

Council on Postsecondary Education
September 28, 2008

Transfer Policy Brief

In October 2007, the Council on Postsecondary Education published *Double the Numbers: Kentucky's Plan to Increase College Graduates*. The plan projects Kentucky will need 800,000 adults with at least a bachelor's degree in the year 2020 to reach the national average in educational attainment, as mandated by the *Kentucky Postsecondary Education Improvement Act of 1997* (HB 1). The plan establishes five essential strategies for ramping up degree production, which includes enrolling more first-time students in the Kentucky Community and Technical College System and transferring them to a four-year program. The Council has developed a policy brief focusing on two- to four-year transfer. The purpose of this policy brief is to provide a snapshot of current statewide transfer initiatives, transfer data analysis, barriers to transfer, and strategies that will produce the dramatic increases in transfer required to meet the Double the Numbers goal of 11,300 transfers in 2020.

Policy Brief Highlights and Next Steps

Motivate more KCTCS students to attain a bachelor's degree. A statewide outreach campaign is underway to inform KCTCS students of the long-term financial and personal benefits of attaining a bachelor's degree. KnowHow2GOKy.org includes a new transfer student handbook in print and online formats. The Council is working with institutions to target areas of interest to transfer students such as business, education, and STEM fields.

Improve advising services. The new Kentucky Academic Advising Association is a professional network for institutional academic advisors focused on expanding transfer advising. An online transfer course equivalency system, redLanternU.select, that informs advisors and students of what credits will and will not transfer, is being expanded beyond its current 12,000 student accounts. The Council promotes joint admission and joint enrollment policies that allow students to be simultaneously admitted to a university and KCTCS and enroll in courses that count toward both associate and bachelor's degrees. The Kentucky Association of Collegiate Registrars and Admissions Officers (KACRAO) is piloting electronic transcript exchange between KCTCS and four-year institutions to support transfer.

Remove financial barriers for part-time and full-time students. While all public institutions have transfer scholarships, the requirements and amounts vary and the funds available are comparatively small. A statewide financial aid program for transfer students is needed. State and institutional aid must be restructured and expanded to increase access to current programs and create new assistance with relocation, housing, childcare expenses, and transportation costs.

Create more flexible and convenient modes of learning. Online bachelor's degrees provide an alternative learning format for transfers to complete a four-year degree. The Kentucky Virtual Campus offers a comprehensive list of associate degrees that transfer completely to online bachelor's degree programs for students who have work and personal obligations. The Council will work with institutions to make academic support services such as advising, registration, billing, parking, and library access more convenient for students.

Create more transfer pathways between technical and applied four-year programs. Kentucky's Applied Associate Degree Transfer Policy (2002) guarantees that the general education courses taken as part of an AAS degree program will transfer and count toward the lower-division general education requirements at public universities. The Council required all public universities to develop a completer degree in 2004 which allows students with any associate degree to complete a bachelor's degree within approximately the normal hours required for a bachelor's degree. In addition, career pathway advising guides are being developed in technical fields to identify seamless pathways for students to obtain a bachelor's degree. The Council will work with the institutions to increase the number and use of these tools.

Improve the understanding and application of the General Education Transfer Policy. The statewide General Education Transfer Policy guarantees that general education coursework will transfer between public postsecondary institutions. Despite the fact that data show that Kentucky's public universities accept the vast majority (90 to 93 percent) of transfer credits from KCTCS transfer students, too many individual incidents of noncompliance with state transfer policies occur among Kentucky's public postsecondary institutions. The Council will establish a Transfer Rights and Responsibilities policy including a state-level appeals process and conduct annual workshops for key institutional transfer personnel to ensure consistent application of the General Education Transfer Policy at all public institutions.

Increase accountability. The Kentucky Transfer Feedback Report provides annual data critical to evaluating whether or not institutions are meeting the key indicators for transfer improvement in the state accountability system. However, in preparing the policy brief it became clear that the Council needs to collect more transfer data. For example, efforts should be made to account for students who transfer to out-of-state and proprietary institutions while continuing to live or work in Kentucky. In addition, the Council will conduct a follow-up survey to identify actual barriers for students who transferred from KCTCS but have not yet completed a bachelor's degree at a Kentucky public four-year institution.

Create an alternative pathway to course-based transfer. Several states have created a competency-based system that allows students to acquire credits toward a degree by directly demonstrating required competencies rather than completing courses covering material they have already mastered through training, work, and life experiences. Through standardized credit for prior learning assessments, the Council will work toward development of a competency-based approach to transfer as an alternative to the current course-based system.