



# South Carolina Commission on Higher Education

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ACAP  
Agenda Item 7  
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## **MEMORANDUM**

**To:** Members, Advisory Committee on Academic Programs  
**From:** Dr. Gail M. Morrison, Director of Academic Affairs and Licensing

### **Report on the Migration of First-Time Undergraduate Transfers**

The Commission on Higher Education had a student intern from USC-Columbia analyze data on the migration of first-time undergraduate transfers to compare trends, growth, and proportions of transfers to and from various sectors and institution types over a three-year period, from 2006-2008. Attached you will find the resulting report entitled *Migration of First-Time Undergraduate Transfers: Snapshot Analysis*.

This report shows that student transfer from one institution to another has increased significantly (16.8%) since 2006, and that during the same time, transfer has increased at a higher rate than opening undergraduate enrollment. The report also notes that large numbers of lateral and reverse transfers could be significantly affecting time-to-degree completion. For example, of the total number of transfers that originate within the technical college system, 30% transfer to another institution within the technical college system and in Fall 2008, 66.91% of the transfers originating from the research institutions and 56.59% of the transfers originating from the comprehensive teaching colleges and universities transferred to a technical college. The report concludes that the growing number of student migrations, as well as the types of movements, produces a real need for deeper understanding of student migration and how transfers impact the educational process.

Please do not hesitate to contact me (803.737-0056; [gmorrison@che.sc.gov](mailto:gmorrison@che.sc.gov)) should you have questions about this report.

## **Migration of First-Time Undergraduate Transfers: Snapshot Analysis 2006-2008**

Analysis of transfer data was viewed through two lenses. A broad year-to-year comparison was analyzed, comparing trends, growth, and proportions of transfers to and from various sectors and institution types over a three-year period, from 2006-2008. Comparing these data is helpful in identifying any significant trend changes as well as identifying areas of stability. The second analysis looked at Fall 2008 data in greater detail. This period was analyzed at a more in-depth level, focusing on movement of students and the types of moves they made.

Specific categories, including vertical transfers, lateral transfers, and reverse transfers, were analyzed. Vertical transfers are students who transfer from a two-year or technical college to a four-year institution. Lateral transfers have origination and destination institutions of the same type. For example, a student transferring from a four-year university to another four-year university or a student transferring from a two-year college to another two-year college is a lateral transfer. Reverse transfers are students who transfer from a four-year college or university to a two-year or technical college.

In Fall 2008, of an opening undergraduate population of 201,898, 15,658 were transfer students, 7.8% of the total.

