to:

- (1) The Statewide Articulation and Transfer Council.
- (2) The statewide articulation agreement.
- (3) The statewide course numbering system.
- (4) Articulation policies and rules.
- (5) General education courses and common degree program prerequisites.
- (6) Course and degree requirements for all fields of study.
- (7) Planning and advising resources.

Requires each educational institution to designate an existing staff or faculty member to serve as a transfer counselor to advise students and administer articulation and transfer functions and operations.

Provides for implementation timelines as follows:

- (1) The Board of Regents shall appoint the members of the Statewide Articulation and Transfer Council not later than August 1, 2009.
- (2) The Statewide Articulation and Transfer Council shall hold an organizational meeting not later than September 1, 2009.
- (3) The statewide articulation agreement shall be developed and adopted not later than March 1, 2010.
- (4) All public postsecondary educational institutions shall be prepared to and shall implement the full articulation and transfer of council approved transfer associate of arts and associate of science degrees by the beginning of the 2010-2011 academic year.
- (5) The courses required for completion of council approved transfer associate of arts and associate of science degrees must be entered into the statewide course numbering system by the beginning of the 2010-2011 academic year.
- (6) All remaining lower division and undergraduate courses shall be evaluated and incorporated into the statewide numbering system not later than the end of the 2011-2012 academic year.

Requires the Board of Regents to ensure that sufficient funding is made available to implement the provisions of new law and authorizes the board to utilize state appropriations, federal funds, funds made available through other sources, or funds realized through realignment of other programs administered by the board.

Requires the Board of Regents, beginning in 2010, to submit a written report to the Senate and House education committees not later than January 31<sup>st</sup> and July 31<sup>st</sup> of each year on the status of statewide articulation and transfer of credit across all educational institutions in Louisiana as required by new law.

Requires the Board of Regents to adopt rules and regulations to implement new law in accordance with the Administrative Procedure Act.

Effective upon signature of the governor or lapse of time for gubernatorial action.

(Adds: R.S. 17:3161 - 3169)