

**THE TRANSFER PLAYBOOK:  
TOOL FOR ASSESSING PROGRESS TOWARD ADOPTION OF  
ESSENTIAL TRANSFER PRACTICES FOR COMMUNITY COLLEGES**

**Institution Name:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Date:** \_\_\_\_\_

*Overview:* This tool is designed to help community colleges assess the alignment of their transfer practices with those described in *The Transfer Playbook: Essential Practices for Two- and Four-Year Colleges*, published in May 2016 by the Aspen Institute’s College Excellence Program and the Community College Research Center at Columbia University’s Teachers College. These practices were identified through research on two- and four-year institutional partnerships that have achieved exceptional transfer and baccalaureate completion rates for students who start at community colleges based on analysis of National Student Clearinghouse data.

*How to use this tool:* The assessment is organized into the following categories: 1) prioritize transfer, 2) create clear, rigorous program pathways, 3) provide tailored transfer advising, and 4) strategies for building effective transfer partnerships. Within these categories, please use the following scale to rate how systematically each sub-practice is implemented at your college. **By “Advanced,” we mean that the practice is implemented routinely and at scale, and that it is part of the regular operation and culture of the college.** The tool offers questions to consider as you conduct the assessment, and space to identify possible next steps and anticipated challenges.

| Scale of Adoption  | Definition   |
|--------------------|--|
| <i>Not Present</i> | College currently not following this practice  |
| <i>Beginning</i>   | Practice present but not systematic  |
| <i>Emerging</i>    | Practice present and plans exist to make it systematic                               |
| <i>Established</i> | Practice implemented systematically, but significant areas for improvement exist     |
| <i>Advanced</i>    | Practice implemented systematically and at depth that reflects core college priority |

We recommend that a core team be assembled to complete the assessment based on their expertise from working with transfer students or overseeing programs that serve transfer students. Possible participants for this core team might include deans and faculty members in key transfer program areas, advising and other student services deans or directors, transfer advisors, and financial aid advisors. Once a diverse, inclusive core team has completed the assessment, members should then engage others at the institution in conversation about the results, beginning with the president and her/his cabinet and followed by a broader group of faculty and staff. Ideally these discussions should help refine the assessment, build shared understanding of the ways your college does and does not support transfer students, and motivate college leaders to continue to engage the wider college community in planning and implementing improvements.

*For help using this tool:* Contact Josh Wyner of the Aspen Institute ([josh.wyner@aspeninstitute.org](mailto:josh.wyner@aspeninstitute.org)) or Davis Jenkins at CCRC ([davisjenkins@gmail.com](mailto:davisjenkins@gmail.com)).

| ESSENTIAL TRANSFER PRACTICE #1:<br>PRIORITIZE TRANSFER  | Stage of Adoption at Our College   | Questions to Consider  | Easy Wins, Opportunities for Long-Term Improvement, and Next Steps |
|---|--|--|--|
| a. The college president and other senior leaders emphasize that improving transfer student outcomes is core to achieving the college's mission.  | <input type="checkbox"/> Not Present<br><input type="checkbox"/> Beginning<br><input type="checkbox"/> Emerging<br><input type="checkbox"/> Established<br><input type="checkbox"/> Advanced | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Do college leaders communicate the value of students' transferring and attaining bachelor's degrees to faculty and staff? How frequently and in what contexts?</li> <li>Do board members understand the importance of students' transfer success to achieving the institution's mission? How often are transfer issues discussed at board meetings? Do reports to the board on student success include transfer outcomes?</li> </ul>  |  |
| b. Transfer student success is reflected as a core priority in the college's strategic documents (e.g., strategic plan, accreditation self-study, student success planning documents, fundraising plans, etc.). | <input type="checkbox"/> Not Present<br><input type="checkbox"/> Beginning<br><input type="checkbox"/> Emerging<br><input type="checkbox"/> Established<br><input type="checkbox"/> Advanced | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>What priority is given to transfer student success in these documents?</li> <li>Does your college have a plan for improving transfer outcomes based on data on transfer student experiences and outcomes, and created through engagement with internal stakeholders and major transfer partner universities?</li> </ul>   |  |
| c. The college regularly gathers and widely disseminates data on transfer student outcomes and the effectiveness of transfer practices.   | <input type="checkbox"/> Not Present<br><input type="checkbox"/> Beginning<br><input type="checkbox"/> Emerging<br><input type="checkbox"/> Established<br><input type="checkbox"/> Advanced | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Does the college regularly collect and report to academic and student services departments and others data on:             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>How many students intend to transfer to four-year institutions?</li> <li>How many students transfer to four-year institutions and where they transfer?</li> <li>What students major in after transfer to a four-year institution?</li> <li>The rate at which transfer students attain a bachelor's degree?</li> <li>The effectiveness of transfer policies and practices?</li> </ul> </li> <li>Have you conducted focus groups with prospective and former transfer students on their experience and improvements they would recommend?</li> <li>Who sees data on transfer students and how is the information used?</li> </ul> |  |
| d. Substantial resources are dedicated to the transfer function.  | <input type="checkbox"/> Not Present<br><input type="checkbox"/> Beginning<br><input type="checkbox"/> Emerging<br><input type="checkbox"/> Established<br><input type="checkbox"/> Advanced | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>What resources has the college dedicated to supporting transfer students? For example, what portions of the college budget are dedicated to supports for students intending to transfer? To training of student services personnel and faculty to provide effective transfer advising to students?</li> <li>What other investments has the college made to improve transfer student outcomes?</li> </ul>  |  |

