May 16, 2023

Office of Internal Auditing

Audit Committee

Project Results – Transfer Pathways Audit

(Assurance Project)

MINNESOTA STATE

Internal Audit Background & Objectives

— The Transfer Pathways associate degree program (Transfer Pathways) includes 27 academic programs to facilitate transferring from two-year institutions into one of Minnesota State's seven universities.

— In June 2022, the Audit Committee of the Board of Trustees approved an internal audit to assess the Transfer Pathways program.

— We conducted the audit beginning fall 2022 through spring 2023.

Our objective was to assess the impacts of and needed enhancements to the Transfer Pathways associate degree programs.

The questions to be addressed focused on:
- Similarities and differences in how Transfer Pathways is administered across different universities
- Data and metrics the system office and universities maintain for Transfer Pathways
- Overall monitoring structure for Transfer Pathways
- Volume and impact of noncompliance within Transfer Pathways

Scope and Approach

Selected three universities to focus interviews and testing. Institutions were selected based on discussion with Academic and Student Affairs (ASA) Division leadership and volume of Transfer Pathways students.

Reviewed documentation, conducted interviews, analyzed system and university data, tested student samples, and completed benchmarking to evaluate the landscape of the Transfer Pathways program.
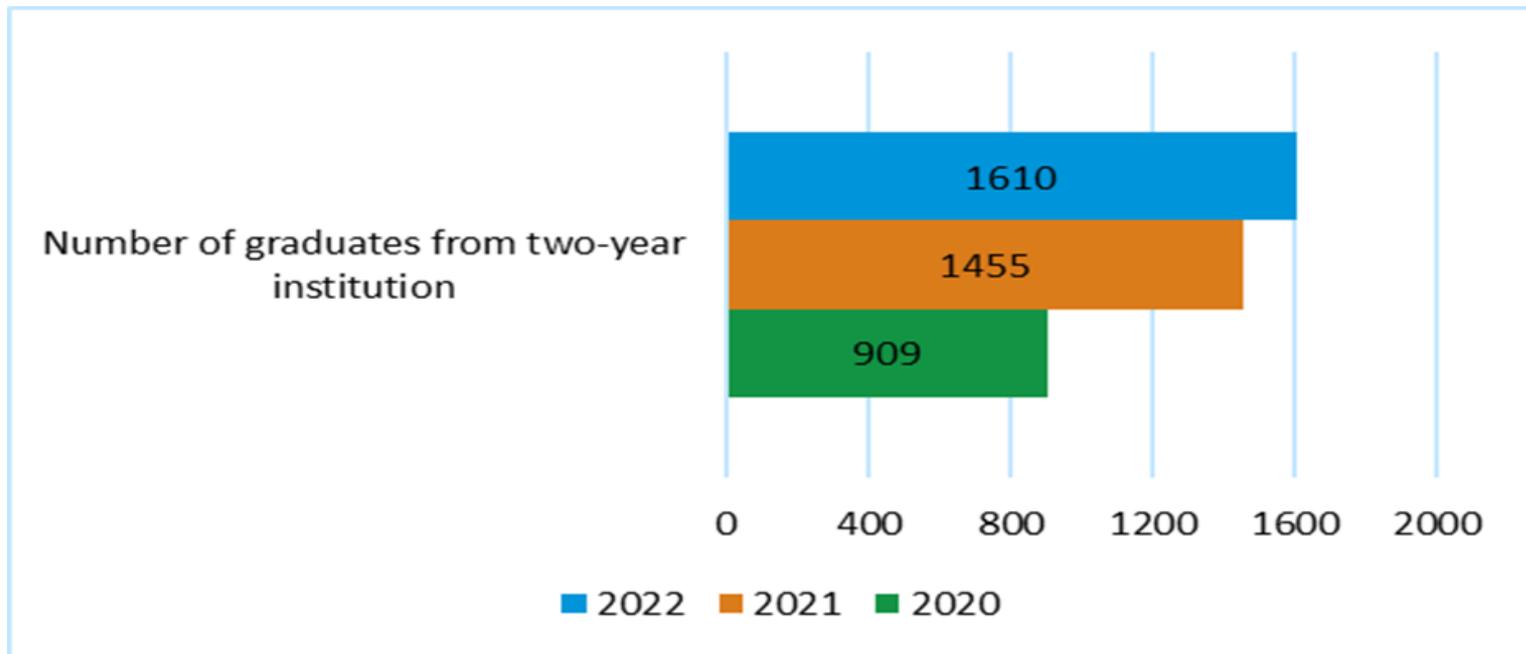
Developed recommendations to assist the ASA Division, in partnerships with other system office divisions, and colleges and universities to better support the success of Transfer Pathways.

