

Improving Transfer Students' Campus Transition
 With Help from Advisors
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Abstract

Research was conducted about the barriers that baccalaureate degree-seeking transfer students face when transitioning to a university from a community college. Transfer students' challenges included: credit loss from the transfer, transfer shock, lack of knowledge of the transfer process, and adjustment to the campus culture of the receiving campus. Several recommendations were found to assist with the transition process including the use of detailed articulation agreements to reduce credit loss and having advisors at both the community college and university who know the curriculum and understand the transfer process. Programs to encourage connection to campus life, whether it was major programming or simply meeting with faculty, were also helpful.

Keywords: transfer, student, advising

Fall marks the beginning of another academic year in most institutions of higher education in the United States as high school graduates take steps toward earning a post-secondary degree. While some students immediately attend a university, another group of students begin postsecondary experience at a community college (Maliszewski-Lukszo & Hayes, 2020). Almost half of U.S. undergraduates (44%) began their education at a community college however, transfer students completed baccalaureate degrees at a much lower rate than resident four-year college students (Nuñez & Yoshimi, 2017). Studies of transfer students have been conducted to determine what causes lower graduation rates and what supports are needed to improve retention and graduation rates.

Statement of the Problem

With a substantial increase in the transfer student population, university and community college campuses need to know how to work with this special population of incoming students. One example of the increase was documented at Iowa State University with a 22% increase in transfers over the previous five years (Chrystal et al., 2013). Increases in the number of transfer students has created a greater need for programs and services to help these students successfully transition from one campus to another. Research has shown that transfer students face many challenges and barriers when switching to a different campus (Chrystal et al., 2013). Because of the diverse backgrounds of transfer students, campus faculty and staff need to know how to support transfer students differently than their counterparts, new freshman. The studies that have been conducted delve into the barriers for transfer students, differing needs when comparing transfer students and new freshman, and resources specifically needed for supporting the transfer student population.

Significance of the Study

With increased budget challenges, universities have increased their focus on retention of students and four-year graduation rates. There has been a renewed and related focus on the number of students transferring from one college to another and the successful graduation rates of those transfer students (Dupont, 2010).

“Transfer students” referred to any students who were joining a university campus not directly from high-school graduation. These transfer students were broken into four groups. The first group included the largest number of students and those were people who transferred from a community college to a university (Woods, 2013). These students made up 56.8% of the number of transfers (Dupont, 2010). The second group were those who transferred from one university to another university campus (Woods, 2013). Transfers were made for a number of reasons such as a change in majors or participation in sports-related activities. The third group, referred to as reverse transfers, were students who moved from a university campus to a community college (Woods, 2013). These transfers sometimes occurred because of academic or financial difficulty at the university since the community college credits per hour were significantly less expensive, and were considered easier to complete because of fewer distractions, smaller class sizes, and more hands-on instruction. The fourth group included students who went from one community college to a different community college (Dupont, 2010).

Community college advisors have very important roles when directing students on how to earn their baccalaureate degree. These advisors should be an important source of information for community college students who want to complete their four-year degree. The information

transfer students need to know include: transfer requirements, program pathways, and university college admittance requirements.

A study by Matthews (2015) found that 45% of students who graduated with a bachelor's degree had previously attended a community college. Taylor and Jain (2017) discovered that 80% of first-time community college students intended to earn a baccalaureate degree. However, only 23% of students successfully made that transfer from a community college to a university campus within five years. What barriers and deterrents exist that prevent community college transfer students from completing a bachelor's degree? What services and resources are needed by transfer students to overcome the barriers to achieve a bachelor's degree?

Purpose of the Study

Those who advise in formal or informal settings can help students transition effectively to new campuses and help prepare students for academic and social integration success. The purpose of this research is to identify the needs of transfer students, discover the barriers that hinder successful transition, and determine the supports needed for a seamless transition for transfer students. How can universities that receive transfer students be better prepared to welcome, support, and graduate this important demographic of college students? Finally, what are the communication needs to articulate unified course/credit transfers between community colleges and their university counterparts?