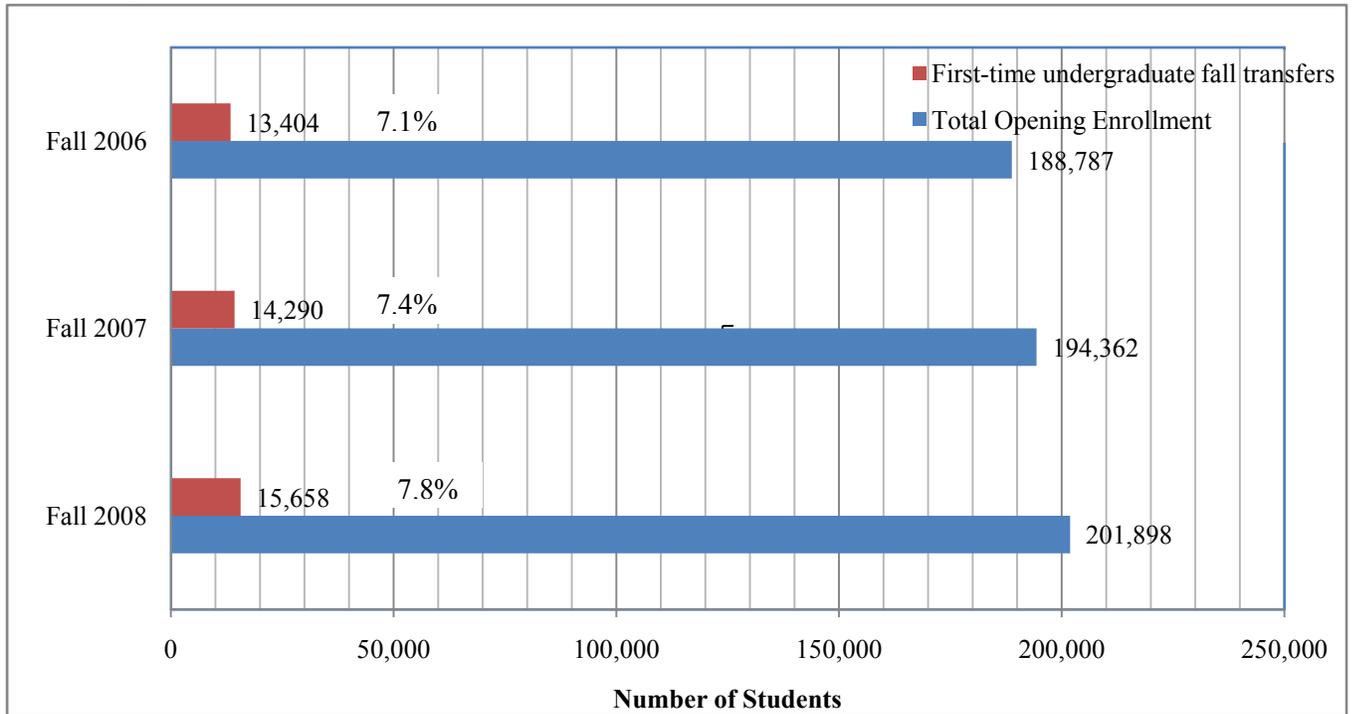
### **Year-to-Year Comparison**

From Fall 2006 to 2008, student transfer from one institution to another increased by 16.8%. In Fall 2006, 13,404 transfers took place. Fall 2006 opening undergraduate enrollment in South Carolina public and independent institutions included 188,787 students; of these, 7.1% of undergraduate students enrolled in Fall 2006 elected to become first-time transfers (Figure 1).

In Fall 2007, transfers from one institution to another increased by 6.6% over Fall 2006, with the transfer student population growing by 886 to 14,290 total transfers. The Fall 2007 undergraduate opening enrollment was 194,362, an increase of 2.9% from the previous year. In Fall 2007, 7.4% of undergraduate students elected to become first-time transfers (Figure 1).

Fall 2008 also saw the total number of transfers grow. In 2008, 1,368 more students transferred than in 2007, for a total of 15,658 migrating students, or a 9.6% increase over the previous year. The Fall 2008 opening undergraduate enrollment was 201,898, an increase of 7.8% from the previous year and an increase of 6.9% from Fall 2006. A comparison of Fall 2008 to Fall 2006 shows that transfer increased at a higher rate than opening undergraduate enrollment. From Fall 2006 to Fall 2008, overall first-time student transfer increased by 2,254 students, a 16.8% increase while opening undergraduate enrollment increased by 6.9% (Figure 1).

**Figure 1: Fall Student Enrollment and Transfer**

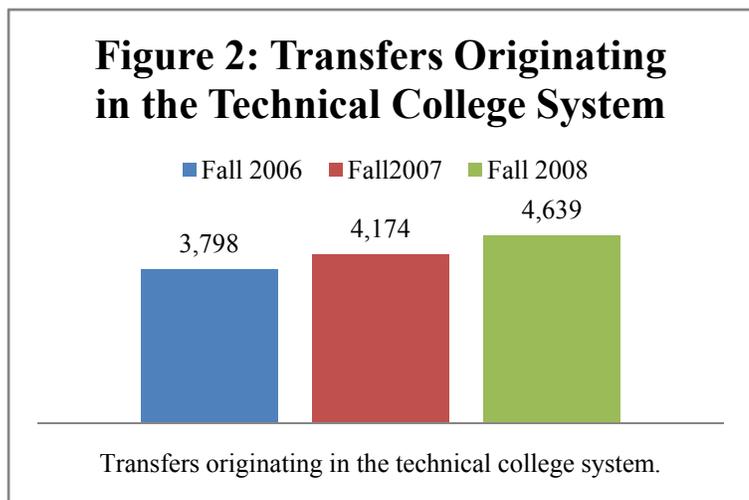


The increase in overall student transfer numbers may be disaggregated into various subcategories, including those transfers originating at comprehensive teaching colleges and universities, two-year regional campuses of the University of South Carolina (USC), technical colleges, independent senior institutions, independent two-year colleges, out-of-state, and foreign student transfers. The only origination category to see a decrease in outward transfers was that of research institutions. While “out” transfers from research institutions increased from 841 to 869 from Fall 2006 to Fall 2007, this number dropped 3.3% below 2006 levels in 2008 to a total of 813.

Transfers out of the technical college system have seen a 22% increase since 2006 (Figure 2). In 2006, 3,798 transfers originated in the technical college system. These transfers increased to 4,174 in 2007 and to 4,639 in 2008.

