

Simplicity, Transparency, Equity, Portability: SB24-164 and the Long Game on Student Transfer

Colorado Commission on Higher Education

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How We Got Here



Transfer – and student mobility more generally – is a perennial concern of policymakers, families, and the general public (~25 years of legislation from HB01-1263/1298 through SB24-164)



Success in transfer includes responsibilities of systems, institutions, and students



While Colorado has been recognized nationally as a leader in system-level approaches to transfer, it's clear that more work is to be done (including a legislative audit to take place in 2024)

Education Commission of the States:

50-State Comparison on Transfer and Articulation Policies (2022)

Colorado is one of 8 states identified as having all of four key policies in place to support transfer student success:

- 1) Common course numbering
- 2) Transferable core of lower-division courses
- 3) Guaranteed transfer of an associate degree
- 4) Reverse transfer (and now the Colorado Re-Engaged Initiative, or CORE)

Other states with all four elements:
FL, KS, LA, MO, NV, OR, TN

HCM Strategists
and the
Tackling Transfer
Collaborative:
The State of State
Transfer Policy
(2021)

Colorado is in the second quintile of states with policies and practices in place to support transfer student success:

- 5/5 on Student Pathways and Credit Applicability
- 0/3 on Student Supports, including advising (few states earned more than 1 point)
- 4/6 on Institutional Collaboration and Implementation
- Gaps Identified:
 - Targeted advising and financial aid
 - Competency-based education and course equivalencies
 - Funding formula incentives

Recent CCHE/CDHE Efforts to Address the System Role in Transfer



SHEEO/Gardner Institute Transfer Policy Taskforce (four-state initiative address system-level barriers to transfer student success: 2021-23)



CCHE Transfer Taskforce (paused Fall 2023)



SIPA GovGrants Program (State Internet Portal Agency) – exploration of technology-based solutions addressing the “information program” in student transfer



Falling through the cracks...

Remember
this logo?



Principles Guiding Transfer Policy:

Simplicity
Transparency
Portability





- **SIMPLICITY:** Agreements should be clear and easy to understand for students, families, faculty, and other institutional stakeholders, with minimal “ifs, ands, and buts”
- **TRANSPARENCY:** Agreements should include all relevant information about the program and pathway, and not rely on students to possess or obtain “insider” information
- **PORTABILITY:** Students should have maximum opportunity to transfer to any institution that is part of the agreement

Simplicity
Transparency
Equity
Portability





(Credit: Wikipedia)



What a Long Strange Trip It's Been

- ▶ 2001: Creation of the original Student Bill of Rights (23-1-125) and the statewide general education transfer core, now known as GT Pathways (23-1-108.5)
- ▶ 2010: Creation of Statewide Transfer Agreements from two-year to four-year programs (23-1-108.7);
- ▶ 2014: Colorado Reverse Transfer (23-1-131)
- ▶ 2017: Credit for military education and training, codification of transfer from AP, IB, CLEP (23-5-145)
- ▶ 2020: Credit for work related experience (23-1-145.5)
- ▶ 2021: Colorado Re-Engaged Initiative (23-1-131.5)
- ▶ 2024: SB24-164: IHE Transparency Requirements (various)

Never Gonna Give (You) Up



SHEEO/Gardner Institute Transfer Policy Taskforce (four-state initiative address system-level barriers to transfer student success: 2021-23)



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SHEEO/Gardner Transfer Policy Taskforce (2021-23)



Recommendation 1: Adopt a more clearly defined transfer philosophy/rationale statement with principles grounded in equity, stating clear state priorities, which is grounded in data and widely communicated.



Recommendation 2: Improve the transparency of how transfer credits are evaluated, including the decision-making process by institutions and the rationale for outcomes.



Recommendation 3: Develop a uniform process for identifying students intending to transfer at the point of admission, periodically assess interest in transfer among students, and develop a process to track the success of transfer students as they progress.

SB24-164: Institution of Higher Education Transparency Requirements

Sponsors:

- Sen. Janet Buckner
- Sen. Paul Lundeen
- Rep. Julie McCluskie
- Rep. Rose Pugliese

SB24-164 Modifies the Student Bill of Rights for the First Time Since 2001

Adds the following to the Student Bill of Rights in 23-1-125:

- Transparency of cost of postsecondary education programs;
- Seamless transfer of guarantee transfer pathway matrix courses;
- Timely and transparent response on requests for transfer credit;
- The right to appeal an institution's decision on transfer courses; and
- The right to know about credit for work-related experience per HB20-1002

Key Elements / Mandated Actions

- Expand the General Education Council to include one representative from each of the 31 public institutions of higher education (12/31/24)
- Identify high volume courses that are problematic in transfer and FIX IT (10/1/25 then annually)
- If a guaranteed transfer pathway course is identical to a course that is required for a major, the course must be applied toward the major

Key Elements / Mandated Actions

- Notify students of decisions on transfer credit within 30 days of a commitment to enroll (including which, how, and why not) AND re-evaluate transfer credit when a student changes majors
- Requires an appeals process for transfer decisions at each IHE
- Create an appeals process at CDHE specifically related to guaranteed transfer pathways matrix courses with statutory enforcement action
- Requires IHE reporting on transfer student data for SMART Act presentation (starting in 2026)

Commission Responsibilities

By April 1, 2025, to develop policies for public institutions “on how to best implement the right” added as §23-1-125(1)(i), specifically:

- “...the right to seamless transfer of guaranteed transfer courses;
 - transparency in the process for transferring credits;
 - a timely response on applications for transferring credits; and
- transparency in how and why a credit is accepted or rejected by an institution and how and why a credit is or is not applied toward degree requirements”

Department Responsibilities

- By December 31, 2024, in collaboration with IHEs, expand the General Education Council to include representatives of each of the 31 institutions
- By October 1, 2025 (and annually thereafter), in collaboration with the GE Council, review the list of courses in the guaranteed transfer matrix and recommend changes to the Commission as needed to improve transferability
- Develop a process, and promulgate associated rules, for students to appeal an IHE's decision regarding credit award for guaranteed transfer courses.
- Annually beginning in January 2026, assemble data from institutions on transfer activity for SMART Act reporting as outlined in §23-1-108(6.5)

Additional Policies and Rules

- Credits earned by students in the guaranteed transfer pathway matrix are applicable to the student's declared major or program requirements, or to fulfill any remaining general elective course requirements.
- If a student changes academic majors or program of study, the application of transfer credits to the student's new program must be re-evaluated.
- Guaranteed transfer courses must qualify as the same course in transfer irrespective of the number of credits assigned to the course at each IHE.

Additional Policies and Rules

- Course transfer guarantees apply regardless of whether a student earns an associate degree prior to transfer.
- Institutions shall publish their process for reviewing transfer credit requests on their website, and that the website must be updated within 30 days of any changes made to said process.

Community College System Perspectives

Implementation in Progress

- Listening sessions with stakeholder groups:
 - Academic Council, GE Council, Registrars, Admissions, Data Advisory Group (Institutional Research Officers), Advisors
- Discussions with CCCS Leadership on GE Council expansion and availability of course-taking data
- Survey of IHE questions and requests for clarification; future consultation with Office of the Attorney General
- GE Council fall retreat
- Cross-functional advisory committee (academic affairs, registrars, institutional research, students)

Questions to be Addressed (What's Going On?)

- How will “problematic courses” be identified?
 - CCCS course completion data
 - Potential survey of registrars
 - Potential survey of transfer students
 - Insights from legislative audit?
- How will additional GE Council members be identified?
- What will the student complaint/appeals process look like?
- How will the Commission approach its policymaking role?

Contact Info

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Thank You!

SB24-164

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