

The Institutional Impacts of Enrolling External Transfer Students in Place of Marginally Admitted and Enrolled New Freshmen

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Purpose

- NC State's Enrollment Planning Committee proposes replacing up to 1,000 freshman with external transfers by Fall 2020 to:
 - Increase freshmen profile metrics
 - Reduce stress on undergraduate infrastructure
 - Expand university access
- This study estimates the institutional impacts by comparing marginally admitted and enrolled freshmen with external transfers using traditional freshman performance metrics

Transfer Students – Nationally & NC

- Nationally, transferring has become more common from 1970s to 2000s (Adelman 2003)
 - Increase to 57% (from 51%) of students attend more than one institution
 - Average number of institutions attended rose to 3 (from 1)
- NC Transfers: 2008-09 Academic Year
 - 21,000 students transferred
 - 22,000 students were enrolled in community college with over 24 credit hours earned

Transfer Students Nationally & NC

- Transfer students often less socially satisfied and isolated (Townsend & Wilson, 2006)
- ‘Transfer Shock’ for changes in institutional mission or type (for example, community college to Research Intensive)
- Extracurricular interests have post-graduation focused (Galloway, 2000)

Transfer Students NC State University

- In 2008-09 year, NC State enrolled 1,394 new external transfers
 - 39.8% from NC Community College
 - 28.7% from GA Four Year Institution
 - 31.5% from any other institution
- NC State's academic colleges have mixed feelings on their quality and desirability

Transfer Students & NC State

- NC State is a land grant institution with a historical mission of providing college access
- Highly selective admissions criteria
- Largest university in North Carolina
- Persistent increases in freshman profile metrics
- In terms of mission, size, and selectivity, at a crossroad

Study Population

- Identify Students who applied to NC State as traditional, first time freshmen and were denied admission but enrolled as a transfer student within 5 years
- Match them to an admitted and enrolled freshman with identical gender, ethnicity and major preference who has the lowest high school GPA of all potential matches
- Limited to:
 - NC Residents
 - Age 17-19
 - Valid SAT score and high school GPA
 - No recruited student-athletes
 - Applied for freshman admission in Fall 2001, 2002, or 2003
 - Enrolled within 5 years of freshman application date
- Purpose is to use Freshman performance metrics on transfer students by establishing them in a Federal cohorts

Study Population

- 423 of 2,888 external transfers students qualify for inclusion
 - 40.1% from NC Community Colleges
 - 42.1% from GA Four Year Institutions
 - 17.8% from other institutions
- Distribution of majors, ethnicity, and major choices similar to all NC State external transfers
 - Transfer students are less diverse than freshmen
- Exactly same major, ethnicity, and gender distribution as their freshmen matches (by rule)

Results

- In time at other institutions, the majority became more major certain
 - 21.5% changed their major preference
 - 31.9% initially applied as major uncertain and have now have a major
 - 53.4% improved major certainty

Major Preference and Actual College of Entry for External Transfer Students					
	Denied Application Major Preference	External Transfer Enrollment	NC Community Colleges Transfers	UNC-GA Universities Transfers	Other Institution Transfers
Agriculture/Life Sciences	47	101	48	36	17
Design	9	3	2	1	0
Education	11	12	7	2	3
Engineering	73	55	27	22	6
Natural Resources	19	37	16	16	5
Humanities/Social Sciences	78	152	49	67	36
Phys Science/Mathematics	11	6	2	4	0
Textiles	10	8	1	6	1
Management	30	49	18	24	7
Undecided	135	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Total	423	423	170	178	75

Results

- Despite significantly lower preparation metrics:
 - Transfers have 17% higher six year grad rate
 - Transfers have .12 higher collegiate GPA
 - Transfers students only lose 0.1 semesters on time to degree
 - Community College transfers aside, the transfers earn as many hours as their continuously-enrolled matches

Preparation and Success of Transfer Students and Their Matches						
	N	Average SAT	Average HS GPA	Six Year Grad Rate	Coll Grad GPA	Years to Degree
NC Community Colleges	170	1034	3.24	68.8%	2.88	5.4
UNC - GA Universities	178	1072	3.27	80.9%	3.00	5.1
Other Institutions	75	1054	3.34	76.0%	2.98	5.1
Total Transfer Group	423	1053	3.27	75.2%	2.95	5.2
Freshmen Matches	423	1164	3.37	58.4%	2.83	5.1

Results

- Head-to-head grade comparison shows transfers out perform their matches
 - Effect of survivor bias muted
 - Transfers out perform in all cases except ST 311 community college transfers vs. matches

Average Course Grade of Commonly Taken Courses					
	COM 112	EC 201	ENG 33X	MA 242	ST 311
Community Colleges	2.47	2.45	3.29	2.11	2.15
Public State Universities	2.86	2.74	3.40	2.13	2.76
Other Institutions	2.83	2.53	3.51	2.50	2.72
Total Transfer Group	2.71	2.58	3.36	2.15	2.48
Freshmen Matches	2.40	2.08	3.28	1.76	2.69

Results

- Federal Retention Metric Improvements
 - Subtracting the freshmen matches marginally improves freshman profile
 - Results more substantial when removing 423 least qualified students vs. holding true to matching constraints
 - Graduation rates improved, profile does not

Performance and Profile With and Without Matches		
Fall 2001-Fall 2003 Freshman Cohorts		
	Entire Cohort	Cohort Less Matched Group
N	11337	10914
SAT	1188	1189
High School GPA	3.99	4.01
1 Year Retention	89.8%	90.0%
4 Year Grad Rate	39.0%	39.7%
6 Year Grad Rate	71.3%	71.8%

Results

- Impact on Student Credit Hours
 - In first six years, 100 freshmen take 10,300 SCHs
 - 6,600 lower level and 3,700 upper level courses
 - In first six years, 100 transfers take 5,500-6,300 SCHs, depending on major distribution
 - 2,700-3,400 lower level and 2,800-2,900 upper level SCHs
 - Same number of SCHs could swap 100 freshmen for 163-214 transfers
 - Increases access to NC State degrees
 - Does not account for course delivery cost differences

Conclusions

- Substituting external transfers would meet the proposals objectives
 - Number of degrees awarded would increase
 - Profile /performance metrics would improve
 - More major certainty among undergraduates
 - Less competition for General Education Courses
- For marginally admissible students, the first year collegiate transition would happen elsewhere
- Comparisons between external transfers and all freshmen should be avoided – marginally admitted and enrolled freshmen don't perform as well as the median enrolled freshmen

Limitations

- Survivor bias – transfer students were very successful elsewhere to qualify for NC State
- Given their initial interest in NC State, these students may have been more prepared to transfer to NC State than a typical transfer student
- Small sample size (423)

Recommendations

- Change likely to meet desired outcomes
- Build better relationships with donor institutions
 - Articulation agreements
 - Pre-transfer advising
 - Create NC State-intent transfer groups at community colleges
- Give Undergraduate Admissions resources to attract diverse transfers students
- Create Student Affairs initiatives to build community for transfer students

Questions and Comments