



# Demographics and Postsecondary Enrollment for Students with Academic Transfer Degrees



**Education Research and Data Center**

Forecasting and Research

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## Author

Bonnie Nelson, EdD

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## About the ERDC

The research presented here uses data from the Education Research and Data Center, located in the Washington Office of Financial Management. ERDC works with partner agencies to conduct powerful analyses of learning that can help inform the decision-making of Washington legislators, parents, and education providers. ERDC's data system is a statewide longitudinal data system that includes de-identified data about people's preschool, educational and workforce experiences.

## Address

Education Research and Data Center  
106 11th Ave SW, Suite 2200  
PO Box 43124  
Olympia, WA 98504-3113

## Phone

360-902-0599

## Fax

360-725-5174

## Email

[erdc@ofm.wa.gov](mailto:erdc@ofm.wa.gov)

## Why is it important to examine transfer student trends?

For Washington students, deciding to transfer to a four-year institution after they complete their transfer degree has significant financial implications for their future. Higher education is typically associated with higher wages (excluding apprenticeships). Fourteen years after graduation, the median earnings for Washington high school graduates that earn an associate degree is \$44,100, while the median for students with a bachelor's degree is \$60,700.<sup>1</sup>

ERDC and the Washington Student Achievement Council published several reports to understand more about transfer students (Greene, 2017; 2019; Wootan, 2021). These reports contributed to the identification of trends related to successful transfer students. Looking at successful students is a helpful tool to assess our education systems. However, it is also important to examine the students that do not pursue transfer opportunities. Therefore, this report takes an alternative approach, asking "What do we know about students that *don't* transfer to four-year public universities?" Identifying whether there are inequitable trends for transfer seeking students related to gender, race, and economic status can aid educators and policymakers to promote educational equity.

One of the reasons that previous studies focused on successful transfer students is that it is hard to track Community & Technical College (CTC) students after they earn a transfer degree if they do not enroll in another institution of higher education<sup>2</sup>. CTC's do not always have access to information about students after they leave their school. Four-year institutions can examine whether students that complete bachelor's degrees also earned an associate degree in their educational path, but do not have information on students that never arrived. This report addresses this gap in understanding by linking two-year and four-year student data to follow a specific population: *CTC academic transfer students who complete their transfer degree, but do not enroll in Washington public four-year institutions immediately after completion of their degree.* The overarching questions in this report are:

- 1) How many academic transfer students who completed their transfer degree at Washington CTC's did not enroll at a Washington public four-year institution within three years?**
- 2) What are the demographics of this group of students?**

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<sup>1</sup> Retrieved from ERDC [High School Graduate Outcomes Dashboard](#).

<sup>2</sup> An academic transfer degree enables students to begin work on their bachelor's degree and then transfer to a four-year institution. Washington CTC's offer multiple types of academic transfer degrees: Associate in Arts Direct Transfer Agreement, Associate in Science-Transfer Degree, and Major Related Program. CTC's also offer professional-technical certificates and degrees.

## Data and analytical approach

To explore these questions and provide context for the findings, this report compares students who completed their transfer degree and enrolled in college courses at a Washington public four-year institution (hereafter referred to as WA public four-year) with students that completed their transfer degree but did not enroll in college courses at a WA public four-year (see Appendix A for data tables).

The data for this report came from the ERDC P20W data warehouse. This data warehouse links administrative records from several contributing education state agencies. Data sources for this report include the Washington State Board for Community and Technical Colleges (SBCTC) data warehouse and the Public Centralized Higher Education Enrollment System (PCHEES) housed at the Office of Financial Management (OFM). Data from out of state schools, private institutions, and CTC Bachelor’s<sup>3</sup> programs are not included in this initial descriptive analysis, but could be considered in future analyses.

