

THE TRANSFER 'RESET'

WE NEED TO RESET TRANSFER TO MEET THE NEEDS/
DEMANDS OF TODAY'S LEARNERS — AND TOMORROW'S —
WHO ARE SEEKING TO RECEIVE CREDIT FOR LEARNING,
WORK AND LIVED EXPERIENCES ALONG THE ENTIRETY
OF THEIR EDUCATIONAL PATH.

BY THE TACKLING TRANSFER POLICY ADVISORY BOARD

COUNTLESS STUDENTS WOULD AGREE: TRANSFER DOES NOT WORK. Despite sustained efforts to fix transfer over the past several decades, the current system continues to produce dismal, inequitable outcomes and unnecessary roadblocks that thwart students' educational goals.

As members of the Tackling Transfer Policy Advisory Board, we are excited to release a set of recommendations for systems change, with an emphasis on state, system, and federal policies, designed to challenge the status quo, dismantle inequitable transfer policies, and build a new approach. Our goal is to center students and the recognition of their learning as they transfer across institutions and move through their varied lived, work, and learning experiences beyond high school.

TOGETHER WE MUST EXPAND OUR COLLECTIVE SENSE OF URGENCY AND OWNERSHIP FOR TRANSFER STUDENT SUCCESS. WE AIM TO CREATE AND CULTIVATE A SENSE OF RESPONSIBILITY FOR TRANSFER STUDENT SUCCESS THAT TRANSCENDS THE CONFINES OF ORGANIZATIONAL BOUNDARIES AND JOB TITLES.

We feel great urgency. Contrary to popular perception, today's students — more than one-third of whom are 25 or older and 40 percent of whom attend part-time — juggle their studies with work, caregiving, and other commitments. More than a third of students transfer to another institution — and of those, 45 percent transfer more than once. But most transfer students face long odds of achieving their goals, and student outcomes are highly inequitable by race and income. The COVID-19 global pandemic has additionally complicated their already complex lives, disrupting educational plans, ushering in ever-changing logistics of program delivery and casting a wide net of generalized uncertainty and upheaval.

We need to reset transfer to meet the needs/demands of today's learners — and tomorrow's — who are seeking to receive credit for learning, work, and lived experiences along the entirety of their educational path. A good first step would be to broaden our collective thinking to recognize that we are doing nearly all students a disservice by not recognizing the knowledge and skills they transfer in from a host of settings, even if they don't change institutions.

In addition, we offer concrete recommendations for state, system, and federal policies. Most transfer policies in place now focus on mapping out pathways, policies that are useful building blocks but nonetheless wholly insufficient on their own. Our policy framework addresses critical dimensions of transfer reform, filling gaps in areas where we currently see very little transfer policy, such as accountability, financial supports for institutions, and financial aid for students. For example:

- **Transparency and political will to change:** States should set, measure, and publicly report progress in achieving data-driven goals for transfer student success — disaggregated by at least race/ethnicity, Pell recipient status, and program of study — through a public dashboard that includes specific targets for closing equity gaps in the two- and four-year sectors, and develop new metrics that focus on the institutions' role and responsibility for transfer student success and support.
- **Financial incentives for institutions:** We call on states and systems to create financial incentives for institutions. Effective student success efforts require time and money, and at this time we see little evidence of states and systems investing in incentives designed to support transfer and recognition of learning.

- **Financial aid:** We recommend that state and institutional leaders designate a subset of state and institutional aid specifically designed for transfer students and that federal actors double the Pell Grant to provide more purchasing power for students experiencing wealth and income disparities.
- **Accreditation review:** Accreditation's role is critical but not widely understood. A study examining how well the accreditation process encourages greater credit applicability and recognition of learning would help to define how to move forward together.
- **Technology:** States, systems, and national actors must accelerate efforts to develop technology systems that facilitate statewide digital transcript exchange, course evaluation, and degree auditing processes across the higher education ecosystem, and empower learners with electronic access to their lifelong learning records.

To ensure these policy changes are undergirded by the political will for change, and attention to solid implementation, we paired our policy recommendations with a set of stakeholder engagement strategies as well.

Together we must expand our collective sense of urgency and ownership for transfer student success. We aim to create and cultivate a sense of responsibility for transfer student success that transcends the confines of organizational boundaries and job titles.

We aim to reset transfer.

The Tackling Transfer Policy Advisory Board includes Marty J. Alvarado, California Community Colleges Chancellor's Office; Cheryl Hyman, Arizona State University; Ron Anderson, Minnesota State Colleges and Universities; Shirleatha Lee, University of South Carolina Upstate; William R. Crowe, Charles A. Dana Center at the University of Texas, Austin; Sharon Morrissey, Virginia Community College System; John Fink, Community College Research Center at Teachers College, Columbia University; Elena Quiroz-Livanis, Massachusetts Department of Higher Education; Maria Hesse, Arizona State University; Jessie Ryan, Campaign for College Opportunity; Shanna Smith Jaggars, The Ohio State University; and Chris Soto, Connecticut State Department of Education.