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# Welcome or just admitted? Transfer receptivity in California State University music programs

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# WELCOME OR JUST ADMITTED?

# TRANSFER RECEPTIVITY IN CALIFORNIA STATE UNIVERSITY MUSIC PROGRAMS

by

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## DEDICATION

I dedicate this work to my students—past, present, and future—whose courage and creativity remind me every day why music education must be a place of belonging and possibility.

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**WELCOME OR JUST ADMITTED?**

**TRANSFER RECEPTIVITY IN CALIFORNIA STATE**

**UNIVERSITY MUSIC PROGRAMS**

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ABSTRACT

Community colleges in the United States create opportunities for students to pursue higher education yet transfer to four-year universities may present barriers that challenge or interrupt student progress. In California, students may begin at one of the California Community Colleges (CCCs) with plans to transfer to one of the California State Universities (CSUs). Although pathways between CCCs and CSUs are designed to promote access, music transfer students may encounter barriers due to the unique nature of music study, including sequenced coursework, limited alignment between institutions, and program-specific requirements such as performance juries and audition requirements, which may not transfer or align consistently across institutions.

Transfer Receptive Culture (TRC) (Jain et al., 2011) a framework used to evaluate institutional commitment to supporting successful transfer students, emphasizes structural factors rather than placing responsibility on individual students. The purpose of this study was to examine whether and to what extent TRC is enacted within CSU music departments from the perspectives of CSU faculty who work with CCC transfer students. A sequential explanatory mixed methods design was implemented, with a faculty

questionnaire and semi-structured interviews. Both the design and analysis were developed in alignment with Critical Realism as the guiding paradigm.

Key findings included misalignment between CCC and CSU curricula, inconsistent advising and communication, and limited institutional assessment of transfer-related practices at the CSUs. Broader themes also emerged beyond the TRC framework, including student well-being, faculty strain and emotional labor, deflecting institutional responsibility, and systemic misalignment and institutional frustration. TRC implementation varied across CSU music programs, with support structures differing in both consistency and comprehensiveness. Practical implications for the promotion of TRC within university settings are also presented.

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# CHAPTER ONE

## INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

The California Community College (CCC) system is the largest higher education system in the United States, serving approximately 2 million students yearly at 116 campuses (California Community Colleges Chancellor's Office [CCCCO], 2024c). Community colleges in California operate under an open-access mission, providing affordable education to all students regardless of academic preparation, background, or career goals (CCCCO, 2024f; Cohen et al., 2016). The CCC system offers affordable education to a diverse student population: In 2024, the CCC student body was 48% Hispanic, 40% adult students (25 years or older), 65% were classified as economically disadvantaged under the federal Perkins criteria, and 35% were first-generation students (CCCCO, 2024f).[1]

Prior studies document that transfer from community colleges to four-year universities can be challenging, particularly for students of color (Del Real Viramontes & Jain, 2021), due to limited familial and institutional financial, academic, and social support systems (Del Real Viramontes, 2020) as well as microaggressions such as deficit messaging (Casanova et al., 2024). Microaggressions contribute to a negative campus experience, potentially causing students, especially students of color, to question their place in higher education and hindering their motivation to persist through the transfer process (Fematt & Ramirez, 2024). These persistent challenges stand in contrast to the

[1] In California, a student is considered first-generation when "both parents or guardians have never attended college or attained an associate degree or higher as reported by the student at any college" (CCCCO, 2024e, first-generation section).

intent of California Senate Bill 1440, which established the Associate Degree for Transfer (ADT) pathway. Enacted in 2010, this law was designed to guarantee students a clear and direct route from community colleges to the California State University system by providing junior-level standing upon transfer. The tension between these legal protections and the lived realities of many students underscores the complexity of transfer in practice.

Regarding music, community colleges provide an affordable and accessible entry point for students aspiring to become music educators. However, findings from recent studies have shown that the transfer process for preservice music educators who begin at community colleges is especially challenging due to waitlists or students having to repeat music coursework, which delays degree completion (Dixon, 2018; Glenn, 2020; Koner & Eros, 2022). Because community colleges serve a diverse student population in California (CCCCO, 2024f), creating clear and equitable transfer pathways is essential for ensuring that students from underrepresented backgrounds have access to music teacher preparation programs. Efforts to diversify public school music educators (DeAngelis, 2022; Fitzpatrick et al., 2014; Howard et al., 2014; VanDeusen, 2021) align with statewide goals to reduce opportunity gaps and respond to demographic shifts across California's public education system (Alcala, 2024; CCCCO, 2024f/2024g).

**The Community College System**

The first public junior college, Joliet Junior College in Illinois, was founded in 1901 by J. Stanley Brown and William Rainey Harper, who envisioned a system that would bridge the gap between high school and university education (Joliet Junior

College, 2024). Historically, community colleges have been known by several names, including *junior college, city college, county college*, and *vocational college* (Cohen et al., 2016). As community colleges were established across the US, their mission expanded to include vocational training, workforce preparation, personal development, and academic transfer to four-year universities (Clotfelter et al., 2013; Strada Education Foundation, 2023).

The California Community College (CCC) system serves as a gateway to higher education, providing accessible and transformative learning opportunities for students from diverse backgrounds and varied academic aspirations (CCCCO, 2024c). The system's roots trace back to the 1907 California Upward Extension Act, the first state law in the United States to authorize junior colleges (Boggs & Galizio, 2021). The first California junior college, established in 1910 at Fresno High School, later became Fresno City College (Boggs & Galizio, 2021). The 1960 California Master Plan for Higher Education solidified community colleges as a key component of the state's three-tiered higher education system, alongside the University of California (UC) and California State University (CSU) systems (Boland et al., 2018). Today, CCCs play a vital role in fostering social mobility, economic prosperity, and lifelong learning opportunities for all Californians, with 51% of CSU graduates being CCC transfers (CCCCO, 2024d; 2024f).

**California State University System**

The California State University (CSU) system plays a central role in California's public higher education transfer pathway and serves as the primary receiving institution for students transferring from California Community Colleges (CCCs) (California State

University, n.d.). Based on statewide data, 51% of California State University graduates and 29% of University of California graduates began their education at a California community college (California Community Colleges Chancellor's Office, 2024d). Within California's higher education landscape, these data place the CSU system as the primary destination for community college students seeking four-year degrees. With 23 campuses, the CSU constitutes one of the largest four-year public university systems in the United States. The system enrolls a highly diverse student population and has long operated as a key access point for first-generation, low-income, and underrepresented students seeking to complete bachelor's degrees through the transfer process (California State University, 2025; Hernandez, 2021; Jain et al., 2011).

To improve transfer outcomes statewide, California passed Senate Bill 1440 (2010), which built on earlier articulation agreements by establishing in law the Associate Degree for Transfer (ADT) pathway. The ADT was designed to create more transparent pathways between the CCC and CSU systems by guaranteeing CSU admission at the junior level for students who complete approved associate degrees at CCCs (CCCCO, 2024a). This policy aims to streamline transfer by aligning lower-division coursework across sectors and reducing unnecessary credit loss which occurs after students transfer from community colleges.

**Transfer in Music Education**

Music has been part of the community college curriculum since the earliest development of these institutions (Brophy, 1997). Community college music programs serve multiple purposes, including workforce preparation, community engagement, and

transfer preparation for students seeking baccalaureate degrees (Brophy, 1997). The open-access mission of community colleges allows students with a wide range of educational and career goals to pursue music study (Dixon, 2018).

Preservice music educators may begin their academic paths at community colleges because of the affordability and accessibility these institutions provide (Dansereau & Sundblad, 2024). As educational costs continue to rise and teacher shortages persist across the United States (Piotrowski, 2021), community colleges may serve as a critical access point for developing the music education workforce by lowering financial barriers and expanding entry points into the field.

Recent scholarship on transfer in music education highlights both direct transfer processes and related factors shaping student pathways. Transfer-focused studies include analyses of student transitions and integration experiences (Glenn, 2020), challenges and institutional barriers (Koner & Eros, 2023), and parallel perspectives of transfer students and faculty on preparedness (Steele Royston et al., 2021). Additional research provides relevant context by addressing college choice factors (Dansereau & Sundblad, 2024), community college students' engagement with curriculum and cultural capital (Park, 2021), and curriculum design at the community college level (Dixon, 2018). Although scholarship has examined transfer broadly, little attention has focused on how receiving institutions and faculty shape outcomes within music programs.

Although the ADT has improved transfer efficiency in many areas (Baker et al., 2023), the process remains complex for certain academic disciplines. Fields like music education present unique challenges because of prerequisite sequencing, performance

requirements, and specialized coursework that may not fully align across institutional systems (Koner & Eros, 2022). Even when transferring under the ADT structure, students may still encounter credit loss and advising complications (Jain et al., 2020). Other research has shown similar challenges in music programs, including course repetition and extended time to degree (Koner & Eros, 2022; Park, 2021). This study examined music broadly rather than solely music education to capture how transfer processes operate across the range of disciplines housed within music departments.

**Problem Statement**

In the United States, higher education is commonly associated with increased social and economic opportunity (Boggs & Galizio, 2021). Yet, persistent obstacles including financial burden, racial inequity, and uneven distribution of institutional resources may hinder students from earning a four-year degree (Cahalan et al., 2024; Jha & Wharton, 2023). Community colleges serve as a crucial pathway to bachelor's degree attainment, particularly for historically underrepresented and non-traditional students (Mejia et al., 2020). The success of transfer pathways between two- and four-year institutions has thus emerged as a crucial factor in achieving broader goals of educational equity (Jabbar et al., 2021; McGee, 2024; Taylor & Jain, 2017).

One purpose of California Community Colleges (CCCs) is to help students transfer to four-year universities where they might obtain a baccalaureate degree (Boggs & Galizio, 2021). However, research consistently shows that transfer students across the United States encounter institutional barriers, including course articulation problems, complex policies, and insufficient communication between community colleges and

receiving universities (Jabbar et al., 2022; Jain et al., 2020; McGee, 2024; Taylor, 2019). These barriers are compounded by students' additional responsibilities such as employment, caregiving, and long commutes, as well as financial pressures related to tuition, housing, and transportation, which place them at greater risk of attrition (Baugus, 2019; Hart, 2021; Olfert et al., 2021). Collectively, these institutional and personal challenges create considerable obstacles for students navigating the transfer process and persisting toward degree completion.

Transfer challenges can be especially complex in fields such as music education, in which sequential course structures, applied performance requirements, and ensemble participation expectations rarely align across institutions (Glenn, 2020; Koner & Eros, 2022; Steele Royston et al., 2021). These structural inconsistencies can extend students' time to degree and increase financial strain. In some cases, they may also discourage students from completing the transfer pathway altogether (Ortagus et al., 2021).

**Theoretical Framework**

To frame this study, I drew upon Transfer Receptive Culture (TRC). TRC is a relatively new framework that provides an asset-based approach to transfer in higher education (Jain et al., 2011). Asset-based frameworks reject deficit narratives and instead recognize the strengths, knowledge, and lived experiences that transfer students carry with them as they continue their academic journeys (Jain et al., 2011; Yosso, 2005). Grounded in critical race theory (CRT), TRC places the onus of transfer receptivity on baccalaureate institutions rather than on students or transfer-sending institutions (Jain et al., 2016). TRC defines transfer receptivity at the university level through five

interrelated elements: (1) institutional priority, (2) outreach and resources, (3) transfer-specific financial and academic support, (4) acknowledgment of student lived experiences, and (5) assessment frameworks (Jain et al., 2011). The framework emphasizes institutional responsibility rather than placing the burden of transfer success solely on students or community colleges. In this study, I applied TRC as the theoretical framework, using its elements to shape the research questions.

**Purpose and Research Questions**

The purpose of this study was to investigate the transfer receptive culture (TRC) within California State Universities (CSUs) from the perspective of CSU faculty as TRC pertains to music students transferring from California Community Colleges (CCCs). Faculty play a critical role in shaping transfer outcomes through their influence on advising, curriculum design, and classroom practices, which position them as valuable evaluators of how TRC is enacted within music programs. Although faculty perspectives do not capture every dimension of transfer, they illuminate how faculty beliefs about transfer students and institutional processes shape the supports, expectations, and practices students encounter after transfer. Understanding these perspectives is essential because when transfer pathways remain difficult to navigate, fewer community college students complete music degrees, ultimately narrowing the pool of future professional musicians, music educators, and other practitioners, and limiting the diversity of the broader music workforce. The following questions guided this study:

1. How do faculty members at California State Universities (CSUs) understand and perceive the transfer receptive culture at their institutions for music students

transferring from California Community Colleges (CCCs)?

2. What faculty practices and perspectives shape the transfer experience of music students, as interpreted through the lens of transfer receptive culture (TRC)?

**Justification**

Although community colleges serve as a central pathway to four-year colleges and universities, transfer students in music continue to encounter distinctive barriers related to course sequencing, performance requirements, and curricular alignment that can delay or derail degree completion (Albert & Heiderscheit, 2023; Koner & Eros, 2022; Park, 2021). Despite the prevalence of these obstacles, little research has examined how receiving institutions—particularly California State University music departments—shape transfer outcomes. Because faculty influence transfer through curriculum, advising, and classroom practices, their perspectives provide essential insight into how institutional environments either foster or constrain transfer receptivity in music education.

As a community college faculty member, I have observed the challenges my students face when their cultural and musical backgrounds are not fully recognized within transfer pathways. Students with rich training in mariachi, gospel, jazz, or other community-based traditions often find their experiences devalued when curricula prioritize Eurocentric ensembles and expectations. These encounters underscore the urgency of understanding how faculty at receiving institutions perceive and enact transfer support, and they motivate my commitment to investigating ways to strengthen equity and access for music students moving from California Community Colleges to CSU programs.

Regarding the theoretical framework and research surrounding community college music, no study thus far has examined Transfer Receptive Culture (TRC) in the context of music. Existing TRC research has primarily focused on general student populations or on institutional and policy-level practices related to transfer, rather than on discipline-specific contexts. Understanding the transfer receptive environment for music students is therefore essential for identifying the strengths and weaknesses in the transfer process for preservice music educators. Applying the TRC framework to this population provides an opportunity to illuminate how institutional structures, faculty perceptions, and departmental cultures shape transfer student experiences in music programs, ultimately contributing to broader conversations about equity and access in higher education.

# CHAPTER TWO

# LITERATURE REVIEW

This literature review begins with broad perspectives on transfer pathways and the structural barriers that affect student mobility in higher education. I then examine how the transfer process impacts underrepresented student groups, with particular attention to the role of community colleges and California State Universities (CSUs) in expanding access to four-year degrees. The review continues with an analysis of how critical race theory (CRT) has been applied to the community college context, followed by a detailed discussion of transfer receptive culture (TRC), a CRT-derived framework that emphasizes institutional responsibility for equitable transfer. The final section addresses the limited application of TRC within music, highlighting structural and cultural barriers that continue to affect transfer student success in the discipline.

## Overview of Transfer Process in Higher Education

Transfer in higher education can take many forms, including coenrollment, dual enrollment, lateral transfer, reverse transfer, and vertical transfer (Bahr, 2012; Jain et al., 2020; Taylor & Jain, 2017). Vertical transfer, the most common form of transfer in higher education, involves academic progression from lower-division to upper-division coursework, typically through movement from a community college to a four-year institution (Handel, 2013). Transferring from a community college to a 4-year institution is critical for many students who aspire to earn a bachelor's degree, as it provides an accessible and affordable pathway to achieving their educational goals (Marling, 2013; Taylor & Jain, 2017). Community colleges tend to be more affordable than four-year

institutions (Ma et al., 2023), and many states—including California—offer tuition support programs such as the California College Promise, which provides free tuition for eligible students during their first two years of study (California Community Colleges Chancellor's Office [CCCCO], 2024b).

Community colleges serve as crucial entry points to higher education, particularly for individuals from low socioeconomic backgrounds, underrepresented communities, and first-generation college-goers (Cohen et al., 2014). These institutions attract a diverse student body through their open-access policies, affordable tuition, flexible scheduling, and varied academic and vocational programs catering to traditional and non-traditional students (Boggs, 2011). Furthermore, community colleges often function as entry points for students aiming to transfer to 4-year institutions, allowing them to complete general education requirements and explore academic interests at a more affordable cost (Fink & Jenkins, 2015; McKinney et al., 2015). Community colleges increase educational equity and workforce development in their communities by accommodating students who may be balancing work, family responsibilities, and academic pursuits (Jain et al., 2020).

### *Community Colleges and the California State University System*

California's public higher education system includes three segments: the University of California (UC), the California State University (CSU), and the California Community Colleges (CCC). This study focuses on the CSU system, which receives the majority of CCC transfer students (California Community Colleges Chancellor's Office, 2024d) and was the intended recipient of the Associate Degree for Transfer (ADT) pathway. Although the UC system also accepts transfer students, it enrolls fewer CCC

students overall and offers fewer transfer-oriented undergraduate music pathways (California Community Colleges Chancellor's Office [CCCCO], 2024a). The CCC system enrolls more than two million students annually across 116 campuses, making it the largest higher education system in the United States (California Community Colleges Chancellor's Office [CCCCO], 2024c). Community colleges disproportionately serve first-generation students, adult learners, and individuals from historically underrepresented racial and socioeconomic backgrounds (CCCCO, 2024c; Cohen et al., 2014).

The CSU system comprises 23 campuses, and more than half of its graduates began their education at a California community college (CCCCO, 2024d). Enacted in 2010, Senate Bill 1440 established the Associate Degree for Transfer (ADT) to improve alignment between California's community colleges and universities. The ADT guarantees admission to a CSU campus in a related major for students who complete an Associate in Arts for Transfer (AA-T) or an Associate in Science for Transfer (AS-T) degree. Researchers have associated ADT participation with improved efficiency in transfer and higher rates of baccalaureate completion (Baker et al., 2023; Senecal, 2021).

Despite these structural reforms, substantial barriers to successful transfer remain. A policy report by Mejia et al. (2020) found that only 19% of CCC students who expressed an intention to transfer completed the process within four years, and only 28% did so within 6 years. The report also documented substantial racial disparities, with

Black and Latino[2] students transferring at lower rates than white and Asian peers, even when students demonstrated similar levels of preparation. Additionally, transfer outcomes vary widely by region, as local implementation practices differ across CCC districts and CSU campuses (Mejia et al., 2020).

Challenges with advising and articulation also continue to affect student transfer experiences. Nguyen et al. (2023) reported that students using ASSIST, California's course articulation platform, frequently encountered confusing interfaces and difficulty determining how community college courses would transfer to four-year institutions. Although recent initiatives have promoted dual admissions programs and greater collaboration between CCC and CSU institutions, these efforts have not been consistently adopted across campuses (Adan et al., 2024). Variation in advising capacity and articulation transparency continues to affect students' ability to navigate transfer requirements.

Research conducted at specific CSU campuses has further illustrated the impact of these conditions on student experience. For example, Hernandez (2021) examined the experiences of Mexican American male transfer students at a CSU institution and found that participants encountered unclear degree pathways, limited departmental advising, and few faculty relationships. Similarly, Flores (2020) conducted a mixed-methods study at CSU Los Angeles and reported that Latinx students who had completed ADT

[2] Throughout this study, I use terms such as Latino, Latina, Latino/a, and Latinx based on the language used by the authors or participants being cited. These terms reflect evolving conversations around gender inclusivity, cultural identity, and community self-identification. I aim to respect and preserve the original context of each source rather than impose a single uniform term.

requirements still faced a lack of mentorship and minimal support tailored to their transfer background. Even when transfer policies are in place, institutional culture and infrastructure can continue to limit student integration and progress.

Although the introduction of the Associate Degree for Transfer (ADT) and the California General Education Transfer Curriculum (Cal-GETC), a statewide general education pathway for transfer, has contributed to more coherent transfer frameworks, persistent misalignment across institutions, inequities in advising, and insufficient attention to student experience continue to hinder equitable outcomes. These challenges are particularly acute in programs such as music, in which sequenced curricula and competitive admissions processes compound systemic barriers (Glenn, 2020; Park, 2021).

### *Transfer for Underrepresented Groups*

Community colleges often serve as an entry point to higher education for students from low-socioeconomic, first-generation, and racially minoritized backgrounds, who may aspire to transfer to four-year institutions (Del Real Viramontes, 2020; Mejia et al., 2020). However, institutional structures and policies do not always align with these aspirations. Even when students demonstrate academic readiness and motivation, inconsistent advising, limited course articulation, and uneven institutional commitment can complicate the transfer pathway (Felix et al., 2022; Mejia et al., 2020).

Latinx students are among the largest groups enrolled in community colleges in California, yet they remain underrepresented among bachelor's degree recipients (Felix et al., 2022; Del Real Viramontes, 2020). Research has shown that they often rely on familial and peer-based forms of social capital to navigate the transfer process—

resources that are powerful but frequently unsupported by institutional systems (Del Real Viramontes, 2020). Although many CSU campuses are designated as Hispanic-Serving Institutions (HSIs), HSI status alone does not ensure the presence of transfer-specific advising structures or administrative practices that align with Latinx students' needs, a pattern noted in research on HSIs' uneven capacity to support student success (Núñez et al., 2016). This disconnect between student assets and institutional structures contributes to ongoing inequities in transfer outcomes.

Adult learners, including returning students and those with caregiving responsibilities, represent a growing population within community colleges, reflecting national trends toward increased enrollment among nontraditional students—typically defined as learners who are older than traditional college age, financially independent, employed while enrolled, or balancing family obligations (Boggs & Galizio, 2021; California Community Colleges Chancellor's Office, 2024f). These nontraditional students often face logistical barriers such as rigid course scheduling or limited campus support, yet many persist due to strong self-determination and career focus (Kasworm, 2010; Mikayelyan, 2022). Similarly, transfer students from historically marginalized backgrounds benefit from learning environments that affirm their identities and contributions. Mikayelyan (2022) found that positive faculty interactions considerably boosted transfer student confidence, while exclusionary experiences led to diminished academic engagement.

Equity-oriented campus initiatives have shown promise in supporting transfer success. Draganov et al. (2023) reported that community college students from

historically underserved backgrounds who engaged in service-learning experiences focused on social justice showed higher rates of retention and degree completion relative to non-participating peers, reflecting how reciprocal engagement with off-campus communities can affirm students' identities, lived experiences, and emerging professional commitments. These programs helped foster a sense of belonging and connected students to faculty, peers, and community organizations in meaningful ways. Similarly, Wyels and Martinez (2024) found that first-year and transfer students from low-income and underrepresented backgrounds who participated in first-year service-learning courses showed substantially higher retention and graduation rates. These courses emphasized culturally relevant, community-based projects that connected academic learning with real-world social justice issues and fostered student-instructor-community relationships. These findings highlight how equity-oriented initiatives can improve transfer outcomes by strengthening students' sense of belonging and connection within the community college context and in relation to their anticipated transition to four-year institutions.

