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Assessing Transfer Student Performance

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Assessing Transfer Student Performance

By

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Assessing Transfer Student Performance

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This thesis has been examined and approved by the following members of the thesis committee.

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Abstract

Higher educational institutions place a high priority on the retention and timely graduation of students. Previous literature and research studies have identified transfer students to have a vital role in the success of four year universities. The university in the study enrolls a high percentage of transfer students, primarily from two year community colleges within the state of Minnesota. To understand transfer students performance, the study used multiple measures of transfer student success, including (1) cumulative GPA, (2) one year retention rate, and (3) one year graduation rate. The comparison of transfer students and native students is examined, showing that generally speaking, there are few significant differences between both groups.

Assessing Community College Transfer Student Performance at Minnesota State
University, Mankato

Community colleges are a key component of the North American higher education system and are the largest contributor to the movement of students from one institution to another (Pascarella, 1999). As community colleges expand in size and number in the future, the possibility of more two-year community college students transferring to four-year universities is a certainty. Therefore, to examine this population, we must identify three trends that are changing higher education. First, societal changes are showing that community colleges are a more affordable and accessible way of securing an education. Second, demographic changes are showing that the number of individuals enrolling in these two-year community colleges is increasing. Third, university initiatives are beginning to foster more of a focus on transfer students, especially in terms of articulation agreements that facilitate student transfer between institutions.

Societal Changes

The community college is a vital component of the American educational story. Evolving and taking shape during the era of a sharp increase in college attendance fueled by post-war prosperity, the American community college has become fundamental to the higher education system (Cohen & Brawer, 1996). In 1973, Bateman stated that the growth of community colleges was one of the most striking phenomena of the many new and expanding forms of educational organizations. As community colleges become

increasingly accessible to individuals, more students will be using these –brick and mortarl institutes to spring-board their educational careers. This comes as a result of society placing an extreme amount of importance of graduating with a baccalaureate degree. As a result of these changes in how society deems a job applicant as qualified or not, an acquired degree is one of the most important characteristics for an applicant to have.

In addition, many students are concerned on the quality and affordability of their education. According to several news sources, many four-year universities have or intend to increase tuitions to offset budget cuts by federal, state or local governments (Satake, 2010). Today, in the United States, there are more than 1,200 community colleges with more than 11 million students enrolled, suggesting that community colleges are becoming a money-saving alternative (Glass & Harrington, 2002) As students seek less expensive routes to a baccalaureate degree, community colleges cannot be overlooked; the primary function of community colleges is to provide two years of course work suitable for transfer to four-year institutions (Wilson, 1983). In fact, enrollments at community colleges—the largest sector of higher education with close to 44 percent of all U.S. undergraduates—have increased for eight of the past 10 years, but the prolonged recession has spurred recent enrollment spikes. From fall 2008 to fall 2009, enrollments were up an average 11 percent nationally, and from 2007-2009 enrollments increased close to 17 percent (AACC, 2010). Community colleges are often a real catalyst for economic development.

Demographic Changes

The workforce of today needs to be more educated than the workforces of previous generations. Higher education used to be for only those privileged few who were well prepared for further education (Hansen, 1998). At the turn of the century, there were 237,000 individual enrolled in colleges (Association of Governing Boards of Universities and Colleges, 1999). In current times, enrollment in degree-granting institutions increased by 14 percent between 1987 and 1997. Between 1997 and 2007, enrollment increased at a faster rate of 26 percent, from 14.5 million to 18.2 million students (NCES, 2008). This is an increase of 18 million students in the last 100 years. The education system in the United States has had to keep up with this growth rate. Employers are seeking specific higher-order skills and prefer graduates who have gone through systematic programs of study.

As a result of this growth, many institutions accept a large number of transfers, and the numbers of students attempting transfer will most likely increase in the near future (NCES, 2009). Nearly 50% of those enrolled in public institutions of higher learning have attended one of a thousand or so public community colleges in the United States and this number is expected to increase (The Chronicle of Higher Education, 1995). This mobility from one institution to another is highly popular among today's college students, making higher education more accessible to a larger number of individuals. For example, taking lower level courses through a community college and finishing at a more prestigious four-year university may become an option for many working students.

Educating a competitive workforce not only helps to stimulate both the local and state economies; it also helps individuals improve their lives and the lives of their families. More people are realizing the economic value of an education and are seeking a college education. In a survey conducted by NCES (2010), the median annual earnings for a male in 2008 with a high school diploma was \$32,000. Comparing this to a male with a bachelor's degree or higher earning \$55,000, the economic incentive to attain a Bachelor's degree is evident. Merely graduating from high school is no longer sufficient to guarantee a steady job and a middle class income.

About two-thirds of 2004 seniors who enrolled immediately in a community college seem to have done so with the intention of pursuing a bachelor's degree or higher: as high school seniors, 28 percent had planned to use a community college as a stepping stone to a bachelor's degree and 39 percent revised their original plans to attend a 4-year college and earn a bachelor's degree by starting their postsecondary education at a community college (NCES, 2008).

Transfer is a component of most community college students' educational aspirations (Grubb 1991). In fact, National College Education Statistics (2002) reports that community colleges are a gateway to post secondary education for almost half of all incoming freshmen. This preparation is key to the community college's role in higher education because it affirms the community college's claim to a collegiate, academic identity and to a role in broadening access for those historically excluded from a college education.

University Initiatives

Four-year universities are beginning to understand that with the rise in the number of transfer students, effective transition from two-year to four-year institutions will have to be seamless. This is increasingly important as the composition of the population to be served becomes increasingly diverse and complex. Nationally, the U.S. Bureau of the Census is projecting that by the year 2050, no racial or ethnic group will be a majority. Universities are incorporating transfer agreements and special recruitment procedures as strategic priorities to help deal with the influx of new transfer students.