Definition of Terms

Articulation agreements: formal written agreements developed between a two-year college and a four-year university to specify how transferred credits meet program or degree requirements between the two schools (General Accounting Office (GAO)-17-574, 2017).

Community college: two-year local college providing broad access to postsecondary education including offering a wide range of programs and credentials. The aim has been to prepare students for either transfer to four-year institutions or immediate labor market opportunities (Baime & Baum, 2016).

Connection: defined in higher education as developing community through in-class relationships with faculty and students, along with relating the student's past life experiences into their educational experiences (Schwehm, 2017).

Dual enrollment students: high school students who enroll in college courses and receive both high school and college credit (Hughes et al. 2012).

First generation college student: student whose parents have not yet completed a baccalaureate degree (York & Fernandez, 2018).

Grade point average (GPA): one of the primary positive determinants of student performance in college (Xu et al. 2018).

Junior college: offer the first two years of college coursework, preparing students for transfer to four-year institutions. Additionally, junior colleges fill the needs for college graduates in the workforce, local community pride, expansion of the secondary system, and the desire by business to have trained workers locally available (Wilson & Ford, 2016).

Lateral transfer student: a student who moves from one community college to another community college (Woods, 2013).

Nontraditional student: a student who is different from new freshman in a number of ways that might include age, familial status, and/or work status (Walker & Okpala, 2017).

Post-secondary enrollment student: a student who enters a community college or university to pursue a baccalaureate degree or certificate (LaSota & Zumeta, 2016).

Resident, non-transfer or native student: a student who enters an institution as a first-year student and does not transfer to another campus or university (Fauria & Fuller, 2015).

Reverse transfer: a student who transfers from a four-year institution to a community college to earn an associate degree or certification (Woods, 2013).

Sense of community: a student's engagement, sense of belonging, and emotional engagement in academic and or extracurricular activities at their new institution. (Townley et al. 2013).

Student swirling: a developed pattern of student mobility that differs from the community college to university pattern. It consists of multiple transfers to different institutions without making successful progress towards a degree (Fauria, & Fuller, 2015).

Transfer shock: the initial experience that students experience when first attending the university. Typically, this shock is seen via a lower grade point average (GPA) compared to the GPA earned at the previous institution (Maliszewski-Lukso & Hayes, 2020).

Transfer student: any undergraduate student who has received college level credits from one or more institutions of higher education. This definition does not include international students, permanent residents, dual enrollment high school students, or post-secondary education options (PSEO) program students (Matthews, 2015).

Transfer student capital: the accumulation of knowledge and experiences a student collects during their time at their previous community college to promote successful adjustment when students transfer from a post-high school institution of higher learning to a university (Woods, 2013).

Under-represented: are generally considered students who are from low-income or minority families (LaSota & Zumeta, 2016).

Vertical transfer student: a student who transfers from a community college to a university (Woods, 2013).

University: a four-year public or private institution that provides a baccalaureate degree (Matthews, 2015). a post-secondary educational institution that offers a bachelor degree program that requires a minimum of 120 credits to graduate (GAO-17-574, 2017).

Delimitations of Research

All articles used for the research in this study were peer-reviewed works published within the last seven years. Several older seminal works were also included to provide historical context. Search tool provided by the Karrmann Library at the University of Wisconsin-Platteville were used to identify relevant works.

Method of Approach

A literature review of topics related to improvement of transfer student success at their receiving campus was conducted. To identify effective methods used to remove barriers for transfer students, a combination of the terms “transfer,” “student” and “support” was used. This provided helpful demographic information, definitions of transfer students, and barriers that affected transfer student success. Findings were synthesized in Chapter 2. Chapter 3 contains the recommendations of support needed for transfer students, not only at their receiving campuses, but also by professionals at the students’ previous campuses, high schools, and also in the state legislature.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

Many students who graduate from high school choose a path of higher education. Their pathway could depend on many different influencers, such as future career aspirations, geographic location or financial capabilities. Because of different variables, many students may start at a community college and then switch to a university campus. Research has found that almost half (44%) of the undergraduates in the United States who started their education at a community college, then transferred to a university to obtain their baccalaureate degree (Nuñez & Yoshimi, 2017).

