

# Seamless Pathways to Lifelong Learning

CSA Recommendations for improving transferability and mobility



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College Student Alliance

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## Executive Summary

When more and more postsecondary students intend to pursue further education to gain the advantage of combining college-to-college, college-to-university, or university-to-college education, and to maximize their opportunities in the changing workforce, transferability and mobility attract the attention of educational stakeholders as key issues facing Canada's postsecondary education system.

Students need to obtain appropriate transfer credits for previously completed learning in order to continue their educational plans as they move from one institution to another. As a result, recognizing previous learning by postsecondary institutions is one of the top concerns of students. Federal and provincial governments, postsecondary institutions, and educational stakeholders must share the students' desire for a future education that is easy to access and allows for movement from and within sectors, and across provincial and/or territorial boundaries. Given the barriers to moving between institutions, and the costs incurred due to lack of full recognition of previous learning, former premier Bob Rae made it clear that the postsecondary system needs to be reformed and that "we need to recognize the value of the student experience, give credit for work that has been done, and establish clear and transparent equivalency standards so that there is recognition for what each student has accomplished."<sup>1</sup> All educational stakeholders must work collaboratively to improve the effectiveness and efficiency of a transfer system, and to provide students with clear, seamless pathways for future education and training. That need has become readily apparent. To reach this goal, policies, systems, programs, and incentives need to be developed and refined to promote greater student mobility and transferability within the province and country.

In the context of a demand for transferability and mobility of learning in Canada, the College Student Alliance (CSA) acknowledges that the federal and provincial governments and educational stakeholders agreed on the common goal of increasing student enrollment, academic transferability, and mobility of qualifications. The purpose of this paper is to outline several recommendations for both the federal and provincial governments with the primary focus on improving the transfer system and building bridges for students across the country with the end goal of a seamless pathway to lifelong learning.

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<sup>1</sup> Rae, B. February, 2005. *Ontario: A Leader in Learning*. P14.



## Recommendations for the Government of Canada

Canada's ability to remain competitive in the global knowledge-based economy depends on how effective it is in developing, attracting and maintaining a highly educated labour force. Canada is the country with the highest percentage of its population having completed a postsecondary education. Today, 45 percent of Canadians have a postsecondary degree, compared to the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development's (OECD) average of only 25 percent<sup>2</sup>. To maintain Canada's top ranking and competitiveness, educational institutions and workplaces must provide more mobility and transferability. This way, Canadians will be able to upgrade their knowledge and skills on a continuous basis. CSA proposes the following recommendations aimed at improving students' transferability and mobility across Canada.

**Develop and implement an umbrella national credit transfer system to give widely accepted learning credentials and provide universal comparable principles to facilitate easy movement of students from and within the college, institute and university systems in Canada.**

In Canada, the mechanisms to facilitate credit transfer differ from jurisdiction to jurisdiction. The systems for credentialing are too decentralized and have a lack of explicit comparability and universality for creating new, widely accepted learning credentials.<sup>3</sup> The responsibility for recognizing learning and credentials has been divided among a number of disparate organizations, institutions, governing bodies and systems. Without an umbrella national credit transfer system or recognition board in Canada, the complexity of the systems for regulating and recognizing learning across Canada makes learning reorganization more challenging.

According to sources, the Government of Canada and all provincial education ministers accepted a position that states all governments must ensure there are no barriers to mobility and transferability that unreasonably inhibit access. Achieving this goal requires a Pan-Canadian strategy, involving all stakeholders and multilateral cooperation. Under a Pan-Canada strategy, all education stakeholders must make every effort to strengthen principles and enforcement mechanisms in a national context that recognizes previous learning, which will ensure accuracy, consistency and fairness.

A proven practice from another industrialized nation can help Canada develop a strategy that has the potential to succeed. In Europe, for example, member states of the European Union, European Economic Area countries and several central and Eastern European countries are participating in a European Credit Transfer System (ECTS) which enables students to transfer to any member country institution and receive full credit for whole or partial credentials they have already gained. ECTS was set up initially for credit transfer. The system facilitated the recognition of periods of study abroad and thus enhanced the quality and volume of student mobility in Europe. The European's approach has been based on "...a clearly defined common goal: to create a European space for higher education in order to enhance the employability and mobility of citizens and to increase the international

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<sup>2</sup> Country Profile for Canada. 2006. Council of Ministers of Education, Canada.

