

ARTICULATION AMONG HIGHER EDUCATION  
INSTITUTIONS IN NORTHEAST OKLAHOMA

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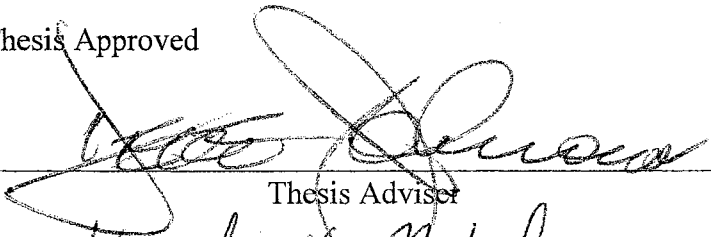
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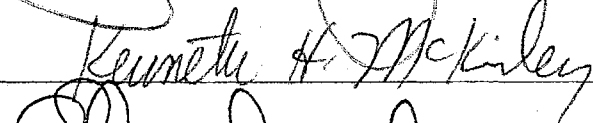
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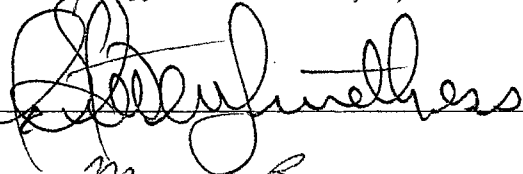
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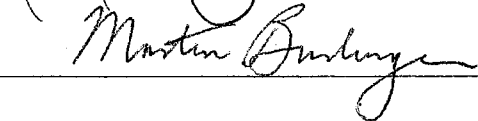
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## PREFACE

This study offers view about the direction of the Oklahoma State Regents for Higher Education's Transfer Policy. Specifically, this study offers views of what transfer problems students encounter, what the state of Oklahoma is doing to ease the transfer situation, and some suggested solutions to those problems.

I would like to thank Dr. Deke Johnson, my adviser and dissertation chairman, for his wisdom, guidance and patience throughout this study. I also would like to thank Dr. Martin Burlingame, Dr. Steve Smethers, and Dr. Kenneth McKinley, my committee members, for their contributions to this study and to my academic experiences at Oklahoma State University.

Thanks also go to those who participated in this study. Their intelligent feedback helped enormously as I outlined the study.

Thanks to my doctoral support committee of friends. I could not have done this without them. Thanks Dr. Celia Stall-Meadows, Jocelyn Payne, Dr. Shelley Duncan, Brett Campbell, and Dr. Michael Turner.

Special thanks to my parents, Max and Peggy Eversole, who gave me the opportunity to further my academic career and who have always provided financial and emotional support when needed. Thanks to my brother, David, for all the babysitting.

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CHAPTER I  
INTRODUCTION

To create a seamless system in which students can attend all Oklahoma Public institutions, make progress over time on degree programs, and have confidence in the quality and transferability of individual courses.

**Vision Statement of Oklahoma State Regents on Articulation**

Background

Transfer - that function of the comprehensive two-year college that facilitates the movement of students to four-year colleges and universities for baccalaureate degree attainment - was one of the founding purposes of the American two-year college nearly a century ago. Arguably, transfer remains one of the most important mission components, offering students' opportunities for access to and acquisition of the social and economic benefits that can be obtained through a baccalaureate (Higgins and Katsinas, 1999). Moreover, transfer is generally considered the most prestigious function as it serves to position the community college in the graded system of higher education (Cross, 1985).

The transfer process is difficult and continues to affect students nationally as well as internationally. Students transferring have not considered it an easy task. They

expressed frustration with the process of applying, gaining admission, and the transferring of college credits. The process of transferring from a community college to a senior institution was a complex and often ominous task for students pursuing the baccalaureate degree (Davies and Dickmann, 1998).

Research identified potential avenues to lessen student difficulties in transferring. Cohen (1992) identified some potential avenues: "At the institutional level, faculty-to-faculty articulation activities, concurrent enrollment in one or more institutions, guaranteed admission at the senior institution, and various types of student services, including testing, placement, and advising, function to smooth the process." Dougherty (1992) suggests: "Transfer rates would be increased by better transfer advising, familiarizing would-be transfer students with four-year colleges through campus visits, and more financial aid tailored to transfer students' special needs." Hughes (1992) suggested the need for programs that assist transfer students in making the transition to a large university. Many of these students are capable academically; yet, they may need assistance in succeeding in a very different environment.

Each year, new articulation agreements are implemented, state legislatures mandate transfer policies, and higher education institutions create transfer programs to ease the students' burden related to transferring. Many states, Oklahoma among them, have a policy which allows all general education credits to be accepted by a state institution from those students who have obtained an associate's degree from a two-year college.

Nearly all of the 50 states in seeking to ease the transfer of students, have at the

very least, begun prodding public colleges to use common core titles and course-numbering systems. These are often posted on the Internet to help students with academic planning.

Beginning in December 1994, presidents of all state-supported higher education institutions in the State of Oklahoma nominated the first faculty members to serve on a committee designated by the Oklahoma State Regents for Higher Education. The faculty members formed the Faculty Transfer Curriculum Committees to review course descriptions and design a matrix of course equivalencies. Members attended the first systemwide transfer meeting in February 1995 on the University of Central Oklahoma's campus. Most of the membership returned in September 1995 for the second systemwide meeting. In between the two meetings, considerable support from faculty, students, and legislators developed. With House Bill 1205, the Oklahoma Legislature encouraged the Oklahoma State Regents for Higher Education to work with institutional faculty and administrators to ensure that students move smoothly from one level of education to another, partly through developing course equivalencies and common course numbering. Simultaneously, the State Regents called for implementation of a comprehensive plan to act on student transfer problems in *The Next Step* planning document (May 1995). The State Regents' system academic plan *Oklahoma Challenge 2000*: (May 1995) included establishment of the Faculty Transfer Curriculum Committees for assisting the articulation of the courses.

In December 1995, the State Regents' staff compiled and reported the course equivalency information that the faculty transfer committees developed in 1995 during

the two, systemwide meetings. The report represented a multifaceted plan to improve student transfer. Its four parts included: 1) creating working faculty transfer curriculum committees, 2) proposing the development of a systemwide electronic course transfer guide, 3) emphasizing academic advising, and 4) organizing an evaluation process to monitor transfer students' success.

The faculty played a pivotal role in the State Regents' Comprehensive Action Plan. The Faculty Transfer Curriculum Committees generated the course equivalency information that drove the systemwide effort to facilitate student transfer among state system institutions. The present initiative to improve student and adviser access to current transfer information with electronic delivery also depended on the faculty's work. The role was a visible one that has captured the public's interest, including that of legislators.

Oklahoma's Higher Education System offer three different education environments to accommodate students who are at varying levels of academic preparation or have different educational goals. This approach for optimizing student access to education was dependent on how smoothly students moved among the two-year, regional, and comprehensive institutions. Therefore, the State Regents prioritized student transfer issues, such as course articulation, in both policies and programming. The State Regents' report to the 1996 Legislature, *Facilitating Student Transfer: A Comprehensive Action Plan*, presented a multifaceted plan to improve student transfer were the same as those in the previous years. In December 1997, the State Regents submitted their second progress report on student transfer issues to the Legislature on the Course Equivalency

Project—the implementation phase of the *Comprehensive Action Plan*. The Course Equivalency Project received the Governor’s Commendation Award in 1999 for demonstrating innovation and efficiency. Drawing national attention and the focus of an education journal article, the Course Equivalency Project established and distributed course equivalency information to facilitate student transfer within the Oklahoma System of Higher Education. The project’s database contained faculty-generated course equivalency information for thousands of courses spanning 32 disciplines at 25 public and four private institutions in Oklahoma. The courses are configured in matrix formats that are organized by academic discipline—biology, history, etc. A State Regents’ equivalency number (a two-letter prefix and three-digit number) bonds like courses into equivalency groups. Courses in a group are **guaranteed** to transfer among institutions offering courses in the group. The equivalency information is accessible in print or electronically at the Internet address [[www.okhighered.org/student\\_center/mainsite/transfer-stdnts/index.html](http://www.okhighered.org/student_center/mainsite/transfer-stdnts/index.html)].

The Course Equivalency Project operates on a yearly cycle. Annually, in May or June, the Council on Instruction (COI), which was made up of academic vice presidents at all state supported higher education institutions, determined which faculty committees met in the fall; some committees did not meet every year. The vice presidents were given this responsibility by the Oklahoma State Regents for Higher Education (OSRHE).

The Vice Presidents annually nominate faculty to the selected curriculum committees during the summer. Academic vice presidents update the course equivalency information twice each year-August and December. Each fall, up to 500 faculty

representing the entire State System of higher education meet by discipline to update curricula and establish new course equivalencies. Faculty reports are completed in November. With faculty review on their respective campuses, academic vice presidents added courses to those course equivalency disciplines that had no faculty meeting during the fall. Generally in December, the COI approves the faculty's course equivalency information. The State Regents accepted it at the beginning of each year. Concurrently, the State Regents' website for course equivalencies was updated to include the latest equivalency information. The State Regents developed an annual timeline which assisted in helping the project on track.

#### Annual Timeline for the Course Equivalency Project

June - Notify presidents of institutions to nominate faculty for a one-year term to newly-formed Faculty Transfer Curriculum Committees and to verify membership of previous discipline committees.

August - Deadline for academic vice presidents to update the academic year's course equivalency information.

October - Systemwide Faculty Transfer Curriculum Committee Meetings.

November - Final reports of the Faculty Transfer Curriculum Committee are to be sent to the Regents' staff.

December - The COI committee approves the final reports. The approved course Equivalency Matrices will then be sent to academic vice presidents of institutions for review with a return deadline in January.

February/March - The Regents accept the final reports, and staff distributes them to institutions' presidents and academic advisers for implementation. Matrices are added to the Regents' web site.

The State Regents' operating definition of course equivalency was as follows:

Course "A" is equivalent to course "B" if and only if "A" satisfies all program requirements that course "B" satisfies the same purpose with respect to content delivery, general education, or program degree requirements and vice versa. Lower-division course work cannot be substituted for upper-division credit-hour requirements. However, the content was transferable. For example, if a student completed Smart Course 2000 at two-year college A, it would transfer in content to four-year college B for its Smart Course 3000. The student need not repeat the content or learning competencies acquired in Smart Course 2000. But, the student must have completed the full amount of 3000-level semester hours that college B requires for a baccalaureate degree.

The following four tables illustrate the growing number of course equivalencies that faculty have established since fall 1995. Business Communications and Business Law were two new faculty committees formed in 1999 to establish additional course equivalencies. By March 2001, the following information had been compiled to illustrate the number of course equivalencies that faculty had established since fall of 1995.

Table I reflects only 16 disciplines (primarily general education areas) had been evaluated for course equivalencies in 1995, leading to 1,594 courses being guaranteed acceptance for transfer among universities across Oklahoma that have equivalent courses. By Fall 2000, the number of disciplines had doubled and the number of courses accepted for equivalent transfer had almost tripled to 4,531. New disciplines were added to the transfer matrix each year with the latest being Business Communication and Business Law in 1999.

TABLE 1 - Course Equivalencies in Oklahoma State System of Higher Education

Fall 1995	16 Disciplines	1,594 Courses
Fall 1996	22 Disciplines	2,875 Courses
Fall 1997	25 Disciplines	3,690 Courses
Fall 1998	30 Disciplines	4,187 Courses
Fall 1999	32 Disciplines	4,399 Courses
Fall 2000	32 Disciplines	4,531 Courses

Table II reflects the number of total courses accepted for transfer equivalency as of Fall 2000. These courses comprise 14,172 credit hours. Within the 32 disciplines that have established transfer equivalencies, there are a total of 387 different categories or equivalency groups. For instance, under the discipline of English there would be categories of English Composition I, English Composition II, Introduction to Literature, Survey of American Literature I, Survey of American Literature II, and so on.

TABLE II - Total Number of Courses and Semester Credit

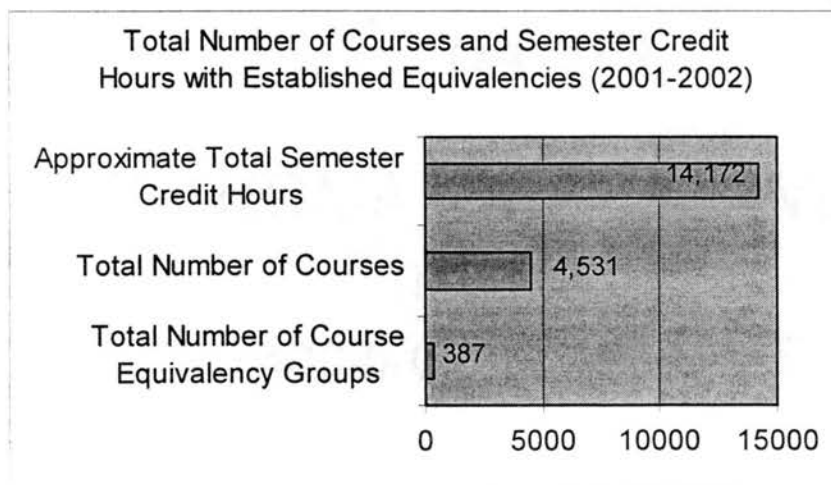




Table III provides the specific data for the Fall 2000. Thirty-one (31) disciplines are listed along with the number of courses that have been evaluated in each discipline. Business Law was not included in this chart as the faculty committee could not come to agreement on equivalencies during the first year. Not only have more disciplines been added to the transfer matrix, but additional courses in each discipline have been added each year. The disciplines with the largest number of transfer equivalent courses are history, art, English, information systems, and sociology.