A pathway for a significant number of students to earn a bachelor's degree has been to attend a community college first. Community colleges first started in Illinois in 1902 at Joliet Junior College (Maliszewski-Lukszo & Hayes, 2020). The first record of transfer students was created in 1896 at the University of Chicago when the university president divided the college in to a junior and senior campus (Maliszewski-Lukszo & Hayes, 2020). Even then there were discussions on how students could transition successfully from one campus to another.

One of the contributing factors for increased transfer rates has been an increased emphasis by the United States government on students completing their baccalaureate degree. A 2009 federal policy boosted postsecondary degree attainment among adults between the ages of 25-34 (Lasota & Zumeta, 2016). In 2009, degree attainment was 38% and increased to 60% by 2020

A study conducted in 2015-2016 found that 49% of students who completed a baccalaureate degree attended a community college at least once within the previous 10 years (Matthews, 2015). Shapiro et al. (2017) reported similar findings of 45% of students who

completed a bachelor's degree during the 2011-2012 school year had previously enrolled in a community college.

Transfer students are made up of a wide variety of demographics including: race, sex, geographic locations, socioeconomic status, and ages (Walker & Okpala, 2017). Some transfer students could be traditional 20-to-23-year-olds, while other community college students could be returning military, or persons coming from the workforce. Because of the many different demographic variables, there is no single support approach for students transferring from a community college to a university.

A major proportion of community college students are from underrepresented populations. Over 56% of Hispanic students, and 48.5% of Black students began their postsecondary careers at a community college (Jabbar et al., 2019). In some cases, underrepresented students are also first-generation college students. Their parents may have attended a community college or technical school, but never attended a university to receive a bachelor's degree (York & Fernandez, 2018). These underrepresented students could be hindered by the lack of familiarity with the university experience (Jabbar et al., 2019).

Definitions of Terminology of Transfer Students in Higher Education

Matthews (2015) defined resident students as those who enroll in their academic program at their original college campus and stay to complete their degrees. Resident students enroll in their institution of choice and then graduate from their original campus without transferring anywhere else (Fauria & Fuller, 2015).

Students who transfer to a university campus from a community campus are categorized as vertical transfer students (Woods, 2013). These are the most common transfer student events.

If students transfer between university campuses or between one community college campus to another community college campus, they are considered lateral transfers (Woods, 2013).

Community Colleges to Four-Year Institutions

Community colleges usually offer liberal arts courses, transfer advising and counseling, and then conduct follow-up surveys on how transfer students are performing (Taylor & Jain, 2017; Walker & Okpala, 2017). Transfer students reported that four-year institutions provided less advising, counseling, or support and fewer faculty connections than the community colleges (Allen et al., 2014). They also reported that transfer students wanted more specialized advising since they had different needs and goals at a four-year institution compared to their non-transfer counterparts (Allen et al., 2014).

Advisors at community colleges are often viewed as pre-transfer advisors. According to Hayes, Linderman, Lukszo (2020), pre-transfer advising at a community college focused on helping students plan and complete a course of study that would eventually result in the successful transfer of credits to a university. In addition, community college advisors were perceived as taking an interest in the student including serving as a mentor.

Transfer Shock

When students transferred to four-year institutions, they might experience many different struggles. One of those challenges has been referred to as “transfer shock.” The term “transfer shock” was first used in 1965 to describe college students’ challenges in transitioning from their first postsecondary campus to the university (Woods, 2013). Transfer shock was described as a decrease in academic performance or Grade Point Average (GPA) when transitioning from a community college to the university (Harrick & Fullington, 2019). Research has shown that transfer can have a negative effect on students’ GPA, by almost .50 point (Townley et al., 2013).

They found that students who transferred from less competitive academic programs to more competitive academic programs had significant decreases in their GPAs.

