STUDENT SUCCESS PROJECT

New York State Association for College Admission Counseling

NYSACAC

Engaging Decision Makers on Attainment Targets and Student Success

November 2020

Building the Future Transfer Environment
Report on Project Virtual Conversations

Introduction

"Transfer should not be a consolation prize."

This statement was made during one of the Virtual Conversations and succinctly represents the sentiments expressed throughout these sessions. Even before COVID-19, changing demographics, the increasing costs of higher education, and economic uncertainty in families from low Socioeconomic Status (SES) situations have been signaling to four-year institutions that guided transfer pathways from community colleges were worthy of serious consideration. The pandemic caused many vulnerable students to shift their plans from aspirational thriving to immediate surviving. The pandemic exposed just how fragile the higher ed enrollment pipeline is for most institutions, demonstrating how poorly institutions, local and state systems, and the nation were prepared for this level of disruption.

The myriad organizations collaborating on identifying and advocating for statewide postsecondary attainment and student success targets are contributing to this comprehensive effort, supported by the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation. NYSACAC's role in this coordinated effort is to focus on identifying policies and practices that either enhance or inhibit a transfer student's experience. While transfer issues exist in the postsecondary arena, it is clear from the many conversations comprising the Virtual Conversation series that the involvement of secondary school counselors, independent counselors, and CBO college access leaders can provide important and consistent guidance to students whose higher ed "prize" includes a community college experience.

The high school-to-community college-to-four-year college process often consists of rigid transactional (i.e., application-admission-enrollment) protocols that can send students a

message that each step is independent of the others. Thus, perhaps, the perception that having to transfer means getting a consolation prize, a community college start rather than enrollment at a four-year institution. Along with identifying new and reinforcing current advocacy agenda items, the results of these Virtual Conversations and the upcoming Convenings will help various constituents in this process explore ways to collaborate – creating a seamless process – in order to best serve our students.

The Process

As NYSACAC's Student Success Project Team initiated its work in January, it was becoming evident that the medical crisis apparent to most was going to impact initial project plans. These plans included participation in several professional conferences and the project's own in-person convenings. Once it was clear that travel and in-person meetings were not going to be possible, a weekly series of Virtual Conversations was created. These were launched on April 28 and completed on June 25 with a week's hiatus to accommodate NYSACAC's Virtual Annual Conference. This is a report of the observations, findings, and resources identified through these rich and robust discussions. Also, pertinent insights provided by several NYSACAC Annual Conference sessions are incorporated into this report.

This report provides recommendations and resources to assist NYSACAC, its institutional members, and the myriad professionals whose efforts increase the number of students pursuing and completing a postsecondary degree appropriate to their career and life goals. Per the scope of the Association's participation in this multi-organization statewide effort, the focus will be the higher ed transfer area.

Virtual Conversation Transfer Discussion Topics

Tasked with taking a special focus on higher ed transfer issues, the Virtual Conversation schedule included the following:

- Transfer Admission Policies and Practices
- Academic Credit Transfer Policies and Practices
- Financial Literacy
- Transfer Student Onboarding/Orientation
- 2+2 Transfer Programs
- Non-Traditional Transfer Students

Along with these topics, the first Virtual Conversation provided an overview of the Student Success project and the second week was devoted to the discussion of the impact of COVID-19 on our work. Although there is no need to report on the project overview, a separate section of this report will reflect the discussions about COVID-19.

Virtual Conversation Participants

NYSACAC is a member organization comprising 830 four-year institutions, 50 community colleges, 606 secondary schools, 155 community based organizations, and 151 individual

members (most/all independent counselors). While the vast majority of members are from New York State, some are from neighboring states.

Each Association member was invited to participate in these Virtual Conversations. In addition, invitations were forwarded to members of the New York State Counselor Association (NYSSCA) and the New York State Transfer & Articulation Association (NYSTAA) through their leadership.

Two hundred ninety-eight (298) individuals participated in at least one session. The affiliation of these professionals:
- 19 CBO Leaders
- 107 Secondary School Counselors
- 27 Community College Staff
- 124 Four-Year College Staff
- 13 Independent Counselors
- 5 NY State System Staff
- 3 Graduate Students

The geographical distribution of Virtual Conversation participants compared to NYSACAC's membership distribution was:
- Greater NYC, including Long Island   56% (65% of NYSACAC NYS membership*)
- Central New York, including the Capital Region   27% (17% of NYSACAC NYS membership*)
- Western New York   17% (18% of NYSACAC NYS membership*)
         *per NYSACAC Membership Roster 8/31/20

Framing the Issues: Common Transfer Questions

While each transfer student has his/her own unique questions about this process, the following are a common set of transfer issues that emerged from these VC sessions:

1. **Will I gain admission to my target transfer institution?**

   While articulation agreements – when readily available to students – and the increasing availability of program-to-program guidelines can provide assistance to community college students as they anticipate transferring to a four-year institution, often the actual admission process remains traditional – Apply-Review-Admit and Aid-Enroll. Most often this process is neither initiated nor completed until the final semester at the community college.

