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## ABSTRACT

In March 1990, the Center for the Study of Community Colleges in Los Angeles hosted a Transfer Assembly as part of an on-going effort to stabilize the imprecise definitions and data relating to student transfers from community colleges to four-year institutions. This report provides excerpts from six of the presentations given to the assembly. First, Mike Nettles discusses the collection methods, content, and scope of the various types of available data on transfer, and reviews evaluative purposes those data might serve. Next, Burton R. Clark emphasizes the "public accountability" factor served by data collection, suggesting that the collection of data on transfer prompts honest self-reporting and promotes both the institutional integrity of, and public respect for, the community college. Next, Jim Palmer underscores the importance of developing an operational definition for the calculation of transfer rates. Then, Louis Bender discusses the increasing influence of state legislatures through the passage of resolutions and provisions relating to transfer and articulation, and the growing national concern for transfer/articulation problems. Next, Charles McIntyre addresses the issue of data standardization, longitudinal data collection, and guidelines for the use of accountability data. Finally, Judith Eaton uses a hypothetical conversation between a wealthy benefactor and an evasive, ill-informed community college president to illustrate the inability of community college officials to provide meaningful, intelligent information about the institutional transfer experience. (GFW)

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The 1990 Transfer Assembly

Edited by Dana Nicole Williams

Report from the Center for the Study of Community Colleges  
in conjunction with the ERIC Clearinghouse for Junior Colleges

Proceedings from the Transfer Assembly Conference (Los Angeles, CA.,  
March 15-16, 1990).

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# The 1990 Transfer Assembly

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Report from the Center for the Study of Community Colleges  
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How many students transfer from community colleges to four-year colleges and universities in the United States? No one knows because definitions of transfer vary and few reliable data are available.

Under Ford Foundation sponsorship, the Center for the Study of Community Colleges is attempting to stabilize the data and definitions so that questions of transfer rates can be answered. As part of that effort the Center hosted a Transfer Assembly in March 1990. Several aspects of the transfer issue were addressed in papers presented by prominent figures in community college research to the 125 Assembly participants. The following have been adapted from some of those papers. §



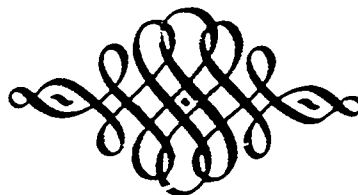
## MIKE NETTLES

When it comes to compiling data about transfer rates, six important questions surface that demand your earliest attention. 1) "Why should the data be collected?" 2) "What questions will the data address?" 3) "What type of data need to be collected?" 4) "How should data be collected?" 5) "Who will do it?" And 6) "How does one behave after the data are collected?" The following brief remarks will elaborate upon these questions.

First, one must consider, "Why collect data on the transfer rate?" The overriding answer to this has been accountability. But to get the necessary momentum on your campus and to marshal the kind of support needed to collect data and information, more reasons than the public accountability issue must be given. Another reason, for example, would be to help the college improve its overall performance. Data will convey people inside the institution, just how well the college is managing its functions. Asking the ques-

tion, "Why do it?," also helps to define the parameters of data collection study and analyses, as it helps to define other issues.

There are many questions that can be asked that justify collecting data and studying transfer. Such questions as the following are



important. What is the transfer rate? What are characteristics that distinguish transfer students from those who do not transfer? What type of interventions are most effective in improving transfer rates.

What subjects should be included? Concentrating on students who have completed over 12 credit hours is a good way to study transfer rates. But on the local level, there may be studies that include other definitions of transfer. There may need to be a reason to define a transfer rate in this way for one issue and as "anybody who

walks through the door of a community college and later transfers to a four year institution." Community college faculty may need to feel accountable for all students who enter. And if that is what it takes to get the momentum to begin the research, then the community college must also be encouraged to have more than one definition.

"Which subjects do you need to include?" Suggestions have been made to look at entering freshmen who start from the beginning as first-time freshmen and go all the way through the program; completing an associates degree. That is probably the most important and easiest way to track a transfer rate. But consideration must also be given to including people who start late in the community college program. But again, if one asks the question "Why conduct the research," it will help to determine which subjects need to be included.

