

Report of the Results of the BGSU Transfer Student Questionnaire

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ABSTRACT

This report describes the results of a questionnaire administered to Fall 1998 main campus undergraduate transfer students. The questionnaire was designed to provide information about students' satisfaction with the transfer process, why they chose to transfer to BGSU, and problems which they may have encountered as they transferred.

BACKGROUND AND METHODOLOGY

The BGSU Transfer and Articulation Think Tank group identified in 1998 the need for a systematic assessment of the issues faced by students who transfer to the University. It was decided that a study similar to the BGSU First Year Student Questionnaire, which collects data about reasons students choose to attend college in general and BGSU in particular, but which also collects data about the specific issues faced by undergraduate students who transfer to the main campus and their satisfaction with the transfer process, would provide important information as the topic of transfer becomes a greater priority. Several transfer student questionnaires from other institutions were reviewed and a draft instrument was developed and shared with the Transfer and Articulation Think Tank.

A final version of the questionnaire was sent by the Office of Undergraduate Admissions to 600 new Fall 1998 main campus undergraduate transfer students. Of the 600 questionnaires distributed, 148 were returned, making for a 25% response rate. Since PID numbers were collected in the questionnaire, results were able to be merged with registration data, allowing for comparisons of results by gender, ethnicity, college, full-time vs. part-time status, and living arrangements. The demographic profile of the questionnaire respondents matched that of the overall transfer student population quite well with respect to ethnicity and college. Women were over-represented in the respondents (71%) as compared with the population (52%). Responses were analyzed by determining the number and percentage of respondents who provided each response to each item. Responses were also cross-tabulated by gender, ethnicity, college, full-time vs.

part-time status, and living arrangements; significant differences are noted where they occurred. The following pages highlight the findings. A complete listing of all questionnaire responses is provided at the end of this report.

RESULTS

As is the case with new first year students, there is wide variability in the distance from home to BGSU for transfer students; 11 to 50 miles was the most common response. Unlike new first year students, 76% of new transfer students report being employed; 26% are employed 20 or more hours per week.

Most questionnaire respondents (89%) attended the orientation session for transfer students and 91% found it to be very helpful, helpful, or somewhat helpful. Exactly 50% of the respondents reported that they originally planned to transfer when they attended their previous college or university. Sixty percent did not consider BGSU originally instead of their previous institution. Students of color were less likely to plan to transfer. Students in the colleges of Education and Human Development, Health and Human Services, and Musical Arts were more likely to have considered BGSU instead before attending their former institutions. Full-time students were more likely to attend the orientation session.

Sixty-seven percent of the respondents said that all or almost all of the classes they wanted to take at BGSU this semester were available. Full-time students were more likely to agree that most of the classes they wanted were available. Sixty-six percent of the respondents were not aware that the University has a special scholarship for transfer students. Commuters were less likely to be aware of the scholarship. Fifty-three percent of the respondents did not meet with a college or department representative to discuss their academic programs before coming to registration. Of those who did meet with an academic representative, 92% found doing so to be very helpful, helpful, or somewhat helpful. Sixty-eight percent of the respondents did not meet with an Admissions Office representative prior to transferring. Of those who did meet with a representative from Admissions, 94% found doing so to be very helpful, helpful, or somewhat helpful. Students of color were more likely to meet with an Admissions representative.

As is the case for first year students, preparing for a professional career, being able to get a better job, learning more about things that interest them, being able to make more money, and gaining a general education are the most important reasons transfer students choose to go to college in general. Preparation for a professional career and learning more about things that interest them were more important reasons for full-time students. Having a teacher or adviser urge them to go to college was more important for part-time students.

The only stated reason for deciding to transfer to the University which was noted as very important for a majority (79%) of the respondents was that BGSU offers a major that they are interested in. The advice of a teacher, adviser, friend, or family member, being

able to attend college near their workplace, and the institution's academic reputation were particularly important reasons for part-time students to choose to transfer to BGSU. Students living on campus more often stated that they chose to transfer to BGSU because they were unhappy at their previous college or university; they were less likely to report wanting to live near home and their workplace as reasons for transferring. BGSU's academic reputation was a more important reason to transfer for commuter students.

The potential concerns which were identified as major problems for the largest portion of respondents were finding available parking (41%) and financing their education (32%). Men were more likely than women to feel that finding information about transferring to BGSU is a problem. Students of color were more likely to agree that finding information about transferring to BGSU, not knowing anyone else who was transferring, and conflicts with family responsibilities are problems. Students living in the city of Bowling Green were more likely to feel that receiving inconsistent information from different sources at BGSU was a problem.

