

NATIONAL STUDENT CLEARINGHOUSE[®]
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REPORT

Reverse Transfer:

A National View of Student Mobility
from Four-Year to Two-Year Institutions



Project on Academic Success



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Table of Contents

Acknowledgements	4
Executive Summary	5
Introduction	9
What We Gain By Examining Student Mobility From Four-Year To Two-Year Institutions	10
Studying Four-Year To Two-Year Mobility Through National Data.....	11
What to Find in This Report	12
A Note on the Data	12
Results	15
Prevalence and Timing of Reverse Transfer: The Fall 2005 Four-Year Beginning Cohort.....	15
Subsequent Enrollment Following Reverse Transfer	19
Six-Year Outcomes	27
Discussion	37
Prevalence of Reverse Transfer	37
Subsequent Enrollment Behaviors of Reverse Transfer Students	37
Subsequent Enrollment Outcomes Following Short- and Long-Term Enrollments in Two-Year Institutions	38
Overall Six-Year Outcomes for All Reverse Transfer Students	39
Completion at the Institution of Origin	39
Six-Year Outcomes for Reverse Transfer Students Who Returned to Institution of Origin	40
Implications for Institutional and Public Policymaking	40
References	43
Appendix A: Methodological Notes	45
Appendix B: Coverage Table	51
Appendix C: Results Tables	53

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REVERSE TRANSFER: A NATIONAL VIEW OF STUDENT MOBILITY FROM FOUR-YEAR TO TWO-YEAR INSTITUTIONS

In its second Signature Report™, *Transfer and Mobility: A National View of Pre-Degree Student Movement in Postsecondary Institutions* (Hossler et al., 2012), the National Student Clearinghouse® Research Center™ found that one-third of all first-time students who began at a four-year institution transferred to or enrolled at a different institution at least once within five years after their initial enrollment and that more than half of those students went to a two-year institution. This new, third report in the series, *Reverse Transfer: A National View of Student Mobility from Four-Year to Two-Year Institutions*, explores in more detail this latter group of students, those who went from four-year to two-year institutions, focusing on reverse transfer behavior among first-time-in-college students who entered four-year colleges and universities in fall 2005 and following their college enrollments for six years through the summer of 2011. Drawn from data housed at the National Student Clearinghouse, the report examines:

- The prevalence of reverse transfer nationwide, with contextual information on summer session course taking behavior, broken out by initial enrollment intensity, control of institution of origin, and timing of first enrollment in the two-year sector;
- Subsequent enrollment outcomes following reverse transfer by students' length of enrollment in the two-year sector, enrollment intensity during the first term at a two-year institution, and control of institution of origin;
- Student pathways and completion at institution of origin; and
- Six-year outcomes for all reverse transfer students by length of enrollment in the two-year sector for students who returned to their institution of origin, disaggregated by control type of institution of origin.

The findings presented in this report show that within six years, 14.4 percent of the first-time students who started at a four-year institution in the fall of 2005 subsequently enrolled at a two-year institution outside of summer months or reverse transferred and an additional 5.4 percent enrolled at a two-year institution for summer courses only. The reverse transfer rate was higher among part-time students (16.4 percent) compared to students who initially enrolled full time (13.1 percent) and was also higher among those who started at a public four-year institution (15.8 percent) than among those who initially enrolled at a private nonprofit four-year institution (11.4 percent) or a private for-profit four-year institution (10.8 percent). Several other points that emerged from the analysis are summarized below.

SUBSEQUENT ENROLLMENT BEHAVIORS OF REVERSE TRANSFER STUDENTS

Tracking the subsequent enrollments of reverse transfer students showed that, unlike the summer session course takers who overwhelmingly (80.7 percent) returned to their original four-year institution, only a small minority (16.6 percent) of those with two-year enrollments outside of summer months returned to the four-year institution where they began. Almost twice as many (28.3 percent) returned to the four-year sector but to a different institution. More than half of reverse transfer students (55.1 percent) did not return to any four-year institution by the end of the study period. These findings demonstrate that enrollment at a two-year institution after beginning college at a four-year college or university does not necessarily mean that a student has made a permanent reverse transfer. However, results also show that — whether or not they had intended to return to their institution of origin — the majority of reverse transfer students did not return.

SUBSEQUENT ENROLLMENT OUTCOMES FOLLOWING SHORT- AND LONG-TERM ENROLLMENTS AT TWO-YEAR INSTITUTIONS

The majority of reverse transfer students (71.1 percent) stayed at a two-year institution for more than one term. Not surprisingly, the longer students stayed at a two-year institution, the lower the rate at which they returned to their institution of origin. Among those four-year starters who enrolled at a two-year institution for only one term, almost one-third (31.4 percent) returned to the institution of origin, while only 10.5 percent of those with multiple terms at a two-year institution did so. This suggests that four-year institutions employing outreach strategies to increase the number of returning students among this population have only a small window of time in which to do so.

OVERALL SIX-YEAR OUTCOMES FOR ALL REVERSE TRANSFER STUDENTS

By the end of the study period, among all four-year starters who enrolled at a two-year institution, even for just one term, only 17.8 percent returned and completed a degree at a four-year institution, while 16.1 percent were still enrolled at a four-year institution. Two-thirds of all reverse transfer students neither had a credential from nor were still enrolled at a four-year institution. However, one-third of reverse transfer students in the fall 2005 four-year beginning cohort either completed or were still enrolled at a two-year institution at the end of the study period. While conventional retention studies would categorize them as nonpersisters, this result nevertheless shows that these students continued their postsecondary career and earned credentials in the two-year sector.

COMPLETION AT THE INSTITUTION OF ORIGIN

To draw possible insights on how enrollment at a two-year institution might be related to completion at the four-year institution of *origin*, we compared completion rates at the institution of origin for students with enrollment pathways that did or did not include enrollment at a two-year institution. Our findings show that those four-year starters who enrolled at a two-year institution during summer months only and returned to their institution of origin had a very high completion rate, 77.5 percent. By comparison, the completion rate for those who never enrolled at a two-year institution was 58.4 percent (at students' institution of origin) — almost 20 percentage points lower. In contrast, the completion rate was lower among reverse transfer students who returned to their institution of origin after enrolling at a two-year institution outside of summer months, from 40 percent to as low as 33 percent, depending on the length of their stay in the two-year sector. These findings point to various roles of two-year enrollment in four-year students' academic trajectories.

SIX-YEAR OUTCOMES FOR REVERSE TRANSFER STUDENTS WHO RETURNED TO INSTITUTION OF ORIGIN

In our findings, 16.6 percent of those who enrolled at a two-year institution for one or multiple terms returned to their institution of origin. Of those, 60 percent either completed (36.8 percent) or remained enrolled (23.3 percent) at the institution of origin by the end of the study period. In other words, out of all students who left their original four-year institution to enroll at a two-year institution in nonsummer months, only one in 10 completed a degree or was still enrolled at the original four-year institution by the end of the study period.

By informing our understanding of student mobility from four-year to two-year institutions at a national level and within the institutional context, the findings from this study have implications for policy at the institutional, state, and national level. At both two-year and four-year institutions, campus policymakers who understand the patterns of reverse transfer behavior will be better able to craft policies to help institutions reach their enrollment goals and to assist students in making decisions about their educational pathways. In addition, this kind of analysis may help institutions and public policymakers develop more comprehensive measures of student success and better indicators for institutional accountability. Additional implications for institutional and public policymaking can be found in the body of the report.

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Students' postsecondary pathways through multiple institutions are complex as well as broadly encompassing. In the past decade and a half, more attention has been given to the tendency of students to attend multiple institutions while working toward their educational goals (Adelman, 2006; Bach et al., 2000; Dougherty & Kienzl, 2006; Doyle, 2009; Eagan & Jaeger, 2009; Goldrick-Rab & Pfeffer, 2009; McCormick, 2003; McCormick & Carroll, 1997; U.S. Department of Education, 2001, 2005). In its second Signature Report™ *Transfer and Mobility: A National View of Pre-Degree Student Movement in Postsecondary Institutions* (Hossler et al., 2012), the National Student Clearinghouse® Research Center™ found that one-third of all students who started college in fall 2006 transferred or enrolled at a different institution at least once within five years. Additionally, one-quarter of those who transferred did so more than once. The report findings also showed that the phenomenon is not restricted to students at one particular type of institution — students who started at two-year and four-year institutions had strikingly similar mobility rates within five years.

There are signs that federal policy is evolving to reflect this new reality of student enrollment pathways. Notably, the U.S. Department of Education recently released an action plan that includes revising its data collection procedures to include students who transfer, enroll part time, and enter an institution as non-first-time students, as well as to consider alternative measures of student and institutional success using the data currently collected (U.S. Department of Education, 2012). At the same time, college completion has become an increasingly important focus of higher education policy at national, state, and institutional levels. Together, these two shifts highlight the need to consider the multiple and complex pathways students take towards successful educational outcomes and degrees (Adelman, 2006; Hebel & Selingo, 2009; Reyna, 2010). This is because the narrow definition of completion that looks only at outcomes from the starting institution does not fully reflect today's students' experiences.

This report focuses on a specific type of student mobility: students who began their postsecondary education at four-year institutions and later enrolled at two-year institutions, a pathway sometimes referred to in the literature as "reverse transfer" (Kajstura & Keim, 1992; Townsend & Dever, 1999; Winter & Harris, 1999). While administrators and faculty at two-year institutions have been aware of the reverse transfer phenomenon for many decades (Townsend, 1999), researchers turned to this issue mostly from the late 1990s. Still, it remains an underresearched topic, perhaps because of the difficulty until recently of obtaining transcript or tracking data on sufficient numbers of students. Previous studies have provided some evidence of the prevalence of these enrollment patterns (Adelman, 1999, 2006; Hossler et al., 2012; McCormick, 2003; McCormick & Carroll, 1997). Using sample data from the Beginning Postsecondary Students (BPS) 1989-1990 data, McCormick found that 45 percent of four-year transfer students had gone to two-year institutions (i.e., were reverse transfers). In a different study using sample data from the National Education Longitudinal Study (NELS) 1988/2000, Goldrick-Rab and Pfeffer (2009) found that 15 percent of all students who started at four-year institutions reverse transferred. Lastly, in the 2012 report referenced above, using enrollment data covering nearly the full population of students who began college in fall 2006, the second Signature Report™ by the National Student Clearinghouse® Research Center (Hossler et al., 2012) found that 52 percent of students who transferred from four-year institutions within five years of entry went to two-year institutions.

Although they contribute much to our general understanding of this phenomenon, empirical studies that have examined reverse transfer show limitations in their ability to fully capture student outcomes. Many of these studies focus on a single institution, city, or region, using institutional or state unit record databases, and therefore cannot account for enrollments in multiple institutions, cross-state transfer, or transfer in and out of private institutions (Bach et al., 2000; Hillman, Lum, & Hossler, 2008). Thus, much remains to be known about this type of movement and how it might be related to subsequent student outcomes.

WHAT WE GAIN BY EXAMINING STUDENT MOBILITY FROM FOUR-YEAR TO TWO-YEAR INSTITUTIONS

In spite of the negative connotation of the term “reverse,” reverse mobility cannot easily be classified as either a positive or negative student outcome and, as previous studies have shown, can play an important role in the academic trajectories of students. If one were to focus only on baccalaureate attainment, not surprisingly, the research shows that reverse transfer is associated with extended time to degree and lower rates of completion (Goldrick-Rab & Pfeffer, 2009). However, research also shows that reverse transfer students “have more academic and labor market outcomes than otherwise similar students who drop out of postsecondary school altogether” (Kalogrides & Grodsky, 2011, p. 853). In other words, while reverse transfer may not be the best indicator for students aiming to complete a bachelor’s degree, it is clearly a positive indicator for students transitioning to a more direct route to a shorter degree completion, and certainly preferable to withdrawing from a four-year institution and dropping out of higher education altogether.

Relatively little attention has been given to student movement from four-year to two-year institutions (Hillman, Lum, & Hossler, 2008). To date, policy discussions and research have generated much more knowledge about transfer from two-year to four-year institutions in comparison. There are two principal reasons for this. First, transfer to a four-year institution is an essential component of the community college mission (Bragg, 2001; Cohen & Brawer, 2003; Townsend, 2001), and thus is considered a success outcome for two-year institutions; transfer is not traditionally part of the mission of four-year institutions in the same way. Consequently, transfer is not seen as a measure of institutional success at four-year institutions, even if students who transfer subsequently complete a degree. Further, there are structures in place to support student mobility from two- to four-year institutions. For example, 2+2 curricular structures at the state level have been established in many states to support this type of student movement, and the development of articulation agreements between two- and four-year institutions is encouraged, if not mandated, by many states to facilitate successful student transfer from community colleges to four-year colleges and universities (Anderson, Sun, & Alfonso, 2006; Ignash & Townsend, 2000; Western Interstate Commission for Higher Education, 2010).

Reasons for the emphasis on two-year to four-year mobility notwithstanding, there are several compelling arguments that recommend a closer look at reverse transfer. First, from a public policy point of view, state policymakers are increasingly focused on (1) student enrollment outcomes as indicators of the success and quality of individual public institutions and on (2) state policies that have been enacted to improve enrollment related outcomes (e.g., retention, degree or certificate completion). In addition, as we have already noted, a substantial number of students reverse transfer each year. It is axiomatic, furthermore, that campus policymakers are interested in the enrollment behaviors of reverse transfer students and the extent to which institutions might influence students’ decisions, so as to be able to increase enrollment, persistence, and graduation.

By examining in greater detail the patterns and outcomes of reverse mobility in this report, we are able to:

- Offer four-year institutions a context for understanding what happens to many of their “missing” students — students who cease their enrollment at the institution and whom they do not have an ability to track.
- Present two-year institutions with an informed perspective on a substantial number of transfer students they enroll.

- Provide a more nuanced understanding of four- to two-year student mobility, distinguishing patterns involving short-term or casual course-taking from that which includes longer-term enrollment at two-year institutions.
- Contribute a more complete understanding of the role community colleges and other two-year institutions play in the national college completion agenda, where they provide short- and longer-term educational experiences for students who initially enroll at four-year institutions.

We seek to accomplish these goals through the findings presented in this report and bring attention to this prevalent but understudied pattern of student mobility.

STUDYING FOUR-YEAR TO TWO-YEAR MOBILITY THROUGH NATIONAL DATA

Students who initially enroll at four-year institutions may subsequently enroll at a two-year institution for many different reasons. Previous research (Hagedorn & Castro, 1999; Mullin & Phillippe, 2009; Townsend, 2001; Winter & Harris, 1999) identifies at least of eight of those reasons:

1. Students who initially enroll at four-year institutions will often transfer to community colleges, which generally offer courses at lower tuition prices, to save money.
2. Students' educational goals may change over time, and they may concurrently change their academic trajectories as well, perhaps opting for short-term programs or vocational programs available at two-year institutions that may not be available at four-year institutions.
3. Students who attend residential four-year colleges and universities may enroll in courses over the summer at institutions near their homes.
4. Personal situations may require a student who moves away for college to return home for a period of time or may require other students to move to a new region for reasons not having to do with their schooling.
5. Students who do not perform well academically at the institutions where they initially enroll may leave the four-year institution to seek the learning environment of a two-year institution.
6. Some students may not find the environment of the four-year institutions where they initially enroll to be welcoming and may consequently seek a different sort of environment at two-year institutions.
7. Students who live in regions with multiple institutions in close proximity to each other may leverage the flexibility afforded by enrollment at multiple institutions — alternating semesters of enrollment or mixing enrollment within the same semester — making these choices in part based on how well course offerings by each institution align with the students' personal and work schedules.

To begin to account for the diverse reasons why students may reverse transfer, in this study, we separate four-year starters who enrolled at a two-year institution only during summer terms (defined as terms that begin and end between May 1 and August 31 of a given year) from those who enroll in a "regular" term during nonsummer months. As we demonstrate, there is a large difference in the subsequent pathways followed by these two groups of students. For example, summer-only enrollments at two-year institutions are mostly short-term, followed by immediate return to the starting institution, and thus may not represent any significant change in students' educational goals.

Short-term enrollment at a two-year institution may also happen in nonsummer months and may or may not overlap with the student's enrollment at the original four-year institution. Because our definition of reverse transfer excludes those who concurrently enrolled at their original four-year institution with their enrollment at a two-year institution, in this study, enrollment at a two-year institution in nonsummer months by definition means departure from the original institution. We hypothesized that short-term departure from the institution of origin may have a different relationship with students' later outcomes from one that spans over multiple terms. For this reason, we categorize those who reverse transferred in nonsummer months into two subgroups: those who spent only one term and those who spent multiple terms at a two-year institution.

WHAT TO FIND IN THIS REPORT

This report focuses on four- to two-year mobility, with an emphasis on reverse transfer behavior among first-time-in-college students who initially enrolled at four-year colleges and universities in fall 2005, and follows their college enrollment for six years through the summer of 2011. The tables and figures presented in this report explore:

- The prevalence of reverse transfer nationwide, with contextual information on summer session course taking behavior, broken out by initial enrollment intensity, control of institution of origin and timing of first enrollment in the two-year sector;
- Subsequent enrollment outcomes following reverse transfer by students' length of enrollment in the two-year sector, enrollment intensity during the first term at a two-year institution, and control of institution of origin;
- Student pathways and completion at institution of origin; and
- Six-year outcomes for all reverse transfer students by length of enrollment in the two-year sector for students who returned to their institution of origin, disaggregated by control type of institution of origin.

Coming Up in the Next Signature Report

The Clearinghouse's fourth Signature Report will focus on college completions nationwide, examining completion rates for students starting at different types of institutions, including whether they enrolled part time or full time and whether the students finished at the same institution or somewhere else.

A NOTE ON THE DATA

Data Source

The data for this report were drawn from the StudentTrackerSM and DegreeVerifySM services, administered by the National Student Clearinghouse (Clearinghouse), which tracks 93 percent of college enrollments across all postsecondary institutions nationwide, including all institution types — two-year and four-year institutions, public and private institutions, and nonprofit and for-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 data's coverage rate for each institution category (sector and control). A complete explanation of national coverage rates and the weights used to ensure that results reflect enrollment by sector and control, and nationally can be found in Appendix A.