Articulation agreements are formal agreements between two or more colleges and universities to accept credits in transfer toward a specific academic program (*See appendix for example articulation agreement*). Articulation agreements are generally for specialized professional or technical programs offered at colleges (e.g., Associate of Science (AS), Associate of Fine Arts (AFA), Associate of Applied Science (AAS), diplomas, certificates) that can be applied to a specific program/major at the receiving university. Many states and institutions have developed articulation policies to facilitate such transfers (Wellman, 2002). Each institution is responsible for developing articulation agreements with other institutions. Some institutions have agreements with all or nearly all of the colleges and universities in their respective state, while others have agreements with only a more limited number of colleges or universities.

Articulation agreements give students a better way to identify appropriate community college coursework that will transfer and meet the university's degree requirements. (Minnesota State Colleges and Universities, 2007). However, when a

transfer student does not have access to articulation agreements, the transfer process from a two-year institution to a four-year school may seem baffling. Without an articulation agreement, transfer students do not have a clear perspective of what course to complete at the community college that will successfully transfer to the university. This lack of consistency can affect numerous parts of the transfer student's transition, including overall performance at the receiving university.

Minnesota State University, Mankato has developed specific goals in accordance with a university wide strategy of bring in and retain more transfer students. The development and accessibility of more articulation agreements is a high priority. Specifically, the university hopes to develop articulation agreements with two-year community colleges outside of their traditional network area to help attract more students. Furthermore, leaders and stakeholders want to intensify transfer student recruitment efforts by doubling the number of visits from student relations coordinators to community and technical colleges. Support for such an initiative will come from the creation of a two-year college liaison job. Recruitments efforts will also focus on students that will help meet the need to enhance diversity. In fact, the majority of Black and Hispanic undergraduate students in this country study at community colleges (AACC, 2009). These university initiatives are a result of the increased need and support to accommodate the rise in the admittance of transfer students.

Admissions and Definitions

For the purposes of this research, it is useful to understand how both transfers and

freshmen arrive at Minnesota State University, Mankato. Students registered in a given semester can be divided into two groups, new and returning. New students are students who have just arrived at the university and are attending their first semester here.

Returning students, on the other hand, have matriculated in a previous semester. Based on their matriculation status these two groups can be subdivided into first-time freshmen and transfers. With the exception of continuing education students and international students, new undergraduates are classified as either new (or first-time) freshmen or new transfers.

First-time freshmen have not previously attended a post-secondary institution before attending the university, while transfers have. First-time freshmen are often referred to in the transfer literature as -natives - they are native to the university in that they first began their college career here. Based on these categories, we can divide all undergraduate students registered in a given semester into four different groups:

1. New natives – the cohort of new first-time freshmen entering the university in the fall
2. New transfers – the cohort of new transfer students entering the university in the fall
3. Returning natives – all undergraduates enrolled in the fall who were here in a previous semester and who originally entered the university as first-time freshmen
4. Returning transfers – all undergraduates enrolled in the fall who were here in a previous semester and who originally entered the university as transfer students

First-time freshmen are those students who have never attempted or earned credit at a post-secondary institution (excluding courses taken through a post-secondary options

program). First-time freshmen are applying after high school graduation, are applying to the university after having completed a GED, or are applying to the university after completing home schooling, all within three years.

New transfer students are those students who have attempted or earned post-high school graduation credits. Transfer students have also completed at least 24 semester level credits with a 2.0 cumulative GPA and satisfactory completion of at least 67 percent of the credits attempted will be admitted. Transfer students who have completed fewer than 24 semester college level credits must also submit a final high school transcript. The eligibility for admission for these students will be based on the high school and collegiate records.

Review of Existing Literature on Transfer Student Performance

Research shows that performance of transfer students utilizes several different performance variables. In fact, there is some concern about transfer student performance, particularly in whether two-year community college students can academically perform, be retained, and graduate at a four-year university.

Most community colleges strive to serve all the members in the community who can benefit from their services. The large proportion of students attending public 2-year institutions seek a wide range of services, from a place to experiment with postsecondary education to a structured vocational certificate or associate's degree program (Grubb 1991). Although the course offerings and degree programs of many community colleges can accommodate diverse student interests and goals, preparing students to transfer to a

4-year college remains a central characteristic of community colleges (Brint & Hirt 1999).

When considering the long-term implications for success at four-year colleges, the quality of community college education has been and continues to be controversial and widely debated (Dougherty, 1994; Parnell, 1982; Zwerling, 1976, 1986). The common perception is that students who enter a four-year university by transferring from a two-year community college are less qualified and perform worse than students who enter as first-time college students. Yet, most two-year community colleges firmly believe that transfer students bring high quality performance, outside exposure, and diversity to the classroom at the receiving institution (Berger & Malaney, 2003).

Numerous studies have identified differences among native and transfer students, most often reporting that transfer students have lower GPAs and higher attrition rates than native students (Cejda et al. 1998; Cuseo, 1998; Glass and Harrington, 2002) A study conducted by the University of Maryland showed that transfer students are retained at rates of 1 to 9 percentage points lower than native freshmen, graduate at rates 2 to 8 percentage points lower than native freshmen, and earn grade point averages 1/10 to 2/10 of a grade point lower than native freshmen (Porter, 1999). It is also known that community colleges address the problem of an increasingly large population of people who are under-prepared to meet the minimum admissions requirements of four-year universities, cannot attend a university due to work or family constraints, or seek job-related skills. In 2003–04, nearly 40 percent of community college students were dependent students (i.e., under 24 years old and not financially independent from their parents); yet, 26 percent were 24 years old or older and financially independent from

their parents, 20 percent were independent and married with children, and 15 percent were independent, single parents (Horn and Nevill, 2006). If the transfer student does not have time to participate in learning, he or she is unlikely to be successful. As a result, transfer students supposedly perform poorer academically and are retained at lower rates.

There is some research that points to *transfer shock* affecting this performance (Diaz, 1992; Cejda, Kaylor, & Rewey, 1998). Transfer shock is the tendency for transfer students to experience a drop in GPA during the first semester at a four-year institution. Explanations for this drop in GPA can be attributed to the change in environments, lack of support from the receiving university, and lack of preparedness. This phenomenon has been reported in several studies on transfer populations; however, few studies have also shown GPA to increase after transfer (Nickens, 1975).

