



Transfer Intent Definition Task Force Report 2026 Recommendations

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California Community Colleges Chancellor's Office | Sonya Christian, Chancellor

2026 TRANSFER INTENT DEFINITION TASK FORCE REPORT

Prepared By

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SUMMARY

- The recommended transfer rate definition is inspired by previous work and combines education goal selection and behavior to determine transfer intent:
 - Indicated a goal to transfer OR Attempted math or English and earned 12 or more units
 - Exclude apprenticeship students
 - Six year cohorts of first-time students
- The 2016-2017 transfer intending cohort captures 78% of first-time students with a transfer rate of 31% and a 10-point equity gap between race / ethnicity minoritized and nonminoritized students.
- The recommended Vision 2030 goal is to increase transfer rates by twenty percent by reducing equity gaps and other strategies to 37%.

CHARGE OF THE TRANSFER INTENT TASK FORCE

In 2023, the California State Auditor issued a report with a series of recommendations for improving transfer at California community colleges. The first recommendation called for creating an official transfer rate for the California Community Colleges system to monitor progress. The full recommendation is shown below:

TRANSFER AUDIT, 2023-123

RECOMMENDATIONS TO THE CALIFORNIA COMMUNITY COLLEGES CHANCELLOR'S OFFICE

RECOMMENDATION 1

To assess and improve the State's efforts to help community college students transfer, the California Community Colleges Chancellor's Office (Chancellor's Office) should establish by September 2025 a goal transfer rate and a process for measuring and reporting that rate as it applies to the statewide system and to individual community colleges. The process for measuring the transfer rate should include identifying the proportion of transfer-intending community college students who ultimately transfer successfully by using a methodology that the Chancellor's Office determines best captures students' intent to transfer and allows for timely analysis. The Chancellor's Office should also incorporate this goal into any key strategic plans for the system.

FULL AUDIT REPORT

[2023-123 California's Systems of Public Higher Education - California State Auditor](#)

To address Recommendation 1, the Chancellor's Office Research, Analytics, and Data (RAD) Division created the Transfer Intent Definition Task Force (TIDTF), composed of research experts. The Task Force met seven times in addition to asynchronous work to research

definitions, test draft definitions, and finalize a recommended definition. The Task Force will also assist with promulgating the recommended definition and advise on how to display rates in Chancellor’s Office dashboards and reports.

HISTORY OF DETERMINING TRANSFER INTENT

While preparing students for transfer is a core function of California community colleges, it is not the only part of their multifold mission. Other key areas include career education and personal enrichment. In addition, these colleges are open-access with relatively low fees. These factors interact so that students can change their goals as they progress down a pathway and re-enroll at different life stages with different goals. This flexibility is a boon to our students but makes it problematic to define a group of students with transfer intent. For example, if a student selects on their application that their goal is to prepare for a new career and later decides on a trajectory that necessitates a university experience, they may not update their education goal, and their transfer intent may only emerge by virtue of transferring. Without a clear definition of students with transfer intent, a transfer rate will be diluted by students with no intent to transfer but still served by the college for other goals. The quest to identify transfer-intending students for use in a transfer rate has spanned many decades. Transfer intent definitions have used reported education goal, behavioral measures such as a threshold number of units completed or gateway course attempts, and even age. Table 1 is a selection of key research on defining transfer rates in California community colleges used by the Task Force to inform their work.

Table 1. Primary Research Studies on Determining Transfer Intent with Definitions

