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Building effective programs and supports for transfer students: Towards a community of practice

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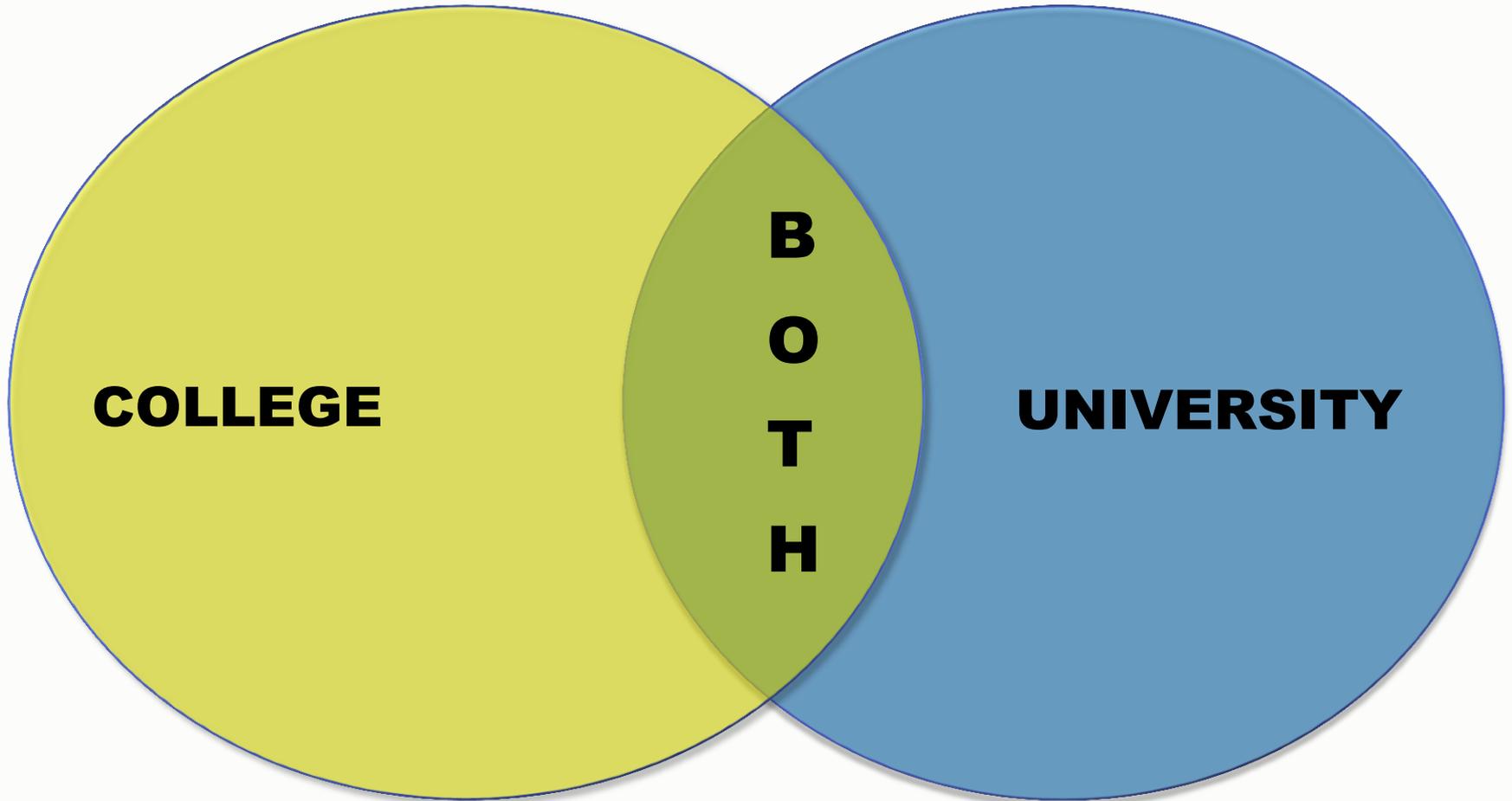l'enseignement supérieur

Workshop Objectives

- To get to know others who are doing similar work

- Document issues and challenges with respect to credit transfer

- Share promising initiatives

- Explore potential for a Community of Practice

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Activity #1:
Getting to know each other

- Name and college/university

- Role

- How long in that role

- Experience in both sectors

- What else?

