

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 Poster

2840 - Defying Expectations: A Discussion of Transfer Students Who Outperformed Direct-Entry Students

Transition Programs and Supports, Credits and Degree Pathways

Despite having lower grade point averages upon entering, the transfer students in our study defied expectations and graduated at higher rates than their direct-entry peers at a transfer-friendly university in Ontario. These findings suggest that transfer students, and particularly “vertical” transfer students, can be supported to succeed above and beyond in the right environment. Our presentation will discuss these findings and propose some hypotheses about how universities can help transfer students succeed.

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Defying Expectations: Transfer Students Who Outperformed Direct-entry Students

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Abstract

Despite having lower grade point averages upon entering, the transfer students in our study defied expectations and graduated at higher rates than their direct-entry peers at a transfer-friendly university in Ontario. These findings suggest that transfer students, and particularly “vertical” transfer students, can be supported to succeed above and beyond in the right environment.

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Introduction

ONCAT launched the DataPilot initiative in 2020 to help postsecondary institutions gather transfer student enrolment data to assist them in learning more about this unique segment of their student population. In phase one, ONCAT staff help institutions collect, categorize, and analyze transfer student outcomes. In phase two, we compare this data with direct-entry students at the same institution.



College-University College-College University-College University-University Direct-Entry

Works Cited

Davies, S. & Pizarro Millan, R. (2020). A Statistical Portrait of Students in the TDSB-UT Linkage, Ontario Council on Articulation and Transfer: Toronto, ON. https://oncat.ca/sites/default/files/media-files/2020-04-a-statistical-portrait-of-transfer-students-in-the-tdsb-ut-linkage_0.pdf

Schudde, L., Bicak, I., & Meghan, S. (2022). Getting to the Core of Credit Transfer: How Do Pre-Transfer Core Credits Predict Baccalaureate Attainment for Community College Transfer Students? Educational Policy, 0895904821049415.

Shapiro, D., Dunder, A., Huie, F., Wakhungu, P. K., Yuan, X., Nathan, A., & Hwang, Y. (2017). Tracking Transfer: Measures of Effectiveness in Helping Community College Students to Complete Bachelor's Degrees/Signature Report No. 13, National Student Clearinghouse.

Spencer, G. (2019). Promoting the attainment-to-transfer pathway: Effects of transfer associate degree policies across states. The Review of Higher Education, 43(2), 553-580.

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Data and Methods

Through the partnership created in our DataPilot project, we gained access to two decades of student-level data (anonymized) to compare the performance of four types of transfer students (u-c, c-u, u-u, c-c) to direct-entry students. We used students' first-year GPAs and whether or not they graduated as targets for our analyses to be able to quantify student success.

We used a bivariate regression model to examine the relationship between transfer and first-year GPA with 2 sets of controls. Demographic controls included: age, gender, immigration status, first-generation post-secondary education status and mother tongue. Program-level controls included: average admitted GPA, field of study, degree type (3-year vs 4-year), semester admitted, and admitted credential.

A logistic regression model was used to examine the relationship between transfer and graduation rate, with the same controls.

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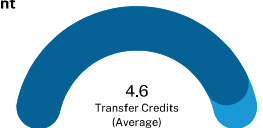
Results/Findings

After controlling for the demographic and program-level indicators, we found that transfer students from colleges have slightly lower GPAs on average (68.2%) than their direct-entry counterparts (68.7%) (without the controls, their roles are reversed, with college-university transfers having slightly higher GPAs).

When looking at graduation rates, college-university transfer students have a 4.6% higher rate of graduation compared to direct-entry students (60.7% vs 56.3%). When controlling for these factors, college-university transfers have a 10.6% greater likelihood of graduation (65.4% vs 54.8%).

	College - University Transfers	Direct-Entry Students
First-Year GPA*	68.2%	68.7%
Graduation Rate*	65.4%	54.8%
*After correcting for demographic and program level characteristics		

Trent



University of Toronto



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Discussion

One possible enabler for transfer student success is the number of transfer credits that students receive at Trent. On average, college-university transfers receive 4.6 transfer credits, while in another study, data from the University of Toronto (Davies, 2022) showed that their students received only 2.6 credits on average. In our study as well as Davies', positive associations were found between the number of transfer credits awarded and graduation outcomes.

For transfer students at Trent, the high percentage of articulated pathways (16%) could contribute to the higher graduation rates for college-university transfer as prior research has shown a relationship between prior degree completion, travelling articulated pathways, or completion of a block of core credits at the college level and improved graduation rates (Schudde, Bicak & Meghan, 2022; Shapiro et al. 2017; Spencer 2019).