

Maricopa County Community College District

Transfer Ombudsperson (TSO) Project Report

HISTORY. As a result of the 1996 mandate from the Arizona State Legislature, the Arizona Board of Regents and the State Board of Community Colleges established a Transfer Articulation Task Force (TATF) to develop a seamless statewide articulation and transfer system that enables community college students to transfer without loss of credit toward a baccalaureate degree. Composed of university and community college representatives, this collaborative task force developed a new transfer model that provides for enhanced support and advocacy for students with a means to resolve issues and problems encountered in the transfer process. This provision requires that each university and community college designate a Transfer Student Ombudsperson (TSO) to work in partnership to resolve issues arising from the transfer process as reported by students, advisors, faculty members and college officials.

Therefore, it is assumed that Maricopa County Community College District and the public state universities will jointly share the responsibility for identifying and resolving problematic issues that impede a seamless transfer process.

MCCCD TSO MISSION. It is the mission of the Maricopa County Community College (MCCCD) TSO to act as an advocate for our students who have met the essential and reasonable expectations of a student attempting to transfer and still perceive obstacles in their transfer process. The Maricopa Community College TSO student advocacy role will act to ensure that articulation processes and any transfer processes related to articulation between Maricopa Community Colleges and all other Arizona state post-secondary public institutions are student-centered, equitable, and logical.

Specifically, the MCCCD TSO will:

- Clarify advising/transfer issues and advocate for students experiencing obstacles in the transfer process
- Work collaboratively with university TSOs to resolve problems/issues related to transfer to provide a seamless transfer process
- Serve as an on-campus clearinghouse to track and document issues.

TSO QUALITIES. The individual appointed as TSO for a campus is ideally an experienced advisor who has contact with students on a regular basis and has an extensive understanding of complex 'front line' issues. The TSO is knowledgeable about the processes within MCCCD and at the transfer institutions and has the skills to advocate for the student within these processes. The TSO's broad knowledge base

should include the ability to resolve problems and conflicts so as to remove barriers to the student's successful transfer whenever possible. In addition, the TSO must be easily accessible to students, faculty and staff.

The TSO is an advocate for students seeking to transfer who have encountered obstacles in the transfer process. It is assumed that a student will have completed the expectations listed in this document before contacting his/her TSO. Knowledge of the transfer process will be made available to students via college catalogs, web sites, etc. Students will be encouraged to meet with university personnel before leaving the community college.

TSO FUNCTIONS AND RESPONSIBILITIES.

- Act jointly with other institutions to ensure that problematic articulation issues are identified and resolved to allow a smooth and seamless student transition
- Facilitate, on behalf of the student, advising issues, articulation compliance and seamless transfer with the appropriate university personnel
- Troubleshoot unresolved issues and transfer problems encountered by the student with the appropriate TSO counterpart
- Identify transfer related training needs for advisors and staff
- Gather and document information, issues, and problems encountered by students and advisors related to transfer
- Maintain a TSO log, listing issues and problems
- Submit to the MCCC CD TSO Committee, as required, a report of the problems, articulation compliance issues, and successful experiences encountered by the TSO or any community college representative
- Meet on a regular basis with MCCC CD TSO's for the purpose of compiling an annual report, analyzing problems for patterns, discussing TSO issues and successes
- Attend statewide TSO meetings to exchange ideas and discuss issues and solutions
- Notify the AAAATF/TSO co-chairs of TSO assignment changes. Provide an orientation to replacement TSO.

STUDENT RESPONSIBILITIES. A student can expect the transfer process to be seamless only if he/she has declared a major, embarked on the appropriate degree pathway(s), and met other expectations normal for a person who eventually plans to earn a college degree. These expectations include:

- Declare a major and select a university, ideally, by the time 30 credits have been earned. Undecided students are encouraged to work closely with the Counseling Department and/or Career Center to select a major, university and career choice
- Work with an advisor at the community college to develop an educational plan
- Select and successfully complete course work based on this educational plan
- Request all necessary documents and official transcripts from all post-secondary institutions be sent to the community college and/or university in a timely manner
- File for graduation at the community college, if appropriate
- Follow guidelines for university admission and to the appropriate professional program within the particular college. This includes such things as deadlines, GPA requirements, immunizations, financial aid, and, where appropriate, any necessary requirements for the particular professional program
- Work with the appropriate university advisor to continue their educational plan.

