



# 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.*

## December 2020

### *Why transfer? Why now?*

- Students' educational plans have been seriously disrupted by COVID-19 and experts predict that students will transfer across institutions at higher rates than in the past as they choose to take time off, continue their studies at more affordable colleges, or stay closer to home. In addition, the economic recession will likely lead displaced workers to return to higher education for further skills training.
- The health, education and workforce impacts of COVID-19 have disproportionately affected low-income communities and people of color, particularly Black, LatinX and Indigenous people.
- Improved credit transfer and applicability cannot solve the myriad issues facing students and Texans today. Improving transfer can be, however, an important lever for:
  - Helping displaced workers leverage their prior learning to get new skills, receive credentials and get back into good jobs;
  - Ensuring that low-income students and Black, LatinX and Indigenous students—students who are disproportionately more likely to start their educations in a community college—have an equitable and smooth pathway to the baccalaureate; and
  - Supporting students as they navigate these incredibly challenging times.
- The policies and practices that support students as they transfer across institutions needed improvements before COVID-19. Fixing transfer will be all the more important now.
- Fortunately, Texas public colleges and universities know this is an issue, and are collaborating to take specific actions.

### *What is the Texas Transfer Alliance and what resources can it provide?*

- The Texas Transfer Alliance—a joint effort between the Charles A. Dana Center, the Texas Success 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 in response to a shared belief that we needed to collaborate across the state on improving transfer student outcomes.
- Members of the Texas Transfer Alliance have a deep understanding of transfer challenges statewide and can serve as resources for legislative briefings, testimony, etc.
- Members of the Texas Transfer Alliance sit on several statewide bodies that discuss and seek to influence policy, including the Texas Student Success Council and the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board's workgroup on transfer.
- The Texas Transfer Alliance is aligned to 60x30TX's goals as outlined by the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board.
- The Texas Transfer Alliance has created a number of resources:
  - Texas Transfer Alliance web site with links to the resources named below (and more): <https://highered.aspeninstitute.org/texas-transfer-alliance/>
  - Two-pager leave-behind on the [Texas Transfer Alliance](#);
  - [Goals](#) for improving equitable transfer student success with benchmarks and targets;
  - Customized institutional data reports on transfer student outcomes;
  - Data analysis and case-making language/[slides](#) on why transfer is so critically important to equity in Texas;
  - A letter to Texas institutions on how to respond to [COVID-19](#) to ensure equitable transfer outcomes;
  - Dana Center summary of progress on the Transfer Partnership Strategy; and
  - Dana Center publication [Emerging Solutions #3](#) - Improving Institutional Collaboration and Student Outcomes Through the Texas Transfer Alliance.

### What has the Texas Transfer Alliance work looked like?

- **Phase I:** Over the first year and a half of the existence of the Texas Transfer Alliance, we took a number of important steps:
  - **Conducted research:** Conducted research into what Texas institutions want and need for improving transfer student outcomes through a set of interviews, analysis of institutional self-assessments, and deep listening;
  - **Convened institutions:** Held six regional convenings across the state, with 93% of Texas public colleges and universities in attendance;
  - **Analyzed data:** Created customized data reports on transfer student outcomes for all participating institutions;
  - **Set goals:** Identified common goals to improve equitable transfer student outcomes and developed metrics to track progress (see page 3 for a summary of the goals, or the 2-pager on [goals](#) with more details);
  - **Engaged institutions in partnership work:** Launched the Transfer Partnership Strategy (TPS), with funding from Trellis Foundation, to work intensively with 26 institutions across the state to strengthen their local efforts around community college transfer;
  - **Responded to COVID-19:** Released a set of recommendations to Texas public institutions to encourage them to implement policies and practices supportive of equitable transfer student success during COVID-19; and
  - **Developed statewide resources and learning:** Launched learning opportunities, including webinars, a publication on emerging practices, and a web site to promote statewide learning and disseminate innovative and promising practices from Texas institutions as they emerge. The 26 institutions in the Transfer Partnership Strategy are producing models and learning that can influence and guide critical statewide conversations. Examples include:
    - *Reducing excess credit:* Several of the partnerships are focused on how to reduce excess credits and ensure increased applicability of credit. As one example, the University of North Texas and North Central Texas College are seeking to improve advising with the goals of keeping students on track to completion and reducing student-initiated changes in majors that lead to credits not applied to program completion.
    - *Improving math alignment:* Texas State University and Austin Community College are working to align math requirements and program maps for the top 10 programs at Texas State into which Austin Community College students transfer.
    - *Common course numbering:* Texas A&M Kingsville and Texas Southmost and South Texas College are working together to use both common course names and numbers in their region and ensure curriculum is aligned to meet knowledge content requirements.
- **Phase II:** We are now turning our sights to what a deepened body of work might look like. Through a set of facilitated strategy discussions, we are considering options such as:
  - **Expand membership:** Expand the Alliance to include all public institutions in the state;
  - **Engage more institutions:** Provide more institutions with partnership-level supports through the Transfer Partnership Strategy;
  - **Deepen leadership table:** Expand the role of the Alliance as a statewide leadership voice by intensifying efforts to share data and participate in courageous conversations about transfer student outcomes;
  - **Activate leaders:** Activate and engage more leaders statewide in transfer efforts;
  - **Establish new committees:** Find ways to deepen the work and connect closer to institutions by engaging more stakeholders, such as provosts and chief academic officers, through committees; and
  - **Support Texas Pathways Institute:** Provide transfer supports to the community colleges by supporting the Texas Success Center's April 2021 Texas Pathways Institute on transfer.

### 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.

See [Goals](#) 2-pager for more details.

### *Members of the Texas Transfer Alliance (in alpha order)*

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The Texas Transfer Alliance receives resources and technical assistance from [Tackling Transfer](#), a collaboration among three national partners (HCM Strategists, Sova and the Aspen Institute College Excellence Program) supported by four foundations (Ascendium Education Philanthropy, ECMC Foundation, The Joyce Foundation, and The Kresge Foundation). Tackling Transfer is a three-state effort (MN, TX, VA) that aims to foster the conditions for scaled and measurable improvements in attainment rates for baccalaureate-seeking community college students, especially the large number of low-income students and students of color who begin education in the two-year sector.