Listening to the Voices of our Transfer Students in order to Create Meaningful Initiatives

Lauren Prepose-Forsen, EdD & Nicole Mitani, MSCP
University of Hawai‘i at Mānoa & Honolulu Community College
ALOHA from the University of Hawaiʻi System
64.3% Hawai‘i (in-state)
29.7% Out-of-State & U.S. National
6.0% International
140 Countries & Regions Represented

60% Top 25% in H.S.
61.8% Female
3.64 Avg. H.S. GPA
1169 Avg. SAT Scores (1051 National Avg.)
18,025 Total Fall 2020 Enrollment (13,203 Undergraduate, 4,822 Graduate, 352 Law, 441 Medicine)
In 2020, transfer students comprised about 40% of UH Mānoa’s (UHM) degree-seeking undergraduate student population.
% of Transfers from each of our UH Community Colleges

Manoa Institutional Research Office (MIRO), July 2021 eNewsletter
1.7 Million
new students enroll in a
community college each year

80%
plan to get a
bachelor’s degree
or higher
National Scene continued...

- Tracked 720,000 community college students who started in the Fall of 2007 in pursuit of a college credential:
  - Only 100,000 earned a bachelor’s after 6 years
  - Only 33% of students who started at a community college in Fall of 2007 transferred to a four-year school
  - Of the students who successfully transferred only 42% went on to get a bachelor’s within 6 years of starting their college credential

Public Agenda, Community College Research Center, Aspen Institute (2016)
So what’s holding transfer students back?

**Institutional Barriers:**
- Articulation issues
- Credit loss
- Inaccurate advising
- Policies & procedures
- Lack of information available online
- Delayed admission notifications and transcript evaluations
- Misinformation from campus communication systems
- Lack of support services
- Financial aid availability
- Cost of attendance
- Commute/Traffic
- Housing/Higher cost of living
- Campus culture
- Relocating

**Social Emotional Barriers:**
- Sense of belonging
- Self efficacy
- Anxiety, fear, and confusion
- Transitional trauma
- Transfer shock
- Lack of support system

**Other Barriers:**
- Catastrophic Disturbances
- Lack of academic preparedness
- Need to work part-time or full-time to support extended family
Transfer Student Panel Workshop Idea

- Fall 2019 - student commented on transfer experience to Honolulu Community College (HCC) Administrator

- Achieving the Dream (ATD) Conference breakout session on “Student Voices” in February 2020

- Counseling mentor’s philosophy - student feedback is important (qualitative)

- HCC Strategic Plan (2016-2021) & UHM Strategic Plan (2015-2025) included transfer benchmarks

- University of Hawaiʻi System Transfer Study

- Communicated idea with UH Mānoa Transfer Specialist
Methodology

Recruitment of former transfer students

1) Created a list of students (name, email address, major at HCC & UHM, semester they started at UHM)
   - who we worked with that transferred to UHM in recent semesters
   - highlighted those who had challenges with school

2) Ran a report in STAR (student registration system) of students who graduated and transferred for at least one semester at UHM

3) Asked other advisors/counselors if they had any potential students that would be a good panelist.
Methodology Continued…

4) Email invitation sent to students on the list.

Aloha,

I am working on hosting a transfer student panel at Honolulu CC and I am kindly asking if you would like to participate and be a part of this panel. There will be a set of questions given to you prior to the workshop and all of the questions will pertain to your experience with the transfer process from Honolulu CC to UH Mānoa. Your voice will be valuable to faculty, staff, and other students to learn about your experiences and how the campus can improve its transfer efforts.

If you are interested, please email me back. Hope to hear from you soon.
Methodology Continued...

5) Managed list on who was willing to participate

6) After panelist were confirmed, sent out a Doodle poll to schedule the workshop date/time with participating students
   - Length of workshop - 1 hour
   - Location - Virtual (due to COVID-19 pandemic)
   - **Challenge** - finding a day/time for all of them to be available for the workshop

7) Communicated via email on selected date/time and sent Zoom invitations
   - Sent out consent waivers to be recorded and testimonials to be used in presentations, data, etc.
Methodology Continued...

9) Sent email reminders one week prior to the workshop

10) Partnered with TRIO program to help coordinate workshop

- TRIO managed the marketing & recruitment/registration of workshops to students and faculty
- Announcement and invitation was made to departments or student services that work with transfer students
Panelists consisted of...