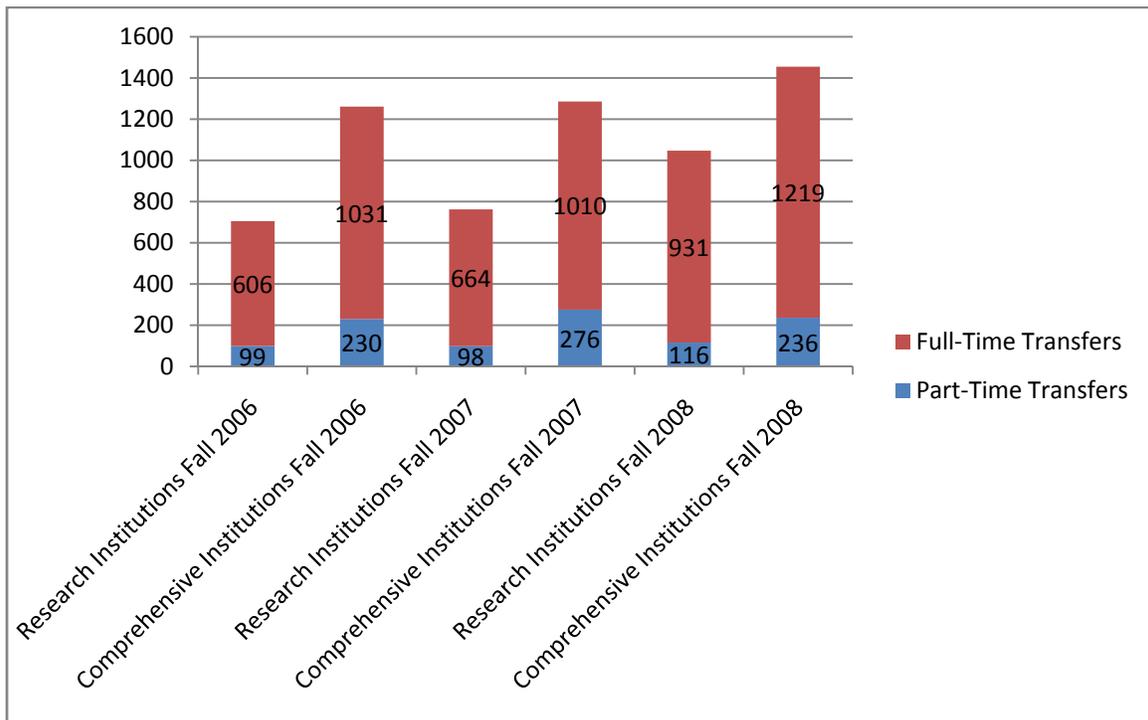
The number of transfers originating at technical colleges and moving into public comprehensive teaching colleges and universities has increased since 2006. In Fall 2006, 1,261 students transferred from a technical college to a comprehensive teaching college or university. In Fall 2008, 1,455 students transferred from a technical college to a comprehensive teaching college or university, an

**Figure 2: Transfers Originating in the Technical College System**



increase of 194 students (15.4%) over the three-year period. During this same period, the number of transfers originating at technical colleges and moving into public research institutions increased significantly. In 2006, 606 full-time and 99 part-time (705 total) students transferred from a technical college to a research university. In 2008, 931 full-time and 116 part-time (1,047 total) students transferred from a technical college to a research university, an increase of 342 students (48.5%) over the three-year period (Figure 3). This percentage outpaces overall growth in student transfer as well as the growth in overall transfer out of technical colleges.

**Figure 3: Transfers to Comprehensive and Research Institutions from the Technical College System**



The “transfer out” rate of the technical colleges (22%) was almost identical to that of transfers originating at the regional campuses of USC. These transfers saw an increase of 21.2%, starting at 542 in 2006, climbing to 607 in 2007, and finally reaching 657 in 2008.

Transfers from other sectors saw growth on a much smaller level. While transfers originating at public comprehensive teaching colleges and universities have also increased, they have done so only slightly. In 2006, 1,886 transfers originated at public comprehensive teaching colleges. This number has increased by only 7.4% since 2006, growing to 1,924 in 2007 and to 2,025 in 2008.

The number of students transferring into South Carolina institutions from out-of-state increased during this time period as well. In 2006, 4,506 students transferred to an institution from out-of-state. These transfers increased to 4,714 students in 2007 and to 5,150 students in

2008. While this population has increased in number, it has actually *decreased* slightly in proportion to total transfers. In 2006, 33.6% of transfers originated out-of-state. In comparison, in 2007, 33% and in 2008, 32.9% of transfers originated out-of-state.

The three-year data set provides an insight into consistency as well as growth. Transfers originating at public two-year institutions have consistently been the largest number and proportion of transfers within the state of South Carolina. In 2006, transfers originating at public two-year institutions made up 32.4% of total transfers. In 2007, this number increased to 33.5% and to 33.8% in 2008.

## **2008 Snapshot**

Data from Fall 2008 was used to provide a more in-depth analysis of student movement throughout institutions of higher education in South Carolina. Vertical, lateral, and reverse student migration are considered below for the 10,997 full-time student transfers and the 4,651 part-time student transfers.