Source	Transfer Intending Definition
Bahr, Hom, & Perry (2005)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • First-time freshmen who accumulate at least 12 units. • AND complete at least one transfer-level math OR transfer-level English course within six years of entry.
Horn & Lew (2007)	<p>Evaluated six distinct denominator models with 6 year cohorts:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. All Entrants: All first-time community college entrants in a cohort. 2. Self-Reported Goal: First-time students declaring transfer intent on entry applications. 3. Credit Accumulators: First-time students earning 12+ credits within 3 years. 4. Curricular Track: First-time students earning 12+ credits and enrolling in transfer-applicable coursework. 5. Gateway Complete: First-time students earning 12+ credits and completing gateway transfer-level math or English. 6. Strict Behavioral: First-time students earning 12+ credits, maintaining GPA $\geq$ 2.0, and completing transfer coursework.
Shulock & Moore (2007)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Were age 17-19 at the time of initial enrollment; and/or • indicated a goal of degree or certificate completion or transfer upon enrollment or after meeting with a counselor; and/or • demonstrated intent to complete through their behavior by completing at least 12 units and attempting a transfer- or degree-level English or math course within six years.
Hayward (2011) – Transfer Velocity Project	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • First-time freshmen who accumulate at least 12 units. • AND attempt at least one transfer-level math or transfer-level English course within six years of entry.
National Student Clearinghouse (NSC) Research Center (2024)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All first-time community college entrants in a given fall cohort (full-time and part-time) tracked for six years. • Enrolled in degree-granting two-year institutions nationwide.
Community College Research Center (CCRC) (2024)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • First-time, degree-seeking community college entrants tracked across a six-year window. • Credit accumulation thresholds (e.g., 12+ credits) or course-taking patterns to isolate credential-seeking students.

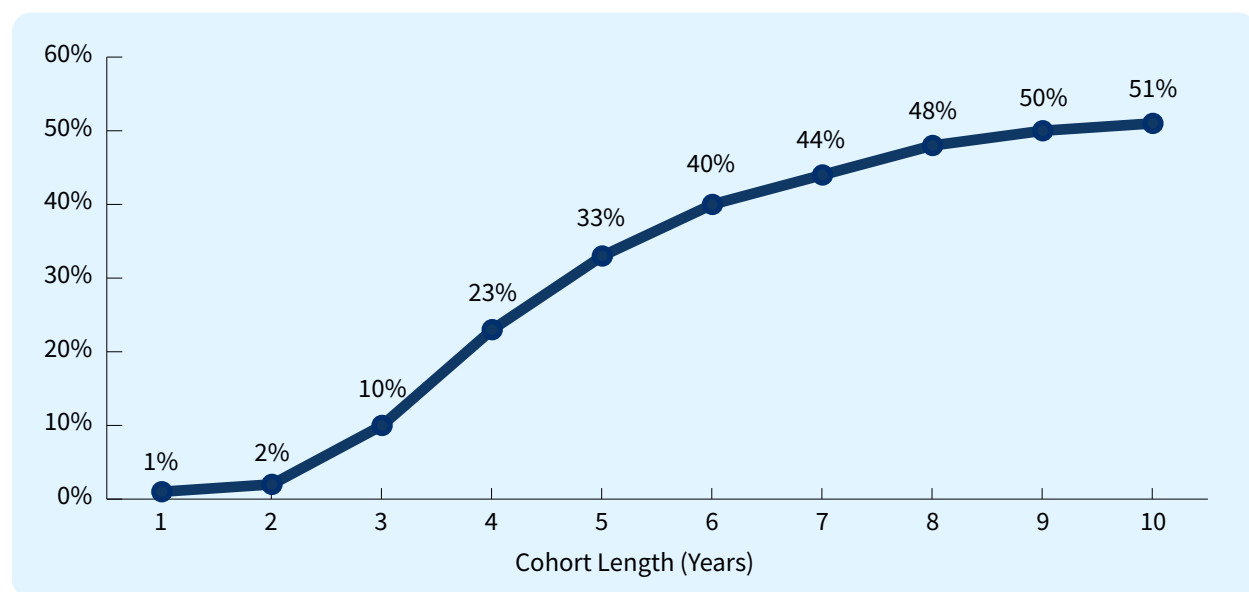
TRANSFER RATE DEFINITION DEVELOPMENT

The Task Force reviewed available definitions and tested a variety of definitions and parameters to determine a final recommendation. Two key elements to consider were the length of time to track cohorts and transfer-intent inclusion criteria.

TRANSFER COHORT LENGTH

After reviewing prior efforts to define transfer rates, the task force explored a variety of definitions and parameters. A fundamental parameter is the duration of tracking for a cohort. A short time span has the advantage of presenting more recent data, while longer timespans capture more students. Typical rates range from three to six years. To determine the recommendation for the timespan of transfer cohorts, the task force examined data from the previous Transfer Velocity Project (TVP) effort. The inclusion criteria and method for the TVP effort are similar to but are not the same as the definition ultimately recommended by the task force. Nonetheless, the TVP rates were useful during the exploratory phase for examining cohort lengths. Starting with a 2012-2013 cohort, TVP transfer rates were calculated for each year from years 1 to 10 (Figure 1). The inflection point was at four years, and by year six, over three-quarters of all the students who had transferred by year ten were captured. The task force recommended a six-year timespan as a balance between capturing more students and not making the timespan excessively long. The six-year cohort is also used by every major related study examined by the task force (see History of Determining Transfer Intent).

