

NISTS 2023

BE A CONNECTOR FOR TRANSFER STUDENT SUCCESS

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The following presentation was given at the 21st Annual Conference for the National Institute for the Study of Transfer Students. Please cite responsibly and direct questions to the original presenter(s).

Research Spotlight

2841 - A Closer Look: Transfer Credit Degree Applicability and How It Informs Policy

Credits and Degree Pathways, Partnerships and Collaboration

Effective transfer articulation directly impacts the cost of a degree, time to degree, degree completion, and institutional partnerships. The University of Illinois System conducted two studies (2020 and 2013) to examine not only transferability of course credit, but importantly how those courses applied to a student's degree. We will review how the research was conducted, present the findings and discuss conclusions drawn from the data that led to policy considerations.

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SYSTEM



A Closer Look: Transfer credit degree applicability and how it informs policy

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UNIVERSITY OF ILLINOIS SYSTEM



Land-grant, flagship institution
located in Urbana-Champaign

57,000 students; 35,000 undergrads



The state's second public R1
university located in Chicago

34,000 students; 22,000 undergrads



Smaller, comprehensive university
located in state's capital

4,000 students; 2,400 undergrads



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- 4,000 new transfer students in Fall 2022 (64% from Illinois community colleges)
- Almost one-third of undergraduate degrees handed out at May 2022 graduation ceremonies were to former transfer students
- Students who transfer into the system earned an average of 1 additional credit hour at the time of completion in comparison to students who started as first-time freshmen*



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UI System Transcript Study

- Study undertaken to:
 - Determine extent to which transfer coursework applied to degree completion
 - Examine coursework that did not apply to fulfill degree requirements
- Effective transfer articulation is a key element of the transfer student experience, with direct impact on cost of degree, time to degree, and degree completion.
- Transfer admission increases access for underrepresented students, more likely to enter higher education via community colleges.

Method of Analysis

- Study conducted twice – 2013 & 2020
 - Doubled the sample population size for 2020
- Study parameters:
 - Representative sample of 200 students
 - Selected/randomized by Planning & Budgeting
 - 80 from UIUC, 80 from UIC, 40 from UIS
 - Transferred to UI in Fall 2018
 - Collected in fall 2019
 - Last attended an IL community college
 - Important for illuminating issues with state initiatives



