

University to College Transfer Students

Exploring Motives and Characteristics

Final Report

November 28, 2013

Confederation College collaborated with the Ontario Council on Articulation and Transfer (ONCAT) to focus on students who transferred to Confederation College from university between 2010 and 2012, specifically examining what motivates them to make such a decision. Data was collected via online surveys and focus groups from Confederation College students and graduates who have any amount of previous university experience. Results indicate that students' main reason for attending college after university was to gain skills to further employment opportunities. We are hopeful this project will help further knowledge into transfer students' motives, which can aid in increasing student satisfaction, learning opportunities, ease of access, and quality of program delivery in colleges.



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University to College Transfer Students



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Introduction

In 2009, Ontario's Colleges proposed four goals to help improve the quality of higher education, one of which involved enhancing student mobility (Colleges Ontario, 2009). As such, mobility within postsecondary education is an important factor to assess, and it is becoming progressively more common for students to transfer between institutions (Colleges Ontario, 2009). Because of this increase in student mobility, several studies have examined mobility trends and transfer student characteristics with data collected from various sources (e.g., Graduate Satisfaction Survey, Student Satisfaction Survey, University/College Applicant Survey, etc.). Results from these sources indicate that the pathways students use to access postsecondary education are becoming more diversified; students do not always follow the traditional linear path from high school to either college or university (Bayard & Greenlee, 2009; Colleges Ontario, 2013; Kerr, McCloy & Liu, 2010; Usher & Jarvey, 2012). Previous research into student mobility generally focused most on college students who transfer to university; consequently, much information has been collected pertaining to this facet of mobility (Colleges Ontario, 2008; MacLennan, 2002), but relatively less is known about the movement from university to college.

To add to the literature, Confederation College collaborated with the Ontario Council on Articulation and Transfer (ONCAT) to focus on students who transferred to Confederation College from university between 2010 and 2012, while specifically examining what motivates them to make such a decision. Data was collected via online surveys and two focus groups. Participants included students who are either currently enrolled at, or had previously attended, Confederation College and who have any amount of previous university experience. Discovering what motivates a student to attend college after university can help inform best practices to ensure that students' needs are being met before, after, and during transfer. Additionally, further knowledge into transfer students' motives can aid in increasing student satisfaction, learning opportunities, ease of access, and quality of program delivery in colleges.

The report includes a literature review relevant to university-college mobility, the methods used to collect survey data and conduct focus groups, the results from both methods, a summary of the results, and discussion regarding limitations, recommendations, and future directions.



Literature Review

Data Sources

Listed below are several surveys that measure trends and student characteristics in postsecondary education (PSE) in Ontario.

University/College Applicant Study (UCAS)

This survey measures demographics and key decision factors in choosing a college including academic, financial, outcome, campus, and nurturing factors. The UCAS contacts approximately 250,000 university/college applicants each spring, and is the largest survey of PSE applicants in North America.

National Graduates Survey (NGS)

This survey examines factors including: employment success since graduation, employment secured and relation to field of study, employment satisfaction, rates of unemployment/underemployment, and postsecondary influence on present career achievement. The survey is administered to PSE graduates at two and five years following graduation.

Ontario University Graduate Survey

This survey is administered via mail two years following graduation. It examines factors including employment and further education of Ontario university graduates.

Key Performance Indicator Surveys (KPI)

Additional surveys are grouped under the KPI Surveys and include the Student Satisfaction Survey, the Graduate Satisfaction Survey, and the Employer Satisfaction Survey. These surveys are designed to measure how well Ontario's 24 colleges are performing in comparison to the goals delineated by the Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities (MTCU). The surveys measure the five KPIs: graduate employment rate, graduate rate, employer satisfaction rate, graduate satisfaction, and student satisfaction. The Student Satisfaction Survey is administered in class to college students during their second semester; the Graduate Satisfaction Survey is administered to graduates six months after graduation, and the Employer Satisfaction Survey is administered to employers five weeks after the Graduate Survey is complete.

Gaps in Transfer Student Information

While the purpose of these surveys is to gather information on the performance of the colleges and universities, they also are able to provide some insights on transfer students and their reason for transfer. Much of the literature uses information from these surveys to help explain motives; however, these surveys are not designed to collect all the relevant information on the transfer students. For example, the Graduate Satisfaction Survey is only conducted on graduates six months following graduation which may not capture students who transferred to another institution before graduation,



or subsequent to six months following graduation. In addition, data on transfer applicants can only be tracked if students voluntarily include a university transcript or degree in their college application; some applicants may not have shared such information. The present study attempts to add to the current information by providing an additional examination of students who have transferred to Confederation College from university.

Mobility

Recently, much attention has been directed towards student mobility within and between postsecondary institutions and sectors, as increasing ease of transfer has emerged as an important factor in the quality of PSE (Kerr, McCloy, & Liu, 2010; Speers, 2012). The term mobility encompasses an array of transfer options for students, and may refer to the transfer of students between colleges, between universities, from college to university, or from university to college. The number of students embarking on these non-traditional pathways to PSE is increasing; the route from high school directly to either university or college is no longer the norm (Kerr, McCloy, & Liu, 2010; Liu, 2013). Results from the 2012 University/College Applicant Study show that 31% of Ontario college applicants are transfer students, and an additional 15% of college applicants have some previous postsecondary experience (Colleges Ontario, 2012). In this vein, Colleges Ontario (2013), found that the number of non-direct college applicants (includes applicants with delayed entry or previous PSE experience) is increasing; in the 2012-13 year, 65.5% of college applicants were non-direct applicants, while only 34.5% of college applicants applied directly from high school. This report included information on PSE applicants from 2003-2013, and found the number of non-direct applicants has increased since the 2003-04 year, when 58.8% of college applicants were non-direct and 40% of applicants were direct entry. This report (Colleges Ontario, 2013) also found that in 2012-13, 42% of applicants had some previous postsecondary experience (includes those with and without credentials); 24% of applicants had completed PSE (12% from university), and 18% had incomplete PSE. It is clear that the number of students diverging from the traditional path is on the rise; as such, it is vital to understand as much as possible regarding students' pathways within PSE.

As mentioned above, it is evident that student mobility is an emerging area of interest in PSE. Accordingly, research into student mobility and non-traditional pathways in PSE has been recognized as a priority for the major PSE research institutions in Canada, including ONCAT (formerly the College University Consortium Council), the Higher Education Quality Council of Ontario (HEQCO), and Colleges Ontario. ONCAT was established in 2011, and seeks to support collaboration between Ontario's colleges and universities, and support student transfer between them. ONCAT also sponsors and provides funding for research involving transfer and mobility in Ontario. HEQCO formulated a research plan in 2005 to better understand and develop different models of PSE and collaboration between institutions; as such, understanding student mobility is a priority for their research mandate. Finally, as mentioned previously, College's Ontario (2009) proposed enhancing student mobility as one of its four goals for improving PSE. In view of the fact that the major PSE research institutions in Canada recognize the importance of student mobility en masse, there are several studies examining various facets of mobility, some of which are outlined below in terms of trends and student characteristics.



Trends in PSE

Several reports show that the number of transfer students with university experience has increased, including students with university degrees and students with some previous university experience. For example, the findings from the 2008 Colleges Ontario study demonstrate that in 2007-08, 37% of college students had some previous experience with PSE, and nine percent were university graduates. Similarly, in 2011, the College-University Consortium Council (CUCC) reported that proportionally, the number of college attendees with a university degree is slightly increasing; in 2001-02, 7.3% of college students had a university degree; the number increased somewhat to 8.3% in 2006-07, and increased again to 9.8% in 2009-10 (CUCC, 2011a). When the CUCC considered any amount of PSE experience, the proportions significantly increased, with 21.3% of students having either a college or university diploma or degree, and 20.8% having some PSE experience in 2009-10.

