

Demonstrated Excellence

College Practices that Support Student Success and Make California Stronger



Associate Degree for Transfer Student Enrollment

March 2016



At California State University, Fullerton, decades of hard work developing close partnerships with Orange County community colleges has paid off for students.

In 2010, the Student Transfer Achievement Reform (STAR) Act established the Associate Degree for Transfer program, which created 120-unit pathways from California Community Colleges to the California State University (CSU) system. With the Associate Degree for Transfer in hand, students are guaranteed admission to the CSU system and guaranteed that they will finish their upper-division bachelor's degree requirements in no more than 60 units. Additionally, at campuses that use more selective admissions criteria due to their limited enrollment capacity, Associate Degree for Transfer students are given a small GPA bump to increase their chances in a competitive admissions process.

One CSU campus that has demonstrated excellence in Associate Degree for Transfer student enrollment is Cal State Fullerton. Located in northern Orange County, Cal State Fullerton is one of the largest CSU campuses with almost 39,000 students enrolled in 2014-15. As a result of very intentional collaboration with Orange County community colleges, Cal State Fullerton has been a prime destination for California Community College transfer students for over 15 years. In 2014-15, CSU Fullerton enrolled more than 5,300 new transfer students.

Nine Orange County community colleges that send many of their transfer students to Cal State Fullerton are excelling at awarding Associate Degrees for Transfer. In fact, in 2013-14, six Orange County community colleges were ranked in the top 20 in terms of the number of Associate Degrees for Transfer awarded out of all 113 community colleges across the state.

"Earning an Associate Degree for Transfer was good because it allowed me to then help other people in the process."

Vanessa Moreno, now a junior sociology major at Cal State Fullerton, knew that obtaining a bachelor's degree was essential to securing a better future for herself and her family. However, she was unsure how she was going to navigate the complicated path to a bachelor's degree that stood in front of her.

For Vanessa, an Associate Degree for Transfer was more than just a piece of paper—it was the path that would guide her to achieving her academic and professional goals. The predetermined structure of the pathway empowered her to become independent and control her academic journey, and the experience pursuing the Associate Degree for Transfer exposed her to all of the resources that helped her become the student she is today.

Most importantly to Vanessa, though, is that her experience obtaining an Associate Degree for Transfer equipped her with the knowledge to help her younger brother successfully navigate the community college journey and pursue his academic aspirations of receiving a bachelor's degree as well.



(left) Mark Casas, Senior Psychology Major (right) Vanessa Moreno, Junior Sociology Major

Six of Cal State Fullerton's Nine Local Area Community Colleges Are Top 20 Associate Degree for Transfer Producers

Campus	Number of ADTs Awarded, 2013-14	ADT Production Rank (out of 113 community colleges)
Fullerton College	394	3
Orange Coast College	298	11
Saddleback College	238	13
Santiago Canyon College	216	15
Cypress College	215	16
Golden West College	201	17
Santa Ana College	141	27
Irvine Valley College	117	37
Coastline Community College	21	83

Source: California Community Colleges Chancellor's Office

While some CSU campuses enroll a similar number of transfer students overall (which includes students transferring both with and without an Associate Degree for Transfer), Cal State Fullerton has successfully enrolled Associate Degree for Transfer students above and beyond other CSU campuses. **In the fall of 2014, Associate Degree for Transfer earners made up nearly one in every three new transfer students at Cal State Fullerton, compared to only one in every ten new transfer students across the CSU system.** Cal State Fullerton was the top ranked CSU campus for both the total number of Associate Degree for Transfer students enrolled and the share of Associate Degree for Transfer students out of all upper-division transfer students.

