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ABSTRACT

This study was conducted in order to reveal the nature of community college life at City College of San Francisco (CCSF) and investigate the transfer process through the "eyes" of CCSF students. Interviews were conducted on approximately 30 faculty, 15 administrators, and 60 students to discover the motivations behind decisions to transfer from certain urban community colleges to baccalaureate institutions. Interviews revealed that some students enter the community college without intending to transfer, but are inspired by caring faculty or special school programs to pursue further education. Faculty outreach appears to make a crucial difference in the lives of students and their transfer goals and success. However, barriers to transfer do exist, among which are college bureaucracy, misinformation from faculty, the ease in dropping courses, racism, and condescending teachers. The report contains suggestions for further research and an appendix, which includes a description of the student sample. (YKH)

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TRAVELING THE TRANSFER PATH

Student Experiences at City College of San Francisco

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Traveling the Transfer Path: Student Experiences at City College of San Francisco

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INTRODUCTION

Participants and critics of the community college system often disagree about whether or not community college transfer rates are a sign of success in providing access to higher education for individuals disadvantaged by social inequality. Few, however, ask community college students what *they* think and about how *they* experience the community college. In this report, Jennifer Myhre describes community college life at City College of San Francisco and the process of transfer *through the eyes of City College students*.

Jennifer Myhre spent an entire academic year at City College of San Francisco in 1995/96 examining the college's transfer function and interviewing approximately 30 faculty, 15 administrators and 60 students. Her study is part of a national research project funded by the Ford Foundation to examine why certain urban community colleges successfully transfer as many students as they do to baccalaureate institutions. The full study will be published sometime this Spring with profiles of eight urban community colleges including CCSF.

While there are no surprises in Myhre's findings, it is a significant report for all faculty and staff to read and consider. Myhre gives us a roadmap of where students find smooth pathways for meeting their transfer goals as well as roadways containing many "bumps" and "potholes." Reading this report helps to pinpoint what we do well and should expand, and what we do not do well and must remedy. Students succeed in transferring to baccalaureate institutions because of the excellence of many of our instructors and counselors, our special programs such as Math Bridge, Puente, the African-American Achievement Program, DSPS and EOPS. Barriers to success include certain college policies and procedures, the lack of timely and accurate information and student difficulties with the attitudes and outlooks of some instructors and counselors.

A timely response to many of the issues raised in Myhre's report can be found in the Transfer Enhancement Plan completed last spring by the Transfer Enhancement Task Force, a temporary committee of the Master Plan Committee. Formed during the 1995/96 academic year, the Task Force reviewed the current state of the college transfer function (including extensive testimony from Jennifer Myhre) and then developed a set of recommendations which were subject to an extensive scrutiny by faculty and staff at the college. The net result was an agreement which has the support of all college constituencies. The Transfer Enhancement Plan (which was recently approved by the Academic Senate and will go to the Board of Trustees for adoption this Winter) will, we hope, bring additional vitality to the college's transfer function and attract additional resources to college transfer programs.

In addition to her delineation of the key issues related to the transfer function, Myhre also contributes to our understanding of how research could and should be conducted at CCSF. Traditionally, we rely upon numerical data and quantifiable information for purposes of accountability to the state and institutional effectiveness in terms of our own planning goals. Ethnographic research, however, gives us additional insights into the student experience as Myhre notes:

"...interviewing allows access to the internal lives of community college students. The interviews analyzed here afforded me a chance to explore how students approach their education, how they use the community college and how they experience it. Interviewing is less useful for

establishing causal relationships than it is for examining common processes students go through.”

Many faculty and staff are already beginning to experiment with focus group research at CCSF (see for example the up-coming report from the Planning Task Force on ESL/Transitional Studies or the work of the SCANS skills project). This report on student transfer experience gives added credibility to the qualitative research methods. We hope that additional research projects utilizing in-depth interviews will be undertaken by faculty, administrators and staff in the near future.

