

A photograph of two young women standing in a library. The woman on the left is Black with braided hair and glasses, wearing a white sleeveless shirt and holding a grey folder. The woman on the right is wearing a beige hijab, glasses, a red and green striped cardigan over a white shirt, and holding a red folder. They are both looking towards the right. Bookshelves filled with books are visible in the background.

# BOOSTing Transfer Partnerships to Promote Equitable and Affordable Transfer Pathways

A large, stylized graphic of an arrow pointing upwards and to the right, composed of several parallel lines in shades of orange and grey.

TRANSFER  
**BOOST**

An initiative by:

 **IHEP**

 **HCM**  
— STRATEGISTS

Katelyn DiBenedetto and Amanda Janice Roberson, IHEP  
Jessica Collis and Rachelle Sharpe, HCM Strategists  
Lara Couturier and Cristen Moore, Consultants for HCM Strategists

April 2023

# Table of Contents

<b>Table of Contents</b> .....	<b>2</b>
TransferBOOST State and Institutional Partners .....	3
TransferBOOST State and Institutional Partners .....	4
Qualities to Look for in State Leads .....	7
State Leads .....	7
Community College and Four-Year Institution Implementation Teams .....	7
Lessons Learned from Establishing Community College and Four-Year Institution Implementation Teams .....	8
Advisory Committee .....	9
Reflect on a Set of Framing Questions .....	11
Understand the Relevant Policy Areas .....	11
Examine Institution-Level Data to Illuminate Inequities in Access, Retention, and Completion Rates .....	13
Examine Transfer Rates to Illuminate Inequities .....	14
Select the Transfer Pathway(s) Based on the Data .....	14
Goals and Metrics Checklist .....	16
Begin with the Future in Mind to Promote Robust and Sustainable Partnerships .....	16
<b>Acknowledgements</b> .....	<b>18</b>
<b>Appendix A: State and Institution Policy Checklists</b> .....	<b>19</b>
<b>Appendix B: Data Collection Guidance for Transfer Partnerships</b> .....	<b>37</b>
Early Impact Indicators Related to Student Behaviors, Experiences, and Outcomes .....	37
Institutional Indicators Related to Communication Strategies .....	38
State Indicators Related to Communication Strategies .....	40
<b>Endnotes</b> .....	<b>41</b>



Clear supports and equitable and affordable pathways to complete a degree across multiple institutions have never been more urgent. Ongoing health and economic crises continue to disproportionately impact Black, Latinx and/or Hispanic, Indigenous, and Asian American, Native Hawaiian, and Pacific Islander (AANHPI) students, students from low-income backgrounds, and women<sup>1</sup>—many of whom are more likely to start their postsecondary education at a community college,<sup>2</sup> and who also still face barriers that not only impede their successful transfer between two-year and four-year institutions but also their completion of a bachelor's degree.<sup>3</sup>

TransferBOOST (Bachelor's Opportunity Options that are Straightforward and Transparent), a pilot initiative the Institute for Higher Education Policy (IHEP) and HCM Strategists (HCM), launched in 2021, involved partnerships across three states at 24 institutions to address transfer challenges. Participating institutions sought to ensure that community college students could complete a bachelor's degree in a timely manner by clearly communicating and supporting them through a mapped pathway, guaranteeing that all credits apply to completion, providing clear costs, and streamlining time to degree.

Arizona, Illinois, and Virginia were selected to pilot this initiative based on:

- **Diverse Student Enrollment:** States needed to serve a high proportion of adults from low-income backgrounds and students of color across public higher education systems. Participating institutions needed to serve at least 20 percent of the state's Black, Latinx and/or Hispanic, Indigenous, and underserved AANHPI populations.
- **State-Level Readiness:** States needed key policy infrastructure in areas such as need-based aid, baseline transfer articulation policies, and student success funding, as well as statewide dashboards and communications capacity that could be leveraged to build public awareness around this initiative.
- **Regional/Local Readiness:** States needed to have one or more regions where addressing equity gaps would make a statewide impact. Those regions needed institutional leaders, community-based organizations, and/or advocacy groups that were willing to engage students and communities of color and deliver on transfer commitments.
- **Institutional Readiness:** States needed to have institutional leaders who demonstrated a commitment to revisiting their business models to better serve adults from low-income backgrounds and students of color in a post-COVID context.

## TransferBOOST State and Institutional Partners

After selecting the states, the IHEP and HCM teams worked with institutional leadership and state higher education agencies to determine institutional partners.

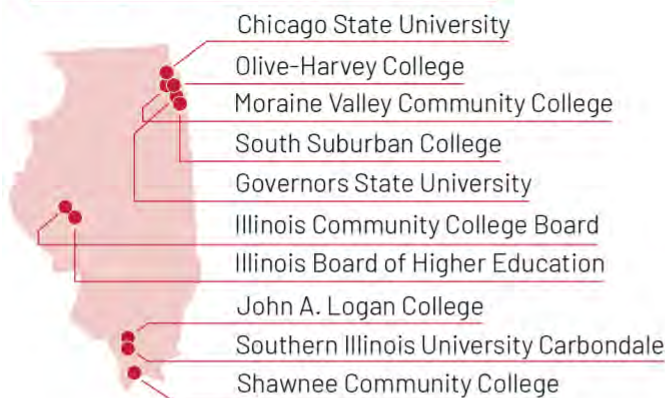
- In Arizona, TransferBOOST focused on a single partnership. The size and diversity of Maricopa Community College's student body—along with work in development with Northern Arizona University—led to an exploration of the importance of transfer students across and between the two campuses; alignment of TransferBOOST with other college-wide new initiatives related to pathways and affordability; and expansion of joint student communications.
- In Illinois, the two higher education governance agencies—the Illinois Board of Higher Education and the Illinois Community College Board—enthusiastically agreed to provide leadership to TransferBOOST. The Transfer Action Committee (steering committee) reviewed transfer outcomes data and discussed state policies that can serve as important building blocks for transfer improvements (i.e., Truth in Tuition, Monetary Award Program [MAP] grant, Aim High scholarship, Common Application, and Transfer Articulation Initiative). Three four-year institutions and five community colleges worked together to articulate the transferability of workforce programs, examine return on investment and affordability improvements, expand joint student supports, and explore new ways to reach current and prospective transfer students.
- In Virginia, the state's higher education agency, the State Council on Higher Education in Virginia (SCHEV), convened the institutions as well as the Transfer Action Committee. The group explored improvements to existing critical policies, including the transfer scholarship, transfer navigation portal, and G3 workforce funding in the community colleges. The institutional partners—including six universities and eight community colleges—explored high-demand pathways, developed improvements to affordability, recommended changes to the transfer portal, and explored expansion of state-funded financial aid.

