Improving Transfer Student Pathways: What Students are Telling Us

Tuesday, November 30, 2021
James Wiley
Eduventures Principal Analyst

James focuses on helping stakeholders understand the success criteria for technology and on ensuring alignment between their technology applications and organizational goals.
Today’s Conversation

What We Will Cover

• In this session, we will explore four questions:
  1. The top concerns of prospective transfer students
  2. How prospective and retrospective student subgroups vary in their concerns
  3. Areas where retrospective transfer students could have used more help
  4. How to retain transfer students after they enroll
What is the current state of transfer pathways?
Current State

Data Challenges

- **Sources**: Varied sources exist, including IPEDS, National Student Clearinghouse, College Complete America, etc.
- **Scope**: Sources differ in terms of whether they cover all Title IV institutions or samples
- **Student Coverage**: Sources vary in terms of cohort analysis, all students enrolled in the current, or include dual enrollment students
- **Transfer-Out Definition**: Sources define “transfer-out” differently, i.e., student leaves one institution and enrolls for four or more months, or students have transferred to an eligible institution
- **Level of Disaggregation**: Sources vary in terms of how data can be disaggregated, i.e., race/ethnicity, gender, Pell Grant recipients, full- and part-time students, etc.
Current State

Too Few Community College Students Achieve Bachelor’s Degrees

Source: National Student Clearinghouse, Tracking Transfer (2021 Update)
Too Many Students Suffer Credit Loss

Current State

Average Credits Earned

Average Credits Transferred

- 2-year to 2-year
- 2-year to 4-year
- 4-year to 2-year
- 4-year to 4-year
- Overall
Current State

Students Face Additional Hurdles

- Transfer Shock
- Credit Loss
- Extended Semesters to Graduation
- Academic Readiness
- Social Challenges
- Transfer Student Capital
- Major Program Requirements
- Financial and Work Responsibilities
- Commuting
- High Impact Practices

Additional Hurdles
Who are the survey respondents?
What are the top concerns of prospective and retrospective transfer students?
Top Concerns

Prospective Students and Retrospective Students Overall

Category: ● Prospective Students ● Retrospective Students

- Credits won't transfer
- More debt upon graduation
- Less financial aid
- Difficult transfer process
- Longer time to degree completion
- Need to make new friends
- Regrets about my decision
- Classes might be too challenging
- Might not like my new school
- Not sure where to find information
- No concerns
- Other
## Top Concerns

### Prospective Students by Subgroups

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<tr>
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<th>Group</th>
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## Top Concerns

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Top Concerns

Prospective Students Overall Longitudinal

Year: 2019 - 2021

- More debt upon graduation
- Less financial aid
- Credits won’t transfer
- Difficult transfer process
- Longer time to degree completion
- Regrets about my decision
- Need to make new friends
- Classes might be too challenging
- Might not like my new school
- Not sure where to find information
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Top Concerns

Retrospective Students Overall Longitudinal

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Improving Transfer Student Pathways: What Students are Telling Us

What are the areas where students could have used more help?
More Help Needed

Advising Help From Receiving Institutions

- The school selection process
- Getting my credits transferred
- The transfer application process
- Advising help at my new school
- Advising help from the school I had been attending
- Getting transcripts to the schools I applied to
- Other

Source: 2021 Transfer Student Survey, Eduventures
Improving Transfer Student Pathways: What Students are Telling Us

How might we help to retain transfer students after they enroll?
Retaining Transfer Students Post-Enrollment

Retention Challenges

- Incomplete Information
- Social Isolation
- Remedial Requirements
- Credit Loss
- Time to Completion
- Low GPA
- Work/Life Balance
- Financial Aid
- Preparedness
- Distance
- Major Declaration
Retaining Transfer Students Post-Enrollment

Survey Points to Potential Challenges

Important Factors Related to Transfer

- Academic rigor
- Acceptance likelihood
- Athletics
- Availability of on-campus housing
- Cost of housing and other expenses
- Cost of tuition
- Credits would transfer
- Financial aid available
- Friends or family members attend
- Likelihood of getting a degree
- Location
- Majors availability
- Online courses/programs available
- Other
- School prestige or reputation
- School ranking
- Size of school
- Student services (tutoring, support, career services, etc.)
Retaining Transfer Students Post-Enrollment

Two Current Strategies

1. Make Transfer Student Success a Priority
   - Communicate transfer as a key component of the institution’s mission.
   - Share data to increase understanding of the need to improve transfer student outcomes—and the benefits of doing so.
   - Dedicate significant resources to support transfer students.

2. Create Clear Programmatic Pathways with Aligned High-Quality Instruction
   - Work collaboratively with colleagues from partner institutions to create major-specific program maps.
   - Provide rigorous instruction and other high-quality academic experiences to prepare students for four-year programs.
   - Establish regular, reliable processes for updating and improving program maps.
   - Design unconventional pathways, as necessary.

3. Provide Tailored Transfer Student Advising

   **Community College Advising Practices**
   - Clearly articulate students’ transfer options and help them determine, as early as possible, their field of interest, major, and preferred transfer destination.
   - Continuously monitor student progress, provide frequent feedback, and intervene quickly when students are off-track.
   - Help students access the financial resources necessary to achieve their goals.

   **Four-Year College Advising Practices**
   - Commit dedicated personnel, structures, and resources for transfer students.
   - Assign advisors and clearly communicate essential information to prospective transfer students.
   - Strongly encourage transfer students to choose a major prior to transfer.
   - Replicate elements of the first-year experience for transfer students.
   - Exercise fairness in financial aid allocation.

Source: The Transfer Playbook, The Community College Research Center, Columbia University

Source: Tackling Transfer Policy Advisory Board, The Transfer Reset
Retaining Transfer Students Post-Enrollment

Supporting All Touchpoints
Improving Transfer Student Pathways: What Students are Telling Us

Future Research Areas
Future Research Questions

Where Our Research Might Go

• Going forward, we would like to focus on other areas of transfer student-related research, such as:

  1. Developing transfer student types for retrospective students
  2. Exploring the collection and dissemination of data related to transfer students
  3. Areas where other technologies (artificial intelligence, for example) might help improve transfer student pathways
  4. Ways to measure the impacts of credit loss
Additional Resources
Johanna Trovato breaks down the latest findings of Eduventures Transfer Student Research into practical insights you can immediately apply to your transfer student marketing strategy.

- Who are the six Transfer Student Types?
- What motivates them?
- When does each Type consider transferring schools?
- What are each Type’s top college search sources?

Use these findings to make more informed decisions about your transfer student marketing strategies.
ON DEMAND

November Transfer Student Series
Transfer Student Engagement Strategies: The Power of Video and Custom Audience Targeting

We reveal how institutions can begin using specific transfer student engagement strategies to impact their upcoming semester’s transfer enrollment, covering:

• How today’s prospective students say they want to hear from colleges according to the latest Eduventures® Student Sentiment Research
• Which specific social and video digital strategies are most effective
• How to leverage the rich targeting criteria that exists on YouTube to capture more transfer prospects at the beginning of their searches for new schools to call home
• How Next-Gen Custom Audience Targeting can play a central role in any transfer recruitment strategy

encoura.org/webinars
Thank you.

ANY QUESTIONS?

James Wiley
Principal Analyst for Technology

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E: james.wiley@nrccua.org

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