

NISTS 2021

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Educational Session

Identifying and Overcoming Barriers to College Completion: Perspectives from Inland Empire Transfer-Achieving Students

Diversity and Inclusion, Special Populations

Inland Empire (I.E.) community college students have the lowest degree, certificate, or transfer-related outcomes across California. In a region of nearly 5 million residents, where 6 in 10 students identify as Latino, less than 12% of Latino adults hold a bachelor's degree. It is critical to address this disparity by increasing the region's transfer rate. In this session, attendees will explore barriers, strategies, and suggestions identified by I.E. transfer-achieving students and consider how they might strengthen their own institutional supports to help students achieve transfer.

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Growing Inland Achievement

Identifying and Overcoming Barriers to College Completion: Perspectives from Inland Empire Transfer-Achieving Students



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Mission



Growing Inland Achievement is a regional, **collective impact** organization that works to achieve educational and economic equity.

We **research** issues and opportunities, **resource** innovations and solutions, and **connect** diverse stakeholders to transform the Inland Empire through **education**.



Inland Empire | Desert Region



- The population of the IE is **51% Hispanic** and growing, yet **2x as many** have **no postsecondary education** compared to non-Hispanic whites.
- Among IE college-going students, **55%** attend **community college**; **58%** (over 110K) of these students **identify as Hispanic/Latino**
- Students in the IE are **less likely to earn college degrees** than the rest of CA, having the **lowest 3-year community college completion rate (22.5%)** across the state, and less than **30% having an associate degree or above.**
- IE students are **second least likely (65%)** across CA to **achieve transfer.**

Unique Challenges Facing IE Community College Students

- Through the Gate report ⁽²⁰¹⁷⁾ asserts I.E. CC students ***“...may face unique challenges and barriers along their transfer journey”*** ^(29 & 6).
- **They do!** Studies on the needs of Latinx community college students support this:
 - Latinx cc students found to be, ***“...typically low-income, are often the first in their families to attend college, have multiple responsibilities in addition to their academic commitment, and often attend classes in the evening”*** ^(Ornelas & Solorzano, 2004).


Contributions of GIA's Transfer Achievement Project

- Addresses the call for qualitative exploration of community college student needs and achievement
 - Particularly, the Latinx community college transfer experience (*Latino Policy and Issues Brief, 2007; Ornelas & Solorzano, 2004*), A demographic representing 66% of project participants.
- Utilized purposeful, in-depth interviews to allow college administrators to become “*fully aware of the barriers students experience in not only getting to college, but through college*” (*The Role of Faculty, Counselors and Support Programs, 2014, 22, 20*).
- Retrospective look at “transfer-achievers” is distinct from the many studies/projects generally reliant on interviews with current community college students.

Transfer Achievement Project (TAP)



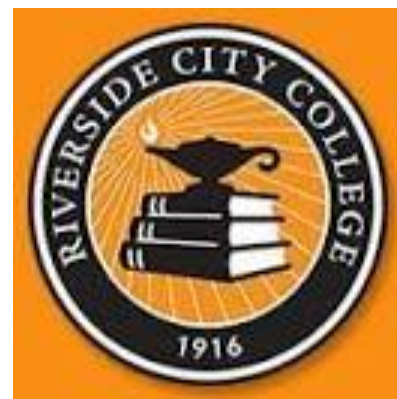
- Interviewed **33 transfer-achieving students**
- Representing **9** Inland Empire/Desert **community colleges**
- Currently attending **5** of the region's most transferred-to public and private **universities**

Objective  build on prior transfer research by the RP Group, PPIC, Campaign for College Opportunity, Aspen Institute (and others) to develop *regional strategies to support IE students*

Inland Empire Colleges/Universities Represented



Chaffey College



Participants: 33 Transfer-Achieving Students



Age (Median)	First-Gen	Employed During CC	Latinx/Hisp.	Rec'd Fin. Aid	CC Units Complete	Years at CC	ADT
24	21	29	22	21	90.2	3.65	22

IE Community College Students: Interview Questions

High School

- Dual enrollment
- Post-grad options
- College advice & decision-making
- Transfer awareness

Community College

- Academic experiences
- College(s) selection & swirling
- Major selection
- Financial aid impact
- Support services use
- Work & family obligations
- First gen experiences
- Wish I'd known...

