

# NEWS

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## **HOW ARE LOS RIOS STUDENTS DOING?**

New Reports Shed Light on Transfer and Other Student Success Measures

*Sacramento*—For the past year researchers at Los Rios Community College District have been studying student transfer and other student success measures to answer questions like: Who is transferring? Where are they transferring? What's blocking transfer? Who legitimately are those students seeking transfer, degrees and certificates and how many are reaching their goals?

The findings provide the most comprehensive picture to date of transfer and student success in the Los Rios District and may provide critical insights to inform state policy.

### MAJOR FINDINGS

- **Many more Los Rios students are transferring to in-state private and out-of-state public and private colleges and universities than to UC and CSU campuses.** In 2009-10, Los Rios transferred **2,222** students to UC and CSU campuses and **3,213** students to in-state private and out-of-state public and private universities. Los Rios students are transferring to major universities across the country including Stanford, Harvard, and MIT.
- **More African-American students are transferring to in-state private and out-of-state private and public universities than to UC and CSU.** In 2009-10, African-American students comprised 5% of Los Rios transfers to UC and CSU, *but 11% of transfers to all other colleges and universities.*

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- **In 2009-10 another 5,012 students became transfer ready**, that is, they completed the required 60 units of transfer coursework including transfer level English and math.
- **Due to increased cost and constraints on enrollment, transfer ready students are waiting as long as three years to get into a UC or CSU campus.**
- **In 2009-10, 10,447 Los Rios students either transferred to a four-year university or were ready to do so.**
- In 2009-10, another 1,424 Los Rios students left to attend the University of Phoenix.
- Los Rios students who left to attend the University of Phoenix in 2009-10 tended to be older (45% over age 30), female (67%), and more Hispanic (15%) or African-American (22%).
- **In 2009-10, Los Rios colleges awarded 6,489 degrees and certificates.** The ethnicity of degree recipients were: African-American, 9%; Asian, 11%; Hispanic, 16%; White, 48%; all other, 16%.
- **In 2009-10, 17,099 students—or 29% of the 60,079 Los Rios students** enrolled with the intent of transferring, becoming transfer ready, or receiving a degree or certificate—completed their educational goal. To put this in perspective, in 2009 at California State University, Sacramento, 20% of students enrolled graduated.
- **Ethnicity of completers compared to all students.** Of the 17,099 student completers: 9% were African-American while 12% of all students were African-American; 13% were Hispanic, compared to 18% of all students; 14% were Asian, compared to 12% of all students; and 39% were White, compared to 40% of all students.

Taken as a whole, this body of research describes in greater detail than ever before available how rising costs and reduced offerings at California's public universities is

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causing a backlog in the transfer pipeline and sending students to other public and private colleges and universities across the state and nation.

The research also provides a more detailed picture of student performance by race and ethnicity and indicates that the two most at-risk groups of students—African-American and Hispanic—are completing degrees and certificates and transferring to four-year colleges and universities in numbers close to their proportion in the student body.

“These research findings are providing us with a much better understanding of how our students are doing and showing us areas of tremendous success as well as areas where work still needs to be done,” said Los Rios chancellor Brice Harris. “It also provides data that can inform public policy regarding transfer and offers a new and more effective way to study student success at community colleges—an approach that we hope will be used by others.”

A major issue facing all researchers studying community college student success and completion rates is determining who legitimately should be counted. That is, who are those students who intend to transfer or receive a degree or certificate? Many studies just count all students enrolled, others select all students enrolled in a certain minimum number of units. Los Rios researchers found that neither of these approaches proved very effective.

Unlike students at four-year colleges and universities who are all seeking a degree, community college students enroll to meet a wide range of educational needs. Students enrolled in community colleges who are not seeking a degree or certificate or transfer include: Those seeking continuing education units to maintain licensure; those taking only a few courses to upgrade job skills; four-year students taking classes to supplement

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their university offerings; those enrolled in non-degree/certificate trade apprenticeship programs; and high school students earning college units. While these students are all meeting legitimate goals that are of value to the them and their community, they should not be included in studies that attempt to determine completion rates (as defined by degree/certificate attainment or transfer) as their inclusion leads to highly inaccurate findings.

“Over this past year of investigation, it has become clear that new approaches must be used to study community college students,” Harris said. “Trying to view community colleges through a four-year lens, simply doesn’t work and it doesn’t help our colleges to truly understand where they are or where they need to improve.”

Los Rios Community College District includes four colleges—American River, Cosumnes River, Folsom Lake, and Sacramento City.

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