

Best Practices on First-Year Seminars for Transfer Students

Center for First-Year Advising

College of Natural Sciences | The University of Texas at Austin

External Presentation Website: <http://firstyearfortransfer.wordpress.com/>

Please refer to this link for additional resources and information.

Overview of the Texas Transfers Program (TxT)

Learning Outcomes

- Students will express that they feel like they are a part of the UT community
- Students will express that they have fully transitioned into a UT student and no longer feel like a “transfer” student
- Students will demonstrate an understanding of how to use student services on campus in order to reach their personal and academic goals
- Students will have a clear understanding of how transfer courses apply towards degree requirements and what courses they have left in their degree plan
- Students will have an understanding of steps to take for a successful transition out of UT and into their career or professional training

Seminar

- Three cohorts each facilitated by a student mentor and academic advisor
- Students in each cohort were registered for two of the same courses
- Mentor-led seminar and joint cohort seminar topic sessions were held
- Research opportunity was provided for interested students starting Spring 2014
- Students were assigned to the academic advisor caseload
- Students enrolled in the seminar did not receive academic credit for the course

On the next page, a brief description of each weekly seminar (50 minutes in length) is provided. Additional ratings by the students are given based on how helpful or enjoyable the session was to their success and transition to UT (N = 39). All cohorts completed the seminar topic sessions listed in order on the next page, sometimes as a joint group or with their mentor-led cohort. Forty-four students were enrolled into the program this past fall.

Mentors

Three upper classmen mentors, who were transfer students themselves, were selected through an application and interview process to assist the three academic advisors. Each mentor was assigned a cohort and an academic advisor to work with. Mentors were encouraged to meet with each transfer student in their cohort individually outside of the weekly seminars. Mentors were required to log their student meet-ups and hours, along with descriptions, they worked. Mentors were paid for their work during the semester.

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Table 1: TxT Weekly Seminar Schedule (Fall 2013)

UT and YOU
<i>Your Place at UT:</i> Students were introduced to their cohort, reviewed seminar syllabus, and completed course survey (food allergies, future interest, topics, etc.)
<i>Current Transfer Student Panel:</i> UT students were invited to speak to the cohort to provide advice regarding their adjustment to UT Helpful – 82% Not Helpful – 5% Did Not Attend – 13%
<i>Scavenger Hunt:</i> Students were split into groups and explored the UT campus Helpful – 53% Not Helpful – 30% Did Not Attend – 17%
<i>Bowling at the Union:</i> TxT enjoyed their first social at UT's bowling alley Enjoy – 64% Not Enjoy – 0% Did Not Attend – 36%
Making the Grade at UT
<i>Learning Skills:</i> Students completed VARK and learned how to utilize their learning strategy Helpful – 82% Not Helpful – 7% Did Not Attend – 11%
<i>Exploring Academic Resources:</i> Students attended a tour of one of three on-campus learning centers Helpful – 74% Not Helpful – 7% Did Not Attend – 19%
<i>Jeopardy:</i> Test your knowledge of UT's resources Enjoy – 67% Not Enjoy – 15% Did Not Attend – 18%
<i>Registration Hoorah:</i> Students receives registration tips and were able to meet with a professor Enjoy – 67% Not Enjoy – 0% Did Not Attend – 33%
Beyond UT
<i>Science Professionals:</i> Students met the health professions office and career design center Helpful – 69% Not Helpful – 3% Did Not Attend – 28%
<i>Career Assessment:</i> Students took the Holland career inventory assessment Helpful – 51% Not Helpful – 20% Did Not Attend – 29%
<i>Study Break:</i> Students enjoyed a study period Enjoy – 54% Not Enjoy – 3% Did Not Attend – 43%
Finish Line
<i>Transfer Complete Party:</i> A celebration of student success throughout the semester
<i>Optional: Study Groups:</i> Students could attend optional study sessions in reserved rooms

NOTES:

Assessment of Texas Transfer Seminar Program

Students were asked to evaluate their transition from a 1 – Strongly Disagree to 5 – Strongly Agree scale based on given choices regarding their transition at the beginning and end of Fall 2013. Table 2 represents the average rating for two populations: 1) students admitted into TxT (N = 30) and 2) students not enrolled into the program (N = 34). A paired t-test was used to analyze the data of each population to determine effectiveness of the program.

