College Futures Foundation Supported California State University - California Community College Transfer Partnerships: A Retrospective Look

February 2024

Rebecca K. Woolston
Madeleine R. Kerrick
Jaquelyn Caro-Sena

Education Insights Center

COLLEGE FUTURES FOUNDATION · *More Graduates for a Thriving California*

Table of Contents

Acknowledgments

Executive Summary

From 2016-2023, College Futures Foundation supported several California State University (CSU) campuses to partner with California community colleges in their regions to increase the number of students transferring from community colleges and completing bachelor's degrees at the CSU. In an effort to learn more about this work, College Futures Foundation partnered with Education Insights Center (EdInsights) to engage key constituents in a retrospective learning engagement about these transfer partnership efforts. This report serves to both document and share these learnings, and to provide relevant information to those interested in forming intersegmental transfer partnerships, potential funders, law and policymakers, and researchers.

College Futures Foundation identified five intersegmental partnerships for us to invite into this learning engagement. Through this process, we sought to answer the following questions:

- What compelled partners to work together on transfer?
- What did partners undertake during their grant periods?
- What attributes foster a successful intersegmental transfer partnership?

Findings

Across partnerships, we identified the following efforts:

- Partnerships worked toward **removing student barriers** to transfer by:
  ◦ improving the clarity of the transfer process (e.g., CSU campuses provided targeted outreach on Associate Degree for Transfer [ADTs] and CSU opportunities);
  ◦ increasing students' access to a shared point of contact by housing a CSU advisor at the community colleges and/or creating peer mentorship programs at the CSU that support students before and after transfer; and
  ◦ creating transfer-specific scholarships and/or employment at the CSU campus.
- Partnerships **changed policies, practices, and procedures in an effort to improve transfer students' sense of belonging** at the CSU campus by:
  ◦ beginning or expanding CSU campus contact with students before they arrived at the CSU, including through co-branded transfer programs at the community colleges;
  ◦ creating CSU campus programming (e.g., transfer-specific orientations, summer transition programs);
  ◦ employing welcome items at the CSU campus (e.g., shirts with their transfer program brand, "transfer stickers" for faculty and staff to signal their support of transfer students); and
  ◦ creating CSU transfer centers that provide connection to feeder community colleges and serve as a centralized source of support and belonging.
- Partners **collaborated intersegmentally on ways to share data** and documents (e.g., enrollment data, transcripts).
- Partnerships **engaged staff and faculty at both CSU campuses and community colleges to create more transfer-receptive institutions,** largely through efforts to create curricular alignment.

- Partnerships **identified course and curricular misalignment and administrative barriers as persistent barriers to transfer for students** that partnerships were not always able to overcome in their efforts.

While it is difficult to attribute student-level outcomes to the partnerships' grant-funded efforts, most partnerships reported an increase in:

- student awareness of the CSU campus and ADTs;
- completion of ADTs; and
- the proportion of transfers having an ADT compared to before their grant-funded partnerships.

Across partnerships, **most faced challenges with:**

- **communication,** primarily within and from the CSU campuses;
- **resource constraints** (e.g., funding, staffing at both CSU campuses and community colleges); and
- **buy-in from campus and college personnel** to engage in the partnerships.

Partnership 4 Saw an Increase in the Proportion of Transfer Students with an ADT (see Case Studies)

18%	26%
Fall 2017	Fall 2022
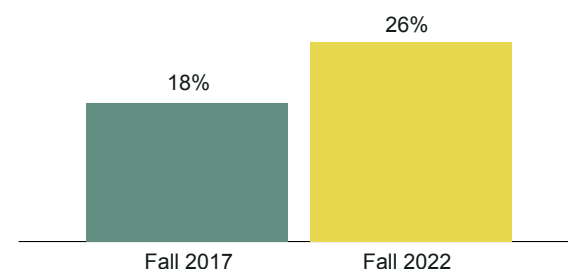
Approach

To better understand the strategies that the five partnerships collaborated on, the challenges they faced, and the outcomes they achieved during their College Futures Foundation grant periods, EdInsights collected and examined data from four sources (see the Appendix for data collection across partnerships):

- grant documents from the CSUs involved (i.e., proposals and reports);
- surveys of CSU constituents (8);
- interviews with both CSU and community college constituents (11 and 7, respectively); and
- two separate meaning-making sessions with CSU and community college constituents to share and facilitate discussions on high-level findings from the interviews.

In the Findings Across Partnerships section, we report, by research question, the themes that arose across most partnerships. This is followed by Conclusions and Considerations arising from the findings across partnerships, in which we present relevant considerations by audience. In the Case Studies, we present an at-a-glance overview across partnerships and then profile each partnership, sharing its specific examples of the themes described in the Findings Across Partnerships and noting any unique findings (i.e., those not seen in a majority of partnerships). We also highlight some unique findings (in yellow call-out boxes with a light bulb) and outcomes (in green call-out boxes with a check mark), where relevant, in the Findings Across Partnerships section.

Findings Across Partnerships

Through this learning engagement, we found the following across the five partnerships:[1]

Question	Findings
What compelled partners to work together on transfer?	• Improving the transfer student experience was the most salient motivator for formalizing partnerships. This included the goal of providing holistic support (i.e., academic, social, and emotional) before and after transfer. • Data reinforced the need to improve the transfer student experience and outcomes (e.g., increasing Associate Degree for Transfer [ADT] transfer rates and full-time enrollments, improving time to degree).
What did partners undertake during their grant periods?	• Worked toward removing student barriers to transfer from their community college(s) into their regional California State University (CSU) by improving clarity of the transfer process, increasing students' access to a shared point of contact, and creating transfer-specific scholarships and/or employment. • Changed policies, practices, and procedures in an effort to improve transfer students' sense of belonging at the CSU campus, including connecting with students prior to arrival at the CSU, creating programming, providing welcome items, and establishing transfer centers. • Collaborated on ways to share data and documents to improve the student experience. • Engaged staff and faculty to create more transfer-receptive institutions, most commonly through efforts to create curricular alignment. • Identified course and curricular misalignment and administrative barriers as persistent barriers to transfer for students.
What attributes foster a successful intersegmental transfer partnership?	• Communication was a crucial element of successful partnerships and a source of challenges. • Relationship building was a key component to creating and sustaining the partnerships, often complicated by difficulty getting buy-in from campus and college personnel in varying levels of leadership. • Institutionalization of partnership efforts was an indicator of success, while resource constraints threatened these efforts.

[1] We acknowledge that each partnership has its own characteristics and some of the findings we present here may apply more to some and less to others. However, these cross-partnership findings emerged in the majority of partnerships (at least three of the five) across our methods of data collection.

Before the grant periods and a formalized partnership, relationships between the CSU campuses and their regional community colleges existed to varying degrees. With the signing of Senate Bill 1440 (Padilla, 2010), which created the ADT, the subsequent influx of ADTs into the CSU[2] made apparent issues that had long existed for transfer students. Receiving dedicated funding from College Futures Foundation allowed the CSU campuses to further connect with their community college partners and to formalize a transfer partnership with written agreements. The formalization process encouraged partners to collaborate and center the needs of their students.

