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## ABSTRACT

For the past 10 years, the Center for the Study of Community Colleges has been tracing the rate of transfer from the two-year colleges to four-year colleges and universities across the nation. In order to derive a transfer rate, the number of students enrolled at the college, subdivided according to certain criteria, must be divided into the number who matriculate at the senior institutions. In the past, individual college, university systems, and state agencies have provided the data; however, for the 1999 Transfer Assembly, data were exclusively provided by state agencies. Thirteen states, which included 345 colleges, participated in the 1999 Transfer Assembly. Of the students who entered in 1993 with no prior college experience, 50.7% completed 12+ credits at the community college and, of that group, 23.4% transferred to an in-state, public university within four years by fall 1997. These results are consistent with previous years' studies, which ranged from 21.5% to 23.7%. This project has continued to reaffirm that about 22% of the students who begin their postsecondary studies at a community college and complete at least four credit courses at that institution enroll in a public in-state four-year college or university within four years. These consistent findings demonstrate that community colleges are effectively serving as the main point of entry to postsecondary Education for a sizable percentage of students. (VWC)

# 1999 Transfer Assembly

## *Center for the Study of Community Colleges*

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## **Background**

- ♦ For the past ten years, the Center for the Study of Community Colleges has been tracing the rate of transfer from the two-year colleges to four-year colleges and universities across the nation.
- ♦ The Transfer Assembly project began in an attempt to establish a firmly incorporated method of defining transfer.
- ♦ The Center aspired toward an agreeable way of calculating a transfer rate so that colleges, universities and state agencies could report data uniformly and according to the firmly incorporated definition.
- ♦ Interestingly, the consistency in the Center's transfer rate has been one of the most notable findings of the Transfer Assembly.

## **General Purpose**

- ♦ When this project began, the general purpose was to create a consistent way of estimating the community colleges' contribution to students' progress toward the baccalaureate degree and ten years later, this still holds true.

## **Research Question**

- ♦ Each year that the Transfer Assembly is conducted and corresponding to the general purpose of this project, the Center sets out to answer this specific research question: What is the community colleges' contribution to their students' progress toward the baccalaureate?

## Definition

- ♦ Early on, it was agreed that the definition employed by the Transfer Assembly for calculating transfer should be valid, easily understandable, and based on data that are readily obtainable.
- ♦ As a result, a simple measure emerged; namely—a percentage—which would become known as the transfer rate. In order to derive a transfer rate, the number of students enrolled at the college, subdivided according to certain criteria, must be divided into the number who matriculate at the senior institutions.
- ♦ As such, the actual transfer rate definition that the Center uses is: *all students entering the two-year college in a given year who have no prior college experience and who complete at least 12 college credit units within four years, divided into the number of that group who take one or more classes at a public, in-state university within four years.*

## Methodology

- ♦ In the past, individual colleges, university systems, and state agencies have provided the data; however, for the 1999 Transfer Assembly, data were exclusively provided by state agencies. Thirteen states, which included 345 colleges, participated in the 1999 Transfer Assembly.

## Results

- ♦ Of the students who entered in 1993 with no prior college experience, 50.7% completed 12+ credits at the community college and of that group 23.4% transferred to an in-state, public university within four years—by fall 1997.

## **Comparison**

- ♦ As expected, the current results are consistent with previous years' studies.
- ♦ And for the past ten years, we've seen a range from 21.5 percent to 23.7 percent.

## **Contributing Factors**

- ♦ Although the Center cannot disclose states' transfer rates because of a promise of confidentiality, marked variance between states was noted.
- ♦ According to Cohen (1997), many factors contribute to the this variance including differing community demographics, the emphasis that the colleges place on students transfer, the fit between college and university programs, and the proximity of a state college or university.

## **Limitations**

- ♦ Before I offer the implications for this study, it is only fair to share some of the limitations. First and foremost, the transfer rate obtained from the Transfer Assembly actually understates the community colleges' contributions to the baccalaureate.
- ♦ Also, for the most part, few states have accessible databases tracking students to private or out-of-state four-year institutions and of course, this leads to an undercount since, as you'll recall, the Transfer Assembly definition only takes public, in-state institutions into account.

- ◆ Moreover, the four-year time span results in an additional limitation, as many students require five or more years to transfer to a four-year institution. Still, the four-year period allows sufficient time for a college to plot the major effects of its program modifications. And finally, the data must be cut off somewhere and four-years seem pretty reasonable especially since community college students are potential transfers until they either matriculate at a four-year institution or die.

## **Implications**

- ◆ Researchers who track the flow of community college students to four-year colleges and universities have come to rely on this measure as one indicator of community college outcomes.
- ◆ This project has continued to reaffirm that about 22 percent of the students who begin their postsecondary studies at a community college and complete at least four credit courses at that institution enroll in a public in-state four-year college or university within four years.
- ◆ These consistent findings demonstrate that community colleges are effectively serving as the main point of entry for a sizable percentage of students.

