



DESTINATION OF 2020 NCAA DIVISION I MEN'S BASKETBALL TRANSFERS

February 2021



Summary of Findings

- ▶ The number of postseason transfers has remained relatively constant in Division I men's basketball for the last four years, between 650 and 700 student-athletes.
- ▶ 2020 saw the largest increase in the number of transfers remaining in Division I. This increase in Division I-to-Division I transfers led to a significant decrease in those transferring to junior colleges. Division I-to-Division II transfers remained near 25%, as has been the case for the past five years.
- ▶ In 2020, 1 in 10 are “up transfers” (transferring to a more prestigious program), while 38% are “lateral transfers” and 51% are “down transfers.” While the proportion of up transfers remains consistent with years past, an increase in lateral transfers reflects the greater proportion of transfers remaining in Division I.
- ▶ Of those men's basketball transfers remaining in Division I, a third are so-called “graduate transfers.” This percentage has remained consistent over the past five years. Graduate transfers are more likely to “up transfer” than undergraduate transfers in men's basketball.

Identifying 2020 Transfers in Division I Men's Basketball

- ▶ Transfers were identified by merging the 2020 Division I Basketball Transfers list from the Verbal Commits [website](#) (downloaded Oct. 1, 2020) with the list of Division I men's basketball student-athletes entered into the NCAA Transfer Portal between Aug. 1, 2019, and July 31, 2020.
- ▶ List destination accuracy was determined primarily through:
 - ▶ The “matriculated” institution listed in the student's status field in the Transfer Portal.
 - ▶ 2019-20 men's basketball roster of destination institution and/or student-athlete bio.
 - ▶ Secondary sources:
 - Official news releases from either/both institution(s).
 - Student-athletes' Twitter feed or other social media footprint (Facebook, LinkedIn, etc.).

Methods of Analyses

- ▶ As in previous years, only end-of-season Division I transfers (those who entered the portal between Feb. 15 and July 31, 2020) were included in the data set.
 - ▶ Cases added:
 - 14 end-of-season transfers on the Verbal Commits list who were not in the 2019-20 Transfer Portal (all but one transferred to a non-NCAA institution).
 - 12 student-athletes are listed as Division II in the portal because their institutions were reclassifying into Division I. These athletes played in Division I conferences during the 2019-20 season: California Baptist (7), North Alabama (4) and Merrimack (1).
 - ▶ Cases removed:
 - “Walk-ons” at either their 2019-20 or 2020-21 Division I institution (167). To identify these cases, we relied on the aid data in the Transfer Portal (19 pre-, 24 mid-, 81 end-of-season).
 - Preseason (19) and midseason transfers (101). To identify these cases, we relied on the “transfer initiated” date in the Transfer Portal.
 - Those not on a 2020-21 college basketball roster (54).
 - Those who “withdrew” from the Transfer Portal (34).
 - Those pursuing professional opportunities (9), those who had retired (5), those who remained on their 2019-20 team (4), those whose sport was incorrectly listed in the portal (4), those deceased (1) and those whose institution was reclassifying into Division II (1, Savannah State).
- ▶ Destination coded by name and division of new institution.