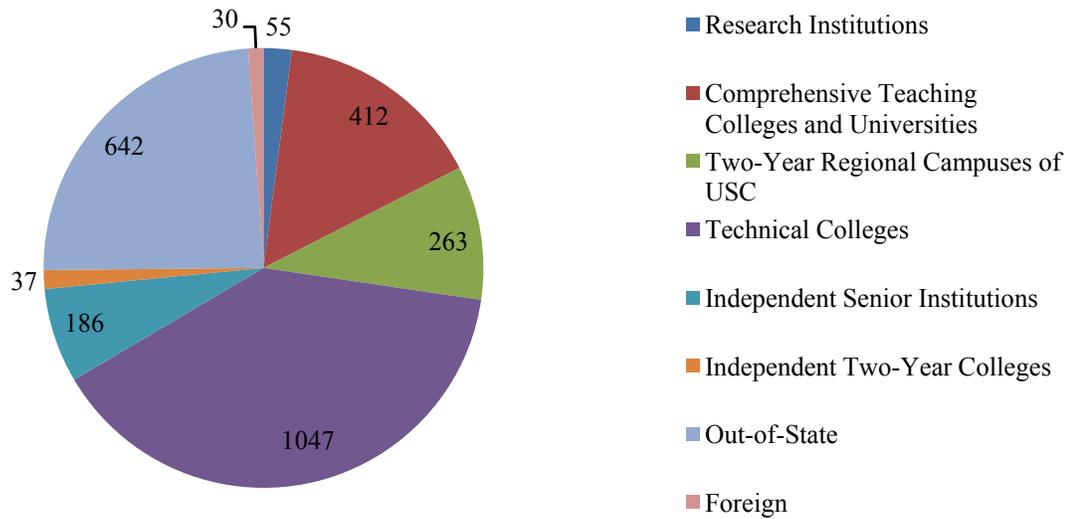
### **Lateral Transfers**

As previously noted, a significant number of student transfers originate at two-year institutions. In Fall 2008, 35.68% of student transfers (5,587) originated at public and independent two-year institutions. Looking more deeply, two-year lateral transfers made up a significant portion of the transfer population. Of the total transfer population, 11.8% made a two-year lateral transfer, meaning that these students transferred from one two-year institution to another two-year institution within South Carolina. These two-year lateral transfers also account for one-third of the transfers, full-time and part-time, that originated at a two-year institution in 2008. A substantial portion of these two-year lateral transfers (83.4%) originate in the technical college system. Of the total number of transfers (4,639) that originate within the technical college system, 1,393, or 30% transfer to another institution within the technical college system. As a result, internal technical college system transfers constitute 8.9% of the total first-time undergraduate transfer population within the state.

### **Vertical Transfers**

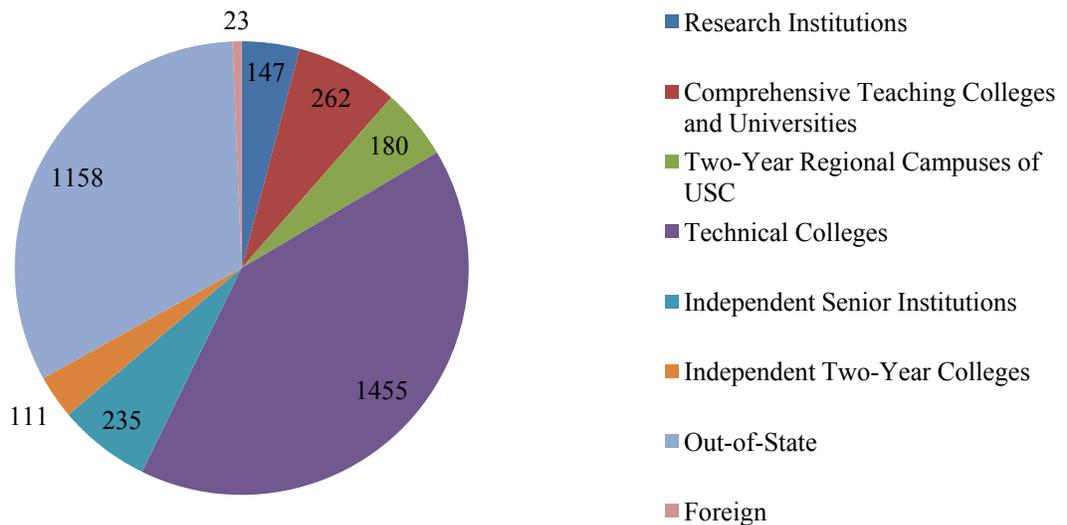
Of all transfer students, 2,672, or 17%, chose to transfer to a research university. Only 55 of these transfers, full-time and part-time, were lateral transfers from another research institution. Excluding other in-state four-year institutions, out-of-state transfers, and foreign transfers, 1,347 in-state transfers to research universities originated at two-year institutions (Figure 4). These vertical transfers constitute 50.4% of the total migrations with a research institution destination.

