

My oldest daughter finished her bachelors degree in record time, just three years after she graduated from high school. She took many college classes while in high school, which helped, came to Neosho for one year to finish her associates degree, then transferred to Friends University where she completed her bachelors degree in just two years. She was aided by a policy there that if a transfer student had the associates degree that first counted all her classes and granted her Junior Status. In fact, they “waved” an undergraduate general education class that is required at Friends. That saved her time and me money.

Which is a good thing that saved me money, because besides her bachelors degree she also got a fiancé! She met the boy in the next door apartment at her residence hall and now it looks like I’m paying for a wedding this spring. I think the president of Friends, Dr. Amy Bragg Carrey, ought to chip in on that wedding cost since they met at her university. Ok, just kidding there.

Recently I signed an articulation agreement with a number other institutions. So in my line of work an articulation agreement is essentially a contract that says that we agree our classes will transfer easily, to one certain four-year institution. These agreements are usually targeted at one or two programs, so that if a student takes a set group of courses at NCCC in, let’s say education, those courses will transfer in to a specific university for an education major. It’s great because it assures the student that those classes are guaranteed in writing to transfer and count toward his or her major at the specific university. We try to sign as many of these as we can to help our student know what transfer toward a major at a university and which ones might not.

But recently I signed the Mother of All Articulation Agreements. In fact, all nineteen public community colleges in Kansas signed it! And we signed it with not one, but all 20 Kansas private and independent colleges! This global transfer and articulation agreement says that if a community college student finishes their Associate of Arts or Associate of Science then the receiving private or independent university, like Friends for instance, will take all 60 hours of their degree and grant them Junior Status in any major. That’s huge!

Like any agreement there are a few exceptions such as a religion course at a faith-based college, or if they didn’t take the requisite class for a required junior-level course. But for the most part where we often run into transfer issues is in specific general education classes and this agreement solves that, like it did for my daughter.

This will cut the time to graduation for our students since they won’t have to take extra general education classes, which helps them with cost. I have another younger daughter who went to a public university that is not part of this agreement and she had to take some extra general education classes even though she has both an associate of arts and science. Now she is looking at having to extend a semester at this university to graduate. That’s costly in terms of time and money. And yes, she met a boy too (this time at high school. I’m not sure how that one is going to come out yet, but Dr. Adams at CHS may wind up owing me some money there.)

This agreement also gives value to the associates degree. Often times students face a terrible choice. Do they finish what they start and earn the degree at NCCC or any community college before they transfer if it means taking classes that some universities just won’t apply to their degrees? Should they stop at say 37 or 45 hours and leave the community college so that they don’t waste their time  
COMPLETING A DEGREE.

Yes I typed that in all caps to show you how upset I am that they get a few credits away and have to stop because not all institutions take all 60+ hours at this point. So this public system essentially encourages students to quit taking classes and not complete. It is heartbreaking to me.

A few students (very few) do go ahead and send back their university transcripts while at the four-year school and we then use those hours to complete their associates. But that is rare. We tried to set up an automatic system to receive those hours from the public universities, but that was stopped. Now we have to rely on the student to do it themselves and often they do not.

But now, with the private colleges anyway, this is no longer a problem! The same way Abrielle didn't have to take that one freshmen level general education class at Friends University, now hundreds maybe thousands of community college students will enjoy that same benefit at private universities. Think of the savings of time and money this global agreement will have for all of those families.

It has always been my hope that we can sign such an agreement with all of the public universities in Kansas. We have asked from time to time, but little progress has been made there. Many states have a similar statewide articulation in place between all public institutions but often that had to happen through legislation not agreements.

However, I have learned to celebrate the "wins" when I have them, so along with the other 38 institutions that signed this agreement I could not be more excited!

Now I have to participate in a discussion of what table decorations will be at the reception. Here I have received some advice from another Father of the Bride community college president friend of mine when it comes to the wedding planning, "Keep your wallet open and your mouth closed."

When it comes to wedding planning I will keep my mouth closed, but not improved articulation. There I will speak to whomever will listen.

If you have any questions or comments about this article or anything else, please email me at [binbody@neosho.edu](mailto:binbody@neosho.edu).