

Our Transfer Students Deserve Our Best – How Can We Help?

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PELP 2016-17 Cohort:

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Our PELP project group was interested in exploring the enrollment management challenges facing the University of Hawai'i (UH) system, specifically related to transfer students. Issues connected with the transfer experience impact our faculty, our staff, and, most importantly, our students. While there has been an increased focus on transfer students over the last few years, there is still a lot of confusion around the transfer process. Transfer students are a particularly important group to study, since they are already invested in their education; they just need assistance to complete their degree. The focus of our group's work was on transfer student retention and persistence, specifically what work still needs to be done to smooth the transition for and success of transfer students.

Recommendations

Based on the research we conducted, our group recommends the following actions to improve the transfer process for students:

Create accurate campus to system articulation.

- Create a system-wide **Transfer Articulation Committee** (composed of administrators, faculty, and staff from all campuses) to rectify course and credit discrepancies across campuses.
- **Continue to grow the Transfer Credit Articulation Database** (based on the work of the Transfer Articulation Committee) to reduce the number of information-related errors by advisors and increase the time that advisors can spend with students on issues beyond course transferability.
- Ensure that courses from outside of the UH system populate within the Transfer Credit Articulation Database **system-wide**.
- Establish **Content Area Boards** that will inform the Transfer Articulation Committee and will work on establishing that introductory, required courses listed with the same numbering (e.g. MATH 103) mean the same thing with respect to content and are reflected uniformly in campus course catalogs.

Articulate all pathways from 2-year to 4-year institutions.

- Within STAR GPS, create **“I Want To” Journeys** that will encompass complete pathways (including transfer) across institutions. “I Want To” Journeys will be informed by the **Student Record Update Form** in Banner and will be designed to show students two STAR GPS pathways – one for their current UH Community College (UHCC) degree and one for their future degree at a 4-year UH campus. This will allow students to see what courses they can take at the UHCC campus that will help them meet their goals (connected to a future 4-year degree).
- In STAR, identify future transfer students and the transfer program advisor at the 4-year institution early.
- In STAR, add a section for notes to promote streamlined and consistent advising across campuses.
- Within STAR GPS, **standardize degree pathways across campuses.** Standardization of courses and pathways across campuses should be done in a bottom-up manner, so faculty and staff know that their information and expertise are valued.

Streamline and standardize advising.

- Engage in outreach and initiate contact with transfer students as soon as they are identified. This will include faculty and advisor outreach to **future transfer students**, who have been flagged through information provided on Student Record Update Forms.
- Use **technology for advising.** Connect the educational and technology components of meaningful face-to-face advising sessions with online check-ins and online office hours.
- Create an **“Adopt a Professor”** program where faculty interested in helping pre-major students would donate a few hours each month to talk to students within a set range of topics. This could be integrated within centralized and departmental major advising to create an online, adaptive matrix of the types of advisors and advising available.

Revisit and update Executive Policy 5.209.

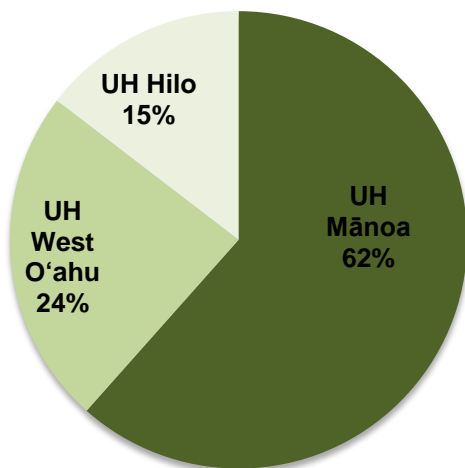
- The University of Hawai'i System Student Transfer and Inter-campus Articulation policy was last updated in May 2006.
- Consider addition of any of the above recommendations.
- Include policy that will allow transfer students to **register at the same time as continuing students** with similar credit earned.
- Recognize the strengths of each 4 year campus but focus on helping the transfer process become more seamless throughout the UH system.

