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## *Educational Session*

### **2343 - Sunshine! Using System Data to Help Students, Advisors, and Leaders Improve Credit Articulation**

Credits and Degree Pathways, Partnerships and Collaboration

Students in the US lose 43% of their credits, on average, when they transfer. One challenge is that they--and often their sending and receiving institutions--don't know in advance how their courses will translate into program requirements at their destination. This session will share a set of novel strategies to unlock administrative data and put it into the hands of students, advisors, and leaders, which has helped improve credit articulation within a large higher education system.

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**PRESENTERS:**

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*NISTS Conference  
February 23-25, 2022*

# Sunshine!

*Using system data to help students, advisors, and  
leaders improve credit articulation*



# Agenda

- 1. Introduction**
2. Degree Works Archiving: Overview and Findings
3. Making the Most of Transfer Explorer (aka T-Rex)





# City University of New York (CUNY)

- 20 undergraduate colleges in the 5 boroughs of NYC
  - 7 community colleges (associate's programs)
  - 3 comprehensive colleges (associate's and bachelor's programs)
  - 10 senior colleges (bachelor's programs)
- 240,000 matriculated undergraduates
- About 20,000 students transfer from one CUNY college to another each year
- Over 50% of bachelor's-degree recipients are transfers



# Articulation of Credit Transfer (ACT)

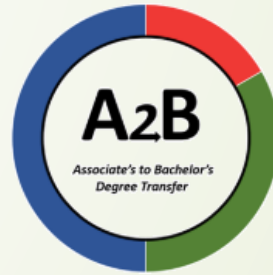
## **The Challenge**

- According to multiple sources, over 80% of first-year community college students aspire to a bachelor's degree; yet within 6 years, no more than 17% earn a bachelor's degree
- Transferred credits that do not count toward the new degree are a major barrier: nationally, as many as 43 percent of transferred credits do not count, and students who lose that many transfer credits are far less likely to graduate

## **The ACT Solution**

- A team of researchers, CUNY college and university administrators, and faculty working iteratively and collaboratively to make credit transfer information transparent, accessible, and actionable
- Through public resources, advising tools, and administrative policy changes, help CUNY transfer students count all of their transfer credits toward their new credential

# ACT Structure



**LEHMAN**  
COLLEGE



ITHACA S-R

**CU  
NY** THE CITY  
UNIVERSITY  
OF  
NEW YORK



HECKSCHER FOUNDATION  
*for* CHILDREN

The Carroll and Milton **Petrie Foundation**

# ACT Focus Areas and Colleges

## Focus Areas

1. Transfer Explorer
2. Degree Audit Archiving for Monitoring and Analysis
3. Extracting and Analyzing Program Requirements
4. Transfer Intentions Survey
5. Transfer Timeline Analysis
6. Transfer Community of Practice

## Participating CUNY Colleges

1. Bronx Community College (BCC)
2. Brooklyn College
3. Guttman Community College
4. Hostos Community College
5. Lehman College
6. Queensborough Community College
7. Queens College

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# Degree Works Archiving

## WHAT IS DEGREE WORKS ARCHIVING?

- Automated process where CUNY's degree audit software, Degree Works archives data daily, for students transferring between the CUNY institutions participating in ACT. Provides us an opportunity to observe and analyze changes in how these students' transferred courses count toward their degree programs at their new institutions

## WHY IS THIS IMPORTANT?

- Before this work, there was no possible way to know, with accuracy, the number of credits that did not count towards a student's degree following transfer
- Degree Works overwrites each student's degree audit data every time there is a change in the student's record, leaving no information regarding whether, how, or when degree applicability changes



# Understanding Fallthrough Credits

## **“Fallthrough Course”:**

Describe a course on a student’s transcript that does not fulfill the general education, major, minor, or total-credits degree requirements of the program they are pursuing

## **Two reasons why a course becomes a Fallthrough course**

1. Course may be “over the limit” if the receiving college places a limit on the number of transfer credits that can be applied to their degree or program requirements
2. Course may be categorized as “overflow” if the student exceeds the number of “free electives” designated for their degree program

