



Inconsistent Implementation of Common Prerequisites Creates Barriers to Effective 2+2 Articulation

at a glance

The state's common prerequisites policy is intended to facilitate articulation for students transferring from community colleges to universities by establishing common courses needed for admission to upper division programs at any of the state's universities. However, the policy has not been effectively implemented by universities, the Board of Governors, and the Department of Education.

- For nearly two-thirds (65%) of the degree programs we examined, universities were implementing prerequisites in ways that could create barriers for students who have followed the approved common prerequisites.
- The Board of Governors and Department of Education have not effectively monitored and enforced the common prerequisites policy.

As a result, transfer students may be denied admission to universities' upper division programs or be required to complete additional courses, increasing both state and student costs. The inconsistencies across universities can also make it difficult for transfer students to plan their Associate in Arts degree coursework.

While most community colleges offer the required prerequisite courses for popular majors, only five colleges have formally integrated prerequisites into the structure of their Associate in Arts programs by requiring students to declare pre-majors at a specific point in their academic careers.

Scope

This is the first report in a series in response to Ch. [2007-246](#), *Laws of Florida*, which requires OPPAGA to review the implementation of statewide articulation policies. Specifically, this review addresses the implementation of the state common program prerequisites and identifies barriers to the effective transfer of students within the public postsecondary education system.

Additional reports will address other statewide articulation policies, including the Statewide Course Numbering System, FACTS.org, the general education requirement, and approved acceleration programs.

Background

Florida's postsecondary education system includes a 2+2 articulation process through which students may successfully pursue a bachelor's degree by first receiving an Associate in Arts degree at a community college and then transferring to a state university to complete the remaining two years of coursework. A large number of students participate in the 2+2 system. For the three-year period the 2003-04 academic year through the 2005-06 academic year, 96,037 students earned Associate in Arts degrees at community colleges and 30,817 transfer students enrolled at a state university.¹

¹ The 2005-06 academic year data was the most recent data

For Florida's 2+2 system to be successful, articulation between community colleges and state universities must be effective. Specifically, several conditions help ensure effective articulation.

- Community colleges must offer general education courses and as well as the prerequisites that are required by universities for admission to specific majors.
- Community colleges must have effective processes for ensuring that potential transfer students take the required courses as part of their Associate in Arts coursework.
- Universities must accept and grant credit for the courses taken at community colleges within the guidelines of the Statewide Course Numbering System, and should not establish admission policies or other requirements for their upper division programs that would hinder the articulation process.
- Students must have easy access to accurate and timely information about college degrees and programs, admission requirements, classes they should take for specific programs, and progress toward completing their degrees.

The Florida Legislature has established several policies to ensure that institutions meet these conditions for effective 2+2 articulation. Section 1007.23, *Florida Statutes*, requires the State Board of Education and the Board of Governors to develop and implement a statewide articulation agreement. This agreement guarantees that community college Associate in Arts degree graduates will be admitted to the upper division of a state university, with the exception of the degree programs that are limited access or require an audition or portfolio (in the case of fine and performing arts programs). In addition, the Legislature has directed the State Board of Education and the Board of Governors to develop and implement other articulation policies and tools including the Statewide Course Numbering System, general education requirement, FACTS.org, and common program prerequisites.²

available.

² FACTS.org is the Florida Academic Counseling and Tracking for Students system and is a statewide computer-assisted student advising system that allows students to access transcripts, view state policies and guidelines, assess progress toward a degree and verify when graduation requirements are met.

See Appendix A for a summary of these policies and tools.

The Articulation Coordinating Committee provides guidance on articulation policies. The State Board of Education and the Board of Governors established the Articulation Coordinating Committee to serve as an advisory body for developing and implementing statewide articulation policies.³ Appointed by the Commissioner of Education, the committee includes representatives from state universities, community colleges, private colleges and universities, career technical centers, and school districts. The committee serves as a board to resolve any articulation issues reported by students or institutions. The Office of Articulation in the Department of Education provides staff support to the committee.

Common program prerequisites are a key to articulation. In 1996, the Legislature directed the Department of Education to establish a list of common prerequisite courses and course substitutions for bachelor degree programs offered by the state universities.⁴ Intended to facilitate efficient transfer among public postsecondary institutions, the common prerequisites are courses that both university and community college students must complete for admission to specific university bachelor degree programs. These courses are an important component of bachelor's degree programs because they provide foundational content to students so that they are adequately prepared for the content of upper division courses. The state's common prerequisites are listed in the Common Prerequisite Counseling Manual located on FACTS.org and include prerequisites for 215 bachelor's degrees. Institutions and students have access to this manual and can view prerequisites by degree program. See Appendix A for an example of prerequisites for one degree program.

Pursuant to Florida statutes, the department and Board of Governors have established processes for identifying, updating and maintaining the list of common program prerequisites.⁵ Specifically,

³ Rule 6A-10.024, *F.A.C.*

⁴ Section 1007.25, *F.S.*

⁵ Section 1007.25, *F.S.*

discipline committees composed of faculty from community colleges and universities are responsible for developing and recommending suggested prerequisites. These committees forward their recommendations to the Articulation Coordinating Committee for evaluation and approval. Upon final approval by the committee, the department and Board of Governors staff revises and distributes the Common Prerequisite Counseling Manual to institutions through FACTS.org. This annual change and approval process is structured to coincide with the timelines universities and colleges use to update their catalogs.

The Board of Governors and State Board of Education are responsible for ensuring state universities and community colleges correctly implement the common prerequisites.⁶ To ensure consistent implementation of the policy, the two boards have established rules and policies that require institutions to

- use the approved common prerequisites and course substitutions as the requirements students must complete prior to admission to upper division programs (e.g., universities cannot require fewer or additional courses);
- clearly identify program prerequisites in their institutional catalogs;⁷ and
- accept all allowable substitute courses that satisfy prerequisites in accordance with the state manual.

Findings

Florida's public universities, the Board of Governors, and the Department of Education have not effectively implemented the common program prerequisites policy. As a result, students could encounter barriers when transferring from a community college to a state university and may either be denied admission into degree programs or required to take additional courses, increasing costs to both students and the state. In addition, while most community colleges offer the required prerequisite courses for popular majors, only five colleges have formally integrated prerequisites into the structure of their Associate in Arts programs by

requiring students to declare pre-majors at a specific point in their academic careers.

