



COLORADO

Department of Higher Education

Legislative Fact Sheet
March 2023

HB23-1262 Expanding Student Eligibility for the CORE Initiative

This bill is a technical adjustment to a current program at the Colorado Department of Higher Education (CDHE) that would increase the number of Coloradans eligible for retroactive associate degree awards.

Background

In 2021, the Colorado General Assembly created an innovative program called the Colorado Re-Engaged (CORE) Initiative. CORE enables four-year institutions in Colorado to award an earned associate degree to eligible students who have stopped-out from a baccalaureate program after earning at least 70 credit hours. In enacting the supporting legislation, the Colorado Legislature recognized that the COVID-19 pandemic forced many students – particularly those from low-income communities – to stop attending the state’s colleges and universities before attaining a bachelor’s degree. These stop-out students have invested a significant amount of time and money to advance their knowledge and skills through higher education, but do not have an academic credential to reflect this investment.

As established, statute excludes all students who were previously "direct transfers" from a community college to a 4-year institution from CORE eligibility. An individual who earned fewer than 15 credits at a community college before transferring to a 4-year institution is ineligible for the CORE program. By clarifying the definition of "direct transfer", this proposed bill will make students who earned **less than 15** credits at a community college prior to transferring to a 4-year institution eligible for the CORE Initiative if they meet all other CORE eligibility requirements. Individuals who earned **15 or more** credits at a community college before transferring to a 4-year institution would remain ineligible for the CORE Initiative – but could be eligible to receive an associate degree under Colorado’s existing Reverse Transfer program.

Participating four-year institutions (as of March 2023):

Colorado State University - Fort Collins
Colorado State University – Pueblo
Fort Lewis College
Metropolitan State University of Denver

University of Colorado – Denver
University of Colorado - Colorado Springs
University of Northern Colorado



Over 6,000 students are currently ineligible for a new state program that allows individuals to obtain a credential to increase their earning potential.



The Department proposes to amend the establishing statute of the CORE Initiative to make students who earned less than 15 credits at a community college prior to transferring to a 4-year institution eligible for an associate degree.



This will enable many students to receive a credential to increase their earning power and get them back on track to finish their bachelor’s degree.

A CDHE data query estimates over 24,000 former students from the last ten academic years are potentially eligible for an associate degree under CORE. The same query estimates an additional 6,300 former students could be eligible if this proposed bill is enacted. With this change, several hundred additional students would also become eligible for CORE each year the program is operational.

For More Information

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Colorado Department of Higher Education <https://highered.colorado.gov/>

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