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BE A CONNECTOR FOR TRANSFER STUDENT SUCCESS

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Research Spotlight

2791 - Faculty Views about Student Transfer from Community to Bachelor's-Granting Colleges

Leadership and Strategic Planning, Credits and Degree Pathways

The role of faculty views about vertical transfer from community to bachelor's-granting colleges is underrepresented in the empirical literature. In fall, 2021, 3,871 faculty members of a large urban public university participated in a survey of their transfer-related experiences and their knowledge and attitudes about vertical transfer. Results suggest that most faculty know relatively little about transfer, and some of what they think they know is wrong. Moreover, bachelor's and community college faculty have different views about vertical transfer students, policies and practices that could have implications for transfer student success.

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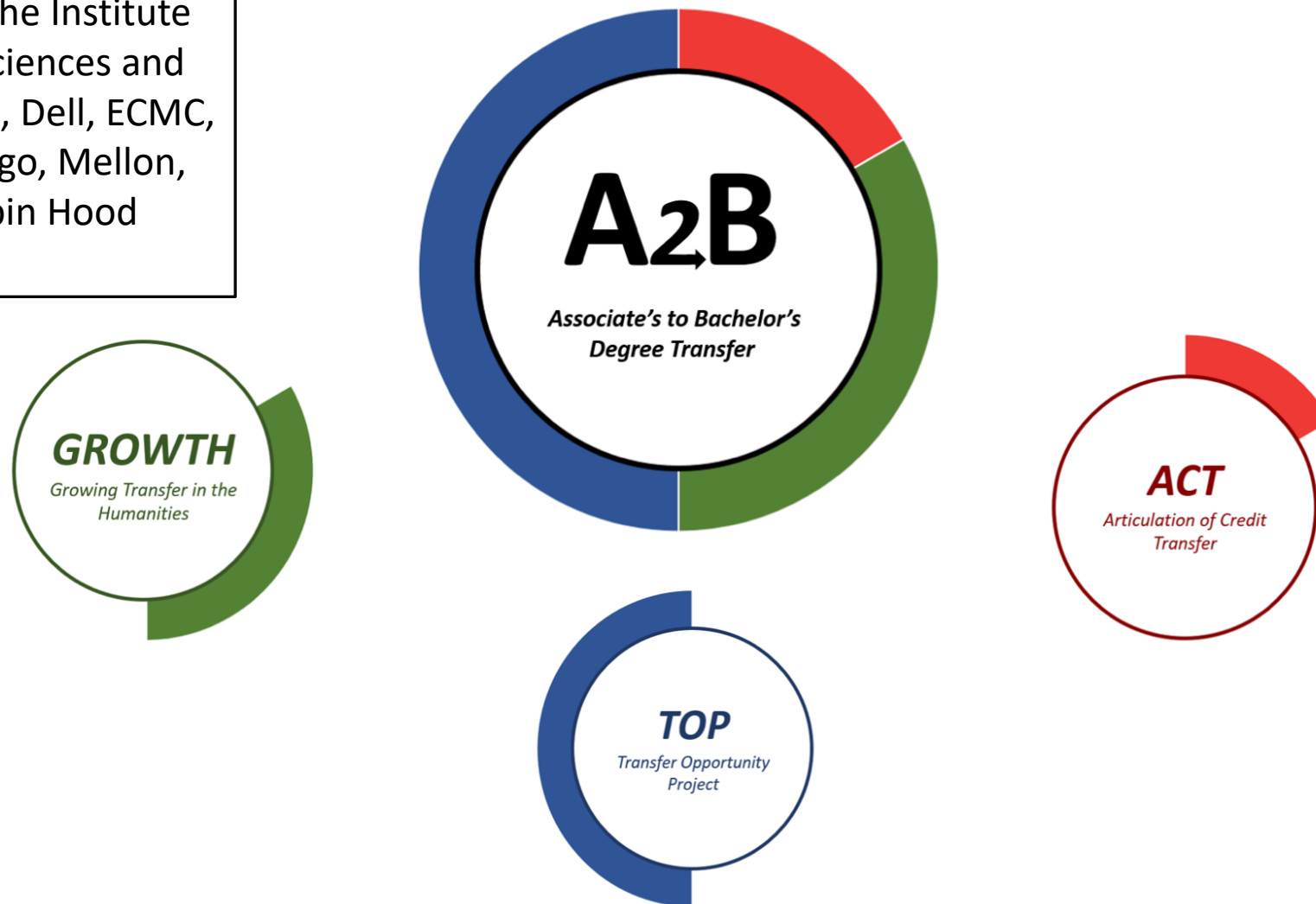
Faculty Views about Student Transfer from Community to Bachelor's-Granting Colleges

