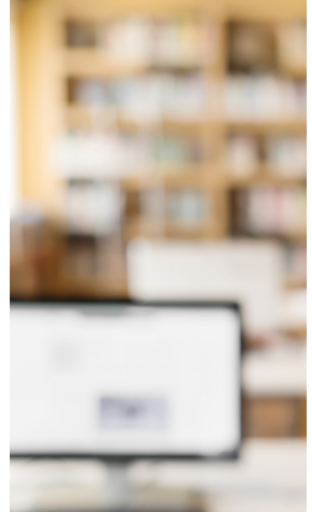




NORTHERN COLLEGE

NORTHERN COLLEGE IN
PARTNERSHIP WITH ONCAT



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

CREATING A CULTURE OF MOBILITY

NEEDS OF SMALL INSTITUTIONS

FEBRUARY 2017 | PROJECT NUMBER: 2016-02

AUTHORS

DR. AUDREY J. PENNER, VICE PRESIDENT
ACADEMIC AND STUDENT SUCCESS

TRACIE HOWIESON, PROFESSOR

ANDREA DiTULLIO, STUDENT RESEARCH ASSISTANT
ONCAT RESEARCH PROJECT

Creating a Culture of Mobility: Needs of Small Institutions

Executive Summary

Introduction

Student mobility is a critical priority within the Province of Ontario (ONCAT, 2014). With technological advances and a global economy educational needs and opportunities for post-secondary students have greatly increased. Not only are post-secondary institutions focusing on local and domestic student entry but global, as well. Appropriate protocol and partnerships must be in place to assure a full range of student mobility options. These protocols must recognize previous academic achievements, to give credit where credit is due.

Students are increasingly interested in completing/furthering their studies in different cities, provinces, and countries. The students of today are more mobile than ever before, and mobility is something they consider a right, not a privilege. Students are aware mobility is an option but do not always know what is available, what a personalized learning path could look like and how to access it. Students are looking for return on investment for their education dollars. Solid credit transfer/articulation agreements between post-secondary institutions guarantees seamless student mobility. Building the post-secondary culture that supports these seamless opportunities is a fundamental part of this process. Examining a culture of mobility to determine needs of small institutions, fosters growth in articulation, pathways and ultimately seamless student mobility for students to and through, those same small institutions.

Literature Review

As student mobility demand increases, the need for institutions to be responsive and articulate in managing student mobility must become part of the institutional culture (Voorhees & Harvey, 2005). Where this culture already exists, it is important to understand the value system supporting it, while finding indicators that predict culture, such as institutional value systems, the established norms, or goals of that institution (Katzenbach, Oelschlegel, & Thomas, 2016). Value systems as a driver for institutional quality have already been affirmed (Penner, 2007). Value systems in relation to a culture of mobility need to be explored. Understanding the culture of an institution and impacts on student mobility, builds knowledge around institutional processes that further the integration and sustainability of credit transfer (Harrison, 2005). Practices which support and enhance mobility will be examined as to their relationship to and within, institutional culture (Velden, 2012).

Core concepts of culture have been researched by Katzenbach, Oelschlegel, & Thomas (2016). Their research stipulates a specific culture cannot be described exactly, as each culture has routine habits, reactions and emotional responses, unique to that organization or institution. Katzenbach et. al. (2016) described ten key principles to motivate a change in culture (to replace it with something entirely new and different). These principles are deemed to be more effective than formally mandated change, and are practical for organizational development. The principles themselves need to be linked to a values system, to be sustainable and to change culture.

The ten principles (Katzenbach, Oelschlegel, & Thomas, 2016)

1. Work with and within your current cultural situations
2. Change behaviours and mind-sets will follow
3. Focus on a critical few behaviours
4. Deploy your authentic informal leaders

Creating a Culture of Mobility: Needs of Small Institutions

Executive Summary

5. Don't let your formal leaders off the hook
6. Link behaviours to business objectives
7. Demonstrate impact quickly
8. Use cross-organizational methods to go viral
9. Align programmatic efforts with behaviours
10. Actively manage your cultural situation over time

The researchers' preliminary concept of a culture of mobility is: "An organizational culture where student mobility is valued, articulated in behaviours, and demonstrated in actions".

Environmental Scan

Credit transfer is a larger issue than Ontario. Alberta, British Columbia and New Brunswick all have Councils on Articulation and Transfer. Within Europe a special organization of the European Commission is dedicated to student mobility, although the mandate is broader than the Councils in Canada. Information about these various entities help place the importance of student mobility into context for postsecondary institutions in Ontario.

To understand student mobility within the Ontario postsecondary system, it is important to describe credit transfer as a priority in Ontario. Mandated in 2011, the Ontario Council on Articulation and Transfer (ONCAT) was created to "enhance student pathways and reduce barriers for students looking to transfer among Ontario's 45 public postsecondary institutions" and defined as a "member-driven organization to work with all public colleges and universities to enable a system of credit transfer to develop as rapidly as possible, while also respecting institutional autonomy" (ONCAT, 2016). By 2015, there were 21,500 transfer students in Ontario, with a comprehensive provincial data base to track and monitor transfer activities. This data base is fed by the 45 postsecondary institutions in Ontario. Credit transfer activity is part of the Premier's mandate letter to the Minister responsible for higher education (Ontario Council on Articulation and Transfer, 2016).

