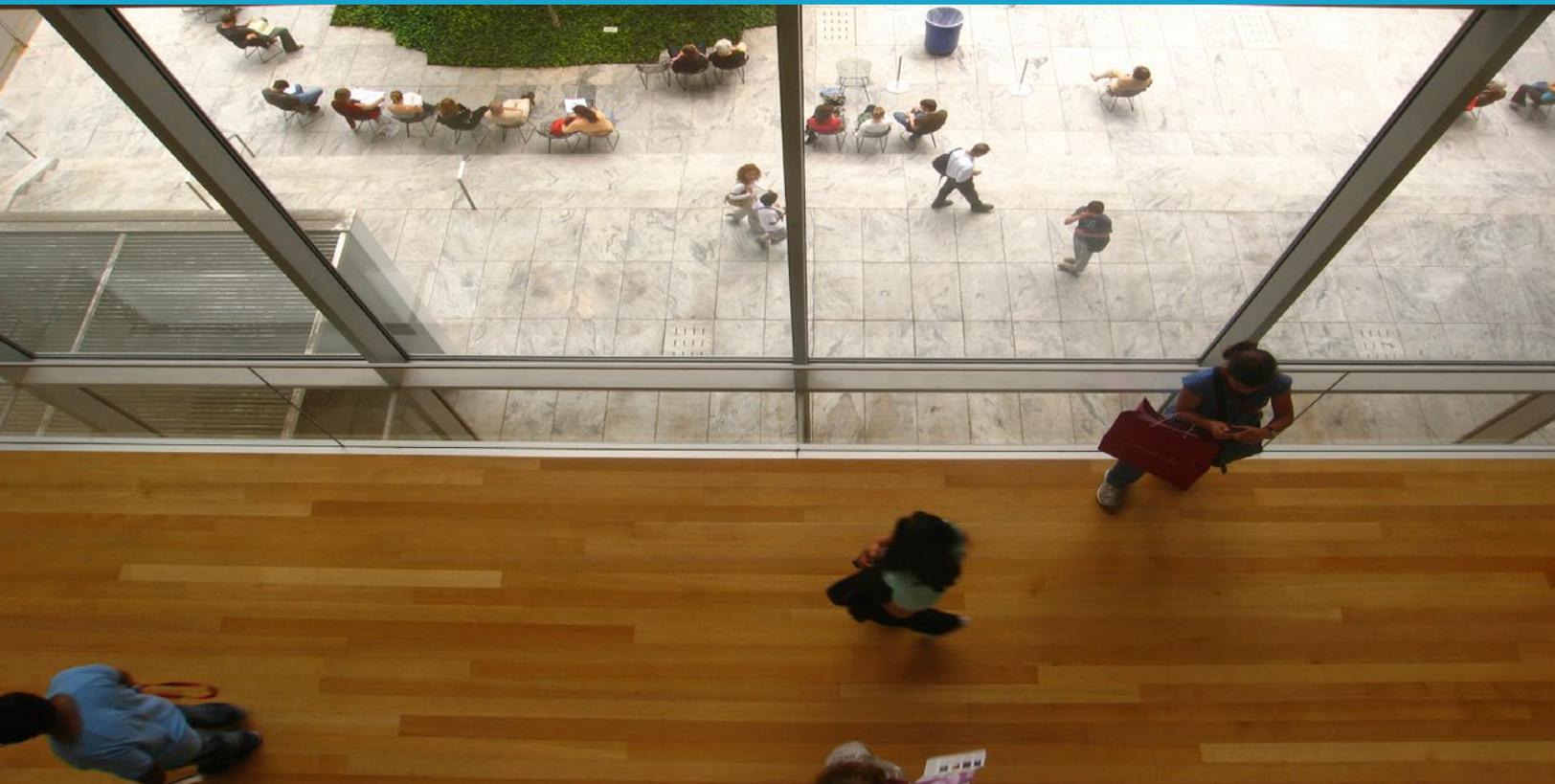


A Survey of Movers

Students Who Move Between BC Public Post-Secondary Institutions:
A Summary of Findings

Prepared for BCCAT by BC Stats

January 2013



Research by

BCCAT

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This report is also available at www.bccat.ca/publications/research/surveyofmovers.



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Introduction

Purpose of Study

Over the last several years, there has been a wealth of new data on student mobility in British Columbia's post-secondary system. Quantitative information from the Student Transitions Project (STP) has allowed current and prospective students, the BC Council on Admissions and Transfer (BCCAT), public post-secondary institutions, the Ministry responsible for post-secondary education and the Ministry of Education to get a clearer picture of how students navigate the system, moving among public post-secondary institutions in multiple directions. These administrative data, rich as they are, are unable to answer qualitative questions about why students are moving and how satisfied they are with their institutions and the transfer experience. This *Survey of Movers* was designed to gather data directly from the students to answer these questions.

The goals of the project included the following:

- Provide useful information to post-secondary planners, advisors, and enrolment managers on the experiences of student movers.
- Assist institutions with their retention efforts.
- Find out if mobile students (a) expected and (b) received transfer credit when they switched institutions.
- Understand why students switch institutions when they do.
- Understand the extent to which the movement of students among institutions is a positive phenomenon and a good use of resources.
- Determine what institutions can do to facilitate student movement among institutions.

Methodology and Response Rate

Data from the Student Transitions Project (STP) were used to identify students who were registered in one or more BC public post-secondary institutions in fall 2011 and were enrolled in a different BC public post-secondary institution during the academic year 2010-2011. The eligible cohort (see Appendix A) is a subset of the students that the STP has identified as having moved from one year to the next. It only includes undergraduate students who had not completed a credential at their "original" 2010-11 institution before switching institutions. Students who attended their fall 2011 institution at any time in 2010-11 were excluded, as were continuing education students. Contact information for students in the cohort was provided by the institution at which the student was registered in fall 2011, and students were surveyed via the Web between March and June, 2012. The survey was administered by BC Stats.

All BC public post-secondary institutions were included in the survey, with the exception of The University of British Columbia¹ (though students who left UBC and registered elsewhere in fall 2011 were captured). Each student had one primary 2010-2011 "original" institution and one primary fall 2011 "subsequent" institution, which they identified in cases where they were enrolled in more than one institution in a period.

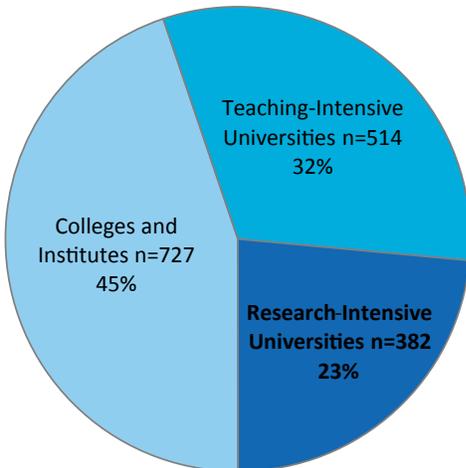
Of the 5,932 *movers* identified as eligible for surveying, 1,623 responded for an overall response rate of 27.4 percent.

¹ UBC did not participate due to administration of a survey of their new 2011-12 students conducted in August 2011 and spring 2012, and to avoid survey fatigue. See <http://www.pair.ubc.ca/surveys/index.shtml>.

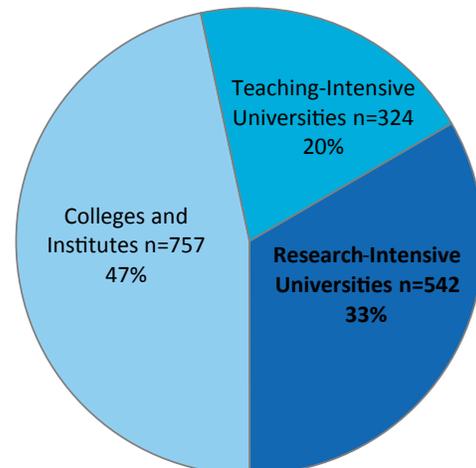
Respondents by Institution Type

Respondents were distributed across “Original” and “Subsequent” institution-types as follows:

“Original” 2010-2011 Institution Type



“Subsequent” Fall 2011 Institution Type



Only 23 percent of respondents had a research-intensive university as their original 2010-2011 institution, while one-third of *movers* ended up at a research-intensive university in the fall of 2011. This latter percentage would have been higher if UBC was included in the study. Respondents were more likely to have come from a teaching-intensive university (33 percent) than to have moved to one (20 percent).

