

NATIONAL STUDENT CLEARINGHOUSE<sup>®</sup>  
RESEARCH CENTER<sup>™</sup>

# Signature<sup>™</sup> REPORT

## **Transfer & Mobility:**

A National View of Pre-Degree  
Student Movement in  
Postsecondary Institutions



Project on Academic Success



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# Table of Contents

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<b>Acknowledgements</b> .....	<b>4</b>
<b>Executive Summary</b> .....	<b>5</b>
<b>Introduction</b> .....	<b>11</b>
Transfer and Mobility as a Student Outcome .....	12
What Knowledge We Gain by Examining Mobility .....	13
What to Find in This Report .....	13
A Note on the Data .....	14
<b>Results</b> .....	<b>17</b>
Overall Transfer and Mobility: Fall 2006 First-Time Student Cohort .....	17
Overall Transfer Patterns: Origins and Destinations .....	21
Part- and Full-Time Student Pathways: Student Transfer by Initial Enrollment Intensity .....	24
Transfers Across States .....	27
Transfer and Mobility Rates by Institutional Sector .....	29
Transfer and Mobility Rates by Institutional Control .....	32
Transfer and Mobility Rates by Institutional Sector and Control .....	35
A Closer Look at When and Where: Transfer Students' Timing of Initial Transfer .....	40
<b>Discussion</b> .....	<b>45</b>
Two-Year Public Institutions: The Most Prevalent Transfer Destination .....	45
Transfer Timing .....	45
Vertical Transfers and Mobility .....	46
Reverse Transfers and Mobility .....	46
Transfer Rates for Two- and Four-Year Institutions .....	46
Transfer Rates for Part- and Full-Time Students .....	47
Out-of-State Transfers .....	47
Transfer Rates for Private For-Profit Institutions .....	47
Implications for Policymaking .....	48
<b>References</b> .....	<b>49</b>
<b>Appendix A: Methodological Notes</b> .....	<b>51</b>
<b>Appendix B: Coverage Tables</b> .....	<b>55</b>
<b>Appendix C: Results Tables</b> .....	<b>57</b>

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## TRANSFER AND MOBILITY: A NATIONAL VIEW OF PRE-DEGREE STUDENT MOVEMENT IN POSTSECONDARY INSTITUTIONS

It is widely acknowledged that many postsecondary students no longer follow a traditional path from college entry to degree at a single institution. Increasingly more students attend multiple institutions, transferring once, twice, or even three times before earning a degree. Standard institution-based reporting tends to ignore these students, however, focusing only on those who enter as first-time freshmen and treating students who do not receive a degree from their first institution as dropouts.

This approach is no longer adequate for informing students about their full range of educational options and policymakers about the real prospects for expanding postsecondary attainment, regardless of the institutional pathways students choose. It is also insufficient for institutional practitioners who are concerned with better understanding the origins and destinations of the students who pass through their doors.

In a step towards improving this situation, the National Student Clearinghouse Research Center, in partnership with the Indiana University Project on Academic Success, has analyzed student-level enrollment data to report on the transfer behaviors, over five years, of virtually all students who began postsecondary education in the U.S. in fall 2006.

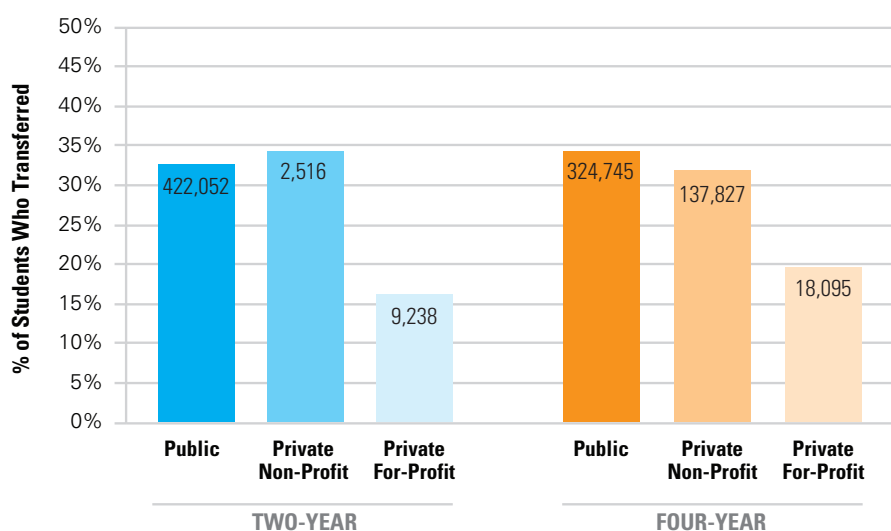
This analysis is unique in that it includes both full- and part-time students of all ages, in all institution types — nearly 2.8 million students. It covers changes in each student's institution of enrollment occurring at any time of year, even across sector and state lines, for up to five years. The report describes the number of students who transferred, the institutional destinations of their transfers, and the timing of the movement. And it counts students uniquely, without duplication even when the same student was enrolled in more than one institution at the same time.

What emerges is a complex picture in which one-third of all students change institutions at some time before earning a degree, a rate that is consistent across all types of institutions outside of the for-profit sector (where the rate is lower) (Figure A). Slightly more part-time students transferred than full-time students.

Of those who transfer:

- 37 percent transfer in their second year
- 22 percent transfer as late as their fourth or fifth years
- 25 percent transfer more than once
- 27 percent transfer across state lines
- 43 percent transfer into a public two-year college

**Figure A: Five-Year Transfer Rates by Sector and Control of Origin Institution**



## WHAT TO FIND IN THIS REPORT

This report brings to light national transfer and mobility patterns among students who enrolled in college for the first time in the fall of 2006 at any enrollment status. We analyze these patterns by following students' enrollments across all types of institutions within the U.S., for five years (through the summer of 2011) or until they complete a degree, whichever comes first. The report defines transfer as any enrollment in a new institution after fall 2006 that is not concurrent with a continuing enrollment at the initial institution, and that precedes the completion of a degree or certificate. This kind of enrollment change was counted as transfer or mobility regardless of whether any subsequent enrollment changes were observed, even if the student returned to the origin institution at some later time.

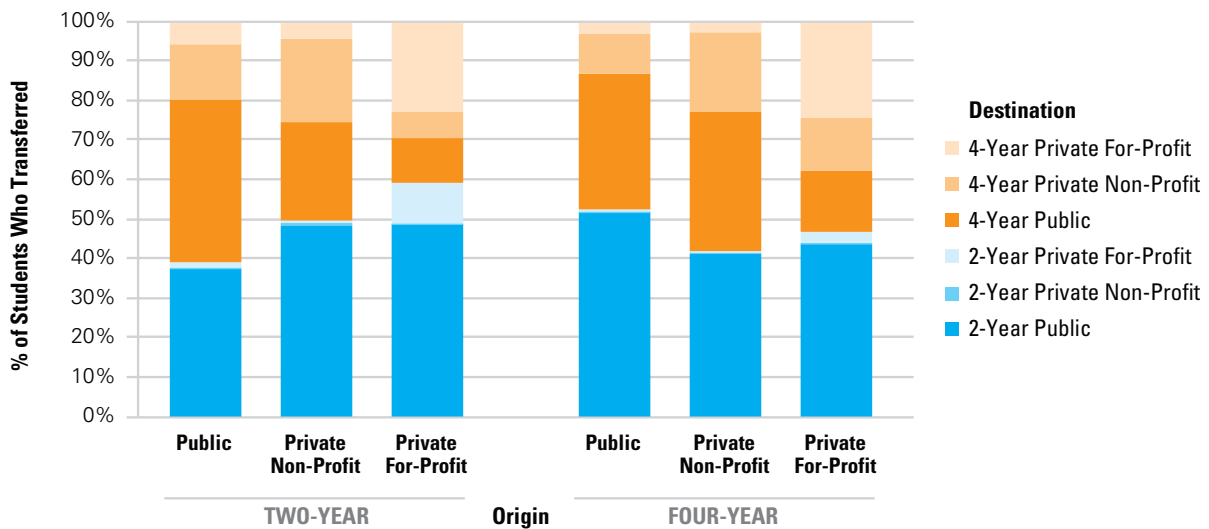
The tables and figures presented explore:

- The overall prevalence of transfer and mobility nationwide, broken out by sector and control of both the origin and destination institution;
- Full- and part-time student transfer and mobility, showing rates and timing of first transfer by initial enrollment intensity and institution type;
- In- and out-of-state transfer by institution sector and control;
- Transfer and mobility trajectories and pathways, specifying institutional origins and destinations; and
- Timing of first instance of transfer or mobility, broken out by sector and control of both the origin and destination institution.

## PRINCIPAL FINDINGS & IMPLICATIONS

The patterns revealed reflect the complexity of postsecondary student enrollment, transfer, and persistence across all sectors of higher education. The results suggest that the linear view of college access and success that focuses on the initial institution attended often fails to address the realities on the ground. Instead, more sophisticated ways of measuring and reporting institutional effectiveness

**Figure B: Origin and Destination of Initial Transfer by Institution Sector and Control**



and student progress are needed. These would help institutions and policymakers to develop strategies and policies that facilitate successful outcomes as students make decisions and choices about different postsecondary paths throughout the institutional spectrum.

Five main points emerging from the study are summarized below.

**One third of all students transferred at least once within five years**

Overall transfer rates for two- and four-year institutions, and for public and private non-profit institutions were very similar, ranging from 32.6 to 34.4 percent, while transfer rates for private for-profit institutions were lower (16.3 and 19.6 percent for two- and four-year private for-profit institutions, respectively).

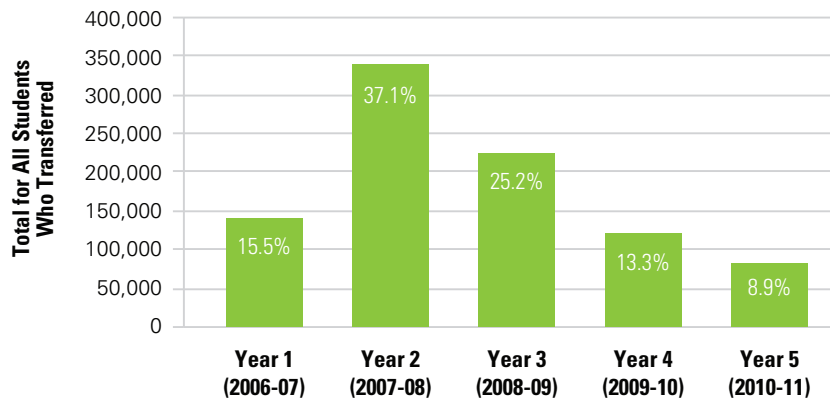
**The most prevalent transfer destination was public two-year institutions**

Two-year public institutions were the most frequent transfer destination for students starting at all types of institutions but one, even four-year institutions (Figure B). Roughly half of all students who transferred from a four-year institution made a reverse-transfer by moving to a two-year institution. The single exception was for students who started at public two-year institutions and, even there, 38 percent of those who transferred simply moved to another two-year public. These results show the pervasive and integral role that community colleges play in student pathways, far beyond the impression given by looking only at initial enrollments.

**The most common time of first transfer was in students’ second year**

Regardless of the direction of transfer — vertical, lateral or reverse — the highest rate of transfer was in the second year. Nonetheless, about one-sixth of all students who transferred did so within their first year, that is, before the following fall term. Moreover, many students’ pathways were still in flux well into their educational careers. A surprising number made their first transfer in the fourth and fifth years of study, even among those who began at a two-year institution. About one eighth (13 percent) of all students who transferred did so in the fourth year, and an additional nine percent did so in the fifth year (Figure C). Among those who began at two-year institutions, 17 percent of those who transferred did so for the first time in the fourth year, and 11 percent in the fifth.

**Figure C: Timing of First Transfer**



**Transfer rates were similar for part- and full-time students**

Slightly more students who began their study part-time transferred (34 percent) than those who began as full-time students (33 percent). However, the share of transfers occurring in the first year was larger among full-timers than part-timers. Almost one-fifth of the transfers for full-time students happened within the first year of study, compared to only 10 percent of transfers for part-time students.

**Over one quarter of all transfers crossed state lines**

The report demonstrates the limitations of both institution and state-based enrollment reporting. In addition, students crossing state lines cannot take advantage of state-based articulation agreements between two- and four-year institutions. The origin and destination institutions were located in different states for 27 percent of all first-transfers. Not surprisingly, the rates were highest among students who were most mobile to begin with, those starting out in private four-year institutions, where 45 percent of transfers went to institutions in a different state. Even among those starting at public institutions, however, state lines were relatively permeable: 22 percent of those transferring from a two-year public left the state, as did 26 percent of those from a four-year public.

## STUDENT TRANSFER AND MOBILITY PATTERNS OFFER A KEY VIEW ON POSTSECONDARY PATHWAYS

The growing emphasis on holding institutions accountable for student success has, to some extent, reinforced the traditional reporting paradigm in which the institution is the unit of analysis and students are viewed as simply entering, progressing linearly, and completing a degree — or not. Indeed, to date much of what we know about student success focuses on the efforts of individual institutions, through programs and policies, to improve student persistence and graduation at the institution of original enrollment. We know far less about the factors associated with student success for mobile students. The analyses in this report suggest that a new view may prove useful, in which students are the unit of analysis and institutions are viewed as stepping stones along a diverse set of educational paths. This view could lead to new approaches and metrics that better inform students and institutions about the range of successful enrollment patterns. Moreover, rather than focusing criticism on institutions when they fail to capture the entirety of each student’s educational career, it would properly recognize all of the institutions that play a role within that career.



## ABOUT THE REPORT

*Transfer and Mobility: A National View of Pre-Degree Student Movement in Postsecondary Institutions* is the second report in a new series, called Signature Reports, from the National Student Clearinghouse Research Center. Signature Reports have been written especially for college administrators and postsecondary education policymakers, serving as a national resource for the continued study of student pathways and college enrollment patterns. Future topics will examine degree completions, concurrent enrollment patterns, dual credit enrollment patterns, and more.

Signature Reports are available at [www.studentclearinghouse.org/signature](http://www.studentclearinghouse.org/signature).

## ABOUT THE NATIONAL STUDENT CLEARINGHOUSE RESEARCH CENTER

A non-profit organization formed in 1993, the National Student Clearinghouse continues to be the most trusted partner in the higher education community, serving as a single point of contact for real-time postsecondary enrollment and degree verifications.

The Clearinghouse Research Center, the research arm of the non-profit organization, collaborates with higher education institutions, states, school districts, high schools, and educational organizations as part of a national effort to better inform education leaders and policymakers. Through accurate longitudinal data outcomes reporting, the Research Center enables better educational policy decisions leading to improved student outcomes.

Headed by Dr. Don Hossler, a published expert in student achievement and college choice and enrollment, the Research Center directs a variety of Clearinghouse research studies regarding student access, improving student outcomes, and more. Dr. Doug Shapiro, senior research director of the Research Center, offers complementary experience in postsecondary enrollment trend statistics, demographic challenges, and markets for highly-educated labor.

You can learn more about the National Student Clearinghouse Research Center and read our latest reports online at <http://research.studentclearinghouse.org>.

## ABOUT THE PROJECT ON ACADEMIC SUCCESS AT INDIANA UNIVERSITY

The Project on Academic Success (PAS), part of the Center for Postsecondary Research at Indiana University, engages in practice- and policy-oriented research toward a better understanding of opportunity and equity in postsecondary education and of the multiple pathways of 21st century students to postsecondary academic success and employment.

For more information, visit <http://pas.indiana.edu>.

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Research shows that many postsecondary students do not follow a traditional postsecondary pathway and have complex enrollment patterns that at times also involve multiple transfers across multiple institutions (McCormick, 2003). Though many studies acknowledge this complexity much of what we still know about enrollment patterns is informed by institutional reports of the number of students who enter as transfers, as opposed to first-time freshmen. Students who leave are often counted as lost to attrition. The consequence of this is that we lack the complete story of where students came from, and what happens when they leave. In other words, when studies follow institutions as opposed to students, they can talk about where students start but not where they go. The statewide student unit record databases available in many states have the capability to address this issue. However, such tracking currently is limited to only those students who move within state boundaries and only within public institutions.

Student mobility is a complex phenomenon that has been defined in different ways in research: transfer, swirling, double-dipping, etc (Adelman, 2005, 2006; McCormick, 2003). A number of research studies focused on transfer from community colleges to four-year institutions, known as traditional, vertical or upward transfer (Dougherty & Kienzl, 2006; Doyle, 2009; Eagan & Jaeger, 2009). Other transfer patterns such as reverse transfer (transfer from four-year institutions to two-year institutions) or lateral transfer (transfer from one four-year institution to another or from one two-year institution to another) have also been documented in recent years (Goldrick-Rab & Pfeffer, 2009; U.S. Department of Education, 2001). However, most empirical research is restricted to only one transfer pattern at a time because of the data availability. Empirical research findings are usually also restricted to just one institution, one state, one time-period (e.g., fall-to-fall), or one enrollment type (e.g., full-time).

The following report looks at pre-degree student transfer and mobility, including any change in a student's institution of enrollment irrespective of the timing, direction or location of the move. Our intent is to illustrate the complexity of student movement among institutions, within the pursuit of the first credential. We include transfer and mobility across institutions, sectors and states, even if they take place over summer terms, or occur after a period of non-enrollment or may later prove to be temporary moves. In many cases these phenomena diverge from the accepted wisdom about "transfer," which is typically based on data about full-time degree-seeking students changing from one degree program to another. We include all students, full-time and part-time, without attempting to discern intent to earn a degree at either the originating or the destination institution.

Many studies of community college student transfer consider all progression from a two-year institution to a four-year institution as "transfer," including progression after earning an associate's degree. Indeed, some states now encourage completion of an associate's degree as part of the pathway to a bachelor's. Yet, for many community college students the associate's degree, or even a certificate, is still the end goal, with no intent to transfer. Nonetheless, many of these students attend two or more institutions before earning that first credential, exhibiting patterns of mobility that have potentially large consequences, both positive and negative, for student success and institutional effectiveness.

This report considers every degree or certificate earned as a potential completion of a postsecondary career, and focuses on mobility and transfer within that career. We thus exclude student transfer that occurs after earning a degree, and in particular, we do not include students who transferred from a two-year to a four-year institution after completing an associate's degree (although we do provide some estimates of the scale of this phenomenon). Later in this introduction, we also outline our plans to address this topic and others in future reports.

On the other hand, many studies of transfer among students at four-year institutions consider short-term movement as inconsequential, or "casual course-taking," treating a student who later returns to the original institution as not having moved at all. Our definition of transfer and mobility includes these types of "multi-institutional attendance" (Adelman, 2006), in part because we consider only students' enrollments at institutions, not their course credits earned or transferred among institutions, and not

**Table 1. Frequency of Transfer and Mobility, 2006-2011, Fall 2006 Cohort**

Frequency of Transfer	Weighted Count	% of All Transfer Students
<b>Once</b>	688,946	74.63%
<b>Twice</b>	156,638	16.97%
<b>Three Times or More</b>	77,613	8.41%

their intent to earn a degree. Indeed, because we include part-time as well as full-time students at both the origin and the destination institutions, the very notion of “casual” begins to lose its meaning. A student taking one or two courses per semester due to work or family obligations at a first institution may find a way to enroll full time at another institution during the summer, or at an online institution for a short term. Moreover, short-term movement is of consequence to many institutions, who consider such student behavior as costing them real tuition revenue.

In short, postsecondary student transfer and mobility is a topic that cannot be covered in a single report. We present this report as a new look at the phenomena from a fresh perspective, focusing primarily on the origins, destinations and timing of the first incidence of mobility or transfer in each student’s postsecondary career. We plan subsequent reports to examine further aspects of transfer and mobility, such as transfers from two- to four-year institutions after receiving an associate’s degree, casual mobility that is followed by a return to the original institution, and transfers that result in a degree completion at the destination institution.

Using National Student Clearinghouse (NSC) data that contain national student-level enrollment data, we begin with over 2.8 million students — the full cohort of first-time students who started in any type of institution that reported data to NSC in fall 2006. We follow each student’s enrollment over five years, through summer 2011, to identify the total number of movements or transfers among institutions, as well as the timing and destination of the first transfer.

This report focuses on a detailed analysis of the first instance of transfer or mobility. Tables 1-6 of Appendix C provide additional detail on the number of students who transferred more than once. In subsequent moves after the first, students might have returned to the institution of origin (swirling), or might have moved on to a third or fourth institution. Our definition captures the first part of all of these patterns as instances of transfer, regardless of subsequent moves. As Table 1 demonstrates, about three-quarters of all students who transferred did so only once during the five-year period, making the first instance of movement a reasonable focal point for closer examination. Examining multiple transfers across two or more institutions is another interesting area of research that we leave to future work.

## TRANSFER AS A STUDENT OUTCOME

Transfer is an important student outcome to examine because it plays a significant role in students’ degree completion. It can facilitate baccalaureate degree attainment for community college students who transfer to four-year institutions (Townsend, 2007). Moving from four-year institutions to two-year institutions — reverse transfer — may improve students’ chances of completion if such transfer is temporary and serves a goal of completion of additional coursework at lower costs. On the other hand, reverse transfer may somewhat hinder baccalaureate degree completion if the move is permanent (Goldrick-Rab & Pfeffer, 2009). Many students may also make a lateral transfer to find a better institutional fit or a program that may meet their interests more closely.

This study goes beyond a single number reflecting a national transfer rate. It presents students' complex enrollment patterns that cross two- and four-year, public, and private institutions. It also examines the distribution of transfers across state lines and over multiple years. Such a comprehensive look makes the findings useful for state and institutional policymakers as well as college administrators and the general public. Institutional policymakers need a better understanding of their students' mobility to identify the ways to assist them with this decision. Transfer rates across state lines will help state policymakers to gauge the magnitude of transfer outs to their state institutions. Finally, the results from this study will be useful in the national discussion of today's college students.

