

Tracking Transfer

New Measures of Institutional and State Effectiveness in Helping Community College Students Attain Bachelor's Degrees

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Introduction

This research report seeks to advance understanding of transfer and bachelor's degree attainment rates among community college students, with the larger goal of fostering improvements in transfer success for these students.

Focus on the institutional structures, policies, and practices that result in high levels of degree attainment by community college transfer students.

While many, if not most, community colleges examine the rate at which students transfer out, few systematically track which four-year institutions their students transfer to, and even fewer monitor the rates at which their students go on to earn bachelor's degrees.

- **transfer-out rate**—the rate at which a community college's degree-seeking students transfer to a four-year institution;
- **transfer-out bachelor's completion rate**—the rate at which a community college's students who transfer to a four-year institution earn a bachelor's degree from any four-year institution within six years of entering higher education.
- **transfer-in bachelor's completion rate**—the rate at which the students who transfer to a given four-year institution complete a bachelor's degree at the institution within six years of entering higher education.

Data, Definitions and Student Variables

Used data from degree-seeking students who entered community college in fall 2007 who were 18 or older (to remove dual enrollment students) and had no previous college experience. Followed this cohort for 6 years.

Results that are relevant to us

1) Students from lower income areas had a significantly lower likelihood to complete a Bachelor's degree.

Outcome	Lower Income	Higher Income	All Transfers
Earned a pre-transfer certificate or associate degree	29%	29%	29%
Earned a bachelor's degree	36%	44%	42%
Number of students	57,995	137,499	237,126

2) Transfer-out rates for community college around the country vary around 15-40%, with a trend towards larger colleges having a higher transfer rates. Schools that serve students in the higher socioeconomic groups tend to transfer more students.

3) Bachelor's completion rates follow the same trends. Between 20 and 50% of transfer students complete the Bachelor's degree with some difference between the smaller schools and the larger ones. Students from higher socioeconomic groups tend to had higher Bachelor's completion rates.

4) CA has a below national average transfer-out rate (31%), but one of the highest Bachelor's completion rate (47%).

5) Bachelor's completion rates for transfer students were highest at public institutions. More selective institutions had the highest completion rates, but the lowest number of transfer students.

Main Takeaways

1) Institutional practices matter

2) "Strong baccalaureate completion for community college students requires both high transfer-out rates and high transfer-in completion rates." CA has high transfer-in completion rates.

3) "Community colleges should identify and strengthen relationships with four-year institutions that graduate relatively high proportions of transfer students. Community colleges should also identify four-year institutions where their transfer students have low graduation rates." How do we get this information for Canada students?