Data from the Student Transitions Project (STP)² allow us to compare the respondents to this survey with the population of students who moved from one BC public postsecondary institution to another between academic years 2010/11 and 2011/12. This allows us to understand the representativeness of our respondents in terms of the sector from which they originated, and to which they moved.

For the purpose of this comparison, students who moved to UBC in 2011/12 were excluded from the STP data, consistent with the cohort selection for the current survey. The results indicate that the current survey over-represented students *moving from* research-intensive universities (23 percent of survey respondents vs. 20 percent of STP movers), and to a greater extent, over-represented those *moving to* research-intensive universities (33 percent of survey respondents vs. 28 percent of STP movers).

Respondents to the current survey were less likely to have originated in colleges and institutes (45 percent of survey respondents vs. 55 percent of STP movers). They were also less likely to have originated in teaching-intensive universities (32 percent of survey respondents vs. 37 percent of STP movers). The largest proportion of survey respondents were those who moved to a college or institute, and the proportion reflects quite accurately the proportion of movers to this sector captured in STP data. However, those moving to teaching-intensive universities were markedly under-represented (20 percent of survey respondents vs. 33 percent of STP movers).

In summary, respondents to this survey were much less likely to have originated in a college or institute and much less likely to move to a teaching-intensive university, than was the population of students who moved within the BC post-secondary system between 2010/11 and 2011/12 (excluding those who moved to UBC in 2011/12). In other respects, survey respondents are reasonably representative of movers as a whole in terms of sector-level pathways.

² http://www.aved.gov.bc.ca/student_transitions/

Original Institution (2010-2011 Academic Year)

Goals for Enrolling

Survey respondents were asked to identify their most important goal for enrolling in their studies at the original institution. Almost one-quarter (23 percent) reported that they enrolled to *prepare to transfer to another institution*, followed by 21 percent who indicated that their goal was to *complete a credential at this institution*, 16 percent who indicated that they enrolled to *prepare for a professional career*, and 13 percent who said that their goal was to *pursue a specific program*.

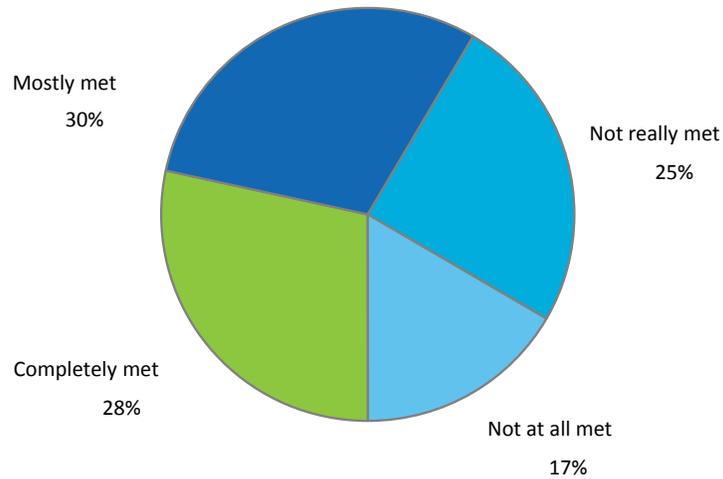
Main Goal for Enrolling at Original Institution



When analyzed by institution type, there was very little variation among students enrolled at the research universities, colleges and institutes, and teaching universities, except that research university students were less likely to have identified *prepare to transfer to another institution* as their main goal. While students from colleges and institutes and teaching universities indicated *prepare to transfer to another institution* as their main goal (30 and 27 percent, respectively), research university respondents reported *complete a credential at this institution* as their main goal (36 percent).

More than half (58 percent) of respondents said they had completely or mostly met their main goal for enrolling at their original 2010-2011 institution. Respondents from colleges and institutes were more likely to have completely or mostly met their main goal for enrolling (71 percent), while respondents moving from a research university were less likely to do so (33 percent). This finding reflects the notably different circumstances that shaped the experiences of students moving from research universities relative to those moving from other institutional-types, as described below (next page).

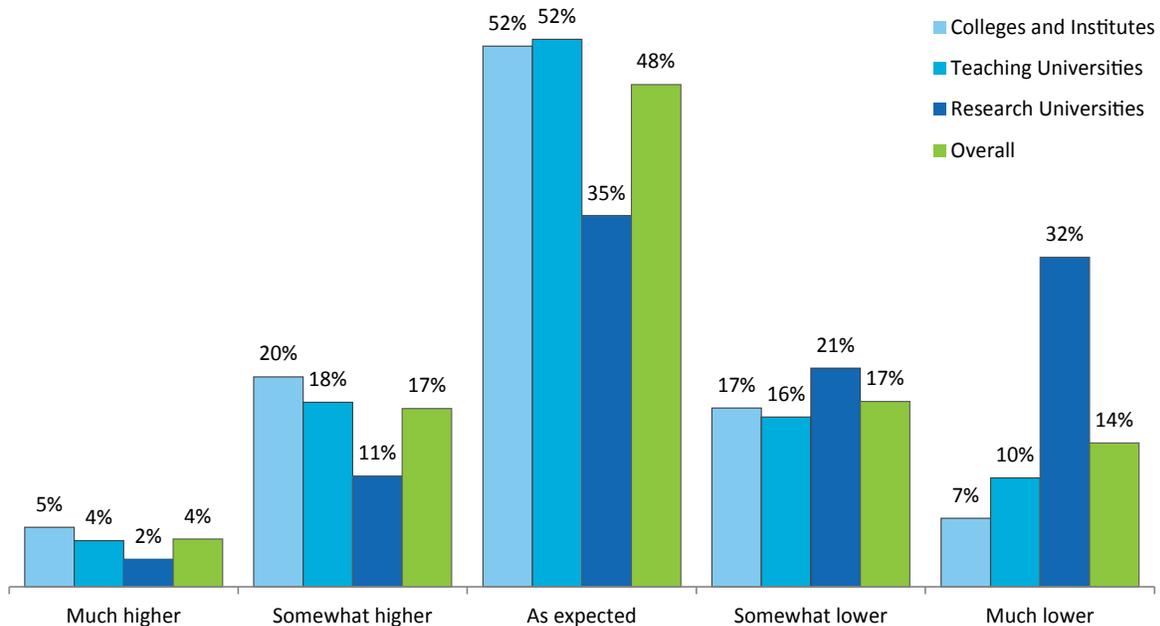
Extent to which Goal was Met at Original Institution



Grades

Overall, almost half (47 percent) of respondents said the grades they received at their original institution were *as expected*, while 31 percent said their grades were *lower than expected*, and 21 percent said they were *higher than expected*. When analyzed by institution type, 51 percent of respondents whose original institution was a teaching university, college or institute reported their grades were as expected. However, for those at research universities in 2010-11, 35 percent said their grades there were as expected and more than half (52 percent) said their grades were lower than expected.

