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in Contexts of Evolving Higher Education System Structure,  
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The History of Massachusetts Transfer and Articulation Policies in Contexts of Evolving  
Higher Education System Structure, Coordination, and Policy Actors

A Dissertation Presented

By

DANIEL DE LA TORRE, JR.

Submitted to the Graduate School of the  
University of Massachusetts Amherst in partial fulfillment  
of the requirements for the degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

May 2018

College of Education

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The History of Massachusetts Transfer and Articulation Policies in Contexts of Evolving  
Higher Education System Structure, Coordination, and Policy Actors

A Dissertation Presented

By

DANIEL DE LA TORRE, JR.

Approved as to style and content by

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## DEDICATION

To my parents, Daniel and Guadalupe: Despite their own limited learning, they sent all six of their children to college with the conviction that education is the most important thing that one can attain. This attainment is for them.

To Katherine: Thank you for your boundless support.

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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Lastly, thanks go to my family: Natalia, Alex, and Katherine. My wife, Katherine, has been my unwavering supporter and fellow traveler as I made my way through the doctoral program. I could not have completed this journey without her.

**ABSTRACT**

**THE HISTORY OF MASSACHUSETTS TRANSFER AND ARTICULATION  
POLICIES IN CONTEXTS OF EVOLVING HIGHER EDUCATION SYSTEM  
STRUCTURE, COORDINATION, AND POLICY ACTORS**

MAY 2018

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Community colleges carry out dual missions providing occupational and collegiate preparation in local communities across the United States. These institutions prepare students for advanced study via transfer policies that lead to enrollment in baccalaureate institutions. State higher education systems use transfer and articulation policies to strengthen academic pathways between two-year and four-year institutions. These policies rely on established governance to facilitate student transfer between sectors. The transfer and articulation literature stresses the importance of statewide policy guidelines, yet little has been written about the process of transfer policy development involving state higher education governance and policy groups and actors.

The history of transfer policy formation in Massachusetts presents a unique case. From 1974 to 2009, a series of guidelines were produced. Despite the seemingly long-term commitment to transfer and articulation, controversies around policy authority, implementation, and compliance have persisted. Moreover, transfer and articulation guidelines were created within different public higher education governance settings and

comprised diverse policy environments and actors. Research questions focus on categorizing transfer guidelines and investigating how public higher education governance, policy groups, and actors, influenced the development of transfer articulation policy.

This inquiry followed a case study format making use of archival and oral history research methods. Archival research methods converged on obtaining formal records chronicling outcomes of system and policy activity as well as unofficial documents detailing background events. Oral histories supplemented written records with first-person perspectives of policy activity at different points. Policy environments including governance structures, groups, and actors, were then compared across historical periods to better understand how transfer and articulation issues have been perceived, organized, and addressed.

Results point to cyclical policy creation. At times, state higher education governance led the process, and at other times regional collaborations between two-year and four-year institutions resulted in innovative linkages. This history suggests ongoing tension between centralized control and individual campus autonomy, which plays out in transfer guideline implementation. The study offers recommendations for future research in Massachusetts and elsewhere. Ultimately, this inquiry has critical value for higher education systems, institutions, and professionals who guide community college students through the transfer process.



# TABLE OF CONTENTS

|  | Page |
|--|------|
| ACKNOWLEDGMENTS .....  | v    |
| ABSTRACT .....   | vi   |
| LIST OF TABLES .....   | xiii |
| LIST OF FIGURES .....  | xiv  |
| CHAPTER  |      |
| 1. OVERVIEW OF THE STUDY .....                                       | 1    |
| Definitions.....   | 2    |
| Statement of the Problem.....  | 4    |
| Purpose of the Study .....   | 6    |
| Research Questions .....   | 7    |
| Significance.....  | 8    |
| Organization of Chapters .....                                       | 10   |
| 2. LITERATURE SOURCES.....   | 13   |
| Transfer and Articulation Issues .....                               | 13   |
| Articulation Policies.....   | 14   |
| Articulation Policy Components.....                                  | 16   |
| Academic .....   | 17   |
| Enrollment.....  | 19   |
| Structural.....  | 22   |
| Statewide Governance, Coordination, and Transfer .....               | 24   |
| Unique State Cultures and Policy Development.....                    | 28   |
| Gaps in the Literature.....  | 29   |
| Public Higher Education Systems.....                                 | 30   |
| Governance Structures .....  | 32   |
| Autonomy vs. Coordination, Decentralization vs. Centralization ..... | 37   |
| Theories of Policy Formation .....                                   | 41   |

|   |    |
|---|----|
| Policy Theories in This Study.....                              | 43 |
| Policy Environments.....  | 45 |
| Policy Groups.....  | 46 |
| Policy Actors.....  | 47 |
| 3. CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK AND RESEARCH METHODS .....              | 48 |
| Conceptual Framework.....                                       | 48 |
| Articulation Literature .....                                   | 50 |
| Governance Structure and Coordination Concepts.....             | 50 |
| Policy Theories .....   | 51 |
| Personal Experience.....  | 51 |
| Visual Depiction of Conceptual Framework .....                  | 52 |
| Epistemology/Design.....  | 53 |
| The Extended Case Method.....                                   | 54 |
| Historical analysis in case studies.....                        | 56 |
| Researcher Affiliation and Subjectivity.....                    | 57 |
| Historical Methods.....   | 59 |
| Archival/documentary research .....                             | 59 |
| Oral history .....  | 62 |
| Data Collection .....   | 63 |
| Documents .....   | 64 |
| Interviews.....   | 65 |
| Protection of human subjects .....                              | 68 |
| Analytical Framework .....                                      | 69 |
| Employing Tosh's framework .....                                | 72 |
| Interpretation.....   | 74 |
| Validity of data and results .....                              | 75 |
| 4. FINDINGS: TRANSFER ARTICULATION DEVELOPMENT IN               |    |
| MASSACHUSETTS, 1974-2009 .....                                  | 79 |
| Transfer and Articulation Policy Development 1960 to 1969 ..... | 82 |
| Statewide Governance and Coordination.....                      | 82 |
| Early Transfer Policy Attention .....                           | 83 |

|   |         |
|---|---------|
| Transfer and Articulation Policy Development 1970 to 1979 ..... | 85      |
| Commonwealth Transfer Compact, 1974 .....                       | 85      |
| Statewide Governance and Coordination.....                      | 86      |
| Policy Formation Process .....                                  | 87      |
| Transfer and Articulation Policy Development 1980 to 1989 ..... | 90      |
| Commonwealth Transfer Compact (Revised), 1984 .....             | 91      |
| Statewide Governance and Coordination.....                      | 91      |
| Policy Formation Process .....                                  | 92      |
| Transfer and Articulation Policy Development 1990 to 1999 ..... | 94      |
| Commonwealth Transfer Compact (Revised), 1990 .....             | 94      |
| Joint Admissions, 1992-1993.....                                | 95      |
| Joint Admissions, 1995.....                                     | 96      |
| Joint Admissions, 1996.....                                     | 97      |
| Tuition Advantage Program, 1996-1997 .....                      | 97      |
| Statewide Governance and Coordination.....                      | 98      |
| Policy Formation Process .....                                  | 99      |
| The Revised Commonwealth Transfer Compact.....                  | 100     |
| Joint Admissions.....   | 102     |
| Tuition Advantage Program.....                                  | 105     |
| Transfer and Articulation Policy Development 2000 to 2009 ..... | 106     |
| Joint Admissions Agreement, 2000 .....                          | 107     |
| Revised Tuition Advantage Program, 2002.....                    | 107     |
| Education Compact, 2004.....                                    | 108     |
| Revised Joint Admissions, 2006.....                             | 108     |
| MassTransfer, 2009.....   | 109     |
| Statewide Governance and Coordination.....                      | 110     |
| Policy Formation Process .....                                  | 111     |
| Joint Admissions Agreement, 2000 .....                          | 112     |
| Revised Tuition Advantage Program, 2002.....                    | 114     |
| Education Compact, 2004.....                                    | 115     |
| Revised Joint Admissions, 2006.....                             | 116     |
| MassTransfer, 2009.....   | 118     |
| <br>5. SYNCHRONIC ANALYSIS .....                                | <br>121 |
| Prelude to Transfer Policy: 1960s.....                          | 121     |

|  |     |
|--|-----|
| Emergent Governance.....   | 121 |
| Early Policy Components and Environments .....   | 123 |
| The Advent of the Commonwealth Transfer Compact: 1970s .....                           | 124 |
| Governance Focus and Avoidance.....  | 124 |
| Policy Groups and Actors .....   | 126 |
| Governance Consolidation, Centralized Transfer Policy and<br>Consequences: 1980s ..... | 127 |
| Centralized Governance.....  | 127 |
| Centralized Transfer Policy .....  | 128 |
| The 1990s: Regional Innovation and Statewide Consolidation .....                       | 132 |
| The Last BOR Transfer Policy: The 1990 Commonwealth Transfer<br>Compact .....          | 132 |
| Revolving Governance.....  | 133 |
| From Regional to Statewide Transfer Policies .....                                     | 135 |
| Recurrent Policy Enterprise at UMass-Amherst.....                                      | 136 |
| Enduring Interests of Transfer Committees .....  | 137 |
| Continued Transfer Policy Revisions and Merger Efforts in the 2000s .....              | 138 |
| An Initial Attempt at Policy Merger .....  | 139 |
| Stable Governance and Another Policy Clash .....                                       | 140 |
| 6. DISCUSSION AND IMPLICATIONS .....   | 143 |
| Summary of Study .....   | 143 |
| Significance and Implications of the Study .....                                       | 144 |
| Significance for Students .....  | 145 |
| Significance for Institutions.....   | 146 |
| Significance for Policy Makers.....  | 147 |
| Significance for Other State Systems .....   | 149 |
| Significance for the Researcher and Other Transfer Professionals .....                 | 150 |
| Findings in Relation to the Research Questions .....                                   | 152 |
| Massachusetts Transfer Policies-Components and Structures.....                         | 153 |
| Evolving Statewide Higher Education Governance .....                                   | 154 |
| Independence and collaboration .....   | 157 |

|  |     |
|--|-----|
| Regional and centralized policy formation .....          | 158 |
| Co-existence of regional and statewide policies .....    | 159 |
| Individuals, Groups, and Environments Involved in Policy |     |
| Development .....  | 160 |
| The 1974 Commonwealth Transfer Compact.....              | 161 |
| Revisions to the Commonwealth Transfer Compact .....     | 161 |
| The Joint Admissions Program.....                        | 162 |
| Mass Transfer.....                                       | 163 |
| Transfer Committees.....                                 | 164 |
| Transfer Professionals.....                              | 165 |
| Politics in Governance and Policy Development.....       | 166 |
| Conceptual Framework Considerations .....                | 167 |
| Analytical Framework Considerations .....                | 167 |
| Suggestions for Further Inquiry .....                    | 168 |
| Other General Emphases.....                              | 171 |
| Comparison Studies .....                                 | 171 |
| Conclusion .....   | 173 |
| APPENDICES   |     |
| A. PRIMARY AND SECONDARY ARCHIVAL SOURCES.....           | 175 |
| B. MASSACHUSETTS TRANSFER POLICY DOCUMENTS .....         | 180 |
| C. SAMPLE INFORMED CONSENT LETTER.....                   | 181 |
| D. GUIDING INTERVIEW QUESTIONS .....                     | 183 |
| E. PRELIMINARY TIMELINE PROVIDED TO INTERVIEWEES .....   | 184 |
| BIBLIOGRAPHY.....  | 190 |

## LIST OF TABLES

| Table   | Page |
|---|------|
| 1. Conceptual Levels of Governance Structures.....                    | 32   |
| 2. Policy Theory Concepts.....  | 44   |
| 3. Oral History Interviewees.....                                     | 66   |
| 4. Massachusetts Academic Transfer Policies.....                      | 81   |
| 5. Corresponding Transfer Policy and Higher Education Governance..... | 155  |

## LIST OF FIGURES

| Figure                       | Page |
|------------------------------|------|
| 1. Conceptual Framework..... | 53   |
| 2. Analytical Framework..... | 71   |

## CHAPTER 1

### OVERVIEW OF THE STUDY

Public community colleges create opportunities for collegiate study in local districts throughout the United States by virtue of secular, state-supported charters. These higher education institutions are recognized for meeting local technical and workforce needs, supporting local economies, and fulfilling the notion of service to the public good (Kezar, 2004). More broadly, community colleges fulfill dual missions offering occupational and collegiate preparation to local populations. Community colleges prepare students for advanced study via transfer and articulation policies that lead to enrollment in private and public baccalaureate institutions. Typically, two-year community colleges and counterpart four-year state colleges and universities make up public higher education systems that provide overall structure for coordination and collaboration between sectors. Transfer articulation policies are developed and implemented within these formal structures, relying on established governance to facilitate student transition between community colleges and baccalaureate institutions.

Scholars highlight the importance of statewide policy formation to ensure efficient and effective implementation of transfer articulation guidelines (Ignash & Townsend, 2001; Southern Regional Education Board [SREB], 2007; Wellman, 2002). Without a coordinated system that clearly and consistently spells out transfer rules among institutions, the argument goes, community college students bear the brunt of navigating between dissimilar academic and administrative structures. Adding to their challenges, these students must first identify and then comply with often ambiguous procedural requirements before they can make the transition. Formal articulation guidelines provide the mechanism for public two-year and four-year higher education institutions to



coordinate transfer processes within established structures. Furthermore, as public institutions operate within statewide higher education governance systems, public policy makers play important roles in creating frameworks for the development of transfer policies.

These issues are at the heart of my study, which concentrates on the historical case of Massachusetts public higher education. From 1974 to 2009, transfer policy development involving the state's two-year and four-year public institutions addressed a number of articulation components and procedural revisions. Despite the seemingly long-term commitment to transfer and articulation, controversies around policy authority, implementation, and compliance have persisted. Moreover, the series of transfer and articulation policy ratifications took place under different public higher education governance structures and comprised diverse policy environments and actors. This study seeks to explore this complex history, focusing on how existing public higher education governance structures and policy actors were related to, and influenced, the development of transfer articulation policy.

### **Definitions**

To understand the relevance of transfer and articulation policy within the public higher education context, it is useful first to define basic terms. College student movement from two-year community colleges to four-year baccalaureate colleges and universities is widely summarized by the term *transfer*. It is important to point out that college students also transfer between four-year institutions, which is often called *lateral transfer*. Other students transfer from four-year institutions to two-year colleges. This movement is typically termed *reverse transfer*. In this study, I confine analysis to

*vertical transfer*, the transition of community college students to public four-year universities.

Underscoring transfer is a core characteristic, identified by Cohen and Brawer (1987) as the "collegiate function" of community colleges, which "rests on two sets of college operations: the liberal arts curriculum and the activities that support student flow into and through the community college and on into the universities" (p. xi). Ideally then, community college transfer involves both distinct academic programming within the classroom and a set of organized actions outside of the classroom to facilitate inter-institutional movement.

The latter set of activities is systematically grouped into what is commonly called *articulation*. This term emphasizes conscious efforts to cultivate and carry out practices, more or less structured, to support community college advancement at the baccalaureate level (Kintzer, 1996). Roksa (2009) adds, on a systemic level "articulation encompasses all institutional and state policies and practices aimed at facilitating the flow of students between postsecondary institutions" (p. 2447). Examples of articulation practices include negotiated course equivalents, alignment of comparable program curricula, and consensual transfer admissions requirements. This information is detailed further in the literature on transfer and articulation in Chapter 2.

It is helpful to clarify the meaning of *policy* to establish its role as an instrument expediting student transfer. Anderson (1997) defines policy as "a purposive course of action followed by an actor or set of actors in dealing with a problem or matter of concern" (p. 173). Although he focuses on actions carried out by individuals, Anderson implies that a "course of action" takes place over time and within a defined setting or

system (p. 177). For the purposes of this study, the terms *transfer policy* and *articulation policy* are used interchangeably to refer to the formal guidelines promulgated both between higher education institutions, and within higher education systems, to address the regulations and procedures involved in the community college student transfer experience.

Lastly, public higher education transfer policies are constructed within state systems overseen by one or more governing bodies. State legislation steers the creation of these entities as well as their scopes of authority. At the core of *governance* is what McDaniel (1996) describes as a tension between “institutional autonomy and academic freedom on the one hand, and government influence on the other” (p. 139). This strain plays out in the relations between institutions and governance bodies as strategies are proposed and regulations are developed. The history of transfer and articulation policy formation in Massachusetts similarly includes periods of variable institutional and governing body dominance, as this study will show.

### **Statement of the Problem**

In 2009, the Massachusetts Board of Higher Education approved the MassTransfer policy, a set of comprehensive articulation guidelines aimed at coordinating enrollment pathways and practices among the state's fifteen community colleges, seven state universities, and four undergraduate campuses of the University of Massachusetts (UMass). Although this was clearly a new policy, MassTransfer actually represented the latest iteration of a cyclical approach to transfer policy development reaching back to 1974. Over 35 years, public two-year and four-year institutions

established transfer policies that included an array of elements but continued to pose challenges in interpretation and employment.

From 1974 to 2009, community colleges, state colleges, and UMass campuses developed with variable independence and alliance. State colleges were already in existence, having expanded from 19<sup>th</sup> century normal schools for teacher training to comprehensive liberal arts and sciences institutions. Community colleges resulted from the advocacy of Governor Foster Furcolo in the late 1950s into the 1960s to provide alternative routes to higher education for underserved student groups. Originally established as an agricultural school in 1863, UMass expanded from one site in the late 1950s to a multi-campus organization in the 1990s. The three sectors were variously overseen by shared governance (state colleges and community colleges) and independent governance (UMass) in the 1960s and 70s. They were unified under a single statewide governing body in 1980, and subsequently uncoupled “in the early 1990s to grant more independence to (the) major university while retaining more statewide governing authority over state colleges and community colleges” (Richardson, Bracco, Callan, and Finney, 1999, p. 10). Since the mid-1990s, this combined governing/coordination relationship between two-year and four-year public higher education institutions has been in place despite an unsuccessful attempt at reorganization in 2003. Consequently, given the variable system-wide coordination over the years, Massachusetts public two-year and four-year institutions initiated various transfer articulation policies at institutional, sector, and system-wide levels. These articulation policies focused on different elements at different times, ranging from core academic standards to enrollment requirements to financial incentives and administrative safeguards.

On the surface, the repeated creation of transfer guidelines implies a longstanding interest in coordinating academic pathways between two-year and four-year institutions. At a deeper level, recurring policy revision suggests changeable organizational priorities reflected in ongoing challenges to policy implementation. This revolving approach to transfer policy development, in turn, has an enduring impact on student movement from community colleges to baccalaureate universities. Students covered by an early transfer policy might lose eligibility under subsequent guidelines emphasizing different criteria. Similarly, students meeting the terms of later policies might have been excluded from earlier ones that provided benefits no longer available due to altered requirements. Nevertheless, the history of transfer articulation policy in Massachusetts is unique in that public higher education governance and coordination continued to evolve as policies were enacted. Examination of these recurring changes in governance and inter-institutional collaboration sheds light on the incremental approach to transfer policy development. Moreover, this inquiry addresses how, in spite of recurring policy development, obstacles to student transfer have persisted. This is an issue that is especially critical at a time when broader economic and governmental forces stress the need for greater systemic coordination to ensure degree attainment and employment readiness (Massachusetts Department of Higher Education [MDHE], 2014, 2016b).

### **Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of this study is to better understand how, and why, transfer articulation policy formation has been a recurring challenge in Massachusetts public higher education. To address this, I examine the history of transfer policy formation, focusing on state higher education governance structures, as well as groups and

individuals who were involved. I identify how central governance forces, along with regional groups and policy actors, contributed to the process of state transfer articulation policy creation, from the first version in 1974 to the most recent major policy revision in 2009.

### **Research Questions**

The questions in this investigation begin with a descriptive aim. Given the extended period of time and the multiple policy enactments contained within, I begin first by distinguishing the different transfer and articulation guidelines. I follow by inquiring more deeply into the elements of each policy environment, placing attention on relevant governance bodies as well as interested groups and individuals involved in the policy formation process. I then step back to ask how these parts come together to illuminate the history of transfer policy development from a larger perspective over time. The questions are as follows:

- 1) What has been the sequence of articulation policy development in Massachusetts?
- 2) At the time of each policy creation, what was the policymaking environment?
  - a) What were the public higher education governance structures responsible for coordination among the different educational sectors?
  - b) What individuals and groups participated in the policy formation process?

- 3) How did state governance structures, as well as groups and individuals involved in transfer policy formation, influence the history of transfer articulation policy development?

### **Significance**

This study is significant as it focuses on the public higher education contexts, interest groups, and actors involved in transfer guideline formation over time to better understand how these factors influence the policy process. With a better understanding of these influences, policymakers and practitioners can recognize and address potential challenges to policy proposals to reinforce effective outcomes. The literature on articulation guidelines has tended toward analysis of existing policies and recommendations for improvement, as I point out in Chapter 2. Yet, little attention has been placed on the policy formation process itself. This analysis not only proposes to uncover past rationales for policy directions, it also seeks to shed light on system governance challenges and priorities that may impact policy development in the future. For Massachusetts, the past incremental approach to policy creation, at times emanating between institutions and at other times mandated across the public higher education system, raises questions about the rationales for specific policy enactments and their impacts on students and institutions.

Massachusetts is well known as a supportive setting for higher education. The state is celebrated for its legacy of private higher education, a distinction that has historically overshadowed Massachusetts' public colleges and universities. When scholars have examined public higher education in the state, attention has often been placed on state higher education governance challenges (Bastedo, 2009; Tandberg &

Anderson, 2012), adding to a perception and regard for the public system as a faltering, second class arrangement (Hogarty, 2002). Over time, however, Massachusetts public higher education has become increasingly popular (Quintana, 2016), in part because the cost of attendance at state universities and UMass campuses is significantly less expensive than at private institutions. This demand, coupled with the fact that the community college sector represents 50% of all public higher education enrollment in the state (MDHE, 2016a), creates the impetus to address how transfer and articulation policies operate to facilitate bachelor's degree attainment.

Strong transfer policies are equally important in terms of equity and access. According to the Aspire Institute (2016), 49% of low income, 56% of African-American and 45% of Latino high school graduates in Massachusetts attend community colleges. These student groups are least likely to be prepared for advanced studies and most likely to be significantly influenced in terms of degree attainment and improved employment opportunities (MDHE, 2016b). Transfer guidelines offer realistic and effective ways of reinforcing further educational achievement for these demographic groups. This research also represents a unique effort into one facet of Massachusetts public higher education at a time when the state system is coming under increased public and political scrutiny regarding workforce development preparation along with retention and graduation rates (Alssid, Goldberg, & Schneider, 2011; Jan, 2010, MDHE, 2014).

This study's findings will be generative for further inquiry involving other policy settings where two-year and four-year institutions intersect and operate. In addition, results will inform future system-wide transfer policy development, especially in terms of institutional and statewide governance. The conceptual framework and analysis used in



this study may be applied to other states where varying types of existing higher education governance similarly include system-wide transfer articulation policies as well as other system-wide or inter-institutional policy formation. Finally, this study adds to the transfer articulation policy literature, filling a research void regarding the transfer policy formation process that includes the influence of state governance and coordination, and the roles of policy groups and actors.

### **Organization of Chapters**

This dissertation is organized into six chapters. This chapter provides an overview of the investigation, including statement of the problem, research purpose and questions, and significance. Chapter 2 introduces three areas of literature that provide substantive foundations for examination of my associated research questions. The literature includes a review of transfer and articulation related research that highlights policy components and statewide approaches. Next, I introduce higher education governance structure and coordination concepts to delineate structural concerns, and I present theories of policy formation (including policy environments, advocacy groups, and individual actors) that offer insights into the decision-making process. These literature bases not only provide background to my research, they are critical to informing the conceptual and analytical frameworks that I introduce in Chapter 3.

In Chapter 3, I present two sections that organize my study in theoretical and methodological ways. First, I introduce my conceptual framework based on the Ravitch and Riggan (2012) model that incorporates multiple sources. I draw on three primary scholarly perspectives: a) transfer and articulation literature addressing policy components and application in higher education, b) concepts and models describing

statewide governance systems, and c) formal policy theories that offer distinct modes for understanding the process of decision-making. I add personal experience to this framework, acknowledging my vested interest as a transfer professional negotiating and implementing articulation guidelines on behalf of students.

Second, I present the epistemological design and methods applied in this study. I follow a qualitative approach to focus on the case of Massachusetts. Within this case study, I draw on historical methods of archival research and oral histories to guide the data collection process. A historical approach is appropriate and necessary, not only because of the chronological periods examined, but also because of the complexity of circumstances. Archival research methods provide the opportunity to examine formal records chronicling outcomes of system and policy activity as well as unofficial documents detailing background events. Oral histories complement written records with first-person perspectives of individuals involved in the creation and enactment of guidelines at different points. I then introduce a framework for analysis (an extension of the conceptual framework) that I use to direct my narrative interpretation. In the analytical framework, policy environments, governance structures, and actions by interested groups and individuals are compared across historical periods to better understand how transfer issues have been perceived, organized, and addressed in Massachusetts. I conclude by addressing validity issues and the function of the researcher in this study.

Chapter 4 contains my findings, organized chronologically by decade, into three areas according to one aspect of my analytical framework. First, I encapsulate the relevant policy or policies completed during each ten-year period. I then review the

existing and/or evolving higher education governance during the same period, and conclude with a summary of the transfer policy environments (including relevant groups and actors) occurring around each policy enactment. I employ this format for the decades of 1970-1979, 1980-1989, 1990-1999, and 2000-2009.

In Chapter 5, I present a deeper and more nuanced account of the periods during which transfer guidelines were formed and amended, offering contemporaneous appraisal according to the second aspect of my analytical framework. Here, I offer comparisons to highlight the similarities and differences in governance forces and advocacy groups and actors involved in policy creation and implementation over time.

Chapter 6 incorporates conclusions based on the findings and interpretation in the previous sections. I address the significance of my inquiry for students, for institutions, for policy makers, for other state systems, and for the researcher and other transfer professionals. I relate the study's findings to my three research questions as well as to the literature, models, and theories that comprise my conceptual framework. I also reflect on my conceptual and analytical frameworks, noting the strengths and limitations of each. I offer suggestions for further investigation, highlighting the need for focus on the policy formation process itself to better understand the complexities involved. I highlight the climate of ongoing policy development in the state, noting the enduring tension between governance and institutional autonomy. I conclude by stressing the powerful roles played by transfer professionals who facilitate transfer through policy interpretation and implementation in service to students.

## CHAPTER 2

### LITERATURE SOURCES

Elegant accounts of higher education history can make the past seem straightforward and compelling. Yet, these narratives can also conceal the challenges of dealing with complex factors behind actions and events that took place in the past. To better understand the history of Massachusetts transfer and articulation policy development, in this chapter I break down the literature to provide background for the conceptual framework that I present in Chapter 3. I begin with a review of articulation policy literature, highlighting research on policy components and system-wide approaches. Next, I introduce higher education governance structure and coordination concepts to outline the structural relationships inherent in transfer policy formation. Finally, I present theories emphasizing policy environments and the roles of policy groups and actors as they relate to the guideline development process. In Chapter 3, I demonstrate how these literature sources are folded within the overall conceptual framework that informs this study.

#### **Transfer and Articulation Issues**

The literature addressing transfer-related issues covers a range of topics and concerns. For this study, I introduce major emphases in transfer and articulation research, pointing out policy component categories to establish a connection with my first research question. I then focus on studies that describe the relationship between state governance systems and articulation policy development to provide background to the second and third research questions.

## **Articulation Policies**

Transfer and articulation policy issues encompass the relationship between the development of rules and the implementation of practices. These concerns also bring to light the common academic and bureaucratic challenges that students encounter during the transfer process. Articulation policy studies are grounded in rationales for establishing formal rules used to structure the transfer process. Core issues in the transfer and articulation policy literature also include identification of systemic barriers to student transfer, along with policy proposals for improvement. It is important to note that articulation issues in the literature are substantially concentrated within policy reports, which is reflected in my review. A relatively smaller number of empirical studies emphasize critical assessment of articulation policies.

Reviews of the history of transfer and articulation policies in the 20<sup>th</sup> century indicate recurring concerns regarding the varied transfer patterns of students, the changing demographic characteristics of transfer students, and the impact of increased community college mission focus towards occupational associate degrees on transfer rates (Barkley, 1993; Mosholder & Zirkle, 2007). Barkley (1993) has drawn attention to the rise and decline of transfer rates, which she asserted as having been complicated by periodic episodes of a) traditionally-aged students seeking transferable coursework at community colleges and b) students transferring without completing associate degrees. Mosholder and Zirkle (2007) argued that the shift in community college emphasis on vocational education during the 1970s and 1980s, along with increased minority student enrollment, fundamentally challenged the transfer function. The authors contended that a move towards greater state involvement in transfer and articulation policy development

resulted from two trends: 1) an overall shift towards workforce development and 2) the broader message of the individual right of access to baccalaureate education that became prominent at the time (p. 741). In this study, I present the growth of Massachusetts transfer policies from the 1970s to the 2000s in relation to regional and central forces vying for strength within the state's public higher education system.

Statewide transfer and articulation policies have been examined considerably for more than a decade. Reports have addressed the rationale for development of systematic responses to institutional barriers (Wellman, 2002), and offered best practice recommendations (Hezel, 2009; SREB, 2007). Others have presented common state transfer policy features (American Association of Community Colleges & American Association of State Colleges and Universities [AACC & AASCU], 2004; de la Torre & Wells, 2014). Moreover, studies have addressed policy issues through comparative approaches, either focusing on a subset of states to identify common transfer policy problems and solutions (Moore, Shulock, & Jenson, 2009; SREB, 2007) or creating large indices of detailed state guidelines and describing the administrative environments that surround policy endorsement (Smith, 2010; Wellman, 2002).

Transfer and articulation policy studies generally share a cohesive presentation of institutional and student-based issues that impact transfer. These topics range from conflicting institutional missions and academic priorities to limited advising supports, from the unique needs of emergent student groups to misalignment of high school with two-year and four-year college performance standards, and from disparate general education requirements between community colleges and baccalaureate institutions to decentralized and weak statewide governance (AACC & AASCU, 2004; Boswell, 2004;

Ignash & Townsend, 2000). In response to these concerns, policy reports have set forth an array of recommendations grouped around themes such as legislation; cooperative agreements; transfer data reporting; admission guarantees, rewards, and financial incentives; statewide transfer guides; a common core or general education curriculum; and common course numbering (ECS, 2001; Smith, 2010; SREB, 2007; Wellman, 2002). In a number of these studies, the role of statewide transfer policy development and coordination has been referred to, if at all, as part of the organizational background; policy recommendations tend towards distinct articulation components rather than systemic requirements or improvements. In this study, transfer articulation components and system-wide policy development are equally important.

### **Articulation Policy Components**

Deeper examination of articulation policy components sheds light on the complexity of policy enactment and serves to reinforce the significance of recommendations such as those mentioned above. This is relevant for the case of Massachusetts because, as I demonstrate in Chapter 4, the guidelines created between 1974 and 2009 included diverse policy elements comparable to those presented here.

It is useful to group policy elements into organizational clusters commonly found within higher education institutions: academic, enrollment, and structural (de la Torre & Wells, 2014). These categories represent the specific administrative functions involved in the transfer process. The academic and enrollment policy elements convey the “what” and “how” of transfer guidelines, with the structural components serving as the framework in which academic transition from one institution to another takes place.

Literature in the academic category includes curricular priorities such as general education coursework, faculty involvement, and transfer articulations for selective majors and technical fields. Enrollment-related studies include admissions and registrar concerns such as common course numbering, admissions guarantees, and financial incentives. Structural features are reflected in literature stressing systemic matters such as data reporting and monitoring, statewide articulation agreements, and legislation.

