Charting Community College Student Pathways to a Bachelor’s Degree

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Key Questions on Student Transfer

• What percentage of students who start at the community college transfer to a four-year college?
  – Definition of starting cohort
• When exactly do students transfer?
• Do transfers receive an associate degree before transferring?
  – How many credits do they complete before transferring?
Defining a Starting Cohort

• Students who start at a community college in North Carolina and eventually enroll at a four-year college within six years, at any point
  – We look at seven-year bachelor’s outcomes
• This definition is different from others that look at students who transfer smoothly
  – Smooth transfer: Only those with enrollment at CC in current or previous year
  – Others only include students who received their associate degree first
Transfer Basics in North Carolina

• About 22% of all FTIC students eventually transfer to a four-year college within six years
• Of those transfers, over half go to an in-state four-year college
• Undeclared students have the highest transfer percentage (33%), followed by Liberal Arts and Sciences majors (28%)
• In NC, there is a gen ed core that students can complete at the community college
  – In process of creating a 30-credit core
When Do Students Transfer?
When Do Students Transfer?
Timing of Transfer

• The last two visuals give evidence that students transfer across the spectrum of time
• Also evidence that students do not transfer smoothly into a four-year college
• Significant number of early transfers
  – However, wide variation in college readiness among this group
• Advantages of getting an associate degree, and then transferring?
Credits at the Community College

• On average, transfers attempted 32 college-level credits, and completed 30
• 37 credits attempted and 35 credits completed for UNC transfers
• About two-thirds of these college credits were within the gen ed core
• However, only about 9% of transfers completed the gen ed core in its entirety
  – 13% completion for UNC transfers
Award Completion

• Within seven years, about 35% of all transfers received a bachelor’s degree
  – More than three-quarters of these bachelor’s degrees were awarded at a UNC college
• Among these UNC transfers:
  – 24% received an associate degree
  – 51% of associate degree completers earned a bachelor’s degree
  – 48% of non-associate degree completers earned a bachelor’s degree
Credits Completed and Bachelor’s Completion among Transfers
Key Insights

• Students in North Carolina transfer at all points in time within a relatively long timeframe

• No definitive evidence that earning an associate degree is linked to bachelor’s completion

• Often, students do not smoothly transition from the community college to the four-year college
  – Enrollment gaps between CC and four-year
  – Students often do not get their associate degree first before transferring, even to the state system
  – Even smaller percentage complete the core
For more information

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