“Arizona, Illinois, and Virginia were chosen to pilot this initiative based on diverse student enrollment and readiness at the state, regional/local, and institutional levels.”





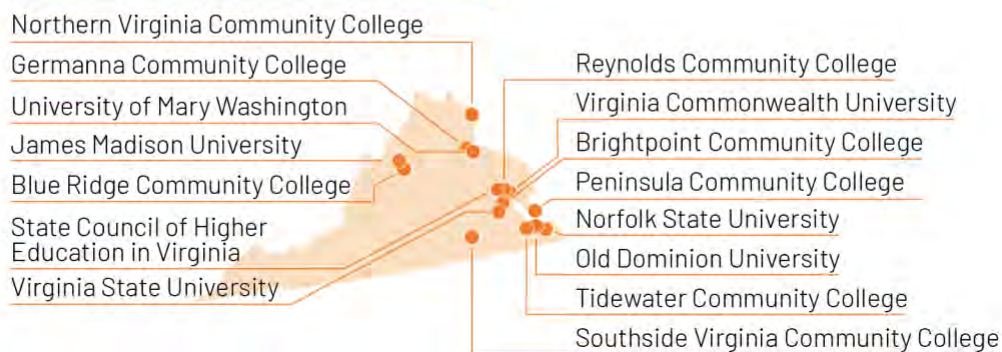
### Illinois TransferBOOST Participants



### Arizona TransferBOOST Participants



### Virginia TransferBOOST Participants



This brief outlines the critical steps partnerships took to implement TransferBOOST in order to more equitably serve students and improve transfer pathways. It can serve as a useful implementation guide for other states and institutions seeking to build more transparent, affordable, and effective transfer pathways. Please also review [\*BOOSTing Student Success Through Equitable and Affordable Transfer Pathways\*](#) for the critical policy and practice take-aways from the initiative.

Partnerships were at the heart of the TransferBOOST initiative, with active participation from community colleges, four-year institutions, state agencies, advisory committee members, and more. To create more equitable and affordable transfer student outcomes, partnerships need to be student-centered, data-informed, and equity-driven. The TransferBOOST initiative used four steps to create such partnerships:

1. Select state and institutional partners and advisory committee members.
2. Conduct a policy scan to strengthen the design of the transfer efforts.
3. Examine institutional and partnership data.
4. Set clear goals that align with specific institutional and state contexts.



Step 1

---

# Select State and Institutional Partners and Advisory Committee Members





**A key element of the TransferBOOST initiative was the student-centered, data-informed, and equity-driven partnership between community colleges and four-year institutions.**

While each institution convened its own leadership team to advance transfer student outcomes, the partnerships were encouraged to meet regularly to create and implement a plan and tackle challenges related to their specific transfer pathway(s). The goal of this partnership was to ensure that the student experience in the TransferBOOST initiative was clear and streamlined from the beginning of the postsecondary journey.

## **State Leads**

In the TransferBOOST initiative, state leads played a key role in aligning efforts with state and system priorities and policies. Staff members from state higher education agencies helped participating institutions navigate challenges and opportunities based on specific state politics, policy, and economic contexts. State leads helped recruit institutions to participate in the TransferBOOST initiative as well as form state advisory committees to build buy-in and strengthen state support for improved transfer policies. These individuals led the overall project strategy.

## **Community College and Four-Year Institution Implementation Teams**

As part of the TransferBOOST initiative, each community college and four-year institution convened a broad leadership team made up of:

- Transfer specialists, to provide expert knowledge on enrollment processes for prospective and current students.
- Student affairs professionals, to provide expert knowledge on transfer student experiences.
- Advisers, to promote TransferBOOST pathway(s) to prospective and current students.
- Deans and/or department heads, to help create TransferBOOST pathways and recruit champions among faculty and staff.
- Financial aid officers, to share information about affordability gaps for transfer students, how scholarships are packaged with other aid, and other guidance related to communicating about affordability.
- Finance specialists, to provide expertise about institutional financing related to revenue and expenditures associated with the transfer pathways and how to support discounts or scholarships.
- Institutional researchers, to provide critical data on transfer student enrollment and outcomes, including disaggregated data by race/ethnicity, income, and gender.
- Provosts, to help set the priorities for the TransferBOOST initiative, in collaboration with the president.

## **Qualities to Look for in State Leads**

The TransferBOOST initiative state leads possessed:

- Strong project management skills to help coordinate the work, including leading and facilitating check-ins with institutional partners to understand how the work is progressing, helping troubleshoot where challenges arise, ensuring that partnerships are meeting key deadlines/milestones, and celebrating accomplishments;
- Expertise in transfer matters, including relevant policy and political considerations;
- Ability to advocate for resources at the institutional, system, and state-level, where appropriate, to ensure partnerships have the resources necessary to make the transfer pathways more affordable and equitable for students;
- Enthusiasm to champion of transfer student success;
- Trust with institutional partners; and
- Support and buy-in from institution, system, and state leadership.

- Presidents, to give approval for their institutions to participate in the TransferBOOST initiative as well as maintain momentum and build buy-in on campus.
- Individuals from related institutional work groups and initiatives underway, to provide expert knowledge.
- Communication and marketing teams, to help create communication and marketing content and campaigns.
- Foundation professionals, to offer philanthropic support and help develop scholarships for transfer students and/or expand community/employer partnerships to amplify transfer pathways.

TransferBOOST teams like these enabled administrators and staff to collaborate across areas, including enrollment, affordability, and communications/marketing. These teams effectively coordinated across multiple units that impact transfer at the institution, holistically addressing opportunities and challenges related to current policies and systems. Implementation teams took the following actions:

- Selected one or two individuals to serve as the project lead(s), to help maintain momentum for the initiative.
- Brought the full team together for introductory conversations to help align goals across the various academic units and departments and help build rapport and trust.
- Determined a regular cadence of meetings, where both the full implementation team meets as well as specific groups tied to key aspects of the initiative (e.g., affordability, wraparound services, pathway streamlining, etc.).
- Created a project strategy based on the transfer pathway(s) chosen, such as identifying how to align the pathway with equity goals; developing communication and marketing plans; determining the best ways to reach prospective and current students; setting and reviewing metrics to track student experiences, outcomes, and behaviors; strengthening business models to support affordability; building will with key institutional stakeholders; etc.
- Assigned team members to the various tasks outlined in the project strategy based on expertise and set clear expectations and deadlines.

