

Facilitating Community College Transfer: A Master Plan Mandate

Intersegmental Committee of Academic Senates April 2009

INTRODUCTION

The 1960 California Master Plan for Higher Education established the principles of universal access and choice, employing the differentiation of admissions pools for the California Community Colleges (CCCs), the California State University system (CSU), and the University of California system (UC). The transfer function is an essential component of California's commitment to access. In order to ensure baccalaureate-earning opportunities, the UC and CSU are to establish a lower division to upper division ratio of 40:60 to provide transfer opportunities to the upper division for community college students, and eligible CCC transfer students are to be given priority in the admissions process. Since the late 1980s, the Legislature has focused on accomplishing a "seamless" transfer system, but because of the necessary diversity between and, especially, within the higher education segments, **transfer is a complex process to bring into coherence – one that defies simple or low-cost solutions.**

Some factors that make transfer complex:

- The CCCs serve a diverse body of over 2.5 million students.
- Two-thirds of all CSU students and one-third of all UC students begin their careers in a CCC.
- Each of those students' preparations and ambitions has to be coordinated and aligned to transfer opportunities via services offered at 110 different CCC colleges.
- The system of transfer opportunities is vast and differentiated: 23 unique CSU campuses and 9 distinct UC undergraduate campuses with multiple and specialized major programs across the campuses.

The population of students who enter the community colleges reflects the diversity of California. While some students are college-ready, many students who have the potential to eventually succeed at a university enter community colleges underprepared for college, and they require additional coursework and support services before beginning transfer-level courses. Also, many students do not enter community college with transfer as a clear and expressed goal. Some students who underperformed in high school may underestimate their true capabilities. Others may come from an environment in which college graduation is not viewed as an expectation or even as a realistic possibility. For others, developing the competencies necessary to complete high school may not be achieved nor may the educational opportunities available foster the development of even the most basic skills. Hence, shortcomings of the education system prior to entering higher education are an on-going challenge to postsecondary educational success, not merely transfer.

FUNCTIONS ESSENTIAL TO TRANSFER

The 2005 ICAS authored "A Transfer Discussion Document" and identified **the following functions as essential to transfer:**

Function 1: **Provide students with access to current information** about major preparation, prerequisites, transfer requirements at UC and CSU, and course requirements.

Function 2: **Provide counselors, advisors, transfer center directors, and others with current information** about existing and new articulation agreements and major preparation.

Function 3: **Provide a venue for faculty from across the segments and disciplines to discuss curricular and transfer-related issues.**

Function 4: **Provide Articulation Officers with access to new information** about changes in major requirements so they might support new articulation agreements and faculty's creation of new or revised curricula.

Function 5: Provide a mechanism for ongoing certification of courses meeting the common general education curriculum (IGETC/CSU GE Breadth, and SciGETC).

Function 6: Provide a mechanism for assigning course identification numbers and verifying that courses actually qualify for the assigned number.

Function 7: Provide for statewide dissemination of curricular recommendations and decisions (e.g., agreement on course identifier descriptions, findings of discussion groups regarding major preparation, essential changes in course content).

Function 8: Provide students with assurances that the courses they take will transfer to a four-year university.

Function 9: Provide transfer students with UC/CSU advising linked to confirmed acceptance of units from their community colleges, their declaration of a major and development of their personal graduation plans.

Function 10: Provide a process whereby all transfer initiatives are reviewed by the faculty who are ultimately responsible for effectuating them.

These functions remain essential and are currently being addressed to a varying degrees. To the extent that transfer works well in California, it could be accomplished more effectively and more efficiently if the aforementioned functions were adequately funded.

Coordinated and supported intersegmental efforts are essential to the transfer function. It is only through the segments continually working together to solve the dynamic problems that naturally occur that transfer can be made the seamless process that is desired to the benefit of both our students and our institutions.

