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Fewer spots in public baccalaureates for increasing numbers of transfer students

OLYMPIA – A new *Transfer Report 2011* by the Higher Education Coordinating Board shows the number of students transferring from two- to four-year colleges and universities in Washington is increasing, with the greatest percentage increase occurring among students transferring to the state's independent baccalaureate institutions.

Prepared by the HECB's Division of Policy, Planning and Research, the report notes that while the overall number of students transferring rose 13 percent (16,768 to 18,946 students) between 2005-06 and 2009-10, the state faces a challenge in finding enough seats for its growing transfer population in its over-burdened public, baccalaureate sector.

During the five-year period ending in summer 2010, the number of students transferring from community and technical colleges to public baccalaureate institutions increased only 1.3 percent, while the number of students transferring to private baccalaureates increased 36.9 percent.

It is important to note the state's public baccalaureate institutions continue to educate the majority of transfer students (69 percent in 2009-10). However, budget cuts in the last three years have resulted in significant over-enrollment in the public baccalaureate sector, which has reduced institutional flexibility in offering transfer slots.

In addition, students who enroll as freshman in Washington's public, four-year institutions have among the nation's highest persistence rates, a fact that further constrains transfer access. As a result, relatively fewer students are being admitted to the public baccalaureates.

Transfer to private institutions is worth special note. The University of Phoenix is now one of the top two transfer destinations – on par with the University of Washington's Seattle campus. At least part of this development is due to the University of Phoenix's transfer-friendly policies.

The availability of transfer slots is of key importance in helping achieve the central goal of the state's *Strategic Master Plan for Higher Education*, which calls for a significant increase in the number of bachelor's and advanced degrees being produced.

More than 70 percent of students who access higher education in Washington do so first at a community or technical college. Washington's 34 community and technical colleges enroll a much greater percentage (49 percent) of all college students than the national average (34 percent).

One way of improving the traditional two- to four-year transfer rate is to locate baccalaureate programs on CTC campuses. Several of the Independent Colleges of Washington (ICW) have done just that. For example, Heritage University has programs at Columbia Basin, Big Bend, and South Seattle Community Colleges.

St. Martin's University has programs at Centralia and Olympic Colleges and offers courses at Joint Base Lewis-McChord. Whitworth University has a degree-completion program for returning adults in downtown Spokane. And Seattle Pacific University offers an evening electrical engineering degree and a degree at the Boeing plant in Everett.

Transfer student success also is increasing, the report found:

- The number of students who graduated within three years after transferring to a public baccalaureate increased 8 percent.
- The number of transfer-designated degrees (Associate of Arts, Associate in Science-Transfer, Direct Transfer Associate) increased 6.3 percent (+13,973).
- The number of students completing designated transfer degrees in major fields (Major Related Pathways) increased 41 percent (+1,514).

Other questions the report addressed:

Do students transfer without loss of credit?

Specialized transfer degrees for Science and Engineering (AS-T) and Major Related Programs (MRPs) for majors like Business are effective. Students completing these pathways earn fewer excess credits, saving them and the state time and money.

Is student transfer awareness increasing?

- The number of students who stated they were interested in transferring to a four-year institution increased 5 percent.
- The number of students completing programs like Running Start, College in the High School, Alternative High School, and Tech Prep rose from 38,000 to 60,300 over the last 5 years.

To read the full report (including an executive summary), visit www.hecb.wa.gov/news/newsreports/documents/TransferReport2011.pdf.

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