## Lessons Learned from Establishing Community College and Four-Year Institution Implementation Teams

The impressive work that institutional administrators and staff are doing within their academic units/sphere of influence could advance student transfer outcomes even further with cross-functional collaboration. Institutions also need to take a holistic view of transfer student success, knitting together efforts such as advising, career connections, mapped pathways, applicability of credit, and affordability. Community college and four-year institutional implementation teams should:

- Engage team members with expertise in strategic finance and affordability, who may not typically be included in transfer conversations (see [\*BOOSTING Transfer Pathways Through Strategic Finance and Affordability\*](#)).
- Collaborate with a broad array of academic units and transfer-related initiatives/working groups at both two- and four-year institutions to think more innovatively about recurring problems related to transfer (e.g., advising models and affordability).
- Host a project kick-off meeting to align goals, discuss challenges and opportunities, and build rapport and trust.
- Ask the project leads and implementation teams from both institutions to meet regularly, which will help further momentum for the initiative and help trouble-shoot challenges.
- Create a project strategy that incorporates both the community college and four-year institution to increase efficiency and ensure goal alignment.
- Celebrate key milestones and accomplishments because making transfer pathways more equitable and affordable is hard work.



## Advisory Committee

Every state has its own political, policy, and economic contexts. Once the institutional work is well underway, partnerships should assemble an advisory committee to help address challenges and opportunities and advocate for policy and practice improvements, as well as pursue scale and sustainability of transfer pathways.

The advisory committee should include diverse representation from key stakeholders across the state, such as:

- State higher education agency staff and state policymakers, with purview over postsecondary policies and resource allocation, including for transfer pathways.
- Postsecondary system office or campus-level leaders, including chief financial officers, provosts, and presidents, to help maintain system and institutional buy-in.
- Representatives from community-based organizations and/or regional collaboratives that partner closely with higher education institutions, work closely with the populations of interest, and/or lead postsecondary attainment or transfer advocacy efforts to generate the political will necessary to spur and sustain change for transfer outcomes.
- Organizations active in racial, gender, and socioeconomic equity advocacy efforts.
- Superintendents or other P-12 representatives who can help problem-solve pipeline and/or dual enrollment challenges between P-12 and postsecondary education.
- Employers and members of key industries, particularly if pathways focus on specific career trajectories, to help ensure curriculum alignment with job responsibilities and expand outreach to adult populations.

**“Partnerships should assemble an advisory committee to help address challenges and opportunities and advocate for policy and practice.”**



### Lessons Learned: Ways to Identify Advisory Committee Members

Ask, when selecting advisory committee members:

- What momentum is underway to improve transfer student outcomes?
- Which organizations and stakeholders are driving transfer student efforts? With those organizations and groups, who is well positioned to identify opportunities to align various transfer efforts in ways that build upon or leverage—rather than duplicate—them?
- Who in the state can help create stronger policy conditions at the institutional, system, and state levels to support the initial implementation, scaling, and replication of innovative transfer efforts? Whose support is needed for ongoing will-building to ensure long-term sustainability?
- Which entities have strong rapport, trust, and credibility with communities that have been most left out of transfer conversations, and how can these groups be engaged respectfully?
- Are there particular employers or industries that should be involved?

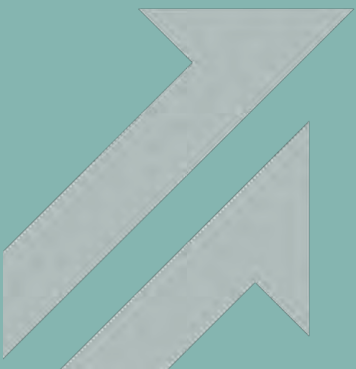




Step 2

---

## **Conduct a Policy Scan to Strengthen the Design of Transfer Efforts**



Once the state leads and institution implementation teams were identified, IHEP and HCM worked with each to conduct a scan of state and institutional policies relevant to transfer. The policy scans were designed to support institutions and their state partners in considering four key policy areas—current funding, financial aid, data and transparency, and transfer and pathways—that can be leveraged to strengthen the design of TransferBOOST pathways and inform the strategy of the partnership.

## Reflect on a Set of Framing Questions

State and institutional partners should consider the following questions as they think about transfer pathways and outcomes:

- Which pathways have been intentionally designed to ensure that students of color, students from low-income backgrounds, and adult students complete their degrees? What do you know about student outcomes in those pathways?
- Which programs are preparing students for careers in high-demand and/or high-wage fields? Are those programs serving a diverse student population and producing equitable outcomes? How can student access to and success in those programs be improved?
- How affordable are existing transfer pathways in general and in high-demand and/or high-wage fields? What steps can improve affordability and influence transfer student enrollment?
- Where are there strong relationships between transfer partners at the institution and state level and key external collaborators such as employers or community-based organizations, particularly those representing the student populations of interest?
- What levers can partners use to enhance transfer accessibility? For example, how will you communicate directly to the students you most hope to reach? Can transfer scholarships be expanded? How will you ensure that students register in a timely manner for the courses on the transfer pathway?
- Is there a state and/or institutional communications platform designed to reach students that can be leveraged for branding the transfer pathway and marketing it to students?
- Is there an outreach platform or partner known for strong communications aimed at students/prospective students, particularly organizations that have built credibility with students of color, students from low-income backgrounds, and adult learners?

## Understand the Relevant Policy Areas

There are four major policy areas that state and institutional partners should investigate for building equitable and affordable transfer outcomes:

- Finance: Understand the existing funding streams and features of funding design at the institution and state level.
- Financial aid and affordability: Examine existing student financial aid resources and features of financial aid programs.
- Data and transparency: Analyze disaggregated data on outcomes for transfer students; also consider how data are reported, whether they are shared between partner institutions, and which data are available to assess and improve transfer student success.
- Transfer and pathways policies: Review existing institution and state transfer policies and practices that support seamless transfer, retention, and completion of transfer students.