Method of Analysis

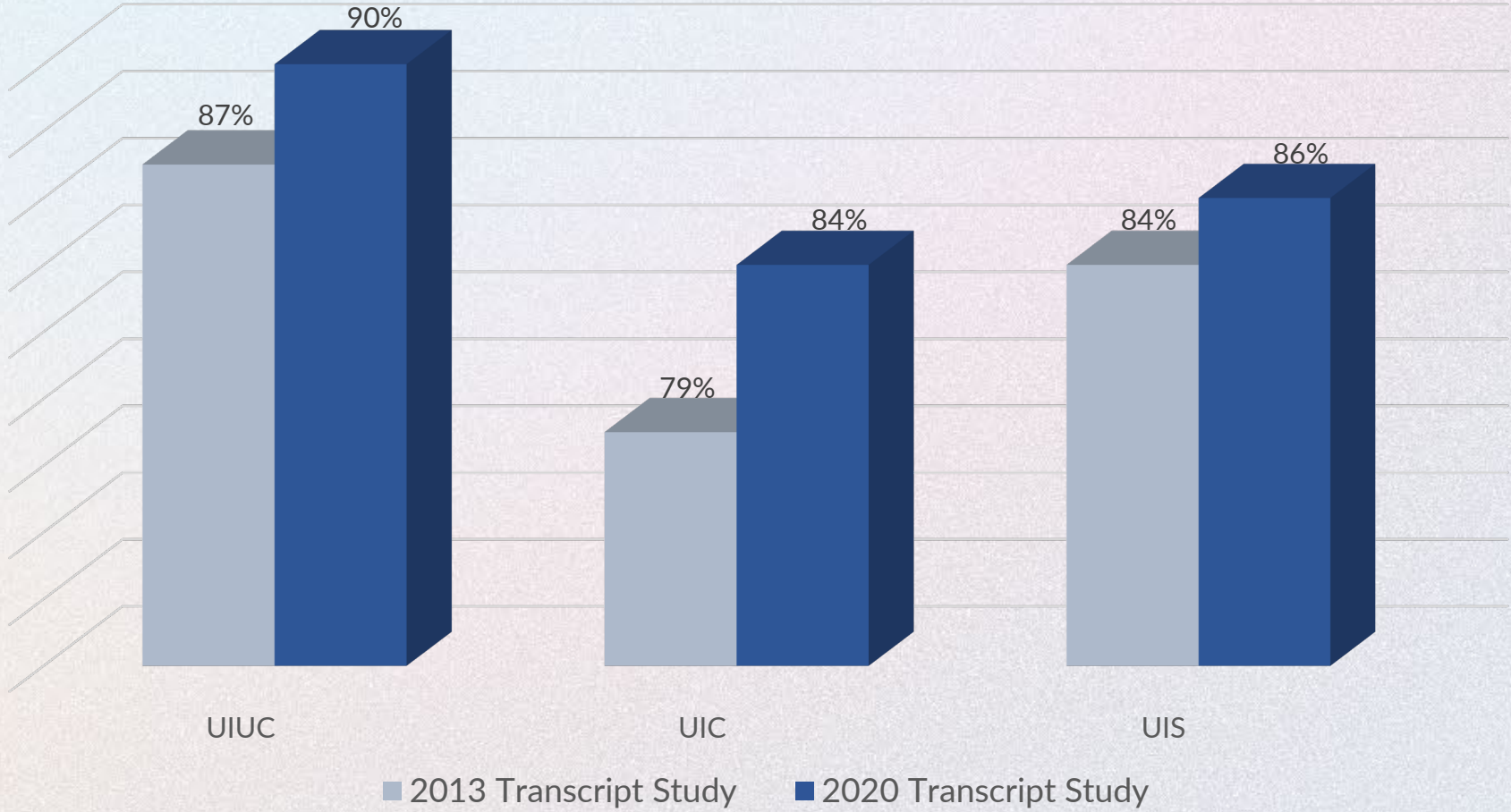
- Collected degree audits run at point of admission
- Obtained secured access to all students' transcripts
- Examined transcripts first to ensure all transfer credit appeared in admission audit.
- Analyzed credit that did not apply to degree to determine why
- Categorized the results for further evaluation

Transcript Study Results – General Statistics

	Overall	UIUC	UIC	UIS
# Credits submitted for transfer	13,631.5	5,193.5	5,601	2,837
# Credits did <i>Not</i> apply to degree	1,818	518.5	905	394.5
% Credit applied to students' degree	87%	90%	84%	86%