2. **What academic credits will transfer and how long will it take to complete my degree?**

   As students consider the full cost of their higher education – including actual financial expenditures and time committed to the process, along with the costs of being out of the workforce – optimizing the time and effort to earn a degree is important. Central to this understanding is how community college credits will transfer, both in numbers and in applicability to general education and major requirements.

3. **How much will it cost to complete my degree?**
   Financial literacy – or the lack thereof – can make or break a student's higher education plans, particularly for low SES students. Becoming an educated consumer is vital for students, particularly those with limited resources, resources measured in actual monetary outlay, time out of the workforce, and future loan obligations.

4. **Will I fit into my new campus community?**

   Right after meeting basic physiological and safety needs – needs that will frame the post-COVID-19 discussion on education – the psychologist Maslow tells us that people seek to belong and to love. Maslow tells us that the fulfillment of these needs is important to build self-worth as a person works toward self-actualization.

Of the four, perhaps the most important question is about "fit." After all, students tend to thrive in situations where they have a sense of belonging. In all ways, a student's confidence that he/she will be comfortable within their new college community can be established and nurtured by approaching the prior three questions in supportive and coordinated ways.

Within the context of the above admonition that "transfer should not be a consolation prize" and these four framing questions, serious consideration should be given to the potential efficacy of employing the following practices in transfer from community college:

- **Early Identification** – In conjunction with faculty and staff at community colleges, four-year institutions can/should identify "pathways students" early in their first year. Eventually, working with high schools, these pathways opportunities will be more actively sought by graduating seniors.
- **Early Involvement** – Co-advising, peer contacts, and campus visits are three examples of ways in which pathways students can interact with the 4-year campus community while attending their community college.
- **Early Commitment** – Admissions guarantees, financial planning, and early onboarding can mean that a transfer student arrives at their new campus community "Junior Year Ready" in all ways.

As reflected in the substance of these many conversations this report's focus will be on transferring from a community college to a four-year institution. The four-year-to-four-year transfer experience can change from year to year. However, any positive change in the way four-year institutions manage the community college transfer process should enhance their overall transfer culture.

What Role Will NYSACAC Play?

A key outcome of these Virtual Conversations (VCs) and the upcoming Convenings is defining the role that NYSACAC can play in increasing the level of success in students' postsecondary

aspirations. With the focus on the transfer process and, in particular, the potential benefits of transfer pathways, the Association is in a unique position to contribute both in terms of advocacy for policy change and effecting adjustments to the processes and practices of college access. NYSACAC membership runs the full gamut from CBO and secondary school counselors to community college admission and transfer advisors to four-year college admissions staff. Also, the Association's close working relationships with CICU, NYSSCA, NYSTAA, and NYSFAAA provide opportunities for inter-association collaboration.

Based on the information shared during the VCs and in the resources delineated near the end of this document, the following items are offered to the leadership of NYSACAC for consideration. These are proposed with the full knowledge that the Association succeeds because of a hardworking group of dedicated volunteers. In the best of times, these volunteers are very busy in their respective workplaces. It has been abundantly clear that the disruption caused by COVID-19 has stretched them even further. It may take a year or so for individuals and institutions to regain their bearings. Thus, consideration of these ideas should be made within this context.

Identified Needs:

- Greater dialogue with members of NYSSCA, NYSTAA and NYSFAAA. Additional collaboration with the leadership of each organization.
- Greater collaboration with CICU. A coordinated transfer support system for independent colleges.
- Professional Development Opportunities:
    o Financial Literacy
    o 2+2 Transfer Pathways
    o Institutional Transfer Strategies
    o Institutional Internal Transfer Program Self-Audit
    o Transfer Credit Management Systems – how best to vet options in the marketplace?
    o Working with Nontraditional Students
- Dynamic Online Resource Library
    o Annual Transfer Requirement Summary offered by individual NYSACAC member institutions.
    o Best Transfer Practices
    o Quick Links to Member Transfer Tools – see Resources (Tools) below.
- Possible expansion of NYSACAC's advocacy agenda. (see Legislative and Policy Advocacy Section below)

Recommendations:

- Identify ways to increase interaction with NYSSCA, NYSTAA and NYSFAAA.
- Consider teaming up with CICU to map out a strategy to design a community college-private college transfer guarantee program.
        (see New England model - https://nebhe.org/?s=transfer+guarantee)
    o Seek outside funding to support the initiative.

