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Los Angeles

Aspirations, Barriers, and Transfer Opportunities for  
Latina and Latino Community College Students

A dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction of the  
requirements for the degree Doctor of Philosophy  
in Education

by

Monica Monique Sanchez

2012

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## ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION

Aspirations, Barriers, and Transfer Opportunities for  
Latina and Latino Community College Students

by

Monica Monique Sanchez

Doctor of Philosophy

University of California, Los Angeles, 2012

Professor Don T. Nakanishi, Co-chair

Professor Daniel G. Solorzano, Co-chair

The majority of California's students seeking higher education are enrolled in a community college and approximately a third are Latino. Yet as the number of Latinos in community colleges has risen, their degree completion and transfer rates lag in comparison to other major ethnic groups.

To investigate the academic aspirations and barriers of community college students, this mixed-methods case study focused on Latinos in a specialized learning community for students entering their first year. This research employed pre and post surveys among approximately 280 students enrolled in a first year learning community at a large urban community college in Southern California. Interviews were conducted with thirty-one students who were enrolled and

successfully completed courses in the first year learning community. Additional students were interviewed who had previously been affiliated with the learning community but did not successfully complete their courses and were no longer enrolled. Interviews were also conducted with students who had successfully completed their second year at the community college and were employed in the specialized learning community as a Peer Assistant.

Findings demonstrate that students held greater aspirations to transfer than to complete an Associate or Vocational degree. The majority of participants from all student cohorts expressed aspirations to transfer to a public university. Although the surveys and interviews provided insight into students' aspirations, the cohort of first year students appeared to lack specific knowledge about which academic pathway led to their desired degree or career.

These students all reported complex barriers in balancing financial and personal responsibilities with their academic workload. Students who had participated in the matriculation process and received early academic planning through the learning community programming held more realistic perceived timelines to transfer, highlighting the importance of early access to counselors and academic planning to help students' overcome institutional barriers.

The majority of participants struggled to reach college transferable "gatekeeper" courses, where most students were placed in developmental English and Mathematics courses in their first semester. The study concludes with recommendations for future research and improved practices to address the high aspirations towards transfer and barriers that students face at community colleges.

The dissertation of Monica Monique Sanchez is approved.

Clara Chu

Robert Cooper

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2012

## **DEDICATION**

To all of the motivated students who participated in my study, may they make it through their educational pipeline and accomplish all of their aspirations, despite the numerous barriers.

*“We cannot seek achievement for ourselves and forget about progress and prosperity for our community. Our ambitions must be broad enough to include the aspirations and needs of others, for their sakes and for our own”.* -Cesar Chavez

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## PUBLICATIONS AND PRESENTATIONS

- Sanchez, M. (March 25, 2008). "Examining the Impact of Small Learning Communities on First Year Latina/o Community College Students." Unpublished paper presented at the American Educational Research Association (AERA) Annual Conference. New York, NY.
- Ornelas, A., Perez Huber, L., Sanchez, M., Velez, V. (November 10, 2006). "Crossing Borders in Higher Education: Moving More Latino/a Students Towards Transfer." Presented at the Tomás Rivera Policy Institute (TRPI) Education Conference. Long Beach Convention Center, CA.
- Solorzano, D.G., Burciaga, R., Calderon, D., Ledesma, M.C., Ochoa, V., Rivas, M.A., Sanchez, M., Velez, V., Watford, T., Ortega, L., Pineda, J. (January 2004). *Unlocking GATE: A case study of black, Latina/o, and Native American inequity in Los Angeles Unified school district's Gifted and Talented Education Program*. Unpublished report to the American Civil Liberties Union of Los Angeles.

## **CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION**

### **Researcher's Background and Interest**

My personal background that I share in this chapter is intended to provide an understanding of my connection to my dissertation project. My research investigates the academic aspirations and barriers of community college students, focusing on Latinos in a specialized learning community for students entering their first year. This study stems from my status as the first and only person in my family to graduate from college with an advanced degree. I am what community college literature describes as a reverse transfer student, having initially attended a tier one research university before transferring in reverse to a community college. I enrolled at UC Berkeley immediately after completing high school, but was overwhelmed and academically underprepared during my first year in college. I left Berkeley in my second year and took a voluntary leave of absence, in expectation of my first child and in danger of being dismissed from the university for poor academic progress.

During my absence I attended Rio Hondo College a community college in Los Angeles County. At Rio Hondo, I gained academic confidence, received help from my family members in raising my son and eventually returned to Berkeley within two years time. According to national longitudinal data, students who are first generation in college and from lower socioeconomic status are more likely to transfer in reverse from a university to community college and less likely to transfer back to the university (Goldrick-Rab, 2009). I was unaware of this statistic when I first attended the university, but fortunately my career did not end at the community college like it does for so many of California's Latino first-time students.

I am privileged to have had the opportunity and educational resources that assisted me in reaching my academic achievements. I recognize that my identity as a Latina, mother, and first

generation college student could have influenced this study in different ways, additionally my cultural knowledge could have benefited this study in many ways. In my research, I aim to highlight academic resources that exist in community colleges that help students who are in financial, personal or academic straits to reach their academic goals despite immense difficulties. I hope that this study, influenced and informed by my own personal and academic struggles, might encourage other students in similar situations to recognize the importance of education, and despite the barriers, to seek resources available within our educational system and ultimately utilize the community college as a stepping stone for their long term academic and career aspirations. Additionally, I hope that this study helps to the college counselors, faculty, higher education administrators and researchers to address the needs, desires and barriers among the growing population of Latino students.

### **Background of California's Community Colleges**

California's community colleges are part of a three-tier public higher education system and the largest system of its kind in the nation. These community colleges provide services to over two million students per year and there are 20 colleges in Los Angeles County and 112 colleges statewide (See Map 1 of the California Community Colleges). The first community college opened in California was Fresno City College in 1910. These early colleges were intended primarily as transfer institutions, providing students with their first two years of college education (California Community College Chancellor's Office, 2010). Eventually, however, the missions of these colleges began to diversify and gradually included vocational and career tracks as well. The community college system in each county varies in size and program degree offerings. Los Angeles County holds a large density of colleges in one region and borders the counties of Orange, San Bernardino, and Riverside (See Maps 2, 3, and 4). Due to the proximity



of some California Community Colleges to each other, students who reside in one county may attend a community college that falls within another county. It is not unheard of for a student to attend one college in Los Angeles and hold concurrent enrollment at a community college in a neighboring county. California’s students migrate in and out of these community colleges but communication between campuses within this system is not always as fluid.

**Map 1: The California Community College System<sup>1</sup>**

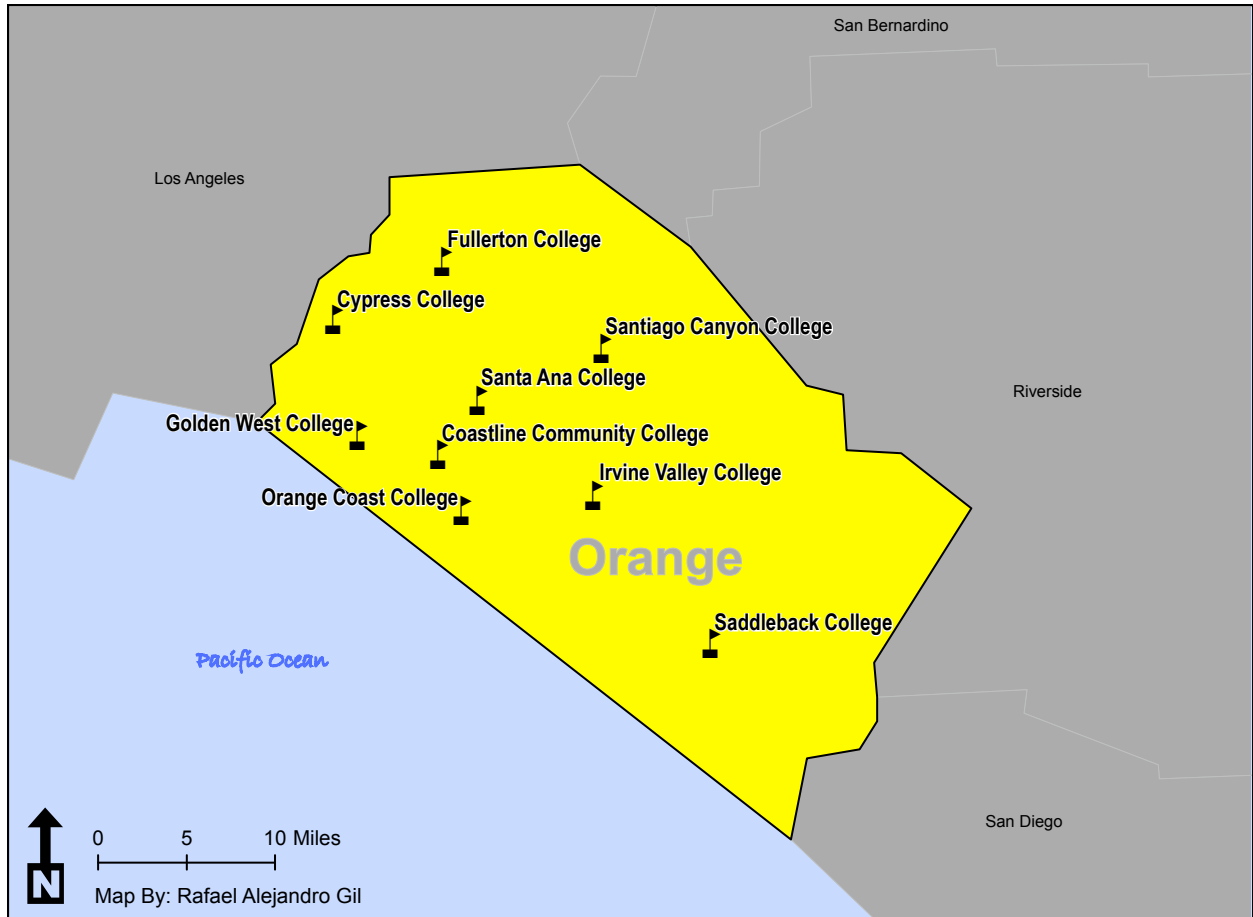


<sup>1</sup> California Community College Chancellor’s Office, 2010-2011. Compton College is no longer an accredited California Community College. El Camino College utilizes the former Compton College site as a satellite campus since 2011.

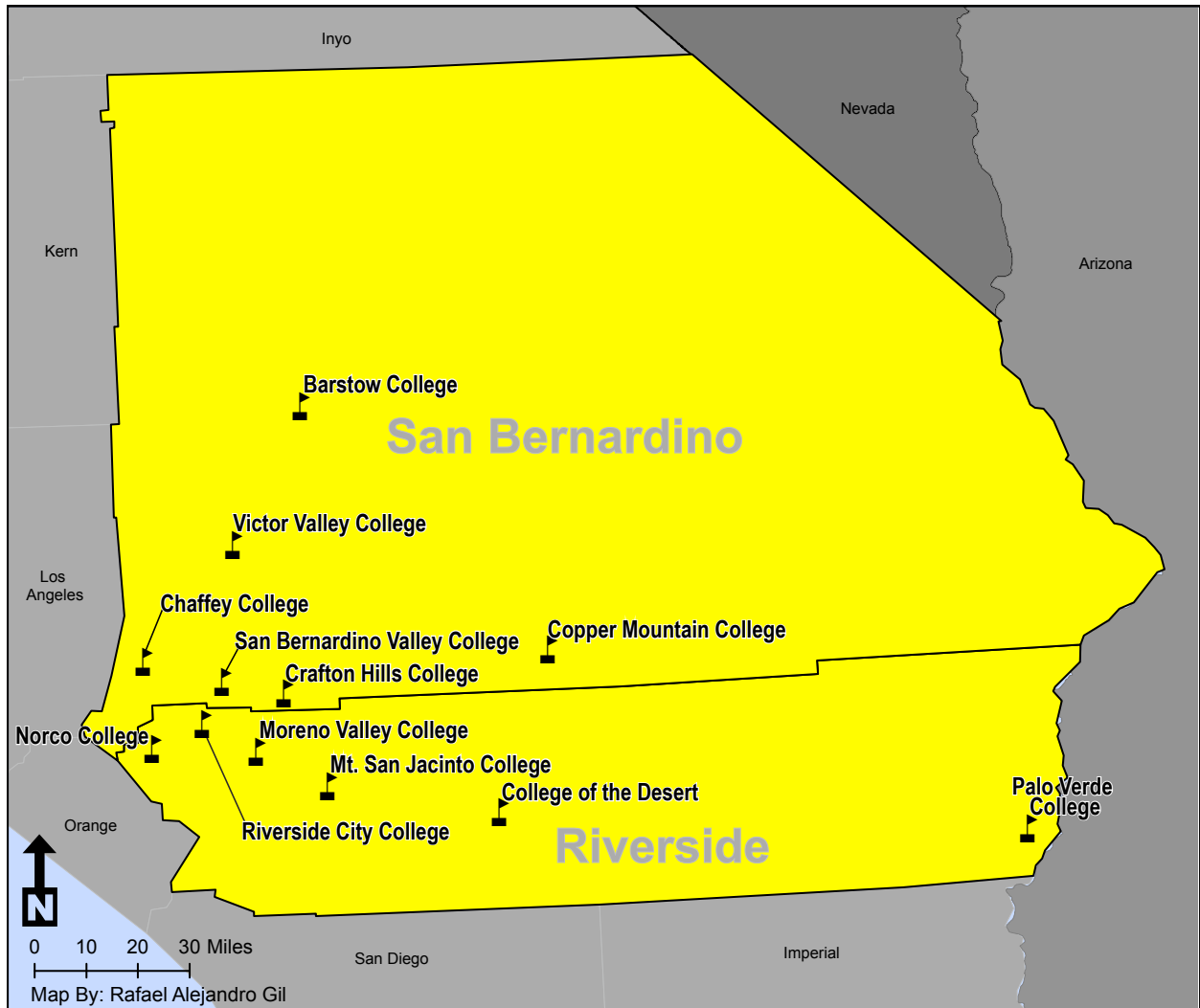
**Map 2: Los Angeles County California Community Colleges**



### Map 3: Orange County California Community Colleges



**Map 4: San Bernardino County and Riverside County California Community Colleges**



The California Community Colleges provide open enrollment to millions of students per year, in fact, prior to 1984 the community colleges charged no fee to students enrolled. However, over the past decade Californians have seen an economic downturn with a national recession, all time high unemployment rates and progressive budget cuts to public higher education.

Community colleges are under pressure to cap enrollment, cut courses, reduce faculty hires and increase fees in order to address budget shortfalls at the state level. Recently, student fees have increased over 38% in just one year as shown in Table 1: California Community Colleges’ Fee History (California Community College Chancellor’s Office, 2012).

**Table 1: California Community Colleges’ Fee History. Prior to 1984 there were no fees instituted for enrollment into California Community Colleges.**

<u>YEAR</u>	<u>FEE PER UNIT</u>
1984-1985	\$5.00
1991-1992	\$6.00
1993-1994	\$10.00
1994-1995	\$13.00
1998-1999	\$12.00
1999-2000	\$11.00
2003-2004	\$18.00
2004-2005	\$26.00
2006-2007	\$20.00
2009-2010	\$26.00
2011-2012	\$36.00
Summer 2012	\$46.00

Simultaneously, the community colleges are being inundated with displaced workers who are seeking training in new skills as well as bombarded with high school graduates who could not afford university costs or did not meet the requirements to attend a four-year university. During these challenging economic times, many of California's Community College students rely on these colleges for educational opportunities for themselves and their families. Arthur Cohen (2003) described the community colleges as the lungs of the higher education system, expanding to accommodate the exceeding number of college freshman and contracting as the population wanes. The question remains how California can maintain open access to higher education for the diverse pool of college aspirants.

Open enrollment policies and relatively low cost<sup>2</sup> have drawn Latino students toward the community colleges; additionally an increase in the younger Latino population in California (US Census, 2010) has lead to a greater presence of Latinos at the community colleges in comparison to public and private colleges. Reports by the California Post Secondary Education Commission (2007) found that one-third of the students enrolled in California community colleges were Latino. In addition, these students had lower successful transfer rates than did other major ethnic groups in proportion to their college-age population within California (CPEC, 2007). A great number of social and institutional barriers have been linked to low transfer rates of Latinos who attend community colleges (Hagedorn & Cepeda, 2004; Ornelas, 2002; Ornelas & Solorzano, 2004).

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<sup>2</sup> Educational fees do not include other costs such as campus fees, housing, books, parking other living expenses.

## **Latina and Latino Community College Students in California**

According to a study on academic aspirations of community college students, approximately forty percent of Latinos who enroll in California Community Colleges enter with the goal of transferring to a four-year college or university, but only about ten percent of these community college students actually transfer (Yosso & Solorzano, 2006). Still, community colleges have become a pathway for underrepresented, first generation and low-income students to gain access to higher education. In addition, community colleges are the beginning to a critical and life changing transition toward access and equity in higher education for many of California's largest growing ethnic group. Research consistently points out the added benefits of obtaining a post-secondary education. According to Perna (2000), the short-term benefits of attending college are "enjoyment of learning experiences, involvement in extracurricular activities, participation in social and cultural events, and enhancement of social status." More importantly, the long-term effects of acquiring a higher education have been shown to enhance the overall lifestyle of the individual. Increased lifetime earnings, fulfilling employment, and better health are among long-term benefits of college acquisition (Perna, 2000).

Yet, evidence suggests that for some low income and first generation Latino students, the road to higher education is narrow or non-existent. The process of decision-making is further limited for students with low socioeconomic status (McDonough, McClaferty & Nunez, 2004). Additionally, researchers have found that for Students of Color<sup>3</sup> and low-income students, the likelihood of transferring and attending a less prestigious college institution is high. Although Latinos are the majority in several districts in California, they are academically left behind, diminishing their opportunities to enter post-secondary education. Therefore, it is possible to

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<sup>3</sup> A Student of Color refers to individuals of Latino, African American, Asian American, Pacific Islander, Native American or Middle Eastern American heritage.

infer that many of California’s Latino students have not been academically prepared or adequately informed about the college process in order to apply to the University of California (UC) or California State University (CSU) system.

Ensuring an effective transfer process among the community colleges is important for maintaining California’s commitment to access and diversity in higher education. Community colleges are a critical vehicle for social mobility among groups of students and allow access to California’s public universities, displayed in Table 2. As California seeks to fulfill its educational mission as laid out in the Master Plan for Higher Education<sup>4</sup>, it is important that researchers and universities continue to engage with community colleges in collaborative partnerships that encourage greater transfer rates in order to ensure a substantial flow of diverse groups of students through the education pipeline.

**Table 2: Transfer from the California Community Colleges (CCC) to University of California (UC) and California State University (CSU) campuses.**

**California Post-Secondary Education Commission (CPEC) 2009-2010**

<b>California Higher Education System</b>	<b>Total Transfers from CCC</b>	<b>Bachelors Degree Recipients who Transferred</b>	<b>Total Latino Transfers from CCC</b>	<b>Percent Latino Transfers from CCC</b>
<b>University of California (UC)</b>	14,690	30%	2,145	24.5%
<b>California State University (CSU)</b>	37,651	55%	9,240	14.6%

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<sup>4</sup> The 1960 Donahoe Higher Education Act was passed by the state Legislature based on recommendations from the Regents and State Board of Education. These recommendations created differentiation in public postsecondary education, California Community Colleges were designated with universal access for California’s students and the University of California was charged with the primary research institutions for California.



## **Significance of Study**

This study will contribute to the knowledge on the academic aspirations toward transfer and barriers of Latina and Latino community college students. This mixed methods case study design provides insight into the college aspirations and barriers of students in community colleges, differentiated by gender and ethnic background, through the use of a qualitative component as well as supplemental data from campus, state and national data sets. Stanton-Salazar and Dornbusch (1995), who specialized in studies among the Latino community, recognized that while conducting research in these communities multiple socio-cultural variables and methods should be examined and utilized.

Standard quantitative variables to measure student academic performance may not be as effective in conducting research on learning outcomes among Mexican and Latino-origin groups, since these ethnic groups tend to be more often among lower socio-economic groups and often lack traditional forms of monetary resources or access to educational information. Adding qualitative or mixed methods to achievement aspirations and outcomes measures may be more efficient in attempting to understand Latina and Latino students' aspirations and barriers, in turn helping to uncover other factors that will improve their academic outcomes.

It is important to acknowledge the disparate resources and barriers that exist between the Latina and Latino ethnic groups in both high schools and universities, but it is just as important to highlight and identify resources that can be drawn from these communities of students and aid in identifying resources in college persistence despite financial or personal shortcomings. It is evident in the literature review that there is a lack of information that specifically links academic aspirations of Latino first year community college students and interventions that address students' academic barriers. It is my hope that this research fills a gap in the areas of community

college research, Latinos, student aspirations, and specialized academic initiatives for students with developmental needs.

Employing the Community Cultural Wealth lens provides a unique perspective and in-depth understanding of the aspirations and persistence of Latino community college students, a population often neglected in general college research. The use of a Community Cultural Wealth Model in this research will also allow a greater detachment from deficit-based frameworks and help researchers to recognize specialized nuances and tenets that exist among Latino community college students.

### **Conclusion**

In this dissertation, I first outline relevant literature and research that discuss the history and functions of the community college. I include a description of the Community Cultural Wealth theoretical framework and the Learning Community model to begin the analysis of student transfer aspirations and barriers. Chapter three of this dissertation presents my research methodology and a discussion of how the methods and framework helped shape my research design. Additionally, Chapters four and five illustrate the various findings with surveys and interview data conducted with first-year community college students. Chapter six will provide a conclusion as well as recommendations that may assist Latino students and community colleges to address the transfer aspirations and academic barriers of this group.

## CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

I begin this chapter by first reviewing literature on the transfer function and culture within community college. The second section I provide a review of literature on small learning communities and their effectiveness in colleges. Due to the availability of studies and literature in this area much of the research pertains to learning communities within four-year colleges. The subsequent sections of this chapter provide a literature review of Latina and Latino academic aspirations and persistence in college. The final section in this chapter will discuss the theoretical model of Community Cultural Wealth (Yosso, 2006) that guided this study.

Although programs have been implemented that address student success in colleges, including popular programs such as Puente and MESA (Laden, 1999)<sup>5</sup>, barriers to college access and degree completion have plagued students, researchers and educators for decades. An early example of this is offered by Clark (1960) where he initially described the process of community colleges diverting students from academic tracks into more technical or vocational tracks. Clark coined the term “cooling out” as a means of describing the diversion of students' college going aspirations within community colleges. Rendon & Garza (2004) also found that faculty at community colleges continued to be overwhelmingly white and lacked "cultural sensitivity" toward Latino students. This study similarly found that community colleges and four-year institutions failed to collaborate or ease the transfer process for Latino students (Rendon & Garza 2004). It is the combination of all of these aforementioned issues that create a culture, which is not conducive to nurturing the transfer aspirations of these students.

