New Transfer Data: Inadequate Outcomes, Substantial Variation
Tracking Transfer: Five New Measures

1. Transfer-Out Rate
2. Transfer-with-Award Rate
3. Transfer-Out Bachelor’s Completion Rate
4. Transfer-In Bachelor’s Completion Rate
5. Community College Cohort Bachelor’s Completion Rate
Transfer Students Struggle to Earn a Bachelor’s Degree

- 80% of new community college students aim to earn a bachelor’s.
- 33% of these students transfer to a 4-year college within 6 years.
- 14% earn a bachelor’s within 6 years of starting college.

For more information, see Tracking Transfer: New Measures of Institutional and State Effectiveness in Helping Community College Students Attain Bachelor’s Degrees (New York, NY: Community College Research Center).
Community College Cohort Bachelor's Completion Rates by State

U.S. average: 14%
These are the bachelor’s completion rates for transfer students, by individual community college.

There’s a lot of variation.
While outcomes at community colleges vary, what we might imagine would predict variation doesn’t.

Average Transfer-Out Bachelor's Completion Rates by Institutional Characteristics

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Program Mix</th>
<th>Transfer-Out Bachelor's Completion Rate</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>U.S. community college average</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Primarily occupational</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Primarily academic</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Urban</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Suburban/town</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rural</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Top quintiles</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Middle quintile</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Lower quintiles</td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Our conclusion: Transfer outcomes depend on what community colleges and 4-year colleges do to teach and support their students.
Understudied Barriers to Transfer Success

1) Lack of early momentum
2) Students make progress, don’t transfer
3) Transfer paths unclear
4) Transfer credit loss
Understudied Barrier #1: Lack of Early Momentum

VA Fall 2004 Matched 2- and 4-Year Entrants, Average Credit Load by Term

Source: Xu, Jaggars, & Fletcher, 2016.
Understudied Barrier #1: Lack of Early Momentum

VA Fall 2004 Matched 2- and 4-Year Entrants, Cumulative Credits Earned by Term

Source: Xu, Jaggars, & Fletcher, 2016.
Understudied Barrier #2: Students make progress, don’t transfer

Bachelor’s Degree-Seeking 2-year Entrants in VA,
Rate of Transfer to Four-year Colleges

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>All two-year entrants</th>
<th>Associate earners</th>
<th>&lt; 20 College-level credits earned from CCs</th>
<th>20-39 College-level credits earned from CCs</th>
<th>40-59 College-level credits earned from CCs</th>
<th>≥ 60 College-level credits earned from CCs</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Percentage</td>
<td>23%</td>
<td>68%</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>18%</td>
<td>36%</td>
<td>57%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Source</td>
<td>Xu, Jaggars, &amp; Fletcher, 2016, Table 9.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Understudied Barrier #3: Transfer paths unclear

Enrollment Patterns among ~100K Bachelor’s Degree Completers who Started at a Community College

**Patterns with Enrollment Breaks, 19.9%**
- 2 + 3, 17.7%
- 3 + 3, 13.6%
- 2 + 4, 10.9%
- 3 + 2, 8.1%
- 1 + 4, 8.0%
- 1 + 5, 4.9%
- 1 + 3, 3.7%
- 4 + 2, 3.5%
- 4 + 1, 0.2%
- 5 + 1, 0.1%
- 3 + 1, 0.2%
- 1 + 2, 0.7%
- 1 + 1, 0.1%

**Few graduates follow 2+2 pattern**

**years at CC + years at 4yr**
Understudied Barrier #4: Transfer Credit Loss

Just 58% of students successfully transferred 90% of their credits.

And 15% can’t transfer any credits at all.

Students who can transfer 90% of their credits were 2.5x more likely to get their bachelor's degree, compared to those who transfer half or less.

Understudied Barrier #4: Transfer Credit Loss

VA Fall 2004 Matched 2- and 4-Year Entrants, Total Credits Earned at Graduation

Average number of college-level credits

- 4-Year Entrants: 125
- 2-Year Entrants: 133

Average number of credits (any type)

- 4-Year Entrants: 126
- 2-Year Entrants: 136

Source: Xu, Jaggars, & Fletcher, 2016, Table 10.
Term-by-Term Fluctuations in GPA Among Transfers and Matched Native Students

Transfer student community college GPAs pre-transfer much higher than matched sample of 4-Year Entrants

“Transfer Shock” initial drop in GPA; still higher than matched sample of 4-Year Entrants

Transfer Student GPA consistently higher than matched sample of 4-Year Entrants

Source: Xu, Jaggars, & Fletcher, 2016, Figure 4.
For more information

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