ASSIST Transfer Channel

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ASSIST: What's Under the Hood?

On the surface, ASSIST is just one more source of information for those navigating the world-wide-web in search of buried treasure. ASSIST definitely delivers the goods. In fact, ASSIST was visited over 4 million times in 2004 by 661,668 unique visitors. That's because with just three clicks of the mouse visitors can find out which courses from California community colleges will be accepted for credit and what kind of credit will be given when transferred to a California university.

It seems so easy, but how is it possible to display information about so many courses between so many schools? As usual, it's done with lots of hard work by dedicated people at each of the schools. In this case, those people are using three online software systems to maintain quality information for ASSIST users: the Curriculum Update System, OSCAR, and the ASSIST Articulation Data Entry System. Read on to find out how these systems under the hood make this transfer planning tool so flexible, useful, and powerful.

Curriculum Update System

The Curriculum Update System is an online curriculum entry system. It contains all of the community college transferable courses and every university course that is articulated. It is the foundation of all articulation agreements and course lists in ASSIST. The Curriculum Update System is the resource of information from which transfer information gets displayed in ASSIST.

The Curriculum Update System is designed to be used by campuses because they are the most familiar with their courses and curriculum and so are best qualified to enter and update that information. Since curriculum information for a campus is entered by the campus itself, ASSIST users have the assurance that the information in ASSIST is accurate. In addition, campuses update this information four times each year using the Curriculum Update System so the transfer information in ASSIST is up to date.

Now that you know how the courses get entered, you might be wondering about who decides which courses are going to be accepted for credit and the type of credit the courses will receive when transferred? One part of the answer is that the university system offices and articulation officers review and approve courses for transfer credit with the help of OSCAR.

Online Services for Curriculum and Articulation Review—OSCAR

OSCAR is an online curriculum and articulation review system developed to help campuses submit, review, and approve courses to be included in UC TCA, IGETC, CSU GE, and CSU AI course lists.

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(*What's Under the Hood?* continued)

Only those courses entered in the Curriculum Update System are available to be selected in OSCAR so that there is a source of accurate, dependable information to draw from.

The way it works is that community college articulation officers use OSCAR to enter courses they are proposing for transfer credit. OSCAR allows users to enter course outlines describing the courses in detail, including textual descriptions for review by the UC and CSU system offices. The approved transfer information ultimately gets displayed in the various transfer-related reports available in ASSIST.

But the question remains as to how all of this information gets displayed in ASSIST when a user wants to see transfer information for a specific department or major at a particular campus. There is another system developed and maintained by the ASSIST Coordination Site known as the ASSIST Articulation Data Entry System.

ASSIST Articulation Data Entry System

The ASSIST Articulation Data Entry system is where university articulation officers create articulation agreements between schools by matching up individual courses from their university with comparable courses from the community colleges. The ASSIST Articulation Data Entry system provides the versatility that is needed to enter articulation according to each university's preferences. And since the schools are entering the articulation information themselves, users have the assurance that transfer information is presented as the campus intends. In addition, the courses that were entered in the Curriculum Update System are used in the Articulation Data Entry System assuring that only valid courses are entered.

What's Under the ASSIST Hood?

At a glance, ASSIST is a simple, easy-to-use web site that provides an abundance of transfer information with just a few clicks of a mouse. Under the hood, however, there are several systems and processes that contribute to the success of this helpful and powerful tool. The Curriculum Update System, OSCAR, and the ASSIST Articulation Data Entry System all contribute to the success of ASSIST and the ability to provide complete, accurate, and up-to-date transfer information for anyone planning an academic career at California's community colleges and universities. Behind these systems are the people at the community colleges and universities who maintain accurate information in ASSIST as well as the staff at the ASSIST Coordination Site who maintain these systems and make sure the data is presented as intended to ASSIST users.