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<sup>5</sup> The Puente and Math, Engineering, and Science Achievement (MESA) are national outreach programs designed to increase the enrollment of disadvantaged students in four-year colleges and universities. The MESA program specifically aims to increase awareness of Math and Science careers in higher education.

Though the mission of California's community colleges includes the transfer function, they often emphasize the pursuit of vocational tracks instead. According to Brint & Karabel (1989), community colleges became more vocational in order to best appeal to powerful corporations and to specifically define their role in workforce training. They also agree that if the community colleges had taken on a more academic commitment they would have to compete against the already established four-year public universities and therefore remain at the bottom rung of the academic hierarchy. Many of California's community colleges have developed a strong vocational niche and failed to highlight the transfer function.

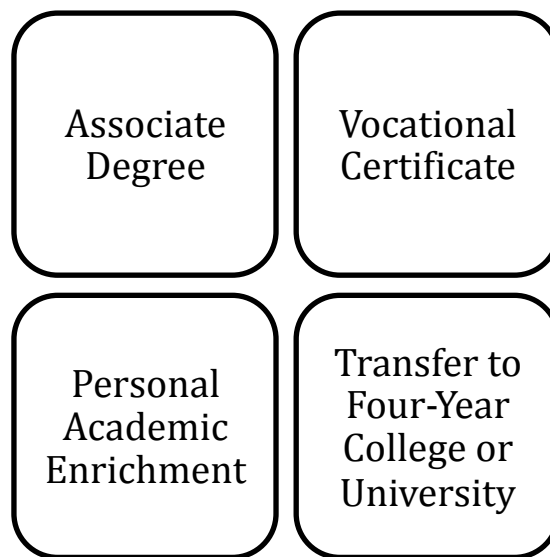
Ornelas (2002) demonstrates the importance of a collaborative commitment to the transfer function within the California community college system where she states that such proactive engagement involves a campus where government entities, the institution, faculty, and staff fully integrate students in this transfer culture. Similar to the conceptualization of this transfer culture, Gloria (1997) defined a college-based community as a "culturally inclusive university environment in conjunction with those individuals in and around the university who contribute to and make up the totality of the community". Although Gloria's 1997 study focused on Chicanas at a four-year university, she found that when the students believed their school was supportive, the social support from friends became more salient in relation to decisions around academic persistence. Gloria (1997) described three core constructs for first year Latino students related to the campus climate: university comfort, social support, self-beliefs and maintaining ties to the family. In relation to student persistence and involvement, Astin (1984) conducted a longitudinal study of college dropouts and found that the less involved students were on campus the less likely they were to persist. Implicit in these studies lies the importance of having a resourceful campus transfer culture, a culturally inclusive college-going community and student persistence

that appear to be significant factors in the academic success of Latino students through their transition from community college to a four-year university.

*The Transfer Function*

The California Community Colleges have multiple missions, generally among these the top four include 1) The Terminal Associate Degree 2) The Vocational Certificate 3) Personal Academic Enrichment or Continuing Education 4) The Transfer Function to a Four-Year College or University. One of the community college’s primary functions is assisting students in their transition from the community college into four-year institutions; this has been defined as the “transfer function” (Ornelas, 2002).

**Figure 1: General Functions of Community Colleges**



Through this transfer model, community colleges have become the means to a postsecondary education for many underrepresented students. The 1960 California Master Plan for Education affirmed the open admissions practices of community colleges and

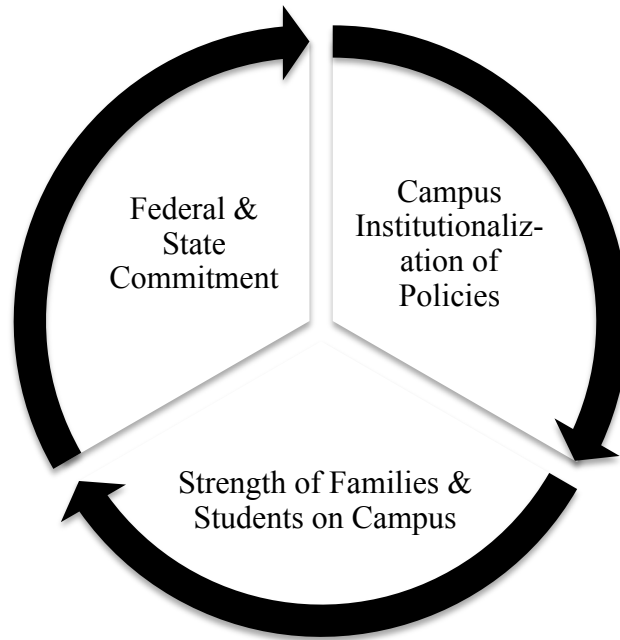
encouraged large numbers of student enrollment into these community colleges. Based on statewide community college trends on student transfer, Latino and other underrepresented students have had a difficult time making the critical transition from community colleges to four-year institutions (Hagedorn & Cepeda, 2004; Ornelas, 2002; Ornelas & Solorzano, 2004).

### *The Transfer Culture*

Ornelas (2002) argues that in order for community colleges to effectively implement the transfer function, they must make the transfer process a priority to their mission.

Institutionalizing the transfer function is a necessary element to creating a *transfer culture* at an institution. The community colleges' transfer culture involves a campus-wide effort that normalizes and ensures that students who aspire to transfer will in fact make this transition to the university.

**Figure 2: Transfer Culture within the College Transfer Function**



Collaborative commitment to the transfer function is essential within the California community colleges and should involve government, the campus, and students. Ornelas & Solorzano (2004) identified three key elements within a community college transfer culture that includes:<sup>6</sup>

1. Federal and state commitment to the transfer function.
2. Campus institutional policies that normalize the transfer function.
3. A campus culture that draws on the strengths of families and student engagement/involvement.

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<sup>6</sup> Adapted with permission from "Transfer conditions of Latina/o community college students: A single institution case study". Ornelas, A. & Solorzano, D.G., *Community College Journal of Research and Practice*, 28 (3) 233-248. Taylor and Francis LTD 2004.

Additionally, college transfer can be viewed as a joint commitment between the sending community college and the receiving university or college (Jain, Herrera, Bernal & Solorzano, 2011). Education reform initiatives have been implemented to address the low rate of Latina and Latino students transitioning into four-year universities from the community college level. One form of intervention that has addressed the transfer rate of these students is the development of learning communities within colleges.

### *Learning Communities*

Learning communities have been described as academic communities with cohorts of students who enter into the college, for the first time, in a small group and often take courses among this same cohort of students. According to Tinto (1997), attributes of this group include courses where faculty collaborate on curricular content in a learning community, often throughout their first academic year. Studies in the field on college level learning communities have found that small-specialized academic learning communities have positively impacted academic achievement and positive feeling toward college among community college students (Tinto and Love, 1998).

In general, learning communities have been described as communities of students who enter into a college in a small group and often take courses among the same cohort of students and faculty within their school community. According to Tinto (1997),

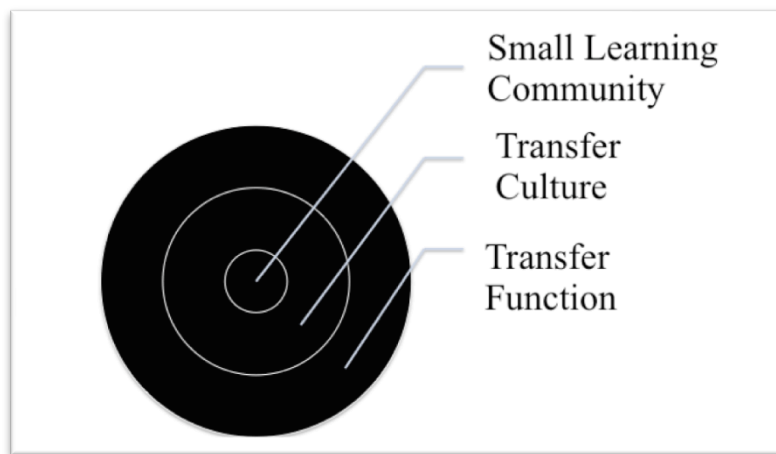
Learning communities are a kind of co-registration or block scheduling that enables students to take courses together. The same students register for two or more courses, forming a sort of study team...there is no one type of learning community...But nearly all have two things in common. One is shared knowledge. By organizing the shared courses around a theme or single large subject, learning communities seek to construct a coherent first year educational experience that is not just an unconnected array of courses...In this way, students come to share, as a community of learners, a body of knowledge that is itself connected. The other is shared knowing.



By enrolling in several classes together, students not only share a body of knowledge, they also share the experience of trying to know or learn the material of the shared courses.

Students who participate in learning communities are often able to develop a network of supportive peers with aspirations to transfer. This learning community model, as part of the development of a transfer culture, displayed in Figure 3, can help community college students make a successful academic progression. Studies of community college students in learning communities found indications that students in these specialized groups often persist beyond their first semester in college, helped students acclimate to campus academic or social culture, and encouraged better faculty and counselor interaction among students (Borden, & Rooney, 1998; Mosqueda, 2010; Rosenbaum, Deil, Amen & Person, 2006; Schneider & Hurst, 1998; Shapiro & Levine, 1997; Smith, 2001; Tinto, 1997).

**Figure 3: Small Learning Communities within the Transfer Culture & Function**



Gabelnick, MacGregor, Matthews & Smith (1990) have described five major learning community models often cited in literature. These models include:

- 1) *Freshman Interest Groups*, where linked courses are offered around a pre-major topic and has an advisory component assisting first year students in making course and career choices. Students in these learning communities often participate in life and study skills courses that address issues that pertain to first year college students.
- 2) *Linked Courses* involves pairing two courses together, where a specific cohort of students co-registers in these courses. Within this model faculty often link syllabi and/or assignments.
- 3) *Learning Clusters* are an expanded form of the Link Courses model where three or four courses are linked together.
- 4) *Federated Learning Community* where in this model courses are linked around a common theme. An advantage of this type of model is that a faculty member is assigned to this cohort and leads the learning community students throughout their participation within the learning community.
- 5) *Coordinated Studies* is the most intensive model where both faculty and students are engaged in interdisciplinary studies where courses are linked and team taught by three to five faculty members.

Within these different models of learning communities students are not only able to learn the academic content within their courses but students also become a community of learners developing networks of social support among one another. These academic and social support mechanisms are often useful for first time college students and provide them with a means to exchange knowledge shared among underrepresented or disadvantaged groups.

### *Latino Students' College Aspirations and Persistence*

Although more is being done at state levels to increase Latino college going aspirations and persistence in colleges and universities, evidence from research has shown that Latinos are more likely to aspire to attend a two-year college (Gandara, O'Hara, & Gutierrez, 2004) and more likely to start their post-secondary career at a community college, where Latinos have become overrepresented at these institutions (Adelman, 2005). Evidence from longitudinal studies have found that students from disadvantaged groups, such as those from Latino ethnic backgrounds, low socioeconomic status, or first generation immigrants often encounter additional barriers that hinder academic persistence in higher education (Choy, 2001; Laanan, 2001; Teranzini, Springer, Yaeger, Pascarella, & Nora, 1996; UCLA Center for Labor, Research and Education, 2008; Zamani, 2001).

There is an abundance of literature on how generational status in college affects the aspirations and persistence of first generation Latino students at four-year colleges and universities. Generally speaking, research on first generation Latino students in four-year colleges are more likely to leave their institution after their first year and are less likely to persist on the college matriculation bachelor degree track after three years than their college peers with parents who had attended college (Adelman, 2005). These findings on four-year college persistence of Latino students have helped to inform persistence patterns of Latino first generation community college students.

In addition, studies on Latino students from lower socioeconomic backgrounds have found that this group has less access to college going information. For example, one national study conducted by the Tomás Rivera Policy Institute (TRPI) revealed that three quarters of

Latinos from ages 18-24 were not attending college, yet reported more likely to have attended college if they had been given better financial aid information (TRPI, 2004).

In terms of community college transfer, Yosso & Solorzano (2006) found that approximately forty percent of Latinos who enroll in the California Community Colleges enter with the goal to transfer to a four-year college or university yet only about ten percent of Latino community college students actually transfer. Although California community college students hold academic aspirations to earn a degree beyond the Associate or a vocational certificate, there is a dire need to address the low rates of academic achievement among this group of students.

### **Theoretical Frameworks**

The discourse on low-income and minority populations has been based in cultural deficit frameworks defining members of this ethnic group as culturally or biologically insufficient for achieving high educational achievement. As such, these deficiency theories erroneously attribute the low educational achievement of Latinos to their own laziness or due to their parents' lack of value in education (Moreno & Valencia, 2002). These deficit approaches have guided school curriculum and practices, yet still there has been a failure to account for the knowledge, strengths, and resources that lower income Latino students and their families have utilized in order to aid in their educational achievement and survival. One framework that challenges the deficit approach is the Community Cultural Wealth Model.

#### *Model of Community Cultural Wealth*

The educational under representation in higher education of Latino students has more recently been addressed through the use of research on the diverse forms of knowledge and social capital of Latino students (Solorzano & Delgado Bernal, 2001; Solorzano & Villalpando, 1998; Stanton-Salazar, 1995, 2001; Yosso, 2006). A model that acknowledges individual agency

among Latino students and their families despite social and institutional barriers is the Community Cultural Wealth Model. The Community Cultural Wealth Model was developed in response and in resistance to deficit based theoretical models that have labeled Chicano and Latino communities as lazy, biologically inept and incapable of academic achievement (Valencia, 1991 & 1997).

Community Cultural Wealth is described by Yosso (2006) as various forms of knowledge that often go unrecognized among marginalized communities. According to Yosso (2006), wealth is described as the accumulated assets and communal resources of an individual or group that are shared with others. Yosso identifies six forms of capital that formulate the Community Cultural Wealth Model, these forms of capital include:

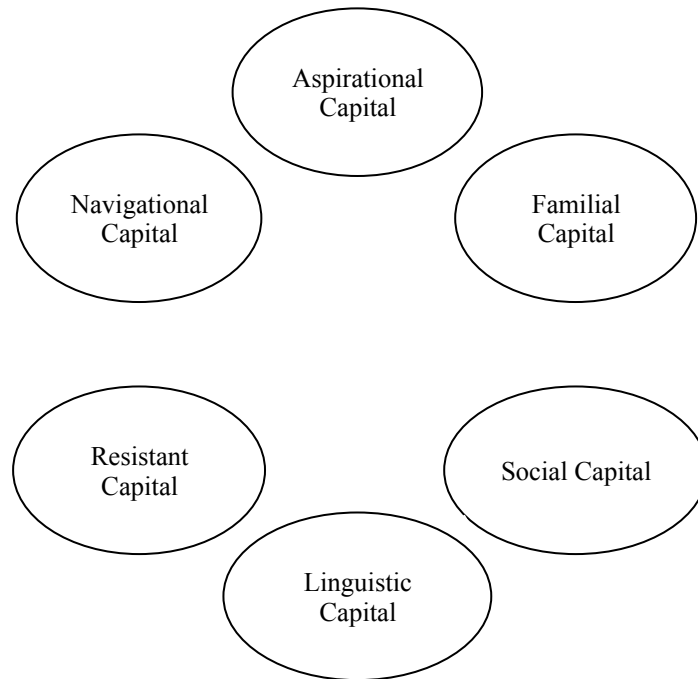
1. Aspirational Capital is defined as the ability to maintain hopes and dreams for the future even in the face of barriers. For example, a student who has aspirations of becoming the first person in their family to graduate from college despite having coming from a low-income family with no historical access to higher education.
2. Linguistic Capital is described by Yosso as the intellectual or social skills learned through communication experiences in more than one language and/or style such as children translating for parents.
3. Navigational Capital is the skills of maneuvering through social institutions such as learning to navigate through school matriculation systems.
4. Familial Capital is cultural knowledge around family or kin that carry a sense of community, history, memory and cultural intuition. An example of this

would be advice that is shared among family and is intended to provide family moral lessons to be shared.

5. Resistant Capital is the knowledge and skills cultivated through behavior that challenges inequality based on the legacies of resistance to oppression in communities of color. Such as a participation in unions or groups that attempt to address racial or social inequities.
6. Social Capital within the Community Cultural Wealth Model is defined as networks of people and community resources. Social capital addresses how social networks can be developed to assist in the movement through school institutions. Social capital attempts to explain how low-income Latino youth can help their peers navigate through social institutions such as schools and colleges.

The Community Cultural Wealth Model extends both the traditional conceptions of cultural and social capital frameworks. This model recognizes the family resources and skills that low-status students bring from their home to school. These forms of capital are communal forms of wealth that can be transmitted to others and lead to sources of knowledge that assist in greater academic achievement.

**Figure 4: Model of Community Cultural Wealth<sup>7</sup>**



Bourdieu's forms of Social Capital are described as resources, social relations or networks from which individuals gain resources from other individuals to support their access to higher social status or mobility, such as higher educational attainment (Bourdieu, 1986; Coleman, 1988). These personal links or relationships to networks or to individuals then provide a resource that lead to the attainment of individual or group goals. Within traditional Social Capital theories there is debate over whether low social status groups, such as low-income Latino students or their families, have access to tangible resources that could be passed on to others. The Community Cultural Wealth Model challenges traditional notions of Capital in that it provides a lens in which to demonstrate how Latino low-income youth and their families possess resources

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<sup>7</sup> Adapted with permission from *Critical Race Counterstories Along the Chicana/Chicano Educational Pipeline*. By Yosso, T.J. Routledge, New York: NY. Taylor and Francis Group LLC (2006).

that are not necessarily of monetary value but can be of personal and sentimental value to the particular community and can lead to the attainment of group or individual goals.

Aspirational and Social Capital within The Community Cultural Wealth Model are centralized, for the purpose of this study, within and in order to distinguish from the traditional models of Social or Cultural Capital where the Community Cultural Wealth Model emphasizes the communal and intangible nature, yet important resources rather than the monetary benefits capital transitioning from one individual or group to another.

The Community Cultural Wealth Model will allow me to frame my research in order to centralize the aspirations that exist among these historically marginalized- lower economic status communities of students. Furthermore, this model demonstrates how low-income Latino students can provide reciprocal forms of academic resources to their peers, family and community members through means of holding Aspirational Capital for themselves or others.

#### *Social Networking Among Students and Social Capital*

The Community Cultural Wealth Model recognizes that social capital can be gained by lower status students over time and is beneficial to students in academic settings. This model acknowledges the resources that students can bring to their peers and institution despite being first-generation and low-income Latino students. Researchers have recognized peer social networks as being significantly associated with measures of social capital among college age groups. Tierney and Venegas (2006) studied peer mentoring groups in educational settings, where they argue that these “fictive kin” networks promote college access due in part to the ability of providing social and emotional information through peer counseling and sharing information among peers who hold similar characteristics such as ethnicity, age, gender, socioeconomic status and neighborhood. In discussing non-traditional modes for acquiring social



capital on college campuses among peers it is essential to also address the use of technology. Today's college students are active members of online virtual communities via social network sites. Researchers have begun to explore the role that the Internet plays in student's peer networks and how they maintain connection to resources within school communities that they have inhabited over time.

Social network sites such as Facebook gained popularity through high usage rates among student populations in the early 2000s. Facebook was created in 2004 where it has gained increasing popularity among college populations by boasting twenty-one million registered members and 1.6 billion page views per day (Ellison, Steinfield & Lampe, 2007). Facebook has increased usage among college communities and other diverse groups of users who may not have inhabited the same neighborhood, school, or even country. Facebook originally was targeted for use among college students where users were required to possess a college related email address in order to create a profile and communicate with other members online through this site. Students are more likely to conduct their online networking through the Facebook social networking site and it has remained popular among high school and college-aged students for over a decade.

College age students are often members of transient populations where they move from one school or town in order to accommodate their career or academic aspirations. Social relationships change over time and location, creating a shift in available social networks and the resources that those networks carry. Research has emerged, mostly in communication and technology-related journals, to explore the role that the Internet plays in helping students maintain connections to resources of previous communities that they have inhabited. For example, researchers found that that Internet services such as email and instant messaging helped

students who attended college remain close to friends from their high school neighborhoods over time (Cummings, Lee and Kraut; 2006). One study, specifically among college students, found a strong link between Facebook usage and measure related to the presence of social capital (Ellison, Steinfield & Lampe; 2007). This study suggested that social networking sites, such as Facebook, helped maintain relations as people transitioned from one community to another. Social capital within non-traditional spaces and online communities are important to address.

Latina and Latino students are limited in their college-going opportunities, social resources, and face numerous barriers in their quest for higher education. It is important to document how strong academic and social networks within a college community on campus can contribute to successful completion of academic aspirations and greater transfer opportunities for these student populations. The centralization of Aspirational Capital and the role of peers in Social Capital within Community Cultural Wealth will aid in answering my research inquiries in this study within a learning community. My research questions are outlined in the subsequent chapter, which additionally describes the research methodology in greater detail.

## **CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY**

This chapter describes in detail my research methods and design as guided by the theoretical model of Community Cultural Wealth (Yosso, 2006). The first section of this chapter outlines my research questions. The second section provides information about the research setting and site demographics. In the third section I provide a description of my research data collection methods and analysis. The final section will discuss limitations of the study design.

### **Research Questions**

Education researchers estimate that forty percent of Latinas and Latinos who enroll in California Community Colleges enter with the goal to transfer to a four-year college or university, where approximately only seven to ten percent of these community college students actually transfer (Yosso & Solorzano, 2006). Community colleges have become a pathway for underrepresented, first generation, and low-income students to gain access to higher education. In addition, community colleges are the beginning to a critical and life changing transition toward access to higher education for many of California's largest growing ethnic group. In order to understand and address these challenges, I posed the following research questions:

1. What are the educational aspirations of the Latina and Latino community college students who participate in a learning community?
2. What barriers do Latina and Latino learning community students face in relation to their academic aspirations?

To answer these questions, this study examined the *Transformation* learning community at Neighborhood Community College to determine the academic aspirations and barriers of first-year Latina and Latino students. It is important to document how academic and social networks within a college community campus can contribute to greater educational opportunities for success among these Latino student populations who are the majority ethnic groups on campus. It is equally important to recognize the compounded barriers that students face in order to reach their academic aspirations.

### **Research Setting**

The setting for my research project was within the Transformation Program learning community at a large (over 100,000 students enrolled in 2009-2010) urban Hispanic serving community college, the Neighborhood Community College in southern California. The Transformation Program commenced with their first cohort of students in the 1999-2000 academic year through efforts of the Vice President of Student Services on campus. The foundation for this program was made possible with initial funding support from a Title V federal competitive grant. The Title V grant is intended to help eligible Hispanic Serving Institutions (HSI) enhance and expand their capacity to serve Hispanic and low-income students by providing funds to improve and strengthen the academic quality, institutional stability, management, and fiscal capabilities of eligible institutions (U.S. Department of Education, 2010).

