

Navigating the Transfer Journey: Insights from Fresno City College Students

Fresno City College
Focus Group
Report Summary



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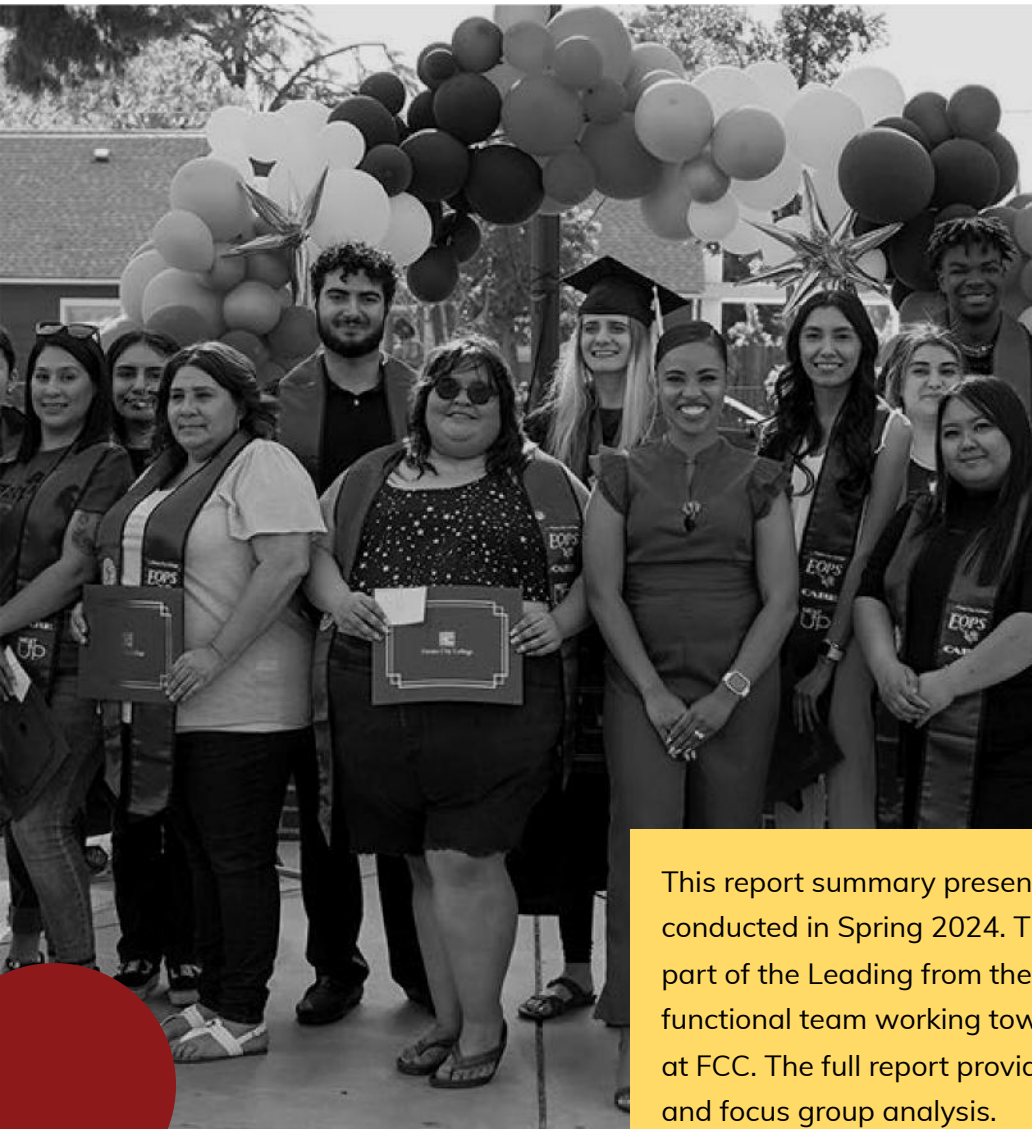
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Overview.



This report summary presents the findings from the focus groups conducted in Spring 2024. This qualitative project was initiated as part of the Leading from the Middle (LFM) team project, a cross functional team working toward closing equity gaps in transfer rates at FCC. The full report provides in-depth details of the LFM project and focus group analysis.

The research question asked, "**How have the classroom and counseling experiences of students at FCC impacted their transfer journeys?**"

The groups consisted of thirteen women and five men identifying as African American and/or Latino/a. These students represented various majors and age groups, and all had successfully completed at least one of the golden four courses (Math English, Communication, and Critical Thinking).



