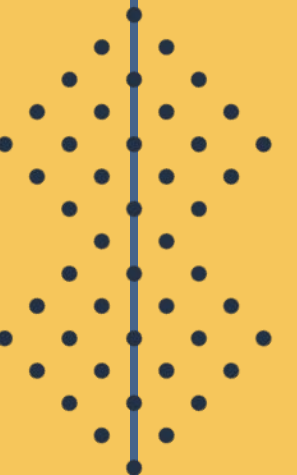




STUDENT FOCUS GROUPS FINDINGS

SACRAMENTO K16 COLLABORATIVE

DECEMBER 11, 2024





CLP TEAM



Sherry Shojaei

Director



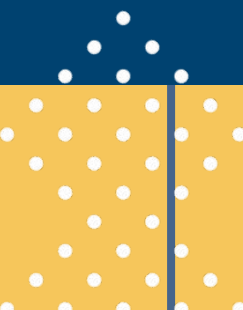
Byron Reaves

Director



Cristina Sandoval - Lazaro

Senior Program Associate

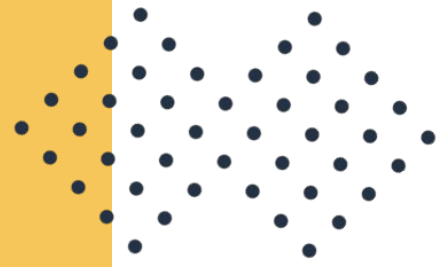


AGENDA

1. Overview of of Focus Groups
2. Research Methods
 - a. Protocol
 - b. Research Participants
 - c. Research Considerations
3. Findings
4. Questions?
5. Recommendations

OVERVIEW OF FOCUS GROUPS

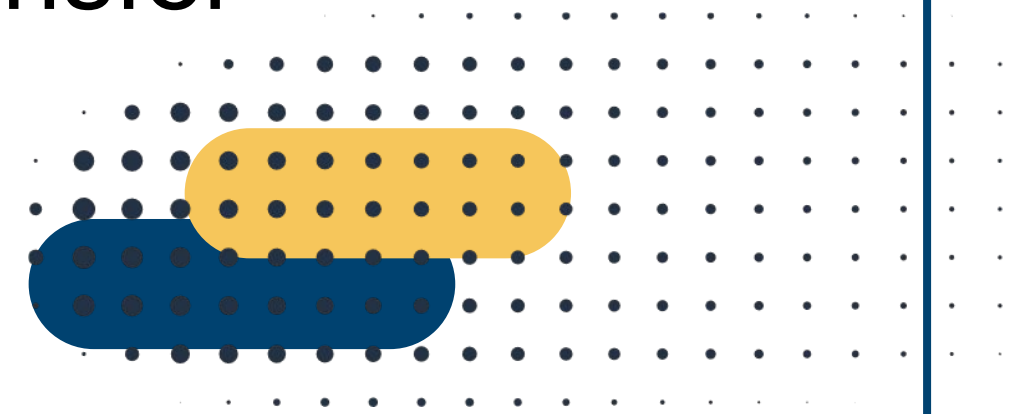




GOAL

The purpose of these focus groups was to gain insights into the specific challenges faced by adult learners, first-generation students, and students of color on their transfer journey.

By centering student voices, these findings aim to help the Sacramento K-16 Collaborative in making meaningful improvements to support students navigating the transfer process.



RESEARCH

METHODS

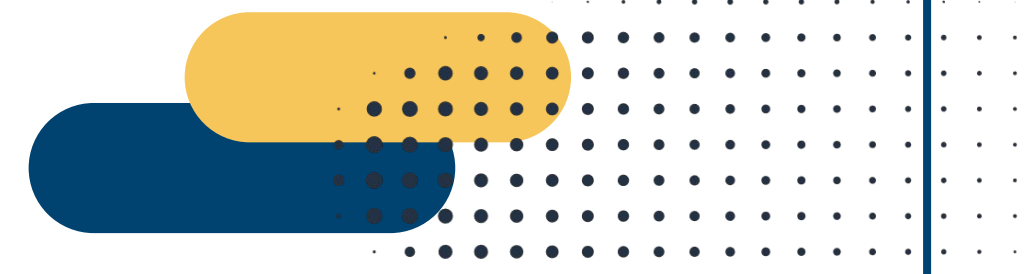




RESEARCH METHODS

CLP conducted five focus groups (40 Students) with the following populations:

1. Lake Tahoe Community College students who are adult learners or students of color (5 students);
2. adult learners (12 students);
3. students of color (6 students);
4. first-generation students (10 students);
5. a general/nonspecific group that students could opt into (7 students).