## WHAT KNOWLEDGE WE GAIN BY EXAMINING MOBILITY

- *Developing a clearer picture of student transfer across institutions.* Much has been said about increasingly more students following a non-traditional postsecondary pathway. Information on transfer sheds light on the scope of mobility nationwide as well as within and across state lines.
- *Understanding the complexity of student transfer in context.* Educational implications of student transfer could be different depending on the types of the institutions (origin and destination) and on the timing (early or late relative to the normal time to obtain a degree). Information on student transfer by institution type and year helps understand this phenomenon in this context.
- *Giving institutions potentially useful information on timing of transfer.* The distribution of transfers presents information on the peak years when first-time students transfer from and to each type of institution. This level of detail enables institutions to make informed decisions about the allocation of more resources on one or another area in a given year.

## WHAT TO FIND IN THIS REPORT

This report brings to light national transfer and mobility patterns among students who enrolled in college for the first time in the fall of 2006 at any enrollment status. We analyze these patterns by following students' enrollments across all types of institutions within the U.S., for five years (through the summer of 2011) or until they complete a degree from the origin institution, whichever comes first. The tables and figures presented explore:

- The overall prevalence of transfer and mobility nationwide, broken out by sector and control of both the origin and destination institution;
- Part- and full-time student transfer and mobility, showing rates and timing of first transfer by initial enrollment intensity and institution type;
- In- and out-of-state transfer by institution sector and control;
- Transfer and mobility trajectories and pathways, specifying institutional origins and destinations; and
- Timing of first instance of transfer or mobility, broken out by sector and control of both the origin and destination institution.

### Coming Up in the Next Signature Report

The Clearinghouse's third Signature Report, which focuses on college completion nationwide, will examine

- Completion rates by state and institutional sector.
- Completion rates for part-time and full-time students.
- Completion rates that include students who transferred and completed elsewhere by state and institutional sector.

The categories of pre-degree student movement include some, but not all, conventional notions of student transfer behaviors in the postsecondary literature and in common perception. We list some of these here to help clarify what is included in the general results tables of this report, and to draw attention to topics that we describe separately from the main tables, or that we intend to cover in more detail in future reports.

- Forward transfer from a two-year to a four-year institution without earning an Associate’s degree.
  - These student movements are included in “transfer and mobility” and in the general results of this report.
- Forward transfer from a two-year to a four-year institution after earning an Associate’s degree.
  - Since we focus on only pre-degree transfer and mobility, these transfers are not included in the general results of this report. We present estimates of the scale of this phenomenon, however, and intend to treat it in more detail in a future report.
- Lateral transfer from a two-year to another two-year institution, with or without eventual return to the original institution.
  - These student movements are included in “transfer and mobility” and in the general results of this report. We do not distinguish those who do not return from the casual course-takers (who do return after a short period of time) within this category.
- Reverse transfer from a four-year to a two-year institution, with or without an eventual return to the four-year institution.
  - These student movements are included in “transfer and mobility” and in the general results of this report. We do not distinguish those who do not return from the casual course-takers (who do return after a short period of time) within this category. We suggest estimates of the share of reverse transfers who may be casual course-takers, however, and intend to treat this issue in more detail in a future report.
- Lateral transfer from a four-year to another four-year institution, with or without eventual return to the original institution.
  - These student movements are included in “transfer and mobility” and in the general results of this report. We do not distinguish the career transfers (who do not return) from the casual course-takers (who do return after a short period of time) within this category.
- Second, third, or further movements, or serial transfers.
  - Since we focus our analyses of the destination and timing of mobility and transfer on only the first instance for each student, these student movements are not included in the general results of this report. We provide estimates of the frequency of multiple movements and serial transfers in the first six tables of Appendix C, however, and intend to treat them in more detail in a future report.

## A NOTE ON THE DATA

### Data Source

The data for this report were taken from the StudentTracker<sup>SM</sup> database, administered by the National Student Clearinghouse (NSC), which tracks 93 percent of college enrollments across all postsecondary institutions nationwide, including all institution types — two- and four-year institutions, public and private institutions, and for-profit and non-profit institutions. In order to ensure the most accurate possible reflection of all U.S. institutions, the results reported here are weighted according to the coverage rate

for each institution category (sector and control). The weighting scheme used in this report to correct for missing information due to NSC's institutional coverage rates is the same as the one used in the first Signature Report, entitled *National Postsecondary Enrollment Trends: Before, During, and After the Great Recession*. A complete explanation of national coverage rates and the weights used to ensure that results reflect enrollment nationally can be found in Appendices A and B.

It should be noted that the way the enrollment data are weighted in this study accounts for the likelihood of finding a student in the NSC data in the original cohort, but not for the likelihood of finding the student again if he or she transfers to another institution. The frequency of transfer is thus underestimated in this report, particularly transfer to institutional sectors with lower coverage rates. In data explorations on this question, the authors determined that overall transfer rates were underestimated for all categories of origin institutions, and underestimated to a slightly higher extent for for-profit origin institutions.

The transfer activity captured in this report is based on student-level data and represents an unduplicated headcount of students across all institutions. This feature of the NSC data set distinguishes it from many existing data sources, including the Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS), which are not structured to identify multiple enrollments by individual students and, thus, may not accurately capture the complexity of transfer behaviors. Because of the capability of the StudentTracker database to link enrollment records across institutions nationally, the NSC data allow researchers to follow students longitudinally as they moved from institution to institution.

Although NSC data contain demographic information on students, the coverage for these data is incomplete. Consequently, the results summarized in this report give a national overview of transfer behavior, showing by a unique headcount the number of students enrolled in various types of institutions, but they do not examine transfer by race, ethnicity, or gender, for example.

## Cohort Definition

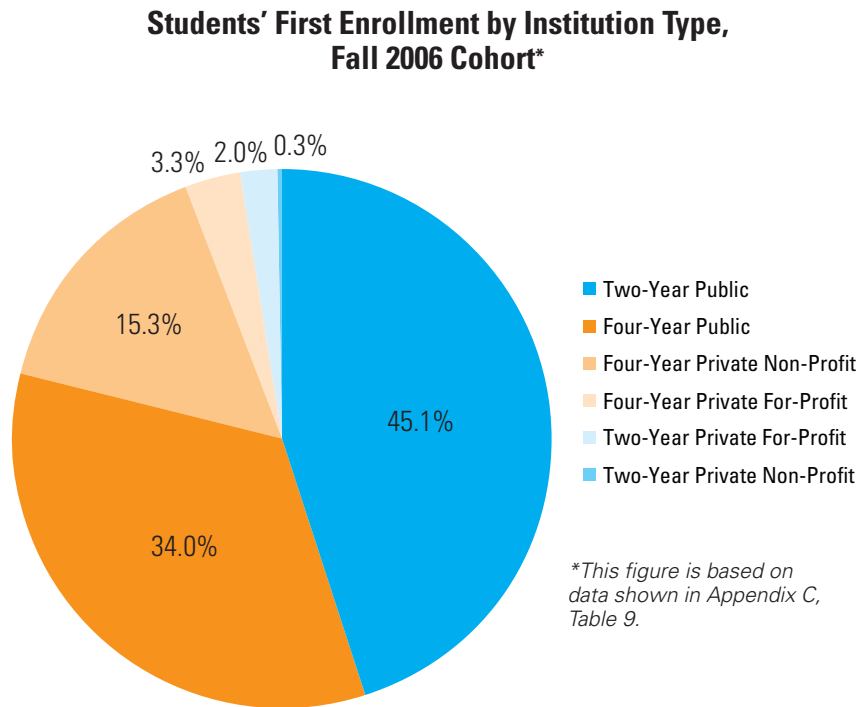
The cohort examined in this study is made up of first-time students, of any age, who began their postsecondary studies in the fall of 2006. First-time status was established by ensuring that a student did not show any postsecondary enrollment record, at any institution covered by NSC data, in the four years prior to the student's fall 2006 enrollment. The criteria further excluded students who received any degree or certificate from a two- or four-year institution prior to fall 2006, according to data contained in the NSC database.

Researchers face considerable complexity in operationalizing the category of first-time student in analyses, depending on the strengths and limitations of the data sets used. NSC and the Project on Academic Success (PAS) balanced competing priorities in selecting a method for identifying cohorts to be studied in this report. On the one hand, NSC data allow researchers to capture a unique headcount of students nationally and, therefore, to follow individual students, while accounting for concurrent enrollments. In addition, NSC data allowed the researchers to establish first-time enrollment status empirically (i.e., by searching for prior enrollments) rather than by relying on institutional reporting, which may be limited by variation in local definitions as well as by student non-reporting of prior enrollment in institutions' transactional records. On the other hand, limitations do arise with this approach. For example, NSC data do not include universal designations for class year. Consequently, the sample includes students who have more than 30 Advanced Placement (AP), International Baccalaureate (IB), or dual enrollment credits and who, despite having first-time-in-college status, may not be considered freshmen by their institutions. Moreover, because of inconsistencies in the historical depth of NSC degree database records, it is possible that a small number of graduate students are also included in the study cohort. (For a full discussion of data, definitions, and limitations, please see Appendix A.)

## Transfer and Mobility Definition

The analysis in this study reports on the transfer and mobility activity for the fall 2006 cohort over a span of five years. Transfer was defined as any enrollment after the end of the student's fall 2006 term in an institution that is different from the institution in which the student was originally enrolled, provided that the student had not already completed a degree or certificate and was not still enrolled (concurrently) in the original institution. This kind of enrollment pattern, in which a student changes institutions, was regarded as a transfer in this study regardless of subsequent enrollment behaviors (e.g., completion, returning to the origin institution, stop-out, etc.). Therefore, even if a student left an institution, enrolled at another institution for a short time, and then returned to the origin institution, the short-time activity was still categorized as a transfer for this report.

The chart below shows the breakdown of origin institutions, by level and control, for the study cohort. Two-year public institutions enrolled nearly half of the cohort (45.1 percent), followed by the four-year public sector, in which 34 percent of students enrolled. In the private sector, 15.3 percent of first-time students started at four-year private non-profit institutions, while only small percentages of the study cohort began at two-year private for-profit, four-year private for-profit, and two-year private non-profit institutions. These figures reflect applied weighting to correct for variations in NSC data coverage by institution type.





## OVERALL TRANSFER & MOBILITY: FALL 2006 FIRST-TIME STUDENT COHORT

A total of 2,792,961 students began their postsecondary education at U.S. colleges and universities in fall 2006. After enrolling in these institutions — students’ origin institutions — 33.1 percent of these students enrolled in a different institution at least once during 2006–2011. Table 1 shows the prevalence of transfer and mobility among students in the first-time entry cohort during the five years of this study.

The results presented in this Signature Report represent students shown in NSC data to have enrolled at some point between fall 2006 and summer 2011 in an institution different from the one where they began in fall 2006. Only consecutive enrollments at different institutions were considered in this study. Students who were concurrently enrolled in their origin institution and another institution were not counted as transfers.

The results in this report focus on the destinations and timings of students’ first instance of transfer, regardless of what occurred after that point on the students’ college pathways. Thus, transfer students may have continued studies at their new institutions, returned to their origin institutions, moved on to a third institution, completed a degree, or stopped out after transferring within or outside of the study period. Students classified here as “nontransfers” may have continued enrollment at their origin institutions, completed a degree, or stopped out during the study period.

Within this context, we present a view of transfer behavior using NSC data, which provides a national near-census of student enrollments. The total transfer rate reported in Table 1 is higher than transfer-out rates estimated by IPEDS from reports by postsecondary institutions. IPEDS reports yearly figures while this report takes a five-year period into account. Nevertheless, even with first-year results (e.g., 15.5 percent in year one as shown in Figure 1) NSC results are higher than those produced by institutional reports to IPEDS (e.g., 9.3 percent for 2006 and 9.9 percent for 2007) because most institutions do not pursue nonreturning students to identify transfer activity. The 33.1 percent overall rate reported here is consistent with a recent finding of a 32 percent transfer rate using NCES Beginning Postsecondary Student (BPS) survey data (Medwick, 2009, pp. 18–19). Yet NSC data show lower transfer rates than those reported in Adelman’s (2006) *The Toolbox Revisited*, which used NELS:88/2000 survey data to estimate that over 60 percent of students who enrolled in four-year institutions had attended more than one postsecondary institution. These different results are partly explained by differences between the designs of these latter two studies. *The Toolbox Revisited* results covered a longer study period, tracking students’ enrollments for a full eight years, and also included students’ precollege dual enrollment experiences and concurrent enrollments. The study conducted for this Signature Report tracked enrollment for five years and excluded dual and concurrent enrollments, counting only consecutive enrollments after students’ initial enrollment in fall 2006.

It is important to note that the NSC estimate presented here is based on the tracking of individual students across all institutions that reported data to NSC — accounting for over 93 percent of all enrollments nationally. In addition, the results presented here were weighted to account for differences in data coverage among institutional sectors, as described in Appendices A and B.

**Table 1. Prevalence of Transfer and Mobility Among All Students in Entry Cohort, Fall 2006 Cohort\***

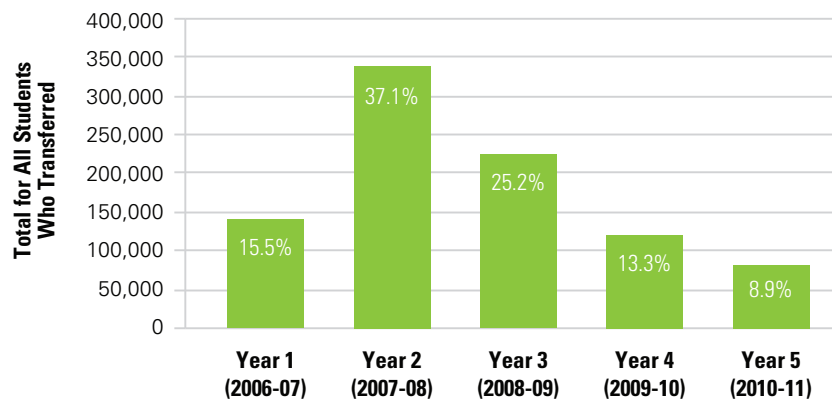
	Weighted Count	%
Transfers	923,196	33.1%
Nontransfers	1,869,765	67.0%
<b>Total</b>	<b>2,792,961</b>	<b>100.0%</b>

\*This table is based on data shown in Appendix C, Table 8.

Figure 1 presents the timing of first transfers among the 923,196 students who transferred at least once between 2006 and 2011. In this figure, as in the rest of the report, “Year 1” captures the time period from August 15, 2006, through August 14, 2007. Similarly, “Year 2” captures August 15, 2007, through August 14, 2008, and so forth, through “Year 5,” which captures student enrollment from August 15, 2010, through August 14, 2011.

Among all students who transferred, the most prevalent time for the first transfer was during the second year of college, when 37.1 percent of all transfers occurred. Almost one sixth of students who transferred, 15.5 percent, did so in their first year. One quarter, 25.2 percent, did so in their third year of college, and more than one fifth transferred for the first time after three years at their origin institution — 13.3 percent transferred in their fourth year, and 8.9 percent transferred in their fifth year. These results are consistent with the literature on the timing of transfer suggesting that transfer is most prevalent soon after the first year of college (Adelman, 2006; McCormick & Carroll, 1997).

**Figure 1. Timing of First Transfer Among All 2006 Cohort Transfer Students, 2006-2011\***



*\*This figure is based on data shown in Appendix C, Table 9.*

Table 2 presents the proportions of students who transferred at least once during the five-year study period by the students’ origin institution. As mentioned above, the overall national transfer rate during 2006–2011 was 33.1 percent. Interestingly, there was no difference between the overall rate of transfer from two-year institutions and from four-year institutions. The transfer rate among students who began at two-year institutions was 32.6 percent — equal to that of four-year institutions.

It is important to note, however, that these results do not account for all transfers from two-year institutions. As discussed in the introduction, they exclude students who transferred after receiving an associate’s degree or certificate. Transfer after receiving a degree will be the focus of a future report in this series. Our preliminary analysis, however, suggests that this phenomenon accounts for 5.6 percent of the original cohort who started at two-year institutions. This means that, if we were to combine pre-degree and post-degree movement, the overall rate of transfer from two-year institutions would increase to 38.2 percent.

When examined more closely, these data show that transfer rates for two- and four-year private non-profit institutions range from 34.4 percent for two-year private non-profit institutions to 32.1 percent for four-year private non-profit institutions. Public institutions showed even less difference in transfer rates across sectors, with 33.4 percent of two-year public students and 34.1 percent of four-year public students transferring within five years. Transfer rates for private for-profit institutions, however, were much lower — 16.3 percent for two-year private for-profit institutions and 19.6 percent for four-year private for-profit institutions.

**Table 2. Students Who Transferred at Least Once Between 2006-2011 by Type of Origin Institution\*\***

Origin Institution		TWO-YEAR				FOUR-YEAR				Grand Total
		Public	Private Non-Profit	Private For-Profit	All Institutions	Public	Private Non-Profit	Private For-Profit	All Institutions	
<b>Transferred</b>	Wtd. Ct.	422,052	2,516	9,238	<b>433,806</b>	324,745	137,827	18,095	<b>480,667</b>	<b>914,472</b>
	%*	33.4%	34.4%	16.3%	<b>32.6%</b>	34.1%	32.1%	19.6%	<b>32.6%</b>	<b>32.6%</b>
<b>Did Not Transfer</b>	Wtd. Ct.	842,786	4,787	47,434	<b>895,007</b>	628,738	291,230	74,024	<b>993,992</b>	<b>1,888,999</b>
	%*	66.6%	65.6%	83.7%	<b>67.4%</b>	65.9%	67.9%	80.4%	<b>67.4%</b>	<b>67.4%</b>
<b>Total</b>	Wtd. Ct.	1,264,838	7,303	56,672	<b>1,328,813</b>	953,483	429,056	92,119	<b>1,474,659</b>	<b>2,803,472</b>
	%*	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	<b>100.0%</b>	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	<b>100.0%</b>	<b>100.0%</b>

\*Transfer share within origin institution type

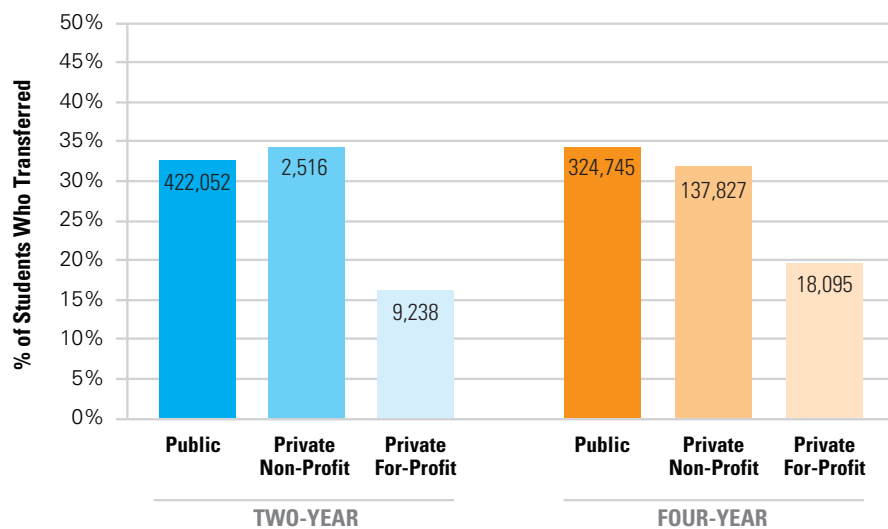
\*\*This table is based on data shown in Appendix C, Table 10.

Note: The total enrollments in this table are different from the total 2006 cohort due to differences in applied weighting.

In putting these results in context, it is important to note that the numbers of students differ greatly by institution type in this study cohort. These numbers are particularly low for two-year private non-profit and for-profit institutions and also for four-year private for-profit institutions. This is partly due to the smaller overall size of these institutional sectors and the tendency of these institutional sectors to enroll students with some prior postsecondary experience — students who were excluded from this study cohort.

Figure 2 presents the same information as in Table 2, above, emphasizing the prevalence of transfer by sector and control of students' origin institutions. In general, transfer rates at public and private non-profit institutions were similar regardless of institutional sector (i.e., two-year vs. four-year). Transfer was less prevalent at private for-profit institutions as compared to institutions of other control types.

**Figure 2. Five-Year Transfer Rates by Sector and Control of Origin Institution\***



\*This figure is based on data shown in Appendix C, Table 10.

Among private for-profit institutions as well as public institutions, four-year colleges and universities had higher transfer rates than their two-year counterparts. Although these differences are slight in the context of the many motivations for and functions of transfer, they are nevertheless worth noting. In particular, four-year private for-profit institutions had transfer rates of 19.6 percent, 3.3 percentage points higher than two-year private for-profit institutions, whereas four-year public institutions had transfer rates of 34.1 percent, less than a percentage point higher than the rate of their two-year counterparts.

## OVERALL TRANSFER PATTERNS: ORIGINS AND DESTINATIONS

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We next examine transfer not just by where students begin college enrollment (their origin institutions), but by the institutions they transfer to (their destination institutions). In the following section, we examine the transfer patterns of students by the type of postsecondary institution they entered and by the type of institution they initially transferred to. We then focus on the top transfer destinations of these students. These results help to place postsecondary enrollment decisions in perspective, beyond examining first-time first-year students' experiences exclusively. Moreover, this view of transfer origins and destinations provides important context for the analyses presented later in this report.

Figure 3 shows the breakdown of transfer destinations of students who began in each institution type. Two-year public institutions were the most prevalent transfer destination of students who began at all institution types except one: two-year public institutions. More than half, 51.9 percent, of all students who transferred from four-year public institutions transferred "in reverse," to two-year public institutions. Even among students who transferred from two-year public colleges, 37.6 percent of them transferred "laterally," to other two-year public colleges. This was nearly as many as transferred to four-year public institutions: 41.2 percent.

Private for-profit institutions were a more prevalent destination of students who began at other private for-profit institutions than they were of students who began in public or private non-profit institutions. Notably, 22.5 percent of the students transferring from a two-year private for-profit went to a four-year private for-profit, a rate similar to the rate for those beginning at four-year private for-profit institutions (24.2 percent). In contrast, fewer than six percent of students who transferred from two-year public or private non-profit institutions went to four-year for-profit institutions (see Appendix C, Table 11 for the percentages illustrated in Figure 3).

