



# “Get Me from Point A to Point B:” **Student Perspectives on Barriers to Timely Graduation at the California State University**

February 2018  
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## **Acknowledgments**

We are grateful to the participating students at the three California State University campuses that took part in this research. The students’ candor in sharing their thoughts and opinions through the survey and focus groups was invaluable in helping us better understand the experiences of students in the CSU. We appreciate the assistance of the administrators and staff at those campuses who helped us make arrangements to conduct the research. We are grateful to Camille Esch, Brock Grubb, Jacob Jackson, and Sara Adan for their input on draft versions of our student survey and/or focus group protocols. We thank our colleague Terra Thorne for her assistance in coding responses to the survey and focus group questions, and our graduate student assistant Amelia Gomez for her help with formatting the online summary of survey responses. We appreciate Thad Nodine’s guidance with thinking through and structuring the content of this report. Ioakim Boutakidis, Jeff Gold, Su Jin Jez, Kristy Michaud, Bianca Mothé, Cynthia Schrager, and Andrea Venezia helped to inform and improve drafts of this report. Finally, we appreciate the editorial assistance of Sasha Horwitz and the graphic design work by the Foundation for California Community Colleges.

## Executive Summary

**“I just couldn’t see a reason to be here any longer [than two years]. I knew what I wanted, and when I transferred in I could see everything that I needed to take. So I was like, just get me from point A to point B.”**

- CSU Student

One primary goal of the California State University’s (CSU) Graduation Initiative 2025 (GI 2025) is to reduce time to degree. The results of a survey and focus groups involving students at three CSU campuses, undertaken by the Education Insights Center (EdInsights) on behalf of the CSU Student Success Network, indicate that this goal is consistent with students’ aspirations. Most students enroll in the CSU intending to graduate in a traditional timeframe—four years for students enrolling as freshmen and two years for those transferring from a community college. According to survey results, 85 percent of those who enrolled as first-time freshmen intended to graduate “on time”—within four years. Among transfer students, 70 percent enrolled in the CSU planning to graduate in two years. While graduation rates are increasing in the CSU, they are not currently well aligned with students’ expectations, as less than a quarter of incoming freshmen graduate within four years and a third of community college transfer students graduate in two years.

Many surveyed students reported that they changed their expectations about time to degree after encountering barriers that inhibited their progress. Such challenges are not unique to the CSU, but mirror those cited by students in other higher education systems. Limited course availability topped the list of obstacles students reported, with about half of students who enrolled as freshmen (and somewhat fewer transfer students) reporting that they often or very often have not been able to enroll in a class they needed. In focus groups conducted at each campus to follow up on the survey, students often expressed frustration about limited course availability that consequentially led them to take courses they did not need in order to maintain their full-time enrollment status and financial aid eligibility. Surveyed students reported that other major obstacles to making timely progress through the CSU include issues in their personal lives (such as work and family obligations) and difficulty selecting an appropriate major or having changed their major.

Financial concerns were also perceived as a significant challenge, with about one quarter of students reporting that not having enough money was a major obstacle to timely graduation. While many people working in the CSU system believe that most students work an excessive number of hours in order to meet the costs of attending college, as recently demonstrated in a California Faculty Association fact sheet suggesting that three out of four CSU students work more than 20 hours per week, this finding was not borne out in our research. Our survey confirmed that a majority of CSU students work, but most students reported working no more than 20 hours per week. While the share of students working more than half time is not as high as conventional wisdom suggests, there are certainly many CSU students who are working at a level that could impede their progress through college, particularly among the transfer population. About a quarter of transfer students reported

working off campus for more than 30 hours per week. Caring for children or other family members requires substantial time for some students, with about one in six transfer students reporting that they spend more than 20 hours per week on family care.

CSU students are spending considerably less time than recommended preparing for class, according to the survey. While faculty generally recommend that students spend two hours outside of class for every hour in class, about 50 percent to 60 percent of students reported spending 10 or fewer hours per week studying and preparing for classes, regardless of their unit load. Students appear to recognize the problem, with some indicating that barriers to making progress include their own insufficient time management and study skills and classes and instructors that are too hard or demanding.

When asked about academic advising, students reported mixed experiences. Only about half of students reported being satisfied or very satisfied with the quality of advising, and students in the focus groups described a number of problems with both their access to, and the quality of, advising services. Students in the focus groups also spoke about the importance to their success of support from a concerned faculty or staff member who demonstrates confidence in, and a commitment to, their success. Students said that connecting with faculty and peers who share their interests helps to increase their engagement with, and enthusiasm for, their studies. In addition, many students expressed a desire for more structure and clearer paths through the CSU, including a more structured transition, early help to develop a clear plan for timely graduation, advising that is tailored to their plan, and support services that provide help all along the pathway.

To continue their work to meet the goals of GI 2025, this report shows that CSU campuses do not need to worry about changing student mindsets about the time it should take to graduate—most CSU students already enroll aiming to graduate in a traditional timeframe. Rather, meeting the needs of CSU’s diverse student populations while supporting their expectations around timely graduation requires creating institutions that are more student-centric. Addressing students’ biggest barriers to timely graduation will require campus-wide engagement and deep collaboration across institutional functions. As the campuses seek to achieve their ambitious goals for GI 2025, the students’ perspectives described in this report can help guide their efforts to create a smoother pathway.

# The CSU is Aiming to Reduce Time to Degree

The California State University (CSU) has placed a high priority on increasing completion rates in recent years, with the Chancellor’s Office adopting a Graduation Initiative in 2009 that established a goal of increasing six-year graduation rates for entering freshmen to 54 percent by 2015. As shown in Figure 1, graduation rates for entering freshmen have steadily increased over the past decade, and the six-year graduation rate reached 59 percent for the cohort of freshmen entering in 2010, exceeding the goal of the 2009 initiative.<sup>1</sup> According to an analysis by the Public Policy Institute of California, six-year graduation rates at CSU campuses are generally higher than those in institutions serving similar student populations, but four-year graduation rates remain lower.<sup>2</sup> Only about one in five freshmen graduate within four years across the system, with lower rates for many campuses. Similarly, graduation rates for CSU students who transferred from the California Community Colleges (CCC) have been increasing, but only one third of these students graduates within two years (see Figure 2).

Graduation Initiative 2025 (GI 2025), implemented in 2016, sets more ambitious goals for improving graduation rates, with an emphasis on reducing the time to degree. Key goals of the new initiative include:

- increasing the systemwide four-year graduation rate for first-time freshmen to 40 percent and the six-year rate to 70 percent;
- increasing the systemwide two-year graduation rate for transfer students to 45 percent and the four-year rate to 85 percent; and
- eliminating equity gaps across student populations.

In conjunction with this initiative, the Chancellor’s Office is making systemwide policy changes in order to support improved, and more equitable, rates of student success. For example, the system is dropping English and math placement tests for incoming freshmen in favor of using students’ high school grades and standardized test scores (e.g., SAT, Smarter Balanced assessments), and has instructed campuses to eliminate no-credit remedial courses in favor of “stretch” courses or co-requisite models that pair a standard college-level course with additional support.<sup>3</sup> Those efforts are based on a growing body of research, both nationally and in California, documenting increased student success with such changes to placement and remediation policies.<sup>4</sup> As part of GI 2025, each of the 23 campuses has developed its own student success plan that identifies short- and long-term objectives, and lays out new campus efforts to improve graduation rates and eliminate gaps.<sup>5</sup>

At the state, system, and campus levels, education leaders are concerned about graduation rates and are working to help CSU students achieve their goals. Information from structured research about students’ experiences and perspectives can help inform new policies and practices. On behalf of the CSU Student Success Network, the Education Insights Center (EdInsights) conducted research about students’ goals, the challenges they encounter in their efforts to meet those goals, and their experiences with supports and services provided by their campuses.<sup>6</sup> The research included a survey and focus groups conducted at three CSU campuses (see Research Methods box on page 6 and the appendix). Over 1,000 students across the three campuses participated in the survey, including 580 students who enrolled in the CSU as freshmen—a group we refer to in this report as first-time freshmen or FTF, although they were not freshmen at the time of the study—and 476 students who transferred from a community college. A total of 54 students participated in the focus groups at the three campuses.

Figure 1

**Graduation rates for first-time freshmen in the CSU are increasing, but only one-fifth graduate within 4 years.**

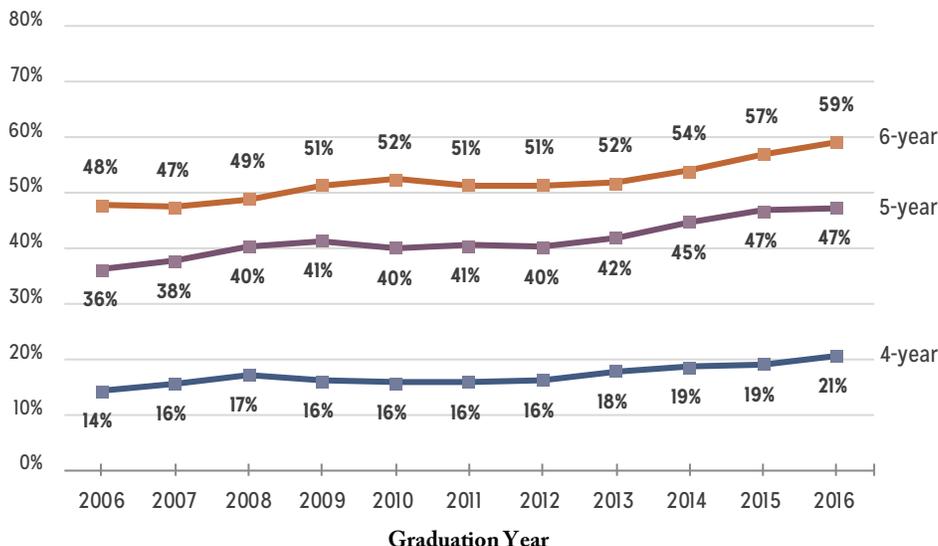
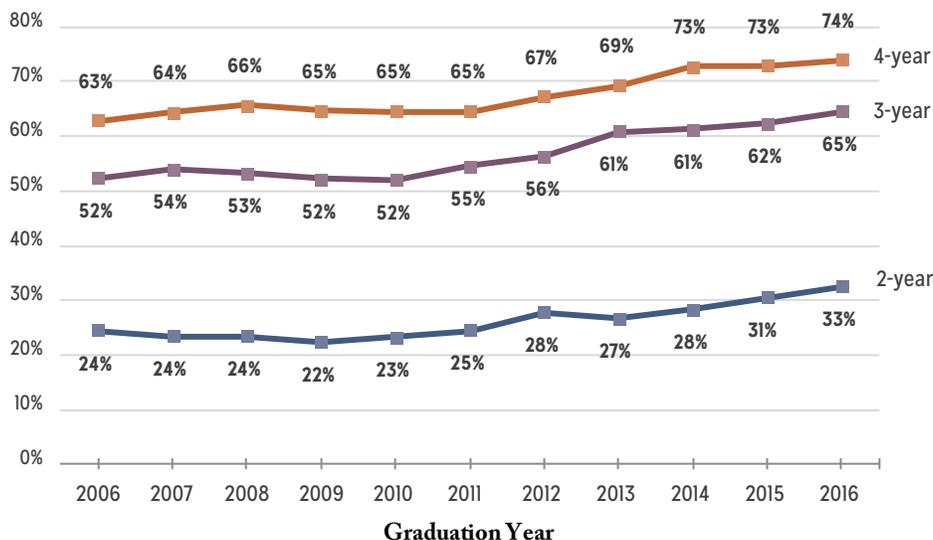