**SUMMARY OF FACULTY TRANSFER CURRICULUM COMMITTEES  
2001-2002**

--Total Courses Per Discipline With Established Equivalencies--

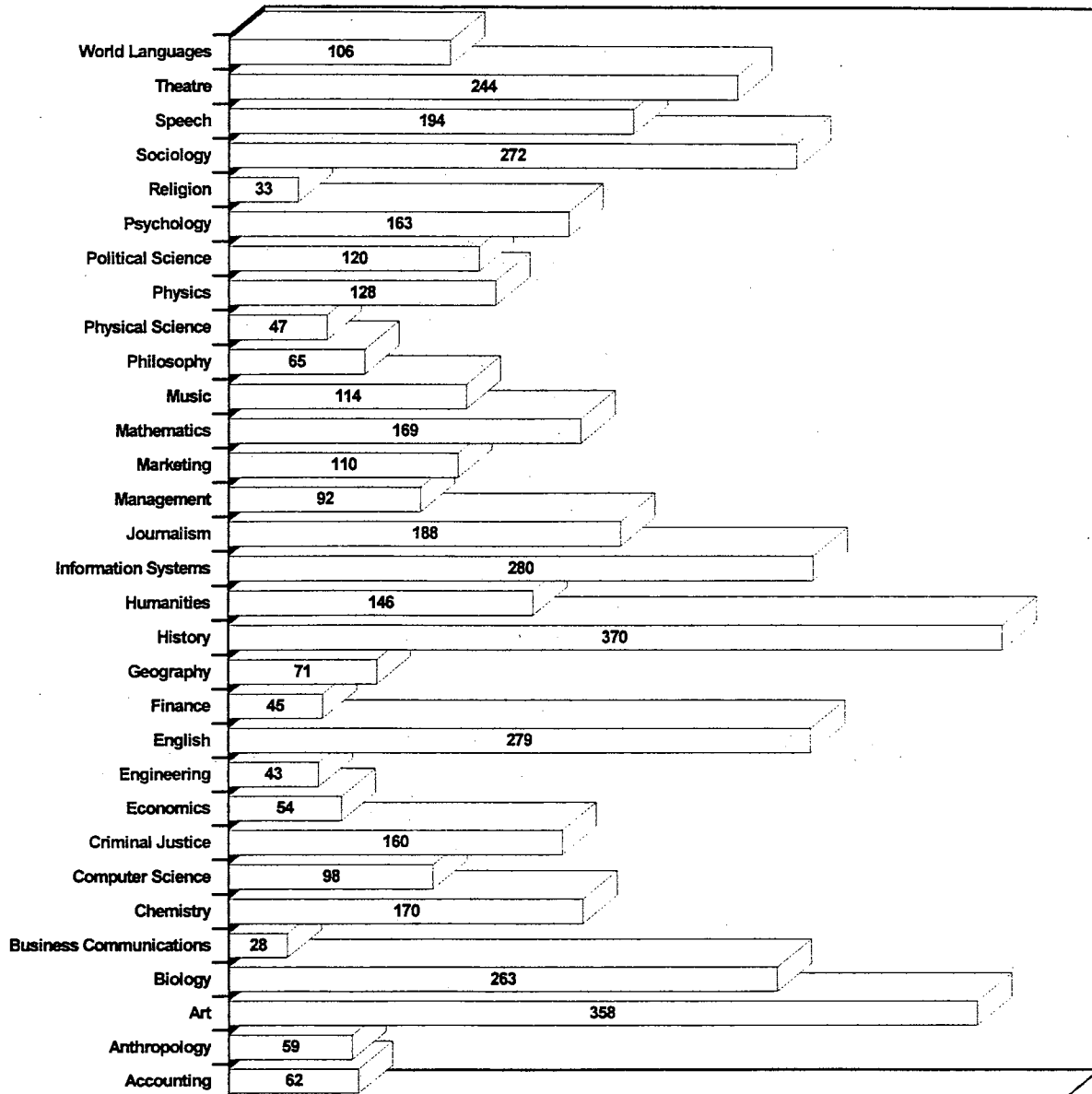
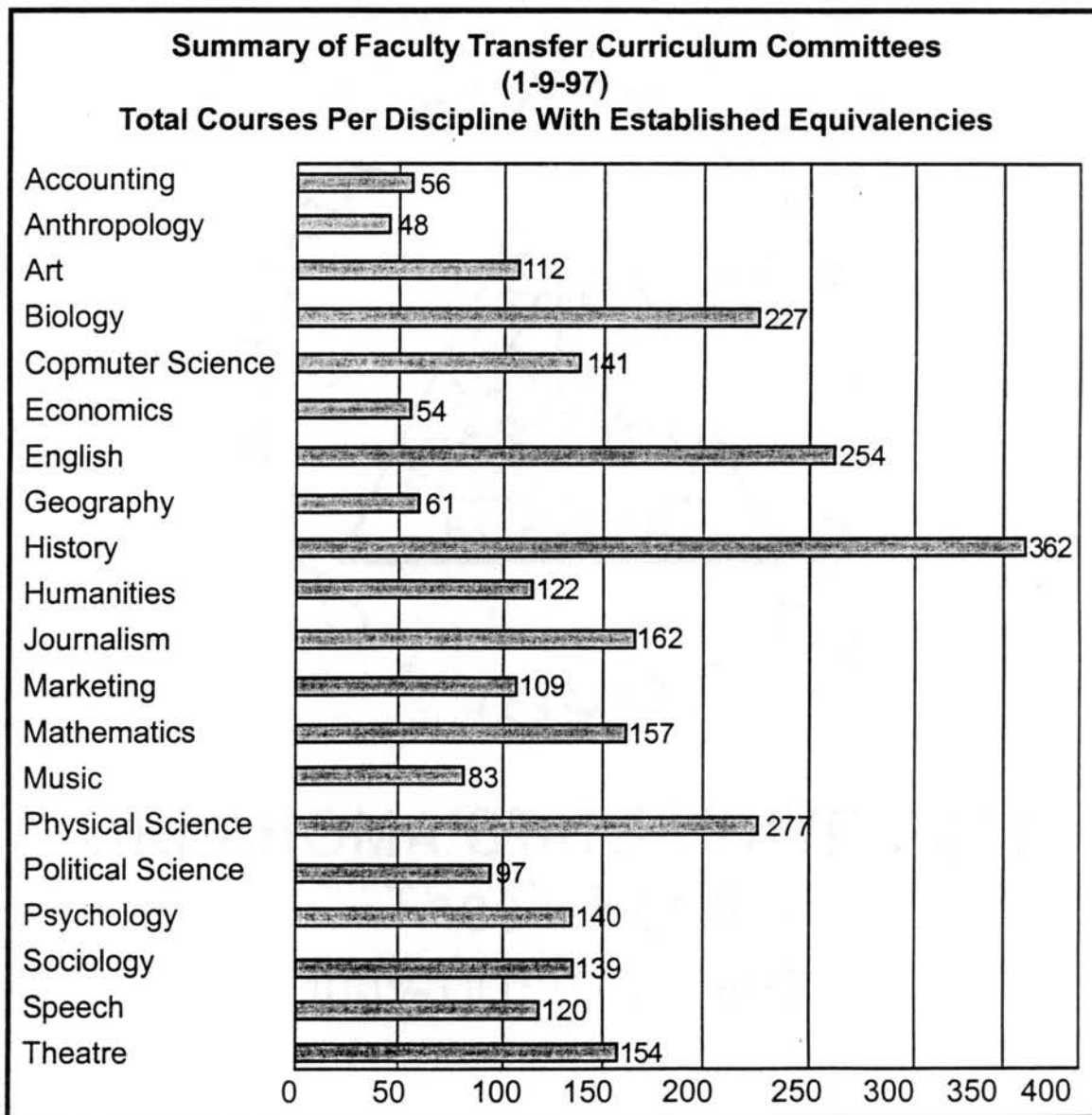


Table IV provides the specific data for the figures listed in Chart 1 for Fall 1996. Twenty (20) disciplines are listed along with the number of courses that have been evaluated in each discipline.



The Course Equivalency Project had the capacity to affect future development of the Oklahoma State Higher Education curriculum. The Faculty Transfer Curriculum Committees have established common course content descriptions for nearly all equivalency groups in their respective disciplines. This information assisted faculty as they designed new courses to meet articulation guidelines.

The objectives for the Faculty Transfer Curriculum Committees included: established course equivalency groups for general education and lower division courses; established course equivalency groups for upper division courses where appropriate; addressed any 2000/3000 level transfer issues; discussed other initiatives to facilitate student transfer and the performance of transfer students; discussed the implications of technology on course content, delivery, and ultimately course transfer; and addressed any other disciplinary issues.

A new tracking system was implemented in 1998-99 that permitted registrars to recognize the course changes made to the course equivalency matrices from year to year. In addition, by 2000-01 a coding identification project was completed, allowing State Regents' staff to monitor students' use of the Course Equivalency Project. This supported part four (evaluation component) of the State Regents' 1996 *Comprehensive Action Plan* mentioned above.

The State Regents implemented a number of changes in the transfer system to make it easier. For example, if an individual decides to transfer to a four-year university with an associate in arts or associate in science degree (two-year degrees), State Regents' policy guarantees that a person's associate degree will satisfy all freshman and

sophomore general education requirements at the four-year university. Also, if an individual transfers to another college before he completes an associate degree, he will receive general education credit for courses that match those at the college he wishes to attend. All undergraduate degrees, except for the associate in applied science, require that an individual take a minimum of 37 hours of required courses in English, literature, math, science, history and the arts.

Transfer guidelines may vary from institution to institution. During a person's college career, he may decide to transfer from one Oklahoma state college or university to another. Information gathered by Oklahoma public colleges and universities indicates that, based on junior- and senior-level grade point averages, transfer students perform compared with students who stay at the same college or university.

According to the Oklahoma State Regents for Higher Education, as of spring 1999, 36 percent of the students who entered a two-year college in 1996 transferred to a four-year institution. Twenty-five percent transferred from a four-year school to a two-year school, while 20 percent moved from one two-year college to another. Nineteen percent transferred from one four-year institution to another four-year school.

If a person has more than six attempted credit hours -- not counting remedial courses, pre-college work or credit hours received by concurrently enrolling as a high school student -- he may transfer to another Oklahoma public college or university under the following conditions:

If he originally meets the high school course and performance requirements of the college or university to which he wishes to transfer, he must have a 1.7 grade point

average if he has 30 credit hours or less, or a 2.0 grade point average if he has 31 or more credit hours.

If a person originally met the high school course requirement but not the performance standards of the college or university to which he wishes to transfer, he must have at least 24 attempted semester credit hours of regularly graded (A, B, C, D, F) college work. If he has 24 to 30 credit hours, he must have a 1.7 grade point average. If he has 31 or more credit hours, he must have a 2.0 grade point average. If he originally met the performance standards but not the course requirements of the college or university to which he wishes to transfer, he must complete the course requirements before transferring. If he has 30 credit hours or less, he must also have a 1.7 grade point average, and if he has 31 or more credit hours, he must have a 2.0 grade point average.

If a person originally met neither the course nor the performance standards of the institution to which he wishes to transfer, he must have at least 24 attempted semester credit hours of regularly graded (A, B, C, D, F) college work. If he has 24 to 30 credit hours, he must have a 1.7 grade point average. If he has 31 or more credit hours, he must have a 2.0 grade point average.

#### Other Related Features of the Oklahoma Plan

The Oklahoma State Regents for Higher Education created the following features to assist the state's transfer students. These included the following:

- A common 37-hour lower-division core curriculum was adopted for all associate in arts, associate in science, and baccalaureate graduates (40-hour curriculum).

- A student articulation policy that guarantees students who successfully completed an associate in science or associate in arts degrees that their lower division general education course requirements are satisfied.
- Each baccalaureate degree-granting institution was required to list and update the requirements for each program leading to the baccalaureate degree and to publicize these requirements for use by all other institutions.
- An advisory articulation committee was established to review and evaluate articulation policies and practices and to make recommendations for improvement as needed. The committee also addresses any articulation disputes.
- The Study of the Success of Community College Transfer Students was adopted in the Oklahoma State System of Higher Education in the fall 1994. The Study concluded that transfer students perform in a manner comparable to native four-year university students based on upper-division and graduation grade-point-averages.
- A Course Transfer Problem Hot Line (1-800-583-5883) was mandated by the State Regents. From February 1995 through February 2001, the total number of calls received was 143 with 30 of these being direct transfer problems (an average of 0.42 calls per month).

#### Oklahoma Law

There was a force on the State Legislature to ease transferring. Students, parents, and citizens were pushing state legislators to ease the transferring of students from one state institution to another. University personnel agreed that measures needed to be taken and followed through, but legislation was not always the answer. Many legislators believed poor transfer and graduation rates were caused by students who lost ground because their credits did not transfer (Mingle 1997). According to Mingle (1997): “To a legislator, a credit is a credit, and it should be fully portable to any other public institution in that state. In some states this has reached extreme proportions, with mandates that virtually all curricula be fully transferable.”

In Oklahoma, the Legislature enacted House Bill 1205, May 15, 1995, stating legislative intent concerning the acceptance of higher education credits among institutions in the Oklahoma State System of Higher. The Legislators gave this task to the Oklahoma State Regents for Higher Education. The Law is published in the Laws of the Forty-Fifth Legislature. It reads as follows:

It is the intent of the Legislature that credits earned by students in any institution of higher education within the Oklahoma State System of Higher Education be fully accepted at any other institution of higher education within The Oklahoma State System of Higher Education and that the Oklahoma State Regents for Higher Education assume leadership in working with institutional faculty and administrators to ensure that students move smoothly from one level of education to another.

Objectives should include development of transfer policies and guides, degree sheets, course equivalencies, and common course numbering. By January 1, 1996, the Oklahoma State Regents for Higher Education shall submit, to the Chair of the Education Committee of the Oklahoma House of Representatives, a report on the progress made toward the identified objectives.

## Statement of the Problem

The Oklahoma Legislature handed the Oklahoma State Regents for Higher Education a mandate to make the transfer process seamless. Policies were made by the State Regents and handed to committees made up of faculty representing different disciplines from state institutions to solve which involved lots of conflict. The problem addressed in this study was to ascertain the extent to which the Faculty Transfer Curriculum Committee fulfilled its task. Did it complete its task? Is the academic transfer process in Oklahoma seamless?

## Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to (1) examine the patterns of communication between the various participants during Oklahoma's most recent attempt to facilitate student transfer from one institution to another, (2) determine how accepting faculty and students were in the most recent attempt to facilitate student transfer from one institution to another and (3) determine why the process moved so slowly.

## Research Questions

Various participants' opinions were sought in response to the following research questions: How accepting were faculty in the Faculty Transfer Curriculum Committee process? How was the Faculty Transfer Curriculum Committee information being communicated? How were course equivalencies decided by the Faculty Transfer Curriculum Committee? How did the law work in regard to the Faculty Transfer Curriculum Committee?



## Methodology

This paper summarized 12 interviews. Five interviews were from faculty at Northeastern State University representing journalism, geography, biology, speech, and humanities disciplines and one interview was from a faculty member at Northeastern Oklahoma A&M College, a two-year school, representing journalism. Each faculty member served on the Faculty Transfer Curriculum Committee. Four transfer students were interviewed. All four had transferred at least once within the state of Oklahoma. Two of the four transfer students had transferred at least once from an out-of-state institution. The interviews also included two State Regents' staff members who were in charge of academic affairs projects for the State Regents.

This qualitative research paper presented for analysis a perspective from the participants, the assumptions behind the committee meetings, and the impact upon the educational institution. The goal was to understand the outcomes behind the committee meetings and the interactions that took place during such meetings. This research used a case study approach. The case study was developed by identifying factors that were influencing within the Faculty Transfer Curriculum Committee meetings. This case study covered the period between the initial Legislative mandated to the Regents and the programs made to date with the Faculty Transfer Curriculum Committee. Data collection consisted of documents including minutes from legislative sessions and information from the Regents given to faculty chairs. It seemed appropriate to use long interview techniques to collect information. As McCracken (1988) noted, the long interview method provides a tool for understanding how members of a subculture who are

interviewed see all, or significant parts, of the subculture.

After recording and analyzing my initial data, the researcher narrowed her research and made focused observations. (Spradley, 1980). Interviews were conducted, tape-recorded and the data transcribed for analysis. An ongoing check of the researcher's interpretations of the interview process occurred. "A continuous dialogue regarding the researcher's interpretations of the informant's reality and meanings ensures the truth value of the data" (Creswell, 1994, p. 167). To ensure external validity, a thick, rich description of the case was provided. The data were presented chronologically, providing a systematic and clear picture of the case.

#### Significance of the Research

This study offers university faculty some guidance in the articulation process as mandated in the State of Oklahoma. Because it consolidates many of the methods previously used, this study provides faculty and university administrators perspective into articulation. Faculty and administrators can learn new ideas from what others suggested. Educators can consider what changes in curricula could benefit students preparing to transfer.

#### Scope and Limitations

This study involved interviewing college faculty involved in the Faculty Transfer Curriculum Committee, an Oklahoma State Regents for Higher Education coordinator, and transfer students. The main limitation of this study relates to the participants. Although the participants selected were chosen based on their involvement with the

Faculty Transfer Curriculum Committee and students who had transferred, they were not selected randomly. Thus, results cannot be generalized to a larger population and must be accepted as the views of these participants. The researcher recognizes the fact that the responses represent only the opinions of those involved.

“The interpretative approach has certain weaknesses,” (Rogers, 1992) warns, “such as the difficulty of managing and summarizing the large amounts of qualitative data.” Not only was such information difficult to summarize because of its mass, (Sloan 1990) adds, it is difficult to generalize with any degree of reliability.

“All investigators are human and, being human, are liable to bias” (Clark 1967). Nevertheless, he argues, it can be asserted with some confidence that we can always get closer to the truth, we can produce “a version of history which is a better guide to what really happened, a more secure basis for thought and action” than previous versions.

Clark’s conclusion was particularly relevant when previous versions were incomplete or disconnected from the whole.

