Supporting Transfer Students Series
PART 3: Strategies for Encouraging Academic Engagement in Transfer Students

Academic engagement is important to transfer student success in college (e.g, Lester, Leonard, & Mathias, 2013). Lester et al. (2013) defined academic engagement as "academic activities that include meaningful connections with faculty members as well as academic challenge and learning" (p. 213). The study also indicated that transfer students tended to view their engagement in academic activities as their primary focus, eschewing social activities on campus unless those activities were directly related to their classes, interactions with instructors, or opportunities within their majors. While both types of engagement are important, this resource will focus on encouraging academic engagement.

Strategies	Explanations	Teaching Suggestions
Design your class to fit a diverse range of student needs	Transfer students may represent a variety of ages, experiences, backgrounds, and knowledge; they may understand and approach the classroom in vastly different ways from each other and from their peers on more traditional pathways, and may therefore have more diverse needs within the classroom.	Consider designing activities that will allow for a variety of approaches and perspectives. For example, "learning journals" are term-long projects where students are provided with a set of open-ended prompts that facilitate the development of critical reflection skills by allowing them to consider their learning throughout the course. For sample learning journal prompts, see this conference poster from Richardson, Fatherly, and Thomas (2017).
Create a class attendance policy that will allow you to be flexible when needed	Consistent class attendance is important for sustaining success with community college and transfer students. However, keep in mind that transfer students may have significant extracurricular demand on their time that might at times make attending class difficult.	Try to be flexible when possible, especially if your policy connects attendance with a grade. For example, you could allow students to miss up to XX number of classes without loss of attendance points.
Encourage students to participate and ask questions during class discussions	Fauria & Fuller (2015) found that transfers students who participated in class discussions or asked questions during class were more likely to be able to persist to graduation.	Try to create a learning environment in your classroom, where students' responses (even incorrect ones) are acknowledged and considered. For example, if a student provides an incorrect response, ask to see if another student can provide additional information or "help" clarify the first student's response.
Encourage students to set clear goals, both for your course and for the future	Have a discussion with your students about what they will know, what they will be able to do, and the types of attitudes and social/career skills that they will develop by the end of your course.	Consider conducting a diagnostic assessment (e.g., a short quiz or in-class writing exam) at the beginning of the term at gauge your students prior knowledge and experience. Give your students time to ask questions and/or clarify your expectations. You might begin by clarifying your expectations and discussing how the course was designed for student success.

	Martin, Galentino, & Townsend (2014) found that transfer students who set clear academic and career goals for themselves were more likely to be successful in their 4-year universities.	Have students write personal and career goals that they want to achieve during the term, and then have them connect those goals to the learning outcomes of your course.
Create opportunities for personal and career relevance	Have students consider how your course will fit into their degree programs, and more importantly, their future career plans.	Encourage them to integrate the concepts of your course with their personal/career interests and activities (e.g. work, extracurricular activities, volunteering, experiential- or service-learning, and discipline-specific organizations and activities).
Implement authentic activities and assignments	Consider designing your course around authentic assignments and practical tasks. The goal of these assignments are to help students not only understand *what* they are learning, but *why* they are learning it, and how it will *apply* to their work in the future. Consider designing and implementing projects that mirror real world tasks completed by professionals in the field.	Try designing inquiry- or problem-based projects, or other authentic assignments that provide students with opportunities to engage in the types of writing and problem-solving common in their disciplines and/or careers. For example, you could provide students with a case study describing a real world and/or field-related problem, and have them work to teams to develop a solution. For more suggestions on developing inquiry-based projects, see our "Strategies for Covering Content Series".
	Assignments that allow students to interact with established members of their discipline or professional in their career area are also effective authentic assignments.	If possible, offer experiential or service learning opportunities, and encourage students to explore internship opportunities outside of class, as these (CCCSE, 2012; Ishitani & McKitrick, 2010).
Encourage students to make use of their prior knowledge and experiences	Transfer students may have extensive prior experiences and knowledge, particularly veterans and nontraditionally-aged students (Durosko, 2017). Tap into students' prior experiences and prior knowledge and help them explore how they can apply it to the new content of your course.	For example, you could have students complete a short survey or diagnostic where they outline their prior experience with the course subject, and then use the results to design activities or homework tasks where students can apply that knowledge to course material.

Additional Resources
- Transfer and Reentry Center
- Student Academic Success Center [SASC]
- SASC's Writing Assistance Services
- Veteran Success Center

In addition to this resource, we would also suggest referencing our "Supporting First-Generation University Student Series," as the experiences of transfer students often parallel those of first-generation students more broadly.

Citation
Center for Educational Effectiveness [CEE]. (2018). Supporting Transfer Students Series. *Just-in-Time Teaching Resources.* Retrieved from https://cee.ucdavis.edu/JITT

References

Center for Community College Student Engagement [CCCSE]. (2012). *A Matter of Degrees: Promising Practices for Community College Student Success (A First Look)*. Austin, TX: The University of Texas at Austin, Community College Leadership Program.

Center for Teaching, Vanderbilt University. (n.d.). *Teaching first-generation college students*. Retrieved from https://cft.vanderbilt.edu/teaching-first-generation-college-students/

Durosko, H. (2017). Five ways to support veteran transfer students. *Journal of College Admission, 235*, 42-43.

Fauria, R. M., & Fuller, M. B. (2015). Transfer student success: educationally purposeful activities predictive of undergraduate GPA. *Research & Practice in Assessment, 10*, 39-52.

Ishitani, T. T., & McKitrick, S. A. (2010). After transfer: The engagement of community college students at a four-year collegiate institution. *Community College Journal of Research and Practice, 34*, 576-594.

Lester, J., Leonard, J. B., & Mathias, D. (2013). Transfer student engagement: Blurring of social and academic engagement. *Community College Review, 41*(3), 202-222.

Martin, K., Galentino, R., & Townsend, L. (2014). Community college student success: The role of motivation and self-empowerment. *Community College Review, 42*(3), 221-241.

Richardson, E., Fatherly, S., & Thomas, J. (2017). *Transfer Experiences: Creating Transition Pathways for All Students.* Poster session presented at the conference on Diversity, Learning, and Student Success, sponsored by the Association of American Colleges and Universities, Jacksonville, FL. Retrieved from http://www.aacu.org/sites/default/files/files/dlss17/Poster17.pdf