Universities are not consistently implementing the common program prerequisites

Universities are not consistently implementing the approved common prerequisites and related state policies, creating potential barriers to articulation. To assess the implementation of the common prerequisites policy, we compared university prerequisites (as published in their catalogs and other materials) with the common prerequisites established by the state for 14 of the more popular bachelor's degrees students earned in 2005-06. These 14 degree programs represent nearly half (47%) of the bachelor's degrees granted by 10 of the state's universities.⁸ We assessed whether the courses universities required for each degree program matched those listed in the Common Prerequisite Counseling Manual.⁹ Finally, we provided our findings to each university to confirm our understanding of their prerequisites.

Widespread inconsistencies exist. As shown in Exhibit 1, our analysis found widespread inconsistencies in degree prerequisites across universities. For nearly two-thirds (65%) of the degree programs we examined, universities implemented prerequisites that could create articulation barriers for students following the approved common prerequisites. Each university had at least one degree program with problems, and eight universities had problems with at least half of the degree programs we reviewed. For example, three universities (Florida International University, Florida A&M University, and the University of Florida) only had one program that was fully aligned with common prerequisites.

⁸ New College of Florida was not included in this analysis because its bachelor's degree programs do not use standard course requirements and are highly individualized.

⁹ We calculated error or problem rates by institution and program. There were 133 total instances (programs multiplied by institutions) in which institutions should have been following the common prerequisites. Some universities do not offer specific degrees. We provided our findings to each university and requested an explanation of each discrepancy we identified.

⁶ Sections 1001.705(1)(b) and 1001.02, *F.S.*

⁷ Rule 6A-10.024(11), *F.A.C.*

Exhibit 1

Universities Were Not Consistently Implementing the Common Prerequisites for 14 Popular Degree Programs

Degree Program	Florida A&M University	Florida Atlantic University	Florida Gulf Coast University	Florida International University	Florida State University	University of Central Florida	University of Florida	University of North Florida	University of South Florida	University of West Florida	Problem Rate by Programs
Accounting	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	100%
Biology	X	X	✓	X	X	X	X	X	✓	X	80%
Business Administration	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	✓	X	X	90%
Civil Engineering	X	X	✓	X	X	X	X	✓	✓	n/a	67%
Elementary Education	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	0%
English	X	✓	✓	X	✓	✓	X	✓	✓	X	40%
Finance	n/a	X	X	X	X	X	X	✓	X	X	89%
History	X	X	✓	X	✓	X	X	✓	X	✓	60%
Hospitality	n/a	X	✓	X	X	✓	n/a	n/a	✓	✓	43%
Marketing	n/a	X	X	X	X	X	X	✓	X	X	89%
Nursing	X	X	✓	X	✓	✓	X	✓	✓	X	50%
Political Science	X	X	✓	X	✓	X	X	X	✓	✓	60%
Psychology	X	X	✓	X	X	X	X	✓	X	✓	70%
Sociology	X	X	✓	X	✓	X	X	✓	X	n/a	67%
Problem Rate by University	91%	86%	29%	93%	57%	71%	92%	23%	50%	58%	

X - University prerequisites could create articulation barriers for students following the common prerequisites.

✓ - University prerequisites did not create articulation barriers for students.

Source: OPPAGA analysis of university prerequisites and common prerequisites.

University prerequisites for business and biology programs had the most inconsistencies. As shown in Exhibit 1, every university had implemented prerequisites for their accounting programs that could create articulation barriers for students following the common prerequisites. In addition, only one university—the University of North Florida—had prerequisites for business administration, finance, and marketing degree programs that were fully aligned with the common prerequisites for all of these programs. Finally, eight universities had problems with the prerequisites for their biology programs. As a result, community college students who sought to transfer into business and biology programs could either be required to take additional courses or have difficulty being accepted for these degrees.

Two major types of problems occurred across universities

While every university had implemented prerequisites that could create articulation barriers for students following the state common prerequisites, there were two major types of problems that occurred across the universities. In some instances, universities had both of these problems.

- Universities implemented program prerequisites that were inconsistent with the common prerequisites.
- Universities did not identify all allowable prerequisites in their catalogs and other materials.

Universities frequently implemented requirements that were inconsistent with the common prerequisites. Eight of the 10 universities had additional or different courses to those included in the common prerequisites. We found this inconsistency for 33% (44 of 133) of the degree

programs we reviewed. Requiring students to take additional or different prerequisites could prevent community college students from being accepted into bachelor degree programs even if these students had successfully taken all of the approved required prerequisite courses during their Associate in Arts curriculum. For example, the approved common prerequisites for political science degree programs require students to successfully complete two introductory courses (6 hours) in political science. However, the University of Florida requires students to successfully complete four courses (12 hours)—three courses in political science and one course in statistics—to qualify for admission into its political science bachelor’s program.

Universities frequently did not identify all approved program prerequisites for their degree programs. The second major problem we identified is that universities frequently did not identify all approved prerequisites (including allowable course substitutions) for their degree programs. Specifically, eight universities did not identify all approved prerequisites for at least one of the degree programs we examined, with this problem occurring in 60% (80 of 133) of the degree programs. It is important for universities to identify all allowable prerequisites (including course substitutes) in their college catalogs and related materials so that current and potential students know what courses they need to take to gain admission to degree programs. In addition, it helps ensure that university personnel involved in program admission decisions consistently evaluate student admission records.

The primary cause of this problem is that universities frequently did not identify all allowable substitute courses in their published materials. The statewide common prerequisites allow students to complete certain substitute courses to meet specific prerequisite requirements for many degree programs. However, every university with published prerequisites failed to list (in their catalogs or other published materials) all approved substitute courses for at least one of the degree programs we examined. As a result, universities may not be informing students of all their course options and may be requiring students who take substitute courses listed in the Common Prerequisites Counseling Manual to

take additional courses to meet admission requirements.

