



# Improving Student Transfer from Community Colleges to Four-Year Institutions — The Perspective of Leaders from Baccalaureate-Granting Institutions



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# **Improving Student Transfer from Community Colleges to Four-Year Institutions —**

The Perspective of Leaders from  
Baccalaureate-Granting Institutions

## **Project Description**

Twenty-one higher education leaders were interviewed at 12 four-year institutions that are known for their commitment to transfer students; these leaders possess expertise in one or more facets of institutional administration, including outreach and recruitment, admission and enrollment, financial aid, and student and academic affairs. (The names, titles, and affiliations of these individuals are presented in Appendix 1.) These leaders were sent in advance a list of questions to be addressed during the interview. The questions focused on their work with transfer students in a variety of areas, including recruitment, enrollment planning, financial aid, and student and academic affairs. All interviews were taped and transcribed. This report reflects only a small portion of the entire set of conversations.

This project was conceived by Stephen J. Handel of the College Board, who also conducted the interviews and wrote this report.

Every attempt has been made to present as accurately as possible the views of the individuals who participated in this project, although their comments do not necessarily represent those of the College Board or its member institutions. Any errors, however, are the responsibility of the author.

## **Acknowledgments**

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For additional copies of this report or information about the College Board's community college initiatives, visit: [www.collegeboard.com/communitycollege](http://www.collegeboard.com/communitycollege).

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## PREFACE

*“Transfer students are proven. You’re not taking a chance with them. Once they come to a four-year institution you know they want a degree. Transfer students are a great investment.”*

Frank Ashley, Texas A&M University System

As the nation prepares to meet President Obama’s goal of eight million new college graduates by 2020, the transfer process — the pathway between community colleges and four-year institutions — will take on an increasingly vital role. For many four-year colleges and universities, however, this pathway is uncharted territory. To help clear a path, this report highlights the perspective of four-year institution leaders who have had success in recruiting, enrolling and serving transfer students. It is hoped that their insights will assist other four-year college and university leaders who wish to enroll and educate transfer students from community colleges.

While the transfer process has garnered the attention of researchers for many decades, much of their work is focused on the challenges facing two-year institutions. Relatively little attention has been paid to the role of four-year colleges and universities. Yet these four-year institutions, both public and private, are responsible for admitting transfer students, evaluating and accepting students’ course credits, and awarding financial aid. **Four-year colleges and universities represent the pivotal gatekeepers in the transfer pathway, although they have rarely asserted their role in the transfer process.**

Recent events — a bruising recession, international competition and long-predicted demographic shifts now evident — have created an urgency among these institutions to investigate the viability and the long-term merit of a more efficient transfer system.

This report begins to redress this imbalance by giving greater voice to the four-year institution perspective by interviewing institutional leaders who are concerned with and committed to the needs of the community college transfer student.

**Without properly consulting with the institutions that award the baccalaureate degree, the transfer process can never function in a way that supports the nation’s need for an educated citizenry — in particular, a citizenry that authentically represents the diversity of this nation.**

What follows is their assessment of the transfer process in the United States, the challenges they face — institutional, academic and programmatic — in serving transfer students and, most importantly, their perspective on the opportunities that accrue to a four-year institution that makes community college students an essential part of its campus community.

Twenty-one higher education leaders were interviewed at 12 four-year institutions that are known for their commitment to community college transfer students (see Appendix 1). Their institutions include public and private colleges and universities, public flagship and smaller institutions (including a private, liberal arts institution), and highly selective and moderately selective universities (see sidebar, p. 5).

Of course, 12 institutions represent only a fraction of the colleges and universities that recruit, admit and serve transfer students in the United States. But the purpose of this effort was not to inventory the work of every four-year institution, but to highlight the work of representative schools engaged successfully in this work. Any four-year leader interested in expanding the transfer efforts of his or her campus would be well-advised to consult with individuals who took the time to participate in this initiative, as well as leaders of any of the nearly 100 institutions listed by *U.S. News & World Report* as enrolling high numbers of transfer students.<sup>1</sup>

One final point: This report is only concerned with students attending *public community colleges* who transfer to a four-year institution with the intention of earning the baccalaureate degree. There are, of course, other kinds of students who transfer, particularly those who move from one four-year institution to another. The needs of those students are not addressed here, even though many of the institutions that were visited for this project enroll significant numbers of four-year transfer students. In theory, these students, sometimes called lateral transfers, could earn a degree from their original four-year institution but, for whatever reason, have chosen

to go elsewhere. The community college transfer student, however, *must* transfer to an upper-division institution or the student will never earn a bachelor's degree. Students who enroll in a community college have entered into an agreement — sometimes formally, but most of the time only implied — that they will be allowed to finish their bachelor's degree someplace else.

## Four-Year Institutions Profiled in This Report

Georgetown University, District of Columbia

Iowa State University

Syracuse University, New York

Texas A&M University

The University of Arizona

University of California, Los Angeles

University of Central Florida

The University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill

University of North Texas

University of Southern California

Virginia Tech

Wheaton College, Massachusetts

## PART 1

### Why Transfer? Why Now?

*“I think it’s an advantageous time for four-year schools to start thinking about how their enrollment goals and their environment might be enhanced by considering transfer students.”*

Jerry Lucido, University of Southern California

Most four-year colleges and universities in the United States admit transfer students in some fashion. Few, however, have made community college students an integral part of their overall enrollment management strategy. The main reason appears to be a belief by many four-year institution leaders that there is an inexhaustible supply of high school graduates to recruit. But there are other reasons as well. For example, at smaller liberal arts colleges, which have anchored their institutions in a tightly structured four-year curriculum, enrolling community college students is difficult because there are few entrées for latecomers. Larger institutions, especially public four-year universities, manage to admit community college transfers, even relatively large numbers of them, but the effort is sometimes lackluster, a bow more to political pressure than a conscious decision to serve transfers with the same level of commitment they do for freshmen. Other four-year universities, especially those in the Southwest, are earnestly committed to reaching out to Native American students who attend two-year tribal colleges, but their efforts are challenged by the remoteness of some colleges and the reluctance of students to leave their families and homeland (a not dissimilar concern of students from other underserved groups).

Whatever the reason for avoiding transfer students, public community colleges — and the students they serve — have an increasing visibility among policymakers who see these institutions as serving greater numbers of students at a lower cost. They are also becoming more popular among students and parents who are anxious to extend their higher education resources in the face of rising four-year college tuitions and academic competition. Moreover,

the college-going population is changing. According to the Western Interstate Commission for Higher Education (WICHE), the number of public high school graduates is expected to decline, reaching its lowest point in 2013-14.<sup>2</sup> Highlighting this volatile confluence of variables, a Brookings Institution study recently concluded, “Confronted with high tuition costs [at four-year institutions], a weak economy, and increased competition for admission to four-year colleges, students today are more likely than at any other point in history to choose to attend a community college” [emphasis added].<sup>3</sup>

Consider the following:

- **Community colleges are the largest postsecondary education segment and its share of the undergraduate population is likely to increase:** Community colleges enroll more than seven million students, nearly 44 percent of all undergraduates in the United States.<sup>4</sup> In the 2007-08 academic year, community colleges enrollment hit an all-time high, especially among traditional college-aged students (18–24 years). In comparison, enrollments at four-year institutions were flat. More remarkably, among all 18-to-24-year-olds in the United States, one student in 10 was attending a community college.<sup>5</sup>
- **Community college students want to transfer:** Transfer has been and continues to be a popular goal for a large proportion of incoming community college students. Surveys indicate that at least 50 percent and perhaps as many as 80 percent of all incoming community college students seek to transfer and earn a bachelor’s degree.<sup>6</sup> Moreover, many students who intend to earn sub-baccalaureate credentials at a community college often increase their educational aspirations after starting at a two-year college.<sup>7</sup>
- **Community colleges will prepare more students for transfer in the future, especially students from middle-class backgrounds:** The American Association of Community Colleges (AACC) estimates that between 2007 and 2009, the number of full-time students enrolled in community colleges grew 24 percent.<sup>8</sup> And, as noted above, significant overall growth in



community college enrollment has been fueled largely by traditional-age students (18–24 years). Traditional-age students attending full time are far more likely than other students to have transfer and the bachelor’s degree as a goal.

- **Community colleges attract students from underserved groups in greater numbers than four-year colleges and universities:**

White students dominate community college enrollments as they do in four-year institutions. Compared to four-year institutions, however, community colleges enroll greater proportions of African American, Hispanic, and first-generation students, as well as students from the lowest-income level and single-parent families.<sup>9</sup> These relative proportions are likely to increase since, for example, the population of students from underrepresented ethnic groups is expected to increase substantially in the coming decades.<sup>10</sup> Moreover, students from underserved groups, especially Hispanic and Native American students, have traditionally enrolled in community colleges in greater numbers than in public four-year institutions, regardless of their income level.<sup>11</sup>

- **Community colleges cost less to attend than four-year institutions:** The cost of college is rising at two- and four-year colleges and universities, just not as fast or as much at community colleges. According to data compiled by the College Board and AACC, tuition and fees at community colleges average only 36.2 percent of the average four-year public college tuition and fee bill.<sup>12</sup>

- **Community colleges are more accessible than four-year institutions:** According to AACC, there is a community college located within driving distance of most Americans. Moreover, community colleges are more evenly distributed compared to four-year institutions. Twenty-nine percent of community colleges are located in cities, 24 percent in towns and 18 percent in rural areas.<sup>13</sup> In a recent survey of students, proximity was a major reason why they selected one school over another.<sup>14</sup>

Appreciating that community colleges offer a host of advantages to first-time students — advantages that four-year institutions are finding difficult to match — Frank Ashley, vice chancellor for academic affairs at the Texas A&M University System, recalls the advice he gave his staff when he supervised admissions at Texas A&M–Commerce: “Listen guys, we can’t compete against the cost of the community college or their numerous locations. We should really concentrate our [outreach] funds toward recruiting transfer students ...”

As four-year institution leaders like Frank Ashley will attest in the following pages, the higher education marketplace is changing, and transfer students will be an important and permanent part of it.