Responses to the open ended section of the questionnaire were quite diverse and are not easily summarized. Respondents' greatest concerns before they transferred to BGSU most frequently included having the ability to finance college, receipt of financial aid, transfer of credit, maintaining good grades, commuting, fitting in with other students, and attending an institution on a semester rather than a quarter calendar. The most common responses to the question of what BGSU could do to encourage more students to transfer were to advertise more, to have more financial aid available and to provide more information about financial aid, to have lower tuition, and to offer more opportunities for transfer students to interact in order to build a support network. Seventy-seven percent of the respondents said that if they could do it over again they would still transfer to BGSU. The remainder were evenly split between reporting that they would not transfer to BGSU and being undecided. The most frequently articulated best experience since enrolling at BGSU was meeting new people, including people of diverse backgrounds. The most frequently stated worst experiences involved parking, financial aid, finding their way around campus, problems with scheduling classes at convenient times, and residence hall roommate concerns.

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

The current study represents BGSU's initial attempt to gain information about the experiences and concerns of its new transfer students. It serves as a benchmark for future follow-up efforts. The major limitation is the 25% response rate. Transfer students choose to attend college generally and BGSU specifically for many of the same pragmatic reasons as first year students. Parking, financing college, receipt of financial aid, and fitting in with other students are among their greatest concerns. Meeting new people was most commonly identified as the best experience since transferring. A considerable majority of transfer students would still choose to transfer to BGSU if they could start over again. Transfer orientation and meeting with Admissions Office and academic unit representatives were found to be very helpful. A few differences in the responses were

found across gender, ethnicity, college, full-time vs. part-time, and on-campus vs. off-campus groups.

Feedback concerning this and other studies and how they can continue to be improved is always welcome.

ITEM RESPONSES

How many miles from BGSU is your permanent home?

10 or less	7%
11 to 50	38%
51 to 100	20%
101 to 500	28%
Over 500	7%

How many hours per week during the school year do you plan to be employed?

None	24%
1 to 9	14%
10 to 19	36%
20 to 39	18%
40 or more	8%

Did you attend BGSU's orientation session for transfer students?

Yes	89%
No	11%

If yes, how helpful did you find it?

Very Helpful	9%
Helpful	41%
Somewhat Helpful	41%
Not Helpful	5%
Not at all Helpful	4%

When you attended your previous college or university did you originally plan to transfer?

Yes	50%
No	50%

If yes, did you plan to transfer to BGSU?

Yes	48%
No	52%

Before you first attended your previous college or university did you consider attending BGSU instead?

Yes	40%
No	60%

How many classes that you wanted to take at BGSU this semester were available?

All of Them	41%
Almost all of Them	26%
Some of Them	30%
None of Them	3%

Are you aware that BGSU has a special scholarship for transfer students?

Yes	34%
No	66%

Did you meet with a department or college representative to discuss your academic program before coming to registration?

Yes	47%
No	53%

If yes, how helpful was this person?

Very Helpful	41%
Helpful	30%
Somewhat Helpful	21%
Not Helpful	7%
Not at all Helpful	1%

Did you meet with a BGSU Admissions Office representative before transferring?

Yes	32%
No	68%

If yes, how helpful was this person?

Very Helpful	21%
Helpful	57%
Somewhat Helpful	15%
Not Helpful	4%
Not at all Helpful	2%

How important were each of the following in your decision to attend college in general?

	Very Important	Somewhat Important	Not Important
To prepare for a professional career	93%	6%	1%
To be able to get a better job	83%	15%	1%
To be able to make more money	63%	28%	9%
To gain a general education and appreciation of ideas	56%	39%	5%
To learn more about things that interest me	65%	29%	6%
To learn more about other people	30%	42%	28%
A friend or family member urged me to go	20%	26%	54%
A teacher or adviser urged me to go	9%	25%	66%

To what extent were/are each of the following a problem for you?

	Not a Problem	A Minor Problem	A Major Problem
The availability of classes to meet my schedule	50%	35%	15%
Finding information about transferring to BGSU	79%	20%	1%
Financing my education at BGSU	35%	33%	32%
Finding out about financial aid opportunities	47%	34%	19%
Finding out about parking regulations	67%	17%	16%
Finding available parking	30%	29%	41%
Maintaining good grades at BGSU	53%	42%	5%
Conflicts with family responsibilities	68%	23%	9%
Conflicts with job responsibilities	66%	24%	10%
Inconsistent information from different sources at BGSU	64%	24%	13%
Not knowing anyone else who was transferring to BGSU	55%	29%	16%

How important were each of the following in your decision to transfer to BGSU?

	Very Important	Somewhat Important	Not Important
BGSU offers the major I'm interested in	79%	17%	4%
I was not happy at my other college/university	28%	18%	54%
A teacher or adviser encouraged me to attend BGSU	5%	14%	81%
I wanted to live near home while I continue my education	34%	21%	45%
BGSU's cost is low	39%	33%	28%

I was offered financial assistance	34%	18%	47%
BGSU has a good academic reputation	48%	37%	15%
A BGSU representative encouraged me to attend	6%	17%	77%
BGSU's graduates get good jobs	37%	35%	28%
A friend or family member encouraged me to attend BGSU	19%	33%	48%
I wanted to live near my job site while I continue my edu.	18%	14%	68%
I completed all of the courses I could at my previous college/university and needed to transfer to continue my edu.	39%	10%	51%