





Transfer Access Self-Assessment Inventory For Community Colleges

The Transfer Access Self-Assessment Inventory is designed to enable community colleges, in collaboration with partnering four-year institutions, to examine the extent to which their institutional policies and practices promote or inhibit transfer from community colleges to highly selective institutions, particularly for socio-economically disadvantaged students. The inventory is a tool to structure an audit of transfer practices and to stimulate dialogue about improving transfer access.

The assessment process¹ involves convening a team of administrators and faculty to participate in eight meetings spanning one academic year. The team includes eight members: a team leader, an institutional researcher, the director of the transfer center or of transfer counseling, a financial aid officer, three faculty members, and one former student who successfully transferred and graduated from a selective four-year college. The team leader should be a person with experience with and reputation as an advocate for or "champion" of transfer students. Often such individuals were transfer students themselves or have had personal relationships with transfer students that inform their

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¹ The 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.

understanding of the transfer experience (Gabbard et al., 2006; Pak, Bensimon, Malcom, Marquez, & Park, 2006)

The faculty representatives should include one member who serves on the college's curriculum committee, one who directs the college's honors program (or other specialized academic programs, such as mathematics or writing institutes), and one who is dean of the general studies, humanities or social science division. In addition, a representative from the state system office whose responsibilities include transfer and program articulation should be identified to provide information and participate in meetings as needed.

The outline presented below summarizes the team member roles and the main agenda for each of the eight meetings. 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 highly selective institutions. These indicators were developed through case study research conducted as part of the Study of Economic, Informational, and Cultural Barriers to Transfer to Selective Institutions, funded by the Jack Kent Cooke Foundation, Lumina Foundation for Education, and the Nellie Mae Education Foundation.

The case study involved document review and interviews with administrators and faculty members at highly selective institutions and partnering community colleges. The field research took place on the campuses of eight "best practice" pairs of four-year and two-year colleges. The pairs were selected based on evidence of a "transfer amenable" culture at the four-year institution and an existing collaborative relationship between that institution and its community college partner. The indicators are drawn from the

exemplary practices² of these institutions, which are described in the report *Practices*Supporting Transfer of Low-Income Community College Students to Selective

Institutions: Case Study Findings (Gabbard et al., 2006).

Though many community colleges will not have all of the items listed in the Transfer Access Self-Assessment Inventory taking place on their campus, the indicators provide benchmarks against which to examine current practice and policies. The benchmarking process is intended to lead to a clearer understanding of the inhibitors and facilitators of transfer access for low-income community college students and adoption of a plan of action to increase transfer access. All of the indicators on the inventory are among the exemplary practices and policies in use at the community colleges that participated in the case study research.

The assessment process calls on team members to identify, collect, and report on materials describing practices and policies relevant to transfer access. It is based on the principle advanced by John Dewey that in order for individuals to form relevant and effective goals they must first be acquainted with and take notice of the actual conditions of the problem. The indicators on the Transfer Access Self-Assessment Inventory provide a tool to map the human, technical, and social resources of the college that must be coordinated to advance transfer goals.

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² Practices 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.

Characterizing Transfer Capacity and the Quality of Effort

The assessment team evaluates institutional practices and policies based on each indicator in the inventory, using the categories of Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats (SWOT). The team member completing each section makes this initial judgment and presents the rationale for that judgment to the team, which may arrive at a different consensus. The perceived effectiveness of institutional efforts in each area delimited by the sections of the SAI is summarized by the team at the conclusion of each meeting.

In addition, proposed recommendations for action are drafted at each meeting and recorded for review and prioritization at the final meeting of the team. These action steps should include a plan for evaluating what the team views as the initiatives most critical to the college's success in enabling students to transfer to highly selective institutions. In addition, the evaluation plan should ensure that data concerning student participation, particularly in honors and other transfer-directed programs, as well as their transfer and graduation outcomes can be analyzed at a level disaggregated by socio-economic status, gender, and race-ethnicity. Otherwise, efforts to increase transfer access may be invested in ways that direct resources to middle- and-upper income students instead of strengthening transfer access as a means to promote educational equity.

