

Executive Summary

Seneca College is a recognized leader in the field of student transfer and pathways, both nationally and internationally. This is due to its focus not just on numbers of agreements, but also on comprehensive student advising, advocacy, assessment and development of quality pathways for students. Its centralized office, the Degree and Credit Transfer Office (DCTO), supports individuals by providing a variety of integrated services such as Degree Transfer Advisement to prospective, current students and alumni on new and existing diploma to diploma, diploma to degree and degree to graduate studies program pathways and connects them with resources and information to support their academic goals.

Seneca's DCTO was established in 2001 after some investigation pointed to a gap in the provision of information for students. At the time, nearly 44% of incoming students indicated that they planned on pursuing further education after completing their program at Seneca (36% at a university) and yet few services existed to support students interested in obtaining further education.

Previous reviews of DCTO services have focused on the experiences of students using the DCTO, particularly the Degree Transfer Guide, which provided the DCTO with useful feedback. The purpose of the current study, by linking into a database containing the full population of Seneca students, is to understand which segments of the Seneca student body are making use of the advising services, and who is not, particularly among those who indicate aspirations for university when they entered Seneca. Additionally, what are the transfer rates and experiences of those who used the DCTO advising services versus those who did not? Therefore, the study had two components:

Part 1. What is the profile of students who use the DCTO transfer advising services?

- How does the sociodemographic and academic backgrounds upon college entry differ between users and non-users?
- Do motivations for college and program selection differ upon college entry for non-users and users?
- How many students who aspire to university use the service? How many use the service who did not enter college with plans for transfer? How does the profile of these groups of students differ?
- How do the academic outcomes differ between users and non-users (graduation rates and grades)?

Part 11. Transfer rate to university and transfer experiences

- What is the transfer rate to university for those who used the DCTO versus those who did not?
- For graduates who transferred to university, did DCTO users differ in terms of reasons for transfer, sources of information, or their reported satisfaction with the transition experience?
- For transfers, does the choice of university or university program differ for those who used the DCTO?

Methodology: Students whose first semester at Seneca was between the summer of 2007 and the fall of 2014, and whose first programs were not a degree or graduate certificate programs were included in the study. Visits to the DCTO were captured up until October 13, 2016. In total 59,942 students fit this criteria and were included in Part 1 of the study, the profile of DCTO users. Part 2 of the study, transfer outcomes, included a subset of the part 1 sample, who had graduated from a diploma or certificate program and completed the graduate satisfaction survey, and whose first visit to the DCTO was less than two months after graduation. This resulted in a sample of 13,607 graduates.

Results:

Part 1: Student Profile. Students who used the DCTO advising service were:

- Much more likely to have had plans for university when they first entered college (65% vs 37%)
- Much more likely to be younger, and somewhat more likely to be female, have a parent with a degree, be non-Canadian citizens and not have English as a first language. There were no differences by income or OSAP receipt.
- More likely to have slightly stronger academic backgrounds, with 67% users versus 56% non-users taking mostly university preparatory high school courses, and were somewhat more likely to have over a 70% average (50% vs 45%). However, they were less likely to have attended college or university previously.
- Much more likely to have entered a three year advanced diploma (47% vs 30%) and to have entered a business program (53% vs 35%).
- Much more likely to go on to graduate and obtain higher grades at Seneca.

Part 11. Transfer rate and experiences

- 58% of DCTO users furthered their education within six months of graduation compared to 25% of graduates who did not use the DCTO. The transfer rate to university was 44% of DCTO users versus 10% of non-DCTO users.
- In total, 20% of all university transfers from Seneca had registered with the DCTO office. Although this share differed little by student characteristics, 32% of university transfers from business programs used the DCTO, as well as 29% transfers from advanced diploma programs, much higher than the average of 20%.
- Of those who aspired to university at college entry, half of DCTO users transferred to university, compared to 22% of DCTO non-users.
- Overall, York and Ryerson predominate as universities of choice. Transfers who used the DCTO were much more likely to transfer to Ryerson than non-users (30% vs 17%), with users and non-user equally likely to transfer to York.
- Graduates who use the DCTO are much more likely to transfer into business at university (52% vs 25%) and less likely to transfer into humanities or the social sciences.
- Users of the DCTO are equally as likely to transfer into a related program as non-DCTO users.
- The reasons for transferring to university were similar between users and non-users, with career advancement and obtaining a credential cited for almost nine in ten transfers. DCTO users were more likely to cite the potential for higher income (76% vs 70%), and the presence of transfer agreement (55% vs 49%) as major reasons than non-users.
- DCTO users make more use of most information sources, particularly college sources.
- Graduates satisfaction with the transition experience (83%) and their academic preparation (87%) for transfer is high for both DCTO users and non-users. There is little difference in satisfaction between users of the DCTO and non-users.

Conclusions: Overall, students accessing the DCTO have similar sociodemographic and academic backgrounds to other college students, indicating the service has a fairly equitable reach. However, users seem to be concentrated in programs with a large number of agreements, and outreach may be necessary for those who are navigating pathways that do not have agreements and they may need the most support. Those who use the service perform extremely well academically in college, which is likely

due to being highly motivated to obtain the grades required to transfer, and also may be a result of advising received at the DCTO. The most significant and positive finding of the study is the high transfer rates to further education and specifically to university for users of the DCTO advising services. Recommendations to enhance usage include reaching out to students early in their program who indicated an interest in transfer when entering the college, as well as to faculty and programs whose students are underrepresented among users of DCTO's advising services.