
Accountability of the BC Transfer System

April 2005

555 SEYMOUR STREET
SUITE 709
VANCOUVER, BC
V6B 3H6
CANADA

TEL: 604-412-7700
FAX: 604-683-0576

EMAIL: admin@bccat.bc.ca
WEB: www.bccat.bc.ca

BRITISH COLUMBIA COUNCIL ON
ADMISSIONS & TRANSFER

SUPPORTING BC'S
EDUCATION SYSTEM

The Accountability of the BC Transfer System

Prepared by the
BC Council on Admissions and Transfer

© Copyright 2005 by the
British Columbia Council on Admissions and Transfer
709 - 555 Seymour Street, Vancouver, BC V6B 3H6 Canada
Phone: (604) 412-7700 Fax: (604) 683-0576
E-Mail: admin@bccat.bc.ca

*BCCAT is the official mark of the
BC Council on Admissions and Transfer,
as published by the Registrar of Trade-marks
of the Canadian Intellectual Property Office*

*Photocopying and further distribution of this document is permitted.
Please credit source.*

I. Introduction

This paper entitled *Accountability of the BC Transfer System* has been prepared by staff of the British Columbia Council on Admissions and Transfer (BCCAT) at the request of the Accountability Branch of the Ministry of Advanced Education (AVED). The purpose of the paper is to provide evidence that the Transfer System in British Columbia (BC) has been effective and therefore accountable for the public funding that supports that system. The paper attempts to show:

- the multi-faceted nature, breadth and depth of research that has been conducted to determine the effectiveness of the BC Transfer System and the success of transfer students;
- the longitudinal nature of some elements of that research;
- efforts that have been made to promote innovation in the Transfer System for the benefit of students and institutions; and
- the role that BCCAT plays in working with institutions to ensure an effective Transfer System.

The paper describes the history of BCCAT and its role in the Transfer System. It presents information on key research findings in two main sections, the first dealing with transfer and the second with admissions, the two different but related emphases of BCCAT's mandate. It reviews efforts to improve the Transfer System and it concludes with a discussion of possible future research projects and strategies to further enhance the accountability of the Transfer System.

The Transfer System includes 27 public and 5 private institutions. Transfer research tends to deal with all institutions in the Transfer System whereas admissions research deals with public institutions only, as the Personal Education Number (PEN), which is necessary to track student flows across institutions, is not used with students at private institutions.

II. The History and Role of BCCAT

BCCAT was formed in 1989 as part of the Access for All strategy of the provincial government. BCCAT's purpose is to coordinate the transfer and articulation efforts of institutions in the BC Transfer System. BCCAT built on coordinating efforts that had been undertaken in BC under various structures since the late 1960s when the Transfer System was born due to the creation of two-year colleges that delivered first and second year university courses for the purpose of transfer to universities. BCCAT was not given any legislative authority by government to carry out its mandate but was created as an arm's length agency whose role was to facilitate collaborative efforts among autonomous institutions in a differentiated post-secondary system. Transfer and articulation in BC have always been the responsibility of individual institutions, and BCCAT has coordinated and managed the processes involved.

The main roles of BCCAT are to:

- encourage institutions to develop policies and practices that facilitate the *transferability* of post-secondary credit courses so that credit granted at one institution can be applied toward credentials at other institutions; and
- examine issues pertaining to capacity, demand, and student mobility and recommend policies and practices that facilitate the *admission* process for direct entry and transfer students.

For more detailed information on the work of BCCAT and the numerous projects it has undertaken to ensure accountability of the Transfer System, please refer to the Annual Reports located at:

<http://www.bccat.bc.ca/council/menuannrpt.html>.

Different types of BCCAT research studies are grouped together below. Brief descriptions of the various studies/reports are provided followed by key findings in point form. All BCCAT research is described in an annotated research bibliography available on the BCCAT Web site¹ (attached as a separate document), and all research reports and related *Research Results* publications are available online.

