

## **FACULTY** dimension

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### 1) Our Direction:

When we were introduced to the “Transfer Matters” Initiative at Arizona State University (ASU), it was explained as a movement to “study all aspects of the transfer student experience and to produce a plan for institutional improvement leading to higher levels of transfer student learning, satisfaction, and graduation.” Following the Gardner Institute’s “Foundations of Excellence” system, we were assigned to the faculty dimension committee. Our goal is to “**create a culture of faculty responsibility** for transfer student success by encouraging awareness of and responsiveness to the unique needs of transfer students. This culture of responsibility is nurtured by chief academic officers, deans, and department chairs and supported by the institutions’ reward systems.” One key point that our committee immediately addressed was the idea of “culture”. Is transfer student recognition a regular part of the faculty culture at ASU? Do faculty members consistently reach out to transfer students to ensure a successful transition to ASU and success in their respective courses? Is it commonplace to be recognized for work with transfer students? Are faculty members regularly encouraged to engage with transfer students to determine needs, strengths, and weaknesses? The resounding answer from our committee was: NO. It was quickly apparent that many of the committee members were under-educated about transfer student needs, and current resources at ASU.

The lack of a culture of faculty responsibility for transfer student success raised a red flag, and prompted a great deal of discussion. If we want to engage in excellent teaching, promote an inclusive environment, elevate student success, raise retention rates, and offer a more enriched ASU experience, something needs to change. To support our committee discussions, we gathered evidence, both quantitative and qualitative, to gain insight in to the current practices at ASU, the current perception of “culture”, feedback about the experiences of transfer students and faculty at ASU, and perspectives of faculty and staff at Mesa Community College – one of the community colleges from which ASU receives many transfer students.

Throughout this process, one challenge that we faced was keeping our focus on faculty – and not branching out in to students, assessment, advising, and other areas of potential overlap. This can be difficult, since each of these dimensions **MUST** work together to facilitate student success. As a committee, we feel that we have streamlined our evidence and recommendations to be relevant and applicable to faculty at ASU. Our ultimate mission was to provide a focused set of feasible recommendations. Our goal is to further understanding and empathy that will ultimately create a culture that produces enriching transfer student/faculty relationships.

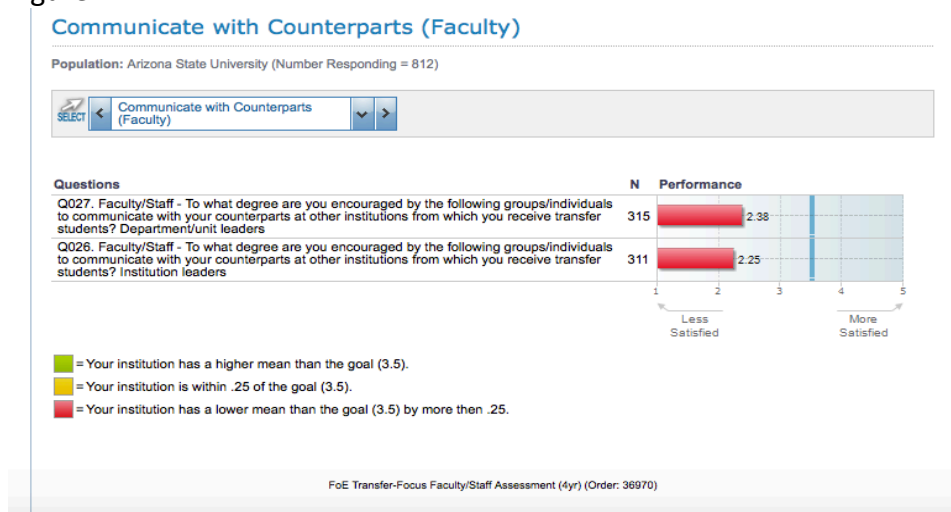
The information that follows provides evidence to support our current overall grade for ASU. Finally, we list and describe our set of recommendations for action and recognition. While this is in no way a solution to the current problem, we hope that it does provide some insight in to the current situation, and direction to improve one aspect of the transfer student experience at ASU.

