

Executive Summary

The purpose of this report is to better understand data collection methods, practices of certain demographics, and pathways of university-to-college transfer students. In the last decade, significant increases have been reported in college entrants with (some) previous post-secondary experience. University-to-college transfer students reflect approximately 20% of all student transfers in Ontario. This development, among others, is expected to change demographic compositions of students entering Ontario colleges. Understanding these shifts can inform future decisions about articulation and transfer pathways, services within Ontario Colleges, and beyond. It is also expected that understanding the gaps between desired and current data collection methods could improve the quality of the information colleges receive, store, collect, and analyze concerning transfer students.

The data collection process illustrated that information about transfer students entering different Ontario colleges is challenging. This is a result of differences in the structures of student information systems and the quality of some indicators received through OCAS. Therefore, data from the KPI Student Satisfaction Survey was collected to verify administrative data. Overall, the results of the KPI Student Satisfaction and Engagement Survey seemed to be a robust and accessible source of information on transfer students.

University-to-college transfer students account for a significant percentage of the incoming student population in Ontario colleges. According to the research, 13,226 students with university experience started a program at one of the participating colleges over the course of three academic years. After analyzing the KPI data, 1 in 4 students (23.3%) enrolled at the colleges, indicated they had (some) university experience as their highest level of completed education. These transfer students tend to be older, are typically female, and often transfer from universities in proximity to the college; where they were enrolled for longer periods of time. Often transfer students finished their degrees while they were starting a college program (60% in KPI data; and 56% in administrative data), after excluding graduate certificate students, almost half of the transfer students finished their degrees. This also results in a significant number of credits being transferred to the college; 28% into Algonquin College and 39% to Seneca College. Excluding graduate certificates, this percentage increases significantly with 7 and 10 percentage points respectively. Transfer students most often move into Diploma or Graduate Certificate credentials and are most interested in the Business program cluster.