



# Education Insights Center

Advancing Research and Policy  
for K-12 and Postsecondary Education

## **Trial and Error:** California Students Make the Best of an Improving Yet Complex Transfer Process

**October 2016**

Jodi Lewis

Kathy Reeves Bracco

Colleen Moore

Thad Nodine

Andrea Venezia



**SACRAMENTO STATE**

California State University, Sacramento  
6000 J Street, Tahoe Hall 3065  
Sacramento, California 95819-6081  
[www.csus.edu/edinsights](http://www.csus.edu/edinsights)  
@EdInsightsCtr

# Contents

---

<b>Acknowledgments</b> .....	<b>2</b>
<b>Executive Summary</b> .....	<b>3</b>
<b>Introduction</b> .....	<b>5</b>
<b>Findings</b> .....	<b>9</b>
I. Transfer policies and practices remain complex and unwieldy .....	9
II. Students say they are primarily on their own in the transfer process.....	14
III. The associate degree for transfer can help in limited ways, but there is room for improvement.....	16
<b>Recommendations</b> .....	<b>19</b>
I. Take further steps to simplify the transfer process.....	19
II. Create better supports for transfer students .....	20
III. Help more students benefit from the AD-T .....	21
<b>Conclusion</b> .....	<b>22</b>
<b>Appendix A</b> .....	<b>23</b>
<b>Appendix B</b> .....	<b>25</b>
<b>Appendix C</b> .....	<b>26</b>
<b>Endnotes</b> .....	<b>34</b>



## Acknowledgments

---

We are grateful to the students who shared with us their achievements and challenges in transferring from a community college to a four-year university. Their voices—and their suggestions for improving the transfer process—helped to enrich and ground our research. We also thank the administrators and staff from the California Community Colleges and the California State University institutions who provided invaluable perspectives about their efforts to support students. In addition, Camille Esch, Brock Grubb, Jacob Jackson, and Nancy Shulock helped to inform and improve our early versions of this report. Gretchen Kell provided editorial support, the Foundation for California Community Colleges provided graphic design, and our graduate research assistant Katrina Beedy gathered data. Finally, we thank the College Futures Foundation for its support of this work.

# Executive Summary

---

Student transfer processes from the California Community Colleges (CCC) to the California State University (CSU) have been simplified somewhat over the past few years, but they remain complex and confusing for most transfer students, according to students, administrators, and staff at several community colleges and CSU campuses. Transfer processes—from planning and course-taking at a community college to applying to and enrolling at a CSU campus—remain burdensome for students, despite the services provided by institutions and the implementation of the new associate degree for transfer (AD-T). Many transfer students, to make it through, employ strategies that were described to us as trial and error. College administrators, staff, and students said that students need more help interpreting transfer requirements.

These findings are based on research by the Education Insights Center (EdInsights) examining policies and practices in California that support student transfer from the community colleges to the CSU. Previous research has documented the complexity of transfer processes in California. In 2010, the state enacted the Student Transfer Achievement Reform Act to streamline transfer from the community colleges to the CSU by creating a new degree, the AD-T. This research examined how students experience policies and practices related to transfer from community colleges to CSU in the context of the AD-T, which was implemented in 2012. Findings are drawn from interviews with 26 administrators and staff at six community colleges and four CSU campuses, and from focus groups at the four CSU campuses with 64 students who had successfully transferred from a community college.

Key findings include:

- Students said they are primarily on their own in the transfer process. They said

they had trouble accessing and receiving consistent information from counselors and from websites that are intended to support transfer students. They asked for better information from the CSU about its requirements. They also wanted more support services targeted for them as transfer students once they enrolled in CSU as juniors.

- CSU campus policies to manage enrollment can create barriers for students preparing to transfer. Such policies can cause admission requirements to vary by campus and by major. Students planning to transfer and interested in more than one CSU campus have to track varying requirements for multiple campuses and majors.
- The AD-T has promoted better communication and organization of curricula within some institutions and across community colleges and CSUs. However, the benefits associated with the new degree seem to apply to a relatively small proportion of students who have clear academic and career goals when they enter community college and the flexibility to go to CSUs beyond their closest campus.
- Most interviewed students did not understand the AD-T. The fact that many community colleges offer the AD-T along with associate degrees in the same discipline is confusing to students. Most students in our focus groups who had earned an associate degree did not know whether the degree they received was an AD-T.

Recommendations in this report are aimed at continuing to simplify the transfer process and strengthening the supports for transfer students—with the understanding that the state’s public higher education systems face fiscal challenges in making these changes. Recommendations include:

- Community colleges and CSUs should continue to organize curricula for transfer students more effectively. Faculty at the community colleges and the CSUs

- need to work together to achieve greater consistency in requirements across campuses and majors, with the goal of making baccalaureate programs more accessible to transfer students.
- Both the community colleges and the CSUs need to improve counseling and online supports for transfer students. Community colleges should improve counselor awareness of and expertise in AD-Ts. Information about the AD-T needs to be incorporated into websites that can help students understand degree options, transfer requirements, and the courses they need to transfer.
  - Community colleges should institute degree audit programs to assist students in transfer planning.

Further simplifying transfer processes will require a higher level of coordination across the community colleges and the CSU. Without a statewide coordinating body, the systems and institutions must find ways on their own to ensure that transfer-seeking students achieve their goals. By working together, the state's education systems can continue to remove existing barriers and create clearer paths for students.

# Introduction

---

## Simplifying Student Transfer in California

This report examines the policies and practices that support student transfer from the California Community Colleges (CCC) to the California State University (CSU) through the perspectives of students, administrators, and staff. Previous research has established that transfer processes in California are complex.<sup>1</sup> In 2010, the state enacted the Student Transfer Achievement Reform Act to simplify and streamline transfer from the community colleges to the CSU by creating a new degree, the associate degree for transfer (AD-T). In the wake of previous reports about this topic and implementation of the AD-T, our research sought to understand the experiences of students transferring from the community colleges to the CSU.

EdInsights researchers examined transfer-related policies and practices at six community colleges and four CSU campuses and found that, while the new legislation is simplifying some processes overall, transfer remains complex and difficult for students. As one student described, successful transfer is often the result of trial and error. We recommend that higher education systems and institutions take additional steps to streamline the process to help more students reach their educational goals.

The findings in this report are based on a study that sought to answer three questions:

1. How do community college and CSU campuses support transfer students, both those intending to transfer and those who have transferred?
2. How do students experience transfer-related policies and practices at individual community colleges and CSU campuses?
3. Is the implementation of the AD-T affecting campus policies and practices and/or students' experiences in the transfer process?

In addressing these questions, we collected data from semi-structured interviews with 26 administrators and staff at six community colleges and four CSU campuses. At the four CSU campuses, we also conducted focus groups with a total of 64 students who had successfully transferred from a community college (see appendix A for research methodology).

## An Overview of the Transfer Function in California

California's community colleges play a wide range of crucial roles in providing educational opportunities for state residents, including providing transfer for students to four-year universities. Under California's Master Plan for Higher Education, direct access to the state's public universities and their baccalaureate degrees is supposed to be offered to the top one-third of high school graduates. Students not in the top third are supposed to have access to a bachelor's degree in California by transferring from a community college. In practice, the state's public universities enroll only about one-fifth of high school graduates, even though over a third are academically eligible, and this places even greater pressure on the community colleges to support the transfer function.<sup>2</sup> The number of students transferring from community colleges is substantial. In 2015-16, more than 58,000 community college students transferred to the CSU<sup>3</sup> and 16,000 transferred to the University of California (UC).<sup>4</sup> Transfer students represented about half of new undergraduate enrollment at the CSU in 2015-16, and half of the bachelor's degrees conferred by the CSU in 2014-15 were awarded to students who had transferred there from a community college. At the UC in 2015-16, about 28 percent of new undergraduates had transferred from community college, and community college transfer students were awarded about a third of the UC's bachelor's degrees in 2014-15.<sup>5</sup>

Despite the substantial representation of community college transfer students at the state's public universities, problems with the transfer function have been widely documented. Several studies have found that California's higher education systems are not adequately supporting students who intend to transfer; while computational methods to determine transfer rates vary, those rates are low based on the number of students who demonstrate intent to transfer.<sup>6</sup> The community college system's own method indicates that only 24 percent of the students who enroll intending to transfer to a university actually do so after four years, and only 38 percent transfer after six years.<sup>7</sup> Substantial disparities in transfer rates across racial/ethnic groups have also raised concerns,<sup>8</sup> with underrepresented minority students less likely to transfer.<sup>9</sup>

In addition to the problem of low transfer rates, the transfer function in California is plagued by inefficiencies. Many students take excessive time to transfer, and they typically earn many more course credits than are required for a degree at both the community college and university levels. A study using data from the National Education Longitudinal Study found that transfer students in the California sample earned, on average, 157 units to complete a bachelor's degree compared to approximately 141 units earned by students in other states (most bachelor's degrees are designed to be completed in 120 semester units).<sup>10</sup> Taking extra units increases the cost of a degree both for students and for the state and limits access to courses, as students take up seats that could be filled by others.

