

# Research Results

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## BRITISH COLUMBIA COUNCIL ON ADMISSIONS & TRANSFER

### Profile of British Columbia College Transfer Students

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For several years, the British Columbia Council on Admissions and Transfer has contracted profile reports of students transferring to universities from B.C. colleges, university colleges and institutes in order to assess and measure transfer effectiveness in the post-secondary system. These reports tell us what students are being admitted into the largest degree granting institutions, where they come from, and how well they perform academically after transfer.

The SFU Office of Analytical Studies has prepared a report integrating the key findings from several profile reports involving over 22,000 students who transferred from a B.C. college, university college or institute to SFU, UBC, UNBC and UVic between 1994/95 and 1998/99. This summary presents highlights of the full report, *Profile of B.C. College Transfer Students Admitted to B.C. Universities: 1994/95 to 1998/99*, a copy of which may be obtained from the B.C. Council on Admissions and Transfer office or Web site:

[www.bccat.bc.ca/pubs/bcprofile.pdf](http://www.bccat.bc.ca/pubs/bcprofile.pdf)

#### What is the B.C. transfer system?

The B.C. transfer system allows students to pursue one to two years of academic or applied study at a community college, university college or institute and transfer their credits to a recognized degree granting institution towards the completion of a baccalaureate degree. Although alternative transfer routes are also possible, such as transfers between degree-granting institutions or to two-year colleges, this report focuses on the most frequent transfer route — from college<sup>1</sup> to university.

#### How many college students transfer to B.C. universities?

In 1998/99, 4,390 college transfer students were admitted to B.C. universities: 35% transferred to UBC, 29% each to UVic and SFU and 7% to UNBC. With the exception of UBC, this is similar to the distribution of

1 For simplicity in this report, "college" includes colleges, university colleges and institutes.

Table 1:  
Source and Destination Institutions

Approximately 22,000 students transferred from one of the following B.C. colleges, university colleges or institutes to one of the four largest B.C. universities in the five-year period ending in 1998-99.

SOURCE COLLEGES		
<b>Northern B.C.</b>	874	4.0%
College of New Caledonia	507	2.3%
Northern Lights College	99	0.4%
Northwest Community College	268	1.2%
<b>B.C. Interior</b>	2,638	11.9%
College of the Rockies	180	0.8%
Nicola Valley Institute of Technology	4	0.0%
Okanagan University College	1,199	5.4%
Selkirk College	433	2.0%
University College of the Cariboo	822	3.7%
<b>Vancouver Island</b>	3,811	17.2%
Camosun College	2,539	11.5%
Malaspina University-College	1,034	4.7%
North Island College	238	1.1%
<b>Lower Mainland Public</b>	13,937	63.0%
B.C. Institute of Technology	255	1.2%
Capilano College	2,716	12.3%
Douglas College	3,072	13.9%
Emily Carr Institute of Art & Design	31	0.1%
Kwantlen University College	3,492	15.8%
Langara College	3,351	15.2%
University College of the Fraser Valley	666	3.0%
Vancouver Community College	354	1.6%
<b>Lower Mainland Private</b>	707	3.2%
Columbia College	452	2.0%
Coquitlam College	255	1.2%
<b>Other</b>	143	0.6%
Open University	70	0.3%
Other or Unknown	73	0.3%
<b>TOTAL COLLEGE TRANSFER STUDENTS</b>	<b>22,110</b>	<b>100.0%</b>
DESTINATION UNIVERSITIES		
Simon Fraser University (SFU)	8,323	37.6%
University of British Columbia (UBC)	6,559	29.7%
University of Northern British Columbia (UNBC)	316	1.4%
University of Victoria (UVic)	6,912	31.3%
<b>TOTAL COLLEGE TRANSFER STUDENTS</b>	<b>22,110</b>	<b>100.0%</b>

students who entered universities from B.C. secondary schools in the same year. On average, B.C. universities admit three B.C. college students for every five B.C. secondary school students. UBC accepts more than double the number of secondary school students compared to transfer students while UNBC accepts nearly equal numbers from both categories (see Figure A).