Robert S. Gabriner
Director, Research, Planning and Grants
January 1998

I. Methods and Sample

To inform my analysis, I draw upon fifty-nine semi-structured interviews with students who have attended City College.¹ The interviews were only one part of a year of field work at the college, which included interviews with faculty and administrators as well as participant observation in classrooms, meetings, and other events on the Phelan Campus. The field work took place as part of a four year multi-site ethnographic study of urban community colleges with higher than average transfer rates to four year institutions, called the Cultures of Success Project².

The students interviewed for this paper included students attending City College from August 1995 to May 1996 (the period of the field work) as well as students who had transferred from City College to local universities. Student interviews included (but were not limited to) questions about students' background, educational experiences, academic aspirations, perceptions of the college, and issues around transfer to a baccalaureate college. I identified student interviewees through a variety of strategies, including snowballing (i.e. asking interviewees for other contacts to interview), visits to classrooms, and a mass mailing to students who had transferred to a San Francisco State University from City College.

Throughout the process, I made every attempt to maintain range of variation across the student sample in ethnic background, class background, immigrant status and educational experiences. (See appendix for description of student sample.) While the sample of students I talked with may not have been representative in the statistical sense, my goal was to tap into as many *different* experiences of the college as possible. European Americans, African Americans, Latino(a)s, Asian-Americans, and Filipinos were interviewed, in numbers roughly proportional to their representation at the college. Over one-fifth of the students interviewed were immigrants, three were students with disabilities, and three were either gay or lesbian.

Unlike surveys which may sacrifice depth of response for larger sample sizes, interviewing allows access to the internal lives of community college students. The interviews analyzed here afforded a chance to explore how students approach their education, how they use the community college and how they experience it. Interviewing is less useful for establishing causal relationships than it is for examining common *processes* students go through.

II. Paths to Transfer Success

Transfer is a key indicator of student success because people who attain bachelor's degrees have higher occupational prestige and income than those who receive only associate's degrees.³ If transfer is a goal, we can imagine two primary paths by which students might successfully transfer from City College to a baccalaureate institution. First, students may enter the college without intending to transfer and while at CCSF raise their aspirations and plan to transfer. I refer to this process as "heating up."⁴ Second, students may enter the college with the explicit purpose of transferring. These students need to maintain those aspirations and follow a transfer plan in order to succeed. I refer to this process as "staying hot."

Heating Students Up. Some sociologists have argued that student aspirations strongly influence their probabilities of success. The argument proceeds as follows: If students don't desire to transfer to a baccalaureate college, then it is unlikely that they will transfer. They will not follow an educational plan, attain the skills, nor achieve the grades that will enable them to transfer successfully. This is intuitively obvious. What is not so obvious are the mechanisms through which the college helps to raise student aspirations.

In my interviews, students often told stories about teaching or counseling faculty that intervened in their academic lives. Some of these stories are "rescue" stories. Maria⁵, a young Latina who came to City after high school without any clear educational plans, had been on academic probation and was about to be kicked out of school when a counselor she visited convinced her not to give up. She explains why what he said made her feel she could change her situation: "I guess there's his background as far as family and his being a minority. I think he can relate to a lot of stuff. It's like everything he shot at me, it was like I could relate to it." Maria enrolled in the transfer class, is trying to get her grades up, and hopes to transfer to San Francisco State to pursue a teaching credential.

It is not just the acts of individual teachers and counselors that help to raise student aspirations, but also special support programs. Cristina, a biracial student and parent who identifies herself as Black Hispanic, was tracked into remedial math as a kid but is now considering pursuing science classes after going through the Math Bridge⁶ program. She recounts, "It was the first set of [math] classes I took and I got A's. I was like, oh my god--I got all A's. Then I got A happy and I had to have A's in all my classes. So it kind of set the stage for me. I think if everybody could get into a program to begin with like that, it was really supportive, and have really great teachers, it kind of gets you going 'Wow, I can do this, I really can do this.'" Cristina plans to transfer to San Francisco State and hopes to go on to pursue a master's degree.

Luis, a Chicano student accepted in a handful of prestigious state universities across the country, had been involved in a gang in high school. He says that he now wants to be an educator and eventually a lawyer thanks to his involvement in the Puente Project. He remarks, Puente "made me realize just that I had to educate myself in order to get somewhere, to protect myself. Not to protect myself but to know how to argue persuasively in the sort of touchy issues you come upon. It motivated me too...now my number one priority is just getting educated and coming back and being an educator." Luis has a mentor through Puente, a Latino lawyer who gives him advice about how to succeed at the university.

