Transfer Strategies for Success Course

While UC San Diego has increased its transfer student population by 50% over the past decade, the campus has not provided a corresponding increase in resources and programing to support this population’s unique needs. Transfer students often struggle with the transition from their prior institutions to the large research university and its rigorous demands. Transfer students regularly feel disconnected from their college and campus life, which can negatively affect their overall experience. This white paper proposes a Transfer Strategies for Success (TSS) course to address such challenges and to connect transfer students more securely with colleges, departments, and campus-wide resources. Moreover, the TSS course could assist in transfer student time-to-degree progress. While comparable to the First Year Experience Course for Freshmen (FYE), the TSS course is distinct from FYE because transfer students differ from four-year students in a number of important ways. These include the following:

- Transfer students enter UC San Diego as upper-division students who have fulfilled most GE requirements and whose time at UC San Diego will be significantly shorter than their undergraduate peers who entered as freshmen
- Transfer students lack the shared college experience which, for students entering as freshmen, was forged by college programming and the completion of college GE requirements, including the College Writing Programs
- Many transfer students live off-campus and commute to UC San Diego or live in the Village and are not physically connected to a college, unlike students who entered as freshmen and live in college housing, typically for their first two years.
- Many transfer students have additional and often more complex responsibilities outside of school (e.g., children, military obligations, etc.).

Therefore, the Transfer Student Success course will address issues essential to strong academic performance and overall student satisfaction by including such topics as experiential and research opportunities, internships, career and graduate school, personal well-being and its relationship to academic success, academic integrity, campus engagement, campus resources, and improved learning and study strategies.

The proposed course expects to achieve three goals:

1. Improve transfer students’ understanding of academic expectations and identify strategies to meet those expectations successfully
2. Improve transfer students’ understanding of research, experiential, and co-curricular opportunities and assist students in engaging and mapping these opportunities
3. Strengthen students’ organizational, inter-personal, and personal well-being skills

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Model for a TSS course

The Ad Hoc First Year Experience Work Group proposes a full-term (10-week) model similar to the First Year Experience Course for Freshmen, which UC San Diego will launch in Fall 2014, and which has already been well-established at other large research universities. The Transfer Strategies for Success course would be a lecture class taught by academic senate faculty with discussion sections led by graduate teaching assistants or experienced transfer students.

TSS TAs would be required to complete a mandatory pedagogy training program prior to leading the section as well as participate in on-going guidance and supervision. This training program could be designed and offered by the emerging Center for Teaching and Learning or draw on existing college and departmental TA training programs. If this TSS course relies on graduate student TAs, requisite funding will be necessary.

Credit and Evaluation for TSS course

The TSS course would be a 2-credit class, based on one hour of lecture and one hour of discussion section weekly (20 hours total class contact). Further, we propose a Pass/Not Pass grading model which reflects grading for freshman and senior seminars at our institution. The proposed course would also draw on the expertise of Student Affairs and Academic Affairs professionals to amplify some of the topics.

Beyond the use of CAPE evaluations for faculty and similar evaluations for TSS TAs who lead discussion sections, we envision other assessment tools designed in collaboration with CREATE and/or the Center for Teaching and Learning which champions on-going efforts to assess and improve pedagogical effectiveness at UC San Diego. We foresee follow-up contact in winter and/or spring quarter of transfer students’ first year with focus groups and web-based surveys to gather additional data. We propose surveying Academic Advisors, Counseling and Psychological Services (CAPS), Student Affairs/Residence Life staff, and the Academic Integrity Office to gather their perspectives on the impact of the TSS course as has been designed for the (freshman) First Year Experience course in Fall 2014. A longer-range metric would use time-to-degree and retention data.