CSU Fullerton Enrolled Nearly 900 ADT Transfer Students in the Fall of 2014

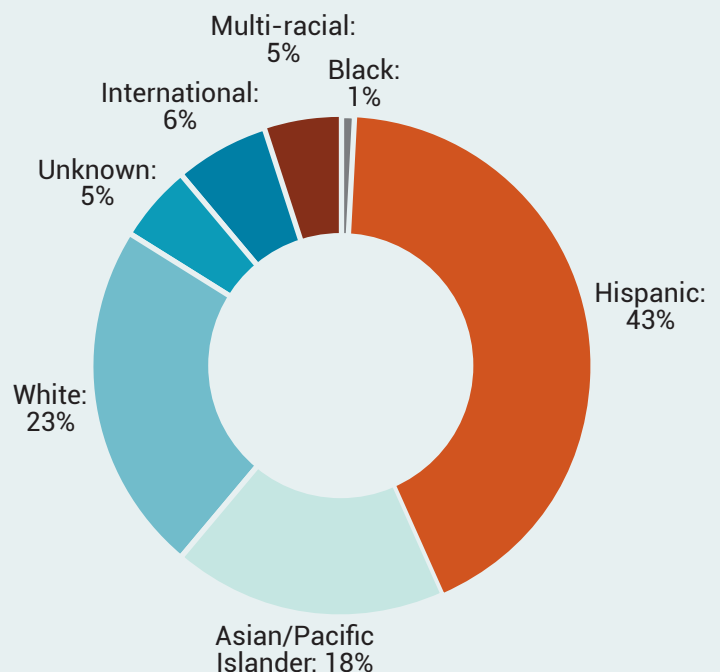
Campus	Number of ADT Transfer Students, Fall 2014	Number of All Upper-Division Transfer Students, Fall 2014	Percentage of ADT Students of All Upper-Division Transfer Students
Cal State Fullerton	879	3,089	28.5%

Source: California State University Office of the Chancellor

Not only has Cal State Fullerton been a consistent leader in enrolling Associate Degree for Transfer students, but the Associate Degree for Transfer students they enroll are remarkably diverse. **Almost 45 percent of the Fall 2015 Associate Degree for Transfer students are underrepresented minorities, compared to 38 percent of the transfer students without an Associate Degree for Transfer.**

Almost half of new Associate Degree for Transfer students at Cal State Fullerton are Latino

Race/ethnicity of New Associate Degree for Transfer Student Enrollment, Fall 2015



Source: California State University Fullerton Department of Institutional Research & Analytical Studies

What is Cal State Fullerton doing to attract and support Associate Degree for Transfer students?

Dr. José L. Cruz, Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs at Cal State Fullerton, said the university has taken two important steps to successfully implement the Associate Degree for Transfer program on its campus:

1. Identifying Associate Degree for Transfer students early in the admissions process, and
2. Using data to monitor the academic performance of Associate Degree for Transfer students and providing student support when needed.

Identifying Associate Degree for Transfer students early on is key

Cal State Fullerton is more competitive as a result of not having enough spots to accommodate all eligible students, so all applicants must meet heightened admissions standards regardless of their major. Therefore, early identification of Associate Degree for Transfer earners is important at CSU Fullerton to ensure that they receive the .1 GPA bump that comes with earning the Associate Degree for Transfer (ADT).

In a competitive admissions process, the .1 GPA bump can be a significant advantage for Associate Degree for Transfer earners. Dr. Cruz suggested that tracking students required a significant investment, especially in the areas of information technology and admissions. For example, Cal State Fullerton developed processes to alert admissions staff when community college students submit transcripts indicating that they have earned or are in the process of earning an Associate Degree for Transfer. By immediately tracking students into different categories (e.g., verified completed, in-progress, and incomplete), Cal State Fullerton can then provide student specific instructions for how to proceed in the application process accordingly.

For students who are identified as “in-progress” of receiving an Associate Degree for Transfer, Cal State Fullerton mails them detailed information about when and how to verify that they have completed an Associate Degree for Transfer and the conditions they must meet to finish their bachelor’s degree in 60 upper-division units at Cal State Fullerton.

The return on investment is clear, as the university has successfully enrolled almost 2,000 students on the Associate Degree for Transfer pathway between the Fall 2012 and Winter 2015 academic terms—more than double any other CSU campus.¹

How is Cal State Fullerton supporting Associate Degree for Transfer students once on campus?