Comparing native students and community college transfers requires that steps be taken to ensure that both groups in each cohort are as similar as possible. Even though perfect comparison will not occur, striving to make each pair of groups as similar as possible is still important (Clark, 1994; Ishitani, 2008). The method employed in this study compares new transfer with returning natives and has advantages over comparison with new natives (Best & Gehring, 1993, Dupraw and Michael 1995, Saupe & Long 1997). Because both groups have college experience, measures such as retention rates and graduation rates are not artificially inflated for new transfers. In addition, both returning natives and new transfers can be broken down into further subgroups (gender, ethnicity, etc.). This increases what this study can compare or not compare. However, with this approach, the effects of transfer shock may impact retention, graduation, and GPA measures (Cedja, 1998). New transfers might be affected

by transfer shock since they aren't afford ample time to adjust to the university's new policies, procedures, student body, and culture.

The confluence of these factors may potentially hinder the performance of transfer students at the receiving university. Higher education institutions prefer admitting transfer candidates who will reflect well on the institution and graduate in a timely manner. It is understood that no matter how rigorous the curriculum, dedicated the faculty, or plentiful the academic support services, a transfer student who is working many hours or juggling demanding family obligations while attending school may simply lack the time to take advantage of the services offered or even to complete the work assigned.

Retention Rate

The first outcome variable that has been extensively studied in previous literature on student performance is retention rate. Higher educational institutions have placed the retention and timely graduation of students as a critical priority (Glass and Harrington, 2002). Retention rate is measure of the rate at which students persist in their educational program at an institution, expressed as a percentage (IPEDS, 2010). In other words, retention rate is the percentage of a school's first-time, first-year undergraduate students who continue at that school the next year. For all other institutions this is the percentage of first-time degree/certificate-seeking students from the previous fall who either re-enrolled or successfully completed their program by the current fall. For example, a student who studies full-time in the fall semester and keeps on studying in the program in the next fall semester is counted in this rate.

While approximately half of community college students have aspirations to attain a bachelor's degree with or without an associate degree (American Association of Community Colleges 2007), some studies suggest that students who begin at community colleges are less likely to complete a bachelor's degree than those who begin at four year colleges (Christie & Hutchenson 2003; Clark 1994; Grubb 1991; Ishitani 2008). The attrition rate for a transfer student is 10 to 15 percent higher than that of native students (Glass & Harrington, 2002). When they fail, the majority of transfer students do so before the end of their first year as a transfer (Cejda, Kaylor & Rewey 1998; Cuseo 1998).

However, transfer students are more likely to be neglected or ignored in retention efforts (Berger & Malaney, 2003). Historically, the majority of retention literature has focused solely on native freshmen (Christie, Munro, & Fisher 2004; Hughes & Pace 2003; Rickinson & Rutherford 1995); however, due to the recent enrollment shift into and out of community colleges, more emphasis has been placed on retaining transfer students. Specifically for Minnesota State University, Mankato, there is a great deal of importance in understanding transfer student performance.

Graduation Rate

Another prominent outcome variable, graduation rate, is the percentage of a school's first-time, first-year undergraduate students who complete their program within 150% of the published time for the program (IPEDS, 2010). For example, for a four-year degree program, entering students who complete within six years are counted as graduates. Because the establishment of a graduation rate definition in the federal Student Right to Know Act of 1990 (SRTK), campus leaders, federal policymakers, and research have extensively analyzed and debated this indicator of student success

(AASCU, 2008). Although scrutiny exists as to using this graduation rate as an indicator of performance, the AASCU maintains that it is a legitimate indicator of student performance. It is important to state that graduation rates represent just one part of a broader outcomes picture, and that graduation rate should be used in conjunction with other outcomes variables (NPEC, 2010).

Grade Point Average

The final outcome variable this study will focus on is grade point average (GPA), or the numerical value of a grade multiplied by the credit hours for a course. Transfer GPA has been shown to be the best predictor of degree persistence and completion among full-time university students who transferred from a community college (Townsend, McNerny and Arnold, 1993). Research also shows that across the nation, 42% of community college transfer students do not achieve a 2.0 grade point average at their university of choice (Hughes & Graham, 1992). For instance, the results of such studies indicated that students with transfer GPAs of less than 2.5 were not as apt in graduating as those with GPAs above 2.5. As a group of transfer students who entered with a GPA of 2.5 or more were able to maintain a 2.3 at the university, whereas those who entered with less than a 2.5 had an average university GPA of 1.9. However, this is only the results of one study. It is equally important to note that several studies show no significant differences between the GPA of native students and transfer students.

Gender

Education has been a source of advancement, empowerment, and liberation for women, but it has also reproduced gender inequalities. Women and men are known to

differ in their college experiences and face different outcomes (Jacobs, 1996). One study suggests that female college students are almost as likely to cheat as their male counterparts even though the former's ethical standards tend to be higher than those of the latter (Whitley, 1999). Gender also seems to influence what type of student groups one affiliates with. Women are more likely to be labeled as a "grind" whereas men are much more likely to be labeled as a "recreator" (Kuh, Hu & Vesper, 2000). Grinds exhibit a high level of academic effort and recreators are involved with sports and exercise. Students labeled as grinds exhibited attitudes and behaviors very similar to those who have been identified as possessing an academic ethic (Smith and Pino, 2003).

The Current Study

Are transfer students truly less qualified than native freshman students, or is this simply a myth? The purpose of this research paper is to methodically evaluate transfer student performance in terms of retention rate, graduation rate, and grade point average and compare this information with native freshman students. By analyzing the backgrounds and behavior of recent transfer and freshman cohorts, this research will shed light on what evidence, if any, supports this belief. This study can provide much needed information to help ensure smarter decisions be made while undertaking such large initiatives, as in common articulation agreements. Additionally, assessing transfer students and comparing them to native freshman students provides an opportunity to evaluate transfer admission criteria. If transfer students happen to be performing poorly, should an institution raise minimum GPA requirements, or instead concentrate on

students from certain types of transfer institutions? Such questions will be informed by results of this study.

