

Testimony of Nancy L. Zimpher  
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before the  
Subcommittee on 21<sup>st</sup> Century Competitiveness  
Committee on Education and the Workforce  
U.S. House of Representatives

Hearing on College Credit Mobility: Can Transfer of Credit Policies Be Improved?

May 5, 2005

Chairman McKeon, Ranking Member Kildee, and Members of the Subcommittee on 21<sup>st</sup> Century Competitiveness of the Committee on Education and the Workforce, thank you for this opportunity to describe a statewide initiative that will, I believe, provide a model for discussion during this hearing on credit transfer policies. My name is Nancy Zimpher. I'm President of the University of Cincinnati and Co-chair of Ohio's Articulation and Transfer Advisory Council of the Ohio Board of Regents.

Ohio has made significant strides forward in ensuring that students have easy access to all the resources of the state's comprehensive system of public colleges and universities. Like many other states, we have grappled with very difficult conceptual, educational and logistical issues in developing a new policy for statewide transfer. Ohio's model for transfer and articulation might serve as a useful resource to other states challenged by similar issues. Students are very mobile. Consequently, the opportunity to easily transfer courses among campuses is a foundation for improving student access and success in college. Educational access is critical, especially in a state like Ohio, with its diverse education system. Therefore, Ohio needed to consider all the various dimensions of access: affordability, availability, aspiration, and academic preparation.

Ohio is a state that needs to increase the college education level of its citizens to meet the needs of the knowledge economy and provide the workforce of the future. In today's economy, it is increasingly clear that learning must extend beyond high school. New knowledge is being created at unprecedented rates and innovative technologies are transforming old jobs and creating new ones. Being ranked 39<sup>th</sup> in the nation for the percentage of its population with a bachelor's degree doesn't bode well for the future of Ohio. We must seize on every opportunity to increase the college participation of our citizens and remove barriers that inhibit the mobility of students throughout the higher education system.

#### Background

Ohio's articulation and transfer system is elegantly simple in concept. Students will now be able to begin a course of study at any college or university in Ohio and be guaranteed that significant credits will transfer and apply to degree requirements statewide. The policy places students squarely in the center of the educational system. Further, since

students make educational choices based upon convenience, cost, interest, location, program availability and other such factors, Ohio's new system removes barriers to these choices.

Ohio has actually been in the business of articulation and transfer for 15 years. The first phase of the Articulation and Transfer Policy, established in 1990, was a major achievement for the state at that time. It improved the mobility of students by developing a foundational concept: the Ohio Transfer Module. Students taking a complete module of 36-40 semester hours or 54-60 quarter credit hours comprised of general education courses like English, math, and biology were guaranteed that these courses would transfer statewide and take the place of the module at the receiving institution. To ensure comparability of courses across institutions, a statewide faculty committee reviewed each course's level and rigor within the module.

We encountered a few difficulties. Students often just take courses, not full modules. Consequently, if students didn't complete the entire transfer module, they lost the ability to transfer courses. The full intent of Ohio's transfer and articulation policy was not being maximized in a way that would significantly provide students access and success in college.

We began designing the next phase of the transfer and articulation process a little over two years ago. Our work coincided with a legislative mandate to fix any barriers and challenges that students might be experiencing in the transfer of coursework. The General Assembly gave us an aggressive time line to complete this work (April 15, 2005) and the flexibility to design the best strategy. We met the deadline. The final report is written, and we are into full-scale implementation. Students enrolled this coming fall will have a statewide transfer guarantee that ensures they can make progress in one of 38 different baccalaureate degree pathways, anywhere within the public higher education system and in Ohio's participating private institutions.

### Ohio's Revised Policy

A few basic guiding principles framed Ohio's effort to revise its transfer and articulation policy. Student success was the central focus of the policy, rather than convenience to the state or campuses. Students can expect fair treatment in the transfer and application of credits to major/degree requirements and will be considered the same as any student beginning or ending college on the same campus, what some have called "native" students. Campus missions are preserved: community colleges continue to focus on access to college, workforce training, and programs offered at the associate degree level. The public and private universities are the primary providers of baccalaureate education. Finally, campus authority and autonomy is maintained. Presidents, provosts and more than 300 faculty provided leadership for the development of the new policy. While the Board of Regents and the General Assembly were the driving force behind the initiative, the Articulation and Transfer Advisory Council was a critical entity in establishing the framework for the policy, one that would work for Ohio's campuses and students.