We have profiled Cal State Fullerton for its commitment to improving student success and closing achievement gaps before, so it is not surprising that the university has supported the success of Associate Degree for Transfer students. In addition to the Student Success Teams that were previously established across the campus to focus on the graduation, retention, and career readiness of all students, Cal State Fullerton has dedicated support services specifically for Associate Degree for Transfer students. For example, once Associate Degree for Transfer students are on campus, departments across campus are using data to monitor their progress (e.g., student grade point average, academic probation, and degree completion progress) and provide interventions accordingly. Some academic departments have noticed that some Associate Degree for Transfer students are in need of supplementary instruction to be successful in upper-division coursework. In response, some academic departments have created training modules that supply students with the additional academic support while staying within the 60 units guaranteed by the Associate Degree for Transfer pathway.

Almost 45 percent of the Fall 2015 Associate Degree for Transfer students are underrepresented minorities, compared to 38 percent of the transfer students without an Associate Degree for Transfer.



Candice Sneizak,
Junior Chemistry
Major

<?> Custom California State University Chancellor’s Office Dataset

Associate Degree for Transfer is Good for Students

Mark Casas, a senior psychology major, told us that he was introduced to the Associate Degree for Transfer program during a visit to the transfer center and through his interactions with Extended Opportunity Programs and Services (EOPS) staff at Orange Coast College. Reflecting back on his college career, Mark felt that the structure of the program, both at the community college and the CSU level, allowed him to move efficiently through his coursework—ultimately receiving his degree and transferring from community college in fewer units than the over 80-unit average for all associate degree earners. Beyond the coursework, though, Mark believed that the clearer pathway and the reduction in excessive coursework resulting from the Associate Degree for Transfer gave him the ability to take part in academic enrichment opportunities outside of class, such as study abroad programs and involvement in student organizations, that research has shown are important to the holistic development of college students.

Candice Sneizak, a newly enrolled transfer student, echoed many of the sentiments Mark expressed. Candice liked that earning an Associate Degree for Transfer provided her an advantage in the admissions process, and also believed that completing all of her lower-division general education courses at the community college put her on the right path to finishing her bachelor's degree at Cal State Fullerton in two years. Although she felt accomplished having successfully transferred to a university, she was most proud of the fact that she had earned an Associate Degree for Transfer and had something to show for all of her hard work at the community

college—an achievement she said many of her peers were unable to realize during their time at a community college.

The voices of students like Vanessa, Mark, and Candice enriched our understanding of the Associate Degree for Transfer program and the effect it has on the lives of students. Each student expressed unique reasons for why these transfer pathways were important to them, but when asked if they would recommend pursuing an Associate Degree for Transfer to other community college students, one clear answer emerged: a resounding “Yes.”

As the Associate Degree for Transfer program continues to grow, more students like Vanessa, Mark, and Candice will pursue these transfer pathways to achieve their goals of earning a bachelor's degree. And that is why it is important that Cal State Fullerton continue to ensure access and success for Associate Degree for Transfer students. We encourage more CSU campuses to follow Cal State Fullerton's lead and 1) develop and maintain strong regional collaborations, 2) ensure early student awareness of Associate Degree for Transfer admissions processes, and 3) develop data management systems that allow institutions to identify Associate Degree for Transfer students as early as possible and then track their progress from application to graduation.

For more information, contact:

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“Our success in attracting and enrolling Associate Degree for Transfer students is a direct result of the very intentional collaborative efforts of our faculty and community college partners.”

Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs, José L. Cruz

In the fall of 2014, Associate Degree for Transfer earners made up nearly one in every three new transfer students at Cal State Fullerton, compared to only one in every ten new transfer students across the CSU system.

ABOUT THE CAMPAIGN

The Campaign for College Opportunity is a broad-based, bipartisan coalition, including business, education and civil rights leaders that is dedicated to ensuring that all Californians have an equal opportunity to attend and succeed in college in order to build a vibrant workforce, economy and democracy. The Campaign works to create an environment of change and lead the state toward effective policy solutions. It is focused upon substantially increasing the number of students attending two- and four-year colleges in California so that we can produce the 2.3 million additional college graduates that our state needs.

For more information, visit: www.collegecampaign.org.

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