Grades at Original Institution by Sector

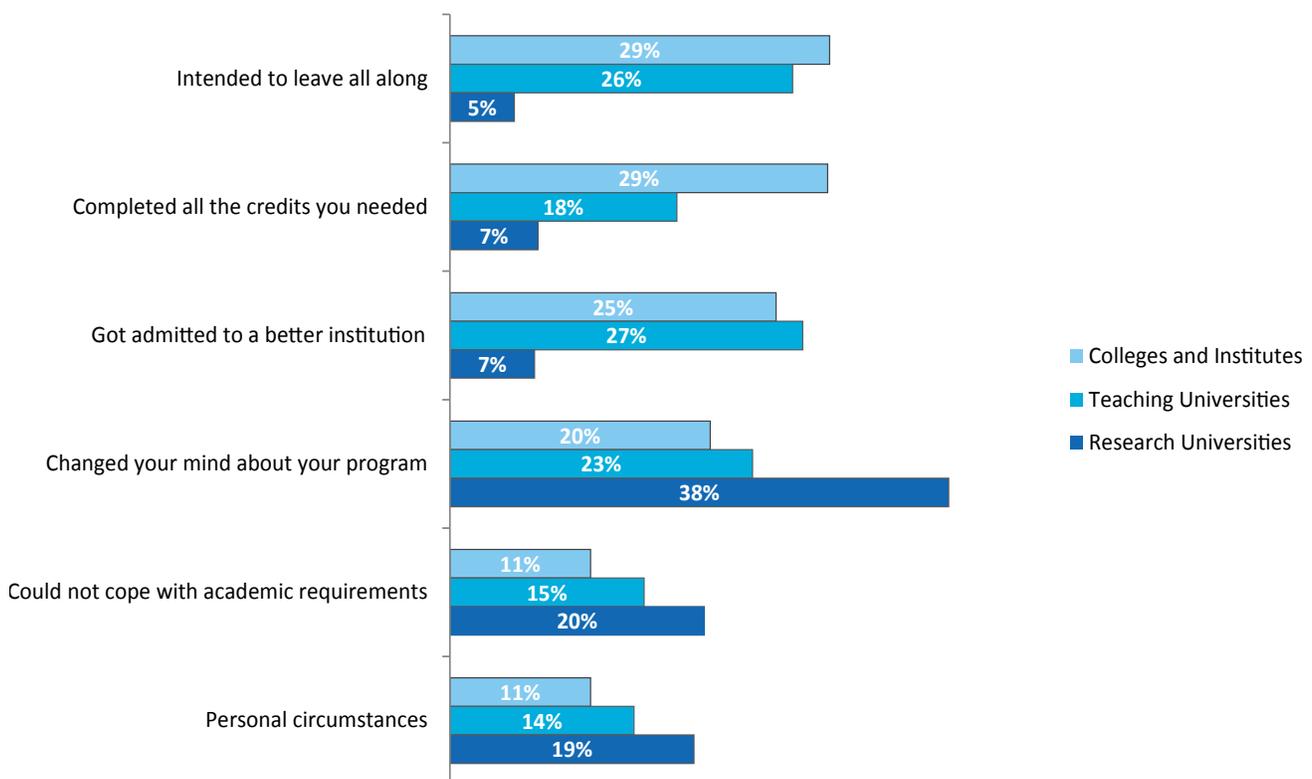


Reasons for Leaving

Overall, one-quarter (25 percent) of respondents indicated that they left their institution because they had changed their mind about their program. Among the respondents from research universities, 38 percent said this. Respondents who left research universities were also much more likely than other respondents to cite *inability to cope with academic requirements* (not surprising, since grades were often lower than expected) and *personal circumstances* than were respondents from other types of institutions.

Intending to leave their original institution all along was much more prevalent among respondents originating in colleges or institutes (29 percent) and teaching university respondents (26 percent) compared with those originating in research universities, only 5 percent of whom cited this intention.

Reasons for Leaving Original Institution (multiple responses allowed)

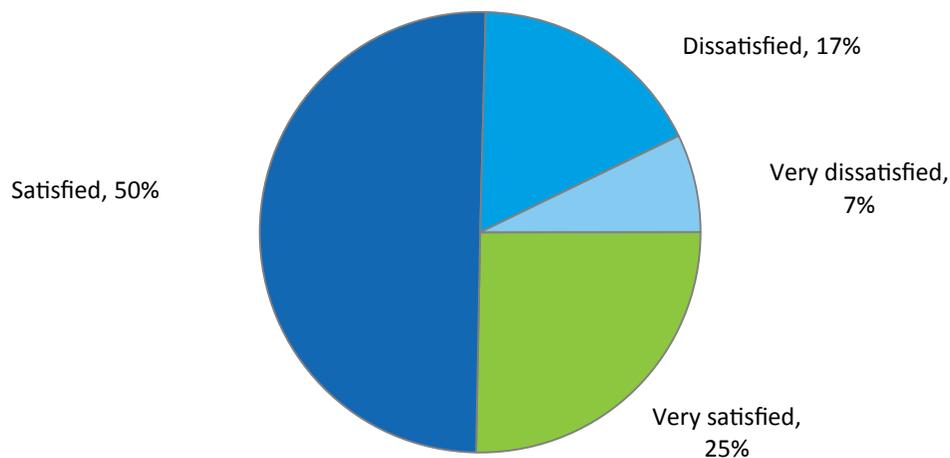


In sum, responses to survey questions about grades and reasons for leaving the original institution show important differences between respondents from research universities, and those from other institution-types. Respondents who moved from colleges, institutes, and teaching universities were more likely to progress according to their original educational plan — by achieving grades as good as, or higher than expected, and by transferring to another institution as originally planned. In many cases, respondents from research universities were confronting challenges — whether in their academic performance or their personal circumstances, and subsequently changed institutions and, perhaps, programs. The findings suggest that students originating in research universities “changed their minds about their program” in this context, and at a rate much higher than did students moving from other institution-types.

Satisfaction with 2010-2011 Institution

Overall, three-quarters of respondents (75 percent) said they were *satisfied* or *very satisfied* with the institution they left, despite not having received a credential.

Satisfaction with Institution Student Left

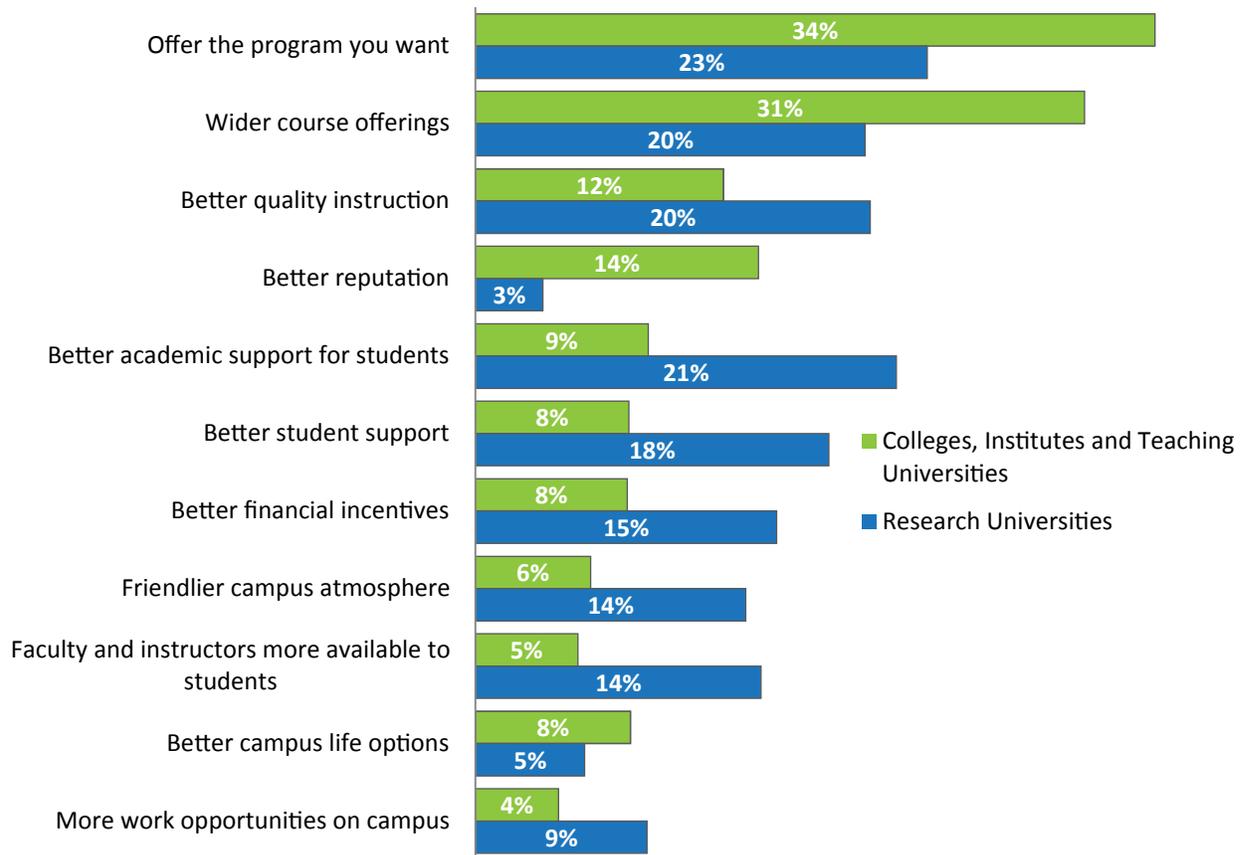


Eighty-four percent of college and institute respondents were *satisfied* or *very satisfied* with the institution they left, while only 59 percent of research university respondents were, which is not surprising given the differing experiences of these two groups outlined above.

