Research Spotlight

2364 - Destination, Integration, and Navigation: How Students Engage in Transfer Mobility in North Carolina

Matriculation Trends and Issues, Credits and Degree Pathways

How do students engage in transfer mobility? We will share findings from our comprehensive North Carolina transfer research project to highlight:;a) transfer destinations;;b) how sense of belonging and supports are related to students' intersecting identities, socio-academic integration, transfer capital, and institutional transfer culture;;c) and how students navigate pre- and post-transfer experiences. Our research captures enrollment trends and student voices to inform local and national conversations on transfer student engagement and success.

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Project Overview

- Foundational work on transfer student destinations

- Exploration of the relationships between student engagement in the community college, as measured by the Community College Survey of Student Engagement (CCSSE) and transfer

- Large-scale qualitative study to capture student voices pre- and post-transfer regarding (1) the transfer process, (2) engagement, and (3) transfer student identities
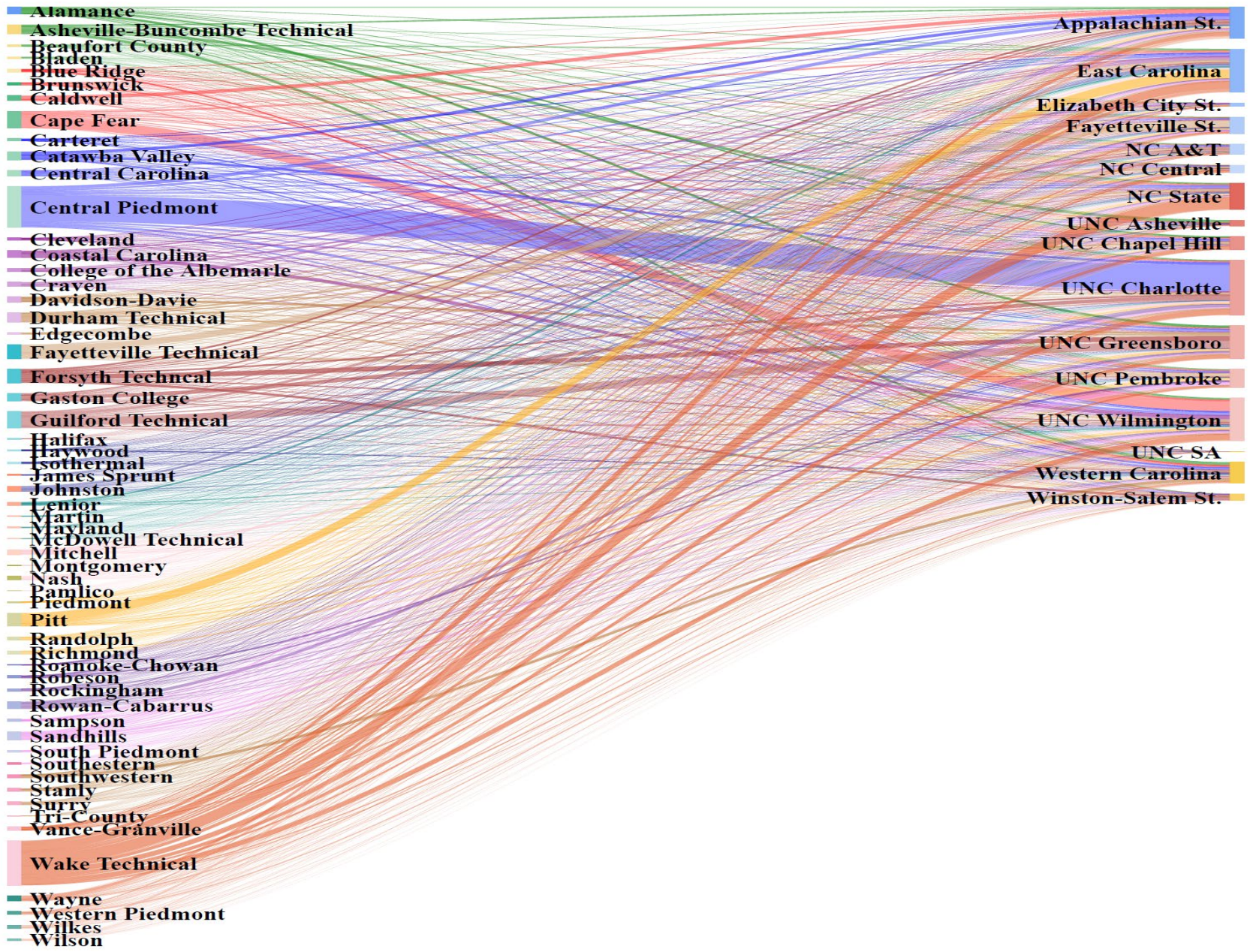
Guiding Questions

- Is community college to university transfer a local process?

