Implementation Plan & Update

Task Force on Transfer Processes and Practices

05/22/2013

Prepared by Task Force Chair

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This follow-up report highlights accomplishments and progress of the work recommended in the Transfer Task Force Report on Processes and Practices. The vision, goals, and recommendations are re-stated with implementation content added below each recommendation. Also, the Chair of the task force assembled two working groups: a process improvement working group and a transfer orientation working group to move forward with implementation. Concluding remarks, additional transfer initiatives, and an implementation timeline round off this update.

Vision

To expand the institutional commitment to increasing the number of transfer students from diverse backgrounds, experiences, and perspectives who enroll at the University and to improve the mechanism by which transfer students enter, matriculate, and make progress toward degrees in a manner that produces a rewarding university experience.[1]

Goals

The goals of the task force were as follows:

1. To improve the transfer process for in-state and out-of-state, students from application through admission and enrollment.
2. To improve partnerships with in-state community colleges by reconciling AGEC issues with mutually beneficial practices that serve students and University and community colleges in Arizona.
3. To reduce bureaucratic barriers to access, admissions, matriculation, and graduation for transfer students.
4. To ensure that information is made available to transfer students in a timely manner via meaningful, accessible, and user-friendly mechanisms including the UA web site.
5. To analyze current policies, practices and procedures related to transfer student recruitment, admission, orientation, advising, and graduation.
6. To maintain autonomy in colleges to meet transfer student needs.
7. To increase the analytic capacity of the institution so that the transfer student experience might be better understood.
8. Review already existing programs related to transfer students – such as STU 210 – and investigate the possibility of future programs that would increase student access to the institution – such as reverse transfer.

Admissions, Enrollment, Retention, and Graduation Data

In addition to discussing the goals, data were pulled and analyzed to help inform recommendations. Below are key findings from the analysis:

- Enrollment numbers are down in recent years despite the increase in applications and steady admission. Since 1985 transfer enrollment numbers peaked at 2,491 and in 2010 enrollment was at 1,875.

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[1] The Task force is operating under the assumption that improved processes will lead to increased retention AND increased enrollment to achieve goals established by ABOR.

- Transfer students persisted at higher rates to upper division standing (3rd Year) than native students.

- From 2002 – 2008 transfer students and native students graduated at about the same rate with a slight advantage for transfer students from 2002 – 2006 and for native students from 2007 – 2008.

- Transfer students' who are undecided share lower persistence and graduation rates than native students.

- In-State Transfer Students who completed the Arizona General Education Curriculum (AGEC-A (Arts), AGEC-B (Business), and AGEC-S (Science)) at a community college persisted at higher rates than transfer students overall.

- Over time transfer students who completed the AGEC graduated at 4-, 5-, and 6-year graduation points at higher rates than transfer students overall

- Transfer students' retention and graduation rates varied to some degree between colleges. The appendices highlight details if comparisons are warranted.

Recommendations and Implementation

1. AGEC completion data revealed that students who complete Arizona General Education Curriculum at in-state community colleges (AGEC) persist and graduate at higher rates than their peers overall. It would benefit UA to obtain more data on A.A., A.S., and ABUS degree recipients to find out if the results are similar. The Task Force recommends holding off on establishing a reverse transfer process for transfer students until more data are available.
   - UA leadership is creating a "culture of support" for Associates Degree completion in most programs; however discussions with individual colleges since the original report was completed have shown that in some professional programs, completion of associates degrees at community colleges results in poorer performance and/or a longer path to degree completion (Engineering and Fine Arts for example).
   - Given that Pima Community College now submits electronic transcripts and it is UA's largest feeder school, the University is re-considering reverse transfer as an option as of April 26, 2013.
     - Action Item: Assemble representatives from academic affairs, registrar's office, and IT to implement reverse transfer.
       Expected Completion Date: December 2013

2. UA should continually work to improve its transfer website toward the goal of a virtual one-stop shop for transfer students. It should be carefully designed for this target market. A marketing unit might also help departments design promotion materials by creating a template to use for recruitment dissemination of information in hard-copy form.
   - The Dean of Admissions is working with the Student Affairs Marketing Group and the Transfer Center to make continuous improvements to the website.
     Completion Date: July 2012

3. Students transferring in with 45+ units should be required to select a major before attending orientation.

- In order to promote a welcoming environment, the work group suggested that students should be permitted to be admitted as undecided.
    - However, staff in CLAS, Admissions and the Transfer Center agreed that outreach to these students once they are admitted but before they attend orientation would be imperative in steering them to a major or the BGS degree. Staff in the transfer center and advising staff agreed to conduct the outreach.
- Concerns were also expressed about the effect such a policy could have on retention.

