

THE TRANSFER PLAYBOOK: TOOL FOR ASSESSING PROGRESS TOWARD ADOPTION OF ESSENTIAL TRANSFER PRACTICES FOR FOUR-YEAR COLLEGES

Institution Name: _____

Date: _____

Overview: This tool is designed to help four-year colleges and universities assess the alignment of their transfer student 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 around four categories: 1) prioritize transfer, 2) create clear, rigorous program pathways, 3) provide tailored transfer advising, and 4) build effective transfer partnerships. Within the four categories, please use the following scale to rate how systematically each sub-practice is implemented at your college. **By “systemic,” 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.

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 to ensure that those with relevant knowledge of transfer student practices and policies are included. Possible members of the team might include: deans from at least two colleges or academic divisions, department chairs from at least two academic divisions, a financial aid staff member, and advisors who work with transfer students. 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 institution 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) or Davis Jenkins at CCRC (davisjenkins@gmail.com).



ESSENTIAL TRANSFER PRACTICE #1: PRIORITIZE TRANSFER	Stage of Adoption at Our Institution	Questions to Consider	Easy Wins, Opportunities for Long-Term Improvement, and Next Steps
a. The institution's president and other senior leaders emphasize that improving community college transfer student outcomes is core to achieving the institution's mission.	<input type="checkbox"/> Not Present <input type="checkbox"/> Beginning <input type="checkbox"/> Emerging <input type="checkbox"/> Established <input type="checkbox"/> Advanced	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Do the institution's leaders communicate the value of transfer students to the institution? How often and in what contexts? • Do board of trustees members understand the importance of community college transfer students to achieving the institution's mission? How often are transfer student issues discussed at board meetings? Do reports to the board on student success include transfer student outcomes? 	
b. Transfer student success is reflected as a core priority in the institution's strategic documents (e.g., strategic plan, accreditation self-study, student success planning documents, fundraising plans, etc.).	<input type="checkbox"/> Not Present <input type="checkbox"/> Beginning <input type="checkbox"/> Emerging <input type="checkbox"/> Established <input type="checkbox"/> Advanced	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What priority is given to transfer student success in these documents? • Does your institution have a plan for improving transfer student outcomes based on data on transfer student experiences and outcomes, and created through engagement with internal stakeholders and partner community colleges? 	
c. The institution regularly gathers and widely disseminates data on transfer student outcomes and the effectiveness of transfer practices.	<input type="checkbox"/> Not Present <input type="checkbox"/> Beginning <input type="checkbox"/> Emerging <input type="checkbox"/> Established <input type="checkbox"/> Advanced	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Does the institution regularly collect and report to academic and student affairs departments and others data on: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ how many community college transfer students are currently enrolled at the institution by college and major? ◦ transfer student GPAs (compared to native students) by college and major? ◦ bachelor's completion rates six years after entry by college and major? ◦ the effectiveness of transfer student policies and practices? ◦ the enrollment and success of transfer students from your main feeder community colleges? • Have you conducted focus groups with transfer students on their experiences and improvements they would recommend? • Who sees data on transfer students and how is the information used? 	



