

# **Recent Findings and New Directions for Transfer Student Success: Trends and Issues for Transfer Student Policies, Programs, and Services**

Jennifer R. Keup

Director, National Resource Center for The First-Year Experience & Students in Transition



# Goals for Presentation

- Discuss who are transfer students are
- Share our challenges in working with this student population
- Discuss common institutional and systemic strategies for transfer student success
- Identify a few specific examples for in-depth discussion.



**What are your greatest challenges in your efforts to support transfer student success?**

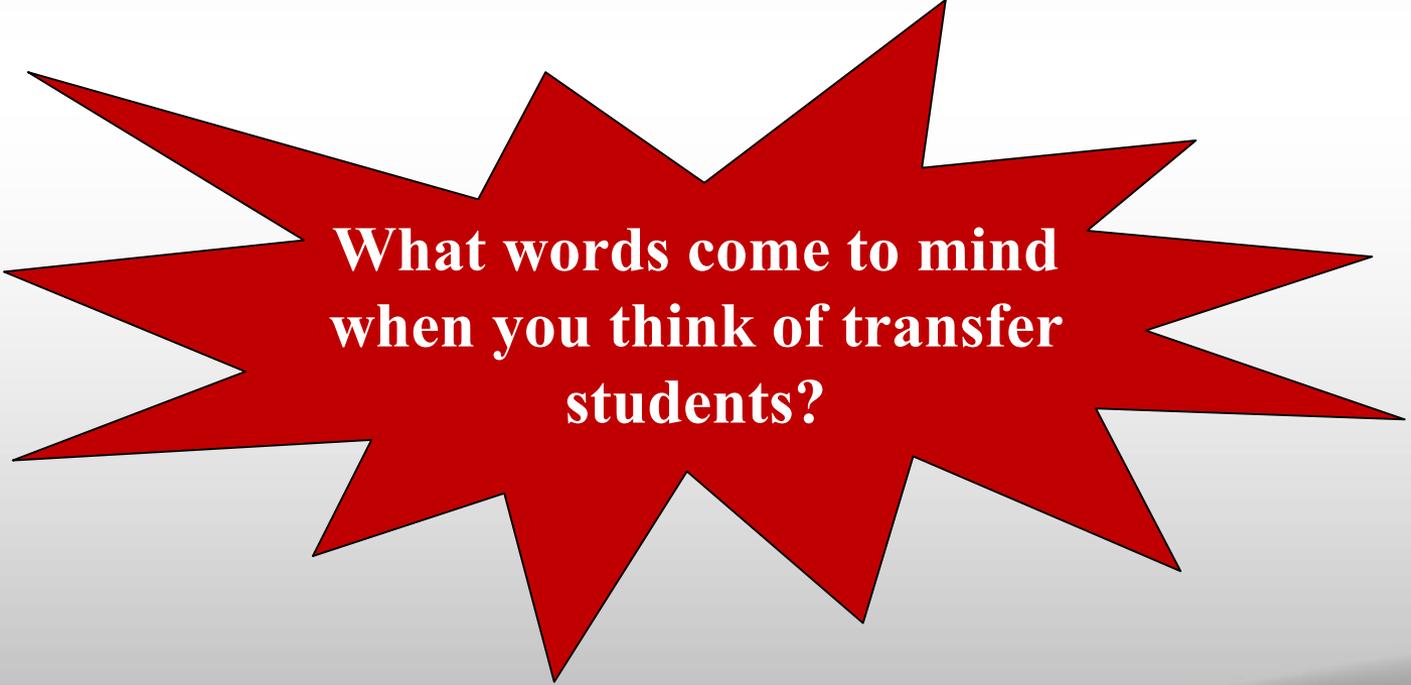


# Challenges

- What is a “transfer” student?
- What are their goals?
- Deficit perception (institutionally and student)
- Reality of academic deficiencies
- Alignment problems on a systemic level
- Difficult to engage transfer students
- Information on transfer is a moving target



# WHAT DO WE KNOW ABOUT TRANSFERS?



**What words come to mind  
when you think of transfer  
students?**



# What is a “transfer student”?

“A student who has attended a college or university and plans to continue his or her education at a different two- or four-year institution.”

