

# FSU Degree Program Attributes and Transfer Student Major Change

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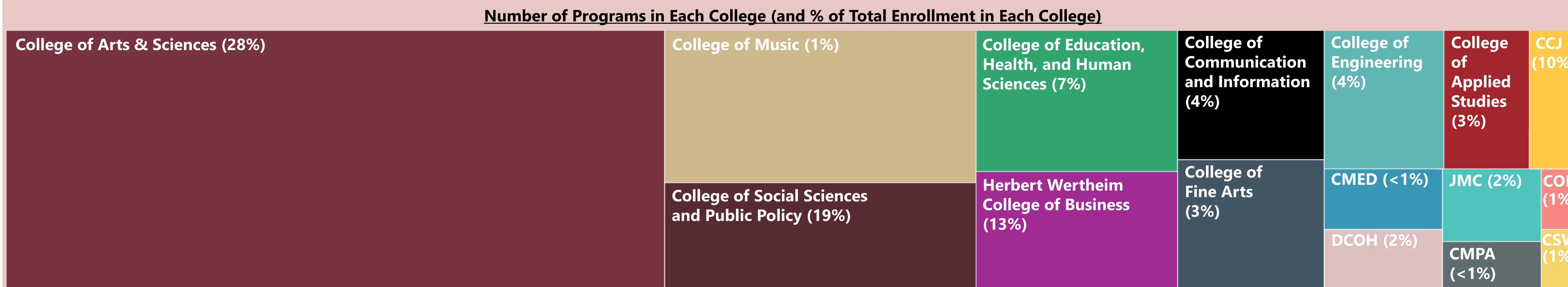
## Introduction

- Background Information:**
  - Many students transfer from Florida College System (FCS) institutions to Florida State University (FSU) after earning an Associate of Arts (AA) degree
  - After completing general education requirements, FCS AA transfers transition to FSU with a specific major selected
  - The requirements for admission to certain majors varies greatly, depending on factors like pre-requisite courses and GPA requirements, as well as specialized admission status of the program
- Research Gap**
  - Despite declaring their major at admission, some FCS AA transfer students end up changing their major after enrolling at FSU
  - While there is a lot of literature on the characteristics that impact student outcomes like time to degree and completion, there has not been much investigation regarding academic program barrier-to-entry and how this is associated with transfer student major change
- Research Questions**
  - Does a college's number of academic programs align with the number of students enrolled?
  - Which colleges and majors have the most "complex" barriers to upper-division admission?
  - What majors did FCS AA transfers change into most frequently, and when?

