

*I. Assessment Report*



**University Counseling Services, Dean of Student's Office, Health Promotion and Wellness  
Annual Assessment Report Template  
Academic Year: 2014-2015**

**Date of Report Submission:** June 19, 2015

**Name of Department(s):** University Counseling Services, Dean of Student's Office,  
Office of Health Promotion & Wellness

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**I. Abstract**

National College Health Assessment (NCHA) data (Spring, 2013, N=736) revealed a significant degree of student distress across a number of populations. These data corroborate with other national surveys and DePaul institutional data which indicates increasing levels of reported stress (emotional, academic, financial) across colleges and populations within the student body. During Phase I (2013-2014) academic year, UCS/DOS/HPW engaged in a study of the NCHA data in order to learn more about student populations and to guide our practices and strategic planning. Institutional research data from DePaul (IRMA, 2014) reveals a very large number of transfer students, many of whom report a significant degree of stress around their transition to DePaul (especially in terms of finances, academics and meeting new people). DePaul institutional data indicate that the largest group of transfers is located within the Driehaus College of Business [COB], (N= 1,080 per year). As such, consultative discussions were initiated between UCS/DOS/HPW in order to better understand how we might improve the transfer student experience – especially in terms of stress management, coping and engagement. A partnership created and strengthened with advisors and leadership of COB. A three-pronged intervention was delivered to COB transfer students including (1) email messaging about student services, (2) a psychoeducational workshop on managing stress and increasing resilience and (3) direct interviews of transfer students. Results indicated that many students enjoy the urban environment of the COB, connections to internships and the alumni network. However, a number of transfer students described feeling isolated or excluded from campus life and indicated that they would like more personalized advising services which focus on the unique experience of transfer students.

## II. Learning Outcome Assessed

Divisional Goal 3: Persistence and Academic Achievement: Students who persist in Student Affairs programs and activities will be able to achieve their personal and academic goals at DePaul through the acquisition of ~~academic~~academic and cognitive skills.

## III. Introduction & Context

### 1. *What is the question being asked? What learning outcomes are being assessed?*

According to DePaul institutional data, the National College Health Assessment and the experience of key personnel (i.e., academic advisors, student affairs professionals) what are the needs of DePaul transfer students? What do we know about student demographics and the impact of the student experience based on transfer status?

If we drill down further and focus on one particular college (i.e., the College of Business – with the largest numbers of transfer students), what can we learn about the needs of transfer students? How can the data guide us toward more effectively intervening to support this rather large group of students?

### 2. *What is the relevance of the question as it relates to the work of the department and/or division?*

Although many departments within the Division of Student Affairs focus a great deal on orienting and acclimating new students, transfer students per se are not often a clear focus of attention – despite DePaul University's historically large numbers of transfer students.

### 3. *How does answering this question help your department?*

University Counseling Services, the Dean of Students Office and the Office of Health Promotion and Wellness are all entrusted with enhancing resilience and creating evidence-based and effective interventions to support student success. Learning more about the specific issues of transfer students in a given college can lead us to support, education and/or messaging that may positively impact a group of students with demonstrated need and at higher risk for disengagement and thus adverse academic outcomes.

### 4. *How is the question linked to the Student Affairs Strategic Plan (2010-2013) and Vision Twenty18 goals?*

**Vision 2018, Objective 1a** challenges the DePaul community to Focus the entire university community on student learning and success in the following ways:

- Enhance and expand learning support services.
- Expand and strengthen programs that focus on critical student transitions, **including the first year for freshman and transfer students**, beginning or reentering college for adult students and entrance to major.

5. *Provide any relevant research and/or literature that informs or contextualizes this project. Please summarize and cite this information.*

In autumn 2013, DePaul University welcomed approximately 1,698 new undergraduate students many of who were transferring from various institutions around the country and world. Transfer students now make up approximately 41% of all new degree-seeking undergraduates at DePaul (DePaul University, 2014). While the first quarter as a new student is an exciting time, transferring can be cause for trepidation. Students may experience anxiety adjusting to their new environment, stress from classes, finances, and creating a new social group of peers. In 1965, John Hills coined the term "transfer shock" to refer to notable decline in the GPAs of transfer students the first term or two after enrolling in a new institution (Thurmond, 2007). This decline can be attributed to a number of factors including transition to a new academic environment, variation in academic rigor, financial stress, and social stress (Tinto, 1988). While developing coping strategies for this adjustment may come naturally to some, research suggests formal interactions with peers, staff, and faculty at the new institution aid students in the adjustment process.

While there are some programs that aim to help transfers feel welcome and included on campus, many universities direct resources to incoming first year students. Institutions may assume that transfer students can more easily adjust to college since they previously attended a two year or four year school or schools in the past. Making assumptions that transfer students can more easily navigate a new institution can have a negative impact on the transfer population. According to Kuh, Kinzie, Schuh, and Whitt (2005), many transfer students may not recognize how to connect with various support services. Transfer students may not be aware of ways to connect with resources such as writing and tutoring centers, counseling centers, and disability support centers. Without a connection to multiple services, students may feel less connected and disengage from the university.

One way colleges and universities can help students transition to their new institutions and alleviate transfer shock is create intentional programming and offer services that support the academic, social, and financial transition students experience. Tinto (1993) states that student retention is largely based on the integration of social and academic experiences in college. For transfer students, simply connecting them with academic resources or course registration help upon entering the four year institution is not enough to help them feel a part of campus. Townsend and Wilson (2006) note transfer students many need additional support at the time of their transfer to help with the social and academic adjustment from a community college to a four year institution. Kuh et al. (2005) also suggest implementing a system of multiple safety nets made up of faculty, academic advisors, and student affairs staff to help make connections with newly admitted transfer students. Helping students connect with their academic and co-curricular environments will help them feel a better sense of belonging and contribute to improved academic and personal outcomes.

References (see Appendix I)

#### **IV. Data Collection & Methodology**

1. *On what group(s) of individuals did the question focus (were particular groups intentionally excluded)?*

National College Health Assessment data (N= 736, Spring 2013 administration) revealed a large number of DePaul students present with stress and wellness issues. (NCHA survey was sent to 6,000 students with 736 respondents, yielding a 12.4% response rate; +/- 3.56, 95% confidence interval). Survey sample roughly mirrors the DePaul population with women overrepresented 12%, white students overrepresented 10%.

Because the Driehaus College of Business (COB) has the largest group of transfer students among DePaul's 10 colleges, the focus of the present assessment project study is on COB transfer students.

2. *What steps were taken to ensure consent of participants? How did you inform participants of their role in this assessment project? Was participation optional?*

### Phase I

Phase I of this assessment project was administering the NCHA survey. The NCHA survey received approval from DePaul's IRB and participation in the survey was voluntary. Additionally, each participant was provided informed consent and could discontinue participation in the survey at any time.

Representatives from UCS, DOS and HPW worked together to make meaning of the data and to determine which pieces of the data were the most significant. After much discussion, it was determined that the amount of stress, anxiety, and mental health concerns that students reported were most salient to investigate further. However, the NCHA survey is administered to a random sample of ALL DePaul students. In order to prepare to focus on Phase II (which will implement and assess a specific intervention) a target population needed to be determined.

It was at this point that discussion about which target population would be best served. The transfer student population became a point of consideration as generally speaking, the DOS/HPW/UCS professionals agreed that there appeared to be a lack of support programming for this population. Additionally, there is data to support that transfer students have unique concerns that differ from other students as it relates to their well-being. The Transfer Coordinator from New Student and Family Engagement was invited in to consult with DOS/HPW/UCS. She validated the team's concerns regarding transfer students. They are provided mainly academic support in the orientation they receive from NSFEE but further, targeted support is not as readily available.

### Phase II

With this knowledge, it was decided that the Phase II intervention would specifically target transfer students. However, transfer students often blend into the rest of the student body post orientation to DePaul. This makes them challenging to program to directly. As such, the DOS/HPW/UCS team decided to focus on transfer students

within a particular College, specifically the College of Business. The Phase II project was intended to enhance and overlay already existing outreach and wellness programming initiatives which align with COB advising structures. The Driehaus College of Business enrolled 4,255 undergraduate students and 1,866 graduate students for the 2013-2014. Since the focus of this project is on undergraduate transfers ( $N=4,255$ ) x 24.4%. As such approximately 1,080 students will be reviewed for intervention and additional orientation efforts. Participation in the wellness initiatives and direct surveys was optional. Specific responses of participants were de-identified.