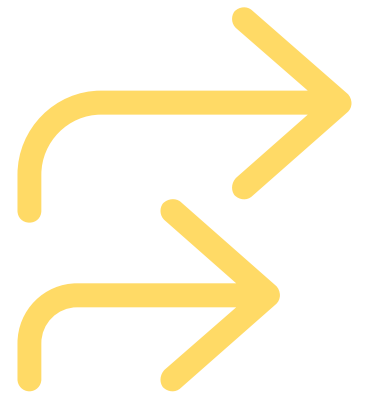
Methodology.

The following sections are key pieces to the methodology of this project. The full report provides an in-depth description of all methodological approaches.

- Minimum Qualifications
- Students Participants
- Team Positionality
- Impactful Experiences

Minimum Qualifications:

1. previously enrolled & successfully completed one of the golden four courses
2. identifies as African American/Black, Hispanic, Multi-racial indicating African American and/or Hispanic
3. FCC student (not dual enrollment)
4. intends to transfer



Student Participants.

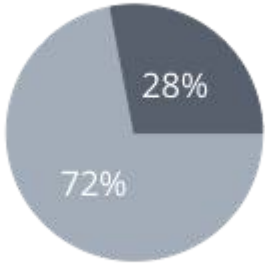


56% **First Generation**
of participating students are first in their families to attend college.



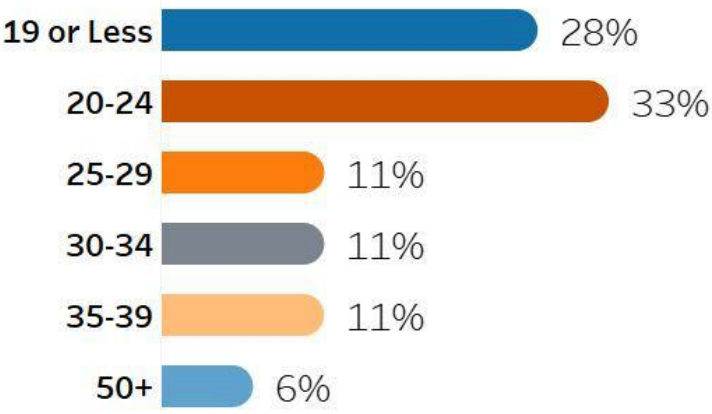
72% **Special Programs**
of participating students were enrolled in either EOPS, DSPS, and/or Cal WORKS in Spring 2024.

