2025 Washington Transfer Efficiency Update

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WASHINGTON STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT COUNCIL
EDUCATION · OPPORTUNITY · RESULTS

Table of Contents

Acknowledgements i

Preface i

Executive Summary ii

Introduction 1

Main indicators of efficiency in transfer degrees 3

- Share of enrollment in transfer degrees at CTC 3
  - Enrollment with intent to transfer 3
  - Inequalities in enrollment with the intent to transfer 4
  - Retention rates based on enrollment intent 6
- Transfer degree earners at CTC (2023-2024 school year) 7
  - Transfer degrees awarded 7
  - Inequalities in transfer degrees awarded 8
  - Inequalities in the type of transfer degrees awarded 9
  - Most awarded major related program (MRP) or associate of science-transfer (AS-T) degrees 10
  - Inequalities in major related program (MRP) and associate science-transfer (AS-T) degrees awarded 11
- Transfer students earning bachelor's degrees at four-year institutions 12
  - Inequalities in bachelor's degrees awarded for transfer students at public institutions 12
  - Bachelor's degrees awarded to transfer students at Independent Colleges of Washington (ICW) member campuses 15
  - Bachelor's graduation rates of transfer students compared to direct entry students at public four-year institutions 15
  - Bachelor's graduation rates depending on transfer entry type at public four-year institutions 17
  - Inequalities in the bachelor's graduation rate of transfer students 18
  - Bachelor's graduation rates for specific majors 18

Development of additional transfer degrees 20

Other initiatives to improve transfer efficiency 20

Conclusion 21

Glossary 23

Technical Appendix 26

References 29

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Preface

On January 10, 2005, the Washington State Legislature asked the Washington Student Achievement Council (WSAC) to report on transfer efficiency every two years. This report tracks progress on key measures, describes new transfer degrees, and shares other data on how transfer efficiency is improving (Washington State Legislature, 2005).

See the full RCW 28B.77.220 request:
https://app.leg.wa.gov/rcw/default.aspx?cite=28B.77.220

In 2011, WSAC began making these reports publicly available. See past transfer reports:
https://wsac.wa.gov/reports-and-publications.

Disclaimer The research presented here uses confidential data from the Education Research and Data Center (ERDC) located within the Washington Office of Financial Management (OFM). ERDC's data system is a statewide longitudinal data system that includes de-identified data about people's preschool, educational, and workforce experiences. The views expressed here are those of the authors and do not necessarily represent those of OFM or other data contributors. Any errors are attributable to the authors.

Executive Summary

Bachelor's degrees are increasingly needed to get a job that pays a livable wage. Washington's transfer degrees and policies can help students earn a bachelor's degree. The state's goal is to have 70% of 25- to 44-year-olds with a credential beyond high school (Washington Student Achievement Council, 2025). Transfer degrees help support that goal. Every two years, WSAC submits a report about transfer efficiency to the state legislature. Transfer efficiency means how smoothly students in transfer degree programs at community and technical colleges (CTC) can complete a vertical transfer. This does not include students who are enrolled in dual credit programs or pursuing a Bachelor of Applied Science (BAS) degree at a Washington CTC.

In this report, *vertical transfer* is when a student in a transfer degree program at a Washington community or technical college (CTC) moves on to a Washington four-year institution. However, some CTC students can choose to earn a bachelor's degree directly from their CTC without transferring to a four-year institution. There are three main ways we measure the efficiency of vertical transfer:

1. Enrollment in transfer degrees at CTC,
2. Transfer degree earners at CTC (2023-2024 school year),
3. Transfer students earning bachelor's degrees at four-year institutions.

Enrollment in transfer degrees shows how students are reaching their goals. The share of students enrolled in transfer degree programs has increased even though fewer transfer degrees are being awarded. Students who already got a transfer degree are more likely to graduate in four years compared to those who transferred without one at public four-year institutions. Still, there continue to be ongoing gaps in transfer degree and bachelor's degree completion rates for transfer students in different demographic groups.

Key Findings

Enrollment in transfer degrees at CTC

- Since Fall 2019, the percent of CTC students who want to get a transfer degree compared to those who want to get other associate degrees has increased by ten percentage points (including award seeking Running Start students). It has stayed at 58% for the past two years.

- The percent of CTC students who want to get a transfer degree and enroll for a second Fall term has also increased by six percentage points since Fall 2019 (excluding award seeking Running Start students).

Transfer degree earners at CTC (2023-2024 school year)

- 68% of the associate degrees earned at CTC were transfer degrees.
- 27% of the transfer degrees earned at CTC were major related programs (MRP) or associate of science-transfer (AS-T) degrees.
- The most awarded MRP and AS-T degrees were Business MRP, Nursing MRP, Pre-Nursing MRP and AS-T 2.

Transfer students earning bachelor's degrees at four-year institutions

- In the 2021-2022 school year, 43% of students who graduated at the public four-year institutions were transfers.
- In the same year, 24% of students who graduated at the public four-year institutions did so with a transfer degree.
- That year, over 24% of the students who graduated at the Independent Colleges of Washington (ICW) were transfers.
- In the 2023-2024 school year, transfer students graduated at the same rate in four years as direct entry students did in six years at public four-year institutions.
- Compared to other transfer students, those with MRP degrees were more likely to graduate in four years at public four-year institutions.
- Compared to other transfer students, those with MRP or AS-T degrees were more likely to graduate in four years in fields like Biology, Business, Computer Science and Engineering at public four-year institutions.

Introduction

Washington State Legislature found that increased demand for bachelor's degrees is due to more students seeking postsecondary degrees/credentials and higher expectations from employers for the knowledge and skills needed for economic growth (Washington State Legislature, 2005). Supporting transfer students is one way to support students in earning a bachelor's degree and will also help Washington meet the educational attainment goal outlined in WSAC's 2025 Strategic Action Plan of at least 70% of adults ages 25-44 earning a postsecondary degree/credential (Washington Student Achievement Council, 2025).

Transfer is when a student moves from one institution and enrolls in another. Their credits from the prior institution may apply toward the credit requirements at the subsequent institution to which the student transferred.

Washington's transfer degree programs – the direct transfer agreements (DTA), associate in science for transfer (AS-T) and major related programs (MRP) – support students in the vertical transfer from community and technical colleges (CTC) to four-year institutions as a key pathway to meeting employer demand and Washington's educational attainment goal (Washington State Board for Community and Technical Colleges). Vertical transfer occurs when a student transfers from a two-year institution to a four-year institution (National Association for College Admission Counseling (NACAC), n.d.). Throughout this report, the term vertical transfer is narrowly defined and is used to describe transfer degree efficiency as it relates to RCW 28B.77.220; it occurs when a student moves from one of Washington's community and technical colleges (CTC) to a Washington four-year institution. However, many of Washington's CTC offer bachelor's degrees, so students also have the ability to earn a bachelor's degree from their CTC without transferring to a different institution. Vertical transfer efficiency can be assessed using three main indicators: share of enrollment in transfer degrees at CTC, transfer degrees awarded at CTC, and transfer students earning bachelor's degrees at four-year institutions.

Washington State Board for Community and Technical Colleges (SBCTC) uses student intent categories to identify the declared intent of students upon enrollment at a CTC (Washington State Board Community and Technical Colleges (SBCTC)). Identifying both the share of students who intend to earn a transfer degree and assessing the transfer degrees awarded reveal how students are supported in the process at the CTC level.

Over the past few years, the share of students enrolled in transfer programs has increased. In Fall 2019, 48% of CTC associate degree seeking students were enrolled and pursuing transfer degrees. Most recently, in Fall 2024, 58% of CTC associate degree seeking students were pursuing transfer degrees. However, this varies by race/ethnicity, in Fall 2024, Asian, Hispanic/Latino and students of two or more races were more likely than any other racial group to pursue transfer degrees. In the 2023-2024 academic year, these groups were also more likely to earn transfer degrees compared to other racial groups. Furthermore, there has been an increase in the retention rate of students pursuing transfer degrees from fall in their first year at a CTC to fall their second year (excluding award seeking Running Start students).

Vertical transfer can be an effective method for students to earn a bachelor's degree, and transfer can occur during any point in a student's education. Over the past twenty years, the transfer report has analyzed several aspects of the transfer pathway. As part of the Completion priorities within the Strategic Action Plan, the companion report, "Beyond Transfer degrees: Opportunities for Future Learning" explores supports in place for transfer students and identifies opportunities for additional research and learning (Washington Student Achievement Council, 2025).

Community and technical colleges (CTC) allow students to begin working on courses relevant to a bachelor's degree before they transfer to a four-year institution (Washington State Board for Community and Technical Colleges (SBCTC), n.d.). The efficiency of Washington's vertical transfer pathway is best seen at the bachelor's degree level. Students with transfer degrees were more likely to graduate from public four-year institutions within four years compared to any other type of transfer. Transfer students made up 43% of the bachelor's degree earners who graduated in the 2021-2022 academic year. Within most race/ethnicity groups, students with transfer degrees are more likely to complete a bachelor's degree within four years of transferring to a 4-year institution. Furthermore, compared to other types of transfer students, students with major related program (MRP) or associate of science-transfer (AS-T) degrees were more likely to graduate within four years at a public four-year institution. This applies particularly to the following major programs: Biology, Business, Computer Science and Engineering majors.

Transfer degrees can support students in earning a bachelor's degree as well as helping meet the statewide educational attainment goal. It is vital that we continue to recognize the varying needs of students across Washington as we support students in vertical transfer.

Main indicators of efficiency in transfer degrees

The following sections will explore the vertical transfer journey from a CTC to a four-year institution in Washington based on three main indicators: share of enrollment in transfer degrees at CTC, transfer degree earners at CTC, and transfer students at four-year institutions.

Share of enrollment in transfer degrees at CTC

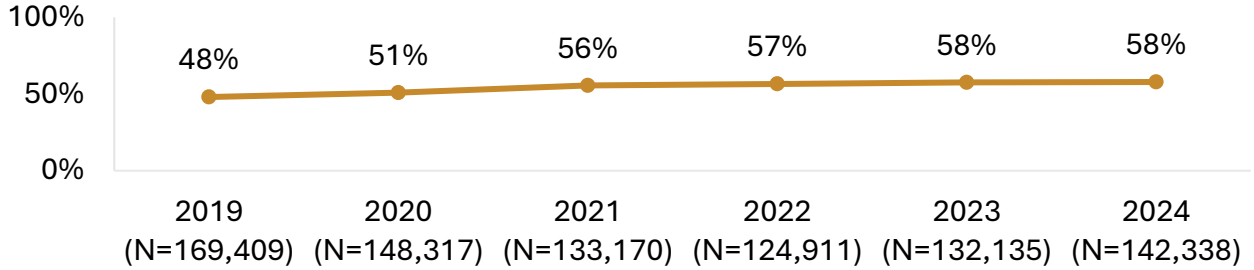
Upon enrollment at a CTC, students have several degree/certificate options they can indicate an intent to pursue. There are two types of associate degrees students that CTC students can pursue: transfer degrees (academic programs) and professional technical degrees (workforce training programs). Community and technical colleges (CTC) serve as an entry point to earning a postsecondary degree and enrolling in a transfer degree can be an initial step towards earning a bachelor's degree. Examining enrollment in transfer degrees specifically, serves as a foundational measure of vertical transfer efficiency. Students with an intent to transfer are enrolled in a degree intended for transfer to a four-year institution. There are inequalities in which students enroll in transfer degree programs and understanding these can guide supports for students.

