Tracking Transfer: Community College and Four-Year Institutional Effectiveness in Broadening Bachelor’s Degree Attainment

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Community College Research Center
Teachers College – Columbia University

SSLI - CCRC Transfer Concurrent Session, February 28\textsuperscript{st}, 2024
MANY ‘GOOD JOBS’ REQUIRE BACHELOR’S DEGREES

Number of Good Jobs
2017 vs 2027

2017
37.3M
16.9M
14.2M
High School
Middle Skills
Bachelor's Degrees

2027
46.5M
17.6M
11.9M

+9.2M
+700K
-2.3M

The Unmet Promise of Transfer as an Accessible Route to the BA

80% of community college students want a bachelor’s degree

33% of community college students transfer to a four-year institution

16% of community college students will graduate with a bachelor’s degree within six years of starting college

Source: Velasco et al., 2024: Tracking Transfer: Community College and Four-Year Institutional Effectiveness in Broadening Bachelor’s Degree Attainment
Tracking Transfer: Community College and Four-Year Institutional Effectiveness in Broadening Bachelor’s Degree Attainment
Key Findings: Tracking Community College Effectiveness in Broadening Bachelor’s Attainment

1. Nationally, transfer and bachelor’s completion rates are low, especially for populations underrepresented among bachelor’s degree holders.

2. A small but noteworthy number of colleges achieve strong transfer outcomes for Black or Hispanic students.

3. Transfer outcomes of prior high school dual enrollment students are stronger than those of students without having taken any dual enrollment courses.
Key Findings: Tracking Four-Year Institution Effectiveness in Broadening Bachelor’s Attainment

1. Outcomes for community college transfer students after they arrive at four-year institutions are low overall and even lower for low-income, Black, and older transfer students.

2. Transfer students who earn a pre-transfer community college award have much stronger post-transfer outcomes.

3. AANAPISIs and HSIs exhibit strong transfer outcomes. (And for-profits and POIs were weakest)
There is no state where at least 25% of their community college students complete a bachelor’s degree within six years.
Nationally, 16% of CC entrants students transfer and complete a bachelor’s degree in six-years.
Let’s dive in
Transfer Metrics Review
Community College Transfer Metrics

- Percent of CC entrants who transferred (ever enrolled at any four-year)
- Percent of transfers who completed at the CC
- Percent of transfers who completed a bachelor’s
- Percent of CC entrants who transferred and completed a bachelor’s

Transfer-out Rate
Transfer with Award Rate
Transfer-out Bachelor’s Completion Rate
Cohort Bachelor’s Completion Rate

Community college FTIC students, Fall 2015 (n = 670K)
Four-Year Institutions Post-Transfer Metrics

Percentage of students retained at the four-year institution into the second year after transferring.

Transfer-in retention rate

Transfer-in bachelor’s completion

Percentage of students who complete a bachelor’s degree at the receiving four-year institutions within two, four, and six years.

Four-Year Institutions’ CC transfers entrants in 2015-16 (n = 396k)
Community College Transfer Metrics and National Findings
Only 33% of students transfer to a four-year institution within six years.
And, only half of those complete a bachelor’s degree within six years.

The average bachelor completion rate of entering community college students is **16%**.
Transfer outcomes are even lower among low-income, Black, Hispanic and older students

Six-Year Transfer Outcomes, Fall 2015 Community College Entrants

- **Transfer-Out Rate**: 33% (All students), 29% (Black), 29% (Hispanic), 26% (Low-income), 17% (25 or older)
- **Transfer-With-Award Rate**: 44% (All students), 37% (Black), 51% (Hispanic), 45% (Low-income), 47% (25 or older)
- **Transfer-Out Bachelor's Completion Rate**: 48% (All students), 32% (Black), 44% (Hispanic), 41% (Low-income), 36% (25 or older)
- **Cohort Bachelor's Completion Rate**: 16% (All students), 9% (Black), 13% (Hispanic), 11% (Low-income), 6% (25 or older)
Six-year transfer outcomes among degree-seeking community college entrants

Transfer rates have remained steady compared to 2007.
## Community College Transfer Outcomes

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>State Name</th>
<th>Share of Subgroup in the Cohort</th>
<th>Transfer-Out Rate</th>
<th>Transfer-With-Award Rate</th>
<th>Transfer-Out Bachelor’s Completion Rate</th>
<th>Cohort Bachelor’s Completion Rate</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pennsylvania</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>34</td>
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<td>U.S. Average</td>
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<td>Iowa</td>
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<td>Tennessee</td>
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<td>44</td>
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<td>35</td>
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</table>

Transfer metrics look different across states overall.
Bachelor’s completion rates below the 16% national average among low-income, Black and Older students.
How about four-year institutions?