<sup>3</sup> Watt, D. & Bloom, M. (2001). *Exploring the Learning Recognition Gap in Canada*. The Conference Board of Canada. pp.14-15.



competitiveness of European higher education.” This approach has received broad political support from all members of the European Union and the Council of Europe, as it contributes to the broader goal of a united Europe.<sup>4</sup>

To ensure students who enter postsecondary education have every opportunity to continue their learning throughout their lives and to make the process of transferring from one institution to another an easier one, Canada will need to consider these examples and immediately develop an umbrella national credit transfer system.

**Develop clear policies on transferability, especially in the areas of articulation agreements and credit recognition.**

Policies that clearly define and expand recognition standards of prior learning and facilitate transferability and mobility of students will help overcome the growing learning recognition gap in Canada. To ensure that all levels of postsecondary education are legitimate and relevant, and that students are able to freely move from and within the college, institute and university systems across Canada without redundant learning, clear policies must be developed, especially in the areas of articulation agreements and credit recognition.

**Build stronger linkages between institutions and jurisdictions, and link individual province-based systems of credentialing to reduce jurisdictional barriers to mobility and transferability for students throughout Canada.**

To give students the maximum benefit of our postsecondary education system and the widest possible choice of their learning experience, one related and important objective is to facilitate the portability of their learning as they move from one institution to another across provincial and/or territorial boundaries. Collaboration and cooperation between institutions across Canada and in the province are critical to the achievement of this objective.

The data from Statistics Canada’s survey of graduates of the class of 2000 indicated that 35 percent of college students and 47 percent of university students had previous postsecondary experience. After their graduation, 26 percent of college students and 41 percent of university students pursued further education.<sup>5</sup> However, when more and more students do not see their diploma or degree as a terminal one and intend to continue their studies in another institution, they find that the postsecondary education system does not efficiently facilitate their movement between institutions. They have encountered barriers such as great variation on the approaches to recognizing previous academic achievement, repeated learning, limited agreements between the receiving and sending institutions, and less reliable information. Given that the demand for transferability and mobility is rising, and that barriers restrict student’s movement from one learning institution to another and from one jurisdiction to another, building strong linkages between institutions and developing relationships between colleges and universities to create a cooperative and collaborative environment is an approach to improving the transfer system.

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<sup>4</sup> Recognition of Learning: An International Perspective. 2003. The Canadian Alliance of Education and Training Organizations (CAETO).  
[http://www.acoef.ca/projects/articulation/Final\\_Tillman\\_Int\\_Pers\\_EngComplete.pdf](http://www.acoef.ca/projects/articulation/Final_Tillman_Int_Pers_EngComplete.pdf)

<sup>5</sup> Class of 2000: Profile of postsecondary graduates and student debt, 2004. Statistics Canada

**Commit more funding to and get more education stakeholders involved in reforming the transfer and postsecondary education system.**

While legitimate factors such as distinct policies and funding mechanisms continue to distinguish provincial education systems from one another, the coordination of transferability and mobility at all levels need to be identified as a priority.

The Government of Canada needs to commit more funding and have all education stakeholders involved. By working together, we will be able to eliminate unreasonable barriers, find ways to create new strategies and methods that enable students to pursue their learning needs and career aspirations, and work to develop future strategies that will connect provincial education standards.

**Support jurisdictions to continue to promote systems and mechanisms that encourage new, widely accepted credentials and multilateral transfer agreements for transferability and mobility of learning in Canada.**

The transfer of credits from one institution to another has created opportunities and challenges for students across Canada. Alberta, British Columbia (BC) and Quebec have formal transfer programs in place that enable the first two years of university to be completed at a college. In most of the university transfer programs a college offers a university's curriculum. The BC transfer system, for example, provides a large volume of course-to-course and block transfer agreements that have been negotiated by faculty at institutions. Some provinces established Transfer Councils, which provide another method of identifying opportunities for students to complete work at one institution and have the credit transfer to another. These councils encourage transfer arrangements between postsecondary institutions in a province. The transfer of credits is also accomplished through the individual agreements between and among various institutions. Although there are a variety of models available, transferability between institutions still proposes many obstacles and barriers to students; it is necessary to move beyond the existing model to one that creates new, widely accepted credentials for learning and transferability of prior learning.