Background

The Transfer Access Self-Assessment Inventory was designed by Dr. Alicia C. Dowd, Dr. Estela Mara Bensimon, and Dr. Glenn Gabbard with assistance from Mr. Brad Arndt, Dr. Jay Dee, Ms. Thara Fuller, and Ms. Sharon Singleton of the New

England Resource Center for Higher Education (NERCHE) at the University of Massachusetts Boston, Ms. Lindsey Malcom and Mr. Daniel Park of the Center for Urban Education at the University of Southern California, and Dr. Elsa Macias and Ms. Amalia Márquez of the Tomás Rivera Policy Institute at the University of Southern California. Development of the inventory was supported by funding from the Jack Kent Cooke Foundation, Lumina Foundation for Education, and the Nellie Mae Education Foundation.

The theoretical principles underlying the evaluation of organizational capacity to improve community college transfer access to four-year selective colleges were derived from research on organizational learning and institutional change (Bensimon, 2004, 2005; Bensimon, Polkinghorne, Bauman, & Vallejo, 2004; Dowd & Tong, 2004) and research conducted as part of the Community College Student Success Project, funded by Lumina Foundation for Education (Dowd, 2005), which described the evolution of higher education benchmarking practices and their potential effects on institutional innovation and change.

References

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- Dowd, A. C. (2005). Data don't drive: Building a practitioner-driven culture of inquiry to assess community college performance (Research Report). Indianapolis, IN: Lumina Foundation for Education.

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- Pak, J., Bensimon, E. M., Malcom, L., Marquez, A., & Park, D. (2006). *The life histories of ten individuals who crossed the border between community colleges and selective four-year colleges*. Los Angeles, CA: University of Southern California.

Summary of Transfer Assessment Team Members and Meeting Agendas

Team Members

- Team Leader
- Institutional Researcher
- Transfer Center or Transfer Counseling Director
- Financial Aid Officer
- Faculty Member serving on the College Curriculum Committee
- Faculty Member Directing the Honor's Program (or another specialized transferdirected academic programs such as mathematics or writing institutes)
- Dean of the Division of General Studies, Humanities, or Social Sciences
- A student who successfully transferred to and graduated from a highly selective four-year college

The Transfer Access Self-Assessment Inventory (SAI)

- Section I: Transfer Counseling Services for Students
- Section II: Financial Support for Students Seeking to Transfer to Selective Four-Year Institutions
- Section III: Institutional Transfer Policies and Practices
- Section IV: Partnerships and Collaboration with Selective Four-Year Institutions

Activities of Inquiry Teams

To gain an understanding of the cultural aspects of transfer, team members use unobtrusive and field research methods to experience the transfer process from the point of view of a potential transfer student. The following examples provide suggestions of activities the team may wish to undertake:

- Surfing the college website to look for information advising students about transfer requirements and procedures.
- Sitting for several hours at the transfer center observing how students use the resources of the center, what kind of help is provided to them, and the demographic characteristics (e.g. racial-ethnic, age) of the students who seek help.
- Attending a transfer fair or other transfer orientation event and observing which colleges send representatives and which do not and the characteristics of the students who participate.
- Filling out an application form for the highly selective institution that typically enrolls the largest number of transfers from your college, including the FAFSA and any other required financial information.
- Calling the admissions office at the highly selective college and asking for information about transfer admission requirements and procedures.

- Sitting in on a class of your college's honors program or pre-transfer summer program.
- Conducting interviews with key people who determine policies affecting transfer, particularly articulation agreements.
- Conducting an "audit" of articulation agreements to determine if they are comprehensive and up to date.
- Inviting students who transferred successfully to meet with the team or holding focus groups with them.

Meeting Agendas

- Meeting 1: Team Leader convenes the team and reviews the
 assessment process and inventory with team members. Each member is
 asked to complete parts of the inventory. Unobtrusive field research
 activities the team would like to undertake are determined and tasks
 assigned to each member. A schedule for presenting findings at
 subsequent meetings is adopted.
- Meeting 2: To the extent allowed by available data³, the **Institutional Researcher** presents an institutional profile describing the typical number and demographic characteristics of students who transfer to selective colleges each year (with the appropriate sample of institutions defined by the team). The demographic profile includes socio-economic, gender, and racial-ethnic characteristics of transfer students. Typical transfer experiences are demonstrated with a listing of the selective colleges admitting transfers from the college; the typical number of credits completed at the college prior to transfer and the number accepted by the four-year college (if known); the proportion transferring with and without an associate's degree.

