



## 1996/97 BCCAT Management Letter Report on Activities Completed

April 21, 1997

### **BACKGROUND**

The B.C. Council on Admissions and Transfer received a Management Letter from the Assistant Deputy Minister of Education, Skills and Training on July 26, 1996. The Management Letter outlined the role of BCCAT and provided a clear set of expectations with respect to the various projects and activities that would be undertaken in the 1996/97 fiscal year. (*attachment A*)

This report outlines what has been accomplished relative to the items listed in the Management Letter and also outlines some significant activities that were undertaken but were not stipulated in the Management Letter.

All activities undertaken by the Council have been consistent with our responsibility to provide service to the BC post-secondary system, and all have supported and reflected major values of our system, of equitable treatment of students, increased access for all students, and accountability to our public.

### **PROJECTS AND ACTIVITIES COMPLETED**

Note that the numbers from 1 - 11 below coincide with the numbers referred to in the July 26, 1996 Management Letter.

#### **1. Hiring a contractor or secondee**

The Council was successful in seconding Finola Finlay, Principal of the Fort St. John campus of Northern Lights College, commencing October 1, 1996 for a one year period but with the clear expectation that the secondment would be extended for a second year. Her work has focused on various projects listed below and discussed in other parts of this report:

- Study of Block Transfer Options

- Task Force on Standards and Processes
- Transcripts Standards Committee
- Handbook for Articulation Committee Chairs and Liaison Administrators
- Arranging for secondary school representation on Articulation Committees
- Improving existing transfer credit arrangements and processes

## **2. A Study of Transfer to B.C. Universities**

The Council has contracted with Lesley Andres at UBC to conduct a detailed research study to clarify the degree to which transfer students experience problems during the transfer process. Her study will involve extensive interviews with a sample of students at Simon Fraser University who have completed the transfer process from Douglas College, to determine the nature of the transfer process from the students' perspective and the difficulties and successes encountered before, during, and after transfer. Students will be asked to share their transcripts with the researchers in order to conduct analyses verifying the transfer of credit. Another phase of the study will involve students currently enrolled at Douglas College who are planning to transfer to SFU. These students will be interviewed several times over a two year period to determine their continuing interest in transferring, the steps being taken to prepare for transfer, problems, from the students' perspective, encountered during the transfer process, and whether or not transfer was successful.

This longitudinal study is progressing very well to date and the full report is not expected to be completed until sometime in 1998. (*attachment 2*)

## **3. An Analysis of Student Transfer Issues revealed in the College and Institute Outcomes Surveys**

The Council contracted with GDA consulting to analyze the data collected in the 1995 and 1996 Student Outcomes Surveys with a particular focus on the responses from those students who were classified as having exited from university transfer programs. This set of 14,534 students had been surveyed on whether or not they had tried to transfer credits and for those who did transfer credits, whether or not they experienced "problems in completing this transfer." Approximately 16% of transfer students indicated some form of transfer problem and these students were encouraged to indicate to the telephone surveyor the precise nature of the problem encountered. Much of the research focused on the difficult task of analyzing and categorizing these "open ended" subjective responses so that we could better understand the precise nature and magnitude of the different transfer problems students experienced. Such understanding was also intended to identify what transfer related questions could be added to the 1997 survey to yield more useful and easily interpretable data for future analyses. The responses were also helpful to the work of the Task Force on Standards and Processes in identifying that many transfer problems are unrelated to specific articulated transfer agreements but instead occur as a result of institutional administrative processes and procedures. The report also provided some very useful information describing patterns of student mobility and

confirmed that the majority (69%) of college academic students do transfer and the vast majority of these transfer from a college to a university.

The full research report is entitled Student Transfer Issues Revealed in British Columbia's Post-Secondary Education Student Outcomes Surveys: An Analysis Intended to Enhance the Survey's Future Utility. (*attachment 3*). It is also available on our website.

As a direct result of this research, the 1997 Student Outcomes Survey questions have been substantially modified and expanded to provide much more extensive information on student transfer that will become available for analysis in the Fall of 1997. These revised questions will enhance substantially the ability of the system to address issues of accountability in regards to transfer outcomes in BC.

#### **4. Task Force on Standards and Processes**

The Task Force on Standards and Processes was formed to identify impediments to smooth and efficient student transfer which may result from administrative processes in use in B.C. institutions. An initial report, written in May 1996, identified the type of issues this committee should deal with, and included sample recommendations designed to make transfer processes work more effectively. (*attachment 4*)

The Task Force recognized the need to solicit input from registration staff and student advisors to:

- identify useful current information and resources, and identify other potential useful resources for advisors and students;
- obtain information on kinds of minor/major transfer problems that occur and how often;
- identify students' knowledge of the transfer system.

