

A Fresh Take on the Transfer Continuum

Viewing transfer as a journey helps us dispel myths and identify opportunities for increasing the success of student groups at different points on the “transfer continuum.”

Through the Gate developed a map of CCC students who were well-advanced along the transfer continuum, focusing on a sample of 875,630 students, including students “near” and “at” the gate, and transfer achievers who made it through the gate to university.

Over a recent five-year period, nearly **300,000 California Community College students** who completed all or most of their transfer requirements, **did not make it “through the gate” to a university.**



Quick Facts

1

Math is a barrier.

92% of students near the transfer gate still need to complete transfer-level math requirements in order to proceed along the path to university.

2

More than half of students who are stuck at the gate and exit the CCC system, leave without a college credential.

3

Transfer achievers overwhelmingly transfer without a degree or certificate.

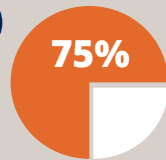
4

The number of students completing an Associate Degree for Transfer (AD-T) is on the rise, but reason for caution remains: region, CSU proximity, and major can all impact transfer success for AD-T earners.

5

Gender, race/ethnicity, and region all play a role in students' transfer progress.

a



75% of African Americans who completed transfer requirements made it through the gate; but most African-American students never make it this far on the transfer continuum.

b

Students in the Inland Empire were least likely to make it through the gate compared to other regions.

c

Latino males and Native American females were least likely to transfer compared to other groups.

Our Next Steps Will Be

- **Gathering insights straight from students**
- **Exploring why** high-leverage learners (those students near and at the gate) get stuck
- **Understanding how to help them through the gate**

Let's Start the Conversation Now

Please share these Quick Facts with your peers, colleagues, and friends to help us move...



#StudentsThroughTheGate



Learn more at www.rpgroup.org/through-the-gate



The RP Group's *Through the Gate* Transfer Study aims to identify strategies for increasing transfer among "high-leverage" learners in California Community Colleges — individuals who have completed all or most of their transfer requirements (those who are near and at the gate), but who do not make it "through the gate" to a university. Supported by College Futures Foundation.



Transfer Stories and Strategies:

How Six Student Groups Experience the Transfer Journey



Supported by:



THROUGH THE GATE

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Introduction

California has embraced transfer between the state’s community colleges and universities as a key mechanism for ensuring a diverse and qualified workforce while simultaneously closing equity gaps and promoting economic mobility for its residents. Yet the RP Group’s *Through the Gate* transfer study finds that each year, nearly 60,000 California community college students who demonstrate the determination and academic ability to transfer do not make it to university (see *What is Through the Gate?*, p. 21).¹ Who is more likely to get stuck? Students historically marginalized by our higher education systems.

These “high-leverage” learners—students whose course taking indicates they are close to transfer—commonly shared that four key factors impact their readiness for university (see *Figure 1. Student Transfer Capacity-Building Framework*, p. 2).

At the same time, **some factors carried more weight for certain groups of students than others** (see *Through the Gate Student Perspectives Research Quick Facts*, p. 2).² **This brief offers community college practitioners a snapshot of these differences and strategies for supporting these focal student groups** (see *In this Brief...* at right).

Each year, nearly 60,000 California community college students who demonstrate the determination and academic ability to transfer do not make it to university. Who is more likely to get stuck? Students historically marginalized by our higher education systems.



IN THIS BRIEF...

Drawing on a survey and interviews with over 800 California community college students exploring which factors impact their transfer journey, we offer for each focal student group:



Stories amplifying their transfer experiences*



Key survey results



A sampling of strategies for community colleges to use for building their transfer capacity

*These stories are composites representing the survey and interview findings for each focal student group. They cannot be attributed to any one student; all names are fictional.

Figure 1. Framework for Building Students' Transfer Capacity

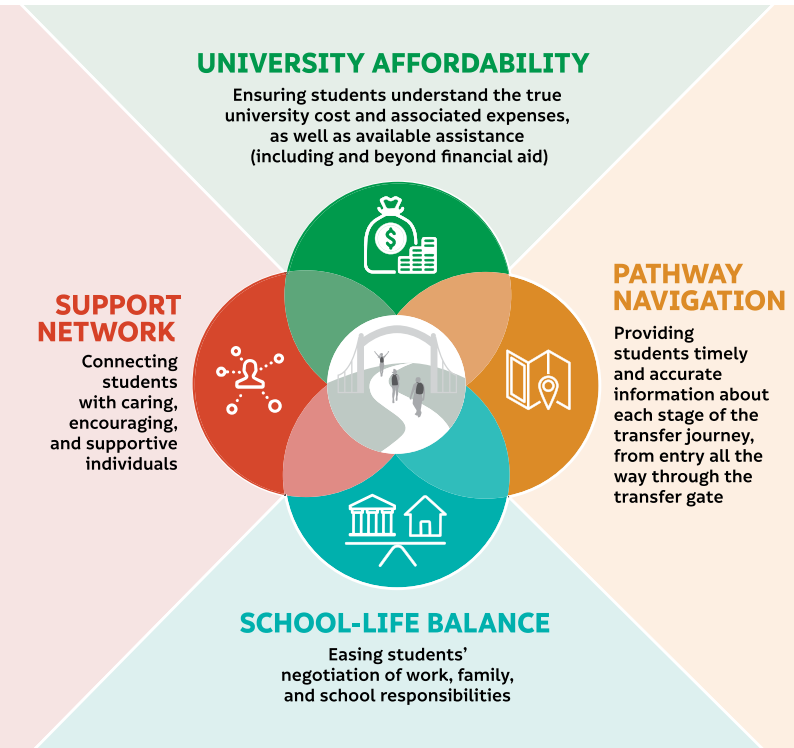


Photo: Stock Rocket



Through The Gate Student Perspectives RESEARCH QUICK FACTS

31
California
Community
Colleges (CCC)
Involved³

809
Student Survey
Participants

39
Student
Interviewees

Focal Student Groups	Survey Participants	Interviewees
Females	62%	49%
Older Students (>26)	32%	38%
Hispanic and Latina/o/x Students	56%	46%
African-American/Black Students	3%	5%
Students Who Reside in CA Central Valley Region	28%	15%
Exited Students Who Still Intend to Transfer	19%	28%

Student Group Profiles

Female Students



ALEXA'S STORY

Savvy with numbers and eager to earn more than minimum wage, Alexa enrolled in college a few years after graduating high school to pursue an accounting certificate. Yet, she quickly realized she wanted a bigger challenge, rekindling a love for math and physics that started in high school and setting her sights on a PhD.

Alexa is determined to make it to university. While chipping away at her transfer requirements over the past six years, she has also juggled full-time work and care for her young son. Yet persistent financial hardships, competing demands on her time, and limited understanding about what to expect and how to get help post-transfer often leave her discouraged. Alexa is especially uncertain about what childcare might be available on campus at the university. She also does not know what attending university will actually cost and has maxed out her financial aid.



Photo: Ammentorp Photography

To juggle her multiple family and work responsibilities, Alexa hopes to attend a local California State University (CSU), understanding from her counselor that this option will have the best financial assistance. She also notes that she plans to apply for any and all financial aid, grants, and scholarships for which she is eligible, although she does not have a clear understanding how to go about this process.

Alexa is determined to make it to university. While chipping away at her transfer requirements over the past six years, she has also juggled full-time work and care for her young son.



FEMALE STUDENTS: SURVEY HIGHLIGHTS



University Affordability

Female students are **MORE LIKELY** than male students to...

- Identify the cost of university tuition as very challenging
- Express that getting enough financial aid to pay for their education is highly motivating



School-Life Balance

Female students are **MORE LIKELY** than male students to...

- Indicate that balancing school and family is very challenging
- Be motivated by the prospect of having universities they can attend near home



Support Network

Female students are **MORE LIKELY** than male students to...

- Voice concern about having too little support from universities if they transfer



TRANSFER STRATEGIES FOR FEMALE STUDENTS

For Alexa and female students like her who have financial pressures and competing family demands, consider...

- Working with university partners to proactively reach out with information about comparable and additional resources and services available once at the university, including childcare and other on-campus support for student parents
- Collaborating with university partners to specifically provide information to help them understand what university education will cost and identify all available assistance, including and beyond financial aid
- Channeling information on resources for managing university life and financing through majority female academic and support programs (e.g., health care, early childhood education, [CalWorks](#)⁴, Extended Opportunities Programs and Services ([EOPS](#))/Cooperative Agencies Resources for Education (CARE))⁵
- Working with regional universities to proactively inform students about current options for accessing university-level programming remotely and/or on the college campus
- Coordinating with public and private universities to develop innovative options for place-bound students to complete a bachelor's degree (e.g., university centers; 3+1, hybrid, and/or online programs) and proactively informing students about these offerings



Photo: Richard Levine



Photo: mauritius images

Older Students



WILLIAM'S STORY

Returning to college in his 30s after a five-year hiatus, William is a motivated computer science major. He thinks getting a baccalaureate will help him “seal the deal” professionally, but he *is* concerned about balancing school, work, and family.

