

# Rethinking Transfer in the Time of Swirl

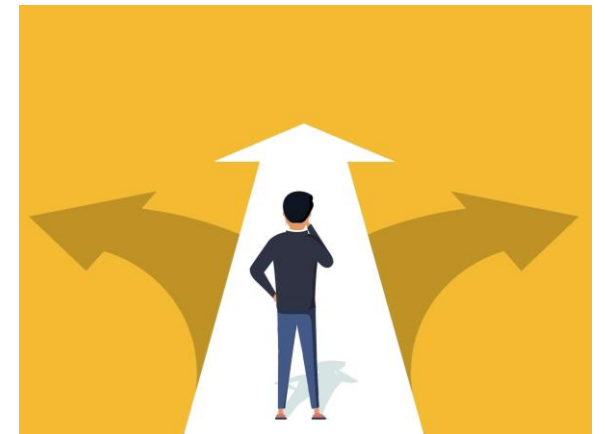
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*March 2, 2023*

## Guiding Questions

- What does the **overall transfer landscape** look like for Alabama's public institutions?
- How do the interventions we have made through AGSC/Alabama Transfers map onto the transfer landscape?
- Are there other interventions we should consider?



# Data on Transfer

ACHE's Research Services maintains the Alabama Statewide Student Database, with information from all public two-year and four-year institutions.

Transfer Reports use term enrollment data to identify incoming transfer students and show which institution they transferred from.

The screenshot shows the ACHE Data Portal interface. The main heading is "Alabama Commission on Higher Education" with the ACHE logo on the left and "ACHE DATA PORTAL" on the right. Below this is a "Student Database Reports" section with several menu items: "Retention Reports", "High School Reports", "Transfer Reports" (circled in red), "Admission / Program Vitality Reports", "Development Completion Reports", "High School Reports & Charts", and "Institutional Student Profiles".

The "Transfer Reports" section is highlighted, showing a table titled "ALABAMA COMMISSION ON HIGHER EDUCATION in accordance with Act 96-509 SOURCE OF NEW UNDERGRADUATE TRANSFERS FOR SPRING 2022 From Alabama Public Four-Year Institutions". The table lists the source institution (Transferred From) and the number of transfers to various destination institutions (To).

Institution Transferred From To ↓	AAM	ASU	ATSU	AU	AUM	JSU	TROY	UA	UAB	UAH
BEV	0	1	0	0	0	1	0	4	4	0
BIS	1	2	0	0	0	0	2	1	1	0
CACC	2	2	0	5	6	2	5	5	1	1
CAL	6	0	1	3	3	5	4	10	6	27
CEN	0	2	0	1	5	2	3	1	2	0
CVC	0	2	0	4	2	0	3	0	0	0
DRA	7	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	3
ENT	1	1	0	1	1	0	4	1	0	0
GAD	0	1	0	2	0	24	0	2	2	0
ING	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
JSC	4	3	0	4	4	10	10	24	29	3
LAW	8	6	0	2	3	4	0	8	14	0
LBW	0	3	0	0	1	0	4	2	1	0
MMI	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0
NEC	0	0	0	0	0	3	0	0	1	0
NWS	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	3	1	2
REI	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
SHC	4	2	0	1	2	0	0	49	3	1
SND	0	0	1	8	2	2	0	4	2	0
SOU	0	2	0	18	9	5	6	5	1	1
TRE	2	13	0	0	11	0	17	1	3	1
WSD	0	2	0	1	2	0	8	2	2	0
WSH	0	1	1	4	3	7	2	5	11	2
WSS	0	4	0	0	3	1	1	1	0	0

<https://data.ache.edu/>

## Data on Transfer: Limitations

- Data only capture one-directional transfer.
- Reports focus on one term at a time and do not show student behavior over multiple terms.
- Data can show patterns for sending and receiving institutions, but difficult to aggregate across the system.

Alabama Commission on Higher Education

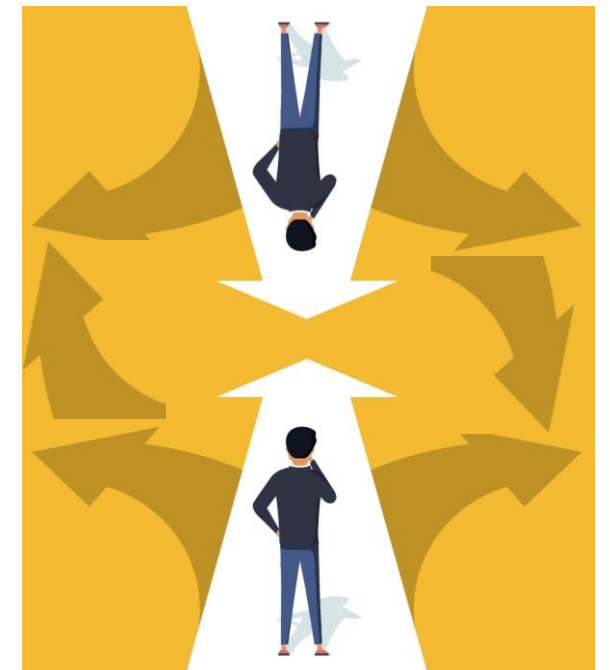
ACHE DATA PORTAL

### Student Database Reports

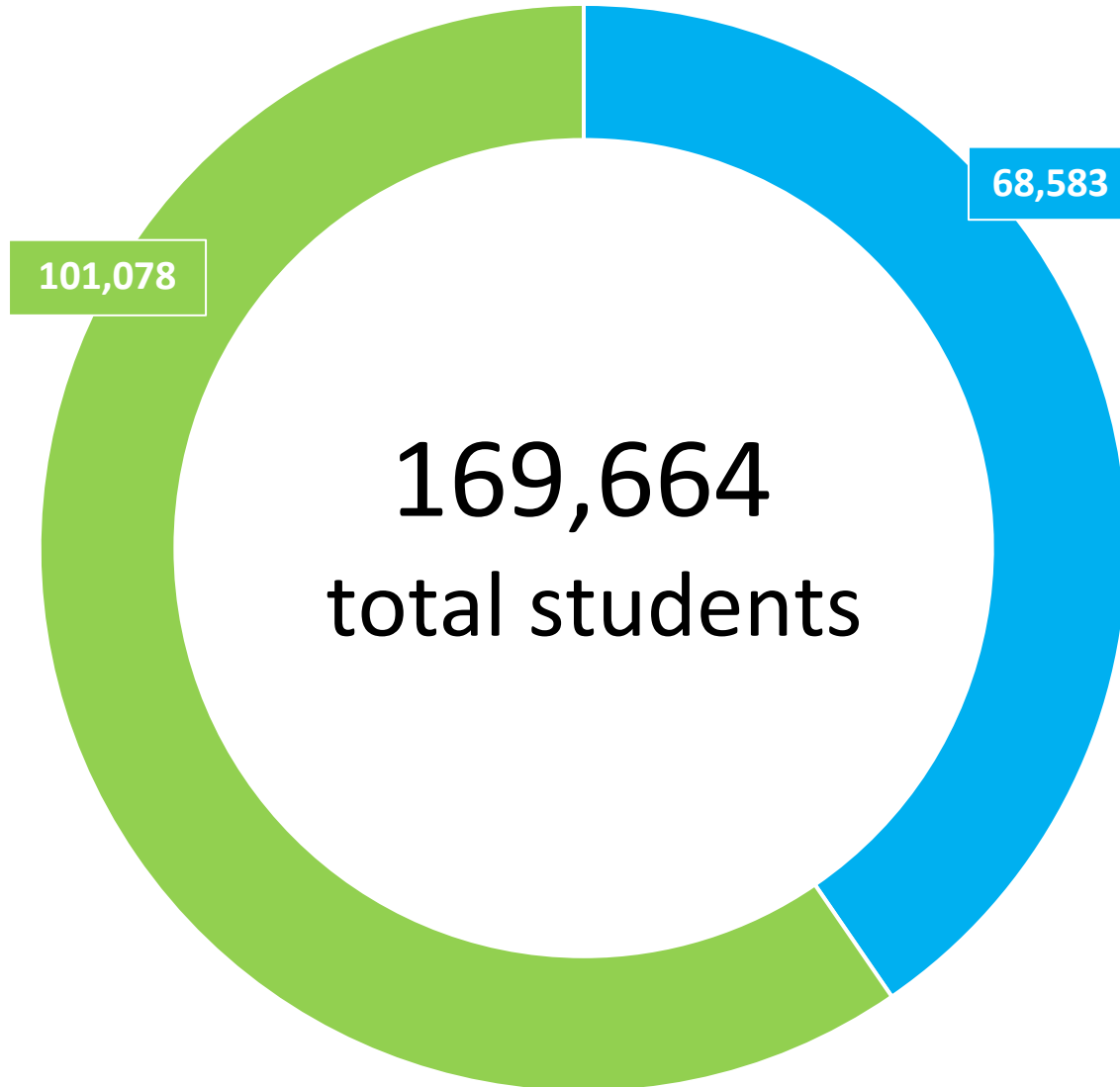
- Retention Reports
- High School Reports
- Transfer Reports**
- Completion / Program Vitality Reports
- Workforce Development Enrollment Reports
- Workforce Development Completion Reports
- School District Reports & Charts
- District College Ready Charts
- High School Reports & Charts
- FTE
- Preliminary Fall Enrollment
- Institutional Student Profiles

# Data on Transfer: A System Approach

- Uses Alabama Statewide Student Database, annual enrollment and completion data submitted by institutions (IHEs).
- Considers first-time students (full-time and part-time) enrolling in Fall of a given academic year.
- Includes four cohorts:
  - FA 2017 first-time, degree-seeking undergraduates
  - FA 2018 first-time, degree-seeking undergraduates
  - FA 2019 first-time, degree-seeking undergraduates
  - FA 2020 first-time degree-seeking undergraduates
- Links each student to the IHE they start at and tracks their enrollment and completion through Fall 2022.



