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"We see you. We hear you."

**Using student voice to inform services,
policies and procedures to improve the
college transfer experience.**

April 21 2015

ONCAT 2015 Student Pathways in Higher Education Conference

Jean-Luc Daoust, Julie Beauchamp, Andrea Secord, Klehr D'souza, Sylvie Lamoureux O.ONT.

Outline of panelists and topics

- Jean-Luc Daoust & Klehr D'souza
 - Context
- Andrea Secord
 - Mentoring Centre for Transfer Students
- Julie Beauchamp
 - The Telfer Initiative 2014-2015
- Klehr D'souza & Sylvie Lamoureux
 - Assessing the Impact of the Telfer Initiative
- Sylvie Lamoureux
 - Looking Forward
- Discussion

College Transfer @ uOttawa: Context to Date

Jean- Luc Daoust &
Klehr D'souza

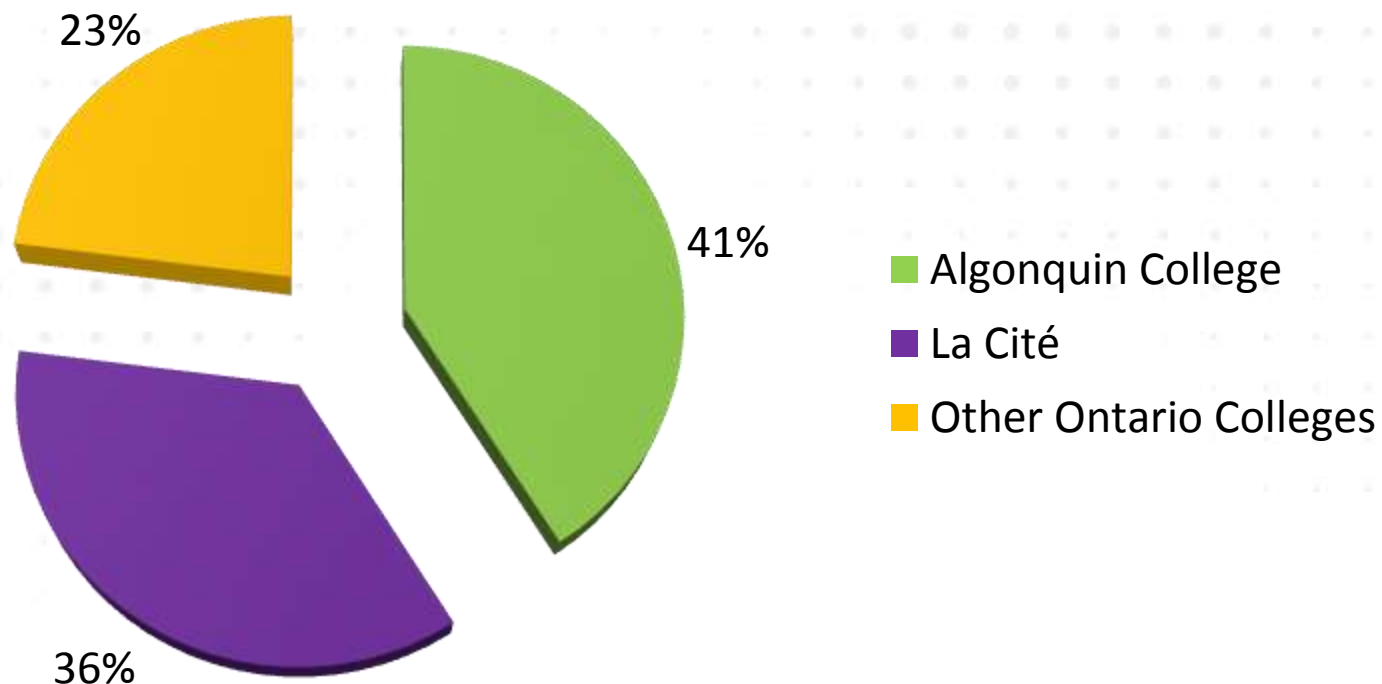


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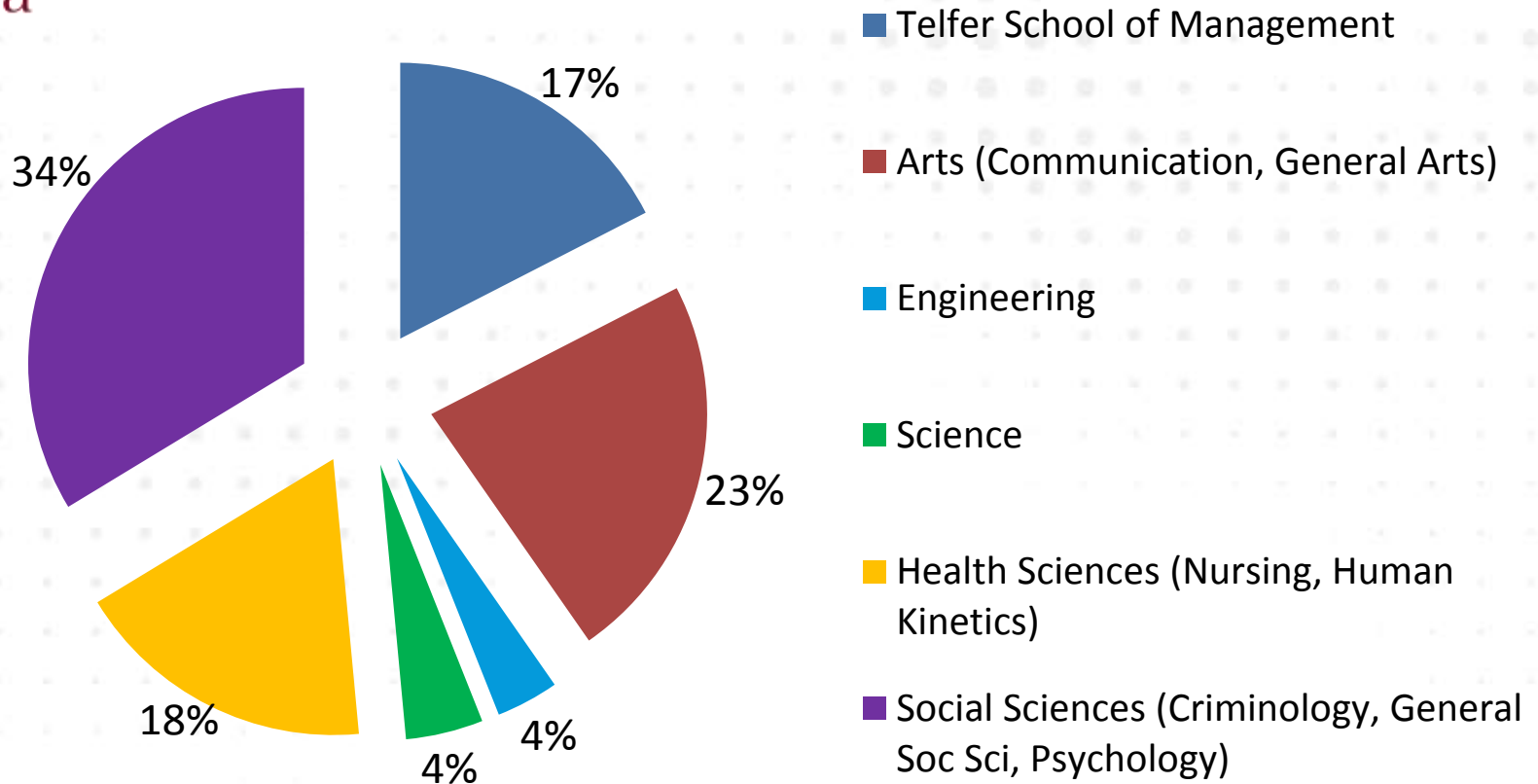
Context - 1

- University of Ottawa - largest bilingual university (43,000 students, including 13,000 Francophones)
- Most programs offered in both French and English with a few programs offered only in French
- Partnership with Colleges offering programs in French and in English
- Ontario College Transfer students represent 7% of first-entry students, CÉGEP students 9%, 101 students 65%

What institutions do our College transfer students come from? (2012 cohort)



Which uOttawa faculties are they choosing?



- Fall session 2012
- All program languages
- Ontario Colleges only



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Context - 2

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- Student success
- Student experience
- Serving the Francophone Community

Challenges

- Tension between focus on learning outcomes vs content for assigning equivalencies
- Faculty members focused on ‘traditional’ pathways(i.e. Ontario high schools), not recognizing shift in what is becoming an additional ‘traditional’ pathway
- Monitoring and supporting student success
 - Clear understanding of credit transfer students’ needs (diversity of incoming students)
 - Students’ performance
 - Retention and program completion

2013-2014: 'Student Voice' Findings

- Most students enrol in programs of study **they perceive are directly connected** to their diploma. However most college programs **do not have** official transfer agreements with uOttawa programs.
- Participants **did not feel compelled** to participate in orientation activities as they feel a disconnect with the majority of « first-entry » students who are at a different life stage.
- Students feel that their **professors do not seem to know** that college transfer students are in their classes and do not build on their previous knowledge.



