

**Building Pathways to Transfer:**  
**Community Colleges that Break the Chain of Failure**  
**for Students of Color**

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# Table of Contents

<b>Building Pathways to Transfer: Introduction and Background .....</b>	<b>3</b>
What is known about community college transfer and ethnic minority students?.....	7
What are California community colleges doing to increase transfer success?.....	9
<b>Study Design: Phases of Research .....</b>	<b>13</b>
<b>Phase One: Data Analyses of Community College Cohorts.....</b>	<b>14</b>
How do transfer rates vary by race/ethnicity?.....	15
How are high school factors associated with the odds of transfer?.....	17
How do the associations between high school factors and transfer differ by race/ethnicity?.....	20
<b>Phase Two: Case Study Schools .....</b>	<b>23</b>
Urban Center College.....	25
Seaside Community College .....	36
Winslow Community College.....	46
Central Coast College.....	56
City Vista Community College.....	68
<b>Phase Three: Student Perspectives.....</b>	<b>78</b>
Do students have a strategy for successfully transferring to a four-year college or university?.....	79
What are the primary challenges students face in persisting to transfer? .....	79
How do these students go about addressing these challenges? .....	79
<b>Phase Four: Institutional Outreach .....</b>	<b>80</b>
Trojan High School .....	83
Johnston High School.....	87
University of California Campuses .....	90
<b>Conclusions and Recommendations.....</b>	<b>98</b>
Conclusions .....	100
Recommendations .....	109
<b>Appendix A: Tables and Figures.....</b>	<b>111</b>
<b>References.....</b>	<b>111</b>

# **Building Pathways to Transfer: Community Colleges that Break the Chain of Failure for Students of Color**

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## **Introduction and Background**

It has been well established that the high schools students attend contribute significantly to how well they do in college, and even if they choose to attend college at all (Lee & Frank, 1990). Low performing high schools tend to under-prepare their students for post-secondary education and contribute to the very high percentages of students who arrive at college without the requisite skills to succeed in college level courses. In fact, based on a very large longitudinal study of community college pathways, Adelman (2005) noted, “if community colleges seek to improve transfer rates, they would be advised to start the paths in feeder secondary schools” (page xvii). This is ostensibly because coursework in the secondary schools predicts significantly the likelihood of ultimately transferring and gaining a college degree. And, especially in California, there has been pronounced attention to the very high percentages of students entering community college who are in need of remedial education in both math and English language arts.

One important way that low-performing high schools contribute to the problem of failure to transfer from community college is by failing to provide rigorous coursework with skilled and experienced teachers. Up to 90 percent of community college first-time entrants (LAO, 2008), and up to 97% of students of color (Hagedorn, 2007) require some remediation, and this remedial coursework may take years to complete before they can begin taking credit-bearing college level courses that will lead to a degree. Too often these students run out of time and money in the process and terminate their studies short of a degree. Thus, community colleges that successfully transfer students from *low-performing high schools* to four-year colleges are facing a challenge that is significantly different from the one faced by community colleges with good records in transferring students (sometimes even minority students) not necessarily from low-performing high schools.

Venezia and her colleagues (2003) also point out that many of these lower performing secondary schools fail to inform their students about basic information they need to successfully matriculate into community college, enroll in the courses required to transfer, and ultimately complete a degree. Many students find themselves wasting valuable time taking courses that they don't need or that don't lead to a degree or certificate. Community colleges are typically viewed by both high school staff and students as a “default” option that does not require an elaborate application, special coursework or other preparation. Students who attend community college often decide late that they will enroll and have little information about how to navigate the experience. Thus, not only are they often academically unprepared for college-level work, but they are also unprepared for the expectations of college, or how to go about studying for classes. In

a study of high school to college transitions, Venezia and her colleagues found not only that many high schools did not have counselors that were knowledgeable about college requirements and how to prepare for college, but “[A]lthough students perceived correctly that there would be postsecondary opportunities at the community college level, they did not receive the important message that they would still be expected to perform at a level beyond the general education graduation requirements.” (Venezia et al, 2003, p.40). The study found that students in schools that served low-income populations thus had little idea of what would be expected of them in community college.

We have chosen to study those community colleges that disproportionately transfer African American and Latino students from low-performing high schools because we believe there are important lessons to be learned from colleges that have successfully confronted this significant challenge, and because this is a rapidly growing sector of the school-age population across the nation and in California. In fact, in 2008 Latinos were the single largest group of graduating seniors in California, and Latinos and African Americans together comprised almost half (46%) of all high school graduates in the state. It is urgent that we find a way to successfully educate these students to the level of a college degree.

With 110 colleges<sup>1</sup> enrolling almost 3 million students, including 120,000 first time freshmen students in 2008, California has the largest two-year college system in the nation and is an important site at which to study the issue of transfer for minority students from low performing high schools. In fact, the state’s Master Plan for Higher Education, first adopted in 1960, is premised on the community colleges being the gateway to a four-year degree for many of its youth. With 61% of all of its public school freshmen in the state enrolling in a community college, these institutions are charged with preparing the vast majority of California’s potential 4-year college graduates for transfer to a BA-degree granting institution.<sup>2</sup> However, best estimates are that only 20 - 25% of these students will actually make that transfer within six years (Adelman 2005; Wassmer et al, 2003).

The distribution of students who attend 2-year versus 4-year colleges, moreover, is not equal across all ethnic or socio-economic groups. On average, more affluent white and Asian students tend to enroll in the state’s four-year colleges, while more low-income Black and Latino students tend to enroll in the community colleges. For example, in 2008, 9% of African Americans and 8.8% of Latinos who went to college in the state, began at the University of California, while 14% of Whites and 36% of Asians who went to college in-state enrolled in the University of California, the state’s most selective public institution. On the other hand, 69% of Latino and 65% of Black college-goers went first to a California community college, compared to 60% of White and only 42% of Asian students. In fact, the community colleges have long been the primary route to a degree for the great majority of low-income and ethnic minority students. But this route has too often led to a dead end.

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<sup>1</sup> Today there are 112 community colleges in California, however the number stood at 110 when we were conducting the study.

<sup>2</sup> 21% of California’s high school graduates go on to a California private college or university, though just 18% of these are Latino; 7% African American. Unknown, but relatively small, percentages leave the state for college.

In spite of the fact that most students who begin college right after high school profess to want to complete a BA degree, the majority fails to do so. In fact, by their second semester the majority of California students who graduated from high school and enrolled in community college intending to transfer and earn a Bachelor's degree either have left college or lowered their educational goals (Driscoll, 2007). This is especially true for Blacks and Latinos. While it is universally understood that community college transfer rates are low, it is extremely difficult to cite a specific rate of transfer because of the problem of defining how many students realistically intended to transfer and at what point the system should stop counting them for purposes of determining a transfer rate. Many students change colleges, drop out and later return, go to school part-time over many years, and change their minds about educational goals. In his study of community college transfer based on large national datasets, Adelman (2005) found that 60% of initial freshman entrants to the community colleges transferred to at least one other community college campus, complicating the tracking of these students.

Over the course of six years, Horn and Lew (2007) followed a cohort of 514,376 students, who entered a California community college for the first time in 2000-01, to determine their transfer outcomes. They found that 17% of the cohort had transferred by 2006 and that another 6% had become transfer-ready. Of the transfer-ready group, two-thirds actually transferred to a four-year university. Even within this small percentage, Black and Latino students comprise a disproportionately lower percentage of the transfers. Another study, conducted by the California Postsecondary Education Commission at about the same time, found that 22% of students transferred from the California community colleges after five years, but that Latinos and African Americans (especially males) transferred at lower rates than other students (CPEC, 2007).

Although transfer rates are notoriously difficult to compute, there is broad agreement across studies that African American and Latino students transfer at significantly lower rates than other students. Sengupta and Jensen (2006) tracked the 1997 entering cohort of students in California community colleges who were between 17 and 20 and held a standard high school diploma. After 7 years (2004), 30 percent of white students and 41 percent of Asian students had transferred to a 4-year college, but only 17 percent of Latinos and 19 percent of African American students had made the transfer.

It is also possible to track the percent of students who go to college (both two and four year) and then the percent that complete degrees some years later. For example, in 2003 Black students accounted for 6.3% of freshman college enrollments in California, yet in 2008—5 years later-- only 5.4% of BA degrees from public colleges and universities were awarded to Black students. Latinos constituted 24.9% of the freshman enrollments in 2003, but just 21.7% of the BA degrees in 2008. In both cases, their rate of degree completion was less than their freshman enrollment five years prior. However, for both Asian and white students, the reverse was true. While Asians constituted just 14.1% of freshman enrollments, they accounted for 15.2% of BA degrees five years later, and white students represented 38.2% of freshman enrollment but 39.4% of degrees. The rate of degree completion for Asian and white students was higher than would be expected based on their percent of freshman enrollments. The largest source of discrepancy, however, occurs *before* college enrollment.

Not only do Black and Latino students have much higher high school drop-out rates than either white or Asian students, but among those who do graduate from high school in California, smaller percentages go on to college at all. For example, in 2008, the California public college-going rate for Asians was nearly 65%, compared to 49% for Blacks and about 45% for Latinos. White students' enrollment in California public higher education was surprisingly only 42%, but this is offset by the fact that 20% of undergraduates in the state attend independent (non-profit) colleges and universities and nearly 60% of those students are white. (18% of California independent college enrollment in 2009-10 was Asian.) African Americans and Latinos together made up just one-fourth of the independent school enrollment.<sup>3</sup> Another percentage of high school graduates attend for-profit and out-of-state public and private schools. Our data show that African Americans are most likely to choose these alternatives and have the highest percent of students attending for-profits, while white students are the second most likely to attend out-of-state publics and privates (see Figure 2).

Transfer is not, however, solely the responsibility of the community colleges. It has also been pointed out by Cohen (2003) that a significant part of the transfer equation is the “pull” factors—the degree to which the four-year colleges and universities attract and admit community college transfer students, and have the capacity to do so. Thus, the programs offered by the 4-year institutions, the relationships that are initiated and sustained across the colleges, the ease with which credits transfer, and the welcome provided by the institutions are all factors that influence whether students actually transfer. Moreover, budget cuts that result in rising tuition and fees, and lessening space at the 4-year schools reverberate through the community college population and must be taken into consideration in analyzing the factors associated with successful transfer. As such, we also endeavored in this study to understand the nature of these relationships across postsecondary institutions.

The low rate of college degree production has tremendous implications for the social and economic well-being of the state of California. A recent report from the Public Policy Institute of California (Johnson, 2009), predicted that by 2025, the state of California would be one million college degrees short of being able to fill the positions in the state that required this level of education. In other words, one million jobs would go unfilled by California educated individuals. The state would either have to import better-educated residents to fill these jobs or California businesses and industries would be hobbled in their competitiveness, perhaps moving outside the state to find better-educated workers. The economic consequences of this are predictable and dire. The National Center for Public Policy and Higher Education predicted in 2005 that by 2020 California would see an 11 percent decline in its per capita income for the period 2000-2020, contrasting sharply with the 40 percent *increase* in per capital earnings during the prior two decades, as a result of its low rate of college degree production. Clearly, the problem is urgent and solutions must be found to the state's low yield of college graduates. This report aims to help point to where some of those solutions may be found.

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<sup>3</sup> [www.aiccu.edu](http://www.aiccu.edu)

## **What is known about community college transfer and ethnic minority students?**

A considerable amount is now known about the factors that support community college transfer, and some colleges have put this information to work with substantial success. There are, even within California, colleges that are well known as “the back door” to highly selective universities and that have disproportionately high rates of transfer. Overwhelmingly, however, they tend to be suburban colleges with significant enrollment of middle class and non-minority students. They also mirror the findings in the literature on successful transfer. Creating a “transfer culture” (Cohen, 2003) appears to be a critical feature of those colleges that experience success in transferring higher percentages of their students to four-year colleges; administrators view transfer as their highest priority. Cohen and Brawer (1996) found that administrators at high-transfer colleges were much more likely to indicate that transfer was the college’s number one function (88% vs. 45%). Of course, in suburban colleges with significant numbers of students whose parents have at least some college education, there is often strong support in the community for this goal.

The transfer culture is also exhibited in ongoing activities related to the transfer function, such as guest speakers and transfer fairs where students come in contact with recruiters from four-year colleges, information is widely disseminated about transfer, and even faculty are attuned to this function and mention it often in classes (Cohen, 2003). In colleges with a transfer culture, students see posters and event announcements about transfer all over the campus, and counselors provide information about transfer to students without waiting to be asked; the default assumption is that students will be interested in this information.

Serban and her colleagues (2008) conducted case studies of seven California Community Colleges that had higher than expected transfer rates and found many of the things that have already been reported in the literature—strong college-going culture, commitment to students and to the institution, and effective student support services. It was notable, however, that these researchers also found strong high school and 4-year college relationships to be significant components of their success. The authors also pointed to many very specific actions taken by the colleges to foster these relationships, such as the use of student ambassadors to high schools, and parents’ nights to introduce the college to the high school community.

Handel (2006) conducted a study of University of California and California Community College partnerships and concluded that the following elements should be implemented at community colleges that want to establish a “transfer-going” culture:

- Establish transfer to a four-year institution as a high institutional priority;
- Ensure that transfer is seen by students as expected and attainable;
- Offer a rigorous curriculum for all students that includes writing, critical thinking, mathematics, and the sciences;
- Provide high quality instruction, including innovative and research-based pedagogies;
- Develop intensive academic support programs based on models of “academic excellence” (e.g. academic counseling, peer tutoring, and reciprocal learning techniques);

- Create an environment of belonging in which students feel stimulated to achieve at high academic levels;
- Establish strong community and family linkages that foster intellectually stimulating, secure and culturally rich environments for students on and off campus (p. 11).

Handel’s recommendations make sense, and reflect the practices of high-transfer colleges, but they do not attempt to target the specific needs of Latino and African American students, and especially those from low-performing high schools. In 2007, the California Postsecondary Education Commission (CPEC, 2007) reviewed the transfer function of the community colleges, noting that low-income students and Latinos, in particular, were transferring at especially low rates, and made several recommendations to strengthen the transfer function for these students:

- Improve matriculation programs that identify and provide more targeted guidance to those students intending to transfer;
- Provide a clearer path to the four-year degree by continuing to develop community college “guarantee” programs, such as transfer partnerships with baccalaureate degree-granting institutions;
- Provide a more robust counseling system targeted at populations that are showing the poorest outcomes.

Virtually all studies of community college transfer cite the counseling function as key (Wassmer et al, 2003). Students need accurate, on-time information and this is generally only available through counselors. Unfortunately, California, with one guidance counselor for over 800 students in the K-12 system, ranks 51<sup>st</sup> (including District of Columbia) in the nation for student-counselor ratio (ASCA, 2010). The American School Counselor Association recommends 1 to 250, while the national average stands at about 1 to 450 (ASCA, 2010). And, high school counselors often have little training in college counseling so that students cannot rely on getting accurate and timely information through their high school. For this reason, many middle- and upper-income parents hire private counselors to assist their children through the college application and preparation process (McDonough et al, 1997), something that low-income parents simply cannot do. Thus, most counseling that new community college students will receive about navigating the higher education system will occur through counselors who visit high school campuses from the community college or 4-year institutions, or once they are on campus at a community college. In California, this on-site counseling is typically organized through the transfer centers, but not always, and campuses that have strong transfer cultures also have distributed information about transfer – students can find the information they need in many places.

Driscoll (2007) found that the first year, even the first semester, of community college is the most critical for the long-term outcomes for potential transfers. If students do not take the right courses, if they fail, or they find the courses in which they are enrolled too challenging, or not to their liking, this is the period in which they are most likely to drop out. In fact, Hagedorn and her colleagues (2008) concluded, on the basis of tracking 5,000 students over five years through the Los Angeles community colleges, that personal characteristics of students were less important for successful transfer than the fact that the students had taken and passed the necessary transfer

courses early in their academic careers. Thus, counseling at the very outset – or before—the first semester is critical. But, as Hagedorn and colleagues (2008) point out, in the community colleges they studied, the ratio of students to counselors was often 2000 to one, even worse than the high schools from which the students came. And, for those students who attend college part-time and evenings, counseling may not be available at all.

Much less is known about successful strategies to help ethnic minority students transfer to 4-year colleges, and thus the rate of transfer for these students remains very low. A variety of student level characteristics are associated with transfer to a 4-year institution. Academic under-preparation, poverty, being the first generation within the family to attend college, being a second language-learner, being a parent, or having other significant family responsibilities are all barriers to a student’s ability to go to and complete college--and all of these characteristics are much more likely to be present in Latino and African American students (Alexander et al, 2007; Gándara & Contreras, 2009). Colleges must be cognizant of these challenges and prepared to address their effects on college persistence and transfer.

Academic preparation and background are critically important to determining the success students will experience in college, but so are the institutional environment and interpersonal climate (Astin, 1984;1993, Hurtado & Carter, 1997; Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005; Tinto, 1993.) Minority students need to feel that they belong on campus; that they are welcomed, and that faculty, staff, and peers view them as having the potential to succeed. A sense of “belonging” cannot be overstated in importance. Hurtado and Ponjuan (2005) described the kinds of college campus climates that create a sense of belonging for Latino students, which include diversity courses, and social and academic support networks. However, this research was confined to 4-year colleges and it is not known to what extent it generalizes to the community college. There has been some debate about whether the importance of social integration found at 4-year colleges is generalizable to 2-year colleges, but a meta-analysis of studies examining students in 2-year colleges concluded that both social and academic integration were, indeed, critical factors for persistence and transfer of community college students as well (Napoli & Wortman, 1996).

There is a fine line, however, between having supportive peers, not feeling alone, and attending a college campus that is racially isolated. Wassmer and his colleagues (2004) found that Latinos and African Americans attending community colleges with high percentages of minority students were less likely to transfer within six years than those that attended colleges with higher percentages of white and Asian students, holding constant other factors expected to influence community college transfer rates, such as academic preparation and socio-economic status. These findings suggest that there are significant risks associated with attending colleges in which Latino and African American students may find themselves isolated from non-minority peers.

## **What are California community colleges doing to increase transfer success?**

The problem of low transfer rates for community colleges in California, and elsewhere, is not new, nor has it gone unnoticed by the institutions. Many efforts have been directed at addressing this problem. Two decades ago, the colleges identified one problem as being the lack

of information about who *intended* to transfer so as to more accurately target these students for transfer counseling. This concern was answered by the Seymour-Campbell Matriculation Act of 1986 that spelled out a set of required procedures to identify, assess, counsel, and provide appropriate classes for those students intending to transfer. These requirements were later codified in Title V of the California Education Code. In this way, it was hoped that potential transfer students would receive the information they needed to be placed on a transfer path, and the colleges would know how many, and which, students actually intended to transfer. Of course, as Adelman (2005) has found, one in five community college students nationally will probably decide to transfer *after* initial enrollment, and these students may not be captured for transfer counseling. A major effort was also dedicated to establishing transfer centers at all of the community colleges so that there would be designated counseling for this purpose and it would be evident to students where exactly they needed to go to receive this counseling. While it is assumed in state regulations that all California community colleges will have a transfer center, the various colleges embrace this function with different degrees of enthusiasm (Cohen, 2003). At one end of the spectrum may be a part-time director with no support staff, to the other end where the director is supported by multiple staff and coordinated with other counseling resources on the campus. California Community College guidelines for transfer centers note that the transfer center should not be the only place that students can go for transfer information, but that it should provide a coordinating function for those resources, yet this is not always the case either.

A second major area of reform has been in the articulation of curricula between the community colleges and the 4-year institutions. The RP Group (2008) found that transferability of community college credits was the single greatest barrier to transfer; only about half of students transferring from community colleges receive full credit for all their community college course work upon transfer. The Community Colleges and the public four-year institutions have attempted to address this through the Intersegmental General Education Transfer Curriculum (IGETC), which meets all the general education admission requirements for California's public four-year colleges and universities. Although the curriculum was approved in 1991, many potential transfer students continue to be unaware of it, or for other reasons fail to follow it. Again, this appears to be largely a failure of on-time counseling.

Orientation has also been identified as a key variable in determining whether Latino students successfully transfer to four-year colleges (Ornelas, 2002), and it is one of the key elements of matriculation specified in the California Community College Guidelines for Transfer Centers (2006). Given that so little counseling occurs at the high school level to prepare students for community college, especially in the low performing schools that so many Latinos and African Americans attend, comprehensive orientation takes on a particularly important role in channeling potential transfer students into the appropriate courses and towards the financial aid they may need to realize their goals. As with the transfer centers, there appears to be considerable variability in the attention and resources that are dedicated to this function and one can expect to find that those colleges that devote more attention to providing a thorough orientation for their potential transfer students are more likely to have higher rates of successful transfer (Ornelas, 2002).

One of the greatest challenges to successful transfer, however, is the need for students, especially those from low performing high schools, to complete developmental or remedial

education courses in order to meet the prerequisites for enrolling in transfer courses. Acknowledging that only 8.5% of those students referred to developmental education completed any credential within four years,<sup>4</sup> the California Community Colleges launched a statewide initiative to improve developmental education. The Basic Skills Initiative provided support for colleges to conduct self-assessments, provided them with summaries of the latest research on effective practices in developmental education, and encouraged them to provide professional development of their staff around these practices. This effort, however, appears to have focused more on curriculum *design* and professional development for faculty than on curriculum *delivery*. Thus a significant problem remains with the long period of time it may take students to take all the required remedial courses they need, time that many can ill afford to spend because of competing needs to help support themselves and their families, and limited financial resources to allow them to continue taking courses. Not surprisingly, Hagedorn and her colleagues (2008) found that taking developmental education courses was a negative predictor of transfer to a 4-year university. No doubt one reason for this relationship is that students in developmental education come to college underprepared, and this, in itself, is a predictor of not completing a degree. But these researchers also found that time was associated with successful transfer and those students who completed course requirements in less time were more likely to transfer. A major challenge remains in accelerating the delivery of developmental education courses, as well as strengthening their content, so that students can move more rapidly and successfully through the curriculum.

One critical aspect of the Basic Skills Initiative has been an increased focus on mandatory assessment in order to identify students who need remediation at the outset of their community college careers and to track them into this curriculum. The intent, of course, is to get students prepared to succeed in transfer courses, but this assessment can cut two ways: as some counselors we interviewed noted, the assessment sometimes prevents students from taking a course they could succeed in and receive credit for, and assessment isn't always accurate. California Community College guidelines state that students should be able to challenge any assessment-based decision that precludes them from taking courses they want to take, but students are often not provided with this challenge information (Bunch et al, 2010). In a review of the literature on the effectiveness of remedial education generally, Melguizo, Bos and Prather (in progress) found mixed evidence that these courses, at least for math, were associated with increased success in transferring. In fact, there is concern that they often delay credit-bearing course-taking to the point of increasing drop out. One recent study found that only 16% of students nationwide who were referred to developmental education three levels below college level proficiency ended up completing even the developmental education requirements (Collins, 2010). Moreover, developmental education represents a very large expense for the colleges. Estimates are that the California Community College system spends about 1 billion dollars annually on this program (Melguizo et al, 2008). An obvious question would be: is there a more effective way to spend a billion dollars to help prepare students to take rigorous college-level coursework? Of course, some researchers have suggested that working with the high schools to better prepare students is one answer (Adelman, 2005; Venezia et al, 2003), but this is a particularly difficult challenge for the community colleges in the case of high schools that are routinely under-preparing their students; high schools often lack

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<sup>4</sup> Achieving Success (2007, July). The State Policy Newsletter of Achieving the Dream: Community Colleges Count. Boston: Jobs for the Future.

the resources to do a better job. Hence, we were particularly interested in this study in determining how these successful institutions had managed the issue of remedial or developmental education and if they had instituted particularly innovative practices in this regard.

Acknowledging that many community college students from low-performing high schools receive little or no counseling to prepare them for college, all of the community colleges in California also have outreach efforts to feeder high schools. The purpose of the outreach programs is to disseminate information about the community college, encourage enrollment, and prepare students with the information they will need to apply. Students are also provided with information about special resources available to them at the campus, and they may take matriculation tests to help place them in the correct classes before they actually begin attending. Outreach programs, however, are very dependent on state funding, which has been shrinking since 2000. As colleges attempt to save courses and faculty during funding cuts, outreach is one of the most vulnerable areas of the budget. In addition to severe cuts to community colleges at the beginning of the decade, the community colleges took about an 8% cut in state and local property tax revenues between 2009 and 2010 (EdSource, 2010).

One of the most effective strategies that community colleges employ to promote transfer for underrepresented students is special programs that offer a full-service experience to help them get on track early and feel supported for at least the first critical year. First Year Experience (FYE) is one such program that typically offers a summer bridge experience in addition to counseling and a cohort model that monitors student progress and includes at least one support class where students learn how to be successful college students. Evaluations conducted to date show that these programs are successful in increasing student persistence and transfer (Mosqueda, 2010). However, like other programs that have been shown to be effective, they normally only a touch a small number of students and can be costly.

Another program that exists in half of the state's community colleges is Puente. Started in 1981, Puente is geared toward Latino students, though most campuses will admit others as well. The program has three components: a Puente counselor dedicated to supporting the students, a two-semester English class that focuses on writing and pushes students to meet high standards, and a mentor, normally a professional individual from the same ethnic background, whose job it is to introduce the student to information about opportunities, social networks, and provide support and inspiration to continue with his or her studies. While there has never been a formal evaluation of Puente, there is considerable evidence that it is quite effective, generally doubling the transfer rate for Latino students who participate compared to those who do not (Laden, 2000). Based on its success with mostly Latino students, a new program, UMOJA, has been instituted at some community college campuses, but targeted to Black students. UMOJA follows the same model as Puente. Like outreach efforts, however, these programs are highly dependent on discretionary funding from the campuses, and they tend to serve small numbers of students. Puente and UMOJA normally serve cohorts of no more than 35 students, and most campuses that have a program support only one per year. As Cohen (2003) noted, "most [of these programs] affect only a small portion of the community college population" (page 11).

Finally, Middle College High School programs have been established on some community college campuses to capture high potential but academically “at risk” students in the junior year of high school, bringing them to the college campus to socialize them to college culture and introduce them to college courses. When successful, the programs can help students to gain college credit before their freshman year, and motivate them to continue on. Particularly for students who have difficulty adapting to high school, the program can motivate students to stay in school and go to college. The experience of these programs, however, appears to be uneven, no doubt related to the way students are selected to participate, and the costs, too, can be significant (Barnett & Ado, 2009).

## **Study Design: Phases of Research**

The present study’s design consists of several phases. Phase 1 examined the academic fates of students who entered the California community college system from low performing high schools (the lowest quintile on a composite measure of academic performance and SES) between 1996 and 1998 and who did so with the intention of transferring to a four-year college or university to earn a college degree. Transfer outcomes were assessed 6 years after they entered, between 2002 and 2004. The data collection asked a series of questions about these students. After answering those initial questions, we determined which California Community Colleges were disproportionately successful in transferring African American and Latino students from low performing high schools to 4-year colleges. We restricted our definition of 4-year colleges and omitted those proprietary colleges that enroll large numbers of minority students, and have exceptionally poor records of ensuring that they receive a degree.

Phase 2 of the study then consisted of conducting case studies of those 5 colleges that showed disproportionate success in transfer of the targeted students. The case studies consisted of multi-day visits to campuses over a period of time, interviews with each President, Vice-Presidents for Student and Academic Affairs, Counseling and Program Staffs, Transfer Center Directors and Financial Aid personnel, and selected faculty who were named as playing a significant role in the transfer function. We also examined websites, collected and read any documents that the campuses could provide us with respect to background, evaluations of their programs, and surveys that had been conducted at the campus.

Questions posed to the interviewees included retrospective queries about how things were at the campus during the period of time that the Phase 1 students were in the process of transferring. Of course, not all interviewees were present at the time and could reflect on this, but we attempted to include as many individuals as possible that had been there during the period up to 2004. Our questions also included queries about present-day conditions, considering that comparing responses about the recent past with the present would help explain trajectories that we would also analyze. Cohen (2003) and others have argued that much of the success of transfer relies on reputation, and that those colleges that develop this reputation tend to continue to succeed in this fashion, in part because of the students that they attract. However, we cared most about the success with a particular target group—Latino and African American students from low-performing high schools—and we reasoned that the establishment of these trends might not occur

in the same fashion as with transfer in general, particularly where there may have been shifts in demographic characteristics of the local population.

Phase 3 of the study design involved surveying students, usually through electronic surveys, but sometimes in classrooms, at each of the five campuses, using whatever means were available to oversample Latinos and African Americans. Given that today's students are not the same students as those who transferred successfully earlier in the decade, the responses of today's students can only be considered proxies for what similar students may have experienced on the campus in prior years. However, the student voice provides another dimension in understanding the experiences and challenges of students like those of particular interest to this study.

Phase 4 of the study design then involved interviewing key individuals at feeder high schools and receiving universities, this generally included head counselors at the high schools, and outreach and counseling staff at the universities. In the case of the high schools, data collection was limited by the willingness of "low performing schools" to participate. The label is not inviting and as much as we tried to finesse it, many schools were not anxious to participate, and one large district that fed two of our colleges refused to participate formally altogether. Likewise, data collection at colleges and universities was limited by resources. We simply were not able to travel to the many colleges and universities that transfer students attended, so we limited this data collection to 4 University of California campuses, reasoning that the counseling staff at these institutions, to which we had more ready access, would have important information and insights into the role and importance of the "pulling" institutions.

## **Phase One: Data Analyses of Community College Cohorts**

We limited our analyses to students who were 17-20 years at first enrollment to focus on students who were recent high school graduates and to eliminate older students who return to college after some time in the adult world. In addition, the analyses include four racial/ethnic groups: whites, African Americans, Latinos and Asians.<sup>5</sup> The data are from three consecutive cohorts of students, those who first entered a community college in the fall semesters of 1996, 1997, and 1998.

Our analysis of these first-time freshmen students included the finding that the proportion of students with the goal of transfer varies by race/ethnicity; higher proportions of whites and Asians enter community college with the goal of transferring than is the case for African Americans and Latinos. Thus, the study population includes a higher proportion of the young adult white and Asian students who first entered community college in 1996, 1997 or 1998 than of the young adult Blacks and Latinos who started community college at the same time. While all the students in the study population had the same educational goal, their odds of being in this subgroup varied by their race/ethnicity. In one sense, given the lower percentages of Blacks and Latinos, these students represent a more select group among counterparts of their own racial/ethnic group.

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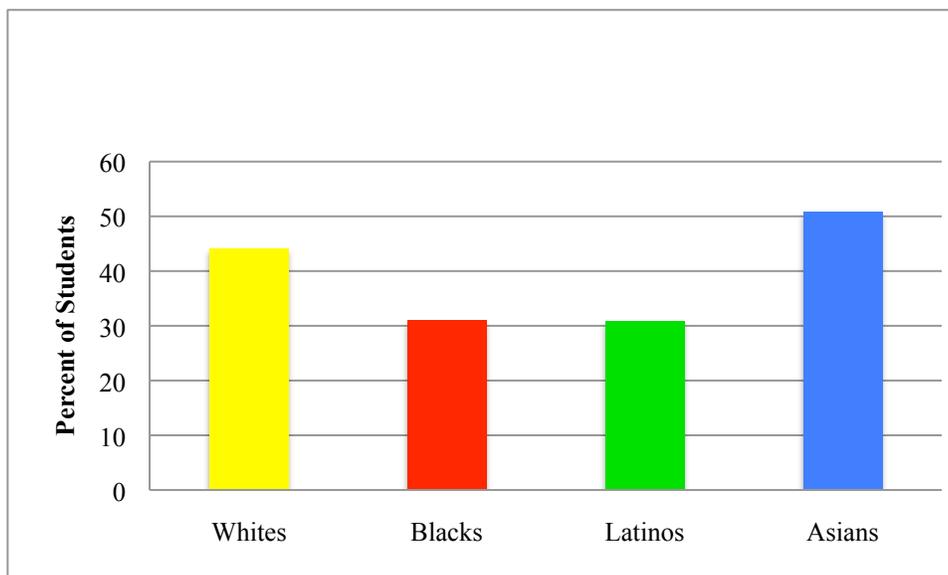
<sup>5</sup>Because of the way the state of California categorizes race/ethnicity, Filipinos are not included in the Asian category but constitute a separate category. Thus, the analyses of Asians do not include Filipinos.

In any case, it is important to remember that the students in this study do not represent all community college students or all recent high school students. In the following sections we answer a series of questions we posed about our large dataset.

### How do transfer rates vary by race/ethnicity?

As noted earlier, the calculation of transfer rates is both controversial and highly dependent on the fundamental decisions, such as who belongs in the denominator, what constitutes a legitimate transfer, and when to stop counting. Our sample eliminated all students who were outside the 17 -20 year age group, whether freshmen or not, and only included those who had noted that transfer was their educational goal. It also included transfers to colleges outside of the California public colleges and universities. As such, our 6-year transfer rates are somewhat higher than often reported in the literature. Among young adults who entered California community colleges (CCC) in 1996, 1997 and 1998, Asians were the most likely to transfer to a four-year institution within six years of entry, followed by Whites (Figure 1). Transfer rates for African Americans and Latinos were lower and almost identical to each other.

