



MISSING 87:

A Study of the “Transfer Gap” and “Choice Gap”

A Collaborative Report by Long Beach City College
and University of Southern California
Center for Urban Education

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Executive Summary

The *Missing 87* report emerged from the action research project partnership between Long Beach City College (LBCC) and USC Center for Urban Education (CUE). The LBCC *evidence team* comprised of faculty members, student affairs practitioners, and administrators, discovered the existence of a *transfer gap* and a *choice gap* among their students. In response to these findings, they conducted a comprehensive study of transfer practices, culture and student experiences at LBCC to understand why these gaps occur. This report documents barriers to transfer and makes recommendations to address them.

The *transfer* and *choice gaps* essentially refer to rates of non-transfer among transfer-eligible students.

- The *transfer gap* refers to the gap between the number of students who are eligible for transfer to the University of California (UC) and/or California State University (CSU) systems, and the number of students who actually transfer to a four-year college.
- The *choice gap* refers to the gap between the number of students who meet the requirements to attend selective four-year institutions (as determined by UC eligibility), and the number of students who actually choose to do so. The *Missing 87* refers to the number of students that were initially identified as falling into the *transfer gap*. However, further investigation of the data revealed that the *Missing 87* were actually the *Missing 112*.

Only 520 students out of total population of 27,422 (1.9 percent) completed transfer requirements to a UC or CSU campus within three years for the 1999-2002 cohorts studied. Among these *fast-track* students, 22 percent did not transfer as of spring 2006. This figure represents the *transfer gap*. Among those

students eligible for transfer to a UC campus, only 20 percent did so. This implies the *choice gap* stands at an astounding 80 percent.

The LBCC evidence team further examined *transfer* and *choice gaps* by race and ethnicity (data examined for African American, Asian/Pacific Islander, Hispanic/Latina/o, White, and other). The rates of non-transfer by UC- or CSU-eligible students for the racial/ethnic groups tend to cluster around the mean of 22 percent (African American students are the exception, with a *transfer gap* rate of 8 percent). However, there is greater variation in non-transfer to selective institutions by eligible students among the racial/ethnic groups. The *choice gap* rates stand at 65%, 82%, 77%, and 85% for African American, Asian, Hispanic and White students respectively.

The *transfer* and *choice gaps* deserve attention for a number of reasons.

- The community college is the point of entry into higher education for historically underserved populations. Among other responsibilities, it is charged with preparing students for transfer to four-year institutions. Transfer rates are one of the measures by which community colleges are judged.
- The *choice gap* has significant implications for community college students as well. Research suggests that marginalized students tend to reap greater benefits by attending selective institutions as they enjoy higher rates of graduation, greater income potential, greater likelihood of attending graduate programs, and greater likelihood of assuming leadership positions in the community.

Neither the transfer nor choice gaps can be ignored. The LBCC evidence team uncovered a

variety of barriers, of which perhaps the most significant is the fact that transfer information may never reach its intended audience. Findings regarding barriers to transfer and potential solutions are fully discussed on pages 35-43, but our recommendations are outlined below:

- Encourage all instructors, including basic skills, to invite counselors to make presentations about transfer in their classes.
- Make the Transfer Center visible and inviting.
- Improve the quality and quantity of signage so students know where to seek resources.
- Document student participation in recruitment activities.
- Review counselors' assignments and responsibilities so they can devote more time for student appointments.
- Invite instructors of basic skills and other fields to create assignments connected to transfer.
- Create professional development opportunities on FLEX day on the role of faculty in the transfer process.
- Create opportunities for students to visit colleges outside the local area.
- Expose students to the many types of colleges so they can find the right "fit".
- Create programs that reduce anxiety about transfer among students.

Missing 87: A Study of the “Transfer Gap” and “Choice Gap”

This report addresses two areas that are critical to access and choice opportunities for minority and first-generation community college students, both of which are noticeably absent from research and policymaking agendas. These two areas are as follows:

- The *transfer gap* refers to the gap between the number of students who attain *transfer eligibility* status, as defined by the California State University (CSU) and the University of California (UC), and the number who actually transfer to a four-year college.
- The *choice gap* refers to the gap between the number of students who, besides having attained the minimum requirements for transfer-ready status, also met the more stringent requirements for admission to the University of California (or similarly selective private colleges and universities such as Stanford University, University of Southern California, Pomona College), and the number who actually transfer to such institutions.

Why do these gaps matter?

Community colleges represent the main *gateway* into higher education for underrepresented students such as students of color, first-

generation students, and low-income students (Bloom & Sommo, 2005). A prime responsibility of the community college is to prepare students for transfer to four-year baccalaureate programs. The existence of the *transfer gap* suggests that institutions are not fully meeting their educational mission. By failing to prepare underserved students for transfer, community colleges inadvertently perpetuate their marginalization. The *transfer gap* also has implications for the state (Bensimon, 2005). Increased levels of educational attainment are associated with increased economic activity and productivity, a development that benefits

society as a whole. The benefits of expanding access to higher education – and raising economic productivity – accrue to all. Ultimately, the *transfer gap* represents a loss for marginalized students and the state economy.

The *choice gap* requires attention because attending a selective college is one of the ways in which low-income and minority students gain access to opportunities that offer

important societal and generational benefits. Selective colleges have higher graduation rates for low-income and minority students than their less-selective counterparts. Graduates of selective institutions are more likely to attend graduate school. Finally, selective institutions increase the income potential of low-income students more than for other students, and they play a critical role in increasing minority ascendancy to leadership positions (Bowen & Bok, 1998; Bowen, Kurzweil & Tobin, 2005;

Long Beach City College transfers over 800 students to California State Universities and approximately 100 students to the University of California institutions each academic year.

Gansemer-Topf & Schuh, 2006; Horn, 2007; Melguizo & Dowd, in press; Titus, 2006; Wyner, 2006).

For the least affluent in our society, the chances of transferring from a community college to an elite institution are practically negligible (Dowd, Bensimon, Gabbard, et al., 2006; Dowd, Cheslock & Melguizo, in press). The number of economically disadvantaged community college transfer students who enroll in the uppermost strata of selective institutions, the *elites* of American higher education, may be as few as 1000 students annually (Dowd & Cheslock, 2006).

Consequently, minding the *choice gap* and ensuring that as many of the students who are qualified to transfer to selective colleges do so is a crucial element of the democratizing mission of the community college. By studying and documenting the *choice gap*, Long Beach City College calls attention to a neglected aspect of the transfer function of community colleges.

These two areas were studied at Long Beach City College (LBCC) by a team that included faculty members, counselors, and staff from LBCC as well as researchers and doctoral students from the Center for Urban Education at the University of Southern California (USC). *Missing 87* presents findings from the insider perspective of the LBCC faculty and counselors who were members of the research team. It describes barriers to transfer and provides recommendations to address them. The main audience for this report is LBCC's faculty, professional staff, and decision-making bodies—the Superintendent-President, Board of Trustees, Academic Senate, the Vice Presidents, and deans—as well as practitioners who work on transfer—counselors, directors and staff of programs for special student populations such as EOPS and Puente, and student service providers such as financial aid.



The Genesis of the “Missing 87”

LBCC joins the Equity for All Project

Long Beach City College was one of nine community colleges that participated in *Equity for All: Institutional Responsibility for Student Success*, a project of USC Center for Urban Education that was funded by the Lumina Foundation for Education and the Chancellor’s Office for California Community Colleges. Based on principles of organizational learning and change, the Equity for All project engaged *evidence teams* at nine California community colleges in the creation of an *Equity Scorecard* (Bensimon, 2005). The *Equity Scorecard* assesses how well an institution meets the educational needs of historically underrepresented students. It consists of four perspectives for examining inequities in students’ college experiences: *Academic Pathways, Persistence and Retention, Transfer Readiness, and Excellence*. For each of the perspectives, the campus evidence teams identify gaps in educational outcomes by examining campus *vital signs*, or data regarding college and course enrollment, performance, and completion. The *Equity Scorecard* was designed to raise attention to disparities in the educational outcomes of Black and Hispanic students, but it also makes visible the outcomes of every racial/ethnic group, including whites.

The essential goal of the *Equity Scorecard* is to engage practitioners in an activity that leads to the *discovery of racial patterns of inequalities in educational outcomes* and persuades them to consider *specific practices that they can enact within their domains of expertise to reduce racial inequalities*. The premise of the *Equity Scorecard* is that practitioners, once they see the specific details of unequal outcomes, feel a personal responsibility to eliminate racial patterns of inequality and are eager to learn how they can impact the outcomes of students who suffer the greatest inequalities.

Discovery of the “transfer gap” and “choice gap”

The *Missing 87* project resulted from what the LBCC team members learned from the data examined for the *Transfer Readiness* and *Excellence* domains during the *Equity for All* project. For the *Transfer Readiness* domain, the team examined the number of students who enrolled at LBCC for the first time during the fall semesters from 1999-2002, and became eligible for transfer to the CSU system (i.e. the General Education Breadth requirements) within three years. The cohorts examined comprised of 27,422 students. For the *Excellence* domain, they looked at the number of students in the given cohorts, who met the UC and CSU transfer requirements within three years of enrolling at LBCC by following the Intersegmental General Education Transfer Curriculum (IGETC). These students were designated as *fast-track* because their eligibility to transfer within three years is relatively fast compared to the majority of students.

The indicators of *Transfer Readiness* and *Excellence* used in the *Equity Scorecard* include:

- ***UC eligible students.*** These include the number of students who were certified as having met the IGETC requirements, also referred to as *Plan C*. We examined UC eligible students who transferred to a UC, a CSU, an institution other than UC or CSU, and students who had not transferred as of Spring 2006.
- ***CSU eligible students.*** These include the number of students who were certified as having met the General Education requirements for CSU, also referred to as *Plan B*. We examined CSU eligible students who transferred

to a CSU, transferred elsewhere, or had not transferred as of Spring 2006.

By examining these data, the *Equity for All* team found that some students who were on a *fast track* to transfer were *missing* from the four-year institutions where they might have eventually enrolled (based on their investments in transfer-level courses). They were also *missing* from a policy perspective, because they had not achieved the highest level of educational outcomes for which they were prepared.

Once the team identified student *transfer gaps* in the *Equity for All* project, the next step was to investigate the underlying causes of those gaps. Some students who were eligible to transfer to a UC campus selected less competitive institutions, and some who were eligible to transfer to a CSU campus did not transfer at all. This represents a loss of talent and human capital to the state, and perhaps a loss of opportunity for the individual students who did not transfer. Therefore, in the Spring of 2007, LBCC and USC researchers conducted a comprehensive study of transfer practices, culture, and student experiences at LBCC to understand why the *transfer* and *choice* gaps occur.

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The Action Research Project

Formation of the research team

The *Missing 87* project involved a team of 23 researchers from LBCC and five researchers from USC's Center for Urban Education. The 23 LBCC researchers responded to an email invitation that was sent out in December 2006 by Dr. David Morse, President of the Academic Senate. Because the email invitation went out during the week of final exams, at the end of the fall semester, there was some concern as to what kind of response there would be. On December 21, Dr. Morse sent an update to the USC researchers on the responses he had received. Below are excerpts from Dr. Morse's email, both of which convey the enthusiasm generated by the project.

Just as an update, and I think this is mostly good news, the e-mail I told you about yesterday was sent to all faculty two hours ago. Although we are in finals week and many faculty members are undoubtedly already gone, in that first two-hour period I have received seven different inquiries expressing interest in the project from faculty members who were not on the list of suggestions.

And since my first e-mail to you today, I have received two more responses, bringing the total to nine. Again, what is nice about the situation is not just the number of responses, but the quality of the people. This is sort of an all-star team. All of those who replied are very conscientious faculty who would be excellent to have on the project. Again, this is in the first few hours, but I would say that it is very encouraging.