### **Academic**

Attainment of the baccalaureate degree is commonly the goal of postsecondary education, and completion of the pre-established academic curriculum becomes the means to this end. Faculty in a given institution may exercise autonomous discretion in the creation of requirements for majors, yet academic leaders also formulate common curricular foundations, frequently termed *general education requirements*, that all enrolled students must complete for the baccalaureate degree. Typically, coursework in composition and quantitative reasoning, along with elective work in humanities, social and behavioral sciences, and lab sciences, make up the nucleus of this base. Numerous sources (AACC & AASCU, 2004; Boswell, 2004; Hungar, 2001; Ignash & Townsend, 2001; SREB, 2007; Wellman, 2002) have noted the importance of establishing a common general education curriculum as a policy response to the distinct challenge that community college transfer students face as they anticipate future requirements at potential transfer destinations. Ignash and Townsend (2000) took this recommendation further in recognition of students who transfer prior to completing an associate's degree. In their view "a strong articulation agreement will accommodate not only students who have completed an associate's degree but also students who complete a significant block



of coursework (such as the general education requirements)” (p. 5). In this way, common general education requirements reinforce transfer pathways between two-year and four-year institutions.

Several studies have also emphasized faculty involvement, with important curricular roles identified at both sending community colleges (Smith, Miller & Bermeo, 2009) and receiving baccalaureate institutions (SREB, 2007). Policy recommendations additionally point to the creation of inter-institutional or statewide faculty articulation committees, often convened by academic discipline, in order to establish and maintain curricular equivalencies and alignments (AACC & AASCU, 2004; Boswell, 2004). On a fundamental level, faculty plays critical leadership roles as content area experts for determining comparability and equivalency of coursework. According to the Southern Regional Education Board (2007), faculty actions strongly facilitate transfer policy and transfer pathways when, in the most basic terms, “one course can substitute for another, even when (faculty) cannot agree that the courses are generally the same” (p. 7).

One breakdown often noted in the transfer process relates to the disparate institutional missions of community colleges and baccalaureate colleges (Knoell, 1990; Wellman, 2002). This divergence affects articulation policy in an elementary way since community college students can choose between strictly occupational degrees or transfer-oriented programs. The early split in academic preparation has consequences for students who develop academic prowess and later decide to continue toward advanced degrees. To re-introduce potential transfer pathways for students who choose occupational degrees, Hungar (2001) recommended articulation policy that recognizes the transferability of career associate degrees, arguing that these programs have value even

though they do not follow a traditional lower-division to upper-division transfer sequence. Additional policy proposals (Moore et al., 2009; SREB, 2007) have bolstered the transfer value of technical associate degrees by taking into account regional workforce needs, especially in high demand spheres such as Health Care and Information Technology. Boswell (2004) similarly made a case for policies governing “‘upside-down’ associate degrees that allow students to complete general education requirements for the baccalaureate after having completed technical associate degrees” (p. 29). All of these career-oriented policy schemes not only accept the unique curricular requirements of certain specialized professions, they also address the importance of reinforcing opportunities for continued preparation at the baccalaureate level as well as supporting upward mobility for students who become credentialed in rewarding fields. The academic policy elements presented here, including general education requirements, faculty involvement, and transferability of occupational associate degrees, are pertinent to the transfer policy formation in Massachusetts, which I describe in Chapter 4.

### **Enrollment**

Student movement from one collegiate institution to another is a basic mechanism in the transfer process. This transition takes place through formal application for admission to the new college or university based on criteria established by that institution. In addition to meeting admissions requirements, transfer students carry accumulated course credits amassed at one or more previously-attended institutions. Course denominations are institution-specific, meaning that they bear codes and titles that are determined by the school that sponsors the curriculum. When a student leaves one college to attend another, the student must contend with transfer credit policy at the new

institution, specifically how previously-earned credits correlate to a different coding and value system. Articulation policy literature has included numerous calls for common course numbering as a way of streamlining the transfer of credits, stressing benefits to students and institutions (ECS, 2001; Gross & Goldhaber, 2009; Knoell, 1990; National Center for Public Policy and Higher Education [NCPPE], 2011; SREB, 2007; Wellman, 2002).

For students, common course numbering minimizes confusion and provides anticipatory guidance for determination of transferrable credits, so that students can make constructive transfer plans that forestall the loss of time and money on non-transferable coursework (ECS, 2001; Gross & Goldhaber, 2009). Institutions benefit through the assurance of recognized coursework from other institutions, evaluated and approved by faculty as comparable to internal academic objectives and outcomes (SREB, 2007). A limitation of this policy recommendation is its sole applicability to public higher education systems that are governed under consolidated administrative structures with the power to mandate system-wide policies and procedures.

Policy proposals for comparable coursework and aligned general education frameworks address important elements of the transfer process, yet community college students must still meet varying admissions requirements of senior institutions. The articulation literature introduces transfer admissions guarantees for students who meet negotiated academic profile requirements including specified cumulative Grade Point Averages (GPAs), completion of pre-approved associate degree curricula, and enrollment in designated baccalaureate majors. The logic behind transfer admissions guarantees stems from a presumption of equity: that students meeting coursework and performance

requirements in community colleges should be perceived as reaching academic achievements that are comparable to students who began as freshmen at baccalaureate institutions (Knoell, 1990; SREB, 2007). Although Knoell (1990) argued for transfer admission with advanced standing “to any applicant who has completed an appropriate lower-division program for transfer with satisfactory grades as prescribed by the receiving institution” (p. 81), most proposals have tied completion of community college degrees to incentivized guarantees such as full associate degree transfer (60-65 credits), junior-level standing, and priority admission into selective or restricted majors at senior institutions (Hungar, 2001; NCPPHE, 2011; SREB, 2007).

Perhaps the most progressive and comprehensive articulation policies have called for financial inducements, including tuition reductions and scholarships for community college students (ECS, 2001; NCPPHE, 2011; Wellman, 2002). Scholars have based recommendations on two related assumptions: 1) community college demographics favoring first-generation, low-income, and racially/ethnically underrepresented students more likely in greater need of monetary support and 2) the financial merit of these same students who demonstrate advanced scholarly potential by persisting to attainment of associate degrees (Hungar, 2001; Knoell, 1990; NCPPHE, 2011; Smith et al., 2009; Zamani, 2001). Knoell (1990) and Zamani (2001) linked financial support to statewide emphases on transfer pathways, drawing attention to grant funding for cohort-based programs geared to minority and underprivileged students. Knoell (1990) also promoted a range of systemic incentives that include institutional initiatives for improving transfer rates, support for campus-based transfer resources, and inducements for community college and baccalaureate institution collaboration. In the Chapter 4 findings, I specify

the transfer admissions guarantees and financial incentives have been incorporated into guidelines in Massachusetts.

### **Structural**

Beyond the academic equivalencies and enrollment prerequisites involved in transfer, articulation policy integrates structural concerns that draw attention to system-wide planning and assessment. Generally, discussion of higher education systems implies a focus on public institution coordination, yet scholars have also stressed the benefit of voluntary participation by independent institutions, especially in states that provide funding to public and private colleges and universities alike (Knoell, 1990; Wellman, 2002). Setting aside institutional status, structural articulation issues stress internal organizational capacity and limits as well as external cross-institutional efforts to streamline and oversee transfer pathways.

Several sources (Barkley, 1993; Ignash & Townsend, 2001; Smith, 2010; Wellman, 2002) have classified data reporting and monitoring as necessary articulation policy components. These proposals cite the need for documentation to draw attention to the scope of transfer activity taking place at a given institution as well as to reinforce the argument for increasing transfer-related resources and support both on individual campuses and system-wide (Knoell, 1990). Moreover, Roksa (2009) has critically assessed the effectiveness of articulation policies based on the capacity of higher education institutions and systems to collect and share data. Arguing in support of data tracking systems, Roksa stated that “(s)ustaining these endeavors over time, especially as states implement and alter existing articulation policies, will provide crucial information about the influence of articulation policies on the transfer process” (p. 2466). Wellman

(2002) has taken a similar line, tying overall institutional performance in terms of retention and graduation rates to transfer student performance. The transfer success of individual institutions, as well as state systems, requires the establishment of baseline data, according to Wellman, so that correlating transfer factors such as student academic preparation, attendance patterns, and inter-institutional relationships can be identified and improved upon where necessary (p. 45).

The literature on articulation policy in public higher education has introduced statewide articulation agreements as worthwhile structural elements (Anderson, Sun, & Alfonso, 2006; ECS, 2001; Knoell, 1990; SREB, 2007; Wellman, 2002). Due to their comprehensiveness, these contracts are emphasized as offering vital protection for students transferring from community colleges. Proposed agreements typically stipulate general education and major prerequisites within a tailored curriculum, whether these agreements are set up across the state's public system or endorsed among neighboring institutions (Smith et al., 2009). Anderson, Sun, and Alfonso (2006) asserted that the ever-rising cost of college education, coupled with diminished state aid and evolving workforce trends serve as compelling reasons behind statewide articulation agreements. Moreover, Smith (2010) noted an increase in cooperative articulation agreements, rising from 40 to 45 states, in the period between 2001 and 2010, signifying that 90% of U.S. public higher education has adopted this policy facet.

Public higher education systems, tied together by state charter enactment and funding support, fall under the jurisdiction of regional political structures. In these settings, public institutions exercise a degree of autonomy as they carry out their educational missions. At the same time, public statutes governing post-secondary

education may necessitate coordination across public colleges and universities as a group. With this backdrop, researchers highlight the importance of legislation for addressing statewide approaches to articulation policy. From one point of view, scholars have favored mandated creation of statewide policies to ensure equitable academic experience and credential attainment in the movement from two-year to four-year institutions (Knoell, 1990). The SREB (2007) also singled out and promoted legislation as affording the greatest potential for comprehensive articulation policy, given the complexity of transfer rules and requirements. A separate group of researchers has challenged the outcomes of transfer policy legislation in terms of misunderstood purpose. Roksa (2009) argued that articulation policies have been enacted to minimize the loss of credit rather than facilitate student movement, a contention that appears to have merit in situations where policy focuses solely on transferability of coursework. Others have questioned the effectiveness of legislated articulation policy on the grounds that there is insufficient evidence to conclude that the policies work (Anderson et al., 2006; Gross & Goldhaber, 2009). These conflicting views add to the controversy around producing and implementing comprehensive transfer articulation policies.

Articulation guideline controversies are central to the focus of this study. But the issue has not been a question of whether or not policies are needed. Rather, the case of Massachusetts is concentrated on the rationales for development, as reflected by the central and regional forces involved at different points in time.

### **Statewide Governance, Coordination, and Transfer**

Barkley (1993) noted early efforts to depict statewide governance over transfer and articulation guidelines. She highlights Kintzer's typology from the 1970s that

suggested policies as being “(a) ...provided for through state-mandated policies and practices; (b)...occur[ring] through voluntary statewide and inter-institutional agreements; or (c)...provided for through formal, legally-based state policies” (p. 43). In addition, Ignash and Townsend (2000) and Wellman (2002) have put forth best practice transfer and articulation guidelines to point out the significance of policy in relation to higher education system functions. Ignash and Townsend (2000) singled out three forms of higher education systems and their relationships to articulation policy:

...deregulated... [in which] individual institutions may have the responsibility for establishing articulation agreements...more regulated, [in which] the state may provide some general guidelines and incentives for institutions to develop these agreements and ...highly regulated, [in which] the state may mandate that the associate of arts degree be accepted at all state institutions (p.1).

This typology helps shed light on the varying ways in which higher education institutions approach articulation policy development. In *deregulated* states where public two-year and four-year institutions have greater autonomy to determine transfer policies, academic pathways between sectors may vary due to issues such as competition for scarce resources as well as perceived institutional elitism or lack of rigor. Still, this same freedom could encourage cooperation between institutions in situations where resources are limited, or reinforce transfer pathways between academic departments that recognize the benefits of feeder (associate or bachelor’s degree) programs. In *more regulated* states, the presence of statewide guidelines can serve to clarify expectations for inter-institutional articulation while also allowing for situational flexibility. However, mandated regulations in *highly regulated* states may offer the greatest protection ensuring



that institutions do not discriminate against transfer students, while at the same time restricting collaborative innovations between two-year and four-year educational sectors.

In the Chapter 4 findings, I demonstrate how Massachusetts public higher education governance has evolved over four decades, at times resembling different regulatory levels, which has significance for addressing the research questions in this study. At the time of this research, Massachusetts may be portrayed as falling somewhere between *more regulated* and *highly regulated* in terms of transfer policy development and execution.

In her assessment of high-performing states, Wellman (2002) concluded in favor of statewide governance structures. She contended that states with the most successful transfer policies follow a statewide, rather than institutional, governance approach (p. vii), an assertion that echoes support for the highly regulated system described above. The idea that higher education system structures influence transfer policy development has been further sustained in an analysis by the American Association of Community Colleges and the American Association of State Colleges and Universities (2004). Although this account was fixed more broadly on categorizing and responding to barriers in bachelor's degree attainment, the authors point out the relevance of system-level characteristics. In particular, the report noted a relationship between the degree to which barriers exist in a given state and the degree to which statewide coordination exists, with greater barriers present in settings where coordination is the weakest (p. 6).

The SREB (2007) has taken the attention on state-level organization a step further. Among the mutual factors and practices contributing to successful transfer programs, the authors underscored the usefulness of transfer and articulation committees,

acknowledging that composition generally includes representatives of public and private higher education, as well as statewide governance leaders (p.3). This recognition of the need for committee involvement implies awareness that policies themselves do not solve problems, but are the tools of individuals working together toward the common purpose of transfer facilitation.

The Education Commission of the States (2001; Smith, 2010) commissioned two studies in the form of surveys to assess the 50 states on seven transfer and articulation-related criteria. In the first report (ECS, 2001), 30 states were listed as having statewide policies directed to transfer and articulation. Smith (2010) asserted in the follow-up report that “enabling legislation” (Overview section, para. 3) had increased to 34 states. While noteworthy, this two-thirds sum represents variable legislative language across the various states. In some cases, statewide policy is narrowly directed to the creation of a common general education curriculum for two-year and four-year sectors, and in other cases it only stipulates that four-year institutions must accept a community college course equivalent. Some statewide legislation is worded so broadly that interpretation may allow for any number of individual directives; the danger of generality, however, is that specific policy recommendations may address benign issues and avoid potentially controversial disagreements.

One extreme example of the limits to comparing state policies and higher education governance structures involves Massachusetts. In the state by state comparison conducted by the ECS (2001) and updated by Smith (2010), Massachusetts transfer policies were listed as coordinated under the state’s *board of regents*, a governance structure that was in fact dissolved in 1990. This inclusion of a defunct governing entity

casts doubt on the conclusiveness of nationwide comparisons. To make matters worse, the Massachusetts state law referenced in this comparison centers on articulation guidelines between technical-vocational high schools and postsecondary educational institutions, thereby calling into question the reliability of the report as well as the actual status of postsecondary transfer and articulation policies. This example also implies that governance-dependent articulation policies may be fragile over time, since the statewide authority ensuring implementation and compliance may change. Closer scrutiny further suggests that, although there may be general concurrence around the need for systemic governance and legislation, deregulated, more regulated, and highly regulated states will influence the composition and authority of policies in different ways.

### **Unique State Cultures and Policy Development**

Though limited, research into unique relationships between state governance, higher education system configuration, and transfer policy development deserves mention. Sauer, Jackson, Hazelgrove, Scott, and Ignash, (2005) have introduced the relevance of articulation policy development within state-specific approaches. This is to say that, rather than advocating for a uniform best practice type of strategy to policy enactment, the authors argued that distinct state cultures, higher education governance systems, and political interests influence transfer policy development and support. In a comparison of policies in Indiana, Kentucky, and New Jersey, transfer and articulation reform is described as vigorously enacted by political leaders in two states and voluntarily initiated by higher education officials in the other. Conclusions reached in the study underscore how, despite resource constraints and opposing priorities, higher education leaders found locally palatable ways to commit attention to advancing the

transfer mission. There is an element of common sense in these conclusions, as states acknowledge the ways that shifting political priorities impact attention to, and support for, regional higher education.

### **Gaps in the Literature**

The literature encompasses a range of topics related to transfer and articulation policies. The examination of policy elements grouped into the administrative academic, enrollment, and structural functions of higher education underscores the complexity of issues involved in student transition between institutions. The case of Massachusetts reflects this complexity, given the diversity of policy components enacted over the years. Studies have also highlighted the potential challenges that institutions face in interpreting and responding to transfer student experiences while at the same time safeguarding the core academic mission. Finally, scholars have described attempts to systematize transfer policies across institutions in relation to levels of system control (deregulated, more regulated, highly regulated).

Missing, however, are studies that systematically examine the process of transfer policy creation within public higher education settings. Authors have suggested that policy components and outcomes are tied to legislation and system implementation. Still, only the works of Knoell (1990) and Ignash and Townsend (2000, 2001) have come close to delineating the process of transfer policy formation within public higher education systems that includes the influence of governance structures and coordination. Although these examples are beneficial, additional research is needed to better understand the process of policy development in these complex systems.

In Massachusetts, transfer and articulation policy development took place within environments involving deregulated to highly regulated public system governance structures over 35 years. The impact of these varied higher education governance settings, within and across decades, is central to the purpose of this study. Examination of public higher education systems provides a backdrop to the governance structures that managed the communication, collaboration, and linkages among the state's public two-year and four-year institutions.

### **Public Higher Education Systems**

The literature on articulation policy varies in specifying the organizational context in which transfer rules are carried out. In some cases, research refers to alignment among higher education institutions within a public system exclusively. At other times, analysis centers only on guidelines between institutions without reference to institutional status-- private non-profit, for-profit, or public. This study follows the former example, focusing exclusively on policy formation between the two-year and four-year sectors of Massachusetts public higher education. Therefore, it is important to introduce organizational concepts that describe the governance structure of these relationships, along with the forces that influence dynamics among these institutions. These concepts help to explain the structural parameters of authority, coordination, and accountability that shape institutional interactions. This organizational arrangement is a critical component of the conceptual framework I present in Chapter 3. I begin by defining the notion of the higher education system to establish an appreciation of structural governance and coordination.

Scholars (Glenny, 1959; Novack, 1996; Perkins, 1972; Richardson et al., 1999) have recounted the emergence of higher education systems and governance structures in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, noting that the rise took place in response to economic, demographic, and structural pressures within, and across, states. Glenny (1959) asserted that higher education became more complex between the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries, as different types of institutions, from normal schools to agricultural and technical institutes to centers of professional training, emerged to serve new student groups. This development created an environment of overlapping purpose and competition for funds. At the same time, within states, institutional specialization led to greater interdependence such that, as Perkins (1972) noted, “the need for coordination of...specialized institutions (became) one of the prime reasons for the development of systems” (p. 4). Moreover, during the wide economic swing between the Great Depression and World War II, state governments shifted management as public resources contracted and expanded, including funding for colleges and universities, so that political pressures contributed to the idea of systemic and systematic administration of public higher education (Novack, 1996).

In their treatise outlining the critical functions of higher education systems in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, Richardson et al. (1999) portrayed state higher education systems as including “the public and private postsecondary institutions within a state as well as the arrangements for regulating, coordinating, and funding (them)” (p. 1-2). This definition takes into account the fundamental role of *governance*, which the authors stressed as a core tension between individual institutional autonomy and centralized authority across institutions. This tension is heightened by the higher education system’s political nature emphasizing the benefit of statewide advocacy and influence over local or regional

support (Boatright, 1999). The political characteristics of systems underscore the push and pull between institutional autonomy and system coordination, as well as the pressures tending towards and away from system centralization. Closer examination of governance structures provides details on how statewide coordination is carried out in different higher educational settings.

### **Governance Structures**

Researchers have offered a range of descriptions of higher education governance, from simple constructions to extensive models. In this section, I introduce models and concepts that have relevance for the case of Massachusetts. I classify these in Table 1, using the terms *cooperation*, *negotiated exchange*, and *accountability and compliance* to differentiate the different conceptual levels. As Table 1 indicates, each governance model applies specific terms for these levels, although these also overlap in use. I summarize my interpretation of these conceptual levels at the end of this section.

Table 1: Conceptual Levels of Governance Structures

| Governance Model                                      | Cooperation                         | Negotiated Exchange | Accountability and Compliance |
|---|-------------------------------------|---------------------|-------------------------------|
| Glenny (1959)   | Voluntary                           | Coordinating        | Governing                     |
| Berdahl (1971)  | Voluntary                           | Coordinating        | Governing                     |
| McGuinness (2003)                                     | Planning/<br>Regulatory/<br>Service | Coordinating        | Governing                     |
| Parmley, Bell,<br>L'Orange and<br>Lingenfelter (2009) |                                     | Coordinating        | Governing                     |
| Richardson, Bracco,<br>Callan, and Finney,<br>(1999)  | Segmented                           | Federal             | Unified                       |

Glenny (1959) is among those credited with the first conceptions of governance structures. His examination provided preliminary mapping of systems in the United States to demonstrate the extent of statewide governance, highlighted by 11 states included in his study. Based on his assessment, Glenny described three structural formations: *voluntary agencies*, *coordinating agencies*, and *governing agencies*. *Voluntary agencies* are expressed as deliberate arrangements among higher education institutions (and their leaders) such that “(t)he success of these...systems rests on the good will and mutual respect of the several presidents. Participants reach agreements by discussion...and thus avoid the public demonstrations which might place any one institution in a disadvantageous light” (p. 30). Glenny has asserted that voluntary participation is encouraged by individual concerns over the imposition of formal governance regulation by the state. *Coordinating agencies* are defined as structures that act to organize, manage, and recommend through policy development. These boards focus on systemic coordination—for finances, programming, and planning—while not infringing on the authority of individual institutional boards. Glenny depicted *governing agencies* as single statewide boards often created through legislation and holding formal roles and responsibilities: “(t)he law establishing a single board...assigns to the new agency all powers and duties formerly held by the boards for the individual institutions” (p. 35). These entities exert authority both for statewide coordination as well as oversight of budgetary, operational, and program planning.

The literature includes the work of successive researchers putting forth similar conceptions of governance using various combinations of terminology. Berdahl (1971) adopted the terms *voluntary*, *coordinating*, and *governing* in his depiction of statewide



governance structures based on review of all 50 states. Berdahl used four categories to describe individual state systems by type (or lack) of governance structure. Category I identifies states lacking any kind of formal coordinating agency or system of voluntary coordination. Category II includes states that function solely through some type of formal voluntary statewide coordination. In Category III, Berdahl introduces a distinct coordination agency umbrella concept, with subtypes divided by board composition and power. Boards may be comprised solely, or in a combination, of institutional and public members. Similarly, boards may retain advisory powers only or may administer some degree of regulatory authority. Category IV defines circumstances of single statewide governing boards that hold sway over one or more public higher education institutions. Berdahl added complexity to his scheme by designating states in Category II as *voluntary associations* and those included in Categories II, III, or IV as *coordinating agencies*. He uses the term *coordinating board* to exclusively classify states in Category III, and applies *governing board* to states in Category IV.

McGuinness (2003) has offered a tripartite format that similarly includes governing boards and coordinating boards, and introduces the *planning/regulatory/service agency*, a designation which suggests voluntary participation due to having “limited or no formal coordinating or governing authority” (p. 15). The McGuinness typology proposed greater intricacy as he demonstrates nineteen different governance structure configurations based on 39 state systems at the time of his report. His compilation included simple single-structure formations, with either governing or coordinating board authority, as well as examples in which governing boards and coordinating boards co-exist within a given system, each responsible for distinct higher

education sectors. In some cases, two governing boards exercise authority, with one most commonly dedicated to the university sector and the other responsible for other two-year and four-year colleges. More sophisticated arrangements place statewide coordinating boards at the top of a system, with two or more governing boards responsible for sectors or individual institutions. State systems involving *planning/regulatory/service* agencies may also involve coordinating and governing boards that are independent from, or have direct accountability to, the central planning agency. The collection of McGuinness models have demonstrated the complexity and variety of higher education governance and offered a vantage point into the broader relationship between public higher education and state governments.

Finally, governance structures have been identified in a minimal binary arrangement, *statewide coordinating boards* and *statewide governing boards*, by Parmley, Bell, L'Orange and Lingenfelter (2009). The authors asserted that all state systems operate under one of the two structures: "Roughly half of the states have a statewide governing board for most or all public institutions; five of these states also have a state coordinating board... (t)he remaining states have a statewide coordinating board" (p. 2). In this scenario, the basic distinction between the two forms is in their related scope of responsibilities. Parmley et al. described statewide coordinating boards as primarily concerned with system-wide organizational and fiscal planning, along with academic program review and approval. In addition to the duties above, statewide governing boards maintain power over operational and personnel decisions at the institutional level. Governance leadership takes on added significance here, as the board

chief may exercise direct control over a wide range of actions or defer day-to-day operations to individual institutional leaders.

In contrast to the formations and shared terminology above, Richardson et al. (1999) have introduced three broad governance schemes in their analysis of statewide system performance. Based on their case studies of seven higher education systems, the authors proposed the terms, *federal*, *segmented*, and *unified*, to describe structural relationships and approaches to governance. In the *federal* system, a central statewide board exists in a largely advisory and supportive role. Primary functions are “collecting and distributing information, advising on the budget, planning programs from a statewide perspective, and encouraging articulation” (p. 17). The federal system distinguishes its role as a facilitator of statewide coordination responsible to the public interest from institutional accountability for strategic planning and management. The *segmented* system, by contrast, lacks a centralized state board, placing governance at local levels:

Each governing board...represent(s) institutional interests directly to state government through the budgeting process. Four-year institutions and community colleges may have their own separate arrangements for voluntary coordination in dealing with state government and with each other (p. 16).

Finally, *unified* systems place coordination and power within one statewide governing body, responsible both for strategic and operational management of higher education institutions as well as leading advocacy efforts with state government.

The different governance structure designs presented here offer common elements that define institutional relationships and sources of control. Viewed on a continuum from voluntary participation to legislated governance, the various structures alternately involve *cooperation* (voluntary affiliation and segmented system), *negotiated exchange*

(coordinating agencies or boards and federal systems), and outright *accountability and compliance* (governance boards and unified systems). Governance oversight incorporated in these various arrangements necessarily raises issues related to institutional autonomy and implied cooperation which is significant for the case of Massachusetts in that transfer policies were crafted under evolving higher education governance settings. My inquiry delves into the influence of evolving governance on establishment of the different policies.

### **Autonomy vs. Coordination, Decentralization vs. Centralization**

The conflict between institutional self-determination and voluntary (or imposed) coordination has persisted and evolved within higher education for many years. The creation of governance structures in the 20th century represents the latest effort to deal with this tension, even as institutions and government stakeholders continue to grapple with competing priorities and interests. McDaniel (1996) traced the notion of institutional autonomy to the 13<sup>th</sup> century, at a time when French universities and their academic leaders challenged the chancellor of the Notre Dame cathedral in Paris over “the privilege of autonomy from external influences, including the liberty of individual faculties, to determine teaching methods...and lectures” (p. 139). According to McDaniel, this dispute provided a formative characterization of the growing tension between institutional and governmental interests that gained prominence in the centuries that followed. Nevertheless, institutional autonomy characterized higher education in the United States from the 17<sup>th</sup> to 19<sup>th</sup> century as relatively small college-bound populations enrolled in locally controlled institutions (Richardson et al., 1999). These institutions persisted with relative independence from centralizing government forces up until the

1900s, functioning in a manner consistent with Berdahl's (1971) depiction of autonomy as "the power of a university or college (whether as a single institution or a multi-campus system) to govern itself without outside controls" (p. 8).

In the 20<sup>th</sup> century, growth in overlapping availability and interest in higher education signaled increased competition for students among colleges and universities. For public institutions, competition and expansion meant further reliance on limited state fiscal support, and a consequential call for greater organizational oversight (Glenny, 1959). Adding to the tension between coordination and autonomy, the American Association of University Professors released its policy statement in the years preceding World War II, codifying a demand for protection of academic freedoms. This act had the effect, according to McDaniel (1996), of expanding academic (personal) freedom to include institutional (collective) autonomy. Soon after, the 1947 Commission on Higher Education (Truman Commission) report represented a countering influence with its endorsement of systematic coordination of public higher education in response to "the excessive cost, both in money and public favor, of the *incoordination* (emphasis added) represented by many of the public arrangements" (Novak, 1996, p. 20).

Glenny (1959) underscored the political roots of public higher education, portraying coordination as the result of government responses to statewide organizational and budgetary priorities, in addition to concerns about efficiency and duplication of efforts at individual campuses. The "centralization of public higher education" (p. 17) necessarily led to the creation of governing bodies to oversee the direction and operation of public higher education institutions. Among the advantages of centralization, this development helped secure equitable allotment of funding for colleges and universities

that had unequal political access and support (Glenny, 1959; McGuinness, 1996). Governance continued to gain importance from the 1950s through the 1970s, as large-scale economic forces (such as federal financial aid policies) influenced institutional growth and reinforced coordination of administrative practices. Thus, cumulative developments succeeded in elevating governing structures as necessary devices to negotiate what Perkins (1972) has called “the two great imperatives of academic freedom and institutional autonomy, on the one hand, and public responsibility with respect to public funds, on the other” (p. 281).

Richardson et al. (1999) reported that an “incremental rebalancing” (p. 9) began in the 1980s, including a subsequent move towards decentralization of higher education governance and coordination. Caught within pressures for large-scale state government reform at the time, higher education decentralization resulted from renewed attention on institutions to become more fiscally responsible (the same rationale used to justify centralization) and to respond to public concerns about accountability (McTaggart, 1996; McLendon & Ness, 2009). In simple terms, whereas centralization meant public colleges and universities were closely monitored and coordinated to ensure effective use of public resources, with decentralization they were being given more institutional latitude to manage their affairs to achieve the same purpose.

Richardson et al. (1999) noted that the interest in accountability in the 1990s reflected a fundamental state government and public “shift [in] attention from simple ‘inputs’ such as state appropriations to ‘outputs’—that is, to institutional performance” (p. 10). Others have made harsher, if overblown, assessments of statewide governance and coordination structures, characterizing them as bloated bureaucratic agencies led by

mediocre and uninformed trustees and crippled by dysfunctional decision-making practices (Fisher, 1995; Novack, 1996). Yet Berdahl (2007) has taken a more nuanced approach as he distinguishes between decentralization forces on the one hand and greater accountability for performance on the other. He differentiates “procedural autonomy” from “substantive autonomy” (p. 87) to demonstrate how institutions and central governing structures each exert control in their relations. In his explanation, states allow institutions the autonomy to determine their own work processes (procedural autonomy) while maintaining some authority over the end goal of institutional outcomes (substantive autonomy), especially as these are expected to align with broader public interests.

Berdahl summarized the plausible conclusion to this organizational push and pull:

The ultimate reality for public supported colleges and universities is that they serve their states. The ultimate reality for state government is that they have to make explicit what they expect, how much they will pay to get it and how they will evaluate the results...there is a relationship that has to be continuously sustained...(and) both sides need to focus on how best to achieve the quality of outcomes that serve the state’s most pressing interests (p. 94).

The seeming paradox of state governance and coordination weighed against institutional autonomy continues into the 21<sup>st</sup> century, and researchers have turned to examination of political factors for answers. The work of McLendon and Ness (2009) has stood out for advocating analysis of higher education governance reform from a political perspective. The authors stressed the importance of viewing the “political context” (p. 69) in which governance-related issues are addressed, and they identify various political actors (including policy entrepreneurs, detailed in the following section), who are seen as playing influential roles in higher education governance and policy development. This perspective validates my examination of the intersection between

governance structures and coordination with policy groups and actors to better understand transfer policy development in Massachusetts. Policy theory and concepts help to distinguish the collective forces and individual actors who navigate within governance settings to shape the policy process.

