Introduction

This newsletter highlights research results on the Mobility of Transfer Students (MTS), a branch of research conducted under the auspices of the Student Transitions Project (STP). In this annual study, students enrolled in the Fall of 2007 in BC colleges, university colleges, and institutes were followed into calendar year 2008 to identify those who transferred to a BC university, including information about their transfer credits, academic qualifications, and movement between programs and institutions. This information is also used to make predictions on the expected volume and destinations of transfer students in calendar year 2009.

Volume of Transfer Students

In this study, students are classified according to their likelihood of transfer to a BC university (see Definitions on page 3). There are three groups of students identified in this research:

1. Academic Course Registrants (ACR). In the Fall of 2007, a total of 60,996 students were taking at least one university transferable course in a BC public college, university college, or institute (see Figures 1 and 4). This is a relatively large and broadly defined group, but monitoring this group does provide a leading indicator on the expected volume of Eligible Transfer Students (described below). More than half (61%) of the Academic Course Registrants have taken fewer than 24 transfer credits. In addition, many of these students completed some university transfer courses as part of an applied or career program, with no intention of transferring to a BC university.

2. Eligible Transfer Students (ETR). There are 24,000 students in this group, a subset of the 60,996 Academic Course Registrants. These students have sufficient transfer courses (24 credits or more) and academic qualifications (grade point average of 2.00 or higher) to seek university admission, although not all who are eligible will seek admission to a BC university.

3. Successful Transfer Students (STR). A total of 4,601 students transferred from a BC college, university college, or institute to a BC university in calendar year 2008 with BC College or Associate Degree as a basis of admission. Of these, 3,715 were enrolled at their sending institution in Fall 2007 and had transferred to a BC university, including information about their transfer credits, academic qualifications, and movement between programs and institutions. This information is also used to make predictions on the expected volume and destinations of transfer students in calendar year 2009.

Conclusion and Looking Ahead

Volume of Transfer Students

Figure 1: Transfer Students by Credit Volume

- Academic Course Registrants - Fall 2007 (Completed at Least One Transfer Course)
- Academic Course Registrants - Still Enrolled at Sending Institution in Cal Year 2008
- Eligible Transfer Students - Fall 2007 (Completed 24+ Transfer Credits, and Min. GPA 2.00)
- Successful Transfer Students - Calendar Year 2008 (Transferred to University)

IN THIS NEWSLETTER

Volume of Transfer Students ................................................. 1
Transfer Student Trends and Predictions .................................. 2
Destinations of Eligible Transfer Students, by Credit Volume .... 2
Increasing Shares of ETR's Staying at Home Institution .......... 2
Eligible Transfer Students by Program .................................... 3
Conclusion and Looking Ahead ............................................. 4
Definitions ........................................................................... 4
Transfer Student Trends and Predictions

The volume of Academic Course Registrants and Eligible Transfer Students in British Columbia reached its lowest point in the Fall of 2005; however, by the Fall of 2008, this decline has been almost completely restored. As shown in Figure 2, a 4.2% increase in Academic Course Registrants and a 2.0% increase in Eligible Transfer Students have resulted in student volumes in these two groups surpassing Fall 2003 levels and approaching the peak volumes of Fall 2004.

The trend in Successful Transfer Students has been moving in the opposite direction: in calendar year 2008, the volume of students transferring to BC universities declined 3% (-163 students over the previous year), and in the three years from calendar year 2006 to calendar year 2008, the volume of students transferring to BC universities has declined 11.7%, with an overall decline estimated to reach -12.2% by the end of calendar year 2009, all other conditions being equal. These anticipated declines from calendar year 2006 to 2009 tend to vary across BC universities, with the University of Victoria showing the largest anticipated decline (-31%) and UBC, Okanagan showing an increase (+20%).

As a result of increases in the volume of Eligible Transfer Students coinciding with decreases in the volume of Successful Transfer Students to university, the transfer ratio (or STR/ETR) has declined to 19% this year, from the peak of 23% in calendar year 2005. The Mobility of Transfer Students (MTS) Subcommittee is interested in these trends, especially in light of recent changes to institution designations in BC.

The Subcommittee will continue to monitor and report this information in future.

Destinations of Eligible Transfer Students by Credit Volume

The destinations in calendar year 2008 for all 24,000 Eligible Transfer Students from Fall 2007 are summarized by credit volume in Figures 3 and 4:

- The largest group (51%) remained at their own institution, increasing from 49% two years ago.
- The next largest group did not enroll the following year, representing 32% of Eligible Transfer Students (12% had a credential and 20% did not).
- A small proportion (4%) switched to another BC public post-secondary college, university college, or institute.
- The remaining Eligible Transfer Students (13%) transferred to university: 11.2% had a college transfer or associate degree as Special Purpose Universities) retained more than half of their home institution has increased from 49% two years ago to 51%.

Shares of Eligible Transfer Students Staying at their Home Institution Are Increasing

The share of Eligible Transfer Students who remain at their home institution has increased from 49% two years ago to 51% this year. Four institutions (all of which were recently designated as Special Purpose Universities) retained more than half of their eligible transfer students in calendar year 2008: Thompson
Rivers University (66%), Vancouver Island University (65%), University of the Fraser Valley (65%), and Kwantlen Polytechnic University (55%). Each of these institutions, plus other large BC institutions (with at least 1,000 ETR’s), retained roughly 2% to 3% more of their ETR’s this year, relative to two years ago. Only one notable exception was identified: Okanagan College retained a smaller share of Eligible Transfer Students this year (41%) compared to two years ago (57%), as more students are now transferring from Okanagan College to UBC, Okanagan.

