



media release

WICHE Launches New Block Transfer Framework

Boulder, CO – The Western Interstate Commission for Higher Education (WICHE) has just launched the Interstate Passport, a new block transfer framework based on learning outcomes, not courses and credits. Sixteen institutions in four states involved in the pilot project – Hawai'i, North Dakota, Oregon, and Utah – are signatories to the Interstate Passport Agreement. Other WICHE states and institutions can now apply for Passport status. The goal of the initiative is to create a more friction free pathway for students to transfer their general education or liberal arts core from institutions in one state to those in another. In recent years, after realizing that swirling was common, states have moved to provide uniform transfer opportunities within states. The Passport is designed to extend these strategies to the entire western region of states and beyond. The project is poised to address quality issues as well as to increase completion rates for the nation.

In this first phase of the Passport project, the Passport Transfer Block focuses on lower-division general education in three academic areas: oral communication, written communication, and quantitative literacy. Participating institutions have signed the Passport Agreement, warranting that their learning outcomes in these three areas are equivalent to and congruent with the Passport Learning Outcomes and Proficiency Criteria for Transfer.

In a collaborative and deliberative process, faculty members from both the two-year and four-year pilot institutions worked together to develop Passport Learning Outcomes, which articulate what a Passport student has learned in each content area. Faculty then developed a list of proficiency criteria that a Passport student would demonstrate as evidence of transfer-level proficiency for these outcomes. Passport institutions will track the subsequent academic progress of students who transfer with a Passport and share this information with relevant partner institutions, so each Passport institution has data to use in its continuous improvement process.

“The Passport focus on learning outcomes instead of courses and credit hours reflects the discourse among many higher education leaders and faculty that emphasizes the competencies and designated levels of proficiency expected of each student at distinct points in their education,” says Dr. Peter Quigley, Associate Vice President for Academic Affairs, University of Hawai'i System and Co-Chair of the Passport Initiative. “Outcomes based block transfer will a) open more doors for students to complete their education, b) clarify the substance of what a student has learned, c) as well as provide more certified confidence concerning the academic quality of a course or program.”

“In the new normal of American higher education, students are increasingly mobile, and efficiency in the delivery of high-quality education is imperative because of the limited resources available to those students and their institutions,” says WICHE President David Longanecker. “For these reasons we simply must streamline the transfer process for students. And we must do so in a way that ensures the quality and integrity of the degrees we ultimately provide. The Passport achieves this by guaranteeing both the value of the credits received and the competencies developed by students.”

Funded initially by a \$550,000 grant from the Carnegie Corporation of New York, the Interstate Passport was conceived by academic leaders in the WICHE region to address inefficiencies in the transfer process. Students enrolled in postsecondary institutions are increasingly mobile and seek programs and opportunities that best meet their academic and career aspirations. Based on a 2012 Signature Report on transfer and mobility by the National Student Clearinghouse, both nationally and in the WICHE region, about a third of students transfer, and about a quarter of transfer students cross state lines. The Interstate Passport – with the Passport Learning

Outcomes as a common currency – can ensure a seamless process for students wishing to transfer from one institution to another without having to repeat academic work on their pathway toward a certificate or degree. It has the potential to benefit a significant number of students and institutions in the region. The Passport transfer framework seeks to maintain academic quality while increasing graduation rates, shortening time to degree, and reducing costs for institutions, states, and taxpayers.

The Passport builds on the Essential Learning Outcomes (ELOs) for general education developed by the Association of American Colleges and Universities in its Liberal Education and America's Promise (LEAP) project. The next phase of the Passport project will develop outcomes and proficiency criteria for the other lower-division general education ELOs common to institutions in WICHE states: critical thinking, physical and natural sciences, humanities, and social and behavioral sciences. Institutions and students wishing to know more about the Passport can find information at www.wiche.edu/passport

Participating Passport Institutions

HAWAII

Leeward Community College
University of Hawai'i West Oahu

OREGON

Blue Mountain Community College
Eastern Oregon University

NORTH DAKOTA

Lake Region State College
North Dakota State College of Science
North Dakota State University
Valley City State University

UTAH

Dixie State University
Salt Lake Community College
Snow College
Southern Utah University
The University of Utah
Utah State University
Utah Valley University
Weber State University

About WICHE & Carnegie Corporation of New York

The **Western Interstate Commission for Higher Education** (WICHE, www.wiche.edu) and its 16 members 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 16 members include 15 Western states – Alaska, Arizona, California, Colorado, Hawai'i, Idaho, Montana, Nevada, New Mexico, North Dakota, Oregon, South Dakota, Utah, Washington, and Wyoming – and the U.S. Pacific territories and freely associated states (the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands is the first to participate).

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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