

**REVIEW OF THE *COMPREHENSIVE ARTICULATION AGREEMENT* THAT EXISTS BETWEEN
CONSTITUENT INSTITUTIONS OF
THE NORTH CAROLINA COMMUNITY COLLEGE SYSTEM
AND CONSTITUENT INSTITUTIONS OF
THE UNIVERSITY OF NORTH CAROLINA SYSTEM**

A Report to
The Joint Legislative Education Oversight Committee,
The Senate Appropriations Committee on Education/Higher Education, and
The House Appropriations Subcommittee on Education

Submitted by
The State Board of Community Colleges and
The Board of Governors of the University of North Carolina

November 1, 2025

As Required by
Session Law 2013-72 (HB 903)

**ANNUAL REPORT ON THE *COMPREHENSIVE ARTICULATION AGREEMENT* TO
THE JOINT LEGISLATIVE EDUCATION OVERSIGHT COMMITTEE
NOVEMBER 1, 2025**

S.L. 2013-72 (HB 903), North Carolina General Statute 116-11(10c), requires the University of North Carolina System and the North Carolina Community College System to conduct biannual joint reviews of the *Comprehensive Articulation Agreement* to ensure that the agreement is fair, current, and relevant for all students and institutions and to report their findings to the Joint Legislative Education Oversight Committee, including all revisions to the *Comprehensive Articulation Agreement* and reports of noncompliance by November 1 of each year. The statute also requires the University of North Carolina System and the North Carolina Community College System to jointly develop an articulation agreement advising tool for students, parents, and faculty to simplify the course transfer and admissions process.

SUMMARY

The revised *Comprehensive Articulation Agreement* (CAA) was signed by the UNC Board of Governors and the State Board of Community Colleges on February 21, 2014. The revised CAA was implemented in the fall 2014 semester. The Transfer Advisory Committee (TAC) has completed four full rounds of compliance visits with UNC System institutions.

The University of North Carolina (UNC) System and the North Carolina Community College System (NCCCS) continue to work to enhance educational opportunities for NCCCS students by improving transfer administration, utilizing data to assess transfer effectiveness, and facilitating communication between respective constituent institutions. Both public higher education systems in North Carolina continue to work together to develop and support degree-mapping tools, improved policies, and professional development opportunities to facilitate informed and efficient transfer.

This report summarizes ongoing efforts to implement and fulfill the CAA. The TAC is committed to providing students and institutions with information and strategies to support both associate degree and baccalaureate degree completion.

The most recent version of the CAA, complete with appendices, is available here:
<https://www.northcarolina.edu/wp-content/uploads/reports-and-documents/academic-affairs/caa-oct.-2022.pdf>

CAA PROGRESS: 2024-25

Transfer Enrollment and Performance Data

The UNC System data dashboard provides essential data on transfer students, including enrollment trends, credit hours and degree transfers, graduation rates, grade point average, and performance in disciplines after transfer. Within the dashboard, data for individual community colleges and universities are available for deeper analysis. The UNC System data dashboard continues to be a vital resource in determining whether the CAA is having the desired impact on transfer student success and whether the changes in policy and practice put in place because of the CAA and the associated compliance site visits are achieving the desired positive outcomes. This information is critical to the decision-making process for individual community colleges and universities and for the two systems. Similarly, the NCCCS provides data dashboards to report on community college transfer performance, in addition to enrollment and graduation data. The NCCCS data dashboard has recently been updated to reflect changes in the state transfer performance measures, and as of 2025-26 those dashboards will also provide more concise community college transfer data. Both data dashboards provide comprehensive and timely information on transfer student access, success, and transitions between institutions.

Students who entered the NCCCS in fall 2014 and later are under the protections of the CAA, and a significant number continue to transfer to the UNC System as of the fall 2024 semester. This large number of transfer students who possess the protections of the CAA and their successful transfer to the state universities gives a clear indication of the value of the CAA to students.