This section presents the following analyses of transfer degree enrollment: enrollment with intent to transfer, inequalities in enrollment with the intent to transfer, and retention rates based on enrollment intent.

Enrollment with intent to transfer

Since Fall 2019, the share of CTC associate degree seeking enrolled with the intent to transfer (including award seeking Running Start) has increased by ten percentage points from 48% in Fall 2019 to 58% in Fall 2023. Award seeking Running Start (RS) students are included in this group of students with intent to transfer because they are pursuing academic programs in efforts to use their credits at another institution. The overall share of students enrolled with the intent to transfer has stabilized at 58% between Fall 2023 and Fall 2024 (Figure 1). In Fall 2023, the share of students pursuing transfer degrees (including award seeking RS students) began to stabilize and in Fall 2024, remained at 58%.

Figure 1: Trend of CTC associate degree seeking students pursuing transfer degrees in the fall of each academic year



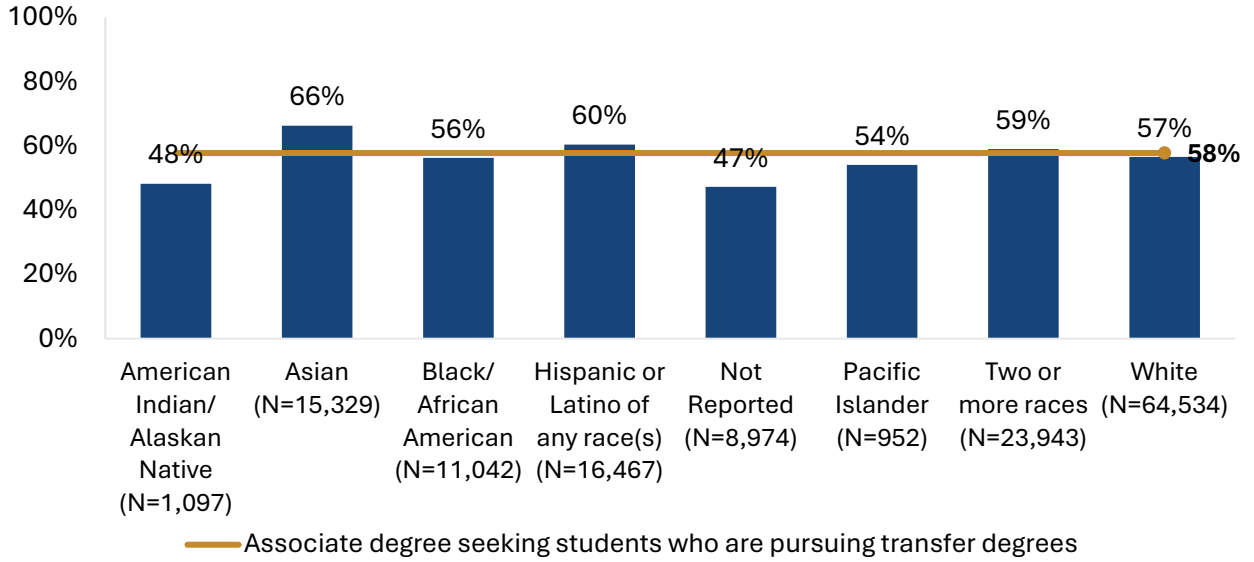
Source: SBCTC Enrollment Data Dashboard, accessed 12/03/2024 at https://www.sbctc.edu/collegesstaff/research/data-public/enrollment-data-dashboard.

Note: SBCTC includes award seeking Running Start (RS) students as students with the intent to transfer. Because of this, award seeking RS students are included in the share of students with intent to transfer.

Inequalities in enrollment with the intent to transfer

Despite an overall increase in the share of associate degree seeking students with intent to transfer since Fall 2019, enrollment rates in transfer degrees vary by demographic group. In Fall 2024, there were significant inequalities in the proportion of students who intended to transfer when examined by race/ethnicity, age group, and gender. Some race/ethnicity groups, such as Asian students, have shares as high as 66% enrolled in transfer degrees, and others, such as American Indian/Alaskan Native have enrollment as low as 48% (Figure 2).

Figure 2: Share of CTC associate degree seeking students pursuing transfer degrees by race/ethnicity, Fall 2024

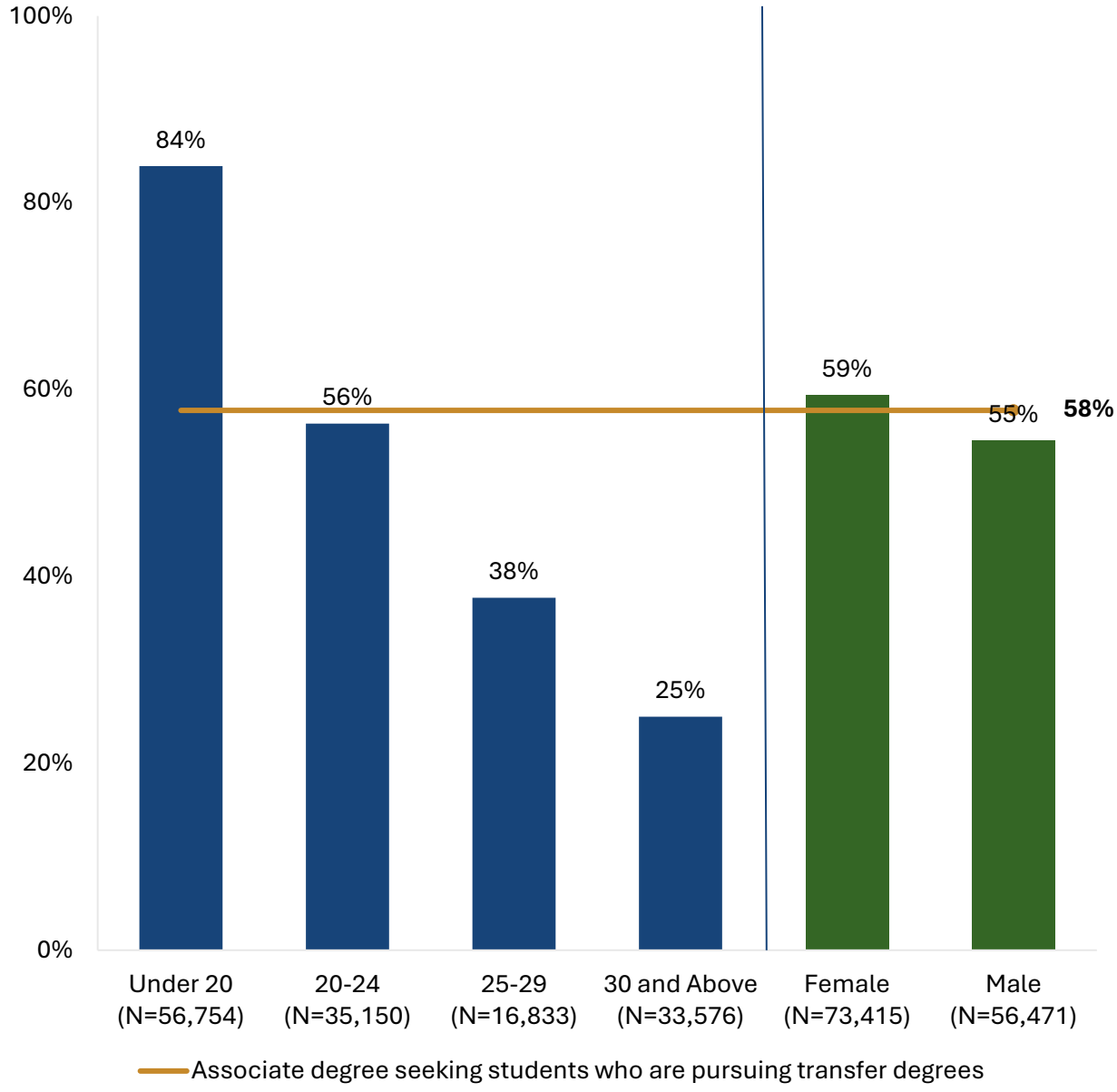


Source: SBCTC Enrollment Data Dashboard, accessed 12/03/2024 at https://www.sbctc.edu/colleges-staff/research/data-public/enrollment-data-dashboard.

Note: SBCTC includes award seeking Running Start (RS) students as students with the intent to transfer. Because of this, award seeking RS students are included in the share of students with intent to transfer.

When comparing students by age group, in Fall 2024, 84% of students under the age of 20 enroll with an intent to transfer, whereas only 25% of those aged 30 or older do so. When categorized by gender, female students pursue transfer degrees at higher rates than male students (Figure 3).

Figure 3: Share of CTC associate degree seeking students pursuing transfer degrees by age and gender, Fall 2024



Source: SBCTC Enrollment Data Dashboard, accessed 12/03/2024 at https://www.sbctc.edu/colleges-staff/research/data-public/enrollment-data-dashboard.

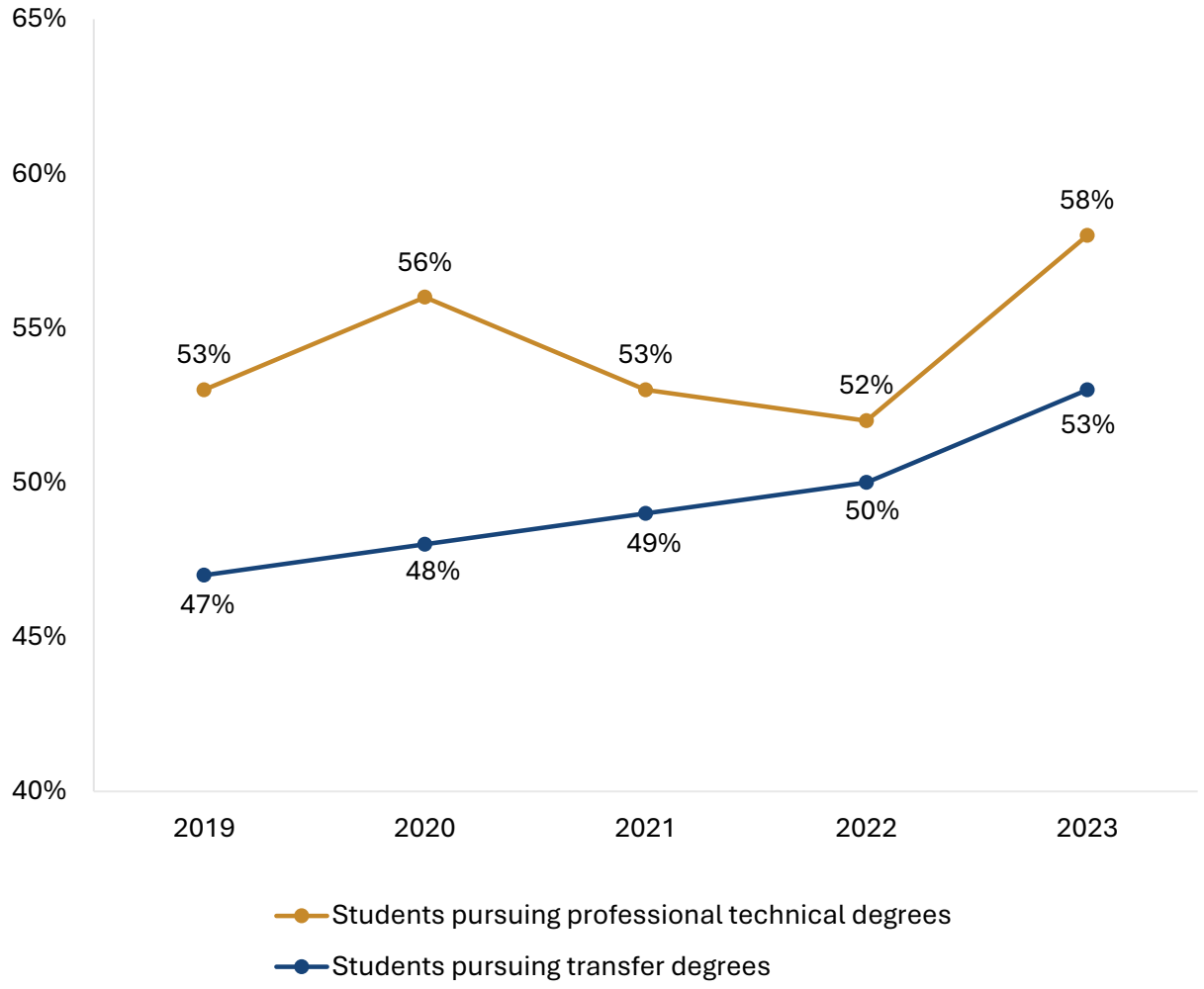
Note: SBCTC includes award seeking Running Start (RS) students as students with the intent to transfer. Because of this, award seeking RS students are included in the share of students with intent to transfer.

