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A recent issue of *Change* magazine, Volume 36, Number 6, called **Community Colleges in a PERFECT STORM** focuses on the important roles community colleges play in higher education. One article *Bridges or Barriers? Public Policy and the Community College Transfer Function* by Katherine Boswell is of particular interest (pgs. 22-29). Some of the facts Boswell mentions that seem to have direct bearing on William Paterson are:

- Two-year colleges typically enroll students of color, new immigrants, older returning students, part-timers, and commuting students. Community colleges will continue to be the point of entry for students of color to a baccalaureate education (pg. 24, 25)
- Eighty-five percent of community college students are employed and 54 percent are full-time employees (pg. 24)
- Traditional aged students are also finding their way to community colleges. (pg. 24) Almost half of the enrollment in public two-year colleges is now made up of 18-24 year olds
- Community college enrollments will soon exceed the number of students attending four-year public colleges and universities
- About 26 percent of students who start their college careers at community colleges transfer to finish at four-year colleges and over 70 percent of those who do transfer earn a bachelor's degree (pg. 25)
- Dramatic shifts in the American economy continue. In the past, high-paying industrial jobs provided entrance to the middle class. Today's "knowledge jobs" require a mix of at least some college and technical skills. "These structural shifts in the American economy make post secondary education necessary for anyone who wants to compete in and command a living wage in today's labor market." (pg. 24)
- While education certainly matters to the individuals involved, it also has significant benefits to the community in the form of an increased tax base, a healthier populace, lower crime rates, a more flexible work force, increased civic participation, as well as many others benefits.
- "The transfer function between community colleges and baccalaureate institutions is one of the most important state policy issues in higher education because its success (or failure) is central to many dimensions of higher education performance, including access, equity, affordability, cost effectiveness, degree productivity, and quality. States that have strong 2/4 transfer performance will have lower state appropriations per degree. They will also do a better job of translating access into success and of reducing the achievement disparities that prevent low-income and minority students from obtaining the baccalaureate degree." (Jane Wellman, pg. 26)

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Therefore, attracting transfer students and helping them successfully complete a degree at William Paterson helps further our own University mission as well as our commitment to students succeeding in the larger community.

This fall, students transferring from other colleges into William Paterson made up an important component of the Fall 2004 entering class; a bit more than a third of new students were transfers (FB table 1.2). (Tables preceded by FB are found in the Fall 2004 University Fact Book, on line at:

<http://ww2.wpunj.edu/ira/FACTBOOKS/FactBook04/FB04DEFAULT.htm>.

Over the past five years the transfer applicant pool (complete and incomplete applications) grew by 23.0 percent, suggesting that University programs are known among transferring institutions. The next steps in the admission process, acceptances and enrollments, have declined a bit each year for the past four years (FB table 1.10). Even with this decline, 872 full- and part-time students, or a third of this fall's entering class were transfers (FB figure 1.2). Transfer students, therefore, play an important role in the University's enrollment efforts. For some academic majors, such as community health, environmental science, history, Spanish, political science, psychology, geography and to a lesser degree art, sociology, biology and English, transfer students are a main source for new enrollments to the major (see table below).

%, FT FT First Year and FT FT Transfer Students of Majors, Fall 2004			
Major	N of Majors	% FT FT First Yr	% FT FT Transfers
Art	410	6.1	7.8
Communication	984	13.9	9.7
Music	235	15.7	7.7
Accounting	314	12.1	8.9
Business Administration	1,038	12.6	8.6
AACS	21	0.0	0.0
Anthropology	46	10.0	8.7
English	550	7.1	8.9
French & Franco. Studies	13	7.7	0.0
History	354	8.8	11.9
Latin American Studies	2	0.0	50.0
Philosophy	25	8.0	0.0
Political Science	153	7.2	12.4
Psychology	812	9.2	11.5
Sociology	788	7.0	8.8
Spanish	97	4.1	7.2
Women's Studies	35	0.0	0.0
Biology/Biotechnology	321	13.4	14.0
Chemistry	20	25.0	20.0
Community Health	88	4.5	12.5
Computer Science	205	16.6	5.4
Environmental Science	21	14.3	23.8
Geography	22	0.0	4.5
Mathematics	191	13.1	9.4
Nursing	453	15.0	10.4
Physical Education	411	12.2	12.2