Figure 2

**Graduation rates for transfer students from the CCC are also increasing; one-third graduate in 2 years.**



This report summarizes some major findings from our survey and focus groups. Additional issues that surfaced in the course of our research will be the subject of shorter publications over the coming months. The full set of results from the survey can be found in the [Technical Appendices](#) available on the CSU Student Success Network website. Next, the report will summarize students’ perspectives on timely graduation, with the sections that follow outlining the primary barriers students face to making progress and the factors they cite as contributing to their success.

## RESEARCH METHODS

To select topics for our student survey and focus groups, we reviewed existing surveys covering undergraduate students’ experiences in college along with documents related to current issues in the CSU (e.g., Graduation Initiative 2025, remediation, impactation). Based on those reviews, we developed a survey and a focus group protocol.<sup>7</sup> Other research steps were as follows:

- We recruited campuses to participate in the research through outreach to members of the Interim Advisory Board of the CSU Student Success Network as well as contacts at other CSU campuses, ensuring some variation in campus size and location in the state. We offered anonymity to participating campuses in order to encourage participation, and therefore do not identify them in this report.
- We administered the survey in April 2017 using Qualtrics survey software, recruiting students to participate via email, based on a random sample of undergraduate students at each campus who had been enrolled for at least one academic year.
- We conducted two focus groups on each campus in September 2017, one for FTF and the other for transfer students. The number of students per focus group ranged from 4 to 13.
- We analyzed the closed-ended survey items using SPSS Statistics, and coded the responses to open-ended items thematically. We recorded the focus groups and conducted content analyses of the transcriptions.

A more detailed description of the research methods can be found in the Appendix along with information about the characteristics of survey participants.

# Most CSU Students Want to Graduate Quickly

The survey asked students what their initial expectations had been about the time it would take them to earn a degree when they first enrolled in the CSU. Most students reported that they had enrolled in the CSU expecting to graduate in a traditional timeframe. Eighty-five percent of students who enrolled in the CSU as freshmen wanted to graduate within four years, and 70 percent of transfer students planned to graduate in two years. The difference between the student groups might reflect, in part, the fact that transfer students already have experience navigating a large public system of education in California since they had to meet the requirements for transfer to the CSU from a community college.

Among FTF who planned to take more than four years to graduate, nearly all wanted to graduate within five years; only one percent of FTF enrolled in the CSU with the thought that it would take six years to earn a bachelor’s degree. Among transfer students, those who did not plan to graduate within two years were more evenly split than FTF in terms of thinking it would take one (16%) or two (13%) additional years to earn a degree. Students generally reported that their parents and other family members shared their expectations about timely graduation (see Table 1).

**“It’s extremely important [to graduate on time] because, where I come from, we graduate in four years. Here, it’s like five years is the normal. To me, that’s not normal. So me taking another semester, if I had to stay any longer, I wouldn’t want that at all.”**

- CSU Student

Table 1

**Most CSU students enroll planning to graduate in a traditional timeframe.**

Time to Graduation with a Bachelor’s Degree	Students’ Own Plans	Students’ Perception of Parent/Family Expectations
<b>FTF</b>		
4 years	85%	77%
5 years	13%	20%
6 years	1%	2%
More than 6 years	0%	1%
<b>Transfer Students</b>		
2 years	70%	69%
3 years	16%	14%
4 years	13%	14%
More than 4 years	1%	3%

Timely graduation is important to CSU students. Over half (54%) of FTF and 60 percent of transfer students reported that graduating on time was important or very important, and another 35 percent and 26 percent, respectively, said it was somewhat important. Finishing a bachelor’s degree in a timely manner appears to be especially important to transfer students, a finding that may be related to the time they have already spent in the community college system before transferring to a CSU campus.

## Financial Concerns Help Explain Interest in Timely Graduation

Students’ reasons for wanting to graduate on time are largely related to financial concerns (see Table 2). Large shares of both FTF and transfer students indicated that they were concerned or very concerned about running out of financial aid before graduating (77% and 70%, respectively). Many students worry about increased debt loads if their graduation date is delayed beyond the standard four or two years. Students also recognize that time is money. Both FTF and transfer students expressed concern about delaying the start of their career or graduate school (71% and 75%, respectively), earning less money over their lifetime (52% and 56%), and having less time to save for retirement (54% and 64%). Many students expressed concern about the impact that a longer time to degree could have in terms of delaying other major life milestones like getting married and having children (44% and 52%). Only about one in five students in each group was concerned that a longer time to degree would mean not graduating at the same time as their friends.

**“I had [a certain] amount of money to spend on everything, and it was very eye-opening. So it was another reason I wanted to get out sooner because the loans start piling up. Every semester is \$4,000.”**  
 –CSU Student

Table 2

**Financial concerns help explain students’ interest in timely graduation.**

Concerns if graduation is delayed:	Percent Concerned/Very Concerned	
	FTF	Transfer Student
Running out of financial aid	77%	70%
Delaying start of career or graduate school	71%	75%
Having to pay back more in student loans	64%	65%
Delaying opportunity to save money (e.g., retirement)	54%	64%
Earning less money over your lifetime	52%	56%
Delaying big life milestones (e.g., marriage, children)	44%	52%
Not graduating at the same time as your friends	21%	23%

**“[Graduating on time was] highly important because, not only do I feel like I’m wasting my time, there’s the money depreciation. So I could be making two, three times the amount, but because my graduation is prolonged, I’m pretty much losing all that money.”**  
 –CSU Student

## Students Willing to Enroll in Ways that Facilitate Timely Completion

Survey respondents across the board indicated that they clearly understood the average number of units required to complete a degree within the traditional timeframe: both FTF and transfer students, on average, correctly said it requires completing about 15 units per semester. Most students also said that they are willing to take 30 units per year, and to enroll in courses during the summer, online, and in the evenings in order to make progress toward timely graduation (see Table 3). However, fewer than half were interested in taking courses on the weekends. Many students said that they had already enrolled in these unit loads and had taken courses at these times, although students in the focus groups said that cost was a significant barrier to taking courses at a CSU during the summer.

Table 3

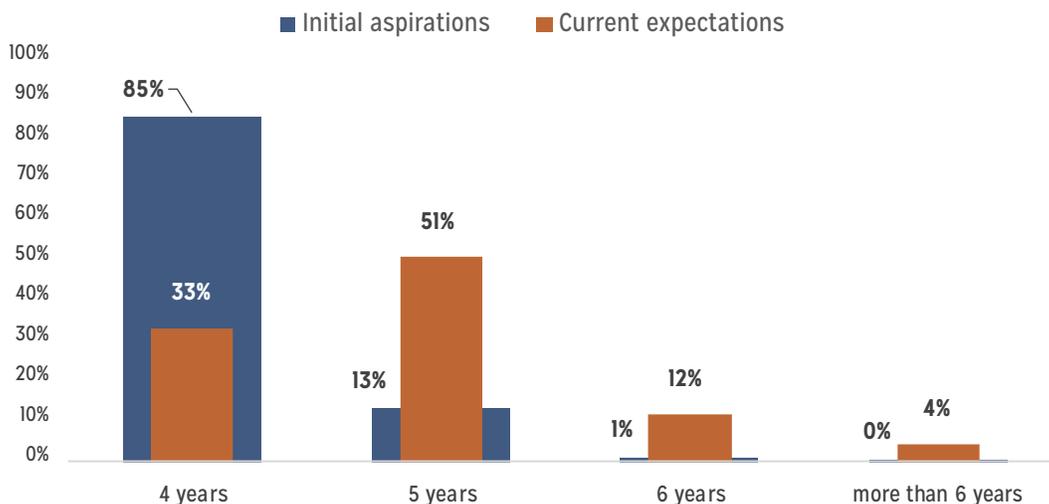
**Most students are willing to enroll in ways that facilitate timely completion.**

Willingness to:	Willing/Very Willing To Do		Have Actually Done	
	FTF	Transfer Students	FTF	Transfer Students
Enroll in 30 units per year	79%	74%	65%	61%
Enroll in summer	77%	67%	57%	56%
Take online courses	85%	83%	79%	81%
Take evening courses	74%	85%	78%	89%
Take weekend courses	42%	49%	14%	30%

