

KEY ELEMENTS FOR TRANSITION TO COLLEGE

SCOPE OF TRANSITION

Student transition to college is a process that begins with initial inquiry or application and continues through the student's completion of their Momentum Year. Extending the scope of transition beyond the traditional orientation and first year experience supports the Momentum Approach to students as they become academically and socially integrated into the fabric of the institution and build the functional competencies necessary for success.

ORCHESTRATED GUIDANCE

To be successful, students need a guide along the path from inquiry to graduation. While the nature of this guidance changes over their academic experience, and the individual or individuals who provide the guidance may change throughout the process, students should make personal connections with campus representatives who remain resources for them as they transition from one phase to another. This guidance provides applicants and admitted students with clarity on who to contact when they have questions and begins to establish vital connections on campus to cement a transition.

PURPOSEFUL CHOICE

Institutions support students making a purposeful choice of a program or focus as a part of the process or transitioning to college. Support for student choice occurs in three stages:

Inform - Students are informed about the academic and career connections of their initial choice, for those students who apply with a choice in mind or about the range of options available and their career connections.

Discern – Students and institutions engage in a process of reviewing student's interests, aptitudes, and background to consider the appropriateness of the fit and, if necessary, alternative pathways.

Affirm – Students engage in a personal process of affirming their choice of program or academic focus area that helps students frame their reason for being in their program and at the institution.

For some students, their process of identifying and selecting a program of study may be iterative as they develop and refine their goals. As students consider changing programs or focus areas they should be guided through this process to inform, discern and affirm their choice.

COURSE REGISTRATION

Students should come out of an in person orientation program having selected a schedule that aligns with a program map for their program of study or focus area. This schedule should include the Momentum Year elements: A "full" schedule—for part time students this is as full a schedule as possible, but for full-time students a minimum of 15 credits in their first term and at least 30 credits in their first year, English and Math in their first year, and three courses in their academic focus area.

DIFFERENTIATION

Not all students need the same structure and support for their transition to college. Institutions can differentiate this process in a variety of ways for a host of different communities, including varying degrees of online and in person activities, extended orientation and/or intensive support for specific

KEY ELEMENTS FOR TRANSITION TO COLLEGE

populations. In person orientations may differ depending on a range of characteristics (e.g., residential and commuter students, transfer and non-traditional students, military students, honors students or less prepared students; early or late cycle orientations; daytime or evening)

ACADEMIC AND SOCIAL INTEGRATION

Transition to college reflects a coherent effort across the institution, including planning, programming and participation from academic affairs, student affairs, and even facilities and administration. While this will necessarily look different on different campuses, new students should have engagement from a host of units on campus, including career services, academic support services, deans, faculty, other students, financial aid and student life, among others.

BUILD A SUPPORT TEAM

Transition programming can make specific and concrete appeals to parents and family members in how they can be part of the academic success network for their associated student, expanding and amplifying institutional resources and activities. Engaging these partners in a constructive manner, and structuring their supports so that they align with and complement the needs of their affiliated student—be it a child, a spouse, a sibling or something else—can help to create a more comprehensive and coherent team.

BEGIN WITH THE END IN MIND

Helping students answer the question of what comes after college is critical to developing a sense of purpose and value in the work the student undertakes in college. Bringing career and personal goals into the discussion of program selection and beyond helps to align college-going with specific, personal goals for the student that can translate into increased engagement, success, and persistence to degree.

TAKING CARE OF BUSINESS

Throughout the transition process, practical steps that a student must take should be clear and sequenced. Being intentional about communications with student to clarify expectations and obligations, and remaining in touch throughout the transition process in a deliberate and clear manner helps to ensure that students can complete their tasks along the way. Supporting students who have questions and making it easy for them to get their questions answered is key to helping them navigate the new and unfamiliar systems of higher education.

DESIGNED FOR HUMANS

Making the transition to college entails a sequence of choices and informed decisions, each of which carry significant import and opportunity for error. Anticipating these errors, and taking steps to minimize and mitigate their impact on student persistence and success, is key to creating a system that is designed with humans in mind. By utilizing behavioral economics techniques and choice theory insights to optimize the way that choices are made, institutions can ensure that students do not have their transition and progress hampered due to poorly structured choices or correctable errors.