

# Research Results

April 2010

## Profile of BC College Transfer Students 2003/04 to 2007/08

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### Introduction

This newsletter summarizes the results from five reports commissioned by the BC Council on Admissions and Transfer (BCCAT) that profiled the academic experiences and demographics of BC college transfer students: those students who transferred from a BC college, university college, or institute to a BC university during the period 2003/04 to 2007/08. The reports were prepared by Simon Fraser University, Thompson Rivers University, the University of British Columbia (Vancouver campus), the University of Northern British Columbia, and the University of Victoria. Between them, over the period concerned, they welcomed over 27,000 BC college transfer students. SFU and TRU included transfer students from Yukon College, which is a member of the BC Transfer System (i.e., the set of institutions within BC for which transfer agreements, overseen by BCCAT, have been made).

**In this report** ... we have used the names of the institutions that were in place at the time of the study (e.g. Capilano University is referred to as Capilano College, as in 2007/08 it was not yet a university).

**In this report** ... where it was impossible to determine an exact number (due to the suppression of low 'N's) we have included the minimum number and noted 'or more.'

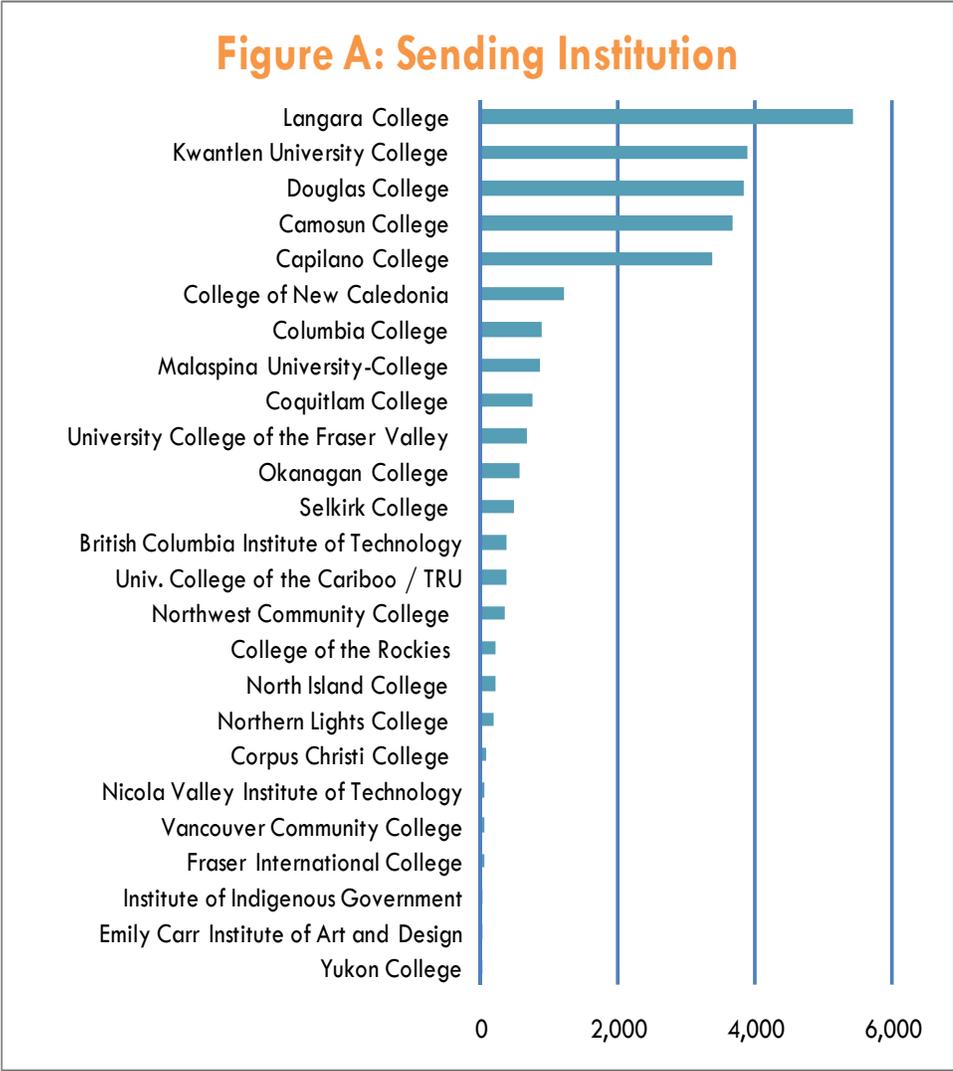
### Where Do They Come From and Where Do They Go?

