



Western Interstate Commission for Higher Education

media release

WICHE Awarded Grant to Improve Transfer Process

Boulder, Colorado — The Western Interstate Commission for Higher Education (WICHE) has been awarded a \$550,000 grant from Carnegie Corporation of New York for a pilot project that will focus on the college transfer process. Inefficiencies in the transfer process can create major stumbling blocks for students trying to earn a degree. The Interstate Passport Initiative will attack the transfer problem at an interstate level, with the goal of improving graduation rates, shortening time to degree, and saving students money. Institutions in five Western states—California, Hawaii, North Dakota, Oregon, and Utah—will participate.

A large share of undergraduate students transfer between institutions—and fully 35 percent of those students head to out-of-state schools. While many states are working to improve the effectiveness of their transfer and articulation agreements, transfer students' time to bachelor's degree is still significantly longer than that of "native" students (those who've stayed at one institution): 5.6 years, on average, compared to 4.4 years. Today, for that extra 1.2 years of college, a student would pay over \$9,000, on average, for tuition and fees alone. They'd also pay a hefty "opportunity cost": delaying graduation and a move into the workforce means giving up months or years of salary while incurring debt. Tacking on an extra year-plus of college is simply too much for our current college student body—45 percent of whom are already working over 20 hours a week while in school and 23 percent of whom are raising children.

"Streamlining the transfer process has become essential," says WICHE President David Longacker. "Students who transfer from one institution to another often end up paying more and taking longer to earn their degree—and many fail to finish. At a time when our country and our states require a well-educated workforce in order to be as competitive as possible, we need to do all that we can to improve the transfer process for students."

The Interstate Passport Initiative will focus on forging general education core transfer agreements, based on Essential Learning Outcomes, between 28 institutions in the five partner states. Essential Learning Outcomes—a quartet of targets that a college curriculum should aim to foster in students in order to prepare them for work, life, and strong citizenship—were developed by the Association of American Colleges and Universities' Liberal Education and America's Promise, known as LEAP, and are already being adopted at a variety of institutions and some higher

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education systems. On a regional level, the initiative will introduce block transfer agreements for the general education core based on this outcomes work—a new transfer framework that could streamline pathways to graduation. The project will focus on the lower-division general education core, the common denominator among institutions—concentrating on it as a whole, not on individual courses—and will allow for a cross-border “match” of outcomes-integrated general education cores. The Interstate Passport Initiative will allow the Western states to work together to better serve the needs of their students and may provide a model for other regions, and ultimately the nation, to adopt.

About WICHE & Carnegie Corporation of New York

The **Western Interstate Commission for Higher Education** (www.wiche.edu) and its 15 member states work collaboratively to expand educational access and excellence for all citizens of the West. By promoting innovation, cooperation, resource sharing, and sound public policy among states and institutions, WICHE strengthens higher education’s contributions to the region’s social, economic, and civic life. Our programs—Student Exchange, the WICHE Cooperative for Educational Technologies (WCET), Policy Analysis and Research, and Mental Health—are working to find answers to some of the most critical questions facing higher education today. WICHE’s 15 member states include Alaska, Arizona, California, Colorado, Hawaii, Idaho, Montana, Nevada,

Carnegie Corporation of New York is a philanthropic foundation created by Andrew Carnegie in 1911 to do “real and permanent good in this world.” Current priorities in the foundation’s Urban and Higher Education program include upgrading the standards and assessments that guide student learning, improving teaching and ensuring that effective teachers are well deployed in our nation’s schools, and promoting innovative new school and system designs.

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