

AICCU

The Association of Independent California Colleges and Universities (AICCU) is made up of 85 independent higher education institutions in California (ICCU). While AICCU serves many functions for its members, its Advocacy & Government Relations division represents its members' interests in policy discussions at the federal and state levels. AICCU was involved in the discussions preceding the ADT Commitment and continues to hold talks with lawmakers regarding the policy's future. Furthermore, AICCU collects data on the sector's compliance with ADT Commitment requirements.

The ADT Commitment

The Associate Degree for Transfer (ADT) Commitment requires California's independent higher education sector to admit a minimum number of ADT students each year. Before the ADT Commitment, the ADT program made transfer requirements and credits uniformly applicable across public four-year institutions. Furthermore, it guaranteed that students would receive associate's degrees and admission to a CSU school. This program was meant to mitigate the complexity of the transfer system for California Community College (CCC) students and improve key outcomes for students (time to completion, rates of completion, and cost of attendance). The ADT Commitment extended this public program to the sector of independent institutions. The policy incentivizes AICCU members to admit ADT students by threatening to reduce their students' Cal Grant funding levels if the collective sector does not meet the quota.

Figure 1: Annual Collective ICCU Transfer Quotas and Recorded Admits¹

Year	AB-1809 Quota (enacted 2018)	SB-77 Quota (enacted 2019)	SB-116 Quota (enacted 2020)	ADT Admits Recorded
2018-2019	2,000	Postponed	Postponed	869
2019-2020	3,000	2,000	Postponed	2,372
2020-2021	3,500	3,000	3,000	TBD
2021-2022	Formula	3,500	3,500	TBD
2022-2023	Formula	Formula	Formula	TBD

Project Scope and Methods

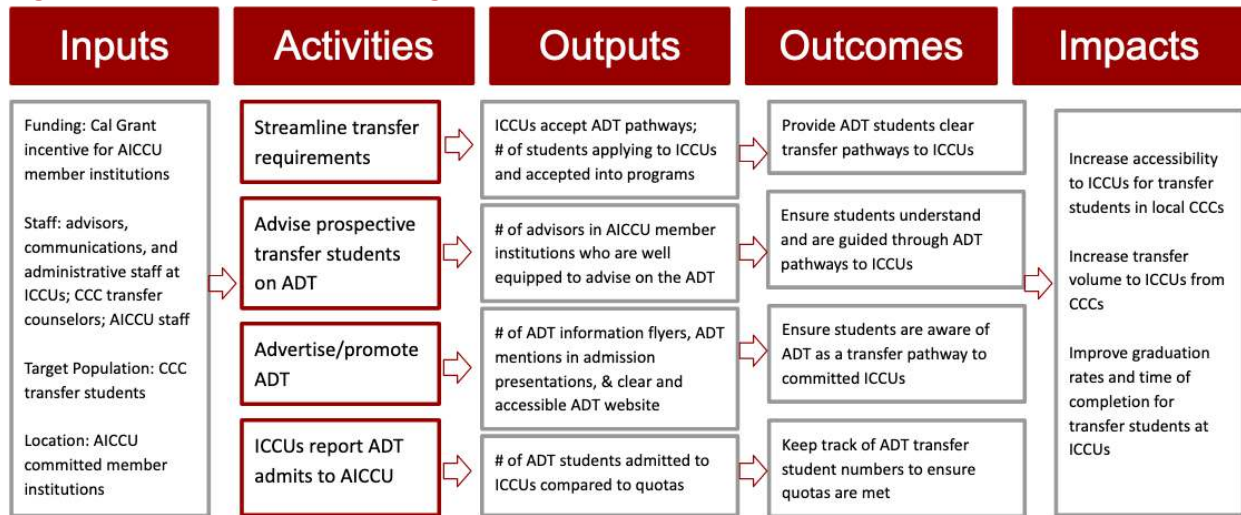
Serving as consultants for AICCU, a team of graduate students from the University of Southern California's Sol Price School of Public Policy conducted an implementation evaluation of the ADT Commitment. The authors analyzed early evidence of progress toward policy goals and identified areas where stakeholders could take action to improve implementation. To guide the research process, the team constructed a logic model and analyzed the interests of key stakeholder groups. The team reviewed quantitative data from public databases as well as qualitative data collected in 18 stakeholder interviews, an evaluation of AICCU member websites, and a proprietary survey of administrators at AICCU member institutions. The analysis led to several key findings related to policy goal progress, unintended consequences, and program activities. The team also arrived at four recommendations to increase the policy's chances of meeting its goals.

¹ Higher education trailer bill, AB-1809, California State Assembly (2018); Postsecondary education trailer bill, SB-116, California State Assembly (2020); Higher education trailer bill, SB-77, California State Assembly (2019).

