EP.17.34 Proposed Revisions to the Policy on Acceptance of Transfer Credit for Undergraduate Admission Purpose (USC OT-337)

RECOMMENDATION

The Senate Committee on Educational Policy and the Senate Committee on Admissions recommends endorsement of the attached Proposed Revisions to the Policy on Acceptance of Transfer Credit for Undergraduate Admission Purpose (USC OT-337) with the stated understanding that it will not in any way impact procedures or policies on the Urbana-Champaign campus.

Committee on Educational Policy
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Kimberly Alexander-Brown, ex-officio
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Marilyn Marshall, Observer
October 4, 2016

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Re: Proposed Revisions to the Policy on Acceptance of Transfer Credit for Undergraduate Admission Purpose (USC OT-337)

Dear Senate Colleagues,

Please see the enclosed document from Dr. Marilyn Marshall, Assistant Vice President for Academic Affairs, which proposes changes to the policy on the Acceptance of Transfer Credit for Undergraduate Admission Purposes and explains the process that led to these changes. The current version of the policy was approved by the Board of Trustees in November 1983. Prior to approval by the Board, the changes were reviewed and approved by the senates.

The University Senates Conference transmits the proposed revisions to the policy for consideration by your senates. If you would like to seek additional information, the primary contacts for the working group were the directors of enrollment management at each university: Kevin Browne, Chicago; Keith Marshall, Urbana-Champaign; and Fernando Planas, Springfield. Please report back after your respective senate has taken action.

Sincerely,

Kathy Novak, Chair
University Senates Conference

Enclosure

c: Marilyn Marshall
ELizabeth Dooley, UIC Senate
Brian Moore, UIS Senate
Jenny Roether, UIUC Senate
Members, University Senates Conference

Kevin Browne
Keith Marshall
Fernando Planas
August 29, 2016

Kathy Novak, Chair
University Senates Conference
378 Henry Administration Building

Dear Professor Novak:

With this letter, I formally request the University Senates Conference to review changes we propose to the Board of Trustees policy on Acceptance of Transfer Credit for Undergraduate Admission Purposes. This policy was last approved by the BOT in November 1983.

The policy currently in force is generally still applicable; however, several aspects need to be updated, such as names of offices and accrediting bodies, mechanics of admissions, and language recognizing the admission of international students as an important source of transfer students. See the current policy, attachment #1, and on page 9 of the PDF of trustee meeting minutes at: http://www.trustees.uillinois.edu/trustees/minutes/1983/1983-11-17-uiBOT.pdf. The attachment is annotated to illustrate the changes proposed in the revised policy, attachment #2.

The UIC Office of the Registrar instigated the review and updates to the current policy. Changes were communicated throughout that campus and were approved by the UIC Faculty Senate. During that process, the Chicago staff worked with my staff and we, in turn, shared the proposed changes with the academic affairs staff, the admissions directors, and the provosts at Urbana and Springfield. I convened a formal cross-campus review of this policy to insure the proposed language is acceptable at all the campuses and UA, which resulted in wording changes subsequent to the UIC Senate approval. The difference between the two relate primarily to move from UIC-specific wording to general university-wide applicability.

The proposed substantive changes to the current policy include the following:

1. Provide needed updates to the names and language describing the relevant accrediting bodies
2. Provide criterion for consideration of foreign institutions
3. Provide for transfer work not in the form of courses, such as credit for military service and credit earned through testing and experimental learning
4. Clarify that transfer courses are evaluated for admission purposes and reviewed for transferability and applicability to degree programs
5. Describe criteria by which courses are evaluated for admission purposes and transfer credit
6. List some course work that is not eligible for transfer credit
7. Explain how transfer credit is assigned and may be applicable to the degree according to current practice in the academic colleges and departments
8. Remove provision 3 from current policy that permits credit to be accepted on a provisional basis for admission purposes on transfer and later validated by satisfactory completion of additional work in residence.

