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AAS Transfer
Working Group Meeting
January 21, 2022
Minutes

A meeting of the Early Childhood Access Consortium for AAS Transfer Working Group was called to order at 12 pm via telephone and video conference as permitted by Public Act 101-0640.

Participating in the meeting were: Christi Chadwick, Illinois Board of Higher Education; Marcus Brown, Illinois Community College Board; Allison Decker, Illinois Community College Board; Sue Maes, Consultant; Melissa Batchelor, Lewis & Clark Community College; Kate Connor, City Colleges of Chicago (Truman College); Stacie M. Kirk, Southern Illinois University Edwardsville; Melissa Szymczak, Joliet Junior College; and Jean Zaar, College of DuPage; Andrianna Smyrniotis, Illinois Central College; Paula Luszcz, Oakton Community College; Danyle Watkins, Lincoln Land Community College; Amy Hurd, Illinois State University; Amy Maxeiner, Black Hawk College; Amy Kelly, Governors State University; Victoria F. Trinder, University of Illinois Chicago; Jess Ray, Illinois State University; Joanne Kantner, Kishwaukee College; Jennifer Kirmes, Illinois State Board of Education; Amy Kilgus Chamley, Parkland College; Anne Pradzinski, National Louis University; Tywanda Jiles, Chicago State University; Lisa Downey, National Louis University; Julie Obermark, Kaskaskia College; Sarah Gowler, Kankakee Community College; Eric Sheffield, Western Illinois University; Natalie Phillips, Saint Xavier University; Caleb Westberg, Chicago State University; Catherine Main, University of Illinois Chicago.

Marcus Brown, Deputy Director Illinois Community College Board, welcomed the working group and went over general meeting guidelines. A quick round of introductions followed.

Marcus Brown provided an explanation of the community of practice and the role of the AAS Working group. He discussed the charge and purpose of the working group and highlighted language from the [establishing legislation](#). The focus of the group is to identify promising and best practices around ensuring the seamless transfer of the AAS in Early Childhood Education and ways to ensure that students can complete their programs.

Jess Ray from Illinois State University had concerns regarding the degree audit systems in place at the colleges and universities and questioned what potential resources/funding may be available to assist colleges and universities with navigating this process. Marcus Brown advised that there may still be the need for course-to-course articulation, but the idea is that the entirety of the program is accepted and applies towards the Baccalaureate program.

Jennifer Kirmes from IL State Board of Education reiterated that ISBE wants to make sure that individuals pursuing this pathway can continue a licensure track with no obstacles. There are proposed revisions to the sections that deal with Early Childhood endorsement, General Education requirements, and field experience/student teaching. The ISBE rules are open for comment for nine more days. She welcomed comments from the group and provided the link to view the rules.

Marcus Brown advised that the pathways to Professional Educator License (PEL) are to be clearly stated and some institutions have tracks for both PEL and non-PEL depending on the student's desired

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trajectory. There are several things that will impact alignment and the members will continue to work through these items to make sure that the process works effectively.

Marcus Brown opened the discussion to the working group to voice potential concerns and questions. Jess Ray mentioned that he did not see operational costs in the list of challenges. Because this will change processing at the institutions, there may be a significant cost impact. Eric Sheffield, Western Illinois University, brought up the issue of salaries for the early childhood workforce and teachers and how that will impact interest. He also mentioned the state tests and the fact that some of these students may come in with limited general education coursework which may negatively impact pass rates. Jess Ray indicated confusion regarding the legislation in general and the need to assist the transfer coordinators and admissions staff who will be a big part of this process. Chadwick advised that this presents an opportunity for the group to operationalize how this will be put into place with clearly stated goals and a path forward. The intent of the legislation is to smooth the pathway for students and acknowledge students' prior learning and experience. Ray also noted that he is not sure, from a curriculum standpoint, what needs to be done and that is not clear in the legislation. It was mentioned by Chadwick that the working group should review models that are working within the state to learn from what has been successful. Also, that it might be helpful to ground the group in the workforce challenges during the next meeting.

Joann Kantner from Kishwaukee College noted issues with transcript evaluations and how those will be reviewed. Adrianna Smyrniotis with Illinois Central College noted that community colleges have made changes over the years so it may be necessary to also revise PEL requirements. Marcus Brown advised that there are goals centered around outputs, so the group needs to make sure that the process works towards achieving those goals. Melissa Szymczak with Joliet Junior College noted a potential concern that students who take the PEL path may be pulled away from their current jobs, and colleges should be mindful of that. Szymczak also advised that there are successful models and 2+2 agreements that are working well. She stated that it is ideal to keep students in their current workplace as they work towards these additional credentials. Andrianna Smyrniotis mentioned that it may be beneficial to define what AAS means. Not all are the same, but all earn a level 4 ECE credential. The group should understand what an AAS in Early childhood means. Marcus advised that the AAS is attached with a specific major/concentration, which is different than the Associate of Arts.

Chadwick suggested meetings going forward could address opportunities as well as better understanding some of the content-related and logistical challenges. The group could also bring in others who can discuss what they have implemented and what they are doing that is working well.

Kate Connor with City College of Chicago (Truman College) advised we should outline the credentialing system and how that system aligns with degrees so we can understand the common framework that exists across Illinois. There are university partners that could provide examples.

Marcus Brown explained what the upcoming meetings and frequency may look like. Melissa Szymczak suggested Fridays to be sensitive to faculty scheduling. Chadwick advised an appropriate occurrence of the meetings needs to be decided to ensure goals are met.

Marcus Brown provided closing statements and contact information for both he and Chadwick for questions, comments, feedback, etc. He also advised that institutional funding is coming that will help institutions with this framework and related costs. Additional information will be sent in the coming

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week and presenters will be lined up. Marcus Brown advised that we need to ensure Registrar involvement/representation as this working group progresses.

There was no public comment.

Chadwick and Brown thanked everyone for participating and contributing to the discussion. The meeting closed at 1:00 pm.