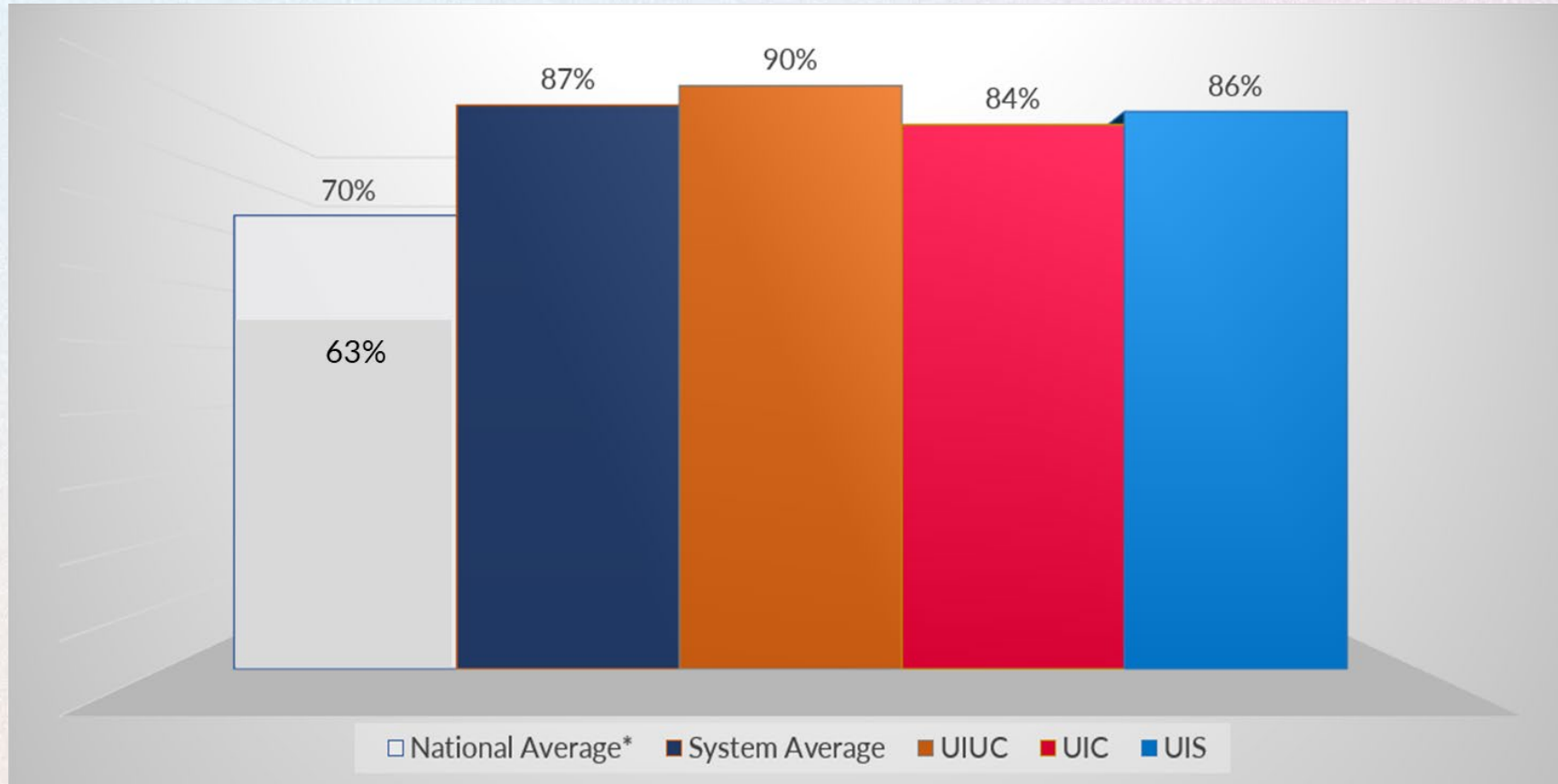
Evaluating Results

Amount of Transfer Credit Applied to Degree Requirements



Evaluating Results

Amount of Transfer Credit Applied to Degree Requirements



*Using Data Mining to Explore Why Community College Transfer Students Earn Bachelor's Degrees With Excess Credits
By John Fink, Davis Jenkins, Elizabeth M. Kopko & Florence Xiaotao Ran
Community College Research Center, February 2018

**Students Need More Information to Help Reduce Challenges in Transferring College Credits
United States Government Accountability Office (GAO) <https://www.gao.gov/assets/gao-17-574.pdf>



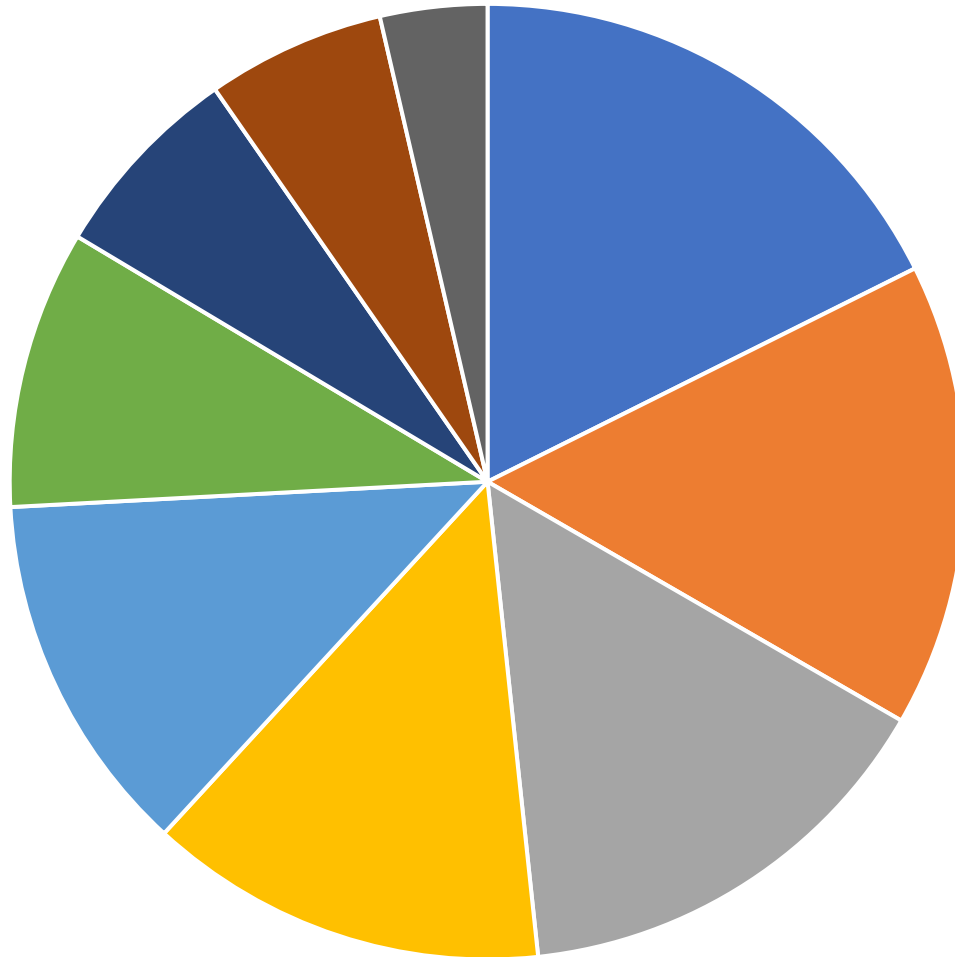
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Categories of non-applicable transfer