Over the five-year period of this study, the proportion of B.C. college transfer students admitted to B.C. universities declined, while the proportion of new students admitted from B.C. secondary schools increased. The total number of college transfer students and secondary school students admitted to B.C. uni-

versities in 1994/95 was 10,275, of which college transfer students represented 46%. By 1998/99, this total had risen to 11,483, but only 38% were college transfer students.

### From which college regions do transfer students come?

In 1998/99, nearly two-thirds of transfer students entering B.C. universities came from Lower Mainland institutions. Kwantlen University College, Langara College and Douglas College each contributed approximately 15% of the college transfer students to BC universities. The remaining transfer students came from colleges outside of the Lower Mainland and this proportion has shrunk from 41% in

1992/93 to 36% in 1998/99 (see Table 2, below). This decline in transfers from outside the Lower Mainland might be due to slower population growth outside of the Greater Vancouver area or it could be attributed to the introduction of UNBC<sup>2</sup> or the introduction of university colleges in the rest of the province, allowing students to complete their four-year degree locally.

### What are the university faculty destinations of college transfer students?

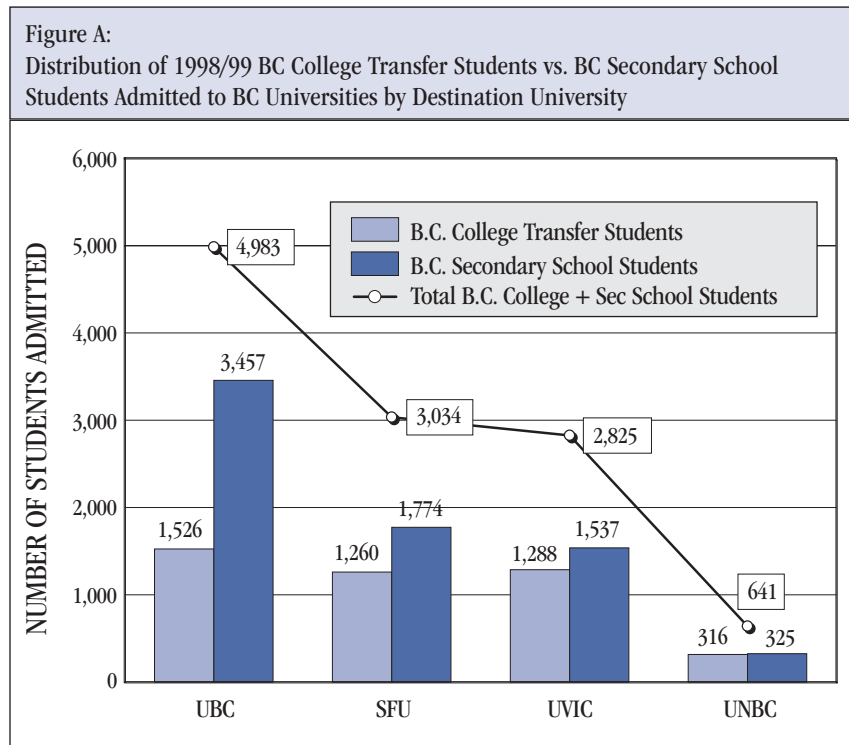
The majority of college transfer students enters the Faculty of Arts (51%). Arts is also the main destination faculty for B.C. secondary school students. However, secondary students are much more likely to enter Science (36% versus 16%) and Applied Sciences (12% versus 7%) compared to college transfer students (see Figure B, next page).

### Do college transfer students study full-time or part-time at university?

Approximately one half (49%) of college transfer students register full-time in their first semester or session at a B.C. university, unlike 84% of B.C. secondary school students who register full-time in their first semester at university.

### How well do college transfer students perform at university?

The academic performance of college students admitted between 1994/95 and 1998/99 was examined at admission, upon completion of the first semester and upon graduation. The performance was analyzed for two



**Table 2:**  
Distribution of BC College Transfer Students Admitted to BC Universities by Transfer College Region and Year of Admission (1992/93 to 1998/99)

REGION	1992/93	1993/94	1994/95	1995/96	1996/97	1997/98	1998/99	TOTAL
Lower Mainland	59%	66%	67%	65%	68%	68%	64%	65%
Rest of B.C.	41%	34%	33%	35%	32%	32%	36%	35%
Total BC College Transfer Students	3,613	4,239	4,751	4,222	4,434	4,313	4,390	29,962

2 College profile data for UNBC was not reported until 1998/99 and is therefore excluded in prior years.

different cohorts of students: the “full cohort” of about 22,000 transfer students versus the “grads only” cohort, which included only those college transfer students who graduated within the period of this study (almost 40% of the full cohort).

