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The Research & Planning Group
for California Community Colleges

Transfer Practices at Skyline College

Case Study #7 of 7 Featuring Colleges with Consistently Higher Than Expected Transfer Rates
Fall 2008

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Abstract: This report is one in a series of seven case studies of California community colleges with higher-than-expected transfer rates. Each case study is based on a site visit conducted in Spring 2008 by two Center for Student Success researchers to document and investigate the full spectrum of factors, inventions, strategies and practices that each college is implementing to support transfer.

The case studies are part of the Transfer Leadership Center (TLC), the most comprehensive study to date of two-to-four-year transfer in California.

The California Community College State Chancellor's Office awarded the TLC in Spring 2007, based on a competitive grant competition and grant written by Dr. Andreea Serban, Superintendent/President, Santa Barbara City College. The project has been implemented by the Chancellor's Office of the California Community Colleges (CCC), the Center for Student Success (CSS) of the Research and Planning Group of the CCC, and California Partnership for Achieving Student Success (Cal-Pass). The study is administered by the Santa Barbara City College and guided by an Advisory Committee including leading experts on transfer.

Readers of the case study presented here may also be interested in the following, which are available on-line at http://www.sbcc.edu/tlc

- TLC Literature Review
- TLC Cross-Case Analysis (an analysis of all seven colleges in the study)
- TLC Case Study #1: De Anza College
- TLC Case Study #2: Irvine Valley College
- TLC Case Study #3: Los Angeles Southwest College
- TLC Case Study #4: Porterville College
- TLC Case Study #5: Reedley College
- TLC Case Study #6: San Diego City College
- TLC Case Study #7: Skyline College

For questions about any of these research papers, please contact Dr. Andreea Serban at Serban@sbcc.edu

SKYLINE COLLEGE
TRANSFER PRACTICES AND STRATEGIES CASE STUDY

Introduction: In Spring 2007, the State Chancellor's Office of the California Community Colleges awarded, based on a competitive grant competition, the Transfer Leadership Center (TLC) study to investigate two-to-four year transfer practices and strategies. As part of the study's qualitative component, research teams from the Center for Student Success of the Research & Planning Group of the California Community Colleges conducted site visits to seven community colleges with higher-than-expected transfer rates. The site visits included extensive interviews and focus groups conducted with students, college counselors, faculty, administrators, classified staff, representatives from special programs, and high school counselors.

It should be emphasized that the research focused exclusively on what each of the seven colleges are doing to support and increase two-to-four year transfer. Accordingly, the case study that follows should be read not as an assessment of the featured college's overall performance, but rather as a review and analysis of one particular area of operations. Moreover, the case studies focus on what appeared to the researchers to be the most salient elements of the colleges' efforts to encourage and support transfer. The case studies are therefore not intended to present an exhaustive list of all transfer-related initiatives and practices at each college.

In addition to case studies on each of the seven colleges, the research team developed a cross-case analysis to identify common factors which appear to contribute to higher-than-expected transfer rates. The cross-case analysis – as well as the research protocols and the literature review upon which the protocols were based – can be found at http://www.sbcc.edu/tlc

Acknowledgement: The Research Team wishes to thank the many students, staff, faculty, and administrators at Skyline College who contributed to the research. We greatly value the perspectives you shared with us and the experiences and insights you provided.

A special thank you goes to Cathy Hasson, former Director of the Office of Planning, Research and Institutional Effectiveness, for her invaluable assistance coordinating interviews and focus groups before and during the visit.

CASE STUDY: SKYLINE COLLEGE

President: Dr. Victoria Morrow
Bay Area: San Mateo County, CA
Fall 2007 Enrollment: 8,725
Ethnicity 26% - Asian 22% - White 19% - Filipino 19% - Hispanic/Latino 3% - African-American 7% - Unreported
Gender 53% - Female 46% - Male 1% - Unreported
Age 24% - 19 and younger 34% - 20 to 24 14% - 25 to 29 7% - 30 to 34 22% - 35 and older
Faculty 112 Full-Time and 221 Part-Time
Counselors 13.4 FTEs, including categorical counselors

SUMMARY

"There is a familial feeling of staff toward students – I think that's why I stayed here for 30 years. The people here seem to really care about the students and they make those personal approaches whether it's in financial aid, counseling, P.E. or English. I just see it everywhere I go here and when someone isn't like that they stand out."
– *Skyline Faculty Member, February 2008*

"I always emphasize that each of these students come to see me about transfer requirements… They have me, either it's an appointment, or in the classroom, or in the hallway, at Starbucks – that's the beautiful thing about learning communities because you establish that rapport with students and it's almost like family."
– *Skyline Learning Community Counselor, February 2008*

"Once you sign up for the programs here, they help you all the way."
– *Skyline Student, February 2008*

While Skyline College boasts nearly 9,000 students per semester, it maintains a small- college atmosphere. The college emphasizes community in many ways, from offering various learning communities to crafting facilities – such as the fireplace in the new Student and Community

Center – which promote a warm feeling on campus. Through its student-centered approach, Skyline provides a place for students to belong, learn, and progress toward their goals.
The college certainly also benefits from being situated in a relatively affluent community with both a CSU and UC campuses nearby. However, not all students come to Skyline oriented toward – let alone informed about – transfer. The college puts considerable effort into informing student goals and raising student expectations of themselves.

