National Center for Inquiry & Improvement

Believe in Your Students. Believe in Yourselves.

Rural Pathways Project Institute #5:

Innovative Rural College Transfer Partnerships

October 30, 2026



Panelists

National Center for Inquiry & Improvement
Believe in Your Students. Believe in Yourselves.

Kate Mahar
Associate Vice President and Strategic Initiatives

Shasta College

Shadi Kilani
Executive Vice President

Arizona Western College

Tiffany Blackwell
Dean of Enrollment Pathways

TCTC
Tri-County Technical College

SHASTA COLLEGE

Expanding Regional Educational Options through Partnerships and Local Supports

Kate Mahar, Ed.D



10,000

255,689

31.2

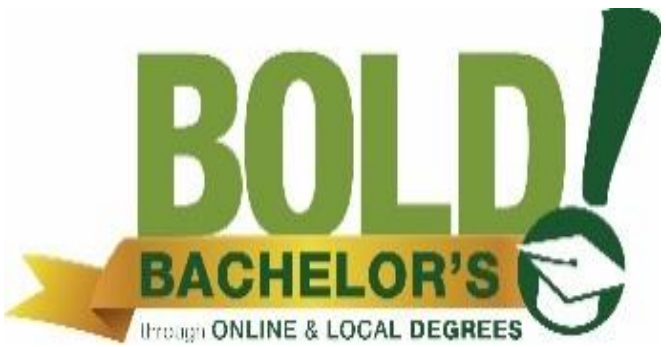
Shasta College

Super Bowl Monday




Something
Different

BOLD: Bachelor's through Online and Local Degrees



Designed for place-based students seeking to obtain bachelor's degrees in our educational desert.

Includes designated counselors and case management to connect students to degree completion programs and support them throughout (as needed).

- BOLD partners with institutions that are:
  - Accredited: Regionally accredited universities*
  - Accessible: Primarily online (one Shasta College option- working on another)
  - Affordable: (threshold $20,000 total tuition to complete bachelor's degree)
  - Institution Agnostic: Linked to Pathways

Public and private choices are all not-for-profit

Development

Home

Announcements

Notebook

Welcome to BOLD



Identifying a Degree Program

Online Associates Degree at Shasta College

Online Bachelors University Information

Cal Poly Humboldt Info...
BOLD
Oct 16 at 12pm

CSU Fullerton Info Sess...
BOLD
Oct 16 at 2pm

CSU San Bernardino Inf...
BOLD
Oct 19 at 12pm

CSU San Bernardino Inf...
BOLD
Oct 19 at 3pm

CSU Fullerton Info Sess...
BOLD
Oct 20 at 12pm

Recent Feedback

Nothing for now

.edu

	A	B	C	D	E
1		**SCHOOL**	**Columbia College**	**CSU Chico**	**CSU East Bay**
2		**Website**	BS Accounting	BS- Business Administration wLCoq2orate Accounting Concentration	BS - Business Administration WL Accounting Concentration
		Contact		Stella Villet, MA Admissions Specialist 530-898-5032 sjvillett@csuchico.edu	cbe_bsba_online@csueastbay.edu
3					
4		**Campus**	Online/Nationwide Campus	Professional & Continuing Education	Extended Campus
5					
6		Start Dates Term Length	Year-round 8-week	Fall, Spring Fall/Spring: 8-weeks Summer: 5-week Winter: 3-weeks	Fall, Spring, Summer 17-weeks
7					
8		Modality	Fully Online	Fully Online	Fully Online
9		Core Courses	18 units	27 units	24 units
10		Concentration	21 units	24 units	24 units
11		Electives	If needed		3 units
12		General Education (upper division)	3 units	6 units	9 units
13		Other Requirements			
14		• Graduation Requirements	Ethics course requirement@ Columbia College: MGMT 368W **or** PHIL330	• HIST 17A or HIST178 & POLSC1000 • Writing Skills Requirement	• HIST C1001or HIST C1002 & POLS C1000 • Writing Skills Requirement
15		Notes	Must complete 39 hours of upper division@ Columbia	**M□ Bookings**	
16		Time to Completion	2 yrs average (2 courses per 8-week session)	16 months (but may vary)	Average 2 yrs
17					

Accounting +

7:01 PM
10/29/2026

Dispelling the Myths!

