

RESEARCH BRIEF

No. 81-16

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Transfer Trends and Patterns

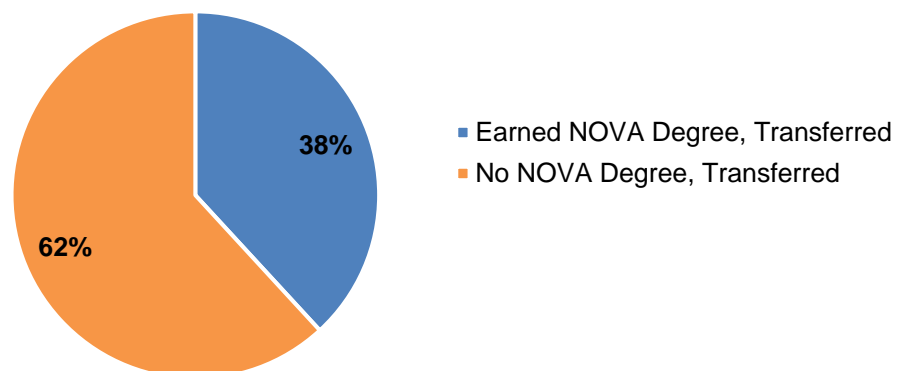
This Research Brief presents data on students who transfer out of NOVA. Data are presented on whether students transferred with or without a NOVA degree (Section I) and student enrollment patterns at NOVA prior to transfer (Section II). Results from a phone survey of students who transferred without earning a degree are presented in Section III. Section IV explores four-year degree completion rates.

I. Pre-Transfer Characteristics

In Fall 2013, there were 8,211 first-time in college¹ students at NOVA. At the end of their third year, 22 percent of students (1,798 students) had transferred to a two- or four-year institution.²

- Thirty-eight percent of these students (686 students) earned a degree or credential at NOVA prior to transferring (Figure 1).
- The remaining 62 percent of transfer students (1,112 students) transferred without earning a degree or credential at NOVA (see Section II for additional details).

**Figure 1. NOVA Students who Transferred by NOVA Graduation Status:
Fall 2013 FTIC Cohort**



Source: OIR/NSC

¹ Fall 2013 FTIC cohort excludes students who were dual-enrolled to limit the focus to college enrollment and transfer patterns of students who are not in high school.

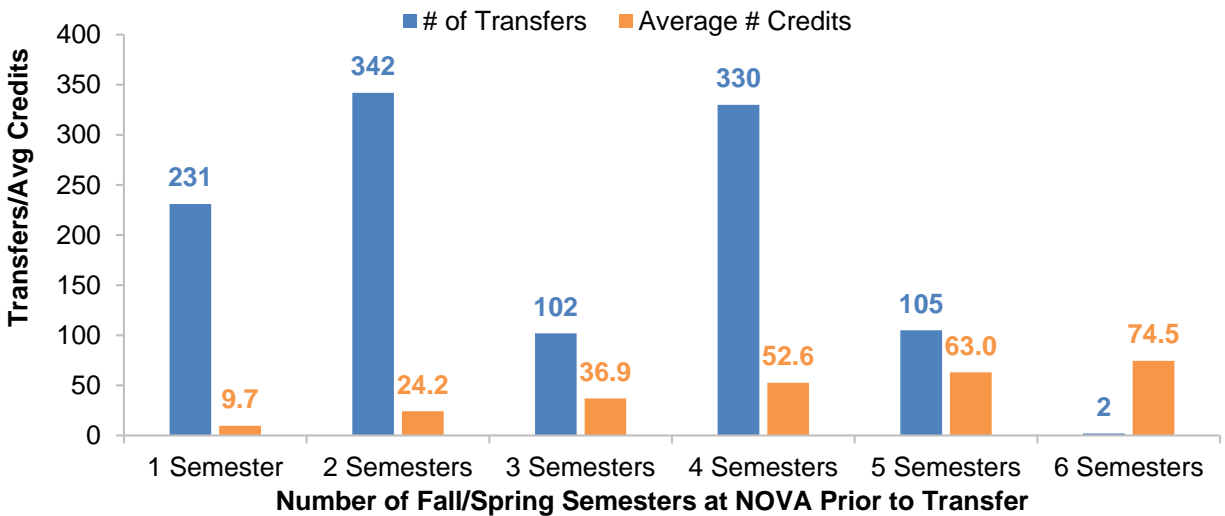
² Transfer data available through July 7, 2016 from the National Student Clearinghouse. It is likely additional students will transfer to other institutions for their fourth year, enrolling in Fall 2016.