### **Theories of Policy Formation**

Scholars disagree on the place of theory in educational research; some recognize its value for generating questions and explaining phenomena (Creswell, 2009), and others fault theory for constraining creative inference (Thomas, 1997). This study seeks a middle ground in which models of decision-making and policy formation provide concepts that can be extended to help understand the history of transfer policy development in Massachusetts. Here, I heed Smart's (2005) advice regarding indiscriminate use of theoretical constructs to justify a speculative hunch. Smart points out the importance of drawing on theory that is relevant to the research being undertaken, rather than seeming to "dress up, justify, or rationalize the legitimacy of common constructs in the conventional higher education literature by equating them with 'more lofty' constructs in theories from other academic disciplines" (p. 465). In this study I carefully extract ideas from policy theories for heuristic purposes: to add to a broad conceptual frame for interpretation of articulation policy developments over time in Massachusetts.

As noted in Chapter 1, policymaking involves a set of choices that are acted on (Anderson, 1997). Policymaking thus is organized decision-making that stresses the environmental constraints, group dynamics, and individual participation that lead to eventual action. In a comparison of policy frameworks and models, Schlager (1999) also



highlighted theories that are centered on individual actors, collective groups, and institutions within settings to argue that policymaking analysis requires “careful attention to the collective actors, [and] to the institutions that provide the context of that action” (p. 247). The emphasis on policy actors, policy groups, and policy settings is important to this study and aligns well with the elements of my conceptual framework, which I present in Chapter 3. It is useful here to briefly review major policy theory trends as background to my choices.

Sabatier (2007) has depicted eight theoretical orientations, which he posits as outgrowths of an earlier construct termed the “stages heuristic” (p. 6) taken from the works of multiple theorists between the 1950s and 1980s. According to Sabatier, “the stages heuristic...divided the policy process into a series of stages—usually agenda setting, policy formulation and legitimation, implementation, and evaluation” (p. 6). He maintained that, although this approach served a formative purpose, it has also come under repeated criticism for its tendency to be linear, to describe and analyze individual policy stages in isolation, and to conceive of policy enactments as simple cycles removed from the complex reality of competing policy interests. Sabatier distinguished resultant policy frameworks in three broad orientations: (a) theories that contrast policy formation as a rational process, as a murky course in competition with elusive counter interests, and as the result of socially constructed values; (b) frameworks that address long-term policy change through the relative power and influence of policy subsystems (i.e., individuals, groups, and institutions); and (c) frameworks that attempt to explain the impact of policy innovations across large political bodies, such as national governments.

### **Policy Theories in This Study**

Given this range of policy structures and orientations, I have logically chosen frames from the first two of Sabatier's (2007) groupings. First, I introduce a theory that focuses on the environment in which policy takes place and emphasizes the difficult interplay between competing political and institutional interests. This approach is fitting given my focus on transfer and articulation policy development across different periods of public higher education governance in Massachusetts. At the same time, policy formation clearly involved institutions bound together and engaged in common endeavors through political charter and authority. Therefore, I draw on the works of Kingdon (1995) and McLendon (2003) as a way of incorporating ideas about the policy environment into my overall conceptual framework. To this, I add theories that highlight policy groups and actors engaged in the policy formation process: the Advocacy Coalition framework (Jenkins-Smith and Sabatier, 1993) and the Policy Entrepreneur model (Mintrom & Vergari, 1996). The main concepts of these theories are presented in Table 2.

Table 2: Policy Theory Concepts

| Policy Theory   | Policy Environments  | Policy Groups  | Policy Actors   |
|---|--|--|---|
| Policy Streams /Garbage Can (Kingdon, 1995; McLendon, 2003) | Problems<br><br>Solutions-Soup<br><br>Political Mood<br><br>Focus on change as conditional |  |   |
| Advocacy Coalition (Jenkins-Smith & Sabatier, 1993)         |  | Shared beliefs<br><br>Action in response to outside groups or forces<br><br>Focus on change as long-term |   |
| Policy Entrepreneurship (Minton & Vergari, 1996)            |  |  | Personal qualities: persuasive and persistent<br><br>Access to institutional clout and resources<br><br>Coalition-building to generate support<br><br>Focus on change as short-term |

The history of transfer policy formation in Massachusetts includes multiple instances of formal and informal deliberation and decision-making. These various instances also involve participation by various institutional representatives at different times and in different settings. I include policy theories centering on the actions of groups and individuals to ensure attention on actors in the policy formation process, complementing the significance of the policy environment. Although Sabatier's (2007)

third broad grouping of policy innovation has provided the opportunity to compare long-term policy enactments across government settings, the focus of this examination is on first uncovering the dynamics within one higher education environment. Future studies may lead to a compilation that allows for multi-setting comparisons.

Sabatier (2007) and McLendon (2003) have both addressed the value of using multiple policy theories for analytical purposes. Among a variety of recommendations in support of policy theory expansion, Sabatier openly asserted that multiple theory use surpasses the limitations of analysis from one theoretical perspective. He added that combining theories reinforces the relevance of different frameworks in different contexts (p. 330). McLendon also stressed the advantage of applying theories with opposing perspectives to safeguard against the potentially narrow interpretation of one approach. He further contended that examination of a particular phenomenon from competing views can lead to a kind of cumulative confirmation by which “the accumulation of evidence in favor of one explanation [is] sufficient to rule out alternative explanations” (p. 484). I draw on the different emphases of policy theories, guided by Sabatier’s and McLendon’s endorsements, to shape my conceptual framework in Chapter 3.

### **Policy Environments**

Complex configuration of the policy environment has been addressed in Kingdon’s (1995) Revised Garbage Can Model, based on organizational theory that compares universities to “organized anarchies” characterized by problematic preferences, unclear means, and fluid participation (Cohen, March & Olsen, 1972). Kingdon’s model contains the notion of multiple policy conduits or *streams*, each underscoring problems, recommendations or solutions, and politics (McLendon, 2003). In the problem stream,

interest is generated among institutional actors through the appearance of controversial or threatening trends and reported system failures. According to Kingdon, formal and informal policy proposals form the recommendation/solution stream, which mixes with problems to make up a "primeval soup" (p. 19-20). The third stream, politics, is illustrated by the influence of prevailing political favor, along with practical and philosophical concerns, that have bearing on final recommendations. These three streams join together in a convergence of timing that will lead to policy enactment. McLendon (2003) pointed out how timing is a critical aspect of this model, as policy problems, solutions, and political forces "develop independently of one another and none necessarily antedates the others... [so that] solutions may actually precede the problems to which they eventually become attached" (p. 487). In this scheme, change is neither incremental nor rational; rather spontaneity seems to underlie the amount of time necessary for policymaking (McLendon, 2003).

### **Policy Groups**

Group, or collective, action is represented through the Advocacy Coalition model. Jenkins-Smith and Sabatier (1993) have described this model as comprised of "actors from a variety of public and private institutions at all levels of government who share a set of basic beliefs (policy goals plus causal and other perceptions) and who seek to manipulate the rules, budgets, and personnel of governmental institutions in order to achieve these goals over time" (p. 5). This group retains a common purpose in affecting policy change that allows for incidental disagreement while maintaining core agreed-upon values and goals. In this scheme, policy change occurs in response to competition between advocacy coalitions, in response to external forces, and as a result of group

dynamics within a structure of established rules and limited resources (Jenkins-Smith & Sabatier, 1993).

### **Policy Actors**

Individuals, or policy actors, may similarly play significant roles in policy deliberations. The Policy Entrepreneurship model (Mintrom & Vergari, 1996) highlights the priorities and behaviors of people who become actively involved in policy formation. Core to the function of the policy entrepreneur is the capacity to see unaddressed problems as well as the motivation to initiate opportunities for resolution (Kingdon, 1995). These abilities are expressed through persuasive and persistent actions in order to make the case for a given policy idea. Among their various policy production strategies, policy entrepreneurs also use institutional, or representational, authority and resources to support their efforts. Formal position, coupled with political clout, can increase access to power. Since the ultimate goal is to influence policymakers, this model also presents policy entrepreneurs as coalition-builders who work to collect broad support. Unlike the Advocacy Coalition framework, Policy Entrepreneurship views activity occurring within a smaller milieu, emphasizing policy change as a short-term process (Mintrom & Vergari, 1996).

Taken together, these three approaches—policy environments, policy groups, and individual policy actors—provide a device for observing transfer and articulation policy deliberation and enactment in this study. The policy frames complement higher education system governance and coordination concepts to make up the conceptual framework guiding my research, which I present in the next chapter along with my research design and methods.

## CHAPTER 3

### CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK AND RESEARCH METHODS

Chapter 3 consists of two essential components of my research: the conceptual framework that provides a lens for viewing transfer policy formation in Massachusetts across time, and the research methods used to obtain the data employed in answering the three research questions in this study.

The chapter begins with a description of my conceptual framework. I include the different literatures presented in Chapter 2 based on their relevance to the case of Massachusetts. I also intentionally add my personal/professional perspective to the framework, given my established role as an active participant in public higher education policy activities for over 12 years. I end the section with a visual representation of the conceptual framework.

In the research methods section, I introduce pertinent epistemological principles, stressing the intersection between case study and historical analysis. I note my researcher affiliation to the investigation, acknowledging the inherent subjectivity of my position. I follow with a depiction of the specific methods used in the study, including archival/documentary research and oral history. I describe the iterative data collection process and then present my analytical framework, an adapted structure that draws on my conceptual framework to narrate and extract meaning from the findings in Chapters 4 and 5. I close the section by addressing issues of interpretation and validity.

#### **Conceptual Framework**

The Massachusetts public higher education system has incorporated transfer policies for approximately 40 years. These policies were created during times of diverse

higher education system configuration, under different governance settings, and involving varied policy environments, groups, and actors. Analysis of the history of Massachusetts transfer policy creation creates an opportunity to learn about the complex interplay of institutional and system-wide factors on policy enactment. By focusing on policy development over time, I look to explain how the individual transfer guidelines reflected public higher education priorities while also working to facilitate student movement between sectors.

To address the complexity of factors in this investigation, I adopt elements of Ravitch and Riggan's (2012) model for conceptual frameworks. This approach combines topical research, theoretical constructs, and personal interest as the principal "intellectual bins" (p. 12) of the framework, emphasizing how these key elements relate to each other within the overall structure. This method recognizes that academic and applied literatures help to shape what is known (and not known) about a given issue, and allows the researcher to critically compare previous methodological analyses of the topic. Formal theories provide constructs that may be adapted to shed light on distinct features and perspectives within the conceptual framework. Likewise, theoretical perspectives are complemented by the investigator's personal interest in the inquiry. This conceptual framework explicitly includes personal viewpoints because they cannot be removed and acknowledges that they may be a source of bias. Ravitch and Riggan direct the researcher to anticipate personal bias through reflection and synthesis, a process that

frequently calls for critiques of existing theoretical or empirical work, as well as of (one's) own biases or assumptions... (One's) goal is not to find published work that supports (one's) point of view; rather it is to find rigorous work that helps shape it (p. 11).



I use this multi-faceted model as a guide to depict the individual components and their relation to one another in the conceptual framework assembled for this study.

### **Articulation Literature**

The literature on transfer and articulation policy has demonstrated the attention placed on comprehensive and coordinated statewide guidelines to promote inter-institutional academic pathways (Wellman, 2002). Although Sauer et al. (2005) maintained that individual state cultures influence the composition of articulation policies, the authors' contention centered on the process of attaining transfer regulations, not on the relative merit of creating such policies in the first place. Allowing for differences across states, the literature has nevertheless pointed to the benefits of explicit articulation guidelines to support student transition between public two-year and four-year institutions. Transfer policy creation is at the core of my conceptual framework, the outgrowth of structural forces and autonomous policy advocates.

### **Governance Structure and Coordination Concepts**

The organizational alignment among public colleges and universities in a given system implies actions, mandated to a variable extent, taking place within a structure shared by member institutions. Research on higher education governance structures and coordination illuminates the relationships and organizational methods involved in policy enactment. Moreover, system coordination is repeatedly influenced by the push-and-pull of forces reinforcing institutional autonomy versus those stressing centralization. Governance and coordination concepts add to the context of public higher education in my conceptual framework.

## **Policy Theories**

Policy theories illustrate ways in which leaders and stakeholder groups use different strategies and rationales to create cross-institutional guidelines. Theories emphasizing the policy environment highlight the importance of timing, location, and perceived urgency to gain support for policy proposals. Policy coalition and entrepreneur concepts stress the interpersonal nature of policy creation through the influential work of groups and individuals. In the conceptual framework, the various policy theories help to illustrate how organized action has been carried out in Massachusetts.

## **Personal Experience**

I have worked in Massachusetts public higher education for over 17 years, most of this time as a transfer affairs professional in a community college. From this perspective I have seen how transfer and articulation policies have been implemented at institutional and individual student levels. I have explained and administered older, now-defunct policies, as well as new ones, in my advising work with students. I have negotiated policy details with transfer professional counterparts at baccalaureate institutions and engaged in discussion and debate on systemic issues with Massachusetts Department of Higher Education leaders. Through these experiences, I have compared different policy provisions to see overlap and continuity, as well as persistent gaps and obstacles. Most importantly, I have learned how community college students endeavor to make sense of these policies as they negotiate transitions between two-year and four-year educational settings.

Also, as I highlight later in this chapter, from 2007 to 2009 I participated in a statewide committee charged with transfer policy review, the outcome of which was yet

another set of transfer regulations. Through that experience, I gained a greater appreciation of the complexity of public higher education system dynamics, including the challenges of policy debates. I bring these cumulative experiences as personal interests to my conceptual framework.

### **Visual Depiction of Conceptual Framework**

Figure 1 displays the visual representation of the conceptual framework that organizes my examination. I propose that higher education governance structure and coordination concepts, along with theories highlighting policy environments, groups, and actors, offer constructive ideas for description and analysis of the history of transfer policy development in Massachusetts. The higher education system constitutes the setting in which formal governance is carried out, including the fluctuation between autonomy and coordination, as indicated by the double-pointed arrows.

Within this scheme, the policy environment, along with interested policy stakeholders at the system level, institutional tier, or from another outside perspective, directly influence the transfer policy formation process (single-point arrows). The completed policy consequently results from some combination of system forces and policy advocacy. Over time, this process repeats itself, even as the higher education environment changes. As I explain my methodological approach in the next section, I expand this framework and apply it as an interpretive lens.

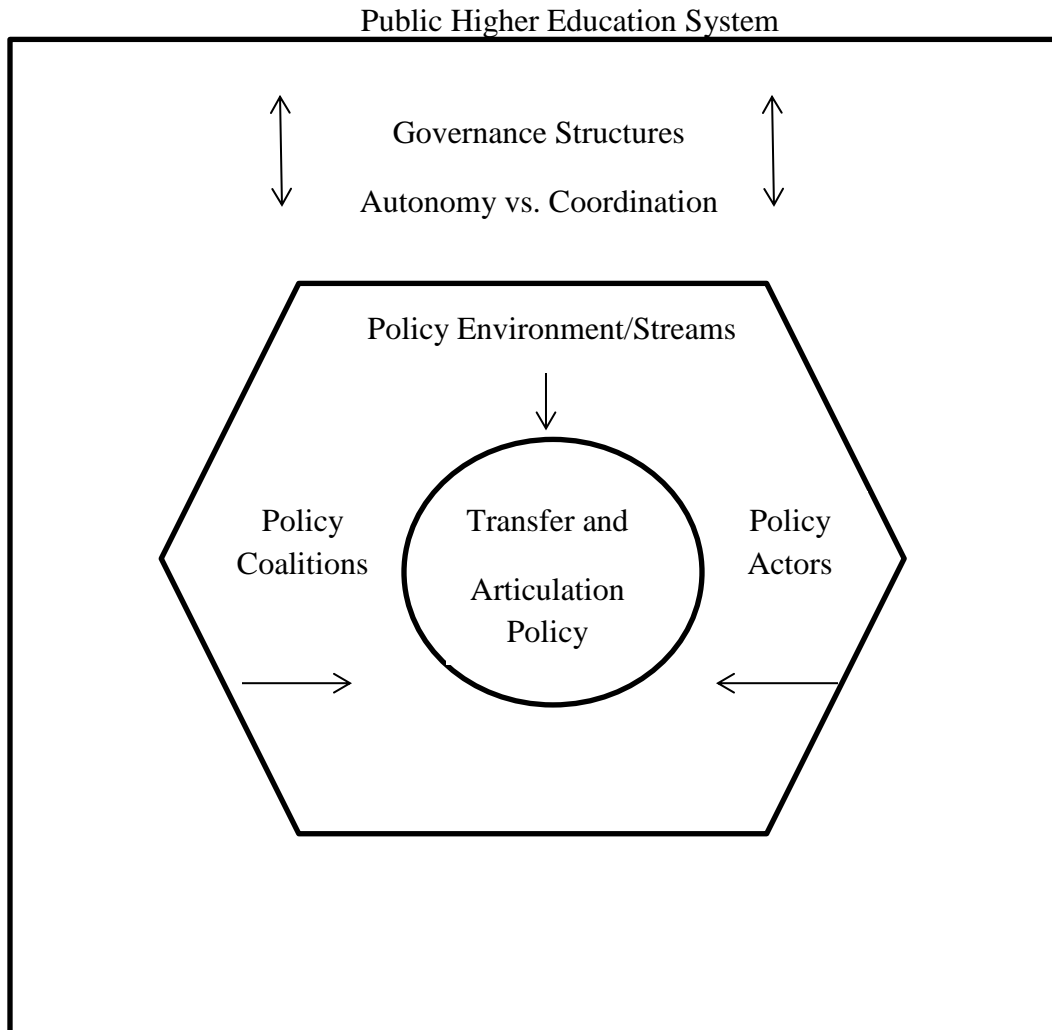


Figure 1. Conceptual Framework

**Epistemology/Design**

The questions at the heart of this study involve the past. But these questions are not intended simply to uncover past events. I call on Tosh’s (1991) notion of “guidance” for what may be learned from past actions and events. I look to what has occurred in the past “for a broader intimation of where (these events) stand in the flow of time and thus of what may lie in the future” (p. 10). This examination follows a qualitative research

approach to better understand how past policy environments, consisting of distinct governance structures, policy groups, and actors, help to explain the development of transfer articulation policy in Massachusetts.

This process of learning from the past includes descriptive and interpretive components, both consistent with qualitative research (Maxwell, 1992; Rossman & Rallis, 2003). I concentrate on describing past actions and events. This is an approach that places great importance on the context in which these actions took place—their natural setting—which means that knowledge gained from this study is essentially tied to the environment in which it takes place. The significance placed on context highlights the interpretive aspect of qualitative research. Interpretation of past events and actions suggests assumptions regarding the authenticity of these events based on written and oral documentation. Rather than seeing these written and oral accounts as having biased or limited analytical value, however, these forms carry interpretive strength “to comprehend phenomena not on the basis of the researcher’s perspective and categories, but from those of the participants in the situations studied” (Maxwell, 1992, p. 289).

### **The Extended Case Method**

The extended case method (Burawoy, 1998) offers value to the examination of the unique history of Massachusetts transfer articulation policy development. The extended case method is based on what Burawoy calls *reflexive science*, taken from ethnographic research, which functions “to extract the general from the unique, to move from the ‘micro’ to the ‘macro,’ and to connect the present to the past in anticipation of the future” (p. 5). This model endorses engagement with, rather than detachment from, one’s topic of interest, consistent with Ravitch and Riggan’s (2012) conceptual perspective. This

approach has practical merit, as I am an active participant in Massachusetts transfer and articulation policy development and implementation. Because of that direct relationship, my research into this topic necessarily overlaps with my specialized role in transfer affairs. Rather than perceive my professional connection as a liability, however, I accept my familiarity and participation within the context of the study. Moreover, I use this familiarity to enhance my informed access to past and present sources of information (materials and professional colleagues) as I look for emergent answers to support future practice. I address my professional relationship to the topic and to potential interview participants later in this section.

Still, integrating personal perspective and recent events into historical research invites criticism in terms of inadequate objectivity. In response, Tosh (1991) suggests that there is relevance to appraising current topics and making predictions of future trends based on the recent past, despite concerns about innate subjectivity. Factual dates and official documents provide some measure of objectivity in historically placing individual transfer policy enactments within larger organizational and political settings. However, any limitation resulting from a perceived subjective depiction of this case does not diminish the value of what may be learned about how transfer and articulation issues have been perceived, organized, and addressed. As Burawoy (1998) notes “Objectivity is not measured by procedures that assure an accurate mapping of the world but by the growth of knowledge; that is, the imaginative and parsimonious reconstruction of theory to accommodate anomalies” (p. 5). In this way, this study seeks to add to the ever-accumulating knowledge of transfer policy development through the analysis of the historical case of Massachusetts.

### **Historical analysis in case studies**

This historical examination focuses on the system-based circumstances in which Massachusetts public higher education transfer policies were developed over several decades. As such, this analysis contains case study features identified by Stake (1994) that include a) bounded inquiry of a particular context (Massachusetts, 1974 to 2009), b) highlighted identification of phenomena (transfer policies), and c) potential comparison with other cases. Another asset of the case study approach, individualized scrutiny of unusual circumstances (Patton, 1990), supports this unique case of policy formation. For over 35 years, Massachusetts policy development appears to have followed an idiosyncratic route involving different institutions and different governance structures over the years, as compared with guidelines advocated in the articulation policy literature.

From a parallel perspective, one can argue that all history is case study, as history is concerned with specific situations, actions, and events that have occurred across countless settings throughout time (Gaddis, 2002). Similarly, case study involves history, as the data that are collected and analyzed already exist, coming from the past (Barzun & Graff, 1992). Yin (2003) points out that both case studies and historical methods deal with “how” and “why” questions that attempt to explain past behaviors. He highlights their overlapping relationship as the focus shifts to more recent events:

The distinctive contribution of the historical method is in dealing with the “dead past”—that is, when no relevant persons are alive to report, even retrospectively, what occurred and when an investigator must rely on primary documents, secondary documents, and cultural and physical artifacts as the main sources of evidence. Histories can, of course, be done about contemporary events; in this situation, the strategy begins to overlap with that of the case study (p.7).

Given that the time period in this study ranges from the 1970s to the recent decade of 2000-2010, the case study and historical approaches constructively work together by including recent and distant past to address the research questions. The analytical framework I employ in this study reflects the combination of case study and historical approaches. I use this framework to examine policy enactments, governance forces, and policy groups and actors at given points in time and then extend comparisons to later periods (Gaddis, 2002; Tosh, 1991) as I demonstrate below.

### **Researcher Affiliation and Subjectivity**

I have been employed in public higher education in Massachusetts for approximately 17 years. For the last 12 years I have been the chief transfer affairs officer at Quinsigamond Community College in Worcester, Massachusetts. In this capacity, my responsibilities include interpreting and implementing a range of statewide transfer policies, from the original 1974 Commonwealth Transfer Compact to the 2009 MassTransfer Policy. In 2007, I was invited to participate in the Commonwealth Transfer Advisory Group (CTAG), a special commission charged by the Massachusetts Board of Higher Education to address concerns regarding transfer policy. CTAG was comprised of 22 individuals, including another three who stepped down at some point during the committee's existence. This group was made up of public two-year and four-year faculty and administrators as well as representatives of state legislature, the Massachusetts Board of Higher Education, the Association of Independent Colleges and Universities of Massachusetts, and other state higher education affiliated organizations. Twelve higher education leaders from Massachusetts and other states made presentations on a variety of transfer trends, models, and efforts over the course of the committee's



work. In addition, state-based transfer reports were provided by Department of Higher Education researchers. The committee held regular meetings from May 2007 through April 2008, with a culminating report of recommendations delivered to the Board of Higher Education in June 2008. I participated in all committee meetings and activities and interacted with a variety of higher education leaders and colleagues, some of whom I knew on a professional basis prior to committee participation. Two of the interviewees in this study also participated on the CTAG committee with me.

These past interactions have been instrumental in providing an “insider” *emic* status (Rosman & Rallis, 2003) through which I relate transfer policy issues to my day-to-day work with students. This “insider” experience has contributed greatly to my rationale for research into the history of transfer policy development. Yet, as Rossman and Rallis point out, this status also reinforces the importance of researcher *reflexivity* (p. 49), which I carried out by remaining mindful of my own participation within the context of this study, as well as my interactions with colleagues who participated in interviews. As I addressed topics with interviewees from a shared knowledge perspective, I acknowledge that this commonality may have affected my capacity to listen and draw from their perspectives in a completely neutral way. Familiarity has supported my relations with individuals who share common work experiences and understanding, but it may also have impacted my ability to interpret their experiences outside of the shared context (Rossman & Rallis, 2003). I address my interactions with interview contributors later in this chapter.

## **Historical Methods**

The purpose of this study is to investigate the history of articulation policy development among Massachusetts public community colleges, state colleges/universities, and campuses of the University of Massachusetts to determine the roles played by (a) governance structures as well as (b) group and individual policy actors at the time of each policy formation. In this case, a historical approach is essential since policy development commenced with establishment of the first statewide policy in 1974 and continued with subsequent policies and revisions during the 1980s, 1990s, and 2000s. Statewide public higher education governance structure and coordination also evolved during this time, so examination necessarily includes historical documents that identify these structural elements and chronicle the changes that took place over time. Likewise, oral history methods provide the opportunity to supplement the written record with spoken accounts by individuals who were present during these periods of policy development and have first-hand perspectives of actions that took place. In the following sections, I identify archival materials and oral histories and distinguish their relative strengths and limitations as data for interpretation.

### **Archival/documentary research**

Written materials, both formal documents and unpublished accounts, are a hallmark of historical research, given the focus on events and actions occurring in the past. Although published materials may at times be obtained directly from associated organizational entities, often these items are catalogued and maintained in archival settings such as libraries, museums, government courthouses or other records maintenance facilities.

One advantage of archival research is that it provides structure for identification of core documents as primary sources upon which interpretation and narration are based (Tuchman, 1994). Primary written sources, according to Moss (1984), are deemed “transactional records,” documents which themselves are the outcomes of the process that led to their creation. Moss includes constitutional laws, statutes, charters, agreements, rulings, instructions, and marketing advertisements among primary sources. These sources are termed *primary* because of their contemporaneity; that is, they were produced by individuals or groups present at the time of the events in question (Gottschalk, 1969). Primary documents such as laws or policies retain a degree of authenticity due to their physical publication and acknowledged acceptance of their purposes. However, other primary sources are not automatically conferred with authenticity or credibility. In situations such as the compilation of meeting minutes or the entry in a diary, a personal decision is made regarding which information to include and which to exclude--what Moss calls “selective records” and “recollections” respectively (p. 87)--so that an amount of interpretation takes place. The power of primary sources comes then, after verifying transactional vs. selective or recollection status, in the presence of the item itself as a piece of the past reality that the researcher seeks (Moss, 1984).

Secondary sources, by contrast, are those written documents formally constructed to address a historical topic, or related issues, by an interested examiner who was not an eyewitness to the event (Gottschalk, 1969). In this case, the secondary source carries its own interpretations based on the intent and perspective of the chronicler, which modify the conclusions that are reached. Although these documents may be helpful in establishing the context of a given period or activity as well as locating available primary

documents, secondary sources are recognized as having relatively narrow use for uncovering additional leads or offering thematic conjectures (Gottschalk, 1969).

For this study, primary and secondary documents included formal policy records, governing agency meeting minutes, related administrative reports, as well as media accounts of the time. Similarly, documents highlighting governance structure and coordination were found in formal agency or commission reports addressing organization/reorganization. Related secondary documents included scholarly articles and analytical reviews of public higher education organizational trends in Massachusetts. Document sources are specified in the data collection section.

Humphrey (2010) offers a number of strategies for conducting archival research, grouped into preparatory activities, time usage in the archives, and document interpretation considerations. Preparation involves diverse actions from researching the archives website to confirm holdings and hours of operation, to introducing oneself and one's research topic to archivists to maximize collaboration and support, to identifying rules for permitted writing implements, copying, and photography privileges. Time spent in an archive is enhanced, according to Humphrey, by not only knowing in advance the specific sources to be examined but also by employing a "triage strategy" (p. 49) for examination of materials. This strategy may comprise a specific plan for reviewing materials by date or topic, for example, but also recognizes the importance of being open to unexpected discoveries that, in turn, may add richness to identified sources. Archival document interpretation involves confirming the origin of primary sources, including the environment that gives rise to these documents as well as the role of the document's author as an observer or participant in activities reported in documents. In my research, I

used a triage strategy that incorporated documents which I obtained from different archival sources as well as interview participants, as I detail below. These multiple bases not only resulted in unexpected materials but also helped to confirm relevant timelines and major policy and governance-related activities.

### **Oral history**

Oral history traces its roots to social projects of the 1930s, including chronicles of former slaves. Alan Nevin is credited with the development of the field and its successive growth in popularity among a cross-section of scholarly disciplines seeking to capture historical perspectives to both supplement, as well as counter, the written record (Hoffman, 1984; Starr, 1984).

Oral history is considered a primary source “defined as a process of collecting, usually by means of a tape-recorded interview, reminiscences, accounts, and interpretations of events from the recent past which are of historical significance” (Hoffman, 1984, p. 68). Once assembled, these histories take their final form as documents. Moss (1984) adds that there is a relationship between the type of oral record collected and its value as testimony on a scale from concreteness to abstraction and interpretation. At one end of the continuum, highly valued primary sources include *transactional records* such as contracts and laws, as well as “any document that embodies in its text the sum and substance of the action it represents” (p. 89). Next come progressively *selective records* and tempered *recollections* that include meeting notes and second-hand commentaries by those present at the time. According to Moss, *reflection* and *analysis* constitute the interpretive, and less valued, endpoint of oral history. At this end of the continuum, the informant engages in subjective abstraction, evaluating a given

circumstance and making comparisons with other past events. Although this testimony has limited value, it is useful in portraying how participants make sense of past events. Oral history transcripts in this study reflect the range of concreteness to abstraction, as individuals verbally confirmed historical dates and events as well as shared interpretations of governance and policy actions.

As a research method, oral history is comparable to traditional qualitative interviewing. Both methods involve real-time interaction between the researcher and informant(s) and both follow a general protocol in which questions are posed to informants on various topics. Oral history diverges from traditional qualitative interviewing in terms of purpose, reflected in the kinds of questions asked. Where traditional qualitative interviewing involves development of relatively focused yet open-ended questions to address specific topics (allowing flexibility for emergent themes in answers), oral history research frames broad questions to explain “the context, circumstance, physical setting, emotions, outcomes” (Chaddock, 2010, p. 19). In this way, oral history methods resemble the qualitative approach incorporated in phenomenological interviewing (Rossman & Rallis, 2003) which concentrates on drawing out participants’ narratives of past personal experiences.

### **Data Collection**

Yin (2003) explains that case study design typically includes the compilation of multiple forms of data including written documentation, archival records, interviews, direct observations, participant observation, and/or physical artifacts. I followed Yin’s basic approach, informed by my conceptual framework, to collect archival materials and conduct oral history interviews.

Data collection began in the Spring of 2015 and concluded in the Spring of 2017. Information gathering took place in repeated phases, beginning with collection of records to identify governance structures in relation to major public higher education timelines. I also reviewed my collection of individual transfer policies for completeness, understanding that there might still be other versions to obtain and assess. I then constructed a draft chronological table listing Massachusetts governors, governance authorities, major higher education activities, and formal transfer policies. This document, which I continued to extend as I collected more information and carried out interviews, is included in Appendix E. I subsequently began to interview selected individuals and then returned to obtaining additional written records. I followed this repetitive process throughout the data collection period.