The Transformation Program is a comprehensive program that enrolled approximately 300 first year community college students in the summer, fall, and spring semesters of the 2010-11 academic semester. The Transformation Program operates as a first-year learning community educational model that provides 1) student services, 2) linked academic clusters in Mathematics,

English, Reading, Health/Pre-Nursing and Counseling courses, and 3) a cohort based learning environment that includes academic development counseling courses collaboratively taught among faculty and counselors (See Appendix A: Sample Learning Community Course Schedule). The only requirements for admittance into this program are that the students must:

- Commit to enrolling in the program-affiliated courses for at least one semester, with optional enrollment in summer sessions.
- Participate in Transformation sponsored activities such as trips to universities, meetings with Transformation counselors and attending transfer-related workshops, as well as supplemental instruction.
- Program priority was given to incoming students who were placed in to developmental English and Mathematics courses and attended a local high school with a low Academic Performance Index (API) based on standards set by the California Department of Education.

Students must also take the college assessment test and be eligible to enroll in the courses offered within the learning community. Although this program is open to all ethnic groups, the majority of students enrolled in the Transformation Program identify as Latina and Latino. In 2010 Latinas and Latinos comprised approximately 37% of the Full-Time Equivalent students at Neighborhood Community College, making this campus one of the largest community colleges serving Latina and Latino students in the state of California (California Community Colleges Chancellor's Office, 2010).

**Table 3: Neighborhood Community College Enrollment by Ethnicity. National Center for Education Statistics (NCES), Enrollment 2009-10.**

Major Ethnic Group	Percent Enrolled
Hispanic (Latino)	37%
Asian, Pacific Islander, and Filipino	20%
White/Non-Hispanic	12%
African-American	3.7%
American Indian/ Alaskan Native	.3%
Unknown/Non-Respondent	27%

The population on the Neighborhood Community College campus was fifty-two percent female and forty-eight percent male and predominantly Latino in 2010. Neighborhood Community College was selected as a research site for its diverse campus population, not only in ethnic diversity but also for the working class community, which the district services. Neighborhood Community College covers an area where the median household incomes range from \$40,000 to \$80,000 annually (US Census, 2000). This college was also selected most significantly for having a long-term campus commitment to their learning community. The learning community was designed to help address course completion success rates, low degree attainment and transfer rates of their diverse student population.

## Data Collection

This research examined the aspirations and barriers from a unique cohort of community college students and documents their academic aspirations and barriers after their participation in a yearlong learning community targeting first year community college students. Research methods used in this case study design, as described in depth in the next section, included the use of pre-survey and post-survey questionnaires, one-on-one student semi-structured interviews, faculty and staff interviews, and secondary campus level data. Education researchers often utilize the case study approach to gain a holistic understanding of real-life experiences, small group behavior, cycles and processes among specific groups (Yin, 2009). The mixed-methods case study design employed allowed for triangulation of data from multiple student cohorts within a specialized population at a community college.

### *Pre and Post Survey Questionnaires*

The quantitative component of this proposed study is based primarily on two survey instruments that were administered to approximately 300 of the first year students who were enrolled into the Neighborhood Community College Transformation Program in the fall of 2010. This questionnaire was designed in collaboration with college faculty and administration to identify student experiences prior to entering in the Transformation Program, to identify academic aspirations, and barriers, as well as to assist in providing feedback to the Transformation Program Director on elements of future programmatic improvement for Transformation students. At the start of the fall 2010 semester and at the start of the spring 2011 semester, both pre and post-survey questionnaires were administered to students during their Transformation Counseling courses at Neighborhood Community College. Questionnaires consisted of an open-ended response, paper-based format surveys that contained questions

geared toward general demographic data, perceptions of the Transformation Program and campus resources, as well as questions pertaining to students' academic aspirations (See Appendix B: Fall Semester Pre-Survey and Appendix C: Spring Semester Post-Survey).

### *Student One-on-One Interviews*

Data for this study also includes individual interviews among three different populations within the Transformation Program. First, twenty interviews were conducted with students who were enrolled in 2010 and formerly enrolled within the learning community. A sample of ten male and ten female community college students who had been enrolled in the Transformation learning community were purposefully selected to participate in hour-long one-on-one interviews. Half of the students selected were categorized as *Achievers* (students who reenrolled full-time at Neighborhood Community College in their second semester of the spring 2011 and had earned a 3.0 or greater college Grade Point Average in the prior fall semester). The other half of students interviewed I labeled as *Stop-Outs* (students who had participated in the Transformation Program but did not return to the program or college for at least one semester). The interview protocol was designed for to explore their academic aspirations, their barriers and their experiences within their learning community (See Appendix D: Student Interview Protocol).

Achiever Interview participants were purposefully selected among the students who were enrolled in the Transformation Program, had completed the fall pre survey, and who self-identified as Latino, Chicano, Hispanic, Mexican or Mexican-American<sup>8</sup>. Demographic

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<sup>8</sup> For the purpose of this research all of these terms are used interchangeably dependent upon source data and references. All ethnic groups listed possess historical and political undertones that are not described within this text. I use the general terms Latina and Latino in order to convey this ethnic group, despite a diversity of cultures among these individual countries of origin who were formerly colonized by Spain, including those of Mexican or Central American descent.



information such as the gender, nationality and aspirations of students were collected from the survey questionnaires among the 2010-2011 Transformation Program cohort.

**Table 4: List of Achiever, Stop-Out and Peer Assistant Interview Participants.**

	<u>Female</u>	<u>Male</u>	<u>Total Interviews</u>
<b>Latino Achiever Students</b>	5	5	10
<b>Latino Stop-Out Students</b>	5	5	10
<b>Latino Student Peer Assistants</b>	7	4	11

**TOTAL STUDENT INTERVIEWS= 31**

**4 Transformation Faculty interviews were also conducted among the lead staff in the subject areas of Counseling, English and Mathematics.**

Additionally, in order to gain a greater understanding of the history and nature of administrative duties within the Transformation learning community context, one-on-one interviews were also conducted with four lead faculty members (two female and two male) who were affiliated with the Transformation Program and taught in the subject areas of Mathematics, English, and Counseling. Two of the counseling faculty members interviewed had served as the Transformation Program Director in prior years.

One unique staffing characteristic of the learning community is the program’s employment of NCC’s current students who are hired as staff *Peer Assistants* who assist first-year students within the program. Eleven Transformation Peer Assistant staff members were also interviewed in order to gain further insight into the Transformation Program (See Appendix E: Student Peer Assistant Interview Protocol). All Peer Assistants were former Transformation students and provided a rich perspective as staff, college students, and former program participants.

Secondary data was also collected for supplemental analysis in this study from public data sets at the California Post Secondary Education Commission (CPEC), California Community Colleges Chancellor's Office, NCES, and data provided by the campus Office of Research and Institutional Effectiveness.

### **Data Analysis**

In order to measure descriptive variables related to student aspirations, gender, first generation status in college, financial aid status, and age, the questionnaire portion of this study was utilized. Responses to the survey were categorized, coded, and analyzed using Microsoft Excel tables and the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) software to conduct descriptive statistics and means comparisons (See Appendix F: Survey Variables and Codes).

Findings based on qualitative survey responses and interviews were also transcribed and coded. Once coded, expository narratives and reoccurring themes were categorized. These extracted narratives and themes then served as the primary focus within my study.

Analysis of these variables included an examination of issues relating to students' barriers in terms of their academic assessment and coursework, confidence in approaching and interacting with faculty on their campus and students feelings toward their academic aspirations.

In order to answer my research questions, analysis of the related variables were examined through the framework within the tenets in the Community Cultural Wealth Model, with a focus on Aspirational Capital identified within these data. Each of the three key research methods will help to answer the main research questions in this proposed study as described in Table 5.

**Table 5: Research Questions and Purposes of Data Analysis from Multiple Sources.**

Research Questions	Surveys/Archival	Interviews
1. What are the educational aspirations of the first year Latina and Latino community college students who participate in a learning community?	Provide general descriptive demographics and identify students' academic aspirations.	Clarify survey findings, identify and examine student current aspirations.
2. What barriers do Latina and Latino learning community students face in relation to their academic aspirations?	Provide basic information on barriers to students' aspirations. Utilize Campus data.	Clarify findings related to barriers to aspirations.

### **Limitations**

Findings from this case study are not intended for generalization due to the nature of the specialized learning community, results may vary by campus and community if this study were replicated. Limitations of this study include the fact that there was an inability to track over longer than a year-period within the Transformation Program from the Fall 2010 through the Spring 2011 semesters due to time limitations, campus scheduling restrictions and financial constraints in conducting this study. In addition, some first year students surveyed had begun their academic career in the Summer Transformation Program 2010 semester and had already received services from the learning community. Ideally, the pre-survey could better measure academic impacts, expectations and aspirations if administered prior to their exposure to college, however due to campus human subjects research policies and academic calendar scheduling constraints, pre-surveys were administered to Transformation students in the Fall 2010.

Another limitation was difficulty in tracking students who had left the campus and dropped their courses, although counselor and faculty outreach were beneficial in tracking down some

students for interviews. Additionally, this study could have benefited in analysis as a comparative study between Transformation and a general campus cohort of non-Transformation students. Although access to conduct research among the general campus was not granted at this stage of my research, over the duration of this study the campus research office was in the process of conducting a longitudinal comparative study, which can possibly be used for future studies and deeper understanding of these students' aspirations and barriers. Despite the limitations of this research project, this case study allows for a more holistic understanding of these students' experiences, aspirations, barriers and networks within this learning community that a purely quantitative study is not able to accomplish.

## **CHAPTER FOUR: QUANTITATIVE AND QUALITATIVE ANALYSIS OF COMMUNITY COLLEGE STUDENTS' ASPIRATIONS**

### **Introduction**

In this chapter I will address my first research question: *What are the academic aspirations of Latina and Latino community college students?* Within this section I discuss analysis and findings of surveys that were administered to first-year community college students enrolled in the Transformation Program learning community from 2010 through 2011. Survey results on student aspirations will be reported in three phases to provide an overview of results. First, findings from all completed surveys will be discussed. Second, I will provide a comparison of results disaggregated by gender. Lastly, an analysis of survey responses from only Latinas and Latinos will be discussed.

### **Research Setting and Survey Sample**

My research project was conducted within a first-year learning community program at a community college in southern California. The program was funded through a Title V federal grant intended to help enhance the campus capacity in serving Hispanic students. The overarching goal was to improve academic quality, increase student success and create institutional stability of the program (U.S. Department of Education, 2010).

The Transformation Program learning community is a comprehensive program that operates as a first-year experience model providing student services and linked academic courses with supplemental instruction in Mathematics, English, Reading and Pre-Nursing. Each course is paired with a counseling component in a cohort-based learning environment. The program includes collaboratively taught courses by both college faculty and counselors. Additional academic resources such as a computer laboratory and tutoring are provided for approximately 300 to 500 students per semester dependent on program capacity.

*Enrollment and Survey Sample*

In the fall of 2010, pre-surveys were administered to first-year students enrolled in twelve of the Transformation Program’s counseling courses, with 283 surveys collected. A post-survey was also administered in ten of the counseling courses in the spring of 2011, with 136 surveys collected. Participants were given the option to include their campus student identification numbers in order to match their pre- and post- survey responses for analysis. By matching student identification numbers, I was able to pair 106 of the fall and spring surveys. Only these paired surveys were utilized for analysis in this section. Surveys were administered immediately following each learning community counseling course.<sup>9</sup> Table 6 provides a comparison of student ethnic background and gender among the survey respondents.

**Table 6: Fall and spring survey respondents by gender and ethnicity within the Transformation Program in 2010-2011 in comparison to NCC full-time enrollment.**

	<u>Gender</u>		<u>Ethnicity</u> <sup>10</sup>					
	<u>F</u>	<u>M</u>	<u>LAT</u>	<u>AF</u>	<u>AS</u>	<u>WH</u>	<u>OR</u>	
Survey Respondents	66	40	95	2	5	2	2	N=106
Percent	62%	38%	90%	2%	4%	2%	2%	100%
Campus	59%	41%	44%	6%	26%	17%	7%	N=29,336

<sup>9</sup> Not all Transformation Program students were administered the survey. Only those who were 18 years old at the time of the survey were eligible to participate in this study. Students who were absent on the day of survey administration were also excluded from this study. Additionally, continuing Pre-nursing students enrolled in the Transformation Program were excluded from participation in the survey portion of this study due to not meeting the criteria of being enrolled as a first-time student in the 2010 academic year.

<sup>10</sup> Ethnic groups consisted of Latino or Hispanic (LAT), African-American or Black/Not Hispanic (AF), Asian or Pacific Islander (AS), White/Not Hispanic (WH), Other (OR), which includes respondents of American Indian, Alaskan Native or Bi-racial/two or more races. All percentages are rounded to the nearest whole number.

Self-reported ethnicities were grouped into five categories. These groups included Latino or Hispanic (LAT), African-American or Black (AF), Asian American, Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander (AS) and White/Non Hispanic (WH). Additionally, the fifth group that I designated as Other (OR) included students who were bi-racial or belonged to other ethnic groups. The majority of survey respondents identified as female at 62% and Latino at 90%.

Small amounts of post-surveys were collected among the African-American, White and Bi-racial ethnic groups, as illustrated in Table 6, which made it difficult to compare survey responses between groups. Since Latinos were the majority population among this cohort and due to such a small sample size from all other ethnic groups, conclusions could not be drawn from survey responses of other ethnic groups, for this reason my analysis in this study will consist of Latina and Latino students' only.

Survey respondents were asked to identify their ethnic background in an open-ended item within the questionnaires. Although there was variation in responses to this question, the most common responses were grouped into the five general categories, as previously mentioned. Variation in responses occurred most among the Latino ethnic category, frequent responses included Latino, Latina, Chicano, Chicana, Mexican-American, Mexican or Hispanic. I acknowledge that Latino, African-American, Asian, White, Native American and Bi-racial students are not homogenous within each category. For consistency in data reporting purposes, main ethnic groupings were based on the definitions outlined by the Integrated Post-Secondary Education Data System (IPEDS).

#### *Additional Characteristics of Survey Respondents*

Community college populations are often described as non-traditional students who are older in age or re-entering college after spending time in the work force. However, the students

surveyed in this study held similar characteristics to first-year college freshman in terms of their age, enrollment status and gender.

Survey respondents had the median age of 19 years old. Most students were 18 years old when surveys were administered in the fall but their ages ranged from 18 to 52.<sup>11</sup> Additionally, respondents were enrolled full-time and held a mean self-reported high school grade point average of 2.7. In summary, most of the survey respondents were Latina, 18 years of age and enrolled full-time. Students were also typically first-generation in their family to attend college (53%) and were receiving financial aid and worked part-time (69%). In the next section I will discuss not only student characteristics but also the methods with which I examined their academic aspirations.

### **Quantitative Methods and Results**

The survey investigated students' aspirations within the first academic year. Survey items were developed to ask students their current educational goal as a measure of aspirations. Students chose from a selection of the following items in response to the survey question: *What is your current educational goal?* Items that were selected included: 1=Transfer with an Associate Degree (AA or AS), 2=Transfer Only, 3=Associates Degree Only (AA/AS), 4=Vocational Degree or Certificate or 5=Undecided. Responses to the survey were coded, categorized and analyzed using SPSS version 17 to generate frequency tables, means and averages from these data.<sup>12</sup> In order for a survey to be included in the analysis, at least 85% of the survey must have been complete. Secondly, students must have provided their age on the survey ensuring their eligibility to participate in the study. Students were also required to provide

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<sup>11</sup> Respondents were younger than that the average community college student population due to the nature of the first-year learning community program that targets students for enrollment from local high schools.

<sup>12</sup> Analysis of paired fall and spring student survey responses were collapsed into a 5-point scale (1=Transfer w/ AA/AS, 2=Transfer Only, 3=AA/AS degree only 4=Vocational Degree or Certificate and 5=Undecided).



their school assigned identification number and report their academic aspirations on the survey for inclusion in my analysis.

Within this chapter, results are presented from selected items in the fall and spring student surveys that met the required criteria. Responses to the specific items will be shared in three stages. First, I will provide a comparison of all students who responded to the survey. Secondly, gender and ethnic groups will be compared. Lastly, results among Latinas and Latinos will be shared.

### **Survey Results**

#### *Educational Aspirations Toward Transfer*

In my first phase of analysis, responses were analyzed without disaggregating students by gender or ethnic categories. Table 7 shows students' responses to the key survey item used to measure academic aspirations. The table illustrates that a majority of students held high levels of aspirations to transfer with an Associate degree; 90% and 87% of the students indicated aspirations to earn an Associate degree and/or transfer in the fall and spring semesters respectively. Findings here differ slightly from a study of over 500,000 first-year community college students in California in which 60% sought to earn a degree (Shulock & Moore, 2007).

**Table 7: Survey responses of educational aspirations from student Transformation Program participants in fall 2010 and spring 2011.**

	<b>Fall 2010 <u>Pre-Survey</u> N=106</b>	<b>Spring 2011 <u>Post Survey</u> N=106</b>
Transfer with AA/AS	70%	71%
Transfer Only	17%	14%
Vocational/Certificate	0%	1%
AA/AS Only	3%	2%
Undecided	10%	12%

In the fall semester, 87% of respondents within the Transformation Program indicated that they aspired to transfer, comparable to 85% in the spring semester. These results showed no large shift in aspirations to transfer from one semester to the next. A study lead by Hagedorn and Cepeda (2004) found transfer aspirations of Los Angeles Community College students to be close to 88%, similar to the finding in this study.

This large percentage of Transformation Program students with aspirations to transfer can be attributed to program recruitment that targets first-year students from local high schools. Additionally, high transfer aspirations may be due to greater amounts of degree-seeking participants who applied and self-identified for this specialized program. Still, differences in transfer aspirations began to emerge among the students surveyed when disaggregating the findings by gender and ethnic group, as discussed in the next section.

#### *Undecided and Vocational Degree-Seeking Students*

Results from the group as a whole indicated that 10% to 12% of the students overall were undecided in their academic aspirations at this early stage in their first year of college. However, only one student indicated aspirations to earn a vocational certificate in the post-survey. Although various vocational certificates are offered on campus in the areas of Nursing, Child Development, Medical Technology and Welding, these students did not hold the educational goal of earning a vocational degree. In the next section I will discuss differences in academic aspirations by gender.

#### *Gendered Differences among Students' Aspirations*

In the second level of analysis, described in this section, students' academic aspirations were disaggregated by gender. Table 8 demonstrates similar responses between groups when taking into consideration combined percentages of transfer aspirations, where 88% of the

females and 85% of males aspired to transfer with or without an Associate degree in the fall. However, between the fall and spring semesters, there was a slight decline in the percentage of male students who aspired to transfer, from 85% to 78%. High transfer aspirations of females remained the same from fall to spring. These results can be compared to state and national trends in which college students are often women, who are more likely than their male counterparts to earn better grades in college and to aspire and earn a degree in higher education (CPEC, 2007; Watford, Rivas, Burciaga, & Solorzano, 2006; Wawrznski & Sedlacek, 2003; Sax, 2008).

**Table 8: Survey responses of educational aspirations by gender of students within the Transformation Program in the fall 2010.**

<b>Fall 2010</b>		
<b><u>Pre-Survey</u></b>		
N=106		
	<b><u>Female</u></b>	<b><u>Male</u></b>
Transfer w AA/AS	74%	62%
Transfer Only	14%	23%
AA/AS Only	2%	5%
Vocational/Certificate	0%	0%
Undecided	10%	10%

**Table 9: Survey responses of educational aspirations by gender of students within the Transformation Program in the Spring 2011.**

<b>Spring 2011</b>		
<b><u>Post Survey</u></b>		
N=106		
	<b><u>Female</u></b>	<b><u>Male</u></b>
Transfer w AA/AS	75%	62%
Transfer Only	14%	16%
AA/AS Only	1%	4%
Vocational/Certificate	0%	2%
Undecided	10%	16%

Both groups were equally undecided in their academic aspirations at 10%. However, a notable difference was an increase in the percentage of males who were undecided in the fall (10%) to the spring (16%). There was a slight 2% increase in males who held the goal to earn a vocational certificate, where no respondents indicated this aspiration in the fall survey. The change in aspirations among males can be attributed to historic education-based institutional factors in secondary schools where, over time, many male and minority students are tracked into remedial and vocational areas as opposed to college course trajectories (Oakes, 2005). Steering of males toward vocational degrees may also be an issue in community colleges as well. Further disaggregating the data by ethnic group reveals differences in transfer aspirations, as demonstrated in the next section.

In my final level of analysis, student responses were examined to reveal how ethnic background may impact the differences in aspirations, with a focus on Latinos. Small amounts of post-surveys were collected among the African-American, White and Bi-racial ethnic groups (2%) which made it difficult to compare aspirations between groups. Due to such a small sample size and the lack of data from all other ethnic groups, conclusions could not be drawn from survey responses. For this reason my analysis will consist of Latina and Latino students' aspirations only. Findings from Latino and Latino student aspirations will be highlighted in the next section.

### *Latina and Latino Students' Aspirations*

As demonstrated in Table 10, Latina/o<sup>13</sup> students generally held high aspirations toward transfer with an Associate degree and overall did not have aspirations toward earning a Vocational Degree or Certificate. In the spring semester, 90% of Latinas and 76% of Latinos

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<sup>13</sup> In this section I refer to Latina/o or Latinas/os in reference to both female and male students' who identify with the ethnic group as a whole. When the terms Latino or Latinos are utilized the intended reference is to the subgroup of only males. Additionally, I refer to the female only subgroup as Latina or Latinas.

held aspirations to transfer. These percentages are significantly larger than reports from a study of Latina/o California community college students, in which 40% of the students aspired to transfer to a four-year college or university (Yosso & Solorzano, 2006). However, in this study responses were gathered from students in the specialized first-year learning community, therefore generalizations from this research can not be made to California’s Latina/o community college population overall.

**Table 10: Survey responses of Latina and Latino students’ academic aspirations in fall 2010 and spring 2011.**

	Fall 2010 Pre-Survey		Spring 2011 Post Survey	
	<u>LATINA</u>	<u>LATINO</u>	<u>LATINA</u>	<u>LATINO</u>
Transfer w AA/AS	74%	60%	76%	59%
Transfer Only	12%	23%	14%	17%
AA/AS Only	2%	6%	0%	5%
Vocational Certificate	0%	0%	0%	2%
Undecided	<u>12%</u>	<u>11%</u>	<u>10%</u>	<u>17%</u>
N=95	100%	100%	100%	100%

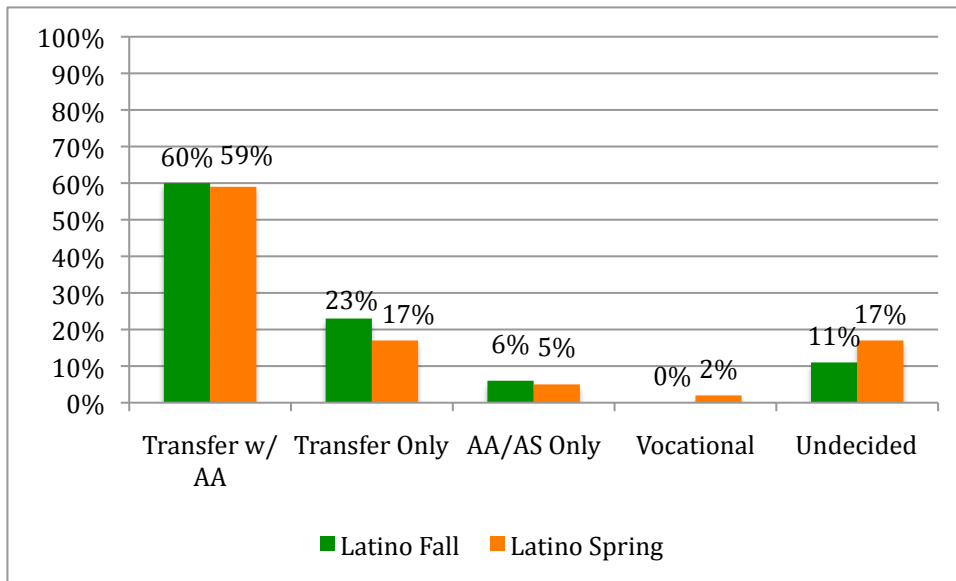
Another study that examined Latino community college students’ aspirations nationally reported that 71% of these students desired to transfer (Solorzano, Rivas & Velez, 2005).