Presentation for the NISTS Conference

February 1, 2023

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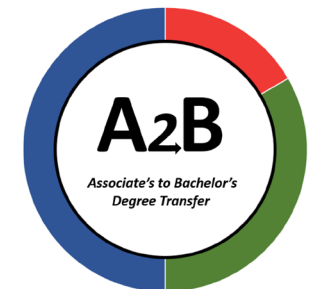
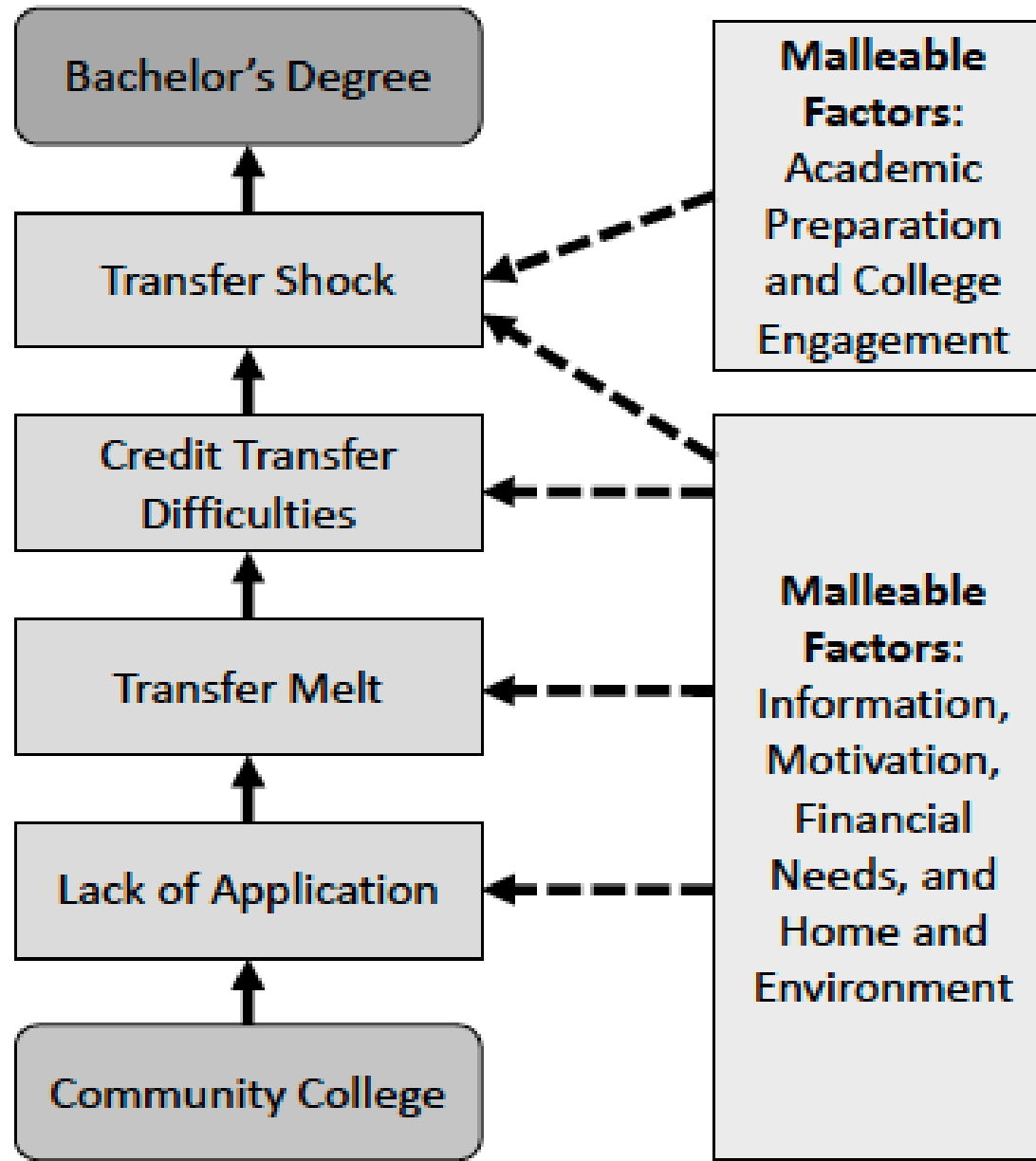
Background on CUNY