Typically BC college transfer students stay close to home, transferring from their college to the closest university. Thompson Rivers

Table 1: Transfer Students' Sending and Receiving Institutions

	SFU	TRU	UBC	UNBC	UVic	Total
<b>Interior/Kootenays</b>						
College of the Rockies	21	23	25	10	147	226
Nicola Valley Institute of Technology	10	41	0	11	0	62
Okanagan College	68	102	144	27	215	556
Selkirk College	32	68	82	32	261	475
Univ. College of the Cariboo / TRU	62	0	165	50	91	368
<b>Interior/Kootenays Total</b>	<b>193</b>	<b>234</b>	<b>416</b>	<b>130</b>	<b>714</b>	<b>1,687</b>
<b>Lower Mainland</b>						
British Columbia Institute of Technology	<5	26	146	19	198	390 or more
Capilano College	1,736	32	1,295	46	279	3,388
Columbia College	396	11	354	9	123	893
Coquitlam College	365	14	294	9	74	756
Corpus Christi College	16	<5	56	1	0	74 or more
Douglas College	2,734	36	696	74	297	3,837
Emily Carr Institute of Art and Design	<5	0	7	0	0	8 or more
Fraser International College	43	0	0	0	0	43
Institute of Indigenous Government	18	<5	19	0	0	38 or more
Kwantlen University College	2,472	43	1,045	65	263	3,888
Langara College	2,171	41	2,398	92	742	5,444
University College of the Fraser Valley	283	33	232	15	114	677
Vancouver Community College	0	<5	49	0	0	50 or more
<b>Lower Mainland Total</b>	<b>10,238</b>	<b>241</b>	<b>6,591</b>	<b>330</b>	<b>2,090</b>	<b>19,490</b>
<b>Northern BC</b>						
College of New Caledonia	89	48	68	952	66	1,223
Northern Lights College	56	12	10	66	33	177
Northwest Community College	33	21	33	207	46	340
Yukon College	3	3	0	0	0	6
<b>Northern BC Total</b>	<b>181</b>	<b>84</b>	<b>111</b>	<b>1,225</b>	<b>145</b>	<b>1,746</b>
<b>Vancouver Island</b>						
Camosun College	156	32	176	45	3,265	3,674
Malaspina University-College	143	12	136	21	551	863
North Island College	19	19	26	9	152	225
<b>Vancouver Island Total</b>	<b>318</b>	<b>63</b>	<b>338</b>	<b>75</b>	<b>3,968</b>	<b>4,762</b>
<b>Total BC College Transfer</b>	<b>10,930</b>	<b>622</b>	<b>7,456</b>	<b>1,760</b>	<b>6,917</b>	<b>27,685</b>

University (TRU) receives more students from nearby Okanagan College than it does from other institutions, the University of Victoria (UVic) is the destination of choice for transfers from Island colleges, and the University of Northern British Columbia (UNBC) has over two-thirds of its transfers from northern colleges. In the Lower Mainland, Simon Fraser University (SFU) and the University of British Columbia (UBC) make room for thousands of local transfer students, with UBC attracting more transfers from Langara, and SFU proving popular with Douglas and Kwantlen students. Some exceptions stand out: many transfers from Interior/Kootenay colleges make their way to UVic, and have been doing so since at least the time of UVic's first profile report of transfers during 1992/93 through 1996/97.