## PART 2

### Developing a Strategic Focus and Something More — Authentic Commitment

*“Who is truly the voice for transfer students at your institution? Who are your champions? Is there an institutional commitment to transfer students? Is it a part of the institution’s values? If it is not, you’re just spinning your wheels.”*

Marc Harding, Iowa State University

The higher education leaders interviewed for this project stressed that a serious commitment to enroll and serve transfer students from community colleges cannot be a separate initiative, parked along a sidetrack, while the institution fulfills its mission on the main line. Minimally, the institution must value transfer students by including them as part of its strategic enrollment plan and, ideally, at the core of its institutional mission. If a four-year college or university does not foster an institution-wide appreciation of transfer students as full-fledged members of the campus community, their presence serves neither the student nor the institution well. Mark Allen Poisel, associate vice president for student development and enrollment services at the University of Central Florida,<sup>15</sup> describes the problem:

*What happens, especially in large institutions, but throughout the country, is that transfer students are treated as second-class citizens. Intentionally or not, people design programs around freshmen. At the University of Central Florida, we value freshmen, but we value transfers too, understanding that sometimes our efforts might have to be the same, but sometimes might have to be different.*

Many of the higher education leaders interviewed for this report make a distinction between a *tactical* commitment to transfer students and a *strategic* one. The former being an opportunistic approach that

sees the enrollment of transfer students as the only aim; and the latter approach that views the education of transfer students as a broader commitment, encompassing enrollment and service to these students after they matriculate at the four-year institution.

Without a long-term, strategic commitment, several leaders candidly argue that an institution’s commitment to transfer students is nothing more than a mercenary process designed to enroll students as backfill for an otherwise unsuccessful freshman recruitment season.

“I think at some institutions there’s a serious orientation toward transfer students to balance the ledgers,” says Marc Cutright, associate professor of higher education at the University of North Texas.

Including transfers as part of its institutional mission allows faculty and staff to plan for these students with the same seriousness of effort that an institution approaches admission of first-time college students. This is necessary because transfer students present four-year colleges and universities with a series of challenges in almost all facets of the institution. Youlonda Copeland-Morgan, associate vice president for enrollment management at Syracuse University, remarks: “I think Syracuse is in the same place that every other institution finds itself: Struggling to determine the right number of transfer students and assessing how this number will impact housing, advising, financial aid and the curriculum.”

Unless these and other areas are addressed, an institution may increase enrollment of transfers in the short term, only to lose them later through attrition and indifference, as noted by Laura Doering, director of transfer relations at Iowa State University: “We can’t sustain our enrollment of transfer students without getting them to graduation.”

#### What Transfer Students Bring to the Four-Year Campus

For colleges struggling with whether the enrollment of community college students should be a part of their institutional future, experts agree that these students offer a number of advantages to the campus community. First, transfer students play an important role in diversifying a campus, a strategic

goal of almost all higher education institutions. Alfred Herrera, assistant vice provost at the University of California–Los Angeles, explains:

*The obvious advantage in admitting transfer students is that you obtain representation of students from different communities who have different life experiences. I think one of the goals of higher education is to prepare students to compete and perform well in the real world — to be able to change that world in ways that matter. Having students come from a variety of areas — whether it is geographic, cultural, ethnic, age — is a critical factor in that preparation.*

Transfer students bring diversity primarily because public community colleges enroll more students from underserved groups than any other higher education entity. The low cost, open admission and proximity of community colleges make them accessible to the widest variety of students in American society. Of the seven million community college students currently enrolled in for-credit courses, 42 percent are the first in their family to attend college, 46 percent are receiving financial aid and 45 percent are from an underrepresented ethnic minority group.<sup>16</sup> This access has been especially important to students from underserved groups, which will constitute an ever-larger share of the American population in the coming decades. Youlonda Copeland-Morgan summarizes this trend:

*When we pay attention to the changing demographics of our students in our community and the rest of the country, the importance of community colleges becomes obvious. I mean you really have to be walking around with your eyes closed not to see this.*

This changing demographic has implications for almost all higher education institutions, but plays out in different ways around the country. In some regions — the West and the Southwest in particular — the number of students wanting a college education is exploding, due mainly to the rising number of college-age Latino students who begin their education at community colleges. In Texas, which has one of the highest proportions of Latino students in the United States, the community college is playing a pivotal role in the statewide “Closing the Gaps” initiative, which

is designed to increase the academic achievement of all underserved students. According to Bonita Jacobs, executive director of the National Institute for the Study of Transfer Students at the University of North Texas.<sup>17</sup> “Transfers are our bread and butter. If we ignore the transfer population, there is no way the state will meet its Closing the Gaps goals.”

In other regions of the country, four-year institutions are preparing for a static or lower high school graduation rate. This is especially true in the Midwest and New England. Students in community colleges become attractive as a pipeline to maintain or increase current enrollment levels. Yet all of the leaders interviewed for this project, regardless of their functional area, identified the importance of transfer students in terms more global than the immediate enrollment needs of their institutions.

“We made a decision very early that we were not going to enroll more transfers as a numbers game and partner only with our largest feeder community colleges. We see this as long-term relationship building,” says Marc Harding, assistant vice president for enrollment and director of admissions at Iowa State University.

Moreover, although not all institutions in this report have a land-grant mission, most representatives spoke largely in land-grant terms, stressing how the enrollment of transfers serves not only the institution but also their communities and the nation. Jerry Lucido, executive director of the Center for Enrollment Research, Policy, and Practice at the University of Southern California, one of that state’s largest private institutions, noted, “Serving transfer students serves USC’s interest certainly in its enrollment functions, but it also serves social goals in ... transforming our area and Los Angeles. In some ways, USC functions almost as a private land-grant university.”

Iowa State University, one of the nation’s largest public institutions, has made a significant effort in the last decade to increase the number of students that it enrolls from Iowa’s community colleges. Although part of this initiative was driven by the need to maintain enrollment in a state with a projected decline in high school graduates, the most significant impetus was to reach out more broadly to the citizens of Iowa.

"We are a land-grant university, and we should be reaching out to community colleges and doing it better than anyone else," says Marc Harding.

The University of Arizona, also a land-grant institution, understands that it has a special responsibility to serve the state's constituents. "About 36 percent of the land base in Arizona is tribal land. We have a responsibility to reach out to those students," says Karen Francis-Begay, special advisor to the president on Native American affairs.

The final and most important advantage of transfer students is that most are good students. In fact, all of the higher education leaders interviewed for this report emphasized that transfer students perform well at their institutions and are at least as accomplished as their first-year students, sometimes more so. Angela Peterson, associate vice president for regional campuses at the University of Central Florida, notes that of the 10 outstanding senior awards UCF awarded last winter, seven were community college transfers.

**Patricia McWade, dean of student financial aid services at Georgetown University says, "We have a very high graduation rate for transfer students. They graduate with distinction."**

Janina Montero, vice chancellor for student affairs at UCLA, concurs, "Transfer students bring a focus to their academic work and they graduate at the same rate as our freshmen. Our transfers participate in all of our academic departments. They are really spread across all majors."

Summing up the advantages that transfer students bring to the four-year institution, Stephen Farmer, director of admission at the University of North Carolina–Chapel Hill, stresses that "enrolling transfer students is *not* charity."

## The Role of Institutional Leadership

The experts agreed that a commitment to recruit, enroll and serve transfer students requires vision from administrative and faculty leadership. At Georgetown University, transfer students have been an important part of the student body for two decades. According to Patricia McWade, this came about as the result of the leadership of Father Timothy Healy, who led the institution from 1976 to 1989. "Father Healy had a

vision back then to enroll students from community colleges," she says. A transfer plan soon followed, providing an important gateway for community college students to attend an elite four-year institution.

Leadership alone, while essential, is not enough, however. The experts agreed that a broader consensus must be formed.

"One of the problems in getting people to grab hold of the transfer issue is that we don't talk about it with senior staff," says Copeland-Morgan. She acknowledges that institutions are complex places and that staff are busy and sometimes distracted, but "enrollment is one of the pillars of the institution" and should be the concern of leaders throughout the university.

Leadership, especially in dealing with transfer students, should not be a one-way conversation.

**"There was so little that we knew when we began our work with community college transfers, says Steve Farmer. "We approached it from the position of abject humility. Instead of trying to tell the world how to do it our way, we developed some partnerships with community college colleagues who could help us."**

Leadership also is needed from community colleges. Bringing leaders together — faculty, staff and students — helps establish and maintain these pivotal interinstitutional partnerships. Alfred Herrera notes that UCLA's chancellor, for example, regularly visits community colleges throughout California, and he brings a team with him, including senior staff from admissions and student and academic affairs.

In Florida, leaders of two- and four-year institutions created the College Access Initiative ([www.collegeaccess.ucf.edu](http://www.collegeaccess.ucf.edu)), which focuses on providing access to bachelor's degrees to the Central Florida region. Transfer is an essential part of this initiative, with special attention to curriculum alignment from K–12 through higher education.

"It's about what we can do as a region that we cannot do independently," says Angela Peterson, from the University of Central Florida.<sup>18</sup>

## PART 3

# Reaching Out to Community College Transfer Students — It's Harder Than It Looks

*“If you are going to recruit transfer students, you have to invest the time and the staff to do it.”*

Mildred R. Johnson, Virginia Tech

Reaching out to transfer students presents a unique set of outreach and recruitment challenges, differing significantly from those used to recruit freshman students. First, there is the problem of finding qualified students ready to transfer. Unlike high school cohorts that begin and end at roughly the same time, transfer cohorts are notoriously difficult to capture. Some students begin community college directly from high school, but many do not. In addition, only a small proportion of community college students transfer in two years, most take three or more years to complete a transfer program. Moreover, many students do not pursue a transfer goal until later in their community college careers, having enrolled initially for a certificate or an associate degree. The variability in a student's intentions, course-taking behavior and enrollment intensity (e.g., part-time enrollment) often exasperates recruiters who are accustomed to working with graduating high school seniors, all of whom transition to college at the same time.

The second problem, which only complicates the first, is the difficulty students have in preparing for transfer. Unlike freshmen, who are asked to complete virtually the same set of college-entrance requirements nationwide, transfer students are faced with completing a different set of entrance requirements for every four-year college and university they might consider entering. Alfred Herrera describes the problem for students in California:

*One of the major differences between freshman and transfer applicants is a freshman knows*

*he or she has to do four years of English composition and all of the other college-prep courses to go to any of our [University of California] campuses. A transfer applicant, however, must focus on prerequisite courses that will prepare him or her for a particular major. But the reality is we have nine different undergraduate campuses, and there could be nine different kinds of patterns of preparation for any given major.*

These problems make it difficult for a four-year institution to recruit transfer students in standardized ways. “When high school students come here [USC], we all know they're starting from scratch. When transfer students arrive, they've already started college, and one size doesn't fit all,” says Timothy Brunold, dean of admission at the University of Southern California.

