Apr 2, 2019

Jay's Conference Takeaways

National Transfer Student Ambassador Jay Francis, a junior industrial design major from Appalachian State University, reflects on his 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?

From the start of my college career to now, I have always had a positive interaction with transfer professionals. Whenever I needed help, there was someone from the transfer community to help me achieve my goals. These transfer professionals are the ones that got me interested in helping other transfer students. I originally got involved with transfer students as a Transfer Student Mentor at Appalachian State University. This organization allowed me to pursue my interest in helping transfer students. I thought this was all I could do to help transfer students. What I did not know, though, was how many people there are in Higher Education who care about transfer students. After the conference, I now know that that there are more ways that I could help the transfer community. This conference exposed me to the possibility of a nationwide initiative to help the transfer body. Being able to talk to and listen to so many transfer professionals at the conference just engulfed me with a new sense of pride and duty to helps transfer students.

The overarching theme of the conference was, "Working Together to Simplify Transfer." What were some ways you learned that could simplify transfer?

I think one of the most interesting takeaways from the conference for me was the idea of applying design thinking to help transfer students from the action-focused plenary session "Turing Insights into Action: Amplifying Transfer Students Voices to Generate Campus Change." This session was interesting for me because I use the design thinking process as a part of my major as a design student, so it was amazing to see what I learn in class being applied to the real world. The design process is usually a five-step process of formulating a solution for a problem through brainstorming. I think that this idea of applying this process can be beneficial when it comes to helping transfer students. I think that this process will work amazing if applied at smaller levels to give solutions to each institution's unique problem.



What did you learn from the other Transfer Student Ambassadors?

First, I would like to say what a pleasure it was to do be a part of this conference with the other Transfer Student Ambassadors. I enjoyed being around all of them and witnessing their unique personalities. It was hard not to be consumed by Bianca's radiant personality as she put a smile

on anyone's face that she met. Taylor's professionality and business-like demeanor definitely had me taking notes. Jennifer was honestly the calmest throughout the entire conference, a skill that I think we could all learn. Thank you all! Meeting the other Transfer Student Ambassadors allowed me to see that there are other students in other institutions that are also advocating for transfer students. I think it's important that professionals and faculty are pushing for transfer students, but I believe that the power truly comes from the voices of the students. The student voice holds the power to change any campus environment. Another important thing that I learned from the other Ambassadors is that not all campuses are as transfer friendly as Appalachian State University. This is something that I personally have taken for granted. This observation is a great example of how every transfer student has their own unique pathway and experiences. Finally, the most important thing that I learned from other ambassadors is the power of being around others that have a passion for helping transfer students. This is important because I feel this energy from them has been transferred to me. With this energy I can then transfer it to other students, faculty, community colleges and universities. This in hand can cause a ripple effect of an immense passion for helping transfer students.



What was your biggest takeaway?

The biggest takeaway for me was the personal experience of being in a professional setting. This conference has really helped improve my public speaking. I learned very important communication skills that I can use to help me grow as a student and a person. I am honored that I was offered to be a part of this enriching experience. I strongly believe in taking advantage of any experience that can help you grow as a person. This conference is an example of what I stand

for and what I think all students should believe in. Positive upward growth is the most important growth!

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

I am going to continue with the transfer body on my campus so that I will give them my support. This conference has really increased the pride that I have for my school and the transfer organization at Appalachian State University. Moving forward, I hope to work more directly with community college students. I think that starting from the community college is vital for a smooth transition for transfer student. This will be beneficial for transfer students in the sense that I will be able to give the student perspective of being a transfer student. I think this was the main reason why the ambassadors were invited to the conference—people want to hear the student's perspective. Lastly, my hope is to work with students that may not think they are capable of transferring to university. I think it's vital that the transfer community strive for a more inclusive transfer student body. I would like to leave you with the national motto from my home country of Jamaica. The motto goes "Out of many one people." To me this means we are all people at the end of the day, but we all come from unique backgrounds. All transfer students are students, but their unique backgrounds and experiences are what makes them outstanding. One love.

Overall, I had a wonderful experience at the conference, and, if I could, I would go again. I just want to say thank you to Emily Kittrell and other NISTS Affiliates for being so amazing and helpful along the way. They did a good job of helping me during the entire conference process. I would also like to thank Jane Rex from Appalachian State University for nominating me as Transfer Student Ambassador. She has always seen the potential in me to grow as person. Lastly, I would like to thank Kim Morton and Matt Huntanar. I work alongside both with the transfers organization on campus, and they have always supported me. Without them, I probably would have not made it to where I am now. Thank you.


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