**Figure 1. Transfer Rates by Race/Ethnicity**



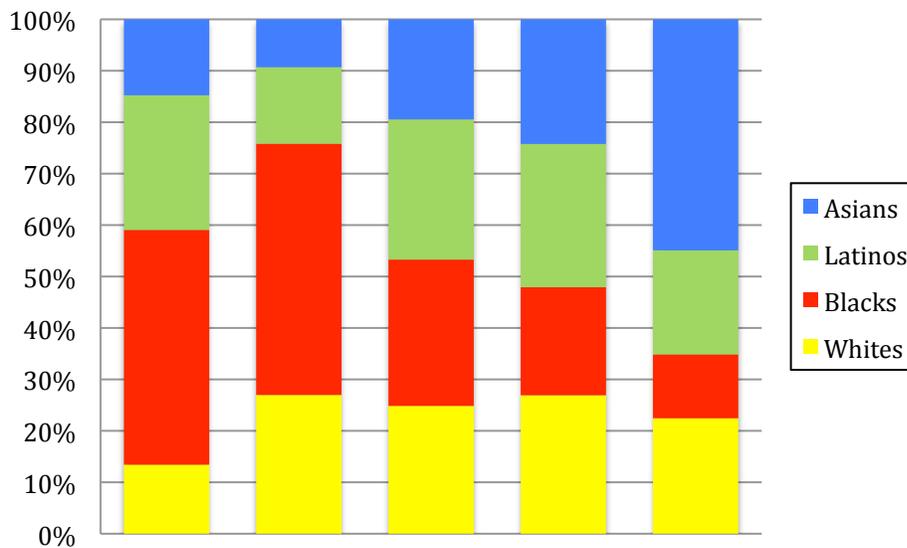
The colleges and universities to which students transfer can be divided into five categories. The first two categories are state-supported schools within California: the ten campuses of the research universities of the University of California (UC)<sup>6</sup> and the twenty-three campuses of the California

<sup>6</sup> There are currently ten UC campuses; however, the tenth, UC Merced, opened in 2005. One of the ten, UC San Francisco, enrolls primarily graduate students in its medical, dental, nursing and pharmacy schools. Thus, there are eight UC campuses to which students in this study could have transferred.

State University (CSU). Non-profit private schools within California (ISP) comprise a third category and all non-profit public and private colleges and universities outside California (OOS) make up another category. Finally, for-profit (FP) schools, many of which offer many of their courses online, constitute a fifth category; examples of these schools are the University of Phoenix and DeVry University. These schools generally have graduation rates below those of non-profit institutions; they have few, if any, prerequisites and they also charge relatively high tuition rates. Thus, it is important to know what proportion of students who are classified as transfers enrolled in schools in this category.

The patterns of transfer destinations among students who transferred to a four-year college or university varied by race/ethnicity (Figure 2). Three in ten Asian (30.4%) transfer students enrolled in a UC, twice the proportion of Whites (15.2%) and Latinos (13.7%) and more than three times the proportion of African Americans (8.4%). Black students were more likely than their peers to enroll in for-profit schools; Latinos (7.8%) were about half as likely to take this route and only one in twenty-five Whites (4.0%) and Asians (4.4%) transferred to a for-profit school. Blacks were also more likely than other students to transfer to institutions beyond California’s borders. Enrollment in historically black colleges and universities (HBCU) among African Americans accounts for part of this higher proportion. About one in four black out-of-state transfers enrolled in a HBCU, the equivalent of 5.0% of all black transfer students. For all transfer students, the CSU was the most popular destination. Just under half (47.5%) of blacks, and just over half (54.8%) of Asians transferred to one of the CSU campuses. Six in ten (60.9%) whites and just over six in ten Latinos (63.0%) were CSU transfers. For all racial/ethnic groups, fewer than one in ten students who transferred enrolled in a private, in-state school. This pattern undoubtedly reflects several factors, including the higher cost of private colleges and the official role of community colleges in serving as a pipeline to public four-year institutions.

**Figure 2. Destination of Transfer Students by Race/Ethnicity**



The patterns of UC campus destination varied somewhat by race/ethnicity; there were also some similarities (Table 1). UC Los Angeles, (UCLA) was the most common destination among Blacks, Latinos and Asians and the second most common destination, after UC Santa Barbara, among whites. This is not surprising, given that UCLA has the largest student body in the UC system. Enrollment rates at other campuses were much less uniform across racial/ethnic groups. For example, while UC Berkeley (UCB) was the second most common destination for African Americans and the third most common for Asians, it was the sixth most common destination of whites and Latinos. In another example, UC Irvine was a much more common destination for Asians than for other students; UC Santa Barbara was the number one destination for whites, but one of the least likely destinations for Blacks and Asians. Thus, we focused our 4-year university interviews on those campuses that had relatively high representation of Black and Latino transfers, plus one campus (Santa Cruz) that took the highest proportion of transfers from one of our case study schools.

Table 1. UC Transfer Destinations among Transfer Students by Race/Ethnicity

UC Campus	Whites	Blacks	Latinos	Asians
Berkeley	8.8	15.4	7.8	15.8
Davis	16.0	14.8	10.2	12.5
Irvine	6.4	8.0	6.9	15.5
Los Angeles	18.0	24.8	25.4	22.2
Riverside	3.4	9.4	9.8	6.3
San Diego	15.2	14.8	17.8	19.0
Santa Barbara	21.9	7.4	14.5	6.1
Santa Cruz	10.2	5.4	7.6	2.4

## How are high school factors associated with the odds of transfer?

### *Attributes of Students' High Schools and Transfer Rates*

Among all students who initially aspired to transfer, four in ten actually did transfer within six years of entry. Transfer rates varied across attributes of the high school that students attended. Three high school measures were chosen to serve as proxies for the environments that students experienced while attending high school. The Academic Performance Index (API) is a measure of student performance. The proportion of students' parents with a college degree is also a measure of the resources students bring with them when they come to school, as well as financial and human resources that the schools can call upon to enhance student learning. Finally, the proportion of students who are either African American or Latino tell us something about the level of school and community segregation which students experience. These measures are correlated with each other. Students with highly educated parents tend to do better in school, which is reflected in students' performance on standardized tests and other measures of performance. Race/ethnicity is correlated

with student performance partially through its high correlation with socioeconomic status (SES), of which parental education is a key component.

The high schools attended by community college students who initially aspired to transfer can be described by their ranking in these three proxy attributes: API score, proportion of parents with a bachelor’s degree, and the proportion of the student body that was African American or Latino. For each measure, high schools were ranked and divided into five groups (quintiles) of equal size. These quintiles are based on the distribution of the high schools of the students in the study, and not all high schools in the state. This is to ensure that each quintile has roughly equal as well as sufficient numbers for analysis. Table 2 presents the ranges for each quintile for each of these measures. The bottom and top quintiles contain larger ranges than the middle three quintiles as they encompass the lower and upper limits of each distribution.

**Table 2. Descriptions of Quintile Ranges of High School Attributes**

Quintile	Range of API Score	Range of % of Parents with BA	Range of % Minority Enrollment
1	0 – 552	0.0 – 26.0	0.0 – 13.5
2	553 – 616	26.1 – 36.0	13.6 – 24.5
3	617 – 673	36.1 – 46.0	24.6 – 38.5
4	674 – 732	46.1 – 58.0	38.6 – 58.0
5	733 – 1000	58.1 – 100.0	58.1 – 100.0

The high schools attended by community college students who aspired to transfer were divided into five categories based on their API scores, the proportion of students whose parents had a college degree and the proportion of the students who were African American or Latino. In general, high school API and high parental education are highly correlated and both are inversely correlated with proportion of minority students. Schools in the bottom quintile of both API scores **and** parental education **and** in the top quintile of minority enrollment constitute the “low” resource category. High schools whose API scores were in the top quintile, whose proportion of highly educated parents was also in the top quintile **and** whose percentage of minority students was in the bottom quintile comprise the “high” resource category. As a result, the high and low categories include only schools that are highly advantaged or highly disadvantaged.

High schools that were in the second API, second parental education quintiles and in the fourth minority enrollment quintile are included in the “low-medium” category. In addition, when schools were in the bottom quintile in two of the three high school measures and in the next lowest quintile on the third measure, schools were designated as “low-medium.” Similarly, high schools that were in the fourth API, fourth parental education quintile and in the second minority enrollment quintile are included in the “high-medium” category. In addition, when schools were in the top quintile in two of the three high school measures and in the next highest quintile on the third measure, schools were designated as “high-medium.” Finally, high schools in the middle quintile on any measure were designated as “medium” resource high schools.

It must be noted that students' own characteristics do not necessarily mirror those of the high schools they attended. While students from lower resource schools are more likely to have less educated parents and to earn lower test scores, some have highly educated parents and do well academically. Conversely, although students from higher resource high schools tend to have better educated parents and do well in school, some come from homes with parents lacking much formal education and who perform poorly in school. The high school measure here describes only the high school environment for students of all backgrounds and abilities and does not represent the background or academic performance of the individual students.

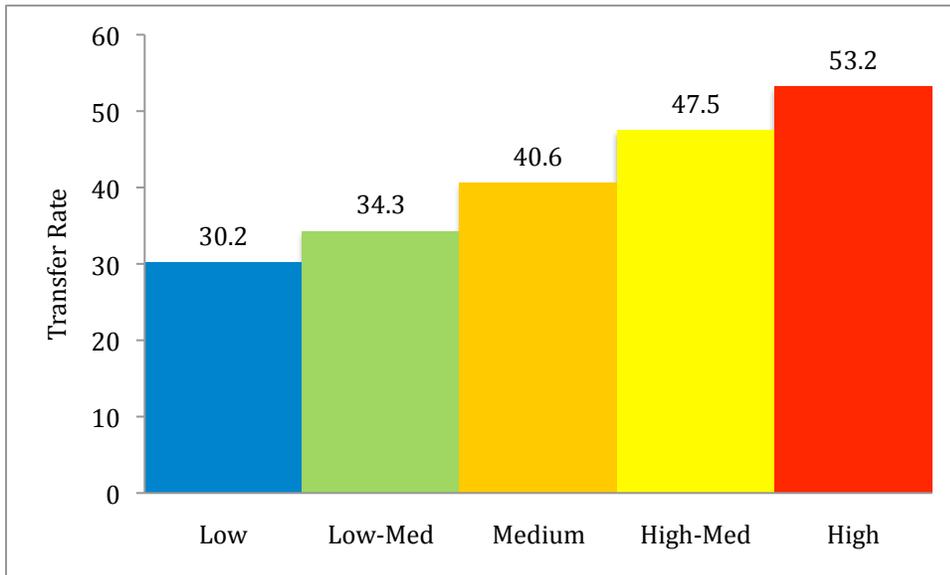
Figure 3 shows the clear, linear association between high school resource category and transfer rates. Three in ten (30.2%) students from low resource high schools went on to transfer; this rate increased steadily as high school resources rose until just over half (53.2%) of students from high resource schools transferred to a four-year college or university.

Among students who manage to transfer, there is an association between the resources of the high schools that students attended and the transfer destination (Table 3). The proportion of transfer students who enrolled in a UC doubled from the "Low" to the "High" category while the fraction that went to CSUs declined from 63.8% to just over half (53.7%). The proportion that chose an in-state private school remained steady across high school resources; those who went to college outside California rose more or less steadily. Finally, the proportion of transfer students who opted to enroll at a for-profit school declined from 8.6% to only 1 in 40 (2.5%).

**Table 3. Destinations of Transfer Students by High School Quality**

High School Resources	UC	CSU	ISP	Out of State	For-profit
Low	12.3	63.8	8.6	6.7	8.6
Low-Medium	13.9	62.1	8.4	8.5	7.0
Medium	15.8	59.7	8.4	10.7	5.5
High-Medium	17.1	61.8	7.7	9.9	3.6
High	24.3	53.7	8.5	11.0	2.5

**Figure 3. Transfer Rates by High School Quality**

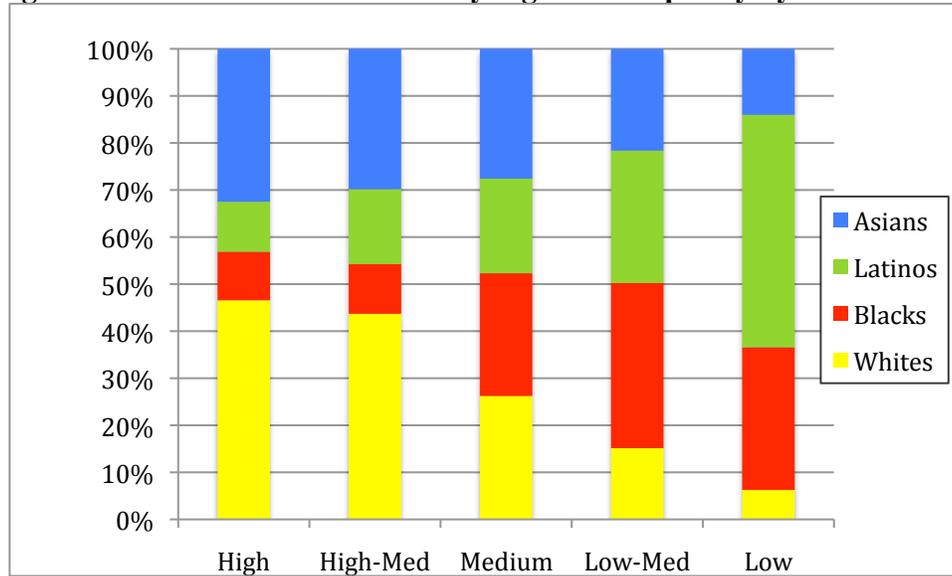


### **How do the associations between high school factors and transfer differ by race/ethnicity?**

#### *Attributes of Students' High Schools by Race/Ethnicity*

Attributes of the high schools that community college students attended varied by the students' race/ethnicity. The distribution of students across high school resource categories varies substantially by race/ethnicity (Figure 4). One third (32.4%) of Latinos attended high schools in the low resource category as did 1 in 5 (19.9%) African Americans. In contrast, only 1 in 25 (4.1%) Whites and 1 in 10 Asians went to such schools. At the other end of the scale, 1 in 7 (14.9%) Whites went to high resource high schools as did 1 in 10 (10.4%) Asians. However, only 3 in 100 Latinos (3.4%) and blacks (3.3%) had the benefit of attending a high resource high school. These numbers show that students' high school backgrounds prior to entering community college are vastly different, a difference strongly linked to race/ethnicity. Yet it is still important to keep in mind that NOT ALL Black and Latino students entering community college hail from underperforming schools, and a few have had the advantage of very high quality high schools. The latter would normally be the students most likely to successfully transfer.

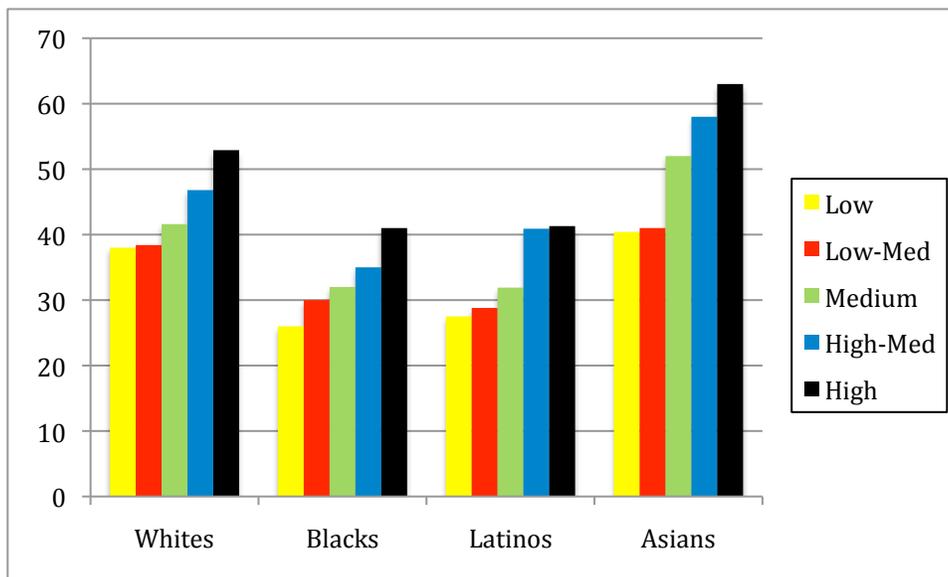
**Figure 4. Distribution of students by high school quality by race/ethnicity**



*Transfer Rates by High School Quality and Race/Ethnicity*

For each racial/ethnic group the percentage of students who transferred rose with the resources of the high schools they attended (**Figure 5**). Blacks had the steadiest rise; among Whites and Asians, transfer rates of students from low and low-medium schools were similar. The pattern for Latinos is slightly different. Transfer rates of students from high-medium and high resource schools are substantially higher than those from other types of schools; among lower resource high schools, transfer rates show only modest increases as school resources improve. As **Figure 5** illustrates, the transfer rates of Asians from low and low-medium schools are similar to those of blacks and Latinos from high resource high schools. (There are several possible explanations for this. The most likely is that Asian (and white) students in similar (or the same) schools may come from more advantaged family backgrounds than African Americans and Latinos; family socioeconomic status is strongly associated with academic success. Asian students are also less isolated by class, language, and ethnicity than Latinos or Blacks and tend to have more access to educational resources in their ethnic communities, even when they are low income (Zhou, 1992). Also, although whites and Asians from low and low-medium resource high schools had similar transfer rates, among students from higher resource high schools Asian transfer rates are much higher than white rates.

**Figure 5. Transfer Rates by High School Quality by Race/Ethnicity**



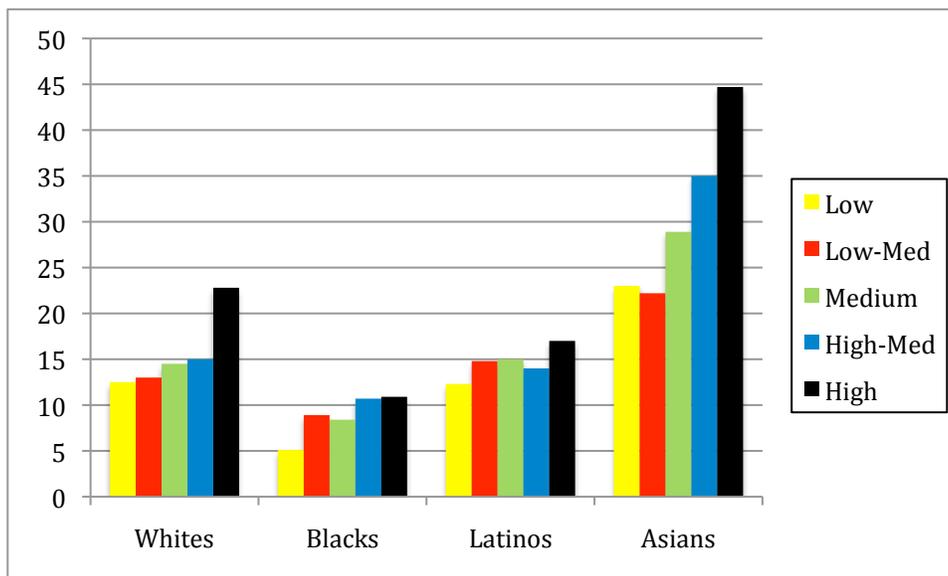
### *High School Quality and Destination of Transfer Student*

Among students who transferred, Figure 3 presents the proportions that enrolled in a UC by high school category and race/ethnicity. In general, UC transfer rates rose with high school quality but UC transfer rates were always higher among Asians than other students for every high school category. In addition, each racial/ethnic group displayed a different pattern. Among Whites, the differences in the proportions of transfers who enrolled in a UC among the four lowest categories were not large, ranging from 12.1% to 15.0%. However, there was a significant jump in this outcome among students from high resource high schools. Among African Americans, in contrast, the biggest difference was between students from low resource high schools and all other students. The overall increase from the lowest to the highest proportions for blacks was small; 1 in 20 (5.2%) of transfers from low resource high schools enrolled in a UC, as did 1 in 10 (10.7%) of those from high resource schools. Among Latinos, the pattern was not quite linear and with the exception of students from high resource schools, Latino UC transfer rates were similar to those of Whites in each high school category.

This pattern contradicts most White-Latino patterns found in this study. It is possible that Latino transfer students represent a selective group of Latino students, one very different from their peers who do not transfer. This explanation, however, begs the question of why the same pattern was not found for black transfer students. The University of California comprises the most uniformly competitive and highly rated group of schools in California and thus serves as a proxy for the quality of schools to which transfer students are admitted. However, African American students who transfer from California community colleges have very high rates of enrolling in schools outside of the state. It is possible that a substantial proportion of black transfers, including highly qualified students, find the right blend of academic, cultural and social factors in colleges

elsewhere. Asian transfer students appear to be in a class by themselves; transfer students from low resource high schools enrolled in UCs at higher rates than White, Black or Latino students from high resource high schools. Asian transfers from high resource schools were two to four times more likely than their peers to enroll in a UC than in another four-year institution.

**Figure 6. Percentage of Transfers who Enrolled in UC by High School Quality**



## Phase Two: Case Study Schools

After determining that there were indeed strong relationships between the high schools that students attended, their rates of transfer, and the types of colleges and universities to which they transferred, we went through a series of steps to identify those community colleges that were doing a disproportionately good job of transferring African American and Latino students from low performing high schools to 4-year colleges and universities.

The steps we followed included:

1. **Identify students from low performing schools.** Students were categorized based on attributes of their high schools. This was to identify and group students from low performing/resource high schools. First, high schools were defined by their API scores. Students whose high schools' API scores fell into the lowest fifth of the overall API distribution constituted one category. Second, high schools were defined by the proportion of their students whose parents had at least a college degree, representing parental resources. Students whose high schools fell into the bottom fifth of this distribution were placed in a separate category. Third, high schools were ranked by the proportion of their student bodies that was African American and Latino, representing level of ethnic segregation. Students whose high schools were in the top fifth of this distribution were designated as a separate category.

**2. Calculate transfer rates.** The mean transfer rates and standard deviations for African Americans and Latinos in each of the three categories described in Step 1 across all community colleges were calculated. Thus, six calculations were carried out: African Americans from low API high schools, African Americans from low parental education high schools, African Americans from high minority enrollment high schools, Latinos from low API high schools, Latinos from low parental education high schools and Latinos from high minority enrollment high schools.

**3. Calculate transfer rates for each college.** The transfer rates for these students were calculated for each individual community college. To ensure reliability, the minimum number of students for which the mean was calculated was 25. If there were fewer than 25 black or Latino students in the given high school category at a specific community college, the transfer rate for the group was excluded from further analyses. At many community colleges, there were too few African American students to generate a reliable transfer rate among students from low performing high schools. There were also too few Latino students in a smaller number of community colleges, particularly those in the rural northern part of the state that are overwhelmingly white.

**4. Compare community college-specific transfer rates.** The community college-specific transfer rates for African American or Latino students in each high school category were compared to the overall mean for that group. The standard deviations (S.D.) generated for each group were quite large; for this reason, one-tenth of a standard deviation was used as a cutoff. For both African American and Latino students in each high school category, one-tenth of the standard deviation of the mean transfer rates ranged from 4.4 to 4.9. Group-specific community college transfer rates that were greater than the mean transfer rate plus one-tenth of the standard deviation were designated as significantly higher than average rates. Similarly, those smaller than the mean transfer rate minus one-tenth of the standard deviation were designated as significantly lower than average rates.

**Table 4. Mean Transfer Rates for Latinos and African Americans from Low Resource Schools**

High School Category	African Americans		Latinos	
	Mean	S.D. (1/10 <sup>th</sup> )	Mean	S.D. (1/10 <sup>th</sup> )
Low API	31.3	4.5	27.8	4.5
Low (High) Parental Education	27.2	4.4	27.8	4.5
High Minority Enrollment	27.5	4.5	27.6	4.9

**5. Selection on the basis of largest difference and most categories of difference.** The community colleges that had significantly higher transfer rates for each high school category were compared across high school categories. Due to the high correlations between high school test scores, parental education and minority enrollment, a number of community colleges that had

higher than average transfer rates for blacks or Latinos in one category also had them for at least one other category

All of the colleges that rose to the top rankings in disproportionately transferring African American and Latino students from low performing/resource high schools were located in the southern half of the state. We do not have an explanation for this fact, other than southern campuses may be more challenged with higher proportions of students coming from low performing/resource high schools. It is also important to consider that our methodology may have skewed results in unknown ways, as well as that we are looking at one slice of time: students who entered community college in California between 1996 and 1998 and were found to transfer between 2002 and 2004. It was also notable that no college was found to serve both Latinos and African Americans disproportionately well, so that each of the colleges included in our analyses had disproportionate success with only one of these groups – 3 with Latinos and 2 with African Americans. Below we describe the five campuses and the key factors that may have contributed to their disproportionate success with these students *at this particular point in time*. In order to protect the privacy of the participants in this study, all of the names of institutions and individuals that appear in this write-up are pseudonyms.

### Urban Center College

Founded in 1925 and tucked alongside a freeway interchange, in an area with more warehouses and homeless encampments than residential housing or businesses, UCC serves one of the lowest income populations in the state (the per capita income in this area is approximately \$16,100). Once largely African American, the majority of the 14,441 students attending UCC are now Latino; the campus is almost 90 percent African American and Latino, with only 1 percent of students identified as white (see Table 5). The college bills itself as “a comprehensive, public community college offering learner-centered associate degrees and certificate programs to students who reflect the global diversity of the region.” It is notable that on the college’s website, “university transfer” is listed as only a third study option after “vocational and technical education” and “career and workforce advancement.”

**Table 5. UCC-Composition of Student Body, 2008-2009**

<b>Ethnicity</b>	<b>Student Body</b>
White	1%
Hispanic or Latino	59%
Asian/Pacific Islander	8%
African American	29%
Native American	N/A
Filipino	N/A
Multiracial or Other	3%
<b>Total</b>	<b>100%</b>

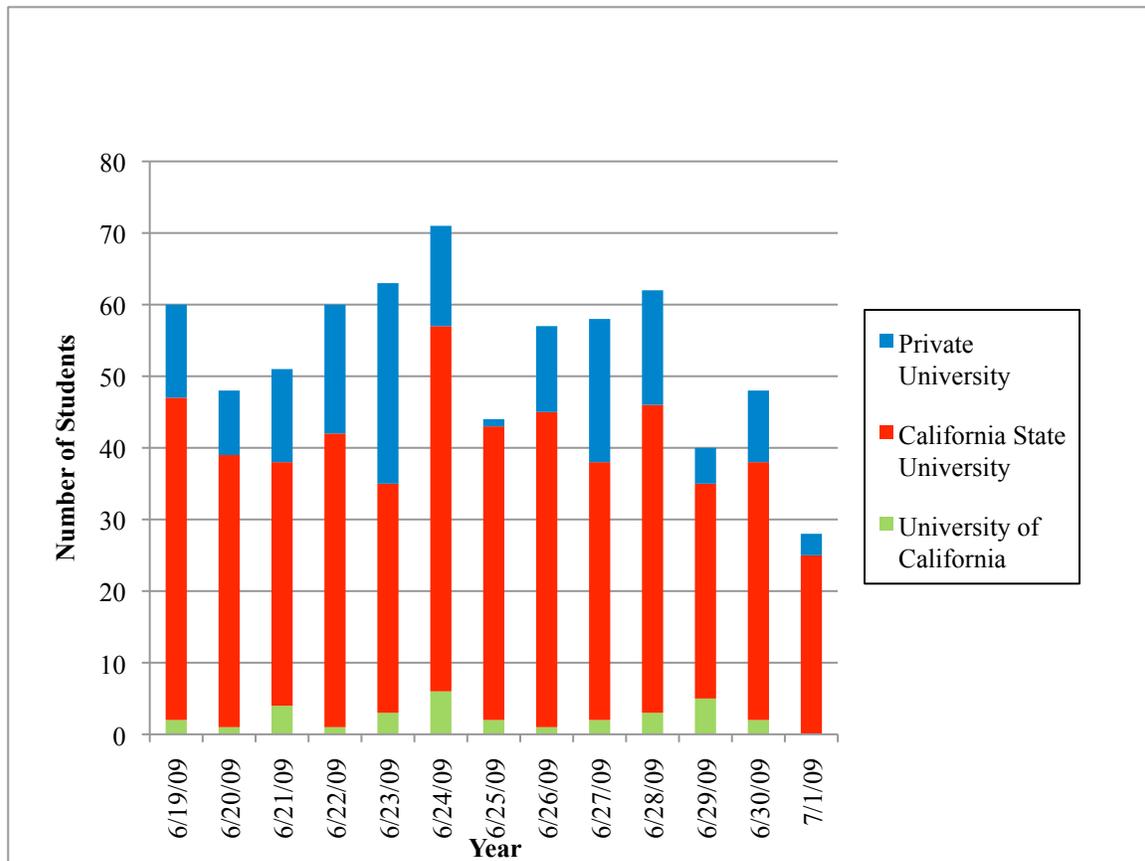
## *College mission and culture*

At UCC we interviewed the president, two vice-presidents, directors of student services, financial aid, learning skills center, several program directors, chief data analyst, and about a half dozen counselors over the period of about a year. The period stretched out because of changes in personnel and new information we came across about the school. In our initial interview with the president of the college, Dr. McClain, a seasoned administrator who had headed several community colleges in various parts of the country, offered that they did not consider themselves a transfer college. “That’s old thinking,” he contended. And, in fact, UCC has not sent a disproportionate number of African American students onto four-year colleges in recent years. See Figure 7. However, between 2002 and 2004, 23 of 57 African American students from very low performing high schools who had enrolled with the intent to transfer to four-year public colleges or universities did so. Because the California Community College system has so little success in effecting transfer for African Americans from this type of high school, it was sufficient to place UCC in the category of “disproportionately” transferring these students.

The new president, who had just held the position for less than two years at our first meeting, focused his goals on what he considered more realistic and meaningful targets for his student population: preparing his students for the workforce and getting a real job. Thus it came as a surprise to the administration, which had not been in place during the period our cohorts of students had passed through the college, that UCC had been selected as being disproportionately successful in sending African American students from low performing/resource high schools to four-year colleges. Nonetheless, it had experienced this success with the cohorts who transferred in 2002, 2003, and 2004, and so it was important to understand why this had been so, as well as why it no longer was the case.

Figure 7 shows the pattern of transfers for African American students from UCC to four-year colleges between 1996 and 2008. Our focus was on the years 2002-2004, when our three cohorts of students would have had 6 years to transfer. Averaging across those three years resulted in a transfer rate for African American students that was relatively high, compared to the average for all colleges during the same period. Immediately after this period, however, the college began a step decline in transfers. Moreover, the rates displayed in Figure 7 represent *all* African American students and not just those from low performing/resource high schools, which is not identical to the students in our cohorts. These data are, therefore, a proxy for the types of students we tracked in our analyses, but not the same. In fact, since these data include *all* African American students who transferred during the period, one could expect the transfer rates to be *higher* than the rates represented in our analyses, which include the most educationally disadvantaged students by virtue of having attended high schools that would be least likely to have prepared them well for college. Although proxy data, given the region in which the college sits and high schools that normally feed into UCC, it is very likely in this case that the great majority of freshmen were coming from similarly low resource high schools. Additionally, because of the college’s reputation as a vocationally-oriented school, it is unlikely that students from more affluent schools with 4-year degree aspirations would choose UCC over other colleges in the region.

**Figure 7. UCC Transfers to Four-Year Institutions**



*Campus Setting and Climate*

In addition to its core administrative building, the UCC campus has two very modern, architecturally distinctive, buildings that have recently been completed. These buildings stand in stark contrast to the aging core buildings of the campus and the larger context in which they sit. When we first visited the campus, these buildings –housing largely office space—were still under construction and many administrative offices were set up in portable units scattered across the middle of the campus. It was in these portable units that we found the special program directors, student services personnel, and counselors. The campus had a very urban feel with relatively few green spaces, and few areas dedicated to “hanging out.” In fairness, however, we visited the campus at a time in which heavy construction was underway and much of the campus was fenced off. As we left the President’s office on our first visit, a homeless man was wheeling his shopping cart down the hallway, apparently on his way to use the restroom. There was no attempt by any staff to dissuade him; living among the homeless and disenfranchised is evidently a fact of life that staff has come to take for granted.

Courses are offered in ways that create distinct “cultures” of trades and transfer students. Many of the trades courses are offered in a block in the mornings until 2pm. In an effort to support these students, counselors visit the classrooms rather than having students visit the counselors, and general education requirements are infused in the trades curriculum. This seems to work quite effectively for the students in these career courses.<sup>7</sup> As one of the counselors put it, “Those faculty like to be gone by 2pm.” Fewer transfer courses are offered in the late afternoon, and the students who are interested in transfer or in a general curriculum do not overlap very much with the trades students, creating a sense of two different worlds on the campus. Seventy-five percent of the students at UCC attend school part-time, calling into question whether financial aid is sufficient to meet most students’ needs, even though two-thirds of the students receive some form of financial aid.

### *Articulating a Mission for the College*

It is a well-known finding in the literature on successful transfer colleges that a “transfer culture” pervades such campuses and this tone is virtually always set by the college president and administration (Cohen, 2003). A shared mission on the part of administration, staff, and faculty is almost always found at colleges that are successful in transferring students to four-year colleges (Cohen, 2003). President McClain, however, believes that most students who find their way to UCC are looking for job skills that can be acquired rapidly and that students who are really 4-year-college bound probably choose to go to other colleges. In fact, data collected in 2000 in a survey administered by the college showed that 75 percent of students defined themselves as “trade” students. He defends his focus on vocational rather than transfer programs at UCC by asserting that he must work with the population that he has, and realistically he is serving a high proportion of students who have had very little success in school and are in need of the skills to obtain a job. Nonetheless, he is open to helping students transfer to 4-year institutions and believes that some can be convinced to elect this option, once they have experienced some academic success in vocationally oriented courses that teach academic content. He proudly recounted the story of a young man who came in with the desire to become a welder, but took some math and science courses in preparation for his A.A. degree. After experiencing unexpected success in these classes, he found himself headed for a career as an engineer and transferred to a state university. Indeed, there is evidence on the campus of a strong vocational program in several areas, especially fashion design, welding, and culinary arts, where students are described as acquiring jobs before they even finish the program. Attending a dinner hosted for the Puente program students and their mentors one evening, it was easy to see that the students in the culinary arts program would be sought after. The presentation and preparation of the meal were impressive.