### *Music and the Transfer Process*

Although university music programs often require auditions for admission (Albert & Heiderscheit, 2023), community colleges traditionally do not (Anderman, 2011), providing an open-access pathway for students, including first-generation students who make up approximately half of current community college music education majors (Dansereau & Sundblad, 2024). Many music education students choose community college as an intermediate step to reduce the financial burden of matriculating directly into a university (Dansereau & Sundblad, 2024; Park, 2021). Additionally, a profile of

community college music education students in the United States showed that location and the ability to live at home were the primary reasons students choose community colleges (Dansereau & Sundblad, 2024).

Communication between institutions has been shown to be inconsistent, especially for music students, which can create barriers to successful transfer. A lack of clear inter-institutional communication may result in misaligned curricula, duplicated coursework, or delays in degree progress (Koner & Eros, 2022). Additionally, coursework repetition may sideline students who are told they will be able to transfer and graduate from a 4-year institution within four years who may not be able to do so (Koner & Eros, 2022). Scheduling is also an issue for community college music education students, as required courses are often placed on the schedule at conflicting times (Dansereau & Sundblad, 2024).

Although some university music programs have made efforts to diversify in recent years, institutional practices in music education often remain centered on Eurocentric ensembles, pedagogy, and coursework (Diaz, 2021). These structures contribute to inequities in student access and preparation for university admission. For example, students who play non-Western instruments are typically required to audition on Western instruments using classical repertoire (Park, 2021), and students without private instruction experience during high school may face additional barriers during the audition process (Dansereau & Sundblad, 2024).

## Critical Race Theory

Critical race theory (CRT) is a framework that researchers have used to examine how race and racism are deeply embedded within the laws, policies, and structures of society (Crenshaw, 2010; Solórzano, 1998). Originally developed by legal scholars in the 1970s, CRT posits that racism is not merely a matter of individual prejudice but is systemic and pervasive, shaping the experiences and outcomes of people of color (Bell, 1980; Delgado & Stefancic, 2017). Central to CRT is the view that race is a social construct rather than a biological reality and that racism is a permanent feature of American society (Delgado & Stefancic, 2017; Ladson-Billings, 1998). In education, CRT has been applied to analyze and challenge the ways in which educational institutions and practices perpetuate racial inequities (Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995; Solórzano, 1998). Solórzano (1998) identified five themes associated with CRT in education: (a) intersectionality, (b) challenge to the dominant ideology, (c) commitment to social justice, (d) experiential knowledge, and (e) interdisciplinary perspectives. The transfer receptive culture framework is itself informed by principles of critical race theory, emphasizing the need to address systemic inequities, challenge dominant narratives, and center the lived experiences of students from historically marginalized groups (Jain et al., 2011; Solórzano, 1998).

### *Critical Race Theory and the Community College Context*

Community colleges are often characterized as accessible and affordable entry points to higher education for students from underrepresented and low-income backgrounds (Cohen et al., 2014; Hernández, 2021). Although this characterization holds

true in many respects, scholars applying critical race theory (CRT) have challenged the idea that community colleges consistently serve as engines of equity (Fisher & Lanford, 2025; Jain et al., 2011). From a CRT-informed perspective, these institutions may also reflect and reproduce larger structural inequities, especially when institutional policies and practices fail to respond to the lived experiences of racially minoritized students (Yücel, 2022).

Researchers have emphasized that institutional efforts to support racial equity in community college settings must go beyond surface-level reforms and include anti-racist frameworks, professional development, and intentional collaboration with students and faculty (Hotchkins et al., 2022; Parks et al., 2022). For example, Yücel (2022) applied CRT to justice-impacted student programs at community colleges and found that many of these initiatives lacked structural alignment with students' actual needs. Yücel concluded that when programs do not fully consider the racialized experiences of their student populations, they risk perpetuating exclusion even when appearing to promote access.

Another study focused on how community college men of color navigate educational pathways in the absence of culturally sustaining supports. Romero-Reyes and Becerra (2025) found that although some faculty offered encouragement, many students still encountered microaggressions, deficit-based assumptions, and a lack of understanding regarding their cultural and familial responsibilities. These findings reinforce CRT's emphasis on experiential knowledge and intersectionality, particularly the need for educational policies to recognize how race, class, and gender shape student experiences.

Felix et al., (2022) argued that policy levers such as the Associate Degree for Transfer (ADT) pathway and transfer articulation agreements must be coupled with intentional, equity-driven strategies if they are to yield real transformation for Latinx students. Rather than assuming equal benefit from universal policies, CRT-oriented analyses stress that students encounter these structures differently depending on their racial and institutional contexts.

Additionally, Hotchkins et al. (2022) emphasized the importance of proactive collaboration among faculty, staff, and administrators to advance racial equity within community colleges. Their study described how anti-racist initiatives that engage multiple institutional stakeholders can contribute to more affirming and supportive campus environments for racially minoritized students. These findings align with CRT's call for systemic change and collective responsibility in dismantling institutional racism.

**Transfer Receptive Culture**

Transfer receptive culture (TRC) is an asset-based framework grounded in critical race theory (CRT) that emphasizes institutional responsibility for supporting transfer students (Jain et al., 2011; Solórzano, 1998). It was developed to address the ways in which four-year institutions have historically failed to provide adequate support for transfer students, particularly students of color. Rather than attributing challenges to student deficiencies, TRC emphasizes the responsibility of institutions to foster inclusive and affirming environments. There are five guiding elements to TRC, with two focused on the pre-transfer process and three focused on post-transfer institutions:

Pre-transfer:

1. Establish the transfer of students, especially nontraditional, first-generation, low-income, and underrepresented students, as a high institutional priority that ensures stable accessibility, retention, and graduation.

2. Provide outreach and resources that focus on the specific needs of transfer students while complimenting the community college mission of transfer.

Post-transfer:

3. Offer financial and academic support through distinct opportunities for nontraditional/reentry transfer students where they are stimulated to achieve at high academic levels.

4. Acknowledge the lived experiences that students bring and the intersectionality between community and family.

5. Create an appropriate and organic framework from which to assess, evaluate, and enhance transfer-receptive programs and initiatives that can lead to further scholarship on transfer students (Jain et al., 2011, p. 258).

Transfer receptive culture (TRC) was first articulated by Jain, Herrera, Bernal, and Solórzano in their 2011 study on Latina/o community college students in California (Jain et al., 2011), extending critical race theory into transfer studies. The framework was designed to challenge deficit-oriented narratives by shifting responsibility from individual students to receiving institutions. Later refinements emphasized that TRC is not a checklist of practices but a conceptual lens for analyzing the cultural, structural, and policy conditions that shape transfer student success (Jain et al., 2016; Jain et al., 2020).

As a theoretical framework, TRC has since been applied in diverse areas of higher education, including academic advising (Yost, 2023), first-generation students (Galvan Godinez, 2024; Harris, 2024; Tamayo, 2021), Latinx students (Del Real Viramontes, 2018; Flores, 2020), and institutional departure (Cortes-López, 2021; Joseph, 2021).

Within the California higher education landscape, researchers have applied TRC in studies of California State University (CSU) campuses. For example, Flores (2020) analyzed Latinx transfer student experiences at CSU Los Angeles, while Hernandez (2021) and Vaquera (2023) investigated TRC-related issues in other CSU settings. Given the CSU system's central role in California's transfer pipeline, TRC provides a critical lens for examining the varied and sometimes inconsistent forms of support available to students transitioning from community colleges.

### *Research Employing TRC as a Framework*

In the context of a private university in the Midwest, Yost (2023) conducted a qualitative, hermeneutic, phenomenological study that examined transfer receptive culture from the standpoint of academic advisors. The findings indicated that although the first three elements of TRC supported success, the last two elements, including establishing and maintaining connections to family and community and measuring successful retention, needed improvement. In this study, Yost (2023) recommended examining TRC in the context of faculty advisors or transfer-specific advisors in future research.

Other research has also highlighted the importance of advising in shaping transfer outcomes. For example, an examination of successful degree attainment at community

colleges in North Carolina found that advising explicitly tailored to transfer students contributed to academic success (Bartek, 2020). In this study, transfer advising occurred through partnerships between the community colleges and the universities and depended on clear communication between institutions. Bartek recommended improving articulation agreements and strengthening partnerships between institutions.

Building on this broader evidence, Flores (2020) applied TRC to examine the experiences of Latinx transfer students within the California higher education systems. This mixed methods study found that advising played an essential role in transfer success, and the author recommended that four-year institutions develop transfer-specific advising teams to support students from community colleges. Advising services and counselors were positioned as integral to transfer student support, directly reflecting the third element of TRC: "Offer financial and academic support through distinct opportunities for nontraditional/reentry transfer students where they are stimulated to achieve at high academic levels" (Jain et al., 2011, p. 258). In this study, reentry students are defined as students who return to higher education after a period of non-enrollment**.** Institutionally coordinated advising services therefore function as a structural component of TRC.

### *TRC and Student Transfer Experiences*

Transfer receptive culture was used in one study to compare transfer success between a guaranteed-transfer pathway program and students transferring through traditional community college processes without participation in a formal pathway program (Herrera, 2018). The analysis showed that students enrolled in the pathway were found to interpret themselves as less academically prepared than traditional transfer

students. Potential factors for these differences included belonging to an underrepresented group, faculty interaction, and parental education beyond high school, influencing students' perceptions of their academic readiness and, consequently, their overall transfer experience. Herrera (2018) recommended that future research utilize a mixed-methods research design for a more in-depth understanding of TRC.

Cortes-López (2021) used TRC to examine the experiences of Latinx transfer students who left four-year universities before completing a degree. Common themes contributing to departure included feelings of isolation, financial concerns related to tuition, and family responsibilities. In this study, the researcher situated these challenges within the TRC framework to examine how institutional and structural conditions influence student persistence.

Del Real Viramontes (2025) conducted a qualitative study utilizing both transfer receptive culture (TRC) and community cultural wealth (CCW) frameworks, focusing on the experiences of students who had transferred into a predominantly White institution (PWI). Results suggested that Latina/o transfer students primarily relied on alternative forms of social capital to gather transfer-specific information and resources. Implications for practice included developing institutional professional development for all personnel working with Latina/o transfer students (Del Real Viramontes, 2025). Furthermore, though universities may have had structures in place for transfer students, the findings showed that those policies and practices were not culturally responsive to meet the needs of Latina/o student populations (Del Real Viramontes, 2018).

Suh et al. (2025) used transfer receptive culture (TRC) as a conceptual framework to examine the post-transfer experiences of racially minoritized students pursuing STEM degrees at a Hispanic-Serving Institution. Based on interviews with 14 transfer students, the researchers reported that participants frequently described their sense of belonging as linked to academic validation and success within their chosen field of study, rather than to racial identity. TRC guided the analysis of institutional structures influencing student engagement, faculty interactions, and access to affirming environments. The authors concluded that receiving institutions should more intentionally support academic goals while establishing conditions that recognize and affirm students' intersectional identities.

Research grounded in TRC has identified persistent gaps in institutional transfer support within higher education (Cortes-López, 2021; Del Real Viramontes, 2018; Joseph, 2021). To date, researchers have not examined transfer receptive culture in the context of music, music education, or arts-related disciplines. This lack of research is particularly noteworthy given the unique demands and culture of music programs, which may present additional barriers for transfer students seeking to continue their musical education at four-year institutions.

In the present study, TRC functions as the central theoretical framework. The five elements guide the organization of both the quantitative and qualitative strands, focusing attention on institutional responsibility for transfer student success. This framework provides the lens through which faculty perspectives on community college transfer students in music are interpreted.

# CHAPTER THREE

# METHODOLOGY

The purpose of this study was to investigate the transfer receptive culture (TRC) within California State Universities (CSUs) from the perspective of CSU faculty as TRC pertains to music students transferring from California Community Colleges (CCCs) and is guided by the following research questions:

1. How do faculty members at California State Universities (CSUs) understand and perceive the transfer receptive culture at their institutions for music students transferring from California Community Colleges (CCCs)?
2. What faculty practices and perspectives shape the transfer experience of music students, as interpreted through the lens of transfer receptive culture (TRC)?

In this study, I employed a sequential explanatory mixed methods design (Creswell & Clark, 2017) through the lens of critical realism. In this chapter, I will present a rationale for using a mixed-methods design, an overview of the paradigm that undergirds the research, and an outline of procedures used in this study to best answer the research questions.

## Rationale for Research Approach

The decision to employ an explanatory sequential mixed-methods design stemmed from the advantages of integrating quantitative and qualitative approaches. A mixed-methods strategy was selected to address the limitations of single-method designs and to draw on the complementary strengths of both forms of inquiry (Creswell & Clark, 2017). Within the explanatory sequential mixed-methods design for this study, a

developmental approach was used, in which the results of one method inform the implementation of the other (Greene et al., 1989). Specifically, findings from the quantitative phase guided the development of qualitative interview protocols to ensure relevance and alignment. Developmental designs can strengthen construct validity and enhance the coherence of inquiry by capitalizing on the strengths inherent in each method (Greene et al., 1989). In this study, the two-phase structure consisted of an initial faculty questionnaire followed by semi-structured interviews. This approach allowed the qualitative data to extend and contextualize the quantitative results (Ivankova et al., 2006).

## Research Design

Utilizing a sequential explanatory design (Tashakkori & Teddlie, 2009), this study followed a QUAN/qual structure, in which the quantitative phase was prioritized and more heavily weighted than the qualitative phase (Creswell & Clark, 2017). To collect both numerical and narrative data, I administered a questionnaire containing closed- and open-ended prompts during the quantitative phase of the study. Semi-structured interviews were used for qualitative data collection, and the interview protocol was designed to probe and expand upon the quantitative results. Following separate quantitative and qualitative data analyses, the findings were integrated, allowing the qualitative data to elaborate on the quantitative results.

### *Methodological Framework*

Historically, research paradigms have been divided along the lines of quantitative and qualitative approaches (Liu, 2022; Tashakkori & Teddlie, 2009). Quantitative

research, rooted in positivism, has traditionally dominated scientific inquiry, particularly in the natural sciences and early social sciences (Creswell & Creswell, 2023). Positivism assumes that objective reality can be accurately observed and measured through empirical methods, whereas constructionism contends that reality is socially constructed through interpretation and meaning-making (Bogna et al., 2020). Qualitative research, often associated with constructivism or interpretivism, gained prominence in the mid-20th century, especially in the social sciences and humanities (Creswell & Creswell, 2023).

The emergence of mixed methods research in the late 20th century sought to bridge the quantitative–qualitative divide (Tashakkori & Teddlie, 2009). In this context, pragmatism became a widely adopted paradigm due to its emphasis on practical problem solving and methodological flexibility (Creswell & Clark, 2017). However, critics of pragmatism argue that its focus on "what works" may neglect deeper philosophical questions about the nature of reality and knowledge (Hampson & McKinley, 2023).

As an alternative, critical realism (CR)—developed by Bhaskar (1975/2008)—offers a philosophical foundation that incorporates strengths from both positivism and constructionism (Fletcher, 2017; Maxwell & Mittapalli, 2010). Critical realists maintain that although a real world exists independently of our perceptions, our understanding of it is always mediated by social and historical contexts. This approach is particularly useful for research addressing educational equity, in which complex social factors interact with institutional systems to produce unequal outcomes (Fletcher, 2017).

Although both pragmatism and critical realism can support mixed methods

research, they differ in foundational assumptions. Pragmatists prioritize utility in methodological decision-making and often proceed without explicitly addressing ontological or epistemological concerns. In contrast, critical realists emphasize the ontological depth of reality, contending that the causal mechanisms underlying social phenomena operate independently of our awareness or perception (Lawani, 2021). CR is well-suited for mixed methods research, as its realist ontology and relativist epistemology allow for the integration of quantitative (extensive) and qualitative (intensive) data (McEvoy & Richards, 2006; Sayer, 2000).

Critical realism distinguishes itself from both positivism and constructivism in key ways. It rejects the positivist notion that existence is limited to what can be empirically observed, and it does not rely solely on observable patterns to determine causation (Sayer, 2000). At the same time, critical realism diverges from constructivism by acknowledging a reality beyond human constructs and embracing explanatory approaches rather than focusing exclusively on interpretation and description (Archer et al., 2016; Sayer, 2000).

In critical realism, individuals interpret the world through social and historical contexts, but reality itself exists independently of those interpretations (Bhaskar, 2008; Shannon-Baker, 2016). For instance, institutional structures that affect transfer processes, such as articulation agreements or credit transfer policies, continue to exist and impact students even if individual students or faculty members are unaware of them. In CR analysis, researchers engage in retroduction and abduction to identify possible causes and ascribe meaning to observed phenomena (Fletcher, 2017; Hoddy, 2019). Retroduction is

a mode of inference that involves moving from observed phenomena to the mechanisms or structures that could have produced them (Mukumbang, 2023). This process entails asking what must be true for the observed events to occur. In contrast, abduction is a form of logical inference that seeks the most plausible explanation for an observation, often by recontextualizing phenomena within a different framework of ideas (Mukumbang, 2023).

The critical perspectives inherent in TRC and CRT align well with CR's commitment to emancipatory research (Fletcher, 2017; Peter et al., 2025), as both TRC and CRT challenge existing power structures and seek to address systemic inequalities in education, particularly for marginalized and underrepresented students. These approaches correspond closely with CR researchers' focus on uncovering hidden mechanisms that perpetuate social injustices and CR's goal of producing knowledge that can lead to meaningful change (Mukumbang, 2023). CR allows for a nuanced examination of how race, class, and other social factors intersect with institutional structures to shape transfer experiences (Martinez Dy et al., 2014).

Transfer receptive culture (TRC), the framework for this study, stems from a critical perspective rooted in critical race theory (CRT). Critical realism aligns well with this study's goal to analyze and enhance transfer practices in higher education, as it acknowledges the existence of an objective reality while recognizing that social, historical, and cultural contexts shape our understanding of it. This philosophical stance allows researchers to examine the complex interplay between institutional structures, societal influences, and individual experiences that affect transfer students, especially

those from marginalized backgrounds. By employing CR alongside TRC and CRT, I aim to not only describe transfer practices but also to identify their underlying barriers for transfer students, particularly in the context of music education. By examining and critiquing the mechanisms influencing transfer receptivity, this research might suggest practical policy recommendations to address/redress challenges faced by transfer students, particularly in music programs.

## Setting and Participants

California houses two of the largest public postsecondary systems in the United States: California State University (CSU) and California Community College (CCC) systems (Boland et al., 2018). Participants in this study were full-time CSU music faculty members who had direct experience working with CCC transfer students majoring in music. To be eligible for the study, faculty participants needed to meet the following criteria: (1) hold a full-time position in a music department at a CSU campus, (2) work directly with transfer students, and (3) be willing to participate in the study. Because transfer students engage with multiple faculty across departmental areas, I framed this study around CSU music programs broadly. This framing allowed me to include faculty who work with transfer students in varied capacities, even when individual students' specific degree plans are not always known.

### *Quantitative Sampling Procedures*

For the quantitative phase of the study, I used purposive sampling (Creswell & Creswell, 2023) to recruit participants from CSU campuses across California. I obtained a list of CSU music department faculty email addresses from the public websites of each

CSU campus. I sent a recruitment email to all faculty members on the list ($N = 374$), inviting them to participate in the study if they met the eligibility criteria. The email included a brief description of the study, the eligibility requirements, and a link to the online questionnaire. Participants were also asked within the questionnaire if they would be willing to take part in a follow-up interview.

**Questionnaire.** For the quantitative phase of this study, I developed and administered an online questionnaire using Qualtrics (Qualtrics, Provo, UT), a web-based survey platform. The questionnaire was designed to gather data on music faculty member's perceptions, experiences, and recommendations related to the transfer process and institutional support for music students transitioning from community colleges to 4-year institutions. The questionnaire consisted of 26 prompts, organized into six sections: (a) demographic information, (b) experience with transfer students, (c) institutional practices and support, (d) faculty role and perceptions, (e) recommendations, and (f) follow-up interview interest. Most of the questions were closed-ended, using a 5-point Likert scale to measure the faculty member's level of agreement, satisfaction, or frequency of experiences. The questionnaire included three open-ended prompts to capture additional insights and context. The prompts were carefully crafted to address the study's research questions and the five elements of transfer receptive culture (Jain et al., 2011).

**Pilot Study.** Prior to full implementation, I conducted a pilot study to assess the clarity, effectiveness, and validity of the questionnaire. The pilot sample consisted of 32 music faculty members from four-year universities outside of California, with 16

participants completing the questionnaire (50% response rate). The pilot study served multiple purposes: (1) to evaluate the clarity and comprehensibility of questionnaire items, (2) to identify potential technical issues with the Qualtrics platform, (3) to assess the approximate time needed to complete the questionnaire, and (4) to gather preliminary feedback on the questionnaire's validity. Cronbach's Alpha was computed on the pilot resulting in an alpha score of .732, indicating acceptable validity.

Based on the pilot study feedback, I refined several questionnaire items to improve clarity and made minor adjustments to the response options for enhanced data collection. The pilot study also confirmed that the questionnaire effectively addressed the research questions and aligned with the transfer receptive culture framework. On average, participants completed the questionnaire in approximately 19 minutes ($M$ = 19.1 minutes), with completion times ranging from about 3.5 minutes to just over 3 hours. This preliminary testing phase strengthened the instrument's reliability and validity before its deployment with the target population of CSU music faculty.

### *Qualitative Sampling Procedures*

For the qualitative phase of the study, I employed a nested sampling strategy (Onwuegbuzie & Collins, 2007) to select participants from the pool of survey respondents who had agreed to be interviewed. Nested sampling involves selecting a subsample of participants from the earlier phase of the study based on specific criteria or characteristics (Onwuegbuzie & Collins, 2007). From the completed questionnaire responses ($N$ = 36), five participants were selected for interviews. I selected interview participants based on their responses to the quantitative questionnaire using purposive

sampling procedures (Creswell & Creswell, 2023; Tashakkori & Teddlie, 2009), aiming to capture a diverse range of perspectives and experiences. The selection criteria included factors such as the participant's years of experience working with CCC transfer students, the size and location of their CSU campus, and their questionnaire responses indicating strong opinions or unique insights related to the research questions. Campus size and geographic location were included to reflect the varied institutional contexts across the CSU system, as transfer-student experiences and faculty roles can differ substantially across regions and campus types.