To facilitate these conversations, state leads and community college and four-year institution partners can use the guidance found in Appendix A as discussion tools.





Step 3

---

# Examine Institutional and Partnership Data

Institutional partners continue to work hard to promote equity in transfer student access, retention, and completion and ensure that transfer students are landing jobs that pay family-sustaining wages. Data are critical to supporting these efforts and informing the strategy of the partnership. There are three main ways partners can use data to highlight areas for growth and improvement:

### **Examine Institution-Level Data to Illuminate Inequities in Access, Retention, and Completion Rates**

Community college practitioners can use data, especially data disaggregated by race/ethnicity, gender, and income, to examine:

- Who is enrolling and are there disparities by demographic group? For example, which groups of students are missing in the pipeline from high school to the community college?
- Which students are enrolling in transfer pathways between the community college and four-year institution? Which students are transferring in multiple directions (e.g., two-year to four-year, two to two, four to four, and four to two)?
- Which students are successfully completing the associate's degree and transferring to a four-year institution?

Four-year institution practitioners can use disaggregated data to examine:

- Who is transferring from the community college partner? Which students are transferring in multiple directions (e.g., two to four, two to two, four to four, and four to two)?
- What challenges and obstacles might be impacting their retention rates once students transfer?
- Which students are completing transfer pathways and which students are not?

**“Community college and four-year institution partners need to ensure they are offering transfer pathways that lead to high-wage, high-demand fields.”**



## Examine Transfer Rates to Illuminate Inequities

Practitioners from two- and four-year institutions should meet collectively to discuss their data to see which students are missing from the transfer pipeline, where there are roadblocks for students, and how the institutions might be able to address, as a partnership, challenges or barriers that transfer students might face on their educational journey between the two institutions.

## Select the Transfer Pathway(s) Based on the Data

Most students aim to earn college credentials and degrees for the purpose of career advancement.<sup>4</sup> Community college and four-year institution partners need to ensure they are offering transfer pathways that lead to high-wage, high-demand fields. They can do this by using data to investigate:

- What fields are competitive and in demand in the region and state?
- Are there transfer pathways that lead to jobs in these fields?
  - If there are pathways:
    - Which students are enrolling, and which students are missing?
    - Are students successfully completing both the associate's and bachelor's degrees?
    - Do these pathways include interaction with employers in the field so students can see a return on investment?
    - Are employers involved in conversations about the transfer pathway's curriculum to ensure that students are competitive for the job market once they graduate?
  - If no pathways are established:
    - Who needs to be involved in conversations at both the community college and four-year institution to create these pathways?
    - What employers, regional and state officials, and community-based organizations should be part of these conversations?
    - How do institutions build buy-in for the new pathway among leadership, faculty, and staff?
    - Do governing boards need to weigh in and/or approve the pathway?

“Practitioners from two- and four-year institutions should meet collectively to discuss their data to see which students are missing from the transfer pipeline.”







Step 4

---

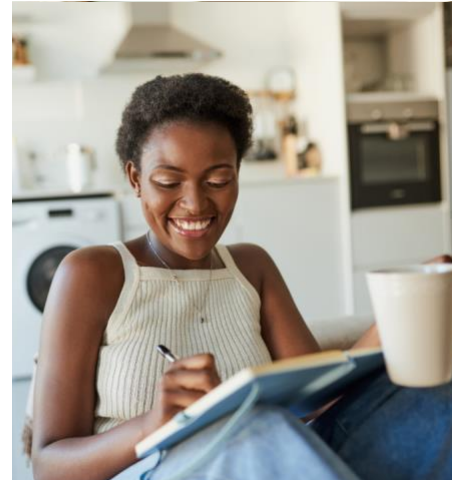
## **Set Goals that Align with Institutional and State Contexts**



## Setting clear goals that align with institutional and state contexts at the outset of the project is critical to continual assessment, course-correction, and reassessment.

In TransferBOOST, once state, community college, and four-year institution partners conducted a policy scan and reviewed their institutional and partnership data, they set both state and institutional goals and discussed how the initiative could help advance these goals. The following questions were helpful in setting goals:

- Are the goals measurable?
- Are the goals focused on equity?
- Are the goals ambitious enough based on past trends and baseline data?
- Are data to monitor the goals currently available to partnerships? If not, how do partnerships ensure access to these data?
- What other stakeholders need to facilitate relevant data access?



### Goals and Metrics Checklist

Consider the following types of goals and metrics:

- North Star or state-level student outcomes goals: What long-term impact do state leads and other stakeholders want to have on improving equitable and affordable transfer outcomes?
  - Examples include increasing the transfer rate; increasing the four-year (on-time) bachelor's completion rate for transfer students; decreasing time to bachelor's completion for transfer students; and increasing representation by race/ethnicity and socioeconomic status in high-wage and/or high-demand programs.
- State-level process goals: What goals do state leads and other stakeholders have in areas such as collaboration or innovation?
  - Examples include improving collaboration between two-year and four-year institutions; enhancing the visibility of transfer students with media, policymakers, and foundations; and learning from/networking with other states working on transfer.
- Institutional goals: What goals do community college and four-year institution partners have to improve affordability, access, retention, and completion, and communication/marketing strategies for their transfer pathways?
  - Examples include aligning with state-level transfer student outcome goals; increasing affordability of transfer pathways by making costs clear and streamlining time-to-degree; investing in innovative approaches to finance and affordability; providing holistic supports to transfer students; and creating more equitable outcomes for transfer students.
- Early performance indicators: What metrics do state and institutional partners want to consider for early performance that would help them monitor and achieve their goals? See Appendix B for example indicators related to student experiences, behaviors, and outcomes, and state and institution-wide communication strategies.

## Begin with the Future in Mind to Promote Robust and Sustainable Partnerships

To ensure the success of transfer pathways, institutional and state leaders must commit to creating robust and sustainable partnerships from the beginning. Doing so will allow for long-lasting institutional and state policy and practice changes that will make transfer student outcomes more equitable and affordable.

