Understanding and Supporting the Successful Transfer of Community College Students to Four-Year Institutions

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Our Mission

The Jack Kent Cooke Foundation is dedicated to advancing the education of exceptionally promising students who have financial need.
Cooke Undergraduate Transfer Scholarship

- 910 scholars since 2002
- 93% earn BA
- 69% attend a selective college
Low-SES Students Are Underrepresented at Selective Colleges and Universities

About This Research

- Purpose
- National Student Clearinghouse
- www.jkcf.org/Persistence
Composition of the 2016 Entering Undergraduate Class

- **Entered from High School**
  Never previously enrolled at any postsecondary institution
  - 15.3% (401,870 students)

- **Transferred from a Four-Year Institution**
  Previously enrolled at one or more other institution(s), at least one of which was a four-year institution
  - 15.3% (401,270 students)

- **Transferred from a Community College**
  Previously enrolled at one or more two-year public institution(s); never enrolled at another four-year institution
  - 69.4% (1,821,870 students)

**Note:** Numbers are rounded to the nearest 10s place. The National Student Clearinghouse (NSC) data also contains 4,780 students who were previously enrolled at either a two-year private or two-year for-profit institution, which equals 0.2 percent of all students. As these types of institutions vary widely in scope and program type, these students are excluded from this report.
Public institutions enroll four times as many community college transfer students as private institutions: 305,730 versus 75,190.
Few Community College Students Transfer to Selective Institutions

Note: Reporting on 2,517,030 students enrolled at 1,237 institutions in the NSC database.
Great news!

4 in 5 (84%) community colleges sent one or more students to a selective institution
Community colleges are more likely to transfer students to selective institutions that...

... have honors colleges...

... are larger...

... and are located in suburban or urban settings.
One-Year Retention Rates of Community College Transfer Students, by Institutional Selectivity

- Most Competitive: 88.0%
- Highly Competitive: 86.5%
- Very Competitive: 80.5%
- Competitive: 77.6%
- Less Competitive: 75.5%

Note: Reporting on 342,780 students who transferred from a community college to a four-year institution in fall 2010. Numbers are rounded to the nearest 10s place.
Six-Year Graduation and Retention Outcomes for Community College Transfer Students, by Institutional Selectivity

Note: Reporting on 342,780 students who transferred from a community college to a four-year institution in fall 2010. Numbers are rounded to the nearest 10s place.
How do transfer students compare to other students?
One-Year Retention Rates, by Student Type and Institutional Selectivity

Most Competitive: 88.0% Transferred from a Community College, 81.1% Transferred from a Four-Year Institution, 89.8% Entered from High School
Highly Competitive: 86.5% Transferred from a Community College, 83.2% Transferred from a Four-Year Institution, 85.4% Entered from High School
Very Competitive: 80.5% Transferred from a Community College, 76.2% Transferred from a Four-Year Institution, 80.9% Entered from High School
Competitive: 77.6% Transferred from a Community College, 72.8% Transferred from a Four-Year Institution, 70.9% Entered from High School
Less Competitive: 75.5% Transferred from a Community College, 69.7% Transferred from a Four-Year Institution, 65.8% Entered from High School

Note: Reporting on the retention outcomes of 2,238,570 students who enrolled at a four-year institution in fall 2010.
Six-Year Graduation Rates, By Student Type and Institutional Selectivity

Note: Reporting on the retention outcomes of 2,298,570 students who enrolled at a four-year institution in fall 2010. For a discussion of the methodology of calculating these graduation rates and how they compare to other graduation rates reported by institutions to the Department of Education, please see Appendix A.
Average Time (Years) to Degree for Community College Transfer Students Graduating from the Receiving Institution

- Most Competitive: 2.6 yrs.
- Highly Competitive: 2.8 yrs.
- Very Competitive: 2.8 yrs.
- Competitive: 2.9 yrs.
- Less Competitive: 2.8 yrs.

Note: Reporting on 205,710 students who transferred from a community college to a four-year institution in fall 2010 and subsequently earned a bachelor’s degree from that institution. Time to degree calculated as number of days between first date of enrollment at the four-year institution and graduation date (divided by 365). Time to degree only calculated for students who earned the bachelor’s degree.
Discipline of Earned Bachelor’s Degree, Selective Institutions

Note: Reporting the top five reported degree disciplines among 255,390 students who received a bachelor’s degree from the Most Competitive or Highly Competitive institution they first entered in fall 2010.
Key Takeaways

@ Selective Colleges:
- Low Transfer Rates
- High Success Rates
Front Range Community College

- Three campuses – North Denver, Boulder County, and Fort Collins
- Various transfer institutions
- 29,000 annual credit headcount
- 40% first gen; 27% students of color; 80% part-time
- Colorado Community College System
Guided Pathways
“An integrated, institution-wide approach to student success based on intentionally designed, clear, coherent and structured educational experiences, informed by available evidence, that guide each student effectively and efficiently from point of entry through to attainment of high-quality postsecondary credentials and careers with value in the labor market.”
Guided Pathways: Planning, Implementation, Evaluation

Creating guided pathways requires managing and sustaining large-scale transformational change. The work begins with thorough planning, continues through consistent implementation, and depends on ongoing evaluation. Colleges should assess their readiness for intensive, broad-based change before beginning this work.

