



EDUCATE TEXAS
of COMMUNITIES FOUNDATION of TEXAS

The NEW PATH to COLLEGE

WHY SEAMLESS CREDIT TRANSFER is CRITICAL to AFFORDABILITY



STUDENTS FACE a TANGLED PATH TOWARD a COLLEGE DEGREE

The college experience has changed dramatically over the last few decades as students face greater challenges to access and affordability, especially the rising cost of tuition. Increasingly, community colleges are the gateway to higher education. Many students are taking advantage of dual-credit opportunities and turning to two-year colleges to “get the basics out of the way” at a lower cost.

In fact, 80 percent of Texas students classified as freshmen attend two-year colleges.⁵ Yet when they attempt to transfer college credits from community colleges to four-year universities, including those earned in high school for dual credit courses, it’s neither simple nor seamless. Cost savings disappear as credits that do not transfer to the student’s chosen college or degree plan are lost. In total, the cost of excess credits to Texas taxpayers and students is \$120 million annually.²

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WHY AFFORDABILITY ISN'T JUST ABOUT LIMITING TUITION INCREASES

Over the past decade, public university tuition has risen at a greater rate than inflation.⁴ In Texas, the average graduate with a bachelor’s degree incurs \$30,516 in debt.¹ Policies that limit increases in tuition are a typical answer, but only address part of the problem. If students take courses that don’t transfer or apply to their degree, the cost of college also increases. Paying for an extra year of college and forgoing wages that would otherwise be earned benefits no one.

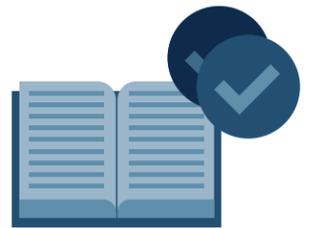
THERE is NO SUCH THING as “THE BASICS”

Texas students do not have a clear or reliable way to know what courses are required for each degree at each college when they’re transferring from one to another. No standardization of credits exists, so referring to any set of courses as “the basics” is misleading—even courses known as “core requirements” do not transfer seamlessly across all majors and institutions.

WHY CAN'T STUDENTS JUST WORK THEIR WAY THROUGH COLLEGE?

60+

The number of hours a student taking an average course load would have to work weekly at minimum wage to afford college.⁶



IT'S TIME to PUT a ROADMAP in PLACE

The Texas Student Success Council (TSSC), convened by Educate Texas, works to identify barriers to higher education access and achievement for students. The council has developed policy recommendations directed at streamlining the credit transfer process and creating transparency for students.

Recommendations

1. School districts, community colleges and universities should share data amongst each other, regionally sequence and map endorsements to degree plans for all students, and provide these maps publicly to students and families.
2. For the top 25 programs into which students are transferring, require universities to identify lower-division courses that apply to that program, the courses that also count for core requirements, and any additional lower division requirements for that program.

The time is now to adjust Texas’ policy framework to reflect the needs and educational journeys of today’s student population—the majority of whom are attending more than one institution—to ensure that students can affordably earn the degrees they need to compete in today’s economy. You can find complete policy briefs from the TSSC at edtx.org/tssc.

WHY a CLEAR PATH THROUGH HIGHER EDUCATION is a MUST

By 2030, approximately 60% of Texans 25–34 will need a higher education credential to be economically competitive.⁷ The potential for individual economic mobility, as well as the broader ability for Texas’ economy to remain robust, is highly dependent on students earning a college degree or technical credential.

In this light, we must recognize that the new path to higher education begins with earning credits earlier and includes more institutions. This means that the seamless transfer of credits is essential to reducing the hidden costs of college for students striving to achieve the credentials necessary to succeed in their future careers.



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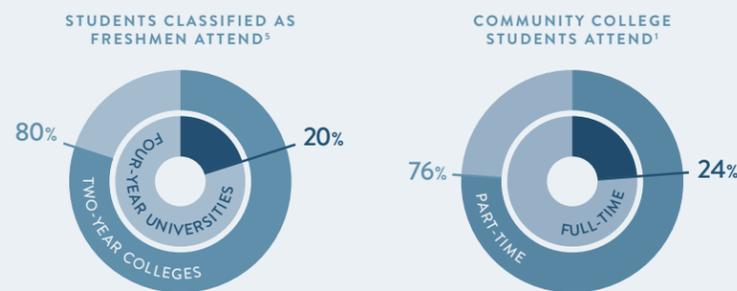
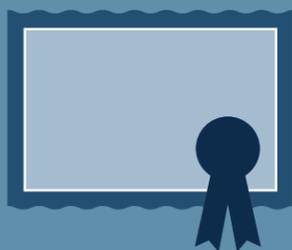
\$120M

is the annual cost of excess credits to Texas taxpayers and students.²

The HIGHER EDUCATION SYSTEM is MISALIGNED with STUDENTS’ COLLEGE PURSUITS TODAY

Simply put, Texas’ higher education system and policies are not in step with the way students approach college today, which has an unseen impact on what it costs to earn a degree. More than any state in the nation, Texas graduates rely on community colleges as part of their bachelor’s degree journey.⁸ Creating a clear path for transferring credits among schools is essential to keeping Texas students on track to afford and earn the college degree they need to be competitive in the 21st-century marketplace.

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Educate Texas, a catalyst for large-scale educational systems change, has partnered with public and private entities for more than a decade to achieve the goal of improving the public and higher education systems in Texas so that every student is prepared for success in school, in the workforce and in life. As a trusted thought partner and resource, both to state policymakers and educational leaders, Educate Texas works to drive conversations and effect change in various college and career readiness, higher education program and policy areas. Additionally, Educate Texas serves as the convener of statewide groups that bring together diverse stakeholders to build awareness and dialogue about the strengths and challenges for key statewide impact areas.

