


Alamo Colleges District Transfer Compact

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August 2024

Fletcher, C. (2024). Alamo Colleges District Transfer Compact. Trellis Strategies.


Most incoming community college students, about 80 percent, intend to transfer to a four-year institution in the future. However, only one-third had transferred within six years. Additionally, only 16 percent of incoming community college students attain a bachelor's degree within six years.¹ According to a 2017 GAO analysis, students lose about 43 percent of their college credits when they transfer (or about 13 credit hours), on average. This translates to about a semester's worth of classes for a full-time student and can mean significant time and money loss for these students. With about a third of first-time students transferring schools within six years, transfer losses can impact a significant portion of college students.² Research has shown that credit loss among students transferring from community colleges to four-year institutions plays a significant role in bachelor's degree attainment.³



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What is the Transfer Compact

The Alamo Colleges District (ACD) created the South Central Transfer Compact (Compact) in partnership with Texas A&M University and Austin Community College to promote transfer among community college students, and create more efficient and seamless pathways to reduce costs for students and increase student success at the transfer institution.

The core of the Compact is the Transfer Advising Guides (TAGs). There is a unique TAG for each partner institution and major within the institution. The TAGs list each ACD course, the course that it fulfills at the partner institution, and how many credit hours will transfer. The TAGs are designed to provide the fastest path to a university transfer for students. To encourage faster degree progression, students who complete at least 18 hours during the fall and spring semesters combined are eligible to take up to 9 free credit hours over the summer.

Because the guides are specific to each major at each institution, they work best for students who know what they want to study and where they want to transfer. However, they are still beneficial for students who are unsure about their major or transfer institution. ACD advisors check in with students at key credit hour accumulation benchmarks to ensure students are still on their desired path.

Partner Institutions

Public Universities

- Angelo State University
- Sam Houston State University
- Texas A&M University – Central Texas
- Texas A&M University – Corpus Christi
- Texas A&M University – Kingsville
- Texas A&M University – San Antonio
- Texas State University
- Texas Tech University
- University of Texas at San Antonio
- University of Texas Health Science Center – San Antonio
- University of Texas at Rio Grande Valley

Private Universities

- Concordia University
- St. Edward’s University
- Huston-Tillotson University
- St. Mary’s University
- Our Lady of the Lake University
- Schreiner University
- Texas Lutheran University
- University of the Incarnate Word
- Wayland Baptist University

Partner Institutions

When the Compact launched in 2015, ACD had seven partners. Today they have 20 partners across South and Central Texas, and a growing list of interested institutions.

ACD has a memorandum of understanding with the 20 partner institutions that protect the students’ degree path for five years, meaning the transfer institution will honor the courses and credit hours outlined in the guide for five years once they begin on the path. More than 8,300 ACD students transferred to a Compact school in 2020.

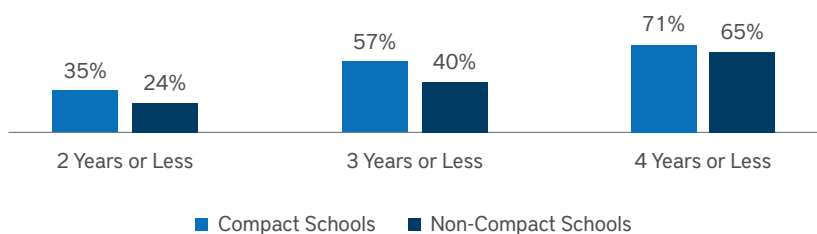
Benefits of the Compact

Successful transfers through the Compact have higher GPAs and higher retention compared to transfer students in prior years, more ACD students are enrolling full-time compared to before the Compact, and students are taking fewer excess credit hours to complete their ACD degree.

Over half of the TAGs are Seamless Transfer Pathways, where there is zero loss of credit hours in the transfer process if the student follows the outlined pathway. In 2020, ACD Compact students who had no excess credit hours collectively saved up to \$374 million on tuition costs. Among those who followed a Seamless Transfer Pathway, students who transferred to a public university saved an average of \$40,215 and those who transferred to a private university saved an average of \$54,435.

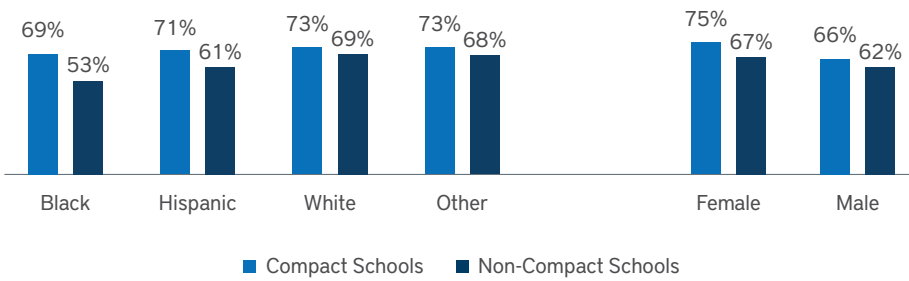
An analysis by Trellis Strategies found further evidence of the efficacy of the Compact. ACD students who transferred to Compact schools graduated at significantly higher rates than those who had transferred to schools not participating in the Compact. Graduation rates increased for all students the longer they remained at their transfer institution, but even after being at the transfer institution for a full four years, a higher percentage of students had graduated from Compact schools compared to non-Compact schools.

