

NISTS 2021

NOT-SO-SECRET TRANSFER AGENTS FEBRUARY 23-25, 2021 | VIRTUAL CONFERENCE

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Educational Session

Becoming Transfer Friendly: Changing the Culture of a Four-Year Institution

Special Populations, Transition Programs and Services

Post-secondary institutions often focus on the 18-23-year-old residential student, but contemporary student populations (transfer students, student parents, adult learners, commuters, etc.) are growing across the country on college campuses. Still, not everyone has a holistic understanding of their needs and how to change the culture to represent the new normal. This session will focus on moving from "fitting in" transfer and contemporary students to transforming the university culture for transfer students.

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**TRANSFER
AGENTS**

VIRTUAL CONFERENCE EXPERIENCE
FEBRUARY 23-25, 2021

BECOMING TRANSFER FRIENDLY: CHANGING THE CULTURE OF A FOUR-YEAR INSTITUTION

Post-secondary institutions often focus on the 18-23-year-old residential student, but contemporary student populations (transfer students, student parents, adult learners, commuters, etc.) are growing across the county on college campuses. Still, not everyone has a holistic understanding of their needs and how to change the culture to represent the new normal. This session will focus on moving from "fitting in" transfer and contemporary students to transforming the university culture for transfer students.



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LEARNING OUTCOMES



Learning Outcome #1: Participants will gain a greater awareness of transfer students within the context of contemporary student populations.

Learning Outcome #2: Participants will learn why including contemporary student needs in their decision making and new initiatives is key in creating accessible environments for transfer students.

Learning Outcome #3: Participants will learn how to shift campus services towards including transfer students in mission and engagement.

Learning Outcome #4: Participants will learn ways to apply concepts in creating initiatives for transfer students on their own campuses.

WHAT IS ORGANIZATIONAL CULTURE?

- An organization's culture is reflected in **what is done, how it is done, and who is involved in doing it**. It concerns **decisions, actions, and communication** both on an instrumental and symbolic level...the culture of an organization is grounded in the **shared assumptions** of individuals participating in the organization" (Tierney, 1991, p.127)
- *What is the organizational culture of your university towards transfer students?*

UTILIZING A CONTEMPORARY STUDENT LENS

- Contemporary students are transfer students, adult learners, student-parents, off-campus students, foster care alumni, students in the military, online students, and other emerging populations
- Contemporary vs Non-traditional
 - 73% of all undergraduate students fit into one or more non-traditional category (National Center for Education Statistics)
 - "Contemporary" can shift our thinking, assumptions, and behaviors
- Prioritizing contemporary students are at a higher risk of not completing their degrees (Kenner & Weinerman, 2000)
- Prioritizing contemporary students is financially responsible
 - \$192,721,300,000 tuition dollars come from contemporary students

UNIVERSITY CONTEXT

- Large, public research university in Fairfax, VA
- Over 37,000 undergraduate and graduate students
- Over 5,000 transfer students a year
 - ADVANCE Program and Pathway to the Baccalaureate
- 20% of undergraduates are over 25-years-old
- Over 1500 self-reported student parents
- 75% of students live off-campus
- Named one of the most diverse institutions by *U.S. News and World Report* (2021)



WHAT PROBLEMS DID WE RECOGNIZE?

- Lacking comprehensive assessment
- Faculty and staff were under-resourced to serve contemporary students
- Low visibility and awareness of contemporary students
- Lower sense of belonging to Mason among contemporary students
- Increasing number of transfer and online students due to stronger partnerships with 2-year colleges and Mason Online degrees
- Student experience contained many obstacles

CONTEMPORARY STUDENT SERVICES

"We disrupt normative views and systemic obstacles of higher education to amplify the success of contemporary college students at Mason."

WHAT PROBLEMS DID WE RECOGNIZE?

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SELF AND INSTITUTIONAL ASSESSMENT RUBRIC



DIMENSION

COMPONENTS

I. Philosophy Regarding Contemporary Students and a Mission for their Success

- Definition of Contemporary Students that includes Transfer Students
- Strategic Planning
- Alignment with Institutional Mission
- Alignment with Academic Reform Efforts

II. Institutional Support for Transfer Student Success and Inclusion

- Coordinating Entity
- Policy-making Entity
- Dedicated Staffing
- Funding
- Administrative Support
- Departmental Support
- Evaluation and Assessment

SUCCESSSES AT MASON

- Transfer Student Outreach via Contemporary Student Services
- Added transfer student priority to Off-Campus Advisor position to ensure student staff is inclusive of transfer students and other student populations.
- Creation of Contemporary Student website
- Creation of Student Parent Working Group
- Representation from CSS on University Life strategic planning committees lead to contemporary students being named in the 2020-2024 strategic plan

CHALLENGES AT MASON

- Getting campus buy-in
- Resources
- Accessibility and Flexibility
- Space

REFLECT AND REIMAGINE

What does a transfer-friendly post-secondary institution culture look like?

What is the culture of your organization?

What are the strengths in support services for transfer students at your organization? Where are there gaps?

How do you envision using the rubric to close gaps at your institution?

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