2013-2014 Findings - 2

- **Work experience better prepared them** for transition to University.
- Uncertainty about university processes, e.g.
 - Choosing courses vs being given a schedule;
 - How to navigate course sequences built for 101 students, in light of equivalencies.
- Students are **frustrated by opaque credit-equivalency process**; is neither consistent nor coherent; varies based on who analyses the file; if you complain, you get more equivalencies.
- **Equivalency conundrum**: must repeat some courses where they know the content, but given equivalencies for courses that lead to missing foundational competencies.



Mentoring Centre for Transfer Students

Andrea Secord



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Background

- The Mentoring Centre for Transfer Students began operating in September 2013, as a result of a study we conducted on College Transfer Student retention.
- The goal of this project was to: 1) facilitate the transition and integration of college transfer students through peer-to-peer mentorship, 2) increase college transfer student retention, and 3) increase overall college transfer student satisfaction.



Activities

Academic Integration / Transition

- Guide for Transfer Students
- Orientation sessions for incoming transfer students
- 1-1 meetings with peer mentors
- Peer-led workshops: Navigating the University of Ottawa's Online Tools, Time Management, Procrastination, Stress Management, Planning for Finals, Staying Healthy and Motivated
- Focus Groups

Activities – 2

Social Integration

- Meet and Greets
- Bi-monthly coffee breaks
- Activities on campus: movie night, Snow Festival, yoga, etc.

Professional Integration / Transition

- Volunteering with the Centre for Global and Community Engagement
- Resume Writing Workshop
- Career Planning Workshop
- Build your Career Toolkit Event



After 2 years, students report:

Orientation Sessions

- Helpfulness : 43% rated “4 on 5” ; 31% rated “5 on 5”
- Would you recommend : 98% said yes

Academic Workshops

- Helpfulness : 33% rated “4 of 5” ; 63% rated “5 on 5”
- Would you recommend : 100% said yes

Students report - 2

One-on-one support

-“Thank you for all of your assistance; you're a great mentor!! :)”

-“I just wanted to take a moment and thank you for your help this afternoon. I appreciated that you took the time to listen, offer suggestions, and actually took an active roll to help me find solutions.”

-“Thank you _____, I really appreciate it and will definitely be employing what we talked about today!”

-“Hi _____, thank you again for this. I really appreciate you accommodating me. It has all been very helpful.”

Next Steps - 2015

- **More of what works**
 - Orientation and early outreach
 - 1-1 support
 - Study skills workshop
 - Activities pertaining to professional integration
 - Social networking opportunities
- **New initiatives**
 - More social networking opportunities in September
 - Monthly themes (e.g. Career month, wellness month, etc.)
 - Online support & video blogs for students
 - More visibility on campus



The Telfer Initiative

Julie Beauchamp, PhD

Vice-Dean, Undergraduate and Professional Programs



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Context

- The Telfer School of Management welcomes an important number of transfer students from Ontario Colleges and other PSE institutions to its Undergraduate programs.
 - In September 2013: 131 students transferred from Algonquin College and 68 from La Cité
 - In September 2014: 271 students had credits recognized and transferred towards their degree at the Telfer School of Management at uOttawa



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Facilitating College Transfers

The Telfer School of Management Experience

pre 2014

- Initially, program transfer looked at the **potential of credit recognition on a case by case basis**
 - Lack of standardisation and equitable treatment in credit recognition
 - Ill defined program mapping
 - Student success questionable at best
- **Negative impact on student experience**
 - Lack of clarity of agreement and prospect
 - Perception of inequity
 - Sense of abandonment
 - **Difficulty in completing program**
 - Time to completion
 - Attrition and failure rates
 - Lack of availability of courses due to unpredictable course sequence
 - Perception that the process was not student centered

The Telfer Initiative :

Changes implemented Fall 2014

- A **student centered** approach
 - Study and analysis of college programs, mapping them against the Telfer B.Com.
 - Establish standardised, pre-determined pathways and credits recognized for transfer
 - Communicate adapted course sequence and program duration to students upon admission
 - Provide student support and counselling throughout the transition
 - Work with Colleges to build on the results and further develop the program
 - *Spring 2014 agreement between Ontario colleges business programs facilitated process*

