

NISTS 2022

FROM MOMENT TO MOVEMENT: SHAPING THE FUTURE OF TRANSFER
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Research Spotlight

2329 - Growing Transfer in the Humanities: Characteristics and Motivations Associated With Major Choice

Matriculation Trends and Issues, Diversity and Inclusion

This mixed-methods research study focused on transfer and bachelor's-degree attainment of community college students with interests in the humanities within a multi-college, urban university system. The study reveals student characteristics associated with major selection, transfer, and bachelor's degree attainment, and suggests ways institutions can create or strengthen their **Heather Domonoske**, *Coordinator, Transfer* humanities-focused degree pipelines in order to facilitate transfer student outcomes.

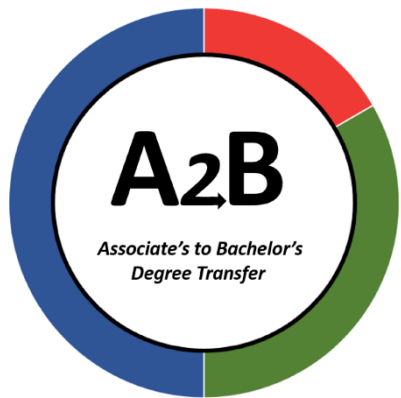
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City University of New York (CUNY), Office of Applied Research, Evaluation, and Data Analytics



Growing Transfer in the Humanities: Characteristics and Motivations That are Associated With Major Selection



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The City University of New York
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Overview of Growing Transfer in the Humanities (GROWTH)

- There is a lack of programs in facilitating transfer to humanities bachelor's programs for community college students compared to those for STEM transfer students.
- Students who begin their postsecondary careers with a focus on the humanities in community colleges may face disadvantages that challenge their persistence to completion and consequently decreases the number and diversity of humanities bachelor's-degree recipients, and possibly of more advanced-degree recipients as well.
- GROWTH uses a combination of quantitative and qualitative methods to investigate whether humanities students are disadvantaged in their pursuit of a bachelor's degree in the CUNY system. We look at associations between student outcomes and characteristics of potential bachelor's-degree recipients at community colleges.

Presentation Overview

1. Research Background
2. Qualitative Research Findings, Rhina Torres
3. Quantitative Research Findings, David Wutchiett
4. Next Steps

Overview of Research Population: City University of New York

- One Board of Trustees and one budget
- 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

*Not included in this study

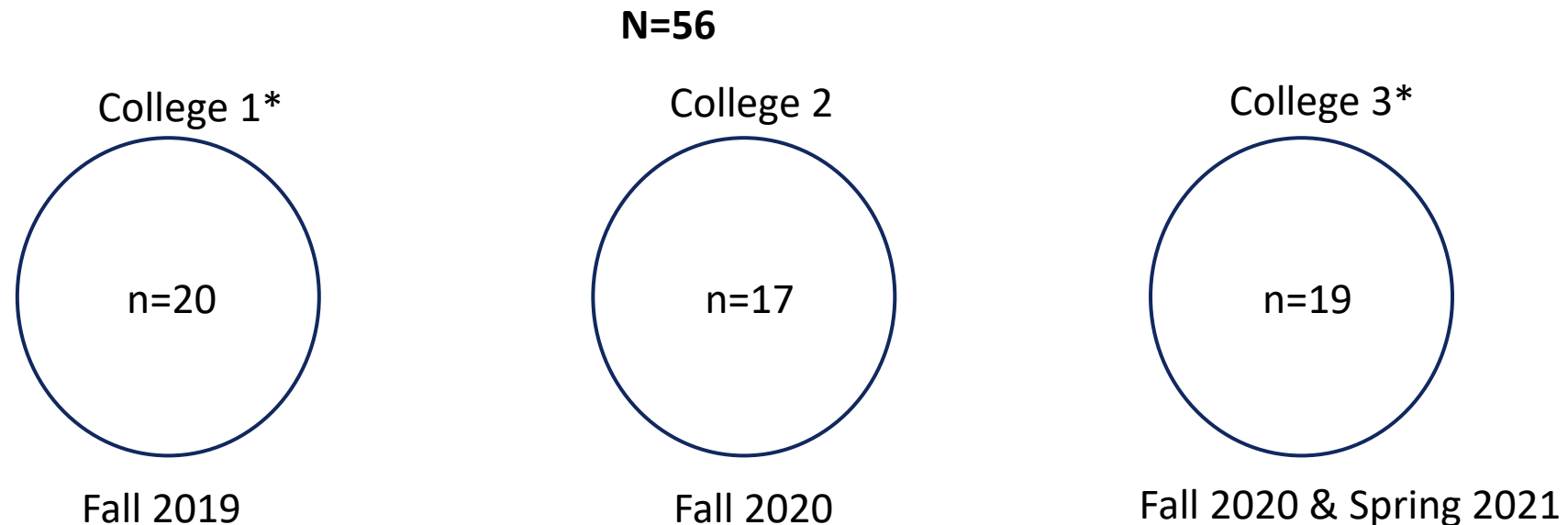
Key Research Questions

1. What information or knowledge do students have about the humanities disciplines?
2. What are community college students' motivations behind their major selection?
3. Do community college students receive encouragement or discouragement to pursue humanities majors?
4. Are there challenges associated with majoring in the humanities disciplines?
5. Are there differences in outcomes between humanities and STEM majors originating at community colleges?

