

Keeping Students on their Transfer Path during the Pandemic and Beyond



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Research • Planning • Professional Development
for California Community Colleges

The RP Group

www.rpgroup.org

Mission: As the representative organization for Institutional Research, Planning, and Effectiveness (IRPE) professionals in the California Community Colleges (CCC) system, the RP Group strengthens the ability of CCC to discover and undertake high-quality research, planning, and assessments that improve evidence-based decision-making, institutional effectiveness, and success for all students.

Services: Research, evaluation, planning, professional development, and technical assistance—designed and conducted by CCC practitioners

Organization: 501(c)3 with roots as membership organization

Student Senate for California Community Colleges

Brianna Ross

Former Vice President of Regional Affairs

Graduated Irvine Valley College, Spring 2021

Transferred UC Riverside, Fall 2021



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Transfer Leaders

Andrea Williams

Career and Transfer Coordinator
Berkeley City College

Located: Berkeley

Students: 11,258



Kate Porter

Transfer Center Coordinator
Cuesta College

Located: San Luis Obispo

Students: 9,358



In this webinar...

Overview of The RP Group's *Through the Gate* transfer initiative
Student and Transfer Professional Perspectives on...

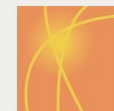
- New challenges to students' transfer experience during the pandemic
- Adaptations / innovations to meet students' needs
- Suggestions for strengthening student transfer moving forward - during the pandemic and beyond

Resources and Next Steps



Through the Gate

(Very Brief!)
Overview



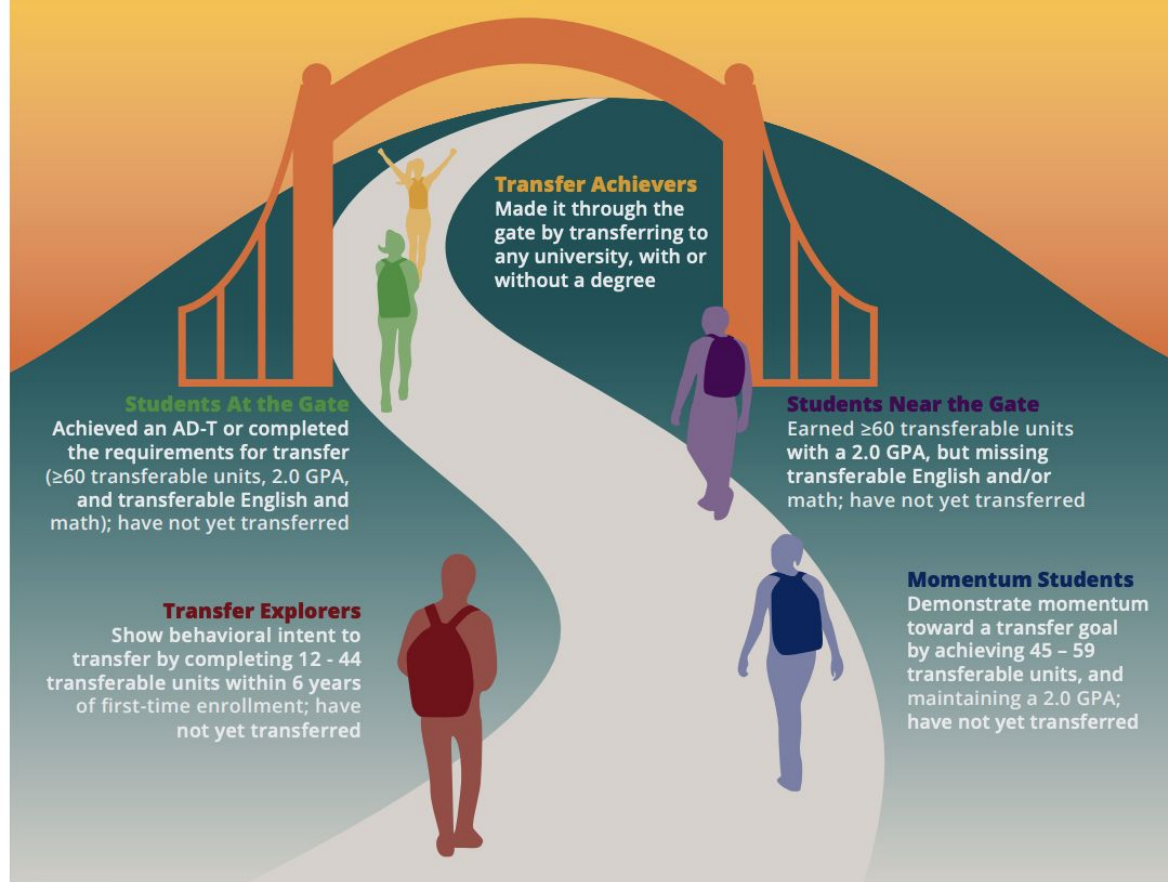
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Through the Gate

