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## Transfer Student Data Template – Components

The Data Template has four components:

### I. Definition of a transfer student

The NISTS advisory board suggests that students be placed into the following categories, adjusted to meet a specific institutional definition if desired. *Categories are mutually exclusive.* A student may be placed into only one transfer student definition category. An institution may choose to revise the number of credits that define each category. However the categories are defined, it is important that the institution determine that categories encompass all students of interest. Usually this will include all undergraduates in credit-bearing (not non-credit) programs (certificates, associate degree and bachelor's degree programs).

- a. *Non-transfer student* = a student who enters the institution with 0-14 college credits taken after high school. A student who earned dual enrollment credits (college credits while in high school, including through AP, International Baccalaureate or other such assessments) and has fewer than 15 credits earned after high school is also considered a non-transfer student. Alternatively, the institution may have an institutional definition of a non-transfer and may prefer to use this institutional definition.
- b. *Associate degree transfer* = a student who transfers with an associate degree.
- c. *Sophomore and above transfer* = a student who transfers with 31 or more credits earned elsewhere after high school but not an associate degree.
- d. *Freshman transfer* = a student who transfers with 15-30 credits earned at a different institution after high school; credits earned through dual enrollment, AP, International Baccalaureate or other such assessments are not included in the 15-30 credits.

## II. Key questions about transfer students and data tables to capture the data.

Excel spreadsheets have been designed as templates to collect the data. Each institution will populate them with the institution-specific numbers. Each spreadsheet corresponds with a different question, and captures data for each of the above categories of students, disaggregated by demographic variables such as age range, gender, and race/ethnicity. The fields to be used for disaggregation should be evaluated and defined prior to data collection.

Questions are:

1. *How many new students are there? Who are these new students?* Data will be organized by term and will capture only students enrolling in the institution for the first time in that term. The **Enrollment Snapshot** data collection addresses these questions.
  
2. *How many total students are there? Who are these students?* Data will be organized by term and capture all undergraduate students enrolled during that term, though an institution may choose to further refine the definition of “all.” For example, an institution might choose to exclude students enrolled only in online courses. The **Enrollment Snapshot** data collection addresses these questions.
  
3. *How do your students do?*
  - a. Of students receiving baccalaureate degrees in a given term or year, how many/what percent were in each of the above four categories (non-transfer students, associate degree holders, sophomore, or freshman transfers)? The **Graduates Snapshot** data collection addresses these questions.
  
  - b. Of students who entered in a given term, how many/what percent in each of the above four categories earn a bachelor’s degree within the following time periods? The **Completions** data collection addresses these questions.<sup>1</sup>
    - i. Non-transfer students = 6 years
    - ii. Associate degree transfers = 3 years
    - iii. Sophomore transfers = 4.5 years
    - iv. Freshman transfers = 5.5 years

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<sup>1</sup> Data for 3b are longitudinal data and will require more work to compile.

### III. Graphic depictions of the data

- The Excel file includes worksheets that have graphic depictions of data built in, with these depictions based on best practices in displaying quantitative data. Those pivot tables and charts are currently connected to the *example* data worksheets. The end user will need to modify the data source and may need to edit the pivot tables and charts depending on the customizations done.
- Examples of data visualizations using Tableau are also provided. Tableau may not be used by as many institutions as Excel, but it offers more flexibility and options for displaying data. The Tableau file uses the *example* data within the Excel file as its source data. The end user will need to modify the data source.

### IV. What's the story?

Guiding questions to promote discussion, such as:

1. Are there surprises in the data? What are they? Are the surprises positive or negative? Do they align or conflict with “urban legends” about transfer students?
2. Are there differences in achievement between the four categories of transfer students? What are they? What might account for them?
3. Are there changes over time?
4. How do these data compare to other institutional data or reports about transfer students?
5. What more do we want to know?

### Uses and Dissemination

Additionally, institutions may find the data and graphic displays useful for a variety of purposes, including but not limited to:

- Communications to various stakeholders
- Accreditation self-studies and other accountability reports
- Grant proposals
- Requests for internal resources and funding, staff, space
- Fundraising campaigns
- Use in research briefs, the institution's website, newsletters, alumni magazines and other college communications.