**PLANNING**

**ESSENTIAL CONDITIONS**
Make sure the following conditions are in place—prepared, mobilized, and adequately resourced—to support the college’s pathways effort:
- Strong leadership throughout the institution
- Faculty, staff, and student engagement
- Commitment to using data
- Capacity to use data

**PLANNING/PREPARATION**
Understand where you are and prepare for change by:
- Engaging stakeholders and making the case for change
- Establishing a baseline for key performance indicators
- Developing flowcharts of how students choose, enter, and complete programs
- Developing an implementation plan with roles and deadlines

**SUSTAINABILITY**
Commit to pathways for the long term and make sure they are implemented for all students by:
- Determining barriers to sustainability (state, system, and institutional levels)
- Redefining the roles of faculty, staff, and administrators as needed
- Identifying needs for professional development and technical assistance
- Revamping technology to support the redesigned student experience
- Reallocation of resources as needed
- Continuing to engage key stakeholders, especially students
- Integrating pathways into hiring and evaluation practices

**IMPLEMENTATION**

**CLARIFY THE PATHS**
Map all programs to transfer and career and include these features:
- Detailed information on target career and transfer outcomes
- Course sequences, critical courses, embedded credentials, and progress milestones
- Math and other core coursework aligned to each program of study

**HELP STUDENTS GET ON A PATH**
Require these supports to make sure students get the best start:
- First-year experiences to help students explore the field and choose a major
- Full program plans based on required career transfer exploration
- Contextualized, integrated academic support to help students pass program gateway courses
- K-12 partnerships focused on career/college program exploration

**HELP STUDENTS STAY ON THEIR PATH**
Keep students on track with these supports:
- Ongoing, intrusive advising
- Systems for students to easily track their progress
- Systems/procedures to identify students at risk and provide needed supports
- A structure to redirect students who are not progressing in a program to a more viable path

**ENSURE STUDENTS ARE LEARNING**
Use these practices to assess and enrich student learning:
- Program-specific learning outcomes
- Project-based, collaborative learning
- Applied learning experiences
- Faculty-led improvement of teaching practices
- Systems/procedures for the college and students to track mastery of learning outcomes

**EARLY OUTCOMES**
Measure key performance indicators, including:
- Number of college credits earned in first term
- Number of college credits earned in first year
- Completion of gateway math and English courses in the student’s first year
- Persistence from term 1 to term 2
- Rates of college-level course completion in students’ first academic year

Revisit conditions, sustainability, and implementation. Continuously improve pathways by building on elements that work and adjusting or discarding elements that are not serving all students well.

The Pathways Project is led by the American Association of Community Colleges in partnership with Achieving the Dream (ATD), the Aspen Institute, Center for Community College Student Engagement (CCCSSE), and others.
- No clear path to a bachelor’s degree.
- Credits don’t transfer.
- Poor alignment between two- and four-year programs.
- The transfer process can often be perplexing.
The Transfer Playbook

- Communicate Transfer
- Share Data
- Dedicate Resources

https://www.aspeninstitute.org/
Colorado State University

- One main campus in Fort Collins, CO
- Land Grant Institution
- 74 degrees, 250 concentrations, 10 online degrees
- 25% First Generation
- 25% Students of Color
- 25% Adult Learners/Veterans
- 25% Transfer Students
  - of those, more than 50% come from CCs
- Front Range Community College is CSU’s biggest “feeder” school.
## Major Transfer Partners Measures

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th># of Transfers</th>
<th>Percent of transfers CSU students who earned a CC award before transferring</th>
<th>Bachelor’s degree completion rate among students who transferred to this university</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1,732</td>
<td>34%</td>
<td>63%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Source:** Davis Jenkins and John Fink, *Tracking Transfer: New Measures of Institution and State Effectiveness in Helping Community College Students attain Bachelor’s Degrees*, Community College Research Center, Teachers College Columbia University, Aspen Institute and National Student Clearinghouse Research Center, January 2016.
Bridge: *n.* 1 a structure built over a river, railroad, highway, etc. to provide a way across for vehicles or pedestrians
2 a thing that provides connection, contact, or transition ...