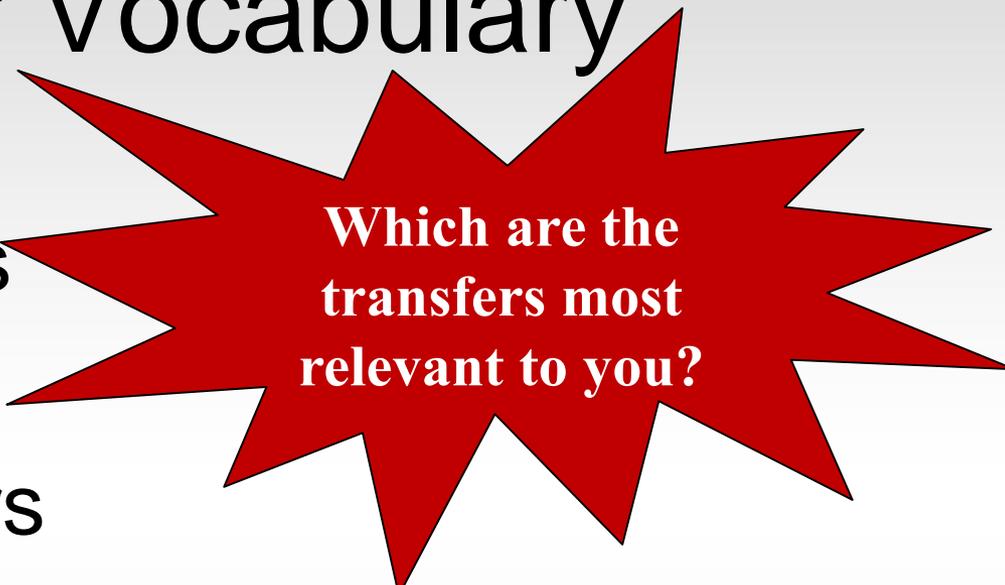
*-Poisel & Joseph, 2011*

- What is your working definition?
- How does your institution define this population?



# Transfer Vocabulary

- Vertical transfers
- Lateral transfers
- Reverse transfers
- Cross level transfers, concurrent enrollment, or “double dipping”
- Dual credit/dual enrollment
- “Swirlers”



**Which are the transfers most relevant to you?**



# Statistics About Transfers

- 2003-2004 NCES data show that 20% of students who enroll for the first time at four-year campuses are transfers.
- 2-year to 4-year transfers at about 20-25%
- AACCC (2010) reported that fall 2009 enrollment was nearly 8 million students
- U.S. DOE report states about 2/3 of 2004 HS seniors entering CC intend to pursue a bachelor's degree
- USNWR identified more than 100 schools that enrolled 1,200+ transfers in fall 2008



# Characteristics of Transfers\*

- Have higher rates of non-traditional students, students of color, working students, and low SES students
- Experience transition issues (“Transfer Shock”)
- Lower levels of student engagement than native students
- Have greater need for developmental coursework early in academic career



# Future Transfer Students

- Increase in number and proportion of students in higher education
  - Veterans & Hispanic Students
  - Significant regional differences
- Due to economic climate greater numbers of students will elect to go to 2-year colleges
  - Increase in the “traditional” demands
  - Transfers an increasing factor in enrollment mgmt
- More informed with the emergence of web-based resources
- More complex & strategic enrollment patterns



# WHAT CAN WE DO FOR TRANSFERS?

**What do we say we are doing for transfers? If you did an audit of your institutional materials, where do you see transfers?**



# Common Institutional Strategies

- Supplemental Instruction
- Transfer Orientation
- Transfer Centers
- Recruitment
- Developmental Education
- Learning Communities
- Advising
- Peer Mentors
- Assessment



# Common Systemic Strategies

- Transfer Centers
- Recruitment
- Articulation Agreements
- Partnerships
- Course Alignment
- Dual Admission
- Tuition Guarantee
- National Programs



# TRANSFER CENTERS



# Transfer Centers

- “A one-stop shop consolidating the disparate offices, departments, and entities that routinely respond to the questions & issues posed by transfer students” (*Collins, Navarro, & Stinard, 2011*)
- Can be at both 2-year and 4-year campuses
  - Transfer Centers at CC: Outbound perspective
  - Transfer Centers at 4-year campuses: Inbound perspective
  - Successful Transfer Centers require involvement of both sectors



# Transfer Center Models

- Student development
  - Focus on holistic advising (transfer opportunities, financial aid, academic plans, course selection)
- Documents
  - Develop and maintain agreements about course equivalencies
  - State and legislative reporting
- Academic
  - A focus on faculty-to-faculty collaboration & alignment efforts
- Hybrid



# Example: Outbound Transfer Center



- Six elements of success for BCTC
  - Dedicate transfers advisors
  - Skilled staff
  - Strong institutional support (including faculty)
  - Strong collaboration with 4-year institutions
  - Funding (mostly for personnel)
  - Evaluation & assessment plan



# Example: Inbound Transfer Center



## CHALLENGES

- Understand & assess transfer students needs
- Working with CC partners to help students prepare academically for transfer
- Develop mechanisms for seamless transition
- Create faculty & staff transfer advocates

## ELEMENTS OF SUCCESS

- Multiple means of communication among all constituents
- Peer mentor program
- Clear vision for success
  - Preparation
  - Transition
  - Progression
- Assessment



# Recommendations



**Others?**

- Communication is key
  - Include all constituencies in message
  - Multiple means
- Resources should always prioritize qualified staff (“People are at the heart of successful transfer support.”)
- Advisement must combine knowledge about process with counseling skills
- Don’t forget connection to sending/receiving institution.