These expectations are essential to ensure the seamless transfer process. If a student has met these expectations and still perceives obstacles in the transfer process, he/she should contact the campus TSO.

TSO PROBLEM RESOLUTION PROCESS. To resolve issues that arise from transfer, the following process will be followed:

- Student, MCCCDCD advisor, faculty, staff or college official will report the issue to the campus TSO. At the discretion of the TSO, some problems/issues (i.e. financial aid, housing, etc.) may not be documented or conveyed to a university TSO. Instances of this nature will be referred to the appropriate source for resolution without further assistance from the TSO. However, a process or policy determined to be an unreasonable barrier to transfer or potential issue to transfer should be documented.
- All pertinent information and documentation related to the problem/issue will be gathered including dates and contacts involved.
- Incident will be reported by the TSO on the standardized DAAC electronic database.
- The MCCCDCD TSO will contact the appropriate university TSO and/or individual to gather additional information, clarify, and discuss the issue(s).
- Upon failure to resolve the problem within two weeks, the MCCCDCD TSO will forward the issue to the District University and College Relations Department and

copy the college Dean of Instruction. Such incidents will be also be forwarded by the university TSO to their chief academic officer.

- Results will be reported to initiating TSO
- Outcome will be reported to student
- TSO will update District incident report on database.

DOCUMENTATION. In order to maintain a reliable bank of occurring issues for follow-up and documentation, each campus TSO will maintain a log. Suggested log details include:

Date
Student Name
Student Social Security number, date of birth or ID number
Student phone number and email address
University
Major
Issue
Issue referred by
Chronology of events
University contact, title
University response
Recommendation(s)
Report forwarded to
Notes

- Issues, recommendations or referrals determined to be urgent will be forwarded by the TSO to appropriate individuals as soon as possible.
- Upon occurrence, each incident will be entered on a standardized electronic database available on the MCCCCD District Academic Advisement Council (DAAC) web site. These reports will be indexed and available for reference by other TSOs and MCCCCD personnel.
- An annual report will be compiled by the MCCCD TSO Committee and will include an analysis, summary, and disposition of issues. This report will be forwarded to the following:

1. MCCCCD

TSO Committee
District Academic Advisement Council
University and College Relations Department
Student Development Services
Deans of Instruction
District Curriculum Committee

Deans of Student Services
Advisors
Admissions & Records Council

2. Statewide TSOs
3. AAAATF
4. Report from university TSOs with consultation from CC TSOs will be sent to Joint Conference Committee

- TSO issues will be a standing agenda item at DAAC regular meetings. It is the responsibility of each campus TSO to alert the DAAC chairs of such issues prior to the meeting date.

RECOMMENDATIONS. To establish uniformity, communication, and effective implementation of this project it is proposed that:

- The Deans of Students establish a TSO committee to meet regularly to review, discuss, and advance issues. Liaisons from other departments will also be invited to discuss issues.
- A distribution list for MCCCCD TSOs.
- A web site located on DAAC web pages be devoted to the TSO role, responsibilities, and process of problem resolution be available on DAAC web site. This site will contain a list of university and MCCCCD TSOs, and the incident reporting form.
- Establish a reference page for students on the DAAC web site that includes definition of the TSO role, each campus contact and availability
- Software and technical assistance be provided to develop web page and database
- Campuses are encouraged to create an internal marketing plan to promote the concept and process of the TSO to staff and students.

TRAINING NEEDS. To support the effectiveness and professional development of TSOs the following training resources are needed:

- Mediation training
- TSO duties and responsibilities
- Train the trainer – Campus education on the role and responsibilities of the TSO and importance and process of problem resolution
- On going changes/decisions involving transfer/articulation from APASC