Within both its larger community and many smaller communities, transfer is continually emphasized to students. Students indicate that "transfer is everywhere" from the flyers and bulletin boards throughout the college to the e-mails they receive about upcoming university visits to their meetings with the counselors and discussions inside classrooms. Initiatives such as the "Transfer Power" course help provide students with additional, more structured information about transfer.

Skyline faculty, staff and administration feel responsible for helping students succeed. Within this environment, innovation is encouraged. In recent years, additional learning communities have been formed with initial funding through the President's Innovation Fund. The creation of student ambassador roles is another form of innovation. The successes of these programs and the college in general are championed throughout the college via the President's weekly newsletter, "Skyline Shines," as well as through activities such as the "Stars: Transfer Student Hall of Fame" (another project funded through the President's Innovation Fund).

Learning communities are just one way that Skyline College integrates instruction and student services. The Vice Presidents of Instruction and Student Services work closely together to intentionally bring various constituents of the college together so that information is shared across the college. Additionally, the Academic Senate President is a member of the counseling faculty and uses her role to further inform and unite the college in its mission to serve students.

Factors and Indicators Contributing to Higher-Than-Expected Transfer Rates at Skyline College

FACTORS	**INDICATORS**
Student focused / Community focused	➢ **Has a "small college" feel where counselors and instructional faculty treat students as individuals and encourage them to "aim high"** ➢ **Faculty and staff feel responsible for helping students to succeed** ➢ **Learning communities and other support services build on the diversity of the student body to help students feel more at home on campus and more engaged in the learning process**
Transfer culture	➢ **Transfer is highly visible throughout the campus through posters and bulletins** ➢ **A large amount of information about transfer is readily available via a website which is maintained by the Transfer Opportunity Center (TOC)** ➢ **Members of the college community, including students, are well-informed of transfer-related events and provided with transfer-related information via email (sent by TOC)**

	➢ **Learning communities and other support services have a strong transfer focus** ➢ **Use of alumni as role models**
Advantageous pairing of Career and Transfer Centers	➢ **Educational and career goals are seen as "opposite sides of the same coin" – in keeping with this perspective, the Transfer Center and Career Center are paired**
Numerous and large programs supporting transfer	➢ **Learning communities serve a relatively large proportion of younger students at the college** ➢ **Learning communities emphasize the relationship between instruction and student services which helps keep students focused on their goals** ➢ **The Transfer Power course helps students plan for transfer and select a university that best fits their individual needs** ➢ **The employment of student ambassadors allows for some additional services to be provided**
Strong integration of Instruction and Student Services	➢ **Instruction and student services work together to provide students with a supportive learning environment – not just through learning communities, but also through administrative leadership and faculty leadership** ➢ **The Vice Presidents of Instruction and Student Services work closely together** ➢ **The Academic Senate President is a member of the counseling faculty**
Collaboration and innovation	➢ **Innovative programs and activities are supported by the President's Innovation Fund and by college leadership** ➢ **Collegiality between instructional faculty, counseling faculty, staff and administration promotes a positive environment**
Strong relationship with four-year universities	➢ **CSU is close by and accessible** ➢ **UC representative comes on campus weekly** ➢ **Honors program provides students with possibility of earning priority admission to select institutions**
High level of commitment to institution	➢ **Dedicated faculty, some of whom have been with the institution since its inception** ➢ **Widespread consensus about mission and purpose**

1. METHODOLOGY

The site visit was conducted February 11 and 12, 2008. It included more than 12 interviews and six focus groups with a total of 42 participants (see Appendix 1). In preparation for the site visit, the research team reviewed the 2007 College Self-Study, the college website and other documents relevant to transfer. Documents provided by the college during the site visit were subsequently reviewed such as statistical information provided by the institutional researcher, flyers and other information provided by the Transfer Center. Appendix 2 provides a list of documents used to generate the case study.

2. COLLEGE OVERVIEW

2a. College Profile

College History & Community: Located on 111 acres in San Mateo County, Skyline College was established in 1969. Skyline, Cañada, and the College of San Mateo together comprise the San Mateo County Community College District, which serves over 700,000 residents in San Mateo county. Approximately one-third of the district's students enroll at Skyline.

According to 2000 Census figures, 23% of county residents are under 18 years old; 25% identify as Asian or Pacific Islander[1], 23% as Latino, and just over 3% are African American. 47% identify as White (non-Hispanic). San Mateo County has a large immigrant population – 32% of county residents are foreign-born. Overall, the county is relatively affluent and well-educated. The median household income in 2004 was $65,425 and 39% of persons ages 25 or older hold a baccalaureate degree – much higher than the statewide California rates of $49,894 and 27%, respectively. Skyline College also draws students from the city and county of San Francisco, which are just five miles north.