EARLY INTERVENTION

To facilitate transfer, information and guidance should be available for students, especially low-income, first generation college students to understand that transfer is possible, and the financial cost should not deter them. Thus, even prior to transfer, secondary and postsecondary systems, and communities at large, must collaborate to establish college-going attitudes and experiences; as students plan to enter college, they must be made aware of the many resources available to them—including transfer planning and counseling, financial aid assistance and workshops, and academic advisement. We acknowledge the many successful initiatives--including CSU's EAP, GEAR-UP projects of K-12, concurrent enrollment opportunities, the CCC's icanaffordcollege.com media blitz and School to College articulation initiative--to inform potential students, parents, and the public at large that transfer and graduation are realistic goals. An important context to acknowledge is that the transfer process is complex, affected by educational opportunity and academic preparation, attitudes towards college attendance, socioeconomic status, personal and family demands that may lengthen the time needed for completion of educational goals, mobility (or lack thereof), and more.

NECESSARY STEPS TO ENSURE SUCCESSFUL TRANSFER

A successful program of student transfer requires informed student behaviors, college and university planning and programs, and considerable faculty and staff efforts to identify and publicize information about appropriate academic preparation. Ideally, for a student to transfer from a California community college to a California public university, the necessary supports must be available for:

1. Students to:
 - a. identify transfer as a potential goal;
 - b. receive counseling and guidance for completing appropriate courses for transfer and major preparation; and
 - c. identify, apply for, and receive any available financial assistance, and

- d. identify a potential major at relevant 4-year institutions and make those intentions clear to counselors at the time they seek academic assistance.
2. Community colleges to:
 - a. offer sufficient courses for students to complete preparation for transfer in a timely fashion;
 - b. provide opportunities for ongoing counseling and career exploration, because many students change majors and academic goals several times and may need assistance in formally declaring a major;
 - c. offer a wide range of services through transfer centers, including campus tours, college fairs, workshops, financial aid assistance, and catalog libraries; and
 - d. provide adequate on-campus professional development to ensure uniformity of information to counselors who directly assist students seeking to transfer.
3. Receiving 4-year institutions to:
 - a. provide timely transfer credit evaluations, major advising and degree audits to ensure clear path to degree;
 - b. engage in student outreach using websites and orientation meetings;
 - c. post information about major preparation and any course identifiers for use by students, counselors, transfer center directors, and articulation officers; and
 - d. provide adequate training opportunities (e.g., Ensuring Transfer Success) for articulation officers and counselors who directly assist students seeking to transfer.

REQUIRED INTERSEGMENTAL AND INTRASEGMENTAL ACTIVITIES TO SUPPORT TRANSFER

All of these activities must occur in a coherent way across the higher education segments, and within them, requiring on-going and multi-pronged collaborations between and within the segments. Consequently, **there must be both the intersegmental and intrasegmental supports** for:

1. holding disciplinary faculty discussions to help develop and maintain coherent and ‘navigable’ lower division preparation requirements;
2. developing shared goals, objectives, and timelines for transfer programs and policies/practices that facilitate transfer;
3. codifying articulation for those courses among and between institutions;
4. assigning and posting common course identifiers to major preparation courses meeting agreed upon criteria;
5. making available accurate and coherent financial aid information that shows the impact of academic choices; and
6. making the right information available for **all** students, especially low-income, first generation college-attending students, so they can know that transfer is logistically possible and financially possible.

Extensive and on-going intersegmental training is necessary to prepare counselors, financial aid personnel, articulation officers, faculty, and others who will assist students at all points in this progression from desire to acceptance, to matriculation, and to graduation at a baccalaureate-granting institution. External groups, organizations, and mechanisms are available to help students proceed as smoothly as possible. We identify many of those groups and their responsibilities in the transfer mission below.

Of the various intersegmental transfer efforts, some are institution-specific (e.g., counseling or advising services at each institution), some are intersegmental initiatives (e.g., ASSIST, IMPAC, OSCAR); some depend upon membership of particular groups (CIAC, ICC); and some are segment-specific and rely to varying degrees upon cooperation with other segments (e.g., LDTP, UC Streamlining Course Major Articulation Preparation Process, Student Friendly Services). Still others strive to be truly intersegmental in nature, but are funded solely by one segment (e.g., C-ID). **All of these activities require ongoing state and institutional support and must be aligned cooperatively and strategically.**