Colleges Ontario (2009) reports that student mobility and transfer is becoming more common; 17% of college students have some previous university experience, and nine percent have graduated from university. According to data collected from the College Application Survey, 13 %of college applicants indicated past university experience, and 11% of first year college registrants indicated previous university experience. Additionally, in a 2005 survey on university graduates conducted two years after graduating, it was found that of those who furthered their education six months following graduation, 11.5% went to college, and two years after graduation 9.4% of graduates were attending college (Colleges Ontario, 2005). Taken as a whole, these studies collectively demonstrate the increasing number of college students with previous university experience.

Student Characteristics

Surveys collecting data on PSE experiences examine not only trends, but student demographics and characteristics as well. Sources indicate that students who diverge from the traditional PSE pathways often have certain characteristics, making them a distinct group in regards to age, gender, language, and program choice.

In 2013, Colleges Ontario examined college applicants and found that the average age for a non-direct applicant (those not applying directly from high school) is 25.6 years, which is significantly older than the average age of the direct applicant (those applying directly from high school), which is 19.8 years. Non-direct applicants are slightly more likely to be male (53% male, 47% female). However, college applicants with postsecondary experience are more likely to be female; 55% of applicants with incomplete PSE are female, while 45% are male. For applicants with complete PSE (those with a diploma or degree), 59% are female, and 41% are male (Colleges Ontario, 2013).

When specifically looking at the college applicant who had graduated from university, it is found that those who are university graduates are most likely to: be female, be older than 25 years, enroll in a post-basic certificate, have a first language that is not French or English, and choose a college program related to government or real estate. (CUCC, 2011b). It was also found that most of them had taken a program in humanities, social sciences, or business in university (Colleges Ontario, 2009). Additionally, as part of its Improving College System Pathways Project, Colleges Ontario (2008)



examined students' motives into why they move. The most common answer was "interest in a new field", followed by "better employment" and "personal/social reasons".

In a 2012 study of college transfer students by Colleges Ontario, 52% of respondents had previously attended university (the remaining had transferred from a different college). For the students with previous university education, 49% had been enrolled in an arts program, and such students were most likely to enroll in either a business or a health science program in college. Results demonstrated that when switching schools, approximately 75% of students changed their field of study. The majority of participants (slightly above half) cited their main reason for switching programs was to enhance career prospects. Additional motives for switching included convenience of the college geographical location, and a penchant for the college's teaching/learning styles (Usher & Jarvey, 2012).

Another aspect of interest in applicants is who influenced their PSE decisions. Colleges Ontario (2004) examined data from the College Applicant Survey regarding the degree of influence that other individuals exerted on choosing the college of interest for applicants. Noticeable differences were found between the direct entry applicants and the group applying who had previous PSE. It was found that as a group, those with previous PSE rated the influence of others as less of a factor in their decision. For the direct entry group, 40% said parents influenced them the most, 14% said friends influenced them the most, and 12% said their main influence was a college representative. The group with previous PSE reported that friends were the greatest influence (29%), and reported less parental influence (25%) and less college representative influence (8%). Another significant difference was the degree of influence from other family members, which only 6% of the direct entry group rated as a main influence, compared with 16% of the group with previous PSE.

Previous research into demographics and characteristics of mobile and transfer students show that they are a distinguishable group. The current study is hoping to examine this group further by discovering what motivates these students to attend college after attending university.

Other Jurisdictions

In Canada, Alberta, British Columbia, and Quebec have emerged as having the most established transfer systems for students moving between postsecondary institutions and sectors (HEQCO, 2010). These provinces all have systems in place meant to recognize and transfer students' credits, which adds great ease to the transfer process. The Canadian Council on Learning (2009) reports that student mobility is highest in provinces with recognized systems that transfer credits, such as British Columbia and Quebec. For example, in British Columbia, 49% of Canadians aged 18-74 have attended more than one postsecondary institution; in Quebec, 47% have, and in Ontario, only 39% have. Suggested reasons for this smaller percentage in Ontario include its original design of its PSE system, which was meant to be binary and recognized college and universities being separate sectors; this model decreases the ease of student mobility between sectors (Kerr, McCloy, & Liu, 2010).

British Columbia has a unique and world renowned transfer system, and is one of the best examples of a successful transfer system in Canada. Bekhradnia Bahram, of the Higher Education Policy Institute in the United Kingdom, declared "British Columbia has taken the California model and developed it into



what is possibly the most extensive credit accumulation and transfer arrangement in the world” (Cowin, 2013, p. 8). The BC system allows students to be mobile, while receiving credit for what they have done at previous institutions. The system has in place policies, guidelines, and articulation agreements to aid in mobility and transfer, and has directed research efforts into the continuous improvement of this system (BCCAT, 2013). A 2013 study by BC Stats examined motivations for mobility of postsecondary students. Results of this study showed that students main motive for moving from one institution to another was because they decided to pursue a program that was not available at their original institution. It was also found that only 20% of mobile students reported some dissatisfaction with the process of credit transfer. The BC postsecondary system illustrates an exemplary model for student transfer and mobility.

From the abovementioned information, it is evident that student mobility is on the rise in Ontario; as such, postsecondary research institutions have conducted much research in this area. Previous studies indicate that student mobility is becoming more common, and mobile students have distinct and identifiable characteristics. Further studies are needed to gain a comprehensive understanding of student mobility to ensure students have access to the highest quality postsecondary education. This study will aid in a more complete understanding of mobility by examining students’ motives for transferring from university to college.

Current Study

The current study examined previous university students who attended Confederation College between 2010 and 2012. The main objective was to discover why students choose to attend college after attending university. Other important themes were also examined, including student characteristics, academic performance, program choice, transfer experience, and students’ overall experience.



Survey and Focus Group Methodology

Information on University Students who transferred to Confederation College

The data from our system comprises information on university students who transferred into Confederation College from 2010 to 2012. The known variables included the term students were admitted in, the program they were admitted to, the previous institution they attended and the amount of credit they were given for their university experience. This data was analyzed with data from the previous study, *Measures of Student Success and Student Experience Following University-College Transfers in Northwestern Ontario* (2012), to find trends.

Survey Methodology

There were 234 students who transferred to Confederation College from university between 2010 and 2012. These students were contacted via email and invited to participate in the survey (please refer to Appendix A for a copy of the survey). The survey questions were guided from both the research objective and previous research into university-college student mobility. From this, themes emerged that were deemed important to examine. These included student characteristics, academic performance, program choice, employment, transfer experience, reason for transfer, and students' overall experience.

The survey included an invitation to participate in one of two focus groups. In addition to the email invite, posters were put up around campus and in-class announcements were made in classes with a high number of previous university students in an effort to attract more participants. The survey was open from September 20th until October 11th, 2013.

Focus Group Methodology

We collaborated with Northern Insights (a division of Generator), to help establish a discussion guide (Appendix B) and moderate the focus groups. Two focus groups were conducted during the month of October, 2013. In total, there were 17 students that participated in the focus groups (see Table 1). The focus groups were conducted at the Northern Insight lab facility located in the Shunia Building of Confederation College's main campus.

Date	Focus Group	Number of Participants
October 9, 2013 from 12:30 pm to 1:10 pm	#1	9
October 16, 2013 from 12:30 pm to 1:30 pm	#2	8

Table 1

The focus groups were led by a moderator who introduced the purpose of the research study to the participants. All participants signed a consent form indicating knowledge of, and compliance with, the recording of the focus groups. Participants were also given \$50 gift cards for their participation.



