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Steps to Success for the College Transfer Student

By Elizabeth LaScala



Elizabeth LaScala, PhD personally guides each student through each step of selecting and applying to well-matched schools for undergraduate, graduate and professional school admissions. For over two decades, Elizabeth has placed hundreds of students in some of the most prestigious colleges and universities in the U.S. By attending professional conferences, visiting college campuses and making personal contacts with admissions networks, Elizabeth stays current on the latest trends and the evolving nature of admissions and passes that know-how on to her clients. Both college and graduate school advising is available and the number of clients taken is limited to ensure each applicant has personalized attention. Contact Elizabeth early in the process to make a difference in your outcomes. Write elizabeth@doingcollege.com; visit www.doingcollege.com or call (925) 385-0562.

passing the assessment exams that place you in college level English and math coursework in a community college environment. That could mean skipping over remedial classes, which have no transfer credits. Advanced Placement classes and AP exams where you earned a passing grade of 3 or higher can be used for some required courses as well.

3. Participate in California's Early Assessment Program (<https://www.cde.ca.gov/ci/gs/hs/eapindex.asp>). The EAP testing is offered to juniors at their high schools. Through the assessment, California juniors have the opportunity to measure their English and math skills toward the end of 11th grade. Juniors can evaluate their college 'readiness' and plan their final year in high school to take coursework to strengthen their ability to be successful in the CCC system.

4. Identify your transfer path in high school. At the end of your junior year or early in your senior year begin to research both the CCCs as well as the four-year public or private universities you are interested in attending to complete your degree. Visit the campuses and well in advance of the visit be sure to make appointments with the transfer counseling departments to assess your status and your transfer plan (the one you put together prior to the visit). Then you will be prepared to really zero in on the schools that make it to your final list.

5. Discover articulation agreements. Most CCCs have what are called "articulation agreements" with the public UCs and CSUs and often with some private colleges as well. These agreements specify the required general education courses and prerequisites for your intended major. Select classes with your articulation plan clearly in mind. Since universities, especially state schools, can and do change their transfer requirements, staying current on the changes is your responsibility. The state's budgetary challenges can

A student recently wrote to me: "My family can't afford to send me straight to a four-year college. My dream is to attend a community college and transfer to UC San Diego. What are my chances of filling all the requirements, and holding down a part-time job and transferring in two years? I know getting the right advice at the right time is very important."

Unfortunately, this student's predicament is not unique. A slice of historical context helps. The Master Plan for Higher Education, ratified in 1960, created the California Community College system, consisting of 112 statewide accredited two-year colleges and its accompanying transfer option to a four-year state university. As designed in 1960 the system rested heavily on a healthy transfer path between the CCCs--and California's public four-year institutions. The role of the CCCs remains critical to a transfer option to California's public four-year institutions, namely our nine University of California campuses and 23 California State Universities. However, the demographics and fiscal realities of the state have changed dramatically. Students who plan to attend a community college today and transfer successfully (<http://www.doingcollege.com/college/transfer-student-counseling/>) must bravely confront a new world.

The following eight recommendations can help our high school students plan how to use the transfer path as effectively as possible.

1. Don't make community college an afterthought. The community college option should not be a late addition to your college admissions plan. You should create a written game plan for the (hopefully) two-year transfer path. Although the plan will likely change based on the availability of classes, schedule conflicts or a change in a student's academic goals, having a plan ensures you get and stay on track.

2. Go beyond your high school's requirements for graduation. Earning strong grades in each UC/CSU required course in high school increases your chances of

make the transfer path a moving target. Your best bet is to check your articulation agreement criteria at <http://www.assist.org/web-assist/welcome.html> and take charge of it. You can identify a counselor to work with at the CCC, but be aware that some are very informed while others not so much, and there is quite a bit of turnover. If you find a knowledgeable counselor, stay in touch by meeting early and often. If you do not have luck at first, try, try again.

6. Be prepared to enroll in classes at more than one CCC. Despite the inconvenience, you may have to take required, transferrable coursework at more than one CCC in order to get the classes you need to move forward along the transfer path.

7. Your Grade Point Average (GPA) is the best predictor of success. Just as in high school, your GPA in a community college (in classes that have transferrable credits) is probably the single most important factor in the transfer admissions decision. Study hard and get tutoring help early. Don't wait to fail or drop a class; that only delays your transfer plans.

8. Don't let life get in the way. Students who can attend CCC full-time are more likely to earn a degree. Try to build the rest of your life around your academic priorities. Living at home for the first year or two helps to ensure that earning money will not get in the way of earning your degree.

The eight tips above are indispensable tools as you navigate the transfer process. Use them for transfer success!

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