- What is a transfer credential?

- How do students experience and navigate vertical transfer?

Transfer Destinations

Vertical Transfer Enrollment Patterns (NCCCS to UNC)

Percent of CC Vertical Transfer Students Following Primary Feeder Pattern (NCCCS to UNC)

43.8%	42.9%	43.4%	41.3%	39.1
Fall 2017	Fall 2018	Fall 2019	Fall 2020	Fall 2021
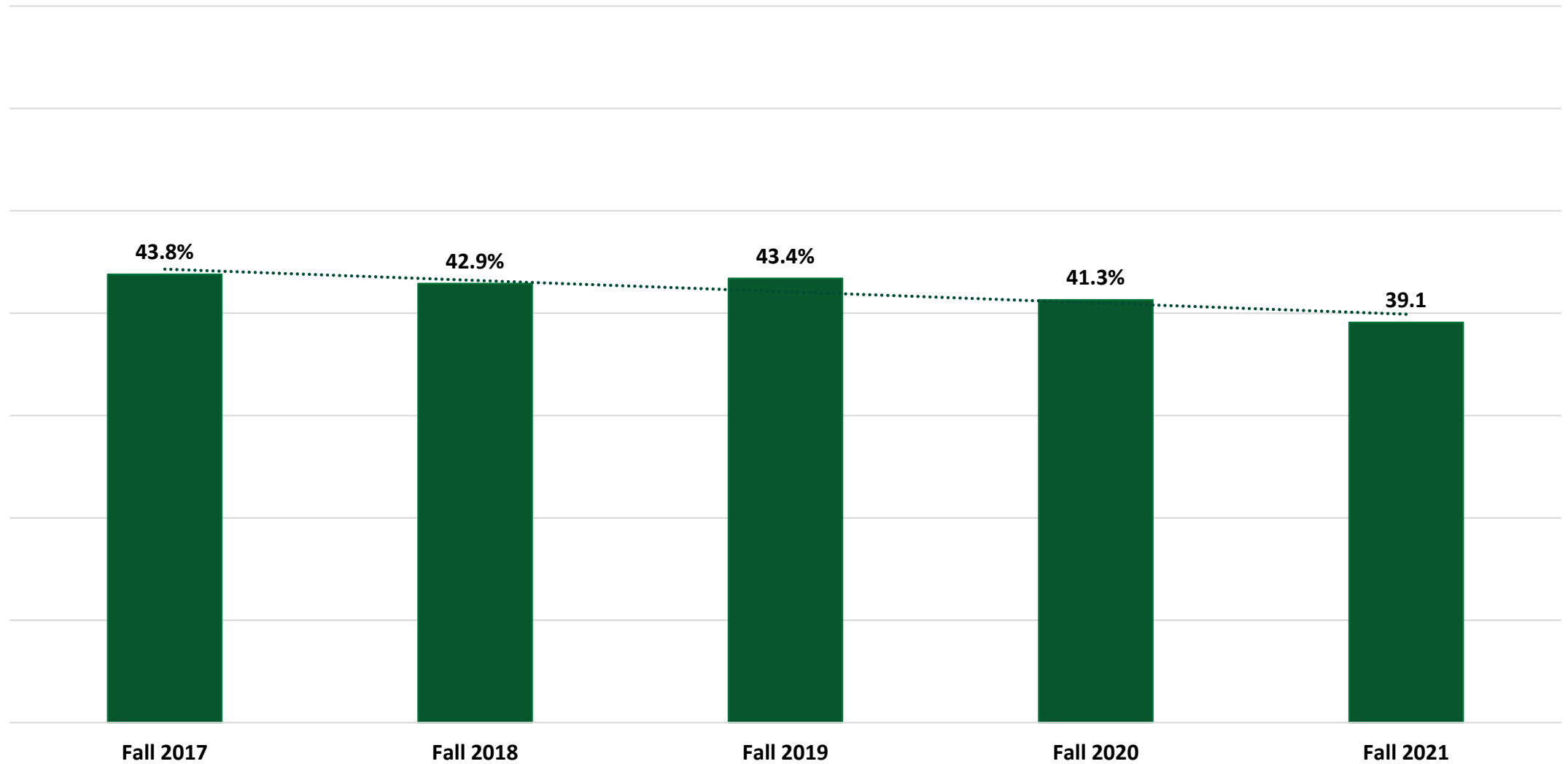
Top UNC Campus Destination of Transfer Students by Number of NC Community Colleges
