

Eight Transfer Student Success Stories in Progress

Companion Report to
Transfer and Articulation From Community Colleges to Four-Year Institutions:
Hope on the Horizon

by George Lorenzo
the SOURCE on Community College Issues, Trends & Strategies

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Editor's Note: The eight students featured in this document have transferred from community colleges to four-year institutions. They are representative of a broad range of challenges and opportunities that students encounter on their pathways toward earning a bachelor's degree.

**Vanessa Delgado,
University of Central
Florida**

Vanessa Delgado embarked on a unique pathway to arrive at her current status as a senior in the University of Central Florida's (UCF) Valencia West regional campus majoring in Health Services Administration.



Delgado was a dual enrollment student in high school, having accumulated nine Valencia College courses under her belt and a scholarship to continue at the community college after graduating from high school in 2003. She went for two semesters and then dropped out. "My focus was not there," she says, adding that she was withdrawing from too many courses.

After a few years of working at non-career-oriented and relatively low-paying jobs, she decided to return to Valencia College where she earned an Associate of Science in Business Administration in December 2007 and then an Associate of Arts in General Studies in the summer of 2010. With two associate degrees in hand, she was admitted into UCF's DirectConnect program, which guarantees admission to students who complete an associate degree and assists them with the transition through the UCF admissions process, including orientation, transcripts, advising and financial aid.

Delgado was able to transfer in 82 credits, with 42 upper-division credits remaining to take in order to earn her Bachelor of Applied Science in Health Services Administration. She started taking courses, both traditional and online, during the fall of 2010. She is on track to graduate in May 2012, and she is also one

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– Vanessa Delgado

course away from earning a minor in Business Administration.

"The transition from Valencia College to the University of Central Florida was definitely not as challenging as I had expected," Delgado explains. "If it wasn't for the DirectConnect program, I think I would have had a more difficult time transitioning over to the university. The transfer process was not only smooth, but all of my credits were transferred, and I did not have to re-take any courses."

**Laura DiVenti,
Arizona State University**

Laura DiVenti's academic career has been a meandering journey that has finally brought her to where she really wants to be: currently studying for a BSN online at Arizona State University (ASU) while working full-time as a public health nurse for the University of Arizona.



"I have always held on to the hope that someday I would be good enough to be in nursing school," she says. That hope became a reality in 2008 when she enrolled in Mesa Community College and graduated in March of 2010 with an AAS in Nursing under the ADN pathway.

Prior to that, after graduating from high school in 1995 in Illinois, DiVenti attended Rock Valley College in Rockford, where she earned an associate degree. Then she transferred over to Illinois State University, where she studied for one and a half years and "pretty much almost flunked out," she says. DiVenti then reversed transferred to Rock Valley College to take some core science courses that could help in her quest to possibly get accepted into

a 4-year nursing program. “I went back to the community college for the smaller classes and more individualized attention, so I could get the grades I needed,” she adds.

She wound up getting accepted at the University of North Carolina at Charlotte, but not in nursing. So, she changed her focus and graduated with bachelor’s degree in psychology in 2003. About three years later she gave birth to her daughter, who is now five years old. After “a very rough pregnancy,” DiVenti was faced with “major postpartum depression” that led to a divorce, and moving to Arizona, while leaving her daughter behind, to live with her Mom to heal.

All was not lost, however. The now 34-year-old DiVenti has turned a seemingly hopeless situation into a strong pathway toward success. “In the past five years I have rebuilt my life from having nothing to becoming an RN,” she explains. “Getting my ADN was the biggest accomplishment of my life, and my daughter [with whom she now has a close relationship] was there to see me graduate. With her as my light, I was able to make it through the darkest days of my life.”

DiVenti says that transferring to ASU was “a natural and effortless stepping stone. All the credits I needed in courses such as chemistry, microbiology, anatomy, and physiology came from all the schools I attended. I did not have to re-take any classes and have been able to focus entirely on my BSN program. It was a great experience at Mesa Community College. Everyone there worked with me to make sure that my credits transferred over and that I was always on the right track.”

“I am proof that one should never give up on their hopes and dreams,” she continues. That includes someday earning a master’s degree in public health and working with post partum women to “give back in the form of service to my community everything that has been given to me.”

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**Laurie Evans,
Arizona State University**

Laurie Evans is a great example of a mobile student who has taken many courses in lots of different areas of study at a good number of institutions. “I have taken courses on everything from nursing to computer programming, always uncertain about what to become when I grew up,” she says. “Transferring credits became a rather sizeable and burdensome task.”



After graduating from high school in 1987, she attended the University of Arizona with aspirations to become an architect, but she dropped out during her second semester. Life took over. She got married, gave birth to a son, and became a stay-at-home mom. Her marriage ended in a divorce and her being responsible for child support. “I was forced to work full-time because I had child-support obligations,” she says. “Otherwise I would have finished school a long time ago.”

