

NISTS 2023

BE A CONNECTOR FOR TRANSFER STUDENT SUCCESS

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The following presentation was given at the 21st Annual Conference for the National Institute for the Study of Transfer Students. Please cite responsibly and direct questions to the original presenter(s).

Educational Session

2852 - Transfer “Leader”-ologist: Forecasting with Nuanced Narratives for Responsive Pre-Transfer Advising

Leadership and Strategic Planning, Matriculation Trends and Issues

This proposal argues that an effective pre-transfer advisor serves as a barometer for a campus, identifying the leading edge of patterns that shape the climate for transfer students. Transfer initiatives should evolve from synthesizing data and narratives to pinpoint unique needs and opportunities for strategic support. This session aims to unpack the potential of raw student administration data and anecdotal advisee data to shape a responsive transfer culture committed to equity and success.

Desiree Sterling, *Coordinator, Pre-Transfer Advising*
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Transfer “Leader”-ologist: Forecasting with Nuanced Narratives for Responsive Pre-Transfer Advising

NISTS 2023 Virtual Conference

Presented by:

Desiree Sterling, M.A.

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Office of Academic and Pre-Professional Advising

Division of Enrollment Management

University of Maryland, Baltimore County (UMBC)

- ❖ Leadership and Strategic Planning
- ❖ Matriculation Trends and Issues

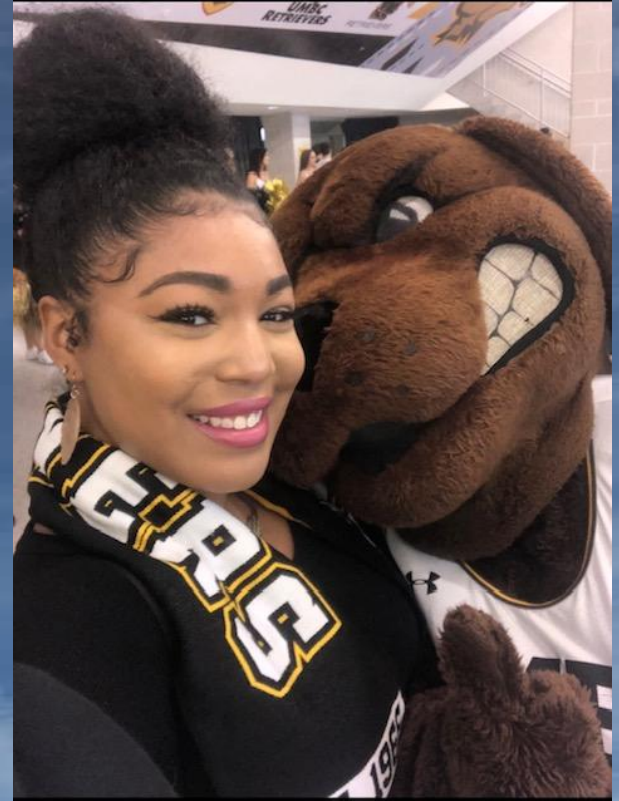
Learning Objectives

Approach pre-transfer advising role as “campus leader-orchestrator”

- *Leverage technology (i.e. CRM) to gauge daily dynamics and trace long term climate shifts for generalized, holistic, and unique campus and advisee cases*
- *Harness data to evaluate procedural efficacy, unaddressed gaps, and other complexities in existing pre-transfer advising approaches and strategies*
- *Synthesize anecdotal advisee data to nuance transfer student assumptions and narratives*
- *Encourage smooth transition, equitable policies and resources, and innovative initiatives through cross- and inter-campus engagement*

About Me

- UMBC Double Dawg Alumna
 - Media and Communications Studies, B.A.; Minors in Dance and Psychology
 - Texts, Technologies, and Literature, M.A.
- “Transfer” from Pre-K through Grade 11
- IB Diploma Programme/AP exams credits
- Study Abroad at University of East London
- Started working with transfer students in 2016 at Howard Community College (Columbia, MD)
- Current role and my tenure in role started simultaneously (internal staff transfer)



About UMBC



- Public university in University System of Maryland
- Located in Baltimore metropolitan area (near BWI airport)
- Medium-sized University
- Residential and Commuter Students
- Universities at Shady Grove (DC metro area) campus for select programs

2021 Transfer Class Profile

- Total Transfer Enrollment: 1,340
- Average GPA: 3.21
- Sex: 53.4% female; 46.6% male
- Racial/Ethnic Diversity:
 - White: 34%
 - Asian American: 16%
 - African American: 23%
 - Hispanic: 13%
 - Other/unknown: 8%
 - International: 6%



