



Foreword

Collaboration for Student Transfer: A Nationwide Degree Qualifications Profile Experiment is one of two primary reports to emerge from a national project focused on student learning and success in the context of student mobility and transfer. In 2011, with grant funding from Lumina Foundation and the William and Flora Hewlett Foundation, the Association of American Colleges and Universities (AAC&U) launched Quality Collaboratives: Assessing and Reporting Degree Qualifications Profile Competencies in the Context of Transfer (the QC project). This project, part of AAC&U's ongoing Liberal Education and America's Promise (LEAP) initiative, had two primary goals. First, it sought to build the capacity of educators to use Lumina Foundation's Degree Qualifications Profile (DQP) as a shared framework to facilitate successful student transfer and to encourage a greater focus on the quality of student learning, including assessment, rather than just on seat time or credit hour accumulation. Second, it sought to help partnering two-year and four-year institutions strengthen transfer students' achievement of the LEAP Essential Learning Outcomes, a set of twenty-first-century learning outcomes identified through the LEAP initiative that are included in the DQP.

Today, most college students in the United States do not attend a single institution in pursuit of their degrees. Accordingly, the successful attainment of a degree or other credential often depends on a smooth transfer process as students move among higher education providers. Since the largest number of students transfer between two-year and four-year institutions, the Quality Collaboratives project was designed to explore the DQP and its focus on student learning proficiencies as a guide for improving the transfer process and reorienting it toward student learning.

Representatives of nine state systems participated in the project, examining state-level policy related to student transfer and piloting new strategies to align curricular pathways and document student achievement. Each state effort was led by one or two "dyads"—pairs of a two-year and a four-year institution that share a significant transfer student population. Over the course of the three project years, participants from ten dyads in nine states explored and tested ways to revise or adapt existing transfer practices in order to acknowledge more fully the importance of demonstrated learning proficiency in determining progress toward degree attainment. The participating state systems were the University of Oregon System (and later the Oregon Higher Education Coordinating Commission), the California State University System, the Utah System of Higher Education, the North Dakota General Education Council, the University of Wisconsin System, the Indiana Commission for Higher Education, the Kentucky Council on Postsecondary Education, the State Council on Higher Education for Virginia, and the Massachusetts Department of Higher Education.

Overall, project participants explored three separate but intersecting aspects of the transfer process: (1) the assessment of learning proficiencies, (2) faculty leadership for advancing and documenting student achievement of shared learning goals or proficiencies, and (3) campus and state policies related to student learning. Through face-to-face national meetings; campus, dyad, and statewide convenings

Quality Collaboratives Participating Institutions

CALIFORNIA

- California State University–Northridge
- Pierce College

INDIANA

- Indiana University–Purdue University Indianapolis
- Ivy Tech Community College

KENTUCKY

- Elizabethtown Community and Technical College
- University of Louisville

MASSACHUSETTS

- Fitchburg State University
- Middlesex Community College
- Mount Wachusett Community College
- University of Massachusetts Lowell

NORTH DAKOTA

- Statewide public and private colleges and universities through the North Dakota General Education Council

OREGON

- The Oregon University System

UTAH

- Salt Lake Community College
- University of Utah

VIRGINIA

- Blue Ridge Community College
- J. Sargeant Reynolds Community College
- James Madison University
- Virginia Commonwealth University

WISCONSIN

- University of Wisconsin–Fox Valley
- University of Wisconsin–Oshkosh
- University of Wisconsin–Parkside
- University of Wisconsin–Waukesha

and communication; and the development and testing of resources and tools, participants developed a portfolio of strategies for engaging with the DQP and other new frameworks and approaches for documenting the quality of student learning. By intentionally working with campuses and state systems that already were approaching student transfer in new and varied ways (e.g., through statewide mandated transfer frameworks, credit acceptance policies, and efforts to map or align disciplinary or general education curricula), the Quality Collaboratives project was able to identify a wide range of potential models for enhancing student learning related to transfer student success and faculty collaboration across institutions. These models all approached transfer through the lens of quality learning and demonstrated achievement.

This publication is anchored by a flowchart, pages 6 and 7, that reflects campus-based work that QC dyads engaged in during the project. The flowchart serves as a guide for campus practitioners seeking to initiate similar transfer-based change efforts on their campuses. The reader can follow the columns in the flowchart from left to right, and start with three major points of consideration when initiating a new project on campus, as gleaned from the QC project: (1) set a collaborative tone early in the process, (2) proactively coordinate and connect multiple campus initiatives, and (3) maximize engagement based on assessment and collaborative capacity. Follow each of these points down their respective columns to three outcomes from the QC project: (1) increased levels of respect and trust among colleagues; (2) sustainable, scalable projects embedded in and connected to institutional goals and other related initiatives; and (3) increased understanding and new avenues to extend project work more broadly, engaging larger groups of stakeholders. In between these points of consideration and project outcomes are the action steps. Each of the eleven action steps is correlated with a QC dyad case study that resides on AAC&U’s website at www.aacu.org/qc/casestudies.

This report and its companion, *The Quality of a College Degree: Toward New Frameworks, Evidence, and Interventions*, along with two shorter booklets (one on assessment strategies and one on collaborative steps to enhance student transfer focused on demonstrated learning proficiency), an online resource hub, and a suite of case studies and campus tools, present the rich findings and insights from this cross-state and cross-campus exploration of student success in the context of transfer.

We invite you to examine the “lessons learned” from the project—lessons about the assessment of student proficiencies, faculty leadership, and policy at the campus, system, and state levels that can help campus and state leaders facilitate intracampus and cross-campus collaboration for student transfer success.

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