**Figure 4: Transfers to Research Universities from:**



Of all transfer students, 3,789, or 24.2% chose to transfer to a comprehensive teaching college or university. Only 262 of these transfers, full-time and part-time, were lateral transfers from another comprehensive teaching college or university. Excluding other in-state four-year institutions, out-of-state transfers, and foreign transfers, 1,746 in-state transfers to comprehensive teaching colleges and universities originated at two-year institutions (Figure 5). These vertical transfers constitute 46% of the total migrations with a comprehensive teaching college or university destination. As out-of-state and foreign transfers could have originated at an out-of-state two-year institution, it is possible that the number of vertical transfers to both research institutions and comprehensive teaching colleges and universities is even higher.

**Figure 5: Transfers to Comprehensive Institutions from:**



In Fall 2008, 2,945 or 18.8% of transfers within South Carolina were public vertical transfers, meaning that students transferred from a public two-year institution to a public four-year institution.

### **Reverse Transfers**

Of the 15,658 transfers statewide in Fall 2008, 2,479 (15.8%) were reverse transfers to a two-year or technical college. These transfer students originated at research institutions (22.7% of total reverse transfers), comprehensive teaching colleges and universities (48.3%), or independent senior institutions (29%). In Fall 2008, 66.91% of the transfers originating from the research institutions and 56.59% of the transfers originating from the comprehensive teaching colleges and universities transferred to a technical college (Figures 8 and 9). This significant portion of students is an area that would likely benefit from more in-depth analysis.

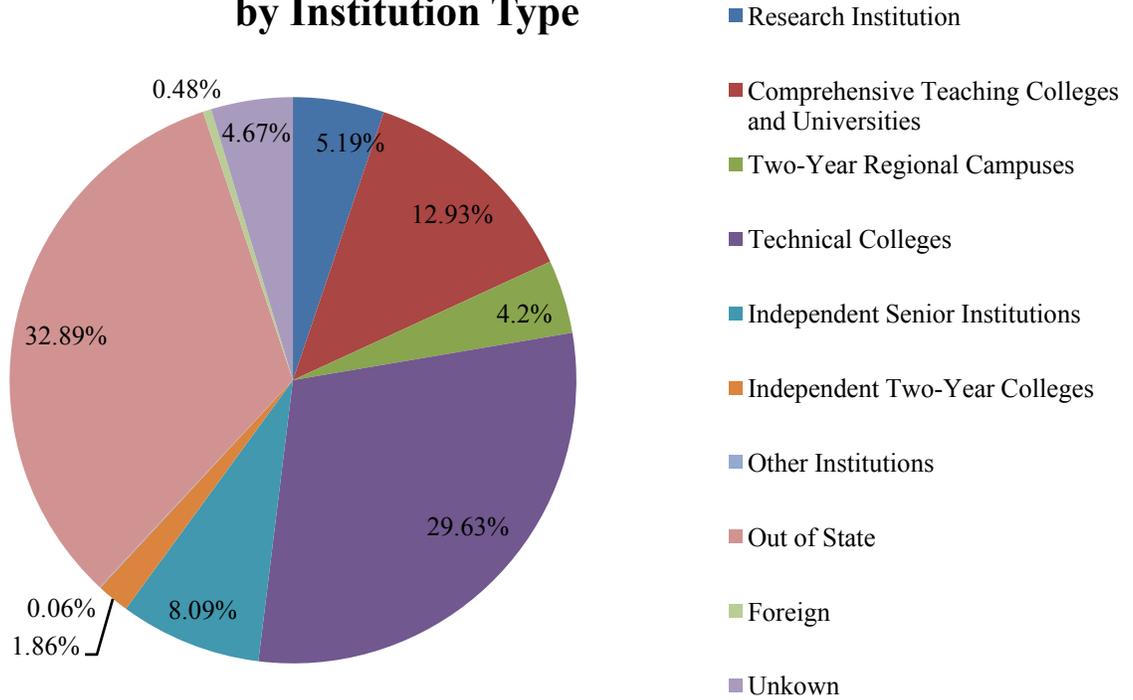
### **Public to Public, Independent to Public, and Out-of-State Transfers**

In Fall 2008, 5,345 full-time student transfers and 1,972 part-time student transfers originated and transferred to a South Carolina public institution. Combined, these 7,317 transfers make up 46.7 % of the total transfer population within the state in Fall 2008. Overall, 51.9% (8,134) of transfers originated at a public institution. Combined, this data reveals that 90% of all students who transferred from a public institution elected to transfer to another public institution. Additionally, of all transfers originating at public institutions, 817 (10%) transferred to an independent institution. This figure constitutes 5.2% of the total transfer population.

