

# Community College-HBCU Transfer Students: Promising Practices for Student Success

Monique Colclough, Ph.D., Senior Research Associate, Belk Center

## INTRODUCTION

Transfer student success is essential to North Carolina's landscape as it supports the economic mobility of college students and their communities across the state. From Fall 2018 to Fall 2019, over 25,000 students transferred from the North Carolina Community College System's 58 colleges to 16 of the University of North Carolina institutions. Over 3,000 of the community college students transferred to one of the five public Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs). The effect that college transfer practices and initiatives have on students is critical as recognized by Sandy Shugart, President of Valencia College, in the 2019 Annual Dallas Herring Lecture, where he advocated for community college and university focus on [End to End Design](#) to positively influence student and institutional transfer success. Transfer student success is perhaps even more critical now as students and institutions navigate COVID-19. Considering recent efforts to [enhance](#) the transfer process, North Carolina's institutions of higher education are uniquely positioned to answer the labor market demands (myFutureNC, 2019) and economic mobility goals of students pursuing career preparation through bachelor's degrees.

[Worsham, Whatley, Barger & Jaeger](#) (2020) previously introduced the impact and positive results of North Carolina's Comprehensive Articulation Agreement (CAA), exploring key outcomes for baccalaureate degree completion. The CAA is a critical component of the transfer process but does not address all student needs. Inter-institutional connections and holistic transfer student support services, including academic advising and career development are important and must be intentional to support a diverse subset of transfer students.

## PURPOSE

The 2019 Dallas Herring Lecture ([Shugart](#)) provided rich historical context for, and, critical perspective on the racial diversity of community college students transferring to baccalaureate degree programs, and, likewise, ways higher education can address uneven economic mobility among Black and brown students. Since 2016, approximately 13% of community college students that transfer to the UNC System each fall transfer to one of the five public Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs). Among North Carolina's 58 community colleges, seven have the greatest number of students transferring to public HBCUs. And, all but one community college is within a 30-mile radius of a UNC institution ([UNC System Dashboard, Transfer Students](#)).



### 5 Public NC HBCUs Within 30 Mile Radius of Top Transfer Community Colleges in the State\*

1. **Winston-Salem University** (Forsyth Technical Community College Main Campus)
2. **NC A&T State University** (Guilford Technical Community College)
3. **North Carolina Central University** (Durham Technical Community College & Wake Tech)
4. **Fayetteville State University** (Fayetteville Technical Community College)
5. **Elizabeth City State University** (College of The Albemarle – Elizabeth City)
6. **\*Pitt Community College** (not within 30 mile radius of NC HBCU)

HBCUs are known for being enriched cultural institutions, expertly weaving curriculum, belongingness, career access, affordability and social justice. In key quantitative research that explored the income trajectory of HBCU students, it was determined that almost 70% of HBCU students experience upward mobility, resulting in placement in the middle-class income quintile (Natheson, Castro Samayoa & Gasman, 2019). Thus, through this study, we seek to elevate the pivotal nature of the transfer experiences and processes that North Carolina community college students undergo when transferring to a public HBCU in their state.

## THE PROJECT

The history and importance of transfer literature is presented in depth in Taylor and Jain's (2017) review of the national history of the transfer function for post-secondary students, the role of articulation agreements and policy, and the experiences of transfer students. Existing literature has also specifically explored the transfer experiences of community college students at one North Carolina HBCU and provided recommendations for enhancing student success and completion (Walker & Okpala, 2017). This research served as a foundation for our work to identify transfer practices and student support initiatives that influence student success and degree completion for all community college students who transfer to North Carolina's public HBCUs. To accomplish this, we invited approximately 40 staff and administrators in Enrollment Management, Transfer Admissions and similar areas at each public North Carolina HBCU to complete a survey about the processes and practices for transfer student enrollment, retention and student services. Over 40% of those invited completed the survey.

The guiding research questions were:

- **How are North Carolina community colleges and North Carolina public HBCUs actualizing the community college transfer?**
- **What student support services and resources contribute to successful baccalaureate completion for community college students at North Carolina's public HBCUs?**

The survey included open ended and rank-order questions about current practices and processes for recruiting, admitting, and supporting transfer students from community colleges. An excerpt of the survey questions is included below:

## Excerpt of Survey Questions

- » Are there specific conditions that are the most fruitful for community college transfer students? If so, please share what they are. As an example, assigned faculty advisors upon admissions, support from Tau Sigma Honor Society, residential living and learning communities, etc.
- » If challenges exist in supporting successful community college transfer students, please rank them in order of the greatest challenge.
  - Academic advising and degree alignment with the Baccalaureate Degree Plans (BDP)
  - Financial barriers
  - Identifying academic mentors
  - Identifying who community college transfers are
  - Students being integrated into campus culture
  - Student scheduling needs being outside of traditional university hours
- » What, if any, institutional barriers could be eliminated on your campus with additional financial or personnel support?



# Key Findings

We share our findings in the three thematic areas below.

## Current Efforts:

- Active recruitment of community college students.
- The greatest number of community college students that transfer to the 5 public North Carolina HBCUs do so from: The College of Albemarle, Durham Technical, Fayetteville Technical, Forsyth Technical, Guilford Technical, Pitt and Wake Technical. With the exception of Pitt Community College, the other community colleges are within 30 miles of a public HBCU.
- Program specific transfer agreements exist at each public HBCU with common ones being in Nursing, Early Childhood Education, Engineering, Theater, Music and Criminal Justice.