Findings

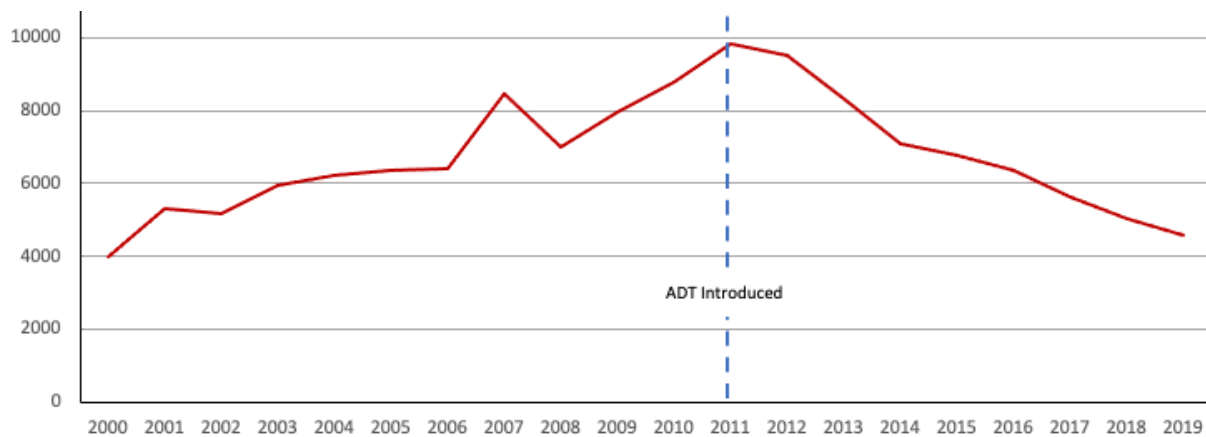
ADT Commitment Logic Model: The logic model provides a concrete framework that gives analysts a clear and objective understanding of the elements that are essential to the program’s successful implementation. Since the implementation evaluation focuses on activities, each activity in the logic model is a criteria against which analysts evaluated actual program activities.

Figure 2: ADT Commitment Logic Model



Progress Toward Increasing Transfer Volume: The policy’s goal is to increase transfer volume from CCCs to ICCUs, but the sector has met challenges, with overall transfer volume declining since 2011. The sector is adapting to a new standard, having previously relied on customized transfer pathways from individual CCCs. While ADT transfer volume is increasing, overall CCC transfer volume is still declining. A holistic emphasis on all CCC transfer students - rather than just ADT students - would allow ICCUs to adapt to a new transfer landscape while serving the broader policy goal. It is early to recommend an alteration of the policy, but a continued downward trend should prompt legislators to reevaluate the quota’s emphasis on ADT students.

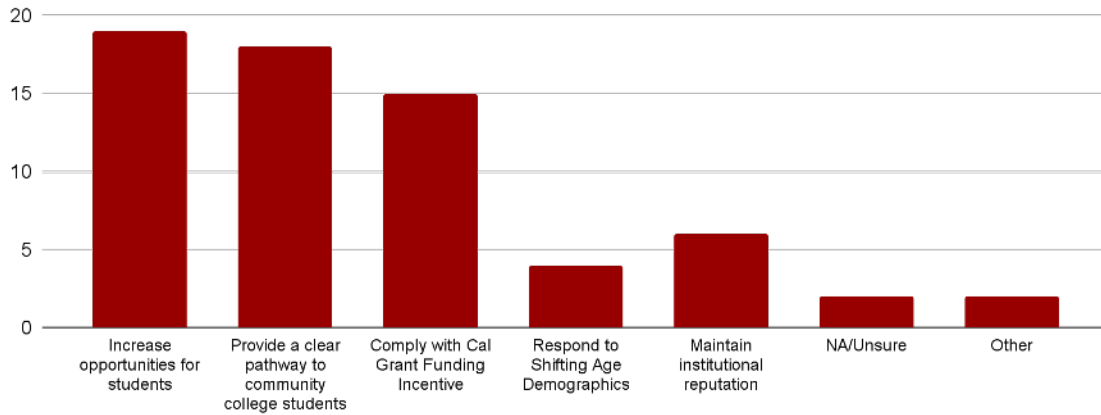
Figure 3: CCC-to-ICCU Transfer Volume²



² California Community Colleges Chancellor’s Office (2021). “Management Information Systems Data Mart.”

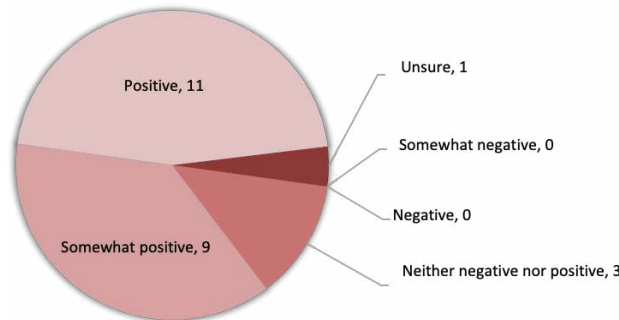
Progress Toward Increasing Accessibility: AICCU and ICCUs are committed to increasing accessibility across institutions and serving California’s transfer students.³ Increasing the accessibility of ICCUs, particularly for CCC students, is critical to increasing the number of bachelor’s degree holders in the state.⁴ However, due to a combination of increasing tuition costs and stagnated Cal Grant funding, ICCUs are perceived as inaccessible - a barrier to entry that deters students from considering ICCUs. The ADT Commitment is a tool to increase opportunities and perceptions of accessibility for CCC transfer students. CCC transfer students indicated that the ADT makes a four-year ICCU degree more accessible and affordable.