At community colleges and the CSU, capacity constraints have likely contributed to the inefficiency of the transfer process. Higher education suffered steep cuts in state funding in the late 2000s, when the Great Recession began, and funding remains tight. In the community colleges, student services were scaled back and have not fully recovered, which has made it more difficult for students to maneuver the community college system. At the CSU, a growing number of campuses and majors have been deemed "impacted." Declaring impaction is a way for

campuses to signal that the entire campus, or certain majors within it, have reached or exceeded enrollment capacity, given available resources.<sup>11</sup> Impaction allows campuses and programs to be more selective in their admissions, such as by requiring students to have a higher grade point average (GPA) or to meet other supplemental criteria. To meet these requirements, some students might need to extend their stay at community college, which can contribute to excess credit accumulation. For the 2016-17 academic year, six CSU campuses were designated as campus-impacted for both freshmen and transfer students, and all applicants are subject to more selective admissions criteria. Many CSU campuses not impacted at the campus-wide level have individual programs that are impacted.<sup>12</sup> An additional 11 CSU campuses have certain programs that are impacted for freshmen, and nine of those campuses also have programs that are impacted for transfer students.

In an effort to create clearer and more efficient transfer pathways to the CSU, the state legislature enacted the Student Transfer Achievement Reform Act (SB 1440, Chapter 428, Statutes of 2010) to, over time, increase transfer rates and reduce excess course credits, thereby increasing capacity to serve more students.<sup>13</sup> The legislation required the community college system to create a new degree called the AD-T, which guarantees students admission, with junior standing, to a CSU campus. Students with the AD-T do not have to take additional lower-division coursework at the CSU, and they need no more than 60 semester units of upper-division coursework, which—in addition to the 60 required units from community college—results in a 120-unit pathway to a bachelor's degree (see "What is an AD-T?"). Faculty from the community colleges and the CSU collaborated to develop Transfer Model Curricula (TMC) for specific majors to ensure a consistent set of degrees across colleges<sup>14</sup> and to reduce the inefficiencies caused when community college students have to take extra courses to meet varying requirements at different CSU campuses. Additional legislation (SB 440, Chapter 720, Statutes of 2013) set benchmarks for both systems in an effort to speed implementation.

While it is too soon to evaluate the transfer reforms, early assessments of their impact concluded that, while implementation of the AD-T pathway to transfer began slowly, institutions have made considerable progress both in developing AD-Ts for various majors at community colleges and in accepting those degrees within majors at CSU campuses.<sup>15</sup> The number of AD-Ts awarded by community colleges has increased dramatically, from just over 700 in 2011-12 to more than 20,000 in 2014-15 (see Table 1).<sup>16</sup> A recent analysis, however, noted several ongoing challenges: there is considerable variation across the colleges in the

numbers of transfer degrees awarded, many of the students who have earned an AD-T have not transferred to a CSU, and CSU transfer students who have earned an AD-T thus far represent a small share of all transfers to the system.<sup>17</sup>

In addition to the state’s effort to improve outcomes for transfer students, the CSU is also taking steps through its Graduation Initiative (GI) 2025, launched in 2015. Through the GI, the CSU Board of Trustees (BOT) signaled the importance of supporting transfer students by setting goals for their rates of graduation. In September 2016, the

**Table 1**  
**AD-T and other associate degree conferrals in the California Community Colleges**

	<b>Annual 2011-2012</b>	<b>Annual 2012-2013</b>	<b>Annual 2013-2014</b>	<b>Annual 2014-2015</b>
Associate in Science for Transfer (A.S.-T) Degree	72	1,674	4,784	9,747
Associate in Arts for Transfer (A.A.-T) Degree	650	3,490	6,668	10,990
Associate of Science (A.S.) Degree	26,993	29,193	31,212	31,471
Associate of Arts (A.A.) Degree	62,600	62,329	64,489	63,538

### What is an AD-T?

The California Legislature directed the California Community Colleges to develop the associate degree for transfer (AD-T) that would require 60 semester units, including general education units and 18 units in a major or area of emphasis. The 18 major units are based on Transfer Model Curricula (TMC) developed by faculty to ensure consistency of degrees across community colleges. Completion of an AD-T guarantees:

- admission with junior standing to a CSU campus (to a major determined to be “similar” to the AD-T, but not to a specific campus or major);
- no additional lower-division CSU coursework; and
- no more than 60 semester units of upper-division CSU coursework to complete a bachelor’s degree that—in addition to the 60 units completed at community college—results in a 120-unit pathway to a bachelor’s degree.

The CSU provides priority admission to community college students with an AD-T by way of a “GPA bump”; students’ GPAs for admission purposes are increased by 0.1 points if they are applying to impacted majors (if at least 20 seats are available) and by 0.2 points if they are applying to non-impacted majors.

The CSU redirects students who are not admitted to the campuses or majors of their choice to a campus with a similar program that has more capacity.





BOT approved an increase in system graduation goals: by 2025, to have 45 percent of transfer students graduate within two years of transfer and 85 percent within four years. In its draft progress report of GI 2025, the CSU outlined several key activities to support these goals—many of which could benefit transfer students, including adding courses; implementing proactive advising; “developing programs to reduce major-changing and prompt earlier choice of majors by students”; and “working with K-12 and community colleges to promote early major and career selection.”<sup>18</sup>

In the context of these efforts to improve transfer outcomes, much can be learned about how community college transfer students are being supported. Research from across the nation demonstrates that transfer student outcomes vary across institutions with very similar characteristics and student populations—a finding that suggests that institutional practices can make a difference.<sup>19</sup> The findings of our research, reported in the next section, indicate that existing policies and practices do support some transfer students, but that resources are insufficient to help all students navigate a complex process. Many transfer students, to make it through, employ strategies that were described to us as trial and error. Our recommendations are aimed at continuing to simplify the transfer process and strengthening the supports for transfer students—with the understanding that the state’s public higher education systems face fiscal challenges in making these changes.

# Findings

---

The following findings from our research are presented in three major areas: (I) institutional policies and practices related to transfer, generally, (II) student experiences of those policies and practices, and (III) the associate degree for transfer, specifically. All of the findings are based on the perspectives of students, administrators, and staff.

## I. Transfer policies and practices remain complex and unwieldy

We heard repeatedly from administrators, staff, and students that transfer from community college remains complex and unwieldy, despite support services provided by institutions and efforts by the institutions and the state to streamline the process.

### Transfer requirements and campus policies are confusing and pose barriers for students

Some state, system, and institutional policies related to transfer have improved, but interviewees told us that the changes have not gone far enough to simplify student transfer from the community colleges to the CSU campuses. A strong tradition of faculty governance at both the community colleges and the universities complicates alignment of curriculum and the movement of students across institutions and systems. On the state level, decentralized governance of higher education systems in California does not incentivize coordination across systems and institutions.

For example, the UC and CSU systems worked to simplify general education (GE) requirements across campuses by establishing two common sets of courses: the Intersegmental General Education Transfer Curriculum (IGETC), which would qualify students for admission to either the CSU or the UC, and CSU GE-Breadth requirements, which would qualify students for admission to any CSU campus, but not necessarily to the UC. There are some differences between

these sets of courses (see Appendix B).<sup>20</sup> The CSU and UC systems also have recommended common GE patterns for students in science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM), but they are specific to each system, and they are not universally accepted across majors and campuses.<sup>9</sup> Further, these common GE patterns do not go far enough in simplifying requirements because students must complete more than GE courses to transfer. According to CSUMentor (a website to help students and their families learn about CSU), general education courses can only account for 39 of the 60 semester (90 quarter) units that students need to transfer to the CSU.<sup>22</sup> The balance of units are lower division courses required for admission to majors.<sup>23</sup> Using ASSIST.org (a website that most students said they used to understand transfer requirements), we found that major requirements vary widely among campuses in the same higher education system. This variation can be confusing for transfer students, particularly those who plan to apply to more than one institution (see “Complex requirements make transfer planning difficult for students”). The AD-T was intended to simplify this kind of complexity, but its impacts have been limited so far. For findings about the AD-T, see section III.

Campus policies such as impaction and the determination of local service area boundaries also create barriers for students preparing to transfer. Impaction, which is largely decided by campus faculty, causes admission requirements to vary by campus and by major and to change annually. If students apply to impacted programs or campuses, they must meet supplemental admission criteria. This makes the overall transfer process more complicated because students have to track and complete varying requirements for multiple campuses and majors. In addition, some campuses choose to grant admission preference to “local” students—a definition that

changes based on how CSU campuses define their service area.<sup>24</sup> However, some campuses are not transparent in how they preference local applicants in the admission process. For students who are transferring units from more than one community college, determining whether they qualify for local preference can be confusing. Administrators at the community colleges and at CSU campuses said these practices directly impact transfer students.

Students also reported problems understanding the complex sequencing of courses at the various community colleges (such as which courses are acceptable as prerequisites to others), as well as difficulty getting the courses they needed in the required sequence. A transfer student at CSU said, “I see so many students [at community college] who take unnecessary classes or miss the sequence of things. The lack of understanding of how to get from A to Z is a huge problem.”

### **Community college supports are insufficient to help students navigate the complexity of transfer**

“Students come to us and we say, ‘Here’s your pathway, and here are the 48 classes that meet the requirements, and you can take them any semester you want to, but we really can’t guarantee that we’re going to offer them, much less that you’ll get in if we do.’”

– *Community college administrator*

Community college administrators and staff said they help students navigate the complexity of requirements primarily by offering a variety of supports. One transfer director said, “I think if students take advantage of the programs and services that are offered, they will have a clear

understanding of [transfer] requirements. If they don’t take advantage of those programs and services, it’s going to be rather confusing for them.” But interviews with staff and administrators and the focus groups we held with students revealed that resources to support transfer students are inconsistent across community colleges and are often inadequate to serve the large number of students who need them. A great deal of staff capacity is required to provide the individualized supports that students need to navigate the transfer process—and colleges do not have the resources to provide them all. For example, the recession-related budget cuts for higher education had a negative impact on student services. The ratio of students to counselors in fall 2014 was 657 to 1.<sup>25</sup> This ratio, however, includes all counseling staff at colleges, some of whom do not meet the qualifications, or were not hired, to work with students on academic planning, such as developing educational plans. For the colleges included in this study, the ratio of students to counselors in fall 2014 ranged from about 600 to 1 to more than 1,500 to 1.