Figure 1. Transfer Rate for 2012-2013 Transfer Velocity Cohort (n = 132,868) by Cohort Length in Years from 1 to 10 Years.



Source: https://datamart.cccco.edu/Outcomes/Transfer_Velocity.aspx

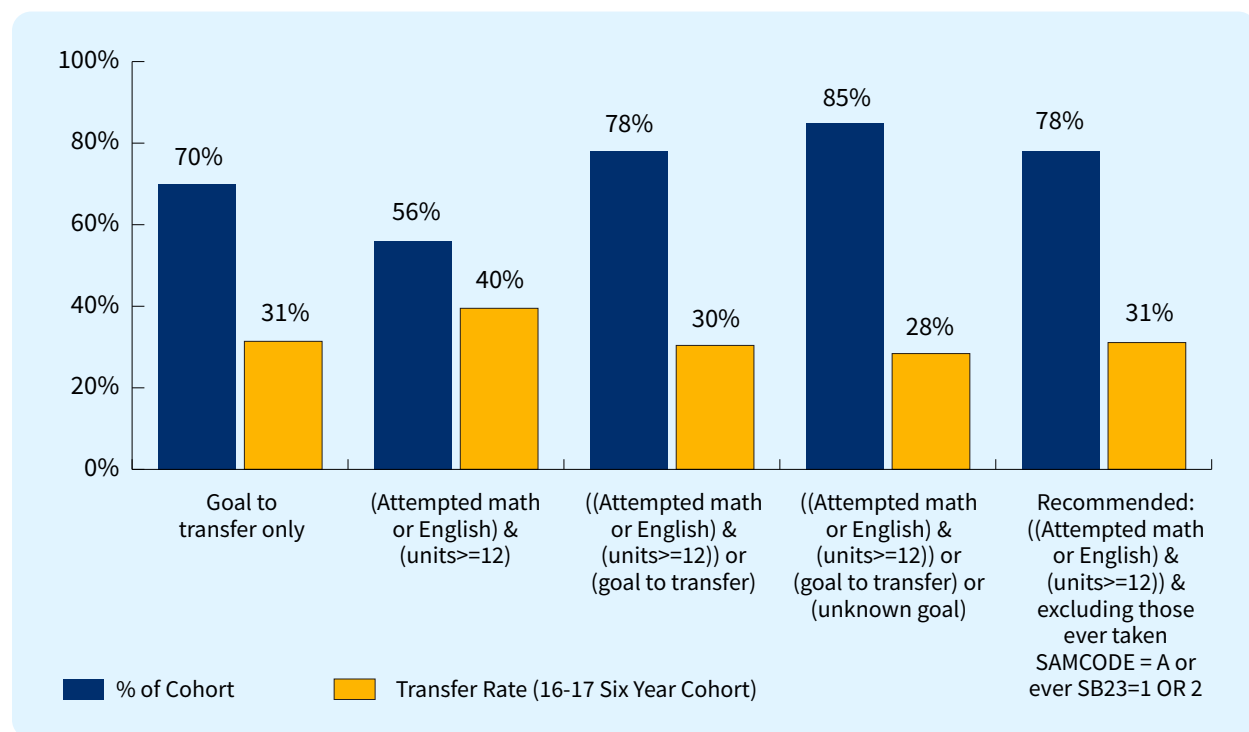
The task force explored modifying parameters to balance inclusiveness with timeliness. Table 2 shows key parameters for determining transfer intent. Each has advantages and disadvantages, ultimately leading the task force to adopt a multiparameter definition.