It is evident from Figure A which institutions are generating the lion's share of transfer students: between them, Langara, Kwantlen, Douglas, Camosun, and Capilano colleges are responsible for 73% of all transfer students. The 10 institutions with the fewest students transferring account for only 3% of transfer students, which is reflective in some cases of the size of the institution, but also their academic emphasis.

The University College of the Cariboo (UCC) became Thompson Rivers University in 2005 (mid-way during the period of study). While most institutions did not include TRU transfers in their reports, SFU's report did include 11 TRU transfers.

Note: SFU included transfers from Fraser International College, which is not in the BC Transfer System.

### When Did They Transfer?

The number of students transferring to a university has been fairly consistent, with the exception of 2004/05 and 2005/06, which saw about a thousand more students transferring each year. The increase coincides with the introduction of 25,000 spaces to post-secondary institutions, but would appear to be

Table 2: Transfers by Year and Receiving Institution

	SFU	TRU	UBC	UNBC	UVic	Total
2003/04	1,789	121	1,441	373	1,412	5,136
2004/05	2,663	142	1,708	406	1,273	6,192
2005/06	2,278	129	1,545	389	1,687	6,028
2006/07	2,076	128	1,297	337	1,333	5,171
2007/08	2,124	102	1,465	255	1,212	5,158

coincidental rather than a reflection of increased capacity at the universities. By 2006/07 the numbers have returned to previous levels.

In 2008/09 several institutions (formerly colleges or university colleges) became "teaching-intensive" universities. In order to maintain consistency with earlier reports, future studies of transfer in BC should include transfers from these universities. It will be interesting to see whether this rather fundamental change in status will influence more students to remain at their home institution through degree completion.

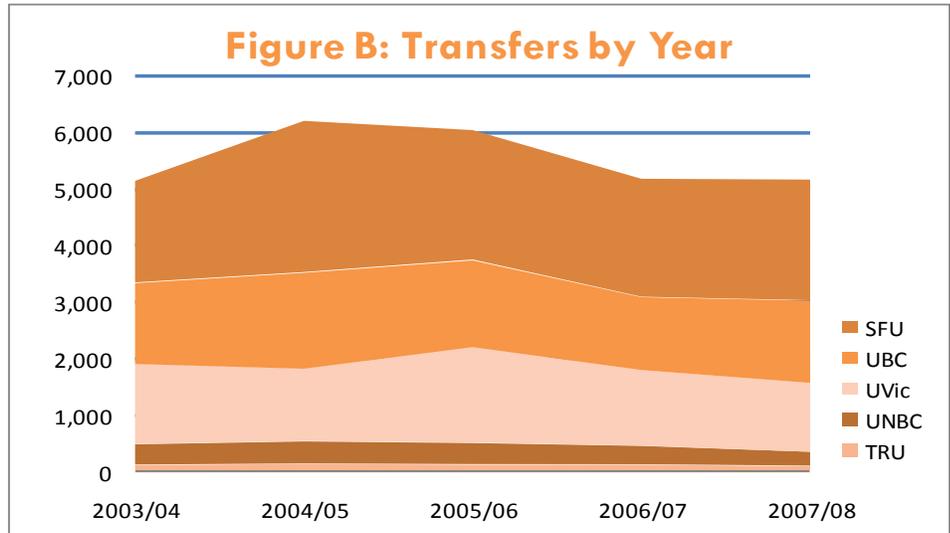


Figure B makes very evident that SFU, UBC, and UVic are receiving the vast majority of transfer students (91% of all transfer students attended one of these three universities). SFU (with 40% of transfer students) has enrolled the most transfer students during the period of this study, followed by UBC (27%) and UVic (25%).