A Demographic Portrait of William Paterson's Transfer Students

A quick review of Fall 2004 fact book tables for transfer students shows:

- 58.0 percent are female (FB table 1.11)
- 36.0 percent identify themselves as minority students: 15.0 percent Hispanic, 14.0 African American, 7.0 Asian, 0.3 Native American (FB table 1.11)
- About 60.0 percent come from Passaic, Bergen and Morris counties
- 21.0 percent of first time transfers live on campus
- The five majors receiving the most transfers are: communication (95), psychology (93), business administration (89), sociology (69) and physical education (50) (FB table 1.12)
- The top NJ community feeder colleges are: Bergen Community College, Morris County Community College and Passaic County Community College
- 2.0 percent of transfers were accepted with no transfer credits, 9.0 percent with 1-14 credits, 19.0 percent with 15-29, 16.0 percent with 30-44, 19.0 percent with 45-59 credits and 35.0 percent with 60 or more credits (FB table 1.13)
- Entering GPAs vary by the major the transfer student is accepted into (see table below)

Entering Fall 2004 Transfer Students GPA by Majors, (3 or more students)		
Major	N of Transfers	GPA
Art	33	2.8
Communication	94	2.6
Music	5	3.1
Music(jazz)	7	3.5
MSEA	3	2.6
Accounting	28	2.8
Business Administration	88	2.7
Anthropology	4	2.1
English	48	2.9
History	43	2.8
Political Science	19	2.7
Psychology	94	2.7
Sociology	66	2.7
Spanish	7	3.0
Biology	41	2.6
Biotechnology	5	3.0
<i>Continued</i>		

Major	N of Transfers	GPA
Chemistry	3	2.8
Community Health	12	2.9
Computer Science	11	2.7
Environmental Science	3	2.3
Mathematics	19	2.8
Nursing	46	3.1
Physical Education	51	2.6
Sped	24	3.3
Undeclared	110	2.4
ALL	872	2.7

How Do Transfer Students Fare at William Paterson?

One of the traditional ways of looking at student success is by reviewing graduation and retention rates. Transfer students are tracked using the same cohort method utilized in tracking first time first year students. All those who start in a given semester are followed as a group over a specified time period. Typically, transfers are defined as those entering with 30 or more earned credits from another institution and are tracked for five years or 150% of the time needed to graduate.

Typically, retention and graduation rates for transfer students are expected to be higher than those of first-time students since transfer students bring with them successful post-secondary experiences and a more realistic understanding of the requirements of academia.

Retention and Graduation Rates and Graduating GPA's of William Paterson Transfer Students by Various Characteristics

Fact book tables 4.12 and 4.13 and new tables 4.14 - 4.16, report transfer student retention and graduation rates. Approximately three quarters of the entering transfer student cohorts return for a second year (one year re-enrolled percentages). About 10.0 percent graduate at the end of their second year and approximately 55.0 percent return for a third year. Around a third of the cohorts graduate in three years and by the fourth year, close to half have graduated after entering William Paterson and approximately 58.0 percent graduate after five years (six-year graduation rates are only slightly higher at 60.0 percent) (FB 4.12).

Transfer student graduation rates follow the same pattern as first time first year cohorts with respect to gender. Female transfer student five year graduation rates for the 1997, 1998, and 1999 cohorts are 62.1, 59.9, and 64.1 percents, respectively. Comparable male rates are 52.5, 52.3, and 49.1 percents (FB table 4.15).

The following table summarizes graduation rates for various racial/ethnic groups (FB 4.14). It is a bit early to define something as a trend with only three years of data but it seems (unlike first time full time student graduation rates) there is less variation among graduation rates for the various racial/ethnic groups (FB 4.14). Except for one group, five year graduation rates for the Fall 1999 cohort ranged from 50.0 to 58.5 percent (Asian students were the exception with 70.0 percent).