While William's wife and two kids are proud of him, he sometimes wonders if spending his hard-earned money and limited time to get a bachelor's degree makes sense since he already has a tech support job. He lives an hour away from work, and the commute is taking a toll. Considering that he will need to stay employed once he transfers, he hopes to find a university campus near home to reduce as much stress as possible.

William thinks he only has a few classes to complete to be eligible for transfer, yet is unsure of what steps to take next. Deterred by a counselor who told him when he re-enrolled that transfer was a long shot given his prior GPA, he has not yet accessed any transfer resources on campus. He plans to start taking advantage of these supports next semester, but still worries that the transfer process will be complex.

William sometimes wonders if spending his hard-earned money and limited time to get a bachelor's degree makes sense since he already has a tech support job.



Photo: ESB



OLDER STUDENTS: SURVEY HIGHLIGHTS



University Affordability

Older students are **MORE LIKELY** than younger students to...

- Pay for their education with their own income



School-Life Balance

Older students are **MORE LIKELY** than younger students to...

- Feel more pressure to prioritize supporting their family over pursuing their education
- Report that their top priority in choosing a university is how close it is to their home



Pathway Navigation

Older students are **LESS LIKELY** than younger students to...

- Leverage the wealth of transfer-related resources provided by CCC
- Talk to others about transferring



Photo: public domain



Photo: digitalskillet



TRANSFER STRATEGIES FOR OLDER STUDENTS

For William and older students like him who may be more independent than their younger counterparts; less likely to speak to their peers; and balancing multiple competing work, school, and family demands, consider...

- Clearly articulating the value proposition for continuing their education and completing a bachelor's degree
- Proactively “pushing” them important information about transfer deadlines and requirements
- Providing on-demand transfer advising and counseling that allow them to “self-service” at times and in ways that do not necessarily require face-to-face interaction
- Engaging counseling faculty in professional development on how to specifically encourage and advise non-traditional students who may be returning to college after multiple years away and/or juggling numerous responsibilities
- Involving instructors in professional development on how to specifically support non-traditional students in the classroom, including offering flexibility and compassion while valuing their life experience as an asset as they work toward transfer
- Developing options for working students, such as weekend and/or evening offerings or online programming with integrated academic and nonacademic student supports
- Working with regional universities to proactively inform students about current options for accessing university-level programming remotely and/or on the college campus
- Coordinating with public and private universities to develop innovative options for place-bound students to complete a bachelor's degree (e.g., university centers; 3+1, hybrid, and/or online programs) and proactively informing students about these offerings

Hispanic and Latina/o/x Students



SOFÍA'S STORY

Sofía has attended her community college since 2013 while also working at a nonprofit. First in her family to attend college, she hopes to pursue a bachelor's degree and become a school psychologist. However, finances are a big hurdle. While Sofía's family supports her educational goals, they are not able to help her financially. Yet her financial aid is impacted because she reports her parents' income on her FAFSA. Finding a way to secure more financial assistance will be essential for Sofía to make the transition to university.

As she explores her options, Sofía can only practically consider universities near home. In addition to both work and school, she takes care of her sister's two young children. Her confidence wavers and sometimes she thinks about "dropping out and just getting a vocational degree," but she is determined to keep going to set a good example for her nieces. Her transfer counselor and a favorite psychology professor have provided her with vital sources of encouragement and practical guidance about what she needs to do to reach her academic and career goals.

Finding a way to secure more financial assistance will be essential for Sofía to make the transition to university.

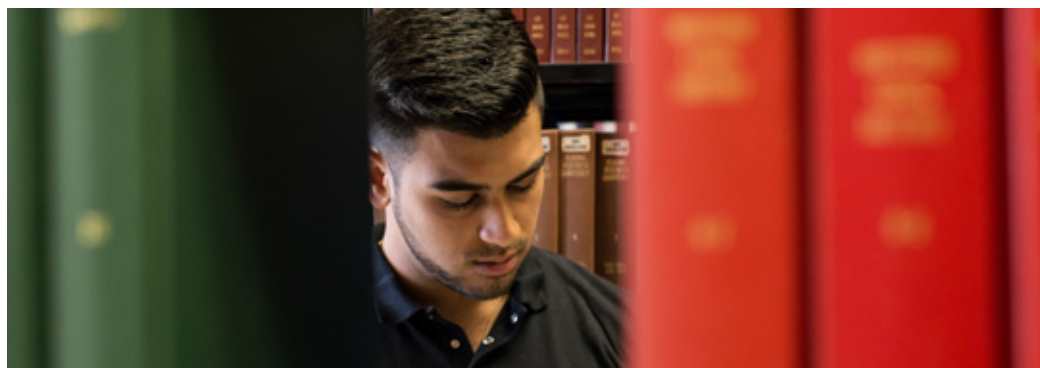


Photo: Manuela Durson



HISPANIC AND LATINA/O/X STUDENTS: SURVEY HIGHLIGHTS



University Affordability

Hispanic and Latina/o/x students are **MORE LIKELY** than Asian and White students to...

- Indicate that getting enough financial aid to pay for their education is highly motivating
- Share that the cost of university tuition is very challenging when considering transfer



School-Life Balance

Hispanic and Latina/o/x students are **MORE LIKELY** than Asian and White students to...

- Report that having universities they can attend near their home is highly motivating



Pathway Navigation

Hispanic and Latina/o/x students are **MORE LIKELY** than Asian and White students to...

- Identify that they used and found helpful a wide range of transfer-related resources, including counseling sessions focused on transfer, online resources, and their CCC transfer center



Support Network

Hispanic and Latina/o/x students are **MORE LIKELY** than Asian and White students to...

- Share that encouragement from their family as well as support from their CCC is highly motivating
- Say that most people they grew up with never attended a university



Photo: Jeffrey Isaac Greenberg



TRANSFER STRATEGIES FOR HISPANIC AND LATINA/O/X STUDENTS

For Sofía and other Hispanic and Latina/o/x students who get a motivational boost from their communities on and off campus and who are simultaneously concerned about financing their education post-transfer and securing a university option near their homes, consider...

- Engaging with K-12 partners to involve students and their families before they get to college, once they arrive on campus, and throughout the entire transfer process through information sessions, workshops, university tours, and meetings with university representatives
- Connecting them to programs such as [Puente](#),⁶ [TRiO](#),⁷ and [EOPS](#)⁸ that support transfer, while at the same time, determining what works well and scaling effective approaches to ensure the vast majority of Hispanic and Latina/o/x students learn about transfer expectations and receive hands-on support navigating the transfer process
- Proactively and continually communicating the college's support for their transfer goal, including recognizing their baccalaureate aspirations, celebrating completion of specific milestones, and providing clear and timely transfer information as they achieve those milestones
- Connecting students to Hispanic and Latina/o/x graduates who successfully transferred to help them learn about what is possible and what the movement to university is like
- Collaborating with university partners to specifically provide information to help them understand what university education will cost and identify all available assistance, including and beyond financial aid
- Working with regional universities to proactively inform students about current options for accessing university-level programming remotely and/or on the college campus
- Coordinating with public and private universities to develop innovative options for place-bound students to complete a bachelor's degree (e.g., university centers; 3+1, hybrid, and/or online programs) and proactively informing students about these offerings

African-American/Black Students



CHRISTOPHER'S STORY

Christopher spent some time wandering after graduating from high school, unsure of his path. While some friends went on to community college, he did not know anyone who attended a university. Christopher eventually enrolled at his local community college, but wound up exiting without a degree after a few semesters.

Then, he landed a job at an afterschool program for elementary-aged kids, and three years later, he is now back and driven to graduate and transfer. With a goal of ultimately achieving a master's degree in social work, his long-term plan is to work with at-risk youth in his community. He has narrowed his focus on local universities that are easily accessible to public transportation.

Since returning, he has developed a relationship with a counselor who has been an incredible support and champion, helping him navigate the transfer journey. He also credits his participation in Umoja, where he is inspired by his peers' own transfer goals.

Christopher wound up exiting without a degree after a few semesters. Now he's back and driven to graduate and transfer, with a goal of ultimately achieving a master's degree in social work.



