

**NISTS 2023**

# BE A CONNECTOR FOR TRANSFER STUDENT SUCCESS

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The following presentation was given at the 21st Annual Conference for the National Institute for the Study of Transfer Students. Please cite responsibly and direct questions to the original presenter(s).

*Educational Session*

## **2782 - Boosting Equitable Transfer Outcomes: Strategies for Reverse and Vertical Transfer**

Credits and Degree Pathways, Partnerships and Collaboration

To boost equitable transfer student outcomes, this presentation will discuss findings from two initiatives: Degrees When Due and TransferBOOST (Bachelor's Opportunity Options that are Straightforward and Transparent). Through presentations, polls, and small-group discussions, participants will learn about strategies and tools to support 1.) proactively identifying, locating, and communicating with potential reverse transfer students; and 2.) making vertical transfer pathways more affordable and helping institutional partners better communicate about these opportunities to students.

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# Boosting Equitable Transfer Outcomes: Strategies for Reverse and Vertical Transfer

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Rachelle Sharpe, HCM Strategists



February 21, 2023 | NISTS Conference, Portland

# Welcome



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# AGENDA

*Warm-Up*

*Degrees When Due Initiative*

*TransferBOOST Initiative*

*Braintrust discussion*

*Q&A*



Photo credit: PeopleImages

# Warm-up

A background image showing three students (two men and one woman) looking at a laptop screen. The image is partially obscured by three dark teal text boxes.

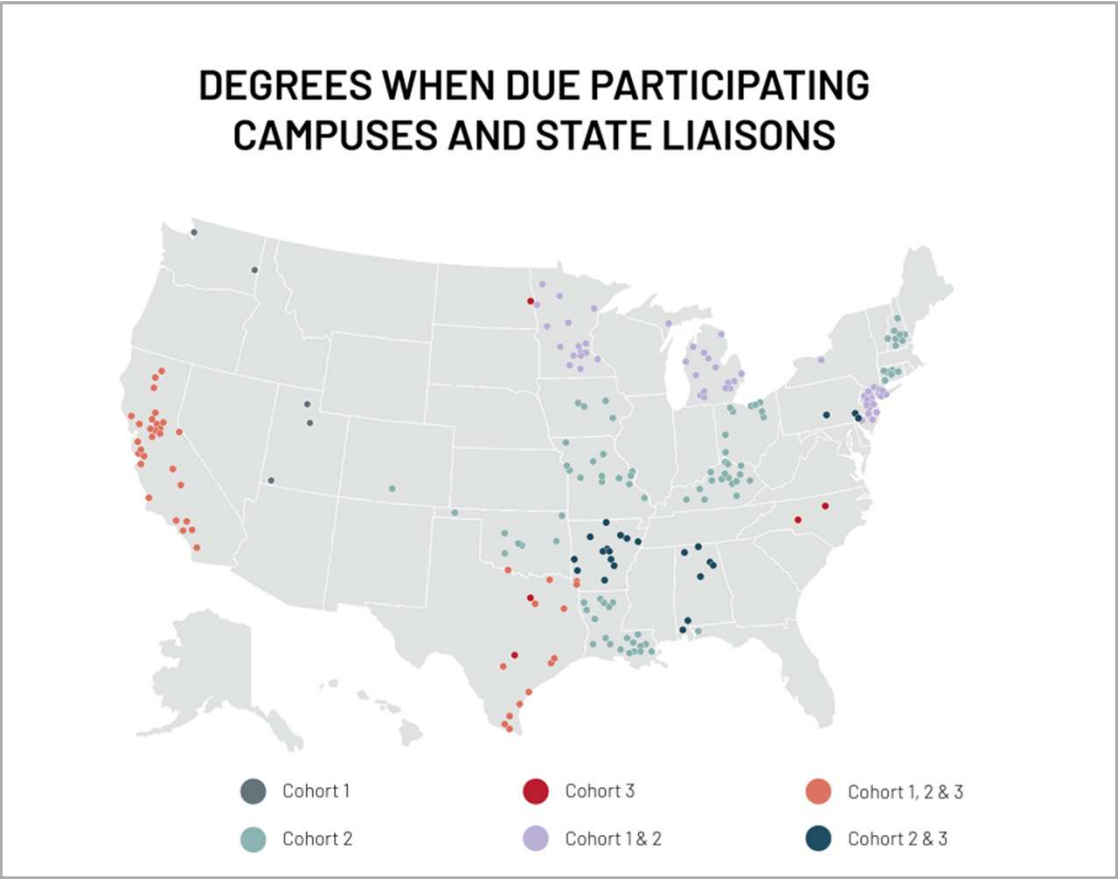
Raise your hand if you are/were a transfer student

How many Americans are there who have earned some college credits, but stopped out before earning a degree?

