

ABSTRACT

Title of Dissertation: THE TRIUMPHS & TENSIONS OF
TRANSFER ARTICULATION:
INVESTIGATING THE IMPLEMENTATION
OF MARYLAND'S ASSOCIATE OF ARTS
IN TEACHING DEGREE

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Philosophy, 2018

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This dissertation study investigated the implementation of the Associate of Arts in Teaching (A.A.T.) degree at two, public four-year universities in Maryland. Using Honig's (2006a) Framework for Policy Analysis as a conceptual framework, I used higher education and policy implementation research to expand the conceptual model's three dimensions: the *Policy Dimension*, the *Places Dimension*, and the *People Dimension*. Using an interpretative case study design, I used multiple data sources, including semi-structured interviews with state and university administrators and faculty, interviews with A.A.T. students, observations of state and university meetings, and a review of federal, state, and university documents.

This study revealed that administrators and faculty generally perceived the A.A.T. degree to be an effective method to recruit diverse students into teaching

professions and to create more efficient transfer pathways into education baccalaureate programs. However, administrators and faculty acknowledged a number of challenges associated with implementation, including: 1) confusion surrounding admissions policies into education programs; 2) trouble completing the Basic Skills Test requirement; and 3) miscommunication, misadvisement, and misalignment with regard to transfer courses in the A.A.T. program, which often led to transfer credit problems. Three factors were found to influence implementation challenges: 1) state and organizational governance structures and culture; 2) state and university leaders (particularly how they interpreted the A.A.T. policy and how they communicated those interpretations to others); and 3) external pressures, such as accreditation and state workforce demands. Some challenges associated with transfer credit articulation can be attributed to differences between community college and university priorities and values.

Overall, the findings from this dissertation provide additional understanding of the promise and the challenges associated with subject-specific state transfer articulation degrees, such as the A.A.T. While subject-specific transfer policies can yield some positive effects on transfer pathways, they are not the sole solution to fixing transfer credit problems. To conclude, I provide recommendations for state policymakers, considerations for university practitioners, and directions for future research.

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OF ARTS IN TEACHING DEGREE

by

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Dissertation submitted to the Faculty of the Graduate School of the
University of Maryland, College Park, in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy
Spring 2018

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Acknowledgements

To complete a dissertation is quite the journey, and one that I could have never done alone!

I would first like to thank my wonderful dissertation committee. Thank you to Dr. Jennifer Rice for agreeing to serve as my Dean's Representative, despite her incredibly busy schedule. I am grateful to Dr. Andrew Lounder for his continual support throughout my dissertation process, particularly in helping me hone my conceptual framework and for always reminding me to think about the impact and implications of my work on policy and practice. Many thanks to Dr. Sharon Fries-Britt, who always encouraged my passion for transfer student populations and reminded me about the organizational implications for my work. My thanks to Dr. Marvin Titus, whose class on state systems was where my original topic was born and for providing me multiple venues to explore my love and passion for state policy. I am sincerely grateful to Dr. Michelle Espino Lira, my dissertation co-chair, for introducing me to qualitative research, being my qualitative inspiration, and teaching me everything I know about qualitative research. Thank you for always intuitively knowing when I needed tough love or a pep talk and for pushing me to put students at the forefront of my work. Lastly, I'd like to thank my advisor and dissertation co-chair, Dr. Alberto Cabrera. From the very first phone call you made to me upon my admission, I knew I was extremely lucky to have you and throughout the years have often joked that I feel like I won the advisor lottery. I am so grateful for all of the guidance, encouragement, and mentorship you've given me over the years, and thank you for your constant support during this process.

I want to thank my UMD community. My Ph.D. partner, Dr. Elizabeth Kurban: from being my editor to my shoulder to cry on, thank you for being with me every step of the way. To my fabulous cohort and sister-cohort members, Amilcar Guzman, Jeanette Snider, Dr. Molly Morin, and Shelvia English, I am forever indebted to you for your encouragement, inspiration, and for being my accountability buddies. Many thanks to other PhD students and alumni for providing hours of advice to me in this journey: Shannon Hayes, Cinthya Salazar, Alicia Bornmann, Dr. Gudrun Nyunt, Dr. Wendell Hall, Dr. Toyia Younger, Donté McGuire, Candice Staples Thomas, Dr. Nina Daoud, Dr. Tykeia Robinson, Jen Eliason, Kelly Cowdery, Dr. Jessica Bennett, Dr. Jennifer Johnson, and many more. You all never hesitated to provide support, advice, and encouragement. I came to UMD because of the collaborative environment that was apparent to me upon my first visit, and I could not have gotten through this without that fantastic community and collaboration.

I want to thank my incredible family and friends who have shaped me into the person I am and for their constant encouragement throughout my entire education, including my parents, Richard and Helen; my sisters, Shannon, Courtney, Erin, Caitlin; my brothers-in law, John, Tom, Jon, and Derrick; my parents- and sisters-in-law, Ewa, Jan, Ula, and Kathryn; my aunts, uncles, cousins, and friends. Your support throughout the years means the world to me, and I know I could not have done this without you! I love you all very much!

I also want to thank countless coworkers and supervisors, who have supported my education and ambitions throughout my Ph.D. journey, including the staff at Parcc Inc., the Office of Undergraduate Admissions, Letters and Sciences, and the

Stamp Student Union. I want to particularly thank my generous and supportive supervisors throughout the years, who gave me the flexibility I needed to finish this journey: Tracy, Enis, Erwin, Greg, Eric, Ashleigh, and Cori.

Finally, I want to thank my husband, Adam Lukszo. When I first met you, I had only started thinking about applying to Ph.D. programs, and you encouraged me from the beginning. Thank you for your constant encouragement, for always making sacrifices to allow me to focus on my research, and for pushing me to keep my goals. I could not have done this without your support and love, and I look very forward to our next life adventures post-dissertation! I love you!

Table of Contents

Acknowledgements.....	ii
Table of Contents.....	v
Chapter 1: Introduction.....	1
Problem Statement.....	3
Transfer Articulation Policy Background.....	5
Summary of Transfer Articulation Policy Research & Research Gap.....	6
Purpose of Study.....	9
Conceptual Framework.....	11
Summary of Research Design.....	13
Summary of Findings.....	16
Significance of Study.....	19
Summary of Chapter One & Preview of Remaining Chapters.....	21
Chapter 2: Literature Review.....	25
Overview of Literature Review.....	26
Policy Implementation Research.....	27
Evolution of Policy Research – from Policy to Implementation.....	27
State Higher Education Policy Research.....	30
K-12 Education Policy Implementation Research.....	32
Honig’s Framework for Policy Analysis.....	34
Conceptual Framework: The Policy Dimension.....	36
Policy Tools & Types.....	37
State Policy Evaluation & Compliance.....	41
Summary of Policy Dimension.....	42
Conceptual Framework: The Places Dimension.....	42
State Context.....	43
Organizational Context & Institutional Theory.....	48
Summary of Places Dimension.....	58
Conceptual Framework: The People Dimension.....	58
Street-Level Administrators.....	59
Mid-Level Administrators/Managers.....	60
Faculty.....	62
State System-Level Administrators.....	63
Summary of People Dimension.....	64
Creating Policy Coherence: Aligning the Dimensions.....	65
Transfer Articulation Policy Background.....	67
Summary of Transfer Articulation Policy Research.....	68
Quantitative Transfer Policy Studies.....	69
Qualitative & Implementation Transfer Policy Studies.....	73
Summary of Research Gap.....	75
Summary of Chapter Two.....	77
Chapter 3: Methodology.....	79
Research Purpose & Research Questions.....	79
Case Study Methodology.....	80
Rationale for Case Selection: State, Transfer Policy, and Universities.....	83

State & Transfer Policy Selection.....	83
University Selection.....	86
Sources of Data Collection	89
Interviews.....	89
Observations	94
Student Interviews	96
Documents	98
Epistemological Assumptions & Positionality Statement	99
Data Analysis	103
Establishing Trustworthiness	105
Summary of Chapter Three.....	107
Chapter 4: Case Descriptions.....	108
Maryland Case Description.....	108
Maryland Demographics.....	109
Maryland’s Overall State Governance Structure	109
Maryland Culture and Political Context	110
Maryland’s Higher Education System	111
Laying the Groundwork: Maryland’s General Transfer Articulation	
Policy	113
Maryland’s Associate of Arts of Teaching Degree Policy	117
Excel University Case Description	125
Organizational and Governance Structure	125
Organizational Culture.....	126
Implementation of the Associate of Arts in Teaching Degree.....	129
Student-Centered University Case Description	137
Organizational and Governance Structure	137
Organizational Culture.....	139
Implementation of the Associate of Arts in Teaching Degree.....	141
Summary of Chapter Four	146
Chapter 5: Findings.....	149
Perception of the Effectiveness of the Associate of Arts in Teaching.....	150
Challenges in Translating a State Transfer Policy to the Local Context ...	158
Confusion about Admissions Policies	158
Completion of the Basic Skills Test Requirement.....	160
Transfer Coursework Miscommunication, Misadvisement, and	
Misalignment	162
Adjustment to Inflexible Course Scheduling.....	165
Lack of Information about the Associate of Arts in Teaching Pipeline	167
Why Implementation Challenges May or May Not Occur.....	168
Organizational Factors Influencing Implementation	168
Role of Leaders in Associate of Arts in Teaching Creation and	
Implementation	184
External Pressures as an Influence on Implementation and Decision	
Making	191
Summary of Chapter Five.....	201
Chapter 6: Discussion and Conclusions.....	203

Summary of Key Findings	205
Policy Dimension	205
Places Dimension	207
People Dimension	208
Discussion of Findings.....	209
Some Successes, Some Challenges.....	210
The Nature of Policy Implementation.....	211
Impacts on the Implementation Process	213
Transfer Articulation: A Story of Tensions	215
Implications.....	218
Practical Implications for Universities.....	218
Implications for Policy at the State Level.....	223
Research Implications.....	227
Significance of the Study	232
Final Thoughts	234
Appendices.....	237
Appendix A.....	238
Appendix B.....	239
Appendix C.....	240
Appendix D.....	243
Appendix E.....	248
Appendix F.....	249
Appendix G.....	250
Appendix H.....	253
Appendix I.....	254
Appendix J.....	255
Appendix K.....	256
Appendix L.....	259
Appendix M.....	260
Appendix N.....	262
Appendix O.....	268
Appendix P.....	271
Appendix Q.....	272
Appendix R.....	273
References.....	274

Chapter 1: Introduction

“The 2/4 community college-baccalaureate transfer function is one of the most important state policy issues in higher education because its success (or failure) is central to many dimensions of state higher education performance, including access, equity, affordability, cost effectiveness, degree productivity, and quality” (Wellman, 2002, p. 3).

Karen Hernandez, a 23-year-old Latina from Baltimore, earned her associate degree from Baltimore City Community College (BCCC).¹ Following her dream of earning a degree, she transferred to Baltimore University to complete a bachelor’s degree in art history and human rights. However, she soon learned that only 55 out of the 65 credits she earned at BCCC would transfer to Baltimore University. Additionally, some of the credits she took at BCCC were not aligned with her major. It was then that she realized it would take another three years to earn a bachelor’s degree. Altogether, it would take Karen six years for a degree that should have taken four years.

What should Karen do? Should she push forward? Should she give up? These are the types of questions that thousands of individuals—from all backgrounds and all ages—face as they navigate their way through the higher education system, both in Maryland and across the United States. Students struggle with questions about the transfer of credits because of policy decisions that are made by state higher education

¹ Narrative is adapted from a real student’s story from Marcus (2013).

agency officials and university administrators (Neault & Piland, 2014; Rosenbaum, Deil-Amen, & Person, 2006).

While 37 percent of all postsecondary students within the state of Maryland enter higher education through community colleges, only one quarter of them transfer to a four-year college² within six years (Maryland Higher Education Commission, 2016a). Even fewer of these students complete a bachelor's degree, with only 18 percent of Maryland community college students earning a bachelor's degree within six years of transfer (Jenkins & Fink, 2016). This trend is not unique to Maryland. Nationally, 75 percent of entering community college students aspire to complete a bachelor's degree or higher, but only one quarter of these students actually transfer to a four-year college within five years (Horn & Skomsvold, 2011). Of those students who successfully transfer, only 42 percent eventually earn a bachelor's degree within six years of transferring (Jenkins & Fink, 2016). In other words, nationally, only *14 percent* of entering community college students who aspire to complete a baccalaureate degree actually accomplish this goal.

The transfer process does not take place in a vacuum. University administrators and faculty play an important role in facilitating transfer student success, specifically in creating, implementing, and promoting college policies that either reduce or introduce barriers for transfer students (Dowd, Pak, & Bensimon, 2013; Mery & Schiorring, 2011). In particular, Berman, Curry, Nelson, and Weiler (1990) noted that transfer effectiveness depends on an institution's "organizational

² In this study, I use "college" and "university" to interchangeably denote a four-year higher education institution. .

environment and how well it implements specific transfer-related strategies” (p. 19). Rosenbaum, Deil-Amen, and Person (2006) argued that organizational policies and processes are an important piece of college pathways, as students’ decisions are impacted by organizational procedures. Decisions made by university administrators and faculty—along with organizational factors such as structure, culture, and values—have a significant impact on the success of transfer students at four-year institutions (Burack, Lansperry, Shields, & Singleton, 2014; Higgins & Katsinas, 1999; Tobolowsky & Cox, 2012).

Problem Statement

One barrier between community college students and successful transfer and bachelor’s degree completion is *transfer credit articulation* (Dougherty, 1992; Monaghan & Attewell, 2015). Transfer credit articulation is defined as the transfer of credits from one college to another (Ignash & Townsend, 2000). Students can experience significant challenges in transferring credits; in particular, they may be shocked to learn that credits earned at one college will not transfer to another institution (Handel, 2013). A recent study by the National Center for Education Statistics found that, on average, students lose 13 credits (i.e., one semester’s worth of credits), while almost 40 percent of students lose the majority of their credits when transferring from one college to another (Simone, 2014). In Maryland, over a quarter of community college students lose at least six credits in the transfer process (Maryland Higher Education Commission, 2013).³

³ The average number of credits lost may be significantly higher. Unfortunately, the scale used for this study of community college students was zero credits lost, three credits lost, and six or more credits lost.

Credit loss is inefficient for students, as well as for higher education systems. When students lose credits, they forfeit both the money spent taking those credits as well as the time spent repeating college courses. In 2014, the average cost of tuition in Maryland was \$251 per university credit (Maryland Higher Education Commission, 2016a). If a student is forced to re-take two courses at their transfer institution, this student forfeits at least \$1,500 in tuition, while losing five courses (the equivalent of one semester) equates to \$3,765 additional tuition dollars that must be spent to recoup the credits. Students who are denied the transfer of these credits may spend at least one additional semester in college, missing out on salary and benefits they could have earned by joining the workforce earlier. Losing credits also can affect students' ability to finance their education, particularly given the current Pell grant structure, which limits student grants to a certain number of semesters (Handel & Williams, 2012). This problem is also a public loss, as college, state, and federal government dollars spent through tuition aid, scholarships, and Pell grants can be wasted on courses that will ultimately not count towards students' baccalaureate degrees (Kisker, Wagoner, & Cohen, 2012). Complete College America (2014) estimated that if each transfer student failed to transfer just two courses in a given year, families and taxpayers would lose \$600 million each year. In short, transfer credit problems waste time and resources.

The most significant challenge associated with transfer articulation is college completion (Doyle, 2006; Handel, 2013; Monaghan & Attewell, 2015). Challenges in transferring credit can dramatically impact a community college student's chances of completing a baccalaureate degree. Doyle (2006) found that 82 percent of students

who transferred *all* of their credits completed their bachelor's degree within six years, compared to only 42 percent of students who transferred *some* of their credits.

Another study found that students who had transferred 90 to 100 percent of their credits were 2.5 times more likely to graduate compared to students who transferred less than half their credits (Monaghan & Attewell, 2015). Addressing the transfer articulation problem will help students successfully transfer credits, which will eliminate or reduce wasted tuition dollars and increase baccalaureate completion rates. Therefore, transfer articulation is among the most critical topics to study within higher education.

Transfer Articulation Policy Background

To address the transfer credit articulation problem, many states have developed statewide transfer articulation agreements, which specify the number of credits and the type of credits⁴ that will transfer from one college to another within a state (Smith, 2010; Townsend & Ignash, 2000). Florida was the first state to pass a statewide articulation policy in 1971, which led to a gradual expansion to the number of states passing and implementing state transfer policies in the 1970s and 1980s (Anderson, Sun, & Alfonso, 2006; Mosholder & Zirkle, 2007; Townsend & Ignash, 2000). By 2010, 36 states had transfer articulation policies defining the transfer of credits between public colleges and universities (including community colleges and four-year universities) within a state (Smith, 2010). As state transfer policies grew in

⁴ For example, a university may specify that any mathematics course that includes college algebra or higher may transfer to that university. Similarly, a university may specify that an English course may transfer if the course covers areas such as critical reading and research skills.

popularity, researchers and policymakers began studying the policies to learn more about their design and effectiveness.⁵

Summary of Transfer Articulation Policy Research & Research Gap

Studies on state transfer articulation policies can be divided into three groups. First, there are a number of studies focused on the history, development, and the types of state transfer policies across the states (Ignash & Townsend, 2000; Kintzer & Wattenbarger, 1985; Kisker et al., 2012; Smith, 2010; Wellman, 2006). Some of the early studies aimed to understand the history behind transfer, outlining the landscape of states that had policies and how the policies were designed (Kintzer & Wattenbarger, 1985; Kintzer, 1996). Ignash and Townsend's (2000) study expanded this inventory approach, but created a classification system for states' policies. While these early studies were instrumental in understanding the historical development and types of transfer articulation policies, these studies did not address whether these policies were effective at improving student outcomes or provide any insight into how they were being implemented.

The second group of studies included a number of quantitative studies analyzing whether the presence of a state transfer articulation policy impacted student outcomes, including transfer rates and baccalaureate completion (Anderson et al., 2006; Boatman & Soliz, 2018; Gross & Goldhaber, 2009; Higgins & Katsinas, 1999; Lasota & Zumeta, 2016; Roksa & Keith, 2008). While some of the studies showed mixed results as to whether these policies positively impacted student outcomes, the

⁵ The term "effective" is defined in this study as whether the policies impact students' educational outcomes, including transfer rates from community colleges to four-year colleges and community college students' baccalaureate completion rates.

majority of the studies concluded that state transfer articulation policies had no statistically significant effects on transfer rates and baccalaureate degree completion (Anderson et al., 2006; Gross & Goldhaber, 2009; Roksa, 2009; Roksa & Keith, 2008). Roksa (2009), however, posited that findings from these 50-state quantitative analyses were severely limited because of insufficient data sources and the inability of quantitative analyses to pick up on important divergent state contexts and policy nuances within currently available data. Roksa's (2009) argument suggested that a qualitative study may be more appropriate to understand state transfer policies to better account for important state context factors given current data limitations.

The third group of studies pertains to policy implementation. For decades, policy researchers have argued that understanding how a policy is implemented on the ground-level is critical to analyzing its outcomes (Honig, 2006a; Mazmanian & Sabatier, 1983; McLaughlin, 2005; Pressman & Wildavsky, 1984). Research over time has settled on an important idea: a policy's outcomes are directly impacted by how it is implemented. Scholars have argued, and continue to argue, that policy evaluation begins with the first step of examining whether the implementation of the policy has been carried out as intended (Fixsen, Naoom, Blase, Friedman, & Wallace, 2005; Odden, 1991; Werner, 2004). After the implementation of the policy has been examined, a more robust analysis of its outcomes can be completed (Fixsen et al., 2005). For instance, if a policy analyst discovers a policy is not having its desired effect, it would be impossible to conclude whether the failure is in the policy's design or its implementation unless the analyst also studied the implementation of the policy.

Thus, not surprisingly, the last group of transfer articulation studies focused on the implementation of state transfer articulation policies through qualitative and mixed-methods case studies (Carpenter-Davis, 2005; Chase, 2013; Neault & Piland, 2014; Schaffer, 2000; Tobolowsky, McClellan, & Cox, 2014; Wilkerson, 2012). Some of these implementation studies found that the policies were not implemented with fidelity, and that administrators perceived the policies as being ineffective at improving student outcomes (Carpenter-Davis, 2005; Neault & Piland, 2014; Schaffer, 2000; Tobolowsky et al., 2014). Some studies also noted the important role that organizational context played when policies were translated from a state-level to a campus setting (Carpenter-Davis, 2005; Neault & Piland, 2014).

While these studies have contributed to the body of research on how transfer policies are implemented, they are hampered by several methodological shortcomings. These weaknesses include a lack of a strong conceptual framework or theoretical orientation (Carpenter-Davis, 2005; Neault & Piland, 2014; Schaffer, 2000), exclusion of four-year university administrators and faculty in data collection (Chase, 2013; Schaffer, 2000; Tobolowsky & Cox, 2012; Wilkerson, 2012), and an absence of data triangulation (Carpenter-Davis, 2005; Schaffer, 2000).

Some scholars have posited that state transfer articulation policies are ineffective because they are too general in design (Bailey, Jaggars, & Jenkins, 2015b). These scholars argued that state policies and initiatives should instead be focused on subject-specific pathways, such as business or education (Bailey, Jaggars, & Jenkins, 2015b). Despite the growing number of states and colleges creating and implementing these policies (Bailey, Jaggars, & Jenkins, 2015a; Complete College

America, 2012), little is definitively known or understood about how these policies work in practice and whether they are more effective at improving student outcomes (Bailey, Jaggars, & Jenkins, 2015c; Jenkins & Cho, 2014). Very little research has been conducted on subject-specific policies, leaving a large gap in the research.

To date, there has been no research on the implementation of a state, subject-specific transfer articulation policy. While some research on the implementation of transfer articulation policies does exist (Carpenter-Davis, 2005; Schaffer, 2000; Tobolowsky, McClellan, & Cox, 2014; Wilkerson, 2012), additional research with strong conceptual frameworks and theoretical orientations is warranted to help build a body of knowledge on these policies and their implementation. Furthermore, there is a noticeable limitation in the extant research in relation to examining the impact that organizational environment and university administrators and faculty have in how state policies are implemented into programs and policies at the campus level (Neault & Piland, 2014).

Purpose of Study

My study contributes to the scholarly work on state transfer policies by providing a case study investigation of the implementation of a subject-specific transfer articulation policy in the state of Maryland: the Associate of Arts in Teaching (A.A.T.) degree pathway, as defined in Maryland Code of Regulations (COMAR) Title 13B.02.03.24. I focus on how key state and institutional stakeholders⁶

⁶ Key stakeholders are defined in this study as state and institutional administrators and relevant faculty who are involved in policy implementation.

interpreted and implemented the policy, as well as how state and organizational context factors influenced the implementation process.

Maryland is a compelling state to study for several reasons. First, Maryland is one of three states with the highest community college to baccalaureate completion rate in the country (Jenkins & Fink, 2016).⁷ Other states have turned to Maryland for advice on state-wide transfer programs, such as their online transfer articulation system (Lederman, 2007). Maryland is also one of the few states with a subject-specific state transfer policy aimed at seamless transfer and was the first state in the country to create a transfer policy for teacher education in 2001 (Ignash & Slotnick, 2007). Given that the policy was implemented more than 15 years ago, the state, in partnership with colleges and universities within Maryland, has had time to work out details of the policy and its implementation, which provided a better understanding of how implementation occurs today. I selected the A.A.T. policy for three reasons. First, the policy is one of three subject-specific degree pathways in Maryland.⁸ Second, the policy was implemented 15 years ago, which has allowed the state and universities time to fully implement the policy. Third, the degree pathway exists at almost every public institution in the state, which offered a robust sample pool.

To give a little background on the development of the A.A.T., the legislature charged a task force in 1994 with creating a new transfer articulation policy “to establish a plan for the seamless transfer of teacher education students who began their preservice education at a community college with the intent to transfer to a four-

⁷ Wyoming and Montana are the other two states. All three states have a community college to baccalaureate completion rate of 18%.

⁸ The other two subject-specific pathways in Maryland are nursing and engineering.

year institution to earn the required baccalaureate degree and state teacher certification” (McDonough, 2003, p. 39). The issue was studied and discussed for seven years before a formal policy was written into law in 2001. As specified in COMAR regulations, if a student earns the A.A.T. degree at a Maryland community college, the student is able to transfer “up to 64 credit hours, satisfying all lower-division teacher education program outcomes without further review by in-State 4-year public and independent institutions” (COMAR 13B.02.03.24.D). Ideally, the intention of this policy is to provide students with a clearly defined pathway to earn an associate’s degree in two years and a bachelor’s degree in an additional two years (McDonough, 2003).

Conceptual Framework

I used Honig’s (2006a) Framework for Policy Analysis as the conceptual framework for my study. Honig (2006a) argued that policy outcomes are a result of a complex interplay between a policy’s design (*Policy Dimension*), the people engaged in the implementation process (*People Dimension*), and the local context in which the policy is implemented (*Places Dimension*). Past policy research has shown that merely looking at the design of a policy to investigate its effectiveness provides a limited understanding of the policy (Mazmanian & Sabatier, 1983; Pressman & Wildavsky, 1984). One key factor of analyzing policy effectiveness is understanding the people engaged in the implementation process, including how these individuals interpret the policy and make decisions about how to implement it (McLaughlin, 1987; Spillane, 2000; Weatherley & Lipsky, 1977). Organizational context is also an important factor to fully understand how a policy is working on the ground, because it

influences the decisions made by key stakeholders engaged in the implementation process (Jones & Ewell, 1993; McGuinness, 1994; Spillane, 2000; Weick, 1993). Honig's (2006a) Framework for Policy Analysis is the culmination of decades of policy research illustrating two key points. First, a researcher must understand policy implementation to apprehend whether a policy is achieving its intended goal effectively. Second, policy implementation is a complex process requiring an understanding of the policy design, the local context, and the people engaged in the implementation process.

Honig's (2006a) Framework for Policy Analysis is a multi-dimensional tool that allows researchers to develop a more robust picture of a policy's implementation. The *Policy Dimension* is used to examine the specific policy, including how it is designed and the policy tools used within the policy. The *People Dimension* examines who is responsible for implementing the policy and their relationships with different stakeholders who might be engaged in policy implementation. Unfortunately, Honig's framework is rather sparse when discussing the impact of people on the implementation process. Thus, I used concepts from sense-making theory (Eddy, 2003; Weick, 1993; Weick, Sutcliffe, & Obstfeld, 2005) to expand the *People Dimension* in order to understand how key stakeholders make sense of the A.A.T. policy and its implementation (Weick, 1993). The *Places Dimension* explores the context in which the policy is implemented, such as the state and institutional contexts. Because Honig's (2006a) Framework is also limited when discussing local context, I incorporated concepts from institutional theory to help me expand the *Places Dimension* and further articulate how internal and external contexts can

impact policy implementation (DiMaggio & Powell, 1983; Kezar, 2014). This conceptual framework guided my study's design, data collection, and data analysis.

Summary of Research Design

This study used an interpretive case study design to investigate the dynamics of policy implementation by looking at two public, four-year institutions within the State of Maryland: Excel University and Student-Centered University⁹ (Merriam, 1998). My overarching research question was: How has the A.A.T. policy been implemented at four-year, public universities within Maryland? In alignment with the *Policy, People, and Places Dimensions* of my conceptual framework, my sub-research questions were:

- 1) What are the policy tools, evaluation measures, and implementation processes associated with the implementation of the A.A.T. policy?
- 2) How do key stakeholders interpret and implement the A.A.T. policy?
- 3) What state and organizational context factors (if any) appear to be influential in how the A.A.T. policy has been implemented?

Case study was an ideal method for this research because it sought to understand a complex, contemporary phenomenon of how a state transfer policy is implemented within a given organizational context (Flyvbjerg, 2006; Stake, 1995; Yin, 2014). Additionally, some scholars argue that a qualitative policy analysis allows for a detailed, nuanced understanding of a policy (Tierney & Clemens, 2011). An interpretive case study design allowed me not only to make claims about *how* the

⁹ Names have been changed.

policy is being implemented, but also to offer ideas about *why* implementation is occurring as it is.

A key element of case study design is the use of multiple data sources in order to build a rich, thick description of the case and support internal validity through the triangulation of data (Creswell, 2013; Merriam, 1998; Yin, 2014). Accordingly, my study included semi-structured interviews, observations, focus groups, and an analysis of documents. The semi-structured interviews included eight key stakeholders at each university (i.e., university administrators and relevant faculty directly engaged in implementation of the policy), who helped me to understand the dynamics of implementation at each institution. To sample these individuals, I used purposive and snowball sampling, beginning with a gatekeeper at each university, and asking for recommendations leading me to other key individuals involved in implementation (Patton, 2015; Glesne, 2010). As part of these interviews, I asked the participants to review a critical incidence case—a mock transcript of an A.A.T. student. I asked the participants to explain how that particular student would experience transfer at their institution. I also conducted semi-structured interviews with four state-level administrators to understand the role that state-system administrators played in facilitating state policy implementation on university campuses and to provide historical context, which helped build the Maryland case description.

I also conducted a series of observations, including two observations of state-held A.A.T. Oversight Committee meetings and three observations of university-level meetings at each sampled site for a total of eight observations. The university-level

observations included new student orientations for A.A.T. students, recruiting events for A.A.T. students, and an annual meeting between one university and community colleges. Additionally, I conducted semi-structured interviews with three A.A.T. students from each university to learn more about how they experience the policy.¹⁰ Lastly, I reviewed state and university documents relevant to the A.A.T. policy. I used both deductive and inductive coding to analyze data using an analytic technique called pattern-matching using codes derived from the conceptual framework (Yin, 2014).

I used multiple methods to establish trustworthiness and support the validity of this study. Data triangulation helped me build a robust understanding of the data and confirm findings were accurate by comparing sources of data with each other (LeCompte & Schensul, 2010; Merriam, 1998; Yin, 2014). Then, I used a member checking process by allowing the administrators and faculty to review and provide feedback on my findings to ensure that the findings best reflected participants' perspectives (Glesne, 2010). I maintained an analytic memo throughout the study to practice reflexivity and examine my position in relation to the data (Saldaña, 2016). Lastly, I used rich, thick descriptions to help readers discern the transferability of the findings to other cases and whether my finding may apply to other locations (i.e., external validity) (Creswell, 2013).

¹⁰ During one of the interviews, a student brought a community college transfer friend who was eager to participate in the study. Although she met most of the selection criteria, she did not transfer with an A.A.T. degree. However, rather than re-schedule the interview with the original student, I decided to include both of them and interviewed them at the same time. This brought the total to seven students interviewed.

Summary of Findings

I present the findings of my study aligned with the three dimensions of my conceptual framework: the *Policy Dimension*, the *Places Dimension*, and the *People Dimension*.

Policy Dimension

Overall, administrators and faculty generally agreed that the A.A.T. degree pathway was effective at recruiting additional and more diverse students into teaching pathways. They also agreed that the A.A.T provides an efficient transfer pathway for most students into baccalaureate teaching degrees. However, participants also acknowledged a number of challenges associated with the implementation of the A.A.T., which can disrupt students' transfer pathways. These challenges included: misconceptions about the admissions policies for community college students into baccalaureate teaching programs; problems completing the Basic Skills Test requirement (which is necessary for the conferment of the A.A.T. degree as well as entrance to professional teaching programs); and miscommunication, misadvisement, or misalignment about coursework prior to transfer, which can often lead students to experience transfer credit problems. A.A.T. students can also struggle in adjusting to universities that offer more traditional schedules (i.e., limited online or evening classes), particularly students who need to care for family members during the day or work to support themselves or their families. Students who encounter these challenges are sometimes required to enroll in an additional semester(s) (beyond the traditional four semesters after transfer) in order to complete their bachelor's degree.

In examining what factors contribute to or mitigate against these challenges, three themes emerged within the *Places* and the *People Dimensions*.

Places Dimension

Organizational structure and culture contributed to how the A.A.T. policy was implemented. The structure of Maryland's system, including the University System of Maryland's convening role and the existence of the A.A.T. Oversight Council, positively influenced communication between community colleges and four-year universities. These communication structures have allowed the state to tackle implementation problems and gradually improve the policy's implementation over time. At Excel University and at branch campuses of Student-Centered University, a centralized advising structure created a streamlined communication structure from not only university leaders who sat on the A.A.T. Oversight Council meetings to street-level administrators but also between the university and local community colleges. Because of the streamlined communication, administrators and faculty were able to understand policy changes, communicate them to other internal stakeholders and enact strategies to implement them swiftly throughout the university. The streamlined communications also enabled better communication between community colleges and university administrators, preventing miscommunication and misadvisement problems.

External pressures outside of the Maryland higher education system also influenced the policy's creation and implementation. Accreditation standards were an important guiding tool in the design of the A.A.T. policy. In designing the A.A.T. degree, the state began with the accreditation standards at the baccalaureate level and

worked backwards to map out the necessary community college outcomes for the A.A.T. degree. Federal policies, particularly accountability policies, influenced certain decisions that impacted how the A.A.T. policy was implemented. Finally, state policies and values shaped changes that were made with the A.A.T., such as the evolution of the Basic Skills Test requirement and teacher certification standards. Many of these external pressures created a tension between three values present in Maryland's higher education system, which are constantly negotiated by state and university leaders: access, affordability, and quality.

People Dimension

State and university leaders played a large role in shaping how the policy was developed and implemented. State legislators were an influential catalyst in policy creation. By bringing transfer credit articulation problems to the public eye, they helped spur action on tackling transfer pathways. Once the idea for creating the A.A.T. was first brought up, it was the commitment of state higher education leaders along with K-12 leaders that enabled the policy to come to fruition.

Once the policy was created, university leaders held great responsibility in determining how the policy would be translated from a state policy into their local context. The ways in which the leaders' interpreted the policy influenced decisions about how the policy would work on their campus with existing university policies. These leaders' interpretations also affected how they communicated with other key stakeholders, such as faculty and academic advisors, about how to implement the policy.

Significance of Study

Recently, policymakers and policy organizations have been promoting subject-specific transfer policies as a possible solution to transfer credit problems, yet very little is understood about these policies (Bailey, 2018). This study addresses gaps in previous research through its aim in better understanding how a subject-specific transfer articulation policy works at the university level. Information from this study can be used to help policymakers and practitioners craft or adjust their own policies to address transfer credit problems and improve transfer student pathways. From this study, I provide a guiding framework for policymakers that can be used for states interested in creating and implementing policies similar to the A.A.T. degree, offering lessons learned from the Maryland case that can be used to begin the policymaking process. In addition, state policymakers and leaders can use information from this study to examine any existing transfer policies and make adjustments to improve the effectiveness of current policies.

This study can provide important lessons for university leaders and administrators, particularly in how to creating strong communication structures to improve policy implementation and outcomes for transfer students. Given the finding that A.A.T. recipients often struggle with adjusting to more limited scheduling options, universities can explore alternative course scheduling to help students with this challenge. Universities must ensure they have clear communication channels to the community colleges so that, if questions about coursework arise, the community college administrators know exactly who to call at the university to receive a quick answer. Community colleges and universities can also explore ways to help connect

universities with A.A.T. students earlier in their education pathways, which can help ensure that students receive correct advising information and are on track with their transfer coursework.

One of the drawbacks of past research on transfer articulation policies has been the lack or weak use of theoretical or conceptual frameworks in examining the implementation of transfer policies. My study addresses this deficiency by advancing Honig's (2006a) Framework for Policy Analysis framework that can be used for additional research on state transfer articulation policies, as well as other state higher education policies. This study provides a first step to additional research on similar topics. Given the importance of studying transfer pathways, additional research should be conducted on the implementation of other subject-specific transfer policies, such as Maryland's transfer pathways in engineering or nursing. This research will expand knowledge about how subject-specific pathways work in practice, but also further test the usability of this conceptual framework. Studies should also be done in other states, which will provide additional data but also examine whether the conceptual framework holds for other state contexts. Studies to further explore the impact of Maryland's A.A.T. degree are warranted as well in terms of the number of students have graduated from A.A.T. programs since its inception; whether students who complete an A.A.T. program graduate from a Maryland university; and whether these students remain in Maryland and become teachers.

This study can inform other quantitative or mixed-methods studies analyzing the effectiveness of state transfer policies. To date, most quantitative studies on the subject have indicated that state transfer policies have little to no effect on transfer

rates and baccalaureate outcomes (Anderson et al., 2006; Roksa & Keith, 2008); yet, these studies do not account for state nuances or whether the state policy was actually implemented. Using the conceptual framework for this study, a survey could be conducted using a sample of state, community college, and university administrators across states to collect information on the state transfer policy, its intended goals, whether it is perceived as being implemented with fidelity, and state/organizational structures or components of their culture that support implementation. Information derived from this survey can be used as additional contextual variables to repeat or enhance quantitative studies. For example, if State A and State B were included in an analysis and State A's policy had no impact on student outcomes, but State B's policy did have an influence, a quantitative study might indicate that transfer policies have mixed outcomes. However, if it turns out that State A's policy was not implemented very well and State B's policy was implemented fully, this information could shape the way quantitative outcomes are viewed. Thus, the conceptual framework from this study offers a way to enhance quantitative research on studying state transfer policy effectiveness.

Summary of Chapter One & Preview of Remaining Chapters

To summarize, transfer credit articulation is a major barrier to baccalaureate completion for community college transfer students. This credit transfer problem impacts thousands of students' lives across the country as well as the economic security of the United States. In recognition of this problem, many states have developed and implemented state transfer articulation policies aiming to improve transfer pathways and students' chances for baccalaureate completion. Unfortunately,

quantitative research indicates that these policies do very little to improve student transfer rates and baccalaureate completion rates. Research also suggests that investigating organizational contexts and the key stakeholders associated with implementation is critical to understanding how policies work in practice (Mazmanian & Sabatier, 1983; McLaughlin, 1987; Pressman & Wildavsky, 1984). While extant research has revealed some understanding as to how state transfer policies are implemented, this research has some methodological flaws and does not include the investigation of a state, subject-specific policy. I aimed to fill this gap by conducting an interpretative case study to examine the implementation of Maryland's state transfer articulation policy in teaching, the A.A.T. degree.

In Chapter Two, I expand my conceptual framework by reviewing pertinent literature to describe the three dimensions covered in my conceptual framework: the *Policy*, *Places*, and *People Dimensions*. I provide a brief history on the evolution of policy research to illustrate the importance of investigating policy implementation and an overview of state education policy research. I examine the literature on policy design, particularly the policy tools that are used. I discuss key concepts relevant to state and organizational context and provide further understanding on the key stakeholders engaged in the state transfer articulation process. I conclude Chapter Two with a summary of the specific ways my conceptual framework informed my study's design, data collection methods, and data analysis.

In Chapter Three, I provide further details outlining the methodology of my study, including a review of research questions, a discussion of why case study is an appropriate methodology for this research, and a rationale for why Maryland is a

compelling case to investigate. In this chapter, I explain the selection criteria for the two institutions included in this study: Excel University and Student-Centered University. I also provide an overview of my data collection plans, including the sources of data that were used. I describe my epistemological and philosophical orientations and discuss how these impacted my research. I summarize my methods for data analysis and explain strategies for establishing trustworthiness.

In Chapter Four, I offer detailed case descriptions of Maryland as well as the two study sites: Excel University and Student-Centered University. Using my conceptual framework as a roadmap, I examine different components of their demographics, governance structure, culture, values, and priorities, and how they have approached implementing the A.A.T. The case description for Maryland also includes a historical summary of the state's approach to transfer over the last 25 years and the origins of the A.A.T. policy.

In Chapter Five, I explore the findings that arose from the study. These findings include a discussion on participants' perception of the A.A.T. goals, whether it is achieving those goals, and the strengths and challenges behind the A.A.T.'s implementation. I also include an examination of why those challenges have occurred, including the influence of organizational structure and culture, external factors outside of the higher education system (such as accreditation, federal accountability policies, and state workforce requirements), and state and university leaders' interpretation of the policy.

Lastly, I include in Chapter Six a summary of the research study, its design, findings, a discussion of the findings and conclusions. I articulate recommendations

for practice for both community colleges and universities on how they can improve transfer pathways and communication with students. I offer a guiding framework for states interested in creating and implementing a degree similar to the A.A.T., based on lessons learned from the Maryland case. Lastly, I offer recommendations for future research, including research on further understanding Maryland's policies, qualitative studies for additional inquiry on transfer policy implementation, and quantitative studies for more analysis on whether state transfer policies impact student outcomes.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

In order to understand how a policy works, it is critical to examine whether the policy is being implemented as intended (Anderson, 2006). In doing so, one must not only analyze the policy design, but also the people who are engaged in the implementation process, while taking into account the context surrounding the policy (Honig, 2006a; Mazmanian & Sabatier, 1983; McLaughlin, 2005; Pressman & Wildavsky, 1984). I studied a subject-specific state transfer policy to address the existing research gap discussed in Chapter 1. In an overarching goal of understanding how Maryland's Associate of Arts in Teaching (A.A.T.) policy works in practice, I examined the role of key stakeholders,¹¹ as well as state and organizational contexts, to investigate how the Maryland transfer articulation policy for teaching is being implemented.

This study was a case study design grounded in Honig's (2006a) Framework for Policy Analysis. Honig's (2006a) Framework posits that in order to truly understand a policy, it is important to understand the policy design (*Policy Dimension*), the local context in which the policy is being implemented (*Places Dimension*), and the people engaged in implementation (the *People Dimension*). Honig's (2006a) Framework has been used in both national and international education policy implementation studies (Musingarabwi & Blignaut, 2015; Van Huy, Hamid, & Renshaw, 2016; Wilkerson, 2012). Similar to these past studies, I used Honig's Framework to anchor different conceptual dimensions in order to analyze the

¹¹ Key stakeholders are defined as individuals who are directly involved in a policy's implementation. Specific stakeholders will be identified later in this chapter.

implementation of Maryland's A.A.T. policy. The *Policy Dimension* helped me understand the nature and design of the A.A.T. policy. The *Places Dimension* provided the components with which I built case descriptions for both the boundaries of the case (Maryland) as well as the embedded units of analysis (universities). Finally, the *People Dimension* helped me identify who is involved in the implementation process, as well as key characteristics and behaviors of these individuals as they shape decisions through this process. I used institutional theory to consider how internal and external organizational contexts affect university approaches to state policy implementation (Burch, 2007; DiMaggio & Powell, 1983; Kezar, 2014; Powell & DiMaggio, 1991).