Qualitative Research Methodology

Goal: Learn about major selection motivations, as well as the transfer and career aspirations of humanities-interested students.

Method: Nine focus group interviews at three CUNY community colleges with students that expressed interest in the humanities, declared a major in the humanities, or completed three or more courses in the humanities.



**College offered humanities-focused options at the time of interviews.*

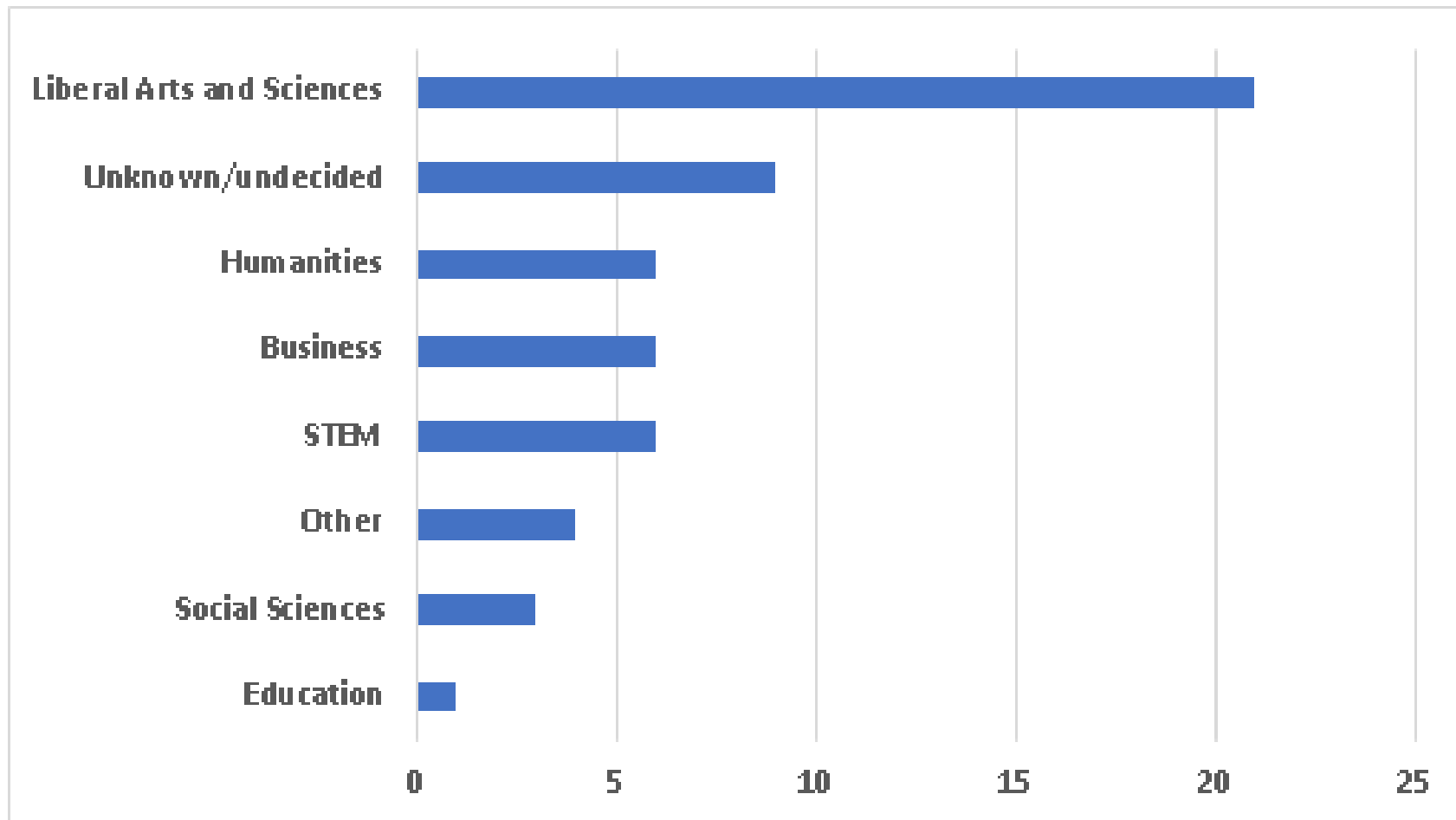
Focus Group Participants Characteristics

N=56

Characteristic	%
Male	32.1%
Female	66.1%
Gender Unknown	1.8%
Hispanic	55.4%
Black	33.9%
White	5.3%
Asian	3.5%
Race Unknown	1.9%
Pell Recipient	50%

