



Excess Credits Case Study: Preliminary Findings

VARI HALL

ONCAT Student Pathways Conference
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Presentation Learning Outcomes

- Knowledge of academic literature on excess credits
- Understanding of the variables associated with the accumulation of excess credits
- Preliminary findings about the extent of excess credits in one university

ONCAT Excess Credits - Overview of Study

- Call for Proposals (Nov 2013)
- Review of Literature
- Methodology
- Key research questions:
 1. extent of excess credits?
 2. factors contributing to accumulation of excess credits?
 3. programs - excess credits most significant?
 4. potential costs?
- Project timelines

Academic literature

- Defining 'excess' credits
 - No clear definitions
 - Among U.S. public institutions, bachelor degree earners accumulate 14% (national average) more credits than required
- How are excess credits generated?
 - Generated by transfer and non-transfer students
 - Students unclear about program choice or changing programs; intensive programs/double major; credits not transferable; not able to access required courses

Academic literature cont.

- Why should we care?
 - Cost to student in terms of time and money
 - Cost to public (e.g. public funds, taking spots)
 - Policy responses (e.g. improve transferability of credits/academic counselling, cap degree requirements, introduce additional credits surcharge)

Sources:

Complete College America (2011). Time is the Enemy.

Kinne, A., Blume, G. & Roza, M. (2013). The high price of excess credits: How new approaches could help students and schools.
Edunomics lab: Georgetown University.

Ontario Context

- # students in publicly-funded colleges & universities (374,410* full-time university undergraduates, 200,000 full-time college students**)
- Provincial commitments (high-graduation, PSE participation, transferability and affordability)
- Average gross annual university degree/college diploma tuition in 2014-15 (\$6000*/\$2,400)
- Need for skilled workforce

*COU; ** Colleges Ontario, 2014

Transfer Credit at York University – Brief History

1969 – First policy on Transfer Credit approved by Senate

1970 – credits from Ontario CAATs considered (Atkinson)

1970 – credits from Ryerson Polytechnic Ryerson studies considered

1982 - acceptability criteria (PSE institutions and programs) established

1984 – advanced standing for CAAT courses / “formula approach” adopted (Faculty of Arts)

Transfer Credit at York University – Brief History

1993 – York adopts COU policy – university to university transfer (Ontario institutions)

1995 – York adopts Pan Canadian Protocol on Transferability

1997 – York adopts “block credit” formula for Ontario CAATs

2008 – Advanced Placement transfer maximum increased to 30 credits

2013- Co-registration policy established (York-Ryerson Co-Registration Initiative)

Transfer Credit at York University Today

- Approximately 21,500 students transfer within Ontario each year
- Approximately 17% of Ontario transfer students are at York
- 10,000+ applications from potential transfer students each year
- 500+ students as visiting students (e.g. Letter of Permission) each year

Looking at York University - Typical University Honours B.A. (e.g. Sociology)

