#### TRANSFER SUCCESS SUMMIT 2008

**Purpose**: To provide a forum for institutional presidents and chancellors to align their knowledge and thinking about how to encourage the adoption of good practices that contribute to creating a "Culture of Transfer" at colleges and universities. The focus was on those institutional activities and practices that will foster collaborative partnerships among colleges and universities for the purpose of facilitating the persistence and success of transfer students and actively encouraging students to continue their post-secondary education through the acquisition of the bachelor's degree.

**Format**: Institutional presidents and chancellors were assigned to one of six break-out groups to discuss questions relating to: (1) advising and guidance; (2) consistency in student achievement; (3) student engagement; (4) financial aid; (5) developmental education and college readiness standards; and (6) who attends colleges or universities.

#### GROUP DISCUSSIONS: TOPICS AND QUESTIONS

### Group 1: Problem statement on Advising and Counseling

Curricular alignment has been a central focus for improving student success in Texas. P-16 Councils and College Readiness Standards are moving forward on this initiative for secondary to post-secondary student transition. But for students who enter community colleges with the intention to eventually transfer and earn a bachelor's degree, the academic counseling and advisement they receive at the institutions they will attend may not provide a coherent or collaborative experience designed to allow the student access to information at appropriate decision points. How can we most effectively and efficiently support the alignment of academic advising programs in colleges and universities in ways that will improve student retention across institutions; provide students with relevant information about themselves, their curricular choices, and the potential consequences of those choices throughout their undergraduate careers? What initiatives would support effective academic advising that will best help students who intend to transfer achieve their goal of graduation with a bachelor's degree?

# Background

Recent studies indicate that the transfer of credit among public universities in Texas generally works well. But a recent study indicates that many more students are qualified to transfer from a community college to a university than are actually choosing to make that move. Just as Texas has been engaged since 2000 in a campaign to create a "college-going culture" throughout the state, colleges and universities should be working more closely together to create a "culture of transfer" that will encourage more students to complete a bachelor's degree. Advising and counseling at colleges and universities should provide "para-academic" support to students who intend to transfer, particularly by providing consistent information about state mandates, policies, and opportunities, in addition to consultation about curriculum and degree program choices. More focused programs for the advisement of transfer students before and after the transfer transaction are needed. The development of advising and counseling resources relies

on funding streams, and often this crucial function is forced to compete for funds otherwise devoted to faculty salaries or other innovative curricular initiatives.

# **Recommendations: Advising and Counseling**

For the purposes of student information, implement a state-wide electronic degree audit or unofficial common transcript (prescribed common course numbers) at all institutions (similar to the Course Applicability System)

Regional articulation councils or conferences for advisors

Funding for academic advising centers and special funding to explore the effectiveness of different advising models

Re-evaluate existing measurements or accountability systems to reflect accomplishments and contributions of all institutions, as well as appropriately distributing success (shared success)

Add a release authorization to the Common Application in order to facilitate a reverse articulation system leading to the post-transfer award of associate degrees

# Group 2: Problem statement on Assuring Rigor in Undergraduate Courses

Studies of student transfer patterns indicate that "traditional" college students—those who graduate high school and then immediately attend just one institution in order to earn their degree within four years—now represent the minority of those attending higher education. This suggests that transferability—not just of course credits, but also of student outcomes—is more important than ever. Are lower-division transfer courses giving students the knowledge and skills they need to be sufficiently prepared for upper-division courses in their major? Are there disciplines in which state-wide articulation agreements (or other tools to assist the transfer process) need to be developed in order to insure consistent preparation of students at the lower-division level?

### Background

The legislation and rules that govern the core curriculum in Texas were passed in 1999, giving us almost a decade of experience with this widely-used curricular transfer tool. It reaches every student in higher education, and serves as the foundation of every academic degree program. How well is the Core Curriculum functioning in Texas? How could it be improved?

CB data show a clear and steady increase for dual credit utilization by high school students. As more and more school districts form partnerships with colleges and universities to serve growing numbers of students, what should the higher education community do to insure that all dual credit courses, including those taught by qualified high school faculty, meet the expected student learning outcomes? What can be done to meet the challenge of overseeing instruction at a high school location which may be many miles from the main campus?

