

Contact: Sam Rauschenfels  
ICUT Foundation  
(512) 615-9320  
[sam.rauschenfels@icut.org](mailto:sam.rauschenfels@icut.org)



## **Independent Colleges and Universities of Texas Foundation Launches First of Its Kind Pilot Program to Accelerate Completion, Reduce Cost of Bachelor's Degrees**

*New Portal Matches Students with the Most Transfer-Friendly Bachelor's Degree Pathways*

**AUSTIN, Texas (Oct. 3, 2017)** --The Independent Colleges and Universities of Texas Foundation (ICUTF) is partnering with the Texas Success Center at the Texas Association of Community Colleges and College Consortium, a leading higher education technology company, to launch a new initiative accelerating completion and reducing the cost of bachelor's degrees. The ICUT Foundation Transfer Portal will use an extension of College Consortium's academic sharing platform to connect associate degree-earners with transfer-friendly degrees at private, nonprofit colleges and universities in Texas, some of which will accept up to 90 credit-hours.

With assistance from participating community colleges, the Transfer Portal will show students the cost and time savings of earning their degree from a regionally accredited, ICUTF member institution. The pilot phase begins with fully-online degrees, and is made possible by a National Ventures Fund grant from the Council of Independent Colleges.

"This type of innovative collaboration is what helps students achieve their goals," says Dr. Richard Rhodes, president and CEO of Austin Community College, a pilot participant. "Together, we're creating seamless pathways for students to earn their associate degree and continue on to a bachelor's. It's a shared vision and ACC is proud to be a part of this mission to improve completion."

Through the Transfer Portal, students will be able to apply, be instantly accepted, and have necessary records securely transferred to their chosen four-year school, streamlining the transfer process and reducing time-to-degree using the innovative system built by College Consortium.

"Students may think a degree from a private, nonprofit school is out of reach – that's just not true," says Ray Martinez, ICUTF president. "This initiative puts bachelor's degree programs from ICUTF member institutions in the reach of thousands of associate degree-earners across Texas in a way that has never been done before."

The average community college student in Texas has attempted 92 credit hours in earning their associate degree, yet most four-year schools will only accept 60 upon transfer. However, a few private, nonprofit colleges and universities in Texas have created leaner majors that will accept up to 90 credit hours, allowing some students to earn their bachelor's degree in as little as a year and with little to no out-of-pocket cost.

According to the Texas Public Higher Education Almanac, 35 percent of graduates from Texas' four-year public institutions have completed 30 or more credit hours at a two-year institution. The Transfer Portal is an opportunity for more students across Texas to complete courses at two-year institutions and finish their bachelor's degrees at four-year, private nonprofit Texas institutions, in less time and at a lower cost than

existing options. It is also an important step toward achieving the ambitious goals of the state's 60x30TX higher education strategic plan, which aims to ensure that by 2030, 60 percent of Texans age 25-34 have attained a credential after high school. A key target of the plan is to graduate at least 550,000 Texans from postsecondary institutions in 2030, a metric the Transfer Portal will be invaluable to achieving.

"Concordia is excited to be one of the founding members," says Dr. Donald Christian, President of Concordia University Texas. "This initiative mirrors our commitment to do everything we can to be affordable and accessible to all students. By leveraging online learning platforms, this project is another tool that enables students to take part in private education and benefit from the personalized touch that these partner institutions can offer. "

The Transfer Portal features several unique elements:

- Includes over 60 online degrees from six ICUTF schools that students can complete from anywhere, at their own pace, more quickly and more affordably than existing options
- Securely accesses transcript and financial aid data from the student's two-year school to package, admit, and show them the real cost and time to complete their four-year degree
- Further discounts the pilot's competitive tuition rates through a generous scholarship from the ICUT Foundation and each participating institution

While the benefits to students are clear, participating institutions will also gain from the Transfer Portal. Two-year institutions can offer their students an additional incentive to complete their associate degree, and by participating will further validate the transferability of their general education and upper-level courses. Four-year institutions will gain access to a talented group of associate degree-earners, and strengthen relationships with community colleges across the entire state. Taken together, the benefits of the ICUTF Transfer Portal to students, their institutions and the state of Texas are clear. To learn more, go to [www.collegeconsortium.org/transfer](http://www.collegeconsortium.org/transfer)

#### **About the Independent Colleges and Universities of Texas Foundation**

The [ICUT Foundation](http://www.icut.org) collaborates with institutional members, businesses, and relevant stakeholders to raise funds to develop and implement innovative programs and administer privately-funded scholarship opportunities for students attending Texas independent colleges and universities, especially underserved student populations. For more information, visit [www.icut.org](http://www.icut.org)

#### **About the Texas Success Center at the Texas Association of Community Colleges**

The [Texas Success Center](http://www.tacc.org) was established to tighten the linkage between practice, research, and policy, enabling Texas community colleges to benefit from national research and promising practices on how to accelerate degree completion. For more information, visit [www.tacc.org](http://www.tacc.org)

#### **About College Consortium**

[College Consortium](http://www.collegeconsortium.org) is a higher education technology company whose academic sharing platform allows colleges to share courses, degrees, and tuition revenue to retain and degree more students. The transfer portal is the latest release of the academic sharing platform, which currently has over 45 colleges and universities collaborating to increase student completion in less than a year. For information, visit [www.collegeconsortium.org](http://www.collegeconsortium.org)