Steve Farmer adds, “This is an exaggeration, but you can take care of a first-year student in a minute and then your next appointment is a community college transfer student and you're talking about an hour. There are no rules that apply adequately to the personal circumstances of these students. You have to fit a program together to meet each student's strengths and gaps.”

### Speak Clearly and Often About Preparation

Given the complexities of preparing for transfer, how can four-year institutions best advise community college students? According to the experts, the outreach message must be purposeful, concise and clear — and focus on academic preparation. Community college students who prepare themselves well by completing rigorous and appropriate course work are far more likely to succeed than those who do not.

**“If you want transfer students to be successful, academic preparation should not be an afterthought,” recommends Timothy Brunold.**

Kim Harves, senior assistant director of undergraduate admissions at Georgetown University, adds, “When it comes down to it, the student must have the appropriate course work to be able to graduate in four years.”

But what kind of preparation should four-year institutions recommend? This is where the outreach message can become a bit cloudy, warn our experts. Many institutions advise students to take general education courses while attending a community college. This is fine, as far as it goes, but may not be specific enough.

“The challenge of getting into Virginia Tech, particularly as a transfer, is that we give preference to students who have completed English, math and science for their particular discipline. I’m not sure other schools are that specific,” says Mildred Johnson, director of undergraduate admissions.

Kasey Urquidez, assistant vice president of student affairs at the University of Arizona, agrees: **“We know from our research here that no matter the students’ major, if they have not fulfilled math, they are not going to do as well compared to students who have.”**

Steve Farmer echoes this advice: “The transition between our partner schools — no matter how hard they work and how hard we work — the toughest part of the transition is in the STEM fields.” He adds that the University of North Carolina–Chapel Hill, as a highly selective institution, has an obligation to be clear about what it will take to succeed at this institution. Otherwise, he says, “It’s really an issue of throwing somebody into the deep end of the pool.”

Higher education leaders stress that students should also prepare themselves for the major they wish to pursue at a four-year institution.

“Make sure your transfers are qualified by completing courses that they will need for their major,” advises Angela Peterson. She adds, however, that this is harder than it sounds. For example, students who do not complete the lower-division preparation requirements at the community college will find it even more difficult to make the transition to a four-year institution, especially with majors in the natural and physical sciences, which require two years of lower-division classes in mathematics, physics, chemistry and biology. And students with no major at all face the highest hurdles: “Ten to 15 percent of our transfer students have not picked a major when they transfer to our campus,” says Mark Allen Poisel. “Of course the problem, as we explain it to the students,

is that it is much more difficult to pick classes if you don’t have a major.”

## Creating a Transfer Pathway

Reaching out to prospective transfer students — helping them plan for a major, complete general education requirements, and strengthen their writing and math skills — makes the work of a recruiter a far more prescribed activity than simply talking about the success of the basketball team or giving tours of the spacious new student union. Indeed, enrolling transfer students is less about traditional recruitment and more about identifying and preparing students at community colleges, concludes higher education leaders.

The developmental aspects of outreach are apparent at UCLA, which has created a one-week summer bridge program for students planning to transfer to a UC campus. This program serves graduating high school students from underserved groups who plan to enroll at a community college. During the week, while residing in campus dormitories, students meet with professors and advisers, attend lectures and seminars, and gain familiarity with research and the academic community. They also spend significant time planning their transfer strategy. At the end of the week, “these students begin to see themselves as UCLA transfer students,” says Alfred Herrera. “And they enter a community college with a plan of action that is essential for ultimate academic success.”

Admission and outreach leaders at the University of North Carolina–Chapel Hill start preparing prospective transfer students while they are still in high school. Using a Jack Kent Cooke Foundation grant, they partner with community colleges in the Raleigh-Durham area to identify students in high school who might make a good fit at Chapel Hill (but who do not meet UNC’s freshman admission requirements). Chapel Hill guarantees admission to these students if they attend a participating community college, complete a prescribed set of courses (and earn a specific GPA), and meet regularly with advisers at the two- and four-year institutions.

In addition, the UNC program allows these students to participate in Chapel Hill campus activities while they are still community college students. Program requirements are stringent and not all students are successful, reports Steve Farmer. But, he adds,

**“We can’t get students to make the sacrifices we think they must make unless we promise them that their work is going to pay off. Our program is designed to promise the student something that he or she willing to [make a] sacrifice for.”**

Several institutions participating in this initiative, including Georgetown University, the University of Central Florida, Iowa State University and Texas A&M University, have developed programs that link community colleges more closely to the four-year institution. For example, Georgetown’s Preferred Consideration Program invites participating community colleges to nominate outstanding, nontraditional community college students who might be strong candidates to complete their undergraduate degree there. Other four-year institutions, such as the University of Arizona, send their advisers to visit community colleges on a regular basis. A sustained presence on the community college campus means that the four-year institution representative is in a good position to help guide prospective students in selecting courses that will prepare them for the upper division.

Community college leaders welcome these advisers on their campuses. They increase the community college’s overall advising capacity, demonstrate the commitment of the four-year institution to community colleges and establish credibility — in the student’s eyes — for the transfer process.

“Students will listen to a university representative before they’ll listen to the community college adviser. Community college folks will tell you the same thing,” says Mark Allen Poisel. He adds that this is not a criticism of community college counselors, but rather a reflection of the difficulty and uncertainty inherent in the current transfer process.

Nevertheless, our experts agree that the unsung community college counselor reaches many more students than any outreach office of a four-year institution can. And, if properly served, these professionals can be their institution’s best outreach partner.

“Community college counselors are ‘our voice,’ throughout the state,” says Marc Harding of Iowa State.

To strengthen this partnership and to increase its recruitment of community college transfers,

Iowa State University developed the Admissions Partnership Program (see sidebar, p.14). The program includes three transfer admissions counselors who visit Iowa’s 15 community colleges.

“Their job is not just to go out and set up a table in the student center to recruit students,” says Laura Doering. “That’s not how it works for our transfer recruitment process. Our counselors’ job is to build relationships with students and community college counselors, talk with prospective students in transfer planning classes, and pay attention to what’s new on the community college campus.”

Outreach representatives from the University of Central Florida’s DirectConnect program (see sidebar, p. 14) begin to work with community college students soon after they complete 30 units. The Central Florida advisers have an office on the community college campuses and spend most of their time there. In return, the community college provides space and an Internet connection. With advisers working at the community college and the four-year institution, transition issues for students are minimized.

Virginia Tech goes a step further. Campus representatives are empowered to admit students “on the spot.” In January and early February, Virginia Tech representatives visit all community colleges in the state that request their services. The Virginia Tech representative makes individual appointments with students who are interested in transferring there. The representative reviews the students’ transcripts and discusses their goals for admission to Virginia Tech. If a student meets all the requirements, he or she can be admitted before the day ends.

Of course, Virginia Tech advisers cannot admit every community college student with whom they meet. However, the advisers provide guidance to help inadmissible students plan their transfer strategy to attend Virginia Tech in the future. For example, if a student was denied admission as a freshman, the Virginia Tech adviser will write a transfer contract so that the student has an opportunity to return the following year.

“If students are willing to go to a community college, we will outline the courses they need for one year and if they earn certain grades — mostly A’s and B’s — then we will admit them for the following term,” says Mildred Johnson.

# Transfer Admission Guarantees and Dual Admission Programs

Community colleges and four-year institutions especially committed to strengthening transfer have developed formalized arrangements called transfer admission guarantee (TAG) or dual enrollment programs. Both function similarly: Community college students are provided with a guarantee of admission to the four-year institution if they complete an academic contract that delineates the courses and grades they must earn for admission. Programs differ, however, in the kinds of services they provide to prospective students.

Beyond the guarantee of admission, TAG programs usually require students to meet regularly with a community college or four-year adviser to assure that they are making appropriate academic progress. At the University of California, community college students can choose to enter into a TAG agreement online with one or more of seven participating campuses in the system. A student's application is then reviewed by his or her community college counselor and then forwarded to the UC campuses to which the student has applied.

Dual enrollment programs are generally more elaborate. In addition to academic advising, participating community college students are eligible to enroll in one or more courses at a four-year institution. In addition, they have access to programs and events at the four-year institution, such as libraries, special lectures, sporting events and, in some cases, on-campus housing.

"So isn't it cool that you can be an Admissions Partnership Program student taking courses at Des Moines Community College but living in our residence halls so you can feel a part of the Iowa State community?" says Marc Harding.

Both TAG and dual enrollment programs help community college students by providing a road map for transfer, while also introducing them to the culture of the four-year institution. Summing up the advantages of these initiatives, Frank Ashley, vice chancellor for academic affairs at Texas A&M, notes:

"Community college students are no longer gambling with their educational future. They know what they need to do to transfer."

TAG and dual enrollment programs discussed in this report include the following:

- DirectConnect: <http://www.regionalcampuses.ucf.edu/directconnect.asp>
- Admissions Partnership Program: <http://www.admissions.iastate.edu/partnership/>
- Blinn Team (Transfer Enrollment at A&M): <http://blinnteam.tamu.edu/>
- University of California Transfer Admission Guarantee: <http://www.universityofcalifornia.edu/admissions/transfer/guarantee/index.html>



## Location, Location, Location ...

A successful partnership with one or more community colleges inevitably leads to requests for participation from other community colleges. However, a single four-year institution may be unable to serve all community colleges in a state or a region. Marc Harding at Iowa State recommends that, given the complexity of the transfer process, most four-year institutions should begin by partnering with their local community college(s). Easy access allows both the two- and four-year institutions to sustain and strengthen the ongoing conversations that will be needed to build a productive transfer pathway.

Texas A&M at College Station recruits most of its transfers from nearby Blinn College, a partnership that represents one of the first dual admission programs in the nation. Eligible students are admitted concurrently to Blinn College and Texas A&M. These students are allowed to complete up to six credits per semester at A&M and have access to all of A&M's campus programs and services. If they earn at least a B average at Blinn, they automatically transfer to A&M as juniors.

"We developed this model about 11 years ago and called it the 'Blinn Team.' It has become a model around the nation," says Frank Ashley. "The reason this model works is proximity. Both institutions are in the same area."

Some four-year institutions develop partnerships with community colleges well beyond their immediate region, however. This works best, experts agree, when such a pathway connects well to the mission of the institution. For example, Iowa State nets only 21 students in any given year from a community college three hours away in the northwest part of the state. Yet, serving these students is important for Iowa State's Department of Agriculture, which has devoted time and resources to developing articulation agreements and other services to make sure students are well prepared for transfer.