Recommendations: Assuring Rigor

(1) Are lower-division transfer courses giving students the knowledge and skills they need to be sufficiently prepared for upper-division courses in their major?

Recommend a two-stage process: Using the college readiness standards model, have local faculty groups by discipline talk and come to agreement student learning outcomes. Then representatives from local groups come together at the state to determine course outcomes. Then amend the Academic Course Guide Manual based on those recommendations.

(Any process created needs to feed into SACS.)

(2) Are there disciplines in which state-wide articulation agreements or other tools to assist the transfer process need to be developed in order to insure consistent preparation of students at the lower-division level?

Good advising and good counseling is critical. The indispensable assistance that advisors can give to students is the key.

A learning skills course that is funded and provides academic credit should be considered for inclusion in the Academic Course Guide Manual.

(3) How well is the Core Curriculum functioning in Texas? Could it be improved?

The Core Curriculum must be reevaluated for relevance to global conditions, rigor for transfer preparation, and consistency between and among institutions including consideration of statutory 12 hour requirement for Government and History. This reevaluation should include possible revisions of the educational objectives of the Core.

### (4) Dual Credit

What should the higher education community do to insure that all dual credit courses, including those taught by qualified high school faculty, meet the expected student learning outcomes?

As in issue one above, the first step is to specify learning outcomes for lower-division courses. That will address the issue of dual credit learning outcomes.

What can be done to meet the challenge of overseeing instruction at a high school location which may be many miles from the main campus?

A study should be conducted to determine how dual credit students compare in performance to the larger student population. Variables should include location, method of delivery, and type of faculty.

### Group 3: Problem statement on Student Engagement and Success

Recent studies show that student retention and success hinge upon numerous nonacademic and academic factors including student engagement in the campus community, performance in foundational coursework, learner-centered delivery, and targeted student support services. How can we most effectively and efficiently redesign

and offer academic programs that will improve student retention, success, ease of transfer (where appropriate), and graduation rates?

# Background

Student engagement in class is an essential factor in determining student success and persistence. Students who become engaged learners are more likely to successfully complete courses and make satisfactory progress towards graduation. Traditionally delivered courses, such as large lecture format courses, courses that follow a traditional academic schedule, or single-discipline courses, may work against helping students become engaged learners. Preliminary reports on Texas Course Redesign projects indicate that redesigned lecture format courses that substitute on-line and face-to-face problem solving exercises for portions of the traditional lecture format produce significantly higher pass rates than non-redesigned sections of the same course. Academic success in key core subjects such as college-level math also has a strong correlation with retention and persistence according to a 2006 Department of Education report by Clifford Adelman. Finally, engagement in overall campus life also plays a significant role in student success. Recent National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE) and Community College Survey of Student Engagement (CCSSE) data indicates that students who met with an academic advisor two or more times during the academic year were more engaged on all five of the NSSE benchmarks than other students.

The need for redesigned courses and programs is not limited to new students. The 2006 American Community Survey conducted by the U.S. Census Bureau reports that 2,969,594 Texas adults over the age of 25 have some college credit but hold no post-secondary degree. For these returning students who struggle to balance family, work, economic, and education commitments, program flexibility and an attention to unique adult learning styles and challenges is crucial. A 2007 Lumina Foundation study, "Returning to Learning: Adult Success in College is Key to America's Future," recommends that institutions wishing to enhance adult learning and success should: (a) develop pre-baccalaureate certificate programs that include both academic credit and workforce development credit to increase the ease of transferability, b) develop part-time degree programs, c) develop year-round, accelerated degree programs, and d) improve degree mapping and advising to assist students in timely graduation.

# **Recommendations: Student Engagement and Success**

Issue 1: Increasing faculty involvement in and out of class, including creating faculty incentives and increased professional development opportunities

Issue 2: How do we develop effective partnerships among institutions that will help students succeed?

Issue 3: How do we develop effective use of internal and external data instruments? This includes data sources, use of data for planning and redesign, and data sharing between institutions.

