



Pathways to Graduation, 2015-16 Graduates

How do students get from “start” to “finish” on the path to graduation? At many traditional institutions of higher education, a majority of new entrants started directly out of high school, and most progress through their chosen major over the next four to six years to arrive at graduation day. Boise State University, like many other institutions, has many students who do not follow such a direct path.

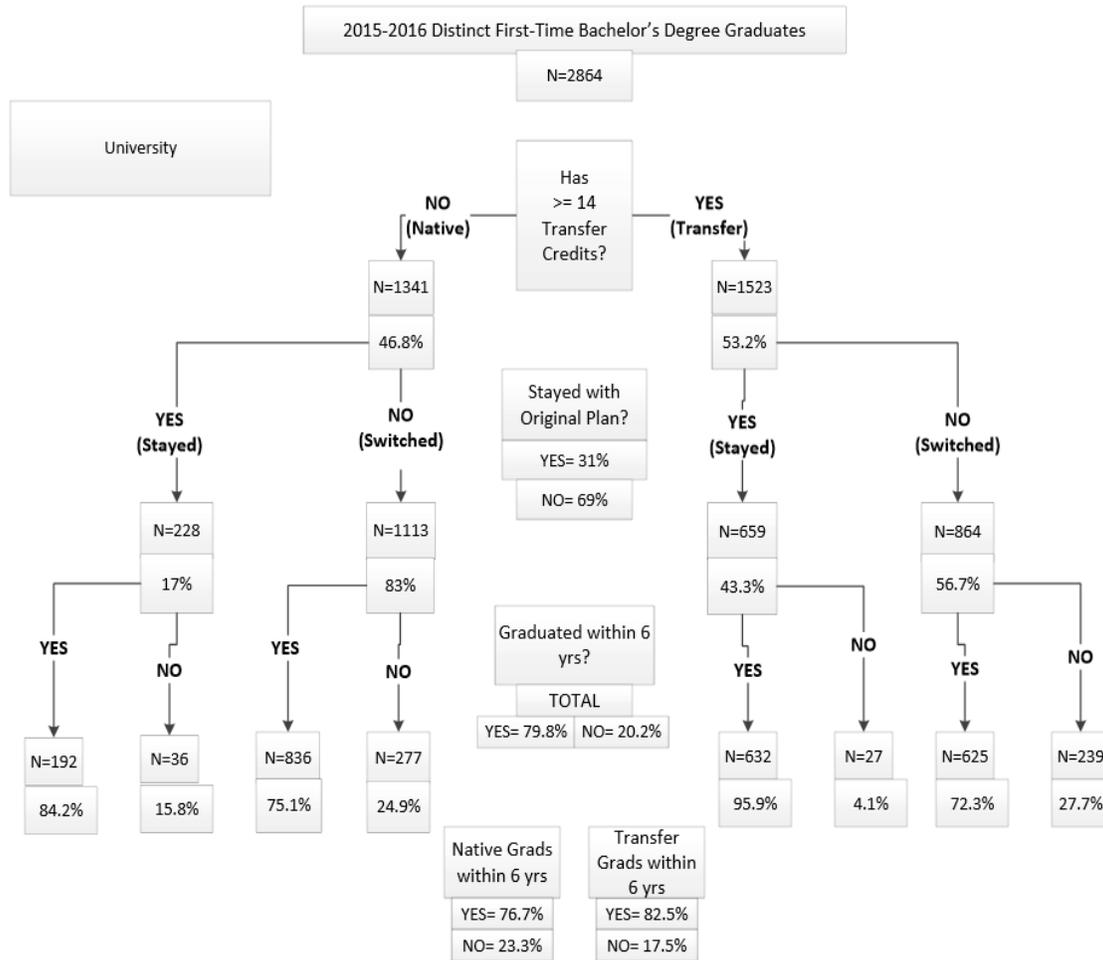
The purpose of this study was to identify the paths that the 2015-16 baccalaureate graduates took to reach graduation day. For this study, the path involves three main points of differentiation:

1. **Native vs. Transfer?**
 - Was the student a Boise State native or was she or he a transfer student? A student was defined as a Boise State “native” if she or he had less than 14 transfer credits at the point of graduation. Everyone else was defined as a transfer.
2. **Stayed with Original Plan?**
 - Did the student know what he or she wanted to major in upon arrival and stick with it? A student was defined as staying in the major if his or her first major matched the major of their degree. Other students were defined as “switchers.”
3. **Graduated within 6 years?**
 - Did the student graduate within six years (defined as 150% of time to degree for federal IPEDS reporting)? The starting point for measuring elapsed time was the point that the student was first enrolled as a bachelor’s degree-seeking undergraduate. Students whose elapsed time was six years or less were assigned to the “graduated on time” category. All other students did not graduate in six years.

Figure 1 displays the number of students who received their first bachelor’s degree in the 2015-16 academic year (N=2,864) who took each of the eight potential paths to graduation. (Note that students who completed a second bachelor’s degree were excluded from the analysis.) At the first fork in the path, slightly less than half (47%) were native to Boise State, and 53% were transfers. At the second fork in the path, only 31% overall stayed with the major they declared when they arrived at Boise State. Boise State natives were less likely to remain in the same major compared to transfers (17% vs. 43%). The third point in the path measures how swiftly students got to the point of graduation. Over three-quarters (80%) reached the point of graduation within six years. As might be expected, transfer students were more likely to reach graduation within six years than were native students (83% vs. 77%).

The box in the lower left-hand corner of Figure 1 shows the number of “traditional” Boise State graduates (i.e., students who started at Boise State, remained in their original major, and graduated within six years). That number is only 192 students out of 2,864 graduates or 7% of the total graduates. This small number also makes it challenging to project the number of graduates based on the number of new freshman who enter.

Figure 1. Paths to Graduation for 2015-16 Baccalaureate Graduates



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