### **Documents**

I collected print and digitally-archived materials from multiple government sources including the Massachusetts State Archives, the State Library of Massachusetts, and the state Department Higher Education. I also obtained print documents from the archives of the University of Massachusetts campuses at Amherst and Dartmouth. Archival records included portions of statutes of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts General Laws, records of the executive and legislative branches of the Commonwealth, special commission reports, committee and sub-committee meeting minutes, memos, emails, promotional materials, and news media sources. Appendix B contains the list of primary and secondary records obtained. As I collected documents, I began to sort them into discrete folders following a practical order. I organized folders for specific policy documents and related notes. I also organized folders by relevant governance authority,

including the Board of Higher Education (1965-1980), Board of Regents (1980-1991), Higher Education Coordinating Council (1991-1996), and Board of Higher Education (1996-2009). I also collected other related reports, news articles, and assorted documents into folders. I then placed folders within larger sections organized by decade: 1960s, 1970s, 1980s, 1990s, and 2000s. This arrangement was especially helpful when I began to cull the data to assemble findings.

### **Interviews**

I interviewed 12 individuals in this study. They are listed in Table 3. I followed purposive sampling (Creswell, 2009) to select informants who met the following criteria: (a) worked within Massachusetts public higher education at some time between 1974 and 2009, (b) worked directly in transfer policy development and implementation roles, and (c) represented distinct institutional perspectives: community college, state college/university, or UMass campus. The selected informants included those who previously worked, and may continue to work, in one of the three higher education sectors as well as the state Department of Higher Education.



Table 3: Oral History Interviewees

| Name                | Institution(s)   | Years of Related Employment              | Title(s)   |
|---------------------|--|--|--|
| Ernest Beals        | University of Massachusetts-Amherst                                    | 1963-1973                                | Associate Dean of Admissions, Director of Transfer Affairs                               |
| Carole Roe Bergeron | Framingham State College/University                                    | 1992-2011                                | Assistant Dean of Admissions   |
| Mark Broadbent      | Holyoke Community College  | 1993-Present                             | Coordinator of Transfer Affairs  |
| Larry Dean          | Greenfield Community College   | 1980-2009                                | Transfer Affairs, Registrar  |
| Gerald Durkin       | University of Massachusetts-Lowell                                     | 1982-Present                             | Director/Associate Dean of Transfer Admissions   |
| Mary Dunn           | Salem State College/University,*<br>University of Massachusetts-Boston | *1983-1987<br>1987-1990<br>*1993-Present | Director of Transfer Admissions/Assistant Dean of Undergraduate Admissions               |
| Therese Labine      | Holyoke Community College, University of Massachusetts-Amherst*        | 1978-1993<br>*1993-2015                  | Coordinator of Transfer Affairs, Associate Director of Admissions                        |
| Catherine Pride     | Middlesex Community College, MA Department of Higher Education*        | 1984-2010<br>*2001-2004                  | Director for Transfer Articulation/Associate Dean for Academic Programs and Articulation |
| Denise Richardello  | North Adams State College/Massachusetts College of Liberal Arts        | 1977-1991<br>1994-Present                | Director of Transfer Admissions/Executive Vice President                                 |
| Kathy Ryan          | University of Massachusetts-Amherst                                    | 1971-2003                                | Director of Transfer Admissions  |
| Eileen Shea         | Bristol Community College  | 1982-2017                                | Director of Transfer Affairs and Articulation  |
| Robert Yacubian     | Greenfield Community College   | 1971-1998                                | Coordinator of Transfer  |

Given my active professional role in state transfer and articulation policy, I formed a list of potential interviewees from among colleagues who met the criteria above. I chose individuals who could provide insights covering the period of 1974-2009. I identified two or more individuals to provide observations for a given period of time, although some were able to provide useful observations over multiple decades. As Table 3 shows, three individuals were working in transfer affairs in the early 1970s when the first formal transfer policy was developed, and eight were working in the field by 1984, when guidelines were revised and the first statewide policy was established. My strategy was advantageous since multiple informants served the purpose of providing corroborating information as well as indicating divergent accounts.

Ideally, I could have expanded the total number of people interviewed, as interviewees named other individuals to consider. Unfortunately, there were others mentioned who had recently passed away. Some of the names that came up were consistent with information identified through collected documents. Significantly, some of the people who were interviewed later in the process were mentioned by earlier participants. I gained confidence in my choice of interview participants based on the voiced recommendation of others as I continued data collection.

I conducted interviews using a protocol that included providing materials to participants in advance of the interview. First, I compiled a list of the recognized transfer policies as in Table 4. Next, I developed questions meant as general starting points for conversation during the interview. The questions are contained in Appendix D. Finally, I added the chronological table mentioned above (Appendix E). I reached out to potential contributors by phone, email, and in person to introduce my project and invite their

involvement. After obtaining agreement from each participant and setting up the interview date, I followed up with an email including the three documents as attachments. During the interviews, we actively referred to the documents both as prompts for recollection as well as clarification of associated details. As questions from the list were asked and answered, I encouraged informants to expand on emergent topics. I asked questions from the list before the end of the interview if these topics were not addressed in the unstructured dialogue.

The interviews took place over two years in face-to-face settings. All interviews, except for one (Bergeron), were conducted on a single date. Interviews ranged from forty-five minutes to one hour and forty-five minutes in length. The Bergeron interview was conducted on two dates separated by six weeks due to the fact that the interviewee had retired and moved away from Massachusetts, but continued to work on new state-sponsored transfer initiatives on a part-time basis with the Department of Higher Education. I coordinated these interviews with attendance at policy meetings.

### **Protection of human subjects**

The researcher has a paramount interest to ensure wellbeing and safeguard participation of individuals engaging in oral history interviews. As I met potential informants, I shared the intent of capturing their experiences as transfer professionals, including participation in various transfer policy committees and activities. I reviewed the intent of the study as I presented the consent to participate disclosure form. I clarified their voluntary options to participate anonymously or as themselves, along with the appropriateness of changing their minds while engaged in the process. None of the

participants expressed concern about confidentiality, and all were willing to be identified. I address this further in the validity section below.

During interviews, I attempted to stay mindful of the double-edged consequences of *emic* status, presented above. Although public higher education issues may have been well-known and shared areas of expertise with informants, I was careful to acknowledge the full official titles of transfer policies as these were first discussed, rather than rely on shortened acronyms. Similarly, I asked participants to explicitly identify higher education institutions and governance structure in existence whenever a particular policy was discussed so as to minimize perceived familiarity with historical environments or actions. Clarification of policies, governance, and associated groups and actors helped me to organize oral histories for eventual analysis using an extension of my conceptual framework.

### **Analytical Framework**

The research questions in this study focus on the interplay between system governance and coordination with policy groups and actors in the creation of transfer and articulation policies. To address this interplay, my questions concentrate first on identifying specific policy and system mechanisms, followed by examining the convergence of these factors:

- 1) What has been the sequence of articulation policy development in Massachusetts?
- 2) At the time of each policy creation, what was the policymaking environment?

- a) What were the public higher education governance structures responsible for coordination among the different educational sectors?
  - b) What individuals and groups participated in the policy formation process?
- 3) How did state governance structures, as well as individuals and groups involved in transfer policy formation, influence the history of transfer articulation policy development?

As these questions indicate, this analysis looks both within specific historical moments, as well as across these periods of policy formation.

Tosh (1991) offers a schema for analysis of past actions that recognizes the contemporaneous relationships at a given point in time and allows for comparison across different points in time. He presents two planes, one horizontal (termed *synchronic*) and the other vertical (termed *diachronic*). The horizontal plane highlights the “the impinging of quite different features of the contemporary world on the matter at hand” and the vertical plane contains “a sequence through time of earlier manifestations of this activity” (p. 116-117). This scheme thus focuses on analysis on two levels. First, the contemporary forces within one temporal context are examined to understand their interplay and impact on the issue or circumstance at hand. This is the synchronic plane. Second, consecutive contexts in the diachronic plane permit comparison of situational factors from one chronological instance to the next. Figure 2 displays the analytical framework used in this study that follows this format of contemporaneity and cross-comparison.

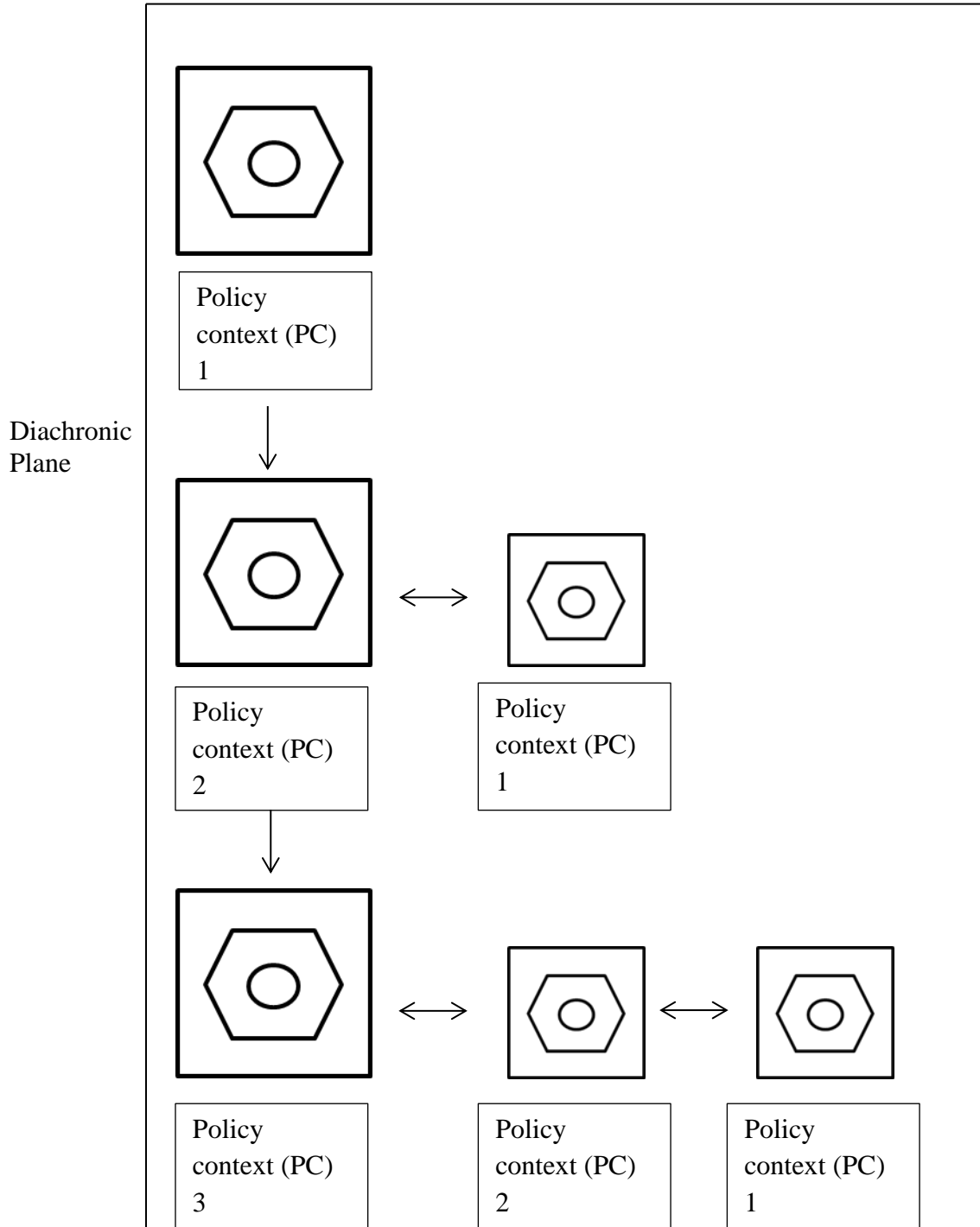


Figure 2. Analytical Framework

This analytic framework is especially useful for the case of Massachusetts as I show in Chapters 4 and 5 that transfer and articulation history includes both situational policy creation as well as successive and complementary policy enactment.

### **Employing Tosh's framework**

At the center of this analysis lies a question about the connection between the public higher education governance structure and the policy groups or actors who produced individual transfer policies at each point of enactment. This connection acknowledges that prior policy environments and outcomes may have some bearing on subsequent deliberations and results. My analytical framework thus addresses how these successive situational factors were arranged and interpreted. I followed a series of steps, incorporating archival documents and interview transcriptions to organize data guided by the graphical representation of the conceptual framework in Figure 1.

From the synchronic (horizontal) perspective, my analysis focused first on the context of transfer policy enactment, followed by highlighting governance structures and policy environments, at one point in time. This organization established the format for the findings in Chapter 4. I started by compiling the individual transfer policy texts, placing them in sequential order and reviewing them for completeness. As I conducted interviews, I cross-checked the order with participants, who had been given the transfer policies list in advance. I also confirmed policy elements and sequence through careful appraisal of interview transcriptions. I then constructed summary descriptions of each policy based on the documents and oral history comments. Key words for this section included the specific title of the policy (e.g., Commonwealth Transfer Compact) as well as specific provisions, such as transfer of credit, mentioned in association with the policy.

I next addressed governance. I referred to the chronological table in Appendix E, which included successive higher education governance entities. I sorted through archival materials organized by decade and topical area to review reports, meeting minutes, and news articles that made reference to a specific governance body. I reread interview transcriptions to corroborate timelines and look for additional descriptions of governance activity in relation to transfer policies. I then constructed a summary description of governance for the decade of time. Key words included names of governance structures in existence, (e.g. Board of Regents), legislative or agency leaders, and higher education system issues and priorities.

I reviewed the transfer articulation policy documents again to identify the groups and individuals, if listed, who participated in its creation. If documents did not include names, I reviewed reports that mentioned specific policies as well as committee meeting minutes and correspondence for some indication of policy actors or groups at the time to determine possible connections with policy development. I also reexamined interview transcriptions to look for names mentioned in association with policy activities. As I uncovered policy groups and participants, along with governance structures, I identified the two-year and four-year sectors to establish the levels of communication and coordination taking place in policy formation settings. I used this composite to construct a narrative of the transfer policy environment. Key words included the names of individuals listed in policy documents and meeting minutes, and policy groups noted in reports and named in interviews. The three areas of policy documents, governing bodies, and policy groups and actors are summarized graphically as Policy Context 1 (PC 1) in Figure 2.



I employed the diachronic (vertical) perspective in the figure to display policy creation over time, beginning with PC 1 at the top of the figure and moving downward to later synchronic planes made up of multiple policy environments. Policy Context (PC 2) followed as a separate and distinct combination of policies, governance structures, and policy actors and groups within a shared policy environment, similar to the process in PC 1. As I demonstrate in Chapter 5, at this synchronic level I analyzed PC 2 in relation to PC 1 in terms of the (a) specific policies created, (b) existing governing structures and levels of coordination, and (c) identified actors and groups in the policy environment. The bottom of the figure shows subsequent synchronic planes with multiple environments as demonstrated by Policy Context 3 (PC 3) next to PC 2 and PC 1. In this way, policy contexts were placed next to each other within each successive synchronic plane, allowing for interpretation based on comparison of contextual features at the system and policy levels. Chapter 5 demonstrates analysis of the successive synchronic planes in relation to each other.

### **Interpretation**

Interpretation in qualitative research is variously described as art, as storytelling, and as recurring circle of analysis (Denzin, 1994; Rossman & Rallis, 2003). These descriptors indicate the significant role of the researcher as actively engaged with the data to make sense and communicate what may be learned to others. According to Rossman and Rallis (2003), interpretation is an iterative process that involves repeated examination and questioning of the data obtained: “You analyze the parts in order to see the whole; seeing the whole further illuminates the parts” (p. 288). This process of moving from the

particular to the comprehensive and back is supported by the collection of detailed information, or *thick description* (Geertz, 1973) of the context being studied.

For this analysis, I drew narratives from primary and secondary archival sources, along with oral histories, recognizing, as Geertz maintains, that “what we call our data are really our own constructions of other people’s constructions” (p. 9). This acknowledgment adds complexity to interpretation in this study. It has reinforced the need to separate, and reflect on, participant understanding (and interpretation) apart from the inferences I make as the researcher. I address the researcher’s simultaneous stance within and outside of the context of the study below.

### **Validity of data and results**

Identification of sources helps to reinforce the validity of data obtained through historical methods. Archival documents are assumed to be “formal, dignified records of the past” (Tosh, 1991, p. 33), yet authenticity may be questioned in different ways. Historical accounts may contain factual errors, may reflect the viewpoint of a biased observer, or may be incomplete (Humphrey, 2010; Tosh, 1991). These issues highlight what Maxwell (1992) calls *descriptive validity* (p. 286) which concerns itself with accuracy of information and the threat that differing accounts may have for accepted facts. Subjective fallibility is also possible for interviews collected as oral history. The challenge for the researcher is in finding ways to confirm information obtained through archival documents as well as oral histories, improving descriptive validity.

Yin (2003) maintains that *triangulation* provides a measure of verification for written and oral sources. In this strategy, the collection of multiple data sources creates a convergence of information to validate the topic in question. Written sources that cite

other sources or events related to the document in question help to ensure authenticity (Humphrey, 2010). Similarly, oral accounts that refer to formal written documents provide support. Maxwell (1992) adds that validity is protected by reaching consensus through the voluntary revision of conflicting accounts. In this way, triangulation emphasizes that “any finding or conclusion in a case study is likely to be much more convincing and accurate if it is based on several different sources of information, following a corroboratory mode” (Yin, 2003, p. 98). For my research, I drew on extensive archival material and knowledgeable oral histories and employed a sophisticated analytical framework to construct findings in Chapter 4. This combined approach helped to increase the validity of this study.

Two additional validity strategies may be applied to oral histories. The naming of informants who supply verbal accounts provides a measure of authenticity. Contributors may be identified in direct connection to their oral testimony, or disassociated from their specific account to ensure anonymity. Understandably, informants may be concerned with personal disclosure in situations where statements containing controversial comments or criticism could directly affect them or affiliated institutions. So, while personal identification of informants provided a degree of validity to oral history accounts in my research, I managed individual concerns about privacy and safety by explicitly offering anonymity. None of the interviewees expressed concerns about being identified when they signed the participation consent form. Nor did anyone change their mind and request anonymity when they were provided with the written transcription of the interview.

Secondly, Creswell (2009) recommends the strategy of *member checking* (p. 191) in which interviewees are invited to review information obtained from their narratives for accuracy and clarity. This process affords the researcher with complementary benefits through concurrence and discrepancy. Concurrence of written and oral data offer direct corroboration. But, according to Creswell (2009), so does disagreement: “Because real life is composed of different perspectives that do not always coalesce, discussing contrary information adds to the credibility of an account” (p. 192). I sent written transcriptions to the 12 persons interviewed in this study. Of those, three responded with written edits to the transcriptions. Suggested edits focused primarily on typographical errors and word choices. Interviewees were then provided with revised versions of their interview transcripts and encouraged to supply additional edits at any time.

Another level of validity transcends accuracy and corroboration. Maxwell (1992) distinguishes descriptive validity from *interpretive validity* (p. 288) within qualitative research. Interpretive validity is concerned with the meaning of past events and activities for those who are included in these accounts. That is, the understanding gained from a qualitative examination “seeks to comprehend phenomena not on the basis of the researcher’s perspective and categories, but from those of the participants in the situation studied” (p. 289). Issues and processes are analyzed for their significance to the members of the context under investigation. Yet, interpretive validity also acknowledges that, while meaning constructed by members is legitimately respected, the analysis of a phenomenon or case situates member perspective as one important aspect of the overall study. The oral history contributors in this inquiry shared a common perspective as transfer policy implementers, regardless of individual experience with state or regional

policy formation. That common viewpoint helped to corroborate interpretation but it also bounded interpretations made by individuals.

In this investigation, one task was to acknowledge the advantage of my emic status for engagement with informants and archival documents as I have sought to understand the creation of transfer guidelines over time. Another task was to remain equally focused on interpreting this policy development history within larger environments of changing governance structures involving diverse policy groups and actors. I considered this a dual process, similar to what Burawoy (1998) labels as *embedded objectivity* (p. 28), which places the researcher within the context of study, reflectively making sense of the outcomes as a participant in the process. As I alternately read documents and oral history accounts, I reflected on how descriptions of earlier policy discussions resembled recent ones in which I have taken part. I began to see how individual actions and events have related to larger, recurring efforts over time. In Chapter 4, I present the findings of this study to narrate this complex description as a representative participant of this historical account.

**CHAPTER 4**  
**FINDINGS: TRANSFER ARTICULATION DEVELOPMENT IN**  
**MASSACHUSETTS, 1974-2009**

This chapter presents the findings of document review and oral history collection that form the basis of investigation into transfer policy expansion within Massachusetts public higher education from 1974 to 2009. Documents include primary and secondary sources collected in a combination of methods, as reported in Chapter 3. Documents and oral histories provide evidence to address the first and second research questions in this study. Documents verify the existence of the formal policies, note the relevant governance structures at times of policy creation, and identify policy actors and groups where apparent. Oral histories similarly furnish information not found in print or formal records and they corroborate facts through the first-person narratives of higher education professionals who participated in transfer policy development and implementation.

I present findings as a chronology organized by decade, thereby incorporating Tosh's (1991) *diachronic* analysis to answer the first two research questions in this inquiry. A chronological approach is appropriate, as this study focuses on the natural sequence of specific policy formation over 35 years. Moreover, I single out transfer policies, governance structures, and policy formation environments for each decade following Walcott's (1994) advice regarding qualitative description: "Relating events in...chronological sequence...offers an efficient alternative to the sometimes lengthy bridges written to give an account the appearance of flow when significant events do not seem all that continuous" (p. 18). Thus, I employ *diachronic* analysis here as a

foundation to answer the 3<sup>rd</sup> research question using Tosh's (1991) *synchronic* focus in Chapter 5.

For each decade, I first describe the policy (or policies) crafted and emphasize significant components based on direct review of the policy texts. Massachusetts transfer policies are summarized in Table 4. I then briefly highlight circumstances around the prevailing higher education governance structure(s) and coordination. I conclude each section with an account of the relevant transfer policy formation environment(s). It is important to note that the narrative presented in this chapter is not meant to be a complete history of public higher education governance, or transfer policy formation, during the historical periods covered, but is meant to address the specific research questions of this study.

Table 4: Massachusetts Academic Transfer Policies

| Policy                                | Established | Participants   |
|---------------------------------------|-------------|--|
| Commonwealth Transfer Compact         | 1974        | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Community colleges</li> <li>• UMass-Amherst</li> </ul>  |
| Revised Commonwealth Transfer Compact | 1984        | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Community colleges</li> <li>• State colleges</li> <li>• UMass campuses (Amherst, Boston)</li> </ul> |
| Revised Commonwealth Transfer Compact | 1990        | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Community colleges</li> <li>• State colleges</li> <li>• UMass campuses (Amherst, Boston)</li> </ul> |
| Joint Admissions                      | 1992-1993   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Community colleges</li> <li>• UMass-Amherst</li> </ul>  |
| Joint Admissions                      | 1995        | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Community colleges</li> <li>• UMass (All campuses)</li> </ul>                                       |
| Joint Admissions                      | 1996        | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Community colleges</li> <li>• State colleges</li> </ul>   |
| Tuition Advantage Program             | 1996-1997   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Community colleges</li> <li>• State colleges</li> <li>• UMass (All campuses)</li> </ul>             |
| Joint Admissions Agreement            | 2000        | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Community colleges</li> <li>• State colleges</li> <li>• UMass (All campuses)</li> </ul>             |
| Revised Tuition Advantage Program     | 2002        | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Community colleges</li> <li>• State colleges</li> <li>• UMass (All campuses)</li> </ul>             |
| Education Compact                     | 2004        | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Community colleges</li> <li>• State colleges</li> <li>• UMass (All campuses)</li> </ul>             |
| Revised Joint Admissions              | 2006        | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Community colleges</li> <li>• State colleges</li> <li>• UMass (All campuses)</li> </ul>             |
| MassTransfer                          | 2009        | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Community colleges</li> <li>• State colleges</li> <li>• UMass (All campuses)</li> </ul>             |



## **Transfer and Articulation Policy Development 1960 to 1969**

Although the first statewide transfer policy did not come into existence until 1974, it is important to begin with the preceding decade. Three significant developments in public higher education occurred during this time: 1) the nascence of the regional community college system, 2) the creation of the first statewide higher education governing board, and 3) the first instance of statewide governance interest in transfer policy.

### **Statewide Governance and Coordination**

The first statewide governing body, the Board of Higher Education (BHE), was established in 1965 as one recommendation contained within the landmark “Willis-Harrington” Act, so called for its’ co-chairs, Benjamin C. Willis, superintendent of schools for the City of Chicago and Massachusetts state senator Kevin B. Harrington. The formal document which led to enactment was entitled *Report of the Special Commission (including members of the General Court) Established to Make an Investigation and Study Relative to Improving and Extending Educational Facilities in the Commonwealth*, (Commonwealth of Massachusetts, 1965), and was completed after three years of extensive research. The Massachusetts legislature initiated the commission to assess public education, elementary through collegiate, after a series of articles in the Boston Globe had criticized lack of support for public education at the same time that the school-age population was rising in the state (Gaudet, 1987). The 600-page Willis-Harrington commission report addressed a number of recommendations across the public education spectrum, including higher education. Within the master plan for public education, the commission specifically proposed creation of a Board of Higher Education

to coordinate public higher education in the Commonwealth. Composition of the BHE was stipulated by statute to be made up of 11 members and led by a chancellor. Membership included seven governor appointees, along with four higher education segmental representatives (selected trustees of the University of Massachusetts, state colleges, community colleges, and affiliated technical institutes). One of the governor's appointees was designated to come from a private higher education institution in Massachusetts.

### **Early Transfer Policy Attention**

The first five years of BHE activities centered around a number of internal organizational concerns, from establishment of board leadership positions and responsibilities, to the need for administrative support, salaries, and meeting schedules. Despite the board's structural emphases during its formative years, it turned its attention to two transfer-related priorities in 1968. The first arose within the context of nurse education and existing associate degree and bachelor degree opportunities. The BHE Advisory Committee on Higher Education Nursing Needs delivered its recommendations at the Board's May 17<sup>th</sup> meeting. Among these were two suggestions directly related to transfer. The first aimed at developing ways to support holders of R.N. diplomas or associate degrees with entrance into baccalaureate programs at the state colleges. The second recommendation stipulated the need for transfer policies and procedures between community colleges and state colleges, both for nursing students as well as students enrolled in specific transfer-designated associate degrees.

A larger effort was introduced later that year which resulted in the creation of a subcommittee charged with conducting research into transfer student issues. Rationale for this effort was outlined in the BHE 1968 Annual Report.

The problem of transfer students from community colleges...into our four year institutions is already reaching serious proportions and will grow more acute as the two-year institutions increase in number and size. Before we are faced with a serious breakdown within the system due to the exclusion of qualified transfer students from continuing their education, a study of the problem and the development of a reasonable plan to meet the situation is necessary.

Board leadership initiated The Committee on Transfer Students and Student Migration in October 1968, made up of public and private higher education institutional representatives. The committee was chaired by Glenda Lee, a University of Michigan doctoral student whose dissertation focused on the transfer experiences of students who completed associate degrees after already transferring to baccalaureate institutions (a phenomenon called *reverse transfer* in current vernacular). The committee prioritized its efforts on identifying transfer trends within and among two-year and four-year institutions.

Lee conducted data collection that included questionnaires and interviews with representatives of public and private colleges and universities. Board interests focused on projecting the need for upper-division coursework and programs to respond to transfer trends with a special emphasis on the development of supports within public higher education. At the July 18, 1969 board meeting, the BHE chancellor summarized a preliminary report that Lee had given at a separate advisory committee meeting. He noted Lee's conclusions that pointed to significant growth in transfer students and the consequential need for structural mechanisms to address transfer issues. Over the next

two months, the BHE chancellor reiterated expectations of a forthcoming final report from the transfer advisory committee. The October 17, 1969 board meeting minutes, although again mentioning a draft report in process of review, actually contained the final reference to the transfer migration study. The next significant introduction of transfer policy discussion did not occur until the mid-1970s when the first public transfer policy was introduced to the board.

### **Transfer and Articulation Policy Development 1970 to 1979**

The era of 1970-1979 marks the creation of the first official statewide transfer policy in 1974. This policy is significant not only because of its precedent-setting role but also because it was created at the regional level, involving one baccalaureate institution and multiple community colleges. This decentralized approach to transfer policy innovation and implementation was repeated in later decades, counterbalancing episodes of centralized statewide policy review and authorization.

### **Commonwealth Transfer Compact, 1974**

The Commonwealth Transfer Compact (CTC) was established as a result of collaborative work that had begun between the University of Massachusetts-Amherst and Western Massachusetts area community colleges, in particular Greenfield Community College and Holyoke Community College, in 1971. The CTC was subsequently expanded to all existing community colleges as the first statewide transfer policy in 1974. The CTC focused on the equivalency and applicability of community college coursework towards meeting general education requirements at the baccalaureate level. The main provision of the Compact identified a common core of general education courses totaling 33 credits that students completed at the community college. Courses in English

Composition, along with electives in Humanities, Lab Sciences, Mathematics, and Social Sciences comprised the general education core. Through a certification process, this block of coursework would be recognized and deemed comparable to the university's own general education requirements. Community college students were required to complete and graduate with associate degrees containing the core of common courses among a minimum total of 60 college-level credits. The Compact also provided for the transferability of "D" grades obtained at the community college as long as all other conditions were met. The CTC policy only addressed academic performance and equivalence, and did not address transfer admission. Community college students were required to follow and meet general university transfer admissions standards in order to acquire the benefits of the CTC.

### **Statewide Governance and Coordination**

By 1974, the state Board of Higher Education had been in existence for approximately eight years. During that time, the board's work increasingly focused on planning, budgeting, and data collection. The BHE took a strong accrediting role toward the state's fledgling community colleges as they actively developed academic programs. The Board similarly invested considerable time vetting and approving the charters and programs for a number of private higher education institutions in Massachusetts. However, the board became deeply engaged in reflecting on its role and relationship within the larger setting of higher education in the state. By 1972, at the same time that the board's Ad Hoc Committee on Master Plan studied how public and private higher education in the state might be coordinated within a single system, Governor Francis Sargent had already begun to reorganize Massachusetts government. One product of

these efforts was the creation of a separate Executive Office (Secretary) of Educational Affairs in 1971. The stated purpose of this entity was to oversee all educational agencies in the state, including budget review, records access, and operational studies and plans. The Secretary of Educational Affairs served as advisor to the governor and liaised with the existing Board of Education (K-12) and Board of Higher Education. From 1975 to 1979, numerous legislative bills were filed that included proposals for new higher education governance structures and responsibilities. The various educational authorities continued to co-exist through the end of the decade, at which time incoming Governor Edward King engineered a legislative action that dramatically overhauled public higher education governance.

### **Policy Formation Process**

The development of the Commonwealth Transfer Compact was initiated by the efforts of an individual working directly with transfer students in the admissions process to the University of Massachusetts at Amherst (UMass-Amherst). Ernest Beals joined the UMass-Amherst admissions team in 1964 and earned a Doctorate in Education at the university in 1968. Beals' dissertation, *Academic characteristics and academic success patterns of community college transfer students at the University of Massachusetts*, formed the foundation for future analyses of the academic and demographic characteristics of transfer enrollees at UMass-Amherst from 1969-1971.