Characteristic	Mean	Min.	Max.
Age	23	18	41
Accumulated Credits	32	0	59

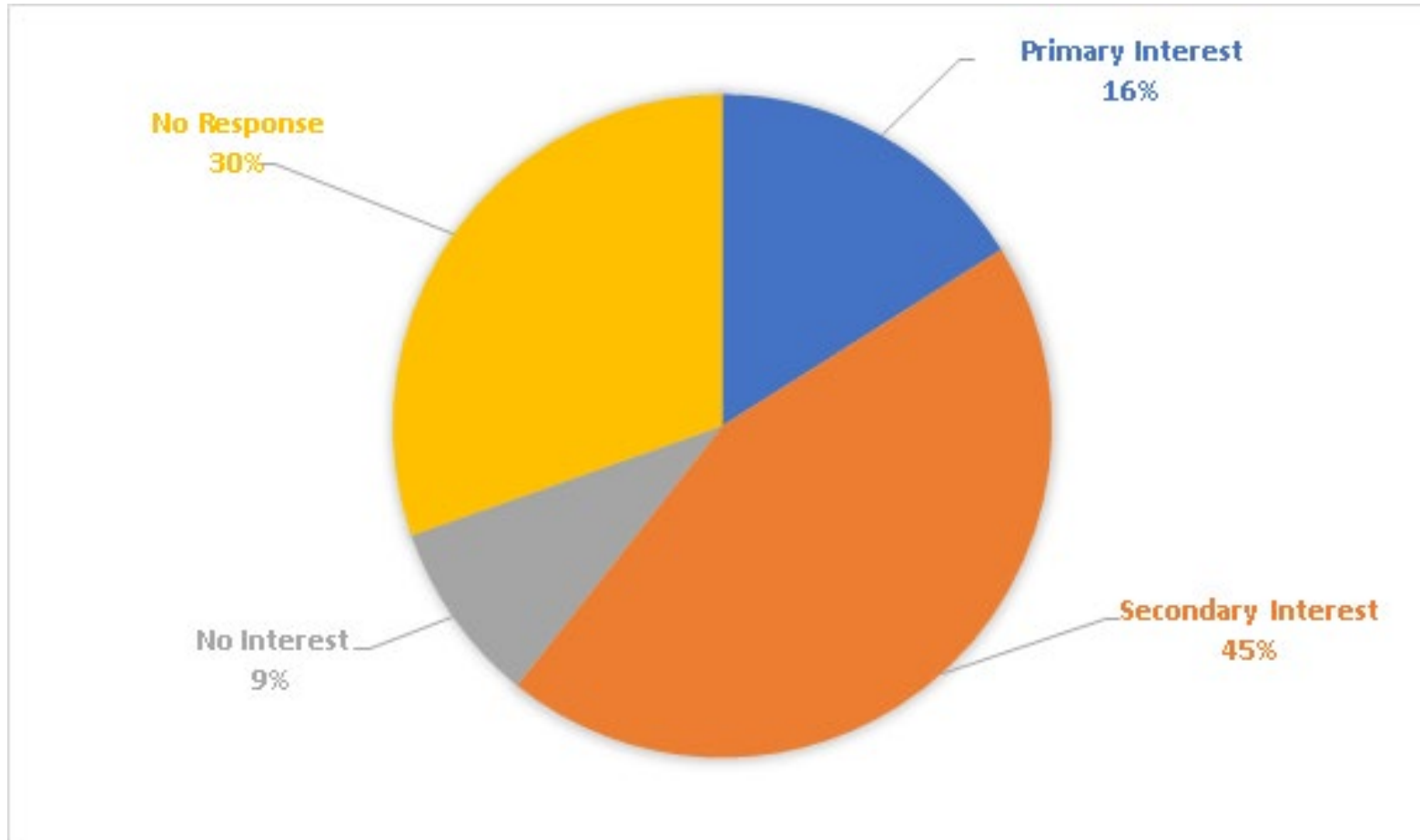
Self-Reported Major Count of Focus Group Participants N=56



11% of students self-reported as a humanities major

Student Interest in the Humanities Disciplines

N=56



- **Primary Interest:** Students that intend on declaring a humanities upon transfer to a bachelor's program.
- **Secondary Interest:** Students with an interest in humanities coursework, but do not intend to pursue it as a major upon transfer to a bachelor's program.

Findings: Student Knowledge About the Humanities Disciplines

Students have an incomplete or an erroneous understanding of the humanities disciplines, their related majors, and application to the labor market. However, they are cognizant of the skills and competencies they develop.