d. The institution evaluates and remains focused on achieving equity in transfer and bachelor's attainment by student race/ethnicity (i.e. Black, Latino, Native American, and Pacific Islander) and income level.	<input type="checkbox"/> Not Present <input type="checkbox"/> Beginning <input type="checkbox"/> Emerging <input type="checkbox"/> Established <input type="checkbox"/> Advanced	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Does the college disaggregate the data referenced above by student race, ethnicity and income level?• Do senior administrators, faculty and staff receive regular reports on student transfer access and degree attainment by race/ethnicity (i.e., Black, Latino, Native American, and Pacific Islander students) and income level?• Do senior administrators, faculty and staff have regular dedicated structures through which to consider how to ensure equity in transfer access and success by student race/ethnicity and income level?• Are explicit references to racial equity made throughout all institutional commitments, priorities, plans, memos, budgets, etc. regarding transfer student success?	
e. Substantial resources are dedicated to the transfer function.	<input type="checkbox"/> Not Present <input type="checkbox"/> Beginning <input type="checkbox"/> Emerging <input type="checkbox"/> Established <input type="checkbox"/> Advanced	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• What resources has the institution dedicated to supporting transfer students? For example, what portions of the budget are dedicated to supports for students intending to transfer? To training of student affairs personnel and faculty to provide effective transfer advising to students?• What other investments has the institution made to improve transfer student outcomes?	
f. The institution has dedicated staff and/or committees with significant responsibility for improving transfer student outcomes.	<input type="checkbox"/> Not Present <input type="checkbox"/> Beginning <input type="checkbox"/> Emerging <input type="checkbox"/> Established <input type="checkbox"/> Advanced	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• 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?• Who at the institution is responsible for monitoring and improving the success of community college transfer students? How many students are such staff expected to serve?• Which committees are responsible for decisions related to transfer students? How prominent is improving transfer student outcomes on the agendas of these committees?	

ESSENTIAL TRANSFER PRACTICE #2: CREATE CLEAR, RIGOROUS PROGRAM PATHWAYS	Stage of Adoption at Our Institution	Questions to Consider	Easy Wins, Opportunities for Long-Term Improvement, and Next Steps
a. Programs of study for community college transfer students are clearly mapped.	<input type="checkbox"/> Not Present <input type="checkbox"/> Beginning <input type="checkbox"/> Emerging <input type="checkbox"/> Established <input type="checkbox"/> Advanced	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Do the transfer maps clearly indicate: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ recommended lower-division courses, course sequences, and progress milestones by academic term for specific majors? ◦ clear information on special requirements and procedures for specific majors or colleges? ◦ notes to clarify particularly confusing articulation with major feeder colleges? ◦ information on career opportunities in each field? • Are the maps easily accessible on the institution's website? • Is there a mechanism for keeping transfer program requirements and maps up-to-date? 	
b. Community college coursework and extra-curricular activities provide students with rigorous preparation aligned to expectations for their junior and senior years at your institution.	<input type="checkbox"/> Not Present <input type="checkbox"/> Beginning <input type="checkbox"/> Emerging <input type="checkbox"/> Established <input type="checkbox"/> Advanced	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What does your institution do to ensure that the lower division instruction offered by partner community colleges is aligned with the requirements for your major programs, both in content and level of rigor? • Are your academic departments actively involved in reviewing the content and quality of partner community college offerings? • Is there a process for your academic departments to communicate needed improvements to partner community colleges? If so, how well does this process work? 	
c. Alternatives to 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 <input type="checkbox"/> Beginning <input type="checkbox"/> Emerging <input type="checkbox"/> Established <input type="checkbox"/> Advanced	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • For which students or programs do 2+2 arrangements work best? For which does the 2+2 arrangement work least well? • What new structures have been put in place to improve outcomes (e.g., 1+3; 3+1; reverse transfer)? 	