Moving from the private to the public sector, 1,034 full-time and 366 part-time (total 1,400) students transferred from an independent institution to a public institution, which constitutes 8.9% of all transfers within the state in 2008. This figure comprises 89.9% of all transfers from independent institutions, meaning that nearly ninety percent of transfers originating at an independent institution transferred to a public institution. Additionally, transfers who originated at an independent institution comprise 9.9% of all transfers.

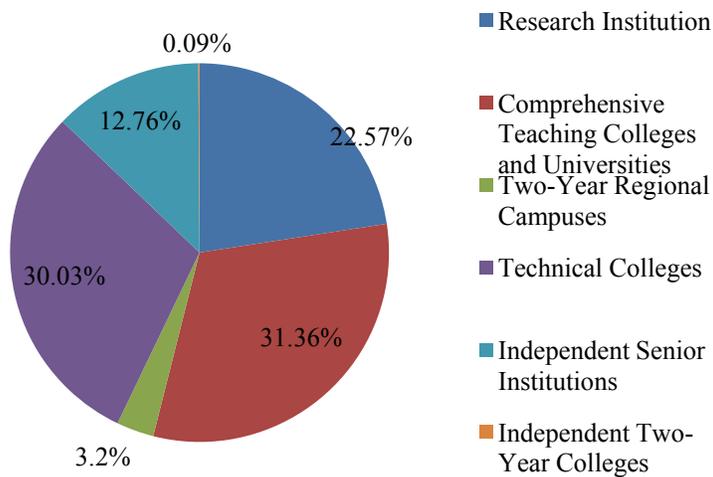
The following chart shows the types of institutions students transferred from in Fall 2008.

**Figure 6: South Carolina Student Transfer Originations by Institution Type**



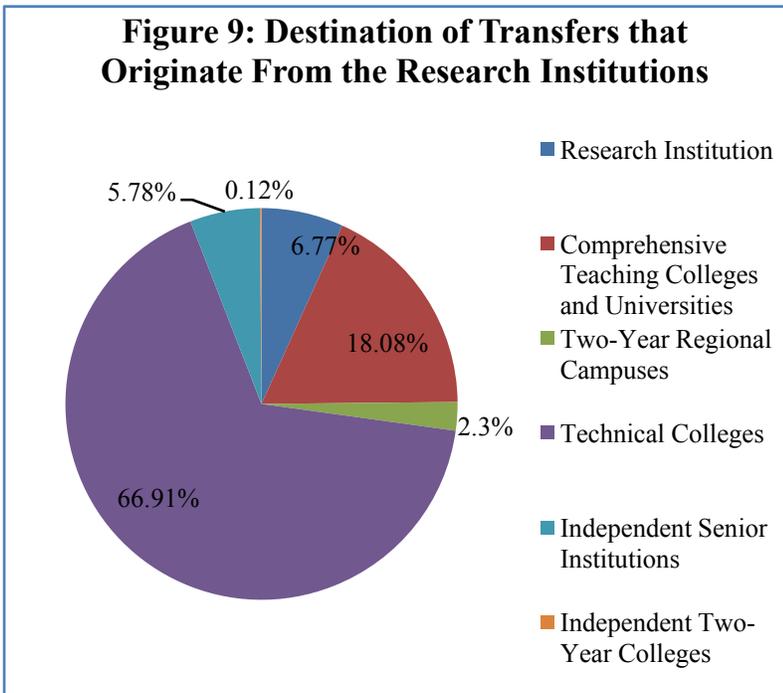
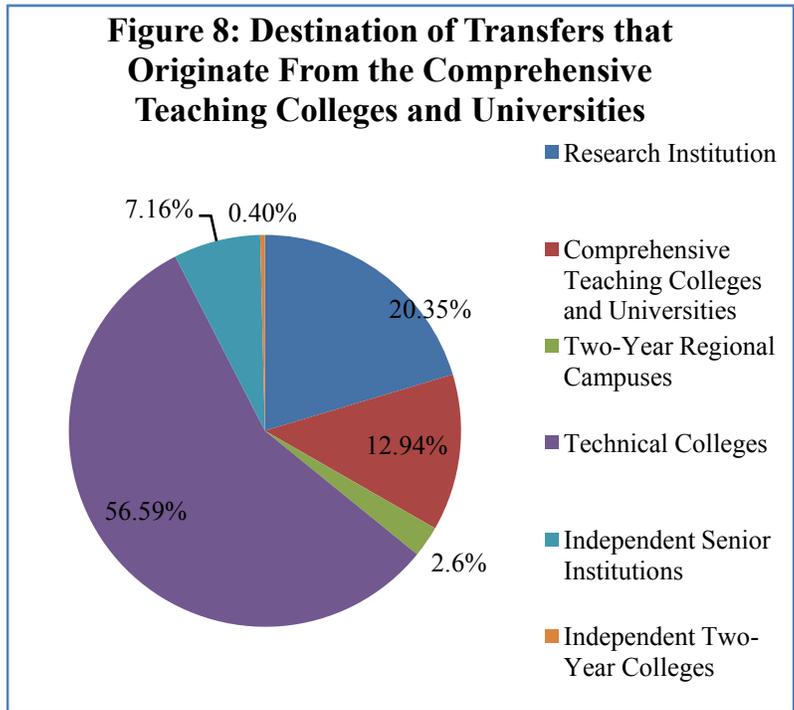
As this chart shows, transfers mainly originate from out-of-state (32.89%), the technical colleges (29.63%), and comprehensive teaching colleges and universities (12.93%). The vast majority (88.9%) of transfers originating out-of-state transferred to a public two- or four-year institution.

