

The Campaign for College Opportunity: Setting the Stage for Historic Transfer Reform in California

For decades, the transfer system in our state has been criticized as woefully inefficient and too complex for students. Our community college transfer rates in California are abysmal yet the decentralized structure of our higher education system, coupled with strong resistance from faculty (who deeply value local autonomy), have made it challenging to engage in comprehensive, statewide, student-centered transfer reform. Absent critical leadership, past efforts to simplify the transfer pathway have always stalled.

Since its inception, The Campaign for College Opportunity has been dedicated to substantially increasing the number of students accessing and succeeding in college in order to meet workforce needs. Recognizing that dramatically increasing transfer would play a vital role in meeting future demand for an educated citizenry, The Campaign for College Opportunity has led a strategic effort that began last year with Assembly Bill 440 (Beall) and continued this year with Senate Bill 1440 (Padilla) and Assembly Bill 2302 (Fong). The Campaign diligently worked to raise public attention, share solutions with key policymakers, secure media coverage and editorial board support, develop close partnerships with key higher education leaders, and build a strong bi-partisan statewide coalition of partners to help us reshape the transfer maze into a clear pathway for all students.

The following is a calendared outline of The Campaign's role in introducing, shepherding, and building the political will necessary to pass historic and sweeping transfer reform in California.

TRANSFER IN CALIFORNIA

- Only 1 in 4 students who begin at a community college will successfully transfer within 6 years
- On average, students who do transfer do so with more than 20 excess units
- Students are burdened by hundreds of college-to-college, subject-by-subject transfer pathways
- Fewer than half of all transfer students will earn an Associate Degree

AUGUST 2007

The Institute for Higher Education Leadership and Policy (IHELP) publishes *Beyond the Open Door*. Report author Nancy Shulock recommends that the California Community College (CCC) structure transfer programs that stress completion of "shorter-term credentials along the path to longer-term credentials...including modifying the transfer pathway to encourage the completion of an Associate Degree prior to transfer." This would contribute to The Campaign's interest in establishing Transfer Associate Degrees.

NOVEMBER 2007

Senator Alex Padilla approaches The Campaign to partner in the development of a hearing of the Senate Select Committee on College and University Admission and Outreach to explore the role of community college transfer rates in meeting growing workforce needs. The Campaign testifies that California faces a looming workforce shortage due to the retirement of baby boomers and that we must improve persistence, completion, and transfer rates if we are to meet future workforce needs.

MARCH 2008

The Board of Governor's for the California Community College system approves Title 5 revisions proposed by the Academic Senate (ASCCC) that re-define the minimum requirements for an Associate Degree finding that only 60 unit pathways that include 18 units of major preparation or area of emphasis "focused study" held validity. This effectively disallows offering successful Associate Degrees for transfer at 14 of the 112 colleges across the state.

AUGUST 2008

The Campaign's Associate Director participates as a fellow in the Women's Policy Institute of the Women's Foundation of California in the first education team. The Team begins to explore the possibility of establishing an Associate Degree for Transfer in California and through research finds that several other states, including Florida and Arizona, have created these degrees as an effective and preferred statewide transfer pathway. The team also finds that while 3 of 4 community college transfer students will go on to receive their bachelor's degree, the other 25% will experience interruptions on their educational pathway and leave the system with no degree to show for their work (despite having successfully navigated the community college transfer pathway and completing a minimum of 60 units of rigorous general education and major preparation coursework).

DECEMBER 2008

The Women's Policy Institute Education Team secures Assembly member Jim Beall (D-San Jose) to introduce legislation that would create a recognized community college Associate Degree in Transfer Studies (AB 440). Senator Alex Padilla agrees to principle co-authorship of the bill.

JANUARY 2009

The Campaign drafts language for AB 440 legislation and becomes the bill's sponsor. The Academic Senate objects to the legislation stating that few community college students intending to transfer have a desire to acquire an Associate Degree. They also object to the inclusion of transfer in any degree title and argue that degrees consisting of 60 units of transferable general education coursework including major preparation compromise the integrity of the Associate Degree.

FEBRUARY 2009

Community College Chancellor Jack Scott engages in debate with his faculty and Academic Senate leaders arguing that students deserve a benchmark of their achievement and a clearer path to transfer. The Chancellor's office begins to negotiate with The Campaign and the Academic Senate on the transfer legislation but decides against taking a formal position on the bill. The Academic Senate formally opposes the legislation.

APRIL 2009

The Campaign commissions Mary Gill, a former CCC statewide dean and legislative policy analyst, to release a report examining barriers along the transfer pathway with recommendations for improving transfer in California, entitled *The Gordian Knot*. That same month, the first meeting of the "Intersegmental Transfer Task Force" including leadership in the UC, CSU, and CCC systems begins to review strategic opportunities to improve transfer collaboration. The Campaign shares *The Gordian*

Knot with the Task Force and meets with staff to offer recommendations, including establishment of a statewide, streamlined Associate Degree for Transfer. We urge the Task Force to adopt an ambitious plan to strengthen the transfer process by creating a truly intersegmental coordinated pathway for all California college students.

