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## **Rhode Island Independent College Transfer Guarantee Memorandum of Agreement**

**Between**

**Association of Independent Colleges & Universities of Rhode Island  
Community College of Rhode Island  
New England Board of Higher Education**

**and**

**Rhode Island Independent Institution Signator to the Guarantee MOA**

*March 2021*

# **Rhode Island Independent College Transfer Guarantee Memorandum of Agreement**

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## **I Background**

In November 2019, the New England Board of Higher Education (NEBHE), received a three-year implementation grant co-funded by the Teagle Foundation and the Davis Educational Foundation to develop systematic transfer pathways between community colleges and four-year independent colleges in three New England states including Rhode Island. NEBHE is partnering with the Association of Independent Colleges & Universities of Rhode Island (AICU-RI) and the Community College of Rhode Island (CCRI) to establish the Rhode Island Independent College Transfer Guarantee, which ensures acceptance at an in-state independent four-year institution for students graduating from CCRI with an associate degree.

## **II The Rhode Island Independent College Transfer Guarantee**

The Rhode Island Independent College Transfer Guarantee (Rhode Island Guarantee) aligns transfer in the state, thereby expanding transfer options for Rhode Island's community college students. The Rhode Island Guarantee ensures acceptance at a participating four-year independent Guarantee institution for associate degree holding students who have met a minimum GPA requirement of either 2.0, 2.4 or 3.0. The minimum GPA guaranteed admission requirement will be selected by each institution. At the core of the Rhode Island Guarantee is an unwavering commitment to equity, opportunity and access for all students in higher education. A signed Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) by all parties is the condition to begin the process of articulating, and subsequently publishing, institutional Guarantee Transfer Pathways.

## **III Purpose**

This MOA between the Association of Independent Colleges & Universities of Rhode Island (AICU-RI), the Community College of Rhode Island (CCRI) New England Board of Higher Education and \_\_\_\_\_ signed on \_\_\_\_\_ serves as the agreement for the Rhode Island Guarantee. The MOA applies roles and responsibilities and terms and conditions to the signatories of this agreement. The signatories shall include the president of each organization or his/her designee.

## **IV Roles and Responsibilities**

### **New England Board of Higher Education (NEBHE)**

NEBHE was established in 1955 by the six New England governors and authorized as a regional higher education compact by Congress. NEBHE's mission is to promote greater educational opportunities and services for the residents of New England and its more than 230 colleges and universities. Under the Rhode Island Guarantee NEBHE will:

1. Serve as the administrator for the joint Teagle Foundation and Davis Educational Foundation grant award.
2. Seek additional grant funds through foundations and other means to support the Rhode Island Guarantee.
3. Allocate resources from grant sources to support the Rhode Island Guarantee.
4. Coordinate the operation of the Rhode Island Guarantee Steering Committee.
5. Coordinate all aspects of the Rhode Island Guarantee in consultation with its primary partners - AICU-RI and CCRI.
6. Plan and deliver all state convenings.
7. Develop all necessary documents that guide and inform the implementation of the Rhode Island Guarantee.
8. Develop press release templates for use by partners and participating institutions.
9. Develop a public marketing and engagement plan.
10. Develop and implement project data collection and impact plan.
11. Develop resources and provide technical assistance that support the implementation of the Rhode Island Guarantee.

### **The Association of Independent Colleges & Universities of Rhode Island (AICU-RI)**

AICU-RI serves to improve, strengthen, and expand the capacity of independent higher education in Rhode Island. AICU-RI serves its members— eight accredited nonprofit independent colleges and universities based in Rhode Island—through government relations, public policy development, research analysis, communications and coordinated member services. Under the Rhode Island Guarantee AICU-RI will:

1. Promote the Rhode Island Guarantee to its member institutions and other stakeholders in the state.
2. Serve as a member of the Rhode Island Guarantee Steering Committee.
3. Assist in endeavors for additional grant funds through foundations and other means to support the Rhode Island Guarantee.
4. Advise on Guarantee policy and resource development.
5. Coordinate with NEBHE's evaluation plan to measure impact of the Rhode Island Guarantee.