A native of Hudson, Massachusetts, Beals attended high school and college in New Hampshire, receiving his Bachelor's degree in 1953 from Plymouth State College. He spent the next six years in high school guidance while simultaneously earning a Master's degree from Boston University in 1959. He went on to work in admissions at

the University of New Hampshire and with the state Department of Education before joining the admissions staff at UMass-Amherst in 1964.

In 1970, Beals completed a report that was a continuation of his dissertation, a description and analysis of the academic and demographic characteristics of transfer enrollees in 1969 and 1970. With a second report concluded in 1971, Beals continued to expand on his dissertation by describing the needs and concerns of community college transfer students as well as explicitly recommending formation of transfer affairs offices at four-year schools. As his research continued, Beals noted the increased volume of transfer applicants at UMass-Amherst and described subsequent extensive outreach carried out at community colleges. Also at this time, Beals actively forged relationships with other admissions professionals in Massachusetts who were similarly dealing with transfer student issues. In September 1971, a group of 21 educators, including transfer admissions and advising personnel as well as faculty from area public and private two- and four-year institutions, formed the Massachusetts State Transfer Articulation Committee (STAC), an independent body not affiliated with state government or other organizations.

Under Beals' leadership, STAC developed its capacity as a forum for transfer professionals to identify and address issues, including carrying out large-scale research surveys, the results of which were later shared with the BHE. STAC used its momentum and membership influence to approach state higher education officials regarding the need for a structure to develop transfer policy recommendations. In response, the Transfer Review Council (TRC) was created by executive leadership at UMass-Amherst, the Massachusetts state colleges, the Massachusetts Regional Community College system,

and the state Board of Higher Education. The TRC became the first state-sanctioned group to review and make policy recommendations regarding transfer in the state. Beals performed chairmanship duties for both groups.

Over the next two years, STAC continued professional development and research activities while TRC hashed out policy concerns. A critical step involved garnering support from the UMass-Amherst Faculty Senate. In 1973, armed with the latest STAC research study showing that community college graduates performed comparably or even better than Freshmen, Beals obtained Faculty Senate approval for accepting associate degrees that contained general education coursework comparable to that of UMass students who began as freshmen (alternately termed *native students*). According to Beals in his oral history account, making the argument to faculty was a challenge.

At first, it was a pretty negative feeling....Remember now, the community college system was in its infancy...so there was doubt cast upon it in terms of the quality of the teaching, quality of the students, quality of the administration. So with that, they (faculty) just didn't think they (students) were capable of going on and doing well at the four year colleges. But this data proved it wrong. They (faculty) began to realize that, as a university system, we needed to do something to make this progression really work for the students, if they're going to do a good job for educating the citizens of our state.

Eventual endorsement by UMass-Amherst faculty provided institutional validation for policy that would be introduced at the state level via the Transfer Review Council. Beals was invited to speak at the February 15, 1974 meeting of the BHE, where he reported results of STAC studies to the Board. In May 1974, the TRC produced a summary statement entitled "Policy for Facilitating Student Mobility in Massachusetts Higher Education: Commonwealth Transfer Compact." The Commonwealth Transfer Compact document bore the official state seal and included the names and titles of 27



state college, university, and community college presidents, along with members from the community college and state college system offices and Massachusetts Board of Higher Education. The CTC text outlined the rationale for the policy, student eligibility, terms, and benefits. The CTC did not focus on admissions standards. Rather, the policy emphasized a standardized core of undergraduate coursework that would ensure full transfer of credit from the community college to the senior institution. This policy set the standard for what were later called “transfer programs” at community colleges, associate degree programs that included a core of general education coursework.

Ernest Beals left UMass-Amherst in 1974 and the Transfer Review Council eventually dissolved but set a precedent for future peer and state-appointed groups that reviewed and revised Massachusetts public transfer policies in later years. STAC evolved into an unaffiliated non-profit professional organization, first called the New England Transfer and Articulation Association and then simply the New England Transfer Association. The New England Transfer Association website recognizes Ernest Beals as its first president.

### **Transfer and Articulation Policy Development 1980 to 1989**

The decade of the 1980’s was significant for public higher education changes at the beginning and end of the decade. Higher education governance and statewide transfer policies were addressed and revised at each point. Public higher education governance underwent a dramatic structural change from the existing board structure, and adjunct Executive Office of Educational Affairs with limited authority, to a centralized Board of Regents (BOR) format with statutory oversight over community colleges, state colleges, and University of Massachusetts campuses at Amherst and Boston. The BOR targeted

administrative attention on refinement and expansion of the existing transfer and articulation regulations.

### **Commonwealth Transfer Compact (Revised), 1984**

The revised Commonwealth Transfer Compact of 1984 expanded the policy to include all of the state's community colleges. It also expanded baccalaureate institutions to include all state colleges and the two University of Massachusetts undergraduate campuses at that time, Amherst and Boston. The revised CTC contained all the provisions of the 1974 version and added a number of new elements concentrated on the associate degree. The policy spelled out the range of transferable credits that could be included in the associate degree (60-66) and identified a minimum GPA requirement (2.0) for student eligibility. The CTC distinguished the emergence of community college programs labeled as "transfer" and "non-transfer," calling for equal coverage of programs as long as the required general education coursework was achieved. The policy also differentiated selective program admission at the baccalaureate level, proscribing general community college student access while at the same time leaving open the potential for admission on a case by case, and campus by campus, basis. The 1984 revised CTC policy was also notable for introducing structural specifications. The guidelines established a standing coordinating committee charged with responsibility for ongoing policy oversight and interpretation, as well as recommended the creation of transfer officer positions at the two-year and four-year institutions.

### **Statewide Governance and Coordination**

The co-existing higher education governance authorities, the Board of Higher Education and the Executive Office of Educational Affairs, were abolished and replaced

by the Board of Regents (BOR) in 1980. The transition resulted from the Boverini Commission report, commissioned by then Governor Edward King. Governor King, along with the leaders in the state's two legislative bodies, enacted broad higher education reform through what was called an "outside section" attached to the 1981 state appropriations bill. Crosson (1996) notes that the governor's staff, in collaboration "with a small group of key legislators and higher education officials...craft(ed)...legislation which passed in a late-night amendment to the budget bill (and) took the higher education community by surprise" (pp. 78). The Higher Education Reorganization Act of 1980 led to the creation of the Board of Regents of Higher Education.

The BOR was awarded all the powers previously vested in the Board of Higher Education, the Executive Office of Education Affairs, and the boards of trustees of all public institutions. Trustee boards were transformed from lay governing to lay advisory boards, although they retained some governance powers (Crosson, 1996, pp. 79).

The first major revision of statewide policy was thus introduced in this period of strong higher education governance and the BOR took an active role in transfer and articulation policies from its inception.

### **Policy Formation Process**

The newly-established BOR was immediately charged with carrying out analysis of public higher education in order to create goals for better system integration. A five-year master plan was initiated in 1982. Phase I of the Board of Regents *Long Range Plan for Public Higher Education in Massachusetts* report specifically cited the importance of system-wide transfer and articulation.

At the present time there is a lack of a fully coordinated effort to develop articulation...between community colleges and four year institutions, despite the

existence of a transfer compact...most of the discussion and arrangements have been at the administrative levels and have had little effect on program integration, which would permit students to transfer without loss of time and credit. Major effort must be directed toward improving this record.

In November 1982, the BOR subsequently created the Articulation Task Force of College Presidents, composed of five presidents from the community college, state college, and University of Massachusetts (Amherst, Boston) sectors. This group drafted recommendations that were reviewed and revised twice with input from public higher education presidents and chancellors. A final version was signed by all public institution leaders and provided to the Board of Regents, which accepted the policy on May 8, 1984.

The revised CTC was notable for a number of innovations, two of which deserve special attention. First, it included program-specific articulation agreement models for Engineering and Business Administration. This was the first instance of directed attention to discipline-based alignments within statewide policy. Second, the revised policy stipulated the creation of an 11-person Transfer Coordinating Committee charged with implementing the new version of CTC. Composition was almost equally divided between executives and practitioners: four chief academic officers from the two-year and four-year segments along with a BOR representative, along with two transfer and admissions representatives from the community college, state college and state university sectors. Ironically, the Transfer Coordinating Committee hastened a short survival of the 1984 CTC policy as the group generated another round of policy review almost immediately. This activity ultimately led to another policy version in 1990.

### **Transfer and Articulation Policy Development 1990 to 1999**

The decade of the 1990s was an active and complicated time for public higher education governance as well as for transfer policy development. During this decade, public higher education governance went through two structural changes. Each shift in authority led to changes in institutional power and relationship with the state. The powerful Board of Regents of the 1980s was replaced with the Higher Education Coordinating Council (HECC), overseen by the newly-created Office of the Secretary of Education in the Governor William Weld administration. The HECC led coordination efforts during the first half of the decade before there was a return to the former Board of Higher Education format.

Also during this era, five policy revisions and innovations took place, and notably transfer policy composition shifted from academics to admissions. Where the earlier Commonwealth Transfer Compact focused on coursework standards and equivalencies, the new Joint Admissions proposals addressed admissions requirements and benefits. Agreements reflecting the new policy direction were formed among the different institutional segments throughout the decade, culminating with the introduction of a financial incentive in 1997.

#### **Commonwealth Transfer Compact (Revised), 1990**

Consistent with the amended 1984 CTC, the 1990 revision involved all three public higher education segments: community colleges, state colleges, and the two undergraduate campuses of the University of Massachusetts. The revised 1990 version also contained all of the elements of the earlier two policy iterations. Moreover, academic coursework transferability was revised further to ensure that community

college courses applied towards explicit bachelor degree requirements beyond the general education core. The 1990 CTC also expanded administrative focus. The guidelines advanced the need for student notifications regarding policy requirements and benefits along with clarification of appeal process opportunities. Most importantly, the 1990 CTC once again called for the creation of a Transfer Coordinating Committee to resolve appeals as well as to formally collect and analyze pertinent data. Soon after the 1990 CTC was approved, the Transfer Coordinating Committee drafted procedures for policy implementation, parameters that had not existed in either of the earlier policy versions. The implementation guidelines followed the 1990 policy in a section by section format, expanding each segment to include definitions of student eligibility requirements, institutional responsibilities, and protocols for handling student records and appeals. The guidelines were five times the length of the revised policy itself.

### **Joint Admissions, 1992-1993**

Joint Admissions was established in 1992 between UMass-Amherst and five community colleges (Bunker Hill, Greenfield, Holyoke, Middlesex and North Shore) in an arrangement that quickly expanded to link all 15 community colleges to the Amherst campus by 1993. Initially titled “The Joint Admissions Project,” the new program focused exclusively on the creation of transfer admission standards for community college students and identified a number of conditions and benefits for eligible students. However, Joint Admissions policy did not address course transferability. According to the Joint Task Force on University of Massachusetts and Community College Relations students were “*guaranteed admission to the UMASS school or college of their choice provided they complete a comparable transfer program at a Commonwealth community*”

*college* [italics original].” In addition, eligible students were required to achieve a 2.5 cumulative Grade Point Average (GPA) and complete their respective community college programs within five years. Student benefits included use of a short, free application form and process, acceptance of “D” grades, access to competitive majors and comparable treatment as native students. Joint Admissions reiterated and expanded language contained in the Commonwealth Transfer Compact in terms of policy implementation and coordination among participating institutions. This policy emphasized the importance of cross-institutional communication, including opportunities for early transfer advising with prospective students. Joint Admissions also addressed the importance of collaborative faculty participation in curriculum development for the purpose of ensuring completion of requisite coursework. Additionally, Joint Admissions directives noted the need for ongoing committee oversight tied to explicit guidelines for implementation. In sum, this policy supplemented the Commonwealth Transfer Compact, which focused on academic coursework, by providing a guarantee of admission for eligible students.

### **Joint Admissions, 1995**

Joint Admissions was extended to all undergraduate campuses of the University of Massachusetts (Amherst, Boston, Dartmouth and Lowell) in 1995, retaining all provisions from the 1992-1993 policy. This iteration clarified a number of implementation components including a tightened enrollment process at community colleges as well as enlarged guarantees at receiving baccalaureate institutions. Community college students were required to enroll in Joint Admissions within the first 30 completed credits, and upon successful graduation and transfer, would be assured of

acceptance of at least 60 credits and full junior status at the UMass campus. The 1995 version also introduced the potential for the Commonwealth Transfer Compact to complement the provisions of Joint Admissions by providing students with assurance of full transfer of credit, including a waiver of general education requirements at the receiving baccalaureate institution, as well as admissions guarantees.

### **Joint Admissions, 1996**

The 1996 enactment of Joint Admissions extended the terms and benefits of the two earlier iterations to transfer pathways between community colleges and state colleges. The policy made particular mention of the state's "special mission" institutions, Massachusetts Maritime Academy and the Massachusetts College of Art, citing participation in Joint Admissions as a voluntary endeavor for each school. In this version of Joint Admissions, students were uniquely guaranteed admission to specific majors at the state colleges, a departure from the earlier UMass-based agreements that only stipulated guaranteed admission to the institution and to individual schools or colleges within the university as a whole. The 1996 Joint Admissions policy also addressed individual state college prerogative to accept community college graduates with cumulative GPAs below 2.5. The policy included wording allowing institutions to exercise discretion in permitting students to participate in program benefits on a case by case basis.

### **Tuition Advantage Program, 1996-1997**

The Tuition Advantage Program (TAP) was introduced by the Board of Higher Education as a financial incentive to community college students who demonstrated advanced academic achievement while completing associate degrees. Community



colleges, state colleges, and UMass campuses were all included in the initiative. Students were required to enroll in the Joint Admissions transfer program and attain final GPAs of 3.0 or higher to become eligible for a 33% reduction of in-state tuition. Once at the baccalaureate institutions, students remained eligible for additional tuition reductions for two successive academic years (or four sequential semesters) as long as they maintained overall 3.0 GPAs.

### **Statewide Governance and Coordination**

At the beginning of the decade and again at midpoint, structural changes took place within Massachusetts public higher education. State higher education authority evolved from the Board of Regents model to the Higher Education Coordinating Council then back to the Board of Higher Education. The first transition took place in 1991 under newly elected Governor William Weld. Weld created a cabinet-level Secretary position and established an Executive Office of Education. He subsequently appointed Piedad Robertson, then president of Bunker Hill Community College, to the secretary post. Secretary Robertson presided over the Higher Education Coordinating Council (HECC), the title of which reflected the state's altered authority in relation to the evolving University of Massachusetts sector. Governor Weld's efforts in reorganizing public education in Massachusetts included a plan to merge and expand the University of Massachusetts sector by adding undergraduate campuses in Lowell and Dartmouth. The four campuses (along with the University of Massachusetts Medical School in Worcester) formed the UMass system.

The second transition in higher education governance took place four years later when Governor Weld first appointed James Carlin, businessman and former Chelsea

Public Schools receiver as well as Secretary of Transportation, to chair the HECC. As Weld installed Carlin to lead public higher education governance, he took the organizational transition a step further by disbanding the HECC and reconstituting the Board of Higher Education in 1996. This entity retained oversight of the state's community and state colleges while maintaining a coordinating relationship with the consolidated University of Massachusetts sector. Under Carlin's leadership, the BHE focused policy efforts on holding down the cost of higher education while also raising admissions standards to four-year public institutions and initiating rigorous assessment standards. Mary Dean, Director of Transfer Admissions, recalls the mood at Salem State: "Admissions standards only existed within the individual schools. When Carlin came on board he really built the admissions standards...much more around high school." In the introduction to its 1999 Annual Report, the BHE reiterated the need to make further improvements, concluding "this report details our relentless pursuit toward that end. Specifically, it lays the groundwork for the performance measurement system, a program that will require more accountability from each institution." This statement signaled the direction of governance priorities in the 2000s.

### **Policy Formation Process**

The decade of the 1990s was notable for the development and execution of a variety of policy initiatives. The pre-existing Commonwealth Transfer Compact was revised again and a new policy, Joint Admissions, emanated from efforts at UMass-Amherst to boost enrollments from community colleges. These two policies created the opportunity for more comprehensive student transfer benefits and support. Also, the state Board of Higher Education introduced a financial incentive for community college

graduates who demonstrated notable academic performance by offering a discount to baccalaureate enrollment costs.

### **The Revised Commonwealth Transfer Compact**

The 1990 revised Commonwealth Transfer Compact was the final transfer policy directive completed during the Board of Regents era of public governance. However, the 1990 policy was the conclusion of work that had begun in 1984 by the Transfer Coordinating Committee, the designated implementation branch of the 1984 CTC policy.

Although the Transfer Coordinating Committee had its first meeting one month after the 1984 CTC policy was approved, the group labored for two years over policy implementation guidelines. The BOR appointed Dr. Tossie Taylor, Associate Vice Chancellor of Academic Affairs, to lead the committee. On behalf of the BOR, Dr. Taylor reached out to community college, state college, and UMass presidents to request participation on the committee. The twenty-eight institutional designees included transfer professionals from admissions and advising areas. As the group began its work, members were assigned to one of four teams, each made up of representatives from the three institutional segments. Outcomes of the committee's work led to a consensus that the 1984 revised CTC did not adequately address transfer issues and further changes were necessary. In December 1986, the committee held a two-day weekend meeting at UMass-Amherst to begin the process of developing policy revisions. Committee members were housed in a local hotel, and spent full days laboring over policy elements. By spring of 1987, the Transfer Coordinating Committee completed a draft that was submitted to the BOR. When standing BOR committees challenged the committee's

plan, the committee abandoned its proposal. BOR leadership subsequently took a more direct role over the CTC policy revision process until another document was finalized.

In 1987, Dr. Taylor was replaced by Dr. Norma Rees, who was literally days into her employment with the BOR as Vice Chancellor of Academic and Student Affairs (later Vice Chancellor of Academic Affairs, Policy, and Planning). From June 1987 to December 1989, Rees mediated the development of CTC draft revisions among different standing committees under the jurisdiction of the Board of Regents: the Council of Public College and University Presidents (PCUP), the Council of Presidents' Committee on Academic, Faculty, and Student Affairs (AFS), the community college Council of Academic Deans, the Community College Presidents, the Chief Academic Officers of public colleges and universities, as well as the Transfer Coordinating Committee. Rees developed a chronology at the time that highlights the iterative process of obtaining input from various interest groups as they responded to and proposed revisions. This activity resulted in three draft versions before a consensus document was sent to BOR members for approval and adoption. The revised CTC was finally approved at the BOR meeting on January 9, 1990. Within two weeks Rees notified college and university presidents of her plan to convene the Transfer Coordinating Committee. She sought out recommendations for participation to help draft implementation guidelines for the new policy. In her January 19, 1990 letter, she stipulated the proposed makeup of the committee: "3 academic officers from community colleges, 3 academic officers from state colleges and universities, 3 transfer officers from community colleges, 3 transfer officers from state colleges and universities, total 12." Rees left the Board of Regents in the summer of 1990 to become president of the California State University at Haywood.

Unfortunately, there is no evidence of Transfer Coordinating Committee activities in subsequent years until a reconstitution was proposed at the end of the decade.

In 1999, BHE Vice Chancellor, Jack R. Warner, sought out volunteers to participate in the Transfer Articulation Task Force, a Board-initiated effort to update the Commonwealth Transfer Compact. A two-page rationale for the task force portrayed the renewed attention as a result of revised general education requirements at public baccalaureate institutions along with reported incidences of non-compliance with CTC standards and recognition of an overall more complex transfer policy environment in the latter half of the decade. The Board solicited a cross-section of community college transfer professionals, baccalaureate transfer admissions, as well as two-year and four-year academic leaders in the effort.

### **Joint Admissions**

The Joint Admissions policy resulted from a coordinated effort at UMass-Amherst to boost enrollment from area community colleges. The 1994 *Joint Task Force on University of Massachusetts and Community College Relations* report laid out the rationale for the creation of Joint Admissions. The proposal included a streamlined admissions process for students who, in many cases, were already part of a steady recruitment stream from western Massachusetts community colleges and others located in larger cities such as Worcester and Lowell. When asked whether the Joint Admissions initiative represented a new collaborative topic between UMass-Amherst and community colleges, Mark Broadbent, who began his transfer counselor career at Holyoke Community College in 1993, maintained “No, transfer was the topic, that’s what we all

did...there was no state involvement at that point in time. It really was a grass roots effort.”

Over the years, staff at the UMass admissions office had become familiar with the types of college-level coursework and programs provided at these colleges, so were able to make reliable admissions estimates on academic preparation. This familiarity formed the basis for targeted recruitment and enrollment, which was at the center of the joint task force initiative. At the time, UMass-Amherst also anticipated that a 10 percent expansion of the program would boost revenue generation of close to a quarter-million dollars per year.

A subsequent report released in 1995 entitled *Building a New Partnership Between UMass and the Community Colleges: A Report of the Joint Task Force on UMass and Community College Relations* noted the expansion of Joint Admissions policy to include all four University of Massachusetts campuses and all fifteen community college campuses. The Joint Task Force, made up of UMass campus chancellors and provosts as well as community college presidents, laid out an array of collaborative accomplishments, Joint Admissions the first among them. The report also highlighted deployment of dedicated transfer admissions personnel to work with the identified pool of potential community college transfer applicants. Significantly, the Joint Task Force report introduced inter-sector collaboration in the areas of technology and joint legislative action that also included the state college segment. This proposal reinforced the idea of conversations about including the state colleges in system-wide transfer policies.

The 1996 Joint Admissions policy between community colleges and state colleges was modeled on the agreement with University of Massachusetts campuses, in part led by a simple HECC leadership inquiry. At the October 17, 1995 HECC meeting, upon learning

that the recent Joint Admissions policy developed by the University of Massachusetts and the community colleges (would) greatly enhance the transfer ability (sic) of community college students... (HECC) Chair Wiley asked about the status of such an agreement between the State and community colleges. (HECC) Chancellor Koplik responded by indicating that the Council staff would work immediately to address the issue.

Koplik moved quickly, announcing at the next HECC meeting that he had arranged meetings with all of the State College presidents to take place on December 11<sup>th</sup> of that year. On April 22, 1996, the respective sector presidents signed the *Joint Admissions Agreement between The Massachusetts Community Colleges and The Massachusetts State Colleges*.

One of the significant achievements of the Joint Admissions partnership between the community and state colleges was the establishment of a standing committee pledged to policy implementation and ongoing communication. The proposed Joint Admissions Implementation Committee--at times also referred to as the Joint Admissions Steering Committee--was made up of transfer professionals representing the two-year and four-year segments. But transfer professional representation did not signify a unified approach. Denise Richardello, who participated on the implementation committee, notes the internal discord:

I can remember some folks not thinking it was a great idea—some of the four year schools...they thought it was, first of all UMass was out ahead of us. Second of all, they thought the implementation of it was going to be too labor intensive.

The committee's work was initially supported through BHE pilot funding obtained by the Massachusetts Community Colleges Executive Office (MCCEO) during the 1996-1997 fiscal year, which was used to hire a dedicated staff person to manage the Joint Admissions program. Despite repeated staff turnover, the MCCEO led Joint Admissions efforts through staff support over the next five years until a transfer professional from Middlesex Community College stepped forward to provide voluntary coordination in 2001.

By 1998, the Joint Admissions Steering Committee had been meeting regularly and identified a number of procedural issues with Joint Admissions and TAP implementation. Ongoing concerns about Joint Admissions joined with an effort emerging from the Board that focused on updating the 1990 Commonwealth Transfer Compact. Transfer professionals active in the Joint Admissions Steering Committee were recruited to participate in the Board-backed effort. The forthcoming section on policy formation in the 2000s introduces subsequent Joint Admissions activities and outcomes of the CTC review process.

### **Tuition Advantage Program**

The BHE examined public higher education funding within overall plans for capital improvements to Massachusetts public colleges and universities during the 1990s. Tuition rates and incentives were discussed along with efforts to raise admissions standards while ensuring enrollment trends. The BHE enacted the Joint Admissions Tuition Advantage Program (TAP), a financial benefit exclusively available to Joint Admissions participants, on December 17, 1996 as an addition to general statewide Tuition Waiver Program Guidelines. Although there had been no campus, or transfer



professional, representation in the creation of TAP, the public higher education transfer community welcomed the new financial incentive. At its June 1997 Summit held at Middlesex Community College, the Joint Admissions Steering Committee introduced a session on TAP implementation recommendations that had been crafted by an internal subcommittee. The BHE subsequently acknowledged its leadership role in a Chancellor's Report to the board at its October 14, 1997 meeting: "Tuition Advantage Program (underline original): The TAP must be marketed more successfully to new students. The CPIP has funded a \$25,000 matching grant to the Community College Executive Office for this purpose." The reference to "CPIP" is as one grant among millions of dollars in funding awarded across the system under the BHE Campus Performance Improvement Program (CPIP) initiative. The CPIP had also previously awarded initial Joint Admissions implementation monies.

### **Transfer and Articulation Policy Development 2000 to 2009**

The turn of the century marked a relatively stable period for public higher education governance, in contrast to the previous decade, despite efforts during the Governor Romney administration to shrink the overall system in 2003. The Board of Higher Education maintained its statutory authority over the state's colleges and universities, along with its coordinating relationship with the multi-campus University of Massachusetts sector. The accumulated transfer policies at the time, the Commonwealth Transfer Compact, Joint Admissions, and the Tuition Advantage Program, remained in force despite ongoing revisions. This period also included the first successful initiation of academic program-specific transfer policy and the eventual merger of individual policies into one overarching and inclusive set of guidelines.

### **Joint Admissions Agreement, 2000**

The revised Joint Admissions Agreement of 2000 focused on clarifying and confirming student benefits, intentionally recognizing that Joint Admissions and CTC worked together to provide students with admissions guarantees as well as assurance of full transfer of credit. This policy version expanded benefits to the transfer enrollment process itself, stipulating that students have access to advanced academic advising, course registration, housing options and related services. The policy further clarified that students accepted under Joint Admissions would be assured of bachelor degree completion within two years or no more than 68 additional credits, unless the specific academic major required more than 128 credits. Unfortunately, due to a variety of administrative concerns, the BHE-approved Joint Admissions Agreement of 2000 was postponed for two years. Ultimately, Joint Admissions and the Commonwealth Transfer Compact continued to work as two separate, but occasionally complementary, policies through the 2000s.

### **Revised Tuition Advantage Program, 2002**

The 2002 TAP policy revision expanded eligibility requirements and contained updated implementation guidelines. Specifically, eligibility was clarified to reward students who transferred directly from community colleges after completing associate degrees and barred students who had first transferred to other, private or non-Massachusetts public institutions prior to seeking to continue at a state college or university and gain the benefits of TAP. The 2002 revised policy further invalidated student eligibility for those whose GPA dropped below the required standard in the first year after transfer. The 2002 Revised TAP policy also contained a separate section

devoted to implementation guidelines which focused on two areas: determination of eligibility in relation to community college graduation and the TAP certification process at the community college. The policy further stipulated TAP eligibility requirements at the four-year institution.

### **Education Compact, 2004**

The Education Compact comprised transfer pathways in Early Childhood Education and Elementary Education for community college students pursuing baccalaureate teacher preparation. This was the first successful program-specific statewide articulation policy in the Commonwealth. The Education Compact functioned like a traditional articulation agreement in terms of dictating specific curricular prerequisites within associate degrees that matched state college bachelor's degree requirements in accordance with Massachusetts Department of Education teacher licensure certification. Joint Admissions provided the enrollment mechanism for the Education Compact, assuring guarantees of admission through associate degree completion with a slightly higher (2.75) GPA requirement. The policy also required students to successfully complete a subtest of the licensing certification examination in order to assure direct admission to Education majors, in keeping with general policy provision of full transfer of credit and junior-level status.

### **Revised Joint Admissions, 2006**

This policy revision exclusively focused on implementation issues, ranging from a loosening of enrollment requirements to assurance of transfer benefits at the baccalaureate institution. Where earlier iterations of Joint Admissions directed students to submit enrollment forms at the start of community college matriculation, modifications

in 2006 extended the enrollment timeline to accommodate students who desired to opt in at a later time. The 2006 amendment reaffirmed entitlement of eligible students to guaranteed admission as juniors with full acceptance of at least 60 credits completed at the community college. The policy emphasized information sharing, notably through statistics on Joint Admissions participation and enrollment trends, as a way of assessing how the policy was being implemented among two-year and four-year institutions. The complementary functions of the Commonwealth Transfer Compact and Joint Admissions for maximizing transfer student benefits were also reiterated in the 2006 guidelines, as was the condition stipulating that eligible students needed no more than an additional 68 credits to complete the bachelor degree.

### **MassTransfer, 2009**

The MassTransfer transfer agreement represented a major advancement combining the Commonwealth Transfer Compact, Joint Admissions, and Tuition Advantage Program into one comprehensive transfer policy. MassTransfer called for the development, or prioritization, of associate degrees that contained a designated subset of general education coursework (called the MassTransfer Block). These associate degrees were evaluated and matched with comparable and compatible bachelor's degrees at public baccalaureate institutions. MassTransfer utilized a three-tiered framework of eligibility and benefits adapted from combined Commonwealth Transfer Compact and Joint Admissions standards. Students graduating with final 2.0 GPAs from designated transfer programs were able to use a special free application and were assured full transfer of credits (along with waiver of general requirements), if accepted. Students who completed the designated transfer programs with 2.5 GPAs were offered the same

enrollment options in addition to guaranteed admission. Students who attained the top GPA of 3.0 (based Tuition Advantage Program standards), were deemed eligible for the additional tuition waiver.

MassTransfer policy also contained a transitional goal for students who desired to transfer to state colleges and UMass campuses without completing associate degrees. Students who accomplished the MassTransfer Block of general education coursework at the community college prior to transfer could still have core requirements waived at the destination school. However, these students were still required to meet the baccalaureate institution's general transfer admissions standards.

### **Statewide Governance and Coordination**

The Board of Higher Education (BHE) retained its status as the state higher education authority in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, outlasting Governor Mitt Romney's efforts to reorganize public higher education in 2003. BHE Chancellor Judith Gill delivered a five-year plan for public higher education at the October 2, 2001 Board meeting, citing enduring objectives contained in the *1995 Task Force Report on Higher Education Goals and Objectives, Performance Measures and Performance Accountability*. She outlined ongoing system challenges despite improvements in recent years. She then introduced Aims McGuinness of the National Center for Higher Education Management Systems, who gave a presentation called *Shaping a Public Agenda: Linking Higher Education to the Future of the State: Lessons from Other States*. In his address, McGuinness' reinforced Gill's agenda by highlighting the likelihood of future disparities between legislative funding and organizational need. Although the board voted to accept Gill's plan, within two years Romney's legislative proposal to reorganize public higher

education became a threat. His scheme, labelled Article 87, impacted all three public sectors. It included consolidation of community colleges and state colleges, funding allocation linked to prescribed performance standards, and closure of the University of Massachusetts President's Office. Ultimately, Romney's plan was suspended by entrenched political party alliances and the BHE continued its dual governance/coordination relationships with the two-year and four-year higher education sectors. Romney's legislative legacy in higher education was limited to creation of a scholarship, essentially a tuition waiver, reserved for high school students who scored highly on the state's mandated graduation test.

By the mid-2000s, the BHE solidified its administrative oversight of statewide transfer affairs and began to provide dedicated resources through the Department of Higher Education (DHE) agency. Although the BHE initially contracted voluntary services to carry out transfer affairs coordination on a part-time basis, they committed to a full-time policy administrator position in 2005 to begin managing system-wide policy including the Joint Admission 2006 review and 2007-2008 MassTransfer policy initiative.

