Research Spotlight

**Fall 2020 Transfer Students and Their Expected Academic Difficulties: Implications for Orientation, Advising, and Academic Success**

Transition Programs and Services, Matriculation Trends and Issues

The focus of this study is twofold: present current research regarding the academic backgrounds, expectations, and beliefs of 6,000 transfer students from Fall 2020; and secondly, use these results and other relevant research to discuss how institutions can best serve transfer students during this time of transition and the current pandemic. Individuals will reflect on how these results connect with their experiences working with students and the implications for their professional practice.

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Indiana University
Fall 2020 Transfer Students and Their Expected Academic Difficulties: Implications for Orientation, Advising, and Academic Success

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We will cover...

I. What we know about Fall 2020 transfer
   a. Academic expectations and beliefs
   b. BCSSE data
   c. Results from Fall 2020

II. Implications for practice
   a. How institutions can best serve transfer students during this time of transition and the current COVID pandemic?
Expectations for Engagement

Understanding student expectations is important!

- Students’ expectations and beliefs about the upcoming year guide decision making and where they focus their attention, what they do.

- Expectations that you should pay attention to depends on what questions you are trying to answer or what you are trying to accomplish.
Purpose: To measure prior academic and co-curricular experiences, as well as expectations and beliefs about participating in educationally purposeful activities during the upcoming academic year, for all entering students including first-year, transfer, and older students who have little or no college experience.

BCSSE results are used in many ways including:

- Academic advising
- Retention efforts and predictive analytics
- First-year program design and evaluation
- Faculty and staff development
- And more.

See Using Your BCSSE Data: bcsse.indiana.edu/usingBCSSEData.cfm

and other examples of NSSE, FSSE, and BCSSE Data Use: nsse.indiana.edu/html/using_nsse_db
Topics asked of transfer students

Regarding the college or university they are transferring from:
- Type institution (baccalaureate, community college, etc)
- How many credits expect to transfer
- Previous Grades
- Use of Learning Strategies
- Expected co-enrollment (attend another institution while attending yours)
- Why they left the other institution

Topics asked of transfer and older students

Regarding your campus:
- Why they chose to attend your institution
- How many more years they expect it will take to complete bachelor’s degree
- Stress factors they expect to encounter (financial, meeting basic needs, time management, choosing a career, etc)
- Hours per week they expect to spend providing care for dependents and commuting
- Veteran status
However, most of the survey is common for all entering students

Expectations for the coming year, including:
- Hours preparing for class, working, etc
- Student-Faculty Interactions*
- Discussion with Diverse Others*
- Collaborative Learning*
- Expected Academic Difficulty**
- Academic Perseverance**
- Academic Help-Seeking**
- Perceived Academic Preparation*
- Importance of Supportive Environment*

Other questions for all entering students include:
- Sources for paying for college
- First generation status
- Expectation to graduate
- Expected grades
- Friends also attending
- Choice of institution
- Race/ethnicity
- Other background information

* Corresponds with NSSE Engagement Indicator
** Corresponds with NSSE First-Year Module
Number of transfer student respondents: 5,159
  Full-time: 93%
  Part-time: 7% (removed from further analysis)

First Generation: 50%

Expected Transfer Credits
  12 to 30: 13%
  31 to 45: 10%
  46 to 60: 32%
  More than 60: 46%

Number of colleges and universities: 42
  Baccalaureate: 26%
  Masters: 41%
  Doc: 33%
Reasons for Choosing Your Institution

Can you guess which reasons had the % of students that said “Very important”?  

How important were the following reasons for choosing this institution?  

a. Affordability  
b. Location  
c. You can transfer most or all of your credits  
d. Offers the major(s) you are interested in  
e. Quality of academic programs  
f. You can finish your degree quickly  
g. Flexible scheduling of courses
Reasons for Choosing Your Institution

Did you guess “Offers the major(s) you are interested in”? 

