



Supporting the Success of Transfer Students

Presented at the ONCAT 2014 Student
Pathways in Higher Education Conference

+ Project Objective



- To develop and improve support services that best address the needs of transfer students by:
 - Identifying the characteristics of transfer students
 - Identifying challenges faced by transfer students
 - Gaining an understanding of which services are used and identify gaps
 - Making recommendations for a coordinated service model



External Findings

From literature review and interviews with North American colleges and universities

+ Transition

ACADEMIC

- I'm just a "number" in this large class
- My prof doesn't know who I am
- Nobody told/reminded me of the deadline
- Too much pressure on doing well in a single project/exam

SOCIAL

- Don't see the same people in class each week
- How can I form a study groups when 'cliques' already exist?
- Classmates are younger than I am
- No one to ask a simple question

+ The Registration “Experience”



- Nothing is typical about a transfer students registration pattern
- Requires a high level of understanding to make course selections
- Registration errors exasperate the problem



Internal Findings

From institutional data, student focus groups, and service provider consultations

+ Transfer Students (2009-2012)



- Faculty of Arts & Social Science and Faculty of Public Affairs account for 72% of transfer students
- University transfers 50.3% College transfers 49.7%
- College transfers: Yr. 1 – 38% Yr. 2 – 61% Yr. 3 - 1%
- University transfers: Yr. 1 – 39% Yr. 2 – 39% Yr. 3 – 20%

+ Profile of a Transfer Student

- Older, socially disconnected from traditional students
- Considerable registration challenges
- More focused on academic aspect of experience
- Some transfer students less prepared for academic demands



+ Focus Groups



- 3 focus groups held – even split of college and university transfers
- First time that they felt targeted as a cohort
- Don't identify as “new” or “first year” – felt that orientation and transition programs were not for them
- Those in defined “pathway programs” had better support and transition

+ Challenges



- Class sizes more intimidating
- Gaining access to professors – more contact with TAs
- Marking expectations – in particular written assignments
- Social disconnect due to age differences, already established peer groups
- Registration restrictions

+ Services & Programming



- Breadth and quality of services does not seem to be an issue
- Use of services available contributes to a positive experience
- Communications and perceptions about the services available is a barrier
- Academic literacy is a challenge for college transfer students



Strategies for Success

+ Student Initiated Strategies



- Speak with an advisor prior to registration
- Take advantage of professor office hours
- Attend peer assist study sessions and Learning Support Service workshops
- Get involved with student societies and groups

+ Enhanced Support Services



- Dedicated services for academic transition (orientation, workshops, etc.)
- Advising Services: Dedicated advisor, online and telephone advising to reach more students prior to registration
- Peer Mentoring program for Transfer Students
- Broader and more effective communications

+ Academic Transition



- Dedicated orientation session
- Learning Support Services Workshop Cluster:
 - Academic Audit, Proofreading, Essay Writing, Research Skills, Campus Connections, Balancing Work and School
- Online Workshops
 - Academic Reading, Note-taking, Test & Exam Preparation

+ Pre-registration Advising



- Registration advising has always been available and is used by transfer students primarily in September (too late)
- Heavily promote pre-registration advising (early June)
- Advising methods: in-person, email, phone, online video
- Read audit, help in course selection, confirm course restrictions, address restrictions (if possible), referring them to departmental advisors

+ Peer Mentorship



■ Goals:

1. Increase use of student services
2. Use online tools and resources more effectively
3. Build personal connections with other transfer students

■ Strategies:

1. Match new transfer students with trained, upper-year peers as an informal source of advice and support
2. Referrals to campus services and programming
3. Involvement in events to make connections

+ Communications Strategy



- Transfer students have trouble distinguishing what information is pertinent to them
- Develop a comprehensive communications strategy/approach
 - Same information as traditional students, different language
 - Emails clearly flagged as for transfer students
 - Centralized website that curates appropriate information into a singular information source
 - Using social media to connect transfer students to each other

+ Conclusion



- Recommendations focus on transition challenges
- Strong need to encourage use of the services available to them
- Students with connections fared better
- Particular support needed in the area of pre-registration advising to improve time to completion

Questions?



For further information contact:

Janice O'Farrell

Carleton University

janice.ofarrell@carleton.ca