Over a five-month period, starting in January 2007 and ending in May 2007, the 23 researchers who committed to the project were engaged in various inquiry activities described in more detail in the following section. The team comprised the following faculty members, administrators, and counselors at the Liberal Arts and Pacific Coast campuses:

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Overview of research activities

At the start of the project, LBCC researchers developed institutional profiles on students using enrollment data analyses with the assistance of Fred Trapp, Dean of Institutional Research and Academic Services, and Hannah Alford, Research Analyst. LBCC, like other California community colleges, has three paths to degree attainment. The College organizes information about general education requirements and transfer eligibility in three curricular tracks referred to as Plan A, Plan B, and Plan C. These plans are summarized in a four-page college flyer, titled General Education Plans, which lists degree and transfer requirements in an *at-a-glance* format. Plan A allows students to earn an Associate's Degree (AA). It is designed for students who want to prepare for a career immediately after graduating from LBCC. Plans B and C are designed for students who want to transfer to a bachelor's program, either with or without the AA. Plan B prepares students for transfer to the CSU System (it provides the lower division general education breadth requirements for admission to the CSU system). The third and most academically challenging path, Plan C, prepares students for transfer to either the UC or the CSU systems. It includes coursework that meets IGETC requirements. Please see Appendix A for Associate's Degree requirements (Plan A), CSU requirements (Plan B), and UC requirements (Plan C) at Long Beach City College.

General Education Plans

PLAN A	PLAN B	PLAN C
The general education requirements for students planning to obtain an Associate Degree .	Designed for students transferring to the California State University (CSU) . Courses on this pattern are lower division general education breadth requirements specific to the CSU and used to obtain a full or partial certification.	Designed for students transferring to the University of California (UC) or the California State University (CSU) . Courses on this pattern are lower division general education requirements unique to and established by the UC and CSU.

After developing student profiles, the *Missing 87* project team members discovered a striking reality—only 520 out of 27,422 first-time freshmen in fall terms 1999-2000, or 1.9 percent, completed transfer requirements to a UC or CSU within three years. The miniscule percentage indicates the difficulty many community college students have in achieving transfer readiness. Over 90% of first-time students place into at least one pre-transfer level course in English, reading, and/or math; as a result, students take much longer to reach transfer-ready status. Additionally, the data indicate that many students take courses at the community college without intending to transfer.

Our research team further analyzed the transfer outcomes of the 520 fast-track students at LBCC. Among the 520 fast-track students, 322 (62%) met Plan B requirements for transfer to a CSU and 198 (38%) completed transfer courses for UC schools by Spring 2006. Table 1 details the transfer success of these student cohorts who had initially enrolled at the college between 1999 and 2002. Among those students who were eligible to transfer to a CSU, about two-thirds actually accomplished that task. Surprisingly, only 20 percent of those eligible to attend a UC made that transition. Instead, over 50 percent of UC-eligible students, who had passed more demanding courses at LBCC, chose to attend a CSU school while 8 percent transferred elsewhere. About 20 percent from both groups had not transferred at all by Spring 2006.

Students who become eligible for transfer in three years are not the modal community college student. These fast-track students were

Of traditional college-age, carried a full-time course load, and earned good grades. It is safe to assume they invested considerable effort into their studies (otherwise they would not have been able to successfully complete the transfer curriculum within three years).

The LBCC researchers were also interested in knowing whether certain racial-ethnic groups, particularly historically underrepresented groups—African Americans and Latinos—experienced greater difficulties in transferring after achieving transfer-ready status. Table 2 presents the transfer outcomes of LBCC’s *fast-track* students by racial-ethnic groups. In this table, unlike the one below, all students who were CSU or UC eligible are first grouped together to determine whether or not they had in fact transferred to a four-year college. Then the UC-eligible students are treated as a subgroup with transfer to a UC as the outcome of interest. Within these categories, Table 2 shows the shares of each racial-ethnic group who transferred or did not transfer.

Table 1. Transfer Rates by Transfer Eligibility among LBCC Fast-track Students, Spring 2006 (N=520)

Transfer Outcome	Eligibility		
	CSU Eligible ^a (Completed Plan B)	UC Eligible ^b (Completed Plan C)	Total
Transferred to UC	—	20% (40)	8% (40)
Transferred to CSU	66% (214)	53% (105)	61% (319)
Transferred Elsewhere	10% (33)	8% (16)	9% (49)
Did Not Transfer	23% (75)	19% (37)	22% (112)
Total	100% (322)	100% (198)	100% (520)

Note. *Fast-track* refers to students who became CSU or UC transfer eligible within three years of first enrolling at LBCC. The sample studied is drawn from a multi-year population of 27,422 students who enrolled for the first time at LBCC in the years 1999-2002.

^a IGETC certified students who completed CSU transfer-eligible courses (LBCC’s curriculum *Plan B*), excluding those who were UC eligible.

^b IGETC certified students who completed UC transfer-eligible courses (LBCC’s curriculum *Plan C*).

Table 2: Transfer Status by Race and Ethnicity among LBCC Fast-Track Transfer-Eligible Students, 1999-2002

Racial-Ethnic Group	CSU or UC Eligible (Completed Plan B and Plan C)			UC Eligible Only (Completed Plan C)		
	(1) N (% of eligible students)	(2) Transferred (% of transfers)	(3) Did Not Transfer ^a (% of non-transfers)	(4) N (% of eligible students)	(5) Transferred to a UC (% of transfers)	(6) Did Not Transfer to a UC (% of non-transfers)
African American/ Black	38 (7.3%)	35 (8.6%)	3 (2.7%)	17 (8.6%)	6 (15.0%)	11 (7.0%)
Asian/ Pacific Islander	107 (20.6%)	84 (20.6%)	23 (20.5%)	34 (17.2%)	6 (15.0%)	28 (17.7%)
Hispanic/ Latina/o	136 (26.2%)	111 (27.2%)	25 (22.3%)	48 (24.2%)	11 (27.5%)	37 (23.4%)
White	163 (31.4%)	121 (29.7%)	42 (37.5%)	68 (34.3%)	9 (22.5%)	59 (37.3%)
Other	76 (14.6%)	57 (14.0%)	19 (17.0%)	31 (15.7%)	8 (20.0%)	23 (14.6%)
Total	520 (100%)	408 (100%)	112 ^b (100%)	198 (100%)	40 (100%)	158 (100%)

Note. *Fast-track* refers to students who became CSU or UC transfer eligible within three years of first enrolling at LBCC. The sample studied is drawn from a multi-year population of 27,422 students who enrolled for the first time at LBCC in the years 1999-2002.

^a Students who had not transferred as of Spring 2006 are treated as non-transfers.

^b This group includes 37 UC-eligible and 75 CSU-eligible students.

The results show that the racial-ethnic distribution of transfers (shown in column 2) is largely similar to the distribution of qualified students (column 1). The one figure that stands out is the very small share of African Americans (2.7%) among non-transfers relative to their representation in the eligible group (7.3%).

The results in columns 4 through 6 show that African Americans are also overrepresented among the successful transfers to the UCs. The African American share of UC transfers is 15% compared to an 8.6% share in the eligible pool. Similarly, Hispanic/Latina/o representation increases slightly from 24.2% to 27.5%, whereas the share of other groups declines relative to the eligible pool.

With a small total of only 40 students in the UC transfer cohort, it is important to note that the percentage distribution would be sensitive to small changes in the number of successful transfers in any racial-ethnic group, and to sampling error based on the years studied and the cases available with non-missing data¹. However, the relative success of African American and Hispanic/Latina/o students is significant if the experiences of these successful students offer insights for improving transfer for other groups and for the entire student body.

Not to be lost in these racial-ethnic comparisons is the strikingly small number of UC transfers from LBCC (only 40), despite the fact that the special *fast track* subgroup was culled from a combined four-year (1999-2002) population of first-time students. As a result, the number of students transferring to a UC from *any* group is extremely low, ranging from 6 each for African Americans and Asian/Pacific Islanders to 11 among Latinos. Additionally, for each of those 11 Latinos who did transfer to a UC, there were at least three more in the UC eligible pool of 48 Latinos who did not.

Table 3 summarizes the incidence, by race and ethnicity, of non-transfer to any four-year college (the *transfer gap*) and non-transfer to a UC for those qualified for it (the *choice gap*). The *transfer gap* for LBCC *fast-track* students in the years of our study averaged 22%, and the rates for each racial-ethnic group were clustered around the mean. African Americans, with a *transfer gap* rate of only 8%, are the exception.

The *choice gap*, already noted as an astounding 80% for the *fast-track* group as a whole, has greater variation by racial-ethnic group. The lowest incidence of non-transfer to a UC among eligible students is observed among African American students. At 65%, this rate is still alarmingly high. Yet it stands in positive

Table 3: Percent Transfer and Choice Gaps (Rate of Non-transfer) by Race and Ethnicity

Racial-Ethnic Group	Transfer Gap ^a (Non-transfer among CSU or UC Eligible Students)	Choice Gap ^b (Non-transfer to a UC among UC-Eligible Students)
African American/Black	8%	65%
Asian/Pacific Islander	21%	82%
Hispanic/Latina/o	18%	77%
White	26%	85%
Other ^c	25%	74%
Total	22%	80%

Note. *Fast-track* refers to students who became CSU or UC transfer eligible within three years of first enrolling at LBCC. The sample studied is drawn from a multi-year population of 27,422 students who enrolled for the first time at LBCC in the years 1999-2002.

^a The *transfer gap* rate is the number of CSU- and UC-eligible transfer students who did not transfer divided by the number eligible multiplied by 100.

^b The *choice gap* rate is the number of UC-eligible transfer students who did not transfer to a UC divided by the number eligible multiplied by 100.

^c This group includes Filipino, Native-American/Alaskan Native, Other, and Unreported

contrast to the largest *choice gap* rates of 85%, 82%, and 77% observed among white, Asian/Pacific Islander, and Latina/o students respectively. While the number of African Americans who transfer to UC is small it would appear that when they are admitted they are more likely to enroll than Latinos/as or students from other groups.

Admittedly, the UC transfer numbers are so small that it may seem odd to call attention to differences between the 11 Latina/o and

¹The results are not subject to random sampling error because the study included the full population of LBCC students based on available data. The results are not based on a random sample.

9 white students going to a UC. In light of the severe under-representation of African Americans and Latinas/os in the UC system, however, those who transfer successfully have great symbolic value in regards to equity and opportunity in higher education.

The tangible benefits that a selective-college education provides to low-income students make the equitable distribution of entry into such institutions especially important. Selective colleges graduate greater proportions of their students, particularly minority students, than do their less-selective counterparts, and greater numbers of the students who receive a bachelor's degree from a selective college or university move on to graduate school. Graduating from a selective institution also increases low-income students' income potential more than for other students. Finally, we know that holding a degree from a top institution can greatly increase the breadth of opportunity a graduate enjoys, including access to leadership positions in many professions. What perspective and drive will be lost on selective campuses and in American communities if increasingly fewer low-income students have access to institutions that open the door to leadership roles?

As stated earlier, the premise of practitioner inquiry into educational outcomes by race and ethnicity is that they will feel a personal responsibility to eliminate racial patterns of inequality once they learn its full extent at their institution. Upon discovering the minute number of students ready for transfer within three years, and those academically qualified students do not necessarily transfer to selective institutions, the LBCC practitioners wanted to learn: *Why? And what can we do to close the transfer and choice gaps in our classrooms, the counseling office, the Transfer Center, and at the institutional level?*

In order to know what may be causing the *transfer* and *choice* gaps, the LBCC researchers engaged in various forms of inquiry designed to

gain a personal and contextualized understanding of the problem prior to taking action. The inquiry activities, all of which were conducted by a research team of faculty members, counselors, and administrators, consisted of:

- Qualitative interviews with students who fell into the *transfer* and *choice* gaps;
- Qualitative peer-to-peer interview to learn about transfer resources, services, and culture from administrators and staff who are central to transfer;
- Review of institutional information systems, including documents, course schedules, and website, to assess the availability of transfer information and its quality based on accessibility, clarity, attractiveness, comprehensiveness, and user-friendliness;
- And, observations of institutional spaces where transfer services and activities take place to assess the types of services provided, how those services were provided, who accessed the services, and the resources available to the service providers.