The request for information pertaining to transfer students has been mandated by the Office of the President due to the influx of transfer students at this university. An increasingly large proportion of students attending two-year community colleges are transferring to four-year universities like Minnesota State University, Mankato, and the need to understand this population of students is essential for the success of the university. With 44% of all new students at the state universities in Minnesota each year being transfer students, and about half transferring from community and technical colleges (Minnesota State Colleges and Universities), emphasis on transfer student performance, graduation, and retention is as important as ever. Given what is already known about community college transfer student performance, I expect to find significant differences between transfer students and native freshman students on key outcome variables.

H1: Incoming cumulative mean GPA for community college transfer students' will be significantly lower than the native students cumulative mean GPA' at the end of the sophomore year.

H2: The one-year retention rates of transfer students will be lower than native students.

H3: The graduation rates of the transfer students will be lower than native students.

H4: Female students (natives/transfers) will have higher GPAs as compared with male students (natives/transfers).

Method

The study focused on assessing and statistically comparing the cumulative GPA, the one-year retention rate, and the overall graduation rate of community college transfer students and native freshmen student scores at a mid-sized four-year public university. Other variables that will be investigated include age and gender.

Participants

This study used archival data on transfer students and native freshman students who were admitted to Minnesota State University, Mankato over the course of three years (N=10427). In terms of organization, the population was separated into cohorts of new/returning transfers and new/returning natives who both began school during the same semester. Keep in mind that this data covers three distinct, consecutive time periods.

Second, demographic data on all subjects was ran for the entire population, but in terms of comparing both native students and native freshmen, this study enlisted a sample of undergraduates taken from each cohort. To increase the comparability of native students to transfer students, equal N of sample groups was randomly assigned to native students. Each sample contained 100 participants for both transfer students and native freshmen across three consecutive years.

The data that was used in this study was gathered from the Office of Institutional Research. All data from these subjects were first organized into an excel spreadsheet. In order to run statistics on the data, the excel spreadsheet was converted to a format read by SPSS.

Types of Analyses

The first type of analytic procedure will be descriptive statistics and frequencies on demographic characteristics of the population being sampled. Next, independent samples t-tests will compare mean scores of native and transfer students in terms of GPA, graduation rate, and retention rate. Other variables such as age and gender will be compared as well using independent samples t-tests.

Results

Data Screening

The first step in these analyses involved screening data to detect, remove, and correct coding errors. To examine the data, the distributions of variables, means, frequencies, standard deviations, and ranges were used. All values were reviewed to make certain that they were within valid ranges.

The next analyses involved removing missing values, especially for transfer GPA. A total of 235 cases had transfer GPAs of .00. It is difficult to say whether students had actual transfer GPAs of .00 or that transfer GPA was not available at the time when data was entered into the spreadsheet. As for native student GPA at two years completion, there was only 1 value that reported a .00. For both groups, these GPA values were not included.

After data screening and cleaning, a total population size of 10,427 subjects was used. These subjects consisted of three consecutive cohorts comprised of both transfer and native undergraduate students. Of the total (N=10427), 3,227 were apart of the fall 2002 cohort, 3,569 were apart of the fall 2003 cohort, and 3,631 were apart of the fall 2004 cohort.

Initial Analyses

Analyses were first conducted to determine demographic characteristics for the population of subjects. Age is reported using frequencies and means by each cohort. Age and ethnicity are reported using frequencies and percentages. Results for these analyses

are presented in the Tables 1-4 below. Population statistics are reported in the appendix (Table 9-11).

Table 1

Mean Age of Cohorts

Cohort	Student Status	Number of Students	Mean Age
Fall 2002	Transfer	618	22.4
	Native	2592	18.5
	Total	3210	19.3
Fall 2003	Transfer	633	22.6
	Native	2922	18.3
	Total	3555	19.1
Fall 2004	Transfer	702	22.5
	Native	2919	18.4
	Total	3621	19.2

Table 2

Gender of Cohorts, further broken down into native and transfer student

Cohort	Student Status	Number of Males/Females	Gender by Percentage
Fall 2002	Transfer	Male (N=321) Female (N=308)	51% 49%
	Native	Male (N=1252) Female (N=1346)	48.2% 51.8%
Fall 2003	Transfer	Male (N=337) Female (N=303)	52.7% 47.3%
	Native	Male (N=1322) Female (N=1606)	45.1% 54.8%
Fall 2004	Transfer	Male (N=382) Female (N=326)	54% 46%
	Native	Male (N=1274) Female (N=1649)	43.6% 56.4%

Table 3

Ethnicity of Transfer students

Ethnicity	Fall 2002	Fall 2003	Fall 2004
American Indian or Alaskan	4 (.6%)	2 (.3%)	3 (.4%)
Asian or Pacific Islander	14 (2.2%)	14 (2.2%)	16 (2.3%)
Black or African American	24 (3.9%)	20 (3.1%)	56 (7.9%)
Hispanic or Latino	7 (1.1%)	6 (.9%)	12 (1.7%)
White	520 (82.7%)	561 (87.7%)	584 (82.5%)
Foreign National	22 (3.5%)	10 (1.6%)	16 (2.2%)
Other	38 (6.0%)	27 (4.2%)	21 (3.0%)

Table 4

Ethnicity of Native students

Ethnicity	Fall 2002	Fall 2003	Fall 2004
American Indian or Alaskan	10(.4%)	4 (.1%)	16 (.5%)
Asian or Pacific Islander	64 (2.5%)	47 (1.6%)	67 (2.3%)
Black or African American	50 (1.9%)	47 (1.6%)	84 (2.9%)
Hispanic or Latino	22 (.8%)	22 (.8%)	27 (.9%)
White	1896 (73%)	2587 (88.3%)	2569 (87.9%)
Foreign National	30 (1.2%)	34 (1.2%)	37 (1.3%)
Other	526 (20.2%)	188 (6.4%)	123 (4.2%)

Of the fall 2002 cohort, 19.49% (N=629) were transfer students and 80.5% (N=2598) were native undergraduate students. Of the fall 2003 cohort, 17.9% (N=640) were transfer students and 82.1% (N=2929) were native undergraduate students. Of the fall 2004 cohort, 19.5% (N=708) were transfer students and 80.5% (N=2923) were native undergraduate students. All cases were reported; therefore, no missing values were listed. Also, the high N for the each population would have caused all analyses to be significant. This study will therefore utilize a smaller sample size for comparison of the data. No doubt information will be lost; however, to understand if real differences exist with the aid of a large sample size, a sample size of 100 participants will be used. This sample size was determined using G*Power, a statistical program used to compute power. An effect size, $d=0.46$, is required for samples of this size.

Hypothesis 1 suggests that incoming cumulative mean GPA for community college transfer students' will be significantly lower than the native students cumulative mean GPA' at the end of the sophomore year. To test this hypothesis, an independent samples t-test was run. Results to these analyses are illustrated in Table 5. The data shows that there is a significant GPA difference between community college transfer students and native undergraduate students in the fall 2004 cohort. Community college students (M=2.75; SD=.68195) in the fall 2004 cohort have significantly lower GPA's than native freshman students (M=3.10; SD=.50240). Fall 2002 and fall 2003 cohorts were found to have no significant differences (*ns*).

Table 5

Community College/Native Student GPA Comparison

Cohort	Student Status	Number of Students Reporting GPA	Mean GPA
Fall 2002	Transfer	78	2.92
	Native	74	3.00
Fall 2003	Transfer	86	3.06
	Native	82	3.15
Fall 2004	Transfer	89	2.75*
	Native	75	3.10*

* $t(162) = -3.754, p < .001$

Retention rate is measure of the rate at which students persist in their educational program at an institution, expressed as a percentage. For this study, retention rate will be the one-year retention rate from enrollment to the next fall. Hypothesis 2 suggests that the retention rates of transfer students are significantly lower than native students. To test this hypothesis, an independent samples t-test was run. It was found that there are no significant differences of one-year retention rates between community college transfer students and native freshman (*ns*) Results to these analyses are illustrated in Table 6.

Table 6

One-year Retention Rates for Students

Cohort	Student Status	Number of Students Reporting Retention Rate	Retention Rate
Fall 2002	Transfer	100	73%
	Native	100	79%
Fall 2003	Transfer	100	77%
	Native	100	85%
Fall 2004	Transfer	100	72%
	Native	100	77%

Hypothesis 3 suggests that the graduation rates of transfer students are significantly lower than native students. Graduation rate is the percentage of a school's first-time, first-year undergraduate students including transfer students who complete their program within 150% of the published time for the program (IPEDS, 2010). To test this hypothesis, an independent samples t-test was run. Results to these analyses are illustrated in Table 7. It was found that there are no significant differences of graduation rates between community college transfer students and native freshman (*ns*).

Table 7
Graduation Rates for Students

Cohort	Student Status	Number of Students Reporting Graduation Rate	Graduation Rate
Fall 2002	Transfer	100	51%
	Native	100	44%
Fall 2003	Transfer	100	58%
	Native	100	57%
Fall 2004	Transfer	100	48%
	Native	100	44%

In terms of GPA differences between genders, hypothesis 4 suggests that female transfers and natives will have higher GPAs compared with male transfers and natives. Independent t-tests were run and the results of the analyses are illustrated in Table 8. Females score higher GPAs than males in the fall cohort of 2002 and the fall cohort of 2003. There were no significant differences found for the fall 2004 cohort (*ns*).

Table 8

Comparing GPA based on Gender

Cohort	Student Gender	Number of Students Reporting GPA	Mean GPA
Fall 2002	Male	77	2.84*
	Female	75	3.08*
Fall 2003	Male	80	2.93**
	Female	88	3.25**
Fall 2004	Male	70	2.86
	Female	94	2.95

* $t(150)=2.785, p<.01$ ** $t(166)=3.681, p<.001$

Discussion

It is increasingly important to understand transfer student GPA, retention, and graduation rates because of the growing number of transfer students, demographic changes within the population and societal changes that can influence certain outcomes. Of particular interest for this study was to examine significant difference, if at all, exist between native students and community college transfer students. Variables that were analyzed included GPA, graduation rates, and retention rates. In addition, age and gender were analyzed.

First, it was shown that there is a significant GPA difference between community college transfer students and native undergraduate students in the fall 2004 cohort. In this cohort, the mean GPA for community college transfer students was significantly lower than native undergraduate students. However, fall 2002 and fall 2003 cohorts were found to have no significant differences.

It is important to note that even though hypothesis 1 was not statistically significant, the means were in the direction hypothesized. In fact, Table 10 in the appendix shows the mean GPA for all students in the population. The means for transfer students are lower than that of native freshmen. Due to the rigors of the current study, significance testing was not employed on the population at large, yet a pattern similar to that of the sample tested is seen. Leaving statistical significance out for a moment, we can see that community college transfer students have generally lower GPA's than native freshmen students. It is also important to note the age difference between transfer student and native students.

Community college transfer students have shown that they are generally older than native freshman students across all cohorts, which may mean they have less time for school work. This decrease in the amount of time spent on school work may carry over and affect overall performance on GPA. In terms of explaining slightly lower GPA scores, it is understood that no matter how rigorous the curriculum, dedicated the faculty, or plentiful the academic support services, a transfer student who has more responsibilities such as working many hours or juggling demanding family obligations while attending school may simply lack the time to take advantage of the services offered or even to complete the work assigned. These responsibilities tend to occur as an individual ages.

Second, the one-year retention rates of transfer students were not significantly different from the one-year retention rates of native freshmen. These retention rates may not be statistically significant, but the data revealed that according to the samples, the retention rates were slightly lower for transfers than native students. It is important to note that similar to hypothesis 1 in terms of directionality, hypothesis 2 showed a distinct pattern that transfers are being retained lower than native freshmen students. This lower retention rate for community college transfer students may be partly due to the fact that graduation rates are slightly higher in transfer students versus native students because of the number of incoming credits earned by transfer students allowing a timelier graduating within a six-year period.

