



## The Texas Reverse Transfer Initiative

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June 2015

### What We Studied

The Texas Reverse Transfer Initiative (TRTI) was a collaborative project among Lone Star Community College, the University of Texas at Austin, the University of Texas System and a group of participant community colleges and four-year universities.

The project's goal was the development of low-cost, scalable, and sustainable systems and procedures for reverse transfer. Reverse transfer occurs when universities monitor transfer students' semester credit hour (SCH) accumulation and send their transcripts back to the community college students previously attended as they surpass certain SCH thresholds.

The community college can then award the student an associate degree if the course requirements of a degree program have been met, and can also receive credit for having awarded the degree.

### How We Analyzed the Data

Evaluation of the TRTI was conducted by the Texas Education Research Center at the University of Texas at Austin, and focused on three major areas:

- Examining the characteristics and academic outcomes for all Texas students who were potentially eligible for reverse-transfer degrees from two cohorts which transferred in different years;
- Examining the characteristics and academic outcomes for students from the same two cohorts who attended TRTI participating institutions and were potentially eligible for reverse-transfer degrees, and;
- The challenges facing institutions of higher education (IHEs) as they implement the reverse transfer process.

### What We Discovered

#### **Reverse Transfer Eligible Students—State of Texas**

Data from the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board were used to identify two cohorts of students who transferred from community colleges to four-year IHEs. Students in the first cohort transferred in either fall 2008 or spring 2009 and had earned at least 30 SCHs before transfer; students in the second cohort transferred in either fall 2013 or spring 2014 and had earned at least 15 SCHs.

Of the 25,456 students in Texas who transferred from a community college in fall 2008 or spring 2009 with at least 30 non-remedial SCHs:

- 18,004 students (70.7%) had not earned an associate degree before transferring, and so, were potentially eligible to earn that degree by reverse transfer.
- The majority were white, female and from 18 to 24 years old, and has been enrolled in college for either two or three academic years before they transferred. However, for 22.2% of students, transfer occurred at least five academic years after they had first enrolled in college.
- The majority reported that they had taken remedial coursework while in college.
- 13,434 students (74.7%) had earned a degree by the end of 2012-13 (either an associate degree, a bachelor's degree or both).
- 4,570 students (25.3%) had not earned any degree by the end of 2012-13, even though they had continued to earn college credit after they transferred (mean SCHs earned after transfer = 46.7).
- The percentage of students who did not earn any degree was somewhat higher for Black students (36.1%; with percentages of students with no degree ranging from 21.7% to 25.1% for all other groups).
- Males were somewhat less likely to earn degrees than were females. Among females, 26.7% had earned an associate degree (either alone or in combination with a bachelor's degree) by the end of 2012-13; the corresponding percentage for males was 19.1%. Similarly, 70.1% of females had earned a bachelor's degree (either alone or in combination with an associate degree); the percentage of males who had done so was 63.6%.

Of the 27,004 Texas students who transferred from a community college in fall 2013 or spring 2014 with at least 15 non-remedial SCHs:

- 18,416 students (65.8%) had not earned an associate degree before transferring.
- The majority were white, female and from 18 to 24 years old.
- 3,727 students (20.2%) had earned a degree by the end of 2014-15 (either an associate degree, a bachelor's degree or both).
- Given the short time since transfer, 14,689 students (79.8%) had not earned any degree, even though they had continued to earn college credit after they transferred.
- Differences in degree attainment among racial/ethnic groups were negligible for this cohort.
- A slightly higher percentage of males than of females had not yet earned any degree by the end of 2014-15. Among males, 83.2% had not earned a degree; the corresponding percentage for females was 76.9%.

### **Reverse Transfer Eligible Students—TRTI Participant Institutions**

The statewide data described above were reduced to include only IHEs which participated in the TRTI. While numbers of students were smaller, demographic characteristics, academic histories and degree outcomes were similar to those for the state overall.

### **The Reverse Transfer Process**

Two surveys were administered to a sample of community colleges and four-year universities in Texas. The first was designed to gain an understanding of current reverse transfer processes and of the ability of responding institutions to implement a reverse transfer initiative. Survey responses indicated that the major challenges IHEs face in sustaining the reverse transfer process stem from a lack of resources in the areas of:

- Transcript exchange technology,
- Personnel, and
- Financial Support.

The second survey further explored the challenges faced by IHEs as they implement reverse transfer. Major challenges described by community colleges included:

- Staffing,
- Contacting former students, and
- Communicating with their university partners.

Major challenges described by university respondents included:

- Transcript exchange technology, and
- Communication with their community college partners.

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