

**NISTS 2023**

# BE A CONNECTOR FOR TRANSFER STUDENT SUCCESS

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*Educational Session*

## **2826 - Getting on the Same Page: Creating a Collaborative Committee to Improve Transfer Student Onboarding**

Leadership and Strategic Planning, Partnerships and Collaboration

Do you want to energize colleagues across campus to reimagine the transfer student onboarding process at your school? Are you tired of surviving committee meetings that should have been an email? Join this session to learn about the multi-step process for developing an action-based, collaborative Transfer Student Onboarding Committee including the growing pains and beneficial outcomes already implemented. Attendees will explore strategies to strengthen an already existing committee or to create a brand new one.

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New Jersey Institute of Technology

NJIT

New Jersey Institute  
of Technology

# **Getting on the Same Page: Creating a Collaborative Committee to Improve Transfer Student Onboarding**

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**National Institute for the Study of Transfer Students Conference  
February 21, 2023**

# Welcome/Introduction

- Jasmine Howard, Office of Academic Advising
  - Senior Academic Advisor
  - NJIT Since September 2014
  - Former Transfer Student: NJIT to Montclair State University
- Shannon Nammour, Ying Wu College of Computing
  - Senior Academic Advisor
  - NJIT Since April 2020
  - Former Transfer Student: Rider University to Montclair State University
- NJIT: New Jersey Institute of Technology
  - Mid-sized public polytechnic research university
  - 1 out of 3 May 2022 baccalaureate graduates identify as transfer student
  - Located in Newark, NJ

# Learning Objectives

- Attendees will be able to:
  - **Reflect** on the transfer student onboarding process at their home campus and identify one area for improvement
  - **Identify** one key stakeholder who can help to improve the transfer student onboarding experience at their home campus
  - **Recognize** the multi-step process for developing a collaborative transfer student onboarding committee

# History/Evolution of Committee

- Former: Monthly Transfer Meetings, 2016 - 2019
  - 7 Members
- Current: Incoming Transfer Student On-boarding Administrative Committee, 2021 - Present
  - 15 Members and counting
    - Increased transfer student enrollment – Over 1,000 new transfer students annually
    - Building on a Strong Foundation – [NJIT 2025 Strategic Plan](#) (p.13)  
“Support transfer students as they integrate into the NJIT community and adjust to the rigorous academic environment. Transfer students face many challenges that can be eased through targeted services, resulting in a smooth transition to NJIT.”

| <b>Former Version of Committee</b><br>Monthly Transfer Meetings                                   | <b>Current Version of Committee</b><br>Incoming Transfer Student On-boarding Administrative Committee |
|---|---|
| Associate Provost for Enrollment Management and Academic Services                                 | Vice Provost for Undergraduate Studies & Co-Chair   |
|   | Senior Academic Advisor & Co-Chair  |
| Director, Advising Success Center<br>(now Office of Academic Advising)                            | Executive Director of University Admissions   |
|   | Director of Admission and Recruitment Marketing   |
| Associate Director, Advising Success Center<br>(now Office of Academic Advising)                  | Director of Student Recruitment   |
|   | Registrar   |
|   | Associate Registrar   |
| Transfer Coordinator, Advising Success Center<br>(now Senior Academic Advisor & Current Co-Chair) | Assistant Registrar/Transfer Credit Evaluator   |
|   | Academic Department Advisors (2)  |
| Director, Admissions  | Executive Director, Office of Student Transition  |
|   | Director, Office of Academic Advising   |
| Associate Director, Admissions  | Director, Office of Global Initiatives  |
|   | Associate Director of Placement Testing   |
| Assistant Registrar/Transfer Credit Evaluator   | Director, New Student Orientation   |
|   | Associate Director of Cohort-Based Opportunity Programs   |

# History/Evolution of Committee (cont.)

- Current Committee Creation Step by Step Process
- Shared Vision
  - Streamline transition processes for incoming transfer students **from admission through the end of their first enrolled semester**
- Shared Goals
  - Effective and Consistent Communication – Students and Personnel
  - Campus Community Engagement
  - Academic Support



# Committee Creation Step by Step Process

## 1. Confirm Initial Committee Vision & Goals

- a. Vice Provost for Undergraduate Studies & Co-Chair
- b. Senior Academic Advisor & Co-Chair
- c. Executive Director, Office of Student Transition

## 2. Strategically Identify Potential Committee Members

- a. Committed to improving transfer student experiences  
and/or
- b. Role directly relates to transfer students with organizational power to influence or make changes

## 3. Email Committee Invitation to Potential Members (see handout)

## 4. Organize Bi-weekly meetings

- a. Consider important dates/times to avoid

## 5. Outline First Meeting Agenda (see handout)

## 6. Create a Shared Google Drive folder to keep meeting agenda, minutes and other committee documents

## **Getting on the Same Page: Creating a Collaborative Committee to Improve Transfer Student Onboarding**

### **Committee Invitation Email**

Good afternoon,

I hope this message finds you all safe and well.

In alignment with the [Building on a Strong Foundation – NJIT 2025 Strategic Plan](#), the university would like to “Support transfer students as they integrate into the NJIT community and adjust to the rigorous academic environment. Transfer students face many challenges that can be eased through targeted services, resulting in a smooth transition to NJIT.”