Figure 4: What motivated your institution to join the AICCU ADT Commitment?⁵



Program Activity - Streamlining the Transfer Process: ADT is intended to provide clear and easy-to-follow transfer pathways. Streamlining the process has the potential to reduce excess courses, save students money, and increase transfer rates from CCCs to four-year institutions.⁶ By simplifying requirements, ADT has made it easier for counselors to advise prospective transfer students - these counselors saw ADT as supplements to - rather than replacements for - existing pathways. Students felt that ADT made the transfer process clearer, but it is important to note that there is still no concrete evidence to suggest that ADT improves transfer student outcomes at ICCUs. Furthermore, ADT students’ options for majors are limited.

Figure 5: Survey Results – How would you rate the impact of the ADT program on improving the clarity of the transfer process for students?⁷



³ AICCU (2020), “Associate Degree for Transfer Commitment Status Report 2020.” *The Association of Independent California Colleges and Universities*, https://cdn.ymaws.com/aiccu.edu/resource/resmgr/publications/2020/aiccu_annual_state_adt_statu.pdf

⁴ Johnson, H., Mejia, M.C., Bohn, S. (2015). *Will California Run Out of College Graduates?* San Francisco, CA: Public Policy Institute of California.

⁵ USC MPP Practicum Team for AICCU (2021), *ADT survey of AICCU member institution administrators*, USC Price School.

⁶ Baker, R., Friedmann, E., Kurlaender, M. (2018). *Associate Degrees for Transfer: A Snapshot of Progress Across California Community Colleges*. Wheelhouse: The Center for Community College Leadership and Research. Davis, CA.

⁷ USC MPP Practicum Team for AICCU (2021), *ADT survey of AICCU member institution administrators*, USC Price School.

Program Activity - Communications: Successful implementation requires accessible and effective communication among key stakeholder groups—students, transfer counselors, and admission staff at ICCUs. Communications activities fall into two primary groups—ensuring sufficient ADT information is accessible and establishing clear channels of communication between CCCs and participating ICCUs. However, there is a lack of communication in both areas. Proper communication can ensure that students are fully aware of transfer options and that CCC and ICCU administrators collaborate to make the transfer process more accessible.

Program Activity - Student Advising: Student counseling and advising are vital to ADT completion and successful transfer to four-year institutions. Partly due to the recency of the ADT Commitment, many students entering CCCs with intent to transfer are still unaware of the ADT program.⁸ Any growth in the ADT program will rely on information availability and guidance from both CCC transfer counselors and ICCU transfer admissions officers.

Table 7: Best Advising Practices for CCC Counselors and ICCU Counselors⁹

Best Advising Practices for CCCs	Best Advising Practices for ICCUs
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Clearly articulate students' transfer options and help them determine, as early as possible, their field of interest, major of study, and preferred transfer destination. 2. Continuously monitor student progress, provide frequent feedback, and intervene quickly when students are off track. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Commit dedicated personnel, structures, and resources for transfer students. 2. Assign advisors and clearly communicate essential information to prospective transfer students. 3. Strongly encourage transfer students to choose a major prior to transfer.

Unintended Consequences: The research team also identified several unintended consequences related to administrative burdens, new conversations about transfer pathways at ICCUs, and the Cal Grant incentive. Interview subjects identified data collection as an administrative burden but did not perceive ADT-related administrative processes as burdensome. Furthermore, the ADT Commitment has generated some new discussions around reforming existing transfer policies at ICCUs. Finally, the Cal Grant incentive's design joins two distinct issues, creates collective action problems, and imposes a punitive mechanism that could hurt the students the policy intends to help. While these findings did not lead to actionable recommendations, they should be considered in holistic discussions of the policy's future.

Recommendations

- ❑ Monitor overall CCC transfer numbers for a continued declining trend. Consider revising the quota's criteria to count all CCC transfer students.
- ❑ Improve ADT web pages at ICCUs to facilitate student access to ADT-specific information at each committed institution.
- ❑ Review gaps in communications and install communication liaisons at ICCUs and CCCs to ensure consistent information flow about program requirements.
- ❑ Establish a two-pronged advising approach - at both CCCs and ICCUs - and implement best practices to make students aware of all available transfer options.

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⁸ J. Constantouros & Heiman, J. (2015). Implementation Update: Reforming Transfer From CCC to CSU. LAO.

⁹ Wyner, J. et al. (2016) *The Transfer Playbook: Essential Practices for Two- and Four-Year Colleges*. The Aspen Institute Community College Research Center, Teachers College Columbia University.