

Degree Completion, Time to Degree and Credit Accumulation: The Case of California Transfer Students

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ACCOUNTABILITY & TRANSPARENCY

- Degree completion
- Time to degree
- Credit accumulation at degree completion
- Efficient navigation through the system.

THE CASE FOR TRANSPARENCY IN THE TRANSFER PATHWAY

- Serves a large majority of first generation college students who cannot draw on experience with the higher education system.
- An economical alternative to a college degree if the pathway is transparent.
- California can provide access to more students while serving the nation's highest volume transfer pathway.

TRANSFER PATHWAY AND TRANSPARENCY



TRANSFER PATHWAY REFORM (CA)

- SB 1440 (The Student Transfer Achievement Reform Act) was enacted to simplify the transfer pathway in California.
- Changes required at the community colleges and the CSUs.
- Required CSUs to provide benchmark data before SB 1440 implementation.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

What are the baseline statistics for degree completion, time to degree and credit accumulation for transfer students?

What are the effects of institutional and student factors on:

2. degree completion?
3. time to degree?
4. credit accumulation?

METHOD

1. Quantitative, non-experimental approach
2. Focus on transfer students at one four-year institution with multiple local feeders.
3. Focus on the most recent cohort whose six year graduation mark was in Summer 2011.
4. Used application, enrollment and degree data already collected for state-mandated reporting requirements.
5. Used descriptive statistics for Question 1 and logistic regression for questions 2- 4.

CONCEPTUAL MODEL

Institutional factors

Community
College

Four-year
Major

Student factors

Demo-
graphics

Academic
achievement

Enrollment
behavior

Major
related

Degree completion; Time to degree;
Credit accumulation at degree completion

INDEPENDENT VARIABLES (INSTITUTIONAL)

Community College Characteristics:

Size

Percentage underrepresented minorities

Student progress and achievement rate

Percent transfer to UC vs. CSU

Four-year college discipline:

Business / STEM /

All other disciplines

INDEPENDENT VARIABLES (STUDENT)

Demographics

Age; gender; race/ethnicity;
International student.

Academic achievement

Transfer GPA; CSU 2nd term GPA; Percent terms with
CSU GPA < 2.0; Course repetition; Earned all units
attempted

INDEPENDENT VARIABLES (STUDENT)