A formal set of questions was explicitly drafted to help guide discussion in the focus groups, based on a preliminary analysis of the survey results that helped identify themes that warranted further exploration. Follow-up questions were asked in addition to the pre-established questions to ensure that a thorough and complete data set would be available for analysis. This method of inquiry allowed the moderator to guide the discussion of each focus group to ensure that all topics related to student transfers were discussed.

Results of System Data

Using the results of the system data we were able to update some of the tables from the previous study, *Measures of Student Success and Student Experience Following University-College Transfers in Northwestern Ontario* (2012), and add new information specific to the current topic.

The number of university transfers from university to Confederation College from 2005 to 2012 was extracted from the data. The average percent change between 2005 and 2012 was calculated to find the relative change in the number of university transfer students over this period of time. An average percent change of 0.04 between 2005 and 2012 suggests that there has been no significant increase or decrease in the number of transfer students from university to college, meaning that the number of university transfers has been relatively stable here at Confederation College (details displayed in Figure 1).

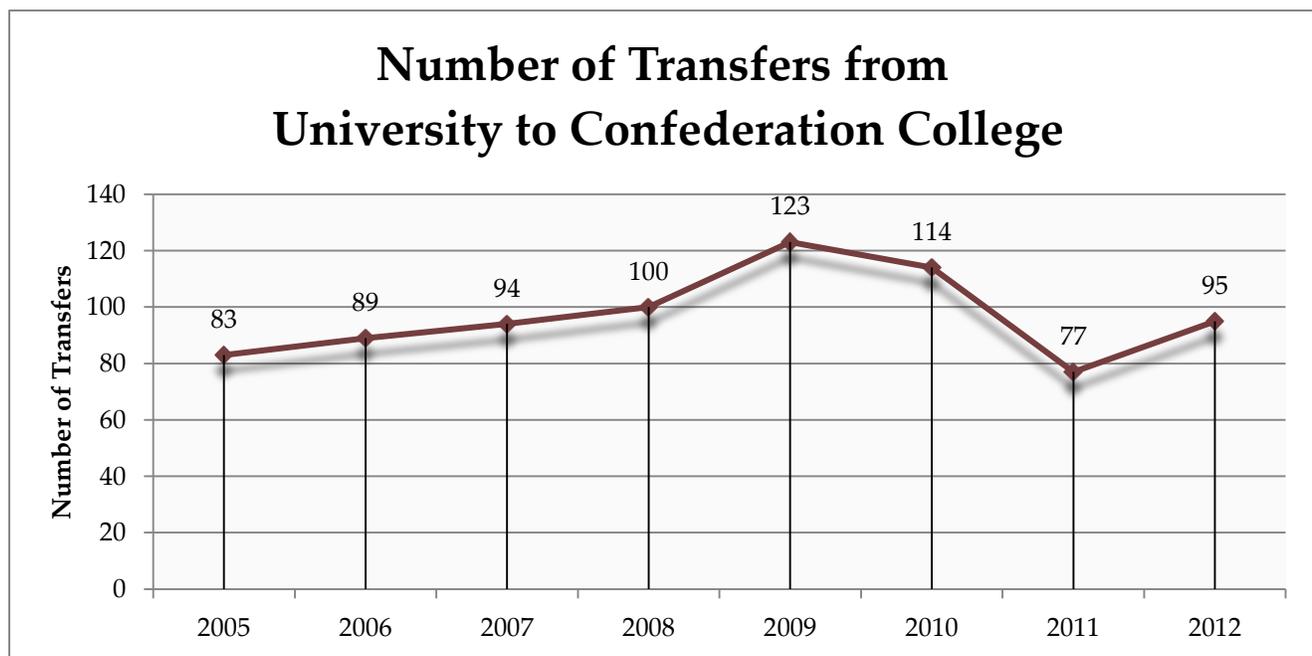


Figure 1



Additionally, the number of transfers exclusively from Lakehead University to Confederation College was also extracted from the data. Percentage change was calculated from 2005 to 2012 to find the relative change in the number of transfers over this period of time. The average percentage change between these years was found to be 0.04, suggesting that the number of transfers from Lakehead University has been relatively stable (details displayed in Figure 2).

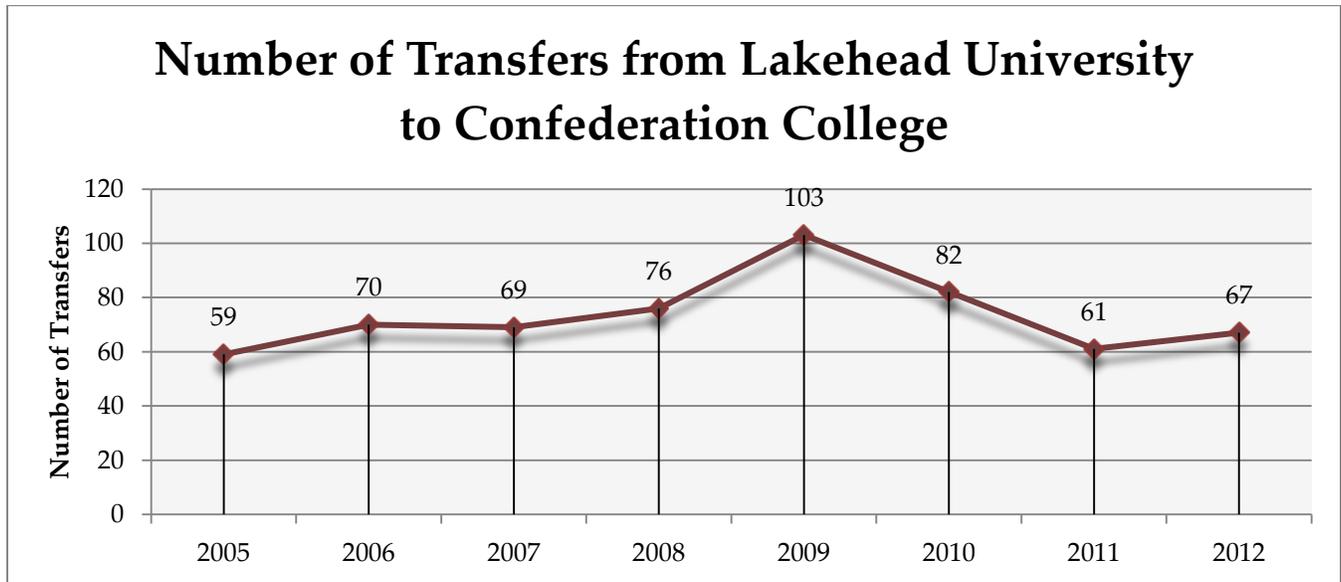


Figure 2

Furthermore, the percentage of transfers from Lakehead University was calculated using the university transfer data. As mentioned in our previous study, most university transfer students to Confederation College are from Lakehead University and this held true in 2011 and 2012 as well. Between 2005 and 2012, 76% of university transfers had attended Lakehead University (details in Table 2).

Year	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	Total
# of University student transfers	83	89	94	100	123	114	77	95	775
# of Lakehead University Transfers	59	70	69	76	103	82	61	67	587
% of Lakehead University transfers	71	78	73	76	83	71	79	71	76

Table 2

Program choice was also extracted from the data. Programs were organized into the four Schools at Confederation College: the School of Aviation, School of Business, Hospitality and Media Arts, School of Engineering Technology and Trades, and School of Health and Community Services, Negahneewin. The data in Figure 3 demonstrates that transfer students are more likely to choose programs in the School of Health and Community Services, Negahneewin and the School of Business, Hospitality and Media Arts.