- When asked directly about the humanities disciplines, some students confused it with the social sciences (e.g., psychology, sociology, anthropology), incorrectly associated the discipline with other majors, or did not know what they were. (n=17)
- Students have insufficient information about the related industries, careers, occupational outcomes for humanities majors that go beyond teaching, the academy, and the arts. (n=8)
- Students acknowledge that the humanities disciplines develop critical thinking, effective communication, and collaboration skills. (n=13)

Findings: Students With a Declared Humanities Major

- Some of the students that declared a humanities major shared that their motivations were based on life-long passions and interests, while others stated that they did this strategically. (n=9)
- Students that chose a humanities major strategically stated they did so because their major of choice was unavailable at the college. Instead, they selected a major that was closely related, such as English, and expressed intention to pursue a different major upon transfer a bachelor's college. These students desire to pursue majors in Psychology, Journalism, and Mass Communication at the bachelor's college. (n=4)
- Students that declared a major in the humanities at the community college and intended to pursue this major after transfer stated that multiple career and occupational outcomes were reason for their selection. (n=7)

Findings: Humanities as a Secondary Interest

Although some students value the key skills, competencies, and knowledge that humanities courses develop, their interest in related coursework was not strong enough to pursue it as a major.

- These students stated that prevailing interest in other majors, low competitiveness edge in the labor market, low wages, and incomplete information about occupational and career outcomes dissuade them from pursuing a humanities major as their primary course of study. (n=25)
- Other students expressed that their negative perception of their writing skills dissuaded their interest. (n=4)
- Nonetheless, students expressed desire to take additional humanities coursework because it advances their career prospects and supports their overall development. (n=6)

Findings: Students Uninterested in the Humanities

- Students that expressed a lack of interest in humanities majors stated that these majors are “too concentrated” in a particular subject area, are not engaging enough, and yield lower earnings compared to other majors. (n=5)

Summary of Focus Group Findings

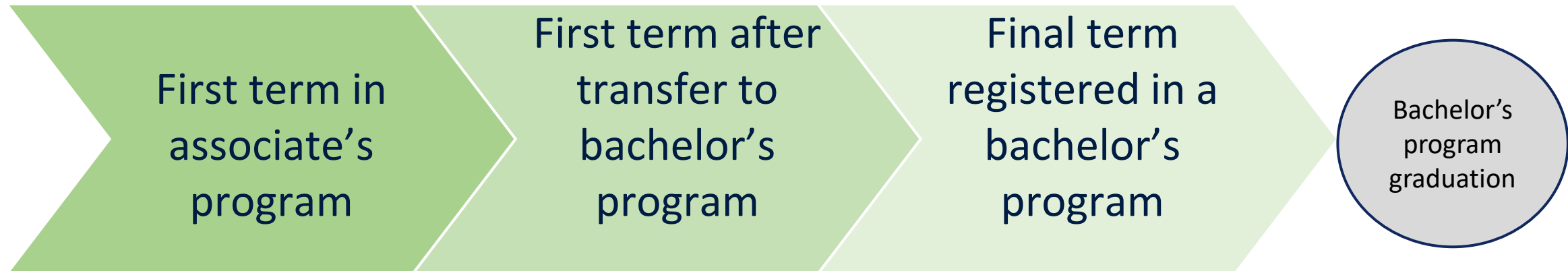
- Students have incorrect and incomplete assumptions about the humanities disciplines as it relates to its related majors.
- Students recognize the value of the humanities disciplines.
- Students have incomplete information about the applicability of the humanities disciplines to the labor market.
- Students have incomplete information about career and occupational outcomes for humanities majors.
- Students go against their humanities interest and choose majors that they perceive to have greater value to employers.

Data

- Population: All CUNY associate's degree seeking first-time freshmen who began Fall 2014.
 - Only included students at Community Colleges (institutions only granting associate's degrees).
 - 19,154 students
- Using the CUNY Central Office's institutional research databases, we were able to access student information including:
 - Term-based longitudinal academic information
 - Student major, Cumulative GPA, Semester GPA, College of enrollment
 - Characteristics upon entry to CUNY
 - Subject-based remedial need, High School GPA, Family Income (from FAFSA)
 - Demographics
 - Age, Gender, Race/Ethnicity

Quantitative Study: Student Major Across Time

Major declared at three different points in time:



- This allowed us to examine the pathways students took in ultimately becoming humanities majors at the bachelor's college and examine relationships between student major and key academic outcomes.