**Figure 7: Destination of Transfers that Originate From the Technical Colleges**



Of the 4,639 transfers that originate from the technical colleges, most transfer to a public comprehensive teaching college or university (31.36%), another technical college (30.03%) or a research institution (22.57%) (Figure 7).

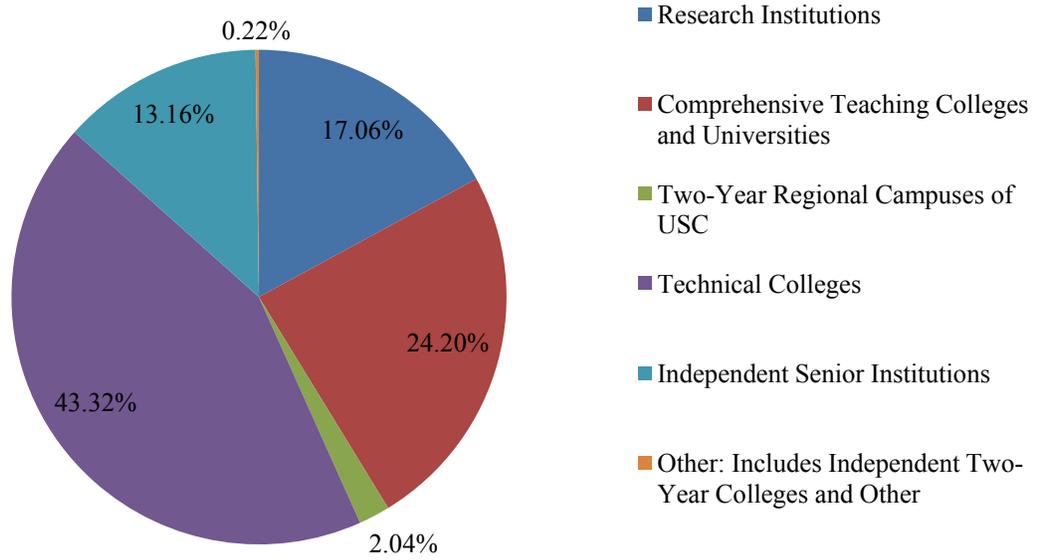
Of the 2,025 transfers that originate from the comprehensive teaching colleges and universities, most transfer to a technical college (56.59%), a research institution (20.35%), or another public comprehensive teaching college or university (12.94%) (Figure 8).