4. Transfer students should have a one-stop shop where their transfer coursework can be routed for evaluation. A re-organization of a recently vacant position (Director) will allow this one-stop environment to occur and will include additional improvements for transfer students: 1) create and manage an online workflow tool; 2) provide assistance in the Transfer Center fielding calls, emails, and questions about transferring to the University, and providing quick advising.
- A Director was hired and trained and is working in the Transfer Center, a unit that brings together academic and student affairs professionals to serve incoming transfer students

    Completion Date: January 2013 (4a on the timeline)
- The Chemistry department has agreed to participate in a pilot to use an online workflow tool that will help transfer students get chemistry coursework evaluated without having to travel to the department.
    - The Math department has agreed to share and set up its workflow tool for Chemistry to use.
    - Once bottlenecks and issues are resolved, the workflow tool will be implemented with other science departments so that students can have all their math and science transfer coursework evaluated without having to send separate communications to each department to make this happen.

    Expected Completion Date: August 2013 (4b on the timeline)

5. In order to meet service levels given the expected increase in enrollment over the next several years and to promote engagement, the UA should develop and offer a formal transfer orientation program starting in Summer 2013.
- The transfer orientation working group includes student affairs and advising professionals who have designed a pilot orientation program effective Summer 2013 with a full rollout of the program planned for January 2014.

    Expected Completion Date: August, 2013

6. Advisors should have access to view student information in the Next Steps Center and Transfer Student Academic Preview in order to answer students' questions.
- The Office of New Student Orientation worked with Student Affairs System Group to grant viewing access to academic advisors.

    Expected Completion Date: August, 2013

7. Matriculate transfer students as early as possible so that administrators can pull reports to identify the demand for courses.
- Fixes have been implemented in terms of access to data at earlier points in time.
- The Degree Tracker and BI teams are constructing the forecast reports.

- The task force chair is actively promoting saving seats in select courses for transfer students.

Expected Completion Date: June 2013

8. Make sure that transfer students can register during the formal orientation program with access to advisors and computer labs just as freshmen do.
   - Transfer orientation will be treated more as a process than an event.
     - Students will not come to campus and do a series of activities including registration.
     - To serve the diverse needs of students, there will be a menu of options that begin with an online assignment with online quick videos and information, a meeting with an advisor, registration at a point in time, a visit to campus (strongly encouraged) for an information and Q & A session, wildcat welcome events specific for transfer students, and continuous outreach during the first semester by the campus community to help transfer students achieve assimilation to the University.

Expected Completion Date: January 2014

9. A Business Process Guide for STU 210 was distributed on May 7, 2012. This needs to be evaluated each semester to identify further potential bottlenecks that might occur for these students between admissions and enrollment.
   - Transfer recruitment and the Advising Resource Center partnered to design the business process and created a listserv of resources who can correct problems in the system should they arise that prevent these students from enrolling.

Completion Date: May 2012

10. Promotion of student involvement will help transfer students engage with the campus and therefore increase the likelihood of degree completion. Student Affairs and Academic Affairs should collaborate to design a plan to embed student involvement into the transfer student culture.
    - Transfer Center, orientation, and advising staff have partnered to engage transfer students during transfer orientation, wildcat welcome week, and during the first semester an ongoing program that will introduce transfer students to involvement opportunities and promote participation.

Completion Date: February 2013

11. Communications from Admissions notifying students about the status of their transfer course work would help students understand where they are at in the process.
    - Admissions processing staff and student affairs systems group worked together to create automated messaging within students' My UA accounts.

Completion Date: February 2013

12. The current 'trigger' for the matriculation/term activation/enrollment appointment process is the Transfer Student Academic Preview (TSAP)—an online assignment required of transfer students before they attend orientation. Transfer students can change their major online in Next Steps prior to setting off the 'trigger'. There needs to be a process created for transfer students to change their major up to one, or two, weeks prior to attending orientation, or in enough time for the departments and colleges to acquire an updated list of students. With that said, there needs to be a way to also make sure transfer students' credit is evaluated, posted, with exceptions complete, prior to their attendance at orientation.

- Admissions processing, orientation, and IT staff are evaluating this system to determine how to improve it. As of the date of this report, a solution has not been found. The current status is as follows: the goal of matriculating students as early as possible (see recommendation # 7) and allowing students to change their majors for as long as possible (recommendation #12) are mutually exclusive within the current system's architecture. Follow-up meetings with the working group are scheduled to continue troubleshooting.