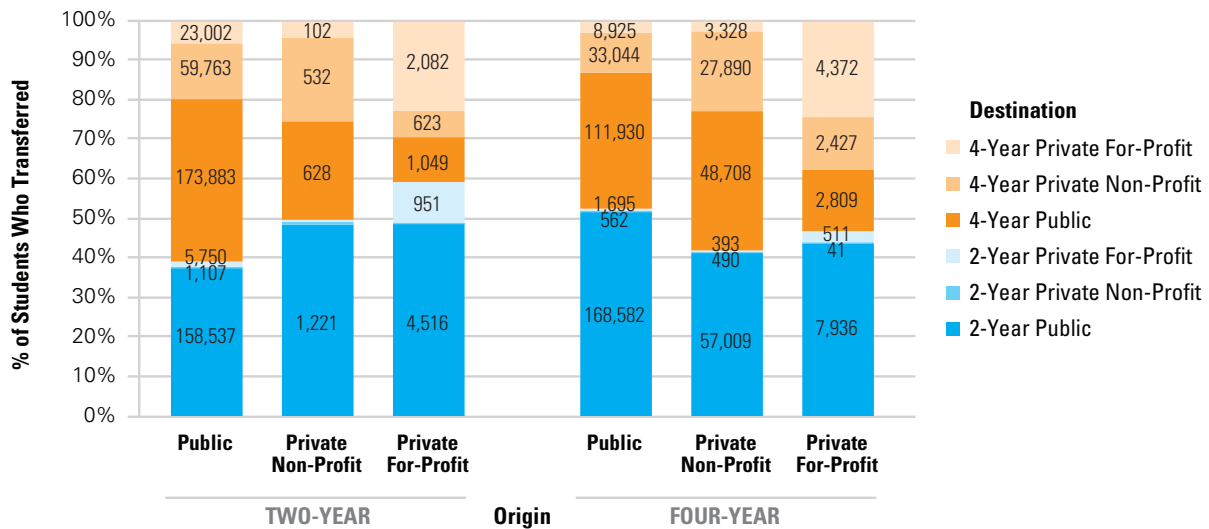
Transfers from two- to four-year institutions were most prevalent among students who began at public two-year institutions: 60.8 percent of the students who transferred from a two-year public went to a four-year institution. Students who transferred from other types of two-year institutions had lower rates of transfer to four-year institutions (50.2 percent of the transfers from two-year private non-profit institutions and 40.6 percent of the transfers from two-year private for-profit institutions had four-year institutions as destinations).

These results testify to the multiple roles of community colleges, which serve students transferring in large numbers to and from every kind of institution.

Additionally, transfer from four-year to two-year institutions — reverse transfer — is a prevalent and noteworthy pattern in these results. As noted above, between 52 percent and 41 percent of students who began at four-year institutions and transferred went to community colleges. Some of these students may have returned to a four-year institution, perhaps even their origin institution, in a subsequent transfer. Because the results reported here capture only the first instance of transfer, they cannot show the proportion of students who may have later returned, or transferred in a "swirling" pattern. However, the frequency and timing of these transfers suggest that transient enrollments may be playing a significant role in students' postsecondary pathways. Fully 30.3 percent of reverse-transfer enrollments occurred during a summer term (defined in this study as a term with a beginning date between May 15 and August 14). Moreover, almost a third of the students who transferred from four-year institutions transferred more than once during the five-year study period (see Appendix C, Table 2).

Thus, it is important to keep in mind that among these reverse transfers are students who may be taking courses at community colleges only for a short time as part of a continuing baccalaureate program as well as students who may be changing programs and enrolling long term in community colleges. In both cases, the prevalence of community colleges along the various enrollment trajectories of students who began at four-year institutions may reflect students' efforts to find college opportunities at lower-cost institutions — either to take a few courses or complete degrees and certificates.

**Figure 3. Origin and Destination of Initial Transfer by Institutions' Sector and Control, Fall 2006 Transfer Cohort\***



\*This figure is based on data shown in Appendix C, Table 11.  
 Note: Weighted counts below 30 are not labeled.

Table 3 presents similar information to that presented in Figure 4, but highlights the top three destinations of students transferring from each type of origin institution.

The findings for these top destinations further highlight the role of two-year public institutions as a principal transfer destination of students beginning at all institution types. In addition, we can see that transfers from each institution type are relatively concentrated in two or three main destinations. For example, among students who began at four-year public institutions and then transferred, over 86 percent went to either a two-year public college or another four-year public institution.

The transfer destinations of students who began at four-year non-profit institutions, on the other hand, were spread relatively more evenly over two-year public, four-year public, and four-year private non-profit institutions. These destinations accounted for 96.9 percent of all first transfers among students who began at four-year private non-profit institutions.

Students who began at two-year and four-year private for-profit institutions showed the most widely varied patterns in transfer destinations, with 17.2 and 16.5 percent of transfers to these institutions, respectively, remaining unaccounted for outside of the three most prevalent destinations.

These results may point to ways that institutions could anticipate common transfer pathways typically taken by their students, and they may further illuminate the origins of non-first-year students who enter postsecondary institutions each year. In this way, these findings may help institutions assess the needs of both entering and departing students.

**Table 3. Top Three Destinations of Initial Transfer by Sector and Control of Origin Institution**

Institutional Origins of Transfer Students		Transfer Destination	Weighted Count	%
<b>Two-Year Public</b>	<b>1st</b>	<b>Four-Year Public</b>	173,883	41.2%
	<b>2nd</b>	<b>Two-Year Public</b>	158,537	37.6%
	<b>3rd</b>	<b>Four-Year Private Non-Profit</b>	59,763	14.2%
	<b>All Others</b>		29,859	7.1%
<b>Two-Year Private Non-Profit</b>	<b>1st</b>	<b>Two-Year Public</b>	1,221	48.6%
	<b>2nd</b>	<b>Four-Year Public</b>	628	25.0%
	<b>3rd</b>	<b>Four-Year Private Non-Profit</b>	532	21.2%
	<b>All Others</b>		134	5.3%
<b>Two-Year Private For-Profit</b>	<b>1st</b>	<b>Two-Year Public</b>	4,516	48.9%
	<b>2nd</b>	<b>Four-Year Private Non-Profit</b>	2,082	22.5%
	<b>3rd</b>	<b>Four-Year Public</b>	1,049	11.4%
	<b>All Others</b>		1,590	17.2%
<b>Four-Year Public</b>	<b>1st</b>	<b>Two-Year Public</b>	168,582	51.9%
	<b>2nd</b>	<b>Four-Year Public</b>	111,930	34.5%
	<b>3rd</b>	<b>Four-Year Private Non-Profit</b>	33,044	10.2%
	<b>All Others</b>		11,182	3.4%
<b>Four-Year Private Non-Profit</b>	<b>1st</b>	<b>Two-Year Public</b>	57,009	41.4%
	<b>2nd</b>	<b>Four-Year Public</b>	48,708	35.3%
	<b>3rd</b>	<b>Four-Year Private Non-Profit</b>	27,890	20.2%
	<b>All Others</b>		4,212	3.1%
<b>Four-Year Private For-Profit</b>	<b>1st</b>	<b>Two-Year Public</b>	7,936	43.9%
	<b>2nd</b>	<b>Four-Year Private Non-Profit</b>	4,372	24.2%
	<b>3rd</b>	<b>Four-Year Public</b>	2,809	15.5%
	<b>All Others</b>		2,979	16.5%
<b>Overall</b>	<b>1st</b>	<b>Two-Year Public</b>	397,801	43.5%
	<b>2nd</b>	<b>Four-Year Public</b>	339,008	37.1%
	<b>3rd</b>	<b>Four-Year Private Non-Profit</b>	124,279	13.6%
	<b>All Others</b>		53,359	5.8%

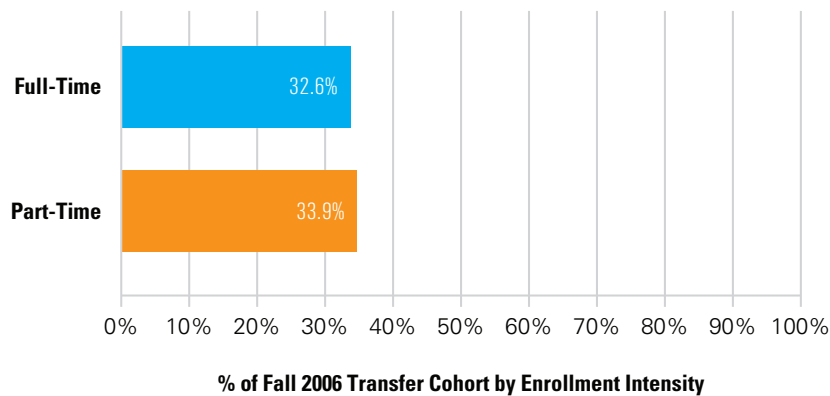
# PART- AND FULL-TIME STUDENT PATHWAYS: STUDENT TRANSFER BY INITIAL ENROLLMENT INTENSITY

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The first figure in this group, Figure 4, presents overall transfer rates by initial enrollment intensity. This study found little difference, surprisingly, between transfer rates for full- and part-time students. Of all students who began full time, 32.6 percent transferred at least once between 2006 and 2011, while the figure for students who began part time was 33.9 percent.

It is important to note, however, that for this analysis enrollment intensity was measured only in the very first term of enrollment. Students may or may not have maintained the same enrollment intensity in subsequent terms, and they may have been enrolled at a different intensity at the time of transfer. For example, a student who began full time may have changed to part time later in the first year and then may have transferred in the third year. Nevertheless, in these results, such a student is defined as a full-time transfer student.

**Figure 4. First Transfer By Initial Enrollment Intensity,  
Students Who Enrolled Part- or Full-Time in 2006 and Later Transferred at Least Once\***



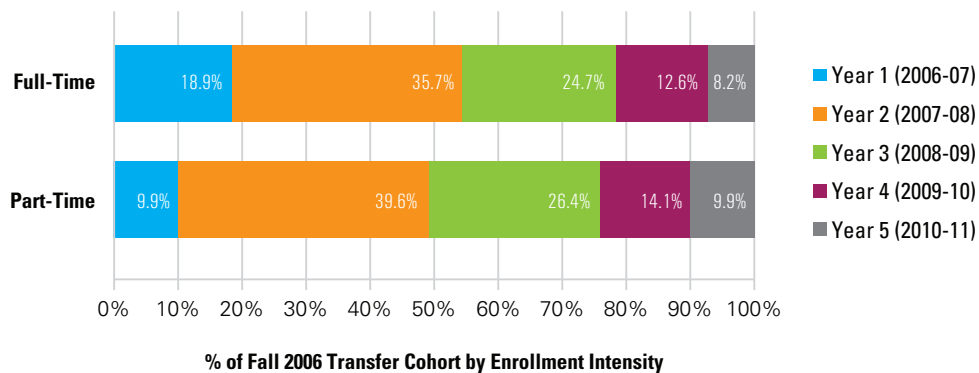
*\*This figure is based on data shown in Appendix C, Table 12.*

Figure 5 presents the results from Figure 4 with additional detail, showing the timing of first transfer within each initial enrollment intensity group. As previously shown in the overall timing of transfer results, transfer was most prevalent in the second and third years, regardless of initial enrollment intensity. However, full-time students transferred earlier in their careers than part-time students did. The share of transfers occurring in the first year among students who began full time was almost twice as large as the share among students who began part time. In the second through fifth years, a greater prevalence of transfer was seen among students who began part time.

These results point to implications for institutional policy and programming and highlight potential ways to tailor information about transfer and degree completion, to make sure the information reaches part- and full-time students when it is relevant to their decision making.



**Figure 5. Timing of First Transfer by Initial Enrollment Intensity, Students Who Enrolled Part- or Full-Time in Fall 2006 and Later Transferred at Least Once\***



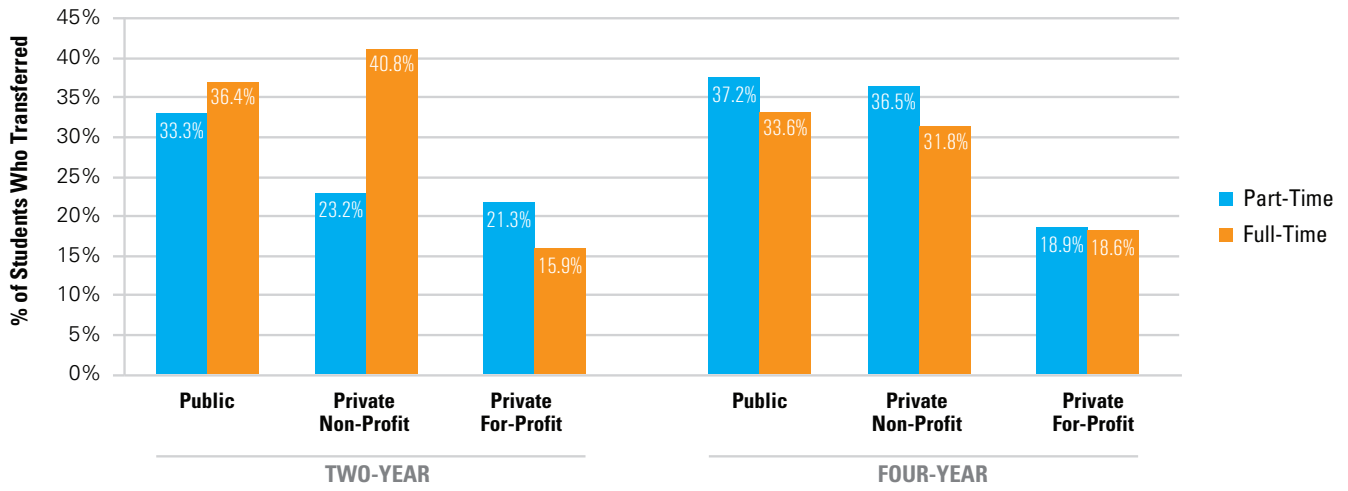
\*This figure is based on data shown in Appendix C, Table 13.

The similarity in part- and full-time transfer rates overall breaks down when the results are disaggregated by institutional sector. Figure 6 shows that transfer rates by initial enrollment intensity and institution type are more complex. At four-year institutions, more part-time students than full-time students transferred, while at two-year institutions (except for two-year for-profit institutions) the pattern is the opposite.

Full-time students from two-year private non-profit institutions transferred at the highest rate, 40.8 percent, a rate much higher than that of their counterparts from two-year private for-profit institutions, 15.9 percent. The rates of transfer from two-year institutions varied more by institutional control (from 15.9 percent to 40.8 percent across all institution types), compared to the variation in transfer rates from four-year institutions by institutional control (from 18.6 percent for private for-profit institutions to 37.2 percent for public four-year institutions). Overall, public institutions' transfer rates remained the most consistent, ranging from 33.3 percent to 37.2 percent, regardless of enrollment intensity or institution type.

The greatest differences in transfer rates by enrollment intensity occurred among two-year private non-profit institutions. At these institutions, part-time students transferred at a rate of 23.2 percent, while full-time students transferred at a rate of 40.8 percent. In the four-year sector, in contrast, the transfer rate for part-time students was very similar to the rate for full-time students, with the smallest difference shown at four-year private for-profit institutions between part- and full-time student transfer (18.9 percent and 18.6 percent, respectively).

**Figure 6. Transfer and Mobility Rate by Initial Enrollment Intensity and Institution Type\***



*\*This figure is based on data shown in Appendix C, Table 5 & Table 6.*

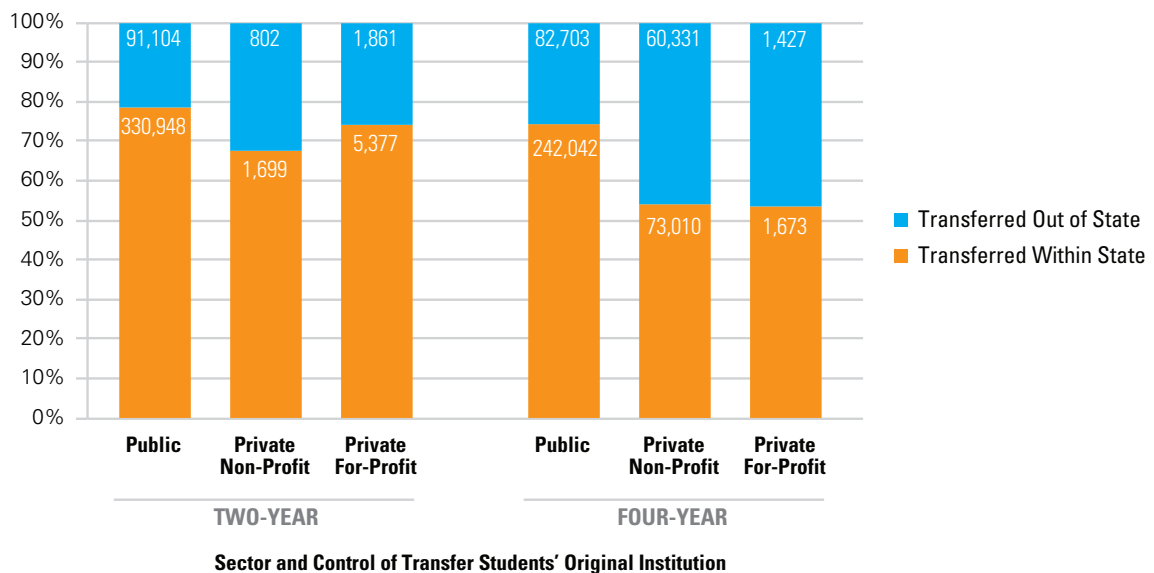
## TRANSFERS ACROSS STATES

Studies of student transfer, while informative, have been limited by the data available to the researchers. Although the statewide student unit record databases available in many states are useful resources for examining student enrollment pathways within system or state boundaries, their geographic limitations cause them to miss a substantial proportion of student enrollment activity, including student mobility in and out of public and private institutions and across state lines (Dunbar et al., 2011). Consequently, studies based on these data sets often underestimate both student persistence and student transfer, ultimately misrepresenting important patterns in student enrollment. Due to the national coverage of the NSC data used to prepare this report, we have been able to capture student transfer across geographic boundaries, enabling us to offer institutions, policymakers, and researchers a national view of transfer and mobility that cannot be shown in studies based on other data sources.

Figure 7 shows the prevalence of in-state and out-of-state movement among the first transfers of students for each type of origin institution. The focus here is on whether or not the destination institution is in the same state as the origin institution, regardless of the student’s state of residence. Students who began at multistate institutions, institutions with branches in more than one state, were excluded from this analysis. These institutions typically report all student enrollments from a central location, regardless of the actual location of instruction. In particular, many large for-profit institutions fall into the multistate category and are not included in Figure 7.

Across all types of origin institutions, sizable proportions of transfer students continued their higher education studies in a state different from the one in which they began their higher education. Within the public sector, more than one fifth (21.6 percent) of students who transferred from two-year institutions and more than one quarter (25.5 percent) of those from four-year institutions moved to an institution in a different state. Although it is not known how many of these students may have been leaving their home state, returning to it, or neither, these patterns are noteworthy in that they show scores of thousands of students following postsecondary pathways across the public sectors of multiple states.

**Figure 7. In-State and Out-of-State Transfer by Sector and Control of Origin Institution, Students in Fall 2006 Cohort Who Transferred at Least Once\***



\*This figure is based on data shown in Appendix C, Table 14.

Not surprisingly, higher proportions of transfer students who began at four-year institutions — compared to transfer students who began at two-year institutions — went to an institution in another state. Furthermore, particularly in the four-year sector, students who began at private institutions and then transferred had the highest rate of transfers to an institution in another state; 45.3 percent of all first-transfers from these institutions went out of state.

These results offer an exploratory glimpse into the complexity of student mobility and enrollment in multiple institutions, a complexity that underscores the importance of having research access to extensive data capturing student pathways across state lines. Currently, the availability of such data is limited outside of NSC.

## TRANSFER AND MOBILITY RATES BY INSTITUTIONAL SECTOR

Transfer is a primary outcome of interest for students who begin at two-year institutions, as it is an essential component of the pathway through which many students who begin at these institutions seek to obtain a baccalaureate degree (Alfonso, 2006; Long & Kurlaender, 2009). However, as noted in literature (e.g., Hillman, Lum, & Hossler, 2008; McCormick & Carroll, 1997) and as shown in data presented in previous figures, transfer is an important element of pathways for students who begin at four-year institutions as well. In the following section, we examine transfer by focusing on students who began within each sector—two-year and four-year—and highlight these results first by destination and then by timing.

Figure 8 presents total transfer rates by sector of students' first transfer destination among students who began in different institutional sectors. Among students who began at two-year institutions, the transfer rate to four-year institutions was 20.1 percent, while the rate of lateral transfer (transfer to other two-year institutions) was 13 percent.

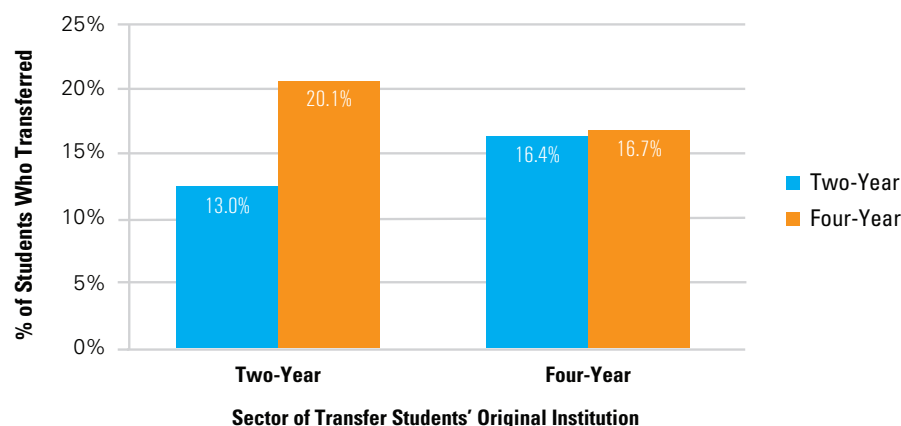
It is important to note once again, however, that these results do not account for all transfer from two- to four-year institutions for two reasons. First, they focus only on the first transfer of each student. Students who initially transferred from a two-year institution to another two-year institution may still eventually move to a four-year institution in a subsequent transfer, which would not be counted here.