Photo: fizkes



AFRICAN-AMERICAN/BLACK STUDENTS: SURVEY HIGHLIGHTS



School-Life Balance

African-American/Black students are **MORE LIKELY** than white students to...

- Voice that transportation to and from university campus is very challenging when considering transfer



Pathway Navigation

African-American/Black students are **MORE LIKELY** than white students to...

- Indicate use and helpfulness of a wide variety of transfer-related resources



Support Network

African-American/Black students are **MORE LIKELY** than white students to...

- Share that most of the people they grew up with never attended a university



Photo: JOPWELL



TRANSFER STRATEGIES FOR AFRICAN-AMERICAN/BLACK STUDENTS

For Christopher and African-American/Black students like him who may have practical concerns about the logistics of attending university as well as limited exposure to higher education, consider...

- Working with regional universities to highlight various modes of transportation options available, for instance, campus bus routes and rideshare opportunities with other university students living off campus
- Proactively “pushing” information about the array of in-person and virtual transfer resources available on campus
- Connecting students to programs such as [Umoja](#)⁹, [TRiO](#)¹⁰, and [EOPS](#)¹¹ that support transfer, while at the same time, determining what works well and scaling effective approaches to ensure the vast majority of African-American/Black students learn about transfer expectations and receive hands-on support for navigating the transfer process
- Connecting students to African-American/Black alumni who successfully transferred to help students learn about what is possible and what the movement to university is like



Photo: Jon Parker Lee

Central Valley Students



JESSICA'S STORY

Jessica enrolled at her community college in 2016 right out of high school. She lives in a small, rural Central Valley town with her parents. She is the first in her family to attend college, and growing up, most of her friends did not plan for postsecondary education, so she too thought she would get a job after high school. However, Jessica's grades caught the attention of her high school counselor, who recommended her for a summer bridge program. She saw the campus for the first time when her parents drove her to the orientation.

Everything changed after summer bridge, which introduced her to different pathways at the college and the possibility of transferring. Several semesters in, she really enjoys her classes and has set her sights on a bachelor's degree in business administration. While she considers herself on the transfer path, she has not been able to utilize campus transfer resources given a long commute. Back home, the college's website and ASSIST.org are her go-to resources. However, she finds the transfer information available on the college's website to be difficult to find and hard to navigate.

With very few universities in the area, she is also unsure what she will do once she is ready to transfer. Moving away from her parents and home seems daunting.

Jessica considers herself on the transfer path.

However, she has not been able to utilize campus transfer resources given a long commute.



Photo: Jillian Cain



CENTRAL VALLEY STUDENTS: SURVEY HIGHLIGHTS



School-Life Balance

Students in the Central Valley relative to students in other regions were **MORE LIKELY** to...

- Express that having an absence of universities they can attend near their home is very challenging AND
- Report there are only a few universities near them within driving distance



Pathway Navigation

Students in the Central Valley are **LESS LIKELY** than students in other regions to...

- Talk to friends (both in and outside their community college) about potentially transferring
- Report the use and helpfulness of many transfer-related resources, most notably online resources



Support Network

Students in the Central Valley are **MORE LIKELY** than students in other regions to...

- Agree that most of the people they grew up with never attended a university



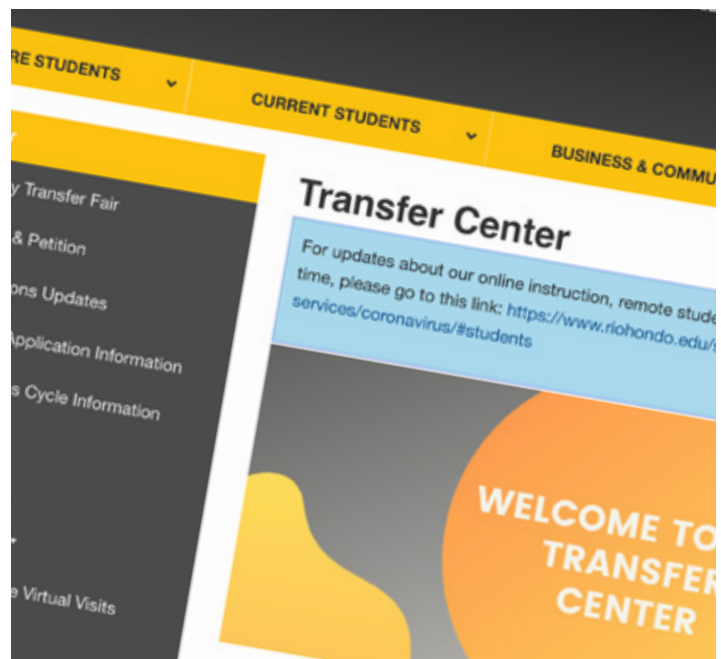
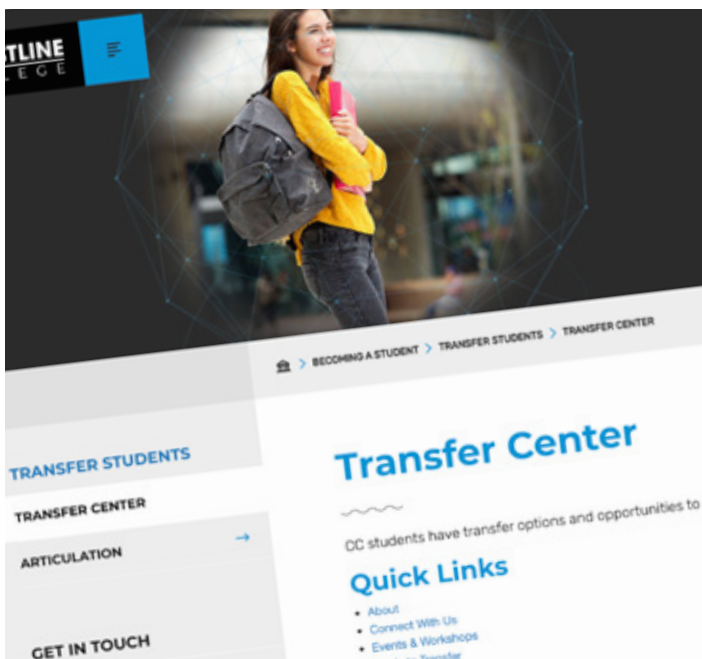
Photo: Jennifer G. Lang



TRANSFER STRATEGIES FOR CENTRAL VALLEY STUDENTS

For Jessica and other Central Valley students who may have less exposure to higher education, limited engagement with transfer-related resources, and concerns about proximity to regional university options, consider...

- Developing cohorts and support groups where students learn about transfer expectations and resources and receive hands-on support navigating the transfer process
- Connecting students to transfer achievers attending universities in the region
- Proactively “pushing” important information about transfer deadlines and requirements to students
- Ensuring transfer-related sections of the college website are accessible and navigable
- Working with regional universities to proactively inform students about current options for accessing university-level programming remotely and/or on the college campus
- Coordinating with public and private universities to develop innovative options for place-bound students to complete a bachelor’s degree (e.g., university centers; 3+1, hybrid, and/or online programs) and proactively informing students about these offerings



Exited Students with Transfer Goals



DAVID'S STORY

David started out planning to transfer when he first enrolled at his community college, and recently completed his associate degree in psychology after nearly six years. Now, with a baby on the way, he is taking a break from school to secure a new job with better wages. Given this turn of events in his family, David does not plan to transfer for at least another year or two. Finding a university campus near home will be essential, close to his in-laws who will take care of his daughter once she arrives. Moving to another part of the state is not an option.

David felt little encouragement or support from his campus when he was enrolled—an additional deterrent to his transfer plans. He is unsure about what he needs to practically do to get into his local CSU, how to transfer units, and what the application process will include. He received minimal help from counselors and the transfer center. When he was attending classes, he struggled academically and regularly tapped tutoring services; he worries about what to expect in terms of course rigor once at university and feels he would need academic support.

David felt little encouragement or support from his campus when he was enrolled—an additional deterrent to his transfer plans.



Photo: Brookdale CC



EXITED STUDENTS WITH TRANSFER GOALS: SURVEY HIGHLIGHTS



Exited students are **MORE LIKELY** than students still enrolled to...

- Feel pressure to prioritize supporting their family over pursuing their education
- Indicate that their family would be upset if they moved away to attend a university
- Share that their top priority in choosing a university is how close it is to their home
- Report that an absence of universities they can attend near home is very challenging
- Think they cannot get into the universities in their area



Exited students are **LESS LIKELY** than students still enrolled to...