There were many variables that can affect the severity of transfer shock. These variables included poor adjustment to the new campus, lack of connections to faculty, and lack of adequate study skills required for the elevated academic rigor, thus resulting in decreased GPA. Transfer shock was reported as the most difficult for those who make vertical transfers, moving from a community college to a university.

Research has been conducted to determine the resources needed to improve transfer student retention rates once students have started at their new campuses. An 11-year study conducted in 38 Texas institutions found that transfer students were four times less likely to complete their baccalaureate degree once they completed their first year at their four-year institutions (Fauria & Fuller, 2015).

Challenges and Barriers for Transfer Students

There are a number of barriers to degree completion for the transfer student who transitions from a community college to a university to complete their baccalaureate degree. A significant barrier has been the extended time to graduation due to credits lost in the act of transferring. Other challenges could be from not understanding degree requirements, not being fully prepared for the academic rigor of advanced course work, and financial and family-related concerns.

Credit Loss

Credit loss has been identified as a major concern for transfer students who may become frustrated when all of their credits do not transfer from the community college. Taylor and

Jain (2017) found 58% of transfer students lost less than 10% of their transfer credits which would be about six credits from a sixty-credit community college degree. These students could easily make up that small loss of credits and continue with their degrees. Unfortunately, 14% of community college transfer students lost more than 90% of their credits, meaning they only retained six credits so these students would essentially be starting over with their degree requirements after having already spent two years at a community college (Taylor & Jain, 2017). Another group of students, 28% of them, lost between 10% and 89% of their credits after transferring to a university (Taylor & Jain, 2017).

There are many reasons for credit loss from too low a grade to transfer, to no equivalent university course, to the course designation as vocational, or the courses were designed as remedial and not full academic designation. Often transfer students are completing remedial course work at their community colleges and are not fully prepared for the academic rigor of their receiving university. Other reasons for credit loss is the advisor at the community college was not informed by the student of their intent to transition to a four-year college and faulty advising. Another potential reason for credit loss is that the major the transfer student selected may have a number of sequenced pre-requisites that extends the time to major and degree completion. In addition, transfer students may have not comprehended the complete transfer process at their new campus which may result in frustration and slower progress to graduation.

Extended Semesters to Graduation

A concern related to credit loss was the additional semesters required to complete degree requirements and the time it took for transfer students to graduate. Transfer students could spend an additional two or three semesters at their four-year campuses because of the credit loss from going from community college to a university. For example, if the student must complete a

sequenced 45-credit major and take a related 25-credit minor, the student must attend an additional semester or semesters to complete their degrees.

Even worse, students could reach their maximum allowed credit hours for degree completion (150 credits, for example) and still not have the needed requirements for graduation (Yang et al. 2018). Researchers also examined how the extended amount of time to degree completion affected the financial aid impact on transfer students. On average, community college transfer students lost 13 credits by transferring to a public four-year university. This almost equaled one full semester. If a transfer student received Federal Direct Loans and Direct Subsidized Loans, the additional semester could have added \$3560 of tuition expense (GAO-17-574, 2017). Especially for nontraditional students, spending an extra semester or semesters at college means spending additional money and time and experiencing additional stress from working full-time and attending school, or from delaying the start of their new career.

Academic Readiness

An additional barrier for transfer students may have started prior to transferring. Many students will attend community colleges to complete developmental coursework, often to complete entry requirements for admission into a university (D'Amico et al., 2014). D'Amico et al. (2014) found that both traditional and non-traditional aged students struggled with college level academic rigors upon entering a four-year university, however the non-traditional aged students appeared to be less prepared. D'Amico et al. (2014) felt these students took remedial coursework primarily to earn college entry only and not to prepare themselves sufficiently for advanced courses at the four-year college.