Overview of Literature Review

This literature review has three components. First, I will provide a brief overview of policy research to highlight the importance of studying policy implementation. Next, I will provide a description of my conceptual framework; namely Honig's (2006a) Framework for Policy Analysis. After an introduction to Honig's (2006a) Framework, I will expand each of the three dimensions of my conceptual model by using relevant literature. Then, I will review the literature associated with state transfer articulation policies and identify the specific research gap that exists within transfer articulation. Lastly, I will summarize chapter 2, particularly noting the conceptual framework, while alerting the reader as to how I used it to answer my research questions in Chapter 3.

Policy Implementation Research

I investigated the dynamics of how the A.A.T. degree policy is implemented at Maryland's public, four-year institutions. Policy implementation research is often used to answer questions about what is happening as a result of the policy and why, which provides compelling information on program or policy design, resources, and outcomes (Werner, 2004). I will briefly summarize the evolution of policy research by tracing its history within the last 50 years. This history will illustrate the changes in policy research, from a focus on policy design, to an emphasis on investigating the dynamics of policy implementation. This description will highlight the significance of studying policy implementation for understanding transfer policies.

Evolution of Policy Research – from Policy to Implementation

Policy research surged in the 1960s when early policy analysts began to explore why policies were not achieving their desired effects, particularly President Johnson's War on Poverty policies (DeLeon & DeLeon, 2002; McLaughlin, 2005; Odden, 1991). This early policy research focused on whether the policies were designed in such a way that enabled successful outcomes (O'Toole, 2000). These studies often found that policies were not achieving their intended goals, but offered little explanation as to why (McLaughlin, 1987).

Policy research evolved when Pressman and Wildavsky (1973) published an analysis on federal programs and policies. These authors argued that investigating the *implementation* of policies was vital in examining why policies may not be working as intended. In particular, Pressman and Wildavsky (1973) argued that examining local conditions surrounding policies provided important context to

understand what was or was not occurring at each stage of the implementation process. This revolutionary change in how to study public policy spurred research focused on the analysis of implementation processes (Mazmanian & Sabatier, 1983).

These early implementation studies negated the previously held notion that if a policy failed, it was due to poor policy design (McLaughlin, 1987). Instead, these implementation studies concluded that policies were failing not because of design flaws, but because of local organizations' lack of capacity or will (Mazmanian & Sabatier, 1983; Pressman & Wildavsky, 1973). These studies supported an important idea: a policy's outcomes are directly impacted by how it is implemented. Scholars argued, and continue to argue, that policy evaluation begins with the first step of examining whether the implementation of the policy has been carried out as intended (Fixsen et al. 2005; Odden, 1991; Werner, 2004). After the implementation of the policy has been examined, an analysis of its outcomes can be completed (Fixsen et al., 2005).

As policy implementation research continued, researchers began to look more closely at underlying local implementation factors, including organizational context as well as the people involved in implementation (also called key stakeholders, street-level bureaucrats, or implementing agents/actors)¹² (McLaughlin, 1987; Odden, 1991; Weatherly & Lipsky, 1977). Weatherly and Lipsky (1977) conducted an evaluation of a state's policy supporting special education students, particularly studying individuals at the bottom of an organization, or "street-level bureaucrats." These

¹² In this study, I use the term "key stakeholders" to denote individuals who are directly involved in policy implementation, such as administrators, relevant faculty, or state-level administrators.

authors found that street-level bureaucrats were often overburdened at work; as a result, they continually searched for more efficient ways to complete tasks. Weatherly and Lipsky posited that this focus on efficiency impacted how policies were implemented, because the street-level bureaucrats would look for ways to avoid the additional work brought on through policy implementation. McLaughlin (1987) supported Weatherly and Lipsky's assertion by suggesting that successful enactment of an education policy relies not only on local capacity (at the organizational/institutional level), but also on the will of the individuals responsible for implementation.

Today, research has expanded significantly to account for greater complexity in the implementation process (Fixsen et al., 2005; Werner, 2004). This research includes more robust policy analyses with implementation frameworks that take into account the design of the policy, multiple levels of context surrounding a policy's implementation, and the individuals engaged in policy implementation (Burch, 2007; Honig, 2006a; Spillane, 2000; Spillane et al., 2002). Using conceptual and theoretical frameworks that capture local and detailed nuances allows researchers to more accurately and completely understand what is occurring when a state policy is implemented at a university.

Within the field of policy research, there is a large body of literature that focuses on agenda-setting at the federal, state, and institutional levels (Anderson, 2006; Kingdon, 2011; McLendon, Heller, & Young, 2005; McLendon, 2003; McLendon, Deaton, & Hearn, 2007; Schneider & Ingram, 1997; Stone, 2002). This literature describes how governmental actors prioritize issues to place on an agenda,

which then leads to policy enactment. I have purposely excluded this literature because my study is focused specifically on the processes that occur *after* policy enactment. Instead, I focus on policy implementation research to provide sufficient context for understanding the core issues around my study topic.

State Higher Education Policy Research

Higher education policy studies span several topic areas. The first type of studies provides a state-by-state inventory of policies in a particular topic area, such as state dual enrollment policies, or state transfer articulation policies (McGuinness, 2003; Ryherd, 2011; Smith, 2010; Townsend & Ignash, 2000; Zinth, 2015). These studies identify in which states certain policies exist, details about the policy design, and sometimes a brief analysis of the benefits and drawbacks to different policy designs. Many of these state reports are authored by policy organizations, such as Education Commission of the States or State Higher Education Executive Officers Association (McGuinness, 2003; Ryherd, 2011; Smith, 2010), although some are published in peer-reviewed journals (Lovell & Truth, 2004; Townsend & Ignash, 2000). These inventory-style studies cover a variety of topics, but are concentrated on dual enrollment policies, career and technical education policies, state governance structures, and state transfer articulation policies. While these studies provide background for understanding the policy landscape, these studies offer little examination of the effectiveness of state policies or how they are implemented.

Other state higher education policy studies investigate state policy adoption (Brock, 2013; Dar & Lee, 2014; McLendon, Heller, & Young, 2005; McLendon, Deaton, & Hearn, 2007; Mintrom & Vergari, 1998). These studies aim to identify

what prompts a state to adopt a specific policy approach. This research does help expand understanding of why certain policies are selected and adopted, but again, this field of research does not inform policy implementation or evaluation.

A last group of studies focuses on analyzing policy outcomes (Anderson, Sun, & Alfonso, 2006; Delaney, 2014; Gross & Goldhaber, 2009; Gross & Berry, 2016; Heck, Lam, & Thomas, 2014; Titus, 2009). This body of research examines whether policies are producing certain outcomes, such as whether the presence of a state transfer articulation policy improves transfer rates (Gross & Goldhaber, 2009) or whether state higher education finance policies and appropriations impact graduation rates (Heck et al., 2014; Titus, 2009). These studies are particularly concentrated on the topic of state higher education finance policies, some analyzing how these policies influence college access and college graduation rates (Delaney, 2014; Heck et al., 2014; Titus, 2009). However, some studies bridge other topics, such as state college access or transfer articulation policies (Anderson et al., 2006; Gross & Goldhaber, 2009; Gross & Berry, 2016). These studies are mostly quantitative in design, although some are mixed methods.

Unfortunately, there is a dearth of higher education policy implementation studies (Goldrick-Rab & Shaw, 2007; Gornitzka, Kogan, & Amaral, 2005). While some studies examining state policy implementation exist, they are often atheoretical or lacking a strong conceptual structure (Carpenter-Davis, 2005; Neault & Piland, 2014; Robinson, 2015). Chase (2013) identified that this lack of conceptually-based implementation research has led higher education policy scholars to draw from K-12 implementation frameworks. Scholars have argued that far more higher education

implementation research is warranted to help develop further understanding of policy implementation in a higher education setting (Gornitzka, Kyvik, & Stensaker, 2005).

K-12 Education Policy Implementation Research

Research on the implementation of federal, state, and district policies in a K-12 setting is relatively extensive, compared to higher education implementation research (Chase, 2013). These studies cover a variety of specific topics, but tend to focus on how a federal, state, or district program or policy is implemented at the school level (Burch, 2007; Coburn, 2001; Evenson, Ballard, Lee, & Ammerman, 2009; Malen, Croninger, Muncey, & Redmond-Jones, 2002; Spillane, 2000; Spillane et al., 2002). While fewer studies appear to be conducted specifically on the implementation of state policies compared to district policies, a great deal can be learned from studying the execution of district policies to a local school context. Similar to the state role in higher education, central district offices also provide a mediating role in translating policies from one level (state in higher education, districts in K-12) to the next level (colleges/universities in higher education, schools in K-12) (Honig, 2006b).

Some K-12 implementation studies focus on the specific roles that individuals, such as teachers or principals, play in the implementation process (Carraway & Young, 2015; Coburn, 2001, 2005; Weatherley & Lipsky, 1977; Werts & Brewer, 2015). For example, Honig (2006b) investigated the role of district office administrators in implementing several district-initiated reforms. Honig found that these individuals often served as boundary spanners and filled a crucial role in relaying information by linking the district office with school officials. These studies

often rely on sense-making theory as a theoretical construct to help explain how individuals perceive and interpret policies (Carraway & Young, 2015; Coburn, 2001; Werts & Brewer, 2015).

Several studies in K-12 education policy implementation have used a cognitive lens to investigate policy processes (Spillane, 2000; Spillane et al., 2002). In these studies, the authors examine how individuals at a school make sense of a district or state policy cognitively. These scholars posit that individuals at a school process information about a policy by contextualizing it with their school and community context, as well as with their personal background and knowledge (Spillane, 2000; Spillane et al., 2002). While these studies have pushed policy implementation research into a new area using a cognitive lens, these perspectives focus less on organizational roles and more on individual roles involved in policy implementation.

Despite the influence of these approaches from K-12, there are some limitations that make these frameworks inappropriate for this study. Many of the K-12 policy implementation frameworks focus specifically on the impact of *individuals* on policy implementation (Coburn, 2001; Spillane, 2000; Spillane et al., 2002), while limiting an organizational-level lens. An organizational lens can be an important bridge between policy ideas and policy execution or implementation (Rosenheck, 2001). Additionally, some research on transfer pathways has identified that organizational nuances matter in transfer outcomes (Berman et al., 1990; Dowd et al., 2013). Thus, using high-level concepts from these frameworks may be useful, but using them alone is not appropriate for this research study.

Honig's Framework for Policy Analysis

While policy design is a critical component in policy analysis, many scholars have noted the important role that local context and people play in implementation (Mazmanian & Sabatier, 1983; McLaughlin, 1987; Pressman & Wildavsky, 1984). Honig (2006a) studied past implementation research and argued that merely investigating policy design is not sufficient to understand how a policy is working in practice. Honig (2006a) argued policy analysts must examine three dimensions of the policy to thoroughly understand policy implementation: the policy design and its goals (the *Policy Dimension*), the places in which the policy is being implemented (which may include nested levels of “places” such as national, state, and local contexts) (the *Places Dimension*), and the people who are involved in the implementation process (the *People Dimension*) (Honig, 2006a). Following Honig's (2006a) Framework for Policy Analysis, I posit that an analysis of state transfer policies requires an examination of the nature and design of the state transfer policy itself, the state and organizational context within which the policy is implemented, and key stakeholders involved in implementation, such as administrators from multiple levels (street-level and mid-level) and relevant faculty.

Honig's (2006a) Framework is particularly useful for case study investigations because it can be used to help build a comprehensive description of the case under examination (Van Huy et al., 2016; Wilkerson, 2012). However, Honig's (2006a) Framework for Policy Analysis does not describe two of the three dimensions (the *Places* and *People Dimensions*) in detail. Particularly, Honig (2006a) does not detail components within the *Place Dimension*; she only indicates that local context is

important. Honig also leaves out specific information about the *People Dimension*, citing just that the people surrounding a policy are crucial to its implementation. Although it serves as an excellent, grounding conceptual base, Honig's Framework for Policy Analysis does not offer sufficient specifics in the *Places and People Dimensions* to use as a complete conceptual model.

In view of this shortcoming in Honig's Framework, scholars have resorted to borrowing theoretical constructs from other models to more fully articulate Honig's Framework aligned to the policy topic of interest (Van Huy et al., 2016; Wilkerson, 2012). For example, Wilkerson (2012) used Honig's Framework, along with symbolic interaction theory, as a basis to examine how administrators in Colorado construct meaning out of the state's transfer policy and how that process impacts implementation. Using multiple theoretical or conceptual constructs allowed Wilkerson to examine the multiple, complex phenomena of transfer policy implementation.

Therefore, I will expand upon Honig's (2006a) Framework by adding an additional layer of concepts under each dimension using relevant literature in the areas of state policy, policy implementation, organizational behavior, and higher education. For the *Places Dimension*, I rely on constructs borrowed from institutional theory, including concepts from DiMaggio and Powell (1983) and Kezar (2014). For the *People Dimension*, I use concepts from stakeholder theory as outlined by Weick (1995), as well as policy research by Weatherly and Lipsky (1977) and McLaughlin (1987). Each of these expanded dimensions will aid me in understanding how a state transfer policy is implemented while helping me build a comprehensive case

description. Similar to using a zoom feature of a camera, using a focused, more specific framework will help provide a more detailed picture of the case. In the sections below, I review key literature relevant to each of the three dimensions of the model: the *Policy Dimension*, the *Places Dimension*, and the *People Dimension*.

Conceptual Framework: The Policy Dimension

In terms of influence on higher educational institutional behavior, state policy is particularly salient (Martinez, 2004; Slaughter, 1990). All state governments engage in some form of policy development, adoption, and implementation that directly impacts higher education (Colbeck, 2002; Wellman, 2006). State policy plays an important role in higher education, as states often control institutional funding, academic programs, and college access policies (Slaughter, 1990).

Investigating state higher education policies, however, requires knowledge about mechanisms and tools used in policies. This section outlines critical aspects of policy design. Specifically, I will discuss key policy tools and types, including what policy types appear to be most effective under what circumstances. Outlining commonly used policy types and tools helps provide a clearer understanding of whether the policy design is congruent with the aims and goals of the policy (Fowler, 2000; McDonnell & Elmore, 1987). In this section, I will outline key literature on common policy tools and types used in state higher education policy, including mandates, incentives, capacity building, and systems change, as well as the effectiveness of those tools (Fowler, 2000; McDonnell & Elmore, 1987). This information will provide important background that will help develop the case

description of the Maryland A.A.T. policy and help the reader understand the nature of this policy.

Policy Tools & Types

Several scholars have described policy tools and mechanisms by analyzing different types of policies (Fowler, 2000; McDonnell & Elmore, 1987). McDonnell and Elmore (1987) discussed four major policy instruments: 1) mandates, 2) inducements, 3) capacity building, and 4) systematic change. Mandates are policies that act as rules governing the actions of both individuals and organizations. Fowler (2000) argued that mandates typically have two components. One component of a mandate details to whom the policy is directed (e.g., public, in-state institutions of higher education) and identifies the target beneficiary of the policy (e.g., transfer students). A mandate also prescribes the required behavior for those actors (e.g., public, four-year institutions in Maryland must accept 60 credits). The second component of a mandate stipulates penalties for those who do not comply with the policy (e.g., if a complaint is filed by a student, the university must go through an appeal process through a state task force).

The second policy instrument, inducements, consists of monetary awards tied to compliance with the policy (McDonnell & Elmore, 1987). Policies that are designed to be an inducement include language that details the award and guidelines about how the award should be used (Fowler, 2000). For example, an inducement could be a new state policy that provides certain funding to colleges for increasing the number of students who graduate.

The next policy instrument, systematic change, transfers authority from one entity (e.g., state higher education office) to another entity (e.g., state commission) in order to produce a desired outcome (McDonnell & Elmore, 1987). A systems change may not only transfers authority from one agency to another, but may it may also result in resource allocation differences. One example of a systems change is when the state of Maryland created the University System of Maryland (USM) in 1988. When this change occurred, it introduced a new state-level office to the higher education governance structure and allocated USM a certain amount of funding to maintain a state office.

Lastly, capacity building includes monetary awards that help build organizations' capacities in terms of material, intellectual capacity, or human resources (McDonnell & Elmore, 1987). Capacity building most often appears in the form of grants awarded to colleges and universities and requires some source of funding, whether from a state budget or from a private entity, such as a foundation.

Colbeck (2002) noted that state governments can use a variety of policy instruments to produce particular responses by colleges and universities. While the nature of state transfer policies may differ slightly by state, state transfer articulation policies can generally be considered a mandate; after all, transfer policies specify a required behavior for colleges and universities, such as the number and type of credits that colleges and universities must accept from other institutions within the state (Townsend & Ignash, 2000). For instance, in New Jersey, the state transfer articulation policy indicates that students who earn an associate's degree must have 60 credits accepted by a four-year university, while in Maryland the state policy

indicates that general education credits from one college must be accepted at another, regardless of whether an associate's degree was earned (Millard, 2014). Thus, while the policies may vary across the states, they typically require colleges and universities to accept some number and type of credits from other colleges. State transfer policies exhibit qualities consistent with a mandate as defined by Fowler (2000): the policy dictates a behavior (accept credits) and identifies the policy target (public, in-state colleges and universities).

Research has uncovered additional insight on the circumstances in which these policy tools are most effective in producing desired outcomes (Colbeck, 2002; Fowler, 2000; Jones & Ewell, 1993). Fowler (2000) indicated that mandates are most effective when all members in a group behave in the same way, when the mandate can be enforced, and when it has political support. Thus, a state transfer policy would be most effective when all colleges and universities behave in the same way, when the state can enforce the policy, and when the policy has political support from key stakeholders, such as college administrators, faculty, and state administrators. Jones and Ewell (1993) cautioned that mandates are typically developed without input from college and university leaders, which can create resentment and resistance to the policies. McGuinness (1994) argued that college administrators and faculty tend to respond more favorably to inducements and incentives, rather than to mandates that are forced upon them. If a state transfer policy was developed without input from institutional leaders, this may lead to college and university personnel resisting compliance with the policy.

Montjoy and O'Toole (1979) posited that successful mandates are those that meet two conditions: specificity and sufficient resources for implementation. Specificity indicates that the policy is so clear that avoids the possibility of misinterpretation by the key stakeholders in charge of implementing it. In contrast, vaguely worded policies may be ignored or misunderstood by key stakeholders. Moreover, lack of clarity can lead to very different outcomes for each implementing organization. On the other hand, if a policy is very specific in nature, the implementing organization would have less discretion in how the policy is implemented (Montjoy & O'Toole, 1979). For example, a state policy that was worded in the following way may generate confusion: "A four-year college should accept credits from community colleges towards a bachelor's degree to the best extent possible." Such a vague statement may bring up questions, such as: "How many credits should be accepted? What does the 'best extent possible' mean? Does that mean a college has discretion in whether to comply?" Compare this vague example to a more specific one: "A public, four-year institution within the state of X must accept at least 60 credits from a community college." In this case, the example is more specific because it clearly articulates the behavior to be expected and avoids vague language that opens the door to questions. Using an example like the one above makes it easier to see how policy specificity can aid policy compliance.

A second condition that is linked to effective policy deployment is whether sufficient resources are made available to comply with mandates (Colbeck, 2002; Montjoy & O'Toole, 1979). When a college has resources to carry out a policy, the college has a greater likelihood of overcoming the routine behaviors that the mandate

may aim to change (Montjoy & O'Toole, 1979). For example, some states have performance-based funding policies that link funding to performance metrics, such as graduation rates (Rutherford & Rabovsky, 2014). Yet Dougherty and Reddy (2011) found that if colleges are not provided with sufficient resources needed to induce behaviors to actually implement the performance-based funding policy, colleges may not achieve the intended goal of the policy. Specifically, Dougherty and Reddy (2011) found the funding sources at colleges within their study did not necessarily support increased capacity to measure, evaluate, and base new programs and policies on performance data, which limited the policies' impact on organizational behaviors and policy outcomes.

State Policy Evaluation & Compliance

Colbeck (2002) noted another key consideration for state policy: monitoring and evaluation of policy outcomes and state enforcement of policy compliance. In the case of higher education, enforcement is usually carried out by the state. However, Colbeck noted, "enforcement is costly both to the state and to institutions that must either comply or find ways to avoid or change mandates" (p. 5). States vary in the amount of effort given to assessment and evaluation of policies because they may have varying degrees of prioritization for bearing the costs of policy compliance. Folger and Jones (1993) argued that if a state places a low level of importance on monitoring implementation and compliance with policies, it is likely that policies will be less effective when compared to those states that have stronger compliance measures. If states do not monitor compliance with a state transfer articulation policy, it is possible that colleges and universities may not fully comply with the policy.

Several studies have found that very few states monitor or evaluate transfer articulation policies, although these studies do not explain why so few states complete this type of evaluation (Schaffer, 2000; Townsend & Ignash, 2000). Scholars have suggested this deficiency could be due to insufficient capacity at the state level, competing priorities at the state level, or a lack of will (Schaffer, 2000; Townsend & Ignash, 2000). Roksa (2009) further suggested that the intended goals of state policies may be unclear, or the state may not have sufficient data to fully evaluate implementations.

Summary of Policy Dimension

The *Policy Dimension* includes both policy design and state policy compliance and evaluation. Describing policy tools and types, or the mechanisms by which policies do their job, is key to understanding policy design. For my investigation of a state transfer articulation policy, it is helpful to understand which policy tools and types are most useful under what conditions. State policy compliance and evaluation describe the extent to which states monitor and track outcomes related to a state policy—something that rarely happens in instances of state transfer articulation policies. As part of my conceptual framework, I will use the *Policy Dimension* to craft a rich, thick description of the A.A.T. policy's design and evaluation.

Conceptual Framework: The Places Dimension

The purpose of this section is to describe key components of state and organizational context using relevant literature from state policy, organizational behavior, and institutional theory research. As Honig's (2006a) Framework for Policy

Analysis is not very specific with regard to the *Places Dimension*, I draw from institutional theory as a grounding basis to expand this dimension. Institutional theorists argue that organizations are influenced by their internal organizational culture, norms, and values, as well as by external groups and pressures that may be particularly salient for that specific organization (Powell & DiMaggio, 1991).

Drawing on institutional theory, I posit that state transfer policy is thus impacted by both the external state context as well as the internal organizational context. Within the state context, I will discuss background on state governance and state culture.

Within organizational context, I draw from organizational and higher education research to discuss organizational governance structures, organizational culture (including values, mission, and goals), and external pressures. The components described in this section will be particularly useful in my case study as these key features of the *Places Dimension* will help guide my case descriptions for Maryland as well as the universities.

State Context

Honig's (2006a) Framework for Policy Analysis indicates that understanding local context is important for understanding a policy. While Honig's model does not specify what includes local context, I propose that state context is a key variable in understanding how policies get developed and implemented. State context may differ in terms of key actors involved, how higher education policies are logistically implemented, and how organizations react to policies (DiMaggio & Powell, 1991; Jones & Ewell, 1993; McGuinness, 1994; Schaffer, 2000). In other words, if two states were to implement the exact same transfer policy, the policy outcomes would likely

be different due to contextual differences between the states. Using a multiple case study design, McGuinness (1994) found that a state's political, economic, and cultural characteristics helped shape the state context, which impacted state relations with higher education institutions, and how policies were created and implemented. Key elements to state context include a state's governance structure, state culture, and the impact of external pressures (Hearn & Holdsworth, 2002; Hines, 1988; McLendon, Deaton, & Hearn, 2007; O'Meara, 2007; Slaughter, 2010). In this section, I review each of these elements.

State governance. A state's higher education governance structure impacts how policies get enacted and implemented (Hearn & Holdsworth, 2002; Hines, 1988). A state's governance structure includes the relative powers of the governor, state legislature, and higher education agencies in postsecondary matters, and how each of these branches connect to college and universities (Fisher, 1988; McGuinness, 2003; Wellman, 2006). In other words, examining a state's governance structures is about understanding what state roles most influence how higher education policies are enacted and implemented.

Governors can have an influence on state higher education policy because they can impact which higher education policy issues receive the most public attention (Hines, 1988). Strong governors typically exhibit a presence by speaking publicly on higher education matters, enacting budgetary powers (i.e., whether the governor proposes the state budget), using their powers to appoint key positions (typically for university trustees or board members), or exercising veto powers (Hines, 1988). Governors also have the power to appoint task forces or commissions

to study specific topics within the state. These task forces or committees typically include stakeholders from a variety of sectors, and have a focused task to create a series of recommendations for the state.

If a state has a strong governor role, this individual and their cabinet will have an important influence on higher education policy (Hines, 1988). For example, one study by Leslie and Berdahl (2014) found that Virginia's governor played a key role by bringing together key players and wielding political power in order to move Virginia from a centralized system to a decentralized one. If a state governor highlighted college completion and transfer issues as a state priority, this may spur more activity around transfer policies and programs. This occurred in Indiana when Governor Frank O'Bannon made it a legislative priority to address transfer issues in the state, which eventually led to the creation of a state transfer articulation policy (Sauer, Jackson, Hazelgrove, Scott, & Ignash, 2005).

State legislatures often have an influence on higher education because legislative action is usually how state policies are passed (Hines, 1988). State legislatures became more influential in higher education in the 1950s when they became more professionalized (Hines, 1988). Before the 1950s, state legislatures met only several times a year and did not have a great deal of staff. Now, many state legislators are considered full-time and have many staff members, including dedicated committee staff for higher education issues. This has led to legislatures having more of an impact on higher education (Hines, 1988).

In some cases, state transfer articulation policies exist because state legislators took notice of a policy problem, and developed and enacted the transfer policy as a

way to mediate the problem (Sauer et al., 2005). In New Jersey, as one example, state legislators received complaints from constituents about having to repeat classes previously taken at community college at their four-year institutions. This issue prompted state legislators to create New Jersey's state transfer policy (Maliszewski, Crabill, & Nespoli, 2008). The nature of the relationship between state legislatures and higher education institutions has become more complex in recent years as tensions between institutional autonomy and public accountability have heightened (Hines, 1988; McLendon, Deaton, & Hearn, 2007).

Another topic that has been widely investigated within a state context is examining the structure of a state's higher education system, including whether the state system's organizational structure is centralized or decentralized (Lane & Johnstone, 2013). The nature of the state system is important in transfer articulation policy because how a state system is organized impacts how transfer policies are created, implemented, and monitored (McLendon, 2003).

In centralized systems, the state system holds some level of power over the colleges and universities. Hearn and Holdsworth (2002) described this type of power as an "intervener" role. For example, in some states, the state system office may propose the budgets for colleges or control the funding mechanisms for higher education as means to promote accountability. These examples are an indication of a centralized state system because the system wields a lot of influence over colleges and universities. In contrast, a decentralized system would leave the budget or accountability process up to the individual colleges and the state governor or legislature. Hearn and Holdsworth (2002) described this as the "encourager" role.

Hearn and Holdsworth (2002) argued the role of intervener is becoming more common as state's increase their accountability systems. Some state systems have very little central, direct control, but see themselves more as an entity that merely connects colleges together (Nespoli & Gilroy, 1999). The nature of the state system is important to consider because it may directly impact how transfer policies are enacted and implemented. If a state has a more centralized system, the state entity may wield more influence over how colleges and universities implement a state policy and exert measures to ensure institutions are complying with the policy. States with a more decentralized system may have less direct influence but may use the state entity as a "convener" to bring colleges to consensus about how to implement a state transfer policy.

One issue that is not discussed broadly in the literature is the relative influence of different state-level entities on particular types of policies. For example, the governor and the legislators may be very influential in determining state funding policies, while a state system may be more influential in approving academic programs. Depending on specific state context, governors and legislators may be more influential in creating a policy, rather than implementing it. On the other hand, state systems may have a more formal role in policy implementation. Unfortunately, the nuances of these state roles and their influence on particular types of policies is not captured in extant literature.

State culture. State culture can be defined as values that are commonly adopted within a state (Wirt, Mitchell, & Marshall, 1988). State culture influences how policies are created and implemented by influencing the relationships between

colleges, universities, and state systems (Hearn & Holdsworth, 2002; Hines, 1988). If the state's culture is more individualistic and favors autonomy, the governor or legislature might have less of a central role in higher education in the state. A common feature of culture in academic institutions is the value of academic freedom or institutional autonomy, which influences how college-level actors interpret policies that originate from outside of their institution (Hearn and Holdsworth, 2002). If the state's higher education culture values institutional autonomy, colleges and universities may not receive some state policies very well and may interpret them as intrusive or overly restrictive. State culture has a substantial impact on the adoption of policies (Leslie & Novak, 2003; McLendon et al., 2006). Thus, a state's culture may significantly impact a state's adoption of a transfer policy as well as how colleges and universities react to and implement the policy.

Organizational Context & Institutional Theory

Honig's (2006a) Framework for Policy Analysis posits that the local context that bounds a policy's implementation is a critical factor in explaining how the policy works. Other research supports Honig's assertion (Kingsley & Reed, 1991; Rorrer, Skrla, & Scheurich, 2008). Kingsley and Reed (1991) analyzed decision-making within public institutions and found that organizational context was a key factor in how decisions were made. Further, Rorrer, Skrla, and Scheurich (2008) argued that how organizations mediate local, state, and federal policies is "layered within a context that positions [the organization] to continuously negotiate its legitimacy" (p. 326). Studies on state transfer articulation policies have also alluded to the impact of organizational context on how these policies are implemented (Carpenter-Davis,

2005). Drawing upon institutional theory and relevant higher education literature, I propose that organizational context, which may include organizational governance structures, organizational culture, and external pressures, can be a critical component to understanding how transfer policy implementation unfolds on a college campus (Kingsley & Reed, 1991; Rorrer et al., 2008). In this section, I review literature pertinent to each element within organizational context.

One theoretical lens undergirding the importance of organizational context is institutional theory (DiMaggio & Powell, 1983). Under institutional theory, behaviors and practices within an organization become ingrained over time and make it difficult for organizational change to occur (Kezar, 2014). When organizations do implement changes, however, it is often due to “powerful, outside forces that collectively shape institutions” (Kezar, 2014, p. 38). According to institutional theory, then, organizational changes needed within colleges and universities to comply with a state transfer articulation policy may occur slowly. Thus, colleges and universities’ responses to state transfer articulation policies are influenced by organizational culture, norms, and values, as well as external groups and pressures. Organizational context is a critical factor to consider when looking at policy implementation. In the remainder of this section, I review research on organizational structures, organizational culture and values, communication, and external pressures.

Organizational and governance structures. One component of organizational context is how colleges and universities are structurally organized (Kingsley & Reed, 1991). Governance structures effect organizational decisions about how to implement or comply with a policy, how decisions are communicated to

others within the organization, and how changes related to the policy occur (Cohen & March, 1974; Mintzberg, 1979). Likewise, organization and governance structures impact how state transfer articulation policies are implemented.

First, it is important to understand how governance structures are defined. Governance structure includes the size of the organization, how units or departments are arranged within the organization, the demographic make-up of the members of the organization, the composition and role of governance bodies, and whether governance bodies have individuals with necessary expertise and a clear understanding of their role (Kingsley & Reed, 1991). Tierney (1988) described colleges as complex webs of people and offices that are interconnected. If one strand of the web represents a department and the people that make up the department, the web as a whole represents the university. Kezar (2004) argued that higher education structures are all about the people who make up those institutions and that structures tend to influence relationships, leadership arrangements, and trust. Thus, structure is how people and resources are arranged and connected to each other.

Several studies have indicated that governance structures impact the efficiency of organizational decision-making, particularly the size and complexity of a college (Cohen & March, 1974; Mintzberg, 1979). Generally, the larger the institution, the more time-consuming the decision-making process becomes (Kezar, 2004; Kingsley & Reed, 1991). Mallon (2004) argued that governance structures in higher education institutions are extremely disjointed, which means that colleges are bureaucratic and complex. Another study by Benjamin and Carroll (1998) found that

governance structures often do not allow for timely review for decision-making, and typically do not allow sufficient time for experts to weigh in on decisions.

Mallon (2004) argued that colleges' large sizes often lead to fragmentation and siloing. In particular, colleges tend to layer decision-making through these fragmented governance bodies, which leads to disjointed governance structures and complex decision-making processes. Clark (1977) offered an argument as to why decision-making may become more difficult with larger structures. He indicated that over time, colleges have moved from smaller, unitary structures to larger, federal structures. As colleges grow, they begin to become "federalized" and split into units and sub-units, each with their own structures within the sub-unit. As this occurs, overall college goals change from focused and specific, to broad and more ambiguous, in order to accommodate this fractured structure (Clark, 1977). Therefore, larger colleges and universities may be slower or have more difficulty making decisions and changes in reaction to a state transfer articulation policy.

Organizational culture. Organizational culture is a driving force in how colleges and universities approach decision-making (Clark, 1963; Tierney, 1988; Umbach, 2007). Organizational culture is a system of shared meaning held by members, and this culture distinguishes member organizations from other groups (Gayle, Tewarie, & White, 1993). Culture is the patterns of interpretations people form about the manifestations of their institutions' values, formal rules and procedures, informal codes of behavior, rituals, tasks, and jargon (Smart, Kuh, & Tierney, 1997). An institution's culture is thought to mediate how an institution makes decisions, such as dealing with external forces and internal pressures (Smart,

Kuh, & Tierney, 1997). Culture can impact how key stakeholders see, interpret, and make decisions about a state transfer articulation policy.

Tierney (1988) argued that organizational culture is a critical factor for decision-making. A college's or a department's cultural orientation will affect how organizational actors go through the process of decision-making (e.g., whether they make a decision on their own or consult with a team), how they select policy alternatives to consider, and what policy alternative they select as the final decision. Some research has looked at the role of organizational culture in decision-making. Smart, Kuh, and Tierney (1997) examined the relationships between institutional culture, decision-making approaches, and organizational effectiveness of two-year colleges. Smart et al.'s (1997) study suggested that organizational effectiveness was a function of the interaction among the external environment, institutional culture, and preferred decision-making approach. Thus, organizational culture may affect how key stakeholders make decisions in relation to the state transfer articulation policy.

Universities may contain different sub-cultures, which may contain different values and perspectives (Gayle, Tewarie, & White, 2003; Smart, Kuh, & Tierney, 1997; Umbach, 2007). Umbach (2007) argued that there can be multiple sub-group cultures within an organization, such as an academic sub-culture, discipline sub-culture, and institutional sub-culture. Umbach (2007) also postulated that sub-cultures are taught to sub-group members through a socialization process that begins when a staff or faculty member is recruited to the university which influences how they are oriented to their professional environment. Thus, it may be important to investigate how different stakeholders engaged in the policy implementation process are first

oriented to their positions and organizational cultures, which may affect how they implement transfer policies.

Culture may also exist at different levels of the system (Tierney, 1988). A college may have a culture within its organization, but there is also a specific culture within the state, as well as the country. Such overlaying can create a domino effect of influence: the culture of a country affects the culture of a state; a state culture may influence the culture at a college; and a college culture may affect a departmental culture. For example, culture in the United States typically dictates a value placed on higher education – it is a cultural norm that higher education is desirable and seen as a route to social mobility. This cultural norm may permeate to a state, where the state might value access to higher education and provide state-level scholarships to low-income students. Further still, this cultural norm may be passed along to colleges. A college that also values access may make particular decisions to recruit students from low-income areas to help promote access. Tierney (1988) also argued that organizations strive to minimize cultural conflict at these different levels while fostering shared goals. Each of these levels may have their own distinct culture, but each level also draws from the culture of the next. Looking through different layers of culture is helpful to analyzing state transfer policies, as universities may be influenced not only by their own culture, but also by state and national culture as well.

Organizational culture is extremely dependent on organizational context, including both the setting that describes a college's structure and the people involved in the organization (Tierney, 1988). Tierney (1988) postulated that it is critical to

understand that “decision-making does not happen in a vacuum, but decision-makers must consider real or potential conflicts not in isolation but on the broad canvas of organizational life” (p. 6). Going back to the metaphor of organizations as a web, decision-making culture depends on how the threads of the web are connected together and how changing one thread can either pull down or reinforce the web.

Values, mission, and goals. Values are another influence that shapes organizational culture, including personal values among key stakeholders and larger organizational values (Kezar & Gehrke, 2016). Personal values are those held by individuals within organizations; they may be shaped by the person’s background and also by their organizational context (Kezar & Gehrke, 2016). Organizational values, on the other hand, are those held across organizations, and are reflected in mission statements and values statements. Organizational values may shape how the organization views and treats transfer students (Miller, 2013). For example, universities that make a public commitment to ensure their institution is “transfer-friendly” are more likely to implement programs and policies geared toward making transfer students’ adjustment as seamless as possible (Dowd et al., 2013).

A college or university mission is one way that organizational values are communicated and operationalized (Kezar & Gehrke, 2016). Understanding the mission is a key factor in organizational culture, including knowing how the mission is defined and how the mission is referred to in every day decision-making (Tierney, 1988). For instance, if a department (e.g., College of Education) includes serving transfer students in its organizational mission, this may impact how the office views

transfer students and thus how employees implement a state transfer articulation policy.

Organizational goals can also be important factors in decision-making, despite some core challenges. Baldrige, Curtis, Ecker, and Riley (1977) claimed that colleges and universities can often be plagued by goal ambiguity. If goals are not clear among stakeholders, different stakeholders might interpret a policy differently. Goals may also be misaligned among different stakeholders engaged in policy implementation—a concept highlighted from principal-agent theory (Hoenack, 1983; Lane, 2014; Lane & Kivisto, 2008; Tandberg, Hillman, & Barakat, 2014; Titus, 2009). Principal-agent theory posits that in transactions, there are two parties: the principal, and the agent whom the principal engages to perform a duty (Lane & Kivisto, 2008). Principal-agent theory posits that there is usually goal conflict in these relationships, where the goals of the principal do not align with the goals of the agent. This goal conflict leads to an issue called “shirking,” when an agent does not fully perform their duty because the agent’s goals are not necessarily aligned with those of the principal. In the case of state transfer policies, the principal is the state, which passes the articulation policy, and the agents are the four-year universities, which implement the policy. Thus, a state transfer articulation policy may not get implemented fully because of goal confusion or because the goals of the agents (colleges and key stakeholders) may not be aligned with the principal (Maryland).

Communication norms and channels. Colleges are places where cultural meaning and abstractions take place as people receive, process, and send messages (Smart, Kuh, & Tierney, 1997; Tierney & Minor, 2004). In particular, how policy

messages are communicated to key stakeholders impacts how they will understand and make decisions about implementing the policy (Russell & Bray, 2013).

Therefore, decision-making in college and universities often comes down to communication norms and methods (Tierney & Minor, 2004).

Organizational structure is also related to organizational communication, as governance structures influence formal and informal communication norms (Tierney & Minor, 2004). It is also crucial to consider the individuals involved in organizational communication, especially who is instigating a message and for whom a message is intended (Birnbaum, 1992; Tierney & Minor, 2004). Tierney and Minor (2004) also discussed the use of symbols and ceremonies as a form of communication. For instance, a university president making a statement about creating seamless pathways for transfer students communicates a key message to constituencies that transfer issues matter.

External pressures. External pressures can be an important source of influence on decision-making (Baldrige et al., 1977; Slaughter, 1990). External pressures may include marketplace structures and competition, college rankings, accreditation systems and evaluation, state and federal governments, or external coalitions (such as foundations who provide funding grants) (Bess & Dee, 2012; Eaton, 2010; O'Meara, 2007; Slaughter, 1990; Wergin, 2016).

There have been many studies documenting the impact of external pressures on decision-making within higher education. One study by Frost, Heam, and Marine (1997) that analyzed a policy decision for out-of-state students in North Carolina found that external factors affected decision-making processes. In particular, college

leaders noted that they studied policies at other institutions across the country, which guided their decision to align policies with that of their peer institutions. Another study by Kezar and Gehrke (2016) examined the influence of external factors, deans' values, and strategic organizational processes on decisions related to the hiring of non-tenured faculty. The researchers found that institutional characteristics and dean characteristics appeared to account for 10 percent of the variance in decision-making while external pressures accounted for seven percent.

Some scholars have examined why external pressures seem to play such a large role in decision-making. Slaughter (1990) found that the reason external factors have an influence on colleges is often due to financial resources: state governments are typically key funders of colleges and universities and as state funding has dwindled down, colleges have become more financially reliant on external forces.

Research indicates there is an increased awareness of marketplace structures and competitiveness among institutions of higher education (Alfred, 2005; Clark, 1998; O'Meara, 2007). Since colleges are competing for clients (students), they are paying more attention to one external entity in particular: competitiveness marketplace structures. This has led many colleges and universities to especially become attuned to another external force; that of college rankings systems (Bastedo & Bowman, 2011). O'Meara (2007) described how colleges and universities can often take on a "striving" behavior as the institution competes to become more prestigious. Thus, it is possible that external factors may impact organizational culture, values, mission, and goals—all factors that could impact how key stakeholders interpret and implement a state transfer articulation policy.

Summary of Places Dimension

The *Places Dimension* includes components that help shape the state context as well as organizational context. Key components of state context include governance structures and state culture. The state governance structures component includes the type of state system (i.e., whether it is centralized or decentralized), as well as understanding the respective impacts the governor, legislature, and state higher education system have on higher education policy decisions. The state culture component includes the values held within the state as well as social relationships that exist across key state actors (e.g., governor, legislature, state higher education system). As part of my conceptual framework, I will examine the state governance structure and culture to help build the case description for Maryland.

My conceptual framework will also help me conduct an in-depth investigation of the organizational context of my sampled sites. This includes examining each sample institution's organizational structure as well as the university's culture, values, mission, goals, and communications norms to investigate whether and how this affects the university's implementation of the A.A.T. policy. Lastly, I will investigate the extent to which (if at all) external pressures (such as federal higher education policies, accreditation, rankings, out-of-state policies and practices) have shaped each university's implementation of the A.A.T. policy.

Conceptual Framework: The People Dimension

The third component of Honig's (2006a) Framework for Policy Analysis is the *People Dimension*. In this section, I will draw from policy and higher education research to help identify key roles involved in policy implementation at universities

and colleges, including street-level administrators, mid-level administrators, faculty, and state-level administrators. I will describe how these individuals are engaged in the policy implementation process, especially as it relates to transfer policies.

