Tackling TRANSFER
The vast majority of students who enroll in a community college plan to one day earn a bachelor’s degree. Most never make it.
1.7 Million
new students enroll in a community college each year

80%
plan to get a bachelor’s degree or higher

Copyright © 2016 Public Agenda, Community College Research Center, The Aspen Institute
We tracked 720,000 community college students who started in the fall of 2007 in pursuit of a college credential. Only 100,000 earned a bachelor’s after 6 years.
Too few students manage to make the leap

Just 33% of students who started community college in fall of 2007 transferred to a four-year school.
Even when they transfer, we’re still failing them

Of the students who successfully transferred, only 42% went on to get a bachelor’s within 6 years of starting.
Broken transfer processes harm the students who can least afford it.
Students who begin their education at a community college are more likely to be lower-income than students who start at a 4-year.
We’ll never reach our education goals without helping these students succeed.

Our country can’t afford the wasted opportunity of broken transfer.
36% of higher income students transfer to a 4-year school.

Lower income students have it worse. Just 28% transfer.
Outcomes aren’t great for anybody

44% of higher income transfer students earn a bachelor’s degree within 6 years.

Just 36% of lower income transfer students earn a bachelor’s degree within 6 years.
We’re wasting lots of taxpayer and tuition dollars – as well as human potential.
Students lose lots of credits in the TRANSFER PROCESS.
Just **58%** of students can successfully transfer 90% of their credits. And **15%** can’t transfer any credits at all.
Students who can transfer 90% of their credits are 250% more likely to get their bachelor's degree, compared to those who transfer half or less.
Even when students are able to transfer credits, those credits often don’t count toward their major.
2 Years of General Education + 2 Years of Major Courses ≠ 4 Years to a Bachelor’s Degree
Lost credits also mean lost money for both students and taxpayers.
If we increased the transfer rate among all new students at community colleges by 10 percentage points, there could be about 70,000 more students earning bachelor’s degrees EVERY YEAR.
The Case for Fixing Transfer
HAS NEVER BEEN STRONGER
We’ve known for years that students have struggled to transfer successfully, but demographic, political and economic trends now make tackling the problem more urgent than ever.
For many universities, improving transfer is a way to boost declining enrollment – and completion.
Transfer is a **shared problem** and a **shared opportunity**.
2-year and 4-year colleges need to co-own getting students to the finish line.
Transfer students are already a large and growing part of their student body. Universities need to help transfer students succeed instead of focusing primarily on first-year students.
REMEMBER,
80% of community college students plan to get a bachelor’s degree or higher.
Community colleges must own what happens to their students after they leave.
Did you know?

On transfer, what a community college does appears to matter more than the types of students it serves and where it’s located.
These are the bachelor’s completion rates for transfer students, by individual community college.

There’s a lot of variation.
There is also huge state variation among community colleges in bachelor’s attainment by their students who transfer.
These are average bachelor’s completion rates for transfer students based on the type of community college where they started.
While outcomes at community colleges vary, what we might imagine would predict variation doesn’t.
On the other hand, the characteristics of 4-year schools matter when it comes to how many transfer students get a bachelor’s.
There’s also huge variation in the effectiveness of individual four-year colleges in helping transfer students complete bachelor’s degrees.
Our conclusion: Transfer outcomes depend on what community colleges and 4-year colleges do to teach and support their students.