



TACKLING TRANSFER

Spotlight on Minnesota

In 2015, the Minnesota legislature created the Minnesota State Transfer Pathways in order to streamline transfer between two- and four-year institutions and improve bachelor’s degree completion rates for transfer students. By August 2020, 244 transfer pathway programs will be implemented across 26 disciplinary pathways. Throughout implementation, it will be essential for the Minnesota State Colleges and Universities system (Minnesota State) to address pathway barriers and identify opportunities to reduce excess credits and shorten time to degree completion for students. In addition, Minnesota State will need to continue elevating transfer and its role in achieving state postsecondary attainment and equity goals. The time is ripe to build upon this progress and sense of urgency to connect transfer to other major student success priorities in the state, such as developmental education reform and guided pathways.

In 2018, the Tackling Transfer partners began working with Minnesota State to support accelerated improvement of transfer efforts. The largest public higher education system in the state, Minnesota State enrolls two-thirds of all Minnesota undergraduates across its 30 two-year colleges and 7 four-year universities. The system serves an increasingly diverse student profile, including large and growing populations of Black, Latinx, Asian subgroups, new Americans, as well as a significant share of rural poor students and tribal populations.

STATE STRATEGIES



Leadership: Support system leaders to drive a goal-setting process that aligns transfer improvement metrics with the Minnesota State Equity 2030 priorities. Support the system in cultivating institutional leaders as “transfer champions” who ensure transfer remains a visible priority among institutional audiences and practitioners.



Student Voice: Partner with Minnesota State leaders and research staff to institutionalize a systemwide approach to conducting high-quality student voice work that captures transfer student experience as part of an overall commitment to student voice. Partner with institutions to conduct independent student voice work as an input to institutional improvement efforts.



Institutional Practice: Adopt a regional strategy by supporting transfer improvement efforts of Metropolitan State University, the four-year institution that serves approximately 70% of all transfer students in the state, and its primary community college partners in the Twin Cities region of the state. Engage transfer specialists with national research and data.



State Policy: Document insights from work on the ground to provide tools for systems leaders and community stakeholders to drive further policy improvements. Partner with statewide equity advocates to ensure transfer is clearly prioritized by those seeking to close equity gaps through higher education reform.

ABOUT TACKLING TRANSFER

Tackling Transfer is a joint project of the Aspen Institute College Excellence Program, HCM Strategists, and Sova that aims to strengthen the conditions needed to scale equitable and measurable improvements in transfer student outcomes. The partners are working intensively within three states—Minnesota, Virginia and Texas—to strengthen state transfer policy, institutional practice, and leadership capacity, while disseminating lessons to influence transfer policy and practice nationally. Tackling Transfer is generously supported by Ascendium Education Philanthropy, ECMC Foundation, The Joyce Foundation, and The Kresge Foundation.



STATE PROGRESS TO DATE

- ✓ Facilitated a systemwide goal-setting process with Minnesota State that yielded a set of core metrics and targets for improving transfer. Metrics were vetted by the Tackling Transfer Champions group and shared with the Leadership Council, Academic Affairs Council, and Transfer Governance Team.
- ✓ Aligned metrics and 2025 benchmarks to [Equity 2030](#), Minnesota State's signature initiative to eliminate equity gaps across its colleges and universities by 2030.
- ✓ Conducted interviews with 9 presidents, including 6 two-year and 3 four-year presidents, to better understand the motivations and challenges institutional leaders face in addressing transfer. Produced a memo for Minnesota State system leaders focused on strengthening support to its institutions.
- ✓ Participated in a systemwide convening of advisors, transfer specialists, registrars and other frontline staff to drive institutional practice and presented at another systemwide convening of academic leaders.
- ✓ Conducted focus groups with 40+ transfer students enrolled at Metro State University—the largest four-year institution in the Minnesota State system—to better understand the transfer student experience. Focus groups revealed insights for institutional, system, and state leaders on the policy and practice challenges that create barriers for transfer students in the Twin Cities region, the part of the state with the highest transfer volume.
- ✓ Completed a case study and improvement 'intel memo' of Metropolitan State University's transfer practices.
- ✓ Consulted with LeadMN and the Minnesota Education Equity Partnership (MnEEP) to understand how state policy advocates can advance transfer student success and inform robust and thoughtful policy conversations.
- ✓ Joined the MnEEP College Race Equity Advocacy Advisory Council (CREAAC) to provide guidance on the policy issues impacting equitable transfer, and to connect MnEEP to Minnesota State's progress on system metrics.
- ✓ Conducted an evaluation of the Pilot Transfer Pathway degree programs (Biology, Business, Psychology, Theater) with 94 college and university discipline faculty. Minnesota State in collaboration with the Charles A. Dana Center, met with faculty in each discipline to discuss better aligning math by discipline. Each of the four *Faculty Communities of Practice* recommended changes to the Transfer Pathway math requirements that would better serve students.
- ✓ Built pivot tools to provide disaggregated student success data by race and gender for all colleges offering a Pilot Transfer Pathway.

A COMMON VISION FOR TRANSFER

The below metrics and 2025 benchmarks were adopted by Minnesota State to elevate and align transfer to the system's Equity 2030 initiative. These metrics and benchmarks were further vetted through the meet-and-confer processes for the system's seven collective bargaining units.

Systemwide Metrics	2025 Benchmarks
Equity Reduce equity gaps overall	- Reduce the gap of all metrics by half
Degree Completion Increase the number of first-time, full-time students completing a baccalaureate degree among community college entrants who are credential seeking.	- From 13% to 18% of first-time, full-time students
Transfer Rate Increase the number of community college students who transfer to a four-year institution without decreasing associate degree, diploma, or certificate completion.	- From 29% to 37% of community college students
College-Level Math and English Completion Increase the number of first-time, full-time students completing college-level math and English in the first year of community college enrollment.	- Math: From 21% to 30% of first-time, full-time students - English: From 44% to 60% of first-time, full-time students
Credit Accumulation in the First Year Increase the number of first-time students completing 20 and 30 credits in the first year of community college and in the first year of university.	- 30 Credits in the First Year of Community College: from 19% to 25% of first-time students - 20 Credits in the First Year of Community College: from 45% to 55% of first-time students - 30 Credits in the First Year of University: from 35% to 45% of first-time students - 20 Credits in the First Year of University: from 72% to 80% of first-time students
Excess Credits Reduce the number of degree credits earned by transfer students (compared to the number earned by direct entry students) who complete a baccalaureate.	- Reduce the difference by half