Major Classification

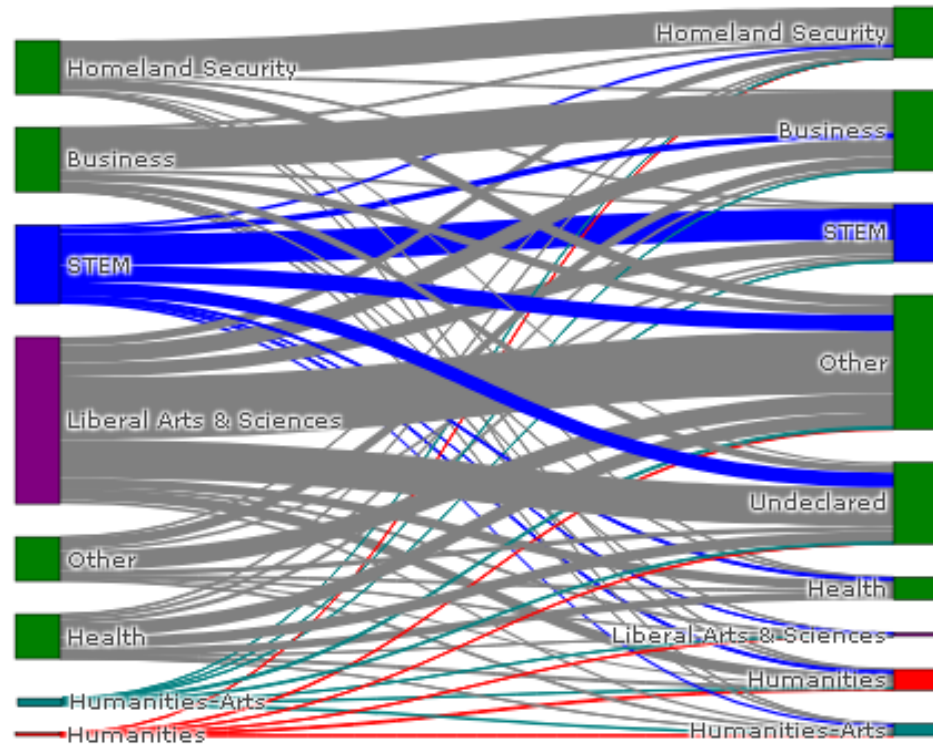
- Humanities:
 - Definition from the National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH):
 - Religion, Archeology, Philosophy, Arts (including Fine and Visual and Performing Arts), Cultural Studies, Language and Literature, and History.
- STEM:
 - With four large subcategories: Science, Technology, Engineering, Math.
- Liberal Arts & Sciences
- Health, Business, Homeland Security or Criminal Justice, Other, & Undeclared

Major Selection Trajectories: Associate's Major to Bachelor's Major

- N= 5614

Associate's Major

Bachelor's Major

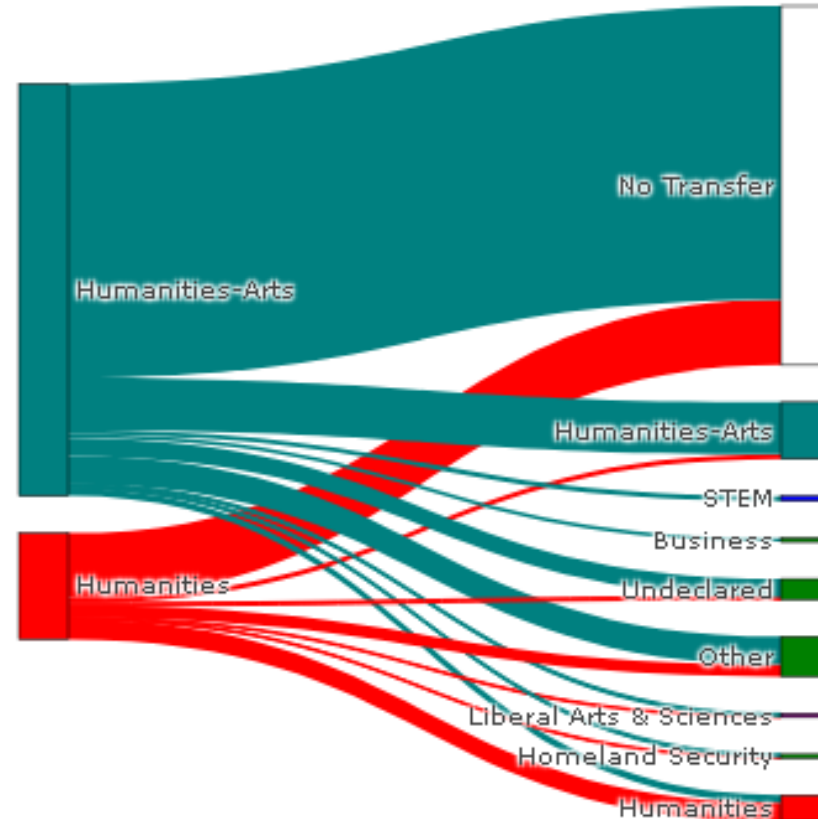


Transfer Outcomes of Humanities Majors in Associate's Program to Bachelor's Program

- 337 humanities majors in visual and performing arts
- 88 all other humanities majors