# Undergraduate Degree-Seeking Students Cohorts 2017-2020

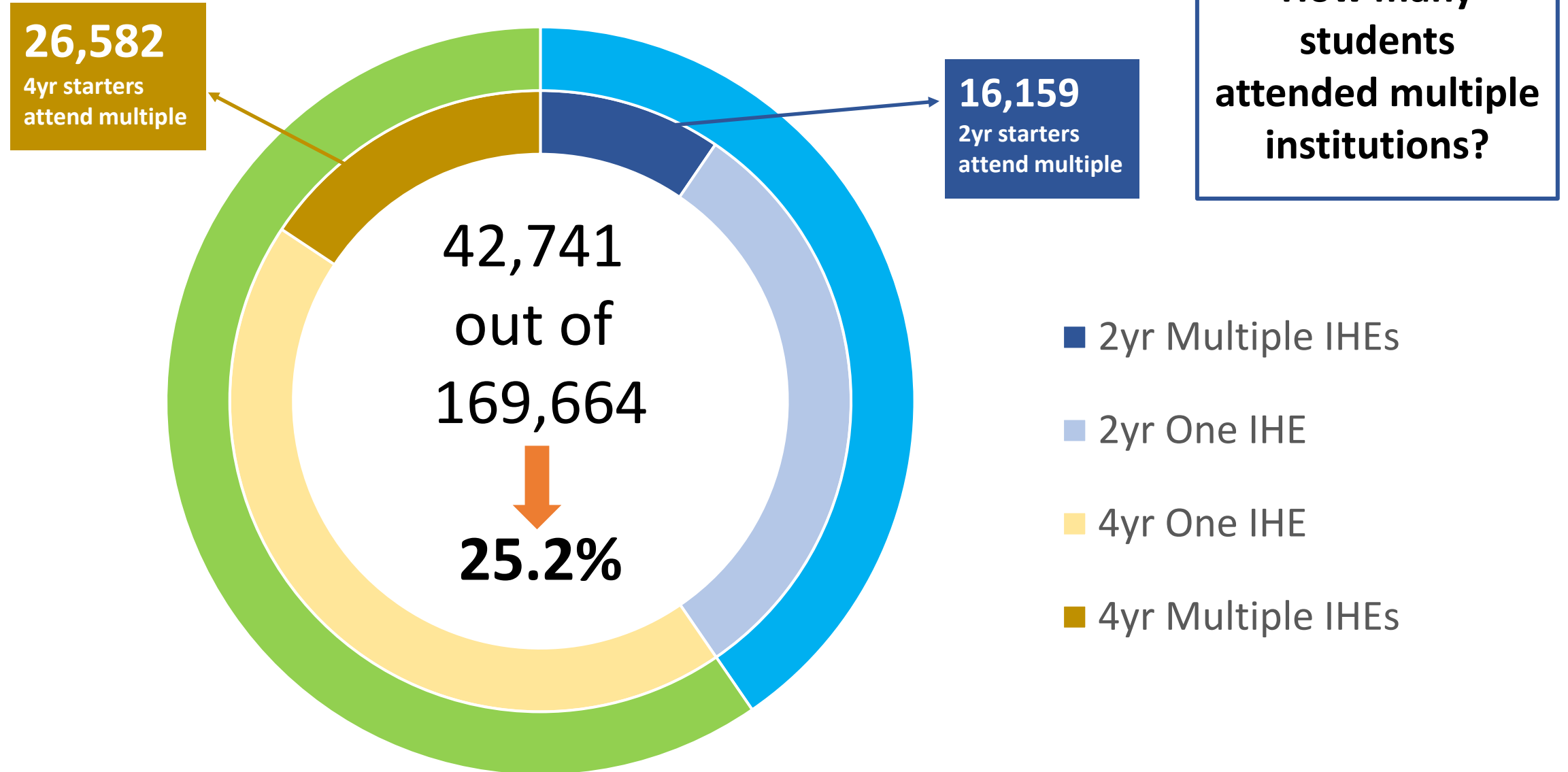


**How many  
students  
are included in  
the sample?**

■ 2yr starters

■ 4yr starters

# Undergraduate Degree-Seeking Students Cohorts 2017-2020

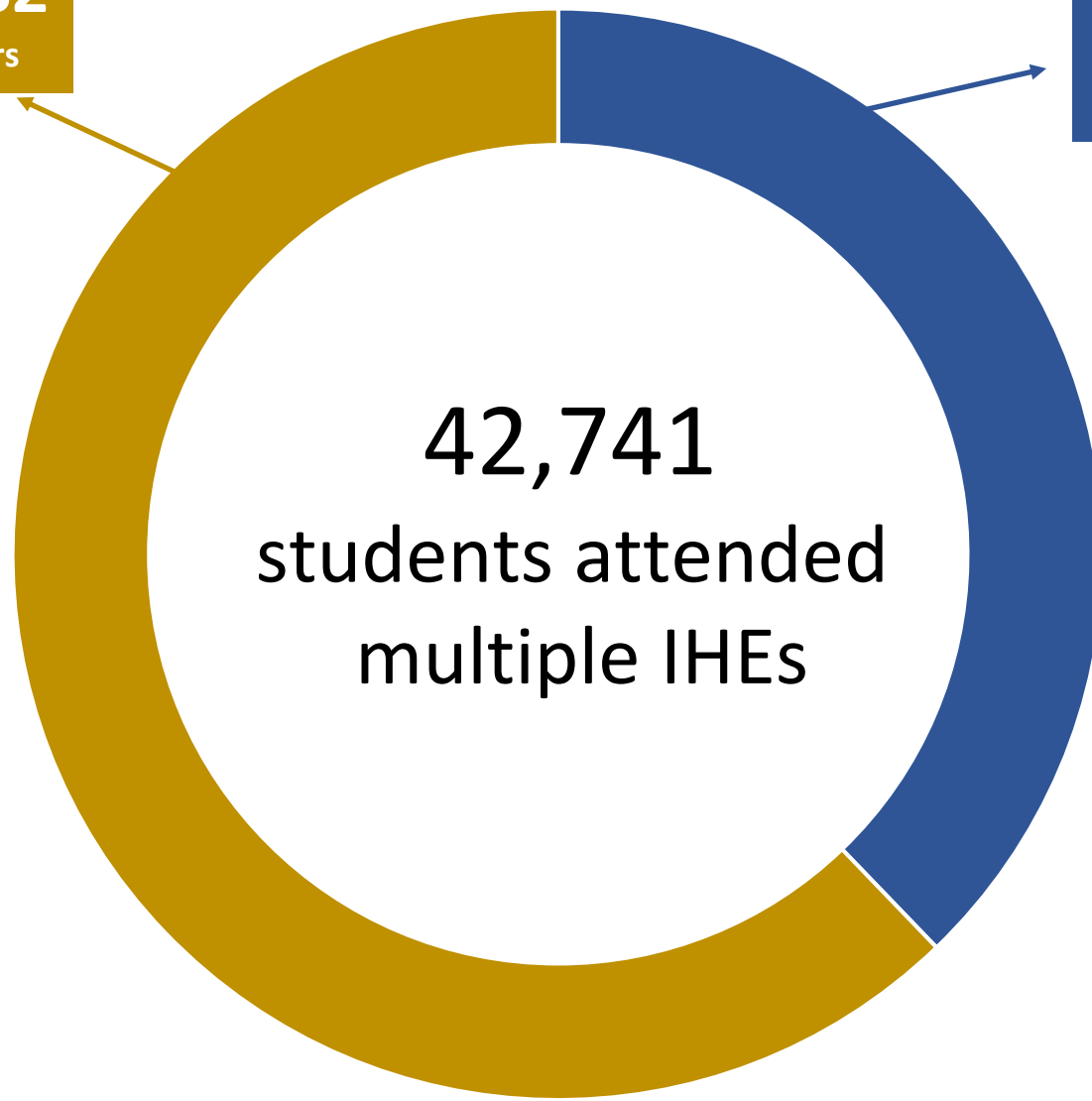


# Undergraduate Degree-Seeking Students Cohorts 2017-2020

**26,582**  
4yr starters

**16,159**  
2yr starters

**Of those, how many students attended 3 or more institutions?**



**42,741**  
students attended  
multiple IHEs

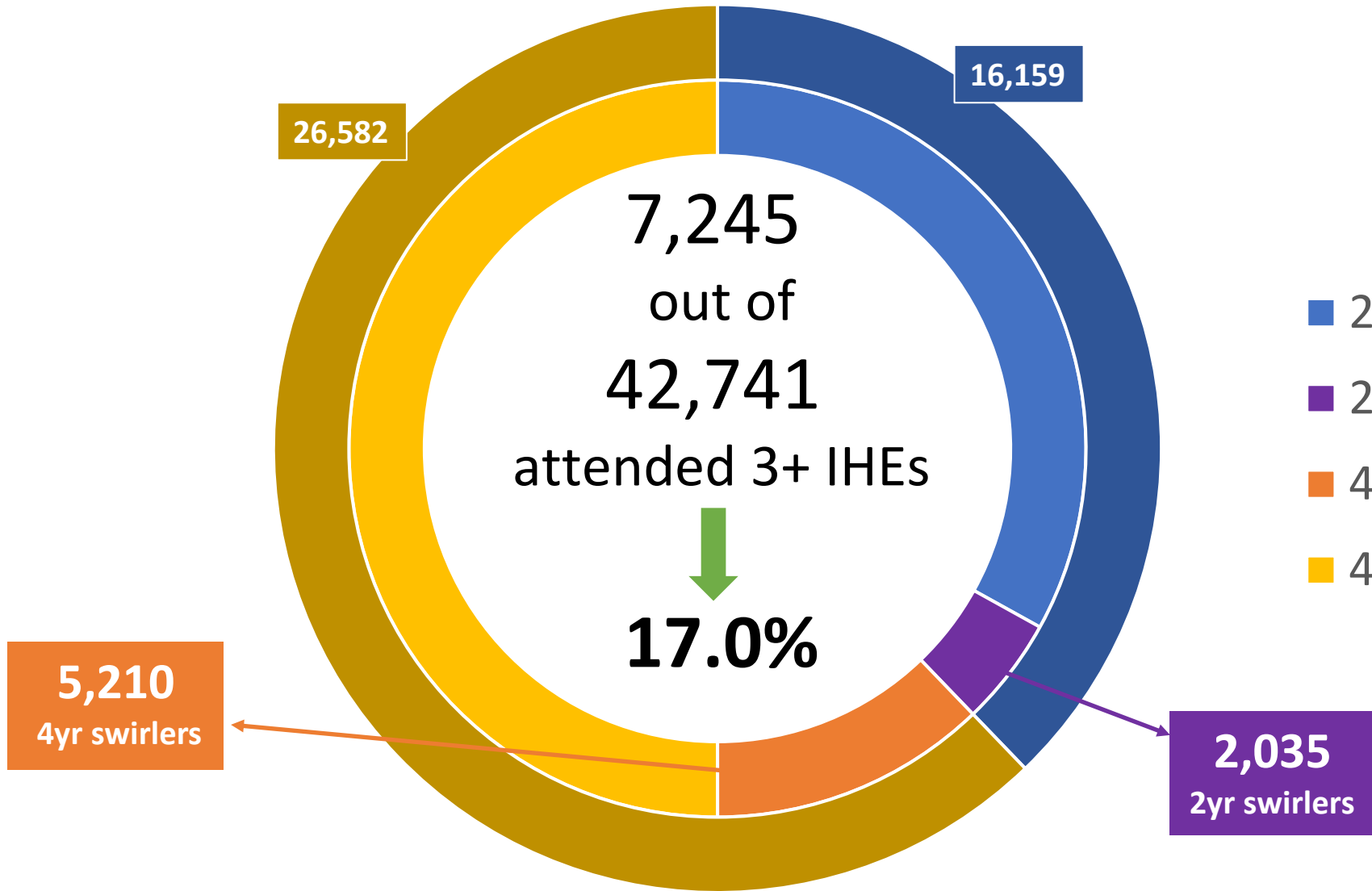
- 2yr Mult IHEs
- 4yr Mult IHEs



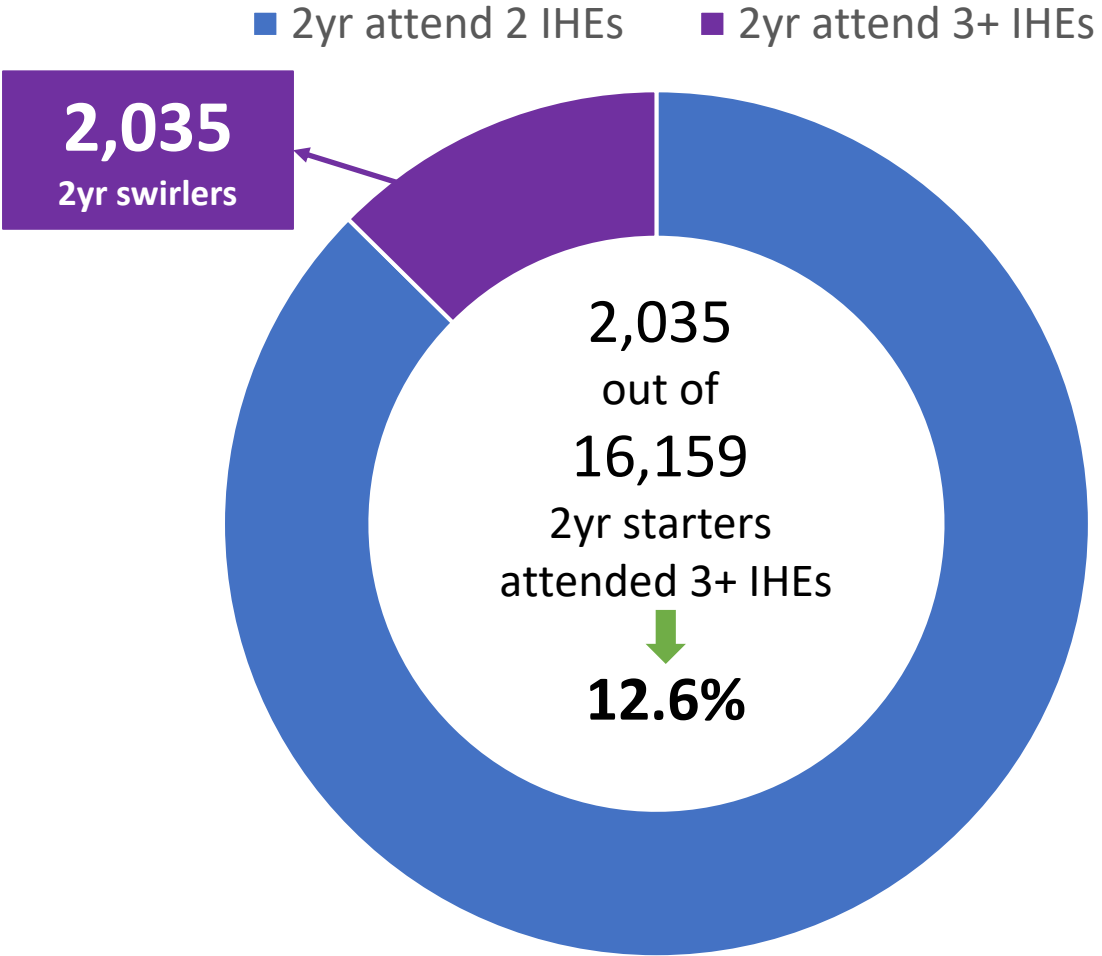
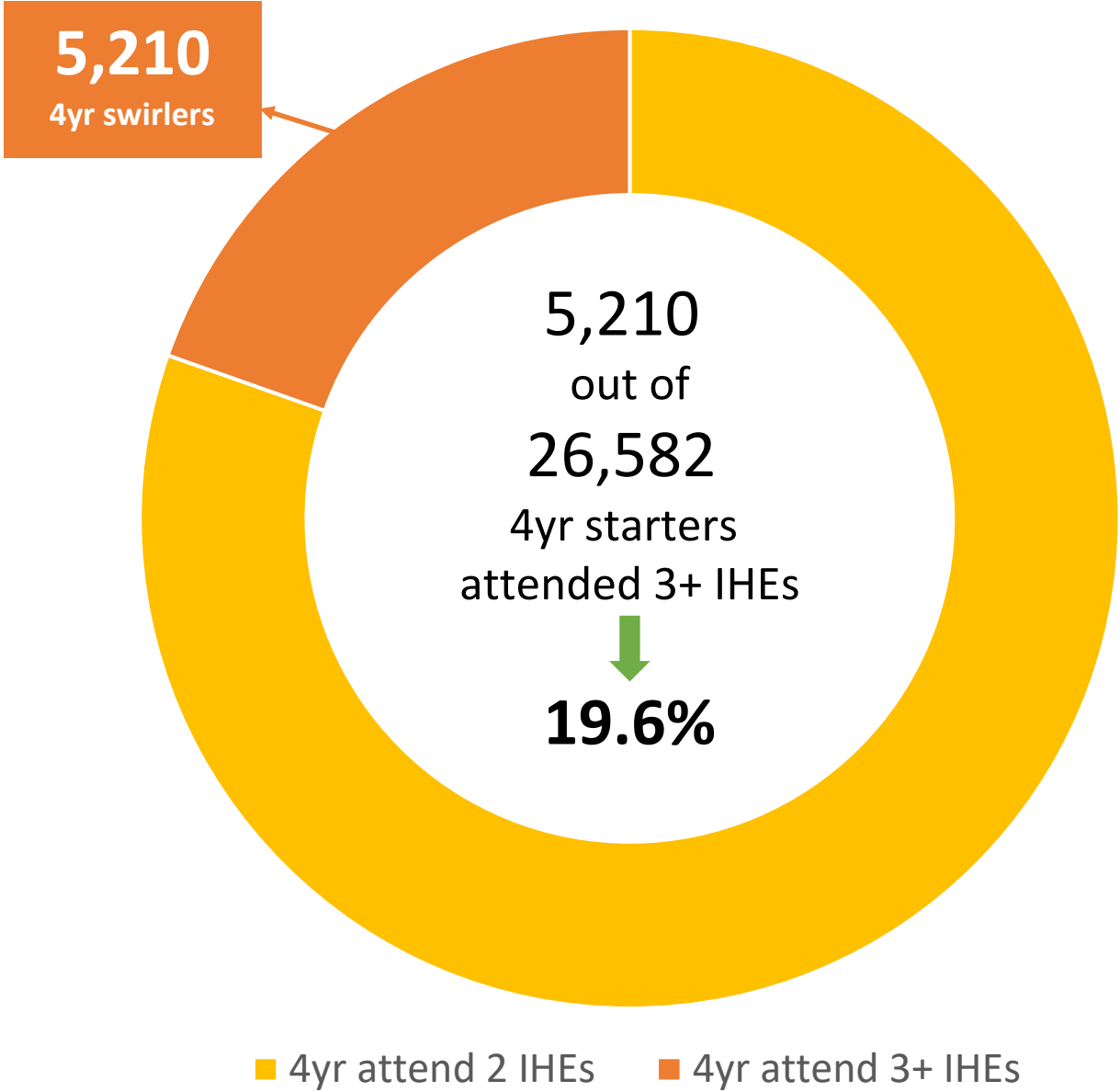
# Undergraduate Degree-Seeking Students Cohorts 2017-2020

**Of those, how many students attend 3 or more institutions (swirlers)?**

- 2yr 2 IHEs
- 2yr 3+ IHEs
- 4yr 3+ IHEs
- 4yr 2 IHEs

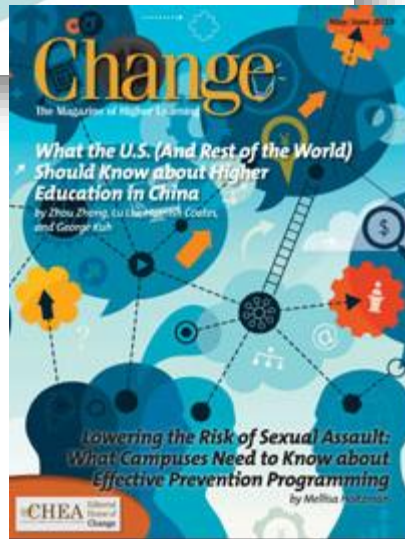


**Which sector (2yr or 4yr) had the higher rate of student swirl?**



# From Vertical to Dynamic Transfer: RECOGNIZING CONTINUOUS SWIRL IN AMERICAN HIGHER EDUCATION

By Steven Katsinas, Nathaniel Bray,  
Linda Hagedorn, Skip Dotherow,  
and Mike Malley



Transfer swirl becomes a greater issue if we consider the expansion of dual enrollment among Alabama's high school students.

## In Short

- Students are unbundling their credit hours to focus on best options across both 2- and 4-year institutions.
- Patterns of student transfer indicate that not only are they swirling freely between 2- and 4-year institutions, but they are accruing significant credit while in high school.
- Fewer and fewer bachelor's students are earning all of their credit from one college or university.
- Colleges and universities need to analyze course-taking patterns to develop strategies to adapt and better serve students.