MINNESOTA STATE

Conclusion

Minnesota State developed the Transfer Pathways program to facilitate transferring from its colleges to universities for 27 academic programs. In alignment with key strategic initiatives, including Equity 2030, and overall goals related to maintaining strong enrollment, Transfer Pathways was designed to enhance access to education and support student success within Minnesota State. While the Transfer Pathways programs have robust participation, retention within the system after pathway completion remains lower than peer systems. The number of Transfer Pathways graduates from two-year institutions continues to increase, however, only 22% of these graduates in the years 2019 through 2022 continued at a Minnesota State university.
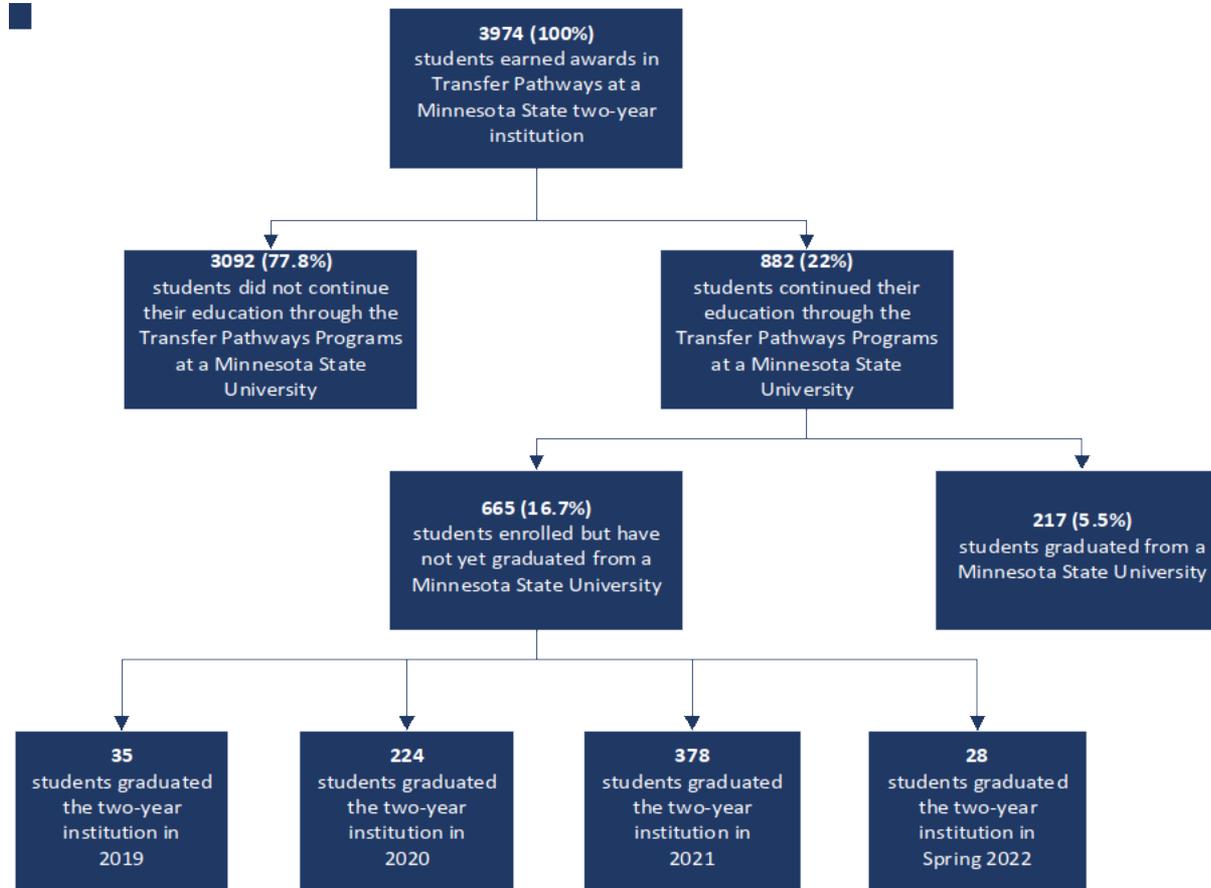
Conclusion, *cont.*