Although large groups of Latino students in California hold aspirations to transfer, research indicates that only about 9% to 10% are likely to transfer to a California State University (CSU) or the University of California (UC) (Ornelas, 2005; Yosso & Solorzano, 2006).

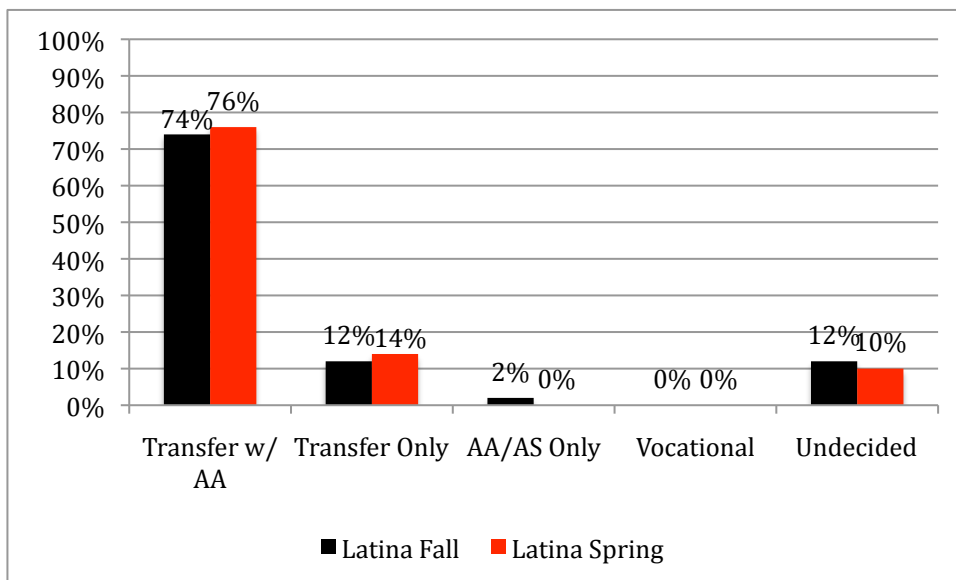
Interestingly, in the second semester there was an increase in the percentage of Latina students who held transfer aspirations. Although, transfer aspirations decreased from fall to spring among Latinos, as demonstrated in Table 10. Additionally, there was an increase in Latinos who were undecided in their aspirations. Latinos who held aspirations toward earning a

vocational certificate also increased in the spring semester. These shifts in aspirations from fall to spring among Latino Transformation Program students are better illustrated in Figure 5, drawn from the data provided in Table 10. The aspirations of Latina Transformation Program students from fall to spring are shown in Figure 6.

**Figure 5: Comparison of Academic Aspiration of Latino Students in the Transformation Program in Fall 2010 and Spring 2011.**



**Figure 6: Comparison of Academic Aspiration of Latina Students in the Transformation Program in Fall 2010 and Spring 2011.**



These results support findings from a five-year study by a California Post-secondary education commission of over 50,000 California Community College students. The study demonstrated that males and Latinos were underrepresented among community college students and had less transfer or degree attainment than other students studied (CPEC, 2007). Male and ethnic minorities may more frequently be tracked toward the Associate degree or encouraged to join the work force rapidly than their female classmates. A recent study found that 44% of Mexican origin students who graduated from high school and enrolled in college ended their educational journey prematurely (Covarrubias, 2011). Additionally, research based on the United States Census has shown that Chicanas are completing degrees at greater rates than their Chicano/Latino counterparts at all points of the educational pipeline from high school to graduate school (Covarrubias, 2011). For more than a decade educational trends have shown that Latinas are outperforming Latinos and community college students appear to not be in exception.

### **Summary of Quantitative Findings**

Significant findings in this study showed that more Latina students reported aspirations toward transfer than their Latino classmates. Additionally, Latinas' transfer aspirations increased from the fall to spring semester, where Latino transfer aspirations decreased in the spring semester. Lastly, there was a slight increase in the spring semester of Latino students' who aspired to earn a vocational degree and who were undecided. These shifts toward vocational degrees and undecided aspirations were not apparent among the Latinas. Reasons for the shift in aspirations will be examined further in the analysis of student interviews.

The next section describes student interviews that were used to further investigate findings gathered from survey results. Interviews were conducted with Latina and Latino Transformation Program students to clarify their academic aspirations. In addition, students

where interviewed who were not enrolled in courses on campus, however were previously affiliated with the Transformation Program. Results drawn from these interviews highlighted students' aspirations that will be shared in the next sections.

### **Qualitative Methods and Participant Characteristics**

After conducting an analysis of data from the fall semester pre-survey, I began the interview phase of my data collection. My overarching goal in the interviews was to clarify information about the different aspirations and barriers to transfer that Latina and Latino students confronted in their community college experiences. This section will focus on students' academic aspirations, while the next chapter will discuss their barriers to transfer.

The narratives described in this chapter were extracted from one-on-one interviews conducted with Latina and Latino students. The first group of students interviewed was enrolled in the Transformation Program in the fall of 2010, which earned at least a 3.0 college grade point average (N=10). This group I refer to as the *Achievers*. Among these students, ten participated in individual interviews; out of these, five were female and five male. The gender and number of all student interview participants are provided in Table 11.

**Table 11: Student interview participants Achievers, Stop-Outs, and Peer Assistants.**

	<u><b>Female</b></u>	<u><b>Male</b></u>
<b>Achievers</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>Stop-Outs</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>Peer Assistants</b>	<u><b>7</b></u>	<u><b>4</b></u>
<b>TOTAL (N=31)</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>14</b>

The second group of participants interviewed were students who had stopped attending courses at one point and were no longer enrolled in the Transformation Program but had participated in the program in a prior year or semester (N=10). I refer to these as the *Stop-Out*



students. Of the ten Stop-Out students who participated in one-on-one interviews, five were female and five were male. These participants were difficult to recruit but were identified through snowball sampling and were referred by students, counselors or Peer Assistants within the Transformation Program who I had interviewed in the study.

Multiple methods of contact were attempted in order to reach my target interviews, I had to aggressively pursue Stop-Outs for participation in my study. Once Stop-Out students contacted me for an interview, I often had to follow-up over several months via electronic mail, cellular phone, text messaging and the social network site Facebook in order to secure a final interview.<sup>14</sup> Even when in-person interviews were scheduled, several Stop-Out students did not show up to participate in the study. Since Stop-Outs were no longer enrolled or strongly connected to the campus it was difficult to draw them back for this study, however I was still able to interview ten Stop-Outs.

Student attendance can be described as rather unpredictable among this population of students. Enrollment patterns of community college students do not typically follow a linear trajectory for a multitude of personal or academic reasons (Cohen, 2003). For instance, a student may begin his or her academic career full-time and then drop down to part-time status. The student may then decide to not enroll in courses at all for one semester or even for several years. The student may additionally re-enroll at a different college or ultimately never return to a college campus again. The inability to identify students definitively as dropouts, lead me to the use of the term Stop-Outs as opposed to naming them dropouts. Stop-Out is used in reference to

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<sup>14</sup> Although the social network site Facebook was not originally part of the study participant recruitment plan, this forum was critical in finding 10 of the Transformation Program former students who were no longer enrolled in courses. The Facebook application allowed other study participants to “recommend a friend” among Stop-Outs who utilized the Facebook network. Students were able to either accept or reject the friend request suggestions. Students who requested me as a “friend” on the site provided assistance in my Stop-Out recruitment through the “recommend a friend” feature on Facebook.

the irregular attendance and non-attendance patterns of community college students (Goldrick-Rab, 2007; Horn & Nevill, 2006). The term Stop-Out was initially coined in a series of policy reports on higher education published from 1974 through 1980 by the Carnegie Council, a progressive non-profit educational institution (Douglas, 2005).

Another group of participants interviewed were students in their second year at the community college or longer, who had been successful in completing their courses and were employed part-time as Peer Assistants within the Transformation Program. This group of students were not initially part of my data collection plan, however, I decided to include them in my study due to their continued enrollment and achievement in their academic pursuit. These students were recruited through referrals from the program counselors in my request to interview “Achiever” Transformation participants. However, they did not meet my criteria of attending college for their first year in 2010. Although they did not meet my initial guidelines of being first-year community college students in the Transformation Program, I felt that their experiences could add another layer of understanding to my study of students’ aspirations, barriers and resources. Eleven of these students were interviewed, of which seven were female and four male. Overall, I was able to conduct a total of thirty-one student interviews of current and former Transformation Program participants as I outlined in Tables 12, 13 and 14. Findings from Peer Assistant interviews will be presented later in Chapter 5.

Interview participants differed somewhat in age, ranging from 18 to 40 years old. Stop-Out and Peer Assistant participants tended to be older students. Participants had similar academic aspirations despite their age, enrollment status or duration of attendance at the college. In this section, I focus my analysis on the Transformation Program Achievers and Stop-Outs who are former Transformation Program participants.

Descriptions of the Achievers are included in Table 12. Included in the next section are tables with a list of each participant's pseudonym, age, gender, ethnic background and academic aspirations. Additionally, Table 13 provides a description of characteristics for the Stop-Out students as well as a summary of their reasons for leaving the college. Table 14 outlines the third cohort of student interview participants who worked as Peer Assistants in the learning community.

**Table 12: Characteristics and aspirations of Achiever interview participants.**

<b>Pseudonym</b>	<b>Age</b>	<b>Gender</b>	<b>Ethnic Group</b>	<b>Aspirations</b>	<b>Interests</b>
Maria	20	Female	Latina	Transfer/BA/Undecided	Psychology
Rebecca	18	Female	Mexican	Transfer w AA/BA/Und	Nursing
Martha	19	Female	Hispanic	Transfer BA/MA	Architecture
Tara	19	Female	Latina/Hispanic/Mex Amer.	Transfer/MFT/PhD	Psych/Child Developmnt
Dolores	19	Female	Mexican-American	Transfer/BA	Sociology/Criminology
Daniel	18	Male	Mexican	Transfer/Undecided	Psychology
Johnny	19	Male	Latino/Bi-racial	Transfer/MD	Medicine
David	18	Male	Mexican	Transfer/BA	Business Management
Javier	18	Male	Latino	Transfer/BA	Hospitality
Octavio	20	Male	Latino/Guatemalan	Transfer/BA	Pharmacy

**Table 13: Characteristics and aspirations of Stop-Out interview participants.**

<b>Pseudonym</b>	<b>Age</b>	<b>Gender</b>	<b>Ethnic Group</b>	<b>Aspirations</b>	<b>Interests</b>	<b>Main Reasons Left</b>
Lindsey	26	Female	Latina	Transfer/Doctor of Vet. Medicine	Medicine/ Veterinarian	Child Born/Family Problems/Work
Vanessa	40	Female	Mexican-American	AA/Undecided	Child Development	Time/ Child Born/Divorce
Veronica	19	Female	Mexican	AA/MA /Undecided	Psych/Child Development	Failed English -ESL
Jackie	20	Female	Mexican	Transfer/Undecided	Counselor/ Teaching	Child Born
Crystal	19	Female	Hispanic/South American	Transfer	Ethnic Studies	Financial Problems
Jose	21	Male	Latino	Certificate/Military	Criminology	Military Career/ Academic Problems
Ryan	24	Male	Chicano	Transfer/PhD	Sociology	Failed Math
Ricardo	21	Male	Mexican-American	Transfer w AA/EMT	Emer Med Technician	Counselor Conflict/ Self-Doubt
Alejandro	23	Male	Chicano	Transfer/BA/Undecided	Engineer/ Welding	Enrolled Late- Waitlisted/no classes
Eduardo	19	Male	Latino	Transfer w AA/Undecided	Probation/ Law Enforce	Failed English-ESL

**Table 14: Characteristics and aspirations of Peer Assistant interview participants.**

<b>Pseudonym</b>	<b>Age</b>	<b>Gender</b>	<b>Ethnic Group</b>	<b>Aspirations</b>	<b>Interests</b>
Chavez	20	Female	Latina	Transfer	Medicine
Rodriguez	20	Female	Mexican-American	Transfer/Undecided	Psychology
Alvarez	20	Female	Mexican	AA/MA /Undecided	Child Development
Herrera	21	Female	Mexican	Transfer/Undecided	Teaching
Sanchez	19	Female	Hispanic	Transfer/Masters	Family/Marriage Counseling
Vasquez	20	Female	Latina	Transfer/Bachelors	Psychology
Delgado	19	Female	Mexican-American	Transfer/Bachelors	Sociology
Sandoval	21	Male	Latino	Transfer & Associates	School Counseling
Rivas	25	Male	Chicano	Transfer/PhD	Sociology/Ethnic Studies
Ochoa	22	Male	Mexican-American	Transfer & Associates	Medical
Valenzuela	19	Male	Mexican	Transfer/Bachelors	Business

## Qualitative Interview Results

Prior to each interview with Achievers, I compiled notes on their responses from the fall semester pre-survey. These notes helped to guide my questions during the one-on-one interview. Although I began each interview guided by a general protocol, my interviews became more semi-structured than I had planned at the outset of my study. My analysis of each interview was derived from reading the interview transcriptions. I conducted my analysis with a summary of themes and codes that I had elicited from the interview narratives, focused on students' academic aspirations. In the next section I will first share the aspirations toward transfer among the Achievers. Second, I will discuss the aspirations of the Stop-Outs.

### *Achievers' Aspirations Toward Transfer*

Eighteen out of the twenty total interview participants indicated having aspirations to transfer to a four-year university and earn a bachelor's degree or higher. Interestingly, the students who held aspirations to transfer also expressed further aspirations to earn a graduate degree despite their Achiever or Stop-Out status. Interview participants indicated academic aspirations that aligned with various fields of interest, including aspirations to study in the fields of Medicine, Education, Nursing and Architecture. Achievers indicated in survey responses that they wanted to earn an Associate degree and some identified aspirations to transfer only. Still some students identified aspirations to both earn their Associate degree and transfer, however during the interviews students mainly discussed their aspirations to transfer.

First let us view the aspirations of 19-year-old Achiever Martha. In the fall survey Martha indicated that she wished to only transfer. When she was asked about her aspirations she replied affirmatively that she wanted to transfer and study architecture, just as she reported in her survey. In an interview with Martha about her aspirations she describes how she came to identify

her major and academic goals. When Martha was asked about her academic aspirations she replied,

At the moment, I want to be an architect...I'm not sure what kind of architect because I know there's different architects and engineering, and architectural studies, but ...I'm working on that and thinking I want to design buildings and cool things like that and I want to transfer to UCLA. I know it's really, really hard to get into a program, so it's making me nervous, but I'm working on that too. Yeah, just want to transfer and get my Bachelor's and my Master's and then I'll see about the PhD.

Martha entered NCC in the summer of 2010 with goals toward transferring. Although here aspirations remained the same from fall to spring, interestingly her area of study interests changed from one semester to the next. She indicated in her survey that she was interested in transferring into an English major but by the next semester she said she was studying Architecture. The first semester of college appeared to be an exploration of majors and possible undergraduate and even graduate level degrees, for Martha but she still remained reassured in her goals towards transfer and even held aspirations toward a doctorate.

Another Achiever who held firm aspirations to transfer was a 20-year-old student Maria. When she was asked about her aspirations she stated,

I want to major in sociology with criminology like law in society and stuff like that. I want to transfer to UCR, and my career that I want to go into is a victim advocate program so I can help victims of crime, like teenagers or children.

Maria had clear aspirations to transfer in alignment with a specific career objective in mind. Additionally, Maria's survey responses matched the aspirations that she mentioned in her interview.

Another example of aspirations toward transfer comes from, 18-year-old Achiever Rebecca. Rebecca's responses differed from Maria, in that the aspirations cited on her survey and interview differed. In the survey, Rebecca indicated that her educational goal was to earn an Associate degree, however in her interview she identified aspirations to transfer and earn not



only a Bachelor's but Master's degree as well. When I interviewed Rebecca about her aspirations she replied, "Well, I still haven't decided what I'm going to do, but so far I'm going to be a nurse." The rest of the interview is as follows:

Question: So you're in the nursing program then?

Rebecca: Well, I'm not in a nursing program yet. I'm still trying to get there.

Question: Okay. And what made you want to try to go into nursing?

Rebecca: Because I like helping people. Before, when I was smaller, I used to help my parents. Well, my mom and my aunt, who had kids, so I like helping them at the hospital, so I thought maybe I should look into that.

Question: What classes do you need or what programs do you have to take to be a Nursing major?

Rebecca: I'm talking to the counselor right now because I'm still kind of undecided. So far, I know that I have to take more sciences, but I still haven't...because I had low test scores [assessment] , so I have to pretty much finish my math to get into the Nursing program.

Question: Okay. And then once you complete the Nursing program, do you have to go to another university or do they give you the nursing degree here...?

Rebecca: No, I was looking into Cal State Fullerton, they have a program where you can get your Master's if you have your AA degree. I think your Master's or your Bachelor's at the same time.

Rebecca shared in her interview that she was undecided in her educational major and she had much uncertainty about which degree she would need to pursue her career aspirations in Nursing. However, Rebecca held aspirations beyond the Associate degree that she had indicated initially on her survey in the fall.

Now let us examine Daniel's aspirations. He was a first-year Achiever who indicated on his survey that he had aspirations to both earn an Associate degree and transfer. When I asked Daniel about his aspirations he replied,

My academic goals are to pass all my classes with As, but that can't happen all the time and I learned that but still to try hard. To try my hardest in all my classes and just to learn from all my peers and my teachers, professors, and really get to know them is my goal right now.

I questioned Daniel further by asking him about his specific aspirations to earn a future degree and Daniel said,

I'm trying to transfer in two years and I don't know where I'm going to go, but I'm going to go somewhere hopefully... with a Psychology major, exactly, and future goals... I want to use that major so I could help youth, people that are at risk of being in gangs. I'm trying to be a probation officer. I want to help them before they step into the wrong tracks. I want to stop them and teach them that there's another way to go, instead of violence, drugs...

Daniel had a clear idea of his career goal however he was initially vague in his response to my question about his academic aspirations. Daniel and the other Achievers were able to clearly identify transfer aspirations in their interviews. In the next section the Stop-Out students' aspirations toward transfer will be shared.

#### *Stop-Outs' Aspirations Toward Transfer*

Stop-Out students were not enrolled in the Transformation Program when surveys were administered, however their aspirations were identified in one-on-one interviews. Although some Stop-Outs' responses tended to be vague and required more probing during the interviews, these students did identify aspirations toward transfer. One Stop-Out even held aspirations to transfer, earn a Bachelor and graduate level degree. When Stop-Out Veronica was asked about her aspirations she stated,

My major was child development, so I want to be a preschool teacher and in the future, I want to get my Master's in psychology because I want to be a child psychologist, so everything related with kids.

Veronica was able to ascertain her aspirations toward working in a field with children. Veronica was the only Stop-Out to discuss earning a graduate level degree and expressed hopes to re-enroll in courses in the next semester.

Another example of student aspirations to transfer was demonstrated in an interview with Alejandro, a 23-year-old Stop-Out. Alejandro held firm aspirations toward transfer, however he had previously been taking courses toward a vocational track in welding. Alejandro described his career and academic aspirations when he said,

I would like to become an engineer. I'm still debating on which field, once I got into welding, my mind was blown by metals and just creating things. I was building huge things. I wish I had photos. So...I'm thinking of taking my classes again and eventually transfer over to Cal Poly Pomona. Within 10 to 15 miles around here, that's one of the best campuses for engineering, or Cal State L.A., which...I don't know where it is, but [Cal State] L.A. is pretty far I'm guessing.

Alejandro took time off from his studies and had been employed as a non-unionized independent welder, however he continued to hold to his aspirations toward transfer in identifying career goals in engineering. Another example of aspirations toward transfer was in Ricardo, a 21-year-old Stop-Out. When asked about his aspirations Ricardo said,

I wanted to do EMT but all four of my years I felt that I was pressured [by family] and then when I finally got in there, I'm just like, "oh no this is kind of not good..." I expected something else, I expected it to be hard but you know I just thought "do I really want to do this for the rest of my life?"... And so my motivation and my inspiration to be in this class was just dropping every minute and it's like I started getting anxious and I talked to my brother and I was like "you know what? I don't think that I want to do this anymore." He said "it's fine as long as you do something you love, do something you are happy about." And I'm like "Okay, I'm going to find what I want to do." Maybe I want to be a counselor...the only thing that I really want to do is probably, the program that really gets me...is probably like this program at Cal Poly.

Ricardo started out in a vocational program as an Emergency Medical Technician (EMT) and described in his interview feeling pressure from his family to enter into a medical related field. However, after spending four years off and on at the community college he decided that the

EMT program was not what he aspired to pursue after all and instead contemplated becoming a counselor. Similar to Alejandro, Ricardo was not enrolled in studies at any college at the time of the interview, however he did maintain his goal of attending a nearby California State University.

Ryan was another Stop-Out student who described conflicting feeling toward his goals.

When Ryan was asked about his aspirations he replied,

My overall goal is creating a sustainable environment for family, my friends, and me and by creating a sustainable environment.... I'm referring to as far as education, educating ourselves, feeding ourselves, making our own food, our own clothes, growing our own food. So that's my overall goal in life because I have a problem with the institution of education, the way it's structured. It's very Eurocentric and it's very top-down...so that's my inner struggle.

Ryan was very articulate in sharing his goals and struggles; still I questioned him further by asking about his more specific school-based academic aspirations. Ryan replied,

It's a constant struggle to be okay with being at school and needing to graduate because graduating and transferring provides resources. I was a history major and I had to push myself so it depends on where I transfer and what I'm going to focus on. If I go to UCR, I'm going to focus in ethnic studies and so double minor...have a double major in history and ethnic studies. If I go to UCLA, my focus will be history and also...I'll minor in ethnic studies.