Other team members report on their progress in collecting information to complete their sections of the inventory and in planning their field research. Any difficulties are addressed by the team leader and other team members, who may be able to provide support in identifying sources, collecting information, or arranging contacts with other faculty or administrators as needed.

• Meeting 3: The **Transfer Center or Counseling Director** reports on Section I of the Inventory, Transfer Counseling Services for Students. Samples of transfer advising materials, such as brochures and application workshop agendas or specialized academic program syllabi, and the completed Section I are distributed to team members prior to the meeting.

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³ State system data and National Student Clearinghouse data are potential sources of information about the college's transfer students.

- Meeting 4: The Financial Aid Officer reports on Section II, Financial Support for Students Seeking to Transfer. Materials describing financial aid counseling workshops and specialized scholarships available for transfers are distributed to team members with the completed Section II prior to the meeting.
- Meeting 5: The Admissions Officer and Faculty Members report on Section III, Institutional Transfer Policies and Practices. Samples of formal and informal articulation agreements and academic requirements for transfer and a completed Section III are distributed to team members prior to the meeting. The representative of the state system office should be invited to this meeting.
- Meeting 6: The Faculty Members and the Director of the Transfer Center or Counseling complete Section IV, Partnerships and Collaboration with Selective Four-Year Institutions. Program materials describing collaborative faculty research and professional development activities, e.g. in the areas of pedagogy and student support services, are distributed to team members with the completed Section IV prior to the meeting. Faculty from nearby selective four-year institutions should be invited to participate in this meeting.
- Meeting 7: Team members review, discuss, and prioritize
 Recommendations for Evaluation and Action, which have been drafted in previous meetings. A plan for evaluating the effectiveness of transfer activities at the college to support transfer access for socio-economically disadvantaged community college is drafted, including the elements of required data collection.
- Meeting 8: The Team Leader presents a draft report to the college President with the Team's Recommendations for Evaluation and Action, which is reviewed by the team and a plan adopted to present the report to the president and the broader campus community. The student member of the team communicates the conclusions of the report to the student body government.

Quality of Transfer Capacity: Examples for Using the SWOT Categories

- <u>Strengths</u>: Existing programs that provide information and cultural orientation to prospective low-income community college transfer students.
- <u>Weaknesses</u>: The absence of programming or support services in areas the team considers important to the college or poor levels of staffing, professional development, training, or resources for existing programs and activities.
- Opportunities: New college or university leaders or administrative staff members, new resources or the potential to redirect resources, former students who transferred who are now involved in mentoring and advising prospective transfers, upcoming accreditation or strategic planning processes.
- <u>Threats</u>: Decreased funding for specialized academic workshops, internships, or courses.

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Section Guide

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•	e Transfer Center or Counseling Director and the Faculty Member directing the another transfer-directed academic program)
college transfer student and/or <i>weaknesses</i> in p	ssess the quality of counseling services your institution offers to community is. Using the indicators below, briefly note your institution's current <i>strengths</i> romoting transfer access. Then, briefly describe potential <i>opportunities</i> and/or es created by changes in institutional resources, personnel, facilities, organization, bry environment.
Key Considerations: Ac	curacy, Consistency, Prominence, and Organization of Information.
Information	
	Strengths and/or Weaknesses:
1. 1. Brochures or other forms of literature are available addressing specific needs of students seeking to transfer to selective institutions.	Opportunities and/or Threats:
	Story who and I as Washington
1. 2. Informational material on selective institutions (i.e. view books, catalogs and transfer applications) are available.	Opportunities and/or Threats:
1. 3. Dedicated web- based information related to transferring to selective institutions available.	Opportunities and/or Threats:

To be completed by the Transfer Center or Counseling Director and the Faculty Member directing the Honor's Program (or another transfer-directed academic program)