To this purpose, a survey was produced and distributed in February to registration staff and student advisors. 101 surveys were returned from the 200 sent out.

Initial results indicate that:

1. Advisors perceive BC's transfer system to be functioning well;
2. There is a need to increase information about the transfer guide and the transfer process to students;
3. There is a need to have the BC Transfer Guide designated the "official" guide;
4. There is concern about the perceived lack of reciprocity of course transfer credit (i.e. university to college).
5. There are several specific practices in use in our institutions which can create barriers and difficulties for transfer students

Data from the survey have been used to develop several draft recommendations that are now being prepared to present to Council. New initiatives for the Task Force have been

identified, such as filling the information void that students currently face about transfer. The Task Force also had significant input in revising Q15 of the Student Outcomes Survey which deals with transfer problems. Items that were identified as being specifically related to transcripts and record keeping were forwarded to the Transcript Standards Committee. A report on the 1996/97 activities of the Task Force will be presented to the Council at its June meeting.

## **5. SFU Student Performance Research**

BCCAT contracted with the Office of Analytical Studies at SFU to update its previous research on the profile of B.C. college transfer students who were admitted to SFU for the five year period between 1991/92 to 1995/96. This extremely valuable research provided extensive demographic information about the numbers of transfer students admitted to SFU and the institutions from which they transferred. For example, the data revealed that 79% of all transfer students came from public Vancouver or lower mainland colleges. The data also revealed the number of credits that students transferred, which programs of study transfer students entered, the numbers of students completing degrees, and how long they took to do so. The study also analyzed the academic performance of transfer students compared to direct entry students as they progressed through to graduation. Comparisons of grade point average performance on a number of key courses were included in this analysis. All of these analyses are reported by individual institutions thereby providing very specific information useful to each College.

This type of research is invaluable because the finding that transfer students do perform very well at SFU helps to inculcate a positive set of values in the university community towards the transfer process and also gives reassurance to students studying or contemplating study in the colleges that they can expect to continue to perform very well after transferring to a university. Therefore, projects such as this one support directly our system goals for equity of treatment, and ease of movement for all students in the system.

The full report is entitled Profile of B.C. College Transfer Students Admitted to Simon Fraser University 1991/92 to 1995/96 and is available on our web site. (*attachment 5*)

The system has responded most favourably to this research but would like to see similar reports prepared for the other major universities. The Council has contracted with the University of Victoria to conduct a parallel study in 1997/98 and hopes to be able to also fund a similar study at UBC.

## **6. Study of Block Transfer**

Since coming to the Council last October Finola Finlay has researched the concept of block transfer and presented on the topic to several groups, including the annual meeting of Articulation Chairs and Liaison Administrators. A BCCAT Discussion Paper will be distributed shortly which summarizes:

- what is meant by block transfer
- the current utilization of block transfer agreements in B.C.
- the potential application of block transfer in traditional academic program areas
- alternative models of block transfer, some of which are in current use in other jurisdictions

and concludes by asking for a response to the question:

**“Should we develop a block transfer system for arts and sciences degrees in British Columbia?”**

**If yes,**

**Should block transfer supplement or replace our current course to course transfer system?**

**Which model or models of block transfer (ranked in order of preference) are most feasible for our British Columbia context?**

**Should block transfer be implemented through legislation, or only through voluntary agreement by participating institutions?**

**If no,**

**What improvements, if any, would you suggest to our current system of credit transfer?”**

Extensive consultation and an examination of the responses to this discussion paper will be a major initiative of the Council in 1997/98. Enclosed is a draft copy of the discussion paper (*attachment 6*).

## **7. B.C. Guide to Post Secondary Education**

The Executive Director of the Council has been an active member of the Advisory Committee to PASBC (now part of CEISS) on improving Explore, a CD ROM electronic guide to programs offered by BC’s public post-secondary institutions. The second edition has been completed and has been distributed widely. The Council strongly recommended that the third edition be on the internet so that it can be updated as and when required and this advice has been accepted.