Retention rates based on enrollment intent

The following section focuses on retention rates for CTC associate degree seeking students who are not in dual enrollment. Focusing on this group of students can inform improvements that would increase their retention rate.

The retention rate of students with intent to transfer has increased 6 percentage points from 47% in Fall 2019 to 53% in Fall 2023 (Figure 4). Comparatively, the retention rate of students pursuing professional technical degrees has increased 5 percentage points from 53% in Fall 2019 to 58% in Fall 2023.

Figure 4: Five-year trend of retention rates of first-time entering CTC associate degree seeking students from fall year 1 to fall year 2 by enrollment intent



Source: SBCTC First-Time Entering Student Outcomes Dashboard

Note: Although award seeking Running Start (RS) students were included in this analysis in the 2023 report, the 2025 report does not include award seeking RS students. RS students are excluded because it enables the analysis to assess the retention rates of transfer students who are not dual enrolled. Focusing on this group of students with the intent to transfer who not in non-dual enrollment can inform improvements that would increase their retention rate.

Transfer degree earners at CTC (2023-2024 school year)

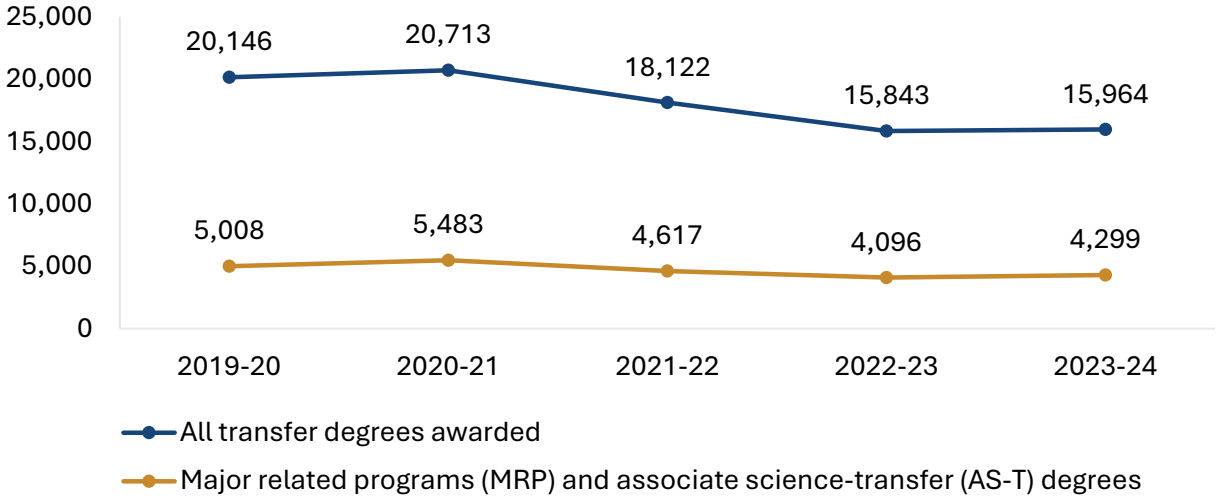
While enrollment at a CTC with the intent to transfer is a beneficial initial indicator, it is only part of the transfer journey. To complete a vertical transfer, students can begin and may complete a transfer degree before enrolling at a four-year institution. This section presents the following analyses of transfer degree attainment: transfer degrees awarded, inequalities in transfer degrees awarded, inequalities in the type of transfer degrees awarded, the most awarded MRP degrees, and inequalities in specific major related program (MRP) and associate science-transfer (AS-T) degrees awarded.

Transfer degrees awarded

The total number of transfer degrees awarded has decreased from 20,146 in 2019-2020, to 15,964 in 2023-2024 (Figure 5). Major related programs (MRP) were developed to help CTC students transfer to one of Washington's public four-year institutions into specific majors. Associate science-transfer (AS-T) programs at CTC focus on math and science courses for students preparing to major in a STEM degree at a four-year institution. The major MRP and AS-T degrees awarded decreased as well. Since 2019-2020, the number of MRP and AS-Ts awarded decreased from 5,008 to 4,299 in 2023-2024.

Between the 2019-2020 academic year and the 2023-2024 academic year, the number of transfer degrees awarded has decreased by 21%, while MRP degrees have declined 14%.

Figure 5: Trend of all transfer degrees and a grouping of major related program (MRP) and associate of science-transfer (AS-T) degrees awarded at CTC

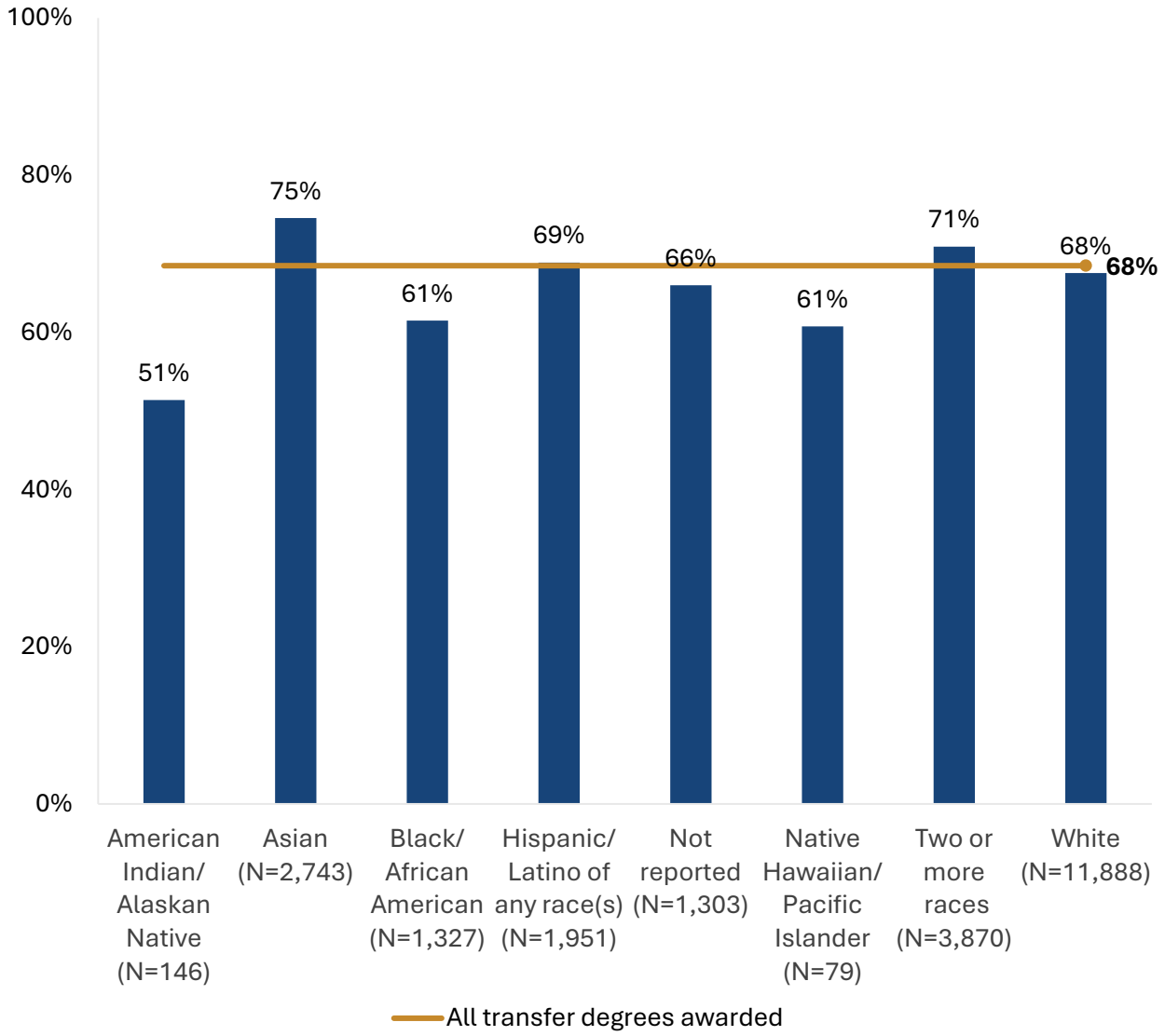


Source: SBCTC Credentials Awarded Data Dashboard, accessed 12/03/2024 at https://www.sbctc.edu/colleges-staff/research/data-public/credentials-awarded-dashboard

Inequalities in transfer degrees awarded

In the 2023-2024 academic year, more than two-thirds of associate degrees earned by CTC students were transfer degrees; the remaining one-third of the associate degrees awarded were professional-technical degrees (Figure 6). When comparing rates of transfer degrees awarded versus all associate degrees, Asian students and students of two or more races had the greatest share of transfer degree completions among associate degrees awarded (75% and 71%, respectively). By contrast, American Indian/Alaskan Native (51%), Black/African American (61%), and Pacific Islander (61%) students had a smaller share of students awarded transfer degrees.