# **ARTICULATION AGREEMENTS & PARTNERSHIPS**



# Articulation Agreements

- “Formal agreements, even contracts, between institutions that spell out courses and/or programs that will transfer from the community college to the four-year institution”  
*(Bers & Younger, 2011)*
- Historically, they are one of the primary vehicles for communication and collaboration across 2-year and 4-year institutions



# Observations about Articulation Agreements

- Often lauded as vehicles to facilitate transfer
  - For whom?
- Range from suggestive to prescriptive
- Inconsistent evidence of their effectiveness
- Can be costly to create and maintain
- Is institution focused and not student focused
  - “It assumes standardization of student experiences at the convenience and design of the institution.” (*Shugart & Harrison, 2011*)



# “Pathways” as an Alternative

- “Want students to see their program of study, across partnering institutions, as a coherent, planned, supported pathway toward a goal that is meaningful to them” (*Shugart & Harrison, 2011*)
- Requires:
  - Alignment of curriculum and program outcomes for all majors available to transfers
  - Promised of improved likelihood toward goal
  - Collaboration between 2-year and several 4-year options
  - Shared vision, resources, & facilities across institutions



# Example: Central Florida

- History of strong articulation agreements & increased demand for higher education in the state
- Leadership of Brevard, Lake-Sumter, Seminole, and Valencia Community Colleges and the University of Central Florida started talking
- Decided on a regional strategy to expand access and meet anticipated growth



# Central Florida Higher Education Consortium

## CORE PRINCIPLES

- Guaranteed admission to UCF for Consortium CC
- Expansion of join-use facilities at CC
- Collaborative philanthropy to increase financial aid options
- Development of a regional infrastructure

## IMPLEMENTATION

- Co-branding
- Admission “guarantee”
- Presence of academic advising at both 2-year and 4-year institutions
- Shared facilities and programs
- New thinking re: curriculum to an integrated four-year arc



# Recommendations



Others?

- Keep it about the students
- Try to avoid politics and use a strategic focus
- Establish trust between the partners
- Agree on parameters and formalize the principles of the partnership
  - BUT don't perseverate in the details: "Just do it!"
- Focus on an area of importance to all partners; mutuality is key
- Be selective and focus energy on a few deep partnerships



# ASSESSMENT



# Assessment

- Efforts to support transfer students hinge upon knowledge of:
  - Transfer policies and programs
  - **Student characteristics and needs**
  - **Effective evaluation of interventions**
- Most efforts to support transfer students begin and end with assessment activities
  - Beginning: Student needs & institutional capacity
  - End: Successful implementation and effectiveness



# Institutional Analysis of Transfer Students

- How many transfer students are on campus?
- What do current transfer students look like, and how are they likely to change in the future?
- What are their specific needs and goals?
- What courses are they taking, and are they succeeding?
- How many students need preparatory courses?
- Are there enough classes and services to meet their needs?
- Are transfer support programs effective?



# Transfer Student Assessment Tools

- National instruments for CC and transfers
- Existing and emerging assessment projects and processes
  - Foundations of Excellence
  - Achieving the Dream
  - Data sharing warehouses
- Increasingly sophisticated and affordable assessment services and tools for institutional efforts



# Ex. of Transfer Assessment Practices



## BACKGROUND

- Over the years transfers had grown to over 30% of total students and 40% of new students
- Transfers showed lower rates of engagement and satisfaction
- Current assessment methods were unable to trace the source

## TRANSFER STUDENT SURVEY

- Modeled after CIRP Freshman Survey to enhance comparability with native students
- Collaborative effort across academic & student affairs and IR
- Commitment to analysis and dissemination of findings



# Transfer Student Survey Findings

- Helped dispel deficit model re: transfer students
- Similarities between native and transfers showed areas we could combine services
- Differences guided resource decisions for interventions
- Helped partner CC identify a profile for a successful transfer student
- Served as a baseline for later data collection opportunities



# Recommendations



Others?

- Need to collect incoming data on students
  - Including intention for transfer at CC
  - Including past experiences and future expectations for incoming transfers
- Connect to existing assessment efforts
  - Increase comparability
  - Enhance buy-in
- Use longitudinal and trends analyses
- Qualitative methods (capture their voices)
- Disseminate to all constituencies, including students



# Discussion Questions

- Are any of you engaging in these efforts on campus?
  - What are your greatest “lessons learned”?
  - What are your most significant successes?
- What is the “next big thing” regarding transfer students on your campuses?
- How can your institutional strategies be aligned with systemic interests?



# Closing Thoughts

- Any other questions?
- Primary reference
  - *Transfer Students in Higher Education: Building Foundations for Policies, Programs, and Services that Foster Student Success* edited by Mark Allen Poisel and Sonya Joseph
- Ongoing conversation
  - [keupj@mailbox.sc.edu](mailto:keupj@mailbox.sc.edu)
  - NRC Transfer Listserv
  - Institute on Transfer Student Success
- Thank you!

