Transfer Equity through Action Inquiry

Does "2+2" Still Equal Four?
Examining the "New Math" of Transfer Access
from Community Colleges to the Baccalaureate

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Does “2+2” Still Equal Four?
Examining the “New Math” of Transfer Access and Equity through Action Inquiry in California and Wisconsin

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Established at USC in 1999 as part of the University of Southern California’s renowned urban initiative, the Center for Urban Education leads socially conscious research and develops tools that advance institutional effectiveness in producing equity in student outcomes.

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Introduction

This symposium introduces audience members to work being conducted at the Center for Urban Education at the University of Southern California concerning transfer access and equity for African American, Latina, Latino, and Native American students. Our purpose in conducting several studies focused on transfer from two-year and community colleges to four-year colleges is to gain a better understanding of transfer equity for these racial-ethnic groups, which are not well represented among transfer students. Our understanding of equity is informed by several perspectives, including political-economic views of the just distribution of resources and critical race theories concerning the representation and participation of marginalized racial-ethnic groups in U.S. higher education. When we refer to inequities in transfer, we refer to the systematic underrepresentation of African American, Latina, Latino, and American Indian students among students who use two- to four-year college pathways to pursue and obtain a bachelor’s degree.

This report has been prepared to accompany the symposium and is organized in five parts. First, we discuss the concept of transfer equity, illustrate inequities in transfer access, and observe that transfer rates, as typically calculated under accountability reporting, omit large numbers of African American, Latina, and Latino students. The second section outlines our conceptual framework for conducting what we refer to as “critical policy analyses” of transfer access using action research and action inquiry methods in collaboration with higher education system leaders, college administrators, faculty, and counselors (i.e. “practitioners”) to address issues of equity. As we discuss, the characteristics of critical policy analysis include attention to the discourses of educational opportunity as well as to program structures, including requirements that formally or informally create participation criteria that are likely to have a
disproportionate impact on low-income students and therefore, given the association between income and racial-ethnic minority status, on students of color.

In Wisconsin, where we are engaged in the Wisconsin Transfer Equity Study with leaders of the University of Wisconsin (UW) system, which includes the associate’s degree-granting UW Colleges, and of the associate’s- and technical-degree granting Wisconsin Technical College System (WTCS), the extremely low numbers of African American, Latinas, Latinos, and American Indians among transfer immediately raises questions about how well the numerous transfer- and baccalaureate- focused programs and over 500 articulation agreements in the state are serving these students groups in providing access to bachelor’s degrees (the UW Colleges and the WTCS).

Similarly, as we explore in the fourth section of the paper, California, though having large numbers of African Americans, Latinas, and Latinos enrolled in community colleges, has a surprisingly small number of these students successfully navigating transfer pathways to the bachelor’s degree. As we discuss further below, racial-ethnic inequities in transfer access are revealed when we compare transfer rates, but they become even starker when we expand the discussion of transfer access to include the large populations of students who are not typically included in the calculation of transfer rates. We illustrate this by presenting a cohort data analysis for a prototypical case study college that we call Downtown Community College, which characterizes enrollment patterns and access to transfer in a high minority serving institutions. The Downtown Community College case study is a fictional composite, drawn based on data analyses conducted by community colleges participating in the Center for Urban Education’s California Benchmarking Project.
We also summarize the "chances of transfer" to the California State University (CSU) and to the University of California (UC) for Latinas and Latinos in ten high Latina/o serving institutions, illustrating that these chances are 4 in 100 or lower for transfer to a CSU and 6 in 1000 or lower for transfer to a UC. We emphasize that these statistics are not transfer rates in the sense that such rates are typically measured in state accountability or data reporting systems. Transfer rates calculated to hold colleges and universities accountable for transfer access typically exclude part-time, vocational, or short-term students from the enrollment base and may even limit the denominator to those who have already made significant progress towards transfer, such as by completing twelve transferable credits or by completing key courses that are shown empirically to be gateways to transfer.

We take a different approach in summarizing transfer numbers because our purpose is to create equitable transfer opportunities and outcomes for African Americans, Latinas, Latinos, and American Indians, rather than to blame institutions or the people who work in them. As a first step this entails revealing the problems of low transfer access for these racial-ethnic groups and enlisting a willingness to address those problems. Transfer rates, as typically calculated, hide inequities in transfer pathways by failing to recognize the large population of students who could obtain baccalaureate degrees if they experienced better educational opportunities. Therefore, we provide examples of the ways in which the principles of action inquiry reframe the academic researchers' role from simply describing problems to taking part in solving them, including problems of inequities of transfer access and outcomes. In this respect, we note that an indicator of the validity of action research and action inquiry is whether the knowledge generated is acted upon by practitioners in institutional contexts affected by the problem under study (Kemmis & McTaggart, 2000). One of the key strategies of our work, therefore, is to develop tools (e.g. data
analysis and summary tools, planning materials) that practitioners can use to observe inequities, document them, and take action on their own campuses to address them.

Although these Wisconsin and California have very different higher education systems and distinctly different structures for their two-year college and transfer systems, we focus on them for the important reason that both are engaged in major initiatives that are intended to rely on the use "inquiry," or self-assessment and reflective practice, to improve educational opportunity in community and two-year colleges.

In California, an initiative to improve the quality of "basic skills" education (also referred to as remedial or precollegiate instruction) has been implemented without initial attention to racial-ethnic equity. Now entering its fourth phase, California’s Basic Skills Initiative (BSI), which incorporated the concept of faculty inquiry as a transformative tool for change, is seeking to integrate equity into its strategies for faculty development and institutional change. The BSI is a major state initiative, funded in its first two years with over sixty million dollars, to address the high number of students enrolling in basic skills classes without positive prospects of success. Through the California Benchmarking Project we are developing tools to model how to incorporate equity into campus-based assessment of transfer access in ways that include students who start postsecondary education in basic skills classes.

Transfer Equity

Equity is an abstract concept that, as we have learned by talking with practitioners in two- and four-year college settings, holds different meaning for different people. One of the most common misperceptions is that equity is a concept synonymous with equality. Others view diversity and equity as equivalent terms. While diversity is one aspect of equity, equity has other meanings that guide our work, including the following:
- **Representational Equity**: proportional participation of marginalized racial-ethnic groups at all levels of an institution, including high status special programs, high-demand majors, and in the distribution of grades.

- **Equity-Based accountability**: Accountability practices are in place for routine data collection, use, organizational learning, and reporting to continually assess the status of educational opportunity and outcomes by racial-ethnic group.

- **Equity-Based Assessment**: At the campus level, individuals, policies, structures, and practices espouse equity as a value and demonstrate it through the ways that problems are framed, assessed, addressed, and evaluated.

- **Resource Equity**: Educational resources, when unequally distributed, are directed at closing equity gaps.

- **Equity-Mindedness**: Individuals at various levels of an institution, including leaders and staff members, say and do things that reflect an awareness of equity issues and a willingness to address them. Equity perspectives are evident in actions, language, problem-framing, problem-solving, and cultural practices. This includes being "color conscious," noticing differences in experience among racial-ethnic groups, and being willing to talk about race and ethnicity as an aspect of equity.

In regard to resource equity, researchers have debated whether there is an active political struggle going on through which more affluent or politically powerful groups are creating inequities in transfer by laying claim to educational resources, such as by lobbying legislators and college leaders to create new programs and policies that will help them secure a place in postsecondary education. As college prices rise and financial aid subsidies cover a smaller
portion of the bill, the less costly two- to four-year transfer pathway to the baccalaureate becomes more attractive.

Barbara Townsend (2001) coined the term “middle-class takeover” to caution that middle-class families and students were better positioned to take advantage of community college programs geared towards academically prepared students, such as dual degree and early college credit programs. Similarly, Gregory Anderson and colleagues (Anderson, Alfonso, & Sun, 2006) warned of a political struggle for increasingly scarce higher education resources in which the potential for a middle-class takeover of the transfer function loomed large. Alicia Dowd and Tatiana Melguizo (2006), analyzing High School and Beyond and National Educational Longitudinal Study data, tested the middle-class takeover hypothesis by comparing the socioeconomic composition of traditionally aged community college transfers during the 1980s and 1990s. They did not find evidence of a middle-class takeover. However, the difference in the point estimates across the decades, which were statistically insignificant, suggested a different sort of resource competition in which middle-class students were losing transfer enrollment share to students from the highest socioeconomic quintile.

Whether a “transfer takeover” is taking place, in the sense that more affluent students are capturing a larger share of educational resources allocated to promote transfer than they were previously, is not clear. However, a recent study by Alicia Dowd, John Cheslock, and Tatiana Melguizo indicates that the distribution of transfer access is heavily skewed in favor of families and students with higher socioeconomic status (SES) (Dowd, Cheslock, & Melguizo, 2008; Dowd & Melguizo, 2008), creating a class-based equity gap. Other studies of national data also make it clear that students from families of lower socioeconomic status have very little transfer access to four-year colleges (Dougherty & Kienzl, 2006; Goldrick-Rab, 2006; Hilmer, 1997).
This poor access is particularly striking in regard to transfer to selective colleges: national longitudinal data show that only 7 percent of transfer cohorts\(^1\) are from the two lowest socioeconomic status (SES) quintiles. Yet, it is also true of transfer cohorts to less selective institutions, where the enrollment share for students from that lower two-fifth of the income distribution is only 20 percent, half of what would be expected under a proportionate distribution (Dowd et al., 2008). As shown in Table 1, U.S. Census data collected in 2006 through the American Community Survey shows that nationally and in the states where our studies are focused Latinos, African Americans, and Native Americans (or American Indians, an expression preferred by many tribes) have substantially lower median household incomes. Nationally, white household median income was over $52,000, whereas Latino household income was less than $39,000, Native Americans less than $34,000, and African Americans just over $32,000. These income gaps, ranging from $13,000 to $20,000, are exacerbated in Wisconsin and California where the gap between whites and African Americans is close to $25,000.

Given the association in the United States between socioeconomic status, poverty, and racial-ethnic background (Bernal, Cabrera, & Terenzini, 2000; Fallon, 1996), these class-based inequities in transfer access are particularly disadvantaging to African Americans, Latinas, Latinos, and American Indians. However, capturing the extent of the impact of transfer inequities on these groups is difficult in national data sets, because they obscure important state-by-state variation and the clustering of racial-ethnic groups in particular geographic areas and in high minority-serving colleges (Contreras, Malcom, & Bensimon, 2008). The small sample sizes of students of color in national data also generate unreliable estimates and comparisons. For these reasons, studies of institutional-level data are essential to understand the distribution of transfer

\(^1\) Based on data from the National Educational Longitudinal Study.
resources and opportunities among African Americans, Latinas, Latinos, and American Indians and to assess the status of transfer equity among racial-ethnic groups.

