From ‘Their’ Students to ‘Our’ Students

A Cultural Shift and the Making of a Strategic Priority

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SESSION OUTLINE

The Transfer Student Experience at UW-Madison

1. Institutional History
2. Initial Efforts
3. Remaining Gaps
4. Vision for the Future
INSTITUTIONAL HISTORY
External Forces

• Increasing freshman applications
• Corresponding public relations concerns
• Transfer increasing nationally, but decreasing at UW-Madison
Internal Forces

• Chancellor response: dual-admission pilot
• More enrollment capacity at junior level
• Student information system conversion
  – Loss of functionality
  – Decreased satisfaction with transfer student services
• Role of “transfer champions”
• Committee on the Transfer Student Experience
Committee on the Transfer Student Experience

• Initiated out of Provost’s Office
• Findings:
  – Transfer students are “our” students
  – Needs are distinct from freshman starts
  – Face more challenges academically
  – Communication is a challenge
  – We can improve the transfer student experience
Snapshot of Transfers at UW-Madison

- 1,800 new transfers each year
- 22% of our new students
  - 64% transfer from WI institutions
  - 8% are international
- Mix of 2-year and 4-year institutions
- 33% are first generation
- 86% of new transfers are under age 25
- Higher financial need
- 80% live off campus
Snapshot of Transfers at UW-Madison

- Evidence of transfer shock:
  - Ave. transfer GPA = 3.4
  - Ave. 1st semester GPA = 2.9

- Retention the following year:
  - Transfers = 90% (sophomore starts)
  - Freshmen = 93%

- 6-Year Graduation Rate:
  - Transfers = 74% (sophomore starts)
  - Freshmen = 87%

- Transfers less satisfied with overall experience
INITIAL EFFORTS
Building Relationships

• Transfer agreements
  – Dual-admission (Connections Program)
  – System-wide (Guaranteed Transfer Program)
  – School-specific (Transfer Contracts)

• Transfer Advisor Conference

• Liaisons with feeder colleges

• Transfer Advisor Newsletter

• High School Counselor Breakfasts

• Transfer Advisors Working Group (TAWG)
Providing Services: Office of Admissions

- Dedicated transfer staff
- Dedicated transfer email account
- Transfer Visit Days
- Feeder college visits/transfer fairs
- On-line course equivalencies
- Facebook group for admitted transfers
Providing Services (post Admission)

• Mandatory transfer orientation
• Reserved course sections for transfers
• Transfer welcome dinner
• Transfer orientation course
• Transfer House
• Transfer advisors
• STAMP (Student Transfer Association & Mentor Program)
REMAINING GAPS
Institutional Challenges

• Limited access to advising and transfer credit evaluation prior to orientation
• Decentralized advising
• No centralized entry point
• Lack of campus-life orientation
Student Challenges/Needs

• Divergent needs = need for “high touch” individualized services
• Majority live, work off campus
• Less likely to engage in high-impact activities
• Greater financial need
• Significant number of spring starts
• Retention and graduation gap
VISION FOR THE FUTURE
Mission: to understand and improve the transfer student experience

Goals:
1. Ease academic and social transition
2. Increase participation in WI Experience
3. Decrease retention/graduation gap
4. Strengthen life-long connections to UW-Madison
PREPARATION → TRANSITION → GRADUATION

Office of Admissions & Recruitment

Transfer Transition Program

Schools & Colleges
Next Steps

• Benchmarking and Assessment
  – Transfer Student Advisory Board
  – External Advisory Board

• Centralized Web site
  – Coming soon! www.transfer.wisc.edu

• Comprehensive Orientation Review

• Hire centralized transitional advisor(s)

• Transfer initiatives grant

• Identify faculty/staff who were transfers
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