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Frank has been very active in Ohio ACRAO as President, Vice President of Mentoring and Membership, member of the Records and Registration Committee and Professional Development Committee, and Co-Chair of the Local Arrangement Committee. He was also selected by his peers to serve on the Ohio Board of Regents Articulation and Transfer Credit Steering Committee.

PREFACE



LEE F. FURBECK

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In January 2015, President Barack Obama announced an ambitious proposal to offer two years of community college tuition-free to qualifying students, including non-traditional and part-time students excluded from similar state initiatives. Community colleges are a relatively recent American invention, starting with Joliet Junior College in Chicago nearly 100 years ago. Since then, community colleges have established a proud tradition as open-access institutions educating a wide variety of students ranging from first-time college students and military veterans to adult learners and new immigrants. According to the College Board, many of the millions of students enrolled in credit-bearing programs in community colleges are doing so with the intention of transferring to a four-year college or university and earning a bachelor's degree.

With the recent recession and college costs continuing to increase, student transfer has become more prevalent and its patterns have become less traditional. More than one third of students transfer at least once before earn-

ing a bachelor's degree (Hossler *et al.* 2012). With more options available for where and when they can access and complete courses, these students engage in multiple patterns of attendance, moving between four-year and two-year schools, and between public and private institutions. Any transfer student may be at a greater risk of not completing a degree, but they don't have to be. Partnerships between institutions as well as college and university support services can help transfer students succeed and graduate.

AACRAO has a history of being at the forefront of transfer, and for over 80 years has published *Transfer Credit Practices of Designated Educational Institutions* (TCP), a voluntary exchange of information regarding practices for acceptance of transfer credit. The much-needed publication *The College Transfer Student in America: The Forgotten Student* was published in 2004 just as institutions and state and federal government were turning an eye toward transfer. This guide translates research into practical advice on attracting, re-

taining, and graduating transfer students, and addresses strategies for orientation and advising, curricular issues, articulation agreements, and particular types of transfer. Not long after, AACRAO's *Accreditation Mills* (2007) was released as the first publication of its kind to explore accreditation fraud. The book gives a historical perspective of the problem, explores the relationship between degree mills and accreditation mills, and defines tactics used by mills to deceive the public.

One year later, in 2008, the AACRAO Transfer Conference was born as the association recognized the need to bring professionals working with transfer students together to address common issues and to take a stance on proposed federal legislation which would have shifted transfer credit decision-making from institutional control to the federal government. Since then, 300 to 400 transfer professionals continue to meet each year to share challenges and successes and to provide a venue for collaboration. In 2012, AACRAO's Transfer and Technology Conferences officially co-located for the first time, creating opportunities for attendees to explore the

connections between the two while retaining the original focus of the meeting.

Now, AACRAO has once again filled the void for admissions, advising, enrollment, financial aid, registrar, and retention professionals working with transfer students. Individual chapters in this book cover enduring topics such as trends, transfer of credit and articulation, transfer policy, two-year to four-year pathways, credential verification, recruitment, transfer student athletes, advising, partnerships, and regulations with a fresh and timely perspective. Other chapters address more recent phenomena such as adult learners, growing numbers of military veterans, reverse transfer, technology, and student swirl.

With so few resources devoted entirely to the topic, this publication stands alone as a comprehensive publication on all things transfer. The best thing about working with transfer students is that no two days are the same. Whether you are just beginning your journey with this fascinating student population or charting the course for transfer student success at your institution, you will find a valuable source of information here.

INTRODUCTION



DOUGLAS SHAPIRO

Executive Research Director, National Student Clearinghouse Research Center

Transfer is a large and growing part of students' experience of postsecondary education today, and thus it is increasingly important for student professionals, institutional registrars, admissions officers, and enrollment managers to understand. Student mobility, generally referring to any of the multiple-institution pathways that students follow in pursuit of their educational goals, can include all directions of transfer, such as "traditional" transfer from a two-year to four-year institution; "lateral" transfer from one two-year to another two-year institution or from a four-year to another four-year institution; "swirling" from one institution to another and back again to the starting point; "reverse" transfer from a four-year to a two-year institution; and concurrent and dual enrollment patterns that may include simultaneous enrollment in more than one institution, such as an online university, a local evening or weekend program, or even a high school. Understanding these patterns and their implications for student success is increasingly vital to institu-

tions as they seek to improve how they serve their students, how they meet increasing demands for accountability from state and federal policy makers, and how they meet their own institutional goals.