**(Include home campus strategic plan and/or policy)**

Similar to incoming first-year students, we want to ensure our undergraduate incoming first-time transfer students receive coordinated assistance as they get acclimated to NJIT. Therefore, **(insert name here)** and I would like to invite you all to be members of the Incoming Transfer Student On-Boarding Committee. As the inaugural co-chairs, we know that your guidance will enable us to streamline many processes for assisting in the transition of our incoming transfer students from admission through the end of their first enrolled semester.

We welcome your participation for **(insert year here)** and will plan to meet approximately twice every **(month/semester/other)** to include the summer term. This committee will inform and share ideas with the staff/faculty working with incoming transfer students about processes, in place and to be developed, that will facilitate a smooth transition to NJIT for our incoming transfer students.

If, for any reason, you would like someone else from your office/department to be a committee member in your place or if you feel someone should be added to this committee, please let us know, by response to this email, before **(insert date here)**.

After we hear from you, we can then begin planning our meetings for this semester.

Thank you and we hope you have a great week!

Best,

**(Insert name here)**

# Committee Outcome Highlights to Date

## (Focus on Effective and Consistent Communication)

- International Transfer Credit Process and [webpage](#)
- Expired Transfer Credits Process and [webpage](#)
  - Undergraduate 10 Yrs and Older
- Incoming Transfer Student Text Message Series
  - Reminders - official transcript, registration, add/drop deadlines, etc.
- Incoming Transfer Student Advisement and Registration Information Presentation (committee responsible for material presented)
  - This is a semesterly presentation to all departmental advisors and administrators outlining the transitional advisement process
- Advocacy to allow new incoming transfer students to waitlist for classes
- Relationship building between departments

# Committee Current Focus Area Highlights

## Working On:

- Challenges, pain points, etc. to be addressed for incoming Fall 2023 transfer student class
- Creating “Universal” credit after initial transfer course equivalency is approved by academic department so future students will automatically receive credit for that same course

## Future Considerations:

- Invite students, staff, course evaluators to share their onboarding process experiences during meetings
- Focus on Committee Goals 2 and 3: Campus Community Engagement and Academic Support

# Committee Growing Pains

- Getting on the same page about transfer student onboarding needs; collaboration vs. isolation
- Questions - Learning the “Why” Behind Decision-Making
  - Enrollment Goals
  - Variety in Transitional Advisement Models
  - Etc.
- Focus on Addressing Challenge/Issue vs. Finger Pointing to an Individual Department

# Reflection & Discussion: Transfer Student Onboarding Process on Your Campus

- Reflect on the transfer student onboarding process on your campus
- Discussion Questions: Think-Pair-Share
  - Are transfer students included in your school's strategic plan?
  - What is one aspect of your school's transfer student onboarding process that can be improved?
  - Who are the key stakeholders that can help you advocate for change in this area?

# Individual Action Plan

- Identify one area for improvement in the transfer student onboarding process on your campus
- Write down the name of one key stakeholder at your institution who can help to improve that area of the transfer student onboarding experience
- *Before you leave the NISTS Conference:* Send an email to the aforementioned key stakeholder sharing the improvement area and invite them to discuss it further

## **Getting on the Same Page: Creating a Collaborative Committee to Improve Transfer Student Onboarding**

### **Strategies**

#### **1. Commit to Shared Vision & Goals**

- a. Develop an initial focus for the committee; overarching vision and specific goals
  - i. Recommendation: collaborate with at least one other stakeholder
  - ii. Be open to adjusting these as the needs of transfer students change
- b. Be sure to openly discuss enrollment goals/numbers
  - i. Gives context for all committee members
  - ii. Provides qualitative data for administrators to make decisions/changes to transfer onboarding processes

#### **2. Create the Space**

- a. Be intentional with who is invited to join - think *impact!*
- b. Capitalize on relationships across campus
- c. Set expectations for time commitment depending upon frequency of meetings

#### **3. Utilize the Space to Make Change!**

- a. Highlight case studies of incoming transfer student interactions and challenges
- b. Ask "Can this be changed?" and discuss the issue/concern/policy during the meeting to alleviate another email
- c. Ensure consistent and accessible information
  - i. Develop agendas where each department represented can report updates, share concerns, and ask questions
  - ii. Send the agendas to members beforehand
  - iii. Use a shared Google Drive folder or equivalent that is accessible to all members
  - iv. Take minutes during the meeting via screen share so everyone knows exactly what is being documented
  - v. Email those minutes to members after the meeting

#### **4. Measure Effectiveness**

- a. Record outcomes as a result of the committee
- b. Use these outcomes to advocate for additional incoming transfer student supports and services

### **Important Reminders**

- Agree to Disagree - We are not going to agree about everything and that is okay
- Compromise may allow for change even if it is a smaller step than initially anticipated
- Building collaborations across departments may be progress in itself!
- Remember that "Rome wasn't built in a day" and some things take time
- We are all on the same team!
- You are a Connector for Transfer Student Success!



# Questions?



# Thank you for coming!

## Presenter Contact Information

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