### **Community College of Rhode Island (CCRI)**

CCRI's mission is to offer recent high school graduates and returning adults the opportunity to acquire the knowledge and skills necessary for intellectual, professional and personal growth through an array of academic, career and lifelong learning programs. Under the Rhode Island Guarantee CCRI will:

1. Serve as members and co-chair of the Rhode Island Guarantee Steering Committee.
2. Advise on Guarantee policy and resource development.
3. Provide a landing page for the Rhode Island Guarantee on the college's website.
4. Coordinate with NEBHE's evaluation plan to measure impact of the Rhode Island Guarantee.
5. Provide critical information on the Guarantee to students, faculty members and other key staff such as transfer counselors.

### **Rhode Island Guarantee Steering Committee**

The Rhode Island Guarantee Committee serves to guide the successful implementation of the Rhode Island Guarantee. The Steering Committee includes representation from AICU-RI, CCRI, NEBHE, and an independent institution and will:

1. Provide strategic direction to NEBHE and its state partners in the adoption and implementation of the Guarantee.
2. Provide input into various Guarantee aspects including but not limited to: Guarantee design and Guiding Principles, state meeting agenda building, implementation guide, front-facing student information about the Guarantee, and technology requirements for Rhode Island Guarantee web pages.
3. Identify risks and challenges as well as offer advice to mitigate risks and surmount challenges.
4. Advise on policy development and procedures prioritizing actions that need to be taken by NEBHE and its state partners to implement the Guarantee.
5. Advise on developing reporting and success metrics.
6. Provide long-term guidance on the operation of the Guarantee.
7. Advise on the development of a sustainability plan when grant funding is no longer available.
8. Serve as the decision-making body on all aspects of the Rhode Island Guarantee.
9. Serve as the arbiter of issues that may arise between two or more institutions.
10. Approve institutional pathway articulation forms.
11. Advise in the evolution and formation of further governance structures and policies.

### **Rhode Island Guarantee Participating Independent Institution**

The participating independent institution will:

1. Adhere to the Rhode Island Independent College Transfer Guarantee Guiding Principles and Foundational Design. See Appendix A and Appendix B.
2. Designate a Guarantee Coordinator. The Guarantee Coordinator will serve as the point of contact and coordinate the implementation of the Rhode Island Guarantee at the

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institutional level. This individual will also chair the Cross Functional Team focused on the implementation of the initiative. See Appendix C for form and additional responsibilities.

3. Form an institutional Guarantee Cross Functional Team. Membership can include representation from the following: department heads, faculty members (including faculty involved with general education requirements), registrar's office, admissions, financial aid, and advising staff. The role of the Cross Functional Team is to advise the institution's administration on transfer policy, training faculty and staff, recruiting, marketing, transfer advising, accepting credits, onboarding, and data collection. See Appendix C.
4. Participate in convenings/training on Rhode Island Guarantee implementation.
5. Post Rhode Island Guarantee information on the institution's transfer website.
6. Identify incoming Guarantee students in the institution's student management information system.
7. Submit annual reports to NEBHE that include outcome-based data for students admitted under the Rhode Island Guarantee. These reports will be compiled for each participating institution into a summary report for the Rhode Island Guarantee Steering Committee to measure progress.
8. Provide, if requested by NEBHE, permission for the National Student Clearinghouse to share institutional data on Guarantee students. The purpose of gaining access would be to conduct research and measure state impact.

## **V      Articulation of Transfer**

### **Student Eligibility Criteria**

To be eligible for the Rhode Island Guarantee, a student must have graduated with an associate degree from CCRI and have an overall average of 2.0 GPA at minimum. Some participating Guarantee institutions require that students have a 2.4 or 3.0 GPA. Institutions are able to self-select the minimum GPA from the three tiers for guaranteed admission. Eligibility is further outlined in the Foundational Design (Appendix A). Institutions will indicate their standard institutional minimum GPA in the Institution Specific Transfer Policy Form (Appendix D).