There are two primary arguments that typically counter notions of representational equity. These argue against treating proportional gaps in educational participation and outcomes such as transfer as indicators of inequities. First, it is clear that the academic preparation of students entering postsecondary education varies widely. Many students do not have the academic skills required to complete college-level work to earn an associate’s degree and transfer to a four-year institution (or to transfer after a shorter time at a two-year college) when they start college. Second, many students do not aspire to earn a bachelor’s degree, but instead are enrolled in vocational or technical programs.

While both of these points are true, they are often overstated in ways that sustain a lack of awareness or even indifference to the very large population of African American, Latina and Latino students who enter college with very low probabilities of ever earning a bachelor’s degree. In addition, other than that our educational system does not typically provide the same caliber educational opportunity to these groups as to white students, there is no reason to expect that the distribution of students with or without appropriate academic preparations or having baccalaureate goals should differ by racial-ethnic group (see Levin, 1994 for a similar treatment of unequal K12 schooling outcomes).

Some might further argue that the differences in educational achievement are a matter of intergenerational mobility and it is only a matter of time before groups traditionally underrepresented in higher education catch up to their white peers. However, this argument is not sustained when we consider the long-standing racial-ethnic gaps in postsecondary achievement, and the fact that these have not substantially decreased over time.
We also know from national longitudinal studies that a significant proportions of students who enter two-year colleges stating that they have no intention of transferring raise their educational aspirations. The most recent available data\(^2\) from the U.S. Department of Education indicates that one-third of students entered college without any intention of earning a degree beyond the associate’s, but almost half of them (47 percent) increased their educational expectations to include a bachelor’s degree (Provasnik & Plany, 2008, p. 24). This indicates that many students are uncertain of their education goals and that others first begin to consider while in college that they have the ability to earn a bachelor’s degree. Clearly, community colleges and technical colleges can and do make a difference in students lives in ways that improve their educational and occupational prospects.

Nevertheless, the higher education system has been criticized for the low rates of degree completion and transfer among its students (U.S. Department of Education, 2006). Nationally about half of students who entered community colleges with baccalaureate goals transferred within six years. This figure falls to 29 percent when students who entered without any intention of transferring are included (U.S. Department of Education, 2005). Transfer rates, like graduation rates, have therefore become controversial indicators of institutional effectiveness, with hard fought battles over which students belong in the denominator of the transfer rate calculation (Dowd, 2008). Colleges do not want to be held accountable for students’ poor educational experiences in K-12 and they argue that the emphasis on bachelor’s degrees discounts their contributions in educating students with technical skills and certification. As a result, transfer rates calculated for accountability purposes have evolved to exclude students without a demonstrated interest in earning a bachelor’s degree.

\(^2\) The statistics are based on the Education Longitudinal Study of 2002 (ELS: 2002), Second Follow-up, 2006, a longitudinal study that began with a nationally representative cohort of high school sophomores in 2002.
For example, in California, which enrolls about one in five community college students nationally (U.S. Department of Education, 2005), the accountability system's transfer rate is calculated based only on the population of students who have completed twelve credits within their first six years of enrollment and have attempted to complete at least one transfer-level course in English and mathematics, which yields a statewide transfer rate of 37 percent. Unfortunately, this approach omits the majority of California community college students, because over 70 percent never reach such a curricular milestone (Horn & Lew, n.d.) and they are not included in the accountability statistic. This is particularly problematic in examining racial-ethnic equity in transfer access, because African Americans, Latinas, and Latinos are disproportionately enrolled in the non-credit or pre-transfer credit “basic skills” courses that are not included in the transfer rate calculation.³

In fact, the most common starting point for California community college students is in non-credit courses and credit-bearing, but non-transferable, basic skills courses. In 2006-07 approximately 600,000 students received basic skills instruction in California community colleges.⁴ In these classrooms, students of color were over-represented in comparison to their white peers. About 40 percent of students receiving basic skills instruction were Latino (in comparison to an overall enrollment share of 30 percent), 20 percent were Asian (compared to 16 percent), and 10 percent were African-American (compared to 8 percent). The only group not overrepresented in basic skills courses was white students, whose enrollment share was 20% (Hill, 2004) (California Postsecondary Education Commission, 2007).

³ Neither non-credit nor credit basic skills coursework count toward degree attainment or transfer eligibility in California.
⁴ Annually, many more students than the number that actually enrolls in basic skills coursework are assessed through placement tests at a basic skills level in math and/or English, but do not follow their placement scores and enroll in college credit courses (Hill, 2007).
Compounding racial-ethnic gaps in transfer and degree outcomes, many students never progress from basic skills coursework to transferable courses. The rates of completion in basic skills courses are low (about 60 percent), and only half of those who do complete a basic skills course successfully go on to complete a higher-level course in that same discipline within three years (ARCC, 2007). Further, African American, Latina and Latino students persist through basic skills curricula at lower rates than their white and Asian peers.

For all of these reasons, current accountability practices obscure the poor performance of the educational system as a whole in regard to racial-ethnic gaps in students’ educational experiences and outcomes. In addition, such narrow framing of “who counts” in postsecondary accountability is likely to narrow discussions of the distribution of higher education resources in ways that neglect the needs of students omitted from accountability statistics. To address these concerns, researchers from the Center for Urban Education have been collaborating with higher education leaders and practitioners in California and Wisconsin to develop equity-based assessment and accountability practices. After discussing the methodological and epistemological perspectives that inform our work in the next section, we describe the strategies we have been developing to broaden awareness of inequities in transfer access and to foster equity minded practices among individuals whose positions in higher education would enable them to improve transfer access. In doing so, our aim is to also broaden the issue beyond one of institutional effectiveness in transfer and bachelor’s degree production by treating it as a societal issue of inadequate attention to the imperatives of democratic education during a time of tremendous demographic change.
Action Inquiry through the "Practitioner-as-Researcher" Model

To facilitate the development of equity-based accountability (typically at the state and system level), equity-based assessment practices (typically at the assessment level and as established in accreditation procedures), and equity-mindedness, we integrate ideas from cultural historical activity theory (Glassmen, 2001; Nasir & Hand, 2006; Ogawa, Crain, Loomis, & Ball, 2008; Roth & Lee, 2007). From this synthesis, we conclude that learning is 1) social; 2) facilitated by assisted performance that is responsive to the current knowledge of the learner; 3) mediated by cultural tools and artifacts; and that 4) learning takes place in communities of practice and is indexed by changes in participation within these communities. The primary means of implementing these principles is to convene practitioners who are involved in an institution’s formal learning systems and/or who are viewed as key actors in informal institutional networks.

Therefore, we convene practitioners in such roles as a community of practice referred to as an "evidence" or "inquiry" team. Learning in the evidence teams is mediated by any number of "data tools" that facilitate the examination of disaggregated data about student outcomes. These tools include the Equity Scorecard (Bensimon, 2004, 2005a, 2005b, 2007; Harris III & Bensimon, 2008) as well as curriculum mapping, data collection and analysis, and goal-setting materials developed through the California Benchmarking Project (Dowd, 2008). These tools are designed to assist higher education leaders and practitioners discover the nature and extent of racial-ethnic student outcome inequities. Practitioners’ background knowledge is revealed in their "sense-making" conversations, for example, concerning the causes of inequalities revealed by disaggregated data on educational outcomes (e.g., persistence after the first semester). Articulating understanding about racialized experiences in higher education is a step towards
adopting equity frames for viewing problems of student outcomes, because it involves taking note of racial-ethnic differences. Observing and noticing problems, including problems of racial-ethnic inequities, is a necessary first step in any “inquiry” process of problem-solving (Rodgers, 2002).

The inquiry process that we use in collaborating with practitioner-researchers convened as evidence teams is based on several traditions in the study of knowledge production, professional practice, organizational change, and social change (Bensimon, 2007; Polkinghorne, 2004; Rodgers, 2002; Schon, 1987). Action research (Greenwood & Levin, 2005; Kemmis & McTaggart, 2000; Noffke, 1997) and action inquiry (Bensimon, Polkinghorne, Bauman, & Vallejo, 2004; Reason, 1994) are related but not identical concepts that influence our work. The collaborative research projects discussed in this session draws on principles from both of these methodological families: action research, with its emphasis on politics, knowledge production, and community advocacy, and action inquiry, with its emphasis on reflection and learning through individual practice and in communities of practice.

We draw on both of these research strands because our projects are rooted in a political advocacy goal to bring about racial-ethnic equity in student outcomes, and the methods we use to advance that goal involve the use of inquiry to promote individual and organizational learning about equity. Definitions of action research and action inquiry abound, but we adopt two closely intersecting definitions that are of particular relevance to the contexts of institutional research, higher education, and our work. Action research, particularly in the tradition of “critical action research,” is the “self-reflective collective self-study of practice, the way language is used, organization and power in a local situation, and action to improve things” (Kemmis & McTaggart, 2000, p. 568). Relatedly, “action science and action inquiry” are defined as “forms
of inquiry into practice...concerned with the development of effective action that may contribute
to the transformation of organizations and communities toward greater effectiveness and greater
justice" (Reason, 1994, p. 330).

These two definitions bear many similarities, including the focus on reflection, action,
and effectiveness. We draw on both explicitly in order to describe the advocacy and inquiry
practices of "equity-minded" practitioners, which is a concept grounded in the study of cognition,
cognitive frames, and sensemaking (Bolman & Deal, 2003; Schon, 1987; Weick, 1998). The
concepts of equity, inquiry and action combine to generate the methods of critical policy analysis
that we call on and develop in our work. These include:

- **Color-conscious (as opposed to color-blind) Analysis and Interpretations**
  - Disaggregating data to reveal inequities that would otherwise be unnoticed.
  - Identifying racial and ethnic groups specifically rather than as a generic category,
    e.g., "students of color"

- **Critical probing:**
  - Applying the methods of critical discourse analysis to identify characteristics of
    culture, policies and practices that may produce or reproduce inequality in
    opportunity and outcomes.
  - Asking: "Who benefits?"

- **Racial Reframing**
  - Reframing inequality as a failure in institutional performance and accountability
    and of our society
  - Asking: "How are students of color depicted?" and "What are the implications of
    such depictions?"

**Transfer Equity and Action Inquiry in California**

Community colleges serve the overwhelming majority of California's students in
postsecondary education (Grubb, 2008; Sengupta & Jepsen, 2006) and are an important entry
point into postsecondary education, particularly for Latinas and Latinos, 75 percent of whom

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5 California contains a three-tier, public postsecondary education system including 110 two-year community
colleges and 23 California State Universities (CSU) and 10 University of California (UC) campuses that are four-
year institutions. Over 60 percent of students in postsecondary education in California are enrolled in community
colleges (Grubb, 2008; Melguizo, 2007).
enter higher education in California through a community college (Rivas, Pérez, Alvarez, & Solorzano, 2007). The community college role in developing California’s college-educated work force is becoming increasingly crucial. Currently, California’s educational system—from high school to postsecondary education—retains Latinas, Latinos, and African American students at about half the rate of whites and Asians. The disparities between groups are the greatest at the baccalaureate level (National Center for Higher Education Management Systems, 2008).

