



LATINO POLICY & ISSUES BRIEF

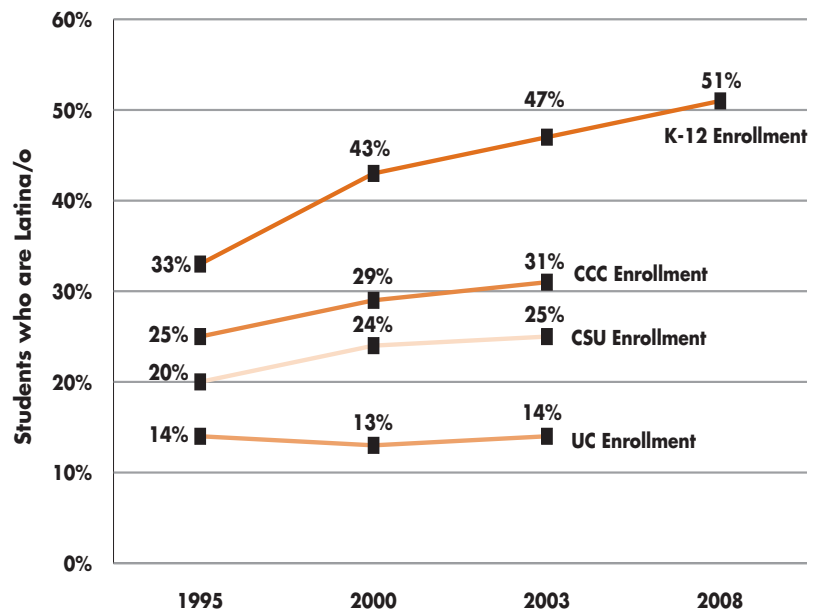
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AN EXAMINATION OF LATINA/O TRANSFER STUDENTS IN CALIFORNIA'S POSTSECONDARY INSTITUTIONS

by
Martha A. Rivas, Jeanette Pérez, Crystal R. Alvarez, and Daniel G. Solorzano

California's three-tier public postsecondary system is meant to provide equal access to higher education for all students in the state. Yet even though Latina/os will soon make up the majority of students in K-12 education, the enrollment of Latina/os in the state's postsecondary institutions remains low. When compared to the percentage of Latina/os enrolled in grades K-12, Latina/os are underrepresented in all three segments of the state's postsecondary education system: California Community Colleges (CCC), the California State University (CSU), and the University of California (UC) (Ornelas and Solorzano 2004). For example, figure 1 shows that in 2003, 47 percent of K-12 students in public California schools were Latina/o, yet only 14 percent were enrolled at a UC campus and 25 percent at a CSU campus. The majority of these students were concentrated in the community college system. This brief examines the transfer function from community college to four-year institutions as a critical segment of the education pipeline for Latina/o students.

Figure 1. Percentage of Latina/o Students in Public K-12 Schools and Postsecondary Institutions in California



Source: Standardized data from California Community Colleges, Chancellor's Office 2007 (CCC Enrollment); California Department of Finance 2000 (K-12 Enrollment); and California Postsecondary Education Commission 2007 (CSU and UC Enrollment).

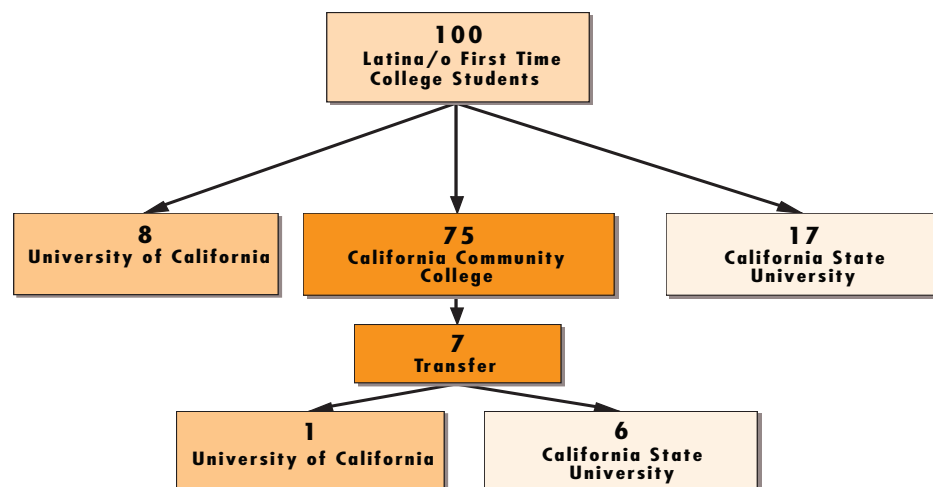
Note: K-12 projection data for 2003 and 2008 are from California Department of Finance 2000.

ASPIRATIONS VERSUS TRANSFER RATES

An examination of the 2002–03 data from the California Postsecondary Education Commission (2004) reveals that of the Latina/o students who enrolled in a California community college, 40 percent aspired to transfer into a four-year institution. In addition, 28 percent of these students were “undecided.” One can argue that with an appropriate curriculum and counseling, many of the undecided students would also make the decision to transfer and pursue a baccalaureate degree. Unfortunately, only a handful of students who aspire to transfer actually do so. In 2002–03, approximately 7 of every 75 students enrolled at a CCC campus successfully transferred to a four-year institution (fig. 2).

