



## **Interstate Passport®**

### **What It Is and How It Works**

Interstate Passport is a national program that facilitates block transfer of lower-division general education attainment based on student learning outcomes, rather than on specific courses and credits. The program contains 63 Passport Learning Outcomes (PLOs)—what a student knows and can do—across nine areas of learning. The PLOs were developed by faculty from institutions in seven WICHE states. Each learning outcome is supported by multiple examples of ways faculty teach and assess learning at the lower-division level. The program’s built-in quality assurance is based on students’ academic progress data.

The concept and design for Interstate Passport resulted in 2010 from discussions among chief academic leaders in the West seeking a solution for transfer students, who too often lose credits or are required to repeat courses, and thus spend additional money to complete their degrees. According to the National Student Clearinghouse, approximately 37 percent of today’s students transfer at least once. Of all students who earned a baccalaureate degree in 2013-14, 14.6 percent had prior enrollments in at least one other state or territory. Although many states have worked to improve the transfer process in-state, these efforts exclude our increasingly mobile and non-traditional population that transfers across state lines.

### **Benefits to Students and Institutions**

Once a student earns a Passport, she knows in advance of transferring to another participating institution—to which she has been accepted—that her lower-division general education requirements are met. She will avoid unnecessary repetition of learning already achieved, saving precious time and money, and streamlining her pathway to degree completion and finishing on time. For institutions, Interstate Passport provides a new tool for increased recruitment, persistence, and completion. There is institutional autonomy in determining what courses will be included in its Passport Block and how it will assess its students’ achievement of the learning outcomes. Faculty have the flexibility to make changes to their curriculum without triggering an articulation review provided they continue to address the learning outcomes.

### **Joining the Interstate Passport Network**

To be eligible for participation in the Interstate Passport Network (the Network), institutions must be regionally accredited, public or private, and not-for-profit. An institution’s faculty agrees that its learning outcomes are congruent with and cover the same range of learning as the PLOs and are acceptable as a basis for block transfer of lower-division general education requirements. They also construct the institution’s Passport Block, a list of courses or learning experiences by which its students can achieve the PLOs. Their Block may be identical to the institution’s general education program or a subset, depending on the extent to which the PLOs are addressed. Twenty-nine institutions in 11 states are currently members, and over 25,000 students earned Passports in Interstate Passport’s first two years of operations. For a list and to see examples of institution Passport blocks, go to <http://interstatepassport.wiche.edu/institute>.

To earn a Passport, a student must earn a minimum grade of “C” or its equivalent in all courses in which he enrolls in the institution’s Passport Block. The registrar notes the Passport achievement on the student’s transcript and reports it to the National Student Clearinghouse and recognizes incoming Passport students as having completed lower-division general education requirements. Each participating institution also reports academic progress data on incoming transfer students for at-least two terms after transfer. The Clearinghouse sorts the data and issues a report on the academic progress of their former students to the participating sending institutions for use in continuous improvements. NSC also sends a report of aggregate

data to the Passport Review Board, the Network policy-making body, for use in evaluating the overall program. Currently, the Network is offering a promotion for qualified institutions whereby they can join on a complimentary basis for five years.

### **Funding and Managing Interstate Passport**

Interstate Passport has been developed and rolled out in phases, with a total of \$7,256,436 in funding contributed by the Carnegie Corporation of New York, the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, Lumina Foundation, and a First in the World grant from the U.S. Department of Education. The program is managed by the Western Interstate Commission for Higher Education (WICHE), one of four regional compacts established by the U.S. Congress in the 1950s to facilitate the sharing of information and expertise in the higher education community.

### **More Information**

More information is available at <http://interstatepassport.wiche.edu/> or contact Anna Galas, program manager, at [agalas@wiche.edu](mailto:agalas@wiche.edu).