Anticipated benefits

- Eliminate inequities that resulted from case by case file analysis for determining equivalencies
- Reduce student anxiety about
 - Uncertainty of outcome of file analysis
 - How to adapt the 'standard' course sequence in light of equivalencies accorded
 - Uncertainty of anticipated time to completion for degree
 - Course sequence vs course offerings
- Increased student perseverance and timely completion of degrees
- Increased student satisfaction with the transfer experience

Moving Forward

- For 2015-2016, launch of a focused support program for our transfer students, including:
 - Dedicated welcome sessions
 - Orientation to the university campus and context
 - Awareness and understanding of university regulations
 - Personal and professional development
 - Exam preparation support (process and structure)
 - Customized advice & counselling

Assessing the Impact of 2014-2015 Changes

Klehr D'souza

Sylvie Lamoureux, O.ONT.



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Student Perspective

- **Methodology**

- E-survey (using SurveyMonkey) after Fall and Winter mid-terms
- Focus groups and individual interviews, after Fall and Winter survey
- 1st entry college transfer students from La Cité & Algonquin @ Telfer, Fall 2014

- **Limits**

- Despite interesting/significant financial incentives, student response was lower than expected.
- All students who participated in focus group or interviews also completed survey.
- Possible pool (English and French programs) of participants n=41



Findings – Fall 2014

- **Our participants indicated that they had all planned on attending university after completing college diploma**
- **Experience with Administrative Component**
 - Confusion around expected credit recognition and those recognized
 - Most completed application process without any guidance
- **Academic Experience**
 - Grades at mid-term were lower than college grades, but students expected this
 - Challenged by the ‘theory-based learning’
 - Large cohort, less structure; students need to be proactive to get to know their professors
 - Redundancy in some course content is source of frustration
- **Social Experience**
 - No sense of belonging to the university or the faculty
 - Out of place in the classroom – do not feel presence or prior knowledge is recognized by their professors



Findings – Spring 2015

- **Administrative experience**
 - Students seek guidance in course selection and changes
 - Students increasingly access more Faculty and university resources
- **Academic Experience**
 - Some redundancy in university course material, due to overlap in college
 - Sense of ‘I already know this’ – source of frustration
 - Increase in marks, due to better study habits and clearer understanding of university context
 - Frustration regarding challenges to accessing coop option
- **Social Experience**
 - Sense of belonging to the faculty increased, but not to the university
 - Students were focused more on completing their degree versus experiencing university
 - Coming to terms with being a minority in the classroom



Staff Perspective - Telfer

- Anticipated a certain level of student frustration with new transfer guidelines (max no 45 credits rather than 60)
- Fewer complaints or requests for revisions
- Discussions with students more focused on program than with admission
- Need to better inform college faculty of the changes
- Benefits of increased dialogue with college
- Create tailored recruitment materials focused on “program for transfer students” rather than advanced placement into program for 101 students
- Positive impact on their relationships with students



Staff Perspective – Admissions

- Increased ability to more quickly process offers of admission to students
 - Students can register for courses in a timely fashion; fewer closed mandatory courses
- Transparency helped improve communication
- A model worthy to be applied to other programs and faculties across the university
- Added to reflection on the implementation of new SIS



Looking Forward

Sylvie Lamoureux, O.ONT.



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Ongoing & Next Steps @ uOttawa

- uOttawa has signed on to ONTransfer
- Update course by course transfer information, for inclusion in new SIS
- Review and strengthen existing program-specific transfer agreements
- Explore institutionalization possibilities of elements of the Telfer Initiative
- Increased visibility of resources for transfer students to all potential students



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Food for thought...

In other jurisdictions

- « top up » year (2 + 1)
- Dual credits, advanced placement, prior PSE credits all considered in 2 + 2 framework
- Prior-learning/experience challenge exams

« If I had known, I would have gone to the HEC in Québec instead, as all of my college credits would have been recongized in my transfer »

Findings presented at Higher Ed Conferences

- Highlight Challenges
 - Supporting students in the transition from further education to higher education
 - Timely completion of degrees in a « top up »
 - Making hidden curriculum visible to all
 - Ensuring a seamless continuity
 - Ensuring success for all students
 - Sense of cohort

Open Discussion



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Guiding Questions

- *How do we institutionalize best practices (administrative, academic, social) across faculties and services to better support our college transfer students?*
- *How can we challenge lingering hierarchical ideologies regarding college and university education ?*
- *What are the challenges or barriers in ensuring that student voice (of their experiences) informs policy and procedures?*



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**THANK YOU FOR YOUR ACTIVE
LISTENING AND PARTICIPATION**

