Transitioning from a Community College to a Four-Year School

If you want to start out at a community college (or are already enrolled in one) and then transfer to a four-year school, make sure you have a plan. If you try to make the switch without mapping out your steps, then your transition will be harder. Here are the steps you should take to transition from a community college to a four-year school.

**Make a list.** Come up with a list of objectives to help you determine the right path for you. Think about where you see yourself in five or ten years. Here are some questions to consider:

- What career would you like to pursue?
- What academic preparation is required to enter this career field?
- Which four-year institution has a good academic program for your field of interest?
- What are some of the characteristics you are looking for in a four-year school?

**Choose a transfer school.** The earlier you can select a four-year institution to attend, the better off you will be. Universities and colleges differ widely in the courses they accept for transfer. By choosing a transfer school as early as possible, you will save a lot of time and effort because you will know in advance which courses will transfer to your selected school. When choosing a transfer school, check to see which schools have articulation agreements. Articulation agreements provide specific transfer policies that make it easier to transfer from one school to another.

**Meet with transfer advisors.** Because not all universities and colleges accept the same courses for transfer, it is critical that you work with a transfer advisor at your community college as well as one at the school to which you want to transfer. These advisors will help you map out courses to meet graduation requirements at your community college and transfer requirements for your chosen four-year institution.

**Focus on academics and extracurricular activities.** Most community colleges operate under an "open admissions" policy, which means that anyone with a high school diploma or GED may attend, regardless of prior academic performance and extracurricular involvement. However, to be accepted into your four-year school of choice, you need to stay focused on academics, achievements, and extracurricular activities. Keep your grades up and become involved in your community. Your transfer school wants well-rounded students.

**Research financial aid options.** Four-year institutions are more expensive than community colleges, so be sure to look into your financial aid options. Look for scholarships. You should also complete the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) to apply for state, federal, and institutional aid. Even if you don't think you'll qualify for need-based financial aid, you should still complete the FAFSA to be eligible for student loans. The FAFSA can be completed online at [www.fafsa.ed.gov](http://www.fafsa.ed.gov) as soon as possible after January 1st of the year for which you are requesting aid. For more specific information on transferring to a four-year school, contact your community college transfer advisor.

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