

An Analysis of CAAT Transfer Students' Academic Performance at Trent University

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Outline of the Study

This study considers 5 comparative questions about the academic performance of college transfer students in their baccalaureate completion studies at Trent University. Analysing the academic records of over 5 recent cohorts of at least 241 students each, it compares the performance of

- transfer and direct entry students,
- students transferring under a transfer agreement and those transferring outside an agreement, and
- graduates of the Fleming College University Transfer Program relative to direct entry students.

In addition, it investigates:

- the degree to which community college grades predict success rates in university¹, and
- the variation of graduation rates and degree completion timelines between college transfer and direct entry students.

Findings

Based on average grades earned in baccalaureate study, college transfer students significantly outperformed direct entry high school admissions. College students who transferred under an articulation agreement (74.1% average GPA) outperformed all other categories including university transfers (72.6%), non-articulated transfers (69.6%), and high school direct entries (67.2%).

Findings from several different multivariate regression models reveal a significant 3% higher baccalaureate performance among females and 3% lower for first generation higher education students.

Based on a limited sample of college and university GPAs, the study observes that college and university grades have a weak positive correlation.

Unadjusted drop-out rate² comparisons found that students transferring under an articulation agreement are significantly less likely to drop out than any other group. Using multivariate analysis to control for gender, age, first generation status and program choice, the drop-out rate of CAAT students entering under an articulation agreement was found to be dramatically lower than high school entrants. Problematically, however, these observations compare students who have been

¹ The data set used to pursue this question is limited to 2011/2012.

² The report notes that data limitations prevented the use of the common "graduation within 6 years of admission" completion rate measure.

granted transfer credits (and, therefore, are already advancing in their degree) with those entering directly from high school (and starting their studies at the beginning). To put high school entrants on an even footing, those who have earned 10 baccalaureate credits are compared with transfer students entering with an average of 9.2 transfer credits. The resulting drop-out rates are equivalent.

The paper discusses the limitations of the findings, raises ancillary questions and suggests additional research questions.

Conclusions

This report concludes that “CAAT students who have come to Trent have performed at least as well as those entering from high schools” and “their grades are as high”. (p.17)

The average grades of CAAT transfer students entering under an articulation agreement are “significantly higher than direct high school entrants” and their “drop-out rates are lower”.

The drop-out rates for CAAT transfer and direct high school entry students are the same. (p. 17)