III. Transfer Related Research

A key research and public policy objective for the BC Transfer System is articulated as follows:

IF it can be shown that students who first attend a college:

- a) are able to transfer without difficulty, and*
- b) subsequently perform well in their academic studies*

THEN

- *the public will retain confidence in the community college system*
- *degree granting institutions will readily accept community college students*
- *and the entire system of post-secondary education can work in a more coordinated fashion to improve access for students in a cost-effective manner.*

A wealth of BCCAT research has focused over the years on the effectiveness of the Transfer System, seeking to test the points in a) and b) above using both quantitative and qualitative research methods. Research findings have led in some cases to additional research, for example, to test qualitative research findings with quantitative methods. In other cases, findings have led to the development of educational resources for students, or have led to encouragement and support for a range of innovative and flexible transfer models or mechanisms to augment the already well-established course-to-course transfer credit system. The goal of BCCAT research, therefore, has been to constantly monitor and improve BC's Transfer System for the benefit of students, who must move among our institutions to further their education.

i. BC college transfer student profile reports

Description

- Detailed demographic and academic performance information about transfer students entering the universities (SFU, UBC, UNBC, UVic and BCOU)
- SFU data from 1991-92 to 2002/03,² UVic data from 1992-93 to 2002-03, UBC data from 1992-93 to 1999-2000, UNBC data from 1998-99 to 2002-03, BCOU data on registrants and graduates within the period 1998 to 2000.³ Each report is for a 5 year period.
- Discussions are occurring with UBC about the possibility of preparing a report to include comparable data to 2002/03.
- Individual university reports plus one integrated report covering the period 1994-95 to 1998-99
- Data includes number of transfer students, which institutions they transferred from, number of credits transferred, programs entered and performance measures after transfer with some comparisons with students entering directly from high school, called "direct entry" students or "direct entrants" for the remainder of this paper.

¹ <http://www.bccat.bc.ca/publications/biblio.html>

² SFU produced its own profile reports with data back to 1985/96 prior to BCCAT sponsoring such reports for the system.

³ A report on the transfer credits and transfer students among 1998-2001 university college graduates is currently in process, albeit using a different model than the university profile reports.

- Performance measures include: admission GPA, GPA after the first semester, at the mid-point semester or session and at graduation; grades in selected courses; degree completion rates, and time to degree completion.
- Some information is also included for university students with some college experience, but with insufficient credit to be admitted as a transfer student.

Key Findings

- Many students transfer, with each university having predominant feeder institutions.
- Transfer students are more likely to be part-time, women, and are half as likely to study Science or Applied Science at university, compared to direct entry students.
- In the 1990s, the 3 largest universities admitted 3 college transfer students for every 5 direct entry students.
- College transfer students tend to have lower GPAs upon admission to university compared with direct entry students. Both groups of students experience a drop in GPA after their first university semester (this is greater for direct entry students). By university graduation, the average GPA of college transfers comes very close to that of direct entry students.
- Generally, there is a positive relationship between the number of credits a student transfers and the degree completion rate.
- Based on the 1994-95 to 1998-99 integrated report, college transfer students take an average of 2.7 years to complete their degree from time of transfer to university degree completion.

ii. SFU comparative academic performance study

Description

- A study of college transfer and direct entry students admitted to SFU from 1992 to 1999, undertaken to determine whether differences in their university grades, as noted in the Profile Reports, still exist after controlling for the high school GPA of each group
- Students were divided into high academic and low academic achievers with average grades above and below 75%, based on their average marks on four provincial exams.

Key Findings

- If average provincial exam scores were used to determine SFU admission eligibility, roughly 3/4 of college transfers would not have been eligible for admission upon high school graduation, compared with about 1/3 of direct entrants. Yet these students who transferred to SFU were ultimately successful at SFU.
- The *high achiever* college transfers *performed equally as well* at university as *high achiever* direct entry students, and the *low achiever* college transfers *performed as well as or better than low achiever* direct entry students.
- Without the college transfer option, many low achieving high school graduates would not have access to baccalaureate degree studies.

iii. Student surveys

Investigating Transfer Project

Description

- In-depth interviews with students before, during and after transfer, detailing their transfer experiences, knowledge and expectations about transfer, and extent of planning for transfer

- Phase I (Fall 1996) involved students who successfully transferred from one community college to one university. Phase II (1997) involved students at one college who were planning to transfer.