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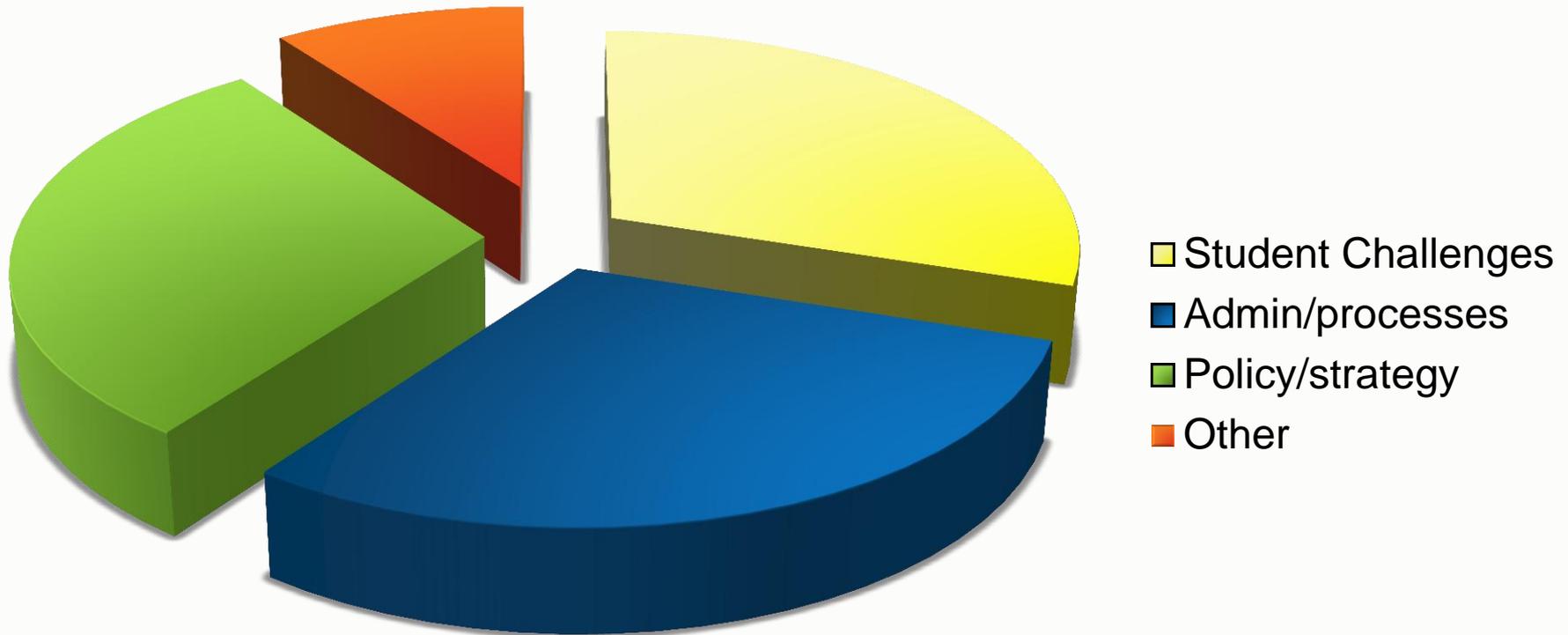l'enseignement supérieur

What roles are represented?

- Recruiting / admissions / assessment of transfer credits
- Providing transition supports and services
- Academic advising
- Developing new programs and agreements
- Developing strategy and policy
- Teaching transfer students
- Other?

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Activity # 2: Documenting the issues and challenges

- What do students struggle with?

- What do you struggle with?

- What systems/structures do you wish were in place?

- What are the barriers?

- What supports do you need? Internal? External?

- Are the issues and challenges the same in colleges and universities?

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Challenge Categories

- Student Challenges
- Admin/processes
- Policy/strategy
- Other

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Activity # 2 Group Feedback

WHAT ISSUES DO STUDENTS STRUGGLE WITH?

- **Concept of transferring can be overwhelming**
  - Don't know who to talk with/where to start
  - Uncertainty around pathways to university
  - Understanding application process

- **Getting the right information at the right time**
  - What questions should I be asking?
  - Understanding agreements – language barrier (administrative terms), jargon (eg. outline, syllabus, credit definitions)
  - Need better understanding of transfer equivalencies
  - Students don't know about ONTransfer

Activity # 2 Group Feedback

WHAT ISSUES DO STUDENTS STRUGGLE WITH?

- **Getting the right information at the right time (continued)**
  - Need better understanding of transfer equivalencies
  - Schools need to be clear about number of credits, what credits, and how they apply to the credential/program
  - How long will it take to complete credential?
  - Miscommunication between students and institutions
  - Determining how many transfer credits a student will get before they apply
  - Information is at times out of date
  - Some institutions don't seem willing to give required information
  - Fee structures are different between college and university

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Activity # 2 Group Feedback

WHAT ISSUES DO STUDENTS STRUGGLE WITH?

- **Transition from college to university & university to college**
  - Culture shock – change in processes and expectations
  - Understanding how advanced standing fits in program
  - Pre-requisites and admission requirements (eg. missing math/science requirements)
  - Shift in responsibility – onus on student
  - Students want to fit in
  - Becoming aware of supports
  - What if the students switch programs?
  - Frustrating to have to repeat similar courses
  - Lack of access to bridge courses/not enough students to run bridge

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Activity # 2 Group Feedback
WHAT ISSUES DO STUDENTS STRUGGLE WITH?