Let’s account for what happens to students AFTER they transfer
Four-Year Institutions Transfer Metrics and National Findings
Community college transfer pathways are a major source of enrollment and diversity at four-year institutions.

Community College Transfer-Serving Proportion:
Percent of Entering Students who are CC Transfers

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>All Students</th>
<th>Black</th>
<th>Hispanic</th>
<th>Low-income</th>
<th>25 or older</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Public four-years</td>
<td>18%</td>
<td>18%</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>21%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Private nonprofit four-years</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td>13%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

CCRC
Community college transfers’ contribution to institutions’ diversity varies across states.

Black Public Four-Year Entrants Who Are Community College Transfers:
- FL: 35%
- MS: 18%
- CA: 12%

Hispanic Public Four-Year Entrants Who Are Community College Transfers:
- FL: 41%
- MS: 25%
- CA: 12%
Four-Year Institutions Post-Transfer Metrics

Percentage of students who complete a bachelor’s degree at the receiving four-year institutions within two, four, and six years.

Four-Year Institutions’ CC transfers entrants in 2015-16 (n = 396k)

Transfer-in bachelor’s completion
Outcomes for community college transfer students after they arrive at four-year institutions are low overall and even lower for some student subgroups.
Yet community college transfers have high retention rates

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Transfer-In Retention Rate</th>
<th>Within Two Years</th>
<th>Within Four Years</th>
<th>Within Six Years</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>All students</td>
<td>81</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black</td>
<td>73</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>42</td>
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<tr>
<td>Hispanic</td>
<td>78</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>63</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Low-income</td>
<td>76</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25 or older</td>
<td></td>
<td>43</td>
<td>48</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Within Two Years

Within Four Years

Within Six Years

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Transfer-In Bachelor's Completion Rate in Years Since Entry to Four-Year Institution</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>All students</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hispanic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Low-income</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25 or older</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Among bachelor’s completers, community college transfers are underrepresented in STEM compared to non-transfers.
Among public four-year institutions, a handful of states have strong results overall and for low-income community college transfer students.
Among public four-year institutions, a handful of states have strong results overall and for low-income community college transfer students.
Among public four-year institutions, a handful of states have strong results overall and for low-income community college transfer students.
Among public four-year institutions, a handful of states have strong results overall without gaps for Black community college transfer students.
Among public four-year institutions, a handful of states have strong results overall without gaps for Black community college transfer students.
Among public four-year institutions, a handful of states have strong results overall without gaps for Black community college transfer students.
Among public four-year institutions, a handful of states have strong results overall without gaps for Older community college transfer students.
So, what can we do?

Transfer outcomes are low, but the data points to promising areas for improvement.
Four promising findings for expanding bachelor’s attainment
1. Expand the benefits of dual enrollment by building transfer pathways into high school.
Recall... transfer outcomes are even lower among low-income, Black, Hispanic and older students

Six-Year Transfer Outcomes, Fall 2015 Community College Entrants

![Bar chart showing transfer outcomes by different demographic groups]
Many students enter CCs with prior dual enrollment, and their transfer outcomes are much better.

Six-Year Transfer Outcomes, Fall 2015 Community College Entrants with Prior Dual Enrollment

- **All students**
  - Transfer-Out Rate: 57%
  - Transfer-With-Award Rate: 46%
  - Transfer-Out Bachelor’s Completion Rate: 61%
  - Cohort Bachelor’s Completion Rate: 35%

- **Black**
  - Transfer-Out Rate: 57%
  - Transfer-With-Award Rate: 46%
  - Transfer-Out Bachelor’s Completion Rate: 50%
  - Cohort Bachelor’s Completion Rate: 28%

- **Hispanic**
  - Transfer-Out Rate: 56%
  - Transfer-With-Award Rate: 50%
  - Transfer-Out Bachelor’s Completion Rate: 56%
  - Cohort Bachelor’s Completion Rate: 31%

- **25 or older**
  - Transfer-Out Rate: 45%
  - Transfer-With-Award Rate: 48%
  - Transfer-Out Bachelor’s Completion Rate: 51%
  - Cohort Bachelor’s Completion Rate: 23%
In Ohio, PDE students have stronger transfer outcomes.
2. Encourage pre-transfer awards
Transfer students who earned a pre-transfer community college award have much stronger outcomes.