Key Findings

- Many reasons were given for starting studies at a community college including: easing the transition from high school to university, lower tuition rates, and a perceived chance of earning a higher GPA.
- The transfer process was straightforward for some, while for others policies and procedures were confusing and complicated.
- Most students satisfactorily transferred most or all of their credits.
- The most anxiety producing issue was students' decline in GPA after transfer and a more demanding university environment.
- Resources available to facilitate transfer (calendars, BC Transfer Guide, advisors etc.) were underutilized for a number of reasons. Students instead relied on word of mouth, usually from other students or family members, rather than on advisors.

Student recommendation highlights:

- Advising should be better advertised and accurate and be available when students are available.
- Transfer information should be provided in high school.
- More information should be provided about the entire system, not just for one college and one university.

Analyses of 2000 & 2002 BC College & Institute Outcomes Survey Questions

Description

- Analyses of questions related to students' admissions and transfer experiences
- The surveys reported on the experiences of between 6,000 and 7,000 students who continued their studies in a BC public post-secondary institution after having studied at a public college, university college or institute.

Key Findings (2000 findings noted with 2002 findings in parentheses)

Where do students go for further study?

- Of the 47% of respondents in the 2000 survey who continued their studies after leaving their original program (43% in 2002 survey), 93% stayed in BC (94% in 2002), including 87% who stayed in public institutions (88% in 2002).
- 71% of those who continued in the BC public system went to a different institution for further study (68% in 2002). Universities were the most common destination, receiving 65% of the total (67% in 2002), especially the three largest universities.
- 29% of those who continued in the BC public system transferred to a different program at the same institution (32% in 2002).

For transfer students who go on for further study, to what extent are they able to enrol in the institution, program, and courses of choice?

- 91% of respondents said they were enrolled in their institution of choice (92% in 2002).
- 95% stated they were in their preferred program of study (94% in 2002).
- 86% said they were enrolled in all the courses they wanted (85% in 2002).

Are students' transfer expectations being met?

- 86% of respondents who expected to transfer credit were either “very satisfied” or “satisfied” with their transfer experience (88% in 2002).
- 12% of respondents reported not receiving all the transfer credit expected (10% in 2002), regardless of type of institution left or entered.
- Close to half (46%) of the cases of unmet expectations are cited as being due to courses not originally designed for transfer (51% in 2002).
- Of the students who expected to transfer credit, a smaller proportion of those who based their expectations on a “lot” of information (vs. “some” information or simply assumed transfer), reported not receiving all transfer credit expected (2000 and 2002).

Outcomes of University Baccalaureate Degree Graduates

Description

- Outcomes for university baccalaureate degree graduates 5 years out (2001 survey of 1996 graduates), comparing outcomes for college transfer and direct entry route graduates
- Outcomes include satisfaction with their life as a result of their university experience, satisfaction with their university education, further education, education financing and debt, labour market outcomes, and social engagement.

Key Findings

- The results confirm the positive impact of a baccalaureate education for graduates of BC's public universities, regardless whether they enter from high school or a community college.
- College transfer and direct entry students had remarkably similar outcomes, and members for both groups were experiencing economic and social benefits of their education.

Highlights include:

- 91% of both direct entry and transfer students felt that their life, aside from their job, was different as a result of their university experience. 96% of both groups were satisfied with their university education.
- 90% of respondents from both groups had taken some form of further education, primarily for career-related reasons.
- 3.2% of college transfers were unemployed and looking for a job versus 4.1% of direct entry students (compared to 7.6% for the national average).
- Direct entrants had slightly higher salaries than college transfer students (statistically significant).
- 59% of college transfers versus 55% of direct entry students had volunteered in the year prior to the survey.
- Some differences between the two groups were revealed in areas such as education financing and debt, further education, and occupational types. Most notably, 32% of college transfer versus 16% of direct entrants had used student loans as their primary source of funding, and the average debt load of college transfers was \$5,500 higher than direct entrants.

