

# Transfer Pathways & Articulation Agreements

## Tennessee policies and programs assist students in achieving educational goals.



Pathways programs and articulation agreements help students transfer between institutions to achieve their education and career goals.

AS THE FIRST STATE IN THE NATION TO OFFER TWO YEARS OF FREE COMMUNITY COLLEGE TO RESIDENTS, TENNESSEE HAS RECEIVED NATIONAL HEADLINES AND ATTENTION. MANY STATES ARE LOOKING TO THE TENNESSEE PROMISE FOR GUIDANCE AS THEY DEVELOP OF THEIR OWN FREE COLLEGE PROGRAMS.

A CHANCE TO ATTEND COMMUNITY COLLEGE CAN OPEN THE DOOR NOT JUST TO AN ASSOCIATE'S DEGREE OR CREDENTIAL, BUT TO ADDITIONAL POSTSECONDARY OPPORTUNITIES. STUDENTS CAN ELECT TO TRANSFER THEIR COMMUNITY COLLEGE CREDITS AND CONTINUE THEIR EDUCATION AT A TRADITIONAL FOUR-YEAR COLLEGE.

National studies show 80 percent of community college students want to earn a bachelor's degree. However, only 14 percent of the 720,000 students that enrolled in community college in 2007 transferred to or graduated from a four-year institution within six years. In Tennessee, 16 percent of community college students transferred to or graduated from a four-year institution in that same time frame.<sup>1</sup>

### Making credits count

Tennessee policymakers and education leaders have worked hard to align educational opportunities with relevant career opportunities. For example, the Tennessee Department of Education (TDOE) provides formalized pathways

from high school to work via 16 career clusters and programs of study.<sup>2</sup> These structures provide a clear path into the workforce through technical colleges, community colleges and four-year institutions.<sup>3</sup>

### Building Transfer Pathways in Higher Education

#### Articulation Agreements

Many states and institutions have adopted articulation agreements, which provide common course requirements and transfer policies between institutions. These agreements can include common course numbers, major and program requirements, and credit by assessment procedures.

Most articulation agreements are constructed and implemented in one of two ways. The first involves the state system or agency controlling all aspects of the agreement. The second form involves institution-to-institution agreements, which are facilitated by individual schools without state involvement.<sup>4</sup>

Tennessee's approach to seamless pathways - established in the Complete College Tennessee Act (2010)<sup>5</sup> - is a hybrid of both articulation agreement models. The Tennessee Higher Education Commission (THEC) coordinates the statewide articulation agreement and develops guiding practices, such as common course numbering for general education courses and lower division course requirements. Individual postsecondary institutions then build upon this foundation by co-determining and co-regulating additional requirements and opportunities for student pathways.

