



Exploring Canadian-American Cross Border Articulation in South Western Ontario: Executive Summary

Tim Brunet, Jessica Bukovac, and Julie Norman
University of Windsor

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In 2011, the College University Consortium Council (CUCC) provided funding to the University of Windsor to explore the competition between United States (US) and Canadian post-secondary degree-granting institutions located in border cities that wished to attract college transfer students. The cities chosen for the exploration included Sault Ste. Marie, Niagara Falls & St. Catharines, Sarnia, and Windsor. The information in this report is based on the online review conducted by Jessica Bukovac and Julie Norman and field notes recorded by Tim Brunet as part of his responsibilities as a University of Windsor Student Recruitment Officer. A three-year diploma in Business Administration (specializing in Accounting) from an Ontario College of Applied Arts and Technology was evaluated for transferability to a four-year business degree program at each of the university-level institutions located in the designated regions. The results of this project were presented at the Pan-Canadian Consortium on Admissions and Transfer Conference in Ottawa in June 2012.

Why is this Study Important?

During the 2011/2012 Ontario college to university recruitment travel season, the first author encountered some Ontario colleges that referenced “2+2” agreements with US universities (two years at college plus two years at university for an honours degree) as a more favourable route to articulation into a degree program than transfer pathways currently available at Ontario universities. There were also a considerable number of US universities at both the St. Clair College and Niagara College fairs, suggesting a heightened US institutional interest in Canadian students. The visits to Lambton College and Sault College where the Student Recruitment Officer met with administrative staff also suggested that there is increasing student interest in US transfer opportunities. Ontario post-secondary institutions in border regions must constantly benchmark the goods and services offered in their cities

to be competitive with what is offered in the US. The neighbouring US competition mixed with fluctuating currency creates unique and complex economic systems that can create challenges and/or opportunities for border city institutions.

Academic Standing and Increased Opportunity

An important consideration that emerged during data collection is the academic standing required to gain admission and receive advanced standing. In almost every region, the norm for both Canadian and US universities was a cumulative average of B- (70%) or higher. However, some US universities offered admission and transfer credit to students whose cumulative average was below the B- standard. It behooves administrators, admissions personnel, and recruitment officers to know their US university competitors when competing to attract college transfer students.

Four tables summarize the transfer credit provided by receiving institutions, as a percentage of total credits required for the degree, and the relation between credit transfer and tuition fees. While there was no strong trend for paying more money for more transfer credit, a small number of high-priced US institutions offer approximately 75% transfer credit as compared to 25% transfer credit at less expensive Ontario institutions. Within the Windsor-Detroit region, US institutions tended to offer more competitive tuition rates for Canadian students as compared to the other border regions reviewed in this project. However, the University of Windsor has the most competitive programs when considering price, proximity, and credit transfer among students whose averages were high enough to receive admission and full transfer credit.

After meeting with a number of post-secondary institution community members and students, the first author concluded that the creation of transfer agreements was too often mired in politically and economically motivated regulations rather than focusing on the academic well being of the students. For example, if a Canadian college administrator obtained a 2+2 (2 years at college followed by two years at university) agreement with a US institution they felt that Canadian institutions should

adopt the same metric. When asked about evidence showing that such a model would work in Ontario (or for the students involved) their comments were anecdotal. Ontario students who consider transferring to US institutions need to learn several technical terms/policies to understand the full implications of transferring to a US school. While there are a few testimonials and promotions published online for College of Applied Arts and Technology (CAAT) students transferring to US institutions, there are no easily-found statistics posted online regarding the success of CAAT students transferring to US institutions. Perhaps past and current CAAT transfer students should have the opportunity to aggregate their experiences and recommendations in a public forum. Their information could benefit future college transfer students, institutional administrators/educators, ONTransfer, and advisors from sending institutions. Perhaps some form of automated, online self-advocacy tools could be provided for CAAT students who decide to transfer to degree programs through the ONTransfer website. For example, students could comment on whether or not they felt prepared versus not given enough credit. Students/graduates could also elaborate on their experiences as a prospect, applicant, current student, and graduate. These online self-advocacy tools could be revised and published annually so that both receiving and sending institutions can be ranked thus giving students more information when choosing where they would like to transfer.

Future Study

The findings suggest that more work needs to be done to assess the strengths/weaknesses of Ontario students transferring into US institutions to complete their degrees. It is evident that analyzing this topic using mediums such as a survey, interview, or focus group, would require significant resources to navigate the research ethics boards on both sides of the border. However, if ONTransfer allowed students to self-report their experiences, recruiters and administrators located within border cities

could provide more robust information to prospective students regarding geographically convenient degree transfer opportunities.