At the first interviews on the UCC campus, the upper administrative team appeared to reflect the composition of the campus –while the President was white, the Vice-President for Academic Affairs was African American, and the Vice-President for Student Affairs was Latino. However, when we returned to the campus a couple months later, the newly appointed Vice-

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<sup>7</sup> Mike Rose, a faculty member from UCLA, also spent time studying the career tech programs at this campus and provided useful ethnographic information about how these courses operated.

President for Academic Affairs had already departed and no one would offer an explanation of what had precipitated his rapid departure, only that “there are a lot of politics on this campus,” and “he got another offer.” This was especially unfortunate because at the initial interview the VP for Academic Affairs had noted that his prior job as head of admissions at a prestigious private university would be an asset in helping more students to transfer. In later interviews with staff, it also came to light that a former president, a Latino, had attempted to move the campus more towards a transfer function and even considered changing the name of the campus to reflect this different focus, and “had paid the price.” He was forced to step down amid intense disagreements with the faculty about this change in focus. This president, who served during the time our cohorts were traveling through the college, was forced out the year after they had transferred. It became clear, throughout the various interviews with staff and administration on campus, that paying too much attention to the transfer function was frowned upon.

The “politics” that so many informants mentioned also appeared to come to a head with respect to the campus’ accreditation; in 2009 the campus was on probation and threatened with loss of accreditation. The ostensible reasons for this, as explained by the administration, were three: they had been cited for lack of “communication” among faculty, staff, and administration; a need to better link expenditures with campus needs, and lack of shared governance. Evidently, the faculty senate complained that they did not have enough say in the decision-making on campus. Informants noted that these problems had festered a long time, and during the period our cohorts of students had been passing through the campus (late 1990s to mid-2000), there was considerable tension around issues of governance as well.

How, then, had the campus been successful in transferring a disproportionate number of African American students during the first half of the 2000’s if transfer was not a focus of the campus? There are several explanations. First, UCC had, during this period, one of the highest enrollments of African American students of any of the state’s community colleges. A strong relationship had also developed between a counselor at one of the UC campuses and the transfer counselor from UCC, so that a pipeline of students had been established. The transfer center counselor had been especially pro-active in establishing himself—along with a psychology professor who served as VP for academic affairs at the time and who created a number of transferable courses—as a key figure in promoting transfer. Lastly, private foundation funds had been acquired and were applied to helping some students transfer to a nearby private four-year university. There were also several programs: Puente (a college transfer program that is designed to target Latino students for transfer but actually enrolls African Americans as well), a Scholars program (that had been funded and helped support the transfer function), and a dual-enrollment program (that recruited students from neighboring high schools who showed an interest in college). What probably did *not* account for this success were the routine policies and programs that the campus had engaged in over time. Such policies no doubt worked against increasing transfer rates. This included policies like block schedules for trades courses that went from morning until 2:00 in the afternoon, with few transferable courses offered in the afternoon, so that students in the trades curricula had difficulty accessing transfer courses. Other examples were the defunding of Puente at a point when it was having success in transferring students, and the locating of the single counselor dedicated to transfer (on a part time basis) to a remote space that was extremely difficult to find.

## *Faculty Involvement*

At each of the campuses we visited, we attempted to identify exceptional faculty or exceptional efforts that had been spurred by faculty who were invested in the transfer function. At UCC this was more complicated and difficult to identify because the faculty at this campus appeared to be very conflicted and divided about whether transfer was even a legitimate function for this campus. Certainly it was not articulated as a primary mission of the college. However, counselors did note some faculty who took a special interest in counseling students to transfer and who were known to be allies in this regard. One particular psychology faculty member had undertaken to help align social science courses so that students could more easily get transfer credits. This clearly had a significant effect on the campus' ability to help facilitate transfer. Prior to this effort, the Transfer Center director recounted that relatively few courses were on the books as transfer courses and so it was especially hard for students to accrue the necessary credits for transfer.

## *Counseling*

Today UCC has a ratio of general counselors to students of about 1 to 2,000 and this appears to have been relatively consistent over time according to college counseling staff. As they pointed out, "There is no way that we can spend the time counseling many students on how to transfer." So, most students are provided with transfer counseling only if they specifically request it. The campus houses an EOPS (Educational Opportunity Programs and Services) program that supports key counseling staff who focus on financial support for students with economic disadvantages or disabilities. Thus most low-income students must visit the EOPS counselors if they want to access financial aid and the general belief was that most students who need financial aid receive it. The VP for student affairs noted, "If a student needs money, I find it." In the process of seeking financial aid, students are provided with counseling about their program of study from the EOPS counselors. When EOPS counselors were asked how they went about counseling students for transfer, they all replied that students who appeared to be especially interested in transfer, rather than terminal associate degrees and vocational programs, were routinely sent to the transfer counselor, a Latino male who oversaw the transfer center. He had the informational materials and conducted all counseling related to transfer. Until recently, he had done this on a part-time basis. Inconsistent with the literature that suggests for a campus to be effective in transfer it must have distributed transfer counseling services, at UCC only the transfer counselor normally deals with students who are seeking to transfer.

## *Transfer Center*

When the transfer counselor was first recruited from a UC campus, he was housed in a room in an obscure area of the UCC campus where, according to him, students could not find him. In 2002, in frustration with his lack of contact with students, he moved his office into a section of the cafeteria! There, behind a glass wall that was constructed to partition him from the eating area,

he was highly visible to anyone who entered the cafeteria. He noted, however, that when he wanted to leave the transfer center to go to the restroom or take a lunch break, he had to lock it up because he had no support staff. More recently, in his position as the full-time transfer counselor, he has had funds to hire student assistants and this has increased the center's viability. The transfer counselor had the advantage of having worked for many years as a recruiter at a UC campus, thus he had a 4-year degree frame-of-reference for his work. The many years as a UC recruiter also brought him into contact with the recruiter from the UC campus closest to UCC, and this relationship was important in facilitating transfer for some African American students. Other specific transfer programs, like the Scholars program and the Puente program, also provided key counseling support for the transfer function, although there was no particular program targeted to African American students during this period.

In spite of the challenges to transfer at this college, the record of pass rate for transfer courses is, impressive. During the period of time that our cohorts were transferring from UCC to four-year colleges, UCC had been more successful (60-65%) than the state as a whole (55%) with respect to pass rates for African American students taking transfer courses in the fall semester--and UCC continued to be, until this last year. Perhaps this is related to having a smaller percentage of transfer students and therefore being able to pay closer attention to them, or perhaps these African American transfer students were a self-selected group; we cannot say. However, the data appear to support our finding that African American students were experiencing a period of relatively high transfer rates during this period at UCC.

### *Special programs*

The UCC Puente program (a program offered in many California community colleges) enrolls the third largest group in the community colleges. According to the Vice President for Student Services, Puente enrolls up to 42 students per year and also enrolls African American students, though at a recent Puente dinner we attended, we did not see any African American students. Nonetheless, the program is universally credited with being a key component of transfer on the campus. Given that everyone seemed to believe that the Puente program was the single most effective strategy fostering transfer, the VP for Student Affairs was queried about why the campus had not funded more slots for Puente students. This appeared to be a question that had never been considered. The VP could provide no answer. Scholarship funds associated with a local private university were also secured for a Scholars program during the early 2000's that supported transfer. These funds, which only lasted a short while during this period, were also thought by counselors to be key in upping the transfer rate, and predictably the transfer rate fell as the funds dried up. There was a lack of institutional memory on the campus about what those funds were or their actual source. They came and went.

A third effort of the campus, a dual enrollment program, was cited by a Jobs For The Future publication as "having a strong track record in preparing underserved high school students for college-level study . . . [by] provid[ing] dual enrollment college courses to thousands of . . . high school students over the past 15 years" (Goldberger & Haynes, 2005, page 2). This program, may have also contributed to transfer readiness during this period. However,

virtually no one mentioned the existence of this program in all of our interviews, and we discovered its existence through other sources. One administrator, who had been with the college for a long time, noted that people don't talk about the program, "because it isn't very popular. It uses resources." It turns out that more than 10% of students served by the UCC campus are from more than 20 middle and high schools in the region, and a major impetus for the program was the extremely high drop-out rate in area schools, including a significant drop out after 8<sup>th</sup> grade *before* students reached high school. There is a perception that the dual enrollment program is making a difference in the drop-out rate, but no one on the campus appeared to have any data to demonstrate this, and it was difficult to locate a champion for the program. Neither had there been any effort to link the program with transfer outcomes. We found a similar general silence about a dual enrollment program operating at another one of the campuses in our study. While these appear to be innovative programs, the community colleges we visited seemed to view them as additional responsibilities that were not central to any of their multiple missions.

### *Developmental Education*

Ms. Ramsey, the Director of the Learning Skills Center was hired in 2001, just before our cohorts began transferring. It is not likely that she would have had contact with them, as they would have had to complete any remedial courses they took before that time. The Learning Skills Center, a feature at all the campuses we visited, is a large building with 100 computer stations and a director who appeared to be very thoughtful and well-organized. A UC Berkeley graduate and recent Ed.D. recipient, Ms. Ramsey was explicit about the ways that the center helped support students' persistence and success with curricula, largely on computers, with modules that were keyed to the courses they were taking. The director noted that they provided "paired courses" so that students could take supplemental coursework at the Center to support the transfer courses they needed. The center also provided the basic skills courses online between 8am and 8pm daily, so that students could move rapidly through the curriculum and begin taking credit-bearing courses without having to wait to be enrolled in a semester-long basic skills course. The director explained how they had "modularized" remedial courses into A, B, and C units so that students did not have to take the full course if they were already more advanced. While the program model seemed to be very well thought out, it was not clear how many students actually took advantage of this option, whether or not it helped them through their basic skills requirements, nor how successful they were in subsequent credit-bearing courses. The director noted that many of the students in the Center had been in special education and needed "a lot of support." Few were ready to move through the remedial coursework on their own. So, in reality, few were actually accelerating their movement through the remedial curriculum.

According to the director, data on the effectiveness of the remedial curriculum were being collected and analyzed by a Midwestern university. The director had, however, no access to these data and did not know how effective the program was, though she clearly thought it was important to track this.

In the first year our cohorts entered UCC, the college pass rate (51%) was slightly better than statewide averages (49%) for African Americans. In the subsequent two years, the college

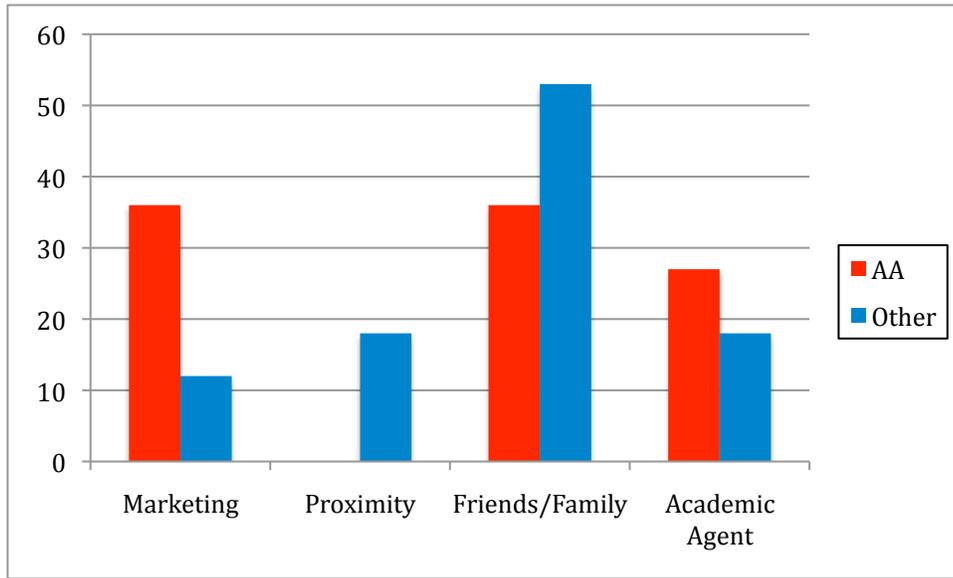
was not doing quite as well (40%), but neither were they doing a great deal more poorly, especially when considering that our cohorts of students were likely among the least prepared for college work in the state. Up to the present, the passing rate for African American basic skills students at UCC hovers around 38% while the statewide average for this group hovers around 45%. While there are not more than about 10 percentage points in difference, the decline could be attributable to shifts in the population attending UCC over the period, with a higher percentage of limited-English speaking immigrant students enrolling. As George Bunch and his colleagues (2010) have pointed out, meeting the needs of limited-English students is a significant challenge for many of the community colleges, and most lack sufficient expertise or policy coherence to meet the challenge.

In fact, the campus has recently undergone a re-examination of the basic skills pass rate and, more importantly, the long-term outcomes for basic skills students, and has completely revamped its entire basic skills program. Today the basic skills instructional program is vastly different than when we first visited the campus. The curriculum has been overhauled, a new emphasis on providing all students with the skills to navigate community college and know-how to plan for their education -- including an emphasis on acquiring the AA and considering transfer as an option -- has been instituted through a “highly recommended” (the college cannot mandate that students take it) 9-hour class that has already enrolled over 5,000 students in a few months. In the class the students are also encouraged to NOT take the ACCUPLACER Placement exam, (which is commonly used in the California community colleges), but instead to take 5- to 8-week “refresher modules” in math and English before taking the placement exam. According to one of the Vice-Presidents, this has increased students’ scores dramatically and raised the level of developmental coursework most students must take, which is much closer to a college credit level. Although it is too early to know how effective this is or will be, or where problems may arise, this is one of the most systematically innovative ways to address the developmental education delivery challenge that we have seen. This revamping of the matriculation process and basic skills program has also resulted in a new emphasis on getting as many students as possible into orientation.

### *Student Perspective*

At each college in our sample, we asked the campuses to help us collect surveys of students who were likely to be considering transfer. Surveys were conducted in several classrooms, but we were dependent on the campuses and instructors to identify and encourage students to respond. Only 17 African American students responded to the survey out of the 100 that we collected in classrooms at UCC and these students appear to be skewed in an odd way; over half of the students had parents with at least some college education and in the case of mothers, more than two-thirds did. One third of mothers and more than one-fourth of fathers were *at least* college graduates, and only one student was first in the family to attend college. Given that UCC serves one of the lowest income populations in the state, these students cannot be considered representative of others on the campus, but they do still provide some insights into why students would select UCC and to what degree they see the school supporting their aspirations to transfer.

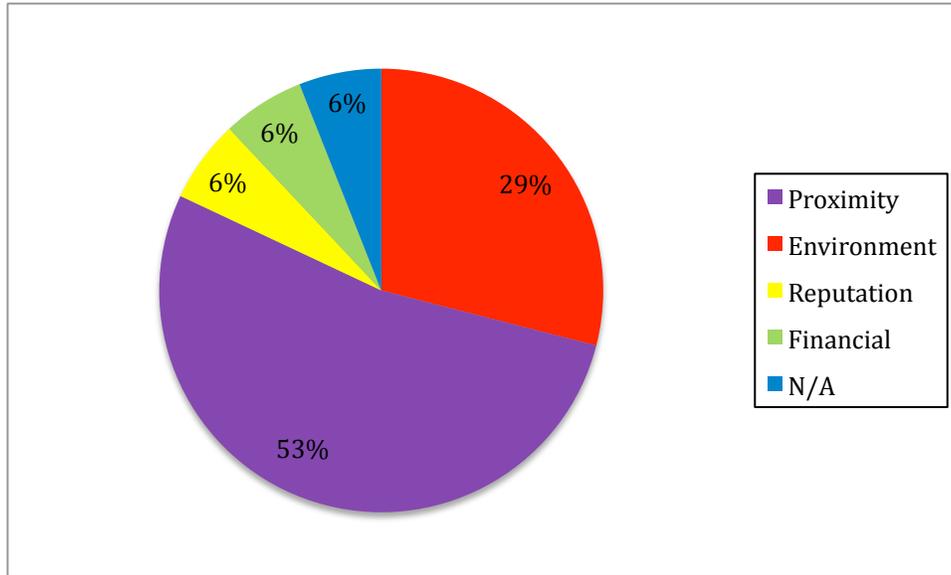
**Figure 8. UCC-How did you find out about this community college?**



An equal percentage of African American students noted that marketing and friends or family members had been the source of information for them about UCC. It is notable that marketing was much more important for African American students than for others. A smaller percentage (about one-fourth) reported that counselors had advised them in this choice. However, when it came to actually choosing a college to attend, proximity played the most important role for the majority (53%) of these African American students.

Nine of the 17 students responding to the question about why they chose to attend UCC reported that it was “convenient” or “close to home.” Five mentioned a specific program that was offered (nursing, fashion merchandising, and culinary arts). The rest offered a variety of reasons that tended to be more general, such as “it’s cheap.” None of the students mentioned that they chose UCC because it had a strong reputation for transfer, though all of these 17 clearly intended to transfer and had already identified the college to which they wanted to transfer.

**Figure 9. UCC-Why did you decide to attend this college? (African American Students)**



*Summary*

UCC has a history of not being a campus that focuses on the transfer function. Yet because of a set of demographic and other circumstances in the early 2000’s, they experienced disproportionate success in transferring African American students from low performing high schools. That is no longer the case. Nonetheless, there are lessons to be learned from this case.

Even on a campus where a “transfer culture” had not been established, pockets of transfer success were possible. A maverick president, who “paid the price”<sup>8</sup> for focusing on transfer, had pulled together a set of resources dedicated to this function. An extremely dedicated and tenacious transfer counselor who was willing to buck the system had shown success in establishing a presence for the transfer function. A faculty member had made a big difference in the availability of courses available for transfer credit. A university counselor had helped establish a pipeline to his campus for some students from this campus. A transfer program had shown particular success with a small group of students and had, in fact, been resurrected after having been defunded because of its reputation for success. Additional private funds had been acquired to help support the transfer function. All of these are known elements in promoting successful transfer for students and together can comprise a “transfer culture.” Without a clear mission or a president who championed this goal, however, it was difficult to sustain many of these efforts and most had fallen away over time.

<sup>8</sup> We have no way of knowing to what extent the president’s focus on the transfer function was related to his dismissal from the position; we simply note that it was characterized in this way by some interviewees.

Resources are a major issue for all community colleges, and some colleges may serve a population that is so dependent upon getting job skills that the transfer function may compete too much for limited resources. And, when those resources are removed, transfers decline. Unlike some of the other colleges in our sample, UCC does not sit in a privileged area of town, it does not have easy access to exceptionally talented individuals who choose to live and teach in the area, and it also serves primarily a very disadvantaged population. It may not be possible or even advisable in these circumstances for a community college to try to serve more than one function well when it serves a highly socio-economically needy population. UCC has made some clear choices over time to focus first on job skills, then if and when it is possible, to help students transfer. However, the innovations in developmental education with which it is currently experimenting may serve as a new impetus to regenerate interest in transfer. The administrator in charge of this effort noted, “We just couldn’t continue with something that wasn’t working.”

## **Seaside Community College**

Seaside Community College is located in a coastal community, but sits in the more urbanized area of that community, fronting a major thoroughfare. From the street, the buildings are relatively non-descript and it does not appear to be a particularly attractive campus. The interior does, however, provide some nice grassy areas, and like many of its companion colleges, it was in the midst of expansion and areas of the campus were blocked off for construction during the time we were there in 2009-10. The community that surrounds SCC harbors some extreme wealth, but also has pockets of low-income housing due to longstanding rent control laws that have it made it possible for communities of immigrants, particularly from the Mexican state of Oaxaca, to thrive. Today, however, there are fewer and fewer rental units available, as they have been converted to condominiums in the face of soaring land values in this community. There are many small shops and neighborhood restaurants in the area surrounding the campus, so that the context of the campus is bustling and welcoming but not at all upscale. Many of the students attending SCC, however, come from outside this area and often travel long distances to arrive there.

Seaside Community College is large; it enrolls 32,000 students, with a broad mix of student demographics. While the student population represents the diversity of California reasonably accurately, SCC has over 3,000 international students—the highest number for any California Community College. Nearly two-thirds of the student body report that their goal is to transfer to a four-year institution.

**Table 6. SCC-Composition of Student Body, 2008-2009**

<b>Ethnicity</b>	<b>Student Body</b>
White	35.8%
Hispanic or Latino	22.5%
Asian or Pacific Islander	16.6%
African American	9.9%
Native American (American Indian or Alaskan Native)	0.5%
Filipino	2.2%
Multiracial or Other	12.5%
<b>Total</b>	<b>100%</b>

At SCC, we interviewed the president, one vice president, one dean of students, the director of institutional research, one faculty leader, the director of financial aid services, and several counselors and program directors. The series of interviews occurred over several weeks and included four visits to the campus.

### *College Mission and Culture*

The first interview with the President and Vice-president for Enrollment Development set the tone for the data collection at Seaside Community College. Both were open, forthcoming, and anxious to talk about the successes that SCC had enjoyed over many years leading up to its reputation as perhaps the most successful community college in the state with respect to student transfers to 4-year colleges. The President had been with the college for just three years at our first meeting and had served very successfully at two other California community colleges before coming to SCC. Queried about what had contributed to the college's exceptional record, President Chan noted that the college was uniquely located in the center of an area with some of the most well-educated and talented people in the country. "We have exceptionally talented people willing to teach and work here, unlike many other places in the state; this gives us an advantage others don't have."

The college has, among other programs, a renowned performing arts center that counts on exceptional teaching talent, individuals often with international reputations, who are available locally. President Chan also noted that the average education level of the community itself is exceptionally high and allows the college to hire parttime instructors with outstanding credentials in the arts, media, literature and other disciplines. The college is also a short bus ride to several very well-regarded four-year colleges and universities, which facilitates the transfer process.

When asked about the impact of recent budget cuts, especially on the college's ability to recruit and support underrepresented students from low-performing high schools, President Chan offered that budget cuts are never welcome, but that SCC would weather them without disturbing their outreach or student support efforts, in part because the budget was augmented by its very

large international and out-of-state student body that paid non-resident fees. This money, President Chan remarked, was plowed back into support services for students.

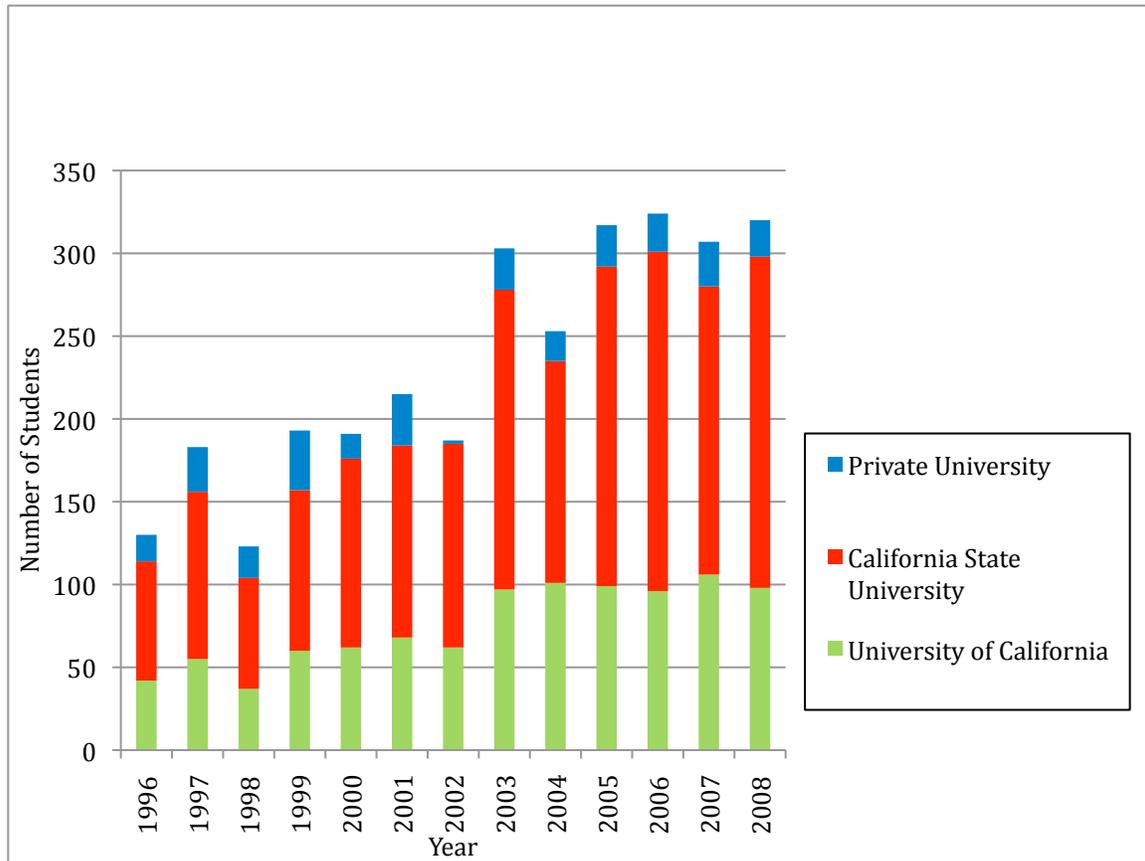
President Chan was also clear that transfer was the highest priority of the campus. This, he to maintain the needed resources and support its multiple missions was clearly related to this perceived lack of conflict among campus functions.

### *Campus Setting and Climate*

SCC maintains a very strong reputation for being a transfer college and many middle class, as well as lower income and minority students, attend the college specifically with the intent to transfer. Because the college has been very successful in transferring students from more privileged backgrounds, we thought it possible—even likely—that the college would not provide a strong focus on helping minority students from low performing high schools to transfer to 4-year colleges. They did not need to; they had a stellar reputation for transfer without taking on this challenge and quite possibly did not have the skills or resources to meet the needs of this population. These conjectures were wrong. Seaside Community College was disproportionately successful in transferring Latino students from low performing high schools to four-year colleges and universities for the cohorts we studied (though it had not experienced the same success with its substantial African American population). This success was in contrast to some other well-known high-transfer colleges. Moreover, it appears likely that they are continuing, and even growing, in this success (though as noted earlier Latino students in general is not the same as Latino students from low-performing high schools, our target group, in all cases). See Figure 10.

How did underrepresented students from low performing high schools find their way to SCC? Many students commuted from extremely long distances, taking multiple buses to arrive at SCC. Why? The reputation of this college is widely known. SCC has maintained a strong outreach effort, and SCC counselors visit a number of urban schools that are a fair distance from the campus on a regular basis, counseling students about the benefits of attending their college. They note that there are 10 “feeder high schools” that they interact with most intensively and these are largely low performing schools. Because the college sits in a densely urbanized area, many high schools from low-income areas are located within a 15-mile radius. Moreover, the college has an extensive media campaign. It houses the National Public Radio affiliate, a station which signs on with a message about the high transfer rate of the college, and the college advertises on buses that travel throughout the region. It also, under President Chan, negotiated a subsidized transportation arrangement that allows SCC students to travel at no cost to and from campus. Counseling staff believed that this almost certainly has had a large impact on attendance.

**Figure 10. SCC-Latino Transfers to Four-Year Institutions**



*Orientation*

At SCC all new students are required to complete, at a minimum, online orientation, but “Welcome Days” at the beginning of the year are also held to orient new freshmen to the campus. Orientation at this campus is considered crucial to getting students properly channeled for transfer. SCC also brings students from about 50 high schools in the region (mostly from low performing schools) in the Spring to orient them to the campus, and SCC does matriculation assessment there with seniors so that students can get results the same day. This prepares them for the courses they will need to enroll in as they enter the college. Additionally, 90 to 100 of those students who elect to enroll are accepted each year into the Summer Bridge program. These students will then continue into the First Year Experience program, where they will be monitored for as long as two years to help ensure that they are on track for transfer. While this is a minority of students who could benefit from the program, it is nonetheless an expensive endeavor, and one that was at risk of being cut with impending state-wide budget cuts.

The Summer Bridge program is especially effective for addressing the problem of under-preparation as students take a 6-week intensive developmental English course that allows many to

move directly into freshman transfer credit English upon entering in the Fall. This course is also paired with a counseling/study skills class that helps students learn how to study effectively. Some students who score very low in English must take a first year remedial English course, that will lead to a next level remedial course before they can take transfer credit English. But even in this case, the time to being able to take credit courses is reduced. Unfortunately, while according to the counselors almost 75 percent of students from low performing schools score below college level in math, there is no equivalent summer math program.

### *Special programs*

Title V (Hispanic Serving Institutions funding) played a role in funding recruitment and support strategies for Latino students. At SCC, Title V funds help to pay for recruitment activities, and things such as the Summer Bridge, but these grants are for 3-year periods and they run out. At a campus like SCC, administrators are acutely aware of the importance of this type of funding and they support grants with stable funding. Core funding from the college pays for a targeted program for Latino students.

While SCC has an EOPS program that serves economically disadvantaged students and those who are first in their family to attend college, specialized services for Latino students are concentrated in the Latino Center. SCC was the only one of the three colleges that was having disproportionate success for Latinos that did not have a Puente program. In the 1980s, SCC had established a Latino Center on campus that functions much like Puente, but serves many more students. The Latino Center houses a program called *Adelante*<sup>9</sup>, which enrolls 740 students (about 10% are not Latino), offers its own English and math transfer classes, with largely Latino faculty, and maintains the class size to 25. *Adelante* also offers tutoring services in math and sciences. The program is completely funded by campus monies plus Title V grant funds. Ms. Maravilla, the director of the Latino Center, noted that other community college campuses had shown an interest in their program. “But it’s really hard to convince districts to fund something like this,” she said, “And so in a way, it’s helped the college . . . because we are an HSI [Hispanic Serving Institution] and . . . . So by being supportive of these students, the college ended up also becoming an HSI and receiving a Title V grant.”

The Latino Center also has six dedicated counselors, five of whom began their higher education careers at SCC and feel an extremely strong commitment to the campus. When the director was asked if she would consider leaving this job, without hesitating, Ms. Maravilla proclaimed, “Absolutely not! No. When I was a student, I actually decided to become a counselor here.” Counselors at the Latino Center are all Spanish speakers, so they are able to provide orientation sessions in Spanish for parents of the Latino students. Ms. Maravilla described that she felt it was also very important that the counselors be able to connect with students’ backgrounds and experiences, and serve as models from the same community who had successful careers as a result of their commitment to higher education.

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<sup>9</sup> The Director of the Latino Center explained that the program was started by a Vice President of a community college “up north” named John González in the 1980s. *Adelante* exists on other California Community Colleges as well.

The Latino Center at SCC also serves as an umbrella for a number of Latino focused clubs to keep the Latino students engaged in the campus. Among these are IDEAS (a support group for undocumented students), ALAS (Association of Latin American Students), LSU (Latino Student Union), MECHA (Movimiento Estudiantil Chicano de Aztlán). There are also several other clubs among the approximately 60 offered at SCC that could particularly attract Latino students, such as intercultural and social justice clubs. There has clearly been a strong attempt to find spaces for the Latino students to feel comfortable in the midst of a highly diverse college.

In spite of strong programmatic efforts, Latino students were not passing transfer courses at the same rate as their co-ethnic peers statewide during the time our cohorts were enrolled, nor are they currently passing these courses at a rate comparable to Latinos statewide. Yet the percentage differences are very small –in most cases less than 5%, even as the campus serves a larger and larger percentage of Latino students.

### *Counseling*

The counseling function, whether it occurs in a counseling center, a specialized program such as EOPS or DSPPS (Disabled Students Programs and Services), or in the transfer center is the critical resource for students wanting to transfer. At SCC, all counselors are charged with being transfer counselors, not just the “transfer counselor.” The director of counseling, Mr. Panini, explained that at one time SCC had a counseling center, a transfer center, plus other specialized centers dealing with international students, disabled students, and so on. However during the 1980s the campus shifted to a single center for all counseling functions.

SCC, no doubt because it is considered a very attractive campus at which to work, has a highly experienced, long-term counseling staff. Like Ms. Maravilla, Mr. Panini expressed that he could not imagine working anywhere else, and he had been at SCC for twenty years. Such continuity had clearly contributed to a coherent understanding of the function of the counseling center. All counselors noted that they provide both personal and academic counseling, as Mr. Panini noted, “I am trying to teach reasoning and not just providing information.”

A critical aspect of the counseling at SCC is the sense of shared responsibility for the transfer function. When the counseling center became the transfer/counseling center, it was made clear that everyone would function as a transfer counselor. Again, Mr. Panini offered:

“ . . . if you’re an EOPS, which is here, or international or disabled student program, that counselor has to know the transfer knowledge as well as anybody in the transfer/counseling center. And those people take on that responsibility. And if I ever get a situation where one of the people in the transfer/counseling center says, ‘You know, my colleague in DSPPS sent somebody over asking how many units does this take to transfer?’ I contact DSPPS. I talk to the counselor and say, What are you uncomfortable conveying? So everybody is

responsible. So you can walk into multiple places and learn about transfer.”