Focus on Pathways that:

- Rethink Where Education is Offered
- Include Wrap Around Supports and Connection (no matter the modality)
- If Students Have to Leave, Include a Pathway “Back Home”

More questions?

Kate Mahar

kmahar@shastacollege.edu

BRINGING OPPORTUNITY CLOSER TO HOME

Rural Partnerships for Bachelor's Attainment
Dallas | October 30, 2026

Shadi Kilani, MD, MSc
Arizona Western College



Arizona Western College at a glance

A public community college in Southwest Arizona, on the California and Mexico borders, meeting students where they live and work

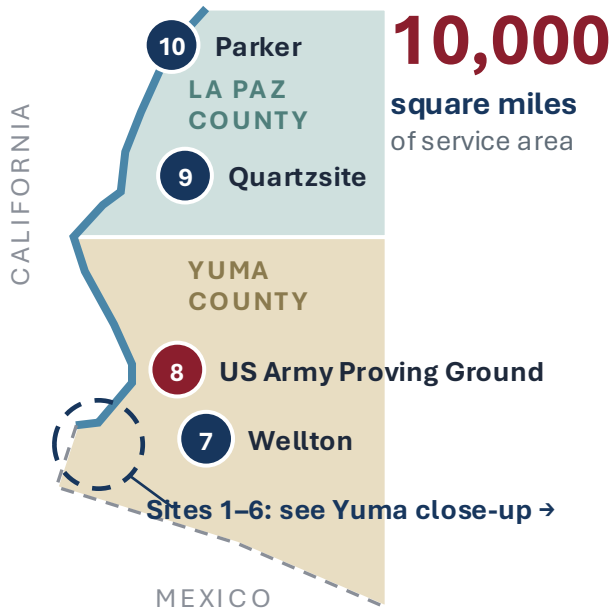
13,622 Students served in AY 2024–25

10 Locations across Yuma and La Paz Counties

10,000+ Square-mile service area

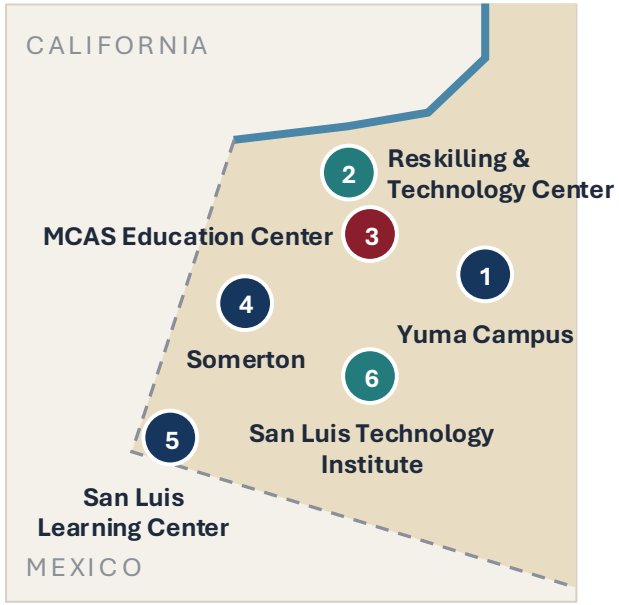
HSI Federally designated Hispanic-Serving Institution

SERVICE AREA: YUMA & LA PAZ COUNTIES



10,000 square miles of service area

YUMA AREA CLOSE-UP



AWC LOCATIONS

1. Yuma Campus
2. Reskilling & Technology Center
   Workforce training, adult education and continuing education
3. MCAS Education Center
4. Somerton
5. San Luis Learning Center
6. San Luis Technology Institute
   Co-located at San Luis Middle School
7. Wellton
8. US Army Proving Ground
9. Quartzsite
10. Parker

College site · Specialty site · Military

Yuma + La Paz Counties

Campuses and centers across Yuma and La Paz Counties, plus a full collegiate environment with housing and athletics.

MISSION IN ACTION: Expand access, strengthen completion and keep opportunity connected to place.

Two counties, one region: Yuma and La Paz

Two agricultural and tourism economies, a majority-Hispanic region, and the students AWC serves

YUMA COUNTY

Winter Vegetable Capital of the World

UNIQUE ASPECTS

- Grows approx. 90% of U.S. and Canadian leafy greens from November to March.
- An estimated 70,000–85,000+ winter visitors dramatically swell the population each winter.
- Guinness World Records' "Sunniest City on Earth".