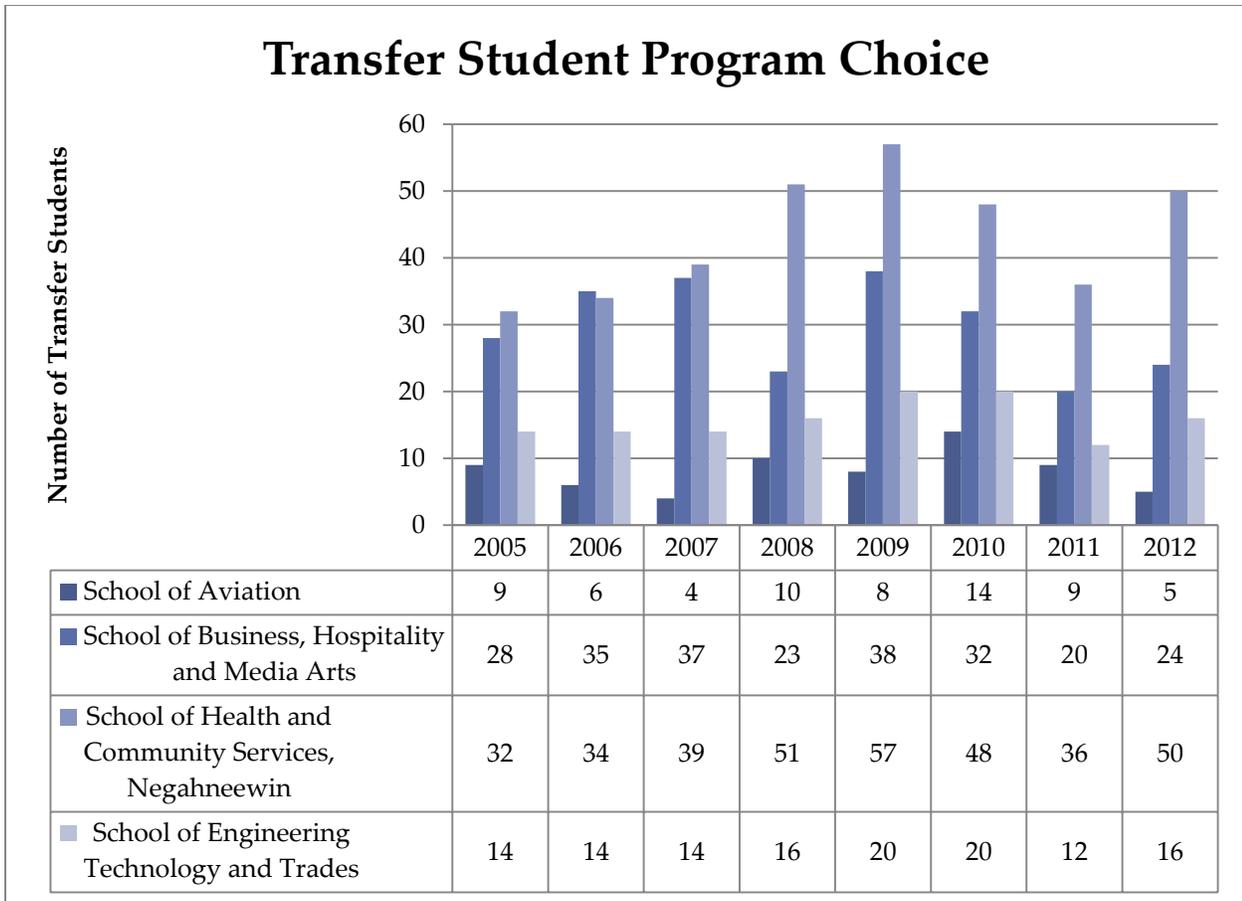


Figure 3

Results of Survey Data

Number of University Transfer Students

The number of university transfer students who were admitted into a college program from 2010 to 2012 was tracked. There were 234 university transfer students admitted in the timespan. From a total of 234 potential students, 30 completed the survey, for a response rate of 13%. Results are listed below for characteristics of students, academic performance, program choice, employment, and transfer process.

Characteristics of University Transfer Students

There were more female respondents (76.7%) than male (23.3%), which is consistent with other literature regarding transfer students. Students' ages range from 20 years to 35 years plus, with most students being between the ages of 20-24 (63.3%). Details for age range group distribution are shown in Figure 4.

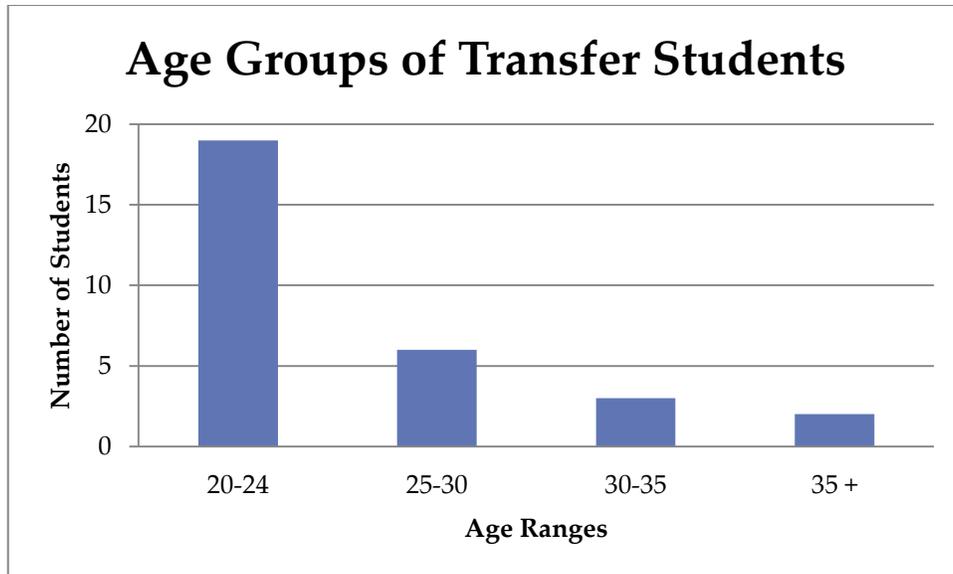


Figure 4

Results indicate that the majority of students report their first language as English (96.7%) or French (3.3%). This finding differs from previous studies, which find the majority of transfer students report having a first language other than English or French.

Also, the majority of students (77%) transferred from Lakehead University, which is the closest post-secondary institution to Confederation College.

More students had received a university credential (57%) than had not (43%). Detailed results for amount of university education obtained are shown in Figure 5.

