

THE CHRONICLE

of Higher Education

August 27, 2009

Improving California's Course-Transfer System Is Vital to Future, Report Says

By Jennifer Gonzalez

Improving California's course-transfer system between its community colleges and four-year institutions is vital to the state's economic future, says a [report](#) released today by the Institute for Higher Education Leadership and Policy at California State University at Sacramento.

The report's authors cite trends showing that, by 2025, there will be one million fewer college graduates than are needed in the work force. One way to narrow the gap would be to increase transfer rates from community colleges to four-year institutions so more students could graduate with a college education, they conclude.

Currently, the state's decentralized, segmented higher-education structure favors a campus-to-campus rather than a systemwide course-transfer scheme. As a consequence, some students transfer with too many credits that don't count toward the specific requirements for a bachelor's degree, while others transfer without completing a transfer curriculum and have to enroll in additional low-level but high-cost courses at the four-year institution. Furthermore, some students transfer to a four-year institution without earning an associate degree, and those who do not graduate are left without any degree at all.

The report recommends creating associate degrees specifically for transfer students that would fulfill the basic requirements for all California colleges and universities, and guarantee transfer of all credits earned in certain courses. Other recommendations include developing a standardized general-education checklist of courses that would allow transfer to all of the state's public, four-year institutions, and creating a degree-audit system that students and counselors could check to ensure that the associate-degree and transfer requirements are being met.

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