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 Clearinghouse data in the original cohort but not for the likelihood of finding that student again if he or she moves to a different institution. The extent of student mobility is thus underestimated in this report, particularly in cases in which students move into institutional sectors with lower coverage rates. Overall student mobility rates were underestimated for all categories of institution of origin and rates were underestimated to a slightly higher extent for for-profit institutions of origin.

The enrollment patterns captured in this report are based on student-level data and represent an unduplicated headcount of students across all institutions. This feature of the Clearinghouse 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 student mobility. Because of the capability of StudentTrackerSM to link enrollment records across institutions nationally, the Clearinghouse data allow researchers to follow students longitudinally as they move from institution to institution and from the four-year sector to the two-year sector and back again.

Although Clearinghouse 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 at 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-in-college students, of any age, who began their postsecondary studies in the fall of 2005. First-time status was established by ensuring that a student did not show any postsecondary enrollment record in the four years prior to the student's fall 2005 enrollment and did not receive any degree or certificate from a two- or four-year institution prior to fall 2005, according to Clearinghouse data.

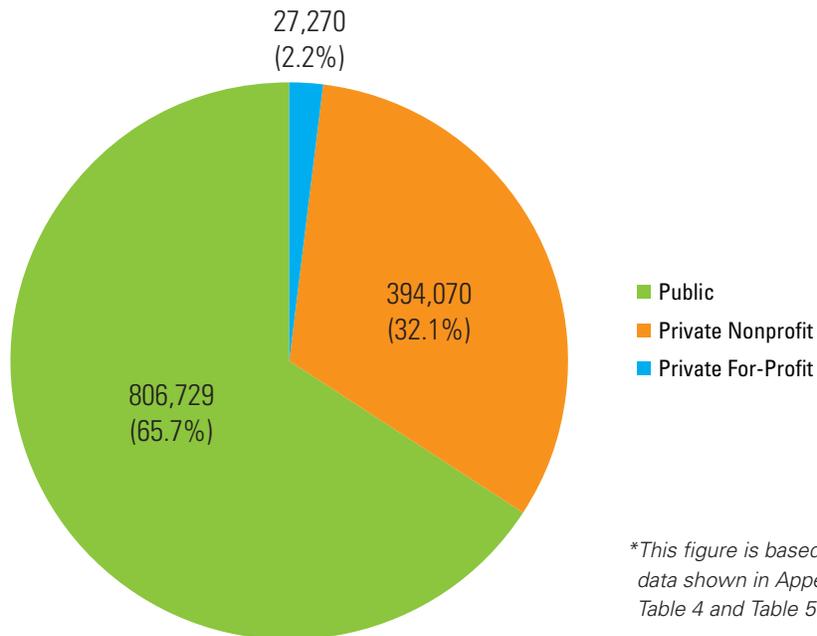
Researchers face considerable complexity in operationalizing the category of first-time student in analyses, depending on the strengths and limitations of the data sets used. The Clearinghouse and the Project on Academic Success (PAS) balanced competing priorities in selecting a method for identifying the cohort to be studied in this report. On the one hand, Clearinghouse data allowed researchers to capture a unique headcount of students nationally and, therefore, to follow individual students, while accounting for concurrent enrollments. In addition, Clearinghouse 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 idiosyncratic definitions as well as by errors in institutions' transactional records. On the other hand, limitations do arise with this approach. Because Clearinghouse data on designations for class year are incomplete, for example, the researchers were not able to use them for this report. Consequently, the sample may include 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 DegreeVerifySM 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.)

For this report, researchers analyzed student mobility from four-year to two-year institutions among first-time-in-college students who started at a four-year institution in fall 2005 over a span of six years, through summer 2011. The study defines four-year to two-year student mobility as enrollment at a

two-year institution by a student whose first enrollment in fall 2005 was at a four-year institution — provided that the student had not already completed a degree or certificate and was not still enrolled (concurrently) at the original institution. This kind of enrollment pattern, in which a student changes institutions and sectors, was regarded as four-year to two-year mobility in this study regardless of subsequent enrollment behavior (e.g., returning to the institution of origin). Therefore, even if a student left his or her original four-year institution, enrolled at a two-year institution for a short time, and then returned to the original institution, this pattern was categorized as four-year to two-year student mobility for this report, regardless of the length of the term or terms spent enrolled in the two-year sector.

The figure below shows the breakdown by control of the institutions of origin in this study cohort. The study cohort represents a total of 1,228,069 first-time-in-college students who began postsecondary education in the four-year sector in fall 2005. Specifically, public four-year institutions enrolled 65.7 percent of the cohort (n=806,729), followed by private nonprofit and private for-profit four-year institutions, which enrolled 32.1 percent (n=394,070) and 2.2 percent (n=27,270) of the cohort, respectively.

Fall 2005 Four-Year Beginning Cohort (N=1,288,069) by Control of Institution of Origin



PREVALENCE AND TIMING OF REVERSE TRANSFER: THE FALL 2005 FOUR-YEAR BEGINNING COHORT

Given the limitations of data sources previously available and the emerging changes in student pathways in higher education, student mobility between four-year and two-year institutions has traditionally been difficult to track. As presented in this report, National Student Clearinghouse (the Clearinghouse) data allow researchers and institutions a new perspective through which to understand the prevalence of student transfer from four-year to two-year institutions. This section of the report, first, describes the general prevalence of reverse transfer among students who initially enrolled at a four-year institution in fall 2005, considering reverse transfer patterns overall across the six-year study period between fall 2005 and summer 2011. The first set of findings distinguishes between two groups of students: (1) reverse transfers, who enrolled at a two-year institution during at least one term other than a summer term, and (2) summer session course takers, whose enrollment at a two-year institution occurred only during the summer months.* As the findings in this section show, summer session course takers differ from reverse transfer students in many notable ways.

Table 1 shows the prevalence of reverse transfer and summer session course taking found in the study, depicting movement from four- to two-year institutions among the 2005 four-year beginning cohort.

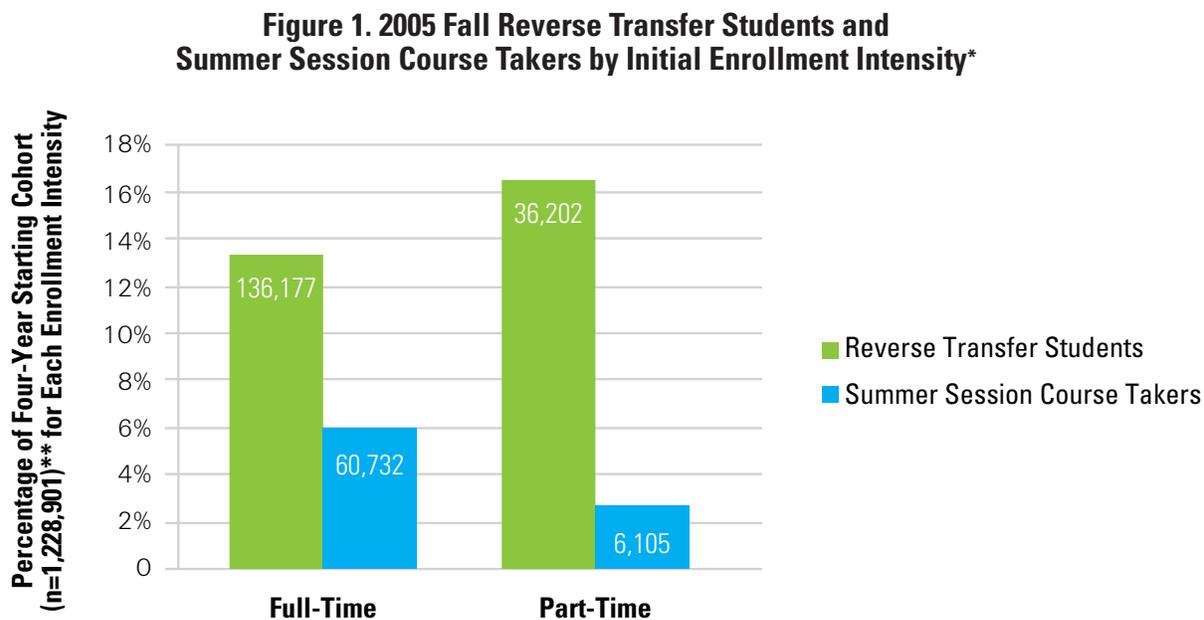
Table 1. Enrollment at Two-Year Institutions by Students Who Began at Four-Year Institution

	Weighted Count	% of All Fall 2005 Four-Year Enrollees (n=1,244,349)
Reverse Transfer Students	178,846	14.4%
Summer Session Course Takers	67,231	5.4%
Total	246,077	19.8%

Across the U.S., more than 1.2 million first-time-in-college students began their postsecondary education at a four-year institution in fall 2005. Among this group, 14.4 percent later enrolled at a two-year institution for one or more terms outside of summer months, and 5.4 percent enrolled at a two-year institution for summer courses only. Among both groups of students, some may have later returned to the four-year sector, dropped out, or remained enrolled in the two-year sector through the end of the study period.

*Due to changes in Clearinghouse data collection procedures over the years, not all summer enrollments are captured in this study. For more details see Data Limitations in Appendix A.

Figure 1 shows the prevalence of reverse transfer and summer session course taking among the 2005 four-year beginning cohort, according to whether they began their initial term in the four-year sector as full-time students or as part-time students.



**This figure is based on data shown in Appendix C, Tables 2 and 3.*

***Totals for figures disaggregated by institution type (n=1,228,069) and those disaggregated by enrollment status (n=1,228,901) differ from the overall total presented in Table 1 (n=1,244,349) due to weighting.*

Among the over 1 million students who initially enrolled full-time at a four-year institution, 13.5 percent transferred to a two-year institution at some point during the study period, while 6.0 percent took summer session courses at a two-year institution during the same time.

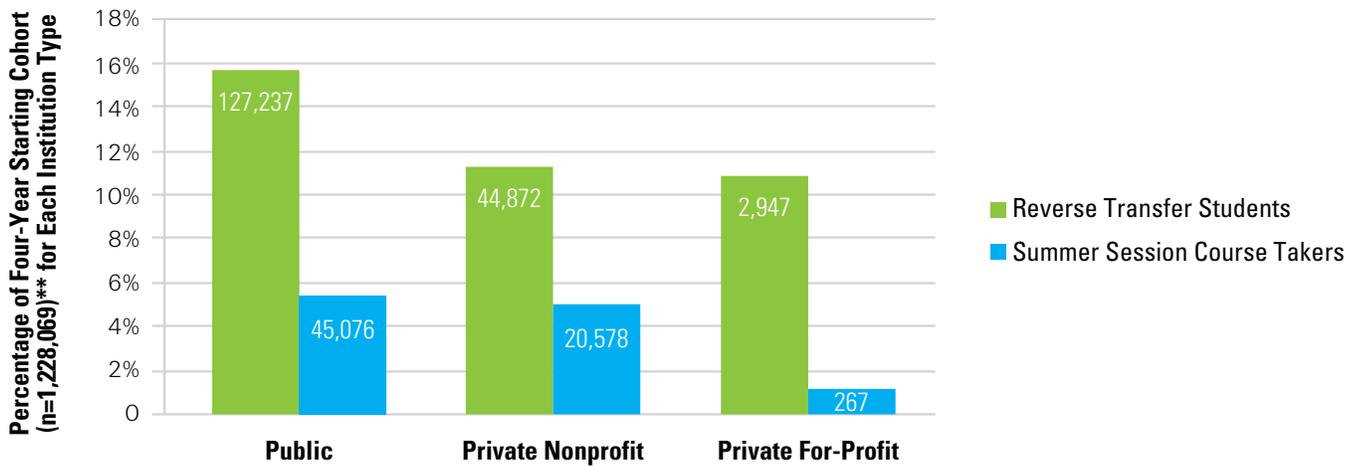
Among those 220,210 students who began part-time at a four-year institution during fall 2005, 16.4 percent later enrolled at a two-year institution (outside of summer months), while only 2.8 percent took summer session courses at a two-year institution.

Thus, a higher proportion of part-time students than full-time students reverse transferred, while the opposite was true for summer course taking. Full-time students had a higher rate of summer-only enrollment at a two-year institution than did part-time students. These results suggest that two-year institutions play a vital role in the postsecondary pathways of part-time students at four-year institutions, while full-time students at four-year institutions may tend more to use two-year institutions to supplement their progress toward a bachelor's degree at their institution of origin.

Examining both the differences among these various types of four- to two-year mobility as well as patterns of reverse transfer specifically shows that the prevalence of reverse transfer and summer session course taking varied somewhat across different types of four-year institutions of origin.

As shown in Figure 2, 15.8 percent of students who began at a public four-year institution reverse transferred at least once during the six-year study period. A substantially smaller proportion of students who began at a public four-year institution (5.6 percent) took summer courses at a two-year institution. Private nonprofit four-year institutions saw a smaller proportion of reverse transfers (11.4 percent) among their fall 2005 beginning cohort but a similar level of summer session course taking at two-year institutions (5.2 percent).

Figure 2. Fall 2005 Reverse Transfer Students and Summer Session Course Takers by Control of Institution of Origin*



*This figure is based on data shown in Appendix C, Tables 4 and 5.

**Totals for figures disaggregated by institution type (n=1,228,069) and those disaggregated by enrollment status (n=1,228,901) differ from the overall total presented in Table 1 (n=1,244,349) due to weighting.

Students who began at a private for-profit institution were least likely either to reverse transfer (10.8 percent) or to take summer courses (1.0 percent) at a two-year institution subsequent to fall 2005.

Insights regarding the timing of four-year students' enrollment in the two-year sector could point to implications for policy and practice at institutions. Figure 3 shows the timing of initial enrollment at a two-year institution for reverse transfer students and summer session course takers, presenting the proportions of students within each of the two groups by when the enrollment occurred.

Figure 3. Reverse Transfer Students and Summer Session Course Takers by Timing of First Enrollment at Two-Year Institution*



*This figure is based on data shown in Appendix C, Tables 6 and 7.

The second National Student Clearinghouse® Research Center™ Signature Report™, *Transfer and Mobility: A National View of Pre-Degree Student Movement in Postsecondary Institutions* (Hossler et al., 2012), showed that the second year of college was the peak year for student transfer in general. The pattern of reverse transfer in terms of timing shown here further substantiates those findings. For more than a third of students who reverse transferred, the first time they did so was in their second academic year (36.4 percent). This was followed by relatively lower proportions of students reverse transferring in their third (21.5 percent) or first year (15.0 percent).

However, reverse transfer students and summer session course takers showed distinctly different patterns in their enrollments at two-year institutions across time. In contrast to reverse transfer students, nearly half (49.0 percent) of summer session course takers enrolled in the two-year sector during their first year of college. These early enrollments were followed by substantially lower proportions in students' second and third years, 24.9 percent and 15.8 percent respectively.

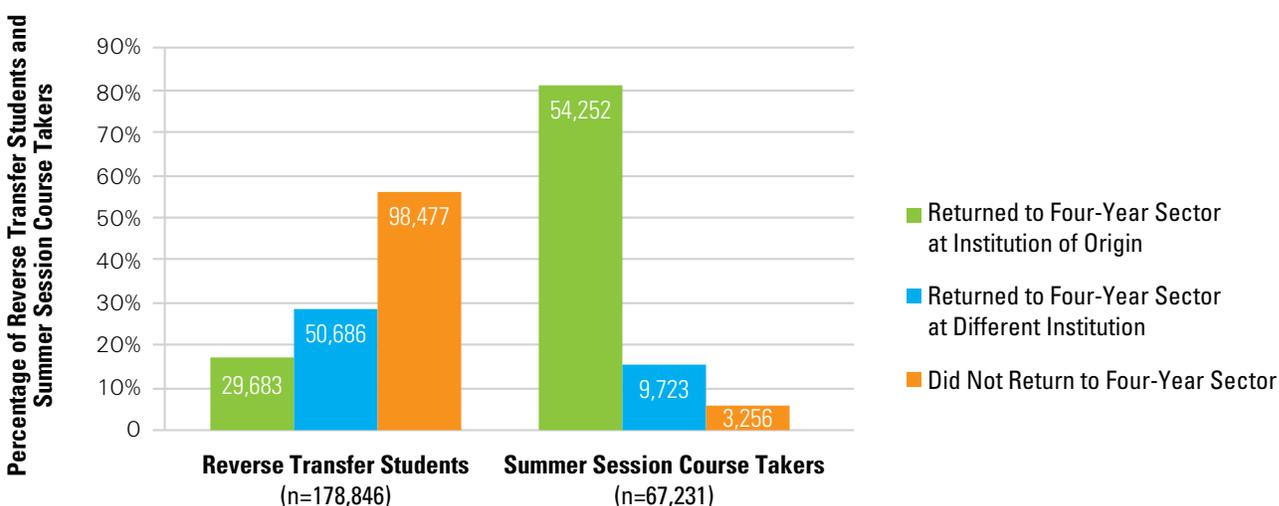
These findings underscore differences between these enrollment pathways and the students who engage in them. While half of summer session course takers enrolled at a two-year institution for the first time in their first year, more than half of reverse transfers occurred in students' second or third year.

These findings have implications for how we consider each of these groups of students and for institutional policies and practices to support completion and success for students on various pathways. For instance, as noted in the report's introduction, students transfer for a number of reasons. While many student support programs focus on first-year retention, 48.5 percent of reverse transfers in this study occurred after the second year, as shown in Figure 3. If and how these students return to their institution of origin or to the four-year sector at all is an important concern for institutions and policymakers as well. In the next section, we examine the differences in returning behaviors between these two groups.

SUBSEQUENT ENROLLMENT FOLLOWING REVERSE TRANSFER

Knowledge about student mobility in general — and about reverse transfer specifically — is more useful if we place it in the context of student pathways. In this study, the reverse transfer group included all who began college at a four-year institution in fall 2005 and enrolled at a two-year institution during at least one term outside of summer months. Finding answers to questions about the subsequent enrollment outcomes of these students can tell us more about the nature of reverse transfer as a student pathway. Did these students subsequently return to the four-year sector? If so, did they return to their institution of origin or to a different four-year institution?

