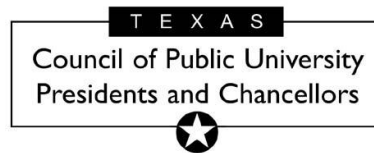




Improving Student Transfer Rates
From Texas' Public Community Colleges to
Public General Academic Institutions:
Recommendations Addressing Participation and Success

November 2010



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REPORT SUMMARY

FIRST SECTION

To prioritize the recommended programs and initiatives presented in the 2008 CPUPC report (accomplished and ongoing):

- The statewide online application, ApplyTexas, now includes the opportunity for students to authorize the release of transcripts for the purpose of granting an associate's (AA) degree (a reverse transfer process)
- An additional accomplishment is the registration of 31 of Texas' 36 general academic institutions in the National Data Clearinghouse
- Coordinating Board review of barriers: a) curricular alignment, such as the mechanical engineering compact; b) the THECB has launched a "Generation Texas" statewide media campaign to promote college and career readiness and postsecondary enrollment/completion
- Ongoing: Interim studies on developmental education, dual credit, including academic rigor and specified outcomes to prepare and assist students interested in transferring

Five priority recommendations were identified from the 2008 report as action areas:

- Reactivate the Statewide Transfer Issues Advisory Committee,
- Share contact information pertaining to first-time in college and transfer-declared students,
- Increase the number and professional training of academic advisors,
- Create online transfer equivalency charts, and
- Create state incentives for increasing the number of transfer students.

REPORT SUMMARY (con’t)

SECOND SECTION

Additional recommendations regarding key challenges related to student transfer:

- Address the way in which graduation rates are calculated,
- Establish incentives for more students to successfully transfer and for institutions to invest in efficient transfer processes,
- Examine institutional approaches to consider transfer students as “at-risk” students, and
- Consideration of financial assistance for transfer students.

THIRD SECTION

- To summarize promising practices in student transfer on a national, statewide, and local basis,
- To summarize policy implemented in other states (and including Texas), and
- To distinguish different approaches in community college and university environments for potential transfer students in the areas of admissions, financial aid, academic advising and counseling, and curricular topics.

Improving Student Transfer Rates From Texas’ Public Community Colleges to Public General Academic Institutions: Recommendations Addressing Participation and Success

Background

In fall 2008, the Council of Public University Presidents and Chancellors (CPUPC) distributed a report identifying a range of programs available to accelerate student transfer from community colleges to general academic institutions. The report intentionally did not present specific or prioritized recommendations (see “Improving Texas Community College Student Transfer Rates to General Academic Institutions: A Report Featuring Recommendations for the Coordinating Board, Higher Education Institutions, and the State” posted at <http://www.cpupc.org/>). Instead, the document provided a review of best practice literature with a menu of options identified by professionals representing enrollment management, admissions officers, registrars, financial aid, and student services. This document is the CPUPC’s second report on student transfer, transitioning from a collection of promising practices to a short list of specific recommendations regarding strategies and policy to increase student transfer success.

Implementing initiatives to improve student transfer is an important service to the state’s growing student population, with the majority starting their higher education experience at a community college. For instance, from fall 2000 to fall 2009, Texas public community college enrollment increased 55.1 percent (from 431,934 students to 669,811 students). Student enrollment growth at Texas’ public general academic institutions for the same period increased 28.4 percent, from 414,626 students to 532,226 students (Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board Accountability Data, <http://www.txhighereddata.org/Interactive/Accountability/>, June 2, 2010). Additionally, former State Demographer Steve Murdock reviewed anticipated growth of the population for the Senate Higher Education Committee and projected the number of students in higher education will increase 105 percent with the need for financial aid increasing over 200 percent (April 26, 2010).

Yet, while student enrollment in postsecondary education has experienced significant increases, similar gains have not been experienced in the completion of bachelor’s degrees. Utilizing the Coordinating Board’s (THECB) same data source, among first-time full-time degree-seeking community college students comprising the 2001 cohort, 15.6 percent had earned a bachelor’s degree within six years (and 13.9 percent of the 2002 cohort). The statewide average for public university students earning a bachelor’s degree in six years (or still enrolled after six years) is 69.4 percent for the 2001 cohort and 69.8 percent for the 2002 cohort.

Related to bachelor’s degree graduation rates is the extent to which community college students transfer to a university. Historically, only a small number of the community college students comprising the first-time full-time (FTFT) student cohort actually transfer (the State utilizes FTFT cohort data to track graduation rates). For example, of 115,602 students in the 2003 community college FTFT cohort, only 33,485 – or 29 percent – transferred within six years to a

university. Of these transfer students, many transferred with 43+ hours completed at a community college (15.4 percent of the transfer students). These are important considerations in addressing the needs of transfer students: FTFT transfer students are relatively few in number and, within this population, some students complete only a few semester credit hours (5.5 percent) while other students are well into sophomore status at the time of transfer (source: THECB Accountability System, http://www.txhighereddata.org/Interactive/Accountability/CC_Success.cfm?FICE=445566).

Implications related to student transfer rates and the success of transfer students are huge with regard to current enrollment and graduation trends as well as state higher education policy. To this end, the chancellors and presidents of public universities in Texas directed a standing committee comprised of enrollment managers, financial aid officers, and student business officers to update the 2008 report on student transfer. The committee, referred to as the Enrollment Services Efficiency Committee (ESEC), represents these three higher education professions with institutional representation invited from each of Texas’ six public university systems and four public independent universities. With the assistance of transfer professionals with the University of North Texas and the University of Texas System, ESEC members decided to approach this directive in three ways:

- 1) To prioritize the recommended programs and initiatives presented in the 2008 CPUPC report;
- 2) To identify and provide recommendations regarding key challenges related to student transfer; and,
- 3) To summarize promising practices in student transfer on a national, statewide, and local basis.