1. **Build champions at the institution, system, and state level.** Institutional partners must make the case to senior leadership for why strategies that implement aspects of the TransferBOOST initiative are important. They should use a mix of quantitative and qualitative data and research to show how affordability affects transfer students, and how lessons and strategies stemming from the TransferBOOST initiative can boost student enrollment, retention, and completion as well as truly change the lives of students and their families and communities. State leads must similarly make the case to system and state leaders, pointing to the positive potential impact that increased transfer student completion can have for the state economy. The only way to truly improve equity in the transfer process is if there is buy-in from leaders at all levels to improve policy and practice changes.
2. **Institutionalize practices that improve transfer student outcomes.** Major challenges to long-term improvements to transfer student outcomes included staff turnover and building champions at the institution-partnership level. Partners should work to institutionalize relevant programs and processes to ensure sustainability of the efforts.
3. **Foster connections with regional economic development organizations.** To ensure that transfer pathways lead to high-demand, high-wage careers, institutional partnerships should build connections with local and regional economic development organizations. These organizations can help partnerships ensure that curricula are career-relevant and that students clearly see what opportunities await them; advocate for additional funding for programs that meet local and regional economic needs; reduce financial costs for students by helping to fund economically relevant pathways; broaden their pool of prospective students; and help gain buy-in from institution, system, and state champions.





# Acknowledgements

The TransferBOOST initiative is the product of hard work and thoughtful contributions from many individuals, organizations, state agencies, and institutions. We are deeply grateful to the state leads, institutional partners, and steering committee/transfer action committee members in our three partner states, Arizona, Illinois, and Virginia. All of these partners are deeply committed to boosting equity in student transfer outcomes within their spheres of influence, even as they juggle the continuing impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on their students, institutions, and institutional and state budgets. Without their partnership, this initiative would not have been possible.

We also express our gratitude to the ECMC Foundation, which funded this project as part of its [Catalyzing Transfer Initiative](#) (CTI). Its support for projects and research across the nation working to eliminate barriers and build clear pathways between two- and four-year programs will help the postsecondary education system achieve more equitable outcomes for today's community college students who seek to complete a bachelor's degree. We also appreciate our fellow CTI participants, including the Education Commission of the States (ECS), who led and convened this group, for their thought partnership and brainstorming sessions.

We extend thanks to the IHEP and HCM staff who were essential to this effort, including Mamie Voight, president and CEO at IHEP; Diane Cheng, vice president of policy and research at IHEP; Lacey Leegwater, vice president of planning and operations at IHEP; Lauren Bell, communications associate at IHEP; Gabrielle Smith, research intern at IHEP; Kristin D. Hultquist, partner at HCM; and Jimmy Clarke, senior adviser at HCM. We also thank Katie Hagan, principal at rpk Group, for her financial modeling support; Christine Flanagan, president and founder of Kinetic Seeds, for her communication and marketing training; Sabrina Detlef, for copyediting; and openbox9, for creative design and layout of this brief.

Finally, we thank former IHEP and HCM staff who contributed to the TransferBOOST initiative, including: Michelle Asha Cooper, former president and CEO at IHEP; Julie Ajinkya, former vice president of applied research at IHEP; Piper Hendricks, former vice president of communications and external affairs at IHEP; Leanne Davis, former associate director of research and policy at IHEP; Katelyn DiBenedetto, former senior research analyst at IHEP; Michael Scott Brick, former senior research analyst at IHEP; Andrés Quintanilla, former research analyst at IHEP; Jihad D. Dixon, former communications associate at IHEP; Juana H. Sanchez, former senior associate at HCM; and Malia Sieve, former senior director at HCM.

*While we are thankful for the many contributions that our internal and external partners have made to this brief, the authors are solely responsible for the final content of the guidebook, including any errors or omissions.*

# Appendix A: State and Institution Policy Checklists

State Policy Checklist

Finance					
For each policy/practice, indicate: (1) the extent to which it is currently implemented; and (2) the ways in which it prioritizes equity, especially for students who have been historically excluded from higher education in the state.					
	Status				Equity Assessment
	Not Present	Exploring/ Planning	Implementing	Sustaining	<i>Please explain the ways in which this policy prioritizes equity.</i>
The state provides funding sources that support institutions, especially those that have been historically under-resourced such as MSIs, collaborating to build strong transfer partnerships such as dual admissions/co-enrollment programs (e.g., innovation funding or challenge grants).					
The state has a Student Success Funding (SSF) formula (also called Outcomes-Based Funding) that provides financial resources to institutions based upon critical transfer metrics and aligned completion milestones, such as students who transfer in, students who transfer out, associate degree completion, transfer with associate degree award, and bachelor's completion for transfer students.					

<p>The state awards additional revenue stemming from a SSF formula that distributes resources to institutions based on achievement of equitable transfer outcomes (e.g., additional funding for Black transfer student success).</p>					
<p>Other state policies or practices related to finance:</p>					
<p>Reflections on areas for growth and opportunity:</p>					



Financial Aid					
For each policy/practice, indicate: (1) the extent to which it is currently implemented; and (2) the ways in which it prioritizes equity, especially for students who have been historically excluded from higher education in the state.					
	Status				Equity Assessment
	Not Present	Exploring/ Planning	Implementing	Sustaining	<i>Please explain the ways in which this policy prioritizes equity.</i>
The state provides a specific financial aid program or incentive for transfer students.					
The state provides a specific financial aid program or incentive for adult/returning adult students.					
The state provides in-state tuition for undocumented students.					
The state has a financial aid program for undocumented students.					
The state has a free community college program.					
The state offers locked-in tuition rates (e.g., a consistent rate guaranteed for a specified number of years).					
The state offers need-based loan forgiveness programs.					

The state allows students flexibility in how they use financial aid funds for non-tuition expenses such as child care, transportation, and nutrition.					
The state provides guidance to institutions on how best to order financial aid packaging to increase impact and non-limiting GPA requirements to increase the number of students eligible.					
Other state policies or practices related to financial aid:					
Reflections on areas for growth and opportunity:					

Data and Transparency					
For each policy/practice, indicate: (1) the extent to which it is currently implemented; and (2) the ways in which it prioritizes equity, especially for students who have been historically excluded from higher education in the state.					
	Status				Equity Assessment
	Not Present	Exploring/ Planning	Implementing	Sustaining	<i>Please explain the ways in which this policy addresses equity.</i>
The state has examined high-quality, disaggregated data and student voice research that reveals the affordability challenges faced by students throughout the transfer process.					
If the state has high-quality disaggregated data, these data are accessible to the entities that want to improve services and programs to students.					
The state leverages any of the following data sources to assess and improve student success: National Student Clearinghouse data matches; IPEDS aggregate data on transfer; data partnerships through other postsecondary partners or initiatives; state data dashboards; or data-sharing agreements between institutions or systems.					
The state has leveraged federal SLDS grant funds to build or improve a state longitudinal data system.					