### Need for the Study

Institutions faced many challenges as they entered the new marketplace of distributed learning, library access, faculty workload, faculty incentives, faculty-support structures, pricing, financial aid, and articulation agreements. The approach in Oklahoma to create a seamless process and transfer guide for its students was a long endeavor and not one to be completed in a few years. Schools focused on the transfer process as a workable facet to the university system. Guidelines should be established that stated

when there were any curriculum changes that affect transfer and articulation agreements should be implemented in a timely manner. Currently, in Oklahoma the associate of arts degree is a statewide general studies transfer degree, structured for entry into baccalaureate degree programs. Many students entered into a four-year program with extra course hours and no place for them to go.

This study was designed to gather information from the various participants in the Faculty Transfer Curriculum Committee and see if the plan was working and providing a solution to an age-old problem.

#### Outline of the Study

In this study, Chapter II consists of a review of the literature - including a brief history of articulation and methods other higher education institutions in other states had tried. Chapter III outlines the research methodology and the design for this study - and briefly introduces the various participants in this study. Chapter IV includes a presentation of the findings. Chapter V includes a summary, conclusions, and recommendations for further study.

## CHAPTER II

### A SEAMLESS SYSTEM

#### Overview

This chapter begins with a statement on the background of the problem and a discussion on the need for the study. A definition and history of articulation showed the various methods used by states to help with the articulation problem.

Also included in this chapter was a review of the relevant literature, focused primarily on the most current information about articulation involving two-year and four-year institutions.

#### Background of the Problem

The State of Oklahoma lacked an overall transfer guide to assist students at its two-year and four-year state institutions. The issue of transfer was a very complex one and individual institutions continued to work out the problem. Students continued having problems. In 1994, the state Legislature forced the Oklahoma State Regents for Higher Education into forming committees to study each academic area offered at a state

institution. Legislators argued that complaints were many concerning students and transfer problems they were experiencing. The Legislators wanted a statewide transfer guide implemented to serve the state's students.

The plan was to have a representative from each academic area at each institution serve on a committee. Academic vice presidents at each institution selected the participants. Vice presidents acted as monitors at the first meeting of the Faculty Transfer Curriculum Committees. They introduced the group to its charge and had it select a leader to begin the duties of articulation.

### Review of the Literature

This review focused on various universities' efforts in a number of states to implement transfer and articulation agreements. The relevant literature primarily covered the types of agreements implemented in the past or those currently in place. Those whose views are reflected here are, like the experts in the study, insiders in the transfer and articulation process who are or have been involved in some of the innovative methods in use.

### Definition of Articulation

If the transfer rate was seen only as an arithmetic measure of student movement between two sectors of higher education, any definition might do. However, it is precisely because the transfer rate was used as an effectiveness measure that matters of definition become crucial. (Fonte, 1993). The major debate over how such rates should be defined

arose from the use of such measures as public indicators of institutional success and criteria for interinstitutional comparison.

“In the most simple terms, the calculation of a transfer rate involves decisions about which students should be put into the numerator and denominator of a fraction. The numerator includes those who have transferred, while the denominator is made up of students who could potentially transfer” (Fonte).

According to Louis Bender (1990), there were many definitions of articulation and transfer in the literature. His preference was to define ‘articulation’ as the “systematic efforts, processes, or services intended to ensure education continuity and to facilitate orderly unobstructed progress between levels...on a statewide, regional, or institution-to-institution basis.” He then defined ‘transfer’ as the mechanisms which facilitate the movement of a student from one institution to another with the expectation of credit for successfully completed course work. These definitions were compatible with the definitions in the National Guidelines for Transfer and Articulation (Knoell 1990).

### Articulation’s Beginning

During the first half of the Twentieth Century, from the founding of Joliet Junior College by William Rainey Harper in 1901 through the post -World War II period, community colleges placed great emphasis on their role as “junior colleges.” The major function of the community college was to provide freshman and sophomore-level courses to the growing number of individuals who wanted an education and the chance to

advance to a higher education institution (Eells, 1931). In 1947, the Truman Commission published a study entitled “Higher Education for American Democracy,” which focused on the two-year college and recommended its expansion. The junior college would offer the first half of the baccalaureate degree, as well as terminal, semiprofessional courses and public service for all citizens (Kintzer, 1996). As a result, university-parallel programs were developed in community colleges to mirror the lower division courses of the state universities, and the mission of the colleges to provide equal educational opportunity mandated the development of specific articulation and transfer agreements with area universities to facilitate the completion of baccalaureate programs (Kintzer).

Continued interest in articulation agreements and transfer policies had been exhibited in the second half of the Twentieth Century in a number of articles and research studies. According to Kintzer, the “Fifty-fifth Yearbook of the National Society for the Study of Education, The Public Junior College (1996), was the first of several landmark publications” (p.5). In it, the chapter by Bird describes the magnitude of the transfer function and concluded it is successful because “junior colleges make records approximately the same as those made by transfers from four-year colleges and by native students” (Kintzer, 1956, p.5). She also referred to evidence that junior colleges were salvaging many students whom otherwise would not have the opportunities for advance studies.

The 1970s saw an increase in the interest of researchers into the community college transfer process due to the growth in both funding and student populations. “The literature of this decade provides a fairly clear picture of the status of articulation and



transfer in the community college for this era” (Kintzer and Wattenbarger, 1985). In fact, Kintzer provided much of this picture; he reviewed the policies of all 50 states in 1970 and outlined statewide patterns in 1973.

Research indicates that because their service districts have varying educational needs, community colleges differ in terms of the emphasis each places on the various components on the comprehensive mission (Fonte). Recognizing the diversity of missions among its members, the American Association of Community Colleges (AACC) adopted a policy statement calling for multiple indicators of institutional effectiveness (American Association of Community Colleges, 1992). Too much emphasis was placed on working toward a transfer rate instead of working on a form of measurement that could be adopted for uniform application at community colleges nationwide (Fonte).

“No student enters a four-year college or university expecting to drop out or leave without graduating” (Southern Education Foundation. 1995, P.6).

“This quotation from a foundation’s report about the education of non-white students is typical of many policymakers’ and perhaps the general public’s perceptive on college attendance. They still believe that most students plan to graduate from the college at which they first matriculate and that if they don’t graduate from there, it is the institution’s fault. In reality, only about one-third of college graduates actually matriculate at the institution from which they receive their degree. Many students, including four-year college ones, intend to transfer from the college where they initially enroll” (Kearney, Townsend, and Kearney, 1995). According to a 1996 report by the

National Center for Education Statistics, only about 37 percent of the students who earn a baccalaureate degree do so from the school at which they first matriculated.

The 1980s ushered in a huge amount of research about articulation agreements and the transfer process by state governments. There was an effort to maximize the economic impact of state funds for higher education and this was reflected in articulation patterns in state higher education institutions. “Many of the mechanics of transfer would be greatly simplified if state boards mandated common calendars for all public institutions of higher education” (Kintzer, 1996).

Studies revealed that community college students continue to perform successfully at four-year institutions after transfer. Despite the preponderance of those studies suggesting that community colleges were performing the transfer function with competence, if not distinction, there were signs indicating a need for re-examination of practice and policies in light of the changing demographics of the 1980s and growing public interest in quality measured by criteria other than the numbers participating.

In California, Kissler (1982) provided convincing evidence of the declining performance of community college transfers. And Gold (1980) noted that students from Los Angeles City College transferred to California State University at Los Angeles with the highest pretransfer grade point average in 12 years and earned the lowest posttransfer GPAs for the same period. Kissler concluded that advising played an important role in the success of the articulation process. “Community colleges should find out why students are attending before they register for their first semester. Students who have the baccalaureate degree as an objective, and those who have the potential for achieving at

this level, should receive special orientation and advising” (Kintzer).

Other researchers indicated that mandates or systemwide guides should be implemented within each state’s higher education system. According to Kintzer and Wattenbarger in 1985, the mandates of transfer could be defined as:

- 1] formal or legal policies,
- 2] state system policies
- 3] voluntary agreements
- 4] special agreements of vocational or technical credit transfer.

Along with the mandates there were three categories of reformers. The categories were differentiated by advocacy of particular functional or structural approaches to change.

One group of functionalists argued that the community college should reaffirm its link to higher education and reverse transfer decline by strengthening the academic and general education core (Prager, 1993). A second, however, proposed that the sector relinquish the transfer function altogether in favor of other functions, such as vocational and adult education which were better suited to the community college’s academic capability. A third group believed that the community college was fundamentally flawed by neither being, nor belonging, to a four-year structure (Prager).

Kintzer found that, while interinstitutional credit transfer was in effect from the beginning of the junior college movement, arrangements were informal. For the most part, policies and practices were individualized. The fate of the transfer students depended on individual action. Despite the rapid growth of two-year colleges, systematic planning lagged, particularly at the state level. In a 1965 analysis of state master plans,

Kintzer reported a lack of information on statewide guidelines and policies.

A model proposed by Eaton (1990) was built around the fact that transfer was an academic matter. The model had three requirements: “faculty involvement as key players in transfer improvement efforts; institutional commitment to the evaluation of transfer against predetermined benchmarks of transfer effectiveness; and, a willingness to critically examine the institutional culture and its impact on opportunities for transfer.”

Robertson and Frier (1996) suggested that the purpose of state involvement was not only to assure better transfer opportunities for students but to improve the quality of education by coordinating the resources and participation of the entire community and each sector of the education system. Eaton (1990) also identified three key factors in developing close faculty relationships: (1) a connection between classroom practice and student transfer success; (2) collaboration between two- and four-year college faculties in curriculum development; and (3) the perception of transfer being a shared responsibility among the faculties at two- and four-year colleges.

Among the reports in the 1980s, “Improving Articulation and Transfer Relationships” (Kintzer, 1985) was released during a period of economic constraint, increasing pressure from state governments, and competition among senior institutions to enroll even greater numbers of transfers. Diminishing numbers of traditional, transfer-age cohorts added to the restive situation. The goal was to open a new era of revitalizing articulation and transfer through dialogue among national leaders.

Following in the footsteps of the report just mentioned, (Kintzer and Wattenbarger, 1985) identified a typology of four state patterns of articulation and

transfer agreements. The four state patterns are characterized as follows:

1] Formal and legally-based guidelines and policies. Legal or quasi-legal contracts mandated by state law, state code, or a higher education master plan in which general education is recognized for transfer; includes an emphasis on completion of the associate degree prior to transfer.

These types of policies are evident in approximately nine states, Oklahoma included.

2] State system policies. Guidelines that concentrate more on the transfer process and less on articulation services; there is stronger and more direct state control.

This pattern occurs in approximately 25 states, including the Oklahoma State Systems Plan.

3] Voluntary agreements among institutions. Informal processes or voluntary cooperation and negotiation for which discussions often surround subject matter and concern intersegmental liaison committees.

Approximately 28 states follow this pattern.

4] Special agreements on vocational and technical transfer credit. Arrangements made within a few states to accept designated vocational and technical course credit.

More recently, state planning began in four states: Texas, Georgia, Illinois, and

Florida. A basic core of general academic studies was recommended by the Texas State Legislature in 1969, and in that same year, the Illinois Junior College Act mandated the development of an articulation plan recommended a year earlier in the state's master plan for higher education. In 1969 a core curriculum was announced by the George University System. However, it was not until 1971, after a decade of debate, that the first statewide plan was activated in Florida. In April of that same year, the Florida State Department of Education announced a formal articulation agreement.

Accordingly, these earlier statewide agreements emerged as formal actions taken by the state legislatures, state departments of education, or state university systems (Kintzer).

At least four other states created plans under a variety of auspices later in the decade: the New Jersey Full-Faith-and Credit Policy (1972), the Massachusetts Commonwealth Transfer Compact (1974), the Nevada University System Articulation Policy, and the Oklahoma Articulation Plan (1975). These policies state that a student's general education core will transfer to any state university. Other states had joined the first seven in formulating a policy.

The decade of the 1990s brought about changes in many states' transfer policies and/or guidelines. Several themes in articulation and transfer appearing in the 1980s literature gained major recognition in the first half of the 1990s.

Access to Higher Education for Disadvantaged Populations. The first theme concerned efforts to improve the scope and individual numbers of disadvantaged groups with an emphasis on minorities. The Ford Foundation sponsored Urban Community

College Transfer Opportunity Program led the upsurge of activities. Donovan and Associates' (1987) work, *Transfer: Making it Work*, offered innovative examples of programs to confirm that progress in increasing minority access could be seen best by looking at individual colleges. State support, in general, continued to lag for increasing minority involvement and for improving programmatic quality. However, progress still occurred in individual colleges and groups of collaborating schools with considerable help from private funding agencies.

### Vocational-Technical Education

Several decades ago, virtually the only transfer avenue for vocational-technical credits was the university baccalaureate degree. Programmatic diversification and flexible delivery schedules implemented to compensate for static academic enrollments and budgets in both two- and four-year colleges attracted career-oriented high school graduates, and other potential graduates. Dale Parnell, the most visible single personality in promoting cooperative vocational and technical programs, gave national recognition to the 2t2 tech-prep/associate degree format in his 1985 book *The Neglected Majority*. In *Dateline 2000: The New Higher Education Agenda* (1990), Parnell continued his advocacy of vocational and technical education but introduced new themes under the goal of serving at-risk populations.

## Business and Industry, the Military, and Proprietary Schools

Employer-sponsored education, proprietary school training, and training for the military provided externally by colleges and universities were forces severely affecting articulation and transfer that emerged in the 1970s and gathered strength in the 1980s. As the first two “outsiders” were granted accreditation by regional agencies and began to form legitimate linkages with state and private institutions, the need for guidelines and policies became crucial. Relationships between proprietary schools and their counterparts in public education - community colleges - remained strained. Some attempt to work together and to exchange students could be traced to individual institutions, but again, transfer agreements were virtually nonexistent. Several states developed such statements, but the courses, degree programs, and students wanting to transfer remained virtually unrecognized.

## Computerized Information Systems

Colleges and universities were still criticized for collecting and distributing invalid and unreliable student data and transfer data in particular. This chaotic situation confused state commissions, whose reports to state legislatures were often inaccurate and inconsistent. Although all institutions and systems collected relevant information, few had databases that provided current transfer information on students, counselors, and faculty, or reliable information on student tracking. The lack of common definitions and consistent reporting complicated the budgetary process and weakened attempts to develop statewide policy.



## State Mandates

More than a dozen states were trying to force state colleges and universities to be more accommodating to transfer students, in some cases, mandated that the institutions accept credits earned elsewhere (Schmidt, 1997).

In Texas, in 1997, Governor George W. Bush signed a measure that required every public college to offer an undergraduate core curriculum that could be automatically transferred to any other public institution in the state.

Alabama, Arizona, Connecticut, Florida, and Ohio adopted several measures. Most guaranteed transfer students admission to other public colleges. Unlike the Texas measure, some also contained provisions that required the students to attain minimum grade-point averages or meet other standards. Nearly all of the states seeking to ease the transfer of students had, at the very least, begun prodding public colleges to use common core titles and course-numbering systems, which were posted on the Internet to help students with academic planning.

North Carolina has used common core course numbers and statewide transfer agreements, and community colleges there were told to switch their academic calendars from quarters to semesters to coincide with those of public universities. Many lawmakers and higher education officials worked on a plan to help students maintain credits during transfer. Many of the lawmakers behind these mandates said transfer students had complained that they had lost credits and had to take repetitive or unnecessary courses at a great cost to themselves and the state.

In Georgia, where the university and the technical-college system agreed in 1994

to negotiate a set of transfer agreements, more than 280 such agreements were in place, and the public colleges had begun a cooperative degree program in applied science.

The South Carolina Commission on Higher Education worked on insuring students that blocks of credits in various fields, including business administration, engineering, teacher education, and nursing would transfer. The state institutions already had a plan to accept the general education core that was mandated by the legislature.

Kentucky worked on the same plan as South Carolina. In Utah, state officials wanted to ease the transfer burden and worked on getting more students to attend a community college to ease the overcrowding at four-year schools.

Alabama, Arizona, Connecticut, Florida, Ohio, and Texas guaranteed transfer admission to other state institutions. These plans were mandated by each of the states' legislature.

Massachusetts' public higher education institutions had all entered into statewide joint admissions agreements in hope of establishing higher admission standards at four-year schools.

The State Higher Education Executive Officers Association contended that the near automatic transfer of credits threatened the coherence and integrity of the curricula at four-year institutions (Schmidt, 1997). In his book *Dateline 2000: A New Higher Education Agenda*, Dale Parnell (1990), past president of the AACC, recommended the formation of community college regional consortia for several reasons.

“The college or university of Dateline 2000 must encourage cooperative learning experiences not only among students but also among faculty. Because community

and state regional colleges work between high schools and universities, they might logically serve as conveners of regional educational consortia. The resulting partnerships among various levels of education could include cooperative efforts aimed at developing teaching-learning excellence, enhancing teacher enrichment, developing continuity in learning, improving student retention and the further education of disadvantaged students. Formalized discussion among faculty from various levels of education could also encourage feedback related to student performance”(p. 12).

Patterson’s (1974) *Colleges in Consort* was one of the most widely read studies of academic consortia in the United States. Findings from this study, funded in part by the Ford Foundation, led Patterson to conclude that “the principal impediment to effective interinstitutional cooperation is the traditional commitment of colleges and universities to institutional autonomy’ (p. 119).

Patterson (1974) called the development of a consortia a notable phenomenon in American higher education:

It flies directly in the face of the historic pattern of institutional isolationism and independence which has dominated higher education until the present time. This movement constitutes something new in education: at the very least, a rhetorical and nominal commitment to cooperative, where before had existed a kind of friendly anarchy among colleges and universities. (p.4)

Each year, more organizations and individuals became involved in the articulation process. The Association of American Colleges and Universities had been working since 1998 with state higher education systems in Georgia and Utah. Shoenberg (2000) blamed

transfer problems on a number of factors. “Not only must the colleges and universities involved answer to the fiscal and political concerns of state legislatures, respect faculty autonomy, cope with limited tools for assessment, and make sense of a crazy-quilt of student attendance patterns, but they must arrive at inter-institutional agreements about the purposes of these requirements.”

State systems wanted to make the transfer process work without the loss of credit. Shoenberg (2000) argued: “The formal mechanisms for creating the ‘seamlessness’ are sets of common core courses and agreement about transfers of credit. But in their zeal to effect ease of transfer, the designers of these agreements often fail to take into account either the variety of ends to which courses might be taught or the coherence of the general education program or major to which those courses apply. Thus, they tacitly encourage students to mix and match unrelated courses, leading them to see these requirements as so many bureaucratic hurdles to be jumped, nor as parts of a purposeful and coherent curriculum.”

The literature traced the articulation problem back to the development of credit hours as the standard unit of academic currency. Created in the early 20th Century, the credit hour was designed to bring integrity to a higher education system then rife with diploma mills (Shoenberg, 2000). The requirement that students received a degree meant they had done genuine intellectual work to earn it. Over the years, a number of accrediting institutions were created to certify that colleges and universities met the basic requirements for the granting of degrees. Following World War II, the number of colleges and universities increased, causing student mobility and the re-examination of credit

hours. Shoenberg (2000) stated “Though the majority of college graduates no longer earn their degrees at a single institution, they generally complete them within a single higher education system.”

### Current Articulation Agreements

According to a survey commissioned by the Association of American Colleges and Universities, 22 states had implemented statewide core curricula, in order to facilitate transfer of credit among public two-year and four-year colleges. Most of these states specified the number of credit hours required per subject area and many specified the particular courses that comprised the general education program. Thirteen states had crafted articulation agreements that applied within a particular segment of the higher education system but not across the entire state. For example, general education courses automatically transferred between California’s community colleges and the University of California system, but there was no such agreement between the University of California system and the California State University system. Fifteen states had no segmental or statewide articulation agreements in place. However there often existed local articulation agreements between these states’ two-year and four-year colleges Shoenberg (2000).

### Summary

Cohen and Brawer (1996) argued that the most pervasive and long-lived issue in community colleges is the extent to which their courses are accepted by universities. “Articulation agreement (sometimes written into state education codes), interinstitutional

standing committee, and policy statements that date from the earliest years of the community colleges to the most recent - all attest to the importance of transferability.” Cohen and Brawer (1996) define articulation “as the movement of students - or, more precisely, the students’ academic credit - from one point to another.” Articulation is not a linear sequencing or progression from one point to another. It covers students going from high school to college; from two-year colleges to four-year universities and vice versa; double-reverse transfer students, who go from the two-year college to the four-year university and then back again; and people seeking credit for experiential learning as a basis for college and university credit. The concept includes admission, exclusion, readmission, advising, counseling, planning, curriculum, and course and credit evaluation. Cohen and Brawer (1996) stated “More recently, rather than following a linear progression through higher education institutions, students have tended to ‘swirl,’ dropping in and out of community colleges and universities, taking courses in both types of institutions at the same time, and transferring frequently between the two. This fluidity complicates the matter of understanding articulation policy, which was traditionally a one-way street with the rules dictated by the four-year schools.”

Past research has found that in most cases, transfer negotiations are conducted between institutions, mostly on a case-by-case basis. Frequent problems include deciding which courses would be accepted, students’ access to their desired majors, and insistence by the four-year institution that they be the primary judge of whether to grant transfer credit (Cohen and Brawer 1996).

Cohen and Brawer (1996) concluded that where formalized articulation

agreements do exist, they are usually brought about through the intervention of state boards of education. Several states negotiate agreements on a common core of general education courses; these agreements must be renegotiated periodically. In an attempt to capture and describe this diversity Rifkin (1998) offered the following: Since the 1960s, state involvement in articulation agreements has increased, but no single model has been pursued. Traditionally, agreements have been voluntary. Both Hawaii, where community colleges are part of the state university system, and California, where they are not, use agreements between the two- and four- year sectors.

More states have legislated policies that specify curriculums and examinations, including a common course-numbering system and/or a core general education curriculum. The Illinois Articulation Initiative is a recent state initiative to improve articulation. Students who take the specified package of course work are assured their credits will satisfy the general education requirements at the institution to which they transfer.

Dual admission programs adopted by institutions in Ohio and New Jersey, and other states have the potential to increase the number of community college students who graduate with an associate degree.

Dual admission agreements are specialized transfer agreements that guarantee admission and transfer of credits to specific four-year colleges and universities. Mercer County Community College, for example, has dual admission agreements with six New Jersey colleges. Each requires completion of a specified program and a minimum grade point average, which varies by institution and program.

The Education Commission of the States concluded that, to be effective, articulation policies and practices must involve a network of constituents from the state to the university to the community college to the high school. State-encouraged and state-supported actions instituted at the system or institutional level may prove more effective overall.

Some of the options suggested by the ECS included:

- Streamline articulation - make community colleges and four-year colleges partners in establishing policies, and integrate the articulation system into the state higher education system.
- Promote collaboration among high schools and two- and four-year institutions.
- Foster curriculum development by faculty at both levels of institutions.
- Bolster student support services, including counseling and financial aid.
- Build technical support for student information services.
- Provide research and evaluation on the effectiveness of transfer and articulation.

McCracken (1988) described the long interview as a departure from participant observation insofar as it is intended to accomplish certain ethnographic objectives without committing the investigator to intimate, repeated, and prolonged involvement in the life and community of the respondent. It departs from group methods of qualitative research (such as the focus group) insofar as it is conducted between the investigator and a single respondent. It departs from the "depth" interview practiced by the psychological



inquirer insofar as it is concerned with cultural categories and shared meanings rather than individual states.

## CHAPTER III

### METHODOLOGY

#### Overview

This chapter details the research plan involved in this study, including a description of the long qualitative interview as a data collection method for investigating the articulation agreement in the state of Oklahoma for students in state institutions of higher education. The chapter also includes explanation of the research questions guiding this study, a discussion of how the subjects were selected and the specifics of the interviews. In addition, the chapter reviews the data collection plan, analysis of the research data, and the limitations of the study.

#### Research Methodology

Drawing from Merriam (1988) and Yin (1994), my study fell within a qualitative case study design. It focused on 12 individuals associated with the Oklahoma State Regents of Higher Education's Faculty Transfer Curriculum Committee, and actual transfer students. I sought to describe those involved with the committee, the experiences, thoughts, and practices on the committee. The transfer students described the many obstacles in their way when transferring, as well as, any positive experiences.

I used inductive reasoning as I analyzed the data, searching for relationships and themes. Yin (1994) stresses that a case study occurs "within its real-life context" (p. 13) and this was an important emphasis in my study. I not only listened to the voices of the participants, but I also observed them in the Faculty Transfer Curriculum Committee meetings and I have been advising students for 11 years. This helped in the understanding of the context within the appropriate settings. The long interview calls for special kinds of preparation and structure, including the use of an open-ended questionnaire, so the investigator can maximize the value of the time spent with the respondent. It also calls for special patterns of analysis so that the investigator can maximize the value of time spent analyzing the data. McCracken explained that the long interview "is designed to give the investigator a highly efficient, productive, stream-lined instrument of inquiry" (p.7). The long interview is one of the most powerful methods in qualitative armory. For certain descriptive and analytic purposes, no instrument of inquiry is more revealing. McCracken described the process as "the method can take us into the mental world of the individual, to glimpse the categories and logic by which he or she sees the world. It can also take us into the life world of the individual, to see the content and pattern of daily experience. The long interview gives us the opportunity to step into the mind of another person, to see and experience the world as they do themselves" (p. 9).

This qualitative research paper presented for analysis a perspective from the participants, the assumptions behind the Faculty Transfer Curriculum Committee meetings, and the impact upon the educational institution. The goal was to understand the outcomes behind the meetings and that interactions that took place during the meetings.

This research proposal used a case study approach to present a description of a qualitative study.

Merriam (1988) defines a qualitative case study as "an intensive, holistic description and analysis of a single entity, phenomenon, or social unit. [They] are particularistic, descriptive, and heuristic and rely heavily on inductive reasoning" (p. 16). A case study is particularistic because it focuses on a specific phenomenon such as a program, event, process, person, institution, or group. When Merriam states that a case study is descriptive, she is referring to the end product of the study which is a "rich, thick description of the phenomenon under study" (p. 11). Heuristic refers to a study's power to "illuminate the reader's understanding of the phenomenon under study" (p.13), and Merriam (1988), quoting from Stake, said "previously unknown relationships and variables can emerge from case studies leading to rethinking of the phenomenon being studied" (p. 13). Case studies utilize inductive reasoning since new understandings, concepts, and relationships arise from studying the data (Merriam, 1988).

According to Yin (1994), a case study "investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context, especially when the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident" (p. 13). Using this method is appropriate when contextual conditions impact the phenomenon under study. Yin also notes that a case study relies on multiple sources of data collection, triangulation of data, and benefits from prior development of a theoretical framework which guides data collection and analysis.

State higher education institutions are making an effort to identify and implement articulation agreements. Some are slower than others. To date, there have been no

dissertations about articulation that I have found. The research was limited to what states were doing to ease the transfer problem.

### Selection of the Subjects

In qualitative analysis, the selection of respondents must be made accordingly. The first principle is that less is more. It is more important to work longer, and with greater care, with a few people than more superficially with many of them. McCracken suggested eight respondents would be sufficient. "The quantitatively trained social scientist reels at the thought of so small a sample, but it is important to remember that this group is not chosen to represent some part of the larger world. It offers, instead, an opportunity to glimpse the complicated character, organization, and logic of culture" (p. 17). The participants in this study were selected based on their experiences with the Faculty Transfer Curriculum Committee and actual transfer students themselves.

The idea was to interview, at different times, six faculty from different disciplines who had served on the Oklahoma State Regents for Higher Education's Faculty Transfer Curriculum Committee representing journalism, humanities, biology, speech, and geography disciplines. Five of the faculty represented Northeastern State University, a regional university in northeast Oklahoma. The sixth faculty member represented Northeastern Oklahoma A&M College, a two-year college, also in northeast Oklahoma.

The interviews also included two State Regents' staff member who had been involved in the process of articulation, as well as, the Faculty Transfer Curriculum Committee since its beginning. I selected the Regents' staff members because each of

them were involved in the creation of the Faculty Transfer Curriculum Committee and the construction and maintenance of the transfer matrix, developed by the Faculty Transfer Curriculum Committee. These two individuals followed every step in the development of a seamless system for Oklahoma.

I invited 25 transfer students to a round table discussion (see Appendix A) concerning transfer issues. After the discussion, I looked at my notes and asked four of the 25 to return for interviews (See Appendix B) involving specific questions (See Appendix C ) concerning transfer issues. Each of the four students had transferred at least once within the state of Oklahoma. Each had agreed to an interview.

This case study covered the period between the initial Oklahoma Legislative contact with the Oklahoma State Regents for Higher Education and the end of the Faculty Transfer Curriculum Committee meetings.

I decided that 12 interviews satisfied my needs of providing an in-depth look into all the different types of Faculty Transfer Curriculum Committee issues. Further selection criteria included transfer students, who had not only transferred from two-year colleges, but also from four-year universities. Three of the four students selected completed academic credit from a two-year college. Three of the four students completed academic credit from a four-year university.

These boundaries (Miles and Huberman, 1994) led me to follow Maxwell's (1996) suggestion of using purposive sampling when persons are "selected deliberately in order to provide important information that [cannot] be gotten as well from other choices" (p. 70). I combined my purposeful sampling with reputational selection, or participants

"Chosen on the recommendations of an 'expert' or 'key informant'" (Miles and Huberman, 1994, p. 28). I drew from others' expertise in choosing participants because they have had experiences I have not been privy to.

I used reputation selection twice in the process of identifying faculty who had participated on a Faculty Transfer Curriculum Committees. My first step was to contact the vice president of Academic Affairs at Northeastern State University in Tahlequah, OK who had direct knowledge of which faculty were involved in the Faculty Transfer Curriculum Committee. I phrased my inquiries to allow the vice president to provide names of individuals involved in the Faculty Transfer Curriculum Committee. From these conversations I formed a list of 20 names.

The second step in my research was to reduce the list of names to six based on a number of factors: (1) Area of discipline, (2) reputation for involvement in the Faculty Transfer Curriculum Committee, and (3) number of times each had attended a Faculty Transfer Curriculum Committee meeting, I then contacted the faculty members via letter (See Appendix C ) and asked them if they would participant in my study.

After the sixth faculty members committed to the study, I made appointments with each to conduct the interview (See Appendix D ). The interviews were recorded and then transcribed before the coding process began.

The 12 participants interviewed were:

- Dr. Craig Clifford; Professor of Biology at Northeastern State University.
- Dr. Rodney Osborne; Associate Professor of Mass Communications at Northeastern State University.

- Dr. Ronald Philips; Professor of Humanities at Northeastern State University.
- Dr. Bill Wallace; Professor of Speech Communication at Northeastern State University.
- Dr. Charles Ziehr; Professor of Geography at Northeastern State University.
- Monty Franks, Instructor of Journalism at Northeastern Oklahoma A&M College.
- Dr. Debra J. Blanke, Coordinator-Academic Affairs Projects with the Oklahoma State Regents for Higher Education.
- Dr. Kim Bender, Coordinator-Academic Affairs Project with the Oklahoma State Regents for Higher Education.
- Rebecca Nott; A three-time transfer student and a senior at Northeastern State University.
- Jamie Veysey; A one-time transfer student and a junior at Northeastern State University.
- Jazmine Stodghill; A three-time transfer student and a senior at Northeastern State University.
- Paul Williams; A two-time transfer student and a junior at Northeastern State University.

All of the participants who were asked, agreed to respond to the interviews.



## Research Instrument

The use of a questionnaire is sometimes regarded as a discretionary matter of qualitative research (See Appendix E). But, for the purposes of the long qualitative interview, it is indispensable. The demanding objectives of the interview require its use (McCracken, 1988).

The questionnaire served several functions. According to McCracken (1988) "the questionnaire's first responsibility is to ensure that the investigator covers all the terrain in the same order for each respondent. The second responsibility is the care and scheduling of the prompts to manufacture distance. The third function of the questionnaire is that it establishes channels for the direction and scope of discourse. The fourth function of the questionnaire is that it allows the investigator to give all his, or her, attention to the informant's testimony" (pp. 24-25).

### Phase One

Data were collected and analyzed in two phases. The first phase consisted of interviews with the six faculty involved in the Faculty Transfer Curriculum Committee and the two Oklahoma State Regents for Higher Education's representatives. The second part of Phase One included interviews with the four transfer students.

### Phase Two

Yin (1994) describes six sources of data used in qualitative case study research: Documentation, archival records, interviews, direct observation, and physical artifacts. As

part of observation, Merriam (1988) suggests completing accurate field notes which include both actual occurrences as well as the observer's comments or interpretations. Of the data sources mentioned, I relied on the Faculty Transfer Curriculum Committee meeting observations, interviews, and field notes when I dealt with the faculty and the Oklahoma State Regents for Higher Education's representatives. I also collected some documents such as FTCC handouts, handouts from the academic vice presidents, and letters. As far as the students, I relied on personal observations, interviews, and field notes. I also collected some documents such as course catalogs, FTCC handouts from the discipline areas used in the study, and transcripts and final degree plans from the students involved.

Since data collection consisted largely of observations and interviews, both which were directly influenced by me, I became the primary instrument of data collection and analysis. Being the primary instrument allowed me to view the context within which my research phenomenon occurred. This gave me freedom to clarify and summarize while collecting data and to pursue new ideas and lines of thought. A degree of data analysis occurred simultaneously with collection and allowed for member checks to enhance the trustworthiness of my interpretations (Merriam, 1988).

I conducted the more formal phase of analysis by coding the interview transcripts and field notes. My initial coding consisted of looking for themes throughout the interviews. After I identified themes within my data, I sorted through each theme category and looked for ways to break the data down into manageable pieces which fit together.

## Interview Protocol

I began my study with broad categories of questions concerning the roles of each participant in the articulation process. The questions came from my observations at the Faculty Transfer Curriculum Committee meetings and as an adviser to hundreds of transfer students. The two groups had different questions, even though many similarities existed in each set.

## Trustworthiness Issues

Instead of addressing the issues of reliability and validity, qualitative researchers uses terms such as trustworthiness, credibility, dependability, and consistency. Merriam (1988) suggested that these are enhanced through member checks, triangulation of data and methods, an audit trail, and stating researcher biases.

## Transferability

Merriam (1988) writes that "one selects a case study approach because one wishes to understand the particular in depth" (p. 173). The purpose of my study was to describe experiences, practices, and beliefs of individuals involved in the Faculty Transfer Curriculum and students who have transferred. Patton says that qualitative research should "provide perspective" (as cited in Merriam, 1988, p. 175) rather than identify truths reflective of a vast number of individuals.

In the chapters following this one, I provide a "rich, thick description" (Merriam, 1988, p. 177) so that those who read the information gathered will be able to evaluate the

degree of transferability to their own settings. My goal has been to articulate one perspective of articulation within the state of Oklahoma's public two-year and four-year colleges and universities.

### The Researcher

I have already mentioned that I, as the researcher, was the primary instrument of data collection throughout the study and would like to make some of my biases explicit. I have spent 11 years as an academic adviser and I have seen the turmoil students go through with the transferring of course hours. I brought several biases to the study. The first bias was the problem I faced trying to advise a transfer student who had not had any or non truthful advice as a two-year college student. My second bias was being an instructor and getting transfer students in my courses who had to retake a course they had already taken. My third bias was convincing students, as an adviser and instructor, that they had to retake a course because they needed what I offered.

Merriam (1988) sees tolerance for ambiguity, good communication skills, and sensitivity to context, data, and personal bias as characteristics needed by the researcher as the primary instrument. My tolerance for ambiguity has grown considerably through my graduate studies and I enjoy the challenge of a less-structured process which allows me the freedom to "search for pieces to the puzzle" (Merriam, 1988, p. 37). I consider myself a good communicator and I find it easy to establish rapport with others and to listen.

Yin (1994) also discusses commonly required skills for case study researchers.

Some of his ideas mirror those discussed by Merriam; skills he adds are the ability to ask good questions, being a good listener, having a firm grasp of the issues being studied, and the ability to remain unbiased by preconceived notions (Yin, 1994, p. 56). Several of the participants indicated that they found me to be a good listener during the conversations, and as I reviewed the transcripts of the interviews, I noticed the amount of words recorded for the questions I asked are minute compared to the length of the answers given.

### My Involvement

I was pursued as a high school student to attend Northeastern Oklahoma A&M College in Miami, OK. This was a two-year college and many of my friends were going to four-year colleges. The scholarship was too good to pass up so I decided to attend and become heavily involved on campus. After two years at NEO, I graduated with an associate's degree and decided to complete my bachelor's degree at Northeastern State University. I attended a transfer day hosted by the college and was enrolled. That was the last time I spoke with an adviser. I advised myself. I worked for the student newspaper and always felt like an outsider because I was not a true four-year scholar - I was a transfer student. I graduated after two years at NSU and taught school in Joplin, MO for five years before returning to higher education. I do recall having to retake six hours of journalism and I decided that if I ever taught in higher education, I would help transfer students. Eleven years ago I was hired to teach mass communications, advise students producing the campus newspaper, and advise undergraduate students at Northeastern

State University in Tahlequah, OK. Since that time, I have seen many angry transfer students concerning their courses and the ones that did not transfer. When the Oklahoma State Regents for Higher Education implemented a Faculty Transfer Curriculum Committee I wanted to see firsthand the changes that were going to occur in the state's higher education system. There were many angry students transferring from and to higher education facilities within Oklahoma. The Oklahoma State Regents wanted to help make the transfer process seamless and fulfill the mandate given to them by the Oklahoma State Legislature.

### Summary

The method used in this study was a qualitative case study design. I relied both on the wisdom and insight of expert informants and a list of factors to find research participants. Data collection included Faculty Transfer Curriculum Committee meetings' observations, interviews, and document collection during the course of one-school year. The results of data analysis and summary and conclusions constitute the remainder of this document.

## CHAPTER IV

### ANALYSIS OF DATA

"We played it by the book and we did what we were asked to do as we perceived it. The goal of the committee was to have a sheet of paper so that no matter what you took at any school in Oklahoma - if you took Humanities you could say, 'OK, you took Humanities 301 at Rose State. OK, now Northeastern won't accept a 2203 for its 3303 transfer," NSU Humanities Professor.

#### General

This chapter has been divided into three sections. The first section provides a brief overview of the Faculty Transfer Curriculum Committee and its charge. The primary purpose of this overview was to give the reader a sense of the major issues and challenges facing the Faculty Transfer Curriculum Committee. In the second section, I addressed the interviews with the six faculty and the two Oklahoma Board of Regents for Higher Education's staff member. In the third section, I addressed the interviews with the four transfer students.

## Section I: Overview of the Study

### Oklahoma Articulation Plan

In 1975, the state of Oklahoma adopted an articulation plan that allowed that a student's general education core to be automatically transferred to any state college or university if the core was taken at a state college or university. This provided an incentive for students who had attended and completed a two-year degree to transfer to a four-year higher education facility. In 1995, the Oklahoma State Board of Regents for Higher Education held the first Faculty Transfer Curriculum Committee meeting. All meetings were held on the campus of the University of Central Oklahoma in Edmond. Each state college and university elected one faculty member to represent a designated discipline. Meetings were held in the fall with new disciplines being added each year. The existing committees continued to meet; some committees held a total of four meetings, while others only met once. Some committees had never completed the task charged to them by the Oklahoma State Regents for Higher Education.

In the next section, interviews with the six faculty members involved in the Faculty Transfer Curriculum Committee and the two Oklahoma State Board of Regents' staff members were conducted and completed by the researcher.

## Section II: Faculty Involvement

Five faculty from different academic disciplines at Northeastern State University and a faculty member from Northeastern Oklahoma A&M College were asked to participate in the study. All six had been active in the Faculty Transfer Curriculum



Committee since its beginning. The faculty member from Northeastern A&M College was selected to provide a perspective from a two-year institution. Each faculty member had been selected by his academic vice president to represent his discipline. All six had attended at least two Faculty Transfer Curriculum Committee meetings. All six agreed to the study and a consent form was signed (see Appendix F). In addition, the researcher recorded observations within the committee meetings through field notes and an audio cassette recording of the interviews. These observations were grouped together as themes and were used to correlate responses with the interview transcripts.

I attempted to make the interview setting comfortable and distraction free and offered participants the choice of where to conduct the interview. It was decided that an alternate location away from Northeastern State University setting would better serve the purpose. This eliminated interruptions from individuals on the phone or in person.

A local restaurant became a natural setting to conduct the faculty interviews. The restaurant allowed for a distraction free setting. After conducting the first two interviews at this location, the researcher and her interviewees blended into the natural environment and became a part of the everyday operations. Although the interviews were formal, the location allowed for a sense of conversation and exchange versus a one-sided interview.

I knew that the interviews were going to be a major part of my research, but after I completed them, I realized the work was yet to come. This included transcribing the interviews and interpreting results without jumping to analysis. This part of the process was overwhelming, and it took a tremendous amount of effort to resist the temptation to interpret. I developed a system to manage the data.

The first step I took was to analyze the interviews was to develop a coding system to make the data from the interviews more manageable. At times it became confusing, and manageability only occurred once the codes were applied. This became a way of sorting data into manageable themes by reviewing the interviews to refresh the researcher on the initial questions.

### Interview Themes

The biggest theme resulting from the interviews with the faculty who served on the Faculty Transfer Curriculum Committee was conflict. Faculty members said that before any major work could be done, conflict had to be resolved. One of the conflict issues involved the number of credits or weights a course had. Most courses were worth three hours of credit, but there were several that only carried two hours of credit.

"How do you decide to accept a course from another school that was worth two hours of credit and the similar course at another school was worth three hours of credit? NSU  
Speech Professor Dr. Bill Wallace.

All six faculty members said from the beginning there was a division between regional and research universities.

"The research universities did not want to work on transfer hours because so many of their programs are accredited. They did not believe they had to accept any hours from another state institution," NSU Humanities Professor Dr. Ron Phillips.

According to the literature, conflict is a persistent fact of organizational life. Situations of conflict in organizations are not always or even usually the dramatic confrontations that receive most attention and publicity - strikes, walkouts, firings. Nor is conflict usually bracketed into discrete public forums where negotiation and designated

third parties officially participate in the resolution of differences. Rather, disputes are embedded in the interactions between members as they go about their daily routine (Galbraith, 1977). If communication is fundamental to an organization, then so is conflict. They have a symbiotic relationship and conflict cannot occur without communication. This helps to broaden the context of communication. According to Galbraith. "The modern corporation is socially a theater of all conflicts that might be expected when hundreds and thousands of highly charged, exceptionally self-motivated, and more normally self-serving people work closely together. Conflicts emerge through a process of interaction and dialogue between groups and between individuals." The original theme resulting from the interviews was conflict. Themes resulting from conflict included 11. These included:

1. Curriculum
2. Goals
3. Structure
4. Leadership
- 5.. Barriers
6. Communication
7. Cooperation
8. Interaction
9. Electives
10. Tasks
11. Empowerment

These categories were developed through the process of segmentation. This technique allowed the interpreter to generate categories, themes, and patterns (Creswell 1994). I read each transcript carefully and made notes when appropriate. There was variation in what seemed important, but a list of clear topics eventually emerged.

The 11 themes were clearly too unwieldy for the data sorting process, and following Creswell's (1994) suggestions on how to work with unstructured data, I started to see if topics could be simplified by grouping those that related to one another together. I created a handwritten graph with these topic clusters and examined them carefully. The clusters were diverse. Some contained unique subjects, others melded seamlessly together. *Curriculum* had five themes under it, curriculum, communication, goals, task, and structure. The topic headings of barriers, cooperation and interaction fell under *Barriers*. Leadership, and empowerment became unified under *Leadership*. Once this sorting was completed, I examined the topic headings I had selected. It was important to not only select descriptive headings, but those that would reflect the content of the material I intended to group under them.

Common themes emerged from interviews of the faculty and Regents' staff member. There were 11 themes that initially surfaced under the major theme of conflict. They were then grouped into three major categories for coding purposes (See Table V). The three major themes were randomly identified by the researcher as:

1. Communication
2. Barriers
3. Leadership

TABLE V - Themes emerging from faculty and Regent's staff member interviews.

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Emerging Categories	Interview Themes
1. Curriculum	Curriculum Communication Goals Task Structure
2. Barriers	Barriers Cooperation Interaction
3. Leadership	Leadership Empowerment

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## Curriculum

The Oklahoma State Regents' for Higher Education was mandated by the Oklahoma Legislature to create a seamless transfer system for the state's public higher education institutions. The Regents decided each academic year what disciplines would meet and create a matrix of transferable courses. The Regents selected each institution's academic vice president to select the faculty to serve on the Faculty Transfer Curriculum Committee. Faculty selected by academic vice presidents to serve on the Faculty Transfer Curriculum Committee were grouped into disciplines once they arrived each fall on the University of Central Oklahoma's campus. Each discipline would meet together and listen to instructions provided by an academic vice president from a state institution. Each group was provided with a list of objectives to complete. The first objective was to elect a chair from the faculty present at the meeting. After the chair was elected, the chair presided over the meeting and the academic vice president sat to the side and offered explanations if asked.

The instructions to faculty serving on the Faculty Transfer Curriculum Committee were to walk through the Course Equivalency Project Document and complete the following for the discipline: 1) Faculty objectives; 2) committee work process; and 3) report deadline. Each discipline needed to develop a matrix after completing the three steps (See Table VI).

Table VI represents a matrix developed by the Faculty Transfer Curriculum Committee in the discipline area of Geography for the Oklahoma State Regents for Higher Education's Course Equivalency Project.

**TABLE VI - GEOGRAPHY MATRIX**

	World Regional Geography GG101	Human and Cultural Geography GG102	Physical Geography GG103	Physical Geography (Earth Science) + Lab GG104	Economic Geography GG105	Introduction to Geography GG105
CASC			GEOG 1113			GEOG 2243
CSC						GEOG 2243
CU		GEOG 2243	GEOG 2013			
ECU	GEOG 2513	GEOG 1113		GEOG 1214	GEOG 1313	
EOSC						GEOG 2143
LU		GE 2413				GE 1412
MSC					GEO 1223	GEO 1113
NEOAMC	SOCSCI 1013					
NOC	GEOG 2253					GEOG 2243
NSU	GEOG 3253		GEOG 2553		GEOG 3133	G E O G 2243
NWOSU					GEOG 2213	G E O G 1113
OCCC	GEOG 2603					
OPSU	GEOG 3603	GEOG 2243		EASC 1214		
OSU	GEOG 2253	GEOG 1113		GEOG 1114		
OSUTB-OKC	GEOG 2253					
OSUTB-OKM	GEOG 2253			GEOG 1114		
OU	GEOG 2603	GEOG 1103		GEOG 1114	GEOG 1213	
RCC		GEOG 2243				
Rogers		GEOG 2243		GEOG 2014		GEOG 1113
Rose	GEOG 2443	GEOG 1103		GEOG 1114		
SEOSU	GEOG 2723	GEOG 1713	GEOG 2713			
SSC	GEOG 1123					
SWOSU		GEOG 1103	GEOG 2103		GEOG 2113	
SWOSU-SAYRE		GEOG 1103	GEOG 2103			
TCC	GEO 2033	GEO 1043	GEO 2153	GEO 1014		GEO 1023
UCO	GEO 2303	GEO 1103	GEO 1203		GEO 1303	
USAO		GEO 1103				
WOSC		GEOG 2243	GEOG 2253			

Table VII represents a legend of two-year and four-year state institutions in the State of Oklahoma. The abbreviations of the school is represented on the left and full name of the institution is spelled out on the right.