- - Consider the impact of emerging interest in Early College programs in the design of these pathways.
- Continue with and build on the collaborative relationships established with EdTrust-NY and United Way-NYC.
- Determine which of the Identified needs warrant and can be given attention. Prioritize the ones to be pursued.
- Continue the community college special interest group (SIG) program at NYSACAC's annual conference.

Legislative and Policy Advocacy

This section addresses issues pertinent to NYSACAC's Government Relations Committee. These findings and recommendations support and augment the Committee's current agenda of:
- Basic Needs Insecurity
- For-Profit Colleges
- Pathways that Support Postsecondary Persistence
- TAP and State Aid

Findings and Recommendations

- **Finding:** Community college students did not benefit from the increase in Excelsior Scholarships between 2017 and 2018. Also, the awards disproportionately favored students attending four-year institutions. (3/23/20 Inside Higher Ed – see "Press" in Resources)
- **Recommendation:** Advocate for more proportional awarding of the Excelsior Scholarship between community colleges and four-year institutions.

- **Finding:** There is increasing concern that institutional financial aid funds used to attract wealthier students with merit awards decreases the amount of funds available to meet the demonstrated financial need of low SES students.
- **Recommendation**: Advocate that institutional financial aid funds – particularly for public colleges and universities – be used to meet demonstrated financial need rather than merit awards to attract wealthier students.

- **Finding:** The lack of financial assistance during the summer months inhibits on-time completion rates and the addition of value-added experiences – such as study abroad – to a financially needy student's college experience. Considering the current disruptions caused by the pandemic, the availability of summer aid could help many students get back on track to complete their degrees in a timely fashion.
- **Recommendation:** Support the addition of summer aid – federal, state, institutional – to support overall completion numbers, the percentage of on-time completion, and provide students with opportunities to enrich their undergraduate experiences.

- **Finding**: Non-EOP students at community colleges cannot transfer into a four-year college's HEOP initiative even if they meet the economic criteria.

- **Recommendation:** Re-examine existing policies in order to broaden access to HEOP opportunities.

- **Finding**: Students eligible for EOP within the CUNY system may have to travel outside their immediate community because the EOP spot is institution (not student) specific.
- **Recommendation:** Advocate for EOP to be student-centered, not institutionally based, to ensure that students can elect to stay as close to their home communities as desired or necessary.

- **Finding:** Typical high school profile reports – which attract college admissions reps and can be factors in real estate decisions – feature the proportion of the graduating class heading to certain types of postsecondary experiences and the names of colleges they enroll in. Given that this information does not include postsecondary retention and completion information, it can be misleading.
  - Note: in light of current acceptance rates at all but the most selective four-year colleges, it is reasonable to surmise that admission to one or more colleges is not the biggest challenge for most students. Success should be measured in completion, not simply access.
- **Recommendation:** Generate statewide reporting policies that emphasize BOTH postsecondary attainment AND completion and create a system to support these efforts.

- **Finding:** In general, community college transfer advising programs are under resourced. One school cited that they have 1.5 transfer counselors for over 10,000 students.
- **Recommendation:** Include community college transfer advisers in the "Pathways" advocacy agenda.

- **Finding:** There is significant concern that the number of non-traditionally aged students will increase post-COVID-19.
- **Recommendation:** Identify where the plight of non-traditional students might fall within each advocacy agenda item – current and future.

Institutional Policy and Practice

This section delineates the many issues raised during the VCs that pertain primarily to institutional policy and practice.

Findings
Advising/Admission/Aid

- As four-year colleges pay more attention to the community college transfer market, they need to consider how best to establish and cultivate a lifelong relationship with these students. Transfers who graduate are alumni also.
- Even as community college enrollments ebb and flow, often depending on the current economic situation, the 6.8 million students (2.4M, full-time) enrolled nationwide (2018)

and the 852,504 associate degrees awarded (2017/18) represent a significant pool of prospective students for four-year institutions.
- Admission staff presentations to and conversations with secondary school counselors, CBO staff, and students rarely include discussions about the institution's transfer practices.
- Transfer financial aid practices tend to be less generous in terms of institutional grant aid than with first-year students.
- Managing a comprehensive transfer pathways program requires a skill set that differs from what is expected of most first-year student recruiters.
- While academic program articulation agreements might exist – and, some are readily available on institutional websites – often there are not enough human resources available to help students navigate the process.
- Many prospective transfer students transfer late in the admissions cycle because they are unaware of the actual length and complexity of the process.
- Financial Aid Calculators found on institutions' websites focus on prospective first-year students.