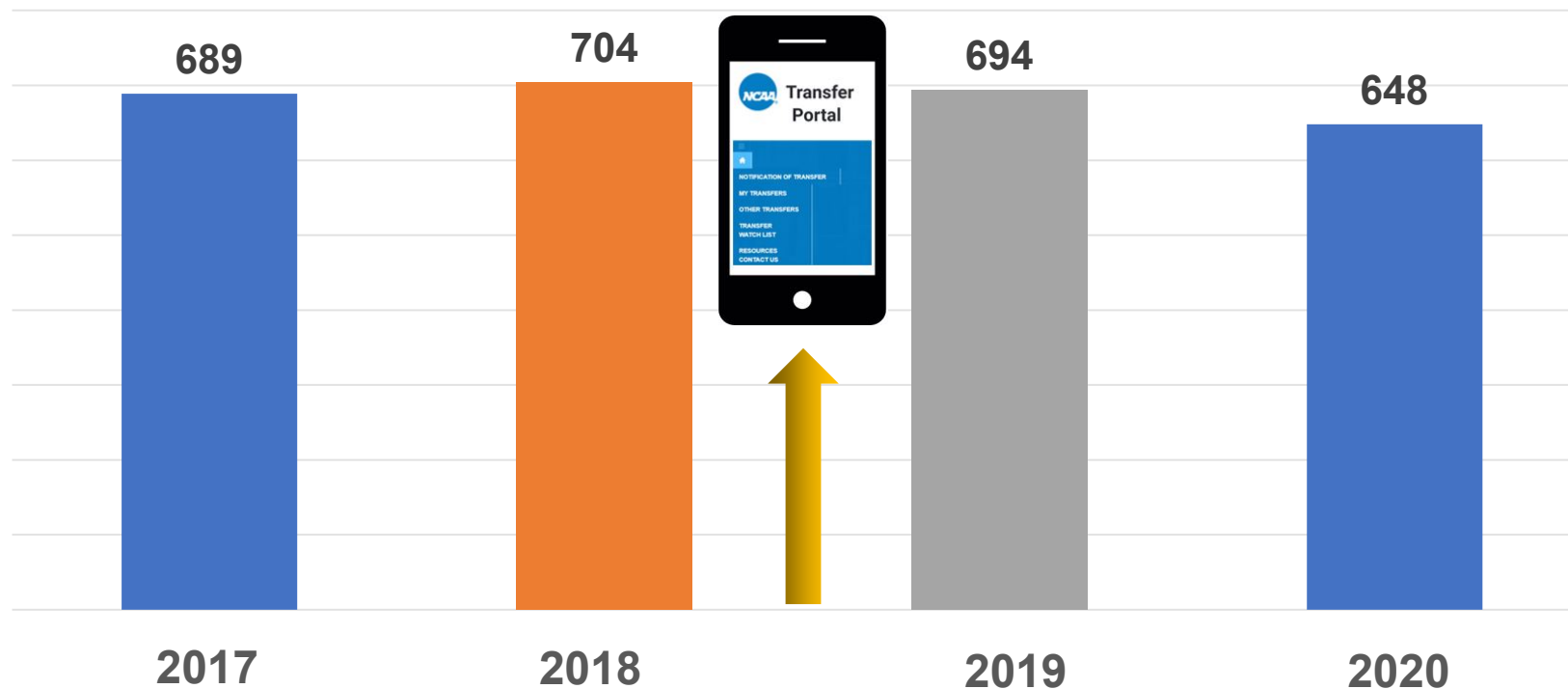
1,021 (in 2019-20 Transfer Portal)

- +14 True transfers from VC list
- +7 From California Baptist
- +4 From North Alabama
- +1 From Merrimack
- 167 Walk-ons (19 pre-, 24 mid-, 124 end-of-season)
- 101 Midseason transfers
- 54 Not on 2020-21 roster
- 34 Withdrew from portal
- 19 Preseason transfers
- 9 Pursuing pro opportunity
- 5 Retired
- 4 Did not transfer
- 4 Incorrect sport in portal
- 1 Deceased
- 1 Did not compete in DI

648 confirmed transfers

Men's Basketball Transfers by the Numbers

- ▶ From 2017 to 2020, there was not substantial change in the number of transfers in Division I men's basketball. In 2017, there were 689 transfers (12.6% of all Division I men's basketball student-athletes). In 2018, there were 704 (12.7%). In 2019, there were 694 (12.6%), and in 2020, there were 648 (11.6%).