JUNE 2009

After three meetings (April 20, May 18, and June 15, 2009) the Task Force begins to draft a preliminary report comprised of modest recommendations and expresses the desire to, “reconvene when the current budget crisis subsides to address the serious challenges associated with strengthening the transfer pipeline in California.”

JULY 2009

After unanimously passing through the Assembly Higher Education Committee, AB 440 is held in the Senate Education Committee by Committee Chair Gloria Romero who states that she disagrees with the “precedent of establishing degrees in statute.”

AUGUST 2009

IHELP releases *Crafting a Student-Centered Transfer Process in California: Lessons from Other States*. The report highlights the failed AB 440 effort and points to other states similar in size that have successfully utilized the Transfer Associate Degree to strengthen transfer. The Campaign meets with Assembly member Ira Ruskin, incoming co-chair of the joint committee on the 50th Anniversary for the Master Plan for Higher Education. He pledges to include the transfer Associate Degree as part of the joint committee discussions.

OCTOBER 2009

At the fall meeting of the Academic Senate of California Community College, three resolutions considering the establishment of transfer Associate Degrees are offered. While none pass, the President of the Academic Senate suggests that The Campaign has significant political will behind reintroduction of AB 440 and that The Campaign has effectively engaged members of the state legislature to the point where she believes that if the bill is reintroduced it will pass. She suggests that the Academic Senate get out ahead of this issue.

NOVEMBER 2009

The Campaign hosts a Capitol briefing to share the findings of *Crafting a Student-Centered Transfer Process in California, The Gordian Knot*, and provides an update on the work of the Intersegmental Transfer Task Force. More than 70 key Sacramento allies attend including representatives from the Legislative Analyst’s Office (LAO), capitol staff, higher education committee analysts, and coalition partners. Many express their frustration over the complex transfer process and lack of progress by the Intersegmental Transfer Task Force.

DECEMBER 2009

The Campaign decides to reintroduce AB 440 with Senator Padilla who agrees to carry the legislation. The Campaign resolves to capitalize on the momentum gained around transfer to host an intimate

Capitol roundtable with key influential legislative staff including members of the Assembly Higher Education Committee, Senate Education Committee, and Assembly and Senate leadership staff. As a result, four pieces of transfer legislation are introduced (SB 1440, AB 2302, AB 2451, and AB 2742) by policymakers.

JANUARY 2010

The Campaign—as sole sponsor—introduces SB 1440 by Senator Alex Padilla, to establish a systemwide Associate Degree for Transfer.

TRANSFER REFORM = COST SAVINGS

In general, baccalaureate degrees are comprised of 120 units. Students that begin in the CCC system graduate with 162 units on average. By streamlining the transfer process, reducing the number of excess units taken at both the CCC and CSU, and moving students more efficiently through to graduation, the state’s investment is maximized.

By reducing excess units by 20 in each system, the following savings are projected.

California Community Colleges
Dollar Savings: \$150 million
Seat Savings: 80,000

California State University
Dollar Savings: \$170 million
Seat Savings: 27,720

FEBRUARY 2010

The Campaign staff travel to Florida with Paul Steenhausen of the LAO and Colleen Moore of IHELP to look at the Florida 2+2 transfer pattern. The Florida pathway includes a Transfer Associate Degree which all Florida college students earn upon completion of their transfer coursework. Immediately upon our return, we convene another intimate education roundtable with key Capitol staff to discuss Florida’s impressive transfer model and release a policy brief with findings and policy recommendations. Assembly member Paul Fong seeks our sponsorship for AB 2302 which is originally a study bill on how to create an intersegmental transfer pathway. We press him to amend it from a study bill to an ambitious systemwide Associate Degree for Transfer that would create a single general education transfer pathway, and guarantee admission with junior standing to the CSU with a request to the UC to develop a similar pathway. We call CSU Chancellor Charlie Reed to share the developments, get his advice and enlist his support to push this policy change that would establish a transfer pathway similar to the state of Florida that he was instrumental in passing when he was head of the Florida State University System. He agrees and makes this a key priority for the CSU system and engages Community College Chancellor Jack Scott in this partnership.

MARCH 2010

The Joint Committee on the Master Plan focuses on strengthening transfer. Campaign Board member and CSU Trustee Herb Carter strongly urges the establishment of a Transfer Associate Degree. Both the CSU and CCC systems begin working closely with The Campaign. Senator Padilla amends SB 1440 to include a clear path from the CCC to the CSU with guaranteed admission and junior status. He leaves out the UC piece and the Campaign works with Assembly member Fong to adjust AB 2302 to compliment SB 1440 and keep the UC request in. We also engage student leadership from the CCC and CSU and secure their active participation in advocacy and in sharing their experiences struggling to navigate the complex

transfer process. Students become a critical voice in supporting the work and we ask them to join us as co-sponsors on the legislation along with the CCC and CSU systems.