"What kind of data are needed?" Choices between transcript data, rather than survey data, often accompany this question. All

kinds of answers to this question have been mentioned at this conference. It is important to remember that all kinds of assessment, all kinds of measurement, and all kinds of data are good. Data compilers should feel free to use both survey data and transcript data depending upon why they need the data. Again, one must ask the question "Why compile the data?" in order to help determine which data are the most useful. If the

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**IT IS IMPORTANT TO REMEMBER THAT ALL KINDS OF ASSESSMENT, ALL KINDS OF MEASUREMENT, AND ALL KINDS OF DATA ARE GOOD.**

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study is designed to examine student opinions and attitudes about transferring in relationship to their actual transfer behavior, then survey information becomes extremely important because such information does not exist on transcripts. Both assessment and measurement are highly contextual. All types of data can serve a useful purpose, it just depends upon the purpose of the study and what it seeks to discover and reveal. Generally, survey data can help to enrich or reinforce transcript data, and visa versa.

"How the compiling is done." But that can best be answered in conjunction with "Who will do it," the fifth. For the past three years Mike Nettles has conducted a study which included data from six urban community colleges: San Diego, Curtis, Los Angeles Mission, East St. Louis, Houston, and

Lawson. The research revealed that "Who will do it?" is an extremely important question. Generally, people react to doing this, or not doing that, on the basis of their schedules and more times than not, the people who end up being responsible for compiling data about transfer rates are already the busiest. If the transfer rate becomes an issue for the institution, often it is beneficial to designate someone full-time to compile the data and sometimes that person will need extra resources to get the job done. To find that the people compiling data on transfer rates are often engaged in other important activities can be very discouraging to a researcher. At the same time, if the data returned is not well-organized or is even unusable because people were too busy to compile it accurately, it can frustrate efforts to complete effective studies. Thus, compiling data becomes a function of the integrity of the data and the credibility of the research. Another way to determine "How to compile the data," and then to measure whether or not a college has a "good" transfer rate may be to examine how students are projected to perform from the beginning. It may also have something to do with the mission of the community college. The allocation of resources at the institution can help to determine what the expectation of a transfer rate ought to be. In fact, if 50% of the mission is transfer, and the other half relates to other functions of the community college, then perhaps 50% of the students

ought to transfer. Likewise, if 50% of the resources are appropriated and allocated to transfer oriented programs, then perhaps that percentage ought to be the expectation of the transfer rate.

"What is the appropriate behavior after compiling the data on transfer rates." Typical behavior includes boasting about having the best transfer rate, or having a new transfer rate, or having arrived at a transfer rate, period. Disseminating the information broadly within the institution can be helpful in encouraging people at the campus level to support similar studies in the future. It is very important to a department chair to know how their students perform in terms of transfer. But it is also important for the institution to know about the transfer rate as well. Very often, good data, whether it is at the national, regional, or institutional level, can serve to motivate people to join into the project.

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**ANOTHER USEFUL FUNCTION THAT THE DATA COMPILED CAN SERVE IS AS A REPORT CARD.**

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Another useful function that the data compiled can serve is as a report card. Students have always received report cards. Data compilers can now produce institutional report cards. Institutions get rewarded on the rate of performance. One measure of performance is how people perform on test. Transfer levels should be measured in terms of numbers and also in terms of how well the stu-

dents are prepared for the institution to which they transfer. A suggestion might be to adopt some of the same measurement techniques which are used at the parallel four year institutions, including the use of cognitive tests. After the results are returned, a community college can use the measurements even if the transfer rate is very low. Even a bad report card can be used in the community college's favor. They might argue, for example, that they have collected enough evidence to show why the transfer rate is low and maintain that if somebody provided the kind of support needed, the community college might be able to improve its transfer rate. In certain states it would work particularly well with legislatures who are representative in the district and who want good report cards. They might argue a case for additional support very well. And commitment to this support makes compiling the data plausible.

These questions, once answered at the institutional level, will help to clarify the type of data needed while at the same time identify the most effective process necessary to compile the data. Institutions need to commit to the study of transfer rates. This support can best be achieved by hiring a single person or special team to take responsibility for compiling the data and converting information and policy recommendations. Increasing communication on all levels of the institution as well as through the educational system encourages others to par-

ticipate in the process and to support similar efforts in other colleges. §

#### **BURTON R. CLARK**

The transfer function is often viewed as the heart of the identity of the community college. It is not surprising that a renewed commitment to student transfer has become an essential issue for the 1990s.