Ryan reluctantly discussed his aspirations to transfer. Although he was aware of negative practices in academic institutions and critical of academia, he described his struggle between transferring and focusing his energy to create a sustainable environment for his family, as if they were mutually exclusive goals. Similar to Ryan, other Stop-Outs shared aspirations toward transfer with conflict or uncertainty in their transfer and field of study.

Another Stop-Out who held aspirations to transfer was Jackie. Jackie discussed her aspirations, although she had some uncertainty in her career field of interest, she identified aspirations to transfer to UCLA or UCSB. In her interview Jackie said,

Well, I want to transfer to UCLA or to UCSB. Yeah, I'm still not sure though... I want to be a counselor. When I originally started in Transformation, I changed my major. I wanted to be a teacher, a fourth grade teacher, but I started working ... and I liked working with people so I kind of like mentoring people and I was like, "Counseling is probably going to be better," so I changed it to counseling and I think I want to work with kids with Down Syndrome, but that's kind of separate from counseling because I've looked into careers for that, but I have always wanted to do something with medicine but I can't see blood because I faint when I see it, so that's why I don't know still.

Although Jackie strongly affirmed her academic aspirations to transfer in her interview, she was not sure of the field in which she wanted to pursue that degree. Additionally Jackie seemed to lack information on which campus offered what degree, still transfer aspirations remained apparent during Jackie's interview.

Despite Stop-Outs' non-enrollment in courses most of these students maintained aspirations to return to a college and transfer to a public university. However in the next section I will share examples from Stop-Out students who did not hold aspirations to transfer.

#### *Stop-Outs' Aspirations Toward Terminal Associate or Vocational Degrees*

Although the majority of interview participants had aspirations to transfer, two students discussed the academic goal of earning an Associate degree. One of these students was a 21-year-old Latino who described his frustration with starting and stopping school multiple times. Jose stated,

My academic goals are... I've come into a circle actually already. I started in '08 and my major was originally criminology. I changed it to firefighting and then I changed it again to more like a counselor-type thing and I'm going to be leaving this June [to the Army], so it's coming to a full circle somewhat now already and I'm really excited obviously, so... I'm going to get my certificate from here and... people tell me I'm crazy, but I don't think so... I'm going... I've been doing high level research into the military and that's where I want to go, that's where I see myself heading.

Jose described how over a three-year period he had multiple majors each time. During the interview he revealed that he aspired to earn his certificate and join the Army. He is the only male Stop-Out student who did not identify aspirations to transfer.

The second interview participant who did not hold aspirations to transfer was also a Stop-Out student. Vanessa was a 40-year-old Latina and mother who described having to focus on her children rather than her academics. When asked about her aspirations, Vanessa said, “I need to finish these two math classes and I’m done with my Associates. I’ll be done, and that’s my goal right now. Yeah, to get my Associates in child development.” I probed further; asking her what she intends to do with her degree. She replied,

Well... a preschool or kindergarten teacher and I’m not sure if I have it in me because I’m so exhausted right now, I can’t go on to Cal Poly and get my Bachelor’s because... I have to concentrate on my kids and let that dream go. That’s how I feel right now.

Vanessa later in the interview said that she intended to enroll in the fall semester to take one of her last required math courses.

Vanessa expressed that her current aspirations were to earn an Associate degree in Child Development; Vanessa ascribed her change in plans to her parental responsibilities and her feelings of exhaustion. She left the college in 2007 and was the only female Stop-Out who expressed the aspirations to earn only an Associate degree. Although she never vocalized aspirations to transfer during her interview, I sensed a desire to transfer from the tone of her responses. For instance, in her reference to not being able to attend a college to get a Bachelor’s and having to “let that dream go,” I suspect that transferring may have been an initial aspiration of hers. Many Stop-Outs maintained aspirations to transfer, although with stronger uncertainty than the Achievers.

## Summary of Qualitative Results

Ninety percent of the students interviewed expressed aspirations to transfer to a public university. Stop-Outs held equal aspirations to transfer compared to the aspirations of the Achievers. Male Stop-Outs more frequently cited transfer in addition to aspirations toward earning a vocational degree; examples of vocational fields cited were in areas of welding, medical technology and even gaining vocational skills in the military.

Both Stop-Outs and Achievers were sometimes ambiguous in their interview responses pertaining to their academic and career aspirations. For instance, a student indicated that he had the goal of earning an Associate degree in Law Enforcement, however during the interview he discussed his aspirations to transfer to a local public university. Yet another student reported being undecided in her survey but in her interview discussed having aspirations to transfer, earn a Bachelors and even a Masters degree.

Both the surveys and interviews provided insight into students' aspirations. Interviews also uncovered signs of students lacking the ability to identify what degree path was needed to enter the specific college or career. Student interviews also revealed the barriers that they faced in their aspirations toward transfer, which will be discussed further in Chapter 5.

## **CHAPTER FIVE: ANALYSIS OF BARRIERS TO STUDENTS' TRANSFER ASPIRATIONS**

### **Introduction**

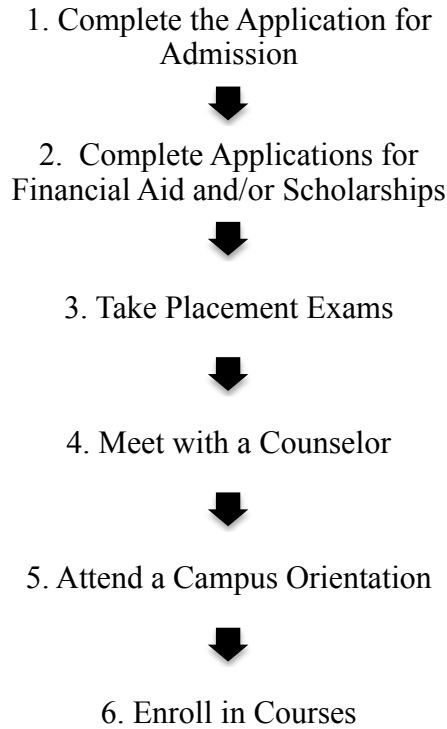
Chapter Five presents findings in regards to my second research question: *What barriers do Latina and Latino students face in their aspirations to transfer?* Answers to this question will come from three sources 1) Student placement levels in English and Mathematics courses based on data from the campus office of research. 2) Open-ended responses from student survey data. 3) Interview data with three groups of current and former Transformation students to augment findings from the surveys and campus data. Three major findings emerged on student barriers toward transfer aspirations. These barriers included unsuccessful participation in the matriculation process, low English and Mathematics course placement, and finally challenges in overcoming personal and financial barriers while balancing academic responsibilities. Prior to discussing these student barriers, I will review the steps as part of the community college matriculation process that are important for that students plan on transferring to a four-year college or university.

### **Matriculation and the Pathway Toward Transfer**

Matriculation is the process in which a student identifies his or her academic pathway to attain a degree or transfer vertically to a four-year college. The matriculation path may vary by campus and is not mandatory for all students but the process begins when a student completes the application for admission. The California Community Colleges Chancellor's Office (2012) states the goals of matriculation are to ensure that all students complete their college courses, persist through the next academic term and achieve their educational objectives through: Admission, Orientation, Assessment and Testing, Counseling and Student Follow-up. Outlined in Figure 7 are the six general steps to successful student matriculation in the community college.



**Figure 7: The Community College Matriculation Process**



This process may need to be repeated every academic term, as students' academic goals and circumstances may shift from one semester to the next. The student first must identify his or her educational goal on the application form. After completing the enrollment application, students should submit an application for financial aid. Paying for college is a major barrier where students may not realize the total costs of attending a college and are often not aware of campus and federal deadlines. Although, applying for financial aid is not mentioned by the Chancellor's Office, it is an important step in successful matriculation on a transfer pathway.

On the academic end of matriculation, students should schedule an appointment to take the English, Reading and Mathematics assessment tests to gauge their academic levels. An essential step in the matriculation process is meeting with a counselor to ensure students are enrolled in courses that are at their level as well as meets their overall academic goals.

Additionally, students need to become oriented with the services available on campus that can

provide student support. Enrollment in courses has become an added barrier to students with popular classes becoming impacted due to high enrollment or cancellation. Students may often be placed on long waitlists or may be forced to enroll in courses that they neither need nor desire. If students are not able to enroll in the required amount of units, they may lose their financial aid and health insurance benefits as well. Matriculation alone poses layers of barriers that a student must face and if one or more of these steps are skipped the likelihood of successful college transfer decreases.

### *Matriculation and UC or CSU Transfer Education Plans*

Once a California Community College student meets with a counselor they will find out that to be eligible for transfer to a University of California (UC) or California State University (CSU) they will need sixty college transferable units in general education, English, Mathematics preparation for the identified major, and elective courses. Students who hold aspirations to transfer into a UC or CSU may opt to follow two general education patterns. The first is the Intersegmental General Education Transfer Curriculum (IGETC), popular among California's community college students. The IGETC education plan is recommended for students who intend to apply to UC and the CSU campuses. Upon completion of the IGETC, students will have completed 40 of the 60 transferable units. Alternatively, students who indicate that they only wish to transfer to a CSU campus may follow the California State University General Education (CSUGE) Plan.<sup>15</sup> Despite these education plans, many students may not often understand what it takes to transfer or what the difference is between transferring and earning an Associate Degree.

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<sup>15</sup> The CSU-GE Breath does not require a language other than English while the IGETC requires students to earn a passing grade in a foreign language. The IGETC satisfies meets the breath curriculum requirements for transfer both to UC and CSU campuses however the CSU-GE curriculum does not meet all of the UC transfer requirements.

As an example of successful matriculation, let us examine first year student Maria's experience at NCC. Maria is a 20-year-old student, who is undecided about what she wants to study, however she knows that she wants to transfer to a University of California. Maria completed her application for admission online and was prompted to schedule an appointment with the assessment center to take the Assessment of Written English (AWE) placement test before she enrolled in courses. In the month before Maria was scheduled to begin her first semester at NCC, she logged on to the assessment center's website with her student identification and pin numbers to schedule her English assessment. As Maria rode the bus to school, she pulled up the assessment centers website on her mobile phone and read that she would have 45 minutes to write one essay that she could choose from two prompts varying in topics. Maria also read sample essays, as well as reviewed the grading criteria. She learned that two professors would grade her essay then would decide on her placement in the course that would best fit Maria's academic ability. Maria read online that she could receive her test results within three days.

Maria arrived early for her English test, was familiar with the format, having read about it online, and felt confident after leaving the exam. Three days later Maria logged back into the assessment center's website via her mobile phone and found out that she was placed in the College Preparation English course, just one level below college transferable English. Maria next made an appointment to meet with a Transformation Program counselor on campus, where she then enrolled in the Transformation Program English course. Maria successfully completed the matriculation process and as a result, she has a plan to achieve her aspirations toward transfer. However, not all students know how to matriculate and often do not take the steps to assess their English or Math ability before enrolling in courses. The matriculation process and assessment

exams may vary by campus leaving students confused and without a plan to meet their academic goal. Lack of student understanding and participation in matriculation has been identified as one of several barriers to students' transfer aspirations. Still, many of these students enter into the community college lacking college level English and Writing skills that slow their progress toward college transfer. In the following section the barriers in the areas of matriculation and early academic planning will be illustrated through student interviews and survey responses from the 2010 cohort of Transformation Program participants.

### **Barriers in Matriculation and Access to Early Academic Planning**

Lack of college counseling has been found to cause students with aspirations to transfer to make poor course selections, have a lack of understanding in transfer requirements, cause increased enrollment in unnecessary non-transferable courses, missed deadlines and increased time to transfer. (Dougherty, 1992; Solorzano & Ornelas, 2004). Meeting with a college counselor can be a challenge for students since the national counselor to student ratio is estimated at 2500 to 1 (American College Counseling Association, 2010). It is beneficial for students to remain enrolled in the Transformation Program for the duration of their first year summer, fall, and spring sessions in order to benefit from this early counseling component.<sup>16</sup> Within the Transformation Program, students are enrolled in a counseling course that is linked to their Math or English core course. The Transformation counseling courses hold a class ratio of approximately 30 to 1, students to counselor.

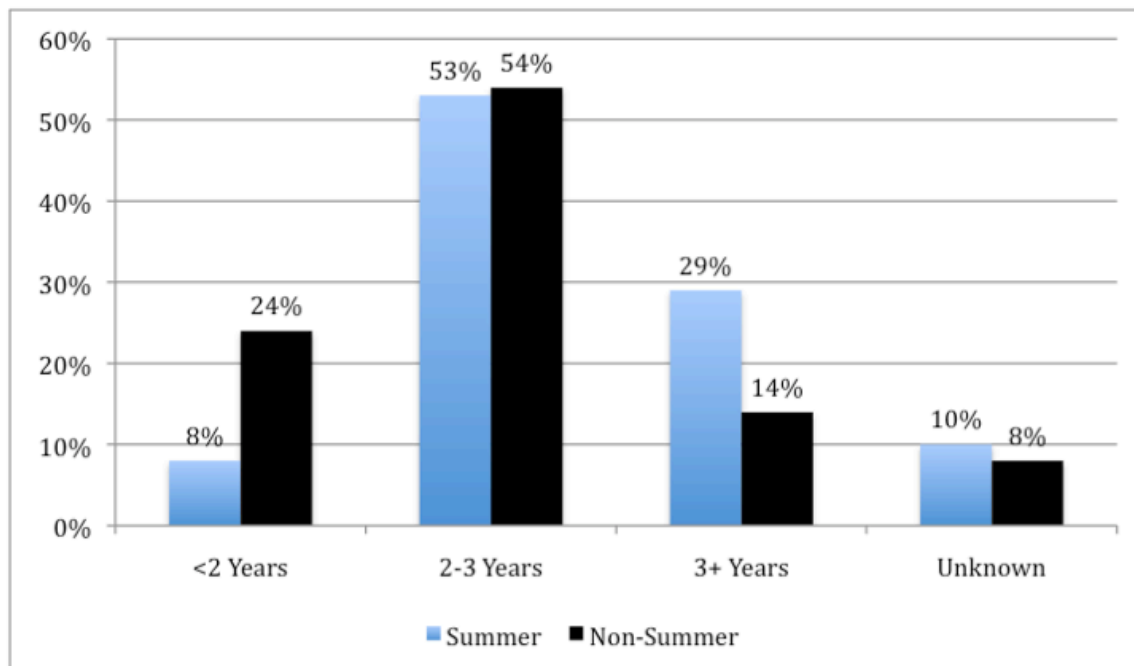
In this study, students were asked in the fall 2010 pre-survey if they had previously attended summer sessions in affiliation with the Transformation Program. Students who indicated that they had attended the summer Transformation Program session in 2010 were then

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<sup>16</sup> It is not mandatory for students to enroll in summer sessions in order to participate in the Transformation Program however a summer Transformation orientation and courses are offered to eligible students.

coded as *Summer*, whereas students who had not attended summer session were identified as *Non-Summer*. In an open-ended response format, these students were all asked the question: *If you intend to transfer, in how many years do you see your transferring to a college or university?* Figure 8 displays the student responses, showing that out of 152 first-year Transformation Program students, 24% of Non-Summer program participants reported that they intended to transfer to a university or college in fewer than two years. Where only 8% of the 2010 Summer Transformation attendees reported having plans to transfer in fewer than two years.

**Figure 8: Duration of Intent to Transfer Between 2010 Transformation Program Participants from the Summer 2010 Cohort and Fall 2010 Non-Summer Cohort.<sup>17</sup>**



<sup>17</sup> Qualitative responses were coded into the following four categories in response to students' intentions to transfer, as displayed in Figure 8: Intended to transfer in fewer than 2 years; Intended to transfer in 2-3 years; Intended to transfer in 3 or more years; Did not know when they intended to transfer=Unknown.

The majority of students, fifty-three percent (53%) of the Summer participants and fifty-four percent (54%) of Non-Summer participants, saw themselves transferring within two to three years. Interestingly, twenty-nine percent (29%) of the Summer students and fourteen percent (14%) of Non-Summer students reported intentions to transfer in three or more years. These preliminary findings indicate that students who were exposed to the matriculation process in summer learning community and took part in educational planning with a counselor held more realistic timelines to transfer. Daniel, an 18-year-old Summer Transformation attendee elaborated on this finding when he stated,

When they (students) come in, they're always in a hurry to transfer. I mean I was in a hurry too. A two-year college, so two years, right? But Transformation kind of walks us through the process of telling us... whatever you test into, that's how much longer it's going to take you to get out. So our goal is to obviously graduate, but in a timely manner, not necessarily two years. So what they (the Transformation Program counselors) try to enforce to us is, "It's okay if you're here for more than two years," and the goal is obviously to graduate.

Eduardo, a 19-year-old student did not share the same knowledge as Daniel about being at the community college for more than two years before transfer. Eduardo did not attend the summer program and was a Stop-Out student who left the campus after his first year at NCC. Eduardo said,

I want to stay only a little bit longer if possible, but I didn't want to overstay my welcome, because community college is meant for two years and if you stay here too long you're going to get used to it and I don't want to do that. I don't want to be comfortable, I wanted to get out here.

Eduardo had the intention of completing his goal at the community college as soon as possible and had the intention of only staying two years at NCC. However, Eduardo was placed in the English as a Second Language course after his assessment and still needed to take quite a few years of English in order to reach transfer level courses.

Alejandro was another Stop-Out student who mentioned not having early access to a counselor while attending NCC. Alejandro had attended multiple community college campuses and he said,

I was going to different campuses, but I never spoke to a counselor until when I decided to quit my job. Like one day, you know what, I told myself, “I got to talk to them, and I need to go take my tests.

Alejandro had spent four years and attended two other community colleges prior to enrolling in the Transformation Program when he finally met with a counselor as part of the matriculation process in the learning community. Students like Alejandro who did not participate in the matriculation process do not have early access to college counseling and hold unrealistic academic timelines, these students may be more at risk to end their studies prematurely. An interdisciplinary study by economist and education researchers examined the lack of structure in community colleges that leaves room for students to unintentionally deviate away from paths of degree completion. The article recommended more intensive advising and integrated curricula that are utilized within learning communities (Scott-Clayton, 2011). More and more researchers are highlighting the importance of early academic preparation, advising and structure in student success. The next section will discuss the added barrier students faced in reaching their academic aspirations, in low English and Mathematics course placement.

Many barriers to transfer actually began before the students stepped foot on the community college campus, as many minority students were not counseled, were not offered or chose not to take college preparatory courses in high school. Education researchers have demonstrated that college preparatory courses are key in the academic pipeline to college transfer, especially for Latino students (Fry, 2004; Solorzano, Villalpando & Oseguera, 2008). Researchers have found that two-thirds of Latina and Latino students start their postsecondary

education at a community college and enter college with many barriers (Ornales & Solorzano, 2004). All though these students enter community colleges with high aspirations to earn a college degree, as demonstrated in Chapter 4, students are often lacking in college-level academic preparation. These students are then placed into non-transferable developmental courses that can take years to complete before reaching college levels, particularly classes in the key subject areas of Mathematics and English.

### **English Course Placement as Barriers to Student Transfer**

It is estimated that 70% to 90% of community college students in California are in need of developmental courses before reaching college-level (California Community Colleges Student Success Task Force, 2011). This held true among the NCC Transformation Program 2010 participants. These data were provided from a study conducted by the campus Office of Research.<sup>18</sup> The study consisted of data collected from 344 students who were enrolled in the Transformation Program in the summer of 2010. Figure 9 illustrates students' English course placement in order of sequence. Courses placed to the left of the bold line in Figure 9 mark the developmental non-transferable courses, in which the majority of Transformation Program participants were enrolled. Data drawn from this report indicated that 99% of this Summer Transformation cohort tested into developmental, non-transferable English courses. The majority of students were placed into Developmental English II. Unfortunately by starting out in this course, students will have to take at least two semesters of English courses that do not count toward the ones needed in UC or CSU transfer requirements.<sup>19</sup>

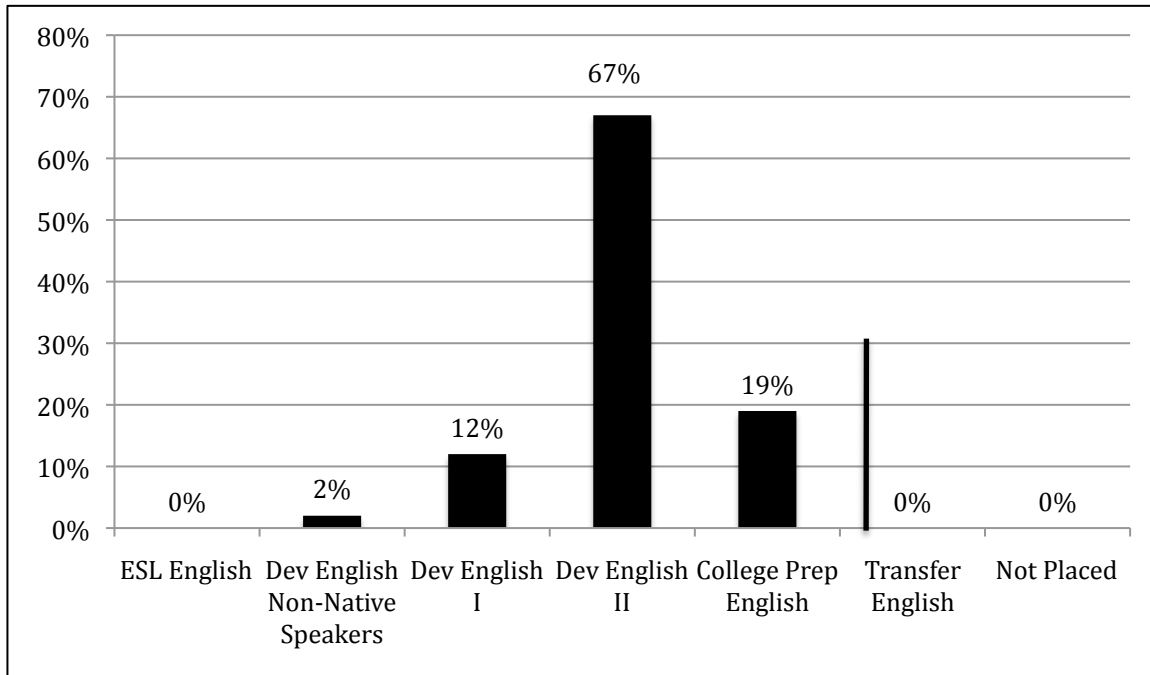
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<sup>18</sup> This report is not cited in the standard American Psychological Association (APA) format in order to maintain the anonymity of the research site in this study. Data from this report were obtained with permission from the campus Office of Research and Institutional Effectiveness.

<sup>19</sup> The Transformation Learning Community targets students for the program who attended high schools with the lowest ranking Academic Performance Index (API) scores in the region. By nature of the learning community and areas in which the community college is located, students who attended the college were likely to be lacking in basic skills areas in Mathematics and/or English.



