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One third of college students are on the move

By [Lynn O'Shaughnessy](#)

College students are not staying put.

One out of three students ends up transferring to another college or university at least once. That is one of the surprising conclusions of a [report](#) released on Tuesday by the [National Student Clearinghouse Research Center](#).

The exhaustive report examined the migration patterns of nearly 2.8 million full and part-time college students of all ages during a five-year period ending in 2011. The transfer rates were nearly identical for full and part-time students.

What was fascinating about the study was that the most popular destinations for [transfer students](#) were [community colleges](#). This was true for students who are attending private and public four-year institutions. Roughly half of all [transfer students](#) who left a four-year institution ended up moving to a two-year college.

College students who transfer

Here are more characteristics of students who transfer:

37% transfer in their second year.

13% transfer in their fourth year.

9% transfer in their fifth year.

25% transfer more than once.

29% of students who transferred from a four-year public university did so more than once.

27% transfer across state lines.

43% transfer into a public two-year college.

Why are college students on the move?

The report didn't address why community colleges are such popular destinations for transfer students, but I can think of a couple of obvious reasons.

No. 1. Some students who start at more expensive schools end up concluding that the price tag is too high. The thrill of getting into a dream school can fade after a family faces steep monthly tuition payments.

No. 2. Some students just aren't ready for college-level work. Private and public two-year colleges are better equipped to help with remedial work.

Bottom line:

It's inevitable that some college students will have to transfer, but the percentage who select this route seems excessive. The high numbers of students who transfer suggests to me that too many teenagers are making the wrong initial college choices.

Transfer student image courtesy of flickr user Skrewtape.

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