Community College Transfer-In Bachelor’s Completion Rate

- Any community college award (n = 161,313)
- No community college award (n = 238,000)

67% vs. 42%

All students
Transfer students who earned a pre-transfer community college award have much stronger outcomes.

Community College Transfer-In Bachelor's Completion Rate

- Any community college award (n = 161,313)
- No community college award (n = 238,000)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Any award</th>
<th>No award</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>All students</td>
<td>67%</td>
<td>42%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black</td>
<td>54%</td>
<td>25%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hispanic</td>
<td>69%</td>
<td>44%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Low-income</td>
<td>62%</td>
<td>35%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25 or older</td>
<td>57%</td>
<td>32%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
In Ohio, CC transfers who completed an award have the highest completion rates.
3. Some four-year institutional types have stronger outcomes
Minority-serving four-year institutions exhibit stronger bachelor’s completion rates

Community College Transfer-In Bachelor’s Completion Rate Within Four Years by Student and Institutional Characteristics

- **All Students**: 52%
- **HSI**: 58%
- **AANAPISI**: 65%
Minority-serving four-year institutions exhibit stronger bachelor’s completion rates across all subgroups

Community College Transfer-In Bachelor’s Completion Rate Within Four Years by Student and Institutional Characteristics

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>All Students</th>
<th>HSI</th>
<th>AANAPISI</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>All</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black</td>
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<tr>
<td>Hispanic</td>
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<td>Low-Income</td>
<td>46</td>
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<td>60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25 or Older</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>56</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Whereas for-profit colleges and predominately online institutions (POIs) have the lowest outcomes.

Community College Transfer-In Bachelor’s Completion Rate Within Four Years by Student and Institutional Characteristics

- **All Students**
- **Private for-profit four-year**
- **Predominantly online institution**

### Bar Chart

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>All Students</th>
<th>Private for-profit four-year</th>
<th>Predominantly online institution</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>All</td>
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<td>23</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
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<td>Hispanic</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Low-Income</td>
<td>46</td>
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<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25 or Older</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
4. Some colleges exhibit stronger transfer outcomes and with little disparities
College with a transfer-out bachelor’s completion rate above the national average and with no disparities for low-income students.

14% of community colleges have bachelor’s completion rates above the national average and with no disparities for low-income students.
15% of community colleges have bachelor’s completion rates above the national average, with no disparities for Black students.
27% of community colleges have bachelor’s completion rates above the national average, with no disparities for Hispanic students.

For older students, it is 17% of colleges.
How Can Community College and Four-Year Partners Achieve Strong Transfer Outcomes?

THE TRANSFER PLAYBOOK:
ESSENTIAL PRACTICES FOR TWO- AND FOUR-YEAR COLLEGES
Essential 2- and 4-Year College Transfer Practices

1) Prioritize transfer student success
2) Create clear program pathways with aligned high quality instruction
3) Provide tailored transfer student advising

Wyner, Deane, Jenkins & Fink, May 2016
Transfer Playbook 2.0

Identified 252 partnerships with:
- Relatively strong outcomes overall for Black, Hispanic, and lower-income transfer students
- Relatively low disparities for these groups

Ranked partnerships based on:
- Number and share of Black, Hispanic, and lower-income students
- Equity in bachelor’s completion rate
- Better-than-expected bachelor’s completion accounting for institutional and demographic characteristics.

Conducted a qualitative review of 70 partnerships, narrowing to 22 partnerships for 90-minute screening interviews.

Conducted 11 in-person site visits and additional virtual follow-up interviews.
Emerging Practical Guidance from Our Fieldwork

Make Transfer a President-Level Priority to Achieve Sustainable Success at Scale

Create Programmatic Pathways to Timely Bachelor’s Completion & Postgraduate Success

Tailor Transfer Advising & Supports to Foster Trust, Momentum, and Engagement
Make Transfer a President-Level Priority to Achieve Sustainable Success at Scale

Features of this strategy

**Multilevel, well-resourced partnerships**
- President-led
- Cabinet-sponsored governance structures that span both institutions
- Individual and shared investment, including dedicated staff

**End-to-end redesign of the transfer student experience**
- Transfer models that extend beyond credit mobility
- Strategies tailored to regional needs
- Attention to affordability and financial aid
- “Any student could be a transfer student” mentality