### How Many Credits Are Awarded?

Students applying for admission to a university may be evaluated according to several criteria (grades in high school, grades in college, aboriginal status, broad-based admission materials, etc.), but to be evaluated solely on the basis of performance at college (as opposed to some combination of college grades and high school grades) a student must have been granted a certain amount of transfer credit. At UBC or SFU, where a 1 term course is typically 3 credits, a transfer student will normally have been granted 24 or more transferable credits. At UVic, where a 1 term course is 1.5 "units", students will normally have been granted 12 units (equivalent to 24 credits elsewhere). Essentially each of these universities wants to admit students with almost a full year behind them. At UNBC, on the other hand, 15 transfer credits (or one term's worth of study) is required for admission. TRU's open admissions policy precludes a "college transfer" basis of admission, but they have limited their report to include only those students who possess 24 or more transfer credits.

Table 3: Transfer Credits by Receiving Institution

The most common degree programs are four years in length, generally requiring 30 credits (or at UVic 15 units) a year. Students transferring about 30 credits would expect another three years of study; students with closer to 60 credits would require only another two years. It is usually the case that the further along students are in their studies, the more likely they are to complete. Table 3 shows the distribution of transfer credits by receiving institution (UVic's units have been converted to credit equivalents). Not all institutions grouped credits identically, so UVic and UNBC are shown separately.

credit range	SFU	TRU	UBC	credit range	UVIC	credit range	UNBC
<30	756	90	1,113	<30	967	<31	400
30-39	2,022	132	1,524	30-39	1,146	31-45	381
40-49	2,111	75	1,290	40-49	810		
50-59	2,447	98	1,594	50-54	527	45-60	506
60+	3,594	227	1,935	55+	1,182	61+	473

(credit equivalents)

Not all credits earned by a student at a sending institution will necessarily be granted transfer credit by a receiving institution; typically eligible courses will be academic in nature and formally articulated (see [bctransferguide.ca](http://bctransferguide.ca) for details).

While students must normally have only 24 or more credits to transfer to a university (or 15 credits at UNBC), the data show that the majority of students transfer with 40 or more credits, which is substantially more than the required minimums.

## What Proportion Are Studying Full-Time?

Table 4: Proportion of Full-Time Students

	SFU	TRU	UBC	UNBC	UVic	Total
Interior / Kootenays	59%	71%	85%	61%	52%	64%
Lower Mainland	28%	77%	66%	66%	40%	44%
Northern BC	51%	70%	79%	42%	52%	47%
Vancouver Island	52%	78%	79%	63%	42%	47%
Total	30%	74%	68%	49%	43%	45%

Students taking 24 or more credits (or 12 or more units at UVic) over two semesters (i.e., fall and winter) are considered full-time. UVic, UBC, and UNBC reported the proportion of full-time

students combining both semesters. SFU and TRU reported the proportion of full-time transfer students during only the student's first semester. On average, only 45.5% of BC college transfer students are full-time, and this is roughly true for students from all regions save for the Interior/Kootenays; students transferring from those colleges are maintaining significantly higher course loads with fully 64.3% of them being full-time (see Table 4). TRU is the institution with the highest full-time rates, followed by UBC. Conversely, SFU has the highest proportion of part-time students (70.3%), primarily because students transferring from the Lower Mainland (who make up the majority of their students) are maintaining lower course loads.