Associate's Major

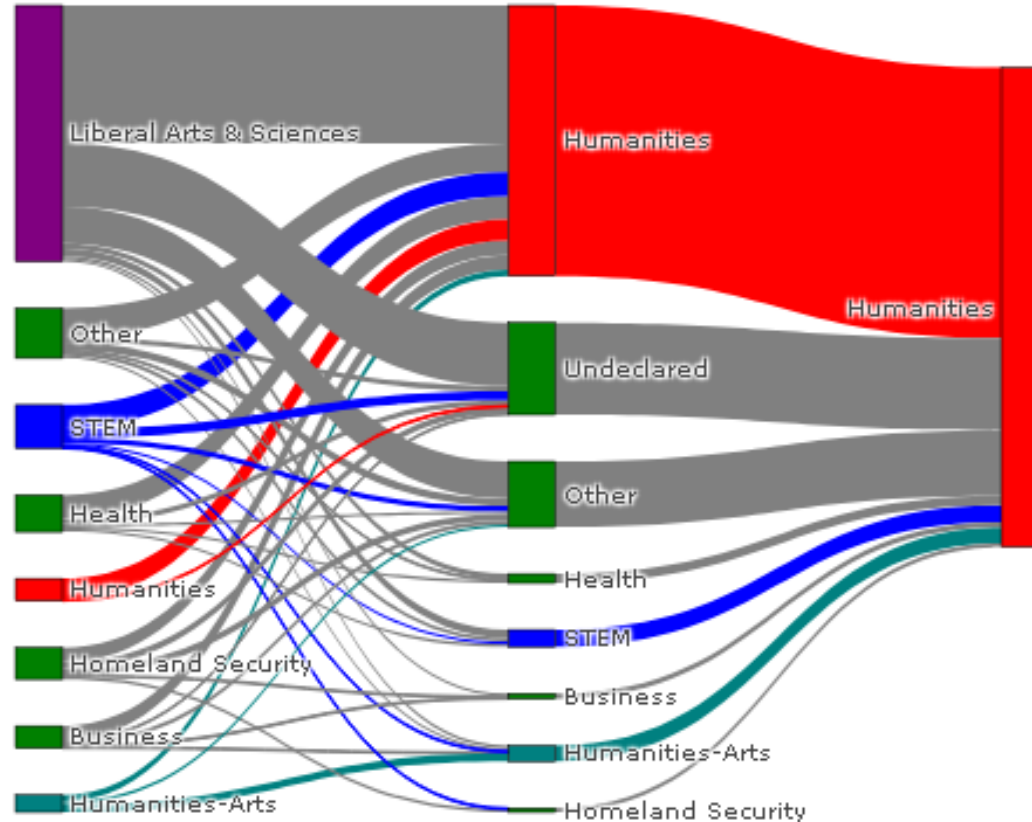
Bachelor's Major



Humanities Majors at Final Term in Bachelor's Program

- N = 365

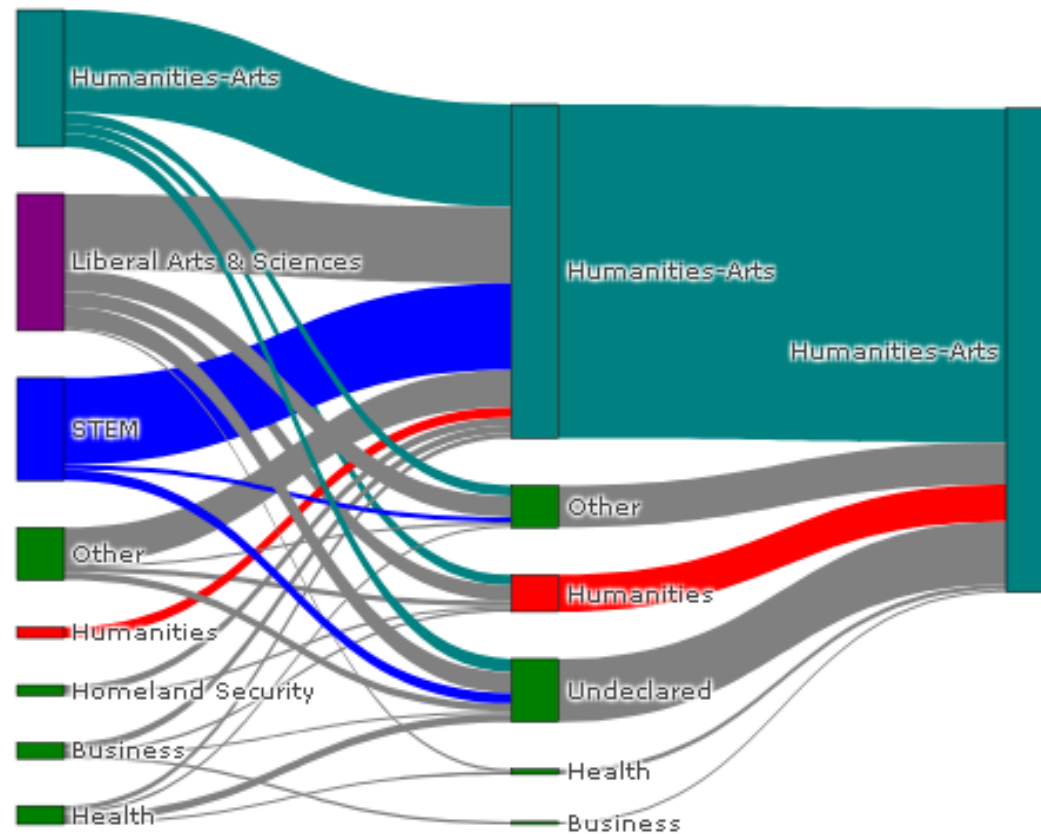
Associate's Major 1st Term Bachelor's Major Final Bachelor's Major