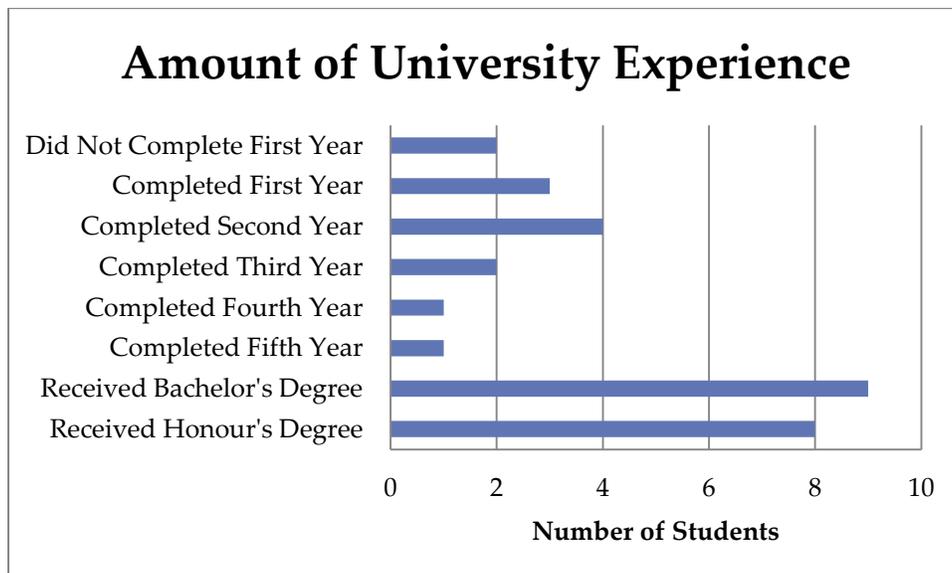


Figure 5



Academic Performance

Students seemed to report that they did well in both university and college. While the majority of students reported that they performed well academically in university (60% reported having grades above 70), more students reported having higher grades in college (96% reported having grades above 70). Details comparing university and college academic performance are shown in Figure 6.

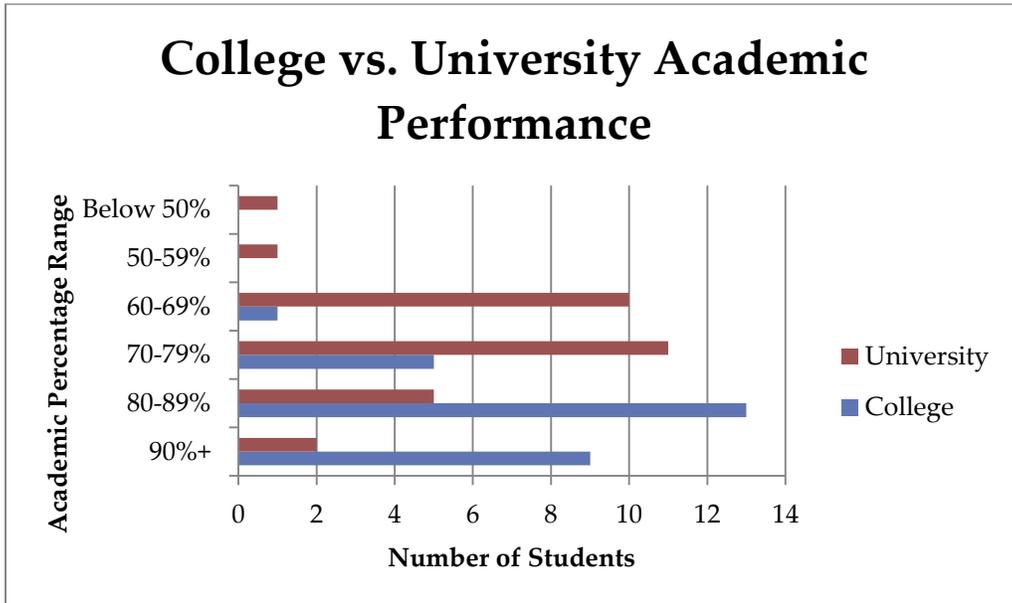


Figure 6

In addition, more students reported finding university more challenging than college. Results are shown in Figure 7.

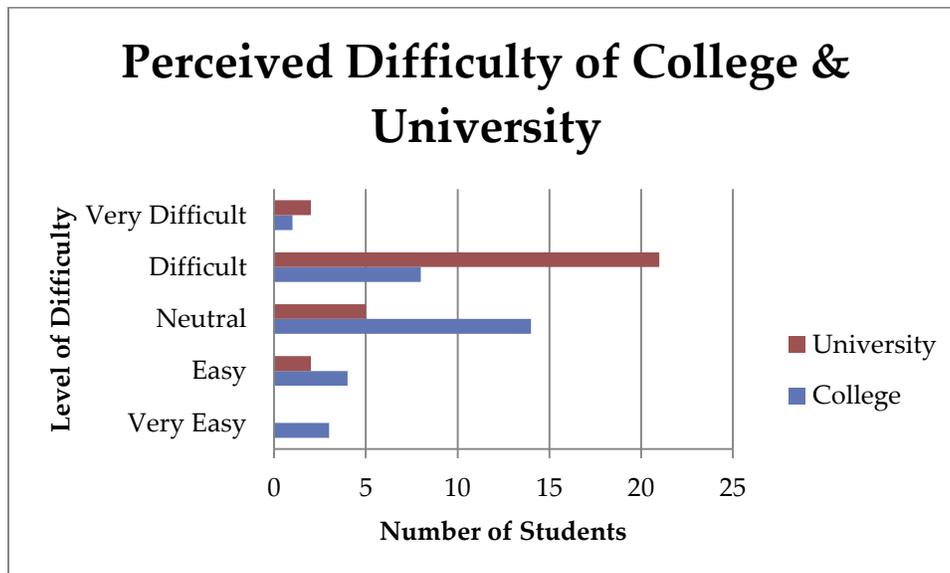


Figure 7



Program Choice

Students were asked what university program they were enrolled in and which college program they transferred to. In university, most students were enrolled in a social science and humanities program (50%), followed by education (20%) and science and mathematics programs (16.7%). A small amount of students were from business or natural resource programs.

In college, most students enrolled in programs in the School of Health and Community Services, Negahneewin (56%), followed by the School of Business, Hospitality and Media Arts (20%), the School of Aviation (13%) and the School of Engineering Technology and Trades (10%).

Students were given an open ended response option to describe why they chose their university and college programs. Responses were coded to find common themes. The most common response students gave for choosing their university program was general interest (46%) followed by a specific career related goals (36%). The most common response for choosing their college program was for career related goals (66%).

Additionally, when asked whether they believed their college program was related to their university program, more students reported that their college program was either “very” or “slightly” related to their university program (55%) than “not related at all” (45%). Detailed results are shown in Figure 8.

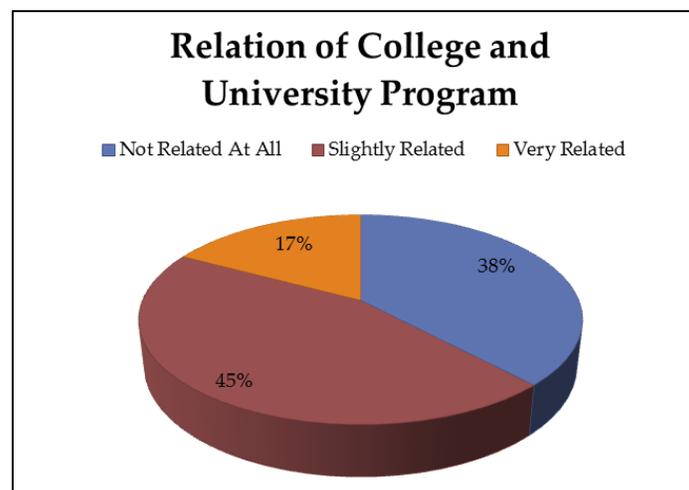


Figure 8

Employment

80% of students reported that they were not employed in a job related to their program after university and believed that university did not prepare them for a employment; however, 100% of respondents feel that college is preparing them for employment.



Transfer Process

78.6% of students were aware they could transfer credits prior to registering for classes, and 17.9% were aware they could transfer credits after registering for classes. Only 1 respondent indicated he/she was unaware of the option to transfer credits.

100% of students said they were interested in transferring credits and 50% of students reported satisfaction with the credit transfer process (more detail in Figure 9).