**Figure 9: English Placement of Summer Transformation 2010 Student Cohort. The bold line indicates a division between developmental level and college transferable courses.<sup>20</sup>**



The Transformation Program provides priority enrollment to students who are placed into the Development English 1 or 2 levels, but offers courses in the learning community up to the college transferable English. Still, 2% of students in the Transformation Program tested into the English for Non-Native speakers, as demonstrated in Figure 9, which is not an English course offered in the Transformation Program.<sup>21</sup> The Non-Native speaking English identification posed an additional challenge to students who not only had to take additional years of English courses, but also were in need of resources to help them speak, read and write English.

<sup>20</sup> In this study 84% of the students in this cohort were Latino and 60% were female. Less than 1% of students were not placed for English assessment. None of these students tested into UC or CSU transferable English, as indicated in Figure 8. Course numbers and titles were modified to protect the anonymity of the research campus.

<sup>21</sup> Students who tested as ESL or as Non-Native English Speaking were not eligible to take English courses in the Transformation Program because these courses were not offered. The students who did not take English courses in the Transformation Program were part of the Mathematics Transformation Program cohort in 2010.

Although greater numbers of Latinos are pursuing higher education in community colleges and are holding aspirations toward transfer to four-year universities, very few of these students are eligible to take transferable courses upon entry into the community college. Latino students who are new arrivals to the United States have the added barrier of possessing limited English writing and speaking skills. With this early English-Learner status, Latino students are often more likely to be placed in non-credit, non-transferable and developmental English courses at the onset of their academic career. In this study, open-ended survey items and interviews with Transformation Program students overwhelmingly highlighted students' difficulties with English courses in which they were placed. Qualitative data from interviews with Latina and Latino Transformation students provide further evidence to this English placement barrier.

It has been reported that 18% of California's community college students test into courses one step below transfer-level and of these only 42% will ever earn a certificate, degree, or complete a transferable course (California Community Colleges Student Success Task Force, 2011). Students in developmental courses have lower chances of successfully completing college-level courses and transferring due to the extended time needed for course completion. Several national and statewide projects have aimed to address this issue of remediation, such as the *Achieving the Dream* program funded by the Lumina Foundation for Education and millions of dollars in support from the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation. More locally in California, many of the first-year learning communities within community colleges, although not funded by the Lumina or Gates Foundations, have attempted to provide a better path through the remediation process in order to help students become more successful in achieving their academic goals. In the next section, I will share narratives from Latina and Latino first-year

community college students (N=20) who were placed into developmental English courses and struggled to reach college transferable courses.

### *Achievers' English Placement Barriers Towards Transfer*

Half of the students interviewed I categorized as the Achievers (N=10); they self-reported a 3.0 college G.P.A, reenrolled at NCC and were previously affiliated with the Transformation Program. The second group of interview participants were the Stop-Outs (N=10); they left their studies after having been enrolled and previously been affiliated with the Transformation Program at NCC. First, English barriers will be discussed among the Achievers, next English placement barriers faced by the Stop-Out students will be shared.

In order to complete a college transfer plan such as the IGETC a student must earn the grade of C or better in two college transferable English. Two English courses may seem simple enough for a student to accomplish, however, this is a huge barrier for many of the students interviewed in the Transformation Program. For instance, in the interview with Johnny, our conversation went as follows:

Question: What are some of the barriers that you face in reaching your goals?

Answer: English is my worst subject...so the first time I came here; I didn't really have good confidence about that. I can understand what people are saying but sometimes I can't write or speak very well.

Question: And what are you doing to get help with this barrier?

Answer: I'm taking English, *Non-Native English* language, English class, writing. Next semester is Development English 1 and then 2, Preparation for College Writing, and then Transfer English so five more classes.

Question: Five classes, quite a few right?

Answer: Actually I can skip one. I can go to...the next semester, I can go to Writing Fundamentals, but I don't want, I want to practice more...

Johnny was able to elaborate on the courses that he needed in the English matriculation pathway, however, he was placed several courses below college-level English. Fortunately, Johnny expressed that he was doing well in his English courses so far and was on the transfer pathway to fulfill his academic aspirations to attend medical school at UCLA. However, Johnny experienced doubts in his English ability, indicated by his statement that he could skip a course but still planned to enroll in the additional, course that was not required, in order to practice and improve his English skills. Self-doubt of students with limited English skills may pose an added challenge to these students as well.

Another example of the English placement barrier was found with Veronica. When she was asked: *What is your biggest barrier in reaching your academic goal?* She replied,

Well, I will say the language. I see that as my main barrier because I came here five years ago...so sometimes it's hard for me to understand some words or to try to write in English. I know I can do it, but it takes a lot of work to do it, so that's my fear and that has been my fear since I came here, to not be able to pursue something bigger because of my language.

When Veronica was asked about how she was addressing this barrier she said,

I was in the Transformation for my English class. Well, I still have to take one see, but I took my English classes in the Transformation and I talked to my teachers about my problem with the language and that helped me a lot because they understood better what I was going through and they give me a lot of advice and they also gave me extra help with correcting my grammar and help with my studying and other process through their English classes. And I will say here, working with the Transformation, I receive a lot of support from the counselors, like sometimes we talk in Spanish. Of course I feel more comfortable talking in my language, so that makes me really happy because I know they're not going to criticize me because of my writing, they're here to help me, and also from the other peer advisors, we're here...I feel like we're like a family because I don't have to be embarrassed or anything.

Veronica was initially placed in the Developmental English I course and Johnny tested into the Non-Native English Speakers course, yet these Achievers appeared to be successfully working

their way through the English courses with support from the Transformation Program. In the next section, I will share the English course barriers that the Stop-Out students discussed.

### *Stop-Outs' English Placement Barriers*

A few of the Stop-Out students indicated having difficulties primarily with English but also indicated additional trouble with their Mathematics. Take for instance Lindsey's experience; when asked about her barriers, she said:

Academically, that will be my major problem or my weakness right now that I try to mix the Spanish or conversation...I am already thinking ahead in Spanish what to say and translate it to English. Or course I will be afraid that I might mispronounce something wrong. First of all, even though I'm born here in the United States, or California, my parents took me to El Salvador and the transition was totally 360 degrees because I knew English and then suddenly I end up speaking more Spanish.

I questioned Lindsey, "Did you ask for help or use any resources for your English barrier?" and she replied,

No, I remember it was my English class, the professor was telling a student that, "You're not going to make it to the end of the semester." Those things put you down as a student. Maybe they're joking about it, as a student I was scared and just thinking through the weeks, through the days, you're not going to make it because the professor said so.

In Lindsey's case, fear of approaching faculty about her academic difficulties in English posed an added challenge to her already limited English skills. Ryan is an example of a student who experienced difficulties in both English and Math. When asked about his barriers he stated,

It's Math and English, which tends to be why most of us don't transfer, because they can't pass I guess what they (Transformation counselors) called the Golden Four-the Math, the English, the Speech, and the Critical Thinking-Math, the transfer Math, which is Math 100's, English I, Speech, and Critical Thinking-so if you can't get past those, you're not going to transfer. And here at NCC, a lot of the courses need prerequisites, at least Math and English. So if I can't take these classes, I'm not going to get anywhere. I need to pass and to get to the next level....

Ryan was able to identify the support he needed as well as which courses he needed in order to transfer. We will continue to see in the next section, how for students like Ryan Math courses were a barrier to aspirations toward transfer.

## **Mathematics Placement Barriers to Student Transfer Aspirations**

A recent study of high school graduates found that 31% of white students, 11% of Latino students and 4% of African-American students met standards in English, Reading, Science and Mathematics (ACT, 2010). Regardless of their ethnic group, American students who enter college in their first year are more likely to be in need of remediation in English and Mathematics. Students may be identified for developmental courses in English, Math or often both subject areas before enrolling in college-levels. In the next section, quantitative and qualitative data will be discussed in order to demonstrate the barriers that students face in their Mathematics courses.

### *Mathematics Course Matriculation and Barriers Towards the Transfer Pathway*

Although it is recommended by the campus that all students go through matriculation and be assessed in English, Reading and Mathematics, several students do not follow this recommendation; they often do not visit a counselor and for various reasons are not familiar with the campus testing format. Let us take the example of Octavio, a Transformation Program Achiever who took his math assessment test late in the school year. Octavio wanted to enroll in the Transformation Program, however, since he found out about the program later he did not attend a program orientation and he was not able to meet with a counselor, missing two important steps in the matriculation process. He learned from a classmate, who had enrolled in the Transformation Program, that he had to take the placement tests before enrolling in classes.

Octavio went to the assessment center on campus and made an appointment to take his placement test the following month, prior to the start of the new semester. As Octavio was planning to take a trip to Guatemala to visit his family, he wanted to take the test as soon as possible. Octavio arrived late to the exam because his dad got out of work later than anticipated,

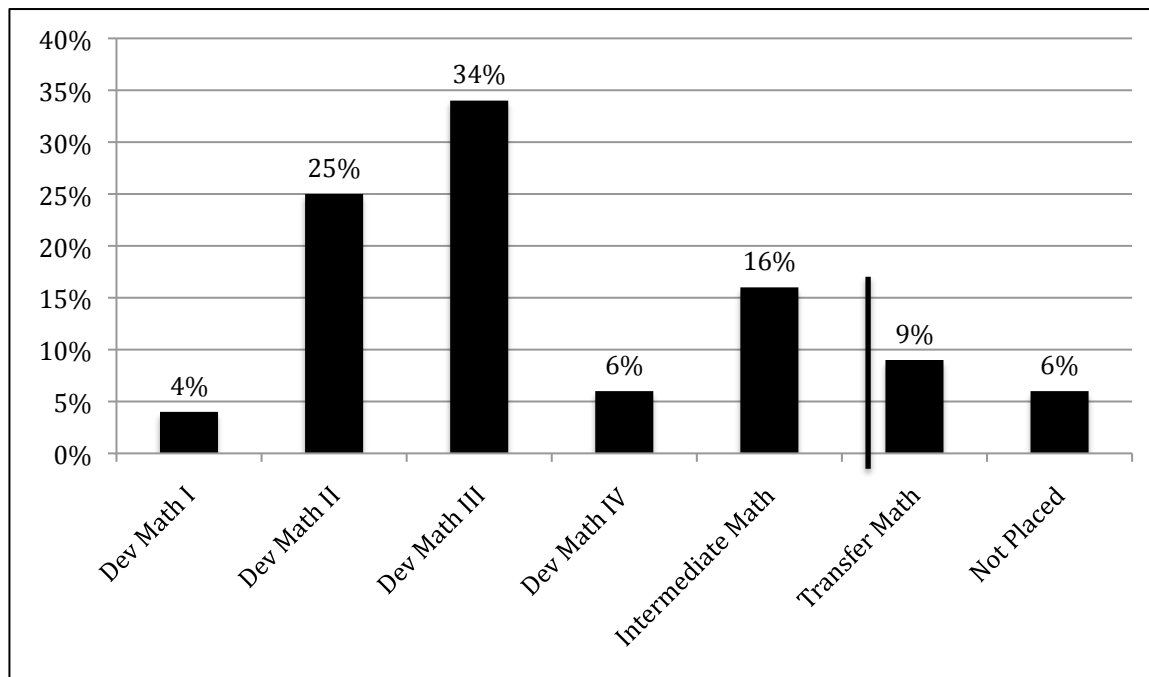
which caused him to lose valuable testing time. Octavio took a small calculator to the test but was told that he could not use a calculator in the exam. Octavio read the instructions to the test before beginning his exam and found out that he would have 45 minutes to complete 35 multiple-choice questions. Because of his tardiness, he realized that he actually had fewer than 30 minutes to complete the exam.

Three days later, Octavio was disappointed when he received an email explaining that he would be placed in the second level of developmental Math. Even though the assessment center staff told him that he could retest in three months, Octavio decided to enroll in the lower math course because he did not want to wait another semester to begin taking his math requirements. Lack of knowledge and lack of familiarity with the placement test procedure was an added barrier to Octavio's course placement and this set him significantly behind on his long pathway to transfer. Students like Octavio find themselves with the barrier of needing to complete additional developmental courses that do not count towards their college transferable units. In the next section, campus-based data is used to demonstrate the high enrollment of Transformation Program students who are placed in non-transferable courses at the onset of their college careers.

#### *Findings from Quantitative Data on Barriers in Mathematics Placement*

Data from a campus study of 344 first-year community college students enrolled in the summer 2010 Transformation Program revealed that 85% of the cohort was placed in Mathematics courses below college level, as demonstrated in Figure 10. Additionally, 16% of students were placed into Intermediate Mathematics, a non-transferable course however closer to the college level mathematics courses of which students aspire to reach.

**Figure 10: Mathematics Placement of the Summer Transformation 2010 Cohort. The bold line indicates a division between developmental level and college transferable courses.<sup>22</sup>**



The percentage of those placed in developmental Mathematics courses (69%) was not as dismal compared to 99% of the students in English development courses, as discussed in the previous sections. However, among these students, 9% tested into college-level Math. Although fewer students were in need of developmental courses in Math than were in English, low assessment placement was overwhelming identified as a barrier to transfer among the Summer Transformation Program participants in this campus-based study. Among the 70% to 90% of students of students in the state of California who require remediation in the subjects of Mathematics, English or in both, it is reported that just 25.4% earn a certificate, degree or reach transferable courses (California Community Colleges Student Success Task Force, 2011). Additionally, results from a longitudinal study of two-year and four-year students in Tennessee showed that developmental Mathematics course placement of high-ability students negatively

<sup>22</sup> Course numbers and titles were modified to protect the anonymity of the research campus.



impacted academic outcomes. For example, when a student with higher math abilities was placed in an upper division developmental course as opposed to a college-level course, the placement in the developmental course appeared to have negative effects on the student's college persistence and degree completion (National Center for Postsecondary Research, 2011). Accurately assessing students' ability is a challenge for colleges nationwide. However, interviews in my study revealed added barriers where students felt that external circumstances affected their performance on their exam and student sentiments that the exam did not accurately reflect their true academic ability. Given the information in the previous section on students' assessment levels, these Transformation students were more likely to have to spend their first two years taking developmental English and Mathematics courses prior to even being eligible to enroll in transferable courses.

### **Qualitative Results in Mathematics Barriers Toward Transfer**

The qualitative results came from interviews among 20 Latina and Latino students. Half of these interviewed were identified as the Achievers (N=10) who earned a 3.0 college G.P.A, reenrolled at NCC, and were previously affiliated with the Transformation Program. The second group of interview participants were the Stop-Outs (N=10) who left their studies after having been enrolled and been previously affiliated with the Transformation Program at NCC. In the next section, these students discuss, in one-on-one interviews, their barriers in relation to math course placements.

### *Achievers' Mathematics Placement Barriers*

In the previous section Octavio's haphazard math matriculation process was shared, where in this section Octavio reiterates his math related barriers. Despite Octavio being an Achiever and continuing to tackle his required math courses, his example is not too far from the norm of what other first-year community college students experience in stumbling through the assessment and placement process. During his interview, Octavio shared,

With math, there was a problem, I tested kind of low. It was...well, my dad had to bring me, but he came out of work late, so I had a little bit of time to do the exam. So it was kind of like I had to really go over it fast, so it was not that good, so I scored in Math .

Octavio attributed his low score to the circumstances of being late to the exam and not having sufficient time to complete the test. Fortunately, Octavio had his Transformation counselors and peers to successfully guide him through his education plan. Another Achiever student who placed low on the math assessment was Daniel. He felt he was good in math, but early on, a high school counselor discouraged him from taking a higher-level math assessment. Daniel said,

She (the counselor) kind of psyched me out so I was like, "Ah, I just got to take this low one,"... I was the first one to finish the test. It took me like 25 minutes out of 60 minutes, so it's too easy, so I decided to take it during the fall. After six months of not taking math, then I took it and I still passed like four points...by four points.

Community college campus assessment tests vary by campus; additionally one campus may not accept assessment scores from another. For example, one campus might use the COMPASS placement test, which will place a student in one of four math levels. However, NCC will only accept results from the Mathematics Diagnostic Testing Project. The Mathematics Diagnostic Test is available in Elementary Algebra, and also offered in the higher levels of Intermediate Algebra and Pre-calculus. Daniel took the Mathematics Diagnostic Test and was

surprised to find out that he had tested into a developmental elementary algebra course because he felt that he was good in math and that the test was easy; however, he decided to follow the advice of a counselor even when he did not agree with the test results.

Yet another Achiever student who mentioned that she was placed low in math courses was Tara. Tara described her experiences in the summer Transformation Program:

It just prepared me personally, in the classes and then academically, I took Elementary Algebra and Intermediate Algebra, which I thought I would never be able to do because I was horrible in Math...

Tara expressed the “personal” and mental barrier that she initially held toward Math. Later she in her interview she shared feelings of satisfaction and surprise when she ended up earning an A in her Algebra courses. Although neither of the courses that Tara took were college transferable, she continued to make progress toward transferable courses. Tara also expressed feelings of being “horrible in math” but thus far has been able to successfully continue on the matriculation path in Mathematics.

#### *Stop-Outs’ Mathematics Placement Barriers*

Stop-Out students tended to have multiple barriers, as they were placed in both lower English and Mathematics subject areas and experienced simultaneous difficulty in successfully completing these courses. For example, when Ryan was asked about his academic barriers in the earlier section he discussed the “Golden Four” which included the English courses. Yet later he said that his barriers were in math as well:

I guess as far as school (barriers) it’s been math... I’ve taken Math three times and for different reasons, I never passed it, that was a couple of years ago and that was straight right out of high school and I didn’t like math, so it took me a long time...it’s not hard, it’s just that...I guess that barrier you create. It’s like I can’t pass...

Additionally, when another student, Jose, was asked about his barriers during an interview, he said that he struggled with successfully completing both his English and Math courses. Jose also struggled with Dyslexia and was participating in a disabled student program in order to get assistance with his learning disability. When Jose was asked about his greatest barriers he said,

I'm actually dyslexic, so when I read... obviously when I read stuff, the letters flip and I really had a hard time in my Math and English class. I think if it wasn't for our counselor pushing me that extra mile when I was already full-out tired already and if it wasn't for her, I think I would not have passed that (math) class. I was about ready to drop the class. I was like, "You know what? Screw this and I don't want to do it anymore," but that was my biggest class that I had trouble with.

Jose was faced with the added challenge of having to overcome a learning disability. Many community college students must overcome barriers related to all types of disabilities. It is difficult for campuses to provide assistance to students with these disabilities due to limited resources. Many students have yet to be tested for learning disabilities and are in need of these services. Students who face the added barrier on learning disabilities posed yet another challenge to student success.

Lindsey discussed her barriers in her Math placement as well as in her English language skills. Lindsey's academic self-doubt also contributed to her voluntary demotion into a lower Mathematics course than she had initially tested into. Lindsey explained,

I ended up in college algebra. I was good, but I was scared because I just barely graduated and all of these new things and I just barely went to El Salvador, so I remember those days it was... everything was for me really difficult to understand. I would switch and try to understand in English... to Spanish. For me to understand it in English, like, "Okay, let's translate this to Spanish." It was a big problem that I had because of that, because I had in my mind a lot of Spanish, math in Spanish. The division was different. The division was different than how they do it here, I made it in the assessment test to Algebra but I dropped it and that time I spoke with a counselor I remember they told me to get a lower math and I end up in pre-algebra.

Again, we see a student follow the advice of a counselor to enroll into a lower math course despite initially feeling “good” about her math skills. Additionally, Alejandro, a 23-year-old

Stop-Out student discussed his barriers:

Where I placed in Math and English was low, I wasn't taking any for two years or so, so I had to retake my Math and English (assessment), see where I placed and, I said “You know what, I'm already here, I might as well speak to a counselor,” and she more or less explained what I need to do and kind of gave me a bright eye like, “You pretty much have very little units going toward a degree. It's mostly vocational.” I took a lot of auto computer aided drafting, manual drafting, welding, all that...

In this case, Alejandro had a positive experience with a counselor who explained to him what he needed to do in Math and English. From these examples we see that students' academic pathways are riddled with developmental needs in Math and English, topped with doubt and coupled with lack of proper assessment planning. Although the English and Math barriers were enough of a challenge to these students' transfer aspirations, they faced additional barriers to transfer, as will be discussed in the next sections.

### **Peer Assistants Perceptions of Students' English and Mathematics Barriers**

The Peer Assistants were students in at least their second year at the community college who had successfully completed courses in the learning community and were hired as staff to assist the Transformation counselors and students. The Peer Assistants also described similar barriers when asked during one-on-one interviews about problems that Transformation students faced. The assignment of Peer Assistants is a promising practice that the Transformation Program has utilized to assist students in addressing the myriad of barriers that these community college students face. Eleven Peer Assistants were employed to assist students in the fall of 2010 as co-counselors, these students also participated in interviews where I had hoped to understand the nuances of the Transformation learning community. Peers Assistants were able to provide insight into student barriers, although they were not initially part of my research plan, I have

included informative data from some of their interviews. When Peer Assistant Vasquez<sup>23</sup> was asked about her duties in the Transformation Program as a Peer Assistant she replied,

I feel like our goal is to support them through Math and English mainly because those are our main classes, but we also have the pre-nursing program, but since math and English are the hardest for students to accomplish, we have the counseling classes which help them like...like Counseling 2 is to help you become a better college student, to help you recognize your choices that you make.

Peer Assistant Sandoval was also asked about Transformation students' common barriers and he stated,

Well, in order to transfer, you need a lab, a science lab, 100 level Math and English I. Students that struggle with English, struggle with all levels. Students that struggle with math, struggle with the 100 levels and people that struggle with science are the ones that struggle with the labs.

Peer Assistant Rivas also stated that the Math and English were barriers to students' aspirations toward transfer when he said,

Here at NCC, a lot of the courses, you need prerequisites, at least in Math and English. I think those are the hardest classes. So if you can't take these classes because you can't pass the first level, you're not going to get anywhere.

Mentoring programs have been found to be effective in providing assistance to community college transfer students of color at four-year institutions (Laden, 1999), however more research is needed to study the impact of peer mentorship on community college students aspirations and persistence toward transfer. Although the Peer Assistants were useful in identifying and addressing the barriers of their peers, Stop-Out students still did not achieve their academic goals. In the next section I will share the financial and personal barriers from both Achiever and Stop-Out students.

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<sup>23</sup> In this section Peer assistants are referred to by pseudonyms that were generated based on surnames in order to distinguish this cohort of students from the Achievers and Stop-Outs.

## **Balancing Financial Barriers, Personal Barriers and Academic Responsibilities**

Interviews among the Latina and Latino students revealed that many of them, particularly the males, were main financial contributors to their household. In an interview with Javier, an Achiever student, he discussed the financial barriers to transfer:

For me, I think it's just...I mean, for a lot of students, I think it becomes a money issue of whether or not you can get into college and pay for what you need to pay for, so that becomes a big thing. Personally, I got financial aid so I didn't have to worry too much, but I really had to...I really want to focus on just trying to keep my grades up, which can be tough since some people just get off track and just want to go out and have fun, and so I think that's another thing, even with Transformation students. You're in college, so you just want to actually get some of the college experience and then you kind of just get off track.