Transfer Student Success Course Outline

The weekly topics for the 10-week TSS course are as follows (see the proposed course plan at the end of this document):

1. Introduction: The College Experience at a Research University
2. Making the Most of the Classroom and Re-examining Study Strategies
3. Academic Integrity and Information Literacy
4. Personal Well-Being and Academic Success
5. Enhancing Communication Skills in the Classroom
6. Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion
7. Campus and Community Involvement
8. Planning for Career/Professional Schools
9. Research Opportunities, Experiential Learning, and Faculty Engagement
10. Lessons Learned and Planning Forward

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The steps to implement the transfer TSS course are as follows:

1. Submit the TSS course white paper to the Council of Provosts (COP), Deans of Student Affairs, Deans of Academic Advising, Amy Binder, Associate Vice Chancellor Barbara Sawrey, and Interim Vice Chancellor Alan Houston for comment and review;

2. Submit the white paper for comment and review to other strategic offices such as EVC, Senate Leadership, Colleges’ Writing Center, Office of Academic Support & Instructional Services (OASIS), Committee for Preparatory Education (COPE), the Basic Writing Program (ELWR), and to all the campus specialists who gave FYE Course suggested readings and reference material;

3. Assess the college’s pilot First Year Experience Course for Frosh in Fall 2014;

4. Seek university approval, funding, and faculty/staff support for a launch in AY2015/16.

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Conclusion

In closing, establishing a Transfer Student Success course addresses the specific needs of this growing population. The proposed TSS course can be the cornerstone of an intentional program to make higher education more meaningful and purposeful for all transfer students.

Ad Hoc Work Group – May 16, 2014

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A Prospective Syllabus Structure:

The Transfer Student Success (TSS) course addresses topics at strategic points throughout the quarter, with developmental readiness and practical implications taken into consideration. Content that will be critical to academic success from the outset (such as academic integrity) will be presented at the early in the term, while topics that require students to have had more university experience, such as research and service options will be addressed later.

Week One - Introduction: The College Experience at a Research University

Rationale: Many students do not understand the nature of the research university or the way that it affects their college experience. In addition, transfer students face transition issues such as adjusting to a vastly different teaching and learning environment and must revise or develop new revised approaches to their studies. This session provides an overview of these issues and strategies to succeed at a research university (Andreatta, 2012).

Content: Provide an overview of the TSS course and explain how students will benefit from active participation.

Learning Outcomes:

As a result of this class students will:
- understand the qualities that are unique to research universities
- increase awareness of UC San Diego’s undergraduate structures, including the colleges and the academic divisions
- learn how they can best utilize university staff and resources to be academically and personally successful
- be able to effectively navigate through the UC San Diego academic environment

Resources:


Week Two - Making the Most of the Classroom & Re-examining Study Strategies

Rationale: The gap between community colleges and an elite public research university is substantial in terms of academic culture and demands. UC San Diego transfer students must make their way in a much larger and more complex environment, while learning in larger lecture classes, TA-led discussion sections, labs, limited office hours, and the variety of faculty and graduate student approaches to each. This session explores ways to maximize learning in and beyond the university classroom.
Content: This session provides research-based strategies for learning in order to prepare students for successful engagement with upper-division course work at UC San Diego. The course content provides strategies for the variety of class formats at UC San Diego as well as the diversity of teaching styles, while emphasizing students’ active role and responsibility in the learning process. From understanding the syllabus (and the course goals) and maximizing the value of lecture to embracing effective study habits and empowering students to become active rather than passive learners, this session aims to provide a pathway toward informed engagement with courses, faculty, and teaching assistants.

Learning Outcomes:

As a result of this class students will:

- be able to identify effective strategies for learning in the classroom and for studying as well as recognize, in order to minimize, ineffective strategies

Resources:


**Week Three - Academic Integrity and Information Literacy**

Rationale: Many students are not aware of why academic integrity matters for their individual and collective education at UC San Diego. Rather than channel institutional resources and attention toward rehabilitative measures after students have failed to live up to expectations, the goal of this session is to explain why the standard exists in the first place and to show how this academic integrity standard relates to the mission of an institution of higher learning, while underscoring
each student’s role and responsibility in the process. This session will also address the topic of information literacy which is defined as “the ability to find, evaluate, utilize, share, and create content using information technologies and the Internet.” University work such as writing papers, creating multimedia presentations, and posting information online require varying degrees of information literacy. Therefore, it is crucial that students understand the rules and rationale for appropriate (and inappropriate) conduct.

Content: In partnership with the Academic Integrity Office and Library and through a variety of pedagogical practices, this session will cover academic integrity in course context by addressing such areas as research and writing assignments, exams, and group projects. Additional topics will include the identification of valid (digital or other) sources and expectations for citation; communication protocol and etiquette with faculty and staff; using mobile media devices in the classroom; maximizing the use of virtual advising tools and other online educational resources; understanding privacy issues and settings; and creating a professional image online.