The state has a state longitudinal data system which includes postsecondary data, inclusive of measures that reflect transfer pathways.					
State stakeholders advocate for greater data disaggregation by race and income, especially for transfer data.					
Other state policies or practices related to data and transparency:					
Reflections on areas for growth and opportunity:					



## Transfer and Pathways Policies

For each policy/practice, indicate: (1) the extent to which it is currently implemented; and (2) the ways in which it prioritizes equity, especially for students who have been historically excluded from higher education in the state.

	Status				Equity Assessment
	Not Present	Exploring/ Planning	Implementing	Sustaining	<i>Please explain the ways in which this policy prioritizes equity.</i>
The state has guided pathways policies and funding incentives designed to ensure that colleges and universities are focused on holistically supporting student completion.					
The state has in place funded policies designed to improve advising to help support students achieve on-time completion.					
The state has in place the “building blocks” of transfer policy designed to support institutions with transfer pathways, such as general education cores, common course numbering, and guaranteed junior standing.					
The state has transfer policies that encourage or require institutions to build transfer partnerships, such as dual admissions/co-enrollment partnerships.					
The state funds access to technologies that support credit evaluation.					

The state funds access to technologies that support sequencing of course offerings so students are guaranteed access to courses needed for completion.					
The state has prior learning assessment policies in place designed to support assessment and recognition of work and personal and learning experiences.					
The state has a student-facing portal that provides information about how to transfer.					
The state has a policy or initiative in place designed to support the application of credit to program completion, such as an effort to encourage institutions to map out discipline-aligned transfer pathways.					
The state has in place dual enrollment policies that encourage students to take program-aligned courses starting in high school to accelerate their progress toward a degree.					
The state has in place policies designed to encourage the redesign of developmental education, such as co-requisite remediation, so that students are able to complete college-level math and English courses in their first year.					

Other state policies or practices related to transfer and pathways policies:					
Reflections on areas for growth and opportunity:					



## Institution Policy Checklist

Finance					
For each policy/practice, indicate: (1) the extent to which it is currently implemented; and (2) the ways in which it prioritizes equity, especially for students who have been historically excluded from higher education within the local context. For guidance on the equity assessment, we encourage practitioners to review Step 2: Build an Equity Framework in IHEP's <a href="#">Degree Reclamation Playbook</a> .					
	Status				Equity Assessment
	Not Present	Exploring/ Planning	Implementing	Sustaining	<i>Please explain the ways in which this policy prioritizes equity.</i>
The institution prioritized using one-time federal grant opportunities (e.g., Higher Education Emergency Relief Fund stimulus dollars) to improve transfer student outcomes.					
There is revenue stemming from a Student Success Funding (SSF) formula that institutions can leverage to support transfer initiatives.					
The institution has analyzed transfer student enrollments, patterns with transfer partners, and pipeline potential; and senior leadership understands and can articulate the financial and mission-related return on investment for better supporting transfer students. (For assistance with this analysis, we recommend using the <a href="#">TransferBOOST Affordability Financial Tool</a> .)					

<p>The institution has prioritized serving transfer students in key documents including the mission, strategic plan, enrollment management plan, and financial aid plan.</p>					
<p>The institution has dedicated budget lines for serving transfer students in key areas including financials, student supports, and recruitment.</p>					
<p>Other institution policies or practices related to finance:</p>					
<p>Reflections on areas for growth and opportunity:</p>					

Financial Aid					
For each policy/practice, indicate: (1) the extent to which it is currently implemented; and (2) the ways in which it prioritizes equity, especially for students who have been historically excluded from higher education within the local context. For guidance on the equity assessment, we encourage practitioners to review Step 2: Build an Equity Framework in IHEP's <a href="#">Degree Reclamation Playbook</a> .					
	Status				Equity Assessment
	Not Present	Exploring/ Planning	Implementing	Sustaining	<i>Please explain the ways in which this policy prioritizes equity.</i>
The institution has analyzed packaging and order of financial aid awards to ensure transfer students have maximum flexibility in use of this funding.					
The institution has analyzed patterns of financial aid application, award, and use for transfer students and developed a strategy for ensuring transfer students benefit from equitable aid levels.					
The tuition rate at the two-year and four-year institutions are lower than the national average, if applicable.					
The institution provides in-state tuition for undocumented students, if applicable.					
The institution provides a financial aid program for undocumented students, if applicable.					



The institution offers locked-in tuition rates (e.g., a consistent rate guaranteed for a specified number of years).					
The institution has funds to support students' cost of attendance expenses such as child care, transportation, textbooks, and meals.					
Students' aid eligibility will be auto-renewed each year.					
Other institution policies or practices related to financial aid:					
Reflections on areas for growth and opportunity:					

Data and Transparency					
For each policy/practice, indicate: (1) the extent to which it is currently implemented; and (2) the ways in which it prioritizes equity, especially for students who have been historically excluded from higher education within the local context. For guidance on the equity assessment, we encourage practitioners to review <i>Step 2: Build an Equity Framework</i> in IHEP's <a href="#">Degree Reclamation Playbook</a> .					
	Status				Equity Assessment
	Not Present	Exploring/ Planning	Implementing	Sustaining	<i>Please explain the ways in which this policy prioritizes equity.</i>
The institution has analyzed high-quality, disaggregated data and student voice research that reveal affordability challenges faced by students throughout the transfer process.					
If the institution has high-quality disaggregated data, these data are accessible to the entities that want to improve student services and programs.					
The institution leverages any of the following data sources to assess and improve student success: National Student Clearinghouse data matches; IPEDS aggregate data on transfer; data partnerships through other postsecondary partners or initiatives; state data dashboards; or data-sharing agreements between institutions or systems.					
The institution leverages IHEP's <a href="#">Degree Mining Tool</a> and <a href="#">Postsecondary Data GPS</a> .					

