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## *Research Spotlight*

### **2351 - Paving the Way for Greatness: Helping Transfer Students Thrive in a University Honors Program**

Transition Programs and Services, Special Populations

This session focuses on integrating research and practice to be responsive to and responsible for the transfer student experience. We will discuss how we used interviews, surveys, and advising to assess and support the transfer student experiences. Our goal is to present our findings in a way that will be informative for all institutions of higher education, community college through RI 4-year institutions.

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# Paving the Way for Greatness: Helping Transfer Students Thrive in a University Honors Program

Bethany Ponte  
Kate Andrup Stephensen

# Presenters

## Bethany Ponte

- Recent graduate of UC Davis and the University Honors Program (UHP).
- Transfer Student from Sierra College
- Current Graduate Student in the Ph.D Integrative Neuroscience Program at the University of Nevada, Reno.

## Kate Andrup Stephensen

- Davis, CA native
- University Honors Program (UHP) Third, Fourth Year and Transfer Advisor
- Associate Director of First-Year Seminars (interim)

## Purpose

- Integrate research and practice to be responsive to and responsible for the transfer student experience.
  - Discuss use of interviews, surveys, and advising to assess and support the transfer student experiences.
  - Present findings in a way that will be informative for all institutions of higher education.
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# Outline

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## Overview and Context

Description of UHP, transfers within UHP and research context.

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## Research Findings

Broken into entry, first year, and second year in the program.

## Efforts

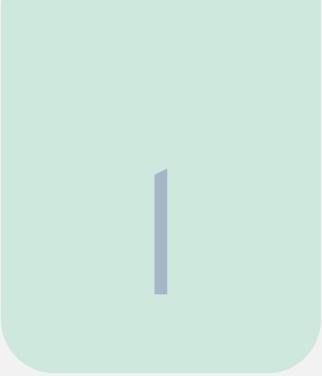
Programmatic Efforts of the 2021-2022 School Year

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## Growth

How to make UHP a stronger program.

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# Overview and Context

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# What is UHP?

- The University Honors Program (UHP) works to include exceptional students from all backgrounds.
  - Transfer Students, continuing students, and first year students are part of the program.



- UHP strives to provide students with:
  - Learning opportunities with experiential knowledge
  - Exposure to distinct histories and cultures
  - The ability to engage in discussions and self-reflection
  - Focus on problems and solutions for a more equitable and just society

# University Honors Program Curriculum

*UC GPA minimum: 3.25 (annual) to participate in the program. All UHP courses must be taken for a letter grade and earn at least a C-*

## One course required per quarter

	Fall Quarter	Winter Quarter	Spring Quarter
Year 1	One UHP Course	One UHP Course	One UHP Course
Year 2	One UHP Course	One UHP Course	One UHP Course

## Year 3 Activities do not need to follow a Fall-Winter-Spring timeline, can be done earlier

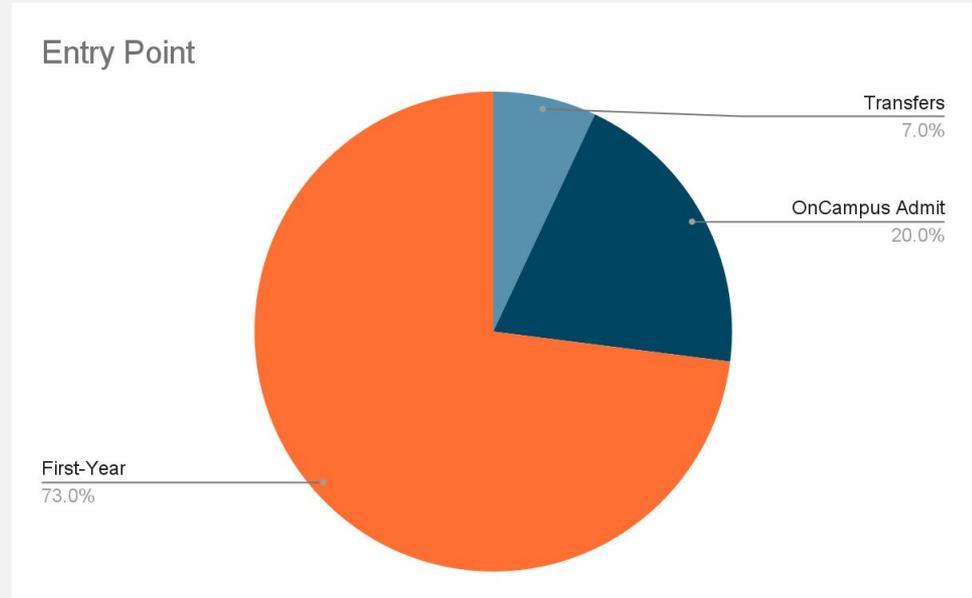
	Research Preparation	Community Service	Project (select one)
Year 3	Signature Work Preparation Workshop Series	Minimum of 20 hours, must be volunteer (non-paid, non-unit earning)	Honors Contract (HNR190x) Individually Designed Project Study Abroad Washington Program
		Project Management Course (both service & project)	
		Leadership Development Programs (both service & project)	

