

NISTS 2022

FROM MOMENT TO MOVEMENT: SHAPING THE FUTURE OF TRANSFER
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Educational Session

2316 - Retaining Transfer Students: Rationale, Barriers, Strategies & Outcomes

Leadership and Strategic Planning, Transition Programs and Services

This session will provide an analysis of the reasons for the historical neglect of transfer students, identify the barriers that have contributed to this neglect, and offer strategies for reconciling the discrepancies between how institutions provide transitional experiences for first-time-in-college students and for transfer students. Participants will be able to identify ways to examine their transitional programs, identify barriers for transfer students, and develop plans for enhancing advocacy roles for their transfer students.

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Retaining Transfer Students: Rationale, Barriers, Strategies & Outcomes

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Learning Objectives

- Identify the potential **institutional value** of transfer students
- Identify ***policies/practices/pathways*** that might create barriers or inhibit smooth transitions for transfer students
- Identify ***potential assessments*** that could strengthen the advocacy efforts to improve transitions and subsequent experiences for transfer students

Rationale

- Historically **overlooked** (and neglected)
- **Not defined** clearly (sometimes)
- Too **diverse** a population that can result in
 - Too **many assumptions** made
- Too **little time** with them
- **Beginning to matter** (e.g., FTIC enrollments going down)
- **It's the right thing to do**

What We Know (about FTIC students)

- Tinto's research (1987, 2006, 2010) on **academic and social integration** indicates that both dimensions need to be in place in order to facilitate students' decisions to remain at the institution.
- Astin's (1975, 1977, 1984, 1993) theory of **student involvement (engagement)** reinforces the notion that student success is linked to the (positive) campus environment, especially through peer group interaction.

So...

Why didn't higher education researchers and administrators, demographers, legislators, etc. apply these same findings to the population of transfer students? **Transfer students are first-time students** at their new institutions...

...and **the transfer experience** can be an “event, or non-event, that results in changed relationships, routines, assumptions, and roles” (Schlossberg's transition theory) (see McGill & Lazarowicz, 2012).

They didn't count!

IPEDS: Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (Federal):

The retention rate measures the percentage of **first-year students** who had persisted in their educational program a year later at the same institution.

These are institutional level data. (Hagedorn, et al., 2012)

National Student Clearinghouse (non-profit organization):

The persistence rate is the percentage of students who return to college at any institution for their second year (and more).

These are student level data, which includes all institutions attended, i.e., transfer students.

Only **IPEDS** data have traditionally been used to gauge “**student success**.”

Why Not?

- The **IPEDS** calculation is derived from the federal Student Right To Know and Campus Security Act of 1990, which defined the **graduation rate** as the “percentage of full-time, first-time, degree-seeking enrolled students who graduate after 150 percent of the normal time for completion...” (from the **same institution**).
(Hagedorn, et al., 2012, p.9)
- **Excluded: TRANSFERS**, part-time students, non-degree students, other than fall term admits.

So, what determines “**student success**” (our primary goal)?

The answer is...

It depends...on who is defining “student success”...

Institutions? (All those attended?)

Legislators?

Faculty?

Parents?

Academic Advisors?

Outside Funding Agencies?

Accreditors?

Employers? (Which transcript(s)?)

Students?????

However, some things are changing...

Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (federal)

Began to **report** (2015-16) graduation rates in 4 cohorts (not just **1**):

- full-time, first-time
- part-time, first-time
- full-time, non-first-time
- part-time, non-first time.

Yet, the accepted calculation of retention rates has remained the same.

IHEP Report (Arnold, et al., 2019) - accreditors

College Transparency Act (S.839; H.R. 1766, introduced 18 March 2021; passed by H.R. Feb 4, 2022)

Tools available:

College Scorecard (IPEDS data)

<https://collegescorecard.ed.gov/>

(Revised Feb 7, 2022)

Student Achievement Measure (Clearinghouse data)

<https://www.studentachievementmeasure.org/>

Better indicators of “**student success**” (IMO).

Common Transfer **Barriers** (to Success)

- ❖ **Transfer of Credits** (equivalencies, timing of receipt and evaluation of transcripts, credit vs. competency question; **stranded** credits)
- ❖ Definitive “**Pathways**” (articulation, sequencing, pre-requisites, State policies; program maps)
- ❖ Limited **Programs/Services** as transitional opportunities (scholarships, Honors, learning communities, Orientation/Registration, new student seminar courses)
- ❖ Unforeseen **Expectations** (academic workload, social integration, major/course availability, others)
- ❖ Absence of a **Culture of Transfer** (welcoming atmosphere, designated office for assistance, strength of academic advising personnel and practices; advocacy; sense of belonging)
- ❖ Lack of **Transfer Self-Efficacy** (ability to navigate the transfer process)

Pathways

Described as a set of specified academic and **curricular roadmaps** to the completion of a Bachelor's degree (**academic integration**), normally available via articulation agreements, statewide databases, institutional websites, degree audits, curriculum planning sheets, and/or college catalogs.

