

A FOCUS ON TRANSFER STUDENT SUCCESS PROGRAMS AND BEST PRACTICES

APLU Powered by
Publics South Eastern
Cluster

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ASSOCIATION OF
PUBLIC &
LAND-GRANT
UNIVERSITIES

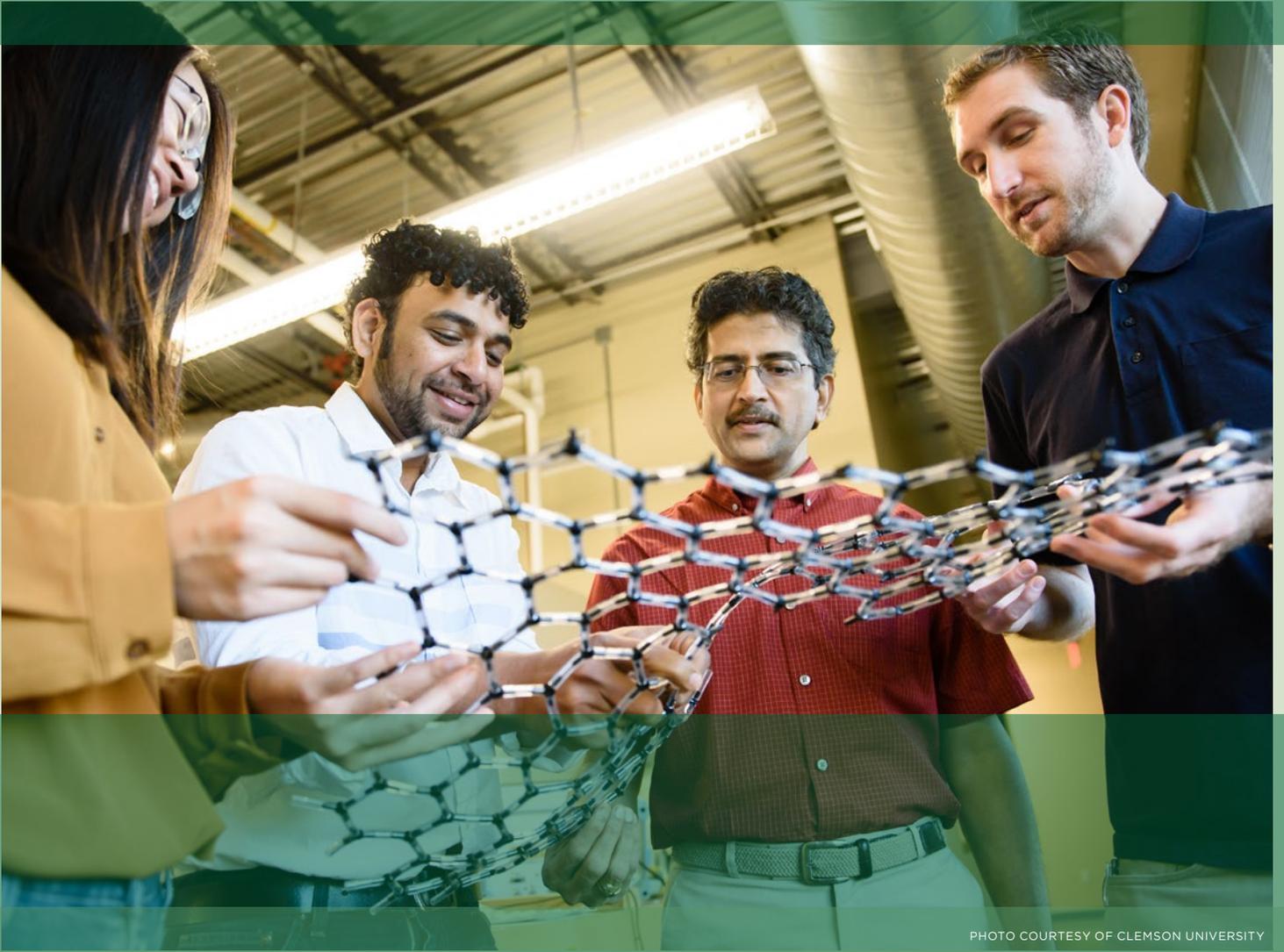


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Lessons Learned:

As we reflect on the work conducted over the length of this APLU Powered by Publics initiative and how it may continue or translate to other collaborative experiments, four themes emerged:

► **Invest and reinvest in establishing trust and clearly communicating needs, positions, and expectations.**

The extent of the successes and the failures of the Cluster’s work tie directly back to how well and often we made these investments. We come from different states with different student bodies and institutional resources. Thankfully, we established some important ground rules early on. We agreed to learn from another and not to compete or compare rankings. We encouraged each other to share examples of successful programs that others might imitate, but also we communicated the caveats and conditions undergirding those programs. We all agreed that the transfer student population was a common, underserved group by whom we could all do better. And we agreed that we’d respect the sensitivities of data sharing. The visualizations and dashboards above are all capable of drilling to fairly granular levels, so we agreed to explore and drive questions as an internal group or community of practice while recognizing and respecting impacts of disparate populations and missions.

► **Remember that we measure what we value, and we fund what we measure.**

South Eastern Cluster institutions are seeing not only a growing transfer student body (by number and as a percentage), but also one in which the percentage of students who attend our universities will complete their degrees through the matriculation of credit across multiple institutions. How well do we know these students' pathways? How well do we proactively identify and remove unnecessary impediments? How well do we as institutions, higher education associations, States, and as a nation track transfer student success? Where does transfer student success show up in the omnipresent ranking, and in how we receive and allocate resources. If our mission demands that we serve all our students equitably, what barriers need to be removed so that we make better data-informed decisions affecting our transfer students. The fact that they often enter into our systems with academic histories that may not generate as neat and tidy data as our first-time, full-time students is not the students' problem but ours to solve. How we track, report and fund should not disproportionately give weight to "traditional" first-time, full-time students when that is just one of the important populations we're charged with serving.

► **Before rushing to implement, contextualize; Keep where your organization is and where you're going in mind when you evaluate other models and programs.**

As we shared information about transfer-centered programs and initiatives, it was often as useful to learn the context in which it was developed: Who championed it? What was the impetus? How long did it take it get fully running? What were the strategic conditions on the ground looking like? These questions should be asked equally of our own institutions. Many readers of this piece have likely been bombarded just while reading this with numerous invitations, cold-calls, and marketing materials for the next big solution to student success, and we live in a culture that exhorts embracing the new and often enables chasing the next shiny object, often to the detriment of the time-tested, slower build outs. Is taking your cue from another institution or technological innovation a useful tool? Absolutely, but with the caveat that you need to have the right foundation upon which to build. Can you not only launch, but sustain a new program from where you're at now as an organization? Where are you in terms of your organizational maturity and technological evolution? Some of the most successful programs catalogued in this paper are the result of many years and even decades of development, implementation, assessment, and continuous improvement. Cutting-edge predictive and prescriptive analytics are powerful tools, but one must first do the important descriptive analytics, exploratory analyses and contextualization to understand not just answering the question, but knowing if we're asking the right question.

► **Explore with curiosity and openness.**

While the context issue belongs to the realms of strategy and operations, SWOT and PESTEL analyses, activities-based costing, and IT audits that will help implementation, it needs to be balanced with a very healthy approach to, and support for, applied research. Much of the success of innovation depends on fostering a culture that's open to exploration. Most of the authors currently serve as administrators and practitioners, which often entails a constant drumbeat to problem-solve quickly and efficiently in an atmosphere of competing demands. This can lead to short-term, myopic views, overly convergent thinking, reliance on heuristics, and other behaviors that put us at risk of falling prey to poor decisions and long-term outcomes due to confirmation bias and other cognitive biases. This is especially true when we are thrust into new team situations. Investing time at the beginning to explore alternatives, build trust, and minimize power differentials, whether it be through design thinking, appreciative inquiry or other approaches, provides the space for divergent thinking and approaches to be considered on equal footing with the status quo. Likewise, after formulating better questions, then we need to go to where the data take us. As practitioners charged with improving students' success, this also means being open and honest about what's important to our institutions.



Summary

When the academic leaders of the South Eastern Cluster of APLU’s Powered by Publics initiative gathered around the table to consider our focus for improving student success at our institutions, we all agreed that the success of our transfer students was something we could all improve upon. With this population of students growing across the country, their success and ability to obtain a degree needs to rise to the same level of importance as supporting those who begin and stay with us through to graduation. Yet there are many reasons for transferring from one institution to another, and just as many pathways that a student may take to join our academic communities. This has made it difficult to develop programming for transfer students around on-boarding and academic success, leaving many of these students to feel they must navigate their way alone or with little support. The result is what amounts to a national crisis, with only forty percent of transfer students obtaining a degree within six years of beginning their college educations.

As we began talking about what our institutions are doing to support transfer students, we started to understand the complexity of creating focused programming for these students. This starts at the state level and the relationships between frequent “sending” and “receiving” institutions. We found that even across our four states, support and involvement varies in the development of initiatives and policies that strengthen these relationships, create alignments in curriculum, and in providing clear guidelines around the transfer of credit. We also now see students coming to our institutions across state lines and at various points in their academic careers, beyond the traditional move after

completion of an associate degree with one of our two-year college partners. This makes it difficult (but not impossible) to create cohort-based programs, as many of these students truly require individualized advising and support that needs to start long before they consider transfer to another institution.

In this report, we provide some insights and a view across our institutions as to how we work with our state agencies and each other to provide students pathways across our institutions, programming in support of their success, and the work we did to develop key metrics for assessment. We provide some detail on the perspectives of our four states on the transfer of credit, as well as detailing some of the key transfer student success programs and initiatives that have been implemented at each of our institutions and across the North Carolina System of institutions. We also provide some reflection on the difficulty we encountered in developing a comparable transfer student success data set across our institutions, much of this difficulty resulting from a lack of consistency in defining the metrics used for assessment. Finally, we provide some insight into lessons learned from this collaboration and on how institutions focus on student success. We hope other academic leaders can find some takaways for building successful programs and initiatives at their institutions, leading to the success of transfer students, with more of them obtaining their degrees.

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "John D. Griffin". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a small flourish at the end.