#### *Tennessee Transfer Pathways*

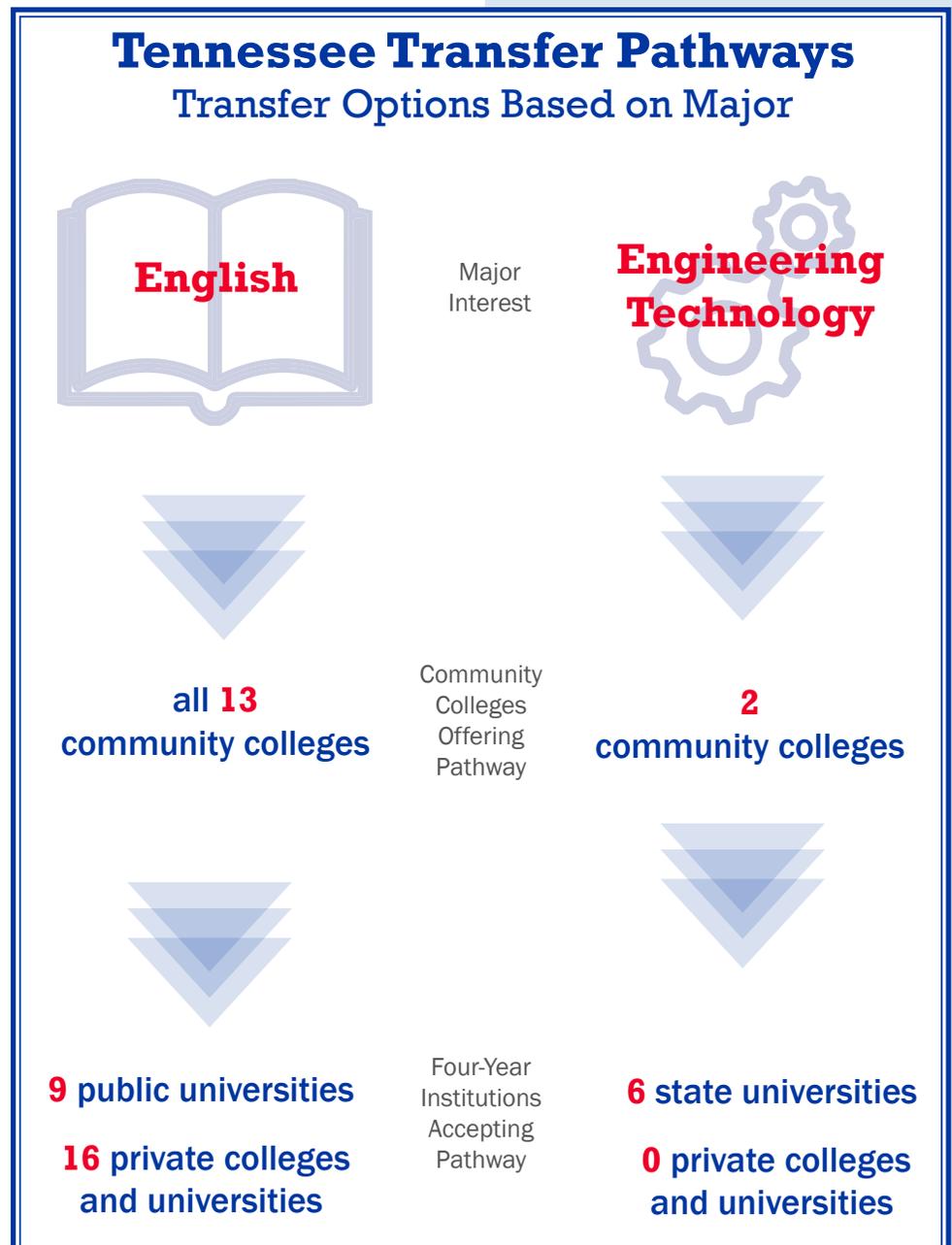
Tennessee Transfer Pathways (TTP) designates 51 majors across 8 focus areas that are guaranteed to transfer from a Tennessee Board of Regents community college to a four-year institution.<sup>6</sup> Whether entering college for the first time or planning their transfer to another institution, students can use the TTP website to view each pathway, the courses required, and the participating four-year institutions. The website also displays valuable career information, such as median salary and occupational outlook.

While THEC enforces the presence of TTP programs across higher education in Tennessee, the bulk of design and implementation work is carried out by faculty, administrators, and governing boards at each campus and system.

#### *Tennessee Colleges of Applied Technology*

For Tennessee College of Applied Technology (TCAT) students, community colleges can award credit after evaluating TCAT transcripts for learning outcomes that match those of community college programs. While community colleges do not offer blocks of credit hours for TCAT programs, individual credit hours are often awarded through prior-learning assessment and other credit-evaluation programs.