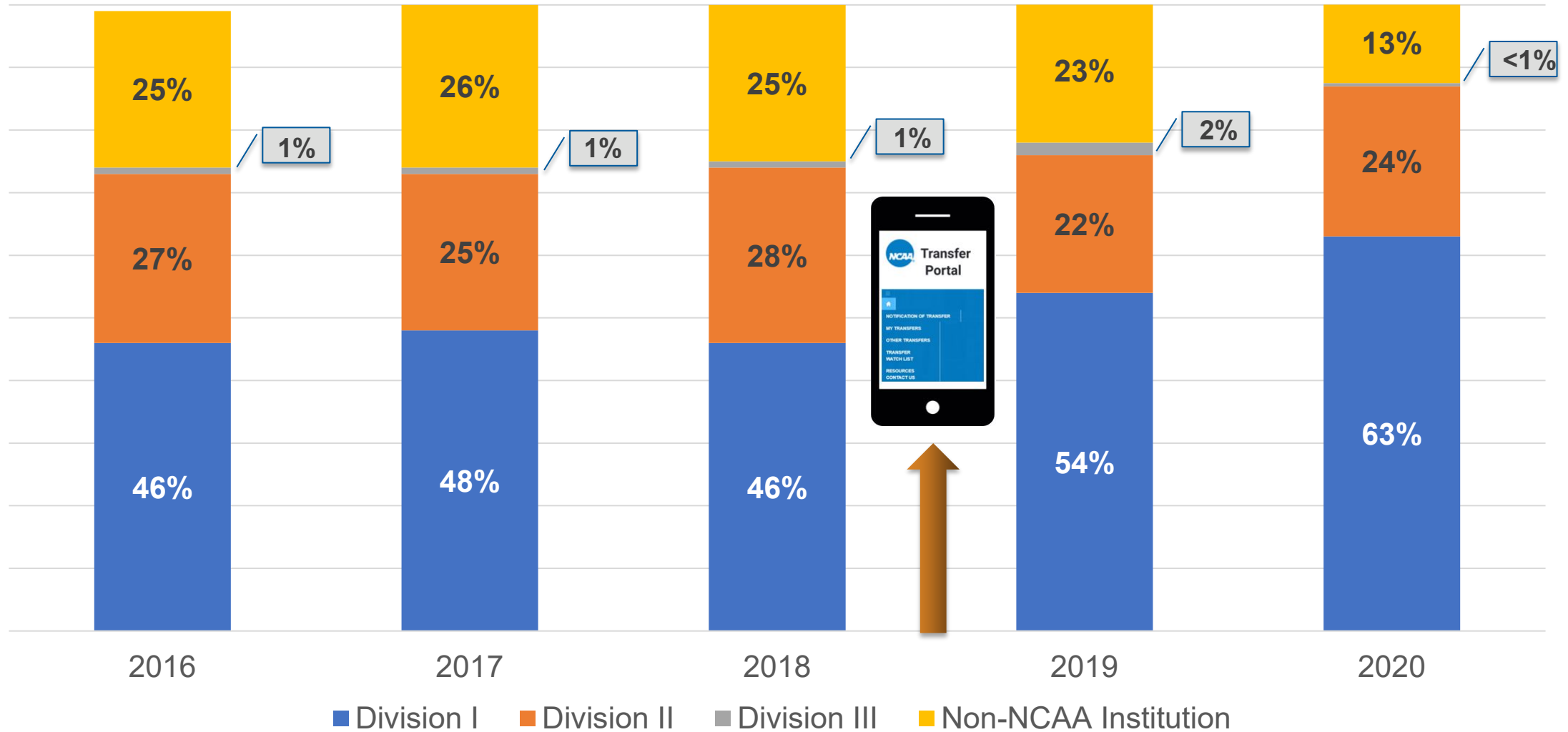


Note: 2017 is used as a baseline because that is when NCAA Research began using the Verbal Commits transfer list to track transfers.