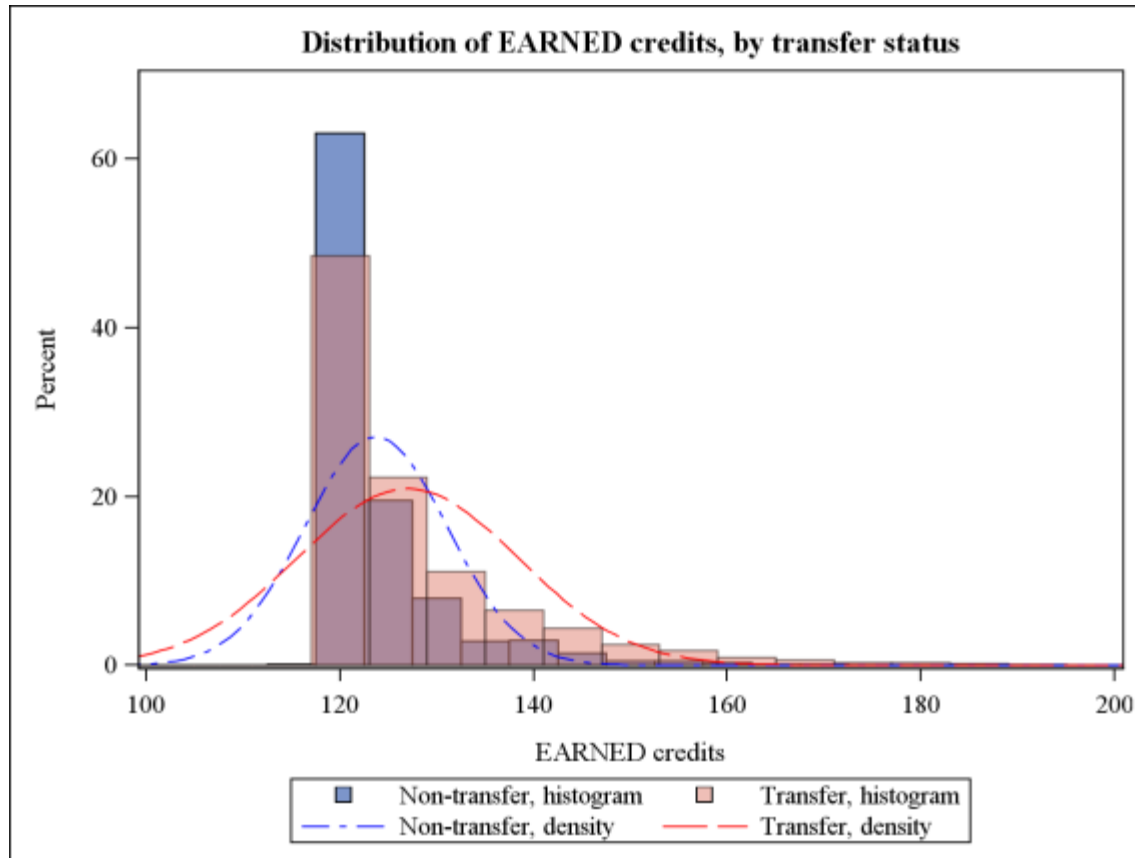
- 120 credits
- 4 years full-time (30 credits per year - studying F/W terms; 1 term course = 3 credits)
- Requirements:
 - 48 credits in Major (min. number of Sociology credits at 1000, 2000, 3000 and 4000 level)
 - 21 general education credits (NATS, SOOSC, HUMA)
 - Minimum cumulative 5.0 GPA (C+)

Why might students generate extra credits?

- Interest; want to take more courses