Table 2. Key Parameters for Determining Transfer Intent

Parameter	Pros	Cons
Education Goal	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Able to measure at initial enrollment. • Incentivizes robust intake support and education plan development. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Goals can evolve over time, and students may not update their goal if they change from a nontransfer to a transfer pathway.
Behavioral Intent (e.g., by number of units or gateway courses completed)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Once expressed, does not change. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Need at least one completed term to determine if not over a year. • May not reflect a student's current educational goals, transfer intentions, or circumstances.
Transfer Related Program of Study(e.g., requires a 4 year degree)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Able to measure at initial enrollment. • Incentivizes robust intake support and education plan development. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Program of Study can change over time and students may not update their major if they change from a nontransfer to a transfer pathway. • Some majors are ambiguous about needing a 4 year degree (e.g., Accounting)

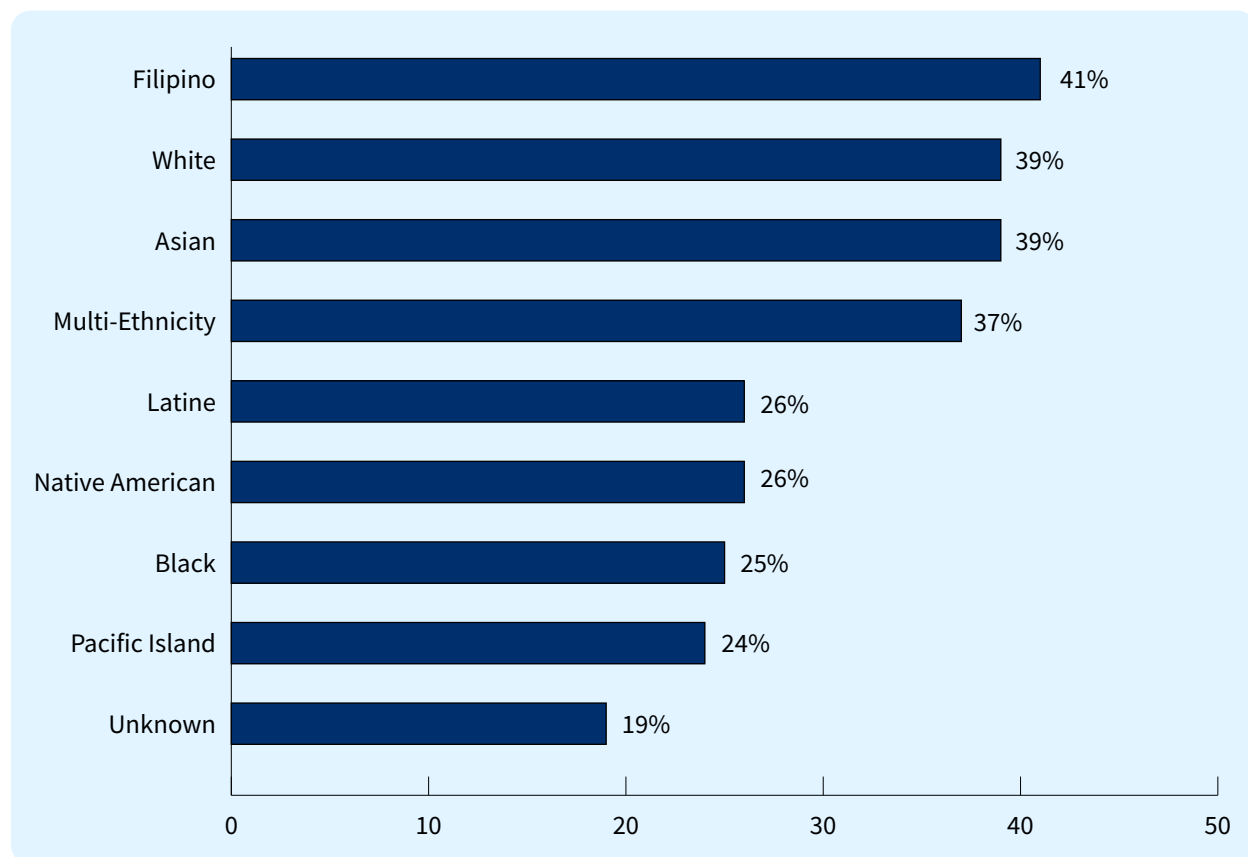
Figure 2 shows the percent of the 2016-2017 first-time cohort identified as transfer intending and the associated six-year transfer rate. The left-most set of bars begins with using only the goal to transfer. The next set of bars uses only behavioral intent to transfer, which captures fewer students than using the transfer goal only, but with a higher rate. The center bars combine transfer goal and behavioral intent, capturing over three-quarters of first-time students with a six-year transfer rate of about 30%. The fourth set of bars from the left adds the goal of unknown, which increases the capture to 85% of first-time students but reduces the transfer rate by two points, suggesting that including those with a goal of unknown may not capture transfer intending students as well as hoped. The right-most set of bars removes the goal of unknown and adds a criterion to exclude apprenticeship students (CB09 SAM code = A or SB21 = 1 or 2) on the premise that they are career rather than transfer focused. This definition, the final recommended definition, captures just over three-quarters of first-time students and has a slightly higher transfer rate of 31%, suggesting that the apprenticeship exclusion did increase the focus on transfer-intending students without substantially reducing cohort size. Other options explored, but not shown in the chart, were attempting both transfer-level math and English, testing attempted versus earned unit thresholds, as well as different threshold levels, such as 6 or 30 units, and excluding CTE concentrators. Rates by college are shown in Appendix B and are provided for illustrative rather than evaluative purposes.

