

Spring 2018

The academic performances of community college transfer students at Eastern Washington University (EWU)

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The Academic Performances of Community College Transfer
Students at Eastern Washington University (EWU)

A Thesis

Presented To

Eastern Washington University

Cheney, Washington

In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements

For the Degree

Master of Arts in Critical GIS and Public Anthropology

By

Amanda S. Lee

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Abstract

The Academic Performances of Community College Transfer Students at Eastern Washington University (EWU)

This thesis assesses the academic progress of transfer students at Eastern Washington University. Over %60 of college graduates attend multiple institutions (United States Department of Education, 2006) and more than %70 of Washington students attend a technical or community college before entering a 4-year institution. (HEBC, 2011) This makes transfer students an extremely valuable and important population to universities across the United States. These students run into different issues than average freshmen do, such as loss of credit which can impact their time to graduation and have a negative financial impact. Transfer student success falls heavily on receiving and having access to crucial information at the right time during their time at community or technical college.

My research consisted of 4 different methods; surveys, interviews, student data collection and participatory observation. Overall these methods would help me find some of the underlying problems EWU transfer students face. The data collected lead me to believe that the issues students face are happening before they enter EWU and being resolved once they get to a 4-institution.

Those in higher education often hear that the transfer system is broken but it is not always clear what are or where the problems are manifesting from. Since transfer students can account for almost half of EWU students, it is key for EWU 's success to

have a seamless transition for these students. With a strong line of communication and a unified idea of transfer between community colleges and universities, EWU will be able create and maintain important resources for transfer student success.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would first like to thank my thesis advisor Associate Dean of Social Sciences, Dr. Rob Sauders of Eastern Washington University. Dr. Sauder's wit was often a light spot in the duration of this process. He has consistently steered me in the right direction while still allowing me the freedom to make this paper my own.

I would also like to thank the Anthropology Department of Eastern Washington University. Without the knowledge they bestowed on me I would not be where I am today. Many professors, especially Dr. Kassahuan Kebede and Dr. Julie Smith, took the time to meet with me often, give me feedback and reassurance. Their guidance helped me succeed in this program.

Finally, I must express my gratitude to those in Academic Affairs; Senior Director Keith Klauss, Associate Vice President Mark Baldwin and Assistant Vice President Heather Veeder. They not only gave me employment as a graduate assistant but encouraged my research, offered continuous feedback and helped feed my knowledge through valuable conversations. They inspired me more than I can put into words and for that I am forever thankful.

Introduction

My research assessed the academic performance of transfer students at Eastern Washington University. One of the biggest roadblocks many students run into when transferring from community colleges to four-year universities is the loss of credits, pushing back their time to completion which in turn will cost the student more in tuition (Leslie, 2015). When students transfer from a community college to a 4-year institution they usually run into 3 significant barriers; lack of alignment and advising, loss of credits, and negative financial impacts (Leslie, 2015). With over 60% of college graduates attending multiple institutions (United States Department of Education, 2006), many starting at community colleges, the importance of understanding community college transfer students' stories is critical to retention and graduation agendas at colleges and universities nationwide (Lazarowicz, 2015). Transfer students exhibit a great range of diversity in terms of age, race, socioeconomic status, and previous educational experience. Transfer students also face a number of barriers when transferring to a new institution. They bring a range of assumptions, frequently misguided, from their previous institution, which can potentially hinder their navigating the new administrative bureaucracy (Tobowolsky & Cox, 2012).

Currently the community college and university systems are separated to the point where it causes problems for students who want to transfer to a university to earn a four-year degree. (Leslie, 2015) The acceptance of credit hours is essential to students' success or lack thereof. This creates a problem for the student by prolonging (potentially unnecessarily) their time at the institution. (Lewis, 2013). Moreover, with the transition to a new school they are dealing with differences in class schedules, course work, class and

campus size, new professors and institutional culture. This can affect the academic performance of the student and their social integration into the campus community. The power of a good relationship between faculty/advisors and the transferring student is often underestimated. The lack of these relationships can create difficulties for the transfer student.

When students are looking at transferring to a regional institution they are expecting their academic credits to transfer and complete requirements of any given school. Students can be under the impression that if you earn any type of associate's degree at a community college there should be no reason why the credits wouldn't apply to your degree.

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Literature Review

Historic Summary of the Anthropology of Education

The anthropology of education is a way of examining educational systems from a cultural anthropologist point of view. The anthropological approach on education focuses on the cultural aspect of education including both formal and informal education. Formal education requires a theory of society as a whole and a theory of how social processes shape education (Scibner and Cole, 1973). Informal education occurs in the course of mundane adult activities in which children take part according to their abilities. This type of informal education teaches basic skills, values, attitude and customs which define appropriate adult behavior in the culture (Scibner and Cole, 1973).

The anthropology of education explores the ideas of culture and its meaning, as well as function and dynamics in education. Further, this subfield investigates how culture is transmitted from generation to generation through the institution of education along with the insights related to the idea of schooling and the institution of the school (Hodges, 2011). The anthropological analyses of the educational processes and institutions, along with their structure and content, sheds light on how societies operate and cultures transmit knowledge because, as Margaret Mead stated, “our humanity rests upon a series of learned behaviors, woven together into patterns that are infinitely fragile and never directly inherited” (Mead, 1949). As part of the cultural learning of one generation to the next, the anthropological study of education has developed “within the context of disciplinary developments in theory and research methodology that advanced anthropological studies of contemporary

peoples in a rapidly changing world” (Eddy, 1985) and provides yet another lens through which cultural knowledge and transmission can be studied and assessed.

Educational anthropologists have historical roots that date back to the late 19th century when anthropology emerged as a field of scientific study. “An important reason for the long history of anthropological interest in education is that the process of professionalization was intertwined inevitably with the promotion of the discipline as a legitimate and needed new area of scientific teaching within institutions of higher education“ (Eddy, 1985). Education and the schooling system are closely connected with our culture and society which has vast opportunities for anthropological discoveries (Labatiuk, 2012).

In ‘Coming of Age in Samoa’, Margaret Mead’s research primarily focuses on Samoan youth. Through her studies she begins to discover the difference between a learning culture and teaching culture. She argued that teaching is an even more distinctive attribute of humans than learning (Erickson, 1982). The role of a teacher can be occupied by parents, siblings, elders, and peers. This type of instruction, which can be undetectable to the learner but which remains deliberate guidance, should be of interest to anthropologists. Cognitive learning is described by a person’s way of thinking, perceiving, remembering and/or problem solving. This can influence attitude, values, and social interaction. This is part of our informal learning, where we learn how to act within our own culture. Mead’s “Coming of Age in Samoa” (1928), argued the value of comparing American civilization with “simpler” societies in order to illustrate our own methods of education. By the mid-1930s the analysis of culture and personality was becoming well established in American anthropology (Eddy, 1985). Culture plays a large role on how we

perceive education. Our society embeds an idea of what type of education is most important through cognitive learning. By further analysis of anthropology of education we can develop a better understanding of disparities within our academic landscapes.

The field of anthropology and education has considerable origins in critiques of schools and schooling, and the structural inequities of education policy and practice (Gonzalez, 2004). Anthropological theorizing can be appropriated into political agendas, and “culture” can be transmuted into an obstacle to academic success. When the subfield of anthropology of education began to emerge, it drew heavily from the works of Margaret Mead, Ruth Benedict, and later George Spindler. The merging of anthropology and education research is occupied by central issues from both disciplines such as knowledge, relationships of power, culture and personality/identity, as well as assessments of globalization (Gonzalez, 2010). Understanding how humans learn and teach can greatly affect how we perceive changes in our society and culture and how these changes are relevant to the way we educate. The convergence of anthropology and education research establishes a different lens through which issues can be identified and solutions can be discovered.

Mead’s earliest professional writings shows awareness of educational adjustments required for the technical change happening in the teaching systems then in use. As Monroe (1992) notes, Mead “focused much of her thinking, speaking, and writing on education and the impact of rapid change on educational theory and practice.” Her publications provided insights into her core tenet that education functions as a mechanism of social change. Mead believed that teaching patriotism for the world as a whole and setting aside old assumptions would help education stay consistent with a changing world (Monroe, 1992). This

innovative notion and circular approach to education analyzed teaching and learning in an effort to develop understanding and drive social change.

Ruth Benedict's major contribution to anthropology of education came from comparing cultures in order to demonstrate how a small portion of the possible range of human behavior is incorporated into any one culture. She contended that the personality, a precise complex of attitudes and traits of a culture, is what defines an individual within a society a success, misfit or outcast. Benedict drew parallels between her research on human behavior and culture to her studies in education. She believed that no educational policies can make a stable society out of an unstable one. "In our changing culture it is necessary to base our teachings upon fundamental commitments of our culture if we are to avoid teaching many things the child will have to unlearn later. Transmission of our democratic heritage is most threatened at the point of transition from childish dependency to adult independences"(Benedict, 1943).

Benedict believed that the controversies about education in past years have brought forward the issue of the role schools play in transmitting cultural heritage. Schools are being blamed for the perceived "un-American" traits of our mercurial society. (Benedict, 1943) "Those critics who blame the schools for the changes they resent in our culture are making the educational system a scapegoat for the vast changes in the structure of modern society which they do not take into account" (Benedict, 1943).

George Spindler is often recognized as a founder of the anthropology of education (McDermott, 2008). Spindler believed that some educational theorists cited the concept of culture as the most crucial in systematic thinking (Spindler, 1992). According to Spindler

(1992), anthropology has been applied to educational problems since 1904 when Edgar Hewett (1904, 1905) wrote his first pieces on education for the *American Anthropologist*. Although the genesis of an anthropological study of education can be traced back to the early twentieth century, the subfield has failed to develop as rapidly or broadly as other subfield specializations such as political anthropology, economic anthropology or legal anthropology. As Spindler (1992) points out, very few anthropologists have attempted to study the education process in our society and it remains a frontier area. To not focus on the anthropology of education is to lose out on an understanding of how our culture and society affects the way we learn and teach. If we do not explore avenues of our culture of education, we will cease to develop effective educational delivery.

Although Spindler focused on the lower rate of anthropologists in the field of anthropology of education as compared to other subfields, the contributions of anthropologists to education during the 1930s, 1940s, and 1950s were impressive. At the 1954 Stanford Conference on Education and Anthropology, participants not only summarized the developments in the field over the past two decades, but also charted a new direction for the future. Specifically, this new direction involved 1) the search for philosophical as well as theoretical articulations of education and anthropology; 2) the necessity for sociocultural contextualization of the educative process; 3) the relation of education to ‘culturally phrased’ phases of the life cycle; and 4) the nature of intercultural understanding and learning” (Spindler, 1984 & Eddy, 1985).

Transfer Students

Society today focuses on the importance of higher education. Whether your family is grooming you from elementary school on, your teachers preparing you for the SATs or someone re-iterating you'll never make it in this world without a college education. "Community colleges seem also to reflect the growing power of external authority over everyone's life, the peculiarly American belief that people cannot be legitimately educated, employed, religiously observant, ill, or healthy unless some institution sanctions that aspect of their being" (Cohen & Brawer, 2003).