Academics

- If high school students had an opportunity to "pressure test" a few potential career paths prior to enrolling in college, that sense of direction and focused interest could encourage them to focus on their academic pathway. This could result in a shorter time to completion, a cost-saver.
- The lack of clear academic roadmaps can lead a transferring student to duplicate their efforts and add to their costs.
- Clear academic roadmaps from community colleges to four-year schools can optimize both a student's time and financial outlay in pursuit of a bachelor's degree.
- Colleges can engage with former students who have not completed their degree to encourage them to return to do so.

Transition to Four-Year College

- Successful 2+2 transfer pathways programs have most of the following attributes:
  - Implementation of early identification, early involvement, and early commitment.
  - Involvement of faculty in program design and implementation.
  - Explicit academic roadmaps.
  - Commitment to open and dynamic partnership.
  - Joint admission.
  - Ongoing professional academic, financial, and personal support along the transfer pathway.
  - Flexibility regarding the number of 2-year college credits allowed.
- CBO staff and secondary school counselors are interested in understanding more the transfer process as they see transfer pathways as a strategy some of their college-bound students should consider.

- Several colleges offer financial literacy programs (see two examples – Syracuse University and SUNY-Oneota) for current students to help them prepare for their post-college life.
- Colleges can either welcome or alienate new transfer students by the language used in public ceremonies celebrating the opening of the new academic year and the enrollment of new students (first-year and transfer).
- Greater attention should be given to the ways that successful community college students enrich the four-year campus environment while completing their degrees.
- While community college might be the best option for a student, he/she might also benefit from a residential campus experience.
- Campus efforts to welcome and support nontraditional students include summer onboarding programs, separate study and social space for any of these students who commute, flexible class hours, mentors, and dedicated staff.

Recommendations:

Advising/Admission/Aid

- Enrollment management personnel at four-year schools should study the students who leave the institution before their junior year to determine if it would be more cost-effective to reallocate resources – including financial aid – to support the enrollment and graduation of successful community college transfers.
- Policies and practices focused on transfer students should recognize the ways these students' situations are different than traditional first-year students.
- Considering the limited resources any one community college might have to support transfer advising, four-year colleges interested in enrolling these students should consider ways to augment the CC's resources. These efforts can result in additional student enrollments and successful graduations at the four-year institution.
- Financial literacy conversations should be connected to each student's academic plans, beginning before or soon after their enrollment at a community college.
- Make community college on-campus housing information more accessible; expand it to provide realistic prospects for out-of-area students.
- Four-year colleges should consider providing a Financial Aid Calculator that addresses the unique needs of prospective transfer students.
- College admissions representatives should include information about their institution's transfer policies and practices as they meet with secondary school, CBO staff, and students.
    - Consider additional cross-training so all admissions staff members are transfer-knowledgeable.

Academics

- Four-year colleges and community colleges should partner with their local school districts, CBOs, and business communities to provide career exploration opportunities for high school students.
- Create programs like "Welcome Home, Terriers" at St. Francis College to engage with former students who have not completed their degrees. (see Resources below)

Transition

- Discussion about financial literacy should be part of a community college initial orientation program, providing their students with a sense of the financial commitments – current and future – they are making. Where appropriate, community colleges should coordinate these efforts with financial literacy programs offered at four-year college destinations.
- Mandatory orientation sessions should be held at both community colleges and four-year schools to help each student (at least those who have financial need) map out their academic plan and identify the costs associated with that plan.
- Four-year colleges should find ways to connect prospective community college transfers to their campus communities to increase familiarity and confidence.

Resources

Throughout the project, the following resources have been collected to inform and support these conversations. While not exhaustive – new information and ideas come available on a regular basis – the list is representative of the variety of resources individuals, institutions, and organizations can utilize as they seek ways to strengthen opportunities for more transfer students to achieve their higher ed goals.

This **Resources** section can serve as a start to a NYSACAC Student Success resource section on the Association's website, a curated area to which members can contribute.

Information/Data

Important facts on which advocacy agendas and operational changes can be based.

- Fast Facts 2020 from the American Association of Community Colleges
  https://www.aacc.nche.edu/research-trends/fast-facts/

  Annual information document describing various aspects of the national community college enrollment picture.

  Takeaway: Community college enrollments represent a significant pool of prospective students.

- SUNY CC Summary Sheet, including On-Campus Housing Information
  https://www.suny.edu/media/suny/content-assets/documents/summary-sheets/Admissions_qf_cc.pdf

Advocacy

Advocating systemic and program change to legislators and sector and institutional policy makers is central to this effort and the overall Student Success initiative. As indicated earlier, NYSACAC continues to pursue a robust and ambitious advocacy agenda to which some of the project's results can be added. This section also highlights advocacy activity of NACAC and other project collaborators.

