

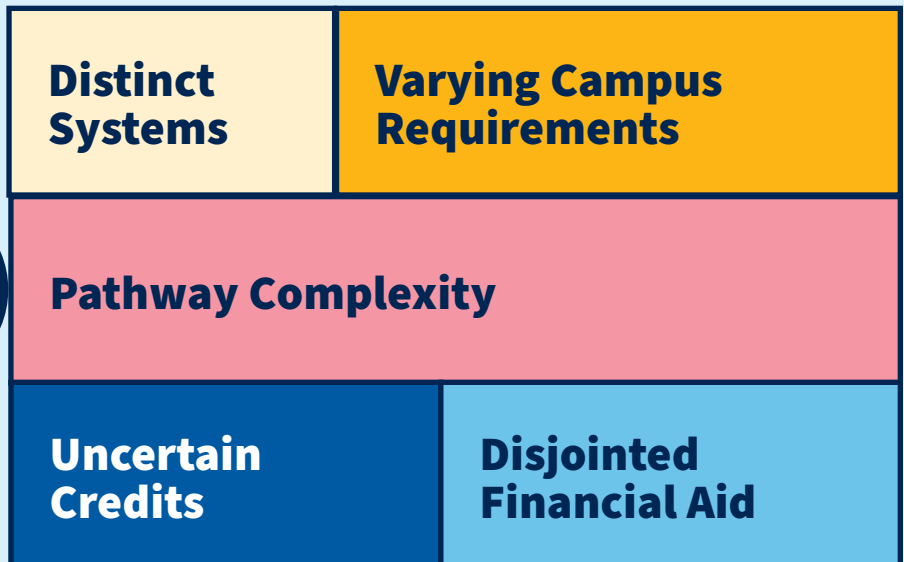


Five Barriers to Transfer for California Students:

Why Coordination Is the Path Forward

Today's student transfer journey is complex. Policies and practices within California's public higher education systems have created five significant barriers impacting student journeys.

Transfer Pathway →



Barrier 01

Transfer pathways are not standardized across California's higher education *systems*.

Transfer Pathway



Choosing one system's pathway may not be in a student's best interest when they face many unknowns early in their educational journey and when policies create admissions uncertainty. Yet, the journey to prepare for each system's pathway is distinct and can take two years or longer — **needing to prepare for multiple paths can add up to excess units, time and cost.**

Admissions Uncertainty

Many students apply to both the University of California (UC) and California State University (CSU) systems, not knowing where they may be admitted.

California community college transfer admission rates, statewide, fall 2022

75%

University of California

89%

California State University

i Source: Cuellar Mejia, M., Johnson, H. Perez, C., and Jackson, J. (2023). Strengthening California's Transfer Pathway. Public Policy Institute of California. Retrieved from <https://www.ppic.org/publication/strengthening-californias-transfer-pathway/>

Hear from a student

I would ask my counselor, ‘Do I really need to take all of these courses [beyond outlined transfer requirements]?’ And she’s like, ‘You don’t, but yes, you do. At the same time, you need to be competitive, you need to stand out.’”

— California Community Colleges transfer student

Place-Bound Students

Transfer students tend to enroll at universities near their community colleges, but transfer pathways do not guarantee admission to local campuses. This uncertainty makes it difficult for students, especially those who are place-bound by choice or circumstance, to commit to one system’s pathway.

i Source: Cuellar Mejia, M., Johnson, H. Perez, C., and Jackson, J. (2023). Strengthening California’s Transfer Pathway. Public Policy Institute of California. Retrieved from <https://www.ppic.org/publication/strengthening-californias-transfer-pathway/>

Transfer Pathway Differences

Requirements differ by discipline across CSU’s Associate Degree for Transfer (ADT) and UC’s Transfer Pathways.

Comparison of Transfer Pathways for Biology

CSU-CCC Transfer Model Curriculum	UC Transfer Pathway
Biology Sequence	General Biology w/ lab
General Chemistry	General Chemistry w/ lab (one year)
Calc. for Life/Social Sci. or higher	Calculus for STEM Majors (one year)
Physics: Trig-based or higher	Organic Chemistry w/ lab (one year)
One additional biology course	

i See: “UC Transfer Pathway Comparisons” at <https://c-id.net/tmc#finalized>

Transfer Frameworks

Each system approaches transfer in different ways.