### **Policy Formation Process**

From 2000 to 2006, policy review and development primarily centered on revisions to existing programs and benefits. An ambitious plan at the start of the decade to combine the elements of Joint Admissions and the Commonwealth Transfer Compact stalled due to campus-based administrative issues, including faculty contractual disputes. In 2007-2008, the DHE carried out a yearlong evaluation process of transfer procedures, partly in response to a Massachusetts legislator's interest and policy proposal. The

perceived threat of a legislative edict propelled the DHE to convene a committee that recommended a comprehensive transfer policy combining elements of earlier rules.

### **Joint Admissions Agreement, 2000**

The 2000 version of Joint Admissions resulted from work carried out by the BHE-appointed Transfer Articulation Task Force, which was initially concerned with updating the Commonwealth Transfer Compact. The Transfer Articulation Task Force included members of the standing statewide Joint Admissions Steering Committee, composed of community college and baccalaureate transfer professionals. The steering committee met regularly in the years following the 1995 and 1996 Joint Admissions policies and had encountered various implementation issues by the late 1990s. Although the Transfer Articulation Task Force initially identified recommendations specific to the CTC, notably consensus around coursework applied towards general education requirements, there was broad recognition that Joint Admissions provisions overlapped with proposed improvements to CTC.

In January 2000, BHE Vice Chancellor Jack Warner submitted a six-page draft of the proposed Joint Admissions Agreement to the BHE Steering Committee for Admissions, Assessment and Articulation. The document had grown to nine pages by May, 2000, when Acting BHE Chancellor, Judith Gill, tendered it to public college and university presidents. Notable expansions involved separating conditions and guarantees, but most important was a two-page description of policy implementation and oversight. The Joint Admissions Steering Committee was identified as the leadership structure to oversee performance of the new Joint Admissions Agreement, which included the creation of two subcommittees charged with reviewing curricular issues and handling

appeals. The Joint Admissions Executive Committee, made up of representatives from the three public higher education executive office segments, along with segmental campus representatives, became the final arbiter for policy issues.

The Joint Admissions Agreement was approved by the Board of Higher Education at its June 20, 2000 meeting, with an effective date of Fall 2001. Remarkably, however, in March, 2000 a BHE newsletter had already announced that the Board planned to defer the implementation of the new Joint Admissions Agreement until Fall 2002 due to stated administrative concerns. Nearly a year later, Chancellor Gill offered more details in a 2001 memo to public college and university presidents regarding the deferral.

At its June 2000 meeting, the Board of Higher Education approved a new Joint Admissions Agreement...Implementation was scheduled for fall 2001. Following the meeting, I forwarded the new Agreement (sic) to campuses for review and in accordance with MTA/NEA-BHE collective bargaining provisions indicated that the Agreement would not be finalized before it was submitted to governance. Because of faculty contract issues, most state college campuses have not yet been able to review the new Joint Admissions Agreement thoroughly. The campuses and BHE staff have identified several administrative and programmatic issues that need to be addressed...and have suggested a fall 2002 implementation date...I agree that revising the implementation timetable...is the prudent course of Action...Campuses should continue operating under the existing Commonwealth Transfer Compact and Joint Admissions agreements until the new implementation date.

Conflicting evidence exists that the Joint Admissions Agreement was implemented in the years that followed. Although later policy documents such as the Education Compact refer to the 2000 Joint Admissions Agreement as the sole transfer guideline, transfer professionals continued to work with the provisions of CTC and Joint Admissions. When I began as the Quinsigamond Community College transfer



coordinator in 2005, both CTC and Joint Admissions were recognized as the applicable guidelines. In practice, the two policies were employed until 2009, when the MassTransfer policy successfully merged the core elements of both. Although faculty union-related issues briefly arose during the MassTransfer committee deliberations, there were no overarching barriers to formalizing the new agreement.

One significant change during the early 2000s was the voluntary deployment of a campus representative to lead the Joint Admissions Steering Committee on behalf of BHE. Between 2001 and 2004, Dr. Catherine Pride, Transfer Director at Middlesex Community College (MCC), worked a half-time assignment with the BHE. Pride was recommended by her president to organize and carry out transfer policy implementation for the public higher education system. In addition to overseeing Joint Admissions policy operations, Pride led efforts in the development of the first program-specific agreement for Early Childhood and Elementary Education before she returned to MCC.

### **Revised Tuition Advantage Program, 2002**

Limited documentation exists regarding the process of revising TAP during this period, but the involvement of transfer professionals in committee work is notable. Catherine Pride, Middlesex Community College transfer professional at the time, provided volunteer services to the Board of Higher Education to assist with ongoing transfer policy implementation. She points out her role in the TAP revision process.

Well, the revision happened...when I was at the board 'cause I remember we worked on implementation guidelines for it...and I'm not saying it was me, but by having somebody at the board that understood the nuances of these things, it could be presented to the people in power in a different way than I think it had been before.

Pride chaired the steering committee that oversaw TAP policy revision and was vocal in raising her practitioner viewpoint. As in other policy revision environments, the need for responding to unforeseen consequences through the clarification of eligibility requirements and implementation guidelines necessitated the 2002 actions and policy update. Notably, the implementation guidelines for TAP include a statement stipulating the necessary approval of the University of Massachusetts Board of Trustees certifying Joint Admissions TAP eligibility. The guidelines do not include a comparable statement for the state colleges on behalf of their trustees.

#### **Education Compact, 2004**

The Education Compact policy came about at a time when education leaders were actively engaged in addressing teacher preparation programs at state baccalaureate institutions. The BHE established a Task Force on Teacher Preparation in Public Higher Education, composed of state and community college presidents, in 2001. The committee's charge was broadly focused on core major requirements, alignment of baccalaureate programs with curricular framework changes in the state Department of Education (K-12), and intentional recruitment of a more broadly diverse candidate pool. By 2003, Elementary Education and Early Childhood Education working groups had devised Education Transfer Compact proposals under the leadership of the statewide Joint Admissions Steering Committee. These transfer initiatives were unique in terms of including Education and Arts and Sciences faculty from the two year-and four-year segments, along with transfer professionals, in discussions. The two agreements were signed within months of each other, the Elementary Education Compact followed by the Early Childhood Education agreement.

The Elementary Education and Early Childhood Education Compacts necessitated the creation of associate degrees at community colleges across the state in order to meet teacher preparation programs at the baccalaureate institutions. The agreements focused primarily on alignments between community colleges and state colleges, the latter known as the primary locations for teacher preparation. Although then UMass President, William Bulger, signed the accord on behalf of the segment, the agreement had limited impact at the UMass campuses. This was primarily due to the fact that the state colleges, with their long heritage of being teacher-training institutions, housed the strongest Early Childhood and Elementary Education programs. In my experience, when students utilized the Education Compact to attend a UMass campus, they were more likely to be offered a traditional academic discipline for the bachelor degree, with the understanding that Education specialization (Early Childhood, Elementary, etc.) would be incorporated at the Master's degree level.

### **Revised Joint Admissions, 2006**

Differences of transfer policy interpretation and implementation continued during the decade, as two-year and four-year public institutions negotiated the disparate guidelines—CTC, Joint Admissions, TAP—and now the Education Compacts. The complex and at times confusing regulations not only added uncertainty to transfer enrollment outcomes but also reinforced the perceived sense of inconsistent policy implementation and oversight. Terri Labine, UMass Amherst transfer admissions representative, points out the inconsistency:

The Compact (CTC) and Joint Admissions were not working at every school, because unless you-the institution devoted itself to the policies and to making it

happen, it wasn't going to happen... So it wasn't working at many, many schools 'cause it was a lot of work to make it work... but the students were benefitting.

By 2005, Dr. Francesca Purcell had joined the BHE as a policy analyst and was tasked with leading state transfer policy initiatives, including Joint Admissions. In practice, the Joint Admissions Steering Committee had become the nexus for all public transfer policy issues. Over the spring of 2006, Purcell convened the Joint Admissions Policy Revision and Transfer Advisor Training subcommittees in advance of the planned June 9, 2006 Statewide Joint Admissions Steering Committee conference. At the June meeting, two-year and four-year transfer professionals, academic advisors, and registrars heard presentations on all four policy initiatives (CTC, Joint Admissions, TAP and the Education Compact), and broke into regional groups to address ongoing issues. Written feedback from the meeting confirmed that implementation issues persisted within all four policies, including the proposed changes to Joint Admissions.

Within this advisory framework, the 2006 Joint Admissions policy revision attempted to address individual campus interpretations of policy, including provisions that overlapped with the new Education Compacts. It is important to recall that up to this time the two separate Joint Admissions agreements (Community Colleges-University of Massachusetts, Community Colleges-State Colleges) continued to exist and were implemented concurrently. It is also important to note that both Joint Admissions agreements were negotiated pacts between the respective two-year and four-year sectors. The BHE did not have formal control in the renewal of these policies. UMass transfer representatives tended to honor admission to the university (not necessarily the major) based on successful completion of pre-approved associate degrees. In contrast, state

college transfer representatives only honored admission to specific majors for students who had completed corresponding (or liberal arts types) of associate degrees.

Given this status, two new agreements were created in 2006 for each segment. The agreements largely contained the same language. The only difference was a stipulation in how future amendments would be addressed between the community colleges and University of Massachusetts that included the independent authority of the President of the University.

### **MassTransfer, 2009**

In 2007, Purcell attained status as associate chancellor and director of academic policy for the Massachusetts Department of Higher Education. Purcell reached out to an array of education leaders and representatives inviting participation in a working group charged with examining current transfer policy. The ad hoc committee, entitled the Commonwealth Transfer Advisory Group (CTAG), included a Massachusetts legislator and member of the Legislature's Joint Committee on Higher Education, State Representative Christopher Donelan, as one of its key members. Donelan reportedly had a personal interest in transfer issues within the Massachusetts public higher education system as a family member had experienced difficulty transferring courses between public institutions. Therese Labine, UMass-Amherst representative member on CTAG, suggests the specific and broader rationales:

What happened is a state representative's wife transferred from a community college to a four-year state college and lost a lot of credits in transfer, and so he brought up the issue that something has to be done about transfer and transfer of credits...that's my understanding of how that came about because...Massachusetts has always been afraid of legislating in higher ed.

Donelan drafted legislation, House Bill 1175, requiring Massachusetts public higher education institutions to align and accept comparable college-level foundational coursework completed at any public two-year or four-year institution. The proposal also emphasized the need for more web-based resources, data reporting and a standing committee to oversee and evaluate outcomes.

As DHE leadership became aware of this proposal, they decided on a course of action that included inviting Donelan to participate in CTAG, crafting changes to existing transfer policy in the hopes of addressing (and suspending) his proposal. Donelan joined a group of state education policy leaders and administrators along with institutional members representing academic and enrollment perspectives. Committee members included representatives of the Massachusetts Executive Office of Education, the Association of Independent Colleges and Universities of Massachusetts, and the community college, state college, and University of Massachusetts campus segments.

CTAG met on a monthly basis from May 2007 to April 2008. Purcell organized the meetings, which included presentations by state higher education system representatives outside of New England as well as analysis of enrollment data within Massachusetts public higher education and review of existing transfer policies. Acknowledging that the CTAG committee came from diverse perspectives with variable familiarity of transfer issues, Purcell led the committee through exercises that introduced transfer-related concepts and examined the then-standing process of policy implementation. Purcell formed members into sub-groups to pursue specific activities such as examination of transfer resources at other state system websites and also invited individuals to take turns leading discussions at full committee meetings.

On April 22, 2008, Purcell introduced the final draft of committee recommendations that included proposed guidelines combining elements of the Commonwealth Transfer Compact, Joint Admissions and Tuition Advantage Program into one overarching policy, tentatively titled MassTransfer. CTAG members were asked to vote on the components as well as the entire proposal. Through consensus approval, the plan included in a final report that reviewed the current transfer environment within Massachusetts public higher education and included recommendations that would be brought to the Massachusetts Board of Higher Education for consideration and endorsement.

## **CHAPTER 5**

### **SYNCHRONIC ANALYSIS**

I presented the results associated with the first two research questions of this study in Chapter 4. The data were organized around transfer policies, governance structures and policy environments within successive decades. These groupings conform to Tosh's (1991) *diachronic* notion as a straightforward chronicling of sequential contexts and activities. Yet the diachronic dimension only addresses the successive elements of the individual policy settings as depicted in the graphical representations in Figure 2. Tosh's *synchronic*, or contemporaneous, perspective converges on ways that the successive policy environments resemble, differ from, and relate to each other. In this chapter, I will connect the contemporaneous contexts to help address the 3<sup>rd</sup> research question in this study, reinforcing a deeper understanding of the history of transfer policy development among public higher education institutions in Massachusetts.

#### **Prelude to Transfer Policy: 1960s**

Synchronic comparison for this case study technically begins with the Commonwealth Transfer Compact policy of 1974, yet it is helpful to highlight the activity in the prior decade, as Board of Higher Education attention on transfer issues during that time initiates a pattern for future policy interests and efforts.

#### **Emergent Governance**

As a result of the Willis-Harrington Act, the BHE became the high education governance counterpart to the larger Board of Education, which held oversight for the Kindergarten to Grade 12 segment of public education. The role of the BHE during this time is significant in two aspects. First, the BHE operated as a *coordinating* body (as



defined by Glenny, 1959, Berdahl, 1971, and Parmley, et al., 2009), charged to work with existing higher education segmental groups that were overseen by individual boards. In the 1960s, these were the emergent Regional Community Colleges and the long-standing State Colleges. The University of Massachusetts segment was primarily limited to the Amherst campus, although the Boston campus continued to take shape during this decade.

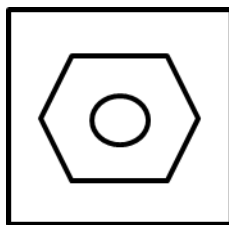
Even as these higher education sectors focused on internal development and mission implementation, the BHE demonstrated an early interest in transfer issues by way of Nurse Education training taking place at the two-year and four-year public institutions. In this instance, the BHE introduced recommendations for collaboration between the two sectors that included recognition of specific transfer policy development for Nursing and other transfer-designated associate degrees. There is no evidence that BHE policy proposals ever materialized; subsequent BHE meeting minutes make no mention of ongoing policy development.

Secondly, BHE examination of transfer trends and demographics in 1968 portended its future role convening ad hoc committees to address transfer and articulation concerns. Meeting minutes during 1968-1969 reveal a chronology of BHE leadership including committee chair appointment, prescribed meeting schedule, and data collection efforts, all leading to a final report. Yet the effort ended abruptly with no evidence of the committee's conclusions, nor record of subsequent board action. Despite the absence of policy enactment, the BHE demonstrated a sophisticated approach by establishing the formal committee and appointing a project leader to oversee the investigation and data collection process.

## **Early Policy Components and Environments**

BHE interest in Nurse Education transfer pathways acknowledged curricular priorities overlapping the two-year and four-year sectors. In particular, the BHE Advisory Committee on Higher Education Nursing Needs singled out the need for program articulation and in their February 16, 1968 meeting minutes, called for “curriculum study and coordination through the Board of Higher Education.” Similarly, the 1968 ad hoc committee on transfer trends and student migration aimed to identify curricular patterns at community colleges and four-year state schools. Through its investigation into existing transfer trends, the committee hoped to project the need for course and degree development that would facilitate transfer with the public system.

The literature on transfer and articulation supports the early emphasis on curricular consistency and alignment in Massachusetts. As noted in Chapter 2, studies of articulation policy components include a focus on academics (de la Torre & Wells, 2014). In particular, general education coursework gains special attention as one way to ensure that community college students complete relevant and necessary requirements prior to transfer. The consequence is pragmatic: time and effort spent by students completing core courses results in financial savings and timely attainment of bachelor’s degrees. The focus on curricular alignment, including general education requirements, continued to be an important element in Massachusetts public transfer guidelines, starting with the first statewide policy, the Commonwealth Transfer Compact.



### **The Advent of the Commonwealth Transfer Compact: 1970s**

The 1970s mark the beginning of public higher education transfer policy development and enactment, despite evidence of BHE-sponsored committee efforts in the previous decade. Unlike the earlier BHE-led research efforts however, the first transfer policy, the Commonwealth Transfer Compact, evolved from ground-breaking research into transfer trends at the University of Massachusetts-Amherst and later among public and private baccalaureate institutions across the state. Here, policy actors within one public higher education institution, with support from an emergent, unaffiliated professional organization, successfully crafted guidelines that were promulgated among multiple community colleges. The state Board of Higher Education played a passive, but compliant, role in endorsing the CTC across public higher education sectors at the time.

#### **Governance Focus and Avoidance**

It is important to bear in mind that the Board of Higher Education was a relatively new political and administrative entity during the late 1960s and early 1970s. Much of its attention was focused both on internal structural composition as well as on promoting statewide coordination. The BHE 1971 Annual Report points out this priority:

In the public sector it is critically important that the various institutions continue to develop as part of a total system. We are past the point where we can afford fragmentation and expediency in the place of careful common planning. We must insure that the system be developed as efficiently, as effectively and as economically as possible commensurate with quality education.

The BHE leveraged its coordination function at the same time that community colleges were rapidly expanding across the state. Board meetings frequently included vetting and approval of academic programs at the two-year colleges. Yet, the CTC was uniquely identified with the UMass-Amherst campus in a way that associated transfer as a four-year institution phenomenon rather than as a two-year college function. From a statewide governance perspective, the role of community colleges as transfer institutions did not fully materialize until the Board of Regents issued explicit directives regarding transfer and articulation in the 1980s.

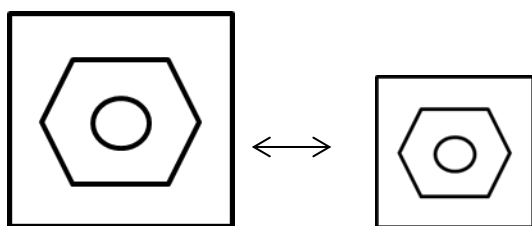
The BHE demonstrated limited involvement in transfer issues, as evidenced in its largely absent acknowledgment of the CTC enactment. A single sentence in the February 15, 1974 BHE minutes makes reference to Ernest Beals, who attended the board meeting to report on his most recent transfer trends study. By May 1974, when the CTC was completed, the BHE was almost exclusively focused on reorganization. At its June 21, 1974 meeting, the board received a presentation by Dr. Donald Schon of the Organization for Social and Technical Innovation in which he proposed conception of a “Public/Private Forum” that unified public and private higher education as a system in Massachusetts. This provocative scheme was folded into successive legislative bills offered during the remainder of the decade. By contrast, in the 1974 *Report on Present and Future Status of Undergraduate Admissions at the University of Massachusetts at Amherst*, campus leadership explicitly identified community college transfer students as one group within broad institutional access goals in keeping with UMass-Amherst primacy as the state’s flagship public institution. Moreover Ernest Beals’ groundbreaking efforts on behalf of the university were reflected in CTC policy expansion in the 1980s.

## **Policy Groups and Actors**

Ernest Beals' dissertation research and follow-up studies provided the seminal evidence that supported his argument for acceptance of community college coursework to satisfy university general education requirements. Under Beals' leadership, the unaffiliated Statewide Transfer Articulation Committee (STAC) sponsored a study in 1972-1973 involving over 20,000 students and 48 colleges and universities. The research results pointed to a number of recommendations, but most importantly, they provided the rationale for STAC's proposal to the BHE for greater involvement in statewide transfer issues and policies. STAC's successful research activity validated its professional prowess and legitimacy as a transfer-focused higher education organization, culminating in its influence over public higher education governance and regulation. Significantly, this was the first instance of non-governmental influence on public transfer policy development. As a policy actor, Beals innovatively straddled a line between carrying out his role as an institutional representative and steering an external organization bent on raising systemic attention and response to statewide transfer issues.

The CTC policy document registers a number of institutional actors among its approving signatories. These include representatives of the regional community colleges, state colleges, and University of Massachusetts-Amherst, along with the publicly-affiliated University of Lowell and Southeastern Massachusetts University. Despite the implied comprehensive approval and support of CTC policy among those listed, policy implementation was actually limited to the state's community colleges and UMass-Amherst. The revised 1984 CTC policy explicitly expanded the policy to include all two-

year and four-year institutions, which also provided the opportunity to reconcile variations in implementation with common standards.



### **Governance Consolidation, Centralized Transfer Policy and Consequences: 1980s**

Synchronic analysis of transfer policy development in the 1980s includes parallels as well as divergences from the previous era in terms of governance, policy actors, and environment. The Commonwealth Transfer Compact continued as the only recognized public higher education transfer policy, although the 1984 version formally expanded usage to the state colleges. The CTC also carried provisions aimed at clarifying associate degree curricular requirements, student academic performance standards, and the creation of an oversight committee.

#### **Centralized Governance**

The main difference in the transfer policy context of the 1980s includes a move toward centralized governance. In its dominant role, the new Board of Regents placed transfer and articulation policy firmly within the BOR plan for system coordination and extended policy attention throughout the decade. Consolidated governance led to enforceable mandates but it also resulted in fractured transfer policy implementation and eventual re-evaluation by the end of the era. In contrast to the BHE coordinating board model of the 1960s and 1970s, the Board of Regents was structured along the lines of a *unified* system (Richardson et al., 1999) or *governing agency* (Glenny, 1959), formed by

legislation and granted with planning, operational, and budgetary oversight of all public higher education sectors. Fortified with powers that were not within the purview of the former Board of Higher Education, the Board of Regents moved quickly to pronounce a comprehensive plan for reorganization in the early 1980s. Transfer and articulation policy development featured clearly in the plan.

### **Centralized Transfer Policy**

The Commonwealth Transfer Compact continued as the only public higher education transfer policy throughout the decade. Although CTC was crafted in 1974 to facilitate transfer between UMass-Amherst and community colleges, the policy had begun to spread by the early 1980s. Transfer admissions representatives employed at other public institutions at the time note that CTC was recognized and applied broadly, although implementation varied from one four-year school to the next. Denise Richardello, recalling her entry into transfer admissions at North Adams State College in 1982-1983 recounts “When it came to policy, I remember the most the Transfer Compact, the 1974 Compact.” Similarly, Gerald Durkin, commenting on his transfer admissions role at the University of Lowell in 1982, points out “At that point, we did have the Transfer Compact...But beyond that there was no Joint Admissions...as far as the statewide programs that are in place now, other than the Compact, that was really it,” and Therese Labine, addressing CTC implementation during her time at Holyoke Community College in 1980, adds “...maybe it was [during] the Board of Regents...what was happening is there were many four-year public institutions that were not honoring the Compact at all, didn’t feel they had to. There were no sanctions...”

The CTC was altered in 1984 to incorporate a number of provisions, as identified in Chapter 4. In addition to improvements designed to address inconsistent implementation, CTC notably expanded to include state college and UMass-Boston participation. The move to a system-wide policy application was consistent with the new Board of Regents (BOR) governance model approach. In his 1982 *Long Range Plan for Public Higher Education in Massachusetts: Phase I* report, BOR Chancellor Duff explicitly indicated the need for transfer policy linking the community college and baccalaureate sectors as one of four components in an overall framework for improving and standardizing admissions to public higher education. Subsequent BOR long range reports further expanded the vision for greater cooperation among higher education segments through articulation. Recommendations singled out the importance of specific transfer-oriented associate degrees to ensure student access to baccalaureate attainment. These pathways were a part of the BOR's heightened efforts at tightening overall college admission selectivity. Within two years, the BOR noted its' success in leading transfer policy efforts in its 1983-1984 Annual Report:

In order to promote a coordinated system of publicly-supported education in the Commonwealth, the Regents approved a revision of the Commonwealth Transfer Compact at the Board meeting on May 8, 1984...The revised Compact, developed primarily through campus-based groups, is one of the most important undertaking of the Board of Regents; with its acceptance, the Board has put in place a major component of its plan to ensure student access to baccalaureate programs.

The BOR followed through in its attention to transfer policy creation, leading the CTC revision process by appointing a committee of presidents from all three segments to craft revisions. This top down approach resulted in an efficiently completed task, but it also created policy implementation challenges for transfer admissions and advising



professionals who participated in committee work designed to carry out the updated CTC. Kathy Ryan, Director of Transfer Admissions at UMass-Amherst at the time, criticized BOR involvement in articulation policy development as overreach.

So the Board of Regents came along and it was like they had their fingers in everything...it was like reinventing the wheel from whoever was the key person and whatever the agenda was statewide...[there were] people that were in those state offices who knew nothing and it was like to trying to educate a kindergartner on a very sophisticated process and we would all get frustrated with that.

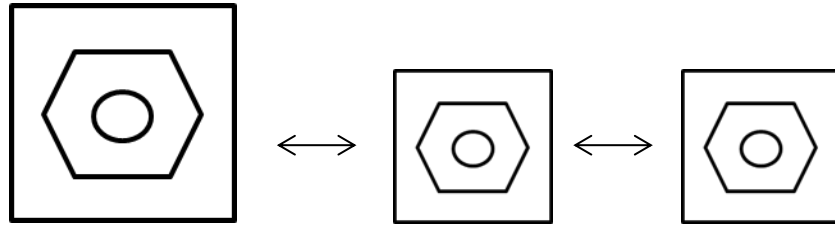
The revised 1984 transfer guidelines specified the formation of a standing committee to carry out policy implementation. Once again, the BOR led the effort, reaching out to campuses to establish the 11-member Transfer Coordinating Committee, made up of two-year and four-year senior executives as well as transfer advising and admissions administrators. Records indicate that ad hoc committees were subsequently brought together to work on implementation issues soon after the policy was enacted. One such team was made up of twenty-eight transfer and admissions representatives from the community colleges, state colleges, and state universities, broken into four teams. Each group followed a script of discussion questions centered on three implementation scenarios and a request for recommendations to implement system wide processes and procedures. There is no evidence of the outcomes of this group's efforts.

Tension between BOR-sponsored policy directives and transfer professional practice reached a crossroads within two years, when the Transfer Coordinating Committee conducted a two-day meeting to deliberate implementation procedures. According to transfer professionals who participated in the group, a crucial CTC meeting took place in Amherst, Massachusetts over the weekend of December 5-6, 1986. Tossie

Taylor, the BOR Associate Vice Chancellor charged with leading Transfer Coordinating Committee efforts, stressed the importance of the gathering in his November 25, 1986 letter: “It would allow us to use our time much more effecitvely (sic) if we arrive at that meeting having read the attached materials... There is much to be done in the short period of time in which we have to work.”

Committee members were given overnight accommodations to allow for day-long meetings. Terri Labine, transfer counselor at Holyoke Community college and one of those present at the time, recalls being “buried in a room and having a lot of back and forth discussions and a lot of disagreement on things.” Others described similar contentious dialogue focused on addressing the CTC provisions, notably involving what were perceived as inflexible state college transfer standards. Indeed, the BOR had initiated the 1984 CTC policy revision in part to address inconsistent transfer policies within the four-year sector of public higher education. Despite passage of the new policy, differences in implementation continued. Ultimately, the committee concluded its gathering and submitted recommendations to the BOR. Records point to a stalemate at the state governance level that coincided with another reexamination of the 1984 CTC policy.

In this instance, the consequences of inviting participation from two-year and four-year transfer practitioners as one policy group resulted in a rejection of guidelines that had been formed by another policy group, the presidents representing the same sectors. Despite this impasse, the BOR once again took a strong role convening transfer policy revisions during 1987-1990 that culminated in another CTC edition at the start of the new decade.



### **The 1990s: Regional Innovation and Statewide Consolidation**

As the transfer policy list in Chapter 4 points out, policy activity followed a busy pace during the 1990s. Compared with the previous decade, these strides included multiple guideline approvals: a second revision of CTC, the new Joint Admissions program (along with the subsequent expansion), and the Tuition Advantage Program financial incentive. It is important to clarify that these policies accumulated throughout the decade rather than in close fashion. Moreover, the policy expansion occurred as higher education governance transitioned repeatedly from the powerful Board of Regents model, to the relatively weaker Higher Education Coordinating Council, to the Board of Higher Education model that fashioned a two-tier relationship overseeing state college and community college operations while maintaining a coordinating role with the University of Massachusetts campuses.

#### **The Last BOR Transfer Policy: The 1990 Commonwealth Transfer Compact**

When Norma Rees took over statewide transfer articulation policy coordination for the Board of Regents, she inherited a committee that had already been in operation for three years, was disillusioned with the 1984 revised policy, and had recently convened a major policy summit. As a result of their two-day meeting in Western Massachusetts in December 1986, the Transfer Coordinating Committee completed an implementation draft that Rees subsequently shared with standing BHE subcommittees and which

garnered critical reaction. Rees cites the committee reaction in her December 7, 1989 written chronology: “Summer 1987: Rees met with the Transfer Coordinating Committee to review the proposed revision. Instead of explaining their document, the Committee rejected it. At this point there was no recommendation to bring to PCUP (the Council of Public College and University Presidents).” Rees pressed on, asserting that the policy would be ratified. Her chronology notes every step, from June 1987 through December 1989, detailing input and revisions by standing BOR subcommittees. On December 14, 1989, Rees sent copies of the final Commonwealth Transfer Compact draft to public two-year and four-year college presidents. In an attached letter, she confirmed BOR authority to set forth the new policy, both on statutory grounds as well as in keeping with community college transfer and articulation provisions in the 1982 BOR *Long Range Plan for Public Higher Education in Massachusetts*. Despite the BOR’s expressed authorship of the revised 1990 Commonwealth Transfer Compact, the clash between the Transfer Coordinating Committee, comprised of transfer professionals, and the BOR (including institutional leaders), signified the start of structured policy advocacy and conflict that continued through the years up to the final negotiations of MassTransfer policy.

### **Revolving Governance**

In stark contrast to Board of Regents dominance in the 1980s, statewide higher education governance changed twice during the 1990s, eventually returning to the Board of Higher Education format in 1996. Both transitions were sanctioned by William Weld during his two terms as Governor of Massachusetts from 1991 to 1997. In the first transition, Weld replaced the BOR with the Higher Education Coordinating Council as

one component of a larger agenda aimed at reorganizing public higher education (Crosson, 1996). The creation of the HECC signaled the two-tiered association between the central authority and the public colleges and universities. Writing about governance restructuring at the time, Crosson described the HECC as an

entirely different structure from the board of regents (sic), but [with] many of the same powers and duties. Although it is called a coordinating board and is mandated to coordinate the activities of the system, it has many powers traditionally accorded governance boards. The relationship of the HECC with the community and state colleges can best be described as a governance relationship, while the relationship with the University of Massachusetts is a coordinating one. (p. 92).

This unique governance configuration does not correspond to any of the defined models presented in Chapter 2. However, McGuinness (2003) and Parmley, et al. (2009) both identify structures that include co-existent governing and coordinating boards, and McGuinness specifies how each may be aligned toward the university and college segments of the system. The HECC model approximated this pattern.

The limited HECC coordinating role was part of a compromise that involved consolidation of four loosely affiliated baccalaureate campuses into one University of Massachusetts segment. For the duration of its existence, the HECC continued to focus on system integration and consolidation, despite statutory limitations. HECC meeting minutes between 1991 and 1995 mention transfer and articulation issues 10 times, the last three in 1995 as then Chancellor Stanley Koplik highlighted the nascent Joint Admissions program. When a representative of community college presidents pointed out the value of the Joint Admissions program in her remarks at the HECC meeting on October 17, 1995, the council chair asked about a similar agreement between community and state

colleges. Meeting minutes cite, “Chancellor Koplik responded by indicating that Council staff would work immediately to address the issue” (p. 6), indicating the volatility of state governance participation in transfer policy development.

The governance shift from HECC back to BHE was similarly swift. In January 1996, Governor Weld announced plans to “to eliminate [the] secretary of education and [replace the] HECC with a board of higher education,” (Fitzgibbons, 2003, “January 1996”). The move was part of a larger effort to reduce the size of state government and specifically targeted cabinet level executives. Other than changing the name of the HECC to Board of Higher Education, nothing changed. The two tiered role of governance remained. Transfer policies garnered more attention under the BHE framework, as the Joint Admissions program moved from a regional agreement to a statewide compact, and transfer affairs in public higher education entered a new stage of activity and sophistication.