**Ensure clear communication and adequate information flow among colleges, institutes, universities and students when conducting and processing transfer agreements among institutions and jurisdictions to enhance efficiency and effectiveness.**

Miscommunication and lack of coordination in conducting transfer agreements among institutions creates inefficiencies and ineffectiveness. Problems include changes being made to a receiving program's regulations without sufficient advance notice to institutions sending transfers, larger losses of credits on transfer than indicated in published information, and a significant drop in learners' grade point average (GPA) caused by a receiving institution recalculating a student's average to fit their own scale. In 1997, the British Columbia Council on Admissions and Transfers (BCCAT) conducted a survey of college and university students in British Columbia and found that 9 percent of respondents experienced major difficulties with the transfer process. This percentage was higher for the colleges (10 percent) than for the universities (3 percent) Administrative processes also act as barriers to transfer.





These include such process-related factors as delays in generating transcripts, delays in instructors assigning grades, delays in registering receipt of transcripts, and delays in assigning transfer credit.

Two recent studies, one focusing on exploring perceptions and experiences of college transfer students about their credit transfer process<sup>6</sup> and the other one focusing on discovering university staff's insights from dealing with college transfer students<sup>7</sup> reveal that the lack of transparent information and clear communication causes many perplexities that students and staff experienced during the credit transfer process. While students perceived an inequity in the number of college transfer credits awarded and felt confused about transfer credit selection and articulation agreements, university staff also reported that conveying information about transfer credits communication challenges for staff and potential students. Students expected efficiency, effectiveness, quality and accountability for the credit transfer process. Staff addressed the need to develop strong and effective communications and relationships between institutions and among all stakeholders.

**In the context of accumulated debt from previous learning, sufficient financial aid will help students finance their further studies and even encourage under-represented students to upgrade their knowledge and skills.**

The cost of pursuing postsecondary studies in Canada has risen dramatically over the past 15 years. High levels of college debt have grown during the last four years and today a growing number of college students are graduating with higher levels of debt.<sup>8</sup> Students who wish to pursue further studies might face financial barriers such as paying extra cost for duplication of learning outcomes due to the lack of full recognition, and an accumulated college debt from previous learning. These barriers may discourage students' decision to pursue an advanced program if they cannot finance their education or training costs.

When students are forced to redo learning outcomes which were previously completed but not accepted for transfer, their decision to enroll may hinge on the ability to cover the cost of tuition and living expenses, the commitment of extra time, and the loss of potential income as a result of now taking additional time to complete. As college students tend to come from less advantaged backgrounds with fewer resources, they are more vulnerable to the education cost. Policies regarding financial aid, specifically focusing on college transfer students, and incentives for low-income and under-represented groups need to be considered and discussed in order to reduce cost restrictions for these students.

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<sup>6</sup> Gawley, T. & McGowan, R.A. (2006). Learning the Ropes: A Case Study of the Academic and Social Experiences of College Transfer Students within a Developing University-College Articulation Framework. College Quarterly, Summer 2006, V9-3.

<sup>7</sup> McGowan, R.A. & Gawley, T. (2006). The University Side of the College Transfer Experience: Insights from University Staff. College Quarterly, Summer 2006, V9-3.

<sup>8</sup> The Price of Knowledge 2006, Canada Millennium Scholarship Foundation



**Make every effort to support the existing Protocols on Transferability such as the Pan-Canadian Protocol on the Transferability of University Credits (between universities), Mobility and Transferability Pan-Canadian Protocol (between colleges), and Polytechnics Canada member institutions' protocol on Mobility and Transferability to better address the challenges of facilitating transferability and develop solutions on the transferability between colleges and universities.**

As there is no nation-wide transfer system for students in Canada, some colleges and universities, in their jurisdictions or across provincial boundaries, have been collaborating in the development of pathways for their students. Some concerted efforts have been made to address the challenges of facilitating transferability with the *Pan-Canadian Protocol on the Transferability of University Credits, Mobility and Transferability Pan-Canadian Protocol and Polytechnics Canada member institutions' protocol on Mobility and Transferability*.