## Training Outreach and Recruitment Staff

Leaders of four-year institutions agree that recruitment staff must be trained to work with prospective community college applicants in ways that are different from freshmen recruitment staff. Timothy Brunold says, "I've got some real hotshot

young recruiters, but they don't know anything about how to talk to transfer students. Most recruitment folks have never advised continuing college students. Your representatives have to be more precise. You don't want to send anybody down the wrong path."

Karen Francis-Begay says four-year institution representatives need to "get out of their comfort zone." Speaking about the importance of personal visits to Native American communities but applying this advice universally, she says: "I take administrators on site visits to the communities of our students and let them see not only the challenges that rural Arizona faces but also the richness of these communities and why students are so devoted to them."

Making students aware of the obstacles that might appear along the transfer pathway is one aim of UCLA's transfer peer mentor program. Former community college transfer students, now currently enrolled at UCLA, visit prospective students at community colleges in the Los Angeles basin. With the credibility of a student who has transferred successfully, these individuals are able to address not only the challenges that face prospective students preparing to transfer but also the ways in which their academic lives will change when they enroll at UCLA. For students from underserved groups who might not see themselves as "UCLA material," peer mentors offer themselves as an example of success, as well as uncensored advice about the challenges and opportunities that lie ahead.

## PART 4

# Admitting and Enrolling Community College Transfer Students — Taking the Plunge

*“There is no such thing as seamless transfer. The articulation of courses is important, but in the scheme of things, it’s the least of it.”*

Steve Farmer,  
The University of North Carolina–Chapel Hill

Experts agree that the goal of any successful transfer process is to admit academically prepared students who are ready to begin the major at the four-year institution. It makes little sense to enroll students only to have them repeat or complete additional lower-division courses. While the goal is clear, the road getting there may be rocky.

Outwardly, the admission process for transfer students is very much like the process for freshmen. Prospective students complete an application, write an essay, forward transcripts from all the schools they have attended and perhaps send letters of recommendation. In fact, most four-year institutions have some kind of process in place to review applicants from other postsecondary institutions. But this is where the similarities end. Four-year colleges and universities interested in recruiting significant numbers of community college students have to prepare for three challenges: evaluating the transfer students’ application files, which are more difficult to review than freshman files; assessing the students’ preparation for their intended major; and determining the students’ educational fit.

Transfer applicants may apply to a variety of majors, unlike freshmen who, by and large, enter college undeclared. This means that almost every transfer applicant has a unique pattern of courses that must be carefully evaluated. Moreover, transfer applicants are likely to have completed additional courses to

satisfy the general education requirements at one or more four-year institutions. So, unless a four-year institution has a standardized articulation agreement covering all majors and GE requirements (a rare occurrence, say our experts), admission evaluators are faced with the time-consuming responsibility of reviewing each course for appropriate application of credit (general education, preparation for the major and general electives). The job of the admission staff assigned to evaluate these transcripts is enormous.

The second challenge is assuring that the community college student is prepared for the major and has demonstrated sufficient mastery of lower-division work to make the leap to the upper division. This determination will be derived largely from the pattern of courses and grades a student has earned at the community college. Yet, not all courses are comparable, despite legislative mandates to the contrary. Without an articulation agreement, faculty members and admission staff are faced with judging a student’s preparation based on little more than a title on a transcript.

The third challenge for four-year institutions is in assuring a reasonable educational fit between student and institution, which our experts argue is as essential a criterion for transfers as it is for first-year students. “UCLA is a very popular place ... but that does not necessarily mean it’s a good fit for all transfers,” says Janina Montero.

Although “educational fit” is something of a nebulous, catch-all phrase used in freshman admission, it means something more concrete with transfer students. Our experts recommend that beyond determining transfer of credit and academic preparation for the major, there should be a commitment to review a transfer student’s application more broadly. Although the admission directors participating in this project — who are associated with some of the most selective and/or popular institutions in the nation — could easily fill a class using academic criteria alone, they insist that it is critical to take into account the unique backgrounds and circumstances that transfer students bring to the four-year institution.

Kim Harves says Georgetown faculty and staff scrutinize the transfer applicant’s file to make sure that “the student’s course work is appropriate and that the student has demonstrated success at

the college level.” But, she adds, Georgetown is committed to a comprehensive admission process. “We read everything.”

Adds UCLA’s Alfred Herrera:

*My argument has always been that if a transfer student can juggle a full-time job, a full community college class load, and family responsibilities, and still perform at a reasonably high academic level, there’s no reason why they couldn’t be successful at this institution.*

Despite these challenges — assessing transfer credit, determining preparation for the major and assuring educational fit — many four-year colleges and universities successfully admit and serve hundreds of transfer students each year. How do they do it?

Assuming that a four-year institution has already established a substantive partnership with one or more community colleges (as described in Part 2), our experts outline a series of tasks: Align courses and programs to ensure that students are well prepared for the upper division, develop reasonable and transparent credit-transfer policies that provide students with specific guidelines about the courses that will — and will not — transfer, solicit faculty commitment and involvement in the admission review process, and create institutional incentives to enroll transfers.

### Aligning Curricula: The Art of Articulation

If the aim of course articulation — agreements that describe how courses from a community college will transfer to a four-year institution — is to prepare students making the transition from a two-year to a four-year institution, this goal is lost in the sometimes rancorous discourse that reflects relationships between two- and four-year institutions. Community colleges complain that four-year institutions are not sufficiently interested in transfer and that this is reflected in their reluctance to accept community college course work for transfer credit. Four-year institutions counter that they are responsible for the bachelor’s degree and must be assured that the courses they accept are appropriate and equivalent.

“The articulation agreement is crucial, but it’s not enough,” says Steve Farmer. “And if it’s used too

narrowly or legalistically — as a treaty that maintains the demilitarized zone between two empires — then it can actually work against the interest of students.”

Jerry Lucido adds, “I am not one who wants to get hung up on the philosophical issue that our definition of a liberal education is better than someone else’s. That’s a big problem we just need to get over and accept more courses, frankly.”

Marc Cutright, a University of North Texas faculty member, understands the need of faculty to assure comparability of courses among institutions and hopes that two- and four-year college faculty will come together to resolve disjunctures in curriculum alignment. But, he adds, “Either faculty will do it or it will be done to them by state lawmakers — with a likely outcome that their response will be ham-handed and counterproductive.”

Legislative mandate appears to be a popular solution with states such as Florida, Arizona, Maryland and several others requiring all courses offered in public institutions to be transferable. But, homogenizing the curriculum appears to satisfy no one and it represents a lost opportunity for two- and four-year faculty to collectively determine how best to prepare students for the baccalaureate degree, which, after all, is both the purpose and the desired outcome of curriculum alignment. Laura Doering comments, **“Creating good articulation means keeping the student at the center.”**

Still, institutions across the country are experimenting with ways of creating stronger curriculum alignment among institutions using nontraditional methods. Faculty members at the University of Central Florida, for example, are working with their peers at several local community colleges to develop a curriculum focusing on undergraduate research that bridges the two- and four-year institutions. Students in the community college develop a research agenda that they will follow when they enter the upper division at UCF, reports Angela Peterson.

### Creating Transparent Transfer Credit Policies

Articulation is at the core of most discussions of transfer because without some agreement about the transferability of credit, students are forced to select classes at the community college based on a

series of “educated” guesses. Even so, many four-year institutions do not inform their admitted transfer students how their credit will transfer until these students are well into their first term at the senior institution.

In a study of four-year institutions in Texas, Marc Cutright found that “it is not uncommon for students to be two, three or four months into their first semester at the senior institution before they get an evaluation of the transferability and applicability of their credits from the community college.”

At Iowa State, students who participate in the Admissions Partnership Program receive credit evaluations showing how the courses completed at their community college will apply toward the Iowa State degree. And they receive this official credit evaluation every semester.

“Providing this information on a regular basis allows students to stay on track to graduate within a reasonable amount of time,” says Marc Harding.

At Georgetown University, prospective students receive a credit evaluation about 15 days after they receive their letter of admission. They have this evaluation in hand prior to making a decision about whether to accept the offer of admission. Colleen Miltenberg, assistant director of undergraduate admissions at Georgetown University, believes that telling students how their credit will transfer before making a decision to come to Georgetown is critical: “We don’t want to put the student in the position of making a decision to attend Georgetown and then finding out later that, ‘Oh, by the way, you thought you had three semesters of transfer credit, but you only have two semesters.’”

**Marc Cutright is even more candid: “Would you be interested in buying a car if you signed a contract and the dealer said, ‘We’ll get back to you in three months with the price?’”**

## Involving Faculty

Experts agree that if an institution’s aim is to admit transfer students who are prepared for their chosen major, faculty must be involved from the beginning — not simply to create an admission policy (though that is essential), but as participants who are actively

engaged in the admission process — reading applications, assessing student preparation and consulting with admission staff.

Georgetown University’s success in admitting and graduating transfer students is due in part to the participation of faculty in the review of applicants’ files. Faculty members are in a better position than staff to assess the preparedness of students based on the courses completed at the community college. Georgetown’s Miltenberg notes that “faculty read the applications of the students they will be teaching.” This helps Georgetown select students “who are really going to be viable candidates,” she says.

Camille Martinez-Yaden, director of Project Native III, a teacher preparation program jointly sponsored by the University of Arizona and Tohono O’odham Community College, believes that the influence of faculty is magnified if they also teach at the community college. In her experience, “it makes a difference to students to see a representative traversing the boundary between the two institutions.”

At Wheaton College, the role of the faculty is pivotal in other ways. As a “quintessential” small, private New England college, Wheaton’s curriculum, developed over its nearly 200-year history, is steeped in the liberal arts, spanning a traditional four-year college time frame. This can make it difficult for transfer students to find an entry point midstream.

Gail Berson, dean of admission and student aid at Wheaton, says, “The genesis of the private, liberal arts institution is built around a four-year academic experience ... That’s how the faculty think about the delivery of the curriculum.” Acknowledging that this may create barriers for the admission of transfer students, she notes that Wheaton faculty are currently working with faculty colleagues within Miami Dade College’s honors program to fashion ways of preparing potential transfers for a private, liberal arts college experience. She emphasizes that faculty expertise in building curricular connections between two different kinds of institutions is essential.

## Creating Incentives: Identifying Transfer Targets and Admission Preferences

Institutions that admit large numbers of transfer students emphasize the need to have separate admission targets for freshmen and transfers. Otherwise the admission process becomes muddled, making it too easy to focus on freshmen — the traditional constituency — rather than on transfer students. Moreover, according to our experts, a transfer “target” motivates staff by providing clear direction for recruitment efforts.