Street-Level Administrators

Weatherly and Lipsky (1977) defined street-level bureaucrats as those who interact directly with citizens in the course of their jobs. These individuals work on the ground-level within an organization and typically have tremendous workloads (Weatherley & Lipsky, 1977). Weatherly and Lipsky (1977) argued that street-level bureaucrats are typically expected to do more work than is possible within their given capacity, and as a result they must make choices about how to simplify processes in order to manage workloads. Therefore, street-level bureaucrats routinize their behaviors to create as much efficiency as possible, which impacts how they respond to the implementation of policies. When a policy is announced, these individuals may see the policy as a disruption to their routine, and they may resist the policy (Weatherley & Lipsky, 1977). As a result of the organizational context, policies may get watered down or ignored simply because of these external pressures and demands on time and resources (DiMaggio & Powell, 1983).

In relation to transfer policies, street-level administrators are those who work directly with students, including academic advisors, transfer advisors, or admissions counselors. These individuals are key to the implementation of transfer articulation policy research because they can be partly responsible for carrying out how the policy is implemented. Since these individuals work directly with students on a day-to-day basis, they are responsible for communicating the policies to students. Signaling the

important role that street-level administrators play in state transfer policies, virtually all extant research investigating the implementation of state transfer articulation policies have included participants who serve as street-level bureaucrats (Carpenter-Davis, 2006; Chase, 2000; Shaffer, 2000; Wilkerson, 2012).

Mid-Level Administrators/Managers

Mid-level administrators are those who coordinate or direct an administrative unit and perform key roles in a department (Johnsrud & Rosser, 1999; Rosser, 2004; Scott, 1978). Some research refers to these individuals as managers who handle managerial tasks, carry out strategic initiatives, build coalitions with external stakeholders, and manage quality (Noordegraaf & De Wit, 2012). These individuals are often front-line managers who have the responsibility of monitoring policies and procedures (Rosser, 2004; Scott, 1978). The difference between street-level bureaucrats and mid-level administrators is that mid-level administrators manage street-level bureaucrats.

Decision-making authority of mid-level administrators varies depending on the institutional context (Scott, 1978). Yet in many cases, these individuals feel enormous amounts of pressure due to their decision-making authority, as well as the accountability that rides on their shoulders (Kelchtermans, Piot, & Ballet, 2011; Noordegraaf & De Wit, 2012). When it comes to policy implementation, these individuals “are expected to make judgements about the nature and limits of policy measures and whether measures are legitimate” (Noordegraaf & De Wit, 2012, p. 964). Additionally, Scott (1978) found that mid-level administrators tend to be overworked and have inadequate resources to complete their duties, which may also

influence how they implement policies. Rosser (2000) argues that mid-level administrators are vital in “identifying problems, formulating solutions, and implementing decisions” (p. 401). As policy implementation can often be perfected over time through continual adjustment (Lindblom, 1963), these individuals can be very influential in how state transfer policies are implemented in the long-run.

One study by Noordegraaf and De Wit (2012) which looked at mid-level administrators (managers) at a Dutch school found that mid-level managers often felt caught between two groups: those who impose strategic goals and policies on them and street-level bureaucrats. While mid-level administrators are ultimately accountable for ensuring that street-level administrators are compliant with policies, they also empathize with street-level bureaucrats (Noordegraaf & De Wit, 2012). In other words, they see multiple sides of situations because of their mid-level role and understand that policy implementation is complex.

These individuals are also essential policy translators to street-level bureaucrats (Honig & Hatch, 2004). They are the front-line individuals who may take in criticism or resistance from the street-level bureaucrats, depending on how the policy is received (Noordegraaf & De Wit, 2012). Mid-level administrators are not only affected by their own organizational context, but their personal context as well (Spillane, Reimer, & Reiser, 2002). Their own feelings on a policy or action may affect how they transmit policy messages to street-level bureaucrats (Noordegraaf & De Wit, 2012).

In my study of a state transfer policy, mid-level administrators are defined as individuals who supervise street-level administrators and hold some type of

leadership role within their department or college. Depending on their organizational context, mid-level administrators may have some level of decision-making authority and influence how state policies are implemented by relaying information to street-level administrators. Thus, mid-level administrators have an important role in the implementation of state transfer articulation policies.

Faculty

Faculty are a critical group to include when investigating state transfer articulation policies (Ignash & Townsend, 2000; Kisker et al., 2012). Faculty have authority on academic matters, such as the curriculum or determining academic policies (Hamilton, 1999). Transfer articulation pertains to the transfer of academic courses towards a degree, which falls under the jurisdiction of academic matters. Faculty are key stakeholders to transfer policy implementation; they can accept and fully implement the policies, or they could ignore them if they feel the policies are not legitimate or consistent with their organizational culture or values (McClure, 2016). Faculty members from four-year institutions are typically wary of transfer articulation agreements because they worry their views will be ignored or that courses will become less rigorous due to standardization processes (Carpenter-Davis, 2005; Kisker et al., 2012). Using faculty members as key drivers for implementing transfer articulation policies can help build trust among the various sectors of higher education and can lead to more successful implementation (Kisker, Wagoner, & Cohen, 2011).

One particularly important role that faculty can play is in the evaluation of transfer credits. Ott (2012) studied transfer credit evaluation processes in New York

and found that while colleges varied tremendously in their credit evaluation processes, academic departments (and thus faculty) commonly evaluated transfer credits. Thus, faculty members held tremendous power in making transfer credit decisions, despite any state or organizational policies specifying a desire for seamless transfer (Ott, 2012).

State System-Level Administrators

State system-level administrators are another group of key stakeholders involved in the process of implementing state transfer articulation policies. Unfortunately, scholars have noted a lack of empirical research on the role that state administrators play in policy creation and implementation (Lane, 2014). While other state transfer articulation implementation research does include state-level administrators in their sample selection, these studies do not delve into details about the roles that these individuals play (Carpenter-Davis, 2005; Wilkerson, 2012). Instead, these studies incorporated state-level administrators into data collection to provide additional information on the state context in policy implementation as well as to provide historical context for the policy's origin.

However, Maryland state system documents indicate that these state-level individuals may play a role in how policies are implemented on a campus. For example, the University System of Maryland (USM) office convenes state office personnel and administrators from all universities and community colleges on a bi-monthly basis to discuss A.A.T. implementation issues that arise on university campuses (University System of Maryland, 2016). Though college and university administrators participate in these council meetings, USM administrators coordinate

the meeting agendas as well as facilitate discussion. The USM office even has an articulation office that works specifically on transfer issues, with two dedicated staff members. This indicates that state-level administrators have some role regarding the ongoing implementation of the A.A.T. policy.

While there is a lack of research on state administrators in higher education policy implementation, some information can be drawn from K-12 research on central district office administrators. Central district office administrators in K-12 are responsible for disseminating information about district-level policies to school administrators. While not perfectly aligned, the role that district administrators play can be likened to state system-level administrators in higher education, who are responsible for disseminating information on state policies to university administrators. For example, Honig (2006b) investigated the role that district office administrators played in implementing several district-initiated reforms. Honig found that these individuals often served as boundary spanners by bridging the district office with school officials, and thus served a crucial role in relaying information. Honig's study provides further support that state-level administrators may be key players in state policy implementation.

Summary of People Dimension

The *People Dimension* includes the different roles of key stakeholders involved in the implementation of state transfer articulation policies, including street-level administrators, mid-level administrators, relevant faculty, and state system-level administrators. Each of these roles impact how state transfer articulation policies are implemented, and individuals in each role interact with and depend on those in other

roles. As part of my conceptual framework, the *People Dimension* will guide my sample selection at each sampled university, including those chosen from a pool of street-level administrators, mid-level administrators, relevant faculty, and state system-level administrators.

Creating Policy Coherence: Aligning the Dimensions

Creating policy coherence is a process whereby key stakeholders who are involved in implementation come together to determine how the policy makes sense within their organizational context (Honig & Hatch, 2004). This process involves all three dimensions of my conceptual model: the *Policy Dimension*, the *Places Dimension*, and the *People Dimension*. Honig and Hatch (2004) describe a dynamic process of creating policy coherence:

...a process of negotiation whereby school leaders and central office administrators continually craft the fit between external policy demands and schools' own goals and strategies, and use external demands strategically to inform and enable implementation of those goals and strategies (p. 19).

Thus, key stakeholders—street-level administrators, mid-level administrators, faculty, and state-level administrators—work together to see a policy, interpret what the policy means, and make determinations about how to implement the policy (Firestone, 1989).

Others scholars call this process *sensemaking*, where key stakeholders continually make sense of an issue in relation to their personal and organizational contexts (Coburn, 2001; Eddy, 2003; Spillane et al., 2002; Weick, 1993; Weick et al., 2005). For example, key stakeholders at Maryland colleges and universities

continually make sense of the A.A.T. policy and how it relates to their local campuses. As they interpret the policy in light of their local context, key stakeholders make decisions on how the policy is translated to their specific campuses.

The process of fitting the policy to the local context is crucial. Honig and Hatch (2004) argued that organizations are often places where a multitude of external demands exist, which leads to policy fatigue or failure to fully implement a policy due to a lack of resources. This process of local translation is a way for organizations to mitigate these local problems; key stakeholders engage in local translation by framing the policy in terms of what is needed in the local context and what local resources are available for implementation. Creating policy coherence is not a static process where implementation is the result of addressing a singular event; instead, creating policy coherence is a dynamic and continual process, similar to Lindblom's (1963) incrementalist approach to policy implementation (Honig & Hatch, 2004).

Honig and Hatch (2004) stressed the conditions that need to be met in order to create policy coherence. First, key stakeholders must interpret the policy through a process of sensemaking (Weick et al., 2005). For example, when a state passes the policy and generates state-level guidance, this information is communicated to college and universities for implementation. When key stakeholders within a university receive this information from the state, they must first determine what the policy means, including decoding the information and deciding whether and how the policy will be integrated into current organizational policies (Honig & Hatch, 2004). Next, key stakeholders translate the policy into their local context by generating organizational policy on the matter, which Honig and Hatch (2004) call the “storage”

step: “Information does not become a part of formal organizational policy until it is encoded into rules” (p. 26). Lastly, once formal policies are created, key stakeholders retrieve and use the information—the last step in implementation.

While this framework is exceptionally useful in understanding the specific steps of policy implementation at the ground level, I argue that Honig and Hatch (2004) left out one critical step: communication of the policy to key stakeholders. Communication is a crucial step in organizational processes and policy implementation (Robinson, 2015; Tierney & Minor, 2004). When a policy is officially passed, key stakeholders may or may not know how to readily retrieve and use the information. Relevant stakeholders need systematic training and communication about how the state policy has been translated locally (Spillane et al., 2002). For example, if a state university department determines that a specific course from a community college will now transfer to a university as a specific requirement, decision-makers may update a database or website to reflect this information. But unless key stakeholders, such as transfer advisors, community college advisors, or academic advisors, know about the change, they may not know to retrieve the information from that website. Thus, communication is a critical step in the policy implementation process.

Transfer Articulation Policy Background

As described in Chapter 1, many students experience difficulty in transferring credits from one college to another, which impacts their degree completion (Doyle, 2006; Simone, 2014). To address problems with transfer credit articulation, many states have developed statewide transfer articulation agreements, which specify the

number of credits and the type of credits that will transfer between colleges within a state (Smith, 2010; Townsend & Ignash, 2000). For example, a state policy may specify that any mathematics courses above the college algebra level must be accepted by a four-year university within the state, or that universities must accept 60 credits from other institutions.

From the state perspective, developing a state-level policy can be a positive step to send a message to the public and colleges that the interests of students are more important than institutional differences (Bender, 1990; Roksa & Keith, 2008). Additionally, the lack of a statewide policy typically means that colleges and universities in the state must rely on institution-to-institution agreements, which require significant time and money for a state to monitor and track (Education Commission of the States, 1998). Florida was the first state to pass a statewide articulation policy in 1971, which led to a gradual expansion of the number of states passing and implementing state transfer policies in the 1970s and 1980s (Anderson et al., 2006; Mosholder & Zirkle, 2007; Townsend & Ignash, 2000). By 2010, thirty-six states had transfer articulation policies (Smith, 2010). In most states, the purpose of these policies is to decrease the duplication of credit and promote “seamless transfer” from one institution to another (Roksa & Keith, 2008).

Summary of Transfer Articulation Policy Research

With the widespread adoption of transfer articulation policies, many practitioners, researchers, and policymakers began to ask whether these policies were effective at achieving their intended purpose of seamless transfer from one institution

to another, and if they improved student outcomes.¹³ Answering these questions, however, is challenging. Examining policy outcomes before and after policy implementation would be the best test of the effectiveness of articulation policies. However, states typically begin collecting data on transfer outcomes only after a policy is created (Roksa & Keith, 2008), giving little insight into the effect of these policies. Also noticeably absent from the extant research is information about the role that organizational environments and key stakeholders play in how state policies are translated into programs and policies at the campus level.

Quantitative Transfer Policy Studies

A number of quantitative studies have investigated whether state transfer articulation policies are effective at improving student outcomes, including transfer rates and baccalaureate completion rates (Anderson, Sun, & Alfonso, 2006; Banks, 1994; Boatman & Soliz, 2018; Gross & Goldhaber, 2009; Higgins & Katsinas, 1999; Lasota & Zumeta, 2016; Roksa & Keith, 2008; Roksa, 2009). Notably, all of the quantitative studies reviewed for this study are atheoretical.

Two studies that used institutional-level data to analyze the impact of transfer articulation policies on transfer rates found that state policies positively affected transfer rates only for institutions with larger percentages of students transferring with 12 or more credits (Banks, 1994) and in states where the policy was a legal mandate, as compared to states with informal state agreements (Higgins & Katsinas, 1999). Both study's authors suggested that the design of the policies may impact the

¹³ Student outcomes are most typically defined as community college to four-year college transfer rates and baccalaureate completion rates (Anderson, Sun, & Alfonso, 2006; Roksa & Keith, 2008).

outcomes, indicating that more strongly-worded policies have a greater impact on student outcomes. One critique of these studies is that they used limited datasets that were not nationally-representative. Another critique is that the studies simply measured whether a state policy existed or not; others argue that this measure is too simplistic—state policies vary widely in their designs, such as in the specificity of the policies, the types of students included in the policies, and the ability of the state to monitor policies (Anderson et al., 2006; Gross & Goldhaber, 2009; Ignash & Townsend, 2000). This critique implied that quantitative studies needed to account for more nuances about policy design to better estimate the impact of transfer policies.

The next group of studies was conducted in the mid-2000s and addressed these critiques (Anderson, Sun, & Alfonso, 2006; Gross & Goldhaber, 2009; Roksa, 2006). There were two main differences in these studies as compared to earlier studies. First, the authors used nationally-representative student-level data. Second, the authors included a measure of the strength of the state policy to account for state-to-state policy differences. With these methodological improvements, most of the studies came to the conclusion that state transfer articulation policies do not generally impact student outcomes (Anderson, Sun, & Alfonso, 2006; Gross & Goldhaber, 2009; Roksa, 2006), although at least one study indicated that certain policy types, such as common core numbering, had a positive impact on transfer and completion rates (Lasota & Zumeta, 2016).

One important critique of these newer, more robust studies is that using transfer rates as the dependent variable was the wrong criterion to use when studying

whether state transfer policies are effective at improving student outcomes (Roksa & Keith, 2008). In their study, Roksa and Keith (2008) studied state statutes and regulations relating to statewide transfer articulation and argued that the purpose of these policies was to minimize the loss of credits through transfer. Therefore, the purpose of these policies, they posited, was to increase bachelor's degree completion rates—not to improve transfer rates. Unfortunately, data were limited and did not permit them to examine the number of credits transferred (or not transferred). Instead, Roksa and Keith analyzed the impact of state articulation policies using proxy measures of bachelor's degree attainment, time to bachelor's degree, and credits to bachelor's degree. Still, Roksa and Keith (2008) found that state policies did not significantly affect any of these outcomes and credited their small samples¹⁴ as a possible factor contributing to their findings. Since then, no nationally representative quantitative studies have been completed on this topic.

This brings forth an interesting question: Why do policies that are intended to help students transfer and graduate show minimal statistically significant impact on student outcomes? Scholars have posited three possible explanations. One such explanation is that a 50-state quantitative analysis of the effectiveness of these policies masks differences and nuances between the different types of policies and divergent state contexts (Roksa, 2009). In fact, Roksa (2009) argues that available data are so limited that it is impossible to truly analyze the effectiveness of state-by-state transfer policies through a quantitative evaluation. Boatman and Soliz

¹⁴ While Roksa and Keith (2008) used a sample from a nationally representative database, the data used to capture time to degree and credits to degree were a significantly smaller sample than the sample used to measure baccalaureate completion rates.

(2018) investigated outcomes from one state transfer policy in Ohio and found that students who had completed coursework in accordance with the state transfer policy were more likely to transfer, the policy possibly increased the transferability of credits, but also that students often took longer to complete their bachelor's degrees. Although this study does suggest some positive outcomes, there is still a lot to be learned about the effectiveness of transfer policies. Questions about the effectiveness of these policies in light of their state context also suggests that a qualitative study, which would permit consideration of state context, would be one way to better study the design of state transfer articulation policies.

Another possible explanation is that the state policies are not being implemented with fidelity (Townsend & Ignash, 2000). A significant body of policy research has concluded that one must understand the implementation of a policy in order to truly understand its impact, including whether the policy is being implemented as originally envisioned by organizations and key implementing actors (Honig, 2006a; Pressman & Wildavsky, 1984; Sabatier & Mazmanian, 1979). In order to understand implementation, it is critical to investigate the key individuals involved in the execution of these state transfer policies, as well as state and organizational contexts (Honig & Hatch, 2004; Kisker et al., 2012; Mazmanian & Sabatier, 1983; McLaughlin, 1987; Townsend & Ignash, 2000; Weatherley & Lipsky, 1977). This critique provides a rationale for why qualitative studies focused on implementation, which include studying key stakeholders and local context surrounding implementation, are warranted.

One last possible explanation is that design of state transfer policies are ineffective because they are too general and not sufficiently major-specific (Bailey et al., 2015b). The state transfer articulation policies are typically geared to general transfer and often focus on the completion of general education requirements (Smith, 2010). Yet colleges and universities vary tremendously across different subject-specific program requirements. It is easy to understand why subject-specific transfer agreements may be useful through a real-life example. For instance, if a general transfer associate degree at a community college requires college algebra but a bachelor's degree in business requires calculus, this misalignment would result in a student's college algebra class not transferring into a business program at a four-year college. Instead, Bailey and associates (2015b) argue that subject-specific transfer pathways, such as in business, education, and science, would be more effective in improving student outcomes. To date, there have been no robust, empirically-based studies investigating these types of policies and transfer pathways.

Qualitative & Implementation Transfer Policy Studies

Some qualitative case studies have compared state articulation policies across multiple states (Bender, 1990; Hungar & Lieberman, 2001; Kisker et al., 2012; Wellman, 2002). These qualitative studies focus on how policies are created and the nature of policy designs. For example, Wellman's (2002) study found that policies across the states fell into two types of policies: structural policies (e.g., mission, governance structures) and academic policies (articulation agreements, transfer of credit policies). However, these qualitative studies did not reveal whether these policies help students transfer credits and improve baccalaureate completion. The

studies also tend to be atheoretical, which further limits overall understanding of how the policies work on the ground and does not build a consistent meaning of how these policies work in practice. Thus, these studies have not shed much light on the effectiveness of state transfer articulation policies and the dynamics involved in translating policies from a state-level to a university-level.

Several researchers have conducted in-depth studies investigating the implementation of a single policy from one state (Carpenter-Davis, 2005; Chase, 2013; Schaffer, 2000; Wilkerson, 2012). These studies have yielded some important findings. First, several studies found that state transfer policies were not always being implemented as originally envisioned, and then provided explanations as to why this was the case (Carpenter-Davis, 2005; Schaffer, 2000; Tobolowsky, McClellan, & Cox, 2014). One study investigating the implementation of a transfer policy in Missouri found that four-year universities were reluctant to implement the policy because of confusion about who was responsible for implementation (Carpenter-Davis, 2005). Additionally, Carpenter-Davis (2005) found a culture of institutional pride impacted the implementation of the policy because administrators believed transfer courses to be less rigorous than their own. Thus, organizational context and the key personnel involved in policy implementation were key factors in whether the policy was fully implemented. Another study by Schaffer (2000) focused on transfer policy in Virginia using an interpretative policy framework. He found that college administrators had mixed reviews about the effectiveness of the policy and that the state did not monitor compliance with the policy. Tobolowsky, McClellan, and Cox (2014) conducted a study using open systems theory as an organizational lens and

found that colleges in different states approached implementation differently. This research supports the idea that institutional contexts and the perspectives of key individuals at universities are crucial components in the process of implementing state transfer articulation policies.

However, each of these studies had some methodological limitations. Carpenter-Davis's (2005) study was atheoretical and did not include data triangulation, an empirical limitation that restricted her findings. Schaffer's (2000) study primarily focused on perceptions from community colleges with limited participants from four-year universities, giving an incomplete picture of how the policy is perceived and implemented at four-year colleges and universities. Tobolowsky et al. (2014) only sampled one college per state, a limited scope that makes it difficult to discern whether their findings hold at multiple colleges within a state. Lastly, Wilkerson's (2012) study ignored the faculty perspective, leaving out a group that is important to state transfer policy implementation since they are often engaged in evaluating transfer courses (Townsend & Ignash, 2000). Additionally, none of these studies included the perspectives of students to learn how they experienced the policy—a critically needed source of data triangulation (Carpenter-Davis, 2005; Schaffer, 2000; Tobolowsky et al., 2014; Wilkerson, 2012).

Summary of Research Gap

The quantitative research conducted on state transfer articulation policies offers limited conclusive evidence of how these policies work in practice. These atheoretical studies were not able to discern state policy nuances and did not include

any consideration of how the policies have been implemented. While the few implementation studies offered additional insight into this topic, these studies also had some limitations. These limitations included a lack of theoretical or conceptual grounding, some methodological flaws (i.e., lack of data triangulation in a case study), a focus only on community colleges' implementation of the policy, limited faculty perspectives on transfer policy implementation, and exclusion of students' perspectives as a source for data triangulation (Carpenter-Davis, 2005; Schaffer, 2000; Tobolowsky et al., 2014; Wilkerson, 2012). Additional research that addresses these limitations is needed to more fully understand the dynamics of how state transfer policies unfold on a college or university campus.

Additionally, there has been no research studying the implementation of a state, subject-specific transfer policy. The promotion of subject-specific transfer pathways has grown increasingly popular in recent years as the result of recommendations provided by numerous high-profile non-profits and policy organizations, such as the Community College Research Center, Jobs for the Future, WestEd, Lumina Foundation, Gates Foundation, and Complete College America (Altstadt, Schmidt, & Couturier, 2014; Bailey et al, 2015a; Complete College America, 2012; Dadgar, Venezia, Nodine, & Bracco, 2013; Enriquez, 2011). The fact that no research exists studying the implementation of these policies is somewhat alarming given the latest proliferation of organizations recommending subject-specific transfer pathways and policies. While these policies may make intuitive sense to practitioners, little is known or understood about whether subject-

specific policies impact student outcomes or how four-year institutions and key stakeholders implement such policies on university campuses.

Summary of Chapter Two

In summary, studying the implementation of a policy is critical to understanding the impacts of the policy itself. When examining the implementation of a policy, it is crucial to consider the policy design, the place in which it is being implemented, and the people involved in its implementation. With regard to policy, it is important to understand the policy type and tools being used. It is also crucial to understand the state context, including state governance structures and state culture, and the organizational context, such as organizational governance structures, organizational culture, and external pressures. Lastly, it is also important to understand the people involved in implementation, including street-level administrators, mid-level administrators, and faculty. These three dimensions, the *Policy Dimension*, the *Places Dimension*, and the *People Dimension*, all converge to create policy coherence: how key stakeholders make sense of a policy within a local context, determine how the policy will be implemented, and then proceed with implementation.

My study will contribute to the scholarly work on state transfer articulation policies by providing a case study investigation of the implementation of a state, subject-specific transfer articulation policy in the state of Maryland: the A.A.T. policy, as defined in Maryland Code of Regulations (COMAR) Title 13B.02.03.24. I aim to develop additional understanding of how a state transfer articulation policy is implemented at four-year institutions to help identify what factors help and hinder the

implementation process. This study will also provide additional understanding of how a subject-specific policy works in practice by exploring the dynamics of how these policies are implemented on college and university campuses.

I will use Honig's (2006a) Framework for Policy Analysis, along with a theoretical grounding of institutional theory and sensemaking theory, to guide the approach to this study. The *Policy, Places, and People Dimensions* that I have outlined in this chapter will guide how I build the comprehensive case descriptions, as well the design of my data collection and analysis. The conceptual framework will be used to guide sampling of participants, the development of research instruments, and the methods for data analysis and coding schemas. (See Appendix A for a visual diagram of the conceptual framework.) In the next chapter, I will describe the methodological approach and a detailed description of the research design and plan for data collection and analysis.

Chapter 3: Methodology

In this chapter, I articulate the methodological approach I used to answer my research questions. Consequently, I will first review the research purpose and research questions. Then, I will describe the methodology and its appropriateness for this study. Next, I will provide details of the research design, including the rationale for site selection, the sources of data as well as how data was collected. I will then provide a statement on my positionality and the epistemological assumptions undergirding this study. Finally, I will also discuss methods for data analysis and explain procedures for establishing trustworthiness.

Research Purpose & Research Questions

The purpose of this study was to investigate the implementation of the Maryland state transfer policy for teaching (Associate of Art, or A.A.T., degree),¹⁵ as defined in Maryland Code of Regulations (COMAR) Title 13B.02.03.24. In particular, I sought to understand the roles that key stakeholders¹⁶ and organizational contexts play in how state transfer policies are implemented on university campuses. My overarching research question was: How has the A.A.T. policy been implemented at four-year, public universities within Maryland? My sub-research questions are aligned to the *Policy, People, and Places Dimensions* of my conceptual framework:

- 1) What are the policy tools, evaluation measures, and implementation processes associated with the implementation of the A.A.T. policy?
- 2) How do key stakeholders interpret and implement the A.A.T. policy?

¹⁵ In this study, I will refer to this policy as the A.A.T. policy.

¹⁶ Per Chapter 2, “key stakeholders” are defined as those involved in the implementation of the A.A.T. policy/degree pathway at an institution, such as university administrators, relevant faculty, and state-level administrators.

3) What state and organizational context factors (if any) appear to be influential in how the A.A.T. policy has been implemented?

Case Study Methodology

I used a case study design to investigate the dynamics of policy implementation (Merriam, 1998; Stake, 1995; Yin, 2014). Case study is appropriate when a researcher seeks to investigate a contemporary phenomenon, and when one wants to uncover the complexity of a real-life case within a given context (Flyvbjerg, 2006; Stake, 1998; Yin, 2014). This methodology was germane to my study, because I intended to examine the current implementation of a state transfer policy within four-year, public universities in Maryland. Case study was also a fitting methodology because my research aimed to understand the complex dynamics and interdependency of the roles that policy design, state and organizational context, and people play in policy implementation. Based on my conceptual framework, a case study is particularly useful for providing a deep, rich understanding of the organizational and state settings surrounding the case.

The selection of case study was also consistent with education policy and state-level policy research studies intended to yield additional insight into policy implementation. For instance, Malen, Croninger, Muncey, and Redmond-Jones (2002) conducted a case study on the implementation of reconstitution reform policies within one school district. Reconstitution was a popular method of reform under the No Child Left Behind policy; one, which argued that in order to improve schools, districts should close and then re-open schools with new staff and organization. Malen et al. (2002) conducted an in-depth case study using interviews

and observations of this process and found that reconstitution was ultimately unsuccessful because an influx of new, inexperienced staff led to similar, or in some cases, decrease in school performance. The researchers found that one of the underlying reasons for the worse school performance was because the physical areas surrounding the schools did not contain high numbers of available, qualified teachers, which led to the hiring of vastly inexperienced, new teachers. A case study design facilitated the identification of factors that enabled researchers to understand the quantitative data (school performance factors) in greater depth. This in turn allowed the researchers to investigate how reconstitution policies were being executed within schools.

A case study application can also be particularly useful in higher education when both internal and external processes impact universities. One case study by de Freitas and Oliver (2005) on the enactment of an e-Learning policy detailed implementation nuances at a university. With this case study, de Freitas and Oliver (2005) gathered data that illuminated important organizational attributes, such as an institutional commitment to e-Learning and a top-down approach to implementation. The authors found that while the top-down approach prompted some staff and faculty resistance to implementation, the university's commitment to e-Learning led to consistent messages and trainings that eventually changed resistant staff and faculty opinions. These context-specific aspects were deemed important explanatory factors that explained how the university made significant progress in implementing e-Learning policies and programs. Thus, a case study design was able to account for

specific organizational context factors that explained how implementation occurred on this particular campus.

Case study design has also been the most frequently used methodology in researching the implementation of state transfer articulation policies (Carpenter-Davis, 2005; Chase, 2013; Schaffer, 2000; Tobolowsky et al., 2014; Wilkerson, 2012). Carpenter-Davis (2005) used case study to examine whether state-level policy in Missouri was implemented as originally envisioned. By interviewing 23 administrators at four-year universities within the state, Carpenter-Davis (2005) found that the universities were not carrying out the policy as originally planned. Instead, administrators were hesitant to accept transfer credits from programs they viewed as less rigorous than their own. Carpenter-Davis' methodology allowed her to dig deeper into participants' interpretations and experiences as well as the organizational contexts in order to explain why the policy was not being implemented as intended. The extensive, rich information that Carpenter-Davis gathered through a case study design would have been far more difficult to access through a survey or quantitative design.

My case study falls in the category of interpretative case study design with a rich, thick description of how policy is implemented, including both state and organizational case descriptions (Merriam, 1998). I analyzed the data under the lens of my conceptual framework to determine whether the data support or challenge the conceptual framework. In this way, I was able to describe what is occurring within the boundaries of the case and also explain why it is happening.

A critical step in case study design is to define the boundary of the case being researched (Stake, 1998; Yin, 2014). The boundaries of my case included public, four-year institutions within the state of Maryland. Yin (2014) described different ways in which case studies can be bounded, including a single case study which investigates a single case; a multiple case study which analyzes more than one case; and an embedded case study which includes multiple sites within one case, but which contains different units of analysis. This study represented an embedded single case study because it incorporated multiple units of analysis (two universities) under one umbrella (the State of Maryland) (Yin, 2014). Although the institutions were my focal unit of analysis, my conceptual framework illuminates importance to the state context in which the institutions are embedded.

Rationale for Case Selection: State, Transfer Policy, and Universities

Case selection for this study was divided into multiple-tiers: that of the state, policy, and institutions. In this section, I will provide details on the rationale for the choice of the state of Maryland as well as the A.A.T. policy. I will also include the selection criteria for the two institutions under study: Excel University and Student-Centered University. Pseudonyms are used for the two universities, as well as all of the participants.

State & Transfer Policy Selection

One case selection method is to identify a case which provides an exemplary illustration of a phenomenon (Patton, 2015; Yin, 2014). Maryland offered an exemplary case to study because of its history with transfer issues and transfer policies. Maryland is one of three states that have the highest community college to

baccalaureate completion rates in the country (Jenkins & Fink, 2016).¹⁷

Approximately 18 percent of students who begin at a Maryland community college transfer and continue on to earn a bachelor's degree within six years, in contrast with the national average of 14 percent (Jenkins & Fink, 2016). National news outlets often highlight Maryland as an exemplar for transfer issues; other states have turned to Maryland for advice on state-wide transfer initiatives, such as the state's online transfer articulation system (Lederman, 2008). This attention to Maryland provides further indication that Maryland is considered a leader on transfer issues. Studying Maryland as an exemplary case facilitated additional knowledge about how these policies can and should be implemented in other states and what challenges may exist even in the best circumstances.

Studying a subject-specific agreement gave insight into whether these types of policies are more successful in providing students with a seamless transfer pathway to a baccalaureate degree. Maryland is one of the few states with a subject-specific statewide transfer policy, and the state actually pioneered transfer policy for teacher education in 2001 (Ignash & Slotnick, 2007). While most state transfer policies were created to help reduce credit duplication (Roksa & Keith, 2008), practitioners and researchers alike have criticized state policies as being too general (i.e., not focused on specific subject areas) to be helpful to students (Bailey et al., 2015b). Maryland's state teacher education transfer policy was adopted in part to address critiques that the state's overall transfer articulation policy was too general to be useful for students (McDonough, 2003). Research on these policies also documented whether challenges

¹⁷ Maryland is tied for highest completion with Wyoming and Montana.

occurred in the implementation of subject-specific transfer policies, and how these challenges can potentially be circumvented for new adoptees.

Policy implementation has often been characterized as an incremental process, where policy implementers make continual adjustments over the course of time to improve policies and implementation (Lindblom, 1963). Maryland began its statewide transfer activities over 25 years ago and implemented its A.A.T. policy 15 years ago. Given the length of time that Maryland has been working on transfer issues, the state and institutions have established a strong relationship by working together on state transfer policy implementation. Studying a state with a rich history of progress on transfer issues gave a more accurate depiction of the potential as well as the long-term challenges of state, subject-specific transfer policies.

Further, studying a subject-specific transfer policy for teaching was of particular importance because of ongoing teacher shortages. Experts have cautioned about a grave deficit in the number of teachers both in Maryland and across the country – a shortage that both policy analysts and researchers predict will only get worse (Bowler, 2001; Sutchter, Darling-Hammond, & Carver-Thomas, 2016). Improving pathways into teaching careers is critically important in maintaining and improving the availability of teachers. Examining Maryland's A.A.T. policy – the first A.A.T. policy to be implemented in the country – may be particularly instructive in alleviating teacher shortages.

While Maryland has two other subject-specific transfer policies in nursing and engineering, I did not select them for my research for several reasons. First, most of Maryland's four-year universities offer bachelor's degrees in education, while public

universities in the state offer only five engineering programs and one nursing program. Thus, I selected the A.A.T. policy to maximize my list of possible institutions to study. Studying the A.A.T. also allowed me to examine a policy related to the critical need to train more teachers within the state. Lastly, the A.A.T. policy was implemented in 2001, compared to the engineering transfer policy, which was established in 2009. I selected the A.A.T. over the engineering policy because the policy has been in place for a longer period of time, which increases the likelihood that the state has been able to execute the A.A.T policy at the state and university levels fully.

University Selection

I selected two public four-year universities as study sites within the state of Maryland which I have given pseudonyms: Excel University and Student-Centered University. Including all Maryland universities (while ideal) would not be feasible for this study due to the robust nature of my intended data collection. Thus, I determined that two site selections would provide sufficient data for my study, while maintaining the feasibility of my data collection.

In order to identify information-rich cases, I used criterion-based case selection using specific criteria that I deemed important factors to include in my study (Patton, 2015). In selecting my institutional sites, I followed three criteria. First, I selected universities with varied missions and contexts due to the focus my conceptual framework places on organizational context. As discussed in Chapter 2, research indicates that organizational context factors - such as mission, values, and culture - impact organizational decision-making as it relates to policy implementation

(Smart, Kuh, & Tierney, 1997; Tierney, 1988; Umbach, 2007). Studying two types of institutions allowed me to investigate differences (if any) in implementation by institutional type. Therefore, I selected institutions with different Carnegie classifications (Carnegie Classification of Institutions of Higher Education, 2015). My second criterion was the inclusion of institutions with high community college transfer activity, represented by the number of community college students who transfer to the university. Selecting universities with a relatively high number of transfer students increased the likelihood that the university has some focus on transfer students. Third, I selected institutions that provide a bachelor's degree in education/teaching.

Excel University. I selected Excel University for my study for several reasons. First, Excel University is classified as a R1 institution, or a doctoral institution with the highest level of research activity (Carnegie Classification of Institutions of Higher Education, 2015). Excel University offers a bachelor's degree in education, has one of the highest numbers of community college transfer students in the state, and has one of the highest community college to baccalaureate completion rate in the state (Maryland Higher Education Commission, 2014b). In 2015, Excel University had over 20,000 undergraduate students and almost 2,000 students in education (University System of Maryland, 2015). Slightly less than half of students are female, and one-third are students of color¹⁸ (USM, 2015). In addition, almost two-thirds (65%) of Excel University enrollment is made up of in-state students. In 2015, almost two hundred students from Excel University graduated with

¹⁸ Includes Asian, Black, Hispanic, American Indian, and Pacific Islander.

an education degree (Maryland Higher Education Commission, 2016b). Additional information about Excel University is provided in the case description located in Chapter 4.

Student-Centered University. Student-Centered University was the second university I chose in accordance with my selection criteria. Student-Centered University is classified as a M1 institution: a larger Master's level institution (Carnegie Classification of Institutions of Higher Education, 2015). Student-Centered University offers a bachelor's degree in education and has one of the highest numbers of community college transfer students in the state. Student-Centered University is a medium-sized institution with almost 20,000 undergraduate students (USM, 2015). According to Student-Centered University documents, the university has just over 3,000 undergraduate students in education. Over half of students are female and almost one-third are students of color¹⁹ (USM, 2015). Eighty-three percent (83%) of students are in-state Maryland residents. In 2015, over three hundred students graduated from Student-Centered University with an education degree (Maryland Higher Education Commission, 2016b). Additional information about Student-Centered University is provided in the case description located in Chapter 4.

Thus, the two sampled sites meet the selection criteria because they have varied organizational contexts represented by different Carnegie Classifications (R1 institution versus M1 institution). As listed above, the two universities represent some of the highest numbers of transfer students in the state of Maryland, and both offer a bachelor's degree in education.

¹⁹ Includes Asian, Black, Hispanic, American Indian, and Pacific Islander.

Sources of Data Collection

A core component of case study methodology is the use of multiple data sources for data analyses, such as interviews, participant observation, and document analysis (Merriam, 1998; Yin, 2016). As such, my study utilized semi-structured interviews with institutional administrators, relevant faculty, and state-level administrators; observations of state meetings and college meetings and events; interviews with A.A.T. students; and state and institutional documents pertinent to transfer and the A.A.T. policy. Prior to data collection, I received Institutional Research Board approval from both universities included in the study.

Interviews

The first data collection method I used was semi-structured interviews. Interviewing is key to a case study approach because it helps build an in-depth picture of the case (Creswell, 2013). State and institutional administrators as well as relevant faculty, whom I refer to as key stakeholders in this study, were an essential data source.

My selection criterion for university interview participants was that the interviewees had to have some level of involvement at the university in the A.A.T. policy. This involvement included the following university roles: a) street-level administrators who implemented the policy by working directly with students (e.g., academic advisors, admissions counselors, pre-transfer counselors); b) mid-level administrators who made implementation decisions about the policy and supervised the street-level administrators (e.g., directors, assistant directors); and c) faculty and other administrators who served as policy translators by providing some level of

decision-making capacity, such as decisions about whether courses will transfer, or communications about state decisions to other administrators or faculty. Selecting participants with a range of different levels of involvement offered a broader picture of what the implementation looked like at each institution and provided wider perspectives on how the policy is implemented. My selection criteria for the state-level participants was that they must work at a state-level office (such as the University System of Maryland) and be involved in some aspect related to the A.A.T. policy.

To select these participants purposefully, I used a combination of complete target population sampling (Patton, 2015), and snowball method sampling (Glesne, 2010; Goetz & LeCompte, 1984; Patton, 2015). First, I completed research on each university's website to identify the informants I would need to interview, such as assistant deans of the College of Education and advising staff. I recruited gatekeepers at each university who introduced me to these individuals as well as other key people to interview. These gatekeepers included an academic advisor at the College of Education at Excel University and a mid-level administrator within the Office of Admissions at Student-Centered University (whom I was referred to by a friend who is a former employee). I contacted each of them to explain the purpose of my study, and they provided me with a short list of key informants and provided introductions as needed. Once I identified key informants and made proper introductions, I used snowball sampling to achieve complete target sampling for Excel University's College of Education advising staff and Student-Centered University's education liaisons in their Office of Admissions. After each interview, I asked the participant

for recommendations on key individuals believed to influence and be involved in the implementation of the A.A.T. policy. I kept employing snowball sampling techniques until I reached data saturation. I completed a total of 16 university-level interviews that were conducted between April and October 2017. At Excel University, this included interviews with five street-level administrators, two mid-level administrators, and one faculty member. At Student-Centered University, I completed interviews with four street-level administrators, two mid-level administrators, and two faculty members. See Appendix B for a complete list of administrator/faculty interviews with a description of organizational affiliation and role.

For the state-level participants, I employed purposeful sampling to select information-rich participants (Patton, 2015). I had already completed exploratory discussions with two senior-level administrators at the University System of Maryland (USM) in preparation for the dissertation proposal. These exploratory conversations provided me with key historical background and context on the origins of the A.A.T. policy and on transfer activities within Maryland. In looking at the staff listing for USM, Maryland Higher Education Commission (MHEC), and Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE), I identified staff members who worked on transfer and teacher education issues and three individuals agreed to participate in my study. I was referred to one additional person via snowball sampling.

Once I identified my target participants, I communicated to these selected individuals via email and provided a brief summary of my study along with IRB consent forms and appropriate IRB documentation (see Appendix C for consent forms). I scheduled each interview via email and emailed a copy of the consent form

to each participant. The majority of all interviews were conducted in person at a location of the participant's choosing (usually their office), with four interviews conducted via phone.²⁰ To establish rapport for both the in-person and phone interviews, I introduced myself and the purpose of my study before beginning the interview. All interviews were audio-recorded with permission of the participant and then transcribed verbatim. After each interview were transcribed, I reviewed each transcript against the audio recording to confirm its accuracy and then sent the transcript to each participant for review. Interviews lasted from approximately 30 minutes to an hour and a half.

For the interviews, I used an interview protocol that includes 26 questions (see Appendix D for the interview protocol), including three questions that addressed the *People Dimension*, five questions regarding the *Places Dimension*, five questions aimed at the *Policy Dimension*, eight questions that spanned all three dimensions, and five questions that elicited recommendations for further data collection. The protocol was designed to elicit understanding about all areas of the conceptual framework, including organizational structure and governance, organizational culture and norms, the influence of external pressures, and participants' involvement in the implementation of the A.A.T. policy, as well as key stakeholders' interpretation of the policy. I developed this protocol in November 2016 using my conceptual framework and research questions. The protocol varies slightly by role (i.e., street-level administrator, mid-level administrator, faculty, state-level administrator). Examples

²⁰ For three out of the four interviews conducted by phone, I had actually met the participant in-person at an observation prior to the interview.

of questions included: What do you think are your university's organizational priorities? In regards to the state transfer policies as they relate to A.A.T. degree, how would you describe these policies to a student and their family? What factors do you think most influences how your college works with A.A.T. students with regard to the state policies? Has your college changed how you advise A.A.T. students within the last year (or few years)—particularly as it relates to their transfer coursework? The protocol was piloted by interviewing two administrators and was adjusted accordingly to reduce redundancy and clarify some of the interview questions.

