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Graduation Rates at San Jose State University of Transferring Community College Students with an Associate Degree for Transfer: A Process Evaluation

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**Graduation Rates at San Jose State University of Transferring Community College
Students with an Associate Degree for Transfer:
A Process Evaluation**

by

Alex Cordova

A Thesis Quality Research Paper
Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the
Requirements for the
Masters Degree
In

PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION

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The Graduate School
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Introduction

Statement of the Problem

California's economy is changing rapidly, and to meet the demands of the changing workforce requirements more college educated residents are needed. The supply of workers with a bachelor's degree will not meet the projected demands due to the retirement of the highly-educated Baby Boom generation, and the reduced migration of college-educated workers into California from other states and countries. California is projected to have 1 million fewer college graduates than needed in the workforce if current trends continue (Moore, Shulack & Jenson, 2009).

One area of focus by the state of California to answer the educational needs is community college transfer students. Transfer students are students who begin their college career in a California community college, then transfer to a four-year degree granting institution. The state of California views this group of students as a key part of creating more college-educated Californians for the economy of the future (California Legislative Information, 2010). There are two main issues when evaluating community college transfer students. The first is the complexity of the transfer process. Second is the unreliable data that is being used to determine whether a community college student actually transfers to a four-year institution.

Traditionally, transfer policies and framework from California community colleges to the California State University system campuses have been set on a campus-specific basis. The strong tradition of local faculty autonomy over curriculum has made it difficult to engage in comprehensive, state-level educational articulation planning. The result has been campus-to-campus rather than system-wide course transferability agreements. Faculty at each college and university are responsible for setting each campus' program requirements, which leads to

differing lower division major prerequisites, even within the same major within the same system. In addition, the University of California system emphasizes a different general education pattern, contributing to the complexity of transfer options, and creating confusion among students (Moore, Shulock & Jensen, 2009).

The California Community Colleges system office uses “behavioral intent to transfer” as the primary measure of transferring students. First-time student cohorts are evaluated six years after initial enrollment in order to determine whether they have shown “behavioral intent to transfer.” (California Community College, 2018). Simply taking courses that may be used to transfer to a four-year institution may trigger the data to indicate that the student has transferred. This leads to an unreliable data set that identifies how many community college students are actually transferring to four-year institutions.

The California Legislature enacted the Student Transfer Achievement Reform (STAR) Act in order to address some of the preceding issues, with the ultimate goal of increasing college graduation rates. This included the creation of the new degree option for community college students, the Associate Degree for Transfer. San Jose State University (SJSU) as a receiving four-year degree granting institution will be the focus of this research, and an examination of SJSU graduation rates will be conducted to determine whether the STAR legislation is meeting its intent.

Research Question

Does San Jose State University experience a higher graduation rate among transferring community college students who have earned an Associate Degree for Transfer (ADT) than among transferring community college students without an ADT?

Background

President Barack Obama laid out a higher education initiative that would focus on the community college as a pivotal source in educating the nation. The goal: By 2020, the United States will have the greatest proportion of citizens who are college graduates, compared with the rest of the world (Pierce, 2015). The State of California responded to the new initiative by focusing on the California Community Colleges system, and their role in the path to a four-year degree.

A Master Plan for Higher Education in California was adopted in 1960. This plan laid out factors to differentiate the public postsecondary institutions (Coons, et al., 1960). The University of California (UC) system was to focus on research and had the exclusive authority to award doctorate degrees (Coons, et al., 1960). The California State University (CSU) system's primary mission was defined as teacher focused. Faculty research is authorized consistent with the primary function of instruction (Gerth, 2010). California Community Colleges system provides academic and vocational instruction as its primary mission. The Master Plan establishes that the first two years of undergraduate education (lower division) can be completed at a community college. In addition, the community colleges are authorized to provide remedial instruction, English as a Second Language courses, adult non-credit instruction, community service courses, and workforce training services (Coons, et al., 1960). The community college system provides access to any student capable of benefiting from instruction, and provides a path to transfer to a four-year institution.

To focus on the new national initiative and to improve the transfer process, in 2010 California passed Senate Bill 1440, which established the Student Transfer Achievement Reform (STAR) Act. The intent of the STAR act is to increase the number of college-educated citizens in

California. The legislation seeks to simplify the pathway from a California Community College system school to the California State University (CSU) system. A secondary goal of the legislation is to improve data and record keeping for California Community College system campuses, so accurate transfer rates can be evaluated.