ERDC analyzed enrollment rates at WA public four-years for students with academic transfer degrees over a three-year period. First, we identified the records of students who enrolled in a Washington CTC in the 2016-2017 year and completed an academic transfer degree in a Washington CTC in either the 2016-17 or 2017-18 academic years. Then, we matched these student records to college enrollment records for the WA public four years for the 2016-17, 2017-18, and 2018-19 academic years to determine enrollment at a WA public-four year. We used multiple academic years to maximize the number of students included in the analysis, which results in less time to transfer to a 4-year institution for students who complete their degree in 2017-18. Finally, we disaggregated the results by gender, race, and economic status.



*Note: \*SBCTC data; \*\*PCHEES data*

<sup>3</sup> According to SBCTC, the number of applied baccalaureate graduates is increasing, from a headcount of 3,401 students in 2017 to 5,445 students in 2021. Based on data from Wootan (2021), about 14% of bachelor’s degree recipients at WA private universities in 2019-2020 entered with a CTC transfer degree (approximately 200 students).

## Sample

Table 1 shows the total number of students that completed transfer degrees in the 2016-17 and 2017-18 academic years. This report focused on students identified as “academic transfer students” in the SBCTC data. These students declared their intent to earn an academic transfer degree and completed that degree (highlighted in blue in Table 1).

*Table 1: How many students completed a transfer degree in 2016-17 & 2017-18, and did they enroll at a WA public four year in subsequent years?*

	Enrolled at WA public four-year	Did not enroll at WA public four-year	Total
<b>Academic transfer students who completed transfer degree</b>	<i>n</i> = 13,444 % = 45.2%	<i>n</i> = 16,318 % = 54.8	<i>n</i> = 29,762
<b>Non-academic transfer students who completed transfer degree</b>	<i>n</i> = 2,333 % = 29.2%	<i>n</i> = 5,667 % = 70.8%	<i>n</i> = 8,000
<b>Total students who completed a Transfer Degree</b>	<i>n</i> = 15,777 % = 41.8%	<i>n</i> = 21,985 % = 58.2%	<i>n</i> = 37,762

*Note: Total indicates number of students enrolled in WA CTC transfer degree program in the 2016-2017 academic year AND completed a transfer degree in 2016-17 or 2017-18 academic years. “Enrolled” indicates that they enrolled in college level course(s) at a WA public four-year during 2016-17, 2017-18, or 2018-19.*

It is worth noting that each year, there is a group of students who complete their transfer degree, though they did not initially declare their intent to do so. They are excluded from the analysis in this report because the goal here is to focus on students that initially express an interest in transferring. As Table 1 shows, 70.8% of non-academic transfer students that complete a transfer degree did not go on to enroll in a WA public four-year. Attending a four-year university may have never been the goal for these students, so they are excluded to focus in on the subset of students that did express an intent to transfer by purposefully seeking out an academic transfer degree.