Eleven LBCC researchers interviewed students who were UC- or CSU-eligible, but did not transfer or attended a CSU when they were eligible for transfer to a UC. The other 12 researchers conducted interviews of colleagues, observed student services programs and departments (such as financial aid and transfer offices), and analyzed institutional documents in which one would expect to find information about transfer.

The student interview sample

Interviewing students became a critical part of the *Missing 87* project to find out why transfer-eligible students do not transfer or, among those who are UC-eligible, elect to attend a less selective institution. Eleven team members conducted semi-structured interviews with 20 students selected from three populations of interest:

1. Students who met the minimum requirements to transfer to a CSU (within three years of first enrollment) but did not transfer;
2. Students who met the minimum requirements to transfer to a CSU and transferred to a CSU;
3. Students who completed Plan C and were qualified to transfer to UC but transferred to a non-UC campus;
4. And, students who completed Plan C and transferred to a UC or to an equally selective institution.

The purpose of the interviews was to learn first-hand from students about their experiences at LBCC and their choices about transfer. Interviewers sought to identify: (1) students educational goals at LBCC, (2) their social and academic experiences at LBCC, (3) challenges and successes in attempting to transfer, and (4) beliefs about the role LBCC played in their transfer experiences.

The research team attempted to reach every one of the 112 students who fell into the *transfer gap*; however, only 15 were found and contacted by telephone. Unfortunately, all 15 declined the invitation to be interviewed. Many students did not give a reason for their unwillingness to participate. Some students said they would call back but did not (even after trying to contact them a second time). Others said they did not have time or that they were not interested. When all was said and done, it was difficult to contact fast-track students (because of wrong phone numbers and no email addresses) who fell into the transfer gap.

Through this process we realized that a number of students who had not transferred were hesitant to discuss their educational experiences. A small number of students who appeared as *missing* had in fact transferred in Fall 2006, but their transfer status was not identified by the National Student Clearinghouse database because they transferred after the project started. To meet the sampling goal of 20 students to interview, we decided to recruit students who were still enrolled at LBCC and eligible to transfer but still had not transferred.

More than half of the 20 students interviewed (N=13) were UC-eligible; however, only four transferred to a UC or equivalent selective institution and the others transferred to CSU. Only one transfer eligible student who had not transferred participated in the interview.

Table 4 shows the characteristics of the 20 students who were interviewed, including the number of students interviewed in each pathway.

The majority of the students interviewed were female (15/20); there were eight Latinas/os, two African Americans, three Whites, five Asian American, one international student and another student who did not identify his/her ethnicity. Among the 20 participants, the majority had attended high schools outside the Long Beach Unified School District (N: 12); had received financial aid (N: 14); and were between the ages of 18-24 (N: 12). Seven of the students were still enrolled at the receiving four-year institution; five had completed the baccalaureate degree; and one was pursuing a Master's degree. In addition to the six students who were still enrolled at LBCC, one student had transferred to a CSU but had re-enrolled in LBCC. Finally, the one fast-track student who fell both into the *transfer* and *choice* gaps and agreed to be interviewed was preparing to transfer to CSU (see narrative for Raquel Roque on page 16).

Table 4: Characteristics of the Twenty Students Interviewed

Demographics	Educational Pathways
Gender	Eligibility
Female (15)	CSU eligible and transferred to CSU (1)
Male (5)	CSU eligible and transferred elsewhere (0)
	CSU eligible but have not transferred (6) ^a
Race/Ethnicity	UC eligible and transferred to UC (3)
Latino (5)	UC eligible and transferred to CSU (7)
Latina (3)	UC eligible and transferred elsewhere (1)
White (3)	UC eligible and did not transfer (2)
African American/Black (2)	
Asian American (2)	Fast-track students
Filipino (2)	Yes (14)
Cambodian (1)	No (6)
International (1)	
Other (1)	Still enrolled at LBCC
	Yes (9)
Age	No (11)
18-24 (12)	
Older than 24 (8)	Still enrolled at four-year transfer institution
	Yes (7)
High School of Origin	No (13)
Lakewood (4)	
Long Beach Polytechnic (2)	Completed Bachelor's Degree
Millikan (1)	Yes (5)
Wilson (1)	No (15)
Out of District/Others (12)	
	Completed Master's Degree
Financial Aid Recipient	Yes (0)
Yes (14)	No (20)
No (6)	

^a We added six transfer-eligible students who had not transferred. These students were not part of the fast-track group, but we interviewed them to learn what was preventing them from transferring and to shed light on the *transfer gap*.

Preparing for student interviews

Team members collaboratively created interview questions, discussed them, and agreed on which ones to include in the interview guide. Interviewers participated in two orientation sessions to learn interviewing techniques and how to use digital audio equipment to record interviews. The orientation included a mock interview with a student volunteer.

In many cases, student interviews took the form of an *informal conversation* to gather information about students' experiences at LBCC. The group attempted to interview all students face-to-face, but several students were given the option to interview by phone because of time or transportation limitations. Student interviews lasted between one-half hour and an hour. All interviews were transcribed by professional transcribers.

In total, the 11 researchers conducted 20 interviews and six inquiry meetings that translated into a qualitative data base of 350 transcribed pages. In addition, the members spent time writing field notes about their interviews, analyzing the student interview transcripts, and contributing to the writing of the final report. Each meeting lasted for two or more hours in order to provide enough time to discuss interview findings and recommendations.

In the next section we provide narrative cases for six of the 20 students who were interviewed. The six students were selected for maximum variability to highlight differences in experiences and outcomes. Table 5 provides an overview of the students featured in the narratives.

Table 5: Students' Profiles Described in the Narrative Cases

Name	Race/ Ethnicity	Age ^a	GPA ^b	Associate Degree Major	Transfer Plan ^c	Gender	Transfer Institu- tion	Current Status
Ernesto Ramirez	Latino	18	3.25	None	C	Male	USC	Graduated with BA; employed
Raquel Roque	Filipina	19	3.51	Liberal Studies; Registered Nursing	B/C	Female	Waiting response from CSULB	Employed as nurse full time
Juan Ruiz	Filipino	18	3.39	Liberal Studies	B/C	Male	CSULB	Will receive BA in Fall 2007
Narcisa Solis	Latina	18	2.90	Liberal Studies	B	Female	CSULB	Enrolled at CSULB
Graciela Rodriguez	Latina	18	2.90	Liberal Studies	B/C	Female	CSULB	Received BA in Spring 2007
Marisol Carrion	Latina	19	3.75	Music	B/C	Female	CSUF	Returned to LBCC

^a Age when started at Long Beach City College.

^b Grade point average at Long Beach City College.

^c Transfer plan B is the track to attend CSU schools and transfer plan C is the track to attend UC schools.

Six transfer stories: Student voices and voyages

Of the six narrative case protagonists, all but one had completed Plan C, meaning they met the minimum transfer admissions criteria for UC. Yet Ernesto Ramirez was the only one, among these six students, who having transferred to USC did not fall into the *choice gap*. Ernesto was not dissuaded by the USC price tag. He weighed the risk of taking out loans against the future benefits he might accrue by attending a highly selective college and, as he put it, decided *to invest* in himself.

Investing in Myself: Ernesto Ramirez



Unlike the majority of high achieving students, Ernesto Ramirez chose to transfer to a selective institution rather than to a nearby CSU. We chose to spotlight Ernesto because, despite having transferred successfully to a selective college, he had several characteristics that have been associated with high risk for dropping out and not transferring. As a Latino he belongs to a vulnerable minority group with a history of low degree attainment. At LBCC, based on his basic skills assessment scores, he was placed in English and Math courses below college level. Additionally, he was a first-generation student who met the income and educational criteria for participation in EOPS.

Many high achieving students decide not to apply to selective institutions because of the cost of tuition and the reluctance to accept loans as part of a financial aid package. Ernesto was different; he willingly risked indebtedness in order to attend his dream college. When the interviewer mentioned students' apprehension about the price of private universities, Ernesto answered: *"It was a sacrifice that I was willing to make and it's worth it. It's a good investment. I'm investing in myself."* In the 10th grade, he remembers saying to himself, *"You know what? That's [USC] where I want to go. I don't really want to go anywhere else."* While goal commitment provided Ernesto with the inner determination to succeed, his story demonstrates the importance of people—teachers, family, friends, and authority figures—as sources of valuable knowledge and intangible resources.

Role models and social networks

Following on the footsteps of his brother, Ernesto first enrolled in LBCC.

"LBCC was the one because people that came before me, my brothers and friends, this is where they did it and this is the way I knew. I had pretty decent grades in high school, but I just didn't apply anywhere. So everybody was pretty much doing the Long Beach City College thing."

Like his brother had done before him, after completing the first two years of college, he transferred to USC. Although he knew that USC was hard to get into, he was not discouraged from applying like other students he knew.

“The good thing is I had people before me that laid down the process. So for me it was, I’m going to apply and I’m going to get in.”

Ernesto attributed his decision to major in economics to a professor at LBCC with whom he became close.

*“I took an independent class with him and he helped me out a lot because **he showed me how to write economic reports.**”*

Independent study classes are rare at LBCC, prompting the interviewer to ask, *“Now most students never do that, how’d you end up doing that?”*

*“**I just went to him** and I said, I want to learn more about the process and how economics works [because] I’m thinking of majoring in it.”*

Ernesto felt special that an admired professor was willing to go through a lot of paperwork to make a class up *“just for me.”*

In the three years he spent at LBCC **he joined clubs that gave him valuable access to people and resources.** For example, he was involved in President’s Ambassadors, which consists of a small group of students, selected on the basis of their academic record and leadership qualities, to represent the president in activities and the community. Being an ambassador is very special and those chosen for this role are formally recognized in the graduation program announcement. But more importantly, they get a letter of recommendation from the Superintendent-President to a four-year university of their choice. They also receive a small scholarship stipend. This program is primarily for full-time students as ambassadors are required to participate in a weekly staff meeting. Ernesto was also in *Leaders Across Campus*, another selective club based on academic eligibility requirements and other screening criteria. Being aware that most students probably do not even know about the existence of Leaders Across Campus, the interviewer asked, *“How did you get hooked up with that?”*



*“**I did that because I’d seen my brother and my friend, were in it already. And I kind of knew about the campus already.**”*

Ernesto’s extensive involvement in extra curricular activities could have interfered with his academic work; however, he felt they helped him stay focused. The benefits of his involvement included being in *“study groups”* with other club members and access to *“insider information”* on what courses to take and what faculty members are like.

*“They helped me on what teachers to take. Sometimes they gave me the book. I got notes. I was prepared before I even got into the class. That helped me out because—like, there’s people that were better in English, and there’s people who were better in math, and all these people were in the group. **We helped each other.**”*

The relational aspects of transfer

LBCC provides students with information on transfer to four-year colleges in various ways: one-on-one counseling, college fairs that bring recruiters on campus, workshops, and college tours. Surprisingly, Ernesto said **he had not participated in any of the organized transfer activities** sponsored by LBCC. The only exception, he said, was when a USC admissions representative visited the campus. The manner in which Ernesto connected with the USC representative illustrates the extent to which students' **transfer choices and opportunities may depend on sophisticated social skills and personal confidence**. We surmised that Ernesto, being a presidential ambassador, learned how to interact naturally and comfortably with individuals in positions of authority. He also seemed to appreciate the benefits of developing important relationships. He described the meeting with the USC recruiter as follows:

*"I went to see her and I introduced myself and it turned out that she was on the Admissions Review Board. I stayed after and I talked to her for awhile. I got to know her really good, and **she helped me to get into SC...**She went out of her way to help me out."*

When the time came for Ernesto to apply to USC, he was able to enlist her help in shepherding his application through the admissions process.

