



11-7-2013

# Tracking retention and graduation rates for transfer students

Glen Rogers

*Alverno College*, [grogers@pacific.edu](mailto:grogers@pacific.edu)

Kathleen Schwan Minik

*Alverno College*

Follow this and additional works at: <https://scholarlycommons.pacific.edu/provost-facpres>

 Part of the [Higher Education Commons](#)

## Recommended Citation

Rogers, Glen and Schwan Minik, Kathleen, "Tracking retention and graduation rates for transfer students" (2013). *Office of the Provost Faculty and Staff Presentations*. 51.

<https://scholarlycommons.pacific.edu/provost-facpres/51>

This Conference Presentation is brought to you for free and open access by the Office of the Provost at Scholarly Commons. It has been accepted for inclusion in Office of the Provost Faculty and Staff Presentations by an authorized administrator of Scholarly Commons. For more information, please contact [mgibney@pacific.edu](mailto:mgibney@pacific.edu).

## Tracking Retention and Graduation Rates for Transfer Students

Prepared by Glen Rogers and Kathleen Schwan Minik,  
Alverno College

2013 AIRUM Annual Conference  
November 7, 2013

## Main Goals

1. Describe ways to **internally** improve reporting of transfer student graduation rates in support of productive dialog.
2. Demonstrate a possible way to compare new and transfer student retention and graduation rates **within** an institution.
3. Identify implications for national reporting initiatives.

## **Context:** National push to report transfer-in graduation statistics

- Voluntary initiatives (e.g., College Portrait, Student Achievement Measure “SAM”).
- Federal proposal (IPEDS).

The initiatives calculate graduation statistics without a breakdown by number of prior credits.

## Alverno Longitudinal Tracking System

- Educational Research and Evaluation created a Longitudinal Tracking System containing records of the college’s undergraduate students.
- The SPSS-based file tracks students each semester from entry to 10 years after entrance, or until they graduate.
- The records include background characteristics, enrollment information, major, number of credits achieved, and selected other information.

## Retention and Graduation Rates: Presenting Information Internally

- Many times, we present student retention and graduation rates **internally** with a focus on first-time, full-time students.
- We do this because first-time, full-time students have an equal starting point in calculating time to degree. It also aligns with current IPEDS reporting.
- **But**, this often leads to questions about transfer students and how their retention and graduation rates compare to first-time students.

## Issues with retention and graduation rates for *Non*-first-time, full-time students

- Many of our students do not fit into the category of first-time, full-time, fall entrants.
- Those new students who enter part-time and/or in the spring have comparable *prior* educational attainment but are relatively small populations.
- Transfer students are a large population but are less directly comparable because they enter with a **head start** in college credits.

What percent of undergraduate students entered by various admission categories?

Entrance Admit Status	Fall Entrance 2012		Spring Entrance 2013	
	Full-time	Part-time	Full-time	Part-time
New High School (First-time)	35%	0%	3%	0%
New Adult (First-time)	1%	1%	1%	0%
Transfer Direct	18%	0%	9%	1%
Transfer Not Direct	14%	5%	10%	3%

Included in FAFSA and College Navigator    Included in College Navigator    Total N = 525

### Improving the Dialog: Transfer Student Persistence

- Generally, we have reported persistence information separately for New and Transfer students.
- For example, we have provided separate regression modeling for predicting new and transfer student persistence.

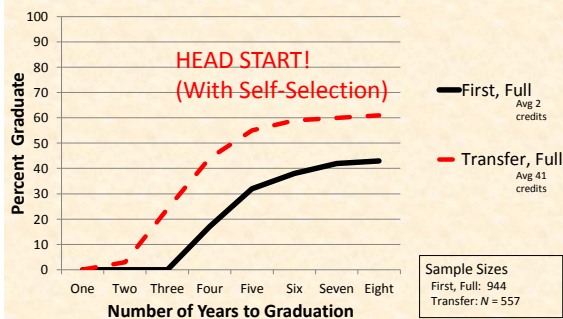
### Improving the Dialog: Transfer Student Persistence and Graduation Rates

- However, the predictive regression modeling does not address the graduation rates and comparisons of rates.
- Such rates are more intuitively representative of degree of success.

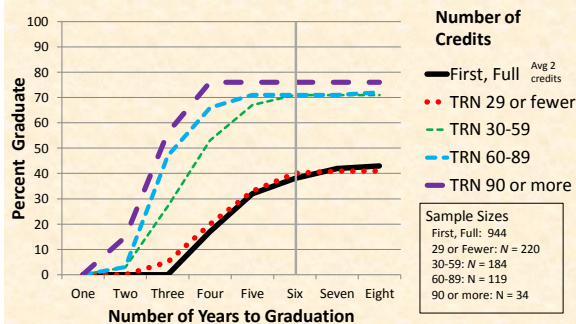
### Improving the Dialog: Transfer Student Persistence and Graduation Rates

- How can we develop a meaningful persistence and graduation rate that will represent our transfer students?
- Can this rate for transfer persistence and graduation be compared to the rate of first-time students?

What happens if we directly compare graduation rates of transfer and first-time, full-time students?



What happens if we examine the effect of credits on transfer student graduation rates?



What are persistence and graduation rates for **transfer** students?

How do we create “fair” comparisons of when transfer students have a head start?



How do we create “fair” comparisons?

Transfer students have a “head start.”