These findings reveal an ongoing mismatch—between students’ aspirations and the institutional support needed to meet these goals—that must be examined and modified (Yosso and Solorzano 2006). Various community colleges do offer support programs developed to enhance transfer rates, such as ASSIST, Puente Program, and Transfer Alliance Program. Additionally, four-year institutions offer summer residential programs that prepare entering CCC students for the transition to a four-year campus—examples are UCLA’s Summer Intensive Transfer Experience and the Academic Advancement Program’s Transfer Summer Program. Nevertheless, the consistently low Latina/o transfer rates highlight the need for an institutional “transfer culture” that will standardize the transfer process and guarantee that all qualified students who seek to transfer to a university can do so in an efficient and timely manner (Ornelas

Figure 2. The Latina/o California Community College Pipeline, 2002–03



Source: California Postsecondary Education Commission 2004; see also Ornelas and Solorzano 2004.

2002). One way to establish a transfer culture is to provide access to the Intersegmental General Education Transfer Curriculum (IGETC) to all students. IGETC is a core curriculum that fulfills lower division general education requirements for all CSU and UC campuses, ensuring transfer readiness for students who complete the requirements.

DEGREE ATTAINMENT RATES

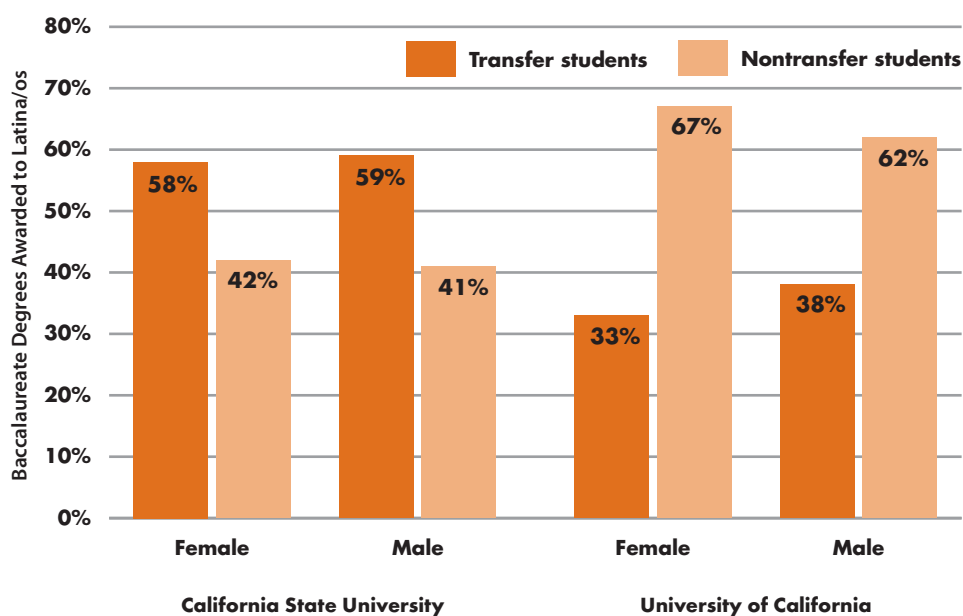
Although Latina/o students’ experiences in community college are examined in several studies (for example, Martinez and Fernandez 2004; Ornelas 2002; Rendón and Nora 1989), their experiences as transfer students at four-year institutions continue to be underresearched. It is clear, however, that more CCC Latina/o students transfer into the CSU system than into the UC system (see fig. 2) and that the percentage of baccalaureate degrees granted to Latina/o transfer students has been higher at CSU campuses than at UC campuses (fig. 3).

Community colleges also play a critical role in doctoral production. Between 1990 and 2000, 23 percent of all Chicana/o doctoral recipients attended a community college, while 6 percent of all Puerto Ricans navigated this pathway, compared to 19 percent of Native Americans, 10 percent of African Americans, and 11 percent of whites (Solorzano, Rivas, and Velez 2005). Thus, Chicana/os are more likely than any other racial or ethnic group to attain a doctorate by way of a community college. These findings suggest that the transfer function plays a pivotal role in increasing the pool of graduate and professional leaders, especially for Chicana/o students.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Every segment of California’s postsecondary education pipeline plays a critical role in encouraging and preparing Latina/o students to transfer from community college into a four-year institution and, ultimately, to pursue a

Figure 3: Percentage of Baccalaureate Degrees Awarded to Latina/o Transfer and Nontransfer Students at CSU and UC Campuses, 2005



Source: California Postsecondary Education Commission 2007.

graduate degree. The following policy recommendations address the need for more effective transfer programs.

1. Implement the IGETC (Intersegmental General Education Transfer Curriculum) as the default curriculum at all community college campuses.
2. Increase resources devoted to the transfer function and work to develop a “transfer culture.”

3. Strengthen support programs that build alliances between community colleges and four-year institutions.

4. Expand summer bridge programs to all CSU and UC campuses and initiate transfer-specific summer research programs at four-year institutions for CCC students and faculty.

5. Conduct more research on the experiences of Latina/o transfer students in all segments of postsecondary education.

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FUNDER Research for this report was made possible in part through funding from the Latino Research Program of the UCLA Chicano Studies Research Center, which receives support from the University of California Committee on Latino Research.

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Community colleges play a critical role in the education of Latina/os by offering transfer opportunities to four-year institutions, but Latina/o attainment of BAs and PhDs is comparatively low. This brief examines the status of the transfer function for Latina/o students.

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Latino Policy & Issues Brief. An ongoing series offering the latest research on critical issues facing the Latino community. To receive an electronic copy automatically, register at www.chicano.ucla.edu.
ISSN: 1543-2238.

Editor: Chon A. Noriega

Press Manager: Wendy Belcher

Senior Editor: Rebecca Frazier

Series Funding: This series is a project of the CSRC Latino Research Program, which receives funding from the University of California Committee on Latino Research.



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