A related problem is that one university—Florida A&M—did not identify prerequisites for eight of the degree programs we examined in any of its published materials.¹⁰ In addition, Florida Atlantic University and the University of Florida did not clearly identify program prerequisites in their college catalogs, but had identified required courses in separate transfer student admission manuals.¹¹

Some universities deviated from the common prerequisites to improve student access to upper division programs

To help improve access to their bachelor’s degree programs, five universities did not require students (their own university and transfer students) to complete all prerequisite courses in order to be admitted to at least one of their degree programs.¹² These universities either required students to complete fewer courses than were listed in the Common Prerequisites Counseling Manual or they did not require students to complete prerequisites prior to admission to the program. While not strictly aligned with the common prerequisites, this practice can be beneficial to community college Associate in Arts graduates who have not completed prerequisites prior to transferring. However, this practice can also be problematic if it results in students taking courses that they do not need. For example, the approved common prerequisites for accounting include a requirement that students complete two different accounting courses (financial and managerial accounting). However, Florida State University did not require students to complete the managerial accounting course as a prerequisite for admission to its accounting bachelor’s degree program. Thus, students who took this course at their community college may have not needed to do so.

¹⁰ Rule 6A-10.024, F.A.C.

¹¹ We did not include the University of Florida and Florida Atlantic University in our count of universities that failed to identify any prerequisites.

¹² The five universities were the University of West Florida, Florida State University, University of Central Florida, Florida A&M University, and Florida Atlantic University.

Universities report taking corrective actions but inconsistencies remain

Each of the 10 universities we examined reported that they would take actions to address the problems identified by our review. After we notified them of our findings, the universities indicated that they had taken immediate action to correct the prerequisites for 61 of the 86 degree programs we identified that had such problems. (See Appendix B.) As a result of these actions, five universities (Florida Atlantic University, Florida Gulf Coast University, University of North Florida, University of South Florida, and University of Central Florida) should now be complying with the state common prerequisites for the programs we reviewed. However, problems remained unresolved for 18% of the degree programs we examined. (See Exhibit 2.)

**Exhibit 2
Universities Have Taken Corrective Actions to Address Many of the Problems With Common Prerequisites**

State University	Percentage of Degree Programs With Articulation Problems	
	Initial Review	After Corrective Actions
University of Florida	92%	92%
Florida State University	57%	43%
Florida International University	93%	29%
Florida A&M University	91%	9%
University of West Florida	58%	8%
University of South Florida	50%	0%
Florida Atlantic University	86%	0%
University of North Florida	23%	0%
University of Central Florida	71%	0%
Florida Gulf Coast University	29%	0%
Total	65%	18%

Source: OPPAGA analysis.

The universities that did not address problems with their implementation of the common prerequisites reported two reasons for not taking corrective action.

- The University of Florida asserted that the State Articulation Manual authorizes universities to establish additional prerequisites for limited access degree programs such as nursing and psychology. However, the State Board of Education and

Board of Governors have issued a formal memorandum explicitly prohibiting this practice and are in the process of strengthening the language in the manual.

- In addition, four universities asserted that the Common Prerequisites Counseling Manual was outdated for certain degree programs. These universities indicated that they would continue requiring prerequisites that are inconsistent with the common prerequisites and would request that the state approved prerequisites be changed to match their practice. However, until and unless these requests are approved by the state process, the institutions will continue to require coursework that does not match the common prerequisites.

Inconsistencies may exist in other degree programs. While universities reported taking corrective action for many of the inconsistencies we identified, these problems may also exist among the 201 degree programs we did not examine in our review. The universities should expand their corrective actions to ensure that all degree program prerequisites are consistent with those established by the Common Prerequisites Counseling Manual.

State-level oversight of the common prerequisites policy has not effectively addressed inconsistencies

Neither the Department of Education nor the Board of Governors has systematically reviewed or monitored how institutions have implemented common program prerequisites since they were established in 1996. Rather, the department and Board of Governors have annually considered proposed changes and have used a complaint and issue resolution process to monitor the state prerequisites. Such a process depends on students and institutions to report problems and was ineffective in addressing the widespread inconsistencies for the degree programs we examined.

Board of Governors staff indicated that they were previously aware of some of the inconsistencies identified by our review. While these staff reported that they had contacted institutions in

some instances, their actions did not result in compliance with state policy and law.

The Board of Governors and the department are currently working with universities to determine whether the common prerequisites need revision. This project includes revalidating existing prerequisites and overhauling the structure of the manual. Board staff estimates this process, which began in the fall of 2007, will take up to two years to complete. The purpose of this review is to identify inconsistencies and allow universities to provide feedback on the state prerequisites.

Community colleges offer most prerequisite courses but vary in student advising approaches

A key to effective articulation is that students be able to take the common prerequisite courses at their community colleges. In addition, students need to be informed in an efficient manner about which prerequisite courses they should complete if they intend to transfer into a bachelor’s degree program.

Students do not have access at every community college to the minimum prerequisites for popular bachelor degree programs. While community colleges generally offer the courses required as prerequisites for the most popular bachelor’s degrees, some prerequisites are not available at all community colleges. For example, every community college offers the prerequisite courses required for transfer into elementary education and nursing degree programs. However, students wishing to transfer into many business-related bachelor’s degree programs can take all required courses at only 22 of the 28 community colleges. See Exhibit 3.

Community colleges indicated that they offer prerequisite courses based on student demand, staffing, and resources. As a result, smaller community colleges may not have the capability of offering required prerequisite courses for all bachelor’s degree programs.

Exhibit 3 Students Have Varying Access to Prerequisite Courses at Community Colleges

Bachelor’s Degree Program	Number of Community Colleges Offering Minimum Prerequisites
Elementary Education	28
Nursing	28
Psychology	28
Biology	28
History	28
Sociology	28
English	28
Political Science	27
Civil Engineering	26
Business Administration	22
Finance	22
Marketing	22
Accounting	22
Hospitality-Track 2 (FSU) ¹	22
Hospitality-Track 1 (FIU, UCF, FGCU, UWF)	15
Hospitality- Track 3 (USF)	11

¹ Hospitality management has three separate tracks, each with different common prerequisites.

Note: OPPAGA did not review how often community colleges offer these courses.

Source: OPPAGA analysis of courses in the Statewide Course Numbering System.

Community colleges take different approaches for ensuring that students complete the prerequisites for their intended majors. Community colleges use a variety of approaches to help ensure that students consider prerequisite requirements when planning their Associate in Arts degree coursework.¹³ These approaches range from the restructuring of Associate in Arts degree programs to include degree pre-major requirements to more general advising processes. Appendix C provides an overview of the approaches used by each community college. Some institutions use multiple approaches.

