

FRIENDS OF BCCAT

* FRANK GELIN *



"Our collective success has resulted in a system that greatly facilitates access and credential completion opportunities for students across the province. And this has been achieved with the unanimous support of our post-secondary institutions which, although governed autonomously, act as an integrated system facilitating admissions and transfer.

From both a national as well as international educational policy perspective this has been and continues to be a remarkable achievement."

Meet Frank Gelin

BCCAT Executive Director and Council Co-Chair, 1993 - 2010;
Executive Director Emeritus, 2010 - present.

Frank Gelin encountered the world of credit transfer early on. As a young college student, he was able to reach his own educational goals through the benefit of a university transfer pathway. Over time, he became a dedicated advocate of post-secondary access enabled through transfer and mobility and this became the focus of his career when he eventually took up his role as Executive Director of BCCAT.

Read Frank's Story...

Frank's Story

My first experience with college transfer predates my involvement with the BC Transfer system. I graduated from Sir Winston Churchill High School in Vancouver in 1963, the same year my parents decided to retire to San Diego, California. Rather than attending UBC, I went with them given the lure of warm sunshine and going to the beach much of the year. I learned there were no tuition fees at the local university for residents of the State but they did exist for nonresidents. (Interestingly there were no tuition fees for anyone attending a community college although there was a student activity fee of \$7.50 per semester!)



Consequently in order to save money I attended a community college for one year and then transferred to San Diego State University. All my courses transferred exactly as promised with identical credits that I would have received if I had attended the university in the first place. And now as a resident of California I again had no tuition fees.[1]

My appreciation of college to university transfer next occurred when I attended graduate school at Stanford University, a private institution with extremely selective undergraduate admissions. I learned that each year Stanford admitted a number of excellent students from a local community college into third year and accepted their credits toward meeting degree requirements. This impressed me as admirable admissions policy, especially by a private university that had many more highly qualified applicants from across the US than there were spaces available.

These experiences reinforced for me the effectiveness and usefulness of transfer credit, setting the foundation for my future interest in this topic. (Although I never anticipated for a moment that it would lead to a related role in higher educational administration.)

In the fall of 1969 the College of New Caledonia[2] opened in Prince George, BC and I was hired as an instructor and to help set up the Psychology department. We were advised that transfer arrangements for students were probable but the details had to be formally negotiated with each of the three research universities. So in August of that year I attended the first meeting of the Psychology Articulation Committee at UBC to commence negotiations.

This proved to be much more difficult than was expected because each of the three research universities structured their first and second year course requirements for majors differently in terms of the curriculum, the order in which courses were to be taken, and pre-requisite requirements. This was clearly a very complex problem that called for considerable goodwill and flexibility to resolve. The colleges argued that it would be very helpful if there were some guidelines to facilitate the negotiation process.

In 1975 I became Dean of Arts & Science at CNC and decided that perhaps I could make a positive contribution to the system by endeavouring to improve college/university relationships and do that by encouraging senior academic administrators from both sectors to meet and discuss topics of mutual interest. That led to my appointment to represent the college sector on the newly formed *BC Post Secondary Articulation Coordinating Committee*.



[1] Incidentally when the State proposed to begin charging tuition fees Frank participated in his first student protest; he and his friends wore buttons that read "Our Position No Tuition" (pictured above).

[2] Pictured right: Frank with his colleague Alistair McVey at CNC, assisting with registration (1969).

As it turned out this Committee was the precursor to The BC Council on Admissions and Transfer that would be created four years later. In 1976 I participated in the Coordinating Committee's subcommittee established to recommend *Principles and Guidelines for Transfer*.^[3] After a very challenging debate and many revisions, a set of guidelines was adopted and subsequently formally approved by all of our public colleges and universities.

Those guidelines included mandating the creation of province-wide faculty based articulation committees for disciplines and programs to negotiate and formalize transfer arrangements. This proved to be a great success for two reasons. The first was achieving thousands of formally approved transfer credit equivalencies that were recorded in brochures and later in the Council's online BC Transfer Guide, the first online transfer guide of its kind in North America. The second reason, and in many respects more importantly, was the resulting collective involvement of a vast number of college and university faculty, support staff, registrars, and academic administrators who became forceful advocates supporting and embracing a culture that in principle supported the notion that students had a fundamental right to receive appropriate transfer credit if they moved between institutions. This culture led to the acceptance of an *implicit* public policy that underpinned the continuing expansion of our postsecondary "system." Amazingly this was all accomplished without requiring any significant provincial legislation to govern the process.

As the transfer system expanded the Council embarked upon a comprehensive plan of evidence based research to identify what was working well and what needed improvement. The results of that led to constructive enhancements to many facets of the credit transfer system and provided evidence of its effectiveness. The research also identified the need to provide easily accessible and comprehensive information to help students plan their post secondary studies and EducationPlannerBC now provides that.