Specific areas of challenges related to Transfer Pathways implementation include:

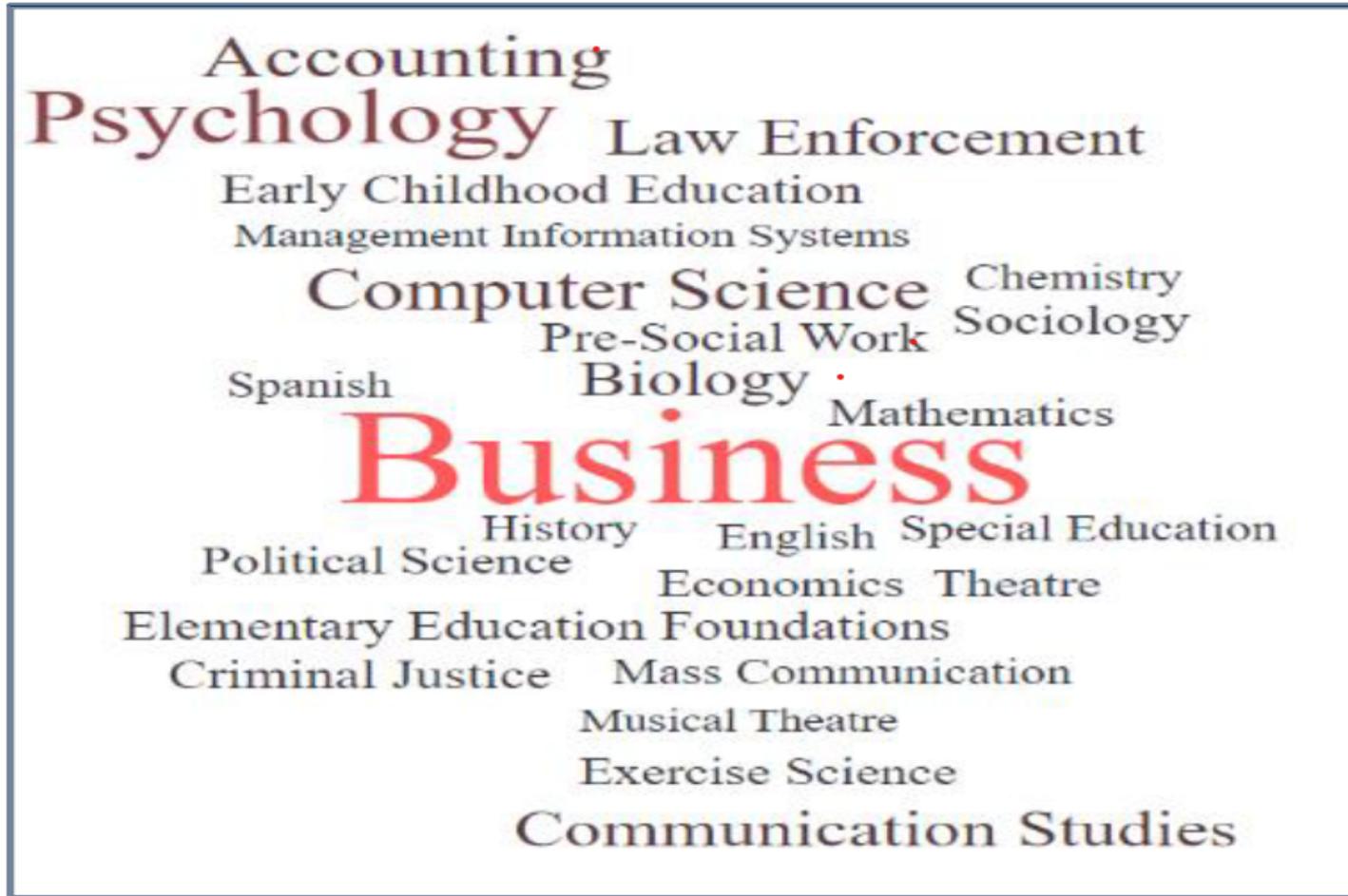|		
Process for establishing course equivalencies	Accountability, roles, and responsibilities	Data quality and completeness
Communication	Collaboration	