Ernesto also received a lot of help from counselors and teachers. In fact, by his calculations in the three years he was at LBCC **he met with a counselor between 10 and 16 times**. Additionally, when it came to writing the college application essays, he said,

*"**I had my teachers, I had people look at them. Every single person that I talked to kind of gave me advice.**"*

Feeling outclassed

Ernesto comes across as an extrovert who easily made friends with peers, teachers, and even the USC recruiter. When the conversation shifts into USC and the interviewer asks Ernesto to describe his initial impressions, we learn that even he, who up to this moment has personified the model transfer student, experienced the discomfort of difference.

*"At first when I was over there, it was like, **I felt out of place...**The first thing that my teacher in economics asked us was, 'So, what'd you guys do this summer? Did you guys do anything involving economics?' And some of the kids were saying, 'I got to help my parents out with their portfolios.' I was like, 'What? Oh man, this is not going to be a good situation for me', because I just felt out of place."*

The social differences that became apparent in Ernesto's economics class could have been discouraging and made him want to look for a more socially comfortable college. However, the confidence Ernesto developed at LBCC helped him get over the **initial intimidation**.

"Once the class got going, I said, 'You know what? We're at the same place. They don't know any more than I do. They just know about portfolios, but this class isn't about portfolios.' So when we got going, I felt a lot more comfortable."

After having completed 67 UC transferable units and a 3.22 GPA, Ernesto transferred to USC and earned a BA in economics. Now, at the age of 24, he holds a professional position in the corporate sector.

Happy to Have Not Incurred Any Debt: Raquel Roque

Raquel's determination not to get into debt is the main reason for not having transferred. After becoming a registered nurse she decided to work at a hospital and save the money to pay the tuition at a four-year college. At the time of her interview she was waiting to hear from CSU, Long Beach about her application to the nursing program. If she is accepted the hospital where she works will pay for part of the tuition, which will make it possible for her to work and finish the BS without relying on financial aid. After she finishes her baccalaureate degree, she would like to earn a MSN degree at UCLA.



Among the *missing* students, i.e., transfer-ready but did not transfer, of the students we were able to locate, Raquel Roque was the only one who agreed to participate in the interview. Raquel's last semester at LBCC was in Spring 2004, when she graduated with an Associate Degree in Nursing. She had completed all the requirements for transfer to both CSU (Plan B) and UC (Plan C). Moreover, her GPA, 3.51, was one of the highest among the 20 students interviewed, and she had participated in the **Honors program**. In her first semester she was placed in Honors English where she earned an A. She earned a B in the first calculus course. Her transcript shows that she earned mostly A's except in her last year, when she earned mostly C's in the nursing courses required for her nursing degree. Needless to say, given her excellent academic **record she could have had many choices of transfer colleges** but she chose not to continue immediately.

Raquel, like other high-achieving students, **could have transitioned to a four-year college directly from high school**, where she had taken Advanced Placement courses and was in a special academic intensive program. She chose LBCC primarily because it was **affordable and she could save money by living at home and commuting**. She said, *"I always had to work and go to school."*

She was also familiar with LBCC's Honors Program and felt she would have access to good classes and teachers and not have any problems in transferring later on. Moreover, at LBCC she was more likely to be able to get into the classes she needed for nursing than at institutions with highly impacted nursing programs.

She was adamant about not incurring debt in order to pay for college. In particular, she did not want to be put in the same position as her friends, where they felt forced to *"take the first job"* that they could get after college in order to pay off college loans.

"Right now, I don't have any student debt, and I'm happy to be able to say that."

"Right now, I don't have any student debt, and I'm happy to be able to say that."

The benefits of being an Honors student

Raquel described herself as “*pretty aggressive*” and **always able to find the resources she needed**. She **looked for information** on transfer requirements, transfer deadlines, and the transfer process. She was a **loyal user of the writing center** and she also “*got to know*” her professors “*really well*” and frequently sought them out during their office hours.

The Honors Program seemed to be the best place to get information and support. “**Honors**” she said, “**was superior for transfer information.**”

“First, all my professors assumed we were going to transfer. They were always promoting transfer and giving us transfer information.” She also added, “*It really helped to have counselors come into class to talk to us about transfer opportunities and encourage us.*”

Raquel made it clear that she was proactive about getting information but that a lot of people she knew at LBCC “*stay for a long time because they don’t know how to move and they don’t ask.*”

She was very knowledgeable about the procedures and how to prepare for transfer but “*a lot of people don’t have a clue about a major, and you need to declare a major when you apply for transfer. A lot of my friends don’t have a clue about what they want to do. They haven’t had enough experience or taken enough courses, so they don’t know about their major and they stay [at LBCC]*”.

Nag a little more so students can’t miss it

Raquel knew how to get information and make an educational plan but she recognized that not all students were like her and many needed more help. One of the questions she was asked was “*If the president of LBCC asked you what you would change or do differently to help students with transfer, what would you say?*” Raquel said she would recommend:

*“Let students know more about what is available at LBCC.
Make the Transfer Center, financial aid and scholarship information more visible.
From the first semester, stress counseling students on majors.
Find a way to hand everyone information about transfer.”*

Raquel recognized that there is a lot of information available at LBCC for those who know how to look for it. “*I know all the information that’s needed is there, but I guess **it would help to nag a little more so students can’t miss it.***”

Although Raquel had not transferred, she received information to set a clear career and educational path for herself at LBCC and will rely on aid from her employer to finance her continuing education.

On a Shoestring: Juan Ruiz



The grandeur of the architecture and the enormous size of the university were overwhelming, said Juan Ruiz of his visit to UCLA and why he opted for CSU, Long Beach.

“I literally was shivering while I was walking—walking—walking around the campus. Like, ‘oh man’, I just like, I thought I was going to collapse on the UCLA pavement and I thought to myself, when I was walking on the grounds of Long Beach State, I didn’t have the bad vibes, I felt good...it felt like a second home.”

Juan described the halls of University of California, Los Angeles as having “bad vibes”

The majority of high achieving students did not follow Ernesto’s transfer pathway. The story of Juan Ruiz, a Filipino, illustrates the factors that influenced high achieving students to limit their transfer options to local institutions. Like Ernesto, Juan Ruiz is a first generation student from a working-class family. He enrolled at LBCC when he was 18, after graduating from Lakewood High School, where he was in the top five percent of his high school class. Juan Ruiz was a Bank of America Scholar and also had a Rotary Club Scholarship. Juan Ruiz could have easily gone directly into CSU, Long Beach in Fall of 2002, but instead decided to complete the first two years of college at LBCC. Just as Ernesto was set on transferring to USC, **Juan Ruiz’ goal was to transfer to CSU, Long Beach.**

The financial and social benefits derived from community college attendance

Even though Juan Ruiz had his heart set on going to Long Beach State ever since he could remember, there were three reasons that made him decide to complete the first two years at LBCC: the price, the associate degree, and gaining more confidence.

“Long Beach City College, not only has education with value, because of the price, but also the associate degree that comes with it can help you get the inside track to any work whatsoever.”

Juan Ruiz spoke about his personal circumstances:

“Keep in mind, my family was really on—really on a shoestring budget at the time. I think that the two important things, hand in hand, were the price and the associate’s degree. Long Beach City’s degree will have a lot of good weight. It’s really great value. Just compare that to \$1500 for 12 units for one semester over at Long Beach State to like about maybe \$300 or so for tuition at LBCC. It’s definitely a steal.”

For Juan Ruiz the associate degree was something to fall back on “if the bachelor thing doesn’t work out.” It was not just the money but also academic quality. “The caliber of education here at LBCC is, is, it’s good, maybe even better or the equivalent over at any university during the freshman and sophomore years. The decision was very easy.” He also thought that going to LBCC would be a way of “maturing faster...and have more confidence

[when eventually] heading to Long Beach.” Juan Ruiz had several scholarships that helped him pay for his education but he was not in EOPS.

The grandeur of selective universities and anticipatory rejection

Juan Ruiz was in the **Honors program** at LBCC and completed Plan C with a GPA of 3.32, which more than likely made him eligible for admission to many other institutions besides CSU. In his last year at LBCC, Juan Ruiz went on a campus tour to UCLA but something about the campus did not seem “to feel right.” As a student in an Honors program that is certified by UCLA, he had a very good chance of being admitted. However, he said:

“All these buildings, gothic buildings, Royce Hall and all that, it was like, I just—I somehow I was getting a feeling that this wasn’t going to be the university for me. Somehow when I was walking up the steps, visiting all the different buildings, even eating in some of the restaurants, I somehow just had shivers and a bad feeling that this wasn’t going to be where I was going.”

Elaborating more about his feelings for UCLA, Juan Ruiz mentioned having been watching a water polo game between UCLA and Arizona State, “they were doing a PAC 10 water polo match, but I just didn’t feel like this was going to be where I was going to continue on...It was just bad vibes, the aura did not look very favorable for me.”

The competitiveness of UCLA, along with the fear of rejection, also influenced Juan Ruiz’s decision.

“I would say that even though I would give it my best shot and I would have had a strong case, they can only take so many students and I don’t think that...If I wanted UCLA and UCLA did not accept me, I would have been traumatized.”

Anxieties about selective college costs and anticipatory debt

But it was not just the sheer bigness of UCLA or its competitiveness that made Juan Ruiz “shiver.” There were also practical issues of finances, transportation, and residence. He said, “I am living with my parents, and to get to UCLA, I would have to take public transportation. It would be probably easier for me to live in the dorms, but that is going to be adding to the tuition.” As Juan Ruiz talked more about why he had decided not even to apply to UCLA, he spoke at great length about the costs of more selective institutions:

“No doubt, I would love to have been—be at USC or UCLA—heck, I would even love to be going to the East Coast at Harvard. But, you know, transportation and all the cost for room and board and all that, it just—it just did not look like—like I was going to be going. The tuition was a little bit—little bit—it was a little bit too, too, too, a little bit too much, and it was—tuition was a little bit too much.”

Juan Ruiz decided against USC because the tuition was too high. He was also under the impression that **to get admitted one has to have “connections”** to a family or friends who have gone there. “You gotta be connected and you gotta have the funds to pay for that stuff.”



Juan said California State University, Long Beach felt like a second home.

Below is an excerpt of the exchange between the interviewer and Juan Ruiz.

Interviewer: *“When students are making the decision on what school to transfer to, we’ve heard from a lot of students that money is an issue. For example, USC is a very expensive school. But they also have more scholarship money, did anybody help you look into that?”*

Juan Ruiz: *“Yeah, money, money---**It was more for me about retail price**, you know money doesn’t grow on trees. I could easily become accepted at USC and then I wouldn’t be given any scholarships, because everybody wants to get scholarships, everybody wants to get free money. Or you’ll have to be on loans for a long time...even like 20 years after you graduate and get your degree. I don’t want to go on loans because if I don’t get them paid by the date, then everybody’s going to be knocking on my door and get a default and they are going to be taking money out of my paycheck to pay for it.”*

Like Raquel Roque, Juan Ruiz was set against taking out loans. He concluded that, *“UCLA and USC, not worth it [getting in debt], even if I did get accepted.”*

Counselors and clubs: Informal means of academic compliance and validation

Like Ernesto, Juan Ruiz had **continuous and frequent contact with his counselor** and made sure *“everything was accounted for”* in terms of the classes he took. He saw his counselor every month and commented that one of the great things about LBCC is having counselors who can help in the selection of classes that

meet requirements. He also said that *“student life”* had helped him out greatly. Juan Ruiz took advantage of special courses such as *College Study Techniques* and *Orientation for College Success*. Every semester, starting in Fall 2002, he took Learn 617, which is a non-credit course on *Educational Technology Skills for College Students* that provides access to computer labs.

On his first semester Juan Ruiz joined the Order of Tong International, which according to a description in LBCC’s website, is the oldest community college men’s social service club in the United States. It was founded at Long Beach City College in 1927. The club emphasizes academics and athletics. Similar to Ernesto, Juan Ruiz found **that the involvement in clubs helped him be in study groups and** opened doors to other organizations. The members were supportive and provided helpful advice. The volunteer service program sponsored by Tong, he said, *“helped me put the skills I learned from my classes in the community.”* Because membership in Tong requires the maintenance of a minimum GPA there is a built-in pressure for the brothers to be *“academic compliant.”* Another positive aspect of clubs is that *“they [members] make sure all those folks are up to date with their courses. **They***

“That first semester [at the transferred university] was something I will never forget. I was feeling like those American Idol rejects who were not able to go to the next round.”

look out for each other, making sure they are not flaking, they are not dropping out any courses, making sure that they don’t stay here for ten years.”