COMMUNITY PROFILE | ACS 2020–24, BLS

12.4%	64.9%	21.2%	18.3%
unemployment rate, Dec. 2025	Hispanic or Latino residents	no high school diploma, ages 25–64	bachelor's degree or higher, ages 25–64

INDUSTRIES Agriculture · Military · Tourism

Agriculture and agribusiness added $3.9 billion to the county economy in 2022.

LA PAZ COUNTY

Arizona's youngest county

UNIQUE ASPECTS

- Quartzsite's winter gem and mineral shows draw 1 million+ visitors a year.
- The 16.5-mile Parker Strip of the Colorado River is a regional hub for boating, water sports and recreational fishing.
- Just 16,557 residents (2020) across 4,514 square miles.

COMMUNITY PROFILE | ACS 2020–24, BLS

5.9%	25.6%	15.2%	14.8%
unemployment rate, Dec. 2025	Hispanic or Latino residents	no high school diploma, ages 25–64	bachelor's degree or higher, ages 25–64

INDUSTRIES Tourism · Agriculture · Government

Winter visitors and RV travelers drive the seasonal economy

AWC STUDENT BODY

79%	85%+	~56%	13,622
of students are Hispanic (HSI)	are Arizona in-county residents	of students are female	annual headcount, 2024–25

The region and the students we serve

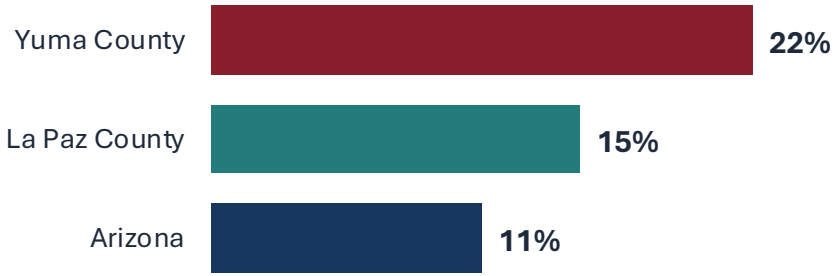
An economy built on agriculture, tourism, military and retirees, and a college built to open doors

REGIONAL ECONOMY & EDUCATION

Economically dependent on agriculture, tourism, military and retirees

13% average unemployment rate for the past several years

Adults with less than a high school education



Poverty and unemployment reflect low levels of educational attainment.

79%

of students are Hispanic; AWC is a Hispanic Serving Institution

~56%

of the student population is female

85%+

of students are Arizona residents and in-county

13,622

annual unduplicated headcount, 2024–25

2,607

full-time students, 2024–25 annual enrollment

~131

full-time faculty members

HOW AWC SERVES THE REGION

Day, evening, weekend and online classes across Yuma and La Paz Counties, with academic transfer and professional technical degrees and certificates. A large winter visitor population also takes academic and personal-interest courses.

More than a college: a community students belong to

Seven athletic programs, on-campus housing and a shared Matador identity make AWC a full collegiate experience



MATADOR PRIDE

Athletics, housing and student life in one community

BELONGING

Housing, athletics, student life and a shared Matador identity. Students experience AWC as a college community, not only a place to earn credits.

7

NJCAA athletic programs

Home

On-campus housing for students

One

shared Matador identity

Athletics and student life give students a team to belong to and a reason to stay connected.

Belonging creates connection.

Matador pride: where campus life comes together

On-campus housing, seven athletic programs and Mateo the Matador build a community students are proud to join



MEET MATEO THE MATADOR

AWC's mascot since November 2024, named by student vote after three years of surveys and focus groups. Mateo leads cheers at games and greets new students at Campus Life events.



ATHLETICS

7 Matador programs

Baseball, softball, men's and women's basketball, men's and women's soccer, and volleyball.

All seven earned NJCAA Academic Team recognition in 2025–26, with 63 All-Academic student-athletes.

ON-CAMPUS HOUSING

3 residence halls

On the Yuma campus, steps from classes, the fitness center, pool, Eatery and athletic events.

ONE SHARED MATADOR IDENTITY

Brave. Bold. Together.

Matadors face fears and obstacles head-on, a spirit that reflects AWC students, on the field and in the residence halls.

One campus. One Matador family.