Social Challenges

Community college students probably found it easy to form connections with their faculty and peers at their small community college campus. However, once the college student arrived at their larger university campus, connecting with faculty and peers may have seemed more difficult. Cheung et al. (2020) found that transfer students suffered from campus culture shock. This was due to lack of integration in social opportunities at the receiving campus, compared to those students who were direct entrants to the same four-year college (Nuñez & Yoshimi, 2017). Relationship building with faculty and peers was listed as a major concern for transfer students. Transfer students reported experiencing marginalization and struggling to feel a sense of validation from faculty and staff members at the receiving institution (Nuñez & Yoshimi, 2017). Students felt that the disconnect stemmed from the faculty and campus staff members not understanding the diversity of transfer students' needs. Transfer students, particularly those who were non-traditional and/or who lived off campus, may not have felt as connected to the campus as resident students. The transfer student may have struggled with social acclamation.

Transfer Student Capital

Only 14% of those who started at a community college graduated from a four-year, baccalaureate degree-granting university (Hayes et al., 2020). Hayes et al. (2020) found that many transfer students did not complete their advanced degrees due to a lower Transfer Student Capital (TSC). TSC can be defined as the knowledge that students accumulate and use to navigate the transfer process. TSC is characterized by a student's ability to comprehend and navigate credit/transcript transfer, admissions requirements of the receiving college, and what the course prerequisites were for the receiving college's major program (Hayes et al., 2020).

Harrick & Fullington (2019) termed the same phenomena as transfer fog where students get confused about the campus processes, technology procedures, or campus environment. This fog generally lifted after increased experiences and time spent on the campus.

Major Program Requirements

For some community college transfer students, not understanding the major, program or career best practices can be a major barrier. Students seeking a career in one of the health fields, for example, may not have a realistic understanding of the level of commitment required (Volino et al., 2015). For example, required clinical experience hours, additional laboratory experiment requirements and equipment and other health-specific related requirements may not have been understood by the transfer student. In addition, many degree programs have extensive drug and background testing and vetting that may eliminate some students. For example, any students in education or health fields have required comprehensive background checks and fingerprinting. Transfer students may not understand the program rigors.

High Impact Practices

Zilvinskis and Dumford (2018) found that when students transferred from one institution to another, the students reported most of their available time and energy was spent on navigation of the transfer process and stress about achieving good grades. Many students may not have felt they had the resources to participate in critical, high-impact practices. These practices might include participation in activities like learning communities, organizations, and study abroad experiences. Additional high impact activities include shadowing, practicum, and internship programs. Because of this lack of interaction, transfers seemed to have less participation and engagement in campus activities, which could have led to dissatisfaction. It is possible the

transfer student may have been so anxious about their grades that they may not have fully engaged in the high impact practices that they did complete.

Financial and Work Responsibilities

Other barriers for transfer students might have included a commute of some distance to attend university or responsibilities to families. In addition, transfer students might have had all of their support networks outside campus (York & Fernandez 2018). Schwehm (2017), discovered a growing transfer student demographic that included older adult students who worked full-time, had family responsibilities, and a support network of friends, family, church and social organizations that were not on campus. Fauria and Fuller (2015) also found that 63% of transfer college students were at least 24 years old, compared to 13% of non-transfers. Many transfer students have had to balance family life and work with their academics.

Commuting

Schwehm (2017) found that transfer to a university often exacerbated the college student's stress because the university location often required the student to go outside of the geographical proximity of their community college. Commuting to the university many miles away could create additional demands on the transfer students time and additional stress if commuting at night or in bad weather. In addition, many universities did not provide the resources for transfer students to meet as a group and did not provide a social network group or a dedicated location to meet. Students who transferred from small campuses to larger campuses struggled with social environment and finding student services or other services on campus (Allen et al., 2014). On the larger campus, transfer students may feel anonymous and isolated. Because of these marginalized feelings, transfers may not succeed or persist towards their degree.

Supports and Resources for Transfer Students

Transfer students reported four-year university campuses were ill prepared to accommodate the diverse backgrounds and needs of transfer students (Walker & Okpala, 2017). However, effective supports and resources can be provided that are tailored specifically for transfers.