Transfer Student Five Year Graduation Rates by Race/Ethnicity			
Race/Ethnicity	Five Year Graduation Rates		
	1997	1998	1999
African American	49.2	56.9	54.9
Asian	64.3	50.0	70.0
Latino/a	44.0	50.8	51.2
Native American	--	100.0	50.0
White	60.8	58.3	58.5
Other/Unknown	50.0	34.8	55.0
ALL	57.7	56.3	57.4

The number of accepted transfer credits with which a student enters is also an important explanatory factor for variations in graduation rates. Transfer students entering with 32 or fewer accepted transfer credits are at a disadvantage compared to those who enter with 33 or more credits (FB table 4.13). Slightly more than 4 out of 10 transfers entering with 0-32 accepted credits graduate in five years. (These graduation rates are lower than the overall six year graduation rates for first time full time first year students). But about 6 out of 10 graduate when they enter with 33-59 credits and almost 7 out of 10 graduate when they enter with 60 or more credits.

With recent renewed interest in the transition of NJ public community college students to NJ public baccalaureate institutions, tables 4.16 and 4.17 were added to the fact book. Slightly over 70.0 percent of William Paterson's full time transfer students come from NJ public community colleges. The new tables track retention and graduation rates for cohorts transferring from NJ public two- year colleges to William Paterson. The following table compares their rates to those of transfer students from other colleges and universities that serve as feeder institutions.

% , Retention and Graduation Rates for Full Time Transfer Students from NJ Public Community College and from Other Colleges, Fall 1997-1999											
Year	N	% Graduated or Re-enrolled After:									
		One Year		Two Years		Three Years		Four Years		Five Years	
		Grad	Reenroll	Grad	Reenroll	Grad	Reenroll	Grad	Reenroll	Grad	Reenroll
1997											
NJ CC Transfers	386	0.0	78.2	12.7	56.0	39.4	26.7	54.7	10.4	60.1	4.9
Other Transfers	267	0.0	73.6	4.8	61.0	27.1	34.2	43.1	16.7	54.6	7.1
1998											
NJ CC Transfers	440	0.5	75.2	9.3	54.8	33.4	40.2	48.4	11.4	54.3	5.0
Other Transfers	293	0.3	79.9	9.9	60.1	34.8	32.4	55.3	9.2	59.7	5.1
1999											
NJ CC Transfers	420	0.2	77.6	14.3	53.3	37.6	26.9	55.0	9.0	59.8	2.9
Other Transfers	299	0.3	74.9	8.7	55.2	27.1	33.8	45.5	16.1	54.2	7.0

It seems that five-year graduation rates for transfer students from NJ public two-year colleges tend to be a bit higher than the rates for full time transfer students from other transfer institutions. For the 1999 William Paterson transfer cohort, the most recent one to complete five years, 54.2 percent of all

full time transfer students graduated in five years and 59.8 of all full time two year NJ public community college students did so.

Finally, GPAs also vary by the number of accepted transfer credits students bring with them. Those who enter with 12 or fewer transfer credits have graduating GPA's of 2.2, those who brought in 13-24 had 2.5, 25-32 had 2.7, those with 33-59 earned transfer credits have 2.7, and those who had 60 or more accepted credits have an overall GPA of 2.9 at the time of graduation.

Transfer Students in a Broader Context: Findings from the Consortium for Student Retention Data Exchange (CSRDE)

The importance of transfer students to baccalaureate granting institutions is certainly acknowledged but comparative data is difficult to find. One of the best sources for reliable information is the data from the Center for Institutional Data Exchange and Analysis. The Center sponsors the Consortium for Student Retention Data Exchange (CSRDE). The Center has over 450 members; William Paterson has been a long time member of the Consortium.

Noted for its work on graduation and retention of first time first year students, the Center recently began collecting transfer cohort data from a subset of its member institutions. Not all members have significant numbers of transfer students or they may not track transfers in the same way CSRDE asked for the information so not all members are participating in the transfer student study. To date, 100 members contribute community college data. The majority, 93.0 percent, of the responding participants are publicly controlled institutions and over half, 52.0 percent, are classified as Master's (following the Carnegie Classification). Thus, for these characteristics, the largest group of colleges in the study is similar to William Paterson.