> *"We always knew we had to do it. We were going to do it, but we couldn't do it alone. We needed College Futures to come in and sort of open the door."*
>
> – CSU campus interviewee

Interviewees indicated that the selection process for which regional community college(s) to engage during the grant period largely related to the community colleges' proximity to the CSU campus, though being the largest feeder of transfer students to the CSU campus also contributed to the selection. While the CSU campuses often engaged initial partner community college(s) during their grant period, all five partnerships indicated their efforts expanded to include other colleges in their region.

Improving the transfer student experience was the most salient motivator for formalizing partnerships.

Specifically, partners reported a desire to focus on improving or creating better transfer support via a holistic approach to the student that provides social, emotional, and/or academic supports to students both before and after transferring. Creating a smooth transition for students, where administrative barriers (e.g., transcript requests) are reduced and transfer students are celebrated and feel welcomed at the CSU campus emerged as a central goal for partners.

> *"We are very interested in making transfer seamless for all our students that come to us from the local community colleges . . . we want to familiarize them with the services we offer, with the courses and degree programs we offer, with their opportunities here."*
>
> – CSU campus interviewee

Data reinforced the need to improve the transfer student experience and outcomes.

Grant documents from most CSU campus partners indicated that they thought about this work in terms of its benefits both to the campus (e.g., increasing transfer rates and full-time enrollments for ADT students at the CSU, improving graduation rates) and to student outcomes (e.g., increasing bachelor's degree completion among first-generation students and students from low-income backgrounds, improving time to degree).[3] Using data to identify needs and target efforts was reinforced in interviews with both CSU campus and community college partners:

---

[2] From EdSource: Citing data from the CSU Chancellor's Office, students transferring into the CSU with an ADT increased by 50% since the legislation's signing in 2010.

[3] One CSU partner did not mention institutional benefits in interviews, nor student benefits in their grant documents.

"As we prepared as a team, we came in with some data . . . so [we had] the last three years of admissions data [for one of our community college partners] . . . how many students applied, how many were admitted, and how many enrolled . . . coming in with some information to say, 'This is what we know about your students.' Then we really said, 'What are your students telling you about us? . . . What do they think about us as an institution? Have they experienced challenges with getting appointments with somebody, with going to orientation, actually enrolling with us? What are those spaces and places?' And then really sitting back and letting them take the lead on what they wanted to most focus on."

<div align="right">– CSU campus interviewee</div>

"[The focus on the Hispanic, Latinx student populations] was actually before the grant because it has been a persistent equity gap in our student equity plan. So when we got the [grant], we pulled the data to see where the largest gap was for transfer . . . [and] the other colleges confirmed [they had a gap in Hispanic and Latinx students]. So that's why we targeted the population for that equity transfer initiative on Hispanic, Latinx students. But that has been a persistent equity gap that we've had for quite some time."

<div align="right">– Community college interviewee</div>

What Did Partners Undertake During Their Grant Periods?

In this section, we describe the common efforts that arose across partnerships and, where possible, what student outcomes came from this work.[4] Throughout this section, we highlight relevant outcomes that partners reported and, in the Case Studies, we detail all of the reported outcomes for each of the partnerships. Finally, we share the student barriers to transfer that partnerships identified as persisting even in the face of their efforts.

With the time and space afforded by their grants, partners reported they did the following during their grant periods:

- Worked toward removing student barriers to transfer.
- Changed policies, practices, and procedures in an effort to improve transfer students' sense of belonging at the CSU campus.
- Collaborated on ways to share data and documents to improve the student experience.
- Engaged staff and faculty to create more transfer-receptive institutions, most commonly through efforts to create curricular alignment.
- Identified course and curricular misalignment and administrative barriers as persistent barriers to transfer for students.

---

[4] We are limited in our ability to describe student outcomes across the partnerships in several ways: some partnerships collected such data but the lack of similarity across partnerships makes it challenging to describe collectively; others did not assess all of the outcomes of their work; others did but data was lost due to turnover; and, for some, it is too early to know the student-level outcomes of their partnership efforts.

✊ Worked toward removing student barriers to transfer.

> **"**
>
> *What I hope that [transfer students] would say is that they felt like the university was ready for them. And that we had the supports in place for them to achieve their goals, that we took the thinking out of it for them. I mean that not to diminish their intellectual aptitude, but to say they're just here to be students. They're here to take their classes, you know, make some friends, join a club, and jump into their career. They're not here to understand complex academic pathways, to figure out financial aid regulations, to navigate various divisions across campus. That's not their job.*
>
> – CSU campus interviewee[5]
>
> **"**

Partnerships worked toward removing student barriers to transfer in several ways, including working to **improve clarity of the transfer process** with the goal of "making transfers seamless for all [the] students that come to [the CSU] from the local community colleges." For example, some partnerships launched **targeted outreach** to both students and community college counselors about opportunities afforded by the ADT. Others created and communicated course and program pathways that allowed students to better advocate for themselves (see Engaged staff and faculty to create more transfer-receptive institutions).

> ✅ Partnership 2 attributed an increase in ADT completion at one partner community college to the CSU campus' outreach and workshops for prospective transfer students (see Case Studies).

"We don't want there to be a major disconnect between when they transition from [the community college] and they're used to receiving, to engaging in the teaching and learning a certain way, and upon transferring into a completely different environment—we want to breach that gap as much as possible."

– Community college interviewee

"It's really exciting to me to think that what [using a program mapper] does for many students [is that] when they see the[ir] counselor, the conversation occurs at a whole other level because they're empowered." [6]

– Community college interviewee

Prior to their grant periods, some CSU campuses had existing personnel, often CSU advisors housed at the community colleges, who understood both systems and could help students and community college personnel navigate transfer. Through their grants, **CSU campuses were able to increase access to a shared point of contact,** such as an advisor/counselor and/or peer mentor (i.e., by increasing the amount of time these personnel were at the community college and/or increasing the number of colleges where these personnel were present).

---

[5] Quote has been edited for brevity but not content.
[6] Quote has been edited for brevity but not content.

College Futures Foundation Supported CSU-Community College Transfer Partnerships: A Retrospective Look
EDUCATION INSIGHTS CENTER AT CALIFORNIA STATE UNIVERSITY, SACRAMENTO

9

Specifically, three CSU campuses used their grants to **create peer mentorship programs to support their transfer students** before and/or after they had transferred. In addition to **creating transfer student employment** through peer mentorship programs, several partnerships also **created a transfer-specific scholarship** at the CSU campus during their grant period, though College Futures' grants did not fund the scholarships.[7] In addition, the collaboration on data sharing (e.g., transcripts), described below, helped to remove some barriers students face to transfer.

> Partnership 4 reported that the 2-year graduation rate for recipients of their small ADT incentive scholarship graduated at more than 1.5 times the rate of other ADT transfer students (see Case Studies).

Changed policies, practices, and procedures in an effort to improve transfer students' sense of belonging at the CSU campus.

While there was little mention of investing in student belonging in the grant documents, partners reported increasing outreach to students as a top goal of changes they made to their practices, policies, and/or procedures during their grant periods. Through interviews, we found partners focused on practices to increase transfer students' sense of belonging.