**Transfer student-centered standard operating procedures**
- Disaggregated data reporting for accountability, case-making, and continuous improvement
- Automation and predictable processes to streamline student experience
- Recurring mechanisms to assess student perspectives
Create Programmatic Pathways to **Timely Bachelor’s Completion & Postgraduate Success**

**Features of this strategy**

**Four-year maps**
- Clear, term-by-term plans
- Set expectation for timely completion but adjustable for part-time students
- Built for no excess credit, including the simplest alternatives to 2+2
- Link to family-sustaining careers in service areas

**Sequences that promote learning and progression**
- Embed relevant math and English in the first year
- Align gateway course instruction to university-level success
- Frontload courses that inspire early major changes or commitment
- Include key high-impact experiences and finances

**Regular faculty engagement**
- Venues for routine pathway development and maintenance
- Professional development to incorporate transfer needs into the classroom
- Map-supported transfer-inclusive scheduling
Tailor Transfer Advising & Supports to Foster Trust, Momentum, and Engagement

Features of this strategy

A knowledgeable and caring advising corps
- Displays empathy for the transfer student population
- Attends mandatory, routine, transfer-specific professional development
- Starts with students’ end goals in mind, supporting early major pathway selection & progression

An inescapable, pervasive advising campaign
- Proactive in high schools, community colleges, and four-year institutions
- Available through in-person and virtual formats and beyond 9-5 hours
- Inevitable engagement throughout community college and university admissions, orientation, and onboarding

A transfer-specific approach to holistic success
- Includes career advising and links to high-impact experiences
- Fosters community-building and inclusion
- Supports students’ financial and material needs
Extending Community College Transfer Pathways into High School

CCRC’s Dual Enrollment Equity Pathways (DEEP) Research
Dual Enrollment: 18% of 2021 Community College Fall Enrollment

CCRC analysis of IPEDS Fall Enrollments among students age 17 and younger at community colleges, divided by total fall enrollments. 

Rethinking Dual Enrollment as an Equitable On-Ramp to a Career-Path College Degree Program After High School

In this report, we present a model for rethinking dual enrollment—through which over 1 million high school students take college-level courses for college credit each year—as a means to expand access to high-quality, low-cost, and equitable postsecondary education for students who are traditionally underserved. By providing opportunities for students to explore the interests and passions that shape their future careers, dual enrollment can prepare students for college, workforce, and life. It is essential that policymakers and practitioners who work with students, parents, and educators recognize and address the equity challenges that have historically limited dual enrollment participation.

We present a conceptual model for DEEP and discuss research to support its four main areas of practice: (1) outreach to undeveloped students and schools; (2) alignment to college degrees and courses in fields of interest; (3) early career and academic preparation, advising, and planning; and (4) high-quality college preparation and academic support. It is worth noting that DEEP practices reflect the curricular coherence and holistic support evident in career-focused high schools, which provide students with multiple pathways, including dual enrollment, from high school to college and career. The DEEP model can be used to support and expand dual enrollment opportunities among students from underrepresented groups. The DEEP approach applies these insights to the much more common context of traditional high schools, in which the potential to benefit hundreds of thousands of students each year.

We conclude by serving as models and opportunities for colleges, schools, and states to implement DEEP practices as a result of identifying costs associated with DEEP implementation.

CCRC COMMUNITY COLLEGE RESEARCH CENTER
OCTOBER 2022

DEEP@CCRC
Resources on dual enrollment equity pathways for K-12 and college practitioners.

Redesigning Dual Enrollment as a Purposeful Pathway to College and Career Opportunity

John Finch, Sarah Smith, Audrey Garcia Tubbs, David Jennings, Maggie P. Paré, Carl Kunkel, Lauren Bresnahan, Jessica Wagner
DEEP Practice Areas

Outreach
Outreach to Underserved Students & Schools

Alignment
Align DE to College Degrees & Careers

Advise
Advise Students to Explore Interests and Develop Plans

Support
Support Students by Delivering High-Quality Instruction
Incentives for Redesigning Dual Enrollment as an On-Ramp to College Degrees

<table>
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<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Potential Incentives</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Colleges</strong></td>
<td>1. Declining enrollments among older students; open seats</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2. Expanding the pool of potential college-going students after high school</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3. Downstream benefits to retention, completion, and statewide performance funding by increasing yield of former DE students</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>4. Reputational benefits</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>K-12 Schools</strong></td>
<td>1. Attracting students and families looking for college acceleration options</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2. Can offer new and attractive programs in partnership with colleges</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3. Improved student outcomes, particularly for underserved populations and schools</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>4. Gains in state performance reporting and funding</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

CCRC