

First Monday (of the semester) Report

Focus on Completion:
How Associate's Degree
Transfer Lifts the State's
Educational Level

Issue 29, February 8, 2016



New community college degrees lifting state's educational level

By Thomas D. Elias

Every forecast of California's future insists this state will need far more college-educated workers than now live here if it's to avert losing out when established businesses expand and seek places with qualified potential employees. This is true in almost every field, from filmmaking to making computer chips and hunting knives.

That's why a community college program to help graduates of the two-year schools move on to full-scale universities now looks like one of the better moves the state has made in decades. Started in 2011, this plan lets community college students earn a new kind of degree that helps them move easily and almost seamlessly to California State University campuses.

Almost all the state's two-year schools now offer the new Associate in Arts Degree for Transfer and Associate in Science Degree for Transfer, huge progress since the plan began with an unheralded signature from ex-Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger in September 2010. The program was sponsored in the Legislature by Democrat

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Upcoming Events

Feb 10: Board of Trustees Meeting, 6:00 p.m., The Great Hall
 Feb 12-15: Presidents' Day, Campus Closed
 Feb 17: Student Health & Wellness Fair, 2:00-4:00 p.m., The Great Hall
 Feb 22: Films on Demand, 12:00-1:00 p.m., Library 5212
 Feb 29: Black Film Festival, 8:00 p.m., The Great Hall





New Administrators

Juan Carlos Astorga

William Marmolejo

Dean of Student Engagement

Dean of Student Services



Dr. Astorga is responsible for overseeing the Center for Academic Success, Library, Office of Student Engagement (student life and ASO), Office of New Student Programs (FYE, Summer Bridge, etc.), and the Child Development Center. He brings a wealth of knowledge and leadership around student development, counseling, advocacy, federal grants, multiculturalism, student equity, student leadership and social justice.

Juan Carlos has over 20 years of experience in higher education having worked at the public, private, and community college level. He served as Dean of Specially Funded Programs for Los Angeles Southwest College. He earned his B.A. from UC San Diego and his Master's degree at San Diego State University. He graduated from the Educational Doctorate Program in Higher Education with a specialization in Community College Leadership from CSU Fullerton. His research focus is on Leadership, Engagement, and Academic Success of Undocumented Students in the community college system.

With over 18 years of experience, Mr. William Marmolejo has an extensive background as a leader in higher education. He served as the Associate Dean of Undergraduate Admissions at Loyola Marymount University. There, he helped recruit and shape the entering freshman class as well as hundreds of transfer students each year.

William also served as the Dean of Student Enrollment at Los Angeles City College for 11 years. He served as the Chair of the Admissions and Records committee for the LACCD district. He is also credited with revamping the admissions office, instrumental in the design of the new Student Services building, and has served as the interim chair and administrator over the Counseling department.

Mr. Marmolejo enjoys hiking and the outdoors. He has two daughters in college and a son who will be graduating from high school in 2017. He earned his M.B.A. and B.A. from Loyola Marymount University.

Lifting state's educational level

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Alex Padilla, then a state senator, now California secretary of state. It guarantees that anyone who obtains either of the new two-year degrees will get a spot at a CSU campus and that credits earned in community college will count at the four-year school. Unlike many laws that pass and then move into obscurity, this one bears more fruit every year.

In 2015, the number of community college students pursuing the new degrees almost doubled, with 20,644 students getting transfer diplomas, compared with 11,448 the year before. For students who get these degrees, there's not only a four-year university slot, but also the assurance they cannot be saddled with additional graduation requirements after they enroll at the next level. So students can see exactly what they'll need to do to complete the entire process in four years. It's much more organized than the often-jumbled transfer process still followed by other tens of thousands of would-be community college transfers.

New degrees are available in more than 1,900 subjects, but not every community college offers them all. Full details of which degrees can be earned where are available at <http://www.adegreewithaguarantee.com/degrees.aspx>. But even the smallest two-year colleges offer transfer-enabling degrees in subjects from kinesiology and accounting to early childhood education, statistics and theater arts. The new degrees also can lower costs of getting a full-fledged university degree, since they let students graduate with a total of 120 semester units if they continue from a community college degree program to a similar one at the next level. More traditional transfer students, without the guaranteed Cal State acceptance of all or virtually all their credits from community college, often must take as many as 40 to 50 additional units after enrolling at a four-year school. This can happen when graduation requirements change or because some classes at two-year-schools are not counted.

**Most community college students remain unaware of the new degrees.
But many students with outside jobs don't feel they have time to visit counselors.**

The proud supervisor of this new opportunity is Brice Harris, statewide chancellor of California Community Colleges. As he announced the huge increase in students getting the innovative degrees, Harris said they create "an affordable path to a four-year degree, without compromising the quality of education." He also touted the new degrees' ability to save both time and money, which he labeled a "win-win for both students and the state of California."

In fact, the more students get four-year degrees, the less likely California is to continue suffering an exodus of expanding companies, many moving to places like Austin, Tex. and the Raleigh, N.C., area because of their surfeit of available, educated workers. But most community college students remain unaware of the new degrees. Most who get the degrees learn of them from guidance counselors, but many, many community college students with outside jobs don't feel they have time to visit counselors.

One 23-year-old student at College of the Desert in Palm Desert said, "Before, I was taking just random classes. I didn't want to see a counselor. But it's turned out that one visit will probably save me months later on. Now I can actually say I'm shooting for my B.A., not just looking for an associate degree." The bottom line: If we're going to rip failed or questionable government programs from high-speed rail to highway repairs, we also ought to recognize those that work, like this one.

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