NATIONAL CALL TO ACTION TO ELIMINATE COLLEGE TRANSFER BARRIERS NOW
COVID-19 spurs need for immediate solutions to costly transfer inequities

July 8, 2020, Boulder, CO – If ever there were a time to simplify how students transfer between colleges, this is it. As a result of COVID-19, thousands upon thousands of students are expected to transfer to an institution closer to home, or to one that is more affordable during these harsh economic times.

But the barriers to college transfer – which disproportionately impact low-income students and students of color – have long been a source of frustration and criticism. And the COVID-19 crisis is resulting in a renewed sense of urgency to find a more efficient way to advance the access, completion, and equity issues surrounding college transfer.

A growing number of supporters at colleges, universities, and educational associations nationwide are calling for colleagues to step up now and change the transfer experience by articulating general education on the learning outcomes based model developed by Interstate Passport, a faculty-developed program founded at the Western Interstate Commission for Higher Education (WICHE).

“COVID-19 exacerbates the inequities and shines a bright light on health and economic disparities for the most vulnerable student populations, who were already under-resourced before the pandemic,” says Francisco Rodriguez, Chancellor of the Los Angeles Community College District. “The time to fix transfer is now.”
While there are multiple barriers in the transfer process, chief among them is the loss of credits, according to a 2017 report by the Government Accountability Office (GAO). On average, students who transfer lose a full semester of credits, which can translate to thousands of dollars in tuition and months of lost time and wages. It is an unnecessary financial burden added to the educational investment.

With 60 regionally accredited, public and private, non-profit institutions across 17 states already on board, IPN is essentially a transfer superhighway that facilitates block transfer of lower-division general education requirements based on learning outcomes rather than specific courses and credits. Students who achieve these outcomes earn a Passport that allows them to transfer to another in-network member institution with their general education requirements already met, facilitating degree completion and the ability for social and economic mobility.

“The pandemic has forced us to look at our systems and processes in higher education. In many cases, we’re starting from scratch to change the way we do business,” says Sam Gingerich, former Provost and Executive Vice Chancellor of the University of Alaska Anchorage. “In this light, Interstate Passport flips the traditional transfer paradigm, making the sending institution responsible for ensuring what a student knows and can do rather than the receiving institution making that determination,” says Gingerich. “Interstate Passport is a proven model that benefits students by streamlining the transfer process.”

Gingerich and Rodriguez are among a group of college and university leaders who are calling on their colleagues nationwide to step up and act on the issue today by supporting and adopting this sea change in transfer.

“We’re asking chancellors, presidents, and chief academic officers at community colleges, colleges and universities – public and private – to join the Interstate Passport Network today and make a difference for the thousands of students impacted by COVID-19,” says Rodriguez.

For more information on the IPN process, fact sheet, background, and video interviews, please visit interstatepassport.wiche.edu/changetransfer.

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INTERSTATE PASSPORT®

Interstate Passport is a program based at the Western Interstate Commission for Higher Education (WICHE) that enables block transfer of complete lower-division general education attainment based on a set of multistate faculty-developed learning outcomes instead of on specific courses and number of credits. After years of research and development, the Interstate Passport Network, whose members are two-year and four-year non-profit colleges and universities, was launched in July 2016. In its first three years of operation, members awarded 38,800 Passports to students. Current membership has grown to 60 institutions in 17 states. For more information please visit interstatepassport.wiche.edu.

WESTERN INTERSTATE COMMISSION FOR HIGHER EDUCATION (WICHE)

For more than 65 years, the Western Interstate Commission for Higher Education (WICHE) has been strengthening higher education, workforce development, and behavioral health throughout the region. As an interstate compact, WICHE partners with states, territories, and postsecondary institutions to share knowledge, create resources, and develop innovative solutions that address some of our society’s most pressing needs. From promoting high-quality, affordable postsecondary education to helping states get the most from their technology investments and addressing behavioral health challenges, WICHE improves lives across the West through innovation, cooperation, resource sharing, and sound public policy. For more information, visit wiche.edu.