## 2) Our Evidence:

### Quantitative Data gathered by the Gardner Institute

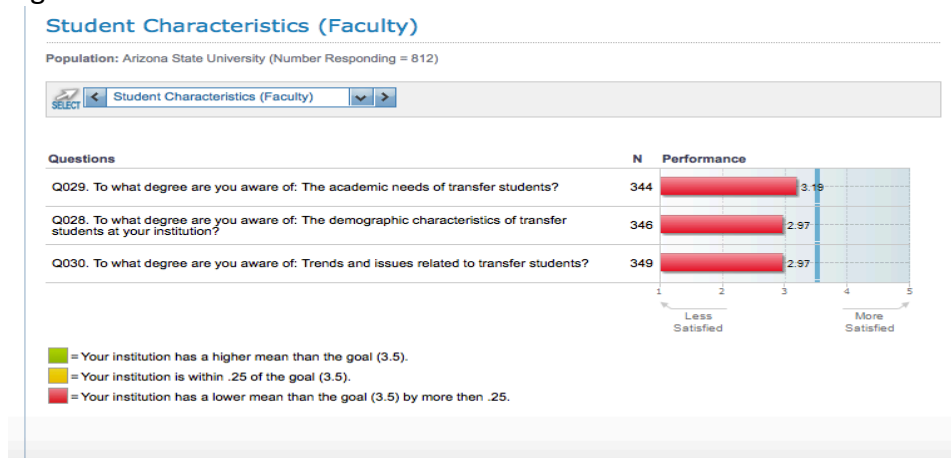
The faculty dimension was assigned specific questions from the Gardner Institute survey that was administered to a group of faculty members at ASU. The first set of questions addressed feelings of encouragement to communicate with our counterparts at other institutions from which we receive transfer students. As can be seen in figure A below, ASU faculty did not feel encouraged, and our institution fell well below the goal.

Figure A.



The second set of questions addressed awareness of faculty members to the needs, demographics, and issues common of transfer students. Again, ASU faculty reported that they do not feel that they are aware of the specific needs of transfer students at ASU (figure B) and our institution fell below the goal.

Figure B.



## Qualitative Data gathered by the Faculty Dimension Committee

To supplement the data gathered in the faculty survey, our committee administered questions to a variety of sectors of the ASU community. Specifically, we gathered qualitative information regarding the transfer student experience from students, faculty and staff from ASU, Barrett, the Honors College, and Mesa Community College.

### ASU Transfer Students

- We interviewed students that represented a few of the characteristics that transfer students embody: transferring in from a Maricopa Community College, transferring in from another 4-year institution, transferring in with an Associate's degree, and transferring in to Barrett, the Honors College. Overall, the students expressed several recommendations for improvement at ASU they would like to see (for transfer students) and specific recommendations for faculty. One student mentioned that it would be nice to meet ASU faculty members (ideally in one's identified major) before transferring to ASU. This student mentioned that such meetings would facilitate connecting to the university and feeling more comfortable in classes. Further, she mentioned that faculty should know which students are transfers. Such knowledge generate more empathy if and when transfer students ask questions that *"students at this level should know"*. The student expressed that faculty members may be more apt to *"blow off"* emails or questions from upper classman because they might expect students to already be aware of issues. Many transfer students, however, may not be aware of such practices or policies. She thought that adding sections to the syllabus and blackboard sites that offer specific resources for transfer students would be helpful. Further, she felt that this would forge a clearer path to better faculty/student relationships because the students will understand that the faculty are aware of, and empathetic to, the (potential) diverse needs of the transfer students.
- A different student explained his experiences, and felt that it is important for faculty to reach out to transfer students regarding prerequisite preparation. He mentioned that one-on-one discussion of what was learned in previous courses might help to ensure transfer students' success at ASU. While this may not be feasible in larger classes, he thinks that there could be some opportunity to discuss students' comfort level with course material with faculty. He also expanded on the transition in to Barrett. He thought this was a bit more difficult, because students cannot transfer in as a sophomore, so if transfer students come to ASU before their junior year, they need to wait to transfer. However, he did mention: *"I think Barrett is doing it right, because if you came in as a sophomore and had to complete the requirements of the 4-year Barrett program, it would be nearly impossible to graduate with honors."*
- Overall it seems that students recognize some areas for improvement with transfer student transition in to classes at ASU and student/faculty interactions.