- NYSACAC Advocacy Activity
  https://www.nysacac.org/advocacy-the-issues

- NACAC Advocacy Activity
  https://www.nacacnet.org/advocacy--ethics/advocacy-letters/

- EdTrust-NY
  One of four national offices, EdTrust-NY is a nonprofit that advocates for educational justice for students across New York State, particularly those students of color or living in poverty. EdTrust's website provides a wealth of resources to support advocacy agendas and inform decisions on the institutional, local, and state levels.
  www.edtrustny.org

- United Way-NYC
  Led by United Way-NYC and including representatives of EdTrust-NY, #DegreesNYC/Goddard Riverside, and NYSACAC, the **New York State Education Equity Compact** was generated to strongly express the need for equity in our education system. This statement will be widely distributed for consideration and support from associations, institutions, and individuals from the education, nonprofit, and business communities.

  Available soon

Pertinent Research

Research efforts and findings can be invaluable as institutions and organizations seek to improve their transfer programs. There is much recent research to consider and ongoing studies whose future findings will reveal additional insight.

- CUNY's A2B Project -collaborative research effort to fix the current "leaks" in transfer pipelines.
  https://www.cuny.edu/about/administration/offices/oira/policy/a2b/about-2/

  Associate's to Bachelor's Degrees (A2B)
  The Associate's to Bachelor's Degrees research (A2B) is a collection of three CUNY projects that share the common objective of removing or meliorating the factors that impede the progress of students as they transfer among CUNY's system of 19 associate's-degree and bachelor's-degree colleges.

  Two of these three projects (TOP and GROWTH) focus on understanding the points within the community college to bachelor's-degree transfer 'pipeline' at which many students

falter, and the third (ACT) is an implementation project focused on improving the credit evaluation and student advisory processes that are involved when students transfer.

The 'leaks' in the transfer pipeline between associate's-degree (community) and bachelor's-degree colleges are a critical problem nationally as well as within the CUNY system. Approximately 30% of college students in the United States are enrolled in community colleges. Over 80% of new freshmen at community colleges (87% at CUNY) say that their ultimate goal is to earn a bachelor's degree (which by definition necessitates transfer between colleges). However, six years later, only 17% have done so (11% at CUNY).

- "4-Year Students can Benefit from Community College Classes, New Research Suggests"
  By Natalie Schwartz   EDUCATION**DIVE**   7/15/20
  https://www.educationdive.com/news/4-year-students-can-benefit-from-community-college-classes-new-research-su/581698/

- "New Report Finds Severe Racial Disparities for Student Loan Borrowers Across American Cities"
  Report from Protectborrower.org (NY is included in study) - 6/2920
  https://protectborrowers.org/disparate-debts/

- "States Narrow Gaps in Completion Rates"
  Madeline St. Amour – March 2, 2020
  https://www.insidehighered.com/quicktakes/2020/03/02/states-narrow-gaps-completion-rates

  "The states that had the largest increases in completion rates compared to the last five cohort years were Ohio, Georgia, Michigan, New York, and California, according to the report."

  At the same time, New York did lose ground regarding the completion rates of Hispanic and African American students.

      The actual report from National Student Clearinghouse supporting this article – February 2020:
      https://nscresearchcenter.org/completing-college/

- "Persistence: The Success of Students Who Transfer from Community Colleges to Selective Four-Year Institutions"
  Jennifer Glynn, Ph.D. for The Jack Kent Cooke Foundation
  https://www.jkcf.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/01/Persistence-Executive-Summary-Jack-Kent-Cooke-Foundation.pdf

  Note: Although the Jack Kent Cooke Foundation often focuses on the experiences of community college transfers at selective four-year colleges, the insights provided by this

report and lessons learned can be applied and adapted to the majority of college communities.

" Failure to transfer is often not a function of students' academic readiness. Recent research estimates that more than 50,000 high-achieving community college students from lower-income families are academically ready to transfer but do not—including 15,000 with a GPA of 3.7 or higher."

- **Transfer Access to Elite Colleges and Universities in the United States: Threading the Needle of the American Dream**

  http://www.jkcf.org/assets/1/7/Threading_the_Needle-Executive_Summary.pdf

  A comprehensive study of the barriers preventing high-achieving students who began their higher ed journeys at community colleges from gaining access to selective four-year colleges and universities. While this seminal study focuses on the top tier institutions in the American higher ed system, the conclusions drawn and the recommendations made are adaptable to any four-year college or university interested in tapping into this pool of students. This study supported the launch of the Jack Kent Cooke Foundation's Community College Transfer Initiative.

- **Partnerships That Promote Success: Lessons and Findings from the Evaluation of the Jack Kent Cooke Foundation's Community College Transfer Initiative**

  http://www.jkcf.org/assets/1/7/CCTI_Exec_Summary_Web.pdf

  Eight highly selective institutions participated in this initiative, supported by funds from the Jack Kent Cooke Foundation. A mix of public and private institutions, large and small. The lessons learned by these institutions are both informative and applicable as any four-year college seeks to build active collaborative partnerships with community colleges to create intentional transfer pathways that develop into sustainable enrollment pipelines. The above link will take you to the report's executive summary. The full report also can be found on the Foundation's website.