Admission is guaranteed given the student has met all eligibility criteria for the selected institution and, if applicable, any program-specific GPA or course-based requirements. Participating four-year independent institutions recognize that CCRI associate degree-holding graduates have received a rigorous, quality education, and, thus, are prepared to succeed at a four-year independent institution.

### **Features and Benefits to Students**

The Foundational Design (Appendix A) outlines the unique features of the Rhode Island Guarantee, which include:

1. Waived application fee for all participating Rhode Island Guarantee independent institutions.

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2. Guaranteed transfer of associate degree and student credits earned.
3. Guaranteed admission - providing the student has met all eligibility criteria for the selected Rhode Island Guarantee institution, and the institution has available capacity within the intended program.
4. Institutional financial support (varying by institution).
5. Adherence to the Guiding Principles (Appendix B).

### **Recommended Transfer Articulation Guidelines**

In order to facilitate smooth and successful student transfer under the Rhode Island Guarantee, participating institutions should consider aligning their current transfer policies with the following recommended transfer practices:

- 1) It is recommended that participating Rhode Island Guarantee institutions apply CCRI's [General Education requirement](#) toward major, minor and general education (core) requirements to the extent possible rather than as free elective credit. A CCRI student who has completed General Education requirement already will have earned 20 credit hours. However, most CCRI degree programs have specific General Education requirements as outlined in their program requirements, and many include more than the minimum requirement of 20 General Education credits.
- 2) The vast majority of CCRI students who intend to transfer complete a degree in [General Studies](#). The requirement for awarding an Associate in the Arts degree in General Studies is 32 General Education credits. It is further recommended that students earning a General Studies Associate in the Arts degree with 32 General Education credits, or other majors which require 32 or more credits of General Education, have the General Education block waived by the accepting institution.
- 3) Receiving institutions should honor the awarding of credit for prior learning college-level credits as determined by the sending institution for students who transfer with the completed General Education requirement. Course grades below a C may transfer if they are part of the General Education requirement and students have completed the requirement with a cumulative GPA of 2.0 or higher. The transfer of any non-traditional credits outside the General Education requirement will be honored at the discretion of the receiving institution.
- 4) In cases where the receiving institution's general education requirements include additional coursework over and above CCRI's General Education requirement, the receiving institution may require the student to complete additional coursework for graduation requirements. The receiving institution will determine which credits/courses shall be required. The receiving institution should make every attempt to convey such requirements to students as early in the admission process as possible and preferably prior to enrollment so that students can make an informed decision on time and cost to degree.

- 5) Outside of the General Education requirement, participating Rhode Island Guarantee institutions may accept transfer credit towards the major and minor requirements and other electives at their discretion, while still guaranteeing a minimum of 60 transferable credits and junior status upon enrollment. Participating institutions are encouraged to develop internal pathway maps. It is further recommended that institutions consider aligning with CCRI's established [Academic and Career Paths](#) in order to streamline the transfer process.

### **Recommended Transfer Credit Policies & Institution-Specific Transfer Policies Form**

Community college students frequently take courses and receive credit from multiple institutions or through credit for prior learning including, but not limited to high school dual enrollment programs, Advanced Placement (AP) exams, International Baccalaureate Programme (IB), national standardized exams such as CLEP, challenge examinations, and Joint Service Transcript analysis for veterans or current members of the military, or online coursework. The determination to award credit from other institutions or grant credit for prior learning is made in a community college transfer audit and a graduation audit.

These audits serve to ensure that all associate degree earners have fully met degree requirements of the community college. While all relevant documentation in the form of scores reports and transcripts will be forwarded to the receiving institution, the receiving institution agrees to honor the community college graduation audit for credit issued.

The recommended minimum course grade for transfer under the Rhode Island Guarantee is "C". Institutions may, however, elect to use the current course grade for transfer stipulated by the institution's existing policy.

In Appendix D, institutions will stipulate their policies in the Institution Specific Transfer Policy Form.