### **From Regional to Statewide Transfer Policies**

Notably, statewide policy co-existed with institution-specific policy for the first time in the 1990s. The 1990 revised CTC—a statewide policy—was in place for two years before the first Joint Admissions policy was enacted exclusively between UMass-Amherst and five community colleges in 1992-93. Continued implementation of the Commonwealth Transfer Compact represented a major policy distinction at this time, with its focus on academic requirements and benefits. The CTC functioned independently of the mushrooming Joint Admissions program that contained an enrollment guarantee. Joint Admissions similarly concentrated on completion of associate degree programs, generally regardless of academic requirements. Thus,

community college students were potentially eligible for either, or both, of these programs, a dynamic that persisted as the Joint Admissions agreement expanded to include all UMass campuses by 1995, followed by the agreements with the Massachusetts State Colleges a year later.

By 1996, the statewide CTC policy and Joint Admissions program were available system-wide. This meant that transfer admissions and academic benefits were potentially available to graduates at all 15 community colleges, although access was compromised due to variable programs of study and individually articulated alignments with four-year institutions. Lastly, the BHE introduced the statewide Tuition Advantage Program in 1997, creating financial incentives for community college students who attained higher levels of academic achievement. However, unlike the CTC and Joint Admissions policies, which both originally began as inter-institutional agreements (both initially involving UMass-Amherst), TAP was an entirely top-down policy crafted by the BHE.

### **Recurrent Policy Enterprise at UMass-Amherst**

Although the policy development environment of the 1990s was complex, involving multiple institutional entities and diverse policy mechanisms, this period also bears resemblance to the 1970s, another time in which institutional relationships between UMass-Amherst and the community college community resulted in innovative transfer policies. Kathy Ryan, Director of Transfer Admissions at UMass-Amherst from 1971 to 2003, summarized the policy similarities “Of course, CTC was originally a UMass concept. Then the Joint Admissions was a UMass concept, and at each of those junctures, eventually, the state colleges (were included).”

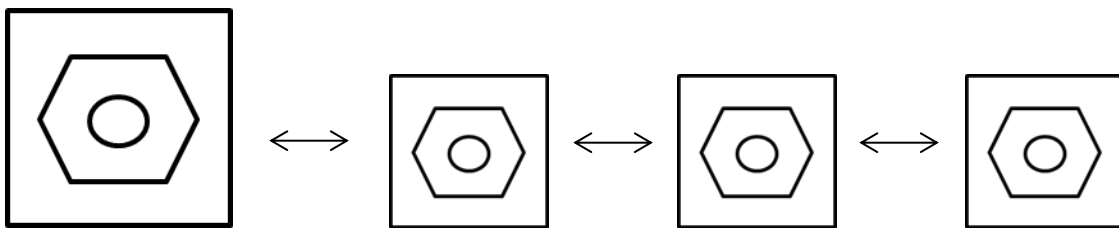
The Joint Admissions policy formation process highlights this distinction in two significant ways: a) separate policy documents were developed for the University of Massachusetts campuses and the Massachusetts State Colleges, reinforcing the evolved governance framework of the 1990s, and b) in practice, University of Massachusetts transfer professionals (notably those at Amherst and Lowell) interpreted the policy to apply to any community college student graduating from an approved associate degree, regardless of intended baccalaureate major. Conversely, state college transfer representatives explicitly tied Joint Admissions eligibility to specific and matching programs of study at the two-year and four-year schools. This separate interpretation of statewide transfer policies continued into the 2000s and influenced implementation of CTC, Joint Admissions, TAP, and even the new MassTransfer policy in 2009.

### **Enduring Interests of Transfer Committees**

Policies in the 1980s and 1990s included provisions that called for standing committees to engage in ongoing policy implementation. However, there was little functional oversight until the latter half of the 1990s and into the early 2000s, once the three main transfer policies were simultaneously in place and various operational challenges emerged. Supported initially with grant funding by the BHE to carry out the Joint Admissions program in 1996, a project manager position was created to coordinate the work of the Joint Admissions implementation team (made up of two-year and four-year public higher education transfer representatives). Although the project manager provided operational support, members of the implementation team (alternately called the Steering Committee) actively led discussions related to policy requirements and responsibilities. By 1998, the group proposed a number of revisions to the Joint



Admissions policy, reminiscent of the CTC implementation committee of the mid-1980s that similarly deliberated execution of policy and ended up in a deadlock. In this instance, the Joint Admissions committee got as far as suggesting modifications to how policy appeals would be handled, adding a second stage to the appeals process. But their efforts ended about the same time that another ad hoc committee was proposed to address policy revisions at the turn of the century.



### **Continued Transfer Policy Revisions and Merger Efforts in the 2000s**

Synchronic analysis of transfer policy environments in the 2000s presents similarities and divergences from the previous decade. The three main policies, CTC, Joint Admissions, and TAP, all remained in force until they were merged into the MassTransfer Policy in 2009. Similarly, the Board of Higher Education continued its role as the state's public higher education governance structure, albeit with the two-tier governing/coordinating format. The decade also included the first instance of a discipline-specific transfer policy: the Education Compacts. Although discipline-specific policies had been identified in the 1960s (Nursing) and proposed in the 1980s (Engineering and Business), there is no record that any of these plans were ever subsequently implemented.

Policy environments from 2000 to 2009 similarly included multiple incidences of revision involving the Joint Admissions program. At the beginning of the decade, and

again toward the end, the BHE either led or co-led efforts to integrate the CTC and Joint Admissions policies. The second attempt resulted in the MassTransfer policy, which also included a provision for students who chose to transfer between the two-year and four-year sectors without first achieving an associate degree. Additionally, although implementation varied across the two-year and four-year campuses, MassTransfer largely absorbed the Education Compact while still honoring that policy's distinctive eligibility requirements. Throughout the decade, transfer and articulation committees actively addressed and debated policy issues, recognizing their power to interpret rules in the transfer process.

### **An Initial Attempt at Policy Merger**

As the Joint Admissions Steering Committee was proposing policy revisions in the late 1990s, the BHE reached out for volunteers to participate on the Transfer Articulation Task Force, charged with updating (once again) the Commonwealth Transfer Compact. BHE Vice Chancellor Jack Warner explained the rationale in his 1999 appointment letter to committee members as being due to modifications in general education requirements across the state. However, according to Catherine Pride, then Dean of Articulation and Transfer at Middlesex Community College and a member of the Joint Admissions Steering Committee at the time, there was a larger goal of merging the CTC with Joint Admissions.

The planets were aligning. Jack Warner somewhere, during that time...went to the Board of Higher Ed as one of the vice chancellors...and his interest in transfer...went with him. And he was the one who initiated the next iteration to try and have the Compact and Joint Admissions start connecting to each other more intentionally. And that was really when the board started getting involved in all of this stuff. Because they had the Compact. They owned the Compact, but they did not own Joint Admissions.

Thus the new century began with strong BHE leadership to revise and combine the Commonwealth Transfer Compact and Joint Admissions. The policy merger proposal did not move forward, yet the BHE maintained a directive role convening new and revised policies throughout the 2000s.

### **Stable Governance and Another Policy Clash**

Unlike the revolving changes in statewide public higher education governance during the 1990s, the Board of Higher Education maintained its structural authority over the community college and state college segments as well as its coordinating relationship with the University of Massachusetts sector. However, stability was threatened during the Mitt Romney administration in the early 2000s, similar to the Weld administration reforms a decade earlier.

Notably during the 2000s, the BHE elevated its organizational capacity by deploying the Department of Higher Education agency to carry out a broad range of administrative functions. In the area of transfer affairs, grant-funded and volunteer personnel initially coordinated state wide committee work, but by 2005 the DHE appointed Francesca Purcell as a full-time staff person to carry out policy implementation and manage relationships with transfer professional community. Purcell quickly engaged with the standing transfer advisory committees and became immersed in ongoing, unresolved policy implementation issues, including a revision of the Joint Admissions policy in 2006. In 2007, she became the point person in the BHE-directed response to legislative intervention narrowly focused on course transferability requirements. Purcell chaired the Commonwealth Transfer Advisory Group and invited State Representative Donelan, author of proposed legislation, to join the CTAG committee. Purcell structured

meetings to systematically introduce detailed analysis of public higher education transfer trends for the group. Regardless, there was a sense that the exercise was futile. Terri Labine, UMass-Amherst transfer admissions representative and member of CTAG recalled

...I think a number of the CTAG members were faculty members who had axes to grind of their own, and instead of looking at the whole picture and what's going to benefit students, they were on that committee to grind their own axe.

Despite vocal campus concerns about perceived unique educational missions and distrust of system-wide course equivalencies, the group coalesced around recommendations for one integrated transfer policy. In one sense, the consensus was easily attained, since the new policy essentially combined the existent CTC, Joint Admissions, and TAP programs. However, except for Purcell and four CTAG members who dealt with transfer affairs on a daily basis, there was little awareness of then-current transfer policy among committee members. Pride notes "...the people who came together to do MassTransfer, primarily administrators, they weren't transfer folks. I mean, there were transfer reps for all the segments, but there were a lot of provosts."

The seemingly reasonable new policy was not well received within the transfer professional community. But criticism converged on the method of delivery rather than the elements of the policy itself. Interviewees in this study shared concerns that ranged from comprehending the new policy as a pre-determined expectation by the DHE (C. Pride), as a DHE initiative that was minimally communicated with others (M. Broadbent) and as a questionable effort (T. Labine), based on the sense that the current policies were

indeed working as long as implementation maintained student benefit as the motivating interest.

Arguably, the MassTransfer policy culminated decades of incremental transfer policy development, containing elements of earlier regulations that fused together to provide comprehensive benefits for community college students. But policy groups and actors, representing distinct interests and goals, continued to advocate their positions in the years that followed. The tendency continues to this day.

## **CHAPTER 6**

### **DISCUSSION AND IMPLICATIONS**

In Chapter 6, I offer a synthesis of the major components of this investigation. I summarize the study in terms of purpose and findings as a prelude to highlighting the significance of my research and its contributions to understanding transfer policy development in Massachusetts and elsewhere. I review findings in relation to the three research questions in this investigation and the primary literature sources in Chapter 2. I note the relevance of my conceptual and analytical frameworks for the study's findings. Finally, I conclude with suggestions for future research and reflect on enduring systemic issues in Massachusetts as well as the roles of transfer professionals who carry out policies.

#### **Summary of Study**

The purpose of this investigation has been to examine the historical development of transfer articulation policies within Massachusetts public higher education. By identifying the influential components of policy environments from 1974 to 2009, I have shed light on the incremental successes and enduring challenges of policy makers and campus-based professionals. Ultimately, this inquiry has critical value for community college students who use institutional linkages to attain bachelor's degrees.

Massachusetts public two-year and four-year institutions have collaborated on the coordination of two-year to four-year academic pathways for approximately 40 years. During this time, individual institutions as well as statewide governance bodies led in the creation of transfer and articulation policies. These guidelines were composed of varied elements, from matching general education coursework to admissions guarantees and

financial incentives for academic performance. Although incremental progress led to new and refined policies, conflict persisted in terms of uniform policy implementation and ongoing institutional resistance to compliance. Importantly, neither centralized governance nor “top down” policies offered assurance of the application of rules and benefits across the system.

Gleanings from the results point to cyclical initiation of policy development. At times state higher education governance (through committees) led the process and at other times regional collaborations between two-year and four-year colleges and universities resulted in innovative linkages. This history suggests ongoing tension between centralized control and individual campus determination, and variable responsiveness to changing conditions.

### **Significance and Implications of the Study**

The impact of this study is related to its capacity to shed light on how two-year and four-year public higher education institutions facilitate the movement of students towards baccalaureate degree completion. Using the case of Massachusetts, the narrative follows a historical approach that takes into account the development of diverse transfer policies, fluctuating participation by higher education governance, and the recurring leadership of policy advocate groups and actors.

This investigation took the form of a qualitative research study that drew on one historical case to understand events and actions through time. Although the study has the greatest significance for the individual case, lessons learned from the results may also be transferrable across settings. As noted in Chapter 3, case studies offer value by allowing researchers to extract from past experiences to make sense of the present and anticipate

future events (Burawoy, 1998). In this historical case, I break down and extract significance further for salient constituent groups.

### **Significance for Students**

The implications of these policies are profound for community college students, who not only represent the majority of enrollment in Massachusetts public higher education but who are also more likely to be first generation, immigrant, and racial/ethnically underrepresented in higher education (Aspire Institute, 2016). Moreover, since community college students constitute the largest segment of public higher education enrollment in the state (MDHE, 2016a), the effect is potentially broad. These students often begin post-secondary education with limited and/or unsophisticated intellectual skills. The community college experience offers many students a first chance to see their own academic potential, and transfer policies reinforce systemic opportunities for continued scholarly progress.

By the same token, inter-institutional policy discrepancies create obstacles for student transition and reinforce messages that community colleges are dead end instructional pursuits, rather than supportive catalysts for attainment of personal goals. Transfer articulation policies level the playing field between traditional, four-year college-bound students and those who begin in community colleges. In Massachusetts, the presence of comprehensive transfer policies that address academic credits, enrollment guarantees and financial incentives offers community college graduates powerful benefits to propel them forward toward equitable achievement. This study sheds light on the history of these policies, recognizing their turbulent formation and execution yet also



stressing the persistent advocacy of institutional groups and committed actors in service to students.

### **Significance for Institutions**

In the field of transfer affairs, the phrase “transfer friendly” is regularly used to identify baccalaureate institutions that follow policies and practices to encourage transfer student enrollment. The phrase also implies that an institution upholds a philosophical mindset that is oriented toward recognizing the varied (external) educational experiences of students seeking to enroll at a new college or university. It also validates the diverse educational paths that students take toward bachelor’s degree completion and distinguishes community college transfer students as comparable to traditional (native) students and equally deserving of access to continued educational fulfillment.

In Massachusetts, public baccalaureate institutions face competition from private institutions as well as among themselves. Although the state universities and campuses of the University of Massachusetts may have staked out missions that ensure institutional longevity, these institutions cannot ignore the potential for rivalries that come down to sustainable enrollments to support their missions. Public baccalaureate institutions that act like private, selective ones in terms of restrictive transfer admissions policies may try to promote themselves as somehow “better” than their sister institutions in the hopes of gaining more students from middle- and upper-income families. But leadership at these schools may underestimate the value of accepting community college students who have crafted resilient academic profiles through hard work and persistence, and who reinforce the diversity of the campus community because of their two-year college experiences.

As the number of traditional-aged college-going students continues to fall in the region (Western Interstate Commission for Higher Education, 2016), institutions will compete for a smaller pool of potential undergraduates. Community college graduates represent a corrective to lower numbers of high school students seeking enrollment in college. But community college students are not naïve pledges. “Transfer friendly” baccalaureate institutions may improve their enrollment sustainability through enhanced transfer and articulation policies, thereby demonstrating their commitment to accomplished community college graduates.

The findings of this study highlight the ways in which institutions can, and have ensured retention of academic rigor through admission of qualified students based on consensual transfer articulation policies. But the policies themselves, as the history in Massachusetts shows, are not enough to confirm that inter-institutional linkages work. These policies have been undermined, as well as bolstered, throughout the years by an array of institutional actors including faculty, college and university leaders, and transfer professionals operating in the field.

### **Significance for Policy Makers**

Historically, transfer policy in Massachusetts has been fashioned both at the institutional level as well as at the state governance level. As I point out in Chapter 4, policy makers include institutional actors working in tandem with unaffiliated advocacy groups (Beals and the State Transfer Articulation Committee), state appointed committees (the Articulation Task Force of College Presidents and the Commonwealth Transfer Advisory Group), collaborative two-year and four-year ad hoc initiatives (Joint Task Force on University of Massachusetts and Community College Relations), and

field-specific professional interests (Task Force on Teacher Preparation in Public Higher Education). Understandably, these policy-making groups were each foremost concerned with the specific guidelines at hand, and policy results reflected immediate interests. Across these policy maker group examples, my research demonstrates that structural efforts to support student progress can equitably come from different directions. There is no single preferred, or approved, impetus. Although the literature on transfer and articulation policies may seem to imply one recommended approach, the case of Massachusetts suggests a more complicated approach.

A challenge emerges in states where either extreme of policy determination dominates. In states where strong governance systems produce top-down rules that do not take into account the complexities of implementation, campus-based actors may be left trying to shoe-horn practices without institutional resources or governmental support. Strong governance states must find a way to incorporate the perspectives of those who will actually carry out the policy. Similarly, in states with uncoordinated, or loose, higher education system alignment, there is a danger of multiple, institution to institution, policy arrangements. At the ground level, two-year and four-year transfer professionals are put in positions of making sense of variable terms and benefits based on specifically articulated pacts. In either case, students bear the brunt of ineffective and inefficient policies that may serve to hinder rather than expedite movement towards bachelor degree attainment.

In Chapter 3, I note my relationship to the study, both in terms of being a current and active member in policy implementation situations, as well as having been a formal member of a policy development team (the Commonwealth Transfer Advisory Group).

These two experiences provide complementary perspectives, and I have learned how the theoretical planning aspects of policy formation both relate to and ignore the execution of transfer guidelines. Policy makers may embark on the creation of regulations that will serve the best—consensually determined—interests of students. However, lacking a first-hand grasp of how regulations are applied within institutions, from admissions and registrar’s office practices to academic curricular integration, policy makers are guessing. From an implementation perspective, transfer articulation policies are seldom easily exercised. More often, students’ successful use of transfer agreements involves a mutual understanding between the sending and receiving transfer professionals of how each is interpreting and determining student eligibility. It is then that the policy becomes a flexible or “living” compact that can be used to facilitate student movement between institutions. Of course, the fluidity of this compact is dependent on the transfer professionals involved, and the relative authority that they each possess and choose to exercise. This is where transfer policies can either help or limit student access to bachelor’s degrees.

### **Significance for Other State Systems**

Smith’s (2010) work offers the most comprehensive account of comparative transfer and articulation policy information for all fifty states, despite concerns about currency and accuracy. Missing from that report, however, is a state by state comparison of how transfer policy is developed and executed. The established list only describes the types of guidelines enacted. It does not offer details on the ways that policies are negotiated and revised in each state. I suggest that individual states can learn much about how to establish and improve transfer and articulation procedures by examining the

practices in other regions. Comparison of state by state practices not only provides the opportunity to specify the ways that public higher education systems produce guidelines, it may also offer creative suggestions that individual states can adapt and use locally. The end goal is the same, to facilitate student movement between two-year and four-year sectors. If there is a genuine commitment to student success through transfer, states benefit by incorporating efforts that challenge, as well as align with, existing structures and practices.

I have intended this investigation to be directly focused on the evolving factors and context of policy development to become better aware of current, and future, approaches to structured collaboration between community colleges and baccalaureate institutions. Although the importance of this study's results may vary across states, subject to prevailing system governance and institutional autonomy, policy makers and practitioners can draw on this precedent to see how central and peripheral forces exert influence on policy creation and execution.

### **Significance for the Researcher and Other Transfer Professionals**

As a committed policy actor at a community college, I have an added purpose for conducting this study. My daily work requires a solid understanding of statewide guidelines in order to guide students appropriately. With this understanding, I strive to be better able to disseminate policy information with campus colleagues, including faculty and administrators, at my own institution. Development of this expertise is critical, since transfer affairs is often seen as a niche student service, and staffing is rationed. I consciously deliberate how statewide policies are integrated within our campus culture,

and I take responsibility for my agency in communicating, promoting, and advocating for opportunities in service to students.

One of the first impressions I gained when I began as a transfer professional over a decade ago was the distinct sense of a professional community among the representatives of two-year and four-year institutions engaged in this work. Within weeks of starting in this role, I came to know individuals from other institutions who had been carrying out transfer admissions, and/or transfer advising, work for decades. This was a remarkable introduction to begin to understand how transfer policies have been interpreted, debated, and championed by people who, in some cases, also participated in public higher education policy creation in the past. A number of these advocates have remained—unraveling, negotiating, and at times reworking guidelines to facilitate community college student enrollment into baccalaureate programs. I began to realize that these professionals may take policy as a starting point, or guiding principle, for work with students, but also toiling over the details to achieve positive outcomes. However, this is not a universal approach, as others struggle with, or simply choose to accept, the concrete parameters of policy and carry it out impersonally. This is the central dynamic of policy implementation at the ground level.

The results of this study offer an opportunity for other Massachusetts public higher education transfer professionals to know the history of policy development and to appreciate the shifting priorities of statewide governance structures as well as individual institutions. Since 2009, transfer affairs in Massachusetts have gained greater attention and focus of efforts, evidence that policy challenges continue. Ambitious efforts to better streamline academic pathways through transfer result not only from compassionate

concerns for justice and equity. Political pressures tied to perceived institutional inefficiencies (bolstered by personally frustrating experiences) also influence energies placed on making policy improvements.

Policy review and innovation did not end in 2009, and transfer professionals continue to participate in policy deliberations. In the years since, 2010 to the present, different transfer policy proposals have come forward, most recently the MassTransfer Pathways initiative. Although this project has been largely focused on faculty and curricular alignments, over time transfer professionals have played important roles, bringing perspective to the consequences of systematized procedures and confronting narrow understanding of the transfer experience. It is my hope that transfer colleagues who read this report in the future will gain an appreciation of the real challenges of forging collaborations with other institutions through transfer, and will fortify themselves knowing that the end goal is always with student success in mind. This was the guiding principle of transfer professionals who came before, from the 1960s through the early 2000s. Future students will need future transfer champions.

### **Findings in Relation to the Research Questions**

The research questions of this study concentrated on identifying transfer articulation policies and corresponding higher education governance structures in Massachusetts from 1974 to 2009. They also focused on the transfer policy contexts (or environments), advocacy groups, and individuals, that contributed to policy formation and review. Chapter 4 provides findings that address the first two research questions. The third question, which pursues an explanation of the history of transfer policy development, is answered in Chapter 5. Although Chapters 4 and 5 provide detailed

answers to my principal inquiry, additional nuance adds meaning and relevance to the findings. I address these aspects in the following sections.

### **Massachusetts Transfer Policies-Components and Structures**

The development of transfer articulation policies in Massachusetts is significant for including academic, enrollment and financial components. These elements are repeatedly mentioned in the literature in Chapter 2 as essential to comprehensive policy arrangements. However, these three pieces were not simultaneously created and implemented in this case. From a chronological perspective, it is noteworthy that the Commonwealth Transfer Compact, with its academic equivalency focus, was the first guideline passed, extended, and retained exclusively for approximately 20 years. This emphasis on the equivalence of academic coursework rigor (and implied student preparation) has endured as a critical point of debate within inter-sector collaboration. The ongoing concern currently persists in the latest MassTransfer Pathways policy iteration.

The Joint Admissions program, which introduced the enrollment aspect of transfer procedures, did not come about until 1992. It is important to highlight that both the CTC and Joint Admissions guidelines were first established between community colleges and UMass-Amherst before being extended by the prevailing higher education governance authority to include other university and state college campuses. In contrast, the Tuition Advantage Program was deliberately established as a statewide financial incentive, and was later integrated within another system-based directive, the MassTransfer program.



The literature on transfer and articulation policy also stresses the importance of standing oversight committees and faculty involvement. Transfer committees played increasingly important roles in the evolution of policy in Massachusetts, a point I address in the following section on policy environments, groups, and actors. Faculty involvement in Massachusetts transfer and articulation guideline formation has been a more recent phenomenon. Faculty educators at two-year and four-year institutions were active in the Education Compact of 2004. Similarly, although as minority participants, two-year and four-year faculty were involved in the 2007-2008 Commonwealth Transfer Advisory Committee deliberations over MassTransfer features. But faculty has played their most engaged role yet in the current MassTransfer Pathways initiative. Via discipline-specific gatherings, academic department representatives have negotiated common learning outcomes and course components to better ensure alignment between sectors.

### **Evolving Statewide Higher Education Governance**

The literature on transfer and articulation policy noted the importance of higher education governance. Ignash and Townsend (2000) placed governance structures on a continuum of *loosely regulated* to *highly regulated* to describe the relative contexts in which articulation guidelines are developed and carried out. Similarly, although broader in scope, studies conducted by Glenny (1959), Berdahl (1971), and McGuinness (2003) highlighted the variable regulatory relationships between centralized authorities and college campuses. Across these theoretical constructs, the common theme is the relative power that statewide governance authorities exercise in relation to higher education institutions or sectors.

This relationship is important in the case of Massachusetts. Between 1974 and 1996, governance changed three times, moving from lesser to greater and back to lesser centralized control. Table 5 visually displays the timeline of policy creation and corresponding higher education governance structure.

As I formulated my research questions, I considered that transfer policy development might be directly related to Massachusetts higher education governance. However, findings suggest a more nuanced picture, as guidelines were variably created at institutional or regional levels, and other times conducted by state governance actors.

Table 5: Corresponding Transfer Policy and Higher Education Governance

| <b>Policy</b>                         | <b>Established</b> | <b>Governance Structure</b>           |
|---------------------------------------|--------------------|---------------------------------------|
| Commonwealth Transfer Compact         | 1974               | Board of Higher Education             |
| Revised Commonwealth Transfer Compact | 1984               | Board of Regents                      |
| Revised Commonwealth Transfer Compact | 1990               | Board of Regents                      |
| Joint Admissions                      | 1992-1993          | Higher Education Coordinating Council |
| Joint Admissions                      | 1995               | Higher Education Coordinating Council |
| Joint Admissions                      | 1996               | Higher Education Coordinating Council |
| Tuition Advantage Program             | 1996-1997          | Board of Higher Education             |
| Joint Admissions Agreement            | 2000               |                                       |
| Revised Tuition Advantage Program     | 2002               |                                       |
| Education Compact                     | 2004               |                                       |
| Revised Joint Admissions              | 2006               |                                       |
| MassTransfer                          | 2009               |                                       |

The Board of Higher Education was a relatively new power when the Commonwealth Transfer Compact was created in 1974. The CTC was created to support movement between community colleges and UMass-Amherst, which at the time was the only university campus. When governance evolved to the Board of Regents in 1980, one of the first statewide moves was to systematize articulation between two-year and four-year institutions, as noted in the BOR 1982 *Long Range Plan for Public Higher Education in Massachusetts: Phase I* report. The BOR took a strong role in expanding and revising CTC twice, which involved a protracted reexamination of the policy and an eventual board-dominated outcome.

Once again, as the BOR was phased out and replaced by the weaker Higher Education Coordinating Council, UMass-Amherst led transfer and articulation collaboration with local community colleges. Although the Joint Admissions program was regional in focus, it came about at the same time that statewide higher education reorganization focused on creating a unified University of Massachusetts sector adding campuses in Boston, Dartmouth, and Lowell to the flagship at Amherst. Joint Admissions policy quickly grew to include the state colleges by 1996. Nevertheless enlargement of the policy was not well received across the four-year sectors. Terri Labine highlights the pressured pace of expansion:

The intent of the pilot...was just UMass-Amherst and five community colleges...in the meantime...the presidents at the state college campuses and at other UMass campuses heard about this...and said "Wait a minute. If UMass-Amherst is doing this, we can't let them be ahead of us." So they came along...at the urging of their presidents, the others had to come along and do the Joint Admissions program...and there was a lot of animosity.

The shift to statewide adoption of Joint Admissions coincided with the shift from the Higher Education Coordinating Council back to the Board of Higher Education. Although the new BHE exercised authority over community and state colleges yet was advisory to the UMass sector, it successfully introduced the Tuition Advantage Program across the system. From 2000 onward, guideline activities primarily concentrated on implementation revisions. The Education Compact came about due to K-12 workforce trends that capitalized on BHE authority to influence two-year and four-year collaboration, but application of Education Compact provisions has varied from inception through overlapping and conflicting co-existence with the MassTransfer program. To date, the Education Compact is recognized and promoted at some two-year and four-year institutions, while considered obsolete at others. Despite statewide policies designed to systematize movement, independence and collaboration across sectors fluctuates.

### **Independence and collaboration**

The narrative of transfer articulation policy development in Massachusetts includes repeated incidences of institutional independence in formulating policies, as well as incidences of collaboration. CTC was originally crafted in 1974 by one four-year institution (UMass-Amherst) concerned with formalizing pathways for local community college students, before the policy was expanded in 1984 to include multiple two- and four-year institutions. The same development took place in the early 1990s, involving the same four-year institution, which led on the creation of the Joint Admissions program. Moreover, as latter policies came into existence and were carried out, institutions (primarily on the four-year side) unevenly interpreted guidelines so that

students were often at the mercy of individual college determinations of what were supposed to be common practices.

This variability of policy construal and execution hints at Berdahl's (2007) notions of *procedural autonomy* and *substantial autonomy*, as introduced in Chapter 2. Depending on the prevailing governance structure, campuses were allowed more or less autonomy to determine how they would approach work processes (procedural autonomy) as long as they reached institutionally determined goals of success (substantial autonomy). In transfer terms, this necessitated interpreting policy in ways that were consistent with larger institutional messages and expectations, which might actually mean limiting community college student access in order to preserve or reinforce primacy of other student groups. As recently as the Education Compacts of the early 2000s, policy interpretation by state colleges might vary in terms of requisite Grade Point Average (general versus Education-specific) and course work prerequisites. Some four-year institutions have exercised leniency regarding associate degree curricula and others have been scrupulous regarding course equivalencies toward Education major requirements—for the same policy. This variability of policy interpretation has been a hallmark of the history in Massachusetts since the 1970s and reflects the tension between *procedural* and *substantial autonomy* among public higher education institutions to this day.

### **Regional and centralized policy formation**

The history of transfer policy development in Massachusetts similarly contains an enduring recognition, if not acceptance, of the proclivity towards regional affiliations. This was certainly true for the CTC and Joint Admissions policies, and it has continued to date through the work of groups such as Central Links in Central Massachusetts, the

Southeast Connect initiative in Southeastern Massachusetts, and the Northeast Consortium of Colleges and Universities in Massachusetts (NECCUM) in Northeastern Massachusetts. Indeed, state higher education authorities have acknowledged the importance and practicality of regional collaboration. The 30K Commitment program, established by Central Links members, Fitchburg State University, Mount Wachusett Community College, Quinsigamond Community College, and Worcester State University, became the forerunner to the recent statewide Commonwealth Commitment program. This example demonstrates that the tradition continues: just as CTC and Joint Admissions provided earlier impetus for statewide policy formation, local transfer innovations in the 21st century continue to be absorbed by the state, extending benefits and advantages across regions but also reinforcing the importance of local determination of inter-institutional priorities.

### **Co-existence of regional and statewide policies**

The unique chronology of transfer and articulation development in Massachusetts is also notable for sustained application of concurrent regional and statewide guidelines. This practice originated in the 1990s when the revised CTC and the new Joint Admissions program began to offer different, potentially complementary, benefits to students. The two policies remained in parallel force for the next 15 years. Joint Admissions did not join CTC as a BHE-sponsored policy until the two were combined in the 2009 MassTransfer program. For students, the overall benefit was having two policies that could serve to maximize transition from community colleges to state colleges and universities. But for transfer professionals, motivation to carry out the

guidelines was complicated by variable interpretation of requirements as well as a perceived sense of autonomy to determine compliance.

Regardless of whether transfer guidelines emerged from regional inventions or evolved from statewide adaptations, unique policy environments, advocacy groups, and actors played important roles in the deliberation and execution of transfer procedures and practices. I address these influences next.