APRIL 2010

The California Intersegmental Articulation Council (CIAC), a statewide committee of articulation officers formed to facilitate the progress between and among the segments of postsecondary education in California, has the Campaign serve as its keynote speaker at their annual conference in San Diego. A group comprised of many faculty counselors and articulations officers in the Community College system express their frustration with the Academic Senate's opposition to the transfer reform effort. There is clearly a division amongst faculty. Through follow-up after the conference, CIAC resolves to form a political action committee and cultivate an alternative voice on behalf of CCC students. A CIAC board member testifies in committee on behalf of AB 2302 and The Campaign helps facilitate her transfer reform advocacy at the State Capitol. Despite rumblings of opposition from both the CCC Academic Senate and the CSU Faculty, there is no formal opposition to the legislation.

MAY 2010

More than 25 organizations attend the hearing to testify in support of the transfer legislation and SB 1440 passes unanimously through Senate Education Committee. Senate Education Committee Chair Gloria Romero commends the effort and asks to be added as a joint author.

As the legislation moves to the Assembly, the CCC Chancellor's office submits language to make the bill permissive to appease their Academic Senate, which would mean colleges would have to elect to participate on a voluntary basis. The Campaign presses against this amendment noting that only a small number of colleges will offer this transfer pathway if it is made optional. Senator Padilla refuses the amendment.

JUNE 2010

The Master Plan 50th Anniversary Joint Committee hearings conclude with the decision that the Committee will not author any legislation—rather they will support the existing transfer reform effort. Assembly leadership makes AB 2302 a priority and amendments are made to the bill to complement SB 1440 keeping a request that the UC system develop a pathway similar to that of SB 1440. AB 2302 moves unanimously out of Assembly Higher Education and Senate Education Committees. The Campaign facilitates Senator Alex Padilla signing onto AB 2302 as a principle co-author. The Campaign works closely with the leadership staff of both the Assembly Speaker and the Senate Pro-Tem leader to ensure that each feel invested in the transfer initiative and that successful passage of both pieces of legislation is not hindered.

JULY 2010

As the transfer legislation makes its way through both houses, continuing to gain momentum, faculty from both systems become increasingly nervous that the bills may pass. The CCC system argues that the implementation timeline is too tight and will unfairly force colleges to launch the transfer pathway with insufficient time for planning. They ask that the bill implementation be delayed by two years and they begin to discourage many community college districts from adopting resolutions that develop strategic local implementation plans. The Campaign strongly advocates for an implementation task force that will

identify key benchmarks for a 2011 fall implementation. Senator Padilla's office supports this decision and implementation by the fall 2011 remains intact and the task force is added.

AUGUST 2010

The Campaign meets with the Los Angeles Times Editorial Board and secures the editorial endorsement of the newspaper for both pieces of transfer legislation. The Campaign continues to make the case for transfer reform in the media with 42 outlets covering the story and with 185 organizational supporters recruited. In addition, the Campaign helps to grow a long bipartisan list of more than 60 bill co-authors. Both bills pass unanimously through the two houses of the legislature and are sent to the Governor's desk.

SEPTEMBER 2010

The Campaign secures a favorable article on the front page of the San Francisco Chronicle regarding the legislation and works to secure support from the Governor's office. In addition, the Campaign works closely with our college student leaders, putting a face to the issue of transfer and sharing real stories on the transfer hurdles faced by students in California. The students mobilize their base in support of the legislation and record a phone message to thousands of The Campaign's coalition partners urging them to ask the Governor to sign these historic bills. Hundreds of calls and letters are sent to the Governor in support of transfer reform.

On September 29, 2010 the Governor signs the Historic Transfer Reform Bill Package into law!

"These two pieces of legislation are a historic victory for California's students, and I'm proud to sign both of them into law," said Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger. "Guaranteeing admission into a CSU for any community college student who completes the newly established transfer degree under SB 1440 is a monumental step forward for California's higher education system. This legislation also strengthens our economy by giving more students the necessary skills to enter the workforce, grow companies, and create jobs in California. I commend both Senator Alex Padilla and Assembly member Paul Fong for authoring legislation that provides such a fantastic opportunity to our community college students."

On Monday, October 4th the Governor hosts an official signing ceremony for the two transfer reform bills at Los Angeles Mission College with over 400 guests and wide media coverage.

The Campaign has worked tirelessly over the past two years to set the stage for substantive transfer reform building the political will, exerting unwavering leadership, and mobilizing a vast network of supporters on behalf of all California community college students. The Campaign proved that the skeptics were wrong, in spite of decades of resistance and a bad economy, leadership to create substantive reform was possible. The Campaign is hopeful that additional reform to increase college-going, expand capacity, and improve college completion is also within reach.