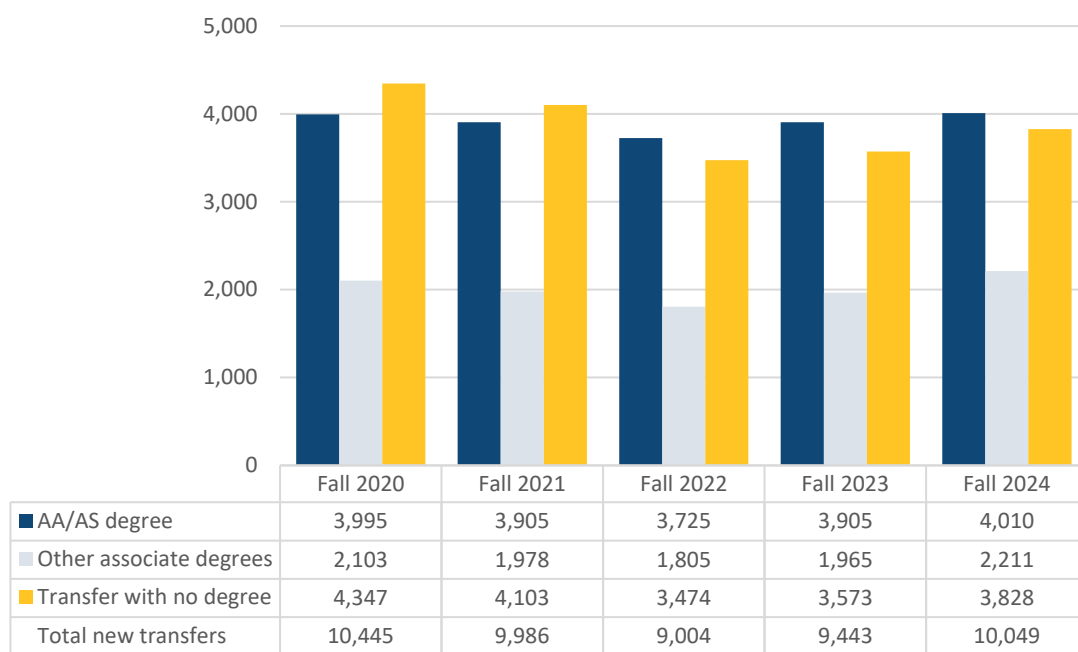
Transfer Student Enrollment

Before the COVID-19 pandemic, there was a steady increase in enrollment of NCCCS transfer students into UNC System institutions. This increase was a clear result of the revised CAA, proper advising, and the strong collaboration between the UNC System and the NCCCS. During the post-pandemic period through the 2023-24 academic year there was an overall decrease in associate degree attainment and transfer enrollment as compared to fall 2020. However, fall 2024 data shows transfer numbers increased, and in many cases exceeded those of fall 2020. While it is too early to draw definite conclusions, there is reason to believe that transfer activity may be returning to pre-pandemic trends.

Data illustrates an increase in the number of NCCCS students transferring to the UNC System (see Table 1), up from 9,443 in the fall 2023 semester to 10,049 in the fall 2024 semester. This marks the first increase in total transfer students since 2018. The number of NCCCS students transferring with a completed associate degree (of any kind) increased (see Table 2) in fall 2024. During the fall 2024 semester, the total number of NCCCS students transferring with a completed degree (AA/AS or any other associate degree) was 6,221, compared with 5,870 in the fall 2023 semester.