When asked what the institution could have done differently to prevent respondents from leaving, the most common responses were *offer the program you want* (32 percent) and *wider course offerings* (28 percent). Other commonly reported changes institutions could make were *better quality instruction* (14 percent), *better reputation* (12 percent), and *better academic support for students* (12 percent).

At the institution-type level, those who moved from research universities were much more likely than other respondents to cite *better academic support for students* (21 percent compared with 9 percent), *better quality instruction* (20 percent compared with 12 percent) and *better student support* (18 percent compared with 8 percent) as things institutions could have done differently. Respondents from colleges, institutes, and teaching universities were more likely to state *offer the program you want* (34 percent), and *wider course offerings* (31 percent) than were respondents from research universities (23 percent and 20 percent respectively), although it is notable that these two responses were the most commonly cited for respondents originating from any institution-type. To the previous finding that respondents originally from colleges, institutes and teaching universities were mostly moving, as planned, to further their educational goals, we can add the finding that their program of choice often could not be completed at their original institution. Presumably, for many of these students, the ability to transfer to their subsequent institution would be a factor in their persistence as a post-secondary student.

What the Original Institution Could Have Done Differently (multiple responses allowed)



When asked if respondents expected to return to their original institution in the future, more than half of respondents said *no* (56 percent), while 27 percent indicated *possibly* and 17 percent said *yes*.

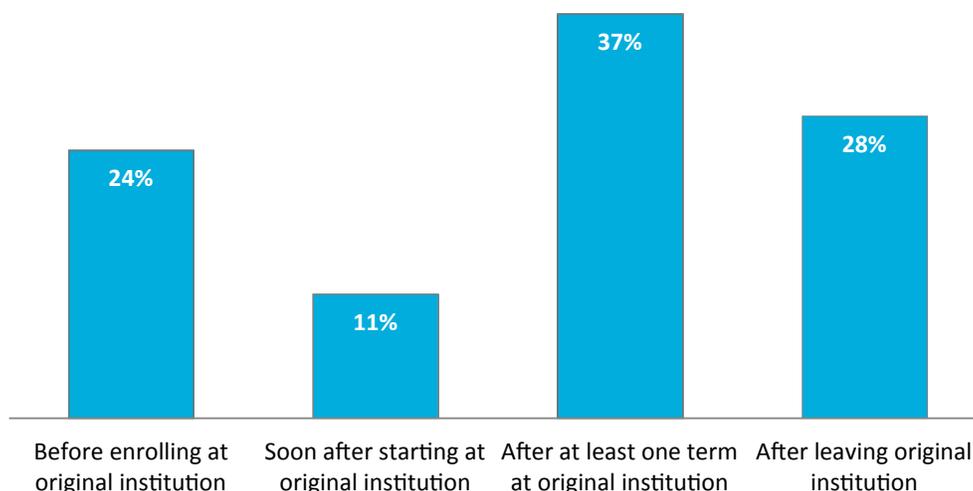
While only 13 percent of college and institute respondents and 10 percent of teaching university respondents reported *yes* when asked if they expected to return to their original institution in the future, one-third (33 percent) of research university respondents said *yes*.

Subsequent Institution (Fall 2011)

Deciding to Move to Fall 2011 Institution

Respondents were asked at what point they had decided that they would move to their subsequent institution. Overall, one-quarter (24 percent) had decided to move to their subsequent institution before enrolling at their original institution (34 percent of college and institute respondents were included in this group). The largest proportion (37 percent) decided to move to their fall 2011 institution after at least one term at their original institution (including 47 percent of research university respondents and 39 percent of teaching university respondents) and 28 percent decided to move after leaving their original 2010-2011 institution.

Decided to Move to New Institution

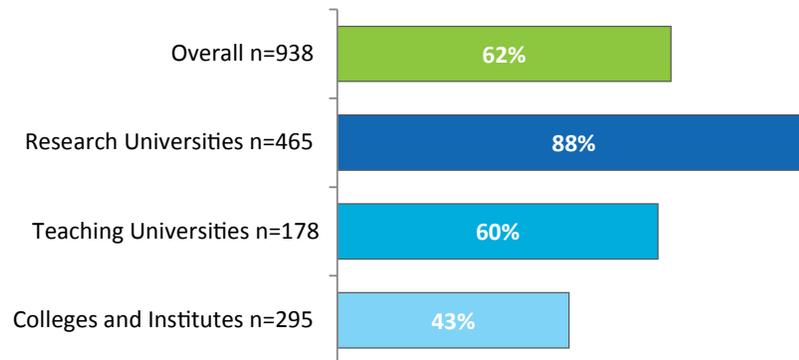


The timing of the decision to move to a specific institution provides further insight into the varied experiences of *movers*. Roughly equal proportions of all respondents identified their next institution before enrolling at, or after leaving their original institution. About twice as many decided where they would move to at some point during their studies. Earlier, we found that over one quarter of students who originated in colleges, institutes and teaching universities cited transfer as their main goal. We can now add that many of these respondents had more developed plans to transfer to a specific institution at some future point. These findings are valuable as we consider the potential of BC's transfer system to support student planning early in their post-secondary careers.

Experience of Transferring to Fall 2011 Institution

Overall, 62 percent of respondents expected to transfer credits from their 2010-2011 institution to their fall 2011 institution. While fewer than half of those who moved to colleges or institutes expected to transfer credit (43 percent), almost nine out of ten (88 percent) of those who moved to research universities expected to do so.

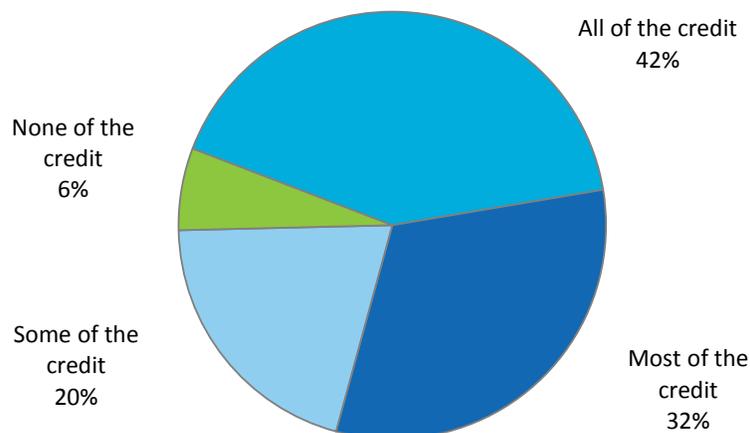
Expected to Transfer Credits, by New Institution Type



More than half (55 percent) of those who moved from a research university expected to transfer credits, including 84 percent of those who moved *from* a research university *to* a different research university.

Although only 42 percent of respondents who expected to transfer credit received all the course credit when they changed institutions, the vast majority (94 percent) received at least some of the credit they had earned at their 2010-2011 institution.

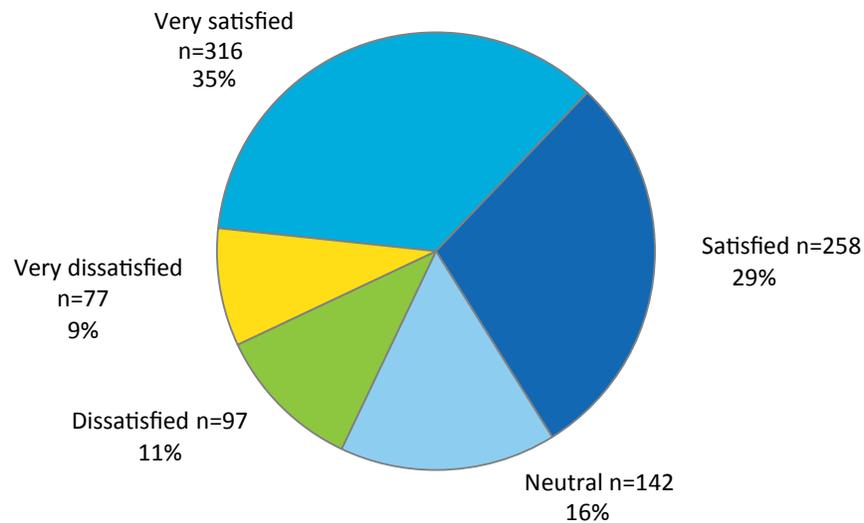
Course Credit Received at New Institution



Transfer Satisfaction

Eighty percent of respondents who expected to transfer credit were satisfied or neutral about the experience of transferring credits.

