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Interinstitutional Student Success

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As you come in, write some examples of efforts specifically aimed at transfer students either at your university or elsewhere in any of the categories listed below on your sticky notes. Multiples encouraged!

- Instruction
- Online resources
- Outreach
- Partnerships
- Anything out of this world!
I. Interinstitutional Student Success

An asset-oriented inquiry into transfer students

Hi everyone, thank you for coming to our session and sharing some of the ways yours and other libraries are serving transfer students. Today we are going to talk about transfer students at UNLV and what we’ve learned about them through our mixed methods research approach while avoiding deficit ideologies and looking through an asset oriented lens. There is a bit.ly link on most of the slides, so if you want to follow along you can or if you want to have access to these slides later there is a link available for that.
Add your sticky note to the appropriate easel.

Then, walk around the room to see what other folks are up to!

Directions for activity where attendees group their previously listed suggested outreach examples on an easel
Before we get started, would anyone be willing to share something they currently do or something new they saw while walking around the room?
1. Research Design
2. What we learned
3. What now?

Here’s our general outline for the next 30 minutes or so. We will walk you through our research design and what it means to do research through an asset-oriented lens. We will talk about what we learned through that research, and end on some next steps we have planned based on what we have learned.
You will be able to...

- describe the diverse experiences of transfer students,
- outline approaches for working with them, and
- identify potential partnerships on and off your own campuses.

All of this is with the goal that you will get an understanding of transfer students and their diverse and varied experiences, outline approaches for working with these students, and identify possible partnerships on your own campuses.
“A lot of our assumptions about transfer students were wrong, including who they are, how they use libraries, and how we might be able to contribute to their success.”

—Kevin Seeber & Erin Richter-Weikum, 2017

First I want to talk about this concept of the asset oriented approach and why we decided to use it. Around the time we were starting this project Kevin Seeber and Erin Richter-Weikum presented on their research about transfer students and found that a lot of their previous assumptions were proven wrong. We decided that what we really wanted to do was learn about the various lived experiences of transfer students in order to understand who transfer students are, what they already know, and what they think the libraries are lacking, instead of assuming they were all coming in with this enormous deficit.
We really came to this realization that we wanted to take this approach by being keenly aware of what we didn’t want to do. We didn’t want to assume transfer students had this huge deficit they were entering our universities with. Deficit mindsets occur when researchers look at a particular population as though they are lacking necessary skills or knowledge and need some sort of intervention to get them on the right track. In educational research it happens quite a bit with students of color, and in LIS literature it happens quite a bit with transfer students.

This mindset is often born of good intentions, generally these researchers are ultimately hoping to help whatever population they are studying, but if gone unchecked it can lead to harmful assumptions that don’t account for the rich lived experiences and strengths of these populations.

What this deficit mindset looks like in education and in libraries is something like “okay, we’ve created this vertically aligned information literacy program and there’s this hugely growing group of students that isn’t getting the first two components of that program, they must be at a disadvantage/have needs/be lagging behind/be underprepared.
An Asset oriented approach focuses on the strengths students already have in order to build on them. It looks at student potential instead of limitations. For us, that meant asking ourselves and them “What strengths do these students have? What do they already know? And ultimately, what are they already good at? How can we use that to our advantage when planning outreach and instruction for them?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>DEFICIT</th>
<th>Student limitations</th>
<th>Rely on stereotypes about who can achieve</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ASSET</td>
<td>Student Potential</td>
<td>Identify and build on student strengths</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
“An alternative approach looks at the proverbial glass as half full instead of half empty. In other words, some helping professionals use an asset-based approach instead of a deficit-based approach”

Rose, 2006

“The critical IL literature explores a variety of aspects of social power but does not adequately address the assets of underserved students, their racial / cultural context in society and within the academic environment, and their potential contribution”

Morrison, 2017

Here’s a bit of background on the scholarship around asset-oriented methodologies. Rose is a scholar in family counseling and she wrote on this over a decade ago, calling it a way of looking at the glass half full rather than half empty. On the previous slide, you saw a chart adapted from Richard Milner from 2010 when he discussed what asset oriented meant in education, particularly focusing on teachers and how they view and teach students of color.

