Understanding Transfer Students: Looking Through the Psychological Glass

Jennifer Brown & Nicole Iwasaki
NACADA Annual Conference
October 11, 2014
Overview

- Welcome
- Transition Theory
- Transitional Trauma and Transfer Shock
- Common Transfer Stressors
- Persistence Factors
- Small Group discussion
- Ka‘ieʻieʻie Transfer Pathway
- Q&A
Welcome to Transfer U
Schlossberg’s Transition Theory

- An event or non-event that results in changed relationships, routines, assumptions, roles
- Type, Context, and Impact
- Four S’s determine ability to cope
  - Situation
  - Self
  - Social Support
  - Strategies and coping response

Evans, Forney, and Guido-DiBrito (1998)
Transitional Trauma

The level of alienation a student experiences when unfamiliar with the norms, values, and expectations at the four-year institution.

Laanan, F. S. (2001)
Transitional Trauma

- Anxiety
- Fear
- Confusion

- Barriers:
  - Cost of Attendance
  - Policies
  - Campus Climate
  - Transfer Adjustment

Transfer Shock

- The tendency of students transferring from one higher education institution to another to experience a temporary decrease in grade point average during the first semester at the new institution (Thurmond, 2007).

- Grades tend to regain the level of other students after the first semester.

Factors of Transfer Shock

- Sophomore transfer v. junior transfer

- Earning the associates' degree seemed to be a positive factor in academic performance.

- Gender

- Major Discipline

- Age

Transition Cycle (adapted from Hopson)

- Well Being
- Feel Good
- OK
- Distress /despair

(a) positive events
(b) trauma or loss

Life event
1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8+ months

- Excitement
- Honeymoon
- Uncertainty
- Losing confidence
- Confusion
- Depression
- Crisis
- *
- New confidence, transformation
- Testing
- Exploring
- Accepting
- Letting go
- Extended crisis
- Quitting
- Partial recovery
Common Transfer Stressors

Academic
- Workload
- Change in expectations
- Rigor

Interpersonal
- Faculty-student ratio
- Campus Identity

Environmental
- Larger campus
- Parking and commuting issues

Ong & Cheong (2009)
Common Transfer Stressors

Confusion and anxiety regarding:

- Registration concerns
- Unfamiliar policies and procedures
- Credit transfer/articulation
- Variation of degrees and requirements
- Understanding the financial aid process
- Where and when to seek advising and other support services
How transfer students feel!

Financial Aid  Cost of Attendance

Credits  Parking

Campus Culture  Large Campus

Unfamiliar Environment

How transfer students feel!
Stress Affects...
Factors of Transfer Student Persistence

- Students’ perceptions on the value of education
- Educational aspirations

Laanan, F. S. (2001)
Student quotes

Pre-transfer

“If I can’t survive at a JC level, there is no way that I am going to survive at a university level” (p16)

Post-transfer

“for me it was really just the anxiety of the change, trying to figure it all out on a condensed time frame... I felt like I was starting all over again which is a little anxiety provoking” (p18)

Chin-Newman & Shaw, 2013,
Case Studies
Case Study 1

Jake transferred to UH Mānoa two weeks ago from Kapi’olani Community College. In your advising session, he complained how far he has to walk to his large classes and he doesn’t feel connected to UH Mānoa. Identify what psychological stressor Jake is encountering? What would you tell him? How can you collaborate with others to prevent Jake from feeling this way?
Case Study 2

Kira is feeling overwhelmed with the transfer process. This is her last semester at Leeward Community College and although she was admitted to UH Mānoa through Automatic Admission, she just learned that she needs to submit her health clearances, apply for financial aid, pay her $200 tuition deposit, and complete mandatory advising to remove her registration hold and realized that she missed the application deadline for her major. At the same time, Kira is studying for her exams, working full-time, and caring for two-year old twins. What can we, as advisors, do to minimize her stress level?
Case Study 3

Michael is confused about how his courses taken at Honolulu Community College (HCC) transfer to UH Mānoa. He has been told that all of his credits will transfer over. However, when he went to see his Mānoa advisor, he was told that only 15 of 30 credits actually apply to his major, which no one told him before. He is confused and upset and feels misadvised. How can you assist Michael? How can you collaborate with others to prevent this type of situation in the future?
Kaʻieʻie Transfer Pathway

- Partnership between UH Mānoa and four UH Community Colleges on Oahu
- Dual-admission, dual-enrollment
- Benefits
- Transfer Specialists Role
- Mānoa Transfer Coordination Center (MTCC)
Contact Information

Jennifer Brown  
jb26@hawaii.edu  

Nicole Iwasaki  
niwasaki@hawaii.edu  

Mānoa Transfer Coordination Center  
University of Hawaiʻi at Mānoa  
http://manoa.hawaii.edu/undergrad/Transfer/

References available via the NACADA Conference website