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Introduction & National Overview:

It was with great anticipation and energy that the Association of Public & Land-grant Universities (APLU) [launched](#) the *Powered by Publics: Scaling Student Success* initiative in the fall of 2018. The goal was to bring institutions together in a collaborative way to “improve college access, advance equity, and increase college degrees awarded.” At that initial meeting, the academic leaders of one hundred and twenty universities and state systems gathered to share their thoughts and ideas for taking on this important set of goals. To provide some structure and focus, sixteen “transformation clusters” were formed around institutional characteristics or regional connections. The South Eastern Cluster (Cluster Five) brought together a diverse set of institutions from this region of the country that included several of the larger universities (Clemson, East Carolina, Florida State, North Carolina State, and Virginia Tech), the North Carolina System Office and its regional universities in Charlotte, Greensboro, and Wilmington, as well as a group of the Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs) in this region, including North Carolina A&T, Virginia State, and South Carolina State. All of us were eager to team up and increase student success.

As we gathered around the table at that first meeting thinking about where to begin and what would be a common issue, many thoughts and ideas were shared. In the end, one

issue resounded with all of us. We knew we could do more and better focus our efforts in supporting the success of students who transfer into our universities!

From that meeting forward, our team of leaders from each university began to gather, share data, and talk about best practices and initiatives we are engaged in on our campuses and with our partner institutions. Much of this work has led to this report, which was developed as a catalog of ideas and innovations to share with our colleagues who are “on the ground” doing this work and share our passions for supporting the success of those who come to us through alternative pathways as transfer students.

While universities and colleges are quick to track their support for and success of a traditional freshman, otherwise known as a First-Time Full-Time (FTFT) student, far fewer have invested the needed attention and programming into supporting those who come to our institutions after beginning somewhere else. There may be many reasons for this ranging from the less noble, e.g., the weight or lack thereof that non-FTFT students’ performance has on institutional rankings and performance measures, to the complicated reality that transfer students take many diverse pathways to come and go from our doors. For example, while a typically conceived transfer pathway involves a student enrolling after earning an associate degree at a two-year institution, many students are enrolling after as little as one semester somewhere else, making it difficult to create a single metric for measuring success. We also know that students who transfer into our universities are students who may chose these pathways for economic reasons, come from diverse backgrounds, and need our support as they may be the first in their families to attend college. In addition, poorly developed policies and processes around the transfer of credit to our four-year institutions, and how those credits are applied to earning a degree can create additional barriers to degree attainment as well as additional time to a degree. In short, they often lack the navigational capital to succeed in institutions that may not have had these populations in mind when building the campus experience.

These questions and concerns are not unique to APLU member institutions, and many national higher-education organizations have been calling for a more inclusive approach to supporting all of our students. To give but one example, as the lead institution of the South Eastern Cluster, Clemson University was also asked to participate in a [The National Task Force on the Transfer and Award of Credit](#). This task force, initiated and supported by the [American Council on Education](#), focused on “improving transfer and award of credit practices in an effort to spur student success and reduce the cost and time to complete a degree”. Led by Anne Holton, Interim President of George Mason University and Tim White, Chancellor Emeritus of the California State University, the presidents and academic leaders of more than thirty institutions and higher education partners participated in the development of a final report that was released in the spring of 2021 entitled, *Reimagining Transfer For Student Success*.

The task force's work began with developing an understanding of the national landscape related to transfer student success. The report makes clear the importance of supporting transfer student success. A [recent review](#) found that one-third of the 2.8 million students entering college for the first time in the fall of 2011 earned credits from two or more institutions within six years, yet the [national average](#) for the six-year graduation rate for students who start at one institution and complete their degree at another is only 40 percent. This lack of degree attainment is [exacerbated](#) by a persistent equity gap, with many more students from diverse backgrounds stopping out before earning a degree.

Through the commissioning of several white papers, review of nationally available data, a national study on transfer student perceptions, as well as a pilot transcript-level study of more than three hundred transfer student transcripts of students attending thirteen task force member institutions, the ACE Task Force Report details several high-level recommendations for supporting the success of our transfer students. These recommendations include reviewing institutional policies and practices related to how transfer credit is evaluated and applied towards a degree program, improving the transparency of how transfer credits may be applied towards a degree, dedicating resources to provide high-quality advising, as well as developing more robust partnerships and articulation agreements between institutions.

The recommendations of the ACE Task Force Report align with many of the best practices that our cluster institutions are piloting or have in place and are detailed in this report. We hope they provide ideas and generate discussions at other institutions around supporting the success of transfer students on their way to a college degree.



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State Perspectives on Transfer Credit:

At the state level, efforts are underway to build relationships between frequent “sending” and “receiving” institutions. In some cases, these efforts are focused on specific cohorts and transfer between select institutions, while more states are committing to an alignment of courses taught at all of their two- and four-year institutions. A key benefit of working in a four-state cluster is that it has allowed us to not only compare and contrast transfer policies, but also to glean lessons learned from those who have been able to blaze a path ahead. Below is a summary of the current approaches to the transfer of credit in the four states that are home to the institutions of the South Eastern cluster.

FLORIDA:

2+2 Articulation in Florida

Florida has developed a nearly seamless articulation system to facilitate efficient and effective progression and transfer of students between and among public postsecondary institutions. The success of the “2+2” articulation system in Florida has been made possible by the development of several state policies to support it. The **Florida Statewide**

Articulation Agreement, established in 1971 and currently codified in statute and State Board of Education Rule/Board of Governors Regulation, is the most comprehensive articulation agreement in the nation.

Critical actions taken by the state of Florida to facilitate efficient transfer among all forty Florida public postsecondary institutions include:

- Defining the Associate in Arts Degree as the transfer degree (guaranteed 60 credit hours upon transfer to baccalaureate program).
- Establishing requirements for awarding degrees and degree definitions.
- Guaranteeing transfer of credit via the Statewide Course Numbering System.
- Guaranteeing transfer of the general education block of credit (36 hours – including 15 hours identified as common state core).
- Establishing a list of statewide common prerequisite courses that are required for admission to all baccalaureate degree programs in a given CIP code.
- Establishing a process for determining statewide credit-by-examination equivalencies and guaranteeing equivalent transfer of credit across all public institutions.
- Creating the Articulation Coordinating Committee (ACC), its purpose, role, and membership.
- Providing for Associate in Science degree articulation.
- Establishing a common college transcript.

Transfer Student Rights

Students who graduate from an institution within the Florida College System (FCS) with an Associate in Arts (AA) degree are guaranteed the following rights under the Statewide Articulation Agreement¹:

1. Admission to an upper division program at a state university or Florida College System institution if it offers baccalaureate degree programs, except to limited access programs.*
2. Acceptance of at least 60 semester hours by the state universities and Florida College System baccalaureate degree-granting institutions.

¹ s. 1007.23, F.S., and Rule 6A-10.024, F.A.C. / BOG Articulation Resolution

3. Adherence to the university or college requirements and policies, based on the catalog in effect at the time the student first enters the Florida college, provided the student maintains continuous enrollment.
4. Transfer of equivalent courses under the Statewide Course Numbering System.
5. Acceptance by the state universities and baccalaureate degree-granting Florida College System institutions of credits earned in accelerated programs (e.g. Dual Enrollment, CLEP, Advanced Placement, International Baccalaureate, and Advanced International Certificate of Education).
6. No additional general education core or general education institutional requirements.
7. Advance knowledge of selection criteria for limited access programs.
8. Equal opportunity with FTFT university students to enter limited-access programs.

*Note: Students who have received an AA degree from an institution within the Florida College System are guaranteed admission with 60 semester hours into an institution within the State University System. However, admission into a specific program at a given university may not be assured.

Broadening of Focus from Transfer Student Access to Success

For decades now, ensuring access to the baccalaureate degree and the seamless movement of students between institutions has been a priority for the state of Florida. However, very little focus has been placed on whether transfer students were successful (i.e., graduated in a timely fashion) once they transitioned from one institution to another. Recently, Florida has adopted policies to monitor and hold state universities accountable for transfer student retention and success. Transfer student graduation rates have been reported to the Board of Governors for each state university and published in the annual Accountability Plan since 1998 (4-year and then 3-year graduation rate of FCS AA transfers), but no funding was tied to institutional performance. In a further step toward holding institutions accountable for transfer student success, beginning with the 2021-22 performance funding cycle, the Florida Board of Governors added “Florida College System AA Transfer Two-Year Graduation Rate” as a performance funding metric that is common to all state universities. The addition of this metric demonstrates Florida’s strong commitment to the 2+2 articulation model and transfer student success.

NORTH CAROLINA:

North Carolina relies on various legislation, articulation agreements, and institutional cooperation to build and expand its transfer landscape. Transfer students are omnipresent in discussions within the UNC System Office, across its constituent institutions, and with elected and appointed officials. **The Comprehensive Articulation Agreement** is in place

to serve community college students at any public two-year institution and facilitate the transfer of their credit to public universities. There are additional agreements that offer credit guarantees for specific programs (the most recent being an agreement for teacher preparation programs), including several branded programs created by universities to streamline the transfer process (e.g., Community College Collaboration-C3 at NC State and Pathways to Excellent at UNC Wilmington). The UNC System has pursued transparency with transfer data and transfer activities by creating public [dashboards](#) that include information on students and institutions, as well as the [Transfer Toolbox](#), which was built to provide a variety of information and resources for students and professionals in supporting transfer student success.

Transfer student success, and all that can be included in that broad statement, is a priority for UNC System President, Peter Hans. He has directed his staff to engage in a variety of transfer initiatives, including a partnership with State Higher Education Executive Officers Association to improve equity in transfer outcomes and the adaptation of a successful support program in the CUNY system focused on serving transfer students. President Hans and the UNC System Board of Governors have also created the [UNC Common Numbering System](#), a set of course equivalencies for commonly taught, lower-division courses that will support transferring between UNC institutions to reduce credit loss for transfer students (the common course numbering system for undergraduate lower division courses, which will be mapped to the unique course numbers used at each respective institution). The first phase of this work will culminate with the launch of a searchable database of courses in the fall of 2022 to be used for transfer students planning their 2023 academic schedules.

SOUTH CAROLINA:

The Education Credit Management Corporation (ECMC) is developing a larger portfolio of transfer projects, focusing on transfer systems through an equity lens. Central to the portfolio is the question of what state transfer ecosystems can do to improve transfer within the states. South Carolina is one of four states chosen for a project by ECMC, along with North Carolina, Washington, and Colorado. These four states have different governances and organizations. The teams will be using the Gardner Institute Foundational Dimensions framework to develop equitable practices to support an array of transfer projects.

Committee organization and major tasks of the South Carolina project include ensuing transfer equity: that students from low-income, first-generation, and all racial and ethnic backgrounds have access to equitable education opportunities and support leading to degree/credential completion. Development and maintenance of learning and curricular pathways between institutions is a key pillar that ensures transfer of credit for students, and organization of personnel at the institutional and state levels are crucial to coordinate these

pathways. Promotion of a transfer-receptive culture at institutions ensures that students are appropriately integrated into their receiving institutions, both academically and socially. To enable and track lasting changes, regular assessment of transfer pathways—including transfer patterns, transfer student outcomes, and transfer culture—is essential to provide meaningful feedback for improvements and to best promote transfer student success.

Each committee of the South Carolina working group will select a key performance indicator that is associated with the committee's charge, to unpack its meaning and importance to excellence and equity. Two key questions include: 1.) What do we know about how South Carolina is operating as it comes to the key indicator? 2.) What evidence do we have or need to evaluate how South Carolina is doing? Each committee will develop recommendations to improve South Carolina's performance on that indicator. The documents will summarize the recommendations, which will be vetted and sorted by the full project team. The final project report will guide future changes in processes and procedures.

VIRGINIA:

The State Council of Higher Education for Virginia (SCHEV) is the Commonwealth's coordinating body for higher education. In 2019, SCHEV launched **TransferVA**, an initiative to improve the efficiency of the Virginia transfer system. Goals include increasing the percentage of community college students who successfully complete gateway math and English courses in their first year; increasing percentages of students who transfer from the Virginia Community College System to 4-year institutions; increasing degree attainment and reducing time to degree for transfer students; reducing the average number of credits earned by transfer students to be comparable to the number earned by native students in the same degree. A commitment to close gaps for underrepresented populations and Pell grant recipients is an intended outcome across all goals.

TransferVA pursues multiple strategies to build capacity and efficiency for transfer from the Virginia Community College System (VCCS) to four-year institutions. Strategies include:

- A 16-credit hour Passport and a 30-credit Uniform Certificate of General Studies to fulfill lower-division general education requirements at any public institution of higher education.
- Collaborative course alignment within the VCCS and with 4-year institutions.
- Program maps for transfer from VCCS to degree programs at 4-year institutions.
- Specialized transfer agreements, including specialized agreements with regional partners.
- A robust online [State Transfer Portal](#).



Institutional Best Practices:

This section of the report provides details and data for some of the key programs and initiatives that support transfer students and their success at the universities of the South Eastern Cluster. Our hope is that they generate discussion and inform the work at other APLU institutions and across the nation, opening the doors of success just a little wider for those who come to our institutions through non-traditional pathways.

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CLEMSON UNIVERSITY:

Bridge to Clemson Program

Bridge students enroll at our two-year partner institution Tri-County Technical College (Tri-County) for their first year and start their course work in the fall semester. To be admitted to Clemson for the subsequent fall semester, Bridge students are required to earn a minimum of 30 transferable credit hours and a 2.5 grade point average (GPA) during their freshman year at Tri-County (course credits and GPA must be earned at Tri-County after high school graduation). Students who satisfy Bridge academic requirements will be admitted to Clemson for the subsequent fall semester without being required to resubmit a Clemson admission application. Students who do not satisfy the Bridge academic requirements will be encouraged to apply for admission to Clemson at a later date as a transfer applicant.

While grades earned at Tri-County will not subsequently be included in a student's Clemson grade point ratio (GPR), the grades and credit hours a student earns at Tri-County will count toward determining the student's eligibility for the South Carolina LIFE scholarship. Students who successfully complete their second year (earning at least 60 credits) at Clemson will qualify for reverse transfer and the awarding of an associate's degree from Tri-County.

Community living is one of the most important experiences for a first-year college student. Bridge students live in four-person apartments on campus at Clemson. Upper-class resident assistants coordinate social and academic programs and are available to assist students throughout the year.

GAIN: Gateway Alliance Improvement Network

Contact: Bridget G. Trogden, Ph.D.

Associate Dean, Division of Undergraduate Studies

The Gateway Alliance Improvement Network (GAIN) supports partnerships of 2-year and 4-year institutions to improve STEM success for transfer students by focusing on gateway courses. The program aims to achieve equitable graduation rates for transfer students beginning their STEM pathways at 2-year institutions. The Alliance will address systemic and pervasive inequities impacting students, focusing on the lens of faculty as drivers for curricular coherence between 2-year and 4-year institutions.

Using a networked improvement communities (NIC) approach and transfer student capital as a guiding theoretical framework, GAIN will cultivate a system of inter-institutional NICs and faculty learning communities (FLCs) to set and make progress toward shared goals.

Pilot GAIN initiatives have been launched between Clemson University and Tri-County Technical College to create joint FLCs for faculty in mathematics, physics, chemistry, and biological sciences. Faculty are working together on equitable teaching of STEM courses online, assignment design, active learning, and syllabus redesign. Pilot support for the FLCs comes from a Howard Hughes Medical Institute Inclusive Excellence 3 learning community grant.

Transformation

TransferMation is an enrollment checklist with important dates, deadlines and frequently asked questions about financial aid, transfer admissions procedures, orientation, and more.

Transfer 2 Tiger Mentor Program

The Transfer 2 Tiger Mentor Program (T2T) is a peer-to-peer mentoring opportunity for new transfer students to connect with upperclassmen transfer students. The purpose of a transfer specific mentor program is to help cultivate a support system within the transfer community at Clemson. In order to apply as a T2T mentor, current transfer students are required to have at least one semester completed at Clemson. All incoming transfer students will have the opportunity to sign-up as a T2T mentee at the beginning of their first semester.

Transfer Council

Transfer Council is part of Clemson's Undergraduate Student Government. All members of Transfer Council transferred into Clemson, giving them a unique perspective on what new transfer students face. Transfer Council works to promote support programs for transfer students and provides a representative voice for the transfer student population on campus.

FLORIDA STATE UNIVERSITY:

The Impact of a Mandatory Enrollment Policy in an Academic Success Course on Transfer Student Success

Beginning with the 2018-2019 academic year, SLS 3140: *Academic Success Strategies for Transfer Students* was approved as a graded, one-credit hour course for transfer students who voluntarily seek to improve academic outcomes. In February of 2019, the university's Undergraduate Policy Committee approved a proposal to *mandate enrollment in SLS 3140 for transfer students who do not earn at least a 2.0 GPA during the first term of enrollment at FSU for AY 2019-2020 and AY 2020-2021*. At the end of this two-year period, the effectiveness of the policy was evaluated based on collected data to determine the impact of the course on transfer student persistence and success.

To evaluate the impact of enrollment in the course on the retention and subsequent academic success of transfer students, two fall cohorts of First Time Transfer (FTT) students who did not earn a 2.0 GPA during their first semester at FSU were chosen for comparison. The first cohort entered FSU in the Fall of 2017 and their academic progress was tracked through the end of the Fall 2018 semester. These students did not earn a 2.0 GPA in their first semester at FSU and were placed on academic probation, but did not enroll in SLS 3140 (whether voluntarily or by mandate) because the course was not approved until Fall 2018. The second cohort entered FSU in the Fall of 2019 and their academic progress was tracked through the end of the Fall 2020 semester. These students also did not earn a 2.0 GPA in their first semester at FSU and were placed on academic probation, but were mandated to enroll in SLS 3140 for the Spring 2020 semester.

Of the Fall 2017 FTT students who were placed on probation at the end of their first fall semester, 40.1% returned to Good Academic Standing by the end of the Spring 2018 semester and an additional 11.4% had returned to Good Academic Standing by the end of Fall 2018, for a total of 51.5%. “Good Academic Standing” is defined as a cumulative FSU GPA of > to 2.0.

By comparison, of the Fall 2019 FTT students who were placed on probation after their first fall semester AND mandated to take the SLS course in Spring 2020, 60.7% returned to Good Academic Standing by the end of the Spring 2020 semester (*a 20.6% change*) and an additional 7.8% returned to Good Academic Standing by the end of Fall 2020, for a total of 68.5%.

The data suggests that the SLS 3140 course mandate had a significant positive impact on the academic success of transfer students, not only during the semester that students completed the course, but also in subsequent semesters. In addition to student performance data, feedback from students who enrolled in SLS 3140 has been overwhelmingly positive. Even though students were mandated to take the course, their assessment of the course content and the instructors, in particular, was overwhelmingly positive.

The SLS 3140 course mandate policy for FTT students who fail to earn a 2.0 or higher in their first semester at FSU has provided struggling transfer students a means to gain confidence in their academic abilities and develop skills that will help them succeed at FSU. In addition, the personalized nature of the course has given transfer students the additional support they need to develop a sense of belonging at FSU that can help alleviate the negative effects of “transfer shock.”

Proactive Academic Mapping and Advising for Prospective Transfer Students

FSU has created the Aspire Program as a comprehensive partnership between FSU and its primary transfer student feeder colleges. Phase one of the project established a Memorandum of Understanding between FSU and Tallahassee Community College (TCC), which is the institution from which the majority of FSU students transfer. The goal of the program is to strengthen the current model of collaboration between FSU and TCC to facilitate admission to FSU for TCC graduates who meet the academic requirements for an FSU bachelor's degree while completing an Associate in Arts degree at TCC. A primary objective of the program is to strengthen advising so that TCC students who earn an Associate in Arts (AA) degree can be accepted to FSU in the upper division major of their choice and graduate from FSU with a bachelor's degree in two years. More specifically, FSU is providing proactive academic mapping and advising for all incoming transfer students, so they start and stay on track for a timely graduation. Currently, around 56% of AA transfers graduate in two years from FSU.

The Academic Program Guide for FSU includes academic maps for each major that provide sample schedules and milestones that all students must meet in order to stay on track to graduate within four years. Although these maps are available to prospective transfer students, they are designed for students who are already enrolled at FSU and include courses that may or may not be available at the transfer student's home institution. As part of the Aspire-TCC2FSU program, FSU developed academic maps that are specific to TCC students. Each map was adjusted to include only those courses that are offered at TCC, which is made possible by Florida's Statewide Course Numbering System (SCNS). In addition to including only those courses offered at TCC on the maps, each academic map also identifies specific FSU graduation requirements that may be completed as part of the Associate in Arts degree. Students are required to meet course and program prerequisites prior to admission to FSU, but by using the TCC specific maps, students can also complete as many of the graduation requirements as possible as part of the AA (for example, requirements relating to diversity, computer competency, Scholarship in Practice, foreign language, etc.) so they are on track to graduate within two years upon acceptance to FSU.

These academic maps are shared with prospective transfer students in a variety of ways. They are prominently posted on the websites of each institution and shared at our "FSU Day" events at TCC in both the Fall and Spring semesters. These advising events include a general advising session relating to admission requirements and transition services for transfer students as well as one-on-one face-to-face advising appointments with specific FSU major advisors on the TCC campus. In addition to these biannual events, FSU advisors from each college have a regular presence in the TCC advising center. Weekly schedules are maintained so there is at least one FSU advisor on TCC's campus for 20 hours per week.