In addition to these three areas, supplemental material is provided at the end of this document highlighting student transfer policy in several select states, including Texas. Also provided is a series of tables created for the Transfer101 website to assist potential transfer students in concisely summarizing the different approaches taken by community colleges and universities in the areas of admissions, financial aid, academic advising and counseling, and curricular topics.

Recommendations Prioritized From the 2008 CPUPC Report

Members of the Enrollment Services Efficiency Committee (ESEC) identified three recommendations from the 2008 CPUPC report which have subsequently been accomplished or implemented, two recommendations under study during the current interim legislative session, and five priority action items for immediate consideration and implementation (as listed in the table below). These items are intended to increase the efficiency for students pursuing a bachelor’s degree among students who initially enroll in a community college and then transfer to a general academic institution.

**Accomplished Recommendations, Interim Studies, and
2010 Priority Recommendations from the
2008 CPUPC Student Transfer Report**

Recommendations
(1-Accomplished) Simplify the reverse transfer process by including a release authorization component on the statewide ApplyTexas application and the common transfer application, authorize the release of transcripts for the purpose of granting an AA degree
(2-Accomplished) To provide the ability to track student enrollment beyond Texas, all institutions should participate in and utilize data provided by the National Student Clearinghouse (Note: all Texas public universities are members of NSC with the exception of two--which are considering membership—and the three new general academic campuses which do not have their own FICE code or accreditation for independent reporting)
(3-Accomplished/ongoing) The Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board is currently reviewing barriers (real and perceived) to transferring in particular majors, such as mechanical engineering and other high-enrollment/high-priority majors
(4-Interim Study) Adopt policies to address developmental education courses involving transfer students
(5-Interim Study) Conduct a study comparing the performance of dual credit students to the overall student population with considerations of academic rigor and leading to specification of outcomes for lower division courses (particularly those most frequently taught as dual credit courses)
(6-Priority Recommendation) Reactivate the statewide Transfer Issues Advisory Committee to advance the recommendations regarding student transfer and consider an annual conference on student transfer as a charge; consider statewide mechanisms to track students, common electronic transcripts, advising guides, electronic degree audits, course applicability systems, tracking including class rosters and grade information, transfer student bridge programs for student credit, transfer inefficiencies for applied technology students
(7-Priority Recommendation) Share contact information for first-time in college and transfer-declared students to four-year universities to facilitate early contact, recruitment and advising
(8-Priority Recommendation) Increase the number of academic advisors to encourage student success by developing clear expectations and rewarding strong advising programs and inform these advisors of financial aid issues related to transfer (the \$1,000 graduate-on-time tuition rebate, 120 hour degree-plan limits, 30 hour rules limiting courses within a major, the “3-peat” course repeat limit, and the six course drop limit)
(9-Priority Recommendation) Create online transfer equivalency charts for all general academic campuses, perhaps developing a standardized statewide template and process for sharing course inventories
(10-Priority Recommendation) After assuring basic student and institutional needs are met through established funding mechanisms, create State incentives for the number of transfer students who graduate from general academic institutions

We are pleased to identify several recommendations included in the 2008 CPUPC report which have been accomplished or implemented. Specifically, the statewide online application, ApplyTexas, now includes the opportunity for students to authorize the release of transcripts for the purpose of granting an associate’s (AA) degree (a reverse transfer process). Also, through legislation and state support, the THECB has launched a “Generation Texas” statewide media campaign to promote college and career readiness and postsecondary enrollment/completion. An additional accomplishment is the registration of 31 of Texas’ 36 general academic institutions¹ in the National Data Clearinghouse. This program will advance data collection in several ways, including the opportunity to track Texas students who transfer and/or complete their degree out-of-state.

The Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board (THECB) has been instrumental at the statewide level in improving student transfer efforts. Since 2008, the agency has conducted several conferences addressing student transfer and is presently focused on identifying opportunities to align specific degree programs with the assistance of a Lumina Foundation Grant. The program began with a thorough review of mechanical engineering courses, resulting in statewide alignment and a single articulation² agreement among participating community colleges and universities. Additional programs scheduled for review include other engineering areas, critical need areas, and high-enrollment majors such as those in Schools of Business. Representatives of the public general academic institutions are interested in continuing these programs and participating in the various initiatives of the agency. (See the Voluntary Mechanical Engineering Transfer Compact, <http://www.thecb.state.tx.us/index.cfm?objectid=C02EE263-D0D4-CB89-63334BECB85CB617>).

Solid academic preparation provided through developmental education and dual credit courses will assist students as they prepare to transfer to a four-year institution; both educational areas were identified as priority areas by ESEC members. An example of the rigor and academic preparedness level required of high school students (which will benefit transfer students) is found in the dual credit principals required of the institutions of higher education pertaining to dual credit/early admissions students. The principles state these students must meet requirements provided through the Texas Success Initiative (TSI). Specifically, undergraduate students in Texas, unless otherwise exempt, will be tested for reading, writing, and mathematics skills and meet minimum qualifications prior to enrolling in any college-level academic coursework.

These topics—developmental education and dual credit—were identified as “accomplished” because they are each an area required for interim study as directed by the Texas Legislature in preparation of the next legislative session, to commence January 2011. In consideration of the close relationship of developmental education and dual credit with transfer-

¹ The general academic institution total of 36 excludes the Texas A&M University at Galveston (reported with Texas A&M University-College Station) and combines the Sul Ross Rio Grande College campus with Sul Ross State University. Both campuses are frequently reported independently by the THECB, creating a total of 38 general academic institutions in state-issued reports.