Budget cuts will almost certainly fall hard on the heavy commitment to counseling at SCC. Everyone expressed a concern about waiting for the other shoe to drop. One counselor noted:

“ . . . with all the students . . . that weren’t able to get into the UCs and the Cal States because they cut the numbers, they might end up coming to community colleges . . . and so budget cuts are going to be hard. My budget’s going to be cut—it probably will. But most likely, the college would rather cut first supplies, maybe my tutors rather than cutting the program itself. . . the college is still committed to funding both centers—the Latino Center and the African American Collegians.”

### *Faculty Involvement*

At SCC faculty were not mentioned in the dozen interviews that we did as playing a particularly critical role in shaping the policies or attitudes of the campus with respect to transfer of Latino students. At this campus the administration and student services personnel were so focused on the transfer mission that specific faculty were simply noted for their dedication to helping Latino students succeed; they were not seen as having to take on the job of routing students toward transfer.

### *Developmental education*

Counselors in the Latino Center focused most of their efforts on supporting students who were taking developmental education courses by encouraging them and showing examples – themselves included—of people who had successfully made it through all of the coursework, even when it took years longer, and completed college degrees. The director of the Latino Center offered the following example:

“ . . . it took me three and a half years to leave [community college]. And math for me was –when I have a student that’s done Math 31 a couple of times, Math 20 a few times [both remedial courses], statistics, it took me five times before I passed it! And when some of them are feeling a little- - I pull up my transcript and say look, Mijo, this is what I have. I am not making this up. This is me. And look, I’m sitting in front of you with a Master’s. So if someone like me did it from such a humble background, you’re no different from me. You can do it.”

Like other community college campuses, SCC offers a study skills course in concert with remedial English. This course supports the English class as well as focuses on how to study for

college level courses. The Study Skills course also offers students units toward transfer, so this helps to motivate students who are not yet receiving transfer credit for other developmental education classes. However, the primary method for dealing with the arduous series of basic skills courses (from level C to B to A, before being in regular credit) appears to be to keep the students engaged in the college, provide cohorts and study groups through the Latino Center and the Adelante program, and provide counseling support via individuals who have come from the same circumstances as the students. Like UCC, we found a general discrepancy of about 10 percentage points between the statewide average (58%) and that of SCC (50%), but again it must be remembered that our cohorts consisted of only those students who had attended the lowest performing/highest need high schools. Thus, the most important thing to take away from this comparison is probably the extent to which the SCC campus is currently increasing its pass rate for an increasing Latino population on its campus (59%). By 2009, SCC is now on par with the state in this regard.

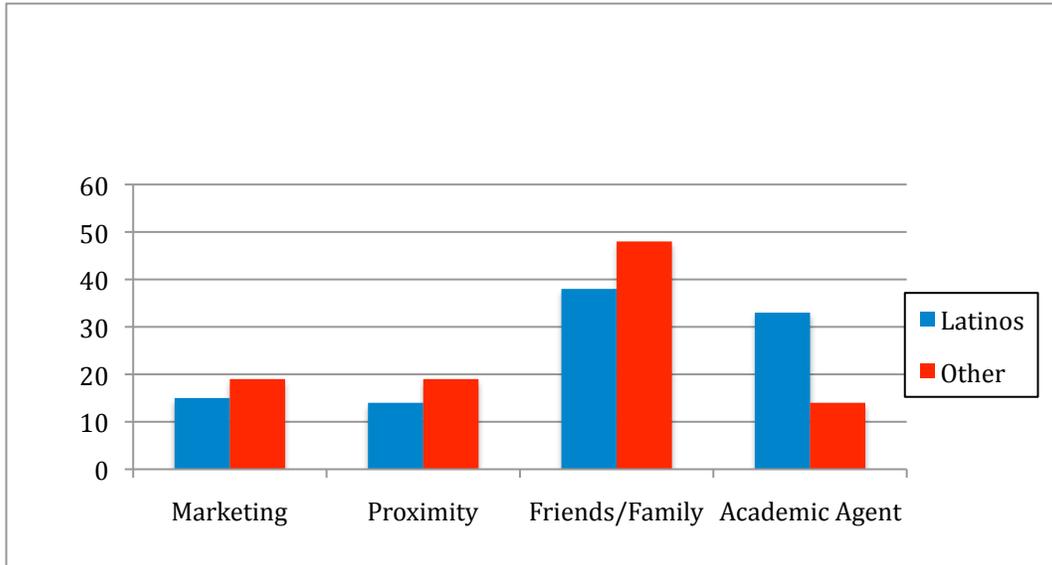
### *Student Perspectives*

One hundred and fifty-six (156) Latino students who were intending to transfer completed the on-line survey at SCC, which gives us large enough numbers to have some confidence in the overall portrait that these students paint of the college. Six hundred and thirty-five (635) non-Latino students responded to the survey, which also allowed us to make some comparisons. And, almost all of what the students say appears to confirm what we heard from the various interviews conducted on campus. A little more than half of the students were attending part-time – a lower percentage than at most of the other colleges in our sample, and almost 40% said they had received no encouragement in their high schools to attend college, yet all but 14% entered SCC with the intention to transfer.

Although SCC advertises extensively about its programs and does substantial outreach, the great majority of these students named friends, family, a teacher or counselor as the source of their information about the college (Figure 11). Teachers and counselors were much more important for these students than for the non-Latino students who responded, and as might be expected, they were more important for Latinos than were family for non-Latinos, assuming that many Latino families and friends did not know a lot about colleges.

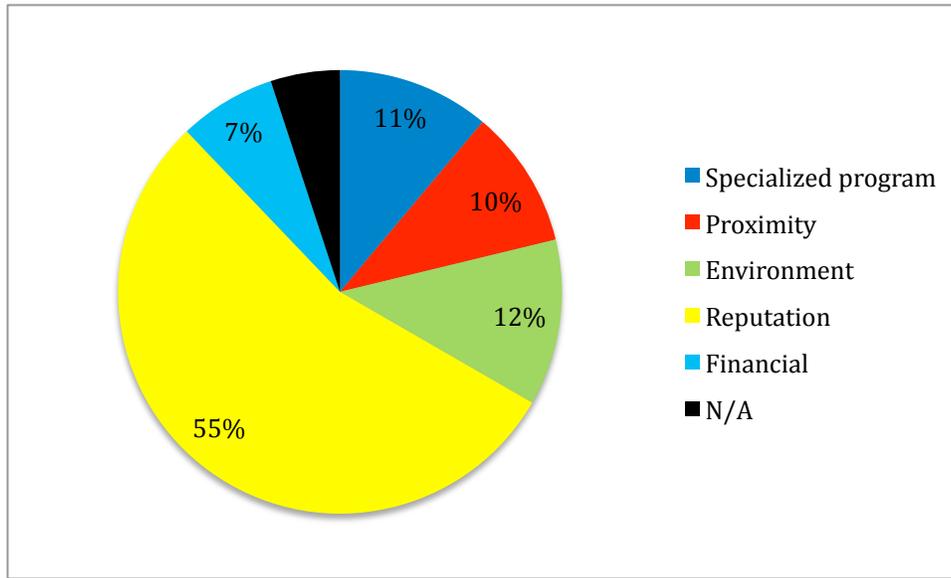
Only about 14% of these Latino students had a parent with a college degree compared to 45% who had at least one parent without a high school diploma. The academic agent, who was nearly as important as friends as family, was likely one of the outreach counselors that SCC continues to send out to a wide ranging area. This will be highlighted later when we discuss high school outreach.

**Figure 11. SCC-How did you find out about this college?**



Almost three-fourths (72%) of Latino students responding to the survey reported feeling that the college strongly encourages transfer, although their primary source of transfer information was neither the counselors nor the transfer center, but the website for the college. (Counselors were a close second, and one-third of students mentioned the transfer center.) Perhaps most surprising was the fact that three-fourths noted they had not belonged to any special program while at the campus and so specialized programs had not helped most students to find the information they needed for transfer. How did they choose this campus? See figure 12.

**Figure 12. SCC-Why did you decide to attend this college? (Latino Students)**



As we hypothesized, reputation played a large role in choosing SCC. Whether students received encouragement or good advice from counselors, and although they did not mention marketing as being a big factor, they *knew* the campus had a strong academic reputation and these students wanted to transfer. Second in importance was environment, which we think is probably related to its reputation, that is, we interpret it as meaning that the school is a good place to be. Proximity was only a major factor for 10% of students.

### *Summary*

SCC is known widely as a very successful transfer college. Some interviewees touted it as number one in the state for transfer; it's difficult to confirm this because of fluctuating numbers and different reporting systems. In fact, counselors mention that many middle class students who might not immediately gain entrance to a selective four-year institution, choose to go first to SCC, where their chances of transferring into highly selective schools improve enormously with guaranteed or priority transfer agreements that are negotiated by the college with a number of these institutions in the region. For the same reason, it also attracts foreign and out-of-state students who must pay non-resident tuition for the chance at transferring to one of these highly selective institutions. What is most notable about this fact, however, from the standpoint of this study is that the President contends that he then plows much of the additional money that comes from the high non-resident fees back into the programs for less advantaged students. According to Dr. Chan, this is how he has been able to maintain things like the Adelante program that serves over 700 Latino students with classroom sizes of 25 students.

The Adelante program, which dates to at least 1982, takes Latino students from basic arithmetic and English through their transfer courses, in an especially supportive environment, with teachers who are trained to work with students who may be fearful of the subject matter

because of past weak instruction. As Ms. Maravilla explained how she recruits faculty to work in the program: “What I try to do is look for professors that are very supportive of basic skills students. So, for example, [Mr. Brown], I know what an awesome professor he is. I had him.” Many of the professors in the Adelante program had been with it “for a very long time so they build that relationship with the students.” Nonetheless, the great majority of Latino students who responded to our survey had not been part of the Adelante program and most did not name counselors as their primary source of transfer information.

It does not appear that Seaside Community College has found the silver bullet or has developed any exciting new innovation to shortcut the lengthy and arduous task of preparing underprepared students for college level classes and transfer to a four-year university. But the campus does appear to have a strong commitment to recruiting and retaining Latino students from low performing high schools, and the Latino Center and Adelante programs rely on research-based strategies. These strategies are: build a relationship with students, create a safe environment with careful guidance by counselors who know and have lived the same experiences as these students, place them in classrooms with teachers who know how to teach them, and surround them with supportive peers. It doesn’t work for all of the Latino students, but it certainly works for a disproportionate number who did, indeed, go on to transfer. As with the other campuses we studied, scaling up these transfer efforts for target populations remains a challenge.

## **Winslow Community College**

Winslow is a 90 years-old community college serving the residents of one of California’s rich agricultural valleys, which we will call Jalapa, where the land produces a bounty of vegetables and fruits that serve a national market and require a great deal of hard field labor to cultivate and harvest. The abundance of valley agriculture contrasts with the limits of the lives of most of the residents. Most of Jalapa’s residents are nonwhite and poorly educated, including many immigrants and people who are more at home in Spanish than English. The region is heavily bilingual and business owners estimate that more than a third of communication with their customers and employees is in Spanish.

Although there are some very prosperous families in the area, it is a region with many poor jobs and little mobility. Even before the Great Recession began in 2008, the region had an unemployment rate far in excess of the state average during the boom, with a number of communities at two or three times the state level. Though it is a small city, Jalapa has problems of crime and gangs. The 2000 Census reported that almost two-thirds of the local residents were Latino and 45 percent of the residents of the area had less than a high school education, far worse than the state’s average. Only one-eighth of those residents over 25 have college degrees.<sup>10</sup> The average income obscures enormous differences between white and Latino populations.

Winslow is a small college, with about 9500 students total, and only about 6500 full time equivalent. It is a key asset in this community, really the only possible pathway to a very different

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<sup>10</sup> American Community Survey data, “State and County Quick Facts,” for 2006.

kind of life for many of the valley’s young people. Winslow has a small majority of Latino students, but a third of the students are white, and a tenth are from Asian backgrounds (Table 7). It is not a school that is famous, but it is a school that has very deep roots in the soil of the valley and has a group of faculty and staff members who have had a deep, long-standing, and successful connection with the region’s Latino community.

**Table 7. Winslow-Composition of Student Body, 2005-2006<sup>11</sup>**

<b>Ethnicity</b>	<b>Percent</b>
White	28%
Latino	59%
Asian/Pacific Islander	4%
African American	4%
Filipino	4%
Other	1%

### *Campus Mission*

At the time of our interviews, there was a relatively new president who had arrived in the aftermath of considerable faculty-administration conflict and a challenge to the accreditation of the institution. The new president had come from a good urban community college in a Midwestern city, but with a one-year contract and a 90-day cancellation clause. Because of rifts between faculty and administration, and the vote of no confidence on the previous president, the faculty and staff had become involved politically and were shaping more of the decisions made by the board of trustees. The new president saw her goal as building into the central mission of the college the challenge of effectively serving the Latino students of the region. The campus’ mission statement reflects this goal:

*Winslow College provides the leadership and resources to ensure that all students shall have equal access to a quality education and the opportunity to pursue and achieve their goals. We are responsive to the learning needs of our community and dedicated to a diverse educational and cultural campus environment that prepares our students for productive participation in a changing world.*

As did the first two points in it Vision Statements:

*Winslow College shall provide its diverse communities and student population with equal opportunities for educational access and success. Winslow College shall implement programs and services that recognize its culturally diverse community, and provide fair and ethical treatment of its entire population.<sup>12</sup>*

<sup>11</sup> Most recent data published by the campus

<sup>12</sup> Winslow College Website

## *Campus Climate*

What is remarkable about Winslow is that the students we studied—those Latinos who transferred between 2002 and 2004—achieved their successful outcomes in the midst of a turbulent campus that had been experiencing serious conflicts for years. Interviews with a dozen individuals on the campus were consistent in noting the lack of leadership during this period. In fact, the former president never had a home in the community, rather lived in a city a substantial distance away and thus was seldom available for community events. The typical story of a college with strong leadership and a clear and consistent message of transfer was not the story at Winslow. Rather it is a story of very committed individuals creating successes *in spite* of other challenges.

Winslow is a school that has very deep roots in the soil of the valley and has a group of faculty and staff members who have had a deep, long-standing, and successful connection with the region's Latino community. It has been a college with very difficult problems, with a declining reputation in the white part of its community, a substantial loss of students from its largest enrollment more than a decade ago, major faculty-administration conflicts, and even a threatened loss of accreditation. But it is also a college that has offered life-changing possibilities to generations of valley residents. Winslow's enrollment rose from 8,100 in 1997 to a high of 11,600 in 2002, then dropped rapidly to 9,400 in 2004 and was 9,900 in 2007. The full-time equivalent enrollment was considerably smaller, about 6,500. These changes caused major stresses in an enrollment-driven institution. Nonetheless, Winslow was finding ways to create success for its Latino students. One staff member summarized what he saw as a critical lesson. "I think it's a success story. The success story is that you can be a college with a lot of problems and if ...you're rooted to your community you can be successful."

Only about 22% of new enrollees at Winslow College select transfer as their goal, whereas the largest percent, or 30%, select job preparation. Thus, unlike other colleges known for their transfer rates, Winslow does not benefit from a large influx of students who are seeking to transfer, yet the pass rates for transfer classes is impressive. Almost every year of our study, Winslow outpaced the state averages in Latino pass rates in transfer courses (63%), not by a large amount, but Winslow's Latino population is also a more economically disadvantaged population than the statewide average. We suspect, based on our interviews with faculty and counselors, that this success is the product of a faculty very dedicated to making Winslow work for its transfer-bound students.

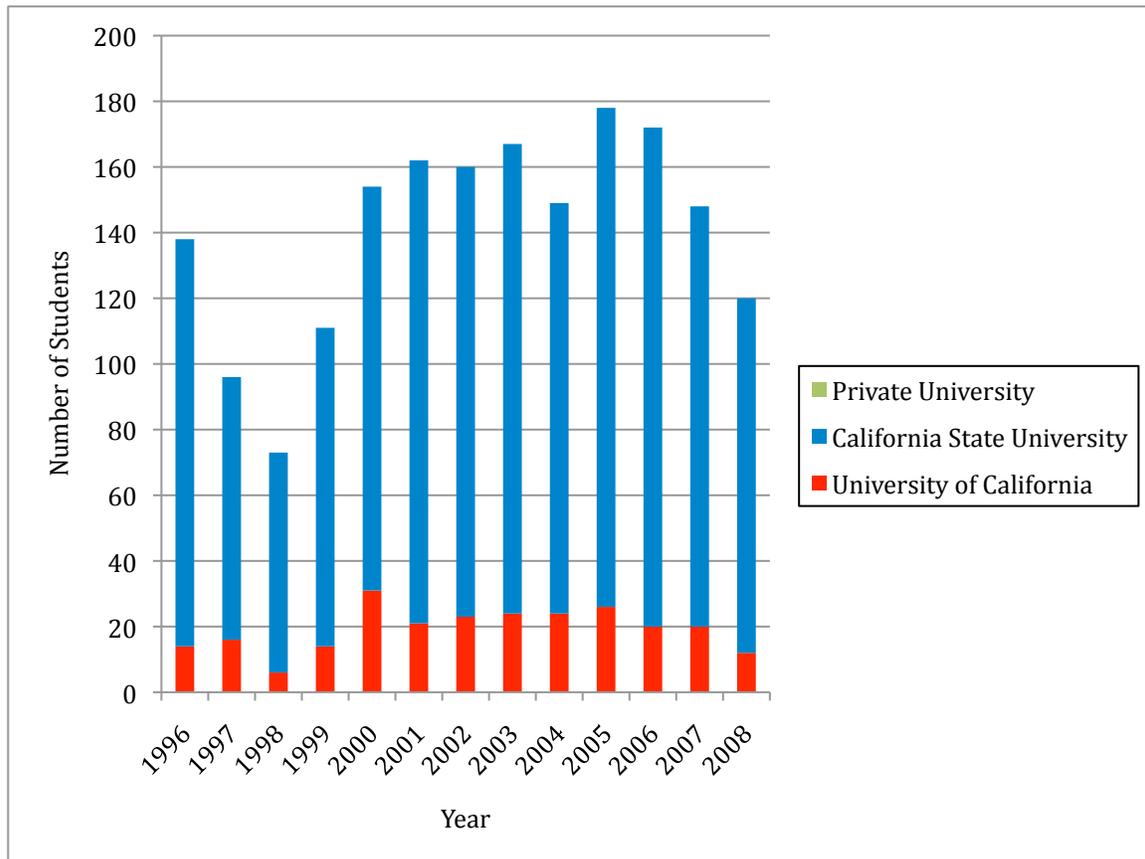
The enrollment of the college is overwhelmingly part-time, 61% are first generation college students and 41% of students note their first language is not English. About two-fifths of students who begin do not make it to the second year.

Based on surveys of a wide range of stakeholders conducted between 1996 and 2010 by the college, we found a consistent picture of what the campus is about, and how it is doing. The college is reaching a substantial but declining percent of high school graduates in its immediate area and has been undergoing a long-term trend of change, from a predominantly white institution to one that primarily serves and graduates Latinos, though it retains a substantial white minority. Although many of the students it enrolls have a strong desire to obtain Bachelors degrees, which is

much more than most of their parents obtained, they are not very well prepared for college level work. Students both coming in and leaving express a strong need for counseling support to help them both with their academic plans and the transfer process, and many are worried about the cost of college. The students who succeed evaluate their experiences very positively and employers see their degrees and certificates as very valuable and give strong evaluations of the students they employ. As the school becomes less white, both community leaders and college leaders are concerned with reinforcing its identity as a quality institution in the community, one related to local job markets, and to avoid loss of students to whiter colleges in the area.

Figure 13 illustrates that the transfer rates over time reflect very limited options for students. First, it is evident that as there is no transfer to private institutions from Winslow, and only small numbers transferring to the University of California. There has been a recent decline in transfers; this may well be related to the downturn in the economy. Nonetheless, there was a peak in transfers in the early 2000s.

**Figure 13. Winslow College-Latino Transfers to Four-Year Institutions**



## *Faculty Involvement*

The story of Winslow is very much a story of faculty and staff working together to create a successful institution even in the absence of strong leadership. Many of the faculty with whom we spoke, because they were pointed out to us as key individuals on the campus, had made their entire careers at Winslow and had been with the college for a long time. Several had very impressive resumes that would have allowed them to go elsewhere, especially during the very turbulent times the college had experienced. (The great tension between the college faculty and administration exploded in 2006 in the first community college faculty strike in California in a quarter century and the selection of a new president under extraordinary circumstances.) Yet they stayed and built programs that would provide opportunities for students from backgrounds in which opportunity was a word they had not often heard.

What is clear is the very important role played by a small number of faculty and staff who were products of the community, had all kinds of connections outside the formal tasks on campus, and whose whole life was bound up in helping students make it through the college and into life, in every way they could, which often involved keeping connections with the community and building them with students and their families. If the institution did not have a clearly defined mission, these people had one and lived it. The institution was moving in some ways toward adopting their long-time mission as its own, decades later. This involved a gradual expansion of Latino faculty, staff, and board members.

One of the reasons why Winslow came to focus on Latinos in the transfer process may have been because it was losing white students through what one staff member described as “white flight.” Whites were increasingly going to another community college in another district. Whatever its plan may have been, it had become a de facto Hispanic Serving Institution. Long-term faculty who were dedicated to the college rolled up their sleeves and decided they would work with the students they had, rather than the ones they wished they had. Some key faculty worried about the loss of local reputation as a strong transfer institution, something the college had tried to recapture especially with targeted science and math efforts. One science professor noted, “We’re trying to say to the community we’re as strong as we were back then. Our Ag institute, our construction sustainable-green construction institute as well, we’re putting funds in that and the community is coming in and supporting that.”

Winslow also benefited from two substantial grants from NASA written by faculty, an ongoing relationship with an engineering school, and experiences developing curriculum for three new, advanced engineering courses. This included creation of a plan for “a seamless articulation pathway” into a UC engineering campus, student access to state-of-the-art equipment and software, and opportunities to explore advanced topics of Project Management in Engineering through participation in special projects and internships with partner institutions. One NASA program was supporting about 30 students on a summer bridge experience and about 30 in the internship program. A faculty member commented, “We had two interns in 2006, 12 in 2007, 20 in 2008 and this year we have 34.” The state’s science and math outreach program, MESA, also plays an important role. One faculty member talked about it and said:

“We have a MESA study room where that’s their home away from home when they’re not working. So they’re studying. So the staff tells each student that they can do what they want to do and they will be helped to transfer. And we connect them. Also we take field trips ...so they can see students like themselves.”

Another faculty member added, “And we’ve formed relationships with people on those campuses and they want our students. They have a need to diversify their student population and we have what they need.”

### *Counseling*

The college lists 14 counselors in 2010, though not all are full-time, and the issue was raised again on this campus that the faculty status of counselors means that they have less time to do one-to-one counseling with students. We estimate the counselor to student ratio is about 1 to 700, and the campus has a high percentage of students who need counseling because they are the first in their families to ever attend college. Although more than 40% of students are primary Spanish speakers, only four counselors were reported to be Spanish-speaking and of Latino background. One of those counselors, who we will call Fernando, had been working at the college for more than 30 years, was very closely connected with community organizations and made a point of spending a good deal of his time at one poor high school, where real connections with the college eventually developed. He spends two half-days each month at Esperanza High School in a small town 25 miles from the campus. “The counselors know me. They refer students. The students... feel comfortable with me and they know that things are connected on campus, a face. There’s a name. I spend time with them...so they know that I’m gong to spend time with them here.”

When he started at Winslow more than 30 years earlier, Fernando recalled, the school had only 15% Latino students and three Latino faculty. Fernando sees the Chicano student movement, or MEChA, as a key to the changes. They demanded Chicano studies and more Latino faculty and had a real impact. There were a handful of faculty members actively supporting their efforts. “All along it’s been kind of grassroots. Its been faculty and the community pushing on this. It hasn’t been huge receptivity from the administration.” The Puente program, for example, has been a widely popular and well-regarded program in California schools and colleges but was discontinued by the Winslow administration.

All of the counselors with whom we spoke worried that counseling was inadequate. Fernando reflected on the counseling staffing and how important the counseling function is:

“But here’s the thing. All of these students are fragile in some way and we meet with them every semester to update because every semester something could happen. They’ll have to be gone for a

month. They have to drop their classes. They have to pick up another job. Something happens at home.”

Fernando continued:

“I think we need to explore again the additional resources for full-time and adjunct counselors. I mean, the counseling function is just very, very important because we’re finding out...that most of the counseling that occurs...at the high school is basically paper shuffling. There’s no career guidance. There’s no college awareness.”

The head of the transfer center, like many of the staff at Winslow, began college at Winslow. The college nurtured her, helped her find a career that she loves and she noted, “Everyone in my family has come here. So they have a connection. This college has a history here and so then, I’m part of that history, part of that connection.” Such sentiments were expressed over and over. Winslow stands for opportunity in this community and there is deep dedication to the institution. Yet Julia, the transfer center director, is on her own with just a clerical assistant. Hours of operation are 8 to 5, closed during lunch and at other times when Julia is in meetings or doing other counseling activities. For students who attend campus after 5, there is no transfer center.

Surveys of students graduating from Winslow are very positive in general about the college but they see counseling as inadequate and as a primary need. The basic response of the college has been to seek special funding to create several nodes of strong well-funded student support, within an institution lacking resources to do that across the board. By seeking and obtaining special grants, the college is able to create an academic support system, transfer advising, and help for a significant group of students who become part of special programs, most of which are explicitly designed to help disadvantaged students.

### *Special Programs*

The college received a federal Title V Hispanic Serving Institution grant for five years that enabled it to build up technical and library resources and staff to provide analytic capacity to college leaders. This provided \$2.9 million from 2002-2007. A federal TRIO program was another key resource, helping more than 100 low-income students with funding and special support. State of California programs intended to support diversity in higher education, in the aftermath of the state’s 1996 ban on affirmative action, and to implement parts of the federal welfare reform law were another important resource.

The EOPS program was frequently mentioned as key to transfer success. EOPs, the Extended Opportunity Program and Services, is designed to “support services to first generation, low income, under-represented college students” and the related CARE (Cooperative Agencies Resources for Education) program is designed to help single moms on welfare with young children. The programs provide help for full-time students who qualify for fee waivers and

financial aid. They give the student early registration to get the courses they need, payment for text books, mandatory counseling, transfer guidance and support, special workshops and seminars, fee waivers on applications to four-year schools, as well as a special loan program.<sup>13</sup> These programs support a staff of six including special counselors at the college. Unfortunately, EOPS experienced a 40% cut in the state budget adopted in 2009, and the governor proposed another 16% cut for the budget in 2010.

The MESA program is one of the biggest support efforts with about 100 students and transferring about 20 a year to four-year campuses. The typical student spends about three years in the program. The program, as explained by a counselor, serves:

“the cream of the crop...since they must be in a calculus-based major, in fact, they have to be in at least elementary algebra before they can join MESA—then they get scholarships and internships and usually spend three years in the program before transferring because they are not prepared with their mathematics. ESL students who want to do science or math take four years.”

The transfer center counselor noted the common assets in the various successful programs:

“The programs like TRIO and EOPS and MESA...have certain things in common. One of those things is that counseling is very tightly connected. They...get dedicated counseling time... They need to revisit their counselors semester after semester, multiple times a semester.” Another added: “Each program is another extended family of those students.”

When one looks at the few hundred graduates and transfers each year at Winslow, and reads the brochures and looks at the lists of colleges to which students are transferring, it is obvious that the counseling and academic support efforts are critical and make a difference. Unfortunately, this vital function cannot be supported for all students in the college budget, and there is very little general one-to-one counseling. So connection with one of these special programs and incorporation in the student-faculty-support personnel “families” that form in these programs is critical.

### *Developmental Education*

Winslow has a particular challenge in that many of its students are not primarily English-speakers and so they arrive at the campus not only with weak preparation from low performing schools, but also with significant challenges in strengthening their English skills. This typically means extra time in ESL or in remedial English courses. This was not an area that the college seemed to have an especially good handle on. In fact, there appeared to be significant confusion,

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<sup>13</sup> Material take from EOPS information on website of Winslow College.

and even disagreement between counselors and professors, about what the appropriate kind of placement was for these students.<sup>14</sup> Figure 19 shows the basic skills pass rate for Winslow's Latino students during the period that our cohorts were entering and moving through the campus. Winslow lags behind the state in this regard, perhaps in part because of the struggles around how to meet the needs of English learners, although as noted earlier, once students are able to access transfer courses, Winslow outperforms the state for these students. Like some of the other colleges in our sample, the basic strategy seemed to be to try to provide strong counseling for students to keep them coming back. But we found no real innovations in terms of how the classes were delivered.

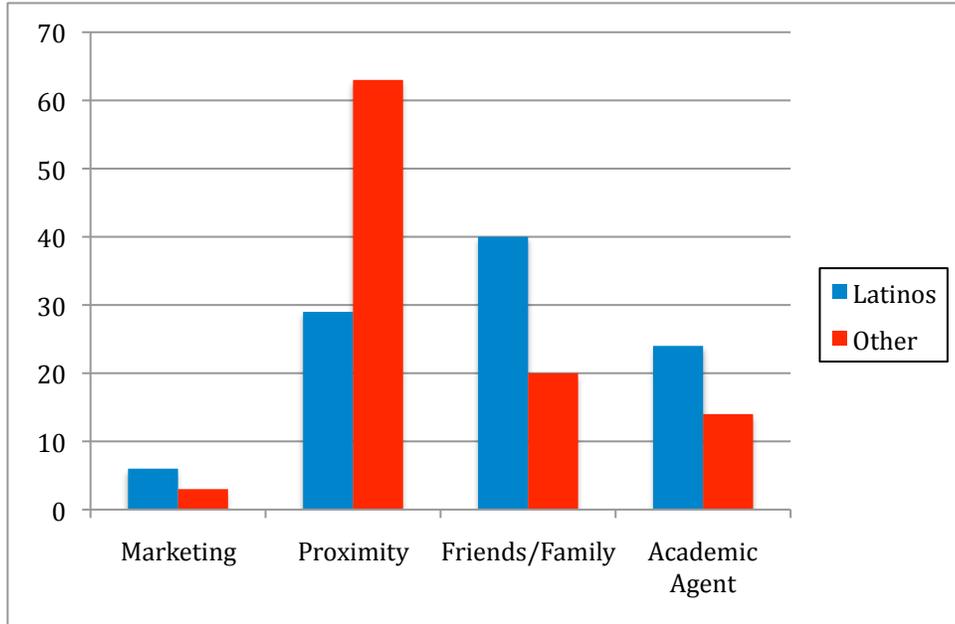
### *Student Perspectives*

Seventy-one Latino students who noted that they intended to transfer to a 4-year college responded to the student survey at Winslow. With respect to how they found out about Winslow College, Latinos (n= 96) noted that the most common source of knowledge about the campus was family and friends, which confirmed what counselors had told us: that the campus is now very embedded in the Latino community. Everyone has a sibling, cousin, or parent who has been there. It is notable that for non-Latinos (n=35) proximity was the biggest source of information –it was nearby. School counselors were a much less important source of information -- especially for white students -- which also confirms the fears of some faculty that Winslow may be losing its reputation among the white community as a good transfer school. Finally, marketing was not a major source of information for either group; Winslow has not been marketing itself.

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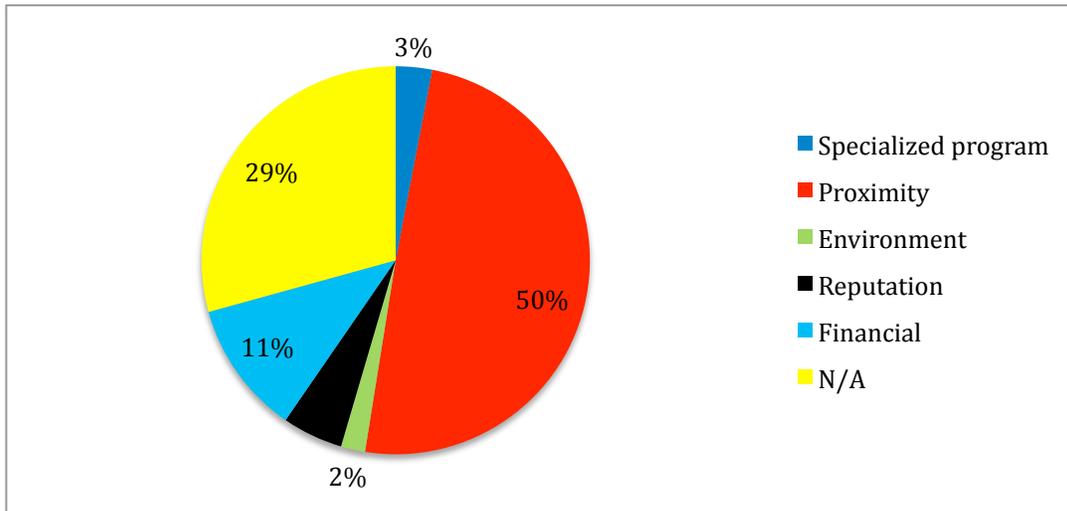
<sup>14</sup> George Bunch and his colleagues, in a forthcoming publication, *Language Testing and Placement for California's Community College English Learners*, 2010, explore this topic in great depth, and spent considerable time examining this question at Winslow as well.

**Figure 14. Winslow-How did you find out about this community college?**



Unlike other colleges with strong transfer reputations, the overwhelming reason given for choosing to attend Winslow by Latino students was “proximity.” It was most convenient to where they lived.

