



SAMPLE

COMMUNITY COLLEGE PROTOCOL

The Bridge Project

This research project concentrates on determining and analyzing policies that affect students' transitions from high school to community college and to a lesser extent, from community college to four-year institutions of higher education. For the purposes of this project, the students of interest are students who enter community colleges directly from high school, degree-seeking students, transfer students, and students enrolled in dual (or concurrent) enrollment courses. The policies of interest are the transition policies that affect the aforementioned students' entrance into, academic placement and advising in, persistence in, and transfer from community colleges. Policies, procedures, practices and exceptions within specific campuses, within their systems and/or districts, and within the specific state contexts will be analyzed. Fieldwork and document review will determine the extent to which the policies of the selective colleges within a state are compatible and consistent with policies across other state education institutions and agencies, including public education and four-year public universities in the region. This research will target (1) descriptions, justifications, and implications of current, past, projected future policies; and (2) compatibility, clarity, and consistency of policies. This research will seek to answer:

1. *What are the admission, placement, advising, remediation, matriculation, transfer, dual (or concurrent) enrollment, data collection and other related policies in the selected community colleges? For example:* What are the policies, procedures, expectations, and practices within each institution? What are the exceptions made to these policies? What are the justifications for these policies? What are the implications of these policies? Are data collected, maintained, and analyzed within community colleges (e.g., regarding student persistence, students' completion of objectives such as transfer) and between community colleges and high schools? Between community colleges and four-year institutions?
2. *To what extent are policies, procedures, practices, and expectations compatible between the community colleges and the previously studied four-year institutions and state-level (K-12 and higher education) policies?* Are the community colleges' policies (categories are mentioned above) compatible and consistent with state education agency (SEA) requirements – such as high school graduation and relevant high school assessments? What is the relationship between the community colleges' expectations and the SEA's exit-level content and performance standards (including curriculum frameworks and state-wide assessments)? What is the relationship between the community colleges' expectations and the four-year universities' transfer expectations? Are both sets of expectations clearly articulated and aligned across systems? To what extent does a two-way communication of expectations and standards exist across state-level institutions and systems? Are there dual (or concurrent) enrollment programs, or other collaborations between the community colleges and high schools and/or

four-year institutions? Do they have data regarding the efficacy of those programs with regard to the programs' goals and objectives?

The interviews for this project will be conducted primarily with individuals at the community college campus level. Document review will be conducted primarily with materials from the colleges. Interviews in, and review of documents from, organizations other than community colleges will be conducted when relevant.

The questions in this protocol need not be directed toward one individual in a college. Rather, they can be divided up and directed to the appropriate person (or people) overseeing each area. Some of these questions might not be "answerable" because the college(s) might not collect the data needed to answer some of these questions. That could be an interesting finding as well.

The questions are grouped in sections:

Section One: Initial Information

Section Two: Description of Institution's Current Admission and Placement Policies

- current admission policies
- current course placement policies

Section Three: Policy Evolution--Former Policies and Possible Changes to Existing Policies

- former policies
- anticipated changes to policy

Section Four: K-16 Connections and Compatibility of K-12, Community College, and University Policies

Documents to request

Section One: Initial Information

Name and title of respondent:

Institution:

Total number of students currently attending the college – FTE and headcount.

Number/percent of students, and racial/ethnic breakdown, in the most recent entering fall class who

- matriculated straight from high school
- are academic degree-seeking students
- are planning to transfer to a four-year college or university
- are pursuing vocational/tech/professional training for no credit
- are pursuing vocational/tech/professional training for certification or degree

If you collect the above data, how do you use them (for example, do you know if an entering student who intends to transfer to a four-year university does or does not transfer)?

What other types of student data are collected?

Do you collect data regarding students' academic intentions at, or after attending, your college?

- If so, what is the number/percent of students who complete their plans and go on to where they intended to go?
- If not, have you discussed collecting the data?
- Are the barriers to collecting the data and, if so, what are they (financial, staff time)?

Number/percent of students pursuing dual or concurrent enrollment (high school students taking community college courses for credit at both levels).

What percentage of students attending your college fulltime who matriculate directly from high school intend to:

- -earn an academic degree (AA and AS)
- transfer to a four-year institution
- pursue vocational/tech/professional training for no credit
- pursue vocational/tech/professional training for certification or degree

How many “reverse transfer” students do you have (who left a four-year institution to attend your college)?

- Why do you think students do that?

What usually happens to reverse transfer students (do they tend to finish a degree, certificate, not finish a program, etc.)?

Ethnic/racial breakdown of students in most recent entering fall class (percentage or numbers):

What is the average age of students at the college?