With one significant change, the Ohio Transfer Module continues to be the foundation of the transfer and articulation process. Students will now be guaranteed the transfer of individual courses from the general education module, without the need to complete the entire module. A faculty subcommittee will continue to review courses for rigor, level and appropriateness as part of the on-going process.

At the heart of Ohio's revised approach to articulation and transfer is a new concept, the Transfer Assurance Guide (TAG). Transfer Assurance Guides have been developed in 38 degree pathways for students in eight disciplines/professions: arts and humanities, business, communications, education, health, mathematics and science, engineering and engineering technologies, and social sciences (see appendix A for a list of disciplines). These pathways build on the general education core by identifying major and pre-major courses that are also guaranteed to transfer and apply to requirements anywhere in the system. The Transfer Assurance Guide also becomes a primary vehicle for advising students, even before the student leaves high school; another building block to a truly seamless P-16 system in Ohio. This initiative will fundamentally change how transfer and application of credits will occur in Ohio and builds upon a decade and a half of work on improving transfer.

Each TAG represents a specific pathway such as nursing, mathematics, engineering, education, sociology or business. Under the direction of the Ohio Board of Regents, 38 teams of faculty from two- and four-year colleges and universities were brought together for each Transfer Assurance Guide. Over a series of meetings, the teams identified courses for each TAG and developed learning outcomes for each course. The learning outcomes are the mechanism to ensure rigor, quality and equivalency of courses across the system.

Campus leaders reviewed the Transfer Assurance Guides on multiple occasions, provided comments back to the faculty panels, and ultimately agreed to abide by the guaranteed transfer of courses in the TAGs. This, as you may imagine, was not an easy process and many compromises were made to arrive at final agreement on the course content of each TAG (see appendix B for sample TAGs). Panels also made recommendations of courses within the general education module that will help students make appropriate choices for their intended major.

While the TAGs are relatively simple in concept, the results are truly impressive. They represent a guarantee to students of academic pathways to majors that ensure improved advising and a certainty of course transfer and, more importantly, application of courses to the major and degree. They remove barriers to transfer and allow for student mobility across the system while ensuring the quality of the educational experience through regular review by the faculty subcommittee. Students that select courses in the TAG will know that they will transfer, and they will not need to repeat the course at another college or university, thus maximizing both student and campus resources.

## Implementation

The logistics of implementing such a comprehensive system of transfer are complex. The Ohio Board of Regents is fortunate to have a world class information system, the Higher Education Information (HEI) system, as the backbone for electronic implementation. Using the course titles and learning outcomes in each Transfer Assurance Guide, campuses will identify equivalent courses and report them to HEI in order to produce a statewide matrix of course matches. This course matrix will be shared with all campuses and serve as the universal course equivalency index for the state higher education system. The universal course equivalency system will make it possible for colleges and universities to guarantee that courses offered at different campuses are equivalent and transferable for credit and to meet major/degree requirements. By August 31, 2005, all campuses will have submitted information on applicable courses in each TAG. Beginning in autumn term 2005, students will be able to complete courses and be guaranteed transfer and articulation to degree requirements should they elect to transfer in the winter of 2006.

We envision, however, a much more sophisticated transfer of information through the development of a statewide Clearinghouse (Hub) for the instant electronic transfer of transcripts between campuses, both sending and receiving (see appendix C for a diagram). Students will benefit from this system that has the speed and accuracy to process very complicated data, and potentially many courses from a variety of institutions. Campuses will benefit with greater efficiency through creating a “one-stop shop” for processing the TAGs and transcripts. We will also be able to develop a statewide application process with the capacity to process high school transcripts in addition to college transcripts. The Clearinghouse will offer students access to a full array of electronic resources to assist them in reaching their ultimate educational goal.

Ohio is also fortunate to have invested in the development of an electronic, web-based advising tool to assist students and advisors in transfer. This electronic advising/transfer tool, the Course Applicability System (CAS), provides students and potential students an efficient way to see how courses transfer across the system and how the credits apply to a degree. All public campuses have implemented CAS as an advising tool for use by advisors and students.