Counselors, who interviewees identified as the primary resource to guide transfer students, are faculty members with master’s degree-level training in academic, personal, and career exploration counseling. Their many responsibilities include helping students plan their courses, set goals, fulfill course requirements, and understand transfer requirements. While some campuses have counselors who are dedicated to serving transfer students, counselors generally provide many services for students other than transfer support. Non-faculty advisors (or paraprofessionals), such as those who often staff transfer centers, can support counseling faculty and students, but they cannot “venture into academic counseling where they would be called upon to interpret, advise, or judge the appropriateness of a student’s course or program choice.”<sup>26</sup> The Student Success and Support Program (SSSP), an initiative of the California Community Colleges Chancellor’s Office,

establishes matriculation services that colleges must provide to students, including an opportunity to develop an educational plan. The colleges can provide either an abbreviated plan (covering a term or two) or a comprehensive plan (identifying all the courses/requirements to complete the student's academic goals). Currently, colleges are struggling to provide each incoming freshman with an abbreviated plan and have insufficient

counseling staff to help students develop comprehensive plans.<sup>27</sup> Many students in the focus groups said that they needed assistance in determining their academic and career goals, but this support is in short supply.

Another resource for students at many community colleges is the transfer center. The quality and use of transfer centers vary considerably across

### Complex requirements make transfer planning difficult for students

Interviewees said that many counselors refer students to online resources such as ASSIST.org to understand transfer requirements, and most students in the focus groups mentioned using this online program. ASSIST.org displays articulation agreements between campuses; it shows what classes are required for majors at each CSU or UC campus, and what classes (if any) a student can take at his community college to fulfill the requirements. We tried out ASSIST.org to understand how students experience this type of inquiry, and whether it helps simplify complex requirements. We found that (1) requirements beyond general education courses vary by major and institution; (2) in using ASSIST.org, it is difficult to compare requirements if students are intending to apply to more than one campus and/or major; and (3) ASSIST.org does not have information on the AD-T.

We used ASSIST.org as though we were a student from a Los Angeles-area community college who was considering transferring as a business major to two local CSU campuses (referred to here as Campus A and Campus B). We found that the lower division courses required for admission to a business major differ somewhat by campus (see Appendix C). Campus A requires two courses not required by Campus B, one in business communications and one in calculus. Campus A's requirements qualify a student for admission into any concentration within the business major, while Campus B requires additional courses for several of its concentrations, some of which are not offered at the community college in our example. Given this scenario, the student can commit to one set of requirements and hope that she is accepted at that specific CSU campus. Alternatively, she can try to fulfill requirements for both, which will likely result in wasted time and money because she will have earned more credits than she needs. Another option for the student is to pursue a business administration AD-T—a curriculum she would follow in lieu of tracking major-specific course requirements for various CSU campuses. However, while the AD-T would likely qualify her for admission to any CSU, it does not guarantee admission to a local CSU, and the AD-T is not uniformly accepted by all concentrations within a major at each CSU. In our example, Campus A accepts the AD-T for all concentrations within business administration, while Campus B only accepts it for the general business concentration, and not for any of the 11 other concentrations in the major.

ASSIST.org does not provide students information on the AD-T, but does provide a link to an AD-T website ([adegreewithaguarantee.com](http://adegreewithaguarantee.com)). The resources at this site do not appear to be as robust as ASSIST.org in providing transfer requirements and course information for students to act upon without seeing a counselor.

colleges, according to interviewees. One campus that we studied did not have a transfer center; interviewees there said support for transfer students is “diffused” on campus. The colleges that have centers intend for them to be a centralized resource for transfer students. Transfer centers typically offer application workshops, meetings with four-year university representatives, essay review, information on and tours of four-year colleges, and college fairs. Interviewees said that advisors (who are different from counselors, as noted above) typically staff transfer centers and help students to understand what is required to transfer, to research colleges and majors, and to complete applications. In general, students said that transfer center advisors were helpful, but that they still needed more consistent access to and advice from counselors to help them evaluate whether their courses were fulfilling transfer requirements. Several students reported more positive experiences with a few college transfer centers where they were able to meet with counselors who specialize in transfer. On one campus, students said it was helpful to have the transfer center as part of a “student services hub,” co-located with the admissions, financial aid, and counseling offices and the career center.

In addition, some students have access to “special population programs” that serve different groups of students, such as students of color or low-income students, or those studying certain disciplines. Students who participated in special population programs such as the Extended Opportunity Programs and Services (EOPS), the PUENTE Project, or a STEM-related learning community said these programs provided more personalized transfer supports than did other resources at their colleges, even though those programs are not designed specifically for transfer students. In the focus groups, many students said they could not participate in such programs because of capacity constraints (most of the

programs can only serve a fraction of eligible students), an inability to qualify, or because they did not learn about the programs early enough.

### Communication between sectors could be strengthened

“It’s great when you have administrators who are communicating with one another, but once you get down to the practitioner level, those folks have to be in communication with one another across institutions.”

– CSU administrator

Communication was cited by many interviewees as a critical way for counselors to keep up with changing CSU transfer requirements. CSU campuses offer workshops for community college counselors and send outreach staff to local campuses—relationships that interviewees said are important and helpful to counselors. Regional cross-sector councils and enrollment management committees that include CSU and community college representatives provide a mechanism for regular discussion about issues such as impact and the potential consequences of changing admission requirements. While community college and CSU interviewees reported that these efforts are helpful, many cited the need for more regular, formal communication mechanisms to ensure that community college counselors can keep up with changing CSU transfer requirements.

## Students at some community colleges receive more help navigating transfer than those at others

Colleges vary in the degree to which they communicate transfer options to students and the way in which leadership prioritizes transfer as a goal for both students and the institution. Several community college interviewees noted that their college's transfer culture is an important support for transfer students. This study revealed variation in transfer culture across colleges (see "Facilitating a culture in support of transfer at community colleges").

### Facilitating a culture in support of transfer at community colleges

Community colleges have a broad mission to serve a wide range of student needs, including help transferring to a four-year college. It is likely that colleges that develop a strong transfer culture can help more students plan for and succeed in transfer.<sup>28</sup> This can be particularly important for students who do not have family members or peers with college knowledge. Based on our interviews, some indications of a strong transfer culture likely include:

1. *Leadership that strongly supports transfer.* This includes college or university administrators who can be influential by stating publicly that transferring to a four-year school is important and by providing resources to support that process.
2. *Dissemination of information to all students about transfer options.* Ensuring that all students understand transfer pathways and requirements from the outset can help community college students explore their options, including transferring or earning a certificate or associate degree.
3. *Academic support for transfer students.* Several counselors and administrators said it is critical that these students have academic as well as student services support, and that ideally the supports are integrated.
4. *Data shared across departments and divisions within a college to improve transfer success.* Colleges that appeared to be more focused on transfer shared data about student progress across the campus, including with faculty. Colleges are beginning to track services related to Student Success and Support Program (SSSP) funds, and some intend to use those data to improve transfer outcomes.<sup>29</sup>
5. *Students connected with a variety of transfer services, support, and information.* Colleges that appeared to have a stronger transfer culture had well-resourced transfer centers and relatively complete information on websites, and they communicated regularly with students about transfer-related information and events.



## II. Students say they are primarily on their own in the transfer process

The majority of students in our focus groups said they did not receive enough transfer guidance and support from the community colleges or the CSU. This, in turn, led many students through a process of trial and error to figure out on their own what courses they needed to take, and when.

“With enough trial and error, I finally kind of figured, ‘Okay, I have CSUMentor, I have an ASSIST sheet open—maybe through both of those I can get out of here.’”

– CSU transfer student

### Students have trouble accessing counselors and receiving consistent information

While some students said they had positive experiences with counselors, the majority of students were disappointed with the counseling services they received in community college. Some students praised their counselors’ encouragement, their willingness to ask questions and to probe students’ interests, their sharing of information about available programs, and their assistance in identifying degrees for which students qualified. However, most students criticized counseling because of the limited availability of counselors (students could not get appointments and said the process of making appointments was challenging—particularly when they need counselors most, such as during registration); the difficulty they experienced in meeting consistently with the same counselor; and the conflicting information they received from different counselors. Consistent with other studies, students mentioned that they needed to know the right questions to ask counselors, or risk getting false or inadequate information.<sup>30</sup> They also did not appreciate it when counselors simply referred them to online resources. Students said they were overwhelmed by having to learn

how to navigate the many complexities of college simultaneously—including understanding financial aid, how to access counselors, how to register, where to park, and how to meet with professors. It is not clear how many of the focus group students participated in orientation at community college; most students reported talking to a counselor at least once while enrolled, generally receiving a 15- to 45-minute appointment either before matriculation to community college or during their first two semesters there. Many did not see a counselor after that.

### Students would like more personalized guidance

“The thing that would have been really helpful is if people did not say, ‘We are here to help you and guide you.’ And if somebody would have just said, ‘You know what? This is going to be a really hard process, and you’re going to bang your head against the wall, and you’re not going to get a lot of help, but stick it out,’ I probably wouldn’t have been discouraged as much as I was.”