Because California demographic projections show that Latinas, Latinos, and Asians will comprise more than half of California’s working population (ages 25 - 64) within the next decade, efforts to increase the number of college degrees earned by these racial/ethnic groups are essential for the state to remain economically competitive and to sustain its tax base.

Yet, although studies show transfer is the most popular educational goal for California community college students, very few actually transfer to a 4-year institution (CPEC, 2007) (Sengupta & Jepsen, 2006). Depending on the methodology utilized, researchers have estimated that approximately 20 to 40 percent of community college students transfer to four-year institutions (Drummond & Perr, 2007; Horn & Lew, n.d.; Sengupta & Jepsen, 2006).

As discussed above, measuring transfer is a contentious matter and transfer rates can be misleading. The variations in transfer calculations occur because of differences in who is counted as potential transfer students in the denominator of transfer rate calculations. Commonly, the denominator includes only those students who have a pattern of course-taking that indicates an interest in transfer (Bradburn & Hurst, 2001; Horn & Lew, n.d.). However, the population

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6 Information of students’ aspirations to transfer can be analyzed in several ways. One method is examine the goal students’ initially indicate as their educational goals upon entering college. For example, Solorzano and Yosso (2006) found 40% of Latinas/os in California community colleges aspire to transfer when examining students’ aspiration data (see also Horn and Lew, 2007). Another method examines students’ course-taking patterns to determine if they enroll in transfer credit coursework. Using this method, Sengupta and Jenson (2006) found that approximately half of all students in community colleges are interested in transferring to a 4-year college or university.
represented in reported transfer rates can range from students who have completed one transfer credit course to those who have met all transfer eligibility requirements (taken a minimum of 60 units including both English and math requirements) (Horn and Lew, 2007). The formula used for state accountability and accreditation reports in California requires that campuses determine transfer rates by dividing the number of students who transfer (numerator) by the number of students who within their first six years of enrollment complete a minimum of 12 credit units and attempt a transfer level math or English course (denominator) (California’s Chancellor’s Office Management Information System)\textsuperscript{7}.

This approach, while understandable as part of a negotiated accountability system, has two primary drawbacks. First, the majority of community college students are not included in the transfer rate calculation. Second, there can be unintended negative consequences of accountability indicators (Dougherty & Hong, 2006). For example, the most expedient way to raise transfer rates is to attract a greater share of enrollment among academically well prepared students who can reach these curricular milestones. For colleges participating in the California Benchmarking Project, researchers at the Center for Urban Education developed an alternative way of estimating transfer access to use as part of a process of equity-based assessment at participating campuses. In the future, we will also explore its use to promote equity-based accountability in the state.

To broaden the frame of reference and problem-solving from that provided by transfer rates, a “chances to transfer” calculation was estimated based on the entire population of students. In other words, the denominator was much larger than a typical transfer rate reported in accountability data, policy reports, or academic research. It was not limited to students who had

\textsuperscript{7} Using this formula, the statewide transfer rate for students was 40 \% in the six-year period between 2000-01 and 2005-06 (Accountability Report for the California Community Colleges, ARCC, 2007).
expressed aspirations to transfer or whose curricular record empirically demonstrated an intention to follow a transfer path.

The chances of transfer statistics were then presented as part of an institutional-level "transfer portfolio" to participants in an equity-based assessment seminar hosted by our Center. The portfolio included enrollment and demographic information to contextualize the chances of transfer for African Americans andLatinas/Latinos from each college. The chance that an individual of a particular racial-ethnic group would transfer was calculated using cross-sectional data. Disaggregating the institutional data by racial-ethnic group, we calculated the average number of students who transferred to either a CSU or UC campus between 2003 - 2007 (the numerator) by the average number of students enrolled from 2002 - 2005 (the denominator). The enrollment number includes a headcount of all part-time and full-time matriculating students.

The transfer portfolios compare among peer colleges the chances of transfer for Latinas/Latinos and African American students in two different ways. First, tables highlight campuses that serve the highest enrollment of either Latina/o or African American students in the state. Within these tables, individual colleges are ranked based on their enrollment size for a particular racial/ethnic group. The tables then allow practitioners engaged in an inquiry process to see how transfer functions at their campus for Latina/Latino or African American students in comparison to colleges that serve large enrollments of these racial/ethnic groups. Additionally, colleges are provided tables that compare the chances of transfer at their college with campuses that have the highest chances of transfer in the state, using a "best in class" benchmark reference.

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8 The chances of transfer were calculated using data from the California Postsecondary Education Commission, 2002-2007. Three-year enrollment and transfer averages were used to smooth out year-by-year variations.
The chances of transfer portfolios create a very different portrait of transfer access than the transfer rate reported in the state’s accountability system, Accountability Reporting for the Community Colleges (ARCC).

To report on this equity-based assessment practice in a way that models the use of institutional data to bring attention to the loss of students from transfer pathways, we developed data and a case study for a prototype college, Downtown Community College,\(^9\) which represents a composite of high minority serving community colleges in California. The decision to present a prototype college rather than data associated with specific colleges reflects the influence of action research and action inquiry methods. The composite is based on public data, which anyone can access, but we choose not to publicly highlight individual colleges in order to lower the chances of invoking the defensive reactions of colleges subject to unwanted accountability or reporting requirements (Dowd & Tong, 2007).

In the next section, we use the Downtown Community College case study to illustrate three equity-based data practices. First, we illustrate the use of cohort migration data analyses from basic skills courses to transfer-eligible courses, a strategy that makes the loss of large numbers of students readily apparent. Second, we report probabilities of transfer based on an extremely inclusive population base: all enrolled part-time and full-time students, regardless of their curriculum status, whether basic skills or transfer-level. And third, we describe a benchmarking process for setting goals for improving transfer access.

There has been considerable interest in the notion of benchmarking in higher education for purposes of accountability, organizational learning, and continuous improvement (Bender & Schuh, 2002; Doerfel & Ruben, 2002; Seybert, 2003, 2004). In our work, we embed the concept

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\(^9\) The college is a fictional composite of several colleges that participated in the California Benchmarking Project. It’s demographics show the diversity of students that many institutions in project serve.
of benchmarking within an inquiry process, depicted in Figure 1. Goal-setting through benchmarking is viewed as an important step towards observing and taking stock of inequities in student outcomes in ways that are contextualized based on the local conditions and demographics of the college (Bensimon, Rueda, Dowd, & Harris III, 2007; Dowd, 2008; Dowd & Tong, 2007). Accordingly, the Downtown Community College case study focuses on Latina and Latino students in recognition of the growing importance of the Latino population in California and in community colleges in particular. As in other conceptualizations of a reflective “cycle of inquiry” (Kruse, 1997; Kruse & Louis, 1997; Rodgers, 2002), Figure 1 depicts an inquiry process in which problem-solving and improvements in educational effectiveness cannot occur in the absence of practitioner reflection on their own role in contributing to or alleviating problems (see also Polkinghorne, 2004).

**Equity-Based Assessment: The Case of Downtown Community College**

As illustrated in Figure 2, which presents student cohort migration data through a basic skills curriculum at Downtown Community College for Latino students, a large number of Latina and Latino students, 290, first enroll in math in a course two levels below the first transfer-credit course. With a successful course completion rate of about 52 percent, only 150 of the 290 are eligible to enroll in a subsequent semester in the next course in the curriculum. Not all of those eligible students reenroll at the college (although they may enroll elsewhere). The next course in the sequence sees an enrollment of 128 students (only 44% of the original cohort). At 57 percent, the successful course completion rate is higher at this level—as is a typical pattern in community college, the course completion rates increase at Downtown as students move through to transfer-level courses—and 74 students from the original cohort pass the course.
Of these 74, 63 enroll in the first transfer-level course, representing only 21.7 percent of the original cohort. It is this group, about 1 in 5 of the Latina and Latino students who began their math studies at the college, who would be included in the ARCC accountability reporting. The success rate at the transfer level is relatively impressive, at 71.4 percent, with 45 students of the original cohort succeeding. From the first course in the sequence to the last, 15.5 percent, or 15 of 100, pass the course and earn transfer-eligible credits.¹⁰

The cohort migration data in Figure 2 illustrates two important points. First, many Latina and Latino students are lost from postsecondary education from the basic skills curriculum. This population is large in magnitude as well as in proportion to the smaller numbers that ever enroll in transfer-level courses. Second, their postsecondary outcomes and poor access to transfer are not observed in accountability transfer rates because only a handful of students in the cohort reach the course level included in the accountability formula¹¹.

As a result of the loss of students from the basic skills curriculum, the chances of transfer for the entire population of Latina and Latino students at Downtown Community College are 3 of 100, or 3%, to a California State University (CSU) campus and 2 of 1000, or .02%, to a University of California campus. As shown in Table 2, at a comparison group of ten colleges serving large Latino student populations, the chances of transfer for a Latina or Latino are similar, with six campuses providing chances of transfer at 3 of 100 to a CSU, three campuses 4 of 100, and one campus 2 of 100. The chances of transfer to a UC for these Latino students are negligible at all campuses, with only one providing a rate of 6 of 1000, still less than one percent, and the rest ranging between 2 to 5 out of 1000.

¹⁰ The comparable figures for African Americans in high minority serving institutions illustrated by the Downtown Community College case study is 27% retention to the next level basic skills course and 10% reaching the transfer-level course.
¹¹ It is important to note that the population of basic skills students is included in another accountability indicator intended to measure college performance in basic skills education.
Clearly, the chances of transfer for a Latino or Latina student at Downtown Community College is far below the 20 to 40 percent captured by transfer rates with a more limited population in the denominator. These low rates of success are particularly problematic when we recognize the large number of Latina and Latino students at these colleges. As shown in Table 1, Latina/Latino enrollment of the ten Latino-serving colleges in the comparison group for Downtown Community College ranges from about 8000 to over 17,500 students, who make up about one-third to two-thirds of the student body. There may be many explanations as to why so many students are not retained, including some that relate to student goals, such as that they were only interested in taking English as a Second Language (ESL) credits, vocational and technical courses, or they decided that college simply wasn’t for them. Other structural explanations are equally plausible, including the difficulties students experience in overcrowded classrooms, student-counselor ratios exceeding 1000 to 1 (Grubb, 2006), invalid testing and placement procedures (Brown & Niemi, 2007), and highly bureaucratic matriculation procedures. These competing explanations represent the tensions between deficit-based perspectives that blame students for failures attributed as individual failures and “equity minded” (Bensimon, 2004, 2005b) interpretations of the problem that accept institutional responsibility for inequities in education.