Press and Publications

Hardly a day passes without some report and/or opinion piece in a major newspaper exploring the potential impact of COVID-19 on higher education. Prior to the pandemic, access to college – complete with concerns about pricing, diversity, and ongoing relevance, among others – was a regular topic of writers. The following is a sampling of stories, opinion, and published books pertinent to the project's theme of student success.

- "Progress, and Finger Pointing, on Student Transfer: A Survey"

  Inside Higher Ed – October 19, 2020

  Fall 2020 Transfer Survey

- "Report: Guided Pathways Show Progress"

  Inside Higher Ed – September 15, 2020

  [Promising Guided Pathways](#)

- "How Community Colleges are Serving the Most Vulnerable"

  Inside Higher Ed – September 10, 2020

  [Community Colleges Serve the Most Vulnerable](#)

- "The Coronavirus May Change College Admissions Forever"

  New York Times Op Ed – September 5, 2020

  [COVID-19 Impact on College Admissions](#)

  Frank Bruni has been with *The Times* since 1995 and an opinion columnist since 2011.

- Who Gets In and Why: A Year Inside College Admissions

  [Book Link](#)

  Jeff Selingo has written about higher education for two decades.

- Coincidentally juxtaposed by a day, the following two articles demonstrate the need for renewed scrutiny about how institutional financial aid funds are used by public universities – ostensibly the engines of access – to attract low-need students with merit scholarships. This practice generates important net tuition revenues for these institutions, but at the same time, it limits the amount of aid available for high-need students.

  New York Times Op Ed – June 16, 2020

  "Rich Kids are Eating up the Financial Aid Pot"

  [Op-Ed Link](#)

  Martin Kurzweil is the director of the Educational Transformation Program at [Ithaka S+R](#) and Josh Wyner is vice president at the [Aspen Institute](#) and executive director of its [College Excellence Program](#).

- InsideHigherEd.com – June 17, 2020

  "Pandemic has worsened equity gaps in higher education and work"
  Paul Fain, News Editor

[Equity Gap Worsened by Pandemic](#)

The pandemic has accelerated and worsened equity gaps in higher education and its connection to work, according to new data, which may also show paths to improving this connection.

- "N.Y. Free Tuition Programs Lags at Community Colleges"
Madeline St. Amour, Reporter
[Community Colleges and Excelsior Scholarship Program](#)

"Statewide, community college students make up about 48 percent of all undergraduates, but they received about 19% of the Excelsior scholarships in 2018. This was actually down from 24 percent of awards in 2017."

- The Merit Myth
Anthony P. Carnevale, Peter Schmidt, and Jeff Strohl, Authors
[Book Link](#)

  From the Georgetown University Center on Education and the Workforce

Programs

There are programs in place that can serve as sources of information and inspiration. This sample of programs is pertinent NYSACAC's student success project.

- New England Board of Higher Education – Transfer Guarantee Program
Supported by a 3-year grant, the NEBHE has coordinated a transfer guarantee program between private colleges and community colleges in CT, MA, and RI.
[New England Transfer Guarantee](#)

- Syracuse University's Financial Literacy Program
https://financialaid.syr.edu/financialliteracy/

- SUNY Oneonta's "Making Cents" Financial Literacy Program
https://suny.oneonta.edu/making-cents

- SUNY Oswego's Information on Nontraditional Students
https://www.oswego.edu/admissions/nontraditional-students

- SUNY Cortland's Information on Nontraditional Students
http://www2.cortland.edu/offices/advisement-and-transition/nontrads/

- Cornell University's Program from Military Veterans (see section on Veteran-Scholar Project)
https://admissions.cornell.edu/learn/veterans-cornell

- **Gateway to College** is a national program designed to help nontraditional students succeed in their postsecondary pursuits.
  https://gatewaytocollege.org/about-us/

Tools

These "tools of the trade" now utilized by institutions, systems, and organizations can provide useful insight and, perhaps, a quick start to projects others are considering.