# Undergraduate Degree-Seeking Students Cohorts 2017-2020

**4yr attending 2 IHEs:**  
Course-to-course  
equivalencies

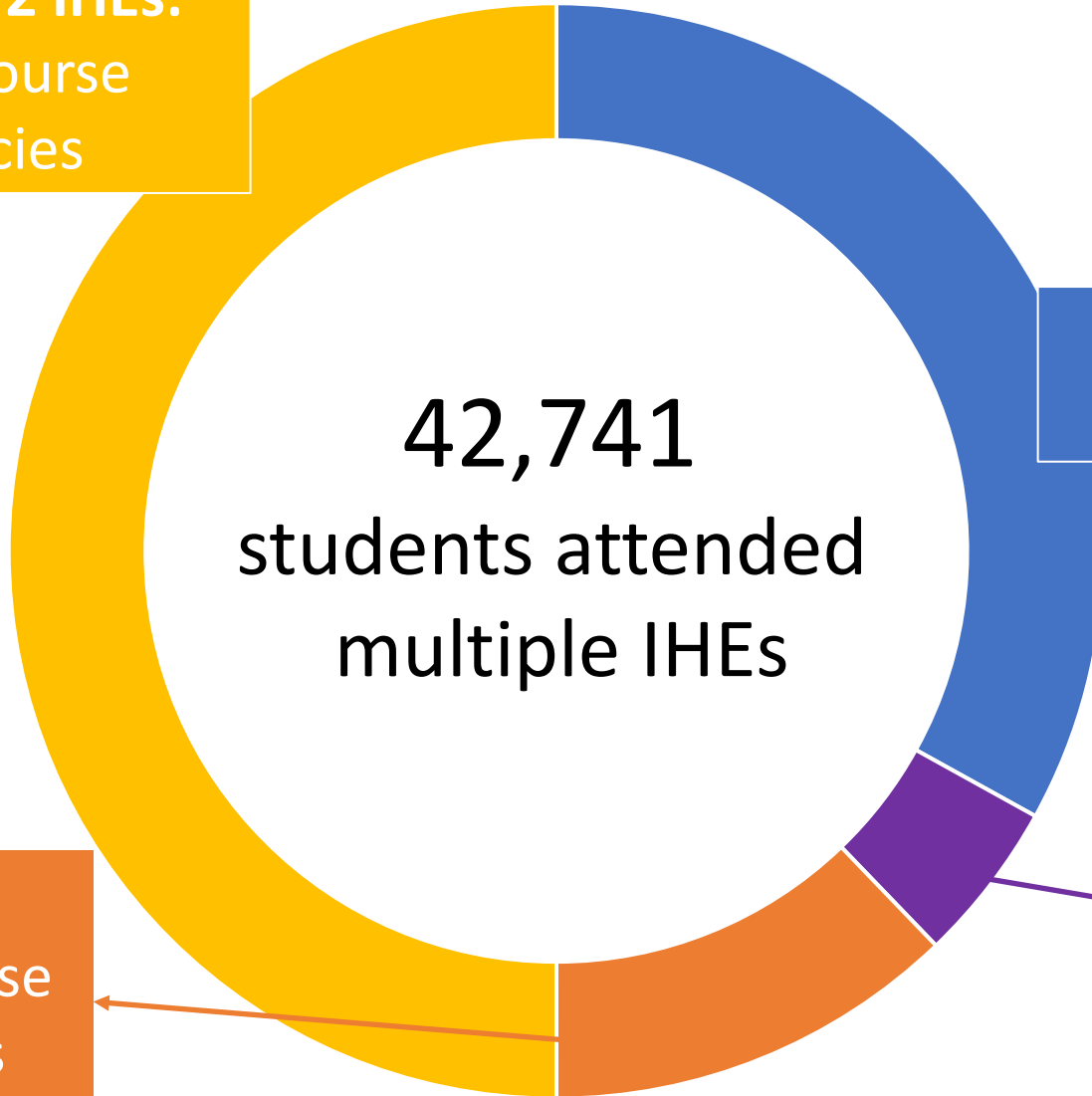
**Which AGSC  
interventions serve  
each segment?**

**42,741**  
students attended  
multiple IHEs

**2yr attending 2 IHEs:**  
Transfer Guides

**4yr swirlers:**  
Course-to-course  
equivalencies

**2yr swirlers:**  
Course-to-course  
equivalencies



# Course equivalencies

<https://alabamatransfers.com/>

## About us

- [\\_What is the AGSC & STARS?](#)
- [\\_What is Alabama Transfers?](#)
- [\\_History & background](#)
- [\\_Participating institutions](#)
- [\\_Annual reports](#)
- [\\_ACHIEVE Conference](#)
- [\\_Contact us](#)

## Students

- [\\_Get the guide](#)
- [\\_Approved community college course list](#)
- [\\_Approved university course lists](#)
- [\\_Course equivalencies](#)
- [\\_Scholarships](#)
- [\\_Transfer checklist](#)
- [\\_Student FAQs](#)



Alabama  
Transfers

## Course requirements & equivalencies

### SEARCH FOR A COURSE

### FILTER BY MAJOR ^

- All Majors
- Animal Bio-Health Sciences (AAMU Only)
- Art Studio B.A.
- Biology
- Biology Education (Middle/High School)
- Biotechnology - Applied/Plant
- Business (All Business Majors)
- Business Education (Middle/High School)
- Chemistry
- Chemistry Education (Middle/High School)

### This course at a Community College

#### AREA I · WRITTEN COMPOSITION ^

- ENG 101 · Written Composition I
- ENG 102 · Written Composition II

#### AREA II · HUMANITIES & FINE ARTS ^

- ENG 251 · American Literature I
- ENG 252 · American Literature II
- ENG 261 · English Literature I
- ENG 262 · English Literature II
- ENG 271 · World Literature I
- ENG 272 · World Literature II
- ART 100 · Art Appreciation (A)
- ART 203 · Art History I (A)
- ART 204 · Art History II (A)
- MUS 101 · Music Appreciation (A)