The community college itself is sometimes cast as an actor in a differentiated opportunity structure that legitimates inequalities (Brint and Karabel, 1989). The role of snobbery affecting community colleges is often neglected. From the beginning many have believed that community colleges are lesser than their counterparts. "For example, although during early decades of the formation of community colleges, the media primarily reported positively on their speedy growth (DeGenaro, 2006), others had already begun to lament their existence. Writing in *Education Record* in 1968, W.B. Devall described community colleges as places that enforce 'continued dependency, unrealistic aspirations, and wasted 'general education'"(Goldrick-Rab, 2010). This critique was seen through the work of many researchers especially from those studying colleges from the outside. In continuation from this only 2% of all national media coverage of education is devoted to community colleges (West, Whitehurst, & Dionne, 2009).

For a growing number of students, community colleges have become a great place to start when pursuing a higher education. According to the Community College Research

Center community colleges serve as an entry point to higher education for over 40% of U.S. undergraduates. Community colleges are a less expensive way to obtain general education credits, but there are multiple reasons students choose this route as their starting point (Chen, 2017). Some of the challenges students face in the transition between institutions can directly affect their academic performance. Factors that can affect their academic performance can be lack of family support, poor academic preparation, and lack of relationships with faculty, whether the institution has an Articulation Agreement and the higher demands of course work. Compared to students who directly enroll in a four-year college, community college students are also more likely to be the first in their family to attend college (Kane and Rouse, 1999). Community colleges can offer classes at more convenient times for those who work, are parents, and/or have other obligations. Community colleges can also be appealing because they are usually conveniently located and often offer courses at work sites or via audio, video or online formats. Therefore, community colleges allow for more people to have extended freedom and options when attending a community college.

Over the past few years, higher education research has drawn attention to the mobility among college students. Enrollment patterns have shown college attendance at multiple institutions including institutions at the same education level. Previous research has described this mobility aptly as “students filling their undergraduate portfolios with courses and credentials from a variety of sources, much as we fill our shopping bags at the mall” (Adelman, 1999, pg 39) (Bahr, 2012, pg 95). Research suggests that students are more likely to be more mobile in their education if they begin their postsecondary education in a community college, as- “a report conducted in 2006 for the U.S. Department

of Education found that nearly 60% of students who graduated had attended multiple institutions” (Lazarowicz, 2015, pg 2). Moreover, about 25% of students transfer to a 4-year college within 5 years and 62% of those transfer students earn a bachelor’s degree (CCRC, 2015).

There are some students that parallel transfer (also known as a “lateral transfer”) back and forth between different community colleges. This is usually due to moving locations or degree interests, and some students even “downward transfer” to a less than 2-year institution. Additionally, students may do a reverse transfer where they go from a 4-year university to a community college. According to research by Peter Bahr, what we know about lateral and downward transfer is outweighed by what we don’t know. Yet, we know comparatively less about how these transitions fit into the academic progress of the student and development or when they are most likely to occur (Bahr, 2012).

The complexity of the transfer experience is to move beyond the “transfer shock” concept and the barriers which must be breached to examine the role of relevance of the “transfer student capital” for student retention (Laanan, Starobin & Eggleston 2010). Barriers that most transfer students encounter are lack of academic preparation, unfamiliarity of academic expectations, inaccurate transfer advising, and weak transfer and articulation policies. These obstacles can create challenges for transfer students upon entering a 4-year institution.

Transfer functionality in community colleges can be viewed as a mechanism that allows social mobility and access for students who do not wish to start their education at a 4-year college or university. Since community colleges serve a diverse population such as

first generation students, ethnic minorities, economically disadvantaged students and non-traditional students, they play a unique role as a gateway and pathway to a baccalaureate degree (Laanan, Starobin & Eggleston 2010). With the diverse populations community colleges serve they can be viewed as agents for aiding in creating social and economic equity.

Students who want to complete a bachelor degree must move among institutions; this introduces another potential structural barrier to student success. For all 4-year institutions, transfer is not created equally which can restrict opportunities for transferring students. The system we use in the United States does not facilitate an impartial flow of all students among all schools. Studies that compare the outcomes of students who successfully transfer from community to 4-year institutions with students who begin at a 4-year institution and rise to junior year status provide some of the strongest evidence that institution differentiation is itself a prime barrier to degree completion (Goldrick-Rab, 2010).

In 1980s and 1990s policy makers and researchers focused on transfer function, taking interest in popular questions being asked: What is the transfer rate for an institution or state? What types of transfer and articulation policies exist across states? To what extent are these policies formalized or institutionalized (Laanan, Starobin & Eggleston 2010)? In recent years, questions have shifted to examine the experiences for transfer students especially among ethnic minorities and first-generation students. The questions took into account the role of community colleges in preparing students to transfer to highly selective public and private institutions and what strategies community colleges were applying to

increase the number of women and minorities in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics fields.

Policy makers see validity in tracking the process of students across colleges and universities in order to track progress and assess program and policy effectiveness. Student data is recorded to track individual outcomes across institutions and for educational employment outcomes to be linked. Most states do not have the data to link sectors K-12 and post-secondary education or to link across sectors within postsecondary education (Goldrick-Rab, 2010). This severely limits the potential for states to refocus community colleges on outcomes, measure the cost-effectiveness of institutional practices, or identify key areas for reform. (Data Quality Campaign, 2008; L'Orange & Ewell, 2006; Goldrick-Rab, 2010).

Students in general have a lot to say about academic and transfer advising. There are students that are grateful for the support and guidance given by advisors, but more often students describe a deep frustration with the availability of and encounters with advisors (Fann, 2013). The consequences transfer students face when receiving poor or inaccurate information can prolong their time to graduation, prevent them from transferring, and hold them back from completing their program of choice. For instance, they can take non-transferable credits or earn degrees that are technical or not made to transfer to a regional institution. Academic advisors are often overloaded with the amount of students they meet with per quarter which can lead to them working (i.e, communicating information about transfer process) on an as-needed basis. When an advisor does not understand the students' career path or goals the student can waste their time and money taking courses that cannot transfer, are not applicable to their degree choice, or even earn a non-transferable degree.

For students looking to transfer credits to a different institution, Articulation Agreements between colleges can play a large role in guaranteeing the transfer of credits. An Articulation Agreement is a partnership between two or more colleges and universities documenting the transfer policies for specific academic programs or degrees in general (Moldoff, 2006). As Grites (2012) pointed out, 40 states within the United States now have some form or policy or procedure in place to address articulation among institutions. These agreements in theory should guide transferring students through the process of transferring their credits to their new institution, which in turn will enhance the likelihood of a student graduating.

Community Colleges attract students from underserved groups in significantly high numbers. They enroll significant numbers of African American, Latino and first-generation students, as well as students from the lowest-income level and single-parents families (AACC, 2012). It is believed that the reason for why students from underserved groups enroll in community colleges likely has more to do with economics than institutional preference. “Between 1994 and 2006, the share of African American students enrolling in community colleges increased from 10% to 14%, and the share of Latino students enrolling in community colleges increased from 11% to 19%” (Handel, 2013). During this time neither population raised their enrollment in competitive 4-year colleges and universities, despite the increase in their high school graduation rates (Carnevale & Strohl, 2010).

Transfer students can be ill-prepared for the increased workload, class size, and standards of new faculty, all of which can directly affect their academic performance. Data collected in Texas suggests that native students always graduate at a higher rate than that of transfer students (Miller, 2013). Although administrators at several case study

institutions argued that transfer students were performing better than native students because they were comparing transfer graduation rates to those of freshmen. The data from Texas showed an unfair comparison considering that most transfer students enter the 4-year institution with 45 credits, or sophomore or junior standing. Since transfer students had already passed through the “reduction of students” usually seen in the first year of college, they can be expected to complete their degrees at higher rates than incoming freshmen (Miller, 2013).

Research done by the National Academic Advising Association explains the effects of transfer shock as affecting the amount of time it takes to graduate. Transfer shock refers to the dip in grade point averages that is experienced during the first or second semester at a new school (Community College Review, 2017). Students that experience ‘transfer shock’ are usually coming from a community college and transferring into a 4-year university. Universities will have a larger campus, larger class size, and more rigorous course work; these all can affect a transferring student.

Research has indicated that students who transfer from the community college to the 4-year school as juniors earn higher grades, have higher graduation rates, and have lower academic dismissal rates than students who transfer as freshmen or sophomores (House, 1989). Keeley and House (1993) found that sophomores transferring from community colleges experience transfer shock and recovery in their first two semesters at the 4-year institution, but showed little improvement in their GPA after their second semester. Students who transferred as juniors showed marked improvement in each of the three semesters following transfer. Earning the associate degree seemed to be a positive

factor in academic performance. Those who transferred as a sophomore also did not graduate in the same proportions as junior transfers (Thurmond, 2007).

In the 1980's community college attendance started to rise, as a result the number of 4-year institutions also began to rise. Studies from the 1970's and 1980's documented that transfer students generally earned grades 0.2 to 0.3 points lower than their GPAs before transfer (Gold, 1971; Nolan & Hall, 1978; Webb, 1971). It has been noted that transfer students' grades tend to increase to the level of native students after the first two semesters. (Thurmond, 2007)

Definition of Concepts:

- Transfer Student: a student that has attended multiple colleges, universities or institutions
- Major Ready: having your general education requirements completed, usually junior standing and taking courses that only pertain to your degree
- Parallel Transfer: transferring from one community college to another or from a 4-year institution to another.
- Native Student: a student who has started at school as a freshman and has not transferred
- Direct Transfer Agreement (DTA): an associate's degree designed to transfer to all 4-year universities and colleges
- Intercollege Relations Commission (ICRC): a unity of the Washington Council that facilitates transfer between institutions for students pursuing a baccalaureate degree in the state of Washington.

Research Objectives

The major objective of this research is to better understand the myriad factors that can particularly derail the academic performances of students transferring from community colleges to Eastern Washington University.

Within this frame, the research aims to:

1. Identify the difficulties transfer students have when entering a regional institution.
2. Understand the extent to which transfer students are major ready.
3. Identify and explore the tools which students utilize most when looking to transfer from a community college to a 4-year institution (i.e. transfer center, transfer guide, advisors, faculty etc.)
4. Identify what other factors might impact the graduation rate of transferring students.

Hypotheses

Based on these objectives, I hypothesize that:

H1. Transfer students will communicate/express some sort of difficulties.

H2. There is a lack of career path advising that prolongs the date of graduation.

H3. The average time to graduate for transfer students is longer than that of native students.

H4. Transfer students risk transferring credits that do not apply to their degree plan if they enter with an unclear understanding of the requirements for their chosen degree program.

Research Plan

Research Site: My research site will be the campus of Eastern Washington University (EWU) in Cheney, Washington. According to the EWU website as of 2017 there are roughly 13,500 students enrolled. EWU's main campus is located in Cheney, Washington but you can also attend classes at their Riverfront campus in Spokane, Bellevue, Everett, Longview, North Seattle, and Vancouver Washington. Nearly 1 in 3 students in last year's freshman class was member of a minority group. This makes EWU one of the most diverse college campuses in the Pacific Northwest (EWU, 2017). 49% of the students that attend EWU are also the first in their families to earn a college degree (EWU, 2017). EWU is also one of the most transfer-friendly schools in the Pacific Northwest, accepting a vast amount of credits each quarter from schools all over the United States. 44% of EWU's new undergraduates have transfer credit from either a 2-year or 4-year school.

Methods

In this research I used a mix of primarily qualitative methods to explore the research objectives guiding the study; I particularly used surveys, interviews, data collection and participatory observation.

Survey

My survey consisted of 10 questions, including inquiry specifically related to transfer students and demographics. I aimed to survey about 50 students. In order to find students to survey, I identified 3 classes which were populated enough that I could conduct my survey and acquired permission to do so from the instructor.

I chose the classes by examining the amount of enrolled students, the college that the course belonged to, and whether the course had any prerequisites in an attempt to demonstrate that students that had trouble transferring credits or had trouble transferring a degree would be required to take prerequisites, introductory courses, and/or general education courses. Courses with larger student numbers can often be introductory classes which students use to complete general education requirements or which are prerequisites for other courses. The courses I selected had 30 or more students in them.

The courses I surveyed were Math 107, Biology 100, and Accounting 261 Business Law. Math requirements are often taken in the later years of college; this can be because students did not take the placement exam right out of high school, they

struggled with math, they tested below college level math, or their math credit did not transfer. My hope was that surveying a math course that satisfied the general education math requirement would produce a large turnout of transfer students. Biology satisfies the general education requirement for natural science. Accounting 261 is required for many degrees within the College of Business and Public Administration, which yields a large number of graduates each year. Degrees within that college are the most common at EWU; therefore, I hoped to encounter a very diverse set of students.

The survey was designed to yield a broad array of information on how students felt about the transfer process as a whole, and what they did and did not understand about the transfer process. This helped me to pinpoint the most common difficulties students faced while transferring to EWU. It also helped me identify what tools were most commonly used by transfer students. For those students who were not transfer students, they helped better understand the demographics of EWU's student population. Surveys produced quantitative and qualitative data which helped support my findings.

Interviews

The interviews aimed to collect individual stories. I interviewed students who had experienced both difficult and seamless transitions. This helped identify more objectively which factors were indeed having a direct, negative impact, and more generally, what was working for transfer students and what was not. Interviews adopted a semi-

structured format (Longhurst, 2003) where a set of multiple tiered questions could be deployed flexibly, depending on the direction of the conversation.

I used students I had previously helped or heard from in the Office of Articulation and Transfer Policy. I also used other sources to help find students willing to be interviewed such as advisors and evaluators. The interviews lasted 15-30 minutes, consisting of 7-10 questions. The questions helped detect any student tribulations or triumphs while transferring. It also helped pinpoint whether students were major ready when they reached EWU and what factors were affecting their graduation rate.

Student Data Collection

To help me better understand the phenomena of transfer shock I collected student information in order to compare GPAs between the transferring school and EWU. A GPA drop is a large determining factor of transfer shock. The student data was placed into a spreadsheet with no identifying information. The data was separated by the college of their major; College of Arts, Letters and Education, College of Social Sciences, CSTEM and CBPA. Each data set was between 40 and 60 students. I used Excel to run a T-test to see if the results were significant. The T-test showed that GPAs from transferring schools and EWU were significantly different.

I used this data to determine how major ready the students were when they entered EWU. It also showed whether the major they chose had a significant impact on their GPA after transfer. It showed how prepared the students were for course work at a university. I sought to link the results back to the answers from the survey and interviews to see why the students felt prepared or not.

Results

Survey Results

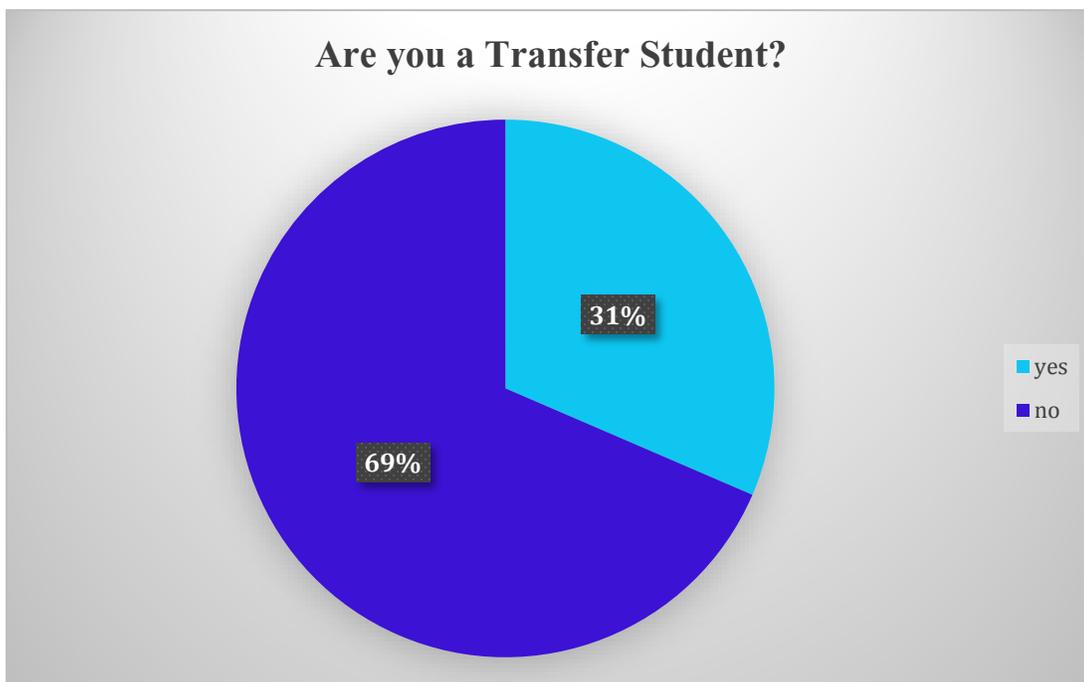


Figure 1. Pie Chart of EWU surveyed students, whether they are a transfer student or not

Out of the surveyed students about one third reported that they were transfer students. Transfer students represent a significant portion of EWU's student population. According to EWU's website the number of transfer students is close to one half of the students enrolled. This makes transfer students a substantial part of EWU's success rate. These students need special consideration to facilitate smooth integration into EWU's programs. Paying close attention to this group will benefit the students and EWU by enhancing enrollment, student retention, and expediting graduation rate.

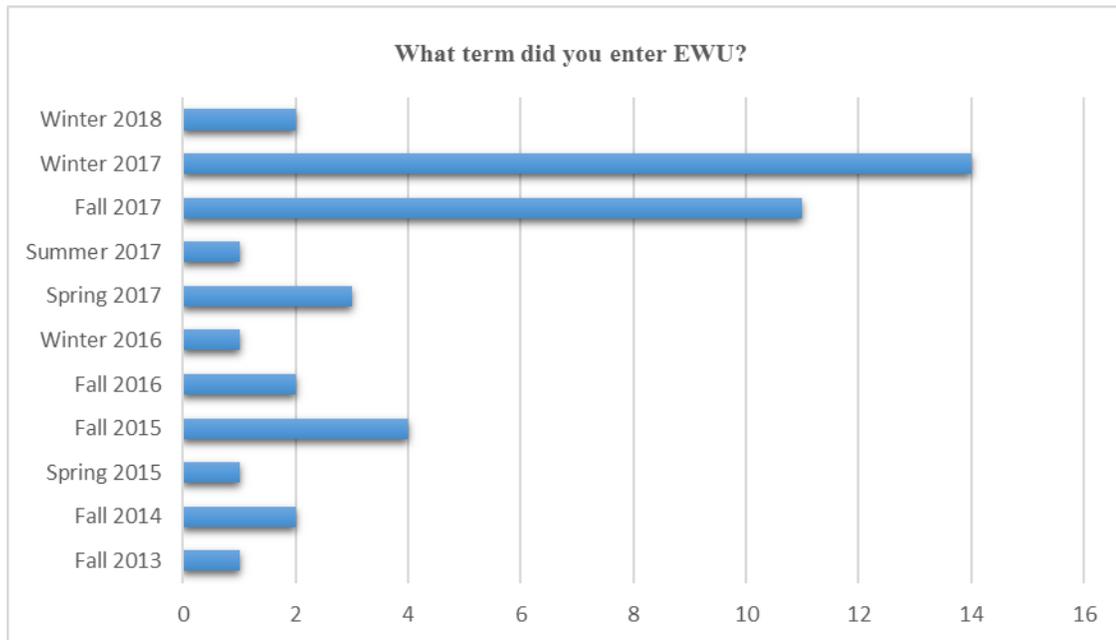


Figure 2. A Bar Graph of when EWU surveyed students entered EWU

Students enroll with EWU in the term which best fits their lifestyle, timing, funding, and academic plans. Traditionally we think of freshmen or non-transfer students enrolling in the fall term. Figure 2 shows that most of the surveyed students transferred or enrolled in Winter 2017 which reflects the influx of transfer students. To account for the number of students enrolling in winter term many factors could affect this for non-transfer students along with transfer students. It is more likely that transfer students enroll in terms other than fall because they have varying credits and degrees that lead to fluctuating readiness for 4-year institutions.

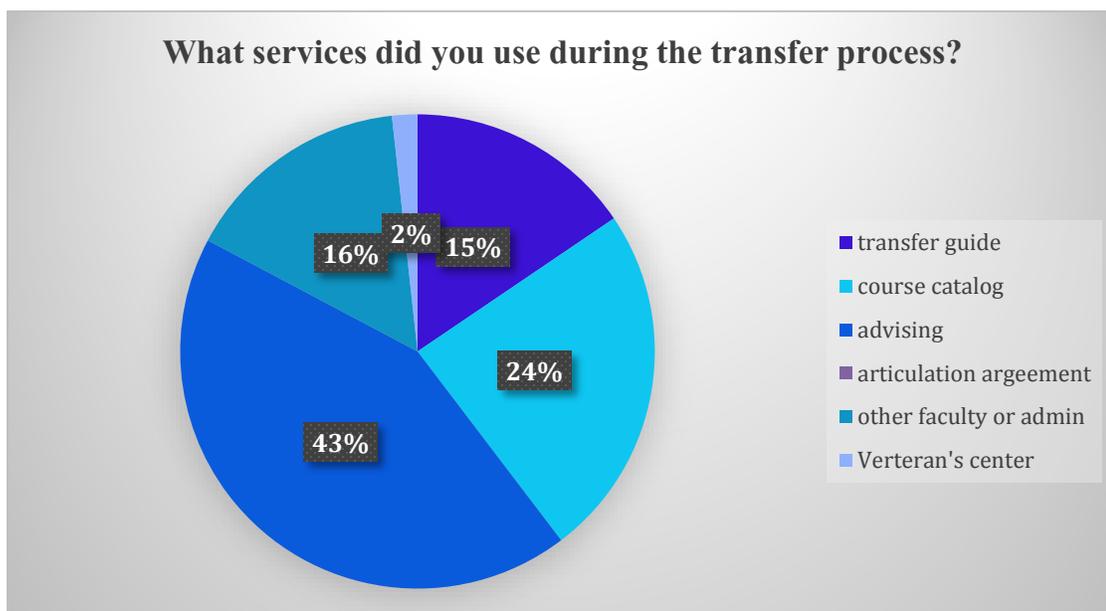


Figure 3. A Pie Chart of EWU surveyed transfer students' responses to what services they used while transferring

Figure 3 shows that advising is the most used service during the transfer process. Accurate advising is a crucial element to student success especially during the transfer process. For freshmen at EWU or for community college students, advising is mandatory for registering for classes. This is not the case for transfer students.

The accuracy and detail provided by the course catalog is essential for understanding your avenue of study, requirements, and prerequisites to determine degree progression. The course catalog can outline your degree program, assisting students in course selection with or without an advisor.

A significant amount of students use other faculty or administration during the transfer process. This can be attributed to faculty acting as advisors, evaluators assisting

in transcript evaluation, or use of other administration within the EWU transfer community.

The EWU transfer guide is an essential tool for transfer students to look at courses that transfer before enrolling in EWU. The transfer guide allows students to look up individual courses taken at previous schools to see how they directly integrate into EWU's curriculum. The transfer guide must be current and have accurate information to aid transfer students in the transfer process.

The Veteran's Center assists students with transfer by working closely with the Office of Articulation and Transfer Policy to help students acquire credit for education during military service. The Veteran's Center also helps orient students with other services that are particular to military personal.

It is important to note that no surveyed students reported using an Articulation Agreement although there are transfer students who use them. Articulation Agreements define a partnership between a university and community college, where curriculum is aligned from the community college to directly transfer into a specific program at a university.

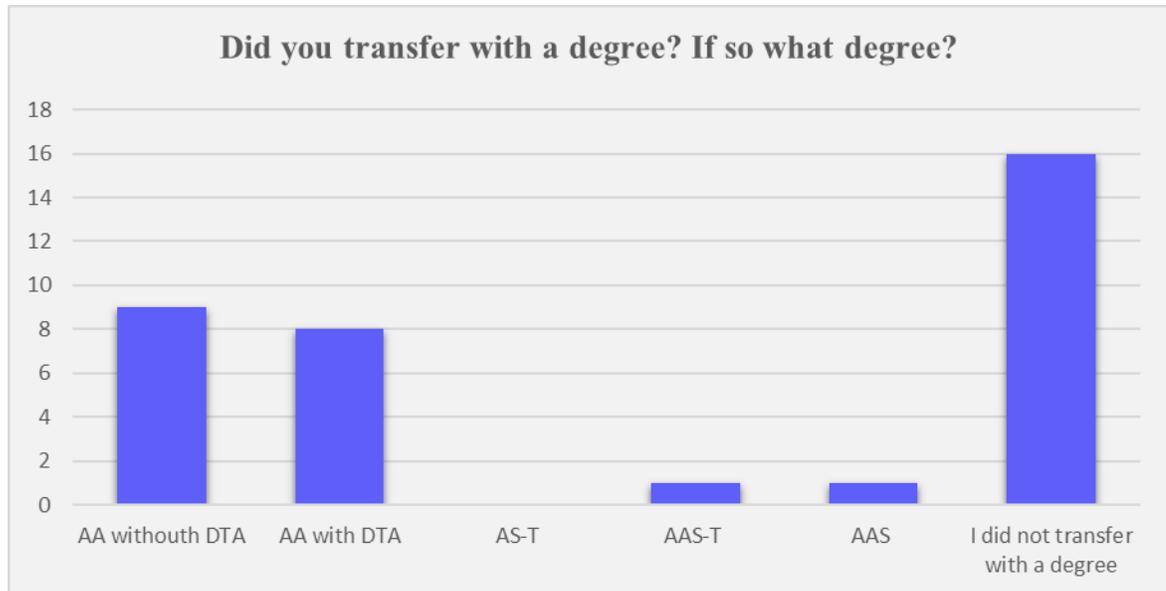


Figure 4. A Bar graph of EWU surveyed transfer students and what degree they transferred with

A significant amount of the transfer students surveyed transferred without a degree, showing they attained a varying number of credits without attaining a degree. These credits can come from college within the high school, transferring from an out of state college, running start, or a local community college.

Students transferring in with an Associate Degree without a Direct Transfer Agreement can have a prolonged graduation rate depending on how the credits correlate with EWU curriculum. When transferring with an Associate Degree without a Direct Transfer Agreement, student courses are evaluated on a course by course basis which leaves the potential for lost credits.

Students transferring with an Associate Degree with a Direct Transfer Agreement have the most fluid transfer. This degree guarantees 90 credits along with all general education requirements met and junior standing. Students with this degree are usually

major ready when they enter EWU; however, depending on their degree path they may not have met all of the prerequisites for their chosen degree program.

Students transferring to EWU with an Associate of Applied Science Degree (AAS-T/AAS) have a non-transferable degree type. These degrees are usually vocational degrees or related to programs which EWU does not offer. This can result in delays for students in achieving their academic goals due to credits being not applicable toward a desired educational pathway.

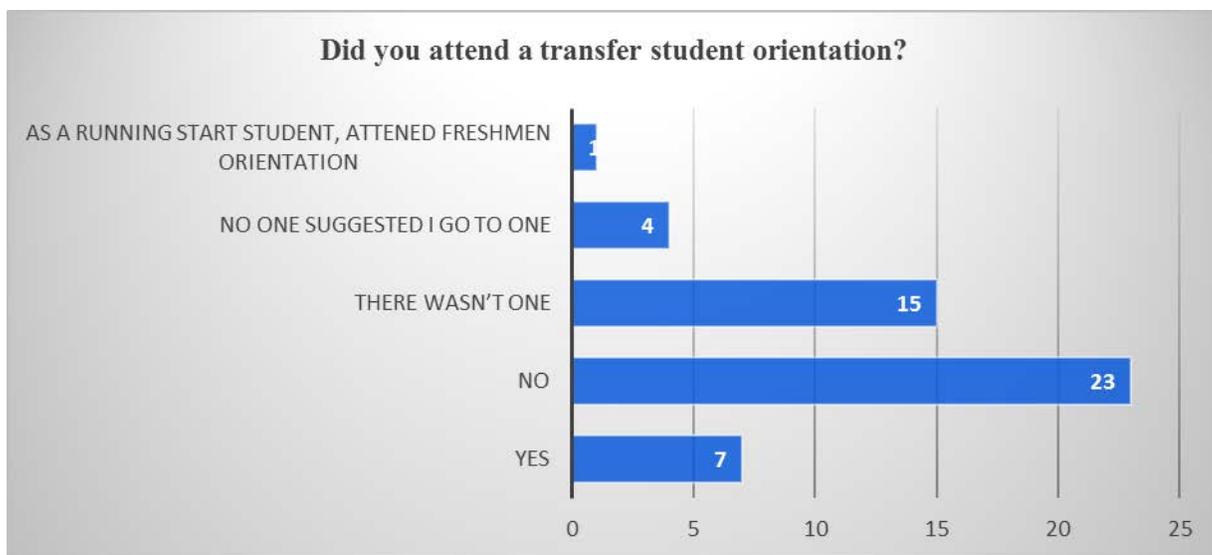


Figure 5. A Bar Graph of EWU surveyed transfer students who attended transfer student orientation

86% percent of surveyed transfer students did not attend a transfer student orientation.

Transfer orientation is only offered at EWU in Spring and Fall terms.

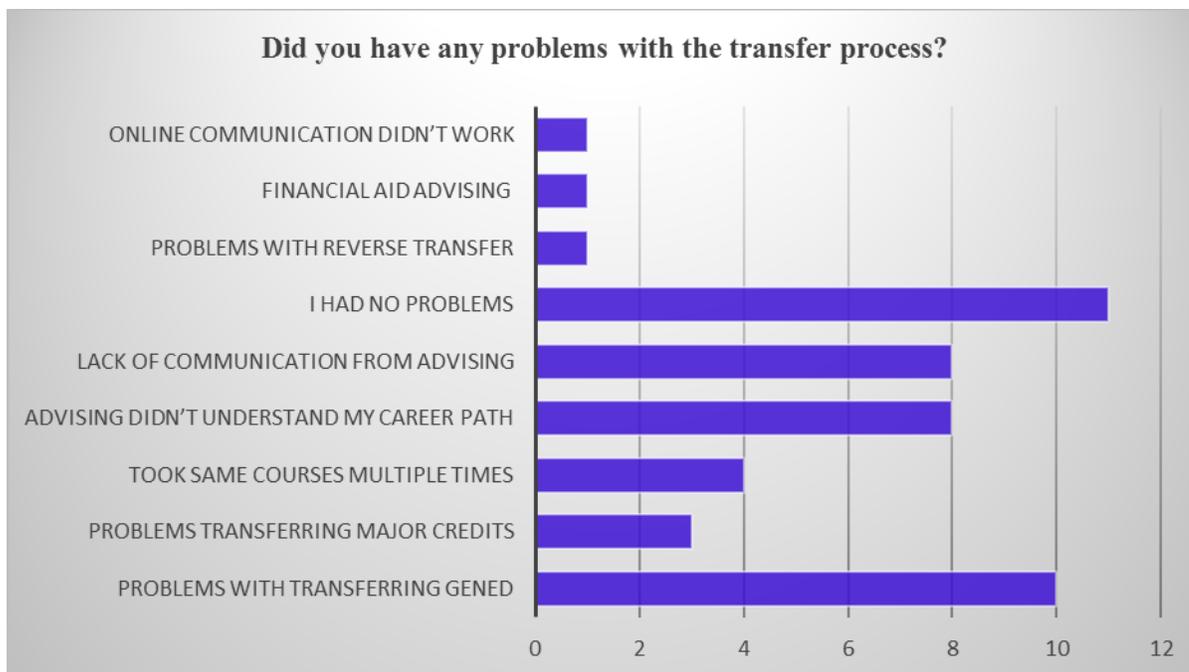


Figure 6. A Bar Graph of EWU surveyed transfer students and potential problems with transferring

In analyzing this graph, it can look misleading; 88% percent of students had some sort of trouble navigating the transfer process while only 22% had no problems. It is relevant to note that significant problems occurred within multiple aspects of advising.

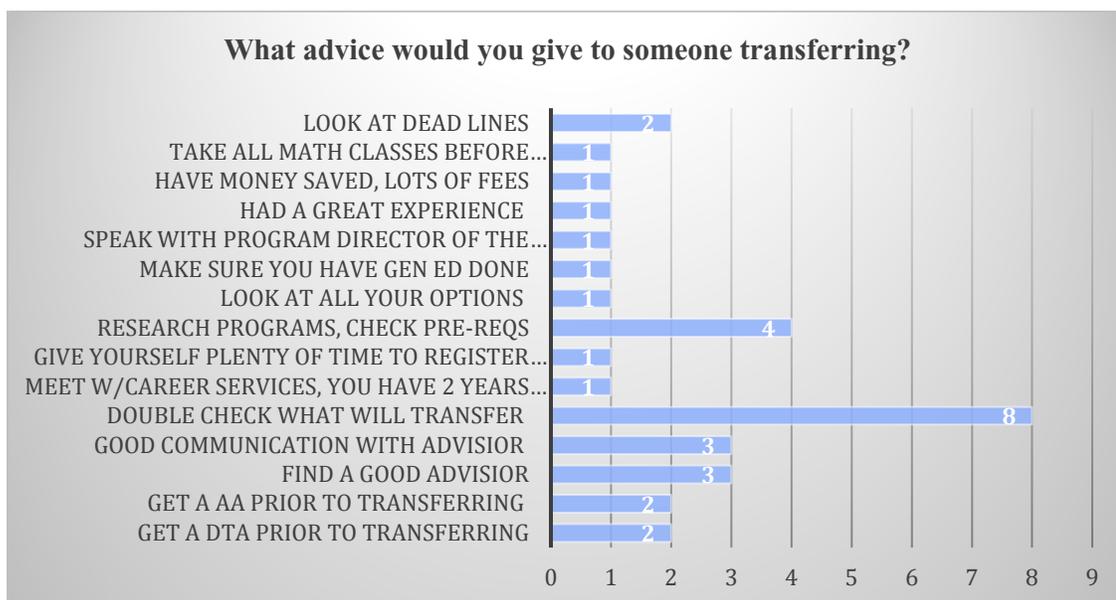


Figure 7. A Bar Graph of EWU surveyed transfer students showing transfer advice

The results of this graph indicate transfer students need to be diligent and self-directed to make this transfer process a success. This can also be interpreted as the university not making the services as accessible as students would like.

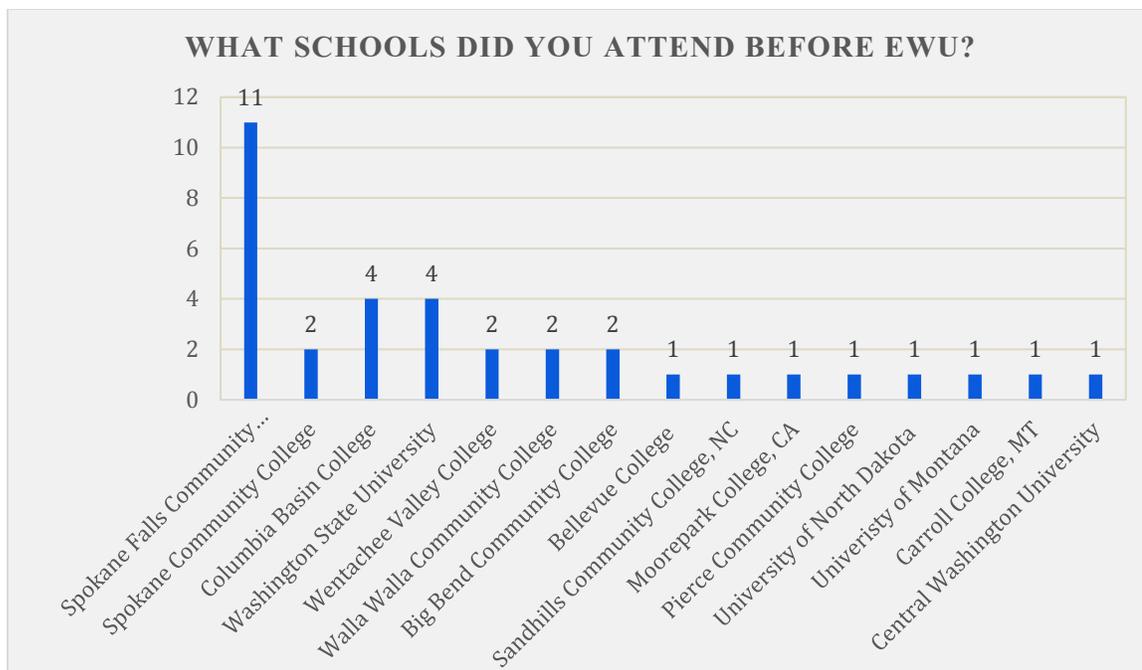


Figure 8. A Bar Graph of EWU surveyed transfer students and what college they attended before EWU

Local community colleges have a direct feed into EWU programs. 90% of transfer students came from Washington schools. Washington State has 32 community and technical colleges which create a large number of transferring students.

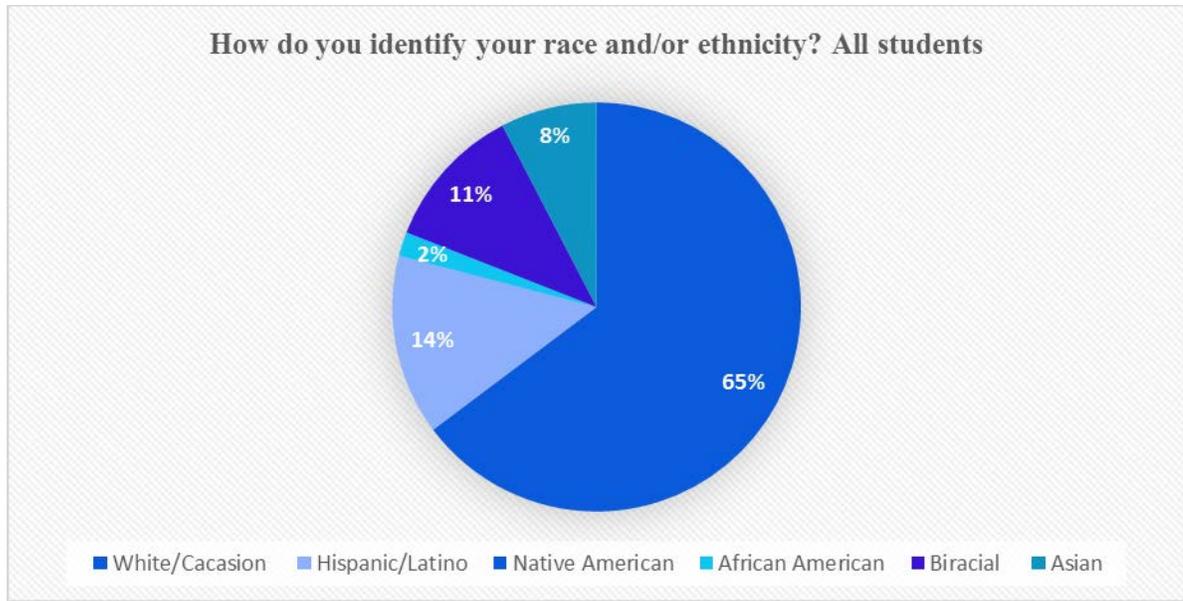


Figure 9. A Pie Chart of EWU surveyed students' race and ethnicity

This chart reflects the diversity of the surveyed students, which is closely aligned with the population of all of EWU's students.

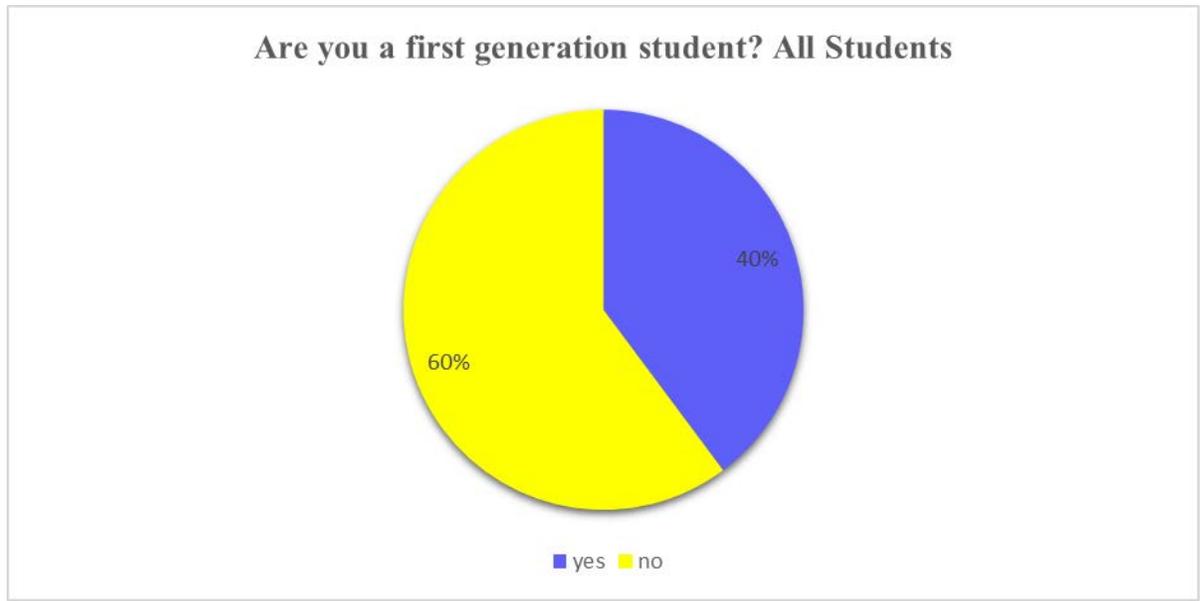


Figure 10. A Pie Chart of EWU surveyed students' first-generation status

This chart reflects the number of first-generation students that were surveyed.

This aligns with EWU's overall student population.

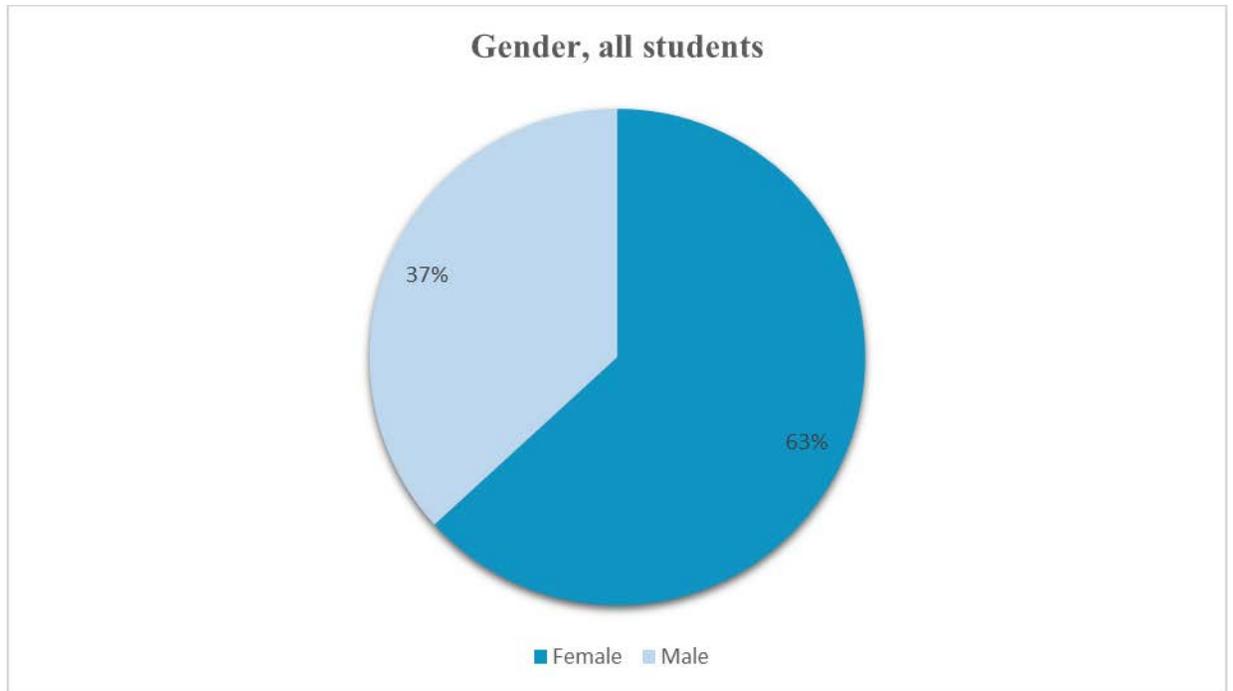


Figure 11. A Pie Chart of EWU surveyed students' gender

This chart reflects the gender of students that were surveyed. This aligns with EWU's overall student population.

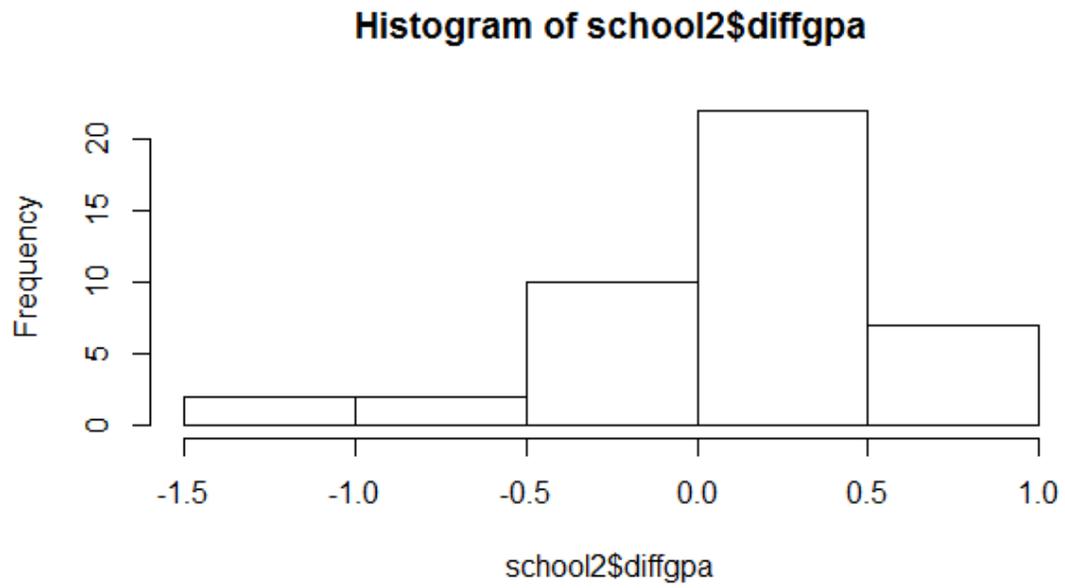


Figure 12. Histogram of CBC grade point differences after enrolling at EWU

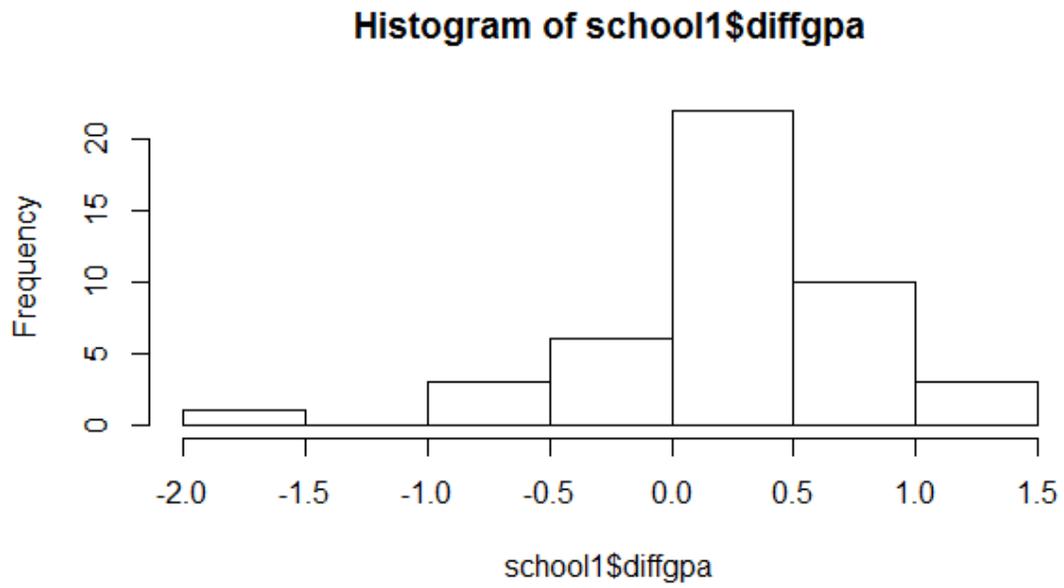


Figure 13. Histogram of SFCC grade point differences after enrolling at EWU

	Spokane Falls Community College	Columbia Basin Community College
Mean	0.2317778	0.1195349
Standard Deviation	0.522504	0.4332488
Minimum Difference in GPA	-1.63	-1.2
Maximum Difference in GPA	1.16	.084

SFCC and CBC T-Test	
T-value	1.0989
DF- value	84.349
P-value	0.2749

Table 1. Output results from t-test.

The results were insignificant. The p-value shows that this data as 27%, showing the same results if pulled at random. With the t-value being close to 1 puts it in the 95% quartile. The histogram for both CBC and SFCC shows a slightly positive skew (Figure 1, 2).

Tables 2-5 show a comparison of transfer students' GPA from the transferring school compared to their GPA at EWU. This data represents students who entered EWU in Fall 2016. Their final GPA from their community college was compared to their current GPA (Spring 2018).

t-Test: Paired Two Sample for Means
CALE

	<i>EWU GPA</i>	<i>Transfer GPA</i>
Mean	3.425172414	3.250689655
Variance	0.344062901	0.148699524
Observations	59	59
Pearson Correlation	0.606652583	
Hypothesized Mean Difference	0	
df	58	
t Stat	2.868316403	
P(T<=t) one-tail	0.002872926	
t Critical one-tail	1.671552762	
P(T<=t) two-tail	0.005745851	
t Critical two-tail	2.001717484	

Table 2. Output results for t-test of GPAs from transferring school and EWU in College of Arts, Letters, and Education majors

This table shows students who are in majors within the College of Arts, Letters, and Education had a rise in GPA upon entering EWU. This table also shows that students' EWU GPA was statistically different from their GPA at community college. With a P-value of .002, there is a .2% chance that these results were not randomly selected, which gives a 99.8% probability that the results are significant.

t-Test: Paired Two Sample for Means
CBPA

	<i>EWU GPA</i>	<i>Transfer GPA</i>
Mean	3.215777778	3.196
Variance	0.18938884	0.139646222
Observations	46	46
Pearson Correlation	0.588989059	
Hypothesized Mean Difference	0	
df	45	
t Stat	0.361793947	
P(T<=t) one-tail	0.359599701	
t Critical one-tail	1.679427393	
P(T<=t) two-tail	0.719199401	
t Critical two-tail	2.014103389	

Table 3. Output results for t-test of GPAs from transferring school and EWU in College of Business and Public Administration majors

This table shows that students who are in majors within the College of Business and Public Administration did not have a significant change in GPA upon transferring. This table shows that students' EWU GPA was not statistically different from their GPA at their community college. The P-value of .359 shows that there is a 35.9% chance that these results were randomly selected, which yields a 64.1% probability that the results are significant.

t-Test: Paired Two Sample for Means
CSTEM

	<i>EWU GPA</i>	<i>Transfer GPA</i>
Mean	3.29245614	3.18877193
Variance	0.209116774	0.218958141
Observations	58	58
Pearson Correlation	0.581161261	
Hypothesized Mean Difference	0	
df	57	
t Stat	1.864505592	
P(T<=t) one-tail	0.033701282	
t Critical one-tail	1.672028888	
P(T<=t) two-tail	0.067402564	
t Critical two-tail	2.002465459	

Table 4. Output results for t-test of GPAs from transferring school and EWU in College of Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics majors

This table shows that students who are in majors within the College of Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics had a rise in GPA upon entering EWU. This table also shows that students' EWU GPA was statistically different from their GPA at community college. A P-value of .033 shows that there is a 3.3% probability that these results were not randomly selected, which gives 96.7% likelihood that the results are significant.

t-Test: Paired Two Sample for Means
CSS

	<i>EWU GPA</i>	<i>Transfer GPA</i>
Mean	3.220645161	3.019677419
Variance	0.504776626	0.196793337
Observations	62	62
Pearson Correlation	0.489987827	
Hypothesized Mean Difference	0	
df	61	
t Stat	2.525163794	
P(T<=t) one-tail	0.007089853	
t Critical one-tail	1.670219484	
P(T<=t) two-tail	0.014179707	
t Critical two-tail	1.999623585	

Table 5. Output results for t-test of GPAs from transferring school and EWU in College of Social Sciences

This table indicates that students who are in majors within the College of Social Sciences had a rise in GPA upon entering EWU. This table also shows that students' EWU GPA was statistically different from their GPA at community college. A P-value of .007 shows that there is a 0.7% chance that these results were randomly selected, which yields a 99.3% likelihood that results are significant.

Interview results

1. What has the transfer experience been like?

A majority of students indicated that their transfer experience was positive. “My experience of being a transfer student was easy to set up and made it easy to apply, in fact it made it easier to get into EWU as a transfer than as a new student, particularly because I was coming from SFCC and the process between both schools was setup to work together very cohesively” (Chandler Jefferson (student) in discussion with author, April 2018). “It was good it allowed me to be able to afford college and get used to college before I joined a big university. I am from a small town so being able to go to a small community college and then transfer was very helpful” (Ty Browning (student) in discussion with author, May 2018).

Academic advisors proved to be beneficial in helping with course selection but did not have working knowledge of students’ transcripts or how previous courses applied. Students felt they had to take the initiative to find and meet with an advisor. “My advisor when I transferred in was pretty helpful, however, they didn’t have much knowledge of what courses I had already taken and how that applied to the courses I would need until I had taken the initiative to meet with them because I wanted to plan out the next few quarters” (Briana Estrallado (student) in discussion with author, April 2018).

One interviewee mentioned that seeking out the program director prior to completing community college ensured the correct transferable courses were

taken for the specific program. Students mentioned that not having a firm grasp on where they wanted their education to take them proved challenging in course selection.

Several individuals stated that obtaining copies of their transcripts from prior community colleges were inconsistent and could prove demanding. “I remember having to physically go back to my old school to request transcripts, whereas I was able to simply call and order the ones from a previous community college” (Alan Smith (student) in discussion with author, April 2018).

One student that transferred from out of state on a semester program quickly realized the differences between semester and quarter systems and credit total. “With my transfer experience coming from Ohio it is very different my old school was on semesters while here at EWU were on quarters. So getting used to how the credits transferred was a bit odd for me” (Iain Clake (student) in discussion with author, May 2018).

2. What parts of the transfer process worked well?

Students stated that EWU’s website had many tools to help with the transfer process. “I think the requirement of meeting with an advisor is essential. I also think Eastern has a lot of the right tools set up, like the transfer guide and other information about transferring courses on their site” (Briana Estrallado (student) in discussion with author, April 2018).

They found that meeting with an advisor is vital to transfer student success. “Meeting with an Eastern advisor should be mandatory. This is

beneficial, so they can walk you through the programs and try to pinpoint what direction of schooling you want to go through or if you have an idea what you want to study then they can show you the best paths” (Alan Millington (student) in discussion with author, April 2018).

With help from an advisor, a student was able to reverse transfer and earn a Direct Transfer Agreement from community college which prevented repetitive classes. “When I transferred, I was made aware that I was missing 5 credits from my AA at SFCC and that I would need to transfer back 5 credits from EWU after my first quarter to receive my AA. I was worried that this would make it more difficult to get accepted into EWU and would be a messy situation, though it turned out to work just as they had explained, and the transfer process was completed” (Chandler Jefferson (student) in discussion with author, April 2018).

The ability to transfer in enough credits prevented a student from having to re-submit SAT scores from high school.

“One tends to remember an event if it was a huge hassle, or it stressed them out, or there was a major problem, but other than one little glitch I was able to complete my application easily and become an EWU student starting in the Winter quarter of 2017. I think that speaks highly of the transfer process working pretty well” (Alan Smith (student) in discussion with author, April 2018).

3. What are some frustrations you have as a transfer student?

Several students spoke about the frustrations they dealt with at their community colleges. Some were advised to take specific courses that they later

found would not transfer or had nothing to do with their degree direction. Others found the advisor/counselors at the community colleges lacked knowledge of Washington's Direct Transfer Agreement. They lacked degree continuity between community and 4-year colleges.

Students found obstruction between the two Spokane community colleges, finding them to be more of competitors than partners which hindered their experiences. "A frustration I have as a transfer student would most likely be the confusion from the community college. As I encountered multiple advisers from SFCC and SCC, of which I attended both. I was told from community college advisers that I could complete a transfer degree and easily move to EWU but when I told them I needed a DTA they seemed mind boggled as to what I was saying. I was told specifically from my EWU adviser what to tell my SFCC adviser I needed a DTA (Direct Transfer Agreement, I think that's what it stands for), Thus it was a mess on the community college side because they had a different name or something for the DTA, or they never put two and two together that that was the acronym for the piece of paper they had been giving to all their transfer students. In the end, it was handled without too much hassle, though, the amount of attitude I received over them not knowing what they should know, it was frustrating" (Chandler Jefferson (student) in discussion with author, April 2018).

Another student found the transfer guide extremely helpful but felt it needed to be more advertised as a transfer student resource. "I think that maybe students who aren't as anal as I am aren't able to find the tools they need for

transfer, like the Transfer Guide. I think they should be more promoted by the university” (Briana Estrallado (student) in discussion with author, April 2018).

Students stated that the specific term in which they enrolled had a large effect on how the transfer process went for them. “As a student who transferred in during Winter quarter vs the normal Fall quarter I missed out on the typical orientation stuff that most students get. There were several things that I wasn’t aware of my first quarter that everybody else just took for granted, like my first day I had to ask, “What’s Canvas?”” (Alan Smith (student) in discussion with author, April 2018).

4. Did your advisor at your community college understand your career path i.e. plans to transfer, degree etc.?

Most of the responses indicated that the advisors at the community colleges were more focused on degree attainment than career and future goals. “My advisor at the community college knew the DTA would transfer anywhere in Washington so she just had everyone complete that degree and signed us up for classes that completed the requirements, it didn't matter what we wanted to do” (Briana Estrallado (student) in discussion with author, April 2018).

Without the advisors understanding the students’ goals, students were advised to take courses that were not necessary. One interviewee stated never having used an advisor at the community college, “I met with the program director from Eastern and they helped me create an outline of what courses I needed to complete at Spokane Community College, so I could enter the

Computer Science program at Eastern” (Alex Panasyuk (student) in discussion with author, April 2018).

Many students attained a Direct Transfer Agreement but were not major ready upon entering EWU due to a lack of appropriate prerequisites required for the program of their choice. This indicates college counselors do not have working knowledge of prerequisites or program requirements at EWU.

5. Does your advisor at EWU understand your career path?

There were mixed responses regarding EWU advisors. Responses appeared to depend on the degree or program the student was in and whether the advisor was strictly an academic advisor or a faculty advisor.

“They'd never asked about what I actually wanted to do with my degree. I appreciated that they were able to answer my questions about coursework and when I was interested in another field for a minor the department advisor for that program was helpful in answering my questions as well. However, what I wanted to do for a career wasn't really addressed” (Briana Estrallado (student) in discussion with author, April 2018).

Students found greater success with those associated with their specific degree than those with a general advisor. “My advisor was one of my professors. Since he taught within my program he was able to really advise me on courses and was a huge part of my success. He made sure all of my courses transferred from my community college which helped me indefinitely” (Amy Washington (student) in discussion with author, May 2018).

For some students the advisors were instrumental in aiding them not only in course selection but other opportunities within the university that would further their education and career opportunities. “My advisor recommended several helpful directions to aid me along that path. I’m starting in a research project this quarter that I wouldn’t have had any knowledge of, if not for him, and that should help me greatly, not only as something that will look good on graduate school applications, but just as valuable experience at the beginning of my research career” (Alan Smith (student) in discussion with author, April 2018).

Others found that the advisors seemed disinterested in their individual career goals. “They'd never asked about what I actually wanted to do with my degree. I appreciated that they were able to answer my questions about coursework and when I was interested in another field for a minor the department advisor for that program was helpful in answering my questions as well. However, what I wanted to do for a career wasn't really addressed” (Briana Estrallado (student) in discussion with author, April 2018).

6. Are you a first-generation student? Do you think this made transferring more or less difficult?

The first-generation student interviewees claimed that being a first-generation student made the transferring process easier. “Being a first-generation student and an immigrant, I understand the struggles I can have if I am not successful in school” (Alex Panasyuk (student) in discussion with author, April 2018). This response indicated that being a first-generation student allows for

intrinsic motivation to succeed in academic endeavors. They thought that being a first-generation student made them more determined to succeed.

7. What would make the transfer process easier to navigate?

The students felt that having advisors who cared more about their individual goals and career paths would be beneficial to their success as transfer students. “I believe that having knowledgeable advisers that keep up with current careers and ways to attain those careers would improve the process. I also feel that having advisers that can take the time and go over goals and career paths with students more closely would greatly improve the transfer process” (Chandler Jefferson (student) in discussion with author, April 2018).

Community college advisors were not as helpful, possibly due to the job restraints, the volume of students they have to serve, and the high dropout rate in the community college community. “I think there should be advisors at the community colleges that are specifically for transfer students. This way they could be more be more knowledgeable of how courses would transfer and maybe have more information about prerequisites and program requirements.” (Amy Washington (student) in discussion with author, May 2018).

A student felt that there should be a clear chart showing the credit change from semester to quarter, so they could accurately assess their credit base.

Students expressed that making transfer tools more accessible and directed more towards transfer students would help them navigate the transfer process more seamlessly. “More awareness for the transfer student of transfer tools. I wish

admissions would be more active about the needs of the transfer student” (Briana Estrallado (student) in discussion with author, April 2018).

Analysis of Findings

Survey and Interview Analysis

This completed research shows that EWU has a significant transfer population that experiences more roadblocks than a traditional student. My findings show that major obstructions include poor advising, lack of campus orientation, and faculty/advisors' lack of involvement in career path planning. This data helps support my first hypothesis that transfer students have expressed difficulties with transfer. These are just some of the obstacles mentioned within the data collected, but all barriers can affect the growth and success of EWU's transfer students.

Included in the survey was a question about what term students entered EWU. The specific term can be of significance to the student; for example, winter quarter does not include a transfer orientation. This hinders the students' transition into the university because they are deprived of campus tours, resources intended to help them succeed, and familiarities of campus life. Many transfer students enter the university in terms that do have orientation, but they do not attend. Some transfer students have a mentality that since they have been to college before, they are not in need of another orientation and they can do it on their own. Since transfer orientation is not mandatory and not offered every quarter, the responsibility falls on the student to discover resources, support for a smooth transition, connections with academic advisors, academic policies, and where classes are located. A significant number of the surveyed students entered during winter term, and a number of those who entered during other terms did not attend a transfer orientation. With this data, it is important

to note that transfer orientation is crucial during all terms considering transfer students enter university during non-traditional start terms.

Most of the surveyed students used an academic advisor during the transfer process. Transfer students talked about how prior to coming to EWU, their academic advisors did not help them prepare for entering a 4-year institution. A student's career path was seldom considered, and some students felt that they were being pushed through a basic degree which would not help them achieve their long-term goals. The data from these interviews support my second hypothesis that transfer students are lacking career path advising but that is not necessarily linked prolonging their graduation.

According to interviewed transfer students, academic advisors from their community colleges were not adequately knowledgeable about how courses transfer into specific degrees, or program qualifications for EWU. A major concern of transfer students was that their advisors did not seem interested in their long-term career goals. When advisors/faculty/administrators do not take into consideration what degree or program a student wants to pursue, it can affect student decision making and therefore can delay student progression at a 4-year institution. Without the correct guidance transfer students do risk transferring credits that do not apply to their degree plan. There are many tools for advisors and students which could help them in overall degree planning so that the courses they take at a community college will fit with the student's program of choice at EWU.

I found it interesting that not one of the students surveyed or interviewed had used an Articulation Agreement. Articulation agreements are very specific for certain

degrees. These partnerships between community colleges and universities help students who have earned a technical degree go on to earning a bachelor degree. Students can earn technical or vocational degrees from community colleges comprised of courses which are non-transferable according to ICRC (Intercollege College Relations Commission). Students who earn such degrees cannot transfer a majority of their credits without an Articulation Agreement.

About half of the surveyed students did not transfer with a degree but entered EWU with varying numbers of credit. Students who transfer credits from a Washington community college or university without fulfilling a degree can still have the potential for a smooth transition because EWU's credit evaluators have likely encountered these courses before. Transfer students from out of state can run into more obstacles while transferring credits because these courses are less reviewed by EWU evaluators. This data is confirmed by participatory observation since the surveyed data did not include a significant population of out of state students. Transfer orientation and utilization of academic advisors or faculty can truly reduce the amount of issues for transfer students and their prior academic credits. Without this guidance, students risk omission of credits earned.

Washington State has created a degree that is specifically made for transferring called the Direct Transfer Agreement. This degree helps students enter EWU major ready with all of their undergraduate requirements completed. Advising remains crucial in making the most of time spent at a community college despite the smooth transition that this degree offers. Many of the interviewed students earned their DTA but still had prerequisites to take before entering their program of choice at EWU. This

relates to the expressed concern regarding a lack of knowledgeable advisors at the community college level. Advisor inquiry into students' long-term transfer, career, and program goals will help guide students toward correct courses which will provide credit fulfillment for a desired program.

According to Figure 6, 88% of the surveyed transfer students exhibited some sort of difficulty navigating the transfer process, which validates my first hypothesis. These issues included communication problems with advising, taking courses multiple times, and trouble transferring courses for their major. Student opinion indicated that these barriers are more present in the community college system than at EWU. Students are unaware of how credits transfer until they are trying to transfer. If students and advisors were more aware of the transfer process at the community college level, the percent of students with difficulty would be reduced. Students and advisors require collaborative communication to develop students' career and program pathway plans. Students rely on the counselling of their advisors; so when students feel that their advisor steers them wrong, they feel misled and as though they have wasted their time. Once students encounter problems, they realize they should have been more diligent and self-directed with their own course choices and academic progression.

The interview data indicates that once students transfer into EWU, they have a more positive experience; students cite differences between EWU advising compared with their community college. This could result from EWU advisors being much more knowledgeable of the programs offered at EWU. Upon entering a program, students found success when communicating with their program coordinators.

Transfer Shock Analysis

During transfer from a community college to a 4-year college or university many students experience a phenomenon called transfer shock. Numerous studies have revealed that students encounter declines in their grade point averages after transferring from a 2-year community or technical college to a 4-year institution (Cejda, 1997). Transfer students can be negatively affected by transfer shock in many ways: the class size can be substantially larger; the content of the course can be more rigorous; psychological stressors, environmental changes, poor academic preparation, lack of relationships with faculty, etc. can impact a student's GPA after transferring.

Studies regarding the academic performance of transfer students can be broad, which can result in overlooking factors that contribute to transfer shock. An American Council on Education policy statement on the transfer function (Palmer & Eaton, 1991) called for research on the academic performance of community college transfer students in specific programs and disciplines (Cejda, 1997). They considered one hundred students who transferred from community colleges to Benedictine College over an eight-semester time period. The students were broken down into groups based on the students major: education, fine arts and humanities, business, mathematics and sciences, and social sciences. The results indicated that transfer shock experienced by the total sample did not accurately reflect the academic performance based on the different disciplines. The students who were majoring in business, and mathematics and sciences encountered a significantly greater amount of transfer shock when compared with the grade point average of all groups (Cejda, 1997).

I took a sample of 80-100 students who all entered EWU at the same time from two different community colleges (Columbia Basin College and Spokane Falls Community College), and compared their GPAs from their community colleges to their first year at EWU. I used R to conduct a t-Test to determine if there was a significant difference in GPA scores between students transferring to EWU from either SFCC or CBC. A t-Test is a method in hypothesis testing which can be used to determine if two sets of data are significantly different from each other. The null hypothesis of the test is that the means of each group are the same, that the difference between the two means is zero.

The results were insignificant. The p-value shows that this data has 27% similar results if polled at random. With the t-value being close to 1, this results in data landing in the 95% quartile. The histogram for both CBC and SFCC shows a slightly positive skew (Figure 1, 2).

Although the results were insignificant, they do show that these students were not prominently affected by transfer shock. What this data indicates is that the difference of the mean and standard deviation is almost one point higher coming from Spokane Falls Community College. (Table 2) Data also indicates that students coming from Columbia Basin College, experienced fluctuating GPAs as often as the students from Spokane Falls Community College. This can be interpreted in multiple ways; one consideration is that the students coming from CBC are better prepared than the students coming from SFCC. The courses they are taking are more comparable to those at EWU; therefore, their grades do not fluctuate as much. Another possible explanation is that students transferring from CBC may have experienced a shorter

duration between transferring. It can be surmised that a drop in GPA occurring upon transfer to EWU resulted due to a lack of preparation as compared to other students, and/or, greater time elapsed between schools.

Additional student data was collected to compare GPAs from the community college to EWU and how GPA was affected depending on what college was entered: CALE, CSS, CBPA, or CSTEM. The results were significant. The students from within this data frame had a rise in their GPA when entering CALE, CSS or CSTEM. According to the current understanding of transfer shock, this should not have happened. Almost 90% of these students transferred with a DTA; I believe this may have a positive impact on their GPA after arriving at EWU. When a student completes a DTA, the student can enter a program of their choice (given the student has completed their prerequisites). Once students start to take courses within their major, I believe their performance improves because major acquisition is a primary objective in college. The improvement in GPA shows that regardless of the problems they may have encountered during the transfer process, they are still very prepared for courses at a 4-year institution.

Students entering CBPA did not have a significant change in their GPA. I believe we can account for this because CBPA harbors many of EWU's students, it is filled with some of their most common degrees. From the students I interviewed a few were in CBPA but they were also double majoring. This could possible affect a student's GPA.

This data reflects that students are not being effected by the academic differences from a community college to a 4-year institution. According to research

displayed in my literature review transfer students go through 'transfer shock'. With the data displayed above we can assume students are not struggling with the effects of a larger class size, more rigorous course work or a drop in their GPA.

Discussion

In the state of Washington more than 70% of students who access higher education do so first at a community or technical college (HEBC, 2011). Washington's transfer students account for 49% of student enrollment in public and private colleges compared to the national average of 34% (HEBC, 2011). To keep and maintain these numbers our institutional policies must be aligned with those of the community and technical colleges. In doing so they must give the right information to students at the right time for them to be successful.

Many of my findings reinforce previous research, though some factors formerly identified did not apply to current transfer students. In the end students who transfer to EWU feel that their experience has been positive and successful once they reached EWU. The issue for most of these transfer students comes from the obstacles and frustrations at the community college level. The need for EWU to be cognizant of the issues transfer students face is integral for long-term academic performance and appropriate support once they reach EWU.

The factors that particularly derail the academic performances of transfer students lie within community college advising. Advising at the community college level requires focus on career goals, and course selection beyond the community college sphere to specify and expedite an individual student's success in obtaining a timely degree. Students need support in navigating their long-term program and degree choice. EWU's continuous and growing partnerships can help all community and technical colleges with developing, maintaining and promoting transfer pathways.

Studies show that students who start a 2-year program with the intention of finishing a 4-year degree only do so about 11% of the time (Mitchell, 2013). This could lead us to believe that students are not finding the correct resources and support to continue onto a 4-year degree. If students are not advised correctly it can affect their success rate of entering a 4-year institution. The focus of community colleges seems to be changing from being directed towards providing students with a cheaper alternative for the first 2 years of their degree to now offering their own Bachelor of Applied Science/Arts degree along with an array of workforce degrees. This means that students who want to transfer to a 4-year institution must be more diligent and self-directed to achieve this.

When we think of troubles with transfer we usually think of credit loss which affects a student's academic progress. From the data collected and 2 years of participatory observation, loss of credit is not something that affects EWU's transfer students as much as we would think. Most students have no problem transferring in all of their earned credits because about half of the students enter with a DTA or some sort of degree. With a DTA's agreed upon credit block, students enter without the obstacle of credit loss. Thanks to creation of the DTA, the partnerships between Washington community colleges and universities has grown. Although universities still need to strengthen those relationships so the DTA can be used to the fullest extent. Understanding the program or career path of the student during their time at a community college can affect how efficient the DTA can really be. With working knowledge and strong communication from both community colleges and universities transfer students can complete credits specific to their degree before they even step

foot on the university's campus. Helping students find the right path for transfer can help the student to debt ratio, and help decrease time to degree.

For students who transfer in with an AA, AAS-T or another degree, the courses are evaluated individually instead of as a block of credit like the DTA. This does not prevent the courses from transferring. Credits that are college level within transferrable subject areas are most likely to still transfer. Students must pay attention to how individual credits transfer to ensure they transferred properly. Students have resources to help them if they feel as though their credits are unjust or were not equivalent to a specific course. The only time EWU will not transfer credits is if they are from an unaccredited college or they are identified by ICRC as non-transferable courses, which are courses such as welding, specific medical courses, culinary, other technical or vocational courses.

From what I have observed, transfer students are not alone in taking longer to graduate. Just like transfer students, traditional students also change their minds on what degree they want to obtain which can potentially slow their time to degree. EWU offers degrees that are not even attainable in 4-years. Transfer students are at a higher risk for taking longer to graduate. Time to graduate can be affected by degree choice, degree change, or lack of advising. This disproves hypothesize 3, there is no proof in my research that transfer students take longer to complete a degree compared to native students. College is about making choices and sometimes as students they make the wrong one and have to start over, however, with adequate support from collaborating advisors, students fare a better chance at an expeditious and fruitful collegiate career.

The only transfer students who are limited in changing their degree path are those who transferred with an Articulation Agreement. Since these agreements are often highly specific to a degree program, students cannot switch without taking additional credits. Articulation agreements are made to make non-transferable degrees transferable, therefore when you switch degrees the courses within your articulation agreement become non-transferable. This is not something I have seen during participatory observation and encountered in my data findings.

The communication between community and technical colleges and 4-year institutions are key to making transfer students successful. Without strong partnerships between colleges students can be given the wrong information at the wrong time which can hinder their academic advancement. With community and technical colleges working closely with students to ensure they are on the right path towards a Direct Transfer Agreement (DTA), a Major Related Program (MRP) or an Articulation Agreement we can assure less excess credit which will save students time and money. As a 4-year institution, EWU has to make sure the 34 community and technical colleges have the correct information on how each of these transfer degrees actually transfer for the students. A greater uniformity of agreements between Washington 2-year and 4-year institutions could reduce the complexity of how degrees transfer.

EWU could assist this by providing advising partnerships with the community colleges. Community college advisors have ratio of 1000 students per 1 advisor or counselor (Marus, 2012). Community college advisors are responsible of knowing all bachelor degrees offered at their college, vocational degrees, and transfer degrees.

With that amount of students per advisor how can we expect students to get the quality of advising we want them to have? By having a set of advisors specifically for those who wish to transfer could help create a seamless transition from community college to a 4-year institution.

Having advisors who facilitate transfer could help students navigate program requirements for 4-year institutions which would help students become more major ready. Currently EWU has advising Major Academic Plans (MAPs) for transfer students showing what courses students should take to help them enter programs at EWU. EWU uses and has created many resources to help assist students and advisors at the community colleges to help students be successful.

The lack of major specific information for transfer students is hindering. Transfer students must be self-motivated to ensure taking the correct prerequisite courses for their intended degree program. Many students rely on advising at their community or technical college to provide this information and for many the information is not available.

From my findings, students did run into issues while transferring but none that completely halted their education goals. Overall my data and research disproves 2 of my hypothesis and supports the other 2. These hypothesis were created after generic research was looked at from community colleges across the country. With half of them being disproved it tells me that the data out there could potentially be dated or irrelevant to students at EWU.

Throughout my research each student I talked to have their own story and it was very individualized. This tells me that within the transfer population it can be very diverse. Yes, some students had issues transferring credits but with the support they found at EWU they were able to see all of their options on how to move forward in a positive way. We cannot assume all transfer students struggle to adapt to life at EWU. What we can do is give them as many resources as we give the rest of our students.

Recommendations

The communication between community and technical colleges and 4-year institutions are key to making transfer students successful. Without strong partnerships between colleges students can be given the wrong information at the wrong time which can hinder their academic advancement. With community and technical colleges working closely with students to ensure they are on the right path towards a Direct Transfer Agreement (DTA), a Major Related Program (MRP) or an Articulation Agreement we can assure less excess credit which will save students time and money. As a 4-year institution, EWU has to make sure the 34 community and technical colleges have the correct information on how each of these transfer degrees actually transfer for the students. A greater uniformity of agreements between Washington 2-year and 4-year institutions could reduce the complexity of how degrees transfer.

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The lack of major specific information for transfer students is hindering. Community Colleges are based around offering a variety of degrees such as transferable degrees, applied science or tech degrees or vocational. As students navigating through a community college landscape, they must be aware of all degree types offered at a 2-year institution. Transfer students must be self-motivated to ensure taking the correct prerequisite courses for their intended degree program. Many students rely on advising at their community or technical college to provide this information and for many the information is not available.

Having a mandatory transfer orientation for all terms would be essential to making all transfer students feel like they are a part of the EWU community. Since some transfer students believe they do not need orientation or any help, making things such as orientation mandatory can give them the resources they may not have known were available. I have met students who were not aware that an amount of their courses did not transfer because they had never met with an advisor, gone through orientation, or had their credits evaluated. We have to take into account sometimes the issues students run into are not the fault of the community college or the university.

Occasionally students do not use the resources offered to them and their academic progress suffers.

To help students be more prepared for what to expect during college, high school teachers and counselors, parents, and community college professionals should be educating students on resources available to help them succeed. Many students start at a community college because they are just not ready for life at university.

Therefore, community college advisors/counselors take on a large roll of preparing these students to make degree, program, or career-based choices. My research shows that these needs are not being adequately met.

Those in higher education often hear that the transfer system “is broken” and is ineffective for some students. Specific information on why students, faculty, advisors, and administrators believe this is often not provided. In order to help students and address transfer student’s concerns we need better communication between schools and better access to information.

The transfer population is a unique set of students who have overcome obstacles, experienced different college cultures and still succeed reaching their higher education goals. By continuing and building resources for this important group of students, EWU can become a transfer destination for students. Creating relationships and collaborating on ideas with community colleges, EWU can brighten the future for transfer students.

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