### ASU NTE Faculty

- While the students expressed both positive experiences and struggles with their transfer experience, most faculty members that we talked to expressed a distinct lack of knowledge of, and inattention to, the transfer student experience. This simply reinforces the fact that there is a

lack of culture surrounding transfer students among ASU faculty. Here are what some of the non-tenure eligible (teaching) faculty had to say:

- Some faculty ask students to self identify at the beginning of the semester and mention that they can ask questions if needed. There was an overwhelming consensus concerning existing underlying expectations, however, that all transfer students should simply “slide” into classes.
- One faculty member gave some specific suggestions that the committee considered:
  - *“There should be a transfer student blackboard class created, getting them up to speed, explaining where services are located (career, writing center, etc.). Ideally, creating an ASU 101 for transfers with specifics for each program versus specifics for the university would be ideal. Most transfers take the freshman foundations transfer course at the community college, but that course is not close to what they need to know about ASU and their degree program specifically at ASU so they do enter their specific degrees at ASU as juniors and at a significant disadvantage to regular first year freshman students.”*
- Overall, most NTE faculty members said that they do nothing specific to transfer students within their classes.

#### **ASU T/TT Faculty**

- Our committee also interviewed tenure track (research) faculty to gain insight concerning their experiences with transfer students. Overall, they also expressed that they do nothing in particular to address transfer students in any of their classes. More specifically, when asked these two questions: 1) Do you do anything to recognize or reach out to transfer students (specifically) in your classes; and 2) Do you think ASU has any expectations or any culture surrounding transfer students? The overwhelming response was “No”.
- This information, again, reinforces the committee’s position that ASU lacks a faculty culture pertaining to transfer students. It seems that most faculty are willing and ready to address needs of transfer students, there is simply a lack of awareness and communication surrounding this topic.

#### **Mesa Community College Faculty and Advising**

- We wanted to reach out to our peers and colleagues at the Maricopa County Community Colleges to gain additional insight into their perspectives on their students’ transition to ASU. We connected with both a faculty member and staff member at Mesa Community College in Mesa, AZ.
- The advisor mentioned that she would specifically like to meet more frequently with ASU faculty to better understand their expectations and questions, however, her only opportunity for such interaction occurs at “Transfer Fairs.” It is our understanding that faculty members infrequently attend these events.
- The faculty member stated:
  - *“I have seen ASU recruiters on campus, but we have not had anyone directly reach out to our program or its students. We have however invited a recruiter to one of our student club meetings. She gave a very informative and engaging presentation. Additionally, (a specific advisor) graciously takes time out of her busy schedule every semester to speak to all four of my introductory level courses about (one specific program) at ASU.”*

- Further, *“the MAPPs have been absolutely key in ensuring a more seamless transition from Maricopa to ASU - they are straightforward and easy to follow. Moreover, the electronic advising that goes along with the MAPP is also incredibly helpful. Thus, it is critical that the MAPPs are up-to-date and reflective of the requirements of native ASU students. When they are not up-to-date or have errors it can lead to excess credits taken and in some cases problems with securing financial aid.”*
- This beneficial feedback corresponds with many of our committee discussions. Again, faculty interaction and involvement with the transfer students seems to be missing. Many current ASU initiatives seem to involve recruiters and advisors, but lack faculty representation. Increased faculty involvement may enhance communication between the Maricopa Community Colleges and ASU, and benefit the transfer experience of these students.

### **Barrett, the Honors College**

- Finally, we talked to representatives from Barrett, the Honors College to prepare a well-rounded report, and to address some specific interests among some committee members.
- The staff member discussed a specific course that all transfer students take during their junior year in Barrett (further discussed in the “current practices” section below). Thus, by definition, faculty that teach these classes are aware that students represent a transfer student population, however, no further discussion of faculty involvement or particular faculty practices ensued.
- When asked for additional comments and suggestions regarding the transfer student experience it was stated that:
  - *“Orientations should be offered to transfer students, but not the same as the freshmen orientation. The university assumes that because these students have been in college they know “stuff,” or can navigate it on their own. In fact, transfer students do need help, as this is a whole new process to them. If we start to show them support early in the process, I believe this will go a long way. These orientations need to include multiple dates, previously there has been one date and this was not conducive to a transfer student’s life. I would keep the online option but some students do not like the online format. Also, allow them a free guest, especially if it is a child of theirs. This will help to make the university more accessible. These orientations should really focus on the recourse available for these students such as career services, counseling, library and how it works, clubs, and other aspects that we assume these students know.”*
- These beneficial recommendations are relevant to the University; but again, do not necessarily involve faculty members. It is our hope that we can begin to offer faculty representation at orientations and networking events with transfer students.