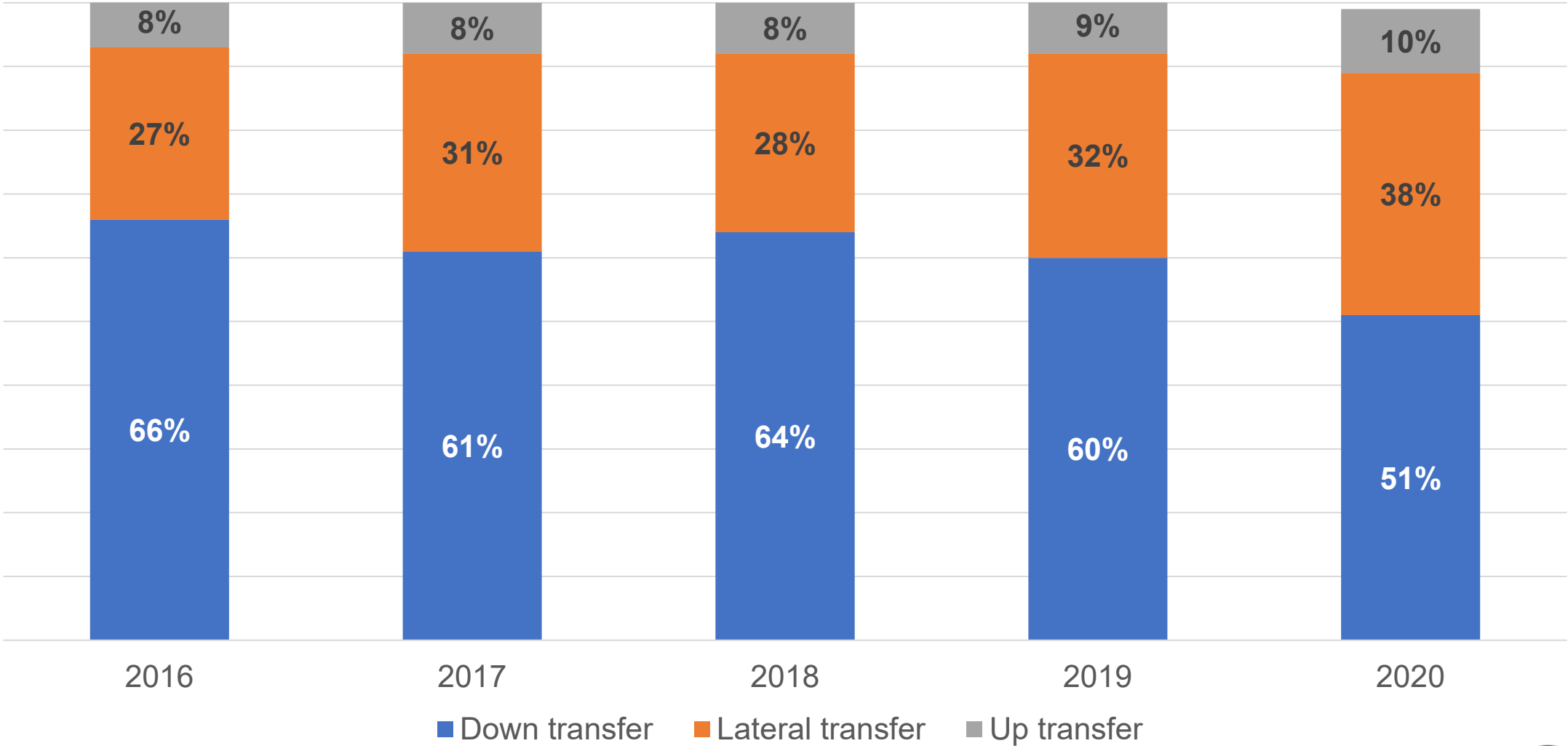
Transfer Pathways

- ▶ In 2020, there was a significant uptick in the percentage of transfers remaining within Division I (from 54% in 2019 to 63% in 2020). This 9-point increase in Division I-to-Division I transfers coincided with a similar decrease in those transferring to non-NCAA colleges (13% in 2020 as compared with 23% in 2019). Consistent with the past four years of transfer data, a quarter transferred to Division II programs.
- ▶ One in 10 are “up transfers” (transferring to a more prestigious program), while 38% are “lateral transfers” and 51% are “down transfers.”
- ▶ Among transfers remaining in Division I, nearly two-thirds are lateral transfers, while about a quarter are down transfers and 16% are up transfers. This pattern has remained consistent over the past four years.