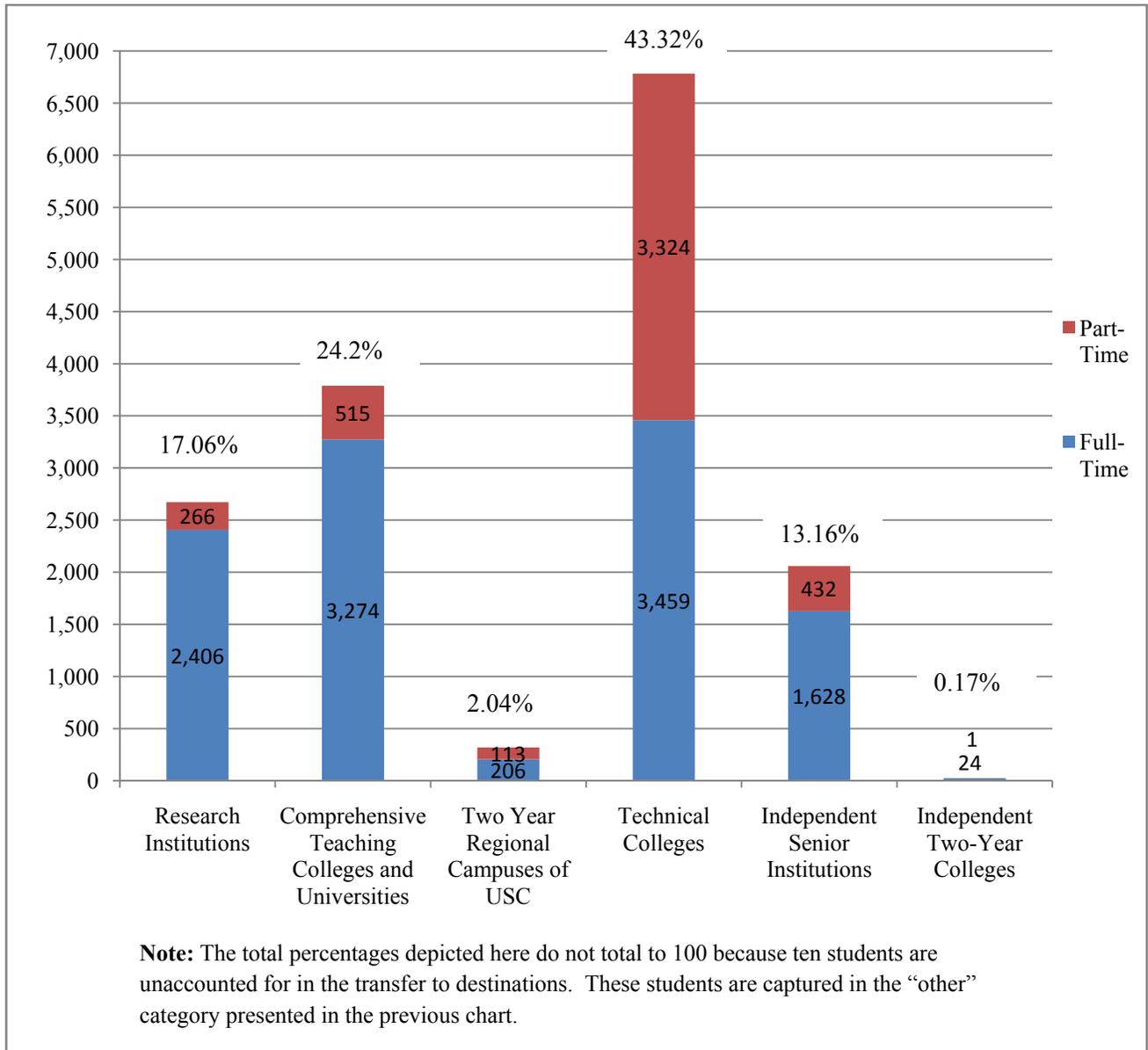
Of the 813 transfers that originate at a research institution, most transfer to a technical college (66.91%) or a public comprehensive teaching college or university (18.08%) (Figure 9).

The charts below shows the types of institutions students transferred to in Fall 2008.

**Figure 10: Student Transfer Destinations in South Carolina by Institution Type**



**Figure 11: Institutions Students Transferred to in Fall 2008 by Full- or Part-Time Status**



As these charts show, the top transfer destinations overall are the technical colleges (43.32%), comprehensive teaching colleges and universities (24.20%), and research institutions (17.06%).

## Conclusion

These trends provide a snapshot into recent student movement throughout South Carolina's institutions of higher education. In summary, it is worth noting that:

- Since 2006, student transfer from one institution to another has increased significantly (16.8%).
- Since Fall 2006, transfer has increased at a higher rate than opening undergraduate enrollment. From Fall 2006 to Fall 2008, overall first-time student transfer increased by 16.8% while opening undergraduate enrollment increased by 6.9%.
- Transfers out of the technical college system have seen a 22% increase since 2006; similarly, transfers out of the regional campuses of USC have seen a 21.2% increase.
- The number of transfers originating at technical colleges and moving into public research institutions has increased significantly (48.5%) since 2006.
- During the same period, the number of transfers originating at technical colleges and moving into public comprehensive teaching colleges and universities increased by 15.4%.
- Of the total number of transfers (4,639) that originate within the technical college system, 30% (1,393) transfer to another institution within the technical college system. As a result, internal technical college system transfers constitute 8.9% of the total first-time undergraduate transfer population within the state.
- While the number of students transferring into South Carolina institutions from out-of-state has increased in number since Fall 2006, this population has actually *decreased* slightly in proportion to total transfers.
- In Fall 2008, 66.9% of the transfers originating from the research institutions and 56.6% of the transfers originating from the comprehensive teaching colleges and universities transferred to a technical college.

Overall, the growing number of student migrations as well as the types of movements produce a real need for deeper understanding of student migration. Specifically, large numbers of lateral and reverse transfers could be significantly affecting time-to-degree completion. While this statement could be true for vertical transfers as well, large numbers of students who begin their educations at a two-year institution do so intending to make a vertical transfer at a later date. South Carolina's institutions would benefit from increasing their knowledge of how transfers affect the educational process, including time-to-degree completion, overall student transition, and academic progress. Clearly, students are increasingly mobile which makes development and maintenance of the new South Carolina Transfer and Articulation web-based tool (SCTRAC.org) all the more important.