

# Through the Gate Transfer Study

## Project Description

The Research and Planning Group for California Community Colleges' (RP Group) “Through the Gate” transfer study aims to identify strategies for **increasing transfer among “high-leverage learners” in California Community Colleges (CCCs)—individuals who have completed all or most of their transfer requirements, but who do not make it “through the gate” to a four-year institution.** Our study specifically focuses on the Inland Empire and Central Valley, as students in these areas of the state have lower transfer rates, which suggests that they may face unique challenges and barriers in their transition from community college to university.

One of the most promising and cost-effective strategies for improving California’s production of baccalaureate holders is to increase transfer from our 114 community colleges to our 23 California State Universities (CSUs) and other four-year institutions. Since most of our state’s underrepresented populations start their postsecondary education at our community colleges, increasing transfer will also help diversify our supply of baccalaureate holders.

Who is transferring, who is not, and for what reasons? What can be done to facilitate this transition for significantly more students? We will answer these and other questions in two primary phases of work.

### PHASE 1: MAPPING THE TRANSFER LANDSCAPE (2016 – 2017)

This stage of quantitative research aims to better understand the transfer landscape for high-leverage learners, determining: (1) how many students in California arrived at or near the transfer gate, but did not go through; (2) who they are and where they reside; and (3) what we can glean about opportunities to increase their transfer success. The RP Group concluded this component of the study and will launch dissemination of our Phase I findings in fall 2017.

### PHASE 2: GETTING BETTER DIRECTIONS (2018 – 2019)

People on the ground are often best positioned to offer insights about the most effective way to get from point A to point B. In this stage of qualitative research, we will ask students who are ready or nearly prepared to transfer what factors are impacting their journey and how policy and practice might be changed to propel them through the transfer gate.

## DISSEMINATION AND ENGAGEMENT (2019 – 2020)

Ultimately, we intend to translate our research findings into recommendations for how higher education stakeholders can work together to address the obstacles and augment the supports that students themselves say they need to help them get to the other side of the transfer gate. We will conclude the project with a statewide campaign aimed at encouraging higher education stakeholders to use the study's recommendations to guide and inform action that can increase transfer.

### The RP Group

Through professional and leadership development, technical assistance, research, and evaluation services, the RP Group strengthens the ability of California Community Colleges to discover and undertake high quality research, planning, and assessments that improve evidence-based decision-making, institutional effectiveness, and success for all students.

[www.rpgroup.org](http://www.rpgroup.org)

### College Futures Foundation

The RP Group is conducting our Through the Gate transfer study in partnership with and generous support from the College Futures Foundation, which seeks to increase the rate of bachelor's degree completion by California students who are low-income and underrepresented in higher education.

[www.collegefutures.org](http://www.collegefutures.org)

#### FOR MORE INFORMATION

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### What Have We Learned So Far?

Phase I revealed that **almost 300,000 students attending CCCs over a recent five-year period who demonstrated the determination and academic ability to transfer did not make it through the transfer gate.**

When examining this population of students, **many learners who get stuck at the transfer gate**—having completed a minimum of 60 units with a 2.0 GPA and fulfilling the English and math courses required for transfer—**leave without a college credential.** Students who are stuck at the gate are also **more likely to be Latino**, regardless of gender, when compared to other subgroups.

For the **vast majority of students who are near the transfer gate**—having earned at least 60 units with a 2.0 GPA but still needing to complete key academic requirements—**math appears to serve as the biggest obstacle** in their path to a baccalaureate institution. Moreover, **nearly half of the students who are near the gate leave our system without earning a degree or certificate.**

When exploring what role gender, race/ethnicity, and region play in the experience of transfer-bound students, we found that **nearly 75% of the high-leverage African Americans in our cohort made it through the gate.** In other words, African-American students—both females and males—overwhelmingly continue their journey toward baccalaureate completion once achieving the requirements for transfer. On the other hand, **Latino male students and Native-American female students were less likely to achieve their transfer goal.**

In terms of region, this research found that transfer-bound **students in the Inland Empire were least likely to make it through the transfer gate**, even after meeting all or most of their transfer requirements.