| <b>ESSENTIAL TRANSFER PRACTICE #1:<br/>           PRIORITIZE TRANSFER</b>   | <b>Stage of<br/>           Adoption<br/>           at Our<br/>           College</b>   | <b>Questions to Consider</b>   | <b>Easy Wins, Opportunities for<br/>           Long-Term Improvement, and<br/>           Next Steps</b> |
|---|--|--|---|
| e. The college has dedicated staff and/or committees with significant responsibility for improving transfer student outcomes. | <input type="checkbox"/> Not Present<br><input type="checkbox"/> Beginning<br><input type="checkbox"/> Emerging<br><input type="checkbox"/> Established<br><input type="checkbox"/> Advanced | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Is there a single person who holds ultimate responsibility for improving transfer student outcomes? Is their position and authority aligned the importance of and goals set for improving for transfer?</li> <li>• Who at the institution is responsible for monitoring and improving the success of transfer students? How many students are such staff expected to serve?</li> <li>• Which committees are responsible for decisions related to transfer students? How prominent is improving transfer student outcomes on the agendas of these committees?</li> </ul> |   |

| <b>ESSENTIAL TRANSFER PRACTICE #2:</b><br>CREATE CLEAR, RIGOROUS<br>PROGRAM PATHWAYS   | <b>Stage of<br/>Adoption<br/>at Our<br/>College</b>  | <b>Questions to Consider</b>   | <b>Easy Wins, Opportunities for<br/>Long-Term Improvement, and<br/>Next Steps</b> |
|--|--|--|---|
| a. Programs of study for transfer students are clearly mapped.   | <input type="checkbox"/> Not Present<br><input type="checkbox"/> Beginning<br><input type="checkbox"/> Emerging<br><input type="checkbox"/> Established<br><input type="checkbox"/> Advanced | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Do the transfer maps clearly indicate:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Recommended lower-division courses, course sequences, and progress milestones by academic term for specific four-year majors?</li> <li>○ Clear information on differences in requirements among programs in the same major field at different institutions?</li> <li>○ Information on career opportunities in each field?</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Are the maps easily accessible on the college’s website?</li> <li>• Is there a mechanism for keeping transfer program requirements and maps up-to-date?</li> </ul> |   |
| b. Coursework and extra-curricular activities provide students with rigorous preparation aligned to expectations for their junior and senior years.    | <input type="checkbox"/> Not Present<br><input type="checkbox"/> Beginning<br><input type="checkbox"/> Emerging<br><input type="checkbox"/> Established<br><input type="checkbox"/> Advanced | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How does the college ensure that your programs adequately prepare students to succeed in upper division coursework? What data are gathered to assess this?</li> <li>• Are four-year faculty actively involved in reviewing the content and quality of your offerings?</li> <li>• Is there a process for university partners to communicate to your faculty needed improvements in lower-division instruction?</li> <li>• When the college identifies areas for improvement, how quickly are these challenges addressed?</li> </ul>  |   |
| c. Alternatives to traditional 2+2 transfer pathways have been developed for circumstances where those are not the best routes to a bachelor’s degree. | <input type="checkbox"/> Not Present<br><input type="checkbox"/> Beginning<br><input type="checkbox"/> Emerging<br><input type="checkbox"/> Established<br><input type="checkbox"/> Advanced | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• For which students or programs do 2+2 arrangements work best? For which does the 2+2 arrangement work least well?</li> <li>• What new structures have been put in place to improve outcomes (e.g., 1+3; 3+1; reverse transfer)?</li> </ul>  |   |

| ESSENTIAL TRANSFER PRACTICE #3:<br>PROVIDE TAILORED TRANSFER<br>ADVISING  | Stage of<br>Adoption<br>at Our College   | Questions to Consider   | Easy Wins, Opportunities for<br>Long-Term Improvement,<br>and Next Steps |
|---|--|---|--|
| a. The college website, and other “marketing” material, includes accurate, easy to access information for students seeking to transfer.                                       | <input type="checkbox"/> Not Present<br><input type="checkbox"/> Beginning<br><input type="checkbox"/> Emerging<br><input type="checkbox"/> Established<br><input type="checkbox"/> Advanced | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• On its website and through other venues, does the college actively disseminate clear and accurate information on pathways to transfer in specific majors? For specific colleges and universities?</li> <li>• Has the college tested the accuracy and navigability of its website with prospective transfer students?</li> <li>• How many “clicks” does it take to find actionable information about transfer requirements for specific majors on the website?</li> <li>• Are there clear instructions on what steps students need to take to prepare for transfer?</li> </ul>  |  |
| b. Students are exposed early in their academic careers to the expectation of and options for transfer to a four-year college.  | <input type="checkbox"/> Not Present<br><input type="checkbox"/> Beginning<br><input type="checkbox"/> Emerging<br><input type="checkbox"/> Established<br><input type="checkbox"/> Advanced | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Does the college feature transfer in its efforts to recruit new students?</li> <li>• When is the transfer process first discussed with new students?</li> <li>• At what points are new students alerted to the importance of choosing a major and a four-year transfer destination?</li> </ul>   |  |
| c. Every new student who wants to transfer is helped—as early as possible—to explore career and transfer options, choose a program of study, and develop a full-program plan. | <input type="checkbox"/> Not Present<br><input type="checkbox"/> Beginning<br><input type="checkbox"/> Emerging<br><input type="checkbox"/> Established<br><input type="checkbox"/> Advanced | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How does the college help students explore options for careers, majors and transfer destination(s)? What proportion of students seeking to transfer participate in these activities?</li> <li>• Are students expected to declare their intended major and transfer university before the end of their second academic term?</li> <li>• Do students get assistance mapping out all four years of the baccalaureate?</li> <li>• Are students required to have an academic plan? If so, do the plans accurately reflect the requirements for the students’ intended major and destination institution(s)?</li> <li>• Do faculty routinely ask students what they’re planning to do next in terms of further education?</li> </ul> |  |

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| <p>d. Students' progress in fulfilling requirements for their intended major/destination institution is monitored, and support is provided to students at risk of falling off-plan.</p>   | <input type="checkbox"/> Not Present<br><input type="checkbox"/> Beginning<br><input type="checkbox"/> Emerging<br><input type="checkbox"/> Established<br><input type="checkbox"/> Advanced | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What advising is available to students seeking to transfer? What proportion of students seeking to transfer uses such advising?</li> <li>• How does the college help students monitor progress and stay on track in fulfilling their pre-transfer requirements? Are all or most students seeking to transfer monitored in this way?</li> <li>• What mechanisms are in place to identify students at risk of falling off their plans?</li> <li>• What supports are provided to help students stay on track, and how effective are these supports?</li> </ul> |  |
| <p>e. Financial aid advisors provide counseling that helps students do financial planning for their <i>entire</i> undergraduate education—including completion of both sub-baccalaureate credentials and a bachelor's degree.</p> | <input type="checkbox"/> Not Present<br><input type="checkbox"/> Beginning<br><input type="checkbox"/> Emerging<br><input type="checkbox"/> Established<br><input type="checkbox"/> Advanced | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Does financial aid advising help students seeking to transfer plan to finance their education through bachelor's degree completion, not just to a community college credential?</li> <li>• Is counseling about loans and need-based aid based on a calculation of the total amount that students will need to complete a bachelor's degree?</li> <li>• Are Pell students advised of the length of their grant eligibility through the completion of the baccalaureate?</li> </ul>   |  |