Satisfaction with Experience of Transferring Credits

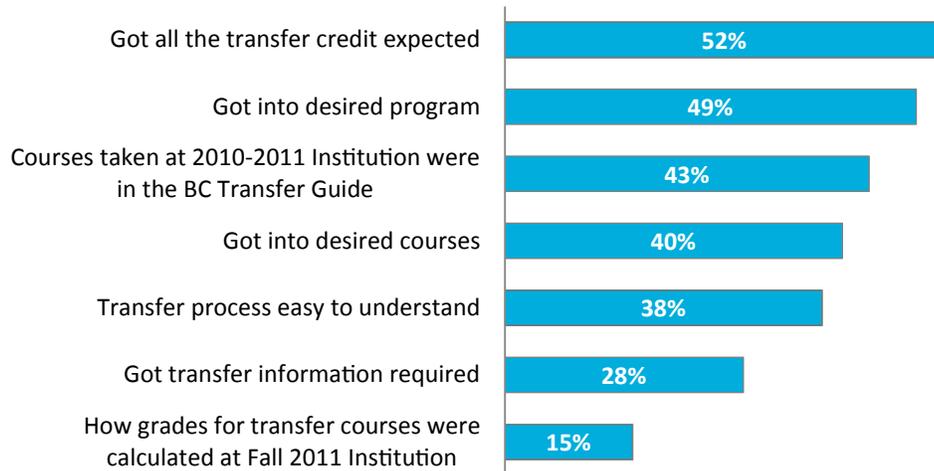


When analyzed by institution-type, the highest level of satisfaction was expressed by respondents who moved *to* research universities (71 percent) and by those who moved *from* colleges and institutes (70 percent). These findings reflect the history and the current characteristics of articulation agreements within the BC transfer system. The lowest levels of satisfaction were reported by those moving *from* research universities (55 percent), and by those moving *to* colleges and institutes (53 percent).

Designed initially to facilitate transfer from community colleges to universities, the majority of the articulation agreements in the BC transfer system continue to support transfer of this type. As of December 31, 2011 (reflecting the end of the term in which respondents moved to their new institution), over 56 percent (36,201) of all active articulation agreements in the BC Transfer Guide were designed to facilitate transfer to a research university, and just under 58 percent (37,075) were *from* a college or institute. In contrast, only 3 percent (1,909) of active articulation agreements in the Guide were *from* a research university, and just over 1 percent (859) was *to* a college or institute. Respondents following pathways supported by the largest number of articulation agreements expressed the highest levels of satisfaction in the current survey. Recently, the BC transfer system has undertaken an initiative to better support non-traditional transfer pathways. Between January and November 2012, almost 7,500 new articulation agreements have been published. The number of active agreements supporting transfer *from* research universities has increased by 68 percent (from approximately 1900 to approximately 3200), and the number supporting transfer to colleges and institutes has increased by 173 percent (from approximately 860 to approximately 2350).

Of those who were satisfied with their experience of transferring credits, the most commonly indicated reasons were *got all the transfer credit expected* (52 percent) and *got into desired program* (49 percent).

Reasons for Satisfaction with Transfer Experience (multiple responses allowed)



While respondents from colleges and institutes (57 percent) and research universities (55 percent) reported *got all the transfer credit expected* as their top reason for satisfaction with the transfer experience, those from teaching universities indicated *got into desired program* as their top reason for satisfaction with the transfer experience (53 percent).

Of the minority who were dissatisfied with their experience of transferring credits (n=174), by far the most commonly cited reason for all institution types was *didn't get all the transfer credit expected* (59 percent). Other commonly cited reasons for dissatisfaction with the transfer experience were the *transfer process was difficult to understand* (34 percent), and *courses taken at 2010-2011 Institution were not in the BC Transfer Guide* (33 percent). (See Appendix B)

Clearly, BC's well-established transfer system shaped the experience and expectations of survey respondents. The most commonly cited goal for enrolling at their original institution was preparation to transfer (23 percent overall, and 30 percent for respondents moving from colleges and institutes). Nearly one-quarter of respondents had identified their subsequent institution before registering at their original institution, and 62 percent expected to transfer credits when they moved from one institution to another.

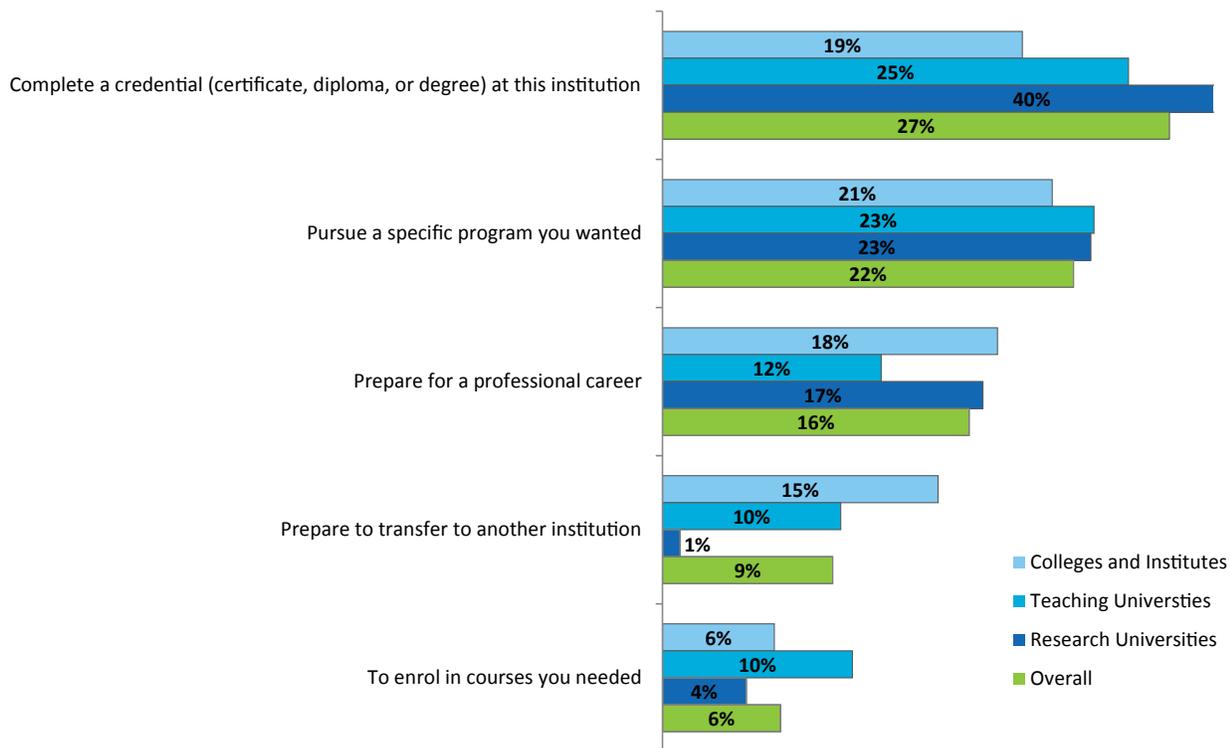
Not surprisingly, their assessment of the transfer experience hinged primarily on the respondents' success in having all of their expected transfer credit recognized by their fall 2011 institution. Those following the most established pathways within the BC transfer system (those flowing from colleges, institutes and teaching universities to research universities) would have been most likely to have their expectations met. Students who moved from research universities and those moving to colleges and institutes may well have found the transfer process more challenging; particularly prior to recent initiatives which seek to expand the opportunities for student mobility between all sectors of the BC public post-secondary system.

The following sections examine the experience of *movers* at their subsequent institution, allowing an assessment of how well their educational objectives were served by the opportunity to move efficiently between institutions.