Cathy, a Filipina student, planned to do just one year in the international business program, when she ran across a flyer for City's study abroad program in Paris. Cathy says that her semester in Paris helped her clarify her goals. Now Cathy is going back to Europe for a year of study before transferring to San Francisco State. As these stories demonstrate, acts of outreach and intervention by caring teaching and counseling faculty, as well as institutionalized mechanisms such as special programs and services, can alter the course of some students and encourage them to raise their aspirations. While there were several examples of City College "heating up" some students among the ones I interviewed, more commonly students came to City College with the hopes of transferring to a baccalaureate institution eventually.

Keeping Students Hot. Successfully transferring students who intend to transfer when they enter City College isn't as easy as it might seem. City College students can face a

staggering array of barriers--the necessity of working full-time while attending school, the need to care for children or sick parents, the effects of inadequate elementary and secondary schooling, considerable poverty, physical or mental disability, racism and sexism, and the sedimentation of disdain or discouragement from educators or family members. City College has relatively little control over the circumstances of students' lives; however, the institution can provide supports that may prevent those circumstances from lowering student aspirations or derailing students' educational plans.

Once again, the intervention of teaching and counseling faculty can help students maintain their desires to get a bachelor's degree. Joan, an African-American woman in her thirties, started at City College in 1987 but had to stop in 1990 to take care of her ill mother. She is close to getting her associate's degree and plans to come back to City to finish her transfer units. She described how her counselor helped her stay on track: "She gives me motivation. 'You can do it.' Like the courses I need to take--'Go on and take them. You can do it. I'm pulling for you.' She just makes you want to do it. She makes you just want to just keep going." Her counselor also introduced Joan to the Transfer Center, which Joan has used to make her transfer plans.

William, an immigrant from Nigeria, planned to transfer from City College all along to enter pre-medical studies at State. However, he worked forty hours per week and really struggled to stay in school and keep his grades up. He managed to transfer in three years, thanks to efficient scheduling and a counselor he saw at the end of each semester to figure out which classes to take next. He commented, "She gave me the motivation. Even though I have it, I needed someone to direct me, show me. That's what she did."

Brandy studied accounting for two years and almost transferred to San Francisco State when she decided to change her major to sociology. She faced a lot of disapproval from her family for this decision. Brandy commented that it was important to her that her counselor was also an American-born Chinese, like she was: "For me the counselor, I can talk to him with my private questions because he is American born. He has faced a similar situation as I have with the parents' pressure. He just gave me a lot of ideas on how to deal with my parents." Brandy has been accepted to transfer to the University of California at San Diego. A couple of students have had counselors help them fill out the transfer applications right in the counselor's office.

City College's wide-ranging student activities program also serves to support students' transfer goals. Jennifer, a Chinese American student accepted to transfer to UCLA and waiting to hear from Berkeley, was recruited into a student club by a faculty member; she comments on how her experiences in student activism have changed her: "In three years I have that much more confidence in myself. I believe in myself that much more and I might be going to Berkeley, I tell my parents, somewhere never in my life did I ever think that I could ever apply to." Miguel, an international student from the Philippines, described how his involvement with the International Students Association helped him get over a rough patch: "We support each other. Like the time I was looking for a house. One of the members allowed me to stay at her house for a week. That was a big help to me. Also, I'm involved with the Filipino club, but I think I'm closer to the ISA. I think we're in the same boat--we're far from home, we have different families, we understand each other." Thang, a Southeast Asian American student, really appreciated the help he got from the faculty member who sponsored the club to which he belonged: "He is always willing to give help about school stuff, personal stuff, other things. For me, he told me what schools, I should try for Stanford, I should go for a

scholarship. He offered to write me a scholarship letter and things like that." Vicki, a European American student accepted to transfer to a state university on the east coast, found that playing on one of City College's women's sports teams helped her stay in school because she needed to maintain 12 units per semester to keep playing; she remarked, "A couple of times I tried to go back, I dropped classes rather than sticking with it and taking the bad grade. I couldn't do that when I was playing sports."

Beyond student activities, targeted programs can have enormous impacts on students, supporting them through difficult circumstances. Shawna, an African-American woman with a learning disability, praised the services of the Disabled Students Program, including tutoring, early registration, and counseling: "God, those people saved me." Jane, a European American re-entry student with a learning disability, also credited the DSPS with keeping her in school. She describes an afternoon when she took a timed thirty minutes algebra test and had an anxiety attack: "Basically, I came into DSPS, just started crying, and bingo there's somebody there to take you outside, take you for a walk and figure out what the hell is going on. Honestly, if I hadn't had that, I would have just quit school." The staff at the DSPS also told Jane when it was time for her to move on and transfer.

Over a dozen of the students I interviewed commended the Extended Opportunity Programs and Services. The book vouchers made a big financial difference for them and early registration helped them get into the classes they needed. Students also took advantage of the peer tutoring offered by EOPS. Many credited the fact that they had to see a counselor regularly, and that they often built up a relationship with a particular counselor, for keeping them on track in terms of taking the right classes to transfer. Brandy, a Chinese immigrant to the U.S. who was accepted to transfer at UC San Diego, found out about the transfer center from a counselor at EOPS.

While the social-psychological aspects of transfer are significant, so is the role of academic achievement in propelling students toward successful transfer. Carl, a returning Chinese American student, explained how one of the instructors he had early on at City spent time in class on teaching students how to take notes, a skill that has served Carl very well in his other classes. Carl also described the struggle he faced in passing one of the math classes he needed to transfer: "I had to actually spend every day working on this math class. It was a statistics class. As I mentioned, the head of the department taught it and he was a great teacher and that's the only reason why I passed it." Like Carl, Robert, a European American student, praises many of his instructors for their help outside of the classroom, "With all of them I had a feeling that I could ask them questions and that if I had problems I had someone to turn to." Teaching faculty not only help students struggle through difficult course material but they help convey the vibrancy and intensity of learning. As a result, some students get caught up by intellectual excitement; a European American re-entry student commented about starting school at City College, "I feel like I'm turned on. I'm excited about living, I'm excited about learning things. My level of curiosity is really high. I'm motivated, I want to do well, I want to interact with people and learn." Finally, teaching faculty also can provide students with the foundation of skills and knowledge they need to succeed in further education. Across the board, the students with whom I spoke who had already transferred felt academically prepared by City College for their courses at the receiving institution.

City College has a variety of mechanisms for keeping students' aspirations up and helping them stick to their paths to transfer. However, as many faculty and administrators with whom I spoke during my year of field work recognize, transfer rates

are not as high as they could be. More specifically, City College needs to improve its transfer rates for African-American and Latino(a) students. In the next section, I highlight some of the barriers students encounter on their way to transferring.

III. Barriers to Transfer

Even for students that aspire to transfer, the transfer path is not always smooth. Students encounter both speed bumps that slow their progress and potholes that may considerably damage them. Often, these speed bumps and potholes occur in the student's life outside City College and cannot be influenced by the institution; parental or child illnesses, for example, may force students to abandon their studies in order to take care of sick loved ones. However, students face some of the obstacles on the transfer path through their experiences at City College itself. In this section, I offer what students have described as factors that have either slowed them down or damaged them as they have tried to pursue their transfer goals.

Speed Bumps on the Transfer Path. The most commonly mentioned factors that slowed student progress had to do with City College's bureaucracy. Students complained about their difficulty in getting into the classes they needed or in getting in to see a counselor and of long lines at registration and counseling. Matt, a European American re-entry student, commented that he had a hard time getting into math classes he needed to transfer. Maria was nearly kicked out because she got on academic probation but never saw a counselor about it. She says she never made an appointment with a counselor because there was always a line at the counseling office and she kept putting off waiting in it. Several students indicated that they had problems getting financial aid or were made to feel like beggars when they went to the financial aid office.