The “full cohort” and the “grads only” cohort demonstrate essentially the same admission and graduation grades, but the average grade after the first semester is significantly higher for the cohort of completers. The drop in academic performance from admission to the end of the first session is generally known as “university transfer shock”. The size of the transfer shock among the “grads only” cohort is much smaller (1.4%) than the transfer shock for the full cohort (3.8%).

Transfer shock is a consequence of the difficulty students may experience when they move from one educational institution to another, such as college to university or high school to university. Students who move from the furthest colleges and those from private colleges (primarily international students) demonstrated the highest “shock”, indicating that distance from a support network may be a factor.

The size of the transfer shock may be a good predictor of successful degree completion within approximately five years of transferring to university: the smaller the transfer shock, the more likely a student is to graduate.

**How well do college transfer students perform at university compared to students admitted from B.C. secondary schools?**

Before comparing the performance of college transfer students to B.C. secondary school entrants to university, it is important to understand that college transfer students are a more diverse group than grade 12 entrants.

B.C. secondary school students are normally 18 years of age, have achieved a high academic level in high school and usually attend university full-time.

In contrast, transfer students are older and therefore tend to have family commitments and to be working while studying. College transfer students also come from a wider range of academic backgrounds: some have not completed high school; some are mature individuals returning after many years ab-

sence; some were eligible to enter university directly, but chose to go to college; whereas others were ineligible for university.

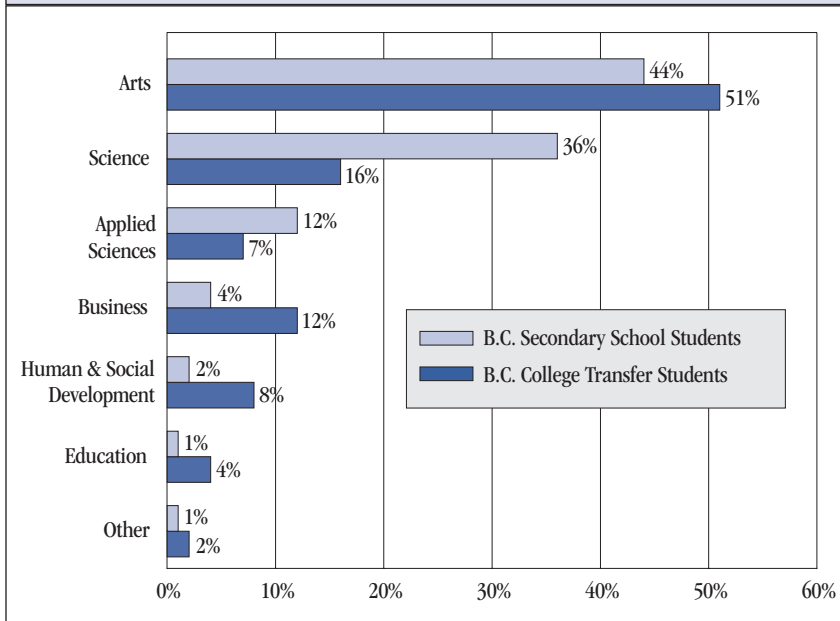
Given this diversity, transfer students perform impressively at university, graduating with an average that is only 5% below the average grade of B.C. secondary school students (see Figure C, next page).

**What is the degree completion rate of college transfer students?**

Given a five-year time horizon since admission to university, approximately 60% of college transfer students graduated from university. Given more time, their long-run graduation rate would likely reach 70%, approximately the long-run graduation rate for students admitted directly from high school.

In general, the greater the number of credits transferred, the greater the proportion of students who have graduated: only 46% of students admitted with less than one year of transfer credits had graduated compared to 67% of those who entered university with more than 1.5 years of transfer credits from college. College transfer students take an av-

Figure B: Distribution of B.C. College Transfer Students vs. B.C. Secondary School Students Admitted to B.C. Universities by Destination Faculty (1994/95 to 1998/99)



*Students with College Experience*

There is another group of students who are distinct from B.C. college transfer students. These students are referred to as “students with college experience”. They normally have fewer than the minimum number of transfer credits from a B.C. college to be admitted as a “B.C. college transfer student” and are therefore admitted to the university under other bases of admission, such as B.C. grade 12, mature, university transfer, etc.