Such practices included **beginning or expanding CSU campus contact with students before they arrived at the CSU** (i.e., as early as high school, at first enrollment at the community college, or once the community college helped them understand how and why they can transfer). These efforts intended to help students see themselves as CSU students and create a sense of continuity and belonging between systems (e.g., inviting community college students to sporting events at the CSU). Primarily, partners did this by conducting outreach and engaging in shared programming, such as community colleges inviting CSU campus partners to the community college orientations. In addition, some CSU campuses created or expanded formalized transfer programs for students to join at their community colleges that had programming at the CSU as well. Transfer programs often had a captivating name, sometimes incorporating both schools' mascots, with the goal of helping students simultaneously identify as community college students and CSU students.

> Partnership 5 expanded their transfer program and reported a subsequent increase in the number of community college students signing up for the program (see Case Studies).

The following quotes capture the importance of having students identify early on that they belong in the CSU, and that CSU campuses want them.

> *"We needed to ensure that these students knew that Cal State was with them from the day they stepped on the campus."*
>
> – Community college interviewee

---

[7] College Futures grants were not intended to fund the scholarships themselves, but may have gone to staff time to develop and administer the scholarship programs.

"One of the things we got from our learning [with partner colleges] is that our students don't want to leave [their community college] because they've established a community and they know where their resources are. So . . . why do they want to go to another school and start over again? . . . And so we're like, 'Okay, how do we address that?' We need to start connecting them to our EOPs [Educational Opportunity Programs], to our TRIO programs, to our Dreamer centers so that we're already part of their lives before they even consider applying. So there's no disconnect."

– CSU campus interviewee

CSU campuses also **created programming**, such as **summer transition programs, transfer-specific orientations, and a "signing/commitment day"** to the university with university-branded gear, to provide information and increase transfer students' sense of belonging before starting at the CSU. CSU campuses **employed welcome items** (e.g., shirts with their transfer program brand, "transfer stickers" for faculty and staff to signal their support of transfer students) once they arrived on campus. Some partnerships **created transfer centers** at the CSU campus that displayed banners from regional community colleges to represent the connection between the colleges and the CSU campus. Partners described how such centers served to not only provide transfer students with a centralized source of information and a variety of academic and other supports, but also as a home base where transfer students can "come in and just sit and hang out in between classes."

"We invite all of the admitted students before their community college graduation to come to a reception to say, 'Welcome to the community,' and to actually pin them . . . It's really saying, 'You're a transfer student. That is an important part of who you are and an important part of how you navigate [our CSU campus]' . . . That pin is kind of the culmination of all of that work, both to change culture internally on campus, but also in how we're partnering externally to bring students on board."

– CSU campus interviewee[8]

Collaborated on ways to share data and documents to improve the student experience.

Partners also recognized the need to establish data and document sharing between institutions to allow for a smoother transition between institutions. For example, some partners **worked to share transcripts** between institutions so students would no longer have to initiate the request upon transfer. Most partners talked about finding ways to share data specifically from the community college to the CSU, though some wanted to **find ways to allow for a bidirectional flow of information.** Some partners also pointed out that sharing data between institutions could allow for better tracking and understanding of the students' journeys after they leave their community colleges.

Engaged staff and faculty to create more transfer-receptive institutions, most commonly through efforts to create curricular alignment.

Partners highlighted that an important part of **creating transfer-receptive institutions involved collaboration among faculty from both CSU campuses and community colleges** to understand the curriculum of departments and majors to create appropriate course pathways.

---

[8] Quote has been edited for brevity and clarity, but not content.

Notably, **aligning curricula also required the work and support of counseling and advising staff**, especially in ensuring that the pathways and any updates to them are communicated in a timely and effective manner to students. This suggests that, even when statewide efforts at curricular alignment take place, local partnerships still play an important role in fine-tuning local curricular alignment.

> In addition to curricular alignment work, two partnerships held intersegmental convenings or conferences for personnel to calibrate and share information on transfer to create more transfer-receptive institutions (see Case Studies).

Identified course and curricular misalignment and administrative barriers as persistent barriers to transfer for students.

Despite the commitment of partners and their dedicated efforts, partnerships were not always able to eliminate the barriers that they identified for students. Sometimes this was because the lever to eliminate the barrier was beyond the local level, resting with the respective Chancellor's Office or state legislature. In other instances, the inability to address barriers was because of a "Russian doll phenomenon," in which the elimination of one barrier uncovered other barriers. For example, one partner described how establishing a 2-year transfer pledge, which granted transfer students priority registration, uncovered that the registrar's office was resistant to making priority registration allowances. Once that hurdle was cleared, they identified that summer term priority registration was housed in a different college, which required yet more collaboration. All in all, this highlights the need for campuses to look holistically at the student journey to identify the barriers students face and consider the ways departments across institutions may unintentionally reinforce these barriers if/when they do not collaborate.

> *"You've got to look at the whole ecosystem before you say, 'What are the barriers? and what was not working well?' I think you truly have to understand the student journey . . . what might be going on for students beyond classes in terms of basic needs, housing needs, food insecurity . . . So you're looking at a lot of outside factors [that] also impact the transfer path."*
>
> – Community college interviewee

Across partnerships, partners identified course and curricular misalignment and administrative barriers as persistent barriers to transfer for students that remained despite their work.

Regarding **course/curricular misalignment,** some programs of study **made it difficult for students to transfer in,** causing them to either delay time to graduation or to declare a different major. Partners described this difficulty as **stemming from impaction and/or misalignment between systems.**

Misalignment between systems was occasionally attributed to the challenge of getting faculty/staff/department buy-in for creating pathways: some departments showed little or no interest in establishing a curricular pathway (see Relationship building), while others had unique challenges with course offerings. This misalignment was sometimes connected to legislative changes: for instance, CSU campuses not accepting an ADT that their regional community colleges offer or misalignment in fulfilling general education (GE) requirements, resulting in students taking duplicative GEs while fulfilling major units at the CSU. As noted above, this highlights the importance of involving both faculty and advising staff in curricular alignment efforts.

Partners shared that curricular barriers did not indicate that collective work did not move forward on creating pathways for students. Rather, **the existence of such barriers was reflected in the lengthy process and trial and error of establishing pathways between systems.** Some partners accomplished more around curricular pathways than others; thus, we discuss these unique challenges and accomplishments in more detail within the Case Studies.

Administrative barriers are processes that create too many stops for students on the way to accomplishing their goals (e.g., transfer, graduation).[9,10] Such barriers disproportionately affect historically underserved students, making the removal of administrative barriers imperative. Partnerships described how processes at institutions remain overly complex and/or are not effectively communicated to students and, in some instances, staff in a timely manner. The **administrative barriers reported primarily included** the following:

- **Financial aid** (e.g., applying for FAFSA, timeline, navigating the application process, needing more financial support generally).
- **Transparency of transfer processes** (e.g., timeline for submitting graduation application to the community college, transcript requests, CSU application).
- **How to access, and the availability of, resources and community support** (e.g., basic needs programs, parallel affinity/community groups at community college and CSU campus).