The Honors Program ranked high in Juan Ruiz’s list of “most valued resources.” Being in the program was a *“privilege”* particularly being able to wear the *Alpha Gamma Sigma Honors Sash* at commencement.

The trauma of first semester—even at a college that feels like a second home

Juan Ruiz viewed CSU, Long Beach as a place where he could feel at home. Nevertheless, **he recalls his first semester as “traumatic.”** He was not able to enroll in the classes he wanted; a fraternity that he wanted to join did not offer him a *bid*; and his math instructor was not very friendly.

“That first semester was something that I will never forget. I was feeling like those American Idol rejects who are not able to go to the next round.”

After that first semester “*baptism by fire*” and learning how to “*jump [the course scheduling] hoops*” he was able to move on. Juan Ruiz, who transferred to Long Beach State in 2005 is scheduled to complete his BA in Information Systems in Fall 2007.



Uncertain Pathways: Narcisa Solis

Narcisa said she followed the curriculum for Plan B (the general education requirements for CSU) but she also took many elective courses, which slowed her down considerably. Although at the time she felt she was taking courses that were of interest to her, she now regrets not having been more disciplined in her course taking. “I took it slow, and I wish that I didn’t. I wish that I would’ve taken all my GE classes, and I would have had just as much of a good time... I’m 23 years old and in my classes [at CSULB] I have 19 year-olds.” Several times during the interview she stressed that students should be advised to take the required General Education classes.

I spent a long time

*“I just kind of got into, like, a zone where **I wasn’t thinking about college**” is the way Narcisa Solis described how she felt in her senior year. When the summer was over and she realized that she didn’t have a college to go to, she followed the advice of her friends and enrolled at LBCC. *“I was really like, okay, summer’s over, and I’m not working, I don’t have anything to do, you know. I liked school. So I didn’t have anything against school. So I just went and I applied. I took, you know, four classes. I liked them, and I just stayed there. **I spent a long time at LBCC.**”* In fact, Narcisa Solis stayed at LBCC for four years and she accumulated almost 97 credits, but could only transfer 70 to CSU-Long Beach.*

Limited contact with counselors

At first **Narcisa did not recall having seen a counselor** during the time she was at LBCC. She said that the only time **she visited the Transfer Center was to use the computers** to complete the online application for CSU-Long Beach.

However, later in the interview she remembered having made an appointment to see a counselor to talk about her major. From her perspective the meeting with the counselor was not very helpful.

“They gave me a mathematics packet. It was just, like, three to four papers stapled together. My experience was that they’re like, ‘Okay, what exactly do you want me to help you with?’ And I wasn’t really sure what to ask her, like, what I need help in.”

Learning about transfer

Transfer was the goal that Narcisa indicated in her application to LBCC. Throughout her four years at LBCC she took courses that met Plan B requirements as well as the courses for a major in mathematics. Most of what she heard about transfer came from casual comments made by her math teachers.

“My math teachers, they talked about transferring. One of them would say, ‘If you want to get a job at Microsoft, they’re going to hire you if you go to UCLA or Harvard or MIT or Cal Tech.’

Narcisa earned the associate degree and graduated from LBCC with a 2.90 GPA. At the time of her interview she had been at CSU, Long Beach for one semester.

The Pain of Rejection: Graciela Rodriguez

Graciela transferred to CSU, Long Beach because USC did not accept her as a transfer student. “It’s kind of sad” she said, “but I applied two times.” The first time she was rejected, as a high school senior, she was disappointed but she was optimistic that by coming to LBCC she would still have another chance. “The first time [I did not get in] I was fine with being not accepted, because I wasn’t done. But then, the second time I applied and I didn’t....”



Graciela Rodriguez is a Latina who enrolled at LBCC right out of high school at the age of 18 and earned her AA within 2.5 years with a GPA of 2.90. By the time she left LBCC she had earned a total of 82 transferable units. She enrolled in LBCC because she was not admitted to USC, which had been her first choice. She had also applied and been admitted to CSU, Long Beach and San Diego State University but decided against them. Instead, her plan was to complete the first two years at LBCC and once again apply to USC. However, she was rejected by USC once again.

Graciela had been a very good student in high school. She took Advanced Placement (AP) and honors classes and her scores in LBCC’s basic skills placement test allowed her to start out in transfer-level English and mathematics.

On paper, Graciela was eligible for transfer to UC, however she only applied to other CSU campuses, including San Diego, Fullerton, Dominguez Hills, and Long Beach, where she decided to go. Graciela’s decisions in regards to transfer were influenced by her desire to go to USC as well as **concerns about distance, financial considerations, reluctance about leaving home, and the familiarity she felt with CSULB,** where one of her sisters was also a student.

“I chose Long Beach, my sister was there and because I already know it. I knew more about it [CSULB] than Fullerton and it was also closer because of the traffic.”

In response to the interviewer’s probing as to why she did not apply to UC’s, Graciela **admitted to being a “procrastinator”** and waiting until the last minute to submit her applications. *“For USC, I always had time but for the other ones, I didn’t write the essay. So, I was like, ‘Oh, I’ll probably get into my dream school this time’ so that’s another reason why I didn’t apply to the UC’s.”* She added, *“but I’m pretty sure I could have gone to one of them.”*

At LBCC, Graciela majored in journalism, and according to her she took all the courses she would need to transfer to USC’s journalism program. **She felt CSULB did not have a good journalism program, so she will graduate in 2007 with a major in History.** A likely career option would be teaching, which is not of interest to her. Her other option is to continue onto graduate school and earn an MBA. Graciela did not receive career counseling and said **she never went to LBCC’s career center** because she *“knew what she wanted to do.”* However, as it turned out she gave up journalism, went into history, and now is considering changing again and pursuing a degree in business.

When asked by the interviewer, *“were there any people in LBCC or student services or any programs that were your biggest supporters and motivators for you to transfer?”*, Graciela mentioned a counselor who helped her a *“little”* but it was mostly her own motivation because she knew she wanted to transfer. She also mentioned her sister having earned the BA at CSULB, she also had to do the same.

“I had to, not because my sister has it, but because my mom is expecting it.”

California State University, Long Beach (CSULB) is one of the top choices for transfer students at LBCC.

In 2006-2007, 488 LBCC students transferred to CSULB.

Speaking of her mother she said, *“It’s not even that my mom knows what a BA is. It’s that she knows that you have to have this [BA] for school. She didn’t have what we have, because she came from Mexico. So it was always, like, ‘You have to go to school.’ I don’t think I really had anybody here [LBCC] who would tell me, ‘Are you going to transfer? Where are you going to go?’”*

Graciela recalled that one of her journalism instructors had been encouraging, *“She always told me that I was a good writer. She was the only one, always telling me I was a good writer, so I really liked her.”* Another instructor told students which four-year colleges had good journalism programs, *“but he never told me, individually, anything.”*

At the time of her interview Graciela was 23 and would be graduating with her BA in History, in May 007, just a few months after she was interviewed. She was planning to continue for her MA immediately but had not yet done much research on her options. However, she was thinking of once again applying to USC.

It's Hard to Leave: Marisol Carrion

Marisol Carrion, a Latina, started at LBCC in 2002 and in 2006, having completed 117 credits with a GPA of 3.75, she transferred to CSU, Fullerton (CSUF). However, after one semester at Fullerton she returned to LBCC because she didn't "feel right" there. "They didn't make it feel as homey as here. I just felt like it wasn't where I was supposed to be."

Like all students who go to LBCC, Marisol was given an assessment test to determine her placement in English and math. Her test scores placed her in the level below transfer for English and in transfer-level math. Her reading scores put her at the proficiency level; however, she chose to enroll in a developmental reading course. She was able to meet the UC transfer requirements.

At LBCC Marisol majored in music and by all indications she must have been an excellent student because she earned just about all A's in her music courses.

As a high school student, Marisol was in AP and honors program and in a Distinguished Scholars program. At LBCC she was not in the Honors program although given her grades she probably qualified. She was involved in many clubs, including choir and the drill team. At LBCC she was an elected officer in Alpha Gamma Sigma, an Honors Society Program and she also was in Leaders Across Campus, like Ernesto Ramirez.

Marisol enrolled in LBCC because she did not know that she could go anywhere else and because her brother was a student. "And" she added, **"it's cheaper."**

"I didn't really look into a four-year university. I thought that what I had to do was come here [to LBCC]."

She mentioned that the high school counselors advised students to go to LBCC because it is cheaper and they get "actual instructors" instead of "student instructors" as in the UC's or CSU's.

Marisol received financial aid and was also the recipient of the Rotary Club scholarship. Her intent always was to transfer to CSULB. However, when she applied she was not admitted to the music program and thus went instead to the only other school she had applied, CSUF. She considered applying to USC but she didn't think she had the qualifications to get in: **"I wasn't smart enough to go there."**

Marisol mentioned that she learned a great deal from her teachers and counselors, who told her she could go to any college. She also made use of the Transfer Center. But **she did not participate in campus tours.**

At the time of her interview in Spring 2007, Marisol had returned to LBCC and was taking 12 credits in child development in order to qualify for a regular job as a teacher's assistant. She had also decided not to transfer for the time being, but perhaps in the future after she was employed full-time.

Marisol wished that LBCC would send **more information about activities and deadlines through mailings to the home or through the internet**, rather than depending only on flyers posted on campus.

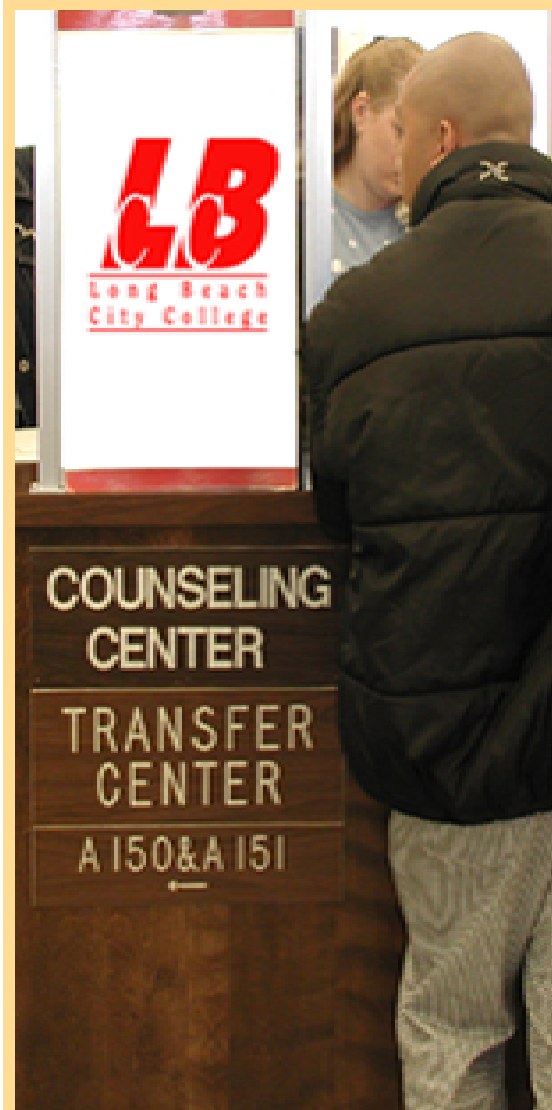
Cultural and Resource Audit of Transfer

Over the course of the project, in addition to interviewing students, the *Missing 87* team collected data through observations on campus, interviews with colleagues, and analysis of campus information sources, such as the web site and class schedule. Five members interviewed a variety of stakeholders. These included, but were not limited to, faculty members, counselors, board members and alumni. Four team members analyzed printed documents such as course catalogs, brochures, and articulation agreements while also looking at documents that were found on the LBCC website. Finally, four members conducted observations of the transfer/counseling center, transfer fairs and the financial aid office.

