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## A Smoother Road Between Colleges

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Students at Connecticut's two-year community colleges will find it easier to transfer to the four-year campuses of the Connecticut State University system under an agreement signed Thursday.

Officials of the two-year and four-year public higher education systems signed a partnership that would guarantee admission to state university campuses for community college students who meet specific guidelines.

The agreement affects Central Connecticut, Eastern Connecticut, Southern Connecticut and Western Connecticut state universities.

The partnership is "a framework to remove barriers, remove obstacles" to students who want to transfer credits to CSU, said Marc S. Herzog, chancellor of the state's community college system, who worked with CSU Chancellor David G. Carter to push for the agreement.

The state's 12 two-year colleges have operated under a hodgepodge of transfer agreements with four-year schools, including a partnership with CSU signed a decade ago, but officials said those agreements were not always followed carefully and have had only spotty success.

"This time it's for real," said Manchester Community College President Jonathan M. Daube, one of about 40 educators and politicians at a signing ceremony at the state Capitol. "Students are going to notice the difference this time around. The number of complaints and hard-luck stories will go down dramatically."

Because of a lack of clear rules or adequate counseling, students sometimes discover their credits will not transfer or find out they must take similar courses for a second time when they transfer, adding time and expense to earning a bachelor's degree.

"As far as what classes will transfer, sometimes it's a barrier because people don't always have the information," said Marc Mojica, who transferred from Manchester Community College to Eastern Connecticut State in Willimantic, where he is a senior accounting major.

Transfers from community colleges accounted for about 14 percent of new students enrolling in 2005 at CSU's campuses in New Britain, New Haven, Willimantic and Danbury.

Thursday's agreement drew praise from several lawmakers.

"It's about time," said state Rep. Roberta B. Willis, co-chairman of the legislature's Higher Education and Employment Advancement Committee. "College transfers should be a bridge, and it should be an easy bridge to cross."

Under the new agreement, community college students will be able to apply for guaranteed admission to CSU. Applicants who complete an associate's degree with a 2.0 average in less than five years will be able to transfer at least 60 credits to enter CSU as a junior. The transfer must take place within two years of completing the associate's degree.

About a dozen states have strong transfer agreements linking two-year and four-year colleges, said Norma Kent of the American Association of Community Colleges in Washington, D.C.

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