Another major success occurred years later and concurrently with many colleges being given the authority to offer four-year degrees and several being granted university status. While the number of degree programs and transfer credit equivalencies increased exponentially it became apparent that the practical limits of system capacity and the ability of students to move between institutions was a different issue than the portability of course credits. The Council's mandate to explore the admissions side of its title was implemented by measuring and reporting on the complex patterns of student mobility. This research endeavour proved to be most informative and indirectly advanced another *implicit* culture that students should be able to move between institutions in order to complete their studies in addition to having their course or program credits recognized towards meeting degree or other credential requirements.

In summary our collective success has resulted in a system that greatly facilitates access and credential completion opportunities for students across the Province. And this has been achieved with the unanimous support of our post-secondary institutions which, although governed autonomously, act as an integrated system facilitating admissions and transfer. From both a national as well as international educational policy perspective this has been and continues to be a remarkable achievement.

[3] The most recent version of the *Principles & Guidelines for Transfer* is available at bccat.ca/system/principles
Pictured below: Frank, in his retirement, taking a moment to relax during his travels to Cartagena, Columbia.



"As the transfer system expanded, the Council embarked upon a comprehensive plan of evidence-based research to identify what was working well and what needed improvement.

The results of that led to constructive enhancements to many facets of the credit transfer system and provided evidence of its effectiveness."

The Franklin Gelin Lifetime Achievement Award

THE FRANKLIN GELIN LIFETIME ACHIEVEMENT AWARD

On October 3, 2014, the BC Council on Admissions and Transfer voted unanimously to name the new BCCAT Lifetime Achievement Award in honour of DR. FRANKLIN GELIN, Executive Director Emeritus of BCCAT.

Frank served as Executive Director from 1994-2010. His value for the importance of collaboration and consultation was a vital contributing factor to the success of the BC Transfer System as we know it today.

The Franklin Gelin Lifetime Achievement Award recognizes those who carry on this important work in the same spirit of collaboration, engagement, and dedication in service to the system over the course of their post-secondary careers.

"Few have devoted as much leadership to the activities of BCCAT as Frank Gelin. For more than two decades Frank has been responsible for a great deal of the innovation, the reputation, the image and the culture of the Council as recognized by government, the post-secondary educational system and the community at large." - John Dennison, BCCAT Co-Chair (1993-1999) and Ph



Frank Gelin (second from the right) assisting with registration at the College of New Caledonia, circa 1969



JOHN D. DENNISON (1929-2019)

BCCAT Co-Chair (1993-1999), and Professor Emeritus, Administrative, Adult & Higher Education, University of British Columbia

FRANKLIN GELIN LIFETIME ACHIEVEMENT AWARD

"BCCAT and the extended network of professional colleagues that facilitate the BC Transfer System have lost an historic figure. Dr. John Dennison made extraordinary contributions to the development of the BC post-secondary system throughout his career. From the outset, as a Professor of Higher Education at UBC in the early 1960's, Dr. Dennison authored numerous articles and books on the development, mandates, and structures of post-secondary education in Canada, particularly in relation to community colleges.

His contributions to the work of the Council have been multi-faceted, providing insight, advice, and support to inform collaborative work among the autonomous institutions that comprise the BC Transfer System. He played a key role in the development of BC's articulation committee network, transfer credit processes and policy, and transfer student performance research.

Dr. Dennison provided valuable historical context and critical analysis of articulation policy and student access and mobility in BC. In 2011, he reminded us that credit transfer was a groundbreaking concept in the 1960's Canadian post-secondary landscape. "Some 50+ years later, through the leadership of educators like Dr. Dennison and the ongoing collaborative work of institutional faculty and staff across the system, transfer has become accepted as routine and post-secondary students benefit from a remarkably flexible transfer network."

- Robert Fleming, Executive Director and Co-Chair, BC Council on Admissions and Transfer

*see BCCAT's Dennison Award at www.bccat.ca/awards/dennison-award



Dr. John Dennison: Friend of BCCAT & Transfer Champion

In 2016, BCCAT conferred (post-humously) the Franklin Gelin Lifetime Achievement Award upon Dr. John Dennison (BCCAT Co-Chair, 1993-1999, and Professor Emeritus, Administrative, Adult & Higher Education, University of British Columbia) for his extensive contributions to the BC Transfer System throughout his career.

John was always a true, supportive "Friend of BCCAT". Frank is pictured here with Rob Fleming (Executive Director, BCCAT) presenting the award to John's wife, Linda.

About John Dennison: bccat.ca/system/awards/2016/dennison >>>>> About this Award: bccat.ca/system/awards/2014



BC Council on Admissions & Transfer

In 1989, BCCAT was established by the provincial government to facilitate transfer and articulation. BCCAT oversees the BC Transfer System, enabling links between post-secondary institutions, the education ministries, and the public and private education sectors.

bccat.ca bctransferguide.ca info@bccat.ca