The Entrepreneurial College: moving at the speed of business

What it means, why it matters in a rural region, and how it works

IN ONE SENTENCE

A college that adapts as fast as the students, employers and communities it serves

WHAT IT IS

Flexible, hands-on learning and partnerships built around what students and employers actually need, not around a fixed calendar or catalog.

WHY IT MATTERS IN A RURAL REGION

Students and employers can’t wait on slow systems, and moving away should not be the only way to get ahead.

HOW IT WORKS AT AWC

One integrated team. Employers at the table. Programs built fast, adjusted faster.

Belonging keeps students connected. Agility keeps opportunity close to home.

Place shapes the pathway

Beyond 2+2: distance, work and family change what a bachelor's pathway requires



Yuma + La Paz Counties

A geographically expansive service area spanning rural and border communities.

The question:

How do we expand opportunity without making relocation the only pathway?

Three universities, one local campus

ASU, NAU and the University of Arizona partner with AWC and teach on the campus students already attend



ASU, NAU and UArizona all teach face-to-face on the Yuma Campus

Partnerships that help students explore pathways and requirements

Shared information, resources and support

A bachelor's pathway becomes real when students can see it on the campus they already attend.

Three universities, one local campus

Student resources and local transfer pathways vary by university partner.

ASU Local – Arizona State University

ON THE GROUND IN YUMA

ASU Local – Yuma is based at AWC's Yuma campus and offers ASU bachelor's degrees in a hybrid format with on-site coaching.

TRANSFER PATHWAY

MyPath2ASU®: Personalized transfer maps with 400+ course-by-course pathways to save money and minimize credit loss.

NAU Yuma

ON THE GROUND IN YUMA

NAU–Yuma has served the region since 1988 with in-person programs and a residence hall shared with AWC students.

TRANSFER PATHWAY

2NAU: An NAU representative guides students step by step, and eligible students can win a $2,000 transfer scholarship.

The University of Arizona Yuma

ON THE GROUND IN YUMA

University of Arizona Yuma is a regional location that partners with AWC and offers local and online bachelor's degrees.

TRANSFER PATHWAY

2+2 pathways: Nearly twenty options, with approved AWC associate degrees fulfilling the first two years of most programs in Yuma.

AWC TRANSFER CENTER

Transfer guidance in one place

The Transfer Coordinator helps students evaluate transcripts, explore degree pathways and understand university agreements.

UNIVERSITY REPRESENTATIVES STAFFED AT THE CENTER

ASU | NAU | U of A

Representatives from all three universities advise upcoming transfer students.



Regional pathways cross state lines

Many students come from California, particularly Imperial Valley College, and AWC meets them where they are.

CALIFORNIA · IMPERIAL VALLEY

Imperial Valley College



One region, two states

ARIZONA · YUMA & LA PAZ COUNTIES

Arizona Western College

Serving two counties and the students who cross the state line to learn here.

IVC STUDENTS HAVE ARTICULATION AGREEMENTS WITH LOCAL UNIVERSITY CAMPUSES

ASU Local
Arizona State University

MyPath2ASU® articulation with IVC for ASU bachelor's degrees in Yuma.

NAU | YUMA

Pathways 2 NAU articulation with IVC for programs at NAU–Yuma.

THE UNIVERSITY OF ARIZONA
Yuma

ValleyCats Initiative: IVC partnership covering transfer, scholarships and internships.

MEETING STUDENTS WHERE THEY ARE

Regional pathways to industry certifications and bachelor's degrees

Industry certifications

Bachelor's degrees

What makes it work: listen, partner, build, adapt

How AWC chooses, coordinates and adjusts its partnerships

1

LISTEN

Hear from students, employers and communities.

2

PARTNER

ASU, NAU and UArizona on our campus; Imperial Valley College across the state line.

3

BUILD

Pathways built with university partners and shaped by regional need.

4

ADAPT

Adjust programs and supports as student and employer needs change.

What another rural college can replicate

Four lessons for rural colleges, whatever your state's transfer rules

01

Start with student barriers

Design from the lived reality of distance, work and family.

02

Build relationships before agreements

Operational trust makes formal pathways usable.