Problem 1: Non-inclusion graduation rate metric

Problem 2: Lack of data on student intention (i.e. degree seeking or not)

Problem 3: Lack of individual student data

Solution 1: Redefine or create a separate metric that takes transfer students into consideration for graduation rates

Solution 2: Refine the statewide data system so that it takes into account individual student characteristics

Solution 3: Determine non-degree completers and reason for non-completion

Solution 4: Assist institutions in using external data such as National Student Learning Clearinghouse, NSSE, CSSE

Issue 4: How do we redefine the entering college student who may already have college credit and provide appropriate support services for those students?

Issue 5: Ensuring the credibility of Associate's Degrees and the core curriculum so that students have incentives to complete Associate's Degrees.

Problem 1: Diversity in the means of fulfilling core curriculum may create transfer difficulty with pre-requisite courses

Problem 2: Little student incentive to complete the Associate's Degree

Problem 3: Concerns that students completing an Associate's Degree may incur excessive hours in trying to complete a baccalaureate degree

Solution 1: Revisit and complete Field of Study plans

Solution 2: Urge institutions to enter into articulation plans that take major pre-requisites into consideration by universities

Solution 3: Make reverse transfer easier in order to allow students to earn Associate's Degrees.

Solution 4: Revisit the Academic Course Guide Manual and deal specifically with upperand lower-level course distinctions

Solution 5: Revisit the 6-course drop limit and determine whether or not it is an advisable best practice

Solution 6: Examine the feasibility of creating new upper-level and lower-level excess credit policies that would not hurt students who move from technical/vocational programs into academic programs

Issue 6: How do we develop programs that will assist returning adult students in completing their degrees?

Problem 1: Programs are not focused on returning adults

Problem 2: Difficulty in identifying adult students with substantial number of credit hours but who have not completed degrees

Solution 1: Consider the viability and expansion of Bachelor of General Studies, Applied Baccalaureates, and other non-traditional degree programs for adults

Solution 2: Create new mechanisms for delivering accelerated degree programs that will allow adult students to quickly complete their degrees

Issue 7: How do we best apportion resources to assist institutions with at-risk students?

Solution 1: Re-examine the funding formula to increase funding to institutions that serve at-risk students

Solution 2: Assure that basic student and institutional needs are met before incentive funding is distributed

# **Group 4: Problem statement on Financial Aid**

Recent studies show that student retention and success hinge upon numerous nonacademic and academic factors including adequate financial aid and targeted student support services. How can we design and fund an effective financial aid program that will encourage and facilitate success (at community colleges and universities), and transfer of community college students to four-year institutions?

# Background

Adequate financial resources are an important factor when a student is deciding whether or not to enroll in or continue in higher education. Students and families hear from the media that the cost of going to college is rising at an alarming rate. They do not hear about the true cost of college, and that the cost of attendance at a community college is about sixty percent less than the cost of attendance at a university. In Texas, the average cost of tuition and fees for a university student is over three times that of a community college student (\$3278 compared to \$11,038).

To change the perception need to do three things:

Ensure that students and families understand that a community college is a less expensive option;

Ensure that students have and can count on adequate financial support if they attend a community college; and

Encourage students (who attain an associate's degree or complete the core curriculum) to continue their education at a university.

If we can inform students and families that college is affordable, in particular if a student starts his education at a community college, and provide adequate and innovative financing we can facilitate success and encourage community college students to transfer to a university when the time is right.

### Recommendations: Financial Aid

- 1) Federal Financial Aid Background
  - Federal Financial Aid is difficult to navigate (e.g. FAFSA); need to better adapt form to meet need student needs.
  - Hispanic serving institutions have a difficult to get students/parents to fill out federal paperwork.
  - Hard for Hispanic families to provide tax information
  - FAFSA very complex even for knowledgeable applicants
  - Need better working arrangement with Treasury and U.S. Department of Education
  - Need to work better with public schools—free lunch program is a good barometer for who should qualify
  - Consolidate forms for federal aid/taxes that accomplish multiple purposes

- Consider using ombudsman to assist people in dealing with process
- Dual-credit costs—who covers and when? If no school district support, why not federal/state programs start earlier to cover such costs? Pell Grants, etc?
- Rural community colleges don't have faculty or tax base to provide free services for dual-credit.
- Need to complete application of Seniors in high school and write off previous year's Pell Grant and get enrolled in summer.