CSU: By student type	UC: By transfer pathway	AICCU: Independently by campus
1. CCC ADT	5. Transfer Pathways	
2. CCC Transfer Success Pathways	6. TAG	
3. Upper Division Transfer	7. Pathways +	
4. Lower Division Transfer		

 **Source:**

UC: <https://admission.universityofcalifornia.edu/admission-requirements/transfer-requirements/uc-transfer-programs/>

CSU: <https://www.calstate.edu/apply/transfer>

AICCU: https://cdn.ymaws.com/aiccu.edu/resource/resmgr/publications/2022/college_and_transfer_guides/aiccu_transfer_guide_2022-23.pdf



Keep scrolling to explore preparing for multiple campuses in the same system.

Barrier 02

Transfer pathways are not standardized across campuses within systems.

University program faculty determine what courses are required for transfer students based on the degree concentration their university offers. **Requirements can vary significantly by campus**, within and across systems. For students trying to prepare for more than one transfer destination, it's a complex process — even more complex if they've attended more than one community college or if they are a STEM major. Keeping their transfer destination options open can add up to excess units, time and cost.

Excess Units

73

median number of transfer-level units students earned before transferring to CSU & UC

60

units required for an associate degree

i Source: Cuellar Mejia, M., Johnson, H. Perez, C., and Jackson, J. (2023). Strengthening California's Transfer Pathway. Public Policy Institute of California. Retrieved from <https://www.ppic.org/publication/strengthening-californias-transfer-pathway/>

Major preparation requirements vary across campuses in the same systems, complicating students' transfer journeys and articulation of courses across systems.

Campus Comparison

Comparison of major preparation requirements* for transfer students in psychology across four campuses:

● Circle Icon = Required courses (set)

▲ Triangle Icon = Required courses (options)

CSU A				
● Introduction to Psychology	● Academic and Career Opportunities in Psychology	● Introduction to Cognitive Psychology		
● Developmental Psychology	● Intro to Physiological Psychology	▲ Statistical Methods in Psychology		
▲ Data Analysis in Psychology + Statistics (lecture)		● Biology (prerequisite)		

CSU B				
● Introduction to Psychology	● Navigating Psychology: The Major and Career			
● Human Development		● Methods of Psychology		
● Introductory Statistics for Psychology				

UCA				
● Psychology Fundamentals	▲ Introduction to Sociocultural Anthropology	▲ Introduction to Biological Anthropology	▲ Introduction to Human Geography	▲ Introduction to Economics
▲ Introduction to Linguistics	▲ Introduction to Political Science		▲ Globalization	▲ Introduction to Sociology
	▲ Introduction to Language and Culture	▲ Cognitive Robotics	▲ Experimental Psychology + Lab	▲ Research Methods in Psychology + Lab

UC B				
● Introduction to Psychology	▲ Introduction to Sociocultural Anthropology			▲ Introduction to Economics
	▲ Introduction to American Politics	▲ Introduction to Cognitive Science		▲ Introduction to Sociology
▲ Introduction to Public Health			● Analysis of Psychological Data	● Research Methods in Psychology

*Campus-specific major preparation requirements applied, not ADT or UCTP.

Pathway Alignment

Faculty decisions about degree concentration can limit the ability of an ADT student to transfer into a “similar” program of study at a nearby university. If a student is not on an ADT pathway that is accepted by their four-year university, they may have to take more than 60 upper division credits to complete a bachelor’s degree. This increases time and cost for the student, as well as for the state.

285

Complete ADT pathways (offered at a regional CCC and accepted in the same program of study at a nearby university)

366

Incomplete ADT pathways (offered at a regional CCC but not accepted in the same program of study at a nearby university)

i Source: Student-Ready Strategies. (2023). “Regional Associate Degree for Transfer Analysis.” Retrieved from <https://static1.squarespace.com/static/63294b64e0e6c61627d6b28e/t/64ee1ce7048bce035e0593c6/1693326567807/california-regional-transfer-profiles-a11y.pdf>

Faculty decisions about degree concentration can also cause students to veer from defined transfer pathways.

Multiple Paths to Transfer

Of students who transferred...

43%

without any type of associate degree

11%

with AA/AS degree

24%

with ADT on a guaranteed pathway

21%

with ADT not on a guaranteed pathway

i Source: The Campaign for College Opportunity. (2021). Chutes or Ladders? Strengthening California Community College Transfer So More Students Earn the Degrees They Seek. Retrieved from <https://collegecampaign.org/publication/chutes-or-ladders-strengthening-california-community-college-transfer-so-more-students-earn-the-degrees-they-seek>

 **Keep scrolling to learn more about the complexity of transfer tools.**

Barrier 03

Current transfer tools cannot simplify this *complex* process enough for most students to navigate independently.

Multiple transfer tools do not simplify the complex transfer process.

