

# Undeclared Student Migration

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## Research Questions

- What are the retention and persistence rates of undeclared students in UCUA and beyond?
- If not retained, which sub-groups did they start in and from which pre-major/major/college did they leave the university?
- What is their timeframe from Undeclared to major declaration(pre/full major)?
- What is their timeframe from Undeclared to graduation?

## Introduction

UCUA supports three types of Undeclared students:

- Students who are truly exploring majors and originally “**applied as undeclared**” to CSULB.
- Students who are “**forced undeclared**.” These students applied to highly impacted majors but are not eligible or competitive enough in the applicant pool to be admitted directly into their intended pre-major or major.
- Students who “**move to undeclared**” from a previously admitted major, typically because they failed to meet first or second year milestones.

### Project Alignment

- We analyzed trends amongst the 3 groups of undeclared students, specifically with their handoffs to and from the college of their primary major.
- This aligned with the Black Student Success Initiative and Student Success Team Pilot within UCUA, supporting our First-Time First-Year Black Undeclared students and their retention and smooth handoff to the college of their declared major. This also aligned with Beach 2030 to ensure that we are analyzing and removing any barriers to students, specifically their ability to pursue the major of their choice and declare said major in a timely manner.

## Methods

### Data Source

- Data were pulled from Tableau with the assistance of our Data Fellows Coach, Christina Goldpaint.

### Quantitative Data Analyses

- Pivot tables were created to further analyze the data primarily by entry point (Applied to Undeclared, Forced Undeclared, and Moved to Undeclared) based on Fall 2017 to Fall 2024 admissions cohorts.
- Further analyses were conducted to compare and contrast student retention and graduation rates.
- When analyzing students who were not retained at the 6<sup>th</sup> semester, we further analyzed the demographics of these students based on the college education of their parent(s) and race/ethnicity.

## Results

### Students not retained at the 6<sup>th</sup> semester Most Undeclared/Exploring students move into a major by the time they earn 60 units and/or their 3<sup>rd</sup> year

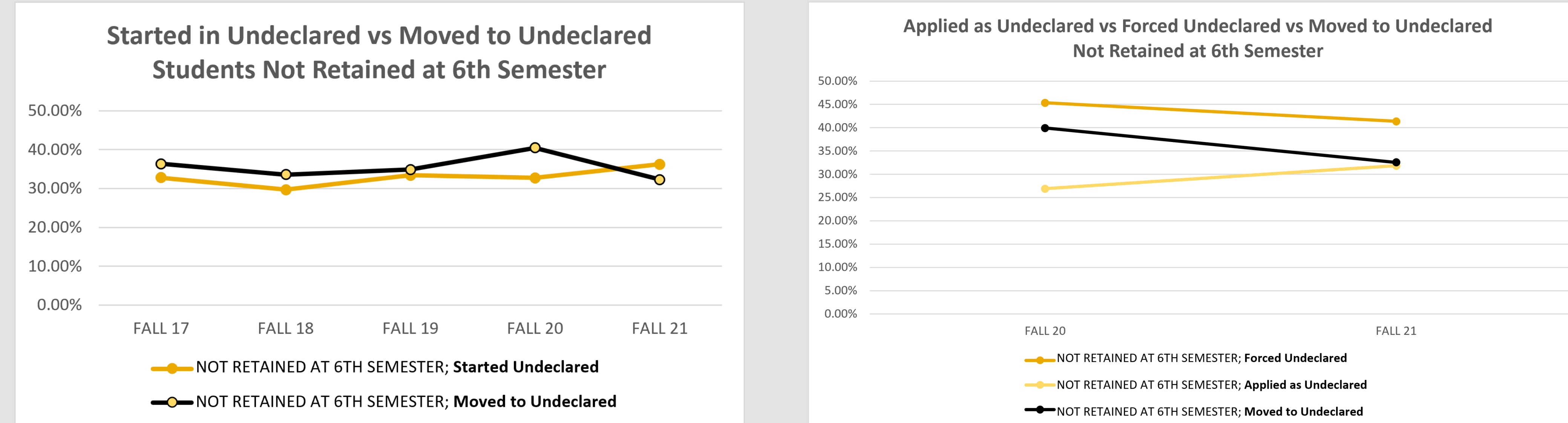


Figure 1

Figure 2

Based on the findings above (Figure 1), students who Moved to Undeclared were less likely to be retained at a higher rate than students who Started in Undeclared.

The data for Forced Undeclared are limited to the Fall 2020 and Fall 2021 cohorts. However, when Started in Undeclared is disaggregated between Forced Undeclared and Applied as Undeclared (Figure 2), students who Applied as Undeclared and students who Moved to Undeclared, are retained at a higher rate than the students who were admitted Forced Undeclared.

