Educational Session

2779 - Retaining Transfer Students: Macro and Micro Approaches
Transition Programs and Supports, Leadership and Strategic Planning

This session will briefly review the historical neglect of transfer students and offer strategies for reconciling discrepancies between how institutions provide transitional experiences for first time-in-college students and transfer students. A specific transitional effort – the Transfer Seminar – will be described in detail, specifically via already existing courses. Participants will be able to determine how this approach could be adapted and will be shown the success outcomes of higher retention and graduation rates using this approach.

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Retaining Transfer Students: Macro and Micro Approaches

NISTS Annual Conference (Virtual Version)

February 1, 2022

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Rationale

- Historically **overlooked** (and neglected)
- **Not defined** clearly (sometimes)
- Too diverse a population that can result in too many assumptions made
- **Less 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.

• ...and using Schlossberg’s (1995, p. 27) transition theory, the transfer experience can be an “event, or non-event, that results in changed relationships, routines, assumptions, and roles” See also McGill & Lazarowicz, (2012)
So...

Why didn’t higher education researchers and administrators, demographers, legislators, etc. apply these same principles to the **transfer student** population?
They didn’t count!

**IPEDS**: Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (Federal):

The *retention rate* measures the percentage of **first-year students** who persisted a year later at **the same** institution. However, these are **institutional level** data. (Hagedorn, et al., 2012)

Excluded: **TRANSFERS**, part-time students, non-degree students, other than fall term admits.

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

So, who 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?????

IMHO: If there is no uniform definition of “student success” among all institutional stakeholders, then these entities could be working counterproductively.

Since retention (and graduation) rates are more easily defined and measured, they have become the most widely accepted metrics.
However, some things are changing...

**IPEDS** has begun to report (2015-16) *graduation rates* in 4 cohorts (not 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)
Remedies

Define your transfer population
Expedite credit transfer processes; stranded credits
Examine transfer policies and all transfer transitional processes (pre-admission through exit)
Recognize that this population is probably the most diverse on your campus, so refrain from over-generalization
Develop a Culture of Transfer
Seek Transfer Efficacy (Hayes Buenaflor, 2020)
Initiate some form of Transfer Seminar course (NISTS blog, 2021)
Evolution of Stockton’s Transfer Seminar concept

• Fall 2002: Contemporary American Education was offered as a freshman seminar (not successful)

• Fall 2003: Planned for student-athletes (not needed)

• DUH!!! – Why not apply the freshman seminar concept to transfer students?
Transfer students are also first-time students at their new institutions.
Some Likely Differences

- 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
GSS 2642  Contemporary American Education

- **Content** includes organization, administration, financing, curriculum, assessment in both K-12 and higher education (+ accreditation)

- As a **General Social Science** course, we examine issues from social, economic, and political perspectives

- Also a **Writing Across the Curriculum (W2)** course

- No required texts/tests, rather Blackboard posts and/or emails from Chronicle, IHE, Academic Impressions, NYT, Press of Atlantic City, NJSBA, whatever they find
GSS 2642  Contemporary American Education

**Seminar elements** (all writing assignments) include:

- **Library** activity
- **Campus Resources** **office visit**
- Attend 3 different types of **co-curricular events**
- Preceptorial (advising) comparison

Other **writing assignments** include:

- Educational **autobiography**
- **Learning preferences**
- **Group research project**
- **Individual Research project**
- Reflective (final) paper
Examples of courses taught as Transfer Seminars since 2003

- Contemporary American Education
- Marketing Principles
- Legal/Social/Ethical Environment of Business
- Health Psychology
- Intro to Criminal Justice
- The Global Community
- Financial Accounting
- Cognitive Psychology
- Intro to Health Sciences
More Titles

- Memoirs of Mental Illness
- World Perspectives on Health
- Research Design and Methods in Criminal Justice
- Writing in the Movies
- Perspectives on Women
- Leadership Strategy and Change
- Developmental Psychology: Childhood and Adolescence
- History’s Mysteries
- Yosemite: Nature and Culture
- Unlocking Creativity
- Business and the Arts
Why this transitional approach is my preference

“Everyone’s entitled to my opinion.”

- No ( ) Peer Group
- Classroom Format
- Promotes Engagement

Course examples supported by research:

- Criminal Justice (Lord, et al., 2012)
- Psychology (Eyer and Johnson, 2011)
- Education (Grites and Farina, 2012; Grites, 2021a)
Seminar Anecdotes

• “I felt intimidated in my other classes.”

• “I would never have attended anything if it had not been for this class.”

• “Our group stopped being just classmates and started to become friends.”

• “I thought I was just going to sit in class, learn, and leave just as I did at my community college. I never thought I would actually become involved in school.”

• “I really liked the seminar because I learned about Stockton from inside a classroom.”
More Anecdotes

• “When I went to register for classes at Orientation a nice girl sat next to me and we ended up adding this course. On the first day of class it was a relief to walk in and see a familiar face.”

• “Meeting new people is a struggle when you’re commuting 40 minutes each way twice a week...this transfer seminar class was one place where I did meet people...I’m hoping to move on campus with Justine whom I met in your class.

• “This was my favorite semester in my entire life. I never thought I could enjoy school the way I did this fall.”
And a disappointment :

“I’m writing to let you know I dropped the class this morning. I didn’t realize the course included co-curricular participation until I checked the syllabus. I am a commuter student, with a 3-hour drive to and fro, and I won’t have as much time to put in and I don’t want to do a half job.”
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<td><strong>Spring 2018</strong></td>
<td>85</td>
<td>303</td>
<td>388</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>173</td>
<td>231</td>
<td>68%</td>
<td>57%</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Fall 2018</strong></td>
<td>178</td>
<td>839</td>
<td>1017</td>
<td>139</td>
<td>587</td>
<td>726</td>
<td>78%</td>
<td>70%</td>
<td>71%</td>
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<td>345</td>
<td>415</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>210</td>
<td>256</td>
<td>66%</td>
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<td>1067</td>
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</table>
Takeaways

- Politically and economically **FREE**
- **Any course** can be designated as such
- One faculty pre-requisite = **commitment**
- It’s **fun**
- It **works**

- It’s been **my best effort**
Thank you!

Q & A

“Everyone’s entitled to my opinion.”

Thomas.J.Grites@stockton.edu
thomasgrites@gmail.com
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 Oct 16–20, 2023 https://www.nists.org/national-
  transfer-student-week

• Student Achievement Measure (SAM)
  https://www.studentachievementmeasure.org/

• College Scorecard https://collegescorecard.ed.gov/


Resources Continued


Resources Continued


