



AMERICAN  
TALENT  
INITIATIVE

# THE TALENT BLIND SPOT

**The Case for Increasing  
Community College Transfer  
to High-Graduation-Rate  
Institutions**

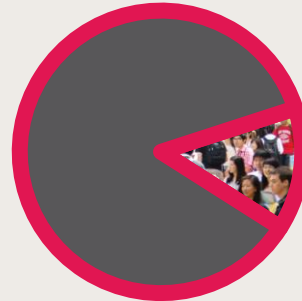
# A National Imperative

Across the country, most community college students aspire to a bachelor's degree,  
**but few accomplish that goal.**



**80%**

Intend to attain a  
bachelor's degree<sup>1</sup>



**Only 14%**

Attain a bachelor's degree within 6  
years of community college entry<sup>2</sup>

..... 6 years .....

1. The Aspen Institute College Excellence Program. (2017). *Tackling Transfer: A Guide to Convening Community Colleges and Universities to Improve Transfer Student Outcomes*. Aspen Institute College Excellence Program & Community College Research Center.

2. Jenkins, D. & Fink, J. (2016). *Tracking Transfer: New Measures of Institutional and State Effectiveness in Helping Community College Students Attain Bachelor's Degrees*. Community College Research Center, The Aspen Institute College Excellence Program & National Student Clearinghouse Research Center.



# **IMPROVING COMMUNITY COLLEGE TRANSFER:**

**A Significant Opportunity to Benefit  
Millions of Historically Underserved Students**

# Community College: A Popular On-Ramp to Higher Education

**More than one-third** of all entering U.S. college students attend community college.

## Community Colleges at a Glance:

**~1,000**

Public 2-Year Colleges

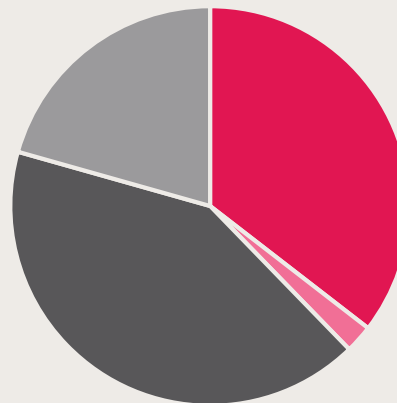
**5,700,000**

Total Fall Student Enrollment<sup>1</sup>

**\$3,156**

Average Tuition<sup>2</sup>

Proportion of total fall enrollment of entering, degree-seeking students by destination,  
3-year average (2014-16)<sup>3</sup>



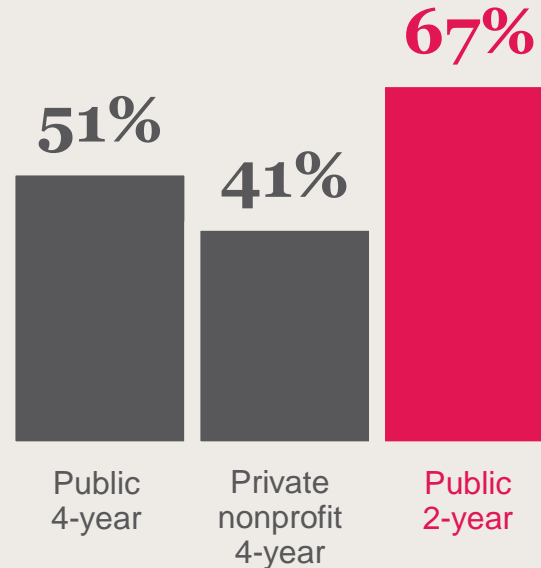
■ Two-Year public ■ Two-year private ■ Four-year public ■ Four-year private

1. U.S. Department of Education. *National Digest of Education Statistics: Table 303.55*, 2017.

2. U.S. Department of Education. *National Digest of Education Statistics: Table 330.10*. National Center for Education Statistics, 2016-17.

3. U.S. Department of Education. *National Digest of Education Statistics: Table 305.10*, 2014-16.

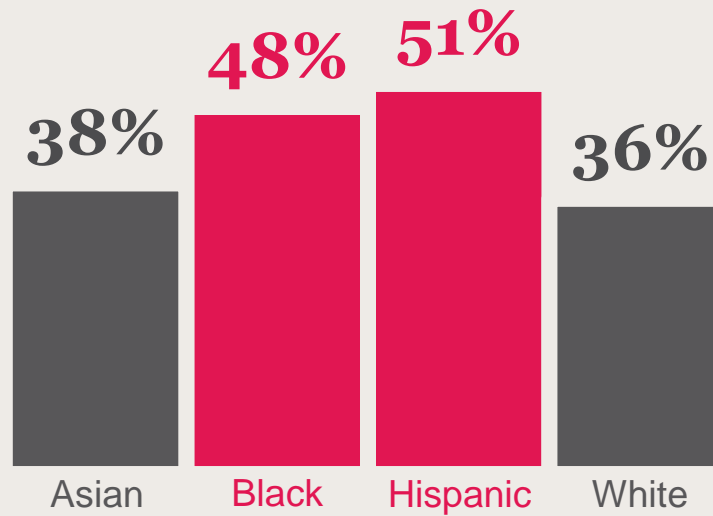
Community college students are more likely than students at four-year schools to **come from lower-income families.**



Proportion of enrollment below median household income by institutional sector and level.

Note: Median income was \$50,054 in 2011, according to the U.S. Census Bureau.