Key Considerations: Outreach to Students and Personalized Advising

Personal Support				
1. 4. Transfer personnel and/or faculty inform students about transfer opportunities to selective four-year institutions during first-year orientation and other workshops and meetings for incoming students.	Strengths and/or Weaknesses: Opportunities and/or Threats:			
1. 5. Workshops scheduled at various times to inform students about transfer possibilities to selective institutions.	Strengths and/or Weaknesses: Opportunities and/or Threats:			
1. 6. A faculty member accompanies potential transfers on visits to selective institutions.	Strengths and/or Weaknesses: Opportunities and/or Threats:			
1. 7. Transfer counselors are available daily and in the evenings for drop-in advising at all campus locations.	Strengths and/or Weaknesses: Opportunities and/or Threats:			

1. 8. Transfer counselors will place calls for students to selective college admissions and financial aid offices to help students make and interpret inquiries.	Opportunities and/or Threats:
1. 9. Students who transferred and graduated from selective colleges are available as peer tutors and mentors.	Strengths and/or Weaknesses: Opportunities and/or Threats:
1. 10. Students know at least one faculty member who is able to write a well informed recommendation for the student's application and who will place a call to the admissions office to personally support the application.	Strengths and/or Weaknesses: Opportunities and/or Threats:
1.11. High school students invited to college to meet with faculty/staff and learn about transfer options.	Strengths and/or Weaknesses: Opportunities and/or Threats:

1. 12. Free transportation is	Strengths and/or Weaknesses:
provided for campus visits at selective institutions.	Opportunities and/or Threats:

To be completed by the Faculty Members.

Key Considerations: Full-Time Faculty Involvement in Curriculum and Program Development; Aligning Academic Content with Four-Year College Curriculum and Transfer Requirements

Pre-transfer Academic Curriculum and Orientation				
1. 13. Special transfer-directed programs offered, such as a summer writing, mathematics, or science program.	Strengths and/or Weaknesses: Opportunities and/or Threats:			
1. 14. Workshop for transfer students focus on social and cultural norms at selective institutions, including the experiences of transfer shock and of being away from one's family.	Opportunities and/or Threats:			
1. 15. Faculty plan workshops for students planning to transfer to selective institutions dealing with academic concerns.	Strengths and/or Weaknesses: Opportunities and/or Threats:			
1. 16. Honors program or college provides preparation and support for students to apply to a selective college or university.	Opportunities and/or Threats:			

	Strengths and/or Weaknesses:
1. 17. Participants in honors and transfer-directed programs reflect the racial-ethnic and socio-economic diversity of the	Opportunities and/or Threats:
college's general population.	
	Strengths and/or Weaknesses:
1. 18. Faculty supervise independent studies and research	
projects for transfer- directed students.	Opportunities and/or Threats:
	Strengths and/or Weaknesses:
1. 19. Students participate in service learning and civic engagement projects	Opportunities and/or Threats:
with peers from four- year colleges.	

Section I: Evaluation and Recommended Action

(To be completed by each team member separately and then summarized for discussion and inclusion in the final report by the team leader.)

Section I: Evalu	uation			
Overall, how effective are the activities being carried out in this section to promote the transfer access of socio-economically disadvantaged community college students?				
☐ Not at all	☐ Minimally	☐ Moderately	☐ Extremely	☐ Don't Know
Notes:				
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	mmended Action ar			
	describe three priori ation for inclusion in			
1.				
2.				
2.				
3.				

2. Financial Support for Students Seeking to Transfer to Selective Four-Year Institutions

To be completed by the Financial Aid officer.

In this section, indicate the types of services provided to help deal with financial concerns of students seeking to transfer to selective institutions. Then for each indicator, please describe *strengths*, *weaknesses*, *opportunities* and *threats*, related to the types of financial aid your institution offers to community college transfer students.