**TABLE VII - LEGEND**

CASC Carl Albert State College	OSUTB-OKC Oklahoma State University Technical Branch - OKC
CSC Connors State College	OSUTB-OKM Oklahoma State University Technical Branch - Okmulgee
CU Cameron University	OU Oklahoma University
ECU East Central University	RCC Redlands Community College Rogers
EOSC Eastern Oklahoma State College	SSC Seminole State College
LU Langston University	SWOSU Southwestern Oklahoma State University
MSC Murray State College	SWOSU-SAYRE Southwestern Oklahoma State University - Sayre
NEOAMC Northeastern Oklahoma A&M College	TCC Tulsa Community College
NOC Northern Oklahoma College	UCO University of Central Oklahoma
NSU Northeastern State University	USAO University of Science and Arts of Oklahoma
NWOSU Northwestern Oklahoma State University	WOSC Western Oklahoma State College
OCCC Oklahoma City Community College	
OPSU Oklahoma Panhandle State University	



Communication is an integral part of each person's daily life. It can occur between two individuals, in groups, in formal or informal settings. Effective communication is essential if deeper critical examination of issues is to occur. These examinations can eventually lead to dialogue and then promote collective thinking.

One of the key theme areas, *Curriculum*, was illustrated by one interviewee. The major war, according to the faculty involved in the Faculty Transfer Curriculum Committee, was over curriculum.

"Well, the primary things were to make sure that equivalent courses taught on various campuses across the state were recognized as equivalent courses across the state," NSU Geography Professor. "So then there was a lot of discussion about whether a course, for example, that may be offered at a 3000 or 4000 level here with comparable name and comparable description that may be offered at a freshman or sophomore level at a community college. Were those truly equivalent courses and could someone take that at a community college and then transfer here and get credit?" NSU Geography Professor Dr. Chuck Ziehr.

"We were to make sure that equivalent courses taught on various campuses across the state were recognized as equivalent courses across the state. It was a problem of numbering or what level they were taught at different schools and does that constitute different course material or was that a different level? And so, in the geography section, we had about three or four names across the state for our introductory course and we pulled those names together and started talking among the group about the content of those courses and to find in fact if they were comparable courses than the other issues at that level," NSU Geography Professor Dr. Chuck Ziehr.

Most of the committee meetings were spent discussing curriculum and curriculum-related issues.

"Four committees met in September 2000 (Business Communications, Computer Science, Information Systems, and Mathematics). The

committees to meet each year are determined by the Council on Instruction members and the time elapsed since the committee met last," State Regents' staff member.

Have the goals been accomplished?

"No, See we haven't seen any results of that at all," NSU Humanities Professor Dr. Ron Phillips.

"We had a spirit of cooperation from the start. The committee decided we are our own entity. We worked hard for four years on transfer and course content. The matrix is hard to follow. Each committee was assigned a task. There was no final document or closure," NEO Journalism Instructor Monty Franks.

There were mixed reactions by committee members whether the goals were being met and if the meetings were useful in task.

"I do not see a workable plan coming out of these meetings," NSU Humanities Professor Dr. Ron Phillips.

Several of the faculty said they have brought the discussions back to their faculty and minor changes have occurred within the discipline.

"My faculty used this as an opportunity to update our course descriptions in the university catalog," NSU Biology Professor Dr. Craig Clifford.

"We have talked about the committees' work and looked at our curriculum. We have played it by the book and we have been asked to do as we perceive it," NSU Speech Professor Dr. Bill Wallace.

The six faculty participants said there was no conclusion or sign off in any of the meetings attended. They did not believe their term of duty was over. The faculty

members said they never received a set of final matrices for their area and are unfamiliar with the transfer guides on the Web site.

"I think after some committees meet for three or four times the State Regents finished the work and signed off on it. They failed to inform the committee members that their task was finished," NSU Humanities Professor Dr. Ron Phillips.

"Faculty must be involved in the transfer game. But it must be two-sided. Faculty at two-year colleges must cooperate with faculty at four-year colleges. There cannot be any of this 'tell us what you want us to teach' as yelled by an upset instructor at a two-year institution at one of the curriculum meeting."  
NSU Humanities Professor Dr. Ron Phillips.

As the illustrations emphasized the importance of communication and how critical it is to the collaboration process it also showed that communication can lead to deep dialogue promoting system thinking and allows for a better understanding between members of the community.

### Barriers

Disagreements, competition, fragmented services and a breakdown in communication are all barriers to a successful operation. Frustration and conflict were grouped into the theme of *Barriers*. These areas all have the potential to create a sense of hopelessness. One member demonstrated an example of frustration within the inter-workings of the committee:

"NSU has seven classes of humanities and some schools like OU have 30. The committee said each student has to take a core of six hours of humanities, and one course could be basket weaving and one could easily be listening to children's

music. After taking these two courses a person fulfills his six hours of humanities and we would object to that transferring. Humanities is an academic subject and it is music, culture, and then someone would say, 'let's substitute Western Civilization.' No, that's not a cultural aspect, so then we would be back to square one," NSU Humanities Professor Dr. Ron Phillips.

Another member discussed advantages of removing barriers in a group setting:

Only one faculty member, (Journalism) felt like any school was dominating and his reaction was the research schools had an agenda, especially OU. The Biology Professor said there was no representation from OU on his committee. The item that keeps coming to mind after reading all the transcripts is the fact that all committees met and tried to match numbers and courses. They also tried to weigh each course, whether it is with course descriptions, number of credit hours, or workload in the course. All those interviewed did not view the committee work as useless, but really did not see a workable plan coming out of this for all disciplines in the near future.

### Leadership

Leaders have the ability to "direct the activities of a group toward a shared goal" (Yukl, 1994, p. 2). This leadership quality was essential for the group to define and carry out its mission.

In the area of *Leadership*, there were different opinions about how the leadership roles were assumed and carried out during and after the Faculty Transfer Curriculum Committee meetings. Faculty members involved said they knew the Regents were paying for the facility and the transportation to and from the meetings, but were unsure of the Regents' role after that. One illustration from a faculty member involved in the

Faculty Transfer Curriculum Committee illustrated this concept:

"I didn't see a lot of direct participation in terms of discussion themselves. We had our representative from the Regents sit in on one and a half meetings. This was an academic vice president from a state school. In the first meeting he gave us some direction to point us down the right path way," NSU Speech Professor Dr. Bill Wallace.

"Most of the time it was a waste of time. You drove to Edmond and spent all morning getting there and all afternoon in a meeting. I would go, I would listen and I would participate. But it is like when someone joins a church or something and they don't get a job or task, then they stop going. Edmond ran the show in the humanities committee," NSU Humanities Professor Dr. Ron Phillips.

"All the faculty were very accepting. All wanted to work toward a seamless system. There was no problem at the two-year college level. The law came about because a Legislator's daughter got an associate's degree and transferred with 22 hours toward her major and the university she transferred to would not accept the hours," NEO Journalism Instructor Monty Franks.

What this member was illustrating was how structure, position, and time all impact decision making and the role of the leadership process. Contrary to this notion, another group member saw *Leadership* in a refreshing new manner:

Only one of the six faculty members (Journalism) believed a school was dominating the committee sessions. His reaction was that research institutions had an agenda, especially the University of Oklahoma. He said the faculty member of OU would not accept any course other than the first introductory.

The Dr. Craig Clifford said there was no representative from OU on his committee.

"What was noticeable in our committee meetings was the absence of one of our major comprehensive institutions, the doctoral institution-OU."

The State Regents' staff member said the evaluation process of the committees was ongoing.

"The Council on Instruction, made up of Academic Vice Presidents from all state system institutions, facilitate curriculum committees and review the work done throughout the year. They also keep contact with their campus staff to monitor the project. The State Regents also operate a Transfer Hotline. This toll-free number is available for students to call and report any problems they are having with curriculum transfer. I monitor the calls and respond to the calls made to the hotline throughout the year," State Regents' staff member.

Leadership styles had a tremendous impact on the committees and the way the committees functioned. Leaders had the ability to create a positive group setting or a hostile one. Leaders also had the task of keeping the committee on target and organizing its charge. Leaders should have kept communication open and signed off on the completion of the duties.

After conducting all six interviews, I saw several themes developing. All of the faculty interviewed said they have experienced problems with transfer students and accommodating their hours. Most of the interviewees talked about the credit, or weight, given to courses and how they can make the transfer process easier by not accepting two-hour courses for three-hour courses. Course descriptions were also discussed.

"We kind of came to the conclusion that for a course to be comparable-it should have similar prerequisites," NSU Biology Professor Dr. Craig Clifford.

“It was only a matter of time before the state Legislature became involved. Many of the two-year colleges were teaching courses that were 3000-4000 level at the four-year colleges. It was out of hand.”  
NSU Humanities Professor Dr. Ron Phillips.

All six faculty members claimed some sort of problems within the individual articulation committee meetings. The most common problem was the confusion between three-hour courses and two-hour courses.

"There was one school that had its speech teachers teaching our equivalent to 1113 and only giving students two hours of credit. During the articulation committee meetings, we decided to make it impossible for them to transfer that two-hour course for our three-hour course which was a policy they had been doing in the past. We just decided to make it illegal to transfer that at all. As a mechanism for applying pressure to the administration at that institution to stop forcing speech teachers to teach basic level 1113 for two hours of teaching credit," NSU Speech Professor Dr. Bill Wallace.

Dr. Rodney Osborne said his department has also made changes since he began going to the articulation meetings.

"Well, yeah. We have. We have redone our whole curriculum and of course we had some input from our advisory board that our department has put together. We also got information from the articulation meetings and kind of incorporated it into the decision to change the curriculum."

The three themes that emerged from the 11 categories linked with the themes that emerged from the categories from the interviews with the transfer students.

### Section III: Transfer Students

As an adviser to undergraduate students, I have seen and heard it all when it comes to transfer horror stories. Each student contacted agreed to participate in the study and a consent form was signed (see Appendix G). In addition, the researcher recorded

observations within the interviews through field notes and an audio cassette recording of the interviews. These observations were grouped together as themes and were used to correlate responses with the interview transcripts.

I attempted to make the interview setting comfortable and distraction free and offered participants a choice of where to conduct the interview. It was decided that my a room in my office complex would serve the purpose. My office phone was on voice mail and the door was shut so there would be no interruptions.

The interviews with the students were natural because it felt like the student and adviser were discussing higher education problems. This part of the analyzation was not as overwhelming as with the faculty. I had heard most of this my 11 years in higher education. I sorted the data into manageable themes by reviewing the interviews to refresh my mind on the initial questions.

#### Interview themes

Originally 14 themes were randomly identified from the interview transcripts.

They included:

1. Goals
2. Transcripts
3. Guidance
4. Cooperation
5. Communication
6. Transferable Credits
7. Electives



8. Financial Aid
9. Faculty Advisers
10. Location of Institution
11. Graduation
12. Career Choices
13. Degree Choices
14. Regional Institution vs. Research Institution

These categories were developed through the process of segmentation. This technique allowed the interpreter to generate categories, themes, and patterns (Creswell 1994). I read each transcript carefully and made notes when appropriate. There was variation in what seemed important, but a list of clear topics emerged quicker than with the faculty.

I simplified topics by grouping them with related ones. I created a handwritten graph with these topic clusters and examined them carefully. The clusters were diverse. **Goals** had five themes under it: goals, career choices, degree choices, regional institutions vs. research institutions, and location of institution. **Cooperation** had four themes under it: cooperation, guidance, transcripts, and advisers. **Communication** had five themes under it: communication, transferable credits, graduation, financial aid, and electives. Once this sorting was completed, I examined the topic headings I had selected. It was important to not only select descriptive headings, but those that would reflect the content of the material I intended to group under it.

Common themes emerged from the interviews with the students.

TABLE VIII - Themes emerging from transfer students' interviews.

Emerging Categories	Interview Themes
1. Goals	Career Choices Goals Regional vs. Research Location of Institution
2. Communication	Transferable Credits Graduation Financial Aid Communication Electives
3. Cooperation	Guidance Cooperation Transcripts Advisers

There were 14 themes that initially surfaced which were then grouped into three major categories for coding purposes (See Table VIII).

The three major themes were randomly identified by the researcher as:

1. Goals
2. Cooperation
3. Communication

### Goals

Goals were an important part of each transfer student's reason for transferring.

The students had mapped a plan and tried to set a course, but many were faced with obstacles. Two students said:

"I selected NSU because of location and the fact that I didn't know until it was too late that I could get a Pell Grant to attend Oklahoma University. So, I did some college then joined the Navy and after I got out I just gave up on the dream of OU," Transfer Student.

"I thought going from one state school to another would not be such a hassle, but I found out I had to retake a tone of classes," Transfer Student.

Another obstacle students faced while trying to complete goals set was help in making career choices or majors that were right for them. One student explained her frustration:

"When I first transferred in the Spring 2000, I thought I wanted to be an English teacher and only one of the professors made me feel really welcomed. I hated it at first, but now that I have switched to another major everything is fine. I am welcomed. I needed to talk to someone as soon as I transferred about the right degree," Transfer Student.

Another student said completing a goal before transferring would have helped her

obtain her four-year degree in a shorter amount of time.

"I should have known what would transfer. I should have also waited to transfer after I got my associate's degree. It would have made things so much easier," Transfer Student.

### Cooperation

Students transferring from one higher education institution to another do not consider it an easy process. They express their frustrations with the actual process of applying, gaining admission, transferring credits, and registering for classes. Two students related:

"Some of my credits were not counted for no explained or apparent reason. I am graduating a semester later than expected because of my classes not transferring. I did take classes that I did not need. The most difficult problem I have had is getting the two-year school I attended to send my complete transcript to NSU. My final degree check showed I needed 36 hours but in reality I only needed nine hours," Transfer Student.

"There needs to be a person transfer students can go to whether it is at a two-year school or a four-year school about what will, and what will not, transfer for credit, This person needs to be an authority," Transfer Student.

At Northeastern State University, transfer sessions are scheduled throughout the year to help ease the obstacle of transferring. Advisers are available and students are able to complete class schedules at that time. NSU welcomes transfer students, but this is not the opinion of some of those who transfer:

"I feel lost sometimes. I feel as if people who have started here have more of an advantage. They are closer to my adviser than I could possibly get," Transfer Student.

"After my third semester at NSU, my new adviser sat down and discussed transferred classes and referred me to the dean who had done my degree plan. The dean also helped me with steps to get transfer classes included on my degree plan," Transfer Student.

"The biggest problem I faced was getting an appointment with my adviser. I also had trouble getting classes to transfer through the appropriate channels. I finally went to my adviser and talked to her. She had me get copies of the course syllabi in question and she made the decision whether my classes would transfer," Transfer Student.

"On Transfer Day, I wish I could have had a scheduled appointment with my adviser instead of a professor who did not know which of my classes would transfer. I also did not like being advised at the same time as other students," Transfer Student.

### Communication

The number of transfer students increases each academic year. The majority of students receive bachelor's degrees from an institution other than the one at which they began their studies. Demands have grown for efficiency in the transfer of credits. No one wants to pay twice for the same course.

"A lot of my courses were non transferable and I had to retake them. NSU representatives came to my two-year school and told me what would transfer and what would not. My junior college counselors did not assist me. A person could barely even meet with them because they are so busy," Transfer Student.

Several students faced the difficulty of getting their home institution to transfer their transcripts to their transferring institution.

"I feel transferring transcripts needs to be easier and less costly. Being a transfer student has been very hard but viable to my education and I advise no one to go out of state because the out-of-state tuition is costly and classes are very hard to transfer," Transfer Student.

"I transferred twice before I settled at a four-year institution

where I would eventually obtain a bachelor's degree," Transfer student.

