

THE COST OF RECRUITING AND ADMITTING TRANSFER STUDENTS

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Research question

- What are the costs that Ontario universities and colleges experience in recruiting, admitting and integrating transfer students?
- How do these compare with the costs of recruiting, admitting and integrating students directly from secondary school?

Definitions

- Transfer student
 - Any direction: C-U, U-C, C-C, U-U
 - Ontario public institutions only
 - The student may or may not have completed a prior credential
- Recruitment
 - identifying and attracting potential students
- Admissions
 - processing the application, determining whether the student should be offered admission, and making the offer of admission
- Integration
 - conversion, registration, orientation and early retention

Methodology

- Survey of 9 institutions: quantitative data
- Focus groups for qualitative data

	Universities	Colleges
Large Toronto	Ryerson	Seneca
Large non-Toronto	Western	
Medium-sized	University of Ontario Institute of Technology Windsor	Niagara
Northern	Laurentian	Canadore Confederation
<i>n</i> =	20,455 applicants 4,259 registrants	7,772 applicants 3,103 registrants

**Operating expenditure *per applicant* on
transfer students and direct-entry students
(dollars)**

	Transfer students	Direct- entry students	Difference	
Recruitment	53	57	-4	-7%
Admissions	112	41	71	172%
Integration	34	18	16	89%
Total	199	116	83	72%

UNIVERSITIES ONLY: Operating expenditure *per applicant* on transfer students and direct-entry students (dollars)

	Transfer students	Direct-entry students	Difference	
Recruitment	73	91	-18	-19%
Admissions	141	31	110	356%
Integration	39	18	20	111%
Total	253	141	113	80%

HIGHER for transfer students at 4 universities (of 5)

COLLEGES ONLY: Operating expenditure *per applicant* on transfer students and direct-entry students (dollars)

	Transfer students	Direct-entry students	Difference	
Recruitment	42	106	-65	-61%
Admissions	175	162	13	8%
Integration	36	170	-135	-79%
Total	252	439	-186	-42%

LOWER for transfer students at 3 colleges (of 4)

Operating expenditure *per registrant* on transfer students and direct-entry students (dollars)

	Transfer students	Direct- entry students	Difference	
Recruitment	203	315	-112	-35%
Admissions	431	230	202	88%
Integration	129	99	30	30%
Total	764	644	120	19%

UNIVERSITIES ONLY: Operating expenditure *per registrant* on transfer students and direct-entry students (dollars)

	Transfer students	Direct-entry students	Difference	
Recruitment	328	597	-269	-45%
Admissions	619	213	406	191%
Integration	183	99	84	84%
Total	1,129	908	221	24%

HIGHER for transfer students at 4 universities (of 5)

COLLEGES ONLY: Operating expenditure *per registrant* on transfer students and direct-entry students (dollars)

	Transfer students	Direct-entry students	Difference	
Recruitment	97	106	-9	-9%
Admissions	808	452	355	79%
Integration	75	459	-383	-84%
Total	980	1,017	-37	-4%

LOWER for transfer students at 3 colleges (of 4)

Are there economies of scale in recruitment, admissions and integration?

- Based on limited data, yes
- Lack of economies of scale affects costs for transfer students more than it affects costs for direct-entry students
 - Because the transfer pool is smaller

Observations: 1

- Total expenditure per applicant for transfer students is higher than for direct-entry students.
 - But not at every institution
 - More true of the universities surveyed than the colleges

Observations: 2

- The potential revenue from transfer students is lower than for direct-entry students
- This means the potential “return” on investments in recruitment, admissions and integration is lower for transfer students than direct-entry

Observations: 3

- The principal driver of higher expenditures per applicant for transfer students is the higher expenditure on admissions activities.
 - Admissions costs per applicant were higher for transfer students at all 5 universities and 2 of 4 colleges
 - Manual processing, many touch points
 - Pathways reduce this cost for students who follow the pathway – but many don't
- Expenditure on recruitment is not higher for transfer students (per applicant)
 - Difficulty in designing a recruitment campaign targeted at transfer students
- Expenditure on integration is higher at universities but lower at colleges (per registrant)

Observations: 4

- Expenditures for transfer students are probably under-reported in this survey.
 - Data systems not designed to answer our questions
 - Many transfer students participate in recruitment and integration intended for direct-entry students
 - Many admissions costs for transfer students are slices of time

Observations: 5

- Current expenditures may not be optimal expenditures.
 - Lack of information about current spending on each target group
 - Budget processes are historically driven
 - Some participants said that their expenditures on transfer students were likely to become more strategic in the near future

Areas for further research

- Impacts of differences in institutional type
 - For example, some colleges devote considerable resources to recruiting for college graduate certificates (out-of-scope for this project)
- Impacts of differences in institutional strategies and processes
- Student perspectives
 - Quality of experience

Conclusions

- It really does cost more to recruit, admit and integrate a transfer applicant than to do the same for a direct-entry applicant
- The potential revenue from an incoming transfer student is lower
- This incentive structure suggests the need for a continuing role for government in financially supporting universities and colleges in recruiting, admitting and integrating transfer students

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