

CARLETON UNIVERSITY

Supporting the Success of Transfer Students

Project Owner:

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Executive Summary

The Credit Transfer Innovation Fund supports a specific range of activities aligned with MTCU's current priorities for development of credit transfer pathways in Ontario as well as research on the student experience of transfer, including experiences during the process of transfer and experiences after transfer, such as communication of transfer credits granted, orientation to new institution, academic preparation for new institution, etc. This benchmarking project was undertaken not only as part of the Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities (MTCU) five year \$73.7M commitment to improve student mobility in Ontario but also supports Goals 1-1 and 1-2 of Carleton's Strategic Integrated Plan to "*develop new programs and initiatives that build on academic strengths and respond to societal needs*" and "*to diversify the student population at Carleton in order to offset the projected decline in the traditional domestic student market*".

Carleton University already offers a number of transition and academic support services for first-year students. Transfer students see themselves as a distinct population and even though they need many of the same services, they often assume that the workshops and programs are designed for younger students. In addition, transfer students have unique needs around registration and integrating with already established peer groups. The purpose of these recommendations is to develop timely, targeted communications, to promote already existing services as well as to coordinate and enhance current services to better meet the specific needs of transfer students.

One of the measures of the strategic plan is to increase the number of students transferring to Carleton from Ontario Colleges. Reaching out to these students with targeted services that best addresses their specific needs will have a positive impact on their transfer experience, help optimize their time to degree completion and help ensure their academic success.

RECOMMENDATION 1: Develop a position of Coordinator of Pathways to advocate and coordinate interdepartmental efforts to continually improve support services and programming for transfer students.

It is recommended that Carleton pilot a new position of Coordinator of Pathways to advocate and coordinate interdepartmental efforts to continually improve all aspects of the transfer student experience. This portfolio ultimately falls under the direction of the Associate Vice-President (Students and Enrolment) however there currently is not a role dedicated to enacting the types of initiatives recommended in this report on a consistent basis. The Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities (MTCU) currently has a Credit Transfer Innovation Fund that may be a source of funding for this position, at least on a pilot basis.

RECOMMENDATION 2: Implement a peer mentorship program to allow for student-to-student advice and support, including referrals to campus services.

Transfer students with personal connections with returning students identified them as the most important resource for advice, information and transition. To offer all transfer students this type of resource, it is recommended that a peer mentoring program be created to match new transfer students with a trained, upper-year peers to offer them advice and support, including providing referrals to the appropriate campus services.

RECOMMENDATION 3: Actively promote pre-registration advising in early June for transfer students, including in-person and virtual advising sessions.

It is recommended that the Student Academic Success Centre and/or departmental advisors actively promote pre-registration advising in early June (prior to the Fall registration period) for transfer students. This should include in-person advising appointments for those in the Ottawa area and virtual (email, phone or video conferencing) advising sessions for those who cannot visit campus. Showing students how to access and read their audit, helping them in course selection, confirming expected course restrictions, and referring them to registration and academic support would allow students to have a much easier registration experience so that they can be confident they are in the right courses.

RECOMMENDATION 4: Encourage the two faculties involved to explore methods to allow upper-year transfer students to register in first-year seminars.

It is recommended that the Faculty of Public Affairs and the Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences be encouraged to investigate methods by which spaces in FYSM courses could be made available to second-year transfer students. In addition, promoting the advantages and importance of these seminars to all transfer students transitioning into the Carleton environment should be undertaken.

It is hoped that the small class sizes emphasizing group work, instructor mentorship, interactive learning, and early assessment/evaluation will help students achieve their academic goals and have a positive impact on transfer students, as they transition to university and prepare for upper-year studies.

RECOMMENDATION 5: Further align programming and services to the needs of transfer students

It should be noted that radical change in service delivery is not necessary to meet the needs of transfer students but more nuanced adjustments are recommended in the area of communications, language, targeting and workshop design. This is expected to better promote the value of student services to transfer students as well as better matching service offerings and programs to their needs. These needs are expected to evolve over time and the main role of the Coordinator of Pathways role (see

Recommendation 1) will be to solicit ongoing feedback in order to keep abreast of the changing needs of transfer students and advise academic departments and student support services to make the necessary adjustments to meet those needs, when required.

RECOMMENDATION 6: Develop a communications strategy to specifically target the transfer student population (new and existing) including targeted email, centralized web resources, and social media.

Transfer students need much of the same information as other students however the language needs to be adjusted and, in some cases, they should not receive information that is not pertinent to them. Clearly flagging email as for transfer students is one way to alert them to a message that they should pay attention to. Having a centralized website as a key information resource that they can refer to is also a way to minimize the information gap. Curating news posts and web information and customizing that information to provide clarity for transfer students would offer them a singular information resource they can refer to. Lastly, use social media to connect transfer students with each other, especially new students with returning, can offer an informal, two-way information source that can also facilitate personal connections amongst students. It can also be used to proactively see where students are having difficulties and adjust other communications mediums as a result.