**Eligible Transfer Students by Program**

The largest proportion (11,580 or 48%) of the 24,000 Eligible Transfer Students in Fall 2007, were enrolled in an Arts and Sciences program at their home institution. Business and Management is the second largest source of Eligible Transfer Students, representing 6,224 students or 26% of all Eligible Transfer Students in Fall 2007.

The Transfer Ratio (19%), or the number of Successful Transfer Students in Calendar Year 2008 expressed as a proportion of Fall 2007 Eligible Transfer Students, is much higher for students in some programs than others (see Figure 5). For example, the Transfer Ratio is relatively high for students enrolled in Engineering, Electrical, and Electronics (49% of 250 ETR’s) and Arts and Sciences (28% of 11,580 ETR’s). By comparison, only 7% of 6,224 Eligible Transfer Students in Business and Management actually transferred to a university, suggesting that Business students are completing their credential at their home institutions (Figure 5 shows that 57% of Business students remained enrolled at their home institution).

Of those who did transfer to university, 64% remained in the same program area at university. Students in Nursing (98%), Engineering (83%), and Arts and Sciences (71%) had relatively high rates of transfer to the same program area at university, compared to students in Business and Management (40%).

Among all 24,000 Eligible Transfer Students in 2007, a total of 7,693 students did not enroll the following year. The rationale for not re-enrolling can partially be explained by the fact that 38% of these non-enrollees had obtained a credential from their home institution. The proportion of non-enrollees with a credential tends to vary by program (20% in Arts and Sciences versus 48% in all other program areas combined).
The 4,601 total Successful Transfer Students (STR) to university in calendar year 2008 includes 1,903 who transferred from prior terms and/or were not deemed eligible transfer students in Fall 2007.

c) Other transfers to university include students admitted to university under a basis of admission, other than BC College or BC Associate Degree.

d) The 4,601 total Successful Transfer Students (STR) to university in calendar year 2008 includes 1,903 who transferred from prior terms and/or were not deemed "eligible" transfer students in Fall 2007.

Conclusion and Looking Ahead

The declining pool of Academic Course Registrants and Eligible Transfer Students has recovered in BC and will likely continue to rise along with overall enrollments in the province; however, the number of students who transfer to university continues to decline. These trends likely reflect the recent changes in the BC public post-secondary environment, including the recent creation of special purpose universities and further expansion of degree programs in the non-university sector, resulting in more options for degree completion.

Given the recent changes in BC’s post-secondary landscape and the impact these changes may have on the volume and direction of student movement between all BC public post-secondary institutions, the Mobility of Transfer Students Subcommittee has agreed to revisit its research methodology in 2009/10 to ensure that the reporting and prediction on the volume of transfer students and other student movement between institutions is consistent with the planning needs of BC’s post-secondary institutions, government, and other stakeholders interested in post-secondary student mobility.

Definitions

An Academic Course Registrant (ACR) – formerly called Potential Transfer Students or PTR – is any student who is enrolled in or has completed at least one course listed in the BC Transfer Guide. The student’s intentions or grades are immaterial for inclusion in the Academic Course Registrant group.

An Eligible Transfer Student (ETR) is any student who is enrolled in or has completed at least 24 credits in courses listed in the BC Transfer Guide and has a GPA of at least 2.00. Not all Eligible Transfer Students will seek university admission in the following year, nor would they necessarily meet specific entrance requirements, but they are more likely to enter university in the subsequent year.

A Successful Transfer Student (STR) is any student who was admitted to university on the basis of having completed a minimum number of credits in courses in a college, university college, or institute that are transferable to BC universities.

This study also uses a Transfer Ratio to estimate the subsequent year’s (i.e., calendar year 2009) volume of Successful Transfer Students, assuming all other conditions remain unchanged. The Transfer Ratio is the number of Successful Transfer Students divided by the number of Eligible Transfer Students from the previous Fall.

1 Institutional designations in this study are those that were in place for the time period of this study (Fall 2003 to Fall 2007 for sending institutions and Calendar Year 2004 to 2008 for receiving institutions).

2 The Transfer Ratio (19%) reported here includes BCIT. In some cases, the MTS research excludes ETRs from this ratio because the BCIT’s course offerings result in a large number of ETRs with few STRs. If BCIT was excluded, the Transfer Ratio would be 20%.

Mobility of Transfer Students Subcommittee

This study on transfer student mobility was conducted under the auspices of the Student Transitions Project (STP) and was funded by BCCAT as part of its Admissions Committee work plan. Research directions were provided by the Mobility of Transfer Students Subcommittee of STP whose membership includes representatives across post-secondary sectors:

- Kathleen Bigsby, Director, Institutional Analysis and Planning, Kwantlen Polytechnic University
- Bob Cowin, Director, Institutional Research and Planning, Douglas College
- Jacy Lee, Director, Institutional Research and Planning, Simon Fraser University
- Hugh Judah, Data Warehouse Coordinator, Ministry of Advanced Education and Labour Market Development
- Joanne Haslop, Manager, Student Transitions Project
- Devon Gaber, Associate Director, BCCAT (Chair)
- Jean Karlinski, Research Coordinator, BCCAT

More information is available at: www.aved.gov.bc.ca/student_transitions/mobility-subcommittee.htm

Designated representatives from each of BC’s public post-secondary institutions have access to additional information on the mobility of transfer students, including Excel pivot tables and dynamic visual mobility worksheets.

Figure 5: Destinations of Fall 2007 Eligible Transfer Students in Calendar Year 2008, by Sending Program Area