Second, they exclude students who transferred after receiving an associate's degree or certificate. Transfer after receiving a degree will be the focus of a future report in this series. Our preliminary analysis, however, suggests that this phenomenon accounts for 5.6 of the original cohort who started at two-year institutions. Ninety percent of these students transferred to a four-year institution, meaning that the total vertical transfer rate, if we were to combine pre-degree and post-degree movement, would increase from 20.1 percent to 25.14 percent of those who started at two-year institutions. Ten percent of those who received a degree or certificate from a two-year institution and subsequently transferred did so laterally to another two-year institution, which would increase the lateral transfer rate from 13 percent to 13.56 percent.

Among students who began at four-year institutions, the rates of reverse transfer (to two-year institutions) and lateral transfer (to other four-year institutions) were similar: 16.4 percent and 16.7 percent, respectively.

The remaining 67 percent of each group of students did not transfer within the five years captured by this study. The report now looks at these initial transfers by when they occurred.

**Figure 8. Total Transfer and Mobility Rate by Sector of Destination Institution, Students in the Fall 2006 Cohort Who Began at Two-Year and Four-Year Institutions\***



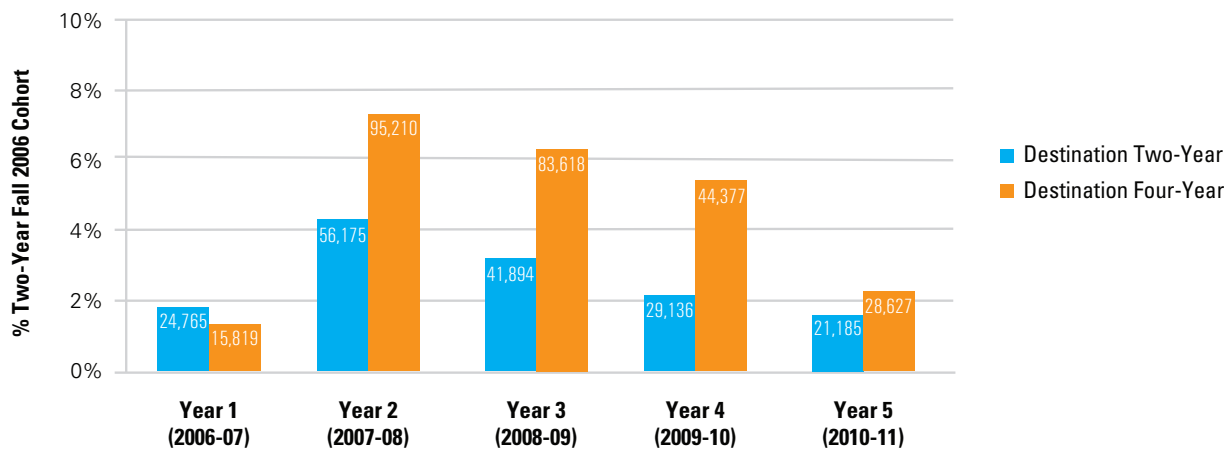
\*This figure is based on data shown in Appendix C, Table 15.

Figure 9 shows transfer rates of students who began at two-year institutions in fall 2006, focusing on the timing of transfer by sector of destination institution. The majority of transfer activity happened during the second and third years of enrollment, regardless of destination. There was relatively less transfer activity in the first, fourth, and fifth years of enrollment. Consistent with previous research, with the practice-oriented literature as well as with the overall results shown throughout this report, these results show that students who began at two-year institutions transferred at higher rates in the earlier years of their postsecondary enrollment, primarily during their second and third years of enrollment. During these years, additionally, a larger percentage of students transferred vertically, from two-year institutions to four-year institutions, compared to the lower percentages of vertical transfers that occurred during the first, fourth, and fifth years of enrollment.

Not surprisingly, vertical transfers occurred at the lowest rates during students' first year of enrollment.

The rate of students transferring laterally in the first year was comparable to rates for similar transfers in the fourth and fifth years of enrollment: 2.2 percent and 1.6 percent, respectively.

**Figure 9. Timing of Initial Transfer by Sector of Destination Institution, Students in the Fall 2006 Cohort Who Began at Two-Year Institutions\***



*\*This figure is based on data shown in Appendix C, Table 15.*

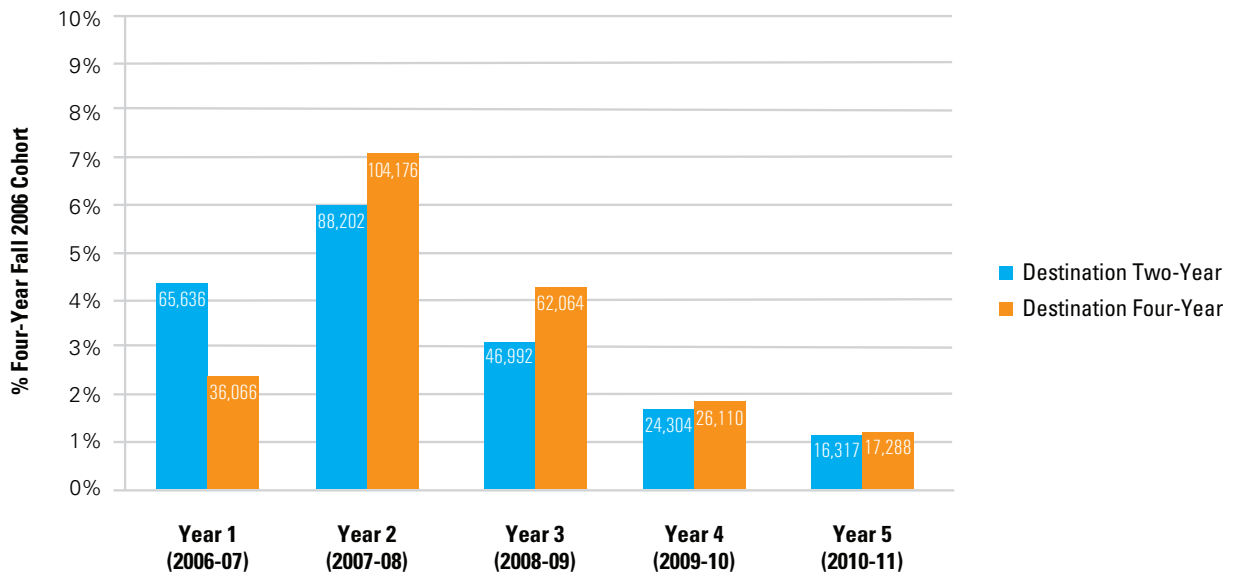
Figure 10 shows transfer rates of students who began at four-year institutions in fall 2006, focusing on the timing of transfer by sector of destination institution. Similar to results shown for two-year institutions, transfer activity occurred most often early in students' enrollment histories. While first-year transfers from two-year institutions were relatively uncommon, students who began at four-year institutions showed significant transfer activity during the first year of enrollment. Transfer rates during the first three years of enrollment were noticeably higher than rates in years four and five. However, as in the case of students who began at two-year institutions, transfer rates among students who began at four-year institutions never exceeded 8 percent of the entire cohort for a particular destination in any given year.

Interestingly, it was only during the first year of enrollment that reverse transfers outpaced lateral transfers among these students; in every other enrollment year, lateral transfers made up a greater proportion of student movement among those who began at four-year institutions.

First-time transfer still took place even in students' fourth and fifth years, although at low rates: under two percent for each year and for each destination. Moreover, after the third year, similar proportions of students reverse-transferred to a two-year institution and laterally to another four-year institution. These results are somewhat surprising, given that after four or five years at a four-year institution students might be expected to find less value in enrolling at a two-year institution and also given that the remaining courses required for completing a credential may not be as available as earlier requirements at a two-year institution. Despite these unexpected results, the transfer rates shown here testify to the varied pathways many students are taking through higher education.

The majority of lateral transfers occurred during the second and third years of enrollment. A particularly high concentration of lateral transfers occurred during the second enrollment year. Over seven percent of the 2006 four-year cohort transferred laterally during the second enrollment year alone.

**Figure 10. Timing of Initial Transfer by Sector of Destination Institution, Students in the Fall 2006 Cohort Who Began at Four-Year Institutions\***



\*This figure is based on data shown in Appendix C, Table 15.

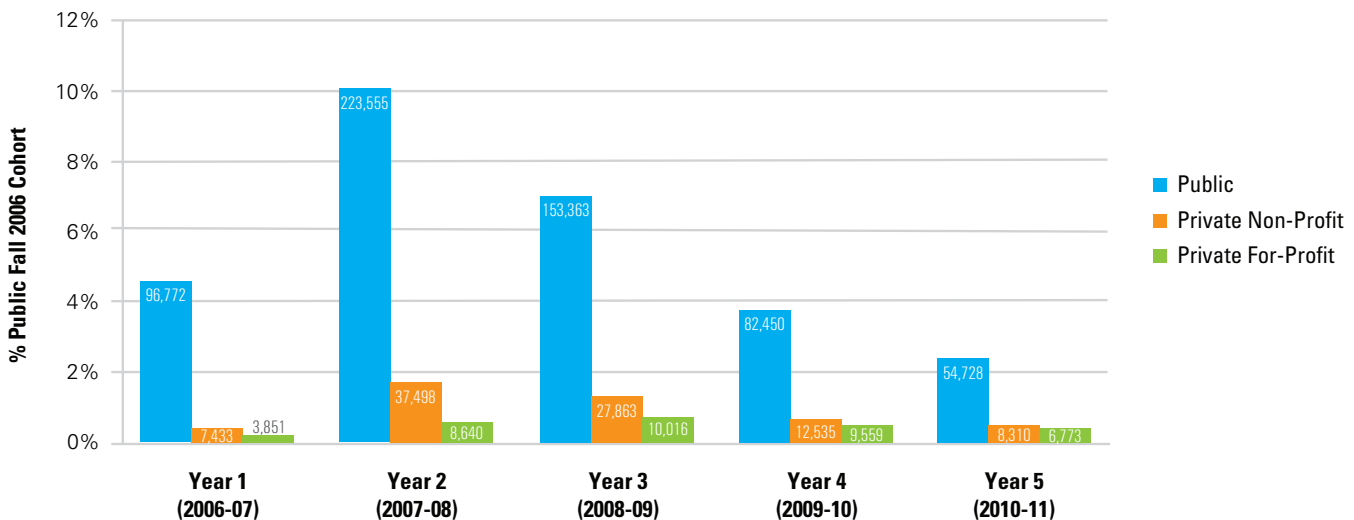
# TRANSFER AND MOBILITY RATES BY INSTITUTIONAL CONTROL

Students who begin college at a public institution may take different considerations into account when making transfer and persistence decisions, in contrast with students who begin at a private non-profit institution or private for-profit institution. Examining how student enrollment patterns differ across these categories can further contextualize student retention and persistence results within each institution type and, in turn, can help inform institutional practices as well as state and federal policy surrounding institutional effectiveness, the funding of public institutions, and student aid. The following section foregrounds differences between students who enroll in different institutions by control type. Given the structure of the NSC data, we are able in this report to account for student enrollment not only in public institutions but in private non-profit institutions and private for-profit institutions as well. Here, we examine transfer by focusing on students who began their higher education within each control type, highlighting results by the destination of students' first transfer enrollment and the timing of that enrollment.

Figure 11 shows transfer rates of students who initially enrolled in public institutions in fall 2006, focusing on the timing of transfer by control of destination institution.

The highest rate of transfer among students who began at public institutions occurred during the second and third years of enrollment. The sharpest increase in transfer activity occurred between the first and the second year. After peaking in year two, transfer rates to public and private non-profit institutions decreased steadily in the third, fourth, and fifth years. In contrast, transfer rates to private for-profit institutions — while lower overall than transfers to public and private non-profit institutions — increased in the second year and continued to rise, remaining steady during the third and fourth years, rather than declining as transfer rates to other destinations did. In year five, transfer rates to private for-profit institutions decreased moderately.

**Figure 11. Timing of Initial Transfer by Control of Destination Institution, Students in the Fall 2006 Cohort Who Began at Public Institutions\***



\*This figure is based on data shown in Appendix C, Table 16.



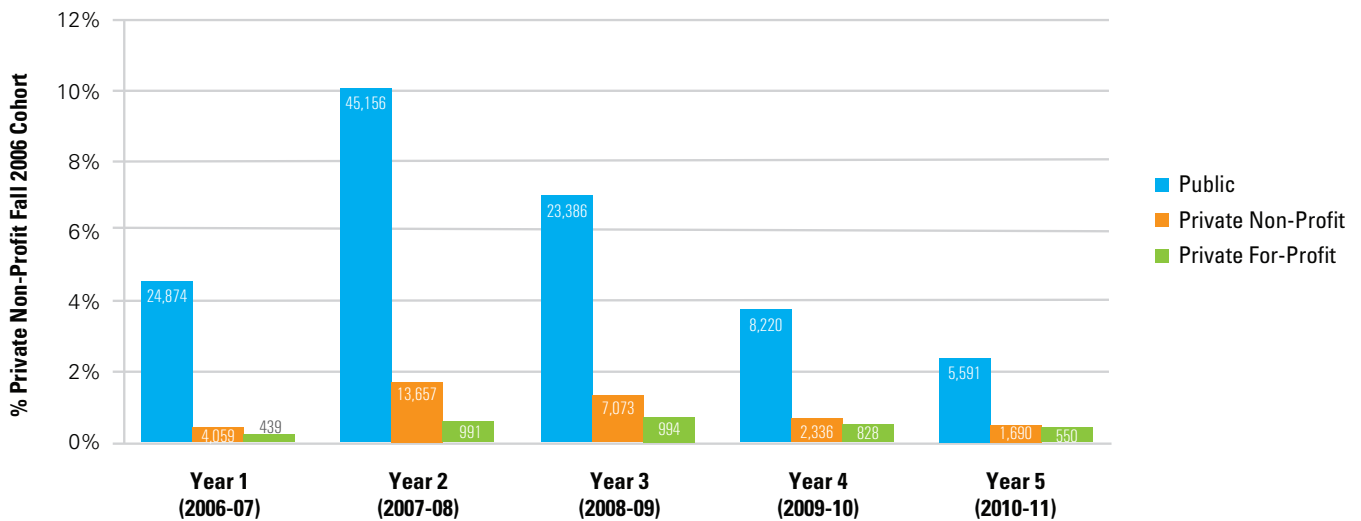
Figure 12 shows transfer rates of students who initially enrolled in private non-profit institutions in fall 2006, focusing on the timing of transfer by control of destination institution.

As we have seen in transfer patterns from all origin institutions, the largest proportion of transfer activity among students who began in private non-profit institutions occurred during the second year of enrollment. Additionally, transfer activity jumped from the first to the second year of enrollment, regardless of destination.

The largest increase in transfer activity for these private non-profit students occurred during the second year and, furthermore, was in transfers to other private non-profit institutions: from less than one percent in year one to over three percent in year two.

Transfer rates to public institutions by students who began at private non-profit institutions was higher than transfer rates to any other type of institution across all years for these students. Transfer rates to public institutions were highest in the first two years of enrollment. Almost six percent and slightly over 10 percent of all students who began at private non-profit institutions transferred in their first or second year of college. This pattern may in part reflect the movement of price-sensitive students seeking lower-cost opportunities, especially during the economic downturn that started in 2007.

**Figure 12. Timing of Initial Transfer by Control of Destination Institution, Students in the Fall 2006 Cohort Who Began at Private Non-Profit Institutions\***

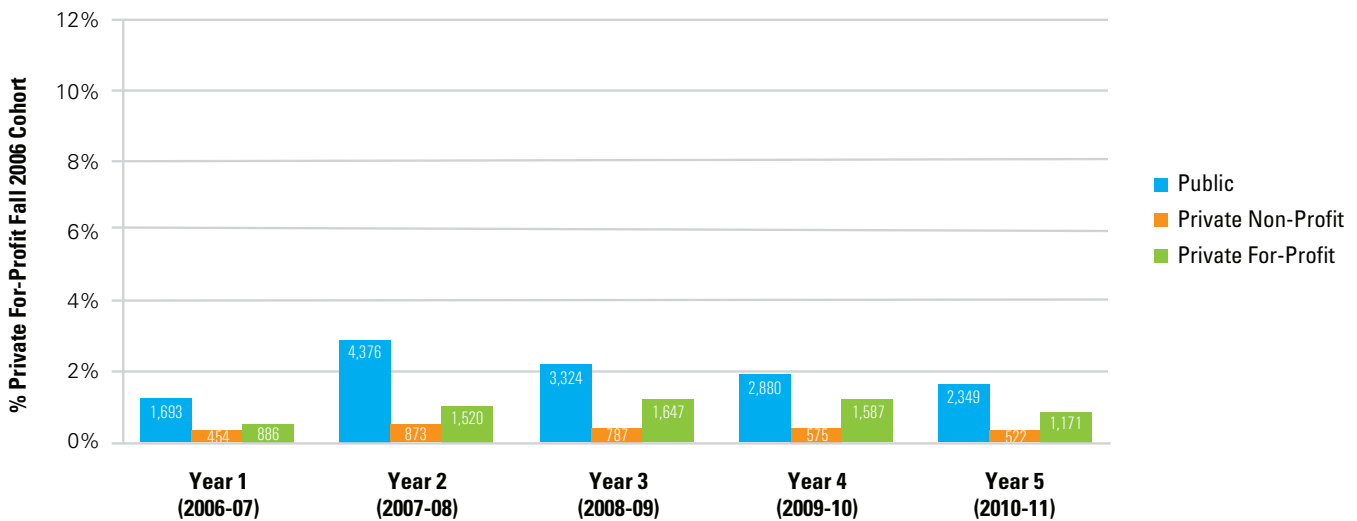


\*This figure is based on data shown in Appendix C, Table 16.

Figure 13 shows transfer rates among students who initially enrolled in private for-profit institutions in fall 2006, focusing on the timing of transfer by control of destination institution.

Transfer rates among students who began within this sector were low and notably stable across years and destinations. Consistent with rates shown previously among students who began at institutions in other sectors and transferred to public and private non-profit institutions, transfer rates in this group tended to occur in a moderate wave pattern across years (more so than in other groups of students), with the highest rates of transfer occurring in the second and third years of enrollment. Even in this context, transfers to other private for-profit institutions were particularly stable over the five years, compared to transfers to other institutional control types.

**Figure 13. Timing of Initial Transfer by Control of Destination Institution, Students in the Fall 2006 Cohort Who Began at Private For-Profit Institutions\***



\*This figure is based on data shown in Appendix C, Table 16.

## TRANSFER AND MOBILITY RATES BY INSTITUTIONAL SECTOR AND CONTROL

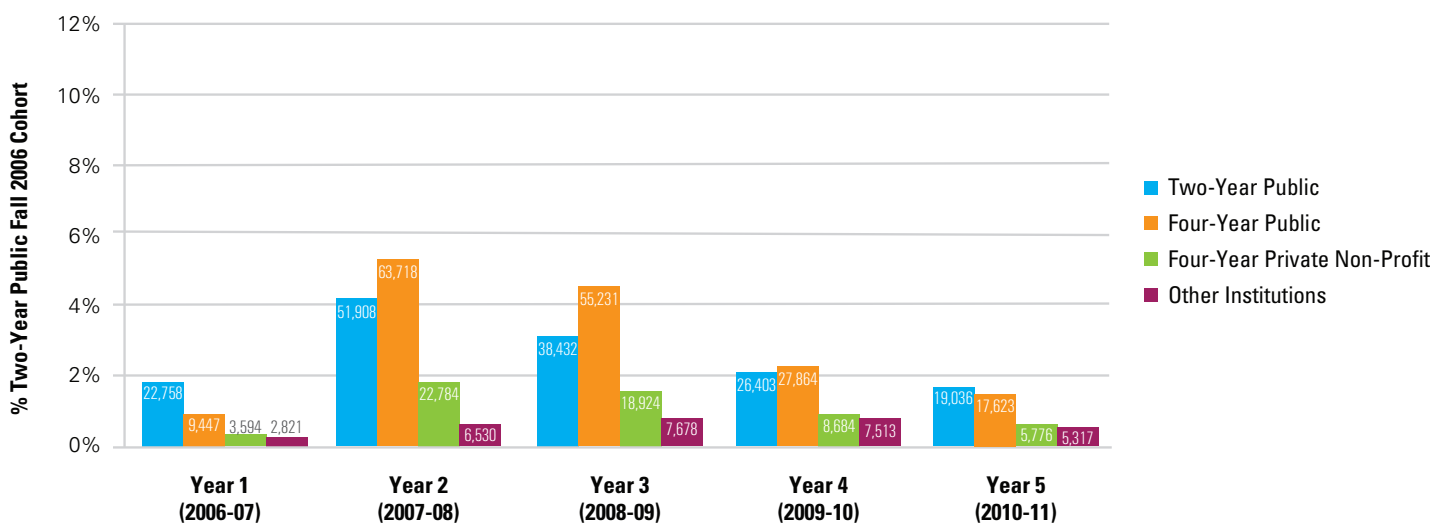
The previous two sections of this report foregrounded sector and control separately as a way of understanding differences between students who initially enroll in those types of institutions. These analyses provide a framework through which we may now look at differences between specific institution types. Highlighting the top three transfer destinations specifically for students who began at each separate institution type (shown in Table 3), the following section provides a detailed examination of transfer and mobility by origin institution type, focusing on both the trajectory and the timing of the first move. The percentages shown in the following set of figures represent the transfer and mobility rates for students in the fall 2006 cohort who began at each institution type.