Another part of my interview process for university participants consisted of reviewing a mock transcript of a hypothetical A.A.T. student. I developed a mock transcript of a community college transfer student; a transcript based on real courses at a Maryland community college as derived from the state's online transfer articulation database, ARTSYS (see Appendix E for the mock transcript).²¹ During the interview, I asked the participant to explain the process of how that particular student would experience transfer, including the process for course evaluations, degree audits, and the projected timeline of their degree completion at his or her university. This activity aimed to accomplish several goals. First, the activity during the interview provided me with an understanding of the logistical processes of transfer at each college. Second, the activity helped the participant provide detailed information using a student example.

²¹ To help verify the authenticity of these mock transcripts, I reviewed the mock transcripts with a former community college faculty member in education.

Observations

I also conducted a series of observations, including state-level observations and university-level observations (see Appendix F for a complete list of all observations). According to my IRB protocol, I contacted the facilitator for each observation to obtain permission to observe the meeting or event (see Appendix G for the observation consent form).

The first set of observations included meetings held by the state: the A.A.T. Oversight Council; a group comprised of representatives from four-year colleges and universities, community colleges, and the University System of Maryland. The group meets approximately every other month (with a hiatus during the summer), and I observed two meetings: one in May 2017 and one in October 2017. Observing these meetings gave me better insight into the relationship between the universities and the state and provided information from university administrators on the A.A.T. issues they deem critical for statewide discussion.

Creswell (2013) states that it is important to identify the type of observation to be conducted by determining the role of the observer, ranging from complete-participant, to participant-as-observer, to observer-as-participant, to complete-observer. I sought out to assume the role of observer as participant. While I strived to minimize my involvement during the observations, participants knew I was there as an observer²² (Creswell, 2013). During the observation, I took notes on a paper copy of an observation protocol and typed notes immediately after the meeting. The

²² According to my IRB agreement, I had to announce to the people I was observing that I was there for research purposes. Thus, all observation participants were aware of my presence.

observation protocol was initially developed using my conceptual framework (see Appendix H for this protocol). For example, I looked for references to state context, such as state policies or governance matters, and organizational context, such as organizational governance, culture, or external pressures. While I anticipated that I would add additional sections as needed to the protocol as my data collection progressed, I did not add additional sections in final data collection.

The other set of observations occurred at each of the selected sites. During the interviews, I asked participants what college meetings or events they believed would be the most useful in understanding how the A.A.T. policy works at their institution and worked to obtain permission for those observations. At Excel University, these observations included one annual meeting held by the College of Education with community college advisors (held in April 2017) and two observations of new student orientations (held in June 2017). At Student-Centered University, this included one observation of new student orientation (held in July 2017), one recruitment event at the main campus (held in October 2017), and one recruitment event held on a branch campus (held in October 2017). While the recommendations of which college meetings or events to observe varied depending on the participants, having participants identify the most helpful meetings or events to observe increased the likelihood of obtaining useful data to understand implementation within each university's unique context. Similar to the state meeting observations, I aimed to serve as an observer-as-participant (although participants were also aware of my presence) and used an observation protocol initially developed through my conceptual framework (see Appendix H).

As an observer-as-participant, my presence may have altered the ways in which individuals at the meeting or event interacted with each other. One way I mitigated this challenge was by asking a university or state lead facilitator whether the observation represented a typical event. I probed them as to whether the meeting or event represented a typical one and if not, why it was atypical (see Appendix I for a list of the questions). For all observations, participants and/or facilitators indicated that each observation represented a typical event. In at least two observations at the university level (one at Excel University and one at Student-Centered University), facilitators indicated that attendance at the meeting or event was lower than typical, but that they did not believe this affected content of the discussions or presentation.

Student Interviews

Another source of data included interviews with A.A.T. students at each university.²³ While administrators and faculty provided key information about how the policy is implemented at each university, students provided first-hand perspectives on how they *experience* the policy at that institution. Since students are not involved in policy decisions at each university, students were an important source for data triangulation. I compared data gathered from the student and administrator/faculty interviews to determine whether students' experience was congruent with administrators' perspectives of how the policy works.

²³ I had initially sought out to conduct student focus groups for this study, but I found it very difficult to identify common times for students to meet at each study site. It quickly became clear that it would be infeasible for me to move forward with student focus groups within the timeframe for my study. Rather than eliminate student focus groups, I decided to proceed with individual student interviews to maintain the perspective of students in this study.

I used selection criteria to help select students for these interviews. My selection criteria were: 1) The students had to be community college transfer students who earned an A.A.T. degree from a Maryland community college; and 2) They had to be current students at either Excel or Student-Centered University in an education-related bachelor's degree program. I recruited these students through the assistance of my university participants. I asked each participant who would be the best person to provide me with names of current A.A.T. students from their college as well as the students' contact information. At Excel University, each advisor from the College of Education sent out an email to students on their case load inviting them to participate. At Student-Centered University, a mid-level administrator sent my invitation to faculty to share with students, and the administrator provided me a list of student contacts. Once I had the list of eligible students, I sent them an email inviting them to participate in a one hour interview about their transfer experiences (see the recruitment email in Appendix J). In this communication, I explained the purpose of my research, the selection criteria, consent information (see Appendix K for a copy of the consent form), and instructions for contacting me if they met the selection criteria and were interested in participating. I recruited three students A.A.T. students at each university (plus one transfer student at Student-Centered University without an A.A.T. who was with another student's interview and asked to participate) for a total of seven students. See Appendix L for a summary of the student profiles.

During the student interviews, I first introduced myself to establish rapport, explaining my background as a community college transfer student and an explanation of my research. The purpose of this specific introduction was to help

create a positive climate with the students. I used an interview protocol containing nine questions (see Appendix M for the student interview protocol). The protocol included questions about why the student participants chose community college, how they learned about the A.A.T. degree, what they expected from their transfer experience, and how they experienced the transfer of their community college credits into their A.A.T programs. Examples of questions include: How did you find out about the A.A.T. degree? What made you decide to pursue the A.A.T. degree? While you were at community college, what did you expect your transfer experience at [name of university] would be like? Did all of your courses transfer? If not, which courses did not transfer? If not, why do you think they did not transfer? When you complete your degree, how many semesters will it have taken you in total? The student interviews were all recorded with the consent of participants and transcribed verbatim for data analysis. Data derived from the student interviews added important context to the case and were an important source of data triangulation.

Documents

My last source of data was drawn from documents from the state and each institution. Documents can be a key source in case studies because they aid in data triangulation through confirming themes generated from other data, and by illuminating additional perspectives (Jones, Torres, & Arminio, 2014). I analyzed documents as they were identified through archival research, interviews with participants, and observations. For state documents, this included the state transfer policy, implementation guidance, minutes from state A.A.T. Oversight Committee meetings, and online documents relevant to transfer and the A.A.T. College

documents included websites related to A.A.T. policies or students, recruitment documents for A.A.T. students, and advising protocol documents. During interviews, I also asked participants about relevant documents that could be shared with me for data collection purposes. At the end of data collection, I analyzed a total of 62 documents, including 40 at the organizational-level, 20 at the state-level, and two at the federal-level. A complete list of documents can be found in Appendix N.

As described by Merriam (1998), content analysis is key to conducting document analysis. Therefore, I examined the documents to identify patterns in the content and triangulate these patterns with the findings that emerge from interviews and observations. Data from these documents were included in the analysis but also used to inform the case descriptions for each site selected.

Epistemological Assumptions & Positionality Statement

This project followed a social constructivist lens. Social constructivists believe that people make meaning of their reality, and that these realities are socially constructed (Jones et al., 2014). Although Yin (2014) indicates many case study approaches lean towards a post-positivist perspective, case studies can also accommodate a constructivist perspective by acknowledging that multiple realities have multiple meanings (Merriam, 1998). I acknowledge that I am bringing to life participants' perceptions and interpretations of their roles, their organizational contexts, and the A.A.T. policy. By doing so, however, I aimed to illuminate a deeper understanding of the complex processes that occur as a state policy is translated to an organizational context.

The inspiration for this project arose from my own experience in navigating the community college pathway to a baccalaureate degree. A community college was not my initial plan when I began the college choice process. Although I had gained admission to a four-year university, I soon realized the costliness of tuition. With my parents' encouragement, I decided to enroll in a community college with the intention of transferring. I received my associate degree and transferred to Mount Holyoke College—a private, women's college in Massachusetts. I was able to transfer 60 credits. Upon my arrival to Mount Holyoke College, my college advisors assured me that I would be able to finish my bachelor's degree in two years.

While reflection shows that my transfer process was straightforward, a conversation with a fellow student about her experiences in transferring to Mount Holyoke College affected me profoundly. Though we entered the college with associate degrees at the same time, she found out that not all of her credits transferred into her major, and as a result, she would need three years to graduate. My friend was not alone in this experience; indeed, I had many peers who were in similar situations. This memory serves as a foundation of my interest in studying the transfer student transition phenomenon. I asked myself continually why I experienced such a positive and successful transition, while others struggled. Why did so many students lose college credits that they had earned and paid for?

This fascination with transfer continued as I entered my first internship in education at the New Jersey Commission on Higher Education (NJCHE) in January 2009. This internship marked the first time I was exposed to state transfer policy. New Jersey had recently passed their own state transfer articulation policy in 2007;

two years later, all public colleges and universities were required by law to submit information to the NJCHE documenting their compliance with the law. As an intern, my job was to organize these documents for our research and policy director. The director explained to me the importance of this law in helping community college transfer students within the state.

I continued my career in education policy, and I remained curious about state education policies. In spring 2011, I began working for an organization that focused on state policies that support college and career readiness. In fall 2014, I began working at the University of Maryland, where I have been employed for the last four years. In my roles at the university, I have worked with transfer students in the admissions process as well as in academic advising and currently work specifically with transfer students through the university's student union. I have seen the benefits and challenges that transfer students face in navigating transfer pathways, including the loss of earned credits. I feel a strong sense of urgency to continue working on facilitating transfer pathways so that other transfer students can complete their bachelor's degrees in a timely manner.

As I investigated the phenomenon of transfer policy implementation in my study, I examined my own identities as they pertained to this research. My role as a university administrator granted me benefits linked to being an insider (Merriam, 1998). For example, my insider role helped in providing access to administrative staff and faculty who implemented the policy. Because I share a common role with these administrative staff and faculty, that of working with students in a university setting, it was easier in some ways to establish rapport. Having this commonality may have

encouraged participants to share more easily or provide more specific details, as they are familiar with my role as a higher education professional.

Conversely, in some scenarios, my roles may have inhibited open and honest communication. For example, my role as a university administrator could have been a limitation. Some administrators may have been less likely to be candid or honest with me given my role within the Maryland higher education community. To help mitigate this risk, I reminded participants that their interview data would be confidential and took particular care to construct the narratives in this study in a way that protected their identities. In addition to my role as an advisor, I am a former community college alumna as well as a researcher. While staff and faculty may have expressed their true views of community college transfer students to me in passing, they may have been more hesitant to share these views since they knew it was for research purposes or because they knew about my community college background. For example, if an administrative staff member had negative experiences of working with community college transfer students, this person may not have openly conveyed their thoughts to me if they knew that I am also a community college alumna. Because of this risk, I often omitted this information when interviewing administrators and faculty. I also worked carefully to establish a rapport with these individuals so that they felt comfortable sharing their true views about the policy's implementation on their campus.

Taking a social constructivism perspective into account, I acknowledge my responsibility in accurately portraying participants' interpretations and perceptions of how implementation occurs on their respective campuses. Throughout the entire

research process, I continually reflected upon how my own experiences may have affected my study by practicing reflexivity and continually maintaining an analytic memo (Glesne, 2011). I often used these reflexive memos to note initial takeaways and to question how my personal and professional identity might have been influencing my initial reactions. This allowed me to interrogate some of these questions more thoroughly through data collection. Practicing reflexivity was a core component during data analysis.

Data Analysis

I used both inductive and deductive coding techniques to analyze data, including an analytic technique called pattern-matching (Yin, 2014). According to Yin (2014), using pattern-matching logic is one of the most desirable analytic techniques for case studies. The technique involves comparing findings through initial coding with predicted findings based on a conceptual or theoretical model (Yin, 2014).

Throughout data analysis, I maintained reflective memos throughout data collection to note my initial reactions to each interview or observation conducted or document collected, including any initial connections to areas of my conceptual framework. Next, I conducted initial coding on the administrator/faculty interviews and observations using pre-established a priori codes that were developed from my conceptual framework; also called structural codes (Saldaña, 2016). As I conducted this initial coding, I maintained an analytical memo to note trends and key questions that emerged (Saldaña, 2016). I then coded the data inductively, using descriptive coding for further concepts that were not necessarily aligned with the conceptual

framework and these codes were added to my codebook. The final codebook yielded 29 codes (see Appendix O for a copy of the codebook). Using the codebook, I coded administrator/faculty interview and observation data using a qualitative software program called Dedoose. I then analyzed the student interviews and documents in a separate analytical memo noting which findings were tri-angulated or countered by student interview and document data.

As typical with case study research, I reviewed the codes and my analytic memos for each of the cases (within-case analysis) and between cases (cross-case analysis) to identify similarities and differences. This analysis permitted me to identify where differences existed between the findings and the conceptual framework (Yin, 2014). This categorical aggregation technique was used to derive the findings of my study (Stake, 1995). In other words, I analyzed the data within each university and the state first to determine what was occurring at each individual institution, which helped me build out a comprehensive case description for each university as well as Maryland. Then, I analyzed the data across the two universities—including the observations, student interviews, and documents—to draw conclusions about what was occurring within the boundaries of the case.

Once I generated these initial findings, I conducted a final review of the findings against the multiple data sources for triangulation purposes. This helped me identify which findings could be confirmed through a secondary source of data to further validate my findings.

Establishing Trustworthiness

To ensure trustworthiness and credibility of findings and conclusions, I employed several strategies, including data triangulation, member checking, reflexivity memos, and rich, thick descriptions. First, I used data triangulation as a way to ensure the findings were comparable across different data collection methods. Data triangulation can be a critical component to establishing content validity (Yin, 2014). According to LeCompte and Schensul (2010), observations can be a useful component of data triangulation by confirming that participants actually do what they say they do. The inclusion of student interviews was another form of data triangulation, as I was able to compare what administrators say students experience against students' perceptions of their experiences with this policy. I also triangulated data by examining documents. As indicated by Merriam (1998), the inclusion of documents as a data source can also be a stable form of data collection and useful to triangulate data by further grounding the context of the case. During data analysis, I used all sources of data - including interviews, observations, and documents - and then compared each source with the others to arrive at my final research findings.

Second, I engaged in two different forms of member checking. After each administrator/faculty interviews were completed and the transcript was reviewed for accuracy, the transcript was sent to each participant with the opportunity to review for accuracy and authenticity as well as the chance to edit their transcript. In my second member checking process, I produced an initial summary of my findings and shared this summary with all administrators and faculty allowing them to review and provide feedback on whether this summary represented their experiences. Approximately one-

third of participants provided comments – most affirming that they believed my findings were accurate as written and some providing suggestions to improve the clarity of the findings. I consulted and reflected on this feedback and adjusted my findings accordingly when their feedback could be triangulated through an additional review of the data. This member checking process helped to ensure that I have both accurately described the case and that my interpretations are consistent with the participants' experiences (Glesne, 2011). The member checking process also helped to ensure that I have not impressed any personal bias on the study findings.

Next, I maintained analytic memos throughout the data collection and data analysis process as a method for practicing reflexivity, which is critical to qualitative research (Saldaña, 2016). Practicing reflexivity allowed me to reflect on how, as a researcher, I might be influencing the research process as a result of my own personal background and experiences. By reflecting on this throughout the research process, I aimed to minimize the chances that my experiences distorted the findings derived from the data.

Lastly, I developed a rich, thick description of the case to help establish external validity and the transferability of my research (Stake, 1995). In particular, I used my conceptual framework to help guide the development of comprehensive case descriptions of both the state and institutions included in this study. The conceptual framework acted as a roadmap to aide me in building the case descriptions through focusing the case descriptions on key aspects from the conceptual framework. As a result of the rich, thick description, readers of my findings are able to better discern the transferability of my conclusions to other locations (Creswell, 2013).

Summary of Chapter Three

In summary, I used an interpretive case study design to investigate how public, four-year universities implemented the A.A.T. policy within Maryland. Data collection sources include a) interviews with individuals serving in roles engaged in the A.A.T. policy implementation process (including street-level administrators, mid-level administrators, relevant faculty, and state-level administrators); b) observations of state-level A.A.T. Oversight Committee meetings; c) observations at each sampled site; d) student interviews, and e) state and institutional documents relevant to the A.A.T. policy and transfer. I used both inductive and deductive coding techniques, beginning with analysis using a priori codes established from my conceptual framework. To help ensure trustworthiness, I used data triangulation and member checking to help ensure construct validity, practice reflexivity by maintaining reflective memos, and rich, thick descriptions to assist with external validity.

In the next chapter, I will draw upon all data sources to provide a comprehensive case description for the state of Maryland, Excel University, and Student-Centered University. These comprehensive case descriptions include discussion on the organizational or governance structure of Maryland and each university, organizational culture, values, and priorities, a description of the historical development of the A.A.T., how the A.A.T. was implemented from the state perspective as well as each university's viewpoint, and how students experience the A.A.T. pathway at each university.

Chapter 4: Case Descriptions

I used an embedded, interpretative case study design to explore the dynamics of how a Maryland transfer articulation unfolds on university campuses (Yin, 2014). The purpose of this study was to investigate how two universities, Excel University and Student-Centered University,²⁴ implemented Maryland's transfer articulation policy for the Associate of Arts in Teaching (A.A.T.) degree. One key component of case study design is to provide rich, thick descriptions of the cases that are the focus of the study (Merriam, 1998; Yin, 2014). As such, this chapter includes three case descriptions: The first at the state level to describe the Maryland case and the second and third at the university level to describe Excel University and Student-Centered University, respectively. Details included in the case descriptions are guided by my conceptual framework based on Honig's (2006a) Framework for Policy Analysis. To represent the *Places Dimension*, I include a description of state and organizational demographics, governance and structure, and culture. The *People Dimension* consists of a description of the key state players. Lastly, I provide a history and description of the A.A.T. policy to represent the *Policy Dimension*.

Maryland Case Description

For the Maryland case description, I provide key demographic data, information about Maryland's governance structure and its higher education system, a description of Maryland's work around transfer, and the history behind the creation and implementation of the A.A.T. degree. Multiple sources of data were used to compile this case description, including historical and current documents, scholarship

²⁴ Names of the two universities have been changed.

pieces written on the topic, interviews with administrators, and observations of state-level meetings.

Maryland Demographics

Maryland, with a population of nearly six million people, is the sixth most diverse state in the country with 60% Caucasian residents, 30% Black or African-American, 5.5% Asian, 8% Hispanic or Latino, 0.4% Native American (U.S. Census Bureau, 2016a). The percentage of residents 25 years or older with a bachelor's degree or higher is 39.4% – higher than the national average of 31.2% (U.S. Census Bureau, 2016b). Maryland has the highest estimated median household income in the country at \$78,945, and the state unemployment rate as of March 2018 is 4.3% (U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2018; U.S. Census Bureau, 2016b).

Maryland's Overall State Governance Structure

Key players in Maryland's overall state governance structure include the governor and the state legislature. Although the governor does not have the power to introduce legislation, the governor may highlight key areas of focus (including education) through the creation of task forces, executive orders, and through public comments (Council of State Governments, 2015, 2017). The governor also has full budgetary approval power over state education funding (Council of State Governments, 2015). The state's legislative body, the Maryland General Assembly, is a bicameral house consisting of 47 senators and 141 delegates representing Maryland's 47 districts. The legislature's role is to illuminate various priorities through legislation, formalize regulatory rules created by other Maryland agencies into law, and appropriate funding for state higher education. The Maryland Senate has

an Education, Health, and Environmental Affairs Committee, which includes an Education Subcommittee.

The majority of state policies that govern higher education are codified in the state's regulations, Code of Maryland Regulations (COMAR). The regulations in Title 13B of COMAR contain the rules and policies that govern the Maryland higher education system, including policies on program approval, funding, and accountability. For the COMAR regulations pertaining to higher education, colleges and universities draft or revise regulations in coordination with state higher education officials. The draft regulations then go to the Maryland Higher Education Commission (MHEC), which publicly releases the draft for comments. After the public comment period, changes are made and the draft regulations go to MHEC for final approval and subsequently to the Maryland legislature for enactment.

Maryland Culture and Political Context

Maryland's current political affiliation is mixed at the governor level and prominently liberal at the legislative level. Maryland's current governor is a Republican, but the office has alternated between Democrat and Republican every other term since 1995. The legislature, on the other hand, has consistently remained liberal since at least the 1940s (Bump, 2015; National Conference of State Legislatures, 2017).

According to study participants, Maryland culture at the state level is heavily focused on workforce development, which goes hand-in-hand with education. Political and educational leaders want Maryland to be an economically stable state and want to ensure that its citizens get the education needed to support diverse

industries within the state. In fact, Governor Hogan's most recent State of the Union address in January 2018 mentioned the work Maryland has done to create more jobs and focused on economic development (Cox, 2018). Irene (State-Level Administrator) shares that since Maryland is a highly educated population, state leaders want to maintain and even increase the number of Maryland residents with a higher education credential to ensure the state is meeting workforce needs. Thus, it can be posited that workforce development is a significant priority for state leaders in Maryland.

Maryland's Higher Education System

Maryland has 53 colleges and universities, including 16 public community colleges, 13 public four-year institutions, 13 state-aided independent institutions, and 11 private institutions (Maryland Higher Education Commission, 2017). In 2016, undergraduate enrollment totaled 288,720 students, which includes a majority enrollment at community colleges (49%), followed by public four-year institutions (41%), state-aided independent institutions (9 %), and private institutions (less than 1%) (Maryland Commission on Higher Education, 2017). Nearly 10,000 students transfer from Maryland community colleges to public Maryland universities each year (Maryland Commission on Higher Education, 2017).

Maryland's higher education system, in its current form, has been in place since 1988 when the state passed Chapter 246, Acts of 1988, which dissolved the previous governing structures (the previous Board of Trustees and University of Maryland Board of Regents) and created MHEC and the University System of Maryland (USM). Maryland's higher education governing structure is a complex

system with a state coordinating board, multi-campus governing boards, and single-institutional governing boards (McGuiness, 2003). MHEC is the state-designated authority on higher education matters (i.e., the state coordinating board) that officially reviews and approves COMAR regulations pertaining to higher education. MHEC also has program approval authority – any college or university seeking to establish a program has to obtain program approval from MHEC.

As the statewide office for all but two of the public four-year institutions within the state of Maryland (i.e., a multi-campus governing board), USM represents Maryland’s public higher education system.²⁵ While USM does not have formal state authority, it has an impact on policy by acting as a convener and informal influencer on state higher education policy matters: “The convening role is really the most important role of our work because our institutions are very diverse” (Marsha, State-Level Administrator). Much of USM’s role is centered on bringing college and university stakeholder groups together – such as presidents, chief academic officers, or faculty in disciplinary areas – to discuss key issues and draft higher education-related policies, including COMAR regulations that go to MHEC for review and approval as well as policies that impact USM colleges and universities. USM is run by a chancellor and a Board of Regents consisting of 17 members appointed by the governor.

The Maryland Association of Community Colleges (MACC) is an organization that provides a “unifying voice” for Maryland’s community colleges

²⁵ St. Mary’s College and Morgan State University are the only two public universities in Maryland not under the University System of Maryland. These institutions have single-institutional governing boards.

(Maryland Association of Community Colleges, 2017). Similar to USM, MACC does not have any formal state governing authority, but serves as an important voice in Maryland higher education matters, particularly since Maryland community colleges are such a large component of the Maryland higher education landscape. MACC influences policy through issuing public statements, engaging in lobbying, and participating in statewide discussions.

Given that the A.A.T. degree brings together stakeholders from higher education and K-12 education, it is important to examine the structure of the K-12 state system as well. The Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE) is the state authority in K-12 education. MSDE and colleges and universities work together on teacher recruiting, training, and licensure. In particular, MSDE provides teacher certifications in the state of Maryland. The Maryland State Board of Education sets the educational policies and standards for pre-kindergarten through high school. Together, these two bodies dictate policies and procedures that school leaders and teachers must follow to run the K-12 system and set priorities at the state level. For a visual representation of Maryland stakeholders, see Appendix P.

Laying the Groundwork: Maryland's General Transfer Articulation Policy

Before describing the development and implementation of the A.A.T. degree, it is important to understand the historical context that led to the state's focus on transfer issues and to the development of Maryland's general transfer articulation policies (GTAP). Throughout the 1980s, Maryland higher education officials and state legislators were concerned about the problem of transfer credit, hearing anecdotal stories of students transferring between Maryland colleges and losing a

significant number of credits. One 1983 report indicated that almost 10% of transfer students lost at least one semester's worth of credits as a result of transferring (Maryland State Board for Community Colleges, 1983). In 1988, the legislature passed Article 11-206²⁶ indicating that MHEC would "establish procedures for transfer of students between the public institutions of postsecondary education" (Section (a)1 of Article 11-207). MHEC convened the Student Transfer Advisory Committee, and USM began the Articulation System for Maryland Colleges and Universities (ARTSYS) in 1988, a computer transfer articulation system that provided information on whether a course transfers to another college (Maryland Commission on Higher Education, 2014).²⁷

In September 1993, the chief academic officers (CAOs) from all public institutions in Maryland (both two- and four-year colleges) met to discuss common issues among their institutions (MHEC, 2015a). Although the Student Transfer Advisory Committee and ARTSYS were in place, the transfer of credits remained a problem. MHEC found that transferring from one college to another added an average of eight months to a student's graduation date (MHEC, 1996). The CAOs determined one potential solution to smooth out the process of transferring credits entailed the development of common general education requirements. If all Maryland colleges and universities could agree to the same general education requirements, developing a policy to facilitate the transfer of those credits could ameliorate the problem. To do so, USM convened meetings involving hundreds of representatives from the colleges,

²⁶ Today, this code is Article 11-207.

²⁷ In 1988, ARTSYS was launched as a PC-based common platform system. In 1993, ARTSYS was converted to a dynamic platform online (Maryland Higher Education Commission, 2014a).

including the CAOs and faculty groups in content areas who developed the specific details of the regulations (MHEC, 2015a). After a year of negotiations, the CAOs delivered the draft regulations to MHEC. MHEC released the draft regulations for public comment and the regulations were adopted in March 1995 as Title 13B.06.01 (MHEC, 2015a), which went into effect in December 1995.

The purpose of Maryland's GTAP is to make transferring more efficient by requiring colleges to accept transfer credits. GTAP specifies that any student transferring from one public institution within the state of Maryland to another is guaranteed transfer of their general education credits to reduce the duplication of credits. The policy also stipulates that major or elective credits earned at a public college in Maryland may transfer to another public college in the state if the credits are from a parallel course or program, and if the student has earned at least a 2.0 grade in that course. Students may transfer up to a maximum of half the credits for a baccalaureate degree if transferring from a community college (usually 60 credits). The policy also articulates a procedure for resolving disputes between colleges if questions arise about which credits can be transferred. If a student believes they have been wrongfully denied credit, an appeal can be filed and the colleges must work together to resolve the appeal (Title 13B.06.01.09: Appeals Process). If the two colleges cannot agree on the transferability of credit, the colleges send the dispute to a transfer mediation committee appointed by the higher education secretary to make a binding decision (Title 13B.06.01.08, Transfer Mediation Committee). According to USM, the mediation committee has never convened.

Maryland's GTAP policy (as well as the A.A.T.) are considered a mandate policy design because these policies contain language that spells out a required behavior for a defined group and contains a penalty for those who fail to comply (Fowler, 2000). The required behavior is that colleges must accept specific credits for transfer students.

USM provided support for Maryland's GTAP implementation. In 1996, USM brought the colleges together to work on a set of guiding implementation principles, including standards for a first-year writing class, standards for grading a "C" paper, and recommendations for standard requirements to be covered in various disciplinary areas (Maryland Intersegmental Chief Academic Officers, 1997). The CAOs approved the implementation guidance in 1997 after a year of development and negotiations by faculty groups convened around subject areas. Administrators and advisors across the state used ARTSYS (a USM-run platform) to help students identify transferable courses and recommend degree programs. Another mechanism that supported implementation was the pressure from community college and university representatives across the state. For example, the CAOs often discussed at meetings that colleges would have to faithfully comply for the policy to work; thus, colleges themselves exerted pressure on each other to follow the policy.

All of these developments – the GTAP policy, the convenings run by USM, the collaborations between four-year universities and community colleges, ARTSYS, the experience of implementing one type of transfer policy – laid the groundwork that made the development and implementation of the A.A.T. degree possible.

Maryland's Associate of Arts of Teaching Degree Policy

The origins of the A.A.T. degree date back to 1988 with the Higher Education Act that led to the creation of MHEC and USM. As part of this legislation, MHEC was directed by the legislature to draft a report identifying priorities and critical focus areas for the new Maryland higher education system. Through statewide meetings aimed at identifying these key issues, improving teacher quality arose as a priority. This discovery led MHEC to create a task force focused on better understanding teacher quality. The most common report cited on state websites is called the "Teacher Education Redesign Report of 1995," which recommended increasing teachers' minimum requirements in content knowledge, expanding students' internship placement experience in teacher education programs, identifying teacher education pathways for early deciders, and expanding professional development options for current teachers.

In addition to teacher quality, officials were increasingly concerned about a teacher shortage in Maryland (Bomster, 1992; Evelyn, 2002). The teacher shortages were one motivation behind creating the A.A.T. degree pathway:

There was a teacher shortage at that time. It was a very important area because we all recognize that our future, successful students needed to have the very best teachers possible. That for many students, starting at the community college, was the best option for them, both monetarily as well as personally.

(Mia, State Administrator)

From reports and task force discussions, state higher education leaders became interested in encouraging more in-state students to pursue a bachelor's degree

in education. Their theory of action was as follows: “Home grown” teachers (i.e., education students from Maryland) who complete their teacher certification are more likely to remain in the state because they grew up in Maryland. If the state could “home grow” more Maryland teachers, this would help alleviate teacher shortages by encouraging more teachers to stay in Maryland. One policy solution that came up in these statewide discussions was to create a more streamlined pathway from community colleges to teacher education programs at four-year institutions by working on transfer articulation between the two sectors. In theory, more students might pursue teaching pathways if they were recruited while attending community colleges.

Another motivation that influenced the creation of the A.A.T. was the need to recruit and train more diverse teachers in terms of race, ethnicity, or socioeconomic background. Maryland currently has a majority of white, female teachers, while the state and student population is growing increasingly diverse. At one observation of an annual meeting between Excel University and community colleges across the state, several administrators from Excel University spoke about the value of working with community colleges. Administrators at this meeting discussed the goals of recruiting teachers from a variety of backgrounds to meet the needs of the increasingly diverse populations they serve. State documents support this finding as well; in looking at an MSDE (2016a) strategic plan, the growing diversity of its student population has impacted strategic planning: “Maryland’s demographic profile is rapidly changing. The overall student population is more diverse and now reflects a majority-minority...” (p. 7). Moreover, an MSDE (2016b) report on teacher shortages

commented on the need to increase the diversity of its teaching population: “Research indicates that it is an advantage to students to have instructors who reflect as great an extent as possible the demographic population of the school setting...” (p. 29). In the 2014-2015 academic year, minority teachers comprised just 19.6% of the teachers in Maryland (Maryland State Department of Education, 2016b). While the percentage of minority teachers has gradually increased over the last few years, there is much work to be done, and many Maryland leaders believe that the A.A.T. can contribute to the diversity of its teachers.

One of the reasons administrators believe the A.A.T. can be a tool to recruit a higher number of and more diverse students into the teaching profession is because students are able to “try out” teaching through the A.A.T. to determine if it is a viable career pathway:

I think one of the other goals is to make sure that students more quickly are becoming familiar with a classroom setting and deciding if this is really what they want to do because it allows for those field work experiences. (Veronica, Street-Level Administrator, Excel University)

Thus, students are able to experience education courses and field placements in local schools to give them more hands-on experience to explore teaching. The A.A.T. degree allows students to determine whether they want to pursue a teaching pathway, while community colleges provide students with a more accessible opportunity to teaching careers.

Lastly, another reason behind the A.A.T. degree was to create a more seamless transfer pathway from community colleges to four-year universities. Sarah

from Student-Centered University shared: “I think the main goal [of the A.A.T. degree] was to provide this kind of seamless transition where again they’re getting a foundation, and then they’re coming to us for the professional work.” Many state leaders spoke of the ideal transfer pathway as a “two-plus-two” pathway, meaning a student spends the first two years at community college and then another two years at a baccalaureate institution. If the state could create a transfer articulation pathway for education, students could graduate from teacher education programs more efficiently. Thus, the three primary explanations for the creation of the A.A.T. degree were to recruit a higher number of teachers, recruit more diverse students into the teaching profession, and promote more efficient transfer avenues into four-year teaching degrees. The idea of creating a statewide seamless teacher education pathway from community college to a four-year university – the Associate of Arts in Teaching – was born.

In 1999, Maryland Chief Academic Officers Intersegmental Group appointed a Teacher Education Articulation Committee (TEAC) comprised of representatives from both two-year and four-year institutions to create a proposal for the A.A.T. To create the new associate’s degree, the committee worked backwards by first defining common learning standards in teacher education programs at four-year colleges, followed by the skills and outcomes needed in community college to meet these standards by a student’s junior year. This approach was particularly appealing to four-year institutions which wanted to ensure that they met accreditation standards for teacher education programs. To identify these standards, the committee agreed to use those established by the National Council of Accreditation of Teacher Education

(NCATE) Program’s Standards for Teacher Preparation. The committee first started by identifying the standards required for an A.A.T. degree in elementary education. The final product created by the committee outlined the outcomes that successful students would complete upon conferment of an A.A.T. degree among different disciplinary areas, including English, Science, Mathematics, Physical Education, Social Studies, the Arts, Health Education, Diversity, and Social and Psychological Foundations. Included in the A.A.T. was the requirement that students meet the minimum requirements for the Basic Skills Test as part of their degree requirements, which is meeting minimum scores on the ACT, SAT, GRE, or the Praxis Core Exam. The Basic Skills Test is required for all Maryland teacher certifications, and four-year universities typically require students to have this test completed by no later than their junior year. The plan to create the A.A.T. degree was approved in 2001.

Once the state developed common standards for the A.A.T. degree, each community college submitted a program proposal for official program approval by MHEC,²⁸ and it was intended that each college would submit a “crosswalk” of how A.A.T. outcomes met national standards and the first half of four-year degree requirements. Each college’s “crosswalk” pertained to a document containing tables that indicated a specific standard, the intended outcome of the standard,²⁹ and the A.A.T. course at that college that met this standard. Although most community colleges submitted a crosswalk, study participants indicated at least one community

²⁸ All community colleges in Maryland have at least one A.A.T. degree program.

²⁹ Examples of standards are “teacher candidates will demonstrate knowledge of how to apply evidence-based teaching pedagogies” and “teacher candidates will demonstrate an understanding of the effects an exceptional condition can have on an individual’s learning in school and throughout life” (Maryland Chief Academic Officers, 2012).

college's A.A.T. degree was approved without an official crosswalk completed. After an A.A.T. degree was approved at a community college, four-year universities internally reviewed the program and determined which baccalaureate degree requirements would be considered completed from the A.A.T. degree and which requirements still needed to be completed after transfer.

This standards-based policy design approach was thoughtfully and purposefully selected to maximize the policy's likelihood of success in terms of implementation. Tina (State Administrator) explained the value of this design when it comes to teacher education program approval at the state level:

What happens with full program [review] is that there is an assumption that some things are taught across curriculum, and that's why a full program is approved and that's what leads to certification. As opposed to when you do course-by-course and transcript analysis – and you can do certification that way – it's a nightmare, because we look at the letter of the law: “Where is your ‘Knowledge of the Learner,’ where is your ‘Literacy,’ where is your ‘Special Ed’?”

Rather than get stuck on defining specific courses that were needed for transfer, the committee focused on the outcomes they wanted students to have completed through the A.A.T. degree. This focus on outcomes also allowed each community college some flexibility in their program requirements.

USM and Maryland colleges had the benefit of implementing a transfer policy once before through the GTAP and applied those lessons to the implementation of the A.A.T. policy. A crucial lesson learned was the value of streamlined communication

between the state, community colleges, and four-year universities. A significant step in the implementation process was to create the A.A.T. Oversight Council. According to its website, the A.A.T. Oversight Council was created in 2002 to oversee the development, implementation, and quality of the A.A.T. degree. The A.A.T. Oversight Council is comprised of members from the state, four-year universities, and community colleges, and representatives are usually directors of teacher education at the institution. The A.A.T. Oversight Council meets three to four times a year and is governed by two co-chairs (one co-chair from the community college sector and one from a four-year university). USM facilitates the meetings by running the logistics the meetings, drafting and distributing meeting minutes, and helping the co-chairs prepare meeting agendas. At A.A.T. Oversight meetings, any representative can bring up issues, questions, or concerns they have related to the A.A.T. degree and share them with the group as a whole.

Improving implementation of the A.A.T. degree can be described as an iterative process over time; throughout the last 15 years, community colleges, universities, and the system as a whole have adjusted the implementation of the A.A.T. to improve its outcomes. For example, state administrators explained that when the policy was first implemented, there were questions about how A.A.T. courses were applied at four-year universities, but over time, many of those issues were resolved and community colleges and universities made small adjustments to their courses and how universities evaluated the courses for transfer. Another example is the development of the Quick Facts Sheet to help community college advisors understand the two-step admissions processes in an effort to reduce

confusion over admissions policies. John (State Administrator) explained that one of the reasons for gradual improvements is due to differences between policy intentions and practice. Mia (State Administrator) further articulated that problems can only be discovered once the policy is actually enacted: “You can develop things and go, ‘This sounds good,’ but then when it comes down to practice, actual implementation is when the things are uncovered.” University and state administrators alike also indicated that implementation has gradually improved as problems are uncovered and addressed.

One consideration when analyzing a policy’s implementation is whether the state conducts an evaluation of the policy. Although Maryland has not conducted a formal evaluation of the A.A.T. or GTAP policy, MHEC conducts a survey of community college graduates approximately every four years to determine students’ post-graduation outcomes, including whether they transferred, whether students believed their community college prepared them for university, and whether students were satisfied with their community college education. The survey was first conducted in 1996 and includes many of the same questions in each year the survey is administered to track how outcomes change over time. One of the questions in the survey pertains to the number of credits that did *not* transfer to a Maryland four-year university. In 1996, over 39% of survey respondents reported losses of over six credits, 47% reported a loss of one to six credits, and almost 13% reported that they lost no credits. In 2014, almost 24.9% of students reported losses of over six credits, 29.6% reported losing one to six credits, and almost 45% reported losing no credits (MHEC, 2016). Unfortunately, this survey does not include outcomes by disciplinary

area, such as education. MHEC and USM do track the number of students enrolled at A.A.T. programs. Unfortunately, I was unable to confirm if the state tracks and shared information about A.A.T. graduates and transfer rates.

Excel University Case Description

In this section, I describe the first university, Excel University, including its organizational and governance structure, organizational culture, and implementation of the A.A.T. degree. Data used for this case description included organizational documents, interviews with administrators, faculty, and students, and observations at Excel University.

Organizational and Governance Structure

Excel University's organizational structure is divided into different segments, including Academic Affairs, Administration and Finance, Research, Student Affairs, and University Relations. Within Academic Affairs, the different academic departments all report to the University Provost and generally have a great deal of autonomy in how academic decisions are made. Participants across interviews described the organizational structure as generally decentralized, with decision-making authority designated to the different divisions.

The College of Education is divided into three academic departments; each department houses their own undergraduate and graduate programs. One feature of the College of Education is its centralized advising services through its Undergraduate Student Services Office. Instead of departmental faculty serving as advisors, the university employs several professional academic advisors who are not instructors or faculty to serve as academic advisors to students, review incoming

students' transcripts, identify remaining coursework, and confirm that degree requirements have been met for graduation.

Organizational Culture

As a research-intensive institution, Excel University's organizational culture is heavily focused on research and innovation. In fact, on its homepage, "Research and Innovation" is the second tab listed after "Academics," emphasizing the importance the university places on these two areas. Research and scholarship are also a core part of the university's strategic plan. This focus on research, scholarship, and innovation carries over to the College of Education, which also emphasizes that research plays an important role in its mission as a research-intensive university. Both the university as a whole as well as the College of Education's mission appear to be focused on research and developing students as leaders. The university's focus on innovation translates to the College of Education's emphasis of empowering students to become transformative researchers and leaders in the field of education.

Along with its focus on research and innovation, another core value of Excel University is its national prestige and rankings. The university's 2016 strategic plan begins with an introductory title that is focused on gaining additional recognition and being the "best." This emphasis on prestige carries over to the College of Education as well. The College of Education boasts of the teacher education rankings it received from *U.S. News and World Report*. This organizational value was evident not only in administrator and faculty interviews, but also at an observation of an annual meeting in April 2017 with community college advisors. At the observation, faculty from each of the program areas gave a presentation to provide an overview of their program as

well as program updates. In two of the five presentations, presenters particularly noted Excel University's national reputation for producing the very "best" teachers. The title of one of the slides in a presentation was "Better Than All the Rest," likely representing a means of differentiation from programs in the state as well as across the country. In this presentation, a faculty member described a story where a local school principal continually called to ask for names of their graduating students, even in August, to recruit students who had not yet been hired. The purpose of those story was most likely to convey that the college produces such high quality teachers, even their worst students are highly sought after. In light of this story, the faculty member ended the presentation with a final request for the community college advisors to refer their students to Excel because "our good is better and our better is best." This focus on rankings, particularly at being the "best," appears to emphasize Excel's prestige and national standing.