The Board of Governors for the State University System of Florida has recently added the two-year graduation rate of Associate in Arts degree transfers from Florida College System institutions as a performance funding metric. The Aspire academic maps will put AA transfer students in a better position to graduate within two years, which will be beneficial for both students and the institution.

EAST CAROLINA UNIVERSITY:

Pirate Promise

To participate in Pirate Promise, a student must be enrolling or already a full-time student in their first year at one of the North Carolina Community College Pirate Promise schools (see list above). Additionally, the student must enroll in one of more than 70 related concentrations within associate degree programs ranging from early childhood education to construction management to industrial technology. High school juniors in Career and College Promise or early college programs may apply to Pirate Promise.

Students within Pirate Promise are guaranteed admission to ECU with a completed associate degree, have their ECU application fee waived, receive specialized support services (like dedicated transfer coach, joint academic advising, and joint financial aid counseling) and are provided access to ECU opportunities like athletic tickets, campus recreation activities, ECU library resources, career services, and “invitation only” Pirate Promise events.

In year one of the associate degree program, prospective Pirate Promise students apply for the program and are eligible to enjoy the program’s benefits. In year two of the associate degree program, Pirate Promise students apply to ECU (application fee is waived) and upon completion of the associate degree transition into the related ECU program.

An important element of the Pirate Promise program is having a transfer “coach” who is dedicated to Pirate Promise students, making them feel like they are part of “Pirate Nation” before they step foot on campus as an enrolled student. The transfer coach has a communication plan in place that provides regular program updates, periodic check-ins, and shares events of interest at ECU. The transfer coach also makes campus visits and offers regular open forum online opportunities for students and prospective students to check in with an ECU representative. Making such connections on and off campus is key to Pirate Promise students feeling welcomed.

Outcome Measures

Growth of the program:

- Partner institutions in Fall 2018: 18
- Partner institutions in Spring 2022: 41
- Students accepted into the Pirate Promise program for Fall 2018 semester: 100
- Students accepted into the Pirate Promise program for Fall 2021 semester: 191

ECU has more than doubled the community colleges with signed Pirate Promise agreements and has almost doubled the number of students being admitted into Pirate Promise each semester.

- In fall 2021, 210 students actively enrolled at ECU who matriculated through the Pirate Promise program.
- At close of spring 2021, 15 students had graduated from ECU who matriculated through the Pirate Promise program.

Areas for Opportunity:

- The verification rate for students eligible for the program has hovered around 60-75% each semester. We still have a high number of students applying for Pirate Promise who are not eligible. This verification rate varies by partner institution.
- Through Fall 2021, 96 students applied to ECU and were admitted but did not enroll or withdrew their application. Likewise, 19 Pirate Promise students were admitted and attended ECU, but do not remain enrolled.

NORTH CAROLINA STATE UNIVERSITY:

Community College Collaboration (C3)

Launched in 2018, the Community College Collaboration (C3) is a dual-admission program between NC State and 13 community college partners. C3 is open to students from low-to-moderate income households who have completed less than 30 credit hours at one of the partner community colleges. In addition to guaranteed admission to NC State, C3 students are assigned a NC State adviser and have access to special programs, activities, and financial aid.

Assessment: Retention, Persistence, Graduation rates-new program

Goodnight Scholars Program

In 2017, the Goodnight Scholars Program, one of NC State's premier scholarship programs, expanded to include transfer students from North Carolina community colleges. To be eligible, students must come from low-to-middle income families, apply to a STEM or STEM education major, and have earned an associate degree. Transfer Goodnight Scholars receive a three-year, full-tuition scholarship, special programming and advising, and opportunities for travel and enrichment funding. In May 2021, the transfer program announced it would be expanding significantly, from its current cohort size of 25 to 50 beginning in 2022.

Assessment: Retention, Persistence, Graduation rates-new program

Transfer Coordinator Position

The Academic Coordinator of Transfer Students will be responsible for the following areas:

- **Advising** - Provide quality cross-curricular academic advising to enrolled students and follow a developmental philosophy of advising based on NACADA's core values. Academic advising is an intentional process designed to support students as they develop and pursue educational, career, and personal goals. The ultimate goal of the student advisor partnership is for students to increase their personal agency and critical thinking skills, and apply both to their life choices in college and beyond. Advising caseload will be composed of the students in the coordinator's USC class sections and Inter-College Transfer students. In addition, the coordinator will provide support for university-wide advising of transfer students as a case manager. The coordinator will also support university academic advising services: AAPS Walk-in Advising and ASC Drop-in Advising.
- **Transfer Advising Partnerships** - Support transfer advising in partnership with Enrollment Management and Services (EMAS) and NC State's Colleges for prospective incoming students with deeper advising needs. Work in partnership with EMAS to support effective advisor training for NC Community Colleges and provide consultation on updating the baccalaureate degree plans as needed. Work closely with EMAS and ICT advising to coordinate and articulate best practices in common between transfer and ICT advising.
- **Instruction** - Teach assigned sections of USC classes that support the various programs and outreach in the department. Outcomes of the courses are: transition to college, academic success, major and career exploration, and diversity.

Assessment: GPA pre- and post-transfer, visits (all by college), qualitative review of advising notes.

S.T.A.T.E. Living Learning Village

The Transfer Experience Village program provides transfer students with opportunities to make the most of their NC State experience by focusing on the six core pillars essential to student success: academic success, career development, community and global engagement, diversity, leadership, life skills. Students experience a number of transitions during their college years that are both challenging and rewarding. Our program is designed to help residents adjust to transitions they face as transfer students. Generally, students only focus on their transition to NC State and their transition to the “real world,” but the Village guides students through all the activities happening between their initial move-in and graduation. The Village’s partners in student success include the Career Center, Tutorial Center, Office of Leadership and Civic Engagement, Study Abroad Office, Co-Op Office, Wolfpack Welcome Week, Career Fairs and Alternative Spring Break trips. The Transfer Experience Village includes 128 spaces for transfer students.

Assessment: Persistence and graduation rates

Transfer Transition Websites:

- <https://newstudents.dasa.ncsu.edu/transfer/>
- <https://newstudents.dasa.ncsu.edu/transfer/orientation/>
- <https://newstudents.dasa.ncsu.edu/transfer/falladvising/>

Survey Data:

- <https://assessment.dasa.ncsu.edu/first-term-survey/>
- <https://assessment.dasa.ncsu.edu/wp-content/uploads/sites/53/2020/12/Updated-Transfer-Website-Report-FINAL-Fall-2020.pdf>

UNIVERSITY OF NORTH CAROLINA CHARLOTTE:

Passport Program

Contact: Office of Undergraduate Admissions

Partner: Central Piedmont Community College

Summary: The Passport Program offers a pathway for FTIC students who apply to UNC Charlotte but are not admissible. Students in the county are offered a place in the Passport

program, which involves one-year of full-time enrollment at Central Piedmont in a structured curriculum with joint CP/UNCC advising. Students who successfully complete the program are then admitted to UNCC after one year.

- Scope – 100-200 students per year
- Assessment / Metrics – standard retention, transfer, and academic outcomes.
- Duration – 10 years +
- Current data – Passport students have consistently stronger outcomes than equivalent students, both in terms of their record while at CP and in terms of graduation rates and time to degree at UNC Charlotte

Forty Niner Next

Contacts: Office of Undergraduate Education, Undergraduate Admissions

Partners: Central Piedmont; Gaston College; Rowan Cabarrus Community College; Mitchel Community College; Catawba Valley Community College; Wake Tech Community College.

Summary: 49er Next is a co-admissions, co-advising program. It is designed to address the community college to UNCC pipeline by ensuring that students can explore major options while at community college and take the correct pre-requisite courses so that they transfer with true junior standing after earning an associates. Students are recruited at the time of their admission to the community college they are attending. They select “meta majors” based on their intended major and each meta major has a common first year curriculum (and some common second year curriculum) to ensure that students have multiple options as they discover their academic strengths and interests. Each meta major also has a set of progression courses – with target semester of completion and grade – that allow advisors to ensure that students are on track for the major they are intended. UNC Charlotte and community college advisors work jointly with students. Other elements of the program include coordinated career and financial aid advising/planning and opportunities for students to participate in UNC Charlotte campus events.

- Scope – Currently approximately 500 students from six community college partners
- Assessment / Metrics – standard retention, progression, grades.
- Duration – 2 years, one pilot with Central Piedmont.
- Current data - First cohort of students are transferring to UNC Charlotte in Fall 2021. data as of yet.

Transfer Symposium

Contacts: University Transfer Center UNC Charlotte

Partners: Multiple Community College partners

Summary: Annual day-long symposium to which advisors from several of NCCC institutions are invited. The day consists of a chance for academic programs at UNC Charlotte to provide updates on curriculum changes, new opportunities, and for NCCC advising partners to ask questions and resolve issues.

- Scope - approximately 100 attendees from more than 25 institutions
- Assessment / Metrics - NA
- Duration – 8 years or so
- Current data – NA

UNIVERSITY OF NORTH CAROLINA GREENSBORO:

Transfer Transition Courses

By design, First Year Experience (FYE) courses seek to minimize the pain points and confusion of transitioning to an institution while fostering connection for those students in the process. Often, FYE courses focus on first-time-in-college students. FYE 101: Succeed at the G is designed to connect students to UNC Greensboro (UNCG), foster academic success, and engage students in personal development. And, as part of its mission, select course sections featured tailored content for transfer students, making the course more specific to the transfer student's transition.

Over four years, the FYE 101 section for transfers increased from one to four sections (with a maximum of 25 seats in each section). Assessment of the program goals was achieved through pre-and post-tests noting factors such as connection to the UNCG community and knowledge of campus resources and support services; voluntary student satisfaction surveys; and records (e.g., student quotes, waitlist totals) maintained by New Student Transitions & First Year Experience administration.

Due to a change to the university general education curriculum in Fall 2021, no FYE 101 transfer sections are being taught. However, with the recrafting of the partnership with Guilford Technical Community College (GTCC), beginning Fall 2022, UNCG faculty and staff will serve as guest presenters within specific sections of ACA 122, College Transfer Success. These sections will be comprised of students intending to transfer to UNCG. ACA 122 is designed to help students develop academic and professional goals, as well as create

a transfer plan. The collaboration allows for a more strategic focus on findings and survey results from activities such as Titan2Spartan Connect.