Despite the large acreage, it is easy to travel between Skyline's main campus buildings, which are centrally located within approximately 0.02 square miles. Nearly all the college's classes take place at this main campus. The campus is often nestled in fog, which has prompted the college to make interior spaces more inviting. Students indicated that the "small campus and cool weather made for a cozy atmosphere which was conducive to learning." (Skyline student survey, 2006)

Student Profile: During Fall 2007, Skyline served 8,725 students. Of the students, 53% were female. Ethnicity figures were as follows: 26% Asian, 19% Filipino, 19% Latino, 3% African American, 22% White, and 7% Unreported. The student body overall was slightly younger than the statewide average, with 57% under 25 years old at Skyline, compared to 52% statewide[2]. Approximately 27% are enrolled full-time.

Mission Statement: "Skyline College is a comprehensive, open access community college that provides student-centered education leading to transfer, career advancement, basic skills development, and personal enrichment. The College is committed to preparing students to be culturally sensitive members of the community, critical thinkers, proficient users of technology, effective communicators, socially responsible lifelong learners and informed participants of a democracy in an increasingly global society. Skyline offers innovative instruction and student

[1] Filipinos are not identified separately in the Census figures.
[2] CCCCO statewide figure for 2006 – the 2007 statewide figure is not available yet.

support to a rich tapestry of diverse learners through the hallmarks of the college: academic excellence, responsive student services, advanced technology, community and industry partnerships, and workforce and economic development."

2b. Transfer Profile

Transfer Indicators: The cohorts tracked by the transfer study (see Appendix 4) ranged in size from 822 to 1,016 full-time, first-time Skyline students. Actual transfer rates for these cohorts ranged from a low of 48.80% in 1999-00 to a high of 51.57% in 1998-99. The degree to which the college performed above expectations (actual transfer rates higher than expected transfer rates) ranged from eight percentage points in 1998-99 to five in 1999-00.[3]

A majority of Skyline students have transfer as their goal – as many as 63%, including 48% who intend to earn an Associate degree first. The top receiving institution is nearby – 78% of transfers to CSU go to San Francisco State University, which is only seven miles from Skyline. UC Berkeley and UC Davis together account for 66% of transfers to UC. Skyline counselors and special program coordinators seek to broaden students' sights as to what options are out there for them. One special program coordinator observed that students enroll with the intention of transferring but "they don't know which school they should go to and they don't really do the research about…which would be the better school [for their major], they just get this idea that Berkeley is really cool or San Francisco State will accept me…that's where the counselor comes in handy because the counselor knows everything about the schools."

In addition to helping students better understand different transfer options, Skyline assists students who seek to transfer to a UC or private university. As one special program coordinator put it, "The goal is to get to a UC." Another said, "When we go out and recruit…we want to talk about who is transferring where." Indeed, from 1996-97 to 2005-06, Skyline transfers to UC increased steadily, with CPEC reporting an overall 47% increase in UC transfers (from 62 transfers to 91). UC figures for 2006-07 were down, but this appears to be an aberration based upon the steady increase up to that year.

Despite its reputation as a transfer institution, not all Skyline students are immediately transfer-bound. One administrator admitted that, given its reputation, this fact surprised her when she began working at the college. Members of the Skyline community encourage these students to set their sights ever higher. Various administrators and faculty talked about "opening doors" for students, "lighting the spark." Counselors talked about helping students "see that things are possible" and "open their minds that transfer is possible for them to do." "It's not that [counselors and faculty are] saying 'you should transfer' but the notion is achieve at the highest level you can and see where it takes you."

Transfer Center, Articulation & Counseling Staff: Skyline is currently undergoing staffing changes. In collaboration with the Counseling Department faculty, the new Dean of Counseling is reviewing how transfer services and the Counseling Department should be structured. Previously, a counselor had a split assignment with .5 to transfer coordination and .5 to articulation and only met with students as an overload. Currently, the TOC coordination and

[3] The transfer rates used for this study were drawn from the 2005-06 Report, which contained the most up-to-date data available. Subsequent editions of the Transfer Rate Report (due out late in fall 2008) will include more recent cohort years (and drop the oldest cohort years); also, the rates themselves will be somewhat - although in most cases not markedly - different. To better understand how the rates may change, please see Appendix 4.

articulation roles rest with the Dean of Counseling on an interim basis. He is supported by a .6 Lead Transfer Counselor, a .3 counselor who works on articulation, and a full time classified position in the Transfer Center. During the transition, the Lead Transfer Counselor provides leadership in the Transfer Center operations. A UC Davis representative is on campus one day a week. While all counselors provide transfer services, Skyline currently has-in addition to one transfer counselor-approximately 10 full-time general counselors and about 10 adjunct counselors. There are two EOPS counselors, one DSPS counselor and a .6 FTE workability counselor--all of whom provide transfer assistance. The Lead Transfer Counselor ensures that that all counselors receive current and updated transfer information, conducts follow-up, training, and works closely with the Dean of Counseling and the .3 Articulation Counselor on articulation-transfer issues. The Lead Transfer Counselor also served on the Curriculum Committee. Note that one of the adjunct counselors also works as a San Francisco State University admissions person, providing a concrete tie to Skyline's largest transfer institution. The transition in staffing will be completed at the end of the academic year, with the clerical support upgraded to a higher classification in order to strengthen support for the Transfer Center.