## 2) State Financial Aid Background

# a. Total cost vs. Tuition/Fees

Transportation, living expenses are part of cost—not always factored in—need to factor in total costs.

#### b. Unmet need

All community college costs aid only hits 50% of total cost—General Academic Teaching Institutions and private institutions have much higher percentage financial aid layer.

#### c. State vs. Federal funds balance

Don't reallocate funds—creates more problems than solutions Ninety-four percent of community college aid coming from federal closer split of state vs. fed at General Academic Teaching Institutions need to grow pool of funding

### d. Major state programs

- Five programs: Texas Equal Opportunity Grant (TEOG), TEXAS Grants, Texas Equalization Grant (TEG), and Work-Study
- Community colleges get very little TEXAS Grants; community college students would benefit if restructure the program and provide incentives for transfers
- Community colleges get less than 10% of all state aid
- TEXAS Grants not pushed out fast enough
- Grade point average requirements a barrier (2.5 GPA too high)—2.0 is good standing at most institutions.
- TEOG is not a guarantee of TEXAS Grant if transfer—maybe provide a direct link and allow for guarantee.
- Recommended High School Program creates a barrier to TEXAS Grants and that is a problem
- Need institutions to help keep cost down
- Guarantee tuition and fees for all 4 years...freeze tuition to provide planning horizon—some have tried and want to get away from it.
- Is there waste in the curriculum...need to change the way we think to look for waste and cut costs in operations, etc.
- Books are an issue on cost and financial aid impact—consider reform to cut costs.

### e. Statewide solutions

Texas Public Education Grant (TPEG) money very important and should be able to use as appropriate and needed.

## 3) Individual/Partnering Strategies

- FAFSA counseling in Spanish
- Counseling to facilitate carrying financial aid between institutions
- Community college financial aid personnel interaction with General Academic Teaching Institution financial aid personnel—facilitate discussion of problems and solutions
- CB developing financial aid module on common application to facilitate financial aid information flow for new and transfer students
- Work closer with high schools; both community colleges and four-year institutions must present united message on transfer policy and financial aid
- Cost-share on employees between community colleges and four-year institutions; e.g. employee at 4-year is financed in part by feeder community colleges and help with transfer/financial aid issues
- Shared counseling program with high schools that works with community colleges and four-year institutions
- Need to make process more "human" for those cultural backgrounds that mistrust
  institutions that create natural barriers to getting students to apply; create
  relationship with these populations (e.g. counselor and parents)
- Create endowments for transfer students from feeder community colleges
- Set specific financial aid levels that reward transfers on a tiered system
- Community colleges need to work with four-year institutions to develop more BAS programs that can be co-located at community colleges
- Synergy with feeder community college and four-year institutions—early contact between student and advisors
- Short term money a problem for many first-generation students; community college foundation is important to help deal with these student issues
- Include financial aid for middle-income transfers
- Provide scholarship information to students to increase awareness
- Go to community groups and churches to promote funding opportunities
- Increase marketing of federal programs
- College presidents and other key staff need better understanding of financial aid—cross training
- Integrate admissions and financial aid
- Training recipients on money management
- Look at disbursement of money—all up front or issued over semester
- Develop intuitive online financial aid applications that help generate student financial aid packages that incorporate federal, state, and institutional aid; also create online verification form as well
- Need to identify financial aid best practices with statewide discussion on issues and solutions.
- Do financial aid training sessions at key conferences and meetings around state for key constituency—focus on best practices.

# Group 5: Problem statement on College Readiness and Developmental Education

The lack of college readiness among college students is a significant challenge in higher education. Too many high school graduates are entering higher education under

prepared for college-level courses and too few under prepared students successfully complete developmental education courses and transfer into four year institutions. These challenges indicate three critical transfer points for under prepared students' academic progression—(1) from high schools into higher education, (2) from developmental courses into college-level courses, and (3) from community colleges into four year institutions. Until Texas College Readiness Standards are fully integrated into public and higher education curriculum and instruction, what policies and strategies would be necessary to assist the public schools and public colleges and universities in addressing the immediate needs of students not college ready? Address the question in terms of the following:

What research would Texas need to conduct in the area of college readiness and developmental education (or other topics) in order to inform the discussion? What are the public and higher education curricular issues What issues would be important to the discussion in terms of traditional vs. non-traditional student populations?