To promote equity-based assessment and interpretations of the problem of low transfer access, researchers at the Center for Urban Education have developed a benchmarking process to break the problem down into manageable goals. The first step in the process is illustrated here by moving away from representing the problem of low transfer access in terms of institutional transfer rates, which have little meaning to faculty and counselors whose work takes place with individual students in particular classrooms, curricula, learning centers, and counseling sessions.
When we look at the raw numbers, the magnitude of the problem becomes much more apparent and pressing. The cohort migration data in Figure 2 enables campuses to identify gateway courses where the rates of successful course completion are low and where improvements can leverage better student outcomes across the curriculum. In addition, they demonstrate that low transfer access is not the fault of any one professor, administrator, or counselor, but of a larger breakdown in educational opportunity.

A additional step in the benchmarking process involves comparisons with other campuses where the rates of student success are higher, not to adopt "off the shelf" solutions viewed as best practices but to reframe understandings of the problem away from deficit perspectives of student failure to a recognition that colleges can serve students more effectively. In preparing transfer portfolios for colleges participating in the California Benchmarking Project, we illustrated a process of setting a short-term benchmark goal of 4 of 100 Latina/Latino students transferring to a CSU. For Downtown Community College that goal represents an improvement of 1 of 100 students, or about 70 students based on their enrollment of just over 7000. This goal can then be translated into several apparent solutions, such as reducing class size in three sections of the math gateway course, adding peer tutors, and increasing the hours of counselors and tutors. A benchmark goal of one percent is admittedly small relative to the magnitude of the problem. However, a smaller, feasible goal, attainable through the reallocation of some existing resources and through a sustained focus on a specified leverage point offers opportunities for organizational learning (Bensimon, 2005a; Kezar, 2005) and a recognition that the college can set and achieve goals to address what are seemingly intractable problems.
Implications

We do not argue that the chances of transfer calculation should be the only way transfer accountability is calculated, but we do believe that including the entire campus population in the pool of possible transfer students allows faculty and administrators to have more inclusive discussions about equity and institutional effectiveness at their campus. Seeing how transfer functions for particular racial/ethnic groups allows practitioners and administrators to think carefully about how transfer is (or is not) prioritized as part of the campus’ mission and how it can be improved.

Additionally, the chances of transfer tables provide a method for faculty and administrators to think about benchmarking at their campus. By examining how transfer functions at other campuses they can set benchmark goals for improvement. For example, practitioners at Downtown Community College would discuss what programs and practices must occur so that we can add 1 more Latina/o students out of every 100. Setting goals in comparison to the performance with peer colleges can also help build relationships between campuses and help schools share information about practices and programs that are effective in increasing transfer capacity.

Examining transfer data in a more inclusive way also can help build greater awareness with faculty and administrators on where students are in the community college curriculum pathway. This awareness can lead to questions that push further inquiry into the institutional effectiveness such as: How can better links be made between basic skills students and transfer curriculum? What are practices and programs that can strengthen the transition from basic skills to college credit coursework? How can the transition occur more rapidly? And importantly,
why are gaps occurring in success in the transition from basic skills to transfer eligibility more often for racial/ethnic groups such as African Americans, Latinas/Latinos?

**Transfer Equity and Action Inquiry in Wisconsin**

Since 2005, ten of the comprehensive universities in Wisconsin and all of the UWColleges (2-year branches), at the direction of the Board of Regents, have adopted CUE’s Equity Scorecard as part of a statewide accountability initiative to improve diversity and student success. The Equity Scorecard, which was developed with funding from the James Irvine Foundation, The Ford Foundation, the Lumina Foundation for Education, and the California Community Colleges Chancellor’s Office, is a tool to promote organizational learning and improve equity of student outcomes (Bensimon, 2005a, 2005b, 2007; Bensimon, Hao, & Bustillos, 2006; Bensimon et al., 2004; Bensimon et al., 2007). As a result of the use of the Equity Scorecard in Wisconsin, there is a growing awareness and concern about the lack of transfer pathways for African Americans and Latina/os in the Wisconsin system.

In 2008 researchers from the Center for Urban Education have convened a system-level evidence team of leaders of the University of Wisconsin (UW) system, which includes the associate’s degree-granting UW Colleges, and of the associate’s- and technical-degree granting Wisconsin Technical College System (WTCS) to develop new understandings and perspectives on transfer access to the baccalaureate for African Americans, Latinas, Latinos, and American Indians.

Despite the existence of over 500 system-to-system and campus-to-campus articulation agreements, the pathways from these technical colleges to four-year institutions in the UW system are extremely narrow, and often, completely closed. For example, the Milwaukee area Technical College enrolls almost 13,000 African American students, but UW Milwaukee, in
2007-08, admitted only 49 African American transfers. Similarly, the Madison area Technical College enrolls almost 2000 African Americans, but UW Madison (the flagship campus) admitted only 14 transfers. The figures for Latinas and Latinos are even lower.

Concerning the notion of resource competition, the Wisconsin case is multifaceted. The state has a 20-year history of stated commitment to ensuring excellence through diversity, including most recently Plan 2008, which required that the 19 campuses in the UW system create their own 10-year plans and identify the accountability measures they would adopt to demonstrate success. However, despite good intentions, it appeared that Plan 2008 had produced many programs, but the system had few if any indicators to evaluate progress in access and success for historically underrepresented groups. This realization led to the Wisconsin postsecondary Board of Regents’ adoption of the Equity Scorecard for use at UW campuses. The emergent focus on transfer equity, significant underrepresentation of students of color in the UW Colleges (two-year liberal arts campuses), and the concentration of African Americans and Latina/Latinos in the technical colleges, which provide very little access to bachelor’s degrees, has come about as an outcome of what the system has learned from completing the Equity Scorecard process.

*The Context of Transfer in Wisconsin*

Wisconsin has two separate systems of public two-year colleges: The University of Wisconsin System which consists of 13 two-year colleges collectively called the UW Colleges\(^\text{12}\) and the Wisconsin Technical College System (WTCS) which consists of 16 districts encompassing 47 technical colleges. The two systems differ in mission, size, geographic location, and in the makeup of the student body. The Wisconsin Technical College System (WTCS) and University of Wisconsin (UW) Colleges have a total enrollment of 400,057 and

\(^{12}\) The term "community colleges" is not used in Wisconsin.
12,639 students respectively for the 2006-2007 academic year (WTC System Administration, 2008; UW Colleges, 2008). WTCS is 30 times bigger than the UW Colleges in terms of total student enrollment.

In very general terms, the UW Colleges are small, rural institutions that provide the lower division coursework leading to the baccalaureate to a predominantly white student body. As a system, the Wisconsin Technical Colleges serve a more diverse population than the UW Colleges, and more closely reflect the population diversity in the state of Wisconsin. However, as illustrated in Figure 4 for African Americans in Wisconsin, it is important to note that minority students are concentrated geographically at certain campus locations in the Southeastern corner of the state, reflecting the general demographic characteristics of those areas.

In its undergraduate transfer policy, the UW Board of Regents recognizes that students may choose to transfer due to “a change in major, a family move, the economic or familial necessity of attending college close to home,” and indicate that a “conscientious effort has been made to create a student oriented transfer process” (UW System Regent Policy Documents, Admissions Policy, §7-1, ¶1-2; adopted 5/11/1984, most recently amended 5/07/2004). Even though each of the UW four-year institutions have the autonomy to set transfer admission requirements and determine how credits will be applied to its programs they are expected to conform to general guidelines set forth by the UW Board. These guidelines, entitled “Principles of Accommodations for Transfer Students,” are intended to protect transfer students from having to take redundant coursework at the receiving institution (adding to their financial burden and delaying time to degree), and to ensure transfer and continuing students are treated in a similar
manner. The guidelines focus on how course equivalency will be determined and disseminated by UW institutions. The undergraduate transfer policy does not explicitly make transfer the centerpiece of an effort to increase the participation rate of low-income or minority students in higher education.

The policy ostensibly applies to all students who transfer from accredited colleges and universities, but it best serves students from liberal arts programs. For example, the undergraduate transfer policy states the “‘Principles of Accommodation’ shall be implemented by recognizing general education/liberal arts requirements in terms of broad academic areas (social sciences, humanities, natural sciences, etc.) as well as specific courses” (UW System Regent Policy Documents, Admissions Policy, §7-1, ¶7).

A separate and more recent policy document, “Criteria for Approval of Wisconsin Technical College System Collegiate Transfer Programs” (UW Board of Regents, Academic Policies and Programs, § 4-16, adopted 2/09/2007), addresses the gap in the UWS undergraduate transfer policy. This newer policy was formulated in response to Wisconsin Statute §36.31 requiring that the WTCS and UWS Boards approve the broadening of collegiate transfer programs in WTCS districts. Unlike the student-centered spirit of the undergraduate transfer policy, the WTCS transfer program approval policy seems suffused with a bureaucratic concern with protecting UWS interests.

In contrast to the “principles of accommodation” set forth by the undergraduate transfer policy, the WTCS collegiate transfer program approval policy is guided by the need to “enhance

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13 The “Principles of Accommodations for Transfer Students” are as follows: offering maximum recognition of satisfactorily completed courses to meet the receiving institution’s requirements; awarding transfer credit for courses that have no direct equivalent at the receiving institution wherever possible; applying academic policies and procedures to continuing and new transfer students in a similar manner; giving accepted transfer students an evaluation of their credit prior to enrollment; ensuring that departments or colleges implementing curricular changes consider its impact on transfer students; and communicating transfer policies and changes in admission or program requirements to students through catalogs, bulletins, Transfer Information System (TIS), etc.
credit transfer” and “avoid unnecessary duplication” in state higher education resources. The thrust of the policy is very much on “avoiding unnecessary duplication.” For example, approved WTCS collegiate programs should “meet a projected long-term need by students; draw upon the existing strengths and resources of the WTCS and UWS institutions; and identify and justify sources and uses of new or reallocated resources necessary to support the program” (UW Board of Regents, Academic Policies and Programs, § 4-16, ¶ 6). The WTCS liberal arts program offers the most direct pathway from WTCS to UWS, but currently only four of the 16 WTCS districts provide it (all 13 UW Colleges offer a liberal arts curriculum. More WTCS liberal arts program can be created when “there is a demonstrated need on the part of existing and potential students and where it has been clearly demonstrated that UWS institutions [i.e. UW Colleges] cannot accommodate the need. Collaboration opportunities, including distance education, offered by UWS institutions should be considered and utilized when feasible” (UW Board of Regents, Academic Policies and Programs, § 4-16, ¶ 8-9).