Figure 6: Share of transfer degrees awarded to CTC associate degree recipients by race/ethnicity, 2023-2024



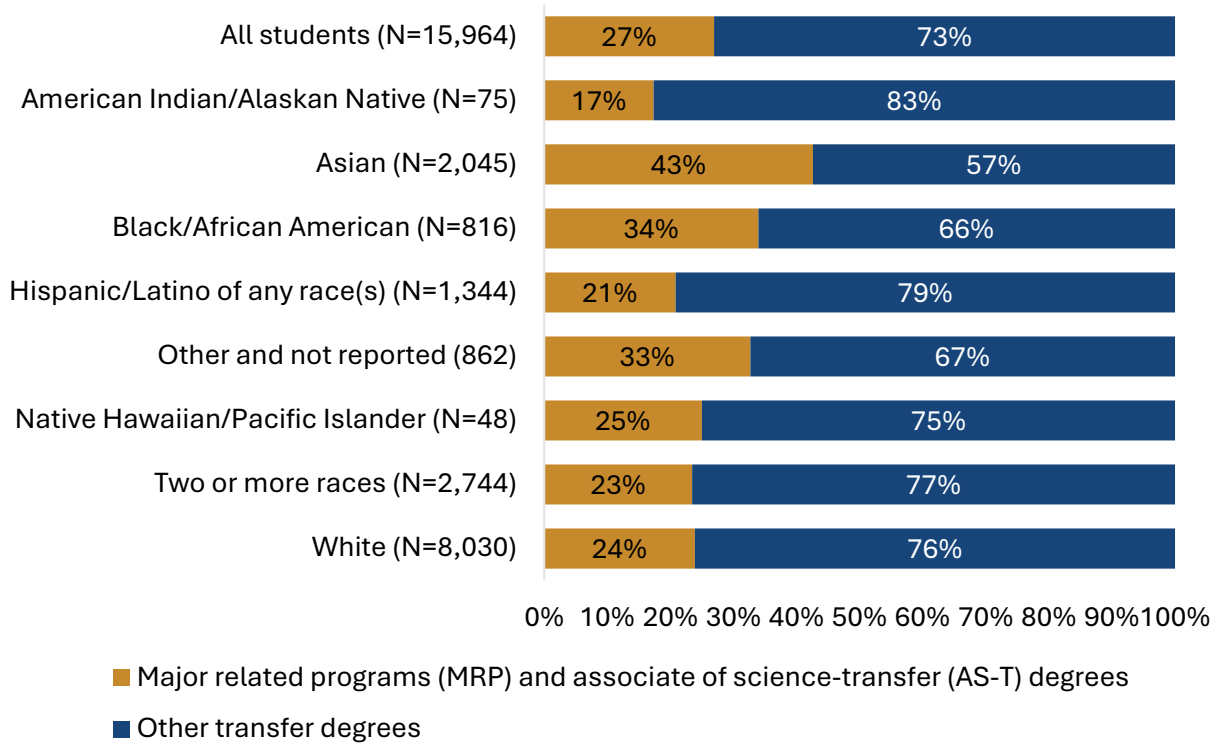
Source: SBCTC Credentials Awarded Data Dashboard, accessed 12/03/2024 at https://www.sbctc.edu/colleges-staff/research/data-public/credentials-awarded-dashboard

Inequalities in the type of transfer degrees awarded

There are several types of transfer degrees that students can pursue. Major related programs (MRP) allow students to take courses that contribute to specific major requirements at four-year institutions, and associate of science-transfer (AS-T) degrees are focused on preparation for STEM majors. Direct transfer agreement (DTA) degrees are intended for students who know they want to transfer but may not yet have a specific field that they would like to study. Accordingly, there is variation in the type of transfer degrees awarded when disaggregated by race/ethnicity.

For all students, 73% of the transfer degrees awarded were non major related program degrees and 26% of the transfer degrees awarded were MRP or AS-T. A larger share of Asian (43%) and Black/African American (34 %) students earned MRP or AS-T degrees compared to other race/ethnicity groups (Figure 7). American Indian or Alaskan Native students had the smallest share of students who earned MRP or AS-T degrees.

Figure 7: Share of students who earned transfer degrees by race/ethnicity and degree type, 2023-2024



Source: SBCTC Credentials Awarded Data Dashboard, accessed 12/03/2024 at https://www.sbctc.edu/colleges-staff/research/data-public/credentials-awarded-dashboard

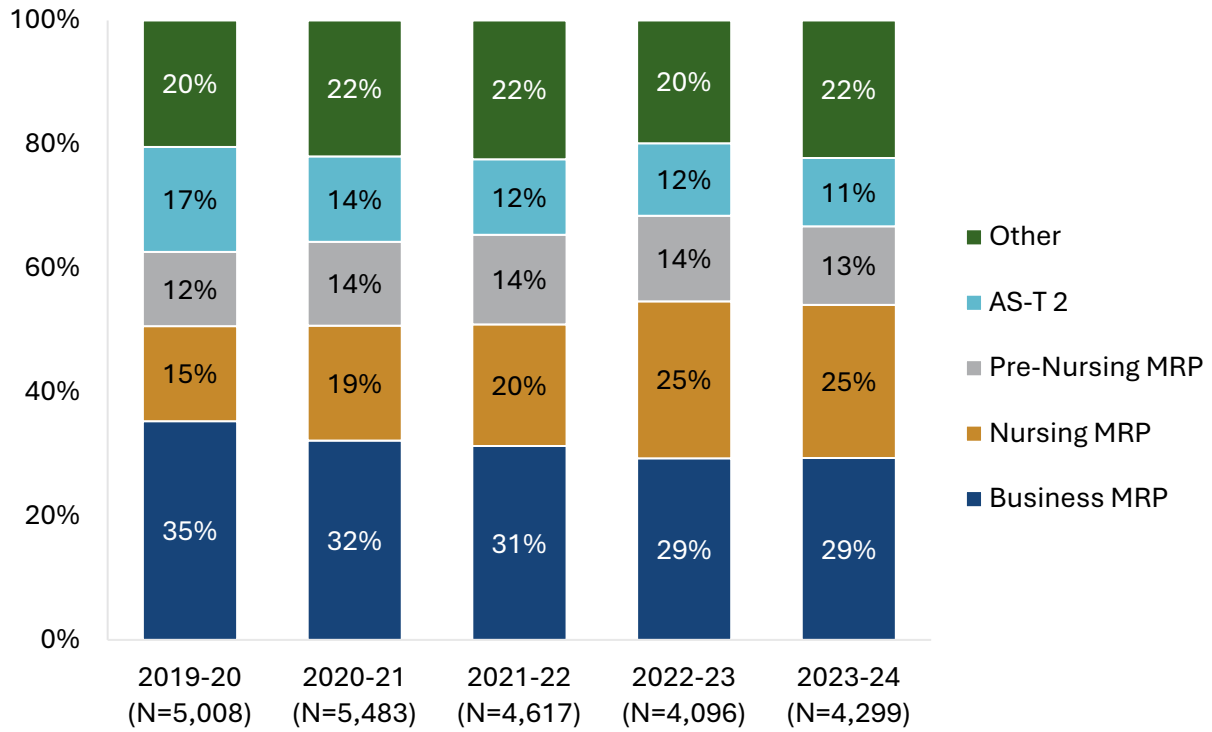
Note: The following degree programs were excluded in this analysis as they are not DTA degrees: Arts non DTA, Workforce non DTA, General Studies and Applied Science AAS-T.

Most awarded major related program (MRP) or associate of science-transfer (AS-T) degrees

Since the 2019-2020 academic year, the most awarded MRP or AS-T degrees have been the Business MRP, Nursing MRP, Pre-Nursing MRP and the AS-T 2. The Business MRP remains the largest share of MRP and AS-T degrees awarded since 2019-2020, however the share of MRP and AS-T degrees awarded that were Business MRP degrees decreased from 35% in the 2019-2020 academic year to 29% in the 2023-2024 academic year. The share of Nursing MRP degrees awarded increased by five percentage points between 2021-2022 and 2022-2023 and remained at the same share in 2023-2024.

The 'Other' category consists of several MRPs and AS-Ts, including the Associate in Science for Transfer 1 (AS-T 1), Biology MRP, Computer Science MRP, Construction Management MRP, Engineering AS-T/MRP, the Math Education DTA and the Music MRP (Washington Student Achievement Council, n.d.).

Figure 8: Share of most awarded major related programs (MRP) or associate of science-transfer degrees (AS-T)



Source: SBCTC Credentials Awarded Data Dashboard, accessed 12/03/2024 at https://www.sbctc.edu/colleges-staff/research/data-public/credentials-awarded-dashboard

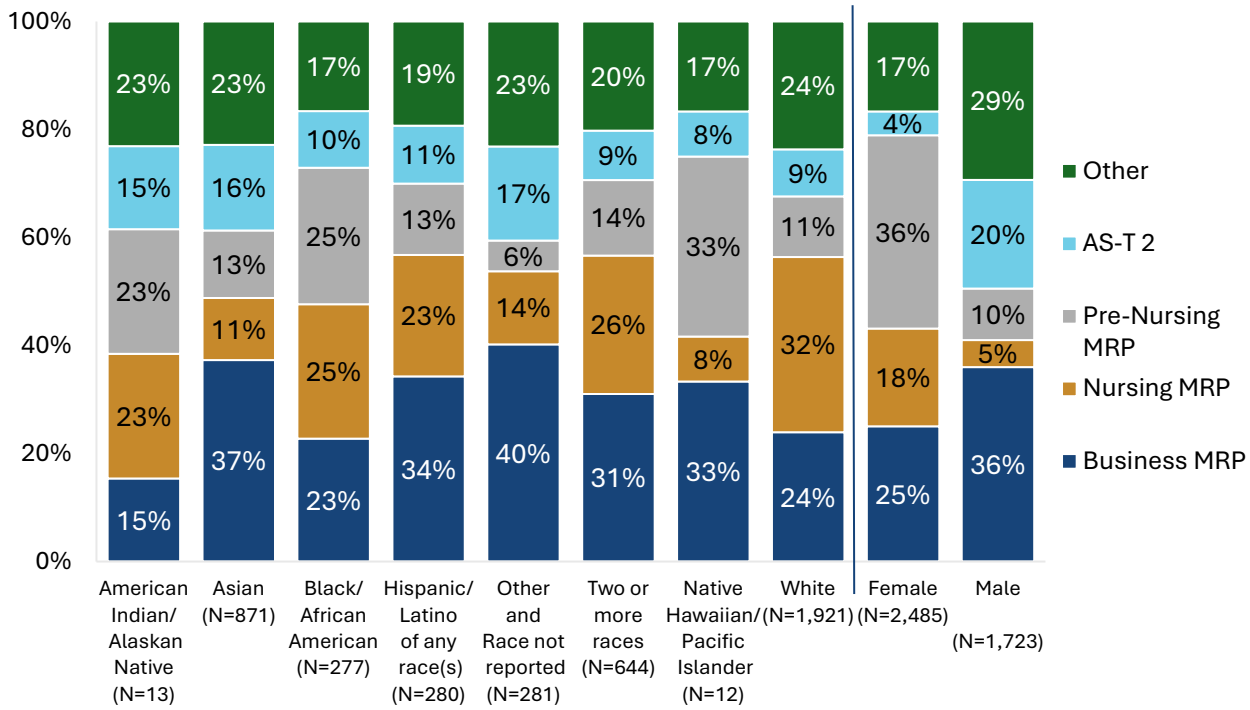
Note: 'Other' includes the following major related programs: AS-T1, Bio/Chem Eng AS-T/MRP, Comp/Elec Eng AS-T/MRP, Comps MRP, Const Mgmt MRP, Mech, Civil, Aero, Ind & Mat Eng AS-T/MRP, and the Music MRP. This category excludes the following degrees as they are not major related programs (MRP): Associate of Arts DTA, Workforce non-AAS-T, Applied Baccalaureate, Applied Science AAS-T, General Studies and the Arts non-DTA. AS-T2 refers to students who completed an Associate in Science for Transfer Track 2 (AS-T2). See glossary for additional definitions.