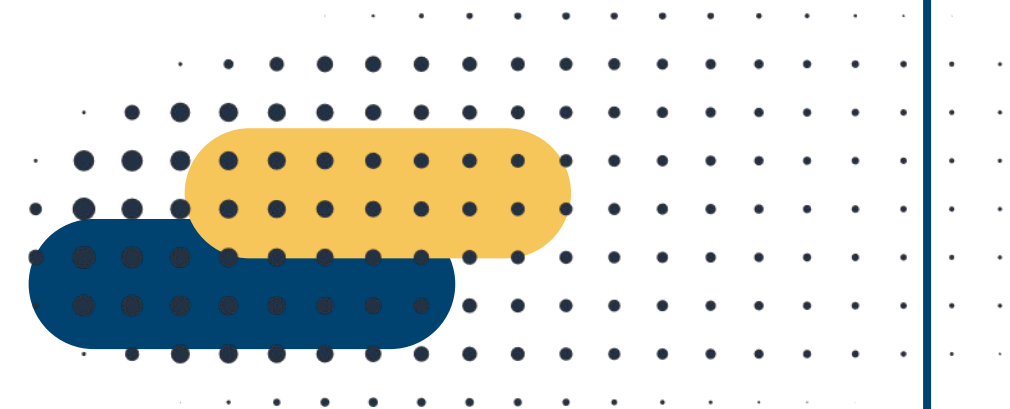


PROTOCOL

The questions posed to participants sought to understand students' experience of the transfer process including where and how they obtained information about the process, support received from counselors, and challenges they experienced. Participants were also asked what support and resources the college could provide to make the transfer process easier.

Example of questions asked:

- When you first started at (name of college), was your goal to transfer?
- When you developed interest in transfer, where did you go to seek help for your transfer options?
- *As a student of (color, adult student, first generation) in what ways can your institution be more helpful when introducing the transfer journey?*





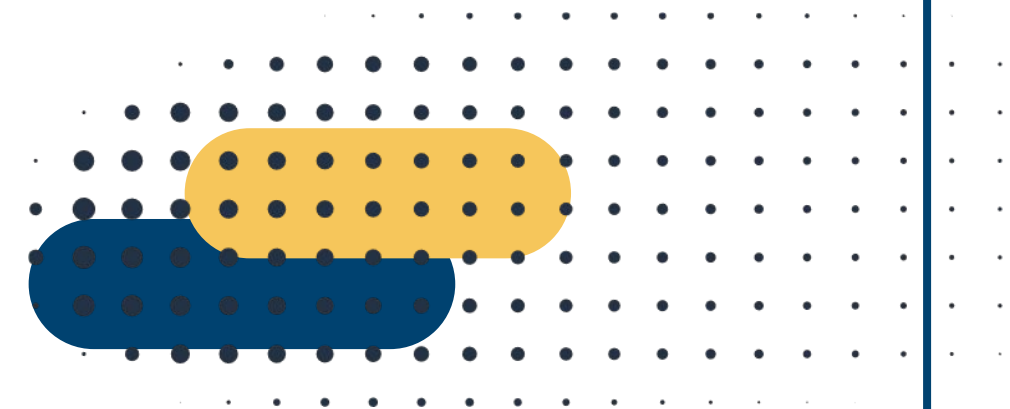
RESEARCH PROCESS/PROTOCOL

- **January - April 2024:**
 - Convened with collaborative to define research questions and identify demographic groups
 - Developed focus group interview questions, recruitment process, shared with collaborative
 - CLP designed and shared methods for recruitment with K-16 leads to communicate with appropriate college personnel
 - Colleges were asked to recruit students who met the criteria
- **April 2024:** CLP facilitated Lake Tahoe focus group
- **Summer 2024:**
 - Capitol Impact asked college leads for support in a second round of student recruitment
 - CLP worked with the college leads and IR teams that responded to initiate recruitment of students
- **September 2024:** CLP conducted an additional 4 focus groups