Learning Outcomes:

As a result of this session, students will:
- better understand what constitutes academic integrity and violations of academic integrity
- understand the rules of appropriate conduct with regard to research, plagiarism, copyright, and privacy in a digital context
- be aware of all the resources offered through the Library and how to use those resources to complete research and writing assignments successfully

Resources:


The Citation Project. (n.d.). Retrieved from http://site.citationproject.net/


University of California, Irvine (2009). *2009 Assessment of Lower Division Writing at UCI*.

University of California, San Diego Office of Academic Integrity: https://students.UC San Diego.edu/academics/academic-integrity/index.html


**Week Four - Personal Well-being and Academic Success**

**Rationale:** A student’s university experience represents one of the most pivotal developmental periods in young adulthood. Competing time demands, managing a wide range of emotions, developing a sense of autonomy and competence are some of the developmental tasks students are working through at this stage in their life (Chickering & Reisser, 1993). Students who struggle academically often cite non-academic precipitants to their academic difficulties. Many college students experience mental health issues including depression and anxiety (in fact, UC San Diego’s Office of Students with Disabilities more often provides accommodations for students with psychological issues than any other form of disability) and substance abuse during their academic career. Since these issues can negatively impact students’ ability to perform academically including them as a topic is essential.

**Content:** Through a variety of teaching strategies, this session will explore appropriate coping skills, identify campus resources, and strengthen interpersonal skills. Students will be exposed to successful time management strategies, and learn positive behaviors and attitudes connected to their health and fitness, nutrition, intimate relationships, financial responsibility, and the use of ATOD, and the impact of all of these on their academic success.
Learning Outcomes:

As a result of this session, students will:

- be aware of common personal difficulties that university students experience, including the signs and symptoms of depression, anxiety, and substance abuse
- learn the UC San Diego resources available for students struggling with emotional, social, and/or mental health issues
- develop strategies for increasing health and fitness and reducing stress and managing anxiety

Resources:


Brown, B. (2010). *The gifts of imperfection: Let go of who you think you're supposed to be and embrace who you are*. Center City, Minnesota: Hazelden.


**Week Five - Enhancing Communication Skills in the Classroom**

Rationale: Public speaking is a fundamental skill, necessary in every profession and walk of life,
yet often left under-addressed in academic setting. This topic equips students with basic skills necessary to present ideas in an academic setting. It is a skills-based approach that supplements any discipline.

Content: This session prepares students for oral presentations, oral exams, speeches, debates, recitations, or any other public speaking assignments or for extra-curricular activities. The lecture and discussion section would cover essential points of application and provide coaching and feedback on areas of public speaking including constructing and organizing persuasive arguments, engaging with an audience or seminar participants, and using the voice and body effectively.

The proposal for this week’s focus on public speaking, oral presentations and seminar exchange would emphasize working through the unique traits of oral versus written communication in order to help students gear their thinking for maximum effectiveness and engagement both with listening and responding to oral thought. The topic focus would also highlight how to listen for the keys of an argument and how drafting clear and concise arguments translates directly to other academic assignments. It would be beneficial to study the principles of argumentation and arrangement; and critically examine students’ speeches and the speeches of others. By becoming better students of public speaking, each student joins a long tradition geared to the art of academic conversation.

Learning Outcomes:

As a result of this topic students will:

- increase awareness of how they speak in classrooms and other public venues by understanding and applying new skills about public speaking
- understand and demonstrate heightened awareness of listening skills and oral arguments
- identify ways to present more confidently and clearly

Resources:


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1 Harvard University offers as part of their Writing Center a course called Expos 40 which is an elective within the Writing Program, and focuses on developing and strengthening the skills necessary for successful public speaking. Students in Expos 40 learn strategies for impromptu speaking, preparing and delivering presentations, formulating and organizing persuasive arguments, cultivating critical thinking, engaging with an audience, using the voice and body, and building confidence in oral expression.
Week Six - Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion

Rationale: Given the ever-increasing reality of globalization and increasing diversity within our society, the university is uniquely positioned to help students better understand and relate to these phenomena as well as to work towards developing cultural competencies that enable our diverse students to work together toward towards shared goals.

Content: This session advances an understanding and appreciation for diversity and inclusion as essential elements of a public university. Drawing on both local and international concerns and social justice issues, students will explore their role in understanding and supporting diversity on campus and beyond.