## Ongoing Agenda

The Ohio Board of Regents envisions that with the full development of the transcript clearinghouse, students will eventually have access to a seamless electronic system for college application and transfer, P-16. This will include an even greater electronic access to employment, career, college and financial aid information. We will also be developing more pathways (TAGs) in the future. The focus on learning outcomes provides us with the opportunity to broaden our thinking about education and include other models of how students learn and demonstrate mastery of concepts (i.e. internships and field experiences, portfolio based learning, interdisciplinary experiences). The notion of

describing specific levels of learning mastery is a major paradigm shift and will more closely mirror the mastery of learning that students will need to exhibit in actual work settings, thus providing an opportunity to make learning more transferable and integrated.

## Conclusion

Ohio is implementing systemic change through one of the most comprehensive and expansive curricular reforms in the state's higher education history. Students will have the benefit of stronger and more informed advising and will have options available that meet specific needs (cost, location, etc.). They also will gain state assurance that a consistent level of quality and rigor is maintained, backed by the state's guarantee for the transfer and application of credits to degrees. Ohio will have the benefit of a better and more effectively prepared workforce. State resources will be more efficiently and effectively deployed, and the success of the policy will be easy to assess. We have put the student in the driver's seat in transfer and have provided the tools to navigate the education system to his or her highest educational aspirations.

Ohio's significantly enhanced articulation and transfer policies and processes will substantially increase opportunities for students to be successful in attaining educational goals. The full implementation of the policy is a critical element of Ohio's efforts to improve educational access and success and, in turn, begin to bridge the gap of low educational attainment. These strategies are critical in meeting the needs of the knowledge economy and the workforce of the future.

Thank you very much for the opportunity to testify, and I look forward to any questions you may have.

## Appendix A

# Key Disciplines

<p><b><u>1. Arts &amp; Humanities</u></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Art History</li> <li>- Dance</li> <li>- English Literature</li> <li>- Fine Arts</li> <li>- Music</li> <li>- Philosophy</li> <li>- Theatre</li> </ul>	<p><b><u>2. Social and Behavioral Sciences</u></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Anthropology</li> <li>- Economics</li> <li>- Geography</li> <li>- History</li> <li>- Political Science</li> <li>- Psychology</li> <li>- Sociology</li> </ul>
<p><b><u>3. Education</u></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Professional Education Module</li> <li>- Professional Education Module with Advising Recommendations for Middle School Math</li> <li>- Professional Education Module with Advising Recommendations for Middle School Science</li> <li>- Professional Education Module with Advising Recommendations for AYA Math</li> <li>- Professional Education Module with Advising Recommendations for AYA Science</li> <li>- Professional Education Module with Advising Recommendations for Intervention Specialist</li> </ul>	
<p><b><u>4. Engineering &amp; Engineering Technology</u></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Aerospace, Agriculture, Civil, Mechanical Engineering</li> <li>- Bioengineering, Biomedical Engineering</li> <li>- Chemical, Environmental Engineering</li> <li>- Computer, Electrical Engineering</li> <li>- Industrial Engineering</li> <li>- Bachelor of Science in Technology             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>o Electrical Engineering</li> <li>o Mechanical Engineering</li> <li>o Construction Engineering</li> <li>o Industrial</li> </ul> </li> <li>- Bachelor of Science in Construction Management</li> <li>- Bachelor of Individualized Studies</li> <li>- Baccalaureate in Organizational Leadership</li> <li>-</li> </ul>	<p><b><u>5. Science and Mathematics</u></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Biology</li> <li>- Chemistry</li> <li>- Geology</li> <li>- Mathematics</li> <li>- Physics</li> </ul>
<p><b><u>7. Business</u></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Business</li> </ul>	<p><b><u>6. Health</u></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Dietetics</li> <li>- Health Information Management</li> <li>- Medical Laboratory</li> <li>- Nursing</li> </ul> <p><b><u>8. Communications</u></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Communication Studies</li> <li>- Journalism</li> <li>- Public Relations &amp; Advertising</li> <li>- Telecommunication</li> </ul>