What percentage of this population would you guess are near completers?



**39 million** Americans have some college but no degree



**200** Institutions

**23** States

**3** Cohorts

**3** Years



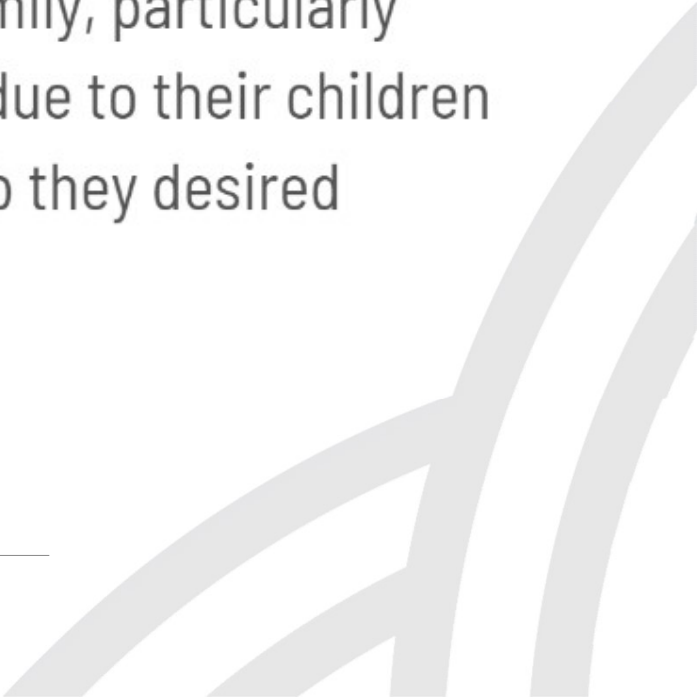


## **Students cited three main reasons for leaving:**

1. Needing to find employment to meet their basic needs
2. Raising and supporting children and a family
3. Reprioritizing work, family, and school



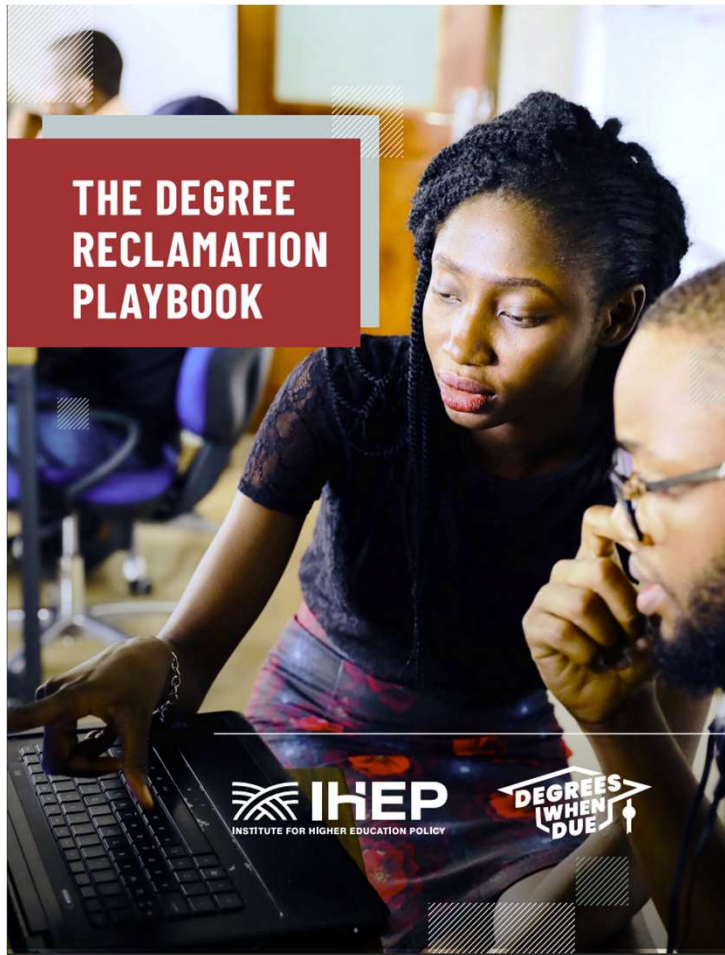
## **Students had two primary motivations for returning:**