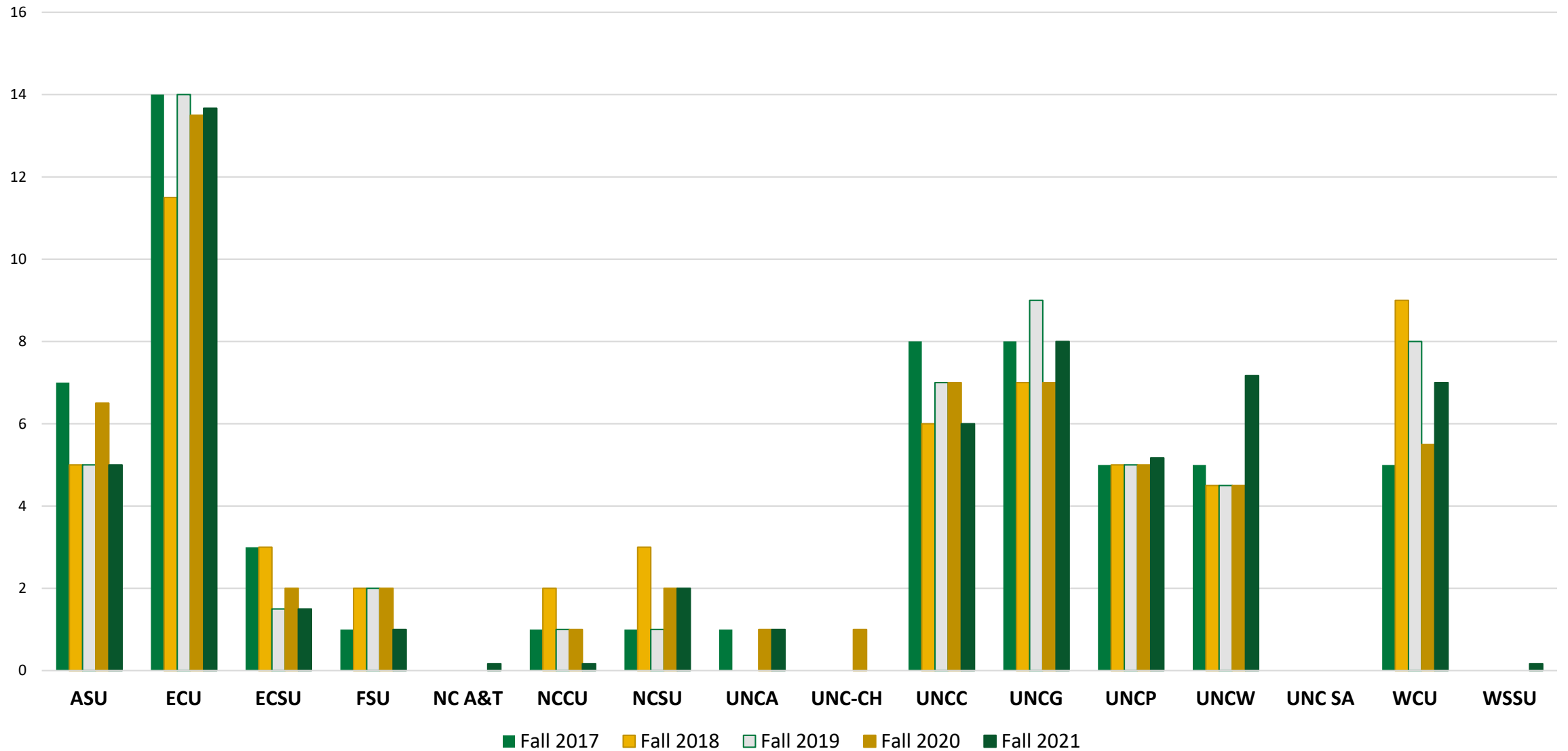
Number of Sending Community Colleges by UNC Campus
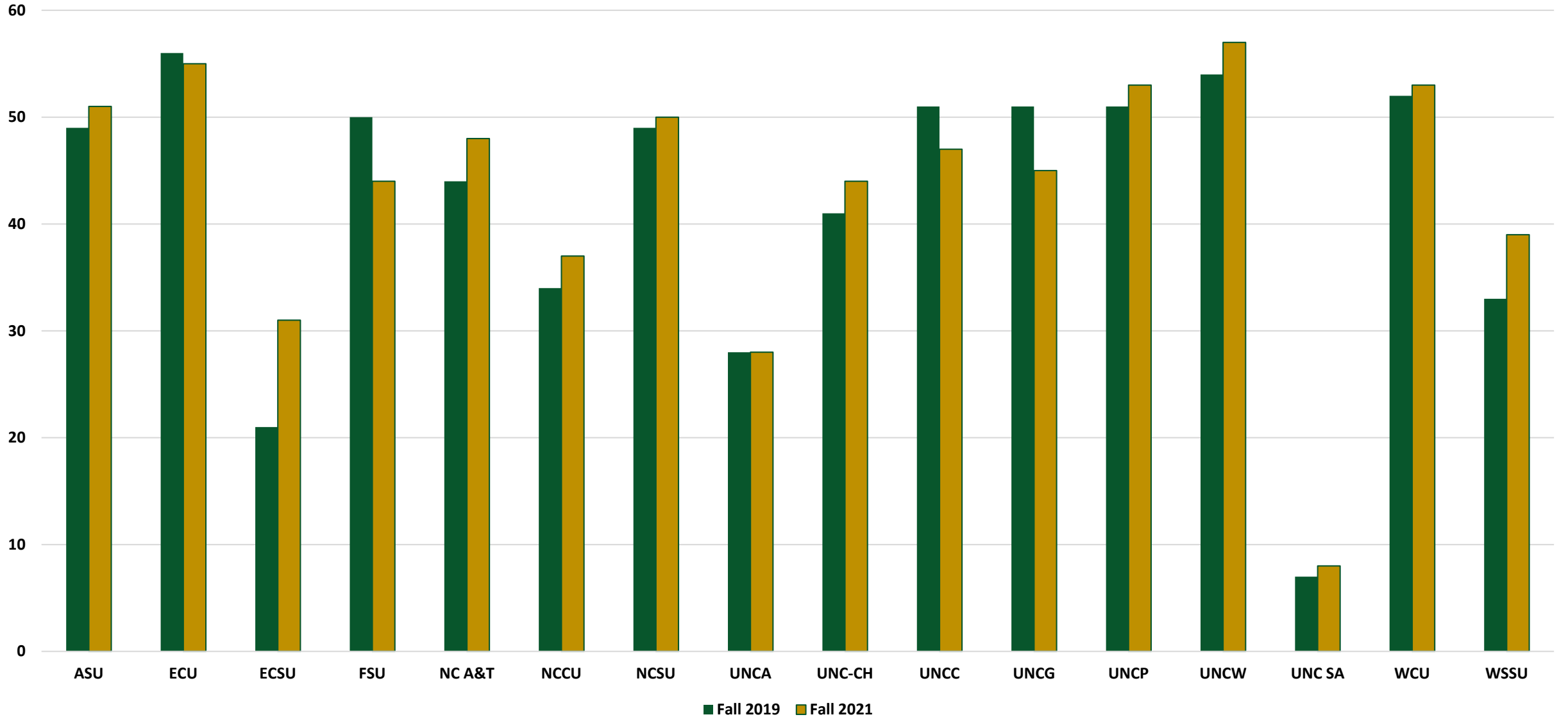
NCCCS to UNC System Transfer Prevalence by Degree Status