² Articulation agreements vary in scope and participants. In some instances, an articulation agreement can incorporate all public 2- and 4-year institutions involving a particular degree program. In other instances, articulation agreements may involve only two institutions and a limited number of courses (instead of a complete degree). In this document, the term may refer to either form.

related topics, we look forward to the recommendations and action plans to be presented in these studies.

In addition to the “accomplished” recommendations from the 2008 CPUPC report, five “priority” recommendations appear in the table. These recommendations were identified as the most important remaining recommendations from the 2008 report following review by ESEC members. The five priority recommendations and corresponding brief discussion is provided below:

1. Reactivate the Statewide Transfer Issues Advisory Committee,
2. Share contact information pertaining to first-time in college and transfer-declared students,
3. Increase the number and professional training of academic advisors,
4. Create online transfer equivalency charts, and
5. Create state incentives for increasing the number of transfer students.

1. Reactivate the Statewide Transfer Issues Advisory Committee: Members of the Enrollment Services Efficiency Committee strongly encourage the Statewide Transfer Issues Advisory Committee be reactivated. The committee is envisioned to be comprised of senior administrators representing both community colleges and universities responsible for student enrollment, retention and academics. There are opportunities to combine this recommendation with that of THECB staff, in that they recommend regular convening of regional articulation councils and/or student advisors, possibly in conjunction with the annual meeting hosted by the National Institute for the Study of Transfer Students.

Areas of importance for discussion by the Statewide Transfer Issues Advisory Committee may include evaluating the role of academic advising in terms of state policy (including policy regarding the 30-hour rule, 120-hour course degree limits, required government/political science course completion), and conduct a review of excess hours accumulated at either the community colleges or universities (or both).

2. Share Contact Information Pertaining to First-time in College and Transfer-declared Students: Timely university receipt of student information from community colleges regarding students at various points in their community college experience will facilitate the most appropriate university recruitment and advising. For instance, students may declare their intent to transfer to a four-year institution as early as their community college application process. This information—the intent to transfer—should be readily shared with the university community as students visit with community college advisors and complete their coursework at their respective community college. Additionally, as community colleges increase dual credit and developmental education offerings, opportunities for the exchange of transfer student information will increase. While many creative local partnerships exist between higher education institutions involving such programs as dual admissions, concurrent enrollment, and reverse transfer, these partnerships have limited proactive engagement of students to guide them as they plan and prepare for transfer. Students who are identified early in their community college coursework will benefit from timely academic and financial advising regarding their chosen educational path.

3. Increase the Number of and Professional Training for Academic Advisors: Higher education literature and research resoundingly endorses the importance of academic advising. Well-trained advisors encourage student success by developing clear expectations for students and the institutions. Strong academic advising programs should be rewarded and promoted as best practice resources, with an emphasis on successful training and professional development opportunities. Information may be provided through online modules which are accessible to advisors and students interested in transferring to a university. Advisors must be aware of a multitude of topics: curricular requirements, application deadlines, and financial aid issues related to transfer (including the \$1,000 graduate-on-time tuition rebate, 120-hour degree-plan limits, 30-hour rules limiting courses within a major, the “3-peat” course repeat limit, and the six course drop limit).

Academic advisors, whether professional advisors, faculty advisors, or student peer advisors, should also be familiar with intervention success plans and transfer success planning. These plans for transfer students serve as a guide and are key to their achievement of an associate’s and/or bachelor’s degree. The plans are often individualized to meet the needs of each student so they may remain on-track and connected with their campus in order to successfully progress toward their degree.

Related to intervention and transfer success action plans are communication plans. While a transfer-related communication plan may encompass a variety of mediums targeting transfer students, research conducted by the University of Texas System while developing the Transfer101.org program revealed staff working directly with students are not well-informed regarding THECB policies on the core curriculum, common course numbering, the role of developmental education, and dual credit principles. Thus, a detailed communication plan designed for transfer students is a highly recommended tool for preparing students who intend to transfer.

The Transfer101.org website is a first-step resource for both students and institutional representatives/advisors. In addition, professional development for, and regular interaction between, advisors at both the community college and university levels is vital to the success of student transfer. Recognizing the career mobility of advisors and the rapid change of processes and policy surrounding transfer, it is imperative that ongoing professional development opportunities targeting the transfer student be included in all academic advisor training.

4. Create Online Transfer Equivalency Charts: Development of a clear crosswalk for all public general academic campuses would be an informative and efficient service for students and advisors. Ideally, the process will entail also developing a standardized statewide template and establish a process for sharing course inventories. The state is moving in this direction as the THECB pursues the Lumina Grant review of select majors (see the Voluntary Mechanical Engineering Transfer Compact, <http://www.thecb.state.tx.us/index.cfm?objectid=C02EE263-D0D4-CB89-63334BECB85CB617>).

5. Create State Incentives for Increasing the Number of Transfer Students: An important end result of emphasizing transfer efficiency is the opportunity for students at two-year institutions to continue or combine their studies in four-year universities, ultimately achieving both an associate’s and a baccalaureate degree. Unfortunately, the available data

show that students are not realizing the full potential of current educational pathways. State-level incentives are needed in conjunction with institutional efforts and partnerships. Incentives will be effective in increasing the rate at which students participate in combined upper level courses of study, resulting in enhanced educational attainment which will serve both the students and the State’s needs and interests.

