



Seneca College's Degree and Credit Transfer Office: A Profile of Users and an Examination of Outcomes

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Seneca College is a recognized leader in the field of student transfer and pathways, with a large number of articulation agreements and comprehensive student advising, advocacy and assessment services. Seneca established the Degree and Credit Transfer Office (DCTO) in 2001 after an investigation showed that 44% of college entrants were planning to pursue further education (36% at a university) after graduation and yet few services existed to support them in achieving their goals. Previous reviews of the DCTO have focused on students' use of the Centre's flagship publication, *The Degree Transfer Guide*. The current study aims to build on this research to understand which segments of the Seneca student population use the DCTO services and whether DCTO usage is associated with higher rates of transfer and better transfer experiences.

Part 1 of this study creates a profile of students who use the DCTO advising services and compares this group to the student population that does not use the DCTO, with variables including sociodemographic and academic backgrounds at college entry, motivations for college program selection, aspirations for university, and academic outcomes (graduation rates and grades). The sample comprises 59,942 students who entered Seneca between the summer of 2007 and the fall of 2014 and whose first program was not a degree or graduate certificate program. Visits to the DCTO were captured up until October 13, 2016.

Part 2 of the study compares the transfer rates to university of DCTO users and non-users, and captures differences in their transfer experiences, reasons for transfer, sources of information on transfer, and satisfaction with the transition experience. The sample is a subset of the Part 1 sample and comprises 13,607 Seneca graduates who had completed the Ontario Graduate Satisfaction Survey.

Younger students, females, and those with a parent with a degree were somewhat more likely to use the DCTO, whereas Canadian citizens were less likely. Additionally, DCTO users had slightly stronger high school academic backgrounds. Even when controlling for these differences, DCTO users obtained much higher grades and graduation rates than non-users, likely because they were highly motivated to obtain the grades and, often, the credential required to transfer, and

possibly because they benefit from DCTO advising services as well as referrals to academic advising.

Students who used the DCTO services were more likely to have entered a three-year advanced diploma program (47% vs. 30%) and a program area with a large number of transfer agreements (such as business, at 53% vs. 35%).

The reasons for transferring to university were similar between users and non-users, with career advancement and obtaining a credential cited for almost nine in ten transfers. DCTO users are more likely to make use of a variety of information, particularly college sources such as the transfer guide and hard copy publications. Graduates satisfaction with the transition experience (83%) and their academic preparation for transfer (87%) is high for both DCTO users and non-users with little difference between the two groups.

The most significant and positive finding is the high transfer rates to further education, and specifically to university, for students who use the DCTO advising services. Overall, 44% of DCTO users transferred to university within six months of graduation compared to 10% of graduates who did not use the DCTO. This difference held true even when controlling for differences in academic performance, student aspirations and a variety of other factors. Of those who aspired to university at college entry, half of DCTO users compared to 22% of non-users transferred to university.

The provision of outreach may be necessary for students navigating program pathways with few or no articulation agreements. Outreach is needed for those at the start of their program who are interested in transfer (as indicated in the entering student survey) and for program areas in which DCTO users are underrepresented. Since graduates often transfer to university with a career focus in mind, a focus on career opportunities associated with transfer pathways is also warranted. Emphasizing the value of the DCTO and advisement service to faculty, staff and service areas across the college also continues to be a priority.