**Interview Protocol.** During the qualitative phase of this study, I conducted semi-structured interviews with a purposefully selected sample of music faculty members from California State Universities (CSUs). I developed the interview protocol (see Appendix B) based on the study's research questions, the theoretical framework of transfer receptive culture (Jain et al., 2020), and findings from the quantitative phase. The protocol consisted of open-ended questions designed to elicit rich, detailed participant responses (Brinkmann & Kvale, 2018). These questions aligned with the themes of institutional support, faculty experiences, and transfer student integration. Each interview took place via Zoom and lasted approximately 60–90 minutes. Following Leavy's (2020) guidance, I audio-recorded each session with participants' consent and later transcribed the recordings verbatim for analysis.

## Data Analysis

To guide the qualitative analysis of interview data, I created an initial codebook with a priori codes drawn from the five elements of the transfer receptive culture (TRC)

framework. These codes reflected theoretically informed expectations regarding institutional commitment, transfer-centered policies, academic partnerships, student-centered support, and assessment practices. The codebook was treated as a living document and was refined throughout the analysis process to incorporate emergent codes that arose organically from the data. NVivo software (QSR International, 2025) was used to organize and apply codes, with the codebook serving as a reference to maintain consistency and transparency in the interpretation of interview responses (see Appendix D).

In addition to thematic coding of open-ended questionnaire responses, a form of quantitative content analysis known as *quantitizing* was applied to the two open-ended prompts. After identifying common themes, responses were tallied to represent the frequency with which each theme appeared across participants. This approach supports integration with quantitative data and offers a complementary descriptive perspective on institutional supports and needs, as perceived by faculty (Onwuegbuzie, 2025).

**Integration**

Integration of the quantitative and qualitative components occurred after both data sets had been analyzed independently. The integration or mixing of methods was guided by the transfer receptive culture (TRC) framework, which provided a shared structure for organizing data from both phases. During integration, open-ended questionnaire responses and interview excerpts were used to explain or expand upon the statistical trends, allowing for deeper insight into faculty perceptions of transfer-related support, institutional barriers, and student challenges. This approach enabled the qualitative

findings to add nuance to the broader patterns revealed through the quantitative questionnaire. The integrated results are reported in Chapter Six, in which quantitative and qualitative findings are synthesized according to the five elements of the TRC framework.

**Trustworthiness/Reliability**

Several strategies were employed for both the quantitative and qualitative phases to ensure the trustworthiness of the data collected in this mixed-methods study. In the quantitative phase, internal consistency of the questionnaire was assessed using Cronbach's alpha. The questionnaire included eight items designed to measure various aspects of faculty perceptions and institutional support for community college transfer students in music programs. The resulting Cronbach's alpha was 0.71, indicating an acceptable level of internal consistency (DeVellis & Thorpe, 2021), and suggesting that the selected items were sufficiently correlated and collectively measured the intended construct.

In addition to reliability testing, efforts were made to minimize measurement error by using clear, concise, and unambiguous questionnaire items, along with consistent response options across all items (Drost, 2011; Fowler, 2014). The instrument was administered via Qualtrics (Qualtrics, Provo, UT), a secure online platform, to support accurate data collection and reduce data entry errors (Creswell & Creswell, 2023).

For the qualitative phase, trustworthiness was enhanced through member checking (Korstjens & Moser, 2018). Participants were provided the opportunity to review their interview transcripts and offer clarifications or additional insights, which

helped ensure that their perspectives were accurately represented (Candela, 2019). A structured coding process was used, starting with a priori codes from the transfer receptive culture framework. As new codes emerged, detailed notes were kept to record how coding choices were made and applied, ensuring consistency and transparency throughout the analysis.

### *Researcher Positionality*

As a researcher who works within the California Community College system, it is important to acknowledge my positionality throughout this research process. In this study, I engaged in self-reflexivity by maintaining written reflections alongside the coding process to examine how personal assumptions and experiences informed coding choices and the development of thematic categories (Berger, 2015; Holmes, 2020). My personal perspective is shaped by supporting students navigating the transfer process from CCCs to CSUs, as well as by my own experiences as a non-transfer student in the CSU system as an undergraduate. Grounded in a critical theoretical framework, this study reflects one positional viewpoint on the transfer process while recognizing that knowledge is partial and multiple perspectives contribute to a more comprehensive understanding (Kincheloe et al., 2011).

# CHAPTER FOUR

# QUANTITATIVE RESULTS

In this chapter, I present the results of a questionnaire administered to music faculty within the California State University (CSU) system, examining how their perspectives reflect the broader institutional culture of transfer receptivity as outlined in the transfer receptive culture (TRC) framework. The questionnaire, to which 36 full-time faculty members across the system responded, was designed to examine transfer receptivity through the lens of the transfer receptive culture (TRC) framework developed by Jain et al. (2011). The TRC framework consists of five elements: institutional priority for transfer students, targeted outreach and resources, financial and academic support, acknowledging student lived experiences, and assessment frameworks. I begin this chapter by presenting demographic information about questionnaire participants, then present a comprehensive analysis of faculty responses organized according to these five TRC elements.

## Demographics

The following section includes demographic data collected from study participants. Information was gathered regarding employment status, academic rank, teaching experience, and musical specializations. Together, these data help situate the findings within the institutional roles and career backgrounds of the respondents, offering important context for interpreting their perspectives on transfer receptivity.

### *Academic Rank and Employment Status*

This study drew on the perspectives of full-time faculty within the California

State University (CSU) system. Because institutional directories varied in format, the original contact list of 374 individuals likely included many part-time faculty. To ensure responses were limited to the target group, participants were asked to indicate their employment status. A total of 41 faculty members responded to the questionnaire. Five respondents identified as part-time and were excluded, resulting in a quantitative analytic sample of 36 full-time faculty members. Based on the 374 individuals contacted, the response rate was 10.96%.

Of the 36 participants, 1 respondent (2.8%) was a Lecturer, 7 were Assistant Professors (19.4%), 12 were Associate Professors (33.3%), and 16 were Professors (44.4%). All participants ($N = 36$) indicated that they had taught and/or advised music students who had transferred from a community college. The mean number of years of teaching experience at the current institution was 12.58 years, with a standard deviation of 8.79. The range of teaching experience varied from 1 year to 40 years.

**Table 1**

Academic Rank of Faculty Participants

| Academic Rank | n | % |
|---|---|---|
| Lecturer | 1 | 2.8 |
| Assistant Professor | 7 | 19.4 |
| Associate Professor | 12 | 33.3 |
| Professor | 16 | 44.4 |

*Note.* All participants (N = 36) indicated that they had taught and/or advised community college transfer students in music.

### *Area of Teaching Expertise*

Participants were asked to specify their primary teaching area(s) in music. Ensembles or Performance was the most frequently selected area, reported by 20 respondents (55.56%). Music Education was also common, with 8 participants (22.22%) identifying it as the primary focus. Five respondents (13.89%) reported Music History and Ethnomusicology as their main area of expertise, followed by four (11.11%) who indicated Composition and Music Theory. Three participants (8.33%) selected Aural Skills, and two (5.56%) identified areas categorized as "Other," such as Music Industry Studies and Rock Music. Because participants could select more than one area of expertise, the total number of responses exceeds the number of participants.

**Table 2**

Primary Teaching Area(s) of Faculty Participants

| Primary Teaching Area(s) | n | % |
|---|---|---|
| Ensembles/Performance | 20 | 55.56 |
| Music Education | 8 | 22.22 |
| Music History/Ethnomusicology | 5 | 13.89 |
| Composition/Music Theory | 4 | 11.11 |
| Aural Skills | 3 | 8.33 |
| Other (Music Industry, Rock) | 2 | 5.56 |

*Note.* Participants could select more than one teaching area; therefore, totals exceed 100%.

## Analysis of Faculty Responses by Transfer-Receptive Culture Elements

Quantitative findings from the questionnaire were organized according to the five elements of transfer receptive culture (TRC) outlined by Jain et al. (2011). I aligned the questionnaire items with each TRC element to allow for a focused, element-by-element presentation of faculty responses. The organization of results by TRC element mirrors the structure used during questionnaire development and analysis.

### *Element one: Institutional Priority for Transfer Students*

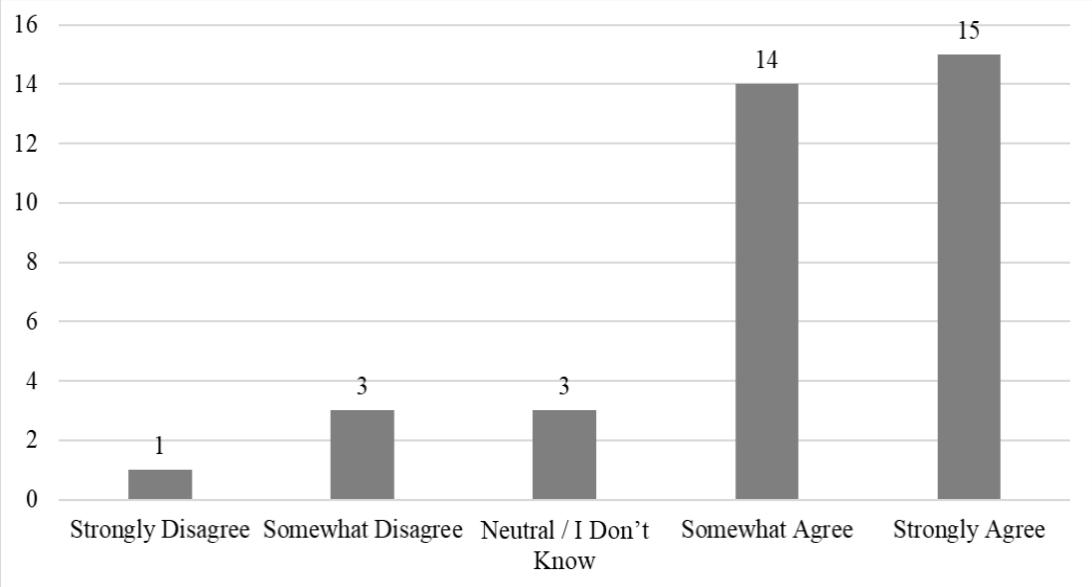
This element, as articulated by Jain et al. (2011), involves "establish[ing] the transfer of students, especially nontraditional, first-generation, low-income, and underrepresented students, as a high institutional priority that ensures stable accessibility, retention, and graduation" (p. 258). To examine this element in the context of CSU music programs, I included questionnaire items that asked faculty to evaluate departmental efforts to establish articulation agreements with community colleges and to describe the frequency of their collaboration with community college colleagues. Although these items focus on articulation and collaboration, I interpreted faculty responses with attention to how such practices shape access for nontraditional, first-generation, low-income, and underrepresented transfer students. As shown in Appendix A, these items capture faculty perspectives on the accessibility and structural alignment aspects of transfer, but they do not directly address retention and graduation. Those dimensions of institutional priority are reflected in later elements of the framework, particularly financial/academic support (Element Three) and assessment (Element Five).

Participants were asked to respond to the questionnaire item, "My music

department is focused on establishing articulation agreements with community colleges to facilitate the transfer process for music students." Responses revealed that the majority of faculty agreed with this statement, while only a small proportion expressed disagreement (Figure 1). The full distribution of responses and descriptive statistics for this item are provided in Appendix C.

**Figure 1**

*"My department is focused on establishing articulation agreements with community colleges to facilitate the transfer process for music students."*

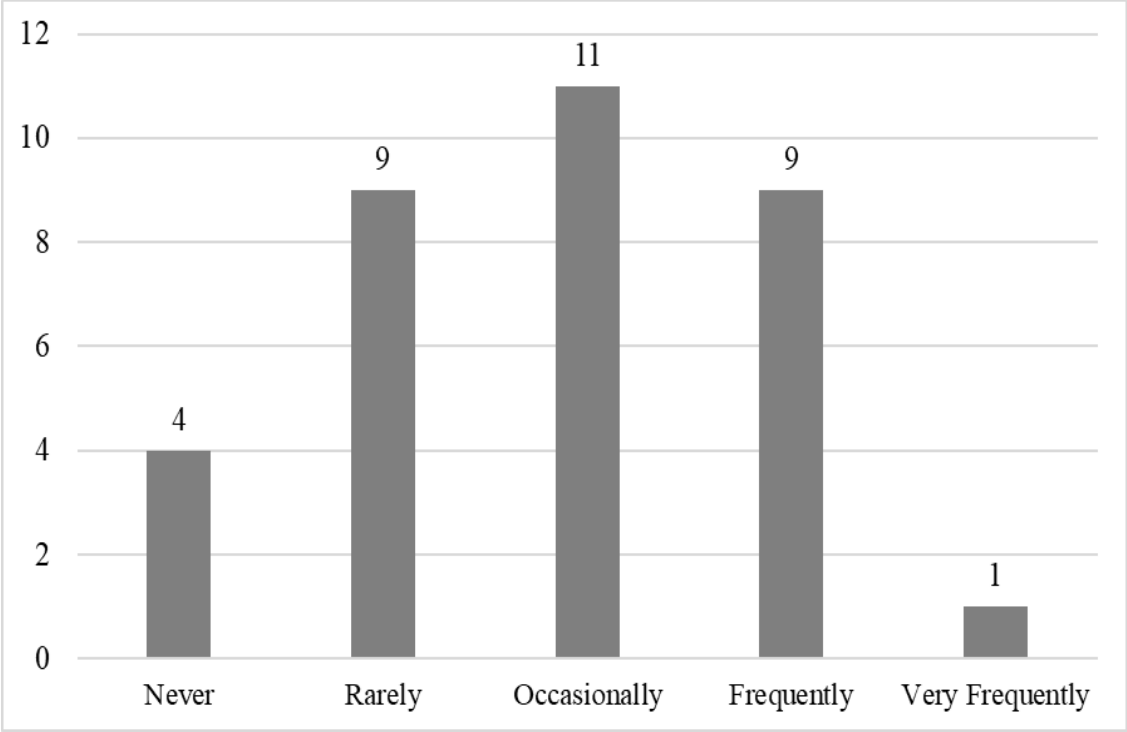



To further examine institutional collaboration in practice, I asked participants, "How often do you collaborate with faculty at community colleges to ensure a smooth transition for community college transfer students?" Responses were more evenly distributed across the scale compared to the prior item about articulation agreements.

Although some faculty respondents reported occasional or frequent collaboration, a notable portion indicated that such contact occurs rarely or never (Figure 2).

**Figure 2**

*"How often do you collaborate with faculty at community colleges to ensure a smooth transition for community college transfer students?"*




Together, the results from these two items offer insight into the degree to which institutional commitment to transfer students is operationalized at the departmental level. Although many faculty respondents indicated departmental support for articulation agreements, fewer reported frequent collaboration with community college colleagues. Response distributions and medians for questionnaire items related to institutional priority are available in Appendix C.

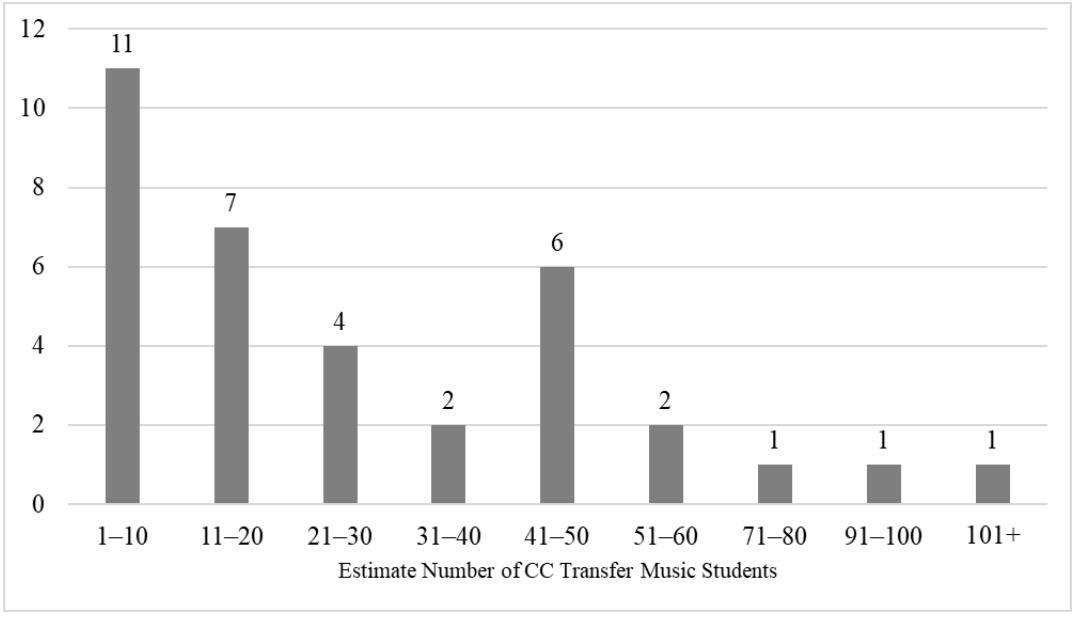
### *Element Two: Targeted Outreach and Resources*

According to Jain et al. (2011), receiving institutions should "provide outreach and resources that focus on the specific needs of transfer students while complementing the community college mission of transfer" (p. 258). To address element two, I included three items focusing on faculty experience working with transfer students, perceptions of institutional responsibility, and perceived preparedness to support this population.

All survey participants indicated that they had taught or advised community college transfer music students. This item served as a screening mechanism, confirming that all included responses were drawn from direct experience with the target population. The distribution of faculty-reported estimates of the number of transfer students they

**Figure 3**

*Estimated Annual Number of Community College Transfer Music Students Taught or Advised by Faculty*

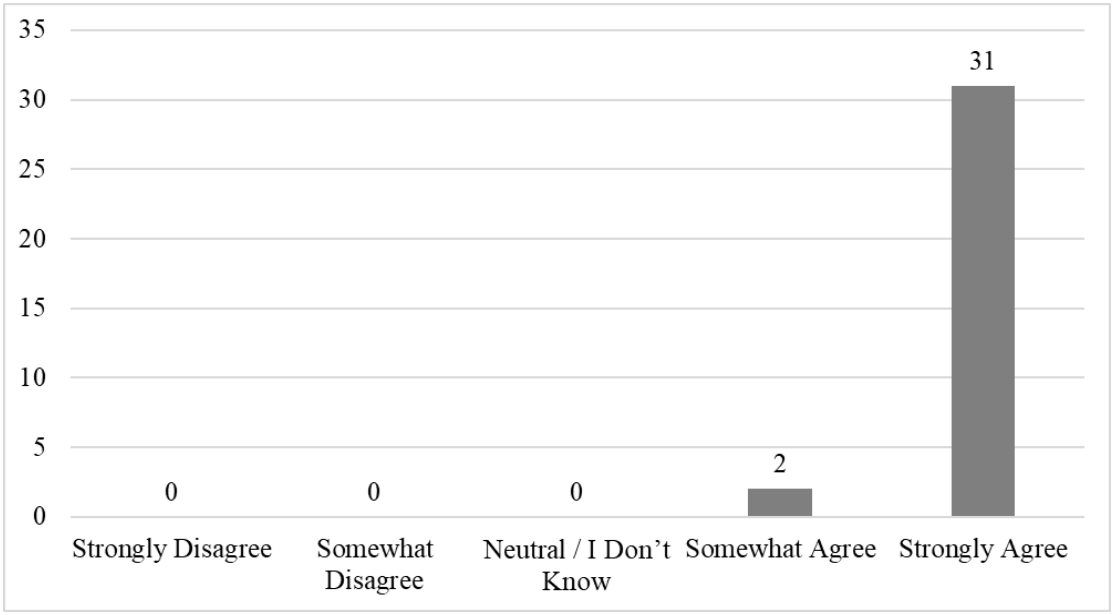


worked with is presented in Figure 3. Responses varied across the scale, with some faculty reporting only a few transfer students each year and others reporting much larger numbers, reflecting differences in institutional size and departmental context.

Responses to the item, “Music faculty play a significant role in supporting the success of community college transfer students” reflected a strong consensus, reflecting a strong consensus, with 86.1% of respondents indicating strong agreement. Figure 4 illustrates the extent to which faculty identified themselves as having an important role in transfer student success. No respondents selected neutral or any level of disagreement on this item.

**Figure 4**

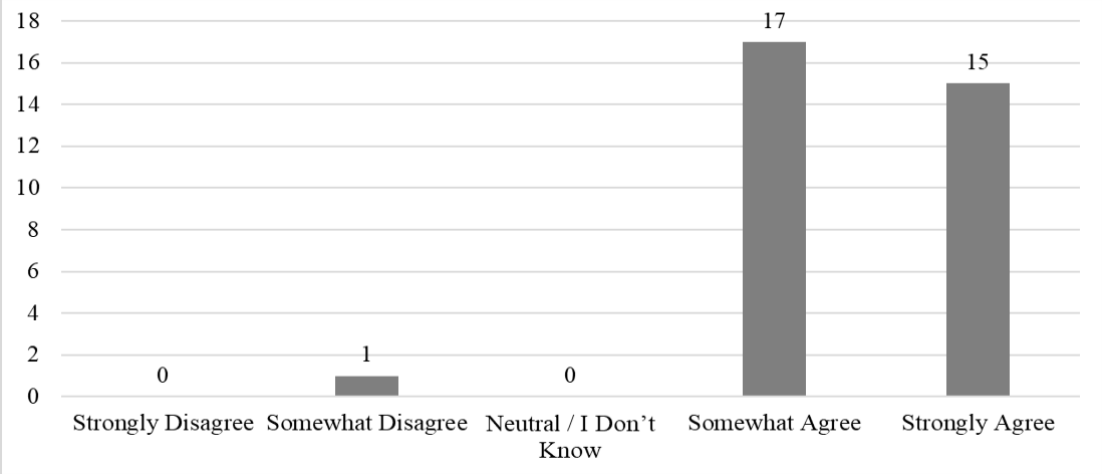
*“Music faculty play a significant role in supporting the success of community college transfer students.”*



In the questionnaire, I asked participants whether they felt equipped to understand and address the unique needs and experiences of community college transfer music students. Responses showed high levels of agreement, with 88.9% selecting one of the agreement options, while only one somewhat disagreed. Figure 5 displays the response distribution for this item.

