

Chapter 1

Introduction

1.1 Introduction

Students who transfer their major create a serious issue in many universities. Some of these students drop out of the university and others take a longer time to complete their degree. In the USA, approximately half of all engineering and computer science students in North Carolina State University did not graduate in their initial field (Felder et al, 1998; Budny et al, 1998). Some of these students transferred to another study area. Almost 11% of new freshmen students enrolled at a public university with a liberal admission policy and a largely commuter campus, chose to transfer within one year and almost 13% of these dropped out (Herzog, 2005). Transferring students have lower Graduation Efficiency Indexes (GELs) than direct entry students and transferring students need to increase their retention time in order to finish their study (Poch and Wolverton, 2006). Between 1991 and 1998 students from the University of South Florida (USF), who did not change their major, took an average of 4.8 years to complete their degrees, while those who changed their major once, twice and three or more times took 4.8, 4.9 and 5.0 years, respectively (Micceri, 2001). Between 1999 and 2000 students in the University of Wisconsin-La Crosse who graduated within 4 years, and between 4-5 years and 5-6 years had changed their majors on average 1.2, 1.4 and 1.6 times, respectively (Thill, 2007).

The reasons for students transferring include institutional characteristics, such as academic program variety, quality of teaching, social life, as well as individual

factors, such as basic knowledge, health, and socioeconomic status (Kearney et al, 1995). Some students do not know exactly what they will do when they leave university. Students from the University of Wisconsin-Madison who left engineering said they did so because of grades below C and poor teaching (Adelman, 1998). Of the students from the University of California - Irvine, who changed their major, 54% said that they did not like the course, 44% had academic difficulties, 43% said the major did not match career interests, 31% found courses harder than expected, 20% said that the major took up too much time and 19% said they found it hard to get to know the faculty (Shoemaker, 2007).

In Thailand, there have been few studies that have investigated the transfer (of major) rate of students and factors associated with transferring by students. At Prince of Songkla University (PSU), Pattani, data based on four-year course undergraduate students who enrolled in one of four faculties, namely Education, Humanities and Social Sciences, Science and Technology, and College of Islamic Studies, between 1999 and 2007, were analysed.

The number of students who were found to have transferred their majors between 1999 and 2007 are shown in Table 1. There were 480 students who had enrolled and transferred to other majors. Of these, 338 (70.4%) successfully graduated (50.6% within four years), 43 (9.0%) had discontinued and 99 (20.6%) were still studying at the time of the analysis.

PSU is the public university in southern Thailand. Of the 5 campuses, the one located in Pattani province was the first permanent campus to be established. It is located in a multicultural area, with the majority of students being Muslim. It is therefore is unlike

other universities in Thailand. Due to the large proportion of Muslim students, the students in PSU, Pattani may adjust themselves to studying differently than students in other universities because of past, and/or continuing focus on religious education. The reasons for transferring majors were not reported in the database system.

Therefore the aim of this study was to investigate the patterns and factors associated with transferring major of students in PSU, Pattani. The results of this study can be used to provide information for future enrolments and to identify students at risk of transferring.

<i>Year of admission</i>	<i>Number of transfer students in PSU Pattani</i>					<i>Total</i>
	<i>Graduated</i>		<i>Continuing</i>	<i>Discontinued</i>		
	<i>4 years</i>	<i>>4 years</i>		<i>1-4 years</i>	<i>>4 years</i>	
1999	25	10				35
2000	23	6		1		30
2001	25	20	1	4	1	51
2002	64	31		8	4	107
2003	32	21		2		55
2004	71	7	17	8	1	104
2005	3		65	13		81
2006			7	1		8
2007			9			9
Total	243	95	99	37	6	480
(%)	(50.6)	(19.8)	(20.6)	(7.7)	(1.3)	

Table 1.1: Number of transfer students classified by graduated, continuing and discontinued categories.

1.2 Objectives

The aims of this study are as follows:

1. To investigate rate of student transfer of major within Prince of Songkla University, Pattani
2. To identify the pattern of student transfer between majors within Prince of Songkla University, Pattani

1.3 Literature Reviews

There have been only a few studies that have investigated the transfer of major by students in universities in Asia and Thailand. Most studies of transfer students have been in the USA. These studies were reviewed as follows:

Transfer rates

Laing et al (1986) reported that of the year 1986 students from Michigan State University, about 65% of new undergraduate students had changed their major.

Micceri (2001) investigated changing of major and completion, among seven cohorts of students studying at least a full semester in 1991-1998 at the University of South Florida. Approximately 50% of the students changed majors at least once, between 1991 and 1993.

Bauer (2005) found that of the students from Pennsylvania State University, 70% of students transferred their major at least one time, while 20% changed twice and 10% changed three or more times.

Stanek (2005) reported that 33% of students at Long Island University in 2005 had transferred and that changing majors caused longer degree-completion times.

Thill (2007) examined the students in the University of Wisconsin-La Crosse, who graduated between 1999 and 2000 and found that students who graduated within 4 years, between 4-5 years and between 5-6 years had their majors changed on average 1.2, 1.4 and 1.6 times, respectively. Approximately 70% of these students changed their majors at least once in their course.

Counseling staff (2007) reported that approximately 35% of students at the University of Purdue changed their major at least once.

Transfer students

Caroline (2009) examined the effects of social background characteristics on the likelihood of transferring to a for-profit university and found that males were approximately 18% more than females to transfer to for-profit institutions.

The office of Institutional Research (2004) studied student 'change of major' pattern and reported that 73.4% of students of Langara College in the University of Victoria, who transferred between 1998 and 2003, were females. About half (51.4%) transferred into the faculty of Human and Social Development.

Herzog (2005) conducted a study on determinants of new freshmen who entered a study program between 1996 and 2002 and found that almost 11% of students transferred in one year and also found that females were more likely to transfer than males.

Shoemaker (2007) considered undergraduate students from the University of California, Irvine and found that 57% start thinking about changing major in the first year, and 25% in the second year. The period of time to complete the change process

varies, with 45% taking less than one quarter, 43% between 1-3 quarters, and 12% more than 3 quarters.

1.4 Definition of Terms

This study is of students who were admitted in PSU Pattani during 1999-2007 in at least one of the four faculties of Education, Humanities and Social Sciences, Science and Technology or College of Islamic Studies.

Transfer students are defined as the students who transferred from their major to a new major (in the same faculty or another) within the university, after studying in the first major for at least one semester. There is a possibility of transferring majors more than once. Therefore each transfer by a student was counted as one 'transfer students'.

As a condition of transfer, the student must have completed at least one semester and have permission to transfer from parents, advisors, and the Dean of the faculty. In addition, these students must meet the terms and conditions of the criteria that are defined for each major.

Not transfer students are defined as the students who remained ongoing in their study of a current major.

1.5 Plan of Thesis

This thesis contains five chapters:

The first Chapter presents the introduction, objectives, literature reviews and definition of terms.

Chapter 2 provides a description of the data and variables, data management and statistical methods.

Chapter 3 describes the preliminary data analysis as variables of interest, distribution of determinants, percentage of transfer students, and associations between determinants and the outcome.

Chapter 4 reports on the statistical results for modeling transfer students within PSU Pattani.

Chapter 5 summarizes the overall study and contains conclusions, discussions, recommendations and further research, and limitations of the study.

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