



Learning Without Borders: Federal Policy and the Future of Learning Mobility

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Meet the Presenter



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Overview



- The Current Landscape
- State Innovation
- Industry Impact/ Orgs You Should Know
- Federal Interest
- What the Future Holds

Influences on Learning Mobility

Technology/Changing Credentials

- Online Education
- Digitizing of global processes
- Microcredentials
- Phone Apps
- Artificial Intelligence

Student Demographics

- More diverse student population
- More access to technology
- Less constricted by geography

Value of Higher Education

- Costs Increase; Student Debt Crisis
- Questionable Earnings Outcomes?
- Political Debate on whether higher education is worth it?

Labor Market Focus

- Increase in skills-based hiring
- Growth in industry certifications
- Apprenticeships
- Rapid occupational change

The Learner Has Changed

Today's learners move in, out, and across education and the workforce.

43.1M

Americans have some college, but no credential

37.6M are working-age adults under 65

1M+

Adults returned to higher education in 2023–24

A record number of previously stopped-out learners

52%

of fall 2024 transfer students were returning after a stopout

Transfer increasingly reflects nonlinear pathways

41% / 75%

of full-time / part-time undergraduates are employed

Education and employment already overlap

Implication for learner mobility: Institutions increasingly serve learners who bring prior credit, workplace learning, and interrupted educational histories—and expect that learning to retain value.

Sources: National Student Clearinghouse Research Center (2025); NCES, Digest of Education Statistics (2022 employment data).

CPL by the Numbers

Millions of learners already bring assessed, documented, or credentialed learning into higher education.

AP

3.24M

students took
6.18M AP exams

CLEP

190K

exams
administered

IB

202,103

exams administered
globally

PORTFOLIO ASSESSMENT

~10%

of adult students
earned PLA credit*

MILITARY LEARNERS

820K

could benefit from
military-learning recognition

WORKFORCE TRAINING

4M

students attend
noncredit workforce programs

BADGES

320.4M

badges awarded
in 2025

CERTIFICATES

670K+

awarded by
institutions of higher education

State - Led Reform



- States are leading the reforms
- What are they doing?
- Will it transfer to the federal level?

California



Credit for Prior Learning Initiative: California Community Colleges

- All 116 CA Community Colleges
- Committed to awarding up to a year of college credit in recognition of the mastery acquired through prior learning, training, and experience

Institution has already evaluated the student for recognized learning before the learner asks for an evaluation.

System-wide credit recommendations through faculty and industry workgroups.

Policy-wide interconnected pieces:

- *Culture*- Building institutional capacity (training, ta, business processes)
- *Technology*- centralized platform allows CPL creation, faculty approval, adoption from other colleges, student CPL planning.
- *Policy*- Collaboration between Chancellor's Office and institutions on establishing best practices, procedures, funding



Tennessee



Talent Marketplaces

- One of 10 national semi-finalists for ED's Connecting Talent to Opportunity (CTO) Challenge.
- Digital Credential Record System already in place at all 40 system institutions

They would expand their Talent Marketplace that connects LERs, a credential registry, and employer job data into a single interoperable system that supports skills-based hiring and strengthens alignment between education and workforce.

Builds on the state's Comprehensive Learner Records (TBR CRED) that all TBR schools use, which offers a comprehensive, verifiable record of a learner's skills, achievements, and experiences both in and beyond the classroom. It contains:

- Program level competencies mastered
- High Impact Practices (e.g., undergrad research, study abroad)
- Co-curricular activities and achievements

Next steps would include:

- Extending learner records to K-12, postsecondary, and prior work experience
- Integrating those records with employment search and matching functions

Colorado



Improving Statewide Transfer

- Various legislative actions improved transfer pathways for students across the state.

Senate Bill 24-164 improved transfer by calling for faster credit evaluations, clearer policies, and providing an appeals process for courses deemed to be Guaranteed Transfer

House Bill 25-1038 created Colorado Transfer, a centralized, online resource for students to explore transfer options. It includes GT Pathway, credit-by-exam, and statewide transfer agreements. It does NOT include admissions functionality or guarantees.

Colorado Office of the State Auditor conducted a review of transfer credit processes to recommend improvements. They found the system worked as intended but recommended improving communications with students, standardizing follow-up procedures, and establishing clearer documentation requirements.

North Carolina



Improving Statewide Transfer

- Various legislative actions improved transfer pathways for students across the state.

SL 2026-41:

- **Expansion of Postsecondary Transfer Technology**
 - Directs UNC System, NCCCS, and the Department of Information Technology to expand postsecondary transfer technology. It has three principle objectives:
 - Accelerate the transfer of course credits among postsecondary institutions
 - Improve transfer technology so that the process is easier for students, advisors, and institutions.
 - Give students better tools to compare transfer options, make decisions more quickly, and plan progress toward a degree, with the goal of reducing overall higher education cost.
- **Community College Seamless Skills Initiative-**
 - Creates competency-based pathways connecting high school and community college. It includes dual credit, stackable credentials, digital wallets, work-based learning, and pathways into high-demand technology employment.
- **Digital Credential program**
 - NCCCS must provide digital credentialing services statewide. Must support open standards and include a noncustodial digital wallet that allows individuals to control their own credentials.

