Final Report of the Activities
of the Transfer Practices Advisory Committee

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Introduction

The Final Report reflects the activities and outcomes of the Transfer Practice Advisory Committee in developing and providing an inventory of best and promising practices from Ohio's public colleges and universities to be shared statewide (refer to appendix I for committee membership). The Ohio Articulation and Transfer Network (OATN) to assist the Advisory Committee retained two consultants with expertise in transfer -- Pete Ross and Jon Tafel --. A collection of data and presentations are presented in the appendices along with a listing of promising practices by category and by public colleges and universities. It is envisioned that the promising practices will be examined and adopted by individual campuses statewide to improve student transfer and completion success. The Final Report is also intended to add to the growing body of research regarding transfer practices and success.

Background

Research has been conducted on current literature and relevant findings on the rate of transfer and matriculation rates of students moving among institutions of higher education: on both a national and statewide basis. An analysis of the research findings crystallized in a national report by Community College Research Center (CCRC) and research provided by the Ohio Department of Higher Education (ODHE) and OATN illustrates a large amount of variance in the 6 year baccalaureate completion rates. Consistent with large data issues, a great deal of the variance can be attributed to differences in the samples used and the source data used in the CCRC study vs. the OATN data drawn from the Higher Education Information system.

Ohio and national data indicate a number of factors impact transfer students' degree completion rates;

- Location
  - Size
  - Proximity to transfer destination
  - Regional student mobility

- Inter-institutional cooperation
  - Staffing

What is apparent, however, and what has been the focus of the ongoing review (both nationally and statewide) are the consistent areas or themes that lend themselves to a better understanding of student transfer issues that hold promise to assist colleges and universities in fostering higher completion rates for students.

Three of the most salient themes are:

1.) Transfer is very much a regional enterprise with the majority of students staying in defined geographic areas and move among a few selected area institutions of higher education.

2.) Clear Pathways with a broad enough scope (Meta-majors) that provide a defined curriculum but also have enough flexibility in course selection to allow students to pursue various majors housed within the larger major concentrations seamlessly without loss of time or credit.

3.) Wraparound support services from intake processes to focused proactive advising play an important role in the retention and completion process. Seemingly, nothing trumps advising.

The new information and spotlight on student mobility provides a tremendous opportunity to review the articulation and transfer structure in Ohio and to elicit promising practices that the state's colleges and universities have implemented to promote student transfer and competition success.

Transfer Practices Advisory Committee

In order to address these issues in Ohio and to determine what strategies work best, a statewide committee, consisting of two- and four-year representatives, was empaneled with the charge of identifying, gathering, analyzing and disseminating information relative to the best and most promising of these practices which are currently in place, or planned for, advancing student mobility and degree completion. The committee first met on November 1, 2016 and reviewed the information gathered by the consultants and determined-- based on the information and data --the best direction to complete the committee's charge (refer appendix II: Ohio Transfer Initiative: Promising Practices for Degree Completion).

One of the first actions by the Advisory Committee was to recommend a questionnaire be distributed to all public colleges and universities to gather transfer practices that are working well.

- Identify appropriate questions to be included in a survey that will provide a comprehensive review of all areas that impact transfer students.

- Review the survey questions prior to its distribution to all public two- and four-year colleges and universities

- Study the results of the survey with eye on promising practices that can be distributed to all colleges and universities

Survey Design & Administration

The Advisory Committee and consultants, through research, stakeholder discussion and national practice, developed a set of Ten Core Principles that have proven effective in promoting student transfer and completion success. The Core Principles formed the structure for the questionnaire, approved by the Advisory Committee in December 2016. All public colleges and universities were asked to address these areas, through a Survey Monkey, to identify current practices and determined if their activities constitute a best or promising practice in each category. The results of this survey and continued discussion would provide a series of success strategies to be shared across campuses in all categories, thereby providing access to promising practices self-identified by colleges and universities. The questionnaire provides both qualitative and quantitative data regarding the strategies employed by state colleges and universities around the following Ten Core Principles:

1. Outreach. - (the process by which an institution promotes and encourages transfer applications)

2. Credit Transfer & Application- (the timing and process by which students are officially notified as to how previous coursework has been accepted.