Articulation Agreements

Articulation agreements are essential, formal, written agreements between community colleges and universities. The agreements detail requirements for each major, minor, and program of study, and provide details on completion of the baccalaureate degree. Contracts between the two entities facilitate smoother credit transfers by specifically describing and then publishing how credits taken at a community college will meet degree requirements at a receiving campus (GAO-17-574, 2017). These agreements must be updated and communicated frequently to transfer students to prevent credit loss. Many community college advisors have students complete an individual program plan that follows the university's articulation agreement, so each student has their own blueprint of what they need to do to get their credits to transfer.

Additionally, states can establish statewide articulation agreements as well. These policies or contracts allow for credit transfer that are applicable to all schools within the state. For example, Florida has a statewide articulation agreement designed to guarantee that students who earn an associate degree from a Florida community college can transfer at least 60 credits to one of the four-year public schools in the state (GAO-17-574, 2017). Depending on the major,

this may mean that a student could graduate in two additional years, or require additional semesters in a specialized degree program, such as education or health care with additional practicum requirements.

Pre-transfer and Specialized Transfer Advising

Maliszewski-Lukszo and Hayes (2020) conducted a study with 327 transfer students in a focus group. Pre-transfer advising was reported as very important to their successful transition from community college to a university. Successful pre-transfer advising had advisors act as institutional agents to provide resources, support, and specific opportunities to transfer students (Hayes et al., 2020). Advisors should possess knowledge of the transfer process, provide aid in setting realistic expectations, and help foster self-reliance in the transfer students. It was also important for both comprehensive advisors and faculty advisors to develop and maintain professional collegial relationships to help bolster self-confidence and motivate transfer students to obtain higher levels of achievement (Hayes et al., 2020). Additionally, transfer students who were successful in their transitions to their universities, had the same advisor throughout their community college education and had positive community college faculty interactions (Maliszewski-Lukszo & Hayes, 2020).

Coordinated Advising

Transfer advising was most beneficial when done concurrently at both the community college and the four-year institution. Chrystal et al. (2013) reported on the Admissions Partnership Program that was developed by Iowa State University. The APP established articulation agreements between Iowa community colleges and Iowa State University to provide a smooth transfer for students who wanted to attend Iowa State University. Transfer students were provided two advisors, one for each campus; received degree audits for their intended

major, and were guaranteed admission to ISU. The APP found that transfer students felt it was important to be assigned advisors at both institutions because it smoothed the transfer process and reduced the stress of moving to a university. Additionally, APP programs can help connect transfer students to campus resources for earlier and more effective access (Chrystal et al., 2013).

Academic Activities

Townley et al. (2013) recommended academic activities such as bridge programs, research opportunities, online forums, mentor programs, and learning communities to increase collaboration and help build social networks. These programs encouraged participation, and engagement in academic activities could build collaborative interactions with other students as well as foster a positive relationship with faculty members (Townley et al., 2013).

Faculty Mentoring

Required orientations and other events created immediate opportunities for building academic relationships and a foundation for future faculty-student mentoring partnerships (Volino et al., 2015). Volino et al. provided an example of a professional pharmacology department's White Coat Ceremony where students were officially gowned in their white coats to symbolize the students' new professional status. This created a sense of belonging to the professional group and provided the opportunity to discuss common research interests.

Service Learning

Transfer students who participated in at least one service-learning course heightened their sense of belonging (York & Fernandez, 2018). A secondary benefit was that students reported an improved sense of well-being. After applying research controls for other types of courses that had been shown to increase psychological well-being and intellectual engagement, York and Fernandez (2018) found service-learning courses had direct positive effects on transfer students.

STEPS to STEM Program

Another recommendation to improve academic performance and behavioral engagement for transfer students with science, technology, engineering, and math majors, was participation in a STEP's to STEM program (Townley et al., 2013). This program was designed to allow participating students to join special courses, learn about research internships, and have monthly gatherings with faculty to foster mentoring and provide advanced financial aid education sessions. The purpose of the sessions was to foster a sense of community, encourage additional interactions with faculty, and reduce transfer shock (Townley et al., 2013).