There was a mix-up on Marisol's City College transcript when she applied to San Francisco State. She said that she cried when she first got the rejection letter from State: "First I wasn't going to do anything about it. Then I said, well maybe I should just forget it or something and go back to apply for art school because I bombed out. Then I said, no maybe I should talk to them anyway. I have the right to know why...I felt like this was it, this is as far as I'm going to go and I felt like, you feel like somebody just put a wall in front of you." Marisol, a European American single mother, had to re-apply to State the following semester.

Students also described "getting the run around" or misinformation from faculty. William was advised over the course of his time at City College to take twenty-two units of coursework that turned out not to be transferable. For each student I interviewed who had some complaint of misinformation, they had several friends who had also had negative experiences with teaching or counseling faculty. Cathy, a Filipina student, expressed her mistrust of the counseling department: "Each counselor tells me something totally different and I don't get anywhere. The way I did it best was on my own I'll go to the transfer center, get some information there, and then get in touch with the school you want to transfer to, rather than talking to people here." Anita, a forty-three year old European American student, has wasted time taking classes she didn't need due to misinformation from counselors. Shannon, a re-entry European American student on welfare, was told not to apply to a local private college by a counselor because they "wouldn't be interested in anybody like you."

Most students don't tell such horror stories, but for many just the basic bureaucratic details can be wearying. As Diane, a European American student, put it: "Nobody was very supportive and there was a lot of bureaucratic paperwork and this and that to get straight answers about what transferred and what didn't transfer. It seemed like I had to be very ambitious to figure out how to take the right classes that transferred." If this was true for Diane, who relied on a husband who had already been through college to give her advice, then it is doubly true for Không, an immigrant from Vietnam, who explains her situation eloquently: "I have to do every step by myself. My parents, they doesn't understand English and I have to do it. I don't know how to get into college and I have to go to every workshop and listen, then go step by step. Nobody helped me, I just do it by myself."

As Không's story illustrates, because so many City College students are immigrants or have backgrounds of extreme poverty, they often don't have the kinds of skills and knowledge that middle class students do about how to negotiate bureaucratic institutions. This is particularly true for students whose families have very little experience with higher education. Such students may lack adequate study or time management skills, they may feel afraid to approach counselors or not know what kinds of questions to ask them, they may not know what kinds of services the college provides or how to find out about them, and finally they may not know how to take the concrete steps to transfer even if they have transfer aspirations. While City College is not responsible for the lack of resources that its immigrant or poor students face, there are services at the college that can help students build such skills if the necessary outreach is done.

Finally, the ease of dropping courses at City College is an institutional policy that also can affect student progress. Heather, a European American student, dropped math several times because she was so intimidated by the material and by the instructors. One of the ways in which students exercise control over the quality of teaching in the classes they take is to drop classes when they don't like the instructor. While this can prevent students from suffering through bad classes, it can also delay their progress through required courses for transfer. When students I interviewed did mention dropping a class because of the instructor, it was most often because the instructor would refuse to answer student questions or was in some way derogatory or insulting to the students.

Factors that may slow students' progress through the college are significant because of the disadvantages students face in their lives. The longer the student takes to finish up their transfer requirements, the greater the likelihood that circumstances in their personal lives may arise that prevent them from finishing school. Even more important than these speed bumps on the transfer path, are the factors that may actually damage students or cause them to lower their aspirations.

Potholes on the Transfer Path. The most commonly mentioned experience that students experience as damaging or destructive is racism. Bobby, back at City after a stint in the Navy, plans to major in genetics and hopes to transfer to a historically black college. As an older African-American, Bobby often feels that instructors patronize him, try to belittle him, or treat him like he's a thief. Bobby's anguish is palpable when he speaks of it: "People feel that you're going to do something to them. I hate that feeling. They think that you're going to hurt them. I'm not here for that." Bobby is on academic probation, and he's afraid that the college is trying to kick him out rather than help him do better. Joseph, a younger African-American student who had an A average at the private high school he attended, left City College after an altercation with an instructor

who publicly insulted his intelligence in a class. Joseph later returned to City College because he had children and wanted to become a more educated father. His experience this second time around has been much more positive. He found out about the Transfer Center because a counselor from the transfer center approached him in the hallway and invited him to come check things out; he found out about EOPS when a faculty member took him there. However, the racism Joseph experienced the first time around could easily have been the end of his higher education--it was Joseph's desire to be a good father that propelled him back.