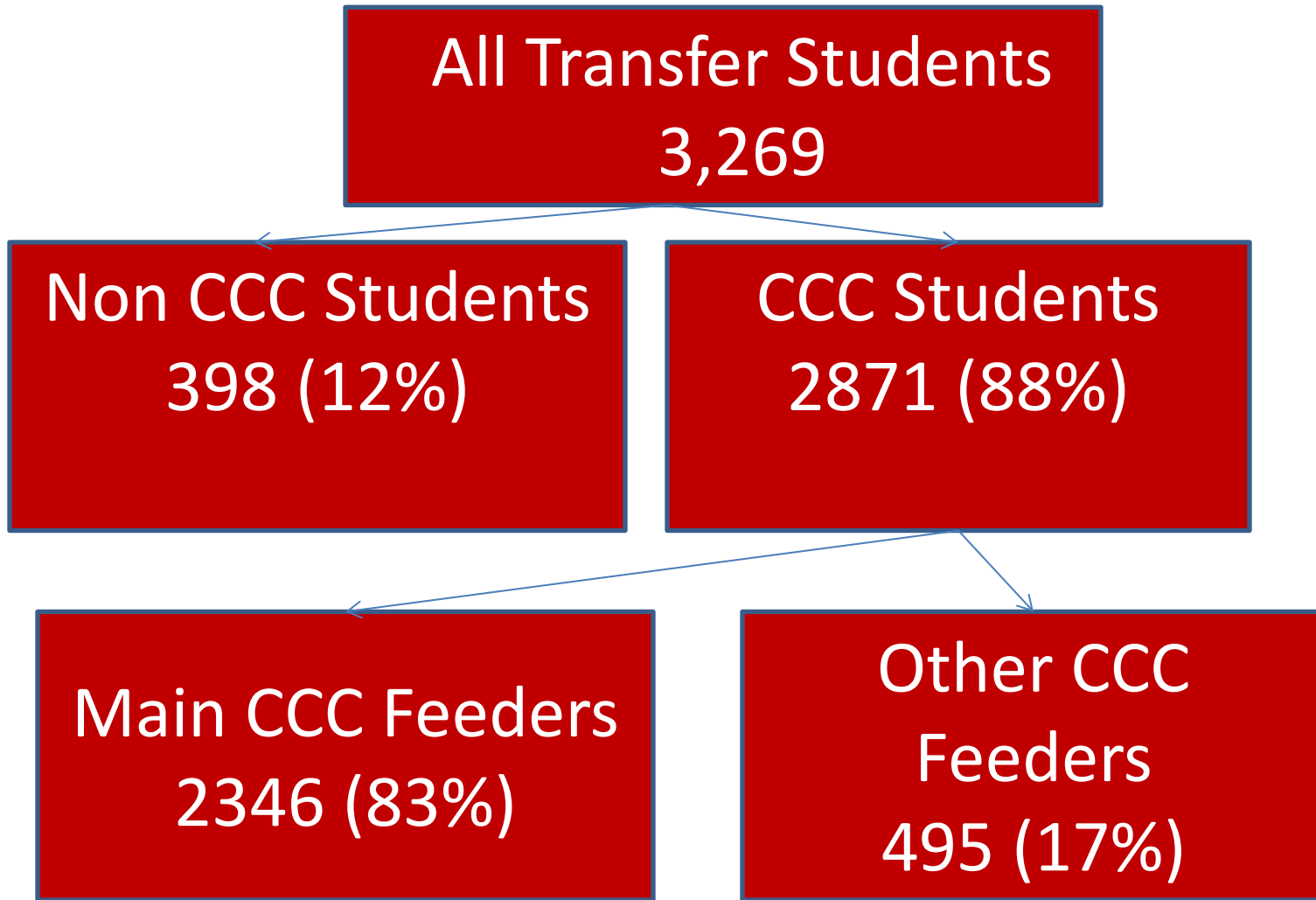
Enrollment behaviors

Full time vs. part time; Continuous enrollment;
Winter/ Summer session attendance

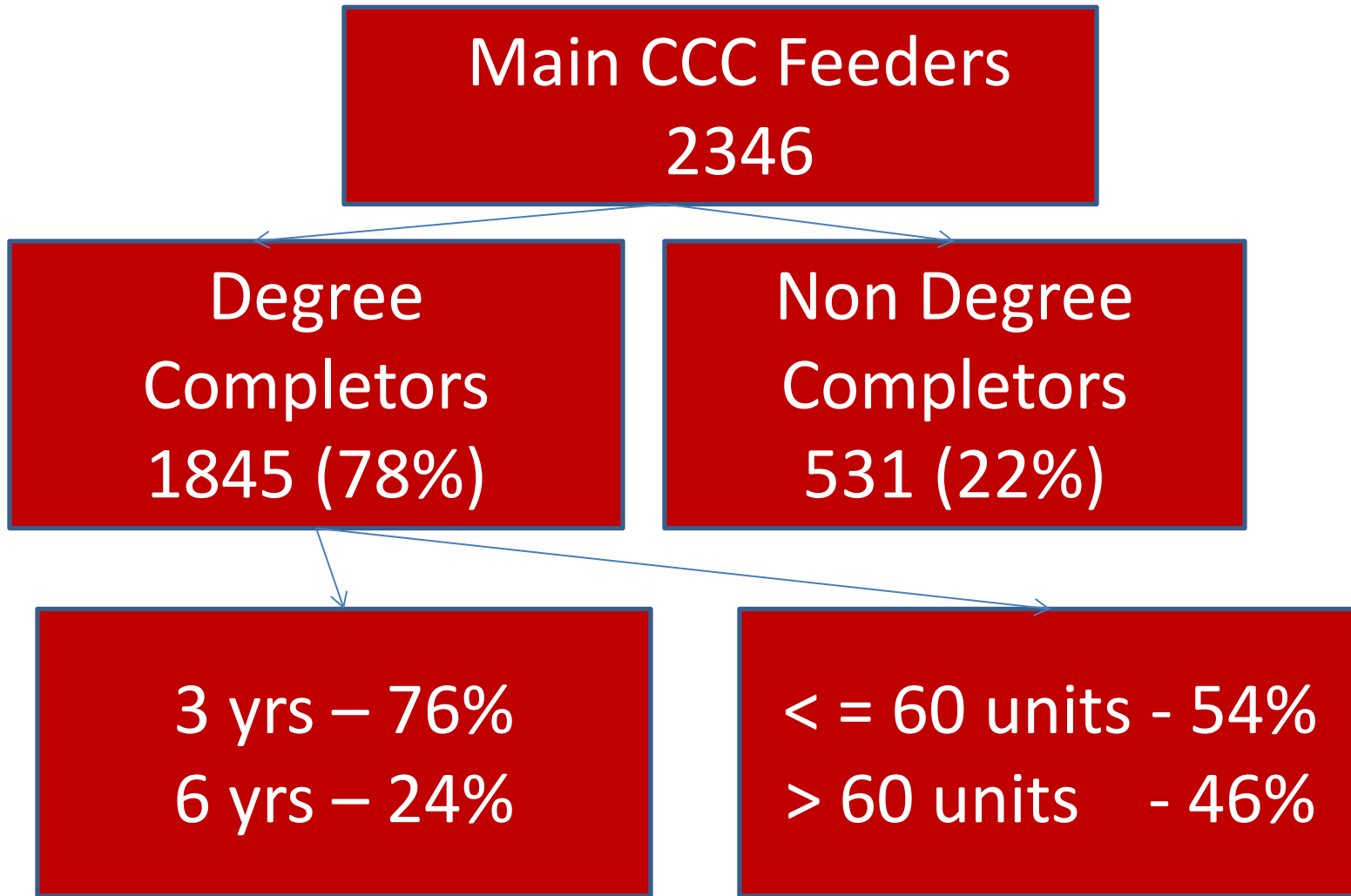
Major related variables

Major change; Term of change; Number of times
major changed; Extent of major change (within
or out of discipline); double majors; major with
minor