- Mode?
- Median?

What happens to high school students who take courses at your college? Do they tend to attend your college after high school?

- A four-year institution?

Are there any particular characteristics about this college that set it apart from others in the district, system, or state? (e.g., the strength/focus on specific subject, different requirements, etc.)

How many community college districts/systems are there in the state?

- How is this district/system different from the other community college district(s)/system(s) in the state?

What is your student intake process (admission, matriculation, outreach, counseling, transcription evaluation)?

- Who is responsible for each function?

List of primary feeder high schools, particularly within region of study.

Do you have any special dual credit/concurrent enrollment or other types of collaborative programs with local high schools?

- If so, please describe (including the goals and content of the program, who developed the program, how long it has been in effect, any evaluations completed, which high schools, why those high schools were included, and how many students participate).

Do you have an honors program?

- If so, who developed it?
- How long has it been in existence?
- How many students are in the program?
- What do students need to do to get into the program?
- To graduate from it?
- What are its goals?
- What is its success rate?

Are there course advisories or pre-requisites for any majors, certificates, or degrees?

- If so, what are they?
- Who developed those policies?

Do you do recruiting for prospective students?

- If so, what are your recruitment activities?
- Who develops and runs those activities?

Do you receive discretionary funds for transfer, vocational program completion, basic skills completion, and other such areas?

- If so, how are those monies allocated?
- What are the outcomes and how are they assessed?

Do you have a new student orientation program?

- Parent orientation?
- What traditionally happens during orientation(s) – what are the activities and events?
- Who runs orientation?
- Who attends (which students and/or parents)?

What are your financial aid policies?

- Who receives financial aid (number, percent, type of student)?
- Do you have merit-based aid?
- Need-based?
- What percent of your students receive each type of aid?
 - Does it matter if they are degree-seeking or not?
 - Transfer-intending or not?
- Does anyone keep data on financial aid recipients – particularly with regard to their academic status at the college – whether or not they complete a degree, transfer, etc.?

Section Two: Description of Institution's Current Admission and Placement Policies

Current Admission Policies:

Please describe your admission process.

- Do students submit applications?
- To whom?
- Are they reviewed?

Can students register and not apply?

Do you have online materials and an application?

Who or what group makes admissions policies?

- Are there ever “border-line cases?” How are these decided? By whom? What policies or informal guidelines govern these decisions?
- Please describe the general procedure through which admission and placement policies are established and modified.
- What is your policy regarding ability to benefit (if a prospective student has not graduated from high school or received a GED, but could benefit from instruction at a community college)?

How often are policies revised?

If college is part of a larger district and/or system, describe the structure and explain what it means to be affiliated with a district and/or system.

How much autonomy does this college have in setting, implementing, and influencing admission and placement, or advising, policies at this institution?

- What type of local campus or departmental discretion is allowed?

Are there programs that are selective in terms of their admission policies?

- Who sets those policies?
- Why are those programs selective?
- What are their policies?
- Are data kept on those students' academic paths (as compared to students in nonselective programs)?

If applications are submitted, where are they sent and filtered?

- Are there deadlines or timeframes for applications?
- Do admission and financial aid applications work together or separately?
- How are students notified of acceptance and of upcoming placement procedures?

What are application and matriculation timeframes? May students enroll in the spring or summer, and is there typically an entering spring or summer class?

Does this college have a policy regarding:

- Limits on the number of students that may be admitted?
- Acceptance of previous academic course credit toward college credit?
- Acceptance of applied or "tech prep" or service learning course credit toward college credit? Who makes these decisions?

Are there exceptions made to these admission policies -- or, in what situations do you deviate from the written policies?

- In what year were these policies updated?
- Who or what entity has responsibility for updating policies?
- Under what circumstances are changes made?

Current Course Placement Policies:

Note: We use the terms "remediation" and "remedial coursework." If these are not the appropriate terms for the campuses you are working with, please use the appropriate terms.

Is there an official college policy regarding student course placement or advising?

How does the college determine if a student needs remediation?

Please describe any policies/procedures for placing students into classes.

Are placement and advising separate?

- If so, please describe the differences between the two functions.

Are there system policies regarding placement and advising?

- If so, what are they, and do they differ from the college's policies?

How would you describe your college's academic standards or expectations for students entering directly from college who plan to earn an AA degree?

What do you think the college expects students to know and be able to do (in terms of broad knowledge/skills and specific content knowledge)?

What do you think incoming students (particularly those who enter directly from high school and wish to earn an AA degree) know about your college's academic standards or expectations?