Gender

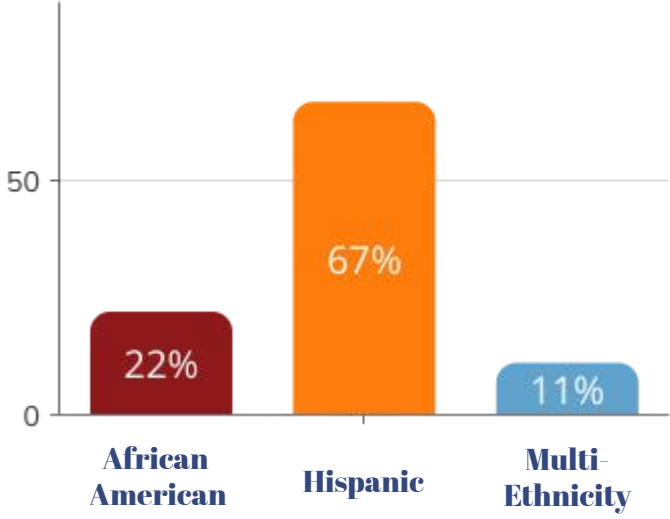


Women Men

Age Categories



Race/Ethnicity

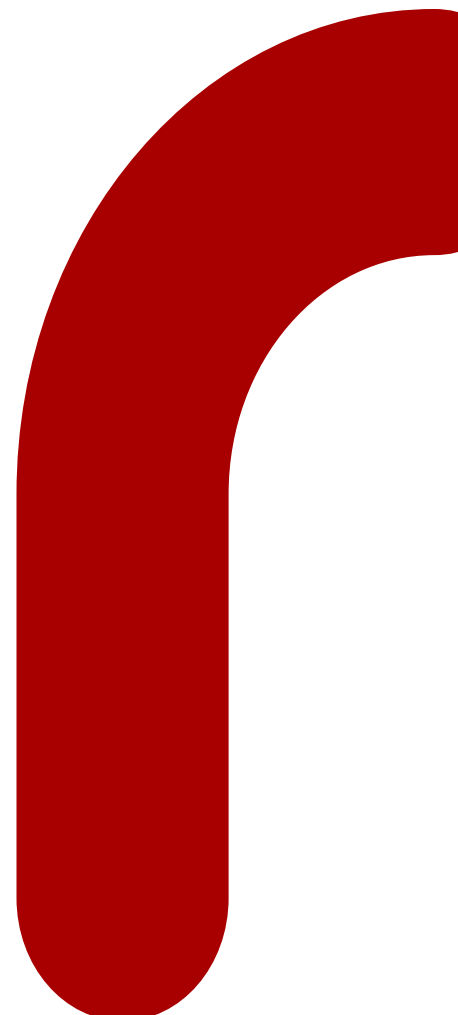




Team Positionality.

The frameworks of Critical Race Theory (CRT) and Liberation Theory guided our qualitative work, analysis, and dissemination of findings. These frameworks enabled us to consciously **center student voices** and experiences throughout the project.

Our team acknowledges the diverse backgrounds and perspectives we each bring to this research. This positionality allowed us to approach the study with a deep understanding of the multifaceted challenges faced by FCC students. We strived to center student voices and their experiences throughout the research process, ensuring that our findings and recommendations reflect the authentic experiences, needs, goals of the students'.





What aspects have played the most crucial roles in students' transfer journeys at FCC?

(based on frequency of mentions)

Classroom Experiences 53%

e.g. faculty mentorship, innovative teaching practices, empathetic instructors

"I've had difficulties and there's been a couple of professors that [have] **been there for me**, and it **gave me motivation**"

Counseling Services 31%

e.g. understanding general vs transfer counselors, counselor availability, receiving accurate information

"Counselors set up their little stands at the beginning of the semester. I feel like that's **very helpful** now"

Special Programs 16%

e.g. EOPS, Ram Pantry, PUENTE, Tutorial Center

"**EOPS helped me out a lot**. Big ups to EOPS because they helped me with books and grants, but then they also told me about another program called Reading and Beyond"



Findings Overview.

The primary goal of this qualitative study was to gain a deeper understanding of how students are experiencing the FCC campus and classroom culture and how their experiences have impacted transfer. Better understanding the student experience is not only crucial for institutional effectiveness, but foundational for student success.

The findings include: **(1)** Opening Reflections: Student Perspectives on FCC Visuals, **(2)** Special Programs, **(3)** Experiencing Faculty, and **(4)** Counseling Services, and **(5)** Student Recommendations. Each theme is summarized highlighting student experiences, include kudos and recommendations based on the findings, and showcase multiple student quotes from the focus groups.

Finding 1

Opening Reflections: Student Perspectives on FCC Visuals.

The focus groups were opened with asking students to reflect on select FCC images (*see Appendix B*). By opening with this question, we aimed to gauge students' immediate feelings and thoughts evoked by these visual representations. This initial question served as an icebreaker, facilitating an open and reflective discussion that allowed students to express their personal connections and reactions to the campus environment.

The following quotes offer a brief glimpse of students' feelings when they think about, see, or experience FCC.

"I do see a lot older and younger people like around my age. But like a lot of adults or even older people - that's nice to see them going into the programs, going to their classes... like I **see such a variety of ages**. I think it's nice, I think it's wholesome."

"Sometimes I do feel like '**where's everybody at?**'... - where can we hang out?"

"left out."

Finding 2

Special Programs.

Two major themes emerged from students' feedback.

(1) Students highlighted the positive impact of FCC's learning communities, which foster lasting connections with peers, faculty, and counselors. They value personalized support from programs like Puente and EPOS, as well as essential services like the Ram Pantry.

(2) Testimonials emphasized the importance of faculty awareness and integration of campus services, noting that cross-collaboration between student services and faculty is crucial for promoting student success.

*"I'm only surviving on the Pell Grant, so like my money situation is super tight. And I'm genuinely **worried about being homeless** anytime soon. So, the **RAM Pantry has been really helpful** like to alleviate food costs."*

*"I liked how they **teamed up** with the tutors and when they told us they were getting help from the tutors by going to the tutoring center..."*

*"I just feel like, sometimes I feel like I'm **not being directed to the right services** sometimes."*

Finding 3

Classroom Experiences.

Two major themes emerged when students were asked about their classroom experiences and relationships with faculty.