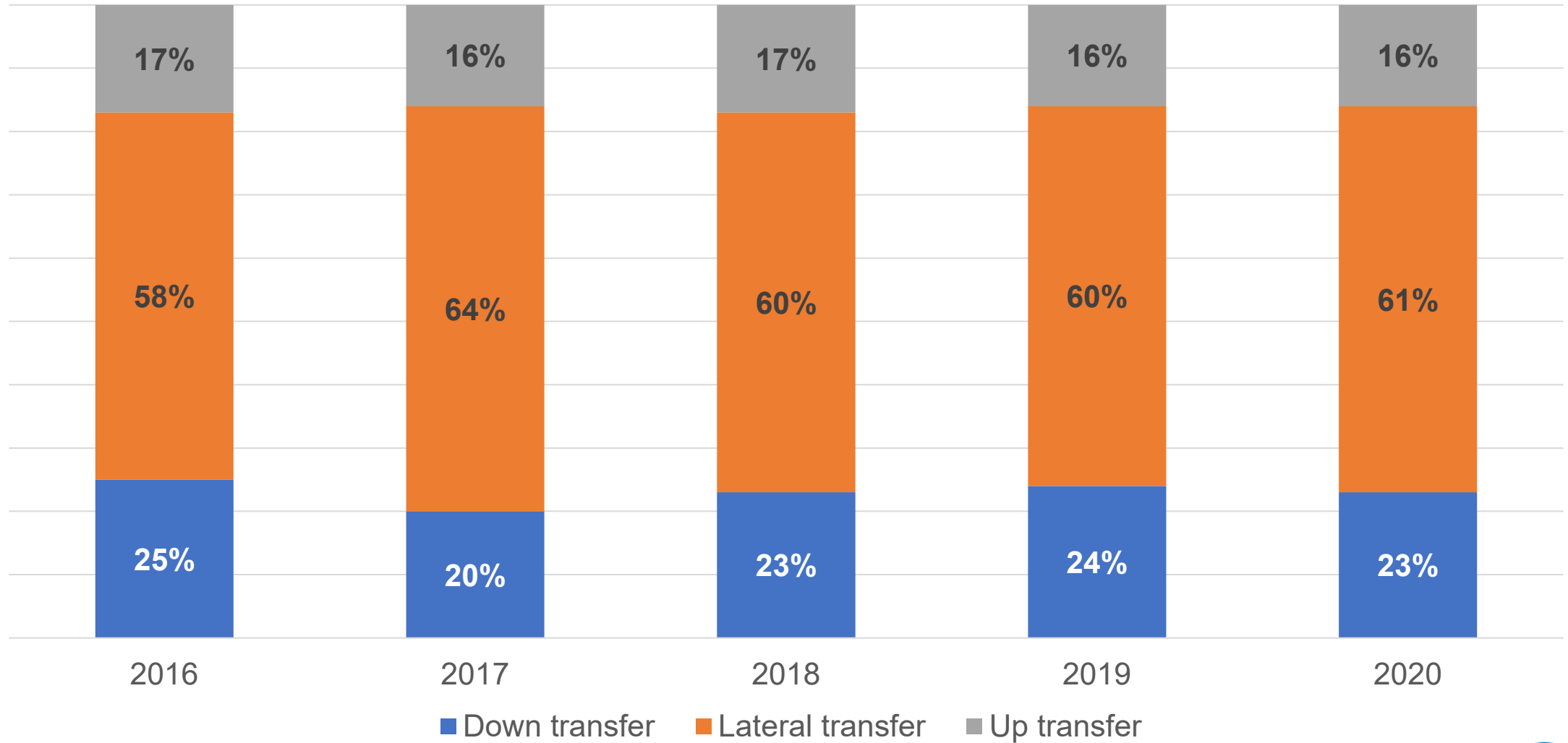
Transfer Destination by Division



Directional Movement of Transfers