1. Wanting to serve as a role model for their family, particularly since some of them had initially left college due to their children
  2. Needing a degree for a job promotion or a job they desired
- 

# Identifying Students and Barriers



- Two words: **Degree audits**
- **170,000** students identified as potentially eligible for a degree
- Three words: **1 in 10**
- **Degree Mining Tool**



## “A Decade of Equity-Focused Completion Best Practices at your Fingertips”

### **This user-friendly guide includes:**

- 10-steps to implementing degree reclamation strategies on campuses
- Color-coded tracks for RT and AR
- Strategic Assessment
- Appendix full of worksheets and guides

# 10 Steps to Degree Reclamation Implementation

1. Build Your Team

2. Build an Equity Framework

3. Inventory Institutional Policies and Practices

4. Dig into the Data

8. Re-enroll Near Completers  
*(Adult Reengagement)*

7. Communicate with Near-Completers

6. Audit Degrees

5. Share Transcripts and Student Consent  
*(Reverse Transfer)*

9. Confer Degrees

10. Sustain Degree reclamation strategies

# Communication Best Practices

## Use Accessible Language

- Messaging is done in terms students can understand and is available in multiple languages.

## Highlight the Benefits of Reenrolling

- Clearly communicate to students how easy the process to enroll is and why it is beneficial.

## Leverage Your Data

- Use data to personalize mailers and other forms of communication to the student situation.

# Financial Barriers

14% of students had financial holds on their accounts

47% of IHEs offered financial incentives, with another 21% of IHEs exploring/planning

# LIGHTING THE PATH

*to Remove Systemic Barriers in  
Higher Education and Award  
Earned Postsecondary  
Credentials Through IHEP's  
Degrees When Due Initiative*

“

Students with some college but no degree need to be reenrolled – and reengaged. A clear path to degree completion will make a tremendous difference for them, their families, our communities, and our country as a whole.





# *Lighting the Path: Policy Recommendations*

## ***Institutional Policy***

- Invest in data.
- Review graduation requirements.
- Switch to an opt-out policy.
- Eliminate unnecessary paperwork.
- Address financial holds.
- Implement routine degree audits.
- Build in clear communication.
- Be student-centered.

## ***State Policy***

- Facilitate implementation.
- Increase awareness.
- Fund degree reclamation.
- Inform pathway development.
- Change policy.

## ***Federal Policy***

- Remove barriers.
- Promote degree auditing.
- Invest in college completion.

# Long-Lasting Impacts of DWD



- Identifying policies and practices that posed barriers
- Systemic institutional change

# Pair and Share



- What practices have you found most helpful in communicating to students about RT?
- What obstacles have you faced in identifying students eligible for RT?
- What student populations will your team(s) center its RT efforts and why?

# Lessons Learned February 2023

TRANSFER  
**BOOST**



# TransferBOOST Overview



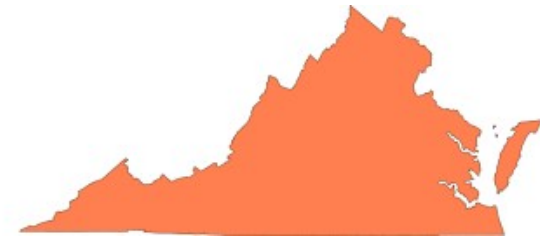
Goal: Increase equity in transfer student outcomes through strengthening supports, improving affordability, and expanding communications. TransferBOOST provides a clear message that credits transfer and apply to degree completion, costs are streamlined, and time-to-degree is minimized.



**Arizona**



**Illinois**



**Virginia**



## HURDLES OF THE TRANSFER PROCESS

43% of credits are lost nationwide through the transfer process.<sup>3</sup>

Loss of transfer credits means taking more classes, which makes costs unclear and creates financial burden for students.