### **3) Current Practices at ASU:**

Based on the committee’s interviews and research, we identified a few current practices that ASU has in place, that relate to transfer students. We understand that there are more practices, but these were particularly relevant to our committee discussions, and discussions with students and colleagues.

### **Transfer Student Ambassadors**

- We currently have students that serve as “ambassadors” for transfer students at ASU. Transfer ambassadors provide help, guidance, and a connection for new ASU transfer. Further, they may visit the local community colleges to reach out to students before they transition to ASU.

### **ASU 101 Courses**

- Some units on campus provide specific introductory courses (like an ASU 101 course) that are specific to transfer students. The curriculum consists of information that would be of particular importance to transfer students, in contrast to students that are first year freshman. These courses also provide an opportunity for transfer students to meet other students that may mirror their demographics, background and/or path to ASU – offering opportunities for social connectedness. These courses also expose students to ASU faculty members in a controlled, more intimate, environment (or online) to ease the transition.

### **Faculty Awareness**

- As denoted in the qualitative discussions presented above, some faculty members are already aware of some of the specific needs of transfer students, and provide opportunities for these students to reach out to them. Some faculty members reach out to transfer students on the first day of classes and/or include information for them on syllabi.

### **Transfer Student Orientations (for the university and Barrett, the Honors College)**

- ASU and Barrett have orientation sessions specific to transfer students to provide them with the specialized attention that they may need. Further, issues and questions specific to transfer students are recognized and addressed. Based on feedback from some faculty and staff, there may be a need for more dates for these transfer student orientations.

### **Barrett, the Honors College Course**

- Per the Barrett Student Recruitment Coordinator: *“In Barrett transfer students receive a specific course, called the History of Ideas. Previously this was not offered. Freshmen students would receive the Human Event, but there was not a signature course like this for transfer students (speaking as a transfer student this was very disheartening, however the Dean has listened to student feedback and brought forth the History of Ideas). I believe this course was introduced in the fall of 2013. In this course faculty understand that these are mostly transfer students.”*

### **MAPP from Maricopa County Community Colleges (and other transfer pathways)**

- One of the recommendations that our committee received from Dr. John Gardner was to reach out to other universities that have had success with enriching the transfer experience (using the Foundations of Excellence Programming). One specific recommendation was to talk with faculty from the University of Central Florida (UCF). Our committee did speak with a faculty member from UCF, and they mentioned that they have been successful with providing an easy pathway for students planning to transfer from the local community colleges. It turns out that, ASU

already has a program such as this in place. “MAPP is an acronym that stands for the Maricopa-ASU Pathways Program. This program is designed for students who have selected a major and know what they want to study at ASU. This program outlines the specific courses to take at your community college to prepare for your desired bachelor’s degree at ASU. Sometimes the transfer guides provided for MAPP students are also referred to as “MAPPs,” because like road maps, they guide you on your journey (description taken from [www.transfer.asu.edu](http://www.transfer.asu.edu).)” Faculty from Mesa Community College also mentioned that these pathways were extremely helpful for their students. We recommend (more information below) that faculty members keep this in mind when making changes to courses and curriculum. Those changes may impact the tracking from the Maricopa Community Colleges, and other institutions.

#### 4) OVERALL GRADE: C-

Based on the survey data, qualitative interviews with students, faculty, and staff, and discussion of current practices/culture/recommendations, we recommend an overall current grade of: C-. Although we have some current practices in place for faculty and transfer students, the evidence shows us that much more needs to be done. There is not a strong culture for specific faculty support for transfer students. We have discussed many ideas and options, finally narrowing it down to our most important and feasible recommendations. We have ranked them in order of easiest and most cost effective to more labor intensive and costly. We hope that even implementing a few of these recommendations will change the knowledge, perspective, and approach for many faculty members. Further, it will enrich the transfer experience of our students.