Morrison does a beautiful job exploring related concepts in her 2017 paper on Informed Asset pedagogy in the IL classroom. She talks about the various theories that specifically look at communities of color from an asset-oriented lens. Here she explains that while critical information literacy in LIS literature is doing a lot of important work, she does not feel like it has successfully talked about asset-oriented approaches to underserved students.

I want to be clear that we are not conflating people of color and transfer students, though many of our transfer students are students of color as we are at a minority serving institution. But we were inspired to look at our students to avoid making assumptions about these students and instead give ourselves opportunities to learn about their lived experiences, as discussed in an asset-oriented approach.
● Who are transfer students?
● What are their lives like?
● How can we best design library services and resources for them?

All of this led us to asking these questions in order to get a really deep understanding of life as a transfer student at UNLV. What lived experiences had contributed to them being in our universities and libraries? What is their day to day like? How does that influence their library use and how can it inform our practice?
When we designed our study we received deidentified data about transfer students from the IR office. The surveys aimed to understand transfer students as a whole. We asked questions like how much they work, how they use campus resources, and how they use libraries in order to get a big picture idea of actionable things we could do. Interviews really gave us those detailed examples of their lived experiences and the opportunity to ask questions about the assets they felt they brought with them that contributed to their success.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Institutional Research Office</th>
<th>Survey</th>
<th>Interviews</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>● Demographics</td>
<td>● How do transfer students spend their days?</td>
<td>● Offered richer, more in depth, personal stories of what life is like as a transfer student at UNLV</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>● Credit hours earned</td>
<td>● What are their previous experiences with libraries?</td>
<td>● How do they like to learn?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>● Previous institution</td>
<td>● How do they use campus resources?</td>
<td>● How have their lived experiences influenced their work at UNLV</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

16 questions
5,116 students
~535 respondents

Semistructured
16 questions
21 students
UNLV is a large public research university with a large minority student population. The large majority of our students come from the Las Vegas area and we had about 2,000 transfer students enter UNLV last fall.
1. Research Design
2. What we learned
3. What now?
I want to start by talking about where students spend their time. UNLV has a beautiful campus right in the heart of Las Vegas - you can see the Strip in the background and our lovely library in the foreground, and students everywhere - but are those students transfer students? We do have small numbers of transfer students who live or work on campus, and the majority are taking classes on campus, but outside of class time - a lot of transfer students are not spending time at UNLV.
This information comes from the survey. We asked students to report how many hours they spend per week on campus doing a variety of activities. Here on the chart are the three things we thought you would be most interested in. Direct your attention to the no time per week: 69% of transfer students do not participate in any on-campus events, 45% do not use any campus resources, and 7% don’t use the physical space of the campus to study and complete classwork. Unfortunately, we did not have an option for students to indicate that they were doing their coursework completely virtually, so some of that 7% probably includes students who are only taking classes online.

We were a little surprised that 10% of transfer students said they spend more than 20 hours per week studying and completing classwork on campus, but some of our interviewees shared that being on campus was their opportunity to focus without any of the interruptions that might happen at home.

Again, the original question included more activity options that aren’t reflected on this chart. Two data points I want to share with you are that 10% of transfer students work an on-campus job, so those students are at UNLV quite a bit. Also, one-third of transfer students reported that they spend absolutely no time on campus socializing or hanging out with friends, and we saw that in our interviews as well - they are coming to college for a degree, not necessarily for the ‘college experience.’ To revisit what Chelsea talked about earlier - there is no one transfer student experience. Some
are on campus a lot, some are not on campus at all. So where are our students when they’re not on campus?
58% of our transfer students are working

During the semester, students work on average:

- 1-10 hours per week: 14%
- 11-20 hours per week: 26%
- 21-30 hours per week: 26%
- 31-40 hours per week: 24%
- More than 40 hours per week: 10%

They are at work. 58% of our transfer students have a job, but that means almost half of our transfer students reported that they don't work at all. When we did our student interviews, almost one-third of those we interviewed were veterans. Unfortunately, we don't have data about the veteran status of our transfer students overall, but we do think they are overrepresented in our survey and interviews, so their access to the GI Bill may influence this number.

During our interviews, we asked students to describe their typical on and off campus days, and I'd like to share three anecdotes from students who are working. One student told us: He wakes up at 1AM and works from 3AM-8AM, he takes 12 credits in back-to-back classes from 8:30 in the morning until 2:15 in the afternoon without a break, then he has until 6PM to eat, or do homework, or see his friends, or have fun, but at 6PM it’s time for bed. He’s working 40 hours a week on graveyard shift, taking a full-time load of 12 credits, and twice a week he has only 4 hours per day when he is not sleeping, working, or in class.

Another student told us that the biggest challenge she faces at UNLV is trying to schedule her classes around her job. She only works 25 hours a week and takes 15 credits of classes, one of which requires a 90-hour practicum experience. She comes
to campus early to do homework and study, takes two classes in the morning, goes to work from noon until 6pm, and takes two classes in the evening finishing her school day at 9:30PM.

We didn’t ask this question in our surveys, but we did find out in our interviews that our transfer students do a lot of unpaid labor. Some are parents and some have younger siblings they take care of. One student assured us that she only worked one day a week and had no family responsibilities, but it turned out she’s actually nannying in exchange for free rent. From her perspective, it didn’t count as work because it was unpaid and it didn’t count as family responsibilities because it’s not her family. So it’s also worth noting that some of those students who reported they don’t work might be working in a different way.

Overall, these results showed us that we need to be incredibly mindful of our students’ time.
One of the most interesting things we discovered is that students ARE using libraries. 74% of our transfer students are using a library at least once a week. 14% of our transfer students report using a library daily. Only 6% of students said they never use a library, so we were very happy with these results.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Library Type</th>
<th>Number of Students</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>UNLV Library:</td>
<td>475</td>
<td>88%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Public Library:</td>
<td>139</td>
<td>25%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Local Academic Libraries:</td>
<td>73</td>
<td>13%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Previous Academic Library:</td>
<td>68</td>
<td>12%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>None:</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>3.5%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

What’s interesting is that they are using libraries outside of UNLV. This question allowed students to check all the answers that applied, and there were more options available than what you see here. Happily, the vast majority use UNLV Libraries. One student specified that they only used the UNLV library’s online resources which made us realize that we probably should have had “Library Websites” as an option to pick.

A quarter of students reported using the public library. Las Vegas is quite spread out and doesn’t have robust public transportation, and it’s possible to have a 45 minute drive to and from campus, so we suspect that is one reason people may be going to the public library. Additionally, we did have a few people comment in response to other questions that university library is not family friendly, so that’s another potential reason why people may be going to the public library.

As for the other local academic libraries and the previous academic libraries, it is possible that their previous institution IS local, or maybe those students were recent transfers and thus last semester they used that library, or maybe they are still enrolled at another institution - we aren’t quite sure what to make of those numbers.

The real takeaway here is that we may want to consider increasing communication and collaboration with our local public libraries and other colleges. And again, these numbers may look very different at your institution if you are not a commuter campus or if you don’t have other institutions in your geographic region.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>Number of Students</th>
<th>Percentage of Students</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Study space</td>
<td>445</td>
<td>84%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Technology</td>
<td>276</td>
<td>52%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Borrowing items</td>
<td>213</td>
<td>40%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Socializing</td>
<td>111</td>
<td>21%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Research help</td>
<td>86</td>
<td>16%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tutoring</td>
<td>72</td>
<td>13%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Special events</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

And what are transfer students doing in these different libraries? Probably what you expect, and you can see the numbers up on the screen. We were disappointed with how few students use the library for research help, so in our interviews we specifically asked students what they would do if they needed help during their research process.
On getting research help...

- “I’d probably try to sign in with my [previous institution account] just to see if it would still work”
- “If it was a subject that I really understand at least to some extent, I would probably just [figure] it out on my own”
- “You know if you need a librarian [they] have specialized librarians here at UNLV...but with my time schedule, I'd rather just do it myself”
- “First I’d probably go to the professor if I needed help”
- “The professor...hooked me up with a few people up there in Special Collections and I was able to get some valuable resources”
- “Just go to the desk maybe because I feel like the librarians here are degreed. They have degrees in research studies so of course they would be familiar in how to use the search engine and everything.”

We’re still transcribing our interviews, but I pulled out some quotes that illuminated where students are getting research help from.