Expected Completion Date: April 2014

13. Invest in advising resources. The return on the investment would be significant given that 1,500 additional transfer students would generate higher tuition dollars. There should be a designated transfer specialist in the colleges with high enrollment. Funding priority should be given to colleges with the highest transfer admissions and enrollment numbers.
    - 1 additional advising line has been approved for the Colleges of Letters, Arts, and Sciences Advising Office, for the BS in Neuroscience and Cognitive Science, and for the BS in Physiology, depending on the level of state funding for the next fiscal year.
    - Every college has identified a transfer advising contact and shared that information with the Transfer Center staff.

Expected Completion Date: July 2013

14. Current state articulation protocols and agreements need to be reviewed and revised to make sure that they align with student success and degree completion.
    - Pathway agreements have been converted to a sequenced format (2 + 2). Complete as of May 2013.
    - Work with APASC includes updating the ACETS workflow tool to include more information form community colleges so that university ATFs can make more informed decisions (Summer 2013).
    - ATFs have been advised to add agenda items to their yearly meetings that include discussions about curriculum and articulations that would make transfer easier for students in terms of the process and position them for academic success (Fall 2013).

Expected Completion Date: December 2013

15. The orientation fee should actually be termed an "enrollment fee" given that not all students will attend a formal orientation program. The fee should be charged whether students attend or not; otherwise, they will seek exceptions in order to avoid the fee. A fee will require a submitted proposal to ABOR.
    - A fee request was submitted to the Provosts' Office and approved.
        - It was <$100 so the request did not need to be submitted to ABOR.
    - Every student will be charged the fee.

Completion Date: February 2013

Concluding Remarks and Related Comments

The operational and change management work is never actually complete but rather ever-evolving. Strategic planning is underway this summer that will include a working plan over the next 3 years that aligns with ABOR goals and expectations and the UA Strategic Plan. Other transfer-related activities and initiatives that are underway that include:

- Form a strategic partnership with Pima Community College advisors to engage the two institutions toward a shared goal of transferring students (Advisor2Advisor);

- Expansion of pathways and master agreements within the state and a plan to make pathway information sustainable which will include improved technology and automation;
- Expansion of user access of SmartPlanner to <u>prospective</u> in-state transfer students;
- Construction of database to serve out-of-state students considering attendance at the University;
- Creation of a customer service and support culture in UA's transfer articulation office that will result in effective partnerships internally and externally that serve transfer students.
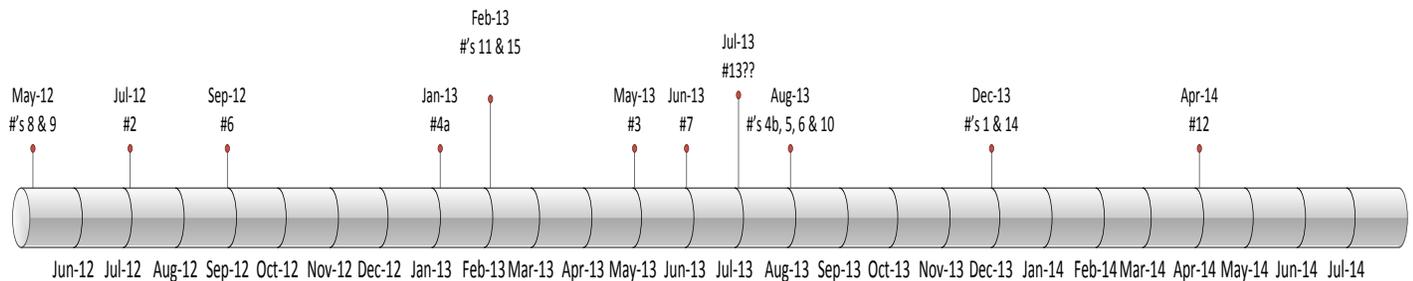- Continued expansion of Bridge Programs with in-state community college partners.

Future documentation will follow the strategic plan including updates, progress, and changes to the plan over time.

Special Recognition

Thanks to the following talented workforce for all their help with planning, programming, and implementation:

Stefanie Basij, Asst. Director, Enrollment Services, Student Affairs
Jeanais Brodie, Director, Transfer Center, Student Affairs
Roxie Catts, Director, Advising Resource Center, Academic Affairs
Arezu Corella, Sr. Assoc. Director, Admissions Processing Unit, Admissions & Student Affairs
Nicole Kontak, Director, Transfer Student Programs and Articulation, Academic Affairs
Paul Miller, Sr. Asst. Director, Transfer Recruitment, Admissions & Student Affairs
Anne Pagel, Asst. Dean, Eller College of Management
Leticia Soto-Delgadillo, Director, Colleges of Letters, Arts and Sciences
Joanne Silva, Academic Advisor, Sr., College of Engineering
Robyn Stanley, Director, Undergraduate Admissions Processing, Admissions & Student Affairs
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Implementation Timeline