Welcome to *Pima Community College Perspectives*, a look on how education enriches our community. And now, here's your host, Nina Trasoff.

Hello, and welcome to *Pima Community College Perspectives*. I am Nina Trasoff, and I'm so glad you could join us. Um, today, again with Rachelle Howell, who is the Assistant Vice Chancellor at Pima Community College, and the topic today is Articulation and Transfer. And that is such an important topic in this world where we need more Bachelor's degrees in order to compete as a community, and Pima plays such an important role in helping us get up to that standard.

We do. It's one of the key roles that we play, and it's really a simple equation. The more you learn, the higher degree you earn, the more money you earn. And that really drives the economy locally. [coughs] The higher individuals earn, the greater they're able to contribute to the local tax base, and it really drives the economic engine.

And for some students, some students are just not ready when they get out of high school to go straight to University.

They aren't. And in fact, Arizona is behind the nation, well behind the nation, in that only 45 percent of current high school graduates in the state move on to a four-year university. That is last in the nation. And we sure would like to help Arizona pull out of that.

Wow, that's last in the nation.

Last in the nation. It's a scary number. And also, the number of individuals with Baccalaureate degrees in Arizona is not a good, not, not, doesn't, uh, reflect well on the state at all. Just to bring us up to even with the national average, we need to increase in the state by 20 percent the number of individuals with four-year degrees.

And one of the ways you are doing that is this effort that's been underway for several years and is really working quite well-- from so many of my friends I know who have taken advantage of it-- of facilitating students getting into Pima, and then going through Pima and being able to easily enroll in the University of Arizona, Northern Arizona, Arizona State, even.

[laughs]

We are in Tucson.

Yes.

Can't forget that.
(Howell) Yes, absolutely not. Yes, we are really, really focused on helping individuals make the transition from the College to four-year schools, and our goal is to make it as seamless as we possibly can. In fact, we currently have 15 formal agreements with other schools, four-year schools, to help students move on once they finish their coursework with Pima. And we’re always aggressively seeking more partnerships.

(Trasoff) And the person who directs the program that facilitates all of that, the Director of Curriculum and Articulation Services at Pima Community Colleges, College, is Jennie Scott. Jennie, thank you for joining us today.

(Jennie Scott) My pleasure to be with you here.

(Trasoff) Tell me a little bit more about what “articulation” means. Can you define that for us?

(Scott) You know, last night, before I came here, I looked it up in the dictionary, because I’ve never actually looked at a definition. And there’s lots of definitions. The one we’re looking at for education is basically, "systematic coordination of course and/or program transfer from one school to another." But articulation is verbal as well, and movement, and actually the one definition I really liked was, "the act of joining things in such a way that motion is possible." And it’s really helping students move from the Community College to the University. And so that motion is basically what we help facilitate.

(Trasoff) And this is relatively new in the last, I mean, to have a formal approach to it, to really try to proactively facilitate that.

(Scott) Well, students have been transferring forever. Um, and within the state of Arizona, we’ve actually had course-to-course transfer since the ’70s. We were, kind of, I think ahead of the game in things like that. We had what’s called the “Course Equivalency Guide”, um, which shows students from all the community colleges, um, what their equivalent courses would be at the three state universities. Um, but Pima has really been focusing in the past few years on really, not only looking at the state universities, but trying to find other opportunities for students to transfer both in and out of state, um, especially with the increase of online programs. Um, we’ve made articulation agreements with a lot of outlying universities. So we’re really going out aggressively in trying to find partners to help students achieve their educational goals.

(Trasoff) And that is what the bottom line is, helping students achieve their educational goals.

(Scott) Absolutely.

(Trasoff) And there are a large number of students who graduate with an Associate’s degree from Pima, but there’s also another graduation or certification that is awarded at graduation. Would you talk a little bit about that?

(Scott) I think you’re talking about the AGEC.