## What Is Their Gender?

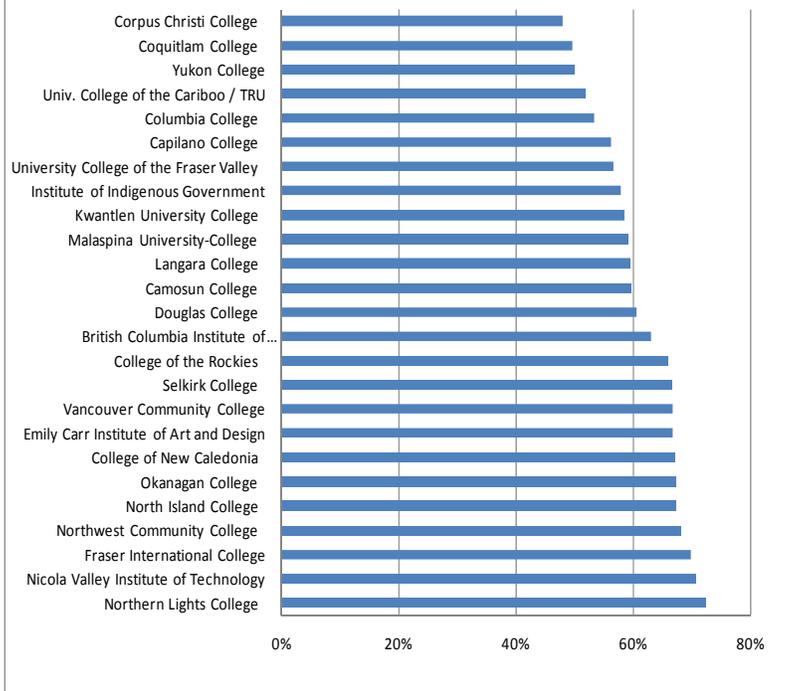
The gender balance for BC college transfer students overall is 40% male, 60% female (see Table 5), so there are 50% more women than men. Nationally (according to the Statistics Canada Labour Force Survey) overall post-secondary education participation rates in Canada for 20 to 24 year olds are at 21% for men and 28% for women (i.e., there are 33.3% more women). The majority of transfer students are also between 20 and 24 years of age. This discrepancy between the proportion of women among BC college transfer students and the national rate is easily explained: the Labour Force Survey included both direct-entrants and students in trades training, and both cohorts have lower proportions of women.

Table 5: Gender

	SFU		TRU		UBC		UNBC		UVic		Total	
	male	female	male	female								
Interior/Kootenays	25%	75%	31%	69%	50%	50%	35%	65%	31%	69%	35%	65%
Lower Mainland	40%	60%	41%	59%	46%	54%	53%	47%	33%	67%	42%	58%
Northern BC	26%	74%	24%	76%	50%	50%	31%	69%	40%	60%	32%	68%
Vancouver Island	37%	63%	35%	65%	48%	52%	39%	61%	40%	60%	40%	60%
Total	40%	60%	34%	66%	46%	54%	36%	64%	37%	63%	40%	60%

There are some differences in gender ratios. UBC has the most balanced population, with men making up 46% of their transfer students, the most of any university. SFU most neatly fits the average, with 40% men. TRU, UNBC, and UVic have the fewest male students, with TRU having the lowest proportion of men (34%). There are regional differences as well: the Lower Mainland yields a higher proportion of male transfer

**Figure C: Proportion of Female Transfer Students**



students (42%), while Northern BC colleges have the lowest proportion (32% male). What is perhaps most surprising in this comparative study is the variety within the table: while female students from the North, the Interior, and the Island are clearly in the majority, at UBC they make up only 50% of the transfer population, and it is the Lower Mainland transfers that result in UBC not having a 50/50 balance.

There is much variety when examining gender by sending institution. Figure C shows the proportion of female transfer students from all BC colleges. The lowest proportion of female transfer students is at the two private institutions Corpus Christi and Coquitlam colleges, where 48% and 50% of their transfer students are female. The institutions who transfer the largest proportion of female students are Northern Lights College (with 72%

female transfer students) and Nicola Valley (71%). These varying proportions of male and female students may not reflect the overall proportion of students within the sending institution (only 36% of all Northern Lights students are female) but presumably they are somewhat indicative of the proportion of students in academic transfer programs.

### What Is Their Admission GPA?

The universities reported the admission GPA (grade point average) on three differing scales: SFU and UNBC employed a 4 point scale, UVic a 9 point scale, while UBC converted the college grades to a percentage grade. It is difficult to compare across institutions, but some patterns emerge: higher grades for Northern BC transfer students across the board, and lower grades for those from the Lower Mainland. Students at Thompson Rivers University have been omitted as, due to their open admission policy, there has been no institutional mandate to collect admission percentages from their students.