## **8. General Role and Activities of the Council**

The number and variety of ongoing Council activities are too numerous to list exhaustively here but major items included:

- overseeing and coordinating the administration of 67 Provincial articulation committees
- attending articulation committee meetings when required
- appointing liaison administrators to all articulation committees

- mediating a major dispute in English (discussed below)
- mediating a dispute regarding Physics transfer
- hosting the annual meeting of Articulation Chairs and Liaison Administrators
- holding five Council meetings as well as meetings of Council's Program and Articulation Committee, Research Committee, and annual meeting of Institutional Contact Persons
- reviewing and revising terms of reference for Council committees
- relocating our office to the new BCIT downtown campus without major disruption of service to the system
- maintaining our extensive Web site, BCCAT Net
- publishing newsletters and reports (*attachment 8*)
- working in collaboration with the Centre for Applied Academics in formulating strategies to accomplish the mission and goals of that Centre
- assisting the Ministry by participating on the Quality Assurance Review Subcommittee for the Data Definitions and Standards Project, serving as a member on the Key Performance Indicators Committee, and generally being available as and when required to consult on transfer and admission related matters for both the K-12 system and the post-secondary system
- speaking at various conferences and workshops on the role of the Council and the management of the B.C. transfer system
- keeping in touch and consulting as required with related organizations in other Provinces such as the Alberta Council on Admissions and Transfer, Education Ministries in other Provinces, and other agencies interested in our work.
- consulting as required on Council of Ministers of Education, Canada initiatives on interprovincial transfer
- speaking with foreign delegations on the B.C. transfer system and how it works
- actively participating in the following system wide committees:
  - Senior Instructional Officers Committee
  - Deans and Directors of Academic and Career/Technical Programs
  - Deans and Directors of Human Services Programs
  - University Vice Presidents Academic Committee
  - Outcomes Working Group:
    - Questionnaire Committee
    - Communications Committee
  - BC Institutional Research and Planning
  - BC Registrars' Association

## **9. Transfer Guide**

BCCAT published its seventh annual edition (1996/97) of the B.C. Transfer Guide and distributed about 2200 copies to the B.C. system including public and private post secondary institutions, high schools, municipal libraries, Education Ministries across Canada, and to a number of public and private agencies and organizations who require copies. (*attachment 9.1*)

The first edition of the online version of the guide was also released last June and has proved to be most successful. Extensive pilot testing of draft versions resulted in a “bug free” web version which is updated frequently. We prepared a brochure and distributed it system wide to inform people of the general availability of our web site and of the existence of the online version the transfer guide (*attachment 9.2*) Approximately 1800 “hits” to the web site are now being recorded monthly (*attachment 9.3*) and this is expected to increase as more and more people gain access to the world wide web and become aware of the utility of our online version of the transfer guide. We hope to be able to reduce the number of hard copies printed in future years as more and more people are able to rely upon using the online version.

The online transfer guide is just part of our web site. BCCAT Net also provides extensive links to information about the BC post-secondary system, other post secondary systems in Canada and around the world, and of course lots of information about our Council including all of its various publications and related research reports.

The Transfer Guide takes an enormous amount of co-ordination and planning to produce an effective tool for educational planning. Much time and effort of our office staff as well as our Transfer Guide Coordinator is required to produce the guide on time and on budget especially considering that interactions of 27 public institutions and three private institutions are involved in its production. However, the transfer guide is an indispensable document relied upon by all of the post secondary system and by students contemplating entering or who have entered our system of higher education. As such, it is directly supportive of system goals to increase and diversify access for all students.

## **10. Cooperation with CEISS**

The Executive Director has been quite involved with various employees of CEISS as they develop their educational and business plan to provide a service to the post-secondary system. In particular, we have provided advice on the kinds of data needed to be collected as part of their planned Link File initiative. The Council has indicated its willingness to assist CEISS as required to ensure that the Link File provides a foundation of accurate and useful data that will be available for analysis by the Council to provide useful measures of system wide performance and accountability especially as they relate to student mobility and transfer effectiveness. In particular, we would like to follow-up with our earlier research proposal that Council had approved but was not implemented due to the closure of SIRI (*attachment 10*).

## **11. Cooperation with the CCTT**

In order to ensure that effective and efficient collaboration and cooperation occurs between the work of our Council and the Centre for Curriculum, Transfer, and Technology, the respective Executive Directors, in consultation with the Ministry, developed a Protocol Agreement which clarified the respective roles of the two agencies and identified the kinds of projects for which there would be a commitment for

collaboration. That protocol agreement has now been approved by the Ministry. (*attachment 11*)

During the past year, we have collaborated on several projects including:

- attempting to arrange for representatives from the secondary school system to sit on our Articulation Committees
- developing the provincial framework for establishing formal articulation agreements between accredited private post-secondary institutions and public post-secondary institutions
- assisting in establishing a CCTT Committee to examine a learning outcomes approach in the development of post-secondary English courses
- arranging for the CCTT to make a presentation on PLA and Learning Outcomes the evening prior to our annual meeting of Articulation Committee Chairs and Liaison Administrators
- assisting the Provincial Steering Committee on Flexible Assessment by having a member of the Council (Susan Witter) participate on this committee
- Assisting the CCTT to construct a Best Practices Handbook for secondary to post-secondary articulation