Figure 4. Subsequent Enrollment Outcomes for Reverse Transfer Students and Summer Session Course Takers After First Enrollment at Two-Year Institution*



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

Figure 4 examines these questions by exploring the enrollment behaviors of reverse transfer students and summer session course takers subsequent to their first enrollment at a two-year institution. The subsequent enrollment behaviors of each group of students are shown for three outcomes: (1) returning to the four-year institution where the student initially enrolled in fall 2005 (i.e., the institution of origin); (2) returning to a four-year institution different from the student's institution of origin; or (3) not returning to the four-year sector at all (e.g., either staying in the two-year sector or stopping out by the end of the study period).

The subsequent enrollment of reverse transfer students compared to summer session course takers formed contrasting — even opposite — patterns. The majority of reverse transfer students, 55.1 percent, did not return to any four-year institution during the remainder of the study period. Only about one-sixth, or 16.6 percent, returned to their institution of origin, while 28.3 percent returned to the four-year sector by enrolling at a four-year institution different from the student's institution of origin.

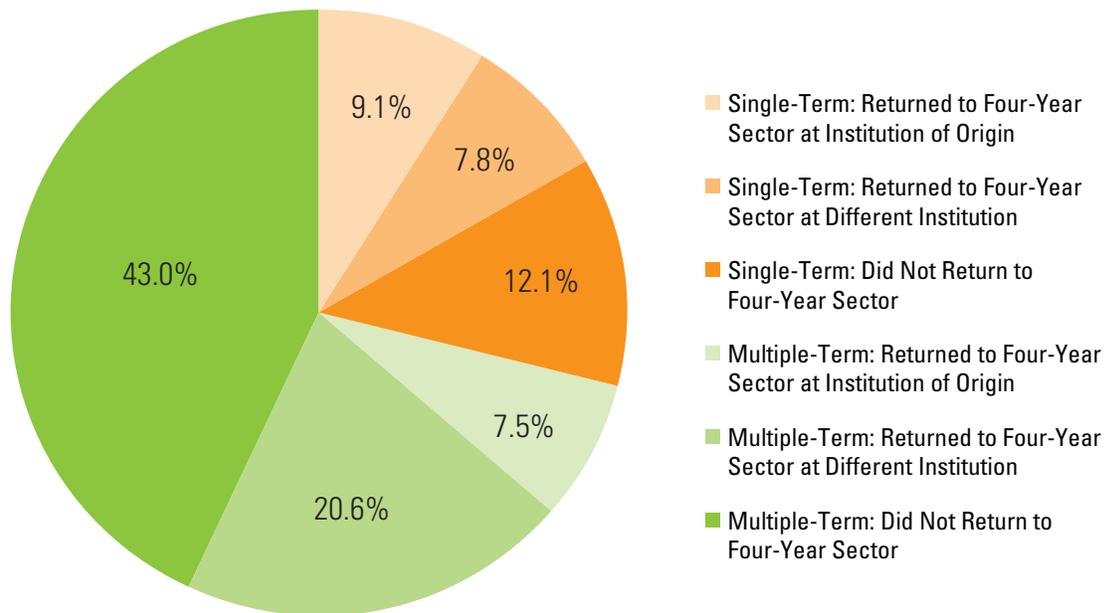
In contrast, the overwhelming majority (80.7 percent) of summer session course takers returned to their institution of origin, while 14.5 percent of them returned to the four-year sector at an institution different from their institution of origin, and only 4.8 percent did not return to the four-year sector by the end of the study period.

Thus, these outcomes emphasize differences between students who enrolled in the two-year sector only during summer months when they were away from their four-year institution and students who appeared to make intentional efforts to transfer from a four-year to a two-year institution — perhaps for financial, personal, or academic reasons or reasons related to the student-institutional fit.

Due to these differences, summer session course takers are not examined further in the remainder of the report. Instead, the report focuses exclusively on the enrollment patterns and outcomes of reverse transfer students.

Among reverse transfer students, one might expect outcomes to differ based on the length of time the student was enrolled in the two-year sector. If and how this factor made a difference in subsequent enrollment outcomes is the focus of this next set of findings. In Figure 5, the subsequent enrollment outcomes for reverse transfer students are shown for students who spent only a single term at a two-year institution and those who spent multiple terms at a two-year institution — over the entire cohort of reverse transfer students.

Figure 5. Subsequent Enrollment Outcomes for Reverse Transfer Students by Single- and Multiple-Term Enrollment in Two-Year Sector***



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

**All reverse transfer students in fall 2005 entering four-year cohort: n=178,846.

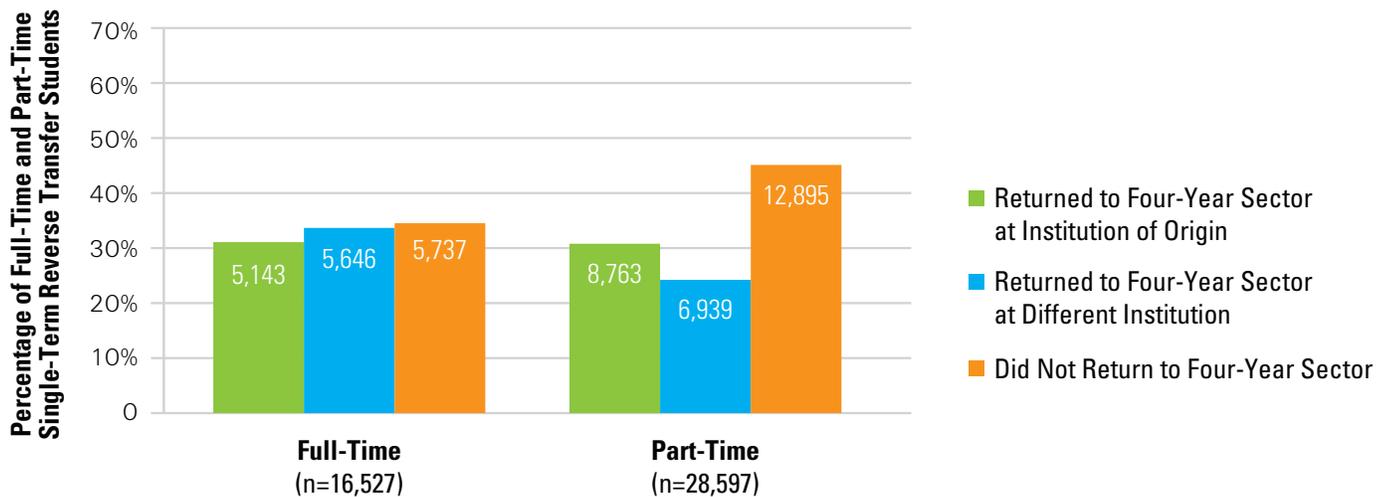
A sizable majority (more than 70 percent) of reverse transfer students remained enrolled in the two-year sector for multiple terms. Among these, the largest proportion (43 percent of all reverse transfers) did not return to the four-year sector within the study period. The next largest group, 20.6 percent of all reverse transfer students, returned to the four-year sector at an institution different from their institution of origin, while 7.5 percent overall returned to their institution of origin in the four-year sector.

Among all reverse transfer students, less than a third (29 percent) enrolled at a two-year institution for a single term only. These include 12.1 percent who never returned to the four-year sector, 9.1 percent who returned to their institution of origin in the four-year sector, and 7.8 percent who returned to the four-year sector at a different institution.

Overall, these results show that by summer 2011 more than half of reverse transfer students did not return to the four-year sector and that the majority of those who did not return spent more than one term in the two-year sector. With implications for institutional practice and students, this finding may in part point to different postsecondary pathways among students who started college in the four-year sector — pathways that include the completion of certificates and degrees at two-year institutions. This finding may also highlight a possible association between length of two-year enrollment and educational goals, including two-year degrees. In addition, the proportion of students returning to their institution of origin was high among those who had enrolled at a two-year institution for a single term only. We explore these patterns in more detail in the next set of findings.

Figures 6 and 7 show enrollment outcomes subsequent to reverse transfer among students who enrolled in the two-year sector for varying lengths of time, focusing on the enrollment intensity during their first term at a two-year institution for each group of students.

Figure 6. Subsequent Enrollment Outcomes for Single-Term Reverse Transfer Students by Enrollment Intensity During First Term in Two-Year Sector*

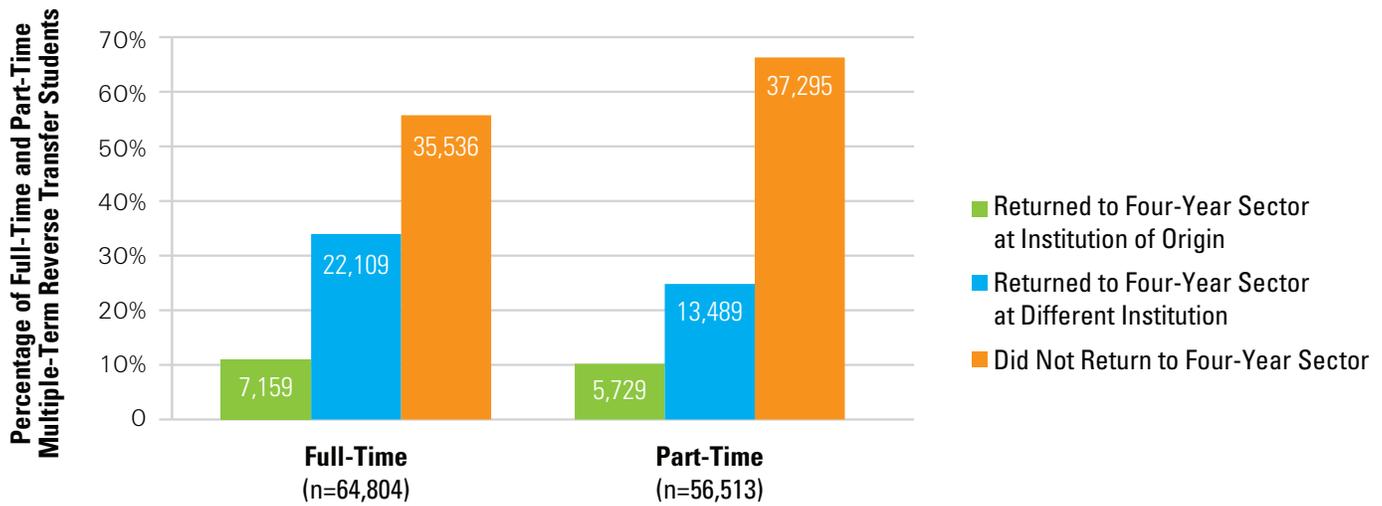


*This figure is based on data shown in Appendix C, Table 10.

Figure 6 shows the subsequent enrollment outcomes for single-term reverse transfer students, exploring how these outcomes differed for students who enrolled full time versus those who enrolled part time during their first term at a two-year institution.

Among the population of single-term reverse transfer students, the proportions of students who returned to the institution of origin were similar for those who enrolled full time and those who enrolled part time at the two-year institution (31.1 percent and 30.6 percent, respectively). However, the proportion of those who did not return to the four-year sector by the end of the study period was much lower among single-term reverse transfer students who had enrolled full time than among those who had enrolled part time (34.7 percent and 45.1 percent, respectively). Full-time reverse transfer students returned to the four-year sector at an institution different from their institutions of origin at a higher rate (34.2 percent) than did part-time reverse transfer students (24.3 percent).

Figure 7. Subsequent Enrollment Outcomes for Multiple-Term Reverse Transfer Students by Enrollment Intensity During First Term in Two-Year Sector*



*This figure is based on data shown in Appendix C, Table 11.

Figure 7 displays subsequent enrollment outcomes by students' enrollment intensity during their first term at a two-year institution for students who stayed in the two-year sector for more than one term (i.e., for multiple terms).

For multiple-term reverse transfer students, subsequent enrollment outcome patterns were somewhat similar between students who started full time and those who started part time in the two-year sector. Specifically, among multiple-term reverse transfer students who enrolled full time during their first term in the two-year sector (n=64,804), just over half (54.8 percent) did not return to the four-year sector by the end of the study period, about a third (32.1 percent) returned to the four-year sector but to an institution different from their institution of origin, and just over a tenth (11.1 percent) returned to their institution of origin.

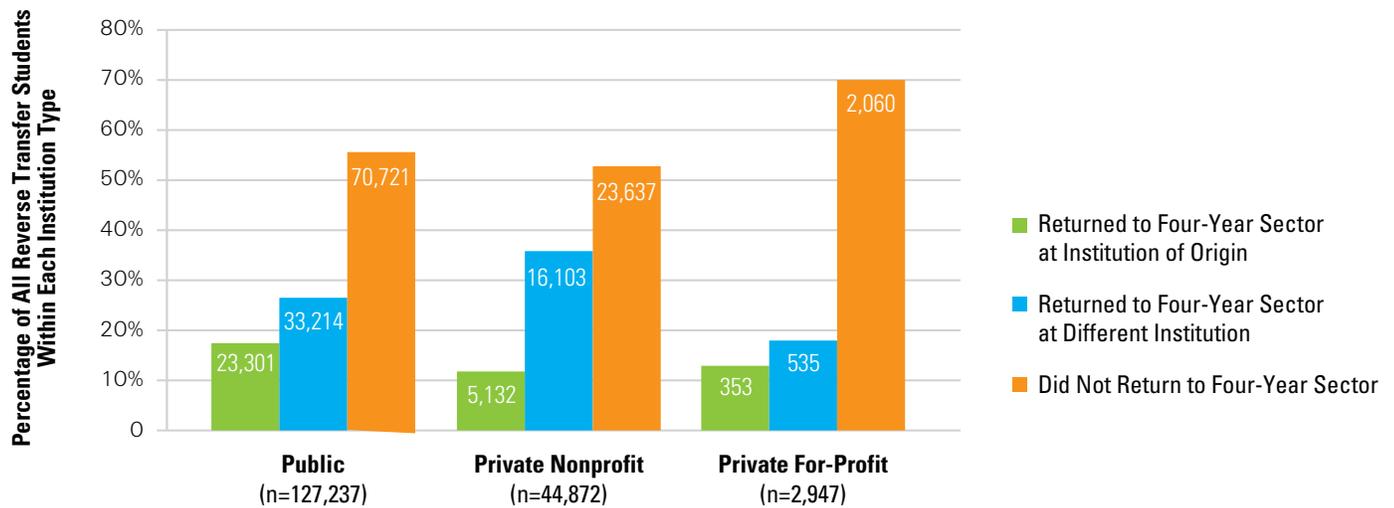
Similarly, among the 56,513 multiple-term reverse transfer students who initially enrolled part time in the two-year sector, two-thirds (66.0 percent) did not return to the four-year sector at all, while just under a quarter (23.87 percent) returned to the four-year sector at an institution different from the one where they initially enrolled in fall 2005, and — like their full-time counterparts — about one-tenth (10.1 percent) returned to their institution of origin by the end of the study period.

Although these results show similarities in the enrollment patterns of students who reverse transferred and stayed in the two-year sector for more than one term regardless of whether their initial enrollment at the two-year institution was full time or part time, part-time students returned to the four-year sector at a moderately lower rate (11.2 percentage points lower) than did their full-time peers. Additionally, a greater proportion of full-time students returned to the four-year sector at an institution different from their institution of origin than did part-time enrollees (with a difference of 10.3 percentage points between the two groups).

Compared to students who enrolled in the two-year sector for just a single term (Figure 6), multiple-term reverse transfer students returned to the four-year sector at a lower rate regardless of enrollment intensity during their first term in the two-year sector. This pattern was most salient among reverse transfer students who enrolled on a part-time basis during their first semester at a two-year institution.

The next figure (Figure 8) also focuses on enrollment outcomes for students following reverse transfer but considers differences by the control of the four-year institution where students initially enrolled in fall 2005.

Figure 8. Subsequent Enrollment Outcomes for Reverse Transfer Students by Control of Institution of Origin*



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

Across all types of institutions of origin, more than half of students did not return to the four-year sector during the study period. Students who initially enrolled at a private nonprofit four-year institution returned to the four-year sector at the highest rates overall, although students who began at a public four-year institutions returned to their institution of origin at the highest rate.

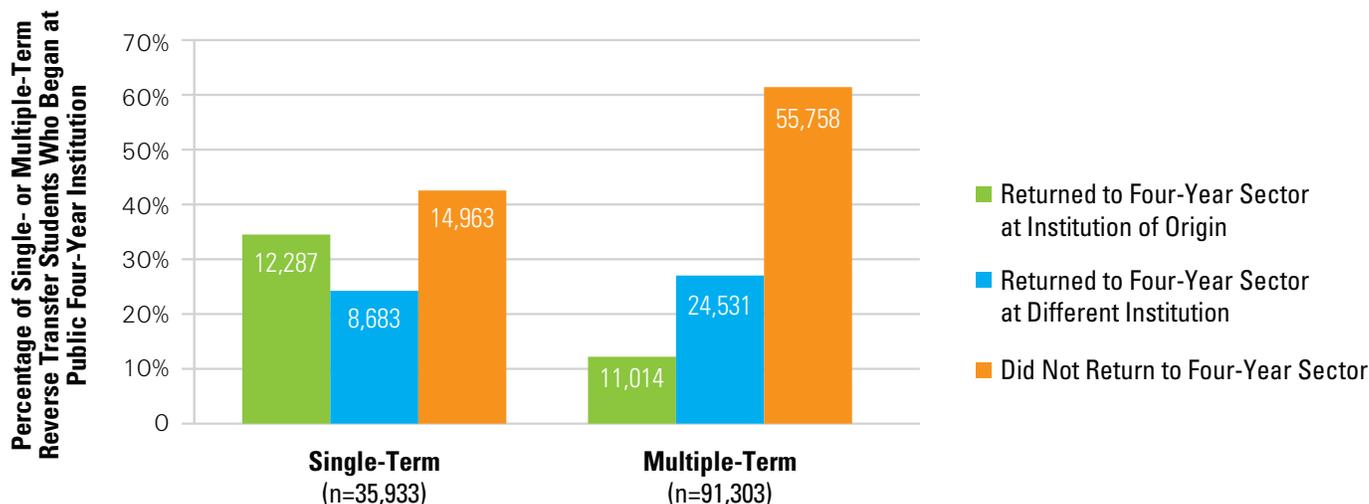
Among reverse transfer students who began at a public four-year institution (n=127,237), 55.6 percent did not return to the four-year sector at all, while over half of those who did return to the four-year sector (26.1 percent of all reverse transfers from publics) enrolled at a four-year college or university other than their institution of origin. Only 18.3 percent returned to their institution of origin by the end of the study period.