#### 5) RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommendations are ranked from easiest to implement to more difficult to implement. The committee considers *all* recommendations to be high priority.

##### Brochure/Information Campaign

- One of the major barriers to developing a culture at ASU that welcomes transfer students, as it related to faculty, is a lack of information and resources. We believe that faculty simply do not know how many of their students are (recent) transfers, which specific students are transfers, and what these students’ unique needs might be. Therefore, we recommend enacting a coordinated communication campaign, oriented towards faculty, which describes the needs and characteristics of transfer students. This information campaign might include brochures (not unlike the Sexual Assault Prevention Resource Guide that was distributed recently), web sites, e-mail blasts with links to the web sites, Blackboard sites, and other formats.
- - This campaign should, first, include descriptions of the demographic and educational characteristics of transfer students. For example, we could communicate that:
  - There are more undergraduate transfer students at ASU than those who come as first-time freshman.

- Half of transfer students come from Arizona Community Colleges. Most of those students come from the Maricopa County Community College District.
- Most students transfer with at least three semester's worth of coursework.
- Nearly 1 of 10 transfers in the 2014-2015 academic year were active duty or veterans.
- The average age of transfer students is the mid-20s.

The campaign would need to do more than simply describe the characteristics of transfer students. In addition, the campaign should provide faculty with specific recommendations that, if widely carried out, would help to create a more welcoming environment for transfer students. Elements recommended in the campaign might include:

- Provide templates for information to be placed in course syllabi welcoming transfer students, offering to help, and providing course-specific information related to this population (further discussed below).
  - Provide templates for information to be included in course blackboard sites (including, for example, links to offices and programs around the campus/university that serve transfer students) (further discussed below).
  - Provide information about MAPP, so that faculty members are aware of how curriculum changes can impact the ability of students to transfer effectively in to certain programs at ASU (further discussed below).
- This information would help to educate faculty and make them aware of the diverse needs of transfer students. In addition, it would let faculty know that there is not a “one size fits all” solution. The main goal of the brochure and/or informational campaign would be to foster awareness and provide resources, so faculty members could attend to transfer students in any way that they see fit.

### **Blackboard Content**

- As mentioned above, ASU could offer a standard Blackboard course shell folder that faculty members could copy and link to their personal course shells. These resources could also be automatically added to all new course shells. The course folder would include information about the university and common helpful links for resources including (but not limited to): the writing center, blackboard help, career services, and financial aid. Further, the faculty member would be able to customize and add information that is relevant to their course, prerequisite information, FAQs, and other pieces of information that may be important to transfer students. Although all students may not utilize this resource, it is a simple, cost-effective strategy that may be relevant to a handful of students in need.

### **Syllabus Content**

- Like the Blackboard content, the committee recommends a standard statement that can be included on course syllabi (similar to the content for disability services and academic integrity). One of our committee members created this statement to include on her syllabus:



- **Transfer Student Support**

If you are a transfer student and are interested in seeking additional support at ASU, please contact your instructor. Additional support can be found at [www.transfer.asu.edu](http://www.transfer.asu.edu). ASU is committed to fostering academic success of all students and your instructor serves on the Faculty Committee of the Transfer Matters Initiative.

While the committee understands that this may not appeal to ALL transfer students, it may attract the attention of some students, and increase their comfort level with approaching the professor. The hope is to lower perceived boundaries and barriers, and increase student comfort with asking questions, asking for help, and participating in class. Not only will this help with course outcomes, but it will also help to promote a connection between faculty members and students. When students feel connected, they are more likely to be retained.