- The City University of New York (CUNY) is the nation's largest urban public university, with 220,000 matriculated undergraduate students in 20 predominantly undergraduate institutions.
 - Seven of these offer associate's degrees only (community colleges); three offer both associate's and bachelor's degrees (called comprehensive colleges at CUNY), and ten offer bachelor's degrees and higher degrees only (bachelor's colleges).
- CUNY was created in 1961 by the New York State Legislature to be a uniquely integrated system, one that facilitates social mobility by providing access at multiple entry points and ladders to degree programs from the associate's to doctoral levels.
- Approximately 20,000 students transfer from one CUNY college to another each year.
- Over 50 percent of CUNY students are Pell Grant recipients, members of underrepresented racial and ethnic groups, and first-generation college students.

Background on Transfer at CUNY

- For many years, over 50% of the graduates of every CUNY bachelor's college have been transfer students.
- Yet most potential vertical transfer students at CUNY are being lost:
 - 87% of CUNY community college freshmen (over 80% nationally) want to attain at least a bachelor's degree.
 - Six years after entry, only about 11% have done so.
- If there are two students, equivalent in every way we can measure, who both want bachelor's degrees, and one begins at a community college and the other at a bachelor's college, the one who begins at the bachelor's college will be more likely to get the bachelor's degree. This suggests that there are likely challenges directly related to the transfer process.
- Given that the percentages of underrepresented students are higher at the community than the bachelor's colleges, these transfer challenges differentially harm students from underrepresented groups.
- Transfer is an equity issue.

A2B Projects' Vertical Transfer Leaky Pipeline



Why a faculty survey on student transfer?

- Faculty views are potentially malleable factors affecting transfer outcomes.
 - Faculty members make many decisions about credit transfer and other transfer processes.
 - Evaluating individual transcripts or courses
 - Setting transfer credit policies
 - Crafting and approving articulation agreements
 - Advising students
- Yet, there are very few empirical studies of faculty views on student transfer.
- What faculty know and think about transfer may have implications for transfer student progress and success.
- *So what do they know and think about transfer?*



Faculty Survey on Student Transfer: Survey items

Survey items:

- Were drawn from scant existing research and writings about faculty roles, opinions and beliefs related to transfer, and from the larger literature on the challenges that transfer students face.
- Probed faculty background regarding formal roles and experiences with transfer matters.
- Explored faculty knowledge and awareness of transfer policies, practices, and outcomes.
- Probed attitudes and beliefs about transfer students, the challenges they face, and their outcomes.
- Elicited views of transfer policies and practices at their colleges, and at CUNY, their perceptions of support for transfer at their colleges and in the “other sector.”

Based on a key item asking faculty whether most of their experience was with prospective or current transfer students, faculty were assigned to one of two branches in the survey: one for faculty teaching in associate’s degree programs, and one for faculty teaching in bachelor’s programs.

Faculty Survey on Student Transfer: Survey administration and response rates

Survey administration:

- In October, 2021, all 17,381 eligible full-and part-time faculty members were sent a personalized link to the survey on the Qualtrics platform.
- Over a five-week period, we sent five reminders and issued three extensions of the deadline for submitting the survey.
- We received 3,871 valid responses.

Response rates:

- Total: 22.3%
- Full-time: 32.8%, Part-time: 16.4%
- Community colleges: 25.8%
- Bachelor's colleges: 21.6%
- Comprehensive colleges: 18.6%

“What Faculty Know (and Don’t Know) About Transfer—and Why It Matters”

<https://www.insidehighered.com/blogs/beyond-transfer/what-faculty-know-and-don%E2%80%99t-know-about-transfer%E2%80%94and-why-it-matters>

Q. Students who transfer after having received an associate’s degree have more of their credits transferred to bachelor’s-degree programs