Data that Informed Recommendations

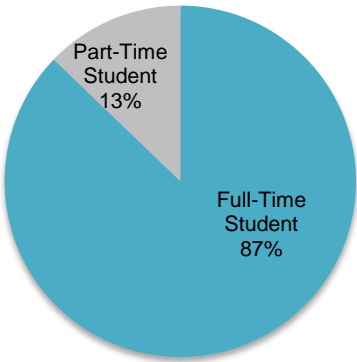
In addition to conducting interviews with individuals involved in enrollment management and transfer student services across the UH system, our group developed a survey for recent transfer students (e.g. students currently enrolled at a 4-year UH institution who transferred to that campus in the last 24 months). This nine-question survey focused students' transfer experience, specifically related to the registration process and barriers they encountered during their transition. Out of an estimated 10,400 eligible students in Banner, SurveyShare (the web survey and questionnaire tool we used) chose a random sample of 1,488 students to receive the survey. The survey was live for 5 days (April 3-7, 2017). During this time, 281 students completed the survey – a response rate of 18.9%.

Sixty-two percent (62%) of survey respondents attend UH Mānoa. Twenty-four percent (24%) of survey respondents attend UH West O'ahu, and fifteen percent (15%) of attend UH Hilo.

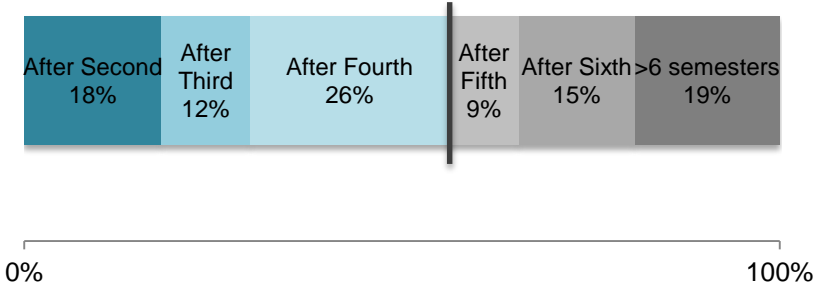
Forty-eight percent (**48%**) of survey respondent transferred from a **non-UH system college**. Forty-four percent (**44%**) of survey respondents transferred from a **UHCC campus**, and seven percent (**7%**) transferred from a **different UH 4-year college**.



The majority of survey respondents transferred as full-time students.

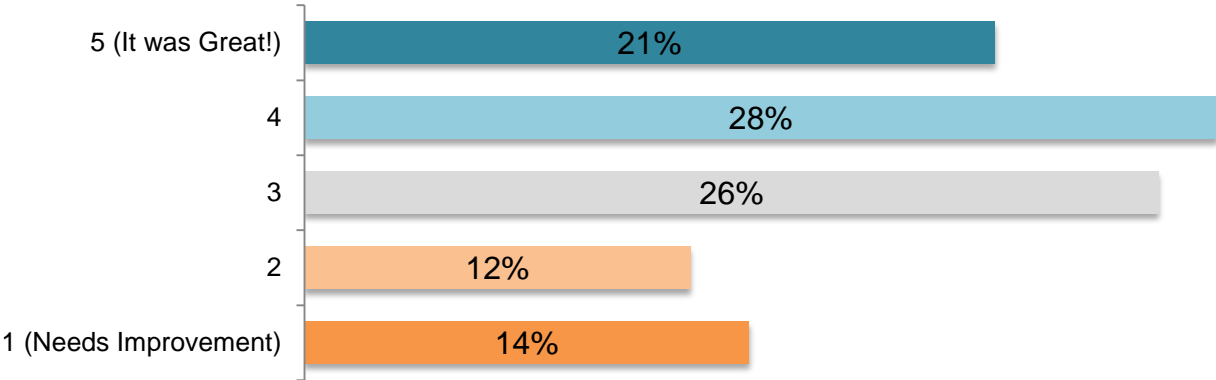


Most students transferred after their fourth semester.