Table 2: Survey Response of Fall 2013 Transfer Students vs TxT Transfer Student

	I feel like I am a part of the UT Austin community.	I feel like a new student at UT Austin.	I feel more connected to my previous college or university than I do to UT Austin.	I know what courses remain in my degree plan at UT Austin.
TxT Students	3.967*	2.967*	2.833	4.167
Non-TxT Student	3.515	4.061	2.781	4.188

	I know of at least one student service on UT Austin's campus.	I have used a service at UT Austin to help reach one of my personal, academic, or career goals.	I believe my previous college or university prepared me for UT Austin coursework.	I have created a plan for what I will do after I graduate from UT Austin.
TxT Students	4.733	3.700	3.233	4.033*
Non-TxT Student	4.576	3.939	2.909	3.545

* P-value less than 0.05 is considered statistically significant

Results

Students who participated in the Texas Transfer Seminar Program (TxT) feel more a part of the UT community (P-value = 0.029), less like a new student on campus (P-value =0.00011), and have created a plan for after graduation (P-value = 0.045) compared to students not enrolled into the program.

Table 3: Analysis of student participants before and after the program

	I feel like I am a part of the UT Austin community.	I feel like a new student at UT Austin.	I feel more connected to my previous college or university than I do to UT Austin.	I know what courses remain in my degree plan at UT Austin.
Before Semester	3.333	4.467	2.733	4.033
End of Semester	3.967*	2.967*	2.833	4.167

	I know of at least one student service on UT Austin's campus.	I have used a service at UT Austin to help reach one of my personal, academic, or career goals.	I believe my previous college or university prepared me for UT Austin coursework.	I have created a plan for what I will do after I graduate from UT Austin.
Before Semester	4.067	3.200	3.367	4.033
End of Semester	4.733*	3.700*	3.233	4.033

* P-value less than 0.05 is considered statistically significant

Results

Students who participated in TxT found that by the end of the semester the program has helped them feel like a part of the UT community (P-value = 0.0032) and less like a new student (P-value = 1.88×10^{-6}). In addition to that, they have been exposed to and used at least one resource on campus (P-value = 0.0067 and 0.044).

Table 4: Effects of Seminar Attendance on GPA of TxT Transfer Student

Number of Attended Seminars	Average GPA	GPA Comparison (to 1- 4 seminars)	GPA Comparison (to 5- 9 seminars)
10 - 12	3.1182	0.0237*	0.4166
5 - 9	3.1660	0.0305*	--
1 - 4	2.4145	--	0.0305*

* P-value less than 0.05 is considered statistically significant

Results

Students who attended the seminar more often, showed a higher GPA average than students who attended 1-4 seminars during Fall 2013 (P-values shown above in Table 6). There was no statistical significance between students who attended 5 - 9 seminars compared to students who attended 10 - 12 seminars.

NOTES:

Transfer Student Needs at UT Austin

Transfer Student Newsletter

Advertisement of Services on
Campus

Seminar Group Similar to FIGs

More Academic Support due to
rigor of coursework at UT

Student Involvement: Honors Program Info Prior to Transferring
and Student Orgs

Connecting with other Transfer students

Suggestions for improvements from students enrolled in TXT:

- More seminars related to academic and personal growth
- Increased amount of time designated for social activities
- Included supplemental learning materials for their shared courses
- Reserved study rooms and times

As advisors, we were curious whether students wished for an 8 week seminar rather than the full semester as well as if they wished they had more one on one time with their student mentor, students seemed to be neutral on both of these suggested changes.

NOTES: