States Respond to Increasing Student Mobility in Higher Education

DENVER – A third of college students will transfer at some point in their pursuit of higher education, an increasing mobility that has state lawmakers scrambling to improve the ease of student transfers.

An analysis by the Education Commission of the States found lawmakers are replacing fragmented campus-level procedures with statewide transfer policies intended to be more uniform and efficient.

Among the highlights of the report Students on the Move: How States are Responding to Increasing Mobility among Postsecondary Students and 50-state database released today:

*National overview*

- 37 states have policies guaranteeing the transfer of associate degrees from one in-state public higher education institution to another.
- 35 states similarly guarantee the transfer of general education or lower-division core classes from one in-state public campus to another.
- 16 states have consistent policies for rewarding credit through tests or other academic evidence, typically known as “credit by assessment.”
- 15 states have policies to ensure that a uniform system for numbering courses is used across public higher education institutions.

*State examples*

- **Florida, Louisiana** and **West Virginia** are highlighted as states adopting, or seeking to adopt, innovative approaches in their transfer policies.
- Louisiana, for example, has adopted a comprehensive student transfer bill that includes a common college transcript to establish consistency across institutions and guaranteed articulation of certain career and technical education programs.

Maria Millard, the ECS policy analyst who authored the report, said transfer policy is particularly critical for non-traditional and lower-income students, many of whom begin their postsecondary careers in community colleges.

“The research tells us that community college students who have all or almost all of their credits transferred are much more likely to graduate,” she said. “In the modern postsecondary environment, transfer policies are more important than ever.”

The issue has drawn national attention. U.S. Rep. George Miller, D-California, has introduced a bill, the Transferring Credits for College Completion Act of 2014, that would require all public institutions to pass policies such as common course-numbering and guaranteed transfer of associate degrees.

*The Education Commission of the States was created by states, for states, in 1965. We track policy, translate research, provide unbiased advice and create opportunities for state policymakers to learn from one another.*