**Figure 5**

*"I feel equipped to understand and address the unique needs and experiences of community college transfer music students."*




***Element Three: Financial and Academic Support***

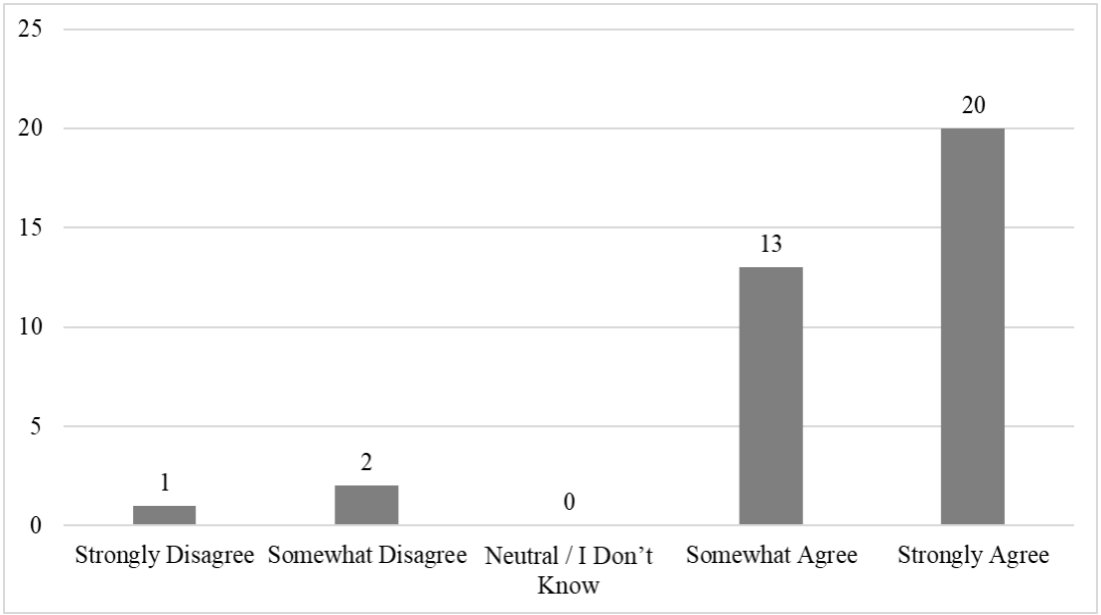
This element, as described in the TRC framework, emphasizes financial and academic support for nontraditional and reentry transfer students. In this study, faculty responses addressed this element more broadly in terms of advising, orientation, scholarships, and institutional support resources. According to Jain et al. (2011), institutions should "offer financial and academic support through distinct opportunities for nontraditional/reentry transfer students where they are stimulated to achieve at high

academic levels" (p. 258). Faculty responses to six questionnaire items were used to assess perceptions of academic advising, orientation programming, course repetition due to articulation issues, and satisfaction with financial aid and student support resources.

Respondents expressed general agreement that advising and mentorship services meet the needs of community college transfer music students. Responses to the statement "Based on my knowledge and experience, my institution's advising/mentorship services for community college transfer students in music meets student needs" were predominantly positive. Most (91.7%) respondents selected "somewhat agree" or "strongly agree," indicating that many faculty respondents viewed these services as effective components of transfer student support (Figure 6).

**Figure 6**

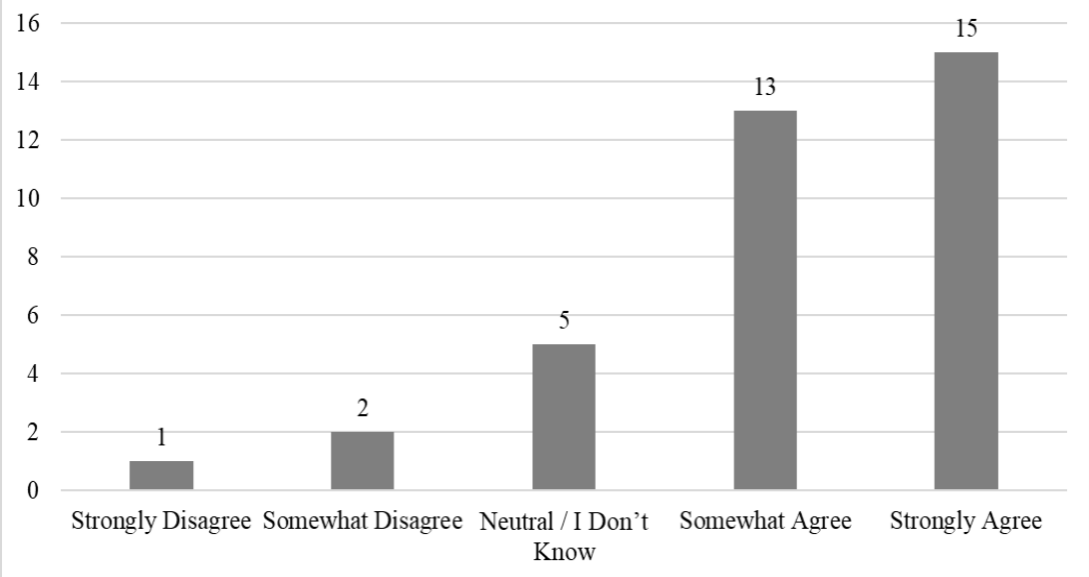
*"Based on my knowledge and experience, my institution's advising/mentorship services for community college transfer students in music meets student needs."*



Perceptions of orientation programs were similarly favorable, although responses reflected greater variability. When asked, “Based on my knowledge and experience, my institution’s transfer-specific orientation program for incoming community college transfer students in music meets student needs,” most respondents agreed. However, several selected “I don’t know,” suggesting that some faculty respondents may not be involved in or aware of how orientation is structured at their institutions (see Figure 7).

**Figure 7**

*“Based on my knowledge and experience, my institution’s transfer-specific orientation program for incoming community college transfer students in music meets student needs.”*

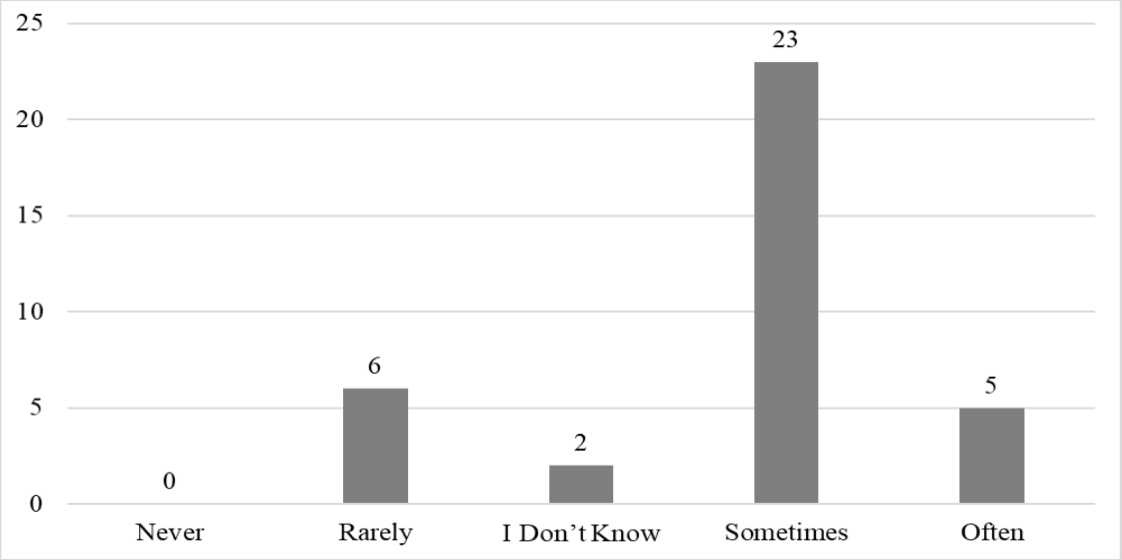



Responses to the question, “To the best of your knowledge, how often do community college transfer music students need to repeat courses due to credit transfer issues or curriculum misalignment?” showed that course repetition occurred with some

frequency. Nearly two-thirds of respondents (63.9%) selected *sometimes*, and 13.9% selected *often*. A smaller number selected less frequent options (see Figure 8).

**Figure 8**

*"To the best of your knowledge, how often do community college transfer music students need to repeat courses due to credit transfer issues or curriculum misalignment?"*

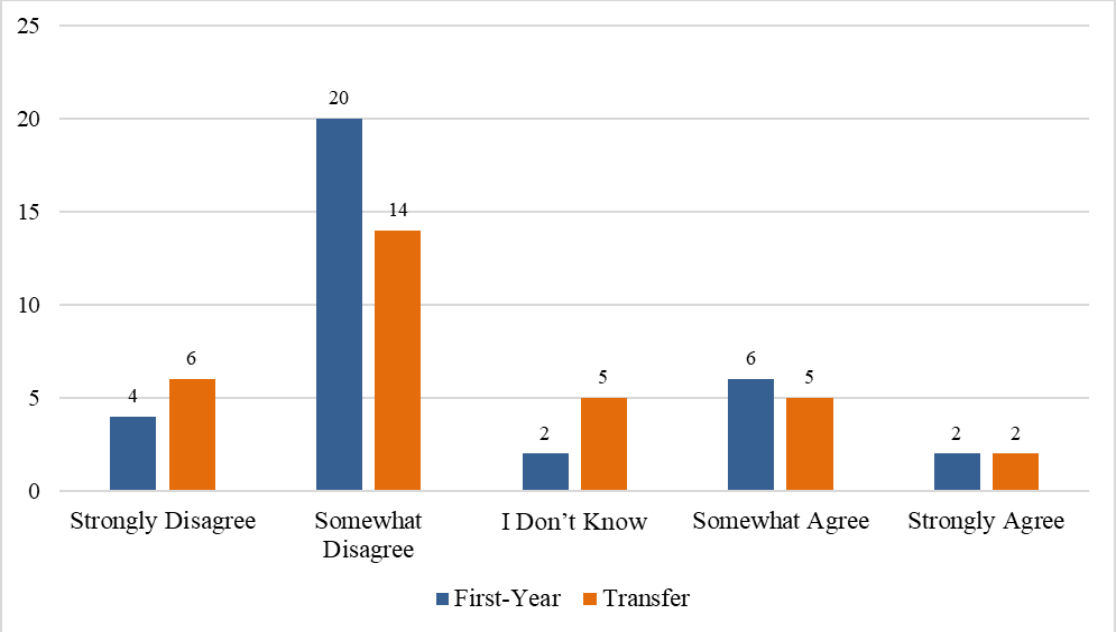



Faculty satisfaction with scholarship offerings for music students differed slightly between first-year and transfer populations. Responses to the items "I am satisfied with the number of scholarships my institution offers specifically for music students who enter as first-years" and "I am satisfied with the number of scholarships my institution offers specifically designated for community college transfer music students" showed generally low satisfaction. For both questions, most respondents selected *somewhat disagree* or *strongly disagree*, while relatively few selected agreement options. A slightly higher

number of faculty selected *I don't know* when responding about transfer student scholarships (see Figure 9).

**Figure 9**

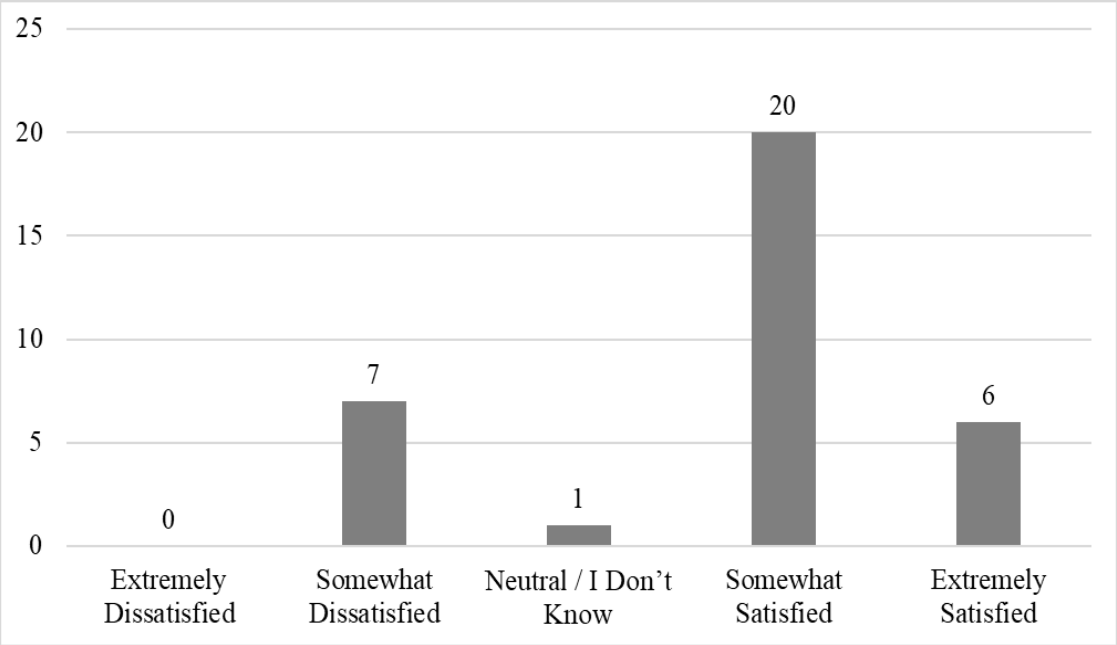
*Comparison of satisfaction with scholarships offered to first-year music students and those designated for community college transfer music students.*




Finally, responses to the item "I am satisfied with the resources and support services my institution offers to facilitate the success of community college transfer music students" reflected a somewhat more favorable opinion compared to responses regarding scholarship-related items. Most faculty respondents selected one of the positive response options. Nonetheless, a smaller proportion expressed dissatisfaction or uncertainty, indicating room for improvement in institutional support structures (Figure 10).

**Figure 10**

*"I am satisfied with the resources and support services my institution offers to facilitate the success of community college transfer music students."*




***Element Four: Acknowledging Student Lived Experiences***

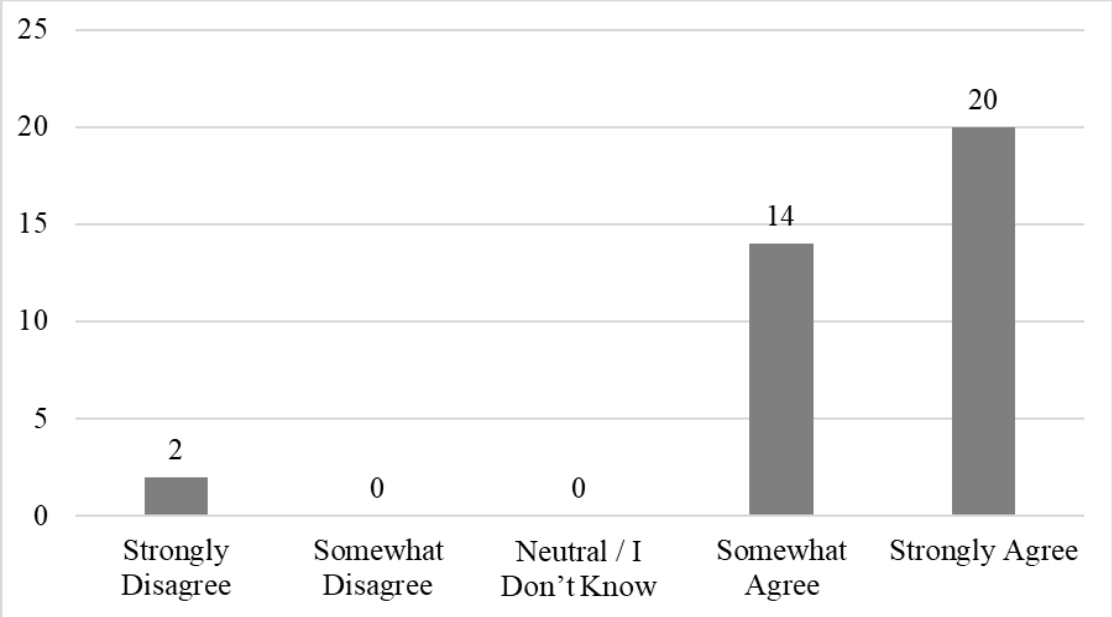
This element of the TRC framework emphasizes the importance of recognizing and responding to the lived experiences of community college transfer students, particularly in relation to their intersecting responsibilities and identities. According to Jain et al. (2011), transfer-receptive institutions demonstrate support not only through academic policies but also by acknowledging the broader social, familial, and cultural contexts in which students live. The questionnaire included one item aligned with this element. Because faculty may have limited direct knowledge of students' lived responsibilities outside the classroom, the questionnaire represented this element through

a general measure of perceived institutional support, rather than more detailed measures such as familial experiences.

Faculty were asked to indicate their level of agreement with the statement, “My institution effectively supports the success of community college transfer music students.” Responses were generally favorable, with the majority selecting one of the agreement options. Figure 11 presents how responses were distributed across the scale. This item captured faculty perceptions of institutional support for community college transfer music students.

**Figure 11**

“My institution effectively supports the success of community college transfer music students.”



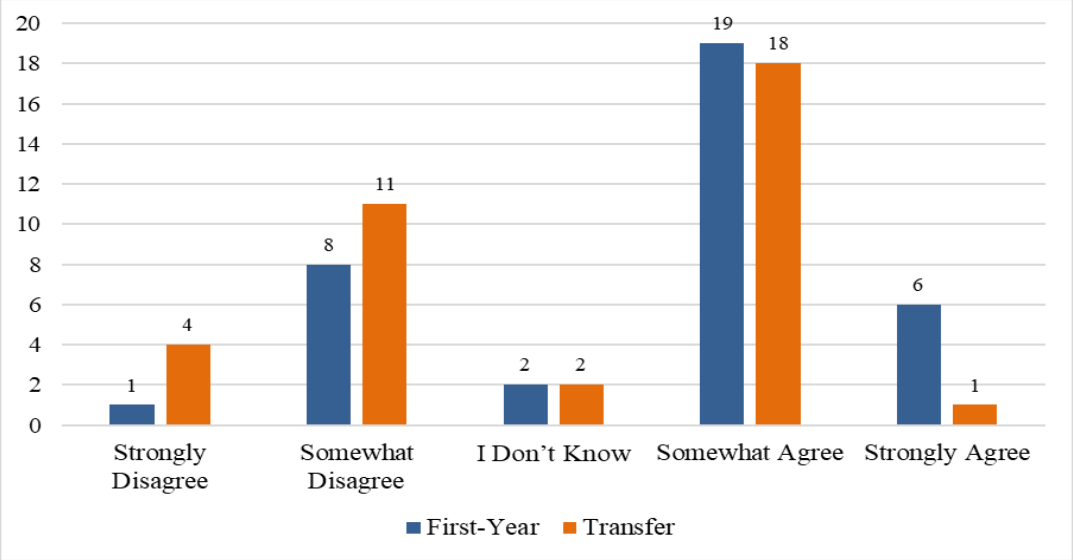
***Element Five: Assessment Framework***

This final element addresses the need for institutions to evaluate and improve transfer-related efforts through intentional data collection and assessment practices. Jain et al. (2011) emphasized the importance of establishing "an appropriate and organic framework from which to assess, evaluate, and enhance transfer receptive programs and initiatives that can lead to further scholarship on transfer students" (p. 258). In the context of music programs, this may include tracking student outcomes across entry pathways, analyzing the effectiveness of transfer-related support services, and identifying areas for systemic improvement.

Faculty were asked two parallel questions regarding the timely completion of music degrees by first-year and transfer students. Respondents expressed stronger agreement that first-year students complete music degrees in a timely manner than they did for transfer students. For first-year students, most respondents selected *somewhat agree* (19) or *strongly agree* (6), whereas smaller numbers selected disagreement options. For transfer students, responses were more distributed, with 18 selecting *somewhat agree* and only 1 selecting *strongly agree*. More respondents selected disagreement options for transfer students than for first-year students (see Figure 12).

**Figure 12**

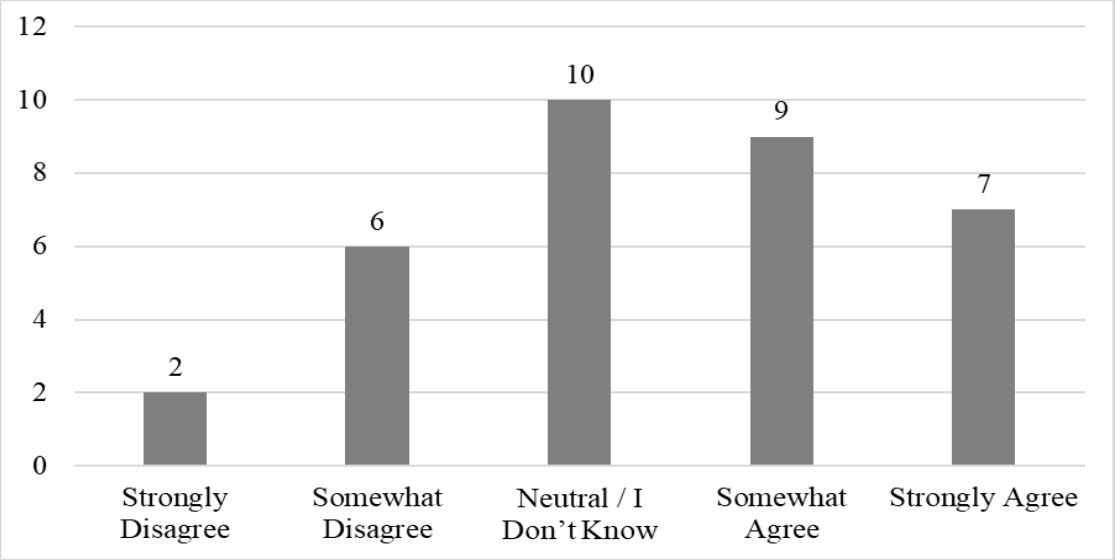
*Faculty Perceptions of Degree Completion Within Expected Timeframe: First-Year vs. Transfer Music Students*




Faculty responses to the item on institutional assessment practices were distributed across the scale, with no single response category emerging as dominant. Approximately 42% indicated some level of agreement that their institution tracks and assesses the success of transfer music students, while 22% indicated disagreement. The largest single category was the midpoint option, "I don't know" (27.8%), suggesting that many faculty may be uncertain about whether regular assessment occurs. These results are presented in Figure 13.