- Change of program/degree
- Did not feel adequately prepared
- Aiming to increase GPA or improve course grade
- Delay graduation? (postpone repaying debt; career uncertainty, poor job market)

On average, how many more excess credits do transfer students accumulate than non-transfer students?

Accumulation of excess credits (York)



York U Excess Credits Study

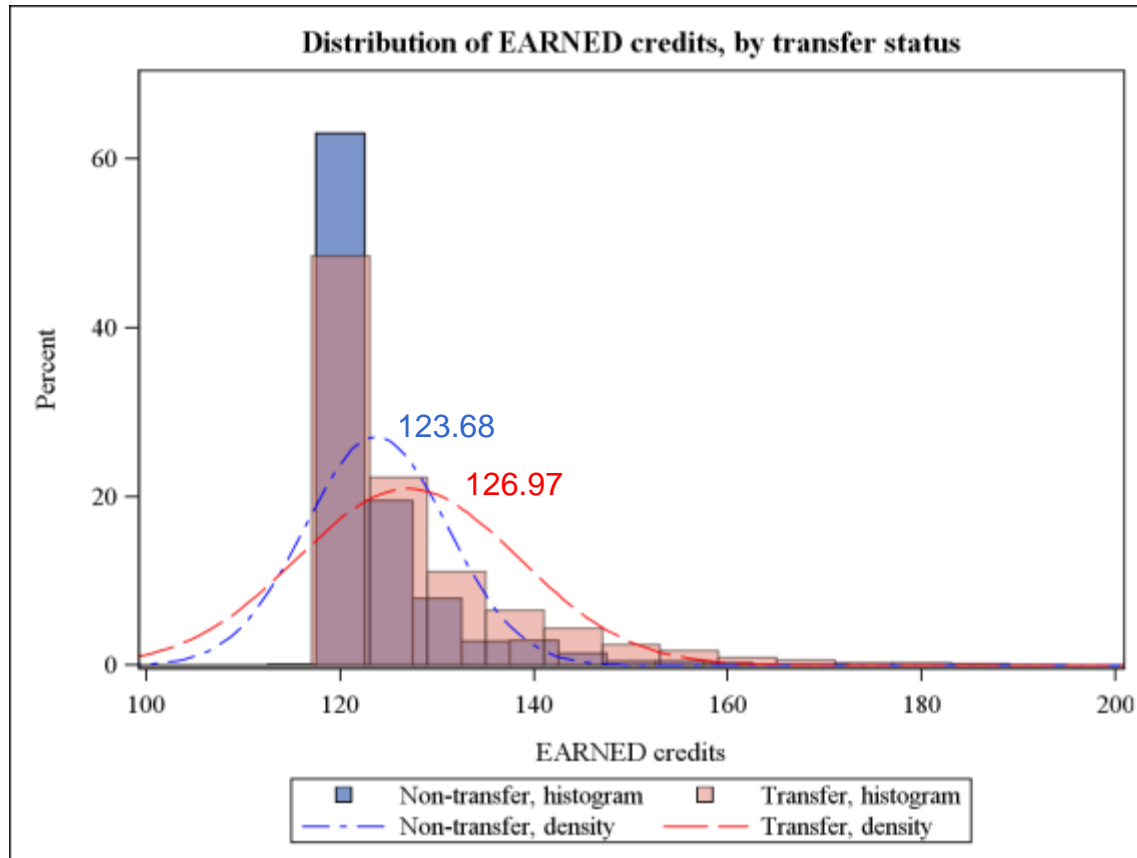
Population of study:

