

Fine Points:

Admission standards for aspiring teacher candidates who transfer from community college

On many four-year campuses, a large number of students in teacher preparation programs have transferred from community colleges. Community college can be a great stepping-stone to teacher preparation – providing that those who transfer are academically talented and have a strong foundation in the content needed for effective instruction. For that reason, standards for admission to teacher preparation for transfer students should never be lower than those for “resident students” already enrolled in classes on campus.

This analysis was prompted by concerns that admissions standards could be lower on some campuses; ed school deans are among those who have voiced such concerns.

What proportion of ed school students have transferred from another institution?

Data on 24 public universities that produce large numbers of teachers show that in over half of the sample (54 percent), transfer students constitute *more than a third* of the student body of the college of education.¹ The proportion can be as large as two-thirds of the student body.

What proportion of the ed school student body are transfer students?

| UNIVERSITY (n=24) | Proportion of education college students who transferred to the university | Total teacher production (2012-2013) |
|--|--|--------------------------------------|
| University of Central Florida | 66% | 864 |
| Arizona State University | 60% | 627 |
| Florida Atlantic University | 58% | 431 |
| Kennesaw State University (GA) | 51% | 583 |
| George Mason University (VA) | 50% | 476 |
| Georgia State University | 49% | 428 |
| Oakland University (MI) | 49% | 262 |
| Mississippi State University | 43% | 316 |
| Appalachian State University | 38% | 494 |
| Florida State University | 38% | 312 |
| East Carolina University | 37% | 681 |
| University of New Mexico (main campus) | 37% | 301 |
| Eastern Illinois University | 36% | 468 |
| Illinois State University | 25% | 1010 |
| Central Michigan University | 23% | 459 |
| Northern Arizona University | 12% | 674 |
| SUNY at Oswego | 11% | 299 |
| Eastern Michigan University | 10% | 386 |
| Missouri State University | 10% | 474 |
| University of Maryland, College Park | 6% | 296 |
| Ball State University (IN) | 5% | 410 |
| Montclair State University (NJ) | 5% | 534 |
| Indiana University Bloomington | 3% | 447 |
| Ohio State University (main campus) | 2% | 431 |

¹ This proportion includes students in colleges of education who are not in teacher prep programs and those who transferred from institutions other than community colleges. These proportions should still quite accurately reflect proportions of transferees in *teacher prep* programs within colleges of education. Based on national data regarding the proportion of students who have transferred at least once (33 percent) and the proportion that have at some point attended a community college, we estimate that 85 percent of transfer students are entering from a community college.

How prevalent is the problem of lower GPA standards for community college transfer students?

In general, GPA requirements for admission to teacher preparation are relatively low (the average required GPA is 2.5). Because students are usually required to have a GPA of 2.0-2.5 to transfer, at most universities it is unlikely that there is a differential (or at least not a large differential) between resident and transfer students in teacher preparation admissions. To determine what we judge to be the worst case scenario for the difference in GPA standards for transfer students, we examined GPA requirements for a small sample of universities whose teacher preparation programs have established a high standard in the field: a GPA of 3.0.

In this sample, as shown below, admission standards for transferees are explicitly stated in about three-fifths (60 percent) of universities. It is unclear in the remaining cases whether the fact that no explicit statement is made means that: 1) the required GPA is the same as that for resident students, or 2) the required GPA defaults to 2.0-2.5, the usual requirement for transfer itself. What is indisputable is that in about one-fifth of cases (20 percent), the required GPA is explicitly lower for applicants who are transfer students from community colleges than for those who are resident applicants.

Although only about 10 percent of programs now require a 3.0 GPA for resident students, teacher preparation programs are increasingly taking the commendable step (sometimes required by state regulations and accreditation standards) to increase GPA requirements to 3.0. Whether now or when requirements are raised, GPA requirements should be explicit and uniform for resident and transfer students.

Comparison of GPA requirements for admission to teacher prep programs

| UNIVERSITY (n=10) | Required GPA for admission of resident student to teacher prep | Required GPA for admission of community college transfer student to teacher prep |
|---|--|--|
| Pennsylvania State University (elem) | 3.0 | 3.0 |
| University of Wisconsin – La Crosse (elem and sec) | 3.0 | 3.0 |
| Central Washington University (elem and sec) | 3.0 | 3.0 |
| Northern Illinois University (elem) | 3.0 | 3.0 |
| SUNY College at Old Westbury (elem) | 3.0 | 2.0 |
| Colorado State University (sec) | 3.0 | 2.0 |
| Minnesota State University - Mankato (elem) | 3.0 | Not posted |
| Utah Valley University (elem and sec) | 3.0 | Not posted |
| Oregon State University (elem) | 3.0 | Not posted |
| University of Pittsburgh at Bradford (elem and sec) | 3.0 | Not posted |

The GPA requirement that should apply to all applicants to teacher prep

Teasing out the GPA requirements for transfer students for this analysis was no easy task. Were NCTQ to decide to do a more comprehensive evaluation of programs for the *Teacher Prep Review's* Selection Criteria Standard that included requirements for transfer students, significant communication with the large minority of institutions that do not post explicit requirements would be required. For that reason, our review of admission requirements under the Selection Criteria Standard in *Teacher Prep Review 2016* will continue to cover only requirements for resident students or requirements for which applicability is assumed to be general. Nonetheless, we urge all programs to adopt the following policies:

- Admission requirements for the teacher preparation program should be uniform for all applicants, whether they are resident students or are transfer students. Publicly posted admissions requirements should be explicit about this fact.

We note that whatever requirements may be mandated by the state for admission to the *university as a whole* are completely separate and have no bearing on requirements for admission to a *teacher preparation program*.

- As stated in NCTQ's Selection Criteria Standard, a 3.0 GPA should be the minimum required for admission to a teacher preparation program.

We note that the average GPA on college campuses is now somewhat above 3.0, meaning that any program that accepts a student with a GPA below 3.0 is accepting a student whose performance is likely to be *below average* for the campus.



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