II. Students Who Transferred within Three Years Without a NOVA Degree

Among Fall 2013 FTIC students who transferred within three years without earning a degree, over half (573 students, 52 percent) enrolled at NOVA for only one or two fall/spring semesters prior to transferring (Figure 2).³

- Students who enrolled at NOVA for one semester prior to transferring enrolled in an average of less than 10 credit hours.
- Students who enrolled at NOVA for two semesters enrolled in an average of 24 credit hours.

Figure 2. Students who Transferred within Three Years without a NOVA Degree by Number of Semesters at NOVA and Average NOVA Credits: Fall 2013 FTIC Cohort



Source: OIR/NSC

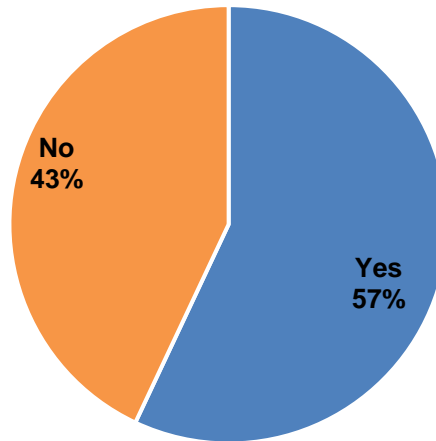
III. Phone Survey of Students who Transferred without a NOVA Degree

A subset of Fall 2013 FTIC students (121 students) who transferred to a four-year institution within two years without earning a NOVA degree were surveyed regarding their initial intentions upon enrolling at NOVA as well as their decision to transfer prior to earning a degree.

- The survey revealed that the majority of the surveyed students (69 students, 57 percent) initially enrolled at NOVA with the intention of staying for one or two semesters and did not plan to earn a degree before transferring to another institution (Figure 3 next page).

³ Students who transferred may have continued to enroll in courses at NOVA.

Figure 3. “When First Applying to NOVA, was it Your Intent to Enroll for Only One or Two Semesters at NOVA and Transfer to a Different Institution without Earning a Degree at NOVA?”



Source: OIR

A. Initial Intent to Transfer without a NOVA Degree: Yes (57%)

Fifty-seven percent of survey respondents (69 students) indicated it was their initial intent to enroll at NOVA for one or two semesters and transfer prior to earning a degree (see Figure 3).

Some of the most common reasons cited for not earning a degree at NOVA included:

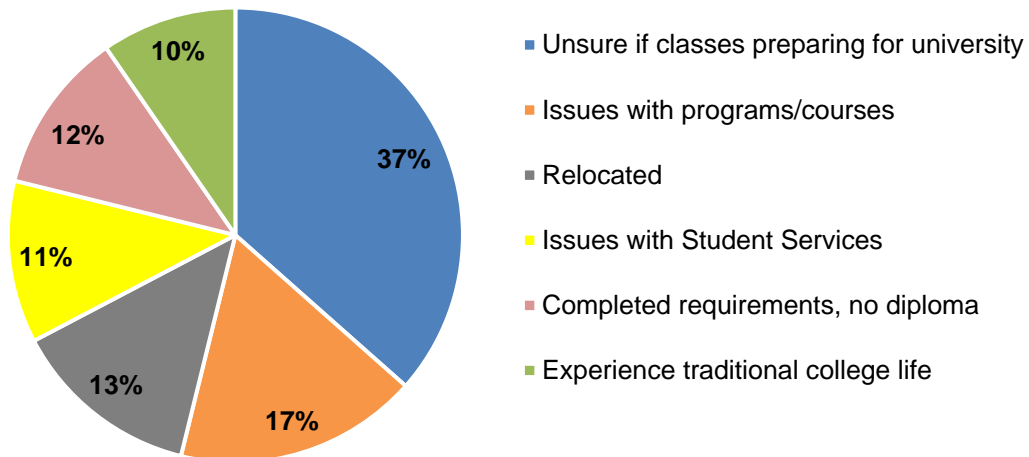
- Accepted at desired four-year institution, took general education courses at NOVA to lessen course load and save money
- Enrolled in courses at NOVA to improve GPA
- Waitlisted at desired four-year institution and enrolled at NOVA in the interim
- Enrolled at NOVA to take ESL courses only
- Enrolled at NOVA to take necessary pre-requisites

B. Initial Intent to Transfer without a NOVA Degree: No (43%)

Forty-three percent of survey respondents (52 students) indicated it was not their initial intent to enroll at NOVA for one or two semesters and transfer prior to earning a degree (see Figure 3).