However, the **social integration** component of any successful pathway is often absent.

A CCRC study on “guided pathways” at Columbia began to acknowledge the latter component and indicated its value in improving “college completion and student success” although **student success** is not specifically defined without including the “completion” metric (Bailey, et al., 2015).

Some Likely Differences

(Irrespective of the Pathway)

- Campus geography
- Vocabulary
- Academic policies and procedures
- Academic standards; faculty expectations
- Peer groups ()
- Advising structures
- Computer systems
- Course scheduling procedures
- Culture and traditions
- Residence Life
- Campus Resources

Assessment Efforts

“...a lack of assessment data can sometimes lead to policies and practices based on intuition, prejudice, preconceived notions, or personal proclivities – none of them desirable bases for making decisions”

(Upcraft and Schuh, 2002, p. 20)

Examples

Examine how the experiences of first-year (FTIC) students **compare** to those of transfer students...

- ❑ Can be institutional or unit-based
- ❑ **Budgetary Allocations** for Transitional Programs
 - ❑ **Recruitment** efforts
 - ❑ **Orientation** Programming
 - ❑ **Registration**/Course Scheduling/Priority
 - ❑ **Academic Advising** (Lavinson & Carroll, 2021)
 - ❑ **“First-Year” Experience** Efforts
- ❖ **Academic Policies** (NISTS)
- ❖ **Data** Collection, especially **RETENTION**

Analyses of Data (*you already have, mostly)

- **Enrollment Rates*** (Yield)
- **Retention and Graduation Rates***
 - Changes of Major (after enrollment)
 - Course Completion Rates (pandemic effect?)
 - D/F/I/W Grades, i.e., not applicable to degree
 - Stranded Credits (Karon, et al., 2020)
- **Effectiveness of Articulation Agreements**
 - (# students who used them, review cycle, curricular updates; # reverse transfers)
- **Student Satisfaction Surveys** **Student Focus Groups**
- **Others:** CAS Standards; SWOT analyses

Remedies

Define your transfer **population**

Expedite credit transfer **processes**

Examine transfer **policies and** all transfer transitional **processes**
(pre-admission through exiting the institution)

Do not over- or under-**estimate** their **abilities to succeed** at your institution

Recognize that this population is probably **the most diverse** on your campus, so **refrain** from over-generalization

Develop **transfer-specific** efforts (website, Open Houses, communications, a Transfer Center, NISTS National Transfer Week)

Initiate some form of Transfer Seminar **course** (NISTS blog, 2021)

Develop a **Culture of Transfer**

Seek Transfer Efficacy (Hayes Buenaflor, 2020)

Looking Ahead

- **Be prepared** for the apparent recognition that transfer students will begin to receive in the near future – **they will count!**
- **Review** your policies, procedures, processes, and programs that affect your transfer students
- **Advocate** for appropriate changes
- **Gather data** as needed and appropriate
- Make **few assumptions/generalizations** about your transfer students
- **It's the right thing to do...**

Thank you!

Q & A

“Everyone’s entitled to my opinion.”

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Resources

- National Resource Center for the First-Year Experience & Students in Transition www.sc.edu/fye
- NACADA The Global Community for Academic Advising – Advising Community on Transfer Students <https://www.nacada.ksu.edu/Community/Advising-Communities/Advising-Transfer-Students.aspx>
- American Association of Collegiate Registrars and Admissions Officers – Transfer and Articulation <https://www.aacrao.org/resources/transfer-articulation>
- Council for the Advancement of Standards in Higher Education – Transfer Student Programs and Services https://www.cas.edu/store_product.asp?prodid=76
- National Institute for the Study of Transfer Students <https://www.nists.org/>
- National Transfer Student Week October 17-21, 2022 <https://www.nists.org/national-transfer-student-week>
- Student Achievement Measure (SAM) <https://www.studentachievementmeasure.org/>
- College Scorecard <https://collegescorecard.ed.gov/>

Resources Continued

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Resources Continued

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- Upcraft, M. L. & Schuh, J. H. (2002). Assessment vs. research why we should care about the difference. *About Campus* 7(1), p. 16-20. <https://doi.org/10.1177/108648220200700104>