100+

Majors & Programs



17:1

Student to Faculty Ratio



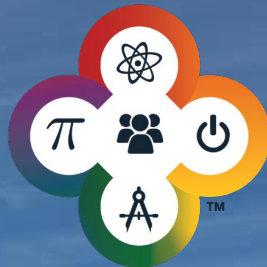
86%

Classes with Less than 50 Students



UMBC Pre-Transfer Advising Timeline

- Grant-funded initiative:
 - **2012:** \$2.6 million grant from the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation to build a national model for ensuring more transfer students earn degrees in science, technology, engineering and math.
 - Part-time staff dedicated to this effort
 - Temporary funding
- Historically pre-transfer advising initiatives primarily focused on STEM but principles still integral to general mission of larger scope pre-transfer advising mission
- Permanent role came to fruition Fall 2021— I started Jan 18 2022



STEM Transfer Student Success Initiative

AACC • CCBC • HCC • MC • UMBC

This Initiative is funded by the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation.

Becoming the Weather Reporter



My Role:

- Onsite academic advising at partner 2-year institutions
- Virtual advising for 2-year and 4-year transfer students
- Collaboration in multiple transfer student focused committees and initiatives at UMBC
- Leveraging Salesforce CRM for prospective student tracking and reporting and documenting/logging student interactions (integrated with Calendly)
- Pioneering in uncharted territory to learn the daily weather patterns and overarching climate changes for prospective transfer students

Example: Transfer Student Curricular Misalignment

- ***Weather report:*** Student's 2-year degree progress isn't best suited for maximizing transferability in pursuit of 4-year degree (i.e. incorrect math track)
- ***Ask locals:*** Student has been self advising and chose math course based on general education designation but not transfer applicability
- ***Almanac Trend:*** Transfer students entering 4-year program with inaccurate math sequence stop out after second semester transfer destination
- ***Leaderologist Intervention:*** Connect stakeholders across partner institutions to assess and address overlooked transfer barriers (e.g. articulation agreements for 2 year to 4 year pathway)

Literature Review: Significance of Pre-Transfer Forecast

This university agent is also arguably more sensitive to the barriers that prospective students are bound to encounter down the road in their degree progress and, therefore, ought to be mindful of how data informs their work and can be shared to enhance their efficacy as advisors. Such utilization of data has been explored in the literature as means of understanding transfer student self-efficacy perceptions and academic intent across identities and disciplines (Wang et al. 2017).

Example: Transfer Part Time Enrollment Trends

- ***Weather Reporting:*** Transfer prospects are inquiring more about online classes and condensing lectures to certain weekdays
- ***Ask Locals:*** Student is helping parents financially when they lost their business and livelihood during pandemic shutdown and can only afford to go to school part time in order to work for tuition and family obligations
- ***Almanac Trend:*** Since Fall 2020 fewer transfer admits are enrolling in full time schedules at orientation and gravitate to evening and online courses
- ***Leaderologist Intervention:*** Ensure students are taking advantage of 2-year completion tuition costs prior to transfer; Help student map pathways with managed expectations (i.e. some face to face courses); Connect with campus scholarship and employment resources and advocate for improvements

Literature Review: Deconstructing Data for Application

Rasen et al. address this necessity of unpacking transfer data and discusses the unfortunate tendency of institutions to rely on surface-level numbers as limited-scoped “litmus tests” (2013). “Amidst this frenzy of activity to improve student completion rates, few colleges have had time to ‘unpack’ the numbers and examine the student experiences being represented by these figures.” (Rasen et al. 2013).

Example: Transfer Trajectories

- ***Weather Report:*** Pre-transfer inquiries are extending beyond 2-year partner institutions, including more 4-year and/or out of state prospects as well as early college high school students
- ***Ask Locals:*** Student wants to attend UMBC now after going to a large 4 year out of state after two years of virtual high school
- ***Almanac Trend:*** 2-Year transfer applications are decreasing; More course description reviews are needed on transfer credit report
- ***Leaderologist Intervention:*** Host information sessions to target population that is tailored to unique transfer experience; Connect students with community/campus life; Evaluate inefficiencies or absences in automated transfer tool lacking nuance

Literature Review: Enrollment Trends

According to recent data from the National Student Clearinghouse Research Center's Update on Transfer Students, upward transfer enrollment declined precipitously from -0.1% in Spring 2021 to -11.6% in Spring 2022 (NSC Research Center 2022). Yet, this is the most general category of transfer students encompassing all students moving from a 2-year to 4-year.