Racism isn't a phenomenon experienced only by African-American students as Katie, a Chinese American student, pointed out: "I thought the racism was quite strong on the campus, and it wasn't just towards blacks. It was definitely towards the Asians, definitely. Everybody was saying that they were taking jobs and filling up the classes, and that American kids couldn't go to school. I heard it all." Katie went to a dean about an instructor she felt was racist and felt she didn't get any response. She has grown resigned to racism, and it has not prevented her from fulfilling her plans to get a bachelors degree from San Francisco State; but clearly experiences of racism in no way enhance the likelihood of student transfer.

Other students recount being mocked by faculty or hearing faculty members make derogatory comments about the academic level of community college students. Diane, now attending San Francisco State, told me about her first English class at City College:

Diane: My first English class, I had this teacher. I was like at the bottom of the English class with like fifth grade students. He basically told the class that probably only, chances are that none of us would finish City College and few of us would ever transfer. That basically that's the way it was. That made me just want to prove him wrong. I don't know if that was his point.

Jen: Do you think that your response was typical of the other students?

Diane: No. In class I was always like, you know, the way he would always put us down and make us feel really stupid 'cause we were in a stupid English class. I would always say things and a lot of kids just sort of ignored him."

While the experiences of the students discussed in this section were not universal, neither were they extremely rare. Most of the students I interviewed survived such incidents without too much long term damage, but students who aspire to transfer may travel some pretty rough terrain to arrive at their destinations. City College could facilitate transfer by trying to remove some of these hurdles on the transfer path.

IV. Conclusions

A popular bumper sticker asks us to "Practice Random Acts of Kindness." In interview after interview with students at City College, I learned that what most influenced students' lives was not random acts of kindness but *nonrandom* acts of help, intervention, and encouragement. Teaching or counseling faculty that knew the student or staffed the program in which the student was involved chose to intervene in a particular student's life. These acts of help or encouragement may be small to the faculty making them, but they are very large to the students who benefit from them. Given the severe disadvantages that many City College students face in their lives

outside the college, the sum of these small acts of help and encouragement may be what keeps students hanging on.

V. Suggestions for Further Research

If we are interested in discovering the *causes* of transfer success, it would be important to survey a random sample of students when they first enter the college and then to follow them over time, surveying the same sample of students repeatedly in semester intervals. Traditional variables found to influence the probability of transferring include student demographic characteristics, student high school achievement, aspirations, and integration into the campus.⁷ Of these, City College can influence only the latter two variables. A longitudinal survey should focus particularly on variables that the college can alter. Further interview and focus group research with students can be used to help operationalize these variables. This report has suggested mechanisms through which student aspirations can be both raised and maintained, as well as potential obstacles on students' paths to transfer. The relative importance of each of these processes in predicting transfer could be assessed through the kind of longitudinal survey I've described here.

Appendix: Description of Student Sample

Total sample: 59

Gender

Female: 40

Male: 19

Ethnic/Racial make-up:

White: 23 (39%)

Asian/Pacific Islander or Asian-American: 19 (32%)

Latino or Latin-American: 7 (12%)

African or African-American: 10 (17%)

Immigrant status:

U.S. citizens: 38

Asian immigrants: 9

Latin-American immigrants: 2

Other: 2

International students: 6

Age range: 20 to 62, over two-thirds under thirty years of age

Transfer information:

Number of transfer students: 21

Number who had been accepted to transfer: 8

Number who had applied to transfer but hadn't heard: 4

Number who hoped to transfer someday: 22

Number who had no transfer plans: 5 (two of these already had BA's)

Ethnic breakdown of those accepted or already transferred

White: 14

Asian or Asian-American: 8

Latino or Latin-American: 3

African or African-American: 4

The slight over-representation of white students, who make up approximately 39% of our sample and only 29% of City College's credit enrollment, is probably due to the fact that many of the transfer students were contacted through a mass mailing to a local state university with postcard reply. The sample of students who replied to this mailing was predominantly white.