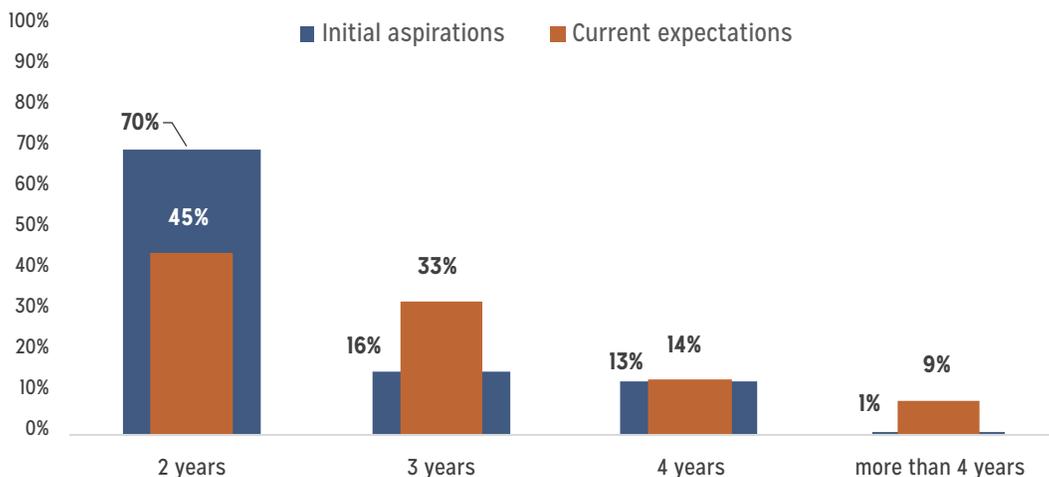
# Students Revise Their Expectations Due to Barriers

While 85 percent of FTF enrolled in the CSU planning to graduate within four years, only 33 percent expected to achieve that at the time they completed the survey, at which point the students had been enrolled in the CSU for a full academic year or more (see Figure 3). Likewise, while 70 percent of transfer students enrolled with plans to graduate in two years, only 45 percent now expect to do so (see Figure 4). Among both groups, students most often revised their expectations to account for taking one extra year to graduate.

**Figure 3**  
**Most FTF in the CSU enrolled wanting to graduate in 4 years, but only one-third currently expect to achieve that.**



**Figure 4**  
**Most transfer students enrolled in the CSU wanting to graduate in 2 years, but fewer than half now expect to accomplish that.**



## Limited Course Availability Tops the List of Barriers

When asked to identify the biggest obstacle to making timely progress through their CSU campus, 28 percent of FTF chose inability to get into courses, followed by issues in their personal lives such as work and family obligations (25%), and changing their major or taking a while to choose a major (19%), (see Figure 5). While nearly the same share of transfer students as FTF reported that course availability was their biggest obstacle (24%), a higher share chose personal issues as the most significant barrier (33%). Transfer students nearly always enter the CSU with a major already chosen, and they usually have junior class standing, which, at many campuses, gives them higher registration priority. However, they are often older and have more work and family obligations that can limit the time available to focus on school, a topic that will be discussed later.

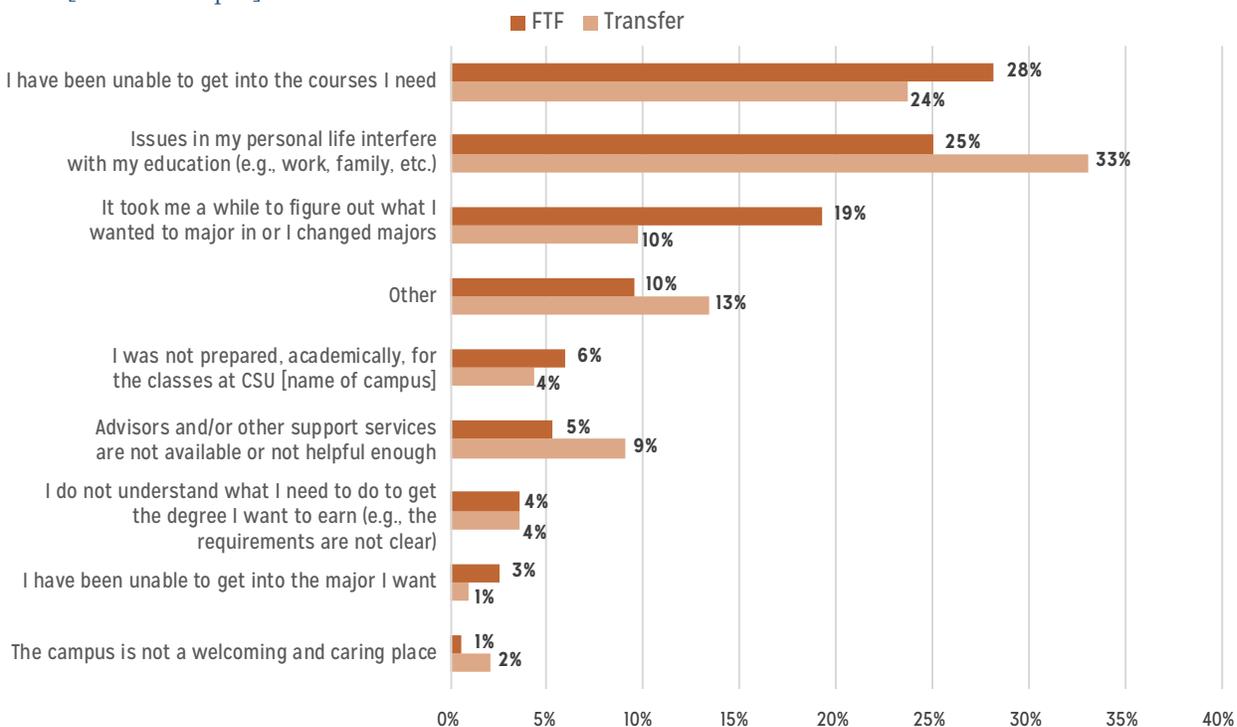
**“I had it laid out, all planned out. But with the class situation, they gave only one or two class sections for each type of course, and since I was only a sophomore I didn’t have enough units for eligibility [to register]. I couldn’t get into the class, so I pushed my [graduation] date back.”**

–CSU Student

Figure 5

**FTF chose limited course availability as the biggest barrier to making timely progress, while transfer students were more likely to point to issues in their personal lives.**

Which one of the following is your biggest obstacle to making timely progress through CSU [name of campus]?



Asked about the frequency of experiencing problems with course availability, nearly half of FTF reported that they often or very often have not been able to get into a general education (GE) class they needed, and 54 percent said the same about classes for their major (see Figure 6). FTF most often reported that they had trouble getting into science classes and labs, lower-division pre-requisite classes for their major, and math classes. Among transfer students, 40 percent reported that they have often or very often not been able to get into a class they needed for their major, and about a quarter said the same about GE classes (see Figure 7).

In response to problems getting into classes, more than half of FTF and over 40 percent of transfer students reported that they have at least occasionally taken classes they did not need in order to have a full courseload. In the focus groups, some students expressed frustration that courses required for their major were offered only once every two or three terms, making it difficult for them to finish and causing them to take courses they did not need in order to maintain enrollment and financial aid eligibility while waiting. Many students said they would like to take classes in the summer to stay on track for timely graduation, but said the classes are too expensive and financial aid is unavailable.

**“If you’re a junior or a senior, then you’re able to take [a class]. But there’s only a limited amount [of courses offered]. So now that person who’s a sophomore can’t take it, it’s setting him back. So it’s like a cycle, setting students back when you should be offering those classes so we can get out of here sooner.”**  
 –CSU Student

**Figure 6**  
**Most FTF have at least occasionally been unable to get into classes because all sections were full; about half report that it happens often.**

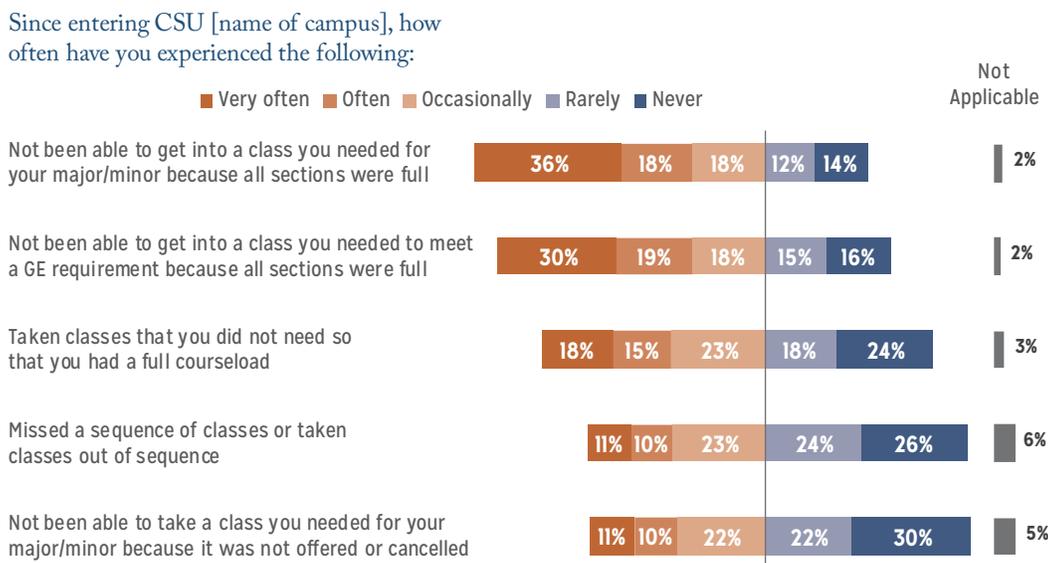
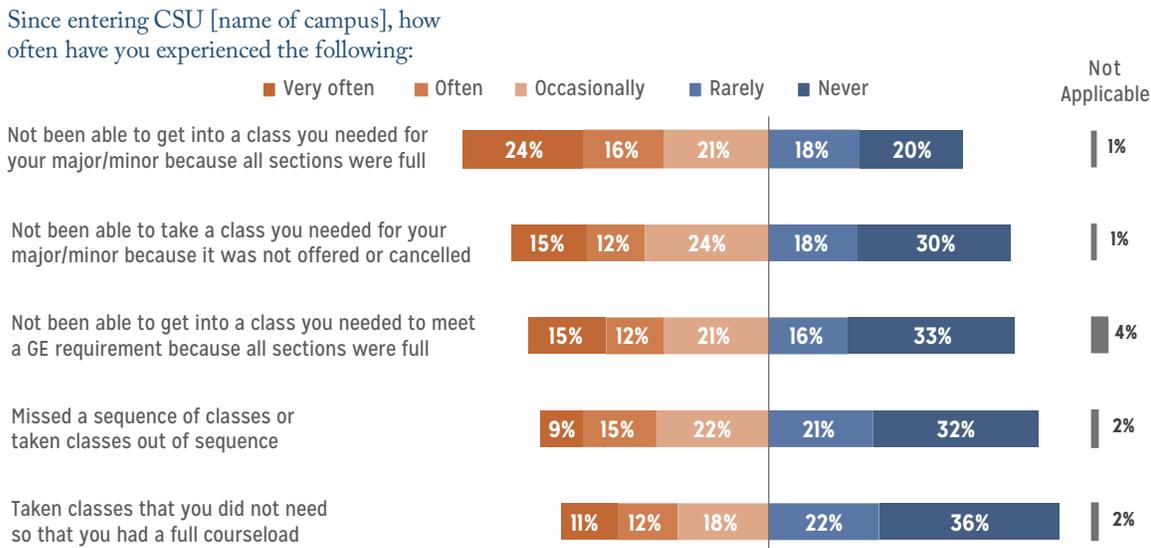


Figure 7

**A majority of transfer students have at least occasionally not been able to get into classes for their major.**



Closely related to the issue of course availability, “impaction” in the CSU is increasingly noted as a barrier for students.<sup>8</sup> The CSU system defines a campus or a major as impacted when the number of applications received from qualified applicants is greater than the number of available spaces. This allows the campus or major to use additional criteria to screen applications. Currently, six campuses have reached their enrollment capacity and have been designated as “campus impacted” at both the freshman and transfer levels, with all majors impacted.<sup>9</sup> Most other campuses have either been designated as “campus impacted” at the freshman and/or transfer level, or have at least some individual majors that are impacted.” For 2018-19, the number of impacted programs at these campuses varies substantially, with several campuses impacted only in nursing (which is impacted at every campus) and others impacted in up to half of all programs.<sup>10</sup>

The CSU campuses participating in this research were not among those with the most programs designated as impacted, yet about a quarter of FTF and one-fifth of transfer students reported that they were not able to pursue their first-choice major because it was impacted at their campus. Courses in majors designated as impacted are in high demand, although courses in non-impacted majors can also have demand that exceeds the available offerings. Some students in the focus groups reported that, even though their major was not impacted, impaction in other majors had affected them because courses they needed to take for their major were also required for students in impacted majors, which, in turn, had the effect of increasing the competition for seats. For example, one student noted that two courses required for her (non-impacted) child development major were also required for students in the heavily impacted nursing program at her campus, making it difficult for her to enroll in those classes.

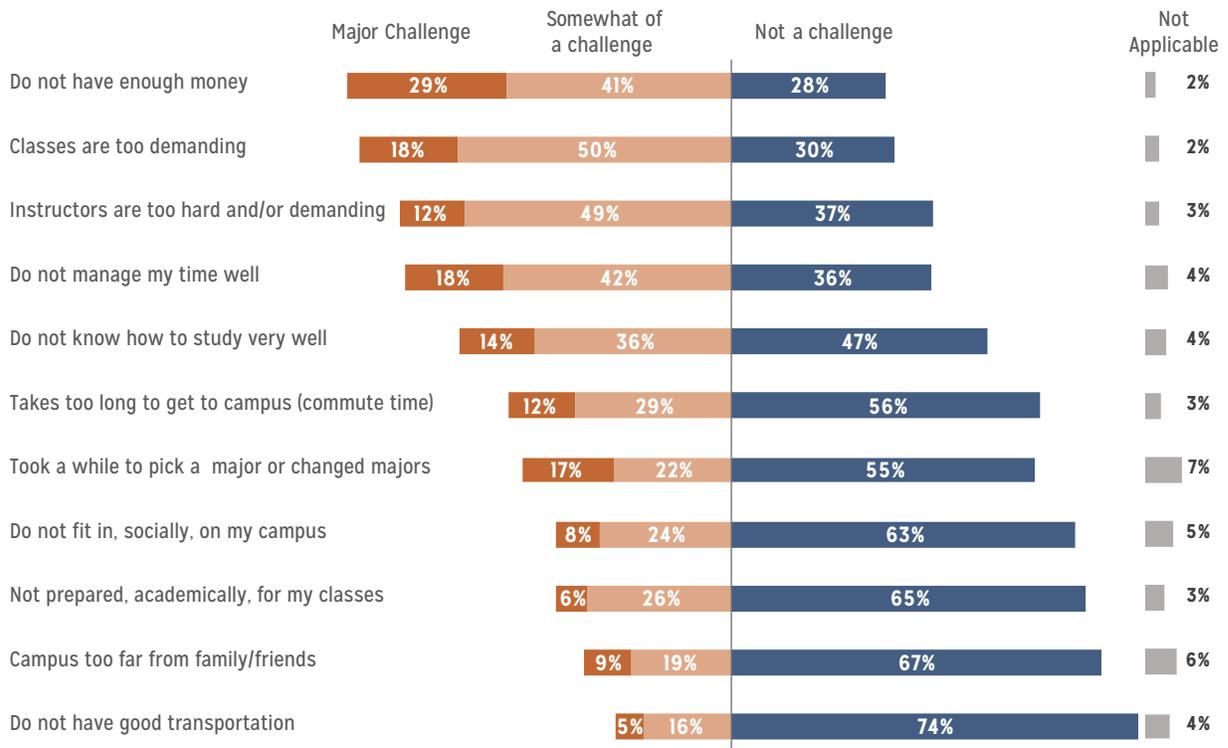
## Financial Concerns are Perceived as a Major Barrier

Other than limited course availability, students identified a number of other obstacles to timely graduation (see Figures 8 and 9). Financial concerns, in particular, were perceived as a substantial barrier by many students, with 29 percent of FTF and 23 percent of transfer students reporting that a major challenge is not having enough money. Another 41 percent and 44 percent, respectively, indicated that a lack of money is at least somewhat of a challenge.

Figure 8

**FTF report that lack of money, demanding classes/instructors, and problems with time management and study skills are obstacles to timely graduation.**

Which of these issues are (or could be) obstacles to graduating from CSU [name of campus] within the timeframe you would like to?



The financial concerns reported by CSU students are consistent with the opinions of all Californians about the challenges students and families face in paying for college. In a recent survey conducted by the Public Policy Institute of California, most respondents (75%) said that the cost of a college education is a barrier that keeps qualified, motivated students from going to college, and nearly 80 percent said students have to borrow too much to pay for a college education.<sup>11</sup> The public recognizes that students’ financial challenges go beyond the cost of tuition to include living expenses, with 85 percent of respondents to the PPIC survey indicating that California’s colleges and universities should do more to ensure students have access to affordable housing. This finding was confirmed in our survey, with approximately 80 percent of CSU students reporting at least some concern about having enough money to pay for the total cost of attending college, including housing costs and other expenses (see Figure 10).

**“It’s a financial burden sometimes, and some people have a hard time getting resources for that. Thankfully, we have loans and stuff, but that adds up if you keep going. Not just the semester [tuition and fees], it’s the gas, the food, and all those other things, like where you’re living. So I think that adds to the stress of it.”**

–CSU Student

Figure 9

**Transfer students identify the same challenges, though in smaller numbers—lack of money, demanding classes/instructors, and poor time management.**

Which of these issues are (or could be) obstacles to graduating from CSU [name of campus] within the timeframe you would like to?

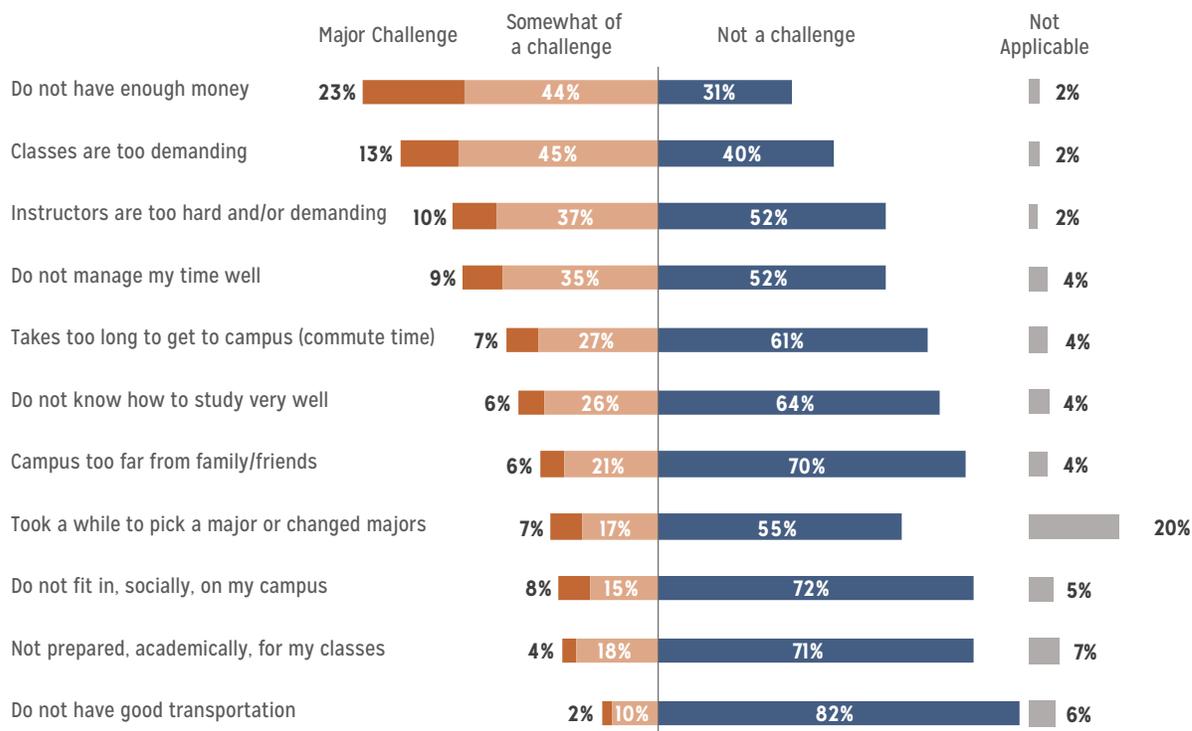
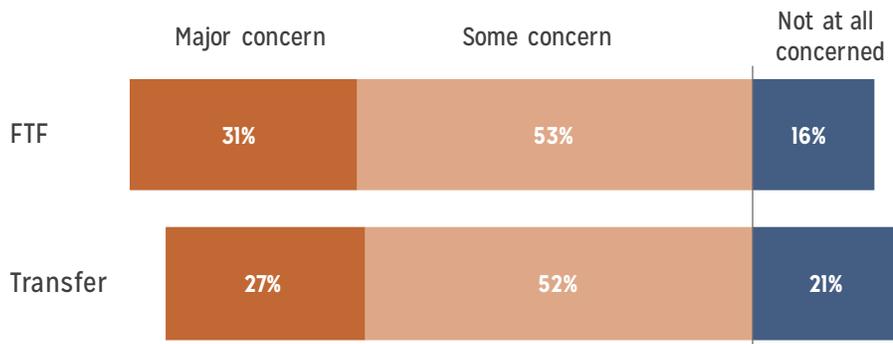