The ASA Division does not have adequate oversight and mechanisms to fully support the success of Transfer Pathways. Without target metrics, there is limited ability for ASA to monitor the progress and success of Transfer Pathways. Finally, the current level of communication and collaboration between the system office and institutions is not sufficient to facilitate the success and growth of Transfer Pathways.

MINNESOTA STATE

Transfer Pathways Retention*

3974 (100%) students earned awards in Transfer Pathways at a Minnesota State two-year institution

3092 (77.8%) students did not continue their education through the Transfer Pathways Programs at a Minnesota State University

882 (22%) students continued their education through the Transfer Pathways Programs at a Minnesota State University

665 (16.7%) students enrolled but have not yet graduated from a Minnesota State University

217 (5.5%) students graduated from a Minnesota State University

35 students graduated the two-year institution in 2019

224 students graduated the two-year institution in 2020

378 students graduated the two-year institution in 2021

28 students graduated the two-year institution in Spring 2022
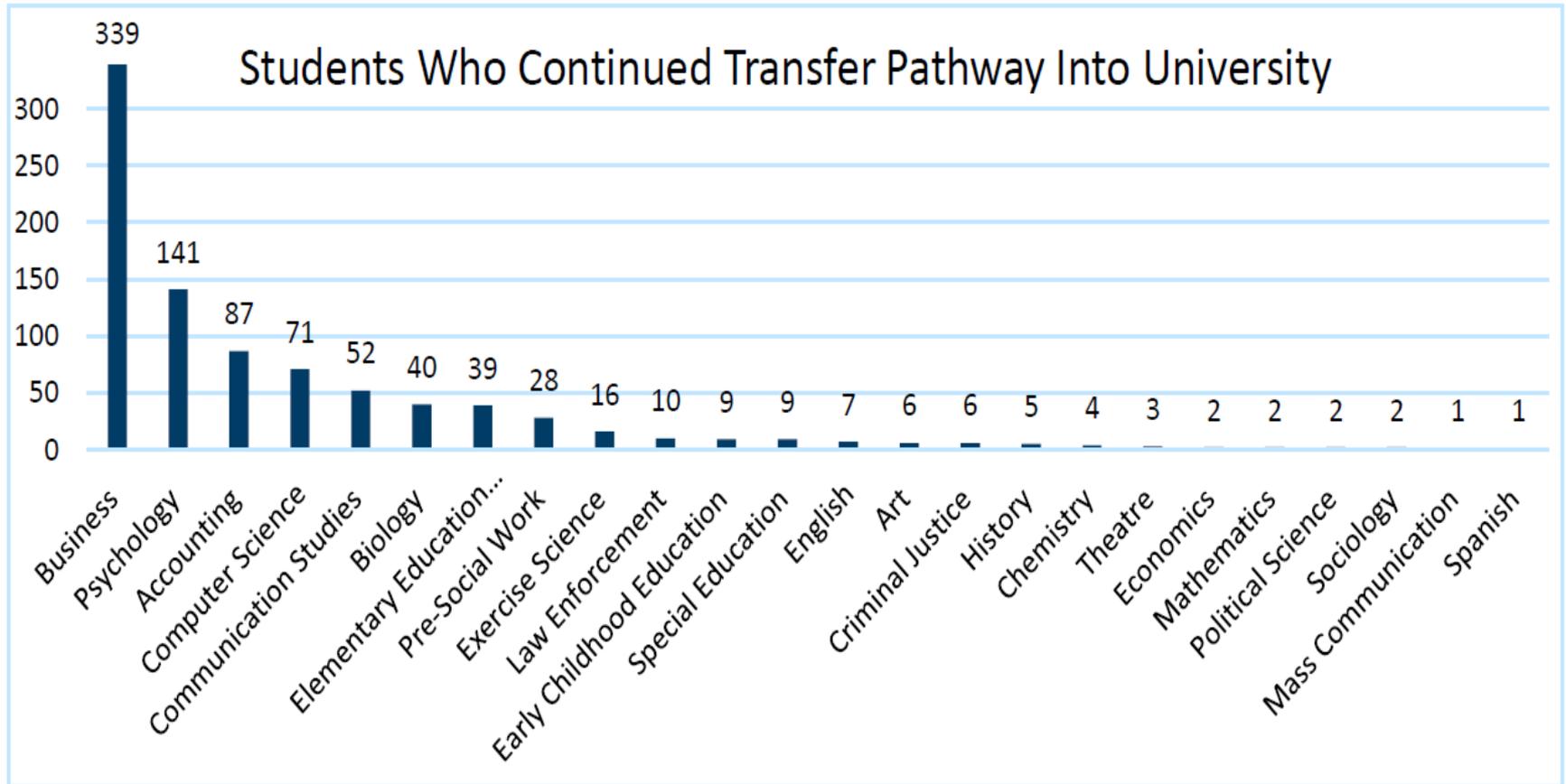
*The system office provided data for students who graduated from a Transfer Pathways program between July 1, 2019 and June 30, 2022.

