

# **Memorandum of Understanding between Regis University and Virginia Community College System**

## **INTRODUCTION**

The Associate's to Bachelors' Program is specifically designed to acknowledge the strong academic foundation that the Virginia Community College System provides its students and the benefits that can be obtained from a bachelor's degree from Regis University. The Associate's to Bachelors' Program goes beyond traditional transfer and articulation agreements and creates a close collaboration between the Virginia Community College System and Regis University.

This Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) formally recognizes that, through the Associate's to Bachelors' Program, the Virginia Community College System (VCCS) and Regis University (Regis) through its - School for Professional Studies (SPS) are actively committed to providing greater educational opportunities and services for students transferring between institutions. Through this MOU, VCCS and Regis hereby enter into an educational agreement designed to provide participating students the opportunity to complete a Bachelor's degree. This is made possible by the Regis commitment to high quality online instruction and student support services.

VCCS and Regis enter into this MOU in the spirit of cooperation and mutually recognize each other as quality institutions of higher learning. Each institution is dedicated to serving students from all walks of life, regardless of race, ethnicity, religion, sex, disability, color, age, marital status, national origin or other non-merit factors.

## **PURPOSE**

The purpose of the agreement is to enable VCCS students who transfer to Regis with an Associate in Arts or an Associate in Science degree to be recognized as having achieved junior status at Regis, and allow them to transfer additional credits (up to a maximum of 90 semester credit hours) that they have already earned. This approach will allow many students to earn a bachelor's degree by attending the equivalent of three years<sup>1</sup> of instruction at VCCS colleges and completing their fourth and final year at Regis.

The MOU provides a structure through which transfer articulation on all levels can be supported. This agreement is with VCCS as a whole and not with individual campuses within the System. Therefore, courses taken by students at any VCCS location are considered equally transferable to Regis.

<sup>1</sup> Years are equivalent to approximately 30-36 semester credit hours.

## **TRANSFER ELEMENTS**

### **Treatment of Associate's Degrees as Admission Criteria**

Students who earn articulated Associate in Arts or an Associate in Science degree at a VCCS college will be recognized as having satisfied the first two years of coursework associated with Regis baccalaureate degree programs and will be recognized as having achieved junior status. The Associate in Arts and the Associate in Science degrees are those awards that recognize at least two years but less than four years of full-time equivalent college-level work. These degrees are general in nature and are not directed to a specific career or technical area.

Students graduating from VCCS colleges and transferring to Regis as participants in the Associate's to Bachelor's™ Program are guaranteed the following:

1. Admission to the Undergraduate SPS at Regis (there are no guarantees of admission to specific Regis Undergraduate degree programs or certificate programs.)
2. Acceptance of credit earned at VCCS colleges in all programs, including credit by testing and other non traditional mechanisms such as Advanced Placement (AP), American Council on Education (ACE) credits, Dual Enrollment, Early Admissions, and International Baccalaureate.
3. No additional General Education Core requirements, if Regis requirements have been met through programs taken at VCCS institutions.
4. Acceptance of all grade forgiveness policies of the VCCS.

In order to complete the baccalaureate program in a timely manner, students will be advised to follow the transfer guide for the academic program they plan to pursue at Regis. If the student intends to change degree focus upon admission to Regis, the student may be required to complete lower division preparation work prior to beginning the program at Regis.

VCCS students enrolling at Regis through the Associate's to Bachelor's™ Program will go through Regis' transfer process and therefore must meet all applicable requirements and deadlines pertaining to application for admission, orientation and registration, and payment of tuition and fees. They will abide by the policies and procedures, along with any revisions thereof that apply to all students.

### **Treatment of VCCS Coursework for Students *without* an Associate in Arts or an Associate in Sciences Degree**

VCCS students transferring without an Associate in Arts or an Associate in Science degree (this would include students that have earned Associate in Applied Science Degrees, Certificates, and/or Diplomas), will have all VCCS courses, numbered 100 and above and with a grade of "C- or better", accepted for transfer. Twenty four semester hours of skill-based technical course work may be used to satisfy general elective requirements in the Undergraduate degree programs of the SPS. The designation (TOS) is used when recording this credit.