**Figure 15. Winslow-Why did you decide to attend this college? (Latinos)**



About one in five students in this sample decided to transfer after they began taking classes at Winslow (accurately reflecting national data), and most of the students (two-thirds) credited the regular academic counselor with providing the needed transfer information. Less than 40% said

they got the information from the transfer center. Most students had not participated in any particular program, but among those who did, they overwhelmingly believed that it had helped them to prepare to transfer.

### *Summary of Winslow*

There were no magic solutions or sudden turning points at Winslow. There was nothing exceptional about the appearance of the college, except that it is well-tended and full of blooming flowers. It was not a “boutique” campus with lots of resources and publicity. It is, however, a small college and this probably has certain advantages; it is easier to create a sense of family and close connections in a smaller environment. But, we found something more important—that a group of people within a college, without large special resources and without strong central leadership, can build networks into communities and bridges into success in college for long-excluded groups just by sticking to their goal, rounding up resources, and living their values in their careers. We found that they made the most of precious external funding and programs to create pathways that actually worked for groups of students confronting many obstacles.

We also suspect that it came to the top of our rankings in part because of its small size combined with a very high Latino population. Winslow has been figuring out how to transfer Latino students from low performing high schools, as this *is* the population that it serves more than any other. Nonetheless, perhaps the most salient lesson we took from Winslow was the power of faculty and staff with deep roots and deep commitment to a community, to harness their dedication and build an institution that works.

There is a great shortage of truly charismatic leaders and there are no silver bullets in higher education, but there is no shortage of people who care deeply about equity and opportunity. The Winslow story shows that they can have a transformative impact that changes the institution and opens up new possibilities for opportunity and equity in their communities, particularly if they can connect with a critical mass of resources. Expanding opportunity for students who are first to go to college in their family or community are widely shared general goals in community colleges, but often get lost in the daily pressures of all that it takes to run the institutions. In Winslow there is clear evidence that they have been built into some important parts of the institution and that they have made real differences.

### **Central Coast College (CCC)**

Founded in the early 1900s, Central Coast College serves the urban area of Diamond Bay and offers instruction at a variety of facilities across the city. The service area includes many low-income neighborhoods, as well as a few medium and high-income areas. Central Coast College (CCC) enrolls approximately 15,000 students each semester and it is the second largest community college in the Diamond Bay Community College District. The student population at CCC reflects the ethnic and racial diversity in the central Diamond Bay area; roughly 69% of the students at CCC are non-white. Most CCC students work at least part-time (78% enroll part-time), and many are first-generation college students. In contrast to other community colleges in the district where

African Americans make up about 8% of the student body, 14% of the students at CCC are African American. More than half of all students, and more than 90 percent of African American students, enter CCC assess at the remedial level in mathematics and English. Many of these students are English learners (including some African American students) and the most common student educational objective is transfer to a four-year college, though students are pursuing a variety of other educational goals.

**Table 8. CCC-Composition of Student Body, 2008-2009**

<b>Ethnicity</b>	<b>Student Body</b>
White	33.2%
Hispanic or Latino	28.0%
Asian or Pacific Islander	6.8%
African American	14.4%
Native American (American Indian or Alaskan Native)	1.2%
Filipino	4.1%
Multiracial or Other	5.1%
<b>Total</b>	<b>100%</b>

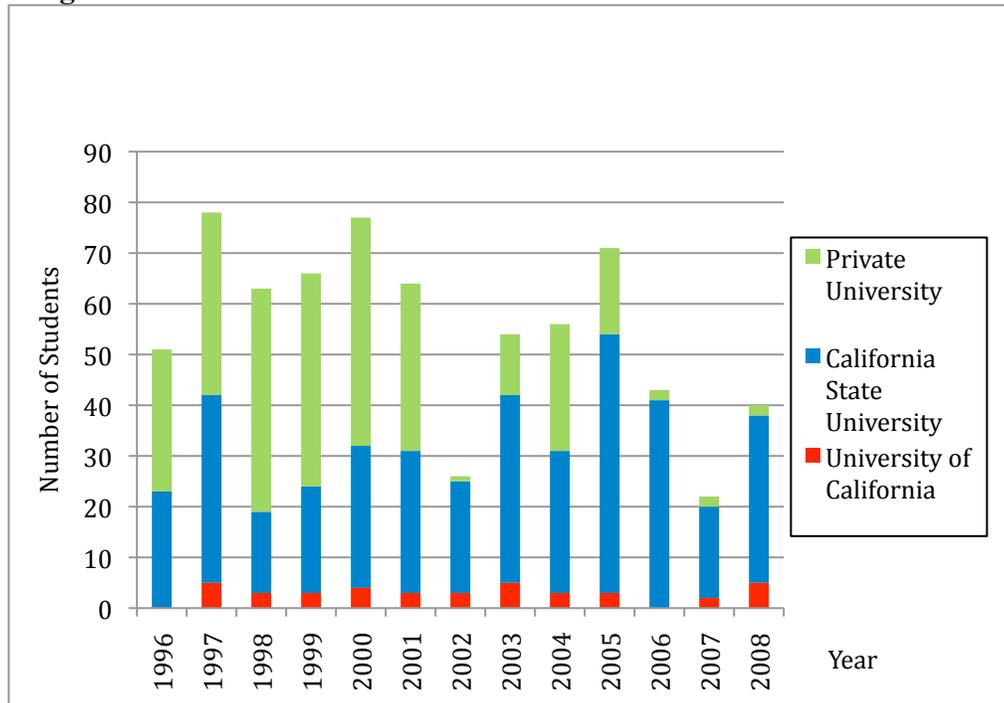
At CCC, we conducted five site visits between February and October 2009. In our first visit, we conducted interviews with the college President, Vice-President, Dean of Student Development, and the Director of Financial Aid and were thereby referred to a second group of interviewees, which included the Director of the Transfer Center and the Director of UMOJA-a transfer-oriented learning community. Based on recommendations made during these interviews, we then interviewed two faculty members in the Department of English, the Basic Skills Coordinator, the Director of EOPS and Outreach, the head of the Black Studies Department, the Institutional Researcher, and a TRIO counselor. Finally, we conducted an interview with a faculty member of the MESA program who was also identified by referral. It should be noted that we could not locate, nor were we referred to any general counselors who were particularly savvy about transfer services at CCC. In addition to these interviews, we also surveyed several students enrolled in transfer Math and English courses. In preparation for these site visits, our research team created and reviewed a background report relevant to transfer. Documents provided by the college during the site visits were also reviewed and incorporated into these reports.

On the main campus in downtown Diamond Bay, we found CCC's main campus to be an architectural composite of old and new. Most of the classes that were in session took place in classic 1970s antiquated buildings in which students entered and exited classrooms from doors that emptied into often-crowded breezeways. Inside of these classrooms, desks were packed into bare spaces with few or no technological or other material resources. Despite the poor state of some of the academic facilities that we observed, we noted that the CCC downtown campus had a collegiate feel that was sustained by a newly refurbished Learning Resource Center (LRC). The

LRC was a bright, clean, building in the center of campus that appeared to be a well-stocked “one-stop shop” for student success initiatives including the EOPs counseling center, the financial aid office, the library, and the math and English tutorial centers. On our visits to CCC, we observed large groups of predominantly African American students congregated in and around the student support offices in the LRC.

Since this study sought to understand the policies, processes, and practices that could account for the transfer of a disproportionate number of African American students from CCC to four-year colleges or universities, we were particularly interested in the pattern of transfers for African American students from CCC to four-year colleges between 1996 and 2008. The trends in Figure 1 (below) suggest that African American students at CCC had relatively high transfer rates from 1996-2005, with a dip in transfer in 2002. Our original dataset focused on transfer rates between 2002 and 2004. In Figure 16 (below), we can see that the average transfer rate across these years was moderately high for African American students relative to the transfer rates from more recent years. Notably, though the number of transfers to private universities has dropped significantly over time, the number of transfer to California State Universities (CSUs) and Universities of California (UCs) generally remained stable over time. It is also important to note that these data include *all* African American students who transferred during the period (not just those who graduated from low performing/resource high schools), which may have positively skewed the data.

**Figure 16. CCC-African American Transfers to Four-Year Institutions**



## *Articulating a Transfer Mission*

Our study of transfer at CCC began online on the college's website where we easily found information related to transfer articulation, transfer workshops, and other transfer-related opportunities at CCC. The school's mission statement makes commitments to both "lower division and general education courses that lead to transfer to a four-year college or university..." and, "... equity, inclusiveness, and diversity in all of its manifestations...and high quality instructional programs, essential student support services, including co-curricular and cultural activities." Overall, the CCC website reflected a diverse campus setting and included several useful links to transfer-related information.

In our initial interviews, President Ferguson [pseudonym]—who had been the president at CCC since 2001—called transfer a "serious priority" at CCC and identified the campus as providing the "lower division for hopeful university transfer students." Despite this, we were surprised to learn that in 2000, a report spotlighted CCC as one of the least successful transfer institutions in the state! The director of the transfer center, Ms. Levin [pseudonym], referenced this report and drew attention to the way that CCC had once been perceived as a "vocational" school. As a result of this report, she noted that transfer had become "a real mandate" for CCC administrators and an institutional priority. When asked what she thought might explain the campus' disproportionate success in transferring African American students to 4-year colleges or universities, Ms. Levin pointed to the way that a transfer culture had permeated into the general campus culture in the early 2000s. In her opinion, faculty, administrators and staff at CCC became, and have remained, heavily invested in creating a transfer culture for all students at CCC as a result of the criticism brought on by this report.

An additional explanation for the campuses disproportionate success in transferring African American students from low-performing high schools may have been in President Ferguson's (and previous presidents') a commitment to student success among historically disadvantaged students. In fact, many individuals interviewed in this study explicitly attributed the college's success in promoting transfer among African American students from disadvantaged backgrounds to administrators' commitments to programs and services targeted at historically disadvantaged students and to hiring practices that attracted individuals who supported this vision. These services went beyond simply creating a generalized transfer culture on campus to creating a sense of family (belonging) for underrepresented minority students. Even in the context of recent statewide budget cuts, President Ferguson and other administrators we spoke with expressed a commitment to sustaining targeted academic services for students from historically underserved communities. One program coordinator with a twenty-five year history at the college talked about a legacy of commitment to students of color on the CCC campus:

"We've been very fortunate, and I don't know if it's the luck of the draw or it's just the way we evaluate the selection of presidents. Since I've been here, we've had four presidents. Each president was pretty much cut from the same cloth...In terms of core services and curriculum, they've always been on the same page and that is you must have full student-services components. And each one came actually with some specific programs in mind that would

address the retention and success of low-income students. Current president, he just turns people loose with ideas.”

These comments suggest that President Ferguson’s (and previous presidents’) visions for student success among historically disadvantaged students in particular may have resulted in, among other things, relatively high transfer rates among African American students.

### *District Administration, Faculty, and Diversity*

Almost all of the individuals interviewed at CCC attributed a part of their success, in transferring academically underprepared African American students to 4-year colleges and universities, to the assistance and vision provided by the central Diamond Bay Community College District. Because CCC is one of two Diamond Bay colleges included in this study, our data suggest that the district may indeed have played a unique role in supporting these schools’ successes with transfer among various populations. When asked to describe the ways in which the district may have provided support for underprepared African American students, CCC faculty members and administrators noted that the diverse racial and ethnic backgrounds of district administrators had likely influenced both policies related to students of color and hiring practices throughout the district. Additionally, participants also underscored the importance of district support and expertise in supporting the CCC transfer mission.

The Diamond Bay community college district is made up of three community colleges and is governed by a locally elected Board of Trustees. The district bills itself as a multicultural institution with “multiple priorities bound together by shared values and a shared vision of the future.” The Chancellor, Rita Cowen [pseudonym]—an African American woman—is responsible for carrying out the solutions to policy and budget issues drafted by the Board of Trustees. Study participants suggested that, under the guidance of Chancellor Cowen, the district played three important roles in supporting transfer on the CCC campus: first, they provided CCC administrators, faculty, and staff with support and expertise on issues related to transfer; second, they provided financial support for transfer related initiatives, and finally they provided support for research and development on each Diamond Bay campus.

In describing the relationship with district representatives, one program coordinator said that they found nonintrusive ways to guide and support CCC faculty and staff. For example, he said that though he was required to report to the district Vice-Chancellor of Student Services, “none of us have to take direction from her...it just so happens that she is probably the best person at that job in the state.” Moreover, an administrator informed us that the recent construction of the Learning Resource Center at each Diamond Bay campus was the result of a district-led policy initiative.

Institutional researchers are another example of the support and expertise that the district provides for each Diamond Bay campus. Each year, institutional researchers produce a profile of campus students and services, summarize the findings in an annual report, and share the findings in workshops. The institutional researcher at CCC described these workshops as “therapy sessions”

in which, “we sit together and go through data, not just go through data but actually have people talk about the data.” In our interviews, faculty and staff seemed familiar with open discussions of transfer-related data disaggregated by race/ethnicity, and seemed genuinely interested in engaging in such discussions. In other words, interviewees stressed that the central office did not micromanage the college, but found ways to support, among other things, the CCC transfer mission.

### *Faculty*

Despite the professed district- and college-wide commitment to diversity at the CCC campus, the CCC faculty is far less diverse than the student body. For example, only 8.7% of the faculty, as opposed to 14.4% of the students, are African American. Several faculty members of color noted, however, that many of the administrators at CCC and in the Diamond Bay district had been people of color or advocates for underrepresented students of color. For example, one counselor endearingly called President Ferguson, “a person of color at heart,” and credited him with bringing members of the college community to work together to advance services for students of color on campus. As she put it, “He has a vision for working with students of color, bringing communities together under one roof.” Beyond the racial and ethnic diversity of the CCC faculty and staff, another program director suggested that the campus’ commitment to underrepresented students of color was directly related to faculty unions on campus, which required the collective approval of CCC budgets, programs, and policies.

### *Campus Climate*

CCC’s central Diamond Bay location appears to afford the campus both costs and benefits in terms of accessibility and climate. On one hand, because of the limited real estate, student and visitor parking spaces are extremely limited. On the other hand, CCC benefits from the accessibility to downtown Diamond Bay area; the campus is only a ten-minute walk from the business center, which is connected to several train and bus lines. In addition, faculty and administrators spoke of a renowned “Diamond Bay” energy that embodies a diverse cultural setting and proximity to beautiful California beaches. The Director of EOPS noted, however, that the proximity to a Diamond Bay high school might also deter some students from enrolling in CCC.

“I think that one of the problems you have in recruiting African-American students is we have the reputation of being a local school...we pay a price for being the school next to Trojan [pseudonym] High School. So we don’t get a lot of the kids over here. You know ‘I don’t want to go there. It’s like going to high school.’ ”

Despite this counselor's skepticism, CCC was actually far more successful at recruiting African American students than other community colleges in the Diamond Bay area.

### *Counseling*

Although counseling is cited in the literature as a critical component of transfer success, counselors are in short supply at CCC. Currently, the college employs 14 counselors, 8 adjunct counselors, and 4 counseling support-service staff, with an approximate counselor to student ratio of 1 to 1,000. General counselors provide career and educational counseling, as well as personal support when needed, and their mission statement expresses a commitment to "offering a variety of counseling services to students in order to facilitate and foster both personal and academic growth." Despite this professed holistic approach to counseling, students, faculty, and counselors indicated that CCC students of color face challenges in both accessing general counseling services as well as in addressing their unique cultural and/or personal needs in counseling sessions. One counselor in a learning community noted that the shortage of counselors at CCC had prohibited her from visiting more classrooms and presenting information that she considered critical to student success in transfer.

In recent years, administrators and counselors at CCC have experimented with innovative ways to address the college's counseling shortage. For example, CCC has offered online counseling services designed to provide students with an opportunity to meet with a counselor online to receive "educational, career, and personal counseling as it pertains to their academic success." The results from our student survey suggest that CCC may have been at least partially successful in reaching African American students: 67% of African American students in our CCC sample identified academic counselors as a source of information or guidance in the transfer process.

Data from our interviews suggest, however, that CCC is still largely unable to address many of the students' deepest counseling needs. The director of one learning community (an African American woman) suggested that faculty and counselors often overlooked students' psychological, social, and cultural needs. She noted that some of the students who she believed could have benefitted from mental health services would not use them, because there was "a stigma in our communities about that." In fact, when we asked African American transfer students at CCC to identify the biggest challenge that they have faced as a transfer student, these students routinely cited "personal issues" or emotional issues, such as anxiety or stress. These responses suggest that there is an unmet need for more intimate counseling services at CCC. It is doubtful that such rapport can be established online or in a one-time thirty-minute counseling sessions.

### *Special Support Programs*

Despite the apparent shortcomings in the counseling department, CCC College has maintained and developed several special programs that link student services to academic affairs programs. We spoke with several individuals who suggested that the learning communities at

CCC likely provided some underprepared African American transfer students with integrated support systems, which may have resulted in transfer. The learning community model, in which groups of students enroll together in two or more classes that are taught by a team of professors, plan courses around a common theme. In addition, faculty, counselors, and tutors mentor these students to ensure that they reach their educational goals. Faculty and administrators at CCC repeatedly suggested that the learning communities at CCC had helped academically underprepared students complete their goal of transfer. In fact, in our sample of CCC transfer students, 16 out of 20 African American transfer students said that they participated in a learning community, or a student support program, and 12 of these students indicated that the program had served as a source of guidance or preparation for transfer. Specifically, these students noted that a particular program or community had provided them with academic and personal guidance, networking opportunities, access to materials (books), and/or academic assistance.

Since the early 1990s, several learning communities have operated on the CCC campus that emphasize transfer as a goal and focus on underrepresented students, including Puente, UMOJA, and Freshman Year Experience (FYE). In addition, CCC has housed several student-support programs that, like learning communities, create a web of counseling, financial, and academic services that simultaneously support students' academic, personal, and career aspirations. On our visits to CCC, several faculty and administrators referred us to Ms. Perkins [pseudonym], the director of the UMOJA program. Modeled after the Puente Project, which provides counseling, instruction, and mentoring for first-year community college students, the UMOJA Program aims to increase the number of educationally underserved students who enroll in 4-year universities, earn degrees, and return to their communities as leaders. The UMOJA Program has only been in operation at CCC since the fall of 2007, and so it could not have affected the transfer rate of the students in our study.

Although UMOJA was not in place at CCC during the time of our study, the TRIO/ASPIRE program was. TRIO is a student-support service program, funded by the U.S. Department of Education, to help increase the number of disadvantaged students who successfully complete a program of study at the postsecondary level. TRIO strives to improve retention and persistence and help raise grades and increase graduation and transfer rates. Eligible participants must be first-generation college students or low-income students (or have a documented disability). Thus, it is likely many of the students in our cohort would have qualified for TRIO services, but we do not know how many of these students actually participated in the TRIO program.

In addition to federally funded learning support initiatives, there were several state-funded student-support services programs at the CCC campus during the late 1990s and early 2000s. MESA is a state-funded program that is designed to help educationally disadvantaged students to prepare for and graduate from a 4-year college or university with a math/science degree in areas, such as, engineering, the sciences, computer science, and mathematics. MESA has particular interest in and focus on students from those groups who historically have had the lowest levels of attainment to 4-year and graduate level programs, though it also has generally rigorous criteria to join. No data were collected on how many of the students in this study, if any, were enrolled in MESA.

EOPS is another integrated service program that is designed to recruit, retain, and transition students from historically disadvantaged student backgrounds. The director of EOPS described the services as "above and beyond" those offered by the college's student services division. Primary, he noted that EOPS services provided students with: priority enrollment, book service program, counseling/advisement, financial assistance, and preparation for transition to four-year schools and the workplace. In our sample, over 50% of African American students who participated in a specialized academic program indicated that they participated in EOPS. Sixty percent of these students indicated that the EOPS program had helped them prepare for transfer by providing them with access to transfer resources, presentations and college fairs, guidance, encouragement, and networking opportunities.

While it appears that the learning communities and specialized support services at CCC likely assisted some African American students in our study to transfer to four-year colleges or universities, it is unlikely that these programs alone accounted entirely for the above average transfer rates at CCC. As one administrator noted, these special programs had always been limited by insufficient funding and at the time of our study, were not always running at full capacity. Moreover, these programs all require students to attend college full-time, which is a challenge for students who are working. Thus, it appears that though the "learning community initiative" was the buzz on the CCC campus in the late 1990s and early 2000s, most African American students from low performing high schools likely remained largely unaffected by these services.

### *Developmental Education*

Despite the fact that CCC had a disproportionate rate of success in transferring African American students from low-performing high schools, data suggest that, during this same period, the college was struggling to retain and promote African American students in basic skills courses. African Americans' success rates in basic skills courses varied in relation to the state averages (which were generally low in comparison to white or Asian students). For example, in the fall of 1997, the success rate for African Americans in basic skills courses was 42% --about 10% below the state average. In contrast, in the fall of 2001, nearly half of the African American students enrolled in basic skills courses successfully completed these courses -5% above the state average. These data document incongruity in the experiences of CCC African American transfer students from low-performing high schools. There are several possible explanations for these apparent discrepancies.

First, there is reason to believe that some of the African American students in our study may have been atypical. We spoke with multiple people who informed us that there was actually a large number of Somali immigrants at CCC, students who had attended low-performing high schools in Diamond Bay, but had relatively highly educated parents. As we noted earlier, we used three proxies to control for the students' background, but these proxies controlled for the average student background and did not reflect individual differences. Thus, it is entirely possible that several of the students in our "low" high school cohort were not as educationally disadvantaged as they appeared. In fact, two of the African American students in our survey sample indicated that

English was not their first language, suggesting they were part of this immigrant group. In addition, the director of the Black Studies department told us that he personally knew several African immigrants who had gone on to transfer, and he touted their relative success compared to the native Black students.

In our conversations with the basic skills coordinator and a basic skills English instructor, we also heard about several other resources that may have helped students in developmental coursework move toward their goal of transfer. In particular, the basic skills English instructor told us that the tutoring centers on the CCC campus had long been piloting innovative practices. Specifically, one instructor in the math center had developed a very successful math lab in which the instructors provided a pedagogical intervention for students who had failed basic skills math courses. Likewise, the instructor of developmental English noted that the English Center had long been a recognized resource on the campus that produced some “dramatic shifts” in student work. Additionally, both interviewees noted that most of the faculty at CCC had a longstanding commitment to helping academically underprepared students of color succeed and that there was no “stigma” associated with teaching basic skills courses.

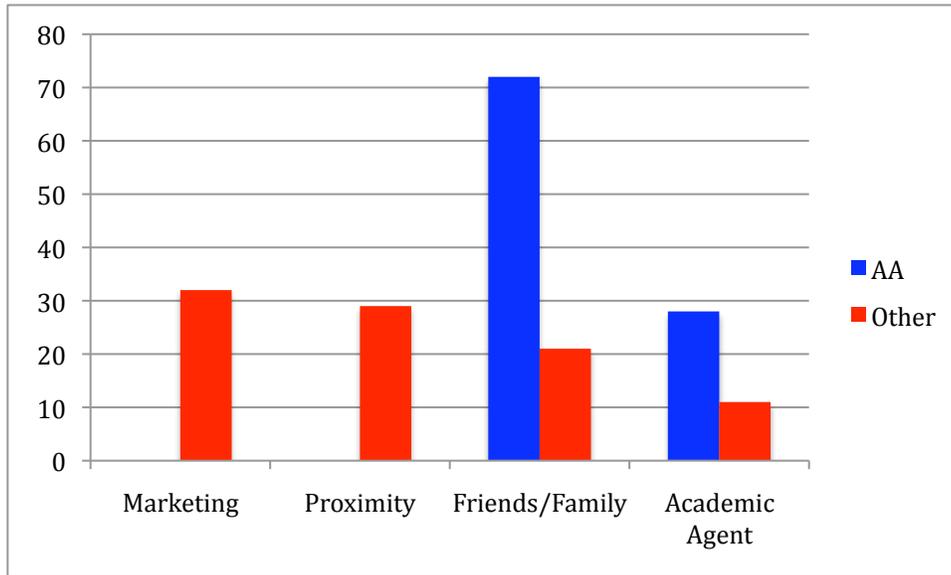
Despite a few pockets of innovation and success, the faculty at CCC seemed familiar with the challenges facing transfer students in developmental courses. As the basic skills coordinator put it, “they’re here, they’re tired, and they get discouraged... ‘I’ve been here a year and I still don’t have any transfer units.’ Pretty soon they disappear on us.” This appears to have been the case for many academically underprepared African American students. According to data provided by Ms. Perkins, between 2001 and 2006, 91 percent of African American students at CCC required basic skills courses. Over this five-year period, only about 10% of the African American students who had enrolled in basic skills courses went on to enroll in transfer-level math. Furthermore, in math, African American students’ average GPA was 1.47. These frightening statistics were only marginally better for English.

### *Student Perspectives*

Only 15 African American students and 73 non-African American students responded to the survey at CCC, which makes it hard to generalize about the findings from this survey. However, there are interesting differences between what these students say at CCC and what other students at CCC answered.

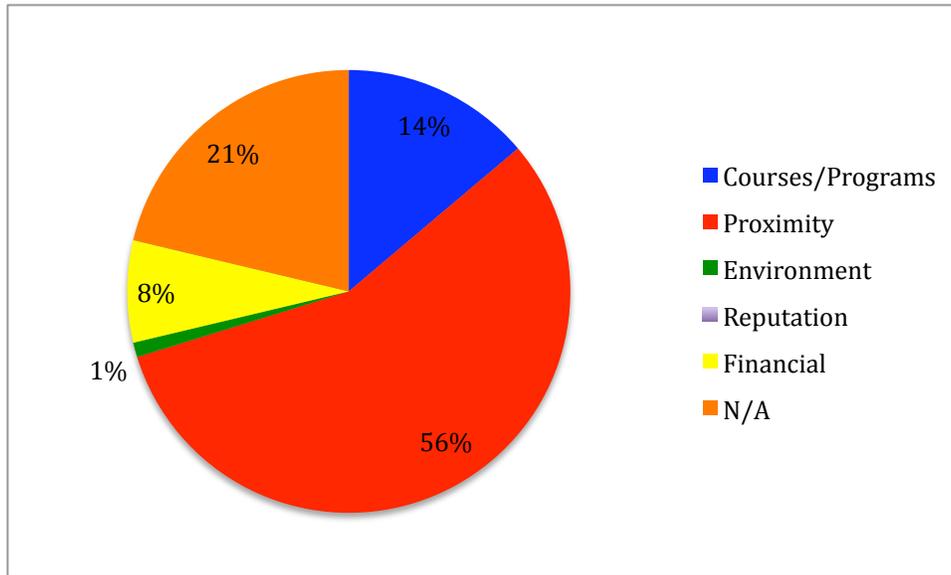
When asked how students found out about the campus, African American students at CCC College appeared to respond more to friends and family and recommendations from counselors or teachers than did other students. Whereas other students at CCC reported that they learned about CCC online or “in passing”, family and friends were the single most commonly named sources of information for the African American students in our sample.

**Figure 17. CCC-How did you find out about this community college?**



In contrast, when asked why students chose to attend this campus, it is notable that the single most common response was its proximity to their work or home. As these questions were open-ended, we categorized responses according to general themes that were touched on by the students' responses. Notably, just one African American student in this sample reported that he chose to attend CCC because it had a "positive climate" or "good environment". It seems that financial or time restrictions weighed heavily into these students' decisions to enroll in CCC.

**Figure 18. CCC-Why did you choose to attend this college? (African Americans)**



Because so few African American students (15) responded to all questions on our surveys, we must use caution in interpreting these results. Moreover, the African American survey respondents appeared to be more educationally advantaged than other underrepresented minority students at CCC. For example, most students (9) had parents with some college experience, and only three students had parents with only a high school education or below. All of the students said they had been encouraged in high school to attend college and all intended to transfer upon starting at CCC, and they gave particularly high marks to the campus for guiding them in this process. The most common response that African American students (11) gave to the question, “does this campus help you to transfer?” was “a great deal,” and more students named counselors as sources of transfer information than friends or the transfer center. Most students (13) reported having contact with a specialized program, and most students (9) reported that the program had helped them prepare for transfer. Thus, overall the African American students in our survey sample appeared to be among the greatest beneficiaries of services that the campus had to offer.

### *Summary of Central Coast College*

The results of our investigation at CCC suggest that its success in transferring academically underprepared African American students were closely related to three things: leadership and advocacy for services targeted at historically underserved students at the college and in the community college district, integrated academic and instructional services (learning communities and specialized support programs), a campus climate that welcomed African American students.

Unlike other colleges included in this study, faculty and administrators at the CCC campus gave the administrators in the community college district and leaders at the CCC campus the majority of the credit for their success in creating successful transfer pathways for underserved

students. Though CCC does not have a reputation as the premier transfer college in Diamond Bay, it seems that African American transfer students enroll at CCC at greater rates than the other colleges in the Diamond Bay area. Perhaps because of this “critical mass” of African American transfer students, CCC administrators and faculty have maintained a high level of commitment to these students, even in times of financial crisis.

Under the direction of the current administration, and with the support of federal Title V funding, the campus now has an African American success initiative that encourages faculty and staff to collaboratively address some of the challenges facing African American students. The college has also invested in the UMOJA program, which provides African American transfer students with a broad base of academic, social, and financial support. Unlike previous initiatives, these programs are directly reaching out to African American *transfer* students. At the time of our study, the learning communities and special programs at CCC likely had little direct influence on African American students from low-performing high schools, who often attended school part-time. Moreover, the limited successes in developmental education and general counseling services were and continue to be areas of weakness.

## City Vista Community College

City Vista Community College (CVCC) is also in the Diamond Bay Community College District, is located in a suburban area and sits on a bluff overlooking a mid-sized city in Southern California. Interestingly, although only five community colleges were found to be disproportionately transferring students from low performing high schools, two were found within the same community college district. This district hosted City Vista as well as Central Coast Community College. Through the process of interviewing many people at both college sites, it became clear that this district as a whole was very thoughtful about the transfer process. In addition to having the best data system we had seen--and it was using data to important planning decisions—it also had a practice of connecting its colleges through regular meetings and very transparent communications, so that the district worked in very coherent ways to disseminate information and best practices effectively and efficiently to all of its three campuses.

CVCC is a large campus with more than 22,000 students. It was founded in 1964, but it has had quite a bit of new construction and feels very new with modern, concrete and glass buildings that appear to follow a similar architectural theme. Parenthetically, the campus offers a program in architecture that it shares with another private college; given the interesting architecture of the campus, the program seems well placed at CVCC. The buildings on the CVCC campus are mostly constructed around a large quad area that provides the sense that the campus has a true center, where tables can be set out to advertise clubs, events, and transfer information that cannot be missed by almost any student passing through the campus. The campus also feels very *suburban* in that it has one of the highest non-minority populations of the state’s community colleges, with a 55% white population and only 12% Latino and 6% African American. The Asian population (11%) is almost as large as the Latino student population, and combined with Filipinos

(which also tends to be an advantaged group in California), accounts for 17% of the student body, unusual across the state.

**Table 9. CVCC-Composition of Student Body, 2006-07**

Ethnicity	Percent
White	55%
Latino	12%
Asian/Pacific Islander	11%
African American	6%
Filipino	6%
Multiracial/other	8%

The student population is also largely youthful, with almost two-thirds of students (62%) under the age of 24. On days that we visited, we saw a preponderance of white students; minority students may attend in larger numbers in late afternoon and evening, after work. We visited the campus three times during 2009-10 and interviewed 13 individuals including the president, former president, vice-president for student services, several counselors, two deans, heads of financial aid and the transfer center, and one key faculty member.

### *College Mission and Culture*

The president of CVCC is a well-known and very successful Latina leader in the California Community College system and has led other colleges, as well as served for many years as a key administrator for the community college system. Asked about the transfer function at CVCC, Dr. Cancino noted that CVCC “is known as a transfer college,” so well known for this function that the college sends many students to private and out of state colleges. “Colleges throughout the nation come here each semester to recruit,” she noted. This reputation was confirmed over and over in interviews with staff. One counselor noted that a student was told at her Northern California high school to enroll in CVCC—although it was at the opposite end of the state—because it was known for its success in transfer. Of course, as Cohen (2003) has noted, such reputations feed on themselves and students who know they want to transfer before starting college make active choices, to the extent they are able, to go to “transfer colleges.”

Dr. Cancino gave credit to the former president for developing a “strong central mission of transfer,” she noted, however, that she was focused on other things. Dr. Cancino was most concerned about the basic skills courses—the lack of sufficient numbers of them and the problems of retaining students in basic skills. She was also interested in developing more Career Technical courses for the college. She contended, “Community college should be a place that offers a career path that gets people out of poverty. Poverty is my thing!” Implicit in this discussion was the idea that a college with the student body and the reputation of CVCC could easily overlook the lowest income students from families with no history of higher education. She clearly felt a need to

advocate for them. Nonetheless, our data showed that the college was, indeed, doing a good job of transferring students of color from these kinds of backgrounds. In addition to poverty, the president expressed a strong interest in multiculturalism and noted that she had hired 32 faculty since coming to the college three years prior, and that in hiring she thought a lot about diversity.

Perhaps because the college is so secure in its reputation for being a high-transfer college, the president saw her challenges elsewhere, and worried that the non-transfer students might be shortchanged by an over-emphasis on transfer. With a young and disproportionately white and Asian population, it is not surprising that many of these parents would be expecting this for their children. In its mission statement, the college lists Associate degrees and transfer as its two highest priorities, while also noting that it provides career and technical education.