Figure 10

**Most students have at least some concern about their ability to pay for their college education.**

Considering all sources of funding (financial aid, savings, earnings, etc.) how concerned are you about your ability to pay for your college education (including books, housing, etc.)?

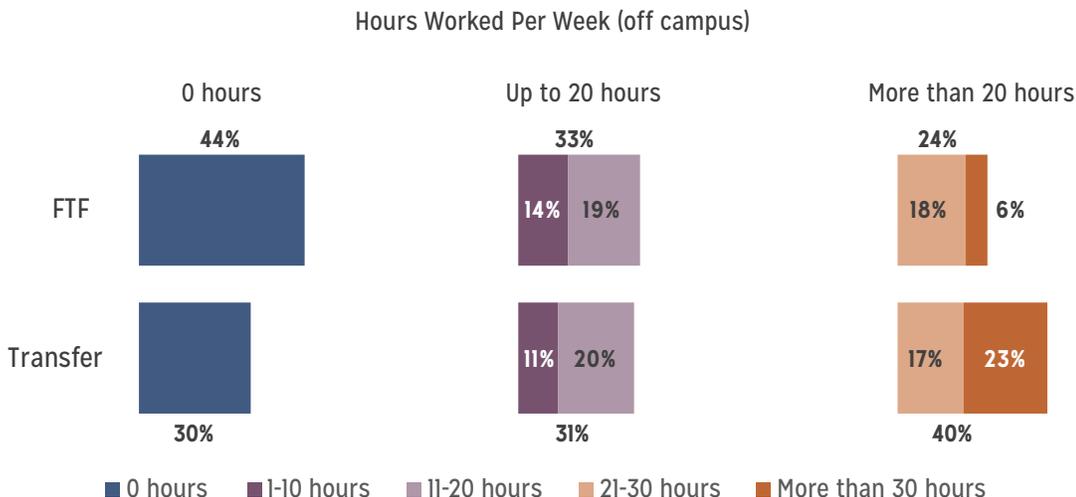


## Students Work, but Generally Fewer Hours than Assumed

It is widely assumed by many people working in the CSU that most students work excessive hours as a means of paying the costs of attending college. For example, the California Faculty Association recently suggested that three out of four CSU students work more than 20 hours per week.<sup>12</sup> While our survey of over 1,000 undergraduate students at three CSU campuses confirmed that a majority of students work for pay while attending college, most students reported working no more than 20 hours per week. Fewer than one in five students reported being employed on campus, with nearly all of those students putting in fewer than 20 hours per week at their campus jobs. Over half (56%) of FTF and 70 percent of transfer students reported being employed off campus (see Figure 11). About a third of students reported working off campus for fewer than 20 hours per week. About a quarter (24%) of FTF and 40 percent of transfer students reported working more than 20 hours per week off campus; a quarter of transfer students reported working a number of hours that reach or approach full time (over 30 hours per week). While, overall, our findings show that the share of students working more than half time was lower than conventional wisdom might suggest, it is certainly the case that some students, particularly among the transfer population, are working at a level that could have negative effects on their time spent studying, their grades, and their chances for retention and graduation.<sup>13</sup>

Figure 11

**While a majority of students work while attending a CSU, most do not work more than 20 hours per week.**

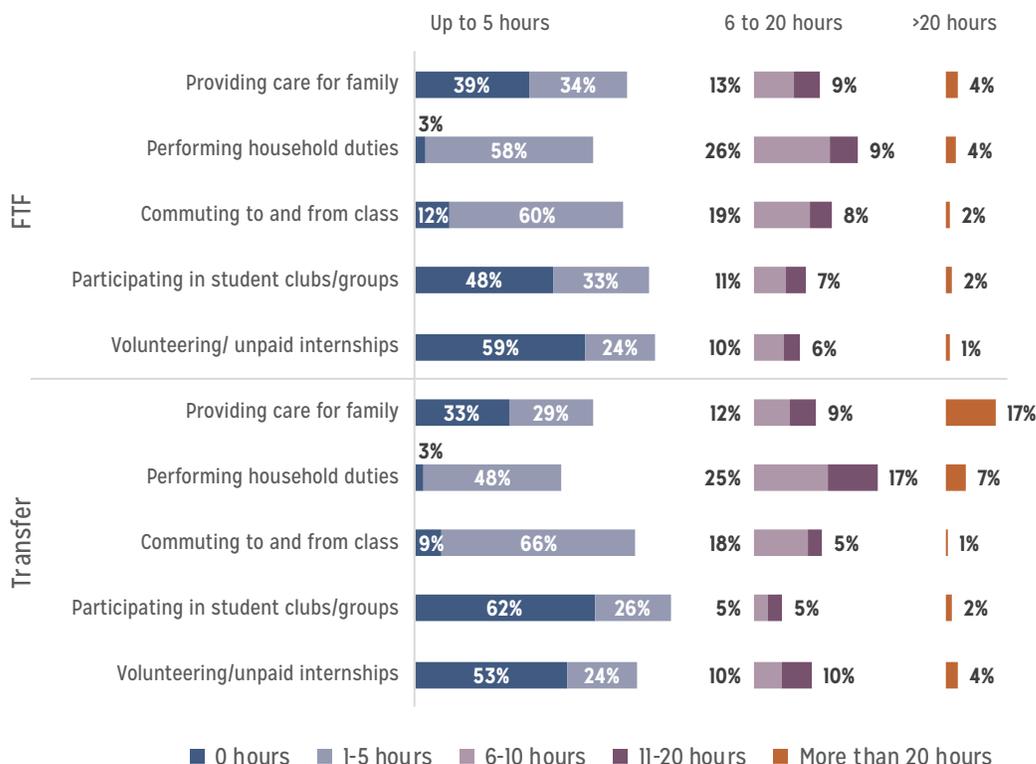


Other external obligations can also have an impact on student progress and success, including caring for children and other family members. Approximately one in six (17%) transfer students reported spending 20 or more hours weekly on caring for children or other family members (see Figure 12). Nearly all students reported spending some time on household duties, though a majority spend five or fewer hours per week. Students who spend significant hours on family care also spend more time on household duties, so that those external obligations are a significant factor for some, particularly among the transfer population.

Figure 12

**Most students spend fewer than 5 hours per week (each) on external obligations other than employment, although 1 in 6 transfer students spends more than 20 hours per week caring for children or other family members.**

About how many hours do you spend in a typical 7-day week doing the following:



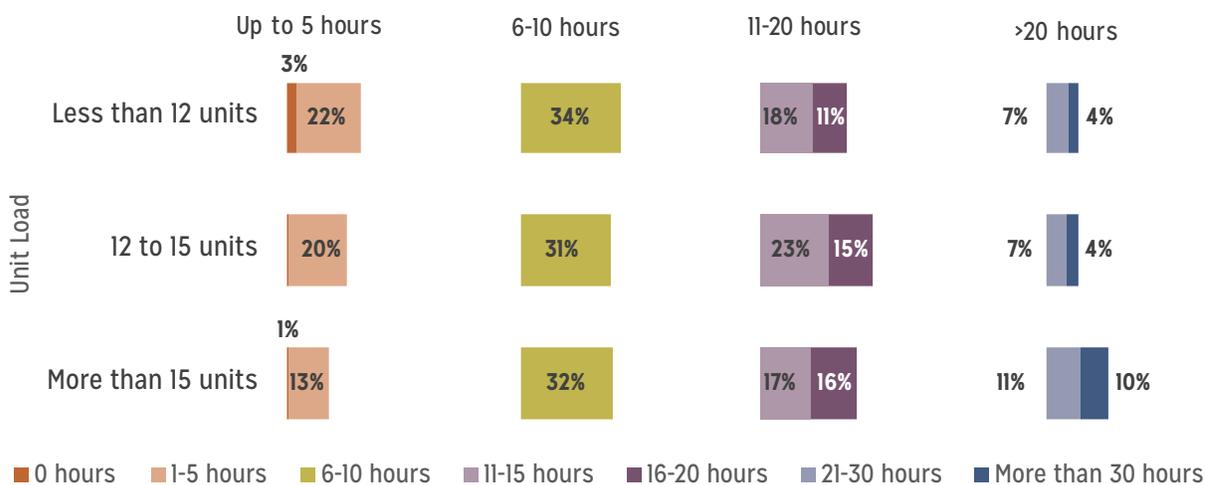
## Students Struggle with Study Skills and Time Management

Faculty generally recommend that students spend at least two hours studying outside of class for every hour in class, or six hours per week for a standard three-unit course and 30 hours for a full course load of 15 units.<sup>14</sup> CSU students are spending considerably less time than recommended preparing for class. Regardless of unit load, about 50 percent to 60 percent of students reported spending 10 or fewer hours per week studying and preparing for classes (see Figure 13). Only 11 percent of students taking 12 to 15 units, and 21 percent of those taking more than 15 units reported spending at least 20 hours per week preparing for class. Students in the CSU are not unique in this regard. A recent study based on data from the National Survey of Student Engagement, administered at many public universities, found that first-year students spend an average of 14 hours per week preparing for class.<sup>15</sup>

Many students indicated that issues related to preparation for college courses had presented challenges for them. For example, some said that their classes and instructors were too hard or demanding and that their own study skills and time management were not sufficient (see Figures 8 and 9 on pages 14 and 15). While a relatively small share of survey respondents indicated that being academically unprepared for their classes was a major challenge, some students in the focus groups pointed to remedial coursework as a factor in slowing their progress.