## Appendix B

### NURSING TRANSFER ASSURANCE GUIDE (TAG) March 23, 2005

<b>1. Ohio Transfer Module:</b>		
<b>Ohio Transfer Module (OTM) Requirements:</b> 36-40 semester hours / 54-60 quarter hours. Students should select courses within the OTM that complement the selected major and meet any specific general education requirements. Students are encouraged to complete the OTM to ensure maximum transferability and application of credits.		
<b>Required Disciplines</b>	<b>Minimum Required Hours</b>	<b>Recommended Courses</b>
Area I. English Composition Area II. Mathematics Area III. Arts & Humanities Area IV. Social Sciences Area V. Natural & Physical Science	3 sem. / 5-6 qtr. 3 sem. / 3 qtr. 6 sem. / 9 qtr. 6 sem. / 9 qtr. 6 sem. / 9 qtr.	Statistics  Introduction/General Psychology and Introduction to Sociology Microbiology w/ lab Anatomy w/lab Physiology
Advising Notes: While chemistry is <u>required</u> by all BSN programs at public universities in Ohio, the amount and type varies among institutions. Students should check with the receiving institution for specific requirements and type and amounts of chemistry required.		
<b>2. Major Courses</b>		
<b>a. Foundations – Health and Assessment Skills</b>	Credits: minimum range of 8 sem. / 10 to 12 qtr.	
Advising Notes: Some schools teach skills beyond those listed and may require students who transfer to complete independent study to develop competency in additional skills.		
<b>b. Maternal Child</b>	Credits: minimum range of 8 sem./ 10 to 12 qtr.	
Advising Notes: Advising Notes: Students are responsible for contacting the receiving institution to discern whether additional instructional modules will be necessary in order to meet all of the stated competencies.		
<b>c. Adult Health /Gerontology</b>	Credits: minimum range of 9 sem./ 12 qtr.	
Advising Notes: Students are responsible for contacting the receiving institution to discern whether additional instructional modules will be necessary in order to meet all of the stated competencies.		
<b>Transfer Assurance Guide Total Guaranteed Credits (Maximum)</b>		
• Ohio Transfer Module	36 - 40 sem.	54 - 60 qtr.
• Pre-major/Major	0 – 25 sem.	0 – 32 to 36 qtr.

**Institutional Requirements:** For entrance and graduation, a transfer student must meet all institutional requirements which would include, but may not be limited to: minimum grade point average, residency requirements, upper division credits attained, minimum grades in specific courses, performance requirements (ex. dance, music) and other requirements of native students from the same institution.

## MATHEMATICS TRANSFER ASSURANCE GUIDE (TAG) March 4, 2005

<b>2. Ohio Transfer Module:</b>		
<b>Ohio Transfer Module (OTM) Requirements:</b> 36-40 semester hours / 54-60 quarter hours. Students should select courses within the OTM that complement the selected major and meet any specific general education requirements. Students are encouraged to complete the OTM to ensure maximum transferability and application of credits.		
<b>Required Disciplines</b>	<b>Minimum Required Hours</b>	<b>Recommended Courses</b>
Area I. English Composition Area II. Mathematics Area III. Arts & Humanities Area IV. Social Sciences Area V. Natural & Physical Science	3 sem. / 5-6 qtr. 3 sem. / 3 qtr. 6 sem. / 9 qtr. 6 sem. / 9 qtr. 6 sem. / 9 qtr.	Calculus I & II  Calculus-based Physics I & II w/lab
Additional courses beyond the minimum required hours, from any of the disciplines listed above, will count toward the completion of the OTM (36-40 semester hours or 54-60 quarter hours).		
<b>3. Foreign Language</b> - Demonstrate competencies through the 200 level. Credits: Up to 16 semester hours / 24 quarter hours.		
<b>4. Major Courses</b>		
<b>a. Calculus III</b>	Credits: 3 - 4 semester hours / 4 - 5 quarter hours	
Advising Notes:		
<b>b. Elementary Linear Algebra</b>	Credits: 3 - 4 semester hours / 4-5 quarter hours	
Advising Notes:		
<b>c. Elementary Differential Equations</b>	Credits: 3 - 4 semester hours / 4-5 quarter hours	
Advising Notes:		
<b>Transfer Assurance Guides Total Guaranteed Credits (Maximum)</b>		
• Ohio Transfer Module	36 – 40 sem.	54 – 60 qtr.
• Foreign Language	0 – 16 sem.	0 – 24 qtr.
• Pre-major / Major	0 - 9 to 12 sem.	0 – 12 to 15 qtr.

**Institutional Requirements:** For entrance and graduation, a transfer student must meet all institutional requirements which would include, but may not be limited to: minimum grade point average, residency requirements, upper division credits attained, minimum grades in specific courses, performance requirements (ex. dance, music) and other requirements of native students from the same institution.

Appendix C

# Overview of HUB Process