**Figure 13**

*"My institution frequently tracks and assesses the success of community college transfer music students."*



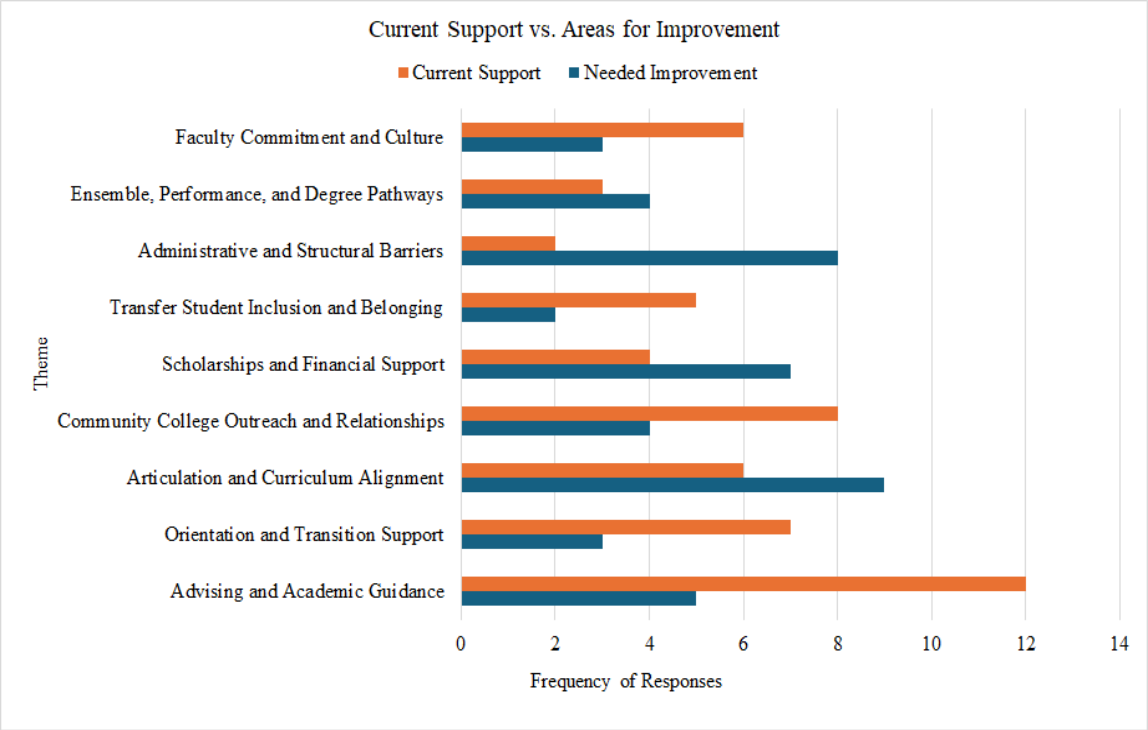

## Open-ended Questions

In addition to Likert-scale items, the questionnaire included two open-ended prompts that invited faculty to describe existing departmental supports and identify areas for improvement related to community college transfer students. Of the 36 faculty who completed the questionnaire, 33 provided a written response to the prompt on current departmental supports, and 31 provided a response to the prompt on areas for improvement. Responses were analyzed using quantitative content analysis, a process of *quantitizing* (Onwuegbuzie, 2025), in which themes were identified through the coding procedures described in Chapter 3 and then tallied to illustrate their frequency. As shown in Figure 14, themes related to academic advising and outreach appeared most frequently

among descriptions of current supports, while articulation challenges, financial concerns, and structural barriers were commonly identified as areas in need of improvement.

**Figure 14**

*Graphic Representation of Current Support and Areas of Improvement.*




The quantitative findings across all five TRC elements reveal varying levels of institutional engagement in supporting community college transfer music students. Faculty respondents generally reported strong departmental efforts in some areas—such as advising, transfer preparation, and faculty preparedness. By comparison, responses to the scholarship and curriculum alignment items were less decisive, with many faculty selecting “somewhat agree” rather than stronger options. Institutional assessment was distinctive in that the largest proportion of respondents selected “I don’t know,” indicating uncertainty about whether such practices occur. These findings establish a

descriptive foundation for examining transfer receptivity within music programs across the CSU system.

# CHAPTER FIVE

# QUALITATIVE RESULTS

Findings from interviews with five CSU music faculty and open-ended responses from 36 respondents to the faculty questionnaire provide insight into how institutional practices influence the transfer experiences of community college music students. Both data sources were coded using a combination of a priori codes based on the five elements of the transfer receptive culture (TRC) framework (Jain et al., 2011) and additional codes that emerged directly from the data. The TRC framework served as a guiding structure for organizing faculty perceptions of transfer support across CSU music programs. Findings are presented by TRC element, with representative quotes illustrating recurring or salient ideas across both data sources. At the end of the chapter, I present a set of emergent themes that illustrate how institutional conditions relate to (1) student well-being, (2) faculty strain and emotional labor, (3) deflecting institutional responsibility, and (4) systemic misalignment and institutional frustration.

## Participant Profiles

To maintain confidentiality, pseudonyms are used throughout this chapter. Although campus names are not disclosed, each participant profile includes a general teaching area and a broad description of their institution by size and region. Gender-neutral pronouns (they/them) are used for all participants to protect anonymity.

Dr. Jordan teaches ear training at a mid-sized CSU in Southern California; Dr. Casey is a music education faculty member at a large CSU in Southern California; Dr. Morgan, a voice instructor, works at a mid-sized CSU in Southern California; Dr. Rivera,

who specializes in ethnomusicology, is based at a mid-sized CSU in Southern California; and Dr. Avery teaches music education at a relatively small CSU in Northern California.

### *Element One: Institutional Priority for Transfer Students*

Element one of the transfer receptive culture (TRC) framework emphasizes the importance of institutional commitment to transfer students, particularly nontraditional, first-generation, low-income, and underrepresented students (Jain et al., 2011). Although institutional priority in the TRC framework centers on commitment to nontraditional, first-generation, low-income, and underrepresented transfer students, interview data in this study did not yield references to these groups. Instead, faculty described transfer students collectively, without reference to specific student identities. Faculty interviews and open-ended questionnaire responses revealed varying degrees of engagement and structural practices related to this form of commitment, especially in the pre-transfer phase.

When asked about communication and alignment with community college (CC) music programs, faculty responses highlighted inconsistency across institutions. Dr. Rivera noted that although some articulation agreements technically exist, outdated systems and administrative oversight often render them ineffective. “There was, like a year and a half of just—it was pure hell advising transfers,” they explained, citing an institutional failure to update articulation agreements during a period of administrative restructuring that impacted course schedules and transfer pathways. In contrast, Dr. Morgan described informal outreach through combined concerts with community college ensembles, emphasizing the value of showing CC students that they are welcome at the

CSU. They explained, “I’ve also just tried to do things to bring…ensembles together so they can see there’s a place for them.”

Orientation practices were one area in which some faculty noted evidence of transfer-specific institutional support. At Dr. Avery’s campus, incoming students are enrolled in separate orientation programs based on whether they are first-time freshmen or community college transfers. As Dr. Avery explained, “We sign [students] up as either incoming freshmen or as transfers...because we know that there’s different needs.”

Institutional commitment was also observed in informal faculty collaboration and relationship-building. Dr. Avery described partnerships with nearby community colleges through joint events and shared faculty appointments. These efforts helped align curricular expectations and create a sense of continuity. As they explained, “The [community college] director and I...are working really hard at trying to make a smooth transition...to have this pipeline.”

Dr. Rivera highlighted two areas in which institutional practices failed to prioritize transfer students. First, they described inequities beginning at the high school level, noting that “they might be assumed to be poor and encouraged to just apply to community colleges first.” Rivera also pointed to structural changes within the CSU system that created additional barriers after students transferred, explaining that “they’ve cut nine units in the humanities [in GE credits]... They haven’t touched STEM…[and] they just haven’t even polled advisors or faculty about why are the students getting behind?” They concluded that “the red tape needs to be reduced.”

Faculty commentary also supported the quantitative trends for element one,

stressing the need for early communication and clearer structural alignment between community colleges and CSU programs. One participant called for "more frequent outreach and communication between our department and community colleges," while another suggested a "regional curriculum review" to improve coherence across institutions. These perspectives emphasize continuing concerns about coordination, equity, and transparency in the pre-transfer stage.

### *Element Two: Targeted Outreach and Resources*

Element two of the transfer receptive culture (TRC) framework emphasizes the importance of providing outreach and resources that focus on the specific needs of transfer students while complementing the community college mission of transfer (Jain et al., 2011). As one of the two pre-transfer elements of the TRC framework, element two focuses on building early, supportive bridges between institutions to facilitate a smoother transition for community college students. This section draws on qualitative data from faculty interviews and open-ended questionnaire responses to explore how outreach and resource alignment are practiced across CSU music departments.

Some faculty participants described intentional outreach to local community colleges as part of their departmental efforts. Dr. Avery discussed how their program engages directly with a nearby community college partner through shared professional relationships and informal coordination. They explained, "We have a graduate of our program who is now the director of [the local CC music program], so he understands our program and knows what it is that we need the transfers to have." This relationship has led to more aligned preparation for incoming transfer students and a stronger transfer

pipeline. Dr. Casey similarly shared their involvement in outreach during orientation, stating that both they and the program advisor speak directly to transfer students at the start of each academic year. “We always have a day that [we] go in and we talk with all the transfer music ed students to ensure that they’re on the right path,” they said.

Faculty participants provided different perspectives on how transfer students accessed support. Dr. Casey noted that transfer students often relied more on one another than on formal campus services, explaining that “they have a great support system in each other … more than some of the resources on campus.” In contrast, Dr. Rivera described efforts to reduce gatekeeping by creating advising materials students could reference on their own. As they explained, “I just try to leave something that won’t change every two years … so that they can look back at it later. … A lot of our students seem to be left in the dark, where they just think a person has to tell them [like] we’re gatekeepers. And I’m like, no, this information is available to you.” Together, these perspectives highlight contrasting ways that transfer students navigate available resources, either through peer networks or through faculty efforts to reduce advising barriers.

Open-ended responses from the faculty questionnaire also pointed to the value of early engagement and structured communication. One respondent suggested that music departments could improve transfer success by initiating “earlier contact from our department once they have been accepted to the university.” Others emphasized the need to “reach out to more community colleges to have that working relationship with them in creating a smooth pipeline toward graduation.”

Collectively, these findings show that outreach and resources aimed at supporting transfer students vary widely across institutions. Although faculty described examples such as informal collaborations with community colleges, peer-based student networks, and efforts to make advising more transparent, these supports were often informal or dependent on individual initiative. Overall, these examples demonstrate localized efforts to improve pre-transfer support, yet highlight the absence of coordinated, system-wide strategies across institutions.

### *Element Three: Financial and Academic Support*

Element three of the transfer receptive culture (TRC) framework emphasizes the importance of "offering financial and academic support through distinct opportunities for nontraditional and reentry transfer students, in which they are stimulated to achieve at high academic levels" (Jain et al., 2011, p. 258). As the first of the post-transfer elements in the TRC framework, this component addresses the institutional supports that are necessary once students arrive at the receiving institution. The findings include both academic and financial dimensions of support, as described by faculty participants in interviews and open-ended questionnaire responses.

Across all interviews, participants described regularly serving as academic advisors for transfer students, often as a formal or informal part of their teaching load. In many departments, especially those with complex curricula like music education, faculty stepped in to provide advising that general campus advisors were not equipped to offer. Some interviewees noted that they were routinely assigned the majority of transfer students due to their responsiveness, availability, or institutional knowledge. These

dynamics reflect the importance of individualized advising and highlight structural inconsistencies that make this support uneven across departments.

Interview participants consistently identified advising as a key form of academic support. Dr. Avery described using individualized checklists to track each student's degree progress and make semester-by-semester adjustments as needed. "We go through every single course that they need to take, and we talk about it every single semester," they explained. Dr. Jordan also described sitting down with students individually to plan and review progress each semester, tailoring support to the complexity of each student's path. Participants shared frustrations with outdated advising systems, limited institutional support, and uneven advisor distribution, which often led students to rely on the initiative of individual faculty members to receive timely assistance.

Faculty reflections highlighted concerns about course access and enrollment timing for transfer students. Dr. Casey explained, "Our poor transfer students… are like the last on the list who get to register for classes." Likely due to registration priority being determined by accumulated units, incoming transfer students were placed behind continuing students, which left them at a disadvantage in securing seats in required courses. In response, they collaborated with their department to add additional sections of high-demand courses, ensuring that transfer students would not fall behind due to enrollment delays. This example illustrates how faculty intervention can address systemic inequities through program-level adjustments that promote more equitable access to academic resources.

Some faculty described the emotional and logistical impact of financial

limitations, especially when students encounter credit transfer complications late in their academic journey. Dr. Jordan recalled a situation in which a student close to graduation required accommodations due to misaligned coursework: “We’re chasing our tails trying to fix something... we’re trying to accommodate. But you don’t want to say no to someone who’s that close to graduation.” Faculty responses suggest that when curricular misalignment is discovered late, resolution often depends on faculty discretion and informal accommodations.

Open-ended questionnaire responses also referenced financial concerns. One respondent stated that “more scholarship funding” was needed specifically for transfer students. Another suggested creating more work-study positions tied to academic departments, allowing students to earn income while remaining academically engaged. Such comments reveal that faculty perceived few distinct opportunities currently in place and identified targeted financial supports as critical for meeting the needs of nontraditional and reentry transfers.

### *Element Four: Acknowledging Student Lived Experiences*

Element four of the transfer receptive culture (TRC) framework emphasizes the importance of “acknowledging the lived experiences that students bring and the intersectionality between community and family” (Jain et al., 2011, p. 258). In this framework, intersectionality refers to the overlapping roles and responsibilities students carry, in which family obligations, community ties, and employment intersect with academic demands. This element highlights how cultural understanding and student-centered engagement can promote transfer student belonging, validation, and integration

within receiving institutions. As a post-transfer dimension of TRC, this element considers how faculty and departments recognize and affirm the diverse social identities and responsibilities that community college transfer students carry with them.

Interview participants highlighted the strengths that transfer students bring to the classroom, particularly their maturity, self-direction, and level of engagement. Although transfer may students navigate complex responsibilities such as work, caregiving, and commuting, participants noted that these experiences often contribute to a strong sense of motivation and focus. Dr. Casey observed, “The most successful [community college] kids... are the kids that really stay on top of their own path.” Dr. Jordan similarly described transfer students as “more mature” and “a little more focused,” adding that many arrive with clear goals and strong time-management skills. Dr. Rivera echoed these sentiments, stating, “My favorite students to work with are transfer students... There’s something about the community college experience. It’s intergenerational... the students come in being more engaged in the classroom and more fun to teach.” While faculty viewed these qualities positively, such comments also suggest that transfer student success is often attributed to individual traits rather than institutional support.

Faculty participants also recognized the broader life circumstances that shaped transfer students’ educational experiences. Dr. Rivera emphasized the limited flexibility many students faced, explaining, “You’re working. You’re commuting from far, and you’re trying to adjust to a new institution, and you have very little room for messing up or missing a class.” Dr. Avery echoed this concern, noting that “many of the students are also working. A lot of them have to work in order to go to school.” Dr. Rivera further

described a student who felt disconnected because of commuting demands and age differences, explaining that the student "just feels out of place" among younger peers. These accounts illustrate how responsibilities beyond the classroom constrained students' ability to navigate institutional expectations, underscoring the importance of acknowledging transfer students' lived realities..

Open-ended questionnaire responses reflected additional insights into how departments recognize or support student identities. One faculty member noted that transfer students often arrive with established peer groups and integrate well when provided a welcoming environment. Another emphasized that their department supports "all transfers regardless of the institution they are transferring from or the exposure to music courses they have had," suggesting a departmental ethos of inclusivity that values individual backgrounds over standardized preparation. These perspectives offer examples of how faculty and departments may validate students' lived experiences as a core part of their academic identity.

Faculty observations highlighted both the assets and the challenges associated with transfer student experiences. Maturity and motivation were frequently praised, yet students' responsibilities outside the classroom often limited their flexibility in navigating institutional requirements. Whereas the quantitative indicators for this element offered a broad portrait of recognition and support, the qualitative findings provided more detailed insight into how these lived realities were experienced and interpreted by faculty. The extent to which departments validated or supported these lived realities varied

considerably, reflecting the importance of Element Four's call to recognize and affirm the intersection of academic, family, and community roles in a transfer-receptive culture.

***Element Five: Assessment Framework***

Element five of the transfer receptive culture (TRC) framework calls for institutions to "create an appropriate and organic framework from which to assess, evaluate, and enhance transfer receptive programs and initiatives that can lead to further scholarship on transfer students" (Jain et al., 2011, p. 258). This element emphasizes the importance of reflective practices that help institutions understand the experiences of transfer students and improve the programs and policies that support them.

Across interviews, faculty acknowledged the existence of institutional data related to student retention and graduation but noted that these figures were not routinely used at the department level to assess transfer student outcomes. Dr. Jordan shared that the emphasis at their institution had shifted more toward early persistence: "It's not about graduation rate. It's about retention rate…" This distinction highlighted a departmental focus on short-term enrollment continuity rather than long-term degree completion. Across interviews, participants did not frame these data in terms of transfer-specific outcomes. Similarly, Dr. Rivera described recent curricular reforms designed to reduce bottlenecks and delays for transfer students. They explained that the department had shifted to a "modular approach" that staggered the availability of key courses and expanded theory offerings to include Western harmony, popular harmony, and remedial tracks that could be taken in different orders. Reflecting on these changes, Dr. Rivera noted, "the hope is [it] is making a big difference in our graduation rates." Faculty

comments indicated that although data systems and institutional reforms exist, structured and sustained evaluation processes are underdeveloped.

Faculty participants also expressed varying degrees of awareness regarding transfer student success rates and institutional follow-up. Dr. Jordan, for example, explained that the institution tracks graduation rates for two-year transfers separately from first-time students. They also emphasized the importance of evaluating the systems themselves, not just students: “I think one of the things which is becoming apparent to me is, there’s just a need for more... not even assessment of the students, but assessment of the system.” They continued, “how do we get an accurate picture of a student’s abilities coming in?” Others mentioned that anecdotal feedback, rather than systematic data collection, was often the basis for identifying barriers or student needs. For example, some described hearing from students that transfer credit delays or registration restrictions impacted their degree timelines, but these issues were not tracked or formally assessed. In these cases, program adjustments, such as opening new course sections or reviewing transfer articulation, were implemented reactively and based on individual faculty initiative rather than formal assessment mechanisms. For instance, Dr. Jordan described creating a personal questionnaire tool within Canvas, the university’s learning management system (LMS), to gather insights about student pathways: “I have my own little Canvas class survey. I said, ‘Hey, tell me about yourself. Are you transferring? You’ve been here a while?’... That information... has been incredibly helpful.” This account illustrates the ways individual faculty work to compensate for gaps in institutional assessment infrastructure.

Open-ended questionnaire responses further reinforced the limited presence of formal assessment practices. One respondent emphasized the need for better articulation of transfer course outcomes, explaining that the current system relies too heavily on case-by-case approvals and lacks consistency. Another noted that although faculty may care deeply about supporting transfer students, institutional structures for evaluating the effectiveness of those supports are often unclear or absent. A third respondent described their department's approach as "responsive but not reflective," indicating a willingness to help students in real time but limited engagement in longitudinal tracking or program evaluation.

Together, these qualitative findings suggest that although faculty and departments are often attuned to the challenges transfer students face, efforts to systematically assess and improve transfer support remain inconsistent. Although faculty noted the availability of institutional data and informal feedback mechanisms, they did not describe processes in which such information was regularly shared back to departments or used to establish sustained frameworks for evaluating or improving transfer student outcomes specifically in music.

**Summary of Themes from Open-Ended Questionnaire Responses**

Open-ended responses from the faculty questionnaire were reviewed to identify department-level strategies and areas for improvement related to transfer student support. These responses, although part of the quantitative instrument, were grouped into common topics to complement the interview findings. The open-ended responses were analyzed to better understand how faculty described institutional practices and concerns.

Faculty responses to open-ended questionnaire items described a range of departmental practices that were reported as supporting transfer music students. Advising and orientation were central in many comments, though faculty varied in how specifically these practices targeted community college transfers. Some described orientation sessions and advisor meetings tailored for transfer students, while others emphasized advising structures that served all students but included transfer needs within them. Respondents also highlighted efforts at curricular placement and flexibility, such as theory and musicianship assessments to guide enrollment, as well as outreach and informal partnerships with local community colleges to strengthen articulation and preparation.

When asked how departments could improve support for transfer students, respondents identified several areas for improvement. Curricular misalignment was a recurring theme, particularly in foundational coursework such as theory, piano, and aural skills. Some faculty described sequencing issues in which course progressions at community colleges did not align with CSU requirements, leading to repeated coursework. Others pointed to philosophical and pedagogical differences, such as fixed-do versus moveable-do approaches in aural skills or differing expectations of theory preparation, that created additional barriers for transfer students. Advising and administrative challenges were also cited, including transcript evaluation delays, centralized advising limitations, and outdated technological systems used for student records and transfer credit evaluation. Faculty frequently noted that they had to intervene personally to compensate for these institutional barriers.

Suggested improvements included earlier departmental contact prior to

enrollment, more consistent placement procedures, and increased financial support through scholarships and employment opportunities. The feedback indicated a need for localized efforts such as improved advising and communication within departments. It also pointed to systemic needs, including clearer articulation agreements and statewide alignment of curricula, to improve the transfer experience.

## Emergent Themes

Although the five elements of the transfer receptive culture (TRC) framework (Jain et al., 2011) provided a strong structure for organizing faculty perspectives, several additional themes emerged across qualitative data that extended beyond the TRC model. These emergent themes reflect broader institutional and interpersonal dynamics that influence transfer student support in CSU music programs. Four thematic areas emerged from the qualitative data: student well-being, faculty strain and emotional labor, institutional deflection of responsibility, and systemic misalignment and institutional frustration.

### *Student Well-Being*

Participants frequently noted that the transfer process places substantial emotional and logistical strain on students, shaping how they participate in coursework and campus life. Whereas Element 4 centers on institutional recognition of students' lived experiences, this theme highlights faculty perspectives on students' mental health, motivation, and overall well-being amid those pressures. Several faculty referenced how students' external responsibilities—such as employment, family obligations, and long commutes—reduced flexibility and increased the likelihood of academic strain.

Dr. Rivera reflected on the limited margin for error that many transfer students face: “You’re working. You’re commuting from far, and you’re trying to adjust to a new institution.” In the same interview, Dr. Rivera described how these demands intersect with students’ lived experiences: “They come with more life experience, which means they also come with more baggage.” Dr. Avery observed similar patterns, noting that transfer students “need to work too,” and often juggle these responsibilities while trying to meet the demands of a structured music curriculum.

These descriptions were often situated in the context of specific advising encounters. Faculty described instances in which students missed rehearsals, arrived to lessons unprepared, or struggled to keep up with sequential courses. The challenges were not always academic in nature but reflected larger structural tensions between institutional expectations and students’ daily realities. Although some instructors provided informal flexibility through advising or modified coursework, such adjustments remained individualized rather than systemic. This theme reflects how non-academic demands intersect with curricular structures, often leaving students with limited room to adapt or recover when obstacles arise.

### *Faculty Strain and Emotional Labor*

Faculty participants described the emotional and professional demands they encountered while supporting transfer students, often in conditions of limited institutional support. Advising emerged as a key area in which faculty felt overextended. Dr. Rivera noted, “We have to constantly do advising that’s beyond what we should be doing,” referencing time-consuming efforts to help students navigate unclear degree plans or

course sequences that often result from transfer-credit issues and curricular misalignments. These tasks were not only administratively demanding but also emotionally taxing, particularly when students faced crises or appeared overwhelmed.