## What did we learn about students with academic transfer degrees and their enrollment trends at WA public four-years?

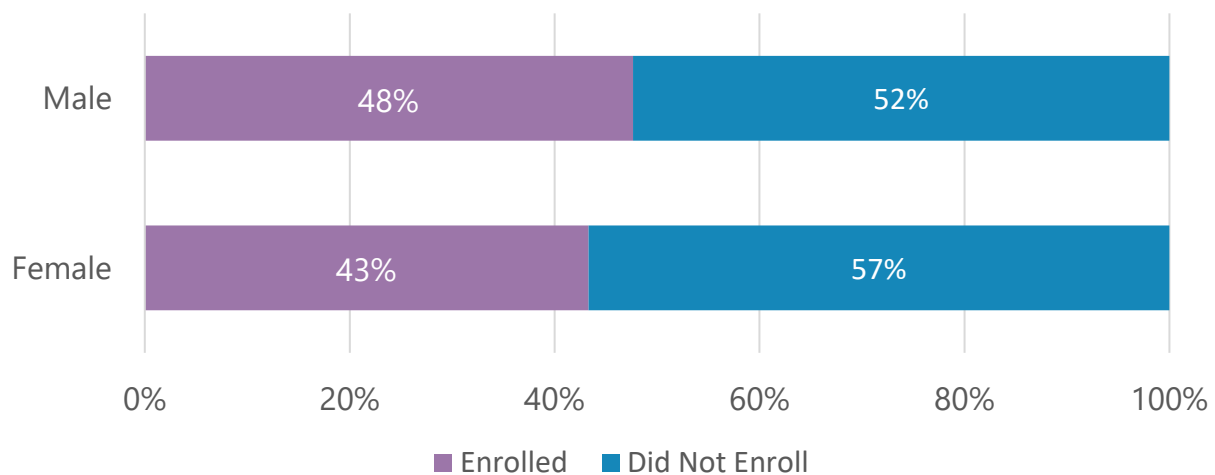
### Gender

In 2016-2017, more female students enrolled in academic transfer programs at Washington CTC's than students who identified with other genders (52% females; 45% males; 3% not reported<sup>4</sup>). Of the students who completed a transfer degree in 2016-17 or 2017-18, 57% identified as female, 42% as male, and less than 1% had an unknown gender identity.

Out of all the female students who completed a transfer degree, 57% did not enroll in a WA public 4-year (see Figure 1). Comparatively, 52% of males who completed a transfer degree did not enroll at a WA public four-year.

In total, 9,683 female students and 6,496 male students completed their transfer degree yet did not go on to enroll at a WA public four-year in the period examined in this report.

*Figure 1: Did transfer degree recipients enroll at WA public four-years at similar rates across gender categories?*