Goals for Enrolling at Subsequent Institution

Across all sectors, 27 percent of respondents identified *complete a credential at this institution* as their most important goal for enrolling at their new institution (more than the 21 percent who cited credential completion as their most important goal at their original institution), followed by 22 percent indicating *pursue a specific program you wanted* (compared to only 13 percent who cited this at their original institution), and 16 percent reporting *prepare for a professional career* (equal to the percentage related to their original institution).

Top 5 Most Important Goals for Enrolling at New Institution

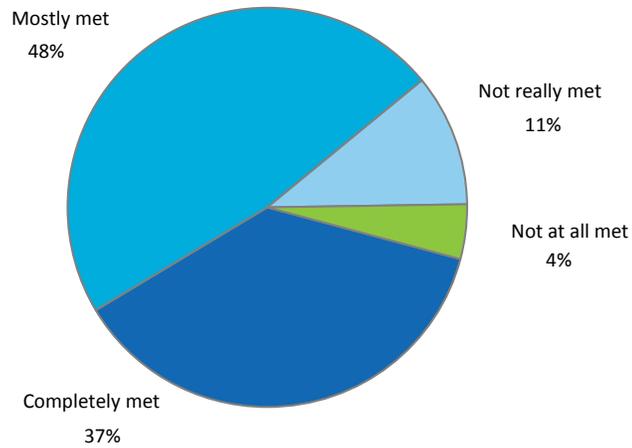


Main goals were fairly consistent across institution types, except that those respondents who moved to a research university were much more likely to have *complete a credential* as a main goal (40 percent) and much less likely to have cited *prepare to transfer to another institution* (1 percent).

As they moved further along their post-secondary path, *movers* refined their goals to put greater emphasis on completion of a specific program and credential at their new institution. Where 23 percent cited *prepare to transfer to another institution* as the main goal for enrolment at their original institution, only 9 percent enrolled at their new institution with this main goal. Even among respondents who moved to colleges, institutes, and teaching universities, the proportion of respondents citing subsequent transfer as their main goal decreased dramatically.

Overall, 85 percent of respondents said their main goal at their new institution had been completely or mostly met by the time they were surveyed in spring 2012.

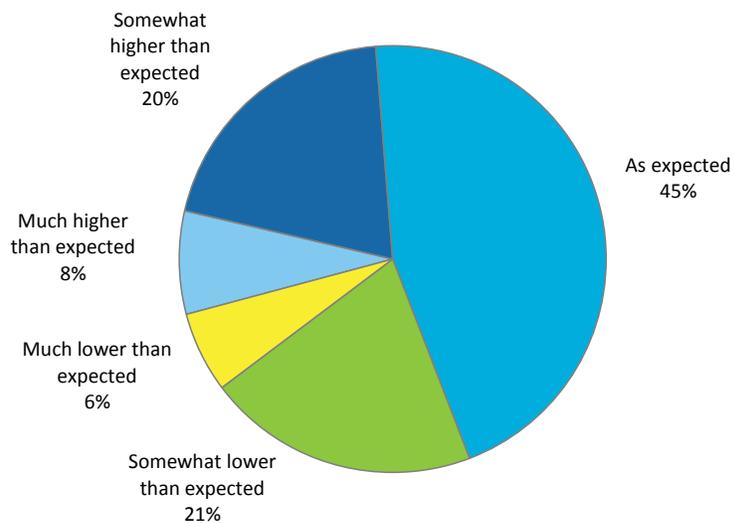
Extent to which Goal Has Been Met So Far at New Institution



Grades at Fall 2011 Institution

When asked about their grades at their fall 2011 institution, about an equal proportion of respondents said their grades at their new institution were *somewhat higher* or *much higher than expected* (28 percent), as those who said that they were *somewhat lower* or *much lower than expected* (27 percent). Among those who moved from a research university, 38 percent said their grades so far were higher than expected.

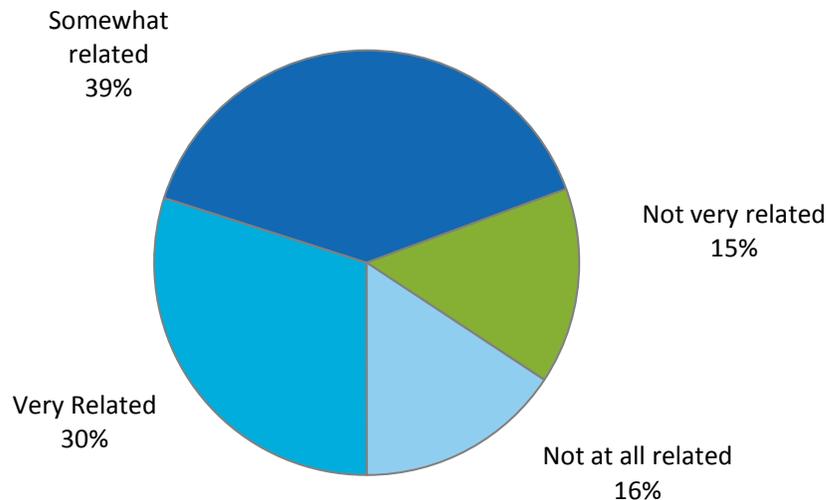
Grades So Far at New Institution



Relatedness of Program

More than two-thirds of respondents (69 percent) said the program at their fall 2011 institution was *somewhat* or *very related* to the program at their 2010-2011 institution. This was true regardless of which institution type respondents came from or moved to.

Relatedness of Program at Original Institution to Program at New Institution

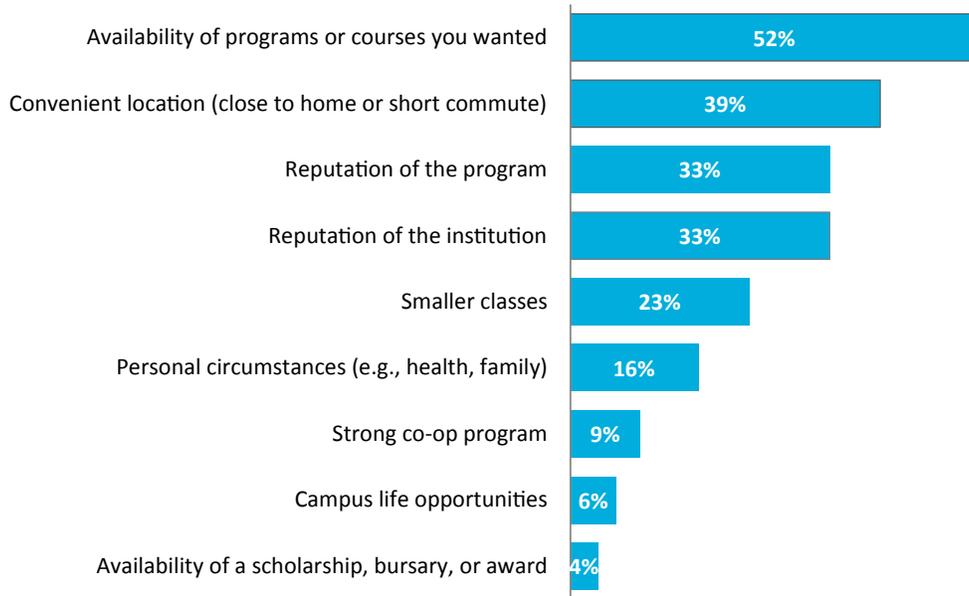


Reasons for Choosing New Institution

When asked why they selected their fall 2011 institution over other institutions, more than half of respondents (52 percent) identified *availability of desired programs or courses* as their reason, followed by *convenient location* (39 percent). Other commonly cited reasons were *reputation of the institution* and *reputation of the program*, both at 33 percent.

Respondents from all institution types reported the *availability of programs or courses* as the top reason they chose their new fall 2011 institution. Coupled with the previous finding that a large majority of respondents followed a coherent educational path by transferring to a related program, this suggests that mobility is supporting their educational goals, and allows them to pursue relevant programming where it is offered, maximizing the effectiveness of BC's differentiated post-secondary system.