Phase 1:

Mapped California's transfer landscape, identifying a continuum of milestones for the student transfer journey and quantifying how many students were "near" or "at" the transfer gate

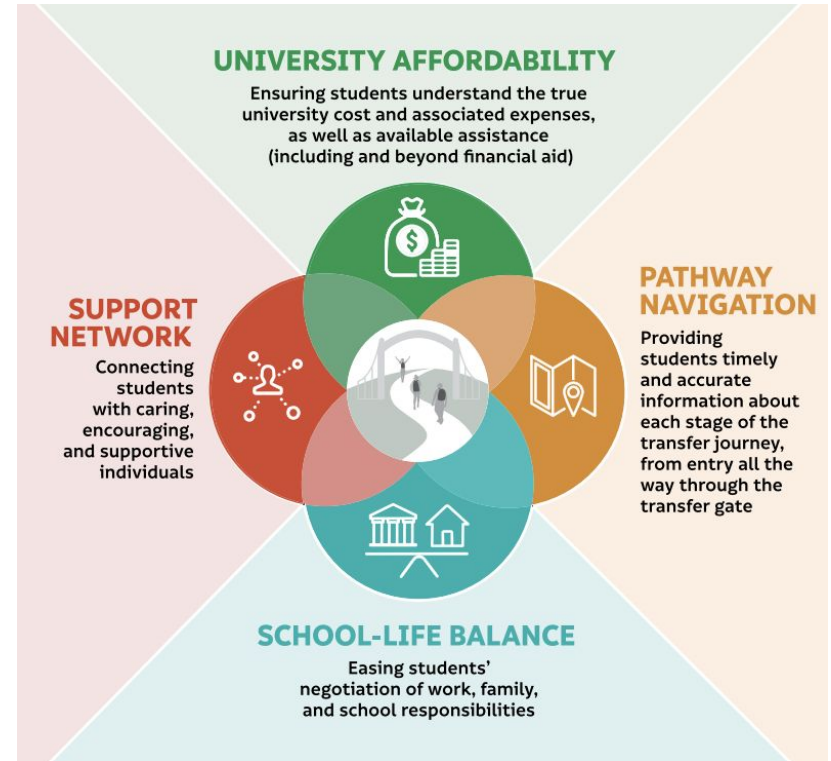


Through the Gate

Phase 2:

Developed a framework for building students' transfer capacity, highlighting four issues community college students grapple with as they work toward their goal: a bachelor's degree

Student Transfer Capacity-Building Framework



Long-Term Questions

- How will the COVID-19 pandemic impact the educational trajectories of students close to the transfer gate?
- What new or different supports will they need to attain their academic goals?



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COVID-19 Impact on Transfer Research Overview

Study activities:

- Statewide survey of ~8,000 high-leverage students attending 67 CCC (58%)
- 2 focus groups with students...
 - experiencing transfer success
 - with impacted transfer plans
- Interviews with colleges rated highly by survey participants for their transfer communication and support



COVID-19 Impact on Transfer Student Survey Findings



40% of students indicated that the pandemic impacted their transfer plans



40% of students found it harder to access counselors and advisors

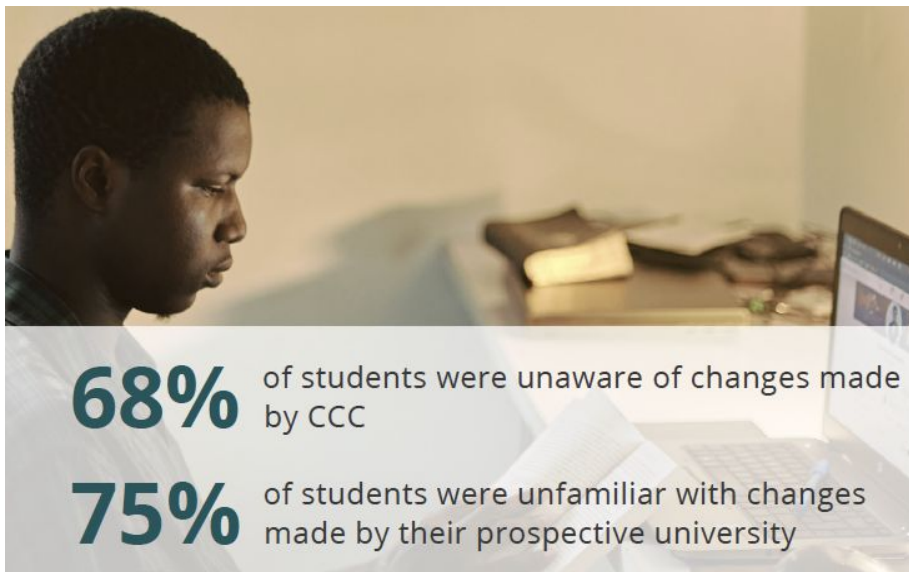
33% of students found it difficult to access both community college and university transfer center staff