To help ensure that students complete their prerequisites prior to transferring to a state university, 18 of the 28 community colleges have established degree pre-majors as an option or requirement for students in their Associate in

¹³ We surveyed community colleges to identify their practices and policies for ensuring potential 2+2 transfer students are aware of common prerequisites and other upper division admission requirements.

Arts programs.^{14,15} Degree pre-majors identify courses that are aligned with the common prerequisites for bachelor degree programs and are intended to help students identify which courses they should take to be admitted to university programs. Among these 18 community colleges, there were two different approaches used to implement degree pre-majors.

- Restructuring programs to include a pre-major requirement. Five community colleges have formally integrated prerequisites into the structure of their Associate in Arts programs by establishing degree pre-majors as a requirement for student progression towards their degrees. These colleges require students to declare pre-majors at a specific point in their academic careers, ranging from initial enrollment at the college to the completion of 24 hours.
- Providing pre-majors as an option for students. Thirteen of the community colleges have established pre-majors as an option for Associate in Arts students to consider in planning their coursework. These optional pre-majors serve primarily as advising tools since students are not required to declare majors in order to progress towards their degrees.

In contrast, the remaining 10 community colleges have not restructured their Associate in Arts degree programs to include degree pre-major options or requirements. Rather these institutions use general advising services to inform students of prerequisites. Most of these community colleges require entering students to see an advisor upon admission, and some require students to see an advisor after this initial visit. However, students who do not keep records of their advising visit and/or who change their planned major may not know what prerequisite courses they need to take to qualify

¹⁴ In 2006, the Council of Community College Presidents recommended colleges require community college Associate in Arts degree seeking students to declare pre-majors after they have acquired at least 24 hours.

¹⁵ Some colleges offer other services to assist students in identifying prerequisites. These services include degree audits which allow students to see which prerequisites they need to complete and a partnership program that connects students directly with the University of Central Florida so they can receive advising and admissions services.

for admission to their desired university degree program.

Not completing prerequisites while enrolled at community colleges may prevent Associate in Arts degree students from being admitted to university degree programs. The University of Florida requires community college students with Associate in Arts degrees to meet the admission requirements of both the university and specific bachelor's degree programs in order to be admitted to the university. Admission requirements for specific programs include completion of all prerequisites. Thus, students who are unaware of common prerequisites and who do not take all required courses as part of their Associate in Arts degree program will not be able to transfer to the university. In contrast, other universities report that they may accept transfer students who fail to take all prerequisite courses but require these students to complete the required classes before they are admitted to degree programs.

Community colleges use multiple sources to advise students about prerequisites. Due to the widespread inconsistencies across universities, community college advisors lack a consistent resource that identifies what courses students need to complete as part of their Associate in Arts program in order to be admitted to bachelor degree programs. The community colleges report using a variety of resources to advise their students, including the Common Prerequisite Counseling Manual and information they receive directly from universities. Many community colleges reported that they do not use the Common Prerequisite Counseling Manual exclusively because they correctly believe that the universities are not consistently following the common prerequisites.

Recommendations

Legislative options

To address the problems identified by our review and to help ensure universities are consistently implementing the common prerequisites, we recommend that the Legislature consider the actions described below.

- Modify s. 1007.25(5), *Florida Statutes*, to specify that the common prerequisites apply to limited access bachelor's degree programs.
- Require universities to provide prerequisite information in their catalogs.
- Require the Department of Education and Board of Governors to review all university prerequisites and report the results of their examination to the Legislature by June 30, 2009.

Agency recommendations

To facilitate the smooth transition of students from community colleges to state universities and to ensure the consistent implementation of the state common prerequisites, we recommend that the Department of Education and the Board of Governors take the actions described below.

- Improve communication with the state universities and community colleges. The department and Board of Governors staff should provide annual training sessions on the common prerequisites and how they are to be implemented. These topics should also be addressed at the annual statewide meetings of university provosts and academic vice presidents and the community college vice presidents for instructional affairs.
- Review the process for updating the common prerequisites. The Board of Governors and department should review the process institutions use to update and revise the common prerequisites. The Board of Governors and department staff should work with university officials to identify ways to improve timeliness and dissemination of revisions to the common prerequisites.
- Require institutions to implement corrective actions to address the remaining inconsistencies identified by our review. The Board of Governors should issue a memorandum to universities requiring

them to take corrective actions to align their prerequisites with the state common prerequisites. The Board of Governors should require these institutions to submit their additional corrective actions to the board's Office of the Inspector General and the Director of Compliance.

- Adopt the Council of Community College Presidents guidelines for student pre-majors. While most community colleges offer pre-majors, few require students to declare them. Since students must complete prerequisites prior to admission to upper division programs, requiring Associate in Arts students to declare pre-majors and to meet prerequisites as part of their coursework (to the extent these courses are available) could help reduce excess hours and help ensure a smoother transition to universities.

Agency Response ---

In accordance with the provisions of s. 11.51(5), *Florida Statutes*, a draft of our report was submitted to the Commissioner of Education and to the chancellor of the Board of Governors to review and respond. Both written responses have been reproduced herein in Appendix D. Where necessary and appropriate, comments have been inserted into the responses.

In addition, a draft report was also submitted to each state university. While the universities were not required to respond to the report, several universities provided comments and feedback which were considered in the final version of the report. One university, the University of Florida, provided a formal response to the report which is available on our website: www.oppaga.state.fl.us/reports/educ/r08-11s.html.

Appendix A

Overview of State Policies and Tools Facilitating 2+2 Articulation

Florida has established several fundamental state policies and tools that facilitate articulation from community colleges to state universities, as shown in Table A-1 below.

Table A-1
Several State Policies Provide the Foundation for Effective 2+2 Articulation

Articulation Policy	Statutory Reference	Summary
Statewide Course Numbering System	1007.24	The system is an inventory of postsecondary course offerings by public and participating private institutions of higher learning. All 28 community colleges, 10 of the 11 state universities, 40 area technical education centers, and 24 non-public postsecondary institutions are included in the system.
General Education Requirement	1007.25	Every public institution must identify 36 hours of general education curriculum in the areas of communications, math, natural science, social science, and humanities. The Department of Education and Board of Governors require that if a student completes this 36-hour block, they do not have to take any additional courses to satisfy general education requirements if they transfer to another public institution.
FACTS.org	1007.28	FACTS.org is the Florida Academic Counseling and Tracking for Students system and is a statewide computer-assisted student advising system that allows students to access transcripts, view state policies and guidelines, assess progress toward a degree and verify when graduation requirements are met.
Common Program Prerequisites	1007.25	The common prerequisites are a list of common prerequisite courses for every bachelor degree program. The purpose of this list is to provide students with a list of courses they will need to complete before being admitted into the upper division of a specific bachelor’s degree program. The Department of Education, through the Articulation Coordinating Committee, has established state common prerequisites for 215 bachelor’s degree programs.