Additionally, scholarships specific to transfer students who pursued STEM majors offered incentives for successful completion of their degrees (Reiser-Wetzel & Debure, 2018). Reiser-Wetzel and Debure (2018) found that Eckerd College orchestrated a scholarship program called QuEST Scholars. This program provided encouragement to transfer students who wanted to graduate with a bachelor's degree in biology, Eckerd College's most popular major. This program was designed to provide additional mentoring for the STEM transfer students as well as award scholarships to help offset their financial burdens. Reiser-Wetzel and Debure (2018) found that 86% of transfer students entering the QuEST Scholars program, graduated with a STEM major, compared to 65% of non-Quest Scholars who graduated with a STEM major. Especially for transfer students entering a STEM major, it is very helpful to participate in a specific STEM transfer program.

Summary

There are increasing numbers of transfer students who are attending four-year institutions to earn their baccalaureate degrees. In 2017, 44% of all entering students were transfer students (Nuñez & Yoshimi, 2017). Transfer students are defined as any undergraduate student who has received college level credits from one or more institutions of higher education. This definition does not include international students, permanent residents, dual enrollment high school students, or post-secondary education options (PSEO) program students (Matthews, 2015).

Most of the transfer students attending a four-year institution are vertical transfers, having completed a two-year degree at a community college (Woods, 2013). These students generally enter the university as juniors with at least 60 college credits towards their 120 or more required college credits for a degree. Generally, the students have completed most, if not all, of their liberal arts courses, but very few of their courses for their majors. Transfer students often experience transfer shock after their first semester when their grades are lower than they anticipated. In addition, their course credit statement may indicate many fewer credits transferred than they anticipated.

There are many challenges in addition to transfer shock that create difficulties for transfer students. Credit loss, including additional semesters required to complete their degree, lack of academic readiness for some of the courses in their majors, and social challenges in adjusting to a new campus may all cause difficulties for the transfer student (Taylor & Jain, 2017; Yang et al. 2018). In addition, the student may not have sufficient Transfer Student Capital, and may not have been aware or prepared for the major program requirements for their degree (Hayes et al., 2020). The universities' high impact practices, including clinicals and internships that enhance the students' educational experiences, may not be as effective for transfer students because of

their other financial and work responsibilities. These other responsibilities to retain work and balance home and school demands create stress (Zilvinskis & Dumford, 2018). Commuting can also cause additional anxiety for the transfer student since universities are larger and more regional in nature and often require long commutes (York & Hernandez, 2018; Schwehm, 2017; Fauria & Fuller, 2015; Allen et al. 2020).

Researchers suggested supports that could assist transfer students including: formal, frequently updated articulation agreements, pre-transfer advising, and coordinated advising between the community colleges and the four-year institutions (Chrystal et al., 2013; Hayes et al., 2020; Makiszewski et al., 2020). Other researchers recommended academic activities, faculty mentoring, and service-learning programs.

Townley et al. (2013) discovered that peer mentoring was helpful to transfer students majoring in STEM majors to make connections to campus and their major programs. However, this study comprised of only 53 students. To determine whether this a viable solution, more research should be done with larger groups of students to justify university programs and resources. Walker and Okpala (2017) concurred and found transfer students preferred peer mentors.

Dupont (2010) found that student searches of university websites provided generally helpful information about transfer to their campuses. However, further research should be conducted to discover best practices regarding website information for this population. This is supported by research conducted by Hayes et al. (2020) that students are using websites as advising tools, because advising is not always mandatory or helpful at every campus. Transfer students may be accustomed to this type of website information and will register for courses

themselves using online tools that they have discovered online. More research is needed to determine how to properly support transfer students online.

Chapter Three: Conclusions and Recommendations

Transfer students need specialized services to successfully transition to a university to complete a baccalaureate degree. Providing general orientation and resources for transfer students that are the same as those that new freshman receive has been ineffective. Research has shown that the transfer student body has many different demographic sub-categories, different levels of completed college credits, life experiences, and backgrounds (Walker & Okpala, 2017).