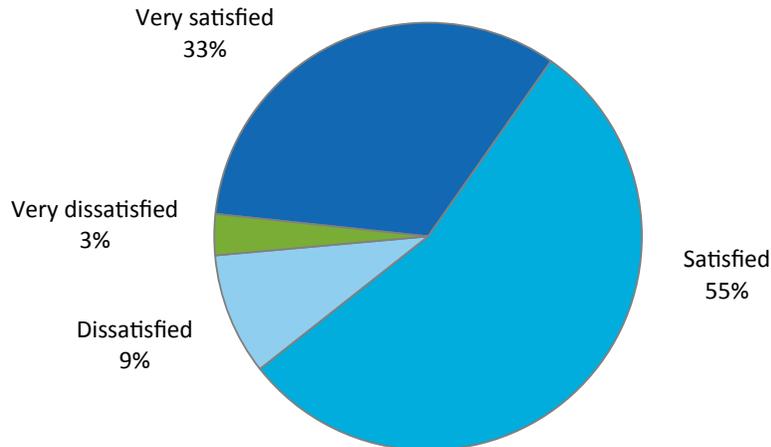
Reasons for Choosing New Institution (multiple responses allowed)



Satisfaction with Fall 2011 Institution

Overall, 88 percent of respondents were *satisfied* or *very satisfied* with their new institution. Respondents were consistently satisfied or very satisfied (85-90 percent) regardless of the type of institution they originated from or moved to.

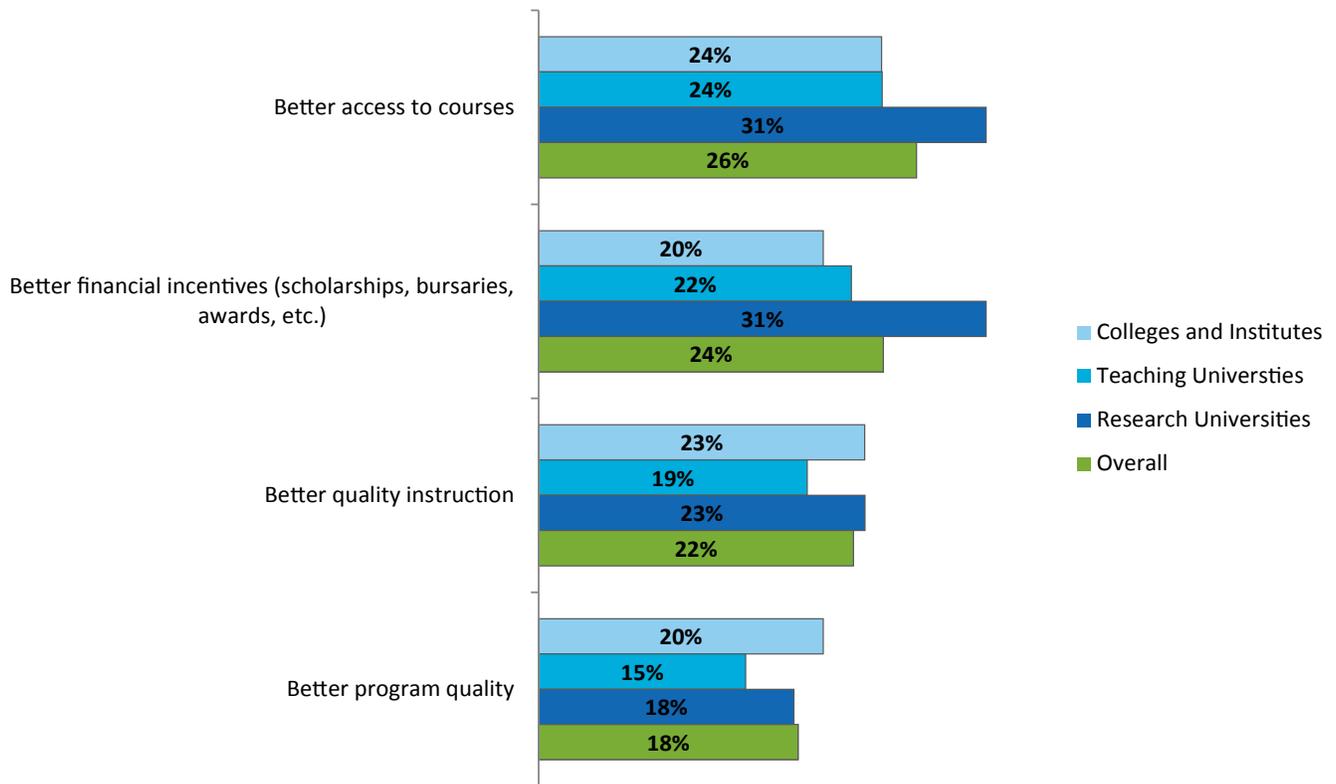
Satisfaction with New Institution



When asked how their experience at their new institution could be improved, *better access to courses* was the most popular response (26 percent), followed by *better financial incentives — scholarships, bursaries, awards, etc.* — (24 percent) and *better quality instruction* (22 percent). For all institutional types, *better access to courses* was consistently the top suggestion to how the experience at the new institution could be improved.

Those who moved to research universities were more likely than other respondents to cite *better access to courses* and *better financial incentives* as ways their experience could be improved.

How Experience at New Institution Could be Improved, by Institution Type (multiple responses allowed)

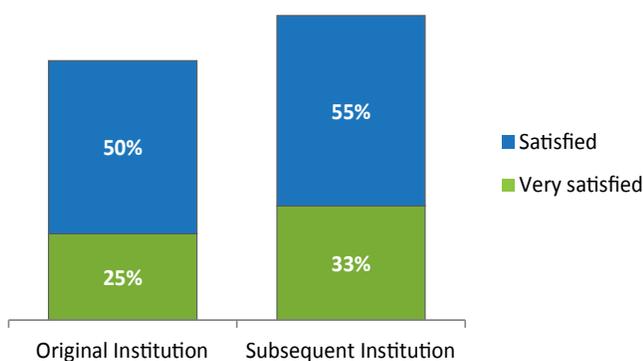


Conclusion

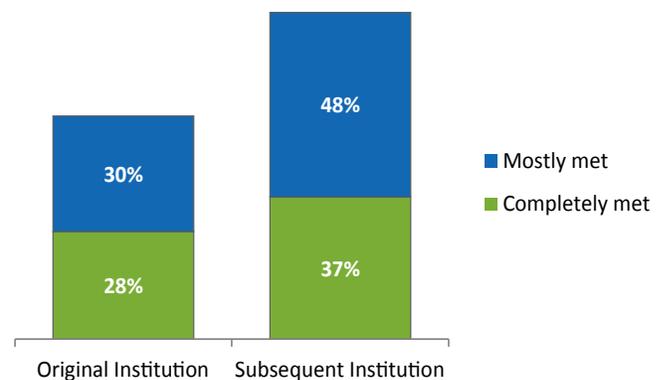
Although thousands of students switch institutions every year without having received a credential, three quarters of those surveyed were satisfied with their original institution, and 88 percent were satisfied with their subsequent institution.

Respondents to the *Survey of Movers* have provided us with important insight into their considerations, decisions and experiences as they moved between BC’s public post-secondary institutions. As a group, they entered the post-secondary system with varying goals — most commonly either credential completion at their original institution, or transfer to another institution. Most respondents (58 percent) had met their main goals by the time they left their original institution and 85 percent had met their main goal at their subsequent institution by the time they were surveyed. Almost 70 percent achieved grades equal to, or higher than they expected. These results are in line with other recent research — a 2009 survey of students who left the post-secondary system without a credential found that 84 percent left satisfied.³