1. Students shared experiences where they expressed appreciating inclusive, innovative, and collaborative teaching that fosters a sense of community. They value instructors who show patience and empathy and note that support and resources outside of class significantly contribute to their success at FCC.
2. Student experiences emphasize that faculty attitudes and approaches shape the classroom environment and affect student engagement. Callous or indifferent faculty discourage participation, while supportive faculty positively impact students' educational journeys.

*"I was homeless for like six months when I was here, and my **professor checked in** with me and she was like "What's going on?" and like "**How can I help you?**" - not like limited to class. If there's something else - it's so like we had that conversation, and she hooked me up with a program that could help me get housing."*

*"... sometimes they [faculty] kind of **forget**...that we're still learning and... just to try to remember when they were in our shoes so that they're able to remember how it was and just be patient...and try to **give us the best example** so that we can work. Some of us are still barely learning."*

Finding 4

Counseling Services.

Students described their encounters with general counseling services at FCC in diverse ways. Three themes emerged from their experiences:

1. Power dynamics between students and counselors (general and transfer) are a key factor in student success. However, students expressed the desire to receive counseling that empowers them and allows for more autonomy over their educational journey.
2. In many cases, students expressed the importance and desire of seeing the same counselor, which they perceived would help alleviate the stress from potential inconsistencies or misguidance.
3. Students expressed the need for guidance on transfer eligibility and clarity on the different types of counselors available.

"I wanted for a little bit to go to a school in Oregon and she would not help me at all. She didn't know what to do or what kind of requirements I needed... I wasn't sure how to look for that stuff. And she was like "I don't know either, good luck."

*"Last semester, I took a tour of... UC Berkeley. And like, it's not something that I could go out and see on my own. So being given that opportunity was like very **eye-opening**, like there's **more out there for me.**"*

*"I'm way **over 60 units**. And she for some reason had told me I didn't need to take a history class, but I do. And so now I need to go and talk to someone else because I **need to get out of here** and she's **not helping me.**"*

Finding 4

Transfer Counseling Services.

Due to the focus on improving transfer rates at FCC, students were particularly asked about their experiences with Transfer Counseling Services. Two major themes emerged:

1. Students have had positive interactions with transfer counselors who have supported them extensively in their transfer journeys, fostering partnerships, autonomy, and empowerment.
2. Students also highly appreciate events like Transfer Day, which allow them to directly engage with different college campuses, verify information, and explore available opportunities.

*"what I liked about those days [Transfer Day] is that I could see like right there like **how many of those students' kind of look like me** or do they have these same types of programs or is this program better at this school or better at that school, and it was good to go and actually sit and compare during transfer days."*

*"She **broke it down for me**. We looked... [at] three of them... and she helped me look at what classes I would need, how much it would cost...we even went as far as looking [at] the area."*

Finding 5

Advice for students by students.

So... what are students saying?

In the focus groups, we asked students to share advice with friends on how to transfer successfully from FCC. Below is some of the *top* advice they shared. *Some helpful tips for their success are included too!*

"Make sure your **schedule aligns** with what you're doing outside."



Tip: Use a planner or calendar app to manage your time effectively.

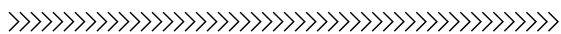


"**Don't be the first one to leave class**

because...somebody has the same questions you always have and maybe...they're going to go ask the teacher."



Tip: Use the last few minutes of class to clarify any doubts with your professor.



"**Talk to your counselor**, talk to your **professors**. Check out different schools to see what you want to transfer to."



Tip: Schedule regular meetings with your counselor to stay on track.



"Not to be afraid to ask for help because there's **so much help available** here."



Tip: Visit the student support center or join study groups for additional help.



"I think you have to be an **advocate for yourself** and say, this is the person that I want to see."



Tip: Speak up for your needs and don't hesitate to request meetings with specific counselors who can best support your transfer goals.



Staple Resources.



Hours:

9:00am - 3:00pm

Wednesdays

9:00am - 12:00pm &
2:00pm - 6:00pm



RamPantry@fresnocitycollege.edu



559.442.8799



General Counseling

Drop-In Service (in-person & virtual)

Live Chat

Appointments Available



559.442.8226

Location: ST-200
(Student Services Building)



Tutorial Center

**In Person Tutoring Hours:
Fall 2024**

Monday-Thursday: 8:00am-7:00pm
Friday: 8:00am-2:00pm
Sunday: 2:00pm-7:00pm

**Online Tutoring Hours:
Fall 2024**

Monday-Thursday: 8:00am-7:00pm
Friday: 8:00am-2:00pm
Sunday: 2:00pm-7:00pm



559.442.8209

Location: Tutorial Center (Library)



Transfer Center

Appointments: The Transfer Center is currently offering in-person and virtual counseling appointments.