Webster’s Dictionary
Four key components

- Deep focus on transfer efficiency
- Attention to momentum metrics
- Building the “Scientific Résumé”
- Reducing transfer shock
Transfer Efficiency

- “Does this class transfer?”
- Instead: “Do I need it?”
- How B2B addresses this
Momentum Metrics
Course development as an example of Program Momentum

- PSY 200 (Research Methods) and PSY 258 (Neuroscience)
- BIO 211 (cell biology)
- BIO 224 (genetics)
Course sequencing as a Momentum Metric

- 6-7 semesters of Chemistry for a bachelor’s degree
- Chemistry should be taken as early as possible.
The “Scientific Résumé”
Reducing transfer shock

- Learning community
- Custom transfer orientation session
- Peer mentors
- Coaching support
- Workshops and community building
- The promise of a B2B graduation cord
Assessment Tool for Assessing Progress Toward Adoption of Essential Transfer Practices for Community Colleges
By “The Playbook”

1. Prioritize transfer.
2. Create clear, rigorous program pathways.
3. Provide tailored transfer advising.
4. Implement strategies for building effective transfer partnerships.
“...from point of entry through to attainment of high-quality postsecondary credentials and careers with value in the labor market.”
Observations on Transfer

KENT A. PHILLIPPE
AVP, RESEARCH & STUDENT SUCCESS
AMERICAN ASSOCIATION OF COMMUNITY COLLEGES
Barriers (non-financial)

- Structural barriers
  - Competition for students
  - misaligned incentives
  - resource constraints

- Poor or inconsistent articulation agreements
  - Credit loss
  - Program variation

- Lack of Information on transfer process

- Location
Figure 12. Total Initial Enrollments by Sector and Control of Starting Institution by Race and Ethnicity, Fall 2011 Cohort

- Four-Year Private Non-Profit
- Four-Year Public
- Two-Year Public

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Race</th>
<th>Four-Year Private Non-Profit</th>
<th>Four-Year Public</th>
<th>Two-Year Public</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Asian</td>
<td>18.1%</td>
<td>47.7%</td>
<td>34.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black</td>
<td>14.1%</td>
<td>37.5%</td>
<td>48.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hispanic</td>
<td>11.4%</td>
<td>37.3%</td>
<td>51.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White</td>
<td>20.7%</td>
<td>44.6%</td>
<td>34.6%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*This figure is based on data shown in Appendix C, Table 1c.
**Due to low coverage, race and ethnicity transfer statistics are only reported for students who started at a two year public non-profit, and four year public and four year private non-profit institution.

Source: National Student Clearinghouse Research Center Completing College report
Figure 16. Six-Year Outcomes and First Completion for Students Who Started at Two-Year Public Institutions by Race and Ethnicity (N=543,849)*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Race</th>
<th>Not Enrolled</th>
<th>Still Enrolled</th>
<th>Completed at Different Two-Year Institution</th>
<th>Completed at Different Four-Year Institution</th>
<th>Completed at Starting Institution</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Asian</td>
<td>29.1%</td>
<td>54.9%</td>
<td>3.6%</td>
<td>14.9%</td>
<td>3.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black</td>
<td>21.9%</td>
<td>54.9%</td>
<td>21.5%</td>
<td>17.6%</td>
<td>3.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hispanic</td>
<td>42.8%</td>
<td>21.5%</td>
<td>3.9%</td>
<td>5.3%</td>
<td>19.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White</td>
<td>39.1%</td>
<td>3.7%</td>
<td>10.5%</td>
<td>12.9%</td>
<td>33.9%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*This figure is based on data shown in Appendix C, Table 41a.
*See Appendix C, Table 41b for completion outcomes of other race and ethnicity categories (e.g., non-resident alien, American Indian/Alaskan Native, and Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander).

Source: National Student Clearinghouse Research Center Completing College report
Prior Credentials: another way of looking at transfer
Figure 6 shows the percentage distribution of prior awards for students who earned a bachelor's degree in each of the last five academic years. In 2017-18, 74 percent were first-time graduates (had no prior award), 3.3 percent had previously earned a bachelor's degree or higher, 21.2 percent had previously earned an associate degree, and 1.4 percent had previously earned a certificate.

Source: National Student Clearinghouse Research Center Undergraduate Degree Earners report
Figure 7 shows the percentage distribution of prior awards for students who earned an associate degree in each of the last six academic years. In 2017-18, 79.4 percent were first-time graduates (had no prior award), 4.1 percent had previously earned a bachelor's degree or higher, 8.2 percent had previously earned an associate degree, and 8.4 percent had previously earned a certificate.

Source: National Student Clearinghouse Research Center Undergraduate Degree Earners report
Figure 8 shows the percentage distribution of prior awards for students who earned bachelor's degrees at age 40 or older in each of the last six academic years. An increasing number of graduates had prior credentials in each year since 2012-13. In 2017-18, 42 percent of bachelor's degree recipients aged 40 and above did not have a prior credential, which is a drop from 48.6 percent in 2012-13.

Source: National Student Clearinghouse Research Center Undergraduate Degree Earners report
Figure 9: Associate Degree Earners Aged 40 and Above – Distribution of Prior Awards

Figure 9 shows the percentage distribution of prior awards for students who earned associate degrees at age 40 or older in each of the last six academic years. An increasing number of graduates had prior credentials in each year since 2012-13. In 2017-18, 66.1 percent of associate degree recipients aged 40 and above did not have a prior credential, which is a drop from 75.5 percent in 2012-13.

Source: National Student Clearinghouse Research Center Undergraduate Degree Earners report
Questions?