



***“Transfer Research: What We
Know – and Don’t Know –
About Our Students”***

And Opportunities for
Student Affairs Professionals to Get it Done!

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DCCCD Transfer Awareness Week Kickoff, October 20, 2008



Annotated Bibliography

- Document in development, dynamic, web-based
- Research from 2000-2008
- Abstracts are drawn from the source, and credited, or are original
- Articles examined for completeness and accuracy of the abstract
- Indexes by specific topic, then broken down by primarily General Administration, Student Affairs, and Academic Affairs
- Incomplete and in ongoing development. Please pass along suggestions for inclusion.



So, what do we know about transfer students?

- What we know
- What we don't know, at least in sufficiency
- What the research suggests as opportunities for Student Affairs and their campus allies



The issue is growing

- Substantially more than half of all students will graduate from a four-year college with credit from more than one institution.
- The trend has been growing
- Reasons? Among them, relative costs of community and baccalaureate institutions, Internet mobility, population mobility, promised and delivered personal attention at community colleges



The patterns are complex

- Transfer “swirl”
- Less than half of 4-year transfers are from community colleges
- Other patterns include 4-4, 4-2, 2-4-4, etc.

Academic accomplishment

- Research generally supports the idea that transfer students do as well or better at 4-year institutions as compared to “native” students. And persistence is better.
- Other research suggests an initial period of fall-off, and not all research supports equal-or-better accomplishment
- Why? Suggests this may not be a matter of *intrinsic student ability*, but of quality of *institutional/transitional support*



Student involvement on campus

- The National Survey of Student Engagement and other research suggests that transfer students are less involved in clubs, service, research with faculty, etc.
- Why?
- Intrinsic to student factors, such as more need to work, older and have families, etc.?
- Or an issue of efforts to target transfer students as people with distinct needs, circumstances, beliefs?



The role of the institution

- Much of the literature is institution-specific, describing model programs and their results
- The best programs have academic and co-curricular components that are mutually supportive
- Institutions are less successful if they stand alone. The issues of transfer are by definition multi-institutional, and the broadest impact is realized through strong, complex, and diligently pursued institutional partnerships.

Information is hard to acquire for transfer students

- The amount of information and facilitation available to first-time students is far more complete, out-reach orientated, and web-available than it is for transfer students.
- Varies by state and locale, of course, but generally, the info and process procedures are murky.



Some things we *don't* know

- Where is student voice in the research?
- What slips 'twixt cup and lip, policy to practice, inhibit transfer student access and timely completion?
- How do our own assumptions and prejudices, personal and institutional, affect our work with transfer students, and their self definitions?
- What do we know about discipline-specific transfer issues?
- Who doesn't transfer, and why?



Where is student voice?

- Most research focuses on such things as analysis of existing student data.
- Some research includes surveys of transfer students.
- Very little in-depth research into the transfer student experience.
- Possible approaches: focus groups, individual interviews, surveys based on this qualitative research. And unconventional approaches, e.g. blog analysis.

Slips ‘twixt cup and lip

- Anecdotal indicators that transfer as shaped by state policy, and transfer as practiced by receiving institutions, may be very different.
- E.g., mandatory acceptance of credit for AA degree holders. Not necessarily applied to degrees. Students may enter with an extensive major in “electives.”
- We don’t know the extent of this and related issues.
- Necessary for improvement of both policy and practice.



Assumptions and prejudices

- Again, anecdotal, but we all “know” that there are widely held opinions about transfer students:
 - Came from weak academic environments
 - Failed elsewhere
 - Not as skilled
 - Not as committed
- Do our prejudices affect the programs and supports we build? Do transfer students “pick up” on these stereotypes—and wonder if they are true?
- Example of Jason Simon’s research on transfer graduate giving as alumni. Preliminary, but counterintuitive.



Discipline specific information

- Very little research has touched on discipline-specific transfer issues, success rates, exemplary programs, etc.
- Can be key tools for a variety of objectives, such as more rapidly expanding the number and diversity of graduates from STEM disciplines



If you don't transfer, do you exist?

- Research has focused on those who DO transfer. What about those who do not?
- In Texas, which may not be unusual, only 20% of AA holders even apply to four-year schools. This, despite the fact that Texas universities accept virtually 100% of transfer applicants.
- We know some of the factors: \$, personal confidence, lack of timely info, place bound, etc. But we don't know the weights of these factors, or their interplay with each the other or demographic factors.



Expanding research

- What do YOU think we need to research?
- What roles can SA professionals take in creating this information?



The bibliography

(and many other resources)

- <http://transferinstitute.unt.edu/>



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