Learning Outcomes:

As a result of this course section students will:
- examine how their background and experiences impact their values and assumptions
- understand and demonstrate increased respect for the beliefs and values of other cultures
- identify principles for working effectively and respectfully with others, including incorporating diverse points of view

Resources:


http://www.isr.umich.edu/home/diversity/resources/white-privilege.pdf


Week Seven - Campus and Community Involvement

Rationale: College students spend more time outside of the classroom than in it and gain valuable experience from involvement in extracurricular activities such as internships, organizational involvement, employment, and volunteer service. Research shows how student engagement with their campus community positively correlates to higher rates of persistence and retention so supporting students in this area can potentially help advance them in time-to-degree. Such engagement also challenges students to manage their time and stress and to work effectively within a team. It is incumbent upon the university to help students acquire the appropriate skills and knowledge to engage in an increasingly complex and global society with sensitivity, responsibility, and competence.

Content: During this session students will explore the concepts of social responsibility, civic engagement, leadership and service learning through readings, participation in an out of class experience, and reflective writing assignments. Students will be directed to establish and develop their own e-portfolio mapping their co-curricular university experience and intended outcomes.

Learning Outcomes:
As a result of this course section students will:
- identify co-curricular experiences that promote personal, social, and professional development
- demonstrate leadership as an experience and understand corresponding leadership theories
- identify principles of responsible citizenship within and beyond the campus community
- develop an individualized e-portfolio mapping their co-curricular university experience
Week Eight - Planning for Career/ Professional Schools

Rationale: Transfer students may struggle in upper-division courses required for their majors or discover other areas of interest. They are reluctant, however, to change majors. Some, for example, experience internal, family, or societal pressure to continue pursuing a major that is expected to result in a successful and financially lucrative career, even if they lack the competency to do so. Dispelling myths around majors and careers may help students consider a wider range of disciplinary options and make more informed choices which would facilitate time-to-degree progress.

Content: Students will evaluate their own choice of majors and be introduced to the range of majors and minors that are available at UC San Diego and their reality (and myths) of career connections. Student will learn and complete an assignment using the major and career exploration tools hosted by Career Services.

Learning Outcomes:

As a result of this course students will
  • articulate their own major decision making process and determine whether they need to engage in further major/career exploration
  • identify major exploration tools and resources they can use to solidify their major/career decisions.

Resources:


ONET Online: http://www.onetonline.org/

Week Nine - Research Opportunities, Experiential Learning, and Faculty Engagement

Rationale: One goal of university education is engagement. We empower students with academic content and skills which they, in turn, apply in their professional and personal lives. Experiential learning offers students the opportunity for application, reflection, and enhanced understanding.

Content: This session furnishes students with the evidence for the academic and personal value of experiential learning through which students strengthen and expand existing knowledge, develop new skills, and apply themselves beyond the classroom. The session will present students with the variety of opportunities at UC San Diego to connect class content with in-depth and/or first-hand experience through thesis projects, study abroad, service work, wilderness programs, leadership opportunities, laboratory work, internships, and more. The session will help students learn about AIP, the Experiential Learning Portal, Career Services Center, UC San Diego’s Extension offering of LAUNCH and CREATE, etc.

Learning Outcomes:

As a result of this session, students will:
- be able to identify and take advantage of UC San Diego resources and opportunities for research and/or experiential learning

Resources:


Experiential Learning Website: https://students.ucsd.edu/academics/experiential-learning


Week Ten - Lessons Learned and Planning Forward

Rationale: Our transfer students routinely have achieved discernible success at a community college or a four year institution, but now have to survive more intense competition among their peers and corresponding challenges to personal confidence. The tools and topics from the first nine weeks must coalesce so that students can proceed better prepared for the balance of the academic year. The focus of this week will be to initiate forethought and planning to help students achieve this goal.

Content: A review of each week’s content will allow the instructor to either reemphasize key ideas and/or underscore the ideas with a synthesis of analogous notions drawn from other weeks. By the very nature of a review week, students might help determine what points need greater clarification.

Learning Outcomes:

As a result of this “final chapter” week, students will:
- complete a culminating assignment drawing, integrating course topics and designing a strategy for their freshman year, including establishing a practical plan for study and for managing time, stress, and academic work