



Differential Experiences of Students Originating as Freshmen and Undergraduate Transfer Students to Brooklyn College

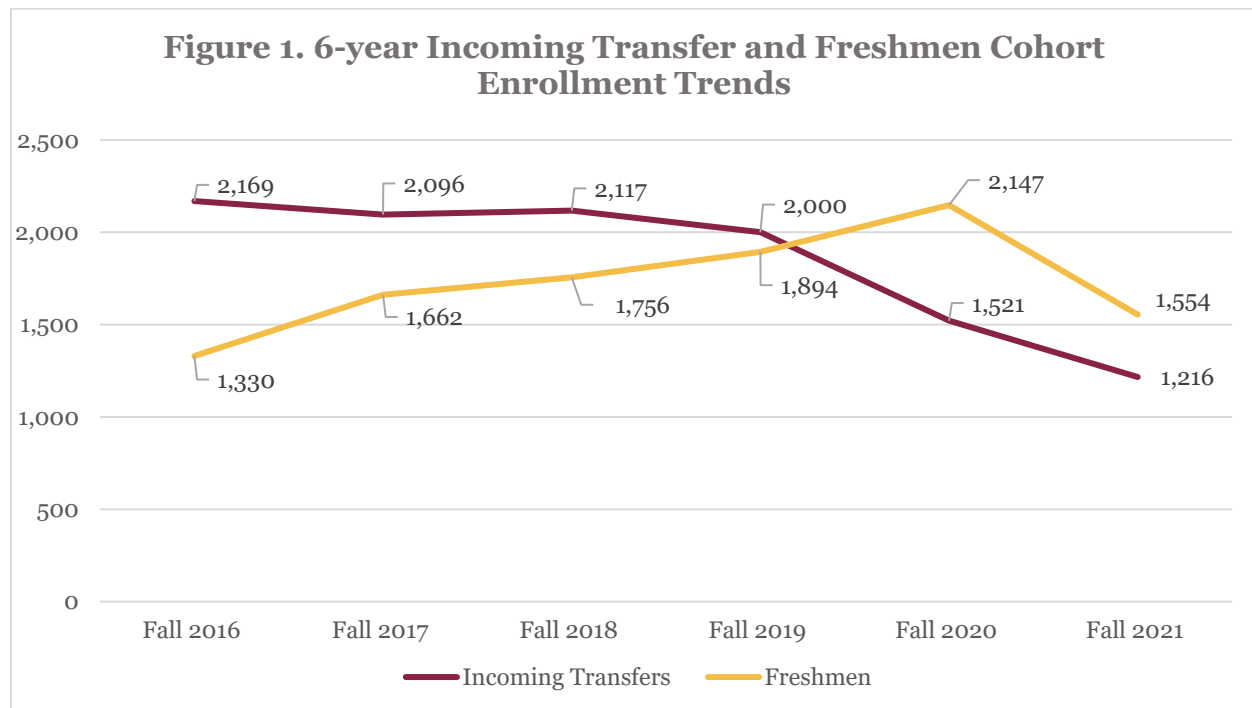
Creating and maintaining the conditions that foster student success in college has never been more important. Approximately 80 percent of high school graduates will need a postsecondary education to prepare them to live an economically self-sufficient life and to deal with the increasingly complex social, political, and cultural issues they will face.

On average, college graduates earn almost a million dollars more over the course of their working lives than those with only a high school diploma (Pennington, 2004). Earning a baccalaureate degree is also one of the leading factors of upward social mobility. Brooklyn College has demonstrated a strong commitment to this outcome.

Recognizing the large percentage of the undergraduate student body entering as

transfers and the historical gap in graduation rates between those who originated as freshmen at Brooklyn College and those who transferred in, Brooklyn College included closing this gap as a part of its most recent Strategic Plan. The College, due to its attentiveness to this key performance indicator, has since seen this gap close.