## **VI Institutional Incentives and Financial Aid**

The Rhode Island Guarantee partner institutions are committed to providing access through need-based financial aid as well as merit-based and/or Guarantee scholarships. Institutions are encouraged to offer incentives and financial support to students with clear criteria (ie: GPA-based or need-based) and provide detailed information about how such financial aid will discount the total cost to degree. Institutions will set their own incentives or discounting rates for the Rhode Island Guarantee. All institutional incentives and pertinent financial aid information will be posted on the Rhode Island Guarantee website in order to provide the utmost transparency for students and families.

## **VII Student Advising**

Community college advisors will provide information and guidance to students before they transfer.

Pre-application and post-transfer, participating independent four-year institutions will provide robust student support and wrap-around services. Services include, but are not limited to, academic guidance and counseling, academic support, orientations, peer advising, personal guidance and counseling, career services and supplemental services. Additional student services and commitments are outlined in the Guiding Principles (Appendix B).

## **VIII Promotion**

NEBHE, AICU-RI and CCRI will co-promote the Rhode Island Guarantee through a cohesive marketing and outreach campaign. The Rhode Island Guarantee will have a highly visible and impactful web presence on the existing CCRI transfer website. Consistent messaging, branding, and information will be deployed across all outreach platforms including: press releases, marketing materials, social media channels, and other avenues that disseminate information to students, faculty, and staff.

Outside of NEBHE, AICU-RI and CCRI promotion, participating institutions are encouraged to promote the Rhode Island Guarantee. Institutions are recommended to develop Rhode Island Guarantee specific landing pages, marketing materials and connect with students through existing outreach channels.

## **IX Data Collection and Reporting**

NEBHE will collect data from participating Rhode Island Guarantee independent institutions beginning in Fall 2022. Data include enrollment of students under the Guarantee, persistence and completion. A complete list of data variables can be found in Appendix E.

Under this agreement, using data from participating independent institutions, NEBHE will produce an annual report that measures impact and progress over time. The report will include institutional and state level data and be reviewed and approved by the Steering Committee prior to any release. A copy of the report will also be provided to funders, including the Teagle Foundation and Davis Educational Foundation, which have provided financial support for the Rhode Island Guarantee.

## **X Term and Withdrawal Provisions**

This agreement takes effect upon the signature of authorized representatives of each party and shall remain in effect for three years. The MOA may be extended beyond the three years upon

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the written agreement of all parties. A party to the MOA may withdraw from the agreement by providing written notification to the other parties at least one-year in advance of such withdrawal. For any institution that seeks to withdraw, this would require expunging all language pertaining to the institution's participation in the Rhode Island Guarantee.

**XI Impact on Other Articulation Agreements**

The Rhode Island Guarantee takes precedence over existing bilateral agreements. However, in cases where community college graduates gain additional educational and/or financial aid benefits, those agreements should be maintained and are encouraged.

**XII Other Provisions**

This MOA expresses the entire agreement of the parties and shall not be modified or altered except in writing executed by the authorized written agreement of all parties.

**XIII Signatories**

**Rhode Island Guarantee Participating Institution**

Institution Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Signator Name and Title: \_\_\_\_\_

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

**New England Board of Higher Education**

Signator Name and Title: Michael K. Thomas, President and CEO

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

**Association of Independent Colleges & Universities of Rhode Island**

Signator Name and Title: Dan Egan, President

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

**Community College of Rhode Island**

Signator Name and Title: Meghan L. Hughes, President

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_



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## **Appendix A:** **Rhode Island Guarantee Foundational Design**

### *Eligibility*

- Completion of an associate degree from the Community College of Rhode Island
- A minimum GPA of either 2.0, 2.4, or 3.0
  - Participating institutions select a GPA tier for minimum eligibility requirements

### *Features*

- Waived application fee for all participating Rhode Island Guarantee independent institutions.
- Guaranteed transfer of associate degree.
- Guaranteed admission to institution - given the student has met all eligibility criteria for the selected Rhode Island Guarantee institution, and the institution has available capacity within the intended Guarantee Transfer Pathway.
- Institutional financial incentives (varying by institution).
- Adherence to the Guiding Principles.