– CSU transfer student

Most students said that counselors’ one-size-fits-all approach left them feeling alone in the transfer process. Most counselors in our sample are generalists, in that they do not provide discipline-specific information, and they counsel students who have a wide range of aspirations, including the wish to transfer. One student said, “I feel like they were just going through the motions when I went to get advisement. They see so many of us that they’re just telling us what they have to tell us, and then they’re pushing you out.” Students said that counselors referred them to career advisement services (usually provided through courses or

career or transfer centers) to help them understand options and establish goals, but that this approach lacked personalized attention. One student said, “Counselors kind of tell you, ‘Take this career development class. It will tell you your personality and stuff,’ and [they] hope you will weave your way through.” A CSU administrator observed that many students (including transfer students) appear to declare majors based on their perception of market demand for a degree rather than on their own personal interests; this “mismatch” can cause students to perform poorly in class or to change their major over time, resulting in lost time, money, and credits. Students recognized that career and academic goals are personal decisions, but several said they would have appreciated someone to help them consider their options.

### Students want more meaningful engagement with CSU personnel while at community college

“It was more like [the counselors] weren’t really trying to look at what I was trying to do. It was just like, ‘Well, this is what we give everybody, so we’ll give you this information.’”

– CSU transfer student

Most students said they had interacted with CSU staff in varying degrees prior to transferring, but that this engagement could have been more helpful to the transfer process. Many students and community college interviewees said their local CSUs tend to send outreach staff to community colleges to help educate students about CSU academic programs and campus life. In general, students found that relationship to be beneficial, but some interviewees said that admissions staff could have been more helpful in determining if the students were ready to transfer (such as by

evaluating transcripts). A few students said they received helpful advice by contacting CSU staff on their own, not by engaging with CSU staff visiting their community college campuses.

### Students need more targeted resources to help them succeed at CSU

Most students in the focus groups at CSUs said they need more support to navigate a new system and to connect with other CSU students and faculty in their majors. Students said they also need information such as who to contact regarding financial aid or how to access student support services. A student said, “They do mandatory [orientation], but what would have been helpful is if they did mandatory one-on-one counseling, with a counselor for your own college to guide you and set your path, not just a group of students giving you general advice.” CSU administrators said there are fewer resources directed at transfer students than at native freshmen, in part because of the perception that graduation rates for transfer students are already fairly high and that the greater need is to get native freshmen to complete.<sup>31</sup> An administrator said, “The Chancellor’s Office has asked us to increase graduation rates for transfers, but we’ve been much, much more focused on freshman graduation rates, in part because that’s what the federal government measures.” Another administrator said that it is difficult to tailor support services that appeal to a wide variety of transfer students—from the 20-year-old who quickly completed community college to the middle-aged student with a family and career. Most students said that a void in support causes a stressful transition to a complex, new system. One student said, “At the community college, you build your study group in that community to help you succeed. This is my second semester [at CSU], and I’m finally starting to get that back, but last semester it was pretty rough.”





### III. The associate degree for transfer can help in limited ways, but there is room for improvement

Interviewees from a few colleges said that the new AD-T prompted administrators and staff at their campuses to organize their curricula better. The degree also catalyzed some cross-sector communication to help streamline processes at a few colleges. However, the AD-T's impact on student outcomes thus far appears to be hampered by students' limited awareness and understanding of the degree and limited applicability of the degree's "guarantee" to students.

#### The transfer degree is catalyzing communication and organization of curriculum at some institutions

Administrators at a few colleges said the transfer degree legislation has increased communication across systems and within campuses. On some campuses, student success teams have helped faculty, student affairs staff, and administrative leaders collaborate in support of transfer students. A CSU administrator said that possibly the most important outcome of the transfer degree legislation is that it gave community colleges a basis upon which to organize their transfer curriculum—to look at their processes, courses, majors, and systems to streamline student transfer. The legislation prompted similar organization on at least one CSU campus, which aligned its lower division major requirements with Transfer Model Curricula so that native freshmen and transfer students were experiencing the same curriculum. A CSU administrator said, "I do think that SB 1440...has really caused many colleges and universities to look at their processes and their systems to make sure that once students do apply with this SB 1440 degree, that they can smoothly get their 60 units and get out of there."

#### Students do not understand the AD-T

The transfer degree pathway appears to be misunderstood by many students. Only a small share of students in the focus groups had

knowledge of the AD-T, and their knowledge was somewhat limited. However, given that the AD-T was only implemented in 2012, and many colleges were slow to adopt degrees, it might be too soon to expect that the focus group students would have deep knowledge of the degree. Most of the students in the focus groups did not understand the difference between an AD-T and a traditional associate degree, and most did not know which degree they had received. The few who knew they had a transfer degree had limited understanding of its benefits. For example, one student knew only about the 60-unit completion guarantee at the CSU after transfer. Others did not know about the guarantee, but knew that it provided a bump in GPA. While a few students had intentionally pursued a transfer degree, other students said they were awarded transfer degrees at the suggestion of their counselor as they approached the time of transfer. Those students were mainly unaware of the benefits.

"SB 1440 has given community colleges a way of organizing their curriculum around transfer, and that is so much more important than any advantage that transfer students may get individually."

– CSU administrator

When students do not understand the AD-T—or even know they have one—it is difficult for them to take advantage of its benefits (such as completion within 60 units and priority registration at one CSU). One source of the confusion could be that many colleges seem to be adding new AD-T offerings while keeping very similar associate degrees in the same discipline; for example, when colleges offer an associate degree and an AD-T in the same discipline, students could be confused about

which of those they are pursuing, making it harder to ensure they are correctly fulfilling requirements (see “Confusing degree options”).

Many CSUs are still implementing ways to flag AD-T students in their enrollment systems, which is critical in order to provide the 60-unit guarantee, but the first challenge is certifying whether or not a student had obtained an AD-T. Administrators and staff at several of the studied CSUs said that students must actively participate in a verification process to officially be considered

an AD-T student. This critical process is not automated. Currently, the community college sends the student a letter verifying the degree award (often in July), which the student must then forward to the CSU campus where he plans to enroll. Some students said that they were aware of peers who received an AD-T but did not complete the verification. This need to verify the AD-T, but not other associate degrees, is confusing and onerous to students and provides an example of where better communication between community colleges and CSUs is needed.

### Confusing degree options: The example of associate degrees in psychology

Psychology is a popular major:

- Eight percent of bachelor’s degrees awarded by the CSU are in psychology (second only to business administration).
- Twenty percent of AD-Ts awarded by community colleges are in psychology.

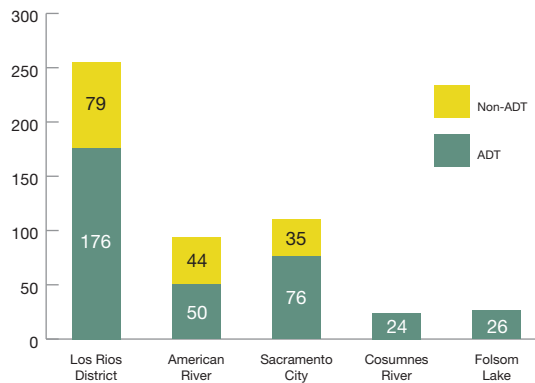
Many CCCs offer two kinds of associate degrees in psychology:

- An AD-T in psychology is offered by 106 of 113 colleges.
- Of those colleges, 44 also offer non-AD-T associate degrees in psychology. For example, three of the four colleges in the Los Rios Community College District offer both an AD-T and an associate of arts (AA) degree in psychology. Cosumnes River offers only an AD-T.
- Nearly one-third of degrees awarded in the Los Rios Community College District (2014-15) in psychology were AA, not AD-T.

It is difficult for students to understand the difference between degree options:

- The AA degree is listed first, before the AD-T, in the Los Rios district college catalogs.
- Both degrees are described as being for students intending to transfer, and the student learning outcomes and career opportunities are essentially the same for both degrees.
- Fifteen of the 18 units of course requirements are the same.
- The AA degree has a broader list of course options for the last 3 units; several course options would have to be repeated at a CSU to count toward the major because they are generally offered at the upper-division level (e.g., Introduction to Organizational Psychology).

**Associate Degrees in Psychology, 2014-15  
Los Rios Community College District**



### The “guarantee” has limited applicability

While the AD-T is described by the CCC and CSU systems as the “Degree with a Guarantee,” it appears that the guarantee is limited to a small subset of students. For others, the guarantee is somewhat of a misnomer.<sup>32</sup>

First, the degree is most helpful for students who have selected career and academic goals early in their community college career, as they are able to start on a degree path early and potentially complete the degree in 120 units. Data are not available on the share of students who begin community college with specific academic and career goals, but previous research and our focus groups suggest it is likely low.<sup>33</sup> More than three-quarters of the focus group students said they entered community college knowing they wanted to transfer, yet most did not have clear academic goals and knew very little about the transfer process. Most of the students said they “wandered” around community college for at least the first year, enrolling in courses they did not need for completion. Some students and administrators noted that students need time during their first year of college to explore and consider their educational interests and goals. In order to avoid accumulating excess credits, and to complete the AD-T in 120 units as intended, students need earlier and better resources to establish academic goals and more personalized guidance in making plans to meet those goals (including information about the AD-T and various other degree options).