Industry Innovation



- Who are the players?
- What are the initiatives?

Recognition of Learning



- LEARN Commission, “Start from Yes”
- LER Accelerator



- Focus on increasing CPL/PLA through partnerships, policy, and design.
- “We Help You Build It” Model; helping institutions build their own PLA/CPL programs



- Translates military and workforce learning into college-credit recommendations
- Their guide has more than 25,000 courses and 3,600 occupations

Credentials, Skills, and Transparency



- Credential Transparency Description Language (CTDL):** a common and uniform lexicon for describing credentials
- **Credential Registry:** a repository of metadata about all types of credential and skills, including competencies, learning/employment outcomes, labor market value.



- Advocates for open badges, comprehensive learner records, digital credentials, and the development of standards to make learning information portable across technology systems.

Learning and Employment Records



- **T3 Innovation Network:** a public-private initiative that aims to help different parts of the job market to share information and data
 - All learning counts through LER
 - Competencies and skills are exchanged with employers for equitable hiring
 - Learners and workers are given agency over their data.
- JFF advocates for more skills-based credentials/ LERs and the intersection of education and workforce development.

Transfer and Credit Mobility



- **Reverse Transfer Data Exchange:** Participating four- and two- year institutions can send course and grade information to any participating two-year institution from which a student has transferred. If eligible, the institution will award an associate degree.



- **Beyond Transfer Initiative:** Aimed at changing policies and building institutional capacity to improve credit transfer. Examines the incentives that institutions may have that inhibit transfer policies and practices that promote transfer and student learning

Federal Policy Trends



- What is pushing the Federal Government?
- What is the Federal Government interested in?
- What are the Feds doing?

Federal Goals

Reduce Discretionary Spending

- Reduce overall spending. Cuts to Department of Education, reduced executive interest in funding projects
- Reduce the Federal Role/ Give Power to the States. Attempts at eliminating federal agencies (including ED), move programs out of ED, reappropriating funds marked for other purposes

Reigning in Higher Education

- Long a target for Republicans, Higher Education has come under increased and harsher attacks than ever before from the federal government.
- Administration is pushing colleges on what they perceive is left-leaning cultural issues and proving their worth and establishing new accountability
- Looking at new accountability metrics to reduce the “monopoly” of traditional colleges

Legislative Update - Reverse Transfer Efficiency Act of 2025

Reverse Transfer Efficiency Act of 2025 ([HR. 6886](#))

- Introduced in December 2025. Currently has only 1 cosponsor
- Referred to House Ed & Workforce Committee and no action since
- The legislation would:
 - Amend the General Education Provisions Act to allow the release of education records to facilitate the award of a recognized postsecondary credential

Legislative Updates - Credit for Prior Learning Act

- The Credit for Prior Learning Act ([S. 4897](#)) was introduced in the Senate on June 24, 2026 and referred to the HELP Committee. There is no House companion bill at this time.
- The legislation would:
 - Allow for an increase to a student's Cost of Attendance of up to \$2,000 per award year for reasonable costs, including test fees, associated with the assessment of prior learning
 - Require reporting of (both disaggregated by race, income and Pell-Grant status):
 - The number of students receiving CPL
 - Average number of credits awarded per student seeking CPL

Legislative Update - MATCH Act of 2026

[H.R. 8183](#) defines talent marketplace, credential registry, and learning and employment record and establishes a grant program to create workforce longitudinal data systems and talent marketplaces.

- Grant Program- Directs a program through the Department of Labor for state agencies to apply for grants of up to 3 years for:
 - Developing a workforce longitudinal data system or accelerating the adoption of systems already in use
 - Research and labor market data improvement activities
 - Establishing or enhancing talent marketplaces
 - Developing guidelines, policies, and security measures to ensure compliance with privacy laws
 - Creating or participating in data exchange using standards-based jobs and employment data
- Legislation has been included in WIOA Reauthorization package. Marked up and passed out of Committee- April 22, 2026.

Legislative Update - One Big Beautiful Bill Act: Workforce Pell

Workforce Pell implemented July 1, 2026 allowing Pell Grants to be used for approved short-term, workforce aligned programs.

- Five programs have been approved
- Redirected FIPSE grant money provided one grantee money to expand a training program to establish a Workforce Pell Grant program.
- Likely will have fewer programs approved than originally anticipated due to final legislative language and will have slow ramp up since programs have to be operating for one year prior to approval.
- An incredible important aspect of Workforce Pell is the requirement that credentials must be stackable and portable.

Executive Update - AIM Rulemaking

Accreditation Rulemaking is in process. NPRM recently closed.

- Final Rule expected Nov 1; implementation date- July 1, 2027.
- Impacts how institutions evaluate transfer of credit
 - Additional disclosures
 - Provide reason for denial (should be based in academic standards of curricular requirements)
 - Allow appeals process
 - Cannot deny transfer credit based on the institution or its accrediting agency

Executive Update - Connecting Talent to Opportunity Challenge

Department of Education grant: Total budget of \$15 million

- Ten states were named semifinalists
- Purpose is to build stronger, more connected education-to-workforce systems through Talent Marketplaces.
 - Should integrate credential registries and LERs as well as leverage AI to connect job seekers, employers, and education/training providers through skills-based job descriptions



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