Percent of Students who Received Bachelor’s Degrees at Transfer Institution by Years at Transfer Institution



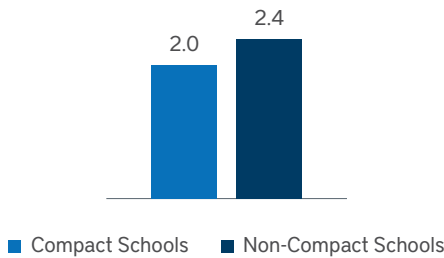
White students and students of other race/ethnicities were slightly more likely to graduate from their transfer institution within four years compared to Black and Hispanic students. However, across all race/ethnicities, students at Compact institutions graduated at higher rates compared to students at non-Compact institutions, and this was especially pronounced for Black and Hispanic students. These significant differences hold even after controlling for other factors such as credits accumulated before transfer, academic standing, and age. Both female and male students graduate at higher rates when transferring to Compact institutions compared to non-Compact institutions.

Percent of Students who Received Bachelor's Degree at Transfer Institution within Four Years by Race and Gender

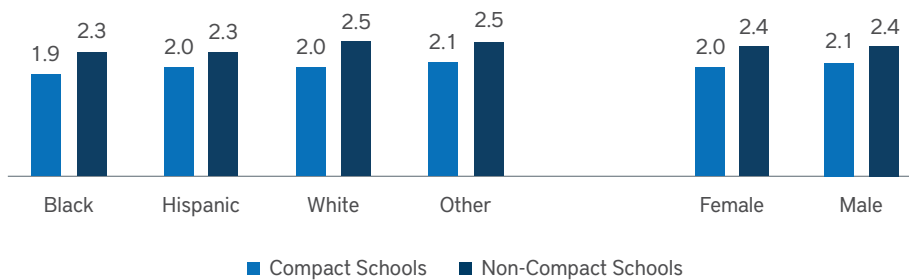


On average, students who earned a bachelor's degree from a Compact school spent less time at the Compact institution than those who earned a bachelor's degree from a non-Compact institution. Black students who earned a bachelor's degree do so in slightly less time than students of other races at both Compact (1.9 years) and non-Compact (2.3 years) institutions. Male students who graduate from Compact institutions take slightly longer than female students (2.1 vs. 2.0 years).

Average Years at Transfer Institution For Students Who Earned a Bachelor's Degree in Four Years or Less



Average Years at Transfer Institution for Students Who Earned a Bachelor's Degree in Four Years or Less, by Gender and Race/Ethnicity



In conclusion, analysis of transfer data from the National Student Clearinghouse indicates that students who transfer from an Alamo Colleges District school to a Compact school are more likely to graduate, more likely to accumulate more credits prior to transferring, and more likely to earn their bachelor's degree in less time compared to students who transfer to a non-Compact institution. Overall, students transferring to Compact schools show better outcomes than those who transfer to non-Compact schools.



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- ¹ Velasco, T., Fink, J., Bedoya, M., Jenkins, D., & LaViolet, T. (2024). *Tracking Transfer: Community College Effectiveness in Broadening Bachelor's Degree Attainment*. Community College Research Center, The Aspen Institute College Excellence Program, National Student Clearinghouse Research Center. <https://ccrc.tc.columbia.edu/publications/Tracking-Transfer-Community-College-and-Four-Year-Institutional-Effectiveness-in-Broadening-Bachelors-Degree-Attainment.html>.
- ² U.S. Government Accountability Office (2017). Higher Education: Students Need More Information to Help Reduce Challenges in Transferring College Credits. <https://www.gao.gov/assets/gao-17-574.pdf>.
- ³ Monaghan, D. and Attewell, P. (2015). The Community College Route to the Bachelor's Degree. *Educational Evaluation and Policy Analysis*, 37(1), 70-91. <https://doi.org/10.3102/O162373714521865>.
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ALAMO
COLLEGES
DISTRICT

About Alamo Colleges District

The Alamo Colleges District and its five colleges have a long history with the San Antonio community. The Alamo Colleges District service area includes Atascosa, Bandera, Bexar, Comal, Guadalupe, Kendall, Kerr and Wilson counties.

- Largest provider of higher education in South Texas (100,000+ students).
- We represent the diversity of our community (81% minority).
- 10,684 degrees and certificates were awarded in FY 2021.
- Students graduating from the Alamo Colleges District have an average number of credits of 63.5 for their associate's degree.
- The average associate degree graduate from the Alamo Colleges District will see an increase in earnings of \$9,400 each year, compared to someone with a high school diploma working in Texas.

Trellis Strategies

About Trellis Strategies

Trellis Strategies is a leading strategic nonprofit research and consulting firm focused on advancing postsecondary education and strengthening the workforce. Our commitment is to provide unparalleled insights into the modern learner experience, spanning from application through graduation. Leveraging over four decades of experience in serving higher education institutions and assisting students in navigating intricate processes, Trellis Strategies' dedicated team possesses the knowledge, insight, and expertise to empower organizations to turn data into impactful action and tangible results.

We are dedicated to the belief that education serves as the cornerstone for unlocking new opportunities, fostering individual economic mobility, and growing community prosperity. For more information, visit our website: www.trellisstrategies.org/about-us/

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