**Figure 19. CVCC-Latino Transfers to Four-Year Institutions**

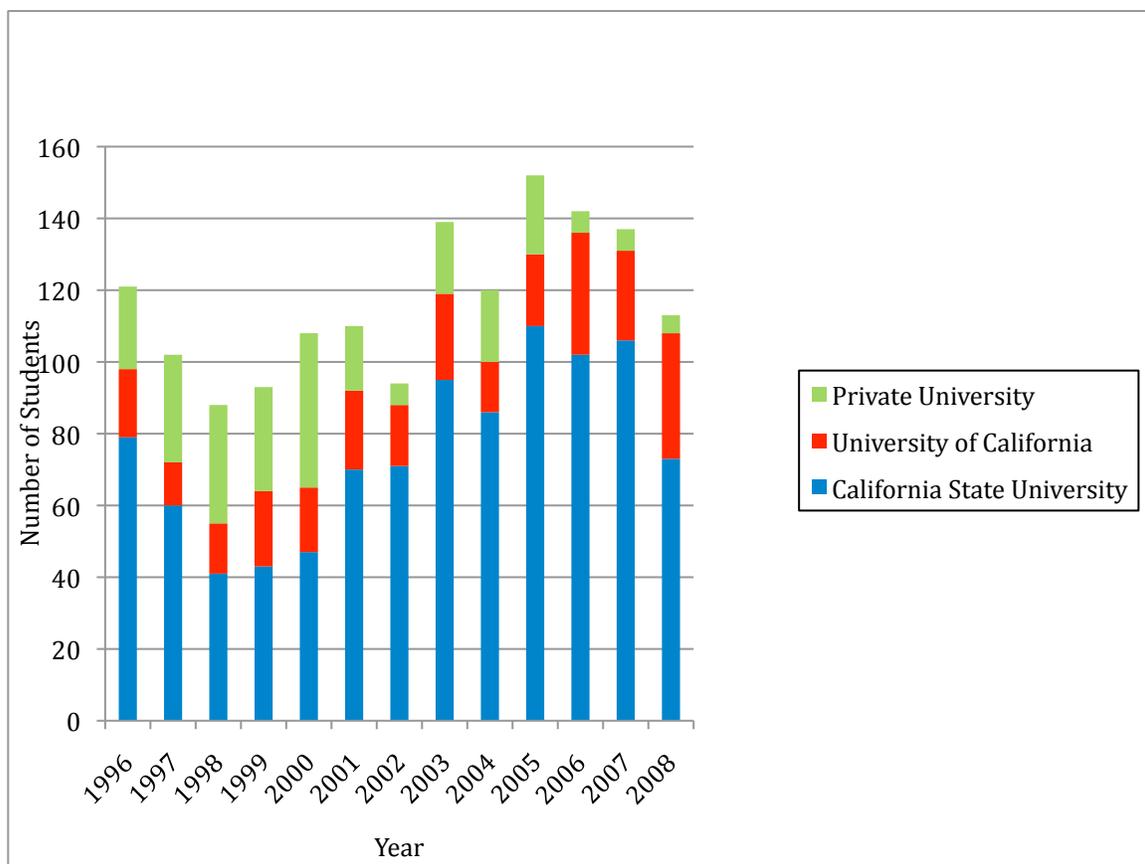


Figure 19 (above) illustrates that after a steep increase in transfers to the CSU system at the beginning of the decade, during the period that our cohorts were moving through the college, there was a sharp decline in Latino transfers to that system, as well as a substantial decline in Latino transfers to private in-state universities. The only upward trajectory is in transfers to the UC system, which is notable, but does not make up for the decline in numbers going to the other

institutions. We saw similar declines in other colleges serving low-income students and suspect this is related to the economic recession and budget cuts sustained by these colleges.

We also saw a troubling trend in the pass rate for transfer courses for Latino students at CVCC that is not quite in line with the transfer success that they were able to achieve with our early 2000s cohorts. Transfer course pass rates for Latino students (59%) were slightly lower than statewide averages (63%), in spite of the fact that CVCC does not attract an especially large very low-income population. So, while our cohort of students managed to transfer, no doubt due to the very strong press-for-transfer on the campus, it is clear that this was an area in need of improvement for the campus, and no doubt what was giving concern to the president.

### *Campus Climate*

One of the factors that affects campus climate is the college's position in the midst of a number of well-regarded 4-year colleges and universities. Several individuals mentioned that this provides a strong talent pool for the college. Many instructors teach at the other 4-year colleges and thus bring that culture and expectations with them into the CVCC classroom. Also mentioned was the presence of students from out-of-state and other countries on the campus. This lends a big-time college atmosphere to the campus -- people come here from a distance because they know the college will help them get into the 4-year university of their choice. CVCC provides a good opportunity for students of color to meet and interact with many students from outside their own communities and experience, and most of these students are preparing to transfer. Added to the mix of serious students, there are frequent recruitment visits to the campus from colleges and universities throughout the region and well beyond. The school calendar is filled with listings of colleges visiting the campus for recruitment purposes.

### *Orientation*

Orientation and transfer events are a big part of CVCC. The first week of school in the fall is Welcome Week, the campus is decorated with balloons and streamers, and clubs and student services all have tables in the quad where students are strongly encouraged to sign up. Orientation follows all placement testing sessions (which are strongly encouraged but not required) and the goal is for every student to receive orientation; a new on-line orientation has been instituted to capture those students who are somehow missed through the on-site orientation. There is also an all-day African American and Latino male "summit" that is held in combination with orientation. Nonetheless, a Latino counselor voiced some concerns about how students of color felt on a campus in which they were such a clear minority:

“. . . Latino and African American students . . . they do fall by the wayside and unfortunately our numbers haven't grown in years. . . . They don't feel like they belong . . . until we have more numbers, that's also going to tell a student, I don't know if I want to be here.”

At the same time this counselor acknowledged the benefit that can be derived from coming into contact with students from other backgrounds. He continued, “. . . once we get exposed to this other stuff, it does-- it is good for us.” The same counselor went on to relate that while he worried a great deal about how students of color were fitting into the campus, he also felt that the administration demonstrated a strong interest in improving conditions for these students. “At least here the thinking is there. It’s [concern for students of color] being promoted. It’s certainly being advocated by our deans and our VPs, but I still just think it’s going to take more time for faculty and staff to buy into it . . . .”

CVCC has an independent Chicano Studies department with 8 faculty (3 full-time), and Chicano faculty are very proud of their role in helping Chicano students to transfer. One faculty member talked about how he encourages the students to transfer:

“. . . [D]ay after day, I remind these students every single day. . . I am here to help you transfer out of here. . . . We don’t want you here too long! . . . The fact that we’ve always had a kind of a close relationship with the students allows us to tell them these things, whereas if they are dispersed, they’re just simply not going to hear this.”

Nonetheless, this faculty member lamented the fact that they don’t seem to be able to do more. He continued:

“Once you told me that this is an exceptional campus, I’m a little surprised, too, because we don’t do nearly enough supporting these students. There are a lot of students who I encounter, are in my classes, drop out and I don’t see them again . . . . There are hundreds of them here. It’s one of the great disappointments is these Chicano students come, they’re not fully prepared for college. They’re unprepared, a lot of them, and their skill levels, and they just disappear. And I don’t know what happens with them.”

### *Faculty Involvement*

At the CVCC campus there is a great deal of emphasis on counseling, and counselors give credit to faculty for being focused on transfer and helping to encourage students in their classes toward this goal. Many people mentioned the way in which faculty and counselors worked hand in hand to help students get the information they needed. But particular faculty who had spurred the effort were not mentioned. It appears that faculty are supportive of the transfer mission, but counselors are charged with making it happen, and the counseling department, along with special program counselors, are very effective in this role. The Chicano Studies department, however, seemed to see its job as not only teaching Chicano students, but also inspiring them to go on and

get college degrees. It was notable that African American programs were less visible on campus and this also was mentioned by some counselors.

### *Counseling*

CVCC has 22 full time counselors on staff according to the Vice-President for Academic Affairs, and all must have MA degrees. This yields a counselor-student ratio of about 1 to 1000. She notes that these are “faculty counselors,” and that they are unionized. The Vice-president, who has had experience in several other community college districts in different states without unionized employees, comments that there is sometimes greater “flexibility” in meeting student needs in these other states, but she finds the excessive restrictiveness of the California Education Code to be the greatest challenge. Other limitations that she notes with regret are that there are no mental health counselors, and that counselors are not available during the summer months when it would be very helpful in getting students prepared for the upcoming year. To this Vice-President, California’s laws and regulations feel very restrictive.

The head counselor noted something he considered to be unique and fairly extraordinary about the CVCC counseling department: they have the “largest number of counselors of any college in the region” and the college has a standard policy of providing one-hour counseling appointments for all students seeking an appointment.

“Usually students take the full hour and they’re very appreciative . . . because you build rapport, we find a little bit of who they are . . . and then with counseling, often the question [they present] isn’t really the question. Okay in fifteen minutes I can write this down and here you go. Next. But if you have a whole hour, you find out that’s the issue. . . “

It was clear in discussions with virtually everyone on campus that counseling, especially for transfer, was an extremely high priority and that everyone was “on the same page” with this mission. However, the president had lamented the shortage of counseling, feeling that the campus was really in need of much more and blaming some of the shortage on the counselors’ contracts that gave them faculty status, and therefore some of their time was spent teaching personal development or other classes rather than being available for one-on-one counseling. This was also described as stretching the campus budget. This remains a significant issue worthy of further investigation, as there were different opinions about both the costs and the benefits of the counselor faculty contracts, an issue raised at other campuses as well.

### *Transfer Center*

Almost every interviewee at the CVCC campus mentioned the Director of the Transfer Center as contributing hugely to the transfer culture on the campus. She is described as being high energy and present at every event where it is possible to push the transfer function. However, as creative and energetic as she is, she is the only staff member of the transfer center and feels limited

in what she can do. “As of right now all the workshops come out of the transfer center and all the workshops are currently conducted by me. And so that’s why I can’t do that many.” As the director demonstrated the transfer center facilities, it wasn’t possible to overlook the fact that the screensaver on all of the computers available for students to access transfer information were the same: an advertisement for a for-profit college (with a poor reputation for degree completion). One had to wonder how many students sat down at a computer and were influenced by the screen saver to pursue that college option. The director, however, seemed oblivious to its potential influence and only remarked on how fortunate they were to have had the computers donated.

### *Special Programs*

CVCC has a number of special programs that come in contact with Latino and African American students. As on other campuses, the EOPS program is key in providing financial aid, tutoring, and counseling support for the students who qualify – which is generally low-income and underprepared students. Perhaps unlike other campuses, however, the EOPS counseling staff also pushes transfer and works closely with the transfer center. The campus also hosts a Mesa Academy, which is a Black student-focused program that is modeled on their Puente program for Latino students, the federally funded TRIO program (called STAR), and a Gear Up program that largely provides outreach services for middle school students. All of these programs, in addition to providing specialized services and special attention for the most “at risk” students, also provide additional counseling services.

CVCC has a MECHA program and a Black Student Union, which help to provide a space for students of color. Many counselors and administrators noted the importance of partnerships, developed with both middle and high schools and with four-year institutions, as critical components of their transfer success. The middle and high school programs concentrate on helping students get ready for college and the partnerships offer guaranteed or preferred transfer agreements with a host of competitive four-year colleges. This is one area that many people on campus worried could be compromised with state budget cuts –that they would not have the resources to maintain these relationships and agreements, and that the public receiving colleges might no longer be able to honor those agreements.

### *Developmental Education*

As noted above, the President of CVCC was especially focused on the issue of Basic Skills and it became apparent why after talking with counselors on the campus. Evidently the college had been experiencing a decline in retention of basic skills students. The discrepancies in basic skills course pass rates (about 49%) with the statewide averages (about 55%) were similar to most of our colleges, between 5 and 10% percentage points. Most do not meet or exceed the pass rates for the state and we attribute this to the fact that most of these colleges were accepting a high percentage of students from low performing/high needs schools. However, this was not the case with CVCC and so it was probably reasonable that the staff were pre-occupied with this issue. There is a high consciousness on this campus that basic skills students are not as successful, and this is particularly evident in the face of such high transfer rates. The campus has participated

vigorously in the Basic Skills Initiative and has focused particularly on professional development, but when asked about the issue of time for completion of courses, this is not an area in which there has been a great deal of experimentation. The Vice President for Academic Affairs attributed this, at least in part, to the very restrictive education codes that simply did not allow the campus to be as creative as it might:

“Here you have the California Community College Chancellor’s Office, which means it’s a lot more centralized. And, of course, you’ve got state Title V Ed Code. So you don’t have as much flexibility in what you offer and how you offer it, and what you do here. Whereas, in Texas, colleges are a lot more independent. They could create modules, the state didn’t care. They had that flexibility to be innovative.”

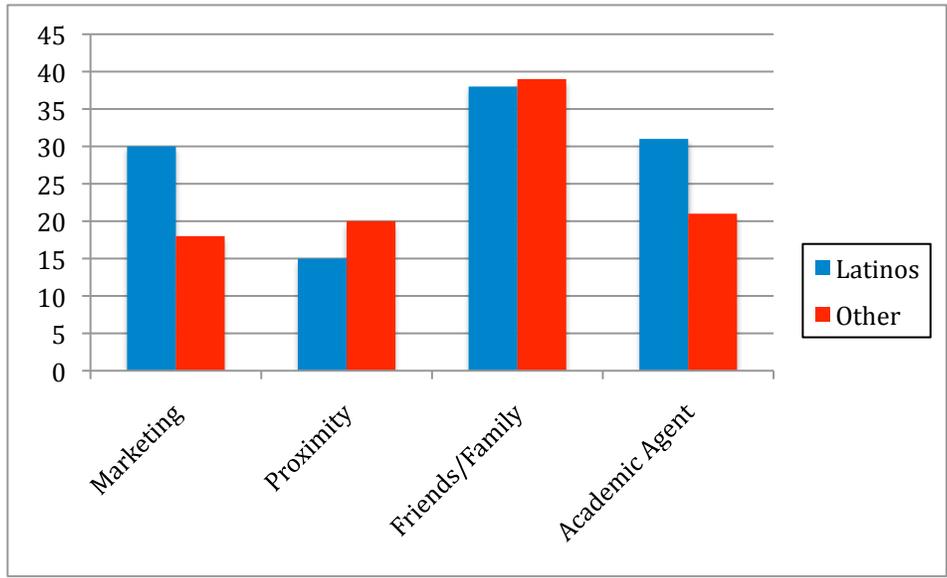
One intervention was that the campus had experimented with attaching a tutor to some basic skills classes to improve the pass rates for students in these classes. This appeared to be a fruitful invention but was placed at risk by budget cuts. Another intervention had been creating Learning Communities that provided a cohort-type experience and where several faculty across disciplines would work with students and try to integrate their curricula. This however was not deemed very successful by the Vice-President as she noted, “They have kind of fallen apart.” It just required too much coordination.

### *Student Perspectives*

Only 18 Latino students and 64 non-Latino students responded to the survey at City Vista, which makes these findings tenuous at best. However, there are interesting differences between what these students say at City Vista and what students from other campuses answered.

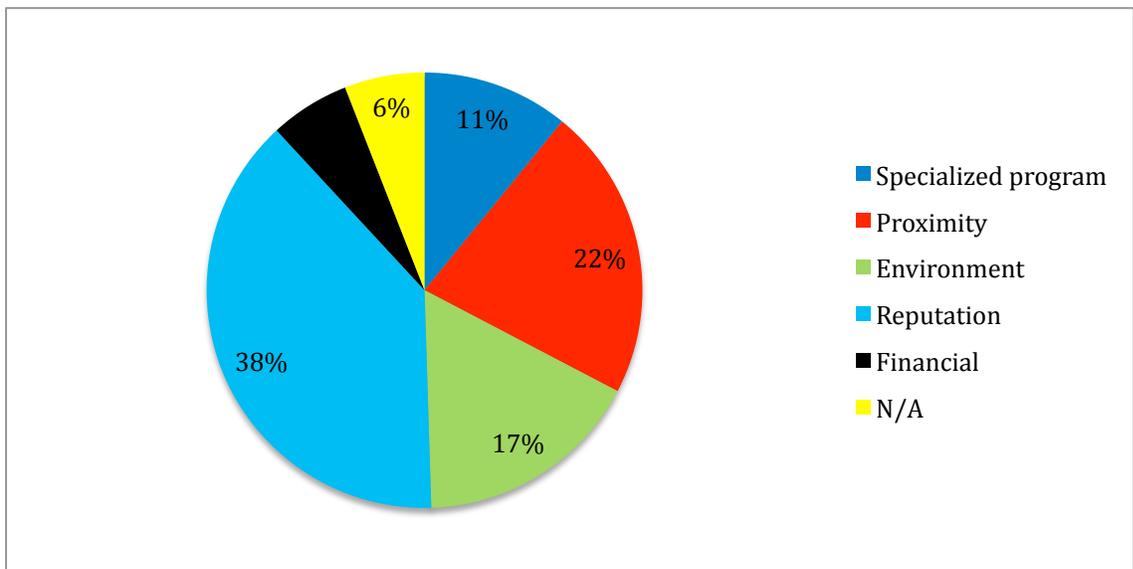
When asked how students found out about the campus, Latino students at City Vista appeared to respond more to marketing of the college and to recommendations from counselors or teachers than did other students. Whereas like other students, family and friends were the single most commonly named sources of information.

**Figure 20. CVCC-How did you find out about this community college?**



When asked why students chose to attend this campus, it is notable that the single most common response was its reputation. As these questions were open-ended, we categorized responses according to general themes that were touched on by the students’ responses. “Environment” was named by students 17% of the time, indicating that students heard that the campus offered a positive environment. We take this to mean that they viewed City Vista as a good place to be. See Figure 21.

**Figure 21. CVCC-Why did you choose to attend this college? (Latinos)**



Because so few Latino students (13) responded to all questions on our surveys, students' responses must be interpreted with great caution, but their demographic background does appear to be reasonably representative of the Latino population at this campus. Some students (4) had parents with college degrees, most parents had only high school educations (5), and some (3 – 4) had less than high school. All of the students said they had been encouraged in high school to attend college and all but one intended to transfer upon starting at CVCC, however they did not give particularly high marks to the campus for guiding them in this process. The most common response (44%) of Latino students to the question, "does this campus help you to transfer?" was only "somewhat," and more students named friends as sources of transfer information than either counselors or the transfer center. Most students reported having no contact with a specialized program, and among those that had, they were divided in how helpful it was. Thus, overall these students did not appear to be among the greatest beneficiaries of services that the campus has to offer, although the friends they made there were likely an important asset. Very surprisingly, although the campus prides itself on its orientations and works to have all students go through orientation, only one-third of these Latino students said they had actually attended an orientation; possibly because they were working during regular orientations? We cannot know the answer to this with our data.

### *Summary of CVCC*

CVCC is an extremely successful campus with respect to transfer. While some people expressed concern about how underrepresented minority students might be faring on the campus, given that they are a relatively small percentage of all students, there does appear to be a concerted effort to integrate these students into the fabric of the school. The evidence suggests that while CVCC may not be as successful as they would like, it is doing a better job than most colleges statewide. CVCC's success in transferring Latinos appears to be most attributable to the very heavy emphasis on counseling and the pervasive climate of transfer on the campus ("transfer culture"). It is not possible to attend this school without getting the message that transfer is a desirable and even expected goal. The fact that the Latino students who attend CVCC are integrated with many students who are very focused on transferring, and that the climate there is one of preparation for a four-year degree, almost certainly plays a significant role in their success with this population. The campus community is also very self-conscious about where it is falling short, and this consciousness almost certainly results in more attention being paid to students of color.

The fact that the college has been the fortunate recipient of exceptionally strong leadership at both the campus and the district levels, and that it is focused simultaneously on transferring students to four year-colleges AND not leaving the students of color behind, is reflected in their success with Latinos. The very small population of African American students may help explain why they have not been equally successful with this population; perhaps there is an issue of critical mass of both students and faculty and counselors. One area of deep concern of the administration is the declining persistence of basic skills students, among which are many Latinos. If the campus were to find ways to improve the delivery of the basic skills curriculum more efficiently, it would almost certainly be able to improve its transfer record with all students of color.

## Phase Three: Student Perspectives

After interviews were conducted on each campus, we asked staff to help us disseminate information about a study survey. Most of the survey questions were close-ended so that respondents chose from the options offered, and we have already reported on most of those responses. However, a few questions were open-ended, allowing the respondents to tell us about their experience in their own words. For open-ended responses, it was necessary to group them by category in order to gain a broad picture of the students as a whole. We were also particularly interested in whether African Americans differed in any way from Latinos in how they viewed their challenges or their means to addressing these challenges.

Each campus handled the distribution of surveys differently and with more and less energy, which resulted in quite different totals of students responding. As we were most interested in the responses of students of color on the campuses since this was the focus of the study, we asked campuses to target these students in their efforts, but we inevitably received responses from a mix of students. In total there were 1,291 responses to the survey, which consisted of 21 substantive questions about how they made the decisions they did about attending college, how they were dealing with challenges, and the things that helped them in moving toward transfer or completion of community college (see Appendix A for survey). There were 8 demographic questions, including parents' education, students' age, ethnicity, part- or full-time attendance, major, and first in family to attend college. (See Table 10 for demographic breakdown.)

**Table 10. Student Survey Sample**

<b>College</b>	<b>Blacks</b>	<b>Latinos</b>	<b>Other</b>	<b>Total</b>
Winslow College	-	86	68	154
Urban Center College	22	-	78	100
Central Coast College	18	-	70	88
City Vista College	-	13	76	89
Seaside College	-	156	704	860
<b>Total</b>	<b>40</b>	<b>255</b>	<b>996</b>	<b>1291</b>

It is important to remember that these are not the same students as those who transferred in the cohorts during the first half of the decade, but they are likely similar students, coming from similar neighborhoods and attending the same college. We wanted to take advantage of the opportunity to include student voice in the study even though it could not be the exact same students. We have no idea what the actual response rate was to the surveys as we do not know how many students were sent the request to survey at each campus. The campuses also had difficulty knowing this since they used various methods for getting the word out. In sum, the survey responses cannot be considered definitive or even representative in any sense, but they do

provide some insight into the challenges that today's community college students of color face, even in very high functioning colleges, and the ways in which they go about addressing these challenges.

In this section we focus on three questions: Do students have a strategy for successfully transferring to a four-year college or university? What are the primary challenges they face in persisting to transfer? How do these students go about addressing these challenges? In the process of answering these questions, a considerable amount can be learned about how the colleges they attend contribute to their persistence and success.

### **Do students have a strategy for successfully transferring to a four-year college or university?**

More than 1 out of 5 African American and almost 1 of 8 Latino students replied that they had no strategy, and an additional 17% of Latinos did not answer this question, suggesting that they may not have a commitment to transfer at all. Among the strategies that students mentioned, some were principally internally-directed strategies: fulfilling course requirements, studying harder to get good grades and staying focused and dedicated to their studies. Interestingly, only 7% of Latinos and 9% of African Americans even mentioned counseling or other program support, and none mentioned peer support, even though these were open-ended questions in which they could have written any answer that came to mind. Students overwhelmingly saw the task of preparing to transfer as a lonely one, in which the responsibility for making this happen was almost all on them. However, when asked about the challenges they faced in persisting and succeeding to transfer, many of the challenges were actually largely out of their own control.

### **What are the primary challenges that students face in persisting to transfer?**

The single biggest challenge in persisting and getting ready for transfer for both African American and Latino students was reported to be job/school conflicts. One of 5 African American students and almost one in 4 Latinos noted this as their principle challenge. Students recounted the problems they faced in working long hours and then having to be prepared in class. The next most often mentioned challenge was surmounting academic difficulties, no doubt reflecting their poor preparation to be in college. Interestingly, African Americans also mentioned child care and family responsibilities, while Latinos simply noted financial issues, which African Americans did not. Perhaps this just reflects a different framing of the same issue, but it is hard to know. Finally, we asked how they confronted these challenges.

### **How do these students go about addressing these challenges?**

More than a third (35 – 36%) of both African American and Latino students wrote that their principle strategy for confronting their challenges was to stay focused and to work on time management. Again, the principle strategies were personal actions. But 10–12% of these students

from both groups noted that the support of others and the motivation they provided was important in helping them to stay on course. Another 11% of African Americans noted seeking help, although Latinos did not mention this; instead 8% of Latinos mentioned finding ways to meet their financial challenges.

African Americans appear somewhat more attuned to seeking out help and advice, while Latinos see their challenges much more anchored in money problems that they alone need to solve. Perhaps some of these Latino students are undocumented and feel they cannot go to the school for this help, or perhaps it relates to a cultural reluctance to seek out help, but there appear to be differences at least in the ways that Latinos and African Americans frame their challenges and perceive avenues to address them. Overall, both groups note a major challenge being to juggle work and school, and look to themselves for the solution to this challenge.

## **Phase Four: Institutional Outreach**

In addition to understanding why particular colleges had experienced disproportionate success with students who were coming from low performing or high needs high schools, we were interested in knowing how students from such high schools ended up in high transfer colleges. As our data as well as numerous studies have shown, students who attend low performing high schools are also likely to attend community colleges that are not very effective in transferring these students onto four-year colleges. Thus, *something* must happen to break that chain of failure and guide these students to settings in which they will have a better chance of succeeding in their intent to transfer—we wanted to know what that was. There were clues in the answers that students gave in surveys about why they chose the college that they did. For some, marketing was a reason. Some colleges are known as high transfer colleges and do a good job of marketing this fact. For most, however, it was through networks of parents, friends, and other adults who recommended the college they ended up attending. We cannot be sure, but we must assume that some or even most of these individuals thought the college could provide a good chance of helping them realize their ambition of transferring to a four-year college. Although other adults were a primary source of information about colleges, counselors, by and large, did not play as important a role as people who were within the students' own social network. This is distressing, but perhaps not too surprising, as it has been pointed out many times in the literature that most high school counselors both lack the knowledge to provide good college counseling and the time with which to do it—especially for those students who are not headed off to competitive colleges. In one case, it was primarily an issue of proximity; the college was simply the most convenient in an area with few options. It was fortunate for the students that the college had also found ways to increase the transfer rates for its Latino population.

We had initially designed the study to interview “low performing” high schools (those that sent large numbers of students to these high performing colleges) to try to understand how students got re-directed to these colleges, and away from colleges that would have probably been less successful in transferring them to four-year universities. In several cases the high school or district was not responsive to our requests, no doubt as being labeled a school with many challenges in

meeting students' needs was not something they especially appreciated. (This also challenged us to change the way we characterized these schools, to a descriptor that was less pejorative: "high needs" or "low resource".) We then moved to a strategy to look at a low resource school in each of the general areas that was served by our 5 colleges. It turned out that there were three different geographic areas among the colleges in our study: two colleges in each of two general areas (each pair within 15 miles distance of each other) and one college in a distinctly different area of the state. This single college was the one located in a rural area of the state in which students overwhelmingly chose it because of its proximity. Thus, we could not learn much about how students had been directed to this college, as for the most part they had not been. They chose it because of limited options (as well as its important role in the community). In order to answer the question, then, of how students *chose among colleges*, we focused our efforts on two case studies of outreach to high schools in the two areas of the state where our study colleges were clustered.

Though there is no coordinated policy in California about how best to provide transfer preparation services to disadvantaged students of color, it has been well documented that high schools or community colleges alone have limited capacity to address the challenges of college preparation and access among historically underserved populations. In the literature on community college transfer, researchers have routinely found outreach between high schools, 4-year colleges, and community colleges to be significant components of student success. The purpose of such outreach is to disseminate information about the college, encourage enrollment, prepare students with the information they will need to apply, and in some cases to conduct early assessment of the students. In reality, however, these efforts typically occur in a context of social stratification that produces differential patterns of post-secondary access along racial and class lines.

Perhaps because of open enrollment policies, little attention has been paid to the institutional networks that support transfer from low-resource high schools to strong community colleges. Similarly, although the transfer rates of underrepresented students to senior level post-secondary institutions could stand much improvement, there has been little investigation into the collaborative relationships between four-year universities and community colleges. In this section, we describe the outreach by four strong transfer community colleges to two low-performing feeder high schools, and between four elite public 4-year universities in California and the community colleges. We present our analysis in two parts, first describing the outreach to the high schools from the community colleges, and then turning to the links between the community colleges and the University of California campuses. In centering this part of our work on institutional outreach, we highlight some of the push/pull factors that are within institutional control and can support access to transfer among underrepresented students who have faced significant challenges in their K-12 education.

### *High School Outreach*

Beyond financial barriers, low-resource schools are ill-equipped to guide students of color in making decisions about their options after high school and to prepare them academically for college-level work. While these schools often attract and implement several college-access

programs, a lack of organization, inexperience, and stable faculty often thwart the effectiveness of these efforts. Moreover, the small amount of counseling and services that are devoted to college preparation rarely guide students to utilize the community college system productively, and many students “choose” the system as a default when other options do not materialize. Therefore, students from these schools typically lack the most basic information about the community colleges and the transfer system (Venezia et al, 2003).

A primary recommendation in the literature on community college success and transfer is to gain more cooperation from high schools to help prepare students before they arrive at the community college. This often takes the form of providing early assessment, giving students more information about what they will need to do to prepare for college, and offering courses that can help prepare them. Unfortunately, students who are arriving at community college from underperforming high schools are most often the product of schools that are unprepared to do any of these things. These students must rely on the services provided by targeted outreach supports from community colleges, state and government programs, and other education institutions.

### *Context*

As previously documented in the Phase One of this study, our data illustrate a positive linear association between high school quality and transfer rates (see Figure 3). In our earlier analysis, we used three proxies to control for student environment: Academic Performance Index (API), parent education, and percent minority and subsequently we rank ordered the high schools into five categories. As was predicted, our quantitative analysis demonstrated that the flows of African American and Latino students from community colleges to four-year institutions who were 17-20 years at first-enrollment varied according to the attributes of the high schools that these students attended. On average, just three in ten students from low performing high schools who declared they intended to transfer were successful in doing so; this rate increased steadily as high school quality rose until just over half (53.2%) of students from high performing schools transferred to a four-year college or university. While these transfer rates document a clear example of the social capital that is embedded in reproductive educational structures, they also demonstrate that transfer opportunities can and do reach some of the students who need them the most. The following case studies document the outreach between two “low performing” high schools that successfully sent significant numbers of black or Latino student on to more successful community colleges.

### *Methods*

In order to paint a picture of the outreach extended to low performing high schools by high transfer community colleges, we first used community college enrollment data to identify the largest sending institutions to each community college that were also targeted for academic improvement. Based on these criteria, we then identified three high schools with the characteristics that suggest they are challenged in meeting the needs of their students but that sent significant numbers of students to each community college in our study. The following case studies describe the outreach efforts to two high schools in the bottom quintile of **both** API scores and parent education **and** in the top quintile of minority enrollment.

We constructed these case studies primarily through interviews with the college counselors at each high school, community college outreach coordinators, financial aid officers, others at our five community colleges, and student surveys. At each high school, we asked the college counselor to elaborate on three things: college preparation programs, counseling, and relationships with the selected schools in our study. Likewise, during the interviews at the community colleges, we asked participants to describe their relationships with our selected high schools and other low category high schools in the area. Notably, we did not restrict our participants' responses to the geographic boundaries of their defined "service areas"; instead we asked them to speak about networks and relationships that may draw students from outside areas.

Additionally, we included questions related to high school preparation, community college access, and four-year college transfer on our student survey. Documents provided by the high schools and colleges during the site visits and downloaded from websites were later reviewed and incorporated into these reports.

## **Trojan High School**

Trojan High School is located in Talcon Park, a densely populated community in the city of Diamond Bay. In this area, the median household income is roughly \$24,900, 40% lower than the median income in Diamond Bay. Of residents over 25 years of age, only 5% have a bachelor's degree and 40% have a high school diploma or a GED. The student demographics at Trojan High School mirror the demographics of the surrounding area. Ninety-six percent of students at Trojan High School qualify for free or reduced lunch. Latino students make up 70% of the total student body and African American students make up another 14%. These figures indicate several things: Trojan high school is highly segregated racially and economically and faces the challenges of educating students who come to class with disadvantages ranging from a lack of English fluency to poorly educated and underemployed parents, yet the experiences that students have in this school are quite diverse.

In 2008-2009, roughly 57% of African American students and 63% of Latino tenth grade students at Trojan High School passed the California High School Exit Exam (CAHSEE) in mathematics, and 54% of African American students and 57% of Latinos passed the exam in English language arts. Despite these lackluster test scores, significant numbers of African American and Latino students navigated from Trojan High to four-year colleges and universities or community colleges that were well-equipped to prepare them for transfer. For the past several years, between 30 and 40 percent of Trojan High seniors have enrolled in a 4-year college or university and several more have enrolled in strong transfer community colleges in the Diamond Bay District. In the following section, we summarize the key factors that may have helped students of color at Trojan High School overcome the informational, social, financial, and academic barriers that often stand in the way of successful transitions to strong community colleges.

## *High School Initiatives*

The official mission of Trojan High describes the conditions whereby “students can graduate with the skills, motivation, curiosity and resilience to succeed in their choice of college and career in order to lead and participate in society.” In order to achieve this goal, the programs of instruction at Trojan High School blend academic and career/technical instruction to offer students a range of post-graduation options. While it would seem that college preparedness could get lost in this somewhat ambiguous trade/academic focus, our investigation uncovered two crucial sources of college preparation at the school site: AVID (Advancement via Individual Determination) and the counseling department.