The Center published its first report based on the collected transfer information, ***2003-04 CSRDE Community College Transfer Report: The Retention and Graduation Rates of 1996-2002 Community College Transfer Cohorts in 100 Colleges and Universities***, last September 2004. For the CSRDE study transfers are defined as students who attended either a community college or 2-year institution and seek a degree at a 4-year college as either a full or part timer and entered the reporting institution in the fall and transferred in at least 30 semester hours. This definition is a bit narrower than the transfer population described in the WP fact book. CSRDE reports aggregated rates of the 1996-2002 cohorts. Reporting information this way smoothes any yearly anomalies. William Paterson rates are usually 1998 cohort information. Please note members of CSRDE share the data only among participating institutions and treat the information as confidential. If reports are posted to the web or shared outside the participating institutions they can not be identifiable from the report.

Overall Findings from the CSRDE Report's Executive Summary

- More than half, 57.0 percent, of community college transfer students transferring in with a minimum of 30 credit hours graduated within four years after their first enrollment in the four-year college. Compared to freshmen one would expect to see a higher percentage graduating within four years since transfer students bring with them successful post-secondary experiences and a more advanced academic status.
- Retention for first-year and second-year community college transfers is an issue of concern. "Across all cohorts from 1996-2002, 21.0 percent of all community college transfers failed to enroll in the fall of the second year. An additional 26.0 percent did not enroll in the fall of the

third year.” At the end of the sixth year 7.0 percent of those who previously left had returned and completed their degrees.

- Native Americans and Hispanics made up a larger proportion of the community college cohort than of the freshman cohorts. The opposite is true for African Americans.
- Retention and graduation rates were consistently lower for African Americans and Native Americans. First year retention rates for African Americans were 74.0 percent, Native Americans, 73.0 percent, Asians, 82.0 percent and whites 79.0 percent. Six year graduation rates over all cohorts in the study were 50.0 percent for African Americans, 62.0 percent for Hispanics, 55.0 percent for Native Americans, 62.0 percent for Asians and 65.0 percent for whites.
- More women are community college transfers and graduation rates are consistently higher for women; 66.0 percent compared to 60.0 percent for men.
- Proportionately more underrepresented students attended the less selective institutions in the study. Selectivity was based on freshmen admission SAT scores.
- From 1996 to 2002 the first year retention rates showed slow continuous improvement for all race and gender subgroups except for Native American students.
- Community college transfers attending highly selective institutions had higher six year graduation rates.
- Community college transfers attending institutions with relatively low part-time undergraduate enrollments graduates within six years at higher rates.

How Does William Paterson Compare to Similar Baccalaureate Institutions?

The following table places William Paterson in the context of CSRDE institutions based on several key institutional characteristics such as size, selectivity, Carnegie classification and the percent of part time students. Using CSRDE’s definition, William Paterson is a moderately selective institution (selectivity is based on the combined SAT scores of first time first year students). William Paterson’s four, five and six year graduation rates for transfer students entering with at least 33 credits are a bit higher than all CSRDE institutions and those with similar institutional characteristics.

Transfer Student Graduation Rates by Various Institutional Characteristics				
Institutional Characteristics	N	%, Graduation Rates		
		Four Year (1996-99)	Five Year (1996-98)	Six Year (1996-97)
Moderately Selective (CSAT 990-1044)	33	54.6	59.8	62.2
Size 5,000-17,999	50	54.5	58.8	60.6
% Part-Time Undergraduate, Above 20%	35	51.4	56.0	58.0
Carnegie Classification Master's	56	56.9	61.5	63.4
All CSRDE Institutions	100	56.6	61.3	63.2
William Paterson (33+ credits, 1998 cohort)	--	60.6	64.7	66.2
Source: C-IDEA The University of Oklahoma, 2003-04 CSRDE CC Transfer Retention/Graduation Report, pg 3; William Paterson Institutional Research & Assessment Office				

The following table compares retention and graduation rates for the 33 moderately selective colleges and William Paterson for certain student and institutional characteristics. While there are small differences between William Paterson's rates and the other moderately selective institutions, two stand out. Five year graduation rates for William Paterson male transfer students are considerably lower than for similar moderately selective institutions in the CSRDE study; 49.1 vs. 56.1 percent, respectively. Five year graduation rates for William Paterson African American transfer students is considerably higher, 54.9 percent, than for those graduating from CSRDE moderately selective institutions, 45.3 percent.