(Trasoff) Yes.
(Scott) The “Arizona General Education Curriculum”. That is a block of 35 general education credits. And students, it applies toward students’ Associate of Arts degree or Associate of Science degree or Associate of Business degree at Pima, so any of our transfer degrees. Um, so it meets our general education requirements for our Associates’ degrees for transfer. And it meets the lower-division general education for Bachelor's degrees at the three state universities. Um, it also will sometimes transfer to some of the other articulation partners that we have as well, although that was not the intention originally.

But a lot of states have something similar. There’s the IGETC. Don’t ask me what that acronym means, but that’s in California. And so other states have similar types of things. But it’s basically a block of general education that really helps students, especially those who really don’t know what they want to study, and they’re trying to figure out “Okay, do I want this? Do I want that? What should I take in the mean time?” And so by taking their AGEC, their general education block, it really helps get them prepared and start meeting requirements before they even necessarily know what they want to do.

(Trasoff) Which would seem an essential foundational element in succeeding when you go on to the four-year college for the Bachelor’s degree.

(Scott) Oh absolutely. Yeah, we, uh, to meet-- I have a partiality to general education; I think students should be well-rounded. And most universities and colleges think that, too, because we have that general education, real general idea of what education should be, kind of giving that broad background.

(Trasoff) But that’s an important, as I said, an important foundation. So what does Pima do? How do you ensure that your coursework meets transfer status standards?

(Scott) Um, there’s lots of things. Um, at a statewide level, there are, um, different “articulation task forces”, ATFs, they’re called. There’s a lot of acronyms in the state of Arizona transfer. Um, and so there’s an ATF for biology, and for English, and for history and things like that. And they meet at least yearly to go over what’s going on in their discipline, making sure that the programs at the community colleges have will transfer to the universities. The faculty of Pima and the universities in a lot of different areas meet regularly, especially between Pima and the U of A, of course.

Um, there is an electronic, call the “ACETS”, the Arizona Course Equivalency Tracking System, where all of Pima’s new courses-- and every time we change a course, we send that to the universities to make sure, um, that they will still accept it. Um, and so, and I think I mentioned earlier the course equivalency guide that shows students how the courses that they take at Pima or any of the other Arizona community colleges will transfer to the three state universities. So there’s a lot of coordination, discussion, between and among the schools in Arizona. Um, so it’s a concerted effort.

(Trasoff) Snd do you have common course numbering?

(Scott) Um, not yet. [laughs]

(Trasoff) Is that important, or does it matter as long as the content is there?
(Scott) Um, well common numbering is something that the state legislature has recently voted on that we will move in that direction. And a report is going, a recommendation is going to the legislature in December on how we’re going to do that. There’s lots of different ways across the country that common numbering has been done, um, and so we’re not exactly sure how it’s going to turn out. But by common numbering, it will make things a little bit easier for students to really understand, “Okay, if it’s this course at Pima, not only how does it transfer to the University, but how might it transfer to another community college?” Because we have, we call them “rolling students," students who don’t just go stay in one school or go directly from one to another. They may go from Cochise, then come up to Pima, and then go to the U of A, and they may go to ASU. And so, um, making sure that courses, that students understand how their coursework applies not only to their home institution, but all of the rest of the institutions they might want to go.

(Trasoff) In the old days, I remember those were the five-, six-, and seven-year Bachelor’s degrees.

(Scott) Right!

[laughter]

(Trasoff) Because you never knew what transferred and what was equivalent to what...

(Scott) Right. And we’re hoping not to have that issue. Yeah.

[laughter]

(Trasoff) That would be good. So tell me a little more about the kinds of degrees you do have.

(Scott) Well, obviously, with different state universities, um, that’s still where the majority of our students transfer. And so we have very generic agreements with them, but we are also working towards having more specific ones. So we’ve, uh, not in the past really had specific articulation agreements where-- we call them “Two Plus Two Pathways” with the University of Arizona for many areas. Students have an idea on how to transfer. Years ago, there were transfer guides put out by all three state universities. Um, now they’re slightly different, but students can still find them in what’s called “AZTransfer.com”, which is the statewide transfer and articulation website.

