Transfer Student Study

Focus Group Sessions and Survey Data

Spring 2012

Data compiled by the

Office of Academic Assessment
Transfer Study: Data Gathered from Focus Groups and Online Survey

Introduction

Students who transferred from a Maine community college (N=75) in the fall 2011 semester were sent an email asking them to participate in a focus group session. The intent of the focus group was to collect information about how easy or difficult the transfer process was for them and to obtain their feedback about the transition into their bachelor’s degree program. Due to the timing of the focus group request (early April), many students responded saying that they had time constraints. Therefore, only four (4) students opted to participate in the focus group sessions, but many students offered to answer any questions delivered by email. Eight (8) additional students responded to the questions by email. All students who participated received a USM gift card for their responses to the below questions.

Questions/Feedback

1. Why did you choose USM?
   - I thought it was a good school where I could get my Bachelors in science.
   - Locality and affordability.
   - USM was more affordable than moving out of state.
   - I have been taking classes at USM since 2006.
   - Only option after SMCC.
   - Friends
   - The school is local, convenient, and I have a job in the area.
   - After evaluating options USM seemed to offer the program I was looking for in close proximity to my apartment.
   - Best program for my major in finance/accounting.
   - Because I attended in 1981 and wanted to finish my BS degree.
   - Because I like the online Communications degree.
   - Convenience, I have a job and apartment.

2. At what point did you decide to obtain a Bachelor’s degree?
   - I thought having just an associate degree would not be enough for the career path I wanted to pursue.
   - I knew ever since middle school.
   - I knew I wanted to get a Bachelors degree, but I was undecided so I started at the comm college in liberal arts.
   - I knew that an Associate’s was not enough to achieve my goal.
   - I had beginning goals of earning BS. I will likely carry onto a Masters program.
   - New Career...New Degree needed.
   - I was offered a scholarship to continue.
   - Sometime during my Associate degree program (4).
3. **What are your educational goals at USM, and do you have a plan to achieve them?**

- Attain my B.S. in Biology. I did have a plan until yesterday. Now plans have changed, need extra courses.
- My educational goal at USM is to complete my Bachelor’s degree then my master’s degree CPA.
- Learn more and get the degree.
- To graduate with 3.0 GPA or higher.
- Get Bachelor’s.
- I am very goal-oriented, I am 27 years old, and I have a plan to graduate in the spring 2014.
- Graduate from USM’s philosophy department and enter USM’s Graduate program in counseling.
- Finish my BS next summer, fall at the latest, graduate program, reduce course load to 1-2 per semester.
- BS in Health Science....grad school to become a Physician.
- To obtain a Bachelor's degree by completing the communication and media studies program.
- To graduate with a B.A. in Communication and then obtain a Masters.
- I want to get my Bachelor’s and get a good job. Still working on a plan.

4. **We are interested in hearing about your transfer transition: what was the best part of the process, what parts could be improved?**

- My transition was difficult. I had to produce a high school transcript (which was many years ago), having an Associates degree was not good enough to move forward.
- The good part of the process is that all of my 75 credits were transferred into USM.
- Truth, the people that worked with me were excellent.
- Everything went well. EXCEPT when I learned that the transfer credits from SMCC were not accepted.
- I really don’t have any suggestions for improvement. It was a smooth and easy process for me and anyone who I dealt with was helpful and pleasant.
- The transfer affairs office continues to be invaluable!
- Ease of transferring credits was great. However your tuition is too high.
- The transition was fine, after the transition is when you find out more details about your course work needed to get your next degree.
- A little more communication is needed before getting to USM about the necessary steps, what’s accepted and what’s not.
- My transition seemed to go okay, not too many obstacles.
- Improve the process by making the website more clear about the academic program requirements for transfer students.
- Better communication between the community college and USM offices, so students get accurate information instead of confusing information.

5. **When looking for information to help you achieve your academic plan, where do you find your information?**

- Go to website (5)
- Ask staff in my major (2)
- Mainstreet (5)
6. Is USM helping you get your academic needs met with academic advising or faculty advising?

- Yes (5)
- Once you have figured it out, its easy.
- It is difficult to coordinate all the pieces.
- My major is Env. Science, and the professors are wonderful and helpful. But, I often go to Mainstreet first.
- Yes, but I am busy outside of USM, having an advisor to talk to, is so important to check my progress.
- Advisors should be a little clearer about the courses necessary for transfer students.
- No problems, so far.
- Mostly, getting needs met...sometimes it’s confusing in the major.

7. Are there services USM should offer to transfer students that would improve the transfer experience?

- One-on-one with an advisor. He should hunt you down to talk, not vise-versa.
- A member of the USM family should do a seminar at SMCC to educate about the transfer process.
- It is uncomfortable being an older student and going to orientation with students parents who are my age.
- Make it easier.
- Unfortunately I cannot think of any.
- On the website, need a quick description of what each office does; saving the time searching.
- Advisors should realize that transfers are different than freshmen.
- It seems like it should be easier.
- My transfer was smooth, not sure what issues other students have encountered.
- Have a TRANSFER student orientation, for any age.
- I did not attend any orientation, maybe I should have.
- Transferring to another school always has obstacles.

8. Do you feel connected to USM academic life or student life?

- The first semester, I must admit was very hard, but I am acclimated now.
- There is no sense of community for fellow students.
- I feel somewhat connected to the students in my courses.
- I receive regular emails about events, nice.
- Not really that connected to the social life on campus, not sure where you find what activities are going on.
- I would say yes (acad life) and no (social life).
- I’m not involved; however I am looking into a couple of student groups.
- Not on campus much, I go to classes, then leave.
- I do feel a sense of connection, but I am an older student so I am really more connected outside of school.
- My professors and advisors have been approachable, at least.
- Yes, I guess...it is hard because transfers are often treated like freshmen.
- Not really a connection here, more connections at the community college level.
9. **Do you have any additional suggestions?**

- No comments
- I like my major in Env Science; the people are so friendly and helpful.
- Not really, I think USM is a good school and there are many groups, organizations always looking to improve.
- I am in my second semester at USM and, so far, am enjoying the experience.
- Not yet, so far my classes have been good, although it should be easier to get information; it can be time-consuming.
- The communication between students and staff/faculty is more frequent at SMCC.
- There are a lot of good people at USM, but some processes at USM are *not* student-friendly.
- Getting information...about what course sequence is recommended, and what courses are *not* necessary for those who already have an Associate’s. No clear process.
- The people in Transfer office are very helpful. Those in the academic offices are a little confusing about which courses are needed, I don’t want to repeat classes I have already had.
- Can you document the transfer process, so students could read ahead before they get to USM about what we need to do or take to get a BS/BA, so we don’t have to spend 4 additional years in school.