- Discuss transfer with family members, community college counselors, and community college professors
- Use and find helpful most transfer resources (e.g., counseling sessions focused on transfer, online resources, their CCC's transfer center, and guidance from CCC professors)



Exited students are **MORE LIKELY** than students still enrolled to...

- Indicate that getting support from their community college is very challenging



Photo: Cavan Images



TRANSFER STRATEGIES FOR EXITED STUDENTS

For David and exited students like him who may feel disconnected from their college, pulled by their off-campus responsibilities, and uncertain about their university options, consider...

- Proactively identifying these students and outreaching to them to:
 - » Understand why they left the college before transferring,
 - » Determine what support they might need to return and complete transfer,
 - » Instruct them on the steps to take to get back on path, and
 - » Connect them to the supports that can help them achieve this milestone, including direct linkages to the transfer center and/or transfer-focused advising
- Intentionally connecting students who have recently returned to the college with at least one college personnel who will serve as an anchor in their support network, structuring a system of encouragement and brokering connections to campus-based resources designed to promote transfer success
- Providing student-centered course and programming options that recognize the multiple demands on students' time off campus, such as weekend and/or evening offerings or online programming with integrated academic and nonacademic student supports
- Working with regional universities to proactively inform students about current options for accessing university-level programming remotely and/or on the college campus
- Coordinating with public and private universities to develop innovative options for place-bound students to complete a bachelor's degree (e.g., university centers; 3+1, hybrid, and/or online programs) and proactively informing students about these offerings

Continuing this Work

Truly increasing the transfer success of students of color, women, older students, students who have exited, and students from historically underserved communities such as the California Central Valley will require a rethink of structures, policies, and practices at both the community college and university levels. More and more, institutions and systems of higher education across the country are stepping up to this challenge, undertaking the important work required to ensure every student receives the support they need to reach their baccalaureate goal.

As *Through the Gate* demonstrates, students from these groups are experts in their own transfer experience and can inform this transformation.

Community colleges can leverage the student perspectives and insights shared in this brief to improve transfer outcomes for specific student groups experiencing disproportionate impact. Consider using this resource in tandem with [*Determining Students' Transfer Odds on Campus*](#)¹², a tool for identifying who at your college is more likely to make the transition to university and which student groups to prioritize with additional support to ensure they achieve transfer.

Quantifying the transfer population on your campus, disaggregating these data by different student characteristics, and examining which factors uniquely impact these student groups can help you better understand who your high-leverage students are on your campus. Just as important, consider connecting directly with these focal student groups to understand their stories and determine which strategies can address their unique transfer experience in your local context—essential steps in improving their transfer journey and closing equity gaps.



Learn more about *Through the Gate's* student perspectives research by...

Reading [*Students Speak Their Truth about Transfer: What They Need to Get Through the Gate*](#)¹³, featuring student perspectives on the factors impacting their readiness for university and how to boost their transfer capacity

Reviewing [*Through the Gate Phase 2 Technical Report*](#)¹⁴ for detailed methodology and findings from the student survey and focus groups

■ ■ ■ *Through the Gate* Transfer Study Overview

The RP Group’s *Through the Gate* transfer study aims to identify strategies for increasing transfer among “high-leverage” learners—students who complete all or most of their transfer requirements but who do not make it to university. The study includes:

Phase 1: Mapping the Transfer Landscape (2016 – 2018)

Quantitative research to understand the transfer landscape, determining: (1) how many students in California arrived at the transfer gate, but did not go through, and (2) who they are and where they reside

Phase 2: Getting Better Directions (2019)

Quantitative and qualitative research with students who are close to transfer to understand what factors impact their journey and how policy and practice might change to propel them through the transfer gate

Phase 3: Engaging for Action (2020)

Convenings with CCC, CSU, and UC leaders, educators, researchers, and advocacy groups to identify strategic opportunities to strengthen transfer success based on findings

The RP Group is conducting this research with generous support from the College Futures Foundation.

The Research and Planning Group for California Community Colleges

The RP Group strengthens the ability of California Community Colleges to discover and undertake high-quality research, planning, and assessments that improve evidence-based decision-making, institutional effectiveness, and success for all students.

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www.rpgroup.org/through-the-gate

Endnotes

- 1 Cooper, D., Fong, K., Karandjeff, K., Kretz, A., Nguyen, A., Purnell-Mack, R., & Schiorring, E. (2017). *Through the Gate: Mapping the transfer landscape for California community college students*. San Rafael, CA: The Research and Planning Group for California Community Colleges. <https://rpggroup.org/Portals/0/Documents/Projects/ThroughtheGate/Through-the-Gate-Phase-I-Technical-Report.pdf>.
- 2 The Research and Planning Group for California Community Colleges. (2019). *Transfer odds: Technical report examining factors that impact whether students achieve transfer or get stuck near or at the gate*. San Rafael, CA. <https://rpggroup.org/Portals/0/Documents/Projects/ThroughtheGate/Through-the-Gate-Transfer-Odds-Technical-Report.pdf?ver=2019-04-02-083808-677>
- 3 <https://rpggroup.org/Through-the-Gate/Participating-Colleges>
- 4 CalWORKS can help students on public assistance get access to vital services such as work study, job placement, childcare, curriculum development, skills training, and more. For more information, visit <https://www.cccco.edu/About-Us/Chancellors-Office/Divisions/Educational-Services-and-Support/Student-Service/What-we-do/CalWORKS>.
- 5 EOPS makes sure students disadvantaged by social, economic, educational or linguistic barriers get the resources they need to enroll and succeed at any California community college. EOPS students who are single parents receiving public assistance can also access the Cooperative Agencies Resources for Education (CARE) program. For more information, visit <https://www.cccco.edu/About-Us/Chancellors-Office/Divisions/Educational-Services-and-Support/Student-Service/What-we-do/Extended-Opportunity-Programs-and-Services>.
- 6 Puente is co-sponsored by the California Community Colleges and the University of California and seeks to improve the transfer rates of students from all ethnicities and backgrounds. For more information, visit <https://www.cccco.edu/About-Us/Chancellors-Office/Divisions/Educational-Services-and-Support/What-we-do/Curriculum-and-Instruction-Unit/Puente-Project>.
- 7 TRiO is a federally-funded program that provides counseling and information on college admissions to qualified adults who want to enter or continue a program of postsecondary education. For more information, visit <http://www.cacollegepathways.org/find-campus-support-programs/additional-support-programs/>.
- 8 <https://www.cccco.edu/About-Us/Chancellors-Office/Divisions/Educational-Services-and-Support/Student-Service/What-we-do/Extended-Opportunity-Programs-and-Services>.
- 9 Umoja is a community and critical resource dedicated to enhancing the cultural and educational experiences of African American and other students through a curriculum that is responsive to the legacy of the African and African American Diasporas. For more information, visit <https://umojacommunity.org/>.
- 10 <http://www.cacollegepathways.org/find-campus-support-programs/additional-support-programs/>.
- 11 <https://www.cccco.edu/About-Us/Chancellors-Office/Divisions/Educational-Services-and-Support/Student-Service/What-we-do/Extended-Opportunity-Programs-and-Services>.
- 12 <https://rpggroup.org/Portals/0/Documents/Projects/ThroughtheGate/Through-the-Gate-Transfer-Odds-Modeling-Tool.pdf?ver=2019-04-02-083342-417>.
- 13 [https://rpggroup.org/Portals/0/Documents/Projects/ThroughtheGate/RPGroup_TheTruthAboutTransfer_TTGPhase3_R3\[79\].pdf?ver=2020-05-18-171449-773](https://rpggroup.org/Portals/0/Documents/Projects/ThroughtheGate/RPGroup_TheTruthAboutTransfer_TTGPhase3_R3[79].pdf?ver=2020-05-18-171449-773).
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***Through the Gate* Transfer Study**
The Research and Planning Group for
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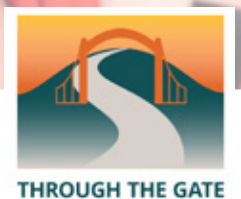


Students Speak Their Truth about Transfer:

What They Need to Get *Through the Gate*



Supported by:



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Introduction

Maya Rodriguez* has been taking day and night classes at her local community college since 2014, working toward her goal of becoming a nurse, while holding down a job at a youth empowerment organization. Despite completing more than 60 units, Maya is rethinking her original aspiration—transferring to the nearby California State University to secure a bachelor’s degree.

First in her family to pursue a baccalaureate, Maya says support from her college has been variable. Participation in a transfer-oriented cohort program has helped clarify some of the steps needed to make the transition to university, however she finds that transfer just “isn’t in the air” at her college. Although Maya shares that some instructors and transfer center staff “genuinely do care,” her encounters with general counseling left her feeling ill-informed and discouraged from her goals. Now, she primarily relies on herself for educational planning—triangulating information from professors, peers, and online resources.

Maya’s biggest concern? Money. Uncertainty about how to pay for tuition, books, and living expenses, and what financial aid she can secure are leading her to stay put for now. As Maya explains:

“**The [associate degree] feels more compelling than a bachelor’s because it feels like a more affordable option.... It goes back to the financial support. If I had more support in that area, then I wouldn’t have to worry about [committing] to a job.... I think the [Bachelor’s Degree in Nursing] route would be so much easier.**”



IN THIS REPORT...

This report is for California Community Colleges interested in a student-centered approach to strengthening the transfer pipeline, increasing baccalaureate completion, and reducing equity gaps. It includes:



A framework for building students’ transfer capacity that recognizes students’ motivations for transfer and identifies four essential factors impacting their university readiness



Student perspectives on each essential factor influencing their transfer experience



Possible **areas of opportunity** and ways to take action now

The findings and recommendations also have implications for university partners, intersegmental collaborations, and advocacy groups seeking to boost bachelor’s degree attainment.

* Not participant’s actual name

There is documented need for California to produce more bachelor's degree holders.¹ Broad agreement exists that increasing community college transfer is an essential strategy for achieving this critical goal, while at the same time closing equity gaps and promoting mobility for residents of a state plagued with the nation's highest cost of living.²

The RP Group's *Through the Gate* transfer study reveals a lost opportunity for California: Students who are close to transfer, yet struggling to make it to university.³

In Phase 1, this research documented that in a recent five-year period, nearly 300,000 students like Maya had made significant progress toward transfer, but found themselves stuck in the community college system or had abandoned their goals altogether.

What do students say they need to make it through the transfer gate? In the study's second phase, surveys and interviews with over 800 students across 31 California Community Colleges reveal that **transfer students need colleges and universities to provide a more holistic and integrated approach to ensure they reach their goals: a bachelor's degree and economic mobility for themselves and their families.**⁴

These students—high-leverage learners whose course-taking indicates they are close to transfer—offer rich and useful perspectives about factors impacting the entire transfer journey (see *Figure 1. Transfer Continuum*). Their input can inform both campus- and system-level efforts to achieve the California Community Colleges' Vision for Success goals, and ensure any student who sets a baccalaureate goal has the funds, knowledge, skills, and confidence to transfer.



Figure 1. Transfer Continuum

A New Framework for Building Students' Transfer Capacity

Determining how to improve students' transfer outcomes must fundamentally start with an understanding of *why* students are seeking to transfer in the first place. This research offers a critical reminder that transfer alone is not students' ultimate goal, rather...

Students are motivated to transfer to have a better life, for themselves and their families.

The vast majority (92%) participating in this research reported they are pursuing a bachelor's degree to increase their career options and make more money (86%). As one student shared:

“

My poverty [motivates me]. I look at it, and I say, ‘Okay, this is what I was taught, but this is what I want to change. And I don’t want it to be like that for my future family or for myself later on in life.’

”

In interviews, students also expressed an inner drive to prove to themselves that they can achieve their goals, as well as inspire and make their parents, friends, and children proud.

At the same time, students resoundingly indicated that the current transfer experience does not recognize the reality and complexity of community college students’ lives in the classroom, on and off campus as they work toward these long-term aspirations. Students further reported insufficient systems and supports that coherently attend to their entire transfer journey, from entry all the way through the gate to university. As one student shared:

“

The overall feeling most students have is that transfer is completely difficult. I think everyone agrees... that [the college] makes it hard. You feel that community colleges in general make it extremely difficult to transfer.

”

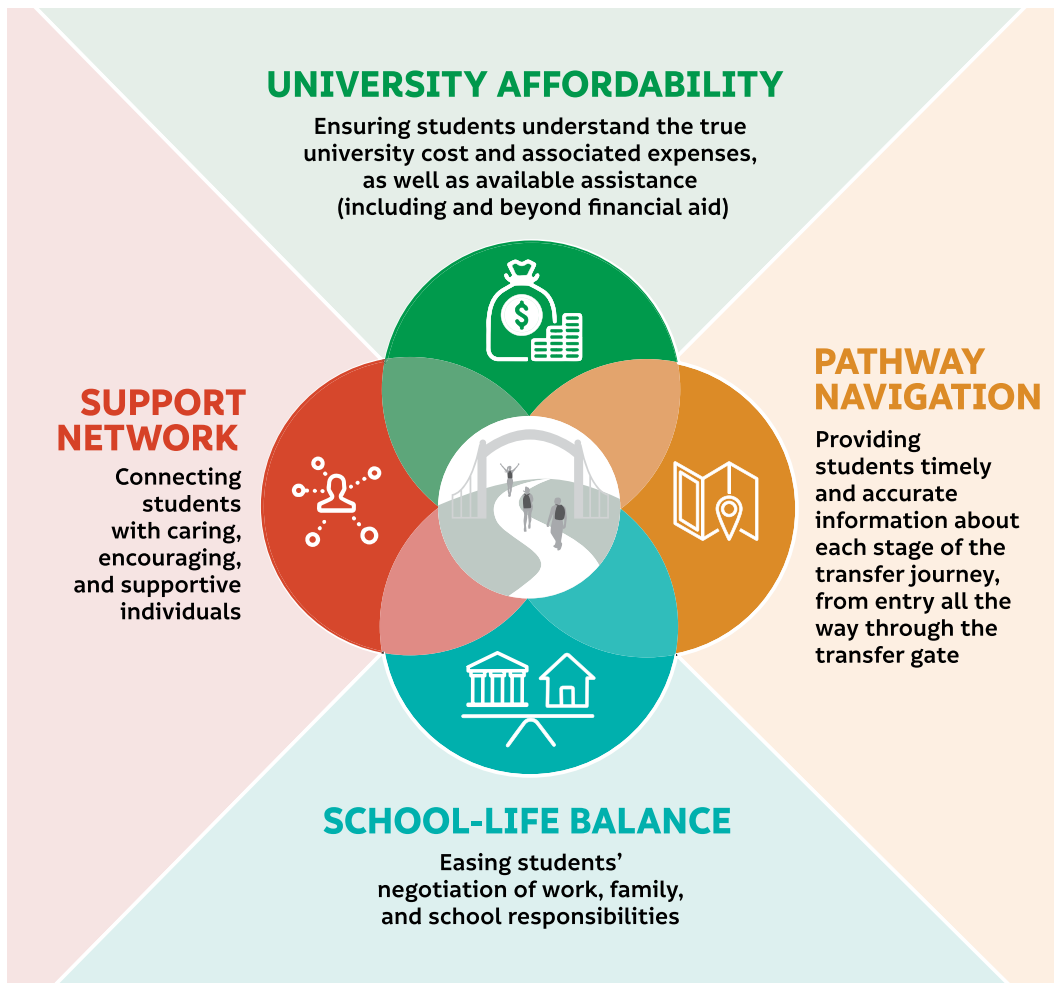
While this research surfaced bright spots and success stories and many colleges are embracing student-centered institutional redesign, clearly more can be done to increase students’ transfer success. The student perspectives gathered indicate that...