9. Allow for transfer work that is not directly equivalent to a University course but is applicable to a degree requirement such as a department- or college-level requirement, and transfer work applicable to a degree such as block credit transferred to meet lower division hour requirements.

The proposed changes conform to the accepted practices endorsed by the American Association of Collegiate Registrars and Admissions Officers (AACRAO), the American Council on Education (ACE), and the Council for Higher Education Accreditation (CHEA). That body of work is provided for your convenience in attachment #3, Joint Statement on the Transfer and Award of Credit.

The essential and fundamental statement of practice consistent across the BOT policy enacted in 1983, the Joint Statement, and the proposed update to the BOT policy is the statement: “transfer work must be similar in nature, content, and level” to that offered by the University of Illinois.

Though the spirit of the policy remains unchanged – admit qualified transfer students from institutions that provide robust preparation – the language is updated for currency and clarity. The proposed changes are designed to provide the faculty and staff involved in the articulation of transfer course work with clear guidance on how to evaluate the accreditation status of the sending institution, to clarify additional criteria for determining the transferability of course work, and to describe how transfer credit may be awarded.

This Board policy is one of the bank of policies enacted by the BOT that are not part of the Statutes or General Rules. They are not housed in a central, online location, although this particular policy is referenced in each of the campus’ catalogs. Given that the Board policies are not easily accessed and prominently displayed in a central location and that they require lengthy and deliberate review before changes are made – as should be the case, this particular policy has not been updated recently. With these changes, the policy will be current and accurate.

Sincerely,

[Signature]

Marilyn M.M. Marshall
Interim Vice President for Academic Programs Designate

Attachments
Current Board of Trustee Policy on Acceptance of Transfer Credit for Undergraduate Admission Purposes

See Section 2 of proposed revision. Gives faculty and staff flexibility to accept transfer work that meets degree requirements when the transfer work does not substitute for a University of Illinois course.

1. Admission of transfer students to the University of Illinois is based only on the transfer course work which is similar in nature, content, and level to that offered by the University of Illinois. Such courses are normally referred to as transfer work or college parallel work. Other course work completed, such as technical courses similar in content and level to courses taught at the University, will be used in evaluation for admission, only upon the request of the Dean of the College to which the student seeks admission.

2. Transfer credit, as defined above, will be accepted at full value for admission purposes on transfer to the University of Illinois if earned in:

See Section 1 of proposed revision. Provides needed updates to accreditation language.

a. Colleges and universities which offer degree programs comparable to programs offered by the University of Illinois and are (i.) members of, or hold Candidate for Accreditation status from, the North Central Association of Colleges and Schools or other regional accrediting association, or (ii.) that are accredited by another accrediting agency which is a member of the Council on Postsecondary Accreditation (COPA).

Section deleted; no longer applicable.

This was written during the establishment of Illinois’ community college system. All Illinois community colleges are now fully accredited.

b. Illinois public community colleges which are neither members of, nor holders of Candidate for Accreditation status from, the North Central Association of Colleges and Schools, but which are approved and recognized by the Illinois Community College Board (ICCB), for a period of time not to exceed five years from the date on which the college registers its first class after achieving ICCB recognition.
Section deleted; no longer applicable. Acceptance of credit on a provisional or deferred basis is no longer considered best practice. Decisions are made at the time of admission.

3. Certain colleges and universities do not meet the specifications in 2 above, but have been assigned a status by the University Committee on Admissions which permits credit to be accepted on a provisional basis for admissions purposes on transfer to the University of Illinois. Transfer credit, as defined in 1 above, from such colleges and universities is accepted on a deferred basis to be validated by satisfactory completion of additional work in residence. Validation through satisfactory work in residence may be accomplished by earning in the University of Illinois, or another fully accredited\(^1\) college or university, at least a 3.0 (A = 5.0) grade point average (higher if prescribed by the curriculum the student wishes to enter) in the first 12 to 30 semester (18 to 45 quarter) hours completed following transfer.