Dr. Jordan reflected on the personal toll of this support: “I’ve kind of realized I’ve reached my capacity… I’m not a therapist.” Dr. Jordan described a pattern in which students arrived with high levels of need, but faculty intervention was generally limited to “about week six.” While the specific significance of this point in the term was not discussed, it marked a perceived shift in which faculty ceased additional outreach and students who disengaged were viewed as having left the course. This remark illustrates the emotional complexity of faculty-student relationships in transfer contexts, in which students may require more sustained support than the institutional system is designed to provide.

Dr. Avery described similar concerns about workload and the difficulty of moving students through the program efficiently: “It’s too many units to try to get them through.” These experiences contributed to a broader sense of strain, in which faculty found themselves balancing teaching, advising, and emotional caregiving roles without sufficient structural reinforcement. The result was a form of invisible labor that extended beyond formal job descriptions and reflected broader systemic gaps in transfer student support.

### *Deflecting Institutional Responsibility*

Several participants described issues related to transfer student preparation and progression, yet placed the responsibility for resolving these challenges on community

colleges or the students themselves rather than on the CSU institution. In multiple interviews, faculty shared examples of community college instructors adapting their curriculum to better align with CSU expectations. Dr. Jordan described one such instance: “You’re all trying to transfer to [X institution]. We’re just going to use their materials,” recounting what a CCC colleague told their students. Dr. Jordan added that this instructor “understands our program and knows what it is that we need the transfers to have.” While these comments acknowledged successful alignment, they also implied that initiating those adjustments was the responsibility of the sending institution, positioning community college faculty expertise as secondary to curricular authority at the receiving university.

A similar pattern emerged in faculty descriptions of student success. Rather than identifying institutional structures that support or hinder transfer students, some participants focused on student attributes. Dr. Casey stated, “The most successful kids... are the kids that really stay on top of their own path.” This framing emphasized personal responsibility over institutional design, suggesting that success results from individual motivation rather than systemic supports. In such cases, the need for broader programmatic or structural interventions was absent from the discussion.

These narratives consistently located agency and accountability either at the level of the community college or the student. Although faculty recognized transfer-related challenges, their descriptions rarely included critiques of CSU policies or departmental practices. This theme reflects a tendency to individualize transfer issues, thereby limiting opportunities for institutional change or collaborative reform.

### *Systemic Misalignment and Institutional Frustration*

Faculty participants described a range of structural challenges that complicated support for community college transfer students. Many concerns reflected broader patterns of misalignment across departments and institutions, rather than isolated oversights. Several interviewees discussed difficulties navigating unclear degree requirements, inconsistent advising systems, and bureaucratic processes that impacted student progress.

Advising inconsistencies were frequently cited. Faculty described situations in which students received conflicting information about course applicability or transfer eligibility, causing confusion for both students and faculty trying to assist them. One participant explained that institutional policies often varied within the same university, making it difficult to identify a reliable source for advising guidance.

Curricular misalignment also presented persistent challenges. Interviewees described transfer students arriving with coursework that did not fully align with departmental expectations. In some cases, students had completed courses at the community college level but were still required to repeat similar content after transferring. Although articulation agreements were in place, faculty emphasized that the depth and pacing of courses did not always correspond between institutions, and agreements were interpreted inconsistently across CSU campuses.

In some cases, articulation agreements were considered final and binding, whereas in others, faculty or departments overrode them if they believed students did not meet program expectations. Communication gaps between colleges and universities were

described as systemic rather than incidental. A few faculty members maintained informal connections with community college colleagues, but these relationships were not standard practice.

As Dr. Rivera explained, “I think there’s just so many points of like red tape, or the delays in... getting their transcripts to transfer, then getting the computer system to update them, and then trying to figure out why are some issues showing up... there’s just a lot of snags that happen.” Dr. Avery similarly highlighted how gaps in community college offerings directly affected student progress: “Studio and ensembles is the biggest thing that is missing... otherwise that holds back a lot of transfer students that they need to then add at least another year on, in order to get those studio and ensemble units.” As a result, alignment efforts were often reactive, depending largely on individual initiative rather than coordinated systems.

Together, these emergent themes offer additional insight into the lived conditions under which transfer receptivity occurs in CSU music programs. Faculty perspectives highlighted a complex environment in which student well-being, faculty labor, institutional deflection, and systemic processes intersect to shape transfer outcomes. Although the TRC framework provided a structured lens for organizing institutional supports, the emergent findings reveal underlying stressors and structural limitations that may impact the effectiveness of those supports.

Across all five elements of the TRC framework, faculty described a combination of individualized support efforts and ongoing structural challenges in serving community college transfer students. The qualitative findings, drawn from both interviews and open-

ended questionnaire responses, highlighted examples of responsive advising, curricular adjustments, and informal outreach. However, formalized systems for communication, evaluation, and resource alignment were less consistently reported. Findings reflect variability in faculty engagement and highlight differences in how transfer student support is structured across campuses.

# CHAPTER SIX

# INTEGRATION

Integration in mixed methods research refers to the deliberate process of connecting quantitative and qualitative strands to produces a more comprehensive understanding than either method could achieve independently (Fetters et al., 2013; Johnson & Onwuegbuzie, 2004). In this study, integration occurred during the interpretation phase of a sequential explanatory design, in which qualitative findings were used to contextualize and elaborate upon the quantitative results (Creswell & Clark, 2017). This structure followed a QUAN → qual sequence, with the quantitative phase forming the foundation for subsequent qualitative inquiry.

The integration presented in this chapter is organized using the framework of transfer receptive culture (TRC) as articulated by Jain et al. (2011), which includes five elements relevant to institutional support for transfer students. Within each element, the relationship between data strands is described using the typology of convergence, divergence, and expansion, as defined by Fetters et al. (2013). Convergence refers to areas in which quantitative and qualitative results align; divergence identifies instances in which they differ; and expansion occurs when one strand provides additional nuance, detail, or explanation that extends the other. Integrated findings are organized according to the five elements of transfer receptive culture, followed by a synthesis of emergent themes that extend beyond the original framework.

## Element One: Institutional Priority for Transfer Students

Element one of the transfer receptive culture (TRC) framework focuses on

institutional commitment to transfer students, particularly those from nontraditional, first-generation, low-income, and underrepresented backgrounds (Jain et al., 2011). The quantitative data indicated broad faculty agreement that their departments prioritize transfer students through formal structures such as articulation agreements. Specifically, 80.6% of survey respondents either "somewhat agreed" or "strongly agreed" that their department is focused on establishing articulation agreements with community colleges. However, the frequency of direct faculty collaboration with community college colleagues appeared less consistent. Only 29.4% of faculty reported frequent or very frequent collaboration, and over one-third (38.3%) reported rarely or never engaging in such collaboration. Because student-focused TRC practice requires cross-institution coordination, low collaboration limits opportunities to align placement and advising around individual transfer students' needs.

The qualitative data added depth to these findings by illustrating the informal and uneven nature of faculty engagement in pre-transfer alignment efforts. Several interview participants described proactive steps to support transfer infrastructure. For example, Dr. Casey discussed a departmental solution to course registration bottlenecks that disadvantaged transfer students, explaining that a new section of a required course had been added to ensure equitable access. Dr. Avery described collaborative efforts with nearby community colleges, including shared faculty events and joint advising strategies. These examples align with quantitative responses reflecting institutional commitment but also highlight the role of individual initiative in operationalizing that commitment.

Qualitative data also expanded the concept of institutional priority beyond

articulation mechanics. Dr. Rivera raised concerns about pre-transfer advising disparities, noting that students from low-income or minoritized backgrounds may be steered by high school counselors toward community college by default due to assumptions about their preparedness or finances. This observation introduced a broader interpretation of institutional responsibility that extends to high school advising environments and early guidance systems. Additionally, open-ended questionnaire responses reinforced the importance of early engagement and cross-institutional coordination. One faculty member emphasized the need for "more frequent outreach and communication between our department and community colleges," while another proposed a "regional curriculum review" to improve articulation, though acknowledged the resource-intensive nature of such reforms.

Overall, integration of both data strands revealed convergence around the perception that articulation agreements are valued and somewhat institutionalized. However, divergence emerged in the limited frequency of direct collaboration and the extent to which structural efforts depend on individual faculty initiative. The qualitative findings further expanded the understanding of institutional priority by contextualizing transfer commitment within broader equity considerations and pre-transfer advising practices. Together, these findings suggest that although institutional structures for supporting transfer students exist, their implementation is often decentralized and inconsistently applied across CSU campuses. However, these results highlight systemic variability in transfer support across CSU campuses, this study examined faculty perspectives broadly and may not capture how such inconsistencies differentially affect

nontraditional, first-generation, low-income, or underrepresented transfer students emphasized within this TRC element.

**Element Two: Faculty and Staff Engagement**

Element two of the transfer receptive culture (TRC) framework calls for four-year institutions and their faculty to engage in outreach and support directed toward community college partners and prospective transfer students, in ways that reflect the mission of community colleges to facilitate student transfer. Quantitative findings indicated that all faculty respondents (n = 36) had experience teaching or advising community college transfer music students, confirming that the participant sample was well-positioned to comment on outreach and support practices. Faculty respondents reported a wide range in the number of transfer students they worked with annually, with substantial variation likely stemming from differences in department size, teaching assignments, and institutional context. These statistics are presented in the quantitative chapter.

Survey data suggested high levels of faculty engagement and confidence in supporting transfer students. A majority of respondents (88.9%) agreed that they felt equipped to address the unique needs of this population, and 86.1% “strongly agreed” that music faculty play a significant role in supporting transfer student success. These responses suggest that faculty view themselves as having an important role in supporting transfer students. However, the quantitative items did not directly assess the presence or quality of institutional outreach efforts toward community college students.

Qualitative findings provided more insights into how outreach and resource

alignment were implemented in some cases and overlooked in others. Interview participants described a range of localized, often informal efforts to engage with community colleges. Dr. Avery discussed how shared professional ties and faculty continuity between institutions facilitated curricular alignment. This included collaboration with a former student who now directs a local community college music program, resulting in clearer expectations for incoming transfer students. Similarly, Dr. Jordan shared that a community college faculty member intentionally adopted CSU textbooks to align course content, demonstrating individual initiative by community college faculty to support student transitions. These examples illustrate how informal networks and personal initiative often fill the gaps left by formal outreach systems.

Some faculty also described institution-level engagement during the orientation process. Dr. Casey mentioned annual sessions specifically designed to orient transfer music education students and establish early contact with faculty advisors. This type of outreach, although occurring post-admission, contributed to the continuity of support and helped clarify expectations. However, not all institutions appeared to implement such practices. Open-ended questionnaire responses revealed suggestions for more proactive departmental outreach. One faculty member recommended “earlier contact from our department once they have been accepted to the university,” although others emphasized building stronger working relationships with community colleges.

Across both data strands, expansion occurred as qualitative findings clarified what forms of outreach exist and how these efforts vary. Although faculty affirmed the importance of transfer support in the questionnaire, the interviews revealed that outreach

often depends on individual initiative and informal partnerships rather than institutionalized systems. The quantitative data reflected faculty confidence and involvement but offered limited detail about the nature or consistency of institutional outreach prior to matriculation, indicating a difference in depth rather than a difference in direction.

Taken together, these findings suggest that although faculty view themselves as essential to transfer-student success and are often involved in outreach and advising, formalized mechanisms for consistent communication with community colleges remain limited. The integration of quantitative and qualitative data points to a need for more structured, state-wide strategies that extend beyond individual efforts to align resources and expectations across institutions.

**Element Three: Financial and Academic Support**

Element three of the transfer receptive culture (TRC) framework addresses the institutional provision of academic and financial support for nontraditional and reentry transfer students—those whose educational paths differ from the traditional, uninterrupted college trajectory, often due to employment, caregiving, or other life responsibilities. In this study, both quantitative and qualitative data provided insight into how CSU music programs support nontraditional and reentry transfer students once they arrive on campus, with a particular focus on advising, course access, and financial aid.

Quantitative findings showed that most faculty perceived institutional advising and mentorship services as effective. For the item assessing satisfaction with advising, 91.7% of respondents selected “somewhat agree” or “strongly agree.” Similarly, 77.8%

agreed that orientation programs for community college transfer students meet student needs, though 13.9% selected “I don’t know,” suggesting some inconsistency in program awareness. In response to a question about course repetition due to credit transfer issues or curriculum misalignment, 77.8% of faculty reported that repetition due to misalignment occurs “sometimes” or “often,” indicating that these challenges persist across institutions.

Qualitative findings converged with the survey results by confirming that faculty play an active role in advising transfer students and view this responsibility as essential to student success. Faculty described frequently serving as academic advisors, often assuming this role because of their responsiveness or experience. Dr. Avery explained using customized checklists to monitor student progress, while Dr. Jordan described one-on-one planning meetings as a routine part of supporting transfer students. Dr. Casey noted that registration systems often place transfer students at a disadvantage and described adding course sections to mitigate scheduling barriers. Expansion occurred as these qualitative examples provided concrete illustrations of how faculty address structural challenges through individualized advising and departmental adjustments. Although participants did not specify whether these advising efforts focused on nontraditional or reentry students, the examples reflect broad departmental strategies intended to support transfer students after matriculation.

Although academic advising was viewed positively, financial support received noticeably lower ratings in the survey data. Only 22.3% of faculty expressed satisfaction with scholarships for first-year students, and 19.5% reported satisfaction with

scholarships for community college transfer students. These similarly low satisfaction levels reflect a shared perception that current scholarship opportunities are insufficient, regardless of student entry pathway.

These concerns were reinforced by qualitative data, with several faculty noting that transfer students frequently balance employment, family, and commuting responsibilities that affect academic engagement and degree completion. Dr. Rivera noted that many students "are juggling a lot," while Dr. Jordan observed that "many of the students are also working… in order to go to school." Faculty participants also described institutional challenges in addressing late-stage credit misalignments, often requiring reactive accommodations for students nearing graduation. One respondent noted the need for "more scholarship funding," and another recommended creating work-study opportunities through academic departments to support transfer students.

The integration of findings for element three revealed convergence in faculty perceptions that advising and mentoring services are generally effective and play a key role in transfer student success. Convergence also occurred around financial support, as both strands pointed to limited scholarship availability and a lack of formalized financial mechanisms tailored to transfer students. Expansion occurred through qualitative accounts that described how faculty navigate academic and financial barriers on a case-by-case basis, often compensating for institutional limitations through personal initiative. These findings indicate that although academic advising is a relatively well-established support, financial assistance remains underdeveloped across CSU music programs.

**Element Four: Acknowledging Student Lived Experiences**

Element four of the transfer receptive culture (TRC) framework focuses on how institutions recognize and affirm the lived experiences of transfer students, including their cultural identities, family responsibilities, and community contexts. In this study, the quantitative strand included a single item addressing overall faculty perceptions of institutional support for transfer student success. The qualitative findings elaborated on this result by providing insight into how faculty perceive and respond to the lived realities that many transfer students navigate.

Qualitative findings broadened this result by illustrating the complex realities of transfer students' lives. Faculty participants described students who commute long distances, work while attending school, or care for family members. These contexts were not viewed as obstacles alone, but as part of a larger set of student characteristics that shaped classroom engagement and persistence. Dr. Jordan commented that transfer students "generally know what they want to do… they're a little more focused, maybe," suggesting that faculty may recognize a level of maturity and intentionality among this group. Dr. Rivera emphasized the richness of intergenerational and peer learning, stating, "You see, the students come in being really more engaged in the classroom and more fun to teach." These comments suggest that faculty view transfer students' diverse life experiences as assets in academic spaces.

At the same time, faculty participants highlighted the ways institutional culture can overlook or inadequately accommodate these experiences. Dr. Rivera described one student who felt alienated due to commuting burdens, age differences, and difficulty

connecting with peers: “He just feels like out of place… He doesn’t even feel like he can relate to some of the students because of the age difference.” They also emphasized how bureaucratic processes and inconsistent faculty awareness can make navigation more difficult for students who have limited flexibility due to their life responsibilities. Statements such as “it depends who you ask” reflected the variability in how departments or faculty members respond to student needs.

Open-ended questionnaire responses expanded on the quantitative trends by illustrating how inclusive departmental cultures translated into everyday student experiences. Although the questionnaire captured broad faculty agreement that institutions support transfer students, the qualitative evidence provided additional context about *how* that support took shape—through welcoming environments, peer and faculty networks, and equitable expectations across incoming pathways. In combination, the two forms of evidence offered a fuller picture of institutional support than either could provide alone.

The quantitative questionnaire used a single, general item to gauge institutional support, providing a broad view of faculty perceptions. In contrast, the qualitative findings offered greater depth, illustrating how faculty recognize and respond to transfer students’ lived realities, including employment, caregiving, and commuting responsibilities. When considered together, the two strands reveal convergence with expansion: both highlight institutional receptivity to transfer students, while the qualitative data provide fuller insight into how faculty and departments address the intersecting factors shaping students’ experiences.

**Element Five: Assessment Frameworks**

Element five of the transfer receptive culture (TRC) framework emphasizes the importance of having appropriate, intentional systems in place to evaluate and improve institutional practices that affect transfer students. According to Jain et al. (2011), institutions committed to transfer receptivity should "create an appropriate and organic framework from which to assess, evaluate, and enhance transfer receptive programs and initiatives" (p. 258). This study examined faculty perceptions of how well CSU music programs monitor student progress, use data to inform practices, and support degree completion for transfer students.

Quantitative findings reflected mixed faculty perceptions of institutional assessment processes related to transfer student success. Fewer than half of respondents (44.4 %) agreed that their institutions use student success data to evaluate or improve transfer support. Additionally, faculty participants also expressed greater confidence in timely degree completion for first-year students (69.5 %) than for community college transfer students (52.8 %), a difference that points to gaps in how transfer-specific outcomes are monitored and assessed. Taken together, these results align with element five of the TRC framework, indicating that institutional tracking of transfer-student success and perceptions of degree completion may together reflect how consistently assessment frameworks are implemented across CSU music programs.

Qualitative findings expanded on this by highlighting how inconsistent assessment practices and unclear responsibilities impact transfer student success. Some faculty participants described a lack of centralized systems for monitoring transfer

student academic progress after transfer, and while some attributed this to unclear institutional responsibilities, others did not explain why formal assessment was limited. In the absence of clear institutional structures, faculty often relied on individualized degree planning and informal check-ins. Dr. Avery discussed creating individualized advising spreadsheets and maintaining contact with students throughout their academic journey. Dr. Jordan also mentioned personally reviewing graduation timelines and coordinating last-minute accommodations for students whose transfer credits created unexpected barriers near the end of their program.

Open-ended questionnaire responses reinforced the perception that systematic assessment is limited. One faculty member noted that earlier contact from CSU music departments could improve outcomes, and another suggested developing “more complete and comprehensive articulation agreements” to reduce the need for course-by-course petitions. A third respondent proposed a regional curriculum review process but acknowledged that implementation would require substantial coordination and resources. These examples reflect an awareness of systemic issues but also point to the absence of consistent frameworks to assess and revise practices based on student outcomes.

The integration of findings for element five revealed a disconnect between faculty perceptions of institutional support practices for transfer students and the limited mechanisms in place to evaluate and improve that commitment. Although about 70% of faculty perceived that first-year students complete degrees on time compared with only about half who said the same for transfer students, fewer than 45% indicated that their institutions regularly assess transfer-student outcomes, and nearly 30% were unsure

whether such efforts occur. Expansion occurred through qualitative accounts of individualized faculty workarounds and recommendations for more coordinated approaches. Although some faculty described efforts to monitor student progress informally, the data suggests that comprehensive assessment frameworks specific to transfer students remain underdeveloped in many CSU music programs.

**Additional Qualitative Insights Beyond the TRC Framework**

Although this integration chapter centers on the five elements of transfer receptive culture, the qualitative data also yielded themes that extended beyond the original framework, as outlined in Chapter 5: (1) student well-being, (2) faculty strain and emotional labor, (3) deflecting institutional responsibility, and (4) systemic misalignment and institutional frustration. Because these areas were not explored in the quantitative phase of the study, they were not included in the TRC element-based integration above. However, their recurrence across participants indicates that these issues represent important aspects of faculty experiences and transfer student support. These insights may inform future research and contribute to ongoing refinement of frameworks that address transfer receptivity within higher education music programs.

The integration of quantitative and qualitative findings in this chapter provided a comprehensive view of how CSU music faculty perceive and enact support for community college transfer music students. Organized by the five elements of TRC, this chapter highlighted areas of convergence, divergence, and expansion across both data strands. The quantitative phase offered broad patterns of institutional commitment, and the qualitative phase enriched these findings through detailed accounts of faculty practice

and departmental culture. In several areas, the qualitative findings expanded the quantitative results by offering more nuanced accounts of faculty roles, student needs, and institutional challenges.

# CHAPTER SEVEN

# DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

The purpose of this study was to investigate the transfer receptive culture (TRC) (Jain et al., 2011) within California State Universities (CSUs) from the perspective of university faculty, specifically as it pertains to music students transferring from California Community Colleges (CCCs). Using a sequential explanatory mixed methods design (Creswell & Clark, 2017), I collected faculty perspectives via a questionnaire that included both closed- and open-ended items. A subset of participants then participated in follow-up interviews to provide additional depth and context. Guided by the TRC framework, the analysis was organized around five theoretical elements: institutional priority for transfer students, targeted outreach and resources, financial and academic support, acknowledging student lived experiences, and assessment frameworks.

The following research questions guided this study:

1. How do faculty members at California State Universities (CSUs) understand and perceive the transfer receptive culture at their institutions for music students transferring from California Community Colleges (CCCs)?
2. What faculty practices and perspectives shape the transfer experience of music students, as interpreted through the lens of transfer receptive culture (TRC)?

This section includes interpretation of the integrated findings alongside broader implications for research and practice. In this discussion, I also highlight emergent themes that fall outside the TRC framework, followed by consideration of study limitations and future directions. A critical realist lens informed the analysis, highlighting

the structural and contextual factors influencing transfer receptivity in CSU music programs.

**Critical Realist Perspective on Findings**

I used critical realism as an interpretive stance to guide how I explained the patterns that emerged from the data. My goal was to identify possible structural or contextual factors that influenced faculty perceptions rather than to make direct cause-and-effect claims. Because critical realism assumes that observable experiences are shaped by deeper conditions, I interpreted faculty descriptions of departmental and institutional practices in relation to the systems and policies that may influence them (Bhaskar, 2008; Fletcher, 2017; Sayer, 2000). This approach made it possible to connect individual experiences to broader institutional settings without assuming that one directly determines the other. At the same time, a critical realist interpretation recognizes its limits: it can propose plausible explanations for how certain conditions influence outcomes, but it cannot confirm them with certainty (Mukumbang, 2023). This perspective therefore provides a foundation for understanding how faculty perceptions relate to the institutional contexts discussed in the sections that follow.