	CC
Agree	36%
Disagree	5%
Don’t know	42%

Q. What % of the graduates of your college are vertical transfer students?

	BC
10% or fewer	5%
11-25%	8%
26-50%	9%
51% or more	7%
Don’t know	57%

Q. How confident are you in your knowledge about transfer policies at CUNY? (1-7)

CC	BC
3.4	3.2

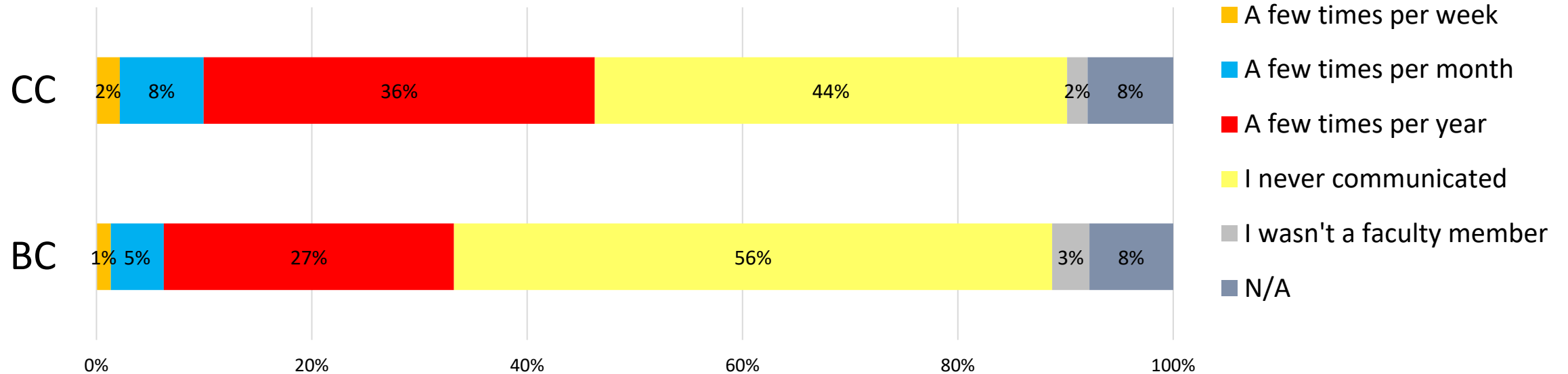
- *There are major gaps in what faculty know about transfer, and they are somewhat aware of those gaps. What faculty don’t know may inadvertently harm transfer students.*

Key CC and BC faculty comparisons: Transfer awareness

	CC	BC
Reported knowing which of their students are prospective/current vertical transfer students	52%	32%
<i>How do they know?</i>		
They ask	70%	21%
Students tell them on their own initiative	59%	60%
They infer from academic performance	12%	20%

Key CC and BC faculty comparisons: Transfer engagement

Q. During the academic year (pre-pandemic), about how often did you communicate with colleagues from other colleges about issues related to transfer?



Over the past five years, I have	CC	BC
Interacted with colleagues from other colleges on course articulation, curricular alignment	31%	22%
Helped organize events like workshops, orientation, transfer fairs	24%	20%

Key CC and BC faculty perceptions of current transfer practice and outcomes

Major transfer-related ***complaints*** faculty report hearing from students

	CC	BC
Credit loss	64%	53%
Lack of information about majors and pre-requisites to majors	51%	38%
Inability to register for needed courses	46%	58%
Not enough advisers available	37%	34%
The amount of time it takes to get credits evaluated	24%	32%
Other	21%	26%
The amount of time it takes to get admissions decisions	12%	9%
The amount of time it takes to fill out the application	6%	3%

Key CC and BC faculty perceptions of current transfer practice and outcomes

Major transfer-related *challenges* faculty perceive

	CC	BC
Getting their transfer credits applied to their bachelor's-degree requirements	63%	57%
Having financial aid last until the bachelor's degree is earned	61%	53%
Being admitted to their desired major in a bachelor's department or program	52%	36%
Getting their credits evaluated in time to register	40%	55%
Getting their credits evaluated before they have to decide whether to accept an offer of admission	38%	36%
Getting good grades in bachelor's-degree programs	33%	44%

Key CC and BC comparisons: Perceived support for transfer from colleges and colleagues

College's support for transfer	CC	BC	Major reasons that faculty value transfer students	CC	BC
Their college communicates importance of improving practices to facilitate transfer as a vital part of the college's educational mission (1-7)	4.7	4.3	Helping every student reach their goals	96%	89%
Faculty at their college value transfer students?	59%	53%	Providing more opportunities to students from URM groups	86%	73%
There are opportunities at their college to get information and advice tailored to vertical transfer students	50%	38%	Providing more opportunities to students with limited financial resources	85%	66%
			Increasing enrollments at the destination colleges	11%	41%