Example: Assessing Transfer Culture

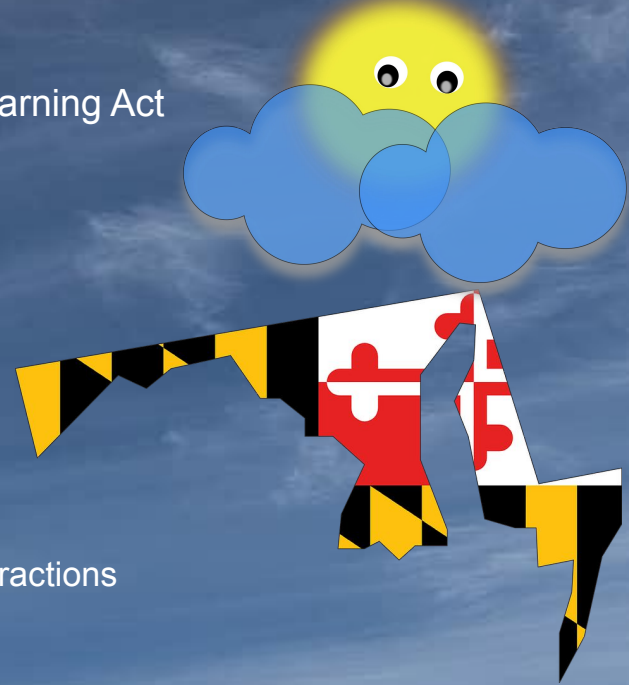
- ***Weather report:*** Coveted campus experiences and cohorts are reserved for first year students
- ***Ask Locals:*** Students wants to be affiliated with scholars program that limits applicants to recent high school graduates and feels excluded from valuable learning community and substantial scholarship monies
- ***Almanac Trend:*** Transfer students are less engaged in research and other co-curricular opportunities that enhance professional portfolio and network
- ***Leaderologist Intervention:*** Collaborate with campus partners involved in transfer student success and belonging initiatives to foster holistic academic and social enrichment; Bring attention in institutional inequities to catalyze intentional change and reconsideration

Literature Review: Source Data from Locals for Accuracy

As NACADA researcher Shannon Hayes has acknowledged, transfer students should be equipped with “transfer student capital” in their advising encounters (2020). Pre-transfer advisors can help with the dissemination of this capital to ultimately give transfer students a leg up: “Four-year advisors also can facilitate the development of TSC among students...making transfer students uniquely experienced and adept at navigating the college experience...students acquire a sense of capital and know-how; that, in many ways, sets them apart from native freshmen” (Hayes 2020).

One Year In...What's On the Horizon?

- ★ More legislation to implement : Transfer with Success Act; Prior Learning Act
- ★ More early college applicants– redefining transfer student
- ★ 4 year transfers and out of state uptick in pre-transfer inquiries
- ★ More partnership programs with articulation agreements
- ★ More intentional transfer equity work and asset based language
- ★ Broad shifts in consumer opinions on value of higher education
- ★ Traditional structures in tension with innovative approaches
 - Returning to normal or embracing distance learning and virtual interactions



Takeaways on Leaderologist Approach

- **Change is constant:** Being a pre-transfer advisor in the field positions the university to identify gaps and support transfer students proactively. Regular “weather reporting” with campus partners is essential.
- **Consider complexity:** There is nuance to how institutions and students populations are impacted and respond to change. Data collection and interpretation must account for variables. (i.e. existing online services during a pandemic :: someone owning a snow plow during a winter storm)
- **Perspective is situational:** Whether it’s term-specific, student-specific, or a long term trend....all of it is important to consider independently and interdependently. Climate and weather are connected.
- **Prepare to be under- and over-prepared:** Some phenomenon go under the radar or are over anticipated...pivot accordingly and remember Maryland weather is like higher education :)

A bronze statue of a dog, possibly a Weimaraner, stands on a dark stone pedestal in a garden. The dog is facing right with its mouth slightly open. The background features trees with vibrant autumn foliage in shades of orange, red, and yellow. A building is partially visible in the distance.

Thank You!

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BE A **CONNECTOR**
FOR **TRANSFER STUDENT**
SUCCESS

Thank you
for attending!

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A SESSION EVALUATION**

(via the conference app)

This
session's
id# is: