Examining College Transfer Student Integration: A Case Study Approach

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Introduction and Literature Review

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- Students transferring between institutions has increased 21% since 2007 (MDHE, 2012).

- State-funded programs encourage high school students to begin at community colleges.

- 21% of incoming class

Introduction and Literature Review

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- Seamless transition $=$ advising on both ends, orientation, and integrative opportunities (Townsend & Wilson, 2006)
- Multiple college adjustment periods (Laanan, 2001; Townsend, 2008)

- Tinto's (1987, 1993) model of student departure
- Students undergo integrative experiences

Purpose and Objectives

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Purpose

- Describe the academic and social integration of college transfer students within colleges of agriculture.

Objectives

1) What do College of Food, Agriculture, and Natural Resources (CAFNR) admissions staff and academic advisors identify doing for transfer students?

2) What challenges do transfer students encounter through the transfer experience?

3) How do CAFNR transfer students integrate into their academic and social environments?

Qualitative Methodology

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- Multiple case study design (Yin, 2009)
- Supporting forms of data: Interviews, Field notes, Document analysis
- Open coding of verbatim transcripts
- Pragmatic lens
- One researcher former transfer student
- Faculty (DUS) ($n = 4$), College Admissions ($n = 1$), Students ($n = 8$)

- 7 themes emerged
  - 3 Advising
  - 4 student

Findings: Advisor Themes

- **<u>Varied approaches to advising are important to guide transfer student to degree completion</u>**.

"One thing we attempt to do as much as possible all of the time is to honest and transparent…in what will and won't transfer"

"First thing we need to do is sit down, look at the classes they took [transferring in] and see which classes transfer here…And I generally tell them right off, the chances of you finishing in two years are very small…"

"…transfer students have a false sense of what it's going to be like at Mizzou. The expectations of the transfer students coming in has changed tremendously."

"it's not unusual for that student to come into the UM and drop a letter grade. "

Findings: Advisor Themes

- **<u>Programmatic opportunities exist, but transfer students are minimally addressed.</u>**

"there's been discussions about [frustrations with transfer students] but not overall activities other than individual advising visits."

"I suppose we don't single them out. But I don't think we have treated them special…maybe we do need a special orientation program."

- **<u>Students often have broad regrets regarding their transfer experience.</u>**

"I have had a couple of really good transfer students who told me that they wished they had never gone to the CC,"

"Often, the reduction in grades in combination with a new environment changes their self-image somewhat…"

Findings: Student Themes

- **Assumptions about students' prior knowledge and experience are communicated to transfer students.**

"[Orientation] was directed toward TSs but most of the day was just watching a video about Mizzou, and then we had an advising appointment."

"people just assume I know what classes to take and that I know what the next step is."

- **Identity in the new environment is facilitated through relationship development.**

"Those relationships [faculty] have made me feel more a part of my department and campus."

"You have the big school with everything going on here, but [in COA] you still feel like you belong at a certain place."

Findings: Student Themes

- **Quality resources and services from institutions assist the transfer process.**

"…having great people here made it transition a lot easier here."

"[Advising] was more upfront and honest here, he told me how it was going to be…"

"I used the online database just looking up requirements of each class and which ones I had to have."

- **Multiple motivational sources propel students through the degree process.**

"[classes] are harder, your professors expect more and expect me to do stuff, they notice when you're not in class."

"I wanted to make myself proud, I guess, that's influenced me to continue doing well."

"you know it's a lot of busting your rear to get a small piece of paper in the end but that was motivating, that degree hanging on my wall."

The Themes

- **1) Varied approaches to advising are important to guide transfer student to degree completion.**

- **2) Programmatic opportunities exist, but transfer students are minimally addressed.**

- **3) Students often have broad regrets regarding their transfer experience.**

- **1) Assumptions about students' prior knowledge and experience are communicated to transfer students.**

- **2) Identity in the new environment is facilitated through relationship development.**

- **3) Quality resources and services from institutions assist the transfer process.**

- **4) Multiple motivational sources propel students through the degree process.**

Conclusions & Recommendations

- Academic and Social relationships integral and supported.
- Maybe seasoned students, still need services and considerations of any new student.
- Academic planning and planning for transfer early and throughout
- Greater presence in 2-year colleges.
- Detailed online presence
- "Boot Camp" or short-term orientation focused on transfer students

Questions?