**Black and Hispanic students**  
enroll in two-year colleges at higher rates than their white peers.



Percentage of college-goers who started in two-year institutions, 2010

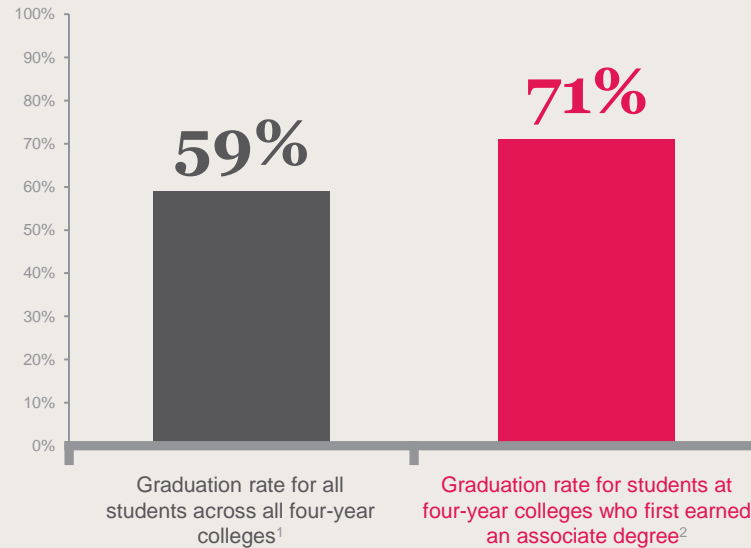




# **IMPROVING COMMUNITY COLLEGE TRANSFER:**

**Transfer Students Succeed  
When Supported**

On the whole, students who earn an associate degree before starting at a four-year college **are more likely to earn their bachelor's** than students who start at four-year institutions.

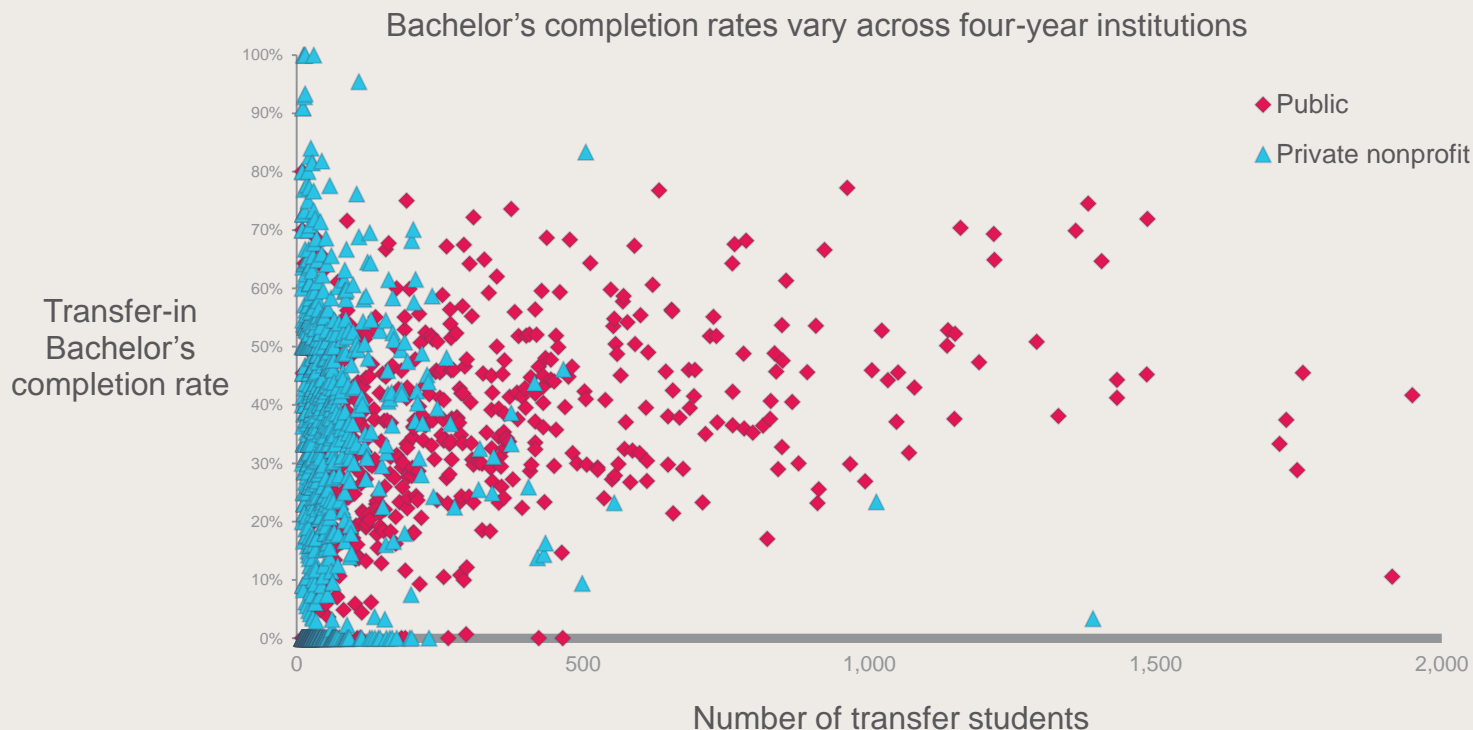


1. 6-year graduation rate for all four-year institutions, 2007 starting cohort. U.S. Department of Education. *National Digest of Education Statistics, Table 326.10.*

2. Snapshot Report: Degree Attainment. (2012). Outcomes of Students Who Transferred from Two-Year to Four-Year Institutions. <https://nscresearchcenter.org/wp-content/uploads/SnapshotReport8-GradRates2-4Transfers.pdf>. National Student Clearinghouse Research Center.