Figure 2. Transfer Rate Definition Comparison Showing Percent of 2016-2017 First Time College Student, Including Six-Year Transfer Rates.



The task force tested disaggregation of the right-most transfer rate definition by ethnicity (Figure 3). The graph shows substantial equity gaps with a clear clustering of Filipino, White, Asian, and Multiethnic students with higher rates than Latine, Native American, Black, Pacific Islander, and Unknown ethnicity students. These gaps may be reflective of institutional challenges in providing effective supports to all students.

Figure 3. Final Recommended Transfer Rate Definition for the 2016-2017 First-Time College Student Cohort Disaggregated by Ethnicity.



EXPANDED DEFINITION

Using the recommended definition, the Task Force explored adding students who were “transfer ready” but did not transfer, and students who were enrolled in, or had earned an award in a community college baccalaureate degree program (BDP) (Table 3). Transfer-ready students are defined as those who were both “transfer directed” (successfully completed a transferable English and a transferable math course) and “transfer ready” (earned 60 or more transferable units with a grade point average (GPA) of 2.0 or higher). About 6 to 7 percent of the transfer intending cohort became transfer-ready but did not transfer. These students may not have transferred due to financial or other family responsibilities, geographic barriers, universities not accepting transferable classes, or other factors (e.g., <https://www.rpgroup.org/projects/through-the-gate>, <https://www.rpgroup.org/projects/geographic-barriers-to-transfer>). The other group tested for inclusion was students who earned a community college baccalaureate degree after starting at a community college. This was a much smaller number, beginning to approach 0.1% of the total cohort. Note that universities may have a different definition of transfer and may include different students than community colleges would.

Table 3. Expanded Transfer Rate Definition Including Transfer Ready Without Transferring Students and Community College Baccalaureate Degree Program (BDP) Students.

Year	Full Cohort Count	Transfer Intending	% Transfer Intending	Transfer Rate	% Transfer Ready, No Transfer	% BDP	Transfer, Transfer Ready, or BDP
2014-2015	353,738	270,961	77%	30.1%	6.3%	0.04%	36.4%
2015-2016	352,619	272,387	77%	30.7%	6.8%	0.06%	37.6%
2016-2017	339,691	264,433	78%	31.1%	7.2%	0.07%	38.3%

RECOMMENDED TRANSFER RATE DEFINITION

The task force's recommended transfer rate definition is:

- First-time general admit students tracked for 6 years who
- Indicated a goal to transfer OR Attempted math or English and earned 12 or more units
- Exclude apprenticeship students

For the Vision 2030 transfer goal of increasing transfer rates by 20%, the 2016-2017 baseline of 31% will increase to 37% by 2029-2030 (based on the 2024-2025 cohort).

SELECTED CALIFORNIA COMMUNITY COLLEGE TRANSFER RATE RESEARCH (IN CHRONOLOGICAL ORDER)

Bahr, P. R., Hom, W., & Perry, P. (2005). College transfer performance: A methodology for equitable measurement and comparison. *Journal of Applied Research in the Community College*, 13(1), 73–87.