Source: Department of Education and the Board of Governors.

Common Prerequisite Counseling Manual

In 1996, the Legislature directed the department to establish a list of common prerequisite courses for every bachelor’s degree program in Florida. The common prerequisites are intended to be courses that are required by both native and transfer students for admission or entrance to a specific bachelor’s degree program. The state common prerequisites are listed in the Common Prerequisite Counseling Manual located on FACTS.org. The manual includes prerequisites for 215 bachelor degrees. The prerequisite courses are identified by course numbers included in the Statewide Course Numbering System. Table A-2 shows an example of common prerequisite courses for a bachelor’s degree in psychology as they appear in the Common Prerequisite Counseling Manual on FACTS.org. According to the common prerequisites, students must complete four courses: one course in general biology (BSC XXXX), Introduction to Psychology (PSY X012), any other lower level psychology course, and any statistics course. Students may complete

any biology course with the course number of ranging from X200 to X209 or a course in general zoology (ZOO X010) to substitute for the general biology requirement.

**Table A-2
Students Must Complete Four Courses to Be Eligible for Admission into the Upper Division of a Psychology Degree Program**

Common Prerequisites Counseling Manual for 2007-2008		
Course Number		Course Title
BSC	XXXX	Any level General Biology course (X000-X099)
or BSC	X200-209	Biology
or ZOO	X010	General Zoology
PSY	X012	Introduction to Psychology
PSY	XXXX	Any lower level psychology class within the psychology inventory
STA	XXXX	Any statistics course (X000-X099)

Note: The X's preceding a course number refer to the course level, which differs by institution. Lower division courses generally have a 1 or 2 preceding the three- digit course number.

Source: Common Prerequisite Counseling Manual.

Appendix B

University Corrective Actions

After comparing the state common prerequisites to state university prerequisites, we requested that each state university respond to inconsistencies we identified. Many institutions replied that they were taking action to fix the problems identified by our review. Table B-1 indicates the programs for which universities indicate they are taking corrective action. Some universities reported they would follow the approval process to update the prerequisite manual, but we did not identify them as taking corrective actions since they are not taking actions to currently comply with the common prerequisites. In addition, there is no guarantee that these institutions will be able to successfully amend the common prerequisites to align with their current practices.

Table B-1
Most Universities Have Taken Corrective Action to Align With the Common Prerequisites for Popular Degree Programs

Degree Program	Florida A&M University	Florida Atlantic University	Florida Gulf Coast University	Florida International University	Florida State University	University of Central Florida	University of Florida	University of North Florida	University of South Florida	University of West Florida	Problem Rate by Program
Accounting	☑	☑	☑	✗	✗	☑	✗	☑	☑	☑	30%
Biology	☑	☑	✓	☑	✗	☑	✗	☑	✓	✗	30%
Business Administration	☑	☑	☑	✗	✗	☑	✗	✓	☑	☑	30%
Civil Engineering	☑	☑	✓	☑	☑	☑	✗	✓	✓	N/A	11%
Elementary Education	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	0%
English	✗	✓	✓	☑	✓	✓	✗	✓	✓	☑	20%
Finance	N/A	☑	☑	✗	✗	☑	✗	✓	☑	☑	33%
History	☑	☑	✓	☑	✓	☑	✗	✓	☑	✓	10%
Hospitality	N/A	☑	✓	☑	✗	✓	N/A	N/A	✓	✓	14%
Marketing	N/A	☑	☑	✗	✗	☑	✗	✓	☑	☑	33%
Nursing	☑	☑	✓	☑	✓	✓	✗	✓	✓	☑	10%
Political Science	☑	☑	✓	☑	✓	☑	✗	☑	✓	✓	10%
Psychology	☑	☑	✓	☑	☑	☑	✗	✓	☑	✓	10%
Sociology	☑	☑	✓	☑	✓	☑	✗	✓	☑	N/A	11%
Problem Rate by University	9%	0%	0%	29%	43%	0%	92%	0%	0%	8%	

✗ - University prerequisites could create articulation barriers for students following the common prerequisites.

✓ - University prerequisites did not create articulation barriers for students.

☑ - University has taken action to correct an inconsistency identified by our review.

Source: OPPAGA analysis of university prerequisites and common prerequisites.

Appendix C

Community College Advising Methods and Approaches for Associate in Arts Students

We contacted all 28 community colleges to determine how they advise students about degree prerequisites. Each college reported using student advising, with some colleges requiring students to see an advisor more than once while completing their Associate in Arts degrees.¹⁶ Eighteen colleges also reported offering pre-majors as a method for students to complete prerequisites as part of their Associate in Arts degree. Table C-1 provides an overview of how community colleges advise students of degree prerequisites. For example, Daytona Beach Community College has pre-majors as an option for students, requires students to see an advisor before initially enrolling, and requires students to see an advisor after 30 credit hours and before graduation. In addition, we asked each college about the source they use to inform students about prerequisites. While most colleges use the Common Prerequisite Counseling Manual on FACTS.org, some use university websites and catalogs as a source to advise students.