03

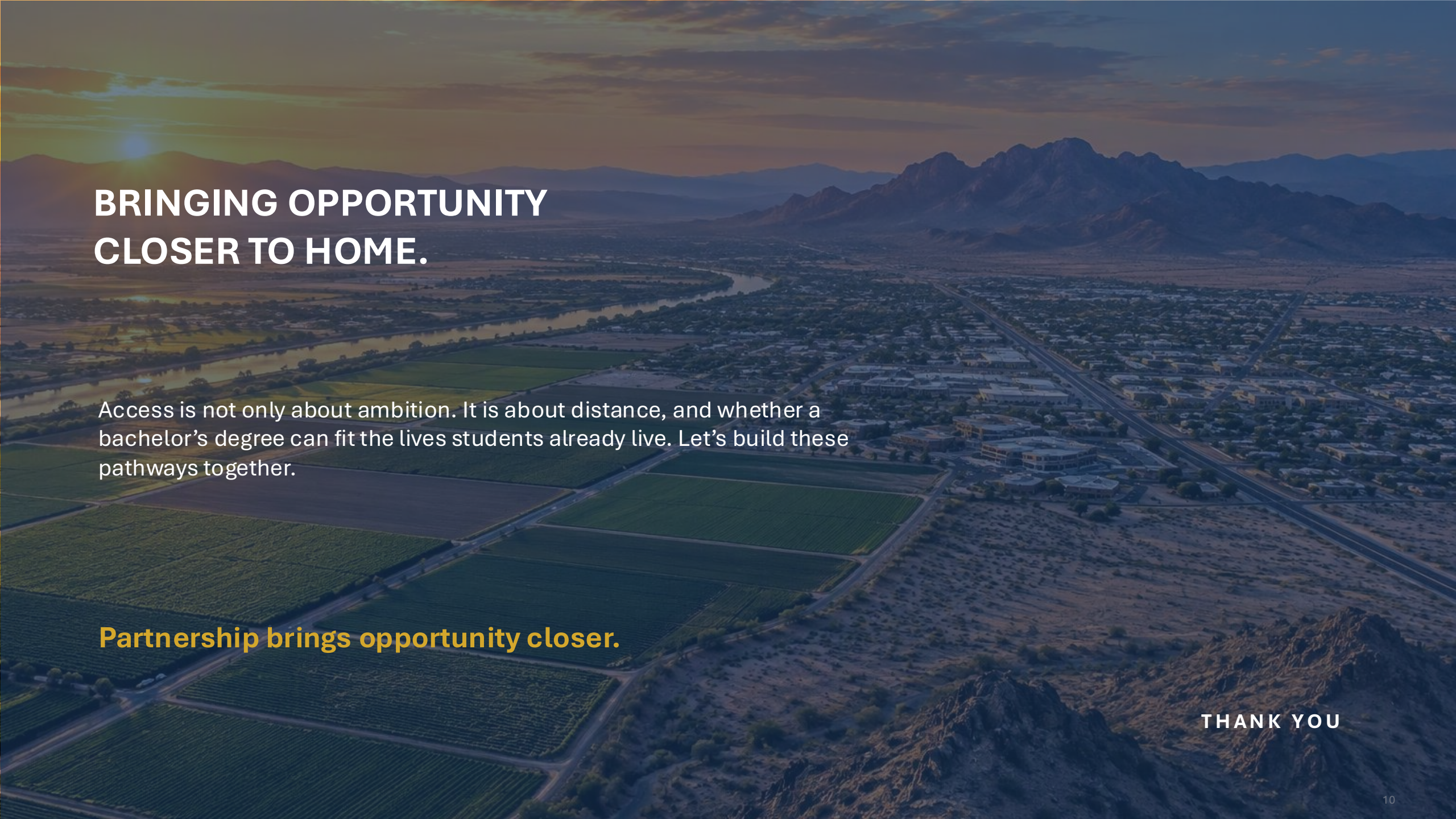
Make partners visible

A local presence and shared supports reduce friction.

04

Keep the bachelor's degree the goal

Transfer is a step. Completion is the outcome.



BRINGING OPPORTUNITY CLOSER TO HOME.

Access is not only about ambition. It is about distance, and whether a bachelor’s degree can fit the lives students already live. Let’s build these pathways together.

Partnership brings opportunity closer.