They have the possibility of counting for major (or minor) requirements, or even for elective or general education credit, but any credits over 60 for an associate’s degree or 120 for a bachelor’s degree, will always be in the overflow Fallthrough category

# Approach and Methodology to Archive Analysis

## Characteristics of students included in cohort:

- Direct transfers from an ACT community college to an ACT bachelor's college. This does not include:
  - previous degree-seeking students at an ACT community college who have already earned a bachelor's degree, and
  - non-degree students; and
- Enrolled in an ACT bachelor's college as of the term census date

**Table 1: Size of archive cohorts by academic semester**

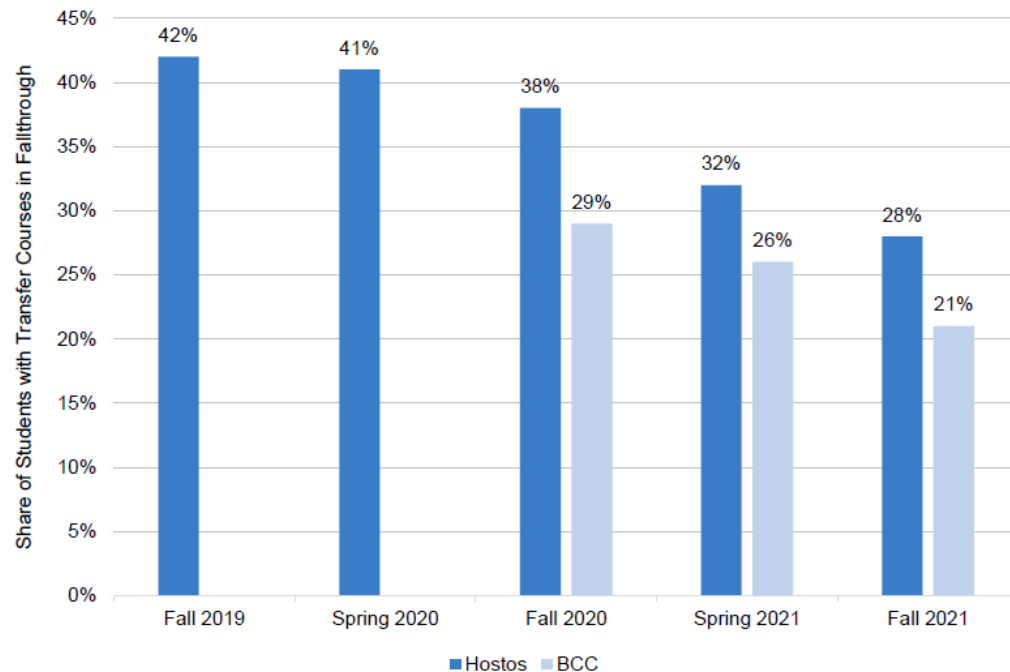
|             | Hostos to Lehman | BCC to Lehman | Five community colleges to Brooklyn | Three community colleges to Queens |
|-------------|------------------|---------------|-------------------------------------|------------------------------------|
| Fall 2019   | 273              |               |                                     |                                    |
| Spring 2020 | 140              |               |                                     |                                    |
| Fall 2020   | 263              | 441           |                                     |                                    |
| Spring 2021 | 129              | 242           | 282                                 | 318                                |
| Fall 2021   | 204              | 362           | 353                                 | 367                                |

*Table 1 reports the number of students in each ACT cohort by academic semester. A cohort is defined to include students who are direct transfers from an ACT community college to an ACT bachelor's college, who do not already have a bachelor's degree and are not non-degree students, and who have enrolled in an ACT bachelor's college as of the term census date. Source: Degree Works Archive*

# Findings from Degree Works Archiving

## Aggregate-Level Analyses of Student Transfer Outcomes

**Figure 1: Percentage of transfer students at Lehman College with at least one course in Fallthrough, by term and sending college**