3. *Was any identifying information about individual participants collected through this assessment? If so, what precautions were taken to keep this information secure (i.e. kept in a locked file).*

The NCHA survey was administered through the American College Health Association (2012). Any identifying data was kept by the ACHA and was sent to DePaul's Principle Investigators in aggregate form only.

4. *Describe the methods used to answer the question, as well as a description and size of the group initially invited to participate in the project.*

Because participation in the intervention/resiliency workshop in Year II of the project was smaller than intended, direct interviews of COB transfer students (sample population,  $N=100$ ) were conducted. 19 students completed the direct interviews.

5. *Please include a copy of the assessment instruments (surveys, focus group questions, interview questions, etc.) and consent forms or written requests to complete instruments.*

Phase I – a copy of the NCHA survey is attached in a separate PDF document

Phase II: See Appendix V for a list of direct interview/survey questions.

10. *Who are potential partners you might involve with this assessment project? (Other Student Affairs departments, Office of Institutional Planning and Research, Graduate Assistants, specific academic departments)*

- i. University Counseling services
- ii. Health Promotion & Wellness
- iii. Dean of Students Office
- iv. Driehaus College of Business academic advisors
- v. Student Affairs campus partners
- vi. New Student and Family Engagement

11. *If collecting data directly from students please describe how you plan to obtain informed*

Phase I: as described above, the NHCA survey obtained informed consent and was voluntary participation and is complete

Phase II: Participation in the resiliency workshop was optional. All responses from participants were de-identified. Direct survey participants gave verbal consent to be interviewed. Names or other identifying data from participants were similarly de-identified.

12. *Do you plan to present or publish this assessment project for external audiences (i.e. professional association conference or journals)? If yes, please list the potential audience.*

a. *No*

Phase I: IRB approval was obtained for the administration of the NCHA survey in Spring, 2013.

Phase II: IRB approval was not sought for the second phase of the project. There is no intention to publicize this data or use it externally in any way.

## **V. Data & Results**

### **1. Describe the results**

NCHA data (N=736) revealed the following:

- NCHA data (N=736) revealed a high level of stress and anxiety across multiple colleges at DePaul.
- Nearly 80% of COB students report that they are overwhelmed by all they have to do (NCHA, 2013).
- Nearly 80% of COB students report that they feel exhausted (NCHA, 2013)
- Nearly 50% of COB students report feeling overwhelming anxiety (NCHA, 2013).
- 49.6% of COB students reported ‘more than average’ or ‘tremendous stress’ over the past year (NCHA, 2013).
- Over 15% of COB students reported that they were diagnosed with or treated for anxiety in the last year.
- NCHA respondents were 22.4% international students.
- 21.6% of COB students report that they are without health insurance.
- Significant disparities exist between white students and students of color who are much less likely to have health insurance.

Other DePaul University institutional research data provides further context for transfer students in general and COB transfers in particular:

- Transfer students comprise 41% of all new degree seeking students at DePaul (IRMA, 2014).

- The Driehaus College of Business (COB) has the largest numbers of transfer students per year (over 1,000).
- Most transfer students come from the suburbs (58.9%) and the City of Chicago (25.0%).
- Latino (17.4%) and African American students (9.1%) are slightly overrepresented in the population of DePaul transfer students.
- Nearly 70% of transfer students are under 24. Adult students (24 and older) comprise 30% of transfers.
- The transfer student population is somewhat weighted towards male students (50.8% as compared to the general male student population of 46%).
- The top 3 concerns of transfer students (Transition DePaul Survey, Summer 2013, N=1509) are financial concerns, academic concerns and difficulty meeting new people.

As this project is phased over 2 years (Year I: analysis of NCHA data, discussion with the colleges, decisions about focus of study and intervention; Year II: email blast to COB transfer students indicating range of Student Affairs services, resiliency workshop and direct individual interviews of COB transfer students.

Much was learned about the magnitude of the DePaul transfer population(s) which has been described in graphs and charts (see Appendix III and IV-).

## **VI. Discussion & Interpretation of Results**

Since the transfer population at DePaul is quite large, decisions were made about how to narrow the focus of the project. Driehaus College of Business transfer students may not be fully representative of other transfer populations. Nonetheless, the study will highlight an often overlooked population and may provide some data which may inform Student Affairs practice with regard to other transfer student populations.

Data to be obtained will be of specific interest and applicability to the College of Business. However, it may also have generalizability to other transfer student populations at DePaul University. It is hoped that as the project continues into Year II, more awareness will be raised about the needs and concerns of transfer students at DePaul. Furthermore, the creation of a pilot program to enhance the transfer student experience may provide important data on the relative efficacy of various interventions to support student health and wellness, resilience and engagement.

This data will be especially useful to New Student and Family Engagement (NSFE), DePaul Academic Advising Network (DAAN) as well as academic advisors, counselors, and a variety of personnel in Academic Affairs and Student Affairs who provide advocacy and support to enhance persistence, retention, goal attainment and the overall student experience.

Based on the workshop we held with transfer students from the College of Business as well as the individual interviews conducted following the workshop, we have identified the following areas of interest where the students indicated they would like additional support and resources and/or did not feel as positively about their transfer experience.

- **Resource Information**

- Students indicated they wanted information about resources sooner in their academic career, specifically as it relates to student organizations and career services. They knew academic advising was present, but other information was limited on what else was available for them to connect with the community as well as support resources.
- Academic advising, while present, was not always a positive experience for the transfer students who felt disconnected from their advisor, and thus information related to what other services advising offers as it relates to academic progress and program schedules or additional office staff might be available would be beneficial

- **Isolation and Exclusion**

- Transfer students, specifically those in the Loop, identified feeling isolated from the “student life” experience they felt was present on the Lincoln Park campus. This was especially apparent in the University Center where the residential life perspective is vastly different than that experienced in the Lincoln Park residence halls in that they do not know who is from DePaul and who is from other institutions.
- There is a desire to connect socially amongst transfer students and wanting to have transfer student activities integrated into larger university-wide activities. Despite these desires to connect with others, transfer students also indicated they were extremely limited in their free time due to family obligations, work responsibilities, and commuting time thus decreasing opportunities to get involved, attend events, etc.
- The transfer students in the College of Business also felt that it may be the College of Business that doesn’t lend itself to the social aspect given the rigorous academic nature of the program and the demand/competition for externships, internships, and job placement.

- **Defining Connection**

- While transfer students indicated a desire to connect with other students, staff, and events at a higher level, there was a question of what connection looks like for these students as they also indicated a high level of stress with regards to their other non-campus responsibilities. The College of Business has indicated that while they try reaching this transfer population of students in their college, they have noted that the students seem to be intimidated to attend events alone, and feel safer in groups. However, this becomes more difficult if there is no group to draw from and the student feels socially isolated, which may prevent them from attending a networking event in the first place.
- Some of the students indicated they still feel connection with their previous institution and friends made there thus making it more difficult to extricate themselves from that culture and into this one. This feeling of loss, which may



occur when they realize their previous friends' network is moving on, permeates the sense of isolation the students are already feeling.

## **VII. Recommendations and Plans for Action**

While we recognize that our sample of transfer students was small, we do feel there is important information to glean from these students' comments and implications for further study as well as recommendations/questions for the campus community.