Section revised. Language reflects only “traditional” transfer path (community college to university) in a two-year to two-year timeframe for degree completion. Articulation practices have evolved to reflect the current transfer landscape in which many students transfer credit in less than two-year blocks, often from multiple accredited institutions.

4. Credit, as specified in 1 above, transferred from an approved\(^1\) community or junior college is limited only by the provision that the student must earn at least sixty semester or ninety quarter hours required for the degree at the University or at any other approved\(^1\) four-year college or university after attaining junior standing, except that the student must meet the residence requirements that apply to all students for a degree from the University. When a school or college within the University requires three years of preprofessional college credit for admission, at least the last thirty semester or forty-five quarter hours must be taken in an approved\(^1\) four-year collegiate institution.

See Section 4 of proposed revision.

5. In all cases, the precise amount of transfer credit which is applicable toward a particular degree will be determined by the University college and department concerned.

\(^1\)Colleges and universities that meet one or more of the specifications listed in 2 above.
Title: Proposal to Revise the Policy on Acceptance of Transfer Credit for Undergraduate Admission Purposes, Submission to University Senates Conference

Executive Summary:

The Vice President for Academic Affairs, together with the directors of admission at the three campuses of the University of Illinois, propose the revision of the Policy on Acceptance of Transfer Credit for Undergraduate Admission Purposes. The original policy was enacted in 1977 and modified most recently by the Board of Trustees on November 17, 1983. Several of the accrediting bodies referenced in the policy have changed names and evolved several times since the policy was approved, making it difficult for staff to determine how best to implement the policy as it stands. More importantly, the landscape of higher education has changed dramatically during this time. Many previously unaccredited institutions have achieved regional or other accreditation status; online education/institutions have risen in prominence and importance; and many more accrediting bodies exist than was previously the case. These changes have made some of the provisions in the existing policy difficult to interpret.

Though the spirit of the policy remains unchanged – admit qualified transfer students from institutions that provide robust preparation – the language is updated for currency and clarity. The proposed changes are designed to provide the faculty and staff involved in the articulation of transfer course work with clear guidance on how to evaluate the accreditation status of the sending institution, to clarify additional criteria for determining the transferability of course work, and to describe how transfer credit may be awarded.

Description:

The proposed changes include the following:

1. Provide needed updates to the names and language describing the relevant accrediting bodies
2. Provide criterion for consideration of foreign institutions
3. Provide for transfer work not in the form of courses, such as credit for military service and credit earned through testing and experiential learning
4. Clarify that transfer courses are evaluated for admission purposes and reviewed for transferability and applicability to degree programs
5. Describe criteria by which courses are evaluated for admission purposes and transfer credit
6. List some course work that is not eligible for transfer credit
7. Explain how transfer credit is assigned and may be applicable to the degree according to current practice in the academic colleges and departments
8. Remove provision 3 from current policy that permits credit to be accepted on a provisional basis for admission purposes on transfer and later validated by satisfactory completion of additional work in residence
9. Allow for transfer work that is not directly equivalent to a University course but is applicable to a degree requirement such as a department- or college-level requirement, and transfer work applicable to a degree such as block credit transferred to meet lower division hour requirements

The proposed policy also has updated wording that should be easier for students, faculty and staff to understand.
Justification:

Each of the points mentioned in the description above are explained below:

1. Most of the accrediting organizations referenced in the 1983 policy have evolved and changed names one or more times since the policy was written. Proposed policy references fewer accrediting organizations but provides additional criteria for determining whether the course work from a particular institution might be transferable.

2. Proposed policy includes information about how foreign institutions are evaluated—recognition of the institution by the ministry of education or an equivalent body in the home country, a commonly used criterion. As international undergraduate populations grow, this information has become critical for faculty, staff, and students to have.

3. Proposed policy clarifies that evaluating transfer credit is a two-component process: evaluation for admission and for possible applicability to a degree program.