The STAR act established the Associate Degree for Transfer (ADT). The ADT was given the tagline “A Degree with a Guarantee”, because it guarantees the holder admission into the CSU system, and guarantees junior year (third year) status when the student arrives at the CSU. This means that students would not have to complete any lower division courses at the CSU. They would only need to complete their 60 units of upper division major requirements (California Legislative Information, 2010). Most importantly, the ADT provides a clear pathway to a bachelor’s degree at the CSU. Students are able to identify majors that use the ADT process by consulting an advisor, or by visiting the California State University ADT degree online search tool (California State University, n.d. -a).

Some drawbacks of the program include the redirection process. The legislation provides a guarantee of admission into the CSU system, but it is not campus specific. Some CSU campuses are "impacted," which means that they have little capacity for admitting juniors. Applicants who have earned an ADT, and have met all the CSU upper-division transfer admission eligibility requirements, but they do not meet the higher requirements of the impacted campuses, are diverted to an alternate CSU campus that has space. This is called redirection (California State University, nd-c).

Value of this Research

This research will be valuable to the California Community Colleges system, as well as to the CSU. It will evaluate whether legislative intent is being met, and what issues are currently being faced by all stakeholders. Evaluating data on graduation rates of students with an ADT degree at San Jose State University will be beneficial, because the graduation rate will help to determine whether the legislative intent is being achieved on the campus level. Future research can focus on other CSU campuses, and compare campus-level outcomes to develop a best practice model at the campus level.

Literature Review

Gap in Literature

There is currently a lack of literature pertaining specifically to the outcomes of the STAR act, but there is research evaluating some of the main issues that the STAR act was designed to solve. This study will be beneficial in responding to this gap in the literature.

Characteristics of Community College Students

Blaylock and Bresciani (2011) examine the characteristics of California Community College system students, and the obstacles they faced when attempting to transfer to a four-year institution. As the primary entry point for students from culturally diverse backgrounds, community colleges must collaborate with California's four-year institutions to create an environment for success (Blaylock & Bresciani, 2011). Although Blaylock and Bresciani focus on additional academic resources in their study, a better understanding of a simplified transfer path between community colleges and California State University campuses would also be beneficial.

Ultimately, the transfer responsibility is mutually shared amongst the four-year institution, the community college, and the student stakeholder as the person charged to take advantage of the institutional support mechanisms (Blaylock & Bresciani, 2011, p. 45).

Felix (2018) also provides research showing that the community college student is often underprepared for the maze of transfer requirements. Felix (2018) noted that many community college students are the first in their family to attend college. These students face not only academic hurdles, but also administrative hurdles. One of the research subjects in the study was a

community college student who said, “It’s hard as the first one from my family. There’s really no guidance for me, so it [has been] difficult for me to navigate cuz I had to learn on my own who to speak with [about transferring]” (Felix, 2018, p. 96). This also speaks to the need for a simplified transfer path. Students should be able to be given a transfer map on the first day of classes, and be able to follow it with ease, even if they have little mentorship from family.

Standardized Transfer Pathways

Perhaps most importantly, the STAR legislation provided a structured pathway for community college students. Baker’s (2016) research showed that most students who set out to earn degrees in community colleges never do. Most students cite the complexity of understanding transfer and bachelor’s degree graduation requirements as the main obstacle for transferring and completing a degree (Baker, 2016). Students using the community college route often have many other personal factors that influence their decisions when deciding on the benefits of a college degree. So, from personal economic perspectives, students will continue in higher education until the perceived costs exceed the discounted perceived long-term benefits. Costs can be defined simply as the direct economic costs associated with schooling and missed short-term earnings (Baker, 2016). Often overlooked is the psychological cost, such as added stress or losses to quality of life. One source of psychological cost in community colleges is the time and stress associated with making repeated difficult choices. Students in community colleges face a string of complex decisions (Baker, 2016). Simplifying the path and instruction for transferring to a four-year institution can greatly reduce the psychological cost associated with transferring. Baker analyzed the transfer degree programs that were implemented in eight states across the country, but not including California: Arizona, Florida, Louisiana, New Jersey, North Carolina, Ohio, Oregon, and Washington.

Jenkins & Cho (2013) examined the development of structured transfer pathways at various community college and four-year institutions across the country. Their research focused on a behavioral psychological aspect of community college transfer pathways. Their research has shown that people can handle complex decisions if they are helped to think through the options hierarchically. One way to do this is by first organizing complex choices into more manageable sets, and then requiring the chooser to select from among the sets (Jenkins & Cho, 2013). With a complex pathway broken down and simplified, students are better able to choose and feel empowered by their decisions.

