

May 2021

Transfer Survey Analysis

Report on the 2020
Texas Community College Transfer Survey



**Texas Association of
Community Colleges**



**PHILANTHROPY
ADVOCATES**

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Credits

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Cover Photograph: Rio Grande River

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Executive Summary

This report presents analysis of a Fall 2020 survey exploring factors influencing university transfer among Texas community college students. It does this by comparing responses from students who just transferred to public universities from community colleges with responses from current community college students who planned to transfer in January 2020 but did not. The survey was commissioned by Philanthropy Advocates and conducted by the Texas Association of Community Colleges.

Findings:

- ★ Students who did not transfer were more likely to be single, aged 18-25, and not caring for dependents.
- ★ Students who did not transfer were more likely to place importance on traditional aspects of university culture and student life.
- ★ Students who transferred were older, had more family responsibility, and were more eager to complete degrees quickly and start contributing to family finances.
- ★ Students who transferred reported more challenges meeting basic needs.
- ★ No factors stand out as highly predictive of transfer, but responses suggest financial concerns play a key role.

Recommendations:

- ★ Universities should explore ways to spread awareness of the transfer process and key support resources among transfer students and potential transfer students.
- ★ Community colleges should help their high-volume destination universities spread this information among their students.
- ★ Community colleges and universities can also partner to conduct focus groups to identify local barriers to effective transfer.

Transfer Survey Data Analysis



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In Fall 2020, the Texas Association of Community Colleges (TACC) was commissioned by Philanthropy Advocates to conduct a multi-part research study to inform improvements to transfer policy and practice, focusing on community college to baccalaureate transfer pathways. As part of the study, TACC administered a survey to learn more about how students made decisions regarding community college-to-university transfer after the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic. The survey explored factors that impacted the decisions of community college students who had planned to transfer but did not compared to public university students who had just transferred from a community college. The survey asked students about demographics, beliefs about the value of a bachelor's degree, and issues they faced during the pandemic. Responses were collected in November and December 2020 from students at six Texas community colleges and five Texas public universities.

Survey Data Demographics:

	Students Who Did Not Transfer	Students Who Transferred
# of responses	392 student responses	1476 student responses
Race/ Ethnicity	African American/Black: 8.9% American Indian or Alaskan Native: 2.2% Asian, Hawaiian, or other Pacific Islander: 3.7% Hispanic/Latino: 59.8% More than one race and/or ethnicity: 2.8% Other: 0.9% Prefer not to answer: 0.9% White/Caucasian: 20.9%	African American/Black: 11.6% American Indian or Alaskan Native: 0.6% Asian, Hawaiian, or other Pacific Islander: 8.2% Hispanic/Latino: 38.5% More than one race and/or ethnicity: 3.2% Other: 0.9% Prefer not to answer: 2.1% White/Caucasian: 34.9%
Relationship Status	Widowed: 0.0% Divorced: 0.93% In a relationship: 22.7% Married or domestic partnership: 5.6% Single: 70.8%	Widowed: 0.3% Divorced: 2.8% In a relationship: 22.6% Married or domestic partnership: 27.2% Single: 47.2%
Age	18-25 Years Old: 81.9% 26-54 Years Old: 18.1%	18-25 Years Old: 40.8% 26-54 Years Old: 59.2%
Gender	Female: 71.2% Male: 26.4% Non-Binary: 1.2% Other: 0.3% Prefer not to answer: 0.9%	Female: 71.5% Male: 26.5% Non-Binary: 1.0% Prefer not to answer: 1.0%
Caregiver Status	Parent or Dependent Caregiver: 19.0% Not a Parent or Dependent Caregiver: 81.0%	Parent or Dependent Caregiver: 34.0% Not a Parent or Dependent Caregiver: 66.0%

Results: Demographics

- ★ Students who transferred were more likely to be married.
- ★ Students who did not transfer were more likely to be Hispanic.
- ★ Students who transferred were more likely to be White.
- ★ 34% of those who transferred were caring for dependents compared to 19% of those who did not transfer.
- ★ Students who did not transfer were about twice as likely to be 18-25 compared to those who did transfer.

Results: Work and Income

	Students Who Did Not Transfer	Students Who Transferred
Do you currently work for pay? Include any work-study positions and paid internships.	Yes: 34.1% No: 58.0% I Don't Know: 7.9%	Yes: 50.9% No: 45.0% I Don't Know: 4.1%
★	Half of students who transferred were working, compared to one-third of students who did not transfer.	
★	Students who did not transfer were more likely to report financial challenges (trouble affording tuition/books/fees, personal finance issues, family finance issues, financial issues) since the beginning of the pandemic than those who did transfer (65.0% v. 50.0%).	
★	Students who transferred to a university were more likely to report mental health issues than those who did not (15.0% v. 11.0%).	
★	Students who did not transfer most frequently relied on Pell grants and other scholarships (37.0%).	
★	Students who transferred most frequently relied on Pell grants and income from work (36.5%).	
★	Students who transferred are more concerned about finances since the pandemic compared to those who did not transfer (62.6% v. 55.6%).	