As a result of its focus on research and innovation as well as rankings, participants mentioned several related themes, including building up infrastructure across the campus and expanding their alumni base. Generally, administrators perceived that the university was focused on building additional facilities to further attract more students, research funds, and company partnerships to campus. Although most administrators expressed hesitation on whether such a focus on building infrastructure would lead to those outcomes, many administrators acknowledged it was a necessary step to remain competitive in the higher education market. Some administrators also shared that the focus on bringing alumni attention back to campus included a monetary motivation:

We really don't have a very strong alumni basis at Excel. I think that as a university as a whole, there's a lot of focus on building that, and kind of doing it through research and through innovation, and trying to get these stories out of what students are doing on this campus, and what faculty are doing in terms of research and innovation specifically, in order to kind of build that alumni and giving basis. (Leigh, Street-Level Administrator, Excel)

Thus, several priorities stemmed from the focus on research and innovation, including infrastructure gains and attention to attract alumni dollars. The idea behind the emphasis on infrastructure and attracting alumni to give back to the university is that these funds can further fuel campus investments into research, innovation, and teaching.

Another core value that emerged from the data was a desire to expand the diversity of its students. The university's 2016 strategic plan included a section entitled, "Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion," that discussed priorities such as continuing to recruit and enroll underrepresented students, increasing the number of minority faculty members, and creating an inclusive environment for students, staff, and faculty. The priority of recruiting diverse students was particularly salient at the College of Education. Administrators and faculty spoke of the need to recruit more diverse students to further enhance the diversity of the teaching population. Irene (Mid-Level Administrator, Excel) from the College of Education explained why the College places such an importance on recruiting more diverse students:

Right now, [the teaching profession is] predominantly female and white, and I think until we change the way we target recruitment efforts, it will continue to

be that way. At the undergraduate level, the best way to diversify the population is to go to the community colleges.

Several administrators echoed that recruiting more diverse students was a priority to the College of Education and that community college students often represent the diversity they are seeking. This priority was also observed at an annual meeting between administrators and faculty from Excel University and community college advisors, where administrators reiterated their commitment to community college partnerships as a mechanism to support the College's efforts to recruit more diverse candidates to the teaching profession.

Implementation of the Associate of Arts in Teaching Degree

After the state agencies, community colleges, and universities agreed upon the A.A.T. standards and once A.A.T. degrees at community colleges were approved, administrators at Excel University cross-mapped how courses from each community college would transfer into the university's program requirements. Administrators from the College of Education's centralized advising office created summary sheets to describe the remaining degree requirements for students transferring from each of the community colleges.

To explain Excel University's current A.A.T. implementation process, I will describe the process by providing information about a real student's pathway derived from one of my student interviews. Katie is a traditionally-aged student who began her education at a rural Maryland community college that is not typically a feeder

community college to Excel University.³⁰ While Katie was in high school, she experienced the loss of a close friend. After this incident happened, she was devastated and felt lost, but her teachers, principal, and supporting staff helped her cope with the experience and get back on track. Because of these personal connections, she felt inspired to go into the field of education. While Katie applied to several Maryland four-year universities, her parents encouraged her to attend the local community college, where they had also graduated. She decided that she liked the honors program at her community college, and began her education there. When Katie first attended community college, she was assigned an academic advisor from the honors program who counseled her on her coursework at community college and advised her to pursue an A.A.T. degree in Elementary Education. This counselor also advised Katie on the transfer process.

Pre-transfer advising. As a first step while attending community college, students would ideally be in contact with a university advisor prior to applying to the university. Katie did not speak with an Excel advisor prior to attending because she felt that she received sufficient information from her community college advisor. Although Katie did not speak with any university advisors prior to transfer, the College of Education at Excel University makes it a priority to speak with students prior to their admission – a rare practice compared to other colleges across the university, which generally do not speak with students prior to admission. Administrators at the College of Education indicated that they allow their own

³⁰ Each university in Maryland has its “feeder” community colleges, which are one or two community colleges that send the most students to that university. Usually, feeder community colleges are the closest ones to the university.

advisors to engage in pre-transfer advising because they want students to experience a seamless transfer pathway. Students sometimes contact an advisor at the College of Education while still enrolled at community college to discuss transfer coursework, the admissions process, and the overall program at Excel University. In some cases, advisors meet with students and their parents while students are still in high school to discuss whether the A.A.T. pathway from a community college to a four-year university makes sense.

Admissions and transfer credit evaluation. As Katie was in her second year at community college, she began to speak with her community college advisor about the transfer application process. The application process for professional teaching programs at Excel University is a two-step process. First, students submit an application to the university overall, which includes an online application, responses to admissions questions, a copy of their transcripts, and recommendation letters. Second, students must apply to the professional teaching program, which requires evidence of meeting the minimum requirements for the Basic Skills Test, a 2.75 GPA, a portfolio that indicates whether students meet the professional competency areas, three letters of recommendation, and a written goal statement. If the student is eligible, they may complete both applications at the same time, but often students will apply to the university first and then the teaching program at that university.

In Katie's last semester of the A.A.T. degree, she applied to Excel University using the university's general application online portal meeting admissions

deadlines.³¹ As part of the admissions requirements into professional teaching programs, students must fulfill the Basic Skills Test. Since many community college students did not take the SAT/ACT (or their scores expired) and have not taken the GRE, most A.A.T. students complete this requirement by taking the Praxis Core exam, typically during their last year at community college. Katie, however, had already taken the Praxis exam directly after high school. Once Katie was admitted to Excel University, she submitted her final transcript which noted completion of the A.A.T. degree and registered for a new student orientation.

Prior to orientation, Katie's courses were evaluated automatically through an electronic system that posted courses from her community college and the courses' equivalencies at Excel.³² Just prior to orientation, College of Education advisors prepared an orientation packet for Katie, which indicated how her community college courses transferred into degree requirements at Excel and what coursework remained for her degree. Katie had already earned her A.A.T. when she sent in her final transcript, but if a student seems to be enrolled in an A.A.T. degree program but their degree is not listed on their transcript, an advisor will often contact the student prior to orientation to remind them to submit a final transcript. Similarly, if a student appears ready to submit an application to the professional teaching program but has not yet submitted an application, an advisor may contact that student prior to orientation to inform them of this information.

³¹ Admissions to Excel University is major-blind and competitive. However, COMAR regulations indicate that students with an associate's degree and at least a 2.0 GPA are accepted permitted that space is available. Whether all qualifying A.A.T. students are admitted was outside of the scope of this study.

³² If a course is not in the system, students are instructed to submit a course syllabus to have the course evaluated.

Orientation and advising. At orientation, an advisor at the College of Education reviewed information with Katie, guiding her through how her courses transferring as well as her remaining requirements and helping her register for classes. While Katie was worried about the transferability of her courses, she was pleasantly surprised to learn all of her courses transferred seamlessly into her degree program. Because of her A.A.T., her general education requirements were waived with the exception of an upper-level writing course. Although she does have to repeat an upper-level education course that seems to contain repetitive content, she will graduate within two years at Excel. Thus, Katie's pathway is an ideal example of a 2+2 pathway – two years at community college and two years at Excel. Katie is required to meet with her advisor every semester until graduation to make sure she remains on track for her degree. Katie's application and transfer was fairly seamless, and this process is generally the same for students from any community college in the state. Administrators at the university noted several of the major feeder community colleges but did not indicate any particular difficulties in terms of transfer credits with any one community college.

Majors and transfer credit challenges. At Excel University, the following programs are single majors: early childhood, elementary education, special education, and middle school. For the middle school program, students must select an area of emphasis. These programs are generally considered 2+2 pathways at Excel University: students who transfer with an A.A.T. are expected to graduate within two years of transfer, provided they are enrolled full-time and follow the required plan of study. Several circumstances can delay students' degree completion. Advising

mistakes can sometimes occur, which means students may have either taken wrong course (e.g., a math course that may have counted for their A.A.T. degree but does not transfer to Excel), or they received permission for a course exception that was permissible under an A.A.T. degree, but not for their bachelor's degree. In these cases, students must take the correct course which not only delays their degree, but can also lead to lost time and money from having to retake courses.

If students transfer without an A.A.T. degree or if they transferred in with the wrong A.A.T. degree (e.g., transferred with an A.A.T. in early childhood education but enrolled in the middle school program), this can also delay baccalaureate degree completion. For example, Amanda is a middle school student at Excel who earned an A.A.T. degree in secondary education. Amanda experienced a 3+2 pathway because she spent an extra year at community college to determine whether she wanted to complete an associate's degree or just transfer without an associate's degree. By the time she decided to complete the A.A.T., she had to go back and take requirements that she was missing for her degree. Another example is that of Mya, who is an elementary/special education major at Excel but started her education at a community college as a nursing major. When she decided to switch majors in her second year at community college, she had to restart her coursework. Mya is on a 2.5+2 pathway to graduation.

The last major within the College of Education is the secondary education program, which at Excel University is a double major in education and the selected

content major³³ (e.g., English or Math). For Mathematics and Science, most students are able to complete their bachelor's degree within two years of transferring if they are enrolled full-time. For English, Social Studies, and World Languages, however, students often need at least five semesters to complete their degree. Administrators and faculty explained this extra semester is because of the way the coursework across the two majors is spread across the years. While the education course requirements are at the discretion of the College of Education, the courses aligned with the secondary major (e.g., English, Mathematics) must meet the requirements of the other colleges of the university:

Like for our A.A.T. degrees with English, those sometimes aren't the best use of student's time to complete just because many of the English courses at the community college level are only like 200 level-ish, 100-200 level. We need many that are 300, 400 -level for the program and they're Lit-based. They will not get the Literature base at the Community College that they need to have for our program to be certified. If they did want the A.A.T., they can certainly do that but it's not the most beneficial to the program here to their needs.

(Vanessa, Street-Level Administrator, Excel University)

In English, for example, because there are upper-level education courses and field placements that must be completed in the junior and senior year, the secondary education and English program requires that students take a significant amount of their English courses in their sophomore year. The problem is that four of these

³³ Secondary education program options include: Art, English, Mathematics, Science (Biology, Chemistry, Geology, Physics), Social Studies (Geography, Government, History), and World Languages (Chinese, French, German, Italian, Russian, and Spanish).

courses are 300- and 400-level courses, which are not offered at community colleges. Even more problematic is that students who complete an A.A.T. program looking to transfer into a secondary education and English degree program may have taken many 200-level English courses at their community college. While these courses would technically transfer to Excel University, the courses would not meet the program requirements and thus be useless to the student. Instead, the student would need to give up the previously taken English courses and take the required upper-level English courses.

Due to these challenges, administrators advise students in pre-transfer advising to either transfer without their associate's degree or complete a process called "reverse transfer." Reverse transfer refers to students who begin at Excel University before they have completed their associate's degree and then transfer courses completed at Excel back to their community college to receive their associate's degree. In these cases, Excel University would honor the A.A.T. degree and waive certain general education requirements. In this way, a student may be able to complete their degree within four years, albeit in a non-traditional manner. Another challenge, however, is the ability to communicate this information to students. Community college advisors may not know to communicate this information to students because the challenges with some secondary education degrees at Excel are very specific to those majors. If students do not know to contact the Excel University advisors for help, they likely would not get the information from Excel either.

In summary, Excel University's culture is centered on research, innovation, and gaining prestige and recognition. Similarly, the College of Education at Excel

University is focused on research, innovation, and producing the very best teachers. The College of Education has a centralized undergraduate advising office with professional advisors, leaving faculty to focus more on teaching and research, rather than advising. While most A.A.T. pathways can lead to a seamless transfer process provided students receive proper advising while at community college, some secondary education pathways can result in an extra semester for students due to the mismatch in coursework between community colleges and Excel University.

Student-Centered University Case Description

In this section, I describe Student-Centered University, including its organizational and governance structure, its organizational culture, and implementation of the A.A.T. degree. Data used for this case description included organizational documents, interviews with administrators, faculty, and students, and observations at Student-Centered University.

Organizational and Governance Structure

Participants across interviews described the organizational structure at Student-Centered University as generally decentralized. The University is divided into divisions, such as the Office of the President, the Office of the Provost, and Division of Academic Affairs. The colleges underneath the Division of Academic Affairs are arranged into six academic disciplines that house each of the programs on campus.

The College of Education is divided into six departments, with each retaining their own programs – two of which only contain only graduate programs. The College of Education works closely with the Admissions Office, which handles not only their

recruiting and admissions processes, but also transfer credit evaluations. At the main campus, advising at the College of Education is done primarily by faculty, rather than staff (non-instructor) advisors.

One important feature of Student-Centered University's structure is its satellite locations in three different parts of the state, all of which include education-based degree programs. One of the university's programs is located at a regional higher education center, which hosts several other universities as well. Another program is a stand-alone location in a more rural part of the state that was specifically set up as a partnership with the local community college. Relatively new, the branch campus was established approximately 10 years ago and has steadily increased the number of programs offered. The building for this branch campus was built on property owned by the community college. Although the building is owned and run by Student-Centered University, it is located just down the street from the community college. The last branch location is a program also in a more rural community located in the southern part of the state and housed within a community college. Classes for the education programs at Student-Centered University are run at the community college, so it is a different type of partnership with this community college compared to the other two branch campuses.

Administrators indicated that the catalyst for these satellite locations was the desire from state leaders to provide baccalaureate options for underserved areas of the state. Each of these branch locations hosts a program coordinator for each education program, and these coordinators are a centralized point of contact who handle pre-

transfer advising, recruitment, admissions, academic advising, orientations, and even instruction.

Organizational Culture

Since Student-Centered University is a regional comprehensive college, it is more focused on the student experience, rather than on purely educational aspects such as research. When asked about what makes Student-Centered University unique, most participants indicated small class sizes and the approachability of its faculty. In the university's 2017 strategic plan, the academic experience and student success are listed as its top priorities. It is possible that there is a connection between the university's value on the student experience and the decision to have faculty serve as advisors, rather than a separate centralized advising office. Since faculty serve as advisors, they work more closely with students than if the College used professional staff advisors.

At the College of Education, while there is a focus on the student experience, there is also an emphasis on establishing Student-Centered University as the premier institution for producing future teachers. In its promotional materials as well as through observations, the College of Education boasts of the authenticity of its real-world approach to teaching. University representatives also often brought up that they produce a very high number of teachers in the state. University representatives also boasted that since the College of Education produces such a high volume of teachers, students are bound to run into Student-Centered University graduates wherever they may go. Several study participants mentioned that Student-Centered University has a large number of instructors who have recently served as teachers or school

administrators and are able to share their experiences as “authentic practitioners.” At an observation of a recruiting event, presenters shared that the College of Education is always searching for best practices to produce the best teachers. The College of Education is even working to unveil a brand-new teaching facility that would allow students to simulate a lesson in a virtual lab before practicing the lesson with students in a classroom. Although it was determined through observations and interviews that research and rankings were less of a focus at Student-Centered University, administrators and faculty still sought to differentiate the College of Education as unique and the best place to earn a teaching degree in the state of Maryland.

A final note about the College of Education’s organizational culture was its focus on its close community connections. At the university level, participants described that partnerships with community colleges and local education agencies impact their work tremendously, and they consider these partnerships crucial. At the College of Education, a few reasons that partnerships with local education agencies is critical is that they provide locations, resources, and mentorship to students through their internships. Participants described that they have to have a two-way partnership in order to maintain the strength of the student experience: Student-Centered provides local education agencies with professional development – sometimes by offering specific classes or workshops at the schools. In return, local education agencies dedicate teachers to serve as leaders and mentors to students during their internships at the schools.

Implementation of the Associate of Arts in Teaching Degree

Once A.A.T. degrees were set, administrators at Student-Centered University cross-mapped how courses from each community college would transfer into program requirements. One administrator from the Admissions Office took the lead on this process, working closely with the College of Education to create transfer grids for each community college and for each education degree program that outlined community college coursework on one side of the grid, and how each of those courses would transfer to the university on the other side of the grid. Admissions Office officials and faculty use these transfer grids when working with community college transfer students.

To explain Student-Centered University's current A.A.T. implementation process, I will describe the process by providing information about a real student's pathway. Tanya is a traditionally-aged student who transferred from a rural, feeder community college. Tanya noted that she wanted to be a teacher for as long as she could remember, so when she decided to begin her education at community college, she knew exactly what program she wanted to pursue and entered the early childhood education program. While she was a community college student, she met with the head of the early childhood education program during her first semester to discuss transfer pathways. The head of the department explained the A.A.T. degree, including required courses, and that most of their students transferred to Student-Centered University. In addition, Tanya's sister was a student at Student-Centered University, so she identified where she wanted to transfer fairly early in her degree process.

Pre-transfer advising. Students may choose to visit Student-Centered University through one of their prospective student visit days, which are held twice a year. Although Tanya did not attend one of these events, many prospective students do take advantage of these opportunities. In these visits, students attend a general welcome session, get the chance to speak with faculty and administrators from the College of Education, and have the opportunity to attend presentations about the admissions process. The event also includes a panel discussion with current Student-Centered University students in the education program, including A.A.T. students.

Admissions and transfer credit evaluation. When Tanya was in her last semester of coursework at community college, she applied for admission at Student-Centered University. Similar to Excel University, the application process for professional teaching programs at Student-Centered University is also a two-step process. First, students submit an application to the university overall, which includes an online application, responses to admissions questions, a copy of their transcript, and recommendation letters. In the second step, students must apply to the professional teaching program, which requires completion of an application, evidence of meeting the minimum requirements for the Basic Skills Test, at least a 2.75 GPA, and a completed criminal history background check.

After Tanya was accepted, the Admissions Office reviewed her transcript and prepared a credit evaluation showing her which courses would transfer and how they would apply to her degree requirements, which was shared with Tanya as well as the College of Education staff and faculty. University administrators indicated that this credit evaluation allows students to review how their credits transfer so they can

address any discrepancies they may see and make an informed decision about whether they want to transfer to Student-Centered University.

Orientation and advising. The next step is new student orientation, where students receive general information about life at the university and meet with faculty from the College of Education. At orientation, Tanya met one-on-one with a faculty member in her program, who guided her through the remaining degree requirements, discussed her application to the professional teaching program, and answered any questions she had. After her advising, Tanya was guided by faculty who helped her register for classes. One consideration for Tanya was that she had not yet earned her A.A.T. degree. While she took the Praxis exam earlier in her last semester at community college, she did not pass the mathematics portion and would have to retake this exam – a requirement for conferment of the A.A.T. in the state of Maryland. Tanya mentioned that this created some confusion for her because at first the faculty thought she did not earn her A.A.T. degree, which would mean she would have to take additional required courses. Once Tanya explained that she would be earning her A.A.T. degree and that some of her spring courses were missing from her transcript, the issue was resolved.

One class Tanya was not expecting to have to take was a lower-level ethics course, which is a common education requirement at the university. While she had taken an ethics course in the sociology department at her community college, this course did not meet the Student-Centered ethics core coursework requirement. Another aspect that surprised her was having to retake an early childhood education course. Although she had taken a similar course at community college, she found out

that the course did not meet the requirements at Student-Centered University and she had to take another early childhood education course at the University. A faculty member instructed that she could take these courses over the summer, in the winter, or in an additional semester. Because she could complete these additional requirements during the summer and winter months, Tanya will graduate Student-Centered University within two years of transferring. After orientation, Tanya received an assigned academic advisor (a faculty member), whom she meets with at least once a semester to discuss any academic concerns and her degree progress.

Majors and transfer credit challenges. Tanya's transfer credit problems were slightly more pronounced than the other students included in this study, and administrators at the university indicated they had issues with this particular community college. At this community college, the A.A.T. degree requirements were found to be somewhat misaligned with Student-Centered University's degree requirements, often resulting in students needing three to four additional courses that they must fit into their schedule while still fulfilling their upper-level requirements. Students appeared to believe some of these additional courses were repetitions of their A.A.T. courses: "I had to take a course and I was confused about it...early childhood education and I took 101 at [my community college] which was Intro to Education. We went over a lot of the same things" (Tanya). Students who transfer from other community colleges in the state typically only have to take the missing ethics course and one upper-level writing requirement to keep them on track with their degree process.

Jessica represents one such student who transferred from a different community college who must take the ethics course. As an elementary education/special education student, Jessica plans to take the course over the summer. Jessica started as a nursing major and spent four years at community college due her decision to switch her major, meaning that she will graduate from Student-Centered University as a 4+2 pathway. Linda, a non-traditional elementary education student, began at one Maryland community college, transferred to another Maryland community college, and then finally transferred to Student-Centered University. She noted that she periodically took time off while in community college due to family obligations. Linda had to take two unexpected courses – the ethics course and a science class – because she took the wrong requirement while at community college. She will finish as a 3+2.5 pathway, although she indicated the extra semester at Student-Centered University was mostly due to the decision to attend university part-time in her first semester. These additional courses can be particularly frustrating for students if it requires them to stretch their remaining coursework beyond two years.

At Student-Centered University, there are four majors and two dual certification programs: Early childhood (early childhood and special education), elementary education (elementary education and special education), special education, and middle school. Secondary education is not a stand-alone major at Student-Centered University; instead, students major in their content area and earn a certificate in secondary education. This certificate is sufficient for teacher certification and allows students to graduate in a timelier manner compared to a double major.

In summary, Student-Centered University is a regional, comprehensive university with a focus on the student experience. The College of Education boasts its long history in the field of education as well as its real-world approach by hosting authentic practitioners as instructors. Faculty work closely with students, serving directly as their advisors rather than having a centralizing advising office. The Office of the Registrar under the Office of Admissions works with students just after acceptance to produce transfer credit evaluations which can aid in their decision-making process. Although the majority of the A.A.T. coursework is transferred into the baccalaureate coursework, community college students almost always need to complete at least two lower-level requirements in addition to their upper-level coursework: an ethics requirement and an education requirement. However, students from at least one community college in Maryland require three to four additional lower-level courses, which can add an additional semester to their studies.

Summary of Chapter Four

Maryland is a state characterized by a highly educated and diverse population with a small geographic area. Key players in the state include the Maryland Commission on Higher Education, the University System of Maryland, the Maryland Association of Community Colleges, the Maryland State Department of Education, and the Maryland State Board of Education. The governor and legislature primarily highlight key areas of focus in higher education, while state agencies direct most of the policy work in Maryland higher education. Maryland's higher education system is directed by the Maryland Code of Regulations, or COMAR, which is reviewed and approved by MHEC and enacted by the legislature. Maryland's political culture is

mixed at the gubernatorial level and primarily liberal at the legislative level, and the state as a whole emphasizes workforce development, economic stability, and a focus on high-quality education to meet workforce needs. Maryland began its work on transfer policies in the 1990s beginning with their general transfer articulation policy (GTAP) established in 1995 and its transfer policy in education (the Associate of Arts Degree in Teaching) in 2001.

Excel University is a large, research-intensive university with a decentralized governing structure. Excel University and the College of Education's organizational culture is centered on research and innovation, prestige and rankings, and the diversity of its student population. A core structure of its College of Education is centralized advising office, where professional non-faculty advisors work directly with students as well as community colleges to help facilitate the transfer process. The College of Education sees itself as a high ranking, high-quality college with a reputation of producing desirable teachers. Unless students are misadvised, A.A.T. students who transfer to Excel University typically are able to complete their baccalaureate degree within two years of transferring, with the exception of some secondary degree programs.

Student-Centered University is a mid-sized, comprehensive university with a decentralized governance structure. Student-Centered University and the College of Education's organizational culture is defined by the student experience. This culture is denoted by small class sizes and close faculty-student connections. As one of the oldest and largest teacher education program in the state, the College of Education views itself as the premier institution for teacher education in the state and boasts of

its authentic practitioner approach to produce the next generation's teachers. The university's strong ties to the community help facilitate this real-world approach through close partnerships. A.A.T. students who transfer to Student-Centered University typically can complete their bachelor's degree within two years of transferring if students are able to complete additional courses required during the summer or winter terms, although the number of additional courses required depends on the students' community college.

Having established a better understanding of the cases included in this study, I will next explore commonalities between the two universities. In the next chapter, I will use data from the within-case analyses to discuss my cross-case findings.

Chapter 5: Findings

Using an embedded, interpretative case study design, my study focused on how the Maryland Associate of Arts in Teaching (A.A.T.) degree is implemented at two universities: Excel University and Student-Centered University.³⁴ My conceptual framework for this study is grounded in the three dimensions of Honig's (2006a) Framework for Policy Analysis: *Policy, Places, and People*. In this chapter, I present the findings from my study. I begin by examining study participants' perceptions of the effectiveness of the A.A.T. policy. Then, I discuss the specific implementation challenges that have arisen since the formation of the A.A.T.

I next explore administrator and faculty perceptions on why implementation challenges have occurred, as well as which factors helped mitigate these challenges. This discussion includes three themes that emerged from the cross-case analysis: the impact of organizational structure and culture on implementation, the role of state and university leaders on the development and implementation of the A.A.T. degree, and the influence of external pressures on policy implementation. The first theme is that organizational structure and culture have shaped how the A.A.T. policy is implemented at the university level. The second theme is that state and university leaders' interpretations have played a large role in how the A.A.T. policy unfolded on university campuses – a finding which extended beyond my conceptual framework. Lastly, the third theme is that pressures external to universities and the higher education system have had a critical influence on A.A.T. implementation.

³⁴ Names of the universities have been changed.

Multiple sources of data were used to inform these findings, including interviews with state administrators, university administrators, faculty, and students; observations of A.A.T. Oversight Council meetings and at each university site; and a review of federal, state, and university documents.

Perception of the Effectiveness of the Associate of Arts in Teaching

Overall, administrators appeared to perceive the A.A.T. degree as fairly effective at achieving the goals of the A.A.T. Participants generally agreed that the A.A.T. helps universities to recruit a higher number of students and more diverse candidates into teaching professions as well as provide a clearer, more efficient pathway to a bachelor's degree. Erin (Street-Level Administrator, Excel University) summed up the majority of participants' perspectives: "The A.A.T. is a great way for students to still get that benefit of a four-year degree in teacher education with the university name but in a pathway that might be more optimal for them for variety of reasons." Most participants in this study spoke highly of the A.A.T. degree and believed strongly in its vision.

Administrators and faculty spoke to the fact that the A.A.T. degree provides more access to teaching degree pathways for a wide variety of students. Michelle (Street-Level Administrator, Student-Centered University) shared her perspective on the age diversity of A.A.T. students:

Not every student at the age of 18, 19 is ready to move away to a four-year college...a lot of our students are non-traditional...we have people who have kids, and they want to go back to school. A lot of women or men do not feel comfortable on a college campus when there's an 18-, 19-year-old sitting in

the classroom. But they're more comfortable taking coursework at a community college and then moving to a four-year for the upper level courses, so that's another piece – the number of non-traditional students we serve.

Administrators and faculty reported that they perceive the A.A.T. degree as highly effective at making teacher education programs more accessible to diverse students, at least in terms of age diversity.

Although administrators did not speak directly to their perceptions as to whether the A.A.T. actually helps universities recruit more students from racially or ethnically diverse populations or from more varied socioeconomic statuses, data suggests that a higher percentage of racially, ethnically, or socioeconomically diverse students begin their higher education at a community college. For example, 44% of Hispanic students and 43% of African-American who begin college in Maryland start out at a community college, as compared to 37% of Caucasian students (Maryland Higher Education Commission, 2016a).³⁵ Some administrators noted that they believe the A.A.T. opens up more economically accessible pathways for students. For example, Michelle (Street-Level Administrator, Student-Centered University) shared her perspective on how the A.A.T. provides more opportunities for students from varying socioeconomic backgrounds:

I strongly believe that if students who wanted to come here, if they had to pay for the extra cost of going to campus between parking and the activity fee, plus the time spent commuting not working, not making money, they would

³⁵ Unfortunately, a breakdown of students by race/ethnicity who enroll and complete an A.A.T. degree program was not available.

not be achieving a four-year degree. I so wholeheartedly believe in this program. It truly is educating and furthering the career path of numerous amount of students who would have never been going to school [without this program] – absolutely. I mean a \$400 parking fee may not mean much to us, but when you're a young person, and you're paying your college bill and paying your rent, the \$400 could be a make or break deal.

Thus, many administrators and faculty generally felt that the A.A.T. made college more accessible for students from lower socio-economic backgrounds.

Many faculty and administrators also spoke positively about the quality of A.A.T. students coming through the pipeline. They felt confident about students' ability to succeed in the program as well as their overall motivation to become a teacher:

As far as the rigor goes, our A.A.T. transfer students are some of our strongest students, and I will go say that to anybody.... Most of them have taken the time to self-select into the A.A.T. program, as opposed to somebody who didn't cut it in engineering or didn't cut it in biology, in pre-med or whatever it was, and then, "Well, I'll just be a teacher." (Mary, Mid-Level

Administrator, Excel University)

Matthew (Faculty, Student-Centered University) explained that A.A.T. students are highly motivated to become teachers:

When I have students with an A.A.T., I know that they've wanted to be a teacher pretty much the whole time. It's not like they changed their mind in

the last semester in college. So, it's usually a good indicator that that person's got a pretty good drive to be a teacher.

Participants generally agreed that the A.A.T. degree is a success in terms of preparing students for teacher-education careers. Administrators and faculty view A.A.T. students favorably and enjoy working with them at their university.

Most administrators believed that the A.A.T. degree provides the majority of students with a more efficient transfer pathway (i.e., two-plus-two pathway) if they are provided with proper advising. Leigh (Street-Level Administrator, Excel University) shared her perspective on the benefits of earning the A.A.T.:

I always encourage students to complete the A.A.T. because it does waive them from a lot of requirements. It essentially, because we accept it as a package, prevents us from cherry-picking courses, where we do course-by-course evaluations to see, "This course does fit our Gen Ed program, but this one does not."

Stephanie (Street-Level Administrator, Student-Centered University) agreed:

I can't speak highly enough about the A.A.T.s. I think they're a really good pathway for students. As I said, it really helps them skip over the nonsense courses, focus on what they absolutely will need to get them ready to start the professional track.

The student participants in this study triangulate this finding as well. Although constituting a small sample, five out of six students included in the study with an A.A.T. degree will be graduating within two years of transferring.³⁶

In some cases, administrators' perspectives on the seamlessness of the A.A.T. degree was shaped by their experience of working with transfer students before the A.A.T. was implemented. Erin (Street-Level Administrator, Excel University) discussed the current transfer process compared to what it was like before the A.A.T.:

I think that students were...taking more time than they needed to complete their degrees prior to A.A.T.... Now, they come into their degree program basically on par with their peers who would also be juniors. The redesign of that curriculum again, a guided pathway – that's exactly what it's giving them – it's giving them a guided pathway where they are not taking an extra year to do the degree.

This comparative perspective may have influenced administrators' views on the strengths behind the A.A.T. While the transfer function of the A.A.T. is not perfect, most administrators agreed that it provides more students with more opportunity for an efficient pathway to a baccalaureate degree, compared to what existed in Maryland before the A.A.T.

In fact, administrators from both universities believed so much in the effectiveness of the A.A.T. that they credited the presence of the A.A.T. policy for each university's high graduation rates in the respective College of Education. Sarah

³⁶ The remaining student will complete her bachelor's degree with one additional semester. The student needs an additional semester to complete additional coursework not completed in her A.A.T. degree.

(Mid-Level Administrator, Student-Centered University) shared that other colleges across the campus have an average of 20% two-year graduation rate for its transfer students, while the College of Education boasts an almost 40% two-year graduation rate. In terms of their three-year graduation rate for transfer students, more than 70% of students graduate from the College of Education, as compared to 50% at other colleges. Sarah shared her belief that this is most likely because of the clearly articulated programs offered through the A.A.T. degree: “I believe it's because it is so well lined up from the very beginning that as long as students identify that that’s what they want to do, it's very easy to get out within a reasonable timeframe.”

Administrators at Excel University believed the same is true:

I think that’s true in our Teacher Ed Programs because of these articulated programs and that we actually attend to them. [Articulation agreements] are not attended to elsewhere in campus – it’s an afterthought I can tell you. I know from being on the committees. It is not on their radar. I definitely would support and agree [that the A.A.T. impacts this]. I absolutely think that’s the case. (Irene, Mid-Level Administrator, Excel University)

That administrators believed that the A.A.T. policy contributes to student outcomes speaks to their perceptions of the A.A.T.’s success.

While the A.A.T. degree and Maryland’s GTAP only technically apply to public institutions through COMAR regulations, interview and document data indicate that the A.A.T. policy has had an effect beyond public institutions as well. Mia (State Administrator) explained that when transfer discussions began in the state,

private colleges and universities joined in the state conversations, including the A.A.T. discussions:

It made sense for them to want to participate in the gen ed [policy], and in ARTSYS. It was a no brainer for them to say, “Hey, the A.A.T. is great. We’ll do that too.” That helped other smaller private institutions to say, “Yeah, this makes sense.” They’re not beholden to some of the other statewide agreements, but they are holding to it. They do accept it.

An analysis of minutes from A.A.T. Oversight Council from October 2008 to October 2017 supports this as well; it was found that representatives from independent colleges and universities as well as the Maryland Independent Colleges and Universities Association (MICUA) regularly attend A.A.T. Oversight Council meetings and participate actively in conversations about the implementation of the A.A.T. Although technically the general transfer articulation and the A.A.T. policies only apply to public colleges and universities since these policies are promulgated through COMAR regulations, it appears that the A.A.T. has an even broader impact across the state than was originally envisioned, which can help a larger number of students.

A small number of administrators and faculty questioned the policy’s impact on the efficiency of the transfer process. Some administrators spoke of misconceptions students have about the A.A.T. degree, namely that they can transfer all of their A.A.T. courses and take exactly two years’ worth of courses to complete their bachelor’s degree. While this scenario appears to be the case for some students, not all A.A.T. pathways are seamless, and administrators indicated that students are

often caught off guard about this realization: “They’ve been told at their community college that it’s a seamless transfer, but that’s not what seamless means, but that’s how they perceived it. I mean in the realm of A.A.T., it doesn’t mean that” (Kathleen, Mid-Level Administrator, Student-Centered University). Tina (State Administrator) echoed this sentiment: “I think if it was currently effective they wouldn’t be rewriting it. I think that everybody would really like it to be. I don’t know if it plays out as cleanly...” Some administrators reported that they believe the A.A.T. is not as effective as it should be because some students still experience problems when transferring credits, which contrasts the original vision of a seamless transfer.

One participant at the state level shared that the A.A.T. degree is not popular with all universities across the state because it is perceived as intervening with local efforts to arrange customized transfer articulation pathways that better match each university’s unique degree requirements. Mia (State Administrator) shared:

I have to tell you, [the] A.A.T. is not without its opponents... [Some say,] “I had a better relationship with the institutions I’m [working with on] transferring before the A.A.T.” Because it was a very specific articulation agreement, which is between the two institutions. When the A.A.T. came about, the four-year institutions had to do a little bit of give, and it was actually making it more difficult for students. The A.A.T. didn’t leave a lot of flexibility, it’s a little bit too lock-step, in a sense, because they were trying to cram all that stuff in there.

Mia indicated that a small number of administrators may see the A.A.T. degree as a harmful policy because it is too prescriptive. When Maryland created a degree

pathway for the entire state, colleges and universities came together to agree to common terms, even if that meant giving up already existing transfer agreements universities maintained individually with community colleges. Most colleges and universities realized that the creation of this degree pathway was going to happen – regardless of the consequences for already existing institution-to-institution transfer agreements – and agreed to comply with the A.A.T. policy terms.

Challenges in Translating a State Transfer Policy to the Local Context

While most administrators and faculty praised the A.A.T. degree, they also acknowledged a number of challenges associated with its implementation, including problems experienced at colleges and universities across the state as well as institution-specific issues. In this section, I describe those challenges, which include confusion about admissions policies into teaching programs, trouble passing the Basic Skills Test requirement, miscommunication, misadvisement, and misalignment in transfer coursework and differences in transfer policies among universities, and a lack of information about prospective A.A.T. students.

Confusion about Admissions Policies

One area that continues to challenge Maryland community colleges and four-year universities entails confusion surrounding admissions policies into baccalaureate education programs. Maryland COMAR regulations stipulate that students who graduate with an associate's degree and have at least a 2.0 GPA are guaranteed admission into any public university in the state. Thus, community colleges often tell students as long that as they meet these criteria, they will be admitted to their intended transfer institution. However, this COMAR regulation does not guarantee

admission into specific *programs/majors* at universities, which includes those related to education. Professional education programs (i.e., programs that meet state teaching requirements) require separate applications, a minimum GPA of 2.75 (as opposed to the COMAR policy of 2.0), completion of the Basic Skills Test requirement (a minimum score on either ACT, SAT, Praxis Core, or the GRE), and successful completion of a criminal background check. This information about admissions does not always reach community college students. Administrators reported that students are often surprised when they learn they need to complete a second application after admittance to the university:

...people were or students were advised I think more so in their sending schools and are like, “You're guaranteed admission through the College of Education.” They're not guaranteed admission – it's highly likely that they will gain admission to the College of Education as well but there's no guarantee of that. (Erin, Street-Level Administrator, Excel University)

A review of the A.A.T. Oversight Council minutes indicates that discussions surrounding the issue date back at least to 2009, although administrators indicated that the problem appeared very early on in implementation. The issue was so prevalent that the A.A.T. Oversight Council decided to create a Quick Facts Sheet in 2011 to clearly spell out key aspects of the admissions policies. The Quick Facts document reads: “Admission to the four-year institution is a ‘two-step’ process and is *not* guaranteed. Applications to both the institution and to the teacher education program may be required” (p. 2). The document was sent to all community colleges to share with students in an effort to remedy the problem.

Confusion about the admissions process, however, continues today. At one observation of an annual meeting between Excel University and community colleges, conversations about the admission policies dominated the majority of the meeting. During the meeting, one Excel University administrator decided to take a step back and clearly communicate the specific steps a student must take to be admitted into the professional teaching program at Excel University. While some community college representatives seemed as though they already understood the two-step admissions process, several representatives expressed shock and concern about this procedure. One community college representative exclaimed that he had been providing students with incorrect information about guaranteed admission into education programs. Although efforts to help correct this information have occurred, such as through the creation of the Quick Facts Sheet, confusion about admissions policies continue to be a problem across the state.

Completion of the Basic Skills Test Requirement

The Basic Skills Test is Maryland's entrance requirement into professional teaching degree programs and is a degree requirement for A.A.T. conferment. To meet the Basic Skills Test requirements according to COMAR regulations, prospective students must meet a stipulated minimum score on either the SAT, ACT, Praxis Core, or GRE exams. Most students who begin at four-year universities meet this requirement through their SAT or ACT scores. Since many community college students either did not take the SAT/ACT or took it so long ago that their scores expired, these students often must take the Praxis Core exam to meet the Basic Skills Test requirement.

Most administrators in this study cited that completing the Basic Skills Test is a major barrier for A.A.T. students. Specifically, students may not take the test in time for graduation or transfer, or they may fail and have to retake the test, both of which can delay transfer or result in transfer credit problems. Michelle (Street-Level Administrator, Student-Centered University) further explained that a large issue relates to the timing of the test:

The biggest [challenge] is the community colleges students are not taking the Praxis Core in time – they’re not taking it soon enough. The Praxis Core – you know you need a qualifying score on all sub-tests [to get into the College of Education’s professional teaching programs], so if the students are falling short in the math or on the reading, they have to retake the sub-test and pass it before we can admit them, and you cannot retake the sub-test until 30 days after taking it. So right now, I have an applicant list that is very long, but I still have three openings in my program because I’m waiting for three more students to pass the Praxis Core. Students are just waiting too long to take the Praxis Core test.

Tanya, a transfer student at Student-Centered University, explained that her A.A.T. degree was delayed by one semester because she had to retake the math Praxis. When Tanya was admitted to Student-Centered University, she had not yet earned her A.A.T. due to the remaining Praxis requirement. This initially created some confusion for her because faculty told her she may have to repeat some classes if she transferred without the A.A.T. Once her A.A.T. was conferred and applied to her record, those concerns about having to repeat courses disappeared. Delayed completion of the

Praxis can delay students' A.A.T. degree completion, which impacts admission into education programs or their coursework after transfer.

Transfer Coursework Miscommunication, Misadvisement, and Misalignment

As noted in the university case descriptions, not all students experience a seamless transfer process. Students in some secondary education paths at Excel University typically take five semesters to graduate, while students who transfer to Student-Centered University from certain community colleges may experience a delayed graduation due to additional course requirements not included in the A.A.T. coursework. Students may experience other types of problems when transferring credits or may need to complete additional requirements not included in the A.A.T. degree. These issues may occur for several reasons, including when program changes are made at one institution and are not clearly communicated to the other institution or when students are misadvised by community college counselors or pre-transfer advisors at the university.

Many transfer coursework implementation problems can sometimes arise when community colleges or universities make changes to their program requirements. When course requirements are changed, they may not always be clearly communicated to community colleges and/or other universities. At one observation of a recruitment event at Student-Centered University, Michelle (Street-Level Administrator, Student Centered University) explained to a prospective student (Anna) that she would have to take an additional communications course that was not included in the A.A.T. Anna asked why she did not have to take this course while at community college, and Michelle explained that the requirement was not a part the

A.A.T. degree at this particular community college. When I asked about the interaction afterward, Michelle noted that this local community college had recently changed their common education requirements as a result of a state policy requirements that community colleges adjust the associate's degree down to 61 credits from 67 credits. After reviewing this community college's A.A.T. degree plan, I confirmed that the requirement in question was no longer part of the degree requirements. According to Michelle, the community college made the change without consulting Student-Centered University. As a result, students from this community college come to Student-Centered University missing a common education requirement that is needed for their bachelor's degree. When common education requirements are changed, it may take time for a university and feeder community colleges to understand how the changes impact transfer coursework for A.A.T. students and make adjustments to accommodate any changes or at least communicate to students the need for additional requirements prior to transfer.

Administrators from both universities also cited that misadvisement is a problem which can result in transfer credit issues. Students may be given wrong information during advising or not advised at all while at community college, leading to enrollment in the wrong courses in their A.A.T. degree:

The biggest problem I deal with is they don't take the correct coursework, because there's only specific math courses we accept. So, when you're on campus and at Student-Centered University, you have to take 204, 205, and 251. We have those courses at the community colleges, students have to take those specific courses. And if they happen to take the wrong math course, then

unfortunately, they have to take another math course. And that creates difficulty. We feel that [our university] advises the community college program very well, but we worry that the community colleges really don't know what our needs are and sometimes the students are misadvised.