Figure 14 shows the institutional destinations for first transfers among students who began their postsecondary education at two-year public institutions by year of the study period. Overall, students who began at two-year public institutions and transferred did so primarily in years two or three, with far fewer students transferring in their first, fourth, or fifth years.

Although, overall, a slightly larger proportion of these students transferred to four-year public institutions than to other two-year public institutions (see Table 3), Figure 14 reveals important differences in when these moves occurred. In year one, students transferred to other two-year public institutions at higher rates, whereas in years two and three transfers to four-year public institutions predominated.

Almost 10 percent of transfer students who began at two-year public institutions transferred during years four and five of their enrollment at the two-year institution; students going to other two-year institutions comprised over a third of this group: 3.6-percent of the 1.3 million first-time students who initially enrolled in public two-year institutions in fall 2006. The transfer of community college students to other community colleges at notable rates in the students' later years in college may be of concern to those interested in community colleges as a viable pathway toward the baccalaureate degree. Furthermore, lateral transfer to other community colleges tends to confirm what research on transfer between postsecondary institutions has generally found: that students who begin at two-year public institutions have high rates of mobility and take multiple postsecondary pathways (Adelman, 2006; Kearney, Townsend, & Kearney, 1995).

**Figure 14. Timing of Initial Transfer by Sector and Control of Destination Institution, Students in the Fall 2006 Cohort Who Began at Two-Year Public Institutions\***



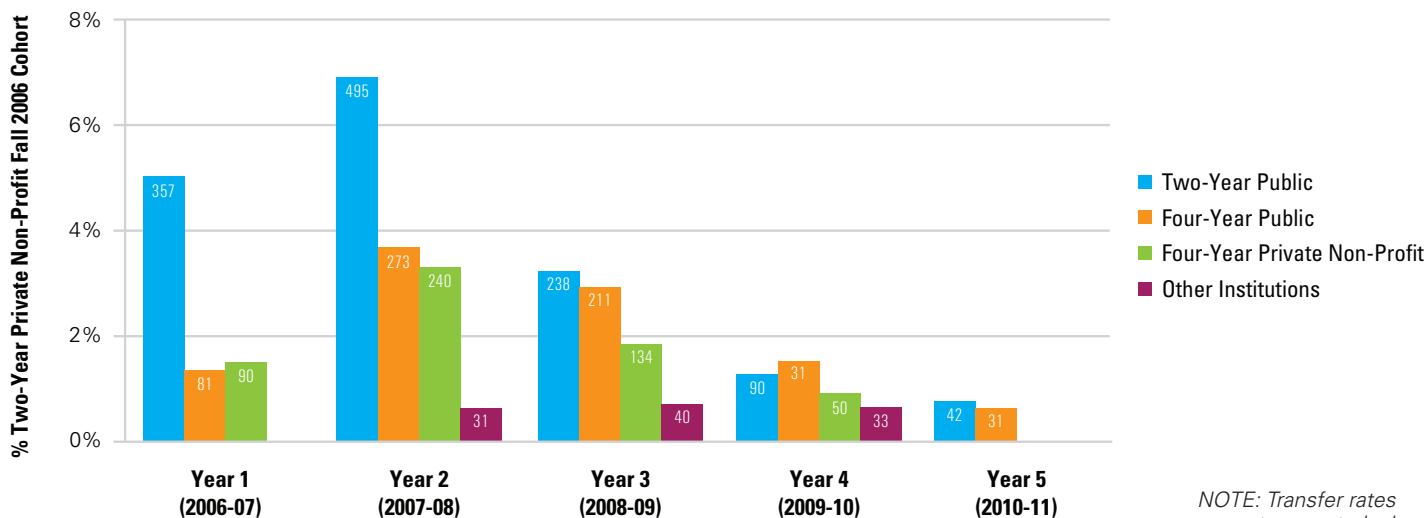
\*This figure is based on data shown in Appendix C, Table 17.

Figure 15 shows transfer rates by timing of initial transfer and transfer destinations among students who began at two-year private non-profit institutions. These results should be interpreted with caution due to the small sample size of just over 7,300 students.

Like their counterparts who began at other types of institutions (i.e., as previously presented in Table 3), two-year private non-profit enrollees consistently transferred to two-year public institutions at higher rates than to any other institution destination across all years, with the greatest difference in transfer rates in years one and two. In these first two years, 11.7 percent of this sector’s students moved to two-year public institutions.

Vertical transfer to four-year public institutions and private non-profit institutions is most notable in years two and three, totaling seven percent in year two and 4.7 percent in year three. These results are consistent with transfer patterns of students who began at two-year public institutions.

**Figure 15. Timing of Initial Transfer by Sector and Control of Destination Institution, Students in the Fall 2006 Cohort Who Began at Two-Year Private Non-Profit Institutions\***



\*This figure is based on data shown in Appendix C, Table 17.

NOTE: Transfer rates are not presented when weighted counts are below 30 students.

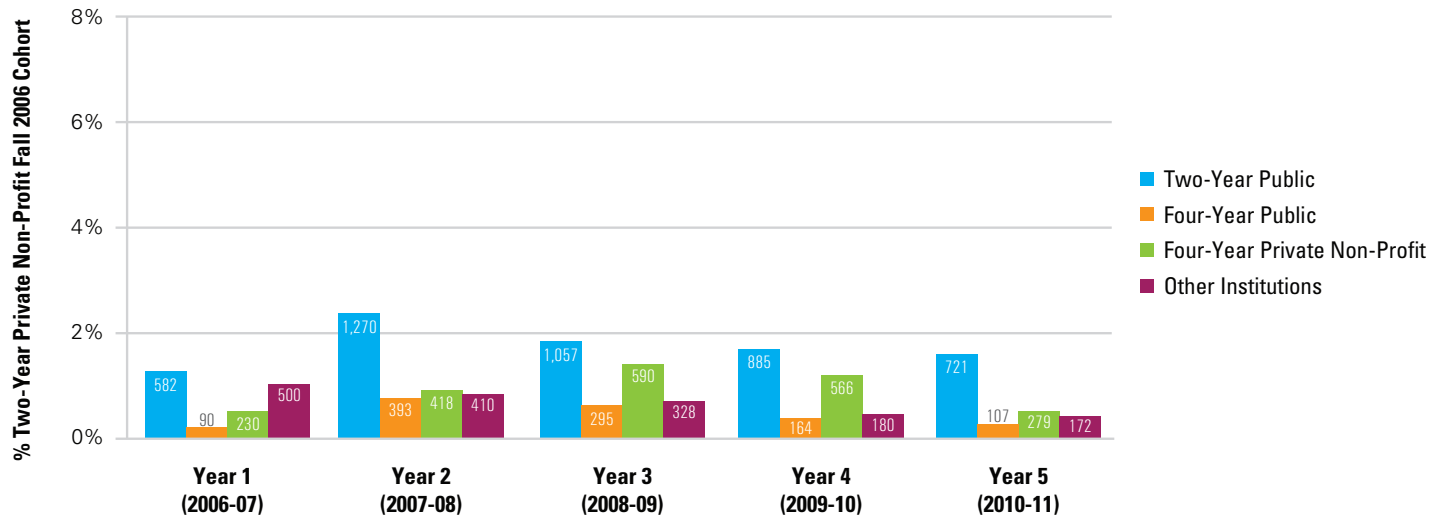
Figure 16 shows transfer rates for the first-transfer destinations by year among students who began at two-year private for-profit institutions.

Two-year private for-profit institutions had the lowest transfer rate among students enrolled in any institution (16.3 percent). Moreover, the transfer rates at these institutions remained low throughout the study period — at most, 2.2 percent of the approximately 56,000-student cohort at any point in the study. Differences in transfer across years and destination institutions were slight.

Worth noting, however, is that among students who began at two-year private for-profit institutions, transfer to two-year public institutions was higher than to other destinations across all five years. These transfers followed a wave pattern: doubling from one percent in year one to 2.2 percent in year two, remaining fairly stable in years two and three, and

decreasing gradually through year five — when transfer to two-year public institutions represented 1.3 percent of all transfer activity for these students. These decreases were slight from year to year, however, with rates remaining higher than for other destinations across all years. Movement to four-year private for-profit institutions was also notable among these students, with a pattern that peaked later in the study period, reaching the highest levels only in years three and four, but not surpassing a transfer rate of one percent.

**Figure 16. Timing of Initial Transfer by Sector and Control of Destination Institution, Students in the Fall 2006 Cohort Who Began at Two-Year Private For-Profit Institutions\***



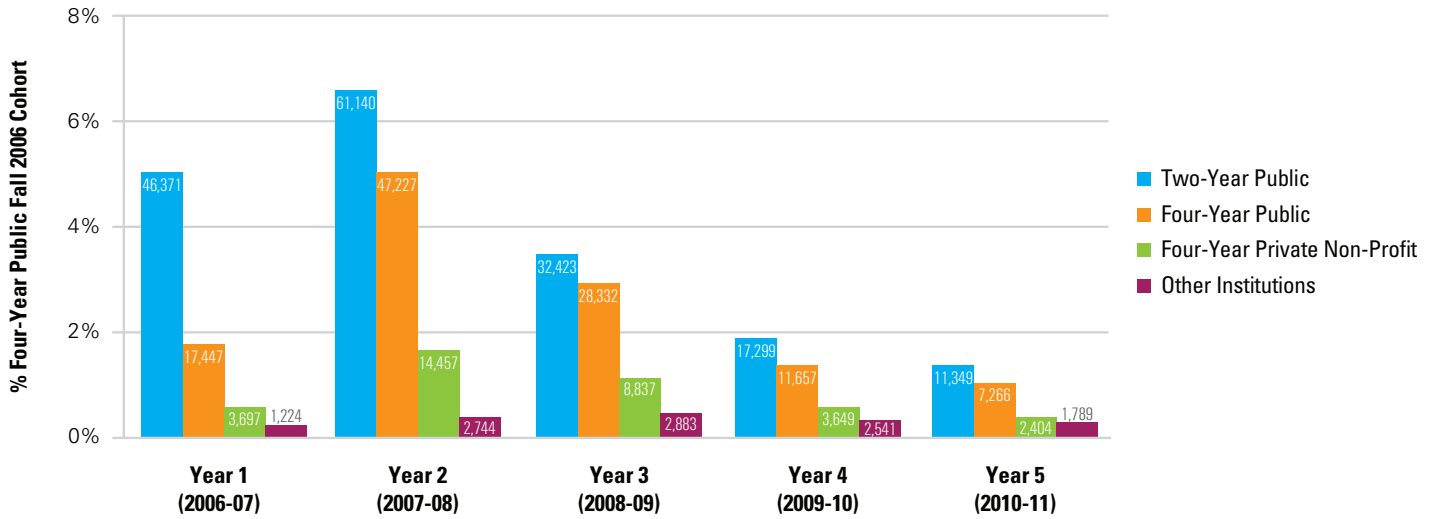
\*This figure is based on data shown in Appendix C, Table 17.

Transfer rates by timing and destination among students who began at four-year public institutions are presented in Figure 17. Just under one fifth of all four-year public students transferred to two-year public institutions (17.7 percent), in a pattern of reverse transfer. This figure shows that two-year public institutions were actually the most common destination in every year of the study. Even in years four and five, three percent of over 950,000 students who began at four-year public institutions transferred to two-year public institutions.

Transfer rates to two-year public institutions were notably higher than for other destinations in the first year (4.9 percent to two-year public institutions, compared to 1.8 percent and 0.4 percent to four-year public institutions and private non-profit institutions, respectively), with rates remaining high in year two and dropping by almost half (translating to a difference exceeding 28,700 students) between years two and three. Although transfer rates to other four-year public institutions were higher in years two and three, they still remained lower than transfer rates to two-year public institutions.

These patterns, which are consistent with the research on reverse transfer (Hagedorn & Castro, 1999; Kajstura & Keim, 1992; Townsend & Dever, 1999; Winter, Harris, & Ziegler, 2001; Yang, 2006), speak to issues of the cost of college as well as students' adjustment to college at these institutions. High numbers of transfers in years one and two to two-year public institutions may, furthermore, reflect rising tuition costs at public four-year institutions — which likely prompt more cost-sensitive students to seek other, more economical enrollment options.

**Figure 17. Timing of Initial Transfer by Sector and Control of Destination Institution, Students in the Fall 2006 Cohort Who Began at Four-Year Public Institutions\***

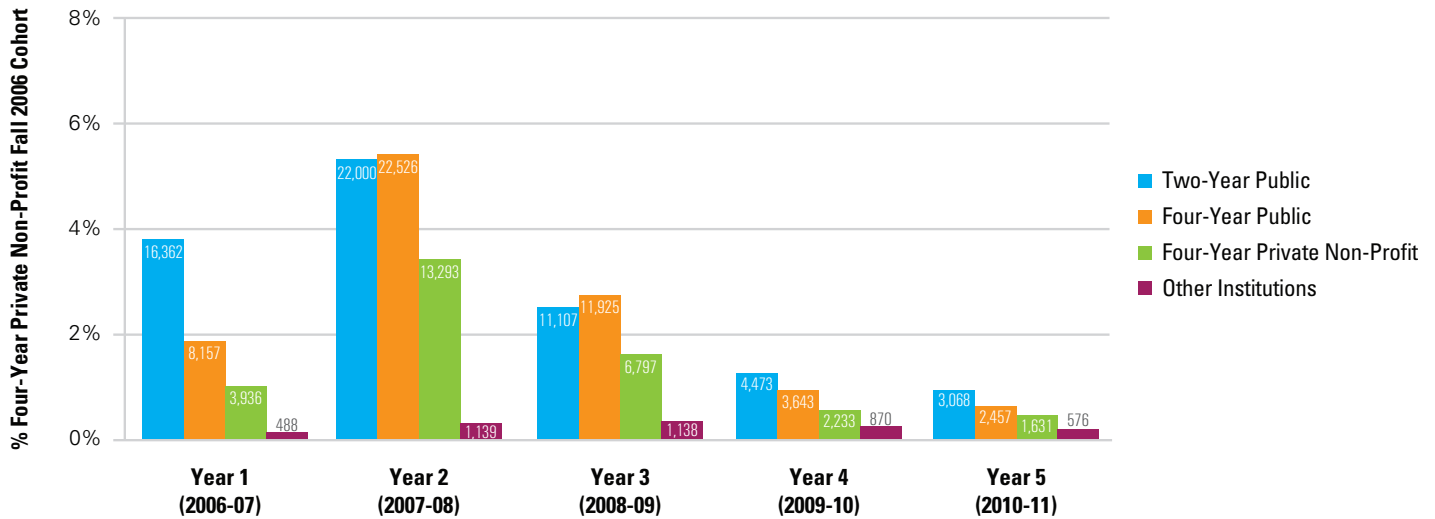


\*This figure is based on data shown in Appendix C, Table 17.

Among students who began at four-year private non-profit institutions, there was a similar pattern of high rates of transfer to public two-year institutions with a total of 13.3 percent transfer rate to these institutions across the five years: the highest transfer rate (over five percent) occurred in year two, and, notably, with just under four percent of almost 430,000 students transferred to two-year public institutions in their first year (see Figure 18). In year one, twice as many students transferred to two-year public institutions as to four-year public institutions (3.8 percent and 1.9 percent, respectively) and four times as many transferred to two-year public institutions as to other four-year private non-profit institutions (3.8 percent and 0.9 percent, respectively). However, in year two, the transfer rates of students who transferred laterally increased moderately, up to 5.3 percent and 3.1 percent for four-year public institutions and private non-profit institutions. The transfer rate to four-year public institutions slightly surpassed the transfer rate to two-year public institutions for years two and three. Years four and five continued the pattern of transfer rate decreases, with declines in each sector.

Similar to rates for four-year public institutions, more students who began in four-year private non-profit institutions and transferred for the first time in years four and five went to two-year public institutions (reverse transfer) than to any other institution type.

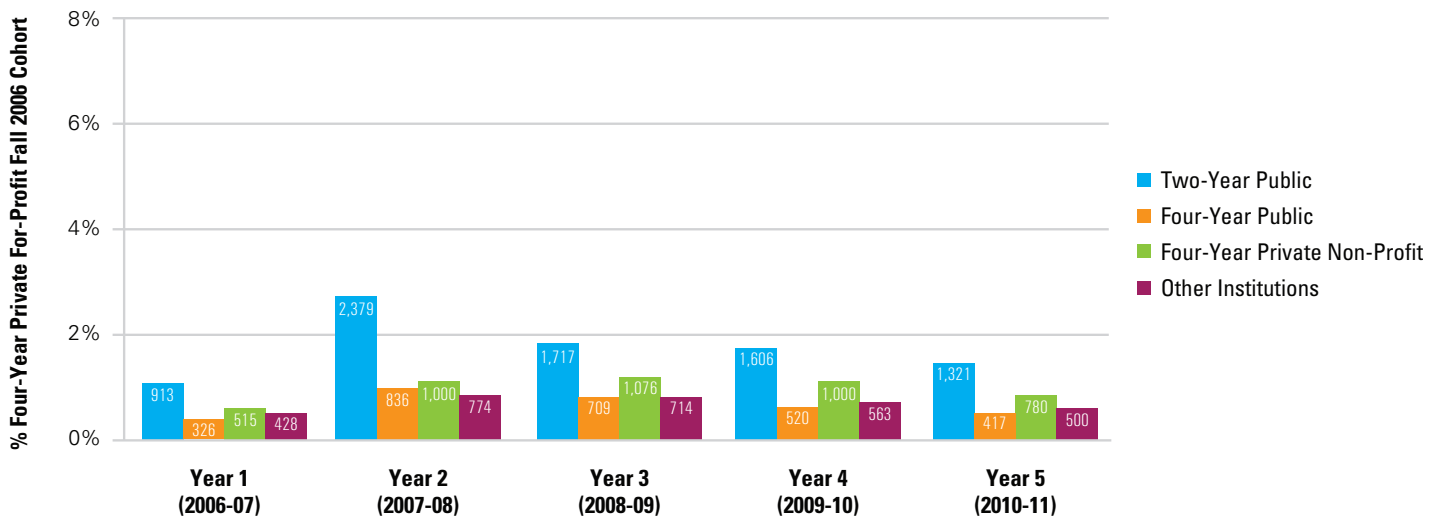
**Figure 18. Timing of Initial Transfer by Sector and Control of Destination Institution, Students in the Fall 2006 Cohort Who Began at Four-Year Private Non-Profit Institutions\***



\*This figure is based on data shown in Appendix C, Table 17.

Just 19.6 percent of the more than 92,000 students who began at four-year private for-profit institutions transferred within five years of beginning their postsecondary program. Thus, across all years and all destinations, transfer rates did not exceed three percent for any given year or destination (see Figure 19). For these students, transfer rates to two-year public institutions were highest, following a wave pattern, starting at one percent of all students transferring in year one, increasing in year two to 2.6 percent, and decreasing moderately each subsequent year. As shown in Table 3, transfers to two-year public institutions accounted for 43.9 percent of all transfers among students who began at four-year private for-profit institutions. Transfer to other four-year private for-profit institutions was the second most common transfer pattern for this group across all five years. While transfer rates did not exceed 1.2 percent of the entire cohort beginning at four-year private for-profit institutions, Table 3 shows that this type of transfer accounts for 24.2 percent of all transfers for this population.

**Figure 19. Timing of Initial Transfer by Sector and Control of Destination Institution, Students in the Fall 2006 Cohort Who Began at Four-Year Private For-Profit Institutions\***



\*This figure is based on data shown in Appendix C, Table 17.

# A CLOSER LOOK AT WHEN AND WHERE: TRANSFER STUDENTS' TIMING OF INITIAL TRANSFER

Current frameworks for evaluating student success focus on degree completion within specific timelines, for example 150–200 percent of time (which translates to three to four years for students beginning at two-year institutions and six to eight years for students beginning at four-year institutions). Furthermore, many student service programs target first-year students specifically, with far fewer services targeting students in their later years at the institution (Barefoot, 2000). The timing of students' enrollment decisions, therefore, has important implications for both policy and practice. This report now considers each group of students who began at a particular institution type and transferred, focusing on the timing of transfer among each of these groups of students.

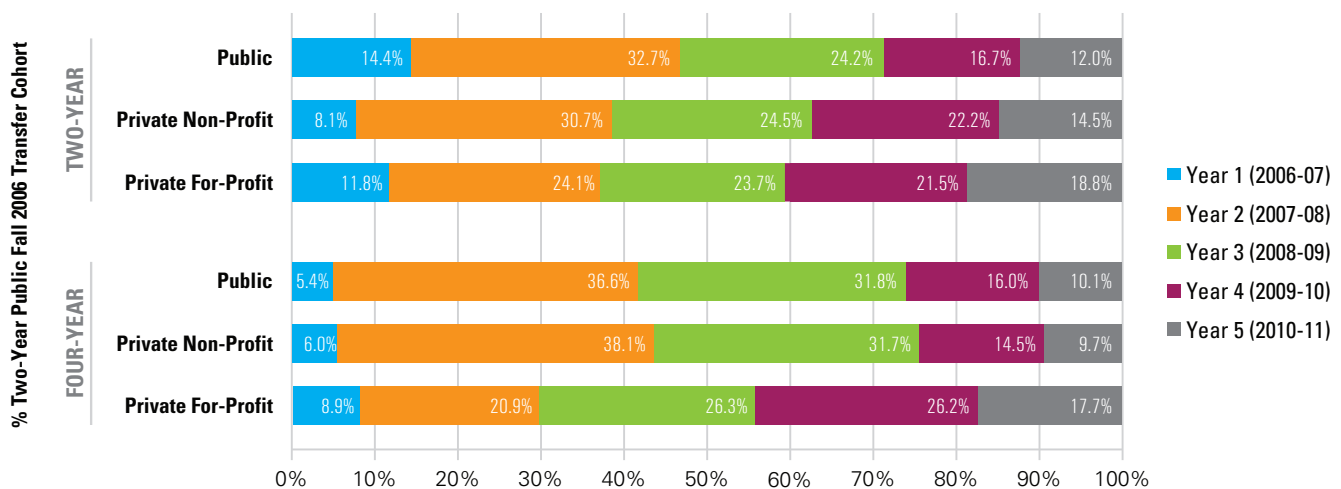
Figure 20 shows timing of initial transfer among students who began at two-year public institutions by type of destination institution.