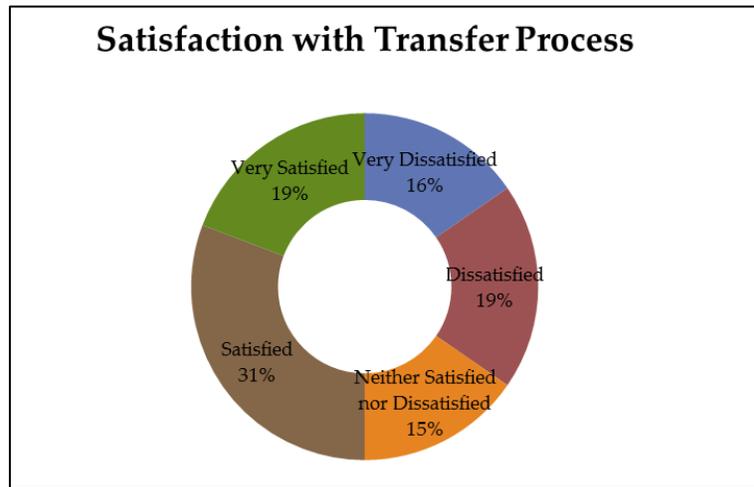


Figure 9

Students were given an open ended response to comment on their transfer experience. Some students reported that no improvement was needed to the process. Students that noted dissatisfaction with the process made suggestions for improvement. These suggestions were coded to find the most common responses. One common remark was to make transferring credits easier by allowing students to transfer credits before registration and applying “broader acceptance standards to university credits.” Common responses also revolved around the dissatisfaction of the price of transferring credits and having to pay for transfer credits. Some students also noted the differences between college and university as “frustrating” because of the increased amount of workload. One student suggested having an orientation for university transfer students to help students adjust to college life.

Reason for Transfer

The main reason indicated by students as to why they transferred to college was “More opportunities for career advancement” (67%). Additional reasons are listed in the Table 3.



Reason	Percentage of Students
More opportunities for career advancement	67%
Broaden education	37%
I was looking for a different approach to teaching and learning	33%
Financial reasons	30%
No jobs available in my previous field of study	30%
I wanted to switch into a new program	27%
Encouragement from others	23%
Personal/Social reasons	23%
I did not enjoy the program at university	23%
Upgrade/Improve knowledge and skills	20%
To get a diploma/certificate	10%
Needed for professional designation	1%
Other Reasons	10%

Table 3

Overall Experience

87% of students rated their overall experience as either “good” (37%) or “excellent” in college (50%).

Details are shown in Figure 10.

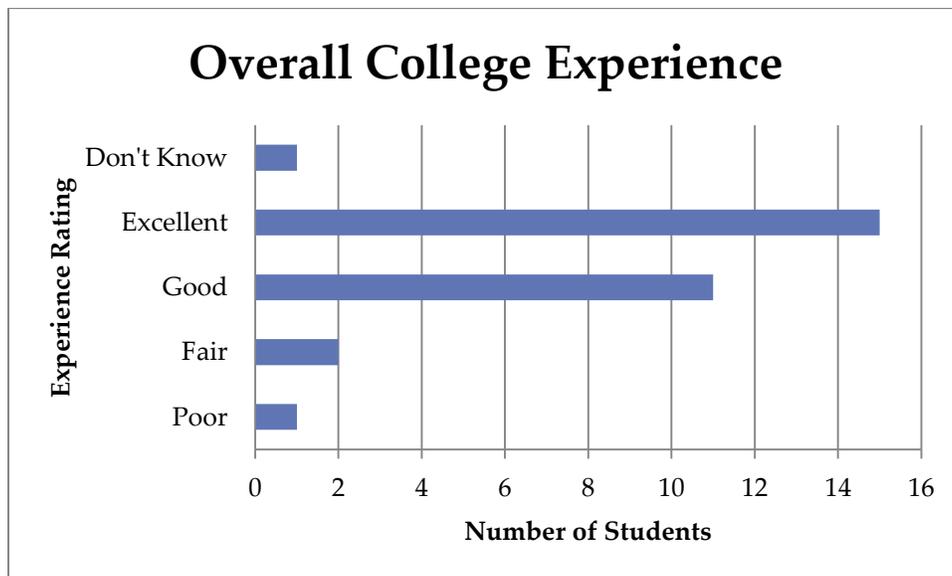


Figure 10



Analysis of Focus Groups

Student Characteristics

There were a total of 17 students who participated in the focus groups (nine in focus group #1, eight in focus group #2). The focus groups participants were mostly female (82%).

Participant	University Attended	University Program	College Program	University Graduate	College Graduate
1	University of Western Ontario	Geography	Environmental Technician	Yes	No
2	Lakehead University	Concurrent Education (Sciences) & MBA	HR Management	Yes	Yes
3	Lakehead University	Arts-Psychology	Pre-Health	Yes	No
4	Lakehead University	Arts-English	Recreational Therapy	No	No
5	Lakehead University	Concurrent Education (Sciences)	Instrumentation	Yes	No
6	Lakehead University	Arts-English	HR Management	Yes	No
7	Lakehead University	Arts-Psychology	Recreational Therapy	Yes	No
8	Lakehead University	Sciences-Applied Bio-Molecular Science	Medical Lab Assistant	Yes	No
9	Lakehead University	Concurrent Education (Psychology)	Early Childhood Education	No	No
10	Lakehead University	Sciences – Biology and Chemistry	Aviation	Yes	No
11	Lakehead University	Concurrent Education (Arts)	Aviation	Yes	No
12	Lakehead University	Nursing	HR Management	Yes	Yes
13	Lakehead University	Arts – Psychology	HR Management	Yes	No
14	Lakehead University	Commerce	HR Management	No	No



15	Lakehead University	Concurrent Education (Arts)	Dental Assistant	No	Yes
16	Lakehead University	Concurrent Education (Arts)	HR management	No	No
17	Lakehead University	Outdoor Recreation	Civil Engineering Technology	No	No

Table 4

65% of focus group participants had graduated from university, and 76% of participants were still in the process of completing their college program.

The large majority of participants had previously attended Lakehead University (the closest neighboring postsecondary institution). In regards to program choice at university, most participants (41%) were enrolled in an arts program, 29% were enrolled in concurrent education, and 24% of participants were enrolled in a science program.

Reasons for Transferring

Results from the focus group showed that the main reason students transferred to college was job related. 88% of participants stated that a key reason for their transfer to college was to gain new skills or build on existing skills in order to increase their job prospects. Students who were university graduates experienced a lack of job opportunities upon completing their university programs, and felt that the college could help them increase their employability.

“...that’s why I switched, because there were no jobs.”

“...take a college course because its job oriented after graduation.”

Additionally, participants reported that they wanted to continue their postsecondary studies at an institution that taught practical skills and had a different teaching style than university, as illustrated by one student’s statement:

“I went to university for four years and I didn’t do one presentation. I did a few essays but it was mostly just read the textbook and do the exam. That’s it. It was not hands-on at all and I needed something that was more hands-on and got you in the community using your skills.”

Academic Performance

The participants’ academic performances at university varied. Four participants mentioned that they performed well academically at university, while another five participants indicated that they performed poorly at university. The participants attributed their poorer university performances to a



lack of motivation, the teaching/learning style at university, and being younger and less mature while in university. Students generally reported that they performed better in college, which they attributed to the different teaching/learning style, the more personalized attention from instructors, being older and more mature, and being more motivated.