This apparent constraint on the creation of more WTCS liberal arts programs may be problematic given that the system historically attracts minority students— in fact, the WTCS non-white population is 65 times bigger than the UW Colleges’ non-white population (based on 2006-2007 data from UW System Administration Office of Policy Analysis and Research and WTC System Administration).14 Minority students who may wish to join WTCS but cannot enroll at one of the four districts offering the liberal arts program automatically face an additional barrier to transfer.

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14 The figure is calculated as follows. Per WTCS System-wide Enrollment by Sex and Race/Ethnicity, FY 1998-2007, WTCS enrolled a total of 58,249 American Indian, Asian, Black, Hispanic and Hawaiian/Pacific Islander students in the 2006-2007 academic year. Per UWS Student Statistics Headcount Enrollment by Undergraduate Students by Race/Ethnicity, UW Colleges enrolled a total of 889 African American, Hispanic/Latino, American Indian, SE Asian American, and other Asian American students in the 2006-2007 academic year.
The recently introduced WTCS pre-professional programs consist of a mix of general education and pre-professional courses (e.g. business, early childhood education) and are intended to facilitate transfer between WTCS and UWS. As with the liberal arts programs, the UW Board has placed constraints on the creation of new pre-professional programs. In general, a WTCS district can offer an approved pre-professional program if it already offers the liberal arts program (only four districts to date) or, lacking liberal arts degree authority, the WTCS district works in collaboration with a UWS institution. The UW Board “will make every effort…to see that effective and efficient collaboration between the two systems occurs in the best interest of students and taxpayers before reaching such a conclusion” that a WTCS district without liberal arts degree authority and without UWS collaboration can offer an approved pre-professional program. The effect of the UW Board’s policy on creating additional WTCS collegiate transfer programs is currently not known, but it may be an area to investigate by the core evidence team of the Wisconsin Transfer Equity Study.

Available public data is currently incomplete to examine transfer access by race and ethnicity in Wisconsin. The UW and WTCS systems have not previously reported on transfer rates from two-year colleges or transfer enrollment rates at four-year colleges by race and ethnicity at the campus or system level. Nor have aggregated statewide transfer rates been reported. To some extent, this reflects the fact that transfer access has only recently emerged as a policy issue. Available reports do provide an understanding of the shares of UW transfer students enrolling from different types of institutions.

Therefore, in this phase of our study, we summarize the available data in three ways to begin to develop a comprehensive portrait of transfer access for African Americans, Latinas, Latinos, and American Indians, but we are not able to do so at the institutional level, as we have
in California. First, we compare enrollment and transfer shares by racial-ethnic group to examine representational equity. Second, we examine trends in the raw numbers of transfers, aggregating multiple years due to the extremely low numbers of African Americans, Latinas, Latinos, and American Indians enrolled at most UW and WTCS campuses. Third, as in California, we report the "chances of transfer" for the total enrollment base (not restricting the denominator to those in liberal arts or transfer-directed curricula), but in this case do so at the state level, not at the institutional level. In reporting these results, we keep in mind that the state-level analyses obscure important differences by campus that we expect to be able to address in the second phase of our study, at which point individual colleges will collaborate with us to examine transfer access, outcomes, and pathways using their own institutional data.

Over a third of all new transfer students to the University of Wisconsin in the 2006-2007 academic year were from other four-year institutions, including other UW universities and the private four-year sector in Wisconsin\textsuperscript{15}. The UW Colleges and WTCS colleges each sent about 20 percent of the total number of new transfers into UW four-year institutions, 19.2\% and 18.75\% respectively in that year. An additional 30 percent transferred from out-of-state colleges, and a small proportion comprised of international transfers.

\textit{Transfer from the UW Colleges}

Because the UW Colleges are considered the freshman/sophomore campuses of the UW System, all its college-level courses are transferrable to UW four-year institutions. The two-year degrees offered by the UW Colleges – Associate in Arts or Associate in Science – are designed to satisfy the general education requirements of the University of Wisconsin and provide students with junior standing at the UW four-year institution where they transfer. Students may

\textsuperscript{15} The data category for the private sector included private two-year colleges; however the overwhelming majority of private institutions in Wisconsin are four-year institutions.
choose to transfer from UW Colleges to UW four-year institutions without completing the associate’s degree. In Fall 2007, 92 percent of transfers from the UW Colleges to the UW four-year institutions were white students. Three percent were American Indian, two percent were classified as Hispanic/Latino, and one percent or less were African American or of Asian descent. The racial-ethnic composition of the transfer pool has changed slightly over time. Over the nine-year period from 1998 to 2007, the average share of white students was 94 percent and the average share for all other racial-ethnic groups was one percent.

Examining representational equity by comparing these transfer shares for each racial-ethnic group with their enrollment shares indicates that the racial-ethnic composition of transfers is proportional to the racial-ethnic composition of enrolled students at the 13 UW Colleges. However, the numbers of minority students who transfer are very limited. From 1998 to 2007, the total number of African American students who transferred ranges from zero to 23, with eight out of 13 institutions sending five or fewer African American students in the nine-year time period (UW System Administration Office of Policy Analysis and Research), and with UW-Waukesha (located in southeastern Wisconsin) producing the most African American transfer students. The transfer outcomes for Hispanic, American Indian, and Southeast Asian students are similarly low, averaging 25, 10, and 21 students respectively, compared to an average of 1589 white students, over the period from 1999 to 2007. The wide range in the number of transfers from each of the UW Colleges reflects differences in the racial-ethnic composition of enrolled students and of the population in the geographic area around the colleges. The population in the areas around most of the UW Colleges is predominantly white.
The Chances of Transfer from the UW Colleges to the UW Four-Year Universities

The table below displays the chances of transfer, or transfer probabilities, for each racial/ethnic group and compares them against the probability of transfer for the student population as a whole from the UW Colleges. The calculation to determine the chance of transfer was similar to that reported above for our study of transfer in California, but it was calculated at the system- rather than the institutional-level, based on the available data. The average number of transfer students from 2005, 2006 and 2007 (numerator) was divided by the average number of enrolled students from 2002, 2003 and 2004 (denominator) (data source: UW System Administration Office of Policy Analysis and Research). The years were staggered because we are using cross-sectional data. As noted above, therefore, these probabilities of transfer do not represent transfer rates as would be generated through a cohort analysis using longitudinal data.

The chances of transfer from UW Colleges reported in Table 6 demonstrate that all the minority groups (with the exception of South East Asians) experience lower chances of transfer, ranging between 7 of 100 African American students to 13 of 100 Hispanic/Latino and American Indian students, compared with 14 of 100 white students. It is also clear that the probabilities of transfer are low across the board, relative to the UW Colleges' mission, which is to serve as the “freshman and sophomore” campuses.

Transfer from the WTCS to UW Four-Year Universities

As for the UW Colleges, when we examine transfer from the WTCS from the point of view of representational equity, we see that the racial-ethnic composition of transfer students roughly matches the racial-ethnic composition of enrolled students in the WTC System. However, the number of minority transfer students from WTCS is very small and has not kept pace with population growth. The issue of transfer for Hispanic students is illustrative. Hispanics
are the fastest growing ethnic group in Wisconsin, increasing 107% between 1990 and 2000 (UW Extension and Applied Population Laboratory, 2001). Their share of enrollment in WTCS has increased accordingly, by 79%, between 1997 and 2007 (WTC System Administration, 2008). Yet between 1998 and 2007, the pooled number of Hispanic students transferred to four-year colleges by various technical college districts during that time period varied from zero to 189, with more than half the districts sending 10 Hispanic students or fewer (UW System Administration Office of Policy Analysis and Research). The average numbers of students from other racial-ethnic backgrounds were similarly small, indicating that Hispanic students are not alone in experiencing low transfer access. From 1998 to 2007, the average number of transfers was 84 African American students, 20 American Indian students, and 22 Southeast Asian students.

*Chances of Transfer from the WTCS to UW Four-year Universities*

The average number of African American, Hispanic/Latino, and American Indian transfers from WTCS to UW four-year institutions is higher during the period from 1998 to 2007, which reflects the greater overall enrollment in the WTCS and the larger proportion of minority students at the WTCS in comparison to the UW Colleges. As Table 7 demonstrates, however, the chances of transfer for minority students from WTCS are far steeper than for those from the UW Colleges. At a probability of transfer of 3 of 1000, Hispanic/Latino students experience the lowest chances of transfer. African American, American Indian and white students all experience a rate of 4 out of 1000, which is also the rate for the student body as a whole. Only Asian students experience a probability of transfer greater than the total. These low chances of transfer reflect the broad mission of the WTCS and its unique focus on technical

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16 The formula to determine the chance of transfer is as follows: the average no. of transfer students from 2005, 2006 and 2007 (numerator), divided by the average number of enrolled students from 2002, 2003 and 2004 (denominator) (source: UW System Administration Office of Policy Analysis and Research, and WTC System Administration).
education, which distinguishes it from the UW Colleges. In addition, as we noted earlier, because of the clustering of African Americans at particular WTCS campuses, these chances of transfer calculated at the state level are likely to be obscuring important campus-level differences in transfer access for students of different racial-ethnic groups.

*Changing Demographics in Wisconsin*

The state of Wisconsin is predominantly white but has experienced a significant increase in its minority population. Racial and ethnic minority groups now constitute 11.1% of the total population (U.S. Census Bureau, 2000). The Hispanic population more than doubled between the years 1990 and 2000, experiencing a 107% increase (Applied Population Laboratory, 2001). In the same time frame, the African American population increased by nearly 25% and the American Indian population increased by 20%. In contrast, the white population (the largest racial group) grew by 4.8%.

The state population break-down, by race and ethnicity are as follows: 88.9% white, 5.7% African American, 3.6% Hispanic/Latino, 1.7% Asian, 1.6% other race, and 0.9% American Indian (U.S. Census, 2000).\(^{17}\) (UW-Extension & Applied Population Laboratory, 2001). The maps in Figures 4 and 5 show the population density by county for African Americans, demonstrating that they are concentrated in the southeastern and south-central part of the state. Latinos are similarly concentrated in this part of the state. In Milwaukee County, as shown in Figure 6, African Americans are 26% of the population and Latinas/Latinos are 11%, much higher than in the rest of the state and with a rate of population growth exceeding that of other racial-ethnic groups (with the exception of the "other" category). The largest population of American Indians is located in Milwaukee County in southeastern Wisconsin, but as a

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\(^{17}\) Racial categories described herein are for those who describe themselves as being of a single race to simplify presentation. The Hispanic/Latino data described here can be of any race since it refers to an ethnic, not racial, identity. The Hispanic population in Wisconsin is predominantly of Mexican descent.
percentage of the population, they are predominant in the northern Wisconsin counties of Menominee, Sawyer, Forest, and Ashland. Table 5 lists counties with populations of each minority group in excess of 10,000 persons (with the exception of American Indians, for which the selected cut-off mark is 6,000 persons).

