

Review nationwide student transfer behavior

National Student Clearinghouse report shows high student mobility

Federal data on student persistence tells whether first-time, full-time students stayed enrolled at the institution where they started their degrees. But most people who work in higher education realize that's only part of the story.

In fact, one-third of all students who enrolled for the first time in 2006 transferred at least once in five years, according to a report recently released by the National Student Clearinghouse Research Center.

Lawmakers rely on the federal data when they create public policies, said Don Hossler, one of the authors of *Transfer and Mobility: A National View of Pre-Degree Student Mobility in Postsecondary Institutions*. He's executive director of the Research Center and professor of educational leadership and policy studies at Indiana University at Bloomington.

But studies like this one could help legislators think about student success in a broader way, rather than just considering whether students persisted at the institutions where they started, Hossler said.

Besides revealing that one-third of all students transferred, key findings included that:

➤ **Transfer rates were similar at two-year, four-year, public and private institutions.** The rates ranged from 32.6 to 34.4 percent at those institutions. The exception was for-profit institutions, which had lower transfer rates. The rates were 16.3 percent for two-year and 19.6 for four-year for-profit institutions.

➤ **Two-year public institutions were the most popular transfer destination.** About half of the students who transferred from four-year institutions then enrolled in two-year colleges. However, students who started at two-year public colleges were the exception: They transferred most often to four-year public institutions. But even among those students, 38 percent of those who transferred enrolled at other two-year public institutions.

Consider these takeaways from research

Knowing that about one-third of all students transfer, you should make checking students' previous enrollment part of your process. Not all students reveal that they attended another institutions, said Don Hossler, executive director of the National Student Clearinghouse's Research Center and professor of educational leadership and policy studies at Indiana University at Bloomington.

"Trust but verify," Hossler said.

Plus, advocate for policies that can help transfer students enjoy a seamless experience, Hossler said. ■

➤ **Students were most likely to transfer in their second year.** About 37 percent of students who transferred did so that year. But about 16 percent of students transferred before enrolling for their second fall. And many students transferred later. About 13 percent of students who transferred did so in the fourth year. And at community colleges, 17 percent of students who transferred out did so for the first time in the fourth year, and 11 percent transferred in the fifth.

➤ **Overall transfer rates were similar for full- and part-time students.** But almost 20 percent of full-time students left the first year, compared with just 10 percent of part-timers.

➤ **About 27 percent of students who transferred went to institutions in a different state.** Students from four-year private institutions were most likely to cross state lines, with 45 percent of transfer students doing so.

To download the report, you may go to www.studentclearinghouse.info/signature. ■

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