For this group of students, most transfer activity occurred after their first year, regardless of destination institution type. However, transfer in the first year was most prevalent among students who transferred to other two-year institutions, ranging from 8.1 percent transferring to private non-profit two-year institutions to 14.4 percent transferring to public two-year institutions. By contrast, only 5.4 percent of transfers to public four-year institutions and 8.9 percent of transfers to four-year private for-profit institutions occurred in the first year.

The majority of students who transferred to public or private non-profit institutions did so in their second or third year. Students who transferred to private for-profit institutions transferred at similar rates from their second year onward, with 18.8 and 17.7 percent, respectively, of these students going to two- or four-year private for-profit institutions in year five.

The timing of community college student transfer is an important consideration. That similar percentages of students who leave two-year public institutions go into both the two- and four-year sectors during the fourth and fifth years of enrollment is of concern when considering students' time to degree.

**Figure 20. Timing of Initial Transfer by Sector and Control of Destination Institution, Students in the Fall 2006 Cohort Who Began at Two-Year Public Institutions\***



\*This figure is based on data shown in Appendix C, Table 18.

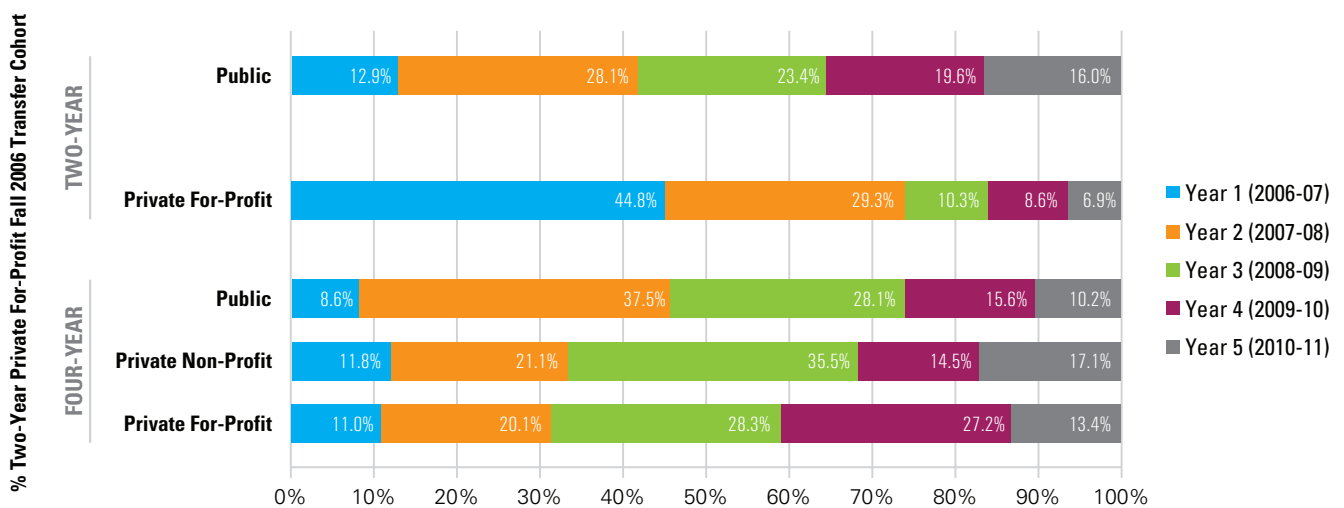


Figure 21 shows the timing of initial transfer of students who began at two-year private for-profit institutions by type of destination institution.

Students who began at two-year private for-profit institutions and transferred to other two-year institutions did so most prevalently during the first year. Notably, the proportion of first-year transfer for students moving to other two-year private for-profit institutions (44.8 percent) was higher than that for any other year and destination. Moreover, most students (74.1 percent) who transferred to other two-year private for-profit institutions did so in their first or second year, compared to 41 percent of those who transferred from two-year private for-profit institutions to two-year public institutions in the first two years.

Among students who transferred to four-year institutions, movement occurred mainly in the second or third years. Transfer during years four and five was highest proportionately among students who transferred to four-year private for-profit institutions.

**Figure 21. Timing of Initial Transfer by Sector and Control of Destination Institution, Students in the Fall 2006 Cohort Who Began at Two-Year Private For-Profit Institutions\***



\*This figure is based on data shown in Appendix C, Table 18.

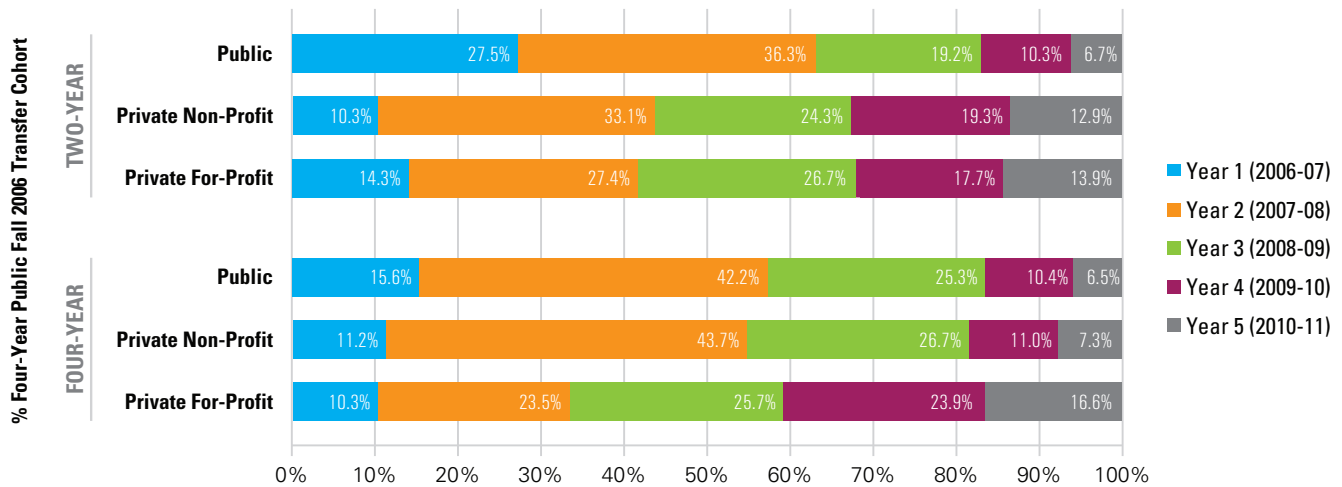
NOTE: Due to low values, transfer rates to Two-Year Private Non-Profit institutions are not shown.

Figure 22 shows the timing of the initial transfer of students who began at four-year public institutions by type of destination institution.

Reverse transfer to public two-year institutions occurred mostly in the first and second years (27.5 percent and 36.3 percent, respectively) while reverse transfers to private non-profit and for-profit institutions mostly occurred in the second and third years. The peak for transfers to four-year public and private non-profit institutions occurred during students' second year. Transfers to four-year private for-profit institutions were more evenly distributed across time, especially in years two and three.

Many students who reverse transferred did so early in their academic careers, although substantial reverse transfer activity also occurred in the third, fourth and even fifth years. Determining whether these students subsequently returned to the four-year sector is beyond the scope of this report. However, it should be noted that 29.3 percent of all students who transferred from a four-year public institution in this study had more than one transfer during the five-year period (Appendix C, Table 2).

**Figure 22. Timing of Initial Transfer by Sector and Control of Destination Institution, Students in the Fall 2006 Cohort Who Began at Four-Year Public Institutions\***

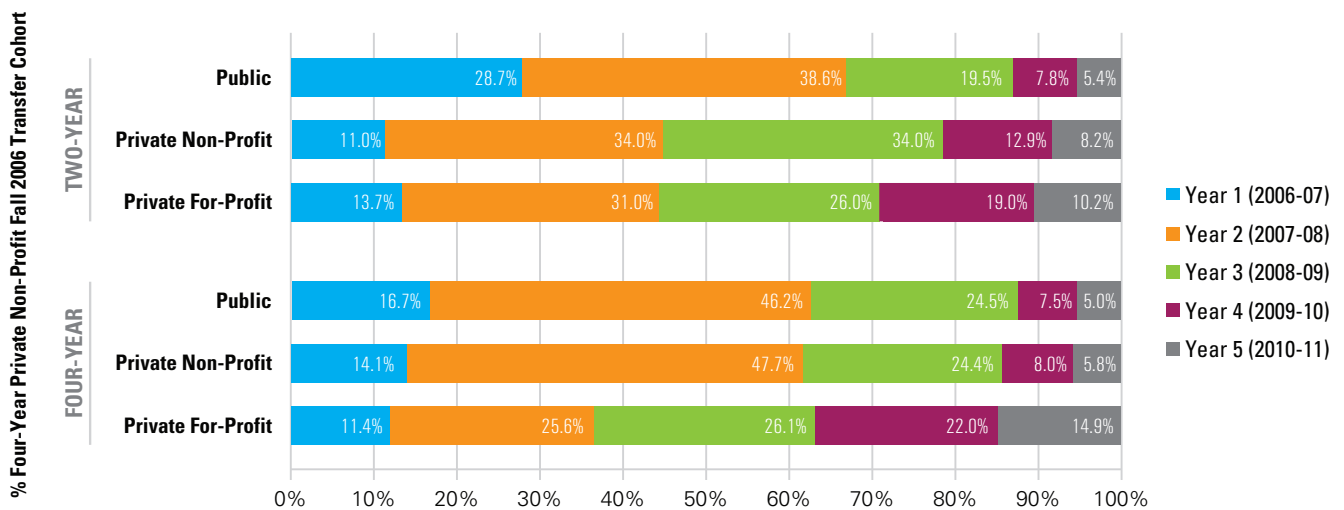


\*This figure is based on data shown in Appendix C, Table 18.

Figure 23 shows the timing of the initial transfer of students who began at four-year private non-profit institutions by type of destination institution.

Similar to the movements of students who began at four-year public institutions, reverse transfer to public two-year institutions occurred mostly in the first and second years (28.7 percent and 38.6 percent), although about one third of these transfers took place in years three through five. Among students who transferred to two-year private institutions, well over half did so in the third through fifth years. For students starting at four-year private non-profit institutions, the proportion of transfers to four-year public and private non-profit institutions was highest in the second year, a pattern shared by students who began at four-year public institutions as well.

**Figure 23. Timing of Initial Transfer by Sector and Control of Destination Institution, Students in the Fall 2006 Cohort Who Began at Four-Year Private Non-Profit Institutions\***

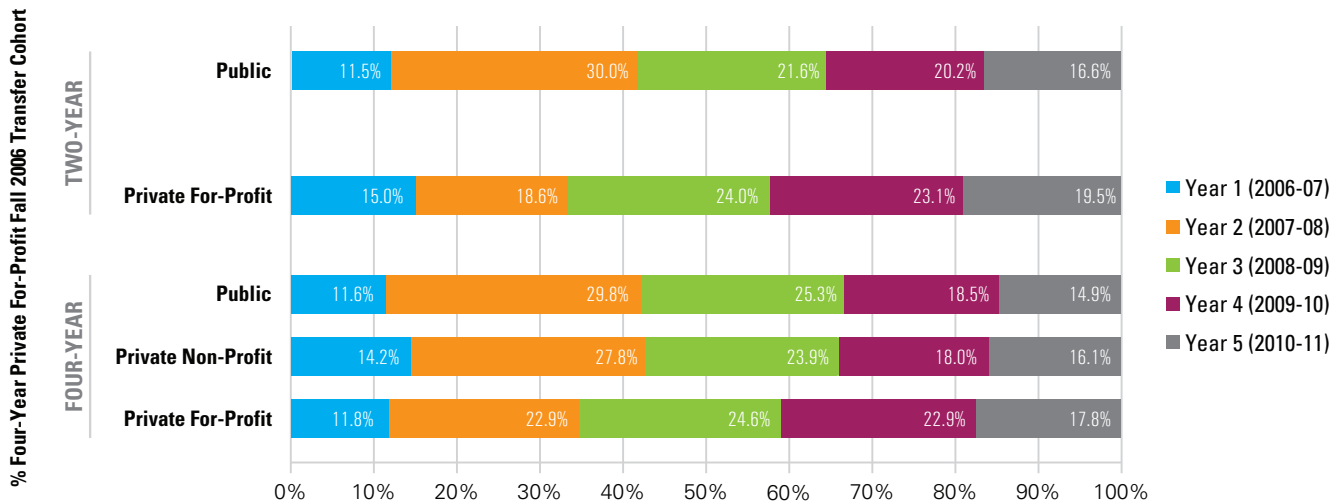


\*This figure is based on data shown in Appendix C, Table 18.

Figure 24 shows the timing of the initial transfer of students who began at four-year private for-profit institutions by type of destination institution.

Consistent with patterns shown by other institution-type cohorts, these students' transfers to two- and four-year public institutions and four-year private non-profit institutions were concentrated in the second and third years of enrollment. In contrast, however, movement to other two- and four-year private for-profit institutions was more evenly distributed across years.

**Figure 24. Timing of Initial Transfer by Sector and Control of Destination Institution, Students in the Fall 2006 Cohort Who Began at Four-Year Private For-Profit Institutions\***



\*This figure is based on data shown in Appendix C, Table 18.

NOTE: Due to low values, transfer rates to Two-Year Private Non-Profit institutions are not shown.

One third of all first-time students transferred at least once within five years. Overall transfer rates for two- and four-year institutions as well as public and private non-profit institutions were very similar, ranging from 32.6 to 34.4 percent, while transfer rates for private for-profit institutions were lower (16.3 and 19.6 percent for two- and four-year private for-profit institutions, respectively). Our findings show that students transferred among all types of institutions and across states. Understanding these transfer patterns will help institutions and policymakers adjust their policies and strategies in response to the needs of today's students, most of whom follow complex college pathways.

## TWO-YEAR PUBLIC INSTITUTIONS: THE MOST PREVALENT TRANSFER DESTINATION

Two-year public institutions are the most frequent transfer destination for students starting at all types of institutions, irrespective of sector and control, except for those who began at two-year public institutions. Even for students who started at two-year public institutions, however, another two-year public institution was the second top transfer destination with 37.6 percent of transfers going to two-year public institutions. This was only slightly behind the top transfer destination for students who initially started at two-year public institutions: four-year institutions, which received 41 percent of transfers.

Community colleges are sometimes thought of as postsecondary destinations for many who would not otherwise be able to go to college. This finding demonstrates that community colleges also serve different populations of non-first-time students who transfer from every kind of institution with various educational goals.

## TRANSFER TIMING

### **Majority of first-transfers occurred in year two.**

The educational goal behind each type of mobility, or even within the same type of mobility, can be different. For example, students who are in the reverse transfer category in this study may have taken a couple of courses at a community college to complement their credit hours at the four-year institution in which they were enrolled. Alternatively, they may have permanently transferred to a two-year institution.

Interestingly, the highest rate of transfer — irrespective of the direction of transfer (i.e., vertical, lateral or reverse transfer) — happened in the second year. In the case of vertical transfers, there was a steep increase in the transfer rate from the first to the second year (from 1.2 percent of all students who started at two-year public institutions to 7.2 percent of the same cohort). Such a steep increase from first to second year can also be observed in lateral transfers from one four-year institution to another, with the transfer rate increasing from 2.5 percent of all students who started at four-year institutions to 7.1 percent of the same cohort. This indicates that the majority of students decide to transfer early in their studies. Whether these transfer decisions are due to institutional fit, concerns over finances, or because the students had always planned to transfer are important questions to be considered with further research. Transfer rates across all institutional sectors start decreasing after the second year and reach the lowest levels in the fifth year. This finding can help institutions make an informed decision on how to allocate resources to assist their students with these transitions.

## **Even in the fourth and fifth years, students were still transferring between institutions.**

Although the second year had the highest transfer rate, a surprising number of students made their first transfer in their fourth and fifth years. About one eighth (13.3 percent) of all students who transferred did so in the fourth year; an additional 8.9 percent of students transferred in the fifth year. Previous research showed that the percentage of students who received a degree within six years was higher among those who attended one institution than those attending more than one institution (Peter and Carroll, 2005). Transfer and mobility in later years of students' enrollment may potentially add years to their time to degree.

## VERTICAL TRANSFERS AND MOBILITY

Of all students who started at a two-year institution, 20 percent made their first transfer to a four-year institution. Additional students whose first transfer was lateral may have later transferred to a four-year institution, as well. The transfer rate from two- to four-year public institutions was about 14 percent of all students who started at a two-year public institution within the same period.

Although the second year was a peak year for vertical transfers (with a 2.2 percent rate of all students who started at a two-year institution), a significant number of students transferred to a four-year institution in their fifth year. Such late vertical transfers can significantly increase the time to graduate with a bachelor's degree for these students. This finding suggests that institutions may want to learn their students' degree intentions regularly, not just in their first year, in order to provide the necessary resources to facilitate the student's transition to a four-year institution.

## REVERSE TRANSFERS AND MOBILITY

Of all first-time students who started at a four-year institution, 17 percent transferred to a two-year institution within five years. Reverse transfers is an under-researched topic and the reasons behind such mobility have not been thoroughly studied. Taking a few classes at a community college that count towards a degree completion can be a good decision for the student and not harmful to his/her baccalaureate attainment. However, a permanent reverse transfer may indicate a significant student-institution mismatch or change in student goals. For example, some students may have opted to earn more technical- or skills-oriented two-year degrees or certificates during their academic career.

## TRANSFER RATES FOR TWO- AND FOUR-YEAR INSTITUTIONS

Interestingly, two- and four-year institutions had the same transfer rate, 33.1 percent within five years. Because many community colleges prepare students for transfer to four-year institutions as part of their mission, two-year institutions could be expected to have higher transfer rates. However, at least for first-time at-college students, the difference did not exist between those who were initially enrolled in a two-year institution and those in a four-year institution. Nonetheless, we observed some differences when we looked at transfer rates across years. Only 3.1 percent of students who initially enrolled in a two-year institution transferred in the first year, either vertically or laterally. For students who initially enrolled in a four-year institution, the rate was 6.9 percent. More than half of the transfers from four-year institutions in the first year were reverse transfers. In each subsequent year, the lateral transfer rate was higher than the reverse transfer rate.

## TRANSFER RATES FOR PART- AND FULL-TIME STUDENTS

Overall, part- and full-time students had similar transfer rates over five years, 32.6 and 33.9 percent, respectively. However, the share of transfers occurring in the first year was larger among students who began full-time than among those who began as part-time students. Almost one-fifth of the full-time student transfers occurred in the first year; only 10 percent of part-time student transfers took place in the first year.

Part- and full-time students had different transfer patterns, depending on the type of institutions where students were initially enrolled. For two-year public and private non-profit institutions, the five-year transfer rate was higher for full-time students. This is not surprising given that full-time students can accumulate enough credit hours for a vertical transfer sooner. For four-year public and private non-profit institutions, part-time students had higher transfer rates than full-time students.

## OUT-OF-STATE TRANSFERS

More than a quarter of all transfers involved multiple states. The transfer destination for 45 percent of all first transfers from four-year private institutions was across a state line. These students are the most mobile because they are more likely to have left their home state to attend their first institution and their first transfer may simply involve moving back. However, even for students who began at public institutions, the share of transfers that crossed state lines was significant, ranging from 22 percent for two-year public institutions to 26 percent for four-year public institutions. This finding further highlights the need to track student transfers across state lines. It also demonstrates the scope of the issue when, due to limitations of many databases used in research, students who move to an institution in another state are often categorized as non-persisters and, consequently, non-completers.

## TRANSFER RATES FOR PRIVATE FOR-PROFIT INSTITUTIONS

Students who began at private for-profit institutions had lower transfer rates than those who started at public and private non-profit institutions. This was true for both two-year (16.3 percent) and four-year (19.6 percent) private for-profit institutions. It is unclear, however, whether this is indicative of higher rates of retention, attrition, or completion. Private for-profit institutions might be expected to have higher transfer rates because of their typically shorter and rolling terms. Or, however, their students may prefer the flexibility of the course taking schedules and other characteristics of for-profit institutions and, thus, have fewer incentives to transfer to other types of institutions.

Transfers to public and private non-profit institutions may also be limited for students who started at private for-profit institutions due to credit transferability among different types of academic programs. These plausible explanations mean that students at private for-profit institutions may have fewer transfer destination options. The distribution of transfers in our results somewhat supports this: four-year private for-profit institutions were among the top three transfer destinations for those who started at other for-profit institutions, but not for those who started at public or private non-profit institutions.

## IMPLICATIONS FOR POLICYMAKING

The patterns our analyses revealed reflect the complexity of postsecondary enrollment, transfer, and, indirectly, persistence, which suggests that the linear view of college access and success that policymakers often take fails to address the realities on the ground. Our findings indicate that more sophisticated ways of measuring institutional effectiveness are needed to avoid having "...institutions determined to hold on to students, keeping them in places that may be unproductive, at all costs, and for the sake of their public ratings" (Adelman, 2006). Instead, institutions and policymakers should focus on strategies that may facilitate success as students make choices about different postsecondary paths.

Similarly, states must be able to distinguish between true non-persisters and out-of-system or out-of-state transfers. This will help broaden the definitions of both student success and institutional effectiveness. Our analyses demonstrated that out-of-state transfers are not uncommon even within the public sector. Between one-fifth and one-quarter of students who transferred from two- and four-year public institutions, respectively, moved to an institution in a different state from where they began. This raises questions about the efficacy of transfer and articulation agreements that focus on transfer only within states.