Kisker & Wagoner (2013) also researched associate degrees with transfer options across the country. Kisker & Wagoner identified seven elements of a successful community college to four-year transfer pattern. These were

- (1) a common general education (GE) package;
- (2) common lower-division pre-major and early-major pathways;
- (3) a focus on credit applicability;
- (4) junior status upon transfer;
- (5) guaranteed and/or priority university admission;
- (6) associate and/or bachelor's degree credit limits; and
- (7) an acceptance policy for upper-division courses (Kisker & Wagoner, 2013).

California's STAR act will be evaluated to determine whether these best practices are being implemented.

Research Supporting Impact of Education on Economy

Berger & Fisher (2013) conducted research showing that a well-educated workforce is essential to a thriving state economy. Not only do states with high educational achievement have a higher income per household, but also they are also more productive. As shown in Figure A, between 1979 and 2012, states in which the share of adults with at least a college degree was higher experienced greater increases in productivity, measured as gross state product per hour worked (Berger & Fisher, 2013).

FIGURE A

Productivity has grown more in states with greater growth in the educational attainment of their workforce

Relationship between state productivity growth and increase in college attainment from 1979 to 2012

States can build a strong foundation for economic success and shared prosperity by investing in education. Providing expanded access to high-quality education will not only expand economic opportunity for residents, but also likely do more to strengthen the overall state economy than anything else a state government can do (Berger & Fisher, 2013, p. 2).

Russel (2011) published a report detailing the many negative impacts that a dwindling college-educated population has on the nation's economy. There is a concern that the United States is steadily losing ground in global competitiveness. While other nations have been making progress, particularly in the attainment of baccalaureate degrees and certificates, the United States has not. The United States has achieved measurable success in improving access to postsecondary education but has not achieved a comparable growth in degree attainment (Russell, 2011).

Methodology

This study uses Sylvia & Sylvia's (2012) four-phase approach process evaluation to determine whether the ADT program is meeting the goals of the legislative intent of S.B. 1440. The program indicator that will be used is graduation rate data. Comparing the graduation rates of transferring students who earn an ADT with transferring students who do not have an ADT at San Jose State University will be the main indicator of success and basis of the evaluation.

Problem Identification	Solution	Implementation	Evaluation
California does not have enough college graduates to meet the changing workforce requirements.	Create a clear path to a bachelor's degree with the Associate Degree for Transfer program. STAR act of 2010	Guarantees admission with junior standing to the CSU system. Prohibits the CSU from requiring students to take more than 60 units to complete a 120-unit baccalaureate degree. Also creates uniform Transfer Model Curricula for community colleges to follow.	Does obtaining an ADT degree lead to higher 2-year graduation rates at San Jose State University?

Data

The data used to measure the success of the program is data for SJSU obtained from the California State University Chancellor's Office. The CSU Department of Institutional Research provides an online tool to access system-wide and campus-specific data and reports. Since the degree was implemented in Fall 2011, and a minimum of two years is common for a community college student to meet the requirements for the ADT degree, Fall 2013 was the first term that students using the ADT path could earn their degree. For various reasons, marketing and awareness took a few years to catch on with California community college students. There were no transferring ADT students admitted into SJSU in Fall 2013, and only 1 admitted in Fall 2014 (California State University, 2018). Therefore, the data will begin to analyze the graduation rates of ADT earning transfer students starting with the Fall 2015 cohort. This study will examine two-year graduation rates only. The data also includes the number of ADT students who were redirected to an alternate campus because of space limitations at SJSU, to see whether their graduation rates improved when compared to traditional non-ADT earning transfer students.

Table 1: Number of ADT & Non-ADT Admits at SJSU

Term	# of ADT Transfer Students Admitted & Enrolled	Total Transferring Students Admitted & Enrolled	% of Transferring Students with an ADT	# of Applicants Redirected to Alternate Campus
Fall 2013	0	3,766	0%	0
Fall 2014	1	3,886	0%	0
Fall 2015	186	3,157	5.56%	542
Fall 2016	417	3,266	11.32%	157
Fall 2017	347	3,814	8.34%	250
Fall 2018	502	2,955	14.52%	557

(California State University, nd-c).