### Is equivalent to this course at

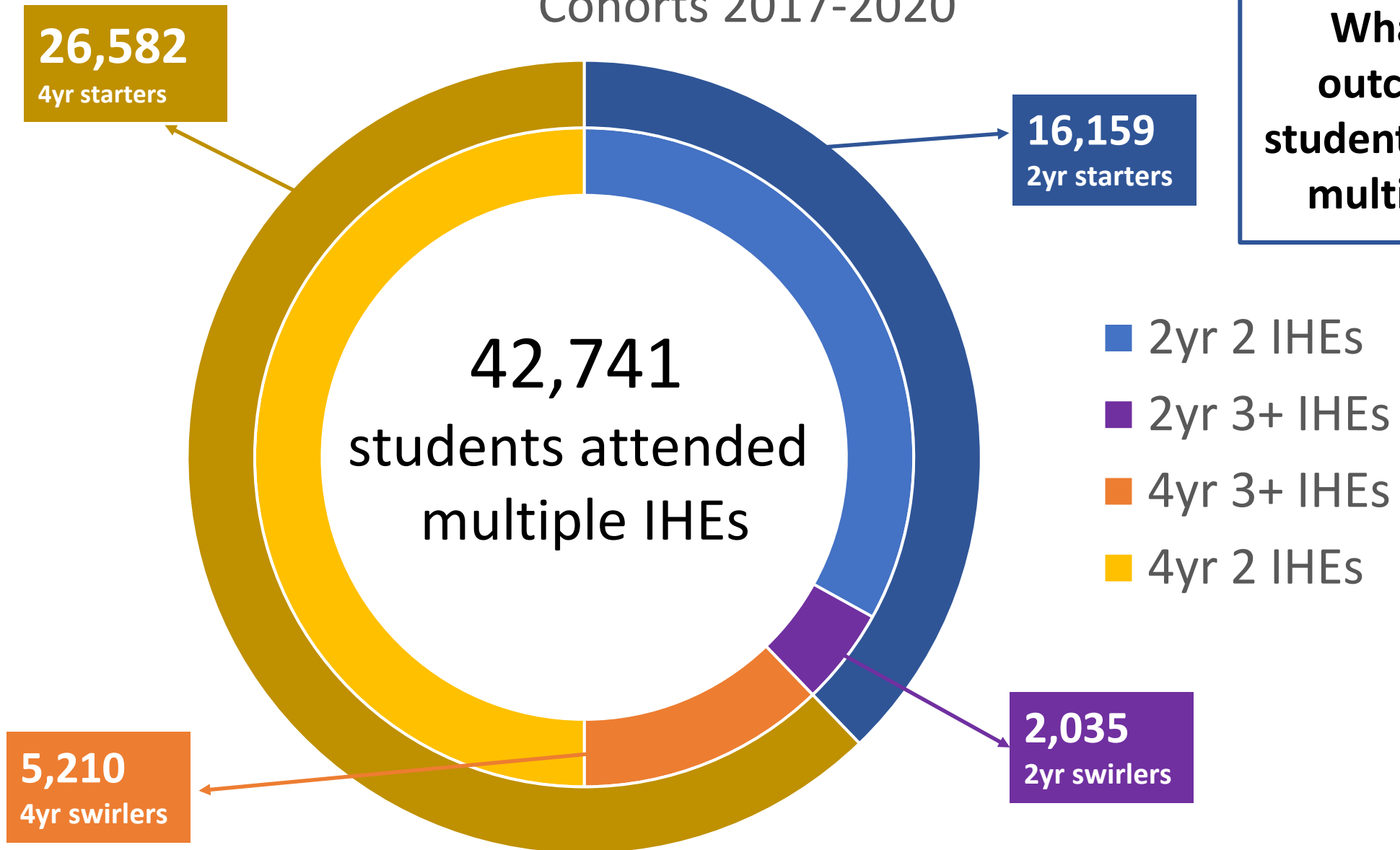
AA&MU v

AA&MU v

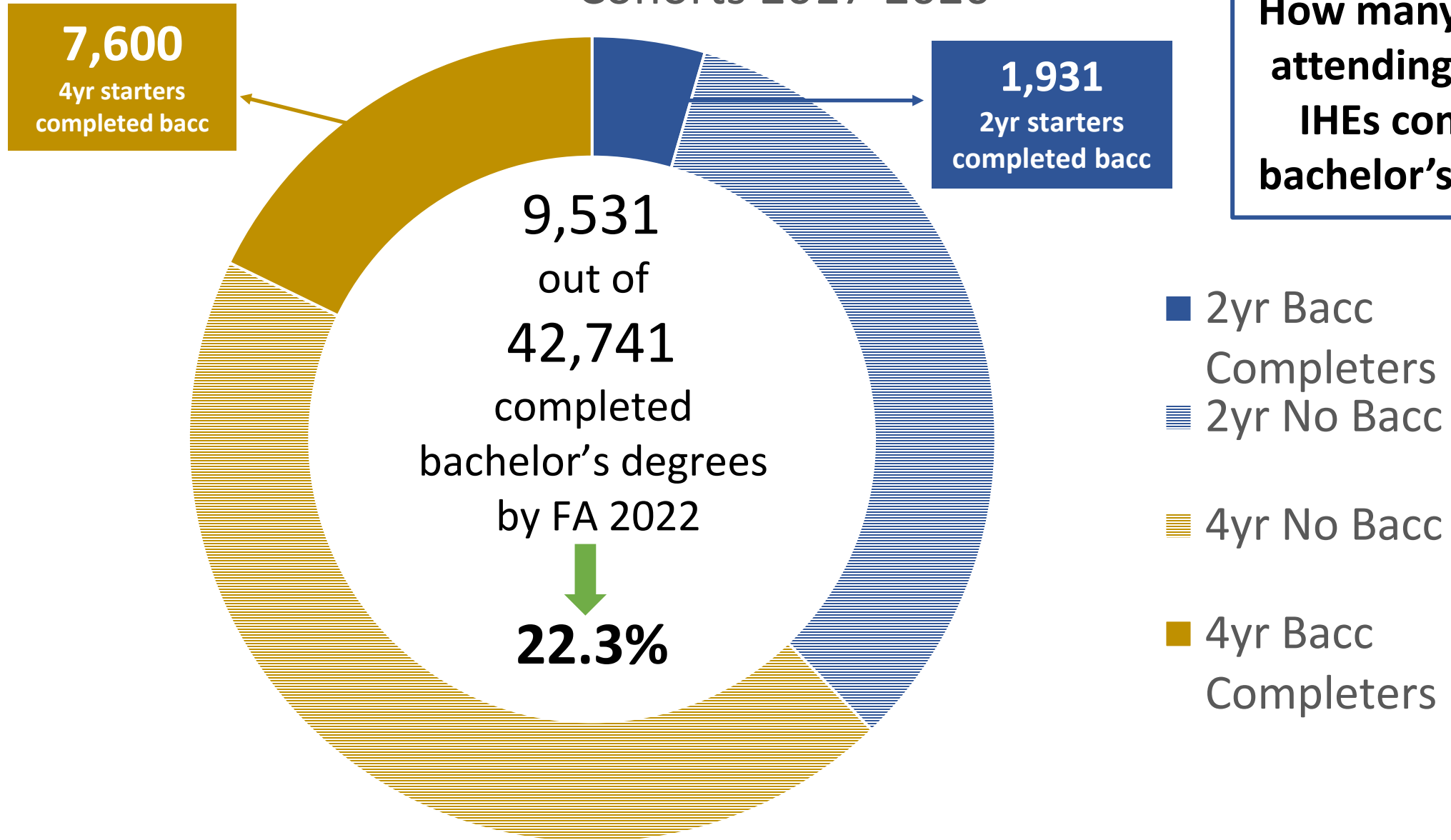
- Alabama State University
- Athens State University
- Auburn University
- Auburn University at Montgomery
- Jacksonville State University
- The University of Alabama
- Troy University
- University of Alabama at Birmingham
- University of Alabama in Huntsville
- University of Montevallo
- University of North Alabama
- University of South Alabama
- University of West Alabama
- ENG 208 · American Literature II.\*
- ENG 201 · Survey of English Literature I
- ENG 202 · Survey of English Literature II
- ENG 203 · World Literature I
- ENG 204 · World Literature II
- ART 101 · Art Appreciation
- ART 220 · History of Art I.\*
- ART 221 · History of Art II.\*
- MUS 101 · Music Appreciation

# Undergraduate Degree-Seeking Students Cohorts 2017-2020

**What about  
outcomes for  
students attending  
multiple IHEs?**



# Undergraduate Degree-Seeking Students Cohorts 2017-2020



**How many students  
attending multiple  
IHEs completed  
bachelor's degrees?**

**How do students attending 2 IHEs compare with swirlers in terms of bachelor's degree completion?**

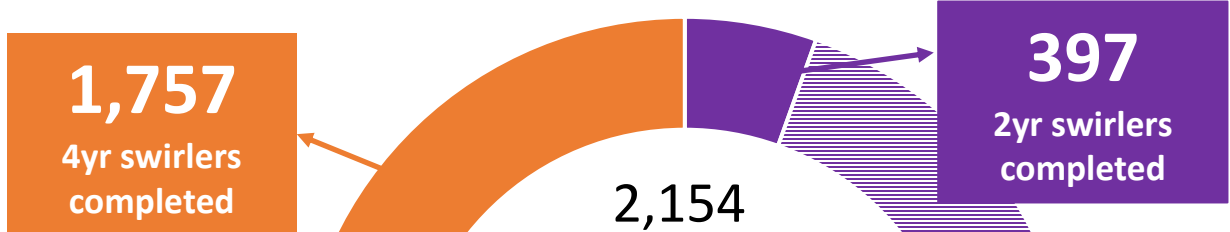


7,377  
out of  
35,496  
students  
attending  
2 IHEs  
↓  
**20.7%**

- 2yr Bacc Completers
- 2yr No Bacc
- 4yr No Bacc
- 4yr Bacc Completers

- 2yr Bacc Completers
- 2yr No Bacc
- 4yr No Bacc
- 4yr Bacc Completers

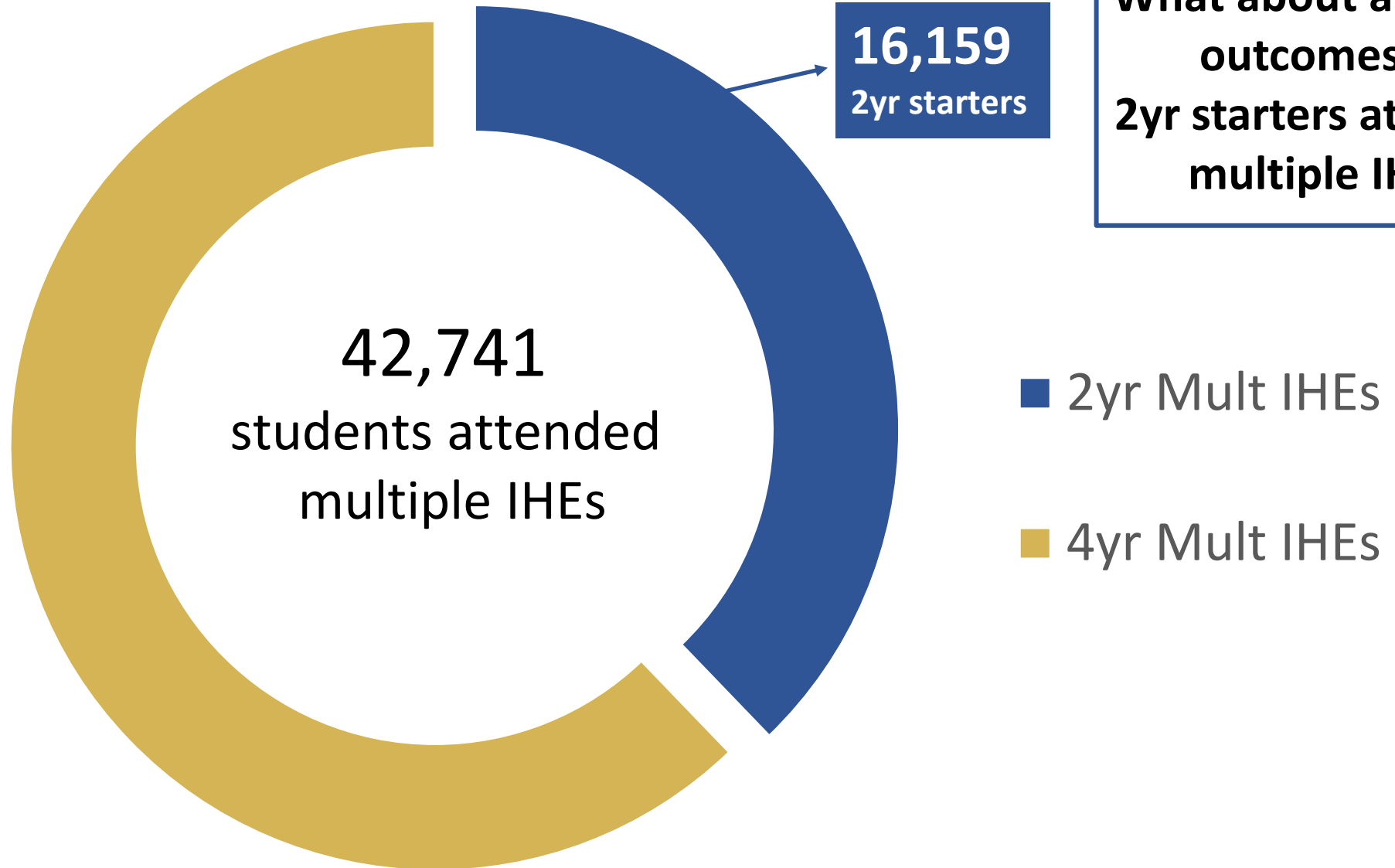
Swirlers  
completed at  
higher rates.