*Figure 1: The percentage of transfer students from Hostos and BCC with at least one course in Fallthrough at Lehman. Source: Degree Works Archive*

### Hostos to Lehman:

- Share transfer students with at least one transfer course in Fallthrough declined from 42 percent for the fall 2019 cohort to 28 percent for the fall 2021 cohort

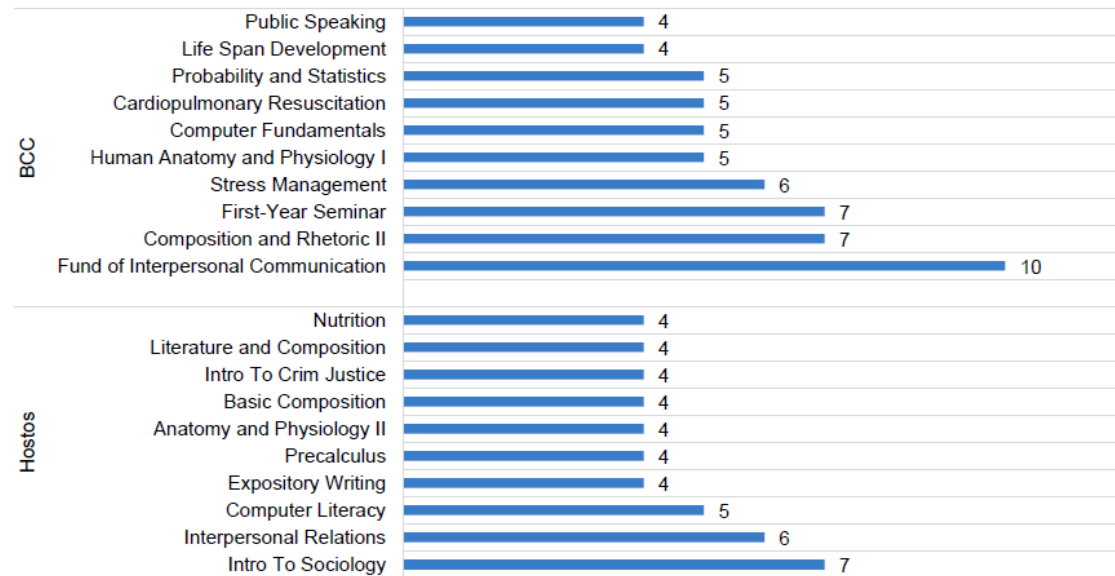
### BCC to Lehman:

- Share of students with at least one Fallthrough course declined from 29 percent for the fall 2020 cohort to 21 percent for the fall 2021 cohort.

# Findings from Degree Works Archiving

## Course Level Analysis

**Figure 3: Top 10 courses in Fallthrough at Lehman when transferred from Bronx Community College and Hostos\***



\*The y-axis illustrates the top 10 courses in Fallthrough at Lehman when transferred from Bronx Community College and Hostos. The number of times a course goes into Fallthrough is indicated to the right of the bars. Results are shown for the ACT Fall 2021 cohort. Source: Degree Works Archive.

1. Surface barriers transfer students face that might be alleviated through changes in policy or advising practices

Example: Anatomy & Physiology II

2. Help understand the nuances in how Degree Works treats certain transfer rules

Example: Expository Writing



# Findings from Degree Works Archiving

## Real-Time Monitoring of Transfer Students' Fallthrough Courses

Using the archive, advisors can observe a new transfer student registering for a Fallthrough course, prompting advisors to contact the student to suggest adding a minor, changing a major, swapping a course, or requesting a substitution to reduce the courses in Fallthrough

### Real Life Examples

- This model of advising at Lehman has resulted in 600 transfer applicants making changes to their course schedule based on recommendations from their advisors, and these changes have increased the number of credits students can count toward their degrees compared to their initial audit
- At Brooklyn College after reviewing 132 student files, 36 students were contacted about making changes to their course schedules, leading to an increase in the number of credits counted towards those students' degrees
- Archive allowed Lehman College's Fallthrough auditor to help 19 students in the Fall 2021 cohort become eligible for the New York Tuition Assistance Program financial aid benefits and receive an average award of nearly \$1,489



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# Goals and Functions of T-Rex

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- **Provide Clear Transfer Information**

Display organized, searchable, user-friendly information on how every course in the CUNY catalog transfers and applies across any number of undergraduate institutions in CUNY.