Still several other students cited struggles with balancing household responsibilities, familial roles and their academic work. Achiever Tara said that within her family, she struggled with her mother's expectations to fulfill her chores as a female in the household. Tara struggled with accepting her mother's conflicting workload between herself and her brother who lived in the same house. Tara explained her situation when she said,

My mom is sick, she's disabled, and she has always kind of emphasized work. My brother dropped out of high school and as soon as he dropped out of high school, he worked at the K-Mart warehouse where he got a promotion to another warehouse, Clorox Warehouse, and now he's working at the Nestle warehouse where... every time he would come home really tired and kind of like, "Oh, just leave me alone, please. I don't want to do chores. I can't...I don't have time for dishes." My mom would say, "Okay, I understand," but every time I came home and I needed to write an essay, I needed to study for a test, she'd be like, "Well, you better do the dishes first. You better cook first. You better clean first," and it was just ridiculous how much was expected of me and how she didn't understand how hard it was to write an essay and actually apply to NCC, and to be in the Transformation Program.

Several studies cite Latino parents as instilling a strong work ethic in their children that can be carried over to the academic world in promoting success in college (Gandara, 1998; Martinez & Fernandez, 2004; Saenz, 2004). However, lack of parental college knowledge and

academic support from Latino parents can be an added barrier for first generation Latina and Latino community college students like Tara.

Several of the Transformation students, including Crystal said that her greatest barriers were both financial and familial in nature. She said,

It would be economic issues, like money. We don't have financial aid. AB540 students or international students have family problems at home and they can't concentrate and they have negative feedback from family members. Our barriers are mostly money related.

Jackie, another Stop-Out student, faced financial barriers to reaching her academic aspirations.

Jackie said,

Money are my problems because my dad was unemployed for about almost a year and my sister just transferred to UCSB. She just graduated high school and she left to UCSB, so now it's not only me going to school here, but my sister as well and it's obviously more expensive because she's going to a UC and I admire her for going, but now the whole money issue is it for us now.

Although some students listed family members as a barrier, Jackie and other students mentioned older siblings and parents as supportive toward their aspirations. Jackie admired her sister for attending UCSB but both her and her family were faced with the larger financial barriers of attending college. In the previous examples, students Tara and Crystal mentioned familial barriers to their academic aspirations. Barriers varied by student and by family circumstance.

In another example Vanessa described her initial barrier as a struggle between balancing her new family responsibilities that came with the birth of her first daughter, coupled with marital and financial problems. Vanessa describes her situation:

In 2007, I decided to stay home with my daughter. She was a year old and I said, "Okay, I'm going to stay home with my daughter," and during that time, I guess it was a year later, her father and I started having problems and we got divorced and we let go of our home and I had to move back home with my mom. So after going through that...I think it was probably years of just not doing anything [academically] because I just didn't...because of everything that happened, I was just like, "I'm not doing anything."



Lindsey was also a mother and highlighted not only barriers in English and Mathematics but also discussed barriers that she faced in balancing familial, work and academic responsibilities.

Lindsey shared,

Since I left home, one of the biggest problems was being responsible. I wasn't responsible when I was with my parents. Well, responsible going to work, home, school, but when I left home, it was a different person. I had to be responsible for myself, for my baby during my pregnancy, so those things was very hard for me because I had money, working it as a business, they would write a check and I would cash it at a bank. At that time when I was with my parents, I never found about financial aid. Everything was through my parents. So now that I'm an independent person, I have to, I have to find out ways how to manage money, how to have help as much as possible I can and that's one of the things...

Stop-Out students like Lindsey faced compounded barriers. Students struggled with barriers in English and Math, coupled with competing responsibilities, then battled familial and financial crisis. These complex barriers that students are often simultaneously facing can be detrimental their academic success.

California's state of economic instability, soaring unemployment rates at 16% for Latinos in California and fiscal cuts to public education have threatened the success of these students, and many other students in the nation. To make matters worse, available resources have not grown to help these increasing groups of Latino students who are in need of assistance to overcome the great many barriers they face. This decade has been a crucial one for identifying cost-efficient changes in the community college system to address these barriers to student success.

### **Summary of Findings on Students' Barriers Toward Transfer**

Several findings came of this study, in relation to barriers students faced in their transfer aspirations. First, the majority of students were found to be in need of developmental services and were placed in English and Mathematics developmental courses. Ninety-nine percent (99%) of the students in the Transformation Program cohort were not eligible to enroll in college-level English and 89% were ineligible to take college transferable Mathematics. Secondly, Summer Transformation Program students who had participated in the matriculation process and received early academic planning held more realistic perceived timelines to transfer, highlighting the importance of early access to counselors and academic planning. Third, students faced complex barriers in balancing financial, and personal responsibilities with their academic workload, these findings were comparable to a similar study conducted by Ornales & Solorzano (2004) at a Latino serving California Community College. Lastly, although both Achiever and Stop-Out students faced similar barriers, Stop-Outs tended to have more compounded financial, institutional, and academic barriers, resulting in the “cooling-out” of their academic aspirations toward transfer to a university or college. In the final chapter I will discuss implications of the findings from this study and provide implications for research, theory, policy and educational practices in addressing the transfer aspirations and barriers of California’s Latina and Latino community college students.

## CHAPTER SIX: CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

During the course of this study Barack Obama served as the 44<sup>th</sup> President of the United States. At this time, a popular speech by President Obama was frequently cited in the media and in publications where he declared a goal of making the United States the most educated country in the world. The President stated in his national address, “We will provide the support necessary for you to complete college and meet a new goal: by 2020, America will once again have the highest proportion of college graduates in the world” (The White House, 2009). Community colleges came to the forefront of the nation’s educational system due to being known for their historical “open-access” as a means for post-secondary education and workforce vocational training. Publications, speeches and op-ed newspaper articles sprouted daily, either touting the community colleges contribution to workforce development and accessible education or critiquing the low completion rates of community college enrollees.

This national focus on the community college system has brought a spotlight to the third tier in California’s higher education system. Some believe that this attention has brought about positive outcomes, propelling financial support to colleges with the most ethnically and economically diverse student populations. Still, there is an unprecedented demand on this educational system. For instance, in California, community college enrollment increased forty-four percent in the last fifteen years and 2.6 million students were served in 2011. Although enrollment has dropped in recent years, it was not due to a reduction in demand. Community college course section offerings were reduced by 5% in 2011 from budget cuts, where the California Community Colleges are facing infinite challenge with limited resources (California Community College Chancellor’s Office, 2011). In the next section of this final chapter, I present a summary of the study findings, theoretical implications, a summary of

recommendations for policy and practices that address the success of Latina and Latino community college students' aspirations, methodological and research implications, and a discussion of my personal aspirations and barriers as a student.

### **Revisiting the Study**

In approaching an answer to my main research questions, I framed this study by highlighting the importance of community colleges in California's higher education plan, as well as provided a background on Latino students' aspirations and barriers to transfer in Chapter One. In Chapter Two, I reviewed the literature in theoretical models that apply to the transfer paradigm but also to practices such as Learning Communities that attempt to provide assistance to improve student success among populations lacking college level basic skills. In Chapter Three, I presented my research questions: 1. What are the educational aspirations of the Latina and Latino community college students who participate in a learning community? 2. What barriers do Latina and Latino learning community students face in relation to their academic aspirations?

In the methods section of Chapter Three, I included a rationale for the research methodology and mixed-methods techniques I conducted. Findings as presented in Chapter Four of this study found that the majority of these first year Latina and Latino students held high aspirations to transfer to a university yet some lost sight of their goal after encountering paralyzing barriers.

As demonstrated from qualitative and quantitative data in Chapter Five, most students had aspirations to transfer to a four-year public college or university. The main barriers hindering students transfer aspirations were that the majority of students tested into English two grade levels below transfer level and three to four levels below college transferable Mathematics

courses. There were also compounded financial and personal barriers that students discussed in their interviews, surveys and written responses. Though the learning community appeared to be successful in addressing the needs of students who were lacking in academic basic skills. This case study helped to shed light on questions that have puzzled the state and nation in the past few years.

### **Summary of Findings**

The student participants in this study consisted of three different groups, the first year Achievers enrolled in a learning community, the Stop-Outs formerly learning community participants, and the learning community Peer Assistants. The majority of participants from all student cohorts verbally expressed aspirations to transfer to a public university. Stop-Outs held equal aspirations to transfer compared to the aspirations of the Achievers. Both Stop-Outs and Achievers sometimes described ambiguous responses pertaining to their aspirations in surveys and interviews. Although the surveys and interviews provided insight into students' aspirations both groups of Achievers and Stop-Outs appeared to lack specific college knowledge about which academic pathway lead to their desired career.

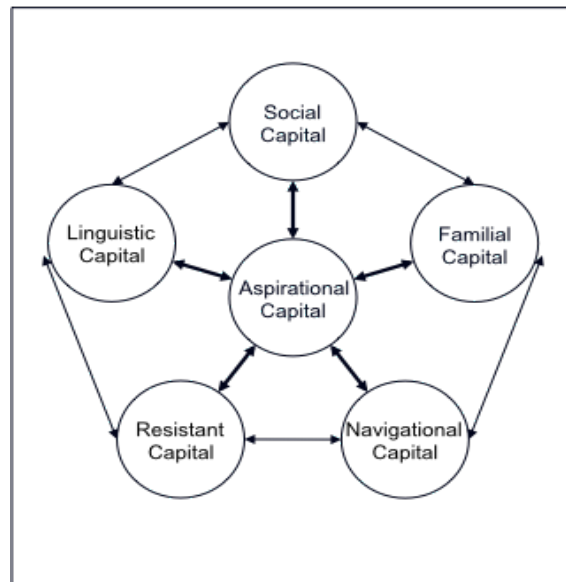
These students all faced complex barriers in balancing financial and personal responsibilities with their academic workload. Although both Achiever and Stop-Out students faced similar barriers, Stop-Outs tended to have more compounded barriers, resulting in the abandonment of their academic aspirations toward transfer to a university or college. The majority of study participants struggled to reach college transferable “gatekeeper”, similar to findings in a study of other community college students (Roksa, Jenkins, Zeidenberg & Sung-Woo, 2009). Based on data from the campus Office of Research, this cohort of enrolled students were placed in developmental English and Mathematics courses. Ninety-nine percent (99%) of

this student cohort were not eligible to enroll in college-level English and eighty-nine (89%) were ineligible to take college level Mathematics, such as the transfer “gatekeeper” course of Intermediate Algebra. Students who had participated in the matriculation process and received early academic planning through the learning community programming held more realistic perceived timelines to transfer, highlighting the importance of early access to counselors and academic planning in students’ transfer aspirations.

**Theoretical Implications: Revisiting the Community Cultural Wealth Model**

Utilization of the Community Cultural Wealth Model and centralization of Aspirational Capital provided a lens to focus on students’ aspirations in an asset-based framework rather than focusing on the perceived deficiencies of students who entered the community college. Figure 11 outlines an adapted Model for Community Cultural Wealth (Yosso, 2006), when applied to the community college student population.

**Figure 11: Adaptation for the Model of Community Cultural Wealth<sup>24</sup>**



<sup>24</sup> Adapted with permission from Critical Race Counterstories Along the Chicana/Chicano Educational Pipeline. By Yosso, T.J. Routledge, New York: NY. Taylor and Francis Group LLC (2006).

Research on community colleges is often focused on student learning outcomes, course completion, or degree completion. Yet measuring students' aspirations are also essential in attempting to determine outcomes. Although students' barriers and needs should not be ignored, researchers, educators and counselors will benefit from first taking an inventory of the assets that students possess. Identifying these strengths can help students to overcome the academic and personal barriers that have hindered success of Latino and underserved student populations for decades. Aspirations and hopes are often the only factor keeping the educational goals alive for many minority students' and a model can help to understand students' Aspirational Capital and potentially turn those aspirations into reality. This model should be made readily available to all who can create positive change for this population of students within California and the nation.

The model of Community Cultural Wealth has potential to be utilized in examining other minority groups such as in research with academically underperforming African American or Asian subgroups of students, not only in community colleges but also in K-12 settings. Just as well, researchers may centralize another form of capital within the Community Cultural Wealth Model to highlight the assets of these students and assist them in their academic pursuits. For instance, in the case where a researcher is interested in studying English language learners and how their bilingual skills may accentuate their academic experiences. The Community Cultural Wealth Model provides limitless permutations of asset-based versus deficit-based theoretical modeling, particularly when conducting research for and among Latina and Latino students.

Another example that could prove useful when applying the Community Cultural Wealth Model is in the centralization of Social Capital within this model of Cultural Wealth. Within this study the Peer Assistants were key informants to identifying the aspirations and barriers of students in the learning community cohort. Further investigations into the social capital that

peers, counselors and even faculty contribute to a students' academic aspirations, barriers, and persistence could be valuable to educators and higher education researchers.

Rotation of each tenet within the Community Cultural Wealth Model can provide a unique central lens in which to examine educational issues in postsecondary education. In another example, centralizing the tenet of Navigational Capital could be useful to longitudinal studies on degree completion among students. A researcher can learn how students navigated through their academic trajectory over decades through a Cultural Wealth lens.

Furthermore, a study conducted by the UCLA Chicano Studies Research Center on a national sample of Chicano doctoral recipients discovered that one in four of these graduates started their higher education career at a community college (Solorzano, Rivas, & Velez, 2005). Although this study did not utilize the Cultural Wealth model, this is another possible example where the centralization of Navigational Capital could further reveal the critical role that community colleges play in the navigation of postsecondary education among Chicanos and Latinos in the United States.

### **Recommendations for Policy and Practice**

In 2010, California Senate Bill 1143 was passed and called for the establishment of the California Community College Student Success Task Force. This task force was charged with conducting a yearlong comprehensive examination of how to improve student outcomes at California Community Colleges. In 2011-2012 this task force, consisting of twenty of the nations top educators, researchers and college administrators, identified twenty-two recommendations in eight areas to address best practices and models for success of California's community college students.



The recommendations presented by the California Community Colleges Student Success Task Force (2011) covered the following areas:

1. Increase college and career readiness.
2. Strengthen support for entering students.
3. Incentivize successful student behaviors.
4. Align course offering to meet student needs.
5. Improve education of basic skills for students.
6. Revitalize and re-envision professional development.
7. Enable efficient statewide leadership and increase coordination among colleges.
8. Align resources with student success recommendations.

Although the Task Force's efforts in identifying these areas for improvement have been applauded by some community college educators and administrators, an even greater question continues to loom where these recommendations have caused controversy on some campuses. How can these areas be improved with the limited resources available to California's community college students? Interviews from this study helped to answer this question and are detailed in the following sections.

#### *Recommendations for Faculty and Counselors*

First year students from NCC assisted in answering this question when I asked during interviews, "*Do you have any advice for faculty or counselors in helping students to accomplish their goals?*" Ryan, one of the NCC students, made the following statement that sums up how he feels the focus should be in community colleges.

The advice I have for professors is to try to pick up on the students that are quiet, the ones that are just in the corner. They say, beware of the quiet ones because usually they're

thinking a lot and maybe they're going through stuff and they're not going to tell you anything. The ones that are speaking all the time, they're good, they want to transfer, their communication, their interaction is there... Not that we shouldn't worry about them, but we can also focus more on trying to catch the ones that fall through the cracks because they don't say anything until their drowning and their heads already down.

Ryan makes a key point in stating that perhaps we need to focus resources to the students who need it most, the students who are lacking in basic skills and the students who are falling through the cracks. Faculty should be incentivized and encouraged to teach and work with students who have the highest needs. Faculty with the most education, experience, and skills could provide better service teaching the students who are most lacking academically. In some community colleges, adjunct lecturers are often hired to teach in the least attractive basic courses for students with skills well below college level. New adjunct faculty may be ill prepared to teach students with high needs, setting both faculty member and students up for failure. A study cited in the *Chronicle for Higher Education* revealed that first year community college students were more likely to drop out of their gatekeeper English or Math courses if it was taught by part-time adjunct faculty (Chronicle of Higher Education, 2008).

Another student Martha recommended that faculty should share information about personal and academic stories with their students. Martha reported that she was very happy with her NCC Transformation Program faculty because she felt that she was able to connect with her teachers and that they were approachable if she needed assistance. Martha had the following advice to faculty, based on her experience in the Transformation Program.

They do this thing called a Faculty Corner where they pretty much tell their life story to the students so it makes them more human, more approachable, and the students find similarities between themselves and the professors. The counseling professors do it too, so then students identify more with them and they take them more seriously than just having this professor who you don't know anything about and I think the students listen and pay attention more to what they say.

The advice that students like Martha and Ryan gave to faculty was to share your story and experiences, appear approachable, pay attention to the students who need it the most and give more time to the quiet ones before they fall through the cracks. Given the current economic crisis in the state, all of these recommendations may be a challenge to expand at a campus-wide level. Yet many of the recommendations from learning community practices can be applied at a larger scale with little resources. It is important to note that in my interviews with students they provided me with many thoughtful and insightful ideas for change or continued practices and policies in helping community college students to succeed. The next section provides a bullet list of my recommendations based on students' advice.

Much of the advice that students provided related to faculty practices at the community college are incorporated here:

#### *Advice for Faculty*

- Share personal stories about academic trajectories, interests and barriers. Faculty members may often be the only person that first generation community college students encounter with postsecondary education.
- Diversify the faculty pool and hire more faculty from minority backgrounds. Students mentioned the desire in viewing similarities between faculty and themselves. Campuses and districts should implement policies and programs to target faculty that match the populations of ethnic minority students in their districts to improve the campus climate and student success among these groups. According to Rendon's Theory of Validation, many nontraditional students of color who attend college hold a fear of failure, doubt and inadequacy (Rendon, 1994). Faculty, among others, can help to validate students

experiences and assist them in overcoming their fears and doubts to reach their academic aspirations.

- Provide training to faculty in teaching strategies for students lacking in college skills.

Faculty can be cross-trained in instructional teaching skills within their subject area and paid to participate in training to teach students from low income, first generation and high need student populations. In the Transformation Learning Community, some counselors are cross-trained as counseling faculty who also provide instruction to students linked to a subject discipline. Faculty should also be crossed-trained to provide academic and personal guidance to students especially in times of crisis.

#### *Advice for Counselors*

Advice that students provided related to counselors practices at the community college is incorporated and shared in my recommendations below:

- Utilize technology. Technology and social media networks such as Facebook are highly popular today. Students can use Smartphone applications “Apps” that efficiently and quickly recommend required courses to students, these applications and online networks can be further developed as counseling assistance tools.
- Hire and utilize students as Peer Counselors. Peers can assist campus in connecting with students who “slipped through the cracks” even after a student leaves the campus. The Transformation Program utilized paid Peer Assistants in order to ease the counselors’ burden and workload. An added benefit is that peer counseling students are provided continued access to the programs resources, counselors and to a paid job on campus.
- Continue to provide counseling for personal issues. Academic counseling is just as important as counseling for issues related to their family, financial or emotional stresses.

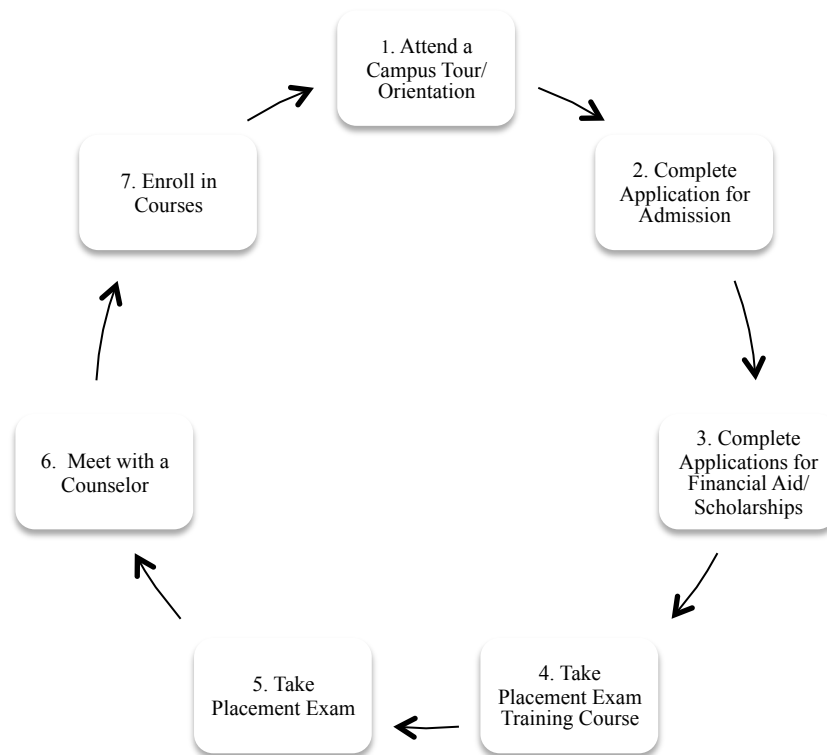
Perhaps social workers, crisis professionals and therapists can be more closely aligned to the academic counseling unit for referrals as academic and personal needs appear to be simultaneously present.

- Teach preparation courses for placement tests and utilize learning community courses. Students mentioned the Summer Transformation Learning Community as a resource for early assistance in helping them to address their academic barriers in these areas. Students also discussed being unfamiliar with the college placement tests prior to their first testing experience that impacted their future course enrollment trajectory.
- Accept assessment exam placement scores from other campuses. Some student interview participants in this study had previously attended other community colleges in Los Angeles, Orange and San Bernardino counties. This recommendation could be supported through a state initiative that standardizes the assessment testing process and exams so that they are transferable across all community college campuses and districts within California.

*Counseling and the Matriculation Process Revisited*

This section discusses an adapted model for matriculation as illustrated in Figure 12. This model includes an assessment-training course that would orient the students to successful completion of the assessment exam. Additionally, this model for matriculation is more cyclical versus hierarchical in relationship since several steps may need to be repeated in successful completion of the matriculation process. For instance, students may choose to retake the placement exam or return and visit a counselor in the next semester. Students would also become oriented on resources and centers available on the college campus before attending.

**Figure 12: Revised Community College Matriculation Model**



In the adapted matriculation plan, students will take a campus tour and orientation prior to enrollment in order to ensure that the campus can meet their needs. This is important if a student is faced with needs that a campus may not be equipped to handle, and thus the student could consider another campus. Choosing another community college campus is more feasible in the urban regions such as in Los Angeles County where there are twenty community colleges and many within close proximity to one another. Counselors could potentially offer advice on which college a student should attend depending on their academic major, needs, resources available, and intended degree objectives.

### **Recommendations for Future Research and Methodological Implications**

This study reinforced the importance of helping community college students to identify their academic aspirations. Early identification of academic pursuits is important in increasing student success. In fact, studies of community college students in learning communities found indications that students in these specialized first year programs are often retained beyond their first year, helped students to acclimate to campus academic or social culture, and encouraged better faculty and counselor interaction among students. (Borden, & Rooney, 1998; Mosqueda, 2010; Rosenbaum, Deil, Amen & Person, 2006; Schneider & Hurst, 1998; Shapiro & Levine, 1997; Smith, 2001; Tinto, 1997).

