Transfer Stories and Strategies

How Different Student Groups Experience the Transfer Journey

NISTS Virtual Conference Experience 2021

Dr. Darla Cooper
Executive Director

Alyssa Nguyen
Director of Research and Evaluation
The RP Group
www.rpgroup.org

Mission

• As the representative organization for Institutional Research, Planning, and Effectiveness (IRPE) professionals in the California Community Colleges (CCC) system, strengthen CCCs’ ability to gather, analyze, and act on information in order to enhance student equity and success

Services

• Research, evaluation, planning, professional development, and technical assistance—designed and conducted by CCC practitioners

Organization

• 501(c)3 with roots as membership organization
Vision

• More graduates for a thriving California

Mission

• Removing barriers so more low-income and underrepresented students attain bachelor’s degrees
Focus on...

- New framework with four factors for building students’ transfer capacity
- Ways five different student groups experience these factors
- Strategies for boosting their university readiness
A Fresh Take on the Transfer Challenge

Overview of Study
Poll:

My institution disaggregates the transfer student population to better understand and respond to their transfer needs.

Always, Often, Sometimes, Rarely, Never
Research Approach

**Phase 1: Mapping the Transfer Landscape**
Quantitative research to better understand the transfer landscape focusing on students who met all or most of their requirements but have not transferred.

**Phase 2: Getting Better Directions**
Mixed-methods research to understand what factors impact these students’ journeys and how policy and practice might change to propel them through the gate.

**Phase 3: Engaging for Action**
Convenings with postsecondary leaders, educators, researchers, and advocacy groups to identify strategic opportunities to strengthen transfer success based on findings.
From quantitative analysis of students’ transfer outcomes...

- Annually, nearly 60,000 “high-leverage” students do not make it to university
- Students historically marginalized by our higher ed systems are more likely to get stuck
Phase 1: Mapping the Transfer Landscape

Transfer Continuum

- >50% of these students exit without credentials
- Math is a barrier
- Time is the enemy
- Once African Americans reach key milestones, they are most likely to transfer...but too few get this far
- Latino students more likely to be at or near the gate
Students’ Perspectives and Experiences

Surveys and interviews with over 800 students across 31 CCC reveal:

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

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

• Community colleges can’t do this work alone; intersegmental collaboration and university involvement is critical.
Phase 2: Getting Better Directions

- How do I practically transfer given my numerous responsibilities?
- What steps do I need to take?
- How can I pay for university?
- Who on campus cares if I transfer?
Framework for Building Students’ Transfer Capacity

Phase 2: Getting Better Directions

- **UNIVERSITY AFFORDABILITY**
  Ensuring students understand the true university cost and associated expenses, as well as available assistance (including and beyond financial aid).

- **SUPPORT NETWORK**
  Connecting students with caring, encouraging, and supportive individuals.

- **PATHWAY NAVIGATION**
  Providing students timely and accurate information about each stage of the transfer journey, from entry all the way through the transfer gate.

- **SCHOOL-LIFE BALANCE**
  Easing students’ negotiation of work, family, and school responsibilities.
Students say finances are the biggest hurdle to transfer

Help students understand all costs associated with attending a university and the full complement of financial assistance options.

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.
Students are **juggling numerous and often competing school, work, and family responsibilities**

Actively recognize the complexity of students’ lives in how educational services and supports are delivered

*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.*
Students are often missing accurate and timely information about pursuing a baccalaureate throughout their transfer journey—from both community colleges and universities.

Proactively provide clear and accurate information about transfer processes and requirements, strategically conveyed across students’ entire community college journey.

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

Intentionally **connect students to a network of supporters who demonstrate an active investment in their transfer success**

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.
Unique Experience of Focal Student Groups

- Hispanic and Latina/o/x Students
- African-American/Black Students
- Female Students
- Older Students
- Exited Students with Transfer Goals
Hispanic and Latina/o/x students are more likely than White and Asian peers to...

- Indicate getting enough **financial aid** is highly motivating
- Share the cost of **university tuition** is very challenging
- Report that having **universities near their home** is highly motivating
- Identify they **used and found helpful** a wide range of **transfer resources** (e.g., counseling sessions, online resources, transfer center)
- Say most **people they grew up with never attended university**
  - Share **family encouragement and college support** is highly motivating
Sample Strategies for Supporting Hispanic and Latina/o/x Students

• Engage with K-12 partners to involve students and their families before they get to college and throughout the entire transfer process

• Connect 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

• Work with regional universities to inform students about accessing university-level programming remotely and/or on the college campus
African-American/Black students are more likely than White peers to...

- Report that transportation to/from a university campus is very challenging.
- Identify they used and found helpful a wide range of transfer resources (e.g., counseling sessions, online resources, transfer center).
- Say most people they grew up with never attended university.
Sample Strategies for Supporting African-American/Black Students

• Work with regional universities to highlight various transportation options (e.g., campus bus routes, ridesharing)
• Connect them to affinity programs while scaling effective approaches to ensure the vast majority learn about transfer expectations and receive hands-on support
• Connect students to African-American/Black graduates who successfully transferred to help them learn about what is possible and what the movement to university is like
Female students are *more likely* than their male peers to...

- **University Affordability**: Indicate getting enough financial aid is highly motivating.
  
  Share the cost of university tuition is very challenging.

- **School-Life Balance**: Indicate balancing school and family is very challenging.
  
  Report that having universities near their home is highly motivating.

- **Support Network**: Voice concerns about having too little support from their university post-transfer.
Sample Strategies for Supporting Female Students

• Work with university partners to proactively reach out with information about university services, including childcare and other on-campus support for student parents

• Channel information on resources for managing university life and financing through majority female academic and support programs

• Coordinate 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 inform students about these offerings
Older students are more likely than younger peers to...

- Pay for their education with their own income
- 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

Older students are less likely than younger peers to...

- Leverage the wealth of transfer resources provided by their college
- Talk to others about transferring
Sample Strategies for Supporting Older Students

• Engage counseling faculty in professional development on how to specifically encourage and advise non-traditional students returning to college after multiple years and/or juggling responsibilities

• Develop options for working students, such as weekend and/or evening offerings or online programming with integrated academic and nonacademic student supports

• Coordinate with public and private universities to develop innovative options for place-bound students to complete a bachelor’s degree
Exit students are *more likely* than enrolled peers to...

Feel more **pressure to prioritize** supporting **family** over pursuing their education and say family would be upset if they moved away.

Think they **cannot get into** the universities in their area.

Exit students are *less likely* to...

Indicate that getting **support** from their **college** very **challenging**.

**Leverage** the wealth of **transfer resources** provided by their college.

**Talk to others** about transferring.
Sample Strategies for Supporting Exited Students

• 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
  – Connect them to the supports that can help them achieve this milestone

• Connect students who have recently returned with at least one college personnel who will serve as an anchor in their support network
Chat Discussion

What strategies is your institution using to address the four factors for building students’ transfer capacity, including with specific student groups?
Questions?
For More Information…

Project Directors:
Dr. Darla Cooper
dcooper@rpgroup.org

Alyssa Nguyen
anguyen@rpgroup.org

www.rpgroup.org/through-the-gate
#StudentsThroughTheGate
Thank you!