- **Transparency**

Provide transparency to students and all other stakeholders in the transfer process by making the equivalencies and program requirements public.

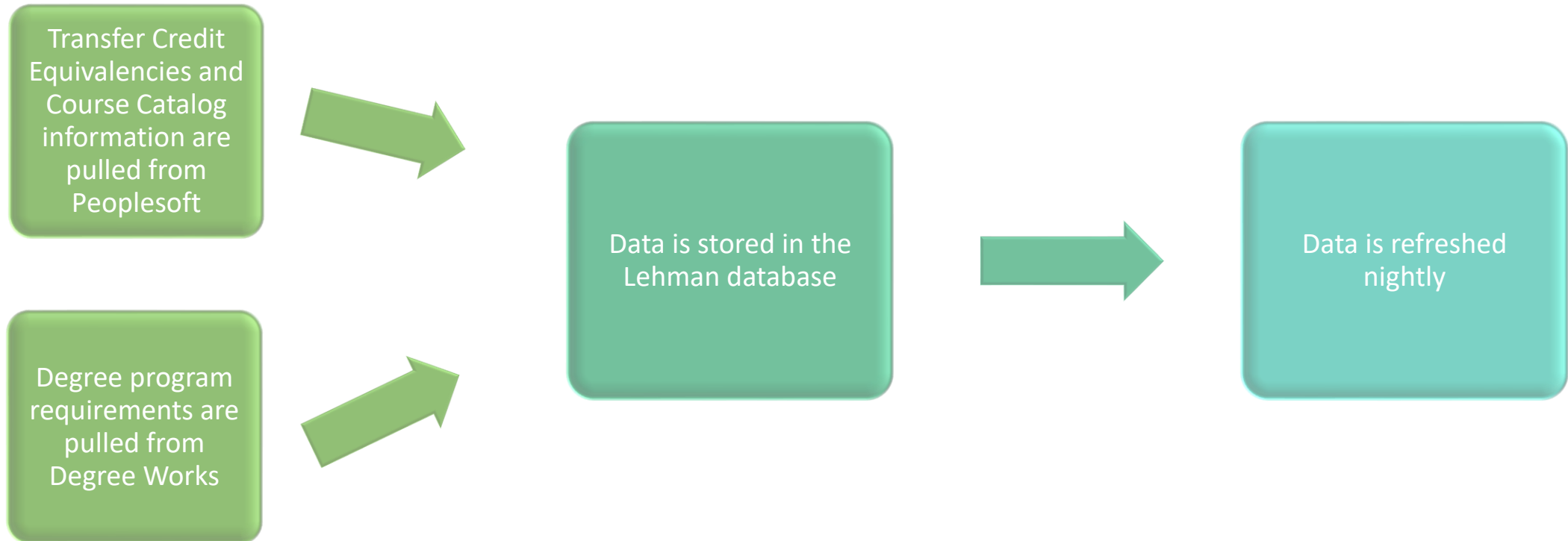
- **Facilitate Ongoing Communication & Review**

Create a user-friendly mechanism by which faculty can communicate effectively and efficiently about course equivalencies. Equivalency changes can be suggested, and existing ones can be validated.



