



CREDIT TRANSFER AT INSTITUTIONS OF HIGHER EDUCATION

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Approximately one-third of new students entering Colorado’s public four-year institutions of higher education are transfer students from another school. This *issue brief* provides an overview of credit transfers between public institutions of higher education in Colorado, including the guaranteed transfer pathways (gtPathways) program, statewide transfer articulation agreements, and other options available to students.

Student Transfers

In the 2014-15 academic year, 22,759 students transferred into four-year schools in Colorado. As shown in Table 1, approximately 45 percent of those students transferred from other public schools within the state. Many students complete general education requirements or an associate’s degree at a two-year school and transfer to a four-year school to complete a bachelor’s degree.

Table 1. Transfers to Four-Year Schools*

Transfers from:	Transfers to Four-Year Schools	
In-state two-year public and vocational schools	6,277	27.7%
In-state four-year public schools	4,001	17.6%
Colorado private non-profit (e.g. University of Denver)	344	1.5%
Colorado private for-profit (e.g. Colorado Technical University)	186	0.8%
Out-of-state or other institutions	11,951	52.3%
Total	22,759	100%

Source: Joint Budget Committee

Policy Oversight

Colorado Commission on Higher Education (CCHE). The CCHE, in tandem with the Department of Higher Education, is charged with coordinating state policies related to higher education. The CCHE reviews and approves recommendations concerning credit transfer made by the Council of Higher Education Representatives.

Council of Higher Education Representatives. The council (also referred to as the General Education Council) maintains a statewide numbering system for general education courses. These courses automatically transfer between schools through the gtPathways program. The council makes recommendations to the CCHE regarding the approval of statewide transfer articulation agreements, gtPathways courses, and annual updates to common course numbering.

gtPathways

Core courses that meet general education requirements in writing, math, social sciences, and natural and physical sciences may be designated as a gtPathways course. These courses are guaranteed to transfer among all Colorado public institutions of higher education and apply to general education requirements for most degrees. Students must obtain a grade of a C- or higher to guarantee transfer. Approximately 1,300 courses have been designated as gtPathways courses to date; however gtPathways courses may not apply to

some degrees, such as certain engineering, computer science, and nursing degrees. Advisers are available at each school to help students understand which credits will transfer and apply to degree requirements.

Statewide Transfer Articulation Agreements

Statewide transfer articulation agreements between schools in Colorado allow students who complete specified 60-credit hour associate's degrees to enroll as a junior at four-year institutions with no more than 60 credit hours remaining for a bachelor's degree. The associate's degree specified by an agreement is referred to as a "degree with designation" and the agreement lists the courses that must be completed to receive the degree with designation.

A school that accepts a transfer student with an associate's degree with designation may not require that the student complete additional lower-division general education courses, unless the courses are necessary to complete the specific degree requirements and do not extend the time to degree completion. Transfer students cannot be required to complete more credit hours than are required of non-transfer students, and course credit earned within the ten years prior to the transfer must apply to the completion of graduation requirements.

There are currently 44 agreements in place covering 36 degrees. While all schools are part of at least one agreement, not all agreements apply to all schools. In the 2014-15 academic year, 734 students completed a degree with designation at a two-year school, of whom 443 enrolled at a four-year school the following year and 42 completed a bachelor's degree.

Guaranteed admission. Completion of an associate's degree with designation does not *currently* guarantee a student admission to a four-year institution. However, beginning in the fall of 2019, students who have completed an associate's degree from a public two-year school in Colorado and meet certain grade and GPA standards will be guaranteed admission to all Colorado four-year schools with the exception of the Colorado School of Mines. Qualified students are not guaranteed

enrollment in a specific degree program and may be denied acceptance based on past criminal or disciplinary action.

Additional Transfer Options

Additional state provisions and programs related to credit transfer are discussed below.

Student's bill of rights. State law provides a student's bill of rights. Those rights include the right to clear and concise information concerning which courses must be completed to satisfy degree requirements and which courses are transferable to the state's two-year and four-year schools. Students have the right for credit for core courses to be transferrable and for course credit to not expire until ten years from the date of initial enrollment.

Institutional transfer guides. Transfer guides allow students who complete an associate's degree with a grade of C- or better in all courses to be granted junior status if admitted to a four-year school, and have at least 60 credits applied to a bachelor's degree. Unlike degrees for which there are articulation agreements, not all degrees for which there are transfer guides can be completed with 60 additional credits. Transfer guides are available for all public four-year schools in Colorado.

Reverse transfer. Reverse transfer, or "degree within reach" allows students who have some college credit, but have not completed a degree, to be eligible for an associate's degree if certain criteria are met.

Credit from area technical colleges. Credit for career and technical education courses earned at an area technical college applies in full at another area technical college or to a certificate or degree program at a two-year school. Credit may be transferable to four-year schools based on statewide transfer articulation agreements.

Exam credit. CCHE has adopted minimum Advanced Placement and International Baccalaureate exam scores required to receive credit at each institution. Credit is guaranteed to transfer to other schools, but is not guaranteed to apply to degree requirements.