- **Acclimation Support**

- The students we spoke to felt that while orientation was successful with the focus on academics, they wanted further information on social involvement, campus resources and events designed to make them feel a part of the campus community similar to the experience of first-year students through Premier.
  - Are there events that would give transfer students both the social and practical knowledge they desire?
  - Is there something we can offer through NSFE or individual college orientations to give them information on campus resources and support?
  - Can other departments support the Transfer Student Union by co-sponsoring events in order to disseminate information as well as get in front of transfer students to hear about their needs on campus and direct them to the appropriate resources?
  - How can we further assist Transfer Student Union with their goal of making this campus a welcoming environment for all transfer students?
  -

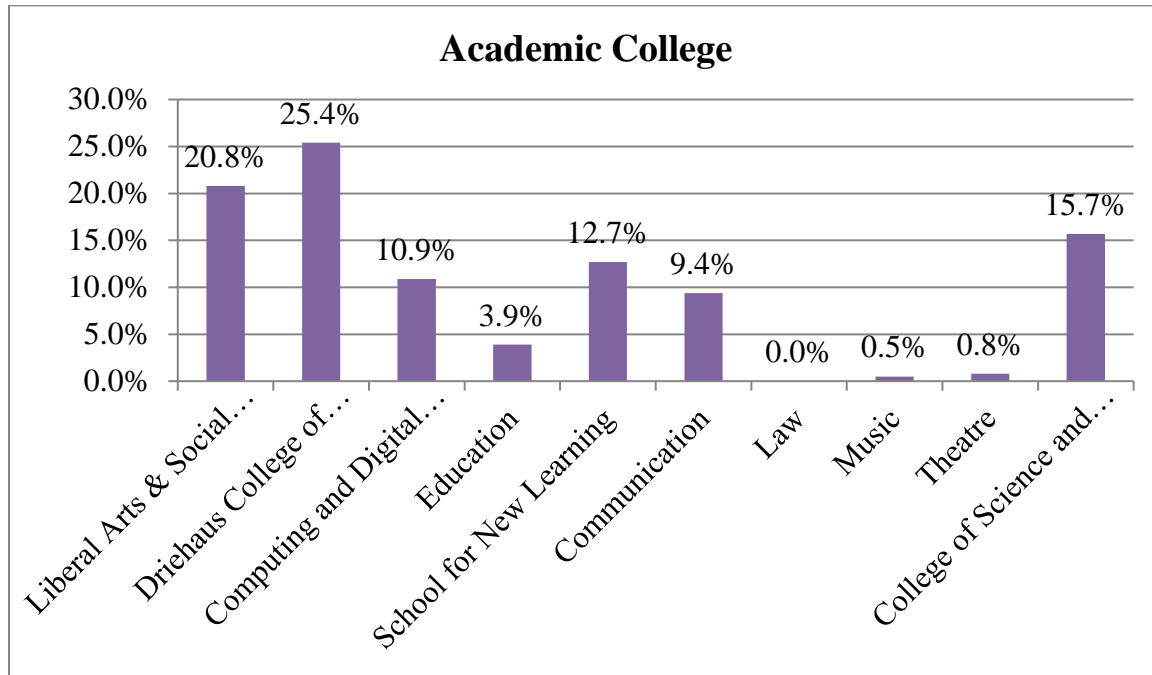
- **Acknowledgement of Transfer Differences**

- The students we spoke to felt like there are differences in the experiences of first-year, traditional-age students and transfer students in terms of additional responsibilities, living arrangements, age/life experience. These differences can be challenging if transfer students don't see a place for themselves on campus hence increasing their stress about isolation and exclusion.
  - Are there ways in which campus departments can create special activities for transfer students outside of what is currently being offered?
  - Is there a place to further partner with various colleges to address transfer students' needs within their own colleges, specifically as it relates to current events already offered in which campus resources could co-sponsor/co-present?
  - Can we partner with Adult, Veteran, and Commuter Student Affairs to address commuter students' needs given the large population of transfer students included? (note this may be easier with the imminent hire of a Coordinator in that office)

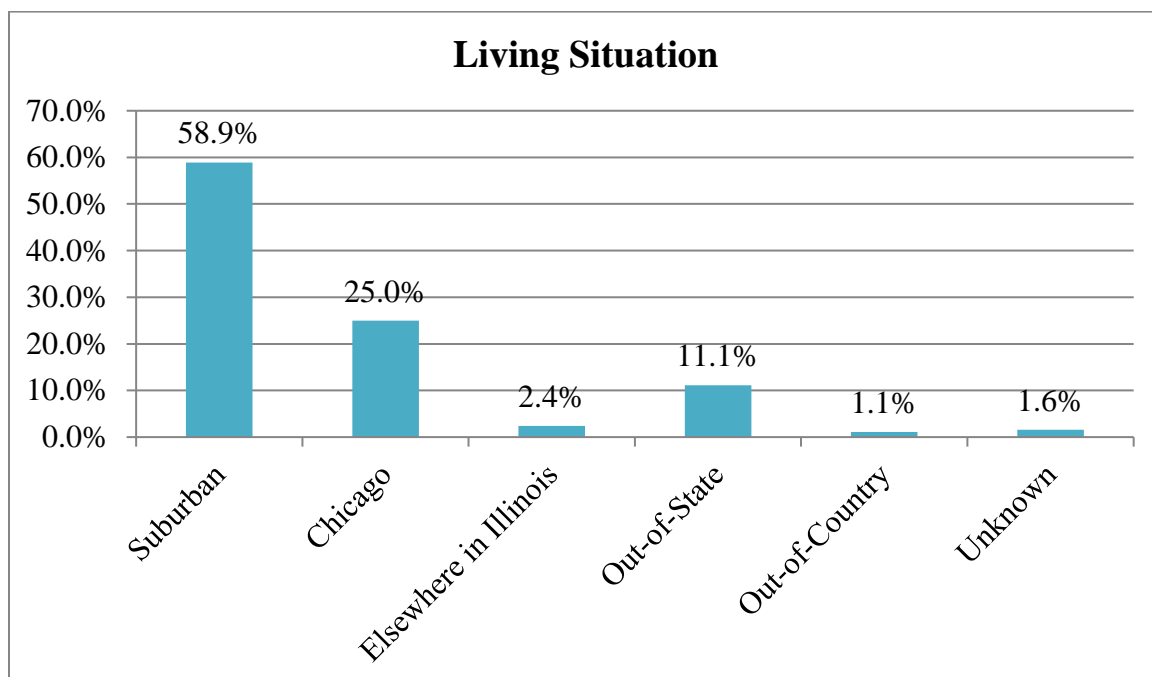
## Appendix I: References

- DePaul University. (2014). *Facts & Figures*. Retrieved from <http://offices.depaul.edu/emm/facts-and-figures/Pages/transfer-enrollment.aspx>
- Kuh, G., Kinzie, J., Schuh, J., Whitt, E., & Associates (2010). *Student success in college*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.
- Thurmond, K. (2007). Transfer shock: Why a term forty years old is still relevant. NACADA Clearing House of Academic Advising Resources. Retrieved from <http://www.nacada.ksu.edu/Resources/Clearinghouse/View-Articles/Dealing-with-transfer-shock.aspx>
- Tinto, V. (1988). Stages of student departure: reflections on the longitudinal character of student leaving. *The Journal of Higher Education*, 68(6), 599-623.
- Tinto, V. (1993). *Leaving college: Rethinking the causes and cures of student attrition*. (2nd Ed.) Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Townsend, B. K., & Wilson, K. B. (2006). A hand hold for A little bit: Factors facilitating the success of community college transfer students to a large research university. *Journal of College Student Development*, 47(4), 439-456. Retrieved from <https://login.ezproxy1.lib.depaul.edu/login?url=http://search.proquest.com/docview/195180100?accountid=10477>

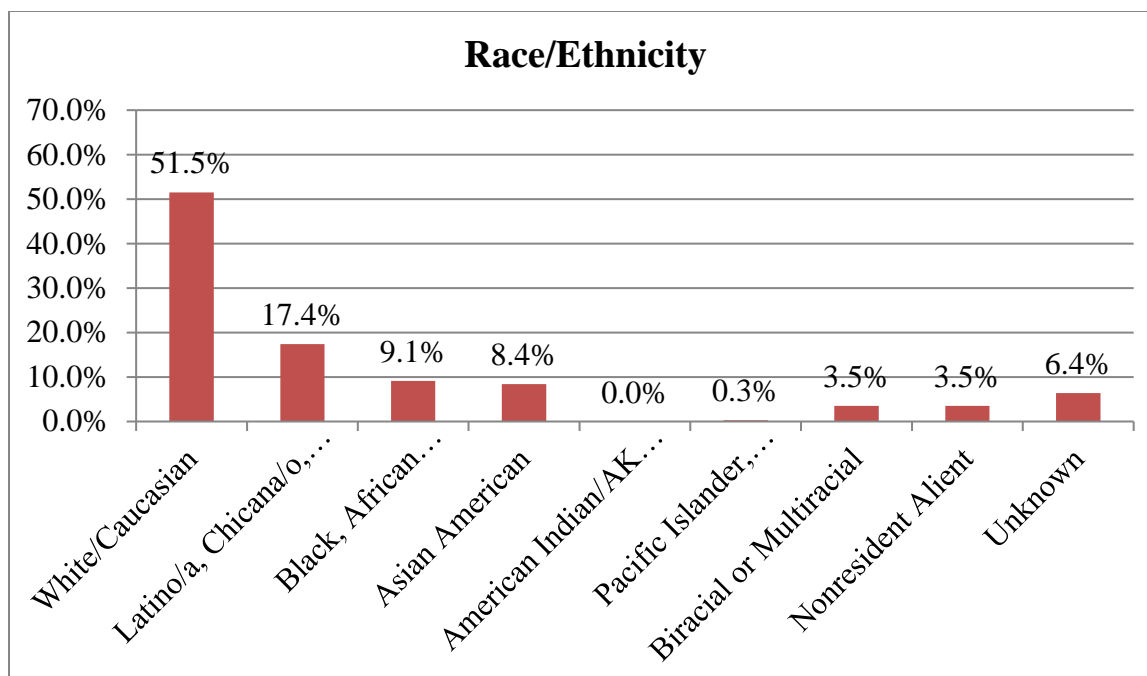
## Appendix II: DePaul University Institutional Research & Market Analytics (IRMA) – Transfer Student Demographics