2,154  
out of  
7,245  
students  
attending  
3+ IHEs  
↓  
**29.7%**



# Undergraduate Degree-Seeking Students Cohorts 2017-2020

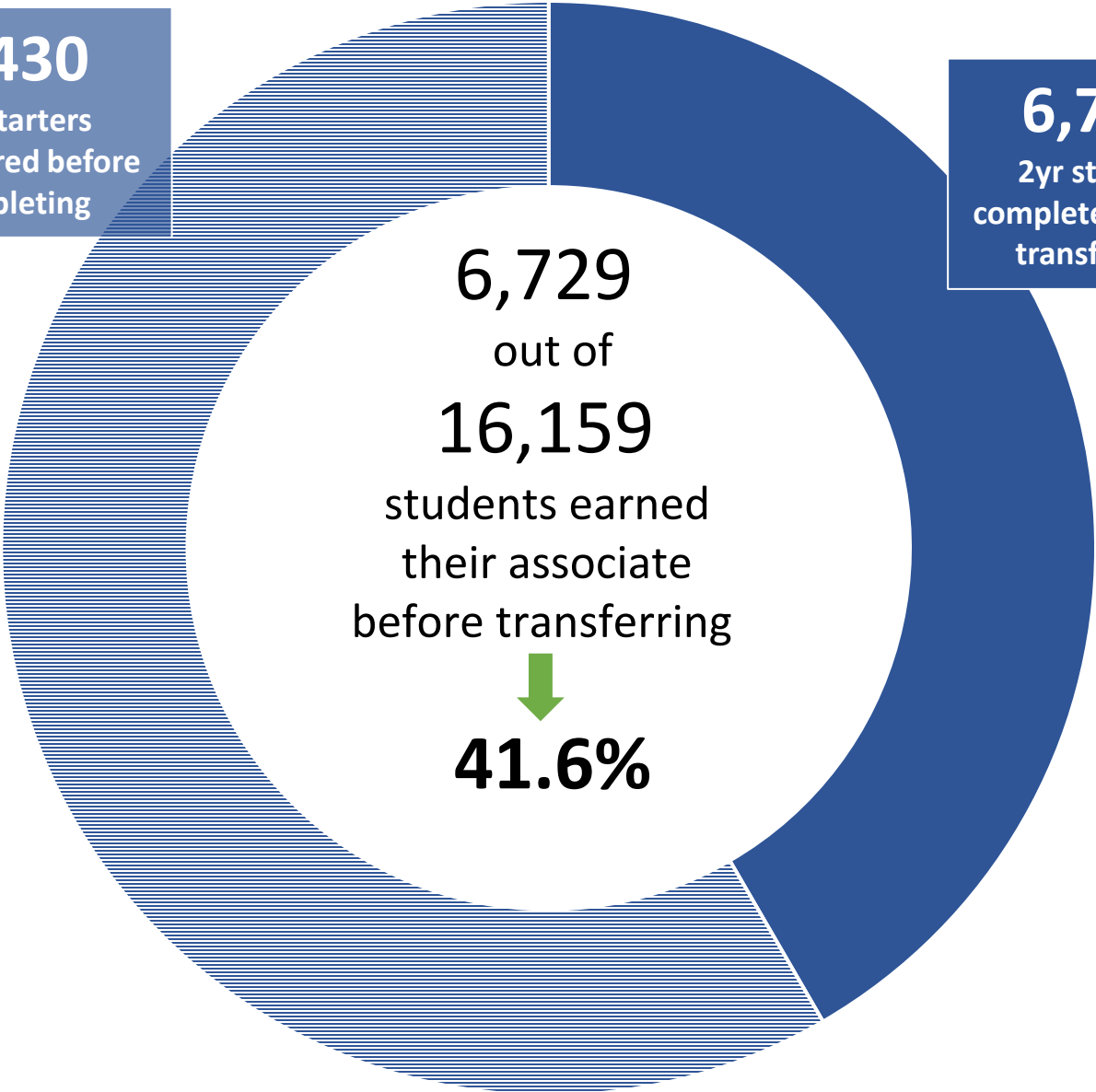


**What about associate outcomes for 2yr starters attending multiple IHEs?**

**How many 2yr starters earned their associate before transferring?**

**9,430**  
2yr starters transferred before completing

**6,729**  
2yr starters completed before transferring



**6,729**  
out of  
**16,159**  
students earned their associate before transferring



**41.6%**

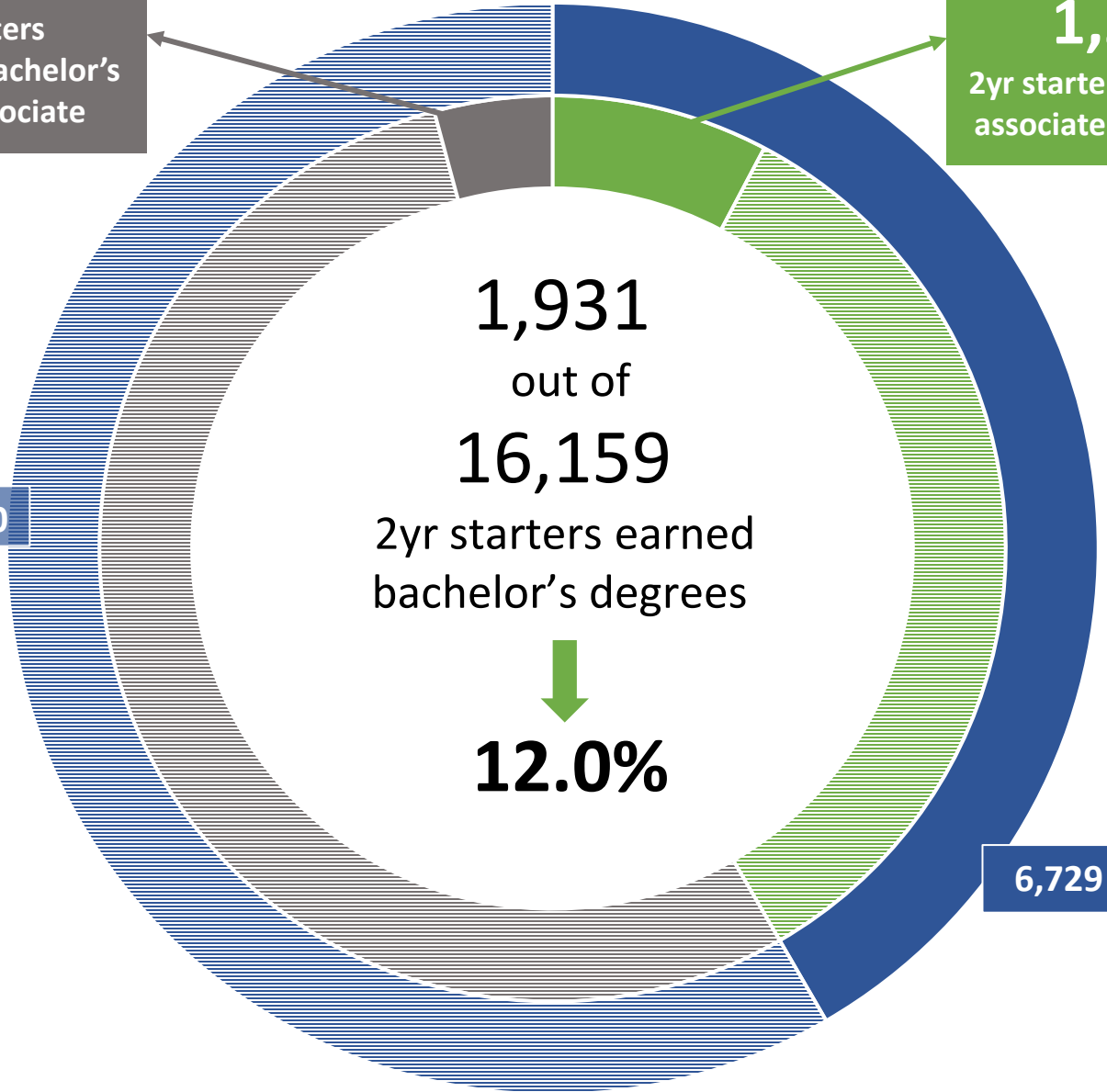
- 2yr Associate
- ▨ 2yr No Associate

Side note:  
**728**  
4yr starters earned associate degrees over the same period.

**How many 2yr starters earned bachelor's degrees after transferring?**

**680**  
2yr starters completed bachelor's but not associate

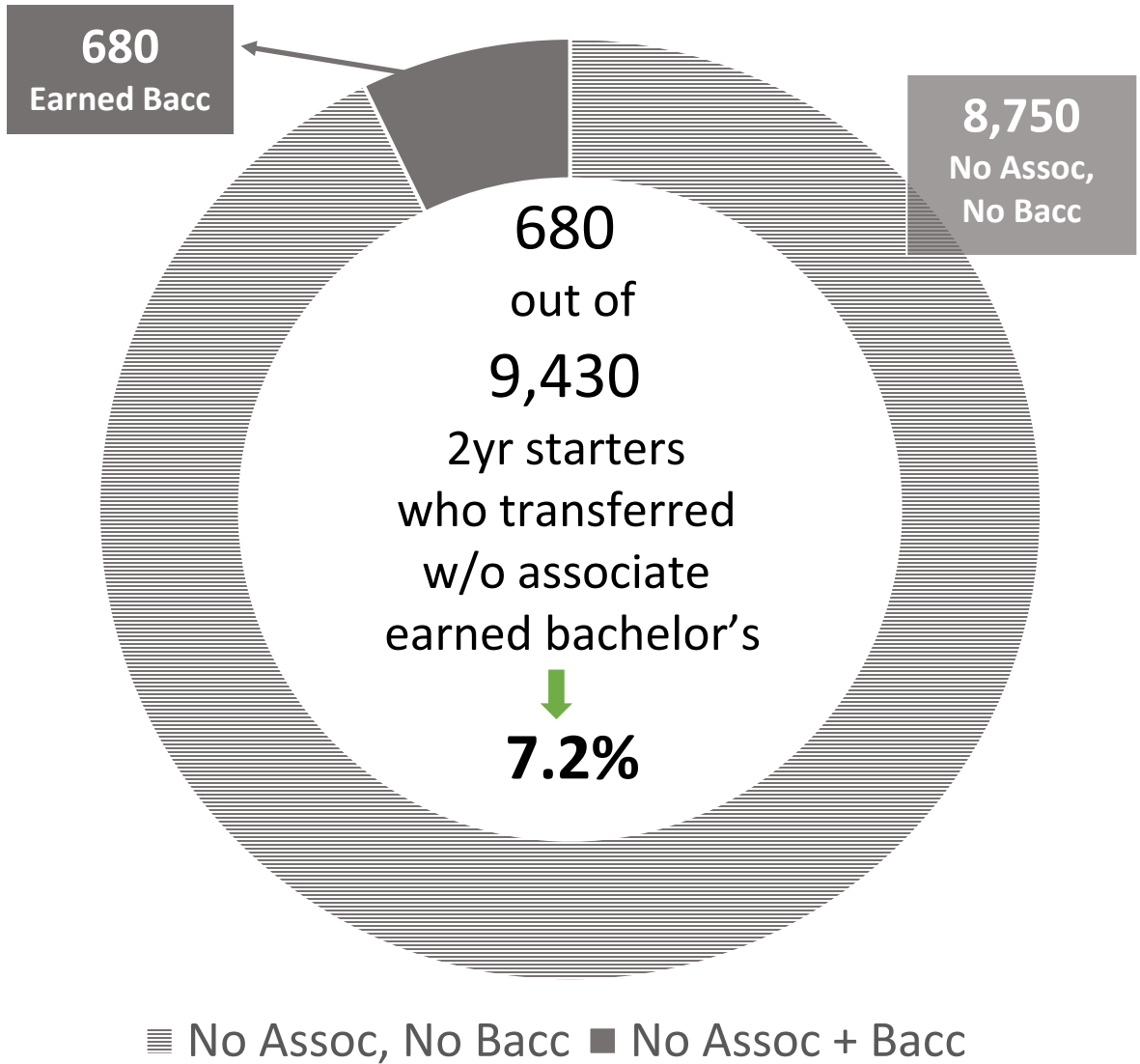
**1,251**  
2yr starters completed associate + bachelor's