A similar proportion of students who initially enrolled at a private nonprofit four-year institution (n=44,872) did not return to the four-year sector at all (52.7 percent). More than one-third of the reverse transfer students in this group (35.9 percent) returned to the four-year sector at a different institution and only 11.4 percent returned to their institution of origin.

Lastly, for reverse transfer students who began at a private for-profit four-year institution in fall 2005 (n=2,947), by the end of the study period, more than two-thirds (69.9 percent) had not returned to the four-year sector, the greatest proportion across the three institution types. Further, of the remaining 30 percent of students who did return to the four-year sector, 18.1 percent enrolled at a four-year institution different from where they started in fall 2005, with 12.0 percent reenrolling at their institution of origin. However, it is important to note that the coverage rate for private for-profit institutions is substantially lower than that for other types of institutions (see Appendix A). Results regarding private for-profit institutions, therefore, should be interpreted with caution.

These patterns are explored in greater detail in the next set of figures, which consider the student groups separately by control of the students' institution of origin and by the length of the students' stay in the two-year sector.

Figure 9. Subsequent Enrollment Outcomes for Single- and Multiple-Term Reverse Transfer Students for Students Who Began at Public Four-Year Institution*



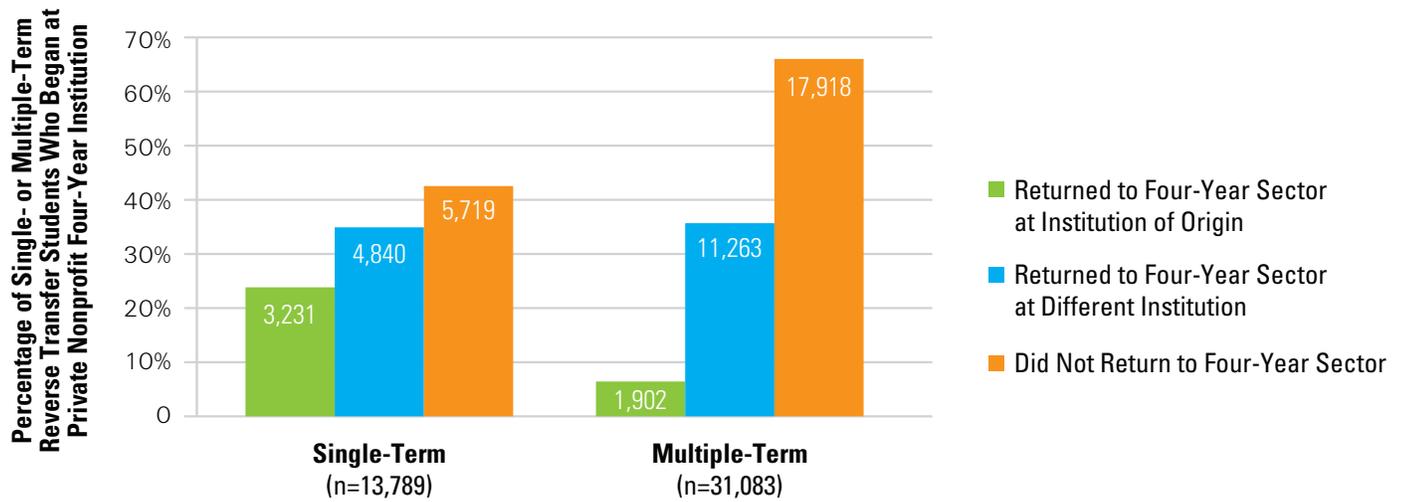
*This figure is based on data shown in Appendix C, Table 12.

Figure 9 shows the subsequent enrollment outcomes for reverse transfer students who initially enrolled at a public four-year institution in fall 2005 and compares students based on their length of stay in the two-year sector — (1) students who enrolled in the two-year sector for just one term (i.e., single-term reverse transfer students), and (2) students who enrolled in the two-year sector for two or more terms (i.e., multiple-term reverse transfer students).

Overall, more than 60 percent of multiple-term reverse transfer students did not return to the four-year sector within the study period. In comparison, only 42 percent of single-term reverse transfer students were found not to have returned to the four-year sector. These students enrolled at a two-year institution for one term only before completing a degree or certificate, stopping out, or reaching the end of the study period. A key point to underscore in these results is that greater proportions of single-term reverse transfer students returned to the four-year sector overall.

Importantly, however, results reveal distinct pathways for single- and multiple-term reverse transfer students who did return to the four-year sector. Although similar proportions of both groups returned to the four-year sector at an institution different from their institution of origin (24.2 percent and 26.9 percent of single- and multiple-term students, respectively), a notable difference between these groups emerged in the rate at which they returned to their institution of origin. Whereas over one-third of single-term students (34.2 percent) returned to their public four-year institution of origin, multiple-term students took the same return pathway at a much lower rate (12.1 percent).

Figure 10. Subsequent Enrollment Outcomes for Single- and Multiple-Term Reverse Transfer Students for Students Who Began at Private Nonprofit Four-Year Institution*



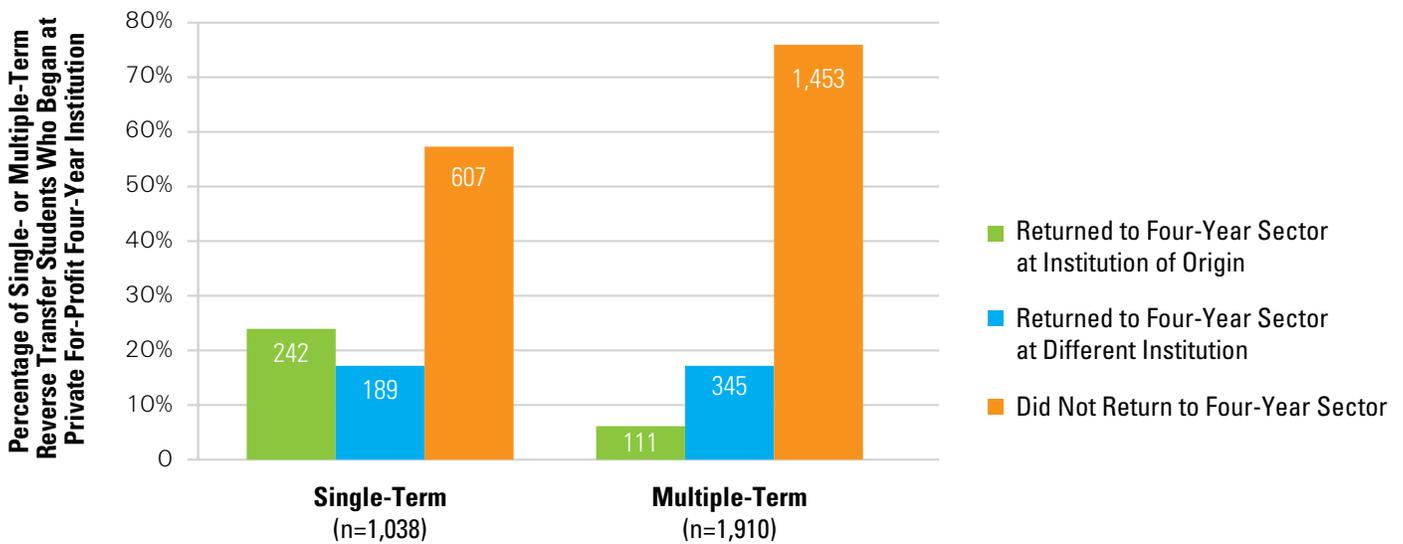
*This figure is based on data shown in Appendix C, Table 12.

Figure 10 shows the subsequent enrollment outcomes for single- and multiple-term reverse transfer students who initially enrolled at a private nonprofit institution.

As with reverse transfer students who initially enrolled at a public four-year institution, a greater proportion of single-term reverse transfer students returned to the four-year sector than did multiple-term reverse transfer students. Proportionately, multiple-term reverse transfer students stayed in the two-year sector or stopped out at a greater rate than single-term reverse transfer students did (41.5 percent and 57.7 percent of single- and multiple-term reverse transfer students, respectively). Further, similar proportions of single- and multiple-term reverse transfer students returned to the four-year sector, to an institution different from their institution of origin (35.1 percent and 36.2 percent, respectively). Among the reverse transfer students who started at a private nonprofit institution, a much greater proportion of single-term students returned to their institution of origin (23.4 percent) than did multiple-term students — just 6.1 percent of whom reenrolled at their private nonprofit four-year institution of origin after enrolling in the two-year sector.

Last in this series of findings, Figure 11 presents the subsequent enrollment outcomes for single- and multiple-term reverse transfer students who initially enrolled at a private for-profit four-year institution. The enrollment outcomes for this group are similar to those of students who began at a public or private nonprofit institution in the sense that larger proportions of multiple-term reverse transfer students stayed in the two-year sector or stopped out by the end of the study period, while a much greater proportion of single-term reverse transfer students returned to their institution of origin. More specifically, over half (58.5 percent) of single-term and over three-quarters (76.1 percent) of multiple-term reverse transfer students did not return to the four-year sector during the study period. Although almost the same proportions of single- and multiple-term reverse transfer students who began at a private for-profit four-year institution (18.2 percent and 18.1 percent, respectively) returned to a four-year institution other than their institution of origin, rates of returning to the institution of origin varied. Nearly one-quarter of single-term reverse transfer students who began college at a private for-profit four-year college or university returned to their institution of origin (23.3 percent), while just 5.8 percent of multiple-term reverse transfer students did the same. As mentioned earlier in this discussion, results on private for-profit institutions, such as those shown in Figure 11, should be interpreted with caution, due to the relatively low coverage for that sector in the Clearinghouse enrollment data.

Figure 11. Subsequent Enrollment Outcomes for Single- and Multiple-Term Reverse Transfer Students for Students Who Began at Private For-Profit Four-Year Institution*



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

SIX-YEAR OUTCOMES

Although the findings on the timing and trajectories of reverse transfer contribute much to our understanding of general patterns — where students begin and where they go — increasingly, questions around student pathways must center on students’ long-term mobility and outcomes. With the national completion agenda shaping institutional agendas across the nation, the question of whether or not reverse transfer students complete degrees, particularly after they return to the four-year sector, must not be left unanswered. This section of the report presents six-year outcomes of reverse transfer students, including those who returned and those who did not return to their institution of origin. Though we consider multiple outcomes both in the two-year and four-year sectors, we focus our examination in particular on whether students remained enrolled in the four-year sector at the end of the study period or had completed a degree at a four-year institution.

Table 2. Six-Year Outcomes for All Reverse Transfer Students

	Students by Length of Enrollment at Two-Year Institution				All Reverse Transfer Students	
	Single-Term Students		Multiple-Term Students		Count	%***
	Count	%*	Count	%**		
Completed at Any Four-Year Institution	13,082	25.30%	18,755	14.80%	31,838	17.80%
Still Enrolled at Any Four-Year Institution	8,002	15.50%	20,700	16.30%	28,702	16.10%
Completed or Still Enrolled at a Two-Year Institution	10,245	19.81%	48,336	38.02%	58,581	32.75%
Not Enrolled	20,394	39.43%	39,333	30.94%	59,726	33.40%
Total	51,722	100.00%	127,123	100.00%	178,846	100.00%

*Percentage of all single-term reverse transfer students

**Percentage of all multiple-term reverse transfer students

***Percentage of all reverse transfer students

Table 2 displays six-year outcomes for all reverse transfer students by their length of enrollment in the two-year sector.

As shown in Table 2, approximately one-third of reverse transfer students either had completed (17.8 percent), or were enrolled (16.1 percent) at a four-year institution by the last year of the study period. It is important to note that many reverse transfer students were substantially engaged and progressing at two-year institutions — by the end of the study period one-third of reverse transfer students (32.8 percent) had completed a degree or certificate or were still enrolled at a two-year institution. The remaining one-third of reverse transfer students (33.4 percent) showed no completion and were no longer enrolled in any college or university.

Compared to their multiple-term counterparts, single-term reverse transfer students completed degrees at four-year institutions at a rate of approximately 10 percentage points higher (25.3 percent versus 14.8 percent, respectively). The two groups showed comparable rates in terms of continued enrollment at four-year institutions though (15.5 percent versus 16.3 percent for single-and multiple-term reverse transfer students, respectively).

Though as noted above a substantial proportion of students remained in the two-year sector after reverse transfer. In the remainder of this report, we focus on reverse transfer students’ completion and persistence at four-year institutions and do not continue to distinguish different outcomes (completion, persistence, or nonpersistence) for students who did not return to the four-year sector.

Student Pathways and Completion at Institution of Origin

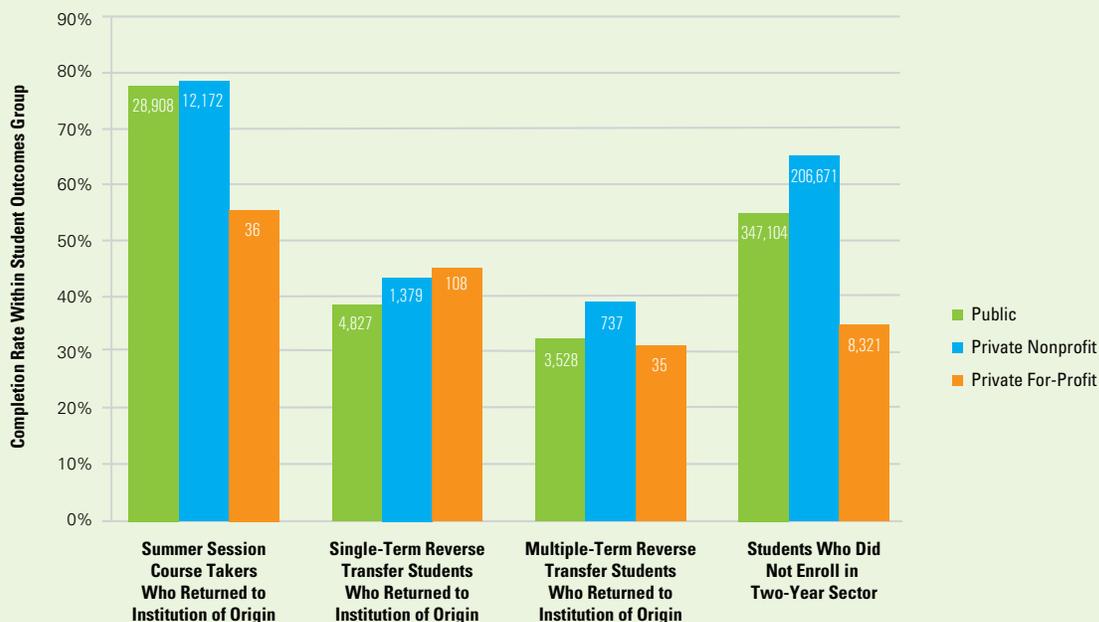
For many observers, a key question concerns what happens to the reverse transfer students who eventually return to their institution of origin. Figure 12 presents the rates at which the students in this study who returned to their institution of origin completed a degree at that institution — focusing on the length of their enrollment at a two-year institution — and compares these rates to those of summer session course takers and students who never left the four-year sector in the first place. Results are shown by the control of students' original four-year institution.

Within each institution type, completion rates are highest for summer session course takers — students who enrolled at a two-year institution during the summer and returned to their institution of origin. For these students, perhaps surprisingly, the completion rates are as much as 20 percentage points higher than those for students who did not enroll in the two-year sector at all.

Students who reverse transferred, on the other hand, had lower completion rates when they returned to their institution of origin than either of the other two groups of students had, regardless of whether they stayed in the two-year sector for a single term or multiple terms. Those who returned to their institution of origin after staying in the two-year sector for multiple-terms had the lowest rates of completion.

It is important to note that Figure 12 shows results only for students who either never enrolled at a two-year institution during the study period or returned to their institution of origin after enrolling in the two-year sector. Students who stayed in the two-year sector or who returned to the four-year sector at a different institution are not shown. While these results show pathways and outcomes of students who are similar in that they stayed or returned to their institution of origin, at the same time, these results highlight wide variation in completion rates across these enrollment pathways.

**Figure 12. Completion at Institution of Origin:
Rates by Enrollment Pathway and Institution Type***

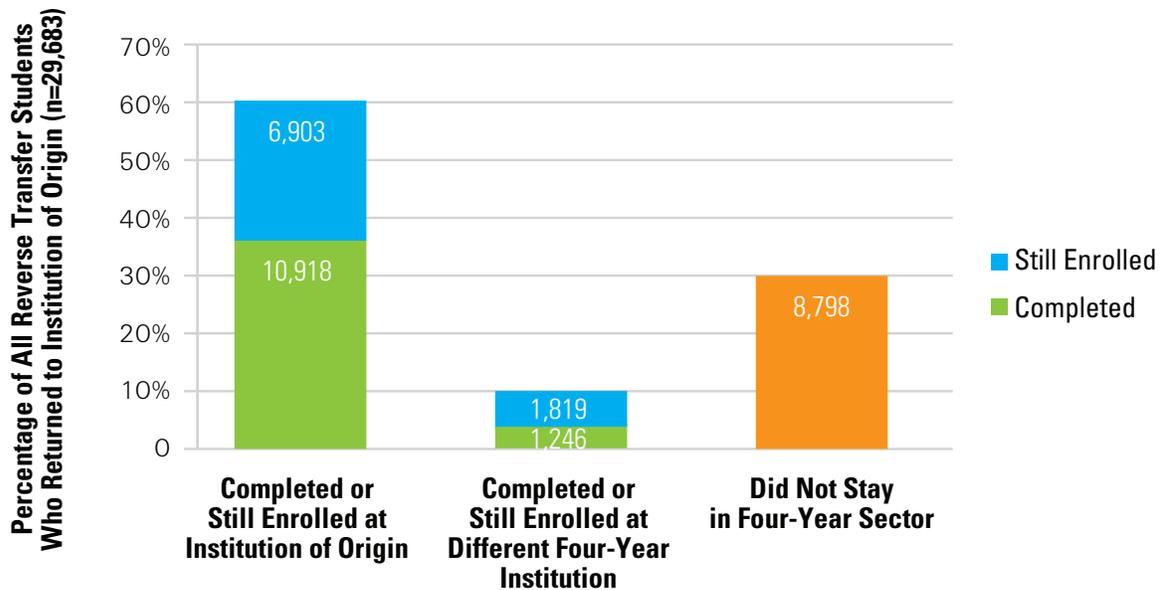


*This figure is based on data shown in Appendix C, Table 13.