In studying this learning community population of students, one of my initial hypotheses was that all students would have aspirations to transfer. I rationalized that since these students entered the community college seeking-out a specialty program I was expecting to find that all of these first year students were high-achievers who desired to transfer to a college or university. However, findings from this study showed that 87% of respondents within the first year learning community said that they aspired to transfer. These results were similar to findings in a larger

study by Hagedorn and Cepeda (2004) where they found the transfer aspirations of Los Angeles community college students to be close to 88%. Although most of the first year student participants in my study wanted to transfer, my hypothesis was incorrect and the learning community students' transfer aspirations and barriers were comparable to a general community college student cohort in Los Angeles County.

It is difficult for researchers to measure student aspirations when multiple factors can impact the answer to a question about the extent to which community college students wish to further their education. In this study, I realized that there was a problem in framing my question by asking: *What are your current educational goals?* Rather than asking them to identify the highest degree that they plan to earn. For instance, in Hagedorn & Maxwell's study (2002) that investigated Los Angeles community college students' aspirations, researchers asked the question, *"If there were no obstacles, what is the highest degree you would like to attain in your life?"* These examples demonstrate that the way in which research questions are asked may impact the ability to accurately identify students' academic goals. It can be equally perplexing for first-year students to identify a singular academic objective. Students may hold an educational aspiration that differs from their future career objective. Additionally, not being fully knowledgeable about the academic degree path or certificates that are required for a particular career of interest may serve as a barrier for students.

This study showed the importance for both community college researchers and counselors to conduct in-depth investigations into students' career and educational aspirations. Student responses may change over time, therefore it is important to probe students through various longitudinal methods in order to better gauge student goals and objectives. Unfortunately, many students make the decision to let go of their transfer dreams as time passes.



I shared preliminary findings from this study with students enrolled in a transfer-based counseling course at the site where this study was conducted. Many of these students were among the first year Achievers cohort now in their second year at the community college. After I shared some of these data from the study, one student raised his hand and asked if I were planning to conduct follow-up interviews with the participants from my study. The student's response spoke to me. I realized that students who achieved and students who stop-out should both be tracked. I have yet to be contacted by any of my former colleges seeking to measure if my academic goals were met. Community colleges might benefit their students by more aggressively tracking students and highlighting their successful alumni through online networks display the achievements of these alumni. Community colleges could additionally engage in fundraising and development efforts to seek endowments from successful alumni for campus-based needs and programs.

Additionally, there is a gap in current research on the students who did not successfully complete their goals. There are many unanswered questions once a student leaves the campus: How long is the average leave until a student re-enrolls? Do students re-enroll at their campus of origination or do they seek out other community colleges that better fit their needs? How can counselors, faculty and peers prevent students from leaving their studies? These questions can be answered through a statewide and national student tracking system that will follow a student throughout their academic career. A study published by the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) found that in 1990, fifty percent of first year students from community college stopped out but returned to school within five years (Horn, 1998). A study in 2010, published by the Institute for Higher Education Leadership and Policy found similar rates where in the second year the cohort of community college students' enrollment dropped by half. More current,

longitudinal and accessible data can be used to better help community college campuses to answer the previous questions on stop-out students. With limited funding and the downsizing of education programs, community colleges are losing resources by not creating the opportunity to track and analyze such data. This will not happen without the support of state, national, public and private research centers stepping up to meet the challenge and fill the funding gap.

The context and findings in my study did not address the career trajectories or experiences in the vocational track. Future studies with students in various majors and vocational subfields may benefit from research in this area, especially to address tracking in fields that appear to be impacted by certain genders or ethnic groups such as nursing and automotive areas. Because my study was conducted at one large community college within a specialized learning community geared toward transfer, future studies should examine students academic and career aspirations at comparative campuses with cross samples at multi-campus school sites across the state and nation. Additionally, in future studies students' aspirations should be measured and gauged upon exit from high school and entry into the college and should be tracked longitudinally.

Another area that could use further examination is factors related to the intersections of gender, ethnicity and age. This study took place within a learning community that targeted first year students who tended to be young adults, where one of the participants interviewed in this study was a fifty-year-old student and reported feeling "different" from the other students. More research is needed among the wave of reentry students who are going back to school in search of skills for a second career. Studies on community college students can further examine how the more mature college reentry students achieve their academic success. In the case of the NCC student in this study, she was a fifty-year-old mother who had returned to college after the

recession negatively impacted her lucrative career in real estate. She is an example of a trend that is increasingly common today due to the economic conditions in California.

Lastly, more research needs to be addressed in the future on military veterans returning to the community colleges, 75% of California's GI Bill Veterans attend a community college (California Community College Chancellor's Office, 2011). One Latino study participant mentioned being drawn to enlist in the military with hopes of earning financial support for college from the GI Bill then planning to later return to his studies. Military financial support can be a draw to future and current students. However, at the end of a current US war and with troops returning from decades in the Middle East, there are anticipated academic and psychological barriers that this population of community college students will face.

The three-tiered college system in California can continue to build upon one another as was intended in the Master Plan for Higher Education. However, in the past decades, there has been a failure in communication between the systems, a failure of student degree completion and for the state to truly become highly educated all systems must work together. Collaborative commitment to the transfer function is essential within the California Community Colleges and should involve government, the campus, and students. Ornelas & Solorzano (2004) identified within a community college transfer culture three essential elements to achieving transfer goals.

The three essential items included:

1. Federal and state commitment to the transfer function.
2. Campus institutional policies that normalize the transfer function.
3. A campus culture that draws on the strengths of families and student engagement/involvement.

This model of a transfer culture was developed almost a decade ago and the NCES longitudinal study on community college persistence was published over twenty years ago. Post-secondary educators and researchers are still addressing this issue of how to create a successful transfer and degree completion for California's community college students. Creating change is difficult, it takes time and community colleges are going to experience growing pains in the next few years in attempting to implement the recommendations put forth by the California Community College Student Success Task Force. Yet change will only occur for the better if all systems work together to create a true statewide learning community toward student success and achievement.

### **Discussion**

When I started graduate school at UCLA my son was three years old and now he is about to reach his fourteenth birthday. Time has rapidly passed by and I did not know that it would take me over eight years to complete a Ph.D. At the start of my academic pipeline, I never aspired to earn a doctorate. I did not tell my high school counselors that I wanted to earn Master's or Doctorate degrees. When I attended community college, I never met with a counselor nor did I tell a faculty member that I wanted to transfer to UC Berkeley to earn a Bachelor's degree. My aspirations unraveled and changed as I flowed through my academic trajectory.

I faced many barriers over the duration of my academic career including academic, personal and financial challenges yet these struggles also fueled my aspirations. When I became pregnant with my son in my second year of school and made my decision to move to Los Angeles, I called on the telephone seeking help from my very conservative Mexican father. Upset over my plans, he told me "it's your problem" and he did not speak to me for five years

after that. I was deeply hurt by this and felt that my father did not care about my goals or about me. However, later when I returned to school my father paid my apartment deposit and first month rent. My father served as financial support in helping me to reach my academic goals and he was a personal and emotional barrier to my academic success. Although I would describe my relationship with my father as a challenge, there are many things that he did for me that helped me to attain my academic aspirations.

I have learned from the students in this study and from my own experiences that there is no definitive descriptor of whom or what constitutes a barrier, sometimes an individual can help a student to reach their goals and later that same person can serve as a barrier. My family has simultaneously supported me and distracted me from my educational goals but I would not be who I am without them. I learned from my family, faculty, classmates, friends and colleagues to stay focused, to identify resources, and how to overcome the barriers that could have hindered my achievement. I am deeply grateful to both my family and to the wonderful and caring faculty at my community college and universities who helped me to gain my academic confidence while gently prodding me to always do better academically.

Today I still occasionally have academic self-doubt, I do not have the best relationship with my father, and I struggle financially where I owe over \$50,000 in student loans. I continue to struggle in my writing and math skills development. I constantly seek out professional and peer editing assistance. I cannot help my son with his math homework any longer, as he is about to enter 9<sup>th</sup> grade and his assignments are more difficult for me. I do however know how to find answers to solve problems, I can show how much I have accomplished and I can help my son to identify learning opportunities that will assist him through his academic pipeline. I have diplomas from two tier-one research institutions and I have access to many resources than I ever

imagined possible. The California public higher education system has provided this education for me but I worry that what was afforded to me will not be available to my son and other Latino students in the future. I hope that I can help keep the transfer aspirations and educational opportunities alive for students like the ones in this study. These are the reasons why I continue to do this research.

**Appendix A: Sample Learning Community Course Schedules**

<b>English Cluster</b>			
<b>Course</b>	<b>Units</b>	<b>Days</b>	<b>Time</b>
Developmental English	4	MTWTh	12:10-2:15 pm
Reading	3	MW	9:45-11:10 am
Counseling	3	TTh	8:00-9:25 am

<b>English Cluster</b>			
<b>Course</b>	<b>Units</b>	<b>Days</b>	<b>Time</b>
College English	4	MW	12:10-2:15 pm
Sociology	3	TTh	9:45-11:10 am
Counseling	3	MW	8:00-9:25 am

<b>Mathematics Cluster</b>			
<b>Course</b>	<b>Units</b>	<b>Days</b>	<b>Time</b>
Developmental Math 1	4	MWTh F	11:30-12:55 pm
Developmental Math 2	5	MWThF	2:50-3:55 pm
Counseling	3	TTh	8:00-9:25 am

<b>Mathematics Cluster</b>			
<b>Course</b>	<b>Units</b>	<b>Days</b>	<b>Time</b>
College Math	5	TTh	9:45-12:15 pm
Counseling 2	3	TTh	8:00-9:25 am

**APPENDIX B: STUDENT FALL SEMESTER PRE-SURVEY**

Hello, I am a UCLA student conducting research on your campus. The information that you provide here will be used to study your experiences in the Transformation Program on campus. Your honest opinions are very important and your answers will remain strictly confidential, your name will not be linked to your responses. Your participation in this study will not impact your course grades or your status in the Transformation Program.

**Cohort: English** \_\_\_\_\_ **Math** \_\_\_\_\_

**Student ID:** \_\_\_\_\_

---

About your background:

Gender: Female \_\_\_\_\_ Male \_\_\_\_\_

Race/Ethnicity: \_\_\_\_\_

Age: \_\_\_\_\_

High School from which you graduated: \_\_\_\_\_

Are you the first person in your family to attend college? Yes \_\_\_\_\_

No \_\_\_\_\_

Are you a parent?

Yes \_\_\_\_\_

No \_\_\_\_\_

What was your high school G.P.A: \_\_\_\_\_

Have you ever enrolled at another college? Yes \_\_\_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_\_

How many units are you taking in the fall at NCC? \_\_\_\_\_

Were you enrolled in the summer Transformation Program? Yes \_\_\_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_\_

Do you qualify for state or government financial aid? Yes \_\_\_\_\_

No \_\_\_\_\_

Are you currently receiving financial aid this semester? Yes \_\_\_\_\_

No \_\_\_\_\_

Do you plan to receive financial aid in the fall? Yes \_\_\_\_\_

No \_\_\_\_\_

How many hours do you currently work for pay each week? \_\_\_\_\_

How many hours do you plan to work per week this year? \_\_\_\_\_

Please indicate all forms that you have filled out related to financial aid:

Free Application for Federal Financial Aid (FAFSA) \_\_\_\_\_

Board of Governors Fee Waiver (BOG) \_\_\_\_\_

What is your current educational goal (select only one)?

Transfer with an AA degree \_\_\_\_\_

Transfer without an AA degree \_\_\_\_\_

AA degree only \_\_\_\_\_

Vocational degree or certificate \_\_\_\_\_

Undecided \_\_\_\_\_

Other \_\_\_\_\_



Which electronic networking sources and sites do you use at least once per week?

Facebook \_\_\_\_\_  
Myspace \_\_\_\_\_  
Twitter \_\_\_\_\_  
AOL Instant Messenger \_\_\_\_\_  
BlackBerry Instant Messenger \_\_\_\_\_  
Email only \_\_\_\_\_  
(For example: Gmail, Hotmail, Yahoo or AOL)  
None of the above \_\_\_\_\_

About your high school experience:

In high school, which sites did you use to communicate with your classmates or teachers about course work such as email, Myspace or Facebook?

---

In high school, did you study with your classmates outside of class time?

---

In high school, did you attend additional tutoring?

---

In high school, did you make friends easily on campus?

In high school, what was the experience like when you talked with your teachers?

---

In high school, did your teachers help you identify academic goals for the future?

---

In high school, did your counselors help you identify your future academic goals?

---

In high school, were you in any college outreach programs such as AVID, EAOP, Gear Up or Upward Bound?

---

About your NCC experience and college goals:

Which colleges or universities were you accepted to before attending NCC?

---

Why did you decide to attend NCC?

---

If you intend to transfer, which colleges or universities would you like to transfer to?

---

If you intend to transfer, in how many years you see yourself transferring to a college or university?

---

How often have you met with a NCC Transformation Program counselor or teacher in order to help you identify your major or educational goals?

---

How often have you visit the NCC and/or Transformation Program websites?

---

Why did you decide to participate in the NCC Transformation Program?

---

Please provide three words that describe your overall first impression of the NCC Transformation Program?

---

What resources or information would you like to get from the Transformation Program in order to help you to reach your academic goals at NCC?

---

---

Thank you for completing this survey!

**APPENDIX C: STUDENT SPRING SEMESTER POST-SURVEY**

Hello, I am a UCLA student conducting research on your campus. The information that you provide here will be used to study your experiences in the Transformation Program on campus. Your honest opinions are very important and your answers will remain strictly confidential, your name will not be linked to your responses. Your participation in this study will not impact your course grades or your status in the Transformation Program.

**Cohort:**

**English** \_\_\_\_\_ **Math** \_\_\_\_\_

**Student ID:** \_\_\_\_\_

---

About your background:

Gender: Female \_\_\_\_\_ Male \_\_\_\_\_

Race/Ethnicity: \_\_\_\_\_

Age: \_\_\_\_\_

Are you the first person in your family to attend college? Yes \_\_\_\_\_

No \_\_\_\_\_

Are you a parent? Yes \_\_\_\_\_

No \_\_\_\_\_

What was your G.P.A. fall semester at NCC? \_\_\_\_\_

Have you or are you enrolled at another college? Yes \_\_\_\_\_

No \_\_\_\_\_

How many units are you taking at NCC? \_\_\_\_\_

Were you enrolled in the summer Transformation Program? Yes \_\_\_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_\_

Do you qualify for state or government financial aid? Yes \_\_\_\_\_

No \_\_\_\_\_

Are you currently receiving financial aid? Yes \_\_\_\_\_

No \_\_\_\_\_

Did you receive financial aid in the fall? Yes \_\_\_\_\_

No \_\_\_\_\_

How many hours do you currently work for pay each week? \_\_\_\_\_

How many hours do you plan to work per week this year? \_\_\_\_\_

Please indicate all forms that you have filled out related to financial aid:

Free Application for Federal Financial Aid (FAFSA) \_\_\_\_\_

Board of Governors Fee Waiver (BOG) \_\_\_\_\_

Other (please list) \_\_\_\_\_

What is your current educational goal (select only one)?

Transfer with an AA degree \_\_\_\_\_

Transfer without an AA degree \_\_\_\_\_

AA degree only \_\_\_\_\_

Vocational degree or certificate \_\_\_\_\_

Undecided \_\_\_\_\_

Other (please list) \_\_\_\_\_

Which electronic networking sources and sites do you use at least once per week?

Facebook \_\_\_\_\_  
Myspace \_\_\_\_\_  
Twitter \_\_\_\_\_  
AOL Instant Messenger \_\_\_\_\_  
BlackBerry Instant Messenger \_\_\_\_\_  
Email only \_\_\_\_\_  
(For example: Gmail, Hotmail, Yahoo or AOL)  
None of the above \_\_\_\_\_

About your high school experience:

If you intend to transfer, what universities would you consider transferring to?

---

If you intend to transfer, within how many years do you see yourself transferring to a university?

---

Has the Transformation Program made you knowledgeable about the transfer process? How?

---

Has the Transformation Program influenced your current academic goals? If so explain how?

---

Have the Transformation Program faculty, counselors, peer advisors or staff helped you in reaching your academic goals this year? If so who and how did they assist you?

---

Did you receive additional academic tutoring or resources through the Transformation Program this year? If so what type of resources did you receive?

---

Do you feel that the Transformation Program has helped you to make friends on campus?

---

Have you studied with your Transformation classmates or friends outside of class?

---

Do you communicate with your Transformation classmates or professors about course work online through electronic sites such as email, Facebook or Myspace?

---

Have you attended your professor's office hours? If not, why have you not done so?

---

If you have visited your professor's office hours, what was the experience like?

---

Have you met with a NCC Transformation Program counselor in order to help you identify your major or educational goals? If so, what was the experience like?

---

How often have you met with a Transformation Program counselor in order to help you identify your major or educational goals?

---

Please describe the most valuable resources or information that you have received while participating in the Transformation Program this year?

---

Please provide three words that describe how participating in the Transformation Program has made you feel this year?

---

Would you recommend the Transformation Program to new NCC students? Please explain why or why not?

---

What other resources or information would you like receive from the Transformation Program in order to help you to reach your academic goals at NCC?

---

Thank you for completing this survey!

## APPENDIX D: STUDENT INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

### Background Questions

1. What type of resources did your high school have in educational interests and goals?
  - a. Were you involved in any particular academic outreach programs for minority students at your school?
  - b. Were you accepted to any other college or university prior to attending NCC?

### Community College Transfer Aspirations and Experiences-Academic Goals?

2. What experiences motivated to want to attend a college or university?
  - a. Were you involved in any particular programs for minority students?
  - b. Can you describe a person or program that got you excited about school?
  - c. Who would you consider to be most helpful in influencing your academic goals (family, peers, counselors, teachers or other)?
  - d. Which college or university would you like to transfer?
3. What have been some challenges you have encountered at NCC?
  - a. Did you feel adequately prepared for your coursework?
  - b. Have you ever had academic difficulty? If so, how did you deal with it?
  - c. Do you feel confident in approaching your professors? Did you feel confident approaching your professors at the beginning of the school year?
  - d. Do you feel that your professors influence your career or academic goals?
4. What resources did you utilize in dealing with academic challenges?
  - a. Have you found academic or personal support within the college?
  - b. Did you seek assistance from professors, peers or family members?
  - c. Did you seek assistance from counselors?
    1. Have you visited a Transformation Counselor?
    2. If so, what was the purpose of the visit?
    3. Can you describe your experience at the counseling office?
    4. Have your educational/career goals changed since being at NCC?
  - a. Have you found academic or personal support within the college?
  - b. Did you seek assistance from professors? Did you seek assistance from peers? Did you seek assistance from family members?
6. Have you changed your academic goal? Have you considered leaving NCC?
7. Have you encountered any obstacles in pursuing your transfer goals?
8. How are you trying to overcome these obstacles?
9. How can the campus help you in this?
10. Do you have advice for current NCC Transformation students with these obstacles?
11. Do you have any advice for faculty/counselors helping students with their goals?

## **APPENDIX E: STUDENT PEER ASSISTANT INTERVIEW PROTOCOL**

1. What are your roles and duties here in the Transformation Program and at NCC?
2. How long have you been working in the Transformation Program and been attending school at NCC?

### Transformation Program

3. What do you believe are the primary goals of the Transformation Program?
4. What do you believe are the primary goals of the college?
5. What are some of the main resources that the Transformation Program provides?
6. Do you receive any special training in working with Transformation students?
7. What are some the barriers that the Transformation Program faces on campus?
8. In what way would you like to see the Transformation Program improved?

### Student Academic Aspirations Toward Transfer

9. What do you find to be the most common academic goals of Transformation students?
10. Do you feel staff/faculty/counselors have an influence on the academic goals of students?
11. Do you feel staff/faculty /counselors encourage students toward college transfer?
12. Do you feel staff/faculty/counselors influence the college in which students transfer to?
13. Do you think the college prepares students academically for a four-year college or university?
14. Do you think the Transformation Program prepares students academically for a four-year college or university?
15. What some of the barriers that you think Transformation students face in the transfer process?
16. What are other personal barriers that Transformation students face?
17. If you could create the ideal transfer program, what would it look like?
18. What are your academic goals?
19. What was your major when you were in the Transformation Program?
20. Do you feel that NCC and/or the Transformation Program has prepared you for a four-year college or university?
21. What was/is your biggest challenge/barrier as a student at NCC?
22. Have you ever stopped attending classes here? Why did you stop attending classes? Have you ever felt like leaving the campus? Why?
23. What resources have you found to help you in reaching your academic goals?
24. Do you have any advice for current NCC Transformation students?
25. Do you have any advice for faculty or counselors in the Transformation Program?
26. Would you like to discuss anything else that I have not already asked you?

**APPENDIX F: LIST OF SURVEY VARIABLES AND CODES**

Variables	Codes
1. ID	Open Field ex. A02613151
2. Cohort	1=English 2=Reading 3=Math 4=Nursing
3. Gender	1=Female 2= Male
4. Ethnic	1=Latino/Mex./Chicano/Hispanic 2=African American 3=White 4=Asian/Chinese/Korean/Pacific Island 5= Other
5. Age	Open Field ex. 18
6. School	Open Field ex. Baldwin Park HS
7. College	1=yes 2=no
8. Parent	1=yes 2=no
9. GPA	Open Field Ex. 2.4
10. Enrollment	1=yes 2=no
11. Other College	1=yes 2=no
12. Units	12 or more=1 >12=2
13. Summer Transformation	1=yes 2=no
14. Fin Aid Qualify	1=yes 2=no
15. Fin Aid Receive	1=yes 2=no
16. Fin Aid Fall	1=yes 2=no
17. Work Current	Open Field
18. Work Plan	Open Field
19. FAFSA	1= (X ) yes    2= _____ Blank no
20. BOGG	1=(X) yes    2= _____ Blank no
21. Goal	1=Transfer w AA 2=Transfer wo AA 3=AA /AS 4=Vocational Certificate 5=Undecided
22. Networks-1=yes X 2=No blank	FB=Facebook MS=Myspace TT=Twitter IM=IM EM=Email NN=None OR=Other
23. HS Communication	Open Field
24. HS Study	Open Field
25. HS Tutoring	Open Field
26. HS Friends	Open Field
27. HS Teachers	Open Field
28. HS Goals Teachers	Open Field



29. HS Goals Counselors	Open Field
30. HS Outreach	Open Field
31. Colleges Accepted	Open Field
32. NACC	Open Field
33. Transfer College	Open Field
34. Transfer Years	Open Field
	1= $\leq$ 2 years
	2=2-3 years
	3=3 or more years
35. Counseling	Open Field
36. Website	Open Field
37. Transformation Program	Open Field
38. First Impressions	Open Field
39. Resources	Open Field

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