Accordingly, ESEC supports the proposal of the university-college partnership initiated by the University of Texas System, Texas A&M University System and the Texas Association of Community Colleges that a state incentive program be created to encourage students to greater participation, to encourage two-year institutions to promote transfer, and to stimulate four-year universities to actively recruit eligible students. Specifically, a state-level incentive program for community colleges and public universities may reward community colleges and universities based upon the number of transfer students with 30-70 SCH or an Associate Degree who graduate with a baccalaureate degree within four years of transfer. The program would recognize the community college from which the student transferred along with the institution which awarded the baccalaureate degree (each institution would share in the award). As mentioned previously, this incentive program to foster increased transfer rates could be specifically tailored to focus on certain student-related criteria or critical fields as defined by the THECB.

The public university-college partnership also established some general purpose guiding principles within which the specific proposal for transfer incentives may be cast:

- Funds for incentives should be awarded over and above increases in base appropriations that are needed to account for enrollment growth, inflation, institutional sustainability, and pursuit of excellence.
- There should be a direct focus on incentives for a few specific areas, such as institutional incentives focused on transfers, proposed here.
- Multifactor formulas and spreadsheets should not be used, which complicate evaluation of cause-effect relationships, and do not serve the critical need to measure and evaluate incentive effectiveness.
- An overriding objective should be to reward desired outcomes, but avoid competition among institutions with markedly different missions and contexts.
- Ideally any new incentives/rewards should be set within an evolving general plan for higher education in the State.
- Improving transfer student success should be one of the highest priorities for incentive/reward funding.

The result of implementing incentives will be alignment of state priorities with student transfer programs, perhaps focusing upon transfer students pursuing specific critical fields. The clear prioritization of state needs will further incorporate these needs into institutional mission.

Additional Recommendations Addressing Key Challenges in Student Transfer

Discussions with enrollment and financial aid professionals regarding transfer frequently identify challenges beyond the list of recommendations provided in the 2008 CPUPC report and the newly identified priority recommendations highlighted in the previous section. These additional areas require in-depth consideration by the higher education leadership, the reactivated Student Transfer Issues Advisory Committee, and state policy leaders. These topics are discussed in detail below and range from addressing the way in which graduation rates are calculated; establishing incentives for more students to successfully transfer and for institutions to invest in efficient transfer processes; examining institutional approaches to consider transfer students as “at-risk” students, and consideration of financial assistance for transfer students.

Are Existing Approaches to Calculating Transfer Student Retention and Success Appropriate? Across the United States, the 6-year graduation rate metric has been the primary measure of university performance, but it has severe limitations. For example, within the University of Texas System (excluding the University of Texas at Austin), only about 31 percent of students who complete a bachelor’s degree appear in this metric. A more holistic approach is recommended to capture all aspects of graduation performance.

President Diana Natalicio of the University of Texas at El Paso has testified before state legislators for several years that current reliance upon first-time full-time student cohorts does not reflect the achievements of students who enroll part-time and transfer in pursuit of a bachelor’s degree. As noted in “Complete to Compete” by the National Governors Association (page 8, June 2010):

The postsecondary graduation rate collected by the U. S. Department of Education’s Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS) only accounts for 48 percent of all undergraduates enrolled in four-year public institutions and 32 percent of those enrolled in two-year public institutions. The IPEDS graduation rate does not account for: 1) Part-time students – these individuals represent 37 percent of all college students, 61 percent of public two-year college students, and more than 40 percent of all black and Hispanic students; and 2) Transfer students – these individuals represent a significant number of college students, as 37 percent of students who earned a bachelor’s degree attended more than one institution, and 23 percent attended more than two institutions.

Several national promising practices are beginning to emerge that could provide a broader set of metrics and more meaningful context for measuring graduation success. The American Association of State Colleges and Universities’ (AASCU) recent recommendations included modeling predicted graduation rates as a way to put the graduation rate discussion into context. Accordingly, the THECB is using this concept and recently announced that staff is working to develop a “predicted graduation rate” for institutions that will take into account expected degree completion rates based upon identified characteristics of students within the student population (factors such as time to degree associated with Pell Grant recipients, started

as a part-time student, entered college at age 20 or older, and so on). The AASCU also recommended disaggregating graduation rates by student characteristics.

Nationally, many states and university systems are also expanding their accountability processes to include other more encompassing metrics (such as degree production as a percent of enrollment) to show success in producing degrees and graduation rates for transfer students. These metrics would include successful completions of transfer and part-time students. In addition, the national Voluntary System of Accountability includes composite graduation rates which incorporate students who graduate from other institutions and those who are still enrolled (the THECB currently tracks this metric).

State leaders are encouraged to monitor the debate and dialogue occurring across the country in an effort to appropriately expand the state’s methodology which determines an institutions’ graduation rate.

How Do We Encourage More Students to Transfer? One area that will be particularly helpful to enrollment officers of general academic institutions is to obtain contact information regarding community college students who have indicated they are interested in transferring to a university and/or intend to complete a bachelor’s degree (as recommended in the Priority Recommendation Table, item 7). Early identification of these students will permit the coordination of appropriate academic counseling and ensure the student receives information well in advance of deadlines (to apply for financial aid, university enrollment, etc.). Additionally, access to information regarding community college students who have completed/have almost completed the core curriculum and students who have “stopped out” and may be interested in completing their degree, will be invaluable to the university enrollment process.