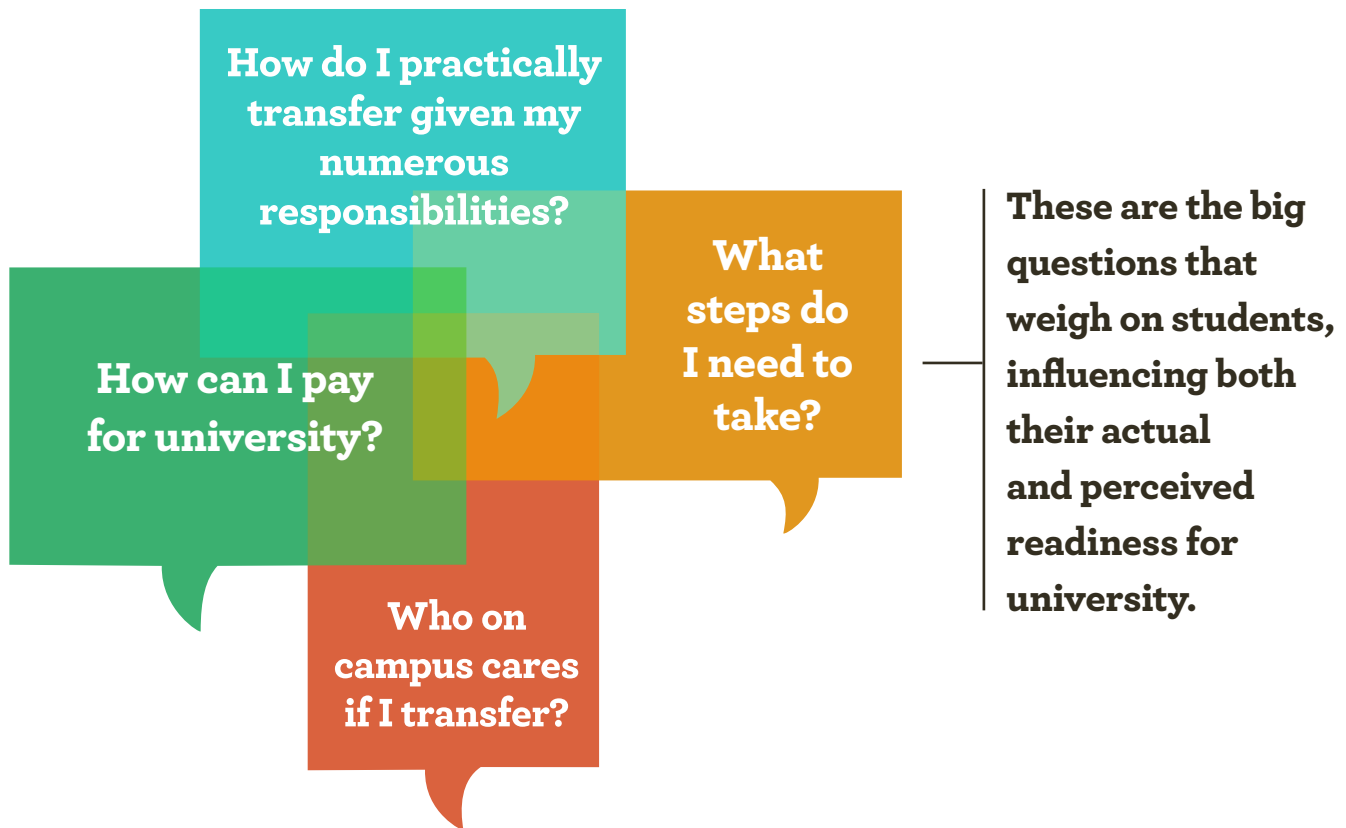
Students need a more holistic and integrated approach to ensure progress toward their educational goal: a bachelor’s degree.

In looking across existing transfer research and speaking directly to students, four essential factors emerge for building students' transfer capacity:



Figure 2. Framework for Building Students' Transfer Capacity





Certainly, this research highlights the complexity of getting students through the gate. Students indicate that to varying degrees, all four of these factors play a role in their transfer journey. Moreover, student perspectives underscore their intersectionality, with each factor having links to and impact on the others. Students tell us that when they practically struggle with any one of these factors, doubt in their overall capacity to make it through the transfer gate can creep in.

While students' lives are complex, the issues they have are not insurmountable. This research demonstrates that community colleges and universities have a strategic role to play in boosting students' transfer preparation and confidence, such that they know they can achieve a bachelor's degree. Students need institutions and systems to make it easier to get through the gate by attending to these four factors in meaningful ways designed to meet their actual needs.

While they call out numerous ways big and small that their colleges can provide support, student input and perspectives underscore that no one solution will boost their university readiness. Attending to all four factors calls for colleges to take a holistic and integrated approach that...

- **Redesigns** institutional infrastructures and supports, in alignment with the Guided Pathways movement and equity-focused reform efforts
- **Rethinks** how campuses communicate to proactively reach students at every step of their transfer journey, all the way through the gate to university
- **Requires** a culture where everyone on campus—across all levels and functions—actively commits to supporting students' transfer success
- **Refocuses** the community college role, taking the long view on preparing students for a bachelor's degree and economic mobility, not just transfer

Community colleges cannot do this work alone; intersegmental collaboration and university involvement is critical.

Creating a true baccalaureate pathway that meaningfully addresses all four factors in a comprehensive and coherent way will require an all-hands effort. This research has implications at all levels—from campus-based culture and practice, all the way up to system-level policy, as well as considerations by segment and across segments.





Student Perspectives on Factors Impacting their Transfer Capacity

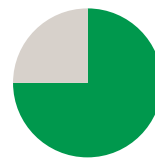
What do students say about the four essential factors impacting their transfer capacity? We further explore each of these factors below from the student perspective.



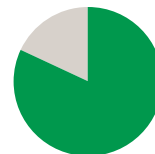
University Affordability: 1. How Can I Pay for a Bachelor's Degree?

Students need colleges and universities to make it a top priority to work together to ensure that students understand that transferring and achieving a bachelor's degree is something they can financially attain. This research shows that students need to become aware of all costs associated with attending a university and the full complement of options for financial assistance, including but not limited to financial aid, well before they transfer, preferably soon after they declare their intent to pursue this goal.

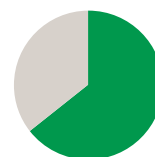
Finances are the biggest hurdle students cite regarding transfer regardless of age, gender, or racial/ethnic background.



75% of students describe the cost of the **university tuition** as “**very challenging**,” with nearly half listing it as the biggest challenge they face when considering transfer



Over four out of five of students (82%) indicate that getting enough **financial aid** to pay for their education is very **motivating** to their transfer effort



Two-thirds of students worry that cost of **living expenses** after transferring to the university will be “**very challenging**”



As students approach the transfer gate, they become acutely concerned about paying for university—the top factor impacting students’ transfer decision-making. As one student said:



One really big thing that’s scaring me is the money.... I mean, it’s almost unimaginable that I have to spend the amount that one would pay for a very big house in California simply on education.



At the same time, students often do not know the true cost of university compared to what it costs to attend community college, and find themselves scouring online resources to patch together this information. Further, students are concerned about expenses outside of tuition and do not necessarily understand all the costs

associated with enrolling in a bachelor’s program, including books, room and board, and other living expenses.

Interviews further reveal students’ lack of knowledge about available assistance, and what steps to take to secure that assistance (including and beyond financial aid). As one student shared:



I am worried about housing the most because I am unsure if its covered by financial aid.



This uncertainty leaves students with considerable financial anxiety, wondering if transfer and a baccalaureate degree are indeed attainable.



AREAS OF OPPORTUNITY

- Convene financial aid representatives from your college and partner universities to determine strategies for building students’ complete understanding about the total cost of getting a bachelor’s degree early in and throughout their educational journey



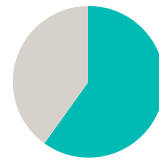
- Ensure students know what it costs to attend both community college and university, what financial supports are available at each institution type (e.g., Promise Grant vs. [Cal Grant Transfer Entitlement](#)⁵), as well as what assistance is offered at the state and federal levels to address both tuition and living expenses
- Provide workshops that help students complete financial aid forms and scholarship applications from start to finish, including what options make the most sense to pursue and what to share about themselves
- Offer sessions that walk students through their financial aid award letters, understand what they mean, and what other state and federal funding might be available





2. School-Life Balance: How Do I Practically Transfer Given My Numerous Responsibilities?

Students need colleges and universities to actively recognize the complexity of their lives in how educational services and supports are delivered, with course scheduling, childcare availability, and access to local/regional universities being specific areas of opportunity for change.



58% of students find balancing **school and work** responsibilities **“very challenging”**



42% of students find balancing **school and family** responsibilities **“very challenging”**

Students are juggling numerous and often competing school, work, and family responsibilities in an effort to address financial hurdles.

Students’ complex lives can make efficient progress toward their baccalaureate challenging, despite significant strides toward the transfer gate. In some cases, responsibilities outside of school are in direct competition with students’ transfer goals. As one student shared:



I am the sole income in my family and work has not allowed me to transfer.



Students observed that managing these responsibilities is exacerbated by the fact that schools are rarely organized to address many students’

complex realities. Students reported needing multiple specific courses in order to transfer and highlighted the obstacles associated with being unable to access limited offerings and/or scheduling that does not align with their off-campus responsibilities. One student explained:



I have to take calculus for business.... The problem is [my college] doesn't offer [it] at night or on the weekends. It's a morning class at [the main campus].... That may work for a millennial, but not for someone with a full-time job.



These competing responsibilities can also lead students to seek a bachelor's program close to home, impacting their university options.

Notably, students who had exited without transferring were more likely than their peers who were still enrolled at the community college to agree that they feel

pressure to support their family over pursuing their education, prioritize choosing a university close to their home, and that they lack university options in their area.



