The Answer for Transfer Students: Reducing Culture Shock

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Presenters

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Presentation Outline

- The Problem
- Literature
- Recruitment
- Mentorship
- Academic Rigor & Resources
- Retention
- The Solution
- Pair & Share
- Transfer Student Panel
- Questions
What is the Problem?

- **What was your biggest challenge when you first started taking courses at VT?**

  “My biggest challenge when taking my first courses at Virginia Tech was getting the courage to ask questions in large lectures.”

  “When I first started at VT I had 2 part time jobs and I had decided that I wanted to graduate in 2 years. Condensing the neuroscience curriculum down to half it’s designed time while continuing to work was challenging for a number of reasons.”

- **Did you feel that the university and the resources available here catered to your needs or mostly to the needs of more traditional students?**

  “I did feel like most resources are geared toward catering to traditional students… Luckily, I quickly learned to use my outlier status to get meetings with people who could help me find the resources, experiences and workarounds I needed to succeed.”

  “The welcome week and other activities definitely felt more catered towards freshman versus transfer students.”

- **What resources do you like/use the most on campus?**

  “I love my advisors and the accessibility I have being able to reach and set up appointments. I also have begun using the career center to prep for interviews and get my plan straightened out for future goals in my field.”
Turns Out, There are Several

- Transfer students come from many diverse backgrounds.
- Sometimes, students experience a type of culture shock.
- Transfers are not typically an audie is starting to change).
What Do We Already Know?

- We know that transfers are very diverse.
  - 47% of African Americans, Asians, and Pacific Islanders start their undergraduate degrees in community colleges
  - 55% of all Hispanics
  - 57% of Native Americans
  - Despite the fact that there are only 1200 Community Colleges to the 3000 4-year universities.
- We know that transfer students tend to do better if they transfer than their counterparts who come from high school directly. However, not enough students transfer.
- We know that there is a negative correlation between graduation rates and credits transferred
  - 82% of students who have all their credits transfer to a university graduate within 6 years. This number drops down to 42% when only some credits transfer.
Importance of Advising

- In a 1988 paper published in the American Journal of Sociology, James Coleman wrote about the importance of social capital.
- Social capital is the set of resources, insider knowledge, and connections to opportunities individuals can get from interacting with others in their social network.
- In many ways, advisors help provide this social capital.
Recruitment

- On site admission
- Early contact with Transfers
- Special events specifically for transfer students
- Welcome weeks for transfers
Accessibility Issues

- According to the National Center for Education Statistics, in 1985 college costs for public universities were on average $3,859 (adjusted for inflation). In 2016 the average cost had risen to $19,488.
- Remember that transfer students are very diverse.
- Community college is often the first stop on their academic journey because of financial barriers.
Mentorship

- We must first realize that transfer students often need mentorship earlier on than traditional students
- Bringing transfer students together regularly
- Getting both faculty and staff involved
Academic Rigor & Resources

- The number of resources available to students at 4-year institutions may seem overwhelming
- Courses at 4-year universities might be more of a challenge
- Missed opportunities (this can contribute to culture shock)
Tinto’s model of student departure (simplified)

(Tinto, 1993, Theory of Student Departure)
Retention to Graduation

- Checking-in (Memes, Postcards, early-alert grades)
- Experiential Learning (co-op/internship)
- Campus part-time jobs
The Solution: Being Prepared

- Supporting
- Research and planning
- Removing the barriers
- Focusing on student needs
- Programming
- Partnering with collaborators
Pair & Share

• How do you work with transfer students?
• If you had all of the time in the world, what would you do differently?
• What do you notice about transfer students?
Case Study 1

Kevin, is a second semester sophomore, who transferred from an international institution and has never experienced college in the United States. He was born in the United States, but has traveled around the world with his family due to his parents’ occupations. He is doing great academically and is taking the correct courses for his major, but he comes into your office because he feels that he can’t connect with his peers and faculty. What challenges might Kevin be facing and how would you advise this student?
Case Study 2

Jen earned an associates degree from Tidewater Community College. She moved from Virginia Beach to earn a theater degree at Virginia Tech. When she got to Virginia Tech, she was shocked to learn that her smallest class had 60 students in it. She is used to smaller classes in her community college where she was able to get to know her faculty. She is concerned that the larger classrooms at VT would hinder her ability to build relationships with faculty and gain valuable mentorship. What advice might you give Jen?
Case Study 3

Alex is a second semester freshman, he transferred from another institution and is considered a transfer student because he earned more than 12 credits in his first semester. He is a first-generation student and is juggling a part-time job and raising a three-year old daughter while pursuing a degree in math. His goal is to work as a data analyst for the FBI. As a single father, he struggles with the rigor of his math courses and is having second doubts about his career goals. How would you handle this situation?
Case Study 4

Sidra is a sophomore and transferred from a school in New Jersey. She is excited to go to class and earn an engineering degree from Virginia Tech. Sidra is an out-of-state transfer student and worried about finances. She gradually takes fewer and fewer credits as she picks up more hours waitressing to help pay for her living expenses. Her part-time status pushes her graduation date further and she comes in to meet with you about this issue. She is worried that she will not be able to afford to stay here much longer. How would you advise Sidra?
Transfer Student Panel

Audience Questions are welcomed!

Picture from advising.vt.edu
Questions, Comments, Concerns...

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References