RESEARCH CONSIDERATIONS

- **Zoom**
 - Geographic location
 - Technology access
- **Student Recruitment**
 - Challenges in obtaining student list



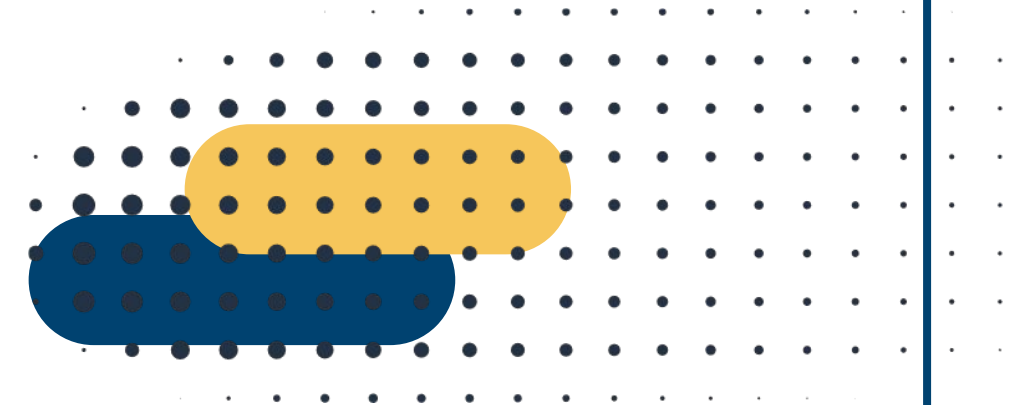
FINDINGS





OVERVIEW

- **Students shared the importance of human connection in fostering a sense of belonging and feel supported and welcome on campus.**
 - Common cultural background
 - Instructional and counseling faculty making an effort to connect with students and share stories about their own educational journeys
- **Importance of receiving clear, understandable information about transfer early in the student educational journey.**



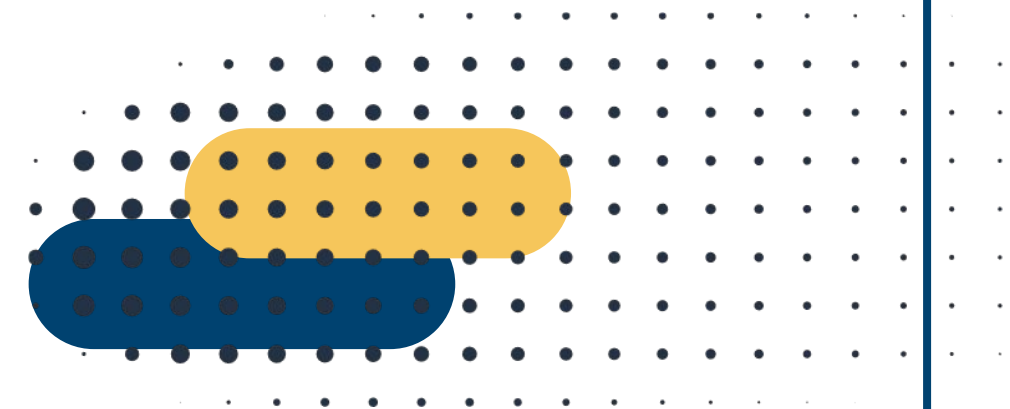




LAKE TAHOE

- **Counseling faculty, especially those working with special programs, helped students to connect to resources and navigate the transfer process.**
- **A need for financial and basic needs support is constant for many students.**

Shared Findings across all groups:

- *A lack of early information about the transfer process contributed to a stressful process.*
- *Instructional faculty who made an effort to connect or who shared a common cultural background helped students feel supported in their transfer exploration.*





Honestly, to help students overcome challenges the school could just be more open about what students need to do. I am in my third quarter and still feel lost like I am going through the classes without knowing what to expect.