Second, the AD-T is most helpful to students who have flexibility to go beyond their nearest CSU campus. While the AD-T guarantees admission to the CSU system, it does not guarantee admission to a specific major or campus. Nearly all students in the focus groups said they chose their CSU based on geographic proximity due to work and family obligations or financial considerations. Admission to another campus is not really a “guarantee” for

them. Impaction further complicates the guarantee for those students with little flexibility; the selective admission requirements for impacted majors and campuses reduces the likelihood that students will gain admission to their local CSU, with or without the AD-T. One transfer center director noted the challenge of helping students understand the guarantee: “[Explaining] the nuts and bolts pieces [of the transfer degree] is difficult. We’ve got to talk about the GPA bump, who gets the GPA bump, how much that GPA bump is, depending on whether it’s an impacted school or a school that’s not impacted. That it’s a guarantee to the system, and not necessarily a specific university or a specific major. And then the students kind of crinkle their faces, as in, ‘What do you mean by that? I thought it was a guarantee.’”

Third, the AD-T guarantee falls apart if students change majors or add a major or minor. Since data suggest that about half of students will change their mind at some point in college, many students will not experience the benefits of the transfer degree as envisioned.<sup>34</sup> One CSU administrator said the transfer degree requires too rigid a focus on one discipline from a very young age (for students who enroll directly from high school). A few students said they were reluctant to pursue an AD-T in community college because they did not want to be “stuck with” a similar major in CSU they knew little about. Administrators were unable to verify the frequency with which AD-T students “break their contract” by changing majors, but they did acknowledge it as an issue.

# Recommendations

---

In our study of transfer policies and practices in California, we identified two issues that affect student transfer, and that have broader implications for postsecondary student success. While we did not set out to examine these issues, we summarize them here, prior to making our recommendations, to call attention to their importance.

## **Impaction undermines the broad access mission of the CSU**

Beyond affecting student transfer, impaction also affects the ability of the CSU to meet its mission to maintain broad access for students. The majority of students in the focus groups (all of whom had transferred) said they chose their CSU campus based on geographic proximity, given their work or family obligations. Since we only spoke with transfer students, we do not know how many students did not transfer successfully because impaction blocked admission to their local campus and because they lacked finances or flexibility to enroll at a different institution. Further, when campuses declare impaction, other campuses experience a ripple effect on their enrollment, which is difficult for them to manage when budgets are constrained. The CSU Board of Trustees has identified “Access to Opportunity” as a key principle of its Graduation Initiative 2025, yet as admission requirements increase on impacted campuses and majors, underserved students may be affected disproportionately, which raises equity considerations. As a campus-centered policy lever, impaction causes systemwide effects that state and CSU leaders need to address. An important first step would be to gather better data to understand how impaction is affecting student access and success and to identify resource problems, underlying inefficiencies, or other issues that may be driving campuses to declare impaction.

## **Lack of data inhibits our understanding of transfer in California**

College transfer is a focus for many states, given its importance in providing access to bachelor’s degrees for historically underserved students. A study from the Community College Research Center found that community colleges serve as the entry point to higher education for over 40 percent of U.S. undergraduates; while over 80 percent of community college students nationwide intend to earn at least a bachelor’s degree, only about a quarter actually transfer.<sup>35</sup> In California, the state’s Master Plan for Higher Education established an even more critical role for the California Community Colleges—as an entry point to higher education for two-thirds of high school graduates in the state. In California, however, we cannot study transfer systematically because we lack comprehensive data systems. We do not have the ability, for example, to document students’ academic goals when they enroll in higher education and to track their progress from community colleges to the CSU and UC systems. Some institutions are utilizing personal relationships across community college and CSU campuses to share data, but a statewide data system is needed.

Our recommendations focusing on student transfer are aligned with our three major sections of findings.

### **I. Take further steps to simplify the transfer process**

**The CSU system should go beyond the AD-T to simplify transfer requirements.** The development of the AD-T alone cannot simplify all transfer policies and practices. Faculty at CSUs need to work with community college faculty to achieve greater consistency in requirements across campuses and majors, with the goal of making

baccalaureate programs more accessible to transfer students. This is an area where academic senates at the CSU could help negotiate compromises across departments and campuses with similar degree options, leading to simpler choices for students. Given that some community college students want to keep open the option of transfer to either CSU or UC campuses, leaders of both systems need to ensure there is as much consistency as possible between AD-Ts and UC's Transfer Pathways (which, like the AD-T, are intended to simplify transfer by making course requirements more uniform across campuses). If some of the systems' alignment issues were fixed, counselors could perhaps spend less time on the logistical aspects of transfer and more time on other facets of their work, such as helping students establish their academic and career goals.

**Community colleges and CSUs should continue to better organize curricula for transfer students.** The California Community Colleges Chancellor's Office (CCCCO) should consider whether to continue its approval of non-AD-T associate degrees in disciplines with an AD-T; where there is no clear workforce need for certain terminal associate degrees, the AD-T could become the only option, which might reduce students' confusion about which degree they received. In addition, the CCCCCO should coordinate efforts to help colleges share curricula and resources, through online courses or other cooperative arrangements, so that smaller colleges would be able to offer more AD-Ts than they could on their own.<sup>36</sup> CSU campuses could standardize curricula so that native and transfer students experience the same preparation for majors. Finally, both the community colleges and the CSUs should increase their offering of courses that transfer students demand most.

**The CCC and CSU systems should improve online resources.** Given scarce counseling and advising resources, online information must be easily accessible, consistent, and accurate.

Existing websites could be improved by being more up-to-date and consistent, becoming more user-friendly, and featuring sections that help counselors and faculty stay current about transfer requirements. Information about the AD-T, including specific information such as course requirements, needs to be incorporated into existing websites that transfer students use most frequently.

## II. Create better supports for transfer students

**The CCCCCO should monitor colleges' implementation of the Student Success and Support Program (SSSP) and modify requirements as necessary.** Abbreviated educational plans can help students navigate their first semester or two, but the comprehensive plans can help students set their longer term academic goals and identify all the courses they'll need in order to transfer. The CCCCCO should monitor colleges' implementation of the SSSP to ensure that all students are receiving improved matriculation services (such as counseling, orientation, and effective educational planning) and that the services are substantive enough to improve student outcomes. In its September 2016 progress report on the implementation of the SSSP, the Legislative Analyst's Office (LAO) recommended that the Legislature direct the CCC Board of Governors to revisit how to make SSSP services mandatory for students; the LAO reported that only about half of newly enrolled students received services in fall 2015.<sup>37</sup> The LAO also recommended that the Legislature direct the CCCCCO to "identify strategies to monitor and improve the alignment of course offerings with students' goals, as documented in their education plans."

**Community colleges should institute degree audit programs for students and use them to track student course demand.** Degree audit programs have helped some CSU students decide what classes to take and in what order to fulfill their degree requirements. These programs would be

particularly helpful for students in community colleges—especially AD-T students, since their course patterns are relatively set. Students’ education plans (as mentioned in the previous recommendation) could be reflected in the degree audit programs. Community colleges could use these degree audit programs as a tool to help them meet student demand by identifying the courses students will need most over the next few semesters, as the LAO recommended. In addition, the community college and university systems could also develop a statewide online academic planning tool that would allow community college students to track their progress toward transfer and toward a bachelor’s degree at any institution in the state, as was recommended several years ago by a joint task force.<sup>38</sup>

**The CSU needs to strengthen its role in supporting transfer students—before and after transfer.** CSU campuses are important partners to the community colleges in supporting transfer students. Efforts by CSU campuses in the following areas could help smooth the process for students.

- *Communication.* CSU campuses need to provide community college counselors with more specific and timely information about issues that affect student transfer, including impaction, changes in service area boundaries, and changes in transfer requirements.
- *Resources for community college students.* CSU campuses need to improve the admissions guidance and other supports available to community college students before they transfer. The information provided to students should be at a level that meets their needs (such as transcript evaluation services).
- *Data sharing across systems.* Community college administrators should be able to track their former students’ progress after transfer. At the very least, CSUs and their “feeder” community colleges should be regularly sharing student-level data to better understand how students fare after transfer.
- *Tracking AD-T students.* Community colleges need to identify electronically for CSU enrollment systems those students who have

completed an AD-T. CSU must then identify and monitor the progress of AD-T students. This is critical both for the benefit of transfer students and to ensure that state leaders can evaluate the AD-T program’s effectiveness.

- *First-year transition resources for transfer students.* Transfer students are not native juniors; they need assistance to navigate a new system and develop a sense of belonging. A few examples include offering first-year experience programs for transfer students, transfer student orientations, and upper-division general education courses specifically for transfer students.

### III. Help more students benefit from the AD-T

**Community colleges should improve counselor awareness of and expertise in AD-Ts.** Identifying a set of community college courses that apply broadly across the various degrees could help counselors provide early advice to students who want to transfer, but have not yet selected a major.

**Community colleges should work with K-12 schools to expand students’ exposure to career options before they enroll.** The impact of the AD-T could be increased if students enter community college with clear academic goals and can begin to follow an AD-T pathway early on. Early goal setting could also improve students’ ability to interact with community college counselors and ask them the right questions.

## Conclusion

---

While the CCC and the CSU have made significant improvements, student transfer from community colleges to the CSU remains a complicated, confusing process for many students. The California Legislature adopted transfer degrees to streamline transfer to the CSU (and UC is implementing a similar transfer pathways program). In our sample, however, the AD-T appears to affect a relatively small proportion of students who have clear academic and career goals when they enter community college, who have flexibility to go to CSUs beyond their closest campus, and who never change their major (or add another). With impaction and changing local service area boundaries affecting their admission prospects, students must plan to apply to several CSU campuses and majors, but varying transfer requirements across campuses outside the AD-T option makes the process complex. Policies and practices to support transfer-seeking students in community colleges and at the CSUs vary widely and have been susceptible to budget cuts.