2c. Transfer-Related Investments

Currently the Transfer Center and Articulation functions are in transition. As previously mentioned, many transfer-related responsibilities have been temporarily assumed by the Dean of Counseling with a .6 Transfer Lead Counselor and a .3 Articulation Counselor. The interim Lead Transfer Counselor is working in the Transfer Opportunity Center while the college, and the Counseling Department specifically, "evaluates the real need for a transfer coordinator versus a transfer lead counselor." Student ambassadors stationed in the intake area of the student services center are able to provide some general information. Further, two classified staff– one associated with the Transfer Opportunity Center and another associated with the Career Center – also provide some assistance to students. In addition to these traditional transfer-related investments, the college also supports various learning communities which have associated counseling costs – these learning communities often support students in their transfer goals.

2d. The Student Transfer Experience

While the student focus groups were informative, it was difficult to form a single impression about "the transfer experience of Skyline students" in general. Each student's situation was unique, from the young student inspired by his DSPS counselor to pursue his transfer goals, to the mother taking many years to reach her transfer goals while simultaneously raising four kids, to the recent immigrant trying to fulfill requirements for transfer as quickly as possible by attending multiple institutions. Each approached the institution in a different way, and each received help from different sources. However, there was general agreement that the college makes significant amounts of information and resources available. "All the information is there, you just have to go get it." "They actually follow-up—[for example] you actually get e-mails about specific scholarships." "You always get updated." Students also commented on the warm and supportive environment: "There's a lot of committed people here all the time, even during the summer."

Despite the wealth of information available, there were considerable gaps in knowledge about transfer that became evident as the focus group progressed and which will be discussed in more detail in the next section. The college is aware of this confusion and college employees

spoke openly about efforts to try to better inform students about particular transfer-related concerns.

3. COLLEGE CULTURE

3a. Messages and Information About Transfer

High Degree of Transfer Visibility Encourages & Reinforces Transfer Goals: Since its inception, Skyline has been a "transfer institution." As one faculty member indicated, "Transfer has always been Skyline's primary goal, we try as much as possible to reach out to the majority of students so they are aware [of transfer opportunities]." As one counselor put it, "Transfer is part of everything we do." Students reported that "transfer is everywhere" from "orientation, financial aid, counseling, career planning" to "bulletins and posters around the school" to the visibility of the Transfer Opportunity Center (TOC) on the college's website. In addition, students who request information from the TOC or who have signed up with one or more of the college's numerous special programs receive e-mails promoting scholarships, university visits, and other transfer-related information. For example, students received notification of the annual transfer fair. Faculty who were alumni of the institutions represented at the fair where also notified and invited to participate. The event "got a lot of visibility on campus," according to a college administrator. "We sent out an e-mail…a lot of the faculty came…it's an indication of how transfer is seen here – it has a very high value."

Students' Transfer Focus Informed: Informants indicated that often students from this relatively well-educated and affluent area are already motivated to transfer when they come to Skyline. Education is "a value in the [surrounding] community." However, despite students' orientation toward transfer and the degree of visibility around campus, administrators, counselors and faculty indicated that many students lack critical information regarding transfer. As a result, they often set their sights on what seems easiest ("I know I can get into San Francisco State") or seems most prestigious ("UC Berkeley would be cool"), regardless of whether that is a good fit for their major or them personally. During the student focus group, the mixture of students' knowledge and confusion around transfer became evident. Students were aware of ASSIST and had a transfer path. In fact, a few carried their education plans with them and pulled them out to show the researchers. However, students revealed confusion regarding whether they needed an Associate degree to transfer ("Isn't it required?"), whether they could complete a baccalaureate at the community college, and why it is difficult to transfer in certain majors (e.g., nursing). Moreover, it became evident how students talking to one another could either provide clarification or in some cases augment confusion. For example, regarding the nursing comment, another student exclaimed, "Now it's even more overwhelming knowing that you won't get a guaranteed transfer…" erroneously believing that her transfer situation for an entirely different major would automatically mirror her classmate's. Many students need help with the particulars around transfer and Skyline aims to assist as much as possible by providing informational activities such as workshops (e.g., "How to pay for a Private College Education") and classes (e.g., "Transfer Power").

Students' Transfer Focus Supported through Integrated Instruction and Student Services: For many students, one or two workshops will be helpful but insufficient. In addition to providing information, there is a widely shared recognition at Skyline that students benefit from a supportive environment. A substantial number of students participate in the college's cohort-based learning communities such as the Honors Transfer Program. These programs are generally transfer-oriented and provide students with specific support services such as longer

counseling sessions and personal statement workshops, as well as providing a sense of community. As one student put it, “Once you sign up for the programs here, they help you all the way.”