Additionally, the researcher conducted an anonymous survey of students who were redirected. The redirection process is a point of weakness in the STAR act, so the opinion of students who have experienced redirection is vital to gain a thorough understanding of the efficacy of the STAR act. The response to this survey offered qualitative and quantitative data on whether the redirected students accepted admission into an alternate campus or rejected the offer.

Findings

Table 1 shows a breakdown of Admissions cohorts by Fall year. The Fall 2015 and Fall 2016 cohorts are the focus of this research. Figures B, C, D, and E show the growth in the number of transfer students with an ADT degree admitted into SJSU. The percentage of admits with an ADT degree has also grown since the Fall 2015 cohort. There were 186 ADT earning students admitted to SJSU in 2015, 417 admitted in 2016, 347 admitted in 2017, and 502 admitted in 2018.

Figure B: 2015 SJSU admitted cohort

(California State University, nd-c).

Figure C: 2016 SJSU admitted cohort

(California State University, nd-c).

Figure D: 2017 SJSU admitted cohort

(California State University, nd-c).

Figure E: 2018 SJSU admitted cohort

(California State University, nd-c).

Graduation Rates

Table 2 displays the number of applicants admitted in each Fall term and is divided into Non-ADT earning students and ADT earning students. The table also presents graduation rates for the Fall 2015 and Fall 2016 cohorts. Figures F and G are a visual representation of graduation rates among Non-ADT earning students and ADT earning students. Based on the data, ADT earning students in the Fall 2015 cohort have a 2-year graduation rate of 65%. Non-ADT earning students in the Fall 2015 cohort have a 26.7% graduation rate. The Fall 2016 cohort showed similar graduation results. The 2015 cohort had a 2-year graduation rate among ADT earning students of 63.3%, and the non-ADT cohort had a 2-year graduation rate of 31.9%.

Table 2: Graduation rates by Cohort

	Cohort by Fall Year			
	2015	2016	2017	2018
Non-ADT Students Admitted	3,343	3,266	4,161	3,457
Non-ADT Year 2 Graduations	893	1,175		
Non-ADT Year 2 Graduation Rate	26.70%	31.90%		
ADT Students Admitted	186	417	347	502
ADT Year 2 Graduations	121	264		
ADT Year 2 Graduation Rate	65.00%	63.30%		

(California State University, nd-c).

Figure F: 2015 SJSU cohort graduation rates

(California State University, nd-c).

Figure G: 2016 SJSU cohort graduation rates

(California State University, nd-c).

Additional data gathered from the CSU Chancellor's Office shows that the percentage of ADT earning students who graduated in the same major that they were admitted with is significantly higher when compared to non-ADT students. The data represents the percentage of graduating students who completed their bachelor's degree in a different major than with which they were admitted. Change of major data from the 2015 and 2016 non-ADT student cohorts was not available at the time of this research, but data from 2013 and 2014 shows change of major rates among non-ADT graduating students at SJSU. Both 2013 and 2014 non-ADT cohorts showed an 18% change of major rate at the time of their graduation. There was data available for the 2015 and 2016 ADT earning student cohorts, and this data showed a 2% change of major rate in both cohort years.

Figure H: 2013 SJSU non-adt cohort Major at graduation

(California State University, nd-c).

Figure I: 2014 SJSU non-adt cohort Major at graduation

(California State University, nd-c).

Figure J: 2015 SJSU ADT cohort Major at graduation

(California State University, nd-c).

Figure K: 2016 SJSU ADT cohort Major at graduation

(California State University, nd-c).

Survey Results

An online survey was conducted for this research using Qualtrics software. Ninety-six students who were identified as being redirected to an alternate CSU campus responded to the survey.

The anonymous contact information was provided by the Enrollment Management Department at San Jose State University. The purpose of the survey was to identify how many students actually accepted their offer from the alternate campus. The survey consisted of three questions total, but the participant only needed to answer two. The questions were as follows:

1. Did you enroll at the alternate campus?
2. If you selected no, Why not?
3. If you selected yes, At which CSU campus did you enroll?

Figures L, M and N show the responses to the survey.