- **www.NYFAFSAChallenge.org**

  A financial aid toolkit in support of EdTrust-NY's initiative: The New York Financial Aid for College Completion Project.
  Financial Aid Toolkit

- **SUNY Transfer Portal**
  https://www.suny.edu/attend/get-started/transfer-students/ steps-to-transfer/

- **CUNY's Transfer "What If"** online tool is a first step for students to begin mapping out their academic schedules.
  https://www.cuny.edu/about/administration/offices/registrar/resources/degreeworks/

- **Bronx Transfer Affinity Group (BTAG**) encourages and facilitates transfer to Lehman College from four CUNY community colleges. Aspects of BTAG include Guaranteed Admissions Agreements, Blanket Articulation Agreements, and Program Alignment Tables.
  http://www.lehman.edu/virtual-transfer-center/btag.php

- Information on **TREX**: CUNY's course equivalency tool
  https://explorer.lehman.edu/

- **Bronx CC Degree Maps**
  http://www.bcc.cuny.edu/academics/academic-advising/degree-maps/

- **CICU Member Transfer Guide 2016**
  http://nycolleges.org/sites/default/files/TransferManual_2016.pdf

- **John Jay's Criminal Justice Academy** Program designed to support smooth transfer from six CUNY community colleges
  http://www.jjay.cuny.edu/cuny-justice-academy

- **The Transfer Playbook: Essential Practices for Two- and Four-Year Colleges**

  http://ccrc.tc.columbia.edu/media/k2/attachments/transfer-playbook-essential-practices.pdf

Based on the experiences of six community college-public four-year university partnerships, the "playbook" provides a handy how-to manual, complete with "lessons learned" and punch lists of "to do's."   This document is the result of a joint effort by The Aspen Institute's College Excellence Program and the Community College Research Center at Teachers College of Columbia University. The full downloadable playbook can be found at the above link. A document that culls highlights from this lengthy report is included in this e-resource packet.

- **Guided Pathways Demystified II: Addressing 10 New Questions as the Movement Gains Momentum**

    http://ncii-improve.com/wp-content/uploads/2017/09/GP-Demystified-II-091517.pdf

    This is the second "chapter" of a common-sense guide written by the head of the National Center for Inquiry & Improvement (NCII), Dr. Rob Johnstone and his colleague, Kelley Karandjeff, EdM. NCII worked very closely with a significant contributor to the work of guided pathways for community college students, Completion by Design (http://completionbydesign.org/). Although focused on community colleges, this effort – funded by the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation – was an early messenger about the benefit of designing pathways for success. There are lessons that all higher education institutions can glean from these experiences and adapt to their specific situations.

<div align="center">

Best Practices
</div>

Taking the approach that "there is nothing new under the sun" or "imitation is the sincerest form of flattery," best practices can serve as models for new program design or existing program enhancement. Many "best" practices are also "transferrable" practices.

- CUNY Degrees Work Transfer "What If" online tool
    https://www.cuny.edu/about/administration/offices/registrar/resources/degreeworks/

- The Stay on Long Island Initiative
    https://www.sunysuffolk.edu/apply-enroll/scholarships/stay-on-long-island/index.jsp

- Degree Completion Initiative at St. Francis - *Terriers Come Home* initiative
    https://www.sfc.edu/admissions/degreecompletion/terrierscomehome

    St. Francis College in Brooklyn has initiated a program to encourage former students to return to campus to complete their degrees: *Terriers Come Home*.
    - The admissions office is working with institutional research to identify those students who most likely have not completed a degree.

- Syracuse University's Financial Literacy Program – Launched in 2010 by the SU Office of Financial Aid and Scholarship Programs under the title "I Otto Know" (see SU's mascot), this initiative continues to grow in scope and participation.
    https://financialaid.syr.edu/financialliteracy/

- "Making Cents" is a financial literacy program designed to help SUNY Oneonta students plan for their post-college lives.
  https://suny.oneonta.edu/making-cents

- Erie Community College's "Traveled Pathways" initiative provides middle school and high school students guidance by looking back at high school courses taken by 'role model' college students who have already graduated from SUNY Erie. The coursework taken by such students can be used by high school counselors as a course/career guide for students they advise.

  As a start, nine Traveled Pathway program guides will be used by school counselors and a careers teacher at the middle/high school level at three city of Buffalo schools beginning Fall 2020. Outreach is taking place with additional schools on an ongoing basis.

  For more information, contact Mark Mazzone, Principal Counselor, ECC South Campus at Mazzone@ecc.edu.

COVID-19 Session

Without question, the disruption caused by the COVID-19 pandemic has exposed, exacerbated, and created significant inequities in our PK-16 educational system. No school district, private school, community college, or four-year college – regardless of resources – has been untouched. However, our low SES communities have been particularly hard hit. While the near-term post-pandemic response is considered, it seems inevitable that there will not be enough resources to address all these needs.

In the not-so-distant future we can hope that the lessons learned from this experience will be applied to a reimaging of what a 21st century education in the United States looks like. In the meantime, it will take a coordinated effort by all those involved in PK-to-postsecondary success work to find opportunities for collaboration. To not find ways to streamline processes, share resources, and coordinate efforts could jeopardize these opportunities for a few generations of students who wait by the sidelines as we figure out what this reimaged American education will look like.