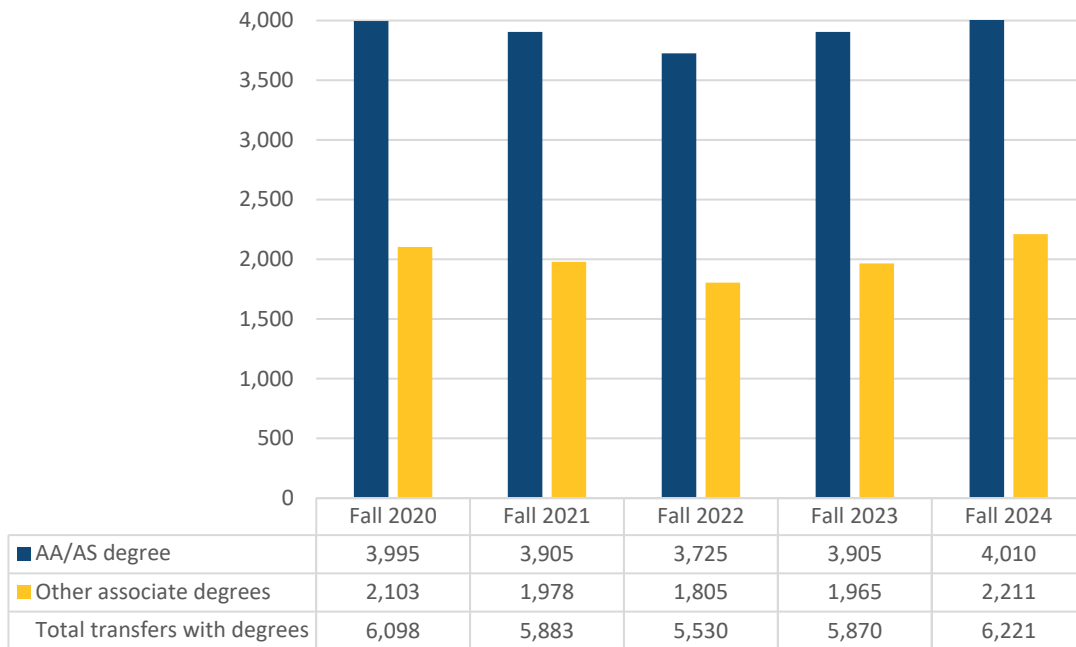
The number of NCCCS students who transfer to UNC System institutions with transfer credit, but no degree, increased from 2023 (3,573) to fall 2024 (3,828). In addition to the provisions of the CAA that require the completion of an associate degree, the Transfer Guides project and increased efforts focused on transfer coordination, detailed later in this report, are opportunities to encourage community college students to complete their two-year degrees prior to transferring to UNC System institutions.

Table 1
New NCCCS Student Enrollment in UNC System Institutions



Note: Data within Table 1 include the most current information posted on the UNC public dashboards and may differ slightly from previously reported information.

Table 2
NCCCS Student Transfers with Completed Associate Degrees



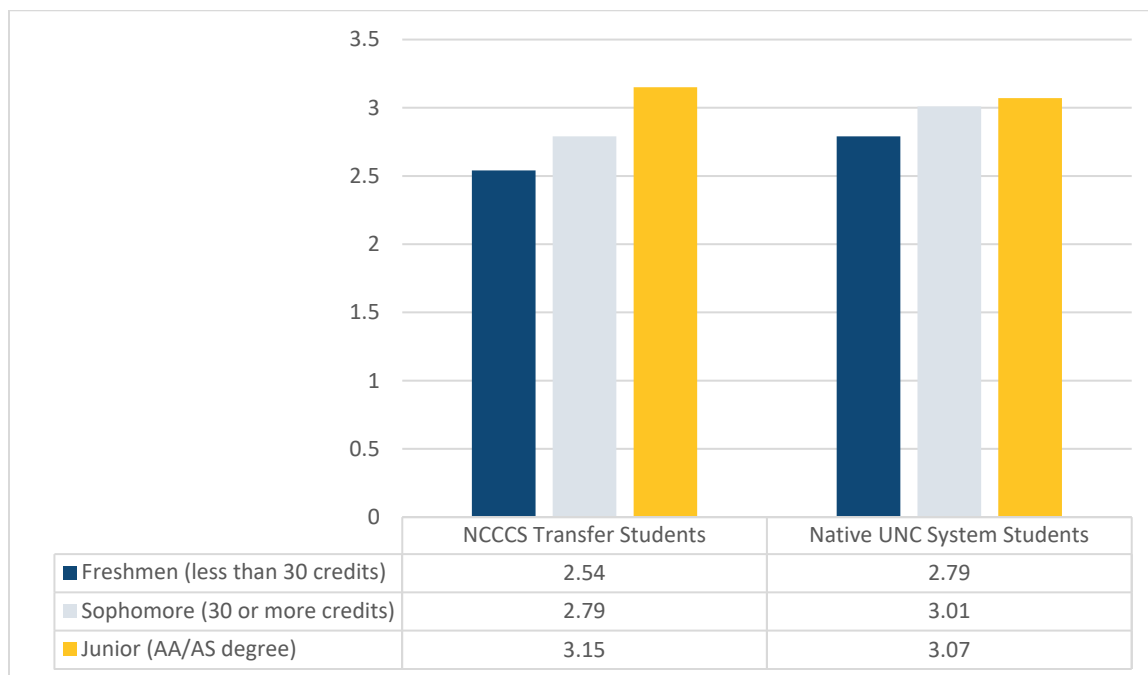
Note: Data within Table 2 include the most current information posted on the UNC public dashboards and may differ slightly from previously reported information.

