



GIA Transfer Achievement Project (TAP): Initial Findings

Introduction: During the past several months, we conducted interviews with 33 transfer-achieving students from 9 Inland Empire community colleges, currently attending 5 of the region's most frequently transferred-to public and private universities. Universities represented include UC Riverside, Cal State San Bernardino, UCLA, Cal Poly Pomona, and University of Redlands. Common barriers/challenges to transfer achievement were uncovered along with frequently employed strategies to increase the likelihood of success. Additionally, students offered suggestions for what community colleges might do to alleviate some of the identified challenges. Below is an initial outline of common barriers/challenges, strategies, and unique suggestions. A more detailed report with quotes reflecting students' voice is anticipated soon.

Barriers/Challenges

Enter Without Direction and Undecided on a Major – In high school, students were largely unintroduced to community college as a post-graduation option and community college was often attached with a negative stigma. As a result, students entered community college without direction and wasted significant time accumulating unnecessary units while undecided on a major.

Underutilized or Ineffective Advising - Many students did not obtain academic advising to map out a path to transfer, or they received what they described as ineffective advising that turned them off from ever returning beyond that initial advising session. Perhaps indicative of this is that a significant majority (27 students) earned an ADT or associate's degree, but for the vast majority this was inadvertent, unintentional, and many were unaware of any distinction between the two.

Low-Priority Registration – This was a substantial barrier to timely transfer, slowing progress as students resorted to taking fewer and/or unnecessary courses. It also contributed significantly to students “swirling” between campuses to complete courses they could not get into on their “home campus”.

Under-Utilized Academic Support Services - Many students did not have time for or were unaware of how to access academic support services, such as tutoring and/or supplemental instruction.

Paying Out of Pocket and Mismanaging Financial Aid Funds – Most found paying for community college out of pocket manageable, but additional costs, such as internet service, transportation, and/or technology fees for online courses, added up. Some who received financial aid attributed having mismanaged their disbursed funds to not receiving financial aid guidance prior to disbursement.

Misperception of Transfer Options - Many were uninformed about the range of potential transfer options, restricting themselves to local CSU and UC campuses and/or they made assumptions about affordability without exploring true net cost of attendance. Limited use and/or familiarity with transfer center services contributed to this, described by many as poorly advertised and/or difficult to locate; A few remain unaware whether a transfer center even exists! College transfer fairs had minimal impact, experienced as impersonal and lacking detailed answers regarding competitiveness as an applicant.

First-Generation College Students - (21 students) These students often had additional cultural/familial demands, or lived in circumstances where challenges of being a college student were not fully recognized.

Employment – (29 students) Often exacerbating all other barriers/challenges, employment could put a major strain on students' ability to study, take max units towards timely transfer, or make use of available campus services and resources.