The majority of survey respondents transferred as **full-time students (87%)** instead of a part-time students (13%). In addition, **most survey respondents (56%) transferred** to their current 4-year UH campus **prior to their fifth semester in college**. The highest percentage of students (26%) transferred after their fourth semester in college.

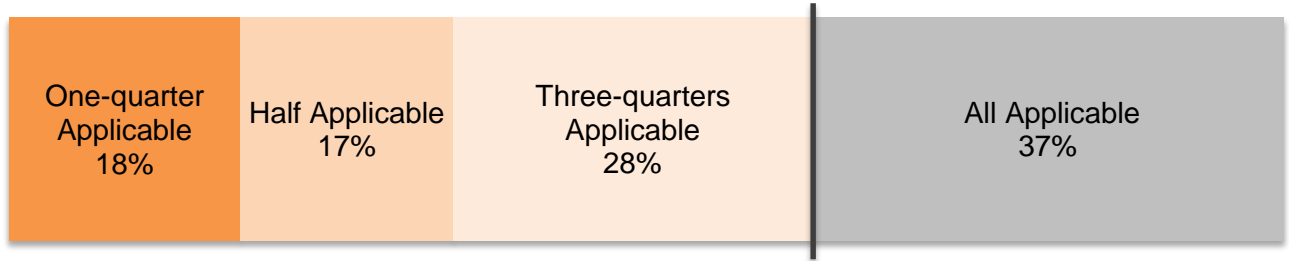
The majority of transfer students feel positively about their transfer experience.



When asked to rate the quality of their transfer experience on a Likert scale (1 = Needs Improvement to 5 = It was Great!), the majority of transfer students reported a positive transfer experience. **Forty-nine percent (49%) of transfer students chose a “4” or “5”** to describe their transfer experience. Twenty-six percent (26%) reported a fair experience (“3”). The remaining twenty-six percent (26%) reported a more negative experience by choosing a “1” or “2.”

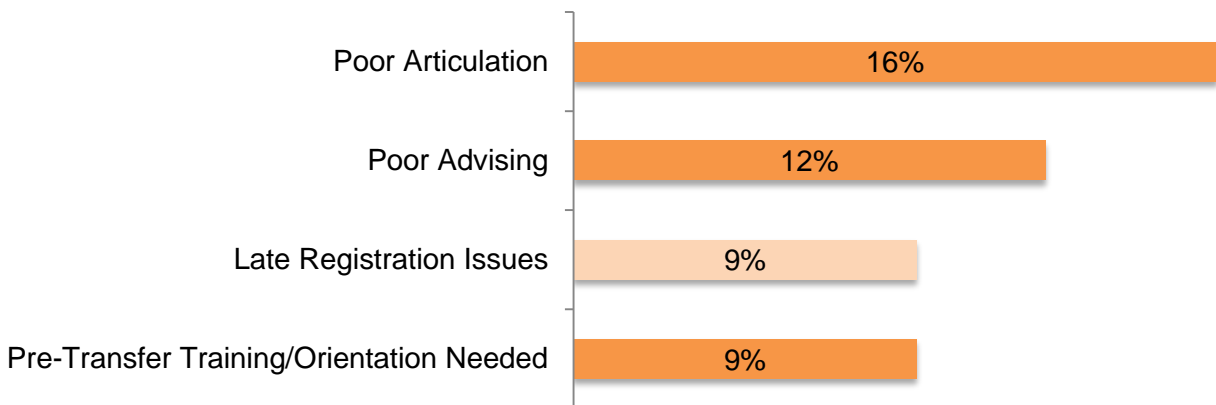
A higher percentage of transfer students at UH Hilo (56%) and UH West O’ahu (63%) selected “4” and “5” responses compared to UH Mānoa (42%). UH West O’ahu had the lowest percent (15%) of “1” and “2” responses compared to UH Hilo (29%) and UH Mānoa (28%).