To emphasize the importance of community college students to their campus, Iowa State uses three undergraduate admission targets to guide their recruitment and outreach strategy. One target is for freshmen and the latter two are for transfer students.

“When we discuss enrollment goals ... there are always two transfer numbers,” says Lora Doering. “An overall number for transfers and a number for Iowa *community college* transfers. That’s a constituency we go after very specifically.”

In addition to admission targets, some four-year institutions grant community college students preference in the admission process over applicants from other four-year colleges and universities. The California Master Plan for Higher Education mandates that community college students be evaluated before all other transfer applicants. This helps explain why nearly 90 percent or more of all transfers to the University of California and California State University come from California’s community colleges. Although the practice is not prevalent nationally, there was support for this strategy among the leaders participating in this project.

“Why shouldn’t transfers be first in line for consideration?” asks Marc Cutright. “Why should they be last in line? These people have proven they can succeed in college.”

## PART 5

# Providing Financial Aid to Community College Transfer Students — It's Not Just the Money

*"The higher education community has not figured out how to serve transfer students well in the area of financial aid."*

Youlonda Copeland-Morgan, Syracuse University

That financial aid is an important element for student success is a given, but it is largely ignored insofar as transfer students are concerned. The goal, higher education leaders report, is to provide sufficient aid to transfer students so they may fully engage in the campus community. There are challenges, however, facing both the student and the institution in making this happen.

Research conducted on the financial aid behavior of community college students indicates that many do not apply for financial aid at all, even though they might be eligible. According to the College Board report, *The Financial Aid Challenge*, "In 2007-08, 58 percent of Pell-eligible students who attended community colleges either full time or part time applied for federal financial aid, compared with 77 percent of Pell-eligible students at four-year public institutions."<sup>19</sup>

The College Board report speculates that this is partly due to the relatively low cost of community colleges compared to four-year colleges and universities. As a result, many students are able to attend college part time while holding a job. (AACC reports that 47 percent of part-time students hold a part-time job and 40 percent of part-timers work full time.<sup>20</sup>) Moreover, many community college students are the first in their family to attend college and may not understand the complexities of applying for financial aid.

If students do not apply for financial aid while attending a community college, they will have very little experience with the process when it comes

time to transfer. Like high school students, they may not understand the forms to be completed or the deadlines that must be met. The result, as documented in the College Board report, is that community college students are less likely to apply for aid. Without some assistance, these students' likelihood of success is diminished for several reasons.

First, whatever the price that community college students were paying at their former institution will be higher at a four-year college or university, even at highly subsidized public institutions. For highly specialized or selective institutions, especially those in the private, not-for-profit sector, costs are especially high. "Who would have thought that we would be talking about a college education [costing] in excess of \$200,000?" says Gail Berson. "Most community college students are not in a position to underwrite this cost on their own," she adds.

Second, transfer students will be faced with the prospect of going to school full time and will be expected to complete a minimum number of units per year. The rise in the cost of textbooks and lab materials alone will significantly increase college expenses. Finally, unless students are able to transfer to a four-year institution near their community college, housing and commuting costs will increase, perhaps significantly. In response, many transfer students rely on strategies that worked at the community college, such as holding a full-time job, which, however honorable, may have perilous consequences for their academic progress.

Our experts highlight two main financial aid challenges facing most four-year institutions that wish to serve transfer students. The first challenge is the very reason why many institutions want transfer students — their educational, economic and/or cultural diversity. This diversity, however, makes fashioning a financial aid package for transfers more difficult than packaging for a first-year student. "You can't have a one size fits all formula," says Youlonda Copeland-Morgan. "A transfer student could be married with kids or single and 19 years old."

The second challenge, ironically, is that although most transfer students enter a four-year institution older than freshmen, many are not "old enough." Now in their early 20s or older, some transfer students consider themselves independent from their parents

and have been living that way for several years. But the federal government's definition for financial independence is strict, placing students in a financial aid catch-22: Although they receive no resources from their parents, current financial aid rules expect parents to contribute to their son's or daughter's educational expenses.

"Transfer students are just old enough that parents don't feel they have a responsibility to contribute to their education," says Copeland-Morgan. "They're 21, they're 22 — parents consider them independent, even if they're not."

Patricia McWade agrees. Most of Georgetown's transfer students are dependent according to the federal definition, but "the reality is that they are often not that closely aligned with their parents."

This perception of transfer students as independent leads some four-year institutions to calculate transfer students' need only as the direct cost of attending college — fees, tuition and books. Other costs, such as housing and transportation, may not be included because it is assumed that these students are already living on their own, which, indeed, may be the case. Yet it is likely they are working a low-wage job or have insufficient extra resources to make college-going successful.

Providing transfer students with less aid may keep an institution's discount rate manageable, but our experts warn that there will be a greater cost if students do not have sufficient resources to participate fully in the campus community. Time to degree and graduation rates will likely suffer. When Copeland-Morgan came to Syracuse three years ago, the institution decided to provide community college transfer students with complete financial aid packages. The institution's discount rate went up, though it is still lower than the freshman rate. Syracuse sees this as an appropriate and necessary investment, since it is likely that more transfer students will complete a degree now that they have sufficient financial aid.

## Innovations in Policies and Practices

All of the higher education leaders interviewed for this report acknowledge the difficulties inherent in addressing the financial aid needs of community college transfer students. Understanding these

needs, however, has led them to develop innovative policies and practices for transfer students:

- Package Transfers like Dependent Students:** When Syracuse distributes its institutional grant aid, rather than make the sometimes difficult determination of whether a transfer student is dependent or independent, the University now treats all transfer students up to age 24 as if they were dependent. Since many institutions package independent students to direct costs or significantly reduce the percentage of grant aid they receive, packaging them like dependent students means that independent students will get the same favorable aid awards as students who entered the University as freshman. This policy reduces the need for transfer students to borrow more expensive private loans and provides resources for room and board since many independent students live off campus and are not charged directly by the institution for these expenses. Copeland-Morgan explains, "We have established a policy that says if a student is 24 years old or younger they will be evaluated just as we would our dependent students. The assumption is that by age 24 a student has not been able to amass any substantial resources from income or elsewhere to fundamentally change his or her ability to pay for college."
- Make Work-Study Work for Transfers:** Many community college students prefer to support themselves through school by working and many wish to continue to do so after transfer. If their jobs are far from campus, however, the commute may undercut their academic success. Georgetown University takes advantage of the Federal Work-Study Program to address the needs of transfer students who wish to work. This program allows students to take a job on or near campus — with decent wages — keeping them more closely tethered to the campus.

"Work-study fits nicely for transfer students," says Patricia McWade. "Sometimes, it's hard to get transfer students to leave the job they already have. We try to educate them that this might be a better way for them to earn the money to pay for college."

- **Create Financial Aid Partnerships that Serve Students:** Interinstitutional partnerships in Florida and Texas encourage full-time enrollment by allowing students to complete courses at both institutions concurrently. By doing so, students are in a position to secure sufficient financial aid. Mark Allen Poisel of the University of Central Florida explains, “If a student declares UCF as their home institution, they can take two classes with us and two with Valencia [community college]. We can categorize them as a full-time student and can award them full-time student aid so long as they provide verification of enrollment at the other institution.” Texas A&M’s comprehensive consortia agreement with Blinn College allows “Blinn Team” members to complete up to six credits at Texas A&M—College Station, while concurrently enrolled at the community college (see Part 2). Concurrent enrollment allows students another avenue to be full time and thereby maximize their financial aid award.

- **Fund Transfer Student Scholarships:** Transfer student scholarships at four-year institutions are rare. Although private institutions rely significantly on internal or endowment funds to attract students, including transfers, to their campuses, this strategy has been applied sparingly at public four-year colleges and universities. However, as student fees and tuition rise at public institutions, especially highly selective ones that compete with private universities, their leaders are beginning to see the value in funding scholarships to help draw students to their institutions.

When Frank Ashley was interim provost at Texas A&M—Commerce, they used scholarship dollars to recruit the best community college students: “We told every community college in Texas, ‘Any student you have that is a member of *Phi Theta Kappa* [the national community college honor society], we will automatically give them a \$2,000 scholarship.’ Since then, Commerce has increased its enrollment from 7,900 transfer students to over 10,000.”

- **Help Students Understand Their Financial Aid Future:** Students who begin college at a community college and who wish to transfer often have little idea about how they will

finance their education across two institutions. Who could blame them? Even an experienced financial aid counselor would have difficulty determining the “best” financial aid package for students whose educational trajectory includes transfer. How long will they attend a community college? Will they attend full time or part time? Will they apply for financial aid or work their way through college? Any combination of these decisions will significantly affect both the amount and the kind of financial aid available to students.

Understanding the complexity inherent in the transfer process, especially regarding the financial aid literacy of community college students, Syracuse University is piloting an ambitious dual admission program that attempts to bridge this knowledge gap in a substantive way. Similar to other dual enrollment programs, eligible community college students will be dually enrolled at both the two- and four-year institutions; course credits will transfer as a result of a comprehensive articulation agreement; and students will be automatically admitted to the four-year institution upon completion of certain courses and grades. *Unlike* other dual admission programs, however, Syracuse plans to meet the full financial need of students who successfully fulfill their community college dual enrollment requirements — and will communicate this to students *in advance*. Copeland-Morgan explains, “Our belief is that if transfer students knew what it would take for them to transfer to Syracuse University, including how much aid the institution will provide them, it is an incentive for them to do well in their first two years.”

Copeland-Morgan stresses that this is not a guarantee of admission. Students must fulfill their dual enrollment agreement and meet Syracuse’s entrance requirements. The proposal’s aim is to reduce the complexity of the transfer process by minimizing concerns about financial aid, while, at the same time, creating a powerful incentive for students to perform well at the community college.



## PART 6

# Creating a Transfer Receptive Culture — Honoring the Presence and Contributions of Community College Transfer Students

*“People say transfer students will take care of themselves. The reality is they won’t. If you really want to help them get the baccalaureate degree, you’ve got to have services for them when they get to the four-year institution.”*

Mark Allen Poisel, University of Central Florida

Recruiting and admitting transfer students pre-stages what may be the most challenging part of establishing a comprehensive and strategic transfer initiative: serving them as full-fledged members of the campus community. All of our experts stress that while most four-year institutions in the United States enroll transfer students, the extent to which they are considered an honored part of the student body varies significantly. **“Our transfers are either USC Trojans or they’re not,” says Timothy Brunold. “I don’t want a bunch of students running around with a ‘Scarlet T.’ on their chest.”**

Although transfer has been around for over 100 years, there are some assumptions that have undermined students’ full integration on four-year campuses. One of these assumptions, according to our experts, is that because transfer students have college experience, they require less attention and fewer services than first-time college students. This idea — not unreasonable, just uninformed — does not account for the sometimes radical transition that students must make from a community college to a four-year institution.