According to a college counselor, the AVID program has been thriving at Trojan High School at least since the mid-nineties. The AVID program places students who would have been placed in courses that are below their actual ability in college track courses and provides them with additional counseling services—as AVID teachers also function as an additional counseling support for students. Research has demonstrated AVID’s success in increasing the rate of program participants attending four-year college (Mehan et al, 1996). It accomplishes this by scaffolding instruction in core courses with learning and study strategies, tutoring, and heavy college counseling. Students go on field trips to visit colleges, receive detailed information about applying to college and are strongly encouraged to go to college. The AVID teachers also focus on a range of colleges so that those who will attend community college are shown how the transfer process works. One important aspect of the AVID program, according to Hugh Mehan and his colleagues (1996), is the creation of a college-going peer group where students provide a network of support for each other.

According to current estimates, approximately 450 students from Trojan High School participate in the AVID program between grades 9 and 12. This translates to between three and four “AVID classes” at each grade level. Schools that host the AVID program typically have one or two AVID classes per grade level, but Trojan High School invested more heavily in this program than is typical. This investment may partially explain the link between Trojan High School and the surrounding Diamond Bay community colleges.

In addition, we found that there has been an historically strong commitment to counseling at Trojan High School. The lack of adequate college counseling has long been identified as a major obstacle to college going for underrepresented students. Among other things, this research indicates that counselors in high-poverty academically struggling high schools typically spend more time dealing with class scheduling and behavioral issues than college preparation, and that few of these counselors actually have specific training in supporting college guidance (McDonough, 1997). Trojan High School has attempted to mitigate this problem by maintaining six counselors, which is above the ratio for the state average, even during times of financial duress. Of equal importance, all of the counselors on staff are trained in college counseling, and several counselors attend meetings on college campuses to stay up-to-date on the latest information, making this a highly unusual public school serving low-income students.

## *Community College Outreach*

Clearly, the community colleges in Diamond Bay have played a large role in the enrollment and transfer rates for students of color. All of the community colleges in the Diamond Bay district have staff dedicated to the identification and recruitment of potential community college students. These outreach programs focus on distributing information and materials to potential students at the high school and in the community. In order to improve efficiency, the district of Diamond Bay partitions their outreach efforts geographically into designated feeder schools. The practice of geographically partitioning outreach efforts by service areas seems as though it would perpetuate patterns of institutional successes and failures (i.e. students from strong high schools are recruited by strong community colleges, and vice versa). Yet, because two of the three community colleges in the Diamond Bay were ranked as being strong in transfer, they have potentially avoided this risk. In addition, in an age of increased technology and media devices, marketing matters. Thirty percent of the Latino and African American students in our study said that they found out about the community college and its reputation online or through some other media channel.

Although a wide range of activities falls under the rubric of community college outreach, the Diamond Bay community college district encourages each college to coordinate with its Transfer Centers so that the community college staff can distribute transfer information and materials to potential transfer students at the high schools and in the community. Of the two Diamond Bay colleges in this study, we found this coordination far greater at City Vista College than Central Coast College. Both community college outreach coordinators, however, assured us that whenever they visited a high school campus, they talked to students about transfer opportunities. In addition, both Diamond Bay colleges partnered with financial aid officers and employed student ambassadors. At both of the colleges, financial aid officers trained a racially/ethnically diverse group of student ambassadors to relay information about financial aid to prospective students. This appears to be significant, as research suggests that Latino and African American students are often very concerned about the cost of higher education. Perhaps because of cultural congruence, outreach coordinators suggested that student ambassadors had played a crucial role in empowering students of color from low-performing high schools to take advantage of the programs and services that support transfer opportunities. They also noted that the college made a specific effort to hire ambassadors that reflected the communities they would be visiting.

## *External Supports*

The Talcon Park Educational Collaborative and the Larson Charities were also salient features of the outreach between Trojan High School and the Diamond Bay community colleges. The Talcon Park Educational Collaborative forms part of a “holistic approach to urban revitalization that includes initiatives in safety, housing, community leadership, recreation, and education.” The collaborative is funded and operated by the Larson Charities, the Diamond Bay School District, and California State-Diamond Bay. At Trojan High School, the Talcon Park Educational Collaborative runs a pilot school program (since 1996) that trains and mentors aspiring teachers who are enrolled in the teacher credentialing program at Cal State Diamond Bay. In exchange, the collaborative provides Trojan High School with money for additional counseling

support from mental health services, extended day classes, and scholarships to the California State-Diamond Bay. Additionally, the collaborative runs a health center on the campus of Trojan High School that provides students with physical, mental and dental health services. Though the health center does not staff “case-load” counselors, the college counselor with whom we spoke indicated that the health center frees up their time to work with more students on college guidance.

Federal and state funded educational intervention programs were another source of support for exceptionally high-risk students at Trojan High School. We spoke with a counselor who was quick to tell us about the consistency of these services at Trojan High School, even through administrative upheavals. In particular, we were told that there were several TRIO programs at Trojan High School during the late 1990s and early 2000, including Upward Bound and GEAR UP. The goal of these programs is to help prepare disadvantaged students to enter and succeed in college. Upward Bound targets high school students with an array of supplemental services, including college counseling as well as summer residential programs at local colleges and universities, where students receive intensive academic instruction and preview college life.

### *Summary of Trojan High School*

By all measures, Trojan High School was (and continues to be) a struggling urban high school: the school is highly segregated both racially and economically, and faces the challenges of educating students who come to class with disadvantages ranging from a lack of English fluency, deep poverty, and poorly educated parents. Yet, students of color who attend Trojan High School routinely connected to community colleges that were well-equipped to prepare them for transfer to four-year colleges and universities. Our data suggest that at least part of this success was attributable to the strength of the marketing and outreach efforts at community colleges and those supported by the district.

Beyond the strength of the surrounding community colleges, Trojan High students also appear to have benefitted from a number of college preparation initiatives that were fostered by the high school and supported by state, federal, and charitable partnerships. At Trojan High School, students of color may have taken part in the large AVID program and benefitted from the high schools’ strong commitment to college counseling. These initiatives, in turn, were sustained and expanded through the sponsorship of the Larson Charities and federal and state-sponsored college preparation programs. One of the lessons to be learned from this high school and its success in moving students toward postsecondary education is that it “takes a village to raise a child.” Students in this school benefitted from a much more holistic approach to their needs than is typical in urban high schools. Given the broad base of support for college preparation at Trojan High School, it is no surprise that students of color were connecting to high-performing (transfer) community colleges in Diamond Bay.

The unfortunate aspect to this positive story, however, was that the school counselors worried greatly about continuing budget cuts. They felt that counseling would certainly be on the chopping block, and there was constant concern about soft money support of counseling, such as the charities and the federal government programs that must be won through competitive

application processes. The safety net, while catching many students in it, was woven of delicate fabric.

## **Johnston High School**

Johnston High School is located in Alta Vista, one of the most densely populated neighborhoods in the heart of the urban center. In the late 1990s and early 2000s, it was one of the largest comprehensive public high schools in the nation. Despite its population density, the community surrounding Johnston High School was actually one of the least diverse areas in the city with 88% of the population being Latino. In this area, the median household income is roughly \$22,000, 40% lower than the median income in the urban center. Of residents over 25 years of age, only 12% have a bachelor's degree and only 42% have a high school diploma or a GED. Notably, the area of Alta Lake includes the neighborhood of Park Station, which is one of the poorest neighborhoods in the urban center and is primarily populated by first-generation Hispanic immigrants. Like Trojan High School, the student demographics at Johnston High School mirror the demographics of the surrounding area. At the time of our study, almost ninety percent of students at Johnston High School qualified for free or reduced lunch and half of the student body classified as English Learners. Latino students made up 88% of the total student body and African American students make up another 3%.

Academically, students at Johnston High School face significant challenges. In 2008-2009 roughly 60% of Latino tenth grade students at Johnston High School passed the California High School Exit Exam (CAHSEE) in mathematics and English language arts, meaning that 40% of students were on track to be denied a high school diploma, unless they could manage to pass the test. Moreover, the college counselor reported that high absence and transiency rates negatively impacted the schools' graduation rates. Despite these challenges, over the past several years between 30 and 40 percent of high school seniors at Johnston High School have enrolled in 4-year colleges or universities and many more have enrolled at Seaside College and Urban Center College. The following section describes the institutional conditions that may have facilitated these transitions.

### *High School Initiatives*

In 1997, Mr. Saenz, the former principal at Johnston High School, initiated an endeavor to restructure the high school into an all academy school. The following year, the school opened several academies within the school with the following foci: (1) Arts and Humanities, (2) Health and Human Services and Science and Technology, (3) Law and Government, and (4) Travel and Tourism and Banking and Finance. The leadership team also left in place a smaller traditional high school within the larger school setting. Hence, parents could choose to send their children to one the themed learning academies at Johnston High School, or to the traditional high school itself. Each academy enrolled approximately 350 students on three tracks (a year round schedule). Administrators theorized that these academies would provide a more individualized approach to student learning.

As a result of the restructuring that took place during the late 1990s, it is extremely hard to characterize the outreach that took place between Johnston High School and Seaside College and Urban Center College. Each academy developed its' own curriculum, cultivated its' own partners, and wrote its' own grant proposals. Though two counselors were assigned to work with each career academy, the school had no common rules or policies regarding college preparation. While this diverse approach to learning aligns with many current educational reforms being implemented in California ("multiple pathways," small learning communities, etc), our investigation suggests that it is unlikely that this approach alone facilitated comprehensive access to information about post-secondary education or transfer among underrepresented students.

At Johnston High School, the director of the college-counseling center, Mr. Tran, informed us that during the time of our study the college preparation services within each academy were diverse and uneven, but that the school had maintained a college-counseling center that was located within the job resource center. All Johnston High students had access to this office, regardless of which academy they attended. Although Mr. Tran was working as a science teacher at one of the career academies at the time, he noted that this arrangement might have provided students who were not necessarily looking for information about college with guidance related to community colleges and transfer. There was, however, no coordinated plan for disseminating information on community colleges or transfer. In addition, Mr. Tran suggested that because the school was on a four-track schedule at the time, students often visited the office over the summer *after* they had graduated from high school and spent some time out in the "real world." And this was often too late to apply to a college.

As it currently stands, the career center is separate from the college-counseling center and the school has a single academic track made up of several academies (the school currently runs on a regular academic calendar and is closed over the summer). Though Mr. Tran believed that the separation of the career and college offices had provided the college counseling center with additional spatial and technological resources, he lamented the fact that most of these resources were spent on students who were eligible for four-year colleges. Students bound for community colleges were left to scramble for information about community colleges in the spring, when representatives from community colleges made their way out to high school campuses. Self-selected groups of students could sign up to meet with these representatives to talk about their post-secondary options. The college counseling center only took students to visit community colleges when the college paid their way. Mr. Tran noted, however, that several of the career academies within the school raised their own funds and planned their own visits to community colleges, allowing other Johnston High School students to "tag along," space permitting.

### *Community College Outreach*

The college counselor at Johnston High School indicated that students' main source of information about colleges and transfer opportunities came from the outreach and marketing sponsored by the community colleges themselves. Unlike the Diamond Bay community college district, however, Seaside College and UCC did not operate in a unified community college district

with a coordinated plan for high school outreach, nor did they necessarily focus on promoting transfer opportunities. In fact, the director of the college-counseling center at Johnston provided us with a well-crafted pamphlet put out by the Urban Center community college district, which made no reference to transfer whatsoever. Despite this apparent lack of centralized district planning, both of the colleges included in our study had outreach efforts related to transfer in the local community.

As mentioned earlier, SCC maintains a strong outreach effort, and SCC counselors visit a number of urban schools on a regular basis that are a fair distance from the campus, counseling students about the benefits of attending their college. They note that there are 10 “feeder high schools” that they interact with most intensively and these are largely low performing schools. Though Johnston High School is located roughly 15 miles from Seaside College (approximately an hour’s drive with moderate traffic), Mr. Tran informed us that a representative from Seaside College visited the school and paid for students to visit the campus each spring. Mr. Tran could not say enough about the value that this representative’s visits added to the Johnston counseling center, in particular, noting that the representative gave students who could not enter four-year colleges directly “the personal attention that they needed.”

Aside from personal counseling, Seaside College also runs an extensive media campaign. It houses the local NPR radio station, which signs on with a message about the high transfer rate of the college, and it advertises on buses that travel throughout the region. It also, under President Chan, negotiated a subsidized transportation arrangement that allows SCC students to travel at no cost to and from campus throughout the region. In contrast to the well-funded and consistent outreach and marketing efforts at Seaside College, UCC’s efforts appear to have been more haphazard and almost entirely focused on the school’s trades mission. The director of the Transfer Center at UCC indicated that they worked with high schools largely upon request, and that they did not always talk to students about their transfer options at UCC. In order to assure the dissemination of this information, he visited schools himself when he could spare the time and led students through an internet-based class called “The Transfer Process.” On these visits, he typically found that “even good students were starved for information about post-secondary options.” Students revealed to him that they had not seen a counselor in high school, or when they had, it had not been to discuss college.

### *External Supports*

Interestingly, possibly as a result of the organizational upheaval in the late 90s, Johnston High School sits at the center of a collaborative relationship in which ten local organizations form part. This collaborative is currently funded in part through the California Department of Education. The mission of the collaborative is to assure that students graduate high school prepared for a full range of options – two and four-year college, apprenticeship, formal employment training, etc. Among other things, the educational collaboration provides wrap-around education and community services to youth and families attending four schools in Alta Vista. The program offers “mentoring and youth development, academic tutoring and enrichment, service learning, parenting education, adult education, job training and career counseling, nutrition

services, primary health and dental care, mental health counseling, and assistance for students who have been truant, suspended, or expelled.” While these services do not directly provide students with college counseling, they likely increase the probability that students will remain in school and they allow teachers and counselors more time to work with students who are underprepared for four-year college.

### *Summary of Johnston High School*

In part because of the size and structure of Johnston High School, counseling, particularly as it pertains to community college, has not had a strong foothold in the school. Less than half of the students of color at both of the community colleges in the Urban Center area said that they were encouraged to attend college in high school. Through various sources, we came to find out that students lacked adequate information and would likely not know where to go for it. Had it not been for the outreach from community colleges, especially Seaside Community College, it is likely that many of the students who ultimately attended that college would not have had any information about community college. The fact that Seaside invested in college counseling at this relatively remote school (several community colleges are closer to it), provided students with the opportunity and knowledge to attend a college that would give them a good shot at transferring to a four-year university. College counselors at Seaside noted, however, that current budget cuts might well put schools such as Johnston outside the reach of their shrinking staff and dollars. We found that when community colleges are forced to make cuts, they try to protect their campus-based services first, which means that outreach is a likely target.

## **University of California Campuses**

In the second part of our analysis of outreach, we examined the African American and Latino transfer students’ pathways into the UC system. We focused on the UCs for several reasons. First, our dataset included underrepresented students from 1996, 1997, and 1998 cohorts -- representing the period just before and after the passage and implementation of Proposition 209 banning affirmative action in the state. Since Prop 209, the admissions practices of the most highly selective public universities in California have been under scrutiny for their failure to enroll working-class and underrepresented minority students (Roksa, Grodsky et al. 2006). Second, while research has documented that a relatively smaller percentage of transfer occurs between the community colleges and the UC campuses (most transfer students enroll at state university campuses), the bachelor degree attainment rate is much higher at UC campuses -- about 86% for transfer students, but only about 70% for the state university campuses. Thus, while transfer to a four-year college is a certain success in itself, transfer to UC -- the institution most affected by Proposition 209 -- represents a much greater likelihood of degree completion for all students, and especially students of color, and a critically important opportunity for the UC to diversify its student body. Third, and of practical significance, we had much stronger contacts, easier access to the UC system, and a higher level of cooperation, which was important for our data collection efforts, given our limited resources.

In the following section, we present descriptive data on the enrollment and outreach between UCs and community colleges in two parts. First, we calculate the proportion of students that transferred to UCs between 2001 and 2004. In our analysis, we use a logistic regression model to estimate the probability of transfer to the UCs and other alternatives among African American and Latino transfer students, controlling for high school resources. In addition, we observe some course-taking patterns that are correlated with enrollment in a UC. Next, we use qualitative data to describe the outreach programs and admissions policies at these institutions in the context of Proposition 209 and to query whether particular outreach efforts, or other practices, were able to address the challenges posed by Proposition 209.

### *Quantitative Analysis*

As described previously, our original dataset allowed us to link cohorts of community college students with receiving four-year campuses. We first used this information to identify the community colleges that were particularly successful at transferring students of color from low-performing high schools to four-year colleges. In addition, we used these data to discern how receptive the UC campuses had been to these students. Because our data included the period just before and just after the implementation of Prop 209, we were particularly interested in documenting students' odds of transferring to a UC and the institutional outreach from the four UCs to our five selected community colleges.

Table 11 presents logistic regression models that predict the odds of enrolling in a UC versus all other types of transfer destinations among students who transferred. In the base model, before controlling for high school attributes, African Americans were half (0.51) as likely as whites to go to a UC; Latinos were 89% as likely to enroll in a UC. Asian transfer students were 2.44 times more likely than white transfers to enter a UC. Controlling for the quality of students' high schools narrowed the Black-white gap slightly and completely erased the difference in the odds of transferring to a UC between Latinos and whites. The odds of transferring to a UC rose with high school resources and the increase was particularly sizable for high resource high schools.

**Table 11. Predicting UC Enrollment among Transfer Students: Race, Ethnicity, HS Quality**

Variables	Base Model	Final Model
<b>Student Race/Ethnicity</b>		
White (ref.)	1.00	1.00
African American	0.51***	0.60***
Latino	0.89***	1.06
Asian	2.44***	2.62***
<b>High School Resources</b>		
Low		0.78***
Low-Medium		0.88**
Medium (ref.)		1.00
High-Medium		1.13***
High		1.77***

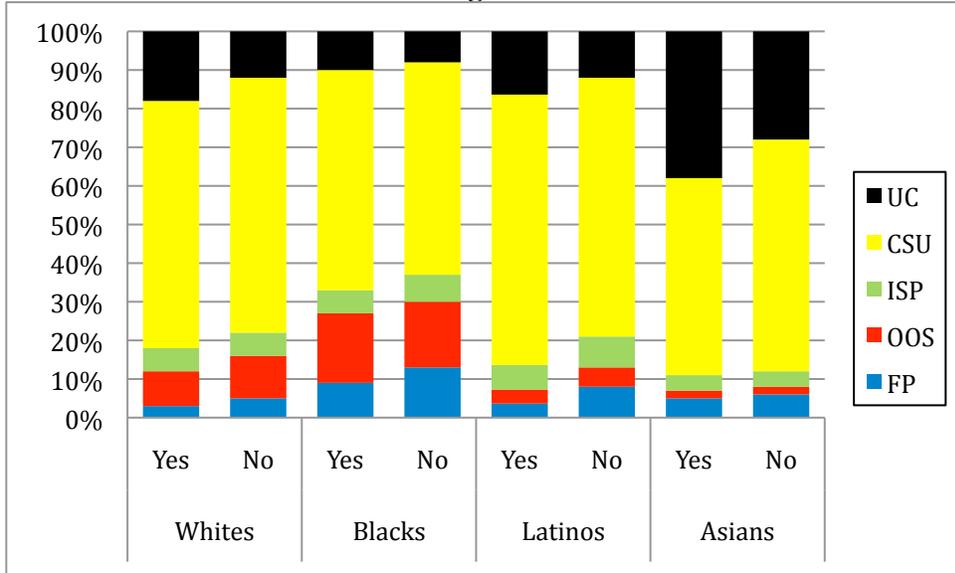
\*\*p ≤ 0.01; \*\*\*p ≤ 0.001

The next part of our analyses predicts UC transfer based on course-taking behaviors in community college. Recent studies have identified remediation in community college as a significant barrier affecting transfer among students of color. For example, in 2004, Wassmer, Moore, and Shulock concluded that transfer students were more likely to have better academic preparation upon entering the community college than their peers. In another study of transfer, Sengupta and Jepsen (2006) documented that Latinos and African American students took the lowest number of first year college-level courses. The following analysis assesses the importance of remediation, GPA, and course-taking patterns among UC transfer students, controlling for high school quality.

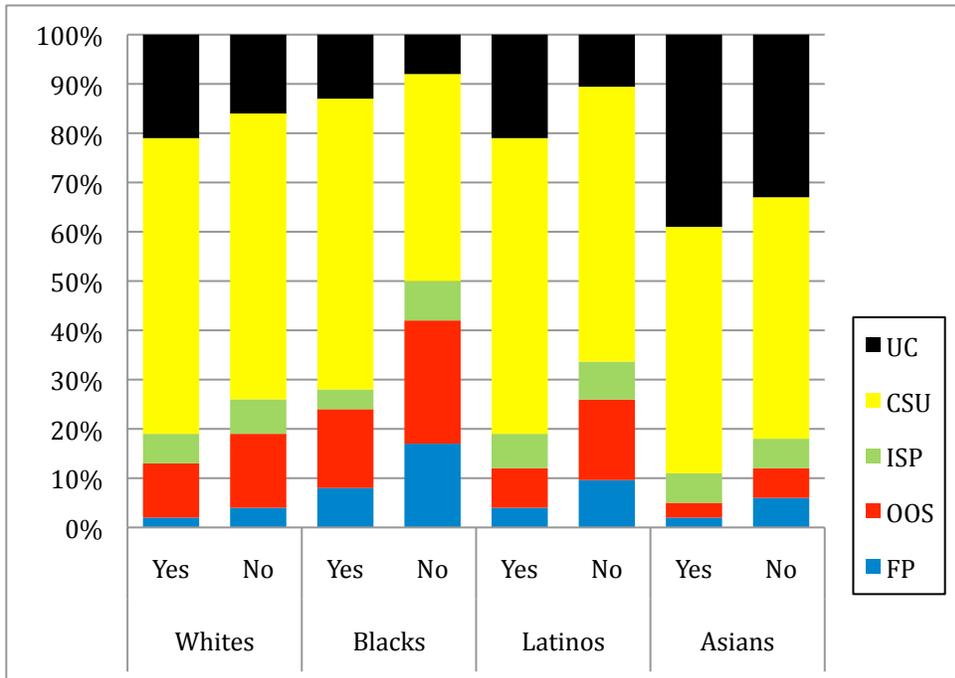
Figures 22 and 23 describe the transfer destinations of students by whether they took transfer math or English in their first semester. In each case, the distribution across the destination categories was similar for students who did not take these courses. For Whites, Blacks and Latinos, those who took transfer math in their first semester were more likely to attend a UC than those who took transfer English. Overall Blacks who took transfer math were more likely to attend a CSU and less likely to attend either a private, in-state college or any college outside California than those who did not. For all groups, those who took transfer math or English were more likely to go to a UC than those who did not.

Predictably, the likelihood of enrolling in transfer math and English was associated with the resources of high schools that students attended. Figure 22 shows how, overall, the proportion of students who took transfer English in their first semester rose with high school resources for each racial/ethnic group. In this figure, we observe that Latinos and African Americans from low resource high schools were less likely to take transfer English in their first term than Asians or white students. Overall, whites took transfer English at higher rates than all other groups in each high school category.

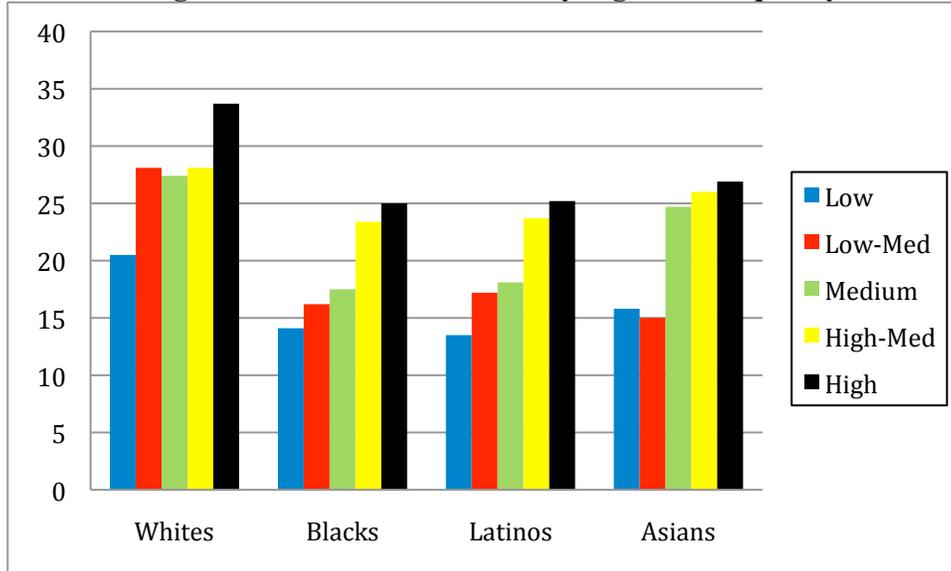
**Figure 22. Destinations of Transfer Students by Whether Took Transfer English First Semester**



**Figure 23. Destinations of Transfer Students by Whether Took Transfer Math in First Semester**

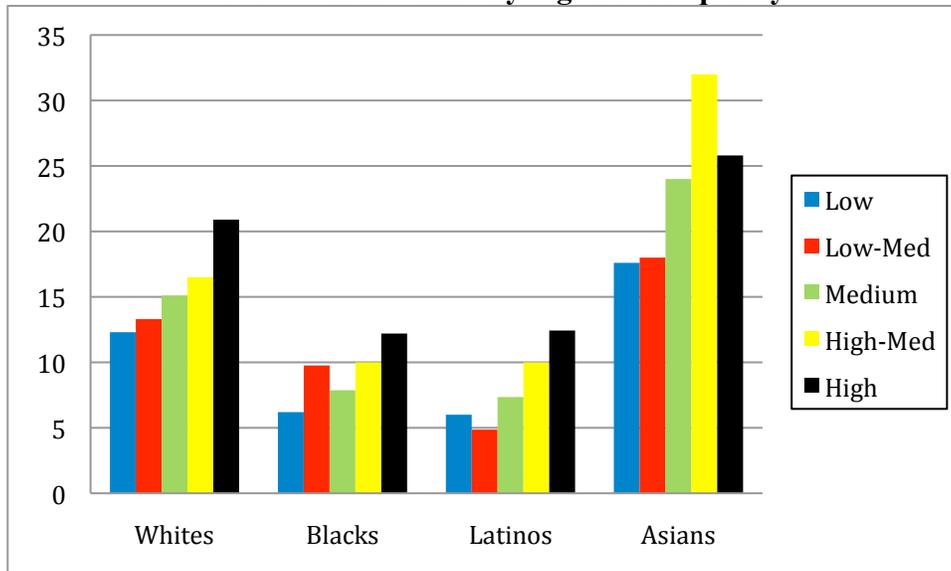


**Figure 24. Percentage of students who took transfer English in their first semester by high school quality**



Whites, Blacks and Latinos exhibited similar patterns in their rates of taking transfer math in the first semester with Latinos displaying the most linear pattern (Figure 23). White students from *low* resource schools and Blacks and Latinos from *high* resource schools took transfer math at virtually identical rates. In all high school categories, Asians had much higher rates of taking transfer math than their white, black and Latino peers. This is a noteworthy difference as transfer level math courses often represent the highest barrier to students aspiring to transfer.

**Figure 25. Percentage of students who took transfer math in their first semester by high school quality**



These overall patterns provide further evidence that taking required transfer courses early in one's college career signals a higher level of prior academic preparation and these course-taking patterns are correlated with the resources of the high schools that students attend.

In the wake of Proposition 209, community colleges' transfer pathways into the UC system for underrepresented racial minority groups have remained small. After Proposition 209 went into effect, Grodsky and colleagues (2006) found that African American and Latino students became less likely to transfer to elite institutions, and African American students became more likely to transfer to private or out-of-state colleges and universities relative to white students. Similarly, Geiser and Caspary (2005) found that in the wake of Proposition 209, very high performing African American students who had been admitted to UC were more likely to decline and instead enroll in private out-of-state colleges and universities. In our analysis, we further observed that enrollment in a UC varied by educational background, and course-taking patterns. Only 5% of African American and 12% of Latino transfer students from low-performing high schools enrolled in a UC. In other words, African American and Latino students who likely required at least some remediation in college were unlikely to transfer to a UC. In other words, our data suggest that UCs played only a minor role in breaking the chain of failure for underrepresented students of color from weak high schools.

### *Qualitative Analysis*

Our analyses above informed us that very few students of color from underperforming high schools had successfully transferred to a UC. Nonetheless, we were interested to know what, if any, outreach the UCs had at our five community college campuses that might have provided a pathway for potential transfers of these underrepresented students. In our investigations we interviewed the principal individuals in charge of counseling, recruitment, and/or admissions at four UCs in geographic proximity to at least one of the community colleges in our study. At each UC campus, we asked these individuals to elaborate on three things: outreach, admission, and relationships with the selected colleges in our study. Likewise, during the interviews at the community colleges, we asked participants to describe their relationships with our selected UC campuses and public four-year universities in the area. We also included questions related to four-year college aspirations, information, and preparation on our student survey. Documents provided by the UC campuses collected during the site visits and downloaded from websites were later reviewed and incorporated into these analyses.

### *Admissions*

The California Master Plan for education calls for UC to accommodate all eligible California Community College transfer students and specifies that the University maintain a 3:2 ratio of upper-division to lower-division students in order to ensure spaces for community college transfers. Approximately 90 percent of transfer students to UC come from a California community college. Moreover, transfer applicants from the community colleges are given priority in

admission over transfer applicants from other institutions. According to the latest figures issued by the University of California, Office of Research, transfer students make up approximately 30 percent of incoming students annually. They calculate that more than half of UCs' community college transfer students are first-generation college students, and 24 percent are from underrepresented student groups.

The University of California describes its admissions process as “a comprehensive way of looking at student applications that takes multiple factors into consideration.” This process, however, is highly competitive. All UC campuses receive far more applications than the number of students that they can admit. Two of the UC campuses in our study receive between 10,000 and 12,500 transfer applicants each year, admit roughly 4,000 transfer students, and enroll roughly 2,500 in the fall quarter. The other two UC campuses in our study receive between 8,000 and 10,000 applicants each year, admit roughly 6,000 and enroll about 1,700 in the fall quarter.

The criteria for admission to UC as a transfer are rigorous. Most transfers to UC enter as juniors, or upper division transfers; to do so, they must also complete 60 semester units of UC transfer courses.<sup>15</sup> To transfer to a UC, students' courses must include two UC transfer English composition courses, one UC transfer math course and four UC transfer courses in at least two of the following subject areas: arts and humanities, social and behavioral sciences and physical and biological sciences. Students must earn a C or better in these courses and a 2.4 GPA in their transfer courses. As is the case for transfer to a CSU, students are advised that since the number of applicants may outnumber the number of spaces in popular majors and at popular campuses, fulfilling the minimum requirements may not be enough for admission to the academic major and campus of their choice and they are encouraged to do as well as possible in their courses. In our analysis of the transfer to UCs, we found that, for Latino and white students, there are certain academic factors that are crucial in determining who eventually transfers and who does not. These factors did not, however, account for UC enrollment among African American students.

In our interviews with admissions officers at these UCs, we asked our participants how their status as an “elite” institution may have impacted transfer rates among underrepresented students of color. In general, the individuals we spoke with lamented the byproducts of selectivity. For example, one admissions officer noted, “Students who are denied admission tell their friends and families about their experience as an indicator of what happens when you try.” Another participant suggested that as a result of the selective admissions policies and practices at the UCs, community college faculty and counselors actually steered students away from UCs, toward less competitive four-year colleges. Another participant informed us that some admissions policies actually worked to the detriment of underrepresented populations, particularly English Learners. She noted that students with “markers” on their transcripts indicating that they have taken English as a Second Language in community college, were required to have a B in both of their transfer English courses. On the other hand, native English speakers were allowed to enter with Cs in these courses.

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<sup>15</sup>All community college transfer courses confer CSU credit; most, but not all, confer UC credits as well.

Despite these disheartening observations, all of the individuals whom we interviewed considered the Master Plan for Higher Education a glimmer of hope in terms of education, equal access and opportunity. As one outreach coordinator put it, “The Master Plan gives UC campuses something tangible to work towards... as transfer students are supposed to comprise 30 percent of the population.” Other counselors stressed that the Master Plan for Higher Education describes a system whereby students have second chances, noting that this is not necessarily the case in other parts of the world, or even the country.

### *Outreach*

As a response to Proposition 209, UC campuses have had to figure out ways to increase student diversity without targeting outreach directly to students of color. All of the UC campuses that we visited had several outreach efforts in place at the surrounding community colleges. For example, one campus had an office of outreach that worked with honor programs, hosted summer institutes, and ran transfer mentorship programs. In general, the criteria for participation in such outreach programs varied between programs and across campuses. Some programs specifically targeted students who were parents, students with disabilities, veterans, or former foster youth. The majority of the outreach programs, however, focused on providing services for a cohort of students from disadvantaged backgrounds (low-income or first-generation college students) who had strong academic records (above a 3.6). Notably, these UC programs often worked closely with special programs such as Puente and EOPS at community colleges.

Study participants informed us that funding for outreach to community colleges had been a constant point of tension at the UCs. Most of the programs related to transfer student outreach and retention at the UCs are funded by permanent dollars, which pay staff salaries. As UC makes budgetary cuts, they typically do so from permanent funds, leaving transfer-related offices in a precarious situation. In light of these budgetary restraints, the individuals with whom we spoke talked about the importance of their networks and partnerships. For example, the Director of Outreach at one UC informed us that they had partnered with Letters and Science to sponsor a symposium about the transfer student experience. She noted that, for some faculty, it was the first time that they had heard about the transfer experience. Another Outreach Coordinator indicated that they worked in support of a nonprofit organization that did outreach to Chicano, Latino, African American, and Native American transfer students. In addition, all of the outreach efforts on UC campuses in our study sent some of their transfer students back to reconnect with their community college and to share information about what the university was doing to support them.