**Table 6: Mean Admission GPA**

	SFU	UBC	UNBC	UVic
Interior/Kootenays	3.1	77.2	2.9	6.2
Lower Mainland	2.9	74.7	2.7	5.4
Northern BC	3.3	77.7	3.1	6.2
Vancouver Island	3.1	76.9	2.9	5.9
All Regions	2.9	75.0	3.0	5.8

**Table 7: Degree Program or Area of Study**

	SFU	TRU	UBC	UNBC	UVic	Total
Applied Science (Engineering)	59	-	690	16	289	1,054
Arts/Humanities/Social Science	8,843	245	3,224	489	3,370	16,171
Commerce/Business	530	116	832	425	191	2,094
Fine Arts	65	-	55	-	131	251
Forestry / Agricultural Science	-	-	332	-	-	332
General Studies	366	-	-	-	-	366
Human Kinetics/Kinesiology	5	-	506	-	-	511
Music	-	-	98	-	57	155
Nursing / Health Sciences	39	13	-	136	1,238	1,426
Science	999	105	1,424	423	935	3,886
Social Work/Social Development	-	61	74	138	357	630
Tourism	-	37	-	-	-	37
Other/Unclassified/Undeclared	129	45	221	133	349	877
Total	11,035	622	7,456	1,760	6,917	27,790

SFU has counted some students twice

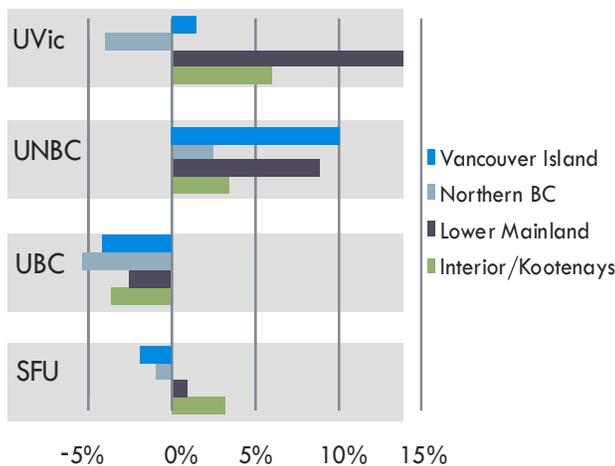
### What Degrees Are They Seeking?

The majority of students are seeking a Bachelor of Arts degree or have declared an interest in achieving a degree in the Humanities or Social Sciences. Next most frequent are Science, Commerce, Nursing, and Engineering. The different universities

**Table 8: GPA at Completion**

	SFU	UBC	UNBC	UVic
Interior/Kootenays	3.2	74.5	3.0	6.6
Lower Mainland	2.9	72.9	2.9	6.2
Northern BC	3.2	73.6	3.2	6.0
Vancouver Island	3.1	73.7	3.2	6.0
Total	2.9	73.1	3.1	6.1
<b>% change from admission to completion</b>				
Interior/Kootenays	3%	-4%	3%	6%
Lower Mainland	1%	-2%	9%	14%
Northern BC	-1%	-5%	3%	-4%
Vancouver Island	-2%	-4%	10%	2%
Total	1%	-3%	4%	6%

**Figure D: % Change in Grade from Admission to Completion**



also be noted that the data include all admitted students in admission GPA, and only graduated students in GPA at completion—so changes shown are not strictly true for all students, but are a more general indicator of a trend.

Figure D shows the percentage increase (or decrease) in grades from admission to completion, by region and institution. UBC students experience the biggest drop—the drop would seem even more extreme had SFU supplied final session grades only (which would have shown larger or more positive percentage changes than the cumulative grades in their reports), whereas UVic and UNBC students experience the most gains. One should keep in mind that UBC requires a higher GPA for admission to most programs than do the other universities, and thus there is less room (or likelihood) for grades to increase.

Students from the Lower Mainland experience improvements from their admission average to final average at most universities. Students from Northern BC institutions saw their grades drop at completion at all institutions save UNBC (where they improve, but not by as much as students from the Lower Mainland or the Island). Some have suggested that moving from a small town to a large city is more likely to cause transfer shock than a move from one urban centre to another.

had reported these figures according to the structure of their institution, hence the totals are suggestive rather than authoritative (for example, TRU's economics program is reported under Commerce/Business, whereas UBC's economics program is reported as part of an Arts degree). Nonetheless, it is evident that Arts and Science are still the preferred area of interest for almost three-quarters of transfer students.