- **Different approaches to teaching and learning**

  - Self-directed learning is a focus at universities – that is a hurdle for most

  - Different systems and teaching tools

  - Differences in terminology and language

  - Differences in curriculum structure (more choice in university)

  - Credit values are different

  - Fewer assignments are worth greater proportion of grades in university

  - Universities schedules for exams vs. college schedules for imbedded programs

  - Program cohort model (college) to open classes (university)

  - Course sequencing and length to completion – opposing sequencing/education philosophy between college and university

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Activity # 2 Group Feedback

ADMINISTRATIVE AND PROCESS CHALLENGES

- **Lack of consistency, definitions and information**
  - Clear definition of "pathway" student
  - Discrepancies between methods for average calculation
  - Need standards for course descriptions, course outlines and transcript
  - What minimum grades are acceptable?
  - Assumption that all college programming is similar
  - Students/parents don't understand / have high expectations of entitlement
  - Align college programs and make university transfer easier
  - Inconsistencies between faculties at institutions
  - Colleges need vibrant, simple source of information about other institutions

Activity # 2 Group Feedback

ADMINISTRATIVE AND PROCESS CHALLENGES

- **Transfer Mechanics**
  - Time/quantity # of students to be processed quickly – triage exercise given levels of commitment/interest
  - Complexity of transfer – program-program; institution-institution
  - Range of manual to automated systems
  - Transfer of completed credential vs. partial completion
  - Complexity re: accredited programs
  - Costs/time associated when no agreement
  - Large number of agreements
  - Not always space in program to accommodate transfers
  - Struggle to provide consistent & timely information to students
  - What happens if they switch programs midway through university

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Activity # 2 Group Feedback

ADMINISTRATIVE AND PROCESS CHALLENGES

- **Who are the right contacts at institutions?**
  - Reaching the right contact in other colleges/universities
  - Getting (involving) faculties to approve and support agreements
  - Need contact lists

- **Developing and maintaining agreements**
  - How do you measure learning outcomes – C-U?
  - Need feedback from universities on what college grads are missing
  - Course vs. outcomes (learning outcomes would allow for easier/less time-consuming credit transfer); How to handle broad and generic outcomes
  - Need for constant review of courses
  - Disconnect within institution (faculty vs. registrar)
  - Transfer from college is still stigmatized within universities

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Activity # 2 Group Feedback

ADMINISTRATIVE AND PROCESS CHALLENGES

- **Resources**
  - Lack of infrastructure, people, money, systems
  - Getting everyone on the same page
  - Challenge getting policy from departments and cooperation
  - Get willing members who want to help make a change who see the importance
  - Time consuming!
  - Duplicated efforts from one institution to the other

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Activity # 2 Group Feedback

POLICY/SYSTEM/STRATEGY ISSUES

- **What systems/structures do you wish were in place to support transfer?**
  - Network and database system-wide that everyone can / must align to
  - Improvements to ONCAT database– too many layers; difficult to navigate
  - System database to standardize curriculum
  - Students to know the value of their credits before transfer
  - Lack of coordination of academic content between institutions
  - Course outlines/consistency/where to find
- **Data**
  - Tracking transfer students and number of credits
  - OEN finalized

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Activity # 2 Group Feedback

POLICY/SYSTEM/STRATEGY ISSUES

- **Policy**
  - Limitations by MTCU/PEQAB about policy and directives

- **Other**
  - Are we becoming cookie cutters – there are some programs that are similar from college to college but other programs are very unique (un transferable?)

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Activity # 3:
Sharing Solutions and Strategies

- Share collective expertise
  - Student challenges
  - Admin/process challenges
  - Strategy/policy/governance challenges
- Record challenge and key contact for solution
- Promo upcoming conference sessions

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Activity # 3 Group Feedback Challenges and Solutions

Challenge: College to university transition / culture shift

- "Transfer Tuesdays" meet and mingle; info & support services
- One day individual orientation with advisor
- Peer mentor program
- Pathway info nights
- Summer transition appointments including academic planning, etc.
- Develop proactive information & marketing strategies

Challenge: Who has authority & responsibility for credit transfer

- Have a contact list for each institution available through ONCAT
- Dedicated office/unit responsible at each institution

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Activity # 3 Group Feedback Challenges and Solutions

Challenge: Policy/strategy/governance

- Colleges, universities, government develop policy together
- Collaborative Nursing (mandated), reporting required to continue funding to start
- Rethink high school-level classes counting
- Consider models in other jurisdictions
- Extract database from each other
- Policy on GPA – standardized

Challenge: Access – sharing learning objectives and course outlines

- Onus on institutions or institution; could this be centralized?

Activity # 3 Group Feedback Challenges and Solutions

Challenge: Faculty participation – resistance to create and endorse pathways and transfer agreements

- Provide research to demonstrate success of transfer students

- Expose to quality of curriculum

- Participate in ONCAT projects to build understanding and relationships

Challenge: Ontario universities don't tend to offer pathways for grads of two year diploma programs

- Look at models in other jurisdictions: Ireland, Athabasca, Alberta, and US universities, BC universities

- Increased role of the province in Ontario in encouraging Ontario pathways

Next Steps

- Community of Practice?
  - Structure? Methods?
- Resources
  - PCCAT – June 16 to 18, Grant MacEwan University, Edmonton
- Others?

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Thanks for your participation…

and thank you to Jill Johnson (Guelph), Jo Stewart (Brock) and Shelagh Towson (Windsor)

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