4. Proposed policy clarifies that accreditation is one consideration in evaluating transfer course work for admission and possible credit. Additional criteria include determining if course work is applicable to an academic program or is similar in nature, level, and content: to courses in the undergraduate curriculum. This clarification provides a framework for reviewing course work for transfer credit.

5. Proposed policy outlines course work that is not eligible for transfer credit. This is necessary because accredited institutions offer remedial, vocational, technical, and doctrinal courses. It causes confusion for students who think accreditation status is the only relevant consideration.

6. Proposed policy details how transfer credit is applied, including work that fulfills degree requirements but is not directly equivalent to University courses. This information provides faculty and staff involved in articulation with an understanding of how their decisions are categorized and provides greater transparency to students who transfer course work.

7. Proposed policy specifies that the academic department and college has the ultimate authority for determining if course work will apply to degree requirements.

8. Proposed policy does not include provision 3 from Current policy. This provision is rarely or never used and could be covered by request from the dean of the college to consider particular course work for admission purposes.

Catalog Statement:

Evaluation of Transfer Work for Undergraduate Admission and Transfer Credit

1. Transfer work is evaluated for admission purposes and considered for credit. The University evaluates transfer work completed at institutions accredited by a regional or national accrediting organization recognized by the Council for Higher Education Accreditation (CHEA), including institutions under candidacy status. Foreign institutions must be recognized by the ministry of education in the home country or an equivalent government authority.

2. To be eligible for admission and credit, transfer work must be similar in nature, level, and content to courses in the undergraduate curriculum and/or applicable to an undergraduate academic program. Other transfer work that is deemed nontransferable (such as continuing education courses, graduate-level courses, and courses that are remedial, technical, vocational, or doctrinal in nature as determined by the campus) are not used in admission decisions regardless of the institution’s accreditation.
3. Credit for transfer courses is either applied as direct equivalents with University courses or applied to a degree in a manner determined by the department and college. Determining how transfer credit is applied varies by campus depending on the process established to implement University policy.

4. The precise amount of transfer credit awarded and that is applicable toward a particular degree is determined by or in consultation with the University college and department concerned.

* "Transfer work" and "transfer courses" are used interchangeably in this policy. Regardless of the term, this policy applies to transfer not in the form of courses, such as credit for military service and credit earned through testing and experiential learning. Transfer work not in the form of courses is evaluated for transfer per the terms of this policy.

Proposed Effective Date:

Effective for Fall 2017.
Joint Statement on the Transfer and Award of Credit

The following set of guidelines has been developed by the three national associations whose member institutions are directly involved in the transfer and award of academic credit: the American Association of Collegiate Registrars and Admissions Officers, the American Council on Education, and the Council for Higher Education Accreditation. The need for such a statement came from an awareness of the growing complexity of transfer policies and practices, which have been brought about, in part, by the changing nature of postsecondary education. With increasing frequency, students are pursuing their education in a variety of institutional and extramural settings. Social equity and the intelligent use of resources require that validated learning be recognized wherever it takes place.

The statement is thus intended to serve as a guide for institutions developing or reviewing policies dealing with transfer, acceptance and award of credit. "Transfer" as used here refers to the movement of students from one college, university or other education provider to another and to the process by which credits representing educational experiences, courses, degrees or credentials that are awarded by an education provider are accepted or not accepted by a receiving institution.

Basic Assumptions

This statement is directed to institutions of postsecondary education and others concerned with the transfer of academic credit among institutions and the award of academic credit for learning that takes place at another institution or education provider. Basic to this statement is the principle that each institution is responsible for determining its own policies and practices with regard to the transfer, acceptance, and award of credit. Institutions are encouraged to review their policies and practices periodically to assure that they accomplish the institutions' objectives and that they function in a manner that is fair and equitable to students. General statements of policy such as this one or others referred to, should be used as guides, not as substitutes, for institutional policies and practices.