### **Identifying Students on Rosters/MyASU**

- This recommendation spurred considerable discussion among our committee members, and also Dr. Gardner. The original idea was to identify transfer students on a roster so faculty members are aware of the students that are recent (or other) transfer students. It was mentioned that this might create some unfair preconceived notions that the transfer students are not appropriately prepared (or another judgment). Therefore, other options were discussed. The committee believes that it is a good idea to indicate the number or percentage of transfer students on each class roster. This will promote faculty member awareness, and they may change their techniques and/or student interactions to provide more support for the transfer students in their class. Changing levels of awareness is the first step to promoting an overall culture shift at ASU. We think it would be beneficial to provide both numbers and a visual (a pie graph) in the MyASU roster showing the breakdown of traditional students, maybe even first time freshman (if the course includes all levels of students), and transfer students.

### **Consistencies in Courses – discussing changes with the community colleges**

- We recommend that faculty members have an identified liaison to serve as a liaison between the Maricopa County Community Colleges and ASU. There may even need to be a department- or college-specific liaison. Such roles would serve many purposes, however, our main goal is to ensure that there is a person to communicate curriculum changes with. The communication may stem from an individual faculty member or a curriculum committee, however, changes to courses that track through the MAPP (between Maricopa County Community Colleges and ASU) could be discussed to ensure appropriate equivalencies. This helps to maintain consistent tracking, and helps students transfer in to ASU with the appropriate level of preparedness for their major.

### **Faculty Transfer Ambassadors**

- We recommend that ASU start a university wide cohort of faculty who make themselves available to assist with the **socialization** needs of transfer students. This group would be known as Faculty Transfer Ambassadors and serve to acquaint transfer students to ASU's academic

expectations. They would be clearly identified for transfer students as a cohort of faculty available to help provide answers, solutions, and information about assimilating to ASU. This could take the form of a website and searchable database that would allow students to find a transfer ambassador for their specific academic program(s).

The Faculty Transfer Ambassadors program would reach university wide and would demand participation at the academic unit level. A ratio should be deployed to identify the appropriate load that ambassadors should cover. We suggest a starting ratio of 1 transfer ambassador for every 50 transfer students. Keeping the ratio manageable will afford transfer ambassadors the opportunity to genuinely engage with transfer students on a host of matters – serving to provide advice, social support, or connecting students to other appropriate campus resources. Conversations might entail instructing transfer students about the expectations and level of work in certain courses or programs, particular academic strategies for success, remedial work that may be helpful for a student (e.g., reading key texts not on the syllabus), or balancing multiple demands that might include family, employment, and academic responsibilities. Finally, these transfer ambassadors could also become more engaged with the community colleges – possibly attending transfer fairs, and being a representative at orientations.

In this model, faculty could be selected because they have academic experience as a transfer student in their past, because they have acquired a certain level of sensitivity training related to the transfer student experience, or both. Training for ambassadors might take the form of an intensive ‘boot camp’ experience whereby participating faculty are incentivized (most likely monetarily) to attend the boot camp as a prerequisite for serving as a transfer ambassador for an annual (renewable) term (training further discussed below).

### **Faculty Training**

- There would be a mandatory training program for the faculty transfer ambassadors; however, other faculty would be able to register for and attend this training as well. This ‘boot camp’ would serve to educate on the varied demographics, experiences, and specific needs of the transfer student population. It would include many of the educational aspects in the informational campaign, along with speakers, group discussions, and behavioral techniques to pair with the education. In addition it might involve representatives from the Maricopa County Community Colleges, and transfer students from a variety of different backgrounds to work with the faculty members.

## **6) REWARDS/RECOGNITION**

It is important to have established forms of rewards and recognition for the faculty members who go above and beyond in their work with students, including transfer students. In order to maintain a sustainable intervention for transfer students, faculty must feel valued for their work. Here are a few recommendations from the faculty dimension committee (again ranked from easiest to most difficult to implement). *All* are considered a high priority.

**Recognition**

- Letters of appreciation from deans and directors; recognition with Sun Awards; recognition on websites and newsletters (for example for serving as the transfer ambassador). All will recognize effort and time spent towards enriching the transfer student experience.

**Service**

- Serving as a faculty ambassador will count towards department or college service requirements. Faculty may be able to alleviate other service duties to add specific services for transfer students.

**Financial**

- Offer a stipend for faculty ambassadors and/or for attending the faculty training.

**Promotion and Tenure**

- Changes in promotion and tenure evaluations, honoring service with transfer students. This service will be recognized as valuable and important at the unit, college, and university level.