“We need to debunk the myth that once a student is in higher education, they know what they’re doing,” says Mark Allen Poisel.

UCLA’s Alfred Herrera agrees and adds, “Without some assistance, transfer students are like Alice in Wonderland. They go from one place to another and have no clue about the culture of the institution.”

Herrera’s point about the culture of the institution is pivotal. Over two decades ago, researchers Richard Richardson and Louis Bender concluded that enhancing the success of transfer students must include helping them adjust from one kind of institution to another, “each with its own set of values and basic assumptions.”<sup>21</sup> At best, Richardson and Bender argue, two- and four-year institutions fail to acknowledge their unique academic cultures and the attitudes and behaviors that each produces. In recent years, however, more attention is being paid to the programs and services that establish a “transfer culture” that helps transfer students navigate the chasm between the community college and four-year institution (see sidebar, p. 24).

The perception, then, that transfer students are more sophisticated than they really are stems at least in part from the notion that community colleges operate precisely like four-year institutions (and vice versa). There are similarities, of course, but also significant differences that often trip up transfer students. For example, community colleges are generally smaller and less expensive than four-year institutions. Community colleges offer part-time enrollment, while four-year institutions are likely to insist on full-time engagement. Lacking on-campus housing, most community college students commute to school, while students in four-year institutions are far more likely to live on or near campus. The vast majority of two-year institutions are on semesters, while some four-year institutions are on a much shorter quarter system.

“Transfer students struggle with the quarter system,” says Janina Montero. “They are going from a semester system to a quarter system, and it is a challenge.”

At the University of Arizona, which pays special attention to recruiting students from two-year tribal colleges, they work with both the students and the family to ease the transition. “Many of our students are first in their family to attend college. This carries prestige within their families but also a great deal of responsibility. Often times there are greater expectations on them — they feel an obligation to

## A Transfer Culture

What factors on community college and four-year institution campuses propel transfer students toward earning the baccalaureate degree? Who are the individuals that set the stage for student transfer success? In what ways do they contribute to the development or enhancement of a transfer culture on college campuses?

Only recently have researchers and policymakers been devoting significant attention to the elements that enhance student transfer success at two- and four-year institutions. Much of this work relies heavily on the research literature concerning college-going cultures, which has documented the importance of the high school context in the preparation of first-time college students. High schools that support an ethos of college going via high academic expectations, as well as offering college-preparatory curriculum, are more effective in focusing student expectations toward higher education goals.

The same logic animates the idea of a “transfer-going culture” at community colleges and “transfer-receptive culture” at four-year institutions. The transfer policies and practices of community colleges and four-year institutions that link the success of their institutions to student transfer and completion of the baccalaureate degree are more likely to see increases in overall transfer rates. The research and policy literature is only just beginning to gain momentum — indeed, the impetus for this report is to identify important transfer elements at four-year colleges and universities. Preliminary findings suggest that institution leaders who establish transfer and baccalaureate completion as an institutional priority, while ensuring that their students see these goals as expected and attainable, are more likely to create campuses that value transfer and the obligations inherent in supporting a transfer culture.<sup>22</sup>

Although researchers will continue to isolate programs, policies and services that sustain and enhance a transfer-going culture, more encouraging perhaps is the willingness of faculty and staff, as well as legislators and other policymakers, to take seriously the needs of community college transfer students by addressing the ways in which two- and four-year institutions can serve them effectively.

go home when there is a crisis or to help the family financially,” says Francis-Begay. “Sometimes, it can be overwhelming.”

Paradoxically, some transfer students believe they do not need help making the adjustment from a two-year to a four-year college. With a year or more of postsecondary experience, they may be lured into assuming that the transition will be a breeze. But, as Poisel advises, “Don’t assume that just because they don’t *want* something, that they don’t *need* it.”

“They don’t seek help,” Poisel continues, “because they think they know the policies. But unless the four-year institution’s policies and procedures are exactly like the community college they’re coming from, transfer students are going to go through a transition. They think they know stuff when, let’s face it, they don’t.”

**Francis-Begay adds, “Sometimes our students don’t share their hardships with the university community. Yet, I think a lot of times just letting people know that they need assistance could alleviate some of the burden.”**

### Connecting Transfer Students to the Four-Year Campus Culture

Helping students connect to the culture of a four-year institution is as important for transfer students as it is for freshman students. Researchers such as Alexander Astin, Vincent Tinto and others have shown that students who bond quickly and well with their new environment are more likely to succeed academically. Most recently, the National Survey of Student Engagement revealed that transfer students, compared to first-year students, are less likely to participate in high-impact activities, such as study abroad, internships, research, and senior seminar or capstone activities.<sup>23</sup> Thus, it is especially important for four-year faculty and staff to engage transfer students early.

Connecting transfer students well to the campus community commits four-year institutions to understand and monitor their students’ campus experiences. Yet, according to our experts, many four-year institutions have considerable difficulty even assessing the time-to-degree and graduation rates of these students. There is no conspiracy to exclude

transfer students, our experts say, but simply a lack of attention to the needs of this student constituency. Understanding the extent to which these students connect effectively with the campus community will inform and improve transfer services for subsequent community college students.

Collecting and analyzing data also help defuse prejudices about the academic “worthiness” of transfer students held by some faculty and staff. It is also an effective way to help community colleges pinpoint disciplines in which their transfer students are not measuring up academically.

“It’s hard to argue with data,” says Frank Ashley. “We are able to run data on the transfer students who come to our university, and we provide these data to our community college partners. This is not finger-pointing. We *want* their students. We say to them: How can we help you make your students successful?”

But what does it mean to connect with the campus community? UCLA’s Janina Montero says, **“Most of the students who come from community colleges have not really experienced an on-campus student life. We want their experience at UCLA to be full, even if it is only for two years.”**

One of the ways that UCLA does this is by reserving on- or near-campus housing for transfer students. In a city known for cars and freeways, Montero says, “we want to make the commute as short as possible. We want to give them an opportunity to engage the university.”

“How transfers fit into the campus is something we talk with them about a great deal,” says Patricia McWade. “We want them to get the best of experiences here at Georgetown. But we also appreciate that their experience will be different than if they started here as 17- or 18-year-olds.”

Helping students engage the campus community requires the development of some basic transfer services. Some will look very much like what is already offered to freshman students but calibrated differently (e.g., orientation). Other services may be unique (e.g., transfer centers). Higher education leaders participating in this report suggest the following.

## Orientation

Freshman orientations dominate the college landscape and their importance in providing students with a good start to the college experience is generally unquestioned. Orientation programs for transfer students are less prominent and, even if an institution offers one, it is almost always a slimmed-down version of the freshman event.

**“At many four-year institutions, freshman orientation lasts two or three days, but transfer orientation is only a few hours. What’s wrong with this picture?” says Alfred Herrera.**

Mildred Johnson at Virginia Tech recalls, “When I came here in 1995, there was no orientation for transfer students. We sent them a letter and said, ‘You’ve been offered biology,’ along with a list of advisers whom they needed to contact. The university wasn’t thinking about meeting their needs. They just assumed that since these students had been to college for a year or two, they knew everything. But what we later learned was that they needed help with the transition.”

Higher education leaders stress that transfer orientation should be somewhat different from the freshman version. For example, more time should be spent on developing a first-term course schedule that aligns well with whatever the student has completed at the community college. Moreover, since the number of transfer admits is likely to be smaller than the number of freshman admits, colleges can take advantage of this by offering orientation programs that are more interactive. Mark Allen Poisel notes that UCF’s first foray into a transfer orientation program gathered all students in the student union, which was not especially conducive to planning courses. “Now, it’s very different,” he says. “Students come in and sit at a round table with eight other transfer students. They are better able to make friends and establish connections.”

Bonita Jacobs at the University of North Texas recommends that a four-year institution think carefully about what their transfer orientation program will address and try to accommodate students’ diverse needs as specifically as possible. When Jacobs was responsible for orientation a few years ago, she recalls that the freshman orientation program would

only need minor tweaks every year. But with transfer orientation, “every year it was throw it out and start over!”

“Transfer students are so diverse,” Jacobs says. “Some transfers do not have the scholastic skills to start at a four-year institution. Other transfers are highly motivated, but have been out of school for 10 years. Another set are honors students who started at a community college for financial reasons. We were trying to develop a generic orientation session to fit all of their needs and that was not realistic.”

The University of Arizona has dispensed almost completely with the traditional orientation model. Once applicants receive a letter of admission, they are able to access an online “academic tour” that is specific to their major. “After they complete this tour, they are eligible to meet with an academic adviser in their major. They can do this by telephone if they live out of town or they can do so in person,” says Kasey Urquidez.

## Transfer Centers

In addition to an orientation program for transfer students, our experts recommend transitional structures to help students manage the first term at the four-year institution. One approach is to establish “transfer centers” to create a home for transfer students on the four-year campus. Models vary, but most are designed as a place where transfer students can meet one another on campus, consult with academic advisers, and obtain information about programs and services on campus. These centers serve as a clearinghouse or “one-stop” service center. The danger with such centers, however, is that students may be less inclined to explore the rest of the four-year institution. Staying cloistered from the rest of the campus defeats the very purpose for enrolling transfers. To address this concern, the University of Arizona started a transfer center and placed it prominently within the student union building at the center of campus. “The center allows transfers to meet one another [and conducts a variety of activities] to help these students to feel part of the campus,” says Kasey Urquidez.

**“Don’t always treat transfers as a special case,” recommends Mark Allen Poisel. “Develop a program for them, create a home for them, and**

**then get them in the mainstream with everything else, and all of a sudden you're looking in a classroom where you don't know the difference."**

### Transfer Skills Courses

A growing trend among four-year institutions is to offer transfer students special transition courses in their first term on campus. These courses highlight the challenges they will face and provide strategies for overcoming them. UCLA, for example, offers "Life Skills for College Students," which focuses on decision making, emotional and cognitive development, and communications. "When they take that course, they're able to connect with the institution faster because they are in a room with people like themselves," says Janina Montero.

The University of North Texas also offers transfers a wide variety of services designed specifically to address their needs, including time management, study skills and selecting a major. In addition, the campus offers guidance on money management, "because suddenly transfer students are in an institution where college costs are much greater," says Bonita Jacobs.