Spring 2020
- 2 females (Human Development and History)
- Transferred to UH Manoa in Fall 2019 and Fall 2017

Fall 2020
- 2 females and 1 male (Human Development, Nursing, and Social Work)
- Transferred to UH Manoa in Fall 2019, Fall 2018, Spring 2019

Spring 2021
- 3 females and 1 male (Human Development and Social Work)
- Transferred to UH Manoa in Fall 2019 (2x), Fall 2016, Spring 2019
Panelist Questions

1) What challenges did you encounter when transferring?

2) What or who was helpful when transferring?

3) What tips would you give faculty and staff to improve the transfer process?

4) What tips would you give to potential transfer students?
What Challenges did you Encounter when Transferring?

- Emotional barriers - “Feeling scared of starting at a new place”.

- Financial hardships - “No money to pay the orientation fee”.

- Lack of support - “My parents didn’t understand why I wanted to transfer and obtain a higher degree”.

- Lack of knowledge about UH Mānoa’s policies and procedures - “I didn’t know the nursing program had a separate application process and admission requirements”.

- Misadvising
What or who was helpful when transferring?

- People who were knowledgeable and care - e.g. academic advisors
- Support programs - e.g. TRIO
- Planning ahead - e.g. understanding changes in curriculum
- Peer support
What tips would you give faculty/staff to improve the transfer process?

- Provide opportunities for students to connect - “It makes a difference having someone who has experienced transferring”.
- Career/Major Exploration - “Knowing what the different majors are would have been helpful”.
- Discuss emotional and mental concerns about transferring - “Talk about stigma and not having the confidence to transfer”.
- Encourage students to use their resources
- “Have some kind of program to understand all of this”.
What tips would you give to potential transfer students?

- Don‘t be afraid to ask for help - “If you have questions, just ask”.
- Build relationships with your advisors, professors, and peers - “When your in class, just introduce yourself to the person sitting next to you”.
- Get involved at UH Mānoa - “Join the peer mentoring program”.
- “Check your email”.
- Plan ahead - “Know where to park and where the shuttle stops”.
- Understand your UH Mānoa degree requirements - “It helped to understand the general education requirements early”.
- Utilize your resources
What did we do with the feedback/data?

- Created IS 100 Transfer Seminar course (1 credit)
- Shared the data with academic counselors, Dean of Student Services, and Liberal Arts Dean, and other UH Manoa Transfer Specialists
- Met to discuss feedback and brainstorm ideas = stronger relationship between Honolulu CC and UH Manoa
Plans for the future

1) Continue to offer student panel workshops and evaluate feedback

2) Evaluate IS 100 course and make improvements as needed
   ● Track students who took the course to determine if the course was helpful in their transition
   ● If the course is deemed successful, continue to offer the course

3) Other initiatives
   ● Peer mentoring program
   ● Obtain funding to offer the class to students for free
   ● Advocate for transfer student scholarship opportunities
Tips and Takeaways For Your Campus

1) Student List
   ● Where can you obtain a list of transfer students?
   ● Reflect on students who you have directly worked with (good and not-so-good relationships/experiences)
   ● Have a variety of majors on this list
   ● Try to have different panelists (not repeat panelists for data purposes)

2) Invitation/Communication method - email?

3) Panel Modality
   ● Workshop or focus group?
   ● Who can you partner with (e.g. Student Life events, TRIO, etc.)?
   ● Live, zoom, recorded?
   ● When / How often/ Length?
   ● Do you set date/time in invitation email or after panelists provide availability?
   ● Be cautious of # of panelists (more panelists = more time needed)
   ● What questions do you want to ask students?
   ● Audience - students only? or would faculty/staff/administrators be attending?

4) Student incentives (i.e. what types of incentives can you provide for your panelists)?

5) What will you do with the feedback?
Let’s Connect!

Lauren Prepose-Forsen, EdD
Transfer Specialist
Assistant Faculty
lprepose@hawaii.edu
University of Hawaiʻi at Mānoa
Mānoa Transfer Coordination Center

Nicole Mitani, MSCP
Counselor
Assistant Faculty
niwasaki@hawaii.edu
Honolulu Community College

