How to Identify Students
Who Transfer Out of Engineering

Your institution may or may not have an established or automated way of tracking students who leave one unit for another. [Note: Engineering programs are identified in a variety of ways (e.g. college, school) so we will use "unit" as a generic term in the discussion below).

First Step: Fact Finding
The first step is to identify what the process is for students who wish to transfer from one unit to another, or who leave the institution all together. As part of this fact finding, determine who are the gatekeepers for the transfer data.

Once you have done this, contact the gatekeepers and ask:
    How do students initiate and complete a transfer?
- Do the students complete an online form?
- Do they complete a paper form at the new college?

    Are the data collected in one place? If so where?
- In what format (separate bits of paper? Electronic database?)
- In what form (aggregate or disaggregated data?)

    Are any of these data sent back to your unit?
    Who has access to these data?
    How can you gain access to these data?

It May Be Straight Forward
If you are fortunate, your institution is aware of the value of tracking student movements and has data ready for you to tap into. If this is the case, you can simply request the emails for those who have left and contact them to participate in the *AWE Leaving Engineering Survey*. Remember that there are generally two categories of leavers: those who stay in the institution but leave engineering and those who leave the university.

In your request, make sure that you are clear that you have IRB approval to administer the survey, what your goals are and how it will benefit the unit.

It May Not Be Straight Forward
If your institution has not established a way to track the movement of students within the institution, there are several possible ways to go about making the data available:

- Contact the Dean or other decision maker in your unit and let them know you need these data in order to understand better why students are making the decisions they do. Point out that understanding students self-reported experiences (especially those who are transferring out) can help increase retention and ultimately improve recruitment to their unit. Point out that it will be useful data for ABET and that objectives with measurable outcomes can be developed based on the data. Ask them set up a way to collect and easily access these data.

- Work with your unit's Information Technology people to identify students leaving engineering by comparing semester to semester enrollments and identifying those who are no longer enrolled in engineering (excluding those who have not graduated, are studying abroad, on internships or co-ops, etc.) This is labor intensive and best achieved with the backing of your dean or upper level administrator. Once software is set up for doing this, request that it be available on an on-going basis.

For the *AWE Students Leaving Engineering Survey* the highest priority is for you to gain access to contact information for those students who are <u>transferring *within* your institution</u>. The objective of the survey is to understand what is underlying their decisions and to develop appropriate activities to

intervene. While we recognize that the data from those who leave the institution altogether would be very interesting, we also know that contacting those students and getting them to respond may be difficult.