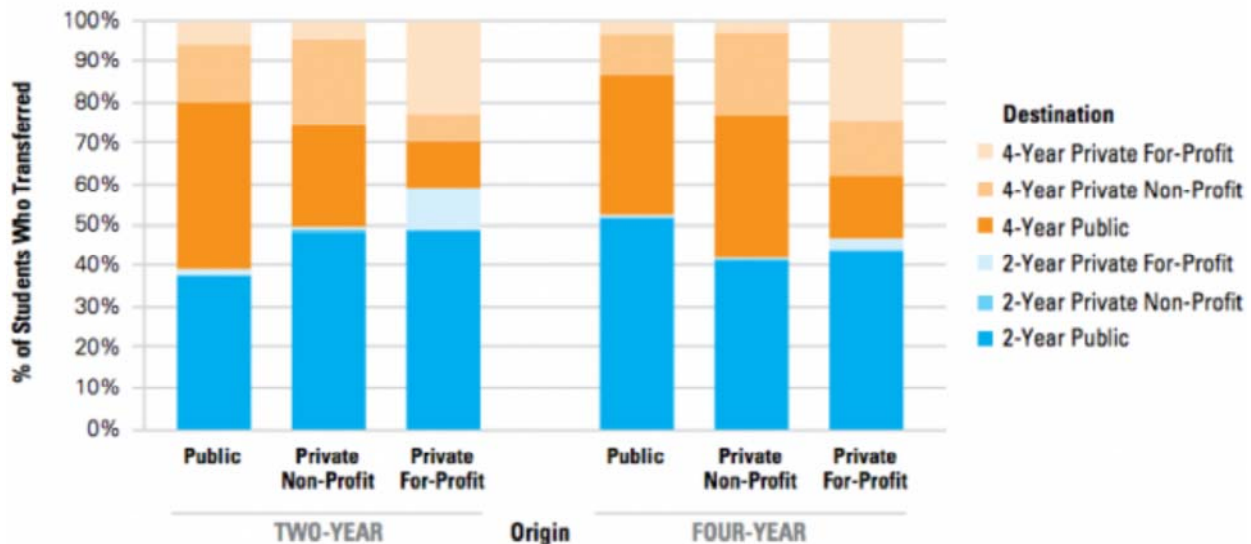


## Changing Gears

# The Rise Of The Reverse-Transfer In American Colleges

**Figure B: Origin and Destination of Initial Transfer by Institution Sector and Control**



*More than half of students who transfer from four-year public universities head to two-year community colleges.*

Today, Changing Gears' Kate Davidson has [the first in a two-part report on the growing burden of student debt.](#)

We typically think that going to college is all about getting that four-year degree. And we see community colleges as a stepping stone to get there. But [a new report released yesterday shows that's not the path for many college students in America.](#)

In fact, a surprisingly large number of students actually transfer *from* four-year institutions *into* two year community colleges.

The info comes from the [National Student Clearinghouse](#) and Indiana University's Project on Academic Success. NSC directly tracks 93 percent of all college enrollments in this country. The study followed the entire class of students, of all ages, who started college in 2006.

A third of all students had at least one transfer. Of those who transferred from a public four-year institution, more than half went to a two-year community college. The study says:

*Of all first-time students who started at a four-year institution, 17 percent transferred to a two year institution within five years. Reverse transfers is an under-researched topic and the reasons behind such mobility have not been thoroughly studied. Taking a few classes at a community college that count towards a degree completion can be a good decision for the student and not harmful to his/her baccalaureate attainment. However, a permanent reverse transfer may indicate a significant student-institution mismatch or change in student goals. For example, some students may have opted to earn more technical- or skills-oriented two-year degrees or certificates during their academic career.*

What do you think is behind this trend? Are students simply trying to save money on their credits, or are they deciding a bachelor's degree isn't for them? And what does it mean for our economy?

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