Institutional stakeholders advocate for greater data disaggregation by race and income, especially for transfer students.					
Other institution policies or practices related to data and transparency:					
Reflections on areas for growth and opportunity:					



## Transfer and Pathways Policies

For each policy/practice, indicate: (1) the extent to which it is currently implemented; and (2) the ways in which it prioritizes equity, especially for students who have been historically excluded from higher education within the local context. For guidance on the equity assessment, we encourage practitioners to review Step 2: Build an Equity Framework in IHEP's [\*Degree Reclamation Playbook\*](#).

	Status				Equity Assessment
	Not Present	Exploring/ Planning	Implementing	Sustaining	<i>Please explain the ways in which this policy prioritizes equity.</i>
The institution has in place the "building blocks" of transfer policy, such as general education cores, common course numbering, and guaranteed junior standing.					
The institution has transfer partnerships or agreements such as dual admissions/co-enrollment partnerships.					
The institution uses technologies that support credit evaluation.					
The institution uses technologies that support sequencing of course offerings so students are guaranteed access to courses needed for completion.					
The institution has prior learning assessment policies in place designed to support assessment and recognition of work and personal and learning experiences.					

The institution has a student-facing portal or websites that provide information about transfer enrollment and pathways.					
The institution maps out its transfer pathways by academic discipline.					
Community college partners offer bachelor's degrees, if applicable.					
The institution has in place dual enrollment policies that encourage students to take program-aligned courses starting in high school to accelerate their progress toward a degree.					
The institution has in place co-requisite remediation policies, so that students can complete college-level math and English courses in their first year.					
The institution has in place transfer-specific advisers.					
The community college and four-year institution partnerships have joint advisors for transfer pathways.					
The community college and four-year institution partnerships have holistic support services for transfer students (e.g., services that help students feel a sense of belonging on both campuses).					
The institution clearly communicates to current and/or prospective students the affordability of transfer pathways.					

The institution clearly communicates to transfer students, advisers, and institutional leaders how much transfer pathways cost and the types of aid and scholarships available.					
The institution collaborates with its partner institution(s) on joint messaging to current and/or prospective students about transfer pathways (e.g., presidents of both institutions co-write letters, etc.).					
Other institution policies or practices related to transfer and pathways policies:					
Reflections on areas for growth and opportunity:					

# Appendix B: Data Collection Guidance for Transfer Partnerships

## Early Impact Indicators Related to Student Behaviors, Experiences, and Outcomes

Disaggregate the data by race/ethnicity, gender, and income for each of these metrics where possible. If your partnership has multiple transfer pathways, collect these metrics for each of the pathways. IHEP's [Postsecondary Data GPS](#) and [Toward Convergence: A Technical Guide for the Postsecondary Metrics Framework](#) can help institutional partnerships capture these data in ways that ensure privacy, security, and quality. We encourage partnerships to customize these metrics.

### Applications

- How many applications have been submitted for enrollment into the transfer pathway?

### Admissions

- How many students were admitted into the transfer pathway?

### Enrollment

- How many students have enrolled full time in a transfer pathway?
- How many students have enrolled part time in a transfer pathway?
- What is the total and average number of credits transferred for students by source(s) (e.g., coursework, PLA, etc.)?

### Affordability

- Have you discounted or offered financial support to students in some way? If so, please describe and quantify this support.
- What is the average EFC (or Student Aid Index, which goes into effect on July 1, 2023) of students admitted to a transfer pathway?
- What is the total percentage received and average amount of grants or scholarship aid and student loan aid of those admitted to a transfer pathway? Consider breaking down the grants or scholarship aid and student loan aid following IPEDS.
- What is the average unmet need of students admitted to a transfer pathway (i.e., the average net price for an institution less the average expected family contribution in a given year)?

### Advising

- How have advising strategies changed with your transfer-partner institution? If you considered revising advising strategies and decided not to, please share why.
- How many students have met with institution-specific or joint advisors about the transfer pathway?

### Other Student Supports

- What support programs (e.g., child care, food pantries, etc.) have current and/or prospective students interested/admitted/enrolled in transfer programs used?
- Have you redesigned joint student supports (e.g., advising, outreach, etc.) with the community college or four-year institution partner?

## Post-College Outcomes

- What are the job placement rates, earnings, and benefits of transfer students, disaggregated by demographic characteristics and completion status?
- What is value provided to students as a result of their education?<sup>1</sup> Specifically:
  - Do students pass Threshold 0 of the Postsecondary Value Framework and receive a minimum economic return from their education (median earning of high school graduated in their state plus total net price with interest amortized over 10 years)?
  - What is the Economic Value Index specific to the transfer pathway?

## Institutional Indicators Related to Communication Strategies

Disaggregate the data by race/ethnicity, gender, and income where data are available, especially within the student outreach category. We encourage partnerships to customize these metrics.

### STUDENT OUTREACH

#### Community College and Four-Year Institution Partners

##### *Current Students*

- How many current students at your institution have campus stakeholders reached out to about the transfer pathway? What were the outreach strategies?
- Were these outreach strategies coordinated with the partner institution? Share any applicable details.

##### *Prospective Students (Non-High School)*

- How many prospective (non-high school) students have campus stakeholders reached out to about the transfer pathway? What were the outreach strategies?
- Was this outreach coordinated with the partner institution? Share any applicable details.

##### *High School Students*

- How many high school students have campus stakeholders reached out to about the transfer pathway? What were the outreach strategies?
- Was this outreach coordinated with the partner institution(s)? Share any applicable details.

### GENERAL COMMUNICATION

- How have you communicated transfer pathway efforts to students/potential students and/or other campus stakeholders? (Examples include use of state and/or institutional financial aid website, targeted financial aid campaigns to students, recruitment and/or advising activities/events, FAFSA completion events, presentations to faculty.) Share relevant details about these communication events, including website links.

### STUDENT-FACING COMMUNICATION

#### *Digital Campaigns*

Please answer the question that best applies to your program:

1. Are you considering any digital campaigns about the transfer pathway? If so, when would you conduct the campaign (e.g., spring 2023)? What would this campaign include (e.g., use of social media, e-newsletters, web banners, etc.)? If you considered such a campaign and decided not to conduct one at this time, share why.

---

<sup>1</sup> See the [Postsecondary Value Framework](#) for more information on methodology for both indicators.





2. If your team has conducted digital campaigns, what metrics are available (e.g., social media platforms used, number of social media posts and engagements, email open rate, click-through rate, etc.)? Do you have qualitative insights to gauge the reach and impact of your campaign(s)?