Clearly the concentration of underrepresented racial and ethnic groups in Milwaukee, Dane, and Racine create a critical role in the production of baccalaureate degrees for the sending and receiving institutions located within these counties. One of the foci of the Wisconsin Transfer Equity Project will be to select a group of campuses from the three sectors (UW 2-year, WTCS, and UW 4-year) to identify informational, economic, and institutional culture barriers that impede transfer through an equity-based assessment process using assessment protocols developed by Center for Urban Education researchers. A criterion for the selection of participating institutions will be the racial and ethnic composition within their service areas.

Implications

Given the transfer mission of the UW Colleges, its curricular integration with the UW four-year institutions, and the University of Wisconsin’s commitment to increasing the number of baccalaureate degree holders in the state, the persistently low rate of transfer throughout the Wisconsin public postsecondary systems is ripe for improvement. The investigation into low transfer may very well have to begin with a consideration of the efficacy of basic skills education. The case study of Downtown Community College in California, presented above, illustrates an inquiry model organized using equity-minded data practices that could be applied to the UW Colleges to good effect. Tracking cohort migration through basic skills into transfer-level courses at each of the colleges may reveal “leaks” in the pipeline that disproportionately affect students of color who are overrepresented in these courses, relative to their white peers. In
Fall 2007, the proportion of new first-year white students at the UW Colleges needing English or Math remediation was 40%. The corresponding figure was 60% of African American students; 47% of Hispanic/Latino students; and 54% of American Indian students (Source: UW System Administration Office of Policy Analysis and Research). Comprehensive information on the participation of low-income and minority students by course level at each of the UW Colleges (e.g. associate's degree, collegiate-level courses, basic skills courses) is currently unavailable, but investigating course-taking behavior disaggregated by race and ethnicity in the future may illuminate why certain student groups are experiencing lower transfer rates compared to others.

Understanding the transfer outlook at WTCS is complicated by its broad curriculum, not all of which is considered transferrable by receiving four-year institutions. The liberal arts and applied associate degree programs are the primary vehicles of transfer from WTCS to UWS. The proportion of WTCS students enrolled in liberal arts and applied associate degree programs in the 2006-2007 academic year\(^\text{18}\) was 5.26% and 29.25% respectively, which indicates that about 35 percent of WTCS students are enrolled in transfer-directed curricula. (One reason only five percent of WTCS students are enrolled in a liberal arts program is because only four WTCS college districts currently offer it: Madison Area, Milwaukee Area, Nicolet Area, Chippewa Valley.) About 10% of students are involved in technical diploma programs, and the remainder is enrolled in community services programs or basic skills coursework that is not applicable towards a degree. The WTC System serves a wide range of students – from traditional age college students seeking transfer to older adult students in need of workforce training – and certainly, the diversity of its students’ needs and aspirations should be kept in mind when viewing its transfer outcomes data. However, a close examination of its transfer outcomes is

necessary because it attracts a significant number of minority students who could be a potential pool of baccalaureate candidates. The Committee on Baccalaureate Expansion (COBE), a joint WTCS and UW committee, has already identified the technical colleges as an important source of working adults and students of color who should be tapped as part of their larger effort to increase the number of baccalaureate degree holders in the state of Wisconsin (Joint UWS/WTCS Committee on Baccalaureate Expansion, 2004).

The large WTC enrollment base system-wide, coupled with disparities in minority enrollment from college district to district, may mask inequities in transfer success at the institutional level that need further investigation. The situation faced by African American students in WTCS provides an illustrative example. The African American community is concentrated in south-eastern and south-central Wisconsin (UW Extension & Applied Population Laboratory, 2001), and the technical college districts serving this region (Milwaukee Area Technical College, Madison Area Technical College, and Gateway Technical College) have the highest populations of African American students in WTCS (WTC System Administration, 2008). African American students represent approximately 5% of the WTC System population (compared to white students making up approximately 88% of the system population), but a quarter of the population at Milwaukee Area Technical College (where white students constitute half of the population) (data based on average enrollment from 1999-2007; source: WTC System Administration, 2008). The average number of African American students who transfer from MATC is 41, compared to an average of 213 white students, and an average of 292 for overall transfers (based on number of transfers between 1998-2007; source: UW System Administration Office of Policy Analysis and Research). Due to these disparities in institutional enrollment, disaggregated by race and ethnicity, across the system, transfer outcomes need to be examined
within the local context wherever possible. In the next phase of the Wisconsin Transfer Equity Study, we will conduct an in-depth analysis of campus-level data to assess for transfer equity. The findings from the data will drive inquiry activities with campus practitioners to strengthen transfer outcome for minority students.

Determining the chances of transfer for minority students from each of the UW Colleges and the Wisconsin Technical Colleges will provide a picture of institutional effectiveness that may encourage practitioners and other stakeholders to initiate change in how transfer is promoted. These tabulations will be made for each of the 13 UW Colleges and the 16 technical colleges when the data becomes available for the Wisconsin Transfer Equity Study. As part of our research effort, we will support our partners in assessing institutional-level transfer success through our equity-minded data tools and practices, and will monitor the impact using these implements have on practitioners in effecting change. In the next section we provide a worked example of equity-based accountability and equity-minded policy analysis that we plan to introduce to the core evidence team of the Wisconsin Transfer Equity Study.

The Wisconsin Transfer Equity Study

As discussed earlier CUE facilitates the development of equity-mindedness among practitioners by engaging them in purposeful inquiry into their own practices and policies. Participatory action research is time-consuming. Not surprisingly, therefore, its practice as a means of defining problems, decision-making, evaluation, and organizational learning is not widespread in institutions. Consequently, when an institution or a system decides to engage in participatory action research, it represents an additional or extra activity for individuals who are already overburdened with administrative and academic responsibilities. One of the ways in which CUE’s researchers reduce the time demands on the participants is by structuring and
facilitating the inquiry process. An important aspect of facilitation is the creation of analytical protocols that assist participants in engaging in an organized and serious inquiry without the frustration of having to figure out how to get started or having to spend a great deal of time to prepare.

Participatory action research serves as the means of exposing participants to equity-mindedness as a sensemaking frame (Bensimon, 2005b, 2007; Weick, 1998). Equity-mindedness incorporates the ways of knowing that are inherent in critical theories of race, discourse analysis, feminism, and poststructuralism. Most participants are not well versed in these theories. Therefore, we provide protocols that mediate critical analysis for individuals regardless of their knowledge of the underlying theories.

In this section we provide a worked example of a protocol designed to facilitate the critical analysis of a policy that—from its name and provisions—protects the right of UW College students to transfer to a campus of their choice. The protocol was developed for the use of the core evidence team in the Wisconsin Transfer Equity Study. As noted above, the term “evidence team” refers to a group of institutional actors who engage in a reflective inquiry process to learn about a problem on behalf of their organizations. There is an expectation that these individuals will spread their learning through their participation in decision-making bodies that have the power and authority to make changes. Most importantly, there is an expectation that through their participation in equity-minded assessment the participants will learn how to reframe seemingly neutral and rational policies and practices from an equity perspective.

---

19 The idea for the formation of a system level evidence team to engage in equity-minded assessment came from the academic leaders of the UW System and Colleges. These individuals have participated in the Equity Scorecard project and their idea for the formation of a system-level team is evidence of their “learning” to see through the equity lenses. None of the Wisconsin Technical Colleges System members have participated in the Equity Scorecard; thus this is their first experience with our process.
In the Wisconsin Transfer Equity Study, the evidence team involves highly placed leaders of three systems: University of Wisconsin, University of Wisconsin Colleges, and Wisconsin Technical Colleges System. The team includes the vice presidents for academic affairs of UWS and WTS, the provost of the UW Colleges, the vice presidents and deans responsible for institutional research and planning for the three systems and others with specialized roles in the system.

The evidence team will spend about six months studying two-to-four year transfer to determine the barriers to transfer and achievement of equity in baccalaureate completion for underserved minority groups. Specifically they will investigate representational equity (i.e., numerical data), accountability equity (i.e., how students outcomes are tracked), and equity-mindedness (i.e., policy discourses). In this example we describe the methods of equity-minded analysis to interrogate systemic policies and practices that regulate 2/4 transfer. The question guiding the evidence team’s analysis is the following: In what ways might systemic policies and practices, albeit unintendedly, create and perpetuate inequities in educational opportunity and outcomes for historically and emerging underserved communities of color?” The effectiveness of the inquiry process will be judged on whether it results in thoughtful and equity-minded decision-making at the system level.

*Equity-Minded Policy Analysis: A Worked Example*

The equity-minded policy analysis tool presented in Table 8 provides questions to facilitate a critical interrogation of a policy to ease transfer from the UW Colleges to UW four-year campuses: the Guaranteed Transfer Program. The protocol questions are informed by our knowledge of critical theories and have been designed to facilitate a critical analysis by individuals who may lack knowledge of the theoretical underpinnings. We also find that the
application of critical analysis methods without immediately engaging in a conversation about the conditions that create unequal opportunity, e.g., institutionalized racism, power asymmetries, and white privilege, is a more effective means of learning equity-mindedness.

Normally, we would ask team members to complete the protocol for discussion at a meeting or we might complete it jointly. To assist the team and model equity-minded analysis we often provide a worked example. The completed protocol on the Transfer Guaranteed Program can serve as a model for the analysis of other transfer policies and programs by Wisconsin’s evidence team.

Conclusion

States are increasingly relying on the community college sector and its transfer function to provide a pathway to the baccalaureate (Long, 2005; U.S. Department of Education, 2005; Wellman, 2002), which, without explicit attention to issues of equity, may increase inequities in transfer access (Dowd et al., 2006; Dowd et al., 2008; Dowd & Melguizo, 2008). Articulation policies have been put into place to facilitate transfer from the two-year to four-year sector (Anderson, Alfonso & Sun, 2006), and many states are offering students incentives to enroll in community college and earn the associate degree prior to transfer in the form of guaranteed admission and increased financial aid (Florida Department of Education, n.d.; Virginia Community College System, 2007). For many states, this shift is a matter of efficiency and economics. Yet, the studies above suggest that the idealized “2+2” transfer pathway, through which the transfer function enables students to earn an associate’s degree and proceed to bachelor’s degree completion, simply doesn’t “add up” for the majority of low-income students, many of whom never even make it out of the “starting blocks” of their first postsecondary course, which is too often a remedial, basic skills-level course.
No one at all familiar with community colleges would be surprised to hear that many community college students do not transfer. The fact that community colleges have multiple missions and enroll both young adult and adult students with diverse educational and vocational goals is well known (see e.g. Adelman, 2005; Bailey & Morest, 2006; Bragg, 2001; Dowd, 2008). It is also likely that few who are familiar with community colleges would be surprised to learn that only a small proportion of students follow a “2 + 2” transfer pathway, where they spend two years earning an associate’s degree, transfer, and then spend two years earning a bachelor’s degree (Wellman, 2002). We know that “2 + 2” can equal four, but it does equal four only for a small proportion of community college students.