71% listed this as “Very important”
Reasons for Choosing Your Institution

Rank order of important reasons for choosing this institution

- You can finish your degree quickly: 34%
- Affordability: 40%
- Flexible scheduling of courses: 43%
- Location: 47%
- Quality of academic programs: 61%
- You can transfer most or all of your...: 61%
- Offers the major(s) you are...: 71%
During the coming school year, which do you think will cause you stress?
Expected Stress

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Issue</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Balancing school and other commitments...</td>
<td>77%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transitioning back to being a student</td>
<td>44%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not having enough money for college...</td>
<td>43%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not having enough money for basic needs...</td>
<td>30%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Choosing a career</td>
<td>27%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Commuting to campus</td>
<td>19%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personal relationship</td>
<td>18%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personal safety</td>
<td>11%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Roommate relationship</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
During the coming school year, how difficult do you expect the following to be?

- Learning course material: High difficulty (17%)
- Managing your time: Medium difficulty (60%)
- Getting help with school work: Low difficulty (23%)
- Interacting with faculty: Not specified
Expected Academic Difficulty

- **First-Generation**
  - Low difficulty: 51%
  - Medium difficulty: 48%
  - High difficulty: 54%

- **Expecting to work 21+ hrs/week**
  - Low difficulty: 43%
  - Medium difficulty: 39%
  - High difficulty: 47%

- **Yes or not sure about taking a course at another institution (co-enroll)**
  - Low difficulty: 28%
  - Medium difficulty: 33%
  - High difficulty: 36%
Expected Academic Difficulty

How prepared are you to do the following in your academic work at this institution?

- **Learn effectively on your own**: 60% Feel Very Prepared
- **Analyze numerical and statistical information**: 45% Feel Very Prepared
- **Write clearly and effectively**: 57% Feel Very Prepared
Expected Academic Difficulty

Where are these entering transfer students expecting to seek help?

- Faculty: 58% (Low), 55% (Medium), 51% (High)
- Advisor: 56% (Low), 53% (Medium), 50% (High)
- Learning Support Serv: 53% (Low), 53% (Medium), 54% (High)
- Friends/other students: 60% (Low), 65% (Medium), 62% (High)
- Family: 34% (Low), 33% (Medium), 32% (High)
Expected Academic Difficulty

How may hours study in a typical week?

- **21 or more hours per week**: 35% Low difficulty, 30% Medium difficulty, 39% High difficulty
- **11 to 20 hours per week**: 43% Low difficulty, 48% Medium difficulty, 45% High difficulty
- **10 or fewer hours per week**: 23% Low difficulty, 22% Medium difficulty, 17% High difficulty
Expected Academic Difficulty

What do they expect their typical grades will be?

- B- or Lower: 4%
- B or B+: 42%
- A- or higher: 54%

- Low difficulty: 74%
- Medium difficulty: 62%
- High difficulty: 54%
Implications

• Most say they are at the institution for major offered
• Many are stressed about balancing commitments
• Almost 1/3 stressed about meeting basic needs
  ➢ Advisor PD about understanding student stress and institutional resources that can be helpful
Implications

• 1/3 of entering transfer students possibly taking classes at other institutions
  ➢ What does this mean for transfer orientation programs and academic resources?
  ➢ What is the impact of students dividing their academic experiences over two institutions simultaneously? Time management. Stress.
  ➢ How can institution best serve students?
    ➢ Partner more closely with the other institutions?
    ➢ Remove the barriers that encourages students to seek courses elsewhere
Implications

- Nearly 1 in 5 expect high level of academic difficulty
- These students tend to have lower academic confidence
- Only about ½ indicate faculty, advisors, or LSS for academic help; Most list friends and other students
- However, those with High Expected Difficulty still expect to study a lot and generally expect to get good grades.

- How do institutions respond to this? Advisor and faculty training to help these students find the resources.
THANK YOU!

Please contact me with any questions or comments.

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