It would seem then, that the UCs were working hard to motivate, inform, and prepare students to transfer from a community college to selective tier I research institutions. In our investigations, we noted, however, that these efforts were likely only received by students who were already on the fast track to transfer. That is, students enrolled in developmental education classes likely did not come in contact with UC outreach programs. Furthermore, data suggest that African Americans who may have been in contact with UC outreach elected not to attend these institutions. In the wake of Proposition 209, both the general African American student population and the transfer population remain low across the UCs.

## *Conclusions*

The enrollment and outreach extended by the four UC campuses we studied indicate that instead of compensating for the restrictions in direct access to elite institutions, transfer pathways to UCs were further limited for underrepresented students of color from low-performing high schools. This can partially be explained by the competitive academic admissions policies. Students of color are more likely than other students to need remediation in community college, and are generally less competitive academically. Since Prop 209, most UC outreach efforts have mostly targeted to the most academically successful community college students, those who need the least support and are most likely to gain admission and enroll. Few outreach efforts at the UCs have cast a net wide enough to capture students of color who may have needed developmental education when they enrolled in the community college. These findings have important implications. They indicate that the transfer pathway to the UCs is an underutilized option for mobility from low-performing high schools to elite colleges for underrepresented minority groups. Talented youth who have been poorly served by the K-12 education system are likely to be overlooked by current outreach efforts. Our research suggests that, among other things, UC outreach efforts may need to extend beyond students who are in honors classes to encompass a broader range of students. In order for these programs to be successful, however, the faculty and staff at community colleges (and high schools) must make these pathways feasible for students. At several community colleges in our study, participation in developmental coursework seemed to be grounds for eliminating a UC as a future transfer destination in counseling students.

Academic trends alone, however, did not entirely account for transfer gaps to the UCs. For example, African American students were less likely to enroll in UCs, regardless of their academic histories. Geiser and Caspary (2005) suggested one reason for this: private colleges and universities offer better and more targeted financial aid packages to high performing African Americans than does UC. One UC-commissioned unpublished study, conducted by RAND in the wake of Proposition 209, interviewed African American and Latino students who qualified for admission to UC but had not applied. The study wanted to know what had driven this decision. The typical answer that came back was, "I didn't feel welcome at UC." The controversies surrounding affirmative action, and the low percentage of African American students in the UC system, probably also contribute to this problem in effecting transfer for Black students. Large questions still remain as to what other policies and practices can positively influence transfer rates among African American students.

## **Conclusions and Recommendations**

This study represents a "moving picture" of conditions in five colleges that managed -- during one period of time from 1996 to 2004 -- to transfer disproportionate percentages of African American and Latino students who came from some of the most impoverished high schools in the state. In this study, we looked at data and queried interviewees about the period during the late 1990s when the students in our cohorts were entering community colleges in California, we then

studied the period in the early 2000s in the colleges when the students were transferring, and finally we collected data on the present circumstances in these same colleges. The institutions we studied have experienced ups and downs during this period and not all of the colleges that emerged from our data profiles would qualify today as high transfer colleges for such students. Some of the colleges have actually become stronger in this function, while others have lost ground. Though we concur with Cohen (2003) that strong transfer colleges generally tend to live by their reputations and build on that success.

The colleges with the most precarious records of transfer were those that were found to transfer African Americans in disproportionate numbers. Across the entire spectrum of community colleges, it was difficult to find *any* that were doing particularly well with this population, and so those colleges that appeared in our study were faring only marginally better than most others. Possibly because of different college attendance patterns, African Americans with similar grades and test scores as Latinos are more likely to select four-year as opposed to two-year colleges. Indeed African Americans have college options that Latinos do not have since some percentage of African Americans choose to attend Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs); there is no equivalent set of institutions for Latinos. So, in contrast to the African American student who attends 4-year campuses, the average African American student who finds him- or herself in community college may be more educationally disadvantaged than the typical Latino community college student. Moreover, perhaps the community colleges are not connecting as well with black students. Whatever the reason for the tenuousness of the transfer outcomes for African American students, we think this is reason for grave concern and for very targeted investigation.

It was also the case that each college had its own story about how it had come to reach success in the transfer function. Each had a unique set of circumstances that created unique advantages -- and sometimes unique disadvantages. Ultimately, it is not possible to say that they all fit into a nice pattern of practices that could be transported easily to other settings. Neither did we find any silver bullets that will solve the problem of low transfer rates for students of color who arrive at community college campuses from low performing/high need high schools. But we are able to describe important practices that worked, as well as some that held the colleges back from long-term success.

One interesting finding of this study was that leadership in the transfer function can come from various sources --district, campus, and/or faculty and staff. The colleges in our study had different sources of leadership in this area. It appears to be true that the higher up the support for this function, the easier it is for the campus to create a "transfer culture," and to realize its goals in this regard. Strong direction from the top creates more support down the line and fewer barriers to enacting a strong transfer function. But it is *not* impossible to stimulate this activity *at any level*. Two of the colleges in this study had found ways --albeit sometimes dangerous to people's career health--to counter the weak transfer support of upper administration and effect programs that strongly supported transfer. This is hardly ideal, but as we saw, it *is* possible.

## Conclusions

Because this is a “moving picture” we are unable to capture all that was occurring at the time that these campuses experienced their successes with our cohorts, and we are unable to know the outcomes of newer innovations that we observed on these campuses in recent times. We are, however, able to make some observations that we think can help move the field forward in significant ways. Across the colleges we studied, five things were common and important to the success we observed.

- (1) *The colleges that showed disproportionate success in transferring African Americans and Latinos from low performing/high need high schools were not necessarily those with strong reputations for transfer.*

One of the central findings in the literature on community college transfer is that “creating a transfer culture” is key. However, we were surprised to find that some colleges that are known for their transfer cultures did not come up in our data. It may be that creating a sense of family (belonging) for underrepresented minorities is more important in some cases than simply creating a more generalized transfer culture. What we saw in colleges that were successful with these students was, for the most part, a very specific dedication to this population, with culturally appropriate interventions and counseling strategies that were targeted to their specific needs. The notion of creating a family atmosphere, including multiple generations of individuals from the same family who attended the school, was one of the aspects that appeared to be very important for these students. Staff, faculty, and counselors who spoke the same language and came from the same backgrounds not only appeared to connect with these students in important ways, but also believed they had a deep understanding of where the students were coming from and could *empathize* with them.

Dowd and her colleagues (2010), in their study of community colleges that help low income students transfer, describe “transfer champions,” as individuals who “provide the perspective of transfer students” in the counseling function and who are often hired because they have been transfer students themselves (p. 12). We have seen this perspective-sharing and cultural compatibility operate in other kinds of education intervention programs as well, though it is seldom discussed in the literature. In a 2001 report, *Paving the Way to Postsecondary Education: K-12 Intervention Programs for Underrepresented Youth*, similar conclusions were reached: “Most of the effective programs paid attention to the students’ cultural background and attempted to incorporate this both in the structure and the content of the program. If Rendón (1994) is correct about the need for validation that many of these students have, then the cultural component may be a core feature of success.” (Gándara and Bial, 2001, p. 36).

One source of this kind of cultural support was often found in the ethnic studies centers on the campuses that we visited. We did not think it was accidental that four of the five campuses we studied had strong ethnic studies centers or departments that served these targeted groups and also provided “safe spaces,” co-ethnic peer support activities, and faculty who shared similar backgrounds with the students, and in a number of cases had fought for programs and supports for these students. This is not to say that all ethnic studies programs are major contributors to the

transfer function—we did not study this—but they were important resources for many of the students we set out to study in these community colleges.

There is now substantial research and practice knowledge about the characteristics of high transfer colleges and the features of a transfer culture that exist on those campuses, but actually little is known or written about the features of colleges that are especially successful with a more challenged population of underrepresented students who come from the lowest performing high schools. Research on community college transfer needs to pay closer attention to specific needs of these students and the interventions that are most effective with them.

*(2) Community college outreach was in many cases the reason that students came to the college in the first place, and connected with appropriate services once there.*

We began this study with the knowledge that students who attend high need/low performing high schools are likely to go to community colleges that are similarly challenged and that have poor records of transferring students. Thus, we wanted to know how students are re-directed to colleges that have more resources to help them transfer. It turns out that an important part of the answer to that question is outreach counselors and the support staff they take with them. Outreach counselors go into the low performing/high need high schools and talk to students about how to use the community colleges as a stepping-stone to a college degree. They generally provide information about their particular college and what it can do to support students, but they also impart fundamental information that students need to choose a college and apply. We also found that an effective practice that some colleges employed was taking a financial aid counselor along with them so that students could get direct and early information about how to pay for their educations, as this is something that weighs heavily on students' and their parents' minds. Outreach from successful colleges convinced students that transfer was much more likely on their campus and redirected some students from low performing schools that would have otherwise gone elsewhere. Notably, outreach counselors were often mentioned as the *only* real college counseling that students at these low performing schools received. Without the outreach counselors from the community colleges, students would have had little idea of either how or why to apply to college.

As budgets tighten and community colleges are left with fewer resources to spread over more students—because they typically absorb more of the students who cannot afford to attend the senior institutions when fees increase—the community colleges are placed in the position of having to make further cuts to their programs. In an effort to keep the cuts away from the classroom as much as possible, counseling functions are vulnerable, especially outreach counseling. In fact, at all segments of the higher education system, outreach is one of the most vulnerable areas of the budget. Policymakers ask, “Why fund outreach if you already have more students than you can handle?” The answer to this question, at least as the community colleges are concerned, was especially clear in the data we collected.

Two of the colleges we studied had well established reputations as “transfer colleges,” yet in spite of having a media campaign to attract potential transfer students to the college, both SCC and City Vista appeared to have the most influence through their outreach counselors and student

ambassadors. While our data were not as strong on this point at City Vista College, it appeared that the outreach counseling and student ambassadors played a similarly important role at that college. In fact, most students mentioned the campus' "reputation" in citing why they chose to attend that college, and City Vista counseling staff were especially keen on the importance of the student ambassadors introducing the campus to potential enrollees through their high school visitation programs. As one counselor noted, "Students who are similar in age have a bigger impact on the high school students than do our counseling staff, that's why we are so worried about having to cut back on the student ambassadors."

As Venezia and her colleagues (2003) have pointed out, preparation for attending community college is at best inadequate, and in most cases simply non-existent, and this leads to students making uninformed decisions about where to go and how to navigate the institutions once they get there. So especially in high-need schools, there is considerable reliance on these outreach programs to equip students with the basic knowledge they need to apply to college and to make critical choices about which community college to attend. Given the lack of training—and time—that most high school counselors have to counsel students in college preparation and application, and the fact that students attending low performing high schools typically have parents who are unable to provide much guidance in this area, these schools are extremely dependent on the community colleges and four-year institutions to provide this service. And, since most of the students from these high schools that go on to four-year colleges will initially enroll in a community college, they need specific information about the two-year colleges. Moreover, our knowledge that the first year -- and even the first semester of college -- are critical in determining whether many students will persist lends weight to the importance of students being armed with the knowledge to make good decisions *from the beginning*. Outreach counseling from the community colleges is not a luxury -- it is the first critical step in transfer. If the state is serious about increasing transfer among the students attending the most challenged public schools, then it must begin with outreach to high schools (and possibly middle schools).

*(3) Strong transfer counseling is the sine quo non of community college transfer, yet it is wholly inadequate and this is not always just because of resource limitations.*

At every campus that had been successful at transferring underrepresented students from low performing high schools, effective counseling was cast as the primary reason for this success. Yet, we were impressed by how many students did not receive these services and how many problems there were in delivering the services. For example, a number of studies have pointed to the importance of all students going through orientation as an efficient way to provide critical information about transfer and navigating the community college to all students. So, we found it surprising how many students in our surveys had not been to an orientation, even at campuses that noted it was their policy to expose all students to orientation. Our surveys did not allow us to know how or why so many students had missed orientation, but this is clearly an area worthy of investigation.

We were also surprised to find that on some of our campuses, counseling and transfer center hours ended at 5pm. So, the large numbers of students who attend part-time, and in the evening because of demanding work schedules, would have great difficulty making an

appointment with a counselor to discuss transfer. While it was clear that resources for counseling were a major problem on all of the campuses, limiting the hours in this way appears to be anachronistic, considering the population served, the likelihood they need to stay employed, and their very real need for specific transfer guidance after-hours.

At three of the campuses the issue was raised very pointedly that counselors in the community college, in an effort to upgrade their status and pay, had negotiated contracts to place them in the same category as faculty, which also required that they teach and attend certain meetings and other out-of-classroom activities that are expected of faculty. This was, according to some administrators, an extreme drain on counseling hours and reduced their counseling strength commensurately. Some administrators complained of classes that were taught by counselors that simply represented “double dipping” – counselors signed up their counselees for a class and also took credit for one-to-one counseling of the same students. In fairness, some counseling staff believed that the “teaching” that was done by counselors actually allowed them to reach more students with critical information and increased their effectiveness.

Because counseling is so key and because ratios of 1 counselor to 2000 students are common on many California campuses, creative ways must be found to provide the one-on-one attention that so many students need. Specialized programs are one way and involving more faculty in this function is another. Some campuses even involve faculty in teaching the “introduction to college” courses that are taught by counselors on other campuses. It is reasonably clear that the decrease in one-on-one counseling time with individual students was brought about by the faculty status that counselors hold in California. At the very least, this issue deserves some systematic research and analysis given the critical importance of counselors in the transfer process.

“Transfer center counselor” is a role that appears to be ill-defined on the campuses. In no case did a larger number of students in our surveys note that the transfer center or counselor was the primary source of their information about transfer. Where a counselor was mentioned, this was generally a regular counselor or special program counselor. It appeared from our study that transfer counselors were more in the service of *other* counselors – providing up-to-date information for the faculty and counselors, maintaining the center, and at one campus manning tables in the quad and attending meetings where students could be apprised of the center—than in actively counseling many students themselves. Transfer center counselors often complained that they had little support and could do little more than keep up-to-date on materials and oversee the use of the center, although as counselors they clearly sought more face-to-face counseling time with students. We found that transfer centers – a cornerstone of the state’s strategies for increasing transfer—were usually too underfunded to contribute significantly to counseling students. The literature is clear that where transfer works well, this function is not centered with the transfer counselor but is distributed among all counselors and faculty. Nonetheless, there appears to be some frustration on the part of transfer center counselors that they were not able to do the job as well as they would have liked, and universally that they needed more resources to be effective. Different staffing patterns might be considered for the transfer centers that allow counselors to counsel and other staff to administer the other center functions.

(4) *Every campus immediately pointed to its special support programs for underrepresented students as key to increasing its transfer rate for these students.*

In an evident acknowledgement of the chronic problem of providing sufficient counseling to adequately support the transfer function, every campus we visited immediately noted their special programs as their primary source of support for ensuring success and transfer for low income and minority students. For all low income and minority students this was the EOPS and CARE programs that provide counseling, financial aid, and other support services such as child care (CARE). However, programs that specifically targeted Latino (Puente, Adelante) or African American (Unity, Umoja) students were touted as being most effective in pushing transfer for these students. Yet these programs generally reach only a small fraction of the students who could benefit from them.

In an evident acknowledgement of the chronic problem of providing sufficient counseling to adequately support the transfer function, every campus we visited immediately noted their special programs as their primary source of support for ensuring success and transfer for low-income and minority students. For all low-income and minority students, the EOPS and CARE programs on every campus provide counseling, financial aid, and other support services such as child care (CARE). All qualifying students are funneled through the EOPS offices to receive course plans and financial aid, and this program appears to be a critical resource for all the colleges. However, programs that specifically targeted Latino or African American students were touted as being most effective in pushing transfer for these students. These programs offer personal counseling as well as academic counseling, classes geared to strengthen student academic skills, and mentorship and support structures to create a sense of “belonging” among students. What is striking is how immediately these programs that target underrepresented students come to mind as THE focal point to support transfer, yet how few students these programs serve. Puente typically has one cohort of 30 to 35 students each year, and Umoja (and Unity), built on the Puente model, does the same. Yet these programs are almost universally believed to be critical elements of support for Latino and African American students. Art Cohen (2003) has noted this as well in his work, that as effective as these programs evidently are, they serve so few students. But why?

The simple answer to the question, of why specialized programs that focus on low-income minority youth serve so few students, is that they represent a significant cost. The programs require the campus to purchase counseling time, they must provide professional development for teachers and counselors associated with the program, and they may involve a mentoring component that requires time and resources to organize and monitor. Having a counselor assigned to the program ensures that things like financial aid are dealt with directly and in a timely fashion, and the programs provide activities and events that bind students together in a supportive network. It was unclear to what extent programs such as Umoja and the EOPS program work together to efficiently meet the needs of the same students. The SCC campus, in an effort to increase the numbers of Latino students it could serve with a specialized program, moved to the Adelante program, which provides fewer services, but for more students. One element that they incorporate, however, that is not found uniformly in other targeted programs, is the focus on connecting parents to the college. They support a number of parent activities and encourage parents to stay in touch with the counselors.

There has been no study conducted to determine the relative effectiveness of these approaches, but we have known for some time that truly effective intervention is labor intensive; it requires *relationship building*, which cannot be done en masse. It seems that a good cost-benefit study of these types of programs is well overdue. How much do they cost? What is it worth to double the rate of transfer for underrepresented groups?

(5) *Developmental education is the elephant in the living room for transfer of minority students from low performing/high need high schools.*

Almost all students of color from low performing high school need some academic remediation when they enter community college and this delays or impedes transfer. For example, among those students who initially test *just one level* below college level math and English, less than half will complete the courses they need to transfer ([www.achievingthedream.org](http://www.achievingthedream.org)). In spite of the relative success of the campuses we visited, developmental education remained a challenge for all. But for more effective practices in developmental education, these campuses would undoubtedly be even more successful. Relatively little innovation in this area was seen at the case study colleges, with the exception of one that was experimenting with intensive review courses in English and math *before* testing students for remedial course placement and conducting diagnostic assessment to determine the specific areas of need for remediation and then providing students with modules targeting those specific needs rather than whole courses. It appears that these practices can significantly reduce the time that students are in a developmental education sequence<sup>16</sup> and increase their chances of completing transfer courses.

Almost all of the Latino and African American students who graduate from low performing high schools and go to community college arrive needing remediation or developmental education. Often their need is extensive. One former director of developmental education for her community college system noted that many of the students from low performing high schools arrive with reading skills at the 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> grade level. This requires intensive remediation, and most of those students will also require math remediation as well. It can take years, especially if a student attends part-time, to move through the developmental education courses and be able to take college classes for credit. By that time, students have run out of time, money, and motivation. Life has happened and they have new responsibilities and can no longer attend college. It is not surprising then that only 8.5% of these students who enter with significant remedial education needs actually complete all the remedial work and transfer to 4-year colleges.

The community colleges have not been unconscious of this problem and the California system awarded \$110 million to colleges in the last few years to address issues in basic skills education. However, this award focused largely on strengthening curriculum and providing professional development, and included no rigorous evaluation component. A Basic Skills Director for one college system noted that there was absolutely no coordination among campuses

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<sup>16</sup> Edgecombe, N. (2011). "Accelerating the academic achievement of students referred to developmental education." Community College Research Center Working Paper.

even within the same district or evaluation of those funds for basic skills education. “We have no way to know how that money was used. We can’t say, ‘Here’s how that money was used and here is the pay-off for that.’” When queried as to why there was no monitoring of the funds or how they were used, the Director noted, “We have local control. We don’t even do admissions in the same way within the same community college district!”

A critical problem with the Basic Skills Initiative from our vantage point is that it focused on content and professional development, and this may or may not have any appreciable effect on program effectiveness—without any evaluation it is hard to know—but it largely ignored the *delivery* issues. How do colleges keep these students engaged and continuing to attend college when they know they are a long distance from taking any real credit-bearing course? We asked this question at each of the campuses we visited. We talked with developmental education faculty, counselors, and administrative staff, yet we received surprisingly few responses that suggested there was a concerted effort to attack the problem. In conversation with one Developmental Education Director, she noted that one major problem is the lack of system-wide coherence. People simply don’t know what is happening on other campuses and so there is little opportunity to disseminate innovative practices. According to this director, other states with more coherent systems do a better job of this. She also found that there is a tension between faculty wanting to provide strong curriculum in traditional formats and counselors worrying about the time it takes to work through those traditional formats. As the director noted, “A lot of faculty hear ‘acceleration’ as ‘skipping over stuff.’ So, we’ve started to use the word ‘completion’ instead.”

Another Developmental Education Director saw the problem as just the opposite. She noted that there were huge tensions on the campus around the role of counselors versus faculty and that counselors did not want to relinquish their hold on the personal development and introduction to college courses, those courses that are geared toward the students who need developmental education and more effective academic guidance. They considered these “their territory,” in spite of the fact that it eroded so much time from actually counseling students and seriously reduced instructional innovation. This director felt that the faculty was more open to innovation and finding solutions to the counseling shortage than were the counselors. “And I am a counselor by training!” she added.

We saw some efforts to “accelerate” the coursework at the campuses we visited. On one of our initial visits to the UCC campus, we saw a very large computer-based developmental education center where 100 students can work at one time on modules especially prepared to meet their specific academic needs, thus eschewing an entire course if they don’t need the whole course. Unfortunately, the director of the center noted that so many of the students need careful instructional guidance, they cannot navigate the whole module on their own, and many are so far below college level (3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> grade) that they need intensive basic instruction. For these students, the modules simply don’t provide enough of the content they need, and the computers do not provide the hands-on instructional support that they require.

In subsequent interviews, however, we came to find that the UCC campus had grappled with the problem of their limited effectiveness in developmental education and had completely revamped their whole program. Now their focus was on “acceleration not remediation.” Key to

this rethinking of developmental education was the counseling of students to *not* take the placement test when they first enrolled, rather to take the diagnostic test the campus offered to see where their remedial needs were and then to enroll in the many 5- or 8-week “refresher courses” or “modules” in math and reading that the campus was now offering “day and night.” These courses are non-credit, ungraded, and tuition free. Students do not have to worry about “failing” because there is no grading. The aim of this strategy is to avoid initial low placement, and through the refresher courses, to work towards the goal of placing no lower than one level below college work. The campus offers a “bridge academy” that provides only these courses over the winter break to make it easier for students to get the additional “bridge” classes they need. The program director notes that 2200 students have already taken courses through this program in the first few months since its inception, and they are seeing students meeting the goal of placing much closer to college level work. It will take a while before enough data are accumulated to determine the program’s effectiveness, but it is certainly innovative and worthy of close attention.

At CCC we encountered a math instructor who had thought very carefully about the developmental math curriculum. By excising elements he thought were not critical, and emphasizing others, he had created a curriculum that allowed many students to cover two levels of math in one course, effectively cutting their remedial time in half. A critical component of this course, though, was the “family” he created among the students—largely African American, Latino, and other minority students—and the way in which the students were encouraged to support each other socially and emotionally, as well as academically. This kind of intervention is labor-intensive and does not happen in large classrooms, but for small numbers of students is evidently a powerful intervention. This faculty member was well-known all over the campus for his innovative approaches with students who had a fear of math and was recommended to us by numerous other faculty.

There are some notable attempts to attack the developmental education delivery problem on community college campuses in California and beyond. At the Cabrillo College campus, the Academy for College Excellence (formerly the Digital Bridge Academy) focuses on underrepresented, largely Latino, second-language learner students who arrive underprepared for college. It capitalizes on student interest in STEM areas like technology, nursing, lab technicians—areas in which there are significant employment opportunities, and offers a one semester, full time, 15 ½ unit (some portion of which are transferrable for CSU credit) integrated series of courses designed to prepare students for college learning with behavioral and management skills, intensive English, and exposure to a range of skill areas to excite and motivate them. The program only accepts students who are at the 9<sup>th</sup> grade level in reading (although they may be lower than this in English), but it accelerates their transition to regular community college courses so that by second semester they are enrolled in credit courses. Several external groups have evaluated the program and concluded that the program has great promise. But, to date, it has not been adopted at any other community college campus.

At Los Medanos College, Myra Snell and her colleagues in the math department have been working on a one-semester accelerated math course that bypasses the normal four-course sequence toward calculus. It focuses on the most important concepts in the math curriculum that lead to statistical understanding, eschewing the standard algebra-heavy curriculum. Pass rates for students

are high and these students are much more likely to stay in college and transfer. At Chabot College, Kathy Hern has developed a one-semester accelerated English course that replaces the two-semester sequence, and focuses on rich reading and writing opportunities with remedial work embedded. Data show that outcomes for this class, in terms of student pass rates in subsequent courses, are as good, or better, than for the two-semester class.

Some commentators have noted that one reason such courses are not widely instituted, in addition to the lack of coherence of the California community college system, is that most instructors of developmental education courses are part-time and adjunct faculty. Thus, they come in, teach their classes, and leave. They are not part of the community of faculty that designs and approves curricula and may have time to develop innovations. In a study we did about a decade ago, looking at programs that support high achievement for ethnic minority college students, we concluded, based on the data we had collected, that the best of the core faculty instructors need to be assigned to the first year students since this is the most critical year for success or failure (Gándara, 1999). Yet colleges (both community and four-year) typically assign part-time, untenured, and adjunct faculty to these courses. Likewise, if the developmental education problem is to be solved, or at least attenuated, community colleges will need to assign their strongest core faculty who are willing and able to teach these courses.

A number of organizations and reports have weighed-in on the developmental education problem. Among these is a recent report by the Legislative Analyst's Office (LAO, 2008) for California, a thoughtful, non-partisan group of researchers who endeavor to sift through the best information available on topics that affect the state. The LAO report concludes with a series of recommendations to promote completion of community college certificates and transfer. Prominent among them are: (1) to test students while still in high school so that the high schools will be alerted to their academic needs and help to fill these gaps before students enroll in college, and (2) to test and place students immediately in the appropriate remedial courses in the first semester of college so that they do not skip over these critical courses and risk failure in other classes. In a perfect world, in which our lowest performing high schools had the capacity to bring their students up to college level, the first recommendation would make a great deal of sense. But, the schools that these students are graduating from do not, by and large, have the capacity to provide this kind of high quality, intensive instruction for their students. To some significant extent this is why the students are performing at these remedial levels.

With respect to the second recommendation, there has also been a concerted effort on many of the community college campuses to test for placement while the incoming students are still in high school (usually using the outreach counselors for this purpose), so that students can begin remediation as soon as they reach the campus, losing no time in getting started. A fundamental problem with this approach is that it appears to confuse correlation with causation. That is, because students who test in the remedial category and take and pass remedial courses when they first enroll are much more likely to complete their community college goals, therefore all "remedial" students should follow this path to success. There are, however, good reasons why the majority of students who need remedial support do not enroll in those classes and do not complete them successfully. For students who are attending part-time, working long hours, and hoping to make tangible progress toward a degree, the message that they may need to take three, four, or five

English and/or math courses before even being able to enroll in a college credit course can be extraordinarily disconcerting. The students who immediately enroll in and complete the designated remedial (or developmental) classes are most likely to be the students who have the fewest developmental courses ahead of them; they are less likely to come from the lowest performing high schools.

Urban Center College's approach has rejected this received wisdom and taken an opposite approach: use diagnostic rather than placement testing, let students use this diagnostic information to select refresher courses and help them build their skills *before* they are given a placement test and told they have three, four or five levels of courses to take before they can begin taking "real" college classes. Their approach also places an emphasis on helping students to challenge placement testing if the student believes it underestimates her ability. Because the "test early, place early" strategy is so popular today (see also Shulock, 2007), the UCC administrator who oversaw developmental education had to find a way to convince her upper administration that her's was a strategy worth trying. She asked students to take the placement test in math and reading. Many could not place at college level; they had forgotten much of the material covered on these tests. Her strategy worked and the campus adopted her plan in spring of 2010.

As Thomas Bailey points out, "The more levels of developmental courses a student must take, the less likely that student is to ever complete college English or math" (2009). Students who must master three levels of developmental courses are 1/3 to 1/2 as likely to complete the necessary sequence. Less than half of students who enter at only one level below the regular curriculum will complete these courses (Bailey, Jeong et al. 2010). Knowing what we now know, it is unconscionable that California community colleges would continue with the traditional approach to developmental education that is closing the door on so many students who come from low performing high schools. These students, consigned to the most challenged schools in the public system, are then doubly jeopardized by being told they may have years more of classes to take before they will meet college standards. It is little wonder that we are losing so many. Acceleration practices can significantly reduce the time that students are in a developmental education sequence<sup>17</sup> and increase their chances of completing transfer courses. California Community Colleges can and must do better at creating clear pathways toward this goal.

## Recommendations

Below we distill the findings and conclusions of this study into five recommendations. It would be easy to add more, and it is tempting to go through each, re-explaining our motive for selecting these five. However, the foregoing pages have, we believe, already done that. We end with a call for doing five things that we believe are necessary to shift the focus to the needs of the ever growing numbers of African American and Latino students, who are entering the postsecondary system from K-12 schools that have not prepared for them for this experience, and

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<sup>17</sup> Edgecombe, N. (2011). "Accelerating the academic achievement of students referred to developmental education." Community College Research Center Working Paper.

that can increase successful transfer for these students.

- (1) It is critical to enhance and guarantee funding for Community College and Four-year College outreach to the most high need high schools in the state as their counseling is typically weak and these programs are often the only real preparation students receive for how to navigate college.<sup>18</sup>
- (2) Careful evaluation of special programs targeted to Black and Latino students who seek to transfer needs to be conducted to determine their relative costs and benefits. Evidence suggests they may be the most effective tool to increase transfer for underrepresented students from low performing high schools, but they must serve more students. Research should now investigate how these programs can be most cost-effectively scaled up.
- (3) Different delivery models of developmental education that focus on reducing the time to eligibility for college credit courses need to be evaluated and structures that allow effective models to be disseminated need to be created. We found evidence of potentially successful models, but they need to be carefully evaluated and then disseminated if proven successful.
- (4) There should be increased attention to and research on campuses that do an effective job of transferring students of color from low performing high schools. Incentives for campuses to focus on the transfer of these students, in particular, should be put in place.
- (5) Additional research needs to focus on the issue of the poor transfer rates of African American students with a goal of identifying specialized programs and practices that can support this particularly vulnerable population in California's community colleges.

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<sup>18</sup> College Board reports that for 2007 California ranked 49<sup>th</sup> in the nation with 1 counselor for every 809 students, well above the national average of 467.

## Appendix A: List of Tables and Figures

### Tables

Table 1. UC Transfer Destinations among Transfer Students by Race/Ethnicity .....	17
Table 2. Descriptions of Quintile Ranges of High School Attributes.....	18
Table 3. Destinations of Transfer Students by High School Quality.....	19
Table 4. Mean Transfer Rates for Latinos and African Americans from Low Resource Schools	24
Table 5. UCC-Composition of Student Body, 2008-2009.....	25
Table 6. SCC-Composition of Student Body, 2008-2009 .....	37
Table 7. Winslow-Composition of Student Body, 2005-2006 .....	47
Table 8. CCC-Composition of Student Body, 2008-2009 .....	57
Table 9. CVCC-Composition of Student Body, 2006-07 .....	69
Table 10. Student Survey Sample.....	78
Table 11. Predicting UC Enrollment among Transfer Students: Race/Ethnicity and High School Quality.....	92

### Figures

Figure 1. Transfer Rates by Race/Ethnicity .....	15
Figure 2. Destination of Transfer Students by Race/Ethnicity .....	16
Figure 3. Transfer Rates by High School Quality .....	20
Figure 4. Distribution of Students by High School Quality by Race/Ethnicity.....	20
Figure 5. Transfer Rates by High School Quality by Race/Ethnicity.....	22
Figure 6. Percentage of Transfers who Enrolled in UC by High School Quality.....	23
Figure 7. UCC Transfers to Four-Year Institutions .....	27
Figure 8. UCC-How did you find out about this community college?.....	34
Figure 9. UCC-Why did you decide to attend this college? (African American Students).....	34
Figure 10. SCC-Latino Transfers to Four-Year Institutions.....	38
Figure 11. SCC-How did you find out about this college?.....	44
Figure 12. SCC-Why did you decide to attend this college? (Latino Students).....	45
Figure 13. Winslow College-Latino Transfers to Four-Year Institutions .....	49
Figure 14. Winslow-How did you find out about this community college?.....	55
Figure 15. Winslow-Why did you decide to attend this college? (Latinos) .....	55
Figure 16. CCC-African American Transfers to Four-Year Institutions.....	58
Figure 17. CCC-How did you find out about this community college? .....	66
Figure 18. CCC-Why did you choose to attend this college? (African Americans) .....	67
Figure 19. CVCC-Latino Transfers to Four-Year Institutions .....	70
Figure 20. CVCC-How did you find out about this community college? .....	76
Figure 21. CVCC-Why did you choose to attend this college? (Latinos) .....	76
Figure 22. Destinations of Transfer Students by Whether Took Transfer English First Semester .....	90

Figure 23. Destinations of Transfer Students by Whether Took Transfer Math in First Semester ..... 93

Figure 24. Percentage of students who took transfer English in their first semester by high school quality ..... 94

Figure 25. Percentage of students who took transfer math in their first semester by high school quality ..... 94

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