**“I had to do a lot of remedial courses and that set my units back, so I didn’t get priority. Right now, technically, I’m a sophomore but this is my third year and I’m supposed to be a junior, but because of my remedial math and writing, the units just don’t add up.”**  
 –CSU Student

**Figure 13**  
 Regardless of courseload, about 50 to 60 percent of CSU students spend no more than 10 hours per week studying/preparing for class.



## Students Want Advising That is Tailored to Their Needs

The survey included questions about students’ experiences with academic advising in order to shed light on the role of advising in facilitating timely progression to a degree. About half of FTF and slightly more transfer students reported being satisfied or very satisfied with the overall quality of academic advising they had received at their campus (see Figure 14). In responding to more specific questions about the kinds of help advisors provide, students generally agreed that advisors are knowledgeable and help students understand how to complete requirements for their degree (see Table 4). However, students gave advisors somewhat lower ratings for helping them prepare a plan for timely graduation or understand opportunities to pursue graduate education after college. Department advisors, a term we used to refer to either faculty advisors or academic advisors assigned to students’ department or major, received somewhat higher ratings than general advisors who have responsibility for serving all students on campus.

Figure 14

**Students are about evenly split between those who are satisfied and dissatisfied with the quality of advising at CSU**

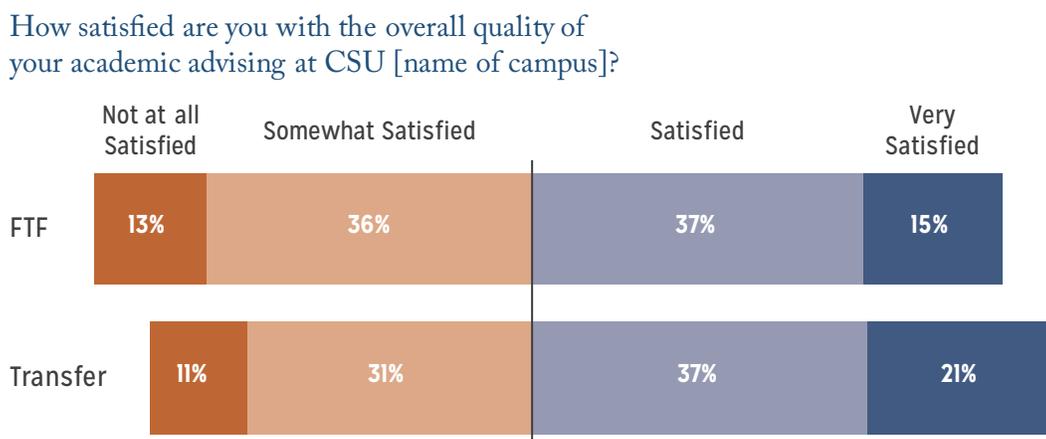


Table 4

**Students give department advisors higher ratings than general advisors, and give all advisors the lowest ratings for helping students to prepare for graduate school or plan for timely graduation.**

My advisor...	Percent Agree/Strongly Agree			
	FTF		Transfer Students	
	General Advisors	Department Advisors	General Advisors	Department Advisors
...helps me understand how to complete GE requirements	67%	68%	56%	63%
...is knowledgeable about courses in my major	64%	82%	57%	79%
...helps me understand how to complete graduation requirements	63%	74%	61%	74%
...helps me understand how my transfer credits count towards my degree	N/A	N/A	58%	65%
...is very effective	62%	77%	56%	74%
...is available when I need help	61%	74%	55%	74%
...helps me understand issues related to registration	61%	66%	53%	65%
...informs me about opportunities to pursue graduate education	46%	62%	40%	59%
...prepares a 4-year/2-year academic plan for me	45%	56%	46%	60%

All CSU students should have some experience interacting with advisors, as campuses generally require at least an initial advising appointment for new students, and often recommend or even require periodic advising as well. Yet a substantial share of students responded “not applicable” to many of the items asking about the availability and effectiveness of advisors shown in Table 4.<sup>16</sup> In a separate question about how frequently students met with an academic advisor, 28 percent of FTF and 33 percent of transfer students indicated that they only occasionally (once per year) or never see advisors. In the focus group discussions, some students expressed hesitancy about going to see advisors unless specifically required to do so, due to negative experiences they had with advisors in the past. The problems they most commonly described fell into several thematic areas, illustrated here through students’ own words:

**Students are often not sure which advisor to see and cannot see the same advisor consistently, leaving them without an opportunity to establish the kind of rapport or connection with an advisor that they would find helpful.**

“I was never given a regular advisor since I came to this campus. So I just make my own [plans], that’s what I’m doing now.”

**Students have difficulty getting an appointment with an advisor, and the appointments are too short to provide the help students need.**

“They just want to give you a list of what to do and just send you off. I know I never felt like any advisor I ever talked to ever clicked with me, as if they actually want me to graduate and do well. They never checked back. They were just there for like 20 minutes, 30 max.”

**Advisors often provide general information that students can find on their own, rather than providing new information tailored to students’ specific needs.**

“With advisors, it’s like they’re doing their job, but not really doing their job. I can print out degree records by myself and see what’s going on. I don’t need you to pull it out for me and highlight these things. I can clearly read that myself. I understand. You’re telling me what I already know. I want some new information on how I can make things happen.”

**Students sometimes receive wrong information from advisors, or conflicting information from different advisors.**

“They kept telling me, ‘just take this class and take that class,’ but it turns out I have taken about three or four classes that I didn’t even need. So that wasted a whole semester.”

**Advisors focus too much on what courses students should take the next term rather than providing an overall plan to graduation.**

“They didn’t plan it all the way. I wanted to plan out my two years in advance. It was two years ago that I went to an advisor and she’s like, ‘Well, that’s too far away. You still have to take all these classes.’ And I [asked], ‘Can I project a date, like how many classes I have left?’ She’s like, ‘You can come back after two semesters and we’ll do that.’ So, that kind of discouraged me.”

**Advisors’ suggestions often do not account for students’ likelihood of getting into the courses they recommend—as if the advisors themselves are not aware of the difficulties students face in enrolling in particular classes.**

“You go to these counseling appointments and they don’t ask you, ‘Do you have priority? Are you an athlete?’, anything like that. So they have no idea if you’re even going to get the classes they pick. The first semester I was here they were like, ‘try to take [this particular class],’ and anyone who’s [in that major] knows that is incredibly hard to get into.”

**Advisors often told new students to take 12 units, which put them off track for timely completion.**

“I kind of just figured it out on my own because my freshman year, I took 12 units like they said. And then the following semester, I was like, ‘Why am I only taking 12 units? This makes no sense.’ Then I just went into the [online] student center and figured it out myself and ever since then I’ve been taking 15 units.”

## Students Value Engagement with Faculty and Peers

**“And I think I kind of just got, how do you say, it’s like [the good professors] rubbed off on me — their passions and their curiosities.”**

—CSU Student

In response to an open-ended survey question about what factors have been helpful to their progress through the CSU, students often mentioned the importance of being engaged in their subject matter and courses, and the value they find in connecting with faculty and peers who share their interests and passions. Students in the focus groups said that connecting with a faculty member in their major has very practical advantages. In addition to increasing their interest in a subject, faculty provide more in-depth guidance and direction than general or department advisors, and they offer help with specific problems like getting admitted into a particular course or finding an appropriate substitution that would keep students on track. Students also voiced appreciation for opportunities to apply their learning through research, fieldwork, internships, or other activities outside the classroom, noting that such experiences help them see the real-world implications of what they’re learning and encourage them to stay interested and engaged with their studies.

**“I’ve participated in one of these [independent study] courses the entire year last year, and it’s just having that constant contact with a faculty member to learn about a certain topic, to do research on a certain topic. It has really changed my experience at [this CSU] to where even though there are certain challenges, it makes you excited to hope for good things to come at this school.”**

—CSU Student

Just as good relationships and experiences with faculty motivate students, bad experiences can have a substantially negative impact. Some students in the focus groups expressed disappointment about faculty who do not use up-to-date technology, like learning management systems that allow students to have easy access to course materials and the current status of their grade. Others pointed to a lack of diversity in the faculty ranks, and said that faculty are often well trained in their discipline but lack cultural competency and sensitivity to the needs of their students.

These findings confirm other research that points to the importance to long-term student outcomes of feeling supported and having deep learning experiences. For example, a study of more than 30,000 college graduates across the country found higher workplace engagement and overall well-being among people who had close connections with a supportive faculty mentor and who engaged in projects, internships, or other experiential learning opportunities while in college.<sup>17</sup>

**“I have had professors kind of pinpoint me out, in a lecture setting, over my diabetes. I check my blood sugar and dose in class. I don’t use a vial and a syringe, I use a pen, and it clicks. One stopped class just to point me out about it and had everyone looking at me. So I stopped going to her class; I didn’t feel comfortable.”**

–CSU Student

Few participants in our survey pointed to issues around campus climate as the biggest barrier to their progress, with only one percent of FTF and two percent of transfer students responding that the biggest barrier they face is that the campus is not a welcoming and caring place (see Figure 5 on page 11). However, the focus group discussions revealed the importance to students of finding a supportive community to connect with on campus, and many students said that it can be difficult to find friends and study partners. Others expressed disappointment about services and activities that are difficult to learn about or that close too early and make the campus seem “dead” and uninviting as a place to linger once classes end. Transfer students, in particular, seemed to find it difficult to connect with the campus and to feel like a part of the community. For students who were involved with them, special support services like the Educational Opportunity Program, peer mentoring, and programs targeted at particular student populations were viewed as very helpful.

