

# **From Community College to University**

## **Expectations for California's New Transfer Degrees**

**Colleen Moore and Nancy Shulock**



# Transfer pathway is critical to creating more college graduates

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- California needs more college graduates
  - Potential shortfall of one million graduates by 2025
- Research points to problems with transfer process
- Policymakers want to improve outcomes, minimize costs
- Chancellors at California Community College (CCC) and California State University (CSU) interested in reform



# Important reform passed in 2010

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- Legislation (SB 1440) had several goals
  - Create clearer transfer pathways that reduce excess units
  - Incentivize associate degree
  - Increase transfer
- CCCs required to create associate degrees for transfer
- Degree gives students guarantees for CSU
- Academic Senates established “Transfer Model Curricula” (TMC)



# More legislation passed in 2013

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- LAO and Campaign for College Opportunity expressed concerns
  - Reform not happening quickly enough
  - Too much variation across campuses
- SB 440
  - Transfer degree “becomes the preferred transfer pathway for all students across the state”
  - Specifies TMC approach and sets targets
  - Other provisions



# This study assesses recent progress

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- Is the program on track?
- Methods include
  - Review of public data
  - Over 70 interviews with administrators, faculty, and staff at CCC and CSU
  - Survey of 84 student leaders at CCC



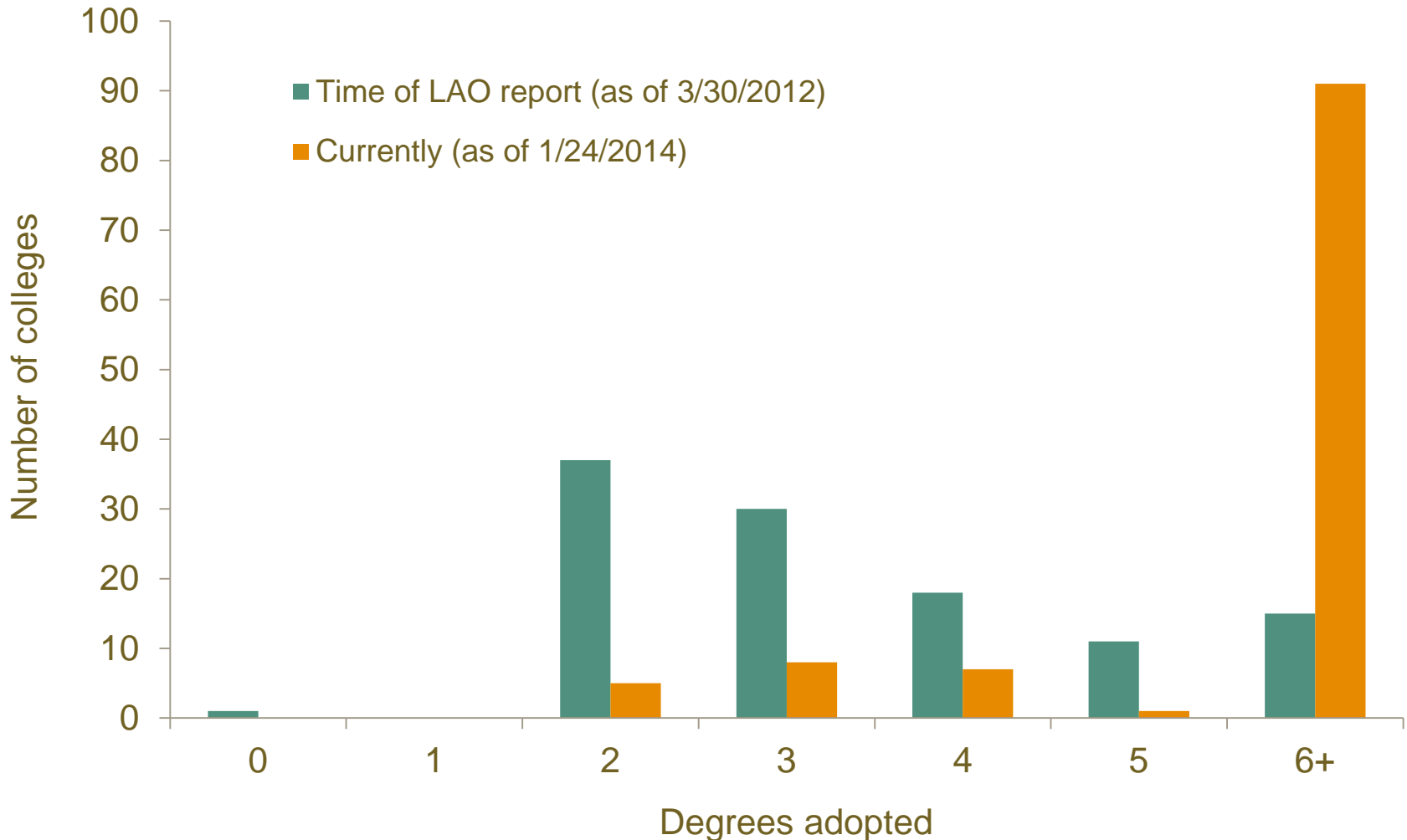
# Outline

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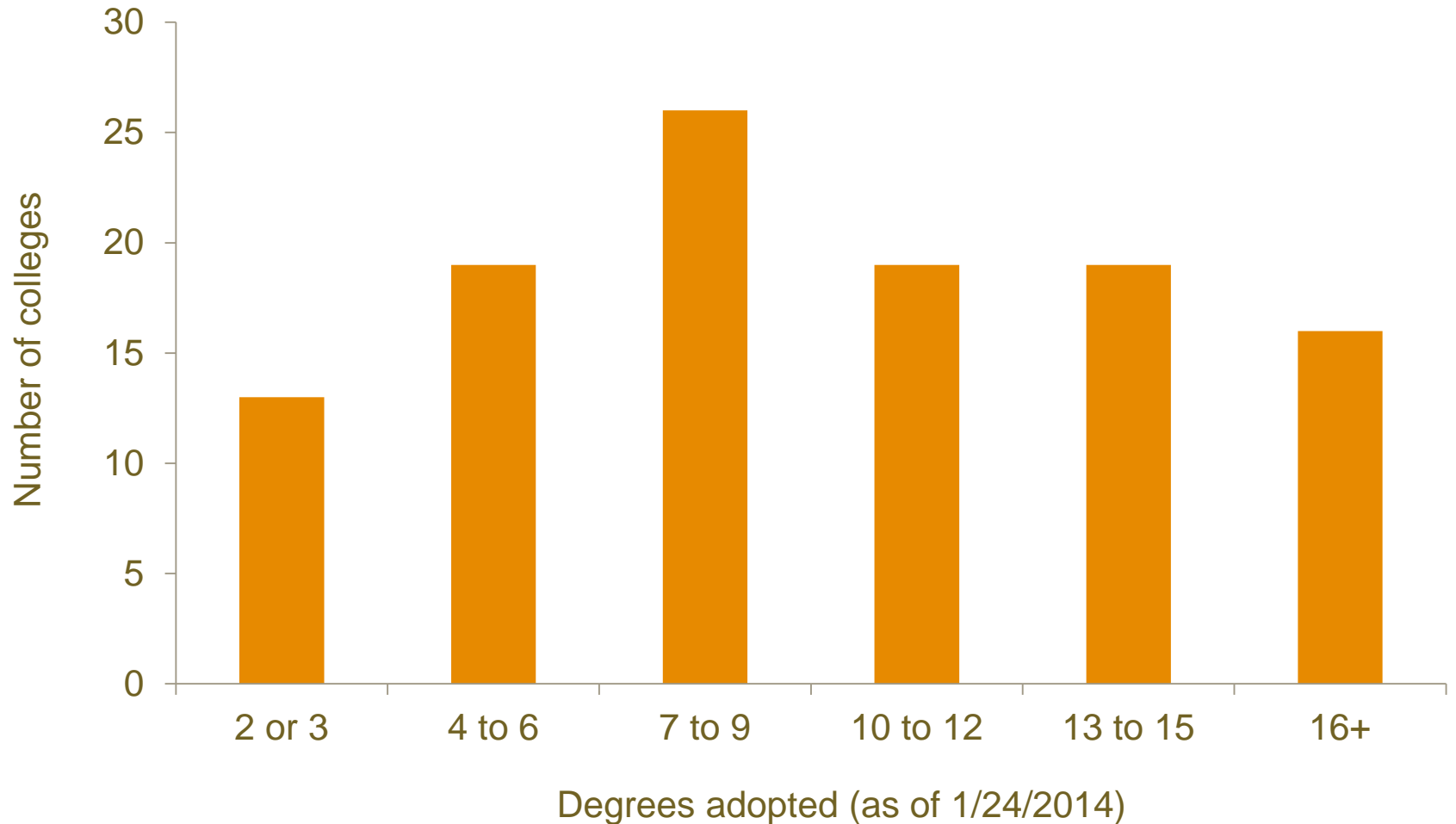
- Recent progress
- Perceptions of the degrees
- Assessment of the pathways
- Conclusions and recommendations



