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

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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%.
- AACC (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

Others?
Common Systemic Strategies

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

Others?
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

• 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

• “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

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CORE PRINCIPLES</th>
<th>IMPLEMENTATION</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Guaranteed admission to UCF for Consortium CC</td>
<td>Co-branding</td>
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<td>Expansion of join-use facilities at CC</td>
<td>Admission “guarantee”</td>
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<td>Collaborative philanthropy to increase financial aid options</td>
<td>Presence of academic advising at both 2-year and 4-year institutions</td>
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<td>Development of a regional infrastructure</td>
<td>Shared facilities and programs</td>
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<td>New thinking re: curriculum to an integrated four-year arc</td>
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Recommendations

• 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

• 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
  – NRC Transfer Listserv
  – Institute on Transfer Student Success
• Thank you!