(Michelle, Street-Level Administrator, Student-Centered University)

Linda, an elementary education major at Student-Centered University, also experienced this type of misadvisement. She took a science course at community college only to discover that she took the wrong class and would have to take another science course. After transfer, students may find that they are missing courses or need to retake a requirement because their courses do not meet the requirement at the four-year university, which can create delays in students completing their bachelor's degree.

Lastly, according to data from interviews, Excel University and Student-Centered University had some differences in the way they implemented transfer policies and worked with transfer students. At Excel University, when students complete the A.A.T. degree (or any associate's degree), all lower-level common education requirements are waived for students. For example, Excel University has several requirements that are unique to the institution, including completion of a scholarship and practice course as well as an innovation course. If students complete an associate's degree, they do not need to complete these courses. Moreover, students must complete an upper-level writing course, but administrators indicated the reason for this requirement is because community colleges do not offer 300- and 400-level courses. In comparison at Student-Centered University, students with an A.A.T. (or

any associate's degree) do not have all common education courses waived. Specifically, one course in ethics is a requirement for all students, and most ethics courses at community colleges do not meet this requirement. When students transfer, they must determine the best way to fit in this extra course, such as during a summer or winter term. These differences can create confusion, particularly if students are still deciding on which university they want to transfer to. If a student learns of a policy at one university, they might assume the same rule applies to another university and be surprised when they learn it is not.

Adjustment to Inflexible Course Scheduling

Both universities shared that some A.A.T. students struggle in adjusting to a university with limited online or evening classes. Administrators indicated that many A.A.T. students previously worked while completing their A.A.T. coursework. Once students transfer, they are faced with a full load of classes and a more traditional schedule, which can make it difficult to manage work and family obligations:

“[Administrators must make] sure that students understand that it's really a curriculum that's meant to be full-time and it's not meant really for a part-time work very easily” (Vanessa, Street-Level Administrator, Excel University). Maria (Street-Level Administrator, Student-Centered University) echoed this sentiment:

Many times, the big challenges are for those students that need to work. It's very difficult because they are teaching full-time and not really able to work much of a part-time position at that time because of the demands of the assignments – the student teaching which pays off in the end but it is definitely a challenge for students.

Therefore, students may be unprepared when they find out they cannot work after transferring. Students must cope with the realities that come with limited working hours, such as reduced income levels or alternative sources of employment.

This problem is so prevalent for A.A.T. students that administrators at Excel University addressed the issue during an annual meeting with community colleges. At the meeting, Irene (Mid-Level Administrator, Excel University) explained that a significant challenge for students is the shock they face when they realize they cannot work the same schedule they did during their A.A.T. program. Irene advised that she had pleaded with the community college advisors to help relay this information so that students were more prepared for this reality once they transferred.

Many students included in this study also supported this finding. Linda, who recently transferred to Student-Centered University, shared her surprise when her faculty advisor told her that her schedule would have very little flexibility:

[My community college advisor and I] had actually sat down to try to work out a schedule that would work for our personal life and everything with the kids and my husband and everything. When I came to Student-Centered University, [faculty] were like, “Yeah, we don’t do that,” and I was like, “What?” I remember like, “We give you your schedule, you just got to deal with it.” That was pretty stressful because everything revolves around my school schedule now. Things were working nice before, and now we have to juggle the kids with this [new schedule].

Based on Linda’s experience, it is evident that students who are used to a more flexible schedule with evening and online options may need time to adjust to a more

rigid schedule. A particular challenge exists for community college transfer students who may no longer be able to work with this more structured schedule. Since many community college students come from lower socioeconomic backgrounds compared to students who begin at a four-year university, adjusting to a more traditional schedule and not being able to work can be significant issues of concern.

Lack of Information about the Associate of Arts in Teaching Pipeline

Lastly, administrators from both universities claimed that there is a lack of information about the students in the A.A.T. pipeline, including how many A.A.T. students are expected to transfer and which students are interested in that particular university. Mary (Mid-Level Administrator, Excel) explained the challenges that come along with this lack of information:

If we can know who is in the pipeline, if we have some magic wormhole that took them from where they're going and just drop their information into our office somehow, and we knew who was coming, we could reach out to them and start a relationship earlier on, then their transition would be much easier.

According to administrators, this lack of information means that university staff do not have a clear understanding of how many A.A.T. students may be applying in the near future. While community college students may not know exactly where they want to transfer, administrators in this study believe it would still be helpful to provide prospective students with critical information, such as required coursework, application deadlines, and application requirements. Currently, universities are unable to reach out to A.A.T. students while they are at community college to give them this information because universities do not receive information about prospective

students until they contact the university for more information about the program or the transfer process.

The issue of a lack of information about students moving through the A.A.T. pathway was discussed at a recent A.A.T. Oversight Council meeting in October 2017, where the Council looked at students beginning and completing A.A.T. degrees. During the meeting, members discussed the need to better understand and track how students are progressing through the pipeline, so they can better understand any problems that might be occurring. University administrators indicated that having information about the progress students are making and identifying students in A.A.T. programs while they are attending community college would enable universities to communicate with these students earlier and improve their transfer experience.

Why Implementation Challenges May or May Not Occur

After understanding the challenges students face as they complete their A.A.T. and transfer to a four-year university, the next logical question is: Why do these challenges exist? In this section, I posit that there are three factors which contribute to these challenges, including organizational structures and culture, the role of state and university leaders, and external pressures, such as accreditation, federal policies, and state influences.

Organizational Factors Influencing Implementation

A prominent theme that emerged from the data is that organizational culture and governance structures have played a role in the implementation of the A.A.T. degree. In particular, the structure of the University System of Maryland (USM) and its practices of bringing universities and community colleges together, along with

Maryland's small geographic area, have positively impacted communication and implementation practices. Additionally, the communication channels at universities have also shaped how a state policy was translated to a university context. For this first theme, I explore how organizational culture and governing structures have guided implementation.

State organizational culture and governance structures. According to interviews with university and state administrators, state culture and governance structures appears to have significantly and positively influenced how the A.A.T. policy has been implemented. Specifically, the presence of USM serving in a convening role and the creation of the A.A.T. Oversight Council has given the Maryland higher education system at all levels opportunities to work together cohesively. Mia (State Administrator) explained the history behind this state-level governance structure:

The one thing we did when we made it a more formal and state-wide process was to establish the A.A.T. Oversight Council, which has representatives with two-year and four-year [institutions], independent and public. Not every teacher education program is on the Oversight Council, but what we did is to make sure through the Oversight Council that any implementation issues were brought to the Council so that we could figure out what we're starting on and what needed to be tweaked.

Sarah (Mid-Level Administrator, Student-Centered University) shared that the A.A.T. Oversight Council has given community colleges, universities, and the state the chance to gather and share key insights:

[The A.A.T. Oversight Council] was an opportunity for everyone to kind of get together and share information and share strategies in terms of what works and what doesn't work... that's why I think from the students' perspective the reason that the A.A.T. program is so good is that they know they are getting, what's kind of been established as the best possible curriculum in these foundation courses.

The A.A.T. Oversight Council provides a regular communication structure to talk through implementation concerns and to solve them together. John (State Administrator) shared that the A.A.T. Oversight Council is an important communication tool:

We try to figure out before we change policy, we really have conversations between the four-year and the two-year [colleges] and that's again those types of issues that should come to the Oversight Council. A lot of it again is getting people in the same room to explain from their perspective what's going on and then try to resolve it.

Documents also confirmed that the presence of the A.A.T. Oversight Council allows the different sectors to discuss key issues. For example, at an A.A.T. Oversight Council meeting in 2008, members discussed concerns about the ability of A.A.T. students to fund their education. Because of the concerns raised at the state-level meeting, USM worked with community colleges and universities to prepare a national grant application to fund student scholarships. Another concern that has come up in past A.A.T. meetings is the review of A.A.T. standards in light of changes to national accreditation standards. The continual discussion of this topic at the A.A.T. Oversight

Council meetings over the last several years led the group to tackle these revisions over the summer of 2017, where sub-committees worked on reviewing the standards for the elementary education and early childhood A.A.T. degrees. The sub-committees presented their findings at the January 2018 meeting and began discussing how these findings may influence course changes and adjustments to A.A.T. degrees at community colleges. This constant communication has allowed the state, universities, and community colleges to tackle issues together and smooth out some of the implementation problems. Both state and university administrators agreed that the A.A.T. Oversight Council has been a strong influence on how the A.A.T. has been implemented over time.

Other Maryland organizations across the state have also come together in person to discuss issues pertaining to the A.A.T. degree, such as the Maryland State Department of Education and Maryland Association of College in Teacher Education: “[These meetings] help to ensure that we’re all on the same page...it’s enough opportunity for people to come together around issues of Teacher Ed and that way we’re all talking the same language” (Irene, Mid-Level Administrator, Excel University). Documents revealed that another governance body which discusses state issues related to the A.A.T. is the Maryland Association of Directors of Teacher Education at Community Colleges (MADTECC). This body meets approximately every month to discuss common issues among the Maryland community colleges. When a problem is mentioned in MADTECC meetings, these topics may be brought to the A.A.T. Oversight Council for further discussion with the state and four-year universities. Thus, multiple groups within the higher education and K-12 education

systems enable state officials, universities, and community colleges to come together to discuss issues pertaining to the A.A.T. degree.

Maryland's geographic structure has also facilitated easier communication between the different sectors. John (State Administrator) stated: "Often, because of the nature of Maryland, we are a geographically small state but we're also very close knit in terms of communication across sectors. We can have those conversations that are in practice, outside of any formalized structure." Thus, Maryland's small geographic structure enables in-person communication. This in-person contact and regular communication allow key stakeholders at each institution to meet and become familiar with one another, which may facilitate communication efforts. If there are specific problems between a particular community college and a four-year university, representatives at both institutions may have met at an in-person meeting and know exactly who to contact to begin resolving the issue. In terms of the progress Maryland has made in smoothing out education transfer pathways, existing state governance structures and communication mechanisms may be one of the greatest influences.

University organizational structures and impacts on implementation. In addition to state structures, data indicate that university-level governing structures influence the way a state policy is translated to a local context, influencing how the policy works in practice. One of the factors at the university-level is the role that faculty have in contrast to administrators within each College of Education. Faculty and administrators have different roles in implementation based on the organizational culture and structure of the College of Education at each university, including their role in advising A.A.T. students.

Excel University has a centralized advising structure with a professional advising staff, while at Student-Center University, faculty serve as advisors. Excel University has one assigned advisor for each program within the College of Education. These advisors complete student evaluations of transfer coursework to indicate the program requirements which have already been completed as part of the A.A.T. degree and which requirements remain. At Excel University, faculty do not serve as advisors nor do they review or evaluate students' previous coursework or degree progress for graduation. Instead, articulation agreements and conversations are conducted by the lead administrators at the College of Education. At Student-Centered University, staff at the admissions office complete initial transfer course evaluations and indicate which program requirements have already been completed as per the A.A.T. degree. At orientation and throughout the school year, faculty take the lead in advising students on remaining coursework. Articulation agreements and conversations are conducted by the admissions office and several lead administrators at the College of Education (For a summary of the different roles within each university, see Appendix Q).

The different implementation roles that administrators and faculty play may be shaped by organizational culture and values. At Excel University, where research is a priority, advising students on coursework and requirements might be seen as taking away time from faculty to conduct research. Having a centralized advising office with non-faculty advisors provides faculty more time to conduct research. At Student-Centered University, however, the student experience and close connections between faculty and students are seen as core institutional values, so having faculty

who also serve as students' advisors may give students more contact with faculty members.

Moreover, the different ways in which each College of Education is structured influences how each university implements the A.A.T. policy. In this quote, Leigh (Street-Level Administrator, Excel University) explains the role that a centralized advising structure has had on Excel's approach to working with A.A.T. students.

I actually think [centralized advising is] the best thing that could have happened. I think that it ensures that there's a single staff of advisors who work together on a daily basis and are able to kind of better manage the changing policies. The associate dean, or I think she's the assistant dean technically, of the College, [name omitted]. She works with MSDE and MHEC on a weekly basis, like constantly talking to them about the A.A.T., and about accreditation, and all that kind of stuff, and teacher certification. Being able to have her working directly with the director of services who oversees the advisors. I think it kind of helps to streamline the conversation and makes sure that the policies are followed. (Leigh, Street-Level Administrator, Excel University)

The interview data suggest that having a centralized advising office may help in streamlining communication channels by providing a single point of contact at the mid-administrator level and a clear communication structure internally within the College of Education to the street-level administrators. Faculty serving as advisors may have its benefits, such as improving the student experience by helping students feel more connection on a regular basis or reducing costs by eliminating a central

advising office. However, centralized advising appears to benefit transfer students through the creation of clearly defined communication channels, which may smooth out policy implementation efforts.

One way in which structure appears to impact implementation is the external effect on communication practices. Vanessa (Street-Level Administrator, Excel University) shared that communication is a coordinated effort among the centralized advising staff at the College of Education and the university's Pre-Transfer Advising Office:

I think we're starting to do a lot better at that from the university standpoint with having pre-transfer advisers at a couple of our community colleges. I think that's a really great thing. We have contact with those folks and they feel comfortable to reach out to us with questions. That's really helpful... That's a key goal. The comfort levels are there and people know who to ask... To be able to get answers or start conversations to address questions that were brought up I think is really important.

A participant outside of the centralized advising office, Arielle, commented on the role that these advisors play at Excel University:

Our Office of Student Services is outstanding in regard to constantly communicating with the community college advisers and letting them know what their students need in order to be prepared to pretty much hit the ground running. Again, that is due to the just extraordinary job that our advising office does... I mean they are key there, absolute key. They are the lynchpin in this process and they do that very well.

The way in which advising is structured at Excel University appears to have an influence on the ability of the College of Education to work more directly with community college advisors. This structure also opens up communication between the sectors.

Students also confirmed that Excel University advisors communicated with community college advisors. Katie, an elementary education student at Excel University, explained that when she had a scheduling issue, her community college advisor called her Excel University advisor to directly to confirm whether they would accept a substitute course:

I couldn't take the geography class but the anthropology I could take, so then my adviser actually contacted Excel University and they confirmed that that was okay that I could take this because I was set on going here. Once I got here for orientation, my adviser handed me a packet. She was like, "These are all your requirements you've completed." It was a breeze. I was expecting like it to be more complicated but for me the transition was so easy that I had nothing to worry about.

The way that governing structures are set up at Excel University appears to facilitate easier communication between the university and community colleges. When communication channels are opened, advisors across the sectors are able to more easily ask clarifying questions or ask for direct information.

The influence of organizational structure on communication with community colleges was not unique to Excel University. Student-Centered University also has a

centralized advising approach at its branch locations. One administrator at one of those locations shared:

I work with community college advising, so I share information with them. I have created relationships with the full-time faculty at the community colleges. I email them, and they are very agreeable to emailing out information to the students. Basically, I communicate with the professionals at the community colleges. (Michelle, Street-Level Administrator, Student-Centered University)

Other administrators at these branch locations, who also maintain a similar centralized advising role, expressed similar connections with community colleges. They work closely with community colleges communicating information about the bachelor's degree programs with advisors and answering questions about students' transfer coursework. This communication appears to be perceived by both administrators and students as preventing advising and transfer credit problems.

The advising structure at Excel University may also explain why the university has an annual meeting with all Maryland community colleges. At this annual meeting, faculty and administrators meet to update community college advisors on program changes and the two groups discuss common issues and questions. In an observation of this meeting, community college advisors were able to ask clarifying questions and meet all of the Excel University advisors and faculty. Irene (Mid-Level Administrator, Excel University) shared what she sees as the benefit of this annual meeting:

Putting a face with a name. [We say,] "If you have a student coming with a question, please contact us, because we're happy to talk about any of your

questions.” And so, we have forged relationships to try to bridge that – with the community college staff – to try to bridge that gap between who they know in your program and who they don’t. We try to make that connection and keep that connection open.

Veronica (Street-Level Administrator, Excel University) agreed that the annual meeting is a benefit for Excel University administrators and faculty and community college advisors to come together:

What I perceived happening is that the university and this bigger field of community colleges really do try to connect to make sure they’re all on the same page...just making sure there is an open line of communication between the two-year and the four-year [colleges] in terms of, “This is my understanding of the policies or changes in policy or the curriculum – let’s make sure it works.”

Leigh (Street-Level Administrator, Excel University) also shared:

The College of Education really tries to have strong relationships with local community colleges, so advisers know to send their students to us for pre-transfer advising. I think the fact that they meet with community colleges every year is huge. The community colleges know the Excel University’s requirements. They advise their students on that.

The annual meeting appears to have a significant impact on building relationships, making contacts, relaying critical advising information, and correcting misconceptions about how to advise students on transferable coursework.

Administrators, recognizing the valuable contribution of sustained and continued communication with community colleges, also pointed out that it is up to universities to create organizational structures to facilitate this communication and provide sufficient resources:

I think the bottom-line is you have to have someone in each institution designated to work with the community college people, and I'm not talking about from central office. I'm talking about in the College of Education who's familiar with all programs, who regularly works with those transfer coordinators from the Teacher Ed areas at the community colleges so that there's ongoing communication... communication is really the key and in order to have really good communication, you need to have designated people who have that responsibility. (Irene, Mid-Level Administrator, Excel)

According to study participants, taking proactive steps to create communication mechanisms requires a certain level of strategic thinking and the ability to dedicate resources to supporting these structures.

Faculty resistance. Some of the misalignments in A.A.T. coursework seem to have not been fully resolved because of faculty's resistance (both at the community college and the four-year institution) to make changes in the program requirements. While previous literature indicates that four-year university faculty across the country view community college students as inferior to native students (Cohen, Brawer, & Kisker, 2013), results from this study indicate that faculty resistance to transferring courses was due to more complex university factors, including the perception that the requirements are outside of the control of the College of Education or because they

wanted to ensure students could obtain the skills needed to be successful in future courses. First, university administrators and faculty indicated that course misalignments between community college requirements and those at the university were in some cases the result of requirements which were outside of the College of Education's control. Sarah (Street-Level Administrator, Student Centered University) explained that one common education requirement, an ethics course, is often problematic for students. She explained that many within the College of Education do not see the course as a priority, but that others within the university as a whole value the course: "I think that's the biggest issue that at least the community colleges have with us as a four-year institution is that they see that there're some of these extra courses that *we* absolutely don't want" (Sarah, Street-Level Administrator, Student-Centered University). In other words, representatives of the College of Education at Student-Centered University wish that the course could be waived for their students, but their perception is that the ethics requirement is out of the College of Education's hands. Some participants echoed that they were not involved in the conversations concerning core requirements, further articulating that they had little to no control over these requirements: "I mean, I know there are conversations about core. But I'm not privy to them. Because I'm not involved. I don't know what's going on" (Tom, Faculty, Student-Centered University). Since this course is a university requirement, students must take the course, even if it falls outside of the required classes for the A.A.T.

At Excel University, the problems with the secondary majors are also believed by administrators to be an issue outside of the control of the College of Education.

Leigh (Street-Level Administrator) voiced her thoughts that the misaligned coursework for A.A.T. students transferring into secondary education majors at Excel University is due to decisions made by the other departments:

These content area majors are outside of the College of Education. We don't have any kind of purview over what their degree requirements are. We can't say that we want English education majors to have the ability to take more 200 level classes because it's not our degree. We don't confer the degree. We don't do any of that. I think part of it is just the fact that because it is a double major, it's a little bit out of our control.

Thus, the misalignment problems that have occurred at Excel University are largely perceived by administrators to be outside of the College of Education's decision-making authority. Despite the wishes of the College of Education administrators and faculty, they perceive that little can be done by the College of Education to change these requirements for students. Decisions made by general education and core requirement committees or departments outside of the College of Education pertaining to required classes can affect the transferability of coursework.

University faculty often want to maintain their education courses because they believe that the requirements are needed to ensure students succeed in later requirements for their major or meet the needs of the teaching profession:

...it's hard to teach [transfer students] because so many of them don't have the same stuff that students last semester got as [our other students] – 8 out of 10 get this, and the others don't. It's not that transfer students aren't as bright. We need to require that they know this because of a few lessons down the line

where we talk about standards. If you come in without that, they're going to be at a big deficit. (Matthew, Faculty, Student-Centered University)

In this example, Matthew appears to imply that one the reasons the College of Education is strict regarding the transfer of education classes is because faculty want community college students to be successful in upper-level courses. Interview data from this study suggest that faculty at four-year universities want what is best for transfer students, and that includes ensuring that these students have the proper foundation for future success.

Opposing values and priorities as a source of tension. Faculty may also be resistant to changing degree requirements because they see these requirements as consistent with the values and priorities at their university. Faculty may also want to maintain unique requirements aligned with their college or university's priorities and organizational culture, which can sometimes lead to tension between a community college and university. Melissa (Street-Level Administrator, Student-Centered University) explained why she believes community colleges have been unwilling to change requirements to meet the university's requirements:

From my perspective, it sounded like it was just a lot of pride and, "Well, this is our program, and this is what we're going to offer. We will not change that and that's the way it's going to be." Just unwillingness to compromise, I guess.

Michelle (Street-Level Administrator, Student-Centered University) went on to explain the different organizational pedagogical approaches to certain classes:

I love the community colleges – I believe in them, I support them. I just think they do things a little differently than what Student-Centered University does. I'll be honest with you, [at our local community college], intro to special education is taught online, and at Student-Centered, we would *never* teach that course online. It's all about the emotions and the connectedness to children with specialties, and it's very, very hard to simulate, to come across when it's an online course.

Demonstrated in these examples is a juxtaposition of the values and priorities of Student-Centered University and a community college. At Student-Centered University, where their organizational culture is focused largely on the student experience and quality of education, teaching classes in person is important to their College of Education's institutional identity and values because administrators and faculty believe it follows the best pedagogical practices to prepare teachers. This is contrasted with community colleges' organizational priorities and values, which likely focus on the accessibility of classes. Community colleges may offer courses online to help make teacher education programs more accessible. Although the particular course mentioned in the quote above is ultimately accepted at Student-Centered University, faculty's beliefs on keeping requirements consistent with their organizational values can lead to resistance in changing requirements. Existing tensions with regard to disagreements about A.A.T. coursework appears to be due in part to opposing values between community colleges and four-year universities.

Role of Leaders in Associate of Arts in Teaching Creation and Implementation

One key finding is that emerged from the data is both state and university leaders have been crucial in the creation of the A.A.T. and how the policy has unfolded on university campuses. In this section, I discuss the role of state leaders in the A.A.T.'s creation and implementation, the role of university leaders in implementing the policy on local campuses, and how leaders' interpretations of the policy have ultimately shaped how the A.A.T. works in practice.

Role of state leaders in policy creation and implementation. Interviews with administrators and an analysis of policy documents indicate that state legislators have been a catalyst for Maryland higher education agencies as well as colleges and universities to begin tackling transfer issues in earnest. Minutes from the February 2009 A.A.T. Oversight Council meeting stated: "At the time the A.A.T. was created, there was extensive external pressure from legislators to 'fix' transfer/articulation issues" (p. 2). State-level administrators indicated this was because constituents were frustrated that they or their children experienced transfer credit problems, which added time and money to their college completion. State citizens took these concerns to their legislators, who began to elevate the issue within the public sphere and the state government. While colleges and universities knew transfer articulation problems were ongoing, a push from representatives outside of the higher education system provided further impetus for additional work on transfer issues. State officials' pressure eventually led to the creation of key transfer policies, including the Maryland general transfer articulation policies (GTAP) as well as the A.A.T. degree.

Specifically, participants perceive that state leaders played an important role in the creation of the A.A.T. The USM website indicates that “[s]taff members advocate on behalf of the 12 USM institutions, facilitate collaboration and efficiencies among the institutions, and provide information about the system to the public.” The power of USM in gathering representatives from community colleges and universities to sit at one table represented a crucial step to begin discussions and complete the steps necessary to produce this new degree pathway. The creation of the A.A.T. would not have been possible without the ability of various stakeholders to come together.

Another key stakeholder mentioned by participants was the Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE). John (State Administrator) commented on how buy-in from MSDE was necessary in order to launch the A.A.T.:

Back in those days, MSDE was the strongest [state player] because [name omitted] was the superintendent...She was a very strong superintendent. She was in the office for I think over 20 years. To really get a policy like this off the ground without MSDE’s buy-in, it would not have gone far.

Kathleen (Mid-Level Administrator, Student-Centered University) shared that she had doubts that the A.A.T. was going to come to fruition when it was initially proposed, but at the first convening of the A.A.T., she stated that “I heard the conversation and I heard the person from MSDE saying, ‘Yes, I am behind this 100 percent.’ Then, I knew it was going to happen.” Clearly, state leaders played a crucial role in bringing together diverse stakeholders and building buy-in.

State higher education leaders have also directly influenced policy implementation by facilitating conversations, mediating questions between community colleges and four-year universities, and offering interpretations of state policies. During my observations of the A.A.T. Oversight Council meetings, state leaders from both USM and MSDE were very active in discussions, often bringing up key issues and questions with the group. Administrators from the universities also addressed the impact that state leaders have on implementation decisions. Kathleen (Mid-Level Administrator, Student-Centered University) explained that state leaders were influential because they provided information to the university that affirmed the decisions university leaders were making in the implementation of the A.A.T.:

I've asked [name omitted] from the USM System a number of times like, "Is that what we're supposed to do?" She'll say, "As long as you require the course of your native students, you have every right to require it of the transfer students." We're doing it the way we think is the right way to do it.

It is clear that state leaders provide college and university stakeholders with occasional support by clarifying their positions on the policies. By doing so, state leaders can impact how the A.A.T. policy is interpreted by university leaders.

Role of university leaders in implementation. After the A.A.T. was created, university leaders were highly influential in how the policy was implemented on each campus. Administrators from both universities indicated that they had mid- and upper-level leaders who actualized the implementation by discussing, negotiating, and sometimes even arguing with faculty. These university administrator-led conversations turned into policy decisions on how the university would accept A.A.T.

courses as well as the remaining education coursework for A.A.T. students. For example, a dean at Student-Centered University served as a liaison to the faculty and worked with faculty to accept the state policy:

The Dean at the time, [name omitted] got involved in all of it. I think he was one of the proponents of the whole collaboration between the two- and four-year institutions. The Dean helped with this [process], trying to smooth it over with the faculty. (Kathleen, Mid-Level Administrator, Student-Centered University)

Sarah (Mid-Level Administrator, Student-Centered University) explained that another mid-level administrator worked closely with faculty and other administrators to create the mechanisms that led to implementation, including the creation of documents used to evaluate A.A.T. coursework. Kathleen (Mid-Level Administrator, Student-Centered University) echoed that this leader, with her vast experience in transfer articulation, was highly influential in developing the proper systems to implement the A.A.T.

At Excel University, study participants indicated that one leader in the College of Education and one dean outside of the College of Education were both strong advocates for Excel's policy that all lower-level common education requirements are to be waived for students who have completed an associate's degree. While COMAR regulations indicate that common education requirements at one Maryland college should result in the automatic transfer of common education requirements at another Maryland college, administrators at Excel University did not always accept transfer courses in that way prior to 2012:

Having been an adviser under the old system before 2012, it was pretty willy-nilly. Each college [at Excel] did things differently. If you have an associate's degree, the A.A.T., or whatever maybe some Gen Ed [would transfer] but not all. It was really about institutional memory...Really – depending on what college you were in, you were implementing different policies. (Veronica, Street-Level Administrator, Excel University)

Mary (Mid-Level Administrator, Excel University) explained that the College of Education had always granted community college students as many transfer credits as possible and had already been abiding by the policy of waiving common education requirements:

We, as a college...were the lone tree in the desert doing this. We always took the position ...and [name of leader omitted] waged any number of conversations with people to say, “This is the COMAR regulation. This is the way we're supposed to do it. It says a student does not need to go through a course-by-course review.” When I started here [at the College of Education], that was the law of the land.

Another street-level administrator shared that Mary was advocating in other ways for community college transfer students:

Mary worked particularly hard on this just to make sure the College of Ed was like, “EDCI280, Exploring and Teaching - what can that count as? What can that double count as? How can we make it as easy as possible [for students]?” (Tina, Street-Level Administrator, Excel University)

When an opportunity arose for administrators at Excel University to come together to discuss the issue in light of changes to the university's common education requirements, the College of Education leader as well as a dean from another college took the opportunity to advocate that all colleges across the campus implement the policy in the same way. This effort led to a university-wide policy change that colleges across the university had to waive all but one upper-level general education requirement if a student transferred in with an associate's degree. Thus, university leaders can influence how that state-to-campus interpretation occurs. Leaders who serve as advocates for transfer students can positively influence the decisions that are made.

Importance of policy interpretation. Through these findings about the role of state and university leaders in policy implementation, it is clear that individual leaders' interpretations of the A.A.T. policy profoundly influenced how implementation occurred. At Student-Centered University, administrators indicated that when the policy was first created, they believed that it still allowed for exceptions for university-specific courses which could be determined by each university. When Student-Centered University began to receive pushback on this approach from community colleges and other universities, administrators and faculty seemed to be surprised that others outside of Student-Centered University interpreted the policy more strictly. Kathleen (Mid-Level Administrator, Student-Centered University) explained that Student-Centered University administrators never interpreted the policy as being so seamless that it would waive certain common education requirements:

I don't think Student-Centered University ever got that message because it was like they can't graduate from Student-Centered if they don't meet all the Student-Centered Gen Ed requirements. How did we do that? That's still the question that we have today. It's like if our university says, "You have to have a course in Ethics and you can't graduate until you take that course." If you don't have that as part of your A.A.T. package [at community college], how are you going to graduate from Student-Centered when you transfer here?

Irene (Mid-Level Administrator, Excel University) offered a different interpretation of the policy indicating her belief that the policy should allow all universities to waive certain classes for students:

Again, it was this notion of this seamless transfer. If the whole notion is that if you get the four-year people working with the two-year people, I'm talking about our faculty, and you agree on a set of outcomes and an array of courses that will meet that. You've already agreed on that – honor it.

Though it is clear that both universities participated in state-level meetings when the policy was created, it appears that university leaders walked away with two different interpretations of the A.A.T. policy. When university leaders interpret the policy in a particular way, this impacts how the policy will be carried out at that institution.

One vital consideration for universities is how messages and information are communicated throughout the organization. For example, Erin (Street-Level Administrator, Excel University) shared, "Once it was adopted, as my understanding, people really couldn't opt out of it. I really think it was kind of, 'You're all accepting [the policy and the way it will be implemented].'" While Erin was not present at

state-level meetings, it is evident that she received a particular message about the A.A.T. policy, one which likely trickled down from individuals present at the state-level meetings. While stakeholder interpretation is important for initial reactions to the policy, communication mechanisms appear to be particularly influential in how the policy is carried out throughout all levels of an organization.

External Pressures as an Influence on Implementation and Decision Making

Pressures outside of the Maryland higher education system appear to have played a large role in how the A.A.T. was developed and designed as well as how the policy is currently carried out. These external pressures come from various levels of the public sphere, such as the state level and federal level. In this section, I discuss the influence that national and regional accreditation bodies, federal policies, and state-level influences have on A.A.T. policy. I end this section with a brief discussion of the tension among access, affordability, and quality that is present in all A.A.T. matters.

Accreditation bodies. In Maryland, state approval for university teacher education programs is driven primarily by whether the program meets national accreditation standards. A large number of university as well as state participants mentioned accreditation as a driving force behind the A.A.T. for several reasons. Accreditation was the driving factor in a key design element of the A.A.T. – basing the transferability of the A.A.T. based on program outcomes, rather than a course-by-course review. When state, community college, and university representatives came together to articulate A.A.T. degree outcomes, they began with the accreditation standards that must be achieved by baccalaureate graduation and worked backwards

to determine the standards that should be achieved by the end of the associate's degree – the halfway mark to a bachelor's degree:

I think that CAEP [Council for the Accreditation of Educator Preparation], which is the accrediting body for teacher certification, is a large impact.

There's all kinds of accreditation standards that we have to meet. I think it's really using those accreditation standards as a foundation to kind of build from there. You build on what is important. When you look at an A.A.T., you can see the student has a number of one-credit field experiences that the community college has decided they want to integrate throughout the program. No problem – we do ours in a single three credit class. Completely different. But if you count it up, it's the same number of hours. We're both meeting the same accreditation standards for the number of hours you have to have in your initial field experience. (Leigh, Street-Level Administrator, Excel University)

This particular approach to how the A.A.T. was designed was influenced by the accreditation bodies. By basing curricular decisions on accreditation standards, community colleges and universities can more easily agree on the transferability of courses, rather than getting held up by arguing about specific courses.

Accreditation also impacts how the A.A.T. is currently implemented as well as changes that are made or will be made to the policy. Tom (Faculty, Student-Centered University) shared the great influence of accreditation on decision-making within the College of Education:

In terms of the College, we're always changing. We have accrediting [*sic*] bodies that kind of dictate to us. The last accrediting body seemed to be more dictatorial... may not be a lot but it came across as being much more. The CAEP, Council of Accreditation of Educator Preparation... We just got NCATE [National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education] accredited in 2014 and passed with flying colors and no category was deemed 'necessary need for improvement,' and then we immediately jump into the next seven-year cycle. It drives everything unfortunately or fortunately depending on how one may look at it.

Accreditation is also perceived by participants to be a driving force as an accountability measure behind the recent campaign in the A.A.T. Oversight Council to review the degree for changes. In looking at A.A.T. Oversight Council meeting minutes and observing these meetings, a major issue appears to be related to updating the A.A.T. degree standards by looking at the current accreditation standards. Thus, accreditation standards and processes continue to be driving factors in the A.A.T., particularly in driving the design of the A.A.T. degree.

Federal policies. Federal accountability policies may have also influenced policy implementation. Administrators in this study indicated that federal policy requirements have impacted decisions made at the state level, which in turn have impacted university reactions to those policies. In other words, federal policies have a trickle-down effect that impacts decision making with regard to program requirements. At Excel University, for example, administrators explained that the reason that the university chose to organize the secondary education program as a

dual major was in response to the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) with regard to quality teachers. As delineated by NCLB policy, the law required schools to employ “highly qualified teachers,” but left the definition of “highly qualified” up to individual states (U.S. Department of Education, 2009). States then were left to determine the criteria students needed to fulfill to meet the minimum requirements to serve as a teacher. Maryland determined that in order to be considered a “highly qualified” teacher in high schools, teachers had to have a bachelor’s degree in the content area they were teaching (Maryland State Department of Education, 2003). This decision to require secondary education students to major in a content area led universities to make adjustments as needed to meet these criteria.

Universities in this study approached the secondary education programs differently. At Student-Centered University, students major in their desired content area, such as English or math, but earn a secondary education certification through the College of Education. While secondary education is not considered as a major, the certification allows students to receive key instruction in pedagogy, curriculum development, assessment, and classroom management. In contrast, Excel University determined that students would double major in their content area and secondary education:

Ten years ago, probably, as a result of No Child Left Behind and the concern of the teacher quality, the State decided that in order for a student to be certified in the secondary areas, they had to have a minimum of a content area double major, in addition to the degree in Education, or in addition to the

Education major, in order to consider to be qualified. (Mary, Mid-Level Administrator, Excel)

As noted earlier in this chapter, one of the implementation challenges Excel University has experienced relates to its extended transfer pathways in some secondary education degrees: students take five semesters to complete their degree rather than four. The federal-level NCLB policy led to a state implementation decision of requiring secondary education teachers to major in a content area, which in turn led to the university's decision to create a double major. The NCLB policy directly affected university decision-making in a way that influenced how the A.A.T. degree was implemented as well as its effectiveness as a seamless transfer pathway – these effects trickle down to the student experience, thus creating problems with seamless transfers.

The role of accreditation bodies is also influenced by federal financial aid policies. The Higher Education Act of 2008 states that for students at an institution of higher education to be eligible for federal financial aid, the institution must be accredited by an agency that is approved by the U.S. Department of Education (U.S. Department of Education, 2018). As previously stated, accreditation influences how the A.A.T. was designed and implemented, but accreditation would not be a factor without the impact of federal higher education policies.

State pressures. Participants indicated that state agency and university leaders are also influenced by external state-level pressures, including the state budget as well as economic and workforce pressures. State budget and state governance

leaders can affect overall decision-making at universities by influencing budgets and directing attention to specific priorities that the university must pursue:

Again, there's so much concern about budget and available resources that a lot of the decisions that need to be made do have to be held back because we don't have the budget; we don't have the personnel to be able to satisfy the needs of a lot of our programs. For example, here in our department we have searched for the past three years, four years trying to attract needed faculty. We do have some giant holes in certain content areas and sometimes the search is shut down, because the money isn't there to go ahead and bring on the new hire. Bottom line, the budget that's available to you. (Arielle, Faculty, Excel University)

State budgets may particularly affect hiring within any College of Education, which can directly impact policy implementation overall. If universities have insufficient staff within their respective Colleges of Education, this could impact communication with community colleges as well as pre-transfer advising.

Participants also indicated that another state-level economic pressure is the state workforce demand. State employment needs directly impact the number of students universities can admit into education pathways, which affects the number of A.A.T. students accepted into the professional teaching programs:

For the College of Education in particular, separate from other colleges on this campus, I think that there's a stronger connection to the state because of our direct tie to the workforce. Particularly for undergraduates, and all of our master's and graduate level certification programs, we're producing teachers

that are going directly into Maryland's state workforce. When we set our numbers, when we set our goals, when we set even our admission criteria – all of that is based on Maryland state standards. We're constantly needing to meet those, and work with the Maryland State Department of Education in order to make sure that our graduates are meeting the criteria that the state upholds, and kind of doing it that way. (Leigh, Street-Level Administrator, Excel)

Administrators and faculty perceive that state influences on admissions policies directly affects A.A.T. implementation because of the goals behind the A.A.T. degree in creating more accessible pathways to education degrees. If A.A.T. students are not admitted to university, the goal of recruiting more and more diverse students into teaching careers is not fulfilled.

Document analysis and observations support the impact that the state workforce needs have on the A.A.T. At a recent A.A.T. Oversight Committee meeting, one of the topics discussed was a review of critical teacher shortage areas, where a state-level employee shared a recent report produced by MSDE with a plea that the A.A.T. Oversight Council work on plans for recruiting students to those particular programs.

At Student-Centered University, the decision to open branch campuses in certain locations was also due largely to state workforce demands. Michelle (Street-Level Administrator, Student-Centered University) explained that the decision to open one branch campus was because a particular area of the state had a teacher shortage and no four-year institution nearby to educate potential teachers:

Basically, MSDE indicated that special ed is a critical need area. At Student-Centered University, we are the largest teachers' college in the state, so they basically wanted to expand and offer the accessibility of a four-year degree at different locations in the state.

At an observation of an open house at the branch location, administrators explained to prospective students the reason this location was created – the state government knew they needed to produce more college graduates and provide residents in this area of Maryland a convenient, cost-effective avenue to a bachelor's degree. As one of the presentations indicated, students can “have it all – close to home.” The need to support baccalaureate completion for economic reasons in a geographically rural area was the impetus for opening at least one of the branch campuses of Student-Centered University. Thus, universities can be influenced by state external pressures, such as budget and workforce development needs, which in turn can affect the accessibility of bachelor's degree locations or pre-transfer advising for A.A.T. students.

Tensions among access, affordability, and quality. Because of the external factors influencing A.A.T. implementation, administrators believe there is constant tension between quality versus access in Maryland higher education. Marsha (State Administrator) called it the “iron triangle” of higher education: the necessary and constant push and pull between access, affordability, and quality:

If you want more people to be able to access higher education, you need to keep the costs down. To keep the cost way down, the quality is probably going to suffer. So, if you want high quality, nationally recognized institutions, then you're going to need money, then we probably have to raise tuition, so the

affordability and the access is going to come down. It's a tension, so we call it an iron triangle – you change one angle and everything's going to change.

The three corners of this triangle – access, affordability, and quality – are all interdependent. When a decision that impacts one corner of the trio is made, the other corners react. The higher education system as a whole centers on these three competing tensions, and leaders at the state and university level must work within this dynamic. While this “iron triangle” of higher education resonates most at the state level, universities must also contend with this issue as they make decisions about tuition and standards for university and program admission, maintain sufficient enrollment to run the university, and attract a wide variety of students to sustain enrollments.

This tension among access, affordability, and quality is evident in the A.A.T. degree pathway. Most administrators spoke of the A.A.T. degree as crucial to the teacher pipeline because it enables more diverse students to become teachers by providing a more affordable option to earn half of a bachelor's degree. Yet, the state maintains a certain standard to enter the professional teaching pathways – namely, the Basic Skills Test requirement. The Basic Skills Test requirement helps ensure that students who will eventually become teachers have certain basic skills, such as reading, writing, and mathematics. According to study participants, this policy serves as a quality control measure because it helps ensure that students who do not even meet this basic level of competency are sorted out of teaching pathways.

This tension between access of and quality in the A.A.T. degree is a topic of recent discussion across the state. The State Board of Education is examining

strategies to improve the quality of its teachers, raise student achievement, and narrow the achievement gap. As part of this exploration, the Board brought in a consultant, the National Center for Education and the Economy (NCEE), and a national expert, Dr. Marc Tucker (real name). Dr. Tucker and his team created a report for the Board which provided a number of recommendations. In the report, the NCEE recommended that Maryland consider raising its entrance standards for acceptance into teaching pathways (e.g., via qualifying scores on the Basic Skills Test requirement). While there has not yet been formal discussion at the Board of Education on what that change might look like, the topic came up at an A.A.T. Oversight Committee when representatives shared highlights from the NCEE report. After this presentation, A.A.T. Oversight Committee members shared that they believed the group had to continue promoting and communicating the value of the A.A.T. degree. Though no one said it directly, the implication is that there may be a looming threat to the A.A.T. degree. If the state raises its entrance requirements for teaching pathways – such as the minimum GPA or qualifying scores on the Basic Skills Test – the decision could potentially lock many A.A.T. students out of teaching careers and potentially jeopardize the A.A.T. degree. This decision, therefore, could drastically impact access by changing the bar that students must pass in order to access education baccalaureate degrees. Thus, this “iron triangle” tension is ever present in Maryland and directly influences both the existence and continuation of the A.A.T. degree pathway.

Summary of Chapter Five

Overall, state and university administrators view the A.A.T. as generally effective at helping streamline transfer pathways for teacher education and providing better access to teaching careers. Still, administrators acknowledged that transfer students experience some challenges in the A.A.T. pathway, including confusion about admissions policies; trouble passing the Basic Skills Test requirement; miscommunication, misadvisement, or misalignment which leads to problems transferring credits; and challenges adjusting to a traditional university setting. University administrators indicated that many of these challenges could be overcome or mitigated if they had better information about A.A.T. students coming through the pipeline, so that they could communicate with these students sooner and provide better pre-transfer advising. Given these challenges, I explored the factors that contribute to or help mitigate against these challenges.