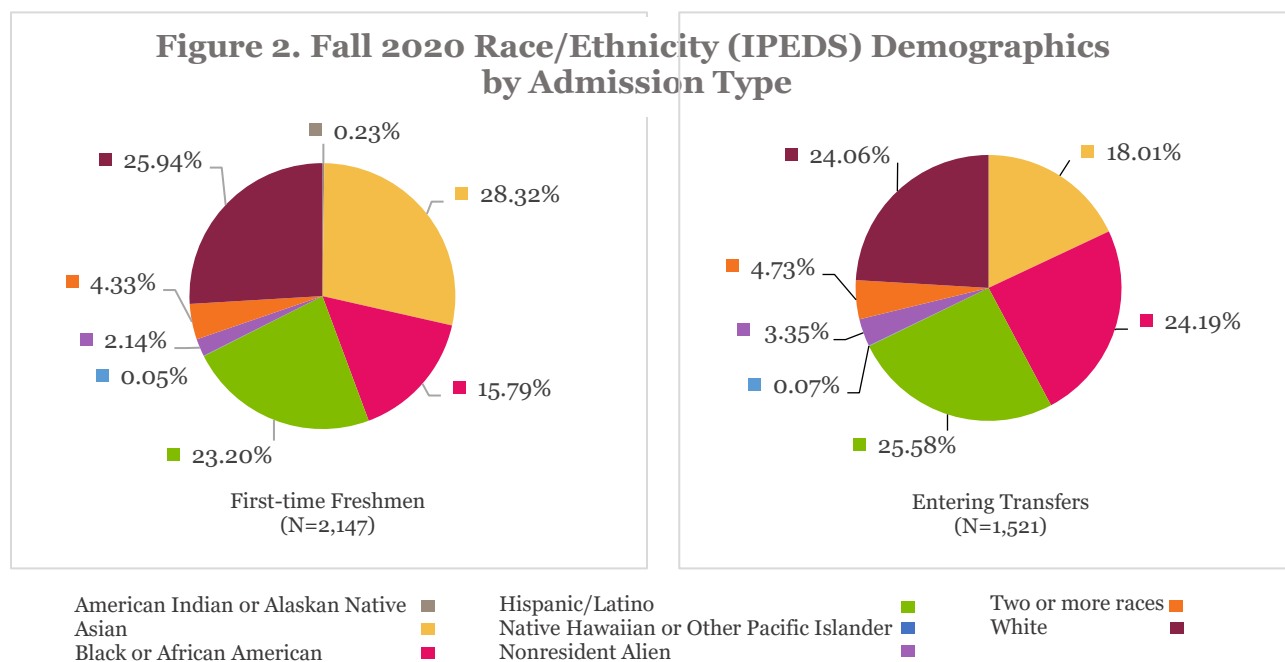
Until recently, Brooklyn College's entering cohorts were comprised of more transfer students than freshmen (see Figure 1). Accordingly, the College has remained committed to ensuring a quality experience for all students, monitoring student outcome and satisfaction data to identify performance gaps and differential experience indicators between students originating as freshmen and its transfer students.



During the fall 2020 semester, Brooklyn College administered the *BC Cares: Student Experience Climate Survey*. This Survey Research Brief accompanies the College-wide *BC Cares: Student Experience Survey Report (2020)*. The Brooklyn College Retention Committee charged Brooklyn College Survey Research Services with examining the differential experiences of its transfer students and students who originated as freshmen. Recognizing that the transfer student population is comprised of a larger proportion of at-risk students, including students from historically underserved populations, it was important to reveal any differential experiences between the two groups, since there is a significantly larger proportion of transfer students who enter the College with socio-economic hardship. On average, transfer students have a higher level of economic disadvantage defined by the students' eligibility

for a Pell Grant, New York Tuition Assistance Program, Aid for Part-Time Study, Elevation and Knowledge, College Discovery, Aid to Families with Dependent Children, or Home Relief. Transfer students are also more likely to be a first-generation college student, that is, students who do not have at least one parent with a baccalaureate degree.

In addition, race/ethnicity distributions differ between these entering groups. In the fall 2020 semester, the demographic distribution according to federally-reported race/ethnicity categories showed that there was a much higher percentage of Black or African American students – an under-represented minority (URM) – among entering transfers (24.19%) than among first-time freshmen (15.79%). The demographic distributions of entering freshmen and transfer students are presented in Figure 2.



When examining the *BC Cares: Student Experience Climate Survey* undergraduate respondents' federally-reported race/ethnicity distributions by their original Brooklyn College admission type, i.e., first-time freshman vs. entering transfer, the survey respondent pool appeared representative of the two populations. The results of the analyses also indicated that survey responses were similar for the majority of the items on the survey, revealing a similar

positive or challenging experience.

However, there were some areas in which the experience of students who originated as freshmen differed from the transfer student experience. A statistical analysis was conducted to determine statistically significant differences with a high level of sensitivity ($p \leq 0.05$). Differences are bulleted and further analyses are presented in Table 1 (pgs. 3 and 4).

Significant Differences in Favor of Transfer Students

- Transfer students have a **more favorable impression of Brooklyn College** (pre-COVID and post-COVID). The change in perception between pre- and post-COVID was effectively consistent for students who originated as transfer students and freshmen;
- Transfer students are more satisfied with the **quality of instruction** and College communication of information than students who originated as freshmen;
- Transfer students expressed a greater level of satisfaction with **campus safety**, in general;
- Transfer students are **more intellectually engaged** through the online learning environment.