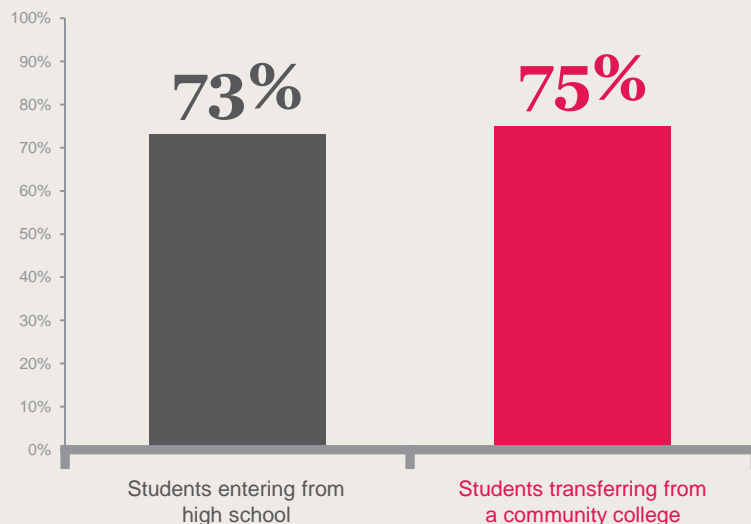


## Where Transfer Students Enroll Matters to Their Success, Because Institutional Practice Makes a Difference



# A Predictor of Transfer Success: Enrollment in Selective Colleges<sup>1</sup>

At selective institutions, **transfer students are just as likely to earn their degrees within six years** than students who enroll straight from high school.<sup>2</sup>



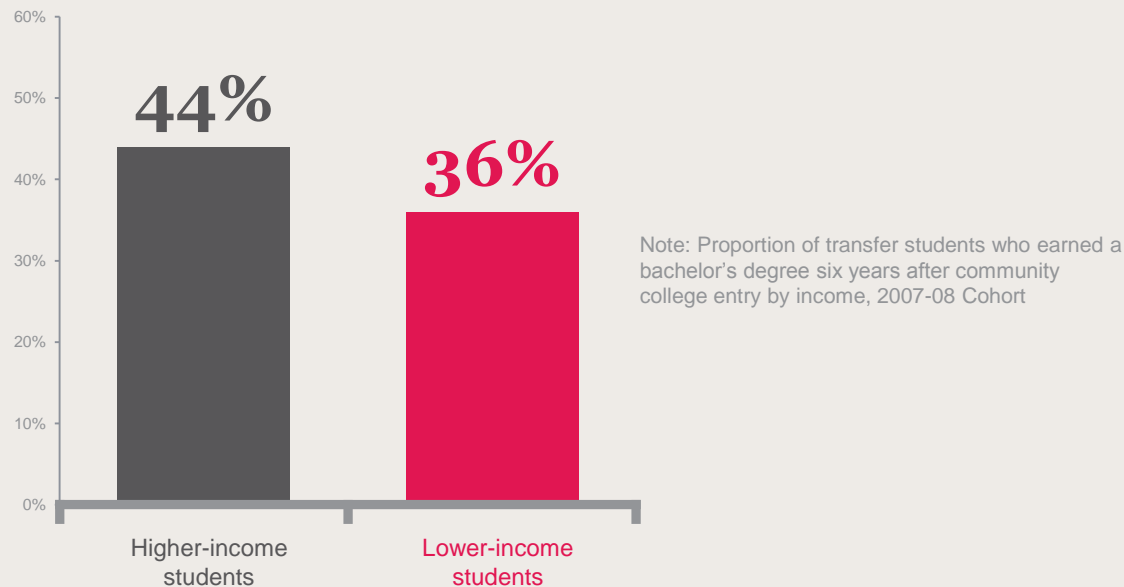
Note: Data reflect six-year graduation rates for community college transfers at “Most Competitive” and “Highly Competitive” four-year institutions, 2010 Cohort

1. Jenkins, D. & Fink, J. (2016). *Tracking Transfer: New Measures of Institutional and State Effectiveness in Helping Community College Students Attain Bachelor's Degrees*. Community College Research Center, The Aspen Institute & National Student Clearinghouse Research Center.

2. Glynn, J. (2019). *Persistence: The Success of Students Who Transfer from Community Colleges to Selective Four-Year Institutions*. Jack Kent Cooke Foundation.

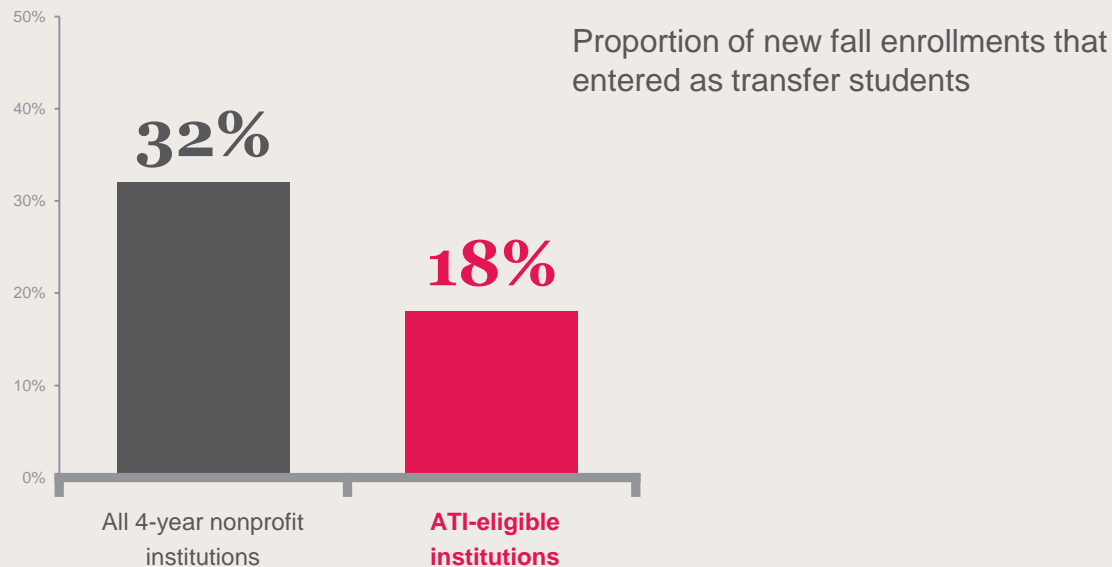
## Overall, Transfer Rarely Goes as Intended, Especially for Lower-Income Students

Lower-income students are less likely than their higher-income peers to attain a bachelor's degree



**A Call to Action  
for the ATI Sector to Expand  
Community College Transfer**

High-graduation-rate colleges overall are substantially less likely than other institutions to **enroll transfer students**.