| STRATEGIES FOR BUILDING STRONG TRANSFER PARTNERSHIPS  | Stage of Adoption at Our College   | Questions to Consider   | Easy Wins, Opportunities for Long-Term Improvement, and Next Steps |
|---|--|---|--|
| <p>a. The president and other college leaders have trusting relationships with colleagues at partner four-year colleges and regularly communicate with them about transfer student supports/outcomes.</p> | <input type="checkbox"/> Not Present<br><input type="checkbox"/> Beginning<br><input type="checkbox"/> Emerging<br><input type="checkbox"/> Established<br><input type="checkbox"/> Advanced | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How often do the institutional CEOs speak or meet? Monthly? Annually?</li> <li>• How often do other senior administrators (provost/academic VP; deans/department chairs, student services administrators) speak or meet?</li> <li>• To what extent do these communications with transfer destination institutions focus on improving transfer student success?</li> <li>• Is there a joint leadership council or committee that meets regularly to monitor transfer supports and outcomes?</li> <li>• Is there a plan with defined goals for improving transfer outcomes that is jointly “owned” by the institutions?</li> </ul> |  |
| <p>b. A critical mass of faculty and staff from both institutions regularly communicates and collaborates to improve transfer student success.</p>  | <input type="checkbox"/> Not Present<br><input type="checkbox"/> Beginning<br><input type="checkbox"/> Emerging<br><input type="checkbox"/> Established<br><input type="checkbox"/> Advanced | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How often do faculty from your college speak or meet with four-year faculty in related disciplines? How much focus is there on improving transfer student success?</li> <li>• How often do advisors at the college meet or speak with advisors or admission counselors? Is improving transfer outcomes a major focus?</li> <li>• Do faculty and/or staff work together on externally funded grants focused on transfer?</li> </ul>   |  |
| <p>c. Your college and partner four-year institutions share data on transfer student outcomes and work to discuss improvements in practice.</p>   | <input type="checkbox"/> Not Present<br><input type="checkbox"/> Beginning<br><input type="checkbox"/> Emerging<br><input type="checkbox"/> Established<br><input type="checkbox"/> Advanced | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How often are data on transfer student outcomes shared with leaders at partner four-year institutions?</li> <li>• How often are transfer student data discussed jointly? In formal meetings? Informal conversations?</li> <li>• Have such discussions about the data resulted in specific changes in curriculum, pedagogy, advising, financial aid, etc.?</li> </ul>   |  |
| <p>d. The two institutions jointly invest in shared support services and strategic initiatives to benefit transfer students.</p>  | <input type="checkbox"/> Not Present<br><input type="checkbox"/> Beginning<br><input type="checkbox"/> Emerging<br><input type="checkbox"/> Established<br><input type="checkbox"/> Advanced | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Do the two institutions jointly invest in co-advising, co-located facilities or other shared resources to benefit transfer students?</li> <li>• Have the two institutions established “co-admissions programs” or other joint strategic initiatives to increase success in four-year institution bachelor’s programs for students who start at your college?</li> </ul>  |  |

| STRATEGIES FOR BUILDING STRONG TRANSFER PARTNERSHIPS  | Stage of Adoption at Our College   | Questions to Consider  | Easy Wins, Opportunities for Long-Term Improvement, and Next Steps |
|---|--|--|--|
| e. Each institution has at least one “transfer champion” who serves as a point person for the exchange of information and the raising of concerns between the partners. | <input type="checkbox"/> Not Present<br><input type="checkbox"/> Beginning<br><input type="checkbox"/> Emerging<br><input type="checkbox"/> Established<br><input type="checkbox"/> Advanced | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Is it clear who the primary contacts on transfer at each institution are?</li> <li>• Is there at least one full-time person dedicated solely or mostly to transfer issues with university partners? If not, what is the largest percentage of time any one individual spends on transfer issues?</li> </ul> |  |