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Bianca's Conference Takeaways

National Transfer Student Ambassador Bianca Hill of Baylor University reflects on her experience as a TSA attending the NISTS 2019 annual conference in Atlanta, Georgia, February 13-15, 2019.



What were your original thoughts on transfer professionals/initiatives, and how did they change with your conference exposure?

I don't know that I had thoughts on professionals, aside from just being really appreciative of them, but I was definitely pretty ignorant about initiatives and change being made all over the country. There is so much research being done (or already done!) and so much more that is known, with evidence to back it up, about the transfer experience than I realized, as well as resulting suggestions for how professionals can come alongside transfer students to help them succeed. I think maybe because my own transfer experience and the transfer offices I have come into contact with only practice bits and pieces of what I heard about at the conference, I guessed there just wasn't much proven yet and that we had a long way to go. Not that we don't have progress to make... We absolutely do!! But we have also already taken giant steps in the right direction, and I just didn't know about them. My perspective on possibilities and knowledge of current trends both expanded dramatically, and I feel much more knowledgeable about where we're at and where we're headed. **The overarching theme of the conference was, "Working Together to Simplify Transfer." What were some ways you learned that could simplify transfer?**

I think half the battle is knowing what questions to ask and whom to ask, but I think we–transfer students–often have less centralized or accessible information and maybe not the same level of programming dedicated to the on-boarding process. Eliminating the unnecessary extra steps that come with being passed around between different departments like a hot potato is one step in simplifying transfer; I think that comes with educating people in every department to understand transfer and know how their work specifically can help transferring students. One idea is to make the journey a one-stop shop or at least minimize the steps that have to be taken. I think some of that also comes with making sure everything freshmen get, transfers also get in some way that accommodates them appropriately. Freshmen go to Orientation? Transfers do too, and they have one that makes sense for where they're coming from. Freshmen have centralized advising? Transfers do too, and they have an idea of who's evaluating their credits and who's helping them take what they've done to kick start what they haven't yet.



What did you learn from the other Transfer Student Ambassadors?

I mostly learned about different programs and resources offered at other schools that Baylor doesn't have and how they have affected the students making use of them. Even going into the conference with knowledge of many students' different stories, I learned about still other

different transfer pathways (just when you thought you knew them all…) and how a student's experience and opportunities for development can be fostered or stifled by adequate or inadequate transfer resources.

What was your biggest takeaway?

I WAS SO ENERGIZED!!! Man, my mom was sure my spirit and energy could have powered our flight all the way home; who needs fuel for a plane? Aside from totally recharging and feeding off every bit of positive energy, my biggest takeaway was that transfer students are full of possibility, outperform their peers when most unexpected, and are so much more supported by professionals all over the country than I knew before. There are people who believe in transfer, and transfers are killin' it!



What are you going to do next in regard to transfer based on something you learned at the conference?

Since I am no longer a student but am working in Admissions, I–in conjunction with our Transfer Student Success department (a.k.a. Mr. Joe Oliver)–will continue to try to create new bridges to Baylor, starting with creating an ambassador program that takes matriculated transfers from our local community college back to the community college to encourage and mentor prospective students who are hoping to follow in their footsteps. While this program is ambitious, I am also trying to work with our marketing department to improve communication methods and timing

for prospective transfers and joining in conversations to increase scholarship funds dedicated to transfers.

Other thoughts:

I am so thankful to have been able to take family–my sweet mom!–to the conference and to have been received by a larger family I didn't even know I had!!! I was so encouraged by the work being done and the energy shared by everyone; it was such a wonderful environment to be in and one I hope to continue to be in for years to come. Thank you to everyone who made the conference possible and everyone who shared ideas and encouragement with me and the other Student Ambassadors. You all made our time in Atlanta memorable, and I am most grateful for the opportunities I had to experience meaningful connection and inspiration as I did in a professional setting.



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