Only 14% of community college students earn a bachelor's degree within 6 years of entry to postsecondary education.<sup>4</sup>

Research suggests that clear information about college costs can go a long way in keeping students on the college path.

## STRATEGIES TO REMOVE HURDLES FOR STUDENTS



### ALL CREDITS TRANSFER SEAMLESSLY

Today's students do not have time nor money to waste. Ensuring credits are seamlessly transferred from a two-year to a four-year institution supports students on their path to a bachelor's degree.



### PROVIDE SET COST

Increasing costs associated with a postsecondary credential, including non-tuition costs, can be an insurmountable barrier for many students. Providing a clear set cost for the entire pathway provides clarity for students.



### CLEAR TIME TO DEGREE

Offering holistic support services (joint outreach, advising, etc.) ensures students stay on their pathway and complete their degree in a timely manner.



### DIRECT COMMUNICATION TO STUDENTS

Developing clear, consistent, and direct messaging designed to connect with students and increase awareness of and participation in a degree pathway can encourage students.



## TransferBOOST: Bachelor's Opportunity Options that are Straightforward and Transparent



### Pathways

- Align Goals
- Identify Existing Transfer Pathway
- High Value

### Price

- Financial Modeling
- Determine Affordability Approach
- Establish sustainable cost structure

### Promote

- Advertise pathway
- Recruit students
- Execute support plans

# PATHWAYS

TRANSFER  
**BOOST**





# Serving transfer students well is an essential enrollment strategy.

- Transfer students provide the potential to grow the enrollment pipeline.
- Ensuring equity in transfer student outcomes requires consistency and intentionality.
- Transfer students enrich colleges with broad life experiences, cultural perspectives, and perseverance.

Robust  
Data  
Analyses

Expanded  
Partnerships

Increased  
Awareness



# Pathways: Spotlights from Illinois

## The Associate of Applied Science degree

- Prepares students to directly enter a career
- Provides a strong academic foundation with specialized knowledge
- Can prepare students well for pursuing a Bachelor's degree to provide advanced knowledge, career advancement and higher salaries



1. Chicago State University & South Suburban College improved a healthcare pathway  
Medical Coding → AAS → BS
2. Governors State University & Moraine Valley CC mapped the AAS to BA to reduce excess credits and allow completion within 120 credits.



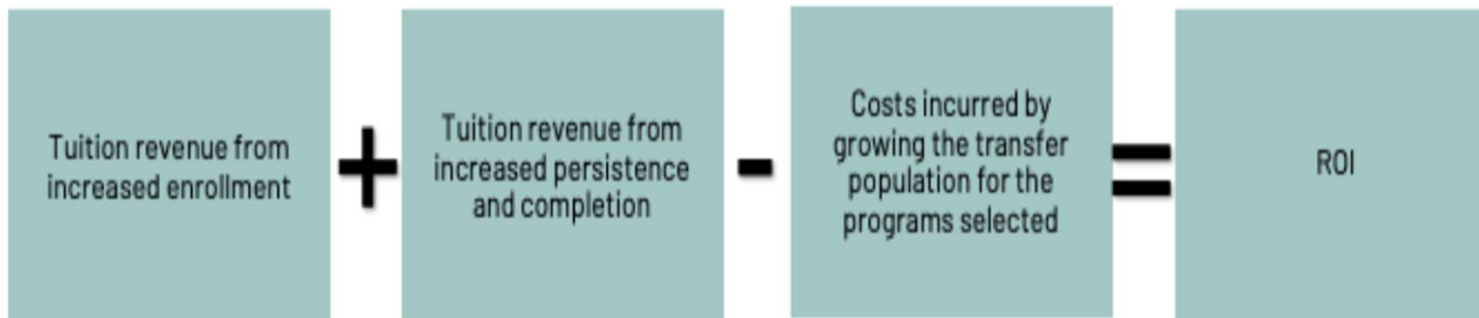
# PRICE

TRANSFER  
**BOOST**




Affordability Financial Tool

**Project and redirect revenue to transfer students to make pathways more affordable.**



1. Clarify projections of new **enrollments**, retention and completion
2. Understand and account for revenue and new **costs**
3. Identify institutional strategy to direct portion of anticipated ROI to **invest** in transfer students



Transfer affordability [brief](#) and [financial tool](#) are found on [www.ihep.org/initiative/transfer-boost](http://www.ihep.org/initiative/transfer-boost) .