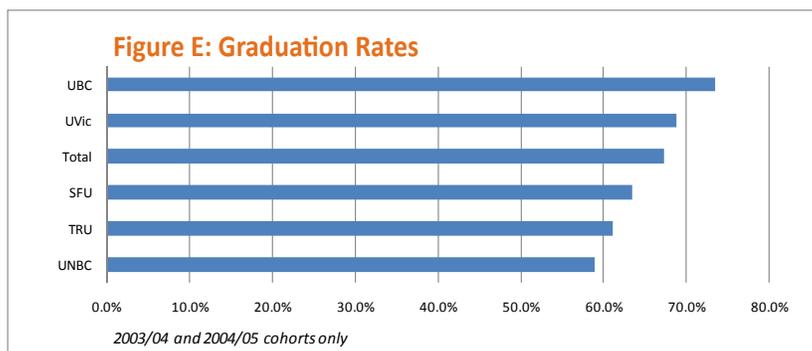
### How Did They Perform at University?

Although the scales are different, they are each internally consistent—thus we can compare the grades at admission with the grades upon completion (for those transfer students who have received a degree). Typically students experience a drop in grades during their first semester, with direct entrants dropping more than college transfer students, but grades for both cohorts improve throughout their course of study. It is evident that the extent to which one's grades will improve is largely determined by which region one has transferred from, and which institution one has transferred to. All things being equal, one would expect to see the same changes across institutions and for students from all regions, but this is not so.

SFU had reported a cumulative GPA, rather than a sessional average (i.e., the average grade for their last year/term only), which has the effect of smoothing out the highs of later grades by incorporating the lows of earlier grades. It should

## What Are The Graduation Rates?

The majority of transfer students who entered university in 2003/04 or 2004/05 have graduated during the time frame of the study (by 2007/08). There is considerable range in the graduation rates during this period (see Figure E), which reflect the number of transfer credits awarded, the applicability of these credits to the university program (not all credits might have been earned for courses in their current curriculum), full-time/part-time status, the academic capabilities of the students (some will never complete, having dropped out or been asked to leave), and numerous other factors.



## What Credential Did They Receive?

The credentials awarded to BC college transfer students (see Table 9) are largely the same credentials they were originally seeking when admitted (degrees in Arts, Science, Commerce, Nursing, Engineering—these most popular programs make up 85% of degrees awarded). As UNBC did not include credentials by region or college in their report, the section on region of sending institution is underreported, especially for Northern BC whose colleges supply the majority of UNBC's transfer students. UNBC did, however, report subject area by college—but at that level of detail, most of the values are "<5" and impossible to aggregate.

Table 9: Degrees Awarded

	SFU	TRU	UBC	UNBC	UVic	sending institution location				Total
						Interior / Kootenays	Lower Mainland	Northern BC	Vancouver Island	
Bachelor of Applied Science / Engineering	10	-	245	-	87	42	233	5	61	341
Bachelor of Arts / Gen. Stud. In Arts	2,887	38	1,237	142	1,031	248	4,145	79	721	5,193
Bachelor of Bus. Admin / Commerce	443	46	533	206	131	57	981	16	97	1,151
Bachelor of Nursing	-	13	36	60	802	86	428	2	324	840
Bachelor of Science	222	8	521	141	343	93	727	15	254	1,089
Other Credential	422	140	611	115	384	217	991	98	270	1,576
Total	3,984	245	3,183	664	2,778	743	7,505	215	1,727	10,190

It is apparent that the pronounced tendency to acquire an Arts degree is to a great extent a function of the large numbers of transfer students from the Lower Mainland, where 55% of graduates received a B.A. or like degree; only 33% of students from the Interior/Kootenays did so, the lowest percentage when looking regionally. Graduates who had transferred from non-Lower Mainland colleges are more likely to receive another credential entirely, such as the Bachelor of Social Work, Fine Arts, or Education.