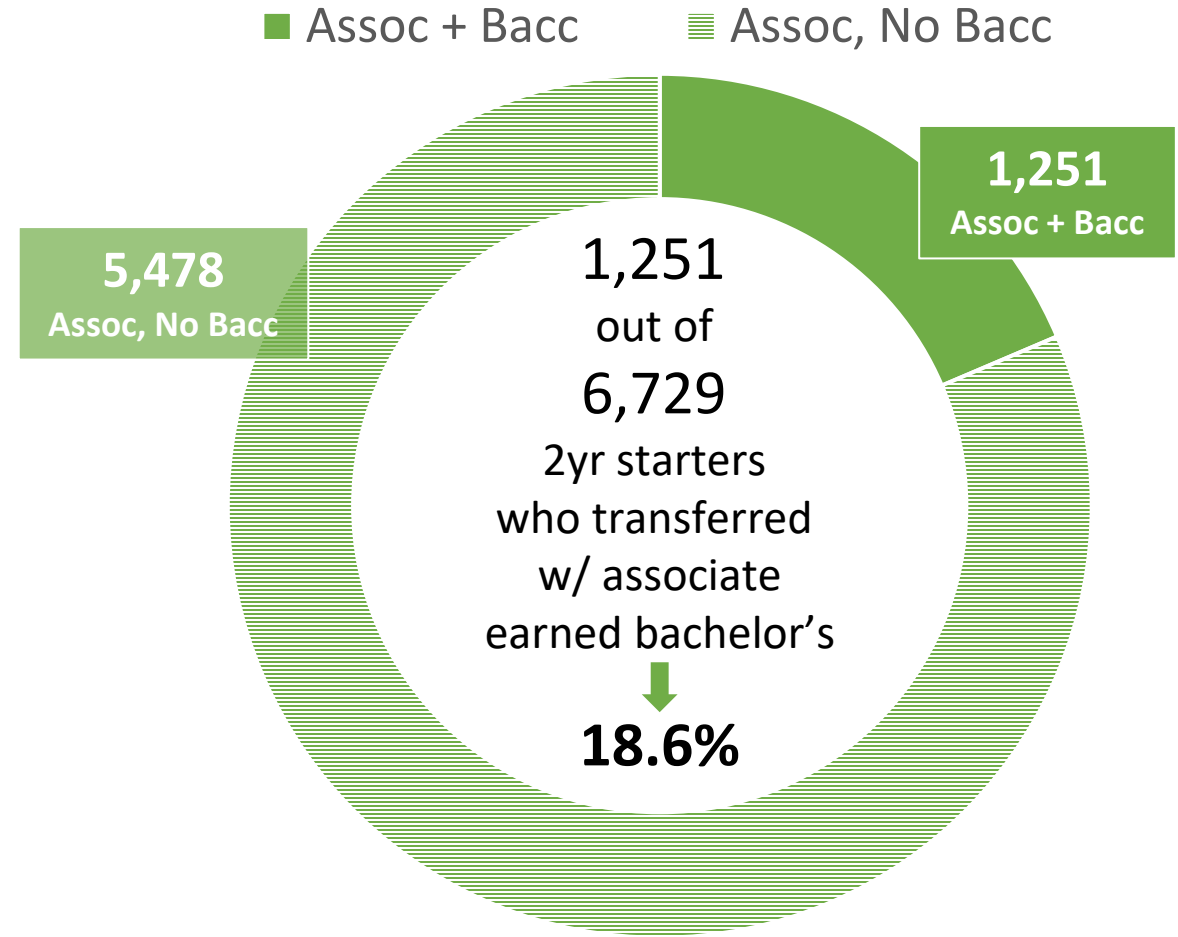
- Assoc + Bacc
- Assoc, No Bacc
- No Assoc, No Bacc
- No Assoc + Bacc