#### *Call Campaigns*

Please answer the question that best applies to your program:

1. Are you considering conducting a call campaign to promote the transfer pathway? If so, when (e.g., spring 2023)? If you considered such a campaign and decided not to conduct one at this time, share why.
2. If your team has conducted a call campaign, what metrics do you have (e.g., number of calls made, number of staff members/staff hours involved, number of students reached)? Do you have any qualitative insights to gauge the reach and impact of your campaign(s)?

#### *Websites*

Please answer the question that best applies to your program:

1. Are you considering creating a website for the transfer pathway? If so, when would you create it (e.g., spring 2023)? If you considered creating a website and decided not to create one at this time, please share why.
2. If your team has created a website (or websites), share the URL(s) of the landing page. List the date(s) each website went live. Share the metrics you have (for example, number of site visits since the site(s) went live, number of unique visitors, average visit length, click-through rates).

#### *Portals*

If your state or system uses a central portal which allows students to examine programs, please answer the question that best applies to your program:

1. Are you considering including information about the transfer pathway on your state or system portal? If so, when would you add this information? If you considered adding this information and decided not to, share why.
2. If your team added this information already, share the URL(s) of the landing page(s). When did the information go live? What metrics do you have about the page(s) that you can share?

### **INVITED TALKS/SPEECHES, WEBINARS, AND PRESENTATIONS**

If your team or state or institutional stakeholders have given invited talks, presentations, and/or webinars on the transfer pathway, include this information below. For each invited talk/speech/webinar/presentation, include who gave the talk, the audience, where the speech occurred, the title of the presentation, and a brief description of the event, as applicable. Where possible, share website links to the event, slide decks, and other relevant materials.

### **OP-EDS, BLOG POSTS, AND NEWSLETTERS**

If your team has authored or supported op-eds, blog posts, and/or newsletters about the transfer pathway, share details about them below, including relevant links. If your team has not yet written any op-eds, blog posts, or newsletters, but it is planning to do so, include this information.

### **OTHER**

Include details about other ways your team has communicated or is planning to communicate about the transfer pathway to students, transfer-partner institutions, policymakers, other state or institutional stakeholders, and/or the public.

## State Indicators Related to Communication Strategies

We encourage state leads to customize these metrics.

### INVITED TALKS/SPEECHES, WEBINARS, AND CONFERENCE PRESENTATIONS

If your team or other stakeholders have given invited talks, presentations, and/or webinars on the transfer pathway, include this information below. For each invited talk/speech/presentation/webinar, include who gave the talk, the audience, where the speech occurred (e.g., campus townhall, etc.), the title of the presentation, and a brief description of the event, as applicable. Where possible, please share website links to the event, slide decks, and other relevant materials.

### OP-EDS, BLOGS, AND NEWSLETTERS

If your team or other state stakeholders have authored or supported any op-eds, blog posts, and/or newsletters about the transfer pathway, share details about them below, including relevant links. If your team or other state stakeholders have yet not written any op-eds, blogs, or newsletters, but are planning to, include this information below.

### OTHER

Include details about other ways your team or other state stakeholders have communicated or are planning to communicate about the transfer pathway to students, institutions, policymakers, other state or institutional stakeholders, and/or the public.

# Endnotes

---

<sup>1</sup> Ahn, T., & Dominguez-Villegas, R. (2022, March 17). *A change of plans: How the pandemic affected students of color and their plans for higher education*. UCLA Latino Policy & Politics Institute.

<https://latino.ucla.edu/research/fact-sheet-education-covid/>; Almeida, B., & Buchanan, M. J. (2022, March 10). *Ensuring women's economic security requires more than a return to the pre-pandemic status quo*. Center for American Progress. <https://www.americanprogress.org/article/ensuring-womens-economic-security-requires-more-than-a-return-to-the-pre-pandemic-status-quo/>; Causey, J., Gardner, A., Kim, H., Lee, S., Pevitz, A., Ryu, M., Scheetz, A., and Shapiro, D. (2022, September). *COVID-19 transfer, mobility, and progress*. National Student Clearinghouse Research Center. <https://nscresearchcenter.org/transfer-mobility-and-progress/>; and Smith, E., & Reeves, R. (2020, September 9). *Class notes: The gender poverty gap, COVID-19's impact on college students, and more*. Brookings Institution (blog). <https://www.brookings.edu/blog/up-front/2020/09/10/class-notes-the-gender-poverty-gap-covid-19s-impact-on-college-students-and-more/>

<sup>2</sup> Barrington, K. (2022, May 31). *Declining enrollment and the widening gender gap*. Community College Review (blog). <https://www.communitycollegereview.com/blog/declining-enrollment-and-the-widening-gender-gap/>; and Rios-Aguilar, C., & Deil-Amen, R. (2019). *Invited essay: Taking history, funding, and current challenges into account when discussing race, ethnicity, and completion in community colleges*. In Espinosa, L., Turk, J. M., Taylor, M., & Chessman, H. M. (2019). *Race and ethnicity in higher education: A status report*. American Council on Education. <https://www.equityinhighered.org/resources/report-downloads/race-and-ethnicity-in-higher-education-a-status-report/>

<sup>3</sup> Shapiro, D., Dundar, A., Huie, F., Wakhungu, P. K., Yuan, X., Nathan, A., & Hwang, Y. (2017, updated 2021). *Tracking transfer: Measures of effectiveness in helping community college students to complete bachelor's degrees* (Signature Report No. 13). National Student Clearinghouse Research Center. <https://nscresearchcenter.org/tracking-transfer/>; and Logue, A. W., & Wutchiett, D. (2022, February 25). *Student views: What can they tell us about vertical transfer? Beyond Transfer* (blog). Inside Higher Ed. <https://www.insidehighered.com/blogs/beyond-transfer/student-views-what-can-they-tell-us-about-vertical-transfer>

<sup>4</sup> Fishman, R., Nguyen, S., & Woodhouse, L. (2022, July). *Varying Degrees 2022: New America's sixth annual survey on higher education*. New America <https://www.newamerica.org/education-policy/reports/varying-degrees-2022/>; and Strada Education Network & Gallup. (2022). *Back to school? What adults without degrees say about pursuing additional education and training*. <https://cci.stradaeducation.org/report/back-to-school/>

