

San Gabriel Valley Tribune (San Gabriel Valley, CA)

June 10, 2003 Tuesday

College transfers differ by groups; Study: Rates lower for women, others

BYLINE: By Tracy Garcia, Staff Writer

LENGTH: 648 words

Community colleges that have higher percentages of Latino, African- American, female or older students also have lower numbers of students who transfer to four-year colleges and universities, a new state Senate report shows.

Older and female students are more likely to have significant work or family responsibilities that can keep them from furthering their education, according to the report, "California Community College Transfer Rates: Policy Implications and a Future Research Agenda," conducted by the state Senate Office of Research.

However, the low transfer rates among Latino and African- American students occurred even after researchers accounted for such factors as socioeconomic status and academic preparation, the report said, indicating a need for further research.

In determining transfer rates, the study used the restrictive definition also called the Chancellor's definition of a transfer rate. That means they analyzed transfer data over a six-year period only from students who showed an intent to transfer, such as those who had completed 12 units and enrolled in transfer-level math or English classes.

The \$10,000 study, financed by the Senate Rules Committee, analyzed two groups of students those who began their studies in 1994 and those who began in 1995.

"We hope this study illustrates the importance of identifying trends in education and the reasons for them to better understand why some groups aren't succeeding as well as others under current policies," said study organizer Nancy Shulock, director of the Institute for Higher Education Leadership & Policy at California State University, Sacramento.

In the San Gabriel Valley and Whittier area, Rio Hondo and Mt. San Antonio colleges were at the mid-way point when it came to their transfer rates. Rio Hondo's rate was 32.4 percent and Mt. SAC's was 32.2 percent from 1995-2001 about half of the state's 108 community colleges had rates above and below those figures, according to the study.

Pasadena City College's rate was 40.2 percent for the same time frame, while Citrus College was on the low end at 26.3 percent, the study showed.

The study's statistical analysis showed that a 10-percent increase in the percentage of students who identified themselves as Latino at a community college resulted, on average, in about a 1-percent decrease in those who transferred to a four- year college or university over a six-year period.

The same 10-percent increase among African-American students resulted in a 0.5-percent decrease in transfer rates, while among Asian-American students, it resulted in a 0.5-percent increase in rates.

"The problem in community colleges is that, as a whole, it is so hard to track who does and does not transfer," said Julius B. Thomas, Rio Hondo College's Transfer Center coordinator.

With Rio Hondo's increasing numbers of Latino students, Thomas said various issues affect students' decisions to transfer, such as whether they are first-generation college students or can finance a college education or have family obligations.

But most of all, Thomas said many students at the beginning of their college career don't know much about the transfer process. Once they find out, most want to do it.

That's why Rio Hondo is starting up two new programs over the next couple of years that help underrepresented students transfer to four-year colleges.

"Community college students are so transitional,' Thomas said. "The key thing is not only to help students transfer, but have all of them counted in the process. We have loopholes that keep all of them from being counted because they're not required to say anything to us. They just get what they need and they're out of here.'

A copy of the study can be obtained at www.sen.ca.gov/sor.

Tracy Garcia can be reached at [562]698-0955, Ext. 3051, or by e-mail at tracy.garcia@sgvn.com .

LOAD-DATE: October 28, 2003

LANGUAGE: ENGLISH

Copyright 2003 MediaNews Group, Inc. and Los Angeles Newspaper Group, Inc.