Colleagues' support for transfer	CC	BC
Do you find your colleagues in the other sector helpful in creating course equivalencies? (1-7)	4.3	4.8
Bachelor's faculty do not do enough to make transfer students feel that they are valued and supported (1-7)	4.6	3.3

Opinions and beliefs about transfer students and the “other sector”

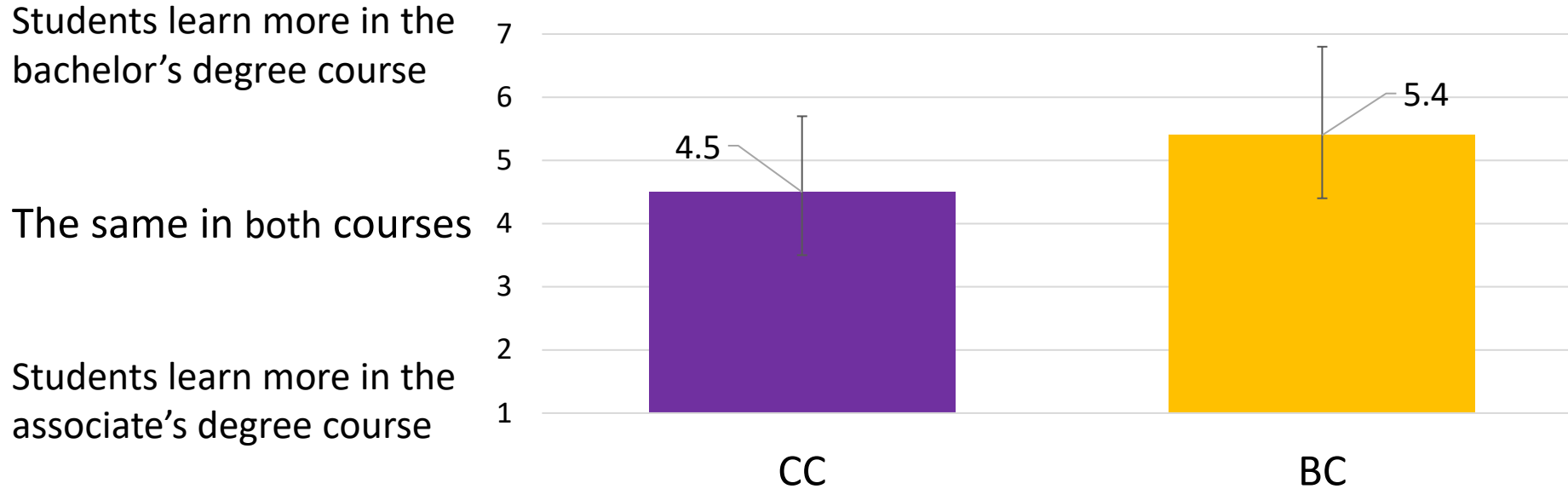
	CC	BC
In some people’s minds, there is a stigma attached to attending a community college (1-7)	5.4	4.6
The characteristic “academically prepared for advanced work” is more common in: (1: Community college starter – 7: Bachelor’s college starter)	4.5	5.0

Q. To the best of your knowledge, after transferring to a bachelor's-degree program, vertical transfer students typically experience the following:

	CC	BC
A temporary decrease in GPA	15%	18%
A temporary increase in GPA	1%	2%
A permanent decrease in GPA	4%	8%
A permanent increase in GPA	1%	2%
No change in GPA	3%	3%
Don’t know	57%	52%
N/A	18%	16%
Total	100%	100%