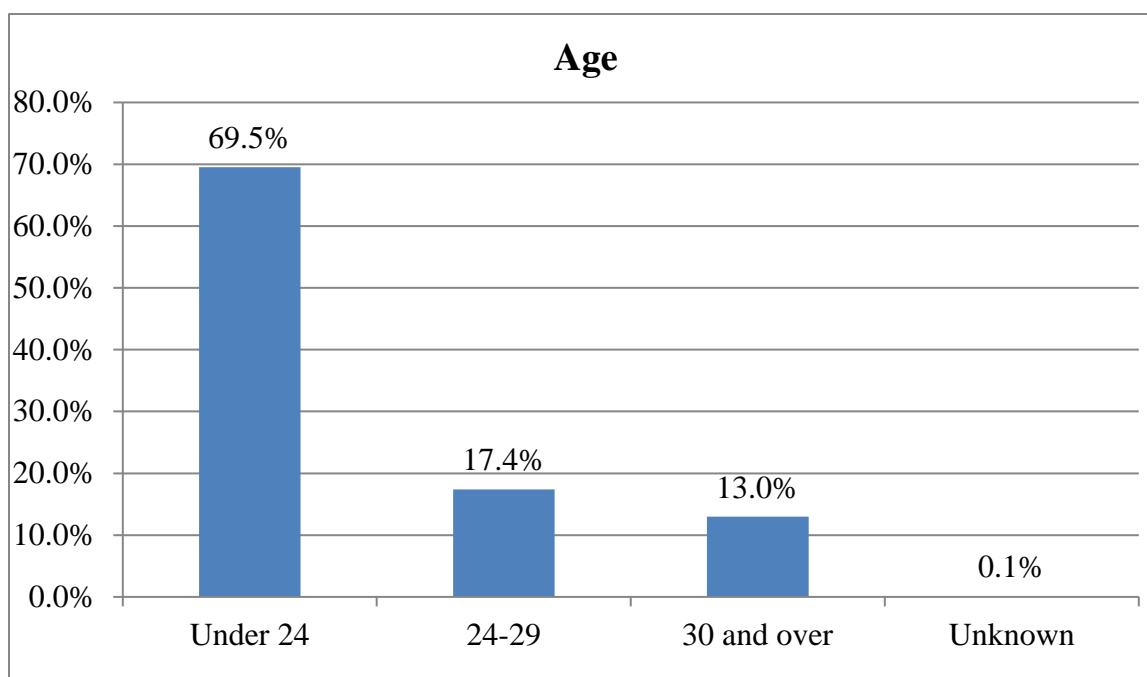
The Driehaus College of Business has the largest percentage (24.7%) of transfer students within the University.



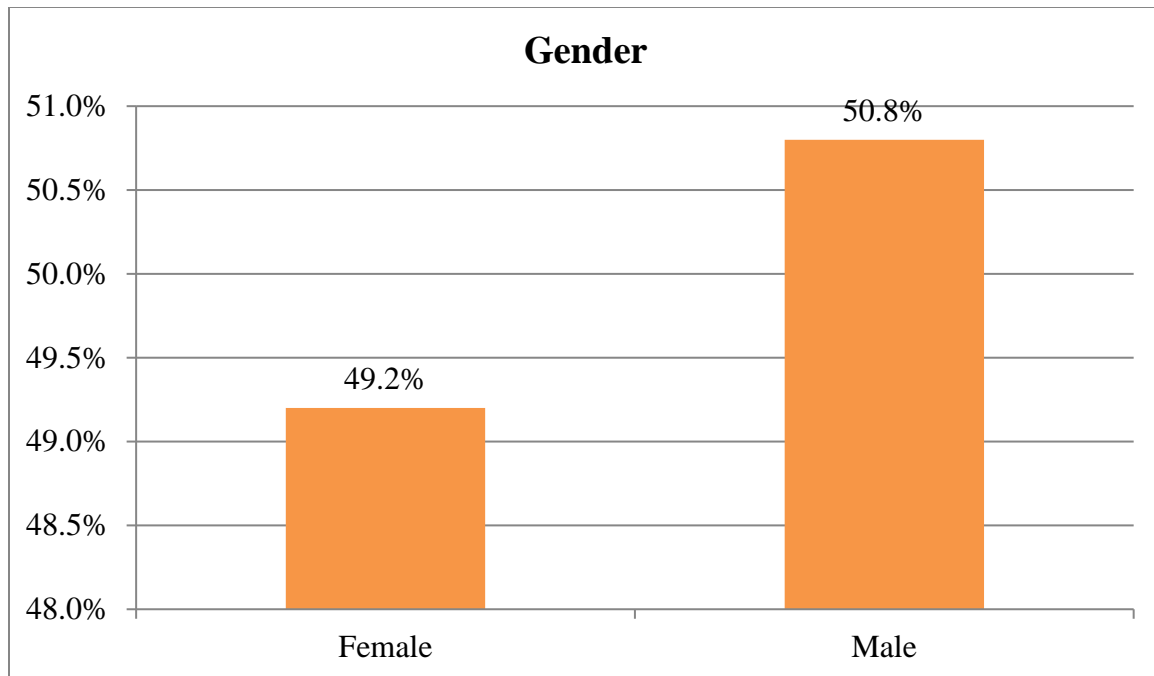
The greatest percentage of transfer students come from suburban areas of Chicago.



Consistent with other reported university demographics, white/caucasian students represent the largest group. Latino students are slightly over-represented within the transfer population at DePaul.

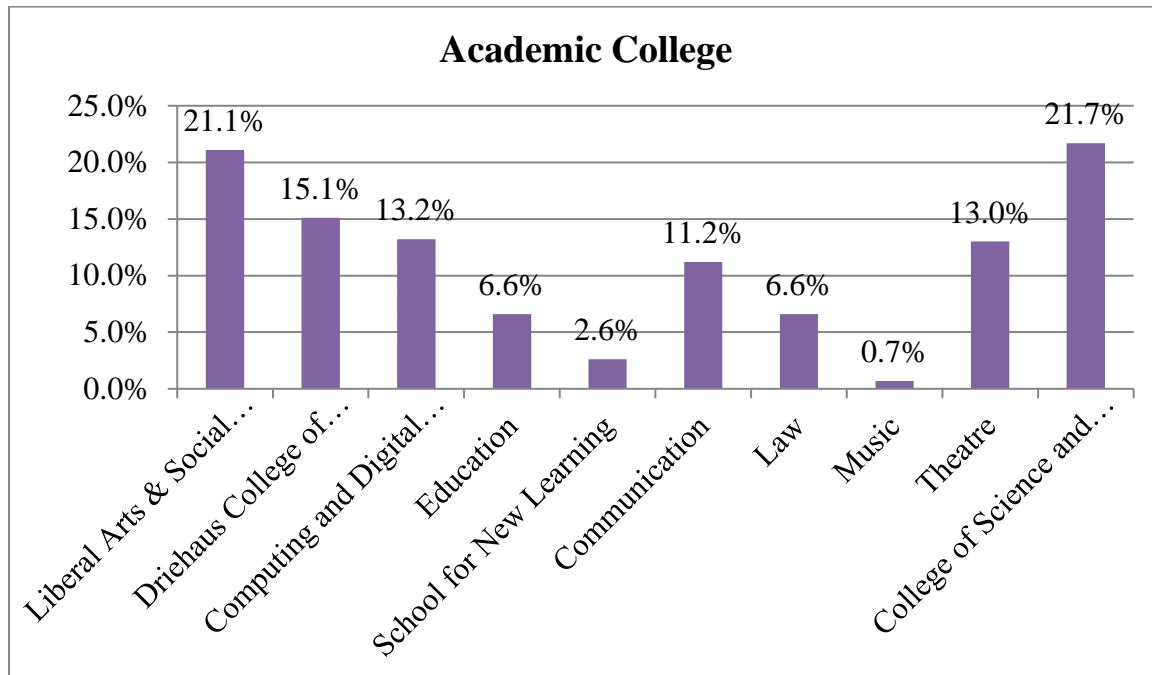


A large majority of transfers are traditional age college students. However, over 30% of transfers are adult students.

