

Transfers within the Utah System of Higher Education

Transfers between institutions are a common part of the educational pathway for many Utah students. This brief examines students who transferred between institutions in the Utah System of Higher Education. Students who enrolled between 2017 and 2023 were tracked through 2025. During this period, an average of 12% of students transferred between USHE degree-granting institutions.

Table 1. Student transfer between institutions. Blue represents the first quartile, red the top quartile, and yellow the middle 50%.

Starting Institution	Outgoing Students	Receiving Institution							
		UT	U of U	USU	SUU	Snow	WSU	UVU	SLCC
UT	2,794		249 (9%)	337 (12%)	324 (12%)	25 (1%)	266 (10%)	1,121 (40%)	464 (17%)
U of U	3,437	133 (4%)		243 (7%)	89 (3%)	13 (>1%)	267 (8%)	841 (24%)	1,838 (53%)
USU	4,662	320 (7%)	632 (14%)		205 (4%)	50 (1%)	781 (17%)	1,932 (41%)	730 (16%)
SUU	2,518	463 (18%)	211 (8%)	353 (14%)		24 (1%)	195 (8%)	960 (38%)	292 (12%)
Snow	4,061	387 (10%)	179 (4%)	1,076 (26%)	513 (13%)		396 (10%)	1,165 (29%)	343 (8%)
WSU	2,866	201 (7%)	386 (13%)	711 (25%)	101 (4%)	25 (1%)		674 (24%)	740 (26%)
UVU	3,389	403 (12%)	561 (17%)	592 (17%)	178 (5%)	43 (1%)	330 (10%)		1,282 (38%)
SLCC	5,792	249 (4%)	2,303 (40%)	542 (9%)	138 (2%)	30 (1%)	509 (9%)	1,949 (34%)	

Transfers

Consistent with the transfer role of community colleges, Salt Lake Community College had the highest number of outgoing transfer students (5,793), accounting for 20% of all USHE transfers. Utah State University had the second-highest number (4,667; 16%), followed by Snow College (4,065; 14%). Most SLCC and Snow students transfer vertically to four-year institutions, reflecting strong pathways to bachelor's degrees.

At the receiving end, Utah Valley University enrolled the most transfer students (8,640; 29%), followed by SLCC (5,766; 20%) and the University of Utah (4,538; 15%). UVU and the U of U received the greatest share of vertical and lateral transfers. Among students transferring from USHE’s two community colleges, most students who vertically transferred enrolled at UVU, followed by the U of U. UVU also received the highest number of lateral transfers from other four-year institutions.

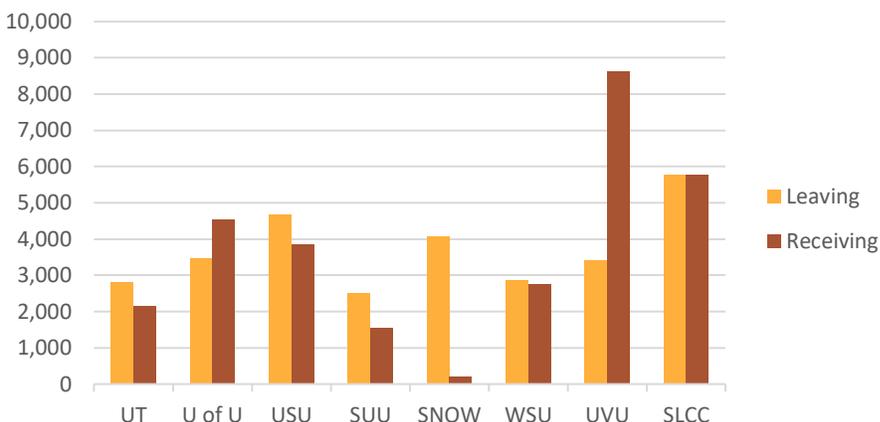


Figure 1. Student transfer between departing and receiving institutions

Two-Year Institutions: Of all vertical transfers from two-year institutions, 90% started at SLCC, and the remaining 10% from Snow. Almost all (5,378; 99%) of SLCC transfers were vertical transfers to four-year degree-granting institutions, with less than 1% transferring laterally to Snow. A total of 3,720 students transferred vertically from Snow.

UVU received the most vertical transfers (3,114), with 63% coming from SLCC and 37% from Snow. The U of U enrolled 2,482 community college transfer students, 93% of whom came from SLCC. USU received 1,618 students, 67% of whom came from Snow.