## Price: Spotlights from Illinois & Virginia

- Intentionally address affordability challenges faced by transfer students.
- Ensure finances for any affordability efforts come from sustainable sources.

- Governors State University (IL) intends to invest projected ROI in transfer students by committing \$2,500 per student in additional scholarship funds.
- Southern Illinois University Carbondale lowered the GPA threshold for their transfer scholarship.
- Virginia seeks to improve promotion of the statewide transfer grant and extend a CC grant (G3) to transfer pathways.
- University of Mary Washington (VA) is offering \$500 per term to supplement state-level funding.



# PROMOTION

TRANSFER  
**BOOST**



**Jointly communicate the pathway together with clarity and an emphasis on the benefits.**



### TransferBOOST Student Value Proposition

Realize real return on the money, time, and energy invested in boosting your AA/AAS to a 4-year degree.

- 1. Predictable journey** flexibly delivered and supported by both institutions.
- 2. Predictable costs and financial support** within a pathway to 4-year degree.
- 3. Predictable outcomes** that increase income and career opportunities.



(supporting boost messages)

### **Follow a predictable and flexible education pathway**

Boost your associate's degree with a bachelor's degree from X.  
Two great schools. Two powerful degrees. One affordable journey.

*There is no one way to be a college student. Together we can create a pathway to a 4-year degree that fits into your life and your schedule.*

*Start here. Finish there. And seamlessly advance to the next stage of your education and career goal.*

### **Boost-able Attributes**

- Shorter, streamlined, accelerated pathways
- Applicable transfer of credits
- Personalized support/enrollment counseling
- Stay local, remain at CC
- Online or hybrid



# Virginia Sample Messaging Framework



**Boost your Human Services AAS from Tidewater with a BS from Old Dominion.  
Two great schools. Two powerful degrees. One affordable journey.**

## **Follow a predictable and flexible education pathway**

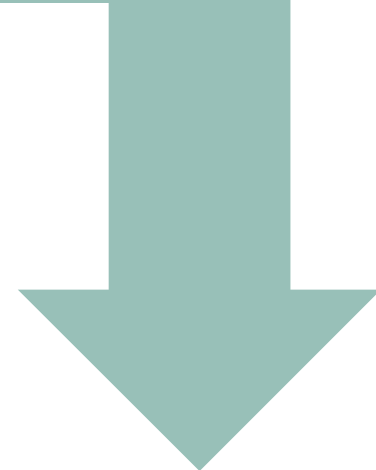
- Clear pathway to completion
- Lower-division General Education courses waived once courses in transfer agreement are completed.

## **Graduate on time with less (and sometimes no) debt**

- Savings from credit applicability
- G3 savings
- Eligible to apply for Transfer Grant, up to \$3,500 upon transfer

## **Leave prepared for a successful career**

- Expanded career opportunities
- The median salary for Mental Health and Substance Abuse Social Workers with a BS is \$47,830.



# Promotion: Spotlight from Arizona

- The Maricopa CC and Northern Arizona U teams developed brochures and pathway-specific promotional materials
  - A joint email was drafted to send to students enrolled in key pathways at MCC
  - Social Media posts during National Transfer Week (Oct. 17th - 21st)
- Other communications in progress include
  - Joint landing page
  - Direct mail



# Braintrust Discussion

Which external partnerships would be beneficial in supporting your IHE's/org's Reverse and Vertical Transfer efforts?

What methods can you use to amplify promising Reverse and Vertical Transfer efforts in your state or region?

How will your team(s) leverage data and student stories to gain internal and external support for your efforts?



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The image features a dense, overlapping collage of colorful sticky notes in shades of pink, blue, green, and yellow. Each note has a large, bold black question mark printed on it. The notes are scattered across the frame, creating a vibrant and busy background. In the center, a semi-transparent white horizontal bar contains the word "Questions?" in a bold, dark blue, sans-serif font.

**Questions?**

# Thank you!

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