Most transfer students were not able to take a course-load where all courses applied to their degree during their first semester.



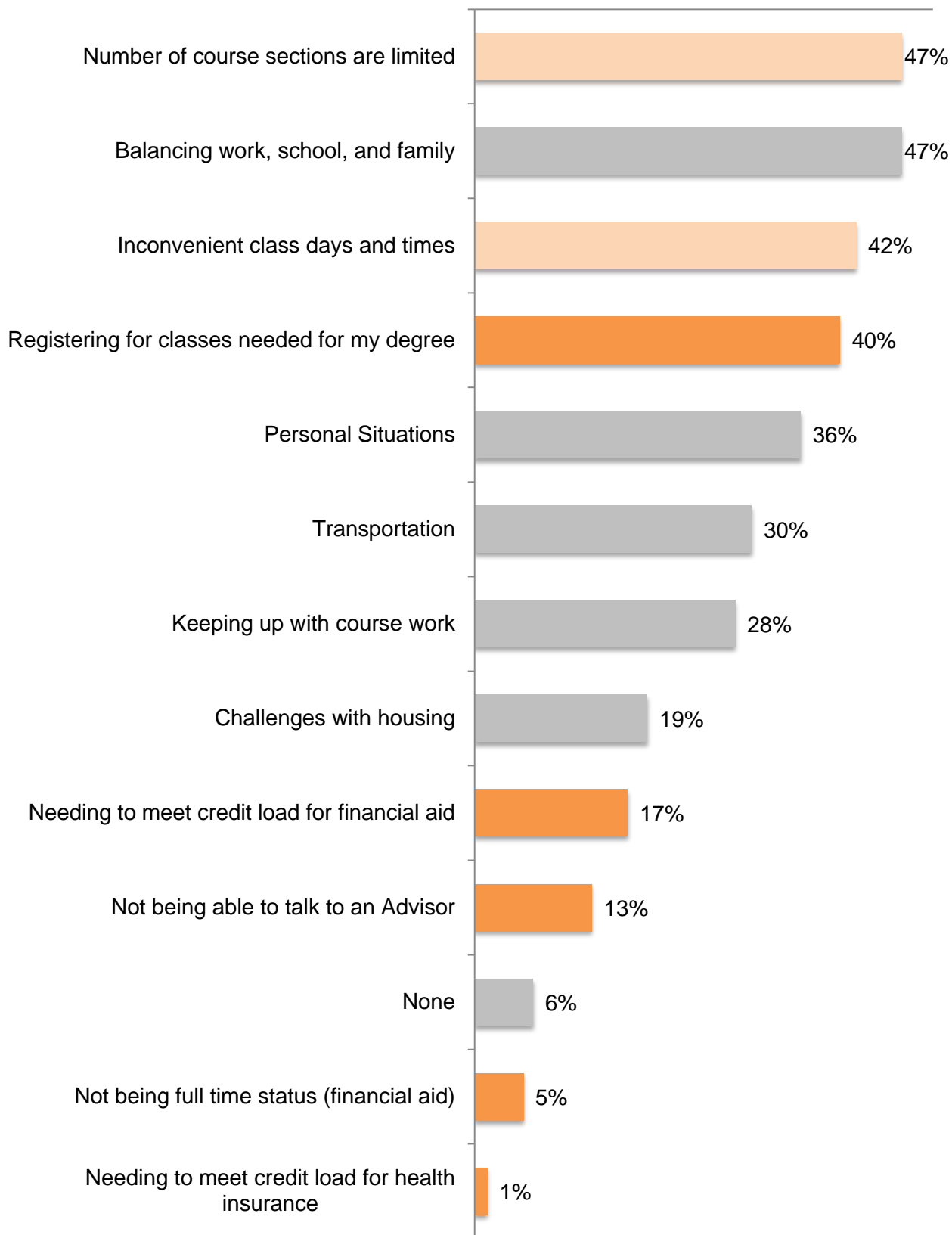
During their first semester at the 4-year UH campus, **sixty-three percent (63%)** of transfer students **were not able to take a course-load where all courses applied to their degree.** Factors contributing to this issue included limited course sections, inconvenient class days and times, advising (e.g. not being able to talk to an advisor), and late registration (which is directly connected with course section limitations, since, by the time many transfer students registered, fewer open course sections were available). This data is particularly concerning because, the fewer courses students are able to take in their program of study, the longer it will take them to complete their degree. We hope that earlier registration of transfer students and the full capabilities of STAR GPS will help to address this challenge.