Faculty, counselors, administrators, and students all indicated that learning communities were assisting students in reaching their transfer goals. One hallmark of these learning communities is an effort to integrate instruction and student services in order to promote student retention and support student achievement. Informants stated that the creation of the “One-Stop Student Services Center” as well as the emergence of learning communities helped bridge the traditional divide which often exists between student services and instruction. Counselors note that in recent years they have “done more in terms of interacting with [instructional] departments and there’s much more [of a sense that] we’re all in this together, they trust us, generally we have a pretty good reputation among faculty that if they send us a student we will help them.” Instructors often refer students to counselors because “they sense that [counselors] really do care about students.” Counselors have access to instructional deans when they have questions. In addition, the former Academic Senate President has a counseling background and uses her role to help further bridge this divide. Moreover, the Vice Presidents of Instruction and Student Services work consciously and closely together. The college’s campus climate values statement reflects this partnership as well: “We value a campus-wide climate that reflects a ‘students first philosophy’ with mutual respect between all constituencies and appreciation for diversity. Both instruction and student services are dedicated to providing every student with an avenue to success.”

Informal, Caring Community Which Takes Responsibility for Student Success: The “students first philosophy” permeates much of the campus. “You can tell [the faculty and staff] care about the students… it’s sophisticated enough that we have access to good programs and services but it is intimate enough that the students have personal relationships with the faculty and staff and they know when those faculty and staff see them in the hall they’re going to hold they accountable – they don’t get to shift through as a number,” stated one administrator. Another administrator said she sees “commitment to students across all segments.” A faculty member said he believes that students have the impression that “Skyline is a nice place with nice people who really care about us.” A counselor noted, “Skyline is a really friendly college and the students get that.” Counselors talked about their perception that “It’s easy to advocate for students here.” Due to the centralized student services, a counselor indicated she could simply walk over to another office to quickly resolve a student-related issue. Another said, “There’s not an attitude of ‘we can’t do that, that’s against the rules’. We’re not going to break the rules but, come back tomorrow and we’ll take care of it.” “It’s a lot friendlier here [compared to other college], and certainly the size the school is part of that. You can advocate for students effectively, on a timely basis.”

Receipt of Associate Degree Prior to Transfer: Students reported a desire to complete their AA or AS prior to transferring. One student said that a counselor informed her that all she needed was a P.E. class to complete the requirements. Another said, “You’re right there, it might be just one more course… and you never know what’s going to happen” so it’s good to get the degree prior to transferring. Another said she wanted the “sense of completion.”

3b. Transfer Goals and Plans

Skyline College uses a “Balanced Scorecard” approach to annually review its progress on transfer rates as well as other measures. In practical terms, however, there is no set approach to achieving improved transfer rates. As one counselor put it, “I don’t think the college has

goals, the students have goals, and the priority of the college is the students." As previously stated, transfer is made highly visible at the college. In addition, transfer is actively promoted on a student-by-student basis. Another counselor stated she "encourages as many students as possible to consider transfer… but [the college has] no set plan." A third counselor stated he will always raise the possibility of transfer: "I make sure I at least provide that information" even if that is not the student's immediate goal or interest.

Although currently there is no specific, coordinated effort to improve transfer rates, a general approach seems to be evolving at the college. The "President's Innovation Fund" has provided financial support for new special programs. As a result, a growing number of special programs serve a large number and wide variety of students. (For more detail, see section 4d.) The successes of these programs and the college in general are championed throughout the college via the President's weekly newsletter, "Skyline Shines," as well as through activities such as the "Stars: Transfer Student Hall of Fame" (another project funded through the President's Innovation Fund). The support for innovation promotes "leadership at every level," according to one administrator. Faculty agreed, stating that they don't hear "no" very often.

3c. Communication and Collaboration Among Individuals Who Run Programs and Services That Promote and Support Transfer

The college appears to maintain a high degree of communication via Transfer Opportunity Center e-mails which are circulated to students, faculty, counselors and others in the college community. The current Academic Senate President uses her position to promote information sharing about student services in general and transfer in particular.

4. SERVICES AND PROGRAMS SUPPORTING TRANSFER

4a. Role and Scope of Counseling, Transfer Center and other Transfer Support Services

Skyline's Transfer Opportunity Center (TOC) is identified by a large sign which is immediately visible as students come into the new "One-Stop Student Services Center" (SSC) which contains admissions, financial aid counseling and other student support programs. Student ambassadors greet fellow Skyline students as they enter the SSC. The SSC was created during construction / remodeling a few years ago. Since the remodel, the TOC has been co-housed with the Career Center. As one administrator put it, "When students come in they will have a career in mind but they don't know what degree will get them there, or they have a degree in mind but they don't know what they want to do with it. It's really the same question just asked from a different perspective."

The TOC also has an active presence on the college's website. It is visible as a link on the general home page and as a series of four links if the "current student" view is selected. Two transfer-related links are immediately available in the "prospective student" view. The TOC website offers students the option of receiving transfer-related mailings by either e-mail or regular mail. Such mailings are also forwarded to other college employees, particularly to special program directors and coordinators.

TOC activities include the following:

- Maintenance of the TOC website as well as a physical transfer library
- Coordination and promotion of transfer workshops, as well as the "Transfer Power" course

- Coordination and promotion of transfer university visits
- Cooperative relationships with other Support Services (see section 4d for more details)
- Promotions of "Stars: Transfer Student Hall of Fame," an annual activity through which Skyline College honors several outstanding former Skyline College transfer students who have achieved outstanding educational and career success. Inductees have their photographs and biographies posted on the TOC website.
- College videos feature success stories from former Skyline transfer students.

All general counselors provide transfer counseling. The TOC houses one transfer counselor, who also serves as the counselor for the Honors Transfer Program (HTP). The HTP along with other programs described in section 4d strongly support the transfer mission of the college.

4b. Scope, Quality and Use of Articulation Agreements

As mentioned previously, Skyline's Articulation function is in transition due to some staffing changes. However, the person currently assisting with Articulation has been performing the role for Skyline and other community colleges for many years. Also, the previous Articulation Officer was very active in the statewide articulation organization.

4c. Financial Aid Scholarship Information

The Director of Financial Aid also directs EOPS, CARE, and CalWorks. Previously, the Financial Aid Office used to coordinate a workshop for students who have been accepted for transfer with the Transfer Opportunity Center. Due to recent short-staffing, these workshops did not take place last year, but the director anticipates they will start the workshops up again. The Financial Aid Office also works with Cal Grant A and Cal Grant B recipients. The Financial Office has recently hired its own counselors.

Regarding scholarships, there is a regular, updated list of the scholarships available for students. In the last two to three years, the San Mateo County Community College Foundation– comprised of local business persons and other community members – has assisted with raising funds for student scholarships. Another source of funds come from students themselves. When students register for classes they are able to contribute to the Tuition Assistance Program (TAP). One administrator observed, "We have a substantial contribution from students to assist other students every year now."

4d. Special Services and Programs Supporting Transfer, Including Academic Support Services

Learning communities, along with other special programs and services, clearly play an increasingly important role at Skyline. Learning communities are highlighted in the college's accreditation report as part of the college's commitment to diversity: "We have many learning communities designed to meet the particular needs of specific cohorts of students…" They are advertised prominently on the inside cover of the current class schedule (Spring 2008) as part of an effort to encourage students to complete English and math requirements: "Each Learning Community has its own theme based on culture, experience or needs. Math and English are important components of each…." The schedule also informs students that in the learning communities, "Students participate in groups to share ideas and help each other learn. There is a greater sense of involvement with students and professors."

The college currently has seven learning communities as well as five programs which are not traditional learning communities but which offer support for specific groups of students. Researchers estimate these programs serve anywhere from 20% to 25% of younger Skyline students (ages 28 and under) each semester. The percentage of students in the 18-22 age bracket served by these programs is likely to be much higher still given the typical age of program participants. Even when the two largest services are excluded – DSPS and EOPS, which are support services but not learning communities – student involvement approaches 20% and may be higher than that. It is difficult to pin down specific enrollment figures. The Honors program, for example, boasts more than 400 students, however some may be inactive during any given term or may have dropped out of the program because they did not meet certain criteria.

Descriptions of Twelve Learning Communities and Special Programs Which Support Skyline Students in Reaching Their Goals:

- **The African-American Success Through Excellence and Persistence (ASTEP)** Program at Skyline College is designed for African-American and other students to increase their chances of remaining in college. This program offers students an exciting and unique opportunity to select courses from an Africentric curriculum. The ASTEP components include core courses in English, math, career and personal development, African-American history, Black Psychology, and Tutorial Assistance, as well as mentoring, counseling and other support services.

- **Disabled Students Programs and Services (DSPS)** offers services to students with learning disabilities, psychological disabilities, and long- or short -term physical disabilities.

- **Extended Opportunity Programs and Services (EOPS)** is designed to improve access, retention and completion of educational goals for students who are low income and educationally disadvantaged. EOPS students have the potential to succeed in college but have not been able to realize their potential because of economic and/or educational barriers.

- **The Gateway Learning Community** is designed to prepare students for entry into career technical education programs. Course content and context addresses the learning needed to succeed in programs such as allied health, biotech and others.

- **Hermanos** is a brotherhood-supporting academic achievement in the Latino culture.

- **Honors Transfer Program/TAP** for highly motivated students who seek a challenging academic experience for intellectual and personal growth.

- **Kababayan Program** is a transfer and community support program with the goal of increasing proficiency in English skills for success in college, work, and life.

- **Math, Engineering & Science Achievement** (MESA) – provides support, encouragement and assistance to students with math- and science-based majors.