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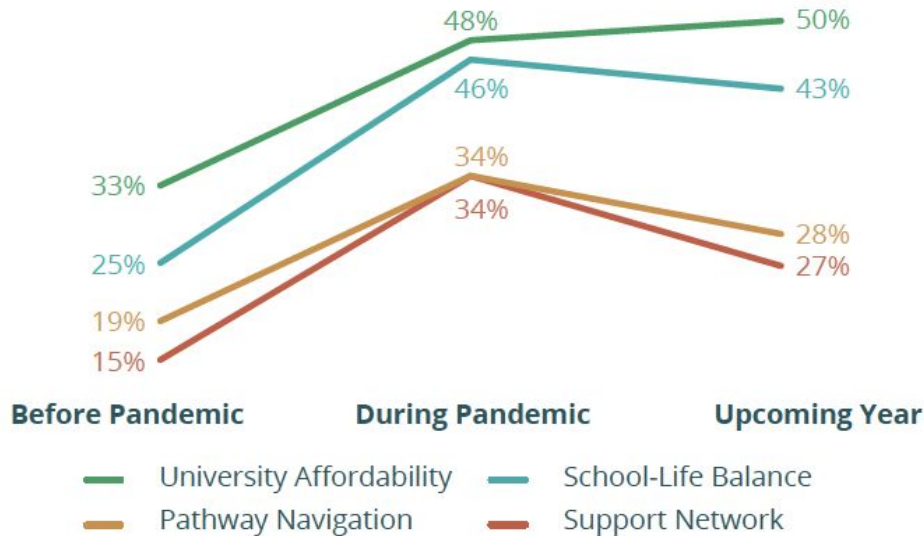
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COVID-19 Impact on Transfer Student Survey Findings



COVID-19 Impact on Transfer Student Survey Findings

Percentage of students finding each factor "very challenging"



Student struggles with all four factors increase during the pandemic -- particularly University Affordability

New Challenges to Students' Transfer Experience during the Pandemic



Students needed more empathy and support from transfer personnel



Colleges struggled in the transition to online learning



Students and universities had reduced connection



Students experienced new barriers to accessing the CSU and UC systems

New Challenges to Students' Transfer Experience during the Pandemic

As transfer practitioners...

What new challenges to students' transfer progress and success did you observe -- for students, your college, or with university partners?

As student leaders pursuing transfer...

What new / unique issues emerged for you and your peers during the pandemic that challenged your transfer progress and success?

Adaptations to Support Transfer Students during the Pandemic

Leveraging a strong student-centered foundation



Using technology to rapidly move transfer services and supports online



Deploying campus-wide communications, with a focus on student-facing campaigns



Developing new programmatic approaches to meet transfer student needs -- both persistent and new

Adaptations to Support Transfer Students during the Pandemic

As transfer practitioners...

What student-centered practices did you have in place, pre-pandemic?

What adaptations did you make that were particularly helpful?

As student leaders pursuing transfer...

What innovations did you experience that supported your transfer momentum?

What statewide action did SSSCC support to help students achieve transfer?

Suggestions for Strengthening Students' Transfer Success Moving Forward

Shared and consistent messaging and communication about transfer requirements and resources

Streamlined business processes within and across all systems (CCC, CSU, UC)

Expanded capacity across all systems to support student and state goals (i.e., increased bachelor's degrees, more equitable outcomes)

Suggestions for Strengthening Students' Transfer Success Moving Forward

As transfer practitioners and student leaders pursuing transfer...

- **What can community colleges do to improve students' transfer success?**
- **What can universities do?**
- **What can CA's higher ed systems do?**
- **What can students do?**

Resources

Be a Transfer Advocate: How Faculty Can Strengthen Students' Transfer Success



Surveys and interviews with over 800 California Community College students conducted as part of the RP Group's Through the Gate transfer study reveal that four key factors can boost students' transfer capacity: university affordability, school-life balance, pathway navigation, and support network (see figure at right). Students also emphasized the essential role their teachers and academic programs play in holistically addressing these factors as they work toward their bachelor's degree.

In collaboration with the Academic Senate for California Community Colleges (ASCCC), we offer faculty the following suggestions for increasing students' transfer capacity. Drawing on students' own ideas, we outline ways to help students experience these factors at the classroom and program levels and point to statewide action you can support to advance students' transfer success.

