

# RESEARCH BRIEF

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## Degree Program Changes Over Time: Fall 2013 First-Time in College Program-Placed Students

Many students change their degree program over the course of their enrollment at NOVA, switching from one program of study to another. Changing majors may lead to students taking longer to graduate and can cause students to accumulate additional credits beyond what is required for graduation.

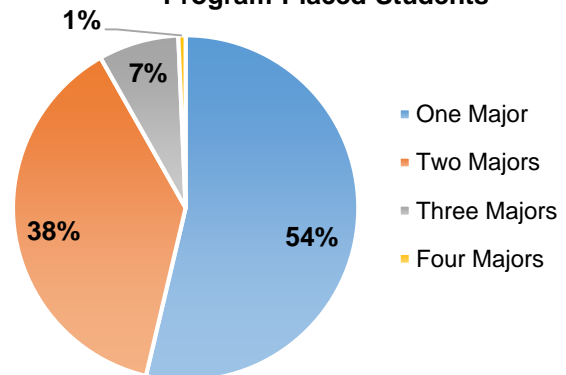
For example, students who switch from the A.A.S. in Business Management to the A.S. in Business Administration will likely have taken some of the courses required for graduation in the new major as the program areas are very similar, whereas students who switch from the A.A. in Liberal Arts to the A.S. in Business Administration may have earned credits that cannot be used toward the graduation requirements in the new program, possibly extending their time and expense to graduation.

This report takes an in-depth look at Fall 2013 first-time in college<sup>1</sup> (FTIC) program-placed students who remained enrolled at NOVA in Spring 2016 to better understand their program enrollment over time.

Of the total Fall 2013 FTIC program-placed cohort, 2,341 students were still enrolled in Spring 2016 and had not received a degree or award from NOVA (this is 30 percent of the original cohort). Over half of this sub-cohort of still-enrolled students (1,257 students, 54 percent) had the same primary major<sup>2</sup> in Spring 2016 as when they first enrolled in Fall 2013<sup>3</sup>.

**Forty-six percent of the still-enrolled students (1,084 students) had a different major in Spring 2016 than in Fall 2013 – this is the sub-cohort of students examined in this Research Brief.** The majority of students who changed majors from Fall 2013 to Spring 2016 changed majors only once, enrolling in two majors during that time period<sup>4</sup> (see Figure 1).

**Figure 1. Number of Majors Over Three Years at NOVA: Fall 2013 FTIC Program-Placed Students**



<sup>1</sup> First-time in college cohort excludes dual enrolled students to focus on college-level enrollment patterns.

<sup>2</sup> The VCCS counts only the primary major. Secondary majors are not included; therefore the data are limited.

<sup>3</sup> Changes among specializations within a degree program are not included as major changes. Changes from one Career Studies Certificate to another Career Studies Certificate are not included as major changes.

<sup>4</sup> Time period includes all Fall and Spring semesters from Fall 2013 through Spring 2016.

Half of all students (538 students, 50 percent) who changed majors between Fall 2013 and Spring 2016 switched from one A.S. degree program to another A.S. degree program (see Table 1). Fourteen percent of students (150 students) switched from an A.A.S. program to an A.S. program.

**Table 1. Number of Students Who Changed Programs by Award Level:  
Fall 2013 FTIC Program-Placed Students**

Award Level		Program Change	
Fall 2013	Spring 2016	#	%
A.S.	<b>A.S.</b>	<b>538</b>	<b>49.6</b>
	A.A.	67	6.2
	A.A.S.	98	9.0
	Certificate	7	0.7
A.A.	A.S.	95	8.8
	A.A.	12	1.1
	A.A.A.	1	0.1
	A.A.S.	11	1.0
	Certificate	3	0.3
A.A.S.	<b>A.S.</b>	<b>150</b>	<b>13.8</b>
	A.A.	24	2.2
	A.A.A.	1	0.1
	A.A.S.	18	1.7
	Certificate	4	0.4
A.A.A.	A.S.	3	0.3
	A.A.	2	0.2
	A.A.S.	2	0.2
Certificate	A.S.	31	2.9
	A.A.	5	0.5
	A.A.A.	1	0.1
	A.A.S.	9	0.8
	Certificate	2	0.2
<b>Total</b>		<b>1,084</b>	<b>100.0</b>

Among the Fall 2013 FTIC program-placed students who changed majors over the course of three years (between Fall 2013 and Spring 2016), the A.S. in General Studies was both the most common program students switched into and the most common program students switched out of. Twenty percent of students (221 students) changed their major to the A.S. in General Studies by Spring 2016, compared to twenty-six percent of students (279 students) who were initially enrolled in the A.S. in General Studies and switched to another program during that time period, resulting in a net change of -58 students.

