

NATIONAL STUDENT CLEARINGHOUSE®

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

CONTACT:

Paula Newbaker

703-742-3262

media@studentclearinghouse.org

Dear Old Alma Mater Changes Over Time: Over One-Third of College Students Transfer to a Different Institution

Herndon, Virginia, February 28, 2012 – According to a new [Signature Report](#) released by the National Student Clearinghouse® Research Center™, one-third of all first-time students who began their postsecondary education in 2006 transferred (prior to obtaining a degree or certificate) to a different institution within a five-year period. The report, *Transfer and Mobility: A National View of Pre-Degree Student Movement in Postsecondary Institutions*, examines student transfer and mobility over a span of five years from the fall of 2006 through the summer of 2011. The report is based on data from the National Student Clearinghouse, which facilitates the exchange and understanding of student enrollment, performance, and related information. Included in the analysis are students from more than 3,300 U.S. postsecondary institutions educating nearly 94 percent of the nation's enrollment.

Major report findings include:

- One-third of all students transferred at least once within five years
- The majority of transfers and mobility occurred in students' second year
- The most prevalent transfer destination was public two-year institutions – this was true even amongst students who started at a four-year institution
- Transfer and mobility rates were similar for part- and full-time students
- Over one-quarter of all transfers crossed state lines

The term “transfer” in this report is defined as enrollment subsequent to the fall 2006 term in an institution different from the institution in which the student was enrolled during fall 2006 (the origin institution), provided that the student was not also concurrently enrolled at the origin institution and had not already completed a degree or certificate.

This analysis is unique in that it includes both part- and full-time students of all ages in all institution types – nearly 2.8 million students. It counts students without duplication, even when the same student was enrolled in more than one institution at the same time.

The report shows that most students follow complex pathways throughout their college careers and many studies acknowledge this complexity. Much of our knowledge about enrollment patterns is informed by institutional reports of the number of students who enter as transfers, as opposed to first-time freshmen. Students who leave are often counted as lost due to attrition. Consequently, we lack the complete story of where students came from and what happens when they leave. In other words, when studies follow institutions as opposed to students, they can talk about where students start, but not where they go.

NATIONAL STUDENT CLEARINGHOUSE®

This report fills the gap by following students as they move from one institution to the next. It recognizes that all institutions play a role in each student's educational career. With this new view, in which the students are the unit of analysis and institutions are viewed as stepping stones along a diverse set of education paths, new approaches and metrics emerge, better informing students and institutions about the range of successful enrollment patterns.

"Our findings indicate that more sophisticated ways of measuring student transfer behaviors and institutional effectiveness are needed," stated Dr. Don Hossler, Executive Director, Research Center. "Institutions and policymakers should focus on strategies that can facilitate success as students make choices about different postsecondary paths. Similarly, states must be able to distinguish between true nonpersisters and out-of-system or out-of-state transfers."

"Our Signature Report series continues to provide information to the higher education community using student-level data, which sheds light on student behavior in new ways," said Rick Torres, President and CEO of the National Student Clearinghouse. "By continuing to supply this type of analysis, we can help postsecondary institutions, state governments, and other entities shape policy."

The Signature Report series serves as a national resource for the continued study of student pathways and college enrollment patterns and has immediate relevance for institutional, state, and federal policy. Written specifically for public and institutional policymakers, the Signature Reports provide comparison data that reveal patterns and valuable insights on students' postsecondary access, persistence, and other success outcomes. The first [Signature Report](#) detailed the Great Recession's impact on higher education enrollment and persistence. Later in 2012, the Clearinghouse will release a third Signature Report focusing on college completion rates nationwide.

About the National Student Clearinghouse

The National Student Clearinghouse (a non-profit formed in 1993) is the unique and trusted source for higher education enrollment and degree verifications. The Clearinghouse serves as a single point of contact for the collection and timely exchange of accurate and comprehensive enrollment, degree, and certificate records on behalf of its more than 3,300 participating higher education institutions, which represent 96 percent of all students in public and private U.S. institutions. The Clearinghouse also provides thousands of high schools and districts with continuing collegiate enrollment, progression, and completion statistics on their alumni.

Through its verification and reporting services, the Clearinghouse saves the education community cumulatively nearly four hundred million dollars annually. Most Clearinghouse services are provided to colleges and universities at little or no charge, including enhanced transcript and research services, enabling institutions to redistribute limited staff and budget resources to more important student service efforts. Clearinghouse services are designed to facilitate an institution's compliance with the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act, The Higher Education Act, and other applicable laws.

In addition, the Clearinghouse provides accurate, timely enrollment and degree verifications to student loan providers, employers, student credit issuers, the U.S. Department of Education, and others who access its registry more than half a billion times annually.

For more information, visit www.studentclearinghouse.org.

-###-