3. Pathways & Partnerships - (the process by which articulation agreements are initiated, developed and monitored)

4. Web/Social Media - (how potential and accepted transfer students are integrated into the college/university via various forms of social media)

5. Orientation - (how transfer students are informed of services available, their rights and responsibilities, and the culture of your institution)

6. Advising - (by what process are students assisted in monitoring their degree completion progress and how are advisors kept current in all aspects of transfer related issues)

7. Institutional Environment - (the commitment through all levels of the institution that transfer students and their success are an integral part of the Strategic Enrollment Management plan)

8. Partner Collaboration - (the level and process by which institutions interact to ensure mutual understanding of issues impacting transfer issues)

9. Financial Assistance - (providing students with comprehensive financial information and funding opportunities)

10. Data Sharing - (data related to transfer student profiles, progression metrics and completion that is routinely shared with partner institutions)

The survey results provide a rich array of information regarding both how campuses are addressing the ten components and, of those strategies, which ones they deem promising practices. Two types of information were obtained from the questionnaire:

- The quantitative data illustrates how and if the institution is addressing each of the ten principles. With information as to what strategies are being used.

- The qualitative data provides promising practices, self-identified by the college or university, for the ten principles. The consultants, in reviewing the data, divided the promising practices for each of the Ten Principles into two categories: Common and Unique.

Common promising practices represent strategies employed by a number of campuses so are grouped. The Unique promising practices are innovative strategies usually offered by an individual campus. The Transfer Practices Advisory Committee met for a second time via conference call on March 23, 2017 to review the survey outcomes and to continue discussion. Prior to the conference call, a document, Best Practice Categories as Reported by Ohio's Colleges and Universities (refer to appendix III) was shared with the co-chairs and then the whole committee.

A presentation was given by the consultants on April 12, 2017 to the Ohio's Promising Practices Essential Transfer Practices Regional Meeting (refer to appendix IV for presentation). This presentation provides an analysis of the survey findings and examples of promising practices in each of the ten categories.

A final document was prepared that contains the complete listing of promising practices by category. This document (refer to appendix V) is the penultimate collection of promising practices by institution that should be shared with all

campuses. The appropriate contact person at each campus is being documented to assist in facilitating the sharing of practices and information.

Suggestions / Next Steps

- The document (appendix V) should be housed on the state's Articulation & Transfer website to facilitate ease of availability and use.

- Technical assistance may be beneficial to the adoption and implementation of the promising practices statewide. Such a potent resource should be widely publicized and not left to chance-- perhaps the IUC and OACC could participate in this effort.5

- Continued gathering of promising practices should continue - like all new initiatives to identify innovations, things are overlooked on the first round.

- A regional approach to dissemination of promising practices may be warranted since transfer is usually focused among a limited number of institutions in geographical proximity. This would make for easier dissemination and adoption.

- A number of strengths are identified, including Outreach, Social Media, Advising and Partnership Development.

- Attention needs to be given to the data-sharing category. This was the least addressed area by institutions and very limited promising practices were offered. It is also a crucial category since it provides the final answer of how students are doing and progressing upon transfer.

- Financial Aid support could be boosted if colleges and universities instituted a number of effective practices in this category. The most promising of these are the availability of institutional scholarships, grants and work study opportunities being available for transfer students in a similar fashion and amount as they are for native students. Also of assistance is providing students with a comprehensive cost of attendance budget that will detail expenses and financial aid implications for the entire baccalaureate degree path and the inclusion of financial aid information into the orientation process for incoming transfer students.

- Providing transfer students with a tailored version of the New Student Orientation as a mandatory step prior to registration that aids transfer student in understanding the new environment with the accompanying

assistance available and institutional expectations. Offering Freshman (or Transfer year) experiences courses during the first semester of the students attendance provides an avenue for incoming students to engage more fully with the University.

- One of the Unique promising practices that was identified - "Transfer App"--is applicable statewide and should be taken to scale. The Transfer APP provides detailed information related to transferring to the university, which can be used, on any mobile device.