Educational Session

2360 - Developing a Sustainable Peer Mentoring Structure for Today’s Transfer Students
Transition Programs and Services, Partnerships and Collaboration

The University of Texas at Dallas implemented a 1:1 peer mentoring program focused on helping new transfer students' institutional transition and providing deeper leadership connections for returning transfers. The presenters will provide an overview of strategies employed to empower current transfer students in mentoring, create an environment conducive to stronger academic outcomes, pivot from in-person to virtual programming in the time of Covid-19, harness university resources for sustainable program growth, provide personalized support, and create collaborative assessment practices.

**Hilary Roush Freeman**, Assistant Director of Undergraduate Programs
**Hillary Beauchamp Campbell**, Director of Undergraduate Education

University of Texas at Dallas
Creating a Proud Transfer Legacy

Hillary Beauchamp Campbell, Director of Undergraduate Programs
Hilary Roush Freeman, Assistant Director of Undergraduate Programs
Part 1: UT Dallas & Transfer Students

Part 2: Program History and Implementation

Part 3: Outcomes and Challenges

Part 4: Mentoring in the Pandemic
The University of Texas at Dallas

Established in 1969 as a graduate institution

Began accepting undergraduate transfer students in 1975

Began accepting freshman in 1990

In Fall 2021:

- 21,300 Undergraduate Students
- 61st Best Public University in the US
- Top 25 Most Ethnically Diverse
- Highest Rated LGBTQ+ Campus in Texas and Southwest US, Premier Campus
- 37th Best Value University
- 1st Best Value Public University in Texas
Transfer Student Experience

66% Graduation Rate

45% of the undergraduate population at UT Dallas

Approximately 40% enter UT Dallas in the spring

AY22 Non-Returning Transfer Student Survey

46% reported no social connection

26% reported no academic connection

Top Concerns for Incoming Transfers
Managing Time (65%)
Connecting with Peers (59%)
Engaging in Social Activities (52%)
Financial Situation (51%)

Top Concerns for Incoming Freshmen
Managing Time (72%)
Connecting with Peers (63%)
Engaging in Social Activities (57%)
Building Relationships with Faculty (57%)
Returning Transfer Reflections

“I almost feel like there is an ever-so-slightly negative stigma associated with non-traditional students.”

“...the feeling of loneliness...”

“...I felt as a stranger on campus...”

“...biggest challenge a transfer student faces is alienation ...”

“...did not know how to look up classes or find them...”

Incoming Transfer Aspirations

“...hope to become engaged in student life...”

“...hope to achieve success at UT Dallas by learning about myself...”

“I’m a strong believer in community and its benefits, and I’d like to find a way to engage that belief on campus.”

“...hope to build relationships and connections that are meaningful”
Quality Enhancement Plan (QEP)

New Transfer Student Success (NTSS)

...an innovative peer mentoring program that matches transfer students with more advanced transfer student mentors.

...simplify the transfer process and improve transfer student success.

...the creation of a seminar experience tailored to the needs of new students.
“The mission of the Transfer Mentor Program is to cultivate a stronger connection to UT Dallas for incoming transfer students, by providing concentrated support that addresses the specific needs and challenges of today’s transfer student.”
Application Process & Requirements

Mentors
- Online Application
- Enrolled for Fall
- Transfer Student
- 3.0 GPA
- Phone Interview
- Two Academic/Professional References
- Program Agreement
- Online, large-group, and monthly small-group training
- Monthly Reports

Mentees
- Online Application
- Enrolled for Fall
- Transfer Student
- Program Agreement
- Large-group orientation session
- Monthly Reports
Challenges Experienced by Mentors
- Connecting with Peers
- Emotional/Mental Wellbeing*
- Personal Organization

Challenges Anticipated by Mentees
- Connecting with Peers
- Academic Rigor
- Personal Organization
Why Mentor?

Philosophy

Service

Legacy

Tangibles

Flexible Leadership

Campus Connection
Institute for Peer Mentoring
Partnerships
Admissions & Enrollment
Student Affairs
Institute for Peer Mentoring
Transfer Student Services
Graduation Help Desk
Assessment and Institutional Effectiveness
First-Generation Programs
Academic Advising
Comet Cents
On-Campus Mentoring Programs
Develop 1 training per semester with staff oversight

Represent the Transfer Mentor Program at On-Campus Events

Event Planning

Capstone Presentation

Social Media

Liaison between staff and program
Maintenance and Support

How's it going?