Reverse Transfer Students Who Returned to Their Institution of Origin: Six-Year Outcomes

The next set of figures (Figures 13-15) focuses exclusively on the 16.6 percent of reverse transfer students (n= 29,683) who subsequently returned to their four-year institution of origin after enrolling in the two-year sector (see Figure 4), examining the six-year outcomes for these students with particular attention to completion at four-year institutions.

Figure 13. Six-Year Outcomes for Reverse Transfer Students Who Returned to Institution of Origin*



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

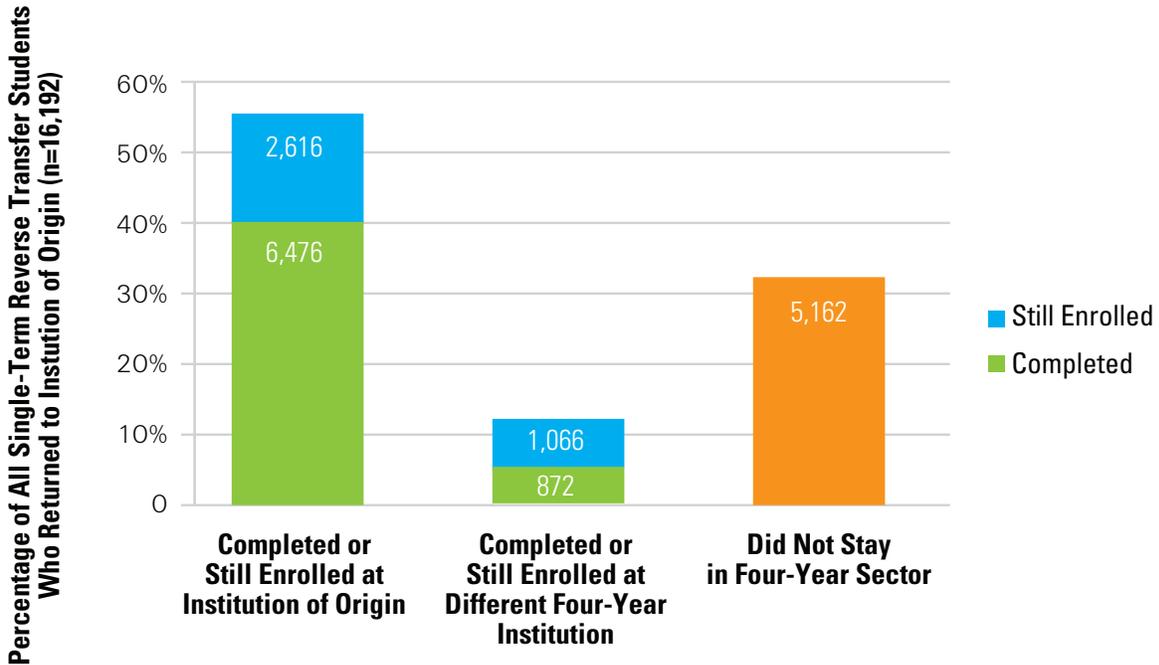
Figure 13 shows the overall six-year outcomes for reverse transfer students who returned to their institution of origin. This figure shows that the majority of students who returned to their institution of origin after reverse transfer completed or remained enrolled at their institution of origin by the end of the six-year study period (60.0 percent).

Specifically, among the 29,683 reverse transfer students who returned to their institution of origin, 36.8 percent had completed a degree at their four-year institution of origin, while an additional 23.3 percent remained enrolled without having completed a degree (shown in the first column of Figure 13).

An additional 10.3 percent subsequently left their institution of origin and either completed or remained enrolled (without degree completion) at a different four-year institution — 4.2 percent had completed while 6.1 percent remained enrolled (without completion) at a different four-year institution. It is interesting to note that these students changed their institutions of enrollment at least three times within the six-year period captured in this report.

The remaining 29.6 percent of reverse transfer students who returned to their institution of origin after reverse transfer did not stay in the four-year sector. That is, subsequent to their reverse transfer and return to their four-year institution of origin, they either returned to the two-year sector or stopped out of higher education altogether.

Figure 14. Six-Year Outcomes for Single-Term Reverse Transfer Students Who Returned to Institution of Origin*



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

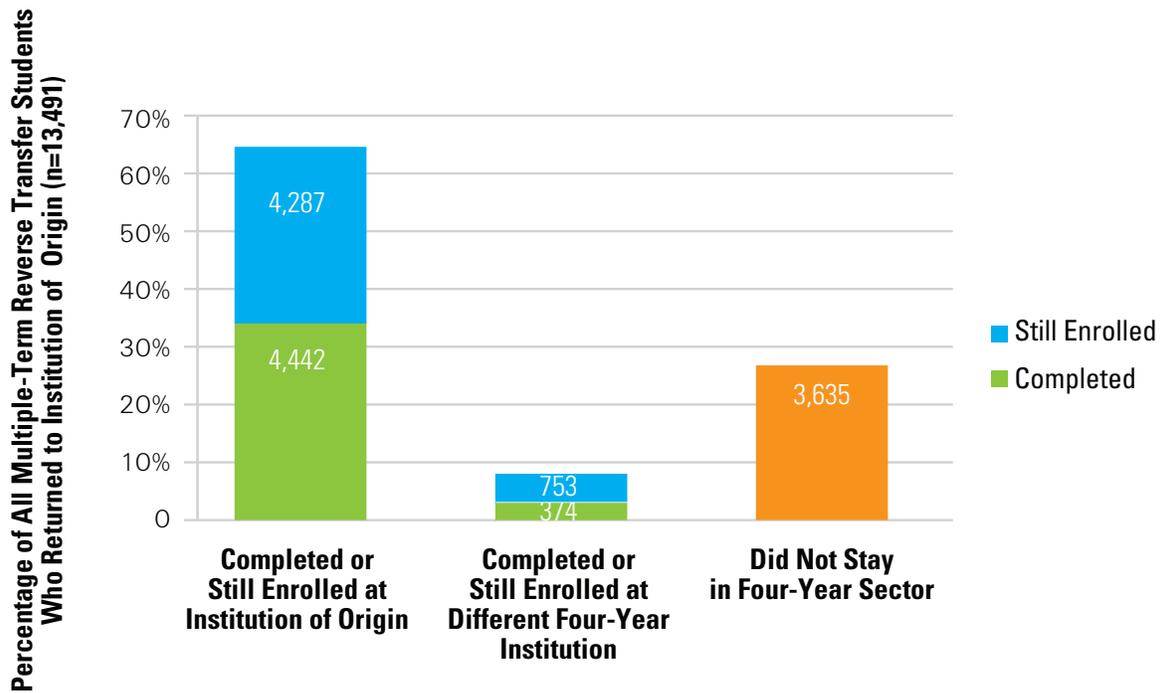
Figures 14 and 15 examine these same six-year outcomes for students who returned to their institution of origin after reverse transfer, disaggregated by their length of stay in the two-year sector, first considering students who stayed in the two-year sector for a single-term (Figure 14) and then those who stayed in the two-year sector for more than one term (Figure 15).

Overall, the six-year outcome patterns are similar across both groups of students, regardless of whether the students stayed in the two-year sector for one term or longer. The majority of students who returned to their institution of origin after reverse transfer completed a degree at their institution of origin before the end of the study period, although a sizable proportion of students either stopped out or returned to the two-year sector.

As displayed in Figure 14, among the 16,192 single-term reverse transfer students who returned to their institution of origin, 40.0 percent had completed while 16.2 percent were still enrolled at their institution of origin by summer 2011. An additional 5.4 percent and 6.6 percent had completed or were still enrolled at a different four-year institution, respectively.

Additionally, a little less than one-third (31.9 percent) of single-term reverse transfer students who returned to their institution of origin were not enrolled in the four-year sector by the end of the study period (without having completed a degree at a four-year institution).

Figure 15. Six-Year Outcomes for Multiple-Term Reverse Transfer Students Who Returned to Institution of Origin*



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

Similarly, Figure 15 reveals six-year outcomes for multiple-term reverse transfer students who returned to their institution of origin, revealing comparable outcomes for these students.

Specifically, of the 13,491 students who stayed in the two-year sector for more than one term before returning to their institution of origin, 32.9 percent completed a degree at their four-year institution of origin and 31.8 percent remained enrolled there. The proportions were relatively small for students who completed (2.8 percent) or remained enrolled (5.6 percent) at a four-year institution different from their institution of origin. Among students in this group, 27 percent did not remain in the four-year sector by the end of the study period.

Despite having a pattern similar to that for single-term reverse transfer students, the multiple-term reverse transfer students had slightly lower completion rates both at their institution of origin and at other four-year institutions. For multiple-term reverse transfer students, notably, the persistence rate (without completion) at the institution of origin was higher than that for single-term reverse transfer students.

These patterns suggest that longer enrollment in the two-year sector is not accelerating students' time to degree, although it evidently is also not related to students' subsequently stopping out altogether from higher education. These findings may point to transfer and articulation issues that exist in many states between the two- and four-year sectors that often result in students retaking courses when the new institution does not accept the students' past credits.

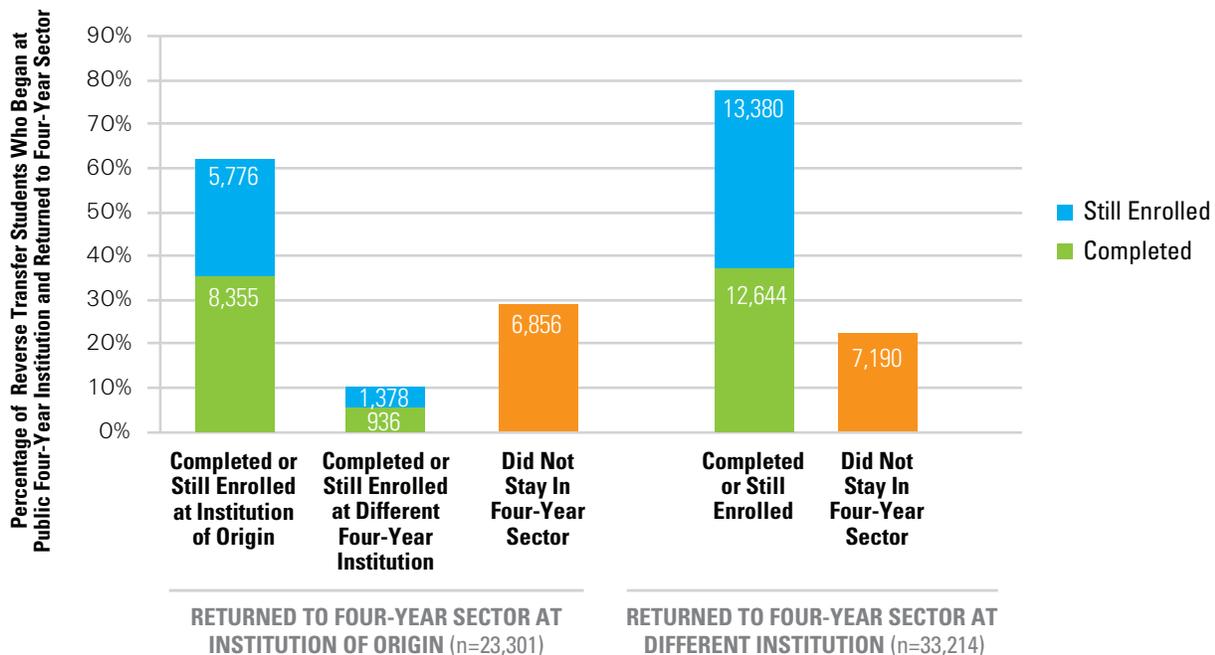
Reverse Transfer Students Who Returned to the Four-Year Sector: Six-Year Outcomes By Control of Institution of Origin

The following three figures present six-year outcomes for students who initially enrolled at four-year public, private nonprofit, and private for-profit institutions, and who subsequently returned to the four-year sector (the 44.9 percent in Figure 4), examining whether or not students were still enrolled, had completed, or were not enrolled in the four-year sector by the end of the study period. For each institution type, Figures 16–18 compare these outcomes across two separate groups of students in the fall 2005 beginning student cohort: (1) students who returned to their institution of origin after reverse transfer and (2) students who returned to the four-year sector after reverse transfer but enrolled at a four-year institution different from their institution of origin.

Public Four-Year Institutions

Figure 16 presents the six-year outcomes for reverse transfer students who began at a public four-year institution in fall 2005 and subsequently returned to the four-year sector (n=56,515).

Figure 16. Six-Year Outcomes for Reverse Transfer Students Who Began at Public Four-Year Institution and Subsequently Returned to Four-Year Sector by Four-Year Destination Institution*



*This figure is based on data shown in Appendix C, Tables 18 and 19.

Overall, the figure shows that a large proportion of students who returned to their institution of origin after reverse transfer did not stay in the four-year sector: 29.4 percent of them subsequently transferred to a two-year institution or stopped out before the end of the study period. Among students in this group who returned to the four-year sector at an institution different from their institution of origin, 21.7 percent did not stay in the four-year sector.

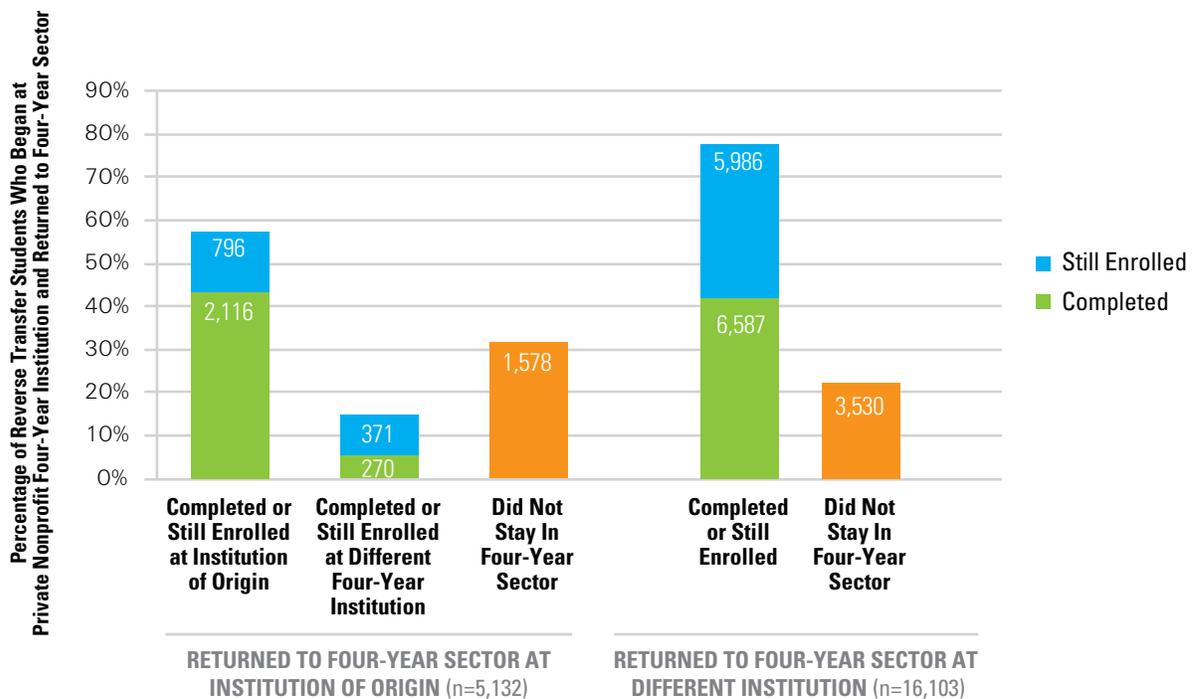
For students who returned to their institution of origin after reverse transfer, 39.9 percent completed at a four-year institution, with the majority of those students doing so at their institution of origin (35.9 percent of the group of students who returned to their institution of origin). Moreover, an additional 30.7 percent were still enrolled at either their institution of origin or at a different four-year institution — 24.8 percent overall of students remaining at their institution of origin and just 5.9 percent remaining enrolled at a different four-year institution.

Of those students who enrolled at a four-year institution different from their public four-year institution of origin after reverse transfer, 38.1 percent completed by the end of the study period and 40.3 percent were still enrolled in the four-year sector — with most of them remaining enrolled at their returning four-year institution (see Table 18 in Appendix C).

Private Nonprofit Four-Year Institutions

Figure 17 shows six-year outcomes for reverse transfer students who began at a private nonprofit four-year institution and subsequently returned to the four-year sector, by whether they returned to the institution of origin or to a different four-year institution subsequent to reverse transfer (n=21,235).

Figure 17. Six-Year Outcomes for Reverse Transfer Students Who Began at Private Nonprofit Four-Year Institution and Subsequently Returned to Four-Year Sector by Four-Year Destination Institution*



*This figure is based on data shown in Appendix C, Tables 21 and 22.

For students who began at a private nonprofit four-year institution and returned to their institution of origin after reverse transfer (n=5,132), the six-year outcomes appeared similar to those of their public four-year counterparts. By the end of the study period, more than half of these students had completed (41.2 percent) or were still enrolled (15.5 percent) at their institution of origin, while only one-eighth of students had completed (5.3 percent) or were still enrolled (7.2 percent) at a different four-year institution, and 30.8 percent had stopped out of the four-year sector altogether.