Community college transfers are more likely than traditional students to require financial aid, but institutions still **spend less aid per degree** because transfers arrive with less time needed to complete.

Estimating the total savings in financial aid conferred by enrolling and graduating an average cohort of lower-income community college transfer students at ATI Institutions<sup>1,2,3</sup>

Sector	Estimated lower-income transfer student cohort size	Student type	Annual financial aid by student type	Average time-to-degree (years)	Total financial aid per degree	Cumulative savings per transfer degree	Total savings across lower-income transfer cohort
Private	25	Traditional	\$32,958	4.03	\$131,370	\$50,781	\$1.27 million
		Community College Transfer	\$39,699	2.03	\$80,589		
Public	945	Traditional	\$12,683	4.29	\$54,410	\$3,785	\$3.58 million
		Community College Transfer	\$19,249	2.63	\$50,625		

1. ATI Member Data and Analysis: (2013-15) 3-year Average Pell transfer student enrollment (Publics 945 n=15, Privates 25 n= 41).

2. Burack, C., Lanspery, S., Shields, T.P. & Singleton, S. (2014). *Partnerships that Promote Success: Lessons and Findings from the Evaluation of the Jack Kent Cooke Foundation's Community College Transfer Initiative*.

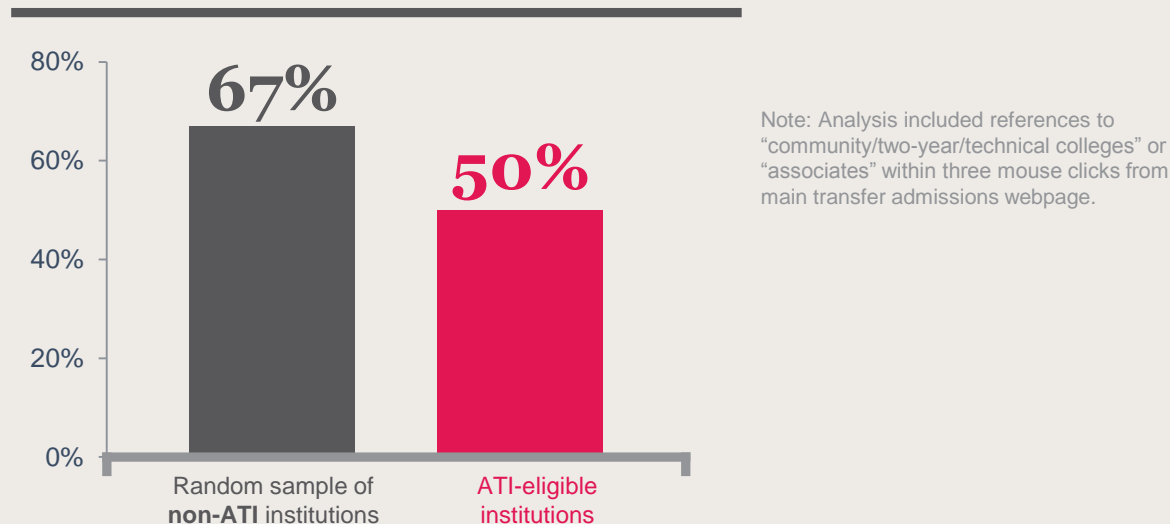
Note: As part of their evaluation of the Jack Kent Cooke Foundation's (JKCF) Community College Transfer Initiative (CCTI)—an institutional grant program aimed at jumpstarting community college transfer opportunity at top colleges—Burack et al. collected data on average total annual financial aid awards to low-to-moderate-income two-year transfer students at five private and three public selective institutions—all of which are ATI-eligible.

3. ATI Analysis: 2004/09 *Beginning Postsecondary Students Longitudinal Study*. National Center for Education Statistics.

# Current Practice at ATI Institutions is Misaligned with Increasing Community College Transfer Opportunity

For instance, ATI institutions can **provide better information upfront** that is tailored to community college students on their transfer admissions webpages.

Text Analysis: References to “community colleges” on transfer admissions webpages between non-ATI institutions and ATI-eligible institutions





A photograph of a busy university walkway, likely a quad or a main thoroughfare, filled with students walking in various directions. The scene is framed by large trees and lampposts. The entire image is covered with a semi-transparent red filter. Overlaid on this background is a large, white, bold text block.


**There are thousands of  
high-achieving, low-income  
prospective transfer students out there.**

There are more than 1 million degree-seeking students **enrolled in community college.**

**1.07M**

**Community college students**

First-time, degree-seeking students  
enrolled in 2-year public institutions<sup>1</sup>



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1. U.S. Department of Education. National Digest of Education Statistics, Table 306.20. National Center for Education Statistics, 3-year average (2013-15), [https://nces.ed.gov/programs/digest/d16/tables/dt16\\_306.20.asp?current=yes](https://nces.ed.gov/programs/digest/d16/tables/dt16_306.20.asp?current=yes).

Forty-one percent of them are **earning high grades**,  
which suggests they could succeed at a four-year college.

