



# Call to Action:

## Join Us to Help Fix Transfer for Students Nationwide

*If ever there were a time to streamline transfer, this is it.*

*July 8, 2020*

As a result of the coronavirus' impact on higher education and the economy, thousands more students are expected to transfer or to stop or drop out in the next year and beyond. Many will be crossing state lines. They need our help and they need it now.

For years transfer has been a problem in this country, contributing to some of the historic equity gaps in higher education. Although there is more to learn about the extent of credit loss in transfer and the reasons for it, we do know that for many students this loss can be significant, costing them extra time and money that they cannot afford. This loss of credit disproportionately affects low-income, first-generation, and students of color who are more likely to enroll initially in less expensive community colleges, and military students who often transfer when reassigned. Some will persist, but many will drop out of the pipeline permanently. University students suffer too—nearly four out of ten transfer and their credits need to go with them.

In response to the pandemic, campuses have sent most students home, transitioned courses to online, changed grading and financial aid policies and so much more. It's imperative that we streamline the transfer process as the statistics, researchers, and higher education media have urged.

There is an existing, proven, faculty-driven and student-centered way to do this. The Interstate Passport Network, based at the Western Interstate Commission for Higher Education, is growing nationwide to enable block transfer of lower-division general education based on a set of learning outcomes rather than specific courses and credits. It focuses on students achieving outcomes regardless of the courses in which they learned them. Isn't what students know and can do what we really care about?

When students achieve these learning outcomes, they earn a Passport at their institution. If they transfer to another Network member institution, their lower-division general education requirements will be met, and they can advance in their studies.

Already 60 regionally accredited public and private non-profit institutions in 17 states have put Interstate Passport in place or are in the process of doing so. Their faculties have mapped the system's or institution's learning outcomes to the 63 Passport Learning Outcomes and determined that they are congruent with and cover the same range of learning. They have identified a Passport Block—a menu of courses (often the same as their Gen Ed program or

### KEY STATISTICS

- **38%** of the 2.8 million students entering in fall 2011 transferred at least once in six years<sup>1</sup>
- **27.2%** of the transfer population in the fall 2011 cohort crossed state lines<sup>2</sup>
- **43%** is average credit loss upon transfer<sup>3</sup>
- **48.5%** of Black and **51.4%** of Hispanic students first enrolled in a community college compared to **34.6%** of White and **34.2%** of Asian students<sup>4</sup>
- **80%** of community college students who transfer do so before earning a two-year degree<sup>5</sup>
- **3.48** is average GPA post-transfer for students transferring with a Passport vs. **2.93** for those transferring without<sup>6</sup>

with minor changes) by which a student can achieve the learning outcomes. Typically, students earn a Passport with 30-38 semester hours (45-54 quarter credits); they must achieve a minimum grade of “C” or its equivalent in every course counted toward a Passport. So far, 38,800 students have earned a Passport.

As a built-in quality assurance mechanism, Network member institutions agree to report privacy-protected student academic progress data to the National Student Clearinghouse at the end of each term so that Passport earners can be tracked at least two terms post-transfer. Early data is very encouraging. Passport earners have higher GPAs and take a heavier credit load than students transferring without a Passport. The GPA Passport advantage for low-income and Latino transfer students is even greater than for white and Asian transfer students. We are hopeful that we’ll see this same trend in other segments of the population as more schools come aboard and more data is collected.

We’ve learned from the coronavirus crisis that there are advantages of states and organizations working together. Interstate Passport provides states, systems, and institutions with a way to collaborate on a solution for transfer, while also incentivizing students to reach this milestone of general education completion whether they transfer or not. It also can provide a common foundational credential to use in the workforce if students have to stop out in these challenging times.

Becoming a member of the Interstate Passport Network is a win-win for states and institutions and their students. Let’s build this interstate highway together for our collective pool of students. They are hurting... they need us. We can do this together!

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Join the Interstate Passport Network today  
and help us fix transfer for students nationwide!

Contact: [interstatepassport@wiche.edu](mailto:interstatepassport@wiche.edu)

[interstatepassport.wiche.edu](http://interstatepassport.wiche.edu)

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## ENDNOTES

<sup>1</sup>Shapiro, D., Dundar, A., Huie, F., Wakhungu, P.K., Bhimdiwali, A., Nathan, A., & Youngsik, H. (2018, July). Transfer and Mobility: A National View of Student Movement in Postsecondary Institutions, Fall 2011 Cohort (Signature Report No. 15), p. 9. Herndon, VA: National Student Clearinghouse Research Center.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., Executive Summary.

<sup>3</sup>U.S. Government Accountability Office (2017). Students Need More Information to Help Reduce Challenges in Transferring College Credits, p. 2. Washington, DC: USGAO. (*\*The American Council on Education has a [study](#) underway to learn more about the extent of credit loss and reasons for it.*)

<sup>4</sup>Shapiro, et al., p. 7.

<sup>5</sup>Jenkins, D. and Fink, J. (2015). What We Know About Transfer, p. 1. New York: Community College Research Center, Teachers College, Columbia University.

<sup>6</sup>Western Interstate Commission for Higher Education (2019). Interstate Passport Annual Report, pp. 10-11. Boulder, CO: WICHE.