RESULTS - 1

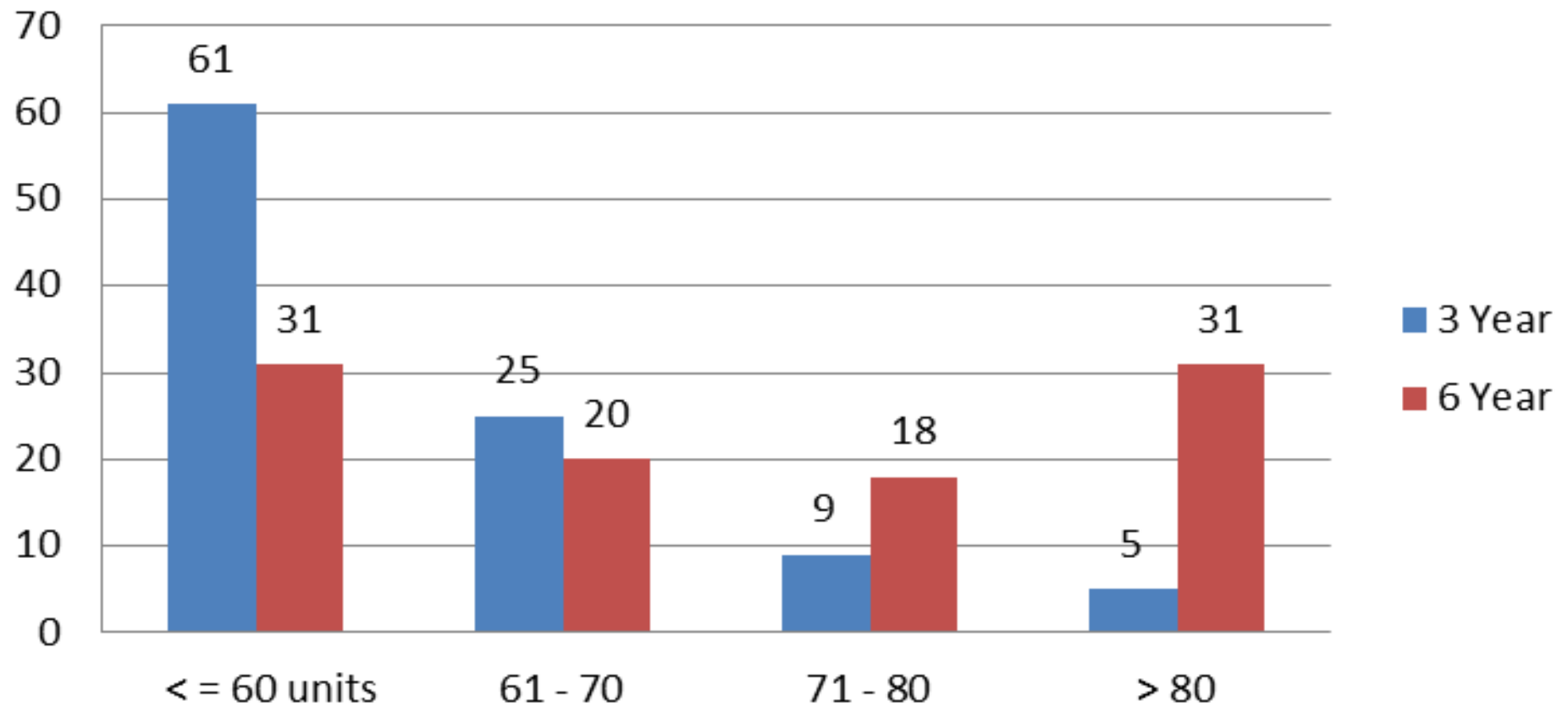


RESULTS - 2



RESULTS - 3

Transfer Student Credit Accumulation at Four Year Institution



RESULTS - 4

Degree completion in six years or less:

- Met GPA threshold every semester of enrollment
- Summer / Winter session attendance
- CSU GPA 2nd term
- Major change between disciplines

RESULTS - 5

Time to degree : Degree completion within three years

- Full time enrollment every semester
- No change of major
- If major was changed, it was an early change, i.e. by the second or third semester of attendance.

RESULTS - 6

Credit accumulation over 60 units:

- STEM graduates
- Changes between departments
- Double major
- Major with minor

OBSTACLES : DATA COLLECTION AND ANALYSIS

- Accountability studies are usually within the CCCs and the CSUs; the transfer pathway spans across the CCCs and CSUs.
- 25% of the students did not provide data on parental education
- Financial aid data available only for students who used it; the remaining could have financial need
- No data on the percentage of time spent working.

TRANSFER PATHWAY AND TRANSPARENCY

- A student cannot easily answer the question of how many courses / units to degree completion until the graduation check.
- The more the choices of majors, the more the complexity of planning.
- Resources for advisement/counseling have not increased commensurate with enrollment increases.

TRANSFER PATHWAY AND TRANSPARENCY

Potential Solutions:

- “Anytime, Anywhere” Electronic advisement
- Curtail choices?
- Pre-packaged pathways by discipline (TMCs)
- Offer GE with themes that link various disciplines.

TAKEAWAYS

- Credit accumulation at the CSU
- High credits most likely accumulated by high achievers.
- Major change may not an obstacle
- Low transfer rate CCC students also succeed
- No matter how much choice, top 10% majors account for 80% of degrees

ACCOUNTABILITY AND TRANSPARENCY

The Secretary of Education at the Time
Summit on Higher Education 2013:

“How many students at an institution graduate at a reasonable cost without a lot of debt and get a job in the field they choose?”

ACCOUNTABILITY AND TRANSPARENCY



"I would suggest that you get a good education, find a job that pays well, and be happy. I wish I could be more specific."