But we are working to having more specific program pathways. So not too long ago we signed an agreement with U of A for their Early Childhood Education Bachelor’s degree, which they recently started. We are moving towards having also one for Elementary Ed. at the U of A, um, as well as U of A South for their Elementary Ed with an Early Childhood Ed. concentration. We’re looking at ones for Anthropology. Actually, U of A has really, um, recently decided that, um, having these pathways is going to be beneficial for students. Um, we also, about a year ago I think it was, Rachelle, uh, we signed with Arizona State University to have what they call “TAG”, the “Transfer Admission Guarantee” program. It started out with just two programs. It was Social Work and uh, as I draw a complete blank...

(Howell) I’m not coming up with it either. I’ll think of it before I leave.
(Scott) I'll think of it before I leave! [laughter] And then we recently added Psychology, and we’ll be in the process of also adding additional majors. And the Transfer Admission Guarantee really lays out course by course what students should take at Pima, what specific requirements that will meet at ASU. Um, and not only that, there’s also a financial benefit, because if you start at ASU, you have their tuition guarantee where tuition will not raise more than five percent per year, um, whereas transfer students would have to wait until they got there, so two or three years into it, well two years into their Bachelor’s degree, they’d be starting fresh with a new tuition, and then it would only increase five percent from there. But if students elect to sign up for the TAG, the Transfer Admission Guarantee program, they can actually start that tuition guarantee when they start at Pima.

(Trasoff) Wow!

(Scott) So, financially, that’s a really good deal...

(Trasoff) Even though they’re going to Pima with a lower tuition cost at Pima, they’re still guaranteed the lower cost when they do get to ASU.

(Scott) Exactly. So that is, with tuition rising as quickly as it is right now, that is, um, really a good thing. Oh, and Rachelle found that for me; it’s the Elementary Ed at ASU. So we’ll now have Social Work, Elementary Education, and Psychology, and actually four Psychology degrees at ASU because they have two BA’s and two BS’.

(Trasoff) Wow. Now are these “Two-Plus-Two” programs?

(Scott) Yes they are. And actually, it’s slightly more than two, because a Bachelor’s degree is typically six, uh sorry, 120 credits, and they can actually transfer up to 64 from Pima. There’s also, at the state-wide level, uh, there’s Bachelor’s of Applied Science degrees that the three state universities are offering as well. And those are for students who originally weren’t planning on transferring; they were doing something like, um, Computer Technology or, uh, Automotive Technology or some of our other technical areas, Legal Assistant, those type of things. Um, but they decide later on that a Bachelor’s degree really would be helpful for them, so the universities have a Bachelor of Applied Science, and students can actually transfer up to 75 credits for that.

(Trasoff) Wow. That, so you’re really making it easier, but you are also taking advantage of the possibility that a student who thought he or she only wanted a two-year degree gets so excited by what they are doing and discovers their own capabilities...

(Scott) Exactly.

(Trasoff) ...and decides to go beyond that.

(Scott) Mm-hmm. Yes.

(Trasoff) So many things. So the website that you were talking about is AZTransfer.com.

(Scott) Correct.
So students, potential students, can go there and really learn more about that side of this program.

Right. That’s for most of the state-wide programs. If students are interested in learning more about the partnerships that Pima has, if they go to Pima’s home page at www.pima.edu, click on “Student Resources” and then “Transfer Partnerships”, it’ll have a table basically that shows the institutions, what Bachelor’s degrees they can earn, how many credits will transfer, whether it’s an online program. Um, we’ve recently added quite a few programs in the past couple of years. Eastern New Mexico University is one. We’re actually, um, they could potentially get a tuition break there as well. And they can actually transfer up to 90 credits.

