

Transfer Reform

CSU Long Beach

BACKGROUND

In 2010, Governor Schwarzenegger signed into law historic legislation to reform the transfer process from California Community Colleges (CCC) to the California State University (CSU) system. For decades, transfer has been a confusing process for students marked by myriad challenges, including 1) coursework requirements that differed from campus to campus, and sometimes changed from year to year, 2) that frequently required students to take courses they didn't need or that they had to retake after transferring, and 3) that did not result in an associate degree for students at the time of transfer. SB 1440 (Padilla) sought to change all of that by creating an Associate Degree for Transfer comprised of 60 units, 18 of which would be focused in a major or area of emphasis—all of which would be fully transferrable to the California State University—that guaranteed students admission into the CSU system with junior standing, and that ensured that students would only need an additional 60 units to complete their bachelor's degree (for a fuller description of the legislation and benefits to students, please see *Meeting Compliance, but Missing the Mark* found at www.collegecampaign.org).

Templates (called Transfer Model Curricula, or TMCs) for developing Associate Degrees for Transfer (ADT) have been created by leaders from both the California Community College and California State University systems. From these TMCs, community colleges create Associate Degrees for Transfer while CSU campuses report back for which of their existing degrees a student earning an ADT would be prepared to enter as a junior.

More than three years after the passage of this important legislation, significant progress in implementation has been made, though much remains to be done. In an analysis of data released monthly by the California State University Chancellor's Office, implementation—and consequently student access—varies from campus to campus.

One campus that has been a leader in providing access to students on the SB 1440 transfer pathway is CSU Long Beach. Not only have they created pathways into each of the 25 majors for which there is a TMC, but they are also providing a depth of access by admitting students to nearly all of the concentrations within the majors offered as well.

SUCCESSFUL STRATEGIES

- ***Saying “yes.”*** Initially the CSU system put forth a goal of having at least one pathway into each campus for each of the TMC majors they offered. For example, if a campus offers a bachelor's degree in English, with concentrations in Creative Writing, Literature, and Rhetoric and Composition, they would only need to ensure that one of those concentrations was similar to meet the system goal. If students earning an Associate of Arts for Transfer Degree (AA-T) in English wanted to transfer and study either of the other concentrations (Literature or Rhetoric and Composition, if only Creative Writing was deemed “similar”), they would not have the guarantee of entering as a junior or completing their degree in 60 units.

CSU Long Beach, however, has been taking extra steps in order to say “yes” to students who want to transfer into any concentration within a major offered on their campus, or to transfer into selected degree programs outside of the major they had originally selected at the community college.

- » **Restructuring major preparation requirements.** CSU Long Beach has restructured their lower-division major preparation coursework in the majors for which there is a TMC to align with the coursework students will be taking at the community college so that they can admit students into nearly every degree and concentration they offer on campus. The ADT consists of the general education coursework required of all undergraduates at the CSU or University of California (UC), as well as 18 units of preparation coursework in a major or area of emphasis. If the 18 units in a TMC—the template for developing an Associate Degree for Transfer—align with the lower-division coursework for the degree at the CSU, then it can be deemed “similar” and an ADT student can transfer into it.
- » **“Compatible” degrees.** CSU Long Beach has noticed that approximately 50% of students who transfer to their campus with an ADT change their major. There are a number of reasons why a student may make this choice: 1) the ADT program is still being fully implemented on most CCC campuses and their preferred major may not have been available; 2) they weren’t sure where their interest was, but broader degrees in an area of emphasis (such as Humanities or Social Sciences), which would have allowed them the flexibility to take a more diverse set of classes, are not yet available at CCCs; or 3) they simply changed their mind upon transferring. Whatever the reason, if a student changes their major after transfer, they will not have the guarantee of entering as a junior and completing their bachelor’s degree in 60 units as promised by SB 1440.



In order to address this issue and create more flexibility for students, many CSU campuses, including Long Beach, have been working to define “compatible” degree pathways for ADT students. These are degree pathways in majors outside of the specific discipline in which students completed their preparation at the community college, but for which their preparation would still enable them to succeed. At CSU Long Beach, the community college student who completed an AA-T in English can not only transfer into a degree program in English, but also into a bachelor’s degree program in Comparative World Literature and American Studies. Similarly, students interested in a degree in American Studies at CSU Long Beach could enter into that program with an AA-T in English, History, or Political Science.

- » **Creating room for students to explore.** Of course students should have rigorous coursework requirements for the major in which they earn their degree, but students should also have the opportunity to explore additional areas of interest during these formative years of earning their bachelor’s degree. CSU Long Beach has worked with faculty to define the maximum number of units a major can require that still allow for students to complete their degrees in 120 semester units and allow students to take courses of interest to them to provide a well-rounded education.

- **Clear communication to community colleges.** Each year CSU Long Beach hosts an annual conference for community college counselors to update them on changes they have made in enrollment management practices, transfer requirements, etc. This clear and proactive communication has enabled community colleges to provide accurate guidance to their students, and it has also provided a roadmap for community colleges that may still be working on developing ADTs in majors for which CSU Long Beach already has opened the doors for ADT students to enter. Using the former example of English, if a community college knows that a nearby CSU campus has already created pathways into an English bachelor degree program with multiple concentrations, they know that there is an opportunity ready and waiting for their students as soon as they build out their end of the pathway: the Associate of Arts for Transfer Degree in English.
- **Clear communication to students.** One particularly important element for students to understand when they transfer to a CSU campus with an Associate Degree for Transfer is that the major preparation they completed at the community college level has prepared them to enter into a specific field of study after transfer. As mentioned previously, approximately 50% of students on the SB 1440 pathway transferring into CSU Long Beach apply for a major outside of the one for which they earned an ADT. With some majors, there are compatible degrees into which they could transfer, but for others, changing their major would make them ineligible for many of the benefits of the ADT.

In order for students to make informed choices about the direction they take after transfer, CSU Long Beach has instituted mandatory advising twice a year during students' first year. During their first advising meeting upon arrival to the campus, ADT students are provided with a two-year contract detailing which classes they need to take in order to graduate in two years (at a full-time pace) and to receive all of the guarantees of being on the SB 1440 transfer pathway. At the end of the contract, the students indicate if they will be continuing with the plan provided in the contract or if they are going to go in a different direction, and sign the contract.

Reform at this scale is not easy, particularly for systems as large and diverse as California Community Colleges and the CSU. Yet, when focused on creating opportunity for students and having a willingness to reconsider what has been in place for a long time, reform and increased student success is possible. Saying "yes" works.

For more information regarding CSU Long Beach's implementation of SB 1440, please contact:

Cathy Bean, Director of Academic Programs & Curriculum

Cathy.Beane@csulb.edu