For the programs of study with more students changing out than in (net loss) see Table 2, and for the programs of study with more students changing in than out (net gain), see Table 3 (next page).

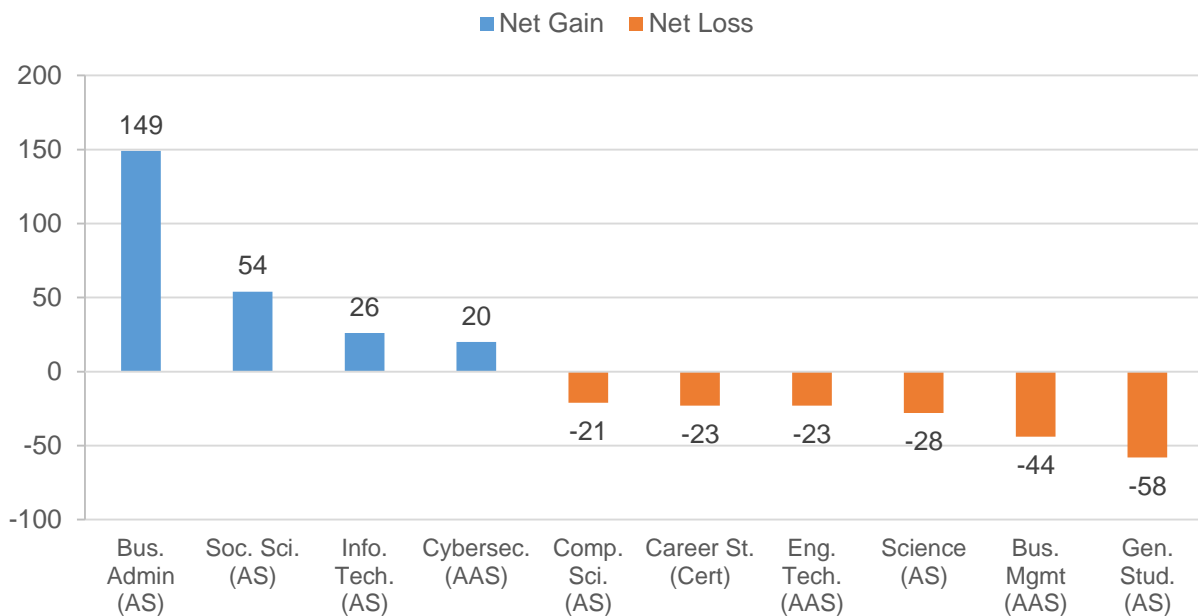
**Table 2. Programs of Study with More Students Changing OUT than IN (Net Loss) Over Three Years: Fall 2013 FTIC Program-Placed Students**

Program of Study	From Fall 2013 to Spring 2016		Net Loss
	Changed IN	Changed OUT	
<b>General Studies, A.S.</b>	<b>221</b>	<b>279</b>	<b>-58</b>
Business Management, A.A.S.	10	54	-44
Science, A.S.	89	117	-28
Career Studies, Certificate	12	35	-23
Engineering Tech, A.A.S.	4	27	-23
Computer Science, A.S.	37	58	-21
Accounting, A.A.S.	5	21	-16
Engineering, A.S.	50	65	-15
Music, A.A.	1	11	-10
Architecture, A.A.S.	4	11	-7
Paralegal Studies, A.A.S.	2	8	-6
Liberal Arts, A.A.	88	92	-4
Biotechnology, A.A.S.	1	5	-4
Music Record Technology, Certificate	0	4	-4
Early Childhood Development, A.A.S.	6	9	-3
Horticulture, A.A.S.	0	3	-3
Admin of Justice, A.A.S.	15	17	-2
Fine Arts, A.A.A.	2	4	-2
Photography, A.A.S.	2	4	-2
Marketing, A.A.S.	1	3	-2
Music, A.A.A.	1	3	-2
Administration of Justice, Certificate	0	2	-2
Culinary Arts, Certificate	0	2	-2
Fire Science, A.A.S.	0	2	-2
Multimedia Design, Certificate	0	2	-2
Air Conditioning & Refrigeration, A.A.S.	1	2	-1
Contract Management., A.A.S.	0	1	-1
Early Childhood Development, Certificate	0	1	-1
Small Business Management, Certificate	0	1	-1

