Testimony
Prepared for the
U.S. House of Representatives
The Committee on Education and the Workforce Hearing
"Keeping College within Reach: Meeting the Needs of Contemporary Students"

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Good Morning Chairman Kline, Ranking Member Miller and Members of the Committee.

My name is David Moldoff. I am the CEO of AcademyOne, a technology consulting company located in West Chester, Pennsylvania. Thank you for inviting me to testify.

AcademyOne's focus is addressing the implications of student mobility, academic credit portability and prior learning recognition. The company has developed a suite of navigational tools that assist states and institutions in addressing the diverse patterns students pursue as they follow their academic and learning aspirations.

For over 35 years, I have led teams in creating, implementing and supporting student information systems for thousands of colleges and universities. I directed this work as the senior executive of several technology companies, including ones I started.

Back in 2000, the standalone systems[1] I helped design, develop and deploy were slowly impeding degree completion as higher educational institutions adjusted to the growth in non-traditional programs. Traditional students progressing through a single college or university in four years was the exception and not the norm. "Alma mater" was being replaced with "I am mobile."

This fueled my desire to launch in 2005, AcademyOne to address the implications of college transfer and prior learning recognition. We assembled the first national course atlas with 3.5 million courses, and indexed millions of course equivalencies. We also indexed more than 20,000 articulation agreements, which were "treasure maps" promising gold at the end of the hunt. I learned most are not followed to completion for various reasons.

Today, over 1,200 institutional profiles are summarized on AcademyOne's website CollegeTransfer.Net. They are viewed by millions of students and parents each year seeking the answer to the question "will my credits transfer?" Economics, and in some cases state legislation, have resulted in an increase in the number of articulation agreements and course equivalencies published. This is evidence that the landscape has changed and institutions have responded to the significant challenge of student mobility.

I estimate that our federal agencies, states, industry partnerships, foundations and institutions have invested well over two billion dollars developing transfer articulation agreements since 2010.

Most of us remember what it was like trying to find our way on roads we never traveled before. My wife would suggest I stop and ask someone for directions instead of fumbling with

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[1] Banner, Colleague, PowerCampus, Jenzzabar, Campus Management and PeopleSoft

paper maps. Some of us have a sense of direction. I don't. I am directionally challenged.

GPS Technology has addressed travel challenges for people like me. Now I can easily navigate roads as long as I know where I want to go. This solution took years to evolve. GPS technology was conceived from U.S. government launched satellites. In essence AcademyOne has developed a GPS for students and institutions.

AcademyOne pioneered the automation of transfer maps. Thousands of maps every month are generated on behalf of participating institutions based on the academic rules that govern how institutions accept learning outside of their own classrooms.

Pennsylvania, South Carolina, Tennessee, Utah, Texas, Delaware and Florida are states that employ AcademyOne's technology to serve statewide initiatives instead of home growing their own technology.

For example, Pennsylvania uses CollegeTransfer.Net for several initiatives including:

Managing the Department of Education's statewide transfer framework to guarantee transfer of targeted courses to any major for students attending participating institutions.

Another is through the state's Bureau of Career and Technical Education, funded by the Perkins Act, to prepare high school students for high priority 21st century occupations. Students Occupationally and Academically Ready Project (SOAR), provides online articulation agreements between the state's popular high school vocation programs and postsecondary institutions.

And Tennessee is using our software to build a statewide reverse transfer system to determine eligibility of students

pursuing their undergraduate degree and attending 4-year institutions that transferred from an in-state community college but never earned their associate's degree.

I have included additional state summary briefs in my written testimony.

The state-based web portals and apps AcademyOne powers publish informational resources shared by institutions to assist the contemporary learner with step-by-step guidance that saves time and effort.

Contemporary learners may attend more than one institution. They might work full-time and take courses part-time. They could be unemployed, a single parent, career changer or a returning service member looking to transition their experiences into a new career. By automating prior learning recognition methods, contemporary learners can petition for college credit before they enroll, not after. This offers institutions the opportunity to better assess and place them in pathways suited for their aptitudes and interests by referencing prior learning as a starting point, instead of just looking at a batch of test scores to dictate selectivity.

It has not been easy to overcome institutional bureaucracy. In some institutions, students will have to wait months after enrolling to learn what courses they have previously taken will be accepted and applied to their degree. Or they might learn that the institution denied transfer credit because the course was differentiated subjectively rather than by validating learning outcomes.

Students can continue to experience **transfer shock** when prior learning, initially accepted based upon general course descriptions, turns out non-transferable to the major after faculty review. On average a transfer student loses more than a semester of credits by the time they graduate. This is

what I call a **transfer tax,** and it can add 10% to the cost of an undergraduate degree. Furthermore, financial aid and loans are stressed by increased time to degree completion.

Education is diverse and decentralized. Our sector is not monopolized by a few players. There are thousands of institutions, each focused on their uniqueness. Like roads, we have local, state or interstate. Just like the landscape along each road is unique, so are our institutions. There are numerous challenges facing our Nation that can be addressed with GPS-like technology that can replace the "treasure maps" with prescriptive directions minimizing the friction of college completion. I have outlined these in my written testimony and provided an example of TransferCheck.

AcademyOne's success with statewide initiatives proves that we can bridge institutional student information systems. We have demonstrated how institutions can utilize shared technologies to accelerate their efforts and get over the "not-invented-here syndrome." We have successfully assisted institutions to retain and graduate contemporary learners.

We have shown how to empower students to self-assess their progress to completion. The big question is not how anymore – but **when**?

I want to thank Chairman Kline and the Full Committee for the opportunity to testify. I am available to answer any questions and be of assistance to members of the Committee.