Third, students are allotted 150% (6 years) of the published time to complete a program to be included in graduation rate data, and it was found that there are no significant differences in graduation rates between community college transfer students and native freshman. It was predicted that transfer students would have lower graduation

rates than native students. However, the directionality of the results show that graduation rates are generally higher for transfer students compared to native students. This pattern is understandable because transfer students are enrolling to the four-year university with two years of experience and credit, allowing for a better chance to graduate within the allotted six-year timeframe.

A fourth finding was in terms of GPA differences between genders, suggesting that female undergraduate students (both native and transfer) have higher GPAs compared with male undergraduate students. It was shown that females scored higher GPAs than males in the fall 2002 and 2003 cohorts. However, there were no significant differences found for the fall 2004 cohort, though scores were still in the direction favoring of female students. Research has shown that females generally score higher than males in terms of GPA (NCES, 2010) and the findings of this study are consistent with this research. Since females are scoring higher than males, a potential area of emphasis will be improving the overall GPA of male undergraduate students.

Recommendations

In terms of practical recommendations for the university, there are a few suggestions that can be made. Based on the findings of the current study, it is very important to continue to examine the transfer student population. The community college transfer student population at Minnesota State University, Mankato will continue to increase, thereby impacting many aspects of the university. Therefore, the first recommendation is to establish an ongoing assessment of transfer student performance, including qualitative data. This will not only provide insight into how students perform

based on specific criteria variables, but will also provide a basis to compare transfer students to native freshmen students. Moreover, continued data collection and analyses can potentially be used to identify marketing needs to underrepresented community colleges that the university wants to extend their network to. If high performance scores of GPA, retention rate, and graduation rate are associated with specific community colleges, admitting those students would be likely produce a better transfer student body in terms of those variables.

To fully understand the magnitude of the data, information in terms of qualitative data should be collected and analyzed. Instances occur whereby quantitative data can produce only a glimpse of the overall situation facing the student body at Minnesota State University, Mankato. For example, this study uncovered that there is an approximate three-year difference between native freshmen students and community college transfer students. And research has shown that community college transfer students usually part-time employment, have families, and other responsibilities. If individuals are asked open-ended questions about their university experiences, both inside and outside the confine of the classroom, we may potentially uncover important findings that can lead to improving the university experience. Further investigation will help to uncover these questions.

The second recommendation is to evaluate the admissions process for native and transfer students here at Minnesota State University, Mankato to uncover potential pitfalls in the transfer process. A critical issue that has gained awareness through this study is that native freshmen students and transfer students do not have the same admission requirements, especially in terms of GPA. Different admission requirements could lead to perceptions of problems with fairness or bias in the selection process

(Guion, 1991). Such differences could also be an indication that the transfer process is not treating native and transfer student equitably in terms of admissions.

The third recommendation is to improve the overall mean GPA of male students by first identifying why this disparity exists. As the results have shown, female students generally outperform male students based on GPA. This may be due to overall cognitive ability, or environmental factors hindering this specific group's GPA. A future study delving into this issue may potentially benefit the male students at Minnesota State University, Mankato.

The last recommendation stresses the importance of a diverse undergraduate class as outlined by university initiatives. By looking at the ethnic breakdown of transfer and native students, over 80% of each cohort's student body was Caucasian. Increasing the percentage of minorities enrolled in the university would help to satisfy Goal 1 outlined in the Strategic Plan (see appendix for Minnesota State University, Mankato Strategic Priorities – Goal 1: Promote Diversity).

Limitations

There are a few limitations to the current study. It is important to keep in mind that there are no cause and effect conclusions that can be drawn from this research. The focus of the study was to report statistically significant differences between transfer students and native students, and to also provide descriptive statistics of the population being sampled. Causal modeling, along with other statistical analyses, can provide insight into the directionality of some of these findings.

Another limitation is that the cohorts sampled were from 2002, 2003, and 2004. Using these cohorts does not allow for a recent comparison of GPA. Comparing transfer student and native students in later cohorts would provide much more relevant and actionable results.

One major limitation is the use of comparing groups of native students and transfer students where many relevant differences still exist. These differences can impact a proper comparison of both groups. For example, transfers may pursue different academic programs than native students, therefore inflating variables such as graduation rate. There are many other variables that can be controlled for, including credits earned; however, no comparison will ever be a perfect comparison.

Moreover, it would be beneficial to know something about the people who were not retained or did not graduate. It cannot be assumed that transfer students who left were not able to handle the work at a four-year institution; therefore, research should analyze and try to understand why those students leave. It would be interesting to find out if incoming GPA is lower than subsequent semester GPAS in transfer student populations due to transfer shock or if students with extremely low GPAS are leaving each semester. Articles on transfer shock continue to appear, yet what might be transfer shock might actually be attrition of less qualified students.

Conclusion

The purpose of this research paper was to methodically evaluate transfer student performance in terms of retention rate, graduation rate, and grade point average and compare this information with native freshman students. It is increasingly important to

understand transfer student GPA, retention, and graduation rates because of the growing number of transfer students, demographic changes within the population and societal changes that can influence certain outcomes. As community colleges expand in size and number in the future, the possibility of more two-year community college students transferring to four-year universities is a certainty. By analyzing the background and behaviors of recent transfer and freshman cohorts, this research shed light on community college transfer student performance.

In general, the data shows few significant differences between transfer students and native freshmen students; however, there is still validity for the direction of the slight disparities between both groups. Analyses conducted on performance indicators make one to believe that continued monitoring of transfer students needs to occur to ensure that transfer students are on par with native students.