Wow. So there’s so many possibilities for the students.

There are.

Jennie, this has been fascinating. There are so many things Pima is doing to make it easier, and the bottom line is the beneficiary is not just the student, but our community.

Yes.

Thank you so much for joining us.

Thank you for having me.

And we’re going to take a break now. And when we come back, we’re going to be joined by a student who is taking advantage of this opportunity. Be right back.

For more than 40 years, Pima Community College has helped prepare the citizens of Tucson and Pima County for good jobs and better lives for themselves and their families. We don’t do it alone. We appreciate your ongoing investment in education, especially during these extraordinarily tough times. Your tax dollars, combined with student tuition, make it possible for thousands of Southern Arizonans to get a jump-start before transferring to a university, to get the training they need to stay competitive at work, and to prepare for the jobs of tomorrow. Many of our students are seeking to restart their careers after losing their jobs, and some, their homes, during the recession. All of our students know, as you do, that the more you learn, the more you earn. We know that today’s students are often juggling work and family, as well as school. That’s why Pima offers classes at night and on weekends at six campuses, more than 180 other locations, and over the Internet. Our programs deliver education how you want it, and give you the opportunity to achieve your goals at your pace. Today’s Pima Community College students will be tomorrow’s firefighters, nurses, police, teachers, and small business owners, the backbone of a safe, healthy, prosperous Tucson and Pima County. Thank you for your support as we continue to help you and your family build a better tomorrow. For more information, contact us at 206-4500, or visit us on the Web, at pima.edu. Pima Community College, Developing our Community Through Learning.
Welcome back. I’m Nina Trasoff, and this is Pima Community College Perspectives, and I’m joined still by Rachelle Howell. And Rachelle, the first part of this program we were talking about the articulation and all of the convenience for students. But it is possible no matter where the articulation agreement is, when a student leaves Pima and goes on to a four-year college, to not have to leave Tucson in order to complete the degree.

That’s correct. In fact, many of the transfer partnerships that we have are specifically designed to be completed online so that individuals who finish up at Pima and want to get a four-year degree don’t even have to ever leave the city, and they can sit in their pajamas, literally, and complete their four-year degree if they are so inclined.

Sounds like heaven to me!

Yes. [laughs]

And somebody who has taken advantage of all aspects of this, including, I would suppose, the sitting in pajamas at the computer...

Yes I have done that.

Our guest, Linda Lyons, is a Pima Community College student who is now, having worked through Pima Community College and that portion of it, is now at the U of A, although still taking a class at Pima.

Yes.

So you’re doing all of it, Linda.

Unfortunately. [laughter] Yes I am.

Well, I might say fortunately.

Um, yes. It’s just, uh, I do enjoy finishing up my work at Pima; it’s been amazing for me. And the U of A is a whole new set of challenges. So I’ve sort of got one foot on each side of the fence at the moment. But I’m ready to leap over fully after this semester.

Somehow I have no doubt about that. [laughs]

Thank you. [laughs]

Tell us, quickly, your background, because you are an older student from the typical student.

Yes, uh, uh, I am what you call a “mature student”. I returned to college after 40 years out of school. That was an adjustment. I also am an international student. I returned to college here in Arizona,
but I’m from Canada. So I have a few little things going for me that are different from the person sitting next to me.

(Trasoff) So you had to get a student visa.

(Lyons) I did. I did. I had to go back to Canada, apply for a visa, pay fees, dada-dada-da.

[laughter]

(Trasoff) But it’s how we keep it legitimate.

(Lyons) Yes, correct.

(Trasoff) That’s the standard intake questions.

(Lyons) It is. It is. Yes.

(Trasoff) So tell me about your experience going back to Pima, because 40 years out of school, coming back, um, for anybody, that would be intimidating.

