2848 - STEM Transfer Success: Building Community Through Cross-Institutional Recruitment Initiatives

Partnerships and Collaboration, Transition Programs and Supports

Transfer-student recruitment events usually include opportunities to meet with advisors and representatives from student support services, but what if they could also provide a deeper connection to the campus community? The STEM Success Fair was designed to introduce transfer students to faculty, research, scholarships, and resources to make the transfer process easier. Learn how two institutions worked together to help build a community for STEM students, faculty, and staff through one event.

Allyson Rocks, Academic Program Manager
University of Utah
STEM Transfer Success: Building Community Through Cross-Institutional Recruitment Initiatives

Allyson Rocks
Academic Program Manager, Utah Pathways to STEM Initiative (UPSTEM), University of Utah
Overview

• What is UPSTEM?
• Barriers to transferring in STEM
• Why Aren’t Students Transferring?
• Our STEM Success Fair
  • Challenges
  • Outcomes
• How else can we connect and support transfer students?
Utah Pathways to STEM (UPSTEM)

- Part of a nationwide HHMI initiative to promote *inclusive excellence* in STEM

- **Collaboration** between the University of Utah and Salt Lake Community College

- Focuses on *transfer students* and students from *historically marginalized* groups in STEM

- Prioritizes building *institutional capacity* and *infrastructure* for inclusion
Transfer Student at the University of Utah

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>First-Time Freshman</th>
<th>New Transfer</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Fall 2017</td>
<td>4,119</td>
<td>1,447</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fall 2018</td>
<td>4,256</td>
<td>1,292</td>
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<td>Fall 2019</td>
<td>4,249</td>
<td>1,416</td>
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<tr>
<td>Fall 2020</td>
<td>4,483</td>
<td>1,448</td>
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<tr>
<td>Fall 2021</td>
<td>5,361</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Top Institutions Students Transfer From

- Salt Lake Community College: 57%
- Weber State University: 9%
- Utah Valley University: 13%
- BYU: 3%
- BYU Idaho: 3%
- Dixie: 2%
- Snow: 2%
- SUU: 2%

Average Transfer Age: 23
Average Transfer GPA: 3.32
Average Transfer Credits: 59
Create and implement protocols for data collection and sharing to increase institutional capacity to make data-driven decisions.

Create disciplinary degree articulation teams to develop efficient pathways for transfer students.

Create interdisciplinary Faculty Learning Communities committed to inclusive excellence in STEM.

Promote and support a culture of inclusion for all STEM students at SLCC and the U.
Barriers to STEM Transfer?

With a neighbor, discuss the following:

• What are obstacles a student might face when transferring to a 4-year institution in STEM?

• How would you rank these barriers in level of difficulty?

• How do they relate to or differ from barriers in other disciplines?
Enrollment/Retention Trends

- After two years of the pandemic, transfer enrollment declined 13.5 percent overall, falling two times more steeply than non-transfer enrollment (-6.3%).

- Upward transfers with an associate’s degree fell by 10.3%

- Upward transfers without an associate’s degree also fell by 9.3%

- The student persistence rate one term after transferring declined across the board and remained below pre-pandemic levels. Year 2, however, showed signs of recovery among younger students (20 or younger), men, bachelor’s degree-seeking students, and at private nonprofit four-year institutions.

National Student Clearinghouse COVID-19 TRANSFER, MOBILITY, AND PROGRESS First Two Years of the Pandemic Report
What is Happening?

• In your opinion what are the major factors that are contributing to these declines?

• How should institutions articulate to students the value of earning an associates degree and transferring?

• How should 2-year and 4-year institutions work together to support students through the transfer process? How do you see your role in supporting this process?
STEM Success Fair

Annual recruitment event planned by both institutions (starting Fall 2021)

Faculty, staff, & students participated from the following:

Salt Lake Community College
• School of Science Math & Engineering

University of Utah
• College of Science
• College of Mines and Earth Science
• College of Engineering (2022)
01 Faculty
- U & SLCC Faculty presence
- Low-stakes setting to build relationships
- Faculty brought research papers, material samples, and ran live demonstrations

02 Student Support
- U & SLCC advisors were present to answer logistical questions about transfer articulation, scholarships, etc.
- TRIO programs, Undergraduate Research, Admissions, and Transfer Centers also participated

03 Students
- SLCC & U student clubs were invited to participate and recruit for their organizations
- U students (direct admits and former transfer) were invited to share their experiences
“SLCC’s campus is a much different environment than the U. Anything we can do to ease that transition, we want to do it. It’s important for STEM students to engage with researchers. If you’re a first-generation college student, faculty can seem scary, and it’s hard to approach them on your own. We invite U and SLCC faculty to the STEM Success Fair to be in a casual setting with low stakes”

- Craig Caldwell, co-principal investigator of the UPSTEM Initiative and Dean of the School for Science, Mathematics, and Engineering at Salt Lake Community College
“Faculty aren’t usually at recruitment events so having them there makes the STEM Success Fair unique. Here, students can start to form a relationship with faculty so that they know at least one professor when they transfer to the U campus. A lot of transfer students think they want to major in pre-med but at the STEM Success Fair, they meet researchers from many different fields and might fall in love with something they didn’t expect.”

- Holly Godsey, principal investigator of the UPSTEM Initiative, Director of STEM Initiatives in the College of Education, and Associate Professor in the Dept. of Geology and Geophysics at the University of Utah
Challenges

Here are some challenges/worries we have:
• Faculty Participation
• Varying Support from Institutional Leadership
• Cost
• Student Turnout (always a mystery…)

What are some potential challenges you anticipate in your own institutions/divisions if you were to do something similar?
Outcomes

2021

188 SLCC STUDENTS
Over 70 Faculty & Staff from the U & SLCC participated

2022

340 SLCC STUDENTS
Added U College of Engineering
Over 40 Faculty & Staff from the U & SLCC participated
SLCC business majors came too!

2023
Will add U Health Sciences
“I just kind of guessed my way through the first two years of college. Then I started talking to these geologists about their field, about the courses offered where you go on fields trips outside the classroom. I love adventures and being outside. I realized I could pursue this other field while still staying in education.”

Zach Knettles: First-Year U transfer who decided to switch from Special Education to Earth Science Secondary Education after conversation with faculty from the University of Utah’s Geology & Geophysics department at the STEM Success Fair.
Other Ideas?

• Share opportunities that your home institutions provide to connect transfer students to vital resources and community at the transfer institution.

• What are some new ideas you’d like to implement to build connection and community between transfer partner institutions?
Questions?

You can find me at:

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(via the conference app)

This session's id# is: 2848