Surveys and Monthly Reports
- Engagement
- "Needle" Watch
- Red Flags

Institutional Data
- Participant characteristics
- Returning/Non-Returning Retention
- Persistence

Novel
- Phone Interviews
- In-Person Meetings
- Focus Groups

Email
- Engaged Responsiveness
- Touches
- Situational Updates
- Red Flags
Mentees in the program experienced:

- Increased academic and social belonging
- Higher retention into their second year than their non-mentored peers
- Higher GPAs than their non-mentored peers
MENTORS IN THE PROGRAM REPORTED

GOOD LEADERSHIP OPPORTUNITY
100% of mentors reported that their experience was a good campus leadership opportunity.

SUPPORTED OTHER LEADERSHIP OPPORTUNITIES
Mentors reported that this experience supported and encouraged them to pursue more leadership on-campus.

STRONGER LEADER ON CAMPUS
Mentors reported that this experience made them a stronger leader on-campus.

CREATE A CAMPUS LEGACY
93% of mentors reported that mentoring contributes to their legacy at UT Dallas.
This program gives me an extra family, and I love mentoring. Helping other students make me feel like I have a positive impact on my university.

[It] was a wonderful experience for me. I really feel like I grew as a leader by being able to be a role model and be there for someone who is in the same position as I was as a transfer.

This year all my classes were virtual. But being part of TMP made me feel connected to UTD and helps me network with other mentors as well as my mentee. I am really happy that I was able to improve my leadership skills as well as help my mentee along the path while enjoying every bit of the journey.
Challenges

Attrition and Disengagement
- Fall Graduates
- Spring “Melt”
- Short Timeline for Transfers

Missed Populations
- Spring Admits
- Summer Admits

Growth
- Mentor Supply
- Low mentee to mentor conversion

Assessment
- Mentee Response Rates
- Multiple Reporting Lines
- QEP Reporting and Compliance
Growth:
Most Mentees ever served
TMP Connect Program
Additional Check-in Meeting

Program Engagement:
More mentees attended orientation
More mentee reports
Less mentee attrition overall
Social Media Engagement

Depth:
First Gen Partnership
Leaders of Excellence Certificate
Advising Groups Collaboration
Mentors

“… My mentee has not been very responsive to the idea of meeting virtually…”

“My biggest challenge has been to be able to get to know him outside of his person educational persona. Because of the pandemic we're both only comfortable meeting online, which I believe hampers the way that we're able to communicate.”

“…Catering to the needs of the mentee through emails and messaging has led to delayed responses and thus interrupted communication. ”

Mentees

“This semester has been very weird; without having been on campus or to classes, there's a big feeling of disconnect that kind of plays into some of my anxiety about finding a place on campus or in my career, etc. ”

“…Struggling with finding a job and finding time to do extra curricular activities, since school and homework are done at home. ”

“…I am struggling to adjust to the academic demands and also manage my time, because I am currently going through a depression due to family matters and financial issues.”
”My experience in the Transfer Mentor Program has been great despite all that has gone on this year. There is much knowledge and experience I have gained from participating as a mentor, evolving my leadership skills, interpersonal skills, and confidence.”

”This year all my classes were virtual. But being part of TMP made me feel connected to UTD and helps me network with other mentors as well as my mentee.”

”My mentor has been really helpful in making me feel that I will fit in at UTD. We talked via FaceTime for two hours and [the mentor] is very sweet and understanding.”

”Even during the pandemic where there was a severe lack of socialization, this program was my friendly reminder that my peers, UTD’s academic staff, my mentors are still here for me, and care about my success.”

”Really felt as if I actually had a friend to talk to during this whole pandemic which made me optimistic about my time at UTD.”
How is 2021-2022 going?

- Spring Cohort Pilot for Mentors and Mentees
  - Added 7 new mentors, 21 mentees

- Mix of virtual and in-person opportunities
  - Virtual mentor/mentee meetings, virtual training options, virtual events along with in-person opportunities for each

- New Programming- able to use data to inform programming more specific to the UT Dallas transfer student
  - Training Content: Making Healthy Connections, Managing Big Transitions, Time Management for Transfers
  - Financial Literacy: Student Loan Workshop, Paying for College
  - Undergraduate Research Workshop
  - Building Faculty Relationships: Evening with the Dean

- New corporate partnership with State Farm

- Transfer unenrollment challenges, shifting landscape of virtual and in-person as the year progressed, and unreliable event attendance
Thank you!

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