The California UC Board of Regents has declared their intent to expand enrollment by adding 20,000 new seats in the next few years. In a May 12th article in the UCLA Daily Bruin, authors Megan Tagami and Lisa Huiqin outline both the intent to expand enrollment and the relevant challenges associated with the goal.

Following an extensive decades-long push in California high schools to promote college-readiness and increase the number of UC-eligible students graduating each year, there is an increased demand for access to our UC campuses throughout the state. Even more impressive, is the number of students eligible for transfer to UC from our California Community Colleges. Not only are there more transfer-eligible students coming from community colleges, but these transfers also succeed in completing their UC degrees at higher rates than all other UC students.

In particular, Tagami and Huiqin cite the targeted efforts of UC Merced to increase the number of community college students from the Central Valley that successfully transfer to UC Merced. This effort emerged in 2018 as UC Merced struggled to recruit/retain local community college transfers. UC Merced officials met with a focus group of Central Valley Community College CEO/Presidents in the Central Valley Higher education Consortium (CVHEC ) to clarify and address the challenges. During this meeting the group discussed the Transfer Admission Guarantee (TAG) project agreed to by some UC’s as a transfer pathway for community college students to be accepted to the UC. This discussion quickly evolved into a compare and contrast of the UC-based TAG agreements and the CSU systemwide transfer pathways project called the Associate Degree for Transfer (ADT).

Completion of ADT’s as an effective pathway for transfer to the CSU, far outpaced the number of successful transfers to UC through the TAG agreements. This is credited in large part to the consistency of the CSU’s commitment/acceptance of the community college ADT’s, that when completed, fulfill the lower-division requirements for guaranteed transfer to CSU. Simply put, if a student successfully completes the ADT pathway in a particular discipline/major, they have fulfilled the lower-division requirements and are accepted as a transfer (third-year) student in good-standing, to the CSU.

Fast forward to today…The Central Valley Higher Education Consortium (CVHEC) and UC Merced have been engaged in a collaborative, intersegmental process to review and assess the community college ADT’s with the intent to accept the completion of selected ADT’s in various disciplines as fulfilling the lower-division requirements for successful transfer to UC Merced.

This process brings together community college and UC Merced faculty in common discipline/majors to review/approve existing ADT’s for successful transfer to UC Merced. To date, seven of the CVHEC community colleges are now engaged in the approval process with five more in line to begin the approval process next fall for implementation in 2023. The culminating feature in this process is the implementation of a public-facing, internet-based software application called Program Mapper. This software merges an updated/accurate list of community college courses in approved ADT’s with the corresponding upper-division coursework at UC Merced to show a complete four-year pathway to degree completion! The Program Mapper software makes all of this information available through public internet access to all students, parents, and community college and high school faculty and counselors!

As the UC system explores ways to accomplish their newly minted goal to increase UC enrollment, it would be well-served to study the CVHEC/UC Merced Transfer Project. This is a process-based project that requires little to no additional funding other than the time for faculty and staff to collaborate. The Program Mapper is an inexpensive software solution. The result so far, is that HS and community college students can now open the Program Mapper on their smart phone and easily find their major of interest at their community college and an accurate/up-to-date list of all the courses necessary both lower division and upper division, to successfully transfer and graduate from UC Merced in those majors!