

## USING DATA TO INFORM DECISION-MAKING

Research-based decisions are critical to improving supports and programs for transfer students, says NISTS

In February, NACAC members and staff traveled to Atlanta to present and participate in the 16th annual National Institute for the Study of Transfer Students (NISTS) conference, which serves professionals who directly support transfer students, conduct transfer-related research, and create policy. Presenters from states across the country shared research and best practices in working with transfer students.

### TRANSFER RESEARCH

A plenary panel and several in-depth concurrent sessions, highlighted recent research published in *Community College Review's* special issue on transfer in October. One such presentation by Jason Taylor and Dimpal Jain offered a review of transfer research to date and the following recommendations for future research:

1. Transfer research must extend beyond vertical transfer... Students who swirl, take dual credits in high school, co-enroll, transfer laterally, and transfer in reverse

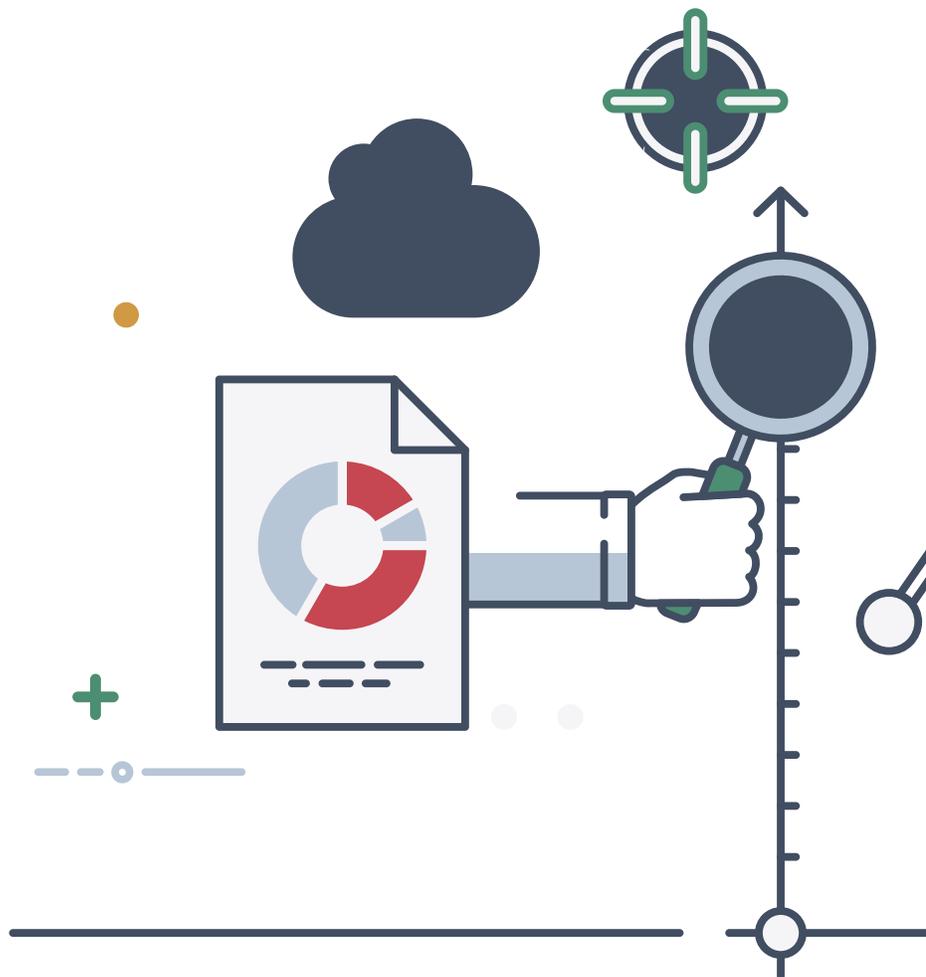
are increasingly a large segment of the undergraduate population, yet very little is known about the causes and consequences of these patterns.

2. Focus not just on documenting inequities but understanding what explains and perpetuates these inequities. Similarly, more research is needed that elevates the voices of marginalized transfer student communities.
3. Review the enactment and implementation of policies at the institutional and partnership level... how these institutional cultures

facilitate or impede transfer...[and] perspectives from transfer agents such as counselors and faculty.

4. Focus on why students transfer, [especially] outside of vertical transfer patterns.
5. Examine the impact of guided pathways and other new policies.

NISTS just released their second research volume, *Transition and Transformation*, which highlights new research focused on access and the process of transfer for community college students.



## ABOUT NISTS, FROM NISTS.ORG

The National Institute for the Study of Transfer Students (NISTS) exists to improve the lives of transfer students. Through education, research, and advocacy, we support professionals who directly serve transfer students, as well as those who create transfer policy and conduct transfer-related research.

NISTS bridges knowledge, policy, and practice by bringing together a wide range of stakeholders to explore the issues related to the transfer process in order to facilitate student success and degree completion. We partner with two- and four-year institutions, state agencies, higher education associations, foundations, and others committed to transfer student success.

We want transfer and transitioning students to succeed! Our goal is to increase access to and attainment of certificate, associate, and baccalaureate credentials by promoting successful transfer and articulation for two-year, community college, and university students.



### USING DATA

Whether it's to learn more about your transfer recruitment and admission pool, transfer student success across different majors at your institution, the culture surrounding transfer students, or the effectiveness of orientation or other programming—using data to inform decision-making is critical to improving supports and programs aimed at helping transfer students succeed. This theme continues to be shared annually at NISTS as a proven best practice. Indeed, as reported in the Fall 2017 issue of NACAC's *Journal of College Admission*, a John N. Gardner Institute survey of transfer practitioners revealed the critical importance of using data to raise awareness and involve the upper levels of campus leadership in making transfer a high priority. NISTS' *Guide to Gathering Transfer Student Data* is a great free resource for those looking to start or refine this practice (available at [www.nists.org/guide-to-gathering-transfer-student](http://www.nists.org/guide-to-gathering-transfer-student)).

### PARTNERSHIPS

With a mix of community colleges and public and private four-year colleges, the NISTS conference builds connections across the country between professionals who work with transfer students. Organizations like NACAC, NACADA: The Global Community for Academic Advising, the John N. Gardner

Institute, and others come together at NISTS to build relationships in support of transfer student programming and pathways. NACAC Board Director Janet Marling, executive director of NISTS, continues to be a leading resource and advocate to improve NACAC's offerings related to transfer. [↗](#)

—Heather Durosko