Inequalities in major related program (MRP) and associate science-transfer (AS-T) degrees awarded

The types of major related program (MRP) and associate science-transfer (AS-T) degrees awarded varies by demographic. In 2023-2024, the largest share of students who earned a Business MRP were students who did not report their race or identified as 'Other' (40%) (Figure 9). Asian and Hispanic/Latino students of any race(s) also had larger shares of students who earned a Business MRP compared to all other races (37% and 34%, respectively). American Indian/Alaskan Native Students had the smallest share of students pursuing a Business MRP (15%).

The distribution of MRP degrees awarded further varies by gender. Female students were more likely to earn the Nursing MRP or the Pre-Nursing MRP than male students are. Male students were more likely to earn a Business MRP, AS-T 2, or 'Other' type of MRP than female students.

Figure 9: Share of the most awarded major related programs (MRP) or associate of science-transfer (AS-T) degrees by race/ethnicity and gender, 2023-2024



Source: SBCTC Credentials Awarded Data Dashboard

Note: 'Other' includes the following major related programs: AS-T1, Bio/Chem Eng AS-T/MRP, Comp/Elec Eng AS-T/MRP, CompSci MRP, Const Mgmt MRP, Mech, Civil, Aero, Ind & Mat Eng AS-T/MRP, and the Music MRP. This category excludes the following degrees as they are not major related programs (MRP): Associate of Arts DTA, Workforce non-AAS-T, Applied Baccalaureate, Applied Science AAS-T, General Studies and the Arts non-DTA. AS-T2 refers to students who completed an Associate in Science for Transfer Track 2 (AS-T2). See glossary for additional definitions.

Transfer students earning bachelor's degrees at four-year institutions

There are several ways that students can transfer into a bachelor's degree program at both public and private four-year institutions. Students can transfer from a CTC to a four-year institution with a transfer degree, other credentials (such as a professional technical degree), credits from a CTC, or non-CTC institution. Students who engaged in Running Start at a CTC can be included in any of these groups at the four-year level depending on their intent and degree/credential pursued at a CTC. This report is meant to assess the efficiency of the vertical transfer from a CTC to a four-year institution and therefore only highlights a few ways that transfer students can earn a bachelor's degree.

This section presents the following analyses to capture vertical transfer at four-year institutions: inequalities in bachelor's degrees awarded for transfer students at public four-year institutions, bachelor's degrees awarded to transfer students at the Independent Colleges of Washington (ICW), bachelor's graduation rates of transfer students compared to direct entry students at public four-year institutions, bachelor's graduation rates depending on transfer entry type at public four-year institutions, and bachelor's graduation rates for specific majors.

To gauge the progress on vertical transfer efficiency the share of bachelor's earners and graduation rates are displayed by transfer entry types. This approach is used to highlight differences in outcomes by CTC degrees and student subgroups. (See glossary for definitions).

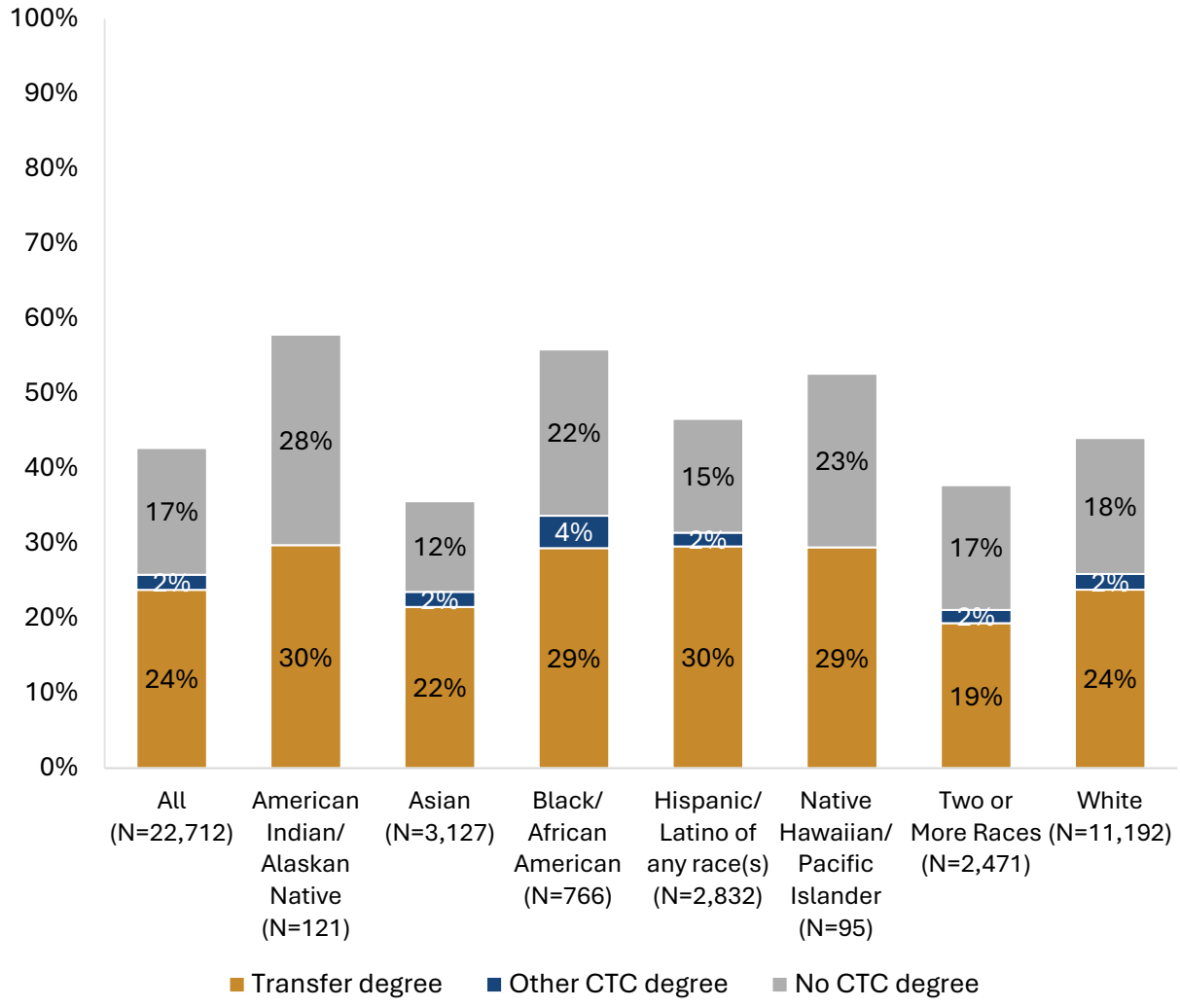
Inequalities in bachelor's degrees awarded for transfer students at public institutions

Bachelor's degree earners in this section include students entering as direct from high school and transfer bachelor's degree seeking students. These students are included because we know their admission status and that they are working toward a bachelor's degree. In the 2021-2022 academic year, transfer students made up 43% of bachelor's degree earners at public four-year institutions. These include transfers from non-CTC institutions.

Across all race/ethnicity groups, transfer degree earners were the largest share of all bachelor's degree earners who were transfer students (Figure 10). Furthermore, transfer students who earned any degree from a CTC before transferring made up more than 20% of the share of bachelor's earners across all race/ethnicity groups.

Transfer degrees provide all students another path toward earning a bachelor's degree. Data indicate that traditionally underrepresented students who earn bachelor's degrees are more likely to have earned a transfer degree prior to entry compared to other types of transfer. Among bachelor's degree earners who were transfer students, Native American/Alaskan Native, Black/African American, Hispanic/Latino, or Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander were more likely to be transfer students with transfer degrees compared to those who were Asian, Two or more races or White.

Figure 10: Share of bachelor's earners among transfer students by transfer entry type and race/ethnicity, 2021-2022



Source: WSAC staff analysis of PCHEES bachelor's degree completions for academic year 2021-2022.

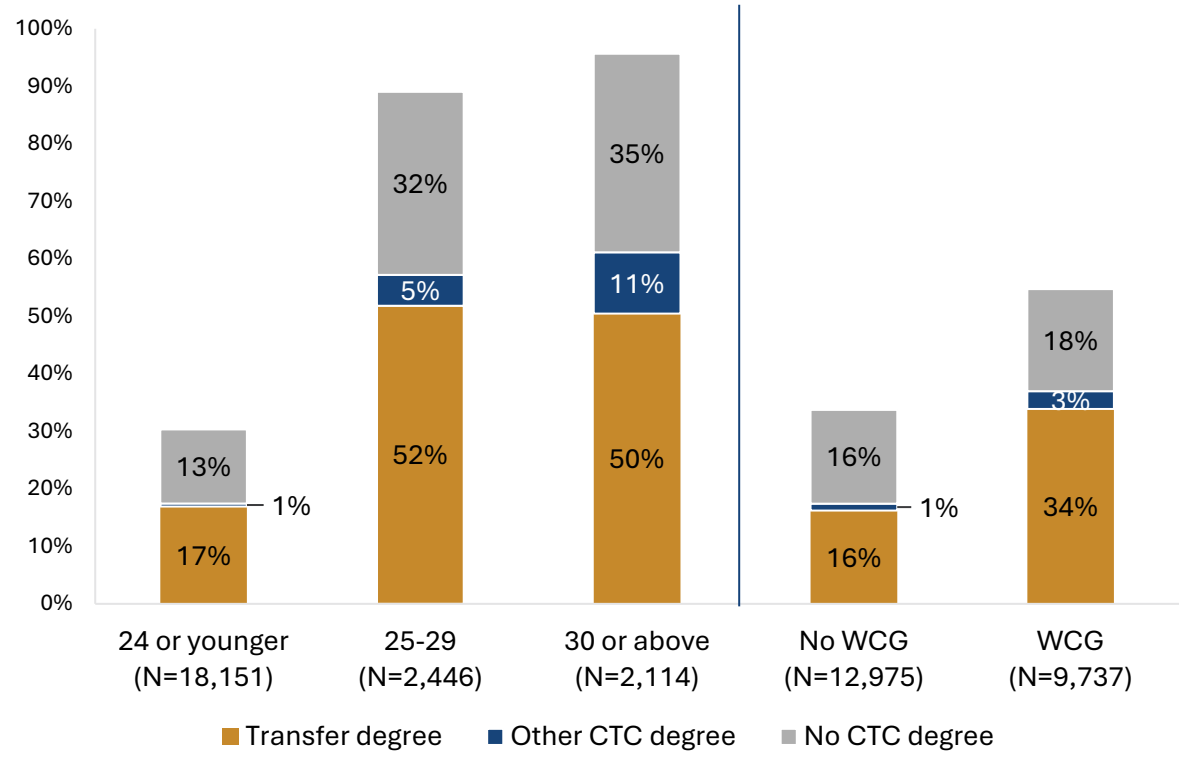
Notes: Bachelor's degree earners include first-time bachelor's earners entering directly from high school and transfer students. These are selected from the latest available year of awards (2021-2022). Counts < 10 are suppressed.

Transfer entry types include transfer degree, other CTC degree, and no CTC degree. See glossary for additional definitions.

For bachelor's degree earners in the 2021-2022 academic year, data indicate certain age groups were more likely to have enrolled with a transfer degree: 52% of students 25-29 years old enrolled with a transfer degree compared to 17% of students 24 and younger. Because of this, it appears that the vertical transfer pathway is commonly used amongst adult learners when they pursue bachelor's degrees.

Similarly, earners who received need-based aid via the Washington College Grant (WCG) were more likely to have enrolled with a transfer degree: 34% WCG recipients enrolled with a transfer degree while only 16% of students with no WCG had the same transfer entry type (Figure 11). This shows that, in general, transfers who qualify for WCG because of low income may consider the transfer degree an accessible option to complete a bachelor's degree.

Figure 11: Share of bachelor's earners among transfer students by transfer entry type, age, WCG status, 2021-2022



Source: WSAC staff analysis of PCHEES bachelor's degree completions for academic year 2021-2022.

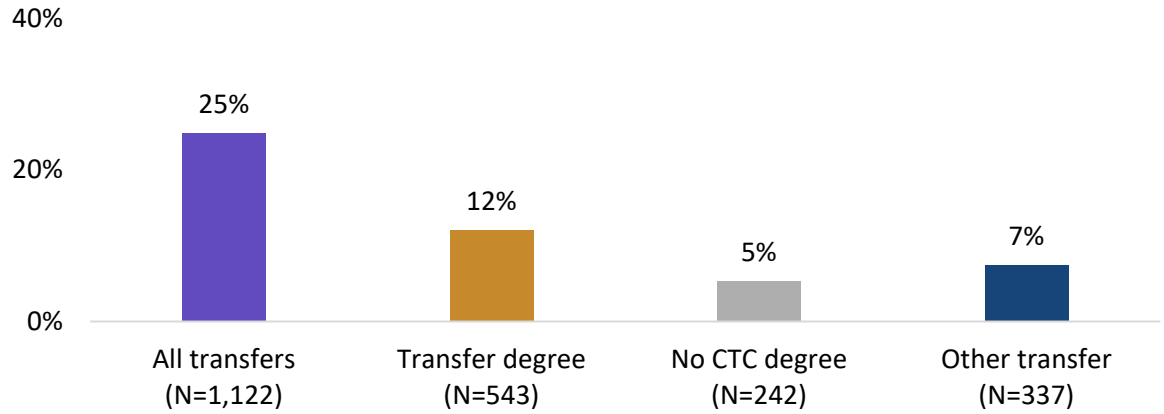
Notes: Bachelor's degree earners include first-time bachelor's earners entering directly from high school and transfer students. These are selected from the latest available year of awards (2021-2022). Counts < 10 are suppressed.

'No WCG' refers to students who did not receive the Washington College Grant. 'WCG' refers to students who received the Washington College Grant. Transfer entry types include transfer degree, other CTC degree, and no CTC degree. See glossary for additional definitions.

Bachelor's degrees awarded to transfer students at Independent Colleges of Washington (ICW) member campuses

In the 2021-2022 academic year, graduates with transfer degrees made up the largest proportion of transfers who graduated from ICW member institutions (Figure 12). Over 24% of the bachelor's degree earners at the ICW member campuses were transfer students from a CTC or another institution. Approximately 12% of the students who earned bachelor's degrees at these campuses transferred in with a transfer degree, 5% transferred from a CTC without a degree, and 7% engaged in another type of transfer including transfer students from other states.

Figure 12: Share of bachelor's degree earners at the ICW member campuses by transfer entry type, 2021-2022



Source: WSAC staff analysis of ICW bachelor's degree completions for 2021-22 from data received from seven of the eight ICW institutions that are DTA signatories. See Technical Appendix or participating institutions.

Notes: Transfer entry types include transfer degree, CTC transfer, and other transfer. 'Other transfer' entry type at ICW refers to transfer students who did not attend a CTC. See glossary for additional definitions.

First-time bachelor's earners are selected from the 2021-2022 academic year.

Bachelor's graduation rates of transfer students compared to direct entry students at public four-year institutions

It is important to consider how transfer students perform compared to other students at four-year institutions. Washington's publicly available data does not include information on completion for transfer degree recipients specifically, but data on bachelor's degree completion rates for transfer students offers some insights to this.

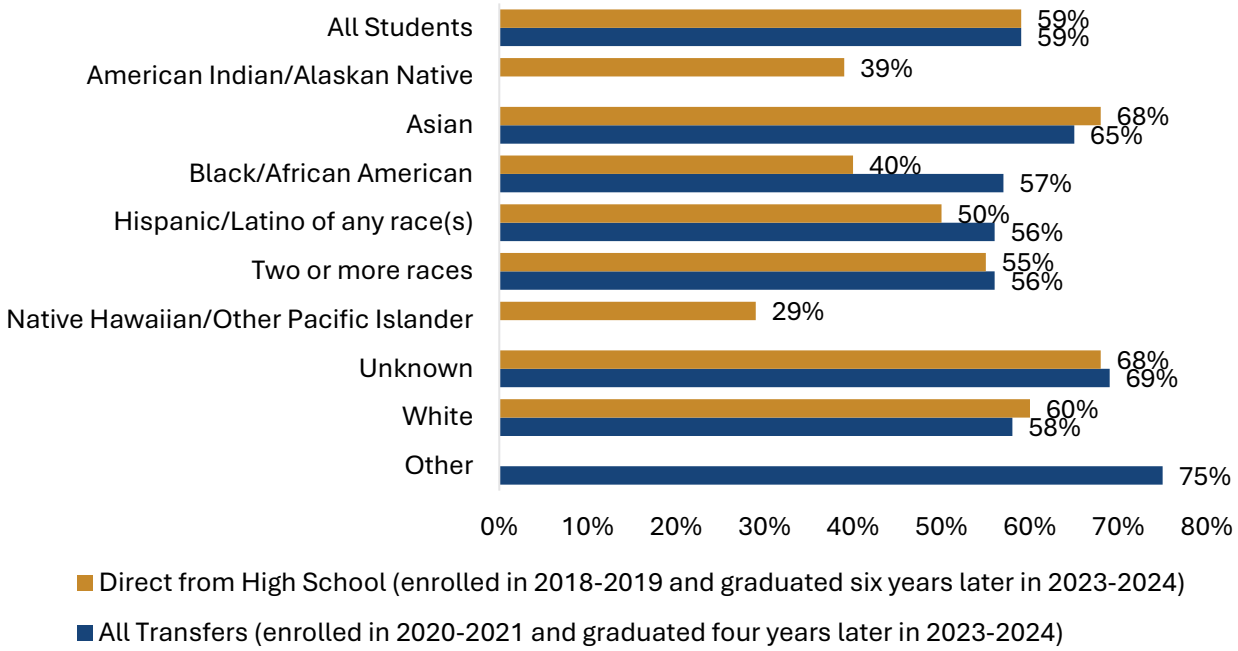
Interestingly, in the 2023-2024 academic, the six-year graduation rate of direct entry students in is identical to the four-year graduation rate of transfer students (Figure 13). After transferring to bachelor's institution in 2020-2021, the four-year graduation rate of transfer students was 59%. For students who directly enrolled in a bachelor's degree program after high school in 2018-2019, their six-year graduation rate was 59%. Transfer degrees are designed to be completed within two years at a CTC, however some may

complete this degree in more, or less time than expected. Comparing the four-year graduation rate of transfer students at a four-year institution to the six-year graduation rate of direct entry students compares a total of six years of postsecondary education.

At the bachelor's level, transfer students include transfer students of any type; some transfer from a CTC with or without a degree and others may transfer from another four-year institution. Although the overall graduation rates are comparable, certain race/ethnicity groups were more likely to graduate within four years after transferring from a CTC to a public four-year institution as opposed to directly enrolling and graduating within six years.

In 2024, 40% of Black/African American students who had directly enrolled in public four-year institutions graduated within six years compared to 57% of Black students who transferred and graduated within four years. In contrast, Asian and White students were more likely to graduate from a public four-year institution in six years by directly enrolling compared to students who decided to transfer.

Figure 13: Four-year bachelor's graduation rate of transfer students compared to the six-year bachelor's graduation rate of students who enroll directly from high school by race/ethnicity, 2023-2024 graduation year



Source: PCHEES Dashboard - Graduation/Continuation

Note: The PCHEES does not report the number of students who graduate on this dashboard. For 'American Indian/Alaskan Native' and 'Native Hawaiian/Other Pacific Islander' students, transfer data are not available. For 'Other' students, direct from high school data are not available. 'All transfers' include students of any type of

transfer, including but not limited to students who transferred to a public four-year institution from CTC with or without transfer degrees, or students who transferred from other public or private four-year institutions.

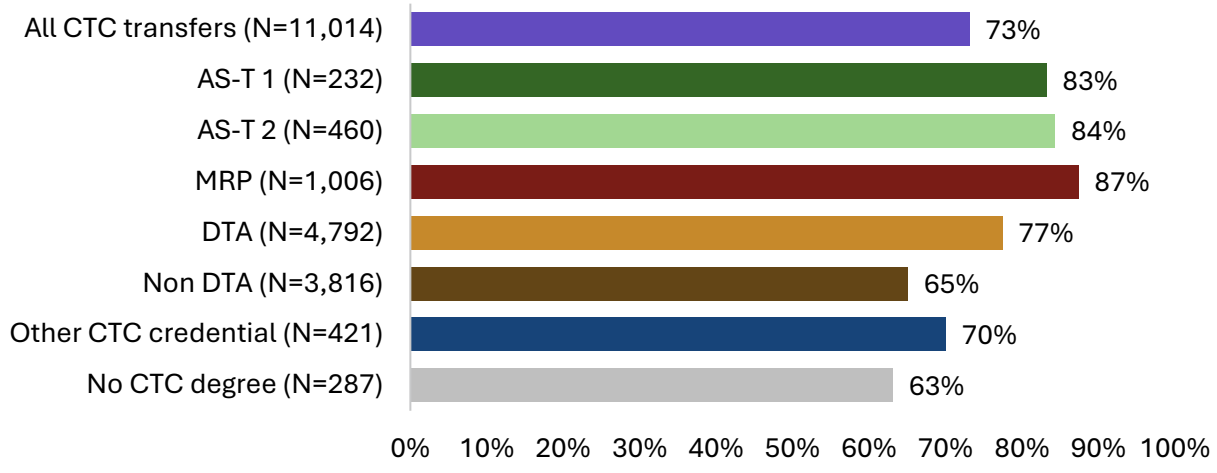
Bachelor's graduation rates depending on transfer entry type at public four-year institutions

The following sections examine the bachelor's graduation rates of CTC students within four years after transferring to a public four-year institution. This is limited to CTC students to highlight the difference in outcomes based on CTC degree type with which a student entered the four-year institution. While CTC students may earn multiple CTC degrees before entering a four-year institution, the analysis in this section selects a single degree a student earns, giving precedence to transfer degrees.

Students' four-year bachelor's graduation rate varies depending on the type of transfer degree earned at a CTC (Figure 14). The four-year graduation rate at public four-year institutions for all CTC transfer students who transferred in 2017-2018 was 73%. However, the rate varies by transfer degree type. Most notably, students who earned an AS-T 1, AS-T 2 or any major related program (MRP) degree each had higher graduation rates than students with a DTA or other transfer types.

The public four-year institution graduation rates for all CTC students were relatively high at 73%.

Figure 14: Bachelor's degree graduation rate for CTC students within four years of transferring in academic year 2017-2018 by CTC degree entry type



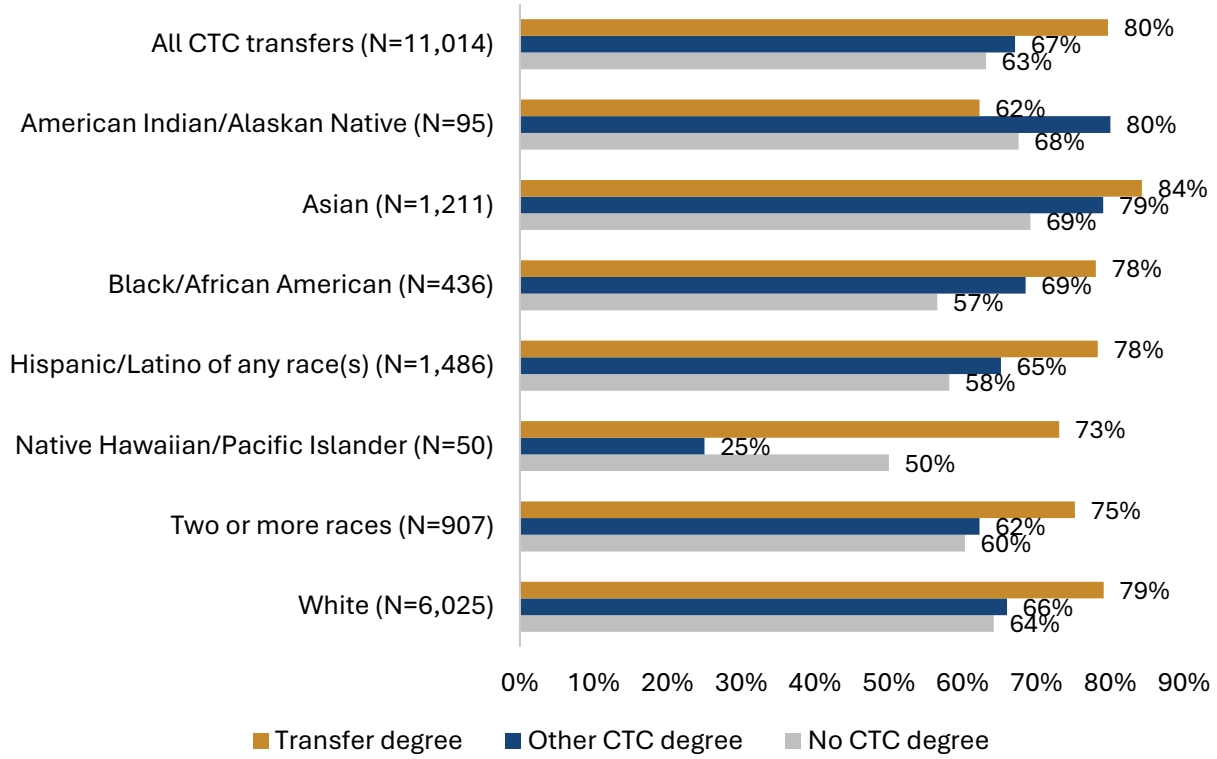
Source: WSAC staff analysis of PCHEES bachelor's degree completion rates for Washington public two-year academic transfer students who entered Washington public four-year institutions as transfer students in the 2017-2018 academic year (graduated by the end of 2021-22).

Note: The following are transfer degrees: Associate in Science-Transfer Track 1 (AS-T1), Associate in Science-Transfer (AS-T2), Major Related Programs (MRP), Associate of Arts DTA. 'Non DTA' refers to bachelor's degree seeking transfer students who earned an associate degree that was not a DTA prior to entry. 'Other CTC credential' and 'No CTC degree' entry types are included. See glossary for additional definitions.

Inequalities in the bachelor's graduation rate of transfer students

The four-year bachelor's degree graduation rate is higher among transfer students who earned a transfer degree compared to other types of transfer students. In fact, across nearly all race/ethnicity groups, apart from American Indian/Alaskan Native students, students with transfer degrees were more likely to graduate within four-years of transferring to a four-year institution than all other transfer entry types. For Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander students in particular, students with transfer degrees were almost three times as likely to graduate within four years compared to those who enrolled with 'other CTC degree' transfer entry type (Figure 15).

Figure 15: Bachelor's degree graduation rate of CTC students within four years of transferring in academic year 2017-2018 by transfer entry type and race/ethnicity



Source: WSAC staff analysis of PCHEES bachelor's degree graduation rates for Washington public two-year academic transfer students who entered Washington public four-year institutions as a transfer students in the 2017-2018 cohort.

Notes: Transfer entry types include transfer degree, other CTC degree, and no CTC degree. See glossary for additional definitions.

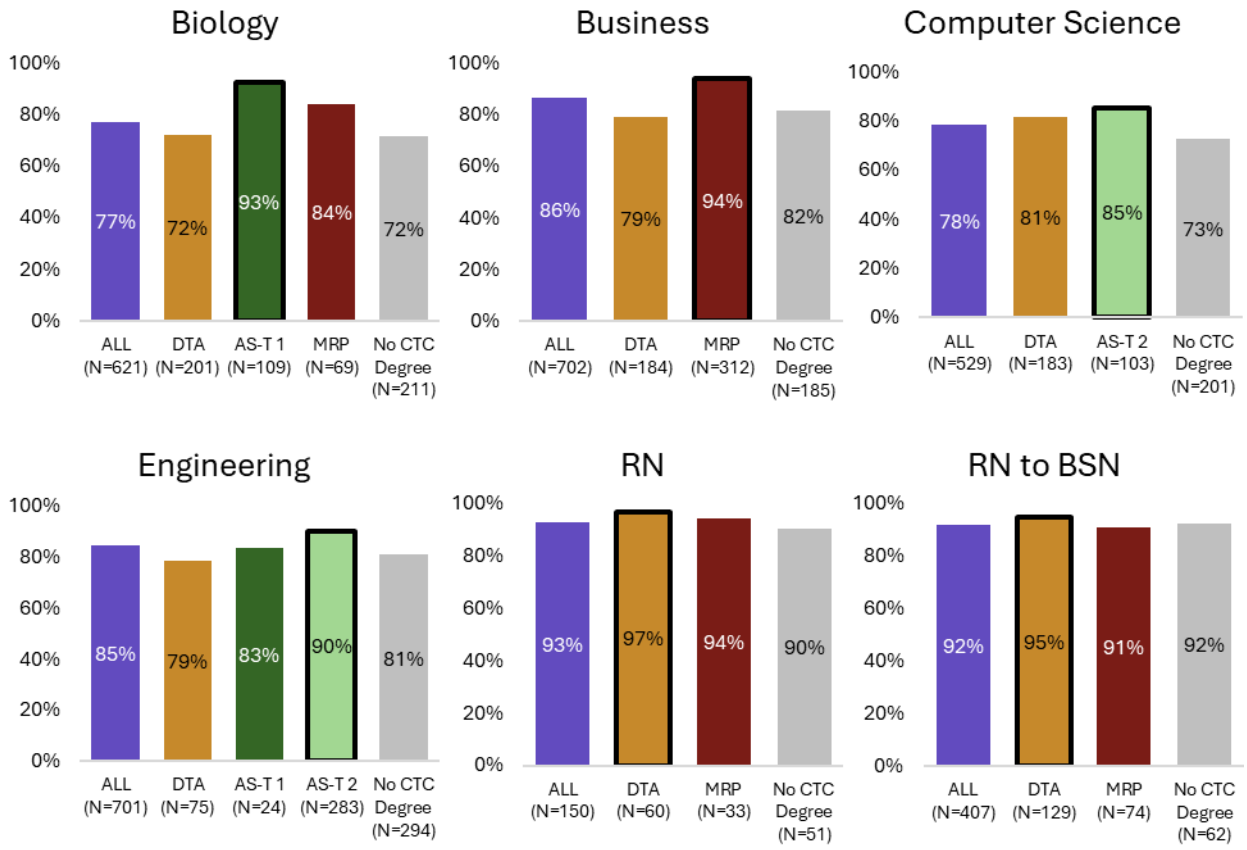
Bachelor's graduation rates for specific majors

Major related program (MRP) and associate of science-transfer (AS-T) degrees were developed to help CTC students seamlessly transfer from a CTC to a public four-year institution in specific majors. The four-year graduation rate at public four-year institutions varies by both major and the type of transfer degree a CTC student had upon transfer.

CTC students who earned MRP and AS-T degrees were more likely to earn a bachelor's degree within four years of transferring to public four-year institutions than other transfer degree types within the same majors. For Biology majors, CTC students who earned an AS-T 1(93%) or an MRP (84%) were more likely to graduate in four years compared to other transfer degree types. Among Business majors, the highest graduation rate was students with an MRP (94%). For CTC students who majored in Computer Science, those with an AS-T 2 had the highest graduation rate (85%). The MRP includes Computer Science track, but because of low headcounts, the rate is not included in Figure 18. Similarly, Engineering majors who had earned an AS-T 1(83%) or AS-T 2 (90%) were more likely to graduate within four years than those with other transfer degrees.

The MRP includes tracks specifically designed for Pre-Nursing (RN) and Nursing (RN to BSN) majors. Notably, among RN majors, CTC transfer students with a standard DTA had a higher four-year graduation rate (97%) than those with an MRP (94%). For RN to BSN majors, students with a DTA also had the highest graduation rate (95%), compared to 91% for those with an MRP (Figure 18). It is important to note that while DTA does not provide RN training, students can be concurrently complete CTC workforce degrees and a transfer degree. Since precedence was given to transfer degrees in this analysis, further investigation would be required to parse out the sequence of CTC degrees RN to BSN students earn before entry into a four-year institution.

Figure 16: Bachelor's degree completion rate for CTC students within four years of transferring in academic year 2017-2018 by transfer degree type and major



Source: WSAC staff analysis of PCHEES bachelor's degree completion rates for Washington public two-year academic transfer students who entered Washington public four-year institutions as transfer students in the 2017-2018 cohort.

Note: The following are the transfer degrees: Associate in Science for Transfer Track 1 (AS-T 1), Associate in Science for Transfer Track 2 (AS-T 2), and Direct Transfer Agreement degree (DTA [this does not include any MRP]), and Major Related Programs (MRP). Non DTA' refers to bachelor's degree seeking transfer students who earned a degree that was not a DTA prior to entry. 'No CTC degree' entry types are included. See glossary for additional definitions.

Transfer degree types with small cohort counts (<20) are suppressed.

Development of additional transfer degrees

The Computer Science MRP has been revised and updated, with a start date effective September 1, 2025. This degree will replace the 2016 degree and computer science track in the AS-T 2 as of September 1, 2027.

Other initiatives to improve transfer efficiency

Washington's transfer entities engage in independent projects to improve the opportunities available to transfer students and identify areas for attaining additional

pertinent data. Within this framework, there are several ongoing initiatives that are shaping how students navigate the transfer pathway. These initiatives include:

The Universal Transfer Explorer Project. Transfer Explorer is a public, up-to-date, authoritative credit mobility platform that allows students to explore how courses they have taken in the past or may take in the future may transfer towards a college degree program requirements. Participating institutions are automating a regular data feed that includes evaluated course equivalencies, course catalog information, and program requirements. ITHAKA S+R leads this work, with the Washington Student Achievement Council serving as an intermediary to provide grant funding to Washington's participating institutions including Washington State University, Shoreline Community College and Columbia Basin College.

Pathways to the Liberal Arts. The Independent Colleges of Washington (ICW), with support from the Teagle Foundation and the Arthur Vining Davis Foundation, has created a transfer scholarship fund to support vertical transfer processes especially among underserved and low-income students.

STEM Transfer Partnerships. University of Washington's Community College Research Initiatives' STEM Transfer Partnerships (STP) aim to improve transfer and completion rates for low-income STEM students. This program focuses on using intentional relationships and partnerships to improve the vertical transfer outcomes for STEM students.

Conclusion

Washington's transfer policies and collaborative efforts with partners matter for students. Transfer degrees provide another pathway to earning a bachelor's degree and as a result, contribute to meaningful improvements in postsecondary attainment statewide.

Since the 2023 transfer report, updated data on the three main vertical transfer indicators show that Washington students benefit from policies that center transfer students' needs, but disparities persist throughout the transfer pathway. Overall, the percent of students enrolled in CTC with intent to transfer (including award seeking Running Start students) has stabilized since the Fall 2023, but participation in transfer degrees varies by race/ethnicity: 66% of Asian students enrolled in transfer degrees while 48% of American Indian/Alaskan Native students and 47% of the students who did not report their race pursued transfer degrees. Since the 2021-2022 academic year, both the number of transfer degrees, and the number of major related program (MRP) and associate science-transfer (AS-T) degrees awarded have decreased.

There are disparities in which student groups were more likely to graduate within four years after transferring to a public four-year institution. Across nearly all race/ethnicity groups, students with a transfer degree were more likely to complete their bachelor's degree within four years compared to other types of transfer students. However, American Indian/Alaskan Native students who transferred with another type of CTC degree had higher bachelor's degree completion rates compared to those with a transfer degree, at 80%. Additionally, the four-year graduation rate of transfer students at public four-year institutions is the same as the six-year graduation rate of direct entry students.

After transferring to a four-year public institution, the four-year bachelor's graduation rates vary by transfer degree type. Transfer students with MRP degrees had a higher four-year bachelor's degree graduation rate than transfers with a DTA. The four-year graduation rate for students who transferred with AS-T 1, AS-T 2, and MRP were 5 – 10 percentage points higher than those who transferred with a DTA. At public four-year institutions, students who majored in Biology, Business, Computer Science, and Engineering, and had earned a relevant MRP degree were more likely to graduate in four years than CTC students pursuing the same major with other transfer degree types. Interestingly, Nursing and RN to BSN majors with a DTA had higher graduation rates compared to CTC transfers who entered with a relevant MRP or AS-T degree.

As Washington continues to address challenges within the transfer pathway, there is an opportunity to further develop the system to reduce disparities across different groups. Ongoing initiatives to promote and increase participation in Washington's transfer degrees offer students the opportunity to make their postsecondary education suit their goals. As we continue to work toward the statewide postsecondary attainment goal, recognizing the diverse needs of students is imperative to developing strategies that meaningfully support students in the vertical transfer process.

Glossary

Associate of Science Transfer (AS-T)	Coursework for the Associate of Science-Transfer (AS-T) programs at CTC focus on math and science courses for students preparing for a bachelor's STEM degree, while covering a more limited set of general education requirements. There are two types of Associate of Science Transfer (AS-T) programs.
Associate of Science Transfer Track 1 (AS-T 1)	Associate of Science-Transfer Track 1 (AS-T 1) includes coursework relevant for majors relating to biological sciences, environmental/resource sciences, chemistry, geology and earth science. For transfers earning bachelor's degrees, 'AS-T 1' refers to bachelor's degree seeking transfer students who earned an AS-T 1or AS-T/MRP prior to entry.
Associate of Science Transfer Track 2 (AS-T 2)	Associate of Science-Transfer Track 2 (AS-T 2) includes coursework relevant to majors relating to engineering, engineering technology, computer science, physics and atmospheric sciences. For transfers earning bachelor's degrees, AS-T 2 refers to bachelor's degree seeking transfer students who earned an AS-T 2 or AS-T/MRP prior to entry.
Direct Transfer Agreement (DTA)	The Direct Transfer Agreement (DTA) degree is a two-year degree for students who intend to pursue bachelor's degrees. This degree is designed so that students can complete lower division general education requirements for most bachelor's degrees at Washington's public four-year institutions before transferring to a four-year institution. Not all institutions accept the major related programs (MRP) and associate of science-transfer (AS-T) degrees, but for any college or university that does not accept the MRP, the degree counts as a DTA or AS-T for transfer purposes (Washington State Board for Community and Technical Colleges, n.d.) At four-year institutions, 'DTA' refers to bachelor's degree seeking transfer students who earned a DTA prior to entry.

Major Related Programs (MRP)	Major Related Programs (MRP) are a type of DTA that help students prepare to enroll in specific majors at the bachelor's level and is available in the following content areas: biology, business, computer science, construction management, engineering, mathematics education, music, nursing, practical nursing (ADN and BSN), and pre-nursing. Not all institutions accept the MRP, but for any college or university that does not accept the MRP, the degree counts as a DTA or AS-T for transfer purposes (Washington State Board for Community and Technical Colleges, n.d.). At public four-year institutions, 'MRP' refer to bachelor's degree seeking transfer students who earned an MRP prior to entry.
No CTC Degree	At public four-year institutions, 'No CTC Degree' refers to bachelor's degree seeking transfer students who did not earn a CTC degree prior to entry.
Non DTA	At public four-year institutions, 'Non DTA' refers to bachelor's degree seeking transfer students who earned an associate degree that is not designed for transfer prior to entry. Students in this category are also in the 'Other CTC Degree' category. A student's highest transfer degree prior to enrollment in a public four-year institution is selected to determine transfer degree categories.
Other CTC Credential	'Other CTC Credential' refers to bachelor's degree seeking transfer students who earned a CTC degree that was not intended for transfer to a public four-year institution prior to entry at a public four-year institution (mutually exclusive to 'No CTC Degree' and 'Transfer degree'). Degrees include apprenticeship, credit bearing and non-credit bearing certificates, unique program completion of non-credit occupational training, and associate in applied science (AAS-T).
Running Start	Running Start is a dual enrollment program that allows 11th and 12th grade students to take college courses at any of Washington's CTC and earn both high school and college credit for these classes. (Washington State Board for Community and Technical Colleges, n.d.).

Student Intent	Washington State Board of Community and Technical Colleges (SBCTC) uses student intent categories to identify if students are degree/credential seeking, or only taking discrete classes at CTC (i.e. Intent to transfer, etc.). For credential seeking students, they further classify if students are seeking transfer degrees or professional-technical degrees. Students with an intent to transfer are enrolled in transfer degree programs intended for transfer to a four-year institution (Washington State Board Community and Technical Colleges (SBCTC)).
Transfer Degree	The 'Transfer degree' category includes students who earned the following degrees: AS-T1, AS-T 2, DTA, and MRP at a CTC. At public four-year institutions, 'transfer degree' is used to categorize bachelor's degree seeking transfer students who earned a transfer degree prior to entry.
Vertical transfer	Vertical transfer is when a student begins a two-year degree at a CTC and later enrolls at a four-year institution to pursue a bachelor's degree (National Association for College Admission Counseling (NACAC), n.d.).

Technical Appendix

This technical appendix provides detailed, technical supporting information that explains data sources and definitions used to access transfer efficiency. It has two sections:

- Individualized Data Sources
- Independent Colleges of Washington (ICW) Member Campuses

Individualized Data Sources

WSAC. The WSAC Unit Record Report (URR) is the primary data source for determining Washington College Grant (WCG) receipt. Submission of URR data is mandatory for all institutions participating in Washington State financial aid programs.

ERDC. Data on graduation outcomes were obtained from the Washington State ERDC. This report focuses on two primary sources that ERDC collects and maintains to determine graduation outcomes:

1. **The Public Centralized Higher Education Enrollment System (PCHEES).** The PCHEES system gathers data on individual students attending public colleges and universities. The data span the course of students' postsecondary careers from admissions through graduation. Institutions submit data specifically tailored to the PCHEES system, which applies extensive checks for completeness and consistency.

2. **The data warehouse of SBCTC.** The SBCTC data warehouse compiles administrative data from the system's community and technical colleges. The data warehouse includes student-level information about enrollments and credentials conferred.

Calculation methods:

- **Baccalaureate Degree Earners:** First-time bachelor and Bachelor of Applied Science (BAS) degree earners were select from the latest available year of awards (2021-2022). Students' age, gender, and race/ethnicity were determined from the latest non-missing value in their last enrollment record prior to degree completion. WCG receipt was determined by a student receiving WCG award while enrolled as a first-time bachelor or Bachelor of Applied Science degree seeking student. A first-time bachelor degree seeking student's transfer degree category is determined by the highest level of CTC award earned before their enrollment as a bachelor degree

seeking student at a four-year public institution. A first time BAS degree seeking student's transfer degree category is determined by the highest level of CTC award earned before earning a BAS degree.

- **Bachelor's Degree Graduation Rates:** First time bachelor four-year graduation rates were calculated for 'Baccalaureate Transfer Student' (PCHEES) student type who attended a CTC before their enrollment as a bachelor degree seeking student at a four-year public institution. Student age, gender, race/ethnicity, major, WCG, and transfer degree categories were determined using the same method described for Baccalaureate Degree Earners. Degree graduation rate was determined for new students (where admit term and year equals enrollment term and year) who entered during any term of the academic year. End points for rates were determined by calculating a date four years after initial enrollment as a 'Baccalaureate Transfer Student' (i.e. start term date = 01/9/2017, then end date of four-year range = 01/9/2021).

Independent Colleges of Washington (ICW) Institutions.

ICW compiled the data and shared with WSAC in December 2024. Each participating institution sent anonymized aggregate data for students who graduated in academic years 2019-2020 through 2023-2024.

Participating ICW institutions include:

• Gonzaga University

• Heritage University

• Pacific Lutheran University

• Saint Martin's University

• Seattle Pacific University

• Seattle University

• Whitman College

About the Washington Student Achievement Council

The Washington Student Achievement Council is committed to increasing educational opportunities and attainment in Washington. The Council has three main functions:

- Lead statewide strategic planning to increase educational attainment.
- Administer programs that help people access and pay for college.
- Advocate for the economic, social, and civic benefits of higher education.

The Council has ten members. Four members represent each of Washington's major education sectors: four-year public baccalaureates, four-year private colleges, public community and technical colleges, and K-12 public schools. Six are citizen members, including two current students (one graduate student and one undergraduate student).

If you would like copies of this document in an alternative format, please contact the Washington Student Achievement Council at:

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