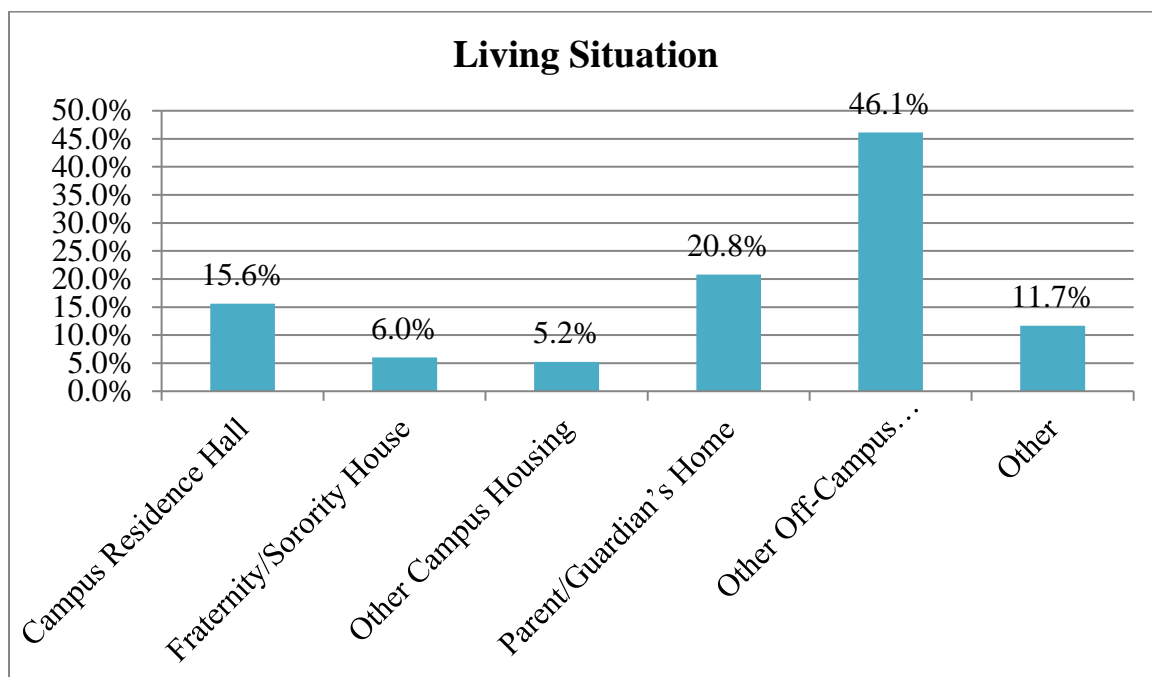


In contrast with a majority of non-transfer female students, male students are somewhat more likely to transfer than female students.

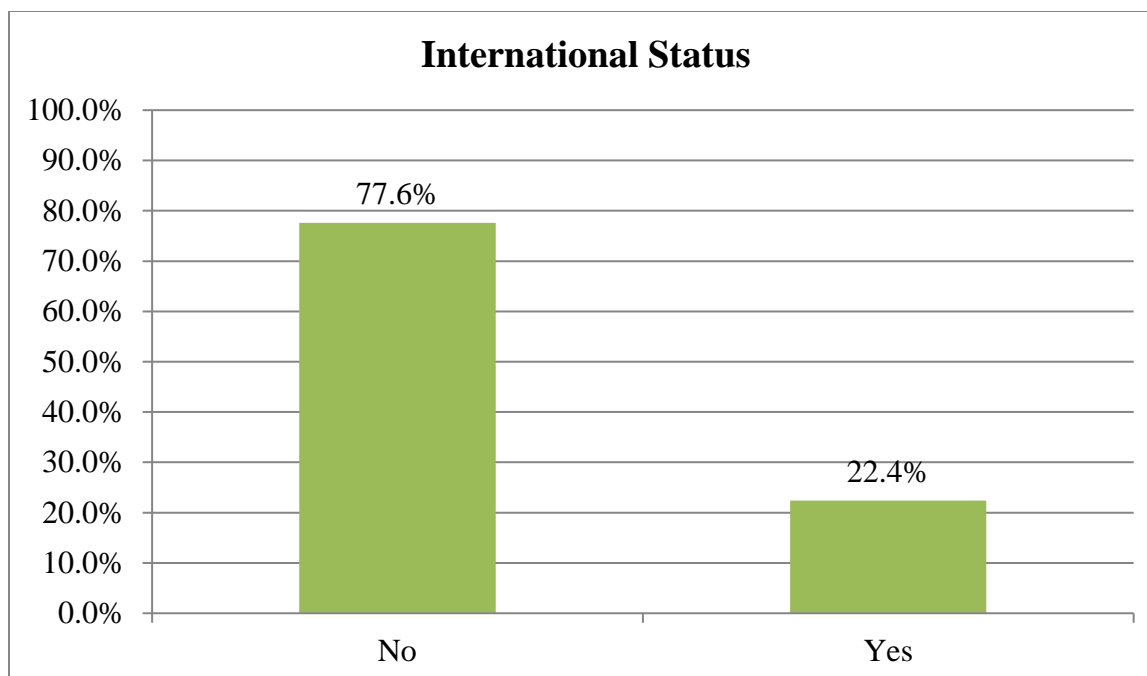
### Appendix III: NCHA Transfer Student Demographics (N=736)



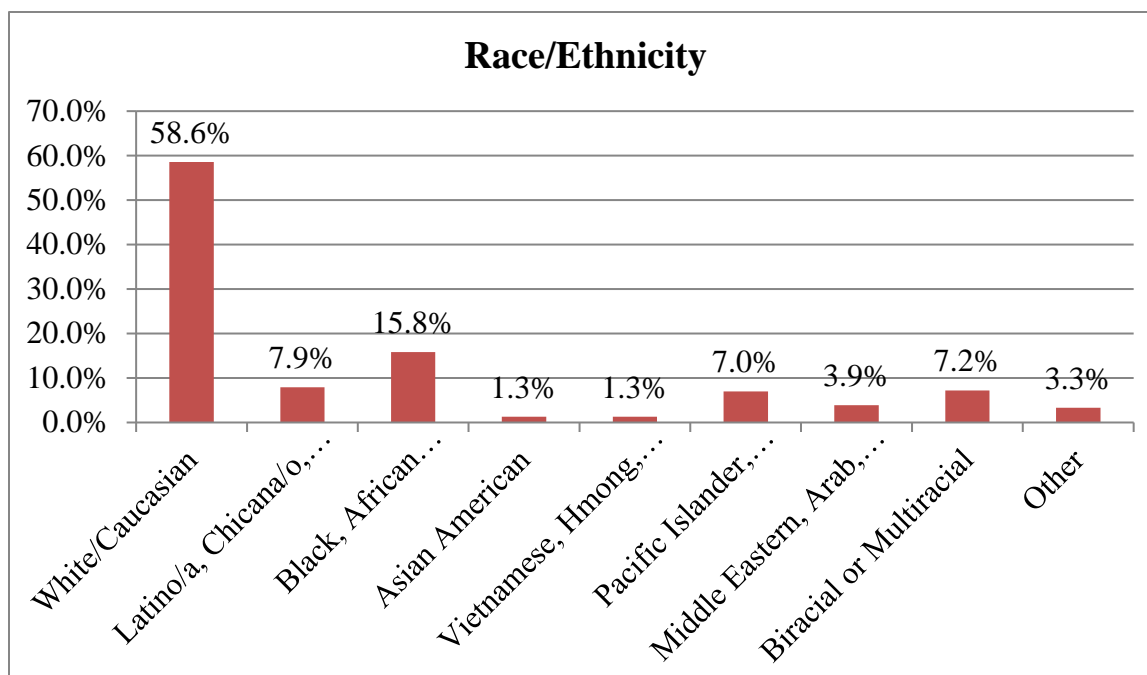
Although College of Business students are the largest DePaul transfer group, NCHA data is more weighted towards College of Science and Health and Liberal Arts and Social Science transfer students.