Students said the supports for transfer were generally insufficient and that they had to rely too much on their own initiative—employing strategies of trial and error—to transfer to a CSU campus. The students included in this study were among the minority of transfer-seeking community college students who succeeded in steering through the difficult process; thus, the challenges might have been too great for students who intended to, but did not, transfer.

Further simplifying transfer processes would require a new and higher level of coordination across the community college and CSU systems, including faculty collaboration to create clearer and more aligned requirements. Without a statewide coordinating body, however, the systems and institutions must find ways on their own to ensure that transfer-seeking students achieve their goals. With its revised Graduation Initiative 2025 goals, the CSU is signaling the importance of improving support. By working together, the state's education systems can continue to remove existing barriers and create simpler paths for transfer students.

# Appendix A

---

## Research Methodology

The findings in this report are based on a study by EdInsights researchers that was driven by three overall questions: (1) How do community college and CSU campuses support transfer students, both those intending to transfer and those who have transferred? (2) How do students experience transfer-related policies and practices at individual community colleges and CSU campuses? (3) Is the implementation of the AD-T affecting campus policies and practices and/or students' experiences in the transfer process? Our study was based on semi-structured interviews with administrators and staff at six community colleges and four CSU campuses, and with focus groups of students who had successfully transferred from community college to the CSU. The study included the CSU, since it is the recipient of the largest number of CCC transfers and because recent efforts to create the AD-T were aimed at facilitating transfer to the CSU system.

The analyses in this report are derived from three data collection efforts:

**1. Semi-structured interviews with 26 individuals at four CSU campuses and six community colleges.**

The selected CSU campuses have large shares in their undergraduate population of transfer students and underrepresented minority (URM) students. The selected community colleges are among the largest feeders of transfer students into those CSU campuses, and they also enroll large proportions of URM students. The six studied community colleges are in the southern and central regions of the state, and their combined enrollment represents about 9 percent of total enrollment across all California community colleges in Fall 2015. To select interviewees at each college campus, we reached out to individuals there who we knew were likely to have knowledge of transfer policies and practices. Those interviewees then referred us to others on campus who could give us additional perspectives. Participants were guaranteed anonymity to encourage participation and frank discussion of issues; hence, neither individuals nor campuses are identified in this report. Interviews were conducted with administrators and staff familiar with transfer issues, including individuals in both academic and student affairs who work directly with students. Interviews focused on the priority placed on transfer at the institution, the kinds of supports provided to students seeking to transfer or who have transferred, cross-sector collaboration around transfer, and experiences with transfer degree reforms.

**2. Focus groups with transfer students enrolled at each of the four CSU campuses.**

Two focus groups held at each of the four CSU institutions in February and March 2016 yielded the participation of 64 students. The method for recruiting students varied somewhat at each institution, but generally involved sending email requests to lists of transfer students provided by the university. The participating students had transferred from 48 California community colleges, not just the six included in our sample. About half of the focus group students had been at CSU two semesters or less. Three-quarters of them had been at CSU four semesters or less. Their majors at CSU varied widely—no more than five students shared the same major. The group discussions focused on the students' experiences preparing for transfer while at community college and attending CSU and included the development of their goals, their awareness and understanding of the transfer process in general and the transfer degree pathway in particular, the kinds of supports they received at both community college and CSU, the barriers they encountered, and their strategies for dealing with challenges. Only a small share of the students in the focus groups said they had earned an AD-T (some students were confused about whether they had received an AD-T or another associate degree, which makes it impossible for us to cite a precise percentage here).



3. **Review of data and various websites and documents for the community colleges and CSUs included in the study.** Our research included a review of resources for students intending to transfer (such as community college and CSU campus websites) and an examination to determine whether the institutions' strategic plans included goals related to transfer or transfer students. It also entailed an examination of general web resources providing transfer support for the state's community college students (e.g., ASSIST.org, CSUMentor). Finally, the research included examination of transfer-related data available through CSU's Analytic Studies Division and CCC's Datamart.

EdInsights researchers conducted content analyses of the transcripts of the interviews and focus group discussions to identify dominant themes. The results presented in this report should be interpreted in the context of several limitations:

1. The selected campuses may not be representative of the CCC and the CSU systems as a whole.
2. The perceptions of the administrators and staff interviewed at each campus may not represent those of their campus as a whole.
3. The perceptions of students in the focus groups may not represent those of all transfer students in CSU.
4. The students in the focus groups had successfully transferred from CCC to the CSU. Their perceptions and experiences may not fully reflect those of CCC students who intended to transfer, but did not actually do so.

## Appendix B

### Comparison of Intersegmental General Education Transfer Curriculum (IGETC) and CSU GE-Breadth Requirements

	<b>UC IGETC</b>	<b>CSU GE-Breadth</b>
English communications	One course in English composition	One course in English composition
Critical thinking	Second composition course emphasizing critical thinking	Stand-alone course in critical thinking
Oral communications	Not required	One course required
Mathematical concepts/ quantitative reasoning	One course required	One course required
Arts and humanities	Three courses, at least one in arts and one in humanities	Three courses, at least one in arts and one in humanities
Social and behavioral sciences	Three courses from at least two disciplines	Three courses from at least two disciplines
Physical and biological sciences	Two courses, one in each area	Two courses, one in each area
American institutions	Not required	One course in U.S. history and one course in government*
Foreign languages	Proficiency equivalent to two years of high school study	Not required
Lifelong understanding and self development	Not required	One course required
Certification of GE completion	Complete package must be completed to be certified	Certification done area by area

\* The courses in American government and history are not technically part of CSU GE-Breadth requirements; they are CSU graduation requirements that most students complete as part of their lower-division coursework.



# Appendix C

## Comparing transfer requirements for Business Administration majors at two CSU campuses

The information in the table below is drawn from ASSIST.org. We used the website to inquire about what courses would be transferable from one Southern California community college to two local CSUs; this process is similar to what a student might do if he wanted to compare courses that are required to transfer as a Business Administration major at the two CSUs, and to understand which courses he could take at his community college to satisfy the requirements. Researchers took considerable time to analyze and compare the requirements as presented in the table below, including looking up the requirements for the business administration AD-T as an additional point of comparison. Below the table are screenshots of how the information would actually appear to students using ASSIST.org. The requirements for the AD-T are available in community college course catalogs.

	<b>AD-T Business Administration</b> (23 – 25 units) <sup>1</sup>	<b>CSU Campus A Transfer Requirements for Business Administration</b> (27 – 30 units) <sup>2</sup>	<b>CSU Campus B Transfer Requirements for Business Administration</b> (18 – 21 units) <sup>3</sup>	<b>Community College Articulated Courses</b>
<b>Core Requirements</b>				
Financial Accounting	ACCT 110 - Financial Accounting (3)	ACCT 220 – Intro. to Financial Accounting (3)	ACC 230 – Financial Accounting (3)	ACCTG 1 – Introductory Accounting I (5)
Managerial Accounting	ACCT 120 – Managerial Accounting (3)	ACCT 230 – Intro. to Managerial Accounting (3)	ACC 231 – Managerial Accounting (3)	ACCTG 2 – Introductory Accounting II (5)
Microeconomics	ECON 201 – Principles of Microeconomics (3)	ECON 160 – Principles of Microeconomics (3)	ECO 210 – Economic Theory 1A Microeconomics (3)	ECON I – Principles of Economics I (3)
Macroeconomics	ECON 202 – Principles of Macroeconomics (3)	ECON 161 – Principles of Macroeconomics (3)	ECO 211 – Economic Theory 1B Macroeconomics (3)	ECON 2 – Principles of Economics II (3)
Business Law	BUS 125 – Business Law (3) OR BUS 120 – Legal Environment of Business (3)	BLAW 280 – Business Law I	LAW 240 – Legal Environment of Business (3)	BUS 5 – Business Law I (3)

	<b>AD-T Business Administration</b> (23 – 25 units) <sup>1</sup>	<b>CSU Campus A Transfer Requirements for Business Administration</b> (27 – 30 units) <sup>2</sup>	<b>CSU Campus B Transfer Requirements for Business Administration</b> (18 – 21 units) <sup>3</sup>	<b>Community College Articulated Courses</b>
<b>Mathematics Requirements</b>	<b>List A: Select one of the following</b> (3 units):	<b>Both Calculus AND Statistics required</b>	<b>No Calculus required; Statistics is recommended</b>	
Calculus	MATH 140 – Business Calculus (3)	MATH 103 – Mathematical Methods for Business (3) OR MATH 150A – Calculus I (5) OR MATH 255A Calculus for the Life Sciences (3)	Not required	MATH 238 – Calculus for Business and Social Science I (5) OR MATH 261 – Calculus I (5)
Statistics	MATH 110 – Introduction to Statistics (3)	SOM 120 – Basic Business Statistics (3) OR MATH 140 – Introductory Statistics (4)	MAT 131 – Elementary Statistics and Probability (3)	No course articulated for SOM 120 at CSU Campus A  MATH 227 – Statistics (4) OR MATH 228 B Statistics Pathway Part II (5)
Finite Mathematics	MATH 130 – Finite Mathematics (3)	Not required	Not required	Not offered
<b>Additional Requirements</b>	<b>List B: Select two of the following</b> (5-7 units):	<b>Both of the courses below are required</b>	<b>One course below is required</b>	
Computer Course	BUS 140/ ITIS 120 – Business Information Systems (3) OR Computer Skills (2-3)	COMP 100 – Computers: Their Impact and Use (3)	CIS 270 – Information Systems and Technology Fundamentals (3)	CO SCI 501 – Introduction to Computers and Their Use (3) OR CAOT 82 – Microcomputer Software Survey in the Office (3)
Communications Course	BUS 110 – Introduction to Business (3) OR BUS 115 – Business Communication (3)	ENGL 205 – Business Communication in its Rhetorical Contexts (3)	Not required	CAOT 32 – Business Communications (3)
	Any course from List A not already chosen (3)			



## Notes

1. The AD-T in Business Administration is accepted in all 5 of the options/concentrations within the Business Administration major at Campus A, and also in the separate degree programs in Management, Finance, and Marketing. At Campus B, the AD-T is accepted only in the General Business option/concentration, and not in the other 11 options/concentrations offered within Business Administration.
2. These transfer requirements apply to all 5 options/concentrations within the Business Administration major at Campus A, and also to the separate degree programs in Management, Finance, and Marketing.
3. These transfer requirements apply to 9 of the 12 options/concentrations within the Business Administration major at Campus B. The other 3 options have additional course requirements; for two of those options, there are no articulated courses at the selected community college that meet the additional requirements.
4. The number of units students earn for courses are in parentheses (e.g. in the Financial Accounting box for the AD-T column, ACCT 110 is a three-unit course).