Results: Family

	Students Who Did Not Transfer	Students Who Transferred
After the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic caused your school to close or significantly alter campus operations in mid-March, did the time you spent caring for children and/or other dependents change, compared to before the pandemic?	Yes: 60.7% No: 39.3%	Yes: 73.6% No: 26.4%
★	Both students who did not transfer and those who did spent more time taking care of dependents. Additionally, nearly half of all students reported spending more than six additional hours caring for dependents.	
★	Those who transferred and were taking care of children and/or other dependents were more likely to be White (40.1%). Those who did not transfer and were taking care of children and/or other dependents were more likely to be Hispanic (67.6%).	

Results: Beliefs About Education

Students who transferred were more likely to agree with the following statements compared to those who did not:

- ★ A bachelor’s degree will set me up for better jobs in my career (89.4% v. 83.4%).
- ★ This degree will be worth my time and money (83.4% v. 80.1%).
- ★ My family expects me to earn a bachelor’s degree (66.7% v. 59.6%).
- ★ People with bachelor’s degrees earn more respect (67.0% v. 39.4%).

Students who transferred reported the following statements were less important to them as they continued their education compared to students who did not transfer:

- ★ Learning about the world.
- ★ College culture and social life.
- ★ College facilities and amenities.
- ★ Extracurricular activities.

Students who did not transfer were almost as likely to report that minimizing student debt was very or extremely important (87.9% v. 86.4%).

Those who transferred were more likely to report that they needed to contribute to their family after graduation (84.5% v. 77.1%).

Those who transferred were more likely to report that finishing school as quickly as possible was very or extremely important (67.2% v. 56.3%).

Results: Changes Since Onset of Pandemic

Students who did not transfer were more likely to report that they:

- ★ understand COVID protocols on-campus.
- ★ have access to academic support services.
- ★ have access to healthy meals.
- ★ have access to safe/reliable housing.
- ★ have access to healthcare services.
- ★ have access to emergency funds.

See tables below

Almost half of students in both groups stated they learn somewhat or much worse in online/remote classes.

Question: Please rate the following based on your experiences at your current school:

Access to academic support services when needed

	Students Who Did Not Transfer	Students Who Transferred
Good/Very Good	73.3%	55.9%
Fair	17.3%	20.2%
Poor/Very Poor	5.2%	10.8%
Not Applicable	4.2%	13.2%

Access to healthy, nutritious meals

	Students Who Did Not Transfer	Students Who Transferred
Good/Very Good	51.5%	37.7%
Fair	18.8%	18.1%
Poor/Very Poor	5.8%	9.2%
Not Applicable	23.9%	35.0%

Availability of emergency funds/aid programs

	Students Who Did Not Transfer	Students Who Transferred
Good/Very Good	51.2%	29.7%
Fair	22.9%	21.6%
Poor/Very Poor	11.6%	18.9%
Not Applicable	14.3%	29.8%

Understanding of campus COVID-19 (coronavirus) protocols

	Students Who Did Not Transfer	Students Who Transferred
Good/Very Good	84.5%	71.3%
Fair	10.0%	11.4%
Poor/Very Poor	3.0%	3.2%
Not Applicable	2.4%	14.1%

Access to safe, reliable housing

	Students Who Did Not Transfer	Students Who Transferred
Good/Very Good	54.9%	41.5%
Fair	12.1%	11.0%
Poor/Very Poor	4.6%	3.0%
Not Applicable	28.5%	43.0%

High rates of “not applicable” responses complicate the interpretation of some of these questions. It is likely that many respondents understood the question to be asking about access to college-provided services as opposed to their general welfare.

Findings:

- ★ Students who did not transfer were more likely to be single, aged 18-25, and not caring for dependents. It is possible that these factors, coupled with financial issues/stress, led students to feel that they did not need to transfer at this time. Additionally, the reduction or elimination of extracurricular and cocurricular activities that support university culture and student life may have contributed to these students' decision not to transfer.
- ★ On the other hand, students who transferred were older and had more family responsibility. They were also more likely to report the need to complete their degree as quickly as possible and contribute to their family. Additionally, they were less concerned with campus culture, facilities, and extracurriculars affected by the pandemic. These factors may have pushed them to transfer regardless of the pandemic.
- ★ Transfer decisions are complex, and surveys cannot fully capture differences in motivations between individuals. No single factor explains the decisions of students not to transfer, though responses suggest financial concerns may play a key role.

Recommendations:

- ★ Universities should continue to provide information on where and how transfer students can access emergency aid, healthy/nutritious meals, healthcare services, and emergency funds once they have made the transition. This information should be conveyed early on so that students have help with the transfer process, are informed about resources, and are confident they can make the transition to a four-year university.
- ★ Community colleges should collaborate with high-volume destination universities to gather specific information about processes, deadlines, resources, etc. that they can communicate to students who intend to transfer.
- ★ Four-year universities may want to partner with local community colleges to conduct focus groups of students to examine specific factors that influence decisions regarding transfer. Facilitators may want to explore the following areas in their focus group discussions:
 - ★ Educational and career goals, including any changes.
 - ★ Student interactions with personnel at both institutions and usefulness of those interactions.
 - ★ Financial challenges and plans for paying for educational and life expenses.
 - ★ Time constraints and time management.
 - ★ Areas of concern and whether and how those concerns were addressed.
 - ★ Expectations of the university experience.