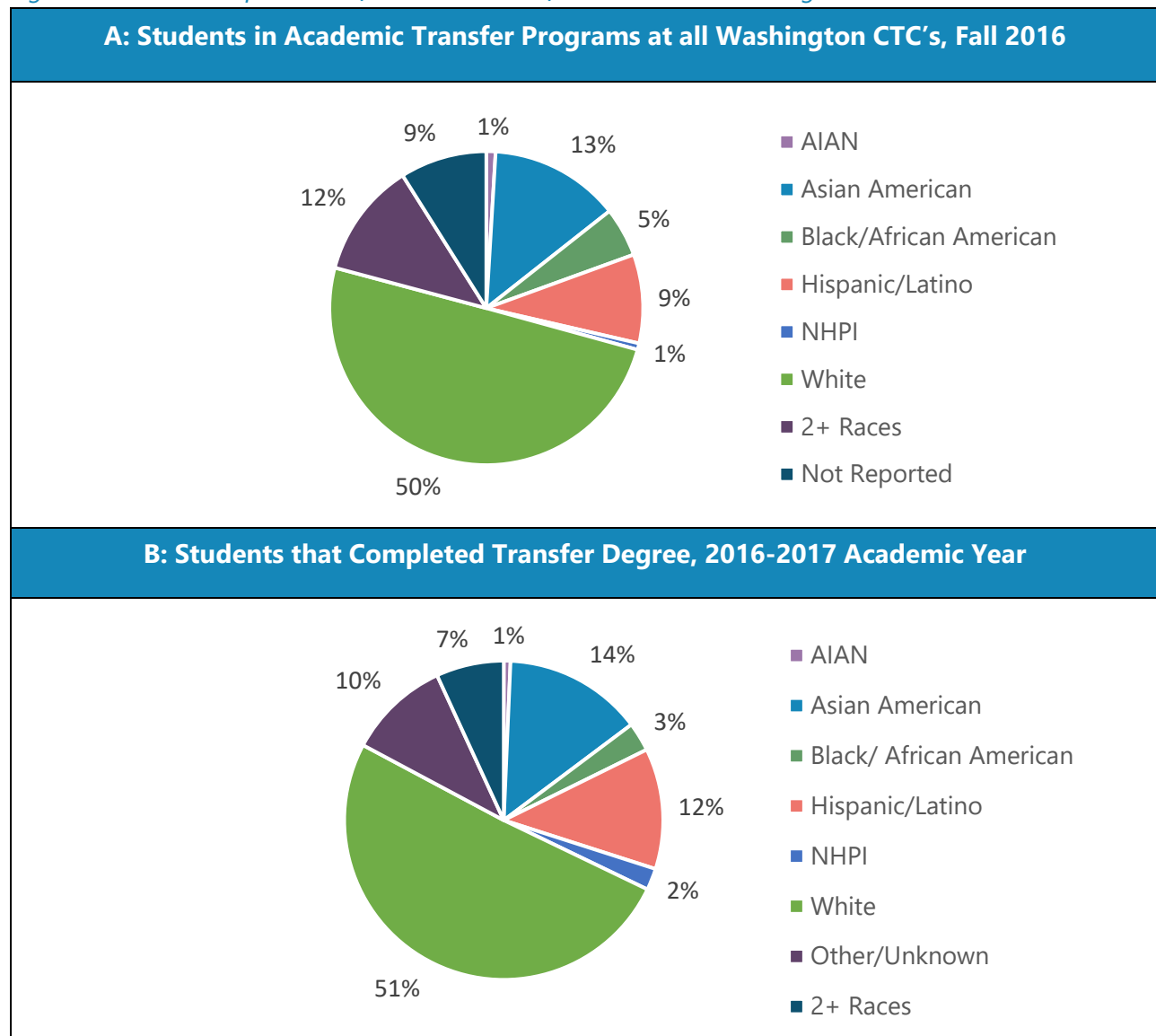


<sup>4</sup> Data retrieved on 12/20/21 from SBCTC Dashboard: <https://www.sbctc.edu/colleges-staff/research/data-public/enrollment-data-dashboard.aspx>. Gender X not available for this academic term.

## Race & Ethnicity

To examine where disparities across racial groups may exist, it is first helpful to understand the racial composition of students attempting to earn academic transfer degrees in Washington CTC's in Fall 2016<sup>5</sup> (see Figure 2, Panel A). Students of color, combined with students who have multiple or unreported racial identities, account for half of the enrollment. White students make up half of the student group, at 50%. Completion rates of transfer degrees follow a relatively similar pattern (Figure 2, Panel B)

Figure 2: Enrollment patterns of academic transfer students at Washington CTC's, 2016-2017

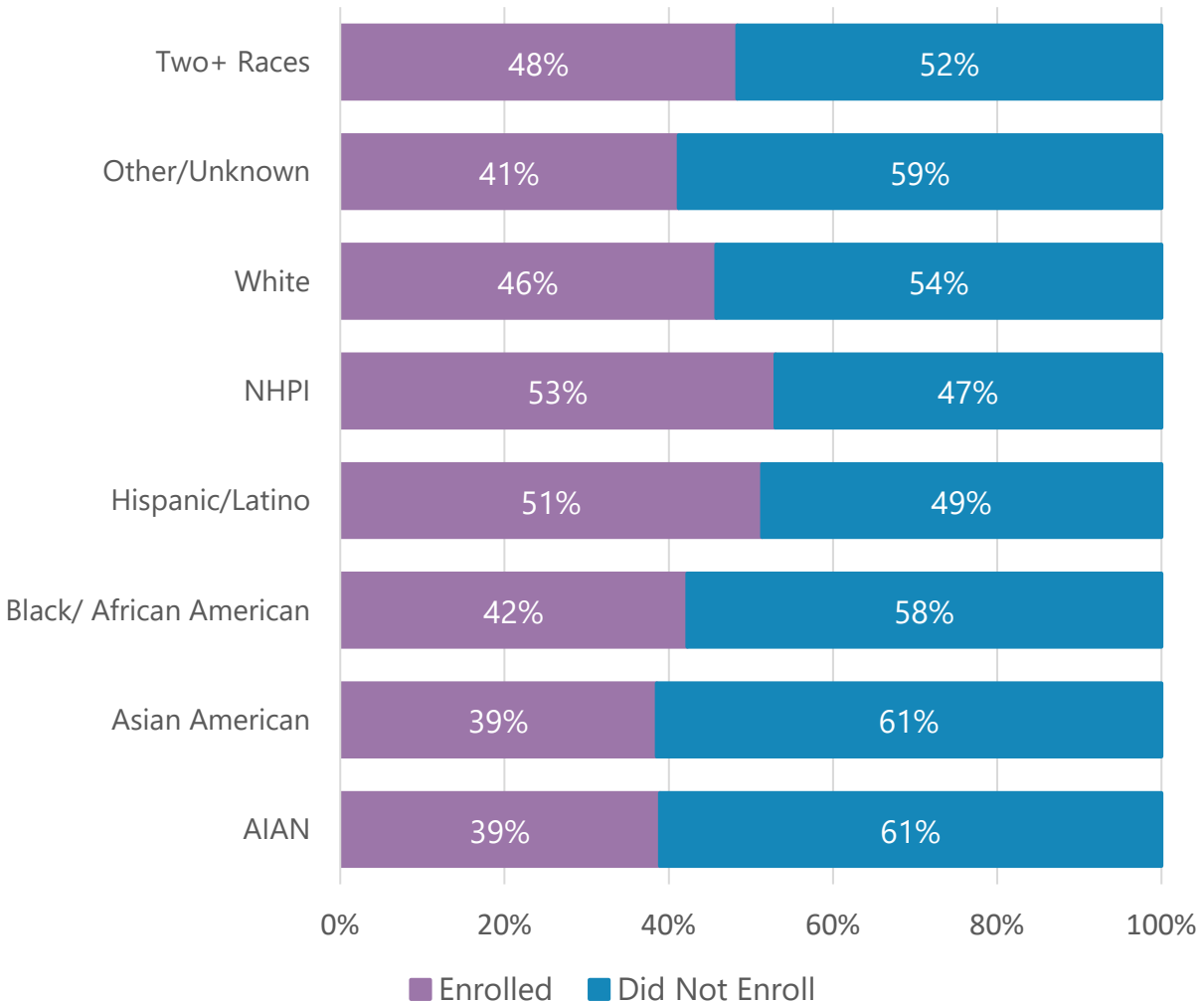


<sup>5</sup> Data retrieved on 12/20/21 from SBCTC Dashboard: <https://www.sbctc.edu/colleges-staff/research/data-public/enrollment-data-dashboard.aspx>

Among students who completed their transfer degrees (the students included in Figure 2, Panel B), a high percentage of students did not go on to enroll at a WA public four-year (see Figure 3). This trend has slight variations but is consistent across all racial groups examined. For example, 61% of Asian and American Indian or Alaskan Native (AIAN) students, as well as 58% of Black or African American students did not enroll in a WA public four-year. 54% of White students and 52% of students that identified with two or more races did not enroll in a WA public four-year. The only racial groups where over 50% of students went on to enroll in WA public four-years were Hispanic or Latino students and Native Hawaiian or other Pacific Islander (NHPI) students.

In total, out of the 16,318 students that completed their transfer degree but did not enroll at a WA public four-year during this time, 8,173 of these students identified as White, while 8,145 identified as students of color or had an unreported racial identity.