Requirements to transfer into Business Administration (and related concentrations)  
from a Los Angeles-region community college to CSU campus A

8/17/2016

www.assist.org

Page 1

Articulation Agreement by Major  
Effective during the 16-17 Academic Year

To: [REDACTED] | From: [REDACTED]  
Semester | Semester

====Business Administration====

BUSINESS ADMINISTRATION: B.S., College of Business & Economics

OPTIONS AVAILABLE IN BUSINESS ADMINISTRATION: Business Law; Global Supply Chain Management; Real Estate; Systems & Operations Management

FINANCE BS, MARKETING BS, MANAGEMENT BS ARE OFFERED AS SEPARATE DEGREES. REFER TO THE BY MAJOR AGREEMENT FOR EACH.

It is highly recommended that all lower division business core requirements be completed prior to transfer. No grade lower than a "C" will be accepted from another institution to satisfy College of Business and Economics requirements.

This agreement displays the lower-division courses required in the major: [REDACTED] courses on the left and approved (articulated) transfer courses on the right. General education (CSU-GE Breadth or IGETC or [REDACTED]) and upper-division courses are also necessary for completion of this degree.

Advanced Placement (AP) Exam info for the major in Business Administration:

- Score of 3, 4, or 5 on AP Economics: Microeconomics satisfies ECON 160
  - Score of 3, 4, or 5 on AP Economics: Macroeconomics satisfies ECON 161
  - Score of 3, 4, or 5 on AP Statistics satisfies MATH 140
  - Score of 3 on AP Math: Calculus AB satisfies MATH 103
  - Score of 4 or 5 on AP Math: Calculus AB satisfies MATH 150A
  - Score of 3, 4, or 5 on AP Math: Calculus BC satisfies MATH 150A
- Consult [REDACTED] catalog for complete AP Exam information.

THE LOWER DIVISION REQUIREMENTS FOR ALL OPTIONS IN BUSINESS ADMINISTRATION ARE:

[REDACTED] is an impacted campus. Students outside of the local [REDACTED] area must satisfy the 3.9 gpa requirement for admission. Refer to Transfer Impaction at: [REDACTED]

ACCT 220	Introduction to Financial Accounting (3)		ACCTG 1	Introductory Accounting (5)
			I	
ACCT 230	Introduction to Managerial Accounting (3)		ACCTG 2	Introductory Accounting (5)
			II	

Business Administration (continued)					
BLAW 280	Business Law I	(3)	BUS 5	Business Law I	(3)
COMP 100	Computers: Their Impact and Use	(3)	CO SCI 501	Introduction to Computers and Their Uses	(3)
			OR		
			CAOT 82	Microcomputer Software Survey in the Office	(3)
ECON 160	Principles of Microeconomics	(3)	ECON 1	Principles of Economics I	(3)
ECON 161	Principles of Macroeconomics	(3)	ECON 2	Principles of Economics II	(3)
ENGL 205	Business Communication in its Rhetorical Contexts	(3)	CAOT 32	Business Communications	(3)
SOM 120	Basic Business Statistics	(3)	No Course Articulated		
	OR		OR		
MATH 140	Introductory Statistics	(4)	MATH 227	Statistics	(4)
			OR		
			MATH 228B	Statistics Pathway Part II	(5)
MATH 103	Mathematical Methods for Business	(3)	MATH 238	Calculus for Business and Social Science I	(5)
	OR		OR		
MATH 150A	Calculus I	(5)	MATH 261	Calculus I	(5)
	OR		OR		
MATH 255A	Calculus for the Life Sciences I	(3)	MATH 261	Calculus I	(5)
END OF MAJOR					

**Requirements to transfer into Business Administration (and related concentrations)  
from a Los Angeles-region community college to CSU campus B**

8/17/2016

www.assist.org

Page 1

Articulation Agreement by Major  
Effective during the 15-16 Academic Year

To: [REDACTED] | From: [REDACTED]  
15-16 General Catalog Semester | 15-16 General Catalog Semester

====Business Administration (B.S.)====

**Major Concentrations**

- Accounting Concentration
- Business Analytics Concentration
- Entrepreneurship Concentration
- Finance Concentration
- General Business Concentration
- Global Logistics and Supply Chain Management Concentration
- Information Systems Concentration
- Information Systems Security Concentration
- International Business Concentration
- Management and Human Resources Concentration
- Marketing Concentration
- Sports, Entertainment and Hospitality Management Concentration

Transfer students should have completed lower division general education requirements, including the appropriate courses in English and mathematics. Statistics should be taken as the General Education Quantitative Reasoning requirement; otherwise, OMG 221 will need to be taken as a prerequisite to OMG 321, which is an upper division requirement for all options in the major.

-----  
All courses applied to the major must be passed with a grade of "C" or better.  
-----

**Recommended Course(s)**

MAT 131	Elementary Statistics and Probability	(3)		MATH 227	Statistics	(4)
				<b>OR</b>		
				MATH 228B	Statistics Pathway Part II	(5)

**Common Core Lower Division Required Courses**

=====  
**Business Administration (B.S.)**

ACC 230 Financial Accounting (3) | ACCTG 1 Introductory Accounting (5)  
I

-----  
ACC 231 Managerial Accounting (3) | ACCTG 2 Introductory Accounting (5)  
II  
-----





ECO 210	Economic Theory 1A Microeconomics	(3)	ECON 1 I	Principles of Economics	(3)
ECO 211	Economic Theory 1B Macroeconomics	(3)	ECON 2 II	Principles of Economics	(3)
LAW 240	Legal Environment of Business	(3)	BUS 5	Business Law I	(3)

**General Business Concentration Electives:**

CIS 275 Internet Literacy (3) | No Course Articulated

NOTE: Instead of the above, students may opt to complete upper division electives after transfer. See current catalog for a complete course listing.

**Global Logistics and Supply Chain Management Concentration  
International Logistics Track & Systems Track  
Additional Lower Division Required Courses:**

OMG 220 Introduction to Transportation Management (3) | No Course Articulated

OMG 225 Introduction to Logistics Management (3) | No Course Articulated

**Business Administration (B.S.)**

OMG 230 Introduction to Supply Chain Management (3) | No Course Articulated

In addition, the following courses may be completed to satisfy requirements for the Systems Track, or students may opt to complete upper division electives after transfer. See current catalog for a complete course listing.

CIS 272 Business Programming I (3) | No Course Articulated  
CIS 275 Internet Literacy (3) | No Course Articulated

CIS 272 Business Programming I (3) | No Course Articulated

CIS 275 Internet Literacy (3) | No Course Articulated

**International Business Concentration  
Additional Lower Division Required Course:**

POL 100 General Studies Political (3) | POL SCI 7 Contemporary World (3)  
Science: World | Affairs  
Perspectives |

The other options/concentrations within this major do not require any additional lower division courses.