It has been found that transfer students can take many different pathways to achieving their goal of earning a baccalaureate degree. Vertical transfer from a two-year community college or junior college to a four-year institution are the most common (Woods, 2013). Other transfer students may have started at one four-year university and then changed to a different university to complete their degree. These students are classified as taking the horizontal pathway (Woods, 2013). These students may experience some of the same difficulties in transitioning to a university as vertical transfers (Taylor & Jain, 2017).

There are many barriers that can prevent transfer students from earning their baccalaureate degree. Transfer shock was found to be a very common barrier resulting from an unexpected decrease in a student's GPA at their new campuses (Fauria & Fuller, 2015). The lowered GPA can be caused by the student not being adequately prepared for the academic rigors of their new courses and programs or not knowing where to find campus resources for academic support, such as tutoring services (Townley et al., 2013). It may also be related to a transfer student's unrealistic expectations of the university. While the student may have been the top student in their community college classes, they may find now that they are on a much larger campus, they are competing with a much larger, and potentially better prepared and more motivated student group, particularly in courses in the major course of study (Allen et al., 2014).

Transfer students must also overcome the shock and disappointment of losing credits. This credit loss can exist due to remedial or technical classes that are taken at community college but not accepted at the four-year university (Matthews, 2015). For example, the technical college course, Business English, frequently has not been accepted at a university. Transfer students generally lost on average 13 credits when they transferred to a university. This could potentially add an additional semester of course work to a student's time to degree completion at their receiving campus.

Another challenge for transfer students has been students lack of knowledge about their university including the majors, programs, and graduation requirements. According to Harrick and Fullington (2019), the diverse backgrounds, geographic location, type of transfer student, and financial situations of transfer students, meant an umbrella approach to transfer orientation is impossible to guarantee transfer student success. Additionally, the characteristic and mission differences between community colleges, junior colleges, and universities introduce significant barriers to prevent transfer student success. Transfer students reported feeling isolated because they could not find resources and support services and did not feel connected to their peers or faculty on campus (Harrick & Fullington, 2019).

Researchers recommended several strategies to increase transfer student success in transitioning from community colleges to four-year colleges. Community college and four-year university advisors and faculty were considered vital in improving the transition for transfer students. These advisors need to be organized, knowledgeable, and have full academic comprehension of multiple programs (Packard et al., 2013). Packard et al. suggested that community college faculty serve as mentors, sharing their experiences from their time as college students.

Chrystal et al. (2013) recommended formal, current, well-communicated articulation agreements to prevent excessive credit loss during the transfer process. These formal agreements between community colleges and universities specifically articulate which classes taken at the community college are equivalent to a university class and are guaranteed to meet academic requirements at the receiving campus. Articulation agreements can reduce the amount of credit loss and prevent transfers from taking extra time to degree achievement. Additional semesters add extra costs and financial stress and may prevent the transfer student from achieving their degree goals. York and Fernandez (2018) recommended transfer student participation in service-learning projects to increase connections with faculty and peers. Additional transfer student advisor training would be recommended for community college and university advisors to facilitate transfer student success (Hayes et al., 2020).

The receiving campus should hold orientations specific to the multiple needs of transfer students. Four-year universities need to offer faculty mentoring opportunities along with service-learning coursework to encourage and bolster transfer student's self-confidence which can aid in preventing transfer shock (Fauria & Fuller, 2015). Campuses that are admitting transfer students should also offer additional support to shield transfer students from feeling marginalized. Townley et al. (2013) discovered that peer mentoring was helpful to transfer students majoring in STEM majors to make connections to campus and their major programs. However, this study comprised of only 53 students. To determine whether this a viable solution, more research should be done with larger groups of students to justify university programs and resources. Walker and Okpala (2017) concurred and found transfer students preferred peer mentors.

These recommendations are given to improve the transition of transfer students and promote degree completion for those who are committed to successfully completing their four-year baccalaureate degree.

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