Transfer Performance Data

The most recent data on transfer student performance (2024-25 data for students who transferred in the fall 2023 semester) continue to indicate a strong correlation between degree and credit-hour completion prior to transfer and academic performance at the university (see Table 3). Students who transferred in the fall 2023 semester from an NCCCS institution into a UNC System institution with fewer than 30 completed credit hours have a lower GPA than those who started at a university as freshmen. This is also true of students who transfer before completing an associate degree but have more than 30 credit hours of transferable coursework: GPA of non-degree-earning transfer students with more than 30 completed hours is lower compared to their UNC System sophomore counterparts who began at the university.

Students who completed the associate degree prior to transferring in the fall 2023 semester, however, performed better than UNC System juniors who started at the university as freshmen (3.15 GPA vs. 3.07 GPA). These results confirm the foundational principle of the CAA that transfer students who complete the associate degree prior to transfer will perform as well as or better than students who began their higher education journeys at UNC System institutions.

Table 3
2023-24 Transfer Student Grade Point Average After First Year



Note: Data indicated are reflective of first-year performance at UNC institutions for transfer students. This measurement was taken during fall 2024 to spring 2025 for the cohort entering in fall 2023.

Campus Compliance Site Visits

In January 2016, the Transfer Advisory Committee (TAC) established a process for reviewing the institutional transfer credit policies and procedures of UNC System institutions once every two years to ensure compliance with the CAA. As of the last round of compliance visits, the UNC School of the Arts has not been included because it had few transfer students. Since 2016, the TAC has completed four rounds of reviews with each UNC System institution using a combination of virtual and in-person visits. Beginning in the 2025-26 academic year, TAC will conduct university CAA compliance reviews with a rotation of in-person site visits and extensive surveys. Also beginning in 2025-26, TAC has proposed to regularly review community college CAA compliance using surveys and/or site visits.

Transfer Guides (formerly referred to as Baccalaureate Degree Plans)

The CAA requires tools to support student transfer. One such requirement ensures that UNC System institutions develop and maintain transfer guides (formerly called Baccalaureate Degree Plans (BDPs)) to outline community college programs with university courses that lead to timely baccalaureate degree completion for each major plan of study that the university offers.

Until last fall, UNC System institutions created and maintained BDPs based on best practices developed at each institution. After TAC reviewed statewide concerns with the utility,

timeliness, maintenance, and accuracy of BDPs in 2021, over 2,500 students, faculty, and staff participated in surveys and focus groups expressing various opinions regarding BDPs.

In response to the input received from stakeholders, and in collaboration with many teams across North Carolina, the UNC System Office created a new process and format for the BDPs. This centralized, student-facing resource was rebranded as Transfer Guides and made available to the public in 2024 on a centralized platform hosted by our close collaborators, College For North Carolina (CFNC). All Transfer Guides can be accessed at: www.cfnc.org/transferguides. In its first year (2024-25), 1,377 Transfer Guides were published and over 91,000 individual Transfer Guides were accessed.

At the start of the second year (2025-26), efforts are taking place to build on the strong foundation of the Transfer Guides project. In addition to the creation of a formal annual editing process, TAC is thrilled to see over 1,500 updated Transfer Guides publicly available on the CFNC site. During the first week of publishing the updated Transfer Guides for this academic year, there were already 6,000 views of individual guides. And while outside the official purview of TAC, the addition of Transfer Guides for the AFA in Music, AFA in Theatre (two tracks), AFA in Visual Arts, and AA in Teacher Prep and AS in Teacher Prep are highly supported by TAC. It is the hope of TAC that additional high-transfer community college degree programs will continue to be included in the Transfer Guides project to best support students across the state as they pursue transfer into baccalaureate programs.