iv. Transcript assessment studies

Description

- Quantitative studies by universities (SFU, UBC & UVic) analyzing the proportion of credits students completed at another BC post-secondary institution (as per their transcripts) that received transfer credit at the university, and where transfer credit was not granted, identifying the reasons why

Key Findings

- BC college transfer students received transfer credit from the universities for 85% of the credits they earned at college. The percentage was lower for Science students (79% at SFU and UBC; 83% at UVic), while the higher percentages at each institution were for students in Arts (SFU -87%), Human Kinetics (UBC – 91%) and Fine Arts (UVic – 93%).
- The most significant reason courses were not granted credit was that they were not articulated for transfer; that is, transfer credit had not been negotiated by the college offering the course (applying to almost 50% of courses not granted credit). For the most part, courses are not articulated because they are not university level (e.g., a high school level or college preparatory course) or are from programs not originally intended for transfer, such as vocational or applied fields. As noted in the UBC report, some courses are not articulated because students complete subjects not offered at that university.
- Other reasons courses were not granted credit included differences in credit weighting between institutions, duplicate courses already being granted credit, maximum transfer credit exceeded in the program, and others.
- A number of recommendations to sending and receiving institutions arose from the findings, dealing with informing students and with articulating additional courses as appropriate.

v. Administrative standards and processes

Description

- Several small studies undertaken to support the work of the Task Force on Standards and Processes, including a survey of advisors and comparison studies of transfer policies, semester dates, transcript tracking practices, etc.

Findings

- The Report of the Task Force on Standards and Processes made numerous recommendations to institutions designed to remove barriers to transfer, including use of NGR (no grade reported) on transcripts in certain circumstances, establishment of a transfer liaison network, provision of user-friendly materials for students, harmonising of semester dates, and support of EDI (electronic data interchange) for transmission of transcripts.

vi. Cost/benefit analysis of an articulated post-secondary system, Phases I and II

Description

- Phases I and II concentrated on the costing side of the analysis. Phases III and IV are planned, examining the benefit side.
- The “Articulation Costing Report, Phase II” examined all aspects of articulation work, including that which occurs at various levels in institutions, that which occurs in articulation committees, and the supporting work of BCCAT. The researcher derived cost estimates for all phases of activity.

Findings

- Articulation costs the BC Transfer System about \$6 million a year, or about \$120 per articulation agreement.
- Maintenance of articulation committees costs about \$2 million per year.
- Dealing with non-articulated courses is much more expensive than dealing with articulated courses.

vii. “Block Transfer” project

Description

- A comprehensive system-wide consultation on the effectiveness of the Transfer System, undertaken in the mid-1990s as a result of directions outlined in *Charting a New Course*

Findings

- The analysis of institutional responses to this consultation led to the Council adopting a formal motion which stated:

In light of our research on block transfer and the responses, comments, recommendations received, we:

- *believe the current system is working well but can be enhanced;*
- *support and encourage the development and promotion of block transfer arrangements that*
 - *supplement, but do not replace, the current system of course-by-course transfer agreements*
 - *provide greater flexibility in enabling sending institutions to develop innovative curricular approaches to the curriculum, and*
 - *are clear and understandable and published in a form accessible to students and advisors.*

This motion launched many new initiatives in articulation and transfer, described below in the “Efforts to Improve” section.

IV. Admissions Related Research

i. Relationship of admissions research to transfer in BC

“Admissions” has been part of BCCAT’s mandate since its’ inception in 1989. However, BCCAT has only recently begun placing greater emphasis on its admissions mandate as the result of receiving additional resources from government to hire an Associate Director to help direct this work. BCCAT is interested in the admission of students to institutions because the portability of credits earned is integrally linked to the ability of students to be admitted to another institution with those credits. The well-developed Transfer System in BC would be in jeopardy without access to further educational opportunities for transfer students.

