

## Transfer Student Data Template - Principles

NISTS has designed of a draft data template that individual institutions, or colleges/departments within an institution, will be able to populate with their own data. The data template will guide professionals through the process of gathering the right data and communicating it effectively with others on their campus. The populated template will provide baseline data about transfer students and, over time, a picture of transfer students' progress at the institution. Key principles influencing the template are:

- The template is intended to be a *starting point* for institutions to evaluate *their own data* on transfer students.
- In contrast to data collections for which cross-institutional comparison is a primary purpose, such as IPEDS, the Voluntary System of Accountability (VSA), Voluntary Framework of Accountability (VFA), and the Student Achievement Measure (SAM), the data collected on the NISTS template are intended for use only by and within the institution itself. An institution may wish to define relevant variables in the same way as they are defined on other data-collection instruments or customize the definitions; this is entirely up to the institution. Similarly, an institution may want to report the data in accreditation studies or other documents but, again, the uses of the compiled data are entirely up to the institution.
- The template is not intended as a “turnkey” tool to permit institutions to use it exactly as is. Rather, it is expected that institutions will make at least minor modifications to meet their particular needs.
- The template is not intended as a tool for collecting comparable data from multiple institutions, to use for inter-institutional comparisons, or to use for research purposes except by the college using it.
- The template focuses on students who transfer in to an institution. While some may think this focus eliminates community colleges, in fact community colleges enroll many students who have prior postsecondary education experiences. A project for tracking students who transfer out of an institution is an entirely different project and beyond the current scope.
- The template is a starting place for institutions. An institution may choose to build on it to depict more sophisticated or disaggregated sets of data about transfer students. As a starting place, the data template is *purposely simple* and addresses just a few key questions about the transfer student population.

- Each institution may choose to define a “transfer student” in its own way, and may in fact have several definitions. The definitions provided in the data template are suggestions reflecting common practice, but an institution may customize them to fit their campus.
- Each institution may choose to disaggregate student data in different or additional ways, by identifying different subgroups.
- We have provided sample reporting in both Excel and Tableau versions. We recognize that most institutions are likely to have Excel and will be less likely to have Tableau. That said, Tableau offers more flexibility and options for displaying data. To download a trial of the software go to <http://www.tableau.com/products/desktop>.

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