Three Rivers Community College is expanding its educational offerings in two opposite directions this fall. TRCC will begin offering baccalaureate-level business courses at its Norwich campus through a new arrangement with Albertus Magnus College in New Haven. The agreement means that business students at the community college can continue and complete their studies toward a bachelor’s degree in business management while taking classes locally.

Officials from both colleges met July 16 to sign a formal “articulation” agreement, spelling out how credits from the community college associate’s degree program will transfer to Albertus Magnus. TRCC President Dr. Grace Jones called the new program “an excellent partnership [that] will enhance our students’ success and allow them to progress even further in their educational achievements.”

According to Irene Rios, director of AMC’s New Dimensions program for working professionals, all 63 credits in TRCC’s associate’s degree business program will transfer to the Albertus Magnus’ baccalaureate program. Students who are short on credits may fill in the gaps with courses in Norwich, which will save time, money and gas costs, she said.

The bachelor’s degree program will start up whenever there are at least 10 or 12 interested students, Rios said. As working adults, they will take one five- to six-week course at a time “in true lock-step fashion.” The single course will help students balance family and work responsibilities with school, but they will still be considered full-time students for financial aid purposes, she said. “Focusing on one course at a time is a godsend for them,” she said.
Rios said she was impressed at “how well the business program here articulates with our business management program. Norwich is a remote area, so we can bring education to the students here.” TRCC business graduates may also opt to transfer their credits directly to Albertus Magnus and complete their degree at the New Haven campus as traditional full-time resident students, she said.

Richard Bennett, the head of TRCC’s business department, said that the two institutions had discussed the plan for more than a year. “Part of the strategy of [Three Rivers] college is to open doors for people to get that degree that will improve their lives,” he said. TRCC business students would take foundational business courses and their core requirements, along with a few specialized courses, at the community college, he said, and their upper level business courses through Albertus Magnus.

Albertus Magnus President Dr. Julia McNamara said the program will function on a cohort model, in which students who start together form a unit and work in teams, as many businesses want people to work in teams. “In today’s world where money is very tight… these educational institutions of ours must really help our students become their best selves,” she said. AMC already has similar agreements with Asnuntuck Community College in Enfield and Housatonic Community College in Bridgeport, she said.

Also new this fall will be a two-year “middle college” program at Three Rivers. The program formalizes a long-standing offer of college courses to qualified local high school juniors and seniors by establishing space for them on campus. The middle college will kick off Aug. 27 with 30 11th-graders, said Jones. The students will attend the TRCC campus to complete their high school graduation requirements while simultaneously taking college-level courses. The program will help “get students onto that platform where they see themselves as college students,” she said. “We’re very excited about it.” The college has long-range plans to have a dedicated building for the Three Rivers Middle College program, said Jones.

Albertus Magnus College is a Catholic college, founded in New Haven in 1925, with a total enrollment of 2,000 students. It offers 50 traditional undergrad, accelerated undergrad, and graduate programs. Three Rivers was established with the 1992 merger of community and technical colleges in the five geographic areas of Connecticut. It boasts an enrollment of about 5,000 students each semester, along with 2,300 continuing education students.