Perceptions about associate's-program courses

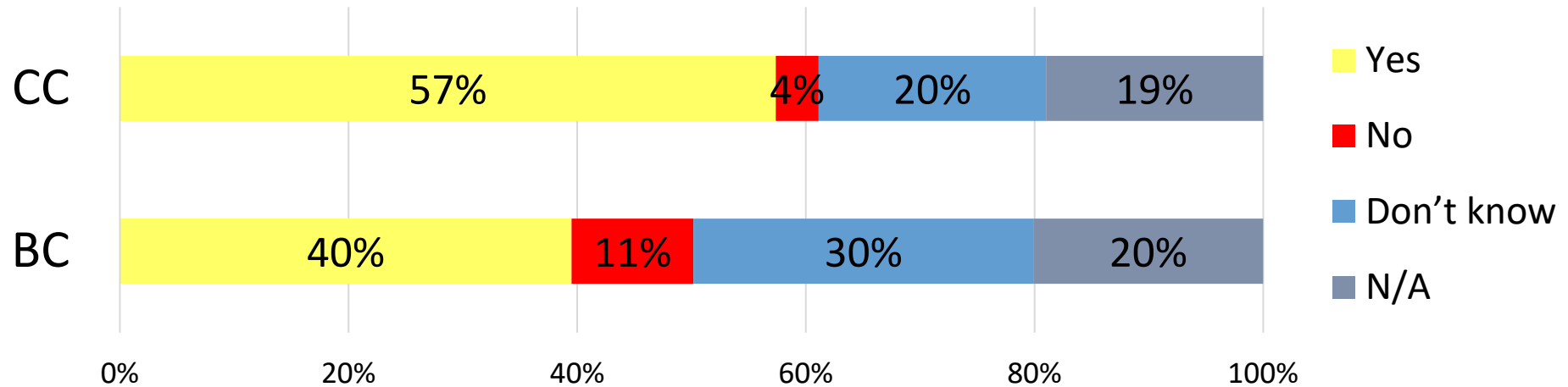
Q. The amount students learn in an associate's-degree course and a bachelor's-degree course that have the same name is:



Other perceptions related to associate's-program courses	CC	BC
It is sometimes advisable for vertical transfer students to retake courses in their majors when they transfer to bachelor's-degree programs (1-7)	3.4	3.9
Support for associate's program students taking as many of their general education courses as possible in community colleges	48%	44%
Support for associate's program students taking as many of their intended major courses as possible in community colleges	33%	16%

What do faculty think they need to improve transfer?

Q. Should the CUNY Central Office do more to facilitate credit transfer?



Q. What information or resources would enable you to better support prospective/current vertical transfer students?

Top answers	CC	BC
Resources to better align associate's and bachelor's courses	56%	44%
Data on the performance of students who transfer from/to my primary college	49%	43%
Training on how to advise transfer students	47%	37%
No opinion/ don't know	13%	20%
Other	7%	9%
None, I have sufficient information and resources to support transfer students	3%	6%

Faculty from most selective bachelor's colleges vs. selective bachelor's colleges

Faculty from most selective bachelor's colleges are **more** likely to report...

	Most Selective	Selective
Their faculty should make the final decision on credit transfer	64%	54%
Credit loss is the most often heard complaint	55%	50%
<i>Transfer students experience after transfer:</i>		
Temporary decrease in GPA	19%	16%
Permanent decrease in GPA	11%	4%
The characteristic “academically prepared for advanced work” is more common in: (1: Community college starter – 7: Bachelor’s college starter)	5.2	4.8
In some people's minds, there is a stigma attached to attending a CC (1-7)	4.7	4.4
It is sometimes advisable for transfer students to retake courses in their majors when they transfer, even if they did well at the associate’s level (1-7)	4.3	3.6
Their colleagues do not do enough to make transfer students feel valued and supported (1-7)	3.5	3.0

Faculty from most selective bachelor's colleges vs. selective bachelor's colleges

Faculty from most selective bachelor's colleges are **less** likely to report...

	Most Selective	Selective
CUNY central office should do more to facilitate transfer	36%	43%
There are opportunities at their college for transfer students to get information and advice tailored to them	34%	43%
Participation of their departments in articulation/dual-enrollments	25%	30%
Colleagues in their departments genuinely try to understand the challenges that transfer students face in transferring to bachelor's programs (1-7)	4.7	5.1
Their colleagues in associate's programs are cooperative and helpful (1-7)	4.6	5.1
Their college communicates that improving transfer is a vital part of its educational mission (1-7)	4.1	4.4

Conclusions

- Faculty views are a treasure trove of potentially malleable factors.
- Where faculty sit is where they stand.
- Faculty are, to some degree, aware of problematic policies and practices and the challenges that transfer students face.
- But they do not appear to perceive the nature and extent of the problems nor do they seem to agree on potential solutions.
- And many bachelor's-college faculty, especially those from CUNY's most selective colleges, do not perceive that transfer matters or transfer students are high priorities at their colleges.
- What do our findings suggest might improve transfer practice and outcomes? Information, motivation, collaboration, tools, resources— and leadership!

Thank you!

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Some of the faculty survey results have been published in:

Rabinowitz, V., Oka, Y., & Logue, A. W. (2022, September 8). What faculty know (and don't know) about transfer—and why it matters. *Inside Higher Ed*. <https://bit.ly/3E1dvsm>