

A POLICY AUDIT: First-Year Students vs Transfer Students How Do They Measure Up?



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John N. Gardner, President

 **John N. Gardner Institute**
FOR EXCELLENCE IN UNDERGRADUATE EDUCATION

I am indebted to the following institutions for teaching me the most important things I have learned about transfer student success.

I and my non-profit organization have worked with the following two and four-year colleges and universities since 2007 in the Foundations of Excellence[®] Transfer Focus Process...

Transfer Focus: Four-Year Institutions

American Public University System

Arizona State University

CUNY Brooklyn College

CUNY Lehman College

CUNY Queens College

East Carolina University

Georgia Gwinnett College

Illinois State University

Indiana University Kokomo

Indiana University Purdue University Indianapolis

Kean University

Kennesaw State University

Lourdes College

Northwood University

Shenandoah University

State University of New York at Oswego

State University of New York College at Brockport

Texas A&M University-San Antonio

University of Central Florida

University of Houston-Clear Lake

University of Maine Fort Kent

University of Northern Iowa

University of Southern Maine

University of Texas Brownsville

University of Texas El Paso

Transfer Focus: Two-Year Institutions

Ashland Community and Technical College
Big Sandy Community and Technical College
Bluegrass Community and Technical College
Bossier Parish Community College
Columbus State Community College
Elizabethtown Community College
El Paso Community College
Gateway Community and Technical College
Hazard Community and Technical College
Henderson Community College
Hopkinsville Community College
Jefferson Community and Technical College
District

Kirkwood Community College
Lone Star College-Montgomery
Lone Star College-North Harris
Madisonville Community College
Malcolm X College
Massachusetts Bay Community College
Maysville Community and Technical College
Mercer County Community College
Minnesota State Community and Technical
College

Transfer Focus: Two-Year Institutions

NorthWest Arkansas Community College

Olive-Harvey College

Owensboro Community and Technical College

Palo Alto College

San Antonio College

Somerset Community College

Southcentral Kentucky Community and

Technical College

Southeast Kentucky Community and Technical

College

St. Cloud Technical & Community College

Truman College

Waubonsee Community College

Waycross College Merged into South Georgia
College

West Kentucky Community and Technical
College

A POLICY AUDIT: First-Year Students vs Transfer Students How Do They Measure Up?



Following is a simple tool / template for you to conduct your own initial policy analysis of the relative status at your institution of the relative status of both populations of students.

Basically, this is an inventory of the policies that are directed towards transfer students and which can be used to compare with comparable policies for first-year students.

Consider then the relative policies applying to first-year versus transfer students for:

Initial Policy Analysis Template

- Application deadlines for admission
- Capacity for slots: total institutional and in academic sub units in any given academic term
- Financial aid awards: institutional monies, need versus merit based, special awards for first-year versus transfer students—amounts and eligibility guidelines

Initial Policy Analysis Template

- Continued eligibility for such awards after first year of enrollment
- Eligibility for on-campus residential accommodations
- Application deadlines for housing
- Priority for allocation of available spaces in housing
- Eligibility for participation in student organizations, clubs, teams, student government, etc.

Initial Policy Analysis Template

- Eligibility for leadership positions in student organizations
- Allocation for admission slots into high demand majors
- Registration priority and deadlines
- Availability of student organizations devoted to supporting this cohort
- Availability of special orientation and advising initiatives to support this cohort

Initial Policy Analysis Template

- Stipulations that certain forms of student support be required versus optional for these populations
- The existence on campus of a high level academic officer with specific responsibility for the welfare of this cohort
- In like manner, the existence of an advocate, at the institutional level, for the needs of this population, other than and beyond processing by Enrollment Management

Initial Policy Analysis Template

- The priority for making available “High Impact Practices”
- The availability of a college success course for this cohort
- The availability of such curricular cohorts as learning communities
- Availability of opportunities for on-campus employment
- Availability of opportunities for internships, practicum experiences and study abroad (with financial aid support)

Initial Policy Analysis Template

- Internal systems of accountability for retention and graduation rates for this population
- A priority for addressing needs of this population as expressed in the institution's strategic plan
- Being on the priority list and attention agenda for senior leaders and spokespersons
- A priority for gathering, analyzing, discussing institutional research data

Survey of Transfer Practitioners

- February 2017 – distributed at NISTS/NACAC to front line professionals working with transfer students.
- Included forced-choice and open-ended questions on transfer-related items.
- About 100 respondents from 27 U.S. states, DC, and BC.
- Open ended responses coded to determine broad themes.
- 76.3% of respondents were from transfer-receiving institutions.

Closed-Ended Responses

Commitment to Transfer

- 59.8% indicated that institutional priority for transfer increased in past two years. 33% said that it stayed the same.
- Current institutional commitment to transfer:
 - High: 26.8%
 - Medium: 51.6%
 - Low: 21.6%
- 54% claimed their institution undertook a project that improved transfer outcomes in the last three years.