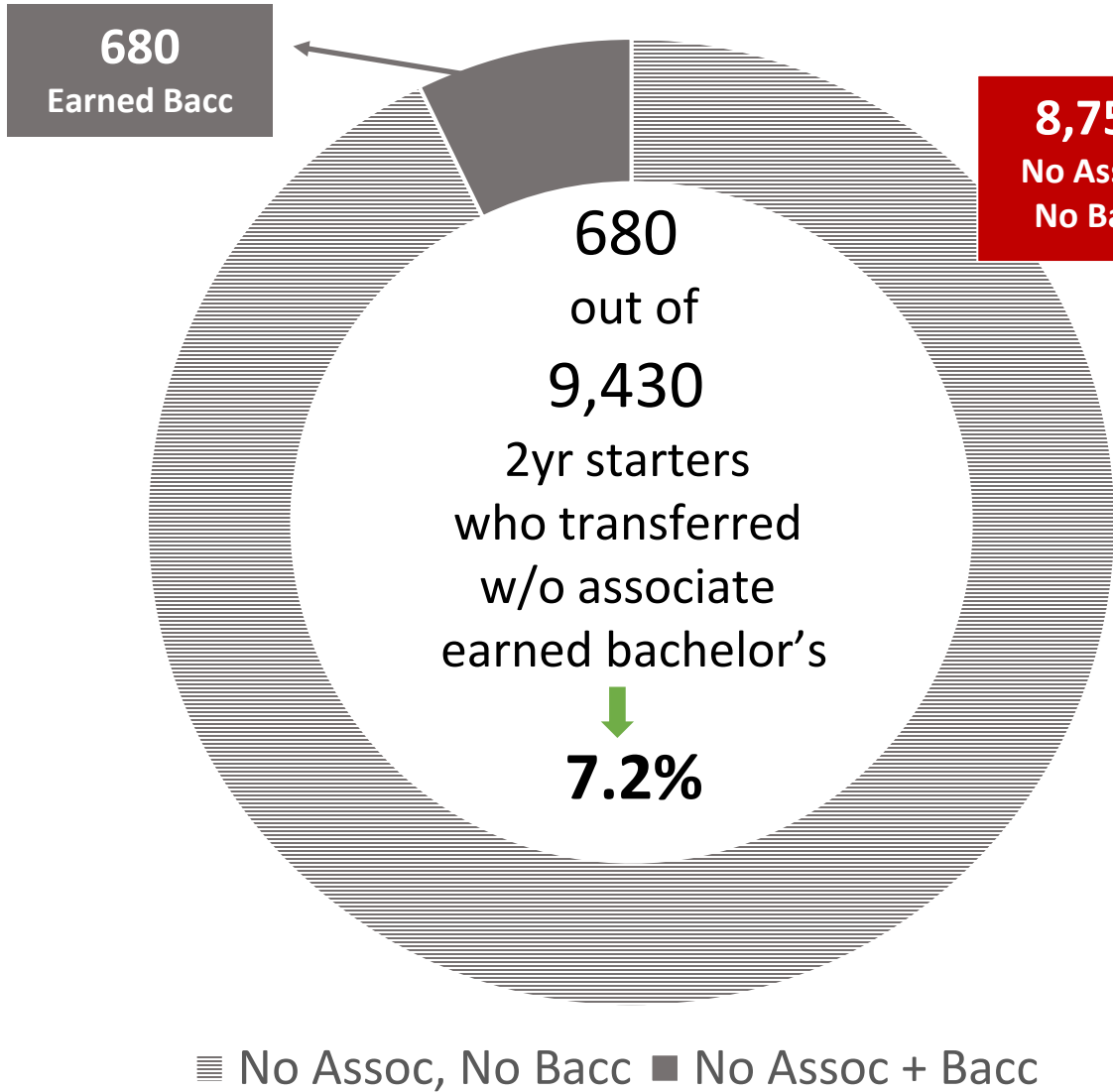
**9,430**

**6,729**



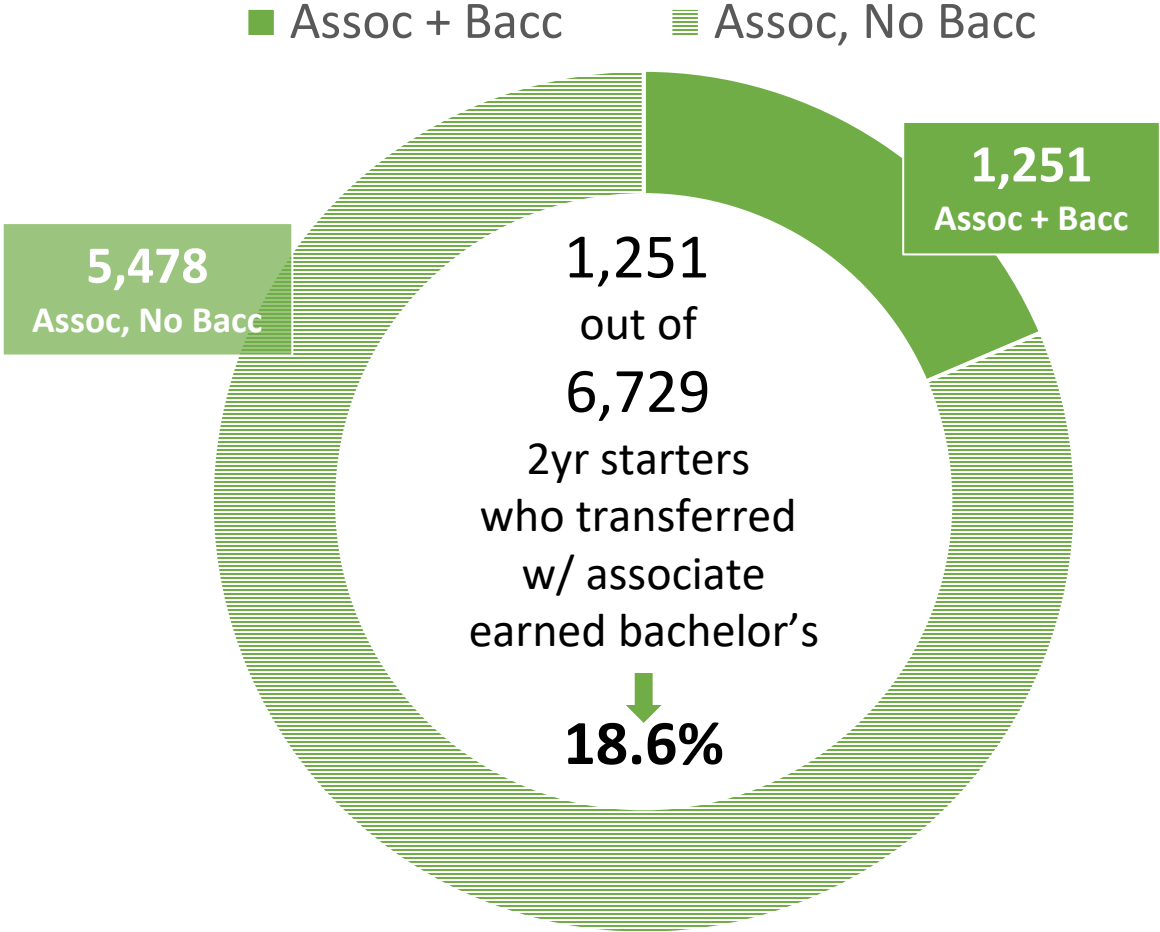
2yr starters who transferred with an associate were more successful in completing their bachelor's.





**BUT...**  
there were 8,750 2yr starters  
who attended multiple IHEs  
and did not earn any degree.

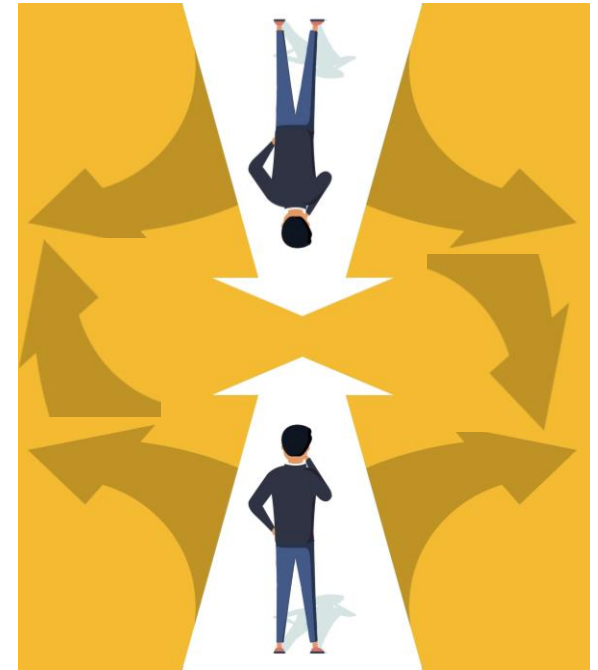
**8,750**  
No Assoc,  
No Bacc

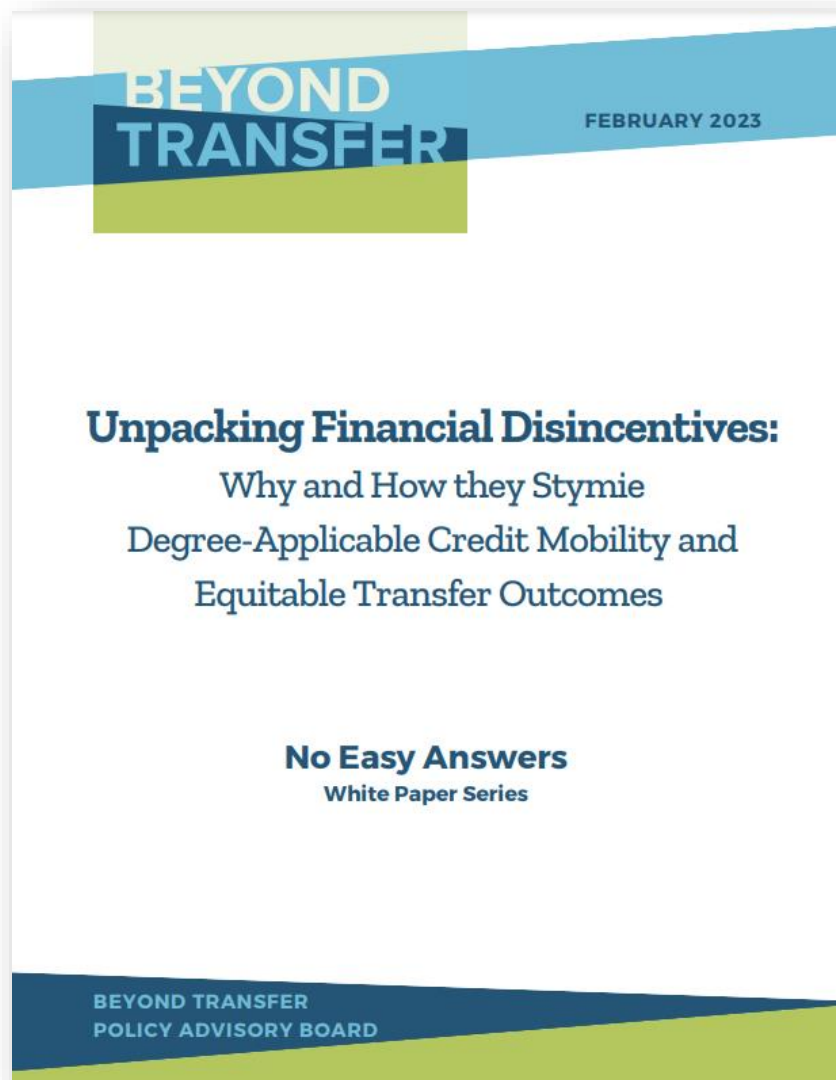


# The Takeaways

Student swirl may be DIFFICULT FOR US as enrollment managers and advisors...but swirlers had better outcomes than students who attended two institutions.

→ We must adapt our work to accommodate (and even encourage) a variety of enrollment patterns.





## Evolution of Transfer and Credit Mobility Technology<sup>48</sup>



- ▶ **Transfer portals:** Student-facing portals that provide baseline transfer information (e.g., credit equivalencies and information on programs, admissions, cost, financial aid, academic advising, etc.).  
**Benefits:** Provide one-stop access to guidance/information for learners.
- ▶ **Sharing of machine-readable electronic transcripts:** Electronic sharing of machine-readable records by postsecondary, K12, employers, community organizations, etc.  
**Benefits:** Automate and speed credit evaluation and verification processes for learners.
- ▶ **Course equivalencies and automated credit evaluations:** Student-facing tools that show course equivalencies and apply existing transfer rules to learner records.  
**Benefits:** Provide equivalency information and credit evaluation results to learners faster and reduce biases introduced by evaluators.
- ▶ **Degree audit and planning:** Student-facing tools that allow students to map evaluated credits to credentials of interest.  
**Benefits:** Allow students to identify optimal pathways (e.g., optimal credits to completion).
- ▶ **Dynamic credit mobility+ portals:** Student-facing portals that access transcripts to combine credit evaluation and identification of optimal degree pathways with determination of time and estimated costs to completion; career supports and labor market alignment; credit for prior learning; eligibility for Pell grants, military aid, and scholarships, etc.  
**Benefits:** Allow students to make well-informed decisions about program, cost, time, etc.
- ▶ **Comprehensive learning and employment records in wallets:** Documentation of learning from a variety of academic and non-academic settings, displayed in an electronic "wallet" that students carry with them (e.g., on an app).  
**Benefits:** Increase learner agency and help students to own, and holistically demonstrate, their skills, knowledge and prior learning and work experiences.
- ▶ **Artificial intelligence (AI) and machine learning advances:** New technologies designed to automate course equivalencies through algorithms rather than applying a limited set of transfer rules.  
**Benefits:** Dramatically expand capacity for fast, efficient credit evaluation that applies to a larger universe of courses, programs, IHEs, and learning experiences.

<https://sova.org/beyond-transfer-publications/>

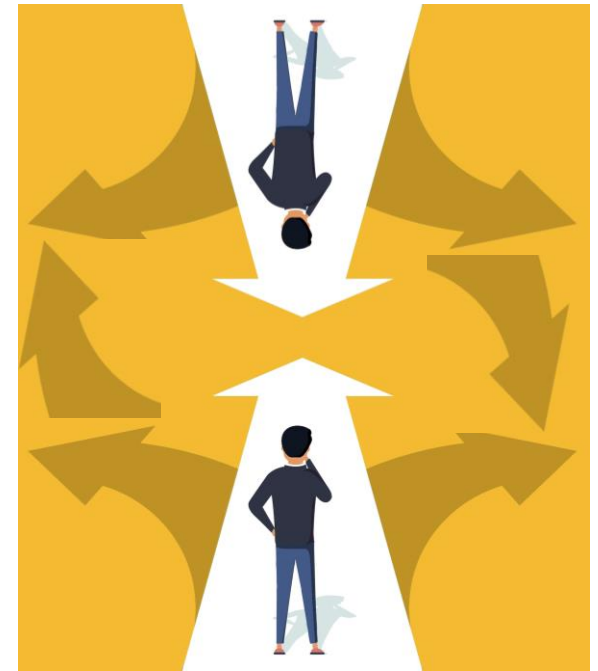
# The Takeaways

Student swirl may be DIFFICULT FOR US as enrollment managers and advisors...but swirlers had better outcomes than students who attended two institutions.

→ We must adapt our work to accommodate (and even encourage) a variety of enrollment patterns based on students' goals.

More 2yr starters are choosing to transfer before earning their associate, even though they are less likely to finish their bachelor's degree.

→ We must get a better handle on what is motivating students in order to serve them better.





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