- Students who were conferred their first Honour's degree in 2011, 2012 and 2013
- Excluding BSCN, BBA, IBBA, and BASC
- N = 14,643

Potential Factors:

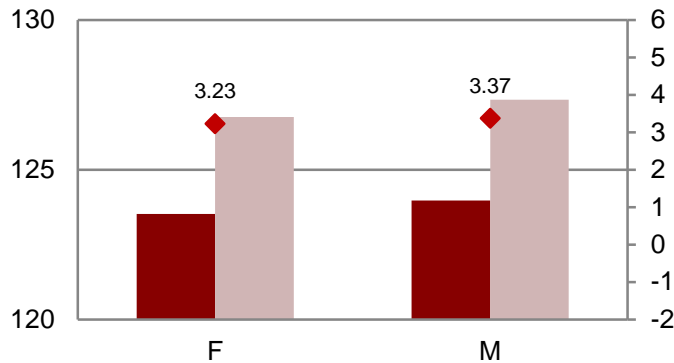
- Demographics (e.g. gender, age, immigration status, language)
- Program (program choice, program changes, credential type)
- Academic performance (GPA, repeated/failed courses, double major, whether had ordinary degrees before, whether continued to obtain a graduate degree)
- Transfer experience (e.g. pre-planning, advising)

Accumulation of excess credits (York) - recap

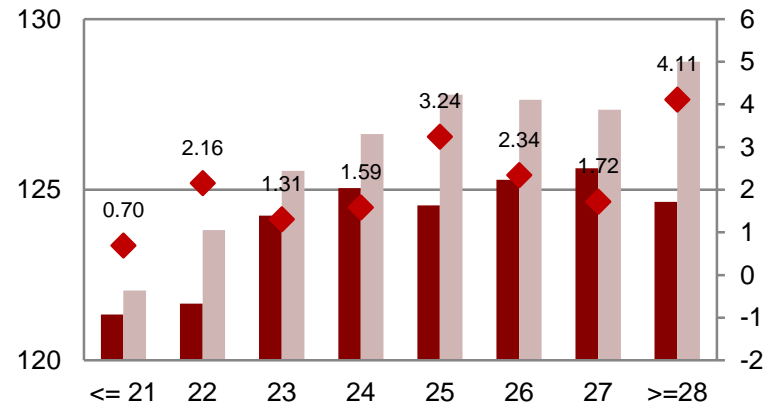


There are variations in earned credits by demographic factors

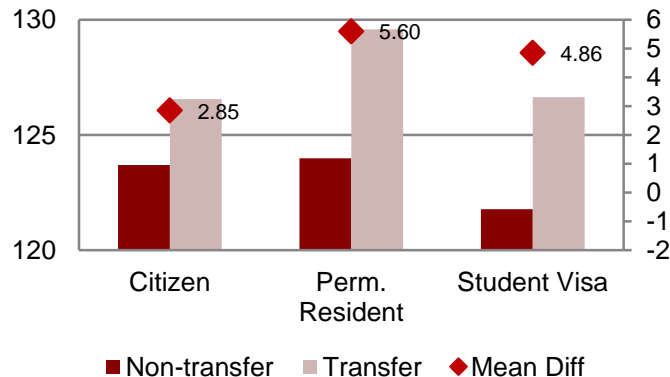
by Gender



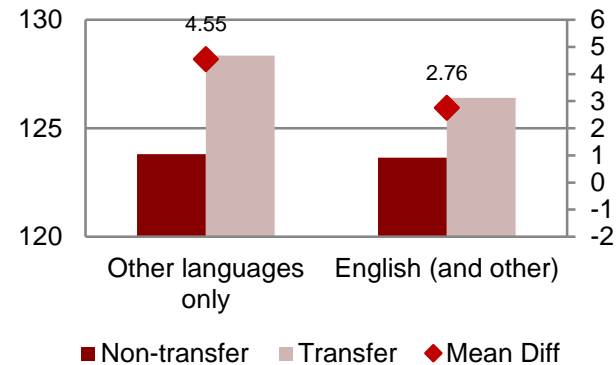
by Age upon Graduation



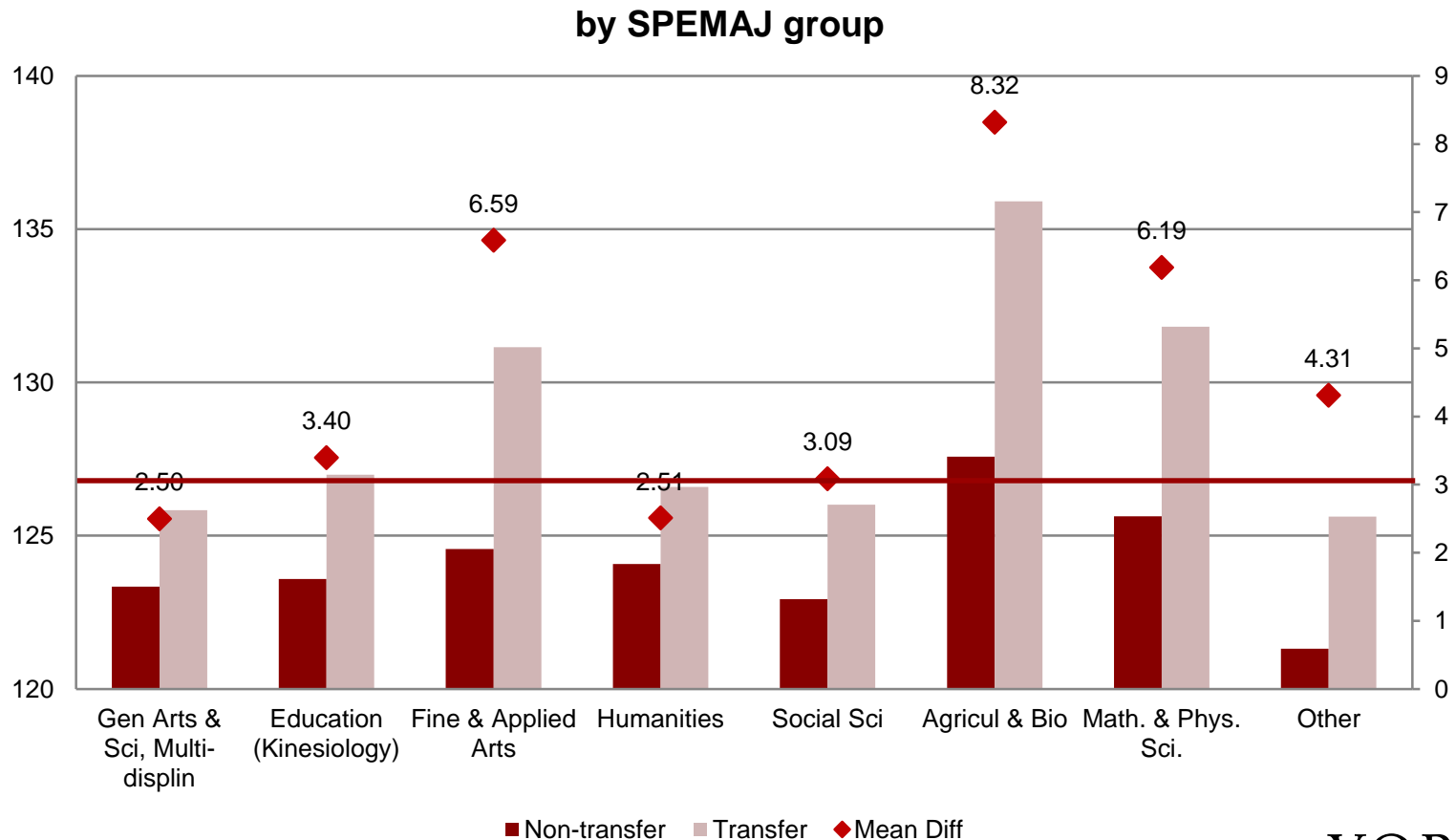
by Immigration Status



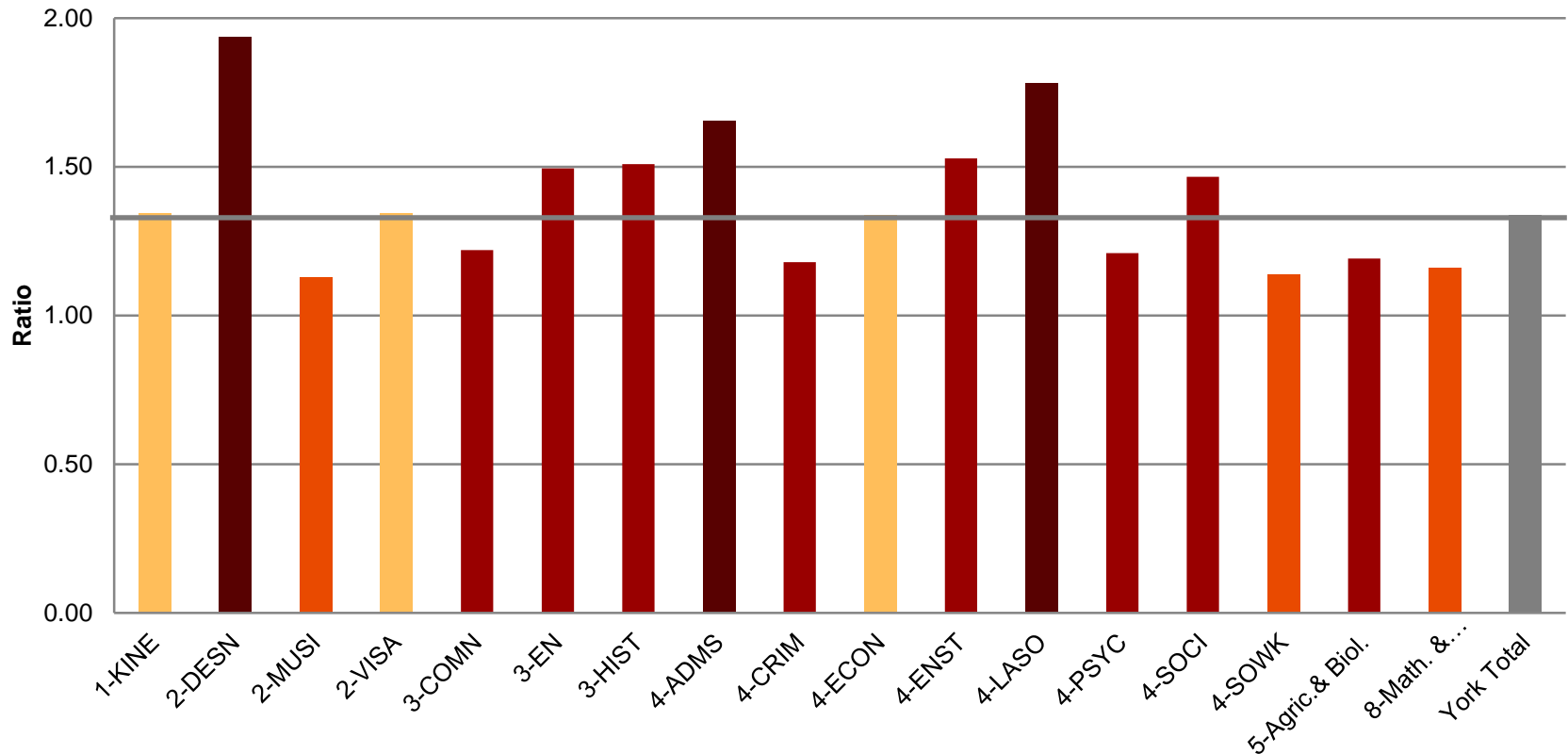
by Mother Tongue



There are variations in earned credits by program group

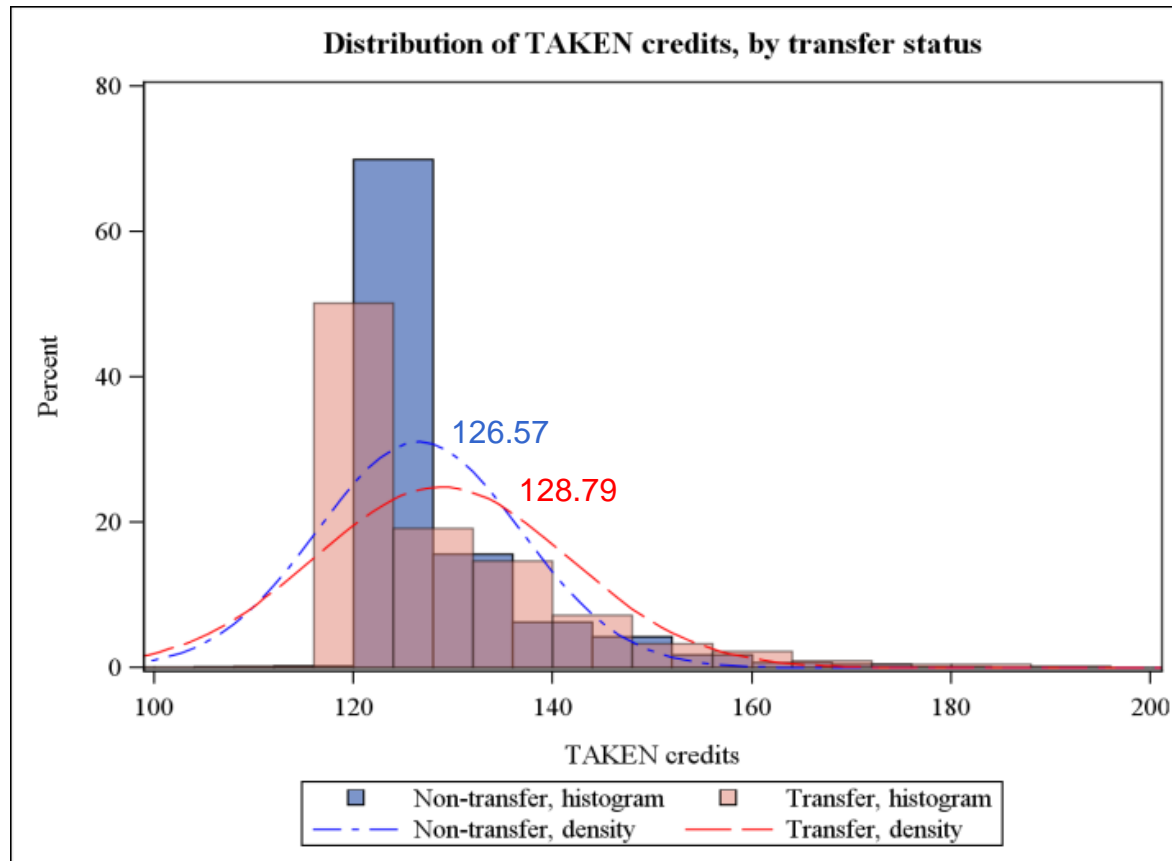


Which programs tend to have bigger “gaps” in earned credits?



$$\text{Ratio} = (\% > 120)_{\text{transfer}} / (\% > 120)_{\text{non-transfer}}$$

Look beyond “earned credits”



Further Exploration

- Program/degree changes (transfer/non-transfer)
- Program affinity
- College vs. university transfer
- Closer examination of select programs (e.g. music, administrative studies)
- Cost of excess credits
- Qualitative research on transfer experience (student focus groups)

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