Over the years Evans lived in Illinois, Iowa, Michigan, and Arizona. She completed a wide variety of courses on a part-time basis at Truman College in Chicago and at Indian Hills Community College, Grand View University, and Des Moines Community College in Iowa. She moved back to Arizona in 2007, returned to school after a 7-year hiatus from higher education, and graduated in 2010 with an Associate in Arts degree. She had completed both traditional and online courses at Mesa Community College, Scottsdale Community College and Rio Salado College, all in the Maricopa County Community College system, where transfer of credit within the system is not a complicated process. “It’s pretty neat

“It’s pretty neat how the Maricopa system is set up. You can go to ten different community colleges and it all matriculates. I was thrilled to be able to take my registration from one school to another without any difficulty.”

– Laurie Evans

how the Maricopa system is set up,” she says. “You can go to ten different community colleges and it all matriculates. I was thrilled to be able to take my registration from one school to another without any difficulty.”

In January 2011, Evans enrolled in Arizona State University’s (ASU) fully online BS in Sociology program. Over what she calls “my very long-term college journey,” Evans accumulated 126 credits, 64 of which were transferred into the ASU program. She also had to repeat some courses. For example, an Anatomy and Physiology course that she took at Des Moines Community College in the 1990s was not recognized for her general education requirements.

Evans is currently on track to graduate from ASU in the Spring 2012 semester, and she has plans to attend ASU’s School of Public Affairs to ultimately earn a Master of Public Policy.

**Vincent Josik,
Morrisville State College**

Vincent Josik is a great example of a reverse transfer student who starts at a community college, transfers to a 4-year institution prior to earning an associate degree, and then transfers back to the community college to complete an associate degree.



The 23-year old’s academic journey has spanned five years, and he still has a good way to go to earn a bachelor’s degree. He has accumulated a great deal of student-loan debt and is currently not attending school, working to strengthen his financial legs while in a deep search for a better-paying job [in an obviously tough job market] than the one he now holds at a supermarket.

Josik is an intelligent young man, but he did not make any solid college plans while he was in high school. He did not take the SAT or ACT, and his high school grades were below average. That did not stop him, however, from attending Erie Community College (ECC) in Williamsville, New York, enrolling in its Liberal Arts and Science – General Studies program.

After one year, he transferred into ECC’s Computer Science program. After his second year at ECC, without an associate degree in hand, he transferred to the State University of New York’s Morrisville State College, starting with junior status as an on-campus student majoring in Information Technology: Network Administration. Some math and computer science courses did not articulate into the Network Administration program. “I had to retake a Visual Basic programming class because the ECC version was several versions behind the most current version,” he explains. “Some of my math classes did not transfer over. I took a placement test, and I could have enrolled in the highest level of math, but I chose to take the next level down so I could work on my foundation.”

After a year in Network Administration, Josik switched his major to Information Technology Management. This move made his pathway to a bachelor’s degree longer. Now he had to take additional new courses that would more specifically align with the new major.

By the end of his fifth full-time semester at Morrisville State College, he started to get tired of school, he says. “I realized that my debt was just piling up. However they calculated time toward degree completion, I was a junior the entire time I was there, and I still had another year to a year and a half to complete.”

He then decided to transfer back to ECC to at least obtain an associate degree. A college success skills course and humanities course [he

“I did this just to have a sense of accomplishment. I wanted to show something after five years – not just a pile of debt that I needed to pay off.”

– Vincent Josik

chose music appreciation] were all he needed to take. “I did this just to have a sense of accomplishment,” Josik says. “I wanted to show something after five years – not just a pile of debt that I needed to pay off.”

His plans are to return to obtain a bachelor’s degree in the not-too-distant future. “I’ll probably end up back in school in the next year or two,” he says. “For now, I just want to work for a while.”

**Leslie Karbassi,
Western Governors
University**

Leslie Karbassi commuted to California State Fullerton after graduating from Cerritos High School. She stayed for a semester and became frustrated with the day-to-day traffic snarl on the California freeway. She was working full-time as a customer service clerk at an insurance company and decided that it would be easier to attend late afternoon and weekend courses at Cerritos Community College. Later in her academic career, she transferred over to nearby Long Beach City College. For about two years, she took general education courses on a part-time basis, with her mind set on eventually transferring back to CSU Fullerton to pursue a bachelor’s degree in business.

But then she was unexpectedly laid off from her job. “I was irritated, and I said to myself that I needed to find work in a profession where there would be no such thing as a lay-off,” Karbassi explains. She was having lunch across the way from the nursing sciences building at Long Beach City College. “I looked at the nursing science building and said ‘why don’t I just become a nurse?’”