***Pan-Canadian Protocol on the Transferability of University Credits***<sup>9</sup> made it a priority to remove barriers to postsecondary student mobility among provinces and territories on the Transferability of University Credits, and have Canadian degree-granting institutions recognize and accept transfer credits for the first two years of undergraduate studies.

***Mobility and Transferability Pan-Canadian Protocol***<sup>10</sup> is a protocol for credit transfer among colleges, which facilitates individuals and enterprises mobility between colleges, and mobility between college and the labour market. Signatories to this protocol also agreed to maximize the recognition and transfer of learning acquired through formal education, workplace training and work and life experience.

***Polytechnics Canada member institutions' protocol on Mobility and Transferability***<sup>11</sup> was signed in 2004 by eight Polytechnics Canada member institutions to maximize the recognition and transfer of learning acquired at another participating institution.

It should be noted that these agreements are not keeping pace with the rising flow of students moving between colleges, institutes and universities. Students who make transfer of credits or recognition for learning between two postsecondary education sectors face more challenges. The Government of Canada must support these existing protocols to better serve students and recognize, through a commitment, the need to develop agreements that will facilitate such a learning flow between the postsecondary education sectors.

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<sup>9</sup> <http://www.cmec.ca/postsec/transferabilit.en.stm>

<sup>10</sup> [http://www.accc.ca/english/advocacy/advocacy\\_priorities/mobility/protocol.htm](http://www.accc.ca/english/advocacy/advocacy_priorities/mobility/protocol.htm)

<sup>11</sup> <http://www.polytechnicscanada.ca/advocacy/mobility.shtml>



**Support research on transferability to examine articulation agreements and to make it easier in the future to recognize prior learning through formal effective agreements amongst institutions in order to transfer students' educational credits from one institution to another, or from one province or jurisdiction to another.**

Canada is facing many difficulties and challenges involved in transferability and mobility. The reports from the Conference Board of Canada have documented these difficulties and challenges and the consequences we have already experienced from the lack of a coherent and equitable articulations system. Some of the challenges are decentralization, limited inter-provincial portability of credentials, value differences, and incompatibility.<sup>12</sup>

In early 2002, the Canadian Alliance of Education and Training Organizations (CAETO) released a national action plan according to their research and examination about articulation agreements between educational institutions. This plan aims to make it easier in the future to recognize prior learning through formal agreements amongst institutions in order to transfer their educational credits from one institution to another, or from one province or jurisdiction to another.<sup>13</sup> However, the transfer of credits and previous learning recognition is still a big issue facing institutions and students.

Transfer students face a repetition of learning, which can impair productivity and innovation in the Canadian economy because of delayed opportunity to fully employ people's knowledge and skills. This 're-learning' can also cause significant investment loss for the country because of more loans from governments or other resources, more debt and interest to students, and the increased cost institutions need to cover for delivering redundant education and training that people do not need.<sup>14</sup>

Therefore, there is a need to expand research on transferability to examine current articulation agreements to minimize the transfer process, to prevent wasting public resources that result from requiring students to repeat courses covering the same learning, to facilitate smooth and valuable transition from learning to learning, to communicate helpful information, identify financial incentives for collaboration, and to develop a mechanism to audit transferability across the country or in the province.

**While more private degree-granting institutions are permitted to develop, and more colleges are offering degree or applied degree programs, barriers between public and private institutions regarding how new learning credentials fit into the context of existing credentials need to be addressed.**

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<sup>12</sup> Watt, D. & Bloom, M. (2001). *Exploring the Learning Recognition Gap in Canada*. The Conference Board of Canada. pp.14-15.

