

“Claim What You’ve Earned” Reverse Transfer Partnership

CSUN Connections is a collaborative effort between California State University, Northridge (CSUN), L.A. Mission College, L.A. Pierce College and L.A. Valley College to streamline student transfer across these four partnering institutions in order to help students reach a degree more efficiently. CSUN Connections targets students who may have gotten off-track through two distinct pathways - “Claim What You’ve Earned” and “Re-Route to Success.”

Like many successful reverse transfer partnerships across the country, Claim What You’ve Earned will help eligible CSUN transfer students obtain an associate degree from a participating CSUN Connections community college. This document contains more information on this reverse transfer pathway.

Re-Route to Success will re-engage CSUN first-time freshmen who have been academically disqualified, with the goal of enrolling them at a participating CSUN Connections community college, and creating a clear path back to CSUN. To learn more about this pathway, visit www.csunconnections.org.

What is reverse transfer?

Reverse transfer refers to the process of transferring college course credit back to a community college in order to fulfill the degree requirements of an associate degree program. This is considered a “reverse” process, as students typically transfer credits in the other direction—from a community college to a four-year institution in order to fulfill the requirements of a bachelor’s degree. Through the Claim What You’ve Earned reverse transfer pathway, transfer students may combine credits earned across multiple colleges and universities in order to receive their associate degree from a participating CSUN Connections community college. In this way, students can “claim” what they have already earned, even as they continue working toward a bachelor’s degree.

Why focus on reverse transfer?

Research shows that a great majority of community college students transfer to a four-year institution without first completing an associate degree. Many of these students accumulate more than 60 credits along the way, though they tend to focus on completing requirements for a general transfer curriculum rather than for a particular associate degree program. Once at a four-year institution, community college students face steep odds to completion.

At CSUN, 83% of the fall 2010 transfer cohort entered without an associate degree. Six years later, about one in five of these transfer students left CSUN without earning a bachelor’s degree. When the CSUN Connections partners further examined CSUN student records, they identified more than 700 students who transferred from L.A. Mission, Pierce, and Valley colleges in the fall 2014, 2015, and 2016 terms and who were no longer enrolled

at CSUN. While these students left CSUN in good academic standing, they had neither a bachelor's nor an associate degree to show for their efforts. This is the population of students that the Claim What You've Earned pathway aims to help.

How is CSUN Connections implementing reverse transfer?

In order to identify which students would be good candidates for the Claim What You've Earned reverse transfer pathway, the CSUN Connections partners conducted an electronic transcript exchange and preliminary degree audit.

First, CSUN electronically shared all transcript data on file for each student with the student's home community college. This not only included transcripts for CSUN and the home community college, but also for any other college or university that they student may have attended and submitted to CSUN during the admissions process. Home community colleges were defined as the community college where the student completed the most credit prior to transfer.

Counselors at L.A. Mission, Pierce, and Valley colleges then reviewed student transcript data to determine if the student had already met all of the requirements for an associate degree program. A student may have satisfied associate degree requirements with just their community college coursework or through a combination of coursework from their home community college, CSUN, and/or any other colleges attended. In a few cases, counselors found that students had satisfied all the requirements for two separate associate degrees. These students are considered "Completers" on the Claim What You've Earned pathway.

Not every student who the CSUN Connections partners identified for the Claim What You've Earned pathway will have met all requirements for an associate degree. In some cases, students may be just a few credits shy of completing an associate degree. These students are considered "Near-Completers" on the Claim What You've Earned pathway.

How are students being contacted regarding their eligibility for Claim What You've Earned?

The CSUN Connection partners have leveraged The Center for Visual Communication (VISCOM) at CSUN, a student-run creative agency to develop communications tools and outreach materials for the Claim What You've Earned project. VISCOM has developed a project website and other materials that will be utilized for student outreach. Visit the project website at www.csunconnections.org.

The CSUN Admissions Office will send students an initial email communication to notify students of their progress toward an associate degree. CSUN will send this communication to all student email addresses on file, including previous CSUN and community college email accounts. "Completers" who have already met all associate degree requirements will

be advised of their status and instructed on how to receive their degree. “Near-Completers” who have a few credits left to go will be notified of their status and advised on how to re-enroll at the community college.

The email communication will also list the primary points of contact for CSUN and for the student’s home community college, as well as a link to Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs).

How is each community college implementing reverse transfer?

Each community college has designated a primary point of contact for CSUN Connections. This contact person will work closely with “Completers” to award the appropriate associate degree(s), and with “Near-Completers” to help them re-enroll at the community college for an upcoming term in order to complete outstanding associate degree requirements.

Understanding that some of these students may have had negative experiences pursuing higher education, the goal is to connect the student with a CSUN Connections advisor who can provide individualized help to navigate all administrative processes (i.e. gaining re-admission, applying for financial aid, completing an educational plan, registering for courses, etc.) and help remove any potential barriers. The CSUN Connections advisor will serve as a “one-stop” point of contact who will assist the student from start to finish so that the student does not have to bounce between numerous individuals at the college.

The designated CSUN Connections counselors are as follows:

CSUN	Geraldine E. Sare Undergraduate Studies	dean.sare@csun.edu (818) 677-6968
L.A. Mission College	Diana Bonilla Student Success Center	bonilladi@lamission.edu (818) 364-7655
L.A. Pierce College	Career & Transfer Center <i>Student Last Name Starting with the Letters A-K:</i> Akadina Amrekhasadeh <i>Student Last Name Starting with the Letters L-Z:</i> Judy Lam	amrekha@piercecollege.edu (818) 710- 2907 Lamj2@piercecollege.edu (818) 710-2907
L.A. Valley College	Anita Martinez Counseling Department	martina@lavc.edu (818) 947- 2794

What are the benefits associated with completing an associate degree?

Completing an associate degree on the way to a bachelor's degree offers students real benefits. Data from the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics shows that associate degree holders enjoy median earnings that are 8% higher than that of individuals with "some college" but no degree. For the millions of nontraditional students who balance school with work, family, and other life responsibilities, this immediate labor market return can be significant.

Beyond a bump in earnings, associate degree attainment also provides students important motivation to continue on the path to a bachelor's degree. The Community College Research Center at Columbia University Teachers College reports that students who earn an associate degree have higher probabilities of completing a baccalaureate degree.

Lastly, earning an associate degree may help the student advance in their career trajectory by qualifying them for jobs that have higher education requirements or making them eligible for promotion at their current jobs.