Table C-1
Eighteen Community Colleges Have Formally Integrated Prerequisites into the Structure of Their Associate in Arts Programs by Offering or Requiring Pre-Majors

Community College	Pre-Majors	Do Colleges Require		Source Used to Advise Students of Prerequisites
		Initial Advising?	Additional Advising?	
Brevard	Not offered	Yes	No required additional advising	Prerequisite Manual and university websites
Broward	Offered	Yes	No required additional advising	Prerequisite Manual and university websites
Central Florida	Offered (Nursing only)	Yes	No required additional advising	Prerequisite Manual and university websites
Chipola	Required	Yes	Every semester	Prerequisite Manual and university websites
Daytona Beach	Offered	Yes	After 30 hours, before graduation	Prerequisite Manual
Edison	Not offered	Yes	After 24 hours, 45 hours, before graduation	Prerequisite Manual and university websites
Florida CC-Jacksonville	Not offered	Yes	No required additional advising	Prerequisite Manual and university websites
Florida Keys ¹	Not offered	Yes	Every semester	Prerequisite Manual
Gulf Coast	Required	Yes	Every semester	Prerequisite Manual and university websites
Hillsborough	Not offered	Yes	No required additional advising	Prerequisite Manual
Indian River	Offered	Yes	After 45 hours, before graduation	Prerequisite Manual
Lake City	Required	Yes	After 15 hours, 45 hours	Prerequisite Manual
Lake-Sumter	Offered	Yes	No additional advising required unless student is on academic probation	University websites and catalogs
Manatee	Not offered	Yes	Subsequent advising conducted based on cohort groups	Prerequisite Manual
Miami Dade	Offered	Yes	No required additional advising unless student falls below standard	Prerequisite Manual

¹⁶ Three colleges require additional advising if students are on academic probation or if they change programs.

Community College	Pre-Majors	Do Colleges Require		Source Used to Advise Students of Prerequisites
		Initial Advising?	Additional Advising?	
North Florida	Offered	Yes	Every semester	Prerequisite Manual
Okaloosa Walton	Required	Yes	No additional advising required ²	University websites and catalogs
Palm Beach	Offered	No	Only students on academic probation and those who test into three college prep areas are required to meet with an advisor	Prerequisite Manual
Pasco Hernando	Not offered	Yes	No required additional advising	Prerequisite Manual
Polk	Offered	Yes	No additional advising required	Prerequisite Manual and university websites
Pensacola	Offered	Yes	No additional advising required	Prerequisite Manual and university websites
St. Johns River	Not Offered	Yes	After 30 hours, before graduation	Prerequisite Manual and university websites
St. Petersburg	Offered	Yes	Only to change majors or programs	Prerequisite Manual
Santa Fe	Not Offered	Yes	Every semester ³	Prerequisite Manual
Seminole	Offered	Yes	No additional advising required	Prerequisite Manual
South Florida	Not Offered	Yes	Only students on academic probation or students enrolled in college prep courses	Prerequisite Manual and university websites
Tallahassee	Required	Yes	Every semester until 50% of program completed	Prerequisite Manual and university catalogs
Valencia	Offered	Yes	No additional advising required	Prerequisite Manual

¹ Florida Keys will offer pre-majors beginning in the fall semester 2008.

² Each time an AA student without a pre-major attempts to register they are prompted to consult an advisor to select a pre-major.

³ Santa Fe requires students complete an online degree audit each time they register. This audit informs students which courses they need to complete if they intend to transfer to a specific program at UF.

Source: OPPAGA survey of community colleges.

Appendix D

FLORIDA DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION



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Commissioner of Education



February 22, 2008

Gary R. VanLandingham, Ph.D.
Director
Office of Program Policy Analysis &
Government Accountability (OPPAGA)
Claude Pepper Building, Room 312
111 West Madison Street
Tallahassee, Florida 32399-1475

RE: Report 08-xx: *Inconsistent Implementation of Common Prerequisites Creates Barriers to Effective "2+2" Articulation*

Dear Dr. VanLandingham:

Thank you for the opportunity to respond to the draft report entitled *Inconsistent Implementation of Common Prerequisites Creates Barriers to Effective "2+2" Articulation*. Florida serves as a national model for "2+2" articulation and has many effective policies and practices in place to ensure the smooth transition of students between and among education institutions. However, as our educational landscape continues to evolve and expand, there is always room for improvement.

The report recommends requiring the Department of Education and the Board of Governors to complete a review of all university prerequisites and report the results to the Legislature by June 30, 2009. The Department of Education, through the Articulation Coordinating Committee (ACC), is already working in collaboration with the Board of Governors to complete such a project. The goal of this project is to increase institutional compliance with the statewide Common Prerequisite policy by opening the lines of communication and ensuring that all institution staff are aware of both the law and the process for seeking statewide approval for revisions to the Common Prerequisite Manual.

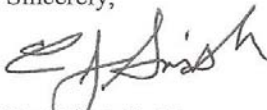
Dr. Gary R. VanLandingham
Page Two
February 22, 2008

The Board of Governors and the Department of Education staff are also in the process of revising the format of the Common Prerequisite Manual to ensure accuracy and increase the clarity of information provided so that it can be a more useful tool for students and institutional advisors. Having this up-to-date information readily accessible via FACTS.org is critical to seamless, cost-effective transfer articulation. In addition, the Articulation Coordinating Committee, through the work of the Oversight Committee, is developing a plan to enhance the process for making changes to the Common Prerequisite Manual as well as the effective communication of any future changes that are approved.

With regard to the recommendation that all 28 community colleges require students to declare pre-majors as part of their Associate of Arts degree programs, the Department supports OPPAGA's recommendation as it is consistent with guidelines adopted by the Community College Council of Presidents.

Should you have any further questions for the Department about the Common Prerequisite Manual, please contact Dr. Heather Sherry at Heather.Sherry@fldoe.org or Dr. Willis Holcombe at Will.Holcombe@fldoe.org. Thank you again for the opportunity to respond to this report.

Sincerely,



Dr. Eric J. Smith

EJS/hsa

c: Dr. Heather Sherry, Director, Office of Articulation
Dr. Willis N. Holcombe, Chancellor, Division of Community Colleges (DCC)
Dr. Judith Bilsky, Executive Vice Chancellor, DCC



BOARD OF GOVERNORS STATE UNIVERSITY SYSTEM OF FLORIDA

325 West Gaines Street – Suite 1614 – Tallahassee, Florida – 32399-0400
Academic and Student Affairs (850) 245-0466 – www.flbog.org

February 26, 2008

Dr. Gary R. VanLandingham
Director
Office of Program Policy Analysis &
Government Accountability
Claude Pepper Building, Room 312
111 West Madison Street
Tallahassee, Florida 32399-1475

RE: Report 08-xx: *Inconsistent Implementation of Common Prerequisites Creates Barriers to Effective 2+2 Articulation*

Dear Dr. VanLandingham:

Thank you for the opportunity to review the draft report titled *Inconsistent Implementation of Common Prerequisites Creates Barriers to Effective 2+2 Articulation*. We appreciate your staff’s collegiality in the development of this report.