Transfer2Transfer Mentors

Fall 2020, in partnership with Mentor Collective, UNCG piloted a mentorship program for transfer students. Mentor Collective handled the mentor/mentee recruitment, mentor training, and mentor/mentee matching. The pilot funded up to 300 students. It was a low-stakes way to pilot a mentorship program as recommended by UNCG's Transfer Promise working group. The response was so positive the pilot was expanded to a total of 470 matched mentees. This represented approximately one-third of the fall incoming transfer class.

Mentors interacted with their mentees in a variety of ways, including email, telephone, text messaging, video chatting or, when available and if desired, in person. Since the program launched during COVID, many students chose to interact virtually with the most prominent mode being or texting.

Mentors rated their satisfaction with the program as a 6.55 out of 7 with mentees rating their satisfaction as a 6.13 out of 7. The demographics of our participants mirrored the demographics of UNCG's student body overall but included adult learners in ways that traditional student organizations typically do not.

Although UNCG does offer orientation and other on-boarding programs for transfer students, attendance is not required and most transfer students do not attend. The support of a program like Transfer2Transfer Mentors is an important mechanism for helping students through their transition.

The success of the program led to a continuance of the mentorship program for Fall 2021 with a total of 457 matched mentees. Mentors and mentees addressed topics ranging from academics to staying balanced to getting to know each other. In Fall 2022, the partnership will continue with a goal of 450 mentees for the academic year.

Titan2Spartan Connect

This pre-orientation event was designed for current Guilford Technical Community College (GTCC) students who self-identified as having a desire to complete a bachelor's degree at UNC Greensboro (UNCG). Various sessions offered students important information to help them plan their transfer pathway. These included financial aid, student life at UNCG, credit articulation, and presentations from academic units about the degree programs available.

At the onset of planning, a needs assessment was administered to GTCC students who were enrolled in a college transfer program. More than 300 students completed the assessment. Likewise, UNCG surveyed recent transfers from GTCC to learn what went well and what could be improved about their transfer experience. The survey received 127 responses in a two-week period (a response rate of 13%).

Findings from the GTCC needs assessment included:

- The vast majority of students indicated that UNCG was the primary college of interest. Most students agreed that they were confident in their ability to successfully transfer and complete a bachelor's degree but were less confident that they have financial support needed.
- Students' top three academic concerns about transferring to a bachelor's degree-granting institution included, "higher academic standards", "transfer credits" and their "academic ability".

Findings from the UNCG transfer student survey included:

- Students wanted earlier connection to admissions counselors and academic advisors.
- The top three things students felt they needed more information about before transferring to UNCG included credit articulation, the transfer process, and financial aid.
- The top three areas of concern students had about transferring were registering for classes, finances, and adjusting to a new environment.

These assessments revealed a lot about UNCG students and their transfer concerns. UNCG designed the orientation around this information.

RSVPs for the event totaled 155 students and a total of 300 guests. Of those, 64 students actually attended with a total attendance of just over 100 people. Students who attended provided positive feedback. The event was held for a second time in fall 2020 during National Transfer Week but was virtual. Sessions were a mix of pre-recorded content and live Q&A. UNCG is planning on holding the event again this fall.

Lessons Learned:

- Incentivize completion of program surveys
- Use a different reservation process. UNCG used a process currently in place for students to confirm attendance at our new student orientation. That tool did not work

well for this event. We weren't able to ask students what their intended major was or gather other important information that would have helped us better prepare.

- Yield rate for similar events targeting transfer students seem to be about 50%. This was the case with this event, and this has been the trend with other transfer student orientation events as well.
- Students desire more specific credit articulation to understand their own pathway.
- Track former GTCC students currently enrolled at UNCG and have their inclusion in the event to assist new transfer students.
- Presenters should receive as much information about the students attending the event to help them target their presentation to the needs of the students in the room.
- Offer incentives to completers of the post-event survey.

UNIVERSITY OF NORTH CAROLINA WILMINGTON:

Community College Undergraduate Research Experience (CCURE)

Rationale (including relationship to student success challenges): Undergraduate research (UR) is identified as a critical high-impact practice. When executed well, it supports student persistence and progress to degree. It also improves post-graduation opportunities in significant ways. UNCW faculty culture is highly supportive of such opportunities, and our Honors College and Applied Learning Office have been built intentionally to advance UR. In partnership with our Office of Applied Learning, UNCW's CSURF supports undergraduates research experience through faculty and student-facing resources, including applied learning grants, Summer/Spring Undergraduate Research and Creativity Awards (SURCA), and student research travel awards and research fellowships. CSURF also sponsors a one credit-hour introduction to research course (HON 191) taken primarily by first-year students, introducing them to opportunities in their major interest areas to engage in UR. The course is designed to help students to understand how such opportunities can be scaffolded through their undergraduate experience. CSURF also sponsors First-Year Research Experiences (FYRE) which offer incoming FTFY students who participate in an HON 190 a partnered mentored research experience with a willing faculty member (not the 191 instructor), who designs a low-stakes way to engage first-year students in ongoing labs and faculty research/creative production.

Our internal research makes it clear that transfer students are far less likely than FTFY students to 1) engage in high impact practices generally, 2) engage in UR in particular, 3) take HON 190, and 4) complete departmental honors research projects, even when they have appropriate GPAs to do so—all due to a general lack of awareness about these

opportunities, and the pressure many of them feel to make progress in or towards their chosen major at the time of matriculation. Curricularly, they are engaged in catch-up, and because they often bring in credits that cover introductory courses in their majors or related fields, they struggle to develop mentoring relationships with faculty and do so relatively in their academic development if at all.

Program: CCURE was developed to offer eligible community college students with a 190/ FYRE-like experience. It targets successful (> 2.5 GPA /24 credit hour) students who are planning to transfer to a four-year school (not necessarily UNCW) and offers UNCW credit to students to complete locally taught but UNCW-sponsored versions of 191 towards their associate degree. Participating students are matched with a UNCW faculty member, who agrees to develop a FYRE opportunity with a student or a group of students connected to their broad disciplinary area. The program was piloted in Spring 2021 with some 25 students, 3 CC instructors, and 3 UNCW faculty mentors, who worked with instructors and their classes to co-develop an introduction to research course and a partnered, mentored UNCW-based (virtual) research experience.

Costs for the program include, as we piloted It, salary support for CC instructors and a partner UNCW student research mentor, and tuition support for a 1 CH UNCW HON 190 course for up to 15 students, ran around \$7K per section. We used existing funds available to support faculty mentorship and applied learning.

Evaluation: Assessment of FYRE has to date has been primarily subjective based on student and faculty reflection with 93% of participants reporting being very satisfied or satisfied with the student-faculty member relationship and 93% of students being very satisfied or satisfied with the professional mentorship. We are committed to tracking FYRE's effects on both retention and levels of engagement with departmental honors participation. Our internal data indicates that first year students who participate in designated applied learning experiences are retained at 6-7% higher rates than our institutional norms.

CCURE pilot participants were evaluated via pre- and post-tests designed to measure self-perceptions of basic research skills and expectations and comfort levels with various aspects of the research and mentoring experience. They also participated in an end-of-experience demonstration of competency/showcase. Results from the showcase and the pre- and post-tests were strong and indicated across the board positive outcomes, particularly relative to the development of practical research skills. We intend to track CCURE participants as they matriculate relative to expected transfer year 1 to year 2 persistence, and the program's effectiveness in generating further engagement with UR.

Next Steps: We have secured Chancellor support to run up to 10 sections next year beginning in 2022. We expect the program to be scalable and are engaged in internal and external discussions about partnerships and funding.

Aspen-AASCU Transfer Intensive Project

UNCW was accepted into a program that the Aspen Institute and the America Association of State Colleges and Universities (AASCU) is coordinating called the [Transfer Intensive](#). The Transfer Intensive is a one-year initiative consisting of monthly sessions designed to support partnerships between community colleges and AASCU members in advancing the practices and policies associated with improved, more equitable transfer student success. The workshop series will provide practical support aimed at accelerating transfer reform over the course of the year at participating institutions. The primary goal of the project is for institutions to create a transfer strategic plan that can be scaled across multiple partnerships.

UNIVERSITY OF NORTH CAROLINA SYSTEM:

Understanding Transfer Credit Efficiency in North Carolina

South Eastern Regional Cluster Participants Cooperative Student Success Initiative

Funded by APLU’s Powered by Publics: Seed Funding for Collaborative Projects

Contacts and Institutions:

UNC Greensboro: Samantha Raynor, Asst. Vice Provost, Strategic Student Success Init.
Trina Gabriel, Asst. Director of Student Success

NC A&T: Regina Williams Davis, Asst. Provost for Student Success & A.
Support

NC State University: Carrie Zelna, Assoc. Vice Chancellor, Div. of Acad. & Student Affairs
Charles Clift, University Registrar

UNC Charlotte: John Smail, Assoc. Provost for Undergraduate Education

UNC Wilmington: Jess Boersma, Assoc. Dean of Student Success & Applied Learning
Amanda Fleming, University Registrar

Andy Mauk, Assoc. Provost of Institutional Research & Planning

Poor articulation agreements, inapplicability of many credits, and “streamlined pathways” that remain poorly aligned all work to increase, instead of decrease, time to graduation which in turn increases student costs. By enhancing our understanding of how credits are applied and curricula are structured, the authors may offer recommended policy

adjustments to improve the likelihood of transfer and reduce time to degree, as well as the affordability of the degree overall.

Project Goals: To better understand the relationship between credit alignment and success outcomes for transfer students, particularly those with an AA/AS and those who come from low-income backgrounds and are underrepresented minorities.

The five UNC institutions in the APLU South Eastern Cluster seek to accomplish the following regarding their transfer populations and policy that may impact transfer student success:

1. Understand how credit (particularly for AA/AS degree holders) is applied at the time of transfer (degree requirement versus elective credit, general education pre-requisite requirements, etc.)
2. Understand degree efficiency and curricular alignment between lower division coursework at the Community College and upper division coursework at UNC institutions.
3. Documenting misalignment in both credit applications and curricula in major transfer pathways.
4. Inform UNC System Policy guiding articulation of credit and recommendations.

Study Design/Management Plan: The population of interest for this study are NC Community College transfer students transferring to UNC institutions. Each participating UNC institution will select a large and a small NC Community College feeder institution to partner with on this project. Partnering institutions will share data with one another to ensure there is a full picture of the student's academic history for analysis. All UNC institutional data will be compiled into one dataset, which will include:

2-, 3-, and 4-year graduation rates of incoming transfer students from feeder partners broken out in cohorts based on the number of credits and associate degree completion at the time of transfer.