- Student



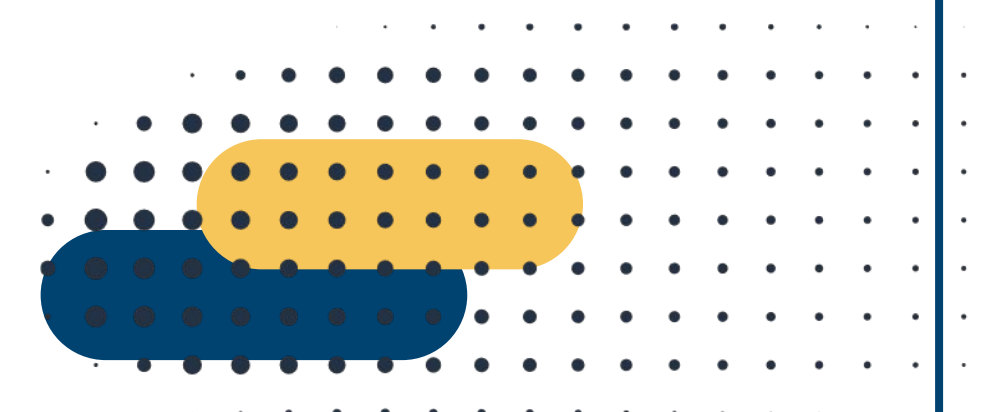




ADULT LEARNERS

- **Adult learners were less likely to have received information from a counselor and more likely to have done their own research about transfer before enrolling in community college.**
- **Adult students want a place to connect with other adult students and sometimes felt like they didn't fit into the college culture.**

Shared Findings across all groups:

- *Counselors and instructors who share a cultural connection and who made an effort to connect were an important part of developing a sense of belonging for adult learners.*

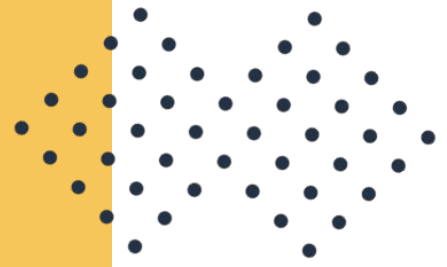




"Connecting with those further along
could help... adults face unique hurdles
in the process."

- Student



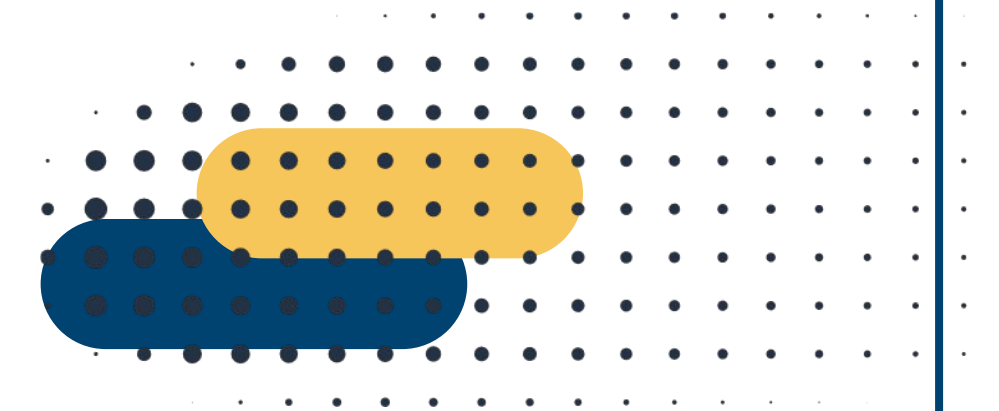



STUDENTS OF COLOR

- Counselors are critical for supporting students through their completion and transfer processes.
- Overcoming stereotypes that students of color can't succeed in college is a significant issue.

Shared Findings across all groups:

- *Students found that the clarity, timing, and online accessibility of information about the transfer process needs work.*
- *More information about financial aid and other financial resources helps students to envision their path to a transfer institution.*