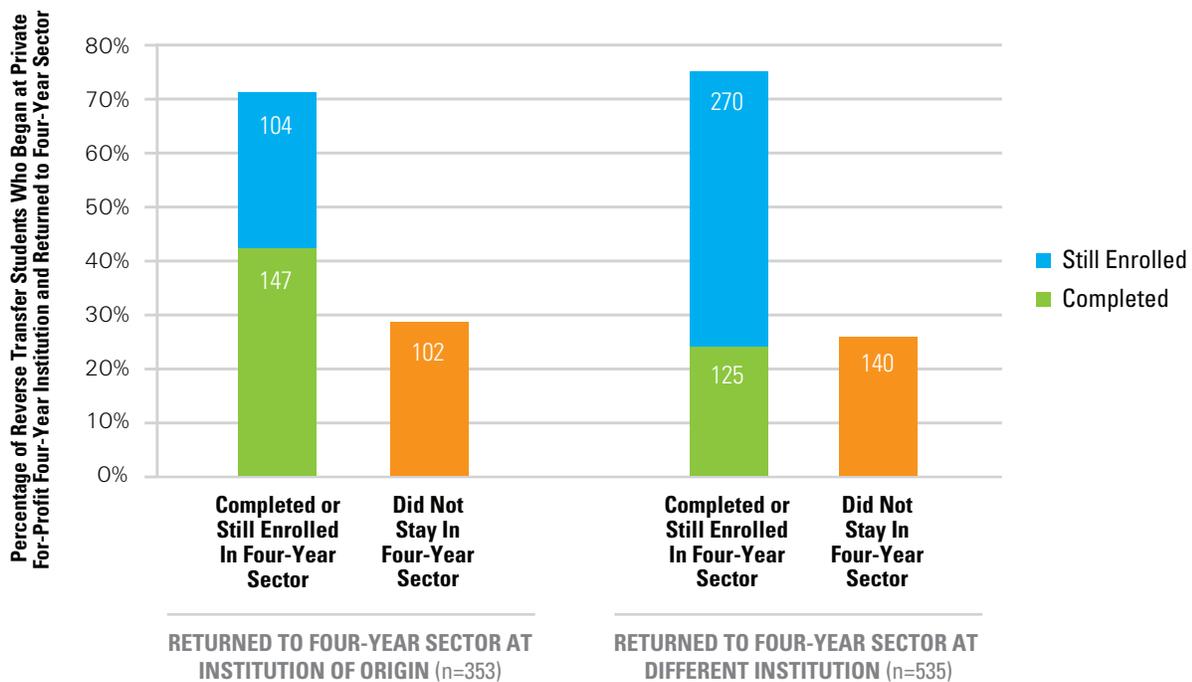
Among the 16,103 students who began at a private nonprofit four-year institution and returned to a four-year institution different from their institution of origin after reverse transfer, by summer 2011, more than three-quarters (78.1 percent) had completed (40.9 percent) or were still enrolled (37.2 percent) at a four-year institution, while 21.9 percent were not enrolled in the four-year sector.

The comparison of students who returned to the four-year sector at their institution of origin with students who returned to the four-year sector at a different institution suggests that students from the latter group stayed in the four-year sector at a greater rate.

Private For-Profit Four-Year Institutions

Figure 18 displays six-year outcomes for reverse transfer students who began at a private for-profit four-year institution in fall 2005 and subsequently returned to the four-year sector, comparing by whether students returned to the four-year sector at their institution of origin or at a different four-year institution subsequent to reverse transfer (n=888). Caution is required when interpreting these results, due to low data coverage for private for-profit institutions.

Figure 18. Six-Year Outcomes for Reverse Transfer Students Who Began at Private For-Profit Four-Year Institution and Subsequently Returned to Four-Year Sector by Four-Year Destination Institution*



*This figure is based on data shown in Appendix C, Tables 24 and 25.

It is important to note here that outcomes at students' institutions of origin and at different four-year institutions were collapsed due to low counts for this figure. The results suggest that once these students returned to the four-year sector after reverse transfer, they completed or remained enrolled at a relatively high rate, regardless of whether they returned to their origin private for-profit four-year institution or to a different four-year institution.

Among reverse transfer students who began at a private for-profit four-year institution and returned to their institution of origin (n=353), 41.7 percent completed and 29.4 percent were still enrolled there by the end of the study period, compared to 23.3 percent and 50.6 percent for their counterparts who after reverse transfer returned to the four-year sector at an institution different from their institution of origin (n=535).

These findings point to ways in which student pathways differ greatly across the types of institutions where students enroll and by the outcomes associated with those enrollments. Overall, this report highlights differences in student mobility and outcomes, centering around one specific type of pathway — reverse transfer — which accounts for over 14 percent of all students who initially enrolled at a four-year institution in fall 2005 (see Table 1). Students' outcomes in this group differed based on the length of their enrollment in the two-year sector, the type of four-year institution where they were originally enrolled, and the intensity of their original enrollment in the four-year and two-year sectors. For instance, students who enrolled in the two-year sector for a single term completed a four-year degree within six years at a rate almost double that for students who enrolled in the two-year sector for more than one term (see Table 2). Additionally, as just shown in Figures 16 through 18, reverse transfer students who began at a private nonprofit four-year institution completed a four-year degree within six years at a higher rate than their peers who began at other types of four-year institutions. As national, state, and institutional attention centers more and more on degree completion and the factors and pathways associated with earning a degree or certificate, these descriptive findings may help point to important considerations for institutions as they create policies to support student success.

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In its second Signature Report™ *Transfer and Mobility: A National View of Pre-Degree Student Movement in Postsecondary Institutions* (Hossler et al., 2012), the National Student Clearinghouse® Research Center™ found that one-third of the students who began at a four-year institution in fall 2006 transferred to or enrolled at a different institution at least once within five years. Slightly over half of those students went to a two-year institution. The current report examined this understudied type of student pathway — the mobility of students who initially enroll at four-year institutions into two-year institutions — in more detail. In this report, we separated four-year starters who enrolled at a two-year institution only during summer terms (defined as terms that begin and end between May 1 and August 31 of a given year) from those who enrolled in nonsummer months. As we hypothesized the findings demonstrated a large difference in the subsequent pathways followed by these two groups of students. The vast majority of summer-session course takers (80 percent) returned to their institution of origin with an additional 15 percent returning to a different four-year institution. We thus define reverse transfer in this study as enrolling at a two-year institution only in nonsummer months and explore the prevalence of reverse transfer as well as where students go after they reverse transfer, and where they end up after six years of initially enrolling at a four-year institution. We highlight our key findings below.

PREVALENCE OF REVERSE TRANSFER

Within six years, 14.4 percent of the first-time students who started at a four-year institution in the fall of 2005 subsequently enrolled at a two-year institution outside of summer months or reverse transferred.

A slightly higher proportion of part-time students reverse transferred (16.4 percent) compared to students who initially enrolled full-time (13.1 percent). The reverse transfer rate was also higher (15.8 percent) among those who started at a public four-year institution than those who initially enrolled at a private nonprofit four-year institution (11.4 percent) or a private for-profit four-year institution (10.8 percent). As it was first reported in the second Signature Report (Hossler et al., 2012), the second year was the peak year for reverse transfer. Reverse transfer happened for the first time for more than a third of the students in their second academic year (36.4 percent). However, it should be noted that over a quarter of those who reverse transferred within the six-year study period of this report, did so in their fourth, fifth, or sixth year. Such a late reverse transfer may potentially add to their time to degree and may have serious implications for students' six-year completion from a four-year institution.

SUBSEQUENT ENROLLMENT BEHAVIORS OF REVERSE TRANSFER STUDENTS

This report highlighted not only the prevalence and starting enrollment characteristics of reverse transfer students among fall 2005 enrollees, but also explored the enrollment pathways and outcomes of these students after reverse transfer. Subsequent enrollments of reverse transfer students showed that only a small minority (16.6 percent) returned to the four-year institution where they began. Almost twice as many (28.3 percent) returned to the four-year sector but to a different institution. More than half of reverse transfer students (55.1 percent) did not return to any four-year institution by the end of the study period.

Among reverse transfer students who began college at a public four-year institution, a higher proportion (18.2 percent) returned to the institution of origin, as compared to reverse transfer students who initially enrolled at private nonprofit or private for-profit four-year institutions (11.4 percent and 11.9 percent, respectively). Nonetheless, these findings demonstrate that enrollment at a two-year institution after beginning college at a four-year college or university, does not necessarily mean that a student has made a permanent reverse transfer. In fact, many of these reverse transfer students return to their institution of origin after a brief or longer stay at a two-year institution.

The proportion of the reverse transfer students who returned to a four-year college or university other than their institution of origin was the highest (35.9 percent) among those students who started at a private nonprofit four-year institution, followed by those who initially enrolled at a public four-year institution (26.1 percent), and those whose institution of origin was a private for-profit four-year college or university (18.1 percent). The proportion of reverse transfer students who did not return to the four-year sector was the highest among those who began at a private for-profit four-year institution (69.9 percent) and was similarly high for those who originally enrolled at either a public (55.6 percent) or a private nonprofit (52.7 percent) four-year institution.

However, regardless of the prevalence of return to the four-year sector, results also showed that — whether they originally intended to or not — the majority of reverse transfer students did not return to their institution of origin. This has implications for all institutions involved in this complex postsecondary student pathway. First-time college students who departed from the four-year institution where they began and enrolled at a two-year institution during nonsummer months, even for just one term, have a very small likelihood of returning to the institution of origin. Four-year institutions may want to institute means of tracking those students to determine whether there is a potential to increase this number by reaching out to students after their departure and facilitating their transfer back, investing in pathways not just for “vertical transfer” students (students who start in the two-year sector and transfer to four-year institutions), but for reverse transfer students who seek to reenroll as well.

As noted above, many reverse transfer students subsequently enroll in four-year institutions that are not their institution of origin. For these four-year destinations of reverse transfer students, the pressing tasks may center on becoming more familiar with these students’ complex postsecondary pathways — which include enrollment at, at least, one four-year and one two-year institution by the time they enroll — to better understand their needs and assist them in achieving their educational goals. As transfer and articulation of credits between institutions is a persistent issue (Anderson, Sun, & Alfonso, 2006; Ignash & Townsend, 2000; Western Interstate Commission for Higher Education, 2010), supporting students who attend multiple institutions, including reverse transfer students, may entail creating transfer agreements with other institutions and enhancing transfer initiatives to allow for the articulation of courses taken at other institutions for credit at students’ destination institution.

Additionally, two-year institutions have an important role in advancing reverse transfer students’ postsecondary careers by retaining and graduating them, as well as supporting them through persistence at other institutions or vertical transfer. In the context of serving multiple missions, therefore, community colleges and other two-year institutions must invest resources in mediating for these students the effects of leaving a four-year institution without receiving some type of credential. The findings presented in this report can provide two-year colleges with important detail on prior and subsequent pathways of the reverse transfer students and summer session course takers that enroll at their institutions.

SUBSEQUENT ENROLLMENT OUTCOMES FOLLOWING SHORT- AND LONG-TERM ENROLLMENTS IN TWO-YEAR INSTITUTIONS

The majority of reverse transfer students (71.1 percent) stayed at a two-year institution for more than one term. Not surprisingly, the longer students stayed at a two-year institution, the lower the rate at which they returned to their institution of origin. Among those four-year starters who enrolled at a two-year institution for only one term, almost one-third (31.4 percent) returned to the institution of origin, while only 10.5 percent of those with multiple terms at a two-year institution did so. This

suggests that four-year institutions intending to pursue outreach strategies to increase the number of returning students among this population have only a small window of time in which to do so.

By contrast, there was very little difference in the proportions of students with single-and multiple-term enrollments at a two-year institution who returned to the four-year sector at a different institution, 26.9 percent and 29 percent, respectively. The same pattern held when we examined subsequent enrollment outcomes for single-and multiple-terms reverse transfer students by the type of control of the original four-year institution. It may be that these students are the most motivated by a poor “fit” with their starting institution. They appear to enroll at a two-year institution determined to return to the four-year sector, no matter how long it takes to get back on their feet academically, but with no intention of returning to their starting institution.

OVERALL SIX-YEAR OUTCOMES FOR ALL REVERSE TRANSFER STUDENTS

As noted throughout this report, college completion (i.e., students earning a credential) is a focus of institutional, state, and federal policy and interests, with all institutions playing an important role in advancing students towards degree attainment. This report examined longer-term outcomes as well as short-term ones.

By the end of the study period, among all four-year starters who enrolled at a two-year institution, even for just one term, only 17.8 percent returned and completed a degree at a four-year institution, while 16.1 percent were still enrolled at a four-year institution. Two-thirds of all reverse transfer students neither had a credential from nor were still enrolled at a four-year institution. Overall, this finding suggests that reverse transfer behavior may have interfered with these students’ completion at four-year institutions, even though some reverse transfer students returned to the four-year institution of origin or to the four-year sector at a different institution. However, one-third of reverse transfer students in the fall 2005 four-year beginning cohort either completed from or were still enrolled at a two-year institution at the end of the study period. While conventional retention studies would categorize them as nonpersisters, these findings nevertheless show that they continued their postsecondary career and earned credentials in the two-year sector.

COMPLETION AT THE INSTITUTION OF ORIGIN

To draw possible insights on how enrollment at a two-year institution might be related to the completion from the four-year institution of *origin* we compared completion rates across several groups of students with differing enrollment pathways. Our findings show that those four-year starters who enrolled at a two-year institution during summer months only and returned to their institution of origin had a high completion rate at 77.5 percent. This might partially be explained by unobserved student characteristics. For example, the students who enroll in two-year institutions during summer months may tend to be students attending residential institutions away from home and enrolling in courses at a two-year institution during summers back home, or highly motivated students determined to complete their studies in a set time. This finding also suggests, however, that enrollment at a two-year institution in summer, which does not necessarily entail a “departure” from the original four-year institution, may contribute to student success. Such contributions might be in the form of additional courses that students transfer back to their institution of origin, which help them progress with more focus towards their four-year completion goal, for example. By comparison, the completion rate for those who never enrolled at a two-year institution was 58.4 percent (at students’ institution of origin) — almost 20 percentage points lower.

In contrast, the completion rate was lower among reverse transfer students who returned to their original institution, after enrolling in two-year institutions outside of summer months. This was true for both single- and multiple-term reverse transfer students. Those who enrolled at a two-year institution in nonsummer months for only one term and returned to the institution of origin had a completion rate of 40.1 percent (at their institution of origin); for those who stayed at a two-year institution for more than one term before returning to the institution of origin, the comparable completion rate was the lowest, at 33.0 percent. These findings point to ways in which two-year enrollment may play differing roles in four-year students' academic trajectories. In addition, they suggest different factors that may be associated with students' attainment of educational goals. It is important to keep in mind, nevertheless, that these outcomes do not capture the full academic trajectory of students who may take longer than six years to complete a degree or whose educational goals may change as they seek a two-year credential instead.

SIX-YEAR OUTCOMES FOR REVERSE TRANSFER STUDENTS WHO RETURNED TO INSTITUTION OF ORIGIN

Our findings show that 16.6 percent of those who enrolled at a two-year institution for one or multiple terms returned to their institution of origin. Of those, 60 percent either completed (36.8 percent) or remained enrolled (23.3 percent) at the institution of origin by the end of the study period. Moreover, an additional 10 percent subsequently left their institution of origin and completed or were still enrolled at a different four-year institution. The remaining 30 percent did not stay in the four-year sector.

In other words, out of all students who left their original four-year institution to enroll at a two-year institution, only one in 10 completed a degree or was still enrolled at the original four-year institution by the end of the study period.

IMPLICATIONS FOR INSTITUTIONAL AND PUBLIC POLICYMAKING

Taken together, results from these analyses inform our understanding of student mobility from four-year to two-year institutions at a national level and within the institutional context. The findings highlighted in this report suggest implications for policy at institutional, state, and national levels. We outline a few key points from these implications below.

Institutional Policymakers. Consistent with previous studies, this report shows the postsecondary pathways of reverse transfer students to be complex and multivalent, suggesting that four- to two-year student mobility may be associated with barriers to baccalaureate attainment, but also with persistence and completion of credentials at two-year institutions. Consequently, our recommendations neither urge institutions to encourage reverse transfer nor propose that four-year institutions implement policies and adopt practices that aim to limit this type of student mobility. Instead, we suggest that institutions use the results from this study to take a closer look at the students who leave their system and thus appear to stop out, as well as students who appear at first to be newly enrolled or traditional "vertical" transfers but in fact may be reverse transfer students. This recommendation holds for both two- and four-year institutions.

Four-year institutions should mine institutional data to develop a better sense of who the students who discontinue enrollment without earning a credential are — student background characteristics, major, GPA, and other relevant college experiences — and use this understanding to determine what steps the institution can take to retain some portion of students who leave to enroll at two-year institutions. It also behooves community colleges to pay more attention to reverse transfer students, in order to have

a better sense of the number and types of four-year starters that they are serving, and to understand that these students may also need support in navigating transfer pathways, despite already having experience at four-year institutions.

In addition, careful analysis of the timing of transfer decisions may reveal more about the reasons for the higher proportion of reverse transfers happening during students' second year, for example. Is it because many scholarships and other types of financial aid are not renewed for the second year? Is it related to students realizing that a two-year institution is a better match for their career goals? Do many of these students intend to accumulate credits at a two-year institution at a lower cost and return to their institution of origin? Armed with further institution-specific information, four-year institutions may be better positioned to make informed decisions on allocation of resources as well as be better able to advise students on the potential impact of enrollment at a two-year institution on their subsequent postsecondary career.

Though the findings from this study showed that the majority of those who enrolled at a two-year institution had not received a degree from a four-year institution within six years, we recommend that this finding be understood in the context of students' realities. For many students, reverse transfer may actually offer a way to stay enrolled in postsecondary education and receive a credential from a two-year institution that will help them reach their professional and personal goals just as well as if they had stayed at a four-year institution. Nevertheless, it is still important that students become informed how different transfer pathways are related to completing a four-year degree in a particular timeframe to help them make sound decisions about what steps they should take to reach their goals.

For both two- and four-year institutions, campus policymakers who understand the patterns of reverse transfer behaviors will be better able to craft policies to help institutions reach their enrollment goals and to assist students as they make important educational decisions. In addition, this kind of analysis may help institutions and public policymakers develop more comprehensive and nuanced measures of student success.