**Element One: Institutional Priority for Transfer Students**

This section addresses how faculty perceived institutional commitment to transfer students, corresponding to element one of the transfer receptive culture (TRC) framework, which positions transfer—particularly for students from historically underrepresented and economically marginalized groups—as a measure of institutional responsibility for equitable access and completion (Jain et al., 2011, 2016, 2020).

Approximately 81% of participating faculty participants viewed transfer as an institutional priority, yet qualitative accounts revealed that this commitment was unevenly enacted across CSU music programs. Formal collaboration among CSU and community college faculty was limited, and participants frequently described relying on personal initiative or informal professional networks to maintain curricular alignment and provide advising support. Some faculty participants assumed additional coordination responsibilities in the absence of formal structures, such as personally advising transfer students, reviewing transcripts to determine course placement, and adjusting course offerings to accommodate transfer pathways. Overall, the results suggest that institutional commitment to transfer was expressed in principle rather than supported through consistent, system-level practices. Faculty generally discussed transfer students collectively, so subgroup distinctions (e.g., first-generation or low-income status) did not emerge in the data.

Prior scholarship provides context for interpreting these findings. Decentralized governance and unequal resource allocation within higher education have been identified as key factors that limit collaboration and reproduce barriers to transfer (Dowd et al., 2008). Complementary work on transfer receptive culture stresses the importance of institution-level structures that are both culturally and systematically responsive, noting that articulation mechanisms are often inconsistently coordinated or evaluated (Jain et al., 2016). Together, these perspectives mirror the pattern observed in this study: institutional commitment is frequently cited but unevenly enacted in practice.

Interpreting this element through a critical lens draws attention to the real but

unmeasured structures that influence transfer policy implementation. Institutional values alone do not drive practice; faculty engagement in transfer work depends on whether systems are in place to support, coordinate, and recognize their efforts. In the absence of these mechanisms, institutional priority remains partially enacted, leaving gaps that individual faculty members may attempt to fill, but cannot consistently sustain.

**Element Two: Outreach and Resources**

According to the TRC framework, element two calls on four-year institutions to engage proactively with community college partners by aligning resources and outreach practices that serve the specific needs of transfer students. In this study, faculty described providing robust support after transfer but having few formal mechanisms for collaboration or communication prior to students' arrival. Both quantitative and qualitative findings indicated that outreach efforts were often informal and dependent on individual initiative rather than institutional coordination. Participants cited the absence of structured incentives, designated contacts, and/or shared systems for curriculum alignment, resulting in reliance on personal networks or previous professional relationships to fill gaps left by institutional structures.

Existing scholarship on higher education and music education provides a foundation for interpreting these findings within broader patterns of transfer articulation and curriculum alignment. Research on higher education policy and transfer access has shown that inequitable structures and uneven resource allocation can limit collaboration across institutions, producing inconsistent transfer outcomes even when faculty commitment is high (Dowd et al., 2008). Within California's community college to CSU

system, inconsistent communication has been identified as a constraint on early curricular alignment (Nguyen et al., 2023), and pre-transfer advising—though beneficial for building transfer student capital—often remains inconsistent or inaccessible (Hayes et al., 2020). In the context of music education, earlier work demonstrated that community college music curricula were historically designed to complement four-year programs (Dixon, 2018), yet more recent research reveals persistent sequencing and coordination gaps that continue to delay student progress (Koner & Eros, 2022; Glenn, 2020). National accreditation standards further underscore this inconsistency. The NASM Handbook (2024–2025) specifies that two-year institutions offering transfer-oriented music programs should maintain curricula equivalent to the first two years of a four-year degree (National Association of Schools of Music [NASM], 2025). These standards presuppose alignment between community college and university programs; however, faculty in this study described frequent mismatches in preparation and placement, suggesting that formal accreditation requirements have not resulted in consistent practice.

Analysis of this element reveals that outreach and alignment across campuses depend primarily on individual initiative operating within weak or fragmented institutional structures. Faculty commitment and interpersonal initiative support transfer success in localized ways, but in the absence of system-wide structures that formalize communication, these efforts remain uneven. The persistence of informal, individualized outreach highlights the need to better understand how institutional organization, workload design, and accountability processes either enable or constrain sustained collaboration between two- and four-year institutions.

**Element Three: Financial and Academic Support**

Element three of the transfer receptive culture (TRC) framework focuses on providing financial and academic support structures for nontraditional and reentry transfer students. Integrated findings from this study indicate that although academic advising and mentorship are widely available within CSU music departments, financial supports, particularly those targeted at transfer music students, remain insufficient and inconsistently administered. Across both quantitative and qualitative strands, academic guidance appeared faculty-driven and effective, while financial resources remained insufficient and beyond departmental control. This pattern reflects a broader tension between localized faculty initiative and system-level resource constraints that shape transfer student experience.

Results from the quantitative strand indicated that approximately 92% of faculty agreed that their departments provide advising and mentorship services that meet transfer-student needs. Qualitative findings clarified, however, that this adequacy depends on individual initiative rather than institutional design. Participants described sustained advising relationships with transfer students and individualized degree planning to navigate sequencing and credit-transfer complications. These faculty-led efforts do not fully compensate for limited institutional coordination, leaving systemic advising gaps in place. This pattern parallels previous research identifying faculty accessibility and discipline-specific advising as key supports for transfer student persistence (Hayes et al., 2020; Jain et al., 2020; Flores, 2020). In music education specifically, Koner and Eros (2022) found that inconsistent articulation between community colleges and universities

and rigid course sequencing frequently delay transfer progress, underscoring the structural nature of advising challenges in the field. Programmatic flexibility is further limited by accreditation policy: The 2025 NASM Handbook prescribes sequential curricula, fixed credit and time requirements, and transfer-admission standards based on demonstrated competencies, leaving little latitude for course substitution or acceleration (NASM, 2025). Advising in CSU music programs therefore functions effectively at the interpersonal level but remains bounded by structural and accreditation limitations.

Quantitative and qualitative findings converged on a shared concern regarding financial support for transfer students: Faculty reported few scholarships targeted toward music transfer students and described limited departmental influence over financial-aid processes. Comments from open-ended questionnaire items and interviews indicated that transfer students frequently balance employment, commuting, and caregiving responsibilities while managing high-unit music curricula that include applied lessons, ensemble participation, and practice expectations. Approximately 70 % of faculty either disagreed or were uncertain about the adequacy of scholarships designated for transfer music students, indicating limited awareness of financial structures. Qualitative findings likewise revealed that faculty may lack detailed knowledge of students' financial circumstances because financial aid is administered outside their departments, constraining insight into how funding mechanisms influence student persistence. These findings align with statewide analyses showing persistent inequities in funding structures and limited aid portability within California's community college-to-CSU transfer pathways (Baker et al., 2023; Mejia et al., 2020). Research specific to music education

further highlights that affordability is a primary motivator for community-college attendance among aspiring music educators and that many students enter university programs with critical financial constraints (Dansereau & Sundblad, 2024). A study of music education transfer students similarly identified financial burdens as a major challenge influencing persistence and degree completion (Steele Royston et al., 2021). Collectively, these findings indicate that faculty awareness of financial need is limited and that financial barriers for transfer students in CSU music programs reflect interconnected state, institutional, and discipline specific structures that remain largely beyond departmental control.

Viewed together, these results illustrate how faculty agency functions as both a resource and a limit. Individualized advising practices partially mitigate systemic barriers but cannot offset the financial constraints embedded in transfer and accreditation systems. Within the TRC framework, authentic receptivity requires coordination across both academic and material domains. When faculty responsibility operates without adequate institutional structures or departmental resources, support for transfer students becomes fragmented, reflecting systemic conditions that may influence which students are best positioned to persist in music programs.

**Element Four: Acknowledging Student Lived Experiences**

Element four of the TRC framework emphasizes recognizing and supporting the lived experiences that transfer students bring to their receiving institutions, including family, employment, and community responsibilities. In this study, faculty respondents generally perceived their institutions as supportive of transfer student success, yet both

strands of data indicated that such support often arises through individual faculty actions rather than coordinated institutional structures. Together, these findings illustrate that acknowledgment of lived experience occurs, but primarily through personal initiative instead of formalized policy or programming.

Quantitative data for this element consisted of a single item asking whether participants believed their institution effectively supported the success of community-college transfer music students. Approximately 75 % of respondents selected one of the agreement options, indicating a generally positive perception of institutional support. However, because the item did not specify which dimensions of support—academic, social, or cultural—it provides limited insight into how faculty interpret responsiveness to students' lived realities. The broad nature of this measure suggests that faculty perceptions reflect confidence in institutional mission rather than direct evidence of how transfer students experience support in daily practice.

Qualitative findings provided more nuanced insight. Faculty participants frequently described transfer students as mature, focused, and resilient—traits shaped by caregiving, employment, and commuting responsibilities. These experiences were viewed as both constraints and sources of motivation influencing classroom engagement and academic progress. Open-ended questionnaire comments echoed these observations, with faculty identifying employment, commuting, and caregiving as common barriers to participation, while also describing these responsibilities as indicators of student maturity and commitment. Similar patterns appear in music education research: Glenn (2020) described transfer students' adjustment as a process of navigating cultural and academic

differences while developing self-awareness of their integration into new institutional environments, and Koner and Eros (2022) found that CSU music transfer students frequently balanced work and family obligations while relying on informal faculty and peer networks to maintain belonging and persistence.

Despite this awareness, participants rarely described formal departmental or institutional mechanisms designed to acknowledge or support transfer students' lived experiences. Most examples reflected informal accommodations—adjusted rehearsal schedules, flexible advising, or individualized mentorship—rather than structured initiatives. While these efforts demonstrate faculty responsiveness, they also reinforce inconsistency in how students experience belonging and validation. This reliance on individualized approaches parallels findings from music education research in which institutional acknowledgment of nontraditional student needs remains limited to interpersonal relationships (Koner & Eros, 2022). Within CSU music departments, this dependence on informal faculty support underscores a structural tension between recognition and capacity, revealing that genuine receptivity to transfer students' lived experiences remains partial and uneven.

**Element Five: Assessment Frameworks**

Element five of the TRC framework emphasizes continuous evaluation and evidence-based improvement as essential to equitable transfer support. Within this framework, effective assessment involves systematic monitoring of student outcomes, structured feedback loops, and shared accountability across institutional levels. In this study, findings from both strands indicated limited institutional assessment and reliance

on individual faculty initiative within CSU music programs.

Quantitative results showed that fewer than half of respondents agreed their institution frequently assesses transfer-student success, reflecting uncertainty about whether evaluation processes exist or are consistently applied. Qualitative interviews expanded on this finding, revealing that faculty often compensate for the absence of formal systems through individualized tracking, advising spreadsheets, and one-on-one interventions. These approaches were viewed as necessary to ensure student progress but also as inefficient and inconsistent, relying on personal effort rather than coordinated data-sharing or institutional oversight. Participants described these practices as reactive, surfacing only when students faced registration or degree-completion challenges, underscoring how limited infrastructure restricts systematic evaluation.

Research on TRC implementation consistently shows that assessment and accountability mechanisms are among the least developed dimensions of TRC. Within TRC scholarship, assessment involves using institutional data to evaluate transfer outcomes and refine policies (Jain et al., 2011, 2020). Studies of public university systems have found that few institutions maintain consistent practices for analyzing transfer outcomes or translating findings into program-level improvements (Yost, 2023). In the CSU context, Flores (2020) documented similar inconsistencies, noting that accountability structures for transfer success remain dependent on departmental initiative. Other research has shown that sustained transfer receptivity requires continuous institutional reflection and coordination (Joseph, 2021) and that when such assessment is absent, inequities and fragmented supports often persist (Cortes-López, 2021). The

limited assessment practices identified in this study reflect these same conditions, indicating that CSU music programs mirror broader patterns in which institutional learning remains underdeveloped.

Although a few departments had partial assessment systems, most faculty depicted evaluation as inconsistent and dependent on individual effort. The lack of shared processes reduces institutional awareness of transfer outcomes and limits opportunities to apply support broadly. Consequently, assessment mechanisms remain insufficiently developed to support ongoing, coordinated improvement to CSU music programs.

## Emergent Themes Beyond the TRC Framework

Although this study was organized around the five elements of the TRC framework, the qualitative findings revealed additional, interrelated dynamics that shape transfer experiences in CSU music programs. Across interviews, faculty described the intersecting pressures of student well-being, faculty strain and emotional labor, deflection of institutional responsibility, and systemic misalignment and frustration. Together, these themes depict a complex ecosystem in which students and faculty navigate transfer within structurally rigid and relationally demanding contexts. Within music, for which program sequencing, applied-lesson intensity, and ensemble participation leave little flexibility, even minor disruptions can cascade into extended completion timelines or emotional fatigue for both students and instructors.

### *Student Well-Being and Faculty Strain*

Faculty observations of transfer students' well-being reflected persistent tension between students' lived realities and the demands of highly sequenced music curricula.

Participants described how employment, commuting, and caregiving responsibilities constrained students' participation in rehearsals, lessons, and coursework. These conditions mirror findings by Hernandez (2021) and Flores (2020), who documented that transfer students at CSU campuses often confront unclear advising systems and limited institutional belonging even after completing structured pathways. In the present study, such pressures were intensified by the time-intensive nature of ensemble and applied lesson requirements. Faculty frequently discussed providing individualized advising or additional support to help students navigate these obstacles, illustrating the type of informal guidance and communication gaps also identified by Koner and Eros (2022), who found that advising inconsistencies and limited outreach between community colleges and universities created systemic barriers for transfer students. Dixon (2018) further highlighted how community college music programs often cultivate strong peer and faculty communities that contrast with the less personal environments students may encounter after transfer, suggesting that shifts in institutional context can affect well-being and persistence.

### *Deflecting Responsibility and Systemic Misalignment*

These interpersonal strains were mirrored by broader institutional patterns. Faculty descriptions of advising confusion and curricular rigidity reflected systemic conditions that extended beyond individual classrooms. Many participants attributed transfer difficulties to community college preparation or student motivation, reflecting what Jain et al. (2011) identified as deficit-oriented interpretations that stand in contrast to the Transfer Receptive Culture (TRC) framework's emphasis on institutional

accountability and collaboration between sending and receiving institutions. Flores (2020) similarly emphasized that equity in transfer cannot be achieved through policy alone but requires institutional agents who actively reform advising, communication, and structural practices. Within music programs, these limitations are intensified by discipline-specific expectations. Glenn (2020) found that music transfer students often depend on peers and applied lesson teachers for navigation due to inconsistent advising, a pattern that parallels faculty accounts in this study. The National Association of Schools of Music (NASM, 2025) further reinforces structural rigidity through accreditation standards that mandate fixed course sequences and proficiencies, leaving little room to recognize prior learning. Park (2021) and Diaz (2021) likewise demonstrated how Eurocentric curricular traditions and assumptions about musical capital privilege students with classical backgrounds, perpetuating inequities even within well-intentioned programs. Collectively, these findings highlight how structural inflexibility and disciplinary norms constrain transfer receptivity in music education, revealing that institutional culture—not student capacity—remains the primary barrier to equitable transfer.

A particularly salient example of systemic misalignment concerns the Associate Degree for Transfer (ADT) policy, which was designed to guarantee admission to a CSU with junior standing for students completing an aligned associate degree (California Community Colleges Chancellor's Office [CCCCO], 2024a). Despite this policy, several faculty participants reported that transfer students in music were still required to repeat courses such as theory, aural skills, or ensembles after transfer. Faculty attributed these

redundancies to differences in pacing, content coverage, and expectations between community college and CSU curricula. This finding reveals a disjunction between policy intent and disciplinary implementation, highlighting that statewide articulation agreements do not necessarily ensure equitable credit recognition within highly sequenced disciplines like music. Such contradictions illustrate how even well-intentioned reforms can fail to address the structural conditions that constrain transfer receptivity in specialized fields, including strict adherence to pedagogical and accreditation priorities that can disadvantage transfer students and, at times, conflict with transfer policy.

**Implications for CSU Music Programs**

Findings from this study point to several actionable implications for music departments within the California State University system. Faculty participants consistently described assuming primary responsibility for advising transfer students, often engaging in individualized planning and curricular adaptation. CSU music programs are not unique in this; faculty-led advising for transfer students has been noted in STEM fields as a key, yet often unsupported, element of transfer success (Queen, 2022). Despite the centrality of faculty advising, participants in this study reported that their efforts were rarely supported by formal departmental or institutional structures. To reduce reliance on discretionary faculty labor, department chairs and music leadership could consider implementing designated advising roles or assigning advising load credit specifically for transfer-related work. This would help ensure continuity in support and prevent burnout among a small subset of highly involved faculty.

Given the sequential nature of music curricula, particularly in performance, theory, aural skills, and music education tracks (Koner & Eros, 2022; Steele Royston et al., 2021), leadership within departments should prioritize proactive communication with community colleges. Curriculum misalignment not only delays graduation but may also result in students repeating coursework or losing eligibility for financial aid due to extended timelines (Mikayelyan, 2022; Park et al., 2021). Research has shown that music transfer students often face credit loss or redundancy due to program-specific sequencing and misaligned course expectations across institutions (Koner & Eros, 2022). Building on earlier recommendations for cross-institutional collaboration (Dowd et al., 2013; Handel, 2013; Johnson & Mejia, 2020), the present study points to discipline-specific applications such as developing department-level articulation maps or assigning faculty liaisons to strengthen CSU/community college communication. These initiatives would be especially impactful for first-generation, low-income, and underrepresented students, who may have fewer informal pathways to institutional knowledge or advising support (Gopalan & Brady, 2020; Jain et al., 2011).

Additionally, participants described how transfer students are often the last to register for courses, placing them at a disadvantage in programs in which course sequencing and ensemble participation are tightly controlled. Although Harper and Thiry (2022) identified late registration as a general barrier for transfer students across disciplines, Koner and Eros (2022) documented similar obstacles within music programs, noting that waitlists and advising lapses often delay access to key courses. Department chairs and faculty leaders can advocate for early registration access for transfer students

in high-demand sequences and ensure that multiple sections of required courses are available to prevent delay. Course scheduling and ensemble placement policies should be reviewed with transfer timelines in mind, particularly for students balancing employment or caregiving responsibilities.

Music department leadership should also consider developing onboarding practices specifically for transfer students, including early outreach from faculty, peer mentoring programs, or departmental orientations aligned with the start of the academic year. Orientation and mentoring programs tailored to transfer students have been found to improve academic integration and persistence (Daddona et al., 2021; Thomas et al., 2021). These low-cost practices could foster belonging, clarify degree expectations, and reduce the confusion students face when entering programs with specialized language, pedagogy, and program-specific performance, audition, and curricular sequencing requirements.

Department leaders could also engage more intentionally with assessment data related to transfer student outcomes. Faculty participants in this study reported limited involvement in institutional evaluation processes and uncertainty about how—or whether—transfer data inform policy or program decisions. Similar gaps have been observed in other disciplines lacking structured transfer assessment practices (Anderson & Deil-Amen, 2024; Blaney, 2025). Developing department-level processes to collect, review, and act on data related to degree progress, course bottlenecks, and curriculum alignment could facilitate more proactive and equitable support structures. Collaborative data-sharing with institutional research offices between CCCs and CSUs or faculty

governance groups may also improve transparency and foster a culture of continuous improvement around transfer receptivity.

Finally, music department chairs might consider opportunities for building faculty awareness around the lived experiences of transfer students. Several interview participants described how students often juggle multiple roles, such as commuting, caregiving, and employment, while navigating unfamiliar institutional systems. Yet, this context was not always visible or uniformly understood across faculty participants. Offering professional development or reflective dialogue opportunities could help build a shared understanding of transfer student challenges and foster more responsive teaching, advising, and policy decisions at the departmental level.

When examined through TRC, transfer within music involves distinctive challenges for equity, with implications for how transfer receptivity is conceptualized and operationalized within CSU music programs. Transfer receptivity depends on departmental actors that treat diverse forms of musical preparation as legitimate foundations for degree progression. In practice, music degree progression is often tightly sequenced and tied to performance-based benchmarks, which limits flexibility for transfer students (Koner & Eros, 2022). Within this disciplinary context, equity-oriented transfer initiatives may require approaches tailored to music rather than direct application of models developed in less constrained fields such as STEM (Anderson & Deil-Amen, 2024; Hernandez, 2021; Suh et al., 2025).

**Implications for Institutional and System-Level Policy**

This study highlights a gap between policy commitments to transfer equity and

the operational mechanisms needed to support transfer student success. Faculty participants often described working beyond their formal responsibilities, including tracking graduation progress manually, negotiating curriculum exceptions, and addressing crises late in students' degree trajectories. These examples reflect a lack of integrated advising structures, data monitoring systems, and cross-institutional communication. Such patterns are consistent with broader research on the implementation challenges that arise when transfer policies are not supported by adequate infrastructure or coordination (Casanova et al., 2024; Jain et al., 2020). To address these issues, institutional leadership could invest in the development of coordinated support systems that reduce reliance on individual faculty and ensure consistent transfer pathways across departments.

As discussed earlier, faculty accounts revealed that even under the statewide Associate Degree for Transfer (ADT) policy—which guarantees admission to a CSU campus with junior standing upon completion of an aligned associate degree (CCCCO, 2024a)—music transfer students are often required to repeat coursework, particularly in theory, aural skills, and musicianship. These redundancies illustrate a persistent gap between statewide policy frameworks and the disciplinary realities of sequenced music curricula. The finding underscores that policy alignment on paper does not ensure curricular alignment in practice, especially in specialized fields governed by accreditation standards and performance-based progressions. To mitigate unnecessary credit loss and extended time to degree, CSU and community college music programs should engage in discipline-specific articulation planning to clarify expectations for foundational

coursework. Should such efforts remain insufficient, systemwide policy adjustments—or even legislative intervention—may be needed to safeguard transfer equity in sequential programs like music.