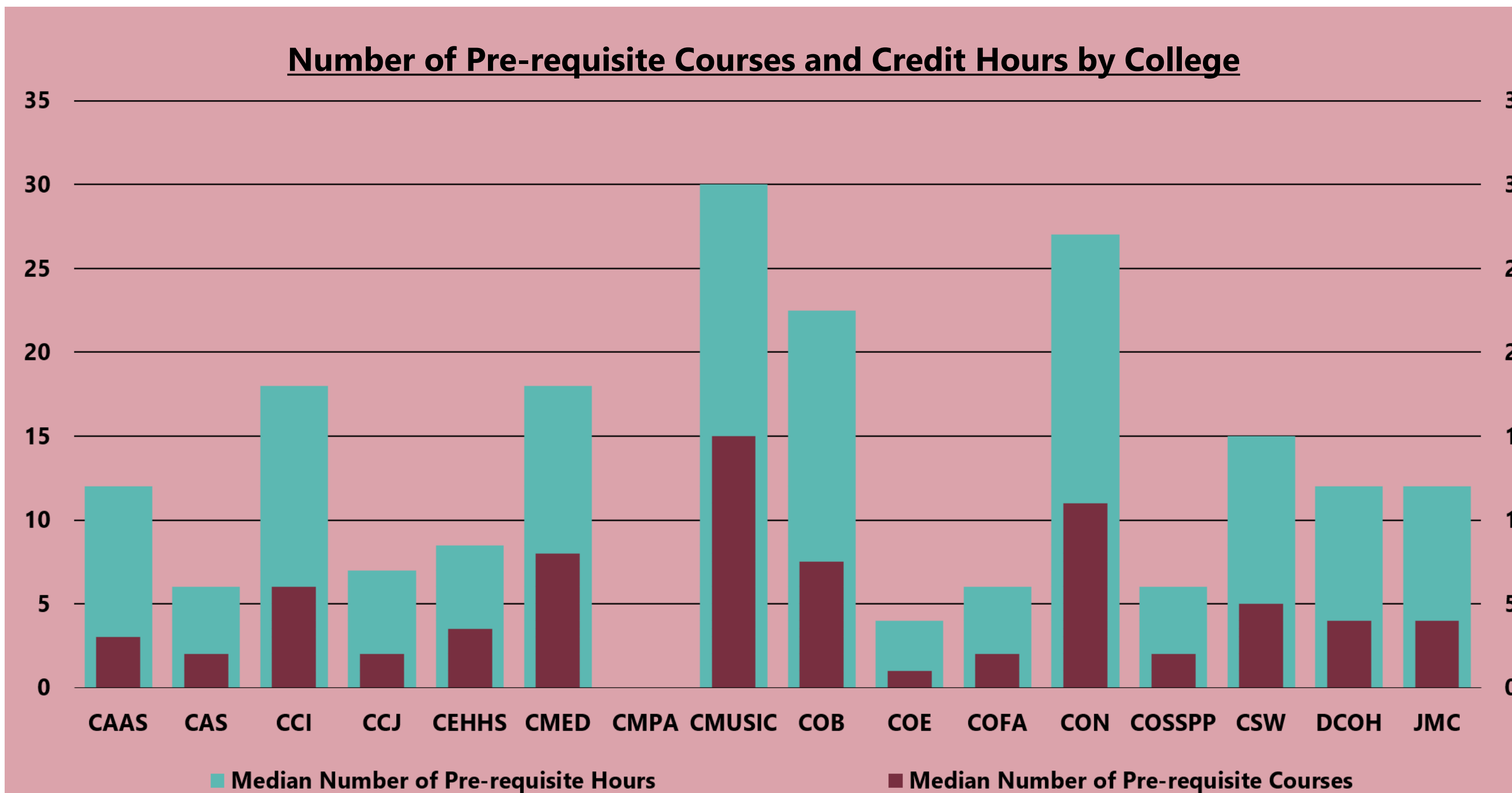
## Methodology

- Procedures**
  - Developed a framework for indexing a major's elements so that majors can be compared to one another
  - Parsed through FSU Academic Program Guide and recorded characteristics of each of FSU's programs (as of Fall 2025) in Excel
- Data Analysis**
  - Conceptual Context Analysis – identifying words, themes, or concepts by counting implicit and explicit instances of these occurrences (Mailman School of Public Health, 2023)
  - Recorded the elements of FSU's academic programs and compared them (e.g., whether programs had a course repeat policy or were specialized admission)
  - Evaluated characteristics of FCS AA transfer major changes, e.g., when the changes happened and what major change paths were most frequent
  - Quantitatively aggregated data to produce visuals of degree program attributes and FCS AA transfer major change through Power BI, a data management and visualization tool