**“There’s a lot of peer facilitators [in that program], and they’re in the same grade as you are or have their masters or something, but they’re still your peers because they’re there every day with you. They help make what you’re learning fun because they just make it a fun environment. And then with peers in my class, you just hit them up and it’s like, hey, let’s study this, let’s do this, it just makes it a lot more fun to not do it by yourself.”**

–CSU Student

## Students Want More Structure and Alignment

When asked how their CSU campus could better meet their needs for on-time graduation, students in the focus groups most often pointed to issues around the schedule of classes. In particular, they said they want campuses to offer more class sections, at varying times and in an appropriate sequence, to allow them to make progress and graduate in a timely manner. In line with this request for having more courses available to meet their needs, students offered other suggestions focused on aligning courses and supports. Taken together, these suggestions can be seen as a call for more structure and clearer paths through the CSU to timely graduation.

**A More Structured Beginning.** Many students (and especially transfer students) discussed the limited value of their orientation experience. Students said there was too much emphasis on “throwing information” at them and getting them enrolled in classes for the first semester. What they wanted, instead, were opportunities to make early connections to their departments and majors in order to begin forming a community with other students and faculty. In addition, some students described positive experiences with first-year programs and learning communities, describing them as helpful in providing engagement with built-in peer networks. In two separate focus groups, a participating student described being in a program or major that organizes students into cohorts or having a friend in such a program. As those students described their positive experiences, others in the groups expressed great interest in that model, saying it would help them find friends and study partners.

**“[When you’re in a cohort,] you have friends in your classes that you have similar interests with and not only do you guys study together, but sometimes you become really comfortable with each other. You go out to eat after a test to celebrate or after school’s over, and just hang out outside of the classroom. So it makes it a little more fun and you guys motivate each other as well.”**

—CSU Student

**A Clear Plan.** Students expressed a desire for a clear plan to timely graduation, including sequences of courses—not just course lists—that specify all required classes and other graduation requirements, organized to allow for on-time completion. They wanted access to a plan tailored to their individual goals early in their enrollment at the CSU in order to prevent mistakes in coursetaking that add extra time to graduation. Such a plan would, preferably, be available during the first term for students who designate a major, and would be easily accessible, to the students as well as to faculty and academic advisors, and would be kept up to date. Students discussed the importance of ensuring that the sequences of courses actually being offered are fully aligned with students’ plans.

**Advising Tied to Their Plans.** Students suggested that their campuses should improve access to advising and improve its quality and usefulness for students. They emphasized a need to ensure that advisors are well trained, especially on major requirements. Some students suggested that all advising, to the extent possible, be done through colleges or departments to ensure that advisors have specialized knowledge, with only students without a declared or intended major utilizing general advisors. Students also requested that advisors focus more on helping them take the classes they need to graduate on time, including information about how to get into the courses that are likely to be filled, or, when necessary, alternative courses that meet the requirements. Students also requested more information about making post-graduation plans, including opportunities for graduate education, better career planning, and increased connections to employers.

**Support Services That Provide Help All Along the Pathway.** As with advising, students cited a need for improved access to, and quality of, other support services like tutoring and help with study skills and time management. Students said that tutoring is generally available for math and writing courses, but they have trouble finding tutoring for classes in other disciplines, including courses in their major. Some students recalled that general college skills such as effective study strategies and time management had been briefly covered in a freshman seminar course they had taken, but students were not aware of any ongoing support for those kinds of skills outside of those classes.

## Conclusions and Implications: Becoming Student-Centric Institutions

One primary goal of the CSU’s GI 2025 is to reduce time to degree. The results of our survey and focus groups indicate that this goal is consistent with students’ aspirations. In order to achieve the system’s goal, CSU campuses do not need to worry about changing student mindsets about time to degree—most CSU students already enroll aiming to graduate in a traditional timeframe. Students expressed their willingness to engage in the kinds of coursetaking patterns required to support their goal, but described the barriers they encounter that too often lead them to change their expectations about time to degree, including limited course availability, insufficient access to advising that is tailored to their needs, difficulty choosing and accessing an appropriate major, and insufficient supports to help them develop strong time management and study skills and to connect them to caring mentors and peer networks. Students’ primary suggestion for helping them graduate in a timely manner was to offer sufficient sections of needed courses, but they also requested more structure and alignment in their student experience at the CSU.

Our survey also demonstrated that many students in the CSU lead complex lives. While we found a smaller share of students working excessive hours than is typically assumed across the system, it is certainly the case that some students, especially among the transfer population, balance work and family obligations that complicate their efforts to complete a degree. Addressing the needs of today’s diverse student populations while supporting their expectations around timely graduation requires creating institutions that are more student-centric.

A previous study conducted for the CSU Student Success Network described efforts across the CSU to plan and implement new strategies to support student progress and success, and found an emerging awareness of a need for more structural and cultural change across the campuses, rather than just adjustments to, or implementation of, discrete programs.<sup>18</sup> The results of our survey and focus groups with students support the need for this kind of change. Addressing students’ biggest barriers to timely graduation will require collaboration across institutional functions. For example, no single division or department of the university can ensure the availability of courses students need to graduate. Adequate investment in the CSU by the state and students is necessary, and it also requires the effective allocation of available resources based on rigorous analysis of students’ educational plans and progress; efficient utilization of classrooms, including better use of summer terms, weekends and evenings; better guidance for students in selecting and registering for appropriate courses; and adequate support to help students succeed in courses the first time around, so they do not occupy seats in courses multiple times and reduce availability for other students.

Other challenges rose to the top for students in the survey and focus groups; addressing all of them adequately will require alignment of functions across the campus. The challenges are related to:

**Selecting a Suitable Major.** Helping students to identify an appropriate major in a timely way may require that campuses rethink policies about major declaration and develop new approaches to helping students consider options for careers and majors. Earlier communication with students about the requirements to be accepted into a major may be needed, along with advising

that is more focused on assisting students in selecting majors. Some universities are creating “meta-majors” that offer students broad disciplinary pathways (e.g., health sciences or social and behavioral sciences), with early coursework that can lead to multiple options for majors as they refine their interests, an approach that requires substantial collaboration across departments.

**Academic Advising.** Providing advising that is better tailored to the individual needs of students might require restructuring advising services to be more closely tied to students’ majors or prospective majors; ensuring that early advising focuses on developing a comprehensive plan based on students’ major or area of interest; and using data systems to more closely monitor students’ progress to allow for proactive intervention for struggling students. Given limited resources, campuses may need to engage in more group advising for students in similar programs, and make extensive use of the e-advising tools that many campuses are acquiring. Campuses may need to undertake efforts to inform those who work closely with students about the evidence supporting the benefits of taking 15 units per semester, which might help overcome the culture at many CSU campuses that assumes 12 units is more appropriate for many students.<sup>19</sup>

**Work and Family Obligations.** Addressing issues related to students’ personal lives may require more collaboration across divisions and departments to ensure that courses are offered in ways that accommodate those with considerable work and family obligations; that co-curricular supports are accessible to nontraditional students; that professional development is provided to faculty, advisors and other staff to ensure they know how to meet the needs of a broad range of student populations; and that students are aware of, and have access to, the full range of services aimed at helping them deal with any financial barriers.<sup>20</sup>

Our survey and interviews with CSU students revealed significant barriers that students face to reach their goal of timely graduation, challenges that are not unique to the CSU but mirror those cited by students in other higher education systems.<sup>21</sup> Some of the most salient issues raised by the findings are beginning to be addressed, with the Chancellor’s Office providing recurring baseline funds to help campuses offer additional sections of high-demand courses and hire more tenure-track faculty and academic advisors.<sup>22</sup> As the campuses seek to achieve their ambitious goals for GI 2025, the perspectives of students should be used as a guide for their efforts to create a smoother pathway to graduation.

## Appendix: Research Methods

**Development of Survey Instrument.** To select topics for our student survey and focus groups, we reviewed existing surveys covering undergraduate students’ experiences in college (e.g., National Survey of Student Engagement, College Student Experiences Questionnaire) along with documents related to current issues in the CSU (e.g., Graduation Initiative 2025, remediation, impactation). We sought and received feedback and suggestions for improvement on a draft version of the survey from researchers who study California higher education. We made changes based on these reviews, and piloted a revised version of the survey, in paper form, with a group of undergraduate students on our own campus (responses not included in the analyses). Through a discussion with the students and a review of their survey forms, we identified problematic question wording, confusing concepts, and other issues with the survey, and made final revisions to the instrument.

**Campus Selection.** We recruited campuses to participate in the research through outreach to members of the Interim Advisory Board of the CSU Student Success Network and to contacts at other CSU campuses, ensuring some variation in campus size and location in the state. Three campuses participated in the study. We offered to provide funds to the campuses to cover the cost of staff members’ time to assist us with coordinating the data collection activities, although only one of the three campuses requested such payment. We offered anonymity to participating campuses in order to encourage participation, so we do not identify them in this report.

**Student Sample Selection.** We asked the institutional research offices of each campus to send us the names and email addresses for a random sample of 3,000 undergraduate students who met the following criteria:

- they enrolled in the CSU as either a first-time freshman (FTF) or California community college transfer; and
- they have been enrolled in the CSU for at least one full academic year (i.e., their enrollment began sometime prior to fall 2016).

This yielded a sample comprising 8,782 student emails from across the three campuses. Out of the survey sample, 1,056 students responded to our survey (12% response rate) and the respondent sample size was fairly evenly distributed across the three campuses. While the response rate was modest, we checked the representativeness of the survey respondents by comparing their sociodemographic characteristics to those of the entire sample and found that the two groups were quite similar, with only minor differences in gender and income status. There were slightly higher shares of females and low-income students among survey respondents compared to the full sample.

