



Students Of Great Recession: Transfers Rising, Completions Declining

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There's been a push in the last decade to accurately calculate college graduation rates as a way to address the education gaps between low-income students and their more affluent peers

President Barack Obama upped the ante in 2009 when he promised in his first [speech](#) to a joint session of Congress to provide the resources to have the highest proportion of college graduates in the world by 2020.

That's easier said than done.

The data are difficult to collect because more students are transferring from one college to another and, as a result, aren't included in state and federal calculations, according to an annual report released Tuesday by the [National Student Clearinghouse Research Center](#).

More than 3,600 colleges and universities, which enroll 96 percent of the country's college students, submitted data to the nonprofit group.

The [report](#) contains data that have not previously been available about college graduation rates that includes transfer students.

The [National Center for Education Statistics](#) and many states track only graduation rates for first-time, full-time students who complete their degrees at the four-year public school where they started.

In the majority of states, data on college graduation rates are collected erroneously because students get lost in the system when they transfer, especially to a school outside the state system.

The report estimated that, by not tracking completions elsewhere, at least one-third of students who start in four-year public institutions and transfer to another institution would be counted as dropouts.

Nearly one in four students who completed a degree did so at four-year public college other than the one where they initially enrolled.

More students started college in fall 2008 than ever before, and more of them transferred to other institutions. At the same time, graduation rates have declined from the 56.1 percent of those who began college in fall 2007 to 55.1 percent of those who began in 2008, based on the report, which tracked students who graduated in six years.

Graduation rates declined particularly among older and part-time students because they started college during the Great Recession. Rising tuition costs caused some students to switch to part-time status to save money.

But the report's outcomes aren't all doom and gloom.

It also found that more women enrolled and graduated from a four-year public college in six years.

This story courtesy the Scripps Howard Foundation Wire. Reach Jordan Gass-Pooré at jordan.gass-poore@scripps.com or 202-408-1490.



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