



# THE TEXAS TRANSFER ALLIANCE

*Actively working to meet state goals to ensure more students complete degrees, receive credentials, and obtain the skills needed for the future of the Texas economy and workforce.*

June 15, 2020

To Our Colleagues at Texas Institutions of Higher Education,

As we look to the recovery from COVID-19, the members of the [Texas Transfer Alliance](#) feel confident of one thing: we can expect [more](#) Texas students to transfer across our institutions—in multiple directions, within and across the 2- and 4-year sectors—than ever before. In addition to heightened concerns about affordability amidst high unemployment, students and families continue to have questions about whether colleges will reopen their physical campuses, the quality of remote education, and the safety of returning to campus. These factors and more will influence where, when and how students enroll in the coming months and years.

At the same time, our nation is grappling with its history of racial injustice. Calls for systemic change demand a hard look at practices and policies in higher education, such as transfer, that continue to produce inequitable student outcomes by income, race and ethnicity.

The Texas Transfer Alliance—a joint effort between the Charles A. Dana Center, the Texas Association of Community Colleges, and four of the state’s public university systems (Texas A&M University System, Texas State University System, University of North Texas System and University of Texas System)—was formed in late 2018 out of a shared belief that we need to collaborate across the state if we are to make meaningful progress on transfer student outcomes. We set ambitious goals for our work—focused on closing equity gaps—that have taken on increased urgency as the health, education and workforce impacts of COVID-19 have disproportionately affected low-income communities and people of color, and as a national movement toward racial justice has, hopefully, taken root in new ways.

We believe institutional leadership to improve transfer practices is key to achieving these goals. To this end, we launched the Transfer Partnership Strategy, with support from the Trellis Foundation, to support 26 colleges and universities across the state in building strong regional partnerships that improve transfer student outcomes.

## 2025 Goals of the Texas Transfer Alliance

- Increase the six-year transfer-out rate from 21% to 33%, eliminating all gaps by race/ethnicity and Pell status.
- Increase the four-year bachelor’s completion rate of community college transfers from 58% to 67%, eliminating all gaps by race/ethnicity and Pell status.
- Decrease the average number of attempted credits to degree from 142.9 for transfer students and 136.4 for native students to 135 credits for both groups, while eliminating all gaps by race/ethnicity and Pell status.
- Decrease the average time-to-degree for transfer students from 7.6 years to 6.5 years and eliminate all gaps by race/ethnicity and Pell status.
- Increase the percent of Texas community college students completing college-level math and writing in the first year to 45% (from 19% and 33%, respectively) and eliminate all gaps by race/ethnicity and Pell status.

The [Transfer Partnership Strategy](#) institutions continue to drive progress on transfer in the face of COVID-19, serving as useful examples for how we can all move forward together. For example:

- **Data Analysis:** Navarro College and Texas A&M University-Commerce have analyzed data by degree programs as a first step in determining factors that will improve degree persistence and degree completion. Factors that will be addressed include closing gaps in financial aid through the use of partnership scholarships and identifying factors related to fostering affinity through early contact with transfer students by faculty and program advisors.
- **Transfer Advising:** North Central Texas College (NCTC) and the University of North Texas have identified NCTC students who have completed 30 credit hours and are reaching out to these students to initiate advisor meetings to discuss transfer options.
- **Math Pathway Alignment:** Austin Community College and Texas State University have identified the math requirements for the top 12 programs at Texas State into which Austin Community College students transfer and are comparing program maps by program of study.
- **Program-Specific Cohort Support:** Collin College and the University of Texas (UT) at Dallas have identified six programs with a high volume of transfer students from Collin College. Selected students whose degree audits indicate they may be close to associate degree completion are offered a special assistance program at UT Dallas including virtual recruitment events, specialized advisement, orientation assistance, and a waived application fee. Any of the 158 students who were invited to the program will also receive continued guidance and programming from UT Dallas as they begin their first transfer year.

Our associations and systems are also providing leadership to inform institutional practices and transfer partnership strategies. For example, the Texas Success Center at the Texas Association of Community Colleges has identified essential practices that support transfer and promotes these practices across all community colleges in the state through Texas Pathways implementation. The University of Texas System has conducted an in-depth research study on transfer enrollment patterns and student outcomes by UT campus that can help each UT campus better understand its unique transfer student profile and needs.

The disruption to student lives caused by COVID-19 makes this work on transfer all the more urgent. Now is the time to lean into conversations on and strategic planning for transfer. In response to the exemplary work underway across both regional transfer partnerships and systems, and informed by [research](#) on essential transfer practices, the Texas Transfer Alliance has identified the following promising practices for Texas institutions to consider:

***Prioritize Transfer:***

- Name transfer as a key priority within your institutional strategic plan and COVID-19 response plan, analyze your data to understand current transfer student outcomes vis-à-vis the 2025 Goals of the Texas Transfer Alliance (see goals on page 1), and communicate to your community that improved credit transfer and applicability are critical to supporting recovery from the pandemic;

***Create Clear Pathways for Students:***

- Identify and clearly communicate a set of courses in high-volume majors that, if taken elsewhere and/or remotely during the COVID-19 response period, will be applied to meeting requirements for program completion upon transfer;
- Develop and formalize dual admissions agreements that clearly map student pathways and guarantee applicability of credit upon transfer;
- Ensure that degree program requirements and transfer equivalency tools are up-to-date and highly visible to students to make it easy to understand transferability and degree applicability;
- Examine and consider expanding prior learning assessments and credit by examination policies and ensure that information on these policies and processes is easy for students and community college advisors to find and understand;

***Provide Tailored Student Services and Advising that are Responsive to COVID-19 Exigencies:***

- Strongly recommend and communicate clearly across the institution that courses completed under an alternative grading basis (e.g., pass/no pass) due to COVID-19 should be accepted for transfer admissions and applied to general education or program-specific requirements;
- Build in additional flexibilities within transfer admissions and enrollment processes, wherever practical, and clearly communicate changes to students and families, including changes to application deadlines, fees, and minimum entrance requirements;
- Work with your transfer partners to ensure advisors and financial aid officers have the best information available, are prepared to guide students, and are seeking to minimize the bureaucratic burden on students;
- Streamline processes to assure registrars manage and issue transcripts in a timely manner and explore processes and technology that expedite transcript issuance; and
- Examine institutional residency requirements to reduce barriers to degree completion for transfer students who are close to completion.

We know that much is being asked of you right now. The COVID-19 crisis and its impact on colleges and universities have been overwhelming. But ensuring we are ready for the wave of student mobility coming, and laser-focused on ensuring equitable student outcomes, is essential to our long-term sustainability and our students' futures. Supporting Texas students and bringing displaced workers back to higher education for further skills training will require a keen focus on improving credit applicability upon transfer. We appreciate your hard work, steadfast commitment to students, and attention to the urgency of this matter.

Sincerely, The Members of the Texas Transfer Alliance (in alpha order)

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The Texas Transfer Alliance also receives advisory support from Educate Texas and the national [Tackling Transfer](#) initiative and its partners (HCM Strategists, Sova and the Aspen Institute College Excellence Program).

Learn more about the Texas Transfer Alliance at <https://highered.aspeninstitute.org/texas-transfer-alliance/>