## Signature Work (complete one of the following)

Year 4	Thesis in Major	UHP Thesis
	Engineering Design Project	UHP Project

# What Students Make Up the UHP transfer student population?

- Residency:  
96% California  
4% National
- 27% under-represented minority
- 42% first-generation college
- 38% come from low income households



All transfers are California residents who transfer from a community college

# Research Context

- Bethany's Undergraduate Thesis through Honors
- The importance of this research is to:
  - Understand the impact that UHP at an RI University has on transfer students and their perceptions of imposter syndrome.
- Imposter syndrome:
  - A feeling of being “found out” that they do not have the qualifications to succeed in a new role even if they do.

A hand-drawn graphic with the text "I DO NOT BELONG HERE". The words "I DO NOT" are in orange, "BELONG HERE" is in blue, and "NOT" is in orange. A thick orange brushstroke is drawn over the word "NOT".

I DO NOT BELONG HERE

[https://dartmed.dartmouth.edu/spring19/images/features\\_impostor\\_syndrome\\_01.png](https://dartmed.dartmouth.edu/spring19/images/features_impostor_syndrome_01.png)

# Literature Review

- Gap in the literature on high achieving transfer students.
- Transfers can face difficulties when transitioning to a new University.
- The literature suggests that programs and seminars specifically for transfers can help increase a sense of belonging for these students.
- Hypothesis:
  - The hypothesis is that many students will be affected by imposter syndrome in UHP by having a fear of failure in the classroom and diminished involvement on campus.

# Method

- Participants:
  - The 4<sup>th</sup> year transfer students in UHP at a large public research university. There were twenty-five students in this study.
- Survey:
  - The Clance Imposter Scale was used to assess levels of imposter syndrome.
  - A score of 60 or above indicated imposter syndrome.
- Interview:
  - The students that had a score of 60 or above on the survey were asked to be part of a follow up interview. They were asked open ended questions about their experience with imposter syndrome in relation to the honors program.

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# Findings

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# Data Analysis - Entry

- 5 month period before transferring to the institution.
- High prevalence of intimidation and anxiety with being an honors student.
- “I think [the honors program] wants to invest in people who are going to make a huge positive difference in the world, and I don’t have faith I can be this person”.
- Recruiting advising call helped make them feel more secure and at ease with joining the program.



# Data Analysis - First Year Transfer

- Requirements: transfer seminar, two other exploratory education opportunities.
- Imposter syndrome was high during this time for all the participants.
- Transfer seminar helped them adjust to campus and eased imposter feelings.
- Imposter syndrome peaked when students were needing to decide on their honors coursework and reaching out to faculty.
  - This continued through the spring as they were deciding on their signature work project and mentor.

# Data Analysis - Second Year Transfer

- Requirements: at least two quarters of signature work and presenting the work at a conference.
- The students then felt imposter syndrome differently depending on the progression of their project:



Decrease in  
imposter feelings

Challenging but doable project  
and strong mentor  
communication.



Increase in  
imposter feelings

Challenging project that wasn't  
fully in line with their interest and  
had less faculty mentorship.

# Discussion

- Imposter syndrome exists at a high rate for high achieving transfer students.
- As the student incorporation and involvement theory suggests, those students that felt more connection with their project, mentor, and classes were less likely to show signs of imposter syndrome.
- From the interviews, the students discussed how important the honors transfer community, advising, and educational opportunities helped them belong to their institution and reduce imposter feelings.

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# Efforts

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# Programmatic Efforts Made in the 2021-2022 School Year

- An optional bootcamp before the start of the term to acclimate students to the campus and to research skills.
- Matching the curriculum of transfer students in the program to continuing students.
- Offering transfer student specific workshops on research skills and how to complete the honors curriculum.
- Peer and Staff advising appointments from summer through the academic year

# Programmatic Efforts Made in the 2021-2022 School Year

- Creation of a Transfer Student Peer Advisor role that is embedded in the curriculum.
- Collaboration with the campus transfer community through the UC Davis Transfer & Re-Entry Center.
- Further work has been to create more community for the students by:
  - Hosting social events
  - On campus bi-weekly walks
  - Recruitment of transfer students to the UHP student activity committee

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# Growth

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# How to Make UHP Even Stronger

- Broaden Signature Work to prepare for opportunities beyond graduate school
- Inclusion of more transfers in the program via area community college recruitment
- Creation of an Honors to Honors admission process
- Possible post-matriculation application process for transfer students

# Thank You

Feel free to contact us with any questions!

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