*Figure 3: Did transfer degree recipients enroll at WA public four-years at similar rates across racial categories?*





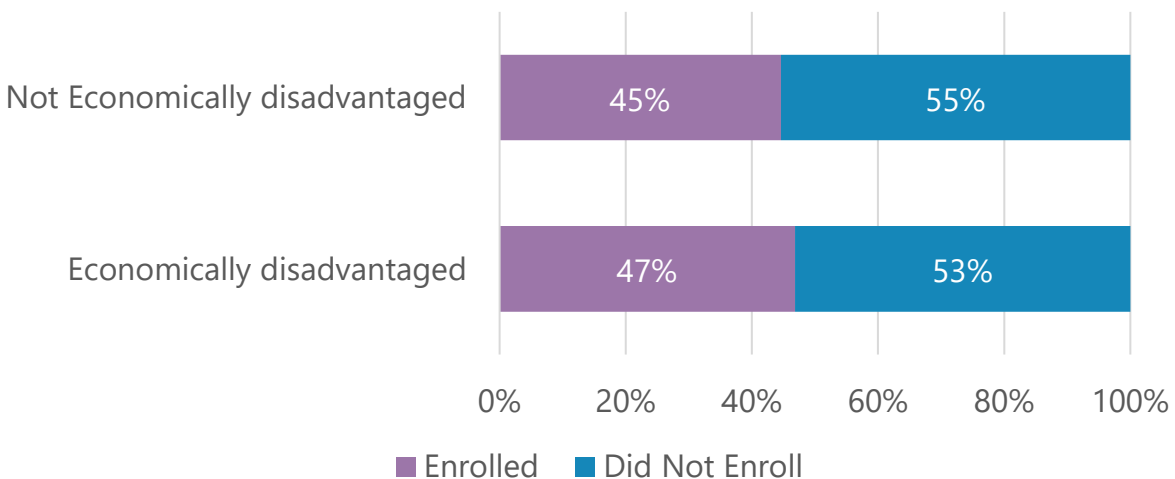
## Economic Status

We used the SBCTC indicator to determine economic status of students. This includes students that received financial aid, a need-based waiver, basic skills waiver, or Running Start low-income waiver, as well as students enrolled in Workfirst, Basic Food, Employment and Training (BFET) or Displaced Homemaker. For students who completed their transfer degree, 26.5% met at least one of those conditions and were considered economically disadvantaged for this report.

Across both economic categories, over half of the students that earned transfer degrees did not go on to enroll at a WA public four-year. 53.2% of economically disadvantaged students did not enroll at WA public four-year, compared to 55.4% of students that were not considered to be economically disadvantaged (see Figure 4).

In terms of the number of students, 4,190 economically disadvantaged students successfully completed their transfer degree but did not enroll at a WA public four-year in the time period analyzed. Nearly three times that amount of students that were not economically disadvantaged, 12,128 total students, did not enroll at a WA public four-year.

*Figure 4: Did transfer degree recipients enroll at WA public four-years at similar rates across economic status categories?*



## What does this mean for students and educators?

In Washington, 16,318 students that completed their transfer degree in 2016 or 2017 did not enroll in a WA public four-year in the state. This is over half (55%) of academic transfer degree recipients.

Although there were slight disparities (for example, a slightly higher percentage of male students that transfer compared to females), this appears to be an issue that occurs at a relatively similar rate across gender, race, and economic level.

This is a cross-sector opportunity that requires support from two-year institutions (CTCs), four-year institutions, and state education entities. Although student supports at four-year institutions are important for student experiences, is not just a problem of getting students to enroll after they complete their degree. In fact, Greene (2019) noted that once students are enrolled at WA four-years, there do not appear to be significant differences between transfer students and direct entry students. Instead, credit accumulation during the first year of their postsecondary career was a stronger predictor of earning their 4-year degree.

Washington education systems should continue to monitor these trends, especially as we observe enrollment declines in CTC's through the COVID-19 pandemic. Understanding the role of CTC baccalaureate programs with students that earn academic transfer degrees could also be included in future reports. Future analyses should also look at intersectional groups of students (for example, rates for race by gender, or economic status by race) and can also consider extra student status information, such as number of years enrollment, number of credits, full-time or part time status.

## References

Greene, T. (2017). Education Research & Data Center. The characteristics and experiences of students who transfer to four-year institutions.