### Students not retained at the 6<sup>th</sup> semester Disaggregated by Undeclared Type and 1st Generation Status

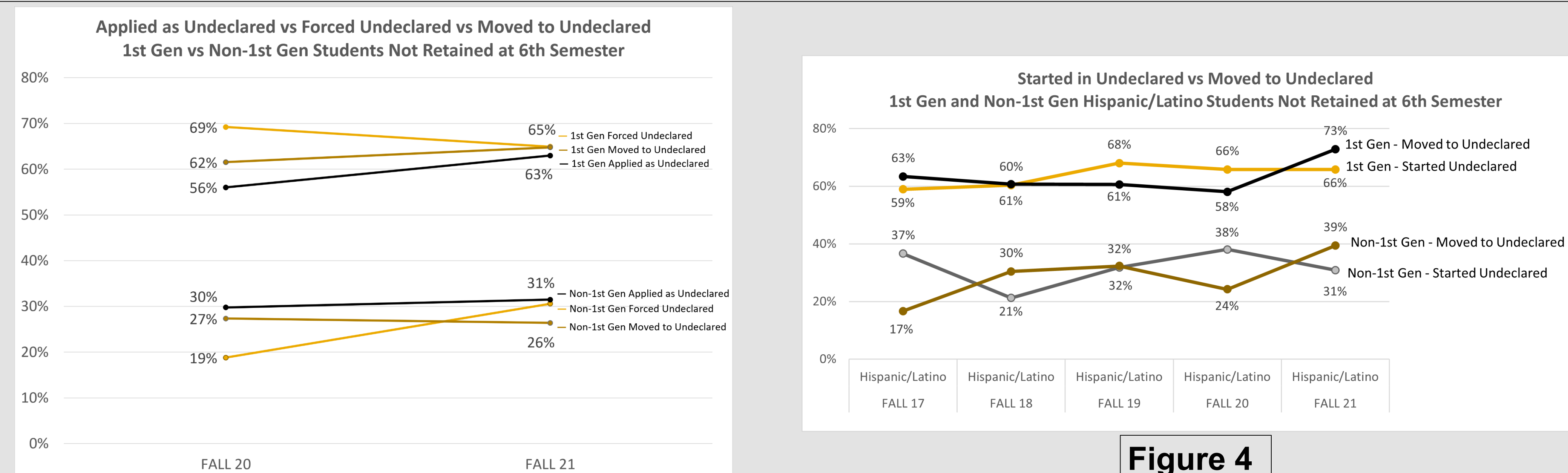


Figure 3

Figure 4

1st Generation students are not retained at a higher rate than their non-1st Generation student counterparts (Figure 3); in this case we combined students who self-selected 1st Generation college student and students who self-selected parent with some college, into our numbers for 1st Generation college students. Students classified as non-1st Generation student, self-selected that they had a parent who earned a bachelor's degree.

We further analyzed 1st Generation and non-1st Generation student retention at the 6<sup>th</sup> semester by race/ethnicity. In doing so, we found that Hispanic/Latino students (Figure 4) reflected the same retention rates of 1st Generation students not retained at a higher rate than their non-1st Generation student counterparts as those found in Figure 3. However, students who identified as Asian, Black or African-American, or White, were not retained at a higher rate if they were non-1st Generation students compared to their 1st Generation student counterparts.

### Degree College Started in Undeclared vs Moved to Undeclared

Of the students who were retained, students who Started in Undeclared primarily graduated from majors in either the College of Health and Human Services (CHHS) or the College of Liberal Arts (CLA); however, CHHS had the highest graduates per year from cohort years of 2017, 2018, 2019, and 2020.

In contrast, while students who Moved to Undeclared also had their largest graduation numbers from both CHHS and CLA, the students mostly graduated within a major in CLA.

## Conclusion / Discussion

Although Forced Undeclared data were limited, it is important to note that from the data we did have, these students were not retained at the same rates as students who Applied as Undeclared or Moved to Undeclared. As a result, further analysis of Forced Undeclared student data needs to be explored to see if this is a larger trend.

While it appeared that non-1st Gen students were retained at a higher rate than 1st Gen students, when disaggregated by both entry point and race/ethnicity, we found that only Hispanic/Latino students truly reflect this same finding. This could be related to non-1st Generation students who identify as Asian, Black or African American, or White, using their social capital to transfer to other universities, but further analysis is needed to test this hypothesis.

Students who Started in Undeclared primarily graduated from CHHS in either Health Science or Family and Consumer Sciences, which could be a reflection of their original intent to pursue a Nursing major or health/helping profession. Students who Moved to Undeclared primarily graduated from CLA, which might be related to identification of a low-unit major after moving to Undeclared with a large number of units. More analysis is needed to determine if either of these hypotheses are correct. In addition, students who Started in Undeclared need to be disaggregated to examine the colleges they graduate from.

## Implications for Action

- These findings reinforce that major swirl is a clear occurrence at CSULB and that having interventions and handoffs is key to retaining students. This is in alignment with the recommendations of a recent NACADA Review.
- With regards to a students' entry point, specifically Forced Undeclared, we should survey these students to determine their intent in remaining at CSULB. In addition, the admissions policy should be reviewed and potentially adapted to offer options for Local Preference students. Option 1: Accept admissions as Forced Undeclared without the ability to pursue a highly impacted major. Or Option 2: Attend LBCC with the ability to potentially transfer into a highly impacted major.

## Next Steps / Future Directions

- More intentional handoffs to and from Undeclared are needed to facilitate retention, major declaration, and graduation.
- Future Data Fellows project to further analyze:
  - Forced Undeclared student retention and graduation.
  - Differences in student success based on various demographics: 1st Generation status, race/ethnicity, gender, and financial need.
- Potentially create a Dashboard with the assistance of IR&A, similar to MAPS and GenExcel, to consistently track how Undeclared students are migrating to and from the colleges of their declared major.