Overview of BCCAT’s 2012-13 Annual Review

BC post-secondary students benefit from an accessible transfer system that offers an extensive range of flexible pathways across differentiated institutions. In the words of one student, “If there were no transfer system, I would not be where I am today.” For many, this system is what makes post-secondary education possible throughout our expansive province. The BC Council on Admissions and Transfer (BCCAT) oversees and supports the transfer system by working in partnership with institutions to create pathways that support BC students in reaching their educational goals in a timely and cost-efficient way. This executive summary serves as an overview of key projects and activities undertaken by the Council this past year, as presented in the 2012-13 Annual Review.2

This year saw considerable expansion of the BC Transfer Guide following recommendations from the “Enabling the Transfer System”3 project. All member institutions may now initiate and accept articulation requests, and the BC Transfer Guide database provides public access to more guaranteed credit equivalencies, including many previously documented only within individual institutions. As a result, students are better equipped to plan their transfer pathways.

Research undertaken by the Student Transitions Project (STP)4 has contributed much to our understanding of the realities of student mobility in BC. System research consistently indicates that BC students are mobile in pursuing their educational opportunities; 55,000 students moved institutions in each of the last three years. (See Figure A below.)

Ongoing student feedback attests that BC’s differentiated and well-articulated public post-secondary system efficiently accommodates transfer students. However, to support even better informed educational planning, BCCAT worked with BC Transfer System members to examine why students move between institutions. BCCAT’s Survey of Movers5 revealed

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1 See p. 4 of this newsletter for one student’s transfer story.
2 All references to the 2012-13 Annual Review will be denoted as “AR, p. X”. This newsletter and the Annual Review are both available at bccat.ca/publications/annualreview.
3 See “Enabling Transfer” (AR, p.14). Further details are provided at bccat.ca/enabling.
4 For further information regarding this collaborative research initiative, see AR, p. 26. STP publications are available at www.aved.gov.bc.ca/student_transitions/welcome.htm.
that a high proportion were satisfied or very satisfied with their original institution (75%), the transfer process (80%), and their subsequent institution (88%). The survey also indicated that students expect transfer options to be both flexible and viable; many planned their move in advance. The fact that BC students are able to find pathways that accommodate their particular transfer needs and expectations is what sets the BC Transfer System apart.

A synopsis of BCCAT (and related) research, offers an overview of what the Council has learned about admissions and transfer in BC this past decade. The report, Student Transfer, Success and Mobility in BC Post-Secondary Institutions, confirms the ongoing success of the BC system in facilitating student mobility.

The findings also indicate that the post-secondary routes taken by BC students are highly variable, including both formal pathways planned in advance and informal pathways arising in response to changing personal circumstances. Students are looking for flexible options that empower them to customize their own pathways as they pursue their educational goals.

This year, BCCAT was commissioned by the Ministry of Advanced Education, Innovation and Technology to facilitate a major review of the Associate Degree; a province-wide consultation to gather feedback on the current function and future potential of this provincial credential. Under the purview of the Provincial Associate Degree Review Steering Committee, feedback was gathered and a number of recommendations were provided. The final report was submitted to the Minister on January 31, 2013. When the report has been released for public circulation, BCCAT anticipates inviting feedback and further consultation regarding the recommendations and their implementation.

Collaboration with other jurisdictions is another important component of BCCAT’s role, as the Council focuses on improving transfer and expanding options for students within and across provincial borders. BC is held in high regard for its highly developed transfer system, so BCCAT staff members are often called on by other jurisdictions for guidance, consultation or joint initiatives. One project focuses on facilitating the development of consistent terminology and transcription practices for credential partnerships. The goal is to support successful practices for both domestic and international partnership programs.
Supporting and informing the BC Transfer System is central to BCCAT’s role. In addition to ongoing responsibilities, including managing web resources such as the Transfer Credit Evaluation System (TCES), facilitating BC’s 68 articulation committees, convening the 2012 Joint Annual Meeting, the BCCAT team focused on the development of a new web facility to support and engage the transfer and articulation community.

The Articulation Information Centre is due for launching in spring 2013. Users of the new resource will have access to reference materials, blogs and articles. They will also be able to customize pages and contribute their own content. This resource sets a new precedent for the delivery of articulation information services as it will invite participants within and beyond BC to participate in an online, transfer community.

Communications and outreach are vital aspects of the Council’s role. Central to BCCAT’s outreach are two student-oriented websites, BCTransferGuide.ca and EducationPlanner.ca. BCCAT staff members attend education/career fairs and related events to engage with students and raise awareness of these planning tools. Last year each of these websites saw approximately one million unique visits (an increase of 50% from 2011).

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In addition, BCCAT’s outreach extends to a wide range of stakeholders within and beyond BC, and we welcome opportunities to connect with post-secondary partners to discuss pertinent matters and provide information on relevant research findings.

Through the guidance of Council and committee members, working in partnership with a wide range of system stakeholders, students moving through the BC Transfer System benefit from a robust and adaptive transfer network. BCCAT looks forward to continuing the work of expanding pathway options to meet the diverse needs of BC students.

“Our post-secondary system is one of the best in the world because it is indeed a system. The new reality is that today, the starting point on your educational journey is not likely to be your end point. And because BC’s post-secondary transfer system is so advanced, it’s relatively easy to move from institution to institution.”

- Scott McAlpine, President of Douglas College, Vancouver Sun (February 26, 2013)

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9 See “Facilitation” (AR, p. 13).
10 See “Articulation Committees” (AR, p. 14). Further details regarding these committees are available at bccat.ca/articulation/committees.
12 See AR, p. 17. The Articulation Information Centre will be accessible on the BCCAT website (bccat.ca).
At twenty years of age, Theo Assu Jr. made a bold, life-changing decision. A commercial fisherman working near the Alaskan border, he had dreams of a career in Business. He left the nets behind and enrolled in the University Transfer Studies program at Langara College, with plans for eventual transfer to UBC’s Sauder School of Business.

Now, five years later, Theo reflects on his experiences as a transfer student and a newly appointed member of the BC Council on Admissions and Transfer. It has been an adventure filled with discoveries and challenges. The initial change in lifestyle was significant, having moved from a much smaller community to the buzzing whirlwind of student life in Vancouver; but Langara’s Aboriginal Services proved a valuable hub for gathering information and connecting with other students.

Theo admits that the transfer pathway hasn’t always been smooth. Planning his transfer route required considerable initiative and perseverance. He remembers talking to advisors, seeking out transfer students, searching the course-to-course database on BCTransferGuide.ca, and calling the BCCAT office with an enquiry. But he is absolutely clear about this: “If there were no transfer system, I would not be where I am today.”

As a member of the Council, Theo feels it is important that he speak on behalf of his fellow students, communicating the realities faced by others navigating their way through a fast-paced, information-steeped post-secondary environment. (This builds upon his prior advocacy experience, having participated in the province’s Aboriginal Post-Secondary Education Forum, conducted in February 2012.) He also provides valuable feedback on how to reach out to students and improvements for BCTransferGuide.ca to make it more accessible and student-friendly.

For Theo, the transfer option opened the way to his educational and career goals. That realization impels him as he frequently draws from his own experience to inform other potential transfer students. His advice: connect with transfer students and advisors, and be proactive about planning out your transfer route. In other words, “Be aware of where you are going, and how to get there.”