  "Our Vice President of Student Affairs wanted to launch what we were calling 'integrated advising.' We were going to have all advisors not directly reporting to the academic advising center, but [be] more connected. Because regardless of if you were a department advisor, you still needed to understand where [GE] intersect[s] and what that meant for students. Traditionally...[advising was] siloed...so students were getting bounced back and forth. ... So we were moving in this direction of integrated advising. And we launched...these meetings, I want to say once a month, for all advisors. You had academic advisors, major advisors, special program advisors, EOP, [disability services], those types of folks, financial aid. It was just anyone who was providing direct advising services to students was invited to this meeting. And so you had folks collaborating in a different way than they had before."
  – CSU campus interviewee[11]

Depending on the foci of their grants, some partnerships made progress in addressing these barriers as described above and in the preceding quote. For example, some partnerships were able to eliminate the administrative barrier of transcript requests by establishing automatic transcript sharing (see Collaborated on ways to share data).

What Attributes Foster a Successful Intersegmental Transfer Partnership?

Partners identified communication, relationship building, and institutionalization as key to successful intersegmental transfer partnerships, and also as the source of challenges.

---

[9] Eliminate Administrative Barriers to Graduation, The California State University.
[10] "I Had to Surpass": Administrative Barriers that First-generation College Students of Color Face, Walters, K.P. (2022).
[11] Quote has been edited for brevity but not content.

Communication was a crucial element of successful partnerships and a source of challenges.

Notably, partners highlighted the need for clear communication at their institution, as well as with their partners. **Partners reported effective communication as necessary for building and sustaining positive relationships.** Across interviews within each partnership, we found alignment among partners' descriptions of the partnerships and reported challenges. This clarity across systems and partners tells us that, **when the communication between partners remained clear, they had a shared understanding of their goals, challenges, and path forward.**

Partners noted that **effective communication required bringing counterparts together regularly, asking questions, listening to one another, and ensuring the timely exchange of information.** Partners shared that knowing who to contact at each institution "so that you can pick up the phone or you can shoot them an email" and being responsive to one another were also critical.

Partners also described how **clear communication among colleagues** at their institution and across partner institutions **helped address and eliminate barriers that students experience.** Such communication among partners can help ensure that clear and digestible information is relayed to students in a timely manner.

While partners often mentioned communication in terms of success for their partnerships, they also noted challenges they faced with communication. While there was clear consensus across partnerships that **challenges with communication existed both among partners and within institutions,** the source of these challenges was not clear. However, according to partners from both segments, this unclear or lack of communication among partners and within institutions contributed to the persistent barriers for students that they identified.

Relationship building was a key component to creating and sustaining the partnerships, often impeded by challenges with buy-in.

Partners stressed **having mutual trust, ensuring that partnerships have a shared common goal, and identifying that goal early on as contributing to both clear communication and building a positive relationship.** Partners emphasized this both within their institutions and with their partner institution(s) (e.g., being transparent about their ability to follow through on promises). However, we noted that building the relationship with their partner institution(s) was mentioned nearly twice as much as within their institutions. **Partners described holding meetings** to discuss transfer-related issues and brainstorm action steps across institutions **as being critical components to relationship building.**

We also heard about **the importance of having "transfer champions"** in both leadership positions and "on the ground" working with students in order to have advocates for transfer students at all levels of the institution. Across partnerships, transfer champions held different roles and played different parts in the transfer partnership efforts. For instance, some had formal leadership roles while others did not, and some had been transfer students themselves, which compelled them to prioritize transfer students' experiences. Overall, transfer champions were similar in having a deep understanding of and care for transfer students' journeys and the importance of transfer students. This enabled transfer champions to play an instrumental role in their partnerships' efforts.

College Futures Foundation Supported CSU-Community College Transfer Partnerships: A Retrospective Look
EDUCATION INSIGHTS CENTER AT CALIFORNIA STATE UNIVERSITY, SACRAMENTO

14

Partners described relationship-building efforts in the following ways:

"I think partnership, in general, means all sides have a vested interest in seeing the outcome. That the outcome is something everybody has bought in[to]. Partnership means there [are] multiple roles, that the partners do have a very clear, identifiable role that they play. There is a symbiotic relationship between the two. I think if the goal is to try to make transfer easier, then you can't do it without [a] partnership. You simply can't."

Partnership 5 had a transfer champion in a formal leadership role that allowed them to advocate for and secure permanent funding to institutionalize their transfer partnership efforts (see Case Studies).

– CSU campus interviewee

"I like [a] garden metaphor. I think [the partnership] could be [everlasting], but you have to tend to it. You can't ignore it and take it for granted. It's not going to flourish in that kind of a neglectful environment. But it can withstand a certain amount of battering. It is fairly resilient, right? You can have a storm come through, you can have some bad weather, and it will endure."

– Community college interviewee

Across partnerships, partners described **difficulty getting buy-in** for the partnerships, or specific aspects of them (e.g., priority registration, course pathways), from influential people (e.g., administrators who have direct connections to the President and other campus leaders) or entire departments, as well as **overcoming certain mindsets** among individuals or at an institutional level (e.g., a sense of competition for students between the CSU and community colleges, lack of interest in investing in transfer students). Notably, when speaking to both CSU and community college partners, **such challenges were more often mentioned as being on the CSU side of the partnership,** particularly from the CSU campus representatives themselves, and often stemmed from neglected and/or strained relationships within the campus.[12]

"Yeah, there was pushback. Like I said, initially, when we . . . started the program, out of the ten invited [department] chairs, only three showed up. And those three chairs were folks that really worked well with us already. But I think that's what helped is then presenting it from the faculty side rather than the administrators presenting."

– CSU campus interviewee[13]

🏛 **Institutionalization of partnership efforts was an indicator of success, while resource constraints threatened these efforts.**

We heard from partners about the need to institutionalize changes made during their grant period. At times, partners noted concern about their institutions' ability to retain changes made to support a transfer partnership and improved transfer student outcomes without external funding. Partners shared that even during the grant periods **resource constraints** – lack of permanent

---

[12] One partnership is not included in these data, as their constituents did not mention difficulty with buy-in during interviews. However, this same partnership had representatives discuss such barriers during collaborative meaning-making sessions.

[13] Quote has been edited for clarity but not content.

funding to support their transfer efforts and issues with staffing (e.g., turnover, low staffing generally) at both the community colleges and CSU campuses – impacted their partnerships' effectiveness. Those we engaged with highlighted **sustainability as a key concern** and goal to ensure transfer work continues beyond their grant periods. This signals a need for campus leadership to assess how and to what degree funding could become permanent.

> *"[Building pathways] took a while, because we had to understand the culture, the data, the processes of the CSU, which were very different than what we've been working with at the community college, and their exigencies and sort of the different people that were on the team . . . were excited by the project and supportive [and] at the same time, they had all this other pressure from their jobs."*
>
> – Community college interviewee

However, most **descriptions of institutionalization focused on** how partners did this, most commonly by **hiring or designating a key point person at the CSU** to manage and build relationships with partners and/or **transforming administrative processes** (e.g., establishing MOUs for automatic transcript sharing).

Uniquely, Partnership 1 institutionalized their efforts through mapping and creating a database of program/curricular pathways (see Case Studies).