What do you think incoming students know about your college's placement procedures (prompt: about the fact that there are placement exams and about the kinds of knowledge and skills they need to demonstrate)?

Please describe, in detail, the use of any placement or advising tests, including:

- What test(s) are used for placement?
- By whom were the tests created/designed?
- Are there system-approved and administered tests? College-approved and administered? Departmentally-approved and administered?
- When are those tests administered?
- When do students/prospective students learn about those tests?
- Who goes through the placement process? Are all students assessed for placement?
- What is the timeframe in which placement decisions are made?
- What happens if a student does not meet the standard (based on the placement test score) set by the college?
- Are placement decisions final? Can students appeal the outcome of the placement exam(s)?
- What subjects do they assess? Are subject area departments involved in developing and implementing the test(s)?
- When (i.e., at what point in student's life) and by whom are the tests administered?
- Do you consider placement or advising test(s) to be "high stakes"? (i.e. what are the consequences for the student if she/he does not meet the standard?)
- How and at what point is remediation attended to? (e.g., through college remedial courses, through intensive summer programs sponsored by ____, in the senior year of high school)
- What types of data are maintained regarding tracking/follow-up of students receiving remediation? If such data are maintained, how are they used? Who collects, maintains, and monitors these data?
- In your opinion, are these data accurately identifying remediation needs? (e.g., do they under-report, over-report, neglect certain areas of need, include specific areas that are less relevant than others?)

Are there exceptions made to your placement and advising policies -- or, in what situations do you deviate from the written policies? Please be as specific as possible. (Prompts and

examples: if students do not meet the standard set forth by the placement exam? If students are not seeking a degree?).

- Who makes these decisions?

If there are exceptions: In your opinion, what impact have these exceptions to the placement and advising policies had?

What types of remediation needs do freshmen students matriculating directly from the K-12 system have?

What is the current percentage of students requiring remediation at your institution? (if by course subject or department, specify)

- Has this figure been constant, decreasing, or increasing over the past ten years (be as specific as possible)?
- Have the placement procedures changed rendering the collection of trend data impossible?

Do any universities in your area send their students to your college for remedial-level work? Do you provide remedial education on a local four-year campus?

Does your college receive state funds for providing remedial education for students attending four-year institutions of higher education?

- If so, approximately how much?
- Are there any local or statewide policies about such actions (e.g., are community colleges required to provide remedial education courses for local four-year institutions)?

How many indicators/assessments are used for placement?

- Why is that the case (why do you use single/multiple indicators)?
- Do you have any assessments that were developed by individual faculty?

Do you give placement exams at local high schools?

- If so, why?
- Which high schools?

Can remediation affect a student's financial aid package? Could admission be postponed or reassessed if remedial needs are severe?

In your opinion, what causes the need for remediation?

Are the results of placement tests reported back to the appropriate high schools? If so:

- When do results get reported?
- How detailed are the results? (e.g., broken down by race/ethnicity, gender, class, grade, individual)
- Who receives these results and are the results used in any way (e.g., to reform the high school curriculum, to link high school and college academic expectations)?

How do high school students learn about the contents of and consequences associated with your college's placement or advising tests?

How do high school teachers and counselors learn about the contents of and consequences associated with your college's placement or advising tests?

In what year were these policies updated?

- Who or what entity has responsibility for updating policies?
- Under what circumstances are changes made?

Section Three: Policy Evolution--Former Policies and Possible Changes to Existing Policies

Former Policies

What were your college's prior policies (e.g., past ten years) regarding:

- (a) admission,
- (b) placement or advising,
- (c) remediation, and
- (d) merit aid?

Describe the historical evolution of the policies:

- How have the policies changed over the past ten years?
- In general, why have the policies changed?
- Who/what initiated the changes? Whose approval had to be sought? Can anyone initiate policy changes?
- What was the route the proposal followed?
- How often are policies reviewed?
- What effects have the policy changes had? Were these effects intended or anticipated?

What factors led up to the policy change(s)?

What have been the effects of those changes?

Anticipated Changes to Policies:

Are there current discussions about changing your college's admission, placement, remediation, and/or financial aid policies in the future? If yes...

- What are the proposed changes and why are they being proposed?
- Who or what entities have been the primary initiator(s) of these changes?
- Who (e.g., institution, level) would implement these proposed changes?
- What autonomy (within its district/system) does this campus institution have in making these changes?

Have specific targets or goals been established or proposed that are relevant for admission, placement, remediation, and/or merit aid policies at your institution? If yes...

- What are the proposed goals? Why have those goals been set?
- Who or what entities have proposed/established the goals/targets?