### Transfer Student Housing

Several of our experts recommend that housing be reserved specifically for transfer students. **"There's a belief that transfer students don't live in campus housing. It's not true," says Jacobs.**

As noted earlier, UCLA offers new transfer students on-campus housing as a way of helping them fully participate in campus life. It also makes college more affordable, especially in cities, such as Los Angeles, where rents are high. Other institutions, such as Georgetown, are following this lead. These institutions understand, however, that traditional dormitories may not appeal to older students. In addition, students with families need far different accommodations. As a result, institutions must think carefully, our experts recommend, about both the quantity and the type of housing they are willing to reserve for transfer students.

The University of Central Florida has addressed the need for transfer student housing in a different way. The proximity of community colleges near UCF, coupled with other interinstitutional agreements in

articulation and financial aid, has created an academic culture that makes it hard to tell whether any given student is enrolled in a community college or in UCF. This is reflected in the local housing stock, where one would be likely to find, as described by Mark Allen Poisel, an apartment house that includes students from multiple institutions.

## PART 7

### Parting Thoughts — Looking Ahead

*“If you’re going to enroll transfer students... there should be a critical mass on campus — not a token presence.”*

Janina Montero, UCLA

The modest goal of this report has been to give voice to the needs and challenges facing four-year institutions as they work to recruit, enroll and serve community college students; and to solicit and publicize the advice of higher education leaders whose experience serving transfers would be of help to other four-year colleges and university leaders wishing to enhance their commitment to these students.

The reason for assembling these voices is clear. First, community colleges are no longer institutions for “other people’s kids.” As described in Part 1, community colleges enroll more students than any other postsecondary segment in the United States, and the popularity of these institutions is likely to increase in the coming decades. Second, the severity of the current recession, combined with the increasing cost of attending a four-year college, has forced many families to consider the community college option — families that, only a few years ago, would not have entertained the notion of sending their children to a two-year institution. Third, students from underserved groups attend community colleges in greater numbers than four-year institutions and, according to virtually every demographer alive, these student groups, especially Hispanic students, are predicted to post the greatest gains in population for the foreseeable future.

The growing popularity of community colleges means that the transfer process will become increasingly important as a pathway for students who wish to earn a bachelor’s degree. The four-year institution leaders interviewed for this report understand this trend and recommend concrete strategies to strengthen

transfer. Their advice to other four-year institution leaders can be summarized as follows:

- Create an institution-wide vision that includes transfer students.
- Treat transfers in outreach, admission, and academic and student affairs with a devotion similar to that of first-year students; and
- Understand that the needs of transfer students may be different than those of first-year students.

Despite the clear-eyed counsel provided by their peers in this report, many four-year institution leaders may not be persuaded of the long-term viability of the transfer pathway and the benefits that accrue to an institution that seeks and serves community college transfer students. Their reluctance is not entirely misplaced. For leaders of the nation’s most selective institutions, reaching out to community college students may hold little promise of institutional advancement because it could interfere with their recruitment of traditional-age first-year students. Although it is debatable whether this freshman-focused model of enrollment management will endure, the persistent message from the higher education leaders interviewed for this report is that without a mission-driven rationale and a commitment from the highest levels of leadership, a college’s embrace of transfer will likely fail.

Moreover, four-year institution leaders have been warned before about the need to enroll more transfers. Predicted declines in high school graduation rates as well as economic recessions — both factors foretold by education pundits as indicators of the rise of transfer — came and went in the past 20 years with little effect on four-year college transfer student enrollments. Even the nation’s retreat on affirmative action via California’s Proposition 209 and other state initiatives, which was predicted to heighten the importance of transfer as a legal pathway for sustaining student diversity at four-year institutions, was not incentive enough for these institutional leaders to recruit more community college students.

Conditions today, however, are unique. As noted earlier, the nation’s slow recovery from the most severe recession in nearly 100 years has had a devastating effect on the college plans of families

throughout the United States. Faced with steady and significant increases in college tuition, especially among public four-year institutions as states try to balance budgets, many families are seriously considering community colleges as a way of making college affordable. The enrollment spike of full-time community college students, coupled with a decline in the average age of students attending these institutions, described in Part 1, support this trend.

Furthermore, the recession has only exacerbated this nation's need for educated workers in a global economy that is challenging U.S. economic dominance. An analysis by Jobs for the Future predicts that the United States must produce nearly 20 percent more bachelor's degree holders — over and above current production levels — in order to meet our nation's needs for an educated workforce.<sup>24</sup> Such growth must include a more efficient transfer pathway.

Finally, the United States has not made a significant dent in the educational achievement gap among students from different racial, ethnic and income groups. As is well known among most higher education professionals, the graduation rate for Asian and white students is significantly higher than the rates for African American, Hispanic and Native American students.<sup>25</sup> Yet the only way to increase bachelor's degree production in the United States by 20 percent, as recommended by the Jobs for the Future report, is by increasing the number of bachelor degree recipients among groups that are predicted to have the greatest growth in population.<sup>26</sup> **If it is true that access and equity is a goal embraced by most colleges and universities in the country, then a partnership with — perhaps even a reliance on — community colleges and the transfer pathway will be essential.**

As four-year college and university leaders contemplate the trajectory of their institutions in the coming decade, they might ask themselves whether a reluctance to admit and educate transfer students stems from something other than reasonable concerns about mission fit, enrollment needs, and adequacy of facilities to accommodate these students. Perhaps it is a reluctance steeped in the very idea of what a four-year college or university should be or do for America in the new century. Still, if there is one overarching theme in this report, it

is this: Four-year college and university leaders *can* shape their institutions to effectively accommodate transfer students, advancing not only the transfer process as it was envisioned over 100 years ago, but demonstrating the pivotal role that their institutions play in tackling the nation's educational challenges in the 21st century.

# Appendix 1

## Interview Participants

The following higher education leaders generously offered their advice and counsel about the transfer process at their institution. This report would not have been possible without their willingness to share their thoughts about the challenges facing community college transfer students, the contributions these students make to their institutions, and the need for two- and four-year institutions to strengthen the transfer pathway.

**Frank Ashley**, Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs, The Texas A&M University System–College Station

**Gail Berson**, Dean of Admission and Student Aid, Vice President for Enrollment, Wheaton College, Norton, Mass.

**Timothy E. Brunold**, Dean of Admission, University of Southern California, Los Angeles

**Youlonda Copeland-Morgan**, Associate Vice President of Enrollment Management and Director of Scholarships and Financial Aid, Syracuse University, New York

**Marc Cutright**, Director of the Center for Higher Education and Associate Professor of Higher Education, University of North Texas–Denton

**Laura Doering**, Senior Associate Registrar and Director of Transfer Relations, Iowa State University–Ames

**Stephen M. Farmer**, Associate Provost and Director of Admission, The University of North Carolina–Chapel Hill

**Karen Francis-Begay**, Special Advisor to the President on Native American Affairs, The University of Arizona–Tucson

**Marc Harding**, Assistant Vice President for Enrollment and Director of Admissions, Iowa State University–Ames

**Kim Harves**, Senior Assistant Director, Office of Undergraduate Admissions, Georgetown University, Washington, D.C.

**Alfred Herrera**, Assistant Vice Provost and Director of the Center for Community College Partnerships, University of California–Los Angeles

**Bonita Jacobs**, Executive Director, National Institute for the Study of Transfer Students and Associate Professor in Higher Education, University of North Texas–Denton

**Mildred R. Johnson**, Director of Undergraduate Admissions, Virginia Tech, Blacksburg

**Jerome A. Lucido**, Research Professor of Education and Executive Director, USC Center for Enrollment Research, Policy, and Practice, University of Southern California, Los Angeles

**Camille Martinez-Yaden**, Director, Undergraduate Teacher Preparation and Graduate Educational Leadership Training, Project Native III, University of Arizona–Tucson and Tohono O’odham Community College–Sells

**Patricia McWade**, Dean of Student Financial Aid Services, Georgetown University, Washington, D.C.

**Colleen K. Miltenberg**, Assistant Director, Office of Undergraduate Admissions, Georgetown University, Washington, D.C.



**Janina Montero**, Vice Chancellor — Student Affairs, University of California–Los Angeles

**Angela Peterson**, Associate Vice President for Regional Campuses, University of Central Florida–Orlando

**Mark Allen Poisel**, Associate Vice President for Student Development and Enrollment Services, University of Central Florida–Orlando

**Kasey Urquidez**, Assistant Vice President of Student Affairs and Dean of Admission, The University of Arizona–Tucson

Other higher education leaders contributed their time in support of this project, although they were not formally interviewed for this report: Shawn Brick (Office of the President, University of California), Dave Holger (Iowa State University), Larry Ebbers (Iowa State University), Frankie Santos Laanan (Iowa State University), Kim Linduska (Des Moines Area Community College), Shirley Ort (The University of North Carolina–Chapel Hill) and Susan Wilbur (Office of the President, University of California).

## Appendix 2

### Summary and Recommendations

Higher education leaders interviewed for this report suggest the following to initiate or improve transfer at four-year colleges and universities. These recommendations are not meant to be exhaustive and not all will be appropriate for every institution. Nevertheless, these strategies may assist other four-year institution leaders who are considering community college transfer students as a new or larger component of their campus community.

#### Leadership and Commitment

Four-year institutions' enrollment and education of transfer students should be a part of the campus mission and should be supported at the highest levels of administrative and faculty leadership. Suggested strategies to achieve this include the following:

- Develop a strategic, as opposed to a tactical, enrollment plan, one that is mission driven and sees the recruitment and enrollment of transfer students as a long-term commitment.
- Engage a broad consensus of senior leaders in academic affairs, enrollment management, outreach, student affairs and financial aid in the commitment to serve transfer students.
- Understand the challenges and obligations that follow from a decision to bring transfer students to a campus, which may require an institution to evaluate all aspects of its operations, including recruitment, admission and student and academic affairs.

#### Outreach and Preparation

Four-year institutions should provide transfer students with the guidance they will need to prepare for and apply to their four-year institution. Suggested strategies include the following:

- Calibrate an outreach message that is purposeful, concise and clear — and that focuses on academic preparation.
- Develop productive and sustainable relationships with community colleges locally; expand as resources and commitment allow.
- Establish a presence on the community college campus that will help guide prospective transfer applicants in selecting courses that will prepare them for the transition to the four-year institution.
- Support community college counselors by keeping them up-to-date on programs and services at the four-year institution.
- Train recruitment staff in ways that will help them serve transfer students effectively, especially since transfer students usually present a more complex academic profile than freshman students.