Administrators and faculty perceive organizational culture and governance structures as an influence on how the A.A.T. policy has been implemented which can be seen at the state and university level. At the state level, governance structures, such as the presence of USM, have facilitated easier communication among the various higher education sectors. At the university level, organizational culture influences program structures and requirements, which in turn affects how administrators and faculty work with community colleges and A.A.T. students as well as their transfer coursework. Ultimately, tensions exist between university values of producing the best educators and the community college mission of providing accessible pathways to a degree.

Study participants indicated that state and university leaders have had an effect on the A.A.T – in particular, state leaders were influential in the creation of the A.A.T. as well as in how the A.A.T. has been and continues to be implemented. University leaders played a large role in determining policies that led to decisions shaping how the A.A.T. policy would work on each university campus. Specifically, each university leader’s interpretation of the A.A.T. policy is communicated to others within each university, which greatly impacts policy implementation.

Lastly, administrators and faculty perceive that external pressures outside of the Maryland higher education system have impacted how the A.A.T. policy works in practice. These external pressures may come from entities including accreditation bodies, federal policies, and state-level pressures. Each of these entities impacts implementation decisions made within each College of Education or university, which has a trickle-down effect in influencing how the A.A.T. degree works on each campus.

In the next chapter, I will conclude with a further discussion of these findings to interpret the usefulness of these results and deliberate on the outcomes in relation to previous literature. I will also discuss implications of the results for policy, practice, and research. Specifically, I will provide lessons learned through the Maryland cases as well as recommendations for other states looking to implement a similar policy. Lastly, I will discuss recommendations for expanding the conceptual framework and provide directions for future research.

Chapter 6: Discussion and Conclusions

Almost 40% of students in higher education transfer to another college at least once within six years – the vast majority of whom transfer from a community college (Shapiro, Dundar, Wakhungu, Yuan, & Harrell, 2015). Although transfer students represent a substantial proportion of students in the U.S. higher education system, they often face tremendous problems transferring credits from one institution to another (Doyle, 2006; Monaghan & Attewell, 2015; Shapiro et al., 2015). Transfer credit challenges (i.e., when credits do not transfer to another college) can add additional semesters to students' graduation timeline and can impact the completion of their baccalaureate degree (Complete College America, 2014; Doyle, 2006). Recently, subject-specific state transfer articulation policies (otherwise known as guided pathways) have been hailed as a solution to transfer credit problems (Altstadt et al., 2014; Bailey, 2015b; Complete College America, 2014). However, policymakers and practitioners know very little about how these policies work and whether they help students transfer to a four-year university and complete their bachelor's degree (Bailey, 2018).

The purpose of this study was to investigate how one subject-specific, state-level transfer articulation policy was implemented at two public, state universities to better understand the extent to which these policies hold any promise in addressing transfer credit problems and to understand the dynamics of policy implementation. The Associate of Arts in Teaching (A.A.T.) degree pathway, as defined in Maryland Code of Regulations (COMAR) Title 13B.02.03.24, was selected because it is one of three subject-specific pathways in Maryland – it was implemented 15 years ago and

represents the oldest A.A.T. degree in the country. Additionally, since nearly every public institution in the state has an education program, it can be inferred that almost every university in Maryland works with A.A.T. students.

To examine the implementation of the A.A.T. degree policy, I draw from Honig's (2006a) Framework for Policy Analysis as a conceptual lens. Building upon years of research, Honig (2006a) argued that a proper analysis of policy implementation requires an understanding of the respective policy based on three dimensions: *Policy Dimension*, *Places Dimension*, and *People Dimension*. In the *Policy Dimension*, I examined the policy design, policy mechanisms, and tools that are used in the design, and how the policy is evaluated by policymakers. For the *Places Dimension*, I investigated the local context of where the policy is implemented. For this study, I considered state and organizational factors to represent the *Places Dimension*, which included demographics, governance structures, and organizational culture, values, and priorities. Lastly, in the *People Dimension*, I explored the roles that individuals have in the implementation process, including street-level administrators, mid-level administrators, and faculty.

My overarching research question was: How has the A.A.T. policy been implemented at four-year, public universities within Maryland? My sub-research questions were aligned to the *Policy*, *People*, and *Places Dimensions* of my conceptual framework:

- 1) What are the policy tools, evaluation measures, and implementation processes associated with the implementation of the A.A.T. policy?
- 2) How do key stakeholders interpret and implement the A.A.T. policy?

3) What state and organizational context factors (if any) appear to be influential in how the A.A.T. policy has been implemented?

Using an interpretative case study design, I leveraged multiple data sources, including 20 interviews with state and university administrator and faculty, eight observations of state A.A.T. Oversight Council meetings and university-level meetings, six interviews with A.A.T. students (and one without an A.A.T. for a seventh interview), and a review of nearly 70 federal, state, and university documents.

I chose two universities because I wanted to be able to explore the organizational and external factors that influenced how the A.A.T. is implemented on each campus. Moreover, by choosing two universities with similar missions and purposes (rather than just one university and its feeder community college), I was able to compare each university's organizational culture, priorities, and values to investigate whether these aspects influenced implementation.

Summary of Key Findings

This section summarizes the key findings from my research. Here, I present my findings delineated by each dimension of my conceptual framework: *Policy Dimension*, *Places Dimension*, and *People Dimension*.

Policy Dimension

Administrators and faculty included in this study cited three main reasons the A.A.T. policy exists: 1) To increase the number of teachers in Maryland; 2) To recruit more diverse teachers to Maryland; and 3) To improve the efficiency of transfer in education pathways and further reduce transfer credit problems. Most administrators (both state and university) and faculty saw the A.A.T. policy as generally effective in

achieving these goals. In particular, administrators and faculty believed that the A.A.T. provided students from diverse backgrounds – particularly those from lower socioeconomic backgrounds – with more accessible pathways to securing a teaching degree.

A smaller contingent of administrators, however, did not believe the A.A.T. was achieving the desired outcomes because not all students who completed an A.A.T. degree experienced a seamless transfer experience. In theory, students with an A.A.T. degree should be able to complete their university coursework in two years (or four semesters). This study indicated that some A.A.T. students – such as those pursuing a secondary education major at Excel University and students from certain community colleges at Student-Centered University – needed to complete additional coursework beyond these four semesters. Although most administrators and faculty strongly believed in the A.A.T. policy, participants acknowledged some weaknesses and challenges in the policy's implementation leading to transfer problems. These challenges included: 1) confusion over admissions policies from community colleges to their university, particularly related to the admissions requirements for teaching programs versus overall university admissions; 2) misadvisement, miscommunication, or misalignment with A.A.T. coursework, which often led to transfer credit problems; 3) trouble passing the Basic Skills Test (a requirement for the A.A.T. degree as well as for entrance into teaching degree programs); and 4) challenges in adjusting to a traditional university setting, including more limited class scheduling options.

Places Dimension

Administrators and faculty noted that organizational culture and governance structures at both the state level and university level played a role in how the A.A.T. policy has been implemented. For instance, values and priorities of the universities in the study appeared to contribute to how each university was organized in terms of advising structures, decision-making structures, and communication mechanisms. At Excel University – a research university that values faculty research – advising was conducted by a professional, centralized staff. This centralized advising staff created a clear communication structure: any policy changes would be communicated from mid-level administrators to street-level administrators. In comparison, Student-Centered University prioritizes the student experience by encouraging faculty-student interactions and hiring practitioners as faculty. To facilitate these student interactions, faculty serve as students’ advisors; thus, the communication channels about policy issues and changes were found to be more complex.

Governance structures and organizational culture at the state level also appeared to influence implementation, especially regarding communication mechanisms established through the creation of the A.A.T. Oversight Council. The A.A.T. Oversight Council, which was convened by the University System of Maryland, provides key stakeholders from Maryland’s higher education state offices, K-12 system, community colleges, and universities with the opportunity to meet in person to discuss A.A.T.-related issues. Maryland’s small geographic presence allows the A.A.T. Oversight Council to meet in-person regularly. These meetings facilitate further discussions about implementation problems and how to fix them. The

meetings also facilitate improved relationship-building among community colleges and universities such that when a particular issue arises, representatives can directly contact individuals they met at an A.A.T. meeting and ask a question.

Lastly, external factors outside of the Maryland higher education system were also perceived to influence the creation and implementation of the A.A.T., including accreditation and other federally-influenced policies as well as state-level workforce and economic demands. For example, federal accountability policies indicate that universities must be accredited institutions for students to receive financial aid; therefore, following accreditation standards is vital to teacher education programs in order for their students to be eligible for federal financial aid. When the idea of the A.A.T. was first brought up, the state decided to begin with teacher education accreditation standards for the A.A.T. degree and then work backwards using a standards-based design approach rather than a course-by-course design approach.

People Dimension

Study participants perceived that state and university leaders played key roles in both the creation of the A.A.T. degree as well as how the policy has been implemented over time. State leaders (e.g., state legislators) were important catalysts in the creation of the policy. State legislators learned about transfer credit problems from constituents and pushed higher education leaders to pursue action on the matter. State higher education as well as K-12 leaders facilitated the creation of the A.A.T. by working together to convene the appropriate groups and build buy-in. The University System of Maryland, in particular, played a convening role in bringing

various groups together, both initially to create the policy and also in the long term through the creation and ongoing facilitation of the A.A.T. Oversight Council.

University-level administrators and faculty played different roles in the implementation process. The nature of each of these stakeholder's role was influenced by their university's institutional culture. For instance, since Excel University places an emphasis on faculty research, the university uses professional staff to serve as students' academic advisors, which frees up faculty to conduct more research. Comparatively, Student-Centered University prioritizes the student experience, where faculty serve as students' advisors to help build a close connection with students. University leaders were influential in how the A.A.T. policy unfolded the two campuses included in this study, shaping the implementation decisions made at each university. Both state and organizational leaders played a key role they in making sense of the policy, including understanding the goals behind it, the context related to their organizational environment, and the decision-making factors which played a role in implement at their institution.

Discussion of Findings

In this section, I discuss the findings from my study, and subsequently connect these findings to previous research and identify unique contributions of this study. Specifically, I review the successes as well as the challenges associated with this policy, what the A.A.T. reveals about policy implementation overall, factors influencing the implementation process, and the ever-present tensions that exist through implementing the A.A.T.

Some Successes, Some Challenges

This study indicated that although the A.A.T. contributes to efficiencies in students' transfer pathways, this degree pathway is not the universal solution for addressing transfer credit problems. Although the A.A.T. has helped create seamless pathways for some students, other students still experience disruptions in their coursework, which may add one semester or more to their degree completion. While these challenges have been tackled in Maryland over time, some persist today, which can still add time and money to students' baccalaureate completion. Despite promising ideas and contrary to recent media articles (Altstadt et al., 2014; Bailey, 2015b), guided pathways by themselves are not the sole answer for addressing transfer articulation challenges. Instead, guided pathways can represent one strategy among many to improve transfer pathways, such as strong general transfer articulation policies, sound community college or pre-transfer advising systems, and strong collaboration between K-12 and community college recruiters to help students understand their degree options (Berger & Malaney, 2003; Bers, Filkins, Sr., & McLaughlin, 2001; Maliszewski Lukszo & Hayes, 2018).

Although the A.A.T. policy is not a universal solution, administrators, faculty, and students indicated that the policy has positively impacted the transferability of credit for the state of Maryland as a whole. Administrators and faculty also believed that the A.A.T. has created options for more diverse students to access education degrees. Although this study did not uncover evidence that the A.A.T. has contributed to the overall diversity of Maryland's teacher pool, administrators indicated that the A.A.T. has opened up access for socioeconomically diverse students, as they are now

seeing more working adults and students from lower socioeconomic areas entering baccalaureate programs through the A.A.T. pathway. Although a modest finding, this result counters much of the existing literature on state transfer policies, which indicate that state transfer policies have zero effect on student outcomes (Anderson, Sun, & Alfonso, 2006; Roksa & Keith, 2008). Additional research of a quantitative nature to further explore the impact of the A.A.T. on the diversity of teachers is warranted.

Evidence indicates that the A.A.T. has affected organizational behaviors in the public sector as well as the private sector, as private universities accept the A.A.T. degree even though they are not obligated by the state to do so. As this study uncovered through administrator interviews and a review of documents, private colleges and universities recognize the A.A.T. as a valid degree pathway and are thus implementing the policy even though this policy in the COMAR regulations only applies to public institutions. This finding is consistent with at least one previous study indicating that public agreements can also impact private institutions, because representatives from the private sector feel the need to compete with public institutions (Maliszewski, Nespoli, & Crabill, 2012).

The Nature of Policy Implementation

Initially implemented over 15 years ago, A.A.T. implementation has gradually improved over the years. Changes that were made over the years included amending the maximum number of credits in an A.A.T. program to 64 credits, expanding the Basic Skills Test requirement to include SAT, ACT, and GRE to match a change in MSDE policy, the development of a Quick Facts Sheet to explain admissions

requirements for professional teaching programs, and small changes over time to college's or university's programs to better align with the transfer pathway. Thus, implementation of the A.A.T. has been iterative over time. While this finding is consistent with policy implementation research (Lindblom, 1963), a discussion of the iterative nature of transfer policies has not been addressed in the literature on state transfer policies. Any state should understand that creating these guided pathways may be less effective without incorporating mechanisms for gradual improvement, such as establishing regular communication structures between the state, community colleges, and four-year universities.

The gradual nature of policy implementation is connected to theories about organizational learning (Kezar, 2014; March, 1991). Theories on organizational learning indicate that institutions can be deliberate about learning how to improve a process or situation through the use of existing data (Kezar, 2014), and that members of an organization must be integrally involved in the learning process to create change (March, 1991). While research on organizational learning often focuses on the university level or college level, organizational learning also occurs at the state level. As seen in this study, states can engage in organizational learning behaviors to work collaboratively with universities and colleges on changing behaviors and practices. Moreover, the A.A.T. Oversight Council can be viewed as a mechanism for organizational learning. The University System of Maryland created the A.A.T. Oversight Council as a way for community colleges and universities to share data for the purposes of improving the policy and its implementation. Thus, the A.A.T.

Oversight Council serves as an example of how a state can engage in organizational learning.

Impacts on the Implementation Process

Data from this study reveal that a core part of creating and sustaining successful subject-specific transfer articulation pathways pertains to establishing clear and consistent communication channels between community colleges and four-year institutions. For example, the A.A.T. Oversight Council provided relevant stakeholders in Maryland a regular opportunity to communicate challenges experienced by students. This consistent communication afforded different stakeholders opportunities to discuss issues and solutions for resolving problems, which has led to the gradual improvement of the A.A.T. over time. This finding is consistent with previous literature on transfer articulation policy implementation Kisker, Wagoner, and Cohen (2012) as well as Ignash and Townsend (2000) noted that cross-sector collaboration (particularly among faculty) is crucial in successful policy implementation.

This study also revealed that organizational culture and structure played a role in A.A.T. implementation. While the influence of organizational structure on policy implementation has been well-established in the literature (Clark, 1977; Mallon, 2004; Mintzberg, 1983), the influence of organizational structure and culture has been even less explored in research specifically on the implementation of transfer policies. As states create new policies, it is important to consider current organizational structures, including whether there are mechanisms for community colleges and four-

year universities to give feedback on policy implementation, work together to identify implementation problems, and create solutions to address implementation issues.

Additionally, this study uncovered the critical role that state and university leaders play. Specifically, state leaders were an important catalyst in creating these policies by elevating a sense of urgency about transfer credit problems. University leaders were essential in how the policies unfolded on each campus based on how leaders interpreted the policy. For example, administrators at both universities played instrumental roles in creating documents and tools that articulated how A.A.T. courses from each community college would transfer into bachelor degree requirements. University leaders who are champions of this policy pushed others on the campus who were less sympathetic to transfer issues to accept and implement the policy. For instance, one administrator at Excel University advocated for the university as a whole to adopt a policy that waives lower-level common education requirements for associate's degree holders. A significant amount of research shows that leaders who serve as transfer advocates help create a transfer-friendly culture on campus (Dowd, Pak, & Bensimon, 2013; Herrera & Jain, 2013); thus, the importance of the role that university and state leaders held during the implementation of the A.A.T. policy is consistent with this literature. Extant literature indicates that the process of identifying transfer advocates and leaders is a crucial step in creating a positive environment for transfer students (Miller, 2013). However, previous literature on transfer policy implementation has not necessarily made the connection between transfer advocates and their role in smoothing out transfer articulation

policies. The role of leaders in promoting successful transfer policy implementation represents a unique contribution of this study.

The previous literature around transfer articulation issues is largely framed by the idea of administrators and faculty rejecting transfer credits because of beliefs centered on elitism. Past research has alluded to narratives that administrators and faculty believe that universities are “far superior” to community colleges; thus, the former cannot accept credits they deem to be inferior because it would lower the quality of their institution (Carpenter-Davis, 2005). However, administrators in this study indicated that their resistance to change was mainly because they wanted transfer students to be successful in their respective program and the teaching profession. Although faculty presented some beliefs about deficiencies in community college students’ coursework, these beliefs were centered on student success rather than out of concern that transfer students from community colleges would bring down the quality of their institution. Therefore, this study illuminates additional understanding about faculty attitudes toward community college students.

Transfer Articulation: A Story of Tensions

Data from this study indicate that course misalignments between a community college’s A.A.T. degree and a university’s bachelor’s degree coursework may be due to tensions between organizational values and priorities of universities and community colleges. The two four-year universities investigated in this study appeared to be focused on delivering high-quality education, producing the very best teachers, and providing students with the tools needed to become successful teachers. Comparatively, community colleges are often focused on providing the most

accessible pathway possible to teacher degrees.³⁷ The clearest example of this tension is the perspective on in-person classes versus online classes. Excel University and Student-Centered University do not currently offer online classes within their Colleges of Education because of pedagogical beliefs related to preparing students to be the best educators possible – administrators and faculty believe instruction must be in-person to stimulate classroom instruction in schools. Many community colleges, however, offer online classes because this method of learning offers as much accessibility as possible, especially to students who are working adults and have families to care for during the day. These tensions are not easily reconcilable – community colleges and universities have very distinct missions and purposes. It may be helpful, however, for universities and community colleges to have a certain level of understanding about each other’s values and priorities and find different ways to help students bridge any gaps without requiring additional courses.

States must also deal with the perceptions of an iron triangle of tension between quality, access, and affordability. States are expected to be the gatekeepers in ensuring quality in higher education institutions, yet also promote access to higher education for students of all backgrounds, the latter of which includes keeping tuition affordable. If community colleges and universities do not have enough monetary resources to ensure quality, states may permit raising tuition; however, raising tuition too much could have an effect on accessibility. These tensions between quality, access, and affordability can be difficult for states to navigate, but working on

³⁷ This statement is based on data from state administrator interviews and documents reviewed. It is important to note the caveat that community college administrators were not included in this study.

improving and expanding community college transfer pathways is a key solution to dealing with this challenge. Community colleges are generally more affordable institutions to begin a college education; thus, the community college to baccalaureate pathway can – in theory – be the most efficient and cost-effective way to earn a bachelor’s degree, provided that transfer credit problems are eliminated. This makes it imperative that states work on smoothing out transfer pathways and reducing credit duplication as a way of mitigating the effects of the tensions between quality, access, and affordability.

Study Limitations

Case study design is not without limitations. First, this study included two institutions within the state of Maryland; therefore, generalizability to other states and institutions may be limited. Yin (2014) indicates that the primary significance of case study research is to generalize back to the theoretical structures used to guide the study development. Therefore, I generalize back to my conceptual framework to aid in the understanding of how state policies are translated to an organizational context, rather than make sweeping generalizations regarding the nature of all state transfer policies.

Second, this study included four-year institutions and excluded community colleges. While community college perspectives are an important aspect to study, including community colleges was not feasible in this study due to the robust data collection planned. Given these limitations, I paid particular focus on the latter part of students’ educational journeys: four-year colleges and universities. When presenting findings from the study, particularly those related to assumptions about community

colleges, I endeavored to present the data with the caveat that the assumptions were based on data from state and university administrators and faculty. However, readers should be aware that excluding community colleges may have left certain nuances out of the analysis.

Implications

In this section, I review practical implications for universities, policy implications for states, and research implications. For practical implications, I discuss a number of recommendations, including improvements in communication systems and structures at multiple levels (e.g., state level, within universities, between universities and community colleges, and between colleges and students), instituting university transfer credit audits to better understand transfer course problems, and cultivating transfer champions on campus. For state implications, I provide a proposed framework which can be used to help guide transfer policy creation. For research implications, I discuss suggested expansions to Honig's (2006a) Framework for Policy Analysis, recommendations for further research in the state of Maryland, and directions for future research on state transfer policy implementation.

Practical Implications for Universities

This study uncovered that even with well-defined state transfer pathways (i.e., the A.A.T. degree), misalignments in coursework can result in students needing additional semesters to complete their baccalaureate degree. For instance, students often need an additional semester of coursework for certain secondary education degrees at Excel University or when transferring from certain community colleges at Student-Centered University. Although these mismatches may be influenced by a

variety of factors, they most likely exist because of organizational policies that have been decided upon by university administrators. Therefore, university administrators have a responsibility to truly understand where transfer course problems exist for students and to take action to address them. To do so, universities should conduct internal audits on students' transfer pathways across all majors to better understand whether students are graduating on time or whether transfer credit problems are creating delays in graduation. These internal audits could provide universities with relevant information about which transfer credits problems exist so that they can take more proactive steps to fix related issues.

Communication channels within universities and within Colleges of Education are important. When messages about a policy are given at the state level, universities need to have a structured, systematic way of ensuring these messages are filtered down to all relevant administrators and faculty. Excel University, for example, designated a mid-level administrator to sit on the A.A.T. Oversight Council. This administrator was then tasked with communicating messages from meetings regarding updates or changes to the policy or its implementation to another mid-level administrator within the undergraduate program; in turn, this administrator was responsible for passing the information onto other administrators within the College of Education. This example illustrates the importance of having clear communication structures in place so that policy messages quickly reach (and are accurately conveyed to) those who are directly working with students.

According to the results of this study, university leaders can be a key catalyst in ensuring transfer policies are implemented with fidelity. Universities need to make

the transfer process a priority to create a friendly environment for these students and pave the way for changes that might be required to improve the transfer experience, even if those changes may be difficult for administrators and faculty to accept. Thus, it is important for universities to cultivate leaders who serve as transfer advocates or champions and are willing to take on problems that affect transfer student outcomes, such as changing program requirements to better align transfer pathways. These transfer champions must be ready to tackle tough problems, including those that may not be popular with faculty.

In addition to working internally at universities, universities need to work more closely with community colleges to better align transfer pathways, particularly if problems are discovered in internal transfer credit audits. When issues are found with a particular community college, university and community college administrators must be willing to meet, discuss misalignments, and determine steps that can be taken to resolve the issues. Both universities and community colleges must be willing to make compromises to enact changes that might improve pathways for students. Universities and community colleges should also work to establish clear communication channels, such that if either makes a change to degree requirements, the change is vetted by other institutions to understand whether it may lead to any transfer credit problems. One example of a communication mechanism is for each university to have a lead contact to liaison with each community college; this lead contact can be the individual community college advisors know to contact in the event of questions about transfer coursework. Another example is hosting an annual or bi-annual meeting between any given university and community colleges

(especially community colleges that send the most students to the university), where both entities can share updates and ask questions about their specific programs. These types of communication mechanisms can potentially help mitigate misinformation, miscommunication, and misalignment about transfer courses, so that more community college students will take the correct courses and have a greater chance of avoiding degree requirements duplication.

Results from this study indicate that additional work is needed in the Maryland higher education system as well as community colleges and universities to improved communication between students and colleges about transfer coursework and pathways. One example of an improved communication system consists of requiring that community college students meet with prospective transfer universities during their second year of studies at the community college. Both Excel University and Student-Centered University have pre-transfer advising capacity and would prefer to connect with students before they transfer to ensure they have met the application requirements and are on the right pathway for success. If students are concerned about their ability to visit prospective universities, universities could offer online meetings (if they do not offer this option already). Universities which do not have the capacity to offer pre-transfer advising services on a regular basis can still offer open house sessions to prospective students and incorporate a pre-transfer advising component to these open houses, allowing students to meet with a representative to discuss transfer coursework and admissions requirements. Community colleges could also explore providing universities with information about prospective students, so that universities could reach them early on during their

studies to ensure they know about pre-transfer advising options as they plan their course schedules.

One of the challenges illuminated through this study is that many A.A.T. students were surprised to learn that scheduling options were extremely limited when they arrived at the university. Fewer course scheduling options can be problematic for A.A.T. students if they are accustomed to pursuing an education with more scheduling options, such as online or evening programs. When they must work or care for family during the day, increased scheduling limitations may result in students needing to reduce their hours or even quit their current job, leading to financial struggles (as most students included in this study indicated). Another consequence is that students may need to transfer again to another institution with more scheduling options (although students included in this study had not pursued or considered this option). Universities may have good reason to teach classes in person instead of online, but universities can do a better job of providing students with varied class times. Since securing the resources to provide varied class times could be challenging, universities could explore cross-university partnerships. If one local university provided a particular class in the evening, other universities could offer that class as an option to students through system-discounted tuition. Universities also have a responsibility to communicate with community college students about their scheduling prior to transfer, so that students can ensure the institution is the right fit for their needs (i.e., evening or online classes needs because the student works full-time).

Implications for Policy at the State Level

This study yielded important lessons for other states looking to implement similar policies. In the following sections, I present these lessons in the form of a guiding framework with key points and guiding questions which could be utilized at the state level. These key points include: identifying stakeholder groups and champions, understanding policy goals and other influencing policies, understanding governance structures, and promoting the message that implementation is a long-term process.

Identify the groups that need to be involved and what roles they will play.

As a first step, it is critical for state leaders to identify key stakeholder groups which need to be involved in any discussions about a subject-specific transfer policy to ensure the correct groups are involved. In Maryland, for example, the groups involved in the A.A.T. discussions included the Maryland Commission on Higher Education, the University System of Maryland (which played a convening role), the Maryland State Department of Education, the Maryland Association of Community Colleges, four-year universities, and independent universities and colleges. Guiding questions for state leaders could include: What groups need to be involved in conversations about this initiative to be successful? Whom in those groups can be contacted to begin this conversation? What role will each group play in this initiative?

Identify champions. This study showed that state and organizational leaders can play a significant role in both policy creation and implementation. State legislators and other state leaders can provide a push to begin addressing articulation issues, while organizational leaders can serve as a model to other universities and

help push the state toward action. Both state and organizational leaders are key individuals who interpret the policy, help communicate the policy to others, and facilitate ongoing implementation conversations. It is important to identify those individuals who may be able to see the creation of a guided pathway through to completion. Champions from all sectors that the policy involves may be required, such as community college leaders, four-year university leaders, public university leaders, private university leaders, K-12 leaders, and state higher education leaders. Guiding questions for state leaders could include: Who is currently an advocate for community college transfer students? Who currently serves in a role whose responsibilities are tied to the success of community college transfer students?

Understanding the goals behind the policy. Communicating and helping key stakeholders understand the goals behind a transfer articulation policy is crucial in that it leads to everyone having a common understanding. For example, administrators at Excel University understood that A.A.T. students have all lower-level common education requirements waived due to Maryland transfer policies. In contrast, administrators at Student-Centered University believed that the intention of these transfer policies was to waive as many courses as deemed reasonable by the university, but not necessarily all lower-level common education requirements. These two interpretations of the A.A.T. policy led to different implementation outcomes at each university, which arguably has a profound impact on student outcomes. Not having a common understanding among stakeholders can lead to different implementation outcomes at the institutional level. Having a common understanding of goals allows stakeholders to work together for a mutual purpose. Clear

communication about policy goals could help ensure that a state vision is correctly translated at the campus level. A first step any state should take is to have a discussion with relevant stakeholder groups about the goals behind the proposed policy. Although this exercise is essential at the beginning of this process, discussions surrounding goals should be ongoing to ensure all stakeholders have a common understanding that new stakeholders who join the process throughout develop a clear sense of the intended goals. Key questions for this step could include: What are the intended goals behind this policy? What would be ideal outcomes as a result of this policy?

Understand other influencing policies. When a state begins the process of creating a guided pathway, it should identify other federal, state, and local policies that may impact how the policy is created and implemented. For example, this study uncovered that national accreditation standards for teacher education programs, state certification requirements for teachers, and federal accountability policies all shaped the way that the Maryland A.A.T. was created and implemented. Understanding how a new policy works in relation to existing policies could help stakeholders better understand how a policy is designed, similar to how Maryland approached the standards-based design for the A.A.T., rather than a course-by-course design. Key guiding questions for this stage include: What currently existing policies might impact this new policy? How does this policy fit into the state's currently existing systems?

Examine existing governance structures. Governance structures may support or impede the implementation of transfer pathways and facilitate strong

communication among the various sectors of state higher education. Therefore, states pursuing guided pathways must first examine organizational structures. For instance, state leaders should identify governance structures that bring multiple sectors of the education system together, similar to the function that the University System of Maryland plays in convening leaders across institutions or the A.A.T. Oversight Council in bringing stakeholders across sectors together to discuss A.A.T. degree matters. If no such structure currently exists, additional conversations may be warranted to determine how to move forward with the creation of these structures. Creating and maintaining these mechanisms as a long-lasting structure will ensure that the policy is sustained and improved over the long term. Guiding questions for state leaders include: What structures currently exist that enable cross-sector communication? What new structures would need to be created to facilitate this communication, and who would take responsibility for that new structure?

Promote the message that this is a long-term process. As this study uncovered, policy implementation is an iterative process that occurs over time. In Maryland, state and college or university leaders have worked together to gradually improve the policy over the last 15 years. As Kezar (2002) notes, change can be a disorderly process. If state leaders promote a message from the beginning of the process that implementation could take many years to be fully enacted, this communication could prevent university and community college representatives from giving up on the process if implementation is not perfect when the policy is initially implemented. One guiding question is: How will the state communicate to

stakeholders a long-term vision for how this policy will be created and improved upon over time?

If states want to create a transfer policy, using the guiding questions throughout these sections could be a helpful starting point. As states move forward with the process, key leaders involved will need to continually adapt and revisit steps in the framework as needed. Though the policy creation process may be disorganized and difficult, a strong transfer policy with good implementation practices can be one way to improve community college transfer student pathways to a baccalaureate degree.

Research Implications

In this section, I discuss research implications, which includes the theoretical contributions of this study and directions for future research. Directions for future research will include a discussion of possible research on Maryland transfer issues, qualitative research on state transfer policy implementation, and quantitative research on state transfer policy effectiveness.

Theoretical contributions. Prior to this study, a framework for analyzing state transfer policies did not exist. For this study, I relied on organizational and policy research and theories to expand upon Honig's (2006a) Framework for Policy Analysis. This study indicated that such a framework is useful for analyzing implementation in a more robust and holistic manner. In particular, using the *Policy*, *Places*, and *People Dimensions* to examine a policy's implementation could afford researchers a framework for understanding contextual nuances that impact how a policy unfolds at the local level. For examine, using the *Places Dimension* to examine

geographical and organizational-level factors that impact implementation will give researchers and policymakers a better understanding as to how these nuances might affect how the policy unfolds at the local level. Fully understanding whether a policy is implemented with fidelity is a first step to examining whether the policy is effectively achieving its intended outcomes. If a policy is not implemented in the way it was envisioned by policymakers, one cannot make valid claims about its outcomes (Odden, 1991; Pressman & Wildavsky, 1984; Sabatier & Mazmanian, 1980; Werner, 2004). The conceptual framework used for this study provides a structure with which to examine implementation to help determine if the policy is being enacted in accordance with the original intent of the policy.

Results from this study, however, indicate that some adjustments may need to be made to the conceptual framework to further expand upon Honig's (2006a) Framework for Policy Analysis. Given this study's findings related to how state and organizational leaders can influence the ways in which a policy is implemented, a leadership component should be added at both the state and organizational level within the *Places Dimension*. Using leadership theories (Kezar & Eckel, 2002; Northouse, 2016) may be particularly beneficial in expanding this dimension of the theoretical framework. For example, leadership theories could be used to articulate those leaders who might be involved in the transfer policy creation and implementation process, such as transactional leaders versus transformational leaders (Kezar, 2014). As Aguirre and Martinez (2002) found that transformational leaders tend to be more likely to focus on issues of diversity, theories exploring the role of transformational leaders in promoting transfer equity might be useful to integrate.

Similarly, another finding from this study centered on leaders' interpretation of the policy is what ultimately guides implementation. For example, leaders at Excel University interpreted the A.A.T. and other transfer policies as those which waived lower-level common education courses for students transferring with an associate's degree; in comparison, leaders at Student-Centered University interpreted these policies as more lenient with university-level requirements. Thus, another change that should be made to the conceptual framework is to add "key stakeholder policy interpretation" to the *People Dimension*, drawing from cognitive stakeholder implementation and sensemaking theories (Burch, 2007; Spillane, 2000; Spillane et al., 2002; Weick, 1993; Weick et al., 2005). Based on these theories, the revised conceptual framework should indicate that how administrators and faculty perceive the policy's goals and interpret the policy within the context of their organizational culture (i.e., sensemaking) are important aspects of the implementation process. A revised conceptual framework with these additional components is available in Appendix R.

Directions for future research. While many policy organizations suggest that guided pathways are the solution to address problems with transferring from community colleges to the four-year sector (Altstadt et al., 2014; Bailey, 2015a; Complete College America, 2012; Dadgar et al., 2013), this study indicated that the actual implementation of these policies is of critical importance, thus meriting further research. Research on subject-specific state transfer articulation policies, or guided pathways, is notably sparse (Bailey, 2018). While the present study expanded the understanding of factors that influence how a policy unfolds on a college campus,

additional research on subject-specific pathways is still needed. This additional research should include an investigation of other subject areas or majors. In Maryland, as one example, guided pathways for engineering and nursing currently exist. Using the conceptual framework from this study to examine implementation for other subject areas would be useful to not only further enhance our knowledge around guided pathways, but also further test the utility of the conceptual framework.

Research on transfer policies and pathways should also be conducted in other states. Although Maryland was the first state to implement an A.A.T. degree, other states may have followed Maryland in implementing the A.A.T. degree. Additional research on other states, including A.A.T. degree pathways and other majors, will provide additional insight into how these policies are implemented and how they work in practice. These directions for future research will ultimately help policy makers craft the most effective policies possible. All additional qualitative research in this area should ideally include the perspectives of community college administrators and faculty to gain a well-rounded understanding of the issues.

According to Ignash and Townsend (2000), states do not typically evaluate the impact of a state transfer policy on an annual basis. This is the case in Maryland, where the impact of the A.A.T. degree has not been examined in detailed. Questions that deserve examination may include: How many students have graduated from A.A.T. programs since its inception? Do those students who graduate from an A.A.T. program go on to graduate from a Maryland university? Do they become teachers? Do they remain in Maryland? A survey of A.A.T. graduates should be conducted to determine what students think of the A.A.T. degree, including whether they believe it

has prepared them well for their baccalaureate program and whether they have experienced any transfer credit issues.

The framework proposed in this study could also be the launching point for several quantitative studies aimed at better understanding the overall impact of state transfer articulation policies across the country. For example, a survey to better understand implementation across states could be administered to become more familiar with the context in each state, such as current state higher education governance structures, statewide communication practices, and attitudes toward transfer issues. The aim of this survey could be to collect data from a sample of state, community college, and university administrators and faculty to apprehend their perceptions of the goals behind the state transfer policy, whether the policy is being implemented with fidelity, and the perceived effectiveness of the policy. This data could be incorporated into existing analyses to better determine whether state transfer articulation policies actually impact baccalaureate graduation rates or transfer credits using a more robust dataset than previous studies. Given the limitations with current quantitative research on this topic, more robust analyses, such as a fixed effects regression analysis, could be used if augmented with data about a state's transfer policy implementation. For instance, data from this survey could be used to generate an index for each state to denote how well the transfer policy has been implemented. Currently quantitative results on state transfer policies show that these policies have no effect on student outcomes (Anderson et al., 2006; Roksa & Keith, 2008). If results indicated that state transfer policies impact student outcomes but only in states where the policy is perceived to be implemented well, this would give researchers a

better understanding of the effectiveness of state transfer policies. Given that this current study indicates that implementation is an iterative process, quantitative studies analyzing the impact of state policies should add a lag time of at least five years to truly capture the policy's impact. Dependent variables should include transfer rates, transfer students' baccalaureate outcomes, and, ideally, time to degree completion from the time of transfer.

To understand the multiple sides of transfer policy implementation, it is crucial to represent the perspectives of key decision makers close to the transfer function: community college and four-year administrators and faculty. Future research should include community college perspectives to provide a balanced view on the dynamics between universities and community colleges. Representing both the university and community college sides of implementation will give researchers a more robust understanding of the dynamics involved in the policy's implementation. Additionally, future research should include student voices alongside of administrators and faculty, as the former group represents an important source of data triangulation.

Significance of the Study

Despite the fact that only 14% of community college students go on to earn a bachelor's degree within six years of transferring (Jenkins & Fink, 2016), many students use the community college as a pathway to obtain a baccalaureate degree. In the state of Maryland, over one-third (37%) of students who begin college start their education at community colleges (Maryland Higher Education Commission, 2016a). This is particularly true for minority students, as 44% of Hispanic students and 43%

of African-American students in Maryland are enrolled at a community college (Maryland Higher Education Commission, 2016a). Maryland's statistics are representative of the nation – nationally, almost half (46%) of all undergraduate students begin at a community college, including 57% of Hispanic students and 52% of African-American students (American Association of Community Colleges, 2016). By producing research to better understand transfer articulation problems within the transfer pathway, this study could have a significant impact on students if the results are used to improve transfer pathways.

Enhancing the community college to baccalaureate pathway is critical to national economic stability because of the increasing need for employees with higher education credentials. In 2010, President Obama challenged the United States to graduate an additional five million students by 2025 (White House, 2010). This goal arose from research indicating that by 2020, two-thirds of new jobs would require college credentials, particularly a bachelor degree (Carnevale & Rose, 2011; Carnevale, Smith, & Strohl, 2013). Community college transfer students play an important role in attaining higher baccalaureate completion rates (Handel & Williams, 2012; Handel, 2013). If transfer rates rose just 10%, this could result in 70,000 additional bachelor's degrees across the country (Wyner, Deane, Jenkins, & Fink, 2016). If baccalaureate completion increased, this may provide additional economic stability by providing a more ample supply of baccalaureate graduates.

While this study is focused specifically on Maryland, transfer credit articulation is a national problem (Simone, 2014). Students have the best opportunity to complete their baccalaureate degree when all or most of their credits transfer from

community college to a four-year college or university (Monaghan & Attewell, 2015). Denial of credits during the transfer process is a major barrier to completing a degree (Doyle, 2006). Ensuring a seamless transfer process also addresses an equity issue (Dowd, Pak, & Bensimon, 2013) in that disadvantaged students are more likely to choose a community college to baccalaureate pathway, yet are less likely to complete a baccalaureate degree (Cabrera, Burkum, LaNasa, & Bibo, 2012; Dowd, Cheslock, & Melguizo, 2008). Losing college credits can create further inequities between minority and majority populations, since minority student groups are more likely to begin their education at community college (American Association of Community Colleges, 2016) and thus may be disproportionately impacted by transfer credit issues. The results of this study can help policymakers and practitioners craft and adjust state policies to better support transfer student outcomes and improve equitable opportunities for disadvantaged students.

Final Thoughts

As was evident in this study, transfer students matter on a variety of levels. Although transfer students represent a large proportion of students in the American higher education system, their needs are more often neglected by policymakers and institutions of higher education, particularly at four-year universities. As a result, transfer students face a plethora of challenges, including problems transferring credits from one institution to another. These transfer credit issues often translate to students taking more time and spending more money to complete their degree, or forcing them to drop out of the college pipeline altogether. Recently, guided pathways policies (e.g., subject-specific transfer policies) have been noted as a solution to address

transfer credit problems, though little research is available to substantiate this claim. This study indicated that subject-level transfer articulation policies can be useful in smoothing out transfer pathways, but they are not the sole answer to fixing transfer issues. Rather, these policies can be one tool among many to tackle these issues.

Working to improve the state and organizational policies aimed at facilitating transfer credits is a core part of addressing the issues that currently exist for transfer students. This study offers both a practical framework for states to use when creating and implementing a subject-specific policy, as well as a conceptual framework based on Honig's (2006a) Framework for Policy Analysis that can be used for future research. Researchers and policymakers alike still have so much to learn about state transfer policies and how to best use these policies to enable student success, but my hope is that these frameworks can be used to continue the important work that needs to be done.

Moreover, this study confirmed that policy implementation matters. Implementation is a complex process, and mechanisms for implementation should be carefully considered by state and organizational leaders. It is not enough to create policies – policymakers and practitioners need to pay careful attention to how policies function in practice and continually work on smoothing out implementation. Of the many complexities of policy implementation, one important consideration is to carefully reflect on which stakeholder groups are involved in the process. Buy-in at multiple levels of the higher education system (and sometimes in other sectors, such as K-12 and the workforce) is crucial for success, and involving these groups from the beginning will not only ensure that the policy created represents the strongest

design possible, but will also facilitate a superior implementation process. Inevitably, implementation will not be perfect the first time around. State and organizational leaders should be prepared for this reality, and at the same time be committed to improving the policy and outcomes over time. This long-term commitment requires ongoing communication and participation in policy discussions, which may necessitate additional organizational resources to support this ongoing involvement.

Practitioners, policymakers, and scholars alike must remember a key idea: this research, this work, and this effort is all about helping students make it to the finish line to graduation. This dissertation began with a student narrative about Karen – a student who lost 55 credits and whose education turned into a six-year journey, rather than four years. Imagine a new narrative – one where Karen (and all students) are not penalized for beginning their education at a community college, where students can pursue a seamless pathway from community college to a four-year university – with no additional time, no additional money, and no additional stress. That is the ideal we should all be working toward.