Finally, the growing emphasis on holding institutions accountable for student success has, to some extent, reinforced the traditional reporting paradigm in which the institution is the unit of analysis and students are viewed as a more or less uniform stream that simply enters and either completes a degree at the starting institution or not. The analyses in this report suggest that a new view may prove useful. One in which students are the unit of analysis and institutions emerge as stepping-stones along a diverse set of educational pathways. This view could lead to new approaches and new metrics to better inform students and institutions about the range of successful enrollment patterns. Moreover, rather than focusing criticism on institutions when they fail to capture the entirety of each student's educational career, it would properly recognize all of the institutions that play a role in that career.



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## METHODOLOGICAL NOTES

This report describes the transfer activity of the fall 2006 cohort of first-time college students across the U.S. from fall 2006 through summer 2011. The results presented show patterns in students' enrollment in multiple postsecondary institutions, focusing in particular on the sector and control of origin institutions (the colleges and universities in which students first enrolled) and of destination institutions (the institutions to which students first transferred). Public, private non-profit, and private for-profit institutions are considered separately in the results, as are two- and four-year institutions in each of these categories. The designation "two-year institution" is used broadly to identify institutions offering both associate's degrees and less than two-year degrees and certificates.

In addition to overall transfer pathways by institution type, the report includes results on transfer disaggregated by full- and part-time status, an overview of transfer activity within and between states, and multiple views on the timing of student transfer by institution type and enrollment intensity.

### NATIONAL COVERAGE OF THE DATA

The National Student Clearinghouse (NSC) is a unique and trusted source for higher education enrollment and degree verification. Since its creation in 1993, the participation of institutions nationwide in NSC data-collection programs has steadily increased. Currently, NSC data include more than 3,400 colleges and 93 percent of U.S. college enrollments. NSC has a nearly 20-year track record of providing automated student enrollment and degree verifications. Due to its unique, student-level record approach to data collection, the NSC StudentTracker database provides opportunities for robust analysis not afforded by more commonly used institution-level national databases.

Because NSC's coverage of institutions (i.e., the percentage of all institutions in the NSC data) is not 100 percent for any individual year, weights were applied in this study by institution sector and control to better approximate enrollment figures for all institutions nationally. Using all IPEDS Title IV institutions as the base study population, sampling weights for enrollments at each institution type were calculated using the inverse of the rate of coverage for that sector (see Appendix B for further detail).

The enrollment data used in this report provide an unduplicated headcount for the fall 2006 first-time-in-college student cohort. Because the StudentTracker database tracks enrollments nationally, NSC data are not limited by institutional and state boundaries. Moreover, because this database is comprised of student-level data, researchers can use it to link concurrent as well as consecutive enrollments of individual students at multiple institutions — a capability that distinguishes NSC data from national data sets built on institution-level data. For instance, in the National Center for Education Statistics' (NCES) Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS) — one of the most widely used national data sets in postsecondary education research — concurrent enrollments remain unlinked and, therefore, are counted as representing separate individuals.

### COHORT IDENTIFICATION, DATA CUT, AND DEFINITIONS

Focusing on the cohort of first-time students who began their postsecondary studies at U.S. colleges and universities in the fall of 2006, this report examines student transfer and mobility activity over a

span of five years, through the summer of 2011. In order not to exclude or misrepresent the pathways of students who were enrolled in college preparatory summer study, students who began their postsecondary studies in either the summer or fall of 2006 were included in the study. However, the summer 2006 enrollment records were not included in the analysis; fall 2006 enrollments were considered the first enrollment for all students selected for the cohort. To further verify that only first-time undergraduate students were included in the study, data from the NSC StudentTracker database were used to confirm that students included showed no previous college enrollment at any institution during the four years prior to 2006 and had not previously completed a degree at any institution at any time prior to 2006.

In defining the study cohort, it was necessary to identify a coherent set of first enrollment records that would as closely as possible represent a starting point for the fall 2006 cohort of first-time-in-college students. With this goal in mind, the researchers excluded enrollment records that were either (a) not clearly interpretable within the study's framework and data limitations or (b) inconsistent with the experiences of first-time college enrollment and college transfer that were the focus of the analysis. Students who showed concurrent enrollments (defined as enrollment at two or more institutions in which the term start and end dates overlapped by at least one day) in the fall 2006 term were excluded from the study. Students were also excluded if they had no fall 2006 enrollments lasting 21 days or longer. Students whose first enrollment was outside the U.S. or in U.S. territories (e.g., Guam, Puerto Rico, U.S. Virgin Islands) were excluded from the study cohort. However, students who transferred to postsecondary institutions located outside the U.S. or in U.S. territories after the first term (i.e., after fall 2006) were included in the study.

The study cohort was defined, therefore, as students who fulfilled all of the following conditions:

- enrolled in fall 2006 (defined as any term with a begin date between August 15-October 31, 2006, inclusive);
- did not have a previous enrollment record, as shown in StudentTracker, between June 1, 2002, and May 31, 2006;
- did not receive any degree or certificate from a two- or four-year institution prior to fall 2006, according to data contained in the NSC database;
- enrolled in just one institution in fall 2006 (i.e., showed no overlapping multiple enrollments August 15-October 31, 2006); and
- enrolled in at least one term that was longer than 21 days and that began August 15-October 31, 2006.

In addition to criteria for the inclusion of students in the cohort, the researchers applied several decisions related to the inclusion of individual enrollment records term to term. Enrollment records showing an end-date preceding the begin-date (a "negative" term length) as well as records exceeding 365 days in length were considered the result of reporting error and were excluded from the analysis. In these cases, only the out-of-range enrollment record was excluded, while the student remained in the cohort. The initial sample contained 58,983 students who had at least one enrollment record associated with a "special program branch code" instead of a conventional institutional branch code. These special codes were created by NSC to indicate particular academic programs that require non-standard data processing. Although these codes do not indicate the real-world institutional branch of a given enrollment, the great majority (about 90 percent) of these enrollment records were at institutions that have only one real-world branch. While these 90 percent could safely be recoded, the remaining 10 percent of records (about 5,900 students) had to be excluded from the study.

Finally, enrollments in multistate institutions — those that have branches in more than one state — were excluded from the state-to-state transfer analysis because these institutions typically report all student enrollments from a central location, regardless of the actual location of instruction. It should be noted that many large for-profit institutions fall into the multistate category.

## CONCURRENT ENROLLMENT

As mentioned previously, NSC data provide an unduplicated headcount of U.S. college enrollments during each term, which allows for the tracking of individuals across concurrent enrollment. In preparing data for this report, students with concurrent enrollments during the fall 2006 term were excluded from the cohort. Students with concurrent enrollments after the first term, however, were retained. Each instance of concurrent enrollment occurring after fall 2006 was examined and a primary enrollment record was selected from among the concurrencies for use in the transfer analysis. Concurrent enrollment was defined in this stage as two or more enrollment records in which the term start/end dates overlapped by 30 days or more. Primary enrollments were selected using the following decision rules:

- 1. Continuing enrollment over changing enrollment:** Continuing enrollment at the institution where the student had been enrolled during the previous term was selected over an enrollment at a different institution. This rule produces conservative results on the prevalence of transfer, since some students may use concurrent enrollments as a way of transitioning from one institution to the next.
- 2. Earlier term begin-date over later begin-dates:** If a student was concurrently enrolled in two or more new institutions and no longer enrolled in his or her previous institution, the enrollment record with the earliest begin-date was selected as primary.

## DEFINING TRANSFER

In this report, transfer is defined as enrollment subsequent to the fall 2006 term in an institution different from the institution in which the student was enrolled during fall 2006 (the origin institution), provided that the student was not also concurrently enrolled at the origin institution and had not already completed a degree or certificate. Enrollment patterns of this kind are regarded as transfers regardless of subsequent enrollments (e.g., completion, returning to the origin institution, stop-out, etc.). Therefore, even if a student enrolled at a new institution for a short time and then returned to the origin institution, the enrollment pattern is still categorized as a transfer.

The results presented in this report capture the extent to which students change institutions at least once — that is, they identify the first instances of student transfer.

## DATA LIMITATIONS

The data limitations in this report center mainly on data coverage, the methods used for cohort identification, and the definition of key constructs, as outlined above.

In fall 2006, representation of private, for-profit institutions in the NSC StudentTracker database was lower than that of other institution types, with the proportion of coverage ranging from quite low for two-year private for-profit colleges (12 percent of institutions, weighted by IPEDS enrollments) to moderately low for four-year private for-profit institutions (65 percent). Participation of two-year private

non-profit institutions was also relatively low, at just under 49 percent. NSC data nevertheless offer near-census national coverage (93 percent) of public institutions, and an overall coverage rate of 89 percent of U.S. postsecondary enrollments.

In order to correct for differences in coverage rates, enrollment data were weighted, as explained previously, according to the level and control of each student's starting institution in fall 2006. This accounts for the likelihood of finding a student in the NSC database in the original cohort, but not for the likelihood of finding the student again if he or she transfers to another institution. The frequency of transfer is thus underestimated in this report, particularly transfer to institutional sectors with lower coverage rates. That is, a student who transfers to a for-profit institution is less likely to be counted as transferred than a student who transfers to a public institution. In data explorations on this question, the researchers determined that overall transfer rates were underestimated for all categories of origin institutions, and underestimated to a slightly higher extent for for-profit origin institutions.

It is important, furthermore, to acknowledge limitations resulting from the cohort identification methods used in this report. Because NSC data do not include designations for class year, the researchers identified first-time undergraduate students via two indirect measures:

- no previous college enrollments recorded in StudentTracker going back four years and
- no previous degree awarded in NSC's historical degree database.

Given these selection criteria, the sample for this report may include students with more than 30 Advanced Placement (AP), International Baccalaureate (IB), or dual enrollment credits and who, despite first-time status, would not be considered first-year students. Moreover, because of inconsistencies in the historical depth of NSC degree database records, it is possible that a small number of graduate students are also included in the study cohort.

Selection of "primary enrollment records" from students' concurrent enrollments introduces possible error because of the risk of selecting a primary enrollment record that is "wrong" (i.e., not what the student considered the primary enrollment).

The definition of transfer used in the analysis for this report also gives rise to further limitations. Because of this definition, transfer results shown in the report include students who returned to their origin institutions after enrolling in a different institution, regardless of how long the student was enrolled in the "new" institution. For example, students "swirling" or taking classes at a different institution in summer were identified as transfers, even if they returned to their origin institution in the subsequent fall term.

In addition, students who completed a certificate or an associate's degree at the origin institution before progressing to a four-year institution were not counted as transfers even if they subsequently enrolled in another institution, for example, to continue studies toward a bachelor's degree.

Finally, although NSC data contain demographic information on students, the coverage for these data is incomplete. Consequently, the results summarized in this report do not break out enrollments by race, ethnicity, or gender.

Note: Percentage values in these tables are rounded to the first decimal place.

**Table 1. Overall NSC Coverage of Enrollments in the United States**

Title IV, Degree-Granting Institutions - Fall	2006
IPEDS Enrollments of Active Participants in NSC Core Service	15,816,289
Total National IPEDS Enrollment	17,758,870
<b>Percentage Covered by NSC (enrollments)</b>	<b>89.1%</b>

**Table 2. NSC Coverage of Enrollments by Sector**

Title IV, Degree-Granting Institutions - Fall 2006	Four-Year Institutions	Two-Year Institutions
IPEDS Enrollments of Active Participants in NSC Core Service	10,156,471	5,659,818
Total National IPEDS Enrollment	11,229,348	6,529,522
<b>Percentage Covered by NSC (enrollments)</b>	<b>90.4%</b>	<b>86.7%</b>

**Table 3. NSC Coverage of Enrollments by Control**

Title IV, Degree-Granting Institutions - Fall 2006	Public Institutions	Private Non-Profit Institutions	Private For-Profit Institutions
IPEDS Enrollments of Active Participants in NSC Core Service	12,209,110	3,045,394	561,785
Total National IPEDS Enrollment	13,180,133	3,512,866	1,065,871
<b>Percentage Covered by NSC (enrollments)</b>	<b>92.6%</b>	<b>86.7%</b>	<b>52.7%</b>

**Table 4. NSC Coverage of Enrollments by Sector and Control**

Title IV, Degree-Granting Institutions - Fall 2006	Four-Year Public Institutions	Two-Year Public Institutions	Four-Year Private Non-Profit Institutions	Two-Year Private Non-Profit Institutions	Four-Year Private For-Profit Institutions	Two-Year Private For-Profit Institutions
IPEDS Enrollments of Active Participants in NSC Core Service	6,599,035	5,610,075	3,026,639	18,755	530,797	30,988
Total National IPEDS Enrollment	6,944,031	6,236,102	3,473,710	39,156	811,607	254,264
<b>Percentage Covered by NSC (enrollments)</b>	<b>95.0%</b>	<b>90.0%</b>	<b>87.1%</b>	<b>47.9%</b>	<b>65.4%</b>	<b>12.2%</b>

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# Appendix C

## RESULTS TABLES

**Table 1. Frequency of Transfer, 2006-2011, Fall 2006 Cohort**

Frequency of Transfer	Weighted Count	% of All Transfer Students
<b>Once</b>	688,946	74.63%
<b>Twice</b>	156,638	16.97%
<b>Three Times or More</b>	77,613	8.41%

\*Average frequency of transfer among students who transferred = 1.38.

**Table 2. Frequency and Total of Transfer/Nontransfer 2006-2011 by Sector and Control of Origin Institutions, Fall 2006 Cohort**

Origin Institution			TWO-YEAR			FOUR-YEAR			Overall**
			Public	Private Non-Profit	Private For-Profit	Public	Private Non-Profit	Private For-Profit	
<b>Frequency of Transfer</b>	<b>Once</b>	Wtd. Ct. %*	344,051 26.41%	1,783 24.41%	7,721 13.62%	229,676 24.09%	94,571 22.04%	16,584 18.00%	684,386 24.41%
	<b>Twice</b>	Wtd. Ct. %*	55,446 4.38%	447 6.12%	1,164 2.05%	65,703 6.89%	30,022 7.00%	1,131 1.23%	153,913 5.49%
	<b>Three Times or More</b>	Wtd. Ct. %*	32,556 2.57%	286 3.92%	352 0.62%	29,366 3.08%	13,234 3.08%	379 0.41%	76,174 2.72%
<b>Total Transfer/ Nontransfer</b>	<b>Transfer</b>	Wtd. Ct. %*	422,052 33.37%	2,516 34.45%	9,238 16.30%	324,745 34.06%	137,827 32.12%	18,095 19.64%	914,472 32.62%
	<b>Nontransfer</b>	Wtd. Ct. %*	842,786 66.63%	4,787 65.55%	47,434 83.70%	628,738 65.94%	291,230 67.88%	74,024 80.36%	1,888,999 67.38%
<b>Total Enrollment Cohort</b>		Wtd. Ct. %*	1,264,838 100.00%	7,303 100.00%	56,672 100.00%	953,483 100.00%	429,056 100.00%	92,119 100.00%	2,803,472 100.00%
<b>Transfers Who Transferred More Than Once</b>		Wtd. Ct. %*	88,001 6.96%	733 10.03%	1,516 2.68%	95,069 9.97%	43,256 10.08%	1,511 1.64%	230,086 8.21%

\*Share of students over entire starting cohort by institution type.

\*\*The overall total enrollment cohort in this table is different from the total fall 2006 cohort (n=2,792,961) due to differences in applied weighting.

**Table 3. Frequency and Total of Transfer/Nontransfer 2006–2011  
by Initial Enrollment Intensity, Fall 2006 Cohort**

Initial Enrollment Intensity			Full-Time	Part-Time
Frequency of Transfer	Once	Weighted Count %*	378,846 23.50%	285,593 26.50%
	Twice	Weighted Count %*	101,364 6.29%	50,435 4.68%
	Three Times or More	Weighted Count %*	46,009 2.85%	29,462 2.73%
Total Transfer/ Nontransfer	Transfer	Weighted Count %*	526,219 32.64%	365,491 33.91%
	Nontransfer	Weighted Count %*	1,085,889 67.36%	712,363 66.09%
Total Enrollment Cohort		Weighted Count %*	1,612,108 100.00%	1,077,853 100.00%
Transfers Who Transferred More Than Once		Weighted Count %*	147,373 9.14%	79,898 7.41%

\*Share of students over entire starting cohort by enrollment intensity type.

**Table 4. Average Frequency of Transfer Among Students Who Transferred 2006–2011  
by Initial Enrollment Intensity, Fall 2006 Cohort**

Initial Enrollment Intensity	Average Frequency of Transfer
Full-Time	1.42
Part-Time	1.34

**Table 5. Transfer 2006-2011 by Sector and Control of Origin Institution  
Among Full-Time Students, Fall 2006 Cohort**

Origin Institution			TWO-YEAR			FOUR-YEAR			Overall
			Public	Private Non-Profit	Private For-Profit	Public	Private Non-Profit	Private For-Profit	
<b>Frequency of Transfer</b>	<b>Once</b>	Wtd. Ct. %*	129,437 29.23%	1,564 28.39%	5,721 13.35%	164,101 23.07%	76,688 21.37%	11,292 17.64%	388,803 23.92%
	<b>Twice</b>	Wtd. Ct. %*	20,822 4.70%	422 7.66%	795 1.86%	52,204 7.34%	26,180 7.30%	457 0.71%	100,881 6.21%
	<b>Three Times or More</b>	Wtd. Ct. %*	11,134 2.51%	261 4.74%	279 0.65%	22,476 3.16%	11,060 3.08%	188 0.29%	45,398 2.79%
<b>Total Transfer/ Nontransfer</b>	<b>Transfer</b>	Wtd. Ct. %*	161,393 36.45%	2,246 40.79%	6,795 15.86%	238,781 33.58%	113,928 31.75%	11,937 18.65%	535,081 32.92%
	<b>Nontransfer</b>	Wtd. Ct. %*	281,432 63.55%	3,261 59.21%	36,057 84.14%	472,388 66.42%	244,855 68.25%	52,081 81.35%	1,090,075 67.08%
<b>Cohort Total</b>		Wtd. Ct. %*	442,826 100.00%	5,507 100.00%	42,852 100.00%	711,170 100.00%	358,783 100.00%	64,018 100.00%	1,625,156 100.00%

\* Share of students over entire starting full-time cohort by institution type.

**Table 6. Transfer 2006-2011 by Sector and Control of Origin Institution  
Among Part-Time Students, Fall 2006 Cohort**

Origin Institution			TWO-YEAR			FOUR-YEAR			Overall
			Public	Private Non-Profit	Private For-Profit	Public	Private Non-Profit	Private For-Profit	
<b>Frequency of Transfer</b>	<b>Once</b>	Wtd. Ct. %*	198,802 26.21%	284 18.97%	1,590 18.32%	64,125 28.66%	18,111 28.15%	1,774 15.58%	284,687 26.66%
	<b>Twice</b>	Wtd. Ct. %*	33,383 4.40%	35 2.37%	213 2.46%	12,612 5.64%	3,474 5.40%	286 2.51%	50,004 4.68%
	<b>Three Times or More</b>	Wtd. Ct. %*	20,580 2.71%	27 1.81%	49 0.57%	6,387 2.85%	1,904 2.96%	87 0.77%	29,034 2.72%
<b>Total Transfer/ Nontransfer</b>	<b>Transfer</b>	Wtd. Ct. %*	252,766 33.33%	347 23.15%	1,852 21.34%	83,124 37.15%	23,489 36.51%	2,147 18.86%	363,725 34.06%
	<b>Nontransfer</b>	Wtd. Ct. %*	505,624 66.67%	1,150 76.85%	6,828 78.66%	140,622 62.85%	40,845 63.49%	9,239 81.14%	704,308 65.94%
<b>Cohort Total</b>		Wtd. Ct. %*	758,390 100.00%	1,497 100.00%	8,680 100.00%	223,746 100.00%	64,334 100.00%	11,385 100.00%	1,068,033 100.00%

\*Share of students over entire starting part-time cohort by institution type.

**Table 7. Total Initial Enrollments by Sector and Control of Origin Institution, Fall 2006 Cohort**

Origin Institution	TWO-YEAR			FOUR-YEAR			Entire Fall 2006 Cohort*
	Public	Private Non-Profit	Private For-Profit	Public	Private Non-Profit	Private For-Profit	
Weighted Count	1,264,838	7,303	56,672	953,483	429,056	92,119	2,803,472
% of Entire Cohort*	45.12%	0.26%	2.02%	34.01%	15.30%	3.29%	100.00%

\*The sum of all institutional cohorts in this table does not equal the total fall 2006 cohort (n=2,792,961) due to weighting.

**Table 8. Total Transfer and Mobility, Fall 2006 Cohort**

Frequency of Transfer	Weighted Count	% of All Transfer Students
Transfer	923,196	33.05%
Entire Cohort	2,792,961	100.00%

**Table 9. Timing of First Transfer 2006–2011, All Transfer Students, Fall 2006 Cohort**

	Year 1 (2006-07)	Year 2 (2007-08)	Year 3 (2008-09)	Year 4 (2009-10)	Year 5 (2010-11)
Weighted Count	142,677	342,493	232,779	122,682	82,566
% of all Transfer Students Within the Fall 2006 Cohort	15.45%	37.10%	25.21%	13.29%	8.94%

**Table 10. Students Who Transferred/Did Not Transfer 2006–2011 by Sector and Control of Origin Institution, Fall 2006 Cohort**

Origin Institution		TWO-YEAR				FOUR-YEAR			
		Public	Private Non-Profit	Private For-Profit	All Institutions	Public	Private Non-Profit	Private For-Profit	All Institutions
<b>Transferred</b>	Wtd. Ct.	422,052	2,516	9,238	433,806	324,745	137,827	18,095	480,667
	%*	33.37%	34.45%	16.30%	32.65%	34.06%	32.12%	19.64%	32.60%
<b>Did Not Transfer</b>	Wtd. Ct.	842,786	4,787	47,434	895,007	628,738	291,230	74,024	993,992
	%*	66.63%	65.55%	83.70%	67.35%	65.94%	67.88%	80.36%	67.40%
<b>Total</b>	Wtd. Ct.	1,264,838	7,303	56,672	1,328,813	953,483	429,056	92,119	1,474,659
	%*	100.00%	100.00%	100.00%	100.00%	100.00%	100.00%	100.00%	100.00%

\*Share of students over entire starting cohort by institution type.