### **Other Activities not referred to in the Management Letter**

Besides those items listed in section 8 above, the Council proceeded with several projects which were not identified in the Management Letter, but which resulted from emerging needs brought to our attention as a result of our regular activities. They include:

#### **12. Associate Degree requirements**

The Council recommended to the Minister a significant revision to the Associate of Arts and Associate of Science degrees. UNBC has now been added to the list of Universities along with SFU, UBC, and UVic so that any course that has university transfer credit to UNBC would qualify for meeting Associate Degree requirements. (*attachment 12*)

#### **13. English Articulation dispute**

The Executive Director became involved (and is still involved) in helping to mediate a major dispute regarding concerns of several Colleges over Simon Fraser University's plans to significantly modify its curriculum requirements for majors and minors in English. The Council kept the Ministry informed (*attachment 13.1*) and called a meeting of appropriate representatives to discuss the issues in question and to endeavour to find solutions to the identified problems. Much progress has been made to date and the Council will continue to follow up on this matter. (*attachment 13.2*)

#### **14. Handbook for Articulation Committee Chairs and Liaison Administrators**

In examining various processes to improve articulation it became apparent that there was a need to prepare a single document that in one location provided information regarding the role and mandate of the Council, the role and responsibilities of Articulation Committees, the role and responsibilities of Articulation Chairs and Liaison Administrators, the Principles and Guidelines for Transfer, and the B.C Transfer Credit Evaluation Form. A first edition of this handbook has just been published and will serve as a test version. Further revisions and refinement will be occur in 1997/98. (*attachment 14*)

## **15. Transcripts Standards Committee**

In the course of research undertaken by BCCAT, various items were identified related to the equitable treatment of students transferring within the post-secondary system. In some cases these issues were related directly to transcribing practices, or in the interpretation of transcripts. The Council therefore approached the BC Registrars' Association to seek their advice and assistance in considering the development of a set of common standards for the preparation of student transcripts. It was thought that such guidelines could help to ensure that students across the system are treated consistently, thus ensuring a greater degree of equity.

To devise a guide for standardized records and transcripts the Committee has reviewed the academic record and transcript guide of the American Association of Collegiate Registrars and Admissions Officers and is in the process of producing a draft *BC Record and Transcript Guide*. This draft document is currently being reviewed by committee members for revisions and feedback.

In February, the Committee produced and distributed a survey to registrars to understand how information is recorded and interpreted on a transcript. Information gathered from the survey is also being used to make recommendations regarding transcript standards.

The work of this committee is in its initial stages and will likely continue at least through 1997/98. (*attachment 15*)

## **Concluding Comments**

A review of this report reveals that all projects identified in the Management Letter either have been completed or substantial progress has been made towards their completion. In addition, many significant activities have been undertaken that are consistent with the overall mandate of the Council in furthering the aims of the Ministry and the mission and goals of post-secondary system in British Columbia. This would not have been possible without the assistance of many individuals and organizations that support the work of the Council. In addition, the opportunity of having a full-time secondee (Finola Finlay) has enabled the Council to accomplish many important initiatives that would not have otherwise been possible. The Council will want to explore with the Ministry the possibility of being able to continue to have such a position funded in 1998/99.

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 British Columbia Council on Admissions and Transfer

Schedule of Attachments (attachments included only to the Assistant Deputy Minister)

- A Management letter, July 26, 1996
- 2 "Investigating Transfer" by Lesley Andres, May 1996
- 3 "Student Transfer Issues Revealed in British Columbia's Post Secondary Education Student Outcomes Surveys: An Analysis Intended to Enhance the Survey's Future Utility" by GDA consulting, November 30, 1996
- 4 Report of the Task Force on Standards & Processes
- 5 Profile of B.C. College Transfer Students Admitted to Simon Fraser University 1991/92 to 1995/96, by Joanne Heslop, October 1996
- 6 "Block Transfer: Issues and Options" by Finola Finlay, April 1997
- 8 BCCAT Newsletter, October 1996
- 9.1 British Columbia Transfer Guide 1996-1997, seventh annual edition
- 9.2 Brochure with information on BCCAT Net
- 9.3 BCCAT Net Visitor Stats
- 10 FY96 BCCAT Research Project Proposal and Workplan, August 1995
- 11 Protocol Agreement, BCCAT and Centre for Curriculum, Transfer & Technology
- 12 Revision to Associate Degree Requirements, September 1996
- 13.1 English Articulation Issue notes
- 13.2 Articulation of SFU English Courses, notes of April 1, 1997 meeting
- 14 A Handbook for Articulation Committee Chairs & Liaison Administrators
- 15. Transcripts Standards Committee Terms of Reference