Measure of the percent applicability of community college credit at two points:

1. At admission to the UNC institution using current Baccalaureate Degree Plans for the student's intended majors as a guide for determining credit applicability.
2. At the time of graduation to account for changes in major.

Relationship between misalignment metrics and retention, persistence, and graduation rates (likelihood to retain, persist, graduate).

Comparisons between UNC institutional outcomes (to uncover promising practices).

Deliverables by August 2022:

1. Transfer dataset shared across UNC participating institution
2. Reporting of finding to APLU's Powered by Publics Scaling Student Success Initiative
3. Executive summary with recommendations for further action shared with the UNC System Office.

UNC TrACE - UNC Transfer Accelerate, Complete, and Engage

UNC TrACE (Transfer, Accelerate, Complete, and Engage) is a pilot program modeled after the ACE (Accelerate, Complete, Engage) intervention program developed by the City University of New York (CUNY) System in New York. CUNY ACE has proven to dramatically increase completion rates among community college students. The UNC TrACE program will target transfer students from the community college system who have earned an associate degree. The objective is to help more of those students complete their bachelor's within two years of transfer. Support from the System Office will cover most direct costs of the intervention, technical assistance from CUNY staff, and evaluation costs. SE Cluster members East Carolina University and UNC Greensboro are current participants, while UNCW is observing the replication model of the pilot programs in the 2022-2023 academic year with hopes to join the UNC TrACE program in the 2023-2024 academic year.

VIRGINIA TECH:

Hokie Corner: Integrated Admissions and Academic Advising for Prospective Transfer Students

Virginia Tech's Hokie Corner is a collaborative program offered by the Office of Undergraduate Admissions and Academic Advising Initiatives. The purpose of Hokie Corner is to provide comprehensive transfer guidance for students as they navigate the transfer process from prospect to applicant to on-boarded new Virginia Tech student. Prospective and admitted transfer students have the opportunity to meet one-on-one in 30-minute appointments with representatives from Virginia Tech's Office of Undergraduate Admissions and Academic Advising Initiatives. Hokie Corner appointments are open to all students, no matter where they are in their transfer journey.

The goals of Hokie Corner are to:

- Provide student-centered advising services.
- Provide up-to-date essential and accurate information regarding the admissions application process and requirements.
- Increase the number of applicants that are admissible to Virginia Tech per the admissions requirements and standards established by each major.
- Enhance the onboarding process for new transfer students by helping students identify campus resources they can utilize before and after they transfer to Virginia Tech.

Progression of Hokie Corner:

- 2018-2019 Hokie Corner launched as an onsite advising center at New River Community College. Representatives from both Undergraduate Admissions and Academic Advising Initiatives were available at each location 1 to 2 times a month, September through early December and February through early May.
- 2019-2020, Hokie Corner expanded to include onsite advising at Virginia Western and Wytheville Community Colleges. Spring 2020 Hokie Corner offered virtual appointments in addition to appointments at the physical locations with a pivot to an all-virtual model in March 2020 due to COVID-19 protocols.
- 2020-2021 Hokie Corner remained virtual. Appointment availability expanded to Monday through Thursday, August through May. The virtual platform opened appointments to students from community colleges as well 4-year institutions, private and public, nationally and internationally.

Outcomes and Metrics:

The increase in unique students served along with their resulting applications, admission offers, and yield are strong initial measures of program success.

	2018-19	2019-2020
Unique Students Served	87	278
Applications Submitted	65	195
Offered Admissions	55	155
Admissions Yield	49 (51%)	124 (80%)



Southeast Cluster Data and Assessment Effort:

As previously mentioned, the Southeast Cluster institutions included larger universities (Clemson, East Carolina, Florida State, North Carolina State, and Virginia Tech), the North Carolina System Office and its regional universities in Charlotte, Greensboro, and Wilmington, and a group of Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs) in this region, including North Carolina A&T, Virginia State, and South Carolina State. We decided to share data on transfer student retention and progress to and achievement of graduation among our member institutions. As we embarked on a data collection, standardizing, and visualization project, we recognized that our institutions' different missions, different transfer populations, and resources that each of us had to even fulfill a data request would influence how each institution compared with others in our cluster. We initially discussed looking at transfer students compared with first-time, full-time freshmen, disaggregated by:

- demographics (IPEDS race/ethnicity and gender),
- credits transferred in,

- prior associate degree earned vs. no prior degree earned, and comparing year-to-year (fall census date) progress towards graduation at each institution.

As we continued discussions about the format we would use to share our data sets, it became clear that the effort for institutional researchers, some of whom also served another role at their institution, would be substantial. As a result, we decided to begin our data comparison by requesting term-to-term retention and graduation numbers for all terms up to retention on year 7 census date. We created an Excel template that tracked the count of students in each cohort, broken out by transfer/full-time, first-time freshmen, IPEDS race and ethnicity categories, and gender enrolled at each fall census date and graduation in each academic year (with summer graduation included in the prior fall/spring academic year).

Once we began collecting data, we discovered that we needed common definitions for terms like “retained” and “attrition.” We decided to include students who had stopped out in our counts if they returned in a subsequent semester, since this pattern was common for some categories of students at some cluster institutions. Thus, a student could be counted as retained at the institution as long as they returned, even if they had stopped out for one or more terms. We also decided to forego tracking the number of credits transferred in and associate degree status in the data set, even though these factors might impact student retention and graduation rates. We took these steps to simplify the data request and facilitate timely participation by all cluster institutions, some of which had only a half-time institutional researcher.

What did we learn once we collected data from most (not all) of our cluster institutions?

It became obvious that institutional missions differed as did institutional student populations. Failing to consider these factors would have obscured outstanding work that is being done to support transfer students towards graduation. Success at a large urban public land-grant may look different than at a smaller rural land-grant where a larger percentage of students may need to work, for instance. It also became clear that retention and graduation for transfer students seems to reflect the robustness of state-level transfer initiatives, articulation agreements, and guided transfer paths.

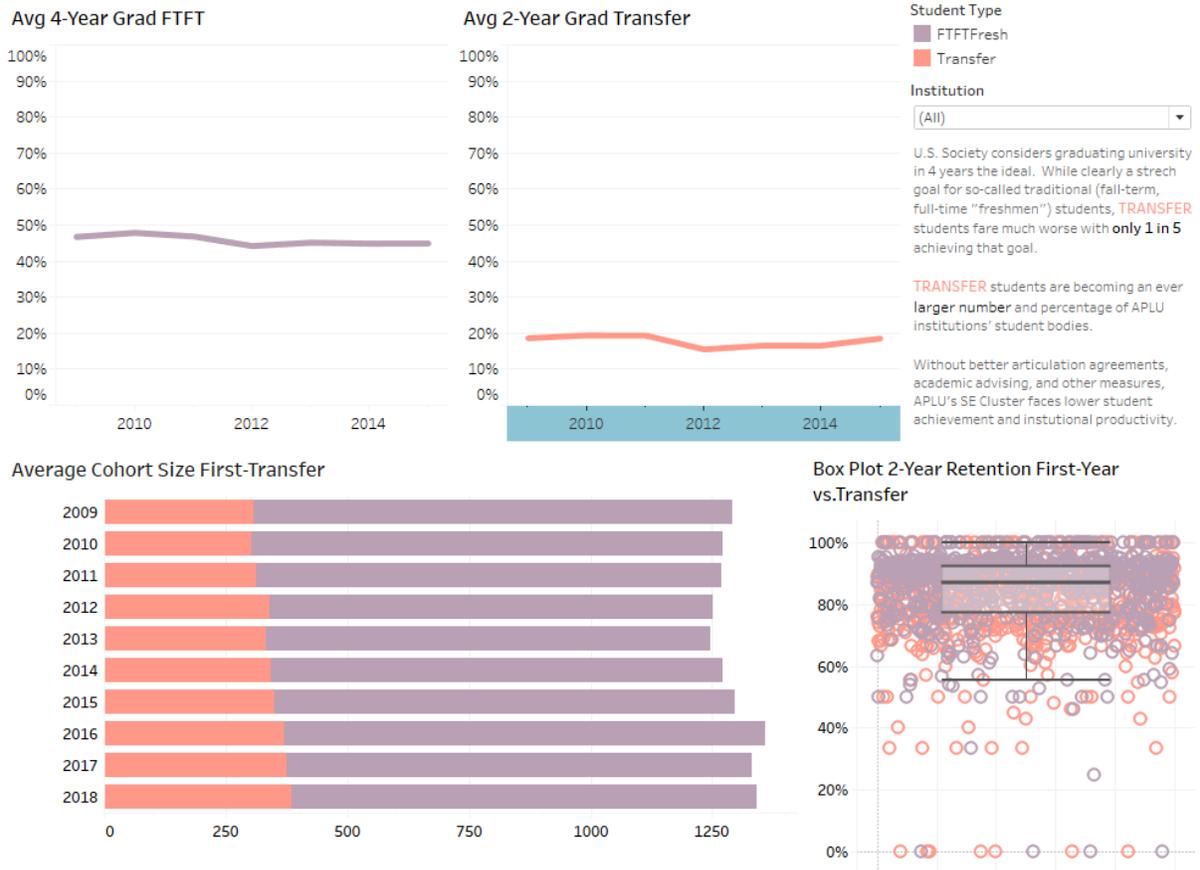
We also noted that not all transfer students and transfer programs are alike, which means that defining success or failure may depend much more on the context and strategy of the intervention. For example, in comparing 2- and 3-year non-cumulative graduation rates for transfer students, there is a 13% higher average 3-year graduation rate than the 2-year rates for transfer students across all institutions and all cohorts studied. This, in and of itself, may seem intuitive. However, there was some interesting variability when looking across institutions. For example, transfer students are a particularly important population

for UNCW, comprising 43% of the undergraduate population over the last 5 years. While there are various support programs and a campus culture that invites transfer students, such as stand-alone transfer orientations and targeted first-year seminar sections, the programming generally does not further segment transfer populations by credits earned. Perhaps as a result, UNCW has strong and very similar non-cumulative graduation rates (3%). Alternatively, students in Clemson University's BRIDGE program transfer in with 30 credits, rather than 60 credits, and BRIDGE students are 48% of Clemson's transfer population. This means that BRIDGE students are expected to graduate 3-4 years after transferring to Clemson, depending on their degree program. This needs to be considered when comparing Clemson's transfer population to an expected 2-year graduation timeline for students who transfer to any institution with associate degrees and 60 credits. Given, then, the BRIDGE program's proportional share of Clemson's transfer population and the investments made to those students, e.g., community living, it's understandably telling that Clemson sees a whopping 27% difference between the 3- and 2-year graduation rate for all transfer students.