Figure L: Survey Responses to Question 1

Figure M: Survey Responses to Question 2

If you selected No, Why not? Choose all that apply to your situation

#	Answer	Bar	Response	%
1	Financial Reasons		12	23.53%
2	Distance		25	49.02%
3	Campus Setting/Location		16	31.37%
5	Housing Options		10	19.61%
6	Limited Internship/Network Opportunities		4	7.84%
7	Climate/Weather		5	9.80%
9	Limited Extracurricular activities		3	5.88%
10	Accepted Offer to another University		24	47.06%
11	No Longer Continued College		3	5.88%
	Total		102	100.00%

Figure N: Survey Responses to Question 3

Analysis

The objective of this research was to determine whether the implementation of the Associate's Degree for Transfer program affected 2-year graduation rates for transfer students who earned an ADT degree. The analysis of the data is based on the process evaluation model. The data shows that although there may be portions of the STAR act that require reform, the legislation has been successful at San Jose State University in improving graduation rates. The data shows that the ADT process at San Jose State University has contributed to higher 2-year graduation rates for students who used the ADT path.

An increase in ADT earning students being admitted into SJSU is a good indication of success in the ADT program. Each year more students are using the ADT pathway thanks to more communication and marketing. In 2012, the California Community College system and CSU formed the SB 1440 Implementation and Oversight Committee (IOC). The IOC comprises 18 members drawn from the Chancellor's Offices of the respective systems and various other organizations. One of the main goals of the IOC was to create a comprehensive marketing and communication campaign for the ADT program (Heiman & Steenhausen, 2012). One can conclude that the marketing efforts are successful when looking at the number of SJSU admitted students who have earned an ADT degree.

The 2-year graduation rate comparison at SJSU among non-ADT earning transfer students and ADT earning transfer students shows the real strength of the ADT program. The cohort of transfer students admitted in 2015 who have earned an ADT degree graduated at a 2-year rate of 65%. When compared to 26.7% for transfer students who did not earn an ADT at their community college, the benefits of the ADT program become clear. The trend continued in 2016, with a 63.3% 2-year graduation rate among students who earned an ADT degree. The data

shows that students are earning their bachelor's degrees faster when using the ADT program. It is essential to the success of California's public higher education system that students do not take unnecessary units, and that they graduate promptly. According to a report published by the Campaign for College Opportunities, a 1 percent reduction in the number of unnecessary credits community college students take could free up as much as \$21 million in state spending, which could provide enrollment to more than 7,000 additional full-time students at the community colleges (Bell & Valliani, 2014).

In addition to completing all of the required lower division courses for their major, students who earn an ADT have a simplified graduation road map when they arrive at SJSU. Having a clear roadmap prevents students from enrolling in unnecessary courses, and promotes 2-year graduations. Figure O is an example of a simplified ADT road map for the Justice Studies major. Students who have not earned an ADT at their community college have to navigate a much more complex road map, because they may not have completed all the lower division major requirements. The ADT roadmap has each semester laid out with suggested classes, so students can plan accordingly and graduate within two years. Figure P shows a blank planner for non-ADT earning transfer students. This planner must be filled out with an adviser because there are so many different paths that a transfer student may have taken that it is difficult for a department to have a structured roadmap for traditional transfer students.

Figure O: Justice Studies Major Roadmap for ADT earning student

1st Semester at SJSU	Recommended Course	Units
WST taken and passed		
JS 15 or STAT 95 (or university elective if statistics was taken prior to transfer)	JS 15 or STAT 95 (or univ elective if statistics was taken prior to transfer)	3
PE – Two units	PE	2
University Elective	University Elective	1
Major Requirement: JS 101	JS 101	3*
Major Requirement: JS 102	JS 102	3*
Major Core: JS 100W course, also satisfies SJSU Studies Area Z	JS 100W	3*
	Semester Total	15

2nd Semester at SJSU	Recommended Course	Units
SJSU Studies Area V in US & California Government (or a different Area V if US2+3 is met prior to transfer)	POLS 170V meets US2+3 + Area V (if US2+3 was met previously then take a different Area V course)	3*
Major Core: JS 114	JS 114	3*
Major Core: JS 151	JS 151	3*
# Additional Major Courses 24 units of upper division from list below	UD JS	3*
# Additional Major Courses 24 units of upper division from list below	UD JS	3*
	Semester Total	15

3rd Semester at SJSU	Recommended Course	Units
SJSU Studies - Area R	Area R course	3*
# Additional Major Courses 24 units of upper division from list below	UD JS	3*
# Additional Major Courses 24 units of upper division from list below	UD JS	3*
# Additional Major Courses 24 units of upper division from list below	UD JS	3*
# Additional Major Courses 24 units of upper division from list below	UD JS	3*
	Semester Total	15