Transfer Pathways Programs*

*Above, the font size for each academic program corresponds to the overall size of program. For example, the Business Pathway had the highest enrollment during the time frame examined.

Transfer Pathways Programs

Students Who Continued Transfer Pathway Into University

Program	Students
Business	339
Psychology	141
Accounting	87
Computer Science	71
Communication Studies	52
Biology	40
Elementary Education...	39
Pre-Social Work	28
Exercise Science	16
Law Enforcement	10
Early Childhood Education	9
Special Education	9
English	7
Art	6
Criminal Justice	6
History	5
Chemistry	4
Theatre	3
Economics	2
Mathematics	2
Political Science	2
Sociology	2
Mass Communication	1
Spanish	1

Risk

Why does it matter?

Without increased oversight, improved procedures, and target metrics for Transfer Pathways, there is increased risk of declining enrollment within Minnesota State. Declining enrollment can lead to negative tuition revenue impacts. Further, nationwide transfer trends show a decrease in transfer enrollment of 7% between 2020 and 2022, and rates have decreased at a higher percentage for both females (9%), and non-traditional students (up to 20%.) This further emphasizes the importance of retaining transfer students within Minnesota State. Additionally, Minnesota State's Equity 2030 goal aims to close the educational equity gap, and challenges with Transfer Pathways may disproportionately impact women and students of color.

Improvement Opportunities and Recommendations

Process for Establishing Course Equivalencies

Increase oversight of course equivalency procedures by updating Board Policies to provide guidance to universities for documenting their procedures for establishing course equivalencies

Accountability, Roles, and Responsibilities

Establish an accountability framework to increase compliance with Board Policies related to Transfer Pathways and define roles and responsibilities of those involved in the processes.

Systems, Technology, and Data

Define metrics to monitor the success of Transfer Pathways and communicate these to the ASA Research unit to ensure data is tracked to analyze and document success of the program

Communication

Improve communication of Transfer Pathways requirements by establishing a feedback loop and formalized liaison role to promote consistent and accurate advising for Transfer Pathways students at the two-year institutions

Collaboration

Facilitate collaboration of faculty across the system to support developing and reviewing Transfer Pathways by designating a system office position to coordinate with faculty committees. Positive programs in established Transfer Pathways programs should be identified.

Management Response Next Steps

The Senior Vice Chancellor and Interim Associate Vice Chancellor for Academic and Student Affairs have developed responses related to next steps to implement the recommendations presented in this project.

Satasha Green-Stephen
Senior Vice Chancellor of Academic and Student Affairs

Jesse Mason
Interim Associate Vice Chancellor of Academic and Student Affairs

Process for Establishing Course Equivalencies

Audit schedule for Compliance

The Associate Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs will be responsible for reviewing pathway equivalencies and establish an audit schedule for compliance with the revised policies and procedures.