Transfer Student Retention/Graduation Rates & Selected Characteristics for 33 Moderately Selective Institutions (SAT composite 990-1044)							
Student & Institutional Characteristics	% of Cohorts	Continuation Rates		Graduation Rates			
		To 2nd Yr	To 3rd Yr	3 Yr	4 Yr	5 Yr	6 Yr
CSRDE							
Male	44.0	78.4	57.6	36.7	50.3	56.1	58.5
Female	56.0	78.7	53.7	44.9	57.9	62.6	65.1
African American	4.5	72.4	51.3	27.8	40.1	45.3	48.3
Asian	10.6	84.1	64.1	36.8	50.8	56.6	59.3
Hispanic	9.2	80.5	57.7	39.0	51.6	56.9	59.6
Native American	0.9	73.3	51.1	34.5	45.8	49.3	57.1
White	62.4	77.4	54.2	42.4	56.0	61.2	63.5
Nonresident Aliens	4.4	86.2	58.5	56.2	68.8	73.0	74.0
WILLIAM PATERSON (1998 cohort)							
Male	43.8	78.2	55.8	31.2	45.5	52.3	54.8
Female	56.2	76.2	57.7	36.3	55.7	59.9	62.1
African American	8.9	76.9	64.6	33.8	50.8	56.9	60.0
Asian	4.1	80.0	53.3	33.3	43.3	50.0	50.0
Hispanic	8.5	71.4	50.8	27.9	44.3	50.8	55.6
Native American	0.1	100.0	0.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
White	75.3	78.2	58.2	34.8	53.1	58.3	60.6
Other/Unknown	3.1	60.9	26.1	30.4	34.8	34.8	34.8
% PT UNDERGRAD							
20+ CSRDE	26.9	73.7	50.0	39.7	51.5	57.0	59.7
SIZE 5,000-17,000 CSRDE	45.8	75.6	52.0	42.5	54.6	59.3	61.6
WILLIAM PATERSON	--	77.1	56.8	34.0	51.2	56.6	58.9
Source: C-IDEA The University of Oklahoma, 2003-04 CSRDE CC Transfer Retention/Graduation Report, pg 7; William Paterson Institutional Research & Assessment Office							

Summary and Suggestions

Transfer students, especially those from two-year colleges, play an important role in the higher education arena. They also are an important part of William Paterson's enrollment profile. Each semester at least a third of new students are transfers and the majority of them come from NJ two year public community colleges. The increase in transfer applications is encouraging and seems to suggest that the undergraduate admissions office is getting the word out to transfer institutions about our programs. Of concern are the declining transfer acceptances and enrollments over the past four years. While our programs are known and initially attractive there seems to be something at work that is discouraging students from completing applications and accepting offers of admissions. Some further investigation of this seems to be in order. A broader issue is what role do we want transfers to play in WP's enrollment profile; should we and can we increase the number of transfers as part of our enrollment mix?

Graduation rates for transfer students vary by student demographic characteristics as well as external or social characteristics. Graduation is more difficult for males and for those who begin William Paterson with fewer than two semesters of full time college level work. Are there interventions we can develop for these two groups? A first step has already been taken; transfer students entering with 24 or fewer credits are assigned to the office of the First Year Experience for monitoring. Without an improvement in this particular group's performance the University's overall transfer graduation rate does not reflect the good work we are actually doing with our transfer population. On a positive note we seem to be above average for graduating African American transfer students; a group that traditionally is difficult to get through to graduation.

Finally, the Student Success Plan does set a benchmark of a 3.0 GPA for transfers but are there additional meaningful indicators of success we should be tracking for transfers? Your suggestions for further analysis are welcome; please send them to zeffj@wpunj.edu.