Transfer Outcomes:
University Engagement Strategies

Josh Wyner
The Aspen Institute, College Excellence Program
October 28, 2016
The vast majority of students who enroll in a community college plan to one day earn a bachelor’s degree.

Most never make it.
1.7 Million
new students enroll in a community college each year

80%
plan to get a bachelor’s degree or higher
We tracked 720,000 community college students who started in the fall of 2007 in pursuit of a college credential. Only 100,000 earned a bachelor’s after 6 years.
Too few students manage to make the leap

Just 33% of students who started community college in fall of 2007 transferred to a four-year school.
Even when they transfer, they do not succeed

Of the students who started community college in fall 2007, only 14% went on to get a bachelor’s within 6 years.
Broken transfer processes harm the students who can least afford it.
Transfer Students Struggle to Earn a Bachelor’s Degree

80% of new community college students aim to earn a bachelor’s.

33% of these students transfer to a 4-year college within 6 years.

14% earn a bachelor’s within 6 years of starting college.

For more information, see Tracking Transfer: New Measures of Institutional and State Effectiveness in Helping Community College Students Attain Bachelor’s Degrees (New York, NY: Community College Research Center).
Students lose lots of credits in the TRANSFER PROCESS.
Just 58% of students can successfully transfer 90% of their credits.

And 15% can’t transfer any credits at all.
Even when students are able to transfer credits, those credits often don’t count toward their major.
2 Years of General Education + 2 Years of Major Courses ≠ 4 Years to a Bachelor’s Degree
Transfer is a SHARED PROBLEM and a SHARED OPPORTUNITY.
2-year and 4-year colleges need to co-own getting students to the finish line.
Transfer students are already a large and growing part of their student body. Universities need to help transfer students succeed instead of focusing primarily on first-year students.

4-year colleges need to pay much more attention to transfer students.
For many universities, improving transfer is a way to boost declining enrollment – and completion.
Community colleges must own what happens to their students after they leave.
Transfer is a **SHARED PROBLEM** and a **SHARED OPPORTUNITY**.
Average Transfer-With-Award Rates by Institutional Characteristics

- U.S. community college average
- Primarily occupational
- Primarily academic
- Urban
- Suburban/town
- Rural
- Top quintiles
- Middle quintile
- Lower quintiles
Average Transfer-Out Bachelor's Completion Rates by Institutional Characteristics

Program Mix
- Primarily occupational
- Primarily academic

Urbanicity
- Urban
- Suburban/town
- Rural

Average Student SES
- Top quintiles
- Middle quintile
- Lower quintiles

Transfer-Out Bachelor's Completion Rate

Average Student SES Urbanicity Program Mix
Transfer is a

**SHARED PROBLEM**

and a

**SHARED OPPORTUNITY.**
Essential strategies and practices to improve transfer outcomes
STRATEGY 1: Prioritize Transfer

STRATEGY 2: Create Clear Programmatic Pathways with Aligned High-Quality Instruction

STRATEGY 3: Provide Tailored Transfer Student Advising
STRATEGY 1: Prioritize Transfer

1. Communicate importance of transfer to mission
2. Share data on outcomes and consequences
3. Dedicate significant resources to transfer
STRATEGY 2: Create Clear Programmatic Pathways with Aligned High-Quality Instruction

- Create major-specific program maps.
- Provide rigorous instruction and extra-curriculars.
- Establish a reliable process to update and improve maps.
- Design unconventional pathways.
STRATEGY 2

For this program of study,

- What learning outcomes are essential in the first two years so the student can transfer to a four-year college with junior standing?

- What essential elements of the “native” freshman and sophomore learning experience may be hard to replicate for community college transfer students?

- What alternatives to these hard-to-replicate learning experiences can be provided so that the students’ junior-year standing is not compromised?
Career Pathways showing potential majors and median earnings
Specific pathway information on program options and career outlook
Courses that lead to technical or industry certifications

Educational progression depending on goals

Course sequences for programs with flexibility for FT and PT attendance

STRATEGY 2

CCRC COMMUNITY COLLEGE RESEARCH CENTER

THE ASPEN INSTITUTE COLLEGE EXCELLENCE PROGRAM
STRATEGY 3: Provide Tailored Transfer Student Advising

- Will I be accepted to the four-year college?
- Will my credits transfer?
- Will they count toward my major?
- How many years will it take to complete my degree?
- How much will it cost?
- What jobs can I get with my degree?
STRATEGY 3: Provide Tailored Transfer Student Advising

- Help students determine, as early as possible, their field of interest, major, and preferred transfer destination
- Continuously monitor student progress, provide frequent feedback and intervene quickly when students are off-track
- Help students access the financial resources necessary to achieve their goals
STRATEGY 3: Provide Tailored Transfer Student Advising

- Commit dedicated personnel, structures, and resources for transfer students
- Assign advisors and clearly communicate essential information to prospective transfer students
- Strongly encourage transfer students to choose a major prior to transfer
- Replicate elements of the first-year experience for transfer students
- Exercise fairness in financial aid allocation
NEXT FRONTIERS FOR TRANSFER

• EMERGING PRACTICE #1: Improve bachelor’s degree outcomes for high school “dual enrollment” students
• EMERGING PRACTICE #2: Define transfer requirements in terms of competencies
• EMERGING PRACTICE #3: Monitor student progress across the entire transfer pathway
• EMERGING PRACTICE #4: Connect transfer pathways to regional labor market needs