Observations:
- The COVID-19 pandemic provides the state, in particular, and the nation, in general, to reimagine PK-16 education.
- COVID-19 has significant potential to lengthen the time current and new college students will take to complete their programs.
- Concerns about the format for summer access programs during the pandemic.

Findings:
- For all schools, consideration should be given to the following as they plan to reopen:
  - Space – limiting the number of students gathering.

- - Technology – hardware, software, bandwidth
  - Teacher Training in use of technology
  - Learning Gaps caused by the absence from school
  - Addressing resultant Psychological Needs
- Along with the negative impact on students' educational experiences, the shutdowns caused by COVID-19 have caused significant strains on the physical and mental health of students and their families.
- Transfer students from community colleges have found it difficult to connect with their four-year destination institution.
- Students on IEPs are especially disadvantaged by the disruption of the pandemic.
- Veterans found their benefits in jeopardy when their brick-and-mortar institutions moved to online instruction but were not approved for this by the Veterans Administration.
- Many colleges have elected to make standardized tests optional – temporarily or permanently – in recognition of the disruption to the testing schedule.
  - Multiple voices about moving away from "teaching to the test."
- Many CBOs not consulted as school closing plans were made.
- Anti-Chinese sentiments, along with increased awareness of racism against other people of color.
- Given the uncertainty, students are considering taking a year off from entering college.
  - What programs can be put into place to ensure that students who take a "gap" year return to their postsecondary plan?
- Barriers to remote learning for many low SES students:
  - Technology
  - Food and housing insecurity
  - Additional demands at home given the disrupted work and school schedule
- Financial concerns:
  - The near-term impact on the financial situations of low SES students caused by the COVID-19 shutdown and post-pandemic reopening is yet unknown but, unfortunately, has the strong potential to be negative.
  - Removal of financial aid that supported housing and food expenses while at school when students returned home.
  - Even before the pandemic's impact resulted in shutdowns, there was a 5% drop in the submission of FAFSA forms for the 2020-21 academic year. Over 70% of the decline in numbers were from students in the lowest SES levels.

Recommendations:

- Create an advocacy strategy that calls for a comprehensive state higher ed financing plan that takes into account the far-reaching impact of the pandemic on state grant programs and loan repayment policies.
- As colleges serve as the place where higher ed attainment and success are realized, these institutions should take a lead with their local communities to identify ways in which students can best be served.
- Encourage colleges to review current utilization of institutional aid funds with the goal of optimizing these funds for those students most negatively impacted by the pandemic.

- Create a "important dates" document that can be shared with a student's network (community) – CBO, secondary school, higher ed – to remind him/her to meet important deadlines, particularly those that impact their college financing.
- Leverage the opportunity of "test optional" to explore ways to envision a different approach to assess success.
- Fast-track graduate programs in school counseling to increase the pool of qualified professionals in this area.
- Build professional pipelines for people of color to encourage and support increased diversity in teaching and administration at all levels of education.
- Identify meaningful (and affordable) gap year options for all students for whom a year off makes sense.
  - As much as possible, build the gap year into each student's full postsecondary plan.
- Consideration should be given to evaluating colleges on their six-year graduation rates given the impact of COVOD-19. At the very least, the impacted years should include a "COVID footnote."

Resources:
- "Low-Income Students Top Presidents' COVID-19 Worry List"
  Doug Lederman, Editor and Co-Founder, IHE.com – April 27, 2020
  https://www.insidehighered.com/news/survey/presidents-biggest-covid-19-worries-low-income-students-and-colleges-financial-strain

  A report of a mid-March 2020 survey of college presidents.

- An EdTrust-NY Press Release – May 28, 2020
  "Four in five New York college students worry about staying on track to graduate because of pandemic"

  https://newyork.edtrust.org/press-release/poll-four-in-five-new-york-college-students-worry-about-staying-on-track-to-graduate-because-of-pandemic/

- **"The latest crisis: Low-income students are dropping out of college this fall in alarming numbers"**

  Washington Post – 9/16/20

  https://www.washingtonpost.com/business/2020/09/16/college-enrollment-down/?utm_campaign=wp_evening_edition&utm_medium=email&utm_source=newsletter&wpisrc=nl_evening

- **"Undergraduate enrollment falls by 2.5 percent, community college enrollment by 7.5 percent"**

  Inside Higher Ed

https://www.insidehighered.com/news/2020/09/24/undergraduate-enrollment-falls-25-percent-community-college-enrollment-75-percent?utm_source=Inside+Higher+Ed&utm_campaign=ee766f0dc3-DNU_2020_COPY_02&utm_medium=email&utm_term=0_1fcbc04421-ee766f0dc3-198611881&mc_cid=ee766f0dc3&mc_eid=ab040c2e4e