

BACKGROUND

Despite being a key tenet of the state's 1960 Master Plan, the transfer mission has not worked as intended. For decades, community college students across California have faced significant barriers to transfer. Inconsistent, duplicative, and ever-changing coursework requirements frustrated and discouraged students, added expense to both the student and the state, and contributed to an unacceptably low transfer rate of 23% within six years for degree-seeking students in California. Only the savviest of students were able to navigate the community college system in order to transfer to a four-year university, most of whom still did so without having earned an associate degree at the community college.

In 2010, The Campaign for College Opportunity, along with the California Community College's Chancellor's Office, the California State University, the Student Senate for California Community Colleges, and the California State Student Association, established a remedy for the troubled transfer function: Senate Bill 1440 (Chapter 428, Statutes of 2010), the Student Transfer Achievement Reform (STAR) Act.

Nearly three years later, while there has been considerable progress made at the community colleges and the California State University in carrying out the SB 1440 transfer reform, there are still foundational elements that are lacking in the access, flexibility, and communication of this new degree and transfer pathway. Without robust implementation of the intent of SB 1440 and a recommitment to the state's transfer mission, students, and ultimately the State of California, will suffer.

EXISTING LAW

SB 1440 required the California Community Colleges and the California State University to collaborate on the development of a pathway that aligned associate degree and transfer coursework requirements, resulting in an Associate Degree for Transfer. As part of this new pathway:

- Each community college district must develop and offer to students Associate Degrees for Transfer, a degree program which is comprised of 60 semester units or 90 quarter units, all transferrable to the CSU.
- Students who are granted an Associate Degree for Transfer are guaranteed admission to the CSU system.
- Students admitted to the CSU under the Associate Degree for Transfer program may not be required to take any more than 60 additional semester units or 90 quarter units to complete their bachelor's degree, with few exceptions.

THIS BILL

SB 440 addresses three main themes of SB 1440 implementation to improve the existing Associate Degree for Transfer pathway for students:

Greater Access

- *Articulate clear benchmarks for offering Associate Degrees for Transfer at each community college and for accepting Associate Degrees for Transfer at each California State University campus.*

While there has been notable progress made in developing, offering, and accepting Associate Degrees for Transfer from a system-wide perspective, the depth of access to the degree pathway for students is less than robust. There is wide variance in the number of degrees being offered at each community college, even within the same district. Additionally, while CSU campuses have been moving to offer admission to students on the Associate Degree for Transfer pathway for particular majors, not all degree options (also known as concentrations, specializations, or tracks) are available to these students. This effectively means that students who want to transfer into a desired program of study at the CSU have less access to academic programs than a native freshman student on the same campus.

- *Require the California State University to develop an admissions redirection process for Associate Degree for Transfer students.*

While SB 1440 guaranteed admission to the CSU system for Associate Degree for Transfer students, there is no guarantee for specific majors or campuses. Instead, these students were given priority admission to his or her local CSU campus through a “GPA bump increase” when their application is evaluated. However, because the CSU system does not have an admissions redirection process, there is no official policy for students who are not accepted to their campuses of choice or their local campus. Due to the guaranteed admission to the CSU system for this degree pathway, the primary CSU campus that is unable to admit the applicant is tasked with the responsibility of finding another CSU campus that would be able and willing to accept the student, a tedious and manual process that could be resolved through an official admissions redirection process, similar to the process at the University of California.

Improved Flexibility and Response to Students’ Needs

- *Require community colleges to develop at least two Associate Degrees for Transfer patterns in areas of emphasis by fall 2015 and require California State University campuses to accept these degrees for transfer.*

SB 1440 required community college districts to offer to students Associate Degrees for Transfer in either a major or area of emphasis, but to date, only degrees in a specific majors have been developed. While templates for developing Associate Degree for Transfer in 22 majors have been finalized and others in the pipeline, there has been no engagement on creating degrees with broader areas of emphasis. Areas of emphasis would reflect academic disciplines such as arts and humanities or social and behavioral sciences. Across the state, there are already several terminal associate degrees in areas of emphasis that are currently available to students; creating a similar Associate Degree for Transfer would provide community college students the flexibility to earn their degree in a broad field and commit to a specific, related major after transferring to the CSU.

Commitment to Outreach and Marketing

- *Require the community colleges and the CSU, in consultation with key stakeholders including students, to develop a student-centered communication and marketing strategy for the transfer degree pathway.*

The Associate Degrees for Transfer will only become the preferred pathway for all students transferring from the community college system to the CSU if there is an effective outreach and marketing strategy to all students enrolled at a community college as well as high school students considering which higher education system to attend. Part of this student-centered strategy includes commitments to display information on this degree pathway prominently in community college course catalogs and to provide information to all first-time community college students developing an education plan.

SUPPORT

Campaign for College Opportunity
Advancement Project
African American California Community College Trustees
Alliance for a Better Community
Alliance for College Ready Public Schools
A Place Called Home
Boys and Girls Club of the Los Angeles Harbor
California Campus Compact
California Chamber of Commerce
California Communities United Institute
California Competes
California Hospital Association
Californians for Justice
Central Valley Higher Education Consortium
Coalition for Humane Immigrant Rights of Los Angeles
Education Trust—West
Families In Schools
Gay-Straight Alliance Network
Girls Inc. of Orange County
Green Dot Public Schools
Hispanas Organized for Political Equality (HOPE)
Hispanic Bar Association of Orange County
Hispanic Foundation of Silicon Valley
Hispanic Scholarship Fund
Inland Coalition
InnerCity Struggle
League of Women Voters of California
Long Beach City College
Los Angeles Urban League
Mexican American Legal Defense & Educational Fund (MALDEF)
Middle College High School
National Council of La Raza (NCLR)
Parent Institute for Quality Education, Los Angeles (PIQE LA)
Parent Institute for Quality Education (PIQE)
Partnership Scholars Program
Project GRAD Los Angeles

Public Advocates

R.E.A.L. Coalition

- Bay Area Council
- Business Council of San Joaquin County
- East Bay Economic Development Alliance
- East Bay Leadership Council
- Greater Fresno Area Chamber of Commerce
- Inland Empire Economic Partnership
- Joint Venture Silicon Valley
- Long Beach Area Chamber of Commerce
- Los Angeles Area Chamber of Commerce
- North Bay Leadership Council
- Oakland Metropolitan Chamber of Commerce
- Orange County Business Council
- Sacramento Metro Chamber of Commerce
- San Diego Regional Economic Development Corporation
- San Francisco Chamber of Commerce
- San Gabriel Valley Economic Partnership
- San Jose Silicon Valley Chamber of Commerce
- Silicon Valley Leadership Group

- Southern California College Access Network (SoCal CAN)
- Stanislaus County Office of Education
- State Center Community College District
- Student Senate for California Community Colleges (SSCCC)
- The Institute for College Access & Success (TICAS)
- The Women's Foundation of California
- Valley Industry and Commerce Association
- Youth Policy Institute

OPPOSITION

- Academic Senate of the California Community Colleges
- Community College League of California