Our evaluation resulted in establishing these categories...

- Vocational/technical/non-bacc/AAS
- Duplicated/repeated class or requirement
- Remedial/developmental coursework
- Orientation/student success courses
- AP/IB/CLEP issues
- Prerequisite level Math
- Grade unsatisfactory
- Incomplete or non-evaluated coursework
- Full hours not accepted
- Credit in excess of maximums allowed (hours in residence, program accreditation, etc.)

Non-applicable Coursework System Overview



- Voc/Tech/Non-Bacc/AAS (18%)
- Dupl/Repeated Class or Requirement (16%)
- Remedial/Developmental (15%)
- Orientation/Student Success (13%)
- AP/IB/CLEP issues (12%)
- Prereq Level Math (9%)
- Grade Unsatisfactory (7%)
- Not Evaluated/Incomplete at transfer (6%)
- Full Hours Not Accepted (4%)

Notes: Vocational/technical, non-bacc, AAS (average 18%)

- This category is more prevalent among students from larger metropolitan areas.
- Students with significant amounts of voc/tech credit are likely to transfer into related BA/BS programs (i.e., those with CNA classes may seek transfer to BSN; those with CAD courses may transfer into architecture; those with network administration or IT security may transfer into computer science).
- Most students understand voc/tech programs are non-transferrable. Their initial goals are often specific to employment opportunities. Students who complete voc/tech/AAS courses with an expectation of transfer may indicate a gap in advising services based on the student's program.
- Some 4-year institutions are designing 'applied' bachelor degree programs that would accept related voc/tech/AAS classes. If this category represents a significant outcome in non-applicable transfer coursework, an applied bachelor degree program may be a good option.

Notes: Duplicated/repeated class or requirement (average 16%)

- Courses taken more than once are typically repeated intentionally, to improve a grade or for additional credit.
 - It is important students are advised about the affect on GPA calculations and policies on credit for repeated coursework.
- Students don't always intend to repeat a particular course. This may happen if the student does not realize the course (or its equivalent) was already completed, such as through AP, dual credit, CC transfer class, etc. or that the two classes fulfill the same requirement.

Notes: Remedial/developmental coursework (average 15%)

- Remedial/developmental classes are problematic in several ways:
 - They do not apply to a degree/credential – at the native institution or in transfer.
 - Progression in other coursework can be hampered until all remedial/developmental courses are complete, lengthening the time to degree.
 - Students who need significant amounts of developmental education have lower retention rates, often leaving higher ed before they progress into degree-level courses.
 - Financial aid does not always cover these nonapplicable courses.
- The State of Illinois has been strongly encouraging institutions to restructure remedial/developmental education in favor of a corequisite model, thus resolving most current challenges to student success.
 - Over the next few years, either independently or as a result of legislation, it's likely Illinois higher education will do away with developmental courses that yield no applicable credit.