These students cited various issues with university preparation and program offerings as the reasons behind their decision to transfer without earning a degree. See Figure 4 (next page) for additional details on why students transferred from NOVA earlier than they initially intended.

Figure 4. Reason for Transferring within Two Years without Earning a NOVA Degree (Survey Respondents who Transferred Earlier than Intended): Fall 2013 FTIC Cohort



Source: OIR

Students cited the following specific **issues with university preparation**:

- Classes not challenging enough
- Class environment not appealing
- Issues with instruction

Students cited the following specific **issues with programs/courses**:

- Specific programs/courses not available
- Too many pre-requisite courses required for certain programs

Students cited the following specific **issues with student services**:

- Rushed counseling sessions/last-minute office hour changes
- Received incorrect/inconsistent information from counseling/advising
- Advised to transfer to four-year institution as met qualifications for program prior to earning NOVA credential
- Advised international credits not accepted at NOVA so transferred to four-year that would accept them

All of the survey respondents indicated that the decision to transfer from NOVA to a four-year institution prior to earning a degree was **beneficial** to them and cited the following reasons:

- Saved time/money by not having to take unnecessary courses at NOVA
- More program options offered at four-year institution
- Courses offered at four-year institution were more challenging

Survey respondents had an opportunity to provide **comments and suggestions on ways NOVA can increase retention** and help more students to earn degrees. Responses included the following:

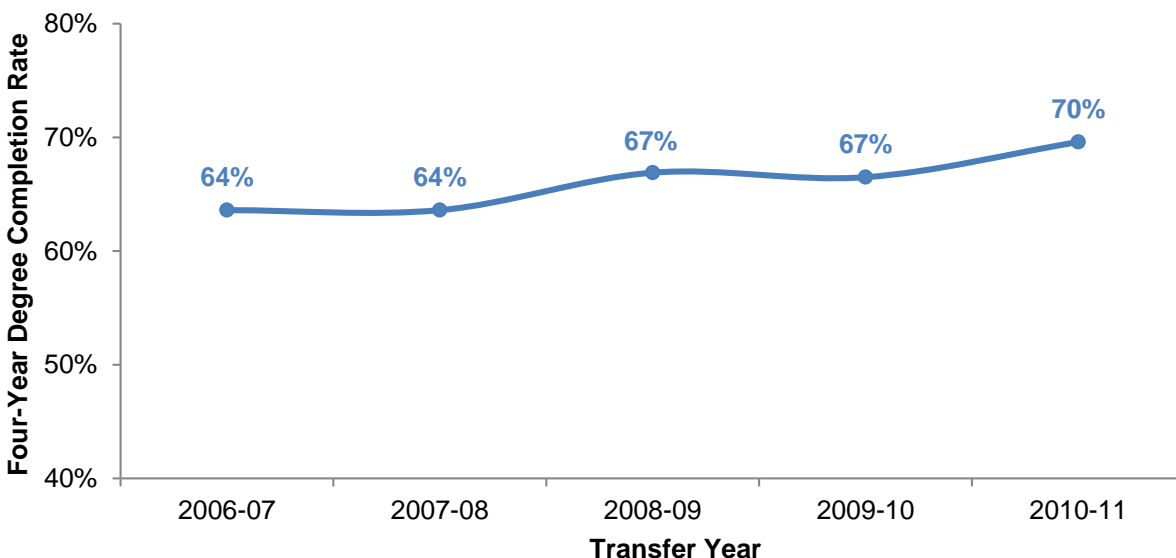
- More course offerings
- More challenging assignments and projects
- Align information on similar degree programs across campuses
- Counselors/Advisors provide more information on relation between degrees and careers/job market
- Counselors/Advisors more knowledgeable on Guaranteed Admission Agreements and which courses transfer to which institutions
- Offer more avenues for advising

IV. Four-Year Completion Rates of Transfer Students by Credits and/or Degree Received at NOVA

The overall four-year degree completion rates for NOVA students who transferred to a four-year institution in Virginia in the 2006-07 through 2010-11 academic years are presented in Figure 5.