BCCAT has spearheaded a variety of research projects, under the auspices of its Admissions Committee, which focus on access, capacity, demand, and student mobility for both transfer and direct entry students. The main concern of BCCAT is the equitable allocation of available spaces for both groups of students and the long-term viability of the Transfer System.

ii. Applicant flow studies for universities

Description

- These studies use unduplicated headcount numbers to determine the number of students who applied to, were qualified for, received an offer from, and registered at one or more public post-secondary institutions in the province.
- Applicant flow studies provide one measure of unmet demand because they determine how many minimally qualified students, if any, are turned away from one or more institutions to which they would have applied.
- The 4 research universities have conducted applicant flow studies for direct entry students since 1995 through the SFU Office of Analytical Studies. BCCAT contracted with the Office to do

similar studies of transfer student applicant flows to the 4 universities using unduplicated headcount data in 2000 and 2001/2002.

Key findings

- In 2000 (Fall only), out of 6,804 transfer students who applied, 5,334 were minimally qualified for general admission of which 4,596 (86%) received an admission offer and 3,749 (70%) registered. Thus 738 qualified applicants (14%) were not offered admission to a BC university.
- In 2001/02 (3 semesters), 8,792 transfer students applied, 7,497 were minimally qualified, 6,400 (85%) received an admission offer, and 5,253 (70%) registered. Thus 1,097 qualified applicants (15%) were not offered admission at a BC university.
- In Fall 2000, 13% of qualified direct entry applicants were denied access to a BC university while in Fall 2001, 14% were denied access.

iii. Applicant flow study for universities and university colleges

Description

- The two studies conducted on applicant flows of transfer students to universities did not attempt to determine if there were other institutions at which students who were qualified but did not receive an offer from a university might have enrolled.
- To build on previous findings BCCAT launched a study, with additional funding from the Ministry of Advanced Education (AVED), to expand the applicant flow study methodology to include direct entry and transfer applicants to 5 universities and 5 university colleges in 2002/03.
- The study was reported in a Working Paper with several caveats related to the comparability of data from and definitions used by universities and university colleges, data quality issues from university colleges, and data matching issues due to the lack of a Personal Education Number (PEN) for all applicants.

Key findings

- Only 11% of direct entry and 1% of transfer applicants applied to both a university and university college.
- Out of 1,867 qualified applicants who were not offered admission to a BC university in Fall 2002, 573 (31%) applied to a university college, all but 2 received an offer of admission, and 353 (19%) registered.
- The demand for access to these institutions exceeded supply as 17% of university applicants and 1% of university college applicants (direct entry and transfer combined) who were minimally qualified for admission were denied admission. This difference can be attributed to differences in admission policies between the universities and university colleges.
- 27% of qualified applicants who received an offer of admission from a university or university college did not register at any of the 10 institutions.

iv. Feasibility of expanding applicant flow studies

Description

- Conducting the above applicant flow study with 10 institutions, despite the difficulties in conducting such research, helped expand the understanding of applicants' choices. However, it is difficult to determine (a) whether there is truly a turn away problem or (b) why 27% of qualified applicants who received an offer did not register, unless more institutions are included in the applicant flow studies.

- An unanswered question is how many qualified applicants also applied to a two-year college and chose to begin their baccalaureate education there, which is possible because of BC's well-developed Transfer System.
- Therefore, BCCAT commissioned a study to explore the feasibility of and support for expanding applicant flow studies to include a broader set of public post-secondary institutions in BC. Registrars, Institutional Research Directors and other senior administrators were consulted.

Key findings and recommendations

- There was overall support for expanding applicant flow studies as long as they support institutional decision making, with support strongest from colleges.
- Key data elements are almost universally available electronically and could form the basis of simplified expanded studies, which should make use of existing database structures.
- It was recommended that BCCAT form a Steering Committee with representatives from all post-secondary sectors to define the scope of, questions for, and mechanisms for completing an expanded applicant flow project.

v. Assigning PENs to applicants

Description

- Efforts described above at expanding applicant flow studies resulted in the conclusion that having a PEN assigned to all post-secondary applicants was key to systematic research using unduplicated headcount data.
- BCCAT commissioned a research study to explore the feasibility of assigning PENs to all post-secondary applicants. Institutional Registrars were primarily consulted.