<sup>13</sup> Recognition of Learning: An International Perspective. 2003. The Canadian Alliance of Education and Training Organizations (CAETO).  
[http://www.acoef.ca/projects/articulation/Final\\_Tillman\\_Int\\_Pers\\_EngComplete.pdf](http://www.acoef.ca/projects/articulation/Final_Tillman_Int_Pers_EngComplete.pdf)

<sup>14</sup> Watt, D. & Bloom, M. (2001). *Exploring the Learning Recognition Gap in Canada*. The Conference Board of Canada

The expansion of higher education systems and the privatization of postsecondary education have influenced the concepts in learning recognition. In recent years, new public and private institutions have emerged. Non-resident institutions and distance delivery universities are operating in various parts of Canada to offer new programs with diplomas and degrees. Alberta, BC, New Brunswick, and Ontario have permitted private degree-granting institutions to develop and operate. Alberta, BC, and Ontario have enabled their colleges to offer degree or applied degree programs. Degree-completion partnerships have multiplied between colleges and Canadian and American universities. BC offers a model of collaborative excellence to acknowledge this reality and address barriers between public and private institutions at the degree level. For instance, BCCAT in BC is starting to include selected private postsecondary institutions and has adopted a policy of admitting certain private degree programs to the BC transfer system. There is no doubt that more institutions and programs will emerge as the Canadian society grows and changes. As students expect their learning achievements to be recognized by both public and private postsecondary institutions across Canada and in other countries, the question of how the new learning credentials fit into the context of existing credentials is also a concern to students, postsecondary institutions, and governments.

### **Recommendations for the Government of Ontario**

An increasing number of Ontario students find value in continuing their postsecondary education beyond their first diploma or degree. In Ontario, 22 percent of college students during the 2004-2005 academic year responded that their main goal in enrolling in a college program was to prepare for further college or university study.<sup>15</sup> While the proportion of university graduates attending college has been relatively stable, the proportion of Ontario college graduates furthering their education has increased 3.3 percent to 26.4 percent over the past four years. The 2004-2005 graduate survey results indicate that 8.7 percent of college graduates had transferred to university and 16.5 percent of college graduates had transferred to college.<sup>16</sup> In response to the rising demand for transferability and mobility, the Government of Ontario must proactively work with the federal government, local educational stakeholders, postsecondary institutions and students to address this rising demand.

**Must urge the federal government to develop a Pan-Canada strategy to develop and implement an umbrella national credit recognition transfer system in Canada.**

A province-based system of credentialing may present jurisdictional barriers to mobility and the efficient transferability of students throughout Canada. Thus, the provincial government must take responsibility to respond to the increasing calls for a fairer and effective transfer system, and push for a Pan-Canadian recognition system to ensure that students anywhere in Canada have access to the same quality of learning recognition credentials.

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<sup>15</sup> MTCU, Student Satisfaction Survey, 2001-2005.

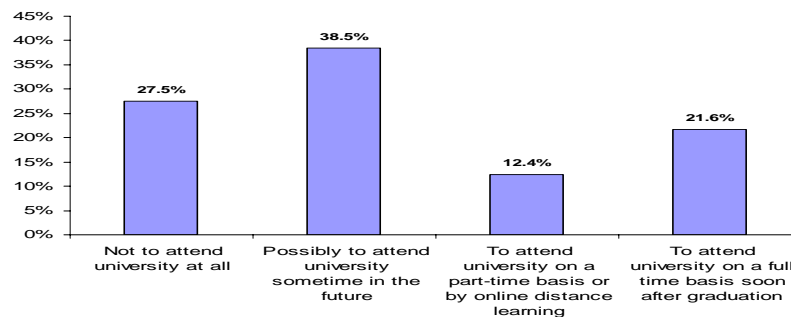
<sup>16</sup> CUCC College-University Transferability Study. March, 2007. Compustat Consultants, Inc.



**Commit to making a flexible and effective transfer system in Ontario by introducing reforms and increasing investment to develop a province-wide accreditation system and mechanisms that expand the scope of the current recognition criteria.**

The proportion of Ontario college graduates going directly to university has increased from 5.0 percent in 2000-2001 to 8.7 percent in 2004-2005, an overall 74 percent increase.<sup>17</sup> Almost 9 percent of college graduates go on to university within six months of graduation (more than 5,000 students annually).<sup>18</sup> Colleges Ontario (formally the Association of Colleges of Applied Arts and Technology - ACAATO) also reported that at least 25 percent of college students have serious intentions of attaining a degree after a diploma.

A College Student Alliance (CSA) survey conducted in the fall of 2004 illustrated that the majority of college students (72 percent) intended or possibly intended to pursue further studies.