	AA/AS	AAS	AE	AFA	AGE	No Degree >30	No Degree <30

Fall 2010: 31%, 14%, 1%, 0%, 1%, 42%, 13%

Fall 2019: 37%, 18%, 1%, 1%, 1%, 32%, 10%

Fall 2020: 38%, 17%, 1%, 1%, 1%, 32%, 10%

Fall 2021: 39%, 17%, 1%, 1%, 1%, 32%, 9%
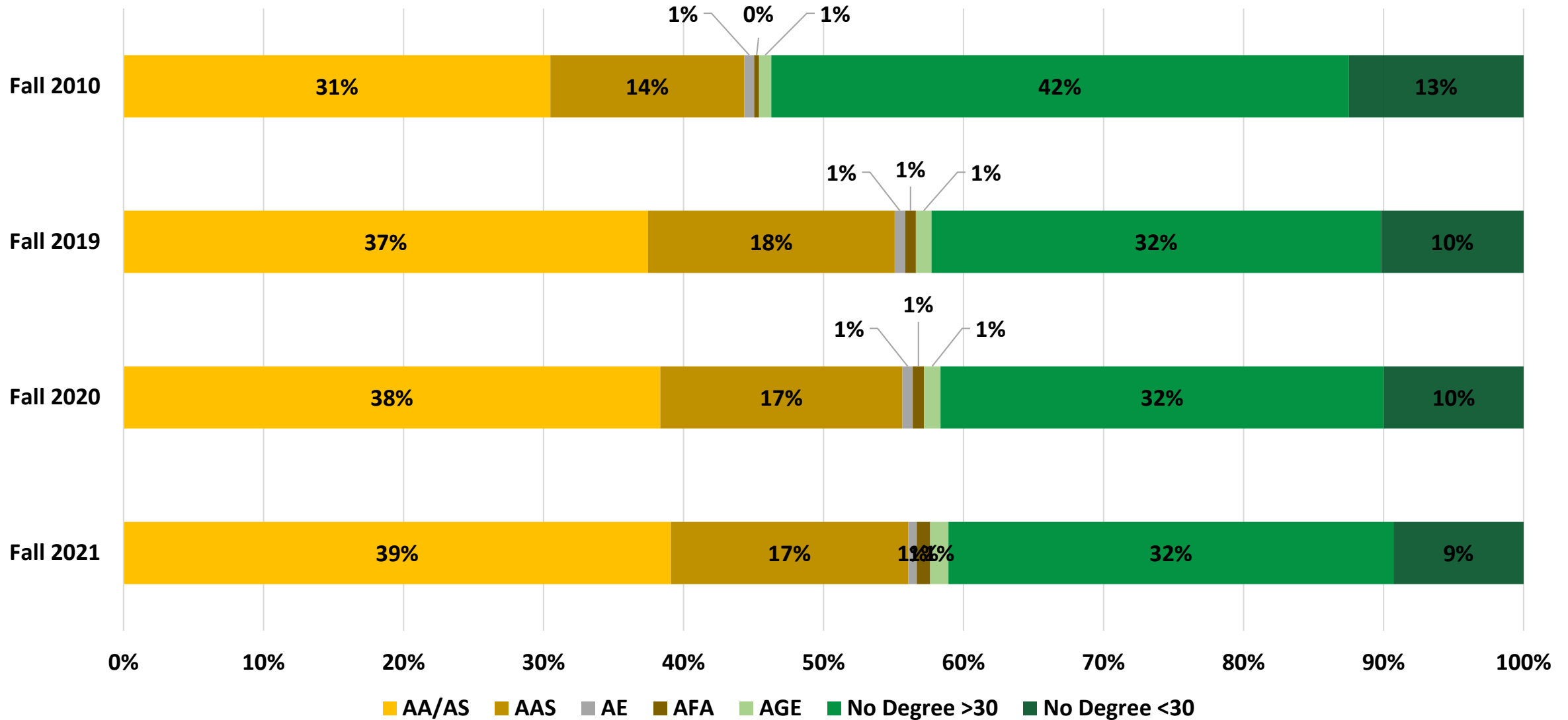
AAS Transfer

AAS Transfer Prevalence by Economic Distress* of Community College Service Area				
Service Area Tiers**	Number of Colleges	Percent of Transfers with an AAS		
		Fall 2019	Fall 2020	Fall 2021
Tier 1	20	24.6%	26.5%	26.5%
Tier 1/2	7	24.1%	23.1%	23.9%
Tier 2	13	20.5%	19.5%	19.2%
Tier 1/2/3, 1/3	3	13.1%	12.3%	12.2%
Tier 2/3	7	20.1%	19.3%	18.9%
Tier 3	8	11.0%	9.9%	10.2%

*Economic distress shown by 2020 Tier designation reported by NC Dept of Commerce (Tier 1=most distress)

**Multi-tier service areas include counties with more than one level of economic distress.

Pre-Transfer Engagement Behaviors

Preliminary Study Overview

- Community College Survey of Student Engagement (CCSSE)