Transfer's "Home" on Campus

Most common location for transfer:

- Enrollment Management – 50%
- Academic Affairs – 17.6%
- Student Affairs – 15.3%
- “Other” – 12.2%
- Student Success – 5.1%
- “Other” included multiple offices, Admissions/Recruitment, Advising, Transfer Advisors within colleges, orientation office, and one direct report to President.

Visibility of Transfer

- 26.5% have a designated Transfer Center
- 26.5% have a comprehensive transfer strategic plan.
- 47.8% could identify a “transfer advocate” – a senior leader with responsibility for coordinating transfer support.
- 59.2% stated there was no institutional group to solve transfer issues.
- 61.5% stated there was no structured process to share transfer data.

Orientation & Collaboration

- 21.6% offer a Transfer Seminar.
- 55% of sending institutions include transfer in NSO.
- 58.1% of receiving institutions mandate transfer orientation.
- 64.2% of institutions participate in a state or regional transfer network.
- 29.9% report “strong” relationships with transfer partners. 55.7% “moderate.” 14% “Weak” or “nonexistent.”
- 50.5% claim 5 or more transfer partners.

Open-Ended Responses

What is most essential for an institution to have, do, or provide, to earn the descriptor “transfer-student-friendly?”

Category	Responses	%
Policy	86	33.86%
Staff	41	16.14%
Academics	33	12.99%
Programs	30	11.81%
Leadership	24	9.45%
Info Access	18	7.09%
Infrastructure	13	5.12%
Financial	9	3.54%
Grand Total	254	

Policy - Effective Set of Institutional Policies (minimizing lost credit, credit evaluation, equitable admissions policies, credit for prior learning.)

Staff - Dedicated, visible staff for students to access.

Academics - Publicly available pathways and articulations, transfer seminar

Programs - Orientation, tutoring, honors

Leadership - Upper administration and faculty leaders committed to transfer

Info Access - Readily available data, academic requirements, financial aid info, communication, and marketing

Infrastructure - Visible Transfer Center, living-learning communities

Financial - equitable scholarships & aid

Name one replicable approach you have observed that is effective for accomplishing collaboration between transfer partners.

Category	Responses	%
Academic Partnerships	43	30.07%
Cross-Institutional Review	33	23.08%
Student Services	24	16.78%
Staffing	23	16.08%
Information Availability	14	9.79%
Professional Development	3	2.10%
Statewide Efforts	2	1.40%
Grand Total	142	

Academic Partnerships – Pathways, articulation agreements, reverse transfer, 3+1 agreements, completer degrees.

Cross-Institutional Review – regular meetings among faculty & staff between institutions, regular reviews of curricula and equivs, discussions between admissions, relationship building.

Student Services – campus visits, bridge programs & orientation, mentoring, transfer center operations.

Staffing – having specific, dedicated transfer staff at both leadership and advising levels. Embedding four year advisors at two year schools.

Information availability – available course equivs, transfer fairs, seminars, statewide availability of information

What would help make transfer issues a higher priority for institutional leaders?

Category	Responses	%
Provide Relevant Outcome Data	49	38.58%
Financial Impact of Transfer	27	21.26%
Marketing	19	14.96%
Faculty & Staff Engagement	14	11.02%
Professional Development	7	5.51%
Staffing	6	4.72%
Institutional Self-Study	5	3.94%
Grand Total	127	

Outcome data – demographic data on transfer students, especially how many there are in the student body; retention & graduation rates; levels of student satisfaction. (Who are these students and how are they doing?)

Financial impact – budgetary impact on institution, as well as financial issues facing this population.

Marketing – outward acceptance of transfer, student testimonials, increased targeting of transfer students and publicizing pathways. Joint marketing with partners.

Faculty & Staff Engagement – curriculum alignment and course equivalency processes; faculty and staff keeping pressure on upper administration to emphasize transfer from a grassroots level

What are gaps in transfer research that need to be addressed?

Category	Responses	%
Transfer Student Outcomes	33	24.63%
Descriptive Data	31	23.13%
Support Program Evaluation	17	12.69%
Institution and Major Choice Process	14	10.45%
Effects of State and Federal Policy	12	8.96%
Institutional Policy Impact	11	8.21%
Improving Funding Performance Measures	5	3.73%
Interstate Transfer Effects	4	2.99%

Transfer Student Outcomes – retention, graduation rates; reverse transfer; excess credit accumulation; gateway courses; success rates by major; residential vs. nonresidential.

Descriptive data – general demographics or data for particular student groups (veterans, dual enrollment, underrepresented populations, middle income students), and their outcomes on the financial bottom line.

Support program evaluation – how well do institutional supports for transfer students actually work?

Institution and Major Choice Process – how do transfer students choose where they start and where they hope to complete?

Contact

John N. Gardner, President

gardner@jngi.org

828-885-6014

jngi.org