- They enter our college with *43 credits* on average (vs. 2 credits for NEW students)
- They are a *self-selected* group who have already shown a commitment to continuing their college education

Therefore, to create a fair comparison of new and transfer students for persistence and graduation, we created a “**transfer-centered entrance**” to eliminate the head start.

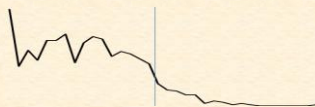
“Transfer-Centered Entrance” Cohort Defined

**New Students**

Transfer-centered entrance = **Continuing** new students **one year** after entrance (thus, dropouts in first year excluded). Controls for self-selection

**Transfer Students**

Transfer-centered entrance = Entrance (**but, limited to those with fewer than 75 credits**)

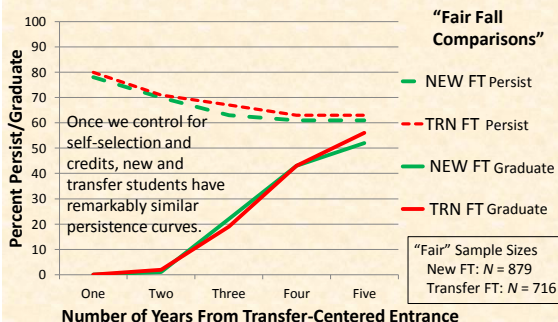


Mean Credits at “Transfer-Centered Entrance”

New = 31 credits  
Transfer = 34 credits

What are persistence and graduation rates for transfer students in a “fair comparison” with new, full-time students?

**Transfer, Full-Time vs. New, Full-Time Students**



How does the IPEDs six-year graduation rate relate to the transfer-centered five-year graduation rate?

**We are not replacing current IPEDS**

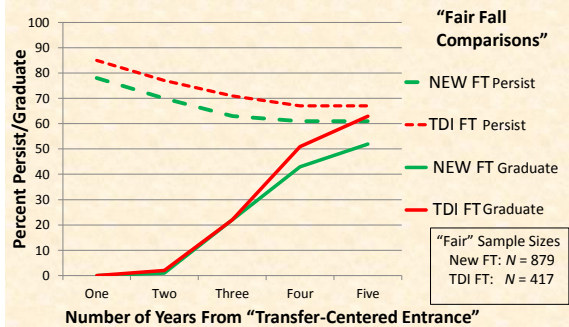
Entrance Admit Status	Transfer-Centered Five-Year Grad Rate	Current Federal Six-Year Grad Rate
Fall, New, Full-Time Rate	<b>52%</b>	39%
entrants in category represented in rate	73% of sample	100% of sample
Fall, Transfer, Full-Time Rate	<b>56%</b>	---
entrants in category represented in rate	87% of sample	0% of sample

The transfer-centered rate is higher than the federal six-year rate because first-year drop-outs are excluded.

## Graduation Rates for Subgroups of Transfer Students

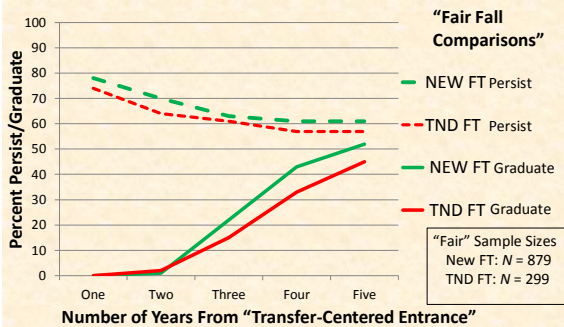
What are persistence and graduation rates for transfer students in a "fair comparison" with new, full-time students?

**Transfer Direct (TDI), Full-Time vs. New, Full-Time**



What are persistence and graduation rates for transfer students in a "fair" comparison with new, full-time students?

**Transfer NOT Direct (TND), Full-Time vs. New, Full-Time**



## The purposes of the transfer-centered metric

- To enable internal dialog on persistence and graduation rates
  - That includes more students
  - That is readily interpretable in these contexts
  - That enables comparison of new and transfer students

## Transfer-Centered Metric Purpose

- It is Not intended to create a national metric of transfer student "graduation rates"

## Some Dynamics Behind the Push to Report Graduation Statistics for Transfer Students

### Legitimate Concerns

#### Federal Policy Makers

- Interest in leveraging change in higher education.
- Providing information to prospective students and their parents.

#### Higher Education

- Wants credit for their part in students' eventual graduation:
  - "We graduate more of our transfer students."
  - "Our students who leave graduate elsewhere."

### However, can we compare transfer graduation statistics across institutions?

In general, students who transfer more credits will graduate more quickly:

- They have more credits toward the degree.
- They have shown a greater commitment to achieving success in college than those with fewer credits.

The national initiatives do not address variation in the number of transfer credits. **Can we assume that transfer credits are similar across institutions?**

### Discussion

- What opportunities and concerns do you have regarding possible reporting of transfer-centered graduation rates within your institution?
- Any concerns about the transfer-centered approach? (**Handout**)
- What other approaches do you have to represent transfer student graduation rates in support of dialog within your institution?

### Questions?

Kathleen Schwan Minik  
Senior Research Analyst, Alverno College  
kathleen.schwan@alverno.edu

U:\SRE\stateman-studies\Transfer\_Students\ARJUM\Transfer\_graduationrates\_3.pptx