Educational Poster

2845 - Developing a Resource-Inclusive Environment with Classroom Assignments for Cohort Transfer Students

Transition Programs and Supports, Diversity and Inclusion

Transfer students are often challenged with a lack of resource knowledge within their new environment, how to access those resources, how to use them in their academic careers, and how to use them in their professional career development. This poster addresses the need to connect students with useful resources and opportunities for skillset development in the classroom. Examples of how to fulfill those needs through classroom assignments will be discussed in this presentation.

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Developing a Resource-Inclusive Environment with Classroom Assignments for Cohort Transfer Students

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Background
Traditional students are typically exposed to pivotal resources in their first-year classes such as freshman studies, as well as throughout their first-year coursework as professors address their needs. By their second or third year, students are expected to know of these resources since professors may assume they have acclimated into their environment as an upperclassman.

Transfer students don’t have the same exposure to those resources, yet they are also expected as upperclassman to be aware of them and use them in their academic career.

This study presents targeted research skill development, innovation, and real-world application approaches in the classroom.

Purpose
The purpose of this study is to develop methods that can be applied to multidisciplinary and multi-classification course assignments beneficial to transfer students.

Study Aims
1) Recognize classroom disparities for transfer students at 4-year institutions.
2) Describe methods used to develop a student background inclusive curriculum and assignments.

Methods
Study: Structure Cohort Observational Teaching Method: Student-centered Instructor: Graduate, PhD Candidate

Surveys were provided to students for open-ended feedback. This feedback in addition to instructor observations was used to develop an interactive curriculum for a more transfer inclusive environment.

Sample Characteristics
- Classifications of students: Sophomores, Juniors, Seniors
- Student Disciplines: Civil Engineering, Mechanical Engineering, Computer Engineering, Computer Science, Electrical Engineering, Computer Information Systems.
- Classroom size: 7-10 students

Results

Focus 1: Areas to Acknowledge
- Acknowledgment of advantages & disadvantages due to transfer status
- Acknowledgment of discipline and classification diversity
- Acknowledgment of the lack of knowledge pertaining to resources and culture of 4-year institution for transfer students.

Focus 2: Instructor Areas of Effort
- Instructor knowledge of useful campus resources.
- Instructor knowledge of potential transfer and traditional student gaps.
- Instructor knowledge of creative instructional assignments to bridge gaps

Discussion
The disparities of transfer students should be acknowledged by the instructor in order to properly address them and build on the success of transfer students at their four-year institution. Most transfer students are equipped with the knowledge required to succeed at a four-year institution, however field knowledge may not be sufficient in aiding the student in their transition. One of the primary disparities that transfer student have is the lack of knowledge to resources and understanding of the culture of their new campus.

This study involved a graduate student developing the curriculum for a cohort of transfer students. This allowed room for innovation and flexibility in the development of the curriculum to better assist transfer students in a controlled environment. Through this unique set up, observations and feedback was provided from the transfer students. This offered a unique experience for both the graduate student and the transfer students. This also offered a controlled environment to develop a transfer student focused curriculum based on observed disparities.

By first acknowledging the disparities one can understand the classroom needs for students in general. The assignments based on the disparities don’t limit traditional students in any way. They built on the foundation of the traditional students while developing a framework for transfer-students making it an inclusive environment for students with diverse backgrounds.

Assignments were created as building blocks without limiting the challenging aspect that encourages student academic development.

As instructors once there is acknowledgment of the transfer student gaps, assignments can be easily adjusted to address these gaps by focusing on four key points:
- Critical Thinking Skills
- Networking
- Resources Knowledge
- Communication

Through disparity acknowledgement and focusing on bridging gaps, instructors can develop curriculums that will meet the needs of transfer students in an environment that combines traditional students.

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