For the record, half of the interviewees we’ve transcribed so far said they would start with the professor.
Referring back to what Chelsea said earlier, it’s easy to think that because students missed out on OUR instruction or because they’re NOT using the library for research help that they are deficient, and I want to emphasize again that they are not. We asked this question in our survey, and happily 82% said yes. Whether or not they received formal library instruction on information literacy, the vast majority have still used their information literacy skills to write a research paper with sources that they cited.
We asked students about the library instruction they have received and the library instruction they’re interested in, and the number one answer to the library instruction they’re interested in was… “No thanks, I’m not interested in research skills training.” Of course, we’re librarians and our first thought was “WHY WON’T YOU LET ME HELP YOU?” But again, maybe they want something different from what we’ve been providing.
The question asked “as a college student, have you received information through instruction or tutorials on the following topics”, and you can see on the left how many students have received instruction on these topics. It's almost a perfect inverse relationship between what they have been taught and what they want to be taught. I do want to point out that the way we framed the question didn't include any instruction they received before or outside of a college setting, like in high school, at work, or in a public library.

These results really have the potential to reframe our practice both as an institution that receives transfer students and as an institution that students transfer away from. The institutions that students are transferring from - whether that’s community colleges or other universities, are providing instruction, just like we are providing instruction before our students transfer away. A lot of research tells us we should focus on transferable skills rather than specific institutional resources. In 1996 Stains, says that when teaching information literacy skills, we should focus on the search process rather than specific tools. In a 2015 article, Kuglitsch says information literacy concepts gained in one setting can transfer to another as long as the information seeking context is emphasized. And most recently Richter-Weikum and Seeber (2018) report that their transfer students said past library instruction helped them in their current academic setting.
We are NOT saying that transfer students don’t want help or don’t need instruction. What we are saying is that our students are coming to us with a lot of skills already, so rather than re-teaching them these basic information literacy skills, let’s build on the skills they have, and take them to the next level.

With that being said, what do transfer students want instruction on?
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Have received instruction on...</th>
<th>Would like instruction on...</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>32% UNLV Libraries facilities (including tours)</td>
<td>25%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>32% UNLV Libraries policies and services</td>
<td>30%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The same thing every student who is new to UNLV wants! They want to know where we are, what we have, and how we can help them. These high numbers may be due to the fact that we sent out the survey early in the spring semester when many transfer students have just arrived on campus. We suspect if we sent out the survey today, right before finals week, we may have different answers.
The last survey question we want to share with you today asked students their preferred way for receiving library instruction - we did not have none as an option, so they had to pick one. We organized the results with the online options on the left and the in-person options on the right, so there IS a slight preference for virtual instruction, but 47% still wanted to do things in person. Our answers were in student friendly language, so we did not use the technical term ‘research consultation’ when we presented it to them.

During our interviews we asked students to tell us about their process for learning outside of school, learning just for fun. All students told us about virtual learning experiences, but some picked visual ones, and some picked text. For example, one student uses Pinterest and YouTube to teach herself watercolor painting, another student uses a gamification app, DuoLingo, to teach himself Korean. On the text side, one student reported going to wikipedia to learn general information about a topic and going to blogs if she wanted to get a more personal experience, a chance to hear from people who have been there. Another student said he goes to Reddit, where there are very specific communities to find very specific information.

Obviously, we can't provide every instructional experience in every potential
instructional medium, but we do want to start experimenting a little, and our outreach librarian Rosan will tell you a little bit more about what we’re planning on trying out.
1. Research Design
2. What we learned
3. **What now?**
Based on everything we’ve learned through this project, we want to emphasize that our next steps will involve developing multiple modes of outreach and instruction to accommodate the varied lives of transfer students.

The project helped us identify several ways to collaborate with off and on-campus partners. We believe a mixed-methods approach will be the most effective.
So many (23%) students reported that email is a preferred method of communication and a way that they learn about campus resources and events. So while it is almost shameful to admit this in 2018, one tool that we will pilot using in the fall, is email!

In addition to crafting email messages specifically for transfer students, we’ve identified ways to fold our efforts into existing programs and infrastructure.
Office of Online Education

- Embed existing tutorials in Canvas
- Participate in new badging program / transfer student portal
- Roll out new and existing tutorials through Canvas

With another 30% of students reporting preferred instruction through online and/or online chat, there are a number of ways we can partner with the office of Online Education:

- Embed relevant existing library tutorials in Canvas… which is an LMS also used by our fellow southern Nevada colleges.
- Participate in new badging system initiative led by OE which could lead to a transfer student Canvas portal, similar to what other libraries have done.
- Use Canvas as a tool to roll out new tutorials (such as a library orientation) to transfer students.
Upcoming Partnership Plans

Community College Transfer Student Office

- Train the trainer
- Collaborate on unique outreach for transferring students

CSN Transfer Student Office (office based at the College of Southern Nevada and staffed by UNLV advisors):

- Train the trainer - provide advisors with in-depth knowledge of services and resources available at UNLV Libraries
- Collaborate to design unique outreach programs for CSN students, whom we’ve identified from our interviews as a subset of students that would be more likely to attend events.
Transfer Student Orientation / Admissions

- Update breakout session activity
- Create materials for transfer students at any orientation
- Veteran Bridge Orientation

Transfer Student Orientation: (which only captures a portion of transfer students -- the ones that attend the transfer student themed orientation).
- Update breakout session activity and content to reflect what we've learned
- Design transfer student focused materials to distribute at all orientation resource fairs, as we learned that transfer students do not exclusively attend transfer student orientation.
- Hold a Veteran Bridge Orientation in partnership with Military & Veteran Services and ASC in August, incorporating findings about student veteran transfer students.
Additional Plans

Informed by survey question:

What services have you used at UNLV?

We also have some additional plans and potential partnerships based on the findings from our survey question: “what services have you used at UNLV?” We learned from this question that many transfer students had not yet used valuable services through key offices.
You'll see we identified that several academic support offices were not reported as used by the majority of respondents.
This is noteworthy because in a separate survey, academic advisors reported referring transfer students most frequently to: Financial Aid, Career Services, Academic Success Center (tutoring/study skills), and the Writing Center. Three of these four offices were not noted as being highly utilized by transfer students. And while we’re thrilled students reported using the library, we’re also realistic and know this likely means the space / technology in our main library, not necessarily help from a librarian or other expert.
Based on these findings, this fall we’re going to offer a transfer student mixer event, along with mini workshops. We’re modeling this event based on a previous collaboration offered to first-generation college students.

The transfer student program will include workshops from the Academic Success Center, the Writing Center, Career Services, the University Libraries, and Financial Aid. This event will be a pilot and we’re realistic about participation, especially since we learned that UNLV transfer students don’t spend a lot of time at campus events, so we know many transfer students will not attend. However, for CSN transfer students, and for folks that prefer learning through workshops or in-person events, this could be a meaningful way to engage and meet those students, while also bringing them into the library before the semester gets underway.
“Increased dialogue within as well as across institutions, and cross-functional training and awareness should become a priority”

Roberts, Welsh, Dudek (Forthcoming 2019)

We know from a recent case study of library services offered to transfer students across institutions in Colorado that “increased dialogue within as well as across institutions, and cross-functional training and awareness should become a priority”. (Roberts, L., Welsh, M., & Dudek, B. Forthcoming: 2019, January. Instruction and Outreach for Transfer Students: A Colorado Case Study. College & Research Libraries. pg 22)
Upcoming Plans

- Other Local Institutions
  - Nevada State College (regional college)
  - College of Southern Nevada (community college)

[images of Nevada State College and College of Southern Nevada logos]

Therefore, over the summer, we're planning to reach out and connect with our librarian partners at Nevada State College and CSN, to share our findings and to improve communication and services for students that transfer to/from these institutions. While our study didn’t focus on students transferring out, we know some UNLV students end up finishing their studies at NSC.

We recently shared our IRB application, survey and interview design, and initial findings with our library colleagues at NSC as a way to encourage them to conduct their own studies.
Our findings may not mirror what you'll find; each institution has their own transfer student profile - we encourage you to do your own inquiry into the lives of transfer students!

Our transfer student profile is multifaceted and dynamic. There is not a one size fits all outreach or instructional intervention needed or warranted to best serve and support the success of transfer students. Efforts to reach transfer students should be multifaceted.

It’s crucial that we strive to understand, acknowledge, and celebrate the previous learning and life experiences of our transfer students. Not only when working with them, but also when considering outreach and instruction.

We’ve identified transfer students as a priority within our department. We are fortunate to have the support of our department head, who is including this work as part of our collective annual goals. In order to develop library resources and programs with other campus partners, to contribute to the success of our transfer students, we’ll need the effort and expertise of many.
Transfer Students

Asset-Based Orientation
Pick out something you saw or thought of today that you are planning to investigate for your own institution!
Write it on a post-it and stick it on the board on the way out!