Team members used a Self Assessment Inventory (SAI) to help guide their research. The SAI is an assessment tool developed by CUE in collaboration with researchers at the University of Massachusetts Boston (Dowd, Gabbard & Bensimon, 2006) based on a national case study of transfer from community colleges to highly selective colleges and universities (Gabbard, et al., 2006), and life history interviews with community college students who successfully transferred to highly selective colleges (Pak, Bensimon, Malcom, Marquez, & Park, 2006). The tool is a series of indicators of exemplary transfer practices arranged in four domains of the transfer function: transfer counseling services for students; financial support for students seeking to transfer to four-year institutions; institutional transfer policies and practices; and partnerships and collaboration. A complete data collection based on the SAI indicators is intended to provide a comprehensive audit of transfer culture and practices.

Completion of the SAI gives a 360 degree view of the organizational structure of transfer at LBCC. Participants wrote field notes and entered their data into Survey Monkey, an internet-based survey system, or sent their notes to Kimberly James, the Research Assistant.

Signs in the Admissions and Records Office at LAC point students to the Counseling and Transfer Centers nearby



The Results

The resource audit conducted by LBCC faculty and staff using CUE’s Transfer Self-Assessment Inventory took stock of a large number and variety of information resources. Printed information included flyers, brochures, catalogs, booklets, guidebooks, information request postcards, and application forms. These were produced by LBCC itself or by four-year colleges and universities or, in some cases such as in a guidebook to medical school admissions, by publishing houses. Printed information was supplemented by the college’s web pages featuring transfer information, as well as a number of state, university, or private organization web sites such as www.assist.org (California’s official state guide to transfer requirements and articulation agreements), www.csumentor.org (the CSU systems on-line advising site), www.collegesource.org (a centralized source of four-year college catalogs), and www.eureka.org (a career information web-site).

However, the resource audit also revealed that such information may never reach its intended audience. Our research team’s observational data highlighted dust on postcards, a lack of posted information in areas outside the immediate physical space of counseling centers, a page limitation on printing from web sites, and an underutilization of transfer planning web sites. For example, a respondent in the counseling area commented that the

www.collegesource.org site was a valuable resource, but one that was seldom used, perhaps due to lack of advertising about its availability. An LBCC faculty member on the research team observed, based on his teaching experience, that many students would not have the computer skills to find transfer information. These comments highlight the fact that the value of web sites for counseling is low if only a few students use them. Poor signage made it difficult for the LBCC researchers to physically find the main transfer counseling centers on their own campus, suggesting that students too would need to be persistent in their search for them.



Student Success Transfer Center at the Liberal Arts Campus (LAC)

The difference between the availability of information and its value to inform students of their transfer options is emphasized in field notes recording statements by a researcher who reviewed the college’s web site:

“All the stuff is there, but it is not... I know my students and I have so many students who are clueless and ...having a bigger insert, having a more public face, having a link on the website [from the main page], [being] more in your face. [Telling them,] this is a possibility for you, Look, go here.”

Most community colleges, which have long prided themselves as open access institutions, are not well-equipped for major marketing efforts. That the burden of communicating complex requirements to first-generation students, immigrants, and others who are still

Learning how to navigate academic systems falls to community colleges is, therefore, unfortunate. The budget for copying in the LBCC Transfer Center in 2007 was about \$1,000 (see appendix for a copy of the budget). Compare this to the resources invested by highly selective institutions, reaching out to the most academically savvy and prepared students, to recruit their freshman classes using four-page view books and brochures. Information about complex choices in other realms, such as health care for example, are typically conveyed with professional graphic designs. The enterprising *do-it-yourselfer* at LBCC was able to save on the copying budget by using small type and a jam-packed design, but the resulting document is far from inviting. Other published pieces at the college, such as the course catalog, similarly face the challenge of including too much information in too little space.

Discussion among the LBCC researchers about developing a *transfer culture* highlighted the need to make transfer information much more prominent. By comparison, they noted that financial aid information was prominently featured in a four-page color insert in the middle of the course schedule. One researcher argued that transfer counseling and resources were available to students who knew how to find them. But *“students on campus tend to have to seek us out, rather than our being able to look out for them.”*

There were numerous ways in which the campus did reach out to students, including transfer fairs, transfer presentations by counselors in classrooms, and field trips to four-year colleges. In Spring 2007, the counseling office had recently completed an outreach effort in which counselors called students whose credit record indicated they were nearing transfer eligibility to ask them to make an advising appointment. However, the observational data revealed that the quality of this outreach was uneven and the budget was inadequate to reach large numbers of students.

Transfer workshops, at which students could get assistance in selecting their courses and completing four-year college applications, were sometimes held, but none took place during the spring term of our study.

The development of early alert advising systems, which inform students when they reach important curricular milestones, was stymied because the college lacked a uniform college email system. Unlike most four-year colleges, which assign a college email account to students and expect them to use it, LBCC collected students' personal email addresses and used those for correspondence. Not surprisingly difficulties ensued as a result of out-of-date and invalid addresses.

Transfer fairs are currently a centerpiece of LBCC's efforts to reach out to students. It is unclear how many participants the fairs attract. One researcher who visited one found very few students in attendance, while another found long lines. The Transfer Center calendar for Spring 2007 indicated that representatives from a variety of institutions in the four-year sector would participate. These included private non-profit institutions such as Mount St. Mary's, a consortium of Historically Black Colleges and Universities, private for-profit institutions such as Vanguard and Phoenix Universities and the DeVry Institute, as well as nearby CSUs (Long Beach, Dominguez Hills, Los Angeles, Fullerton, California Polytechnic University Pomona) and UCs (Los Angeles, Irvine, Santa Barbara).



There were notable differences in the level of participation of four-year institutions at the transfer fairs depending on their level of selectivity and enrollment demand. The most selective institutions acted like *choice* colleges, with the ability to select among numerous applicants, whereas those with enrollment capacity acted more like *supply* colleges. Supply colleges marketed themselves in numerous ways at the transfer fair, as illustrated by the range of activities taking place at the *Day with Dominguez Hills* event held on the LBCC quad. An LBCC researcher described what she learned through an informal interview with the university representative about how the event was planned and from observing interactions between counselors and students:

“A person in the transfer office invites both deans and faculty members from different departments to be part of the fair, so they can field specific questions regarding their department’s requirements; she thinks it’s having a positive impact. I saw representatives from the Music department, Human Services, Liberal Studies, Army Reserve Officer’s Training, and Financial Aid (whose representative was speaking in Spanish to a student!). There were brochures available from Public Administration, English, Anthropology, and World Cultures as well.

She also has an evaluator present, so that on-site admissions can be done. She wants to be pro-active in order to increase the number of transfer students to Dominguez Hills, and also encourages her faculty to be available to make presentations in community college classrooms. Once students are at Dominguez Hills, they seem to do well, so her goal is to increase the number of transfers. As part of her pro-active stance, she also makes sure that transfer fairs are held where they will be visible to the greatest number of students (near food/financial aid/the bookstore).”



The LBCC researcher learned that CSU, Dominguez Hills also recruits transfer students through telemarketing, mailings, and special receptions for transfer students. Vanguard University, a for-profit institution, was similarly active in marketing itself by providing information about tuition discounts, federal and state grants (Pell and Cal), department-level contact names who could advise on selecting a major, and on-site assessment of transfer-credit eligibility. CSU, Long Beach and Dominguez Hills were the most frequent participants, sending representatives to provide information on campus fifteen and twelve times, respectively. There were a total of 66 visits from four-year institutions in Spring 2007, with 40 of those requiring appointments. All of the ten UC and Cal Poly Pomona visits required students to make an appointment, in comparison to 25 of the 35 CSU visits, suggesting that it would not be easy for a student to meet with a UC representative without advance planning.

Major Findings

In this section we summarize the major findings from the student interviews and audit of resources and services. The findings are organized thematically as follows: *informational, structural, practices, policy, cultural and relational*. For each theme, we discuss barriers and enablers to transfer, and suggest potential solutions to enhance the culture of transfer at LBCC.

In 2006–2007, 163 LBCC students transferred to California State University, Dominguez Hills, including 32 African American and 46 Latino students.

Informational

Barriers:

- **Students do not spend enough time interacting with counselors.** One of the interviewees explained, *“I think as counselors, a lot of times it’s a one shot deal. I mean [students] come in [here] and we meet with them for just a half an hour. And within that half an hour there’s not time to really build that rapport... And to have students come back another time, that may or may not happen.... When they come to sit down with us we have to think that this is our shot at giving them information.”*
- **Students accumulate too many credits.** Students would benefit from talking to counselors more regularly and consulting the most recent course catalogue as degree and transfer requirements change yearly. By the time they meet the degree or transfer requirements, students have accumulated a number of unnecessary credits.
- **Lack of awareness about basic information, processes, and support programs.** While some student interviewees, especially those who transferred, took advantage of LBCC’s educational and support resources, others were unaware of what the campus offers. In particular, students lack an understanding of the ins and outs of financial aid. One team member noted, *“Students are horribly misinformed about financing, which came up in the student interviews. Students mention that others don’t apply to USC because it’s expensive. Some students right off don’t apply to UC or USC because of financing. [One student] did not apply because of the application fee. They could probably get a fee waiver, but students don’t know.”*
- **Lack of capacity for just-in-time communication with students.** There is no uniform email system for students at the college. Students use multiple email addresses (or do not have email at all). At one time the college provided campus email accounts but found that most students did not use the service, so it was discontinued. Accordingly, it is very difficult to communicate essential information directly through email. A new requirement that financial aid students must activate debit cards through email may increase the number of students who the college can reach by email. However, the new policy may create problems for students who are not seasoned email users.
- **Lack of capacity for just-in-time communication with faculty.** Information has sometimes been emailed to faculty to pass along to students in classes, but that strategy has been unreliable. One member of the team explained that a lot of information is not received by faculty members and/or passed on to the students. One team member said, *“The messages we get from the Transfer Center are not received by the majority of the people who are teaching at the college [particularly adjuncts who do not have a college email address], and probably if they are received then chances are they are not being communicated to the students. Ideally those messages will be sent directly to the students.”*
- **Lack of computer skills constrains use of electronic resources.** In addition, while the website features very useful information, team members felt that students would need to have sufficient computer skills to access the information. *“You have to have computer skills to find the website. If you don’t have computer skills you are not going to be able to find the Transfer Center at this website.”*

- Inadequate signage.** One student interviewee who actively sought out services on campus noted that LBCC students would be better informed if there was better signage and visibility of campus resources. Even when team members set out to conduct observations of various offices, they had a difficult time finding them. The fact that faculty members did not know where offices like the Transfer Center² and Financial Aid were located provided evidence that both students and faculty members lacked knowledge about where students can seek assistance and resources. A faculty member who tried to find the Transfer Center said, *“The very first time I tried to find the Transfer Center I had to ask at three different offices before I could even find it and then I just kind of wandered into the counseling center and down the hall and I finally found it. I mean it really was a hassle to find.”* If a faculty member has trouble finding the transfer center, imagine how difficult it would be for a student. Students who are easily frustrated may not persist until they find the correct location.

Enablers:

- In-class transfer presentations.** Some students found themselves in classes where counselors made presentations about their services to help students attain degree and transfer goals. These brief presentations can effectively reach a number of students at once with vital dates and information to promote transfer.

- Information on the website is readily available.** However, as noted above, students needed to have computer skills to access this information. After analyzing the LBCC website, a team member noted, *“LBCC maintains an excellent web site that is complex, detailed and readable. One can find the Student Services page, then go to the Transfer Center and find transfer guides for various majors and for many different colleges and universities. At the very bottom of the page a student encounters General Education course patterns (the A, B and C transfer bands) and a transfer guide.”*

- Counselors and Instructors.** Students attributed successful transfer to counselors and instructors who reached out to them and helped with various aspects of the application process. Unfortunately, faculty members are generally unequipped with specific information regarding the transfer process, deadlines, requirements, etc. Also, the

Long Beach City College’s Transfer Website



²In this report, we refer to the Student Success/Transfer Services Center as the *Transfer Center* interchangeably.

counseling office lacks the capacity to provide services in a timely fashion and to all students.