- Data from 24 community colleges: 2017, 2018, 2019

- 3,374 records for students who indicated vertical transfer as goal

- Sought to identify transfer seeking behaviors disaggregated by institutional transfer performance, enrollment intensity, age, gender identity, and racial and ethnic identity

Sample

Characteristic	Categories	Frequency (%)
Age	18-24	2,507 (74.3%)
	25-39	695 (20.6%)
	40+	167 (4.9%)
Enrollment	Full-time	2,478 (74.4%)
	Part-time	896 (25.6%)
Gender identity	Men	1,425 (42.3%)
	Women	1,862 (55.3%)
	Other	25 (0.7%)
	Prefer not to respond	53 (1.6%)
Racial or ethnic identity	American Indian, Alaskan Native	59 (1.8%)
	Asian	115 (3.4%)
	Black or African American	426 (12.7%)
	Hispanic or Latino	313 (9.3%)
	White	2,036 (60.6%)
	Other	51 (1.5%)
	Two or more race/ethnicities	241 (7.1%)
	Prefer not to respond	115 (3.4%)

Findings (by institutional performance and enrollment intensity)

Type	Indicator	All students (N=3,374)	Institutional Transfer Performance		Enrollment Intensity	
			Equitable (n=2,004)	Inequitable (n=1,370)	Full-time (n=2,478)	Part-time (n=896)
Transfer seeking behaviors (yes/no; frequency & percentage)	Discussed career plans with faculty	2,789 (82.7%)	1,658 (82.7%)	1,131 (82.6%)	2,084 (84.1%)	705 (78.7%)
	Developed academic/ transfer plan in first year	2,298 (68.1%)	1,363 (68.0%)	935 (68.2%)	1,718 (69.3%)	573 (64.0%)
	Sought transfer advising	1,876 (55.1%)	1,163 (58.0%)	725 (52.9%)	1,447 (58.4%)	429 (47.9%)
	Participated in student success program	1,727 (50.9%)	1,014 (50.6%)	713 (52.0%)	1,324 (53.4%)	403 (45.0%)

Findings (by age, gender, race/ethnicity)

Characteristic	Categories	Developed academic/transfer plan in first year	Sought transfer advising
Age group	18-24 (n=2,507)	1,715 (68.4%)	1,463 (58.4%)
	25-39 (n=695)	463 (66.6%)	327 (47.1%)
	40+ (n=167)	111 (66.5%)	82 (49.1%)
Gender identity	Men (n=1,425)	992 (69.6%)	823(57.8%)
	Women (n=1,862)	1,255 (67.4%)	1,006 (54.0%)
	Other (n=25)	13 (52.0%)	17 (68.0%)
	Prefer not to respond (n=53)	26 (49.1%)	25 (47.2%)
Racial and ethnic identity	American Indian or Alaskan Native (n=59)	39 (66.1%)	30 (50.8%)
	Asian (n=115)	90 (78.3%)	86 (74.8%)
	Black or African American (n=426)	312 (73.2%)	252 (59.2%)
	Hispanic or Latino (n=313)	244 (78.0%)	162 (51.8%)
	White (n=2,036)	1,341(65.9%)	1,105 (54.3%)
	Other (n=51)	27 (52.9%)	32 (62.7%)
	Two or more (n=241)	154 (63.9%)	131 (54.4%)
	Prefer not to respond (n=115)	77 (67.0%)	69 (60.0%)

Preliminary Implications

- Advising for impact

- Serving adult/neotraditional and part-time students

- Striving for equity

Pre- and Post-Transfer Experiences: Student Voices

Pilot Study Overview

- Semi-structured qualitative interviews of pre- and post-transfer students from one university and two community college (8 participants)
- Goals:
  - ➤Explore how students experience the transfer process (e.g., transfer decisions, information gathering, resources, advising)
  - ➤Uncover how students' social identities informed transfer journeys

Participants

Name	Transfer Status	First-Generation College Student	Employment Status	Race	Gender
Katrina	Pre-transfer (seeking AAS)	Yes	Part-time	African American	Woman
Mila	Pre-transfer (seeking AA)	No	Full-time	White	Woman
Thomas	Pre-transfer (seeking AS)	Yes	Part-time	White	Man
Vera	Pre-transfer (seeking cert.)	Yes	Not Employed	White	Woman
Brenden	Post-transfer (no credential)	No	Not employed	White	Man
Elisa	Post-transfer (earned AA)	Yes	Not employed	Latinx	Woman
Kane	Post-transfer (earned AS)	Yes	Not employed	African American	Man
Sabrina	Post-transfer (earned AE & certificate)	Yes	Full-time	Asian American	Woman