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## **Appendix B:** **Rhode Island Independent College Transfer Guarantee Guiding Principles**

The Rhode Island Independent College Transfer Guarantee (Rhode Island Guarantee) is a student-centered approach to transfer, which provides eligible students with greater access, opportunity, and affordability at participating four-year independent institutions.

### **The Rhode Island Guarantee is guided by the following principles:**

1. Students attend community colleges for a variety of purposes, including the goal of transferring to a four-year institution. Community college graduates bring to a receiving four-year institution enriched perspectives from their life experiences, persistence, diversity, and the academic preparation necessary to be able to graduate at a rate equal to or more likely higher than incoming high school graduates.
2. The demographic challenges facing New England, and especially Rhode Island, make community college students essential to both public and independent four-year institutions.
3. The Rhode Island Guarantee is student-centered, taking into account life experiences, financial and support services needs, interests, aspirations, and/or cultural backgrounds.
4. The Rhode Island Guarantee builds upon the public four-year transfer pathways that have been established in Rhode Island and provides eligible students with the opportunity to transfer as juniors to a participating independent institution in their home state.
5. The Rhode Island Guarantee enables students to transfer without loss of credit counting towards graduation, provided that any minimum course GPA requirements of the receiving institution are met. Whether the credits are applied to a major, general education core or electives will be determined by the receiving institution. All institutional minimum grade requirements for transfer credit will be clearly stated and available to all prospective students.
6. Each independent college will designate a Guarantee Coordinator who will serve as the point of contact and coordinate the implementation of the Rhode Island Guarantee at the institutional level.



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7. All Rhode Island Guarantee transfer pathways will include:
    - a. Clear criteria for guaranteed admission, in most cases a minimum GPA; for programs that have additional admission requirements, these requirements will be clearly spelled out.
    - b. Clear information regarding total cost to complete the baccalaureate.
    - c. If incentives are offered, clear criteria for these incentives (such as GPA) and information about how any incentives will affect the total cost to degree.
  8. Based upon research findings, community college students are far more likely to be successful if they receive support in the form of intensive advising that includes, academic guidance and counseling, academic support, peer advising, personal guidance and counseling, career services and supplemental services.
  9. Pre-application and post-acceptance support services are critical to the successful transition of community college graduates into four-year institutions and these services shall be provided by participating institutions.
  10. Independent institutions will be encouraged to take into consideration the transfer slump many students experience and to develop academic good standing policies that wait until the end of the academic year to determine whether any transfer student (regardless of participation in the Rhode Island Guarantee) should be placed on academic probation.
  11. Community college transfer advisors provide students with the full range of public and independent four-year institution transfer options taking into consideration aspirations, goals, best fit, and affordability.
  12. Four-year Independent institution participation is voluntary and the conditions for participation are included in a Memorandum of Understanding.
  13. Independent institutions will provide annual transfer data to the New England Board of Higher Education. Data will include enrollment of students under the Rhode Island Guarantee, persistence and completion.



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## **Appendix C:**

### **Designated Guarantee Coordinator & Guarantee Cross Functional Team Form**

#### **Guarantee Coordinator**

Participating Rhode Island Independent College Transfer Guarantee institutions shall designate a Guarantee Coordinator. The Guarantee Coordinator will coordinate the implementation of the Rhode Island Guarantee at an institutional level. The Guarantee Coordinator will:

- Participate in all Rhode Island Guarantee implementation convenings, workshops and trainings.
- Collaborate with NEBHE Guarantee Project Director in all aspects of institutional implementation.
- Assemble and chair a Guarantee Cross Functional Team focused on the implementation of the Rhode Island Guarantee.
- Submit an annual Guarantee report to the New England Board of Higher Education.

#### **Guarantee Cross Functional Team**

The Guarantee Coordinator is responsible for convening a Guarantee Cross Functional Team. Membership can include representation from the following: department heads, faculty members (including faculty involved with general education requirements), registrar's office, admissions, and advising staff. The role of the Cross Functional Team is to advise the institution's administration on transfer policy, training faculty and staff, recruiting, marketing, transfer advising, accepting credits, onboarding, and data collection.