"...here they know when you're not in class and if you miss a few classes and there's always, like life coaches coming in to talk to you and they're always just helping you further your education so that you can get a job."

Employment/Career

The majority of participants (82%) reported that they did not find employment in their field of study after completing university, while 12% reported finding a job after university. Many stated that they did not know what type of job they could get with their degree and felt they did not receive much direction from their universities in regards to employment opportunities. Some participants stated that there were no jobs at all available in their field.

"I switched because there were no jobs."

Participants stated that one of the draws of college was that they could take a co-op placement to gain work experience, and noted that this is a good opportunity to gain practical skills, make connections, and potentially find a job. Participants in programs without a co-op (i.e., Aviation or Human Resource Management) stated that while no career placement exists, the classes are still very practical and the skills taught can be easily transferred into the professional working environment

"My program didn't have a co-op but one of the draws to the college was that it's even more hands on. When I left the HR program here, you're actually able to do something."

Program Choice

Table 4 suggests that the majority of participants were studying different programs at Confederation College after attending university; however, some participants' explained why they perceived their university and college programs were related. Some students suggested that they could apply the theory they learned in university to the hands-on skills they were learning in college. This is illustrated in the following student comment:

"The Human Resource Management program felt like it complemented psychology. I was really interested in the science side of psychology, so I was interested to see kind of more the theory side with human resources because you apply it more practically, but you can also go into ergonomics with health and safety and that kind of thing"



On a broader level, the majority of participants that studied the social sciences at university transferred into social science programs at Confederation College. Also, the majority of participants studying the natural sciences in university transferred into the natural science program.

In regards to why participants chose their college program, most stated that they chose it for the end goal of getting a job once they graduate. Participants also noted that they were interested in their program.

“End goal and it was recommended...”

“Kind of an interest in the end goal. There's a goal there and this is how I get to it.”

Transfer Experience

Approximately half of the participants did not experience any issues during the transfer process from university to college. When speaking to participants about their transfer experience, most exclusively discussed transfer credits and the transfer credit process.

When asked about their transfer experience, some students reported satisfaction because their transfer credits were processed quickly and easily. Other students who were enrolled in a Post Diploma program had no issues to report because they could not transfer credits. Those who seem dissatisfied shared some of their frustrations, including difficulty tracking down course outlines from their completed university courses which are required to assess the applicability of specific transfer credits. They also expressed frustration with their university because they had to pay a fee for course outlines that were required in the transfer process. Also, some participants had issues transferring credits at Confederation College as they had courses refused for transfer that they felt should have been accepted.

Students who were satisfied with the transfer process noted that professors at the college were helpful in reviewing course outlines and recommending transfer credits.

Financial Considerations

The findings regarding financial considerations were mixed. In the first focus group, a majority of the participants stated that financial considerations did play a role in their decision to switch from university to college, citing the relatively lower cost of tuition and shorter program length as the two primary deciding factors.

Nevertheless, it is important to understand that the primary reason these participants switched from university to college was not because of lower tuition rates or the opportunity cost associated with forgoing additional annual income (since college programs are typically shorter in length than university programs). The students switched from university to increase the likelihood of procuring employment after completing their program. These individuals were also looking to enroll in a



program that suited their interests and would provide them with more job opportunities upon completion of their respective programs of study. One participant stressed the following with regard to the financial considerations of attending Confederation College:

"I would just add that it's not...it wasn't like, 'oh look at this, it [college] is much cheaper than university.' It was just an added bonus, like after I applied and saw the prices."

Perceived Value

The majority of participants (94%) felt they had received (or are currently receiving) value for their money at Confederation College. Some stated that they perceive they will get their money's worth after they graduate and have a job in their field of study.



Summary of Results

This study was conducted to better understand the reasons why students transfer from university to college. The findings from both the survey and focus groups suggest that the key reasons students transfer are career-related. When explicitly asked why they decided to attend college, students discussed their need for practical skills and experience that they could include in a resume, as well as wanting to make career changes, the need for a clearer career path, and the difficulty in finding a job after university. Even when discussion was focused on teaching styles, students mentioned the practical skills they were learning from instructors who were working in the field, and how this would better prepare them for a career.

When other reasons for transferring were suggested in the focus groups, such as academic performance, placement opportunities, financial considerations, program length, and program choice, the students tended to disregard these. Instead, most students noted that these were additional advantages of transferring. Students discussed topics such as the improvement in their academic performance, the importance of placement opportunities, the advantageous shorter program length that would get them into the field faster, and how they enjoyed that their program choice was related to their previous university program.

In addition, student feedback on program choice also helped to provide more evidence that one of the main reasons students transfer is career oriented. The transfer survey included an open ended question on the programs students took in university and college, and why they selected these programs. In choosing their university program, students mentioned interest as a reason more often than a specific career goal (46% interest compared to 36% career related). In contrast, in choosing their college program, students more often commented on career related reasons (66%). These results suggest that students are more likely to choose their college program for career related end goals, and provide more evidence that students transfer from university to college for career related reasons.

This study had a higher number of students from university programs involving social sciences and humanities (50%). Also, there were a higher number of university students transferring to college programs in the School of Health and Community Services, Negahneewin (57%), and the School of Business, Hospitality and Media Arts (20%). This is similar to the findings in the literature review. When asked whether students believed that their college and university programs were related, the survey results demonstrated that 55% of participants believed their programs were related. In addition, it was found that in one focus group 75% of students believed their programs were related. When focus group participants were asked why they thought their programs were related, the responses seemed to suggest that students could apply the theory they learned in university to their college program and that they could apply it to their hands-on learning at college in a meaningful way.



This may help explain the higher numbers of social science and humanities students and the higher number of transfer students in health, community service or business programs; social science and humanities university students may see the relation of the theory they have learned in university to health, community service or business programs in college and select these programs more often.

Limitations

The most pressing limitation of the current study was the small sample size ($N=30$). A small sample size makes it difficult to generalize results to the larger population. One reason for the small sample size is that the population participants were selected from was relatively small in itself (234 possible students). Despite the small sample size, there were similarities between our sample and previous findings in the literature regarding student characteristics. For example, the students who responded to the survey were mostly female (76.7%) and between the ages of 20 to 24 (63.3%). Most students were previously enrolled in a university social sciences and humanities program (50%), and most were enrolled in a program in the School of Health and Community Services in college (56%). These similarities suggest that our results could be generalized to the larger university to college transfer population. To increase our sample size in the future, more aggressive recruitment strategies will be employed, such as more in-class presentations in programs with a high number of previous university students. Despite the small amount of students who completed the survey, the desired amount of participants for the focus groups was achieved.

Recommendations

One of the recommendations for future research is to further investigate the findings on academic performance. It should be noted that the focus groups consisted of both transfer students who had either received a university degree and who had not completed university. Though the study findings demonstrate students transfer for mainly career related reasons, more informative results and differences may emerge by looking at students who have completed university and students who have not completed as two separate groups.

Another recommendation for future research is to find out whether transfer students choose college as part of an educational pathway. Since there are a high number of students who have completed their university program and a high number of students that choose their university program out of interest, it is possible to infer that students may be choosing their university programs out of interest, and after this decide on a career path that suits their university program.

Future Directions

The findings of this study will be used to further improve our transfer processes at Confederation College. This study, including the survey and focus group feedback, will be useful in implementing changes to the transfer process. Feedback and results will be included in a report that will be presented



to our Academic Council here at Confederation College; a council which leads the development and implementation of academic vision, standards and processes at the college.