**END OF MAJOR**



# Endnotes

---

- 1 See, for example: Moore, C., Shulock, N., & Jensen, C. (2009). *Crafting a student-centered transfer process in California: Lessons from other states*. Sacramento, CA: Institute for Higher Education Leadership & Policy; Kisker, C.B., Cohen, R.M., & Wagoner, R.L. (2010). *Reforming transfer and articulation in California: Four statewide solutions for creating a more successful and seamless transfer path to the baccalaureate*. Los Angeles, CA: Center for the Study of Community Colleges.
- 2 Jackson, J., Bohn, S., & Johnson, H. (2016). *Higher education in California: Expanding college access*. San Francisco, CA: Public Policy Institute of California.
- 3 Retrieved from California State University Chancellor's Office, Analytic Studies Division, at <http://www.calstate.edu/as/CCCT/2015-16/index.shtml>.
- 4 Retrieved from University of California Information Center at <http://universityofcalifornia.edu/infocenter>.
- 5 These figures for UC include only California resident students.
- 6 See for example: Johnson, H. (2016). *California's future: Higher education*. San Francisco, CA: Public Policy Institute of California; Moore, C. & Shulock, N. (2014). *From community college to university: Expectations for California's new transfer degrees*. San Francisco, CA: Public Policy Institute of California; Moore, C. & Shulock, N. (2010). *Divided we fail: Improving completion and closing racial gaps in California's community colleges*. Sacramento, CA: Institute for Higher Education Leadership & Policy; Horn, L. & Lew, S. (2007). *California community college transfer rates: Who is counted makes a difference*. Berkeley, CA: MPR Associates, Inc.; California Postsecondary Education Commission. (2007). *California higher education accountability: Goal - student success, Measure - California Community College students' degrees and certificates awarded and successful transfers*. Sacramento, CA: Author; Sengupta, R & Jepsen, C. (2006). *California's community college students*. San Francisco, CA: Public Policy Institute of California.
- 7 Retrieved from CCCCO's Datamart, *Transfer Velocity Rate for 2008-09 entering cohort*, [http://datamart.cccco.edu/Outcomes/Transfer\\_Velocity.aspx](http://datamart.cccco.edu/Outcomes/Transfer_Velocity.aspx). These figures include students who transferred to any four-year university, not just in the CSU and UC systems.
- 8 Moore and Shulock, 2010.
- 9 According to the CCCCO's Datamart, Transfer Velocity Rates for the 2008-09 cohort, 29% of Latino students and 34% of black students transferred within six years, compared to 41% of white students and 49% of Asian/Pacific Islander students.
- 10 Roksa, J. & Keith, B. (2008). Credits, time, and attainment: Articulation policies and success after transfer. *Educational Evaluation and Policy Analysis*, 30(3), 236-254.
- 11 Information on impacted campuses and programs can be found at <http://www.calstate.edu/sas/impaction-campus-info.shtml>.
- 12 See <http://www.calstate.edu/sas/impaction-campus-info.shtml>.
- 13 For more information about SB 1440, see [www.sb1440.org](http://www.sb1440.org). For a summary of earlier state efforts to reform the transfer process, as well as recommendations that led to efforts to pass new reform legislation, see Moore et. al., 2009.
- 14 Patton, J. & Pilati, M. (2012). Faculty reflections on implementing associate degrees for transfer in California. *New Directions for Community Colleges*, 160, 55-68.
- 15 Moore and Shulock, 2014; Shorette, R. & Byrd, D. (2016). *Keeping the promise: Going the distance on transfer reform*. Los Angeles, CA: Campaign for College Opportunity.
- 16 Retrieved from CCCCO's Datamart, Program Awards Summary Report, [http://datamart.cccco.edu/Outcomes/Program\\_Awards.aspx](http://datamart.cccco.edu/Outcomes/Program_Awards.aspx).
- 17 Shorette and Byrd, 2016.
- 18 California State University Board of Trustees (2016) *California State University Graduation Initiative 2025: CSU system and campus completion goals and plans*. Long Beach, CA: Author. Retrieved from <https://www.calstate.edu/bot/agendas/sep16/ED-POL-2-ADDENDUM-GI-2025.pdf>.
- 19 Jenkins, D. & Fink, J. (2016). *Tracking transfer: New measures of institutional and state effectiveness in helping community college students attain bachelor's degrees*. New York, NY: Community College Research Center, Teachers College, Columbia University.
- 20 CSU Breadth requires a course in oral communications, one in critical thinking, and one in lifelong learning/self development, which are not required by IGETC. IGETC requires a second composition course and proficiency in a foreign language, which are not required by CSU Breadth. Students following IGETC but intending to transfer to CSU are required to take an additional course in written communication and do not need to demonstrate proficiency in a language other than English.

- 21 In the CSU, the GE Breadth for STEM Majors requirements are applicable only to certain AD-T majors for which the Transfer Model Curriculum explicitly indicates the availability of the option. The GE Breadth for STEM pattern allows students in the approved majors to defer two lower-division GE courses (six semester/nine quarter units) until after transfer, in order to allow students to complete more major prerequisites. See [http://www.csumentor.edu/planning/transfer/ge\\_breadth\\_stem.asp](http://www.csumentor.edu/planning/transfer/ge_breadth_stem.asp). UC similarly offers IGETC for STEM, a pattern of courses currently only available to students earning an AD-T at a California community college that offers IGETC for STEM as an option, and only accepted by UC majors and colleges that accept students' partial completion of IGETC. See <http://admission.universityofcalifornia.edu/counselors/transfer/advising/igetc/index.html>.
- 22 See CSUMentor at [https://secure.csumentor.edu/planning/transfer/upper\\_div\\_ge\\_req.asp](https://secure.csumentor.edu/planning/transfer/upper_div_ge_req.asp). Basic skills courses are written communication, oral communication, critical thinking, and mathematics.
- 23 Majors vary in the number of lower-division units required; some majors have space within the 60 units for elective courses.
- 24 CSUs can change their local service area boundaries for the purposes of enrollment management. As explained on CSUMentor, "'local' first-time freshmen are defined as those students who graduate from a high school district with a significant number of historical enrollments in a CSU campus in that region. 'Local' upper division transfer students are defined as those who transfer from a California community college with a significant number of historical enrollments in a CSU campus in that region. The boundaries of a campus' local region shall contain the entire territory of the school district or community college district in which the local high school or community college campus is located. (Specific exceptions to the 'entire district rule' may be approved by the CSU Office of the Chancellor.)" See [https://secure.csumentor.edu/planning/high\\_school/impacted\\_admission.asp](https://secure.csumentor.edu/planning/high_school/impacted_admission.asp).
- 25 Retrieved from CCCCO's Student Success Scorecard at <http://scorecard.cccco.edu/scorecardrates.aspx?CollegeID=000>.
- 26 The Academic Senate for California Community Colleges (2012). *The role of counseling faculty and delivery of counseling services in the California Community Colleges*. Sacramento, CA: Author. Retrieved from [http://www.asccc.org/sites/default/files/CounselingS12\\_0.pdf](http://www.asccc.org/sites/default/files/CounselingS12_0.pdf).
- 27 Legislative Analyst's Office (2016) *California Community Colleges: Second progress report on the Student Success Act of 2012*. Sacramento, CA: Author. Retrieved from <http://lao.ca.gov/reports/2016/3500/Second-Prog-Report-Student-Success-092216.pdf>. For more information, see <http://extranet.cccco.edu/Divisions/StudentServices/Matriculation.aspx>. Efforts to track matriculation services such as comprehensive educational plans are still developing as a result of SB 1456 (Chapter 624, Statutes of 2012). Incomplete data on educational plans completed at all community colleges are available in Datamart. See <http://scorecard.cccco.edu/scorecardrates.aspx?CollegeID=000>.
- 28 Serban, A., Kozeracki, C., Boroch, D., Over, L., Malmgren, I., & Smith, B. (2008). *Transfer issues and effective practices: A review of the literature*. Sacramento, CA: The Research and Planning Group for California Community Colleges.
- 29 See information about SSSP at <http://extranet.cccco.edu/Divisions/StudentServices/Matriculation.aspx>.
- 30 Wyner, J.W., Deane, K.C., Jenkins, D., & Fink, J. (2016). *The transfer playbook: Essential practices for two- and four-year colleges*. New York, NY: Community College Research Center, Teachers College, Columbia University; Venezia, A., Bracco, K., & Nodine, T. (2010). *One shot deal: Students' perceptions of assessment and course placement in California's community colleges*. San Francisco, CA: WestEd.
- 31 Comparing graduation rates of native freshmen to transfer students is not a valid comparison, as transfer students are much closer to earning their degrees than freshmen and therefore more likely to complete.
- 32 See: <http://degreewithaguarantee.com>.
- 33 Some colleges collect data on students' goals; for example, administrators at one community college said the majority of its students enter with the intent to transfer. All community colleges are supposed to be using Student Success and Support Program funds to develop an educational plan with every incoming freshman, to document the student's goals; however, most colleges in this study were not yet able to ensure that all new students have a comprehensive educational plan, largely due to insufficient numbers of counselors. Therefore, data do not yet exist to illustrate how many students enter with career and academic goals. See also: Bailey, T., Jaggars, S. S., & Jenkins, D. (2015). *What we know about guided pathways*. New York, NY: Community College Research Center, Teachers College, Columbia University; Karp, M. (2013). *Entering a program: Helping students make academic and career decisions*. New York, NY: Community College Research Center, Teachers College, Columbia University.
- 34 National Center for Education Statistics. (2013) *STEM attrition: College students' paths into and out of STEM fields*. Washington, DC: US Department of Education. Retrieved from <http://nces.ed.gov/pubs2014/2014001rev.pdf>; Simon, C. (2012, November 4). Major decisions. *The New York Times*, p. ED-13. Retrieved from [http://www.nytimes.com/2012/11/04/education/edlife/choosing-one-college-major-out-of-hundreds.html?\\_r=0](http://www.nytimes.com/2012/11/04/education/edlife/choosing-one-college-major-out-of-hundreds.html?_r=0)



- 35 Jenkins, D., & Fink, J. (2015). *What we know about transfer*. New York, NY: Community College Research Center, Teachers College, Columbia University.
- 36 Some colleges do not have the capacity to offer all of the courses required by the Transfer Model Curricula for certain AD-Ts. This constrains their ability to increase their AD-T offerings.
- 37 Legislative Analyst's Office, 2016.
- 38 Kisker et al., 2010.



# Education Insights Center

Advancing Research and Policy  
for K-12 and Postsecondary Education

This report was made possible by funding from the College Futures Foundation.



**SACRAMENTO STATE**

California State University, Sacramento  
6000 J Street, Tahoe Hall 3065  
Sacramento, California 95819-6081  
[www.csus.edu/edinsights](http://www.csus.edu/edinsights)  
@EdInsightsCtr