## Potential Efforts:

- Intentional and permanent staff support identified for transfer students seeking guidance on career planning, academic advising and student support services.
- Targeted student support services offered throughout enrollment, from application to graduation.
- Additional MOUs and specific transfer agreements in programs that exceed living wage metrics while seamlessly aligning community colleges to neighboring HBCUs.
- Stronger faculty-led academic advisement, including summer support and departmental level liaisons for students in pre-professional programs, e.g., Health Sciences, and Engineering.
- Electronic transcripts for transcript evaluation.

## Challenges That Exist for Community College Transfer Students:

- Financial barriers, including access to merit and need based financial aid, to support transfer student persistence and degree completion. The Community College Transfer Scholarship at North Carolina Central and the Board of Trustees Transfer Student Endowment Scholarship at North Carolina A&T provide examples of ways to address student financial barriers.
- Accessibility outside of standard business hours to accommodate diverse student body needs.

As many institutions are purposefully incorporating transfer student recruitment, enrollment, retention and degree completion in strategic planning, we offer the following considerations, resources and literature that we believe further illustrate the ways community college transfer students are centered and supported.

## IMPLICATIONS FOR POLICY AND PRACTICE

### Considerations for North Carolina’s Community Colleges and Public HBCUs:

- 1. Flexible online degree completion opportunities** that reflect best practices in remote teaching and learning.
- 2. Specific professional development for faculty** related to advising and mentoring in support of the diverse academic backgrounds of community college transfer students.
- 3. Seek and utilize student feedback** to enhance the transfer experience. Although students can generally provide insight into their experience through national engagement surveys, institutions will benefit from intentionally surveying community college transfer students on factors specific to admissions, transfer credit evaluation, advising and persistence needs.
- 4. Strengthen the relationship** between community colleges and HBCUs beyond articulation agreements through communication, advising, and financial aid planning.

## CONCLUSION

The success of community college transfer students is integral to the economic mobility of students and their communities across North Carolina. We offer examples below of HBCU peer institutions with comprehensive, student centered transfer support pages, as well as relevant literature to advance the work that our colleagues at community colleges and HBCUs are doing to support the successful matriculation and graduation of community college transfer students.

### ABOUT THIS BRIEF

Colclough, M. N. (2020). Community College-HBCU Transfer Students: Promising Practices for Student Success. Raleigh, NC: Belk Center for Community College Leadership and Research.

## REFERENCES AND ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

- Cause, J., Harnack-Eber, A., Lang, R., Liu, Q., Ryu, M., & Shapiro, D. (2020, December). COVID-19 transfer, mobility, and progress report (No. 2). National Student Clearinghouse Research Center. Retrieved from <https://nscresearchcenter.org/wp-content/uploads/Covid19-TransferMobilityProgress-FinalFall2020.pdf>
- Jain, Herrera, Bernal & Solorzano (2011). Critical race theory and transfer function: Introducing a transfer receptive culture. *Community College Journal of Research and Practice*, 35(3), 252-266.
- myFutureNC. 2 million by 2030. Retrieved from <https://www.myfuturenc.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/10/MFNC-Mission-and-Goals-Long-Version.pdf>
- Natheson, R., Castro Samayoa, A., & Gasman, M. (2019). Onward and upward: Income mobility at historically Black colleges and universities. Rutgers Center for Minority Serving Institutions. Retrieved from [https://cmsi.gse.rutgers.edu/sites/default/files/EMreport\\_R4\\_0.pdf](https://cmsi.gse.rutgers.edu/sites/default/files/EMreport_R4_0.pdf)
- Taylor & Jain (2017). The multiple dimensions of transfer: Examining the transfer function in American higher education. *Community College Review*, 45(4), 273-293.
- Walker, K. & Okpala, C. (2017) Exploring community college students' transfer experiences and perceptions and what they believe administration can do to improve their experiences. *The Journal of Continuing Higher Education*, 65(1), 35-44. DOI: 10.1080/07377363.2017.1274618
- Wang, Lee, Nachman & Zhu (2020). It matters long before: How early exposure to faculty and advisors at baccalaureate institutions relates to upward transfer. *Educational Researcher*. <https://doi.org/10.3102/0013189X20956659>
- Worsham, R., Whatley, M., Barger, R., & Jaeger, A.J. (2020). The role of North Carolina's comprehensive articulation agreement in transfer efficiency. Belk Center for Community College Leadership and Research. Retrieved from <https://belk-center.ced.ncsu.edu/wp-content/uploads/2020/10/Belk-Transfer-Report1-9.24.20.pdf>
- UNCF North Carolina's HBCU Fact Sheet. (n.d.). Retrieved from <https://uncf.org/programs/north-carolina-impact>

### Examples of Peer Transfer Websites

Florida A&M University's [Transfer Student Services](#)

Howard University's [Transfer and Transition Programs](#)

Morgan State University's [Office of Transfer Student Programming](#)

North Carolina Central University's [Office of Transfer Services](#)

Prairie View A&M University's [Orientation](#) and [Department of Student Experience](#)

*The Belk Center for Community College Leadership and Research at NC State's College of Education develops and sustains exceptional community college leadership committed to advancing college access, the social and economic mobility of their colleges' students, and the economic competitiveness of their regions. The Center conducts and disseminates research to address current and emerging student success challenges facing community college leadership and policymakers in North Carolina and beyond.*