Key findings and action on recommendations

- The study found strong support from all post-secondary sectors for the desirability of moving to universal use of PENs at the applicant stage.
- The study recommended that the BC Registrars' Association (BCRA), which represents all public post-secondary institutions, form a subcommittee to address the issues raised in the study so that PEN could be implemented at the applicant stage.
- The BCRA Subcommittee was formed and made recommendations to BCRA that existing processes for submitting registrant information to the Ministry of Education be expanded to include applicant data and that submissions be made on a monthly basis.
- BCRA has unanimously accepted this recommendation and the Ministry of Education has agreed to begin providing PENs for all post-secondary applicants based on submissions from each institution.

vi. Sharing information on enrolment planning

Description

- The recent capacity crunch at universities resulting in higher GPA entry requirements and greater competition for available spaces has led to increased focus on the equitable allocation of spaces for direct entry and transfer students.
- BCCAT hosted a meeting of senior representatives of post-secondary sectors to determine if there were benefits to be gained from these sectors sharing information on enrolment planning.
- The committee formed a Subcommittee of Institutional Research Directors who worked with AVED and BCCAT staff to recommend ways that institutions and sectors could share information with each other to assist with enrolment planning at the institutional level.

Results of the Subcommittee's work

- Using data from the Central Data Warehouse (CDW) and the universities' databases, the Subcommittee developed a model for determining the potential number of transfer students in sending institutions and for predicting potential future demand by transfer students for university spaces. This information has been disseminated widely to all post-secondary institutions to assist them with their individual enrolment planning.
- The Subcommittee will seek feedback on the value of the data that has been presented to institutions and will continue its work by adding enhancements to the model and exploring with universities ways in which they can provide timely and consistent information on admission quotas and cut-off points to sending institutions.

V. Efforts to Improve Articulation and Transfer

Based on the numerous research reports and other measures to assess the responsiveness and accountability of the Transfer System outlined in this paper, many initiatives have been undertaken to address issues identified in this report, and to improve articulation and transfer practices and policies.

Description

- *BC Transfer TIPS*, a user-friendly, student guide to transfer in BC is distributed free to all institutions in the BC Transfer System each year. This is a direct outcome of recommendations from the "Investigating Transfer Project" referred to previously and from the work of the Task Force on Standards and Processes. It provides students with the tools they need to plan a transfer route to a credential.
- This interest in facilitating student planning led directly to BCCAT requesting and assuming responsibility for *Opening Doors* and updating it with a substantially improved planning tool, *Education Planner*.⁴
- Transfer Innovation (TI) Projects: As a direct consequence of the "Block Transfer" consultation of the mid-90s, BCCAT initiated a series of initiatives to improve transfer by encouraging the development of innovative and more flexible transfer arrangements, developing clearly defined sets of course requirements for particular programs to facilitate student planning, increasing the flexibility of first and second year prerequisites, providing greater flexibility in enabling sending institutions to develop innovative curricular approaches for their courses, and block transfer arrangements for associate degrees and other credentials. Twenty-two TI projects have been completed to date. Final reports for these are available at: <http://www.bccat.bc.ca/articulation/projects/index.html>.
- Transfer & Articulation Projects: Discipline-based projects related to transfer and articulation resulted in improvements in a number of defined areas.
- Several studies pointed to the need for increased information resources for faculty as well as to increased accountability for articulation committees. The *Articulation Committee Handbook*⁵ was developed, with an emphasis on accountability, and the *How to Articulate* guide to improve the articulation process is now going to press.

⁴ See: <http://www.educationplanner.bc.ca/>

⁵ See: <http://www.bccat.bc.ca/articulation/achbook/index.htm>

VI. Future Research Projects/Objectives

i. Consideration of studies to be repeated/updated

Student profile reports

- Profile reports for universities providing information on demographics and performance of transfer students will continue to be produced about every 3 years.
- Consistency in findings from profile reports over the years on transfer student performance makes more regular reports unnecessary.