Bachelor's Major Outcomes for Humanities-Arts Majors in Associate's Program

- N = 184

Associate's Major 1st Term Bachelor's Major Final Bachelor's Major



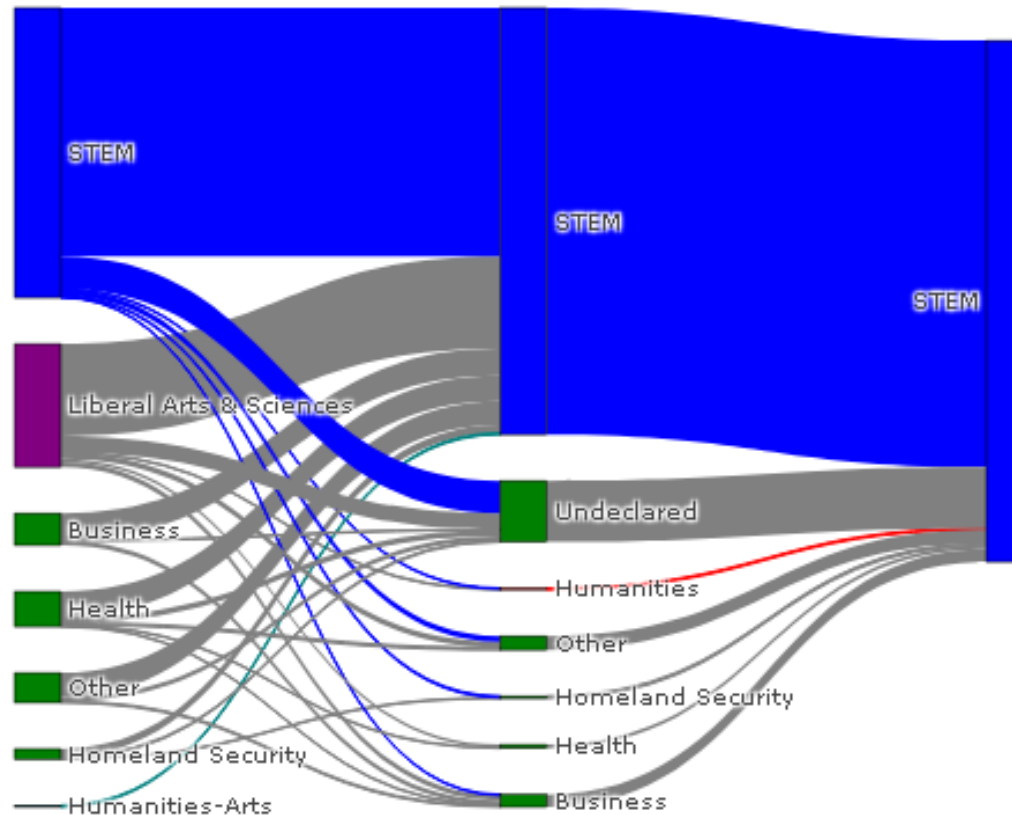
Final Bachelor's Major STEM

- N = 716

Associate's Major

1st Term Bachelor's Major

Final Bachelor's Major



Quantitative Study: Longitudinal Analysis

- Humanities students may face challenges in achieving their academic goals – especially given there are few structured programs facilitating transfer to humanities bachelor's programs.
- Key questions:
 - Can we identify challenges associated with majoring in humanities programs?
 - Considering STEM students have highly structured major selection and transfer pathways, are there differences in outcomes between humanities and STEM majors?
 - What generally facilitates and impedes students' success on the path to transfer and graduation?
 - Is financial aid or family income was associated with major selection?

Methodology and Student Outcomes of Interest

Estimated regression models (logistic and linear) to evaluate the associations between key student characteristics and outcomes

1. Transfer to a bachelor's program
 2. First term GPA in bachelor's program
 3. Selection of Humanities major upon transfer to bachelor's program
 4. Graduation from bachelor's program
- Emphasis upon comparison between humanities and STEM majors

2014 Cohort Characteristics: Major Declared in Associate's Program

Humanities	2.20%
-Humanities-Arts	1.80%
Liberal Arts & Sciences	34.30%
STEM	17.30%
-STEM-Engineering	2.40%
-STEM-Math	0.30%
-STEM-Technology	8.10%
Homeland Security	11.40%
Business	12.40%
Health	12%
Other Majors	10.30%

- Since fall 2014, **29.3%** of the cohort successfully transferred to a CUNY bachelor's program.