**439,000**

**High-achievers**

Public 2-year college students  
with a GPA of 3.0-4.0<sup>2</sup>

**1.07M**

**Community college students**

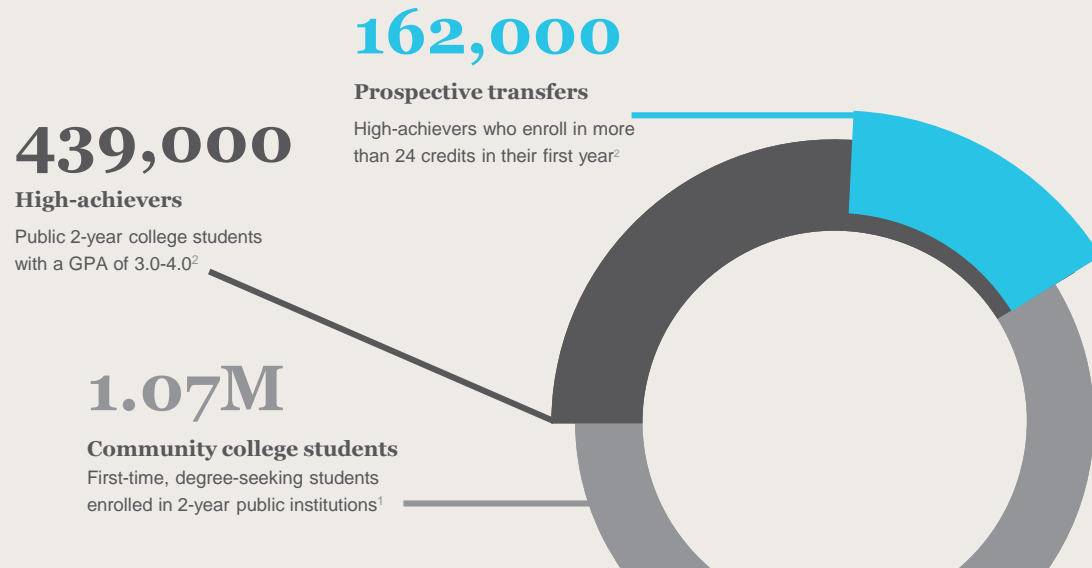
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1. U.S. Department of Education. National Digest of Education Statistics, Table 306.20. National Center for Education Statistics, 3-year average (2013-15), [https://nces.ed.gov/programs/digest/d16/tables/dt16\\_306.20.asp?current=yes](https://nces.ed.gov/programs/digest/d16/tables/dt16_306.20.asp?current=yes).

2. ATI Analysis: 2004/09 Beginning Postsecondary Students Longitudinal Study (BPS). National Center for Education Statistics. <https://nces.ed.gov/pubsearch/pubsinfo.asp?pubid=2012246>.

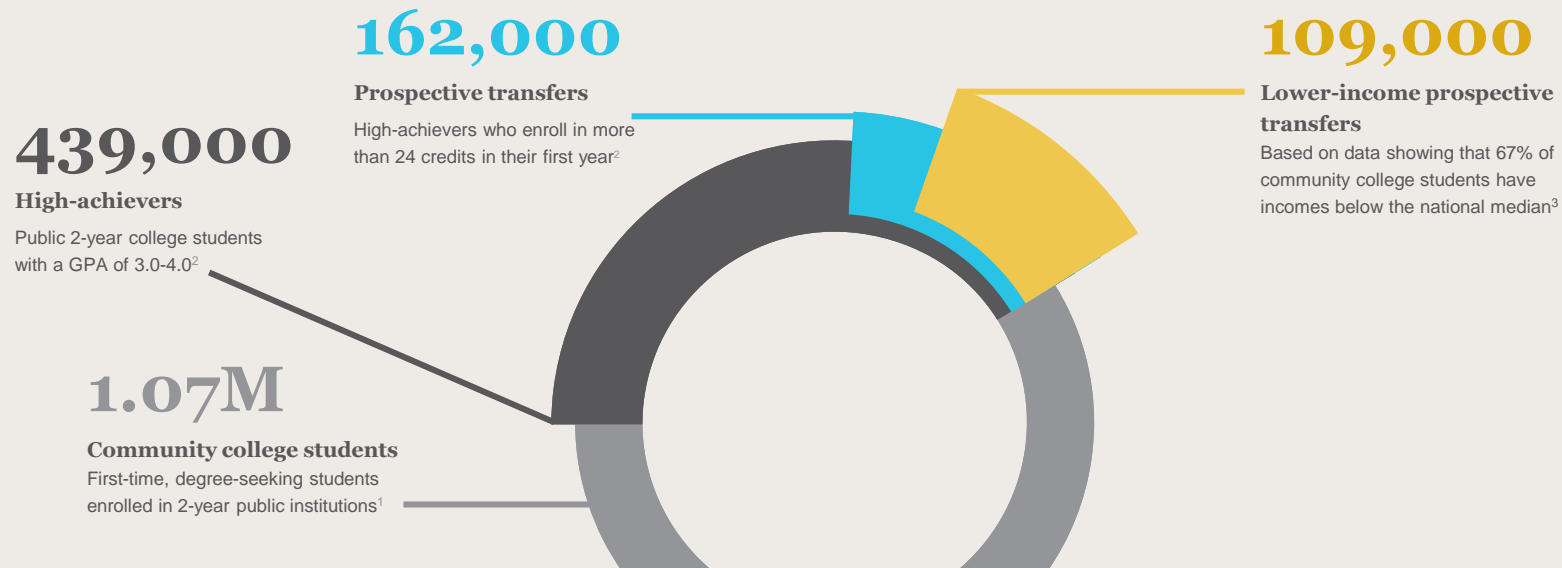
Thirty-seven percent of the high achievers **earn enough credits** to likely enter a four-year school with junior standing.



1. U.S. Department of Education. National Digest of Education Statistics, Table 306.20. National Center for Education Statistics, 3-year average (2013-15), [https://nces.ed.gov/programs/digest/d16/tables/dt16\\_306.20.asp?current=yes](https://nces.ed.gov/programs/digest/d16/tables/dt16_306.20.asp?current=yes).

2. ATI Analysis: 2004/09 Beginning Postsecondary Students Longitudinal Study (BPS). National Center for Education Statistics. <https://nces.ed.gov/pubsearch/pubsinfo.asp?pubid=2012246>.

