

# Urban Transfer Research Network

A Lumina Foundation for Education grant



## Lumina Foundation for Education

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## In Memory of Dan Walleri

The primary force behind the Urban Transfer Research Network multi-institutional research project was Dr. R. Dan Walleri. Dr. Walleri passed away unexpectedly in July 2005 and is dearly missed by his colleagues. Dr. Walleri served as Director of Research and Planning at Mt. Hood Community College in Gresham, Oregon. He is acknowledged locally, across the state, regionally, and nationally as one of the leading researchers on the community college, with a focus on issues of educational access and the critical role of the community college as a foundation for such access. He dedicated his professional life to enabling student success, and in particular, to the completion of the baccalaureate degree by the community college transfer students.



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The goal of the Urban Transfer Research Network is to increase the transfer and success rates of community college students who intend to earn a bachelor's degree.

### About the Grant

The Urban Transfer Research Network (UTRN) is a collaborative multi-institutional research project focused on underrepresented students beginning their postsecondary careers at community colleges with the goal of attaining at least the Bachelor's degree. The purpose of the research is to chart the pathways and success of the target student populations and inform institutional policy and practice as it affects student transfer success. Ultimately, the goal of the project is to increase the community college transfer rate and success rate of students attaining the Bachelor's degree. By the end of the project, the number of urban regions involved will be expanded so as to eventually impact national Bachelor's degree attainment rates by underrepresented students.

The research will be based on two data streams. The first is derived from analysis of community college student cohorts with tracking of their pathways and success in attaining the Bachelor's degree. Each of the participating community colleges will submit data sets to the participating universities, where the community college unit records will be merged with university records. This data stream will include subgroup analysis specific to underrepresented students. The second data stream is derived from qualitative research focused on policy and practice (interviews and focus groups with students, faculty and staff). Each of the three research sites will be guided and informed by a Data Advisory Committee and a Policy Advisory Committee to ensure sound research practice and to bring about improved institutional structures and processes to facilitate student transfer and success. Key personnel include a co-principal investigator and data analyst for each site in addition to consultants assisting with specific areas of concern, such as procedures for identification of low-income students. Grant funds will also be used to engage an outside evaluator to provide both formative and summative evaluation of the project.

### Partner Institutions and Project Leadership

Portland State University has been working with its co-principal investigators at Mt. Hood Community College, Portland Community College, and the University of South Florida. In July 2006, Arizona State University, East Campus and Maricopa Community College joined the project.

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*Portland State University has a long history of this type of work. In 1999, researchers at Portland State and their partners at the regional community colleges released a study outlining the patterns of undergraduate students attending Portland State University and the regional community colleges. They found that many students enroll in more than one community college while enrolled simultaneously at Portland State. Tuition costs, family and work responsibilities, and course availability have an impact on enrollment patterns.*

*Such research projects and partnerships are critical as over half of all students entering postsecondary education for the first time begin at community colleges. In addition, according to a national study by researcher Clifford Adelman, the attainment of bachelors degrees by underserved populations continue to lag behind those for Caucasians.*

*Portland State University currently enrolls more than 1,500 students in its co-enrollment programs with Portland Community College, Clackamas Community College, Chemeketa Community College and Mt Hood Community College. In addition, Portland State offers degree completion programs on those campuses, as well as the CAPITAL Center in Hillsboro and Masters degree programs throughout the state and on-line.*