<https://eric.ed.gov/?id=EJ723817>

Shulock, N., & Moore, C. (2007). Rules of the game: How state policy creates barriers to degree completion and impedes student success in the California Community Colleges. Institute for Higher Education Leadership & Policy, California State University, Sacramento. <https://edinsightscenter.org/rules-of-the-game-how-state-policy-creates-barriers-to-degree-completion-and-impedes-student-success-in-the-california-community-colleges/>

Horn, L., & Lew, S. (2007). California community college transfer rates: Who is counted makes a difference (MPR Research Brief). MPR Associates, Inc. <https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED537841.pdf>

Hayward, C. (2011). The Transfer Velocity Project: A comprehensive look at the transfer function. *Journal of Applied Research in the Community College*, 18(2), 17–28. <https://rpgroup.org/Portals/0/Reports/JARCC-Article-TVP.pdf>

Community College Research Center. (2024). Tracking transfer: State-by-state outcomes. Teachers College, Columbia University.

<https://ccrc.tc.columbia.edu/research/transfer.html>

<https://ccrc.tc.columbia.edu/dashboard/tracking-transfer-state-outcomes.html>

National Student Clearinghouse Research Center. (2024). Tracking transfer: A national vision for student success.

<https://nscresearchcenter.org/tracking-transfer/>

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APPENDIX A. TECHNICAL SPECIFICATIONS

Scope of data:

First-Time Non-Special Admit Student Cohort

Definition:

All students who enrolled as first-time in higher education non-special admit credit students in at least one primary term of the selected year with a minimal credit enrollment at the selected college who are tracked for one, two, three, four and six years from first term of enrollment

Transfer-intending Term Definition:

Initial or informed goal to transfer:

SB14 STUDENT-EDUCATIONAL-GOAL = A or B

SS01 STUDENT-EDUCATIONAL-GOAL = A or B

OR Units Earned and Attempted a Math or English course:

SX03 ENROLLMENT-UNITS-EARNED ≥ 12 at your college and/or anywhere in the CCC system during first six years of enrollment.

Units earned include completed courses with a grade of A, B, C, D or P.

CB03 COURSE-TOP-CODE = 1701.00, 1501.00, 1520.00

CB21 COURSE-PRIOR-TO-COLLEGE-LEVEL = A, B, C, D, Y

Apprenticeship Exclusion:

Excluded students ever taken CB09 COURSE-SAM-PRIORITY-CODE = A

Excluded students ever has SB23 STUDENT-APPRENTICESHIP-STATUS = 1 or 2

Additional Term Definition:

Transfer Ready:

Students who have met both transfer-directed and transfer-prepared criteria

Transfer Directed: student has successfully completed a transferable English and a transferable math course

Transfer Prepared: student has earned 60+ transferable units with a 2.00+ GPA

BDP (Baccalaureate Degree Program):

Students who have valid SG12 STUDENT-BACCALAUREATE-PROGRAM or completed BDP degrees

FAQ:

1. Q: Are students with a college degree excluded?

A: Yes, only students who enrolled in CCC as first-time in higher education non-special admit credit students are included.

2. Q: for the Dual Enrollments, are their units and math and English course taking from their dual enrollment terms excluded?

A: First, this cohort only includes currently Non-Special Admit student. Second, if current non-special Admit students ever enrolled as special admit before, their units and courses taken from dual enrollment terms are not excluded.

APPENDIX B. COLLEGE LEVEL TRANSFER RATES FOR THE 2016-2017 TRANSFER INTENDING COHORT

BDP = Community College Baccalaureate Degree Program

Transfer Ready = students who were both “transfer directed” (successfully completed a transferable English and a transferable math course) and “transfer ready” (earned 60 or more transferable units with a grade point average (GPA) of 2.0 or higher)