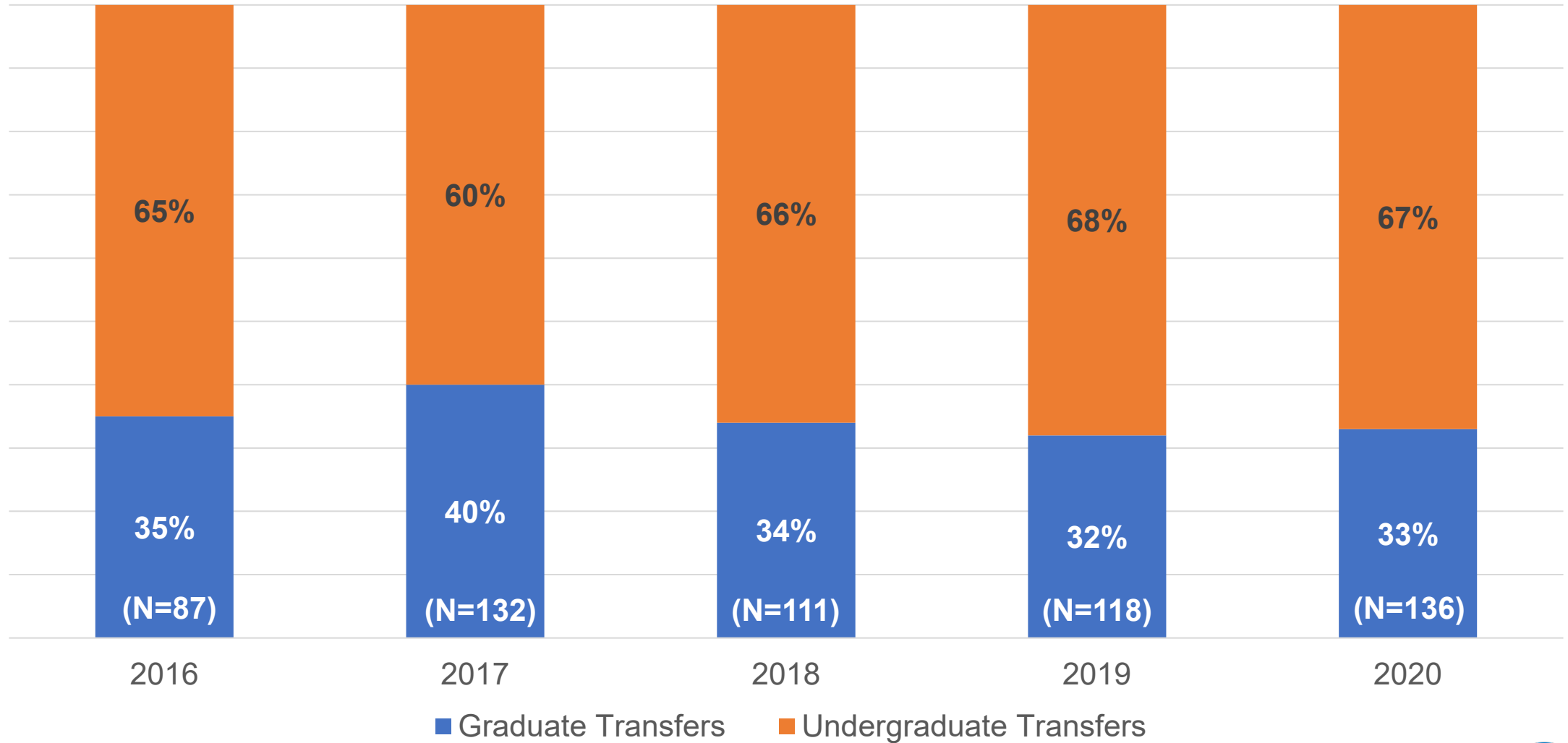
Directional Movement of Transfers Remaining in Division I