[Visit UC Transfer Pathways](#)

[Visit UC Transfer Admission Guarantee \(TAG\)](#)

[Visit UC Pathways +](#)

[Visit the AICCU Transfer Guide](#)

[Visit CCC I Can Go to College](#)

[Visit CSU Associate Degree for Transfer](#)

[Visit the HBCU Transfer Guide](#)

[ASSIST](#)

**ASSIST
is here to help!**

**ASSIST is best used
in combination with
seeing a counselor**

on your campus. It is intended to help students and counselors work together to establish an appropriate path toward transferring from a public California community college to a public California university.

One way students get clarity is by partnering with a counselor, advisor or coach to understand the numerous pathway options and requirements. However, there are not enough counselors to serve the thousands of students each community college serves.

1:370

Recommended counselor-to-student ratio

1:508

Statewide average counselor-to-student ratio

i Source: Academic Senate for California Community Colleges. (2003). Consultation Council Task Force on Counseling. Retrieved from https://www.asccc.org/sites/default/files/publications/ConsultationCouncil_0.pdf; and Success Center analysis of Chancellor’s Office Management Information System data

Hear from a student

“I think I’m already taking [the required course], but I’m not actually taking it. It’s a specific one that they want you to take. I would’ve never known that I had to take these courses, and in this pattern, and in this time frame had it not been for [my counselor].”

— California Community Colleges transfer student

Research indicates that students have inconsistent experiences with counselor support and that Black and African American students benefit less from traditional academic counseling than students from other racial/ethnic groups.

110%

Non-Black and non-African American students who receive academic counseling are 110% more likely to near the transfer gate, compared to their counterparts.

60%

Black and African American students who receive academic counseling are 60% more likely to near the transfer gate, compared to their counterparts.

i Source: The RP Group. (October 2022). The African American Transfer Tipping Point. Retrieved from [https://rpgroup.org/Portals/0/Documents/Projects/African_American_Transfer_Tipping_Point-\(AATTP\)-Study/AATTP_Brief2_Fall2022.pdf](https://rpgroup.org/Portals/0/Documents/Projects/African_American_Transfer_Tipping_Point-(AATTP)-Study/AATTP_Brief2_Fall2022.pdf)

Hear from a student

“For Black and African American students, they are starting at a different point than most students would be — and so it would be more difficult for Black students to gain something because their relationship with their counselor is starting at a different point. The student has to become more comfortable with a person digging into their life, and that can feel a little bit intrusive. And for a Black student, that can be possibly a little triggering ... versus another student who has possibly been conditioned by society to believe that they are a bit safer in society and they have a place in society and that they are valued.”

— California Community Colleges transfer student

i Source: The RP Group. (October 2022). The African American Transfer Tipping Point. Retrieved from [https://rpgroup.org/Portals/0/Documents/Projects/African_American_Transfer_Tipping_Point-\(AATTP\)-Study/AATTP_Brief2_Fall2022.pdf](https://rpgroup.org/Portals/0/Documents/Projects/African_American_Transfer_Tipping_Point-(AATTP)-Study/AATTP_Brief2_Fall2022.pdf)



Keep scrolling to explore how credit transfer decisions impact students' journeys.

Barrier 04

Limiting *credit mobility* significantly impacts costs for students and the state.

Credits that are accepted at one university might not be accepted at another — university program faculty make these decisions. But to students, it's unclear how and why they make those decisions. Even when students do their best to ensure credit acceptance, like making decisions about their major, system and campus early in their transfer journey and using transfer tools, credits may not be accepted. Credit transfer significantly impacts costs for students and the state.

On average, transfer applicants applied to 3.7 UC campuses and CSU new students applied to an average of 2.4 campuses.

i Source: UC Accountability Report 2023, Chapter 1: Undergraduate Students (1.1.2: Transfer applicants, admits, and enrollees); CSU Application, Admission, Enrollment Overlap with other CSU Campuses (The CSU calculation result is weighted by campus rather than student.)