### **Regis' Degree Plan**

The Regis degree plan outlines degree completion requirements for each student. The degree plan is a written agreement between the student and the appropriate undergraduate program. It sets forth the academic requirements for the degree. The student and a Regis Academic Advisor sign the degree plan.

The degree plan specifies the amount of time during which the requirements for a particular degree must be completed. This period is seven (7) years (84 months) from the date the student is accepted into the Undergraduate Program.

During that seven-year period, students may (but are not required to) revise their degree plans to reflect the Regis' curricular changes. If the degree plan expires before the student has completed all degree requirements, the student must sign a new degree plan or request an extension to the current degree plan.

## **Maximum Age of Associate Degree**

There is no expiration date on Associate in Arts and Associate in Science degrees or on credits earned from a regionally accredited institution of higher education.

## **The Transfer Process**

SPS receives transfer credits for all of a student's course work, up to a maximum of 90 semester hours toward fulfillment of SPS core requirements and toward the Regis degree requirement of 128 semester hours subject to the following provisions:

- All VCCS transfer student applicants must meet the admissions standards as outlined in, this MOU (these requirements may differ from those found in other documents and publications).
- Students that are transferring as part of the Regis Associate's to Bachelor's™ Program must have a minimum of a 2.0 grade point average as verified by an official transcript from a VCCS college.
- Students transferring individual courses to Regis separate and apart from the Associate's to Bachelor's™ Program must have earned a grade of "C" or better in the specified course.
- All students transferring to Regis must have 3 years of work experience (waivers may be requested by a designated advisor from a VCCS college).
- Students who apply to Regis must satisfy or successfully complete six (6) semester credit hours (9 quarter credit hours) in Religious Studies and six (6) semester credit hours (9 quarter credit hours) of Philosophy, if these courses are not included in the transferable course work from a VCCS college to the satisfaction of Regis. VCCS students may fulfill the above requirement by (i) taking the courses at VCCS colleges prior to transfer, or (ii) taking Religious Studies and Philosophy courses at Regis.

A minimum of thirty (30) graded semester hours must be taken through Regis. Credits earned through Portfolio (Prior Learning Assessment) or credits by examination are not included in this 30-hour minimum.

## **Transfer Appeals Procedures**

Any student who wishes to challenge a transfer request or decision may submit a written appeal to the Associate Dean of SPS Undergraduate Programs.

## **Degree Completion Opportunities**

The Associate's to Bachelor's™ Program enables students to earn a bachelor's degree by earning up to ninety (90) semester credit hours at a VCCS college and taking their remaining courses at Regis. In order to bring about such a result, Regis will:

- Deliver on-line programs leading to the completion of a Bachelor's Degree.  
These degree programs will include (subject to change at Regis' discretion), but not be limited to the following<sup>2</sup>:
  - o Bachelor's of Science in Business Administration
  - o Bachelor's of Science in Computer Information Systems
  - o Bachelor's of Science in Computer Networking
  - o Bachelor's of Science in Computer Science
  - o Bachelor's of Science in Finance
  - o Bachelor's of Science in Marketing
  - o Bachelor's of Science in Public Administration

<sup>2</sup> Regis reserves the right to drop majors from time to time. Should a major be eliminated, students will be provided the opportunity to finish the program they began in a timely manner.

- Provide instruction by technologically trained and academically qualified faculty.
- Provide all necessary services including: admissions, advisement, registration, financial aid, textbook purchase options, access to a virtual library, online tutoring, and a technology help desk.
- Scholarship assistance will be provided when available.

### **OBLIGATIONS OF REGIS**

The obligations of Regis in carrying out this agreement include the following:

- Provide academic advising to VCCS students once they are registered with the Associate's to Bachelor's program.
- Provide materials, catalogs, and other information to advisors located at VCCS institutions to facilitate their understanding of Regis requirements and academic programs.
- Provide VCCS colleges with adequate and periodic reports on its former students enrolled in Regis programs.
- Develop, distribute, and ensure the accuracy of all transfer articulation products (e.g., Transfer Guide).