CAA Revisions

The last CAA was significantly revised over a decade ago. Over the past year, TAC has focused efforts on updating the CAA to make it more concise and easier to use for students, their families, faculty, and advisors. Throughout the process, TAC referenced input from various stakeholders across the state in order to ensure that students, faculty, advisors, and staff members from both systems were informed of the proposed changes. Highlights from the proposal include an improved, centralized student appeal process, clarifying language about transfer of credits, and a simplification of the policy language. Revisions are being submitted in fall 2025 for consideration by the NCCC System State Board of Community Colleges and the UNC System Board of Governors.

Data Sharing and Student Access

The TAC has approached both system offices regarding the possibility of implementing seamless data sharing between the two systems. This technology solution could interact with student records in both systems and assign university credit automatically without the need for regular human interaction and manual evaluation of transcripts. Such a system will require a substantial initial investment, but it would position colleges to repurpose personnel from data-processing to coaching transfer students, would facilitate curriculum alignment, and would maximize the common numbering systems now present within both systems.

Both system offices are supportive of this type of program, and a pilot project is currently underway. TAC supports the continued support of data sharing across systems to best facilitate transfer.

Additionally, TAC supports including more detailed information on the UNC System data dashboard, so that tracking student transfers from community college to university may be easier than ever and provide information at the programmatic and department level.

Funding for TAC

Since its inception, the TAC has relied upon the home institutions of its members to fund member participation in TAC meetings, compliance site visits, and presentations at professional conferences or workshops. The TAC is intentionally comprised of members from across the state from both urban and rural areas and representing both large and small institutions. Unfortunately, the travel costs associated with the duties and responsibilities of membership place an additional financial obligation on institutions that already have existing significant constraints and limitations on their spending. The lack of such supporting funds may prohibit some institutions from allowing their employees to participate in this important work.

The NCCCS and the UNC System Offices both strongly advise that funding be allocated to provide for travel to TAC meetings, site visits, and professional presentations — all of which support the mission of increased transfer efficiency and effectiveness — for each of the members of the TAC. An initial budget request would be approximately \$7,500 to reduce the costs for the individual TAC members and their institutions.

Conclusion and TAC Recommendations

For more than a decade, NCCCS and UNC System institutions have made steady progress toward seamless transfer. They continue to perfect and improve their partnerships to provide more effective advising, clear and consistent communication, and ongoing support to transfer students. As awareness and execution of the *Comprehensive Articulation Agreement* increase in North Carolina, more students are completing associate degrees at community colleges and transferring to UNC System institutions. Upon transfer, these degree-completers are performing comparably with, if not stronger than, students who started as freshmen at those same universities. The data provided in this report demonstrate that UNC System institutions are not only meeting the expectations set out in the CAA, but they are finding creative ways to enhance the transfer process and to champion transfer student success. Considering this positive momentum, the TAC recommends the following efforts to continue to provide and improve support for transfer across the state:

- Technological and operational solutions that create greater continuity, clarity, accessibility, and transparency for advising and the processing of transfer students and informing course, program, and institution selection among the NCCCS and UNC System institutions, particularly through the implementation of statewide data sharing between the two systems.

- After reviewing student survey responses and comprehensive transfer data, the TAC would like to initiate discussions with other transfer stakeholders regarding expanding the scope of TAC to provide the same review service, support, and reporting to other uniform articulation agreements between the UNC and NCCCS systems.
- A website and/or mobile application that allows students to see how credit earned at one institution would be counted at another — a true degree audit for transfer credit.
- Additional training for community college and university employees on the benefits and guarantees of the CAA.
- Continuing collaborations with other key partners (e.g., NC State University's Belk Center for Community College Leadership and Research, myFutureNC, North Carolina Independent Colleges and Universities, etc.) in the work of transfer success.