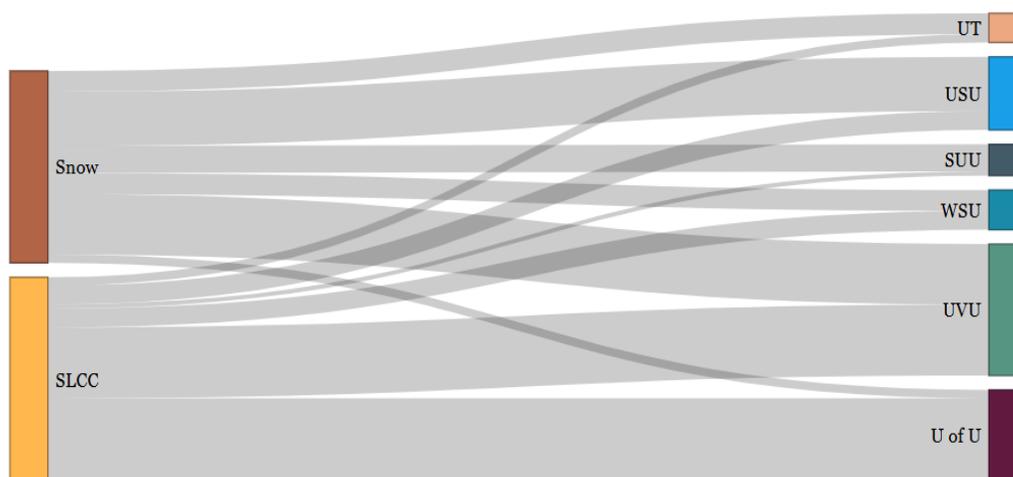


Figure 2. Vertical transfer pathways

Four-Year Institutions: USU had the highest number of students who transferred laterally (3,882), followed by Utah Tech (2,305) and Southern Utah University (2,202). Weber State University (2,101) and UVU (2,064) followed closely behind SUU. UVU received the highest number of lateral transfers (5,526; 39%), followed by USU (2,250) and the U of U (2,052). The U of U (1,877) and UVU (1,338) had the largest number of students transferring to community colleges as reverse transfers. SUU (785) and WSU (772) also had a significant number of reverse transfers. Co-enrollment among these students was not examined in this brief. As shown below, only a small number of students were classified as swirling.

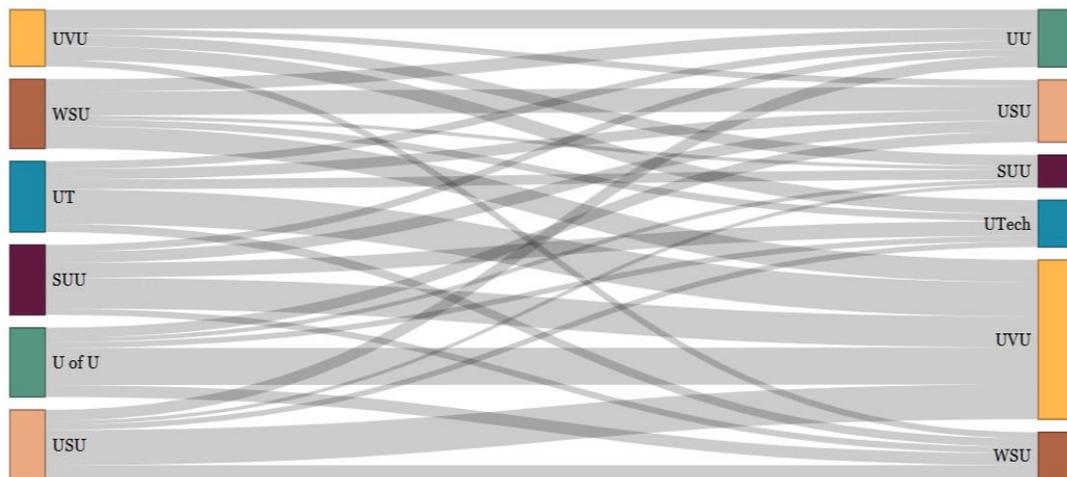


Figure 3. Lateral transfer pathways

Swirling

Six percent of transfer students transferred at least twice. These students, referred to as swirlers, represented a smaller share than is typically reported in the literature. Most swirling occurred at SLCC, UVU, and WSU. Very few swirlers attended Snow, which may be related to its geographic location and distance from other postsecondary institutions, potentially limiting concurrent in-person enrollment. In Utah, only 1% of students (24) returned to their original institution. The reasons for this pattern are not examined in this brief.

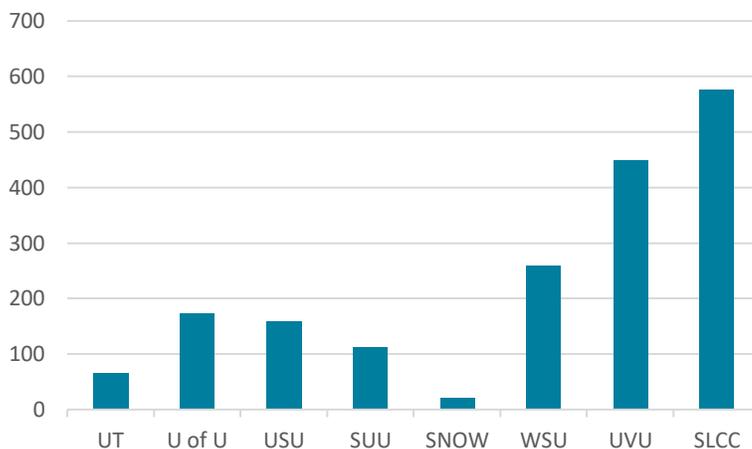


Figure 4. Receiving institution of second transfer students (swirlers)

Summary

The data suggest Snow and SLCC are successfully promoting vertical transfer; also, SLCC received almost all reverse transfers. UT and USU have the highest student transfer rates among four-year institutions. At the same time, UVU and the U of U received the most lateral and vertical transfers. SLCC, UVU, and WSU have the highest number of students who swirled.

Outside of vertical transfer, student transfer tends to indicate that the student's needs are not being met. Continued attention to articulation, advising and credit transfer policies is essential to student success.