**Table 11. Destination of First Transfer 2006–2011 by Sector and Control of Origin Institution, All Transfer Students, Fall 2006 Cohort**

Origin Institution		Destination Institution						Total For All Transfers
		TWO-YEAR			FOUR-YEAR			
		Public	Private Non-Profit	Private For-Profit	Public	Private Non-Profit	Private For-Profit	
<b>Two-Year Public</b>	Wtd. Ct.	158,537	1,107	5,750	173,883	59,763	23,002	422,042
	%*	37.56%	0.26%	1.36%	41.20%	14.16%	5.45%	100.00%
<b>Two-Year Private Non-Profit</b>	Wtd. Ct.	1,221	17	15	628	532	102	2,516
	%*	48.55%	0.66%	0.58%	24.98%	21.16%	4.07%	100.00%
<b>Two-Year Private For-Profit</b>	Wtd. Ct.	4,516	16	951	1,049	623	2,082	9,238
	%*	48.89%	0.18%	10.29%	11.36%	6.74%	22.54%	100.00%
<b>Four-Year Public</b>	Wtd. Ct.	168,582	562	1,695	111,930	33,044	8,925	324,738
	%*	51.91%	0.17%	0.52%	34.47%	10.18%	2.75%	100.00%
<b>Four-Year Private Non-Profit</b>	Wtd. Ct.	57,009	490	393	48,708	27,890	3,328	137,819
	%*	41.37%	0.36%	0.28%	35.34%	20.24%	2.42%	100.00%
<b>Four-Year Private For-Profit</b>	Wtd. Ct.	7,936	41	511	2,809	2,427	4,372	18,095
	%*	43.86%	0.23%	2.82%	15.52%	13.41%	24.16%	100.00%
<b>Overall</b>	Wtd. Ct.	397,801	2,233	9,314	339,008	124,279	41,812	914,447
	%*	43.50%	0.24%	1.02%	37.07%	13.59%	4.57%	100.00%

\*Share of students over entire starting cohort by institution type.

**Table 12. Total Transfer, Fall 2006 Cohort, by Initial Enrollment Intensity**

	FULL-TIME		PART-TIME	
	Weighted Count	%*	Weighted Count	%*
<b>Transfer</b>	526,219	32.64%	365,491	33.91%
<b>Entire Cohort by Initial Enrollment Intensity</b>	1,612,108	100.00%	1,077,853	100.00%

\*Share of students over entire starting cohort by initial enrollment status.

Note: The total enrollments in this table are different from the total 2006 cohort due to differences in applied weighting.

**Table 13. Timing of Transfer 2006–2011 by Initial Enrollment Intensity, Fall 2006 Cohort**

		Year 1 (2006-07)	Year 2 (2007-08)	Year 3 (2008-09)	Year 4 (2009-10)	Year 5 (2010-11)	Total
<b>Full-Time</b>	Weighted Count	99,354	188,014	129,716	66,219	42,917	526,219
	%	18.88%	35.73%	24.65%	12.58%	8.16%	100.00%
<b>Part-Time</b>	Weighted Count	36,301	144,819	96,626	51,642	36,102	365,491
	%	9.93%	39.62%	26.44%	14.13%	9.88%	100.00%

**Table 14. Transfer Within State and Out of State 2006–2011 by Sector and Control of Origin Institution, All Transfer Students, Fall 2006 Cohort**

Origin Institution		TWO-YEAR			FOUR-YEAR		
		Public	Private Non-Profit	Private For-Profit	Public	Private Non-Profit	Private For-Profit
<b>Within-State Transfer</b>	Wtd. Ct.	330,948	1,699	5,377	242,042	73,010	1,673
	%*	78.41%	67.95%	74.29%	74.53%	54.75%	53.97%
<b>Out-of-State Transfer</b>	Wtd. Ct.	91,104	802	1,861	82,703	60,331	1,427
	%*	21.59%	32.05%	25.71%	25.47%	45.25%	46.03%
<b>Total</b>	Wtd. Ct.	422,052	2,501	7,238	324,745	133,341	3,099
	%*	100.00%	100.00%	100.00%	100.00%	100.00%	100.00%

\*Share of students over entire cohort of transfer students by institution type.

Note: This figure excludes the movement of students into and out of multistate institutions.

**Table 15. Timing of First Transfer and Mobility 2006–2011 by Sector of Both Origin and Destination Institution, All Transfer Students, Fall 2006 Cohort**

Origin Institution	Destination Institution		Year 1 (2006-07)	Year 2 (2007-08)	Year 3 (2008-09)	Year 4 (2009-10)	Year 5 (2010-11)	Total
<b>Two-Year</b>	<b>Two-Year</b>	Weighted Count %*	24,765 1.86%	56,175 4.23%	41,894 3.15%	29,136 2.19%	21,185 1.59%	173,155 13.03%
	<b>Four-Year</b>	Weighted Count %*	15,819 1.19%	95,210 7.17%	83,618 6.29%	44,377 3.34%	28,627 2.15%	267,652 20.14%
<b>Four-Year</b>	<b>Two-Year</b>	Weighted Count %*	65,636 4.45%	88,202 5.98%	46,992 3.19%	24,304 1.65%	16,317 1.11%	241,452 16.37%
	<b>Four-Year</b>	Weighted Count %*	36,066 2.45%	104,176 7.06%	62,064 4.21%	26,110 1.77%	17,288 1.17%	245,704 16.66%

\*Share of students over entire starting cohort by institution sector of origin institution.

**Table 16. Timing of First Transfer 2006–2011 by Control of Both Origin and Destination Institution, All Transfer Students, Fall 2006 Cohort**

Origin Institution	Destination Institution		Year 1 (2006-07)	Year 2 (2007-08)	Year 3 (2008-09)	Year 4 (2009-10)	Year 5 (2010-11)	Total
<b>Public</b>	<b>Public</b>	Weighted Count %*	96,772 4.36%	223,555 10.08%	153,363 6.91%	82,450 3.72%	54,728 2.47%	610,868 27.54%
	<b>Private Non-Profit</b>	Weighted Count %*	7,433 0.34%	37,498 1.69%	27,863 1.26%	12,535 0.57%	8,310 0.37%	93,638 4.22%
	<b>Private For-Profit</b>	Weighted Count %*	3,851 0.17%	8,640 0.39%	10,016 0.45%	9,559 0.43%	6,773 0.31%	38,840 1.75%
<b>Private Non-Profit</b>	<b>Public</b>	Weighted Count %*	24,874 5.70%	45,156 10.35%	23,386 5.36%	8,220 1.88%	5,591 1.28%	107,227 24.57%
	<b>Private Non-Profit</b>	Weighted Count %*	4,059 0.93%	13,657 3.13%	7,073 1.62%	2,336 0.54%	1,690 0.39%	28,814 6.60%
	<b>Private For-Profit</b>	Weighted Count %*	439 0.10%	991 0.23%	994 0.23%	828 0.19%	550 0.13%	3,803 0.87%
<b>Private For-Profit</b>	<b>Public</b>	Weighted Count %*	1,693 1.14%	4,376 2.94%	3,324 2.23%	2,880 1.94%	2,349 1.58%	14,622 9.83%
	<b>Private Non-Profit</b>	Weighted Count %*	454 0.30%	873 0.59%	787 0.53%	575 0.39%	522 0.35%	3,211 2.16%
	<b>Private For-Profit</b>	Weighted Count %*	886 0.60%	1,520 1.02%	1,647 1.11%	1,537 1.03%	1,171 0.79%	6,761 4.54%

\*Share of students over entire starting cohort by control of origin institution.

**Table 17. Timing of First Transfer 2006–2011 by Sector and Control of Origin and Destination Institution, Transfer Students Who Started at Each Institution Type, Fall 2006 Cohort**

Origin Institution	Destination Institution		Year 1 (2006-07)	Year 2 (2007-08)	Year 3 (2008-09)	Year 4 (2009-10)	Year 5 (2010-11)	Total
<b>Two-Year Public</b>	<b>Two-Year Public</b>	Weighted Count %*	22,758 1.80%	51,908 4.10%	38,432 3.04%	26,403 2.09%	19,036 1.50%	422,042 33.37%
	<b>Two-Year Private Non-Profit</b>	Weighted Count %*	90 0.01%	340 0.03%	271 0.02%	246 0.02%	160 0.01%	
	<b>Two-Year Private For-Profit</b>	Weighted Count %*	680 0.05%	1,386 0.11%	1,364 0.11%	1,237 0.10%	1,083 0.09%	
	<b>Four-Year Public</b>	Weighted Count %*	9,447 0.75%	63,718 5.04%	55,231 4.37%	27,864 2.20%	17,623 1.39%	
	<b>Four-Year Private Non-Profit</b>	Weighted Count %*	3,594 0.28%	22,784 1.80%	18,924 1.50%	8,684 0.69%	5,776 0.46%	
	<b>Four-Year Private For-Profit</b>	Weighted Count %*	2,051 0.16%	4,804 0.38%	6,042 0.48%	6,031 0.48%	4,073 0.32%	
<b>Two-Year Private Non-Profit</b>	<b>Two-Year Public</b>	Weighted Count %*	357 4.89%	495 6.78%	238 3.26%	90 1.23%	42 0.57%	2,516 34.45%
	<b>Two-Year Private Non-Profit</b>	Weighted Count %*	**	**	**	**	**	
	<b>Two-Year Private For-Profit</b>	Weighted Count %*	**	**	**	**	**	
	<b>Four-Year Public</b>	Weighted Count %*	81 1.11%	273 3.74%	211 2.89%	31 0.43%	31 0.43%	
	<b>Four-Year Private Non-Profit</b>	Weighted Count %*	90 1.23%	240 3.29%	134 1.83%	50 0.69%	19 0.26%	
	<b>Four-Year Private For-Profit</b>	Weighted Count %*	**	19 0.26%	29 0.40%	29 0.40%	21 0.29%	
<b>Two-Year Private For-Profit</b>	<b>Two-Year Public</b>	Weighted Count %*	582 1.03%	1,270 2.24%	1,057 1.87%	885 1.56%	721 1.27%	9,238 16.30%
	<b>Two-Year Private Non-Profit</b>	Weighted Count %*	**	**	**	**	**	
	<b>Two-Year Private For-Profit</b>	Weighted Count %*	426 0.75%	279 0.49%	98 0.17%	82 0.14%	66 0.12%	
	<b>Four-Year Public</b>	Weighted Count %*	90 0.16%	393 0.69%	295 0.52%	164 0.29%	107 0.19%	
	<b>Four-Year Private Non-Profit</b>	Weighted Count %*	74 0.13%	131 0.23%	221 0.39%	90 0.16%	107 0.19%	
	<b>Four-Year Private For-Profit</b>	Weighted Count %*	230 0.40%	418 0.74%	590 1.04%	566 1.00%	279 0.49%	

\*Share of students over entire starting cohort by origin institution type.

\*\*Cells with weighted counts below 10.



**Table 17. Timing of First Transfer 2006–2011 by Sector and Control of Origin and Destination Institution, Transfer Students Who Started at Each Institution Type, Fall 2006 Cohort (Cont.)**

Origin Institution	Destination Institution		Year 1 (2006-07)	Year 2 (2007-08)	Year 3 (2008-09)	Year 4 (2009-10)	Year 5 (2010-11)	Total
<b>Four-Year Public</b>	<b>Two-Year Public</b>	Weighted Count %*	46,371 4.86%	61,140 6.41%	32,423 3.40%	17,299 1.81%	11,349 1.19%	324,738 34.06%
	<b>Two-Year Private Non-Profit</b>	Weighted Count %*	58 0.01%	186 0.02%	137 0.01%	108 0.01%	73 0.01%	
	<b>Two-Year Private For-Profit</b>	Weighted Count %*	243 0.03%	464 0.05%	453 0.05%	300 0.03%	235 0.02%	
	<b>Four-Year Public</b>	Weighted Count %*	17,447 1.83%	47,227 4.95%	28,332 2.97%	11,657 1.22%	7,266 0.76%	
	<b>Four-Year Private Non-Profit</b>	Weighted Count %*	3,697 0.39%	14,457 1.52%	8,837 0.93%	3,649 0.38%	2,404 0.25%	
	<b>Four-Year Private For-Profit</b>	Weighted Count %*	923 0.10%	2,094 0.22%	2,294 0.24%	2,133 0.22%	1,482 0.16%	
<b>Four-Year Private Non-Profit</b>	<b>Two-Year Public</b>	Weighted Count %*	16,362 3.81%	22,000 5.13%	11,107 2.59%	4,473 1.04%	3,068 0.71%	137,819 32.12%
	<b>Two-Year Private Non-Profit</b>	Weighted Count %*	54 0.01%	166 0.03%	166 0.04%	63 0.01%	40 0.01%	
	<b>Two-Year Private For-Profit</b>	Weighted Count %*	54 0.01%	122 0.03%	102 0.02%	75 0.02%	40 0.01%	
	<b>Four-Year Public</b>	Weighted Count %*	8,157 1.90%	22,526 5.25%	11,925 2.78%	3,643 0.85%	2,457 0.57%	
	<b>Four-Year Private Non-Profit</b>	Weighted Count %*	3,936 0.92%	13,293 3.10%	6,797 1.58%	2,233 0.52%	1,631 0.38%	
	<b>Four-Year Private For-Profit</b>	Weighted Count %*	380 0.09%	851 0.20%	869 0.20%	732 0.17%	496 0.12%	
<b>Four-Year Private For-Profit</b>	<b>Two-Year Public</b>	Weighted Count %*	913 0.99%	2,379 2.58%	1,717 1.86%	1,606 1.74%	1,321 1.43%	18,095 19.64%
	<b>Two-Year Private Non-Profit</b>	Weighted Count %*	**	**	11 0.01%	**	**	
	<b>Two-Year Private For-Profit</b>	Weighted Count %*	76 0.08%	95 0.10%	122 0.13%	118 0.13%	99 0.11%	
	<b>Four-Year Public</b>	Weighted Count %*	326 0.35%	836 0.91%	709 0.77%	520 0.56%	417 0.45%	
	<b>Four-Year Private Non-Profit</b>	Weighted Count %*	344 0.37%	836 0.73%	581 0.63%	436 0.47%	391 0.42%	
	<b>Four-Year Private For-Profit</b>	Weighted Count %*	515 0.56%	1,000 1.09%	1,076 1.17%	1,000 1.09%	780 0.85%	

\*Share of students over entire starting cohort by origin institution type.

\*\*Cells with weighted counts below 10.

**Table 18. Timing of First Transfer 2006–2011 by Sector and Control of Origin and Destination Institution, Transfer Students Who Started at Each Institution Type, Fall 2006 Cohort**

Origin Institution	Destination Institution		Year 1 (2006-07)	Year 2 (2007-08)	Year 3 (2008-09)	Year 4 (2009-10)	Year 5 (2010-11)	Total
<b>Two-Year Public</b>	<b>Two-Year Public</b>	Weighted Count	22,758	51,908	38,432	26,403	19,036	158,537
		%*	14.35%	32.74%	24.24%	16.65%	12.01%	100.00%
	<b>Two-Year Private Non-Profit</b>	Weighted Count	90	340	271	246	160	1,107
		%*	8.13%	30.72%	24.50%	22.19%	14.46%	100.00%
	<b>Two-Year Private For-Profit</b>	Weighted Count	680	1,386	1,364	1,237	1,083	5,750
		%*	11.83%	24.10%	23.73%	21.51%	18.84%	100.00%
<b>Four-Year Public</b>	Weighted Count	9,447	63,718	55,231	27,864	17,623	173,883	
	%*	5.43%	36.64%	31.76%	16.02%	10.14%	100.00%	
<b>Four-Year Private Non-Profit</b>	Weighted Count	3,594	22,784	18,924	8,684	5,776	59,763	
	%*	6.01%	38.12%	31.67%	14.53%	9.66%	100.00%	
<b>Four-Year Private For-Profit</b>	Weighted Count	2,051	4,804	6,042	6,031	4,073	23,002	
	%*	8.92%	20.89%	26.27%	26.22%	17.71%	100.00%	
<b>Four-Year Public</b>	<b>Two-Year Public</b>	Weighted Count	46,371	61,140	32,423	17,299	11,349	168,582
		%*	27.51%	36.27%	19.23%	10.26%	6.73%	100.00%
	<b>Two-Year Private Non-Profit</b>	Weighted Count	58	186	137	108	73	562
		%*	10.30%	33.15%	24.34%	19.29%	12.92%	100.00%
	<b>Two-Year Private For-Profit</b>	Weighted Count	243	464	453	300	235	1,695
		%*	14.35%	27.39%	26.71%	17.70%	13.85%	100.00%
<b>Four-Year Public</b>	Weighted Count	17,447	47,227	28,332	11,657	7,266	111,929	
	%*	15.59%	42.19%	25.31%	10.41%	6.49%	100.00%	
<b>Four-Year Private Non-Profit</b>	Weighted Count	3,697	14,457	8,837	3,649	2,404	33,044	
	%*	11.19%	43.75%	26.74%	11.04%	7.28%	100.00%	
<b>Four-Year Private For-Profit</b>	Weighted Count	923	2,094	2,294	2,133	1,482	8,925	
	%*	10.34%	23.46%	25.70%	23.89%	16.61%	100.00%	
<b>Two-Year Private Non-profit</b>	<b>Two-Year Public</b>	Weighted Count	357	495	238	90	42	1,221
		%*	29.23%	40.51%	19.49%	7.35%	3.42%	100.00%
	<b>Two-Year Private Non-Profit</b>	Weighted Count	**	**	**	**	**	17
		%*	**	**	**	**	**	100.00%
	<b>Two-Year Private For-Profit</b>	Weighted Count	**	**	**	**	**	15
		%*	**	**	**	**	**	100.00%
<b>Four-Year Public</b>	Weighted Count	81	273	211	31	31	628	
	%*	12.96%	43.52%	33.55%	4.98%	4.98%	100.00%	
<b>Four-Year Private Non-Profit</b>	Weighted Count	90	240	134	50	19	532	
	%*	16.86%	45.10%	25.10%	9.41%	3.53%	100.00%	
<b>Four-Year Private For-Profit</b>	Weighted Count	**	19	29	29	21	102	
	%*	**	18.37%	28.57%	28.57%	20.41%	100.00%	

\*Percentage within institution type.

\*\*Cells with weighted counts below 10.

**Table 18. Timing of First Transfer 2006–2011 by Sector and Control of Origin and Destination Institution, Transfer Students Who Started at Each Institution Type, Fall 2006 Cohort (Cont.)**

Origin Institution	Destination Institution		Year 1 (2006-07)	Year 2 (2007-08)	Year 3 (2008-09)	Year 4 (2009-10)	Year 5 (2010-11)	Total
<b>Two-Year Private For-Profit</b>	<b>Two-Year Public</b>	Weighted Count %*	582 12.89%	1,270 28.13%	1,057 23.41%	885 19.60%	721 15.97%	4,516 100.00%
	<b>Two-Year Private Non-Profit</b>	Weighted Count %*	**	**	**	**	**	16 100.00%
	<b>Two-Year Private For-Profit</b>	Weighted Count %*	426 44.83%	279 29.31%	98 10.34%	82 8.62%	66 6.90%	951 100.00%
	<b>Four-Year Public</b>	Weighted Count %*	90 8.59%	393 37.50%	295 28.13%	164 15.62%	107 10.16%	1,049 100.00%
	<b>Four-Year Private Non-Profit</b>	Weighted Count %*	74 11.84%	131 21.05%	221 35.53%	90 14.47%	107 17.11%	623 100.00%
	<b>Four-Year Private For-Profit</b>	Weighted Count %*	230 11.02%	418 20.08%	590 28.35%	566 27.17%	279 13.39%	2,082 100.00%
<b>Four-Year Private Non-profit</b>	<b>Two-Year Public</b>	Weighted Count %*	16,362 28.70%	22,000 38.59%	11,107 19.48%	4,473 7.85%	3,068 5.38%	57,009 100.00%
	<b>Two-Year Private Non-Profit</b>	Weighted Count %*	54 11.01%	166 33.96%	166 33.96%	63 12.88%	40 8.20%	490 100.00%
	<b>Two-Year Private For-Profit</b>	Weighted Count %*	54 13.74%	122 30.99%	102 26.02%	75 19.01%	40 10.23%	393 100.00%
	<b>Four-Year Public</b>	Weighted Count %*	8,157 16.75%	22,526 46.25%	11,925 24.48%	3,643 7.48%	2,457 5.04%	48,708 100.00%
	<b>Four-Year Private Non-Profit</b>	Weighted Count %*	3,936 14.11%	13,293 47.66%	6,797 24.37%	2,233 8.01%	1,631 5.85%	27,890 100.00%
	<b>Four-Year Private For-Profit</b>	Weighted Count %*	380 11.42%	851 25.56%	869 26.11%	732 22.01%	496 14.90%	3,328 100.00%
<b>Four-Year Private For-Profit</b>	<b>Two-Year Public</b>	Weighted Count %*	913 11.50%	2,379 29.98%	1,717 21.64%	1,606 20.23%	1,321 16.65%	7,936 100.00%
	<b>Two-Year Private Non-Profit</b>	Weighted Count %*	**	**	11 25.93%	**	**	41 100.00%
	<b>Two-Year Private For-Profit</b>	Weighted Count %*	76 14.97%	95 18.56%	122 23.95%	118 23.05%	99 19.46%	511 100.00%
	<b>Four-Year Public</b>	Weighted Count %*	326 11.59%	836 29.78%	709 25.26%	520 18.51%	417 14.86%	2,809 100.00%
	<b>Four-Year Private Non-Profit</b>	Weighted Count %*	344 14.18%	674 27.79%	581 23.94%	436 17.96%	391 16.13%	2,427 100.00%
	<b>Four-Year Private For-Profit</b>	Weighted Count %*	515 11.79%	1,000 22.88%	1,076 24.62%	1,000 22.88%	780 17.84%	4,372 100.00%

\*Percentage within institution type.

\*\*Cells with weighted counts below 10.

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