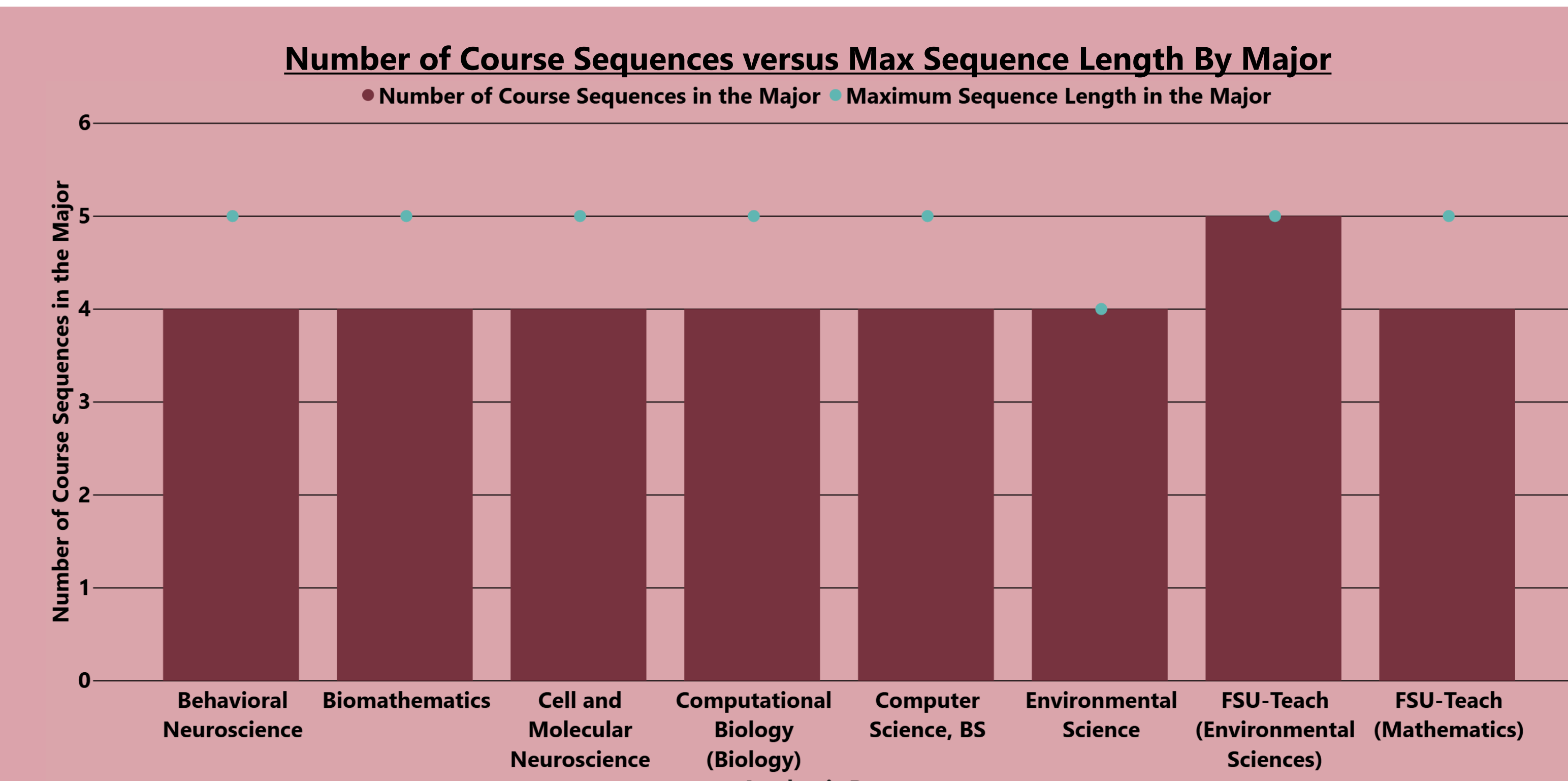
## Results



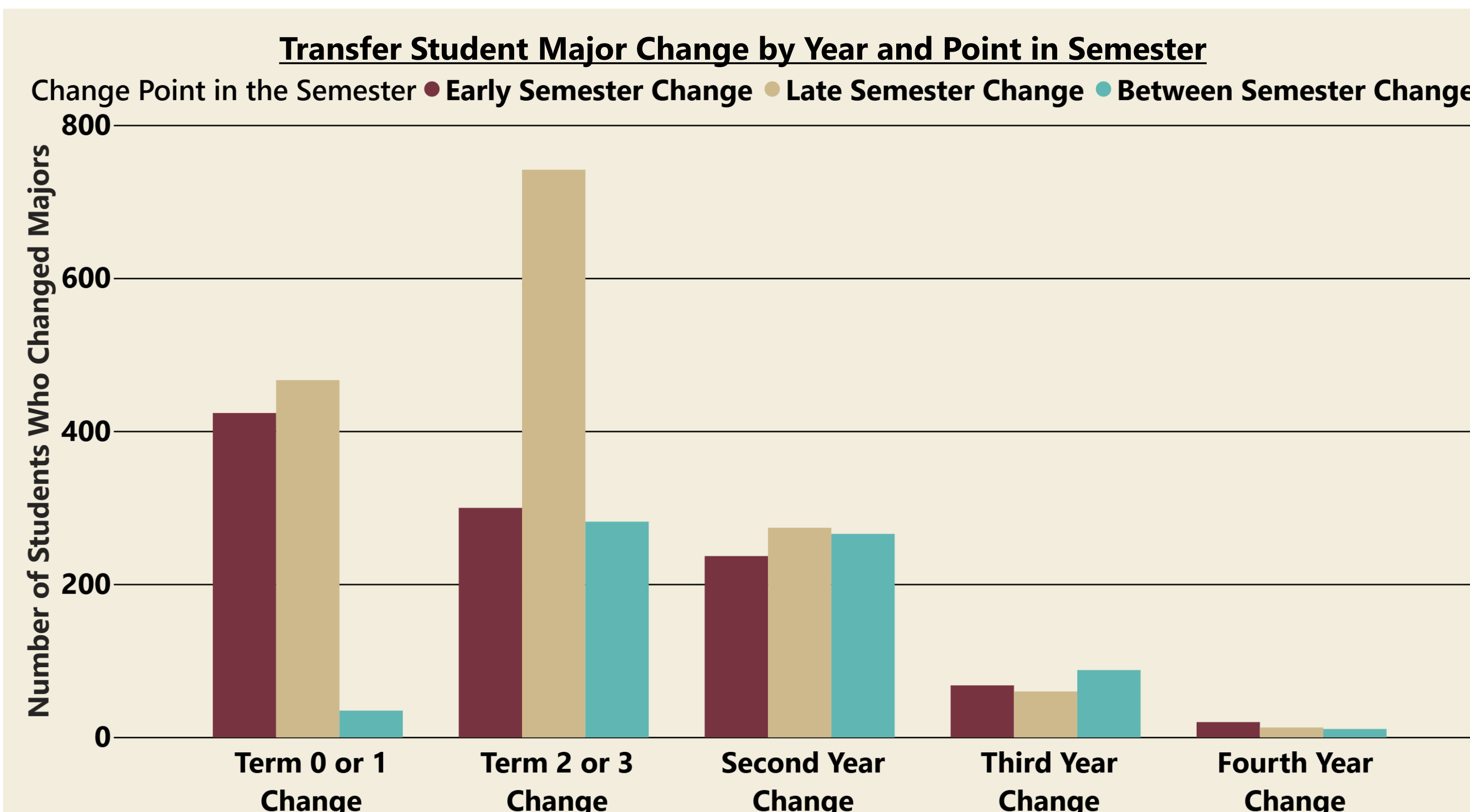
**Figure 1.** This tree map shows the number of programs encompassed in each college, as well as the distribution (expressed as a % value) of students enrolled in each college. From this visual, it's clear that the number of programs in a college is not necessarily aligned with the proportion of transfer students it enrolls. For example, even though the College of Arts & Sciences (CAAS) contains almost half of FSU's total academic programs, it only enrolls approx. 28% of total transfer students. Similarly, the College of Criminology and Criminal Justice (CCJ) has only 3 programs, yet a surprising total 10% of transfer students major in them.



**Figure 2.** This bar-in-bar chart shows the median number of pre-requisite courses and median number of pre-requisite credit hours by college. Naturally, the programs with more pre-requisite courses have more credit hours, yet the number of hours per number of courses varies per college. For example, though the College of Music (CMUSIC) has a median 15 pre-requisite **courses**, there are a median 30 **pre-requisite hours** associated with it. This signifies that the typical pre-requisite class for majors in the College of Music is only 2 credit hours.



