Holistic Credit Mobility

ITHAKA S+R

Learner-centered core principles reinforced by interconnected necessary supports

Holistic credit mobility centers learners by recognizing validated learning regardless of its source so students can chart the shortest route to the credential they seek.

CORE PRINCIPLES

Count Validated Learning Regardless of Source

* The learning that took place is more important than where, when, or how it happened.

* Ensure policies are inclusive in honoring prior validated learning by default wherever possible.

Avoid Repeated Learning of the Same Content

* Students should not be required to take courses that cover learning they have already mastered.

* Institutions should evaluate prior learning against course and program outcomes, identify reasonable equivalencies even when courses do not match perfectly, and proactively surface opportunities for credit from non-traditional sources.

Link Learning Across K-12, Higher Education, and Workforce

* Student pathways across sectors should be as seamless for students as possible, allowing them to transition without losing momentum.

* Intentionally align goals, policies, practices, technologies, and advising across K-12, higher education, and workforce partners.

Provide Clear Guidance on How Learning Will Count Toward a Specific Degree

* Students need clear, consistent, and accessible guidance about how prior and planned learning applies to a desired credential and what further credits they need to complete it.

* Offer guidance, through technology tools and proactive advising, well before transfer or reenrollment so students can choose coursework that maximizes credit efficiency.

Maximize Program Flexibility for Diverse Pathways

* Design credentials to incorporate validated learning from diverse sources, recognizing students don't share a common starting point.

* Ensure rigid requirements, residency policies, or overprescribed curricula don't block prior learning from applying to a credential.

NECESSARY SUPPORTS

Effective Policy

* Structural work, at the institution, system, or state level, that sets common aims and makes holistic credit mobility durable, equitable, and scalable.

* Defines acceptable credit types, key terms, and connections between bodies within a state, accounting for the financial incentives and disincentives institutions face.

Supportive Technology

* Technology tools and data systems that make credit mobility information accessible, support student planning, streamline credit evaluation processes, and facilitate learning portability and institutional collaboration.

* Promotes course sharing, learning portability, and sustained institutional collaboration.

Responsive Practice

* Guide students in exploring and choosing programs that recognize prior validated learning, with proactive advising and tailored major and pathway recommendations.

* Collect and react to input from students, practitioners, and partners to refine guidance and ensure programs work for diverse learning histories.

Active Collaboration

* Foster consistent cross-sector engagement to build relationships and processes that help learners move smoothly between K–12, higher education, industry, and workforce development.

* Coordinate institutions, collective impact partnerships, and workforce ventures to maintain and grow learner pathways.

Data & Measurement

* Build infrastructure to define mobile learners, determine credit equivalencies efficiently, and track how credits and learners move across systems and sectors.

* Use shared data and key performance indicators to identify learner needs, track credit mobility across institutions, systems, and sectors, and guide continual improvement.