As students' pathways to postsecondary education are becoming more diverse, it is important to understand what motivates them along their educational journey. Using a survey and focus groups, this study investigated why students who previously attended university decide to attend college. In vein with previous literature, results demonstrated that students decide to attend college to gain skills and further their employment opportunities. Being aware of students' main motive for attending college can help ensure student satisfaction and program quality, while helping to inform best practices.



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Appendix A

Transfer Student Experience Survey



Transfer Student Experience Survey

Did you transfer from university to Confederation College? We want to hear from you!

At Confederation College we want to make sure that our programs are providing the best learning experiences for our students and now we are looking for ways to enhance the experience of our transfer students. The following survey asks about your experiences at Confederation and how it compares to your previous university experiences. We believe that understanding more about our transfer students will help improve our policies and services. Here's your chance to help make a difference!

To show our appreciation for your input, we are offering a chance to win an iPad mini. To enter your name into the draw simply complete the survey and enter your name and preferred contact information into the last box.

Your participation is voluntary and you can withdraw by logging off at any time. Any personal information we collect will only be used to contact the prize winner and those interested in the focus group. We are committed to protecting your privacy. Once the winner has been selected and the focus groups have been conducted, all personal information will be deleted. The information we collect will be aggregated with others so that individual identities will be protected. The aggregate data will be used to help shape our policies and services to students.

We value and appreciate your time!

To begin the survey, please click the "Next" button below.

[Mobile Version](#) | [Standard Version](#)

Technology powered by BLUE

Transfer Student Experience Survey

Please tell us a little about yourself...

What is your gender?

- Female
- Male

How old are you?

- 17-19
- 20-24
- 25-30
- 30-35
- >35

What is the name of the university you attended?

How much university experience do you have?

- Went through first year, but did not complete
- Completed first year
- Completed second year
- Completed third year
- Completed fourth year
- Completed fifth year
- Received Bachelor's Degree
- Received Honor's Degree
- Received Master's Degree
- Received Ph.D

What is your first language?

- English
- French
- Other

Please tell us about your academic performance...

How would you describe your overall grades while in UNIVERSITY?

- Below 50%
- 50-59%
- 60-69%
- 70-79%
- 80-89%
- 90%>

How would you describe your overall grades while in COLLEGE?

- Below 50%
- 50-59%
- 60-69%
- 70-79%
- 80-89%
- 90%>

On average, how challenging did you find your UNIVERSITY courses?

- Very difficult
- Difficult
- Neutral
- Easy
- Very easy
- Don't know

On average, how challenging do (did) you find your COLLEGE courses?

- Very difficult
- Difficult
- Neutral
- Easy
- Very Easy
- Don't know

Please tell us about your program choices...

What university major/program were you enrolled in?

What was your reason for choosing this university program?

What college program are (were) you enrolled in?

What was your reason for choosing this college program?

How related is (was) your program at Confederation College to your previous university program?

- Not related at all
- Slightly related
- Very related
- Don't know

Please tell us your thoughts on employment...

Are (were) you employed in a job related to your university education?

- Yes
- No
- Don't know

Do you believe your UNIVERSITY education prepared you for employment?

Do you believe your COLLEGE education is preparing (has prepared) you for employment?

Please tell us about transfer credits...

Were you aware that you could transfer credits?

- Yes, before I registered for classes
- Yes, after I registered for classes
- No

Were you interested in transferring credits?

- Yes
- No
- Not Applicable, could not transfer any credits

How satisfied were you with the process of transferring credits?

- Very Dissatisfied
- Dissatisfied
- Neither Satisfied nor Dissatisfied
- Satisfied
- Very Satisfied
- Not Applicable, did not receive transfer credits

In General...

What is (are) the reason(s) you decided to go to college? Please select all that apply.

- Broaden education
- Encouragement from others (e.g., family, friends)
- Financial reasons
- I did not enjoy the program at university
- I wanted to switch into a new program
- I was looking for a different approach to teaching and learning
- More opportunities for career advancement
- Needed for professional designation
- No jobs available in my previous field of study
- Personal/social reasons
- The company I am (was) working for required it
- To get a diploma/certificate
- Upgrade/improve knowledge and skills
- Other (please specify)

How would you rate your overall university experience?

- Poor
- Fair
- Good
- Excellent
- Don't know

How would you rate your overall college experience?

- Poor
- Fair
- Good
- Excellent
- Don't know

Are there any ways we could improve the experiences of transfer students? Please explain below.

To learn more about how we can improve transfer experiences at Confederation, we will be hosting a focus group in early October. All participants will be offered lunch and a \$50 giftcard. Would you be interested in participating in this focus group?

If you are interested, please leave your name and preferred contact information in the box beside the response. We will only use this information to contact you with further details about the date and time of the focus group. Once the focus groups have been conducted, the responses to this question will be deleted.

- Yes Maybe No
-

Name & preferred
contact info

Thank you for completing our survey! We appreciate and value your input. For your chance to win an iPad mini, please enter your name and preferred contact information in the box below.

This information will not be used for any other purpose. Once a winner is drawn, all responses in this question will be deleted.

To complete the survey, please click the "submit" button below.

Progress  100%

Student Transfer Research
October, 2013**DISCUSSION GUIDE****Introduction**

Welcome and thank you for coming to today's group discussion. My name is (*Moderator*) and I am working with Northern Insights, a local research company, hired by Confederation College. The purpose of today is to gather your thoughts, opinions, and insights on why you transferred from your university to Confederation College.

As we discussed, today's session will be approximately sixty minutes. There are no wrong answers but rather differing points of view. Please feel free to share your point of view even if it differs from what others have said. We want you to feel comfortable in telling us your honest opinions.

The discussion is being recorded for reporting purposes and all responses will be without attribute. As stated on the permission/signature sheet, your name and the audio recordings will remain anonymous and confidential.

Does anyone have any questions?

Research Targets	Date of Focus Group
1. Focus group 1	October 9, 2013 at 12:30 pm
2. Focus group 2	October 16, 2013 at 12:30 pm

Research Objective: To discover why students transfer from university to college.

What are your reasons for switching from university to college?

a. Academic Performance

How did you perform academically in university?

Has your academic performance changed since you started studying at the college? How so?

Why do you think your academic performance has changed since arriving at college?

b. Employment/Career

What were your job prospects after university? Was it hard to find a job after university related to what you studied?

Did you find a job after university? Was the job related to what you studied at university?

Were college placement programs a factor in deciding to start studying at the college?

Is the college a part of your overall career path? Is the college an important part of your career path? If so, how is it important?

Of the students who have already graduated from the college, how many of you have found a job? Was the job related to what you studied at the college? Is this job the next step in your career path?

Do you feel that continuous learning/training is important once you graduate from the college and begin your career? If so, how is continuous learning/training important to your career?

Do you think the college could play a role in your continuous learning/training once you begin your working career? If yes, how?

c. Program Choice

Is the program you took at university related to your program at the college?

What are your reasons for selecting your program at the college? Did you select it out of interest or for a desired end goal?

d. Transfer Experience

Are you satisfied with your transfer experience? Why or why not?

Is there any way the transfer experience could be improved?

What did you like about university and college? What did you dislike?

Where did you receive information about the student transfer process?

How knowledgeable were you of student transfer process? (Did you know which courses could be transferred as credits, how to transfer credits)

e. Financial Considerations

Did you switch from university to college due to financial reasons? If so, for what reasons (cost of tuition, lesser time commitment creating more working hours)?

Did you feel you were getting your money's worth at university? Do you feel you are (have) getting (gotten) your money's worth at Confederation College? How so?

Wrap-up

Thank you for taking the time to come in and participate in this study. Your thoughts and opinions are greatly valued and will truly help in our strategies going forward.