Related to this, the THECB is leading an adult degree completion initiative targeting 44,595 students who have completed at least 100 semester credit hours (SCH) and an additional 178,248 students with at least 55 SCH on record in Texas but who have not yet completed a degree. A grant is pending to assist in operating several university/community college consortiums across the state with the goal of enrolling at least ten percent of the total potential base of 222,843 students.

Information-sharing frequently occurs through limited college-university articulation agreements. A statewide approach has been introduced through the establishment of the Transfer101 initiative, launched by the University of Texas System/Texas A&M University System and Texas Association of Community Colleges. The Transfer101 program has grown into a beneficial statewide program, securing the participation of 34 of the 36 general academic institutions and approximately 80 percent (39) of the 50 community college campuses and districts across the state. The goal of the program is to ensure students have easy access to the information and tools they need to make the transition to a four-year university. The site includes a transfer checklist, a link to ApplyTexas (the state’s common online application), and an after-application checklist to assist students in following-up on important dates and details. Developers are preparing to launch a “For Families” section in English and in Spanish and have started work on a “For Military” section. The site averages 9,000 distinct visits a month and positive student and advisor feedback has been collected. This is a low-cost and efficient online opportunity to share data, open the door for additional partnerships, and serve as an additional reference for students and their academic advisors.

When Students Want to Transfer, How do We Encourage Institutions to Become More Efficient in Servicing Transfer Students? As methods of tracking graduation cohorts are expanded to include transfer students, institutions will implement new processes for servicing transfer students. In addition to addressing training for academic advisors, transfer success action plans (intervention plans) provide an example of how colleges and universities can work together to address the needs of transfer students. The plans are developed by leadership teams, faculty, and staff from community colleges and their primary receiving institution. A systemic approach is provided through the plans to address the needs of transfer students and may include articulation agreements, data sharing and joint marketing initiatives. The plans typically identify specific goals, strategies, outcomes, responsible persons for each strategy, evaluation metrics of the strategies, and a timeline. Typical plans encompass three to five years for implementation of all strategies.

There are additional opportunities for community colleges and universities to form collaborations of faculty or inter-mingle student populations. They may develop service projects for the local community, joint study abroad programs, or coordinate joint undergraduate research projects. Examples of joint undergraduate research initiatives include nationally supported programs such as the National Science Foundation programs for research for undergraduate students and local programs such as university engineering majors working with community college engineering tech students in design and construction of projects. The cooperative nature of these programs will expose the university environment to community college students interested in transferring to complete their bachelor’s degree.

The Texas Pathways project is another approach to encouraging institutions to become more efficient in addressing transfer students. As explained on the THECB website, the project refers to local partnerships between secondary and post-secondary institutions which are designed to improve curriculum alignment between high school and post-secondary institutions. A Texas Pathways project has three main components:

- 1) The first component is a large scale data collection and research effort. Pathways partners agree to share student-level data including enrollment, course, and graduation data. The data is received and stored at the THECB where reports on curriculum alignment, graduation, and other topics are generated.
- 2) The second component is comprised of the local vertical alignment teams who will review the data reports. Once the teams have discovered the reasons for misalignment, the teams are charged with the task of creating interventions to solve the misalignments. These teams are supported by a regional coordinator.
- 3) The third component is evaluation. The local vertical alignment teams are monitored to ensure they are achieving their goals and are supported by the regional coordinator and data experts. After interventions are developed, THECB staff use their evaluation and data expertise to evaluate and improve interventions. This model creates an endless loop of data report generation, intervention creation, execution, and evaluation.

The THECB is currently supporting Pathways projects in the El Paso, Houston and San Antonio communities. See <https://share.thecb.state.tx.us/sites/Pathways/default.aspx> for additional information.

Are transfer students “at-risk” students? The federal government and state have established a definition for this particular group of students. Texas utilizes the definition for the purpose of allocating state performance incentive funds and in other discussions pertaining to institutional funding and predictors of student success. The definition of “at-risk” students includes those students who are recipients of Pell Grants, GED graduates, first entered college at age 20 or older, started as a part-time student (less than 12 hours), or earned an SAT or ACT score below the national average (THECB, “Formula Funding Recommendations for the 2012-2013 Biennium,” April 29, 2010). Without reference to specific numbers, a recent THECB report on community college transfer students provides the following conclusion:

“Given the common characteristics of community college students—they are more likely to be economically disadvantaged, the first person in the family to attend college, employed full or part-time, and enter college life with less academic preparation—the odds are that these students will not stay in college or graduate at rates similar to those of their native university counterparts unless institutions of higher education make strong, coordinated efforts to assist them.” (THECB, 2010, <http://www.thecb.state.tx.us/files//dmfile/IVNCommunityCollegeTransferStudentReport.pdf> , page 116).

Thus, institutional recognition that this group of students is largely enrolled in community colleges and therefore is highly represented in transfer cohorts will serve as an incentive for universities to actively recruit transfer students and invest in services dedicated to supporting transfer students (academic counseling, scholarships, etc.).

What do Professionals in the Financial Aid Community Recommend? With regard to student financial aid programs, the Texas Association of Student Financial Aid Administrators (TASFAA) has not developed official recommendations regarding student financial aid specifically to benefit transfer students. However, association representatives provided several general recommendations to the Senate Higher Education Committee on April 26, 2010:

- No changes in the TEXAS Grant award processes (regarding adding a merit component)
- Review the wide variety of current waivers, exemptions and student aid programs in terms of efficiencies, consistency (such as adding a “Satisfactory Academic Progress” requirement to all programs)
- Encourage simplification of the Free Application for Federal Student aid (FAFSA)
- Coordinate financial aid application deadlines (March 31 is most common, but the Top 10% Scholarship deadline is March 1)
- Address the timeliness of award notifications from the THECB.

Additional suggestions concerning financial aid programs consist of encouraging institutions to target fund-raising efforts specifically for creating scholarships for transfer students, to redefine the state’s TEXAS Grant program in order to set aside a certain percentage of funds (or fixed dollar amount) for eligible transfer students, and to convert the state’s B-on-Time program into a conditional grant program instead of its current loan format (due to tax implications for recipients).

Recommendations

Promising Practices in Student Transfer³

Today, 60 percent of college graduates in the United States have attended more than one college or university. Transfer students may swirl in and out of two- and four-year institutions in irregular patterns, and community colleges are the fastest growing segment of higher education, serving more than 43% of the nation’s undergraduate population (AACC, 2010). One-third of college students enter colleges and universities on a transfer track at a community college or as a transfer student to the four-year campus (NACAC, 2010). Postsecondary institutions have been challenged by state legislators throughout the country to increase degree completion rates, and President Obama has set a national goal that “America will regain its lost ground and have the highest proportion of students graduating from college in the world by 2020” (<http://www.whitehouse.gov/issues/education/>). Additionally, the National Governor’s Association has urged colleges and universities to produce improved outcome and progress metrics, including the tracking of transfer students (Reyna, 2010). With national attention focused on degree completion and with the increasing number of transfer students, it is important that higher education examine the programs and services that enhance the success rate of transfer students. With this in mind, the following Promising practices, gathered from the literature and from leading experts in transfer student services, are identified below:

Promising Practices at the Statewide Level

- Common course numbering
- Coordinated statewide articulation agreements
- Statewide articulation agreements for majors
- Discipline-specific curricular alignment across two-year and four-year campuses
- General education common core
- Block credit transfer (may include common core and/or cluster content courses)
- Transfer associate’s degrees (AA/AS degree transfers as core complete and junior status)
- Statewide standing committee to focus on transfer and articulation
- Periodic review to determine policy efficacy and any unintended consequences
- Professional development opportunities for transfer services professionals
- Statewide common application for admission
- Higher education web portals
- Increased data sharing and student tracking
- Reverse awarding of associate degrees (Retroactive degree completion initiatives)

³ American Association of Community Colleges (AACC), (2010). Fast facts. Retrieved from AACC web site: <http://www.aacc.nche.edu/AboutCC/Pages/fastfacts.aspx>

National Association for College Admission Counseling (NACAC), (2010). Special report on the transfer admission process. Arlington, VA: NACAC

Reyna, R. (2010). Complete to compete: Common college completion metrics. Washington, DC: National Governors Association.

Promising Practices in Enrollment Management

- Flexible scheduling of classes
- Transfer fairs for students and their families designed to provide information about transfer issues
- Online transfer guides
- Guaranteed admissions policies
- Reenrollment initiatives for non-completers
- Increased scholarship funding for transfer students

Promising Practices for Transfer Student Services

- Transfer orientation programs at the university level
- Community college programs focusing on transfer issues
- Learning communities and/or residential interest groups
- “Transfer year experience” programs
- Transfer student focus groups, surveys, and assessments
- Phi Theta Kappa and Tau Sigma honorary societies
- Campus retention/graduation committees with a focus on transfer
- Self-assessment of the campus transfer culture
- Financial management workshops centered on paying for college
- Transfer student ambassadors
- Faculty/staff mentoring program
- Parent/family programs
- Veterans programs
- Transfer student bill of rights

Promising Practices in Academic Support

- Early alert systems
- At-risk and academic support services such as TRIO, McNair, etc.
- Learning centers
- Transfer student success seminars on both the two-year and four-year campus
- Tutoring labs, on-line tutoring, and peer tutoring
- Supplemental instruction Advisors (including faculty and counselors) on both campuses who are trained to monitor the transferability of courses prior to registration
- Holistic and intrusive individual advising
- Professional development opportunities for advisors

Related Material
Summary of Policy Approaches to Student Transfer—Select States

Summary Policy Features of States’ Approaches to Transfer	
Compiled by Martha M. Ellis, Ph.D.	
University of Texas System	
Alabama	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Uniform articulation agreement among all institutions of higher education and general studies curriculum – Act 94-202 • Computerized advisement system for students operated by Troy State University • An articulation and general studies committee developed the state wide general education curriculum • A statewide articulation agreement for the transfer of credit among all public institutions of higher education
Arkansas	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • HB1357—Required Arkansas Higher Education Coordinating Board to develop state wide transfer agreement by January 2010 • Designate the AA, AS, and AAT as transfer degrees • Require public universities to accept all credit hours for students completing an associate degree, and to give such students junior status and require no further lower-level GE courses • Require each public university to develop transfer guidelines for each community college within 50 miles (or if none, the closest college), specifying the courses at that college that will prepare a student for each of its baccalaureate degree programs.
Arizona ¹	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Associate degrees for transfer • Legislatively mandated task force developed the framework in 1996 • Arizona General Education Curriculum (AGEC) is a set of standardized GE patterns for different pathways: arts (AGEC-A), science (AGEC-S), and business (AGEC-B) • Transfer Pathways, including associate degrees, correspond with each AGEC option; 7 options depending on major discipline and certainty about choice of university • Completing AGEC guarantees admission (not to specific campus or major) and completion of GE • Completing a transfer associates degree (AGEC + Transfer Pathway) guarantees junior status, application of pathway credits to the major, and competitiveness for admission to programs • Arizona Transfer website guides students through the options
California	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Student Transfer Achievement Reform Act • Student completing an associate degree for transfer with 2.0 GPA • Eligible for transfer with guarantee for admission with junior status into California State University baccalaureate program • Does not guarantee admission for specific majors or campuses • Student priority admission under this reform act to CSU campus of choice and major that is similar to community college major or area of emphasis over all other community college transfer students • Community college develop degree for transfer that is no more than 60 semester or 90 quarter units • Students cannot transfer in more than 60 semester or 90 quarter units Students cannot be required to complete more than 120semester-180 quarters hours for Baccalaureate degree except for high unit majors

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<p>Florida¹</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Associate degrees for transfer • Legislation in 1971 established the associate degree as a transfer degree; all public universities and many private institutions recognize the degree • Any AA degree guarantees admission to a public university (not a specific campus or major), with junior standing for registration purposes • Degree includes 36 GE units and 24 elective units; no explicit requirement for major preparation, but student recommended to complete pre-major requirements and the degree is offered in concentrations that parallel BA programs at public universities • Traditional articulation agreements specify courses for major preparation • GE requirements vary across institution, but completing GE at one college guarantees transfer of GE as a block • Statewide Course Numbering System (SCNS) used at all public institutions • Florida’s Advising, Counseling, and Tracking for Students (FACTS) website include transfer requirements, articulation information, and a degree audit system to compare transcript to degree requirements
<p>Louisiana</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • SB285 provides for a comprehensive system of articulation and transfer of credit between and among public secondary and postsecondary education institutions • Creates the statewide articulation and transfer council to oversee and monitor seamless articulation and transfer, develop a statewide articulation and transfer agreement, development of statewide core curriculum, development of statewide course numbering system, establish advisory committees composed of faculty to facilitate articulation in subject areas, approve common degree program prerequisites, develop policies, provide for end-of-course testing if necessary, establish monitoring, and reporting systems, establish appeals process, and annually review articulation and transfer policies • Guarantees transfer of general education courses and common degree program prerequisites • Guarantees that every graduate of a community college awarded an AA or AS degree shall be deemed to have met all general education and other core curriculum requirements and must be granted admission to the upper division of at least one state public four year college or university, except to a limited access program or program that has audition • Associate degree holders shall receive priority for admission to a state university over out-of-state students. • Provides for transfer of equivalent courses under the statewide course numbering system establishes a common college transcript
<p>New Jersey¹</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Associate degrees for transfer • New Jersey Comprehensive Stateside Transfer Agreement recently enacted (fall 2008) based on legislation passed in 2007 • Any AA/AS from a state community college receives full credit at a public university (60-64 units); some private universities establishing similar policies • Completion of AA/AS satisfies all GE but does not guarantee admission to a university • AA/AS will indicate that student has completed exactly half of the units required for BA/BS, unless a required major prerequisite course(s) is needed, which would increase the units required to complete the bachelor’s degree • Students encouraged to complete AA/AS that aligns with their anticipated major • NJ Transfer website describes the statewide transfer agreement, degree requirements, and course equivalencies

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<p>North Carolina¹</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Associate degrees for transfer • Comprehensive Articulation Agreement (CAA) authorized by legislation in 1995 applies to all community college and public universities; 23 private universities also participate • Completion of CAA (44 semester units) guarantees transfer of the credits as a block and completion of GE, but not admission • Completing an AA/AS degree in addition to CAA guarantees admission to a public university (not a specific campus or major), transfer of all credits, and junior status for recognition • AA/AS Pre-Major agreements in common majors require 64 units; 44 GE units and 20 units of major preparation and electives • Common course numbering across community college • No website specifically for transfer information, but it is included on the University of North Carolina website
<p>Ohio¹</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ohio Articulation and Transfer Policy revised and adopted by the Ohio Board of Regents in March 2007 • Ohio Transfer Modules (OTMs) outline GE requirements (36-40 semester units); adapted by each institution so there is no need for complex course equivalency systems; no statewide transfer module • Transfer Assurance Guides (TAGs) in 8 disciplinary areas describe major preparation coursework and course equivalencies across institutions • Completing TAG courses guarantees that courses will transfer and apply to degree requirements • Completing OTM and TAG courses does not guarantee admission • Website of the Board of Regents includes a section on Credit Transfer that describes OTMs and TAGs
<p>Oregon¹</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Associate degrees for transfer • Joint Boards Articulation Commission developed transfer degrees in 1992 • Two transfer degrees: Associate of Arts/Oregon Transfer (AA/OT) and Associates of Sciences Transfer in Business • AA/OT's 90 quarter units include 55 units of GE and 35 elective or lower division major units; 12 units of applied professional/technical coursework can be used as electives • Oregon Transfer Module (OTM) is embedded in the AA/OT; equivalent of one year of full-time study and offers an alternative for early transfer • AA/OT guarantees completion of GE, acceptance of all 90 units, junior standing for registration purposes, but no assurance of standing in the major • Publications describe information for students, but no comprehensive website on transfer; Articulation Transfer Linked Audit System (ATLAS) is a degree audit system to compare transcript to degree requirements
<p>Tennessee</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Passed transfer bill on January 21, 2010 • Single set of core standards for all 13 community colleges • The 41 hour core curriculum of courses is easily transferred between community colleges and public universities in the state • Standardizes electives so that students can work toward their major at a community college and transfer to a university after earning a two-year associate's degree • Eventually the state's community college will share a single course catalog