College	Transfer-intending	Transferred	% Transferred	BDP	% BDP	Transfer ready	% Transferred, BDP or Ready
Allan Hancock College	2,041	578	28%	0	0.00%	153	36%
American River College	3,922	949	24%	0	0.00%	205	29%
Antelope Valley College	2,913	759	26%	11	0.40%	239	35%
Bakersfield College	4,629	1,145	25%	13	0.30%	262	31%
Barstow College	685	227	33%	0	0.00%	27	37%
Berkeley City College	1,178	409	35%	1	0.10%	141	47%
Butte College	2,325	747	32%	1	0.00%	153	39%
Cabrillo College	1,852	597	32%	0	0.00%	111	38%
Canada College	769	258	34%	1	0.10%	63	42%
Cerritos College	3,882	1,021	26%	1	0.00%	235	32%
Cerro Coso Community College	727	196	27%	0	0.00%	42	33%
Chabot College	2,379	742	31%	0	0.00%	123	36%
Chaffey College	5,109	1,278	25%	0	0.00%	318	31%
Citrus College	2,524	879	35%	0	0.00%	275	46%
City College of San Francisco	3,185	933	29%	3	0.10%	202	36%
Clovis Community College	1,852	838	45%	1	0.10%	107	51%
Coalinga College	1,104	346	31%	0	0.00%	68	38%
Coastline Community College	1,791	276	15%	2	0.10%	104	21%
College of Alameda	790	235	30%	0	0.00%	80	40%
College of Marin	720	265	37%	0	0.00%	51	44%
College of San Mateo	1,768	672	38%	1	0.10%	245	52%
College of the Canyons	3,367	1,291	38%	1	0.00%	333	48%
College of the Desert	2,280	568	25%	0	0.00%	102	29%
College of the Redwoods	917	197	21%	0	0.00%	81	30%
College of the Sequoias	2,703	794	29%	0	0.00%	192	36%
College of the Siskiyous	365	118	32%	0	0.00%	22	38%
Columbia College	628	167	27%	0	0.00%	43	33%

College	Transfer-intending	Transferred	% Transferred	BDP	% BDP	Transfer ready	% Transferred, BDP or Ready
Compton College	1,134	197	17%	0	0.00%	82	25%
Contra Costa College	892	210	24%	1	0.10%	56	30%
Copper Mountain College	375	116	31%	0	0.00%	23	37%
Cosumnes River College	2,820	829	29%	0	0.00%	178	36%
Crafton Hills College	1,205	397	33%	0	0.00%	60	38%
Cuesta College	1,713	623	36%	0	0.00%	129	44%
Cuyamaca College	1,704	546	32%	3	0.20%	131	40%
Cypress College	2,786	883	32%	1	0.00%	244	40%
De Anza College	4,649	1,939	42%	1	0.00%	26	42%
Diablo Valley College	3,850	1,681	44%	0	0.00%	417	54%
East Los Angeles College	4,645	899	19%	1	0.00%	471	30%
El Camino College	4,812	1,493	31%	3	0.10%	430	40%
Evergreen Valley College	1,813	532	29%	1	0.10%	180	39%
Feather River College	320	118	37%	10	3.10%	33	50%
Folsom Lake College	1,906	694	36%	0	0.00%	123	43%
Foothill College	1,898	709	37%	4	0.20%	8	38%
Fresno City College	4,503	1,184	26%	2	0.00%	269	32%
Fullerton College	4,929	1,633	33%	1	0.00%	371	41%
Gavilan College	999	326	33%	1	0.10%	77	40%
Glendale Community College	3,190	1,219	38%	0	0.00%	231	45%
Golden West College	2,165	761	35%	0	0.00%	180	43%
Grossmont College	3,760	1,143	30%	5	0.10%	304	39%
Hartnell College	2,078	680	33%	0	0.00%	180	41%
Imperial Valley College	1,844	508	28%	0	0.00%	189	38%
Irvine Valley College	2,978	1,309	44%	1	0.00%	301	54%
Lake Tahoe Community College	327	91	28%	0	0.00%	1	28%
Laney College	1,293	336	26%	1	0.10%	113	35%
Las Positas College	1,802	835	46%	0	0.00%	129	53%
Lassen College	357	70	20%	0	0.00%	28	27%
Lemoore College	1,028	343	33%	0	0.00%	91	42%
Long Beach City College	4,733	1,218	26%	0	0.00%	298	32%
Los Angeles City College	2,047	389	19%	0	0.00%	134	26%
Los Angeles Harbor College	1,477	367	25%	1	0.10%	109	32%