Analysis of college/university college/institute outcomes survey questions

- BCCAT plans to commission a report in 2005/06 that analyzes the data from the 2005 Outcomes survey to describe the admissions and transfer experiences of students continuing their studies in BC.
- This report will be a repeat of the first two analyses completed on 2000 and 2002 Outcomes survey data.

Outcomes of university baccalaureate degree graduates

- The University Presidents' Council (TUPC) conducts surveys every two years on outcomes of baccalaureate graduates 5 years after graduation. BCCAT funded a study in which the 2001 TUPC Outcomes study was further analyzed to compare the outcomes of transfer and direct entry students (as described previously in this paper).
- BCCAT has begun discussions with TUPC on the possibility of universities identifying transfer students at the outset of their regular 5-year outcomes studies so that information on both transfer and direct entry students will be readily available each time one of these studies is done.

ii. Proposals for new research to fill knowledge gaps

Transfer

Student Engagement Survey at UBC

- UBC has agreed to add questions to their Student Engagement Survey to determine if there are any differences between direct entry and transfer students on items related to engagement, participation, and retention in Arts and Science.

Cost/Benefit Analysis of an Articulated Post-Secondary System, Phases III and IV

- Having quantified the costs of an articulated system, it is important to move to examining the benefits of articulation. However, this is likely to be a complex and sophisticated economic analysis, unlike any previous study. Therefore, Phase III is planned as a feasibility study, to assess the costs of conducting the major study (Phase IV) and to understand the nature and possible limitations of such a task.

Admissions

- Two conditions are key to conducting further research on student mobility and applicant flows: (a) the ability to assign PENs to all post-secondary registrants and applicants, thus allowing unduplicated headcount data research across institutions and sectors, and (b) the ability to conduct research systematically using existing database structures rather than continuing to do ad hoc, one-off studies that rely on special information requests for data from institutions.

- The first condition will partially be met once PENs are being assigned to all applicants, which is already the case for registrants. The next step will be for applicant data for colleges, university colleges, and institutes to be pooled for inter-institutional and inter-sector comparison. This can be accomplished by adding fields for applicant data to the Central Data Warehouse (CDW), which will likely be discussed at a CDW meeting in the next few months.
- The second condition may be met depending on the results of negotiations now underway among universities, the Ministry of Education (holding K to 12 data), and AVED (holding CDW data for colleges, university colleges, and institutes) to develop a shared dataset. This dataset, as long as it is populated with appropriate data and the various partners agree to the use of their data for specific research purposes, could be used to conduct systematic research on student mobility and applicant flows. Examples of such research could include:
 - Tracking the flow of entire Grade 12 cohorts (e.g. the graduating class of 2001) into and among post-secondary institutions;
 - Conducting applicant flow studies for transfer and direct entry applicants to determine applicant behaviour among all public post-secondary institutions in BC; and
 - Determining the flow of post-secondary students into third and fourth year degree completion opportunities at public institutions in BC other than universities.
- BCCAT could play a lead role in such research by helping to establish a system-wide committee, or making use of existing committees, to help prioritize research questions that need to be asked and answered through systematic means.

VII. Conclusion

The above information has been presented to show the multi-faceted and longitudinal nature of research that provides evidence of the success of transfer students and the Transfer System in BC and, therefore, the accountability of that System. Indeed, the BC Transfer System is widely regarded as being among the most successful systems in North America compared to other jurisdictions which consist of a collection of fully autonomous institutions, such as in BC. In a recent publication by Britain's Higher Education Policy Institute, which reviewed credit accumulation and Transfer Systems in the United Kingdom, Europe, and North America,⁶ the following statement was made:

British Columbia has taken the Californian model and developed it into what is possibly the most extensive credit accumulation and transfer arrangement in the world. ... The arrangements in British Columbia appear to have worked extremely well and to have had the desired effect of opening higher education to students who might not otherwise have been able to attend.

⁶ Bekhradnia, Bahram. "Credit Accumulation and Transfer, and the Bologna Process: an Overview". Higher Education Policy Institute, October 2004.