Although the fact that many community college students do not transfer may not be surprising, our findings from our studies in California and Wisconsin are surprising and troubling in revealing the extremely low chances of transfer for large numbers of students. For example, in a California community college designated as a Hispanic Serving Institution and serving a total student population of over 27,000 students, only two percent of students transferred within three years of their first enrollment. On the other hand, the willingness of institutional actors in California and system and institutional actors in Wisconsin to engage with us in an extended inquiry to define the barriers to transfer more explicitly—buttressed by locally constructed evidence—is a promising sign of practitioner commitment and interest to view inequity in outcomes as a failure in taken-for-granted practices and policies. It is much easier to blame the problem on students and adopt compensatory solutions in the form of new programs than to make oneself vulnerable by looking inwards for potential causes and solutions to the problem of inequity.
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UW Board of Regents, Academic Policies and Programs, § 4-16, “Criteria for Approval of Wisconsin Technical College System Collegiate Transfer Programs.” Available online here: http://www.uwsa.edu/bor/policies/rpd/rpd4-16.htm

UW Board of Regents, Admissions Policy, §7-1, “Undergraduate Transfer Policy.” Available online here: http://www.uwsa.edu/bor/policies/rpd/rpd7-1.htm

“UW Colleges Guaranteed Transfer Program.” Available online at http://www.uwc.edu/transfer/guarantee/

UW-Madison Connections Program (n.d.). Available online here: http://www.connections.wisc.edu/


Table 1 Variation in Median Household Income by Race/Ethnicity in the United States and in California, Florida, Texas, and Wisconsin

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>United States</th>
<th>Estimate</th>
<th>Margin of Error</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Median Household Income</td>
<td>48,451</td>
<td>+/-82</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Whites</td>
<td>52,375</td>
<td>+/-73</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Latinos</td>
<td>38,747</td>
<td>+/-205</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>African Americans</td>
<td>32,372</td>
<td>+/-155</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>American Indians</td>
<td>33,762</td>
<td>+/-659</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>California</th>
<th>Estimate</th>
<th>Margin of Error</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Median Household Income</td>
<td>56,645</td>
<td>+/-236</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Whites</td>
<td>65,310</td>
<td>+/-333</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Latinos</td>
<td>43,843</td>
<td>+/-494</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>African Americans</td>
<td>40,709</td>
<td>+/-795</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>American Indians</td>
<td>43,864</td>
<td>+/-3,110</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Florida</th>
<th>Estimate</th>
<th>Margin of Error</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Median Household Income</td>
<td>45,495</td>
<td>+/-247</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Whites</td>
<td>49,585</td>
<td>+/-375</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Latinos</td>
<td>40,510</td>
<td>+/-522</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>African Americans</td>
<td>32,554</td>
<td>+/-671</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>American Indians</td>
<td>37,068</td>
<td>+/-3,199</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Texas</th>
<th>Estimate</th>
<th>Margin of Error</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Median Household Income</td>
<td>44,922</td>
<td>+/-287</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Whites</td>
<td>55,506</td>
<td>+/-394</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Latinos</td>
<td>33,354</td>
<td>+/-428</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>African Americans</td>
<td>32,159</td>
<td>+/-648</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>American Indians</td>
<td>42,200</td>
<td>+/-3,430</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Wisconsin</th>
<th>Estimate</th>
<th>Margin of Error</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Median Household Income</td>
<td>48,772</td>
<td>+/-440</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Whites</td>
<td>50,997</td>
<td>+/-311</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Latinos</td>
<td>34,332</td>
<td>+/-1,977</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>African Americans</td>
<td>26,161</td>
<td>+/-1,322</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>American Indians</td>
<td>40,091</td>
<td>+/-5,667</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey 2006, Authors' Calculations.
Table 2 Chances of Transfer: Latinos at Ten High Latino Serving Community Colleges and at Downtown Community College

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rank</th>
<th>California Community College</th>
<th>Average Latina/o Enrollment 2002 - 2005</th>
<th>% of Latina/o in Campus Total Enrollment</th>
<th>Chances of CSU Transfer*</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>College A</td>
<td>17521</td>
<td>68%</td>
<td>3 out of 100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>College B</td>
<td>13618</td>
<td>40%</td>
<td>3 out of 100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>College C</td>
<td>12068</td>
<td>45%</td>
<td>2 out of 100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>College D</td>
<td>11862</td>
<td>48%</td>
<td>4 out of 100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>College E</td>
<td>11511</td>
<td>57%</td>
<td>4 out of 100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>College F</td>
<td>10951</td>
<td>60%</td>
<td>3 out of 100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>College G</td>
<td>10455</td>
<td>33%</td>
<td>3 out of 100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>College H</td>
<td>9270</td>
<td>33%</td>
<td>3 out of 100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>College I</td>
<td>8544</td>
<td>39%</td>
<td>4 out of 100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>College J</td>
<td>7989</td>
<td>29%</td>
<td>3 out of 100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>College AB</td>
<td>7134</td>
<td>24%</td>
<td>4 out of 100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17</td>
<td>Downtown College</td>
<td>7081</td>
<td>36%</td>
<td>3 out of 100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18</td>
<td>College AH</td>
<td>6948</td>
<td>38%</td>
<td>3 out of 100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: California Postsecondary Education Commission, 2002-2007

*NOTE: Chances of transfer is determined by calculating the average number of Latina/o students who transfer to a CSU institution between the years of 2003-2007 (numerator) divided by the enrollment of Latina/o students at each campus between the years of 2003-2007 (denominator). Enrollment includes all student headcounts including part-time students. College names have been changed.
Table 3 A Benchmarking and Inquiry Process to Achieve Incremental Equity Goals

**Course-Level Equity-Based Performance Benchmarking: Eight Steps**

1. Identify racial-ethnic inequities in successful course completion in non-degree credit, or "basic skills," courses in the English language/composition and mathematics curricula.\(^{20}\)

2. Select a "gateway" course in one or more of these curricula as a central focus for setting performance benchmarking goals. When benchmarking equity, appropriate gateway courses are those where a large number of African American, Latina, Latino, and other traditionally underrepresented groups in higher education experience equity gaps\(^{21}\).

3. Identify an equity-based benchmark goal for increasing student success in percentage terms for each racial-ethnic group experiencing gaps in success. One approach here relies on external benchmarking to set that goal, comparing the college's success rates to those at a college with similar student demographics but higher rates of success.\(^{22}\) Another approach relies on internal benchmarking, comparing the percentage point difference between groups experiencing low success rates and the group with the highest successful course completion.\(^{23}\) Then identify the percentage point increase necessary for each underrepresented group to reach equitable outcomes within three years.\(^{24}\)

4. Describe the goal of achieving equity in terms of the numbers of additional African American, Latina/Latino, and other underrepresented minority students who must experience success in the gateway course to achieve equity.

5. Involve an evidence team of college practitioners in action inquiry using assessment activities designed to contextualize the problems of low student success and transfer access at that particular college from an equity perspective.

6. Implement both small- and large-scale changes believed to be sufficient to achieve the benchmark goal.

7. Conduct formative assessment in years one and two, assessing whether the intended changes have been implemented and in what ways.

8. Conduct summative assessment in years two and three, assessing whether the benchmark goal of closing the equity gap has been attained.

---

\(^{20}\) When conducting benchmarking as part of the comprehensive Equity Scorecard process, we recommend you conduct these course-level analyses as fine-grained measures of student outcomes in one of the four perspectives of the Equity Scorecard focused on retention.

\(^{21}\) Equity gaps are those variations in student successful course completion rates that reflect a systematic difference in student outcomes based on race and ethnicity. Persistent gaps of over five percent variation between groups experiencing high rates of success and those experiencing low rates of success are likely to indicate inequities in college performance.

\(^{22}\) This approach works well for colleges where all student groups experience equally low success rates.

\(^{23}\) This approach works well for colleges with diverse student bodies and equity gaps among racial-ethnic groups enrolled at the college.
Table 4. Comparison of demographic break-down of enrollments at UW Colleges and Wisconsin Technical College System, and the population in the state of Wisconsin

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>African-American</td>
<td>1.35%</td>
<td>5.64%</td>
<td>5.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hispanic/Latino</td>
<td>2.08%</td>
<td>5.28%</td>
<td>3.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>American Indian</td>
<td>0.64%</td>
<td>1.42%</td>
<td>0.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asian</td>
<td>2.95%</td>
<td>2.11%</td>
<td>1.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>International</td>
<td>0.27%</td>
<td>Unknown</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White</td>
<td>92.68%</td>
<td>78.73%</td>
<td>88%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 5. Wisconsin Counties where more than 10,000 African Americans, Hispanics, and Asians, and more than 6000 American Indians reside, based on 2000 Census data (Source: UW Extension & Applied Population Laboratory, 2001)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>African American</th>
<th>Hispanic</th>
<th>Asian</th>
<th>American Indian</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Milwaukee</td>
<td>Milwaukee</td>
<td>Milwaukee</td>
<td>Milwaukee</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Racine</td>
<td>Racine</td>
<td>Dane</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dane</td>
<td>Dane</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Kenosha</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

24 While this timeframe could be extended, it makes it more difficult for those who make the commitment to equity goals to reach a conclusion about whether or not their action steps have been effective. A shorter time frame does not allow time for the organizational learning and formative assessment necessary to gauge whether changes have taken place and, if so, what their effects have been.
28 Black or African-American, one race, data used. Figure for Black or African-American alone or in combination with other races, stands at 6.1%.
29 American Indian or Alaskan Native, one race, data used. Figure for American Indian or Alaskan Native alone, or in combination with other races, stands at 1.3%.
30 Asian, one race, data used. Figure for Asian, alone or in combination with other races, stands at 1.9%.
31 The UW Colleges data collapses white and unknown students together.
32 White, one race, data used. Figure for white, alone or in combination with other races, stands at 90%.
Table 6. Chances of Transfer from the UW Colleges to the UW Four-Year Universities, by Race/Ethnicity, 2002-2007\(^{33}\)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>African American</th>
<th>Hispanic / Latino</th>
<th>American Indian</th>
<th>Southeast Asian</th>
<th>Other Asian</th>
<th>International</th>
<th>White / Unknown</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>7 out of 100</td>
<td>13 out of 100</td>
<td>13 out of 100</td>
<td>18 out of 100</td>
<td>11 out of 100</td>
<td>13 out of 100</td>
<td>14 out of 100</td>
<td>14 out of 100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 7. Chances of Transfer from WTCS, Disaggregated by Race and Ethnicity

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>African American</th>
<th>Hispanic</th>
<th>American Indian</th>
<th>Southeast Asian</th>
<th>Other Asian</th>
<th>White/ Unknown</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>4 out of 1000</td>
<td>3 out of 1000</td>
<td>4 out of 1000</td>
<td>7 out of 1000</td>
<td>4 out of 1000</td>
<td>4 out of 1000</td>
<td>4 out of 1000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\(^{33}\) All numbers are rounded up.
### Table 8: An Equity-Minded Policy Analysis Tool and Worked Example

#### Guaranteed Transfer Program

**Equity-Minded Policy Analysis Tool**

**The description of the program reads as follows on the UW website**

"The University of Wisconsin Colleges is the freshman/sophomore liberal arts transfer institution of the UW System. We take the word "transfer" seriously. You will get help every step of the way. You can begin your education as a freshman at the UW Colleges and be "guaranteed" admission to another UW System institution as a junior by participating in the UW Colleges Guaranteed Transfer Program. After fulfilling certain credit and grade point average requirements, you will transfer with the same rights and privileges as those who begin their education at the baccalaureate institutions."

