

UC WANTS MORE TRANSFERS FROM COMMUNITY COLLEGES

by Richard C. Atkinson

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Last year more than 10,000 students--nearly one-third of all those admitted to the University of California's eight general campuses--got there via one of the state's community colleges. Yet the transfer function is being seriously underutilized. Despite growing numbers of transfer students in recent years, we are still not tapping enough of the brainpower California needs for the demands of its complex society and increasingly high-tech work force.

Some of California's 107 community colleges send significant numbers of students to UC, but many others do not. Even those with relatively high rates of student transfer send fewer than might be expected.

This ought to be a matter of concern for many reasons, including the fact that the community colleges are the place where most of California's minority students begin their higher education. Broadening the highway from the community colleges to UC is vital to the state's ability to educate the leaders who will take their place in one of the most diverse societies in the world.

Community colleges provide a convenient and low-cost option for those who want to study close to home for their first two years of higher education. They also offer late bloomers or students whose personal or work responsibilities have kept them from full-time study a precious second chance at higher education. UC gives these transfer students priority over all other transfer applicants, which means that they have an improved chance to land a place in highly competitive programs such as engineering at UC Berkeley or business economics at UCLA. And the record shows that, once accepted, community college students who transfer to UC do as well as students who entered UC as freshmen.

For all these reasons, UC and the community colleges are taking action to boost community college-to-UC transfers. Two years ago we formally agreed that, working together, we would increase the number of students transferring by one-third between now and 2005.

UC's campuses, in cooperation with local community colleges, are stepping up efforts to interest students in transferring to UC and to help them translate educational aspirations into academic skills.

We have gone online (<http://www.assist.org>) with information about our requirements to make it easier for transfer students to find out what courses they need to take, and we guarantee admission on one of our campuses to those who complete them with sufficiently high grades.

We are working with community colleges to do more to offer part-time study to students who must balance school with family or work. Campuses also are helping to ensure that financial aid is available before and after transfer and they are identifying as early as possible community college students with the talent and ambition to meet UC's stringent admissions standards.

The results are encouraging: Just-released transfer figures show that the number of community college students admitted to UC is rising. But it is clear that we must reach far more students than we do now. What is UC's stake in expanding transfer? We help California educate the next generation. We assist our own campuses in their efforts to accommodate record numbers of applicants over the next decade by making it worthwhile for students to take their first two years at a community college. We gain outstanding students--many of them older and from diverse backgrounds--whose presence in the classroom enriches the education of every UC student.

In 1907, then-UC President Benjamin Ide Wheeler helped shape the legislation that created the community colleges; UC faculty developed the first community college curriculum, which closely paralleled that at UC and became a model for other community college systems in the nation. We are proud of UC's role in community college history and we want the word to go out to California's students and their families: The community colleges are a wonderful way to go to UC.

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Richard C. Atkinson Is President of the University of California
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