- Who would be required to make necessary changes to enable these goals/targets to be met?

Have there been any changes regarding the use of affirmative action in admissions or other practices? If so, what changes have occurred? If not, are any changes being discussed?

Section Four: K-16 Connections and Compatibility of K-12, Community College, and University Policies

Please describe the types of state-wide K-12 standards and K-12 accountability system or mechanisms in your state.

- Content standards
- Performance standards
- Curriculum frameworks
- Assessments: How does the state assess K-12 progress? (e.g., state-wide assessments, subjects, grades). How are the results reported? (e.g., by individual, class, grade, school, district, state)
- State high school graduation requirements/plans

Do you believe the purpose and content of these K-12 policies are compatible with college admissions tests (for four-year institutions)?

- With placement tests (for two- and four-year institutions)?
- With any state postsecondary assessments or frameworks?

Is the state asking students to know and be able to do the same knowledge and skills at the high school exit level and the college entrance level?

Please describe any process that is followed to ensure that college officials are aware of K-12 standards.

- Are there regularly scheduled meetings, joint task forces:
- Who attends?
- Who sponsors?
 - How is the information used and by whom?

Please describe any process that is followed to ensure that K-12 state officials are aware of community college admission policies and placement exam contents.

- Are there regularly scheduled meetings, joint task forces:
- Who attends?
- Who sponsors?
 - How is the information used and by whom?

Please describe any process that is followed to ensure that K-12 state officials are aware of state university admission policies and placement exam contents.

- Are there regularly scheduled meetings, joint task forces:
- Who attends?
- Who sponsors?
 - How is the information used and by whom?

Please describe any process that is followed to ensure that community college officials are aware of state university admission policies and placement exam contents and vice versa.

- Are there regularly scheduled meetings, joint task forces:
- Who attends?
- Who sponsors?
 - How is the information used and by whom?

What opportunities are there in the state for multiple uses of standards and assessments? (e.g., do community colleges use the results of any end of high school exam for placement?) In your opinion, would this type of sharing be possible or useful for the state?

Do you think the transfer function between your college and local four-year institutions is effective (do you think that students who intend to transfer do transfer)?

Do you think the transfer function in the state as a whole is effective?

Do you think that any improvements need to be made regarding the transfer function?

Does anyone at your college receive data regarding what happens to transfer students once they enter a four-year institution?

- Does anyone at your college know if they graduate?
- How long it takes for students to transfer?
- If they need to complete remedial coursework at the university?
- If they receive credit for the coursework at the community college?

How does your institution inform high school teachers, counselors, administrators, parents, students, and community members about the following:

- Admission policies
- Transfer policies
- Dual, or concurrent, enrollment programs
- Placement and advising policies
- Content of, and consequences associated with, any IHE placement tests
- Remediation policies
- Merit aid policies

Please describe the process through which your institution informs these individuals and groups about any new changes in policy.

In your opinion, are these individuals and groups adequately familiar with the admission, placement, remediation, and merit aid policies of your institution?

If not, what might account for any gaps in knowledge?

What could be some of the effects of the gap in knowledge?

How might your institution better inform these individuals and groups about policies?

In an ideal world, what would be the connection(s) between K-12 and higher education?

Closing: Ask respondents if they are available for follow-up questions in the future.

Documents to Request

- Mission statement of college—district/system, if appropriate;
- Course catalogue;
- Board Policy Book, if possible;
- Official college policies regarding: admission, remediation, placement, advising, financial aid, transfer, earning credit, and being granted credit for previous coursework;
- Matriculation Plan (details college's plans regarding admission, counseling and advising, research, prerequisites, orientation, assessment and follow-up, and coordination and training across the campus);
- Office of Institutional Research materials on access, persistence, retention, transfer, placement/assessment;
- If applicable, state policies re: college policies/mission, admission, remediation, placement, advising, transfer, earning credit, and being granted credit for previous coursework;
- Relevant institutional statistics (e.g., demographics of students, admissions statistic, transfer statistics, remediation statistics);
- Admission and placement test/procedures packets, and/or college publications for prospective students and/or counselors;
- Relevant internal documents, e.g. Faculty Senate guidelines, placement documents;
- Statement of competencies or expectations of incoming students;
- Copies of placement exams;
- State legislation regarding colleges policies and/or mission(s);
- Materials produced by the college regarding K-12 policies on: assessment, content and performance standards, curriculum frameworks, graduation requirements, dual (or concurrent) enrollment;
- Meeting summaries and charges (missions) of joint K-16 task forces; and
- Information on transfer requirements and dual (or concurrent) enrollment programs.K-16 task forces.