Potential Solutions:

- **Make transfer expectations and information an integral part of classrooms and the curriculum.** The college's own counselors and admissions officers from four -year institutions can be invited as guest speakers. A new and creative program called *Don't Cancel that Class* schedules LBCC counselors on days in which instructors will be absent. Dissemination of information about transfer can also be integrated into all courses, including basic skills courses, through posters and marketing brochures.

- **Improve the quality and quantity of signage and make it easier for students to know where to seek resources.** One student interviewee made the recommendation *"to have large signs directing students to the Transfer Center and provide more information when transfer college representatives will be on campus."* Signs would not only make offices and programs easier to locate, it would increase awareness that transfer-related services are available to students.

- **Foster a culture of electronic communication among students and faculty:** LBCC would benefit from establishing various means of communicating with students and full-and part-time faculty, including email accounts, text-messaging, instructors' announcements, and electronic bulletin boards. Providing email accounts in particular offer a number of advantages. Campus offices have an easy way to disseminate *uniform* and accurate information to students and faculty regarding academic and transfer policies to students. Emails can be tailored depending on students' course enrollment and class-standing or faculty members' teaching commitments. For example, students and faculty taking or teaching transfer-level courses could obtain information about an on-campus transfer fair. Similarly, students and faculty taking or teaching basic skills courses could learn about academic support services. Now that email constitutes a basic form of communications technology, it is important to help students familiarize themselves with it and use it as a means to enhance their computing skills. Finally, campus email accounts could be a way for students to develop their identity as



Left: Materials about colleges and universities



Bottom: Students can use the computers in the Transfer Center for many uses, including applying for universities and signing up for classes.

LBCC students and enhance student life on campus. If it is not feasible to introduce campus email accounts to all students in the near future, then efforts should be made to obtain current email addresses at the time of registration

Structural

Barrier:

- **Physical location of Transfer Centers.** The two Transfer Centers at LBCC are located in small offices with several computers for students. Over the years the Transfer Center on the Liberal Arts campus has lost counseling space to other departments. Without sufficient space to house counselors and essential resources such as handbooks and four-year college course catalogs, students do not receive the full range of transfer services that may potentially be

offered to them. Below are photographs of the Transfer Centers at both campuses.

Potential Solution:

- **Separate the Transfer Centers from the Student Success Centers.** LBCC is planning to create Student Success Centers that will provide academic support and transfer services. It is important to keep the Transfer Centers separate so their function and identity are not lost to students. LBCC has an opportunity to make space for transfer facilities and support functions in the LAC-A Building quad renovations and the PCC-G building remodeling. Creating these facilities will symbolically demonstrate to students that LBCC prioritizes transfer and makes it an integral part of its mission.



*Left: Inside the Transfer Center at LAC
Bottom: Inside the Transfer Center at PCC*



- **Make the Transfer Centers visible and inviting.** The ideal Transfer Center has conference rooms to hold workshops on transfer-related topics and information sessions led by recruiters from four-year colleges; an entire wall space of transfer books and catalogs; a computer room to research schools and complete applications; and enough office space for transfer counselors to meet with students privately. The Transfer Center will also be marked on the campus map and have clear signage so students – and faculty members – can find it easily.

Practices

Barrier:

- **Access to four-year college recruiters.** Currently only schools CSUs, with possibly the exception of Cal Poly Pomona, have open transfer fairs. None of the UC campuses have open transfer fairs. Meeting with a recruiter is by appointment only. One of the researchers commented that requiring appointments could be perceived as “elitist” and unwelcoming. Students may be more likely to attend a fair that is open to all students instead of scheduling an appointment. Having to make an appointment may be intimidating for students who are not sure what questions to ask and feel apprehensive about meeting a stranger, particularly from an institution that has an established reputation as selective.

Enabler:

- **The Transfer Center provides students with opportunities to visit colleges outside of the local area.** During an interview with a counselor, members learned that the transfer staff

coordinates 5-day campus visits to Northern California universities during Spring Break. Both transfer coordinators, as well as two male and two female chaperones provided through the EOPS Office, travel with 100 students on the tour. A campus tour to universities in the San Diego area is in the planning stages for Spring 2008. Most trips involve a nominal charge of about twenty-five dollars. In addition, there is a special trip to UC Berkeley where students attend a summer transfer event. The students who are admitted into the special program receive free transportation, accommodations and meals.

Potential Solutions:

- **Determine which students make appointments with university recruiters and whether particular groups of students are less likely to do so.** Find out from students about the process and how they feel about having to make an appointment.
- **Meet with the recruiters who require appointments and seek their feedback on the process.** It would be instructive to compare appointments to walk-in advising during the on-campus recruitment process with four-year college representatives. It may also be useful to prepare students with holding a conversation with a four-year recruiter, i.e., know what questions to ask, emphasize their interest in the school, highlight their accomplishments, etc.
- **Document student participation in recruitment activities.** Find a way to monitor which students take advantage of recruitment activities in order to assess the need for special outreach.

- **Invite instructors of basic skills and other fields to create assignments connected to transfer.** Instructors at all levels could create assignments to teach students how to research colleges, how to create an educational plan, how to prepare for an appointment with a recruiter, how to write a personal statement, etc.

Policy

Barrier:

- **Counselors have limited availability for individual appointments.** LBCC can hire a limited number of counselors due to budgetary constraints set by California law. California Education Code 84362, popularly referred to as the *50% law*, requires that half of current expenses in education go towards instructors' salaries. California Code of Administrative Regulations 5 CCR s 51025 requires a 75/25 ratio between full- and part-time faculty members. Hiring full-time counselors affects the college's ability to hire instructors. LBCC created the Counseling 1 class to help counselors reach more students, but the courses fill up to capacity, and students interested in enrolling are unable to do so. The counselors' teaching loads and time spent on clerical tasks limit their opportunities for individualized counseling.

Enabler:

- **The Early Intervention Workshops.** This program helps students interact with LBCC's counselors and counseling system early in their time at LBCC through activities like early bird registration, new student information sessions, and student success

workshops. The expectation is for the Transfer Center staff to contact students who took the English/math/reading assessment tests and completed the LBCC application in order to set up appointments.

- **The Counseling 1 Class (Orientation to College Success) has been expanded from 1/2 to 1 unit, doubling the contact hours from 9 to 18.** This change substantially increases the amount of transfer and financial aid information that reaches students. The expanded time in this class provides an opportunity for students to develop a comprehensive educational plan with the assistance of professional counselors.

Potential Solution:

- **Review the organization of counselors' assignments and responsibilities.** It is possible that some of the procedural tasks carried out by counselors could be assumed by clerical workers. There may also be a need to review the adequacy of counseling services and to compare resources with peer colleges.
- **Expand the number of counseling classes – and the number of counseling staff members:** Linking the counseling staff increase with offering more counseling classes will help LBCC meet its obligations pursuant to California Education Code 84362. The orientation class could also perhaps serve as a cohort program for incoming students so it serves educational, advising, and retention functions.

Cultural

Barrier:

- **Faculty involvement in transfer.** One of the outcomes of the project was the instructors' realization that they can play a more proactive role in increasing transfer outcomes. One team member said the following about transfer: *"As an institution we all have to speak it, own it and have that as our mission. It's meaningful if it gets reinforced."* Another instructor on the team said, *"We need to do a lot more. It seems that maybe we are doing a better job of getting ready to transfer and then sort of cutting them loose, where we need to do a lot more hand holding transferring them."* One faculty member spoke about the importance of being a role model *"On the syllabus, I list all of the places that I went to college."* It was noted that faculty members could be more proactive. Instead of saying *"Go to the Transfer Center,"* they can show students where the Transfer Center is located or invite a counselor to speak in the class.

Enabler:

- **Increased awareness of the need to build a stronger transfer culture.** LBCC does not have a very strong transfer culture. However, there seems to be a shift in the way that services are being delivered and the project has had an impact on the participants. Instructors have reported talking about transfer in their classes, inviting counselors to give presentations, and one instructor in collaboration with the transfer coordinator created a Power-Point presentation on transfer to be shown in classes.

Potential Solution:

- **Create professional development opportunities on FLEX day on the role of faculty in the transfer process.** Schedule at least one Flex session every year to discuss the various practices that instructors use to introduce students to transfer opportunities and assist them in transfer planning.

Relational

Barrier:

- **Transfer anxiety.** Students experienced transfer anxiety stemming from fears about cost, not belonging, leaving home, and generally from lack of exposure and knowledge of higher education beyond LBCC. Transfer anxiety prevented qualified students from considering selective institutions, in California and nationally, as a transfer possibility. A transfer counselor shared that about 75% of the students who participate in bus tours to northern California colleges have never been outside the immediate Southern California area. An Honors Student described UCLA as a place that gave him the *"shivers."*

Enablers:

- **Learning from successful transfers.** LBCC students could learn from others who have made the transition to places outside the immediate geographic area how it can be done. Seeing students like themselves being successful could be a powerful motivator.
- **Actively reaching out to students.** Counselors noted that students are always grateful for being called and

invited for an office appointment. One counselor gives students her/his phone number and encourages them to call at any time if they need help. In addition, they also tell students that they will check their applications on-line. These practices provide a personal touch that may help students overcome barriers to transfer.

Potential Solutions:

- **Anti-anxiety programs.** Ernesto, featured in the first narrative case, was highly influenced by his brother's example and went on to USC. Needless to say, not everyone has a brother who can serve as a model. But it would be possible to create programs to reduce students' *transfer anxiety*. Psychologists who work with clients that suffer phobias, e.g., fear of high spaces, fear of driving over bridges, fear of public speaking use behavioral modification techniques to acclimatize people to their fears and gradually expose them to different degrees of anxiety provoking situations. Similarly, students who do not see themselves as potential transfers or who are fearful of the unknown could be introduced to the idea of transfer gradually.
- **Expose students to the many types of colleges.** One suggestion was to ask faculty members to wear clothing from the university that they attended so that students can see where faculty members went to college. The purpose would be to make a personal connection and to encourage students to talk to their professors about where they went to school and their experiences.

Communicating the Results



Presentations

In May 2007, team members presented the work of the Missing 87 Project, including preliminary findings, to the LBCC Board of Trustees and to the Superintendent. Team members will schedule another meeting with the Superintendent-President to discuss implementing recommendations and possible solutions for redressing the *transfer gap*.

In July 2007, Hannah Alford, LBCC's Research Analyst, presented at the CAMP research meeting about the Missing 87 project. Titled *Engaging Faculty in Research*, the presentation focused on the inquiry methods being used at LBCC.

In October 2007 USC doctoral students Lindsey Malcom and Amalia Marquez and three LBCC colleagues in the project, Hannah Alford (Research Analyst), Mike Tuitasi (Dean of Counseling), and Blanca Galicia (Counselor) presented an overview of the *Missing 87 Project* at the *Ensuring Transfer Success Conference* in San Jose. The presentation is titled, *The transfer gap project: Inquiry into "transfer-ready" community college students who do not transfer*.

In October 2007, E. M. Bensimon, Director of the project gave talks about the project in

Washington DC, at the Latino Summit and at the American Council on Education. She also spoke about the project at the Grantmakers in Education annual meeting in Albuquerque, New Mexico.

Digital Media for LBCC Faculty Members

Two *Missing 87* project team members, Matthew Lawrence, a Philosophy instructor, and Ruben Page, Transfer Coordinator, worked in partnership to develop a PowerPoint presentation about transfer information and services. The presentation provides a schedule of Summer 2007 and Fall 2007 transfer activities, including workshops, presentations by institutional recruiters, transfer fairs, etc. The PowerPoint will be distributed to all the instructors with the suggestion that it be shown at the beginning of class, while attendance is being taken. The PowerPoint will signal the importance of transfer by taking it into the classroom and making it more visible.