On average, students are not able to apply 13 credits—equivalent to one semester for many—toward their degree when they transfer.

i Source: U.S. Government Accountability Office. (2017). Higher Education: Students Need More Information to Help Reduce Challenges in Transferring College Credits. Retrieved from <https://www.gao.gov/products/gao-17-574>; Simone, S.A. (2014). Transferability of Postsecondary Credit Following Student Transfer or Coenrollment (NCES 2014-163). U.S. Department of Education. Washington, DC: National Center for Education Statistics. Retrieved from <http://nces.ed.gov/pubsearch>

82 percent of students who were able to transfer all of their credits graduated with a bachelor's degree within six years of starting college, compared to 42 percent of students who lost any amount of credit.

i Source: Hodara, M., Martinez-Wenzl, M., Stevens, D., and Mazzeo, C. (2016). Improving Credit Mobility for Community College Transfer Students: Findings and recommendations from a 10-state study. Education Northwest. Retrieved from <https://www.luminafoundation.org/files/resources/improving-credit-mobility.pdf>

Cutting the number of excess credits in half — from 85 to 73 credits — could save the state over \$54 million in fee (tuition) costs alone if applied to 80% of associate degree earners.

i Source: The Campaign for College Opportunity. (2021). Chutes or Ladders? Strengthening California Community College Transfer So More Students Earn the Degrees They Seek. Retrieved from <https://collegecampaign.org/publication/chutes-or-ladders-strengthening-california-community-college-transfer-so-more-students-earn-the-degrees-they-seek>

Hear from a student

Mea Montañez will graduate from San Francisco State University in May but only after retaking nearly a year's worth of classes she already passed at a community college. The school didn't accept her classes in psychology — her major — because they weren't considered a match.

"I'm taking the classes and I'm like, 'This is exactly what I took.' If anything, it was much more challenging at the community college level."

— Mea Montañez, 34, California Community Colleges transfer student

i Source: Binkley, Collin. (1 May 2023). 'Waste of time': Community College transfers derail students. Hechinger Report. Retrieved from <https://hechingerreport.org/waste-of-time-community-college-transfers-derail-students/>



Keep scrolling to explore how disjointed system actions impact students' financial aid.

Barrier 05

There is no unified process across systems to help students map out a complete path to a bachelor's degree with *financial aid*.

Financial aid is not seamless for transfer students — in fact, **there is no unified process between the California Community Colleges and other systems of higher education** to help students map out a full path to a bachelor's degree with financial aid. At community colleges, students must make decisions about courses, pathways and degrees — decisions that impact financial aid — without knowing which four-year college they may be admitted to. That is a significant stressor for students already facing a complex transfer journey.

Research shows that students need information from systems about all costs associated with attending a university and the full complement of options for financial assistance well before they transfer, preferably soon after they declare their intent to pursue this goal.

i Source: Cooper, D., Nguyen, A., Karandjeff, K., Brohawn, K., Purnell, R., Rodriguez-Kiino, D., Chaplot, P., Nguyen, K. (2020). Students Speak Their Truth About Transfer: What they need to get through the gate. The RP Group. Retrieved from https://rpgroup.org/Portals/0/Documents/Projects/ThroughtheGate/RPGroup_TheTruthAboutTransfer_TTGPhase3_R3%5B79%5D.pdf?ver=2020-05-18-171449-773

The lack of a coordinated financial aid process creates uncertainty for students and leaves them with a host of unanswered questions such as:

- **Duration:** How long will it take me to get through community college?
- **Transfer:** Where will I transfer to? How long will it take me once I transfer? Will all my credits transfer, or will I have to repeat classes?
- **Expenses:** What does tuition cost? Housing? Program materials?
- **Tuition:** I only have limited time with CalGrant and Pell. How long will my aid last?
- **Affordability:** Will I need to supplement my financial aid? Can I afford to transfer?

Hear about a student experience

“Facing an extra year of school after her completed credits didn’t transfer, Ricki Korba will likely run out of financial aid before she graduates. She’s making plans to go part time in school and work longer hours so she can afford tuition and rent.”

i Source: Binkley, Collin. (1 May 2023). ‘Waste of time’: Community College transfers derail students. Hechinger Report. Retrieved from <https://hechingerreport.org/waste-of-time-community-college-transfers-derail-students>



Keep scrolling to explore what this means for California higher education.

Transfer has the potential to improve racial equity gains in student higher education access and success and produce the educated workforce California needs.

**Distinct
Systems**

**Varying
Campus
Reqs.**

**Pathway
Complexity**

**Uncertain
Credits**

**Disjointed
Financial
Aid**

Transfer Pathway

Good work has been done to streamline transfer processes, but much more needs to be accomplished for transfer students.

A student's transfer journey remains complex due to structural barriers across all systems, despite efforts such as development of system-specific transfer pathways and a common general education pattern.

California's higher education partners must do more to **work across systems, campuses and disciplines** to better

standardize, simplify and streamline the student transfer process.

When we build a transfer system that truly works for all students across race, ethnicity, region, class and gender, we'll not only meet each system's needs but also improve the economic health of our communities and state, as well as the competitiveness of our workforce, and make upward mobility a wider reality for more of our students.