THANK YOU

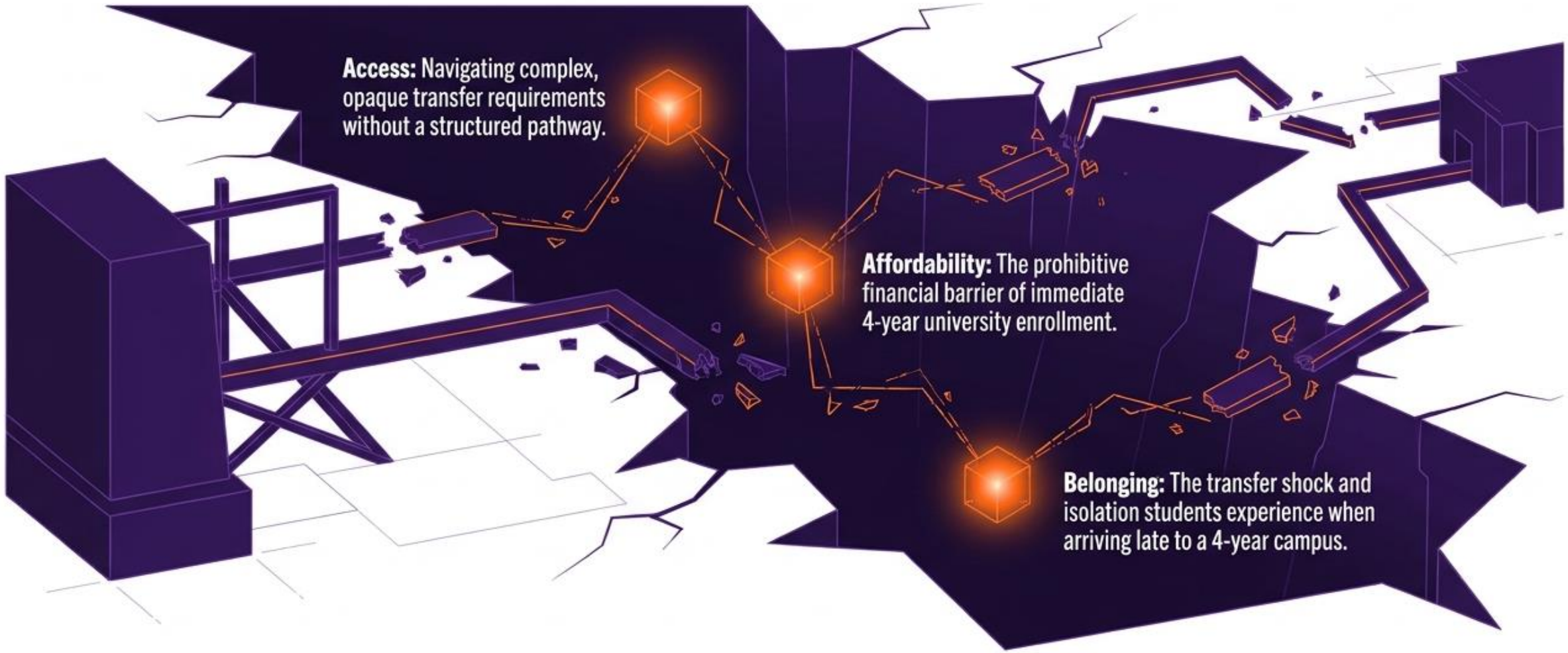
Innovating the Rural Transfer Pathway

The Bridge to Clemson Co-Enrollment Model



Tiffany Blackwell,
Tri-County Technical College

The Rural Transfer Challenge



Building the Foundation

An invitation-only, co-**enrollment partnership creating** a seamless **route** from community college to bachelor's completion.

2006: Established as a first-of-its-kind partnership in South Carolina.

235 Students: The size of the inaugural cohort.



The Pillars: Two Campuses, One Experience

Tri-County Technical College

Localized Resources:

- Academic coursework
- Primary academic advisor
- Significant cost savings

Clemson University

Localized Resources:

- Residential living
- Intramural sports & clubs
- Immersive campus life from day one



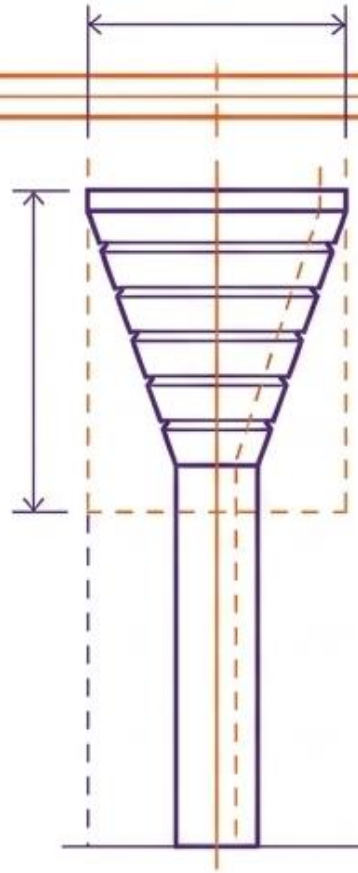
The Keystone: The Bridge Office

Houses dedicated Success Coaches and cross-campus support staff who work hand-in-hand across both locations.

