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The Associate Degree for Transfer May Help CSU Meet 2025 Goals

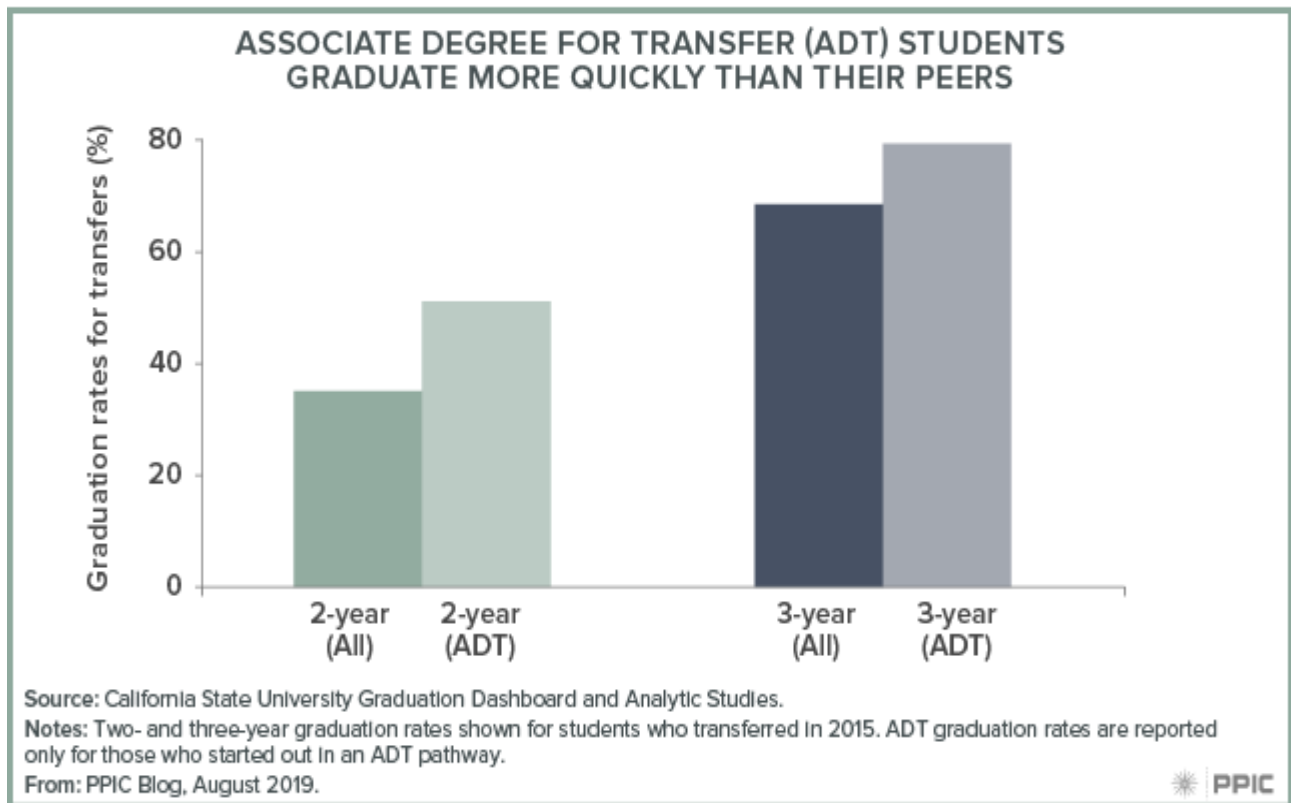
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Students enrolling at the California State University (CSU) as a part of the Associate Degree for Transfer program (ADT) make up a growing share of all CSU transfers—and they are graduating more quickly than other transfer students. The program awards associate degrees and guarantees admission to a CSU campus to community college students who earn at least 60 of the 120 units needed for a bachelor's degree in a specific major. The ADT aims to cut the amount of time-and red tape it takes to transfer to CSU and graduate with a bachelor's degree.

Since its inception in 2011, the program has grown rapidly. In 2018, 41% of community college transfers to CSU had an associate degree for transfer, though not all of them started out on an ADT pathway. The number of students who do enter CSU on an ADT pathway has increased tenfold, from 1,089 in 2013 to 10,917 in 2018, and ADT pathway enrollees now account for about one in five transfers to CSU. Currently, the program encompasses more than 30 majors, though offerings vary by community college and CSU campus.

While students who transfer to CSU are generally very likely to graduate, the three-year graduation rate for ADT transfers are 10 percentage points higher than the rate for all transfer students (79% vs. 69%). But about half of students enrolling in an ADT pathway graduate in just two years, which is 16 percentage points better than the overall average for transfers (35%). This suggests that reducing students' time to degree might be the program's most notable advantage.



The CSU Graduation Initiative 2025 aims to bring two-year graduation rates up to 45% by 2025. Recent experience indicates that the expansion of the ADT could prove helpful: CSU's two-year graduation rate increased from 31% to 35% from 2013 to 2015, as the share of students on an ADT pathway went from 2% to 12%. Given that one in five transfer students in 2018 were on an ADT pathway, we could see a record number of transfer students graduating in just two years, saving themselves time and money and helping CSU make progress toward its goal.