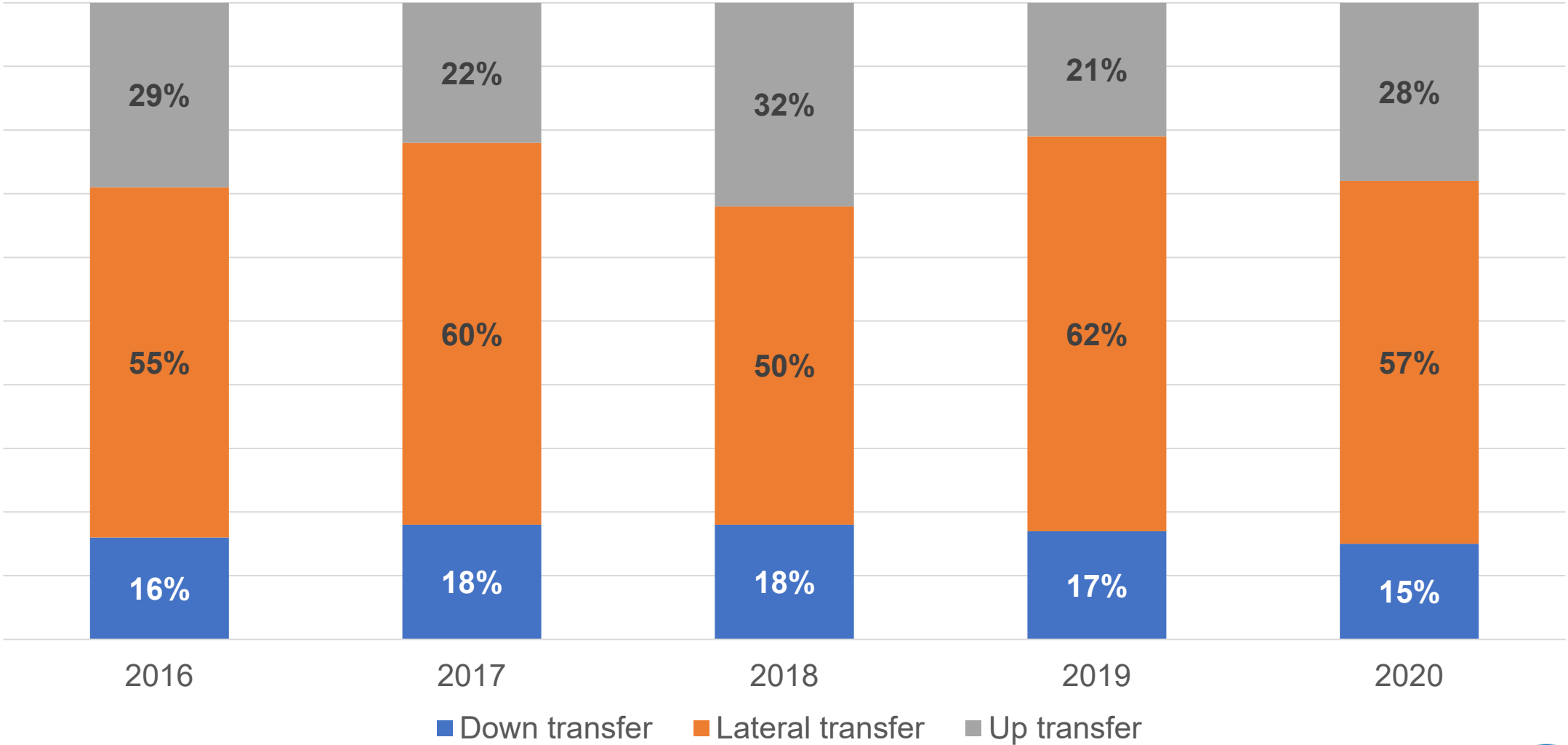
Pathways of Graduate Transfers in Division I Men's Basketball

- ▶ In total, 136 Division I “graduate transfers” were identified (walk-ons excluded) among the 2020 end-of-season transfers. This is similar to the number identified in 2019 (118).
- ▶ Graduate transfers make up about a third of all Division I-to-Division I transfers. This percentage has remained relatively consistent over the past five years.
- ▶ While graduate transfers are nearly three times as likely to “up transfer” than undergraduate transfers who remain in Division I (28% versus 11%, respectively), 72% of graduate transfers are either lateral or down transfer.
- ▶ Graduate transfer figures are considered drafts until academic data for that year are obtained the following spring.