"A transfer student needs to have sealed official transcripts in case the registrar's office does not received them. He also needs copies of the transcripts with him so he can discuss what he has taken," Transfer Student.

A staff person for State Regents' office said "the decision to re-examine the articulation process for the state was because of recent problems in the number of course offerings at all institutions and the level of course numbers at two-year institutions vs. four-year institutions. The State Regents' goal is to have all disciplines on a statewide transfer guide that is available on the Internet.

"If a person decides to transfer to a four-year university with an associate in arts or associate in science degree (two-year degrees), higher education guarantees that the associate degree will satisfy all freshman and sophomore general education requirements at the four-year university. If a person transfers to another college before he completes an associate degree, he will receive general education credit for courses that match those at the college he transferred to," Regents' Staff Member.

Faculty involved in this study said they believed that the two-year college's mission was to offer general education courses and a few courses in the respective majors. Faculty believed that students transferring to a four-year college or university with an associate's degree would have the general education core completed and a few hours in the declared major. What faculty discovered was an abundance of courses that were placed in the elective category.

"I have advised students who are entering a four-year universities with an excess of 21 hours of credits over those counted as electives." NSU Journalism Professor Dr. Rodney Osborne.

“The two-year schools are going to provide better means to help students with the selection of courses. This should be done whether a student decides to transfer or not. “TCC is the worst about having students take an abundance of classes that will either have to be retaken or basically lost,” NSU Journalism Professor Dr. Rodney Osborne.

Colleges and universities must be required to evaluate existing practices to fully utilize all possible potentials and help students who are planning to transfer.

### Summary

There were 14 themes that surfaced from the interviews with the faculty involved in the Faculty Transfer Curriculum Committee and the staff member with the Oklahoma State Board of Regents of Higher Education. Those themes were grouped into four major categories for coding purposes. There were 14 themes that emerged from the interviews with the transfer students which were narrowed to three major categories.

These major emerging categories were used to represent what was happening in the transfer process throughout the state, especially within the Faculty Transfer Curriculum Committee meetings. In this section, quotations from the interviews were utilized to illustrate the inter workings of the committees as told by those involved, as well as to provide the reader with a sense of the interaction process of the committee meetings. The melding of the two sets of interviews were used to illustrate two groups of individuals involved in the transfer process in Oklahoma. At times, the themes appeared to be interchangeable, yet often the themes that emerged were critical and central to the collaborative process being studied.

Conflict is inevitable in any area of life and is sometimes necessary in organizations, since it can help them grow. Inevitable or necessary conflict arises mostly because of inherent problems of incompatibility of goals or scarcity of resources.



## CHAPTER V

### SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

#### General

The purpose of this study was to (1) examine the patterns of communication between the various participants during Oklahoma's most recent attempt to facilitate student transfer from one institution to another, (2) determine how accepting faculty and students were in the most recent attempt to facilitate student transfer from one institution to another and (3) determine why the process moved so slowly.

Using case study methodology, this study entailed the following: a review of the literature, review of documents, a survey of a select group of transfer students, and eight interviews of individuals associated with the transfer process implemented by the Oklahoma State Regents for Higher Education, and interviews of four students who had transferred from at least one higher education institutions to another. Specifically, five interviews were from faculty at Northeastern State University representing journalism, geography, biology, speech, and humanities disciplines. The sixth faculty member was with Northeastern Oklahoma A&M College, representing journalism. Each faculty member served on the Faculty Articulation Curriculum Committee. The interviews also included two State Regents' staff members involved in the Faculty Transfer Curriculum

Committee, and four transfer students. Four questions guided my research and these questions will be reviewed to summarize the study.

### Background

Transfer students have been part of post secondary education since its inception and will likely be so in the future. Studies confirm that two-year college transfer students can mainstream into a four-year higher education setting and perform well. However, there are many signs that indicate a need to re-examine policies and practices surrounding the transfer options of two-and four-year institutions. With the growing public and legislative interest in articulation agreements, many states are mandating transfer guidelines. Their intent is to establish within these states' higher education systems, a seamless transfer process that enables students to move smoothly and efficiently.

Students urged the need for more advice from counselors and transfer specialists. They also argued that the need for open communication over what will, and what will not, transfer should be better vocalized. Students who truly wanted a four-year degree, despite the lack of a seamless transfer, buckled down and retook courses in order to obtain their degree.

### Summary

Someone got angry. Someone told his state legislator that he transferred from a two-year state institution to a four-year state institution and lost several course hours and had to retake courses he had already taken. The state legislator decided something needed to be done. So he and several state legislators wrote a bill that became a law. The law stated that the Oklahoma State Regents for Higher Education, the constitutional board of

nine members, appointed by the governor, and approved by the State Senate, would create a mandate to enforce this new law. The State Regents met with the presidents of all state supported Higher Education institutions to look for a way to create a seamless transfer system among all the state supported institutions. The presidents suggested that the academic vice presidents be in charge since this was an academic issue. The Council on Instruction (COI) was formed by the State Regents with the academic vice presidents from all state supported institutions making up the membership. The State Regents then decided to create a Faculty Transfer Curriculum Committee, led by the COI and made up of faculty representing all the disciplines taught. Meetings were set and duties were outlined. The main objective was a seamless transfer system for state supported higher education institutions. End of story? Not quite.

#### Interview Themes

Conflict, a consistent theme throughout this study, has always existed in organizations. Every theme from the interviews seemed to be born from conflict. Conflict was an issue from the start as discovered by the faculty and student interviews. The biggest conflict resulting from the Faculty Transfer Curriculum Committees was over curriculum. It was a struggle to get the faculty at all state institutions to buy into this seamless system. It made the faculty crazy and conflict was always in attendance at the Faculty Transfer Curriculum Meetings. Some committees never concluded their process. Other committees made an attempt to complete the Regents' objectives and create a matrix as an end result. Curriculum was a territorial issue among many of the faculty involved in the Faculty Transfer Curriculum Committee. The issues resulting from

curriculum were:

- Two-year institutions making curricula changes to satisfy four-year institutions' demands by changing course names, course descriptions, and courses in general.
- The battle over 1000, 2000, 3000, and 4000 level courses and what was transferable.
- Courses that were worth two-hours of credit at one institution and three-hours of credit at another institution.
- Research institutions claiming they did not have to allow any courses to transfer because their academic discipline was accredited.
- There were too many major courses taught at one institution and too few at another institution.
- General education courses were easier to place in a matrix than the courses designated for majors and minors.
- A sole faculty member sitting on the Faculty Transfer Curriculum Committee was having to make the decisions on what would and would not transfer for his department.

Faculty said not all the conflict was negative concerning curriculum. Members of the Faculty Transfer Curriculum Committee were able to go back to their respective departments and make curricula changes. These changes included rewording course descriptions, updating curricula, and deleting courses that were no longer taught. Members of the Faculty Transfer Curriculum Committee said many themes emerged from the committee meetings. The Faculty Transfer Curriculum Committee members were unsure at the first meeting and even the second meeting what their task really was. One committee member said, "At the first meeting I attended no one wanted to volunteer to be the chair. The academic vice president in charge of our discipline finally asked

someone to do it." This was the structure of the committee each meeting. The task and goals were the same - to complete the matrix. All committee members interviewed said they believed the major task was completing the matrix of transferable courses. There were three scenarios of the committees. These included:

- Worked together to complete a matrix for the Oklahoma State Regents for Higher Education in the allotted time.
- Made an effort as a committee to complete a matrix for the Oklahoma State Regents for Higher Education in the allotted time.
- Made no effort during the meetings and left the task to the committee chair and the academic vice president in charge to complete the matrix.

Six faculty members were interviewed representing five academic disciplines on the Faculty Transfer Curriculum Committee. Communication was vague from the beginning of their appointments. Academic vice presidents funneled information to committee members. Committee members received another packet of information when they arrived at the meetings. There was no communication after each meeting except when a notice was sent through the academic vice presidents to each faculty member involved on the Faculty Transfer Curriculum Committee informing members about the next meeting. "It seemed like we would start all over again," said the NSU Humanities Professor Dr. Ron Phillips. The committee members said the matrix was not completed at the end of the first meeting. They knew they would have to return. The problem was, upon returning there were new faces on the committee. The faculty members on the Faculty Transfer Curriculum Committee said a number factors played into the work of the committees. These factors included:

- Rotating participation in the yearly Faculty Transfer Curriculum Committee meetings.
- The lack of progress each Faculty Transfer Curriculum Committee meeting seemed to produce.
- Conflict among two-year institutions, regional institutions, and research institutions.
- The lack of closure to any task given to the Faculty Transfer Curriculum Committee by the Oklahoma State Regents for Higher Education.

The next major category emerging from the Faculty Transfer Curriculum Committee meetings were barriers. Cooperation and interaction seemed lacking at the beginning of each committee meeting. “There was silence at the start of each committee meeting when the vice president in charge was trying to get someone to take the chair position,” said the NEO Journalism Instructor Monty Franks. The biggest barrier, according to the faculty interviewed, was the domination by the research universities in the fact that many were not making an effort to participate in the objectives established by the State Regents. “The research universities said their schools were nationally accredited so they did not have to accept any transfer hours,” said the NSU Journalism Professor Dr. Rodney Osborne. The members of the Faculty Transfer Curriculum Committee said the factors resulting from barriers included:

- Research universities had an agenda coming into the committee meetings. In some discipline areas there was no research universities faculty member in attendance.
- There was a great deal of discussion concerning course descriptions and what was actually taught in those courses.
- The concern that one institution may teach 21 hours in a discipline and

another institution may teach 90 hours.

- No individual accepted the chair responsibility and stuck with it until the end of all the committee meetings.

Leadership was the final category emerging from the six faculty serving on the Faculty Transfer Curriculum committee and two State Regents' staff members. The Faculty Transfer Curriculum Committee members interviewed said the leadership role in the organization of the committees was weak. "There was a vague amount of instruction before we ever left Tahlequah and little addition of information when we arrived in Edmond," said the NSU Geography Professor Dr. Chuck Ziehr. The factors resulting from the leadership category included:

- There was a lack of direct guidance provided to the Faculty Transfer Curriculum Committees and a definition of what needed to be completed each meeting.
- The passing of the mandate from the State Legislature, to the State Regents, to the academic vice presidents at all state institutions, to faculty representing disciplines taught at the state institutions.
- Some of the committees were able to work consistently on a matrix.
- Institutions cleaned up curricula and changed many of the two-hour courses being taught to three-hour courses to be more uniform with other state institutions.
- There was no correspondence between meetings from any leader.
- Faculty members tried to work together to complete at times an unknown task to meet unknown objectives.
- The State Regents concluded that the transfer process and making it a seamless process is never ending.

The four transfer students involved in the study had many conflicts that involved issues concerning where to transfer as well as courses that would transfer and not get lost in the move. Goals, Communication, and Cooperation were the three categories emerging from the student interviews.

Transfer students interviewed cultivated a number of themes from the category of goals. Career choices, choosing between a regional or research institution, and the location of the institution were the themes emerging from goals. “NSU offered the major I wanted to pursue,” said an NSU Transfer Student. The factors resulting from the goals category included:

- Students studied the location of the institution to see if it would fit their needs. Some of the needs included whether they were close to relatives, adequate daycare, length of commute, and available housing.
- Students looked at disciplines they were interested in studying.
- Students visited different campuses to see where they felt they fit in.
- Students went where they thought they had to go.

Cooperation was the second category to emerge from the transfer students’ interviews. Students said they wanted to talk to an adviser and have some guidance in what they enrolled in after the transfer. “I just didn’t want to pay for the same class twice. But I ended up paying for several classes twice,” said an NSU Transfer Student. Factors concerning the communication category included:

- The frustration transfer students faced when trying to get transcripts sent from one institution to another.



- Students faced the problem of what would and what would not transfer.
- The tedious task of going all over a campus to complete what should be readily available at one setting.
- The loss of many course hours, due to lack of advisement.
- Transfer students feel like they do not belong when they transfer to a four-year institution.

Communication was the final category that emerged from the four transfer students' interviews. Students wanted a live individual to provide them with information concerning how to go about transferring. "I just wanted to talk to an adviser or counselor to help me make some important decisions," said an NSU Transfer Student. The factors that resulted from the communication category included:

- Students wanted to know how many hours they lack and when they will be able to graduate.
- Students were interested in the financial aid guidelines and how transfer students could apply?
- Transfer students understood that if they had earned an associate's degree, all of their general education courses would transfer.
- Students said that many of the two-year institutions seem to insist students take a lot of hours and then the students find out the hours will not transfer.
- Students wanted the availability of an adviser who could talk to them and make suggestions on courses that they had taken and what would transfer.
- Students wanted better advisement at the two-year institution.

## My Findings

I thought I knew everything about transferring when I began this study. But there were several things I did not know. For example, Oklahoma now joins the more than a dozen states within the United States trying to force state colleges and universities to be more accommodating to transfer students and in some cases, mandating that the institutions accept credits earned elsewhere.

Many of the states have mandated that every public college offer an undergraduate core curriculum that could be automatically transferred to any other public institution in the state. Many of these states guaranteed transfer students admission to other public colleges. Nearly all of the states seeking to ease the transfer of students had, at the very least, prodded public colleges to use common core titles and course-numbering systems. Those were posted on the Internet to help students with academic planning. Other measures being taken by state systems included use of common core course numbers and statewide transfer agreements. Community colleges were told to switch their academic calendars from quarters to semesters to coincide with those of public universities. Many lawmakers and higher education officials worked on a plan to help students maintain credits during transfer. Many of the lawmakers behind these mandates said they heard from transfer students who had complained that they had lost credits and had to take repetitive or unnecessary courses at a great cost to themselves and the state.

## Research Questions

Twelve individuals participated in this study. Five individuals were faculty members representing Northeastern State University in Tahlequah, Okla., a four-year regional institution.. The sixth was a faculty member representing Northeastern Oklahoma A&M College in Miami, Okla., a two-year institution. All were members of the Faculty Transfer Curriculum Committee. Two individuals represented the Oklahoma State Regents for Higher Education. They, too, were involved in the Faculty Transfer Curriculum Committee. The final four participants in the study were transfer students currently attending Northeastern State University. Here are their responses to the research questions in this study.

Question 1 How accepting were faculty in the Faculty Transfer Curriculum Committee process?

Four of the six faculty members reported their academic discipline had some-to-extensive difficulty with the Faculty Transfer Curriculum Committee process.

"It was so territorial. At the first meeting no one wanted to allow any course to transfer anywhere," said the NSU Journalism Professor Dr. Rodney Osborne.

The other two academic disciplines said most of the time the committee were accepting of the process, but there were times they disagreed.

"There was plenty of friendly discussion," said the NSU Geography Professor Dr. Chuck Ziehr.

The two State Regents staff members said they believed the faculty accepted the challenge put before them and worked toward the objectives.

Question 2 How was the Faculty Transfer Curriculum Committee information being communicated?

All six of the faculty said they received notice from their academic vice president concerning the next meeting. All six faculty members said at the beginning of each meeting there was a revamp of what had taken place before.

Three disciplines said they were right on target with developing a matrix and it was synthesized and cleaned up before each meeting.

The other three disciplines began all over at each meeting. None of the six disciplines have received a copy of a final matrix.

The two State Regents staff members said information regarding the next meeting was sent to institutions prior to the meeting. The matrix is available on the State Regents' web page.

Question 3 How were course equivalencies decided by the Faculty Transfer Curriculum Committee?

All six academic disciplines said the primary function of their committee was to coordinate equivalent courses taught on the two-year and four-year state-supported campuses by reading off the course, providing discussion and taking a vote.

"The State Regents had a list of courses as the beginning of a matrix. We began with the first course listed and went around the table one by one indicating if there was a course at each individual school that would be acceptable for the one on the Regents' list. It was an awesome task to say 'yes and give the course number of your comparable course, or no and just sit there,'" said the NSU Humanities Professor Dr. Ron Phillips.