Conclusions and Considerations

We found that most of the intersegmental transfer partnerships involved in this learning engagement worked to identify and remove barriers to transfer for students, made changes aimed at increasing transfer student belonging at the CSU, collaborated on ways to share data, and engaged staff and faculty to create more transfer-receptive institutions. To accomplish this and support successful partnerships, partners worked on communication (both within and across institutions), relationship building, and institutionalization of efforts. Though partners faced challenges with communication, resource constraints (i.e., funding and staffing), and buy-in for the work, most partnerships saw an increase in awareness of the CSU campus and ADTs, completion of ADTs, and the relative proportion of transfer students enrolling at the CSU campus with an ADT.

Based on these findings across partnerships, we present relevant considerations by audience: 1) Institutions interested in, or in the process of, creating 2-year to 4-year transfer partnerships, 2) Funders, 3) Legislators/policymakers,[14] and 4) Researchers.

Institutions interested in, or in the process of, creating 2-year to 4-year transfer partnerships should consider:

- establishing a designated position to manage partnership relationships, demonstrate commitment and prioritization, and support succession planning;
- ensuring that partners are regularly convening, listening to one another, collaborating on goal setting, and providing timely information to each other;
- identifying and employing transfer champions at multiple levels of leadership/staffing to support their work;
- developing shared milestones/target outcomes and routinely assessing progress; and
- using data to justify the need to institutionalize successful practices, and to solicit permanent funding to sustain such efforts.

Funders should consider:

- providing planning grants to new transfer partnerships to support the identification of key areas to focus on, ideally involving data collection across partner institutions and listening sessions for CSU partners to understand community college needs;

---

[14] This refers to policymakers at the state, regional, or institutional level, depending on the policy in question.

College Futures Foundation Supported CSU-Community College Transfer Partnerships: A Retrospective Look

- providing ongoing funding to help institutionalize the changes that transfer partnerships make and the strategies they employ, as funding constraints were cited as an impediment to sustainability;
- supporting the extensive but critical work required to ease students' transitional burdens by sharing data between institutions (e.g., funding and technical assistance for data sharing MOUs);
- funding the ongoing examination of student-level outcomes of transfer partnership efforts across regions within the state; and
- continuing to broadcast funding opportunities to institutions; one partner noted that, prior to this experience, they did not know the full extent of College Futures' ability to support efforts to increase access to higher education.

Legislators and policymakers should consider:

- identifying which administrative barriers to transfer require policy change by the Chancellor's Office(s) or state legislature – for instance, legal concerns and MOU negotiations posed challenges to partners' ability to share transcripts automatically or establish bidirectional data sharing;
- creating a task force to identify areas requiring policy reform around real-time data sharing, potentially in collaboration with The Office of Cradle-to-Career Data;
- developing policies that eliminate barriers to transfer student admission into impacted programs; and
- incentivizing departments to engage in ADT pathway alignment and other transfer-receptive practices, while keeping in mind that partnerships in this engagement reported the importance of momentum building through a coalition of the willing.

Researchers should consider the following questions related to transfer partnerships:

- How can state, regional, and local initiatives build upon one another to improve transfer?
  - Are local partnerships necessary to support curricular alignment, even when statewide efforts are in place?
- How can institutional research offices best support the routine collection and reporting of student-level outcomes of transfer partnership efforts?
  - What are the short- and long-term impacts of partner innovations on disaggregated student outcomes?
  - Which innovations have the most impact, in general and for specific student populations?
- Why are some departments more motivated to streamline transfer pathways than others?
  - How might faculty mindsets at 4-year institutions contribute to departmental engagement?
  - What incentives are most effective in motivating departmental engagement in transfer pathway efforts?

We also note that two partnerships specifically cited the Research and Planning (RP) Group's "Through the Gate" study as a driver and informer for their transfer partnership efforts. As such, we want to highlight the role of the RP Group's research and others like it. We recommend that audiences from all avenues in the field stay abreast of such reports, and consider how such reports:

- may contribute to and/or inform their own institutions' efforts;
- can guide targeted efforts for how their organizations may support, or further support, efforts made by institutions;
- provide data to make informed policy around increased transfer accessibility in California; and
- can respond to each other and build a holistic understanding of student outcomes, barriers, and statewide successes related to transfer.

Limitations

As with any retrospective learning engagement, as time passes, the accuracy and specificity of constituents' recollection declines. Specificity was additionally challenging for this engagement given that many partnerships had multiple transfer efforts and sometimes multiple related grants simultaneously. Therefore, partners were not always able to identify what was specifically connected to their College Futures Foundation grant(s). This learning engagement was also limited by the turnover that participants noted as a challenge in their transfer work – sometimes those with the most knowledge of the partnerships had moved on and were not available to participate. Similarly, for one partnership, we were not able to interview any community college constituents and only one CSU campus constituent. Therefore, our perspective on that partnership is limited.

Case Studies

In this section, we present an at-a-glance table comparing the partnerships and then provide brief case studies of the five partnerships. We highlight specific examples of the themes presented previously that were unique to a particular partnership, and unique themes that arose in only a partnership or two and were thus not described above. We hope these case studies provide those interested in engaging in transfer partnership work additional details to inform building and maintaining such partnerships.

Table 1. Partnerships at a glance

		P1	P2	P3	P4	P5
Removed barriers	Shared point of contact (for students and/or staff)	X	X	X	X	X
	Peer mentorship program	X	X	X	X	
	Scholarships	X	X		X	X
	Clarity of transfer process	X		X		
Changed policies and practices to increase sense of belonging	Welcome items	X	X			
	(CSU) Transfer center	X		X	X	X
	Transfer orientation				X	X
	Increased outreach	X	X		X	X
	Events and programming	X	X			X
Shared data and documents	Established data sharing	X	X	X	X	
	Shared transcripts	X		X	X	
Engaged staff and faculty for more transfer-receptive institutions	Worked on curricular alignment	X	X			X
	Established collaborative meetings	X	X	X	X	X

Partnership 1

What Compelled Partners to Work Together on Transfer?

Partnership 1 wanted to **improve the transfer student experience by providing transparency to the transfer process** through connecting with students early to let them know they can and should consider transfer, removing barriers to transfer, increasing 2- and 4-year graduation rates, and strengthening curricular alignment from high school through the California State University (CSU). The partnership was bolstered by using data on the rate of students transferring, as well as information and data from the Research and Planning (RP) Group's "Through the Gate" study that applied to their student population.

What Did Partners Undertake During Their Grant Periods?

Worked to remove barriers. Just as other partnerships did, Partnership 1 focused on a smooth transition by:

- **increasing access to a shared contact** utilizing a **peer mentor program** that employed second-year transfer students to help new students transition between the two institutions and **housing a shared CSU advisor/representative** at the community college, although some interviewees pointed out that this position existed prior to formalization;
- **providing scholarships** specifically for transfer students; and
- uniquely, creating an agreement with students and the community college that would **identify them early on as transfer students.**

Made changes to improve student belonging. Like others, Partnership 1:

- **expanded CSU campus contact with students** before arrival through shared programming, such as inviting the community college students to the CSU campus' sporting events;
- **provided welcome items** to students, staff, and faculty (e.g., "transfer stickers" for employees to display in their office); and
- **established a transfer center** at the CSU campus for students, which provided access to critical resources (e.g., computers, headphones, cameras, printers) and a welcoming environment (e.g., decorated with motivational words and school spirit items).