**Table 3. Programs of Study with More Students Changing IN than OUT (Net Gain) Over Three Years: Fall 2013 FTIC Program-Placed Students**

Program of Study	From Fall 2013 to Spring 2016		Net Gain
	Changed IN	Changed OUT	
<b>Business Administration, A.S.</b>	<b>217</b>	<b>68</b>	<b>+149</b>
Social Sciences, A.S.	129	75	+54
Information Tech, A.S.	74	48	+26
Cybersecurity, A.A.S.	20	0	+20
Nursing, A.A.S.	9	2	+7
Communication Design, A.A.S.	9	3	+6
Veterinary Tech, A.A.S.	4	0	+4
Automotive Tech, A.A.S.	11	8	+3
Info Sys Tech, A.A.S.	9	6	+3
Health Info Mgt., A.A.S.	3	0	+3
Physical Therapy Assistant, A.A.S.	3	0	+3
Fine Arts, A.A.	21	19	+2
Construction Management, A.A.S.	2	0	+2
Diagnostic Medical Sonography, A.A.S.	2	0	+2
Substance Abuse Rehabilitation, Certificate	2	0	+2
Interior Design, A.A.S.	3	2	+1
American Sign Language, A.A.S.	2	1	+1
Dental Assisting, CERT	1	0	+1
Emergency Medical Services, A.A.S.	1	0	+1
Medical Lab Tech, A.A.S.	1	0	+1

**Figure 2. Programs of Study with Largest Net Loss or Net Gain Over Three Years: Fall 2013 FTIC Program-Placed Students**



The three most common major changes involved students switching from the A.S. in General Studies to 1) the A.S. in Business Administration (59 students, 5 percent), 2) the A.S. in Science (54 students, 5 percent), and 3) the A.S. in Social Sciences (53 students, 5 percent), respectively. See Table 4 for the top degree program changes from Fall 2013 to Spring 2016.

**Table 4. Top Degree Program Changes Over Three Years:  
Fall 2013 FTIC Program-Placed Students**

Degree Program Change			
Fall 2013	Spring 2016	#	%
Accounting, A.A.S.	Business Admin, A.S.	12	1.1
Administration of Justice, A.A.S.	General Studies, A.S.	10	0.9
Business Administration, A.S.	General Studies, A.S.	23	2.1
	Social Sciences, A.S.	10	0.9
Business Management, A.A.S.	Business Admin, A.S.	26	2.4
Computer Science, A.S.	Business Admin, A.S.	13	1.2
	General Studies, A.S.	12	1.1
	Information Tech, A.S.	18	1.7
Engineering Tech, A.A.S.	Engineering, A.S.	11	1.0
Engineering, A.S.	Business Admin, A.S.	18	1.7
	General Studies, A.S.	14	1.3
General Studies, A.S.	<b>Business Admin, A.S.</b>	<b>59</b>	<b>5.4</b>
	Engineering, A.S.	13	1.2
	Information Tech, A.S.	18	1.7
	Liberal Arts, A.A.	20	1.9
	<b>Science, A.S.</b>	<b>54</b>	<b>5.0</b>
	<b>Social Sciences, A.S.</b>	<b>53</b>	<b>4.9</b>
Information Tech, A.S.	Business Admin, A.S.	13	1.2
Liberal Arts, A.A.	Business Admin, A.S.	14	1.3
	General Studies, A.S.	27	2.5
	Social Sciences, A.S.	23	2.1
Science, A.S.	Business Admin, A.S.	20	1.9
	General Studies, A.S.	46	4.2
	Liberal Arts, A.A.	14	1.3
	Social Sciences, A.S.	16	1.5
Social Sciences, A.S.	Business Admin, A.S.	20	1.9
	General Studies, A.S.	26	2.4
	Liberal Arts, A.A.	10	0.9
<i>Other</i>		471	43.5
<b>Total</b>		<b>1,084</b>	<b>100.0</b>

Note: *Other* includes major change combinations with fewer than 10 students.