Many of the recommendations set forward in this draft report will inform our activities as we move forward with our Common Prerequisite Project and other projects designed to improve articulation. Some recommendations already are being addressed. For example, all universities now have a clear understanding that common prerequisites do apply to limited access programs, and communication will be improved through regularly scheduled meetings with university academic affairs staff. Additionally, training materials will be developed as part of the project so that new faculty will have a clear understanding of the common prerequisites and their role in the articulation process.

We are supportive of the recommendation on page 9 concerning the adoption of the Council of Community College Presidents guidelines for associate in arts students to have pre-majors. Due to the current funding constraints and their impact on enrollment, it is now even more critical than ever for students to complete the common prerequisites as part of their associate in arts curricula.

Gary R. VanLandingham
Page 2 of 3
February 26, 2008

We believe that the report may overstate perceived problems with the implementation of common prerequisites. It is our understanding that the research supporting the report focused on the review of university catalogs to determine if published degree program requirements were aligned with the statewide *Common Prerequisite Manual*. Based upon discrepancies found in university catalogs, the report states that barriers to articulation may have been created and that the common prerequisite policies have not been effectively implemented.

We are not aware of any reviews of actual student transcript records that might document the existence of such barriers; indeed, we are not aware that any such difficulties actually encountered by individual students were not resolved in the students' favor. We are disappointed that there might be errors in university catalogs—we can do better here. However, such errors do not automatically lead to a breakdown in policy implementation.

OPPAGA Comment

As noted on page 3 of the report, our review of the common prerequisites policy was not limited to a review of university catalogs. We compared university prerequisites (as published in their catalogs and other materials) with the common prerequisites listed in the Common Prerequisite Manual and then discussed and verified this information on program prerequisites with staff at each university. We plan to examine student transcripts in a subsequent study to assess the impact of these articulation problems on the credit hours earned by transfer students who are admitted to upper division programs at universities. Articulation problems could also result in students being denied admission to upper division programs when universities are not following the common prerequisites.

It is notable that there is no mention in the report that the Board of Governors (BOG) is charged in Article IX, Section 7 (d), Florida Constitution, with the responsibility for “defining the distinctive mission of each constituent university and its articulation with free public schools and community colleges.” In response to this mandate, the BOG and its staff have engaged in cross-sector task groups seeking to better align high school graduation requirements with university admission requirements and to improve the articulation of community college transfers into state universities. Staff articulation activities include reviewing new baccalaureate degree programs for compliance with established common prerequisites and continuously examining the infrastructural components of articulation in Florida (Statewide Articulation Agreement, Statewide Course Numbering System, *Common Prerequisite Manual*, *Statewide Articulation Manual*, and the FACTS on-line student advising system) to ensure that information provided is accurate and up to date. Universities and community colleges are routinely advised of any changes to these articulation mechanisms.

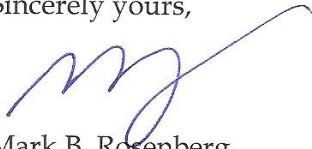
Gary R. VanLandingham
Page 3 of 3
February 26, 2008

The System-wide Common Prerequisite Project described on page 7 of the report is mischaracterized as little more than a discussion group to determine whether the common prerequisites need revising. This project was initiated in summer 2007 in response to issues that were being brought to the attention of BOG and Florida Department of Education staff. It represents a comprehensive overhaul of the 381-page *Common Prerequisite Manual* to revalidate the common prerequisites for each existing state university and community college baccalaureate program, to eliminate out-of-date course requirements, and to simplify the structure and usability of the manual.

This project is a major undertaking involving many state university and community college faculty working under tight budget constraints – with added teaching and advising responsibilities by the day. The Common Prerequisite Project is scheduled to be complete by May 2009. In the meantime, we will do our best to address prerequisite discrepancies between our SUS catalogs with the current manual. The discrepancies are unacceptable.

Thank you once again for the opportunity to review and respond to these reports.

Sincerely yours,



Mark B. Rosenberg
Chancellor

c: Interim Vice Chancellor Dorothy J. Minear
Vice Chancellor Nancy McKee
Inspector General Derry Harper



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29 February 2008

Ms. Jane Fletcher, Staff Director
Staff Director, Education Policy Area
The Florida Legislature's Office of Program Policy Analysis and Government Accountability
111 West Madison Street, Suite 312
Tallahassee, FL 32399-1375

Re: Draft Report (February 7, 2008) *Inconsistent Implementation of Common Prerequisites Creates Barriers to Effective "2+2" Articulation*

Dear Ms. Fletcher:

Thank you for the opportunity to respond to the draft report on common prerequisites at the University of Florida. There are several issues we would like to address, and appreciate your willingness to consider our response.

There are three elements of the report that we support.

1. The first recommendation that all stakeholders "improve communication with the state universities and community colleges" (p. 9) will help all of us better address common issues. We are committed to participating in workshops, state meetings, or other exercises that improve communication.
2. We agree with the report's second recommendation that the Board of Governors and the universities should develop "ways to improve timeliness and dissemination of revisions to the common prerequisites" (p. 9). We are ready to work with the Board on devising more effective methods for revising the state's common prerequisites. We are, in fact, currently engaged with the Board of Governor's efforts to update the Common Prerequisite Manual.
3. As your draft report noted, for the most part our information sources are consistent, but we do have a few inconsistencies particularly between departmental and university information sources. These multiple sources could lead to confusion about our compliance with state law on articulation through the common prerequisites (p. 5). We will immediately begin the process of clarifying our internal information sources, using the following steps:

Response to Report No. 08-11

- a. We will undertake to make the "Transfer Manual" on the UF transfer admission website consistent with the Common Prerequisites Manual <https://www.isis.ufl.edu/cgi-bin/nirvana?MDASTRAN=RSI-ETMEN> ;
- b. The "Transfer Manual" will refer students to the FACTS.org 2+2 audit and a central site linked to our undergraduate catalogue containing all acceptable substitutions and detailed information on requirements <https://facts23.facts.org/advising/user.do>;
- c. We will reiterate in all our communications with potential AA transfers that our admissions decisions will be consistent with the state's Articulation Agreement between community colleges and state universities, and that resource constraints must be taken into account in making admission decisions. Our communication will also make clear that these requirements, courses, and grades are the minimum expectations and those students who exceed these minimums are most competitive for admissions.
- d. We will address departmental website inconsistencies by having the departments provide links to the central sites noted in (a) and (b) above.