### Background:

Under Prepared Students Transferring From High School to Higher Education: Of the entering high school graduates who enter HEIs and are exempt or have met the Texas Success Initiative (TSI) standards for the academic years of 2002-2005, 62 percent met all parts, 68 percent met the math standard, 84 percent met the writing standard, and 79 percent met the reading standard. It is important to note that these data do not reflect how many high school graduates actually enroll into higher education.

Under Prepared Students Transferring From Developmental Education Into College-Level Courses:

In math, few under prepared students earn credit in college-level math courses within two years (CC=16%, Univ.=32%, TSTC/LA=15%).

In reading, few under prepared students earn credit in related college-level courses within two years (CC=45%, Univ.=53%, TSTC/LA=23%).

In writing, few under prepared students earn credit in college-level English courses within two years (CC=38%, Univ.=59%, TSTC/LA=24%).

Under Prepared Students Transferring From Two-Year Colleges Into Four Year Institutions:

Transfer students are more likely to have taken developmental education courses. When comparing students who had taken developmental courses prior to transfer with those who had not taken developmental courses, developmental students were nearly as likely to have earned a 2.0 GPA or better in their first year, and were as likely to persist into their second fall semester.

### Recommendations:

- Testing and diagnostics want to know where student is deficient so we can provide necessary instruction.
- Alignment of college readiness and curriculum
- Partnerships high school, transfer, higher education
- New funding to replicate pilots and bring to scale

## Group 6: Problem statement on Institutional Opportunities and Student Intention

### Background:

As a result of the demands of a 21st century job market, there is growing consensus among policymakers, the business/economic development community, and educational leaders that we must raise the achievement of our students. This dialogue has led to the college readiness movement which is grounded in the belief that all high school students should graduate with the knowledge and skills needed for postsecondary education success. Prior to the development of college readiness standards, several levels of selectivity were developed to ensure that students admitted to certain universities were prepared to succeed at the institution. Currently, about 50% of the nation's entering freshmen do not meet institutional placement standards and are not ready for college-level work. By adjusting admissions standards and policies, policymakers, institutions, and individual departments can determine what type of student is provided access to their educational programs.

How can admissions policies impact what type of students attend a university/community college?

Legislative/Statewide policy

Percentage Plans—i.e., Top 10% in Texas, Top 4% in California, Top 20% in Florida Recommended High School Program mandatory for admissions into public university

Institutional/System-wide policy

Articulation agreements for Transfer students (i.e., University of Texas at Dallas' Comet Connection)

Highly-selective vs. open-admissions institutions

Departmental/College policy

Different admissions standards for certain academic programs More rigorous academic standards (i.e., higher GPA, SAT/ACT test scores) More rigorous course-load (i.e., higher level math, etc.) Rehearsal/audition (i.e., music, band, theatre)

#### Other

Freshman class caps

Fixed percentage of yearly admits composed of transfer students

### Recommendations: Institutional Opportunities and Student Intention

- Started a specific set of scholarships for high community college students. Might be a transfer culture—once you have students who transfer, get more students.
- Have a transfer center at university but that happened because there were a lot of transfers not necessarily to get transfers.
- Accountability: increased accountability, such as focusing on AP and dual credit issues and weighted.

- Marketing—KIPP Academy as example. Central idea of marketing around families. Need a narrow campaign that would look like something that a specific population would do.
- Statewide tracking system: Need to address limitations in system=-class rosters, grades.
- Recommended High School Program: Incorporate career advising, added flexibility, curriculum alignment
- Mechanisms for implementation—common transcript, resources, common degree audit. This lifts burden off of students.
- Revisit the top 10%
- Guaranteeing admissions to those students who go to university with an AA
- Need to get input on recommendations from other stakeholders—public education, business, etc.
- Issue: Stakeholders missing—public education