## **Looking Toward the Future**

- ◆ Since the results have remained markedly consistent over the years, the CSCC has recently made the decision to conduct the Transfer Assembly every other year instead of annually.
- ◆ The next projected Transfer Assembly will be undertaken in 2001 and it will track the 1995 entrants who transfer by fall 1999.

## Conclusion

- ♦ In summation, without the community college, many of our nation's students would not have the opportunity to continue their education past high school.
- ♦ Still, with this statement in mind, the Center is often asked if the transfer rate indicates that community colleges are doing a good job. Frequently, the response has been: yes, community colleges are doing a good job considering that many students who might not have otherwise been able to enter four-year colleges or universities have been assisted in their pursuit toward the baccalaureate.
- ♦ And to many concerned with the status of higher education, this statement definitely appears to be a strong indicator of institutional worth!

## Questions/Comments

- ♦ Handouts

**1999 Transfer Assembly**  
*Center for the Study of Community Colleges*

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**Background**

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- Goal: establish a firmly incorporated method of defining transfer
- 10 years - tracing the rate of transfer from two-year colleges to four-year colleges and universities nationwide

**Background (continued)**

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- Reason for Goal - an agreeable method of reporting data
- Consistency - most notable finding of the Transfer Assembly

**General Purpose**

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- Create a consistent way of estimating the community colleges' contribution to students' progress toward the baccalaureate degree

**Research Question**

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- Specifically, what is the community colleges' contribution to students' progress toward the baccalaureate?
- Same question asked for the past 10 years

**Definition**

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- Should be:
  - valid
  - easily understandable
  - based on readily obtainable data
- Outcome:
  - simple measure, percentage now known as the transfer rate



## **Definition (continued)**

- *All students entering the two-year college in a given year who have no prior college experience and who complete at least 12 college credit units within four years, divided into the number of that group who take one or more classes at a public, in-state university within four years.*

## **Methodology**

- 1999 Transfer Assembly data were exclusively provided by state agencies:
  - 13 states
  - 345 colleges

## **Results**

- Of the students who entered in 1993:
  - 50.7% completed 12+ credits at the community college
  - 23.4% of that group transferred to an in-state, public university within four years - by fall 1997

## **Comparison**

- Consistent with previous years' results
- Range from 21.5% to 23.7%

## **Contributing Factors**

- Cannot disclose individual state transfer rates, but marked variances between states were noted
- Many contributing factors:
  - community demographics
  - emphasis placed on transfer
  - fit between college and university programs
  - proximity of a state college or university

## **Limitations**

- Transfer rate is underestimated
  - four-year time span
  - independent/private universities
  - out-of-state institutions
  - not all states participate
  - estimate of overall numbers of transfers - often greater differences w/in state than between states

## **Implications**

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- Indicator of community college outcomes
- Continues to reaffirm about a 22% transfer rate
- Community colleges are effectively serving as the main point of entry for a sizable percentage of students

## **Looking Toward the Future**

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- Based on the consistency of the findings, the CSCC will conduct the Transfer Assembly every other year - not annually
- Next study will be undertaken in 2001 - will track entrants who transfer by fall 1999

## **Conclusion**

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- Community colleges provide opportunity for many students to continue education
- Community colleges are doing a good job
- Strong indicator of institutional worth

## **Questions/Comments**

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- Handout - 1999 Transfer Assembly Results

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## 1999 TRANSFER ASSEMBLY RESULTS

For the past ten years, the Center for the Study of Community Colleges (CSCC) has been tracing the rate of transfer from the two-year colleges to four-year colleges and universities across the nation. In order to derive a transfer rate, the number of students enrolled at the college, subdivided according to certain criteria, must be divided into the number who matriculate at the senior institutions. The transfer rate definition that the Center uses is: *all students entering the two-year college in a given year who have no prior college experience and who complete at least 12 college credit units within four years, divided into the number of that group who take one or more classes at a public, in-state university within four years.*

### *The Transfer Results*

Of the students who entered in 1993 with no prior college experience, **50.7%** completed 12+ credits at the community college and **23.4%** of that group transferred to an in-state, public university within four years (by fall 1997). These results are consistent with previous years' studies, which ranged from 21.5% to 23.7%.

### *Data Source*

In the past, individual colleges, university systems, and state agencies have provided the data; however, for the 1999 Transfer Assembly, data were exclusively provided by state agencies. Thirteen states, which included 345 colleges, participated in the 1999 Transfer Assembly.

For more information, please contact Arthur M. Cohen or Jenny J. Striplin at (310) 208-6088 or [striplin@ucla.edu](mailto:striplin@ucla.edu).



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