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**Educational Session**

**3002 - Virtual “Hokie” Corner: Expanded Transfer Connections and Engagement in the Time of COVID**

Transition Programs and Services, Partnerships and Collaboration

Join representatives from Virginia Tech Admissions and Advising to learn about the challenges of adapting a prospective transfer student engagement model to the virtual realm. Learn how we employed new tools and technologies to create synergy and facilitate comprehensive student support throughout the transfer process. We will also analyze the outcomes of the program, which include expanded geographic and demographic reach, increased student satisfaction, and measurable impacts on enrollment.

**Nasim Schwab**, Assistant Director, Transfer Student Initiatives  
**Jarrid Dulaney**, Transfer Coordinator and Senior Assistant Director of Undergraduate Admissions  

Virginia Tech
Virtual “Hokie” Corner-
Expanded Transfer Connections and Engagement in the Time of COVID?

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About Us

- Large, public, state and land-grant institution located in Blacksburg, VA

- Total student enrollment of around 36,590 and undergraduate enrollment of 30,000
  - 2,914 transfer students

- Incoming new student cohort for Fall* 2021:
  - Total: 7,651
  - FTIC: 6,758 (88.3%)
  - Transfer: 893 (11.7%)

- Admission by major across 8 undergraduate colleges with over 150 total majors
  - Top five academic transfer disciplines/majors include: Engineering (14 majors); Business Information Technology; Biological Sciences; Animal and Poultry Sciences; Finance

*“Fall” above and throughout this presentation includes Summer and Fall term entry data for the same cycle
Total new transfers enrolled: **893**

- **644** of 893 transferred from a Virginia Community College System (VCCS) institution
  - Around 450 (69.8%) of these students completed a VCCS associate degree
- The majority of the remaining students transferred from other 4-year institutions in the state of Virginia, followed by students coming from out-of-state 4-year and 2-year schools

**Demographics:**
- 19 states and 18 countries represented
- 30.5% of incoming cohort identifies as first-generation in their family to potentially graduate college

*Cohort data as of Fall 2021 Census*
Barriers in the Transfer Process

- The admissions process
- Evaluation of transfer credits
- Academic preparedness
- Transfer shock
- Financial issues
- Connecting with the campus community
The results of the survey indicated that Virginia Tech’s transfer students encountered the following transition barriers:

- Lack of communication regarding application process and admission requirements
- An unclear and unwelcoming acceptance to VT
- Transfer credits and review of transcripts from prior institutions
- Feeling of isolation during first semester/lack of a supportive community
- Transfer shock/difficulty finding academic support and resources
- Unfamiliarity with VT’s jargon (course request, etc.)
- Orientation not meeting their needs
- Difficulty finding on- and off-campus housing
Best Practices

- **Strategy 1: Prioritize Transfers**
  - **Essential Practice 1:** Communicate transfers as a key component to the institution’s mission
  - **Essential Practice 2:** Share data to increase the understanding of the need to improve transfer student outcomes across campus
  - **Essential Practice 3:** Dedicate significant resources to support transfer student success

- **Strategy 3: Provide Tailored Transfer Student Advising**
  - **Essential Practice 1:** Commit dedicated personnel, structure, and resources for transfer students
  - **Essential Practice 2:** Clearly communicate to prospective transfer students essential information pertaining to the admissions process
  - **Essential Practice 3:** Replicate elements of the first-year experience for transfer students (LLCs, FYE’s, onboarding programs, etc.)

Hokie Corner provides an opportunity for students to meet with representatives from Virginia Tech’s Admissions Office and Academic Advising Center.

The goals of Hokie Corner are to:
1. Provide student-centered advising services.
2. Provide up-to-date essential and accurate information regarding the admissions application process and requirements.
3. Increase the number of applicants that are admissible to Virginia Tech per the admissions requirements and standards established for each major/program.
4. Enhance the onboarding process for new transfer students by helping students identify campus resources they can utilize before and after they transition to Virginia Tech.
Hokie Corner Model Development and Implementation Timeline

- In-person/on-site appointments
- Virtual appointments
- Enrichment and expansion amidst the pandemic

**18-19**
- Established Hokie Corner at New River CC
  - Created physical meeting spaces at Dublin campus and Mall site
  - Created Standards of Operations
  - Created the processes for: marketing, appointment sign-up, meeting structures to include follow-up, and assessment procedures
  - Piloted meeting with students

**19-20**
- Expanded Hokie Corner
  - Created physical meeting spaces at Virginia Western & Wytheville CC
  - Moved Hokie Corner processes into Slate
  - Piloted virtual appointments & opened them to all prospective students
  - Extended availability through the end of May to meet increased demand

**20-21**
- Enriched Hokie Corner
  - Expanded access with virtual only appointments offered twice a week
  - Extended the length of Hokie Corner to the beginning of Aug, through end of May
  - Optimized operations and communications through Slate
  - Added additional Admissions' staff to help meet the increased demand for appointments
Appointments built through Slate CRM Scheduler tool (fully customizable)

Templates for each physical Hokie Corner location as well as Virtual
Integrating with Zoom

- Automated and individualized communications for each template which provide access instructions and reminders to registrants + data tracking and analytics

- Virtual appointments held via Zoom with central standing meeting link and waiting room

Hi, {{sys-first}}. Thanks for registering for a Virginia Tech virtual appointment through our Hokie Corner program on {{Form-Date | date: 'ddd, MMMM d, yyyy'}} at {{Form-Date | date: 'h:mm tt'}} Eastern!