Concerns about applied instruction emerged consistently across participant interviews. Lessons completed at the community college level were not always considered equivalent to CSU standards, particularly when delivered in group formats or without individualized instruction. In CSU programs, applied study typically involves one-on-one lessons with faculty specialists and is structured around juried evaluations, performance benchmarks, and degree recitals. In contrast, community college instruction is often less specialized, with limited contact hours or ensemble-based models that do not align with CSU expectations. This mirrors challenges noted in music education literature, in which variation in applied lesson formats across institutions has been linked to transfer inequity (Dansereau & Sundblad, 2024; Koner & Eros, 2022; Park, 2021). These structural differences highlight broader inconsistencies in instructional delivery between the two systems, which are not fully addressed by current ADT models or general articulation agreements. To prevent continued credit loss and confusion for transfer students, CSU and CCC systems must review and update the ADT structure for applied music to ensure that course descriptors, instructional models, and performance expectations are clearly defined and equitably implemented across institutions.

Although some applied courses are formally recognized within existing transfer frameworks, the criteria used to evaluate them vary widely and often fail to account for differences in instructional format, intensity, or assessment standards. These

inconsistencies create confusion for students, extend time to degree, and increase advising burdens for faculty managing course substitutions and waiver requests. The gap between the ADT's structural promise and its practical limitations reflects a need for more discipline-specific articulation planning—potentially including clearer statewide definitions and standards for applied music coursework to better support transfer in sequential fields like music.

Financial support emerged as a critical area for improvement. Faculty participants repeatedly noted that transfer students face elevated stress due to work obligations, commuting distances, and family responsibilities, yet few scholarships are specifically designed for this population. These challenges align with broader findings that financial insecurity is a primary barrier to degree completion among transfer students (Graves, 2023/2024)**.** The leadership within the CSU system could explore expanding need-based aid and developing transfer-specific scholarships, particularly for disciplines like music for which intensive course requirements may limit students' ability to maintain employment while attending university. Leadership could also expand work-study opportunities tied to academic programs, offering both financial relief and deeper disciplinary engagement. CSU campuses could prioritize the development of targeted financial supports for transfer students, but if institutional efforts remain uneven or underfunded, state-level funding initiatives may be needed to ensure equity across disciplines and campuses.

Findings also underscore the importance of collecting and using disaggregated data to inform transfer policy. Although faculty participants recognized lower degree-

completion rates among transfer students, few were aware of formal assessment efforts aimed at addressing these disparities. Institutional leadership should ensure that data on credit loss, time to degree, and retention are shared with departments and used to guide resource allocation, curriculum review, and advising strategies. Without such data-driven frameworks, responsibility for identifying and resolving transfer barriers will remain unevenly and informally distributed. To advance equity, CSU campus leadership should ensure that departments have access to transfer-student data in ways that enable the identification of structural inequities and the development of targeted, evidence-based reforms.

Attention to racial, socioeconomic, and first-generation equity must remain central to transfer reform. Although this study did not collect student demographic data, participants consistently described working with students who were employed, parenting, or navigating college without prior family experience as first-generation students. These characteristics are disproportionately found among underrepresented groups (Herrera, 2018; Jain et al., 2011) and are especially prevalent among community college students (Jain et al., 2011; CCCCO, 2024f). As Jain et al. (2011) emphasize, transfer equity must include recognition of how institutional structures can support or constrain students based on identity and background. Practices that assume traditional student characteristics—full-time enrollment, daytime availability, or uninterrupted attendance—may unintentionally exclude the realities faced by many transfer students. Policy and program design must account not only for academic preparation, but also for the structural conditions shaping students' capacity to engage fully in their higher education

experience.

Although this study focused on CSU faculty perspectives, participants repeatedly emphasized the importance of deeper collaboration with community colleges to ensure aligned preparation and advising. Opportunities for shared curriculum development, transfer planning, and ongoing communication between institutions could reduce barriers and strengthen continuity in music education across systems. Such efforts are especially critical in sequential disciplines, in which disjointed curricula can result in repeated coursework, delayed graduation, and frustration for both students and faculty.

This study's findings carry implications for transfer contexts beyond the California systems, particularly in settings where faculty, department chairs, and advisors must interpret transfer policy. Transfer receptivity is shaped not only by formal policy, but by the everyday decisions made by individuals responsible for advising, curriculum design, and articulation processes (Bartek, 2020; Taylor, 2019). I see these implications as relevant for institutions seeking to strengthen transfer, especially where alignment depends on sustained cross-institutional communication rather than standardized agreements alone. This requires deliberate action by faculty, department chairs, and academic leaders to confront inequities produced by existing transfer policies and practices.

**Limitations**

As with all research, this study includes several limitations that should be considered when interpreting its findings. The perspectives captured in this study reflect only those of full-time CSU music faculty who elected to participate and should not be

interpreted as representative of all faculty across the CSU system. The findings provide insight into patterns and institutional contexts rather than generalizable conclusions, offering a contextual understanding of faculty perspectives within the participating departments. Although these individuals were intentionally selected for their advising responsibilities and institutional knowledge, the absence of part-time instructors, community college faculty, and transfer students themselves, limits the comprehensiveness of the analysis. The findings therefore offer only a partial view of the broader transfer ecosystem.

The qualitative sample was also relatively small. Only five faculty members participated in interviews, which does not fully represent the range of perspectives across the 23-campus CSU system. Although thematic saturation was approached using the transfer receptive culture (TRC) framework, additional voices from departments with different advising structures or institutional contexts could have added further nuance.

Participant self-selection (Guillemot et al, 2025; Vietze et al., 2022) presents another constraint. Faculty who chose to participate may have been more invested in transfer issues or more familiar with articulation processes than those who did not respond. This introduces the possibility of response bias (Guillemot et al, 2025; Kusmaryono et al., 2022) and may skew the findings toward more engaged or supportive departmental environments. As someone who teaches at a California community college and previously attended a CSU, I acknowledge that this familiarity with the transfer process may have shaped aspects of the study's design and introduced a potential bias in the interpretation of faculty engagement and institutional support.

## Future Research

This study did not capture administrative or policy-level perspectives. Although faculty play a central role in advising and curriculum implementation, institutional leaders often shape the broader structures that govern transfer policy, enrollment strategy, and student support systems. Future research could explore how directors of schools of music, student affairs staff, enrollment management professionals, or similar positions conceptualize transfer support, particularly at the institutional and policy levels.

Additionally, incorporating the perspectives of part-time instructors, community college faculty, and transfer students themselves would provide a more holistic understanding of the transfer experience. Future studies should prioritize the voices of transfer students, especially those from underrepresented or structurally disadvantaged backgrounds. Investigating how these students navigate institutional barriers, interpret faculty interactions, and experience support structures would offer deeper insight into the conditions that shape their academic trajectories

## Conclusion

Findings revealed a striking paradox: Partial and fragmented transfer equity in CSU music programs survives not because of institutional systems, but in spite of them. Transfer receptivity operates as an aspirational ideal sustained by human effort rather than institutional design. Faculty repeatedly bridged structural gaps through personal initiative and care; however, these compensatory practices highlight how existing policies have not yet produced durable, institutionally coordinated mechanisms for recognizing transfer students' lived experiences or supporting transfer equity. Beneath surface-level

collaboration lies a deeper misalignment between policy intent and operational reality, in which well-meaning individuals uphold systems that remain structurally indifferent to the needs of transfer students.

Challenges like course repetition, delayed graduation, and the overreliance on individual faculty support reflect deeper systemic conditions—including the institutional deflection of responsibility—that constrain transfer success. These include misaligned funding models, siloed communication across institutions, and a lack of formal accountability for transfer outcomes. Such structural limitations help explain why even well-intentioned faculty efforts often fall short of producing sustainable change. Without coordinated infrastructure and long-term investment, transfer equity remains contingent on individual initiative, and the broader system continues to reproduce disparities in access, progress, and student experience.

Although it is possible that some of the challenges observed in this study stem from individual variation, departmental culture, or disciplinary norms within music education, these explanations alone do not sufficiently account for the patterns identified across both quantitative and qualitative strands. Faculty responses were consistent across multiple institutions and reflected recurring tensions between personal initiative and institutional structure. The prevalence of informal advising, limited outreach mechanisms, and inconsistent articulation practices suggests that these challenges are not isolated, but systemic. Although individual values and departmental dynamics may influence how transfer support is enacted, the absence of coordinated infrastructure, policy enforcement, and cross-institutional accountability points to deeper structural

conditions that shape faculty behavior and transfer outcomes.

Music transfer operates within long-standing pedagogical traditions that shape whose musical knowledge is recognized and rewarded. Although faculty described extensive efforts to support transfer students, those efforts remain embedded in Western art music traditions that are historically rooted in Whiteness and racial exclusion. From a critical race theory perspective, the continued elevation of these traditions as neutral standards constitutes a form of structural racism, as curricular and evaluative practices systematically advantage students whose prior musical training aligns with White, Eurocentric norms. Under these conditions, transfer inequities are sustained through inherited disciplinary traditions that continue to define legitimacy in ways that differentially advantage some students while marginalizing others.

This work contributes to the literature on transfer equity by demonstrating how the TRC framework functions, and in some cases fails to function, within a high-unit, discipline-specific context. By centering the faculty perspective within a mixed-methods design, I revealed both the strengths of interpersonal commitment and the limitations of system-wide design. Although individual actors can mitigate immediate challenges, lasting change depends on institutional transformation. This study underscores that meaningful transfer receptivity requires clearly defined institutional and system-level responsibility for coordination, assessment, financial support, and curriculum alignment, rather than continued reliance on informal faculty efforts. Transfer receptivity requires more than policy alignment; it demands cultural, structural, and resource-based change. Structural inequities in transfer will persist until institutions shift from managing visible

symptoms to transforming the unseen mechanisms that reproduce educational injustice.

# APPENDIX A

**Transfer Music Survey**


**This study was reviewed by Boston University's IRB and was deemed Not Human Subjects Research; as such, IRB approval was not required. All responses will be kept confidential and used solely for research purposes.**

**In this study, transfer students are defined as individuals who have transitioned from a community college to complete their education at a four-year institution.**

**What is your current employment status?**

- ○ **Full-time**
- ○ **Part-time**
- ○ **Other (please specify) _____**

**What is your current academic rank?**

- ○ **Lecturer**
- ○ **Instructor**
- ○ **Assistant Professor**
- ○ **Associate Professor**
- ○ **Professor**
- ○ **Other (please specify) _____**

**How many years have you been teaching at your current institution? (round to the closest whole number)**

_____

**What is your primary teaching area in music? (e.g. music theory, composition, music education)**

_____

**Have you taught and/or advised music students who have transferred from a community college at your current institution?**

- **yes**
- **no**
- **unsure**

**On average, how many community college transfer music students do you work with at your institution over the course of a year?**

_____

**To what extent do you agree with the following statements?**

**My institution effectively supports the success of community college transfer music students.**

- **Strongly disagree**
- **Somewhat disagree**
- **Somewhat agree**
- **Strongly agree**
- **I don't know**

**Based on my knowledge and experience, my institution's transfer-specific orientation program for incoming community college transfer students in music meets student needs.**

- **Strongly disagree (no such program exists)**
- **Somewhat disagree**
- **Somewhat agree**
- **Strongly agree**
- **I don't know**

**Based on my knowledge and experience, my institution's advising/mentorship services for community college transfer students in music meets student needs.**

- **Strongly disagree (no such program exists)**
- **Somewhat disagree**
- **Somewhat agree**
- **Strongly agree**
- **I don't know**

**My music department is focused on establishing articulation agreements with community colleges to facilitate the transfer process for music students.**

- **Strongly disagree**
- **Somewhat disagree**
- **Somewhat agree**
- **Strongly agree**
- **I don't know**

**Students who enter the university as first-years successfully complete their music degree within the expected timeframe.**

- ○ **Strongly disagree**
- ○ **Somewhat disagree**
- ○ **Somewhat agree**
- ○ **Strongly agree**
- ○ **I don't know**

**Students who transfer from a community college successfully complete their music degree within the expected timeframe.**

- ○ **Strongly disagree**
- ○ **Somewhat disagree**
- ○ **Somewhat agree**
- ○ **Strongly agree**
- ○ **I don't know**

**To the best of your knowledge, how often do community college transfer music students need to repeat courses due to credit transfer issues or curriculum misalignment?**

- ○ **Never**
- ○ **Rarely**
- ○ **Sometimes**
- ○ **Often**
- ○ **I don't know**

**To what extent do you agree with the following statements?**

**I am satisfied with the number of scholarships my institution offers specifically for music students who enter as first-years.**

- **Strongly disagree (does not exist)**
- **Somewhat disagree**
- **Somewhat agree**
- **Strongly agree**
- **I don't know**

**I am satisfied with the number of scholarships my institution offers specifically designated for community college transfer music students.**

- **Strongly disagree (does not exist)**
- **Somewhat disagree**
- **Somewhat agree**
- **Strongly agree**
- **I don't know**

**My institution frequently tracks and assesses the success of community college transfer music students.**

- **Strongly disagree (does not exist)**
- **Somewhat disagree**
- **Somewhat agree**
- **Strongly agree**
- **I don't know**

**I am satisfied with the resources and support services my institution offers to facilitate the success of community college transfer music students.**

- **Extremely dissatisfied (does not exist)**
- **Somewhat dissatisfied**
- **Somewhat satisfied**
- **Extremely satisfied**
- **I don't know**

**How often do you collaborate with faculty at community colleges to ensure a smooth transition for community college transfer music students?**

- **Never**
- **Rarely**
- **Occasionally**
- **Frequently**
- **Very frequently**

**To what extent do you agree with the following statements?**

**Music faculty play a significant role in supporting the success of community college transfer students.**

- **Strongly disagree**
- **Somewhat disagree**
- **Somewhat agree**
- **Strongly agree**
- **I don't know**

**I feel equipped to understand and address the unique needs and experiences of community college transfer music students.**

- ○ **Strongly disagree**
- ○ **Somewhat disagree**
- ○ **Somewhat agree**
- ○ **Strongly agree**
- ○ **I don't know**

**Please explain why you provided the answer you did to the previous question.**

_____

**In what ways is your department successfully supporting community college transfer music students?**

_____

_____

_____

_____

**In what ways could your department provide better support for community college transfer music students?**

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

**Would you be willing to participate in a follow-up interview to further discuss your experiences with community college transfer students?**

○ **Yes**

○ **No**

**If chosen for a short interview, how would you prefer to be contacted? Please provide an email address or phone number. Note: Not all who are willing to participate in an interview will be contacted.**

_____

# APPENDIX B

## Semi-Structured Interview Protocol

Introduction (5–10 minutes)

- Thank you for participating in this interview
- Permission to record
- Remind participant they can skip questions or end the interview at any time
- Define transfer students as those transitioning from California Community Colleges to CSU institutions

Opening Questions (10 minutes)

1. Could you tell me about your role at [institution name] and how long you've been teaching there?
2. What courses do you typically teach, and how often do you work with transfer students in these courses?
3. How would you describe your typical interactions with transfer music students?

Theme 1: Institutional Support (20–25 minutes)

4. Could you walk me through how transfer music students are typically oriented to your department?

5. How would you describe the support services available specifically for transfer music students at your institution?

6. In your experience, what challenges do transfer music students face when transitioning to your program?

7. How does your department handle credit transfer and course placement for transfer students?

8. What resources or support services have you found to be most beneficial for transfer music students?

Theme 2: Faculty Experiences and Role (20–25 minutes)

9. How would you describe your role in supporting transfer music students?

10. Could you share a specific experience you've had working with a transfer student that stands out to you?

11. What strategies have you developed to support transfer students in your courses?

12. How do you collaborate with community college faculty, if at all?

Theme 3: Transfer Student Integration (15–20 minutes)

13. How would you describe transfer students' integration into your department's community?

14. What differences, if any, have you observed between transfer students and traditional first-year students?

15. What factors do you think contribute to transfer student success in your program?

Closing Questions (5–10 minutes)

16. What changes would you like to see in how your department supports transfer students?

17. Is there anything else you'd like to share about your experiences with transfer music students?

18. Do you have any questions for me?

Post-Interview Notes

- Thank participant

# APPENDIX C

## Summary Tables for Quantitative Questionnaire Items

**Table C1**

*Descriptive Statistics and Response Distributions for Institutional Commitment Items*

| Question | *n* | *Mdn* | Response Options (%) |
|---|---|---|---|
| My department is focused on establishing articulation agreements with community colleges to facilitate the transfer process for music students | 36 | 4.00 | Strongly Disagree (2.8%)<br>Somewhat Disagree (8.3%)<br>Neutral / I don't know (8.3%)<br>Somewhat Agree (38.9%)<br>Strongly Agree (41.7%) |
| How often do you collaborate with faculty at community colleges to ensure a smooth transition for community college transfer students? | 34 | 3.00 | Never (11.8%)<br>Rarely (26.5%)<br>Occasionally (32.4%)<br>Frequently (26.5%)<br>Very Frequently (2.9%) |

**Table C2**

*Estimated Number of Community College Transfer Music Students Faculty Work With Annually*

*(n = 36)*

| Student Range per Year | Frequency | Percent (%) |
|---|---|---|
| 1–10 | 11 | 30.6% |
| 11–20 | 7 | 19.4% |

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| 21–30 | 4 | 11.1% |
| 31–40 | 2 | 5.6% |
| 41–50 | 6 | 16.7% |
| 51–60 | 2 | 5.6% |
| 71–80 | 1 | 2.8% |
| 91–100 | 1 | 2.8% |
| 101+ | 1 | 2.8% |

*Note.* One response was missing (2.8% of total cases).

**Table C3**

*Faculty Beliefs and Preparedness to Support Community College Transfer Music Students*

*(n = 33)*

| Question | *Mdn* | Response Breakdown (%) |
|---|---|---|
| Music faculty play a significant role in supporting the success of community college transfer students. | 5.00 | Somewhat agree (5.6%), Strongly agree (86.1%) |
| I feel equipped to understand and address the unique needs and experiences of community college transfer music students. | 4.00 | Somewhat disagree (2.8%), Somewhat agree (47.2%), Strongly agree (41.7%) |

*Note.* Three responses were missing (8.3% of total cases) for each item.

**Table C4**

*Descriptive Statistics and Response Distributions for Transfer-Specific Supports (n=36)*

| Question | *Mdn* | Response Options (%) |
|---|---|---|
| Based on my knowledge and experience, my institution's transfer-specific orientation program for incoming community college transfer students in music meets student needs. | 4.00 | Strongly Disagree (2.8%)<br>Somewhat Disagree (5.6%)<br>I Don't Know (13.9%)<br>Somewhat Agree (36.1%)<br>Strongly Agree (41.7%) |
| Based on my knowledge and experience, my institution's advising/mentorship services for community college transfer students in music meets student needs. | 5.00 | Strongly Disagree (2.8%)<br>Somewhat Disagree (5.6%)<br>Somewhat Agree (36.1%)<br>Strongly Agree (55.6%) |
| To the best of your knowledge, how often do community college transfer music students need to repeat courses due to credit transfer issues or curriculum misalignment? | 3.00 | I Don't Know (5.6%)<br>Rarely (16.7%)<br>Sometimes (63.9%)<br>Often (13.9%) |

**Table C5**

*Responses to Financial and Support Services Questions*

| Question | *n* | *Mdn* | Response Distribution (%) |
|---|---|---|---|
| I am satisfied with the number of scholarships my institution offers specifically for music students who enter as first-years. | 34 | 2.00 | Strongly Disagree (11.1%)<br>Somewhat Disagree (55.6%)<br>Somewhat Agree (16.7%)<br>Strongly Agree (5.6%)<br>I Don't Know (5.6%) |
| I am satisfied with the number of scholarships my institution offers specifically designated for community college transfer music students. | 32 | 2.00 | Strongly Disagree (16.7%)<br>Somewhat Disagree (38.9%)<br>Somewhat Agree (13.9%)<br>Strongly Agree (5.6%)<br>I Don't Know (13.9%) |

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| I am satisfied with the resources and support services my institution offers to facilitate the success of community college transfer music students. | 34 | 4.00 | Somewhat Dissatisfied (19.4%)<br>Somewhat Satisfied (55.6%)<br>Extremely Satisfied (16.7%)<br>I Don't Know (2.8%) |

**Table C6**

*Responses to Student-Lived Experiences Question*

| Question | *n* | *Mdn* | Response Distribution (%) |
|---|---|---|---|
| My institution effectively supports the success of community college transfer music students. | 36 | 5.00 | Strongly Disagree (5.6%)<br>Somewhat Agree (38.9%)<br>Strongly Agree (55.6%) |

**Table C7**

*Comparison of Assessment Questions*

| Question | *n* | *Mdn* | Response Distribution (%) |
|---|---|---|---|
| Students who enter the university as first-years successfully complete their music degree within the expected timeframe. | 36 | 4.00 | Strongly Disagree (2.8%)<br>Somewhat Disagree (22.2%)<br>Somewhat Agree (52.8%)<br>Strongly Agree (16.7%)<br>I Don't Know (5.6%) |
| Students who transfer from a community college successfully complete their music degree within the expected timeframe. | 36 | 4.00 | Strongly Disagree (11.1%)<br>Somewhat Disagree (30.6%)<br>Somewhat Agree (50.0%)<br>Strongly Agree (2.8%)<br>I Don't Know (5.6%) |

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| My institution frequently tracks and assesses the success of community college transfer music students. | 34 | 3.00 | Strongly Disagree (5.6%)<br>Somewhat Disagree (16.7%)<br>Somewhat Agree (25.0%)<br>Strongly Agree (19.4%)<br>I Don't Know (27.8%) |

# APPENDIX D

## Codebook

| Code | Definition | Type |
|---|---|---|
| TRC Element 1: Institutional Priority | Efforts made by institutions to prioritize transfer as a key objective, particularly for underrepresented and nontraditional students. | A Priori |
| TRC Element 2: Pre-Transfer Communication and Outreach | Pre-transfer outreach, advising, and communication between community colleges and receiving institutions. | A Priori |
| TRC Element 3: Academic and Financial Support | Support systems provided to transfer students after matriculation, including scholarships, tutoring, and advising. | A Priori |
| TRC Element 4: Acknowledgement of Lived Experience | Recognition and inclusion of students cultural, familial, and community experiences in academic and social settings. | A Priori |
| TRC Element 5: Assessment and Evaluation Frameworks | Institutional mechanisms used to assess and improve transfer programs through ongoing evaluation and feedback. | A Priori |

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Emergent Theme: Student Well-Being | Statements reflecting concerns for student mental health, personal support, and stress management during transfer. | Emergent |
| Emergent Theme: Faculty Strain and Emotional Labor | References to emotional toll, burnout, or institutional pressures experienced by faculty when supporting transfer students. | Emergent |
| Emergent Theme: Deflecting Institutional Responsibility | References in which faculty place responsibility for transfer challenges on individual students or external institutions (e.g., community colleges), rather than addressing systemic or CSU-level causes. | Emergent |
| Emergent Theme: Systemic Misalignment and Institutional Frustration | Mentions of bureaucratic or systemic disconnects, policy misalignments, or institutional inefficiencies. | Emergent |

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