Across our institutions that contributed to the dataset, comparing the 4-year graduation rate for full-time, first-time freshmen to the 2-year graduation rate for transfer students reveals a graduation gap. It is possible that more excess, unnecessary credits may be completed by transfer students, or that transfer students may be repeating courses before succeeding at a higher rate than first-time, full-time freshmen students. Certain states and cluster institutions have signaled possible pathways to greater success for transfer students. Florida State University, for example, had the highest non-cumulative 2-year graduation rate for transfer students across all cohorts among the participating cluster institutions. In addition to numerous transfer student programs, it's also worth noting the success of the "2+2" articulation system in Florida, which dates back to 1971 and has been enhanced by subsequent state policies to support it. Discussing the data and the possible contributors helped inspire follow-on work, e.g., the study "Understanding Transfer Credit Efficiency in North Carolina," which was funded by Powered by Publics and digs further into the actual degree of alignment in credit transfer at 5 UNC system schools.

Challenge #1: The Transfer Gap

Large disparities for an increasing APLU student population

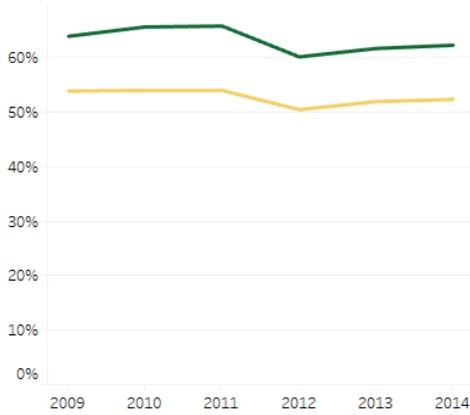


While it became clear that the data confirmed the collective interest in better understanding the attainment gaps of our transfer student populations, it's also important to note that the combined dataset and incorporation into data visualization software has allowed exploration into other areas. To that point, we also observed attainment gaps in retention and graduation in two other groups: by gender and by race.

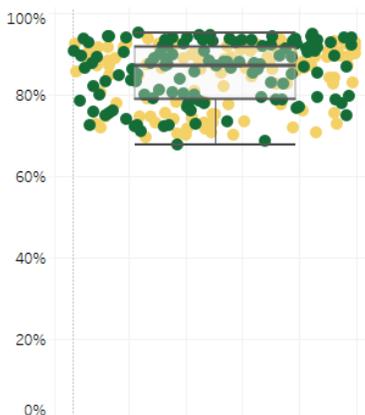
Regarding gender, not only are women more likely to enroll in college, but also this pattern reflects a national trend where women are outpacing men in completing college.

Female vs. Male Achievement

Female-Male 4-yr Grad Rates



Box Plot 2-Year Retention Female-Male



Gender Group

- Female
- Male

Institution

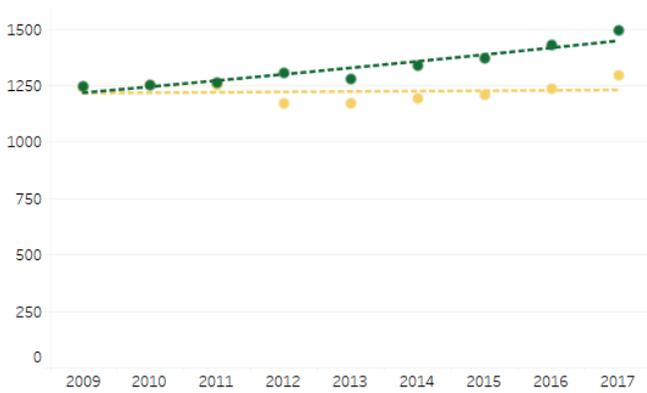
(All)

After transfer students, the **underperformance and flattened enrollments of male students** compared to females represent the next pressing challenge for the APLU SE Cluster.

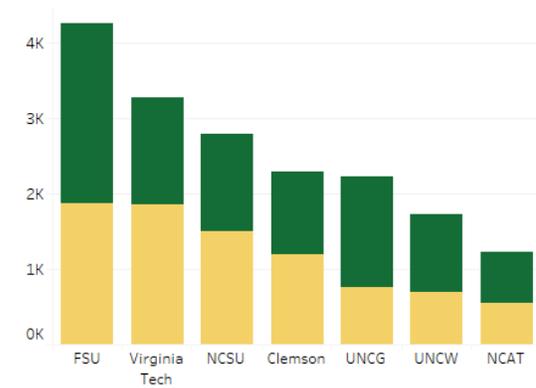
Given historic inequities and continued challenges women face regarding equal pay, representation in leadership, and gender violence, gender-targeted initiatives to improve male-student achievement and enrollment are politically fraught.

However, the APLU SE Cluster should explore where the data take us to possibly address **future challenges such as political and social unrest** correlated with underemployed and undereducated males.

Female-Male Average Cohorts



Average Cohort Size

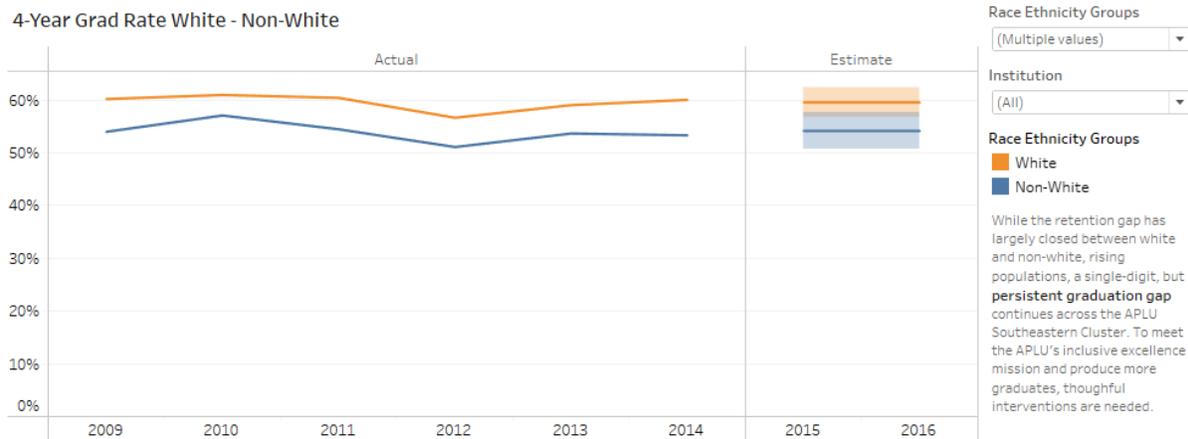


In the case of our institutions, the data show that one population is consistently being retained, graduating, and matriculating at higher rates than another, which should be a cause of concern or, at a minimum, a prompt further research. As the cluster focused on transfer students, a deeper dive into this trend was not within the scope of the current project. That said, this looks to be a challenge with no signs of subsiding and will require much more than a simple structuralist approach to addressing gender inequality.

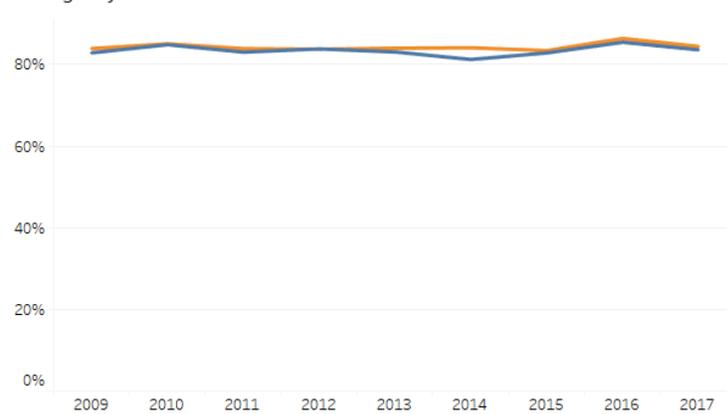
Likewise, we observed a less severe, but nonetheless persistent race gap, with White and Asian students retaining and graduating at a higher rate than students with other races/ethnicities. This trend is also reflected in IPEDS 6-year graduation rates nationally.

The Persistent Race Gap

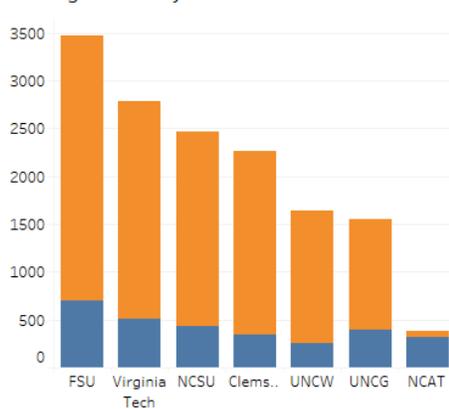
4-Year Grad Rate White - Non-White



Average 2-year Retention Rate



Average Cohort by Race



The gap may be even more pronounced when one considers the [graduation gap](#) and how the ability to succeed after graduation may differ dependent on debt assumed to attend and complete college.

Perhaps the most useful takeaway from our data visualization is that institutions with robust, embedded supports for transfer students had higher rates of retention and graduation than institutions with fewer or less extensive embedded support programs. We also noted that not all transfer students and transfer programs are alike, which means that defining success or failure may depend on the context and strategy of the intervention. For example, in comparing 2- and 3-year non-cumulative graduation rates for transfer students there is a 13% higher average graduation rate of the 3-year graduation rates than the 2-year rates for transfer students across all institutions and all cohorts studied. This, in and of itself may seem intuitive. However, there was some interesting variability when looking across institutions. For example, transfer students are a particularly important population for UNCW, comprising 43% of the undergraduate population over the last five years. While there are various programs and a campus culture that invites transfer students

such as stand-alone transfer orientations and targeted first-year seminar sections, the programming generally does not further segment transfer populations by credits earned. Perhaps as a result, UNCW has strong and very similar non-cumulative graduation rates for the two populations (i.e., within 3% of each other). Alternatively, students in Clemson University's BRIDGE program transfer in with 30 credits, rather than 60 credits, and BRIDGE students are 48% of Clemson's transfer population. This means that BRIDGE students are expected to graduate 3-4 years after transferring to Clemson, depending on their degree program. This needs to be considered when comparing Clemson's transfer population to an expected 2-year graduation timeline for students who transfer in to any institution with Associates' degrees and 60 credits. Given, then, the BRIDGE program's proportional share of Clemson's transfer population and the investments made in those students, e.g., community living, it's understandable that Clemson sees a whopping 27% difference between the 3- and 2-year graduation rate for all transfer students.