Transfer and award of credit is a concept that increasingly involves transfer between dissimilar institutions and curricula and recognition of extra-institutional learning, as well as transfer between institutions and curricula with similar characteristics. As their personal circumstances and educational objectives change, students seek to have their learning, wherever and however attained, recognized by institutions where they enroll for further study. It is important for reasons of social equity and educational effectiveness for all institutions to develop reasonable and definitive policies and procedures for acceptance of such learning experiences, as well as for the transfer of credits earned at another institution. Such policies and procedures should provide maximum consideration for the individual student who has changed institutions or objectives. It is the receiving institution's responsibility to provide reasonable and definitive policies and procedures for determining a student's knowledge in required subject areas. All sending institutions have a responsibility to furnish transcripts and other documents necessary for a receiving institution to judge the quality and quantity of the student's work. Institutions also have a responsibility to advise the student that the work reflected on the transcript may or may not be accepted by a receiving institution as bearing the same (or any) credits as those awarded by the provider institution, or that the credits awarded will be applicable to the academic credential the student is pursuing.

Inter-Institutional Transfer of Credit

Transfer of credit from one institution to another involves at least three considerations:

(1) the educational quality of the learning experience which the student transfers;

(2) the comparability of the nature, content, and level of the learning experience to that offered by the receiving institution; and

(3) the appropriateness and applicability of the learning experience to the programs offered by the receiving institution, in light of the student's educational goals.
Accredited Institutions

Accreditation speaks primarily to the first of these considerations, serving as the basic indicator that an institution meets certain minimum standards. Users of accreditation are urged to give careful attention to the accreditation conferred by accrediting bodies recognized by the Council for Higher Education Accreditation (CHEA). CHEA has a formal process of recognition which requires that all accrediting bodies so recognized must meet the same standards. Under these standards, CHEA has recognized a number of accrediting bodies, including:

(1) regional accrediting commissions (which historically accredited the more traditional colleges and universities but which now accredit proprietary, vocational-technical, distance learning providers, and single-purpose institutions as well);

(2) national accrediting bodies that accredit various kinds of specialized institutions, including distance learning providers and freestanding professional schools; and

(3) professional organizations that accredit programs within multipurpose institutions.

Although accrediting agencies vary in the ways they are organized and in their statements of scope and mission, all accrediting bodies that meet CHEA’s standards for recognition function to ensure that the institutions or programs they accredit have met generally accepted minimum standards for accreditation.

Accreditation thus affords reason for confidence in an institution’s or a program’s purposes, in the appropriateness of its resources and plans for carrying out these purposes, and in its effectiveness in accomplishing its goals, insofar as these things can be judged. Accreditation speaks to the probability, but does not guarantee, that students have met acceptable standards of educational accomplishment.

Comparability and Applicability

Comparability of the nature, content, and level of transfer credit and the appropriateness and applicability of the credit earned to programs offered by the receiving institution are as important in the evaluation process as the accreditation status of the institution at which the transfer credit was awarded. Since accreditation does not address these questions, this information must be obtained from catalogues and other materials and from direct contact between knowledgeable and experienced faculty and staff at both the receiving and sending institutions. When such considerations as comparability and appropriateness of credit are satisfied, however, the receiving institution should have reasonable confidence that students from accredited institutions are qualified to undertake the receiving institution’s educational program. In its articulation and transfer policies, the institution should judge courses, programs and other learning experiences on their learning outcomes, and the existence of valid evaluation measures, including third-party expert review, and not on modes of delivery.

Admissions and Degree Purposes

At some institutions there may be differences between the acceptance of credit for admission purposes and the applicability of credit for degree purposes. A receiving institution may accept previous work, place a credit value on it, and enter it on the transcript. However, that previous work, because of its nature and not its inherent quality, may be determined to have no applicability to a specific degree to be pursued by the student. Institutions have a responsibility to make this distinction, and its implications, clear to students before they decide to enroll. This should be a matter of full disclosure, with the best interests of the student in mind. Institutions also should make every reasonable effort to reduce the gap between credits accepted and credits applied toward an educational credential.