Many times the committee would read course description from the various college catalogs to find out if they were comparable courses.

"Some courses, after you get past the introductory level, might range anywhere from sophomore to senior level with the same course title and at least if you read the course description - looks like it is in course content."

One student knew what the Faculty Transfer Curriculum Committee meant. She was on the student government at her two-year-school and was familiar with the committee's charge but had never looked at the state Regents' web page concerning

transfer courses.

The faculty said there was a lot of discussion about levels of credit. For example, a student takes a course at a two-year institution at the 1000 or 2000 level and wants it to transfer as a course at a four-year institution that is at a 3000 or 4000 level. The course has a similar name and course description. Is the course the same?

"Were these truly equivalent courses and could someone take one of these at a community college and transfer it to a four-year school and receive 3000 or 4000 level credit?" said the NSU Biology Professor Dr. Craig Clifford.

Question 4 How did the law work in regard to the Faculty Transfer Curriculum Committee?

All six faculty answered the same on this question. They were unsure. The two State Regents staff members said the State Legislature mandated that a seamless transfer system be in place in Oklahoma and gave the task to the State Regents for Higher Education to implement. This caused the State Regents to act and initiate a process that resulted in certain changes such as the creation of the Faculty Transfer Curriculum Committee and the development of matrixes for academic disciplines.

#### Research Questions Summary

On paper, the process in which the Oklahoma State Regents for Higher Education began implementing the mandate set forth by the Oklahoma Legislature, occurred. In

reality, it does not. The Oklahoma State Regents for Higher Education are having to play to everyone - the Oklahoma Legislature and the higher education institutions. The ones who are being left out of this are the transfer students. The faculty were empowered with the task of creating a matrix. This caused frustrations and much hesitation. There were great discrepancies within the process. Some academic disciplines were completing the process to the best of their ability, while others spent most of the time arguing.

The entire process was set in motion over a student complaining to her Legislative father about her loss of hours when she transferred. So this whole process began. But the process is weak and lacks the kind of leadership structure needed to succeed. The fact is there is still a way around it because faculty can create a memo and state that a class must be taken again or the opposite - the class will be accepted no matter what the matrix indicates.

The way to make this process better and have it succeed is to appoint leaders of each academic discipline committee and assign them specific duties. Involve transfer students in this process. Their voices are muted or have been lost completely in this process that was initiated to help them.

#### Recommendations for Further Research

The completion of the Faculty Transfer Curriculum Committee's task may never be realized. The process could continue indefinitely with revisions and updates on its way to the seamless system for which it strives. The individuals in this study offered their opinions based on expertise and experience on the Faculty Transfer Curriculum Committee

and an extensive knowledge in their area of discipline. The importance here is how will the State Regents for Higher Education continue to strive for a seamless system?

Future studies - perhaps every three years or so - might look at how many disciplines have completed a matrix and where the mission of the Oklahoma State Regents for Higher Education's seamless system stands. A future study might concentrate on new areas of implementation that colleges and universities are doing on their own to make the transfer process easier. Another study might consider the views of transfer students only. Vital to any future such studies is a comparison with this one and an offering of solutions.

Any studies dealing specifically with what each state is mandating and implementing to make the transfer process easier - agreements between two-year institutions and four-year institutions - would prove helpful. Finally, studies about the transfer students who do complete a four-year degree should also be under taken.

### Conclusion

A student, frustrated with the lack of articulation among higher education institutions in Oklahoma triggered the legislative mandate that stimulated the Oklahoma State for Higher Education to initiate a process to help remedy this by engaging faculty members on faculty transfer curriculum committees from all public higher education institutions under the auspices of the Oklahoma State Regents for Higher Education.

While not all committees completed their work, significant headway was made during the time frame encompassed by this study so that 4,531 courses in 32 disciplines have been



brought in line to facilitate the articulation process.

Now, more students are finding the transfer process less irksome. While this is commendable, more than 30 percent of the disciplines and/or courses are pending review. It also appears that greater emphasis must be directed toward advisement and student services to make this effort pay off optimally. Thanks to a constantly changing curriculum this work will likely never be finished. Thus, the review should be an on-going process that includes student assessment data and engages all entities of the public higher education system in Oklahoma including faculty and students. It is hoped that lessons gleaned from these earlier efforts will be instructive as the movement toward a seamless higher education system changes from ideal to fruition.

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## APPENDIXES

## APPENDIX A

### INTRODUCTORY LETTER

Dear Ms Rebecca Nott:

The Oklahoma State Regents for Higher Education were given the task of creating a seamless system for transfer students. The Regents established a Faculty Transfer Curriculum Committee which you have been active. I am pursuing a doctorate of higher education (Ed.D) at Oklahoma State University in Stillwater and I am currently working on my dissertation involving the Faculty Transfer Curriculum Committee in northeast Oklahoma's higher education institutions.

I know that you have transferred from at a higher education institution to Northeastern State University. I would like to invite you to participate in a round table discussing over any transfer issues you may have. I have invited 25 students to this roundtable discussion and will narrow the actual number of students I interview for my dissertation after that time.

The roundtable discussion will take place September 6, 2000 at 3:30 p.m. in Seminary Hall Room 136. Please call me at (918) 456-5511, Ext. 2891 if you can participate in this discussion. Thank you.

Sincerely,

Dana Eversole  
Leoser Center, Ext. 2891

## APPENDIX B

### ROUND I COVER LETTER

Dear Ms Nott:

Thank you again for agreeing to participate in my study concerning the Faculty Transfer Curriculum Committee. I value your opinion and appreciate your contribution.

I would like to meet with you in the Leoser Center Complex where the student newspaper and magazine are housed, Monday September 18, 2000 at 3:30 p.m. Please let me know if this time is convenient for you.

I will ask you questions concerning any issues you may have about your transfer experience(s).

In my final report, I will include a list of the participants and my reasons for selecting them for this study. As a participant, you can request a summary of the results of the study.

Thank you,

Dana Eversole  
Leoser Center, Ext. 2891



## APPENDIX C

Interview Protocol for Transfer Students Now Attending Northeastern State University for dissertation on "Articulation Among Higher Education Institutions in Northeast Oklahoma."

1. What school did you transfer from? When?
2. Did you receive an associate's degree? If yes, what was your area of interest?
3. At the college you transferred from, what help did you receive concerning transferring?
4. At the college you transferred to, what help did you receive concerning transferring?
5. In your major area of study, how many hours did you transfer?
6. What happened to the hours you earned before transferring?
7. Do you have an adviser?
8. Do you seek advice on your classes and scheduling from your adviser? Why or why not?
9. What obstacles have you faced since transferring?
10. Are you familiar with the State Board of Regents for Higher Education's transfer guide web site?
11. How and why did you select your present college?
12. How and why did you select the college you transferred from?
13. When will you graduate? Is this the time you believed you would graduate? Why or why not?
14. Is there anything you want to add, that was not asked?

## APPENDIX D

### INTRODUCTORY LETTER

Dear Dr. Clifford:

The Oklahoma State Regents for Higher Education were given the task of creating a seamless system for transfer students. The Regents established a Faculty Transfer Curriculum Committee which you have been active. I am pursuing a doctorate of higher education (Ed.D) at Oklahoma State University in Stillwater and I am currently working on my dissertation involving the Faculty Transfer Curriculum Committee in northeast Oklahoma's higher education institutions.

I would like to invite you to participate in a qualitative case study concerning the Faculty Transfer Curriculum Committee and its task. I chose you in particular because of your involvement in the Faculty transfer Curriculum Committee.

Your participation will involve being interviewed by myself concerning your involvement in the Faculty Transfer Curriculum Committee. The final report will include a biographical sketch of your professional experience. As a participant, you could also request a summary of the results of the study.

I would appreciate a response as to your willingness to participate by **Tuesday, Jan. 4, 2000**. Thank you.

Sincerely,

Dana Eversole  
Leoser Center, Ext. 2891

## APPENDIX E

### ROUND I COVER LETTER

Dear Dr. Clifford

Thank you again for agreeing to participate in my study concerning the Faculty Transfer Curriculum Committee. I value your opinion and appreciate your contribution.

I would like to meet with you at the Iguana Café, Monday, Jan. 24 at 2 p.m. Please let me know if this time is convenient for you.

I will ask you questions concerning your involvement in the Faculty Transfer Curriculum Committee.

In my final report, I will include a list of the participants and my reasons for selecting them for this study.

Thank you,

Dana Eversole  
Leoser Center, Ext. 2891

## APPENDIX F

Interview Protocol for dissertation on “Articulation Among Higher Education Institution in Northeast Oklahoma.”

1. Describe your participation on the Faculty Transfer Curriculum Committee.
2. What is your teaching area?
3. Describe state meetings vs. departmental meetings at NSU.
4. Please provide a statement concerning your views about the meetings.
5. What has been your time frame of committee life?
6. What issues have been brought to the table?
7. What have been the tensions/conflicts?
8. What is it like being on the committee?
9. Is your school taken seriously?
10. What has been your individual role in meetings?
11. What are the discussions vs. accomplishments?
12. Please provide an outline of discussions.
13. What goals are discussed?
14. How do the meetings end?
15. What are the conversations like? (content, tone, undercurrent)
16. What is the end goal of the committee?
17. Have any goals been met?
18. What goals are established?
19. Do you see any goals being accomplished?

20. In your opinion, describe the Regents' participation or lack of.
21. What is your opinion of the coordinator's participation or lack of.
22. Has this process been helpful to you?
23. Please provide statement a on this.
24. Have any changes occurred in your department as a result of these meetings?
25. Have there been any changes in the your curriculum as a result of these meetings?
26. Have the meetings been enjoyable?
27. Have the meetings been instructive?
28. In your opinion, are there any universities that are dominating?
29. Explain your previous answer in detail with examples.
30. Did you provide input on the situation?
31. Do you see any way to complete the Regents' action plan?
32. Is there anything I should ask you that I didn't?
33. What would make the committee meetings better?

## APPENDIX G

### CONSENT FORM SUGGESTED FORMAT AND CHECKLIST

#### A. AUTHORIZATION

I, \_\_\_\_\_, hereby authorize or direct \_\_\_\_\_,  
Respondent Researcher

or associates or assistants of his or her choosing, to perform the following treatment or procedure.

#### B. DESCRIPTION

The researcher should include the following elements in his/her descriptions of the procedure:

Name of investigation.

**“Articulation within the Among Higher Education Institutions in Northeast Oklahoma”**

Statement that the study involves research and is being conducted through OSU.

**This dissertation involves research obtained from human subjects.**

**Application has been made to the Institutional Review Board at Oklahoma State University for approval.**

Explanation of the purposes of the research and the expected duration of the subject's participation.

**The purpose of the research is to examine the 1994 implementation of the Oklahoma State Regents of Higher Education's Faculty Transfer Committee. Persons selected for interviews have been involved in the Faculty Transfer Committee either through the Regents' office or faculty serving on committee. Students who have transferred within the state of Oklahoma will also be interviewed. The duration of the subject's participation will be the time it takes to complete the interview.**

Description of the procedures to be followed.

**The procedures that the researcher will follow will begin with the initial contact with the desired subject outlining the research. A full disclosure of the research project will be explained. Potential interviewees will have plenty of time to decide if they wish to participate. An interview time and location will be determined next. Each interview should take between an hour and two hours and each will be taped. After the interview, the tape will be transcribed and then coded. If, at any time, the interviewee wants to abort the interview the interviewer will stop. All information gathered will be discarded.**

Identification of any procedures that are experimental

**Not applicable to dissertation.**

Description of any reasonably foreseeable risks or discomfort to the subject.

**Not applicable to dissertation.**

Description of any benefits to the subject or to the others that reasonably may be expected from the research.

**Not applicable to dissertation.**

Disclosure of appropriate alternative procedures or courses of treatment, if any, that might be advantageous to the subject.

**Not applicable to dissertation.**

Statement describing the extent, if any, to which confidentiality of records identifying the subject will be maintained.

**All the tapes and transcribed interviews will be kept in a locked file cabinet in the researcher's office. No one but the researcher will have access.**

For research involving more than minimal risk, an explanation as to:

whether any compensation is available if injury occurs.

whether any medical treatments are available if injury occurs. If such treatments are available, what they consist of and where further information can be obtained.

**Not applicable to dissertation.**

Explanation of how and whom to contact about the research:

**Please contact Dana Eversole, 917 NSU Drive, Tahlequah, OK 74464.  
(918) 456-4491 or (918) 456-5511, Ext. 2891**

**Additional contact:**

**Sharon Bacher, IRB Executive Secretary, Oklahoma State University,  
203 Whitehurst, Stillwater, OK 74078. Phone: 405-744-5700.**

**C. VOLUNTARY PARTICIPATION**

I understand that participation is voluntary and that I will not be penalized if I choose not to participate. I also understand that I am free to withdraw my consent and end my participation in this project at any time without penalty after I notify the project director.

**D. CONSENT**

I have read and fully understand the consent form. I sign it freely and voluntarily. A copy has been given to me.

Date: \_\_\_\_\_ Time: \_\_\_\_\_ (a.m./p.m)

Signed:

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Signature of person authorized to sign for subject, if required

Witness(es) if required:

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

I certify that I have personally explained all elements of this form to the subject or his/her representative before requesting the subject or his/her representative to sign it.

Signed:

\_\_\_\_\_

Project director or authorized representative

**NOTE TO RESEARCHERS:**

Under certain circumstances, additional elements of informed consent may be required. There are circumstances under which some or all of the elements in the above form may be altered or waived the requirement for the consent form to be signed may be waived

See 45 CFR 46, Sections 116 and 117, or contact the IRB executive secretary at 405-744-5700.



APPENDIX H

Oklahoma State University  
Institutional Review Board

Protocol Expires: 6/1/01

Date : Thursday, June 01, 2000

IRB Application No: ED00269

Proposal Title: ARTICULATION WITHIN OKLAHOMA'S HIGHER EDUCATION SYSTEM

Principal  
Investigator(s) :

Dana Eversole  
310 Willard  
Stillwater, OK 74078

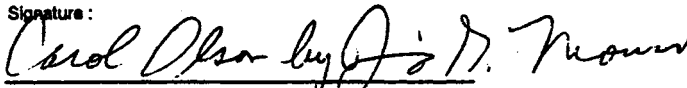
Deke Johnson  
310 Willard  
Stillwater, OK 74078

Reviewed and  
Processed as: Exempt

Approval Status Recommended by Reviewer(s) : Approved

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Signature :



Carol Olson, Director of University Research Compliance

Thursday, June 01, 2000

Date

Approvals are valid for one calendar year, after which time a request for continuation must be submitted. Any modifications to the research project approved by the IRB must be submitted for approval with the advisor's signature. The IRB office MUST be notified in writing when a project is complete. Approved projects are subject to monitoring by the IRB. Expedited and exempt projects may be reviewed by the full Institutional Review Board.

VITA 2

Dana Lynn Eversole

Candidate for the Degree of

Doctor of Education

Thesis: ARTICULATION AMONG HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS IN  
NORTHEAST OKLAHOMA

Major Field: Educational Administration

Biographical:

Personal Data: Born In Muskogee, Oklahoma, December 3, 1959, the daughter of Max Wayne and Peggy June Eversole.

Education: Graduate from Muskogee High School, Muskogee, Oklahoma, in May 1978; received Bachelor of Arts in journalism education, with a minor in psychology, from Northeastern State University in Tahlequah, Oklahoma in May, 1982; received Master of Arts in communications, with an emphasis in public relations, from Pittsburg State University, in Pittsburg, Kansas, in May, 1988; completed requirements for the Doctor of Education degree at Oklahoma State University in May, 2001.

Professional: high school journalism teacher in Joplin Missouri, 1982-1987; graduate teaching assistant for Pittsburg State University Communications Department, 1987-1988; news editor for the Tahlequah Daily Press, 1988-1990; instructor promoted to assistant professor, student newspaper and magazine adviser for Mass Communications Department at Northeastern State University, 1990- present.