Information is not available for these students from all B.C. universities, but it is known that 3,429 students with college experience were admitted to UVic and SFU over the five-year period from 1994/95 to 1998/99. This compares to the 15,235 college transfer students admitted to SFU and UVic in the same time period.

erage of 2.7 years to complete their degree from time of transfer to time of university degree completion.

**What programs do college transfer students complete at university?**

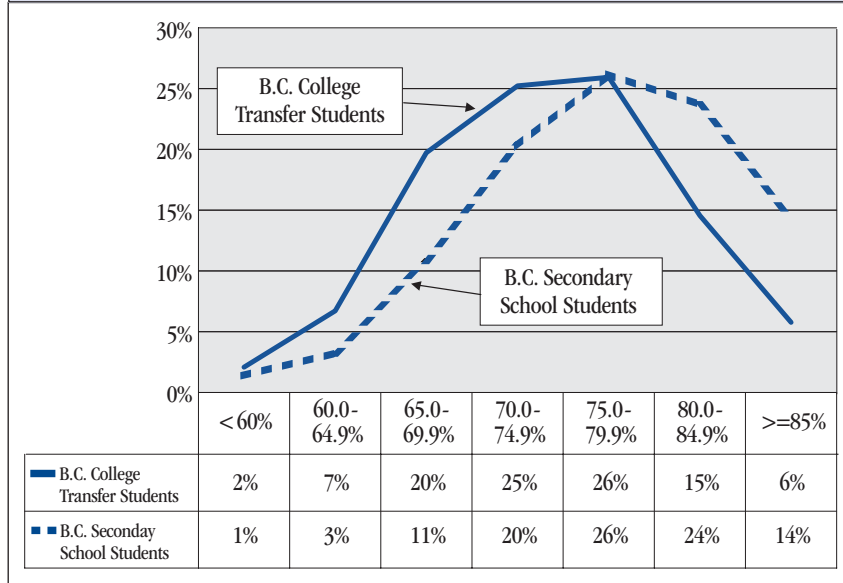
Nearly half (48%) of the college transfer students who graduate from a B.C. university completed an Arts degree (Bachelor of Arts

and Bachelor of General Studies); 13% completed a Bachelor of Science; 11% completed a Bachelor of Business or Bachelor of Commerce; 9% completed a degree in a health-related program (Bachelor of Science or Bachelor of Science in Nursing). The remaining 19% of graduates completed a degree in other program areas (Applied Science, Education, Fine Arts, Social Programs, or Law), or completed a Certificate or Diploma.

**Conclusion**

The transfer system in British Columbia is working very well. Transferring from a college to a university in this province is a viable route to obtaining a degree. Between 1994/95 and 1998/99, approximately 22,000 college students entered the university system, having transferred one to two years of academic or applied study from a college, university college or institute. Just over one-third of those who transferred to university have since graduated, completing their degree within approximately 2.7 years of admission to university. After sufficient time in the system, 60-70% of transfer students will graduate from a B.C. university. Given their diverse backgrounds, college transfer students perform very well at B.C. universities. They enter university with a 70% admission average and complete their degree with an average grade that is within five percentage points of students who entered university directly from high school.

Figure C: Graduation Grade Distribution – B.C. College Transfer Students vs. B.C. Secondary School Students



**Recommendations**

1. Given that the share of students entering B.C. universities from B.C. colleges appears to be declining, it is recommended that further research be undertaken to identify clearly whether sufficient spaces in degree granting programs throughout the B.C. system have been allocated to meet the needs of college transfer students.
2. If another integrated profile study of this nature is conducted in the future, it is recommended that *all* B.C. universities be included and the data for such a report be pooled into a common data set with consistent definitions.

It should be noted that the B.C. Open University and the university colleges are currently working to provide similar information about their transfer students.

BRITISH COLUMBIA COUNCIL ON  
**ADMISSIONS & TRANSFER**

SUPPORTING BC'S EDUCATION SYSTEM

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