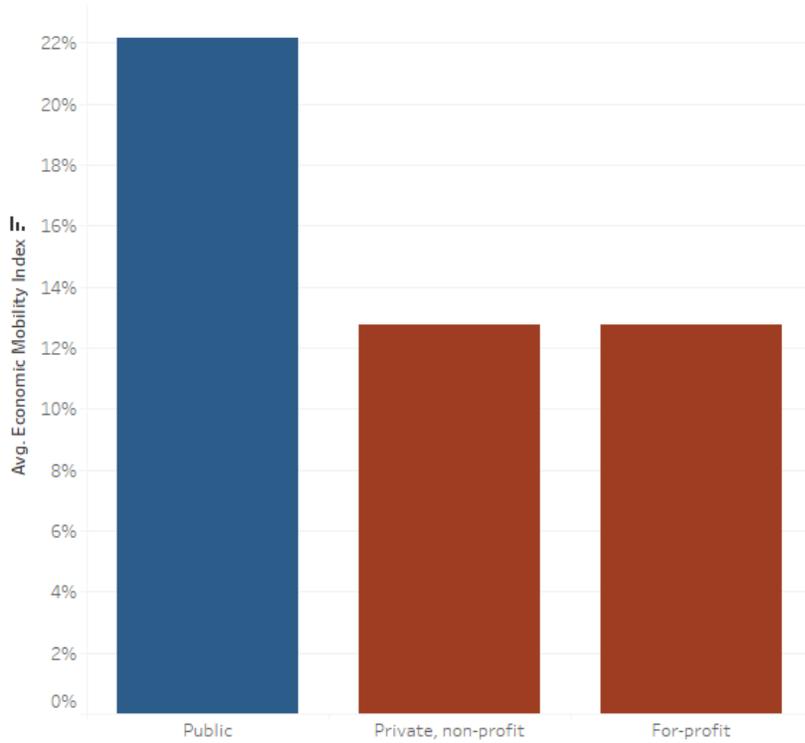
In other words, these public institutions are working under and as part of state systems that vary in the degree to which they have championed, resourced, and held accountable the respective universities: retention and graduation rates tell an important part of, but not the whole story. This realization initiated critical reflections on what indicators of success we're incorporating into our monitoring, reporting, marketing, and continuous improvement efforts. One such example was an exploration of [Third Way's Economic Mobility Index \(EMI\)](#), which attempts to reframe institutional rankings from variables such as historical prestige and selectivity to student outcomes and economic mobility.

While the South Eastern Cluster varied considerably by size and type of institutions, we all share a common mission to serve the students and citizens of our respective states. As a result, the goal is not only access, retention, and completion, but also improving students' ability to lead more productive, financially secure lives, so that they can contribute to the betterment of their States and Commonwealth. We held conversations about how our states and individual institutions were not only advancing achievement gaps for transfer students, but also are thinking about the socioeconomic diversity of whom we serve and how well we do so.

Economic Mobility by Institution Type

Data Source:

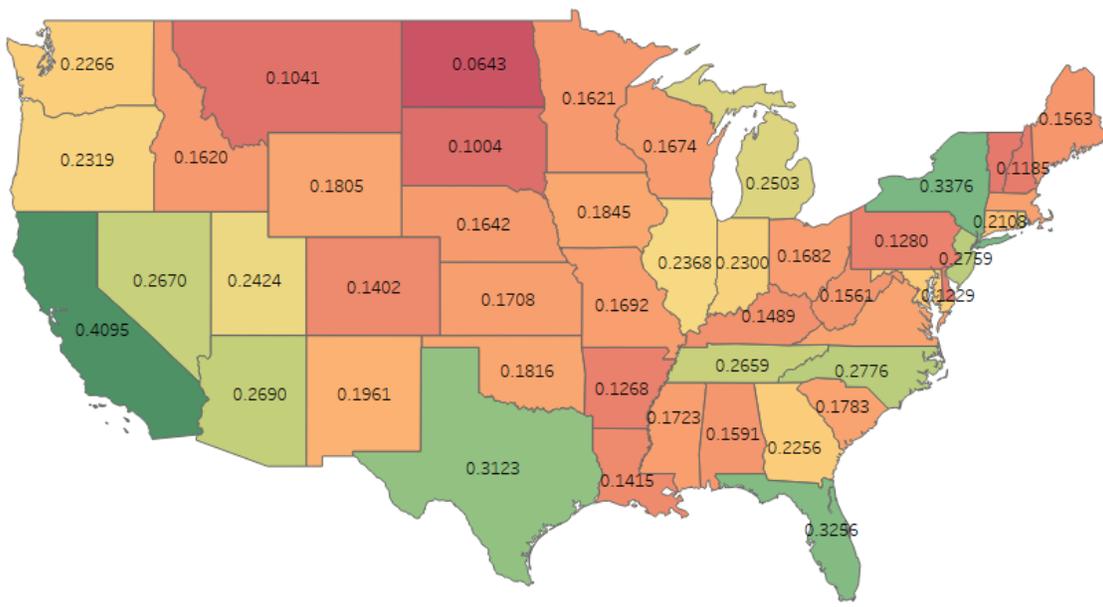
https://thirdway.imgix.net/downloads/out-with-the-old-in-with-the-new-rating-higher-ed-by-economic-mobility/EMI_Data.xlsx



Economic Mobility Index Continental United States Public Institutions

Data Source:

https://thirdway.imgix.net/downloads/out-with-the-old-in-with-the-new-rating-higher-ed-by-economic-mobility/EMI_Data.xlsx



APLU POWERED BY PUBLICS SOUTH EASTERN CLUSTER

Economic Mobility by State: Public Institutions

Data Source:

https://thirdway.imgix.net/downloads/out-with-the-old-in-with-the-new-rating-higher-ed-by-economic-mobility/EMI_Data.xlsx

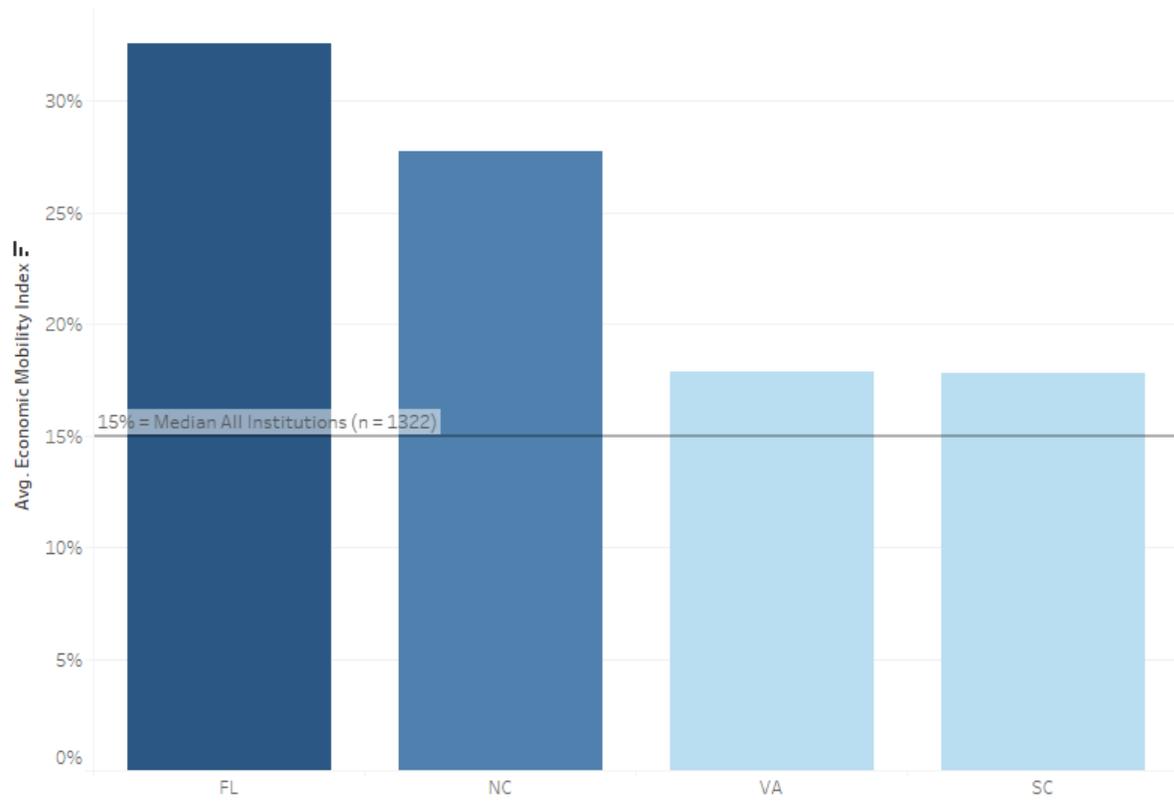




PHOTO COURTESY UNIVERSITY OF NORTH CAROLINA WILMINGTON

Next Steps:

The Powered by Publics effort has had the benefit of creating new opportunities for collaborative research, dissemination, and pursuing extramural support for student success work centered on transfer students. Venues such as the annual meeting of APLU's Commission on Information, Measurement, and Analysis have allowed SE Cluster members to present their findings and enter into dialogue with other Powered by Publics Institutions. Learning of the Western Land-grant Cluster work in curricular analytics, several SE Cluster institutions have begun employing [Curricular Analytics](#) as a tool to help identify potential chokepoints that are particularly prejudicial to transfer students who don't possess the same slack to adjust as first-time students do, if their goal is to complete with a degree in two or three years. The initiative also helped bring together five UNC Systems schools to look at in-state transfer efficiency at a time when that state is increasing its focus on transfer student success. Three SE Cluster institutions with an interest in improving STEM pipelines for transfer students have proposed a collaborative model that crosses three state lines and higher-education systems. Overall, the effort has exposed the group to a greater appreciation of the challenges and opportunities of the transfer student landscape across the four states in the South Eastern Cluster, and to the need to

continuously improve our understanding of our transfer student populations and of the programs and interventions we design to meet their diverse needs.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS:

While I may have been the lead organizer of this project and report, there are many who contributed to our conversations across the several years of this initiative. These academic leaders listed at the beginning of this report are truly passionate and dedicated to their students. I want to thank them all for sharing their experiences and wisdom! I especially want to thank my leadership team from Clemson, Bridget Trogden and Rene Schmauder. Rene, along with Jess Boersma from UNC-Wilmington became our data analytics team and not only built the data set and provided the graphs in this report, but also much of the insights derived through the assessment. I also want to thank Greg Thornton from APLU for his constant and always positive support of our cluster!



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