Significant Differences in Favor of Students who Originated as Freshmen

- Students who originated as freshmen to Brooklyn College are more satisfied with the availability and quality of information provided by their **academic advisors**;
- Students who originated at Brooklyn College reported they have more **discussions or meetings with their peers** outside of class than transfer students;
- Fewer students who originated as freshmen reported **witnessing acts of prejudice** based on gender identity or sexual orientation and race/ethnicity at Brooklyn College.

Hardships Impacting Transfer Students at a Higher Level

- **Outside Job responsibilities**
- **Family responsibilities, including care for others**
- **Disability issues**
- **Paying for college**
- **Paying for housing and related expenses**
- **Paying for food**

**Table 1. Brooklyn College Cares: Survey of the Student Experience
Undergraduate Responses by Original Admissions Type**

What is your impression of the quality of education at this college...			
Response	<u>First-Time</u>	<u>Entering</u>	<u>Difference</u>
	<u>Freshmen</u>	<u>Transfer</u>	
	Mean	Mean	Mean Δ
prior to Covid-19?	3.67	3.83	0.16
after the onset of Covid-19?	2.97	3.11	0.14

Scale: 1=Very Low 2=Low 3=Average 4=High 5=Very High

Please indicate your level of satisfaction with each of the following academic services at Brooklyn College			
Response	<u>First-Time</u>	<u>Entering</u>	<u>Difference</u>
	<u>Freshmen</u>	<u>Transfer</u>	
	Mean	Mean	Mean Δ
Availability of my academic advisor	3.28	3.16	-0.12
Information provided by my academic advisor(s)	3.39	3.29	-0.10

Scale: 1=Very Dissatisfied 2=Dissatisfied 3=Neither Satisfied nor Dissatisfied 4=Satisfied 5=Very Satisfied

Please indicate your level of satisfaction with each of the following academic, administrative, and educational support aspects of Brooklyn College.			
Response	<u>First-Time</u>	<u>Entering</u>	<u>Difference</u>
	<u>Freshmen</u>	<u>Transfer</u>	
	Mean	Mean	Mean Δ
Overall quality of instruction	3.43	3.56	0.13
Communication of college news/information to students	3.58	3.69	0.10
Communication of COVID-19 updates	3.53	3.71	0.18

Scale: 1=Very Dissatisfied 2=Dissatisfied 3=Neither Satisfied nor Dissatisfied 4=Satisfied 5=Very Satisfied

Please indicate your level of satisfaction with each of the following aspects of the campus culture and environment at Brooklyn College.			
Response	<u>First-Time</u>	<u>Entering</u>	<u>Difference</u>
	<u>Freshmen</u>	<u>Transfer</u>	
	Mean	Mean	Mean Δ
Campus safety, in general	3.65	3.74	0.10

Scale: 1=Very Dissatisfied 2=Dissatisfied 3=Neither Satisfied nor Dissatisfied 4=Satisfied 5=Very Satisfied

How much of a problem are the following to you in being successful at Brooklyn College?			
Response	<u>First-Time</u>	<u>Entering</u>	<u>Difference</u>
	<u>Freshmen</u>	<u>Transfer</u>	
	Mean	Mean	Mean Δ
Outside Job responsibilities	2.31	2.47	0.16
Family responsibilities, including care for others	2.28	2.46	0.17
Disability issues	1.61	1.77	0.16
Paying for college	2.24	2.68	0.45
Paying for housing and related expenses	2.06	2.50	0.44
Paying for food	1.84	2.25	0.41

Scale: 1=Not a Problem 2=Minor Problem 3=Moderate Problem 4=Major Problem

Please respond to the following questions about your academic experiences at Brooklyn College. How frequently have you...			
Response	<u>First-Time</u>	<u>Entering</u>	<u>Difference</u>
	<u>Freshmen</u>	<u>Transfer</u>	
	Mean	Mean	Mean Δ
been intellectually engaged through the online learning environment?	3.06	3.30	0.24
had discussions or meetings with classmates outside of class?	2.99	2.87	-0.12
witnessed acts of prejudice based on gender identity or sexual orientation at Brooklyn College?	1.44	1.56	0.12
witnessed acts of prejudice based on race/ethnicity at Brooklyn College?	1.51	1.63	0.13

Scale: 1=Never 2=Rarely 3=Occasionally 4=Frequently 5=Very Frequently

Shading indicates statistically significantly worse for transfer students