Address Transfer Readiness in Your Class

- Share personal stories of success and failure during your own higher education journey, including how you learned about your academic options; financed your education; selected your undergraduate institution(s); built your own network of supportive individuals; and addressed school, social, and personal challenges (support network)
- Welcome students to connect with you outside of class for transfer planning, advice, and moral support (pathway navigation, support network)
- Embrace flexible, compassionate, and culturally responsive classroom practices and policies that recognize the numerous demands on students' time and attention in order to help them stay on path toward transfer (school-life balance)
- Familiarize yourself with college personnel and programs that can address academic and nonacademic issues impeding students' transfer progress; include this information in your course syllabus, i that can help address your students' needs (support network)
- Connect with your colleagues to share best practices and support transfer students (university)
- Offer professional development and support to help students and their families understand the transfer process (university)

Connect with your colleagues to share best practices and support transfer students (university)

Be a Transfer Advocate: How Student Support Professionals Can Help Students Address University Affordability Concerns



Students participating in the RP Group's Through the Gate transfer study cited **university affordability as their top obstacle** among four key factors impacting their transfer capacity—regardless of age, gender, or racial/ethnic background (see figure). Students reported confusion about the true cost of university and concerns about expenses outside of tuition. And, they had limited understanding about financial assistance options, including and beyond financial aid.

Students also shared that support professionals—counselors, advisors, and student services staff—are vital to providing the encouragement and information needed to transfer, including how to finance their baccalaureate. At the same time, community colleges cannot do this work alone. University involvement and intersegmental partnerships are also key to addressing transfer students' financial concerns.

Drawing on students' input, the **RP Group and the California Community Colleges Chief Student Services Officers Association (CSSOA)** offer student support leaders and practitioners across segments the following ideas for helping students understand that achieving a bachelor's degree is something they can financially attain.¹

Community Colleges

- Articulate that all student support professionals—not just financial aid representatives—have a role to play in addressing students' financial concerns, and provide professional development to help practitioners know where to direct students for related information and resources
- Educate students about the basic differences between the cost of community college and university, including tuition, fees, and other associated expenses



Student Transfer Capacity-Building Framework

- Help students access and use resources such as college-based true cost calculators, the California Student Aid Commission's *Student Expense Budget* (<https://www.cscs.ca.gov/student-expense-budget/>), and the US Department of Education's *College Affordability and Transparency Center* (<https://collegecost.ed.gov/>)
- Inform students about financial aid options when they are relevant in their journey (i.e., as they approach the transfer gate) and how they are similar or different at the community college and

Students Speak: Understanding the Impact of the COVID-19 Pandemic on Their Transfer Journeys



Transfer Leaders Speak: Keeping Students on the Transfer Path during the COVID-19 Pandemic and Beyond



The RP Group's Through the Gate Research Initiative

This effort focuses on identifying ways to increase transfer for a "high-leverage" group of community college students: those who are close to transfer but have not yet made it to university. Through the Gate launched in 2016 with funding from College Futures Foundation.

The RP Group's current COVID-19 Pandemic Impact on Student Transfer study (2021) builds on our original Through the Gate effort and includes...

- A Spring 2021 statewide survey of nearly 8,000 California Community College students who completed ≥45 transferable units as fall 2020
- Focus groups with students who both made it through the gate to university during this time as well as those who postponed or abandoned their transfer plans
- Interviews with transfer practitioners at colleges cited highly by students in the statewide survey for their transfer services during the pandemic

Find more information about Through the Gate at www.rpgroup.org/through-the-gate

In a spring 2021 survey of California Community College students exploring the impact of COVID-19 on their transfer journey (see sidebar), the RP Group identified colleges where students felt highly satisfied with the transfer support and communication they were receiving during the pandemic:²

- To better understand what these community colleges were doing to effectively meet transfer students' needs during this period of disruption, we conducted follow-up interviews at five³ of these institutions. These conversations revealed...
 - New challenges impacting students' transfer success resulting from COVID-19**
 - Adaptations to keep students on their transfer path during remote instruction**
 - Considerations for improving students' transfer outcomes as the pandemic evolves**

This brief summarizes these interview insights, offering transfer practitioners and higher education leaders practical ideas for advancing transfer student retention and completion during these turbulent times.

¹ Find detailed methodology and findings in the *Impacts of the Pandemic on Students' Transfer Journey: A Technical Report from a Statewide Study of California Community College Students* at <https://www.rpgroup.org/through-the-gate/impacts-of-the-pandemic-on-students-transfer-journey-technical-report/>

² The RP Group interviewed transfer leaders at Berkeley City College, Cuesta College, College of San Mateo, Norco College, and Santa Ana College. While all fell within the upper quartile, we did not simply select the top five institutions rated highly by students as we wanted to ensure diversity in college size and location.

³ Transfer Leaders Speak: Keeping Students on the Transfer Path during the COVID-19 Pandemic and Beyond. The RP Group | October 2021 | Page 7



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Questions?

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#StudentsThroughtheGate

Thank you!