# Number of transfer degrees offered at CCCs has grown tremendously

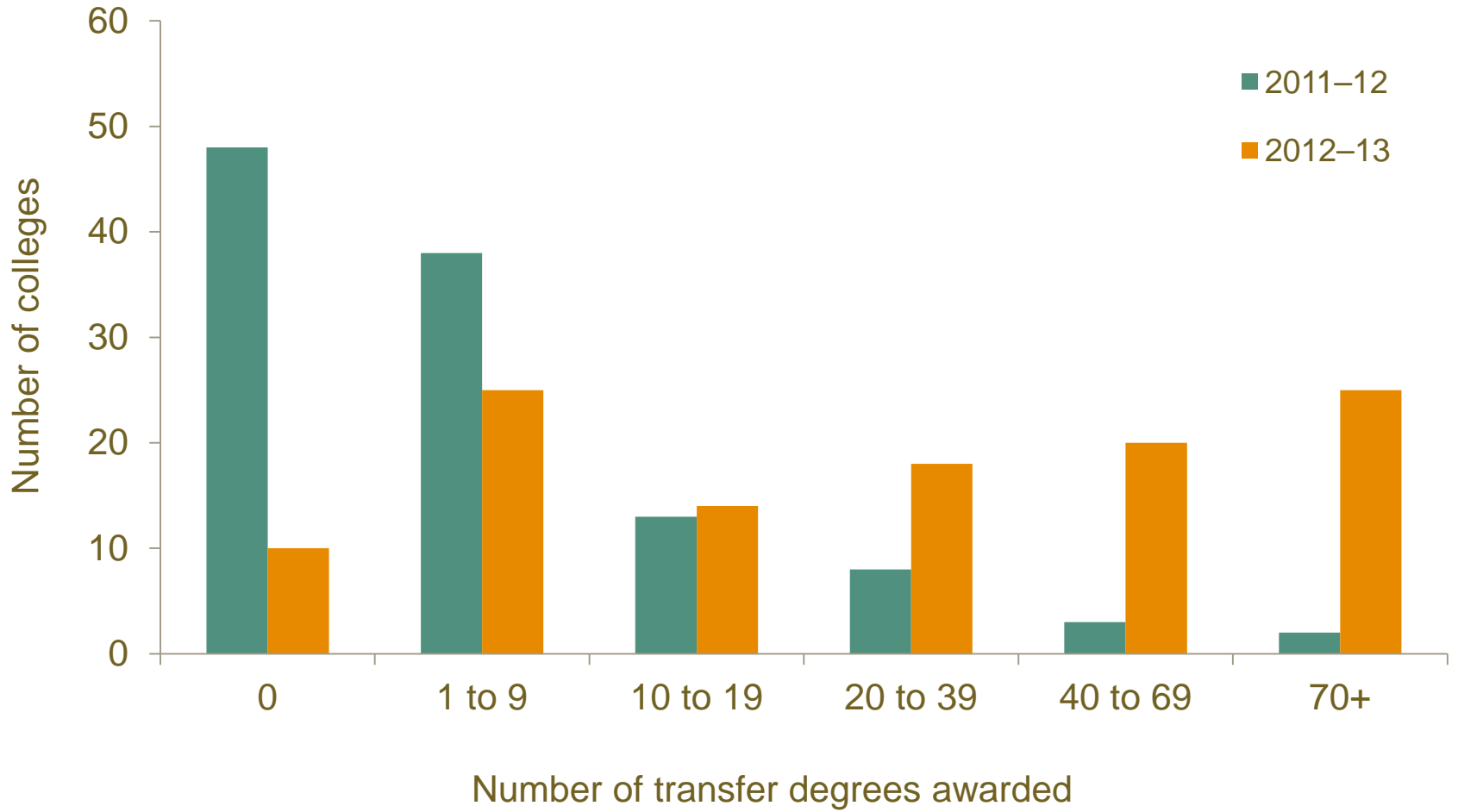


# Many colleges now offer a range of transfer degrees...





# ...But most are not yet *awarding* many degrees to students



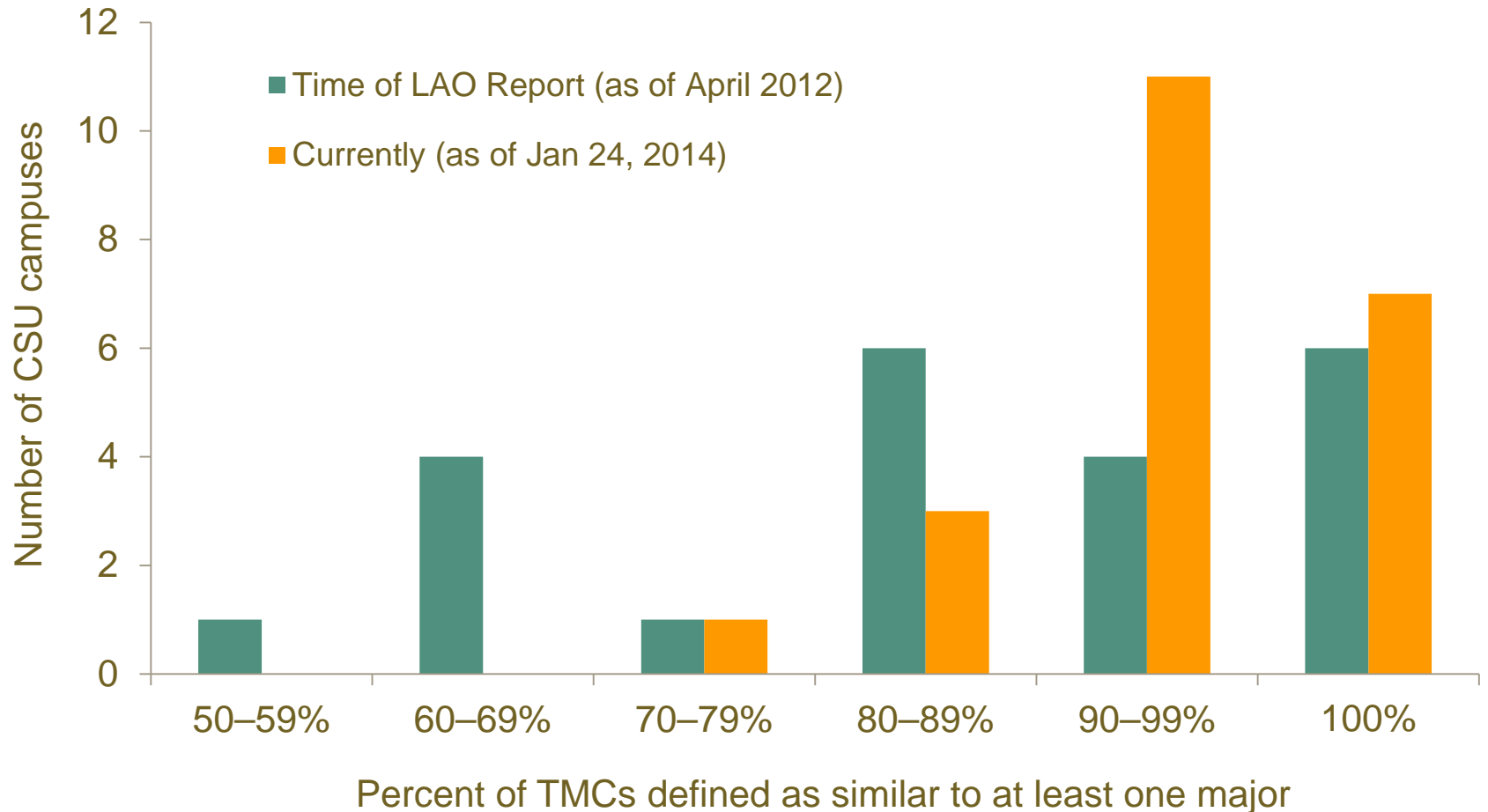
# Alignment of transfer degrees to majors at CSU is critical

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- TMC: 18 units of major preparation coursework included in the transfer degree
- Each CSU decides if a particular TMC is “similar” to its major in that discipline
- Can students complete within 60 credits?
  - Requirements in a major vary across CSUs
  - Requirements vary across options or concentrations within a major at each campus
  - Some have extra graduation requirements



# Significant progress at CSU, but choices are limited at some campuses



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# Views of faculty and staff critical to implementation

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- Opinions are currently mixed
  - Many see improvement overall, but benefits apply only to a subset of students
- Wide agreement across CCC and CSU on positive aspects
  - Consistent pathway, alignment of transfer with degree, student guarantees, faculty conversations
- Some difference in views on negative aspects
  - CCC: pathway not really “statewide”
  - CSU: doesn’t address inadequate advising
- Acknowledge initial resistance, but believe momentum is building