AREAS OF OPPORTUNITY

- Explore student-centered scheduling to ensure students are able to get the courses they need during times and through methods that respond to their off-campus responsibilities
- Connect students with internal and external resources that can help with childcare, housing, food, transportation, and other basic needs
- Coordinate with university partners to identify innovative options for students to complete a baccalaureate degree in programs that may be impacted locally and for students who are place-bound (e.g., university centers, 3+1 programs, and hybrid programs)





3. Pathway Navigation: What Steps Do I Take to Transfer?

Students need colleges to proactively provide clear and accurate information about transfer processes and requirements, strategically conveyed across their entire community college journey. This kind of communication fundamentally assumes that colleges have established efficient transfer paths from entry to university, and have articulated the steps necessary to navigate these pathways.

Students are often missing accurate and timely information about pursuing a bachelor’s degree throughout their transfer journey—from both their community colleges and prospective universities.

Looking back, students describe challenges getting on the right transfer path from the get-go and knowing what to do along the way. This research also shows that even students who are close to the transfer gate struggle to know what practical steps to take to transfer and when. One student explains the precarious position this information gap puts learners in, stating:



A lot of people are left confused in what they’re doing...there’s all kinds of figuring out on their own... kind of teetering on the edge of, “Am I doing this right? Am I taking the right classes?” I think the ones who have it real lucky are the ones that consistently go and ask a bunch of questions and don’t stop until [they] get answers. And that kind of isn’t really good.





This issue is particularly acute for students who had exited, who were less likely to agree that there was a lot of information available on their campus about transferring and that their college effectively prepared and supported them to transfer.

While interviews indicate that in some cases colleges are proactively and effectively reaching out about transfer, students generally highlight the significant self-reliance needed to navigate often confusing transfer pathways. Students describe triangulating information from a variety of resources to suss out and verify what to study, what courses to take, where to transfer, what practical steps to take to apply to those destinations and when, what it might cost, and how to get financial assistance.

They also report using these resources to monitor their progress and check if they are still taking the right classes. As one student suggests:

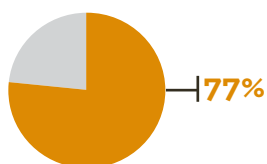
“It’d be good to emphasize transfer classes and pathways every semester in order to help students who may be lost in their educational goal.”

Students additionally noted that missteps in course-taking can have a profound impact on their financial aid eligibility by pushing them toward unit limits, making the need for better information received earlier in their journey all the more important.

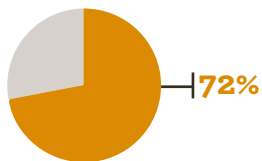


Different Ways Enrolled and Exited Students Use Transfer Resources

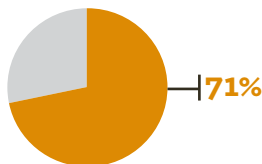
Top Resources Used [All Students Combined]



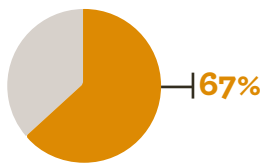
Counseling Sessions Focused on Transferring



Online Resources



Transfer Centers



Community College Professors

So, where do students who have identified a transfer goal go to source this information? Among a variety of options, student identified transfer centers, online resources, and general counseling as top resources for navigating their transfer pathway. Notably, enrolled students were universally more likely to tap these resources than their exited peers—indicating lower engagement and connection on the part of students who left the college and an opportunity to boost their use thereof. We explore these differences below.

Counseling Sessions Focused on Transferring

The vast majority of enrolled students (86%) reported attending a counseling session focused on transferring, while 78% of exited indicated the same. When accessed, 92% of students said these sessions were helpful. Note that in addition to formal counseling sessions, students get transfer information and advice from other individuals, programs, and groups on campus.

Online Resources

Over three-quarters (77%) of enrolled students used online resources while fewer exited students (68%) report leveraging these sources. ASSIST.org serves as students' go-to online resource, followed by university and community college websites, and various forums and tools (e.g., Reddit, Google Search, YouTube). Students highlighted the imperative to regularly visit ASSIST.org to keep abreast of changes to program and transfer requirements for different transfer destinations.

Transfer Centers

Again, over three-quarters (77%) of enrolled students tapped their transfer center, while just over two-thirds (68%) of exited students used this resource. If available, students say these centers are helpful to their transfer process once they get connected, indicating the need to ensure students are aware of and can access this resource early and often. Students report that strategic positioning of the transfer center in a central location, robust marketing of the center's presence and its sponsored events, and incentivizing its use all signal a campus commitment to their transfer success and practically increase use of available resources.

Community College Professors

Similarly, over three-quarters (76%) of enrolled and two-thirds of exited students referenced talking to community college instructors for information on transfer. Students described faculty who make themselves available as particularly impactful. These faculty offer program-specific guidance and insights into students' desired career; welcome them to connect outside of class; share personal stories of success and failure; ask thoughtful questions; and offer poignant advice.



AREAS OF OPPORTUNITY

- Maximize the visibility of your transfer center and/or other transfer supports and services on campus; position resources on campus so they are more easily accessible and promote them through strategic communications and outreach
- Increase university presence through on-campus transfer days, information sessions, and opportunities to meet one-on-one with university advisors on your campus; promote aggressively and incentive student participation
- Develop technology solutions that help students access up-to-date information on transfer requirements and processes and real-time advice that is specific to their path
- Facilitate meetings between local/regional college and university faculty by academic department to discuss expectations for transfer students in order to ensure CCC curriculum is preparing these students for success after transfer
- Ensure faculty teaching advanced courses in a program of study/major at your college know the CSU and UC university application processes and financial aid deadlines and incorporate this information into course announcements and activities



4. Support Network: Who on Campus Cares about My Transfer Success

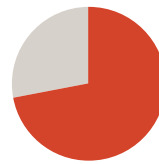
Relationships matter. Students need colleges to intentionally connect them to a network of supporters who demonstrate an active investment in their transfer success. Together, these champions should offer students guidance customized to their unique life circumstances and transfer goals, help them manage obstacles impeding progress toward a bachelor's degree, and provide sustained encouragement throughout their journey.

Students share that they need personalized support and encouragement no matter where they are on the transfer continuum. When family, friends, professors, counselors, and support staff take a caring interest in their transfer success, students feel motivated to persist.

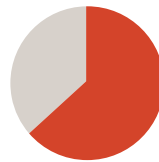
Students express that this support network can be the key to addressing the other three factors impacting their transfer experience—boosting their financial awareness, fostering school-life balance, helping them navigate the transfer path—which empowers them to successfully land a university spot in their major/program of study

Students say the absence of social support negatively impacts their transfer decision-making and compromises their capacity for pursuing a bachelor's degree.

This research underscores that this network is not a “nice to have.” Notably, students who considered transfer at some point but had decided not



72% of students indicate that **family support** for their transfer goal is **highly motivating**



67% of students report that **support from their community college** similarly impacts their drive

to continue their pursuit, as well as those undecided about making the transition to university, express more concerns about transfer support and encouragement compared to those who are actively planning to transfer.

Colleges play an essential role in activating this network, especially in the absence of support at home or in students' off-campus communities. As one student stated:

“

Transfer exponentially increases the cost of school, and for someone who does not get financial aid, it can be daunting and challenging. Having the school support is nice, like having counselors and staff care about, encourage, and support your goals. This is especially important when [students] don't have family support.

”

Yet, interviews reveal that right now, students often feel alone in their transfer process. As one student described:

“

A lot of times, it feels like people are fighting their own battles [at my college].... It just doesn't really feel like everyone's connected...like they're fighting together. A lot of times, it feels like a lot of people are on their personal journeys by themselves.

”

Who *do* students turn to on campus? In interviews, students point to both instructional and counseling faculty as key players in this support network, with counselors having a particularly critical role.

Students universally emphasize the consequential impact counselors can make on students' transfer capacity, depending on the counselor's approach.

Students explain that when counselors go beyond simply providing information to demonstrating a true personal interest in their transfer success, it can profoundly and positively influence their perceived and actual readiness for university. Students characterized counselors who take this approach as sincere, authentic, and able to build rapport and think about students' "big picture." Students sometimes considered these individuals to be family members.

At the same time, students expressed the belief that counselors who take a more transactional approach can hinder their educational journey. Students described interfacing with counselors who were perfunctory and lacked empathy. They pointed to the adverse effect of receiving misguided advice on courses and action steps from counselors who were unaware of transfer requirements. They also spoke to the negative impact of structural issues that impede developing a relationship with a counselor, such as seeing numerous counselors at one college, and being unable to see counselors due to a lack of appointment slots.

