

Student Success after Transfer from College to Lakehead University

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Office of Institutional Analysis, Lakehead University

Overview

This transfer student success study is based on 10 years of data from Lakehead University, a provincial leader in attracting transfer students from colleges¹. It compares and contrasts the success of 3 groups of college students entering Lakehead University:

- Those entering through bilateral or multi-lateral agreements with block transfer,
- Advanced standing college transfer students (those who have completed a college diploma and are eligible for transfer credit), and
- Other college students without transfer credits (students who have upgraded their high school credential at a college, those who only partially completed a diploma, or those whose average is below the requirement for transfer credit).

Findings

The study gauged the success of transfer students based on five criteria:

- i) Retention Rate:** When compared to the full-time direct entry student retention rate of 86.9%, "...transfer students as a whole had a slightly lower retention rate"². Those who received one half or more advanced standing credits for their prior college work have a retention rate of 82.5% followed closely by block transfer students at 81.2% and all other college students at 77.4% . Calculations using Lakehead's data show that annual retention is highest in the later stages of university study.
- ii) Success Rate³:** At 89.0%, block transfer student success rates were higher than those for direct entrants at 86.9%. Advance standing transfer students had the next highest rate of 82.5% and all other college students at 79.8%. The 18-24% of Lakehead's transfer students who registered on a part-time basis appeared to have lower success rates.
- iii) Graduation Rate⁴:** Full-time advanced standing transfer and direct entry students have comparable graduation rates (73.3% and 72% respectively). Since 2000, the performance of full-time block credit transfer students exceeded that of direct entry students with a graduation rate of 84.4%⁵.

¹ Among Ontario universities, Lakehead is tied with Ryerson as having the largest share of the provincial credit transfer enrolment relative to its share of full time enrollment.

² This represents a year one to year two retention rate based on transfer student persistence data since 2005.

³ This report adopted a 'one-year success rate' defined by graduation or persistence one year later. This may be a more accurate measure since it measures success (retention or graduation) one year later.

⁴ Graduation rate includes only full-time transfer students graduating within 2 years of the normal period for program completion.

⁵ The report bases these figures on an average of all data available since 2000.

- iv) **Common Entry Year Graduation Rate⁶:** When comparing the graduation rate for cohorts of full-time students from their entry into the 3rd year of degree study, this report concluded that block transfer students have “similar” but slightly lower success rates (at 84.4%) compared to their direct entry counterparts (at 87.7%). ‘Other college’ and ‘advanced standing’ transfer students experienced lower graduation rates⁷ although data limitations may under represent their success.
- v) **Grade Point Average:** When comparing full-time students’ first semester GPA, advanced standing and block transfer students outperform direct entry students. When part-time students are included, college transfer students obtain a first semester GPA that is lower than direct entry students. This appears to reflect the historically lower performance of part time students that are comparatively overrepresented in the University’s transfer population.

Conclusions

The report concludes, “[o]verall, full-time college transfer students at Lakehead are at least as successful as their direct entry counterparts.” It goes on to state that “the one–year success rate of full-time block transfer students...” and “the six-year equivalent graduation rate for both full-time block and advanced standing students is higher than their direct entry counterparts.”⁸

“[P]art-time status seemed to lower the success rate...” of transfer students. Part-time registrations are over represented in the transfer student enrolment. Therefore, when compared to the mostly full-time direct entry cohort, total transfer student first semester GPA and Common Entry Point Graduation Rates tend to skew lower.

Transfer “...students who have upgraded their high school credential at a college, those who only partially completed a diploma or those whose average is below the requirement for transfer credit...” have significantly lower success measures than those who completed a college diploma and are eligible for transfer credit.

These results affirm the conclusions of parallel transfer student success studies: Assuming appropriate preparation and admission requirements, full-time block and credit transfer students succeed in degree studies as well as their first-time direct-entry peers.

⁶ This statistic is based on time to completion from a common starting point (e.g. high school entrants in their third year of baccalaureate study versus college graduates transferring directly into third year of a baccalaureate program). The report explains the rationale for this measure and the data anomalies for which it compensates.

⁷ The study indicates that the ‘Common Entry Year Graduation Rate’ of advanced standing transfer students does not allow for the fact that they, on average, receive only 3.4 credits. For these students, a 7 year graduation measure would better represent their success.

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