Table A-1  
**Characteristics of Survey Respondents**

	FTF (N=580) MEAN or %	TRANSFER STUDENTS (N=476) MEAN or %
Gender (% female)	70%	64%
Age	21.1	27.6
Race/ethnicity		
White	21%	36%
African American/Black	3%	6%
American Indian/Alaskan Native	1%	1%
East Asian	5%	3%
Filipino	8%	4%
Southeast Asian	5%	3%
Other Asian	3%	2%
Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander	1%	0%
Mexican American/Mexican	34%	24%
Other Latino	9%	5%
Middle Eastern	2%	2%
Bi-racial/Multi-racial	7%	10%
Other	3%	4%
Father's education		
Less than high school	29%	23%
High school completion	21%	21%
Some college	19%	21%
Associate's degree	8%	11%
BA or higher	22%	22%
N/A	1%	3%
Mother's education		
Less than high school	30%	19%
High school completion	25%	28%
Some college	17%	20%
Associate's degree	5%	5%
BA or higher	20%	21%
N/A	4%	8%
Low-income (Pell and/or Cal Grant recipient)	66%	58%
Full-time enrollment (>=12 units in Spring 2017)	93%	74%
Priority registration	25%	25%
Class standing		
Freshman	0%	0%
Sophomore	21%	1%
Junior	39%	8%
Senior	39%	91%
Current GPA	3.10	3.23
Units earned	83.3	84.0
Ever stopped out	9%	14%

**Student Survey.** We administered the survey in April 2017 using Qualtrics survey software, recruiting students to participate via email, based on the random sample of 8,782 students provided by the campuses. To garner higher response rates, we sent four additional reminder emails over several weeks to students who had not completed the survey. We also offered students at each campus the chance to win a gift card and an Apple iPad as incentives to complete the survey. The survey included questions about students’

- expectations for timely completion;
- willingness to engage in coursetaking patterns that support progress toward graduation;
- engagement with campus activities;
- experience with course availability;
- experience with advising;
- obligations outside of classes;
- experience with various barriers or obstacles to timely progress; and
- factors they found supportive of their progress and success.

We conducted descriptive statistics on the closed-ended survey items using SPSS Statistics, and coded the responses to open-ended items thematically.

**Focus Groups.** To follow-up on the survey responses and to gain a deeper understanding of students’ experiences in the CSU, we conducted focus groups with students (one for FTF and another for transfer students) on each campus in September 2017. We developed an interview protocol informed by both the survey instrument itself and preliminary analyses of survey responses. We had several experts in higher education review and comment on a draft version of the protocol, and made revisions based on their comments. We recruited students, via email, from the same random sample of students used for the survey. A total of 54 students participated in the focus groups. The number of students per focus group ranged from 4 to 13. We conducted the focus groups in person at each campus, with each focus group lasting one hour. We provided lunch and offered a gift card as incentives for students’ participation. We asked students about their:

- expectations and self-assessment of their progress;
- experience with barriers or obstacles to timely progress; and
- experience with supports or resources that helped them make progress.

We audio recorded the focus groups and transcribed the recordings for our analyses. We conducted content analyses of the transcriptions to uncover major themes.

# Endnotes

- 1 Graduation rate information is available on the website of the California State University Chancellor’s Office Analytic Studies Division. See the California State University Graduation Rates Consortium for Student Retention Data Exchange at <http://asd.calstate.edu/csrde/ftf/2015htm/sys.htm>.
- 2 Jackson, J. & Cook, K. (2016). *Improving college graduation rates: A closer look at California State University*. San Francisco, CA: Public Policy Institute of California.
- 3 Forbes, E. J. (2017, November 20). *Implementation guidance for Executive Order 1110 – assessment of academic preparation and placement in general education written communication and mathematics/quantitative reasoning courses*. Coded Memorandum ASA-2017-27. Retrieved from <http://www.calstate.edu/AcadAff/codedMemos/ASA-2017-27.pdf>.
- 4 For example, see Ngo, F. & Kwon, W. W. (2015). Using multiple measures to make math placement decisions: Implications for access and success in community colleges. *Research in Higher Education*, 56, 442-470.; Kashyap, U. & Matthew, S. (2017). Corequisite model: An effective strategy for remediation in freshmen level remediation course. *Journal of STEM Education*, 18(2), 23-29; Logue, A. W., Watanabe-Rose, M., & Douglas, D. (2016). Should students assessed as needing remedial mathematics take college-level quantitative courses instead? A randomized control trial. *Educational Evaluation and Policy Analysis*, 38(3), 578-598.
- 5 The campus plans are available on the Chancellor’s Office website at <https://www2.calstate.edu/csu-system/why-the-csu-matters/graduation-initiative-2025/Pages/campus-plans-and-goals.aspx>
- 6 The CSU Student Success Network, established in 2016, brings together faculty, staff, and administrators from throughout the CSU system to connect and improve on progress for students. The Network is facilitated by EdInsights. For more information, see the Network website at <http://csunetwork.edinsightscenter.org>
- 7 CSU campuses interested in replicating the study can find the survey and focus group protocols in the technical appendices on the CSU Student Success Network website <http://csunetwork.edinsightscenter.org/Resources/Network-Publications/ctl/ArticleView/mid/3018/articleId/2193/Get-Me-from-point-A-to-Point-B-Student-Perspectives-on-Barriers-to-Timely-Graduation-at-the-California-State-University-Appendix>.
- 8 For example, see Wong, A. (2015, December 1). California’s higher education crisis. *The Atlantic*. Retrieved from <https://www.theatlantic.com/education/archive/2015/12/californias-higher-education-crisis/418293>
- 9 Information on impacted majors and campuses is available on the Chancellor’s Office website at <https://www2.calstate.edu/attend/impaction-at-the-csu>.
- 10 The 2018-2019 CSU Undergraduate Impacted Programs Matrix is available on the Chancellor’s Office website at <http://www.calstate.edu/sas/documents/ImpactedProgramsMatrix.pdf>.
- 11 Baldassare, M., Bonner, D., & Lopes, L. (2017). *Californians & higher education*. San Francisco, CA: Public Policy Institute of California.
- 12 California Faculty Association (2017, February 16). *Fact check: Myths plague discussion about proposed tuition increase*. Retrieved from <https://www.calfac.org/myths-and-facts>. The CFA cited as its source a 2016 fact sheet on the Chancellor’s Office website, which has since been removed. A contact at the Chancellor’s Office told us that the original source was erroneous.
- 13 See, for example: Triventi, M. (2014). Does working during higher education affect students’ academic progression? *Economics of Education Review*, 41, 1-13; Kulm, T. L. & Cramer, S. (2006). The relationships of student employment to student role, family relationships, social interactions, and persistence. *College Student Journal*, 40(4), 927-938; American Council on Education (2006). *Working their way through college: Student employment and its impact on the college experience*. Retrieved from <http://www.acenet.edu/news-room/Documents/IssueBrief-2006-Working-their-way-through-College.pdf>
- 14 See, for example, the CSU definition of a credit hour as reflected in a memo to campus presidents, available at <https://calstate.edu/>

[AcadAff/codedmemos/AA-2011-14.pdf](#).

- 15 Fosnacht, K., McCormick, A. C., & Lerma, R. (2016). *First-year students' time use in college: A latent profile analysis*. Paper presented at the annual meeting of the Association for the Study of Higher Education, Columbus, OH, November.
- 16 The share choosing “not applicable” ranged from approximately 12 to 19 percent across items for FTF and from 9 to 25 percent for transfer students. The “not applicable” responses might reflect the views demonstrated by those students in the focus groups who said they rarely see advisors due to poor experiences. It could also indicate issues with the rating scale used in the survey, in that the response choices provided (strongly agree, agree, disagree, strongly disagree) may not have given students enough options to accurately reflect their views. In addition, some research suggests that survey items using “agree/disagree” scales are subject to acquiescence, in which respondents tend toward being “agreeable,” yielding results that are more positive than might otherwise be the case with different question formats. The more negative findings about advising in the focus groups compared to the survey might also reflect a circumstance in which students who choose to spend an hour in a focus group are more likely to be those who have experienced challenges they want to share.
- 17 Gallup, Inc. (2014). *Great jobs great lives: The 2014 Gallup-Purdue Index report*. Washington, DC: Gallup, Inc..
- 18 Moore, C., Schragar, C. & Bracco, K. R. (2017) *From scatterplot to roadmap: New efforts to improve student success in the California State University*. Sacramento, CA: Education Insights Center, California State University, Sacramento.
- 19 For example, see Monaghan, D. & Attewell, P. (2014, April). *Academic momentum at the gate: Does first-semester credit load affect postsecondary completion?* Paper presented at the meeting of the American Educational Research Association, Philadelphia, PA.
- 20 Many in the CSU system recognize these financial barriers, and most campuses have recently developed food pantries, emergency funds for students, and other options to address the needs of students experiencing significant financial hardships. See Crutchfield, R. (2016). *Serving displaced and food insecure students in the CSU*. Long Beach, CA: California State University Chancellor's Office.
- 21 For example, a recent study involving students in the California Community Colleges found that they face a similar set of challenges, including difficulty with choosing a major, selecting and accessing appropriate courses, identifying and accessing support services, getting advising tailored to their individual needs, and connecting to faculty and peers with similar interests. See Dadgar, M., Arrillaga, E. S., Buck, D., Sinclair, B., Fischerhall, C., & Brown, K. (2017). *Bringing student voices to Guided Pathways inquiry and design: Findings from student focus groups at two California Community Colleges*. Oakland, CA: Career Ladders Project.
- 22 Storm, R. & Perkins, K. (2017, July 14). *2017-18 Final budget allocations*. Coded Memo B 2017-05. Retrieved from [http://www.calstate.edu/budget/fybudget/coded-memos/B\\_2017-05\\_Final\\_Budget\\_Allocations\\_Memo.pdf](http://www.calstate.edu/budget/fybudget/coded-memos/B_2017-05_Final_Budget_Allocations_Memo.pdf)





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