ESSENTIAL TRANSFER PRACTICE #3: PROVIDE TAILORED TRANSFER ADVISING	Stage of Adoption at Our Institution	Questions to Consider	Easy Wins, Opportunities for Long-Term Improvement, and Next Steps
a. The institution’s website, and other “marketing” material, includes accurate, easy to access information for students seeking to transfer.	<input type="checkbox"/> Not Present <input type="checkbox"/> Beginning <input type="checkbox"/> Emerging <input type="checkbox"/> Established <input type="checkbox"/> Advanced	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Has the institution adapted its material reflecting courses and programs – including the college catalogue – to respond to issues particular to transfer students? • Has the institution tested the navigability and accuracy of its website with prospective transfer students? • How many “clicks” does it take to find actionable information about transfer requirements for specific majors on the website? • Are there clear instructions on what steps students need to take to prepare for transfer? 	
b. Community college students who want to transfer are routinely 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 <input type="checkbox"/> Beginning <input type="checkbox"/> Emerging <input type="checkbox"/> Established <input type="checkbox"/> Advanced	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Does your institution provide incentives for prospective transfer students to choose a major before they transfer? • Does your institution help prospective transfer students to explore academic options and the careers to which they lead? • Does your institution work with feeder community colleges to help prospective transfer students explore academic and career options? • Does your institution have and communicate to prospective transfers clear policies regarding credit transfer, both overall and within different majors? Does that policy cover credits transferred from multiple institutions? 	
c. Prospective transfer students have access to high-quality advising even before they matriculate.	<input type="checkbox"/> Not Present <input type="checkbox"/> Beginning <input type="checkbox"/> Emerging <input type="checkbox"/> Established <input type="checkbox"/> Advanced	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What advising is offered to prospective transfer students? • Has your institution evaluated the reach and quality of such advising? • Are prospective transfer students able to find out how many of their community college credits will transfer toward a major (not just for elective credit) at your institution? 	
d. The institution has a separate on-boarding process tailored to the needs of transfer students.	<input type="checkbox"/> Not Present <input type="checkbox"/> Beginning <input type="checkbox"/> Emerging <input type="checkbox"/> Established <input type="checkbox"/> Advanced	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Does the institution offer orientation, advising, and other support services tailored to new transfer students? • Do students who enter as freshmen get supports that new transfer students do not enjoy? For example, access to and/or assistance with on-campus housing? • How effectively and how quickly does the institution assess how many transfer credits a student will be able to apply toward their degree? 	



e. Once they transfer, students receive targeted advising to help them transition successfully into coursework in their chosen major.	<input type="checkbox"/> Not Present <input type="checkbox"/> Beginning <input type="checkbox"/> Emerging <input type="checkbox"/> Established <input type="checkbox"/> Advanced	<ul style="list-style-type: none">How are transfer students who do not have a major helped to choose one?How are transfer students helped to enter selective majors?Are native students more easily able to be accepted into selective majors?What is the process by which transfer students are advised in their major program area?	
f. Transfer students have the same access to financial aid as do similar students who entered the institution as freshmen.	<input type="checkbox"/> Not Present <input type="checkbox"/> Beginning <input type="checkbox"/> Emerging <input type="checkbox"/> Established <input type="checkbox"/> Advanced	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Does the institution offer financial aid targeted to transfer students?Do transfer students get specialized financial aid counseling?	
g. In crafting its advising services, the college considers the particular needs of different student groups, including by race/ethnicity, income level, age, and family status.	<input type="checkbox"/> Not Present <input type="checkbox"/> Beginning <input type="checkbox"/> Emerging <input type="checkbox"/> Established <input type="checkbox"/> Advanced	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Does the college regularly gather information about the experiences of students of different race/ethnicity, income level, age, and family status to assess the efficacy of transfer advising services?Do transfer advising services take into account the particular challenges and needs of students of different race/ethnicity, income level, age, and family status?	

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



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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 <input type="checkbox"/> Beginning <input type="checkbox"/> Emerging <input type="checkbox"/> Established <input type="checkbox"/> Advanced	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Is it clear who the primary contacts on transfer at each institution are?• Is there at least one full-time person dedicated solely or mostly to transfer issues with community colleges? If not, what is the largest percentage of time any one individual spends on transfer issues?	
f. Your institution works to build partnerships with MSIs and other institutions that serve large numbers of students of color (Black, Latino, Native American, and Pacific Islander students)	<input type="checkbox"/> Not Present <input type="checkbox"/> Beginning <input type="checkbox"/> Emerging <input type="checkbox"/> Established <input type="checkbox"/> Advanced	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• In assessing which community colleges to work with, does the college collect and consider data on student race/ethnicity and income level by community college.?• Has the college proactively reached out to community colleges, including MSIs, that serve large portions of students of color (Black, Latino, Native American, and Pacific Islander) to expand the pipeline of students of color aspiring to and successfully transferring from community colleges to four-year institutions?	