# Implementation is complicated

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- Complex campus processes
  - Curriculum review and approval for the degrees
  - Revise curriculum to stay within 60 units
- Fiscal challenges
  - Severe budget cuts, difficult to allocate faculty and staff time to the effort
- Lack of infrastructure across the two systems



# Student awareness is limited, as are information efforts

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- More than 1/3 of student leaders had not heard of transfer degrees
  - Most don't understand them
  - Believe awareness lower among general students
  - Think college efforts to inform ineffective
- Survey confirms what we heard in interviews
- Interest among students is higher than awareness



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# Are transfer degrees offered in the right majors?

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- To be useful, degrees should be established in subjects students want
- To assess the transfer pathways, we look at
  - Patterns of transfer activity by discipline
  - Share of BAs awarded to transfer students by discipline



# Transfer degrees are in popular fields, but coverage varies by college

Historical transfer activity from selected CCCs in disciplines with transfer degrees

| College          | Number of transfer degrees offered | % transfers to CSU in disciplines with transfer degrees | % BAs awarded to transfers in those disciplines |
|------------------|------------------------------------|---|---|
| Fullerton        | 18                                 | 69%   | 73%   |
| Butte            | 17                                 | 46%   | 48%   |
| Orange Coast     | 16                                 | 62%   | 70%   |
| Long Beach City  | 11                                 | 40%   | 50%   |
| Riverside City   | 9                                  | 16%   | 24%   |
| Evergreen Valley | 4                                  | 9%  | 13%   |
| LA Mission       | 3                                  | 8%  | 7%  |



# 25 TMCs cover majority of BAs, but there are gaps

Transfer activity at selected CSUs in disciplines related to the TMCs

| CSU Campus      | % BAs awarded in disciplines related to TMCs | Number of TMCs with related major offered | Number of TMCs accepted as “similar” | % BAs awarded in disciplines with “similar” TMC |
|-----------------|--|---|--------------------------------------|---|
| Stanislaus      | 84%  | 23  | 23                                   | 84%   |
| East Bay        | 77%  | 24  | 24                                   | 77%   |
| San Diego       | 74%  | 23  | 21                                   | 71%   |
| San Francisco   | 70%  | 25  | 24                                   | 68%   |
| Monterey Bay    | 74%  | 20  | 18                                   | 66%   |
| Pomona          | 61%  | 22  | 18                                   | 58%   |
| San Luis Obispo | 40%  | 19  | 14                                   | 27%   |



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# What is the progress on transfer degree goals?

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- Clearer pathways will be created
  - But less clear on reducing units, increasing capacity
- Associate degree completion will increase
  - But incentives may not be sufficient
- Number of transfers may increase
  - But impeded by capacity at CSU, infrastructure
- Establishment as preferred path to transfer has limits
  - Limited by profile of CCC students, no path to UC



# Many circumstances can reduce benefits of “ideal” pathway

## Ideal transfer pathway via AA-T/AS-T

- Begin GE coursework
- Begin lower division major coursework
- Apply to transfer
- Complete coursework within 60 credits and earn AA-T/AS-T
- Enroll in CSU
- Complete upper division coursework within 60 credits

Many CCC students have a transfer goal



But only some will graduate CSU with 120 credits

## Circumstances leading students off of the ideal transfer pathway

- **Major not decided early**  
student accumulates units in courses that won't count toward TMC
- **CSU as transfer destination not decided early**  
student accumulates units taking courses for UC or other university outside the CSU
- **Preferred CSU campus or major/concentration not “similar” or impacted**  
student accumulates units taking courses to meet local requirements of preferred/impacted program
- **Change made by student that eliminates 60-unit guarantee**  
student accumulates units due to change in major or concentration, adding minor, or other special program like study abroad



# Recommendations

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- CSU coordinate review of “similar” designations at each campus, and of priority admission mechanism
- CCC coordinate efforts to help colleges share curricula and resources to offer more degrees
- CCC and CSU consider course registration priority
- Legislature can
  - Consider “clean up” legislation to allow more flexibility for some majors
  - Provide funding to expand and coordinate efforts to increase student awareness
- Intensify efforts to extend transfer pathway to UC



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# Notes on the use of these slides

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These slides were created to accompany a presentation. They do not include full documentation of sources, data samples, methods, and interpretations. To avoid misinterpretations, please contact:

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Thank you for your interest in this work.