- **Puente Program** - A two-semester program which links students, a counselor, an English instructor, community mentors and UC and other colleges in an effort to increase the number of students who transfer from two-year colleges to four-year colleges.

- **The Scholar Athlete Learning Community** is designed to engage student-athletes in the learning process with courses that will enrich their educational experiences. The mission of the program is to place student-athletes into a cohort and enable them to finish their degrees within a two-year time frame to pursue their athletic and academic goals at the university level.

- **TRIO-STAARS (Student Transfer, Academic Achievement, and Retention Services)** provides intensive academic and counseling support for students who meet the program criteria (low-income, first-generation in family to have attended college, or disabled, either physical or learning).

- Since 1975, the **Women In Transition (WIT) Program** has been successfully helping women make the transition back into the academic environment. Our goal is to encourage women to expand their horizons, and reach their intellectual, professional and personal goals.

Each program is unique and offers a slightly different array of support, however all 12 programs specifically reference transfer in their web-based materials and nearly all mention access to counseling.

Learning communities are seen by college leadership as an asset. The breadth and depth of these programs seemed remarkable to the researchers.

5. TRANSFER OF SPECIAL STUDENT POPULATIONS

See 4d.

6. TRANSFER CONNECTIONS

6a. High School Connection

Up to 10 feeder high schools exist in the immediate area. Skyline offers priority enrollment for incoming high school students. One of the part-time counselors who works in high school outreach estimated that each fall approximately 350 students take advantage of this opportunity. With high school collaboration, Skyline College has increased the number of college courses (all transferable) at most of the feeder high schools. Enrollment in concurrent enrollment classes has increased each of the preceeding terms and is projected to continue to increase. The college also hosts a biannual breakfast with approximately 50 high school counselors. In addition, the College also hosts a Principals' and Vice Principals' Breakfast to discuss strategies for strengthening seamless transition from high school to college. A variety of workshops and presentations are conducted at the high schools, especially on transfer. Many of the college's outreach efforts are linked to the college's learning communities. As part of the College's outreach program, recruitment is also focused in continuation schools, adult education schools, community centers, community fairs, parent nights and similar types of events. The College has expanded its outreach efforts by adding a .5 outreach assignment to a full time counselor. A full-time classified outreach coordinator position previously vacated is expected to be filled at the end of the academic year. Current students and campus ambassadors are involved in recruitment and outreach efforts.

6b. BA Connection

Skyline College is conveniently located within seven miles of San Francisco State University (SFSU). Out of 422 to 465 Skyline transfers to CSU or UC between the years of 2003/04 and 2006/07, up to 61% were to SFSU. During that same time, the UC which garnered the most transfers was UC Davis, presumably due at least in part to the availability of a UC Davis representative on campus on a weekly basis. Transfers to UCLA have doubled in the last two years, and now surpass transfers to UC Berkeley, possibly due to the Honors Transfer Program agreement with UCLA.

7. BUILDING CAPACITY AND EFFECTIVE PRACTICES

Capacity Building: In response to the question of how and where they would invest additional transfer funds, more field trips to four-year campuses was most frequently mentioned. Key administrators and others at Skyline College also talked about the desire to expand and further institutionalize the college's learning communities. Specifically, some learning community coordinators spoke of the need for dedicated counselors (current counseling capacity varies from program to program). Improving the bridge from high school as well as the college's orientation also received mention, with a suggestion of perhaps tying the latter activity to one or more learning communities. On-campus research opportunities for students was another area which was mentioned, as well as professional development for faculty. Finally, some concern was expressed regarding the Transfer Opportunity Center and an observation that perhaps there may have been some decrease in activity and visibility during the recent transition.

Key Findings: The findings suggest that Skyline's community-oriented culture which emphasizes transfer plays a key role in explaining the college's higher-than-expected transfer rate. The following list identifies variables that contribute to create and sustain this culture:

- A "small college" feel where counselors and instructional faculty treat students as individuals and encourage them to "aim high"
- A high degree of visibility of transfer through posters and bulletins around campus, as well as through the college's website and e-mail
- Practical, on-the-ground support for students, in particular through the many learning communities which build on the diversity of the student body
- Collaboration between instruction and student services – not just through learning communities, but also through administrative leadership and faculty leadership
- A collegial environment which promotes faculty and staff innovation and a sense of responsibility for student achievement
- An emphasis on goal-setting through the Transfer Power course as well as through the co-housing of the Transfer Opportunity Center with the Career Center
- Strong relationships with four-year institutions
- Regular celebration of student achievement, including the use of alumni as role models at transfer-related events

Appendix 1: Skyline College Study Participants

Skyline Study Participants	
Interviewee Position	**Comment**
Counseling Dean and Manager of TC budget	
Articulation Officer	
High School Outreach persons (2)	
Financial Aid (FA) Directors (2)	Director of FA, EOPS and Special Programs; and Enrollment Services Dean (previous FA Director)
VP Instruction	
VP Student Services	
College President	
Academic Senate President	
Transfer Center Coordinator	This position is currently held by the Dean of Counseling who is assisted by a Transfer Counselor and a clerk
College Researcher	
Total # of Interviewees	**12**