#### Admission and Enrollment

Four-year institutions should enroll academically prepared students who are able to pursue their major immediately after transfer. Suggested strategies include the following:

- Create transparent transfer credit policies so that students know how to prepare for transfer while attending the community college.

- Complete a credit evaluation for all transfer students before they enroll at the four-year institution.
- Involve faculty in the admission process so that they are actively engaged — reading applications, assessing student preparation and consulting with admission staff.
- Identify transfer student enrollment targets that are separate from freshman targets.
- Grant community college applicants preference in the admission process over transfer applicants from four-year colleges and universities.

## Financial Aid

Four-year institutions should provide sufficient aid to transfer students so that they may engage fully in the campus community. Suggested strategies include the following:

- Use Federal Work-Study Program funds for transfer students since many of these students prefer to work while in college. Holding a work-study job is more likely to keep transfer students close to campus, which helps them connect to the campus community more easily.
- Create partnerships with community colleges that help students attend school full time and to receive full financial aid.
- Fund scholarships specifically for transfer students.
- Help students face their financial aid future by developing information, resources and incentives that span the transfer student's transition from a community college to a four-year institution.

## Student and Academic Affairs

Four-year institutions should create a welcoming environment for transfer students by addressing their unique transitional issues, while working to engage them fully in the intellectual life of the campus. Suggested strategies include the following:

- Dismiss the assumption that transfer students require less attention or service than first-time students because they have already been to college. Similarly, do not assume that just because a transfer student does not *want* something (e.g., orientation), that he or she does not *need* it.
- Monitor and assess the transfer student experience as you would the first-year student experience.
- Offer an orientation program for transfer students that addresses their unique needs and concerns.
- Create a campus “home” for transfer students by establishing a campus transfer center that allows students to meet others like themselves, obtain access to sustained advising and prepare for the transition to the larger campus community.
- Offer special transition courses for transfer students.
- Reserve housing for transfer students on or near campus to shorten (or eliminate) their commute, providing them with time to fully engage the campus community.

## Endnotes

- <sup>1</sup> The *U.S. News & World Report* list can be found at: <http://colleges.usnews.rankingsandreviews.com/best-colleges/rankings/most-transfers>.
- <sup>2</sup> Western Interstate Commission for Higher Education (2008). *Knocking at the College Door: Projections of High school Graduates by State, Income, and Race/Ethnicity*. Boulder, CO: Western Interstate Commission for Higher Education. (Retrieved April 18, 2011 from [http://www.wiche.edu/info/publications/knocking\\_complete\\_book.pdf](http://www.wiche.edu/info/publications/knocking_complete_book.pdf).)
- <sup>3</sup> Sara Goldrick-Rab, Douglas N. Harris, Christopher Mazzeo, and Gregory Kienzl (May 2009). *Transforming America's Community Colleges: A Federal Policy Proposal to Expand Opportunity and Promote Economic Prosperity*. Metropolitan Policy Program at Brookings, p. 10. (Retrieved April 1, 2011, from [http://www.brookings.edu/reports/2009/0507\\_community\\_college\\_goldrick\\_rab.aspx](http://www.brookings.edu/reports/2009/0507_community_college_goldrick_rab.aspx))
- <sup>4</sup> American Association of Community Colleges (2011). *Community College Fast Facts*, p.1. (Retrieved April 4, 2011, from <http://www.aacc.nche.edu/AboutCC/Documents/FactSheet2011.pdf>.)
- <sup>5</sup> P. Taylor, R. Fry, W. Wang, D. Dockterman, and G. Velasco. (2009, October 29). *College Enrollment Hits All-Time High, Fueled by Community College Surge*. Washington, D.C.: Pew Research Center, p.1.
- <sup>6</sup> At least two U.S. Department of Education studies document the transfer intentions of community college students. See: (1) L. Horn (2009). *On Track to Complete? A Taxonomy of Beginning Community College Students and Their Outcomes 3 Years After Enrolling; 2003-04 Through 2006* (NCES 2009-152). National Center for Education Statistics, Institute of Education Sciences, U.S. Department of Education, Washington D.C.; (2) S. Provasnik and M. Planty (2008). *Community Colleges: Special Supplement to The Condition of Education 2008* (NCES 2008-033.) National Center for Education Statistics, Institute of Education Sciences, U.S. Department of Education, Washington, D.C. (3) See also *Community College Survey of Student Engagement* (2006). *Act on Fact: Using Data to Improve Student Success*. (Retrieved April 26, 2011 from <http://www.ccsse.org/publications/CCSSENationalReport2006.pdf>.) This report indicates that 50 percent of students it surveyed indicated that "transfer to a four-year college or university" was a primary goal, while an additional 21 percent listed transfer as a "secondary goal" (p. 5).
- <sup>7</sup> James E. Rosenbaum, Regina Deli-Amen, and Ann E. Person (2006). *After Admission: From College Access to College Success*. New York: Russell Sage Foundation.
- <sup>8</sup> Christopher Mullin (2009, December). *Community College Enrollment Surge: An Analysis of Estimated Fall 2009 Headcount Enrollments at Community Colleges*, American Association of Community Colleges (Policy Brief 2009-01PBL). (Retrieved April 7, 2011, from <http://www.aacc.nche.edu/Publications/Briefs/Pages/rb12172009.aspx>.)
- <sup>9</sup> Recent data indicate that the proportions of Native American and Asian American/Pacific Islander students attending two- or four-year institutions are roughly the same.
- <sup>10</sup> WICHE estimates that virtually all the growth in the number of high school graduates between now and 2014-15 will be among Hispanics (54 percent growth), Asian American/Pacific Islanders (32 percent), Native Americans (7 percent) and African Americans (3 percent). See *Knocking at the College Door: Projections of High school Graduates by State, Income, and Race/Ethnicity* (2008). Boulder, CO: Western Interstate Commission for Higher Education, p. xiv. (Retrieved April 18, 2011 from [http://www.wiche.edu/info/publications/knocking\\_complete\\_book.pdf](http://www.wiche.edu/info/publications/knocking_complete_book.pdf).)
- <sup>11</sup> Currently, 53 percent of all Hispanic undergraduates and 55 percent of all Native American undergraduates are enrolled in community colleges. See American Association of Community Colleges (2011). *Community College Fast Facts*, p.1. (Retrieved April 7, 2011, from <http://www.aacc.nche.edu/AboutCC/Documents/FactSheet2011.pdf>.)
- <sup>12</sup> American Association of Community Colleges (2009). *AACC Statement on Trends in College Pricing and Aid 2009* (October 10). (Retrieved April 1, 2011, from <http://www.aacc.nche.edu/newsevents/News/articles/Pages/102020091.aspx>.)
- <sup>13</sup> S. Provasnik and M. Planty (2008). *Community Colleges: Special Supplement to The Condition of Education 2008* (NCES 2008-033). National Center for Education Statistics, Institute of Education Sciences, U.S. Department of Education, Washington, D.C., p. 2 and figure 3.

<sup>14</sup> Public Agenda (2009). *With Their Whole Lives Ahead of Them: Myths and Realities About Why So Many Students Fail to Finish College*, pp. 13 and 27. (Retrieved June 12, 2011, from <http://www.publicagenda.org/theirwholivesaheadofthem>.)

<sup>15</sup> Since the time of this interview, Mark Allen Poisel accepted a position as associate provost for student affairs at Pace University in New York.

<sup>16</sup> American Association of Community Colleges (2011). *Community College Fast Facts*, p.1. (Retrieved April 4, 2011, from <http://www.aacc.nche.edu/AboutCC/Documents/FactSheet2011.pdf>.)

<sup>17</sup> Since the time of the interview, Bonita Jacobs accepted a position as president of North Georgia College and State University.

<sup>18</sup> Quote taken from University of Central Florida *Newsroom* ("More College Access for Local Students, Say Academic Leaders," Feb. 11, 2011). (Retrieved April 4, 2011, from <http://news.ucf.edu/UCFnews/index?page=article&id=00240041052a2b5bb012d4490764900f17>.)

<sup>19</sup> College Board (May 2010). *The Financial Aid Challenge: Successful Practices that Address the Underutilization of Financial Aid in Community Colleges*, p.2.

<sup>20</sup> American Association of Community Colleges (2011). *Community College Fast Facts*, p. 1. (Retrieved April 4, 2011, from <http://www.aacc.nche.edu/AboutCC/Documents/FactSheet2011.pdf>.)

<sup>21</sup> Richard C. Richardson, Jr. and Louis W. Bender (1987). *Fostering Minority Access and Achievement in Higher Education*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, p. 21.

<sup>22</sup> For an introduction to this work, consult the following sources: (1) D. Jain, A. Herrera, S. Bernal, and D. Solorzano (2011), "Critical Race Theory and the Transfer Function: Introducing a Transfer Receptive Culture," *Community College Journal of Research and Practice*, 35: 3, 252–266; (2) S. J. Handel and A. Herrera (2007). *Pursuing Higher Education Access and Achievement: Case Studies in the Development of Transfer-Going Cultures*. Prepared for the Jack Kent Cooke National Forum, June 28–29, 2006. (Available at [http://professionals.collegeboard.com/profdownload/pursuing-higher-education\\_handel-herrera.pdf](http://professionals.collegeboard.com/profdownload/pursuing-higher-education_handel-herrera.pdf).); (3) S. J. Handel (2009). "Transfer and the Part-time Student: The Gulf Separating Community Colleges and Selective Universities," *Change: The Magazine of Higher Learning*, June 2009.

<sup>23</sup> National Survey of Student Engagement (2009). *Assessment for Improvement: Tracking Student Engagement Over Time (Annual Results 2009)*, p. 11.

<sup>24</sup> Reindl, Travis (2007). *Hitting Home: Quality, Cost, and Access Challenges Confronting Higher Education Today*. Boston: Jobs for the Future and Lumina Foundation for Education. (Retrieved April 25, 2011, from <http://www.jff.org/publications/education/hitting-home-quality-cost-and-access-cha/251>.)

<sup>25</sup> The Education Trust (2011, March 22). *Access to Success: Lessons from Colleges and Universities on the Performance Front Tri-State Consortium of Opportunity Programs in Higher Education*. Tarrytown, NY. (Retrieved April 25, 2011, from <http://www.edtrust.org/dc/presentation/access-to-success-lessons-from-colleges-and-universities-on-the-performance-frontie-0>.)

<sup>26</sup> The Education Trust (2011, March 22).

