

## The Associate Degree for Transfer (ADT): Seamless Transfer for California's Students

### Transfer in California is Broken

Transfer was envisioned as an essential component of maintaining California's commitment to college access. In the Master Plan of 1960, the CCC system was established as an open access institution that would provide a gateway to higher education for non-traditional and low-income students who did not enroll in a four-year university directly from high school. Students could attend a community college to obtain the academic preparation necessary to transfer to a CSU or UC within two years, earn a bachelor's degree, and enter the workforce in a timely manner. The ability to transfer, to start out on one path and seamlessly progress to another, is a critical component of that vision, and yet sixty years later, remains largely unfulfilled.

- 70 percent of students who enter California's community college system intend to transfer – yet few succeed in this transition. In fact, **only 2.5 percent of transfer-seeking community college students transfer within two years**, and only 23 percent transfer within four years.
- Those numbers are considerably worse for Black and Latinx students:
  - Latinx students represent over half of the students who declare a transfer goal, **yet only 35 percent transfer within four years**, and
  - Black students declare transfer goals at a much lower rate, **only seven percent, and only five percent successfully transfer within four years**.
- When students do transfer, they often transfer with excess units that don't count towards their bachelor's degree. Transfer inefficiency is costly—both to students, who frequently run out of financial aid to cover the excess units, and the state. In fact, **if ADTs accounted for 80 percent of all AA degrees conferred, California would save nearly \$100 million annually – both in direct savings to students, and in savings to the state.**

### ADT: A Brief History

In 2010, seeking to dramatically improve community college transfer, Governor Schwarzenegger signed two pieces of legislation into law: SB 1440 (Padilla), and AB 2302 (Fong). SB 1440 created the historic Associate Degree for Transfer (ADT) pathway, and AB 2302 sought to complement SB 1440, by requiring the California Community Colleges (CCC) and California State University (CSU), and requesting the University of California (UC), to establish an intersegmental common transfer curriculum, equally applicable to the CSU **and** UC. Specifically, AB 2302 requests UC to create a transparent transfer pathway enabling students to understand the coursework required for UC admission, and provide a transfer degree that, when complete, guarantees the student admission to a UC campus with junior standing.

Over the next decade, policymakers continued to work toward utilizing the ADT as a seamless, guaranteed transfer pathway to both the CSU and the UC. The 2015 Budget Act even provided UC with a four percent base funding increase in exchange for UC's commitment to create a systemwide pathway for transfer. In 2018, the Student-Centered Funding Formula reimagined community college funding to focus on both access and student success and began providing colleges with supplemental funding for students who earn an ADT. In 2019, the UC signed a MOU with the CCC guaranteeing admissions to the UC to all qualifying CCC students to strengthen the transfer pipeline and streamline access to the UC. Most recently, the state supported and further strengthened the ADT through AB 928 (Berman, 2021), currently being implemented, and which will by default place CCC students onto ADT pathways when they align with their transfer goals.

Yet, **the decade-old commitment to provide students with a seamless transfer pathway to both the CSU and UC remains unfulfilled. In the absence of the UC accepting the ADT as a systemwide admission guarantee, students seeking to transfer to the UC are still left to navigate a complex maze to reach their transfer goals.**

## ADT: The Gold Standard

- The ADT is a lower division degree, like an AA or AS. **What makes the ADT uniquely effective is that it's designed to meet the needs of transfer students.** The ADT is the equivalent of an AA, but each credit is transferrable coursework, and it provides students a clear set of on-ramps to and through their higher education journey.
- The ADT has over a decade of results: since 2010 over 400,000 ADTs have been awarded, accounting for around 50 percent of transfers to the CSU and over 69 percent of enrolled transfer students at the UC.
- The ADT has proven to be excellent preparation for students to succeed after transferring, as **students on an ADT pathway graduate faster and at greater rates than their transfer peers at the CSU and UC.**



## A Promise Unfulfilled: Guaranteed Transfer Admission to the UC

- Despite support for AB 2302 and its subsequent commitments, **UC continues to resist adopting the ADT as a systemwide admission guarantee, instead opting to create additional, separate pathways to transfer** even as California's transfer students continue to struggle, and often, stop out, when confronted with the confusing, contradictory transfer pathways offered by UC.
- **California's transfer process to UC remains overly complex.** UC currently offers [three transfer pathways](#), and in March 2023, unveiled plans to propose a fourth. The UC's reliance on separate campus-by-campus transfer admission, or even program-by-program transfer agreements, places the burden on community college students to navigate a complex transfer maze.
- **Uncoordinated pathways make the transfer experience more difficult, not less.** What is most useful to students is a navigable, straightforward path toward achieving transfer, such as the ADT, which provides them with the most transfer options upon completion.

## Faithful Implementation of the ADT

**Streamlining the ADT pathway for systemwide admission to both the CSU and UC would provide transfer students a clear and transparent transfer curriculum comparable to A-G coursework for first-time freshman admission.** Aligning a UC transfer guarantee with the ADT would allow students to complete college with the security of an associate degree plus a transfer guarantee to the CSU *and* UC system.

The Governor's proposed 2023-24 Budget proposes linking UCLA's alignment and participation with the ADT as a condition for funding. AB 1749 (McCarty & Berman) builds upon this concept by instituting a systemwide UC transfer admission guarantee, making the creation of a singular, streamlined transfer pathway to the CSU and UC a reality. By expanding this budget proposal to the UC system, with an expectation that the UC adopts the ADT as a systemwide admission guarantee, **we can finally realize the statewide goal and promise of a student-centered transfer pathway that provides guaranteed access to both the CSU and the UC.**