Cultivating Transfer Momentum



Scaling Institutional Impact



1,132

Projected 2024 Enrollment (showing immense growth from the original 235).

82%

Bridge Crosser Rate (students successfully meeting strict enrollment standards to transition).

1 in 10

One in ten undergraduate students at Clemson started their journey in the Bridge program.

Outperforming the Average

Doubling the national average for student success.



National average 6-year graduation rate for first-time freshmen.



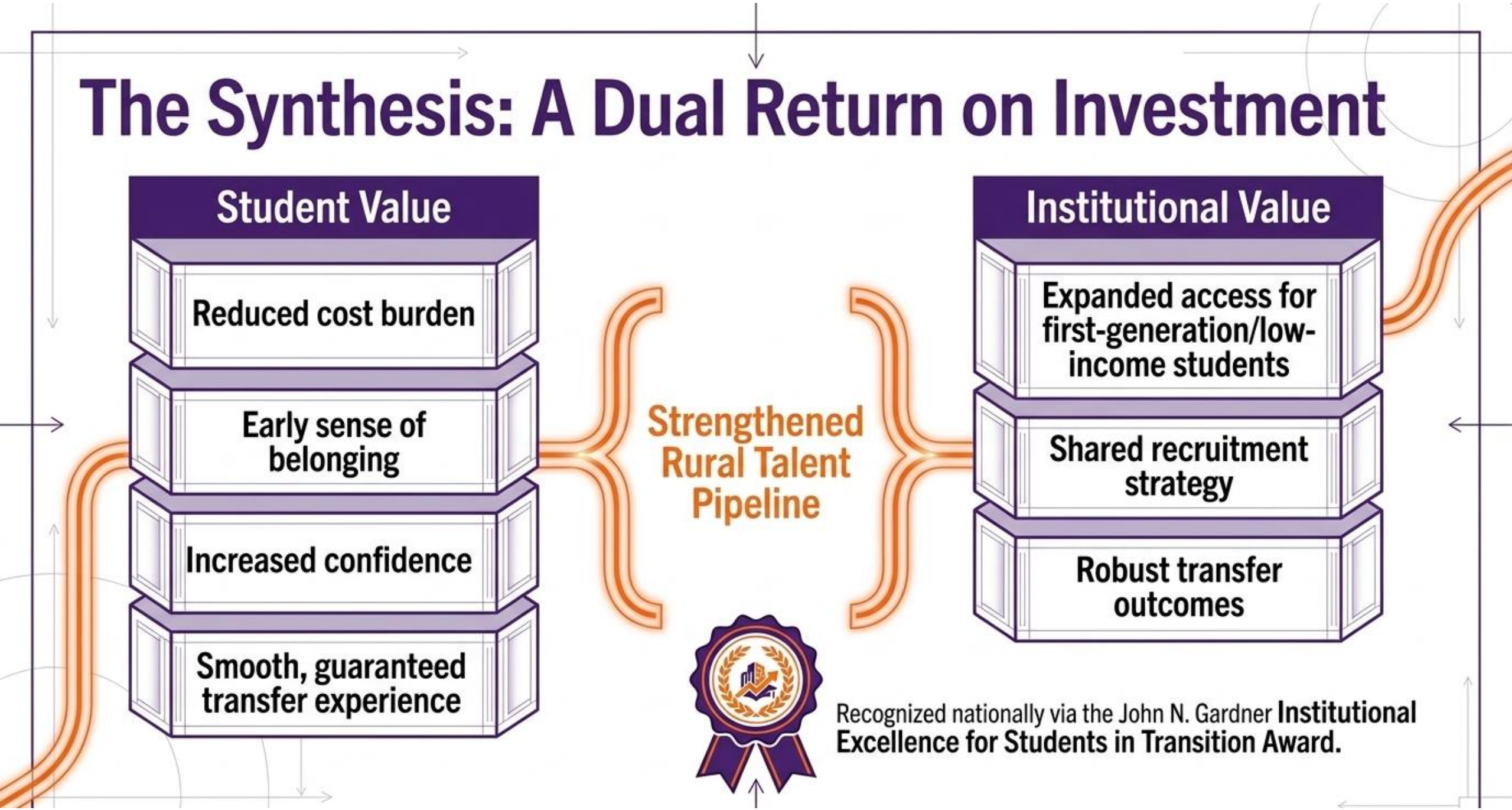
Bridge to Clemson 6-year graduation rate.