### **Individuals, Groups, and Environments Involved in Policy Development**

As noted in Chapter 2 and above in the section on significance for other states, transfer and articulation literature has largely avoided the policy formation process. Implicit in this process is the participation of diverse interest groups, from legislators and governance executives to institutional leaders and transfer professionals. These various individuals and groups engage in policy activity within contexts, or environments, of opportunity. I present illustrations of this activity below. But first, it is helpful to review the policy theories introduced in Chapter 3 (see Table 2) that are employed as part of my conceptual framework.

The respective works by Kindgon (1995) and McLendon (2003) for policy environments, Jenkins-Smith and Sabatier (1993) for advocacy groups, and Mintrom and Vergari (1996) for policy actors, or entrepreneurs, inform my inquiry. Policy environments in this case include enduring transfer policy limitations or implementation inconsistencies (problems) that rise to importance within streams of political opportunity and lead to revisions of existing guidelines or the development of new proposals as solutions. Advocacy groups take the forms of unaffiliated professional groups or emergent regional alliances between two-year and four-year institutions that organize

efforts to influence policy creation or modifications. Lastly, individual policy actors may act as representatives of formal governance bodies or may represent campus interests in cross-sectional committee work. In some cases, individual actors and advocacy groups converge in policy environments that may steer to unexpected outcomes. The narrative of transfer and articulation policy development in Massachusetts contains revealing examples of these policy theory elements in action.

### **The 1974 Commonwealth Transfer Compact**

In the early 1970s, Ernest Beals capitalized on his own research interests, as well as his professional role at UMass-Amherst, to organize likeminded peers (Statewide Transfer Articulation Committee/Transfer Review Council) into an advocacy coalition. Beals and the group created momentum, armed with performance statistics and statewide survey results, to force deliberation about transfer policy creation with faculty and academic leaders at UMass-Amherst. The successful outcome of this effort propelled Beals' advocacy community to produce the Commonwealth Transfer Compact, which was endorsed by two-year and four-year public higher education leaders.

### **Revisions to the Commonwealth Transfer Compact**

The significance of policy environments and actors is demonstrated again during the period of 1984-1990. The Board of Regents mandated state articulation transfer regulations as part of a larger effort to coordinate the two-year and four-year higher education sectors. Although a BOR-appointed committee made revisions to CTC in alignment with the system-wide directive, implementation quickly disintegrated when the appointed Transfer Coordinating Committee reached an impasse and the BOR representative, Norma Rees, took a direct hand in negotiating policy details with



leadership constituent groups. Ironically, the 1990 version of CTC went into effect as the BOR itself was heading towards replacement by the substantially weaker Higher Education Coordinating Council.

### **The Joint Admissions Program**

It was during this governance transition that UMass-Amherst and community college allies formed the Joint Task Force on University of Massachusetts and Community College Relations. Catherine Pride, who represented Middlesex Community College on the Task Force, describes the policy environment:

...we were having all these conversations about, well, the Compact (CTC) only helps with transfer of credit. That you still have to go through all these admission barriers...anyway five community colleges were invited to meet with UMass about this concept of creating this Joint Admission agreement...and they picked schools with whom they had good transfer relationships.

But besides the perceived barriers to transfer, there was an added motivation on the part of the university. Pride continues

And I think, honestly, from UMass' standpoint, it was a desire to increase enrollment. It was total marketing. "We're gonna offer this benefit." They also had a whole lot of research about how transfer students did once they transferred to UMass. And they kind of sold it to their academic folks that transfer students were doing as well, if not better, than native students were. So, that's where all of these conversations started.

In this example, the combined interests of UMass-Amherst (as one advocacy group) to improve enrollment, and that of community colleges (as another advocacy group) to improve transfer benefits, coalesced around creation of a policy that gained traction and eventually pressured the other four-year public institutions to become involved.

## MassTransfer

The creation of MassTransfer provides a final illustration of policy environments and actors. Not long after the standing Joint Admissions Steering Committee updated changes to that policy in 2006, the BHE released plans to respond to the proposed Donelan Bill. At its April 19, 2007 meeting, the BHE announced the formation of the Commonwealth Transfer Advisory Group and highlighted Donelan's bill in the *Request for Committee and Board Action* document that served as the rationale. The text noted BHE support for the bill and explicitly advocated for sustained collaboration among public higher education institutions in order to improve transfer. The document also introduced CTAG as the mechanism that would serve to "develop a comprehensive understanding of the issues."

State Representative Christopher Donelan, who was a member of the state Joint Committee on Higher Education, was invited to participate. I was also a member of CTAG so can confirm that I saw Representative Donelan at meetings, but about half-way through the schedule, surrogates began to attend in his place. At some point, Donelan was identified as the co-chair of CTAG, although he did not actively convene meetings. He was publicly praised for his leadership when recommendations were presented at the BHE meeting on June 25, 2008. In his comments at the meeting, Donelan did not appear to dispute his role.

He told the Board that last year he filed a bill on college transfer and was pleased that follow-through led to the commission of the Report. He commented that this Report proves... that we operate as a system of public higher education. ..He told the Board that he was proud of the Report and asked that it be approved by the Board today. Representative Donelan said that it was a pleasure to work with the BHE, DHE, and Commissioner Plummer and that work will continue on the Report's recommendations.

Through this experience, Donelan went from being a legislative threat to being the sponsor of new and improved transfer policy. The creative brilliance of this strategy rests with BHE leadership, in particular Francesca Purcell, who shaped the monthly CTAG meetings to include data and statistics on state and national transfer trends as well as presentations by representatives of other state higher education systems. She also led the group in exercises that not only facilitated learning for those with limited transfer affairs knowledge (most members), but also steered the group toward its eventual plan to unite the existing policies into one.

These four examples demonstrate how diverse individuals and groups, acting independently as well as within formal authority structures, took advantage of policy windows to effect outcomes that would benefit their distinct constituencies. The instances, however, also show the malleability of policy formation over the years in Massachusetts. One might conclude that the direction of policy formation, whether coming from the central higher education authority versus a local/regional interest, is directly tied to the relative strength or weakness of the central governance body. But actions of advocacy groups and actors cross lines to validate a more complex process.

### **Transfer Committees**

Transfer committees play an important recurring advocacy role in the history of articulation policy development in Massachusetts. Interviewees in this study remarked on the existence of group networks as early as the 1970s. These initial linkages were tied to the Statewide Transfer Articulation Committee (which evolved into the New England Transfer Association), and overlapped with the formation of standing committees involved in specific policy implementation. By the 2000s, groups such as the Joint

Admissions Steering Committee had become the default forum for transfer professionals tasked with interpreting and executing all of the guidelines in effect.

Although in most cases the standing transfer and articulation committees were formed under the auspices of the prevailing governance body at a point in time, selected members were often representatives of two-year and four-year constituency groups and more or less espoused those groups' perspectives. In this way, policy advocacy not only occurred within a given committee's work, but when likeminded policy actors participated in larger efforts they contributed diverse viewpoints that could affect policy deliberation and practice. One extreme example of transfer committee influence took place during the process of carrying out the revised CTC in 1984-85. The power of the committee to resist concurrence around implementation led to a series of events in which the BOR ended up taking a direct role in re-shaping the policy yet again. Transfer professional participation in committees reinforced practice in the field, a perspective that continues to serve an important purpose to this day.

### **Transfer Professionals**

Of the 12 individuals interviewed for this study, nine participated on one or more transfer and articulation policy and implementation committees. Many of them participated on the same committees through the years; I have joined in shared committee membership with half of them. They represented transfer admissions, advising, and articulation affairs at community colleges, state colleges/universities, and University of Massachusetts campuses. In addition to their deep knowledge of past events, their involvement communicated their enduring interest and advocacy for transfer students. Through their practitioner roles, they offered critical views on policy interpretation and

did not shy away from confronting proposals or revisions that they perceived as detrimental to student success. By the same token, some transfer professionals also resisted efforts to make or apply changes in guidelines, which then resulted in divergences from approved practice. Individually, as well as in groups, transfer professionals have exercised power to influence policy outcomes in applied settings.

### **Politics in Governance and Policy Development**

This study has focused on reviewing the history of transfer articulation policy creation, noting the sway of statewide governance, as well as the impact of individuals and environments that influenced outward results. I acknowledge that this history may also be viewed within a political framework, although that approach is beyond the scope of this study. It is important to note that the various public higher education governance bodies, as identified in Table 5, have been granted authority through Commonwealth of Massachusetts General Laws, Chapter 15A, which delineates the role and responsibility of statewide governance. Each transition of governance has involved legislation making revisions to Chapter 15A to confirm with the changes made in composition and scope of power. Chapter 15A also includes a sentence conferring authority over transfer and articulation

Section 9. The council shall have the following duties and powers: ... (v) develop and implement a transfer compact for the purpose of facilitating and fostering the transfer of students without the loss of academic credit or standing from one public institution to another.

This succinct directive leaves the details of how governance, either through mandate or collaboration, carries out efforts aligned with Section 9v. As the findings in Chapter 4 and 5 point out, various guidelines and revisions addressed aspects of transfer

policy that conform with Section 9v. Moreover, as I note above, both outside alliances and governance-sponsored committees exercised political sway that resulted in policy outcomes. Transfer and articulation guidelines in Massachusetts have persistently involved political influence in part due to the tension of independence and collaboration among institutions and central governance.

### **Conceptual Framework Considerations**

My conceptual framework combined articulation literature with governance models and concepts, along with elements of policy theories, to study transfer policy development in Massachusetts. I also included my vantage point as an active participant in policy formation and implementation, recognizing my *emic* status for gaining access but also being mindful of bias due to my direct role. My conceptual framework provided useful insights as a pioneering inquiry into this history given the topic had not previously been addressed in scholarly research.

However, the conceptual framework excluded political climates that surrounded higher education through the decades. Future studies might address this omission by crafting a conceptual framework solely focused on political theory or expand governance models to include legislation and partisan relations. Still, the overall value of my conceptual framework has been in its combination of concepts, theories, and literature. My multi-component framework has bolstered the complex historical narrative at the heart of this analysis.

### **Analytical Framework Considerations**

I borrowed Tosh's (1991) *diachronic* and *synchronic* concepts to structure my analytical framework. These were relevant, as the history of transfer policy development

includes different sequential, as well as contemporaneous, guidelines. Tosh's concepts aligned with my conceptual framework in order to see how prevailing public higher education governance overlapped with advocacy groups and actors in distinct policy environments. Chapters 4 and 5 were constructed to maximize use of Tosh's concepts to help answer the research questions in this study.

This framework may be useful for comparable examinations in other states, where review of past and contemporary policy contexts may offer meaningful insights into the determination of future system priorities or help uncover recurring issues. Conversely, Tosh's concepts may have less value in cases where only one policy is examined over time, or in settings where successive policies replaced prior ones. However, even in this latter instance, Tosh's model could be modified to permit comparison of the sequential guidelines and environments. In addition, an analytical framework focused on political climates and principles could yield different insights into the policy creation process taking into account legislative pressures and prerogatives.

### **Suggestions for Further Inquiry**

This study concentrated its focus on historical contexts to characterize transfer and articulation policy development in Massachusetts. I identified guidelines and introduced the influence of governance entities and policy environments, groups, and actors in order to better understand the complexity of this history. This was a useful first step. Going forward, scholars may build upon my foundational inquiry to delve deeper into specific aspects of transfer guideline creation, employment, and evaluation.

One suggestion would be to re-examine my approach to describing the policy formation process in Massachusetts. I relied on archival documents, contributions from

interviewees, and materials available publicly as reference sources to transfer affairs officials, like myself, in accordance with professional roles. Another researcher might consider interviewing individuals who represented the particular governance authority during times of policy formation. Their perspectives of the political and administrative process involved in creating the guidelines would offer a useful comparison to the perceptions of interviewees in this study who were exclusively campus-based representatives.

Campus-based policy implementation is another important aspect of the history of Massachusetts. In Chapters 4 and 5, I touch on the fact that the various policies prevalent from the late 1990s onward were interpreted separately and inconsistently. Research into the variability of policy implementation can provide insights into enduring practices that at times hinder student transfer and at other times reinforce it. This type of investigation also provides an opportunity to learn more about how requisite transfer affairs professionals perceive their regulatory vs. advocacy roles, and the impact of these roles on interactions with students. After all, at its core, policy implementation is the set of actions that lead up to and accomplish the transfer process.

Acknowledging the long history of transfer and articulation policy development in Massachusetts, there is very limited information about the effectiveness of policies. Quantification of participation, from enrollment at community colleges to graduation from baccalaureate institutions, is one logical way of identifying whether, and how, the policies work. Effectiveness can be defined and examined in a number of ways. For Massachusetts community colleges, capacity may be measured by first quantifying the number of transfer-oriented associate degrees across the 15 campuses each year. This



can be followed up by compiling the total number of community college students enrolled in transfer associate degrees each year. These numbers provide the scope of potential two-year to four-year transfer.

For four-year colleges, effectiveness may first be addressed by determining the number of students who transfer each semester/year having completed related associate degrees. Subsequently, tracking those students through to completion of bachelor's degrees could provide information about the alignment of curricula as well as the persistence of students who follow transfer agreements or pathways. It may be instructive, as well, to look at the length of time necessary to complete bachelor's degrees after transfer, as this may provide information about the personal challenges students experience in the transition as well as insight into the academic demands of specific majors. Similarly, analysis of majors chosen and completed may reveal differences in curricular alignments that either prohibit or facilitate baccalaureate attainment.

Data collection is an immediate concern to any quantitative analyses of transfer. Despite isolated past efforts to quantify participation in the Joint Admissions program, for example, there does not appear to be a current, comprehensive, and ongoing process of collecting transfer mobility information at the state level. Part of the challenge is due to campuses utilizing different student record systems, which makes information sharing a challenge. Added to this is the legacy of campus independence in relation to the central authority that inhibits record keeping coordination. Still, with true campus leadership in support of transfer affairs, and explicit support by central governance and legislative authorities, institutions may choose to deploy staff and resources to address the effectiveness of transfer within public higher education.

### **Other General Emphases**

In Chapter 2, I presented the major topics covered in transfer and articulation policy research. I noted that existent literature has been limited to rationales for the need to establish transfer guidelines, typologies of regulatory governance to carry out articulation policies, and descriptions of essential elements contained in effective policies. However, the process of transfer policy formation is regrettably absent in studies, despite the requisite importance of negotiation and advocacy necessary to accomplish regulatory goals. As noted above for the case of Massachusetts, analysis of policy formation creates an opportunity to gain a better understanding of the process of negotiation and concession that takes place. Along with component identification and implementation measures, policy formation is central to the administrative transfer process.

Research focusing on the transition from policy formation to implementation is equally missing from the literature on transfer and articulation issues. Implementation is the third fundamental ingredient, along with policy design and components, that makes up systemic transfer coordination between two-year and four-year institutions. All institutions, public and private, engaged in transfer affairs must deal with enactment issues. Studies that focus on how campuses make sense of policies to create systems and processes that facilitate transfer will add to a greater understanding of the importance of implementation.

### **Comparison Studies**

The series of cyclical policy initiation, at times emanating from campuses and at other times coming from a central authority, is the crucial narrative of this study. This

may be unique to Massachusetts. On the other hand, comparison studies of transfer policy development in other states create opportunities to compare governance tensions and policy actor activity. One value of comparison studies would be to explore potential similar patterns which may shed light on whether or not the Massachusetts experience is indeed unique, or more like other states. The significance of this comparison would be to inform policymakers, whether at the campus level or within central higher education governance settings, to better understand and anticipate the necessity of collaboration to achieve policy outcomes.

One interesting example of is found in the Sauer et al, (2005) study. That investigation serves as a precedent for recognizing the distinctive governance-transfer policy development environments in three states. Results in that study not only reflected the reality of the diverse combinations involved—higher education governance, higher education system structures and specific transfer policies—but also highlighted the complexity of transfer policy creation and execution. In sum, states are constrained by legislative structures that determine higher education governance, while at the same time they may be responsive to regional innovations that offer improvements to persistent systemic challenges.

Regardless of system structure and shared governance, the tension between centralized power and campus-based autonomy will continue to influence the ways in which policies are carried out within public higher education settings. Future research might expand on this study to explore how central and regional transfer advocates can anticipate changing higher education political climates in order to propose new articulation policies as well as safeguard those already in use. Comparison studies of

multiple settings also offer the chance to derive common conditions and strategies that will reinforce transfer practices for the benefit of students.

### **Conclusion**

As proposed, this study focuses on the development of transfer policies among Massachusetts public higher education institutions from 1974 to 2009. This may seem an arbitrary decision, as investigation could have also followed other formats such as using a shorter time frame or restricting attention to one aspect of policy creation. Nevertheless, I constructed this inquiry to introduce the policy history narrative broadly, identifying central system forces (governance), along with recurrent independent influences (policy groups and actors), in defined environments over time. This initial scope provides essential background for further attention on transfer guidelines and affairs in Massachusetts. It establishes a general foundation from which future researchers can concentrate on one or more policy context characteristics. It also places attention on the policy formation process, a little-explored topic in the literature on transfer and articulation studies.

It is important to note that higher education transfer policy did not end with the implementation of MassTransfer in 2009. In fact, the Department of Higher Education has overseen additional policy revisions and expansions up to the time of this report. Discussions continue to focus on course equivalency and curricular alignment between two-year and four-year programs. In policy meetings, faculty continues to debate the elements of rigorous and standardized coursework objectives. This demonstrates the enduring academic tension between individual and institutional autonomy in conflict with governing power. Despite over 40 years of policy formation and implementation,

Massachusetts public higher education leaders wrestle with this tension, even if the explicit goal is greater alliance to facilitate student movement within sectors. This debate is likely not unique to Massachusetts, yet this case provides a relevant example of how unified processes have been pursued in spite of periodic opposing pressures.

Furthermore, in order for transfer policies to function, the compromise between institutional autonomy and governing constraints often requires more than written formal documents. The policies work (or do not) because of the efforts carried out by skilled campus-based practitioners. Transfer professionals interpret and address the policies on a range from concrete compliance to case-by-case flexibility. This variability is as much a reflection of institutional philosophy toward community college transfer students as it is an indication of policy elasticity. Indeed, as long as policymakers shape guidelines to accommodate the range of interest group priorities, they will require committed advocates to supportively carry them out in the best interests of students. The history of transfer policy development in Massachusetts provides a useful illustration of that approach.

## APPENDIX A

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118. Statewide Joint Admissions Steering Committee, Meeting Evaluation Feedback, June 9, 2006.
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121. Transfer Articulation Task Force (committee list), March 3, 1999.
122. Transfer Officers (list), Circa 1984.
123. University of Massachusetts, *Learning to Lead, Building a World-Class Public University in Massachusetts: The Report of the Commission on the Future of the University*, 1989
124. University of Massachusetts, Statement of System Priorities, June 2, 1993.
125. University of Massachusetts at Amherst, Office of Transfer Affairs, *Activities 1971-1972. Admissions Annual Report of 1971-1972*.
126. University of Massachusetts at Amherst, Office of Transfer Affairs, Circa 1982-1983.
127. University of Massachusetts at Amherst, *Report on the Present and Future Status of Undergraduate Admissions at the University of Massachusetts at Amherst* (Doolan, R. J), January 1974.
128. Wong, D.S. Weld names higher-ed chief James Carlin's role will be to cut waste. *The Boston Globe*, November 23, 1995.

## **APPENDIX B**

### **MASSACHUSETTS TRANSFER POLICY DOCUMENTS**

1. Commonwealth Transfer Compact, 1974
2. Revised Commonwealth Transfer Compact, 1984
3. Revised Commonwealth Transfer Compact, 1990
4. Joint Admissions (Community Colleges & UMass-Amherst), 1992-1993
5. Joint Admissions (Community Colleges & UMass System), 1995
6. Joint Admissions (Community Colleges & State Colleges), 1996
7. Tuition Advantage Program, 1996-1997
8. Joint Admissions Agreement, 2000
9. Revised Tuition Advantage Program, 2002
10. Education Compact, 2004
11. Revised Joint Admissions, 2006
12. Final Report of the Commonwealth Transfer Advisory Group (MassTransfer),  
2009

## APPENDIX C

### SAMPLE INFORMED CONSENT LETTER

Dear participant:

My name is Daniel de la Torre, Jr. I am a doctoral student in the Educational Policy and Leadership program at the University of Massachusetts Amherst. Thank you for considering participating in this study.

I am collecting data for my doctoral dissertation titled “The History of Massachusetts Transfer and Articulation Policies in Contexts of Evolving Higher Education System Structure, Coordination, and Policy Actors.” This research focuses on the development of statewide transfer policies in different public higher education governance settings and involving different individuals who designed the policies. I am further exploring how the combination of evolving governance structures and policy actors may have influenced the formation of transfer policies.

The purpose of the interview is to recall the mood and system priorities in public higher education during different times of transfer policy creation. Interview questions will focus on your recollections of these past periods. It is unlikely, but not impossible, that the interview may elicit memories that are upsetting or uncomfortable. Please keep this in mind as you decide about participation in this study. Interviews will take 60-90 minutes to complete.

To protect the wellbeing and confidentiality of participants in the study, I will do the following:

1. Carefully manage and securely store the information collected during the interviews.
2. Digitally record and take notes during interviews. Once interviews have been transcribed, audio files will be deleted. I will refrain from recording the interview upon participant request.
3. Offer participants options for identification in the study using either a) full name and job title, b) descriptive title (such as administrator, director), or c) full anonymity and use of a pseudonym. Participants will select a preferred option before interviews begin and may change their preferred identification at any time.
- iv. Provide a copy of the interview transcript upon participant request.

-----  
Your signature on this form indicates the following:

- a) You have read and been explained this form and that you are willing to participate in the interview.
- b) You understand that interview results will be used in this doctoral study and you have granted permission for this purpose.
- c) You understand you can withdraw from the study at any time and for any reason.
- d) You can request your real name not be used and that the interview not be recorded.

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If you have questions or comments regarding the study, please contact Daniel de la Torre, Jr., (phone: 508-735-9466; email: ddelatorrejr@gmail.com). You may also contact Dr. Ryan S. Wells, Faculty Advisor (phone: 413-545-0871; email: rswells@educ.umass.edu) or Dr. Linda Griffin, Associate Dean of Academic Affairs (phone: 413-545-6985; email: lgriffin@educ.umass.edu).

\_\_\_\_\_  
Participant Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Researcher Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

**APPENDIX D**  
**GUIDING INTERVIEW QUESTIONS**

What I'm basically trying to capture in the interviews are your recollections to questions like:

- What was going on in Massachusetts public higher education (major trends or issues) during the times when transfer policies were enacted?
- What do you recall as specific transfer issues at UMass, state colleges, and community colleges at these times?
- How was transfer policy connected (or not) to these issues?
- Who (informal networks, special committees, etc.) was involved in transfer issues at these times?
- Who (informal networks, special committees, etc.) was involved in transfer issues at these times?
- From your perspective, what best tells the story of transfer policy development in Massachusetts public higher education over the last 10-20-30 years?

## APPENDIX E

### PRELIMINARY TIMELINE PROVIDED TO INTERVIEWEES

| Period/<br>Governor   | Higher Education<br>Governance Structure<br>System Issues<br>Chancellors/Commissioner<br>roles   | Transfer Policy –<br>Related Committees  | Transfer Policy   |
|---|--|--|---|
| 1965-<br>1969<br><br>Volpe<br>01/1965 –<br>01/1969<br><br>Sargent<br>01/1969 –<br>01/1975 | 1965 Willis-Harrington Act-establishment of Board of Higher Education— coordinating mechanism for public and private institutions, headed by a chancellor.<br><br>System organized into five segments with governance delegated to separate boards of lay trustees. Efforts were coordinated by a central Board of Higher Education whose primary functions were to develop a master plan and review budgetary requests. | 1968 BHE establishes Committee on Transfer Students and Student Migration. Charged with conducting survey. Report finalized but never submitted—no record of completion.   | 1966-1969 UMass-Amherst/Board of Trustees establishes “From Associate to Bachelor Degree” community college transfer admission policy.                          |
| 1970-<br>1974<br><br>Sargent<br>01/1969 –<br>01/1975                                      | 1970 legislation created autonomous multi-campus University of Massachusetts—Amherst, Boston, Worcester. State colleges and community colleges were more centralized and closely regulated.<br><br>1971 Secretary of Educational Affairs (Executive office of Educational Affairs), established as part of an  | 1971-1974<br>Development of statewide transfer agreement based on study of MA community colleges and four-year colleges/universities?<br><br>Transfer Review Council (TRC) | 1974<br><i>Commonwealth Transfer Compact</i> (Community Colleges & UMass-Amherst)? (Community Colleges and all four-year public higher education institutions)? |

|  |   |  |   |
|--|---|--|---|
|  | extensive reorganization of state government. Resulted in substantial overlaps of statutory authority and responsibilities.   |  |   |
| 1975-1979<br><br>Dukakis<br>01/1975 – 01/1979<br><br>King<br>01/1979 – 01/1983 | 1979 Gov. King revives Special Commission to consider reorganization, includes members of legislature, Commission of Ed, Chancellor of BHE and Sec of Educational affairs. Led by State senator Walter Boverini of Lynn.  |  |   |
| 1980-1984<br><br>King<br>01/1979 – 01/1983<br><br>Dukakis<br>01/1983 – 01/1991 | May 1980, Boverini commission submits report. Gov. King, Speaker McGee and Senate president Bulger enacted reform measure by use of an ‘outside section,’ appended to appropriations bill for 1981 fiscal year. Led to enactment of Higher Education Reorganization act of 1980.<br><br>1980 legislation creating Board of Regents of Higher Education abolished and vested with powers of Board of Higher Education, CC and SC system boards, and position of Secretary of Educational Affairs/Executive Office. | BOR Long Range Plan<br><br>1981-1984 MA Board of Regents reviews and revises CTC. “In accordance with applicable provisions of General Laws Chapter 15A, Section 5 (t).”<br><br>1982 Articulation Task Force established. BOR-Tossie Taylor.<br><br>(Policy document-- Academic, Faculty and Student Affairs Committee, BOR) | <i>1984 Commonwealth Transfer Compact-Revised</i> |
| 1985-1989<br><br>Dukakis<br>01/1983 – 01/1991                                  | 1986-protracted and contentious selection of BOR chancellor.<br><br>MA Higher Education Long Range Plan<br><br>1988-89 Saxon report on  | 1986-1990 MA Board of Regents revisits CTC as part of MA Higher Education Long Range Plan. —“In accordance with applicable provisions of General Laws  |   |



|   |  |  |   |
|---|--|--|---|
|   | future of UMass-autonomy and merger (ULowell and SMU).   | Chapter 15A, Section 5 (t).”   |   |
| 1990-1994<br><br>Weld<br>01/1991 –<br>07/1997 | <p>May 1990, house of representatives amended budget bill to call for the abolition of the BOR-defeated.</p> <p>Fall 1990, BOR Chancellor Bromery-Regionalization Plan calling for grouping all public institutions in each of three geographical regions into coalition entities-not supported.</p> <p>Fall 1990, Gov. Weld hired private education advisor, submitted report calling for closure of 4-5 public colleges, combining the 5 university campuses under a single board of trustees.</p> <p>Spring 1991, Weld calls for elimination of the BOR and Board of Ed (K-12) replaced by a cabinet-level Secretary of Education. Set up commission to study merger/closing of 3-5 colleges. Joint Comm on Ed, Arts and Humanities crafted bill: Chapter 142, “An act relative to public education in Massachusetts” passed in June-July 1991. BOR replaced by Higher Education Coordinating Council (HECC).</p> <p>June 1991 Weld replaces BOR chair, Paul Tsongas, with Richard A. Wiley.</p> <p>Sept. 1, 1991, Piedad Robertson named as Secretary of Education to oversee K-12 and higher ed</p> | <p>Academic Policy and Planning Committee, BOR-Norma Rees.</p> <p>(Implementation guidelines-Compact Coordinating Committee)</p> <p>1988(?)-1993 UMass Amherst develops agreement with MA Community Colleges</p> <p>UMA Special committee?</p> | <p><i>1990 Commonwealth Transfer Compact-Revised</i></p> <p><i>1990 CTC Implementation Guidelines</i></p> <p><i>1992-1993 Joint Admissions Agreement (Community Colleges &amp; UMass-Amherst)</i></p> |

|   |  |   |   |
|---|--|---|---|
|   | <p>and work with HECC on higher ed matters. State &amp; community colleges remained under Higher Education Coordinating Council (HECC), which acts as governing board while serves as coordinating board for UMass. HECC includes office of chancellor. Chapter 142 requires HECC to prepare 5-year master plan for public higher education, and facilitate merger of ULowell and SMU into the existing 3-campus UMass system. Provisions of the legislation make it clear that UMass is to be granted independence and treated differently by HECC.</p> |   |   |
| <p>1995-1999</p> <p>Weld, 01/–07/1997</p> <p>Cellucci 07/1997 – 04/2001</p> | <p>1996-97-discontinuation HECC and change back to Board of Higher Education.</p> <p>Board of Higher Education (BHE) created by Chapter 151, s. 43, Acts of 1996.</p> <p>James Carlin, Chair of BHE<br/>Stanley Koplik 1993-2000, Chancellor of BHE</p>  | <p>1993-1995 UMass system joins agreement</p> <p>Joint Task Force of the University of Massachusetts and Community College Relations</p> <p>State colleges join the agreement</p> <p>1996 State and Community College Joint Admissions Implementation Team, MA CC Executive Office (?)</p> <p>Joint Admissions Steering Committee</p> | <p><i>1995 Joint Admissions Agreement (Community Colleges &amp; UMass system)</i></p> <p><i>1996 Joint Admissions Agreement (Community Colleges &amp; State Colleges)</i></p> |

|   |                                    |  |  |
|---|------------------------------------|--|--|
|   |                                    | <p>1997 Fiscal Affairs and Administrative Policy, BHE<br/>Jack Warner?<br/>—“In accordance with Massachusetts General Laws Chapter 15A, Section 19.”</p> <p>1999 MA Board of Higher Education facilitates updating of Commonwealth Transfer Compact through creation of Transfer Articulation Task Force</p> <p>1999 Transfer Articulation Task Force, Steering Committee for Admissions, Assessment and Articulation for Massachusetts Public Higher Education, BHE</p> | <p><i>1996-1997 Tuition Advantage Program</i></p>  |
| <p>2000-2004</p> <p>Cellucci<br/>07/1997 –<br/>04/2001</p> <p>Swift<br/>04/2001 –<br/>01/2003</p> <p>Romney<br/>01/2003 –<br/>01/2007</p> | <p>Judith Gill, BHE Chancellor</p> | <p>2000-BHE Task Force on Articulation combines CTC update with Joint Admissions Agreement</p> <p>2000 Joint Admissions Steering Committee appoints Articulation Task Force</p> <p>2001 Articulation Task Force</p> <p>Office for Child Care</p>   | <p><i>2000 Transfer Articulation (Commonwealth Transfer Compact)/Joint Admissions Agreement</i></p> <p><i>2002 Revised Tuition Advantage Program</i></p> |

|  |   |  |   |
|--|---|--|---|
|  |   | Services, Advancing the Field project, BHE   | <i>2003-2004 Education Compact</i>  |
| 2005-2009<br><br>Romney<br>01/2003 –<br>01/2007<br><br>Patrick<br>01/2007 –<br>01/2015 | Patricia Plummer, Richard Freeland, BHE Commissioners | Joint Admissions Steering Committee, Joint Admissions Executive Committee<br><br>2007-2008 Commonwealth Transfer Advisory Group (CTAG) | <i>2006 Joint Admissions Agreement Revised (Community Colleges &amp; UMass system)</i><br><br><i>2006 Joint Admissions Agreement Revised (Community Colleges &amp; State Colleges)</i><br><br><i>2009 MassTransfer Policy</i> |

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