Percentage of Men's Basketball DI-DI Transfers by Enrollment Status



Directional Movement of Division I Graduate Transfers



Note: Directional movement of graduate transfers remaining in Division I.

Number of Transfer Departures Per Division I Team

	2018	2019	2020
0 Transfers	59	58	57
1 Transfer	94	93	119
2 Transfers	78	90	76
3 Transfers	55	58	50
4 Transfers	43	29	34
5 or More Transfers	22	23	17

Note: 2020 numbers based on the 648 confirmed transfers, as of Jan. 1, 2021.

Detailed Methods

- ▶ NCAA Research has tracked Division I men's basketball transfer movement since fall 2013. From 2013-16, we relied on the Division I men's basketball transfer list compiled annually by Jeff Goodman at ESPN. When that list was discontinued, we relied on the Verbal Commits transfer list. Beginning in 2019, NCAA Transfer Portal data was used in addition to the Verbal Commits list. Both lists are used because it is not required that Division I student-athletes intending to transfer out of the NCAA (e.g., to a junior college) be entered into the Transfer Portal.
- ▶ The primary goal of this project has been to assess the transfer movement of Division I men's basketball student-athletes within and out of Division I, to track trends in "graduate transfers" and to gain a better understanding of the prevalence of "up transfers" (transferring to a more prestigious program) within Division I.
- ▶ When Goodman/ESPN originally compiled the list, midseason transfers were on a separate list from end-of-season transfers. As such, we have tracked the movement of these end-of-season transfers only. Additionally, those who were Division I walk-ons at either the departing or receiving school consistently have been excluded from the NCAA analyses. While walk-ons were annotated on ESPN lists, we relied on news releases and media guides to identify them on the Verbal Commits lists in 2017 and 2018. In 2018-19, athletics scholarship data were often available in the Transfer Portal and were used to determine walk-on status. Beginning Aug. 1, 2019, athletics aid received at the departing school became a required field in the Transfer Portal. It is expected that this led us to identify a greater number of walk-ons in 2020 than in years past.
- ▶ In its first year (Oct. 15, 2018 to July 31, 2019), graduate student status was an optional field in the Transfer Portal; it became a required field in 2020.

Technical Appendix

Determining Transfer Direction (NCAA modification of term defined by Luke Winn, Sports Illustrated, 2012):

▶ Up Transfer

- ▶ Transferring from a non-major basketball conference program to a major basketball conference program (Atlantic Coast, Big East, Big Ten, Big 12, Pac-12 or Southeastern conferences).
- ▶ Transferring from a non-major conference program to a perennial power outside the major conferences (Gonzaga or Wichita State).
- ▶ Transferring from any Division I team that has NOT won a national championship in the past 10 years to a program that has won a national championship in the past 10 years (Duke, Kentucky, Louisville, UConn, North Carolina, Villanova or Virginia).

▶ Lateral Transfer

- ▶ Transferring from a major conference program that has NOT won a national championship in the past 10 years to a perennial power, or vice versa.
- ▶ Transferring from a major conference program to another major conference program that has NOT won a national championship in the past 10 years.
- ▶ Transferring from a non-major conference program to another non-major conference program that is NOT a perennial power.

▶ Down Transfer

- ▶ Transferring from a major conference program to a non-major conference program that is NOT a perennial power.
- ▶ Transferring from a perennial power to a non-major conference program.
- ▶ Transferring from a program that has won a national championship in the past 10 years to a program that has not done so.
- ▶ Transferring out of Division I to a Division II or Division III program or to a non-NCAA institution (e.g., junior college, NAIA, etc.).



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