The last data point in the figure shows that 70 percent of NOVA students who entered a four-year institution in 2010-11 attained a degree from a four-year institution by 2013-14 (within four years). Over the reported time period, four-year degree completion rates of NOVA transfer students increased from 64 to 70 percent.

Figure 5. Four-Year Degree Completion Rates of All NOVA Transfer Students: Transfer Years 2006-07 through 2010-11

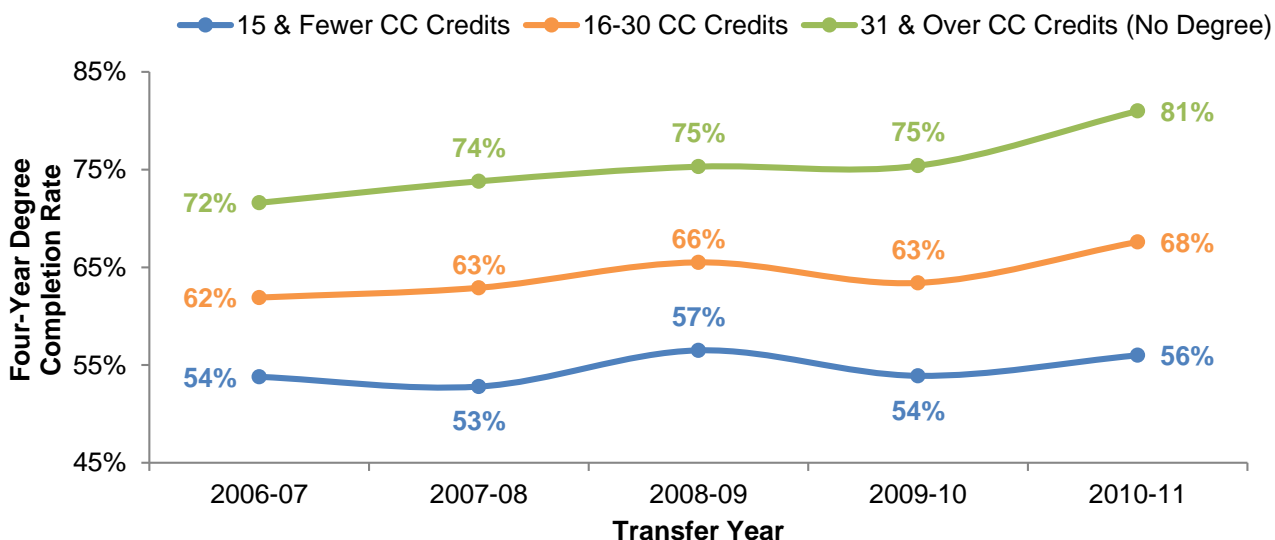


Source: SCHEV. Note: At Virginia 4-Year Institutions (public or private).

As shown in Figure 6, the probability of transfer students attaining a four-year degree within four years increased with the number of credits they attained at NOVA prior to transfer. Keep in mind, the fewer credits attained prior to transfer, the more time a student will need to complete their degree at a transfer institution.

- Looking at the 2010-11 cohort, 56 percent of students who transferred with 15 or fewer credits attained a degree from the four-year institution within four years; compared to 68 percent of students who transferred with 16 to 30 credits, and 81 percent of students who transferred with 31 credits or more.

Figure 6. Four-Year Degree Completion Rates of NOVA Transfer Students by Credits Attained Prior to Transfer: Transfer Years 2006-07 through 2010-11



Source: SCHEV. Note: At Virginia 4-Year Institutions (public or private).

Conclusion

As a community college NOVA serves a diverse population of students, including many who enroll with the intent to transfer to a four-year institution. While NOVA would like to see an increase in the number of students who earn a credential prior to transferring, it is important to remember the varied needs of the student population and to consider additional student success outcomes.

Although most entering students enroll in a degree program, the survey data presented here show that it is not necessarily their intent to complete that program. Rather, many students have selected to enroll at NOVA to help lighten the course load and save on tuition costs at their preferred institution. The four-year completions data presented here showed that the majority of NOVA transfer students go on to earn Bachelor’s degrees, whether or not they completed a degree at NOVA prior to transfer. As NOVA continually works to better understand student transfer behavior and seeks to facilitate the transfer process, it is imperative that the College continue to strive to meet a variety of its students’ needs.