Karbassi enrolled in a three-month certificate program at Long Beach City College to become a nurse’s aid. The credits she earned were transferable into a Licensed Vocational Nurse (LVN) program that she completed, which led to her entering another program and earning an associate degree as a Registered Nurse (RN). During this period of her academic career, Karbassi worked the weekend graveyard shift in a hospital cardiac care unit.



“All the credits I earned were transferrable except for two business courses. The WGU program is accredited and recognized by hospitals. In about one year I should have a bachelor’s degree.”

– Leslie Karbassi

After getting married and having a child, she moved with her husband to Florida, where she found work in a hospital intensive care unit. “I was promoted to charge nurse, and they said ‘we want you to go further than a charge nurse, but we can’t promote you unless you have a bachelor’s degree.’” So, she enrolled in Jacksonville University’s fully online RN-to-BSN program on a part-time basis.

Her marriage wound up in divorce, and she moved back to California, with her daughter, who is now 11 years old. She was hired by Kaiser Permanente Hospital in their pediatric intensive care unit. Now at the age of 43, Karbassi recently enrolled in Western Governors University’s online BS in Nursing (RN to BN). Most of the credits she earned at four institutions were transferable, making her three-quarters of the way toward earning a BN. She adds that WGU’s tuition was more affordable than any of the traditional 4-year institutions in her geographic area. Plus the flexibility of it being an online program makes it easier for her to continue working. “All the credits I earned were transferrable except for two business courses,” she explains. “The WGU program is accredited and recognized by hospitals. In about one year I should have a bachelor’s degree.”

**Kelly Maslanik,
Richard Stockton College
of New Jersey**

After graduating from high school in 1990, Kelly Maslanik attended Salem Community College in Carmeys Point, New Jersey during the fall, but she did not enroll again for the following spring semester. Instead, she decided to devote her time and energies to working and earning a living to support herself.



“I did not spend my parent’s money. I got out when I knew it wasn’t for me and waited until it was for me. I have spent my own money. I feel empowered now to have this educational opportunity.”

– Kelly Maslanik

She landed a job as an administrative assistant for an accounting firm. Three years later she took on a similar position with a dental office and eventually moved up the career ladder to office manager. She has been with the dental office for more than 15 years. During this period she got married. She and her husband currently have a 5-year-old daughter.

In 2007, she decided to go back to school, this time at Camden County College. “I always felt that something was unresolved or unfinished,” Maslanik says. “I wanted more options.” She ultimately earned an Associate in Science with a pre-nursing option – designed for students seeking to transfer to a health-science-related baccalaureate program.

In 2010, after utilizing Camden County College’s student transfer resources and services, Maslanik applied to and was accepted in The Richard Stockton College of New Jersey Bachelor of Science in Speech Pathology and Audiology program. She was able to transfer over 67 credits and has been on a straight track to earn a bachelor’s degree by May of 2012.

Going back to her days just out of high school, Maslanik explains how she felt overwhelmed during that first semester at Salem Community College, feeling pressured to make a decision about what kind of course of study to pursue in order to be successful. “Some students know right away and go off to four-years schools, and they succeed, going into fields that were exactly what they were determined to do,” she says. “But there is that large majority of us who — given that spectrum of ‘you can do anything you want to do’ — feel overwhelmed.

“I did not spend my parent’s money,” she adds. “I got out when I knew it wasn’t for me and waited until it was for me. I have spent my own money. I feel empowered now to have this educational opportunity.”

**Laurie Ogden,
American Public
University**



After graduating from high school in 1988, Laurie Ogden took a practical and smart educational pathway, especially from a financial point of view. She went to the local Onondaga Community College (OCC) in Syracuse, NY, taking one course during the first semester and another course during her second semester, all the while saving as much money as possible through full-time employment. “By the third semester I had enough money to work part-time and go to school full-time,” she says.

By the end of the fall semester in 1991, Ogden had earned an associate degree in Early Childhood Education and quickly landed a job in that field at the State University of New York Health Science Center in Syracuse. She also got married during the summer of 1991 and started a family. She is currently 41. She and her husband have four children and now live in West Virginia.

After their first child was born, Ogden quit her job and became a full-time Mom for about 12 years. Always a health-minded person, she took a job at a local gym as a personal trainer and manager, which she still does today on a full-time basis.

In July 2010, Ogden was accepted into American Public University’s (APU) fully online BS in Sports and Health Sciences program. Returning to college after 20 years had its set of challenges, mostly related to acclimating to the online learning environment [something she had never experienced before].