Key Considerations: Fundraising and Publicity Regarding Scholarships for Transfer Students, Executive Leadership

Financial Aid Offered			
2. 1. Financial packages/ scholarships designed to specifically support students transferring to selective four-year institutions are available from your college.	Strengths and/or Weaknesses: Opportunities and/or Threats:		
2. 2. Information provided about grants/scholarships available from the state, colleges, or the private sector for community college graduates planning to transfer to selective institutions.	Opportunities and/or Threats:		
2. 3. Financial aid personnel available to assist students seeking to transfer to selective institutions.	Strengths and/or Weaknesses: Opportunities and/or Threats:		

2. Financial Support for Students Seeking to Transfer to Selective Four-Year Institutions

2. 4. Financial aid advisors participate in professional development	Strengths and/or Weaknesses:
activities with four-year college colleagues.	Opportunities and/or Threats:
	Strengths and/or Weaknesses:
2. 5. Phi Theta Kappa chapter on campus providing support and scholarships for students seeing to transfer	Opportunities and/or Threats:
to selective institutions.	

2. Financial Support for Students Seeking to Transfer to Selective Four-Year Institutions

Section II: Evaluation and Recommended Action				
Section II: Evaluation				
Overall, how effective is this level of financial aid in facilitating successful transfer? Not at all Minimally Moderately Extremely Don't Know				
Notes:				

Section II: Recommended Action and Evaluation Steps

List and briefly describe three priorities for action and evaluation in this area that you believe deserve consideration for inclusion in the assessment team's final report to the college president.

1.

2.

3.

To be completed by the Faculty members and the State System Representative.

For each indicator in this section, briefly note your institution's current strengths and/or weaknesses in promoting transfer access during the past academic year. Briefly describe potential opportunities and/or threats to these activities created by changes in institutional resources, personnel, facilities, organization, or external regulatory environment.

Key Considerations: Curriculum Articulation, Communicating Academic Standards, Pedagogy, and Assessment Practices to Four-Year Institutions.

	Strengths and/or Weaknesses:
3. 1. Formal articulation agreements with selective colleges and universities.	Opportunities and/or Threats:
	Strengths and/or Weaknesses:
3. 2. Alignment and transferability of general education courses.	Opportunities and/or Threats:
	Strengths and/or Weaknesses:
3. 3. Curriculum alignment (e.g. sequenced course numbering, general education, course content, etc.).	Opportunities and/or Threats:

3. 4. Guaranteed admission for qualified associate degree holders.	Opportunities and/or Threats:
	Strengths and/or Weaknesses:
3. 5. Guaranteed admission for qualified degree holders for specific programs (e.g. engineering, pre-med,	Opportunities and/or Threats:
etc.).	
Please specify:	
	Strengths and/or Weaknesses:
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.	Opportunities and/or Threats:
	Strengths and/or Weaknesses:
3. 7. Transfer course and credit equivalencies are available online.	Opportunities and/or Threats:

	Strengths and/or Weaknesses:
3. 8. Regularly scheduled workshops for personnel to enable them to assist students to follow transfer requirements.	Opportunities and/or Threats:
	Strengths and/or Weaknesses:
3. 9. Transfer credit evaluations are conducted by designated trained personnel to work with selective college	Opportunities and/or Threats:
partners to assist in transfer policies and procedures.	Strengths and/or Weaknesses:
	Strengths and/or weaknesses:
3. 10. Baseline data collected on transfer and transfer performance to help	
in planning and facilitating transfer to selected institutions.	Opportunities and/or Threats:
	Strengths and/or Weaknesses:
3. 11. Professional development opportunities available to faculty/staff to help them to assist students who are seeking to transfer to a selective college or university.	
	Opportunities and/or Threats:

3. 12. Board of Trustee involvement in promoting or	Strengths and/or Weaknesses:
assisting student transfer to selective institutions.	Opportunities and/or Threats:
3. 13. Alumni involvement in promoting or	Strengths and/or Weaknesses:
assisting student transfer to selective institutions.	Opportunities and/or Threats:

Section III: Evaluation and Recommended Action

Section III: Evalu	ation			
Overall, to what extent are these policies and practices effective in facilitating successful transfer?				
☐ Not at all	☐ Minimally	☐ Moderately	☐ Extremely	☐ Don't Know
Notes:				
Section III: Recor	nmended Action an	nd Evaluation Steps		
			luation in this area the	
1.				
2.				
3.				