One student's experience conveys the make-or-break impact counselors can have, underscoring the need for colleges to pay special attention to these essential players in students' transfer support network:

“

Every time I met with her, she remembered me. She remembered that I was a commuter. She remembered everything. She went over every inch of my journey... She got in the trenches with me as though [she was] getting her degree. It took three counselors for me to find one like that because that's what you need.... If you don't have the right information, you're going to fall on your face.

”



AREAS OF OPPORTUNITY

- Outreach to high-leverage students (45 or more transferable units) who have not seen a counselor in the most recent term to connect them to the relevant resources and services that can help ensure their transfer success
- Structure person-to-person support that helps students develop a relationship with at least one individual on campus who can provide personalized guidance and encouragement; consider a range of options to increase college capacity to provide this network including instructional faculty, transfer counselors, general counselors, success coaches, educational advisors, student support specialists, and mentors (e.g., successful transfers attending university, college employees in the student's chosen field)
- Develop peer groups for students who have indicated a transfer goal (e.g., transfer club), have similar educational/career goals (i.e., meta-majors), and/or are close to the transfer gate; provide them space to problem solve together, encourage each other, feel a sense of belonging, and receive just-in-time support
- Work with university partners to identify how to start building connections between prospective transfer students and the university to help students gain a better sense of the support network that awaits them post-transfer



Ways to Start Boosting Your Students' Transfer Capacity Now

Every year, roughly 60,000 students stop at the transfer gate, struggling to get to university and reach their ultimate goal: a bachelor's degree. More students achieving a baccalaureate degree means increased mobility for individual Californians, and more civic and economic strength for the state.

Certainly, building the transfer capacity of significantly more students will require a concerted effort from numerous education stakeholders on campuses and across our state's higher education systems over time. CSU and UC partners have a particularly important role to play in supporting more students through the transfer gate.

Community colleges can lead this effort, taking steps now toward a more integrated and holistic approach. While not exhaustive, the Areas of Opportunity spotlighted throughout this report offer specific strategies for addressing each of the four essential factors that impact students' transfer capacity. We encourage colleges to explore which of these strategies make sense in their local context given Vision for Success, Guided Pathways and Student Equity priorities.

To ground this exploration and immediately identify and help high-leverage students on your campus, **we strongly recommend that colleges start by...**

- 1. Identifying and proactively reaching out to students who are close to transfer right now;** connect them with someone on campus who can assess their needs and share specific steps, resources, and supports for getting through the gate to university; consider contacting students who have made considerable progress along the transfer continuum, including high-leverage learners who are at the gate (ADT earners), near the gate (60+ transferable units, 2.0+ GPA) but have not transferred, and momentum students (45-59 transferable units)
 - Find specific instructions in [*Identifying High-Leverage Transfer Students on Your Campus: Through the Gate Methodology Tool 1*](#)⁶
- 2. Quantifying the transfer population on your campus using the transfer continuum as your guide;** disaggregate these data

by different student characteristics to better understand who your high-leverage students are on your campus, and how boosting their transfer rates can help you close equity gaps

- Conduct this additional analysis using the model described in [*Determining Students Transfer Odds on Your Campus: Through the Gate Methodology Tool 2*](#)⁷
- Compare your findings to the results summarized in both disaggregated Phase 2 research brief that is forthcoming spring 2020, and [*Transfer Odds: Examining Factors that Impact whether Students Achieve Transfer or Get Stuck Near or At the Gate*](#)⁸

3. Talking to high-leverage students directly to map their transfer journey and better understand their experience with the four essential factors for building students' transfer capacity outlined above on your campus, identifying gaps in how your institution addresses these factors and surface redesign opportunities (see *Engage Students as Partners in Your Transfer Redesign*, in sidebar at right).

Join Us!

Visit www.rpgroup.org/through-the-gate for research briefs and reports, tools, resources, and infographics.



Engage Students as Partners in Your Transfer Redesign

Through the Gate shows that when asked, students have powerful perspectives and essential insight about how to increase their transfer success. When talking to students about and mapping their transfer journey, explore:

- How your college articulates the value proposition for pursuing transfer and a bachelor's degree
- How your college helps them with educational goal and career selection
- When they choose a transfer goal and major/program of study
- How they learn about courses required for transfer
- If your college is offering courses and services in a way that meets their needs and what might need to change
- How your college informs them when they achieve specific milestones as they approach the transfer gate
- Who provides them consistent advising
- How your college informs them about university costs, financial aid, and additional financial assistance for university

Find considerations for effectively engaging students as partners in institutional redesign in *Students Shaping Change*.⁹

Appendix: *Through the Gate* Phase 2 Methodology Overview

The second phase of the *Through the Gate* transfer study consisted of an online survey and in-depth phone interviews with students whose course-taking indicated they were close to the transfer gate: students who had completed at least 60 transferable units and maintained a 2.0 grade point average (GPA), but had not yet transferred.

The survey reached over 1,596 students who were identified as near- or at-the-gate between 2010-2014 and who were either enrolled in fall 2018 or who had exited. Of those participants, 809 fit the specific criteria outlined above and completed the survey. The remainder had transferred in the time between being identified and being contacted for the survey, and were therefore filtered out of the survey.

Participants hailed from [31 California Community Colleges](#)¹⁰ across the state, with a focus on the Inland Empire and Central Valley. Follow-up interviews with 39 survey respondents in summer 2019 engaged both those still working toward transfer, as well as students anticipating fall 2019 enrollment in university.

Visit www.rpgroup.org/through-the-gate for research briefs and reports, tools, resources, and infographics.

Endnotes

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2 Handel, S., & Williams, R. (2012) The promise of the transfer pathway: Opportunities and challenges for community college students seeking the baccalaureate degree. The Initiative on Transfer Policy and Practice. Retrieved from <https://www.jkcf.org/research/the-promise-of-the-transfer-pathway-opportunity-and-challenge-for-community-college-students-seeking-the-baccalaureate-degree/>

Bustillos, L. (2017). The transfer maze: The high cost to students and the state of California. Sacramento, CA: Campaign for College Opportunity. Retrieved from <https://collegecampaign.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/09/CCO-2017-TransferMazeReport-27.pdf>

3 <https://rpgroup.org/Portals/0/Documents/Projects/ThroughtheGate/Through-the-Gate-Phase-I-Research-Brief.pdf>

4 See Appendix: Through the Gate Phase 2 Methodology Overview

5 <https://www.csac.ca.gov/post/cal-grant-transfer-entitlement-award>

6 <https://rpgroup.org/Portals/0/Documents/Projects/ThroughtheGate/Through-the-Gate-Transfer-Study-Population-Methodology-Tool.pdf?ver=2019-04-02-082927-647>

7 <https://rpgroup.org/Portals/0/Documents/Projects/ThroughtheGate/Through-the-Gate-Transfer-Odds-Modeling-Tool.pdf?ver=2019-04-02-083342-417>

8 <https://rpgroup.org/Portals/0/Documents/Projects/ThroughtheGate/Through-the-Gate-Transfer-Odds-Brief.pdf?ver=2019-04-02-082526-207>

9 https://rpgroup.org/Portals/0/Documents/Projects/CCC_Guided_Pathways/VoicesEngagement/Students-Shaping-Change-Final-ADA.pdf?ver=2019-12-18-082702-487

10 <https://rpgroup.org/Through-the-Gate/Participating-Colleges>

■ ■ ■ *Through the Gate* Transfer Study Overview

The RP Group’s *Through the Gate* transfer study aims to identify strategies for increasing transfer among “high-leverage” learners—students who complete all or most of their transfer requirements but who do not make it to university. The study includes:

Phase 1: Mapping the Transfer Landscape (2016 – 2018)

Quantitative research to understand the transfer landscape, determining: (1) how many students in California arrived at the transfer gate, but did not go through, and (2) who they are and where they reside

Phase 2: Getting Better Directions (2019)

Quantitative and qualitative research with students who are close to transfer to understand what factors impact their journey and how policy and practice might change to propel them through the transfer gate

Phase 3: Engaging for Action (2020)

Convenings with CCC, CSU, and UC leaders, educators, researchers, and advocacy groups to identify strategic opportunities to strengthen transfer success based on findings

The RP Group is conducting this research with generous support from the College Futures Foundation.

The Research and Planning Group for California Community Colleges

The RP Group strengthens the ability of California Community Colleges to discover and undertake high-quality research, planning, and assessments that improve evidence-based decision-making, institutional effectiveness, and success for all students.

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***Through the Gate* Transfer Study**

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