Public Policymakers. In the introduction to this report, we mentioned that many states have encouraged or even mandated articulation agreements to support student movement from two-year to four-year institutions. However, no states have the same level of policy support for reverse transfer. Nevertheless, our findings demonstrate that many students at four-year institutions transfer to two-year colleges. Given the prevalence of reverse transfer, therefore, a large population of students is ignored by state policy, and opportunities to influence and support college completion may be missed as a result.

Of course, policy reform amending this gap must be approached thoughtfully. In an era of accountability especially, state policymakers must carefully balance competing priorities as they face a number of challenges in developing policy for their state's higher education institutions. Not all colleges and universities have identical curricula, for example, and many academic majors have a highly sequential curriculum where each course builds upon the previous courses. In this scenario, it is seldom the case that a given course can be treated as a widget that can be substituted with equivalents offered at a variety of other institutions. Meanwhile, with no pressure from states to develop sound articulation agreements, many institutions — especially more selective four-year institutions — might decline to develop transfer and articulation agreements. In addition, as the structures of state governing boards vary widely across the nation, state policymakers' roles with public, private nonprofit, and private for-profit institutions can differ in terms of their ability to influence institutional policy and other limitations on their jurisdiction. Within this context, states should support their institutions in navigating challenges related to reverse transfer and supporting student success, while still finding ways of encouraging them to do so.

The findings from this report, along with the previous Signature Report™ on student mobility (Hossler et al., 2012), add to the growing call for the development of a new generation of transfer and articulation agreements and also for a more comprehensive set of measures of student academic progress and success.

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METHODOLOGICAL NOTES

This report describes the mobility from four-year to two-year institutions of the cohort of first-time-in-college students who began their postsecondary education at a four-year institution in the fall of 2005 over a period of six years, through summer 2011. The results presented in the report focus in particular on reverse transfer (i.e., enrollment at a two-year institution outside of summer months after initial enrollment at a four-year institution), with contextual information on four- to two- year mobility among students who enrolled at a two-year institution only during a summer term (defined as a term beginning and ending between May 1 and August 31 of a given year). Considered separately in the results is control of the student’s institution of origin (the college or university where the student first enrolled), namely, public, private nonprofit, or private for-profit. 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 results on overall student mobility from four-year to two-year institutions and an emphasis on reverse transfer behavior, the report includes results by the length of students’ stay at a two-year institution — single-term (one academic term) or multiple-term (more than one academic term) — and also examines subsequent enrollment outcomes including whether or not students returned to their institution of origin, completed, stayed enrolled, or were not enrolled at the end of the study period.

NATIONAL COVERAGE OF THE DATA

The National Student Clearinghouse (Clearinghouse) is a unique and trusted source for higher education enrollment and degree verification. Since its creation in 1993, the participation of institutions nationwide in Clearinghouse data-collection programs has steadily increased. Currently, Clearinghouse data include more than 3,400 colleges and 93 percent of U.S. college enrollments. The Clearinghouse 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 Clearinghouse StudentTrackerSM service provides opportunities for robust analysis not afforded by more commonly used institution-level national databases.

Because the Clearinghouse’s coverage of institutions (i.e., the percentage of all institutions participating in the Clearinghouse database) 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, weights for 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 2005 first-time-in-college student cohort. Clearinghouse data track enrollments nationally and 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 Clearinghouse data from national data sets built with 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-in-college students who began their postsecondary studies at U.S. four-year colleges and universities in the fall of 2005, this report examines student mobility from four- to two-year institutions over a span of six 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 2005 were included in the study. However, the summer 2005 enrollment records were not included in the analysis; fall 2005 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 Clearinghouse StudentTrackerSM and DegreeVerifySM services were used to confirm that students included showed no previous college enrollment in the four years prior to 2005 and had not previously completed a college degree.

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 2005 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 reverse transfer that were the focus of the analysis. Students who showed concurrent enrollments (defined in this step as enrollments overlapping by at least one day) in the fall 2005 term were excluded from the study, as were students who showed no fall 2005 enrollment lasting 21 days or longer. Students who enrolled in postsecondary study the first time outside the U.S. or its territories (e.g., Guam, Puerto Rico, U.S. Virgin Islands) were excluded from the study cohort. Included in the study, however, were students who transferred to a postsecondary institution outside the U.S. or its territories after their first term (i.e., after fall 2005).

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

1. Enrolled in fall 2005 (defined as any term with a begin date between August 15–October 31, 2006, inclusive);
2. Did not have a previous enrollment record, as shown in StudentTrackerSM, between June 1, 2001, and May 31, 2005;
3. Did not receive any degree or certificate from a postsecondary institution prior to the first day of enrollment in fall 2005, according to Clearinghouse data;
4. Enrolled at just one institution in fall 2005 (i.e., showed no overlapping multiple enrollments August 15–October 31, 2005);
5. Enrolled for at least one term that was longer than 21 days and that began August 15–October 31, 2005;
6. Enrolled at a Title IV institution in fall 2005;
7. Showed no enrollment for a term of implausible length, that is, either longer than 365 days or shorter than one day; and
8. Had at least one legitimate enrollment status throughout the study period, that is, enrolled for at least one term with full-time, part-time, or withdrawal status.

CONCURRENT ENROLLMENT

In addition to applying the above criteria for the inclusion of students in the study cohort, the researchers applied several decisions related to the inclusion of individual enrollment records term to term. As mentioned previously, Clearinghouse data provide a unique headcount of U.S. college enrollments during each term, which allows for the tracking of individuals despite concurrent enrollment. In preparing data for this report, each instance of concurrent enrollment occurring after fall 2005 was examined, and a primary enrollment record was selected for analysis. Concurrent enrollment was defined in this stage as two or more enrollment records that overlapped by 30 days or more. Primary enrollments were then selected using two sets of decision rules. These decision rules were applied to all students, regardless of their institution of origin's sector. The first set of decision rules, applied before a student's first enrollment at a two-year institution, was as follows:

- 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 likely produced conservative results on the prevalence of student mobility, but at the same time it arguably approximated the priorities of most students concurrently enrolled in this way.
- 2. Enrollment at a two-year institution over enrollment at a four-year institution:** For students who enrolled at a two-year and a four-year institution concurrently, the enrollment records from the two-year institution were selected over those from the four-year institution. This rule was applied in an effort to be more inclusive and to focus on the type of transfer that is of interest in this study.
- 3. Earlier term begin date over later term begin date:** If a student was concurrently enrolled at two or more new institutions and no longer enrolled at the student's previous institution, the enrollment record with the earliest begin date was selected as primary.

The second set of decision rules was applied to select subsequent enrollment records after students' first enrollment at a two-year institution:

- 1. Enrollment at a four-year institution over enrollment at a two-year institution:** After students' first term at the two-year institution, any subsequent enrollment at a four-year institution was selected over enrollment at a two-year institution, even in the case of continued enrollment.
- 2. Enrollment at a four-year institution of origin over enrollment at any other four-year institution:** If a student was enrolled concurrently at more than one four-year institution and one of those institutions was the student's institution of origin, the enrollment record from the four-year institution of origin was selected as primary.
- 3. Earlier term begin date over later term begin date:** If a student was enrolled at two or more four-year institutions concurrently and none of them was the institution of origin, the enrollment record with the earliest begin date was selected as primary.

For both sets of rules, for the few exceptions of students for whom a primary enrollment record was not assigned after these series of rules were applied, the primary enrollment record was randomly selected.

DEFINING MOBILITY FROM FOUR-YEAR TO TWO-YEAR INSTITUTIONS, i.e., REVERSE TRANSFER

For this report, we examined mobility by four-year students in and out of two-year institutions — a pattern that in the literature is commonly called reverse transfer. In our study, we defined reverse transfer as enrollment at a two-year institution outside of summer months by students who initially enrolled at a four-year institution in the fall of 2005, provided that the student had not already received any credential from a four-year institution. Within this definition, a student may have enrolled at a four-year institution different from the institution of origin prior to enrolling at the two-year institution. Additionally, enrollment at a two-year institution occurring only during a summer term (i.e., a term beginning and ending between May 1 and August 31 of a given year) was defined only as summer session course taking behavior and was not the principal focus of this report. Enrollment patterns considered throughout this report include reverse transfer, enrollment outcomes subsequent to reverse transfer (e.g., returned to a four-year institution or stayed in the two-year sector), and six-year outcomes (completed, still enrolled, stopped-out, etc.). Our considerations of these patterns take students' pathways into account regardless of length of enrollment in the two-year sector.

DATA LIMITATIONS

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

Representation of private for-profit institutions in the StudentTrackerSM data is lower than that of other institution types, with 67 percent coverage for private for-profit four-year institutions in fall 2005 compared to 85 percent and 92 percent for private nonprofit four-year institutions and public four-year institutions respectively. Despite the challenges presented by low participation in the early years covered in this report, current Clearinghouse data nevertheless offer near-census national coverage, representing 93 percent of U.S. postsecondary enrollments. In an effort to correct for coverage gaps, in this study, data were weighted, as explained above. Nevertheless, four-year to two-year mobility is likely underestimated in this report due to the study's approach of weighting data according to institution of origin rather than destination institution.

In this study, we were not able to capture all summer enrollments due to changes in Clearinghouse data collection procedures over the years. Until the summer of 2011, the Clearinghouse did not record data on students who were enrolled in summer terms at less-than-half-time status. Typically, less-than-half-time status during a summer term is used for students taking one or two credits. Moreover, data for summer students with full-time status and half-time status were collected from participating institutions only on an optional basis. Beginning in 2011, all summer enrollments at all enrollment status levels became a required component of institutional participation in the Clearinghouse. Our analysis of the data suggests that the number of summer session course takers in the study cohort is approximately 40 percent lower than the number we would have expected if the current data collection procedures had been in place since fall 2006. The majority of these 40 percent would have been less-than-half-time enrollees.

It is important, furthermore, to acknowledge limitations resulting from the cohort identification methods used in this report. Because the Clearinghouse data on designations for class year are incomplete, the researchers identified first-time undergraduate students via two indirect measures:

- No previous college enrollments recorded in StudentTracker going back four years
- No previous degree awarded in the Clearinghouse's historical degree database

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

The definition of reverse transfer used in the analysis for this report also gives rise to possible limitations. Although this report separates out from the reverse transfer cohort those students who took only summer courses at a two-year institution, the report does consider reverse transfer students who returned to their institution of origin after enrolling at a two-year institution, regardless of the length of enrollment at the latter. Thus, the report identifies students who "swirled" as reverse transfer students. In addition, first completion at a four-year institution regardless of degree type was considered, while completion at a two-year institution (without prior completion at a four-year institution or enrollment at a four-year institution during the last 12 months) was considered outside the main focus of this report. Finally, although Clearinghouse 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.

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Table 1. NSC Coverage of Enrollments at Four-Year Institutions by Control of Institution

Title IV, Degree-Granting Institutions Fall 2005	IPEDS Enrollments of Active Participants in NSC Core Services	Total National IPEDS Enrollment	Percentage Covered by NSC (Enrollments)
Public Institutions	6,474,032	6,837,605	94.68%
Private Nonprofit Institutions	2,913,077	3,411,170	85.40%
Private For-Profit Institutions	499,599	750,645	66.56%
Total	9,886,708	10,999,420	89.88%

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Table 1. Enrollment at Two-Year Institutions by Students Who Began at Four-Year Institution

	Weighted Count	% of All Fall 2005 Four-Year Enrollees (n=1,244,349)
Reverse Transfer Students	178,846	14.37%
Summer Session Course Takers	67,231	5.40%
Total	246,078	19.78%

Data from this appendix table are displayed in the report in Table 1. Enrollment at Two-Year Institutions by Students Who Began at Four-Year Institution

Table 2. Reverse Transfer Students by Initial Enrollment Intensity

	Count	Total Entering Cohort	% of Total Entering Cohort
Full-Time	136,177	1,008,691	13.50%
Part-Time	36,202	220,210	16.44%
Total	172,379	1,228,901	14.03%

Data from this appendix table are displayed in the report in Figure 1. Reverse Transfer Students and Summer Session Course Takers by Initial Enrollment Intensity

Table 3. Summer Session Course Takers by Initial Enrollment Intensity

	Count	Total Entering Cohort	% of Total Entering Summer Course Takers
Full-Time	60,732	1,008,691	6.02%
Part-Time	6,105	220,210	2.77%
Total	66,836	1,228,901	5.44%

Data from this appendix table are displayed in the report in Figure 1. Reverse Transfer Students and Summer Session Course Takers by Initial Enrollment Intensity

Table 4. Reverse Transfer Students by Control of Institution of Origin

	Count	Cohort Size (Within Sector)	% of Fall 2005 Entering Cohort Within Each Institution Type
Public	127,237	806,729	15.77%
Private Nonprofit	44,872	394,070	11.39%
Private For-Profit	2,947	27,270	10.81%
Total	175,056	1,228,069	14.25%

Data from this appendix table are displayed in the report in Figure 2. Reverse Transfer Students and Summer Session Course Takers by Control of Institution of Origin

Table 5. Summer Session Course Takers by Control of Institution of Origin

	Count	Cohort Size (Within Sector)	% of Fall 2005 Entering Cohort Within Each Institution Type
Public	45,076	806,729	5.59%
Private Nonprofit	20,578	394,070	5.22%
Private For-Profit	267	27,270	0.98%
Total	65,922	1,228,069	5.37%

Data from this appendix table are displayed in the report in Figure 2. Reverse Transfer Students and Summer Session Course Takers by Control of Institution of Origin

Table 6. Reverse Transfer Students by Timing of First Enrollment at Two-Year Institution

	Count	% of All Fall 2005 Four-Year Enrollees	% of All Reverse Transfer Students
Year One (2005-06)	26,905	2.16%	15.04%
Year Two (2006-07)	65,174	5.24%	36.44%
Year Three (2007-08)	38,509	3.09%	21.53%
Year Four (2008-09)	22,511	1.81%	12.59%
Year Five (2009-10)	15,899	1.28%	8.89%
Year Six (2010-11)	9,849	0.79%	5.51%

Note: For reverse transfer students, "year" is defined as 12 consecutive months starting August 15 and ending August 14.

Data from this appendix table are displayed in the report in Figure 3. Reverse Transfer Students and Summer Session Course Takers by Timing of First Enrollment at Two-Year Institution

Table 7. Summer Session Course Takers by Timing of First Enrollment at Two-Year Institution

	Count	% of All Fall 2005 Four-Year Enrollees	% of All Summer Session Course Takers
Year One (2005-06)	32,970	2.65%	49.04%
Year Two (2006-07)	16,749	1.35%	24.91%
Year Three (2007-08)	10,592	0.85%	15.75%
Year Four (2008-09)	3,879	0.31%	5.77%
Year Five (2009-10)	1,307	0.11%	1.94%
Year Six (2010-11)	1,735	0.14%	2.58%

Note: For summer session course takers, “year” is defined as the calendar year when the first summer session course was taken.

Data from this appendix table are displayed in the report in Figure 3. Reverse Transfer Students and Summer Session Course Takers by Timing of First Enrollment at Two-Year Institution

Table 8. Subsequent Enrollment Outcomes for Reverse Transfer Students and Summer Session Course Takers After First Enrollment at Two-Year Institution

	Returned to Four-Year Sector at Institution of Origin		Returned to Four-Year Sector at Different Institution		Did Not Return to Four-Year Sector		Row Total	
	Count	%*	Count	%*	Count	%*	Count	%
Reverse Transfer Students	29,683	16.60%	50,686	28.34%	98,477	55.06%	178,846	100.00%
Summer Session Course Takers	54,252	80.70%	9,723	14.46%	3,256	4.84%	67,231	100.00%

**Percentage of group denoted within row*

Data from this appendix table are displayed in the report in Figure 4. Enrollment Outcomes for Reverse Transfer Students and Summer Session Course Takers Subsequent to First Enrollment at Two-Year Institution

Table 9. Subsequent Enrollment Outcomes for Reverse Transfer Students by Single- and Multiple-Term Enrollment in Two-Year Sector

Lenth of Enrollment in Two-Year Sector	Subsequent Enrollment	Count	Column %
Single Term	Returned to Four-Year Sector at Institution of Origin	16,192	9.05%
	Returned to Four-Year Sector at Different Institution	13,887	7.76%
	Did Not Return to Four-Year Sector	21,644	12.10%
Multiple Terms	Returned to Four-Year Sector at Institution of Origin	13,491	7.54%
	Returned to Four-Year Sector at Different Institution	36,800	20.58%
	Did Not Return to Four-Year Sector	76,833	42.96%
Total		178,846	100.00%

Data from this appendix table are displayed in the report in Figure 5. Subsequent Enrollment Outcomes for Reverse Transfer Students by Single- and Multiple-Term Enrollment in Two-Year Sector

Table 10. Subsequent Enrollment Outcomes for Single-Term Reverse Transfer Students by Enrollment Intensity During First Term in Two-Year Sector

	Returned to Four-Year Sector at Institution of Origin		Returned to Four-Year Sector at Different Institution		Did Not Return to Four-Year Sector		Row Total	
	Count	%*	Count	%*	Count	%*	Count	%
Full-Time	5,143	31.12%	5,646	34.16%	5,737	34.72%	16,527	100.00%
Part-Time	8,763	30.64%	6,939	24.26%	12,895	45.09%	28,597	100.00%
Total	13,907	30.82%	12,585	27.89%	18,633	41.29%	45,125	100.00%

*Percentage of group denoted within row

Data from this appendix table are displayed in the report in Figure 6. Subsequent Enrollment Outcomes for Single-Term Reverse Transfer Students by Enrollment Intensity During First Term in Two-Year Sector

Table 11. Subsequent Enrollment Outcomes for Multiple-Term Reverse Transfer Students by Enrollment Intensity During First Term in Two-Year Sector

	Returned to Four-Year Sector at Institution of Origin		Returned to Four-Year Sector at Different Institution		Did Not Return to Four-Year Sector		Total	
	Count	%*	Count	%*	Count	%*	Count	%
Full-Time	7,159	11.05%	22,109	34.12%	35,536	54.84%	64,804	100.00%
Part-Time	5,729	10.14%	13,489	23.87%	37,295	65.99%	56,513	100.00%
Total	12,888	10.62%	35,598	29.34%	72,831	60.03%	121,317	100.00%