Focus Group Participants	**# of Participants**
Learning Communities Coordinators	9 via both focus groups (7) and interviews (2)
Students planning to transfer	8 via both focus groups (7) and interviews (1), solicited via email from a list of students in transfer-level math or English
Faculty	7 via focus group only
Counselors	6 via both focus groups (5) and interviews (1)
High School Counselors	None available
Total # of Focus Group Participants	**30**

Total # of Informants	**42**

Appendix 2: Documents Reviewed for Skyline College Case Study Analysis

- Skyline College Accreditation Self Study (2007)
- College website
- College's organizational chart
- Skyline College Spring 2008 Class Schedule
- Statistics from institutional researcher
- Informational flyers distributed by Transfer Center to students

Appendix 3: Skyline College Descriptors

Descriptors		**Comment**
History and location		
Year founded	1969	
Address	3300 College Drive, San Bruno, CA	
District	San Mateo Community College District	
Other colleges in district	Cañada and College of San Mateo	
Distance to nearest community college	9 miles (City College of San Francisco)	Closer than other colleges within district
Distance to nearest CSU and UC	7 miles (San Francisco State University) 20 miles (University of California, Berkeley)	
Students and Faculty		
Average Student Enrollment 2005-2007 (Fall Semester)	8,391	
% Students Receiving Some Financial Aid	48%	
% Students Receiving Federal Grants	9%	
Counseling FTE (Full Time Equivalent), including categorical counselors	13.4	
Counseling FTE (Full Time Equivalent), excluding categorical counselors	11.3	
Top Majors Declared	Business Management & Administration, Nursing, Early Childhood Education, Automotive, Accounting, Psychology	
BA indicator	39% of San Mateo County residents have a BA	

Appendix 4: Skyline College Transfer Indicators

Skyline College Cohorts	Residual (Actual-Expected Transfer Rate)	Actual Transfer Rate	Cohort Size
1998-99 Cohort	7.9816	51.57	1,016
1999-00 Cohort	4.7628	48.80	961
2000-01 Cohort	5.8799	50.12	822

Source: Transfer Rate Study of the CCCs, 2005-06 at http://www.cccco.edu

All seven colleges selected for the study showed consistently higher-than-expected transfer rates (a relatively large, positive residual) in the 2005-06 transfer rate study conducted by the Chancellor's Office. Cohorts of first-time college freshmen who completed a minimum of 12 units of community college coursework and who attempted a transfer-level Math or English course at some point during their enrollment were followed for six years from the time of their initial enrollment to determine the number and proportion transferring within that timeframe. As indicated previously, the "expected" rates factor in the percent of students who are age 25 or older and the bachelor plus index of the region.

Subsequent editions of Transfer Rate Study will include more recent cohort years and drop the oldest cohorts. Beyond adding more recent cohorts, future editions will reflect some changes in the underlying data which will affect transfer rates. Most differences will not be marked (a transfer rate of 58.05 might be recalculated as 58.15, for example), but in a few cases differences may be more significant. The ARCC report, which uses the same transfer rate data, cites three primary reasons for these changes, as follows:

"Why are the rates for some of the indicators for the same cohort different in the 2008 [ARCC] report when we compare them to the 2007 [ARCC] report?

The changes could occur in a college's denominator, the college's numerator, or both. The changes in the data relate to the following factors:

1) The course cleanup project (Curriculum Reporting for the Community Colleges, CRCC): The course changes can and did alter the student headcounts in the cohorts, as well as their outcomes.

2) Student Identifier (SI) updates: With the announcement of the SB00 cleanup project for 2007-08, more districts started to submit SI updates to get a head start on the project.

3) Improvements in the methodology for extracting the cohort for the NSC match: With the 2008 report, we began to request all records from students, as opposed to restricting by date. This change resulted in identifying fewer students as first time."

Source: www.cccco.edu/Portals/4/TRIS/research/ARCC/ab1417_faq.doc

Appendix 5: Skyline College's Agreements with Four-Year Colleges and Representative Visits

Transfer Agreement Guarantees (TAG)	College/University Representative Visits for Feb-Mar 2008
UC Davis	UC Davis representative on campus weekly
UC Santa Barbara	Academy of Art, SF
UC Santa Cruz	CSU East Bay
UC Riverside	Dominican University
UC Irvine	Fashion Institute of Design
UC Merced	Golden Gate University
CSU East Bay	Menlo College
San Jose State	Mills College
Golden Gate University	Notre Dame University
Notre Dame University	S.F. State University
UC San Diego (starting Fall 2008)	UC Berkeley
	University of S.F.

In addition, students who complete the Honors Transfer Program may qualify for TAP (Transfer Admissions Priority) with UCLA. Honors students are also given priority admission to Mills College.