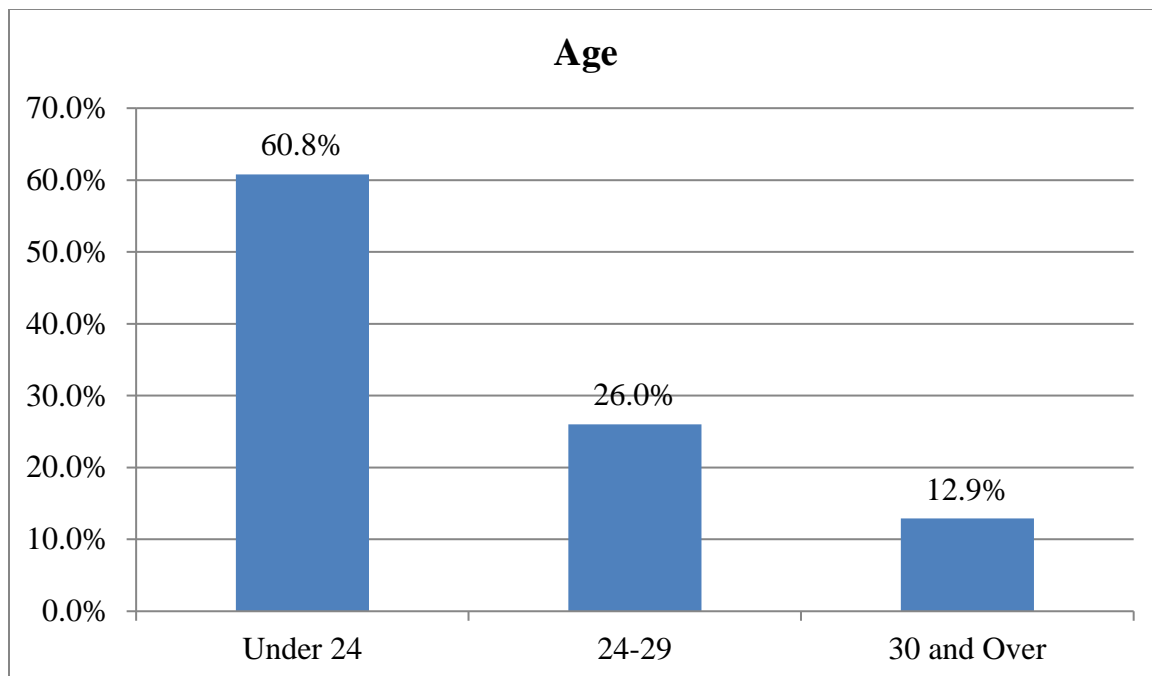
Although a fairly significant percentage of transfers are residential (for a primarily commuter institution), a large majority of transfers are non-residential.



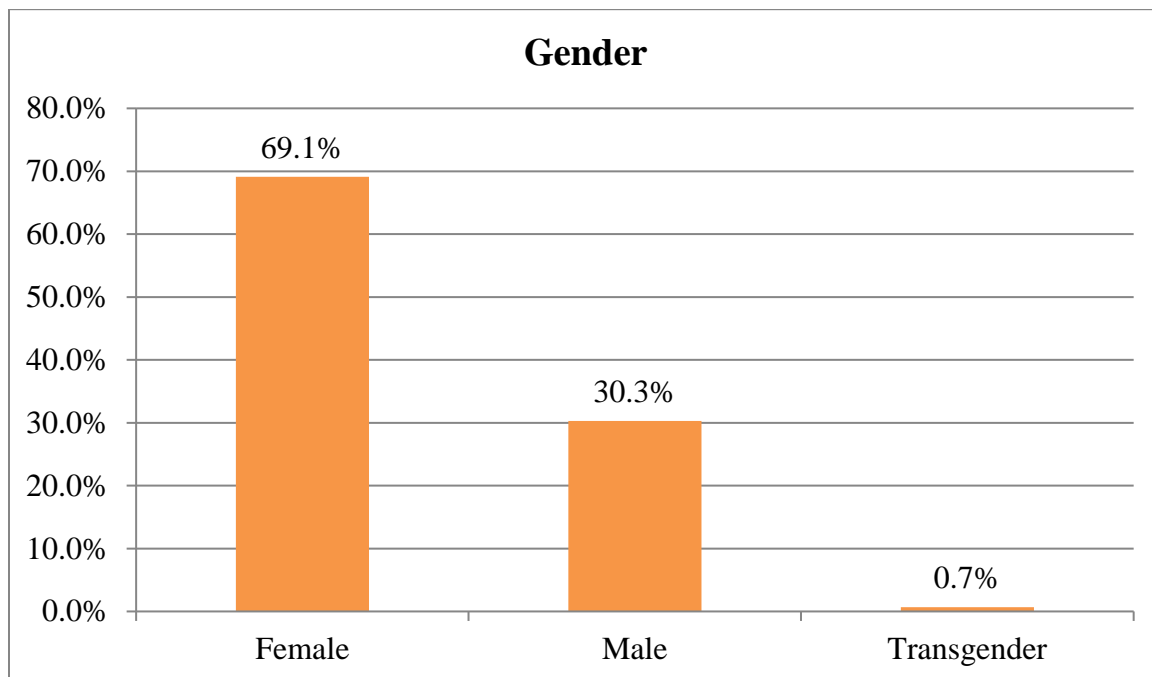
A sizeable percentage (22.4%) of transfer students (at least those completing the NCHA survey) are International students.



African American students are overrepresented in the DePaul transfer NCHA sample, while Latino students are slightly underrepresented.



The NCHA transfer data set has slightly higher numbers of adult transfers (38.9%) than the IRMA data set.

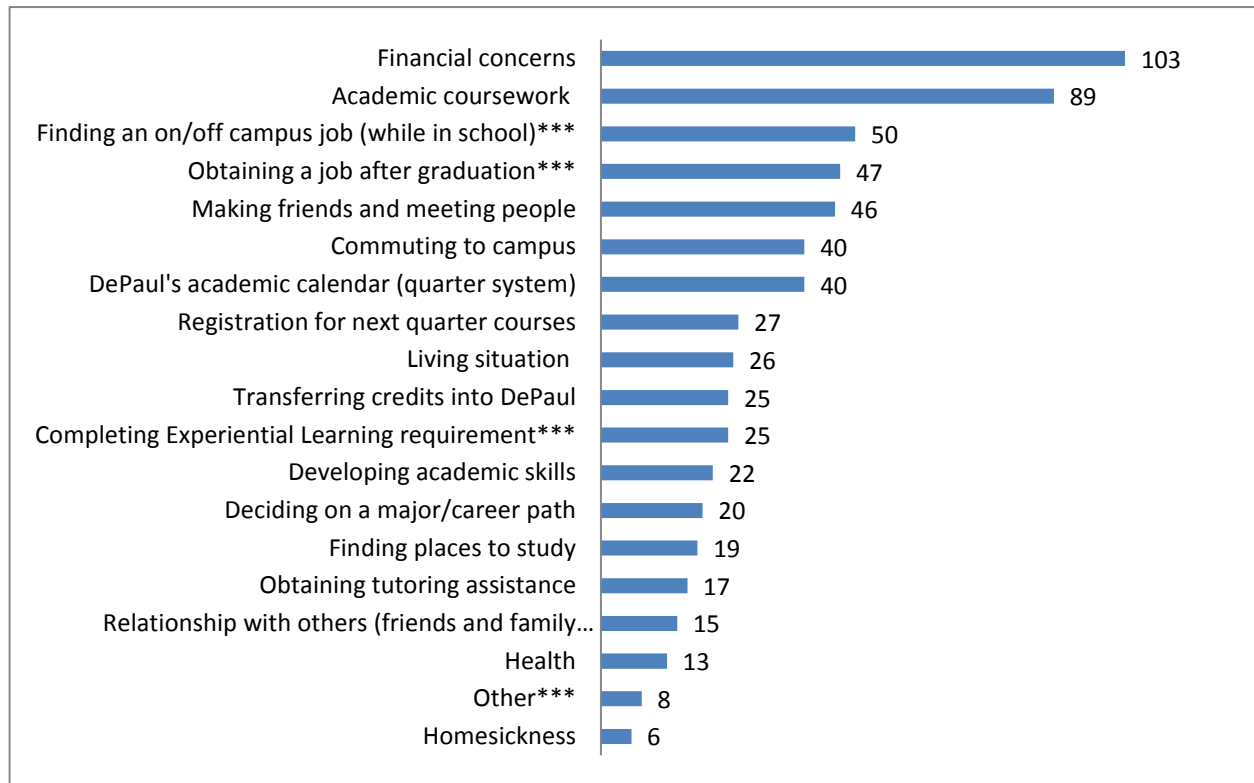


NCHA transfer participants were more likely to be female than the IRMA transfer data set.



