

Improving Community College to Four-Year College Transfer

A Policy Analysis and Student Perspective

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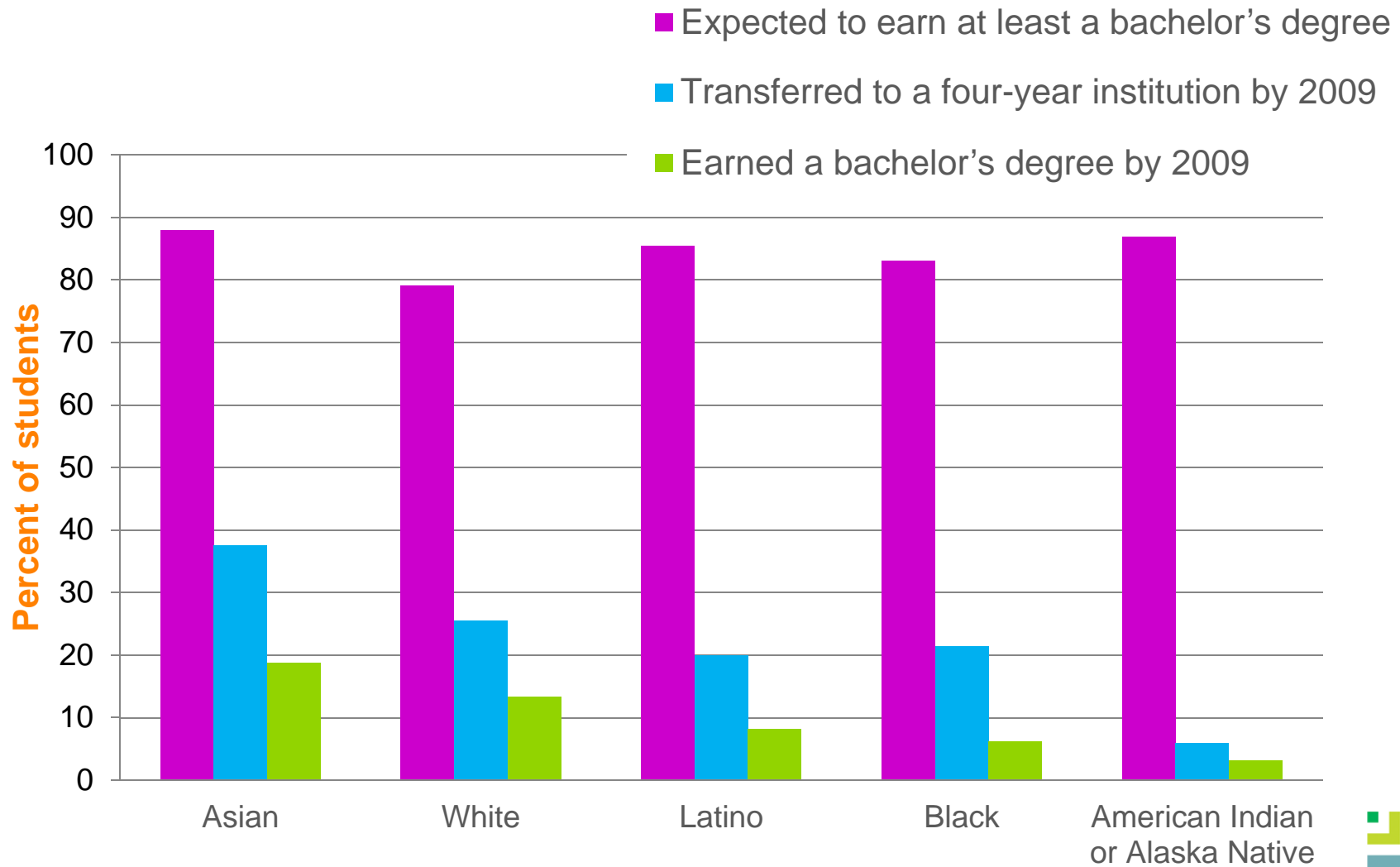
The Problem



- Over 40 percent of first-time undergraduates attend community college (IPEDS)
- Many aspire to earn a bachelor's degree but few do (BPS)



The Problem is More Pronounced for Latino, Black, & American Indian/Alaska Native Students



A focus on credit mobility

Loss of college credits when transferring from one institution to another



Lower likelihood of degree attainment

(Doyle, 2006; Monaghan & Attewell, 2014; Cullinane, 2014)



The Present Study

- Our study addresses the following questions:
 - What are different policy approaches to credit mobility?
 - How and why do community college students lose credit?



Data Collection



Who did we interview?

34 system staff

86 college staff

65 students



Two Types of Credit Loss

■ Transfer student

- does not receive credit for college credits earned at origin institution
- receives credit for college credits earned at origin institution, but credits count as elective credits rather than major/degree program credits

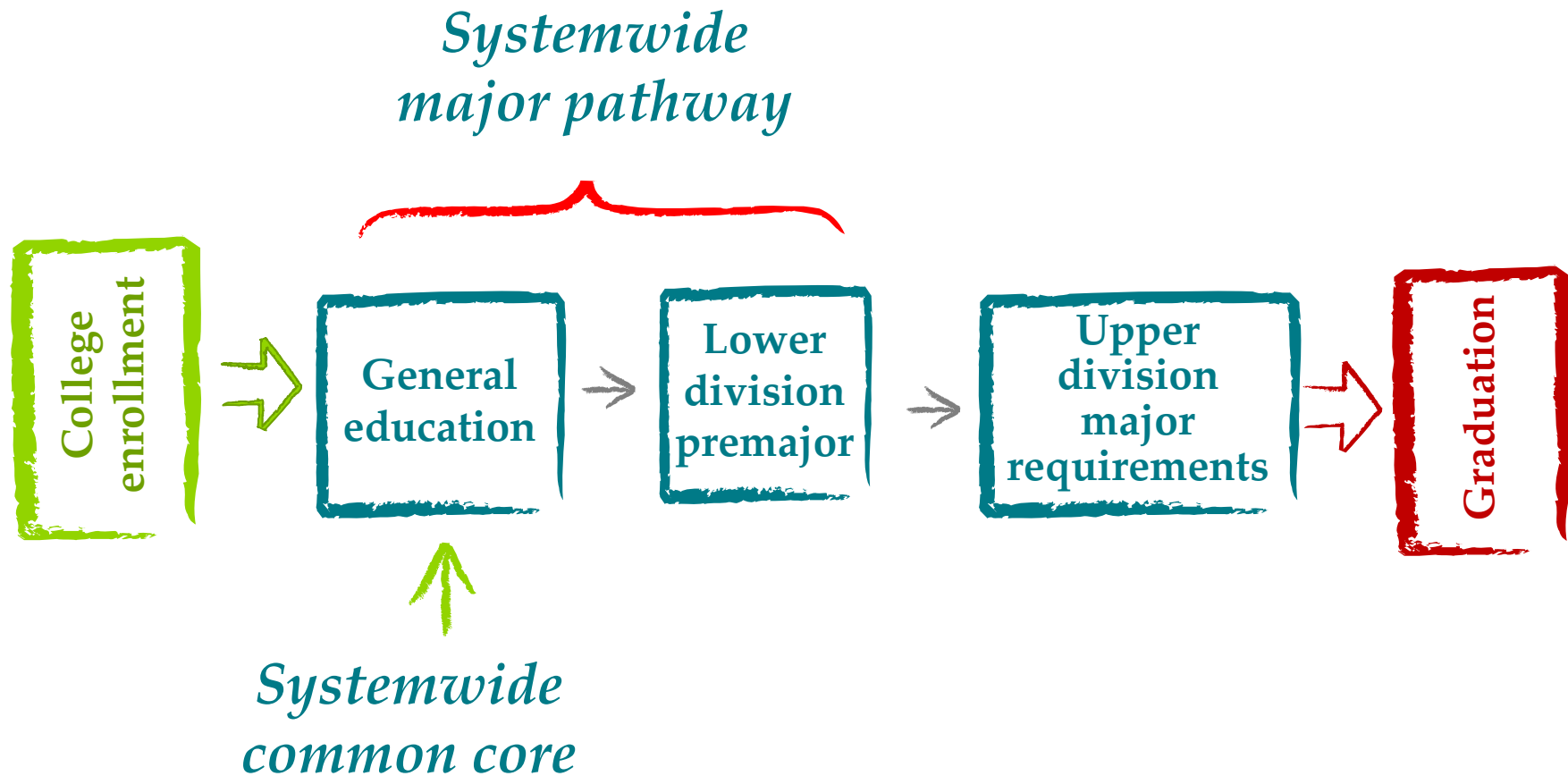


“We all have to remember that everything transfers, but not everything applies. So simply transferring credit from a two-year to a four-year institution, if it’s academic credit, then almost all of it transfers. It’s almost unheard of for it not to transfer. But the real issue for students is, does it apply to their degree?”

-Texas system official



Transfer policies seek to address credit mobility



How is pre-major credit applicability determined?

How is major-ready status determined?

Individual campuses
and/or programs

State/system

State/system

Individual campuses
and/or programs



2+2 Systems
FL, TN, SUNY, GA, CSU



Credit Equivalency Systems
WA, OH, CUNY, UC



Institution-driven Systems
NC, TX, KY

Existing Policies Do Not Address the Common Reasons Students Lose Credit



- Student uncertainty about major and destination institution
- Institutions and advisors lack capacity to provide personalized and knowledgeable support to students interested in transfer early in their career



Uncertainty About Degree Path

- Community college transfer students end up with excess credits because they:
 - Select a liberal arts major
 - Take general education before selecting major
 - Switch majors



In Institution-Driven Systems, Reasons for Credit Loss are Exacerbated

To know what
courses to take,
students must select
major and
destination
institution



"The advice I would give to the freshmen would be [to] know ahead of time what school you plan on committing to. Know that it's not set in concrete but know that it will be costly if you waver back and forth."

*-Texas community college
transfer student*

Advising – Too Little and Too Late

- Credit loss is also the result of:
 - No transfer advising for community college students during orientation or first term
 - Directed to online resources to self-advise
 - Advisors are “guessing” about which courses students should take



In Institution-Driven Systems, Reasons for Credit Loss are Exacerbated

- Advisors must keep track of pathways for every major at every **destination institution**



"When you have very customized advising, there's a lot of room for misinformation. And so much responsibility is left to the advisor to know about, not just the general transfer information, but to know a lot of information about the different requirements for the different disciplines. And advising often gets a bad rap, but we have a very complex system in place, that it's not surprising that sometimes things that are not beneficial to the student to occur."

-Texas community college administrator

Considerations Under Any Transfer Policy

- Build the knowledge and capacity of community college advisors and students
- Use data to better understand credit loss and how it affects students, programs, and institutions



CREATING STRONG
SCHOOLS & COMMUNITIES



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Bachelor's degree aspirations are high, but degree completion is low