Collaborated on ways to share data. During their grant period, Partnership 1 established:

- **data sharing between partners** and data training to staff to increase understanding of what data is needed and its importance for student outcomes; and
- **automatically shared transcripts** to the CSU for students who were part of their transfer programming.

Engaged staff and faculty to create more transfer-receptive institutions. Partnership 1 focused heavily on utilizing its staff and faculty to accomplish the following:

- **Created a digital database of course pathways with curricular alignment** that is accessible to students, parents, and advisors to map out course pathways between both partners, allowing students to understand what they needed to do to transfer.
  - This resulted in students becoming better advocates for themselves when preparing to transfer.
- **Provided stipends to faculty** to engage in pathway curriculum design.

Identified persistent barriers. For Partnership 1, these were primarily **administrative barriers** that resulted in students not knowing about the Associate Degree for Transfer (ADT), despite the programs being launched in 2011-12, delays in course substitutions and degree verification, and timely GE certifications.

College Futures Foundation Supported CSU-Community College Transfer Partnerships: A Retrospective Look
EDUCATION INSIGHTS CENTER AT CALIFORNIA STATE UNIVERSITY, SACRAMENTO

22

Outcomes.

- **Increased awareness of the CSU.** Partners reported the pathways database allowed students to see how their community college courses prepared them for upper-division courses at the CSU campus.
- **Increased ADT completion and transfer.** ADT graduation rates at the community college increased, as did the proportion of community college students transferring to the CSU campus with ADTs.

What Attributes Foster a Successful Intersegmental Transfer Partnership?

Communication. Like other partnerships, Partnership 1 frequently discussed the need to keep open communication between partners and did so, in part, by hosting two **partnership convenings** each year to connect, calibrate, and decide the next action steps. Most of Partnership 1's descriptions of communication related to **course and curricular alignment,** as building this was a focus of the partnership during the grant period.

Relationship building. Like many others, Partnership 1 focused on:

- **Having faculty, staff, and department buy-in** rather than administration forcing participation, though there was **difficulty within institutions with getting faculty and leadership buy-in** for course and curricular alignment for select departments. For these select few, partners simply did not agree with course mapping and could not come to an understanding, despite the efforts of campus and college leadership. At the time of the interviews, this challenge had not yet been resolved.
- **Developing trust** among partners **at their own institution and among institutions** (e.g., leadership from both institutions like Presidents and AVPs, faculty from corresponding departments).
- Emphasizing the need to maintain the relationships built during the grant period, by **ensuring there are "transfer champions"** at each institution and at varying levels of leadership.

Institutionalization for Partnership 1 was done primarily through:

- **Transforming and aligning course pathways** between the institutions, which was accomplished **despite resource constraints.**
  - Partners noted that the development of the pathway database required significant work from advisors, faculty, and departments, and research office leadership, which was a challenge. This partnership also used data related to course offerings and demands to identify "bottleneck courses" where students were getting stuck in their pathways, finding that the bottleneck was in part a result of a lack of lab space.
  - This partnership also faced **challenges with creating an MOU** and ensuring that what data was shared was clean and provided information that both institutions truly needed.
- **Obtaining resources to support the partnership.** The community college partner received separate funding to help support efforts of transfer partnership formalization, specifically the overhaul and creation of course and program pathways.

What Compelled Partners to Work Together on Transfer?

Partnership 2 aimed to **improve transfer students' experience** holistically at their CSU campus. Specifically, the CSU campus **used data** to inform their decision to focus on disproportionately impacted student groups, a strategy inspired by the RP Group's "Through the Gate" Initiative. **Formalizing their partnership** enabled the CSU campus and its community college partners to kickstart or scale up their existing efforts to create a smooth transfer pathway for students.

What Did Partners Undertake During Their Grant Periods?

Worked to remove barriers. Partnership 2 sought to do this by:

- **conducting outreach events** to create awareness of CSU-related opportunities (e.g., research, study abroad, Summer Academy), ADTs, and transfer pathways among prospective and admitted students prior to enrolling at the CSU;

- **increasing students' access to a shared point of contact** by creating a **peer mentorship program** that enabled transfer students to connect and by housing a CSU advisor at the community college to provide institutional knowledge to faculty, staff, and students (e.g., explaining why students were denied admission to the CSU campus); and

- **creating a transfer student scholarship** at the CSU to incentivize transfer enrollment.

Made changes to improve student belonging. Partnership 2 implemented strategies to build transfer students' sense of belonging at the CSU campus, including:

- **expanding CSU campus contact** with community college students through events at the community college that celebrate students' commitment to the university they plan to enroll in, events at the CSU for prospective transfer students, and campus tours and workshops at the CSU for community college affinity programs;

- **creating programming for transfer students at the CSU,** including events that celebrated admission and enrollment to the CSU campus as an achievement, **transfer-specific orientation,** and a spring open house for admitted students; and

- **employing welcome artifacts** (e.g., transfer ally certificates for faculty and staff to display) and visible welcome banners with transfer students' class years.

Engaged staff and faculty to create more transfer-receptive institutions. For Partnership 2, strategies included:

- **establishing meetings so the CSU could listen to community college partner** experiences;

- engaging STEM faculty to **review STEM major curricular and course requirements** to find ways to improve ADT pathways; and

- participating in **Enrollment Management meetings** for AVPs.

Identified persistent barriers. For Partnership 2, these included the following:

- **Administrative barriers** related to course naming schemes.
- **Course/curricular misalignment** including differences in course modality (e.g., transfer students may prefer online courses that the CSU campus does not offer). Some partners also noted that there were restrictions with the transferability of students' online community college courses and difficulties with course naming schemes.

Outcomes. Reported outcomes for Partnership 2 included:[15]

- **an increase in ADTs awarded,** which community college partners attributed directly to the CSU campus' outreach efforts at their colleges;
- **increased awareness of the CSU campus,** which subsequently increased **the number of prospective transfer students;**
- **increased prospective transfer students' confidence about navigating the transfer process** among prospective students who attended the Summer Academy; and
- **increased number of ADT enrollees,** especially Underrepresented Minority students, and **increased 2-year graduation rates** among transfer students at the CSU.

What Attributes Foster a Successful Intersegmental Transfer Partnership?

Communication. Partnership 2 described how the proximity of their campuses enabled stronger communication between institutions and deeper engagement with one another, resulting in **collaboration beyond discussion.** This led to the creation of action-oriented plans to address barriers and the **implementation of regional summits** for community college and high school leaders to share information across segments.

Relationship building. Partnership 2 noted the following:

- **Engaging campus and college leaders actively** with the transfer work was crucial for implementation and gathering campus support **to overcome difficulty with getting buy-in.** Community college partners initially hesitated to work with their CSU campus because of the campus' history with a lack of long-term commitment to transfer students (e.g., historical decrease in the visibility of the CSU campus and the transfer work when grant funding ended).
- **Sharing similar values,** including trust, mutual respect, humility, engagement, integrity, and commitment between both partners (e.g., listening and learning, not assuming, demonstrating a commitment to the work, being willing to receive constructive feedback) was important. The community college partners wanted to ensure that they could trust the CSU campus partner with their students and build trust, which took time and proven actions. Partners described a deeper sense of commitment when it was a long-term commitment rather than a short-term partnership.