Overall “the transfer process was very smooth,” she says. “I had 62 credits from my associate degree, and APU took 48 credits. They used all that they could except for some of my humanities courses.” For example, credits she earned at OCC from a course titled

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– Laurie Ogden

“Families in American History” were not transferrable, primarily because the course did not match up with anything in the Sports and Health Sciences curriculum.

She says that the APU program has everything she was looking for academically, with the flexibility that comes with any fully online program. “I wanted to go back to school, and I knew there was no way I could not work. My time is very limited. I could not show up at a college campus at 10:30 a.m. every Tuesday and Thursday.”

How does she balance going to college, working full-time and being a mother of four? “I do a lot at night and during my lunch breaks at work,” she says. “I do it on the weekends, and sometimes, if necessary, I stay up half way through the night or all night getting my homework done.” She has been taking two courses every eight weeks over each 16-week academic semester, and she currently has 30 credits left to earn her bachelor’s degree.

**Richard Riggle,
Western Governors
University**



It took about ten years after graduating from high school for Richard Riggle to become a four-year to two-year transfer student. He had initially enrolled at Indiana University Purdue University Indianapolis (IUPUI) out of high school but had dropped out early without coming close to earning a bachelor’s degree. “I really did not take my education all that seriously straight out of high school,” he says. In 2000, after coming to the realization that “I would be working a lot of dead-end jobs without a degree,” Riggle enrolled in Ivy Tech Community College, majoring in computer management with a secondary major in computer networking. He earned

an associate degree from Ivy Tech Community College in 2004.

The married father of three is currently 40 years old and has been working in retail management for most of his adult life. In June of 2011 he enrolled in Western Governors University’s (WGU) BS in Business Management program with the goal of ultimately earning a master’s degree in healthcare administration from WGU.

“Some of the computer science credits I earned did not transfer over to WGU, but my math, my English, pretty much all of my arts and sciences credit did transfer over,” Riggle says. “I was very pleased with the amount of transfer credit I did receive. It was an outstanding process. The entrance exam definitely tested my math skills, but short of that, they made it a simple process and everything went very smooth.

“I am half way there towards earning a bachelor’s degree,” he adds, “and I can probably knock out a year’s worth of work in one semester.”

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– Richard Riggle

More Student Profiles

Promotional efforts that feature profiles of successful transfer students from Texas can be found at <http://transfer101.org/category/success-by-degrees/>

And from ASU at <http://transfer.asu.edu/students>

Western Governors University: Partnering for Community College Student Success

When 19 U.S. governors established Western Governors University in 1997 they had a vision—little more than a dream—that technology coupled with excellent academic quality would open doors of opportunity for countless individuals who might otherwise be unable to pursue their education and career goals. Today, in 2011, the vision is reality.

Like America's community colleges, nonprofit WGU serves a diverse student body. Of WGU's 25,000 students spread across all 50 states, most are working adults, and their ages range from the early 20s to 60s. They come to WGU because they want a great quality education at a very affordable tuition. They want flexibility, support, and knowledge and skills that will fit what the job market is demanding. And they want bachelor's and master's degrees that are respected by academia and industry.

But given that online education is so widespread today, what makes WGU different?

"Students choose WGU for a host of special reasons, including WGU's low tuition and flexibility," notes Patrick Partridge, Vice President of Enrollment at WGU, "but most also value WGU's unique competency-based academic model that allows students to demonstrate their knowledge and abilities through rigorous assessments on an individualized pace not tied to traditional semesters."

The WGU approach is particularly well-suited to the community college graduate or student who has completed substantial college already—even more so if the student has additional experience or competence in their degree area.

WGU does not compete for transfer students who want to attend state four-year institutions. Rather, Partridge notes, "WGU is a transfer option for community college students whose life situations—such as work, family, and income—puts the traditional campus education out of reach. Often that's an older student, but the same situation applies to many younger students too."

WGU also assigns a mentor for each new student whose primary job is to provide ongoing personal support, including weekly calls at first. "Our mentors are basically 'success coaches,'" says Chris Mallett, Associate Provost for Mentoring. "Their job is to be part personal coach and part academic advisor." The one-on-one mentoring model is also applied to support students in each online course.

As for the low tuition mentioned earlier, for most WGU programs tuition is less than \$6,000 a year. Many students take advantage of WGU's flat-rate tuition of \$2,890, which covers ALL the courses that a student can complete in six months, to accelerate the time to complete a degree. Sometimes the saving in time and money can be dramatic.

Noted Harvard Business School guru Clay Christiansen considers WGU one of the leading "disruptive innovators" in higher education. The praise is appreciated, Partridge says, "but we want everyone to understand that our innovations are always student focused."

Western Governors University has developed marketing partnerships and articulation agreements with community colleges all across the U.S. to provide a meaningful option for students whose needs might otherwise go unmet. To learn more, visit the WGU website at www.wgu.edu/partners.



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