Pilot Findings (making transfer choices)

Finding #1 - Convenience, cost, and increased career aspirations informed students' decisions to enter community college and subsequently transfer.		Finding #2 - Students' identities shaped their transfer decisions.	
"It's a lot more economical to go to community college first and then transfer in as a junior or sophomore even." - **Katrina, CC student seeking AAS** *"I just really liked the feel that the college had and the atmosphere of the teachers…it just felt right."* - **Vera, CC student seeking certificate**	*"I did intend to get my associate's in science and then a couple of different semesters I dropped a class … I was one class short and then I thought I'd just transfer."* - **Brenden, university student (no credential)** *"I actually didn't decide to finish my associate's until I saw how close I was to it when I started back this past summer"*- **Mila, CC student seeking AA**	*"I have two kids…they're pretty much the reason that I'm gone back to school to get my education"* - **Vera, CC student seeking certificate** *"[My biggest influences] would definitely have to be my father and my mom, my mom told me to go ahead and go to college…"*- **Thomas, CC student seeking AS**	*"There were a couple of people that said I was basically a unicorn because they want to see more Black men in STEM."* - **Kane, university student (earned AS)** *" I'm a part of the LGBT communities. So, when I chose the university, … They just had really good things to support the community, so that's why I chose the university."* - **Sabrina, university student (earned AE & certificate)**

Pilot Findings (gathering information and engaging the transfer process)

Finding #3 - Students primarily relied on themselves to navigate community college websites and receiving university websites to find information about admissions, transfer, and credit mobility.		Finding #4 - Students relied on a few key trusted people in the transfer process.	
"I don't like to ask a lot of people that do stuff for me, so I just Google it. I'll go on [the CC] website or [the university's] website" - **Thomas, CC student seeking AS**	*"I have some classes that didn't transfer just because my major is electrical engineering and some of the [CC] classes I took for computer science … didn't transfer."* - **Sabrina, university student (earned AE & certificate)**	*"Well, me and my fiancé are both doing the same track so we've been comparing notes as far as transferring and what's required and what we need to do."* - **Katrina, CC student seeking AAS**	*"[The transfer advisor at the CC] has been very helpful with providing any information or giving any resources that I need for the information, to find what I have to do to get the transfer and everything done"* - **Vera, CC student seeking certificate**
"I'm a bit stubborn and I never used my advisers enough [in community college] and I try to just find information myself." - **Brenden, university student (no credential)**	*"For the most part, most of the [credits from community college] transferred. I had a little bit more though, just because when I did finish my associate's degree, I actually did another semester after that and I was trying to get my legal assistant diploma."* - **Elisa, university student (earned AA)**	*"My cousin went to [this university] 20 years ago, but she said really good things about it and that's why I chose this university."* - **Sabrina, university student (earned AE & certificate)**	*"So, my initial advisor [in community college] wasn't much help. I remember signing up for spring classes after my first semester, and he was a biology teacher so I'm thinking, 'Hey, what class do you want me to take? Can you help me settle things down?' And he really didn't help me do the things that I should've done"* - **Kane, university student (earned AS)**

Preliminary Implications

- Early guidance is needed in a system that requires students to know major and transfer destination in the first 30 credit hours

- Students are seeking out information independently showing the need for knowledgeable advisors and clear and credible online resources

- Intent, aspirations, and paths unfold over time

- Students approach transfer through different credential paths (e.g., AA, AS, AAS, AE, no credential); systems must recognize multiple pathways to the baccalaureate

- Life experiences, commitments, and identities coincide with capital and lack thereof—must approach transfer through equity lens

How do these transfer student voices resonate with your experiences?

Next Steps

- Expanded qualitative study

- CCSSE outcomes study

- Forthcoming research briefs on transfer destinations, expanded qualitative data, and CCSSE findings related to community college and transfer outcomes

Questions and discussion

Transfer briefs available at:

https://edld.charlotte.edu/sites/edld.charlotte.edu/files/media/CLTRR-2022-1%20%281%29.pdf

https://edld.charlotte.edu/sites/edld.charlotte.edu/files/media/CLTRR-2022-2.pdf

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