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Appendix

Table 9

Population of Community College/Native Student GPA Comparison

Cohort	Student Status	Number of Students Reporting GPA	Mean GPA
Fall 2002	Transfer	544	2.93
	Native	1906	3.06
Fall 2003	Transfer	561	3.01
	Native	2187	3.08
Fall 2004	Transfer	632	2.91
	Native	2181	3.09

Table 10

Population of One-year Retention Rates for Students

Cohort	Student Status	Number of Students Reporting Retention Rate	Retention Rate
Fall 2002	Transfer	629	79%
	Native	2598	80%
Fall 2003	Transfer	640	77%
	Native	2929	79%
Fall 2004	Transfer	708	77%
	Native	2923	80%

Table 11

Population of Graduation Rates for Students

Cohort	Student Status	Number of Students Reporting Graduation Rate	Graduation Rate
Fall 2002	Transfer	629	59%
	Native	2598	49%
Fall 2003	Transfer	640	59%
	Native	2929	49%
Fall 2004	Transfer	708	54%
	Native	2923	47%

MINNESOTA STATE COLLEGES AND UNIVERSITIES

ARTICULATION AGREEMENT

BETWEEN

NORMANDALE COMMUNITY COLLEGE

AND

MINNESOTA STATE UNIVERSITY - MANKATO

This Agreement is entered into between **NORMANDALE COMMUNITY COLLEGE**, and **MINNESOTA STATE UNIVERSITY - MANKATO**

This Agreement and any amendments and supplements, shall be interpreted pursuant to the laws of the State of Minnesota.

NORMANDALE COMMUNITY COLLEGE has established an **ASSOCIATE OF FINE ARTS DEGREE (AFA) IN PRODUCTION AND DESIGN**, and **MINNESOTA STATE UNIVERSITY - MANKATO** has established a **BACHELOR OF FINE ARTS DEGREE (BFA) IN THEATRE DESIGN/TECHNOLOGY**, and will facilitate credit transfer and provide a smooth transition from one related program to another.

The Board of Trustees of the Minnesota State Colleges and Universities is authorized by Minnesota Statutes, Chapter 136F to enter into Agreements and has delegated this authority to colleges and universities.

It is mutually agreed upon:

Admission and Graduation Requirements

- A. MINNESOTA STATE UNIVERSITY - MANKATO admission and program admission requirements apply to both direct entry students and to students who transfer under this agreement.
- B. Students accepted into MINNESOTA STATE UNIVERSITY - MANKATO must fulfill the BFA – THEATRE DESIGN/TECHNOLOGY graduation requirements.

Transfer of Credits

- A. MINNESOTA STATE UNIVERSITY - MANKATO will accept 60 credits from NORMANDALE COMMUNITY COLLEGE AFA – PRODUCTION AND DESIGN to apply to BFA – THEATRE DESIGN/TECHNOLOGY. 60 credits remain to complete the receiving program and award.
- B. Courses will transfer as described in the Program Articulation Table included in this Articulation Agreement.

Terms of Agreement

- A. The Chief Academic Officers or designees of the parties to this agreement will implement the terms of this agreement, including identifying and incorporating any changes into subsequent


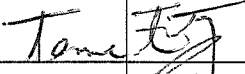





10 August 2009

agreements, assuring compliance with system policy, procedure and guidelines, and conducting a periodic review of this agreement.

- B. Program curriculum and requirements listed in the Program Articulation Table may change.
- C. This Articulation Agreement is effective on 05/01/2009 and shall remain in effect until 04/30/2014 unless terminated or amended by either party with 90 days prior written notice.
- D. This Articulation Agreement will be reviewed by both parties beginning on or after 04/30/2014.

PROGRAM ARTICULATION TABLE						
General Information						
	University			College		
Institution	MSU – MANKATO			NORMANDALE COMM. COLLEGE		
Program name	THEATRE DESIGN/TECHNOLOGY			PRODUCTION AND DESIGN		
Award Type (e.g., AS)	BFA			AFA		
CIP code (8-digit)				500501		
Describe program admission requirements (if any)						
Course Transfer by Program Component						
<i>List equivalent transferable courses on the same line in both degree programs. Complete all applicable components of the table. Enter total credits for all curriculum components for both awards. Double counted courses should appear in both components, but the credits should be counted only once. Make the adjustment in the number of credits at the end of the table. (To add rows, place cursor outside of the end of a row and press enter.)</i>						
General Education						
	University			College		
	course prefix, number and name	Cr	Goal	course prefix, number and name	Cr	Goal
Required general education courses (if any)	TRANSFER STUDENTS MUST			NORMANANDALE STUDENTS		
	EVENTUALLY EARN 40 CREDITS			MUST SATISFY THE FULL		
	AT THE 300-400 LEVEL TO BE			MINNESOTA TRANSFER		
	ELIGIBLE FOR GRADUATION.			CURRICULUM REQUIRMENTS		
				MEETING ALL TEN GOAL AREAS.		
Additional general education credits						
Total General Education		40		Total General Education	40	
Major						
	University			College		
	course prefix, number and name	Cr		course prefix, number and name	Cr	
Prerequisites not counted elsewhere						
Required Major Courses (equivalent courses only)	THEA 100 – INTRO TO THEATRE	3		THTR 1116 – INTRO TO THEATRE	3	
	THEA 102, 103, 105, 107, 108, 109 – THEATRE ACTIVITY	2		THTR 1122 – THEATRE PRACTICUM	2	
	THEA 240 – BASIC DESIGN	3		THTR 2020 – BASIC DESIGN	3	
	THEA 381 – PLAY ANALYSIS	3		THTR 2150 – SCRIPT ANALYSIS	3	
	THEA 260 – COSTUME CONSTRUCTION	3		THTR 1130 – INTRO TO COSTUMES	3	
	THEA 255 – STAGECRAFT	3		THTR 1140 – STAGECRAFT	3	
	THEA 252 – THEATRE TECHNOLOGY	3		THTR 1145 – LIGHTING & SOUND	3	