## How Long Did They Take to Complete?

Average completion times at the university vary from 2.3 years for UNBC students (6.3 semesters, estimated from the figure shown in their report) to 2.9 years for UBC students (see Table 11). TRU did not provide time to completion data in their report. Completion is largely a function of the length of the program, the number of credits a transfer student had already accumulated prior to entering university, and the full-time/part-time nature of their attendance.

Table 10: Time to Completion

	SFU	UBC	UNBC	UVic
average # of years	2.6	2.9	2.1	2.4

*estimate*

Note: completion time excludes time spent prior to transfer

## How do Transfer Students compare to Direct Entrants?

The five profile reports included several measures which compare transfer students and direct-entrants. Institutions used different definitions for direct-entrants—at UBC, if a student is evaluated for admission based on their secondary school grades, they are considered direct entrants, whereas at SFU there is also an element of time (only students admitted within a year of high school graduation are considered direct entrants).

Table 11: Transfers and Direct-Entry Students

	SFU	TRU	UBC	UNBC	UVic	Total
<b>Total BC College Transfer</b>	10,930	622	7,456	1,760	6,917	27,685
<b>Total BC Direct-Entry</b>	12,648	3,151	17,959	2,196	9,068	45,022
<i>transfers as % of total</i>	46%	16%	29%	44%	43%	38%

At some institutions, there are nearly as many transfer students from BC Colleges as there are direct-entrants from BC high schools. At SFU the proportion is 46/54 transfers vs direct entrants, at UNBC it's 44/56, and UVic has 43/57. UBC admits a smaller proportion of transfer students (29/71), and they are comparatively rare at TRU, with only 16 BC College transfer students for every 84 from high school.

Table 12: Transfers and Direct-Entry Students: GPAs

		SFU	TRU	UBC	UNBC	UVic
<b>Transfer Students</b>	GPA at Admission	2.9	n.a.	75.0	3.0	5.8
	GPA after 1st Session	2.5	2.8	70.5	2.8	5.4
	GPA at Completion	2.9	3.2	73.1	3.1	6.1
<b>Direct Entrants</b>	GPA at Admission	3.6	n.a.	87.4	3.5	5.5
	GPA after 1st Session	2.6	2.3	69.3	2.5	4.7
	GPA at Completion	3.1	2.9	73.3	3.4	6.4

Compared to direct-entrants, transfer students are more likely to be female, study part-time (except at UBC and TRU), pursue Arts degrees, and be older. It is more difficult to compare the performance of transfer students to that of direct entrants. Direct entrants required high grades for admission to certain university programs, while college transfer

students (as the Student Transitions Project confirms) were on average weaker performers in high school. When comparing university performance, we see a large drop for direct-entrants in their first year of post-secondary study, but the equivalent data is not available for transfer students, as their first year of study (and usually also their second year) was at the sending institution. When comparing first year performance, then, we should not compare seasoned transfer students against new direct entrants, but rather use these grades to follow their progress toward completion.

Grades for both cohorts increase over time from first session to completion, and by graduation transfer students' grades are on average higher than their admission average and only slightly below direct entrants' grades (TRU is an exception, with transfer students outperforming direct entrants at completion). When grades in specific courses are examined, transfer students on average earned lower grades than did direct entrants enrolled in the same class (with a few exceptions) which would be expected given the higher high school grades of direct entrants. Nevertheless, the most striking result is that transfer students and direct entrants have remarkably similar average grades at completion, demonstrating that the transfer system works: it provides access for students who will ultimately achieve success.

## Summary of Results

There is a large, stable number of students transferring from a BC College to a BC university during the course of this study. The typical transfer student is female, older, and studying part-time in the Arts and Sciences. The majority of students who transferred during the first two years of the study had graduated by its concluding year. Transfer students may represent a different pool from direct entrants but they are just as able to achieve. Given the opportunity they perform well at university and graduate in a timely manner.

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