**Figure 3.** This chart shows the majors at the university with the most pre-requisite courses, then compares that value with the major's longest sequence length. FSU-Teach for Environmental Science has the most course sequences, as well as the longest course sequence. With this definition, these programs can be considered as the most "complex" in terms of how many courses need to be taken before admission to the upper-division part of the major.



**Figure 4.** This clustered column chart shows the total number AA of transfer student major changes by year and the point in the semester. The most major changes were done at the beginning of students' time at FSU (0-1 semesters in) and the start of students' time at FSU (2-3 semesters in). At the beginning of the student degree career post-AA, majors were changed almost equally in the early or late semester; at the start of the student degree career, majors were overwhelmingly changed later in the semester.

**Most Common Transfer Student Major Changes**

Prev CIP Group	Prev CIP Group Desc	Current CIP Group	Current CIP Group Desc.	#
45.10	Political Science and Government.	45.01	Social Sciences, General.	95
45.09	International Relations and National Security Studies.	45.01	Social Sciences, General.	81
43.04	Security Science and Technology.	43.01	Criminal Justice and Corrections.	70
52.08	Finance and Financial Management Services.	52.14	Marketing.	63
52.03	Accounting and Related Services.	52.08	Finance and Financial Management Services.	59
26.09	Physiology, Pathology and Related Sciences.	19.07	Human Development, Family Studies, and Related Services.	48
26.01	Biology, General.	03.01	Natural Resources Conservation and Research.	39
52.08	Finance and Financial Management Services.	52.02	Business Administration, Management and Operations.	39
52.02	Business Administration, Management and Operations.	52.14	Marketing.	36
26.01	Biology, General.	51.22	Public Health.	28
43.01	Criminal Justice and Corrections.	45.01	Social Sciences, General.	28
45.06	Economics.	45.01	Social Sciences, General.	28
45.09	International Relations and National Security Studies.	45.10	Political Science and Government.	28
43.01	Criminal Justice and Corrections.	45.11	Sociology.	26
45.01	Social Sciences, General.	45.11	Sociology.	26

**Figure 5.** This table shows the most common transfer student major changes by representing most common previous and current CIP group changes by count of student EMPLID. The most common changes were Political Science, International Affairs, Cyber Criminology, and Finance with over 50 individual counts of each, and most of the commonly switched majors by transfers students were to majors that were housed in the same college as that of their previous majors.

## Discussion

- Key Takeaways**
- The most popular College for students are the College of Arts and Sciences, which makes sense since it houses the largest number of programs. Second and third are the College of Social Sciences and Public Policy and the College of Business, which only have 12 and 9 programs in the colleges, respectively. Oppositely, even though the College of Music has 15 distinct programs, it only enrolls 1% of transfer students
  - Majors with the most course sequences included majors in the College of Arts and Sciences, including the FSU-Teach programs, Biomathematics and Computational Biology, and Neuroscience. These majors also had sequences that were quite long; since these characteristics make these programs much of an investment, it makes sense that none of them were found in the frequent major change paths list.
  - Most major changes at the start of a student's degree career happened late in the semester, which could mean that for most transfer students who changed their major, it took until the end of the 2nd or 3rd semester for them to decide. Many other transfer students changed their majors at the beginning of their degree career. There wasn't much difference between this change happening earlier or later in the semester, signaling that these students likely planned on changing their major once enrolled.
  - The majors in COSSPP and COB were exited by FCS AA transfers. However, both groups mainly switched their major to one that was still in their original college. Since most major attributes don't vary much within the colleges, it raises a question of whether this had an impact on their major changes

## Future Implications

- Much of this analysis of major change habits and program characteristics has been visualized to identify patterns, but we want to eventually investigate this data with inferential statistics
  - In the future, we can conduct linear and logistic regressions to identify whether a correlation exists between a major's barriers to entry and student outcomes post-major change, including GPA or stop out
  - Once we do this, we can utilize the Academic Program Guide and FCS AA transfer data to look at students' time-to-degree related to bigger picture transfer pathway policies for FCS AA transfer students

## Acknowledgments

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