Notes: Orientation/student success courses (average 13%)

- Colleges and universities frequently offer, and sometimes require, first-year experience, student success, or college/program-specific orientation classes.
 - These classes are typically tied to retention/completion goals, provided during critical periods in the student's academic life.
 - In most cases the classes are weighted with very little credit (i.e., 1 hour).
 - Because they are typically institution-specific, even if accepted in transfer, they do not often fulfill degree requirements at receiving institutions.
- If they are similar enough to a required student success course at the receiving institution, they can be articulated to fulfill that graduation requirement.
 - Evaluating student success courses for transfer can have a significant impact on this category.

Notes: AP, IB, CLEP, A Level (average 12%)

- The most common issues with standardized test credit were twofold:
 - Specific courses, articulated as equivalent to the given standardized test score, may be different at the “transfer from” institution than it is at the “transfer to” institution.
 - This may result in unintentionally duplicated/repeated courses/requirements or in an excess accumulation of elective credit.
 - Students frequently neglected to submit scores to the receiving institution. This may be a result of:
 - Students and/or CC advisors misunderstanding the process by which standardized test credit is applied.
 - Students who feel academically ill-prepared deciding to take the actual course instead of relying on the test credit. (Often overlaps with duplicated/repeated courses/requirements.)

Notes: Prerequisite level Math (average 9%)

- Prerequisite level math refers to courses such as College Algebra, Pre-Calculus, Plane Trigonometry, etc. - that are pre-requisites for required degree program level math.
 - These courses ARE transferable – most often to a directly equivalent course at the receiving school.
 - They are not “lost credit” in the sense that they are *required* for placement in degree-program level mathematics.
 - They are not applicable to degree requirements and many students come to college with this level math completed in high school. To be clear, they are *not* remedial/developmental.
 - This ‘in between’ level of math is taken often enough that it is nearly 10% of the non-applicable coursework.

Notes: Grade unsatisfactory (average 7%)

- This category of non-applicable coursework varies widely among universities, depending upon admission standards.
 - Institutions with highly selective admissions – overall or by program – are less likely to admit transfer students with a significant portion of unsatisfactory grades. Therefore, are less likely to face this as a critical issue.
 - Institutions that serve students who are repositioning themselves academically, where admission standards may be more liberal, will face this category more frequently.
 - Institutions with liberal university-level admission standards, while offering some highly competitive programs, will see both types of academic experiences among their students.
 - This category often relates inversely with the category of duplicated/repeated courses.

Notes: Incomplete or non-evaluated coursework (average 6%)

- This category refers to coursework that requires independent review or evaluation at the time of admission.
- These issues are typically resolved during the students' first semester to provide for appropriate course progression.
- The most frequent examples are:
 - Coursework from out-of-state or private institutions that require review
 - Classes for which the student has not yet submitted official transcripts
 - Older courses that may be subject to acceptance depending on date range – usually a faculty decision depending on the subject and age of course.
 - Credit by prior learning assessment
 - Portfolio evaluation to determine proficiency of performance-based work

Notes: Full hours not accepted (average 4%)

- Generally, this category consists of three scenarios:
 - Partial credit was accepted up to the limit allowed for non-major electives
 - Partial credit was accepted up to overall transfer credit limits - programmatically or institutionally
 - Transferred courses were accepted as direct equivalent to a native course fulfilling a degree requirement, with the number of credits applied based on the receiving institution's course.

Notes: Excess credit

- Credit in excess of maximum limits:
 - In residence requirements
 - Special program accreditation requirements
- Excess credit per campus categorized by quantity:
 - Ranges 0–15, 16–30, 31–45, 46–60, greater than 60
 - Students with excess credit in the 0–15 range are *very common*
 - Students with a great deal of excess credit present a challenge to transfer processes
 - They are well worth the effort!

LONGITUDINAL IMPLICATIONS

- Early stages
- Themes
 - Students are graduating with the same major that they entered in with, for the most part
 - Vast majority have had 0 changes in credit degree-applicability at the point of admissions vs. graduation certification
 - Some changes have been for the better! i.e. courses evaluated prior to graduation
 - If a course no longer applies, we can dig deeper into specific themes (major, # of credits prior to transfer, institutional policies, advising, etc.)
- AP continues to be a point of interest

Discussion

- Ideas for future studies:
 - Continued longitudinal study to compare degree audits at time of admission to those at graduation in order to determine if/how credit may have been resolved.
 - Perform more frequently, as an effort to monitor changes



Questions?

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