4th Semester at SJSU	Recommended Course	Units
SJSU Studies Area S in US History (or a different Area S if US1 is met prior to transfer)	HIST 170S meets US1 + Area S (if US1 was met previously then take a different Area S course)	3*
Major Core: JS 181	JS 181	3*
Major Core: JS 189	JS 189	3*
# Additional Major Courses 24 units of upper division from list below	UD JS	3*
# Additional Major Courses 24 units of upper division from list below	UD JS	3*
	Semester Total	15

(San Jose State University, 2018)

Figure P: SJSU Justice Studies 4 semester planner

Four Semester Course Planning

Name

SJSU ID

Semester <input type="text"/>	Units	
Course #1	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
Course #2	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
Course #3	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
Course #4	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
Course #5	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
Course #6	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
Course #7	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
		Total Units <input type="text"/>

Semester <input type="text"/>	Units	
Course #1	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
Course #2	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
Course #3	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
Course #4	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
Course #5	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
Course #6	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
Course #7	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
		Total Units <input type="text"/>

Semester <input type="text"/>	Units	
Course #1	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
Course #2	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
Course #3	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
Course #4	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
Course #5	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>

Semester <input type="text"/>	Units	
Course #1	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
Course #2	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
Course #3	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
Course #4	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
Course #5	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>

(San Jose State University, 2019).

The data also shows that students who have earned an ADT rarely change their major. The Fall 2015 and 2016 ADT earning student cohorts respectively showed only a 2% change of major rate. Transfer students who did not earn an ADT showed a change of major rate of 18% at the time of graduation. This is significant because research shows that changing majors costs time and money for students. They need to take additional courses and inevitably end up with units that are not useful to their new major (Bell & Valliani, 2014). Irene Ho, the SJSU program coordinator for the ADT program, spoke about the reasons why ADT earning students do not change their major. Ho said, “Students have already committed to that specific major, and when they see the path to graduation that is more than enough incentive to stick with it” (I. Ho, personal communication, January 4, 2019).

The data from the redirection survey responses suggest that a majority of ADT students who were redirected did not enroll at their alternate campus. The highest cited reason was distance. Even for the students who did accept an offer from an alternate campus, most only accepted offers from campuses that were close to SJSU geographically. This aspect of the ADT program is a weakness because it undermines the “guarantee” aspect of the program. Students may feel that the “guarantee with fine print” is not worth the effort. Additional research into this topic was conducted by the Education Insights Center, and their data showed similar results. The ADT is most helpful to students who have the flexibility to go beyond their nearest CSU campus. While the ADT guarantees admission to the CSU system, it does not guarantee admission to a specific major or campus. Nearly all students in the Education Insights Center study said they chose their CSU based on geographic proximity due to work and family obligations or financial considerations (Lewis, Bracco, Moore, Nodine, & Venezia, 2016).

Further Research

In addition to this research, further research is needed on the effectiveness of the STAR act. The redirection process should be researched and analyzed. The data in this research is not extensive enough to create a recommendation for system-wide improvements to the redirection process.

Research is also needed to determine why more California Community College system students do not use the ADT program. Some researchers speculate that many community college students are not committed to the CSU system, so they would like to keep their options open for other universities. They do not see the ADT program as an attractive option because it is specifically designed for transfer to the CSU system. Bustillos (2017) recommended expanding the ADT program to the University of California system in order to improve the alignment of UC transfer requirements and provide guaranteed admission to these transfer students into the UC system (Bustillos, 2017).

In addition, research is needed at other CSU campuses to evaluate their processes and success with the ADT program. There is value in reviewing the data from other campuses on many aspects of the ADT program. For example, extensive research is needed to determine whether the low rate of changing majors among ADT earning students is a benefit to the student. Is it their goal to stick with that program, or do they feel trapped in that major?

Conclusion

The STAR act is meeting its legislative intent in the area of bachelor's degree graduation rates at SJSU. This research shows a significant increase in 2-year graduation rates for ADT earning transfer students at SJSU. Not only do they graduate at a higher rate, but they also stay in their admitted major. The clear path to graduation provides students with the support they need to complete their bachelor's degree on time in four years.

An area of concern that needs to be further addressed is the redirection process. Students perceive the ADT program to provide a false “guarantee” because it does not grant admission to a specific campus. A system should be developed that allows students who commit to the CSU system and complete an ADT degree to be rewarded with a guarantee to their local campus.

The purpose of the STAR act was to create a community with higher educational attainment to be prepared for the economy of the future. Based on the graduation rates at SJSU among ADT earning students, that purpose is being fulfilled.

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