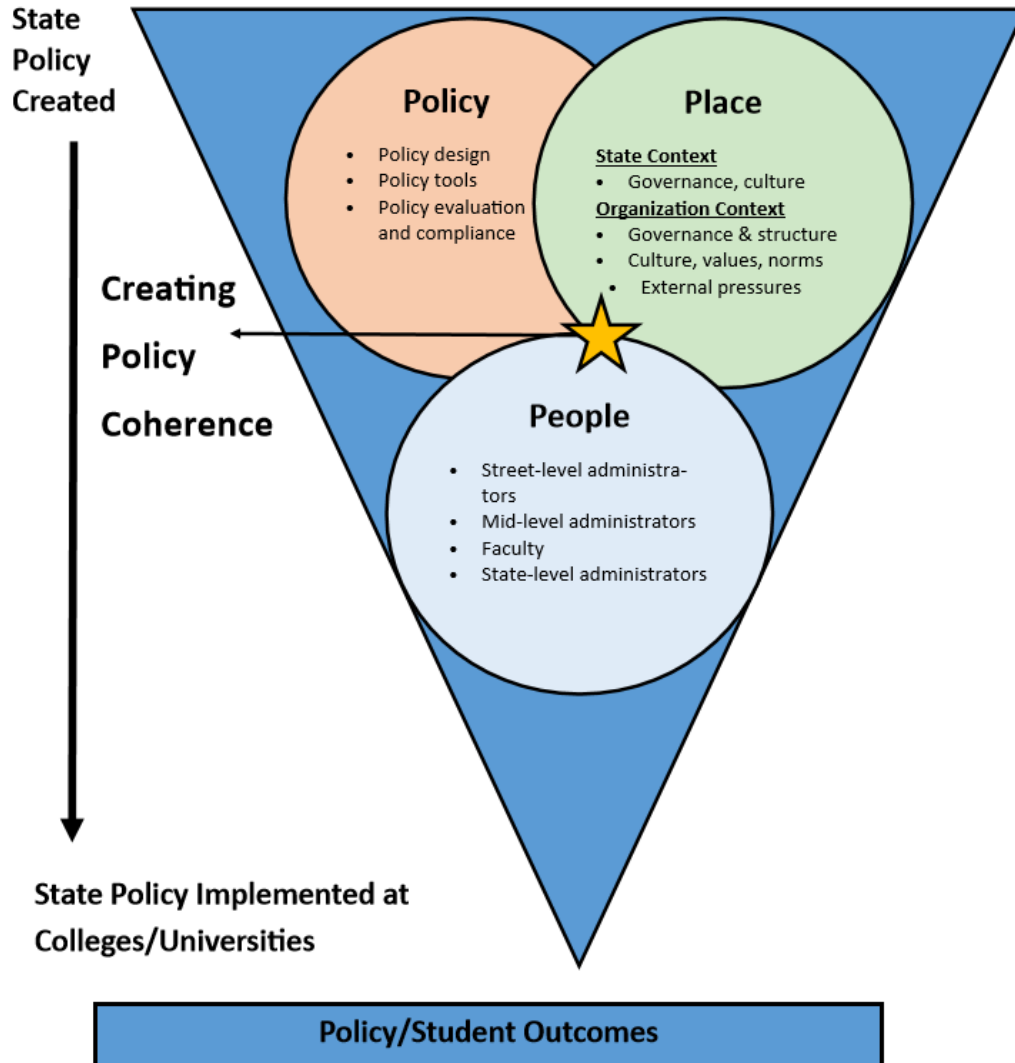
Appendices

Appendix A

Conceptual Framework

Framework for State Transfer Policy Implementation

"...whether or not a policy works is not an inherent property of the program or intervention itself. Rather, its outcomes depends on interactions between that **policy, people** who matter to its implementation, and conditions in the **places** in which people operate" (Honig, 2006a, p. 333).



Appendix B

Study Interviewees Roles and Organizations

Pseudonym	Role	Organization
Tina	State Administrator	State
Marsha	State Administrator	State
Veronica	Street-Level Administrator	Excel University
Vanessa	Street-Level Administrator	Excel University
Leigh	Street-Level Administrator	Excel University
Elizabeth	Street-Level Administrator	Excel University
Mary	Mid-Level Administrator	Excel University
Michelle	Street-Level Administrator	Student-Centered University
John	State Administrator	State
Sarah	Mid-Level Administrator	Student-Centered University
Stephanie	Street-Level Administrator	Student-Centered University
Irene	Mid-Level Administrator	Excel University
Mia	State Administrator	State
Tom	Faculty	Student-Centered University
Kathleen	Mid-Level Administrator	Student-Centered University
Erin	Street-Level Administrator	Excel University
Matthew	Faculty	Student-Centered University
Maria	Street-Level Administrator	Student-Centered University
Melissa	Street-Level Administrator	Student-Centered University
Arielle	Faculty	Excel University

Appendix C

IRB Consent Form for Interviews

Initials _____ Date _____

Project Title	Dissertation Study on Maryland’s Associate of Arts in Teaching
Purpose of the Study	This research is being conducted by Casey Maliszewski at the University of Maryland, College Park (UMCP). I am inviting you to participate in this research project because you are an administrator or faculty who works on transfer issues, particularly as it pertains to students who transfer with an Associate of Arts in Teaching degree. The purpose of this research project is to better understand how universities implement the Associate of Arts in Teaching transfer articulation policy/degree pathway.
Procedures	<p>By participating in this research project, you will agree to participate in a one hour interview. You will be asked to respond to a series of questions about your professional background, experiences of working with transfer students with Associate of Arts in Teaching degrees, and perspectives on state transfer policies.</p> <p>By agreeing to participate in this study, you are also agreeing to allow the researcher to include data you provided through the participation interest form in analyses, which will be de-identified (i.e., not linked to any personally identifiable information) prior to analysis.</p>
Potential Risks and Discomforts	There may be some risks from participating in this research study. This may include some discomfort at recalling and sharing difficult experiences at your university. To mitigate these risks, the interviewer will remind you at the beginning of the interview that you may choose to not answer any questions that you do not feel comfortable answering and that you may stop the interview at any time.
Potential Benefits	There are no direct benefits from participating in this research. However, possible benefits include satisfaction by sharing your perspectives on this topic. We hope that, in the future, other people might benefit from this study through improved understanding of how these policies work on a university campus.
Confidentiality	Any potential loss of confidentiality will be minimized by maintaining one copy of records electronically that are de-identified with no personally identifiable information, including any recordings, transcripts or notes from your interview. In other words, the researchers will maintain any interview/focus group transcripts and survey results by assigning an interview code that will be connected

	<p>to demographic information only with no real name, birthdate, or real student/staff ID.</p> <p>If I write a report or article about this research project, your identity will be protected to the maximum extent possible. Your information may be shared with representatives of the University of Maryland, College Park or governmental authorities if you or someone else is in danger or if we are required to do so by law.</p>	
Right to Withdraw and Questions	<p>Your participation in this research is completely voluntary. You may choose not to take part at all. If you decide to participate in this research, you may stop participating at any time. If you decide not to participate in this study or if you stop participating at any time, you will not be penalized or lose any benefits to which you otherwise qualify.</p> <p>If you decide to stop taking part in the study, if you have questions, concerns, or complaints, or if you need to report an injury related to the research, please contact the investigator: Casey Maliszewski 202-997-0789, casey@umd.edu</p>	
Participant Rights	<p>If you have questions about your rights as a research participant or wish to report a research-related injury, please contact:</p> <p>University of Maryland College Park Institutional Review Board Office 1204 Marie Mount Hall College Park, Maryland, 20742 E-mail: irb@umd.edu Telephone: 301-405-0678</p> <p>This research has been reviewed according to the University of Maryland, College Park IRB procedures for research involving human subjects.</p>	
Statement of Consent	<p>Your signature indicates that you are at least 18 years of age; you have read this consent form or have had it read to you; your questions have been answered to your satisfaction and you voluntarily agree to participate in this research study. You will receive a copy of this signed consent form.</p> <p>If you agree to participate, please sign your name below.</p>	
Signature and Date	NAME OF PARTICIPANT	

	[Please Print]	
	SIGNATURE OF PARTICIPANT	
	DATE	

Statement of Consent to Record	<p>Your signature indicates that you are at least 18 years of age; you have read this consent form or have had it read to you; your questions have been answered to your satisfaction and you voluntarily agree to have your interview/focus group session audio recorded for this research study. You will receive a copy of this signed consent form.</p> <p>If you agree to be audio recorded, please sign your name below.</p>								
	Signature and Date	<table border="1"> <tr> <td>NAME OF PARTICIPANT</td> <td></td> </tr> <tr> <td>[Please Print]</td> <td></td> </tr> <tr> <td>SIGNATURE OF PARTICIPANT</td> <td></td> </tr> <tr> <td>DATE</td> <td></td> </tr> </table>	NAME OF PARTICIPANT		[Please Print]		SIGNATURE OF PARTICIPANT		DATE
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Appendix D

Interview Protocol

- Research Question #1: What are the policy tools, evaluation measures, and implementation processes associated with the implementation of the A.A.T. policy?
- Research Question #2: How do key stakeholders interpret and implement the A.A.T. policy?
- Research Question #3: What state and organizational context factors (if any) appear to be influential in how the A.A.T. policy has been implemented?

Applicable RQ	Applicable Roles	Interview Question	Applicable Dimension from Conceptual Model	Applicable Theoretical Lenses
NA	Street-Level Mid-Level Faculty State-Level	<p>Tell me about your background and how you came to be in this position.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. What is your educational background? 2. What is your position at this university/organization (if USM)? 3. What are your responsibilities? 4. What are your responsibilities as it relates to transfer students, particularly students who transfer with an A.A.T. degree? 	People Dimension	Sensemaking theory
#3	Street-Level Mid-Level Faculty State-Level	<p>I'd like to learn a little more about your university/organization (if USM).</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 5. Could you tell me more about how your university/ university/organization (if USM) is organizationally structured – both as a university as a whole and your particular office/department? 6. What do you think are your university's/organization's organizational priorities? Your office/department's organizational priorities? 	Places Dimension (Organizational Context)	

		<p>7. What do you think sets your university apart from other colleges and universities? What makes your university unique? (Not applicable to State-Level)</p> <p>8. What do you think most influences how decisions are made at this university/organization? In your office/department?</p>		
#1, #2	<p>Street-Level Mid-Level Faculty State-Level</p>	<p>I'd like to learn more about your impressions of the state transfer articulation policies related to the A.A.T. degree.</p> <p>9. In regards to the state transfer policies as they relate to A.A.T. degree, how would you describe these policies to a student and his/her family?</p> <p>10. How did you first learn about this policy (e.g., staff training)?</p> <p>11. What do you think are the goals of the state policy?</p> <p>12. Can you tell me more about the history behind this policy? Why and how was the policy created and implemented over time? (State-Level only)</p>	<p>Policy Dimension, People Dimension</p>	
#2	<p>Street-Level Mid-Level (if applicable, i.e., meets with students sometimes)</p>	<p>ant to gain a sense of how the policy works at this college. Here is a transcript from a sample A.A.T. student from Community College A.</p> <p>13. Can you walk me through what this student would experience in terms of transfer? Where would the student start and what organizational processes occur as this student moves through their degree program here?</p>	<p>Policy Dimension, People Dimension, Places Dimension (Organizational Context)</p>	<p>Sensemaking theory</p>

		<p>14. Can you tell me more about how you would specifically work with this student? How you would advise the student?</p> <p>15. What topics would you discuss with the student?</p> <p>16. Are there any challenges he/she would face in the transfer process?</p> <p>17. How long do you think it would take the student to complete his/her degree if they enrolled full-time (14-16 credits per semester)?</p>		
#3	Street-Level Mid-Level Faculty State-Level	18. What factors do you think most influences how leaders at your office/department and/or or university/organization make decisions about how to implement the A.A.T. degree policy?	Places Dimension (State and Organizational Context)	Sensemaking theory, Institutional theory
#2, #3	Street-Level Mid-Level Faculty	<p>19. Has your college changed how you advise A.A.T. students within the last year (or few years) – particularly as it relates to their transfer coursework?</p> <p>a) If so, what were the changes?</p> <p>b) Who made those decisions?</p> <p>c) What factors do you think influenced those changes?</p> <p>d) How did you find out about the changes?</p> <p>e) Do you provide feedback on recommendations on how your university works with A.A.T. students?</p>	Policy Dimension, People Dimension, Places Dimension (Organizational Context)	Institutional theory
#1, #2	Street-Level Mid-Level Faculty	You mentioned earlier that you think the goals of the policy is _____.	Policy Dimension, People Dimension	Sensemaking theory

	State-Level	<p>20. Do you think the policy is effective at achieving that goal(s)? Why or why not?</p> <p>21. What do you think are the strengths to the A.A.T. degree? Challenges? If challenges, what would your recommendations be to address those challenges?</p>		
	Street-Level Mid-Level Faculty State-Level	<p>22. Are there any documents that you think would be helpful for me to include as part of my data collection (e.g., advising work sheets, course evaluation work sheets)?</p> <p>23. Do you have any recommendations on who else you think I should talk to at this university/organization to get a better understanding of how you work with A.A.T. students and how transfer policies are implemented here? (Not applicable to State-Level)</p> <p>24. As part of my data collection, I plan to observe meetings or events that are related to work with A.A.T. students and the topics we have discussed today. Do you have any suggestions on what types of meetings or events would be most beneficial to gain a better understanding of how your university works with A.A.T. students? (Not applicable to State-Level)</p> <p>25. Lastly, I would like to conduct a focus group with current A.A.T. students. Do you have contact information for current A.A.T. students that I could potentially recruit for this focus group? (Not applicable to State-Level)</p>		
		Those are all of my questions.		

		26. Do you have anything to add that you think is important for me to know about how your university/organization implements the state transfer articulation policy for teaching through the A.A.T. degree?		
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Appendix E

Mock Transcript

Jane Smith – Montgomery College, Associate of Arts in Teaching in Elementary Education

Requirement	Course Number	Number of Credits
English	ENGL102	3 Credits
Mathematics	MATH132	4 Credits
	MATH130	4 Credits
	MATH131	4 Credits
Communication	COMM108	3 Credits
Creativity & Creative Development	DANC204	3 Credits
Science	BIOL115	4 Credits
	PC101	4 Credits
	HS201	3 Credits
Western Arts & Humanities	DN206	3 Credits
	PY102	3 Credits
	EDUC203	3 Credits
	GE110	3 Credits
	PSYC201	3 Credits
Psychology	ED201	3 Credits
	ED202	3 Credits
	ED140	3 Credits
Education	ED216	3 Credits
Electives	Lower Level Elective	5 Credits
Total		64 Credits

Appendix F

Observations (In Chronological Order by Date of Observation)

Observation #	Observation Description	Organization
1	Advisor/Transfer Coordinator Lunch	Excel University
2	A.A.T. Oversight Council Meeting	State
3	New Transfer Student Orientation	Excel University
4	New Transfer Student Orientation	Excel University
5	New Transfer Student Orientation	Student-Centered University
6	Recruitment Information Session	Student-Centered University
7	A.A.T. Oversight Council Meeting	State
8	Recruitment Information Session	Student-Centered University

Appendix G

IRB Consent Form for Observations

Initials _____	Date _____
Project Title	Dissertation Study on Maryland's Associate of Arts in Teaching
Purpose of the Study	This research is being conducted by Casey Maliszewski at the University of Maryland, College Park (UMCP). I am inviting you to participate in this research project because you are an administrator or faculty who works on transfer issues, particularly as it pertains to students who transfer with an Associate of Arts in Teaching degree. The purpose of this research project is to better understand how universities implement the Associate of Arts in Teaching transfer articulation policy/degree pathway.
Procedures	<p>By participating in this research project, you will agree to have the researchers observe your meetings with prospective/current students and/or colleagues from your university.</p> <p>By agreeing to participate in this study, you are also agreeing to allow the researcher to include data you provided through the participation interest form in analyses, which will be de-identified (i.e., not linked to any personally identifiable information) prior to analysis.</p>
Potential Risks and Discomforts	There may be some risks from participating in this research study. This may include some discomfort at being observed. To mitigate these risks, the interviewer will remind you at the beginning of the meeting that you may ask the researcher to leave the meeting at any time. Additionally, researchers will sit discreetly in the corner of the meeting location to be the least distracting possible.
Potential Benefits	There are no direct benefits from participating in this research. However, possible benefits include satisfaction by sharing your perspectives on this topic. I hope that, in the future, other people might benefit from this study through improved understanding of how these policies work on a university campus.
Confidentiality	Any potential loss of confidentiality will be minimized by maintaining one copy of records electronically that are de-

	<p>identified with no personally identifiable information, including any recordings, transcripts or notes. In other words, the researchers will maintain any field notes by assigning an interview code that will be connected to demographic information only with no real name, birthdate, or real student/staff ID.</p> <p>If I write a report or article about this research project, your identity will be protected to the maximum extent possible. Your information may be shared with representatives of the University of Maryland, College Park or governmental authorities if you or someone else is in danger or if we are required to do so by law.</p>
<p>Right to Withdraw and Questions</p>	<p>Your participation in this research is completely voluntary. You may choose not to take part at all. If you decide to participate in this research, you may stop participating at any time. If you decide not to participate in this study or if you stop participating at any time, you will not be penalized or lose any benefits to which you otherwise qualify.</p> <p>If you decide to stop taking part in the study, if you have questions, concerns, or complaints, or if you need to report an injury related to the research, please contact the investigator: Casey Maliszewski 202-997-0789, caseyma@umd.edu</p>
<p>Participant Rights</p>	<p>If you have questions about your rights as a research participant or wish to report a research-related injury, please contact:</p> <p>University of Maryland College Park Institutional Review Board Office 1204 Marie Mount Hall College Park, Maryland, 20742 E-mail: irb@umd.edu Telephone: 301-405-0678</p> <p>This research has been reviewed according to the University of Maryland, College Park IRB procedures for research involving human subjects.</p>
<p>Statement of Consent</p>	<p>Your signature indicates that you are at least 18 years of age; you have read this consent form or have had it read to you; your questions have been answered to your satisfaction and</p>

	<p>you voluntarily agree to participate in this research study. You will receive a copy of this signed consent form.</p> <p>If you agree to participate, please sign your name below.</p>	
<p>Signature and Date</p>	<p>NAME OF PARTICIPANT [Please Print]</p>	
	<p>SIGNATURE OF PARTICIPANT</p>	
	<p>DATE</p>	

Appendix H

Observation Protocol

Observation Notation	Notes
Location and setting of observation	
People present/involved at observation	
Key topics/issues brought up during observation	
Reaction of participants to key topic/issue	
Final outcome of topic/issue	
References to policy issues Policy design Policy tools Policy evaluation/compliance	
Description of state context factors State policies/processes State governance	
Description of organizational context factors Organizational governance Organizational culture Organizational values, norms External pressures	
References to key stakeholders Street-level administrators Mid-level administrators Faculty Student	
Other	

Appendix I

Post-Observation Follow-Up Questions

1. Was this event/meeting typical compared to your average event/meeting?
2. If not, please describe how it might have been different than a typical event/meeting.
3. If not, what do you think influenced this difference?

Appendix J

Recruitment Letter for Student Interviews

Dear Transfer Students:

I would like to let you know about a research study that may be of interest to you. As a current transfer student, you may be interested in participating.

Our study will explore the transfer experiences of transfer students at Excel University/Student-Centered University³⁸ who graduated a Maryland community college with an Associate of Arts in Teaching (A.A.T.). Specifically, I am interested in learning about the impact of your degree pathway on your transfer experience and transition to your university. Any current transfer students in an education degree program who have transferred at any time and graduated community college with an A.A.T. degree are eligible to participate. Interested students who are willing to participate in this study will participate in a one and a half focus group with other transfer students.

Participation in this study is entirely voluntary and students may terminate their participation at any time. If you are interested in participating and telling me your transfer story, please email me directly at caseyma@umd.edu.

I look forward to speaking with you. Please feel free to contact me with questions using the contact information provided below.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,
Casey Maliszewski

Casey Maliszewski, Principal Investigator
Doctoral Student, Higher Education Program
caseyma@umd.edu, 202-997-0789

³⁸ The recruitment letter contained the real name of each university.

Appendix K

IRB Consent Form for Student Interviews

Initials _____ Date _____

Project Title	Dissertation Study on Maryland’s Associate of Arts in Teaching
Purpose of the Study	This research is being conducted by Casey Maliszewski at the University of Maryland, College Park (UMCP). I am inviting you to participate in this research project because you are a transfer student with Associate of Arts in Teaching degree. The purpose of this research project is to better understand how universities implement the Associate of Arts in Teaching transfer articulation policy/degree pathway.
Procedures	<p>By participating in this research project, you will agree to participate in a one and a half focus group interview. You will be asked to respond to a series of questions about your experiences in navigating transfer as a community college student, how you first learned about the Associate of Arts in Teaching degree, and your experiences as a transfer student.</p> <p>By agreeing to participate in this study, you are also agreeing to allow the researcher to include data you provided through the participation interest form in analyses, which will be de-identified (i.e., not linked to any personally identifiable information) prior to analysis.</p>
Potential Risks and Discomforts	There may be some risks from participating in this research study. This may include some discomfort at recalling and sharing difficult experiences of your transfer experience. To mitigate these risks, the interviewer will remind you at the beginning of the interview that you may choose to not answer any questions that you do not feel comfortable answering and that you may stop the interview at any time.
Potential Benefits	There are no direct benefits from participating in this research. However, possible benefits include satisfaction by sharing your perspectives on this topic. I hope that, in the future, other people might benefit from this study through improved understanding of how students navigate transfer programs and policies.
Confidentiality	Any potential loss of confidentiality will be minimized by maintaining one copy of records electronically that are de-identified with no personally identifiable information, including any recordings, transcripts or notes from your focus group and

	<p>data from the participation interest form. In other words, the researchers will maintain any focus group transcripts and survey results by assigning an interview code that will be connected to demographic information only with no real name, birthdate, or real student ID.</p> <p>If we write a report or article about this research project, your identity will be protected to the maximum extent possible. Your information may be shared with representatives of the University of Maryland, College Park or governmental authorities if you or someone else is in danger or if we are required to do so by law.</p>
<p>Right to Withdraw and Questions</p>	<p>Your participation in this research is completely voluntary. You may choose not to take part at all. If you decide to participate in this research, you may stop participating at any time. If you decide not to participate in this study or if you stop participating at any time, you will not be penalized or lose any benefits to which you otherwise qualify.</p> <p>If you decide to stop taking part in the study, if you have questions, concerns, or complaints, or if you need to report an injury related to the research, please contact the investigator: Casey Maliszewski 202-997-0789, caseyma@umd.edu</p>
<p>Participant Rights</p>	<p>If you have questions about your rights as a research participant or wish to report a research-related injury, please contact:</p> <p>University of Maryland College Park Institutional Review Board Office 1204 Marie Mount Hall College Park, Maryland, 20742 E-mail: irb@umd.edu Telephone: 301-405-0678</p> <p>This research has been reviewed according to the University of Maryland, College Park IRB procedures for research involving human subjects.</p>
<p>Statement of Consent</p>	<p>Your signature indicates that you are at least 18 years of age; you have read this consent form or have had it read to you; your questions have been answered to your satisfaction and you voluntarily agree to participate in this research study. You will receive a copy of this signed consent form.</p>

	If you agree to participate, please sign your name below.	
Signature and Date	NAME OF PARTICIPANT [Please Print]	
	SIGNATURE OF PARTICIPANT	
	DATE	
Statement of Consent to Record	<p>Your signature indicates that you are at least 18 years of age; you have read this consent form or have had it read to you; your questions have been answered to your satisfaction and you voluntarily agree to have your focus group session audio recorded for this research study. You will receive a copy of this signed consent form.</p> <p>If you agree to be audio recorded, please sign your name below.</p>	
Signature and Date	NAME OF PARTICIPANT [Please Print]	
	SIGNATURE OF PARTICIPANT	
	DATE	

Appendix L

Student Interviews

Number	Pseudonym	Community College	A.A.T. Degree	Transfer Institution	Major	Pathway
S_001	Tanya	Rural Community College	A.A.T. in Early Childhood Education	Student-Centered University	Early Childhood Education	2.5 + 2
S_002	Jessica	Suburban Community College	A.A.T. Elementary/ Special Education	Student-Centered University	Elementary/ Special Education	4+2
S_003	Alexandra	Feeder Community College	No A.A.T.	Student-Centered University	Elementary/ Special Education	2.5+2.5
S_004	Linda	Feeder Community College	A.A.T. in Elementary Education	Student-Centered University	Elementary Education	3+2.5
S_005	Katie	Rural Community College	A.A.T. in Elementary Education	Excel University	Elementary Education	2+2
S_006	Amanda	Feeder Community College	A.A.T. in Secondary Education	Excel University	Middle School	3+2
S_007	Mya	Feeder Community College	A.A.T. in Early Childhood/Special Education	Excel University	Elementary Education	2.5+2

Appendix M

Student Interview Protocol

Pre-Interview Protocol

- Review consent information with the students:
 - “The purpose of this research project is to better understand how universities implement the Associate of Arts in Teaching transfer articulation policy/degree pathway. I am interested in speaking with you today because you are a transfer student with Associate of Arts in Teaching degree, and your perspective will offer key insight as to how students experience this pathway.
 - Your participation in this interview today is completely voluntary, and you can stop at any time.
 - If there are any questions you would rather not answer, just let me know, and we can skip those questions.
 - The information you provide in this interview will remain completely anonymous. In any write-ups of this information, your name will be changed and no personally identifiable information will be included.
 - With your permission, I would like to audio-record the interview today. This is only for note-taking purposes, so I can focus completely on speaking with you, rather than taking notes.”
- Ask if they have any questions.
- Have students sign the consent form.

First, we’re going to start by getting to know you and your background a bit better.

1. Tell me a little bit about your background and what led you to transfer to your university.
 - a. Why did you choose community college?
 - b. How did you find out about the A.A.T. degree? What made you decide to pursue the A.A.T. degree?
 - c. Why did you want to transfer? (probe: aligned to career? wanted degree?)
 - d. Why did you transfer to your university? (probe: why this university compared to other colleges?)

Now, we’re going to talk about your community college experiences.

2. While you were at community college, what did you expect your transfer experience at [name of university] would be like?

Next, we’re going to talk more about your experiences at UMCP/TU.

3. How did you feel when first transferring to this university? How did it compare with your expectations?
4. Did all of your courses transfer? If not, which courses did not transfer? If not, why do you think they did not transfer?
5. Have you experienced any other challenges in transferring credits?
6. Do you believe the A.A.T. degree pathway helped you as a transfer student? If so, how?

7. When you complete your degree, how many semesters will it have taken you in total?
8. Looking back at your experience thus far at [name of university], is there anything you wish you had done differently or wish you had known prior to transferring?
9. Do you have any recommendations for your community college or [name of university] in what they can do to better help students like yourself through the transfer process?

Conclusion.

10. That is all of the questions we had for today. Do you have anything else you'd like to add?

Appendix N

List of Documents

ID	Title of Document	State/University	Description
D_001	Maryland Code of Regulations (COMAR) Title 13B.02.03.24: Academic Regulations, Degree Programs	State	State regulations around the A.A.T. policy
D_002	Maryland Code of Regulations (COMAR) Title 13B.02.06: General Education and Transfer	State	State regulations around general education and the state's general transfer articulation policy
D_003	Associate of Arts in Teaching Oversight Council	State (University System of Maryland)	Description of the A.A.T. Oversight Council and its purpose
D_004	ARTSYS: The Articulation System for Maryland Colleges and Universities	State (University System of Maryland)	Online database system of transfer courses and degree pathways
D_005	Maryland Chief Academic Officer's A.A.T. page	State	Historical documentation that was produced during creation of A.A.T. pathways, including crosswalks and reports from disciplinary groups
D_006	A.A.T. Oversight Council Meeting Minutes	State	Meeting minutes of the A.A.T. council from 2008 to 2016
D_007	Excel University Mission Statement	Organizational	University's mission statement
D_008	Excel University Strategic Plan	Organizational	University's strategic plan updated 2015-2016
D_009	Excel University, College of Education Mission Statement	Organizational	College of Education's mission statement
D_010	Excel University, College of Education History & Timeline	Organizational	College of Education's history and timeline
D_011	Excel University, College of Education Fact Sheet	Organizational	College of Education's fact sheet

D_012	Excel University, College of Education Organizational Chart	Organizational	College of Education's organizational chart
D_013	Excel University, College of Education's Strategic Planning	Organizational	College of Education's 2009 Strategic Plan
D_014	Maryland Community College A.A.T. Transfer Requirements, Excel University	Organizational	Excel University document that describes requirements for A.A.T.
D_015	Student-Centered University's Mission Statement & Strategic Plan	Organizational	University's mission statement and strategic plan
D_016	Student-Centered University's Strategic Plan	Organizational	University's strategic plan updated 2015-2016
D_017	Student-Centered University, College of Education's Mission, Vision, & Goals	Organizational	College of Education's mission, vision, and goals
D_018	Student-Centered University's Transferring Credits	Organizational	University information page on transferring credits
D_019	Student-Centered University's Transfer Policies	Organizational	University information on transfer policies, including evaluation of credits
D_020	Student-Centered University's Community College Partnerships	Organizational	University information on community college partnerships developed throughout state
D_021	Student Guide to Transfer Among Maryland Colleges & Universities	State	State guide for students on how to navigate transfer within the state
D_022	Excel University Recruitment Handout	Organizational	"What Do Teachers from the Excel University Do?"
D_023	Excel University Recruitment Handout	Organizational	"Undergraduate Teaching Programs"
D_024	Excel University Recruitment Handout	Organizational	"Graduate Programs for Initial Teacher Certification"
D_025	Pre-Transfer Advising Program Sheet	Organizational	Description of Pre-Transfer Advising Program services at Excel University

D_026	Maryland Associate of Arts in Teaching (A.A.T.) Degree Quick Facts	State	Fact sheet with commonly asked questions about the A.A.T.
D_027	Student-Centered University Organizational Leader List	Organizational	Contact sheet for College of Education leaders
D_028	The New Student Guide	Organizational	New student guide from Student-Centered University
D_029	Student-Centered University Sheet on Eligibility Requirements to Apply for the ELED Major & Responsibilities	Organizational	Agreement for students to sign
D_030	Program Planning Sheet for A.A.T. at AACC in Elementary Education to BS in Elementary Education at Student-Centered University	Organizational	Provides information on students' course transferability
D_031	Student-Centered University, Elementary Education Major Program Checklist	Organizational	A program checklist
D_032	Excel University Elementary Education Academic Plan	Organizational	Academic coursework for Elementary Education
D_033	Excel University Sample Plan for Degree Completion for Elementary Education	Organizational	Sample academic plan for Elementary Education
D_034	Student-Centered University Marketing Piece	Organizational	Marketing piece for Student-Centered University
D_035	Excel University Sample Plan for Degree Completion for Secondary Education in English	Organizational	Sample academic plan for Secondary Education in English
D_036	Excel University Secondary English Education for A.A.T. Transfers	Organizational	Program checklist for A.A.T. transfers

D_037	Notes on Mock Transcript from Excel University advisor	Organizational	Notes on Mock Transcript from Excel University advisor
D_038	Your Guide to Transferring to Student-Centered University	Organizational	Transfer guide
D_039	Student-Centered University Curriculum – Transfer Students	Organizational	Description of core curriculum
D_040	Recommended Transfer Program Evaluation	Organizational	Recommended program for Integrated Elementary Education/Special Education
D_041	Recommended Transfer Program Evaluation	Organizational	Recommended program for Integrated Early Childhood/Special Education
D_042	Program Planning Sheet - A.A.T. in Elementary Education/Special Ed at MC, BS in Elementary Education at Student-Centered University – Page 1	Organizational	Provides information on students' course transferability
D_043	Program Planning Sheet - A.A.T. in Elementary Education/Special Ed at MC, BS in Elementary Education at Student-Centered University – Page 2	Organizational	Provides information on students' course transferability
D_044	2016-2017 Profile: University System of Maryland	State	Provides information on each institution in the state
D_045	Powering Maryland Forward: USM's 2020 Plan for More Degrees: A Stronger Innovation Economy, a Higher Quality of Life	State	USM's focused and substantive response to the education, economic and leadership challenges faced by our state and our nation. 10-year strategic plan.
D_046	Associate of Arts in Teaching - Charge to A.A.T. Recruitment Committee	State	Summary of committee charge

D_047	A.A.T. Review Committee, Early Childhood/Special Ed Sub-Committee Progress Report - May 2017	State	Summary of progress of sub-committee
D_048	A.A.T. Review Committee, Elementary Education/Special Ed Sub-Committee Progress Report - May 2017	State	Summary of progress of sub-committee
D_049	A.A.T. Oversight Council Membership	State	Summary of A.A.T. members
D_050	Maryland Commission on Innovation and Excellence in Education: Gap Analysis for Building Blocks 5, 6, and 8	State	Summary of Report
D_051	An Investigative Analysis of Community College Transcripts: What can we learn about Transfer Student from their transcripts?	State	USM research report on transfer credits
D_052	Student-Centered University: Elementary Education Has Programs for You!	Organizational	Promotional piece for elementary education programs
D_053	Student-Centered University: College of Education	Organizational	Promotional piece for College of Education
D_054	Student-Centered University: Middle School/Secondary Ed Information Packet	Organizational	Informational piece for Middle School and Secondary Ed Programs
D_055	An Overview of Accreditation of Higher Education in the US	Federal	An Overview of Accreditation in the U.S.
D_056	U.S. Department of Education Accreditation Policies	Federal	An Overview of Accreditation in the U.S.
D_057	Excel University 2016 Strategic Plan	Organizational	Strategic plan
D_058	Student-Centered University Strategic Plan	Organizational	Strategic plan

D_059	Maryland Community College Graduate Follow-Up Survey	State	Survey of community college graduate outcomes, including transfer of credits
D_060	Trends in Enrollment by Program: 2003-2016	State	Summary of degree program enrollments by college
D_061	Trends in Degrees and Certificates 2003-2016	State	Summary of degree program completions by college
D_062	Trends in Degrees and Certificates by Race and Gender 2003-2016	State	Summary of degree program completions by race and gender by college

Appendix O

Codebook for Data Analysis

Name	Description
Policy Dimension	
Policy design	Description of how the A.A.T. policy is designed.
Policy goals	Description of the goals of the A.A.T. policy and whether it's effective in achieving those goals.
Policy tools	Description of policy tools and mechanisms used in A.A.T. policy, including (but not limited to) mandate, systems change, incentive.
Policy implementation	Description of state system implementation processes.
Policy evaluation/ compliance	Description of any state system evaluation/compliance efforts that measure how/to what extent universities have implemented the A.A.T. policy.
Policy history	Description of the background or history of the A.A.T. policy.
Policy changes	Description of any iterations or changes to the A.A.T. policy over time.
Policy - other	Other details about A.A.T. policy.
Name	Description
Place Dimension	
State governance structure	Description of state governance structures.
State context	Description of state context, such as demographics.
State culture	Description of state culture, such as economic or political environment, attitudes of how state entities/actors work together, relationship between two-year and four-year colleges, attitudes toward transfer students.
State culture: Artifacts	Visible, feelable structures and products of the group, including observed behaviors and routines, documents
State culture: Espoused beliefs	Ideals, goals, values, aspirations; ideologies; or rationalizations.
State culture: Basic underlying assumptions	Unconscious, taken-for-granted beliefs and values.
State values/ priorities	Description of university values or organizational priorities.
State leader role	Mention of a state leader that had a role in development, implementation of A.A.T. policy.
State communication	Description of state system mechanisms for communicating A.A.T. policy information.
State v. org role	Description of the state or organizational role as a part of the whole system.
State decision-	Description of how decisions get made at the state.

making	
Org. governance structure	Description of university governance structures.
Org. culture	Description of university culture, such as attitudes of how offices/departments work together, relationships between offices/departments, attitudes toward transfer students.
Org culture: Artifacts	Visible, feelable structures and products of the group, including observed behaviors and routines, documents
Org culture: Espoused beliefs	Ideals, goals, values, aspirations; ideologies; or rationalizations.
Org culture: Basic underlying assumptions	Unconscious, taken-for-granted beliefs and values.
Org. leader role	Mention of a university leader that had a role in development, implementation of A.A.T. policy or has a continuing role in transfer issues.
Org. mission	Description of university or college mission.
Org. values/priorities	Description of university values or organizational priorities.
Org. decision-making	Description of how decisions get made at university or college.
Org. communication	Description of state system mechanisms for communicating A.A.T. policy information or policies overall.
External pressures	Description of external pressures as an influence on policies/implementation related to the A.A.T., which may include (but are not limited to) accreditation, state or federal funding, accountability, market structures (i.e., rankings, standings).
Name	Description
People Dimension	
Personal background	Description of participant's background.
Professional background	Description of participant's professional background.
Professional responsibilities	Description of participant's professional responsibilities.
Power dynamics: state v. org.	Description of power dynamics/relationship between state versus university.
Power dynamics: org.	Description of power dynamics/relationship among university administrators/faculty.
Interpretation of policy	Description of participant's interpretation of A.A.T. policy design.
Perception of policy goals	Description of participant's interpretation of A.A.T. policy goals and whether they are being achieved.
Perception of implementation role	Description of participant's interpretation of her/his role in A.A.T. policy implementation.

Perception of challenges	Description of participant's perception of challenges associated with A.A.T. policy.
Perception of successes	Description of participant's perception of benefits associated with A.A.T. policy.

Appendix P

Visual Diagram of Maryland Stakeholders

State Players	Higher Education Stakeholders	K-12 Stakeholders
Maryland Governor	Maryland Higher Education Commission	Maryland State Department of Education
Maryland General Assembly	University System of Maryland	Maryland State Board of Education
	Maryland Association of Community Colleges	

Associate of Arts in Teaching Oversight Council Members (as of October 2017)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Co-Chair, Four-Year University • Co-Chair, Community College • University System of Maryland (1, plus 3 supporting staff) • Maryland Higher Education Commission (1) • Maryland Association of Community Colleges (1) • Maryland Independent University & Colleges Association (1) • Maryland State Department of Education (1) • Public Four-Year University Representatives (5) • Private Four-Year University Representatives (2) • Community College Representatives (6)

Appendix Q

Implementation Roles at Study Sites

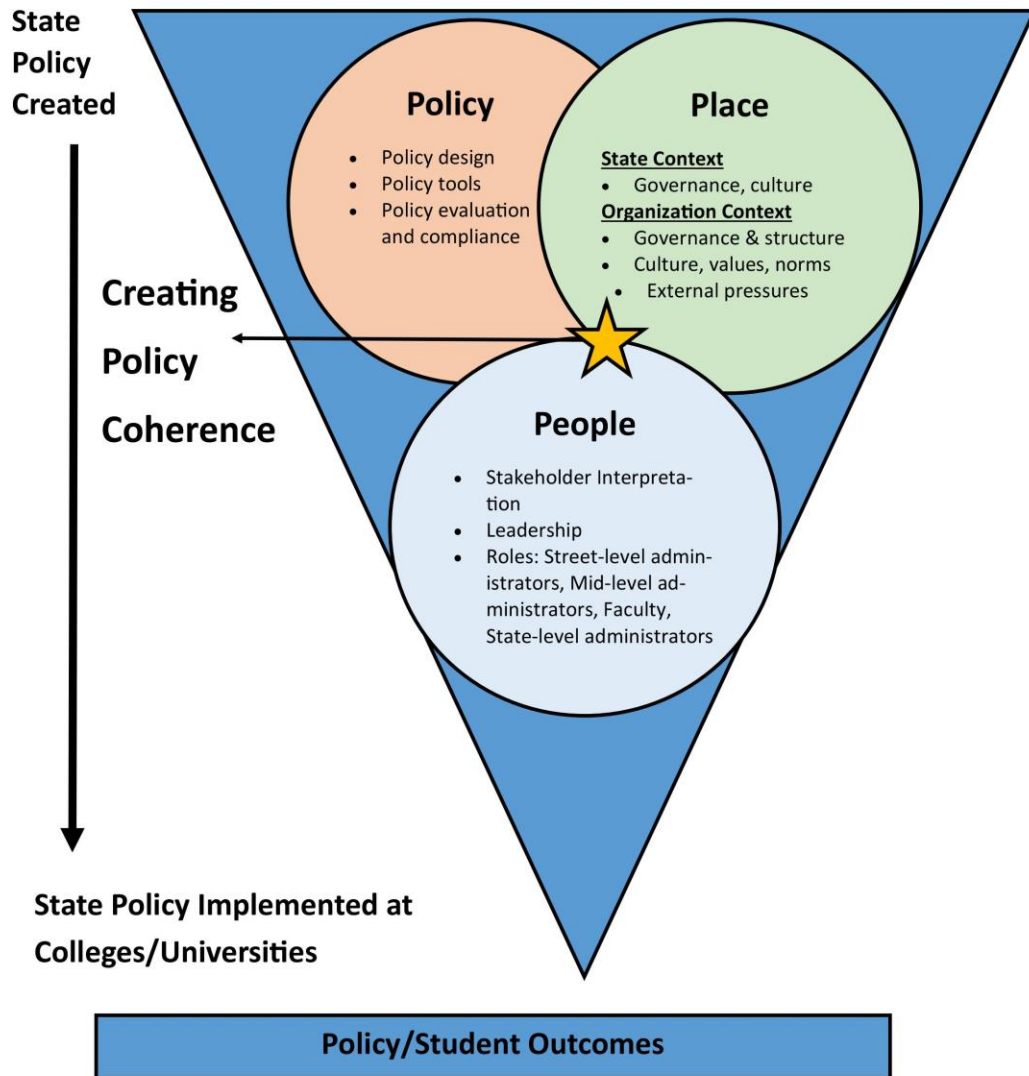
	Pre-Transfer Advising/ Communication with Community Colleges	Transfer Course Evaluation	Advising on Remaining Coursework	Articulation Agreements/ Discussions
Excel University	Advisors within central office	Advisors within central office	Advisors within central office	Administrators at College of Education
Student-Centered University	Admissions (sometimes faculty at branch campus locations)	Admissions (sometimes faculty at branch campus locations)	Faculty	Admissions & Administrators at College of Education (sometimes faculty at branch campus locations)

Appendix R

Revised Conceptual Framework

Framework for State Transfer Policy Implementation

“...whether or not a policy works is not an inherent property of the program or intervention itself. Rather, its outcomes depends on interactions between that **policy**, **people** who matter to its implementation, and conditions in the **places** in which people operate” (Honig, 2006a, p. 333).



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