Revise Operating Instructions 3.2.1.3 Transfer Pathways

Revise Operating Instructions 3.21.1.3 Transfer Pathways, Part 9 University to establish course equivalencies aligned with pathway outcomes and encode in degree in audit system.

Revise Procedure 3.2.1.1

Revise Procedure 3.2.1.1 Transfer of Undergraduate Courses, Credit, Associate Degrees, and the Minnesota Transfer Curriculum, Part 12. College and University Responsibility.

Add to Policy Council Agenda Fall 2023

Work with System Director for Policy & Procedure and Intellectual Property to add review of these Operating Instructions to the Policy Council agenda for fall 2023

Recommendations Sub-committee of TGT

Based on the approval of recommendations from the Transfer Governance Team's sub-committee on Common Course numbering, Academic Affairs will develop an implementation steering committee (Fall 2023-Spring 2025)

Accountability, Roles, and Responsibilities

Transfer Accountability Framework

An internal workgroup will create a Transfer Accountability Framework (establishing a process and procedure for escalation of non-compliance for recommendation) to the Senior Vice Chancellor

Establish a process and procedure

A Transfer Accountability Framework will establish a process and procedure for designation of authority for transfer pathway compliance

Current Technology

A Transfer Accountability Framework will establish a process and procedure for the Academic Programs, Planning, and Transfer Unit that will support in transfer using current technology (i.e., Transfer Evaluation System [TES]) while assessing needs for Workday

Transfer Strategic Planning

Each institution's strategic plan should include serving transfer students, including Transfer Pathways students, and ensuring compliance with Board Policy 3.39 Transfer Rights and Responsibilities

Systems, Technology, and Data

Annual Reporting
Academic Affairs will submit an Annual Report on Transfer Pathways to the Chancellor's Office

Create Data Dashboard
Academic Affairs, Research and the Center for Data Access & Analytics, will establish a formal and interactive data dashboard on Transfer Pathways

uAchieve Grad Planner
Continue to re-enforce the use of uAchieve Grad Planner that provides access for students to custom audits, plans and schedules that assist with planning academic goals

Transferology
All colleges and universities must complete course equivalencies in Transferology a comprehensive database of transfer course equivalencies, allowing students to easily identify how their current course work will transfer to other colleges and universities

NextGen (Workday Student)
Seamless experience for students; provide technology that integrates and personalizes student engagement on-and off-campus; provides streamlined, simplified processes that are reliable, responsive, and developed with the student in mind.

Communication

Training of Advisors and Transfer Specialists

Increase training opportunities with advisors and transfer specialists regarding the Transfer Pathways

Transfer Pathways Evaluations

Invite advisors and transfer specialists to Transfer Pathways Community of Practice evaluations

Transfer Website

Add Transfer Pathways Evaluations approved recommendations to Minnesota State Transfer website to provide stakeholder updates

Communities of Practice

Increase touch points with Advisors and Transfer Specialists through Communities of Practice that serve as feedback loops to support in consistent and accurate advising for Transfer Pathway students at the two-year and four-year institutions

Collaboration

Transfer Governance Team

Increase oversight of course equivalency procedures by updating Board Policies to provide guidance to universities for documenting their procedures for establishing course equivalencies

Communities of Practice

Develop training, discipline specific Communities of Practice (based on lessons learned from the current Transfer Pathways reviews).
Advisors and Transfer Specialists Communities of Practice that serve as feedback loops to support in consistent and accurate advising

Transfer and Student Success Conference

Dedicate time at the Transfer and Student Success Conference to provide updates on Transfer and Transfer Pathways specific changes

Evaluations of Transfer Pathways

Continue the model for Transfer Pathways evaluations that support bringing two and four-year discipline faculty together on best practices for successful transfer

MINNESOTA STATE

30 East 7th Street, Suite 350
St. Paul, MN 55101-7804

651-201-1800

888-667-2848

www.MinnState.edu

This document is available in alternative formats to individuals with disabilities.
To request an alternate format, contact Human Resources at 651-201-1664.
Individuals with hearing or speech disabilities may contact us via their preferred Telecommunications Relay Service.
Minnesota State is an affirmative action, equal opportunity employer and educator.