## Two-thirds of those community college students well-positioned for transfer **come from lower-income backgrounds.**



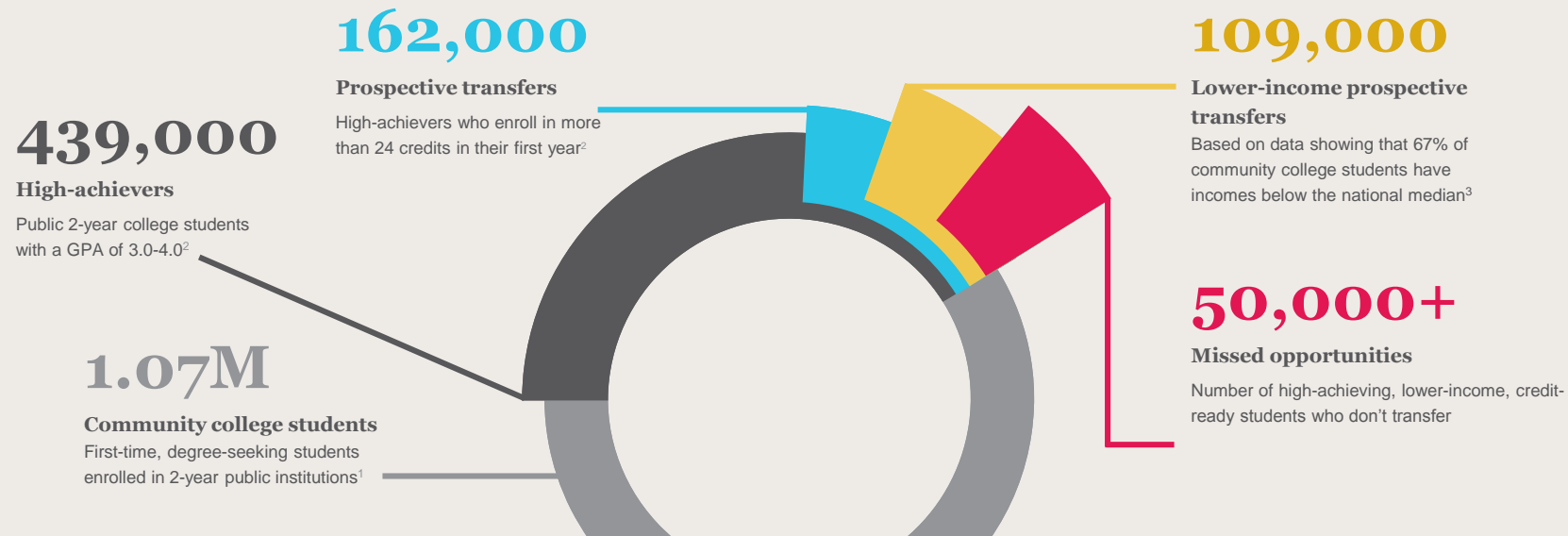
1. U.S. Department of Education. National Digest of Education Statistics, Table 306.20. National Center for Education Statistics, 3-year average (2013-15), [https://nces.ed.gov/programs/digest/d16/tables/dt16\\_306.20.asp?current=yes](https://nces.ed.gov/programs/digest/d16/tables/dt16_306.20.asp?current=yes).

2. ATI Analysis: 2004/09 Beginning Postsecondary Students Longitudinal Study (BPS). National Center for Education Statistics. <https://nces.ed.gov/pubsearch/pubsinfo.asp?pubid=2012246>.

3. ATI Analysis of National Postsecondary Student Aid Study (NPSAS), 2011-12 data.

\* All estimates meet the NCES BPS reporting standard: Standard error represents less than 30 percent of the estimate.

Every year, **half** of those promising low-income community college students **fail to transfer** to a four-year college.



1. U.S. Department of Education. National Digest of Education Statistics, Table 306.20. National Center for Education Statistics, 3-year average (2013-15), [https://nces.ed.gov/programs/digest/d16/tables/dt16\\_306.20.asp?current=yes](https://nces.ed.gov/programs/digest/d16/tables/dt16_306.20.asp?current=yes).

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Among this group are ~15,000 students whose very high GPAs indicate they are  
**especially poised to succeed at ATI institutions.**

**THE TALENT  
BLIND SPOT**

**15,000**

**Missed-opportunity students  
with a GPA of 3.7 or higher**



A group of diverse college students are sitting together, looking at a tablet and a laptop. The image is overlaid with a semi-transparent red filter. The text is centered over the image.

# **Modest Increases at Top Colleges Would Translate into Substantial Opportunity**

**If every ATI-eligible school enrolled an additional 20 low- and moderate-income community college transfer students as juniors each year,**

**ATI would be a quarter of the way  
to its 50,000-by-2025 goal  
—halfway if each enrolled an additional  
40 transfer students.**

A large crowd of students is walking along a wide, paved path in a university setting. The path is lined with tall, mature trees and black lampposts. In the background, a set of stone steps leads up a hill. To the right, there are several informational displays or posters on stands, including one with the word 'REF' and another with 'JON'. The entire image has a blue color overlay.

# A Path Forward





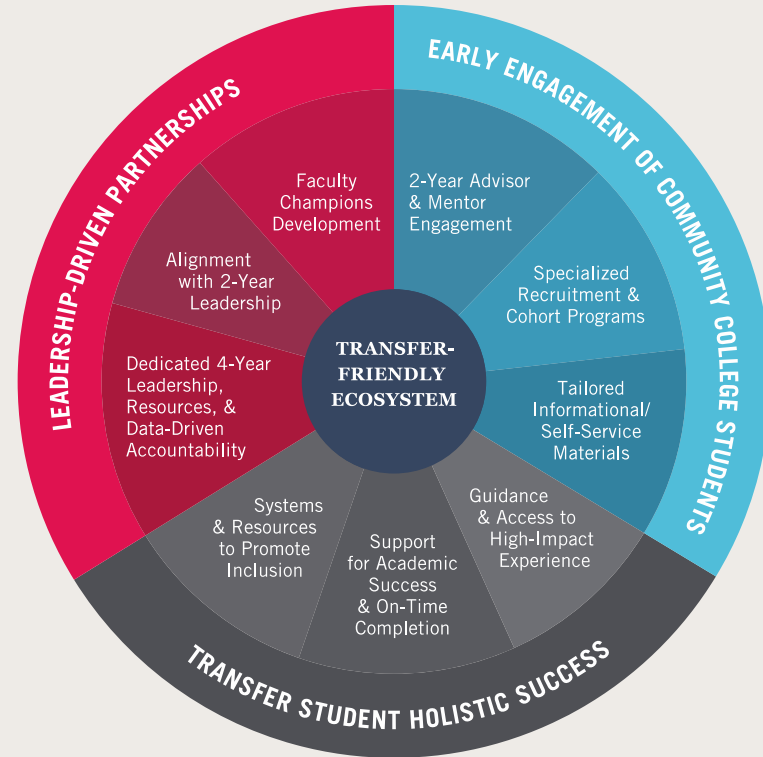
# Advancing Community College Transfer at Our Institution