For additional information see the following websites: [http://www.uwsa.edu/tis/resources/trnpolicy.shtml](http://www.uwsa.edu/tis/resources/trnpolicy.shtml); [http://www.uwc.edu/transfer/guarantee](http://www.uwc.edu/transfer/guarantee); [http://www.admissions.wisc.edu/images/GUAR_requirements.pdf](http://www.admissions.wisc.edu/images/GUAR_requirements.pdf);

******

1. **Policy rhetoric**

1. **What does the policy aim to attain?**

- The policy aims to guarantee transfer to students who start their education in the UW colleges and fulfill certain credit and grade point average requirements.
- The policy aims to guarantee UW college students the "same rights and privileges" as those who begin in the baccalaureate institutions.

2. **Does the policy specify its provenance?**

- No

3. **Does the policy indicate who is intended to benefit from this policy and how they can take advantage of it?**

- The policy implies that all students who meet the requirements can benefit from the policy.
- It also implies that the policy applies to all UW four-year colleges uniformly, i.e., "You can begin your education as a freshman at the UW Colleges and be "guaranteed" admission to another UW System institution as a junior by participating in the UW Colleges Guaranteed Transfer Program." However, additional information available in several websites reveals that in order to participate students must earn a minimum GPA, adhere to specific guidelines, and complete the required 54 credits within three years of continuous enrollment. In theory, students can benefit from this program if: 1) they complete 54 credits (remedial credits do not count), 2) earn a 2.0 GPA, 3) before completing 30 credits they declare intent to participate in the program and designate their intended four-year transfer campus—students can only choose one receiving institution.
- For those students who designate Madison as their transfer institution the requirements are more stringent. In fact, Madison-bound students, to qualify, would have to have been eligible for admission to Madison as high school students. Thus for those students who were not admissible to Madison the guaranteed program does not change students' chances for admission to a selective institution. Additional restrictions apply to specific majors.

- **General Eligibility:** "Students who: (1) begin college at a UW Colleges campus, (2) earn the necessary credits for junior status at the UW campus they wish to attend, and (3) have a 2.0 GPA [2.60 for UW-Madison] are guaranteed admission to the UW transfer institution. Students must complete the Guaranteed Transfer Forms prior to earning 30 credits. More information on the UW Colleges Guaranteed Transfer Program can be found here."

- **Madison General Eligibility** ([http://www.admissions.wisc.edu/images/GUAR_requirements.pdf](http://www.admissions.wisc.edu/images/GUAR_requirements.pdf)) Instead of 2.0 GPA a 2.6 is required; and students must have earned a 2.0 GPA the term prior to transfer. Students are warned that "UW--Madison will compute the UW Colleges GPA in accordance with UW--Madison's grading practices and include grades for all courses, including repeated courses. If students have repeated a course, their UW Colleges GPA could be different from the GPA calculated by UW--Madison to determine whether they meet the minimum GPA." Therefore a 2.6 at the UW Colleges may be lower at Madison.

- In addition participating students have to "meet minimum requirements for admission to UW--Madison" (these being high school requirements) (1) Algebra (one year high school); Plane geometry (one year high school, college-track); College preparatory math (one year high school or equivalent); Single foreign language (two high school years or two college semesters)

- **Madison Special Eligibility for Certain Majors**: Students are also warned of the possibility that "they [may] need to meet further academic requirements and/or apply directly to an academic program, depending on the major they intend to pursue. Some majors, such as teacher
education, health professions, engineering, and business, require specific prerequisite courses, a higher grade point average, and a separate application process. For example, the nursing program requires a separate application and a minimum cumulative GPA of 2.75; admission to the program is competitive and selective. If students intend to pursue an academic program with additional admission requirements, they will need to meet the same criteria as UW–Madison’s continuing students to be accepted into the program. For additional information: Entrance Requirements for Majors Web page at www.wisc.edu/pubs/ug/entrance.

II. Policy Assumptions

1. What are the taken-for-granted assumptions about students, institutions, and transfer?

Students: That they are goal-oriented and can plan ahead (e.g., the requirement that they declare intent to participate before completing 30 credits, that they have the necessary knowledge to know it in order to designate a transfer institution that offers it); that they know how to access complex information that is available in various websites (e.g., in order to understand how the policy works students have to read how each four-year campus interprets the policy and they also need to read special requirements related to their intended major). Essentially, the policy seems to be directed to students who choose to start at a UW College but are likely to have qualified for direct admission to a four-year campus.

Institutions: The policy states: “The University of Wisconsin Colleges is the freshman/sophomore liberal arts transfer institution of the UW System. We take the word “transfer” seriously. You will get help every step of the way.” The policy assumes that the UW Colleges are two-year versions of four-year colleges and that starting at a two-year college will not in any way be disadvantageous. It also assumes that the two-year institutions have the resources, e.g., advisors and counselors to inform and assist students about the way the program works. It also assumes that the four-year colleges will facilitate transfer for these students.

Transfer: Based on the requirements, particularly the three-year limit and the Madison exceptions, there seems to be an assumption that “transfer” is an option for traditional age and traditional college-going students who start college at a UW College instead of going directly to a four-year college. Although the descriptor “guaranteed” makes transfer appear as a right or benefit available to all students, they are not likely to be offered opportunities for transfer and completion of the baccalaureate degree for underprepared students.

2. In what ways might the taken-for-granted assumptions impact equity?

The three-year limit on completing the required credit assumes that students attend full-time and are not working adults or have families of their own to support. It also assumes that students will not be taking remedial pre-collegiate courses as such students are not likely to complete the course requirements within three years. UW college data show that among first-time freshmen, 60% are African Americans, 47% Hispanics, and 54% American Indians, and 40% Whites are placed in remedial education courses. These students are not likely to meet the three-year completion criterion. Additionally, African Americans (60%), Hispanics (40%), and American Indians (39%) are more likely to attend on a part-time basis than Whites (36%).

III. Policy Values

1. What values are explicit/ implicit in the policy?
   
   • The policy appears to be shaped by traditional values of individualism, self-determination, and self-direction. It is very much based on a traditional perspective of college-going as a full-time endeavor for academically ready students.

2. What values are not explicit/implicit in the policy?
   
   • The notion of the two-year college and transfer as a means of opportunity for students for whom a two-year college is the only option.
   • Equity is not a value in that the policy does not attempt to increase transfer among students from communities that are underrepresented among Wisconsin citizens who are BA-holders.
   • Equity in increasing the chances of underrepresented students to gain access to a selective institution is also denied by the more stringent criteria for “guaranteed” transfer to Madison.
IV. Summary

1. In what ways might this policy be detrimental to equity? In what ways might this policy be (in actuality or potentially) beneficial to equity?

Detrimental to Equity:

- The policy does not specifically target underrepresented students nor acknowledges the importance of the policy in expanding equity in opportunity and outcomes.
- The policy's requirements are likely to have a disproportionate negative effect on underrepresented students given their demographic profile.
- The complexity of the policy and all the caveats and exceptions do not take into account "lack of college knowledge" among racial and ethnic communities and among recent immigrants. It seems to advantage students who are "college savvy", have an understanding of college-going from family or peer networks, and have the know-how to obtain information from various sources.
- It disadvantages students who are not computer literate or who do not have easy access to the internet.
- It disadvantages students who enroll in the WTS colleges.

Potentially Beneficial to Equity:

- Changing the criteria to enable students who start out in remedial education courses to participate
- Revising the mission of the policy and state clearly a commitment to improving equity and success for underrepresented students.
- Remove the Madison exceptions
- Report on eligibility and participation by race and ethnicity
- Report on who has participated since its inception
- Include participation and outcomes into the accountability system
- Include the Wisconsin Technical Colleges in the policy.

V. Next Steps

1. What additional information is needed for equity-minded analysis?

- Data on participation over the last three to five years by race and ethnicity and by two-year college
- Data on participation for Madison over the last three to five years by race and ethnicity and two-year college.
- Data on designated institutions by race and ethnicity.
- Data on how students learn about the program, i.e., what do they need to find out about it?
- Data on how students and others, e.g., counselors experience the program.
- History of the policy: what are its origins? Who proposed it? Why was it proposed? Is there a record of commentaries on the policy?
Figure 1 Benchmarking as Part of a Cycle of Inquiry

- **Observe Data**
  - Take stock of student outcomes
  - Identify inequities within and across groups

- **Set Goals**
  - Set benchmark goals to close gaps in student success
  - Utilize equity-based assessments to better understand the problems

- **Informed Solutions**
  - Create solutions that are contextualized by inquiry findings
  - Evaluate how effective are the new solutions

Inquiry into the Causes

Find the Gaps
Figure 2 Equity-Based Assessment: Using Cohort Migration Data from Basic Skills to Transfer-Level Courses

**Downtown Community College**
**Cohort Migration Data Over 10 Semesters**
**Beginning in Basic Skills Level 2 Math**

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<th>Successful in Basic Skills Lvl 2</th>
<th>Enroll Basic Skills Lvl 1</th>
<th>Orig. Cohort %</th>
<th>Successful in Basic Skills Lvl 1</th>
<th>Enroll Transfer Math</th>
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</tbody>
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Figure 3

Number of White and African American Students Transferring from Wisconsin Technical College System to University of Wisconsin Four-Year Institutions (1998-2007)

Source: UW System Administration Office of Policy Analysis and Research
Figure 4 Population Density of African Americans in Wisconsin, 2000

Figure 5 Population Density of African Americans in Southeastern Wisconsin, 2000
Figure 6 Racial-Ethnic Composition of Milwaukee County, 2000-2006

MILWAUKEE COUNTY BY ETHNICITY/RACE, 2000 VS. 2006

Source:
Decennial Census, 2000 and American Community Survey, 2006