



Ontario Council on Articulation and Transfer
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2014 Student Pathways in Higher Education Conference April 28 – 29, 2014

SUMMARY

Plenary Session I: Transfer and Mobility from Coast to Coast: Learning from Other Jurisdictions

Glenn Craney, Executive Director of ONCAT, moderated a cross-Canada jurisdictional panel comprised of the following representatives:

- Dr. Rob Fleming, Executive Director and Co-Chair, British Columbia Council on Admissions and Transfer
 - Phil Bélanger, Executive Director, New Brunswick Council on Articulations and Transfer
 - Ann Marie Lyseng, Senior Manager, Learner Pathways, Alberta Council on Admissions Transfer Secretariat
 - Dave Neale, Executive Director, Campus Manitoba
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The session provided delegates with an overview of the various jurisdictions across Canada that are engaged in student transfer and mobility. Each presenter on the panel leads a council of articulation/admissions and transfer or an allied organization that has as its mandate the enhancement of transfer in their provincial jurisdiction. This national panel also allowed delegates the opportunity to benchmark the work in Ontario against other jurisdictions and to appreciate and acknowledge the promising achievements of the separate provincial jurisdictions and those of the national Pan-Canadian Consortium on Admissions and Transfer (PCCAT). The growing pan-Canadian collaboration, as illustrated by the breadth of the panel participants, signals the maturation and growth of student transfer both in Ontario and across the country.

The panelists provided a brief overview of the research and initiatives underway as well as the challenges impeding transfer in their respective regions. The varied questions from the audience illustrated the high level of engagement of the postsecondary sector with improving credit transfer. Highlights are noted below.

Alberta Council on Admissions and Transfer (ACAT)

The ACAT representative reported that the Council is repositioning and realigning the Alberta transfer system and all its relevant components. As such, they are critically examining the current inventory of learner pathways (including PLAR) and by-program and by-course institutional transfer agreements, collaborative programs, dual credit, etc. The Council is also

focused on redesigning systems to improve transparency, clarifying the role of learning outcomes in the area of transfer, and examining their governance framework with a goal of identifying any potential refinements.

ACAT was founded in 1974 and represents a mature example of an organization heavily involved in transfer pathway development. This maturity helps to facilitate and support institutions to shape transfer and mobility as they grow their capacity. ACAT currently has 17 members on council and operates by MOUs with the institutions. The culture supported by the MOUs builds on the interest and energy from its 39 member institutions, each of which is dedicated to transfer.

The volume of mobile students in Alberta is close to that of Ontario. There are more than 77,000 transfer agreements (most are by-course agreements) in the province, of which 32,000 are considered active agreements. ACAT is currently developing a global online application to allow students to access this information.

More details on the work occurring at ACAT are available at <http://www.acat.gov.ab.ca/>

British Columbia Council on Admissions and Transfer (BCCAT)

BCCAT has been in place for 25 years as a council that operates at arm's-length from the government. Approaches that have positively served the Council's work include the following:

- Recognition of the necessity of differences between jurisdictions and the value of preserving uniqueness while exploring solutions.
- The commitment on the part of BC institutional representatives to represent the system and students ahead of their individual institutions when working with BCCAT. (There is a strong culture of transfer collaboration across all institutions in BC.)
- The fundamental commitment to sustaining quality (Note: BCCAT has both public and private institutions as members; to become a member, an institution has to successfully complete an approval process led by the BC Degree Quality Assessment Board (DQAB).)
- Recognition that all member institutions have the ability to be both senders and receivers of students, because data demonstrates that students move in multi-directional pathways.
- A strong infrastructure of 67 faculty-led articulation committees that predate the Council; these committees are the core enabler of the BCCAT system's ability to work effectively maintain currency.

The volume of mobile students in the BC public system is more than double that of Ontario, according to current statistics. The goal of BCCAT and its member institutions is not necessarily to increase mobility but to ensure that when it happens, appropriate credit recognition occurs.

Two main products are supported by BCCAT: 1) The BC Transfer Guide, which contains more than 90,000 course agreements, 50 dual admission agreements, and has the capacity to instantly publish agreements as they launch and 2) the Educational Planner, which is heavily used by younger high school students as they plan their educational futures.

More information on BCCAT and its associated supports and research is available at www.bccat.ca and www.bccat.ca/publications.

Campus Manitoba

A mature transfer student system is not currently in place in Manitoba in terms of a centralized infrastructure. The focus of Campus Manitoba is to create a robust transfer environment and culture, building on the efforts of the province's 7 institutions. To that end, the Executive Director is currently leading a task force to facilitate transfer and mobility collaboration. There is also a working group for eCampus and a working group of institutional VP Academics tasked with facilitating advocacy and awareness of credit transfer.