The first step to determining a path forward to enrolling more talented community college transfer students is **assessing your institutional data.**

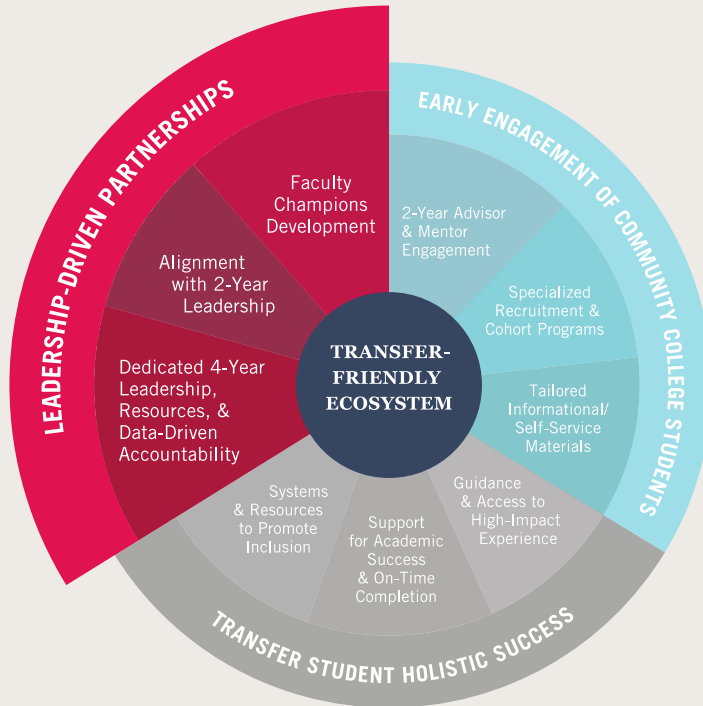
Community College Transfer Access and Success	2014-15	2015-16	2016-17	2017-18	2018-19	Target 2025
Number of incoming community college transfers						
% of community college transfers who are eligible for Pell Grants						
Average unmet need (excluding loans) for transfer students						
Average unmet need (excluding loans) for native students						

ATI has **developed a road map** to improving community college transfer that includes potential high-value practices to consider in several domains.

For more details, consult our framework in *The Talent Blind Spot: The Practical Guide*.



## Potential approaches to **leadership-driven partnerships**:

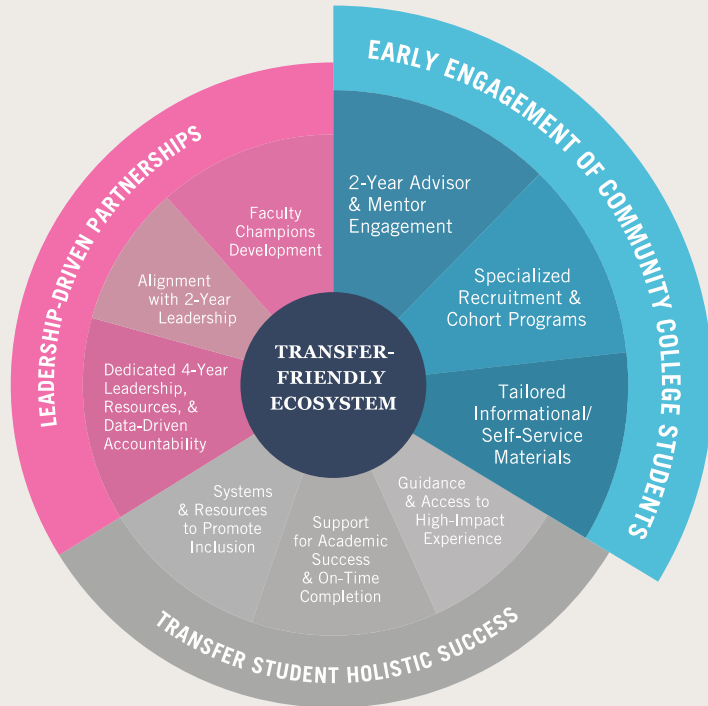


- Establish relationship with area community college president and senior leaders
- Create and announce a transfer task force that includes senior four-year institutional leaders
- Identify key performance indicators
- Incorporate transfer strategy across student services, academic advising, and other relevant departments to build cross-campus awareness
- Develop two- and four-year faculty transfer champions through community college partnerships
- For institutions with strong partnerships with high-volume community colleges, develop major-specific maps and pathways
- [Add your ideas to this list]