Additional major credits			
Subtotal		20	Subtotal 20
Emphasis <i>(College credits may transfer to one emphasis only)</i>			
University		College	
course prefix, number and name		Cr	course prefix, number and name
Cr			Cr
Emphasis Name			
Required Major Emphasis Courses	N/A		N/A
Additional emphasis credits			
Total Major & Emphasis		20	Total Major & Emphasis 20
Required Minor <i>(College credits may transfer only when the university requires a specifically named minor)</i>			
University		College	
course prefix, number and name		Cr	course prefix, number and name
Cr			Cr
Name of Minor			
Required Courses	N/A		N/A
Additional minor credits			
Total Minor		0	Credits Transferring to Minor 0
General Electives <i>(List only college courses that transfer)</i>			
University		College	
course prefix, number and name		Cr	course prefix, number and name
Cr			Cr
Elective Courses			
Total General Electives		0	Total General Electives 0
Other			
University		College	
course prefix and name		Cr	course prefix and name
Cr			Cr
Required courses <i>(List equivalent courses not shown above)</i>			
Total Other		0	Total Other 0
Subtract double counted credits, when applicable		0	0
Grand Total Credits in Award		60	60
Other Baccalaureate Requirements <i>(Specify any other baccalaureate program graduation requirements not identified in this form.)</i>			
Evidence Required			
Attach catalog descriptions of both university and college program curriculum and requirements			
All course equivalencies in this agreement are accessible in uSelect			Yes

(formerly CAS).			
Authorization by each college and university.			
These parties have caused this Agreement to be duly executed and agree to be bound thereby (Insert additional rows as needed):			
Faculty Contact Person		Name	Email Phone
University	Paul J. Hustoles, Chair, Theatre and Dance Dept.		Paul.hustoles@mnsu.edu 507-389-2118
College	Sean Byrd, Chair, Theatre Dept.		sean.byrd@normandale.edu 952-487-7431
University Authorization		Name	Signature Date
Chief Academic Officer	Scott R. Olson		 1/20/10
Dean of Humanities	Terrence Flaherty		 1/19/10
Chair, Dept. of Theatre and Dance	Paul Hustoles		 1/18/10
College Authorization		Name	Signature Date
Chief Academic Officer	Julie Guelich		 1/5/10
President	Joseph Opatz		 1/6/10
Dean of Arts and Humanities	Jeff Judge		 1/5/2010
Chair, Dept. of Theatre	Sean Byrd		 1/5/2010
For Office Use Only			
Date Received	Date Posted	Date Reviewed	



Minnesota State University, Mankato Strategic Priorities (2005)

***Goal 1- Promote Diversity**

Objective 1

The University will adopt, for all purposes, a definition of diversity.

Objective 2

The University will establish a permanent Diversity Commission in Fall 2004.

Objective 3

The University will establish workshops and mini-grants for faculty to integrate diversity components into their teaching.

Objective 4

The University will conduct a campus climate survey.

Objective 5

The university will develop and implement a diversity orientation program for all employees.

Objective 6

The University will develop and implement a mentoring program for new faculty.

Objective 7

The University will implement the Diversity Recruitment Plan developed jointly by the Office of Admissions and the Office of Institutional Diversity.

Objective 8

The University will undertake a diversity-focused advertising and marketing campaign in local media.

Objective 9

The University will strengthen the office infrastructure of the LGBT Center to enable its support of diverse populations.

***Source: Strategic Plan, September, 2005**



Minnesota State University, Mankato

Strategic Priorities

*Goal 3 –Undergraduate Excellence

Objective 1: Enhance the Undergraduate Curriculum

Deployment Strategies 1

Increase the amount and quality of student writing in degree programs and in general education.

Deployment Strategies 2

Increase standards in degree programs. Revising the Honors program to have higher standards.

Deployment Strategies 3

Seek accreditations and treat program review as "internal accreditation."

Deployment Strategies 4

Clarify admission, retention and graduation standards within majors, and enforce prerequisites.

Deployment Strategies 5

Encourage all degree programs to develop some form of capstone experience that requires students to demonstrate some level of mastery of knowledge and skills needed by a graduate of the program.

Deployment Strategies 6

Consider adoption of a +/- option to the grading system.

Deployment Strategies 7

In addition to current First Year Experience seminars, develop and implement a "discipline-based" first year seminar.

Deployment Strategies 8

Develop and implement a "Common Reader" program as part of the First Year Experience courses (FYEX).

Deployment Strategies 9

Recommendations that are already being implemented and need to continue:

Deployment Strategies 9a

Develop General Education course "Clusters."

Deployment Strategies 9b

Streamline the General Education course approval process.

Deployment Strategies 9c

Assess General Education courses and program.

Objective 2: Enhance Faculty Academic Quality

Deployment Strategies 10

Encourage and support innovation and creativity in faculty workload.

Deployment Strategies 10a

Allow faculty within a department to reallocate emphases within the five Article 22 criteria for Professional Development Plans.

Deployment Strategies 10b

Allow departments to meet student demand for courses in innovative ways.

Deployment Strategies 11

Revise the method by which faculty instruction is evaluated.

Deployment Strategies 12

Enhance financial and other support for faculty development and faculty assistance.

Deployment Strategies 12a

Continue and enhance support for the Center for Excellence in Teaching and Learning.

Deployment Strategies 12b

As part of the upcoming Capital Campaign, the University should emphasize the creation of an endowment for Faculty Development.

Deployment Strategies 12c

Provide support in the form of paraprofessionals to work with faculty in areas such as lab set-up and maintenance, technical support, and non-teaching components of classroom activities.

Objective 3: Enhance Student Academic Quality

Deployment Strategies 13

Enhance Academic Advising services.

Deployment Strategies 14

Establish an Academic Honor Code on campus with emphasis on education and enforcement issues.

Deployment Strategies 15

Enhance funding and other resources for the Center for Academic Success.

Deployment Strategies 16

Establish more student study areas in academic buildings, student union, residential life and athletics.

Deployment Strategies 17

Consider changes to Library open hours to better serve students on campus and planned expansion of Friday-Saturday classes.

Deployment Strategies 18

Establish an all-student convocation similar to the faculty-staff convocation in order to set a tone of academic excellence at the very beginning of the academic year.

Deployment Strategies 19

Better publicize and promote undergraduate academic honor societies and review requirements for academic honors.

***Source: Strategic Plan, September, 2005 (Objectives, pg. 4) (Deployment Strategies, pg. 9)**

Note: Critical to the mission of the University “To Promote Learning”, undergraduate studies elaborated on the objectives and the deployment strategies to show their accomplishments.