**"As a woman of color in STEM...
sometimes I feel looked down upon by
white male professors."**

- Student





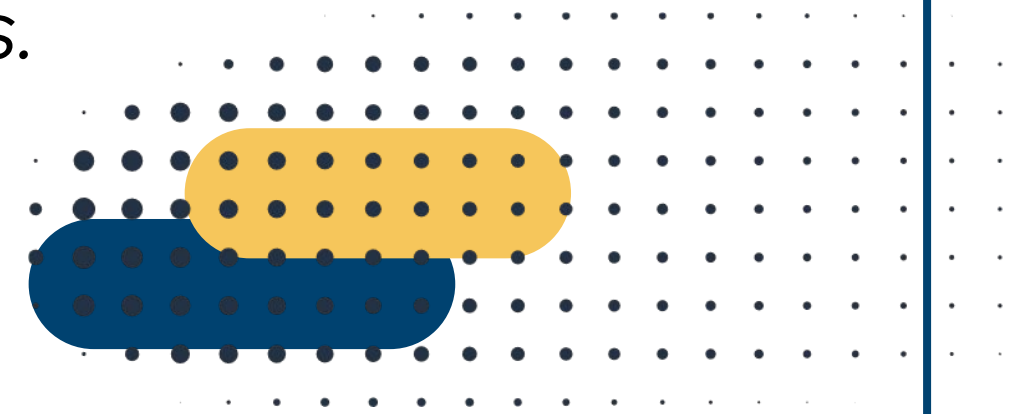
FIRST GENERATION COLLEGE




STUDENT

- Connecting with other students and hearing from alumni who have completed the journey is very helpful.

Shared Findings across all groups:

- *Counselor guidance was crucial for their motivation and persistence throughout their time at community college through transferring.*
- *Timely information is a key way that colleges can support students.*





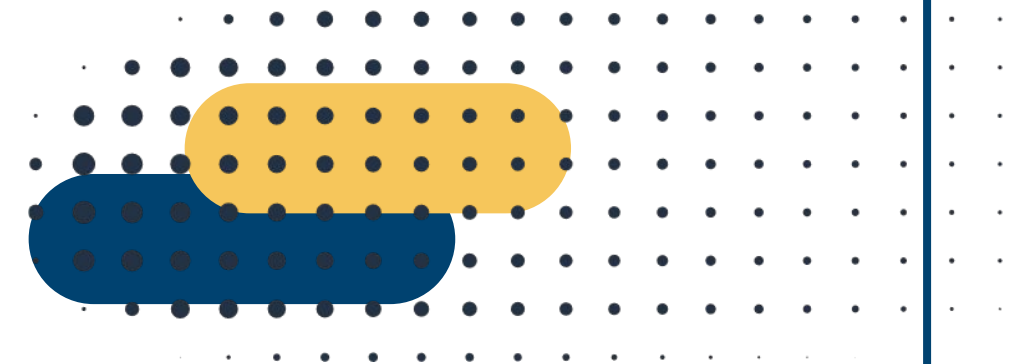
“I'm thankful to have like a counselor who was very experienced with 1st generation students. I think she was a 1st generation student herself ... A really big thing was she made it feel comfortable to build like a personal connection and like when I was on campus I'd see her regularly. And so I think the during the meetings that we had she already had a feel for, like what I prioritize and what's important to me, and like what my budget is.”




- Student



GENERAL/ NON SPECIFIC

- Students felt connected to their counselors especially when the counselors also shared aspects of their cultural identity.
- Students felt that the transfer process was introduced too late, recommending an early and continual communication about the transfer process.
- Connections to other students and alumni would help current community college students to navigate the college transfer process and career exploration.





“It would be super helpful if students or graduates who already did the transfer process would have assemblies or meetings with people who are thinking of transferring or are in the process to help guide us.... We can connect more and ask them questions about their experience.”

- Student

QUESTIONS

?