(College Student Alliance Survey, 2004. n = 6990 from 23 colleges participated)

However, given the fact that more and more Ontario postsecondary students are intending to further their education, the lack of a provincial accreditation system and the absence of a province-wide mechanism to evaluate previous learning have caused considerable challenges.

Colleges and universities in Ontario have had to work together to develop collaborative arrangements between institutions. As a result, there is great variation as to the credit recognition, credit transfer process and transfer criteria listed for colleges and universities. Access to credit transfer depends on what program students completed, which institution and program students want to apply to, and what articulation agreements the sending and receiving institutions have signed. As the various college and university programs have different requirements and prerequisites when students transfer from one institution to another, students feel confused and perceive inequity and complexity.

<sup>17</sup> MTCU Graduate Satisfaction Surveys, 2001-2005.

<sup>18</sup> Student Mobility within Ontario's Postsecondary Sector. July, 2006. The Association of Colleges of Applied Arts and Technology.

The government must commit to making a flexible and effective transfer system in Ontario by introducing reforms and increasing investment to develop mechanisms to support a province-wide accreditation system. Such mechanisms will ease the accreditation process when students transfer between postsecondary institutions. This recommendation was also supported by the Honorable Bob Rae in *Ontario: A leader in Learning*.<sup>19</sup>

**Provide more funding and resources to the College-University Consortium Council (CUCC), which can help the government develop transparent procedures for recognizing and transferring previous learning; facilitating easy movement of students from and within the college and university systems in Ontario.**

In an effort to accelerate collaborative moves on transferability, the Ministry of Education and Training (now the Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities) established the College-University Consortium Council (CUCC) in 1996 to promote joint education and training ventures between Ontario's postsecondary institutions. Its mandate is to facilitate, promote and coordinate joint education and training ventures by Ontario's 24 colleges and 19 universities.

CUCC has funded a number of advanced training projects in an effort to further collaborative partnerships between colleges and universities in Ontario, sponsored symposiums to provide a progress report on such collaborative projects, and created and maintained the Ontario College-University Transfer Guide (OCUTG) which provides students and institutions with a list of collaborative programs, articulation agreements and credit transfer arrangements between Ontario universities and colleges.

In spite of these accomplishments, CSA proposes that CUCC develop initiatives on what they believe to be the best practices for a healthy transferability pathway in all directions for the two sectors and encourage more institutions to actively engage in CUCC's efforts for a proper pathway. CSA therefore calls for the government of Ontario to expand the mandate of the CUCC by providing more funding and greater authority. Accordingly, CUCC will be able to better facilitate easy movement of students from and within the college and university systems, be an active college-university liaison to ensure ongoing connections and understanding between institutions in the transferability issues, and enhance the Ontario College-University Degree Completion Accord, which aims at increasing the number of transfer agreements between postsecondary institutions.

**Encourage more multilateral transfer agreements to provide students with choices that allow them to choose the institution that is most convenient for them.**

The multilateral approach is a transfer guide that allows students to navigate among the various offerings at different levels within a provincial postsecondary system in order to achieve the most appropriate mix of courses without limiting their options.

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<sup>19</sup> Rae, B. February, 2005. *Ontario: A Leader in Learning*.



The Ontario College University Transfer Guide (OCUTG) demonstrates that the total agreements in the Transfer Guide database today are 270 including 188 Bilateral Agreements,<sup>20</sup> 23 Multilateral Agreements,<sup>21</sup> and 59 direct Entry Programs.<sup>22</sup> Given the fact that Ontario's public postsecondary institutions are comprised of 24 colleges and 19 universities offering about a thousand programs, 23 multilateral agreements clearly mean that students in Ontario have little choice over where they can go to pursue further education upon completion.

Ontario students face the difficulty to transfer their credits in the province. One college student who completed his college diploma and was intending to transfer to one local university wrote "...I am seeking a university which will recognize the academic standing of individual college programs, despite the rhetoric to turn this area into 'the Knowledge Capital of Canada,' the three universities in the golden triangle are unwilling to offer a fair evaluation of a college diploma." While one local university offered anywhere from two to five credits which are equivalent to one semester, one university outside Ontario granted him up to two years of advanced standing in a four-year program. He said "If we sincerely want to be the Knowledge Capital of Canada we cannot afford to drive accomplished people to other universities, perhaps never to return..."<sup>23</sup>

In 2004-2005, 8.7% of college graduates attended university directly after college including 2.2% that enrolled in a university degree outside of Ontario.<sup>24</sup> Research reveals that due to the limited mobility of students in their jurisdiction, students may look for opportunities in other jurisdictions provide better and more flexible credit transfer policies. From a local economic development point of view, Ontario may be at risk of losing our best and brightest students to other provinces or territories.