College	Transfer-intending	Transferred	% Transferred	BDP	% BDP	Transfer ready	% Transferred, BDP or Ready
Los Angeles ITV	126	35	28%	0	0.00%	2	29%
Los Angeles Mission College	1,564	333	21%	1	0.10%	99	28%
Los Angeles Pierce College	3,942	1,261	32%	3	0.10%	250	38%
Los Angeles Southwest College	898	155	17%	0	0.00%	70	25%
Los Angeles Trade-Tech College	1,664	163	10%	0	0.00%	80	15%
Los Angeles Valley College	2,874	795	28%	3	0.10%	147	33%
Los Medanos College	1,891	586	31%	0	0.00%	156	39%
Mendocino College	607	141	23%	0	0.00%	63	34%
Merced College	2,230	660	30%	0	0.00%	164	37%
Merritt College	744	165	22%	1	0.10%	51	29%
MiraCosta College	2,807	1,100	39%	9	0.30%	179	46%
Mission College	1,017	319	31%	0	0.00%	64	38%
Modesto Junior College	4,116	1,109	27%	7	0.20%	199	32%
Monterey Peninsula College	1,252	429	34%	0	0.00%	92	42%
Moorpark College	3,176	1,594	50%	4	0.10%	159	55%
Moreno Valley College	1,928	457	24%	0	0.00%	135	31%
Mt. San Antonio College	5,859	1,879	32%	0	0.00%	450	40%
Mt. San Jacinto College	4,017	1,175	29%	0	0.00%	281	36%
Napa Valley College	1,185	397	34%	2	0.20%	106	43%
Norco College	2,150	669	31%	0	0.00%	155	38%
Ohlone College	1,846	827	45%	0	0.00%	181	55%
Orange Coast College	4,519	1,688	37%	1	0.00%	484	48%
Oxnard College	1,263	344	27%	0	0.00%	117	37%
Palo Verde College	557	46	8%	0	0.00%	48	17%
Palomar College	3,997	1,345	34%	4	0.10%	213	39%
Pasadena City College	5,760	2,155	37%	3	0.10%	545	47%
Porterville College	889	291	33%	0	0.00%	89	43%
Reedley College	2,576	764	30%	0	0.00%	169	36%
Rio Hondo College	3,065	761	25%	3	0.10%	237	33%
Riverside City College	4,697	1,223	26%	0	0.00%	349	33%
Sacramento City College	3,304	945	29%	0	0.00%	174	34%
Saddleback College	3,574	1,536	43%	2	0.10%	245	50%
San Bernardino Valley College	2,539	488	19%	0	0.00%	132	24%

College	Transfer-intending	Transferred	% Transferred	BDP	% BDP	Transfer ready	% Transferred, BDP or Ready
San Diego City College	2,602	676	26%	2	0.10%	139	31%
San Diego Mesa College	3,507	1,277	36%	11	0.30%	283	45%
San Diego Miramar College	2,096	868	41%	2	0.10%	142	48%
San Joaquin Delta College	3,720	1,010	27%	1	0.00%	194	32%
San Jose City College	1,040	254	24%	0	0.00%	86	33%
Santa Ana College	3,399	771	23%	4	0.10%	341	33%
Santa Barbara City College	3,092	1,232	40%	0	0.00%	294	49%
Santa Monica College	6,779	2,123	31%	8	0.10%	546	39%
Santa Rosa Junior College	3,135	1,040	33%	0	0.00%	218	40%
Santiago Canyon College	1,979	809	41%	0	0.00%	147	48%
Shasta College	1,786	543	30%	6	0.30%	99	36%
Sierra College	3,865	1,470	38%	0	0.00%	318	46%
Skyline College	1,433	541	38%	2	0.10%	122	46%
Solano Community College	1,908	624	33%	14	0.70%	151	41%
Southwestern College	3,892	1,188	31%	2	0.10%	190	35%
Taft College	729	205	28%	1	0.10%	27	32%
Ventura College	2,536	912	36%	0	0.00%	218	45%
Victor Valley College	2,721	661	24%	1	0.00%	191	31%
West Los Angeles College	1,565	330	21%	5	0.30%	75	26%
West Valley College	1,337	572	43%	0	0.00%	76	48%
Woodland Community College	888	261	29%	1	0.10%	57	36%
Yuba College	1,275	400	31%	0	0.00%	86	38%
Grand Total	270,354	84,365	31%	176	0.10%	19,458	38%

Front cover photo:
Santa Monica College

Photo at right:
Orange Coast College

Back cover photo:
De Anza College



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