The Guarantee Coordinator provides assurances that a designated Guarantee Cross Functional Team has been or will be assembled at their institution within 30 days of submission of this document to the New England Board of Higher Education. The Guarantee Coordinator shall retain and provide, if requested, the names and position of the Guarantee Cross Functional Team members.

**Institution:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Name:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Title:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Email:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Phone:** \_\_\_\_\_



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**Appendix D:**  
**Rhode Island Guarantee Institution Specific Transfer Policy Form**

**Minimum Institutional GPA For Guaranteed Acceptance**

To be eligible for the Rhode Island Guarantee, a student must have graduated with an Associate in the Arts (AA) or Associate in Science (AS) from the Community College of Rhode Island and have an overall 2.0 GPA at minimum.

Participating institutions are required to select a standard minimum GPA for acceptance from the three tiers listed below. Admission is guaranteed given the student has met all the institution's eligibility criteria and there is available capacity within the intended major. Please select one option:

- 2.0
- 2.4
- 3.0

**Institution Specific Transfer Policy**

Community college students frequently take courses and receive credit from multiple institutions or through credit for prior learning including, but not limited to Dual Enrollment, Advanced Placement (AP) exams, national standardized exams such as CLEP, or online coursework. The determination to award credit from other institutions or for credit earned through prior learning is made in a community college transfer audit and a graduation audit.

The recommended minimum course grade for transfer under the Rhode Island Guarantee is a "C". Institutions may, however, elect to use the current course grade for transfer stipulated by the institution's existing policy.

**Please specify institutional transfer policies below:**

Minimum course grade for transfer is \_\_\_\_\_ (enter minimum course grade).  
Grade restrictions for specific major courses or pre-requisites still apply.

Institution will accept previous credits earned from Advanced Placement (AP) or International Baccalaureate Exams.



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Institution will accept previous credits earned through dual or concurrent enrollment.

Institution will accept previous credits earned from College Level Examination Program such as CLEP or DSST.

Institution will accept previous credits earned from other exams.

Institution will accept previous credits earned from online coursework.

Institution will accept credits earned from English as a Second Language (ESL) courses.

- Other:

List any additional transfer policies pertinent to the Rhode Island Guarantee below:



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## **Appendix E:** **Rhode Island Guarantee Data Collection and Reporting Variables**

### **Data variables to be collected from all participating independent institutions including:**

- Institution name
- Participating students disaggregated by:
  - Transferring community college
  - Pell Grant status (as a proxy for family income), if available
  - Race/Ethnicity using IPEDS definitions
  - Gender
  - Age reported in age bands (<18, 18-24, 25-34, 35+)
  - Full-time
  - Part time
- Financial aid award
  - Pell
  - Institutional aid
  - Merit aid
  - Other
- Student GPA as an incoming transfer student
- Community college major
- Major at receiving institution
- Persistence status
- Persistence status GPA
- Completion major/pathway
- Completion status
- Completion GPA

In order to monitor and measure the success of the Rhode Island Guarantee, NEBHE will collect quantitative and qualitative data to measure the following:

1. The number of institutions signing participation MOUs
2. The rate of increase in community college graduates in the three states
3. The rate of increase of community college graduates enrolling as transfer students in independent institutions
4. The rate of increase in community college graduates earning a degree from an independent institution
5. Identification of independent institutions having the best and worst outcomes
6. The efficacy of Guarantee Guiding Principles implementation
7. The efficacy of marketing and outreach campaign, measured through analytics



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The quantitative evaluation for measuring success will incorporate data collection for institutions that have implemented the Rhode Island Guarantee. The first report will include the number of participating community college transfer students, their major and demographic composition.

This includes low-income as measured by Pell eligibility and those students who are traditionally underserved. Subsequent reports will add metrics such as persistence rates, and, in years two and three, credential attainment. NEBHE will investigate whether the National Student Clearinghouse can provide the identified data at an affordable cost to ease the reporting burden of institutions.

Qualitative data will be derived using surveys of enrollment managers, transfer admissions directors and students. NEBHE will utilize an evaluation consultant to develop the surveys, determine the best methods for deploying the surveys and interpreting the results.