Endnotes

¹ For purposes of convenience, I refer to student outcomes as if they were taking place in the present. However, all interviews took place between September 1995 and June 1996. Therefore, when I refer to a student having been accepted to the University of California this refers to that student's acceptance in the Spring of 1996.

² The Cultures of Success project targeted urban community colleges because their student populations tend to be more disadvantaged. Many suburban community college may have high transfer rates, but the economic and racial privilege of the students may account for these colleges transfer success. Thus, by targeting only urban colleges the intent was to try to control for the demographic shape of the student body as a factor in transfer rates.

For the part of the project devoted to City College, I conducted all of the participant observation and most of the student interviews; a handful were conducted by either Howard London, the project director, or Kate Shaw, the assistant project director. The analysis and thoughts expressed in this report are my own; I take full responsibility for them and any errors I may have committed. Likewise, the Office of Institutional Research and Planning is not responsible for this analysis. However, I am thankful to all of the staff of that office; and their assistance in contacting interviewees was invaluable.

³ There is substantial documentation on the influence of community college attendance on socioeconomic attainment. See, for example, Elizabeth Monk-Turner's (1990) article "The Occupational Achievements of Community and Four-year College Entrants" in the American Sociological Review, volume 55, pages 719-25. See also Kevin Dougherty's (1994) review chapters in his book The Contradictory College: The Conflicting Origins, Impacts and Futures of the Community College, published in Albany by SUNY Press.

The focus of this report on transfer as an indicator of student success is not intended to deny that there are other indicators and that the college may be serving its non-transfer students successfully. However, the research project through which this data was collected was a study of urban high-transfer community colleges with the goal of figuring out how these institutions were successful at *transfer*. The Cultures of Success project was based on the premise that one of the community college system's missions was to open up higher education opportunities to students who might not otherwise have the chance. Given that community college students are more likely to be poor, working-class, female and people of color than students at baccalaureate institutions, transfer is one of the key components of that mission if the community college is not to function merely as a system of tracking in higher education.

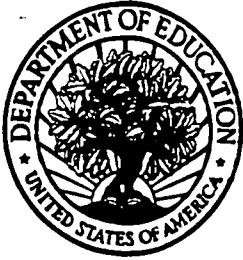
⁴ This phrase was coined by Steven Zwerling (1976) in his book Second Best: The Crisis of the Community College, published in New York by the McGraw-Hill Book Company. "Heating up" refers to the process through which students who enter community colleges with vocational or other intentions are encouraged to raise their aspirations and pursue bachelor's degrees. This phrase was an acknowledgment of a phrase coined by Burton Clark in 1960 in one of the first works of sociology on community colleges called The Open Door College: A Case Study, published in New York by McGraw-Hill. The "cooling out function" referred to the process through which

students who entered with transfer intentions were convinced to lower their aspirations and pursue vocational degrees.

⁵ All names and identifying information have been changed in order to protect the anonymity of the students who spoke to me.

⁶ By mentioning specific programs, I do not intend to single out any particular programs as superior nor imply that other programs do not serve similar functions. I have tried to choose student stories that most strongly illustrate the processes of raising and maintaining student aspirations. There is a wide array of special services and programs at City College, not all of which are mentioned here, that operate to heat up student aspirations and keep them hot.

⁷ Velez & Javalgi (1987, "Two-Year College to Four-Year College: The Likelihood of Transfer," American Journal of Education, 96: 81-94) found that student demographic characteristics (such as sex, race/ethnicity, religion and socioeconomic status) affected their probabilities in transferring, as did whether they held a work-study job or lived on campus during their community college attendance. Similarly Lee and Frank (1990, "Students' Characteristics that Facilitate the Transfer from Two-Year to Four-Year Colleges," Sociology of Education, 63: 178-93) found that being working class, female or a person of color, having lower test scores and grades in high school, and having lower educational aspirations decreased the likelihood of community college students' transferring to a four year college. Additionally Nora (1993, "Two-Year Colleges and Minority Students' Educational Aspirations: Help or Hindrance?," pp. 212-47 in Higher Education: Handbook of Theory and Research, vol. IX, edited by John C. Smart), summarizing the literature on students of color at community colleges, determined that social and academic integration into the college enhanced the likelihood of transfer.



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