Articulation, advising, and registration top students' recommendations about how to improve the transfer experience.



This survey question asked students to share any recommendations they might have to improve the experience of transfer students. Responses from 183 students were reviewed and coded. The results of our coding showed that concerns about articulation, advising (both academic and non-academic – e.g. focused on transition skills and orientation to the 4-year campus), and registration were the most common suggestions. All of our PELP project group's recommendations on pages 1 and 2 align with these student suggestions. As a note, with UH Mānoa's recent decision to move up the registration date for transfer students to May 22, all of the 4-year UH campuses are now allowing transfer students to register at the same time or very soon after continuing students. We hope that this will address the issues students reported connected with late registration.

Common challenges transfer students identified were course offerings, registration, and advising.



An open-ended survey question asked students to identify any challenges they had encountered as transfer students. Responses from 183 students were reviewed and coded. The results of our coding showed that the top challenges faced by students transferring included the limited number of course sections, balancing work, school, and family, as well as inconvenient class days and times. Additional challenges included registering for classes needed for the specific degree, transportation, and the keeping up with course work at the new institution . Several of our PELP project group's recommendations on pages 1 and 2 attempt to address the challenges identified by these transfer students.

Conclusions

The recommendations listed at the start of this report are designed to help address some of the most pressing issues surrounding transfer student success at the University of Hawai'i. The creation of more streamlined and seamless mechanisms for transferring credits into and within the UH System will considerably enhance the transfer experience and avoid wasted time and effort on the part of the students. A significantly greater level of communication between these students and faculty and advisors on their destination campuses will smooth the transition and anchor new transfer students more securely, thereby increasing retention. This can be accomplished by more efficiently and collaboratively leveraging existing advising and faculty personnel resources already available on each campus. The use of enhanced technology to serve the transfer student population as it transitions from one campus/institution to another is particularly important. Increasing the ability of transfer students to envision their transfer journeys by enabling them to experiment with various pathways through STAR should help reduce uncertainty and confusion from the start of the transfer process.

Interviews:

Roxie Shabazz – Assistant Vice Chancellor for Enrollment
Management & Director of Admissions
University of Hawai'i at Manoa

Jim Cromwell – Director of Enrollment Management
University of Hawai'i – West Oahu

Stuart Lau - University Registrar –
University of Hawai'i at Manoa

Dr. Ron Cambra – Assistant Vice Chancellor
University of Hawai'i at Manoa

Megumi Makino-Kanehiro – Director & Academic Advisor
University of Hawai'i at Manoa

Jennifer Brown - UHM Ka'ie'ie Transfer Advisor
University of Hawai'i at Manoa

Dr. Farrah-Marie Gomes – Vice Chancellor for Student Affairs
University of Hawai'i at Hilo

Gail Makuakane-Lundin – Executive Assistant to the Chancellor
University of Hawai'i at Hilo

Patricia Grossman - Transfer Credit Evaluation and Articulation
University of Hawai'i at Hilo

Further Reading:

[Chronicle of Higher Ed piece reporting that a third of college and university students transfer before graduating..](#)

[National Student Clearing House Research Center](#)