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JOINT LEGISLATIVE AUDIT COMMITTEE DAVID A. ALVAREZ, CHAIR

REVISED 5-17-2023

May 3, 2023

Members
Joint Legislative Audit Committee
1020 N Street, Room 107
Sacramento, CA 95814

Dear Members of the Committee,

I respectfully request the Joint Legislative Audit Committee approve an audit of our higher education systems' efforts to improve the rate of community college transfers to the University of California (UC) and California State University (CSU). Expanding opportunities for four-year college education is not only important to the individuals afforded these opportunities, it is also important to the overall success and equity of California.

The California Community Colleges (CCC) system serves approximately 1.8 million students across its 73 districts and 116 campuses. CCC serves a diverse student population that includes low-income, first-generation, and other historically underrepresented students. Forty-six percent of CCC students are Hispanic; 24 percent are White; 11 percent are Asian; three percent are Filipino; and less than one percent are American Indian or Alaskan Native.

CCC fills an important role in providing students with associate degrees, career certifications, and opportunities to transfer to a four-year university. Although most students intend to transfer to a four-year university, few do. Just 19 percent of students who intended to transfer actually transferred within four years, according to the Public Policy Institute of California (PPIC). Only 10 percent transferred within three years and only four percent within two years. According to a recent accountability report from CCC, only 40 percent of community college students who seek four-year degrees are successful in transferring to UC or CSU.

Disparities

Racial and regional disparities exist for student who successfully transfer to UC and CSU. The PPIC reported that while Latino students represent 51 percent of all community college students who intended to transfer, they represented only 35 percent of those who successfully transferred within four years. African American students represent 7 percent of all students who intended to transfer but were 5 percent of those who successfully transferred.

Regional disparities also exist, with students in the Bay Area and Los Angeles dominating transfer enrollment at UC and CSU campuses. Community college students from the Bay Area make up about 17 percent of all community college students but make up 29 percent of UC transfers. Meanwhile, shares of transfers from some other regions—including the Inland Empire, San Joaquin Valley, San Diego, and the Sacramento area—lag behind. The Inland Empire and San Joaquin Valley regions each represent close to 11 percent of community college students; only 7 percent and three percent of all students who transfer to UC respectively come from these regions.

ADT and TAG

Policymakers, higher education systems, and higher education advocates have made notable efforts to help universities reach their transfer goals. In 2010, state law established the Associate Degree for Transfer (ADT) to guarantee admission to a CSU for community college students who meet ADT requirements. The number of students obtaining an ADT increased significantly from about 36,000 in 2016-17 to more than 58,000 in 2019-20; the total number of students who actually transferred to either CSU or UC increased by about 10,000 students during the same period.

The UC, which is not subject to ADT, has six campuses that offer a Transfer Admission Guarantee (TAG) to community college students. However, each of the six UC campus has different course and grade requirements and the guarantees are limited to certain majors. Moreover, three of UC's most competitive campuses—Berkeley, Los Angeles, and San Diego—do not participate in TAG.

Scope

While ADT and TAG are steps in the right direction, more reforms could potentially streamline the fragmented transfer process and boost transfer rates. Doing so could increase access to bachelor's degrees, promoting equity and improving economic mobility. It can also benefit the State as a whole, seeing that California's public higher education system is not producing nearly enough educated graduates to meet future workforce needs. It is my hope that the State Auditor's Office will offer recommendations to policymakers and campus leaders for removing obstacles for students in the transfer process. Consequently, I am requesting an audit with the following scope:

1. Review and evaluate the laws, rules, and regulations significant to the audit objectives.
2. Evaluate the progress the California Community College (CCC), California State University (CSU) and University of California (UC) have made toward improving the number of community college students transferring to public four-year institutions. As part of this objective, determine the following for the past five years:
 - a. The number and rate of community college students transferring to the various campuses of the UC and CSU.
 - b. The community college, CSU and UC campuses with the highest and lowest transfer rates.

- c. The average time and accumulated credits earned by students transferring to a UC or CSU campus and the extent to which students received a degree prior to transferring.
 - d. Any policy changes and their impact on the above data.
 - e. Any system-wide, regional, or campus-specific trends and disparities, including those among racial and ethnic groups, Pell Grant recipients, and geography.
3. Identify barriers preventing community college students from transferring to a public four-year university and recommend policies to mitigate those barriers and improve transfer rates, particularly for underrepresented groups (e.g., Black, Latino, low-income, and first-generation students).
4. Review and assess the extent to which CSU and UC transfer options, such as the Associate Degree for Transfer (ADT), the Transfer Admission Guarantee (TAG), Pathways, and more recent Pathways+ have expanded transfer opportunities for community college students and perform the following for the past five years:
 - a. Determine the number and percentage, as well as the demographic information of ADT and TAG students admitted into their preferred campus and major and those redirected and admitted to another campus and major.
 - b. Assess the availability and accessibility of ADT, and TAG, specifically in the Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics field.
 - c. Determine how the various transfer pathways compare as it relates to student diversity, academic achievement, and transfer rates.
 - d. Calculate the average accumulated credit ADT students earned upon graduating from CSU, and determine to what extent ADT students are earning more credits than necessary.
 - e. Identify efforts by the CSU and UC to streamline the transfer process and improve transfer rates to the four-year university system, as well as to the students' preferred campus and major.
 - f. Determine whether the communications and information regarding the transfer options are readily available and understandable to community college students.
5. Compare and contrast transfer requirements and admission standards and practices across a selection of UC and CSU campuses. As part of this objective, determine all of the following:
 - a. The number and percentage of transfer students by race, ethnicity, gender, income status, geography, and community college campus or district.
 - b. The average accumulated credits, major, and GPA of transfer students.
 - c. The extent to which campuses use campus or major impaction as a reason to deny transfer students; campuses' methodology for determining impaction; and the adequacy of communication provided to students regarding impaction.
 - d. How and to what extent priority admissions consideration for ADT earners is a factor in UC's admission of community college transfer students.

- e. How transfer requirements and/or admission standards may be streamlined to increase transfer rates to these campuses.
6. Review and assess the role played by CCC and community college districts in the transfer of students to UC and CSU campuses. As part of this audit objective perform the following:
- a. To the extent practical, determine why some community colleges or districts have more students who successfully use ADT and TAG.
 - b. Identify the number of community college students denied admission to UC and CSU, disaggregated by: age, race/ethnicity, region, completion of an ADT, non-ADT, TAG, and non-TAG.
 - c. Compare the number of community college students obtaining an ADT and the number of students with an ADT applying for transfer. Identify any disparities, the reasons for the disparities, and recommend options for increasing the number of ADT applicants for transfer.
7. Review and assess any other issues that are significant to the audit.

Thank you for your consideration of this audit request. If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact me.

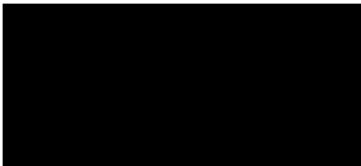
Sincerely,



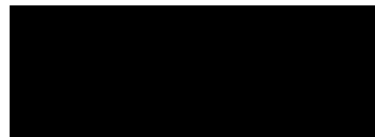
David Alvarez, Chair
Joint Legislative Audit Committee
Assemblymember, 80th District



Susan Talamantes Eggman
Senator, 5th District



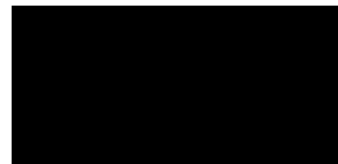
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