To be completed by the Faculty Members and the Director of the Transfer Center or Counseling.

Name: Title: Department:			
In this section, indicate any collaborative joint partnerships with selective four-year institutions that your college had during <i>the past academic year</i> . Using the indicators below, briefly note your institution's current <i>strengths</i> and/or <i>weaknesses</i> in promoting transfer access. Then, briefly describe potential <i>opportunities</i> and/or <i>threats</i> to these activities created by changes in institutional resources, personnel, facilities, organization, or external regulatory environment.			
	our-Year and Two-Year Leadership of Planning Groups and Committees, ards, Pedagogy, and Effective Assessment, Institutional and External Research ces.		
Partnerships and Collabor	ration with Selective Four-Year Institutions		
4. 1. Joint research projects.	Strengths and/or Weaknesses:		
List by Name and Collaborating College:			
	Opportunities and/or Threats:		
4. 2. Joint workshop activities, or projects, focused on pedagogy, student support services, or the improvement of teaching.	Strengths and/or Weaknesses:		
List by Name and	Opportunities and/or Threats:		
Collaborating College:			
4. 3. Joint community service projects or committees.	Strengths and/or Weaknesses:		
List by Name and Collaborating College:			
	Opportunities and/or Threats:		

4. 4. Jointly received external funding.	Strengths and/or Weaknesses:
List by Name and Collaborating College:	
	Opportunities and/or Threats:
4. 5. Joint curriculum or program development projects.	Strengths and/or Weaknesses:
List by Name and Collaborating College	
	Opportunities and/or Threats:
4. 6. Jointly sponsored academic programs, i.e., honors programs.	Strengths and/or Weaknesses:
List by Name and Collaborating College	
	Opportunities and/or Threats:
4.7. Jointly sponsored admissions.	Strengths and/or Weaknesses:
List by Name and	
Collaborating College	
	Opportunities and/or Threats:

4. 8. Jointly sponsored scholarship programs.	Strengths and/or Weaknesses:
List by Name and Collaborating College	
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	Opportunities and/or Threats:
4. 9. Four-year college/university faculty or administrators serve on institutional committees.	Strengths and/or Weaknesses:
List by Name and Collaborating College	
Control and Control	Opportunities and/or Threats:
4. 10. Four-year college/university host activities or events on your campus.	Strengths and/or Weaknesses:
List by Name and Collaborating College	
Control and Control	Opportunities and/or Threats:
4.11. Residency programs at selective institutions allowing students to gain exposure to extracurricular and cocurricular environment at such schools.	Strengths and/or Weaknesses:
List by Name and Collaborating College	Opportunities and/or Threats:

4. 12. Programs at selective institutions allowing students to gain experience with academic expectations at such schools.	Strengths and/or Weaknesses:
List by Name and Collaborating College	Opportunities and/or Threats:
4. 13. Transfer personnel meet with secondary school staff and students to inform them of selective college/university transfer opportunities.	Strengths and/or Weaknesses:
List by Name and Collaborating College	Opportunities and/or Threats:
4. 14. Informational material on your college and its programs mailed to selective colleges and universities. List by Name and Collaborating College	Strengths and/or Weaknesses:
Condorating Conege	Opportunities and/or Threats:
4. 15 Transfer personnel visit four-year selective institutions to provide information on the college and its students and programs to faculty/staff. List by Name and	Strengths and/or Weaknesses:
Collaborating College	Opportunities and/or Threats:

4. 16. Joint monitoring of institutional policies related to transfer at two- and four-year colleges.	Strengths and/or Weaknesses:
List by Name and Collaborating College	Opportunities and/or Threats:

Section IV: Evaluation and Recommended Action

Section IV: Eva	ıluation			
Overall, to what extent do these partnerships and collaborations with four-year institutions foster relationships that facilitate successful transfer?				
☐ Not at all	☐ Minimally	☐ Moderately	☐ Extremely	☐ Don't Know
Notes:				
Section IV: Rec	commended Action	and Evaluation Ste	ps	
		ities for action and e n the assessment tea		
1.				
2.				
3.				