Additional Criteria for Transfer Decisions

The following additional criteria are offered to assist institutions, accreditors and higher education associations in future transfer decisions. These criteria are intended to sustain academic quality in an environment of more varied transfer, assure consistency of transfer practice, and encourage appropriate accountability about transfer policy and practice.
Attachment 3

Balance in the Use of Accreditation Status in Transfer Decisions. Institutions and accreditors need to assure that transfer decisions are not made solely on the source of accreditation of a sending program or institution. While acknowledging that accreditation is an important factor, receiving institutions ought to make clear their institutional reasons for accepting or not accepting credits that students seek to transfer. Students should have reasonable explanations about how work offered for credit is or is not of sufficient quality when compared with the receiving institution and how work is or is not comparable with curricula and standards to meet degree requirements of the receiving institution.

Consistency. Institutions and accreditors need to reaffirm that the considerations that inform transfer decisions are applied consistently in the context of changing student attendance patterns (students likely to engage in more transfer) and emerging new providers of higher education (new sources of credits and experience to be evaluated). New providers and new attendance patterns increase the number and type of transfer issues that institutions will address—making consistency even more important in the future.

Accountability for Effective Public Communication. Institutions and accreditors need to assure that students and the public are fully and accurately informed about their respective transfer policies and practices. The public has a significant interest in higher education’s effective management of transfer, especially in an environment of expanding access and mobility. Public funding is routinely provided to colleges and universities. This funding is accompanied by public expectations that the transfer process is built on a strong commitment to fairness and efficiency.

Commitment to Address Innovation. Institutions and accreditors need to be flexible and open in considering alternative approaches to managing transfer when these approaches will benefit students. Distance learning and other applications of technology generate alternative approaches to many functions of colleges and universities. Transfer is inevitably among these.

Foreign Institutions

In most cases, foreign institutions are chartered and authorized to grant degrees by their national governments, usually through a Ministry of Education or similar appropriate ministerial body. No other nation has a system comparable with voluntary accreditation as it exists in the United States. At an operational level, AACRAO’s Office of International Education Services can assist institutions by providing general or specific guidelines on admission and placement of foreign students, or by providing evaluations of foreign educational credentials.

Evaluation of Extra-Institutional and Experiential Learning for Purposes of Transfer and Award of Credit

Transfer and award of credit policies should encompass educational accomplishment attained in extra-institutional settings. In deciding on the award of credit for extra-institutional learning, institutions will find the services of the American Council on Education’s Center for Adult Learning and Educational Credentials helpful. One of the Center’s functions is to operate and foster programs to determine credit equivalencies for various modes of extra-institutional learning. The Center maintains evaluation programs for formal courses offered by the military and civilian organizations such as business, corporations, government agencies, training providers, institutes, and labor unions. Evaluation services are also available for examination programs, for occupations with validated job proficiency evaluation systems, and for correspondence courses offered by schools accredited by the Distance Education and Training Council. The results are published in a Guide series. Another resource is the General Educational Development (GED) Testing Program, which provides a means for assessing high school equivalency.

For learning that has not been evaluated through the ACE evaluation processes, institutions are encouraged to explore the Council for Adult and Experiential Learning (CAEL) procedures and processes.
Uses of This Statement

Institutions are encouraged to use this statement as a basis for discussions in developing or reviewing institutional policies with regards to the transfer and award of credit. If the statement reflects an institution's policies, that institution may wish to use these guidelines to inform faculty, staff, and students.

It is also recommended that accrediting bodies reflect the essential precepts of this statement in their criteria.

American Association of Collegiate Registrars and Admissions Officers

[Signature]

9/28/01 (date)

American Council on Education

[Signature]

9/28/01 (date)

Council for Higher Education Accreditation

[Signature]

9/28/01 (date)
Proposed Policy on Acceptance of Transfer Credit for Undergraduate Admission Purposes, Submission to University Senates Conference

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