There are very few institutions remaining for which students arrive only as first-time freshmen and leave as newly-minted graduates (or dropouts). Trying to measure the scale of student transfer can present difficulties, however, because of the slipperiness of the phenomenon and the need for multi-institutional data to track individual student movements from campus to campus. Recent research by the National Student Clearinghouse Research Center has found that the numbers depend upon the vantage point for viewing the student pathways and the amount of time spent in observance. Tracking a cohort of students from their very first postsecondary enrollment, for example, shows that one-third of students will enroll at a different institution from where they started within their first five years and before

earning any degree or certificate. This number is fairly consistent regardless of whether that first institution is a community college, public four-year, or private non-profit four-year institution (Hossler *et al.* 2012). These are the students who entered your campus as first-time freshmen. Add the ones who transferred in and, for the average institution, the proportion of mobile students reaches one-half. Looking at a graduating cohort instead of a starting cohort confirms that this is not just a matter of the struggling students trying to find their footing, but includes the successful ones as well; half of all students who earned their first degree or certificate between 2003 and 2013 had enrolled in more than one institution along the way (Shapiro *et al.* 2014b). Many of these are “swirlers,” but even excluding those who leave and come back, the data shows that over a quarter of those who completed degrees within eight years of their first enrollment in 2006 had actually earned them at a different institution from the one they started in (Shapiro *et al.* 2014a). Taken as a whole, it is a safe assumption that the share of students who are on a multi-institution pathway, either transferring in, transferring out, or both, makes up a larger part of the enrollments on the average college campus than many student professionals would think.

Not only are the numbers of mobile students large, but their pathways are also complex. More than one-quarter of students who have enrolled in more than one institution have also crossed state lines in the process (Hossler *et al.* 2012). Nearly 16 percent of new, first-time entrants into postsecondary educa-

tion are now entering as dual-enrollment students while still in high school, meaning that when they enter college as “freshmen” after graduating from high school, they may also expect to bring transfer credits with them (Shapiro *et al.* 2013a). Students starting at four-year institutions are, when they transfer or swirl, equally likely to switch to a two-year college as to another four-year. The same is true of students starting at two-year institutions. Some of them will eventually want to bring their new credits “back home” to their original institution; others, perhaps not. Indeed, most who start at a two-year institution and transfer to a four-year without completing an associate degree may not know that “reverse transfer”—sending four-year credits back to their starting institution in order to receive the associate degree if, by chance, they do not complete their bachelor’s—is even possible. Yet, many state policies now encourage it, and there are as many as two million students nationwide who may be eligible (Shapiro *et al.* 2014b).

The growth of non-traditional students, particularly adults, part-time enrollees, or those returning to college after a long stop-out, is often assumed to contribute to trends of increasing student mobility and the growth of transfer students. Surprisingly, however, non-traditional students are often among the least mobile on many campuses. They tend to have less geographic freedom than traditional-age students, largely due to employment and family constraints, and thus find themselves more tied to the specific programs at specific institutions and locations that best

meet their needs. They are also considerably less likely than traditional-age students to pursue a bachelor's degree by starting at a two-year institution (Shapiro *et al.* 2013a). Students in the military and student veterans, however, appear to be an exception to this rule. Their frequent stop-outs and geographic dislocations due to service demands and redeployments make them more likely to change institutions than their non-veteran adult peers (Cate 2014). Thus, the growth in the student-veteran population, expected to continue to accelerate, may lead to a reversal in the overall trend for non-traditional students.

Student mobility is important to institutions because of its impact on their efforts to manage enrollments and retain students. For many students, the process of transferring credits among the institutions in their increasingly complex educational pathways is often fraught with unexpected hurdles and barriers that can create frustration and dampen momentum (Monaghan and Attewell 2015). Recent attention to the challenges of credit transfer has led to many policy initiatives, particularly at the state level, to address the perceived inefficiencies of “lost” credits through regulation. Institutions that find ways to further streamline this process may be better positioned to avoid undesirable regulation while also becoming more effective at supporting progress and success for their mobile students.

Student mobility and transfer are also important at the overall system of postsecondary education, and particularly in terms of national and state-level goals for increasing college completion and attainment rates. Unfortunately, the resulting focus on institutional accountability and measures of student success often includes measures of success that do not count students who transfer, such as institution-based retention and graduation rates, and our national attention to these measures thus causes both institutions and the public to greatly underestimate the real rates of postsecondary student success. This leads to a diminished public perception of the effectiveness of higher education, and of the value that it returns to students, families, and society's investment. It also causes students to suffer from a narrowed horizon of opportunity and reduced capacities to plan realistic pathways to goal achievement, because neither they nor their advisors and counselors typically have access to complete or accurate statistics on the availability of multi-institutional pathways and their successful outcomes. By improving their understanding of the transfer pathways of students, enrollment professionals will be better able to counter these trends and support the goals and expectations of their mobile students.