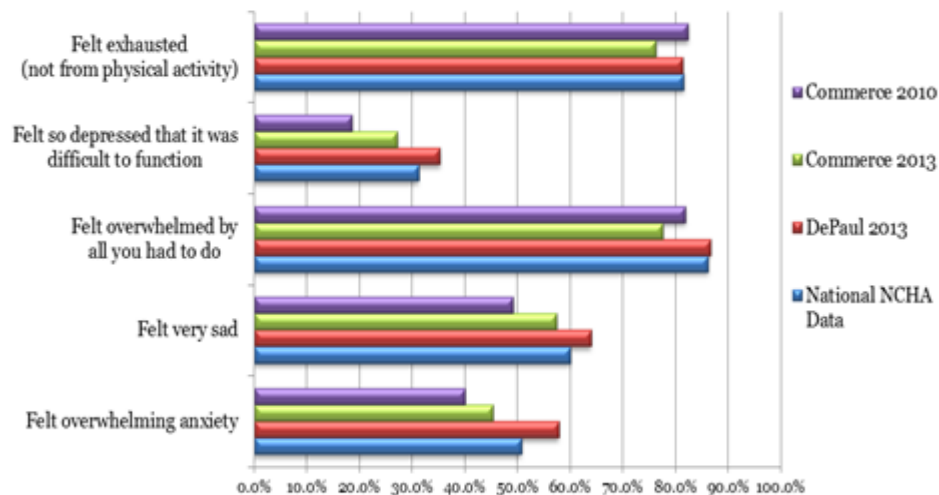
## Appendix IV: ‘Transition DePaul’ Transfer Student Data (N=1509)

### Primary Concerns of Adult/Transfer Students – Summer 2013

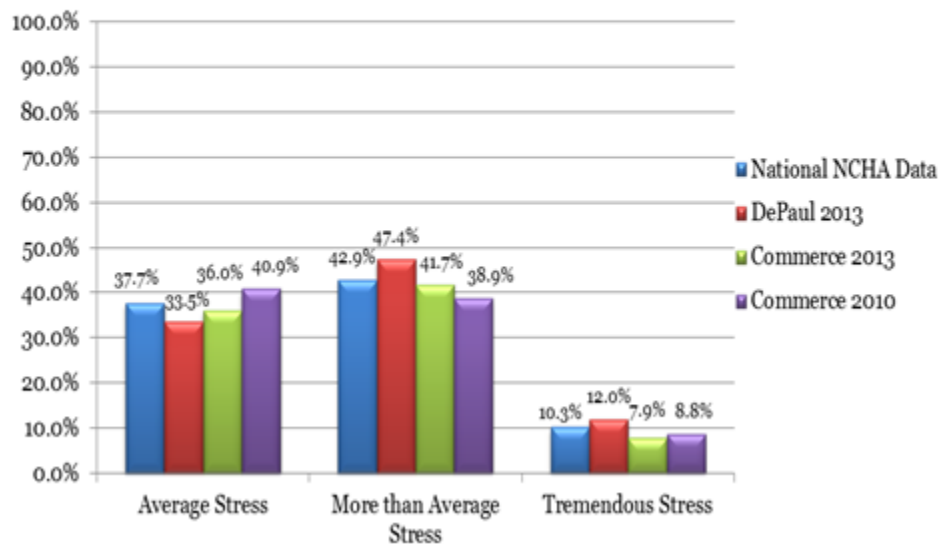


## Appendix V: NCHA data (N=736)

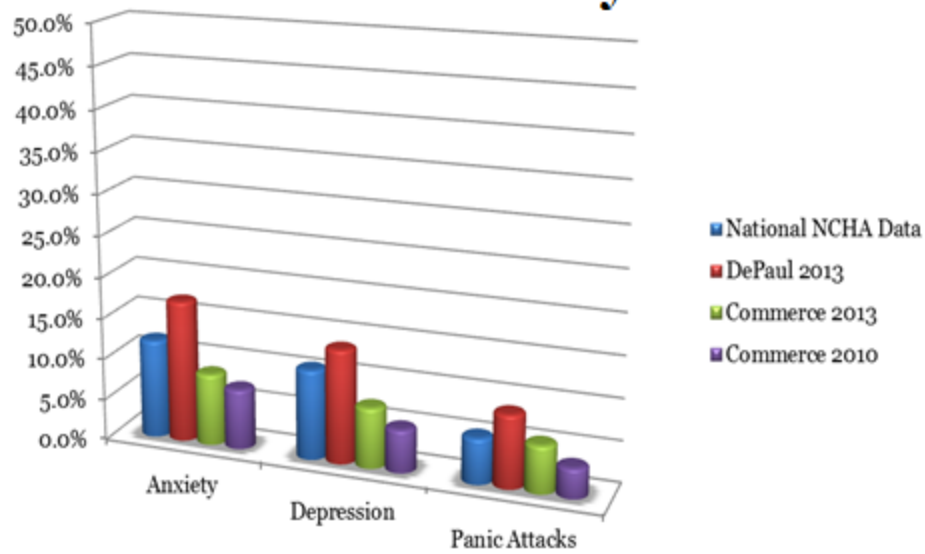
### Commerce-Feelings over the past year (in last 2 weeks, 30 days and 12 months)



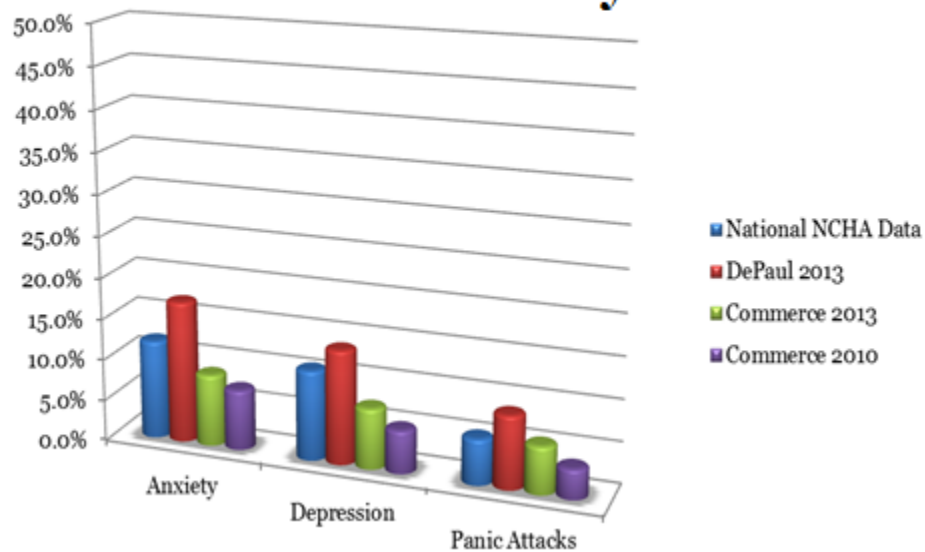
### Commerce-Reported stress level over the past year



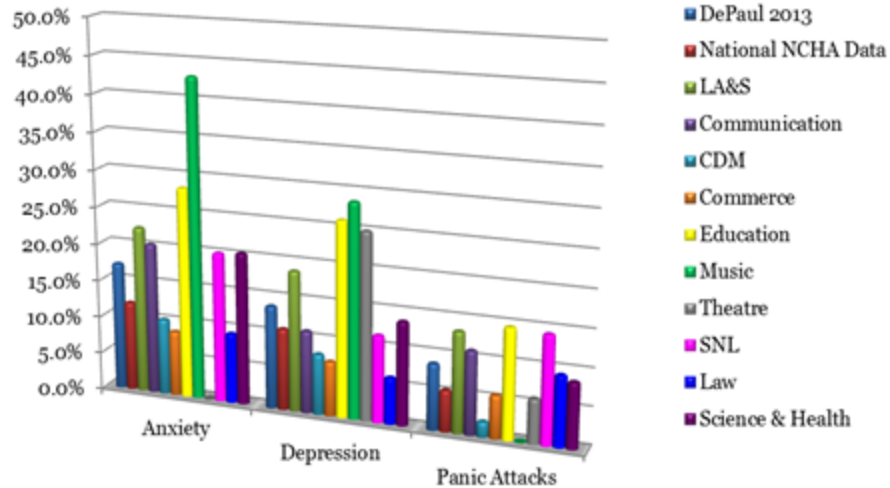
## Commerce-Diagnosed or treated in last year



