

# Strengthening the Transfer Pathway

## From Community to Four-Year Private Colleges

### OBSTACLES AND OPPORTUNITIES

#### Community College Transfer Landscape

Despite intentions to transfer and earn degrees, community college students struggle to advance within the higher education system.

- Just **20%** of first-time, full-time community college students seeking an associate degree earn one within three years. Only **35%** complete their degree within five years.
- **80%** of community college students begin their studies with plans to transfer and earn a bachelor's degree. But just **25%** transfer within five years.
- Only **17%** will earn a bachelor's degree within six years of transferring.

Edvance Foundation research identified systemic obstacles for students before, during, and after transferring from community colleges to four-year institutions.

#### Obstacles to Transferring

- While **81%** of schools surveyed have an established set of transfer course equivalencies, **credit evaluation is highly inconsistent.**
- Most private institutions partner with only a few feeder community colleges. While **68%** have **articulation agreements**, many of these are subjective and uncoordinated, making the process complicated and inconsistent.
- Only **9%** of institutions have an “early assurance” program that guarantees scholarship support to high-achieving community college students.

#### Obstacles to Success After Matriculation

- Just **45%** offer orientation programs that are specifically tailored to the needs of students transferring from community colleges.
- Only **10%** require a grade point average of **3.0 or better for transfer students.** This low academic bar makes it more likely that transfer students will arrive on four-year campuses unprepared to cope with the rigors of four-year colleges and universities.
- Two-thirds of four-year institutions permit transfers to spend less than two years on their campuses, reducing the chances of successful integration and graduation.

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#### Support for Community College Transfers Leads to Success in American Higher Education

Results from the Jack Kent Cooke Foundation's Community College Transfer Initiative (CCTI) prove the efficacy of transfer collaboration programs.

- The **1,100** students who participated in the program achieved an average GPA of **3.11.**
- Mount Holyoke College focused on early identification and engagement of potential transfer students, which helped double its number of recruitment visits to community colleges and saw applications increase by almost one-third in the first year of doing so.
- Summer bridge programs at Bucknell University helped contribute to a graduation rate of **97.3%** for the CCTI transfer cohort.
- The University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill's multidisciplinary planning team helped establish recruitment and application processes to ease barriers for transfer students.