PURPOSE
The purpose of this report is to provide information regarding transfer credit to the Provost and Dean’s Council. This report will provide data regarding transfer credit, an overview of the current process, as well as recent changes. Also, this report will address the following Higher Learning Commission (HLC) criterion:

4.A.3 – The institution has policies that assure the quality of the credit it accepts in transfer.

OVERVIEW
Transfer credit at Grand Rapids Community College (GRCC) encompasses a number of a wide variety of sources. These include test credit, transfer credit from another institution, reverse transfer agreements, prior learning assessment, and articulation credit from non-credit programs and high schools. There have already been reports on Articulation with High Schools which was submitted in August 2012, Testing (Internal Challenge Exams) submitted in October 2012, and another on Prior Learning Assessment, submitted in December 2012. As such, this report will focus on other aspects of transfer credit. Even though GRCC is often seen as an institution for students to begin with and transfer on, quite a few students transfer to GRCC for various reasons. As such, we want to ensure that students are able to bring with them any credits that they have earned in order to facilitate student completion in our degree and certificate programs. However, we must also follow the rules and practices dictated by the Higher Learning Commission (HLC) to meet the accreditation requirements set forth.

HLC Criterion 4.A.3, states that “The institution has policies that assure the quality of credit it accepts in transfer.” Policy 7.11, Acceptance of C- Grades
https://cms.grcc.edu/sites/default/files/docs/policies/7-11_acceptance_of_c_minus_grades.pdf, partially addresses this requirement. In the policy it is stated that “GRCC will continue its current practice of accepting grades of C- for transfer and, when prerequisites have the attainment of a specific grade attached to them, that grade will be C-.” This policy was recently reviewed at AGC and accepted as it stood with no changes. The policy also states that transfer credit will fulfill any prerequisites, even if a higher grade than C- is required. In addition, the catalog states that credit is accepted from “all institutions that are recognized by the Department of Education or that are regionally or nationally accredited and listed with the Council for Higher Education Accreditation.” This helps fulfill the criterion as it assures that we accept transfer credit only from institutions recognized by one of our accepted accreditation agencies.

There is also a section of the catalog labeled “Transfer, Test and Articulation Credit” to share our policies with students. A key portion of this section is the statement that “Course-to-course credit is awarded when course content is substantially equivalent to that at Grand Rapids Community College.” It is the standard process to send transcripts to specific academic departments for department evaluations when it is not clear whether or not there is a direct equivalent. This is also referenced in the catalog and is a part of the quality assurance practice of the Student Records Office.

One of the assumed practices of the HLC, B.1.b, states that “15 of the final 30 for an associate’s degree it awards be credits earned at the institution.” As such, the current policy as stated in the catalog allows a student to transfer in up to 47 credits, with a residency requirement stating that 15 credits must be completed at GRCC. Exceptions can be made to the number of transfer credits allowed in the case of students who change their program and needs additional credits applied, or other such situations. However, the student must still complete 15 of the final 30 credits at GRCC, unless there is a consortium agreement in place.

Until recently, transfer credit was awarded based on the declared program of the student. This reduced the number of credits awarded for each student and dictated that the Transfer Credit Evaluator check each student’s required classes for graduation before determining which transfer credit to award. However, each time students changed their program they were required to contact the Student Records Office in order to have their transfer credit reevaluated. Not only did this add an additional burden to the student, but it was not clearly communicated. Thus, there was a chance the students would not receive transfer credit for a class they should have. One of the changes made in October 2012 was to evaluate transfer credit based purely on the classes taken, not based on the program of the student. In this regard we will now transfer up to the 47 credit limit regardless of whether or not the credit is needed for their current program. This also allows the students to use the “what if” capability of My Degree Path to determine how their transfer credit could be.
used if they changed their program.
Another recent change to the transfer credit process has been the reverse transfer agreements made with six universities: Grand Valley State University, Ferris State University, Western Michigan University, Davenport, Michigan State University, and the University of Michigan. These partnerships provide an opportunity for students who may have transferred on to a four year school without finishing or applying for their associate’s degree. The goal is to award students a credential that they have already earned, just not yet applied for. The process begins with the four year institution contacting the student with information and a release form. The four year institution sends official transcripts directly to the Student Records Office for students that complete the release form, and transfer credit is awarded based on graduation requirements. Finally, the student is evaluated for graduation against the Associate in Arts and Associate in General Studies. Since these partnerships are under a consortium agreement, the assumed practice B.1.b requiring 15 of the last 30 credits be completed at GRCC can be justified. Finally, GRCC has joined the Michigan Credit When It’s Due collaboration seeking to facilitate the transfer of credits for students switching schools.

MEASURES

Process:
1. Number of students who received test/transfer credit by month.
2. Number of credits awarded by month.
3. Average number of credits per student.
4. Average number of days to post credit.

Outcomes:
1. Percentage of graduates with transfer credit.
2. Number of reverse transfer graduates by school.