When compared to transferability methods and procedures in British Columbia, Alberta and other provinces, Ontario has been slower than any other province in promoting the transferability of credits.<sup>25</sup> Although some progress has been achieved to facilitate Ontario students' transferability, such as CUCC's mandate and the articulation agreements between institutions, it still requires an engagement from the government to help develop and refine assessment methods and procedures to create more effective articulation agreements among institutions.

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<sup>20</sup> Bilateral Agreement: A formal articulation or credit transfer agreement between one receiving institution and one sending institution.

<sup>21</sup> Multilateral Agreement: A formal articulation or credit transfer agreement between one receiving institution and two or more sending institutions.

<sup>22</sup> The Ontario College University Transfer Guide (OCUTG).  
<http://www.ocutg.on.ca/search/servlet/searchReports?reportName=byStatus>

<sup>23</sup> Source: A letter to the Editor from *The Record* (Kitchener, Cambridge and Waterloo). Oct 18, 2006.

<sup>24</sup> Ontario's Colleges: Graduates in Demand. Winter, 2007. College Ontario.

<sup>25</sup> Missier, S. D. A Vision of Seamless Education – Academic Mobility in Ontario.  
<http://www.accc.ca/collegecanada/9899-4-1/vision.htm>

Some suggested strategies include focusing on the specific needs of college transfer students by developing special college-university transfer credit programs, removing financial disincentives for joint programs, improving communication of transfer opportunities, and a more effective use the *Ontario College-University Transfer Guide*.<sup>26</sup> Through their leadership, the government must encourage institutions to develop collaborative arrangements and more multilateral transfer agreements to ensure viable pathways for movement between institutions and between the postsecondary sectors.

**Actively encourage and facilitate students' mobility and transferability while addressing the barriers facing Ontario students by creating a multilateral cooperative and collaborative environment for institutions and education stakeholders inside and outside Ontario by strengthening Ontario's college-university relations.**

In BC and Alberta, the transfer of credits and their articulation agreements have worked effectively because of the particular mandates and structure of their higher education systems.<sup>27</sup> This is not the case in Ontario due to historical intents and purposes when the college system was established in the 1960s, not including transferability of credits in the system's design. When college graduates wish to continue their studies at a university level and attempt to acquire fair and appropriate recognition for their college credits, they have encountered unnecessary and arbitrary barriers. Therefore, it paints a different picture when comparing the 35 percent transfer rate in Ontario (2004-2005) for two-year college students to the 42 percent transfer rate in BC.<sup>28</sup>

Although the government decides it will focus on credit transfer to increase collaboration between college and university, the various college and university programs have different requirements and prerequisites when students transfer from one institution to another. The lack of a provincial accreditation system and the absence of province-wide mechanisms to evaluate previous learning still create barriers and challenges. In addition, institutions may have widely diverging interests in relation to recognizing learning that creates conflicts of motivation and action. This conflict can reduce their capacity to recognize prior learning and learning credentials. Sometimes, institutions and programs resist transfers between institutions because they place different value on the same kind of learning and cannot agree on a common value. This prevents students from seeking to gain partial credit towards an educational, professional or trades qualification.

The government of Ontario must make a concerted effort through its leadership to address barriers facing Ontario students, give transferability issues top priority and strengthen Ontario's college-university relations.

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<sup>26</sup> [www.ocutg.on.ca](http://www.ocutg.on.ca)

<sup>27</sup> Recognition of Learning: An International Perspective. 2003. The Canadian Alliance of Education and Training Organizations (CAETO).  
[http://www.acoef.ca/projects/articulation/Final\\_Tillman\\_Int\\_Pers\\_EngComplete.pdf](http://www.acoef.ca/projects/articulation/Final_Tillman_Int_Pers_EngComplete.pdf)

<sup>28</sup> Student Mobility within Ontario's Postsecondary Sector 2006, Association of Colleges of Applied Arts and Technology of Ontario.