*Figure 1: Examples of how two Tennessee Transfer Pathways major choices affect enrollment and transfer opportunities.*



Source: Tennessee Transfer Pathways Website

In 2016-17, 1,072 students transferred from TCATs to community colleges or public universities. Students frequently transfer from TCAT programs to community colleges for health-related programs such as nursing.<sup>7</sup> Several institutions also have defined agreements for specific programs, such as recently announced partnerships between Northeast State Community College and TCAT Morristown for aviation technology<sup>8</sup>, and Pellissippi State Community College and TCAT Knoxville for five engineering technology programs.<sup>9</sup>

### Reverse Transfer

In the past 20 years, more than 31 million students have left higher education with some credits but no degree or certificate. To meet critical workforce demands and attainment goals, policymakers have begun to implement reverse transfer agreements across the United States.<sup>10</sup>

A “reverse transfer” is the process of allowing a student to be awarded an associate’s degree or certificate after transferring and completing degree requirements at a four-year institution.<sup>11</sup>

### Conclusion

Through thoughtful pathway programs and proactive strategies, policymakers and institutional leaders are working to help more Tennesseans gain affordable access to relevant postsecondary programs. From career clusters and programs of study in Tennessee high schools to Tennessee Transfer Pathways and reverse articulation agreements, students can take advantage of a variety of initiatives designed to help them reach their higher education and career goals.

Dr. Walter Bumphus, president and CEO of the American Association of Community Colleges (AACC), has stated this process is vital to granting students the degrees they deserve and properly recognizing community colleges for the value they add in education.<sup>12</sup>

Tennessee’s reverse transfer program allows students to complete an associate’s degree while pursuing a bachelor’s degree. Students who are currently enrolled in a participating four-year institution and have a minimum of 60 credit hours (at least 15 of which must be earned at a Tennessee community college) can be awarded an associate’s degree.<sup>13</sup>

Approximately 2,300 Tennessee students transfer to a four-year institution each year with at least 45 credits from a community college. Estimates suggest over half of these students may qualify for an associate’s degree while completing a bachelor’s degree. Since 2015, 2,284 reverse transfer degrees have been awarded to Tennesseans.<sup>14</sup>

### Endnotes

<sup>1</sup>Fink, D. Jenkins, D. (2016). Tracking transfer: new measure of institutional and state effectiveness in helping community college students attain bachelor’s degrees. Community College Research Center, Columbia University: <https://ccrc.tc.columbia.edu/media/k2/attachments/tracking-transfer-institutional-state-effectiveness.pdf>.

<sup>2</sup>TDOE, Career Clusters: <https://www.tn.gov/education/career-and-technical-education/career-clusters.html>

<sup>3</sup>TDOE, Open enrollment guide: [https://www.tn.gov/content/dam/tn/education/ccte/cte/cte\\_data\\_open\\_enrollment\\_guide.pdf](https://www.tn.gov/content/dam/tn/education/ccte/cte/cte_data_open_enrollment_guide.pdf)

<sup>4</sup>Education Commission of the States, “Transfer and Articulation - All State Profiles”, May 2014

<sup>5</sup>Complete College Tennessee Act of 2010. SB 7006, Public Acts 2010

<sup>6</sup>TTP Website: [www.tntransferpathway.org](http://www.tntransferpathway.org)

<sup>7</sup> Tennessee Higher Education Commission, “Articulation and Transfer in Tennessee Higher Education”, [https://www.tn.gov/content/dam/tn/the/bureau/research/other-research/all-other/articulation/Articulation\\_Transfer\\_Report\\_2017\\_Final.pdf](https://www.tn.gov/content/dam/tn/the/bureau/research/other-research/all-other/articulation/Articulation_Transfer_Report_2017_Final.pdf)

<sup>8</sup>Northeast Nation, “Northeast State, TCAT-Morristown sign transfer agreement”, <https://northeastnation.wordpress.com/2017/12/12/northeast-state-tcat-morristown-sign-transfer-agreement/>

<sup>9</sup>Pellissippi State News, “Pellissippi State, TCAT sign agreement to allow credit transfer”, <http://www.pstcc.edu/blogs/marketing-comm/?p=7128#.WqmWH5P-wbOQ>

<sup>10,11</sup> Anderson, L. (2015). Reverse transfer: the path less traveled. ECS Education Trends: <https://www.ecs.org/clearinghouse/01/18/77/11877.pdf>

<sup>12</sup>National Student Clearinghouse, Reverse Transfer <https://reversetransfer.org/>

<sup>13,14</sup> Tennessee Reverse Transfer, resources <https://tnreversetransfer.org/reverse-transfer-resources-for-administrators/>