Experiences of Students on the Facilitators and Barriers to Obtaining Mental Health Services and Other Supports While Transferring from a Two-Year to a Four-Year College

Susan McKelvey
Elizabeth Evans Getzel
Today’s Session

Based on discussion of preliminary results of students, participants will reflect and share:

Facilitators and barriers to obtaining mental health services of transfer students.

Identify strategies or recommendations that could be used by session participants on their campus.
Study Background

ECMC Foundation Grant (College Success for 2.5 years)

Focus groups and survey research on mental health concerns of transfer students from 2 to 4 year institutions of higher education in Virginia

Develop research protocol and survey for ECMC to distribute
Primary Aim of Study

Collect and disseminate data and analysis that will increase knowledge of and practices for reducing mental health barriers to two-and four-year degree attainment among first-generation, underserved, or low socioeconomic status (SES) students.
Project timeline

Phase 1
- Focus groups with students
- Interviews with administrators
- Pilot survey

Phase 2
- Develop survey
- Redesign for new focus
- Pilot survey

Phase 3
- Administer survey
- Disseminate results

COVID
Importance of Study

Estimated one in three college students meets criteria for clinically significant mental health problem

Projections that by 2030 five key foundational elements that will drive higher education:

- mental health
- digital divide
- diversity, equity and inclusion
- shifting demographics
- return on investment for students
Research Questions

1. What are the concerns of Virginia community college transfer students, in terms of mental health supports, to make a smooth and successful transfer?

2. What are the facilitators and barriers to transferring from a 2-year community college to a 4-year college or university in Virginia, as self-identified by transfer students with mental health concerns?

3. What services or supports did transfer students find most helpful once in a 4-year setting that those students believe will contribute to retention and completion of their degree?
Summary of Instrument – Section 1

- Demographic
- Current demands in their life
- Concerns when transferring
- Concerns after transferring
- Registered with disability support office
Section 2

- Experience locating resources in a 4 year setting
- Resources accessed that help with mental health concerns
- Virtual options that would be helpful with mental health concerns
Preliminary Results of Selected Survey Questions

Focus of results are on selected questions from survey.

Survey instrument and full report available in early 2023.
Survey Participants

- Students who transferred during Spring, Summer or Fall of 2021
- Identify as experiencing feelings of worry, nervousness, or anxiety
- Feelings of sadness, depression or hopelessness
- Transferred from a Virginia Community College
When did you first seek help for your anxiety/depression?

Respondents have mental health concerns, but 42% have not sought or received help.

- Prior to COVID: 41%
- After COVID: 16%
- No help: 42%
I identify As:

The majority of respondents identify as a woman.
Race and ethnicity

Almost one-half (42%) of respondents are people of color.
First Generation

Almost one-half (45%) of respondents are first generation college students.
Are You Registered with DSS?

Only 9% are registered with the DSS office as having a documented disability.
What Has Contributed the Most to Your Anxiety?

1. School
2. Financial issues
3. Personal/Family life relationships
4. Work
## How Concerned were You About the Following Aspects?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Aspect</th>
<th>Concern Addressed</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Make sure my credits transferred</td>
<td>With help from university/faculty or staff</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fulfill academic demands</td>
<td>Did on my own</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reduce my anxiety and depression</td>
<td>Not able to do</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stay healthy</td>
<td>Did on my own</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Make friends</td>
<td>Did on my own (but over 20% still said they were not able to do)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Locating a Campus Resource

About one-half of respondents know how to locate a campus resource to help with mental health concerns.
Locating MH resources

But, 85% of respondents have not connected with someone for mental health concerns.
Resources accessed to reduce mental health concerns

- Academic advisors
- Faculty members/Instructors
- Special interest groups (sports, hobby)
- Wellness-focused activities
Mental Health Needs

Most respondents (63%) neither agree nor disagree on whether or not their mental health needs are being met.
Virtual options

- Virtual meetings to discuss mental health concerns (48%)
- Telehealth meetings with campus mental health counselors (47%)
- Virtual meetings to connect with other students through common interests, clubs, etc. (52%)
Discussion

Extent of mental health crisis on college campuses
Uncertainty about which resources are helpful
Addressing stressors in students’ lives
Role of virtual options
Your thoughts?

What are your thoughts on how to better address mental health concerns for students?
Closing
Contact Information

- Elizabeth Getzel lgetzel@vcu.edu
- Susan Mc Kelvey mckelvey@vcu.edu
- Website: Transition.vcur RTC.org
- Website: Center on Transition.org