## In Conclusion

To increase the educational advantage, students need to be able to move seamlessly between institutions by giving them a pathway into further studies. Therefore, college-to-college, college-to-university, and university-to-college transfers are vital to the establishment of an open, accessible and seamless education system.

CSA believes that the benefits of the pursuit of greater transferability across education and training can:

- encourage individuals to continue learning and thus create a culture of lifelong learning;
- promote better working relationships between educators, institutions and training programs;
- build common standards employed in all provinces and education/training systems;
- enhance educational cooperation, mutual understanding, knowledge and innovation;
- link students and institutions across the country and the province; and
- address the demand for increased skilled labour and a highly educated workforce.

To achieve these benefits, programs, systems and policies must be adopted that promote greater student mobility within the country and the province. Therefore, the federal and provincial governments and all educational stakeholders must look for ways to improve the transfer system and develop niches that create seamless pathways for students wishing to pursue future education.

## About the College Student Alliance

The mission of the College Student Alliance (CSA) is, “Strong Students; Strong Leadership; Strong Colleges.” Through the combined influence of 16 colleges and 23 member councils, and the more than 109,000 full-time students they represent, the CSA acts as the provincial voice for issues such as: student financial assistance, admissions, tuition, educational standards, system accountability, student rights, campus life, and services for students.



## Overview of Recommendations

### Recommendations for the Government of Canada

1. Develop and implement an umbrella national credit transfer system to give widely accepted learning credentials and provide universal comparable principles to facilitate easy movement of students from and within the college, institute and university systems in Canada.
2. Develop clear policies on transferability, especially in the areas of articulation agreements and credit recognition.
3. Build stronger linkages between institutions and jurisdictions, and link individual province-based systems of credentialing to reduce jurisdictional barriers to mobility and transferability for students throughout Canada.
4. Commit more funding to and get more education stakeholders involved in reforming the transfer and PSE system.
5. Support jurisdictions to continue to promote systems and mechanisms that encourage new, widely accepted credentials and multilateral transfer agreements for transferability and mobility of learning in Canada.
6. Ensure clear communication and adequate information flow among colleges, institutes, universities and students when conducting and processing transfer agreements among institutions and jurisdictions to enhance efficiency and effectiveness.
7. In the context of accumulated debt from previous learning, sufficient financial aid will help students finance their further studies and even encourage under-represented students to upgrade their knowledge and skills.
8. Make every effort to support the existing Protocols on Transferability such as the Pan-Canadian Protocol on the Transferability of University Credits (between universities), Mobility and Transferability Pan-Canadian Protocol (between colleges), and Polytechnics Canada member institutions' protocol on Mobility and Transferability to better address the challenges of facilitating transferability and develop solutions on the transferability between colleges and universities.
9. Support research on transferability to examine articulation agreements to make it easier in the future to recognize prior learning through formal effective agreements amongst institutions in order to transfer students' educational credits from one institution to another, or from one province or jurisdiction to another.
10. While more private degree-granting institutions are permitted to develop, and more colleges are offering degree or applied degree programs, barriers between public and private institutions regarding how new learning credentials fit into the context of existing credentials need to be addressed.



## Recommendations for the Government of Ontario

1. Urge the federal government to develop a Pan-Canada strategy to develop and implement an umbrella national credit recognition transfer system in Canada.
2. Commit to making a flexible and effective transfer system in Ontario by introducing reforms and increasing investment to develop a province-wide accreditation system and mechanisms that expand the scope of the current recognition criteria.
3. Provide more funding and resources to the College-University Consortium Council (CUCC), which can help the government develop transparent procedures for recognizing and transferring previous learning; facilitating easy movement of students from and within the college and university systems in Ontario.
4. Encourage more multilateral transfer agreements to provide students with choices that allow them to choose the institution that is most convenient for them.
5. Actively encourage and facilitate students' mobility and transferability while addressing barriers facing Ontario students by creating a multilateral cooperative and collaborative environment for institutions and education stakeholders inside and outside Ontario by strengthening Ontario's college-university relations.

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