---

[15] Partners noted that some of these efforts may not be directly tied to the work funded by the College Futures Foundation grants specifically, but instead result from a culmination of various efforts.

Institutionalization. Partnership 2's **formalized MOUs** operationalized bi-directional data sharing. **Resource constraints related to staffing and funding to support staffing** (e.g., inability to fill positions that were critical to the partnership) at the CSU campus impacted both institutions (e.g., CSU staff burnout from the need for ongoing fundraising, elimination of grant-funded CSU campus staff positions at the community college).

Partnership 3

What Compelled Partners to Work Together on Transfer?

Partnership 3 wanted to **improve the transfer experience** and redevelop their relationships with community college partners in order to identify and strategize ways to reduce barriers that transfer students face. The College Futures Foundation grant provided crucial support for this partnership to **formalize a relationship** in order to provide social, emotional, and academic supports to their transfer students.

What Did Partners Undertake During Their Grant Periods?

Worked to remove barriers. Partnership 3's efforts included:

- **enhancing outreach and education efforts** specifically to students about ADTs and transfer pathways to **improve the clarity of the transfer process;** and
- **providing students with a shared point of contact** through the implementation of a **peer mentorship program** and through the hiring of CSU campus staff housed at the community college.

Made changes to improve student belonging. Partnership 3 **created a transfer student center** to provide a physical space where transfer students can obtain specialized support.

Collaborated on ways to share data. Partnership 3 **established document/data sharing processes,** which included **transcript sharing** between partner institutions and "reverse transfer" in which credits earned at the CSU campus could funnel back to the community college for degree completion. In addition, partners created communication avenues to provide data transparency between the CSU campus and the community colleges, including application, admission, and enrollment data. Due to the success of this existing data-sharing process, the community college partner has decided to expand these efforts with other institutions, including a University of California.

Engaged staff and faculty to create more transfer-receptive institutions. Partnership 3 **established CSU and community college counselor convenings** that were facilitated by the CSU partner to allow the partners to come together to share information across institutions.

Identified persistent barriers. For Partnership 3, these were **administrative barriers,** specifically **misalignment of institutional processes and timelines** across the CSU campus and community college partner (e.g., community college staff not being fully available at certain critical times [e.g., summer, the time period after enrollment]). The grant

also provided the **dedicated time to collaboratively make data-informed decisions,** which allowed for identifying existing barriers for students that partners could collaboratively work to address (e.g., identified reverse transfer program as an area of focus).

Outcomes. Partnership 3 did not report specific student outcomes, in part due to challenges with data collection stemming from the pandemic.

What Attributes Foster a Successful Intersegmental Transfer Partnership?

Communication. Partnership 3:

- **hosted events and gatherings (listening tour)** across community college partners to identify key areas (e.g., transcripts as a way to facilitate course alignment) that needed improvement;
- **determined a point of contact at each institution** to facilitate information sharing across partners (e.g., application and admission processes, sharing new and updated information, answering questions, being readily available to partners); and
- **faced communication challenges,** which included lack of communication and/or responsiveness from partners attributed to staffing or leadership changes at both institutions (e.g., not always receiving a complete list of admitted students from the CSU campus resulting in students not receiving important enrollment information, lack of communication around **impaction** being the reason students were not being admitted).

Relationship building. Partnership 3:

- uniquely, **leveraged existing CSU campus staff and faculty expertise to provide support to community colleges** (e.g., CSU campus departments provided support to a community college partner to troubleshoot a technological issue the college experienced);
- **attended each other's board or leadership meetings** to demonstrate support for the partnership; and
- **faced difficulty getting buy-in** from CSU campus colleagues and departments – some were reportedly more invested in high school enrollees than transfer students, and, aside from the College Futures Foundation grant, the CSU campus was not incentivized to create transfer pathways.

Institutionalization. Partnership 3 reporeted they had done the following:

- **Established an MOU to formalize partnerships,** which allowed for **transcript sharing** between institutions and establishing shared metrics.
- **Faced resource constraints,** such as staff turnover.
  - Specifically, leadership changes at the community college impacted how the information was relayed between partners, and CSU staff turnover created a lack of clarity around the community college's role in explaining the partnership to new staff.
- **Dealt with unclear roles/responsibilities/expectations** between stakeholders involved in the partnership (e.g., no formal or written document, or lack of awareness that one may exist, that establishes responsibilities of partner institutions).
  - Partnership 3 noted the need for a point person from each institution to lead partnership improvement and update institutional leadership.

College Futures Foundation Supported CSU-Community College Transfer Partnerships: A Retrospective Look
EDUCATION INSIGHTS CENTER AT CALIFORNIA STATE UNIVERSITY, SACRAMENTO

27

What Compelled Partners to Work Together on Transfer?

For Partnership 4, **data** indicated the need to **improve the transfer student experience** to raise transfer graduation rates, time to degree, and transfer student connection. This motivated **formalizing, strengthening, and expanding transfer partnerships** between the CSU campus and feeder community colleges to increase the proportion of transfer students with an ADT.

What Did Partners Undertake during Their Grant Periods?

Worked to remove barriers. Like the other partnerships in this learning engagement, Partnership 4 sought to do this by:

- **increasing access to a shared point of contact,** specifically extending placements of CSU campus staff to all feeder community colleges and increasing their availability, and **creating a peer mentorship program** to support prospective and enrolled students; and

- **creating an ADT Incentive Scholarship** (since ended) to encourage successful habits (e.g., attending advising, using degree mapping tools).

Made changes to improve student belonging. Partnership 4, like others in this learning engagement, **increased outreach** to students prior to arrival at the CSU campus (e.g., CSU campus tabling at high school and community college events) and **established transfer-specific orientations and a CSU transfer center** with visual ties to feeder community colleges (e.g., community college banners).

Collaborated on ways to share data. Partnership 4 focused on **sharing transcripts** – while the CSU campus had established electronic access to transfer student transcripts, at the time of this learning engagement, they were piloting a "reverse transfer" system with one feeder college in which credits earned at the CSU campus could funnel back to the community college for degree completion.

Engaged staff and faculty to create more transfer-receptive institutions. Partnership 4 sought to do this by:

- **engaging faculty in intersegmental discussions** to align curriculum and create pathways;

- **establishing counselor conferences** at the CSU, which subsequently lapsed after the pandemic, and **sending CSU admissions and outreach staff to external counselor conferences;** and

- **improving communication** across counseling and advising staff both within and across institutions to ensure students received accurate information.

Identified persistent barriers. For Partnership 4, these were primarily related to **course/curriculum alignment,** including challenges with being accepted into a program of choice (e.g., impaction, department resistance to transfers/credit for prior learning) and being accurately advised so that students have the correct and requisite courses to have junior standing.

Outcomes.

