Transfer students comprise 33% of new full-time degree-seeking undergraduates in an academic year - up from 28% five years ago. The three reports of the Transfer Student Studies highlight the fact that transfer students are a unique subpopulation of BU undergraduates, with significantly different expectations, experiences, and outcomes from students who enter as freshmen.

Report I – Coming in the Front Door

An analysis of CIRP data indicated that compared to entering freshmen, entering transfer students:

- were more likely to be first-generation college students;
- reported weaker high school academic backgrounds;
- were very confident in their academic ability, but less so than freshmen (driven primarily by lower confidence in mathematical skills);
- were more committed to BU and their choice of major;
- faced more financial uncertainty, especially those transferring from a community college;
- were more likely to indicate taking out loans and paying for college expenses out-of-pocket;
- were as intellectually and socially self-confident; and
- had comparable drive to achieve and degree aspirations (generally and at BU).

Transfers indicated that the decision to go to college was more influenced by job considerations than it was for freshmen. Reputation, cost, future employment, and graduate school admissions were important influencing factors for both groups of students in deciding to attend BU, but location was also a more important factor for transfers than it was for freshmen. This, coupled with the fact that BU was often the only college to which transfer students applied (38%), suggests that transfers were relatively place-bound. This may help explain why cost was less of a factor for transfer students, despite their higher financial concerns.

The anticipations of transfers were markedly different from those of freshmen. One of the more striking differences was transfers’ lower expectations regarding campus involvement and participation in various activities. They also had higher expectations about the grades they would get. Transfers with academic experiences at community colleges anticipated regular contact with their professors. There was no difference between transfers and freshmen in their anticipated level of satisfaction with BU, however.

Available Online at http://oir.binghamton.edu/whitepapers/whitepapers.htm
Report II – Experiences at BU: Survey Data

Analysis of the National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE) data revealed that, compared to native seniors (who entered BU as freshmen), seniors who entered as transfers:

- reported similar academic interactions and outcomes;
- had different coursework experiences (or plans);
- were more challenged academically;
- spent more time tending to work and family obligations, and less time involved in extracurricular activities and socializing;
- rated the quality of their interactions with other students lower.

An analysis of Student Opinion Survey (SOS) data illustrated that students who entered as transfers:

- had a lesser degree of participation in (and satisfaction with) social activities;
- made less use of (and had lower satisfaction with) campus athletic facilities, library, and student union;
- were more likely to face the competing demands of marriage and family;
- had a much lower sense of belonging on campus;
- were no more or less satisfied with course availability, registration procedures, or services such as computer support, library, financial aid, billing/payment, personal counseling, tutoring, and career planning;
- were more impressed with the quality of education at BU;
- were no more or less satisfied, overall, with BU.

Taken together, CIRP, NSSE and SOS data show that, outside of academics, transfer students had low expectations which BU met, but did not exceed.

Report III – Institutional Data View

Using institutional data, entering transfers were compared to both entering freshmen and native students of the same (credit hour) level. Transfer students were revealed as markedly different from other BU students on nearly every measure.

Some differences between transfers and freshmen seem obvious, such as transfers being older and more likely to live off-campus. In addition, entering transfer students:

- carried lighter course loads their first semester;
- enrolled in different schools;
- were less ethnically diverse than freshman classes, and have become even less diverse over the past five years;
- were more likely to enter with a declared major;
- were more likely to be from Broome / Tioga;
- had higher unmet financial need;
- were more likely to have a financial delinquency; and
- had lower retention rates.
Entering transfer students experienced “transfer shock,” but the degree of shock was less dramatic than what freshmen experience. First semester GPAs were higher, and transfers shock less severe, for four-year transfers than for community college transfers. The higher the (credit hour) level of the transfer student, the higher the first semester GPA, and the lower the level of transfer shock.

Entering transfer students were also very different from native students of the same (credit hour) level. Across all levels, entering transfers (as a whole):
- were older;
- were more likely to live off-campus;
- were more likely to be from Broome/Tioga;
- were more likely to be from out-of-state;
- were less likely to be EOP participants or risky admits;
- carried lighter course loads;
- had fewer AP credits on file;
- were less likely to take independent study courses;
- earned lower semester GPAs (the disparity lessens as level increases); and
- had lower retention rates.

Four-year transfers “looked” more like their native counterparts on many measures, including GPA and retention, but the differences were still statistically significant.

A multivariate model was provided to aid in a clearer understanding of what data elements have a significant effect on transfer student retention. They are summarized in Table 1, grouped as having a positive, negative, or no significant impact.

Table 1
Multivariate Analysis Summary – Transfer Student 6-year Graduation / Retention

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Positive influence</th>
<th>Negative influence</th>
<th>Not Significant</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>+ First semester GPA</td>
<td>- Nontraditional (25 or older)</td>
<td>° Gender</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>+ Previously denied admission</td>
<td>- Living off-campus at a permanent address</td>
<td>° Ethnicity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>+ School: Management, Decker, SEHD, Computer Science</td>
<td>- Geography: upstate New York (excluding Broome / Tioga), out-of-state, and international.</td>
<td>° “Local” (Broome / Tioga)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>+ Credit hours transferred</td>
<td>- Financial delinquency</td>
<td>° Living off-campus at a “local” address</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>+ First semester credit load</td>
<td></td>
<td>° Entering in a spring semester</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

° EOP status
° Transfer GPA
° “Type” of transfer (four-year, etc.)
First semester GPA is the most significant predictor of transfer student retention. Transfer GPA and transfer student type were both insignificant after controlling for the effects of first semester GPA. However, several of the significant variables are more pronounced among community college transfers than four-year transfers. On average, community college transfers:

- attained lower first semester GPAs ( - );
- carried fewer credit hours in their first semester ( - );
- were more likely to be non-traditional students ( - );
- were more likely to live off-campus at their permanent address ( - );
- entered with more transfer credits ( + ).

Being a nontraditional student (aged 25 or older) has the largest negative impact on transfer students’ odds of retention. Nontraditional students comprised a larger share of the entering transfer student population in 2004-05 than five years before.

**Synthesis**

Transfer students are generally as confident (other than mathematical ability), and as driven to achieve as students who enter as freshmen. They have the same degree aspirations and similar academic interactions while at BU. They are more committed to BU and their major. They are no more or less satisfied than native students with services offered by BU, including registration, financial aid, counseling, tutoring and career planning, and course availability. However, they face different circumstances.

Transfers have greater financial concerns, needs, and difficulties. They spend their time differently, being more likely to deal with the competing demands of work and family obligations (likely related to their age). They spend less time on campus, carrying lighter course loads and living off-campus. They are less likely to participate in activities and use campus facilities. Campus involvement and integration suffers. Transfers are left with a markedly lower sense of belonging, poorer relations with other students, lower academic performance, and lower retention and graduation rates.