PROCESS

1) **Number of students who received test/transfer credit by month.**

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2) **Number of credits awarded by month.**
3) **Average number of credits per student.**

*As of June 12, 2013 – data source: Student Records Office*

As can be seen from the data, the busy months for transfer credit are September, October, January and May. Also, the average number of credits awarded per student has remained fairly consistent since we began processing all transfer credit for students in October of 2012.

NEXT STEPS:
Ideally we should look towards spreading out the number of students to flatten it for the entire year. This will prevent backups and hopefully smooth out the time required for processing transfer credit. Part of this should include communication to potential transfer students the benefit of turning in official transcripts early, including registering earlier.

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Otherwise, it may be necessary to look towards other office staff assisting in evaluating and posting transfer credit, or hire a contingent employee during the busy months.

4) Average number of days to post credit.

For this data set, only records that contained a valid external organization ID for the transcript were pulled. This resulted in 2,601 transcripts from July 1, 2012 through June 17, 2013, compared to 4,043 from the previous query on all transfer credit. The process consists of:
1. Transcript received by Enrollment Center  
2. Logged into PeopleSoft (first date)  
3. Scanned into ImageNow by Enrollment Center  
4. Brought to Student Records Office (once a week)  
   5. Evaluated for transfer credit  a. Send to departments for evaluation as needed  
      b. Contact Associate Deans as necessary to receive response  

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6. Transfer credit posted into PeopleSoft (second date)  
7. Scanned into ImageNow by Student Records Office  

*As of June 17, 2013 – data source: Student Records Office  
Please keep in mind that only the most recent posting date is saved for transfer credit, and it also only looks at the most recent date on the transcript input into PeopleSoft. For the most part, those of 51+ days can be excluded as most are transcripts that needed to be re-evaluated. What can be seen in the data above is the bulk of transcripts are evaluated and posted within 6-15 days of receiving the transcript.  

**NEXT STEPS:**  
The goal here is to move the distributions to the first two groups, having the majority of transfer credit posted within 1-10 days of receiving the transcript. Ideally we would post the credit within 48 hours of receiving the transcript. To facilitate this, the Student Records Office will begin picking up transcripts daily from the Enrollment Center. This will ensure that a transcript is not lost in a weekly batch brought down, and further ensure that transcripts be evaluated shortly after received. Also, the purchase of TES software will help reduce the amount of time needed for evaluation. It is a database of courses from other colleges containing vital information, including course description and transfer equivalencies. As mentioned previously, it also might be necessary to hire a contingent employee during busy times.

**OUTCOMES**  
1) Percentage of graduates with transfer credit.

Data as of June 17, 2013 – data source: Student Records Office

From the data, the percentage of graduates comparing Fall to Fall, Winter to Winter, and Summer to Summer, remained fairly constant. Also, we have a smaller percentage of graduates with transfer credit in the Winter semesters. Most likely this is due to the larger number of traditional students graduating at that time, however this could be an area of improvement.
2) Number of reverse transfer graduates by school.

Data as of June 18, 2013 – data source: Student Records Office

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The data for Davenport University and Michigan State University is not yet available, as the initial reverse transfer information was recently sent to students. It can be noted that the percentage of students graduating through reverse transfer is fairly low, at approximately 56% total. The common barriers to graduation include a lack of PS 110 and/or Wellness course under the general graduation requirements. All reverse transfer applicants are evaluated for the Associate in Arts and Associate in General Studies currently. Any student seeking a different degree or certificate would need to complete the normal graduation audit to apply.

NEXT STEPS:
The Student Records Office will continue monitoring reverse transfer graduation numbers and implement a communication plan. Currently we rely on the four year institution to contact the student, as they cannot release the student information to us due to FERPA concerns. However, we can attempt to find possible reverse transfer candidates by examining students that sent official transcripts to our partner institutions and send an informational email. Currently the query to select students is being developed with the goal of sending a mass email in July or August 2013.

PROCESS/POLICY NEXT STEPS:
The first item that we need to address is the language in the catalog regarding transfer credit. These changes will be targeted for the Fall 2013 catalog release, occurring in June/July 2013. The following updates are recommended to clarify the current policies and practices of GRCC:

1. Under Graduation Requirements – General Requirements – Item #2: a. Change language to say “Complete at least 15 credits of the final 30 credits of course work at GRCC.”
   b. This will align our policy with the requirements of HLC’s assumed practices (B.1.b)

2. Under Transfer, Test and Articulation Credit: a. Update to reflect the current practice of accepting of credits up to the maximum allowed per the residency requirement, regardless of program. Only students with more than 47 credits of transfer credit will be evaluated based on their selected program.
   b. This update will create transparency for students regarding the current practice.

3. Create a new policy which includes how we recognize an institution for acceptance of transfer credit. a. The catalog states that GRCC accepts credit from regionally or nationally accredited institutions, as recognized by the Department of Education and listed with the Council for Higher Education Accreditation, but it is not referenced in a formal policy.
   b. Criterion 4.A.3 requires policies in place to assure quality of transfer credit.
   c. Update the Student Records website to include information regarding transfer policies and procedures.