To join your advising session, please [click here](#). If you have Zoom downloaded, it's advised that you update to the latest version. If you are prompted to sign in when you join the session, look for and click "Join Meeting as an Attendee." This will allow you to join without signing in or a VT credential.

You will also receive a reminder email 24 hours before your appointment with the same link to access you.

If you wish to change or cancel your appointment, you may do so at any time using [this link](#).
Student-facing and access-oriented interface

- Central hosting page for easy student navigation
- Landing/sign-up page for each physical Hokie Corner as well as Virtual
- Individualized calendar widgets that facilitate review of available appointment options and sign-up
- Custom Slate registration form which captures salient information and generates a new prospect record or adds to an existing record
Model of an appointment

Student led:
1. Major/program information
2. Coursework/prerequisites required for admission
3. Application timeline and checklist
4. Transfer credit questions
5. Financial Aid/Scholarships
6. Housing options
7. Student Life

- All students receive a customized follow-up email connecting them to resources covered during the appointment and relevant to continued planning
- Students are also connected with additional points of contact from their intended academic college/department for further guidance and support
- Follow-up survey
On several occasions, we've also met with students currently living outside the United States, including those from Canada, Germany, Argentina, Guyana, etc. and several other states and territories were represented among Hokie Corner participants.
Total appointments offered (7.1.21-12.9.21): 714

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Virtual</th>
<th>In-person</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>444 available appointments</td>
<td>270 available appointments</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>410 scheduled (92.3%)</td>
<td>154 scheduled (57.0%)</td>
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## Admissions and Enrollment Impacts

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Transfer Student Admissions &amp; Enrollment - Overall vs. Hokie Corner Participants</th>
<th>2020</th>
<th>2021*</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Overall</td>
<td>Hokie Corner</td>
<td>Overall</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Applied</strong></td>
<td>2,768</td>
<td>211 (7.6%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Offered</strong></td>
<td>1,784</td>
<td>167</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Enrolled</strong></td>
<td>1,210</td>
<td>137</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Offered Rate</strong></td>
<td>64.5%</td>
<td>79.1% (+14.6%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Yield Rate</strong></td>
<td>67.8%</td>
<td>82.0% (+14.2%)</td>
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### Salient Points:
- From the 2020 to 2021 cycle, proportional representation in the applicant pool of students who participated in a Hokie Corner appointment nearly doubled.
- Applicants for 2020 and 2021 who participated in Hokie Corner were offered at a higher rate than the overall applicant pool by at least 10 percentage points.
- Applicants for 2020 and 2021 who participated in Hokie Corner enrolled at a higher rate than the overall offer pool by at least 7 percentage points.

*The 2021 Transfer Admissions cycle was significantly more competitive than 2020 given the increased number and strength of applications, a reduced transfer enrollment goal, and capacity limitations for several of the most popular programs.*

Data Source: Virginia Tech's Office for Analytics & Institutional Effectiveness; Office of Undergraduate Admissions
Hokie Corner
Virginia Tech | 2019-2020 Survey Results compared to 2020-2021

2019-2020
94% Agree that Hokie Corner staff answered their questions.
92% Agree that Hokie Corner made the feel better about their educational journey.
95% Found the communications helpful.
95% Agree that Hokie Corner staff were knowledgeable about the transfer process.
16% response rate

2020-2021
98% Agree that Hokie Corner staff answered their questions.
95% Agree that Hokie Corner made the feel better about their educational journey.
93% Found the communications helpful.
99% Agree that Hokie Corner staff were knowledgeable about the transfer process.
35% response rate

Student Satisfaction and Engagement

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Previous College work preparation for VT</th>
<th>2017</th>
<th>2021</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Not very well prepared</td>
<td>23%</td>
<td>12%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Somewhat prepared</td>
<td>46.8%</td>
<td>56%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Extremely prepared</td>
<td>32%</td>
<td>32%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

33% of the students involved in an Hokie Corner appointment participated in an HTC program compared to 19% of transfer students who did not attend a Hokie Corner appointment.
Challenges

• Virtual demand exceeding availability
• Higher no-show rate for virtual appointments
• Technology difficulties (Zoom, unstable internet, etc.)
• Rebuilding the in-person appointment culture at partner campuses
• Transfer credit evaluation expectations and other transfer resource limitations outside of the Admissions/Academic Advising spheres
Recommendations

- Create resources to meet transfer student needs
- Targeted and purposeful information
- Normalize their transition
- Meet them where they are
- Gradually release appointments
- Create a system that can be automated as much as possible (scheduling appointments, communications, survey etc.)
- Create communications for prospects, admitted students, and deposited students
- Promote active participation
- Include campus partners
Thank you!

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