Transfer Experience

- When became a goal
- Transfer options awareness
- Motivation to transfer
- Financial aid impact
- Why # units completed
- Why/not AA/ADT prior to transfer
- Support services use
- Undergrad research
- Univ info sessions
- Why others not transfer

Guiding Questions

- How do barriers identified by Inland Empire community college transfer students compare to those observed in your own institution and region?
- How can you and/or your institution better accommodate the transfer strategies identified by Inland Empire community college transfer-achieving students?
- Why are some of these relatively simple suggestions for helping students achieve transfer not already implemented in your institution, and what steps might you take to change that?



Barriers

Guided Question:

How do the barriers identified by Inland Empire community college transfer students compare to those observed in your own institutions and regions?

Enter Without Direction and Undecided on Major



"...it wasn't until like very late in my senior year that I actually realized you could transfer. Community college was for if your grades were bad and you didn't know what you were doing, and you couldn't get into anywhere else."

Age 20, UCR, RCC

"I spent a long time there. Not really because of an issue of academics, it was just more, I didn't really know what I wanted to do when I first got there..."

Age 25, UCR, COD

Underutilized or Ineffective Advising



*...And so, it was just, I felt like whenever I went, **it was kind of like getting a list of what you have to do and the classes that you have to take** and, but it wasn't like," Oh, maybe this class is better for your major, or maybe this class or this class gets you there, or this class might work better"*

Age 26, CSUSB, RCC/MSJC

*...**To be honest with you. I didn't know I was going to get these associates until the moments that I was going to graduate**, that's when, probably like four weeks before that I talked to my advisor and that's when she's like, "Oh, well you're going to get your associates in math and science, your associate's in business and then your associates for transfer."*

Age 27, UCR, RCC

Low-Priority Registration

When I first started, I was expecting like to get three, four classes and I got two and I was waitlisted for a bunch of other ones and I was like, well, let's see how the two go since I can't do anything. I don't have a better registration day. ...Like I had good grades, but the longer you're there, the better position you get to register.

Age 22, CPP, Chaffey

Under-Utilized Academic Support Services

- *"...If I needed tutoring, I wouldn't have wanted to go to the tutoring center, just because no one taught me how to like walk in there and ask for tutoring, which is like dumb."*

Age 21, CSUSB, RCC

- *"It was definitely like a hit or miss. Sometimes you get a good tutor, sometimes you wouldn't. But, with supplemental instruction, usually since there's just a higher screening process, you didn't really see that there."*

Age 23, UCR, RCC



Paying Out-of-Pocket and Mismanagement of Financial Aid



- *"...It just kind of adds up. So to begin with, I wasn't, it didn't feel as bad because I was working with one class, and then I started taking online classes, and then you have to pay another fee for the online portal and then the book and then the class."*
Age 26, CSUSB, RCC/MSJC
- *"Well, it was pretty nice cause they paid for everything, but, for the most part, I was very irresponsible with the money that was given to me through grants. At that point I didn't really have anyone to guide me in, you know, telling me how I should use my money."*
Age 28, UCR, COD

Misperception of Transfer Options

"Seventy-five percent of me is like, "No, there is no transfer center," but I am not sure. I never heard of one."

Age 21, CSUSB, RCC



"...there were things I didn't know in my first year cause I just didn't have the information being given to me. I didn't know that the center did field trips to certain colleges to allow students to learn about these colleges."

Age 24, UCLA, Chaffey College

"Their appointment system online... It seemed a little outdated."

Age 24, UCR, Norco/RCC/MVC

"There were a couple of times where we had fairs that they would show up, but it was never really, I guess personal enough to know if I was going to qualify to go to those schools..."

Age 40, UCLA, Chaffey/RCC

Being a First-Generation College Student



*"...Being a first generation, it was **harder for me to ask for help** or really try to speak to my high school counselors at the time because I was a confused 17-year old where I'm just like, "Oh all I have is my friends."*

Age 28, UCR, MSJC/Norco/MVC/RCC

*"I'm a first-generation college student, so it was not that my parents didn't want me to go to college. It was more that they **wanted me to make money...**"*

Age 40, UCLA, Chaffey/RCC

*"...if I had a question, the whole registration, all of the transfer paperwork, anything like that, **I just did on my own.**"*

Age 26, CSUSB, RCC/MSJC

*"I noticed that for my culture, specific as women, we're not really that encouraged to keep going in academics, **we're more encouraged to be home.**"*

Age 26, U. Redlands, SBVC/Crafton Hills/RCC



Employment



*"It was hard to make it to the school whenever there was **tutoring** because I would **work**... So it was very much just kind of on my own and trying to **beat the clock** to make it to the **library** on time..."*

Age 26, CSUSB, RCC/MSJC

Student Strategies And Suggestions

How can you and/or your institution better accommodate the transfer strategies identified by Inland Empire community college transfer-achieving students?

Why are some of these relatively simple suggestions for helping students achieve transfer not already implemented in your institution, and what steps might you take to change that?



Conversations with Current/Former Community College Students

*"So my uncle actually steered me towards attending community college... **just because you're starting at community college doesn't mean that you're like anything less or anything.**"*

Age 22, UCLA, MSJC

Student Suggestion:

Communicate benefits of community college to high school students early and demystify the negative stigma attached to attending community college.

Early identification of transfer intention and major

*"What's the best option to get me a job?"... Sometimes I still think, "Oh, maybe that could have been cool to major in," but **I just thought the most practical route.** - Age 26, CSUSB, RCC/MSJC*

Student Suggestions:

- Meet with **career counseling** right away to hone interests, strengths, and skills and pick a major accordingly.
- Implementation of **workshops** walking students through potential career options associated with particular fields of study.

Faculty/Staff Mentorships

"...he definitely helped me out big time and he also went to UCR. So I used, I picked his brain a lot, pretty much for this type stuff." - Age 28, UCR, COD

Student Suggestions:

Join **student enrichment programs** to develop a network of likeminded students and mentorships who could also be pivotal to navigating transfer, financial aid, and academic/professional development opportunities.

Priority Registration and Swirling



*"I do have to say that the **honors program** provided me with so many perks... Essentially **they had priority enrollment, which at a California community college that is golden.** That priority enrollment I think has, because my community college was severely impacted, like they're very hard to get classes beforehand, so **having that priority enrollment was amazing and probably got me out when I needed to get out...**"*

Age 23, UCLA, MSJC

*"**It's very hard to get classes.** That was the biggest annoyance. That's one of the reasons why **I ended up going to Crafton, Valley, and RCC.** And yeah, so it's difficult getting courses, **especially if you don't know what you're doing.**"*

Age 26, U. Redlands, SBVC/Crafton Hills/RCC

Strategic Scheduling and Use of Academic Supports

*...When it did come to **classes that were more challenging** for me, I, I made **sure to plan accordingly**. I made sure to be **smart with what classes I took when** and also like, I took psychology on...a smaller term, like the six weeks, because I knew that would be super easy for me.*

- Age 21, CSUSB, RCC

Student Suggestions:

- Tutoring Partnership with regional 4-year Institutions
- Increased social media and email communication explaining available academic services and events.
- In-class presentations and instructional videos
- “Office hours”

Fee Waivers, Grants, and Free Wi-Fi

"...I don't know what I would have done without financial aid...That was a lifesaver."

– Age 22, UCR, Norco/RCC

Student Suggestions:

- Public assistance programs (CalFresh, EBT)
- Participate in student enrichment programs offering scholarships/paid internships (Ex. MESA at COD)

Use of Transfer Center Services, Participation in Student Enrichment Programs, and One-On-One Sessions with University Reps

Both of those programs were... to get you to a four year, and both...helped me see that ...I had plenty of options...I will say that that mindset did not come from academic counseling. It was definitely just those professors and leaders of the honors program and the promise programs.

– Age 20, UCR, RCC

Student Suggestions:

- Social media platforms to advertise TC services/events
- Online platform for students to exchange transfer resources
- Visible transfer center ambassadors on campus
- Monthly panel of successful transfer students
- Weekly “coffee chats” with revolving college reps

Managing Work and School



*...You just kind of see what works and **try to make it on your lunch time for your appointment ...with a counselor to talk about transferring or something. You just gotta figure out other ways to learn about certain things or get information that maybe somebody could have helped you with at the school.***

- Age 26, CSUSB, RCC/MSJC

Student Suggestions:

- Lighten in-class attendance requirements
- More night and hybrid classes
- Make more services/resources available at night

Putting Student Feedback into Action...

Prepare Students for Success in Community College

- Educate high school students about community college and transfer. Create opportunities for students to talk to current or former community college students.
- Upon enrollment, provide timely advising to help students decide on a major and plan to transfer

Putting Student Feedback into Action...

Successfully Maneuvering the Community College System

- Ensure students can enroll in the classes they need to complete their degree requirements
- Increase awareness and quality of advising and support services to meet the needs of students
- Encourage students to join enrichment programs to connect to peers, faculty, or staff for ongoing social support

Putting Student Feedback into Action...

Actualize Transfer

- Provide transfer specific support to prepare students to transfer efficiently

Manage External Factors

- Offer financial advising and support for students
- Provide support for first-generation college students
- Identify strategies to support students balancing school and employment

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Session Evaluation via NISTS 2021 Conference App

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