Location: The Transfer Center located 2nd Floor of Student Services Building Room 200.



transfercenter@fresnocitycollege.edu



(559) 442-8290

Finding 5

Student Recommendations for FCC.

During the focus groups, students were asked to provide feedback for faculty members. The feedback below summarizes major themes that emerged.

Recommendations for Faculty:

1. Students appreciate faculty who bring a *sense of humanity* to the classroom (ex. sharing personal aspects of their lives).
2. They also desire more *understanding and empathy* from teachers regarding their multifaceted lives, including balancing full-time studies, jobs, and family responsibilities.
3. Students emphasize the need for *patience and support* from faculty, who should *remember* their own learning experiences and provide clear examples to help students grasp new and challenging concepts.



Finding 5

Student Recommendations for FCC (cont.)

During the focus groups, students were asked to provide feedback for counseling services. The feedback below summarizes major themes that emerged.

Recommendations for Counseling Services:

1. Students highlight the need for counselors to *listen* to their aspirations and *guide* them toward paths that align with their goals.
2. Students shared that they value counselors who *offer advice* but *respect their autonomy* in decision-making, understanding that guidance should be supportive rather than authoritative.





Conclusion.

This qualitative study has shed light on the crucial role of classroom and counseling experiences in shaping the transfer journeys of students at Fresno City College. The findings from the focus groups emphasize the *interconnectedness* of faculty, special programs, and student support services in fostering a supportive and successful educational environment.

The insights gathered from this study call for a proactive response from FCC's executive leadership. To enhance the transfer success of our students, we recommend the following actions ...



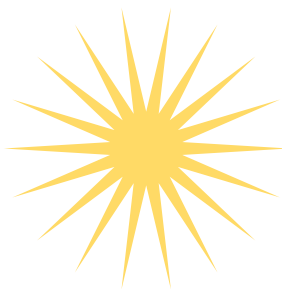
Conclusion (cont.)



Increase Collaboration: Foster greater collaboration between academic departments, special programs, and student support services to provide a holistic support system for students.



Enhance Faculty Development: Implement professional development programs that equip faculty with the skills to create inclusive, empathetic, and engaging classroom environments.



Improve Resource Visibility: Increase the visibility and accessibility of campus resources, ensuring that all students are aware of and can effectively utilize the support available to them.



Student-Centered Counseling: Encourage counseling practices that prioritize listening to and respecting student autonomy, while providing tailored guidance that aligns with their individual goals.

Appendix A

Research Question

1. How have the classroom and counseling experiences of students at FCC impacted their transfer journeys?

Campus Culture:

1. What feelings rise when you see these images? (FCC logo/images) (**Appendix B**)
2. Understanding student experiences in the classroom:
3. What has been/is the environment in your classrooms? What are the vibes?
4. How would you describe your relationships with your instructors?
5. Tell me about any experiences with instructors that have been impactful in your courses.

Promising Practices:

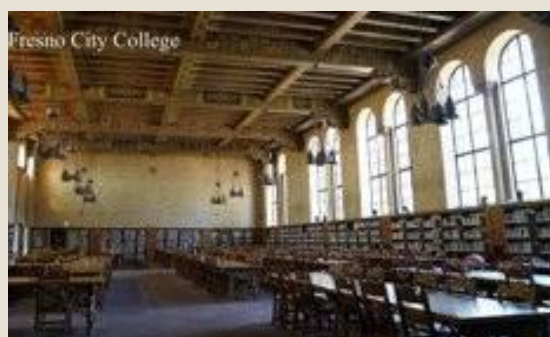
1. How did Fresno City College help you get there? What do you need from FCC to transfer? (Ex. More visibility of the transfer center, counseling)
2. What are your experiences with transfer counselors?
3. Have there been any experiences or student support services that have been impactful? (Ex. Tutoring, financial aid, library)
4. If you were giving advice to a friend who was planning to attend this college about how to successfully transfer, what advice would you give?

General:

1. Thinking about everything we just shared, what feedback would you give instructors and counselors?

Appendix B

Images used during focus groups.



"IF WE AREN'T
INTERSECTIONAL, SOME OF
US,

THE MOST VULNERABLE

ARE GOING TO FALL THROUGH THE
CRACKS"

Kimberlé Crenshaw



Fresno City College