(Lyons) That is the scary thing. And I had a little bit extra motivation, because my husband and I have pulled up roots and came down here. So, I’ve left a family, I’ve committed myself to a huge endeavor. And I was terrified that I was going to be sitting next to somebody with a whole lot more brain cells that were popping than I did, and they were going to look at me and say, “Who’s this old woman in the back of the room?” And I was going to have an absolute miserable time for the next three years. But that’s not what happened.

(Trasoff) Well Pima is a real community. I’ve taken classes there myself, and, yes, most of the students are considerably younger, but not all of them.

(Lyons) No. No, not all of them. I’ve actually had two instructors who were older than me, and in three years, that’s pretty good. And I have made a tremendous amount of friendships with people almost the age of my grandchildren and people my age. So it’s, there’s a whole huge diversity, ethnically, internationally speaking, as well as age-wise. And so it’s just been a big huge melting pot. It’s a family.

(Trasoff) What prompted you to go back to school?

(Lyons) We came to be snowbirds. And we weren’t hauling one of those big trailers that you see coming through town in January, but we came down to be snowbirds, to get away from the ice and the cold and the snow. And I got bored after about three weeks. And the Pima catalog came in the mail. And I love the desert, I just love it. And I wanted very much to study the desert in some way. So I looked at the catalog, and I went to the closest Pima campus, which was Northeast for me, and everybody said, “Oh, we’re so sorry. We can’t allow you to enroll in a class because of Homeland Security and federal regulations.” And I respected that; I thought, “Okay, that’s the end of that.” But the more I thought about it, the more I wanted to study here. So I went to West Campus and met with some international
student advisors, and they are just the best bunch. And they just made it seem so easy, and they gave me such confidence that I could do this. And so my husband and I made the decision for me to try.

(Trasoff) I think that’s wonderful. You have to keep growing.

(Lyons) You do. You do. And I grow every day. [laughter] And in final exams, I grow physically larger with all the chocolate I eat. [laughs]

(Trasoff) You cannot do exams without chocolate.

(Lyons) That’s right.

(Trasoff) I agree completely. So now, what are your goals?

(Lyons) Well, I had not written anything but grocery lists and business letters for 40 years, and the first class I took was Writing 101. Terrifying experience, but from the first piece of homework, I thought, “Wow, I remember this from school.” When I was a little girl, I loved to make up stories. And I’ve just been going ever since. So I hope someday that Steven Spielberg will knock on the door, and Meryl Streep will want to play the lead role in the adaptation of my novel. But I don’t think that’s quite possible, but I’m still going to keep trying.

(Trasoff) I don’t see why it isn’t possible. [laughs] I have a feeling with what happened with you, almost anything is possible. Now you’ve chosen your language requirement a little differently than many might.

(Lyons) I have. In Canada, we are exposed to, well we have two official languages, French and English. And we’re exposed to French instruction in public school. In fact, some of our children go to daycare and preschool in French or half French, half English. And so the French would have been a really easy, I think, route for me to take here. But I took one semester of French, and then I thought, “I’m really not expanding myself in any way.” So I signed up to take Sign Language, and I really do enjoy the class. I’m probably the most awkward and ungraceful signer that Pima’s ever seen, but I do enjoy it very much. And I’ve learned so much about syntax and grammar presented in a different way from the English language, and so I think the Sign Language has helped me in my communication skills on the paper as well as in person.

(Trasoff) I have taken a Sign Language course at Pima, and I think that is a really solid point that you’re making, because you learn to express yourself in a whole other way without the standard subject-verb...

(Lyons) Absolutely. Absolutely.

(Trasoff) ...sequence that they use. It makes you think differently.

(Lyons) Well it helps me with my papers, because if you’re writing an academic paper, the key is to avoid the verb “to be”. And in Sign Language, there is no verb “to be”. So I think that anything I take at Pima spreads out over everything else that I’m doing. I can get little nuggets, and they stay with me.
(Trasoff) And let’s talk about the transfer. I know that your admission to the U of A had to be different because you are a foreign student. But other than that, you took one of the common transfer courses to prepare you.