Aside from the above corrective actions, there are several aspects of the draft report on which we would like to comment and that we hope you would be willing to address in the final version. These are:

1. The implication that the University of Florida creates arbitrary and unlawful barriers to smooth articulation by failing to adhere to the common state prerequisites.

The draft report makes it appear that the University of Florida is creating substantial barriers to the articulation of transfer students to UF. In fact our philosophy is to be as transparent as possible and to provide all our students and potential students with as much information as possible, including clear guidelines on the courses they will need to enter and be successful at the University of Florida. To that end, we developed groundbreaking systems that have substantially improved the graduation rate of both native and transfer students. These systems have gained statewide recognition and national attention as many institutions have either adopted clones or variations to provide their students the same level of support. They give students an automated environment in which their academic record is matched against the actual degree audits used to certify degrees, making it easy for high school or community college students to find information on exactly what the university expects from all matriculated students.

It is a matter of documented fact that transfer students to the University of Florida graduate at the same rate as our native students. This has been achieved in part by developing automated support systems in conjunction with the legislatively directed and funded FACTS 2+2 audit system. Using this system allows transfer students to compare their actual academic record from their home institution to a degree audit for their intended major at the institution to which they would like to transfer. The 4 year graduation rate of 80% for AA transfers is comparable to the 6 year rate for FTICs – also 80%. These data are for our most recent cohort for which data are available – students entering in 2003.

Response to Report No. 08-11

2. The implication that the University of Florida does not adhere to the state requirement of common prerequisites for all students.

It is our understanding that the idea of common prerequisites was born in the desire to create a workable articulation system between community colleges and four-year institutions, not a set of across-the-board mandates. We do not treat the common prerequisites as a ceiling but rather as a floor, and we believe that this was the original intention behind creating a set of standard state-wide courses. In fact, the Board of Regents had established an approval process to recognize additional prerequisites for individual universities. We handle all of our students—natives and transfers—exactly the same in terms of course expectations. UF has no course requirements for our majors that incoming transfer students cannot take through the community colleges.

Further, we would argue that going beyond a “floor” for program requirements recognizes that each institution brings different assets to the marketplace, and that students should be given meaningful choices among them. It allows institutions to highlight strengths, differentiate programs in ways that respond to students’ goals, and more closely articulate programs at the undergraduate and graduate levels within an institution.

OPPAGA Comments

According to the Statewide Postsecondary Articulation Manual, the purpose of the common prerequisites established for every degree program “is to provide students, especially those who plan to transfer between institutions, with information regarding the courses that they will need to take to be admitted to upper division programs.” The manual also says that the prerequisites “for a specific academic program must be the same at all institutions in order to facilitate efficient transfer among all 39 public Florida postsecondary institutions, except for specific program tracks and program exceptions approved by the Oversight Committee (OC) and the Articulation Coordinating Committee.” If any university believes that additional course requirements are necessary it may submit a proposed change for consideration.

3. The indication that 92% of the University of Florida’s programs are out of compliance with state law.

The use of data taken from a select portion of programs across the university to make claims for all programs does not conform to best practices for statistical studies. The programs selected were ones with the highest numbers of enrolled majors and could not be considered “typical” in any way. Since the demand for these programs far exceeds our ability to provide classes and other resources for student majors, admissions have to be limited. We do so in the fairest ways possible, as noted earlier. But, as a consequence of sampling these atypical programs, generalizing the results to all programs – as implied in your charts, such as “Exhibit 3” which is headlined “Percentage of Degree Programs with Articulation Problems,” - greatly overreaches the data.

OPPAGA Comments

In determining what programs to examine, we selected those that enrolled the most students among the state universities since compliance or non-compliance in these programs would affect the largest number of students. In the case of the University of Florida, we found that 12 of the 13 programs we reviewed (92%) had prerequisites that were not consistent with the state common prerequisites.

Response to Report No. 08-11

4. We do not believe that the Common Prerequisites Manual is a suitable basis for the study.

Using a manual that was developed 10 years ago does not meet the needs of a constantly changing curriculum driven by the fast paced knowledge creation that has occurred in the same period. Combined with the glacial process for instituting changes to the common prerequisites, the use of the Common Prerequisites Manual means that the study is looking at an out of date universe. In that sense, the fact that all of the institutions in the study were out of compliance to some degree with the CPM is not surprising. We are not aware that the Manual itself is a statutorily required source. It was originally intended as a tool to create well-informed decision-making, but its lack of currency has created articulation problems forcing institutions to create their own publically accessible prerequisite resources to assure full information disclosure to potential applicants.

UF has high rates of retention and graduation in the SUS because we have provided a technologically responsive information system that allows students to succeed in a very competitive environment. The legislature funds the FACTS.org and its related auditing system because it works for the students.

Students are not served well by a 10 year old process but rather by the academicians who are familiar with the preparation needed to be successful in this highly competitive academic environment where institutions have limited resources.

OPPAGA Comments

While the original list of common prerequisites was adopted over 10 years ago, this is not a static document. In the past four years alone there have been 166 amendments.

5. The status of limited access majors and the Common Prerequisite Manual in state statute.

State statute and FAC Chapter 6C-8.013 clearly allow the use of limited access majors in situations where there are resource constraints or other programmatic restrictions. We are in compliance with state statute and regulations and find no record of a discussion about or adoption of new regulations on this issue by the Board of Governors.

Response to Report No. 08-11

6. The role of competitive admissions and differential institutional strengths in a “one-size-fits-all” structure.

Use of the “2+2” audit allows students to know what is expected of them, and enables institutions to represent the reality of competitive admissions. Short of applying a quota admission system, or simply cutting off students arbitrarily, we are not sure how else to address limited institutional resources and the need to keep admissions within bounds. Technically, we could employ such a system, but doing so would be a great disservice to our students who now enjoy extensive, accurate information on what is required for admission and later success in our programs.

We appreciate your willingness to consider our comments regarding the current draft version of your report. I would be happy to provide any clarifications you might require on our response.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Angel Kwolek-Folland".

Angel Kwolek-Folland, Ph.D.

Interim Associate Provost for Academic Affairs
and University Articulation Officer

cc: Dr. Janie Fouke, Provost and Chief Academic Officer, University of Florida

The Florida Legislature

Office of Program Policy Analysis and Government Accountability



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