- **Increased awareness of the CSU** and the **benefits of an ADT** among students, according to counselors.
- **Increased ADT transfer.** The CSU campus saw increases in the ADT transfer numbers from 18% of the transfer population in fall 2017 to 26% in fall 2022. At least one partner community college saw an increase in the number of students transferring to the CSU.
- **Increased retention.** 100% of ADT students who received the ADT Incentive Scholarship were retained to their third semester.
- **Improved graduation rates.** The CSU campus saw 80% of ADT Incentive Scholarship recipients graduate in two years, compared to 52% of other ADT students and 41% of non-ADT transfer students.

What Attributes Foster a Successful Intersegmental Transfer Partnership?

Communication and relationship building were key. As with others, Partnership 4:

- **established "all-hands" meetings** once a semester and facilitated collaboration across silos on campus (e.g., advisors across departments, registrar, academic advising);
- **fostered trust and** described making **a mutual commitment** to a long-term partnership and actively contributing to each other's success, collective goals, and mutual benefits (e.g., going to one another's board meetings to show alignment and support);
- **faced challenges with** both cross-silo (e.g., major advising, academic advising, program advising, financial aid) and intersegmental **communication,** such that CSU campus curricular changes and other advising- or counseling-relevant changes were not always communicated in a timely way; and
- **had difficulty getting buy-in** for curricular alignment from particular departments at the CSU campus.

Institutionalization. In alignment with the findings across partnerships, Partnership 4 reported they had done the following:

- **Created a dedicated CSU position to serve as a key point person,** ensuring that the partnership work was not person-dependent, lapsing when champions leave.
- **Transformed administrative processes** to support a smooth transfer experience.
  - Overcame a backlog of transfer credit evaluations, now ensuring these are completed ahead of orientation so advising is based on actual credits.
  - Established a two-year pledge for incoming transfer students, which offers signers priority registration and accessible advising.
- **Faced resource constraints,** including challenges stemming from staff turnover at both the CSU campus and partner community colleges (e.g., not knowing who to contact) and challenges with funding to sustain the work that was championed during the grant period.

What Compelled Partners to Work Together on Transfer?

Partnership 5 noted that existing relationships with their community college partners, as the largest feeders of transfer students and relative proximity, helped to motivate their engagement in a **formalized partnership.** They wanted to **improve the transfer student experience** by integrating student services at both institutions, creating clear course pathways, and increasing student academic success and retention. Specifically, Partnership 5 was interested in aligning efforts to increase transfer enrollment at the CSU with the California Community Colleges Chancellor's Office *Vision for Success.* They felt establishing permanent funding at the CSU would best support their transfer efforts.

What Did Partners Undertake During Their Grant Periods?

Worked to remove barriers. During their grant period, Partnership 5:

- **conducted targeted outreach** about ADT pathways and provided mentoring programs from staff at both institutions **to increase the clarity of transfer processes;**
- **increased access to a shared point of contact** by housing a CSU admissions counselor at partner community colleges and providing **peer mentors** upon transfer to aid in the transition; and
- targeted efforts to increase transfer for Black and Latino male students by dedicating grant funding toward **scholarships.**

Made changes to improve student belonging. Like others in this learning engagement, Partnership 5:

- **increased early contact with potential transfer students by hosting events** – high school registration events, transfer program information sessions at partner community colleges, and including prospective transfer students in the CSU campus welcome event – and **expanded the transfer program;**
- utilized **co-branded programming** brochures and fliers;
- **established transfer-specific orientations;**
- **created and distributed** "swag" **welcome items** for transfer students (e.g., shirts) to promote a sense of belonging and pride; and
- **established a CSU transfer center** with visual ties to feeder community colleges (e.g., community college banners).

Engaged staff and faculty to create more transfer-receptive institutions. Partnership 5 sought to do this by creating **clear course patterns and pathways** and specifically designed professional development for faculty on refining curriculum for transfer.

Identified persistent barriers. Partnership 5 reported **course/curricular misalignment,** specifically, that students at the community college take a lot of online courses and want that **course modality** offered at the same rate at the CSU campus, but the CSU campus focuses on being an in-person campus.

Outcomes. Partnership 5 reported an **increased awareness of the CSU,** as seen in an increased number of students **signing up for the partnership's transfer program** at entrance or within the first semester of enrollment at the partner community college.

What Attributes Foster a Successful Intersegmental Transfer Partnership?

Communication. Partnership 5:

- **held twice-yearly meetings** where campus leadership met their counterparts (e.g., Presidents, VPs, deans from each institution) to check in on each other's progress and troubleshoot necessary issues;
- **developed a communications plan** and materials; and
- **held** up to four annual **professional development opportunities** between partners.

Relationship building. Partnership 5 emphasized the importance of building and sustaining relationships by bringing college and campus leaders together to **agree on shared goals and outcomes through recurring meetings to create a "joint identity."**

Institutionalization. Partnership 5 reported having done the following:

- **Created a dedicated position at the CSU to serve as a key point person** to manage partnerships among the CSU campus and community college partners.
- **Secured dedicated funding** to maintain this position.
- **Faced resource constraints, including staffing** at both institutions **and space** for instruction (i.e., insufficient lab space for courses).
  - Regarding staffing, CSU leadership identified a faculty member to help lead faculty learning around transfer receptiveness but was unable to follow through due to teaching needs in the department, and the community college experienced staff turnover.
  - Prior to obtaining dedicated funding for the key point position, campus HR required them to be listed as temporary positions, limiting the work to a 3-year contract, which resulted in a limited pool of candidates.

College Futures Foundation Supported CSU-Community College Transfer Partnerships: A Retrospective Look
EDUCATION INSIGHTS CENTER AT CALIFORNIA STATE UNIVERSITY, SACRAMENTO

Appendix

We collected data across the five partnerships from four sources (see Table A-1) and used data from each source to inform data collection at the next step. For example, after conducting a document analysis of the grant proposals and reports to gain an understanding of the goals of each partnership, we developed interview questions that would help us gather data to fill in any remaining gaps and questions. In Table A-1, we detail the participation in these data collection methods.

All participants were offered $50/hour in gift cards for participating in the meaning making sessions. As CSUs were the grantees, only the community college participants were offered $50/hour in gift cards for participating in the interview. Some participants declined the incentive and others intended to use the gift cards to support students.

Two of the report authors previously worked in the California State University (CSU) system and measures were established to avoid any conflicts of interest with these authors' involvement in data collection from a prior institution. Similarly, while Education Insights Center is housed at California State University, Sacramento, our research staff are not involved in any campus transfer efforts.

Table A-1. Transfer Partnership Participation

Partnership	CSU Survey	Interviews		CSU Grant Proposal	CSU Interim Grant Report	CSU Final Grant Report	Meaning-making session	
		CSU	Colleges				1	2
1	1	2	2	X		X	X	X
2	1	3	1	X	X	X	X	X
3	2	1	2	X	X	X	X	X
4	3	3	2	X	X		X	X
5	1	1	0	X	X	X		

SACRAMENTO STATE

California State University, Sacramento
Education Insights Center
304 S St, Sacramento, CA 95811
www.edinsightscenter.org
✖ @EdInsightsCtr