Satisfaction with Institution



Extent to which Main Goal Met



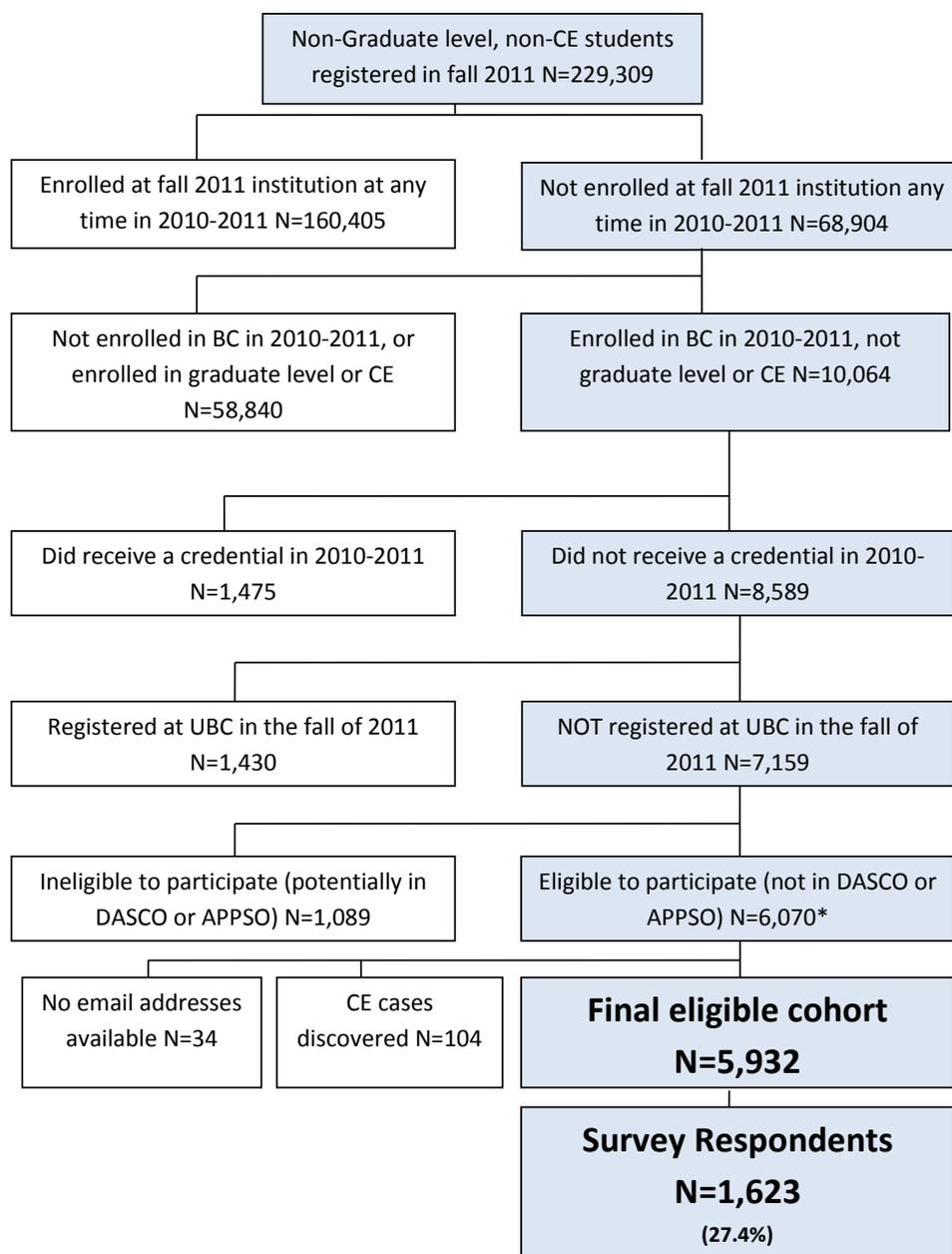
Most students switched institutions not due to dissatisfaction, but because they wanted to pursue a specific program that they could not pursue at the original institution. The most commonly cited actions institutions could have taken to prevent departure were *offer the program you want* (32 percent) and *wider course offerings* (28 percent). More than half of respondents identified *availability of desired programs or courses* as a reason for choosing their subsequent institution. The existence of a well-developed transfer system clearly shaped the expectations of respondents. Over 60 percent of respondents expected to transfer credits when they changed institutions, and almost all (94 percent) of those who expected to transfer credits were able to transfer at least some. Dissatisfaction with the transfer process arose primarily when these expectations were not met — either because courses were not listed in the BC Transfer Guide (33 percent) or all expected credit was not granted (59 percent).

Collectively, movers followed coherent educational pathways, moving to institutions where they could access their chosen program, which was related to the program at their original institution in almost 70 percent of cases.

³ http://outcomes.bcstats.gov.bc.ca/Libraries/SSELSO/SSEL_report_Final_pdf.pdf

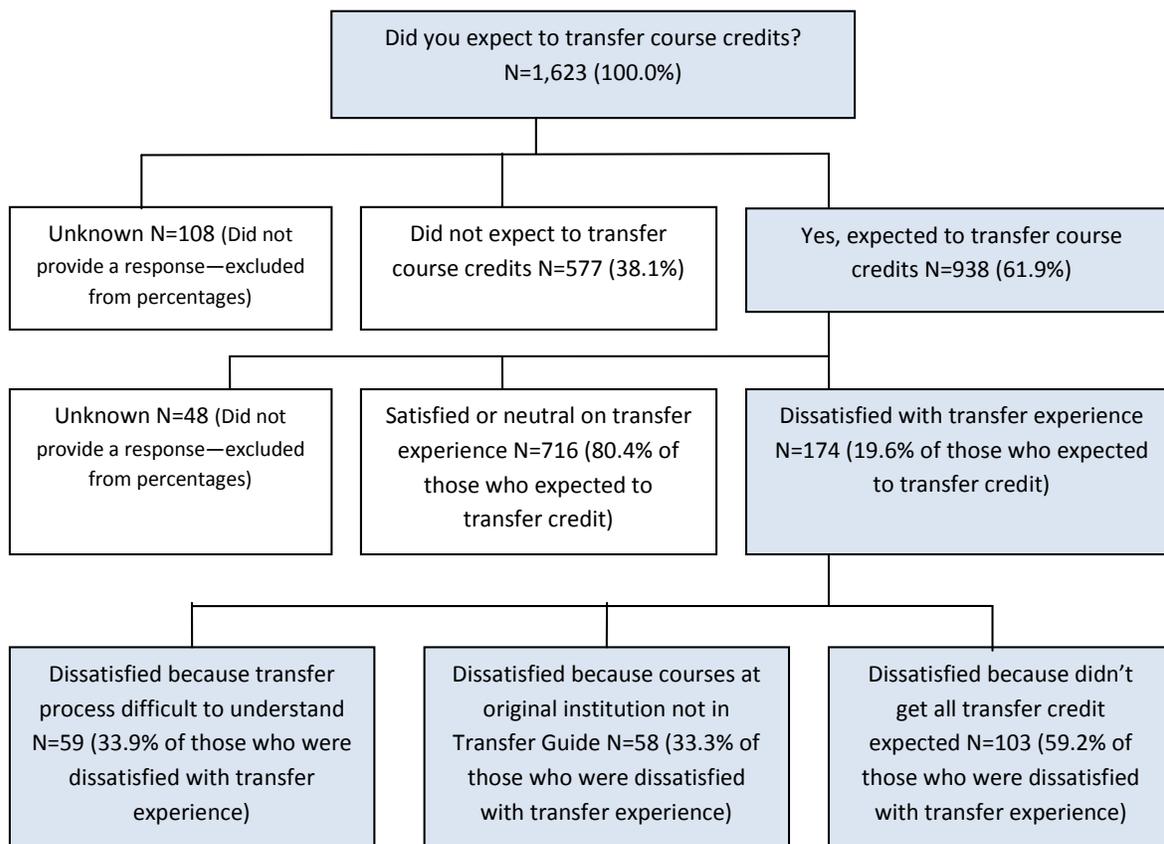
Respondents who originated at colleges, institutes and teaching universities were more likely to have intended to move, and to have identified their subsequent institution earlier in their post-secondary career. Respondents who originated at research universities, where a significant proportion intended to complete a credential, were more likely to move to another institution in response to academic and/or personal challenges. The ability to move predictably allowed the first group to plan effectively. The second group benefited through having options to continue their studies when circumstances intervened. In both cases, student mobility allows students to make effective use of the wide range of institutions and programs that make up BC's post-secondary system. Results from the survey suggest that BC's transfer system is meeting the needs of most students.

APPENDIX A: Identifying the Eligible Cohort



NOTE: Potential “Movers” respondents who overlapped with respondents to the 2012 Diploma, Associate Degree and Certificate Student Outcomes (DACSO) and Apprenticeship Student Outcomes (APPSO) surveys were removed from the cohort to avoid survey fatigue.

APPENDIX B: Transfer Expectations and Satisfaction



Note: movers were permitted to identify multiple reasons for dissatisfaction.

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