(Lyons) Right. I took STU 210. And that was just one of the best things I’ve ever done, because in my particular circumstance there were different forms, different procedures. But STU 210 is almost, it’s not a hybrid class, because it’s all done in class, but about 50 percent of your classes are actually down at the U of A. You get to familiarize yourself with, um, the geographical setup of U of A, which is a big place. And when the time comes for you to choose classes, you don’t want to choose one that ends at 10:00 am at one end and start at 10:10 am at the other end of the campus, or you’re not going to get there. So there were all these little tips and tricks.

And then previous STU 210 students who are now enrolled with U of A came back and spoke to us and gave us their perspective on things to do, things not to do. So even though the actual filling out the forms and having that wonderful transfer expert Paul Miller help you in class get early acceptance and get advisor appointments, notwithstanding all of that, the information I got from STU 210 really helped me focus on where I wanted to go, because I’m still kind of a nervous Nelly. I’m still a lot older than everybody else, and so I needed that.

(Howell) Just so everyone knows, Paul Miller, whom Linda just referred to, he is a great transfer advisor. He is actually a U of A employee who houses at the Downtown Campus at Pima and is onsite every day of the week to help Pima students with transition to the U of A.

(Trasoff) And for students at any age, it’s a very different culture coming from Pima, which is smaller and more nurturing, to the U of A, which is an amazing facility. So it’s not a negative against the U, it’s just...

(Lyons) Big.

(Trasoff) They’re apples and oranges, and you need to know how to peel that orange if you’re going to succeed there.

(Lyons) Absolutely. And they’re big. I mean, it’s a bureaucracy. And Pima, because it has the five or the six campuses, it’s like a family; I see the same faces every day. And at the U of A, unless you happen to sit next to somebody in the same lecture hall, you might not see that familiar face for another month.

(Trasoff) Do you feel well prepared?

(Lyons) I do. I do. I think that the skills that I got at Pima really set me up to succeed at the U of A.

(Trasoff) What about your colleagues from your first two years at Pima? And now are you seeing any of them at the U of A?

(Lyons) I do. I run into them. It’s like old home week, big hugs. And we catch up for a minute, and then they’re dashing off in one direction, and I’m dashing off in another. But it’s fantastic.
(Trasoff) And what do you want to do with this? You mentioned your novel. So is writing your thing, and that’s...

(Lyons) Writing is going to be my thing, and I’m really in the envious position in that I don’t have to worry about what I’m going to be when I grow up. I just get to “be”, and so I want to write. And every day I get up, sometimes at the ungodly hour of 4:00 am, and I sit at the computer, and I start to write. And it’s just pleasure.

(Trasoff) So this is a really interesting phase of life for you.

(Lyons) Oh, fabulous.

(Trasoff) But, you know, you’re coming into it differently than the “typical” student who might be 17, 18, 19 years old.

(Lyons) Right.

(Trasoff) But I would argue that maybe your challenges are not that different.

(Lyons) No, they are not.

(Trasoff) Because they, really it is a major life change that you’re taking.

(Lyons) And my motivation comes from a different space, but I think we all have the same goals. We want to be what we want to be.

(Trasoff) And the articulation program, which is what we’re talking about, could it have happened as easily?

(Lyons) I don’t believe so. I really don’t. Uh, just me going online by myself at home and, uh, looking at the application form was daunting. But I had been exposed to that in the STU 210.

(Trasoff) And I think the bottom line is, Rachelle, that Linda is a wonderful example of how people can succeed and how this program can work for any number of students.

(Howell) That’s true, and especially with all of the resources that are available. And we really encourage everyone to take advantage of those.

(Trasoff) Wonderful. Well thank you, Linda, for joining us. And Rachelle, as always. I’m Nina Trasoff. This is *Pima Community College Perspectives*. And thanks to you for listening.

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