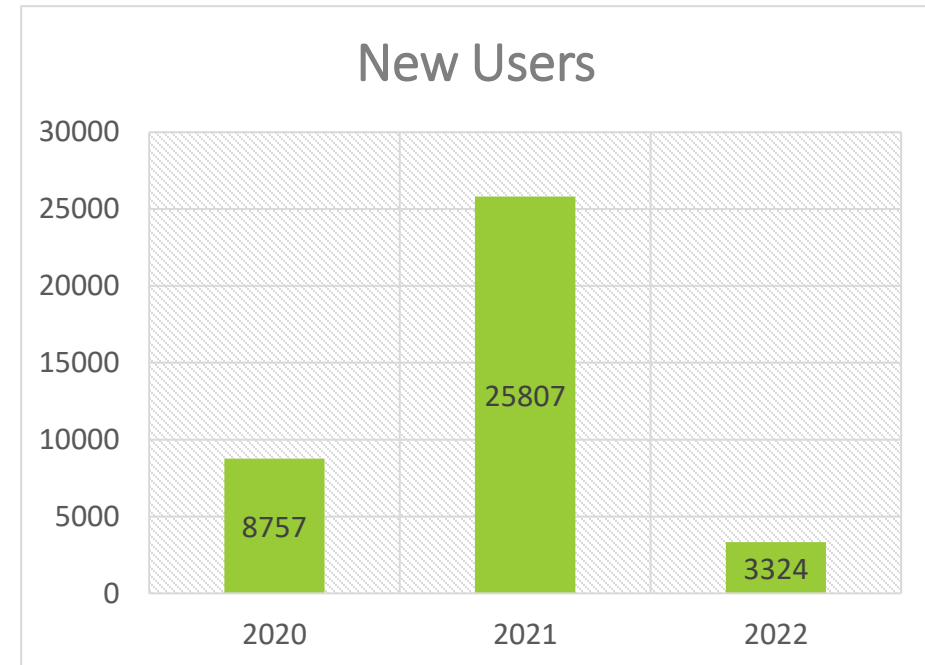
# How T-Rex Works

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# Usage Statistics

- T-Rex is already an active resource, supporting thousands of users across the University – and continues to grow
- Since we started tracking on May 21, 2020:
  - 38k+ unique users
  - 68k+ sessions
  - 291k+ page views
  - 4 mins average time spent on site per visit (at the top of overall internet benchmark)



| Average New Users per Month |                     |
|-----------------------------|---------------------|
| 2020                        | 1095                |
| 2021                        | 2151                |
| 2022                        | 3324 (January only) |



# Transfer Explorer – T-Rex

LET'S SEE IT IN ACTION!

[EXPLORER.CUNY.EDU](https://explorer.cuny.edu)

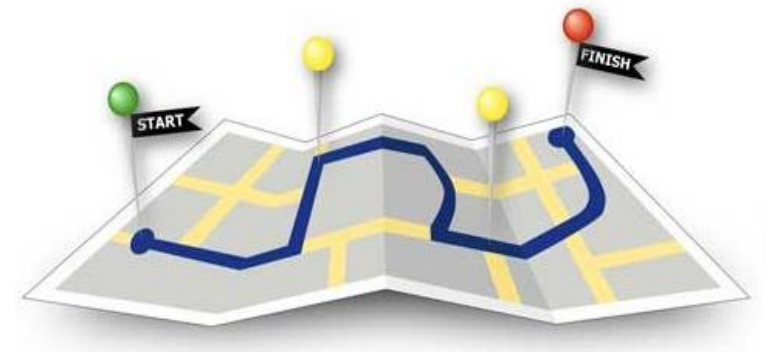
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# Still on the roadmap...

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1. Continued development of the faculty suggestion interface, with the goal of building confidence in equivalencies across the system.
2. Integration of Non-CUNY transfer course information.
3. Integration of Credit for Prior Learning opportunities and how those credits transfer and apply.
4. Providing systematic early information and alerts for transfer staff regarding students' transfer intentions and transfer-related actions.
5. Make even more data available and accessible to help colleges analyze and improve the quality of CUNY course equivalencies and program requirements.
6. Establishing Transfer Explorer as a one stop shop for transfer information at CUNY



# THANK YOU!

Feel free to contact us for any reason

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