*Percentage of group denoted within row

Data from this appendix table are displayed in the report in Figure 7. Subsequent Enrollment Outcomes for Multiple-Term Reverse Transfer Students by Enrollment Intensity During First Term in Two-Year Sector

Table 12. Subsequent Enrollment Outcomes for Reverse Transfer Students by Control of Institution of Origin

		Returned to Four-Year Sector at Institution of Origin		Returned to Four-Year Sector at Different Institution		Did Not Return to Four-Year Sector		Total	
		Count	%*	Count	%*	Count	%*	Count	%
Public	Total	23,301	18.31%	33,214	26.10%	70,721	55.58%	127,237	100.00%
	Single-Term	12,287	34.19%	8,683	24.16%	14,963	41.64%	35,933	100.00%
	Multiple-Term	11,014	12.06%	24,531	26.87%	55,758	61.07%	91,303	100.00%
Private Nonprofit	Total	5,132	11.44%	16,103	35.89%	23,637	52.68%	44,872	100.00%
	Single-Term	3,231	23.43%	4,840	35.10%	5,719	41.47%	13,789	100.00%
	Multiple-Term	1,902	6.12%	11,263	36.24%	17,918	57.65%	31,083	100.00%
Private For-Profit	Total	353	11.97%	535	18.14%	2,060	69.89%	2,947	100.00%
	Single-Term	242	23.30%	189	18.23%	607	58.47%	1,038	100.00%
	Multiple-Term	111	5.82%	345	18.08%	1,453	76.10%	1,910	100.00%

*Percentage of group denoted within row

Data from this appendix table are displayed in the report in Figure 8. Subsequent Enrollment Outcomes for Reverse Transfer Students by Control of Institution of Origin; Figure 9. Subsequent Enrollment Outcomes for Single- and Multiple-Term Reverse Transfer Students for Students Who Began at Public Four-Year Institution; Figure 10. Subsequent Enrollment Outcomes for Single- and Multiple-Term Reverse Transfer Students for Students Who Began at Private Nonprofit Four-Year Institution; and Figure 11. Subsequent Enrollment Outcomes for Single- and Multiple-Term Reverse Transfer Students for Students Who Began at Private For-Profit Four-Year Institution

**Table 13. Completion at Institution of Origin:
Rates by Enrollment Pathway and Institution Type**

	Control of Institution of Origin	Completed at Institution of Origin		Did Not Complete at Institution of Origin		Total	
		Count	%*	Count	%*	Count	%
Summer Session Course Takers Who Returned to Institution of Origin	Public	28,908	77.44%	8,421	22.56%	37,329	100.00%
	Private Nonprofit	12,172	77.70%	3,494	22.30%	15,666	100.00%
	Private For-Profit	36	55.81%	29	44.19%	65	100.00%
	Total	41,116	77.49%	11,944	22.51%	53,060	100.00%
Single-Term Reverse Transfer Students Who Returned to Institution of Origin	Public	4,827	39.28%	7,460	60.72%	12,287	100.00%
	Private Nonprofit	1,379	42.70%	1,851	57.30%	3,231	100.00%
	Private For-Profit	108	44.72%	134	55.28%	242	100.00%
	Total	6,314	40.07%	9,445	59.93%	15,760	100.00%
Multiple-Term Reverse Transfer Students Who Returned to Institution of Origin	Public	3,528	32.03%	7,486	67.97%	11,014	100.00%
	Private Nonprofit	737	38.73%	1,165	61.27%	1,902	100.00%
	Private For-Profit	35	31.08%	77	68.92%	111	100.00%
	Total	4,299	33.00%	8,727	67.00%	13,026	100.00%
Students Who Did Not Enroll in Two-Year Sector	Public	347,104	56.15%	271,078	43.85%	618,182	100.00%
	Private Nonprofit	206,671	64.46%	113,958	35.54%	320,629	100.00%
	Private For-Profit	8,321	35.15%	15,348	64.84%	23,670	100.00%
	Total	562,096	58.40%	400,384	41.60%	962,480	100.00%

*Percentage of group denoted within row

Data from this appendix table are displayed in the report in Figure 12. Completion at Institution of Origin: Rates by Enrollment Pathway and Institution Type

Table 14. Six-Year Outcomes For All Reverse Transfer Students

	Students by Length of Enrollment at Two-Year Institution				All Reverse Transfer Students	
	Single-Term Students		Multiple-Term Students		Count	%***
	Count	%*	Count	%**		
Completed at Any Four-Year Institution	13,082	25.30%	18,755	14.80%	31,838	17.80%
Still Enrolled at Any Four-Year Institution	8,002	15.50%	20,700	16.30%	28,702	16.10%
Completed or Still Enrolled at a Two-Year Institution	10,245	19.81%	48,336	38.02%	58,581	32.75%
Not Enrolled	20,394	39.43%	39,333	30.94%	59,726	33.40%
Total	51,722	100.00%	127,123	100.00%	178,846	100.00%

*Percentage of all single-term reverse transfer students

**Percentage of all multiple-term reverse transfer students

***Percentage of all reverse transfer students

Data from this appendix table are displayed in the report in Table 2. Six-Year Outcomes for All Reverse Transfer Students by Length of Enrollment at Two-Year Institution

Table 15. Six-Year Outcomes For All Reverse Transfer Students Who Returned to Institution of Origin

		Students by Length of Enrollment at Two-Year Institution				Total	
		Single-Term Students		Multiple-Term Students		Count	%*
		Count	%*	Count	%*		
Completed or Still Enrolled at Institution of Origin	Total	9,092	30.63%	8,729	29.41%	17,821	60.04%
	Completed	6,476	21.82%	4,442	14.96%	10,918	36.78%
	Still Enrolled	2,616	8.81%	4,287	14.44%	6,903	23.26%
Completed or Still Enrolled at Different Four-Year Institution	Total	1,938	6.53%	1,127	3.80%	3,065	10.32%
	Completed	872	2.94%	374	1.26%	1,246	4.20%
	Still Enrolled	1,066	3.59%	753	2.54%	1,819	6.13%
Did Not Stay in Four-Year Sector	Total	5,162	17.39%	3,635	12.25%	8,798	29.64%
	Completed or Still Enrolled at Two-Year Institution	1,759	5.92%	1,650	5.56%	3,408	11.48%
	Not Enrolled	3,404	11.47%	1,986	6.69%	5,389	18.16%
Total		16,192	54.55%	13,491	45.45%	29,683	100.00%

*Percentage of all reverse transfer students who returned to institution of origin (n=29,683)

Data from this appendix table are displayed in Figure 13. Six-Year Outcomes for Reverse Transfer Students Who Returned to Institution of Origin

Table 16. Six-Year Outcomes For Single-Term Reverse Transfer Students Who Returned to Institution of Origin

		Count	%*
Completed or Still Enrolled at Institution of Origin	Total	9,092	56.15%
	Completed	6,476	39.99%
	Still Enrolled	2,616	16.16%
Completed or Still Enrolled at Different Four-Year Institution	Total	1,938	11.97%
	Completed	872	5.39%
	Still Enrolled	1,066	6.58%
Did Not Stay in Four-Year Sector	Total	5,162	31.88%
	Completed or Still Enrolled at Two-Year Institution	1,759	10.86%
	Not Enrolled	3,404	21.02%
Total		16,192	100.00%

*Percentage of all single-term reverse transfer students who returned to institution of origin (n=16,192)

Data from this appendix table are displayed in the report in Figure 14. Six-Year Outcomes for Single-Term Reverse Transfer Students Who Returned to Institution of Origin

Table 17. Six-Year Outcomes For Multiple-Term Reverse Transfer Students Who Returned to Institution of Origin

		Count	%*
Completed or Still Enrolled at Institution of Origin	Total	8,729	64.70%
	Completed	4,442	32.92%
	Still Enrolled	4,287	31.78%
Completed or Still Enrolled at Different Four-Year Institution	Total	1,127	8.35%
	Completed	374	2.77%
	Still Enrolled	753	5.58%
Did Not Stay in Four-Year Sector	Total	3,635	26.95%
	Completed or Still Enrolled at Two-Year Institution	1,650	12.23%
	Not Enrolled	1,986	14.72%
Total		13,491	100.00%

*Percentage of all multiple-term reverse transfer students who returned to institution of origin (n=13,491)

Data from this appendix table are displayed in the report in Figure 15. Six-Year Outcomes for Multiple-Term Reverse Transfer Students Who Returned to Institution of Origin

Table 18. Six-Year Outcomes for Students Who Began at Public Four-Year Institution and Returned to Institution of Origin After Reverse Transfer

		Students by Length of Enrollment at Two-Year Institution				Total	
		Single-Term Students		Multiple-Term Students		Count	%*
		Count	%*	Count	%*		
Completed or Still Enrolled at Institution of Origin	Total	6,971	29.92%	7,159	30.73%	14,131	60.65%
	Completed	4,827	20.72%	3,528	15.14%	8,355	35.86%
	Still Enrolled	2,145	9.20%	3,631	15.59%	5,776	24.79%
Completed or Still Enrolled at Different Four-Year Institution	Total	1,410	6.05%	904	3.88%	2,314	9.93%
	Completed	640	2.75%	296	1.27%	936	4.02%
	Still Enrolled	770	3.30%	608	2.61%	1,378	5.91%
Did Not Stay in Four-Year Sector	Total	3,906	16.76%	2,950	12.66%	6,856	29.43%
	Completed or Still Enrolled at Two-Year Institution	1,405	6.03%	1,376	5.90%	2,781	11.94%
	Not Enrolled	2,501	10.73%	1,574	6.76%	4,075	17.49%
Total		12,287	52.73%	11,014	47.27%	23,301	100.00%

*Percentage of all reverse transfer students who began at public four-year institution and returned to institution of origin after reverse transfer (n=23,301)

Data from this appendix table are displayed in Figure 16. Six-Year Outcomes for Reverse Transfer Students Who Began at Public Four-Year Institution and Subsequently Returned to Four-Year Sector by Four-Year Destination Institution

Table 19. Six-Year Outcomes for Students Who Began at Public Four-Year Institution and Returned to Institution of Origin After Reverse Transfer

		Students by Length of Enrollment at Two-Year Institution				Total	
		Single-Term Students		Multiple-Term Students		Count	%*
		Count	%*	Count	%*		
Completed at Any Four-Year Institution	Total	3,488	10.50%	9,156	27.57%	12,644	38.07%
Still Enrolled	Total	2,763	8.32%	10,617	31.96%	13,380	40.28%
	At Returning Four-Year Institution	2,116	6.37%	9,088	27.36%	11,204	33.73%
	At Different Four-Year Institution	647	1.95%	1,529	4.60%	2,176	6.55%
Did Not Stay in Four-Year Sector	Total	2,432	7.32%	4,758	14.33%	7,190	21.65%
Total		8,683	26.14%	24,531	73.86%	33,214	100.00%

*Percentage of all reverse transfer students who began at public four-year institution and enrolled at different four-year institution after reverse transfer (n=33,214)

**Note: Due to low values in some cells, subcategories under this outcome were collapsed.

Data from this appendix table are displayed in the report in Figure 16. Six-Year Outcomes for Reverse Transfer Students Who Began at Public Four-Year Institution and Subsequently Returned to Four-Year Sector by Four-Year Destination Institution

Table 20. Six-Year Outcomes for Students Who Began at Public Four-Year Institution and Did Not Return to Four-Year Sector After Reverse Transfer

	Students by Length of Enrollment at Two-Year Institution				Total	
	Single-Term Students		Multiple-Term Students		Count	%*
	Count	%*	Count	%*		
Completed or Still Enrolled at Two-Year Institution	3,279	4.64%	32,074	45.35%	35,353	49.99%
Not Enrolled	11,684	16.52%	23,684	33.49%	35,369	50.01%
Total	14,963	21.16%	55,758	78.84%	70,721	100.00%

*Percentage of all reverse transfer students who began at public four-year institution and did not return to four-year sector after reverse transfer (n=70,721)

Table 21. Six-Year Outcomes for Students Who Began at Private Nonprofit Four-Year Institution and Returned to Institution of Origin After Reverse Transfer

		Students by Length of Enrollment at Two-Year Institution				Total	
		Single-Term Students		Multiple-Term Students		Count	%*
		Count	%*	Count	%*		
Completed or Still Enrolled at Institution of Origin	Total	1,722	33.56%	1,190	23.18%	2,912	56.74%
	Completed	1,379	26.88%	737	14.35%	2,116	41.23%
	Still Enrolled	343	6.68%	453	8.83%	796	15.51%
Completed or Still Enrolled at Different Four-Year Institution	Total	465	9.06%	177	3.45%	642	12.50%
	Completed	206	4.02%	64	1.25%	270	5.27%
	Still Enrolled	259	5.04%	112	2.19%	371	7.23%
Did Not Stay in Four-Year Sector	Total	1,043	20.33%	535	10.43%	1,578	30.76%
	Completed or Still Enrolled at Two-Year Institution	280	5.45%	205	3.99%	485	9.45%
	Not Enrolled	763	14.88%	330	6.43%	1,094	21.31%
Total		3,231	62.95%	1,902	37.05%	5,132	100.00%

*Percentage of all reverse transfer students who began at private nonprofit four-year institution and returned to institution of origin after reverse transfer (n=5,132)

Data from this appendix table are displayed in the report in Figure 17. Six-Year Outcomes for Reverse Transfer Students Who Began at Private Nonprofit Four-Year Institution and Subsequently Returned to Four-Year Sector by Four-Year Destination Institution

Table 22. Six-Year Outcomes for Students Who Began at Private Nonprofit Four-Year Institution and Enrolled at Different Four-Year Institution After Reverse Transfer

		Students by Length of Enrollment at Two-Year Institution				Total	
		Single-Term Students		Multiple-Term Students		Count	%*
		Count	%*	Count	%*		
Completed at Any Four-Year Institution	Total	2,130	13.23%	4,457	27.68%	6,587	40.90%
Still Enrolled	Total	1,420	8.82%	4,566	28.35%	5,986	37.17%
	At Returning Four-Year Institution	1,062	6.60%	3,882	24.11%	4,944	30.70%
	At Different Four-Year Institution	358	2.23%	684	4.25%	1,042	6.47%
Did Not Stay in Four-Year Sector	Total	1,289	8.01%	2,241	13.92%	3,530	21.92%
Total		4,840	30.05%	11,263	69.95%	16,103	100.00%

*Percentage of all reverse transfer students who began at private nonprofit four-year institution and enrolled at different four-year institution after reverse transfer (n=16,103)

**Note: Due to low values in some cells, subcategories under this outcome were collapsed.

Data from this appendix table are displayed in the report in Figure 17. Six-Year Outcomes for Reverse Transfer Students Who Began at Private Nonprofit Four-Year Institution and Subsequently Returned to Four-Year Sector by Four-Year Destination Institution

Table 23. Six-Year Outcomes for Students Who Began at Private Nonprofit Four-Year Institution and Did Not Return to Four-Year Sector After Reverse Transfer

	Students by Length of Enrollment at Two-Year Institution				Total	
	Single-Term Students		Multiple-Term Students		Count	%*
	Count	%*	Count	%*		
Completed or Still Enrolled at Two-Year Institution	1,152	4.87%	9,372	39.65%	10,525	44.53%
Not Enrolled	4,567	19.32%	8,546	36.15%	13,112	55.47%
Total	5,719	24.19%	17,918	75.81%	23,637	100.00%

*Percentage of all reverse transfer students who began at private nonprofit four-year institution and did not return to four-year sector after reverse transfer (n=23,637)

Table 24. Six-Year Outcomes for Students Who Began at Private For-Profit Four-Year Institution and Returned to Institution of Origin After Reverse Transfer

		Students by Length of Enrollment at Two-Year Institution				Total	
		Single-Term Students		Multiple-Term Students		Count	%*
		Count	%*	Count	%*		
Completed or Still Enrolled in Four-Year Sector**	Total	165	46.81%	86	24.26%	251	71.06%
	Completed	111	31.49%	36	10.21%	147	41.70%
	Still Enrolled	54	15.32%	50	14.04%	104	29.36%
Did Not Stay in Four-Year Sector**	Total	77	21.70%	26	7.23%	102	28.94%
Total		242	68.51%	111	31.49%	353	100.00%

*Percentage of all reverse transfer students who began at private for-profit four-year institution and returned to institution of origin after reverse transfer (n=353)

**Note: Due to low values in some cells, subcategories under this outcome were collapsed.

Data from this appendix table are displayed in the report in Figure 18. Six-Year Outcomes for Reverse Transfer Students Who Began at Private For-Profit Four-Year Institution and Subsequently Returned to Four-Year Sector by Four-Year Destination Institution

Table 25. Six-Year Outcomes for Students Who Began at Private For-Profit Four-Year Institution and Returned to Different Four-Year Institution After Reverse Transfer

	Students by Length of Enrollment at Two-Year Institution				Total	
	Single-Term Students		Multiple-Term Students		Count	%*
	Count	%*	Count	%*		
Completed at Any Four-Year Institution	47	8.71%	78	14.61%	125	23.31%
Still Enrolled	83	15.45%	188	35.11%	270	50.56%
Did Not Stay in Four-Year Sector	60	11.24%	80	14.89%	140	26.12%
Total	189	35.39%	345	64.61%	535	100.00%

*Percentage of all reverse transfer students who began at private for-profit four-year institution and enrolled at different four-year institution after reverse transfer (n=535)

Data from this appendix table are displayed in the report in Figure 18. Six-Year Outcomes for Reverse Transfer Students Who Began at Private For-Profit Four-Year Institution and Subsequently Returned to Four-Year Sector by Four-Year Destination Institution

Table 26. Six-Year Outcomes for Students Who Began at Private For-Profit Four-Year Institution and Stayed in Two-Year Sector After Reverse Transfer

	Students by Length of Enrollment at Two-Year Institution				Total	
	Single-Term Students		Multiple-Term Students		Count	%*
	Count	%*	Count	%*		
Completed or Still Enrolled at Two-Year Institution	146	7.07%	904	43.88%	1,050	50.95%
Not Enrolled	461	22.38%	550	26.68%	1,011	49.05%
Total	607	29.45%	1,453	70.56%	2,060	100.00%

*Percentage of all reverse transfer students who began at private for-profit four-year institution (n=2,060)

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