The Transfer Student Experience

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Session Agenda:

1. Transfer Transition Program Overview
2. Who are transfer students?
3. Factors that impact transfer student success
4. Implications for Practice
Transfer Transition Program

Mission

- To understand and improve the transfer student experience at UW-Madison

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
An Informed Approach

- Comprehensive literature review
- Student Advisory Board
- Transfer Advising Working Group (TAWG)
- Campus-wide conversations
- Feeder campus input
Who are transfer students?
National Transfer Trends

- 33% of all undergrads are transfer students
- Males & Females transfer at equivalent rates
- 70% persistence rate
- 67% experience transfer shock
- More likely to live and work off campus
National Transfer Trends

- 3 out of 4 are of traditional college age (18-24) and their average age is decreasing.
- Institutions nationwide have failed to address their needs.
- Famous transfer students:
Transfers at UW-Madison

- 22% of our new students
  - 64% transfer from WI institutions
  - 8% are international
- 2-year and 4-year institutions
- 33% are first generation
- Higher financial need
- 80% live off campus
Transfers at UW-Madison

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

- Retention the following year:
  - 90% of sophomores
  - 74.3% of juniors

- Graduation by end of 5th year:
  - 88.6% of sophomores
  - 74% of juniors

- As seniors, less satisfied with overall student experience
Lit Review: Methods
Lit Review Process

- To determine factors that contribute to transfer student success

1. Search terms: “transfer student”

2. Search Databases:
   - Academic Search Premier, and
   - ERIC

3. Total articles: 290
Lit Review Process

Narrowing process:
Lit Review: Findings

Institutional factors that impact transfer student success
Themes from the literature:

Institutional factors that impact transfer student success

1. Facilitate connections with faculty, staff and peers
2. Promote student engagement opportunities
3. Utilize their focus on degree attainment
4. Develop mechanisms for performance tracking
5. Alleviate barriers to degree completion
1. Facilitate connections with faculty, staff and peers

- Faculty mentoring and informal interactions
- Peer mentoring, esp. w/senior transfer students
- Housing solutions
2. Promote student engagement opportunities

- Info. dissemination on engagement opportunities
- Create/Promote Transfer Student Interest Groups (TRIGS)
3. Utilize their focus on degree attainment

- Transfer student orientations
- Advise students to join/create study groups
- Encourage membership in disciplinary clubs
- Explore research opportunities with their profs
4. Create mechanisms for performance tracking

- Implement a transfer student performance monitoring system
- Advisor interventions
- Faculty exceptions
5. Alleviate barriers to degree completion

- Child Care programs
- Promote on-campus job opportunities
- Financial aid packages for transfer students
Campus opportunities

1. Provide opportunities for connections/interactions
2. Promote student engagement
3. Utilize focus on degree attainment
4. Develop performance tracking system
5. Alleviate barriers to degree completion
Implications for Practice
Transfer Transition Program: Initial Action Steps

- Review/restructure transfer SOAR
- Wisconsin Welcome
- Resource center (web, email)
- Transfer initiatives grant
- Identify faculty/staff who were transfers
- Assessment Plan
Transfer Transition Program: Future Plans

- Create High Impact Practices (HIPs) targeted for transfer students
- Offer transitional advising for transfer students prior to SOAR
- Develop TRIGs
- Develop scholarship opportunities specifically for transfers
- Improve course access for first-semester transfers
“An individual in transition has the potential for feeling marginalized.”

Schlossberg, 1989

“Transfer students must barter with one school using the currency of the other. Like long-distance travelers without the academic equivalent of a Fodor’s, they encounter differences in language and culture, and they often find that academic assets acquired in one setting are lost in transit or refused at customs.”

Change, vol 27, 1995