Greene, T. (2019). Education Research & Data Center. The impact of transfer on baccalaureate completion.

Wootan, G. (2021). Washington Student Achievement Council. 2021 Washington transfer associate degree effectiveness update.

## Appendix A: WA CTC students enrolling in a WA public four-year who completed a transfer degree

*Table A-1: WA CTC transfer degree completers enrolled in a WA Public Four-Year, Disaggregated by Academic Transfer Status*

	n	%
Enrolled	13,444	45.2%
Did Not Enroll	16,318	54.8%
<b>Total</b>	<b>29,762</b>	

*Note: Total indicates number of students enrolled in WA CTC transfer degree program in the 2016-2017 academic year AND completed a transfer degree in 2016-17 or 2017-18 academic years. "Enrolled" indicates that they enrolled in college level course(s) at a WA public four-year during 2016-17, 2017-18, or 2018-19.*

*Table A-2: WA CTC transfer degree completers enrolled in a WA Public Four-Year I, Disaggregated by Academic Transfer Status & Gender*

	Female		Male		Unknown	
	n	%	n	%	n	%
Enrolled	7,397	43.3%	5,911	47.6%	136	49.5%
Did Not Enroll	9,683	56.7%	6,496	52.4%	139	50.5%
<b>Total</b>	<b>17,080</b>		<b>12,407</b>		<b>275</b>	

*Note: Total indicates number of students enrolled in WA CTC transfer degree program in the 2016-2017 academic year AND completed a transfer degree in 2016-17 or 2017-18 academic years. "Enrolled" indicates that they enrolled in college level course(s) at a WA public four-year during 2016-17, 2017-18, or 2018-19.*

*Table A-3: WA CTC transfer degree completers enrolled in a WA Public Four-Year, Disaggregated by Academic Transfer Status & Race/Ethnicity*

	n	%
<b>American Indian/ Alaskan Native</b>		
Enrolled	79	38.9%
Did Not Enroll	124	61.1%
<b>Asian</b>		
Enrolled	1,616	38.5%
Did Not Enroll	2,576	61.5%
<b>Black/ African American</b>		
Enrolled	369	42.3%
Did Not Enroll	504	57.7%
<b>Hispanic/ Latino of any race(s)</b>		
Enrolled	1,872	51.4%
Did Not Enroll	1,772	48.6%
<b>Native Hawaiian/ Other Pacific Islander</b>		
Enrolled	346	53.0%
Did Not Enroll	307	47.0%
<b>White</b>		
Enrolled	6,906	45.8%
Did Not Enroll	8,173	54.2%
<b>Other/Unknown</b>		
Enrolled	1,268	41.2%
Did Not Enroll	1,807	58.8%
<b>Two or More Races</b>		
Enrolled	988	48.4%
Did Not Enroll	1,055	51.6%

*Note: Total indicates number of students enrolled in WA CTC transfer degree program in the 2016-2017 academic year AND completed a transfer degree in 2016-17 or 2017-18 academic years. "Enrolled" indicates that they enrolled in college level course(s) at a WA public four-year during 2016-17, 2017-18, or 2018-19.*

*Table A-4: WA CTC transfer degree completers enrolled in a WA Public Four-Year, Disaggregated by Academic Transfer Status & Economic Status*

	Economically Disadvantaged		NOT Economically Disadvantaged	
	n	%	n	%
Enrolled	3,688	47%	9,756	45%
Did Not Enroll	4,190	53%	12,128	55%
<b>Total</b>	<b>7,878</b>		<b>21,884</b>	

*Note: Total indicates number of students enrolled in WA CTC transfer degree program in the 2016-2017 academic year AND completed a transfer degree in 2016-17 or 2017-18 academic years. "Enrolled" indicates that they enrolled in college level course(s) at a WA public four-year during 2016-17, 2017-18, or 2018-19.*