Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger has proposed that the University of California redirect 3,200 UC eligible freshman applicants to community colleges. Schwarzenegger’s plan calls for these students to be assured an upper-division space at a UC campus and to receive the first two years of instruction at a community college free. Among the many questions raised by this expedient response to revenue shortfalls are fundamental concerns about fairness and equality. Will students who take this route to a UC education have a comparable upper-division experience and be as successful after graduation? Many people, inside and outside the academy, believe that the answer to both questions is, “No.” They think that community college transfer students are less academically prepared for the rigors of degree program work at a UC campus, that transfer students therefore perform more poorly, and that they are less successful after graduation.

What should you tell a prospective student who is considering starting higher education at a community college and then transferring to UC Davis? Based upon the experiences of over 15,000 community college transfer students over the past decade, you should tell them go ahead--that the upper-division college experience and post-graduation performance of transfer students are very similar to those of students who matriculated as new freshmen. Widely held assertions that community college transfers are less able to accomplish degree work and that they are ultimately less able to benefit from the degree earned are far more myth than fact.

Here are 10 salient facts from a variety of local reports, and most recently, the 12 month follow-up of spring 2002 baccalaureate degree recipients. (A list of publications appears at the end of this document.) This summary compares two groups, transfer students, also called advanced standing students, and native students, or students who began as new from high school freshmen.

1. Transfer students are as academically engaged as native students. Transfer students meet as frequently with faculty out of class, and they work both independently and with faculty at the same rate on research and independent creative projects. Transfer students present research at seminars, colloquia, and conferences as often as native students, and transfer students also have equivalent rates of clinical experiences, field work, and internships.

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2. The graduation rates of transfer and native students are very comparable. About 80% of freshmen graduate compared to about 85% of junior transfers. About 90% of native juniors graduate.

3. When rating both their academic experience and overall experience at UC Davis, transfer and native students are similarly satisfied. On a 5-point scale where 5 is very satisfied with the academic experience, the mean responses of transfer and native students are 4.13 and 4.16, respectively. Their ratings of the overall UC Davis experience, academic and other, are likewise comparable, 4.24 (transfers) and 4.35 (natives).

4. Native and transfer students continue studies at graduate and professional schools at similar rates, 40% of native and 32% of transfer students.

5. Native and transfer students earn similar salaries one year after graduation, $34,000 for transfers and $33,500 for natives.

6. About 70% of both native and transfer students attend their first-choice graduate or professional school.

7. Native students, not transfers, are slightly more likely to be unemployed one year after graduation (11.7% v. 9.4%).

8. Transfer students did not attend community college because they were unsure about their objectives. Most transfer students report deciding to take the community college to UC campus route while in high school.

9. Of the 5 most popular majors for native juniors, 4 are also most popular for transfers.

10. Transfer students are no more likely to be underrepresented minority students than are native students. For both groups, 12 to 13% are underrepresented minority students.

References about transfer students at UC Davis available from Report Retriever at
www.sariweb.ucdavis.edu
#318 Survey of 2002 Baccalaureate Degree Recipients
#257 Hooking-Up With UC Davis: Undergraduate Attachment
#233 Prospective Transfer Students' Reactions to UC Davis Communications
#220 Transfer Students: Myths and Reality
#218 Characteristics of Students Transferring to UC Davis from California Community Colleges 1998-1999
#214 Transfer Students 2001 Focus Group Summary
#213 Comparing Aggies from High School with those from Community Colleges
#211 Take the Community College Route to a Selective Public University Degree
#208 Postgraduate Outcomes of Students Who Transfer to UC Davis

Further information is available using interactive Internet tools for reporting and survey analysis at www.sariweb.ucdavis.edu
Transfer Student Report Generator www.sariweb.ucdavis.edu/Transfers/Tsearch.cfm
Undergraduate Survey Analysis Drill-Down Tool www.sariweb.ucdavis.edu/bsrg/BSRG1.html