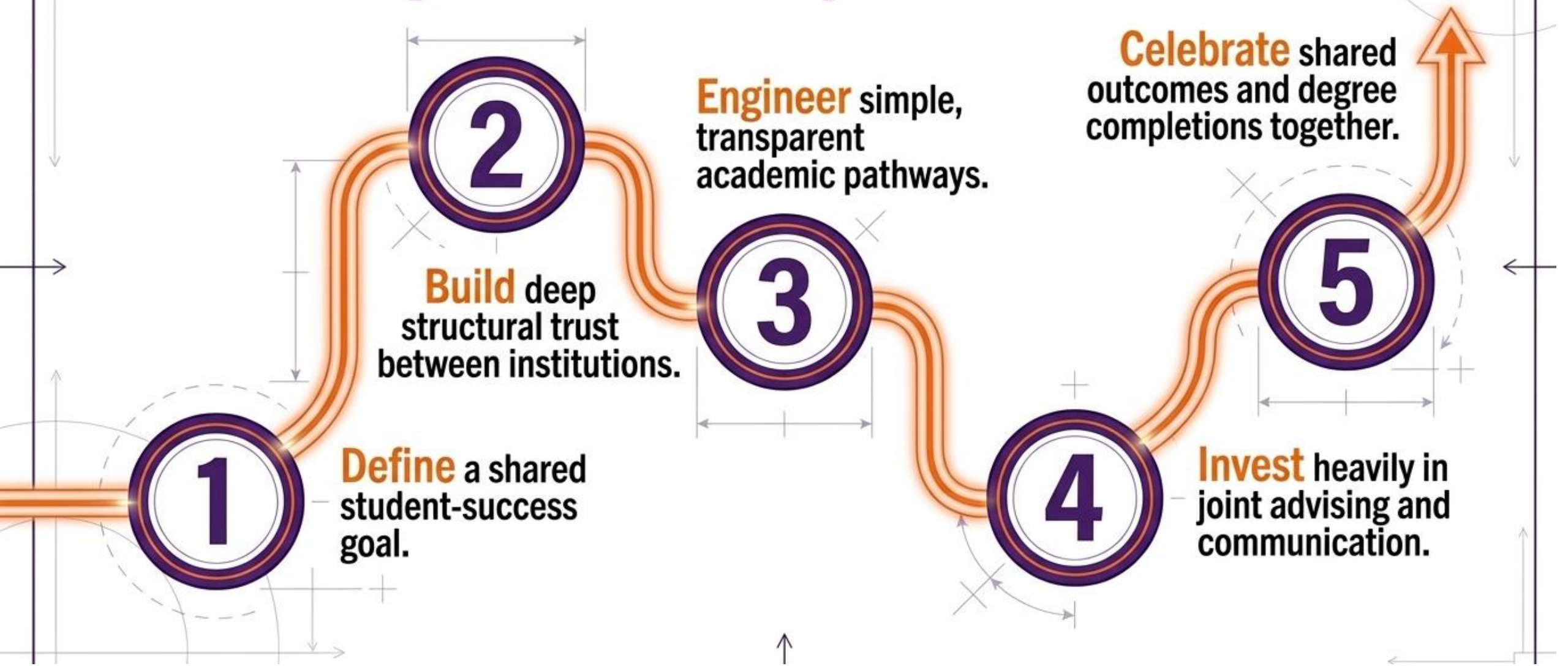
Bridging Talent to High-Demand Careers



The Synthesis: A Dual Return on Investment



The Blueprint for Replication




"More than a transfer agreement.
A student-centered partnership
expanding opportunity and
supporting completion."
Access + Affordability + Support
= Increased Educational Attainment
Tiffany Blackwell | Tri-County Technical College