"Public accountability" has become a major reason for collecting data on the transfer rate. Accountability gives a moral component to data collection and definition: it involves honest pub-

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#### **A COMMON DEFINITION GIVES EACH COLLEGE A REFERENCE POINT, AND DESPITE MUCH COLLEGE-BY-COLLEGE UNIQUENESS, FUNDAMENTAL SIMILARITIES ALLOW FOR A SINGLE DEFINITION OF A TRANSFER RATE.**

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lic reporting. Good data, accurate data, places the community college in a pro-active position, rather than a defensive one, when difficult accountability questions are posed. Reliable data serves the institutional integrity of community colleges and increase public respect. Concise, revealing data helps answer a severe challenge from state official and legislators that community colleges do not know their business well enough to explain it to the public.

In order to unite the American community colleges, a central

definition of the transfer rate must be developed, one which unites while also accounting for the uniqueness of each institution. Though national averages do not serve to answer many direct questions, such standards are the starting point from which to launch new questions on an institutional level. State policy, local demographics, economic conditions, and the institution's mission will each affect the definition of an appropriate transfer rate for each community college. A common definition gives each college a reference point, and despite much college-by-college uniqueness, fundamental similarities allow for a single definition of a transfer rate. If the same criteria are not maintained for all community colleges across the nation, then the definition falls down. Questions concerning student parameters, demographics, time limits, minority issues, and student experiences all need to be addressed when attempting to define the transfer rate.

Either community colleges themselves will do the job of defining the transfer rate, or others will do it for them. If those who compile data on this matter sink their heads in the sand, they are likely to get run over. §

#### **JIM PALMER**

In the public mind, transfer to four-year institutions is still the key role of the community college. Not surprisingly, both the general public and the press are incredulous when their questions about transfer rates are met with expla-

nations of the scarcity of data or with disparate data that are based on wildly different definitions. The inability to provide consistent, credible indicators of student flow from two-year to four-year colleges is viewed-- I think correctly-- as a sign of professional irresponsibility.

The first step in correcting this situation is to develop an operational definition for the calculation of transfer rates. Such a definition includes of necessity three components: a specification of the pool of potential transfers that will form the denominator of the equation; a time limit specifying a cut-off point after which transfer activity will not be monitored; and an indication of the number of four-year college courses or units in which a student must be enrolled in order to be considered a transfer student. Hence, the transfer rate would be defined as:

The percentage of \_\_\_\_\_ students who, within \_\_\_\_\_ years of initial enrollment at the community college, enroll in \_\_\_\_\_ (credits or courses) at a four-year college or university.



Who are the Potential Transfers? Of the three criteria, the specification of the potential pool of transfers has stirred the greatest controversy. Which students should be included? All students? Students who enroll with

the intention of transferring? Students who complete a minimum number of units? The validity of the definition depends largely on whether the chosen pool yields data that help gauge trends in transfer without resulting in transfer rates so large that they appear to downplay even the probability of student or institutional failure and thus serve the public relations agenda at the expense of the research agenda.

Among community college educators there is quite a bit of sentiment for basing transfer rates on the pool of students who enter the community college intending to transfer. Theoretically, using the student's goal as the defining criterion makes sense at the open access community college where students use courses to pursue educational goals that may differ from those set by the curriculum developers. Because students in so-called "terminal" programs may intend to transfer while students in "academic/transfer" programs may be pursuing personal interests or gaining skills needed at the work place, the notion of using those students who enter with a declared transfer intent is compelling.

But critics of this approach properly point out that student goals are unstable, that they change from term to term. In addition, data on student goals will vary depending on the questions used to assess student intentions. Ask the hypothetical question, "What is the highest degree you plan to obtain?" and 75 percent of the stu-

dents will indicate that they want to earn a baccalaureate degree or higher. Ask the more immediate question, "What is your primary reason for enrolling in this college



at this time?" and about one-third will indicate that they enrolled to prepare for transfer to a four-year college. Using the former question will result in substantially lower transfer rates than the latter. Defining transfer rates on the basis of student goals ensnares the research effort in the ongoing controversy over how these goals are best assessed in the first place.

A more useful criterion for defining the pool of potential transfers is the number of units the student completes at the community college. This gets at the question of institutional ownership: "For whom shall the community college be held accountable?" While some argue that all students should be in the pool of potential transfers, regardless of the number of units they complete at the community college, others disagree, arguing that no institution can be legitimately held accountable for the subsequent academic performance of transfer students who have not been significantly exposed to the curriculum.

In the ideal world, the pool of potential transfers would be limited to those who complete a full program of study and graduate with

an associate's degree. These are truly the students for whom the college remains accountable. Consequently, many state and institutional follow-up efforts focus on the associate's degree graduates. But in reality, most students transfer without earning an associate's degree and thus leave the college without an institutional cachet. In practice, then, operational definitions might best identify the pool of potential transfers as those who have completed at least a minimum number of units. The National Effective Transfer Consortium suggests only six units; the Center for the Study of Community Colleges has proposed 12. Both are defensible. In neither case can it be said that the colleges are stacking the deck in their favor by focusing on the limited

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**OPERATIONAL DEFINITIONS MIGHT BEST IDENTIFY THE POOL OF POTENTIAL TRANSFERS AS THOSE WHO HAVE COMPLETED AT LEAST A MINIMUM NUMBER OF UNITS.**

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few who follow a sequential curriculum to earn an associate's degree. In addition, the use of a minimum number of units completed guarantees that the transfer rate is based on easily obtainable data that is understood by all.

Other Considerations The calculation of transfer rates will make a needed addition to the store of available data on post-secondary education. A standard measure will allow researchers to gauge over time the ebb and flow of trans-

fer from community college to baccalaureate granting institutions. Has transfer gone up over the past 10 years? Has it gone down? These questions can only be answered with data collected routinely and according to a consistent definition. Several factors will affect the success of efforts made to develop and utilize a transfer rate definition.

First, the definition must be credible. Any definition that leads to absurdly high transfer rates will be viewed, quite properly, as a political gimmick.

Second, the transfer definition must be understandable and not based on loose and fluid constructs such as the degree to which students complete their goals. Neither should they be based on complicated inferential statistics.

Third, the transfer rate must be based on readily available data. Special surveys will doom any effort to calculate transfer rates. They are too costly for consistent use. In addition, the uneven research capacity of community colleges nationwide guarantees that findings will not be comparable across institutions.

Forth, we should not confuse the development of a standard transfer rate with research into the determinants of student flow, transfer, and academic achievements. Without baseline data, research into the transfer function lacks an empirical foundation and leaves it vulnerable to spurious political agendas that have long been the bane of the community college world.

Finally, we must recognize the imperfection of any transfer rate definition. A definition based on students who complete six or twelve units within five years of enrolling at the community college will undoubtedly understate the transfer rate. In this regard, community college educators may feel they are leaving themselves vulnerable to the criticisms of those who feel that the colleges have de-emphasized or abandoned the transfer function. But it would be a shame if this fear prevented work on the development of an easily understood transfer rate. The possession of dependable, albeit imperfect, data

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**THE CALCULATION OF TRANSFER RATES WILL MAKE A NEEDED ADDITION TO THE STORE OF AVAILABLE DATA ON POST-SECONDARY EDUCATION.**

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is far preferable to meeting the charges of community college critics with no data at all. §

**LOUIS BENDER**

At the 1989 AACJC Convention, the Board of Directors commissioned a one-year study of state policies relating to transfer and articulation as a result of discussions of the Board on transfer problems and issues reported by community, technical, and junior college faculty and students in different states. Throughout the year of the study, it became apparent that transfer/articulation problems are not limited to a few institutions or even states. Evidence of a growing national concern can be found in

the fact that thirteen different state legislatures enacted resolutions or passed provisions during 1989 related to transfer or articulation. These legislative actions ranged from demand for studies to actual mandates for system or institutional policies or procedures.

The majority of two-year college students who transfer apply to nearby baccalaureate institutions. This fact would suggest the desirability of local institutional cooperation in fostering transfer; yet too frequently, the institutions act more like competitors...even at the expense of the student. The increased activity of legislatures makes it apparent that the absence or failure of local voluntary articulation among public institutions will be met by state-level mandatory policies.

An interesting difference in attitudinal posture was found from analysis of state policies dealing with transfer and articulation. Legislative resolutions and intent language, almost without exception, reflect a concern for the student's interest, sometimes to the detriment of traditions or values cherished by colleges and universities. In sharp contrast, the interest of institutions can often be found in the wording of institutional or system-wide statements of state-level inter-segmental bodies. Even the composition of state articulation groups will often offer clues. For example, when baccalaureate representation is greater than two-year representation inter-segmental councils or committees, institutional interest will be found to

supersede student interest when examining agendas and findings of such bodies.

The growing national concern that the interest of the student may not be the focus of colleges and universities has contributed to greater state-level involvement. This, in turn, has resulted in increasing centralization of policy-making in many states. The increased involvement of state governments in the development of policies and regulations effecting

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**EVIDENCE OF A GROWING NATIONAL CONCERN CAN BE FOUND IN THE FACT THAT THIRTEEN DIFFERENT STATE LEGISLATURES ENACTED RESOLUTIONS OR PASSED PROVISIONS DURING 1989 RELATED TO TRANSFER OR ARTICULATION.**

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public institutions creates the need for more and better information with which to address these policies, regulations, and agreements. Unfortunately, the systematic collection, storage, retrieval, analysis, and dissemination of information at the state level has not been a high priority. Furthermore, the inconsistencies of terminology and definitions among segments as well as institutions has created confusion and even misinformation. That is one of the reasons that the Transfer Assembly project is so important. For example, in the state of Florida where we pride ourselves on successful transfer and articulation policies and practices, the data base for our public schools is

an entirely different system than that of our two-year colleges. In turn, the two-year colleges and the university system developed in their own and different data bases. While the state is now working on a single common system, information developed from the Transfer Assembly project can prove helpful for Florida as well as the rest of the nation. §

**CHARLES MCINTYRE**

In California, there are two major activities related to transfer in effect. On one hand, a variety of activities in the hands-on area have been developed - in an effort to improve the transfer process with transfer centers. Also, there are a number of articulation efforts taking place in many institutions. Some colleges have piloted effective processes which we are trying to extend into the system. Also, the state is deliberating legislation which will help improve the lower division/ upper division gap by way of a transfer guarantee.

The other area of interest that will effect transfer and how transfer is perceived, concerns accountability. This July we have submitted to legislature a plan for looking at system-wide and institution-wide accountability. Among the factors included will be transfer.

In California we have done a number of transfer related studies over the last 5 to 6 years. For our transfer rate definition, we studied the number of students who transferred in contrast to the number of high school graduates



who had come to the community college three years earlier. Looking at cross sectional data, we concluded two important factors. First, the transfer rates in California have improved dramatically in the last three years. The question remains, why is that so after a decade of steady or declining performance?

Secondly, the improvements seem to occur over all racial and ethnic groups. Of course, we are still reporting the lowest transfer rate among black students, a somewhat higher rate among other minority groups, and the highest rate among white students. Another discovery was that half (50%) of the California state university baccalaureate recipients began their higher education at the community college. At the University of California, 20% had once been community college people.

This research basically draws from two sources. One, we have some excellent data from studies done by the Postsecondary Commission which gathered information from both the state university



and the university system to which most community college students transfer, we think, at least 8 of 10. Over the years the Postsecondary Commission studies directly primarily by Dorothy Knoll have provided a wealth of data. The other data source used comes from California community colleges. That means anywhere from two years to

a decade worth of unit record data for about 24 general entries on every student enrolled in the fall as of the fourth week of classes.

But there are three major problems with these data; problems we have confronted for years. First, these data are not longitudinal. We enrolled 1,400,000 different individuals in classes and community services last fall. But these students can not be tracked because the data are not longitudinal. Secondly, we lack information on their entering skills, the SES, and the goals of our students which seem essential to explaining the reasons for improvements or declines in transfer performance. And thirdly, there is no standard definition of a transfer rate. We need to address this problem in order to compare transfer rates between states.

In light of these problems, some solutions present themselves. First, students must be affixed with some identification, such as their social security numbers, which will give data compilers the capability to conduct longitudinal studies. This presumes an ability to follow those students after they leave the community college or transfer to a four-year institution. Hopefully this project will be completed by 1992 or 1993 to produce some revealing data should be produced near the end of this decade. The second benefit to system-wide identification numbers, such as a social security number, is that the database will be relational-- we will finally be able to link students to the courses they took. Such con-

nections will reveal the relationship between student objectives and student actions.

For a second solution, there is "matriculation" which is a fairly well-funded effort to better assess, advise, counsel, and follow students. As we improve assessment, data compilers will be collecting information that will tell us more about the motivations and entering skills of the students.

Thirdly, the Postsecondary Commission may be able to speed up these processes. They are doing

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**ONE FACTOR DISCOVERED IS THAT MANY COMMUNITY COLLEGE STUDENTS WHO PROFESS A TRANSFER OBJECTIVE TAKE TOO LONG TO FINISH.**

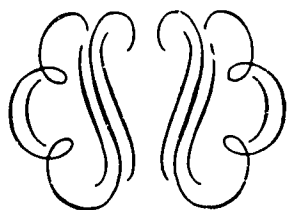
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an eligibility study of high school seniors this year which will determine whether or not the eligibility cut-offs of one-third for University of California campuses and one-eighth for state university campuses are still appropriate in practice. If they are funded by the state, the researchers will follow these same students through postsecondary education. This means we may be able to participate and compile longitudinal data fairly soon.

The fourth solution to our problems is to examine some of the national data. If we can not do this on a regional basis, then at least we should attempt to study the issue at the California state level.

All of these studies and data must allow us to develop conclusions, suggestions, and inferences

about improving our relations with community college students, particularly working students and those who are uncertain about their futures. One factor discovered is that many community college students who profess a transfer objective take too long to finish. Because many attend classes part-time and work full-time they may not achieve their transfer objectives in this lifetime. The time



element is a major problem. Secondly, the accountability question will be very important to the state legislature over the coming year. One issue will be, how to treat data on a system-wide basis, and more importantly, how to treat data institution by institution. But there are some of us who will argue that it is impossible for one institution to compare its performance with another unless they are able to hold constant a variety of factors for which they probably do not have data.

At the local level, each institution will want to look at time-series data pertaining to its own institution. Perhaps they will want to examine data for another, comparable institution. Nonetheless, it is necessary to develop fairly informed and fairly explicit guidelines to our policy makers about how to use these accountability data. Only then will state level accountability be possible. §

### JUDITH EATON

Traveling around the country while working on this Ford Foundation Project, a number of observations stand out to me and are particularly striking. First, one might be surprised at how important transfer education as an issue has become as well as at the kind of attention it is getting. Second, some very good things are going on with transfer education in some community colleges-- not many, but some. Third, I have noticed that for a number of community college people, this emphasis on transfer education is very threatening. They are uncomfortable about it. In this context, the role of community college presidents and the availability of reliable institutional data are particularly important. Community college presidents, to date, are not central figures in transfer education. Comprehensive data about transfer activity, to date, are difficult to find. I want to pursue both of these issues.

Community college presidents, as leaders in their colleges, have an impact on their institutions primarily by paying attention to certain issues. People in the college believe that if the president is attentive to an issue, the issue is important. Second, the day-to-day behavior and the values of the president are disproportionately influential in a campus environment. These values make a difference in relation to transfer education in this context. Third, and perhaps most important, commu-

nity college presidents have not changed their basic rhetoric of "access, service, and vocationalism," in many years. There is much to commend this rhetoric, but presidents are now being asked questions which the rhetoric does not address. For example, four-year schools, state and federal officials, local communities, politicians, and researchers are asking about such issues as academic effectiveness. They want evidence of instructional quality. They are asking about the extent to which community colleges contribute to both civic and general education. Good statements about access and new occupational programs, as important as they are, do not address these current, dominant, national concerns.

Imagine a conference between Donald Trump and President Jeremy Goodliness of Saintly Community College, which is located in a small town called Pu Goodness, Ohio.

**Mr. Trump:** President Goodliness, I am looking to make a major gift to a community college with an exemplary record of successful transfer education. I have to get rid of two billion dollars by April 15th. I am very interested in Saintly Community

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**PEOPLE IN THE COLLEGE BELIEVE THAT IF THE PRESIDENT IS ATTENTIVE TO AN ISSUE, THE ISSUE IS IMPORTANT.**

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College, but I do have a number of questions for you.

**President Goodliness:** Oh, Mr. Trump, this is wonderful, my Board of Trustees will be delighted. How can I be of assistance?

**Mr. Trump:** Is Sainly Community College a strong transfer institution?

**President Goodliness:** Oh, yes. We have a new transfer brochure, three transfer counselors, a course equivalency guide, and we have just opened a transfer center.

**Mr. Trump:** How many of your students transfer each year?

**President Goodliness:** Oh, a large number-- I can't tell you exactly how many, but I know it is a lot.

**Mr. Trump:** Do students transfer after earning a liberal arts degree, an occupational program degree-- do all students earn degrees?

**President Goodliness:** Well I'm not quite sure really. It's quite complicated you know. Students transfer from all programs at different times. You are, of course, aware of our non-traditional student population, and their many different educational goals. It's not easy to describe all of this.

**Mr. Trump:** In looking at your student demographics, which cohorts of students are most likely to transfer? Younger? Older? Men? Women? Blacks? Hispanics? Native Americans? Asians? Whites? This is especially important if I'm to give the college all of this money.

**President Goodliness:** Well Mr. Trump, you do seem to know a lot about community colleges. I'm sure you are aware that we do have trouble collecting these data. I mean, community colleges students

are stop-in, stop-out students-- it is hard to keep track.

**Mr. Trump:** How well do your students do upon transfer? How many earn baccalaureate degrees?

**President Goodliness:** Oh, they do very well.

**Mr. Trump:** Do you have a report on baccalaureate degree attainment of your transfer students which you might share with me?

**President Goodliness:** I don't know if you are aware of how difficult it is to get this information from our major receiving institution, Evil-Bad-and-Ugly University, right up the road.

**Mr. Trump:** Have your transfer

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**MR. TRUMP: HOW WELL DO YOUR STUDENTS DO UPON TRANSFER? HOW MANY EARN BACCALAUREATE DEGREES? PRESIDENT GOODLINESS OH, THEY DO VERY WELL.**

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rates improved over time?

**President Goodliness:** Well, again, this is information which is difficult to obtain. We can't afford a large-scale institutional research operation, our budget was cut last year. Your funding would help an awful lot, Mr. Trump, sir.

**Mr. Trump:** By what measures or criteria do you determine the Sainly Community College is a successful transfer institution?

**President Goodliness:** Let me tell you about Sally James, Mr. Trump. She is the mother of seven children, all her family and former husbands supported her over the 17 years it took her to get an asso-

ciates' degree. She went on to get a B.A. from Harvard, an M.A. from Yale, a Ph.D. from Stanford, and she's now holding an important job in Washington D.C.

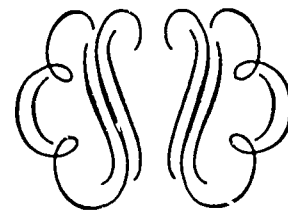
**Mr. Trump:** President Goodliness, how long have you been president of Sainly Community College?

**President Goodliness:** 27 years.

**Mr. Trump:** With all due respect, sir, you are not able to give me any information about transfer education at Sainly Community College. I am afraid that I will have to take my money elsewhere. To my casinos, to my airlines, to my Manhattan real estate or, to invest in my divorce.

What is wrong here? I do not want to overstate the presidential role, but I do want to stress presidential responsibilities. Upon examination, President Goodliness is engaged in four classic community college presidential maneuvers which increasingly do not work in relation to transfer.

The "smoke gets in your eyes" maneuver is the first of these efforts. This means answering specific transfer questions in the most general way possible but in a way that appears plausible even without any information. The second,



or "warm fuzzy story" maneuver involves talking about one special case as if it described the entire student population.

The third maneuver, the "fast shuffle," means shifting the responsibility for transfer information to the four-year school, to the two-year school's fiscal limitations, or to the characteristics of the community college student population. The "great results dodge," or fourth maneuver is a tendency to confuse transfer activity with transfer results. The presence of transfer centers, counselors, articulation agreements, or course equivalency guides do not mean that transfer activity is wide-spread or effective. Only significant numbers of students transferring and achieving their baccalaureate degrees means that transfer is wide-spread and effective.

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**PRESIDENT GOODLINESS PROVIDES VAGUE, EVASIVE ANSWERS TO IMPORTANT QUESTIONS OF INSTITUTIONAL EFFECTIVENESS IN RELATION TO TRANSFER.**

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What is wrong here? President Goodliness provides vague, evasive answers to important questions of institutional effectiveness in relation to transfer. This behavior has deleterious results. Legislators, communities, foundations, four-year institutions are no longer believing these answers. But President Goodliness gives these answers because he does not have better ones. He failed to even minimally support data collection and analysis efforts at his institution so he can not answer even the most basic questions about transfer on his campus.

What is wrong here? There

are probably a hundred President Goodlinesses across the nation. As a result, community colleges have made themselves victims of criticism especially from those outside the community college world. Various recent publications which use limited data to argue that community colleges are ineffective, make this point. President Goodliness represents the community college's inability to provide meaningful, intelligent information about the institutional transfer experience. Silence and the lack of information confirm the criticism, though it is not valid.

There is something else wrong. If President Goodliness lacks information about transfer education, it is indicative of the level of support for transfer at his institution. Transfer education is not a central value within his college. This lack of support constitutes a fundamental betrayal of our historic commitment to access. Access for most of community college history has referred to the opportunity for students to participate in college level work. If community colleges focus exclusively on terminal degrees, if we focus only training or only remedial courses, community colleges are not fully meeting the challenge of access. We are not concentrating on access to the collegiate world, but on access to the sub-collegiate world. Though this may be worthwhile, it is simply not enough.

In summary, institutional data concerning transfer are essential. They enable an institution to set

direction in an intelligent manner. They allow for meaningful self-scrutiny and subsequent improvement of service. They allow an institution to identify both success and failure. The absence of institutional data is crippling. This lack not only leaves community colleges at the mercy of their critics, but suggests the absence of a sense of authority about the future of community colleges. Community colleges cannot engage in meaningful evaluation or planning. A strong institutional commitment to transfer calls for

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**THERE ARE PROBABLY ONE HUNDRED PRESIDENT GOODLINESSES ACROSS THE NATION.**

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strong presidential commitment. Presidents can ensure that transfer education remains central as an institutional value. Presidents can ensure that an institutional database is provided to enable the college to identify both transfer success and transfer failure, and to strengthen transfer education. Presidents have the resources to support transfer. Future transfer success rests with both the commitment of institutional leadership to transfer education and commitment to comprehensively describe and evaluate this important community college responsibility. §





This year the Center for the Study of Community Colleges is hosting another Transfer Assembly. The Assembly seeks to establish a continuing procedure with which community colleges can assess their own rate of transfer. A single definition of transfer rate facilitates this process.

All students entering in a given year who have no prior college experience, who complete at least twelve degree-credit units at the college, and who subsequently enroll at a senior institution.

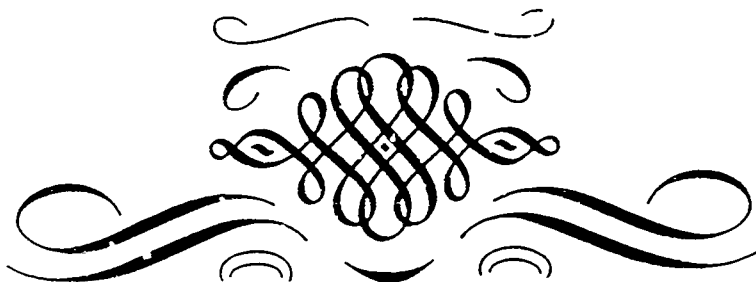
This definition of a transfer rate is valid and understandable. Furthermore, the data needed to calculate the rate may be collected feasibly by community colleges across the nation.

To date, 125 community colleges from 37 states have agreed to participate in the 1991 Transfer Assembly by supplying data on the students who entered those colleges in fall 1985. Other colleges are invited to join. §



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