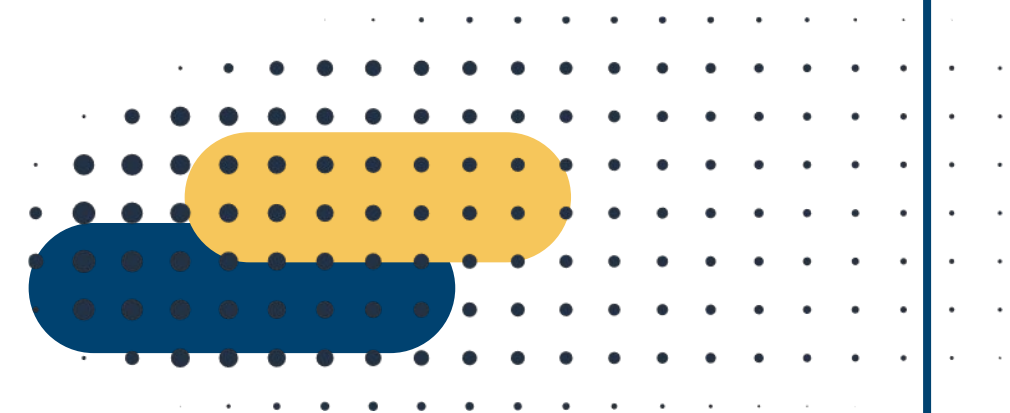
RECOMMENDATIONS





RECOMMENDATIONS

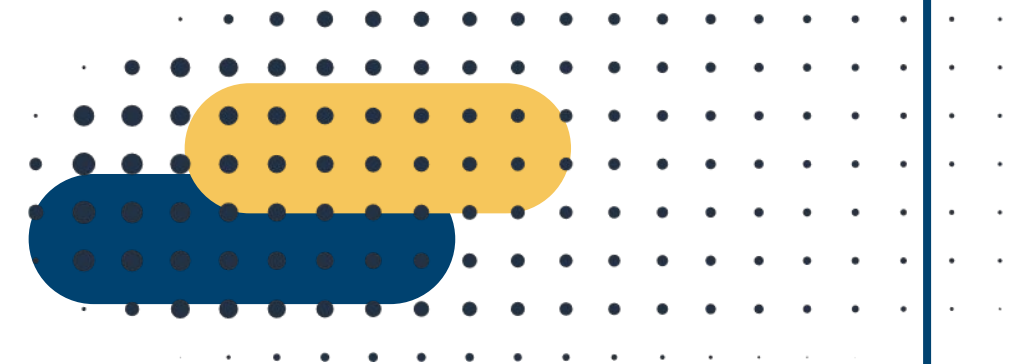
- Develop an adult learner pathway that is cohorted with dedicated counselors, flexible scheduling options, and intentional opportunities to build relationships with other adult learner students.
- Develop an online information hub with interactive components, videos, and visual representations of the transfer steps, processes, and application requirements.
- Implement a case management model for counselors at community colleges with a warm handoff to transfer institutions. (counselors on campus and visible for students)





RECOMMENDATIONS

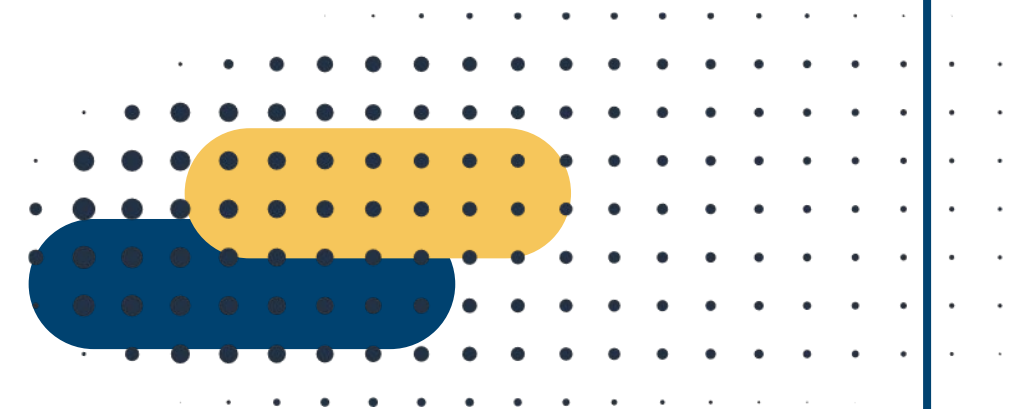
- Build networks of students who went to community college, transferred, and entered a career. Hold networking events with these former students and professionals to help build social networks for first-generation college students.
- Consider professional development, hiring and assignments such that students have opportunities to engage with counselors and faculty who believe in and support their educational success, and/or share similar cultural backgrounds and experiences.





RECOMMENDATIONS

- Create a communication plan for providing students key information about college, transfer, and career. Map this plan to the students' journey from high school through transfer. Include in the plan presentations, student panels, workshops, career fairs, counselor meetings, alumni panels, and a warm handoff to transfer institutions.



Questions





THANK YOU!