### **OBLIGATIONS OF VCCS**

For its role in the Associate's to Bachelor's™ Program, the VCCS will:

- On an annual basis, review the contents of this Memorandum of Understanding and recommend any changes to Regis.
- Promote the programs through student, alumni and community publications/media and through the staffs of each institution.
- Where allowed within the policies and procedures of VCCS, provide Regis with access to graduates and potential graduates to enable Regis to market and promote the on-line degrees. Examples would include but not be limited to invitations to career and college fairs, opportunities to distribute materials on campus, and providing space on bulletin boards. Any contact with potential students will be carried out within limits to be determined by the colleges.
- Provide Regis the opportunity to advertise in VCCS and college publications.
- Provide Regis with the opportunity to train/orient staff at VCCS colleges as necessary to support the programs at each VCCS location.
- Each college will designate administrative, academic and student services personnel who will act as a liaison to their counterparts at Regis.
- Allow students in the Regis Associate's to Bachelor's™ program access to library and computer laboratories at VCCS.
- Train/orient their staff in those facilities to support the needs of these students and to cooperate with their Regis counterparts within limits to be determined by the colleges.
- Advise, assist and support strategically and at the policy level Regis' efforts to provide quality education through distance education to students graduating from VCCS colleges.

## **JOINT OBLIGATIONS**

In carrying out their roles in the Associate's to Bachelor's<sup>TM</sup> Program, both Regis and VCCS agree to the following:

- Provide direct links between their institutional websites, indicating the existence of this MOU.
- Exchange data and documents that will contribute to the maintenance and improvement of these transfer arrangements and promote effective cooperation between the two institutions. The institutions will exchange admissions, grades, and retention data after obtaining appropriate permission from the students involved and in compliance with all federal, state, and local laws and U.S. Department of Education Guidelines.

### **Tuition Discount for Employees**

Regis will also offer a 10% tuition discount to full-time faculty, staff, and administrators employed by the VCCS. This offer is valid with both undergraduate and graduate programs in the SPS. This offer will take effect within the first semester following the signature of this Memorandum of Understanding.

### **Annual Evaluation**

There will be an annual evaluation process of the program supported by this MOU. That evaluation will include representatives at the decision making level of both Regis and VCCS. Both parties may request a more frequent review in response to curricular changes and other institutional changes and conditions. The party initiating such change will communicate it in a timely manner to the other party. The information obtained from this evaluation will be used to improve the transfer process for the benefit of students.

### **Term and Modification**

This MOU will be in effect until terminated by either Regis or VCCS. Either party may terminate this MOU by submitting written notification one year prior to the identified cancellation date in order to protect all students transferring between these institutions. Any modifications to the MOU must be in writing and signed by both parties.

Should this MOU be terminated, VCCS students in the process of applying to Regis at the time of cancellation will be allowed to complete the application process and complete degrees, subject to the requirement to complete the degree within seven years from the date the student is accepted into the Undergraduate Program.

This MOU is effective only under the condition that both transferring institutions maintain current accreditation by a regional accrediting association as recognized by the U.S. Department of Education and that Regis obtain registered status with the State Council of Higher Education for Virginia. In the event either institution loses its accreditation this MOU will immediately terminate.

### **Indemnification**

The parties agree to be responsible for their own negligence. To the extent allowed by Virginia law, the Parties shall indemnify, hold harmless and defend the other from any and all liability, claims, demands and expenses arising out of the other's willful and wrongful conduct arising out of or in connection with this MOU.

### **Limitation of Liability**

Except for the specific remedies expressly identified as such in this MOU, the parties agree that their sole liability for damages (whether in contract, tort, by statute or otherwise) for any claim in any manner related to this MOU, shall be the payment of direct damages. In no event shall either party be liable for any consequential, incidental, indirect, special or punitive damage.

### **Summary**

The intent of the Associate's to Bachelor's<sup>TM</sup> Program is to enhance the learning opportunities available to the students, alumni, faculty, and staff of the VCCS. Through this new venture, students will be able to capitalize on their rich experience at VCCS colleges and be able to earn a bachelor's degree without leaving their community.