Campus Manitoba is currently being rebuilt with the following concerns in mind: 1) providing open educational resources (including open textbook initiatives) and leveraging learning management systems solutions to facilitate transfer; 2) creating a new, updated eCampus Manitoba website; and 3) creating the MBTransfer.ca website. As an immediate goal, Campus Manitoba is tasked with making existing transfer options and information visible to the public. Once this information is shared, they plan to expand transfer and then move on strategic development of pathways.

Campus Manitoba has been in existence for 20 years; however, its structure, physical satellite offices, and mandate are very different today than at its inception. As an example, the satellite offices are now closed and all online courses will soon be published on an online learning resource set to launch in May 2014. The site will launch with 450 courses (50% college, 50% university) and will also list transfer credit equivalencies. They will augment user support with a virtual helpdesk manned by live agents ("Navigators").

The business requirements document for the MBtransfer.ca database is currently being developed and will be circulated over the summer months. The goal is to have the site launch in 18 months.

More information on Campus Manitoba is available at: <http://www.campusmanitoba.com/>

New Brunswick Council on Articulations and Transfer (NBCAT)

NBCAT evolved from a government desire to see what could be accomplished to enhance transfer in the province. The process began by holding collaborative conversations with institutional registrars and researching credit transfer initiatives in other jurisdictions. The principle of collaboration has been key to establishing a strong foundation. NBCAT began by focusing first on the assessment of prior learning (PLAR), along with credit transfer, each of which was supported by a committee. The NBCAT membership includes public and private institutions as well as apprenticeship associations.

To initially assess the amount of credit transfer in the province, NBCAT asked each institution to submit a report on the number of transfer credits awarded. The NB credit transfer portal was launched in 2012. As an indicator of its success, the number of transfer agreements has increased by 18% since the initial assessment of student transfer. NBCAT's portal represents

an important starting point as its compatibility with institutional systems facilitates communication, transparency, and efficiencies. Furthermore, NBCAT has negotiated a protocol with institutions to ensure the currency and accuracy of information published on the portal to best serve students. Out-of-province agreements have now been added to the portal and out-of-country agreements will follow later this year.

NBCAT's goals include the following:

1. Increasing the number of articulation agreements;
2. Creating a central assessment service for PLAR (local, national, and international);
3. Creating electronic transfer of transcripts using a common transcript;
4. Advancing and continuing research; and
5. Expanding the transfer portal.

The following questions arose from the audience in response to the jurisdictional panel:

1. *What information system do you use to interact with your institutions?*

- ACAT institutions use TARs. Institutions connect and develop agreements within that system and then signal to the Ministry when the agreements are ready to be finalized; these then get posted to the student transfer web sites.
- BCCAT provides a self-built transfer credit evaluation system that interacts with local institutional student information systems. Institutional designates are provided access and can also delegate access to others in their institution. It is also possible to directly link any number of institutions to each other when developing shared initiatives. New revisions or changes are easily integrated. While the system doesn't currently include international agreements, this level of expansion is planned in the future.
- NBCAT created a common information system. Its portal facilitates access and publication of information.
- Campus Manitoba is using open source software for its online site (eCommerce software).

2. *How are international partnerships informing pathway development? What impact is the European Bologna process having?*

- NBCAT is publishing the agreements online and ensuring anyone who applies, regardless of origin, can be assessed for transfer. The outcomes of transfer decisions then become standard information that any institution can use.
- BCCAT offers 90,000+ course agreements already and also acknowledges that there are many non-published agreements within institutions. Institutions are working on identifying and reviewing these in partnership, and BCCAT is publicizing this information over time as it becomes available.
- NBCAT – Processes for confirming authenticity of documentation are currently being discussed.
- ACAT is participating in the CAPLA project on PLAR and supporting the examination of how these guidelines can be shared with others across the country. Also, ACAT is looking at updating its databases and exploring closer links with other CATs as a means to improve access.

3. *What experience do you have with establishing partnerships with indigenous institutions that aren't part of the typical norm?*

- ACAT began conversations with indigenous institutions to explore new models for collaboration. As part of this, ACAT is looking to better support the contact persons in these institutions as they tend to be under-resourced. All five indigenous institutions in Alberta are full members of ACAT.
- BCCAT signalled that there is good work going on but as a system, refinements are needed. BCCAT has an indigenous institution as a member and it does a good job working with other institutions (typically on initiatives that improve public access, such as bridge programs). Issues around indigenous language acquisition and culture courses need to be carefully considered. BC's Nicola Valley, a public, Aboriginal postsecondary institution, helps with honouring and facilitating transfer from indigenous institutions.
- In New Brunswick, participating institutions are being encouraged to launch these agreements. NBCAT has also created criteria for membership, which is why they have Crandall University and the apprenticeship association as members.
- In Manitoba, indigenous institutions are full members.
- In Ontario this is an emerging issue. As part of the ONCAT fall RFP, special categories for indigenous institutions were provided and one project was submitted.