California Benchmarking Project

In June 2007, CUE began the *California Benchmarking Project* (CBP) with funding from The William and Flora Hewlett Foundation and the Ford Foundation. The CBP represents collaboration among community colleges, four-year college liaisons, and CUE. The *Missing 87* project provided the opportunity to design and test processes and tools that would eventually feed into the much larger *California Benchmarking Project*. Many of the inquiry tools that we are creating for the CBP Assessment Toolkit derive from what we learned during the *Missing 87* project

By the end of the project, the Missing 87 Project team accomplished a number of research activities. The following timeline depicts the quality and quantity of work accomplished:

Table 6: Timeline of Missing 87 Project Activities and Methods

Time	Description of Activity
December 2006	Planning meeting
January 2007	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Creation of a profile of students that fell into the <i>transfer gap</i> ■ Organization and convening of the LBCC <i>Missing 87 Inquiry Group</i>
February 2007	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Orientation to interview methods, interview assignments and logistics ■ Students recruited for interviews ■ Team members interviewed students and audited their transfer and cultural resources by doing document analysis, informal interviews with colleagues, and observations on campus ■ Initial data discussions
March 2007	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Data collection completed ■ Team met to continue discussing their data, experiences, and what was learned from the data collection ■ Team members analyzed interview transcripts and cultural and resource audit data ■ CUE researchers interviewed team participants
April 2007	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Continued analyzing student interview transcripts and began writing report on findings and recommendations ■ Completed a draft of the report on the findings of the interviews
May 2007	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Finalized a draft of the report on the findings of cultural and resource audit ■ CUE researchers did a second round of project participant interviews ■ Preliminary report with project findings presented to LBCC Superintendent-President and Board of Trustees

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Appendix A

LONG BEACH CITY COLLEGE GENERAL EDUCATION PLANS Academic Year 2006-2007

PLAN A The General Education Requirements for the Associate Degree: Designed for students planning to obtain an Associate Degree. The general education requirement is only a component to the Associate Degree. Refer to “Degrees and Programs - Plan A ” in the LBCC catalog for complete degree requirements.

PLAN B The CSU GE-Breadth Requirements: Designed for students transferring to the California State University (CSU). Courses on this pattern are lower division general education breadth requirements specific to the California State University and used to obtain a full or partial certification.

PLAN C The Intersegmental General Education Transfer Curriculum (IGETC) Requirements: Designed for students transferring to the University of California (UC) or the California State University (CSU). Courses on this pattern are lower division general education requirements unique to IGETC and established by the UC and CSU.

Private University Transfer: Most private universities have specific lower division and general education requirements. It is **HIGHLY RECOMMENDED** that students consult the catalog of the college/university to which they plan to transfer. A counselor may assist students develop a plan consistent with their educational goals. Students are advised to plan early so that they will be well prepared at the time of transfer.

	Plan A	Plan B	Plan C
English Composition	One Class Required	One Class Required	One Class Required for UC & CSU
Communication and Analytical Thinking	One Class Required	One Class Required	One Class Required for UC & CSU
Mathematics	No Class Required	One Class Required	One Class Required
Natural Sciences	One Class Required	Two Classes Required	Two Classes Required
American History	One Class Required	3 Units minimum required for CSU only	3 Units minimum required for CSU only
Political Science	One Class Required	One Class Required for CSU only	One Class Required for CSU only
Humanities and Arts	One Class Required	Three classes required	Three classes required
Social Sciences	One class required	Three classes requires	Three classes requires
Health Education (Plan A) Lifelong Understanding & Self-Development (Plan B)	3 Units minimum in health education	3 units in lifelong understanding	No requirement
Grade Point Average	For graduation: 2.0 (may be higher in some fields)	For admission: 2.0 (may be higher for some majors)	For admission: 2.4 (may be higher for some majors)

**Please note that this is a simplified outline of the 3 plans. Each area has specific courses that must be taken to fulfill the requirements.*

Appendix B

LONG BEACH CITY COLLEGE Transfer Budget 2005-2007

ACCOUNT	2005	2006	2007
Coordination	\$114,661. 00	\$126,791. 00	\$136,905. 00
Clerical Assistance	\$45,398.0 0	\$45,398.0 0	\$45,852.0 0
Staff Benefits	\$54,851.0 0	\$58,732.0 0	\$62,606.0 0
Non Instructional Supplies	\$0.00	\$467.00	\$1,006.00
Food	\$528.00	\$203.00	\$176.00
Transportation (Bus)	\$0.00	\$1,594.00	\$0.00
Postage	\$225.00	0	\$87.00
TOTAL	\$215,663. 00	\$233,185. 00	\$246,632. 00

Appendix C

CENTER FOR URBAN EDUCATION'S TRANSFER SELF-ASSESSMENT INVENTORY (SAI) Summary of Indicators of Effective Practices

This document describes the purpose and development of CUE's web-based Transfer Self-Assessment Inventory. It also provides a summary of the indicators of effective practice that are used to guide data collection based on observations and document analysis of transfer culture and practices.

The Transfer Access Self-Assessment Inventory is designed to enable community colleges to examine the extent to which their institutional policies and practices promote or inhibit transfer from community colleges to four-year institutions. The inventory is a tool to structure an audit of transfer practices, resources and culture and to stimulate dialogue and action to improve transfer access. The assessment process³ involves convening a team of administrators and faculty to conduct research into their own campus practices and culture and recommend action and evaluation steps to increase effectiveness.

The Self-Assessment Inventory has four sections with a series of indicators of practices and policies relevant to promoting transfer access from community colleges to four-year institutions. These indicators, summarized below, were developed through case study research conducted by researchers at the Center for Urban Education (CUE) and the New England Resource Center for Higher Education (at the University of Massachusetts Boston) as part of the Study of Economic, Informational, and Cultural Barriers to Transfer to Selective Institutions⁴. The study included *best practice* pairs of community and four-year colleges and the indicators are drawn from the exemplary practices⁵ of these institutions⁶. The indicators on the Transfer Access Self-Assessment Inventory provide a reference point to map the human, technical, and social resources of the college that must be coordinated to advance transfer goals.

³The assessment process for the Transfer Access Self-Assessment Inventory is based on principles of organizational learning and change developed by Estela Mara Bensimon and colleagues at the Center for Urban Education [see Bensimon, E. M. (2004). The diversity scorecard: A learning approach to institutional change. *Change, January/February*, 45-52] and principles of benchmarking and peer comparisons [see Dowd, A. C., & Tong, V. P. (2007). Accountability, assessment, and the scholarship of *best practice*. In J. C. Smart (Ed.), *Handbook of Higher Education* (Vol. 22, pp. 57-119): Springer Publishing].

⁴The study was funded by the Jack Kent Cooke Foundation, Lumina Foundation for Education, and the Nellie Mae Education Foundation.

⁵Practices and policies are termed *exemplary* because they were observed in use at institutions selected through exemplary case sampling and emerged as important through triangulation of data from document analysis and interviews with administrators, faculty, and transfer students. The identification of these practices as exemplary is further supported by sociological and educational theories of student development. Thus, the *exemplary practices* provide benchmarks for institutions to assess their transfer amenability, but the case study research did not examine or evaluate the effectiveness of these practices.

⁶For details of the case study and discussion of exemplary transfer practices, particularly for promoting transfer access to highly selective institutions, see Gabbard, G., Singleton, S., Macias, E., Dee, J., Bensimon, E. M., Dowd, A. C., et al. (2006). *Practices supporting transfer of low-income community college transfer students to selective institutions: Case study findings*. Boston, MA and Los Angeles, CA: University of Massachusetts Boston and University of Southern California.

Transfer Counseling Services for Students

1. 1. Brochures or other forms of literature are available addressing specific needs of students seeking to transfer to four-year institutions.
1. 2. Informational material on four-year institutions (i.e. view books, catalogs and transfer applications) is available.
1. 3. Dedicated web-based information related to transferring to four-year institutions is available.
1. 4. Transfer personnel and/or faculty inform students about transfer opportunities to four-year institutions during first-year orientation and other workshops and meetings for incoming students.
1. 5. Workshops scheduled at various times to inform students about transfer possibilities to four-year institutions.
1. 6. A faculty member accompanies potential transfers on visits to four-year institutions.
1. 7. Transfer counselors are available daily and in the evenings for drop-in advising at all campus locations.
1. 8. Transfer counselors will place calls for students to four-year college admissions and financial aid offices to help students make and interpret inquiries.
1. 9. Students who transferred and graduated from four-year institutions are available as peer tutors and mentors.
1. 10. High school students invited to college to meet with faculty/staff and learn about transfer options.
1. 11. Free transportation is provided for campus visits at four-year institutions.
1. 12. Special transfer-directed programs offered, such as a summer writing, mathematics, or science program.
1. 13. Workshop for transfer students focus on social and cultural norms at four-year institutions, including the experiences of transfer shock and of being away from one's family.
1. 14. Faculty plan workshops for students planning to transfer to four-year institutions dealing with academic concerns.
1. 15. Honors program or college provides preparation and support for students to apply to a four-year institution.
1. 16. Participants in honors and transfer-directed programs reflect the racial-ethnic and socio-economic diversity of the college's general population.

1. 17. Students participate in service learning and civic engagement projects with peers from four-year institutions.

Financial Support for Students Seeking to Transfer to Four-Year Institutions

2. 1. Financial packages/ scholarships designed to specifically support students transferring to four-year institutions are available from your college.

2. 2. Information provided about grants/scholarships available from the state, colleges, or the private sector for community college graduates planning to transfer to four-year institutions.

2. 3. Financial aid advisors are available to assist students seeking to transfer to four-year institutions.

2. 4. Financial aid advisors participate in professional development activities with four-year institution colleagues.

2. 5. Phi Theta Kappa chapter on campus providing support and scholarships for students seeking to transfer to four-year institutions.

Institutional Transfer Policies and Practices

3. 1. Formal articulation agreements with four-year institutions.

3. 2. Alignment and transferability of general education courses.

3. 3. Curriculum alignment (e.g. sequenced course numbering, general education, course content, etc.).

3. 4. Guaranteed admission is available to qualified associate degree holders.

3. 5. Guaranteed admission is available to qualified degree holders for specific programs (e.g. engineering, pre-medical school, etc.).

Please specify:

3. 6. Articulation agreements with secondary schools to accept high achieving students into honors program (or college) on track to being accepted to a selective four year college or university.

3. 7. Transfer course and credit equivalencies are available online.

3. 8. Regularly scheduled workshops for personnel to enable them to assist students to follow transfer requirements.

3. 9. Transfer credit evaluations are conducted by designated trained personnel to work with four-year institution partners to assist in transfer policies and procedures.

3. 10. Baseline data collected on transfer and transfer performance to help in planning and facilitating transfer to four-year institutions.
3. 11. Professional development opportunities available to faculty/staff to help them to assist students who are seeking to transfer to a four-year institution.
3. 12. Board of Trustee involvement in promoting or assisting student transfer to four-year institutions.
3. 13. Alumni involvement in promoting or assisting student transfer to four year institutions.

Partnerships and Collaborations

4. 1. Joint workshop activities, or projects, focused on pedagogy, student support services, or the improvement of teaching. List by Name and Collaborating College:
4. 2. Jointly received external funding. List by Name and Collaborating College:
4. 3. Joint curriculum or program development projects. List by Name and Collaborating College
4. 4. Jointly sponsored academic programs, i.e., honors programs. List by Name and Collaborating College
4. 5. Four-year college/university host activities or events on your campus. List by Name and Collaborating College
4. 6. Programs at four-year institutions allowing students to gain experience with academic expectations at such schools. List by Name and Collaborating College
4. 7. Transfer personnel visit four-year institutions to provide information on the college and its students and programs to faculty/staff. List by Name and Collaborating College
4. 8. Joint monitoring of institutional policies related to transfer at two- and four-year institutions. List by Name and Collaborating College