2014 Cohort Characteristics: Financial Aid & Family Income

Variable	Mean (%)	SD	Min	Max
Total Family Income	28557.76	34249.37	-22513	999999
Pell First Term Associate's	74.60%	NA	0	1
Total Grant Award Associate's	10657.92	9713.011	0	64730.4
Total Terms Associate's	4.705	2.929	1	24
% Associate's Terms Received Grants (0-1)	0.713	0.364	0	1
Associate's First Term GPA	2.269	1.232	0	4
Associate's First Term Credits Passed	6.702	5.093	0	25

2014 Cohort Characteristics: Student Demographics

Variable	% (mean)
Male	47.80%
Age	20.38
Remedial Math	75.40%
Remedial Reading	25.70%
Remedial Writing	31.70%
Foreign HS	6.80%
Non-DOE non-Foreign HS	19.10%
White	12.90%
Black	29.50%
American Indian	0.50%
Hispanic	42.90%
Asian	14.10%

Results: Transfer to Bachelor's Program

	odds ratio	2.50%	97.50%
Constant	0.58	0.46	0.74
STEM - Science	<i>referent</i>		
Humanities	1.19	0.70	2.00
Humanities - Arts	0.59	0.33	1.06
Liberal Arts & Sciences	0.88	0.75	1.03
STEM - Engineering	0.67	0.50	0.90
STEM - Math	1.63	0.86	3.12
STEM - Technology	0.80	0.66	0.98
Business	1.06	0.89	1.26
Health	0.65	0.54	0.77
Homeland Security	1.22	1.02	1.46
Other	0.78	0.65	0.94

	odds ratio	2.50%	97.50%
Black	0.64	0.57	0.73
Hispanic	0.68	0.60	0.77
Asian	0.91	0.79	1.04
Native American	0.71	0.43	1.16
Male	0.71	0.66	0.77
Age	0.64	0.59	0.69
Age^2	1.30	1.21	1.39
Remedial Math	0.77	0.70	0.84
Remedial Reading	0.92	0.83	1.03
Remedial Writing	0.90	0.81	1.00
Non-DOE Non-Foreign HS	0.91	0.82	1.01
Foreign HS	1.65	1.42	1.94
Credits Passed	1.69	1.60	1.79
GPA	1.92	1.82	2.04
Family Income	1.31	1.25	1.37
Total Grants	1.70	1.62	1.79
N Terms Associate's	1.32	1.26	1.39

Results: Humanities Major Selection in First Term at Bachelor's Program

- Humanities associate's majors very high probability of selecting Humanities major at bachelor's level
- More likely to select humanities bachelor's major:
 - Associate's majors:
 - Liberal Arts & Sciences
 - "Other" majors
 - STEM - Technology
 - More credits upon transfer
- Less likely:
 - Remedial need in writing
 - Foreign High School
- $R^2 = .226$

Results: First-Term Bachelor's GPA

- Constant: 2.48 GPA

- GPA at transfer (standardized) (.43)

- Credits at transfer (standardized) (.04)
- STEM – Engineering associate's Major (.2)
- Black race/ethnicity (-.14)

- Bachelor's Major (STEM-Science major as referent)
 - Humanities (.42)
 - Homeland Security (.42)
 - Business (.18)
 - Health (.35)
 - Other (.2)

- $R^2 = .103$

Results: Graduation from Bachelor's Program

- Final bachelor's majors:
 - Humanities majors more likely than STEM majors to graduate
 - Non-humanities, non-STEM other majors more likely to graduate than STEM majors
- STEM associate's majors were more likely to graduate than Business, Homeland Security, Health and Liberal Arts & Sciences associate's majors
- Students who began as bachelor's majors in Homeland Security or Business were more likely to graduate

Results: Graduation from Bachelor's Program

- Less likely:
 - Black or Hispanic
 - Male
 - Age
 - Double majors
 - More terms in associate's program
- More likely:
 - Higher first term bachelor's GPA
 - GPA at transfer
 - Credits at transfer
- $R^2 = .163$

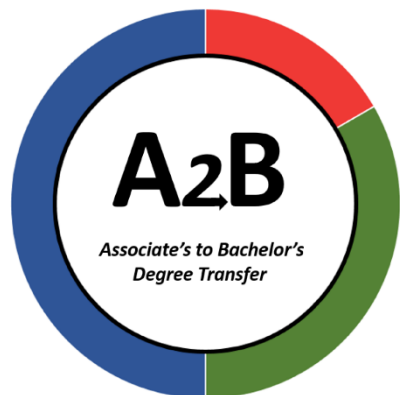
Conclusions

- There are few students who begin in associate's programs specifically within humanities majors. Instead, they tend to come from Liberal Arts and Sciences majors as well as a variety of other majors.
- Conversely, STEM majors tend to be STEM majors across stages of academic career.
- Financial aid increases probability of transfer.
- Bachelor's humanities majors tend to do better in terms of GPA in first term post-transfer compared to STEM majors.
- Bachelor's humanities majors are more likely to graduate than STEM majors however a STEM associate's major improves likelihood of graduation.

Future Research

- Expand to 5 cohorts: 2012-2016
- Analysis of only humanities students
- Further comparisons between humanities majors and other major subgroups

Thank you!



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A2B (Associate's to Bachelor's) website:

<https://www.cuny.edu/about/administration/offices/oira/policy/a2b/>