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Washington ¹	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Associate degrees for transfer• Several transfer degree options: Associate of Science – Transfer Degree (AS-T), Direct Transfer Agreement Associate Degree (DTA), Applied Associate of Science in Technology (for transfer to Bachelor of Applied Science)• DTA includes 60 quarter units of GE and 30 units of major courses and electives• 4 Major Related Programs (MRPs) for DTA in business/accounting, elementary education, pre-nursing, and math education; several MRPs fro AS-T in engineering and other science fields• Completing degree gives priority consideration in admission to public universities• No comprehensive website for transfer information and this point, but an Academic Guidance and Planning System (Academic GPS) is under development
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¹ Data from Moore, C., Shulock, N., & Jensen, C. (2009) *Crafting a Student-Centered Transfer Process in California: Lessons from Other States*. Sacramento: California State University Sacramento

Related Material

Different Approaches by Community Colleges and Universities Applicable to Potential Transfer Students
 (in Admissions, Financial Aid, Academic Advising and Counseling, and Curricular Topics)

Admissions						
	<i>What are the requirements for admission?</i>	<i>When is the application due?</i>	<i>Do I need to pay to apply?</i>	<i>Do I need multiple applications?</i>	<i>Where do I apply?</i>	<i>Who will assist me with application process?</i>
Community College	Open door (with requirements for entrance into certain programs)	Before you start taking classes	There are some community colleges that have an application fee that must be paid when applying.	Just one application for admissions.	applytexas.org	Admission representatives can assist you in completing the application process
University	Requirements based on community college GPA and the number of transfer hours earned for university admission. Many majors within different universities have their own GPA and transfer hour admission requirements to be admitted to their programs	All universities have deadline dates for submitting an application. Usually, the deadline is at least 1 semester before you start (check with the university where you want to transfer for specific dates)	The application fee varies by institution, so contact the university to find out the exact fee. Check on special opportunities for transfer students to have the application fee waived at the university where you want to transfer	Some majors require an additional application. Check with the university where you want to transfer for specific dates	applytexas.org	Most universities have admission representative who specialize in working with transfer students. Contact their admission offices and ask for a transfer counselor or the transfer center

Related Material

**Different Approaches by Community Colleges and Universities Applicable to Potential Transfer Students
 (in Admissions, Financial Aid, Academic Advising and Counseling, and Curricular Topics)**

Financial Aid					
<i>Is financial aid available?</i>	<i>When is the financial aid application due?</i>	<i>Who do I talk to with financial aid questions?</i>	<i>Are grants & scholarships available?</i>	<i>When is my tuition due?</i>	<i>Do you offer scholarships for transfer students? When should I apply for scholarships?</i>
Community College	Yes	Typically before you start taking classes	A representative of the financial aid office	Yes	Before classes start- and be sure not to miss the deadline or you may have to register again
University	Yes	Usually at least 1 semester before you start (check with the university where you want to transfer for the specific date)	A representative of the financial aid office	Yes	Check with the university about payment dates when registering for your classes Before classes start-check with the university so that you do not miss the deadline Yes, some universities offer scholarships to transfer students based on overall GPA, PTK membership and other factors. You should contact the financial/scholarship office for the deadlines, any specialized application procedures, and possible award amounts

Related Material

Different Approaches by Community Colleges and Universities Applicable to Potential Transfer Students
 (in Admissions, Financial Aid, Academic Advising and Counseling, and Curricular Topics)

Academic Advising and Orientation					
	<i>Do I have a specific advisor I need to talk to?</i>	<i>Must I attend a new student orientation?</i>	<i>What are the expectations for textbooks?</i>	<i>How can I learn more about the university before transferring?</i>	<i>How do I register for classes?</i>
Community College	Advising Center in student services	New Student Orientations are available. Check the community college for requirements	Check with your professor or the college bookstore about textbook requirements	Some colleges offer you an opportunity to meet with an admissions representative at your college during each semester. This person can assist you with transition into the university	Some colleges require you attend an orientation, meet with an advisor or both before you can register for classes. The adviser will assist you in selecting courses and information on registering for classes
University	Contact transfer specialist is available, a general advisor, or an advisor in the department of your desired major	Not all universities have orientations for transfer students to attend; please check with your University	Check with your professor or the university bookstore about textbook expectations	Some universities offer prospective student special events or meetings during each semester. Contact the university’s admissions office for more information	Some universities require you to either attend an orientation, meet with an academic adviser, or both before you can register for classes. The academic adviser will assist you with selecting classes, provide information on registering for classes, and determine whether you are meeting degree requirements

Related Material

Different Approaches by Community Colleges and Universities Applicable to Potential Transfer Students
 (in Admissions, Financial Aid, Academic Advising and Counseling, and Curricular Topics)

Curricular Topics				
	<i>Where can I take my Core Curriculum Classes?</i>	<i>Will my Core Curriculum Classes count for my degree?</i>	<i>How do Associates of Applied Science (AAS) degree or career/technical courses transfer?</i>	<i>What classes can I take that are guaranteed to transfer?</i>
Community College	Yes	Yes--if you complete your core at the community college you will meet the core requirements at the university when you transfer		Meet with an academic adviser at the community college your first semester to get started on the core curriculum. Also get information from transfer101.org on who to contact at universities regarding the transfer process and courses that will meet university degree requirements
University	Yes	Yes In most cases, ask a university representative about printed or electronic resources that explain the applicability of your coursework to a specific degree program	Some universities offer Bachelor of Applied Arts and Science degree that will combine your applied credit with specialized course to create a customized bachelor’s degree	Save yourself time and money by contacting the admission office or the academic department at the university you would like to attend at least one semester before you want to transfer. They can recommend a list of both core and major courses you can take at your particular community college that will satisfy the university degree requirements