## Potential approaches to **early engagement of community college students:**

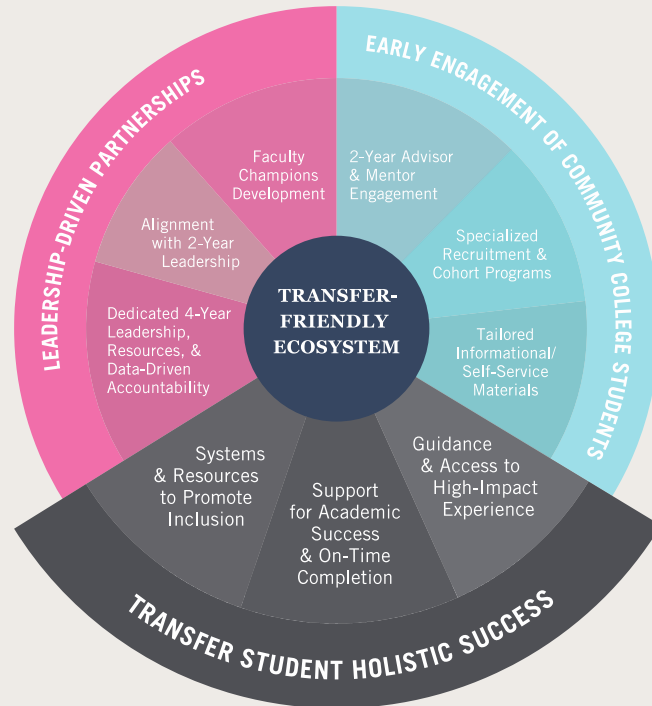
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- Invite advisors/faculty/mentors from feeder community colleges to campus for training and relationship building
- Train subset of recruiters to specialize in transfer student information
- Develop an early prospective transfer student cohort experience in partnership with area community colleges
- Review website to ensure it is informative, easy to use, and welcoming for potential transfer students
- [Add your ideas to this list]

## Potential approaches to ensuring **the holistic success of transfer students:**

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- Convene focus groups of current transfer students to identify areas of opportunity
- Develop a tailored orientation experience for incoming community college transfer students
- Host faculty research and internship fairs especially for transfer students
- [Add your ideas to this list]



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**Join a national movement to  
improve community college  
transfer pathways for  
millions more students.**

# A Guide for Using This Slide Deck

This research serves as a visual companion to the American Talent Initiative's *The Talent Blind Spot: The Case for Increasing Community College Transfer to High Graduation Rate Institutions*.

If you would like to use all or any part of this slide deck at your own institution, please see the formal citation below.

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## SLIDES 2 - 12

**The national picture:  
a look at demographics  
and behaviors of  
potential community  
college transfer  
students**

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## SLIDES 13 - 25

**A call to action for the  
ATI sector: why ATI  
institutions should  
enroll more high-  
achieving community  
college students**

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## SLIDES 26 - 31

**Institutional tools:  
customizable case-  
making slides for  
institutional use**

Note: These slides draw on research from the other half of the Talent Blind Spot: *The Practical Guide to Increasing Community College Transfer to High Graduation Rate Institutions*

Suggested citation for *The Case*:

LaViolet, T., Fresquez, B., Maxson, M. & Wyner, J. (2018). *The Talent Blind Spot: The Case for Increasing Community College Transfer to High Graduation Rate Institutions*. The American Talent Initiative.

# A Guide to Using Slides 26-31

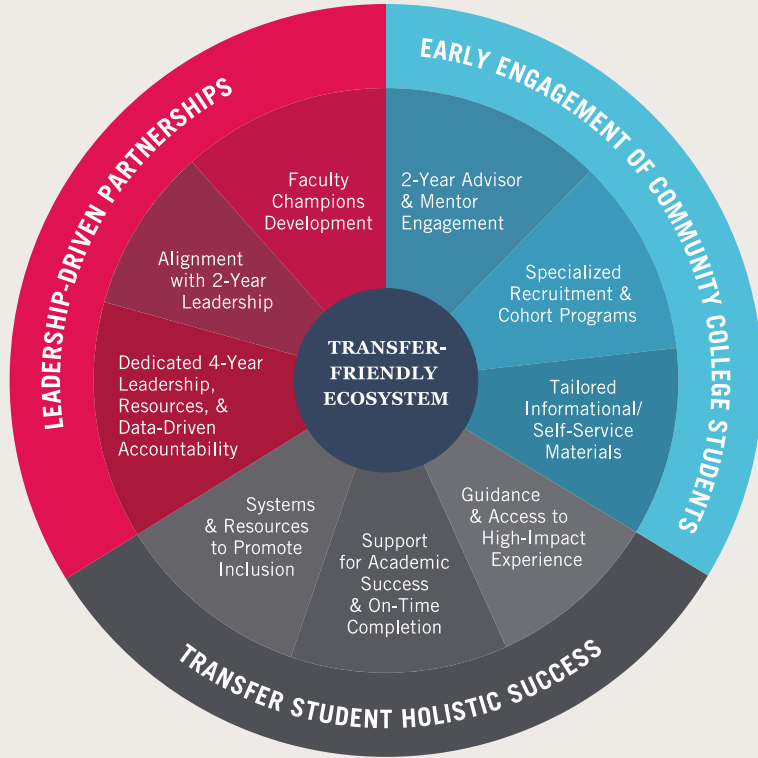
- These slides are based on the second research volume of *The Talent Blind Spot: The Practical Guide to Increasing Community College Transfer to High-Graduation-Rate Institutions*.
- The slides, as well as the research, are divided into three strategies for community college transfer student success:
  1. Leadership-driven partnerships
  2. Early engagement of community college students
  3. Transfer student holistic success
- The slides are meant to be **customizable** for institutions to utilize internally or externally, to map out a plan for community college transfer work at the institution.
- The slide content may be edited as needed to fit your institution's strategies and goals, but kindly cite *The Practical Guide* as a source.

Suggested citation for *The Practical Guide*:

LaViolet, T., Fresquez, B., Maxson, M. & Wyner, J. (2018). *The Talent Blind Spot: The Practical Guide to Increasing Community College Transfer to High-Graduation-Rate Institutions*. The American Talent Initiative.

# Additional ATI Community College Transfer Resources

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- *The Talent Blind Spot: The Practical guide to Increasing Community College Transfer to High-Graduation-Rate Institutions*
- *The Transfer Playbook: Essential Practices for Two- and Four-Year Colleges*
- *Tackling Transfer: A Guide to Convening Community Colleges and Universities to Improve Transfer Student Outcomes*
- *Tracking Transfer: New Measures of Institutional and State Effectiveness in Helping Community College Students Attain Bachelor's Degrees*

Please see our [digest](#) of additional assessment tools, example websites, and transfer support organizations