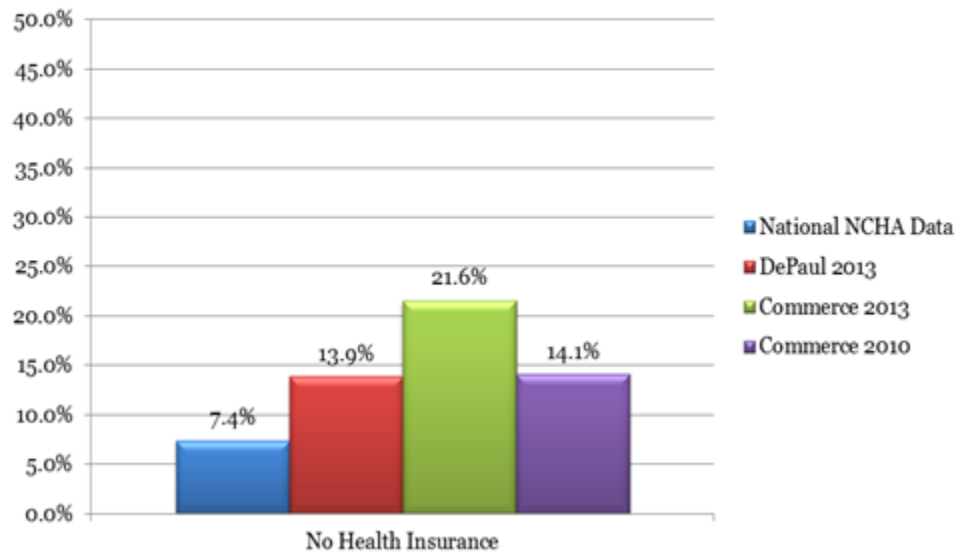
## Commerce-Diagnosed or treated in last year



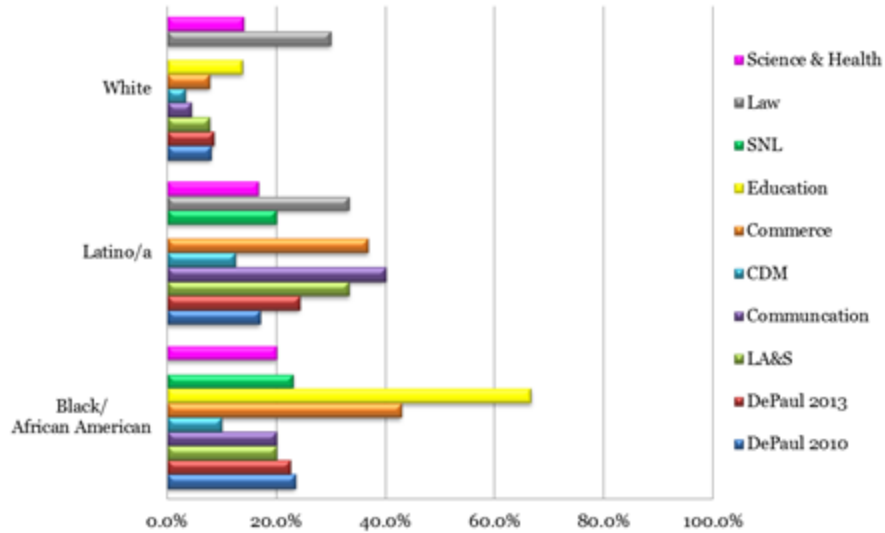
## All Colleges-Diagnosed or treated in last year



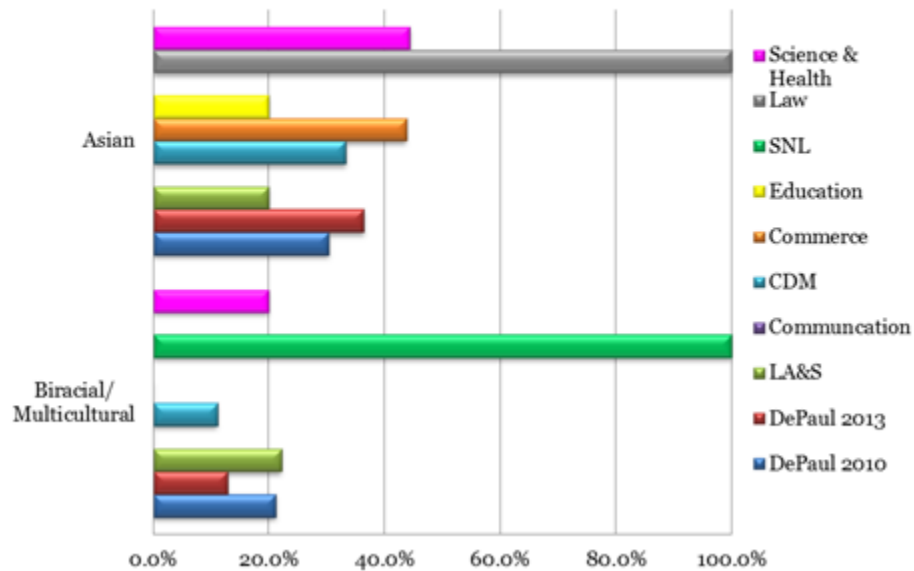
## Commerce-Students without Health Insurance



## All Colleges-DePaul Communities Without Health Insurance by Ethnicity/Race



## All Colleges-DePaul Communities Without Health Insurance by



## Appendix VI: Direct Student Interviews summary

Themes from interviews:

- 1. An overall positive transition – despite some bumps in the road** – Student spoke about some difficulties with the transition from one institution to another. Some of those challenges were logistical – One student stated, “Not all of my credits transferred over. That put me behind.” Another expressed, “It took me a month and a half to adjust to the pace of the quarter system.” Socially, DePaul can be challenging to navigate. One student thought “people don’t reach out.” Another decidedly spent time on the Lincoln Park campus to meet people. Another used connections through people he already knew at DePaul. The challenge for the students who are feeling more isolated is that time is limited as work, internships and school take up the majority of their time. Many expressed that the transition was “smooth” and as one student put it a “positive change in my life.” Overall, overwhelmingly the students expressed that overall, it was a positive transition from one institution to DePaul.
- 2. Urban environment** – Nearly every student mentioned the city of Chicago as a part of their transition. Some discussed that getting used to the city is part of the transition - “Being in the city is so different!” Others talked about it as one of the reasons they wanted to come to DePaul - “The location is great – the heart of Chicago!” “The urban environment is great!”
- 3. DePaul’s Reputation/ The College of Business’s Reputation** – overwhelmingly, students discussed with us that one of the factors for deciding to transfer to DePaul was the reputation of DePaul, in particular the Business School and the alumni network available to them upon graduating. One student mentioned that, “This is a much better business school. I have a better chance of getting a good internship here...” Another stated simply, “DePaul is impressive.” Another stated, “The DePaul network is held in high regard.”
- 4. Support and Resources** – Advising and the Career Center seemed to be the most obvious points of support and connection for these students. Some feel their advisors were a positive point of connection and helped make the transition easier. Others state they need more from the advising and career center. Overall, it seems the students start forming their relationship with DePaul from a very logistical place: the transfer of credits, internship requirements, job opportunities post-graduation. This can make or break their transition to the University.

## **Appendix VII: Transfer student survey questions**

- (1) How is your DePaul (transition) experience going so far?
- (2) What has been the best part (so far) about transferring to DePaul?
- (3) Has anything been challenging or difficult about your transfer to DePaul?
- (4) How connected do you feel to (a) the COB and (b) the wider DePaul community?
- (5) Anything we can do to help with any obstacles or barriers you have been experiencing?
- (6) Anything else that you want us to know about your DePaul experience?
- (7) Can we send you an email to ask some follow-up questions?