Methodology

The goals of this project were to:

- Define a culture of mobility
- Determine best practices
- Determine challenges in creating and sustaining a culture of mobility

To achieve these goals, ten (10) small institutions participated to determine the culture of mobility within their institution.

Research questions posed reflect the goals of this research project. The research questions are:

1. What is a culture of mobility?
 - a. Why is a culture of mobility important?
 - b. What are the key determinants of a culture of mobility?
 - c. What values are demonstrated in a culture of mobility?
 - d. Why do small institutions want or need a culture of mobility?
 - e. How can a culture of mobility be created and sustained?

Creating a Culture of Mobility: Needs of Small Institutions

Executive Summary

Findings

Qualitative Data and Key Themes

The researchers chose to assess the key informant data using the prescribed themes of values, behaviours, and investment. These three themes encompass Kuka's (2012) indicators, Mueller's theories, (2014 & 2015) and are mapped to Katzenbach, Oelschlegel, & Thomas, (2016) ten principles of culture. To validate these prescribed themes, the mapped themes to Katzenbach et.al's principles are shown in Table 2.

Table 1 Themes mapped to principles

Principle identified by Katzenbach, Oelschlegel, & Thomas, 2016	Themes	Description Prescribed Theme cross referenced with Principles
Work with and within your current cultural situations Don't let your formal leaders off the hook Align programmatic efforts with behaviours Actively manage your cultural situation over time	Values	Work with and within your current cultural situations to articulate values Don't let your formal leaders off the hook requires senior leaders in an organization to identify and demonstrate values Align programmatic efforts with behaviours requires an organization to align values to practices/ behaviours Actively manage your cultural situation over time means pay attention to culture and values and how they are demonstrated/expressed
Link behaviours to business objectives Focus on a critical few behaviours Change behaviours and mind-sets will follow	Behaviours	Link behaviours to business objectives to ascertain how a certain behaviour will achieve an objective Focus on a critical few behaviours to attempt to change/enhance/promote these behaviours, as required Change behaviours and mind-sets will follow, behaviours should reflect values and changed behaviour reinforces value
Deploy your authentic informal leaders Demonstrate impact quickly Use cross-organizational methods to go viral	Investments	Deploy your authentic informal leaders, invest in the change with time and messaging Demonstrate impact quickly once the investment has paid off Use cross-organizational methods to go viral, invest in spreading the message in a variety of formats across the institution

Creating a Culture of Mobility: Needs of Small Institutions

Executive Summary

Values

There were four distinct values expressed in the key informant's interviews: access, student success, faculty engagement, and student mobility. The value of access was typically linked to the value of student success. One comment from a college "we want to use student mobility as a way to promote their success". Another value expressed by the participants was faculty engagement, which could also be described as participation within a culture of mobility. Student mobility as a concept was identified as a value from the data. A profound comment came from one of the universities "learning is fluid and flows through different generations and cultures, mobility is part of that".

Behaviours

The researchers asked specifically about new procedures put into place to support student mobility. The most common response to this question, was the use of technology or a dedicated human resource to manage the process. Use of a data base for centralizing records was mentioned, as well as moving information to the website to assure students could access more information and begin the process. The institution's website was the most frequently used resource for information. A practice identified by several of the participants, was the move to bring pathways and articulation into the new program development process. The behaviours and practices of an institution around communication are intertwined. One college supplied a list of the new vocabulary in their college, related to student mobility; course equivalence, course exemption, learning outcomes, common curriculum, transfer credit articulation, student pathways block transfers, and prior learning assessment recognition (PLAR). Another practice noted by most of the participants was the monitoring of pathways and recognition that some were underutilized.

Investment

A number of institutions utilized student mobility processes as a means to address strategic enrollment management strategies (SEM). The interviewees were asked how they felt about sharing waitlists, when programs were full, as a promoter of mobility and access for learners. This appeared to be a novel concept for most of the institutions, and three were very keen on the idea. The majority of the institutions were hesitant about the concept but found it interesting while one institution was neutral. As one institution stated "the biggest challenge is leaving old ways of doing things behind." When specifically asked about program ownership as an issue, the responses were mixed. Some institutions acknowledged this can be a challenge while others said they had not encountered it.

Quantitative: Data Analysis

A section on Strategic Enrolment Management (SEM) was included on the survey with four values related statements measuring SEM and level of authority. The statements were: My supervisor encourages credit transfer activity; My supervisor supports my activity related to credit transfer; Student mobility directives originate from the executive level in my organization; The activities for student mobility are directly connected to our institution's strategic enrollment management plan. Aggregated averages were used and aggregating the four statements created a maximum of 20 for this section. Figure 2 shows the stacked aggregate averages of the four statements linking student mobility, SEM and level of authority with organizational culture and value.

Creating a Culture of Mobility: Needs of Small Institutions

Executive Summary

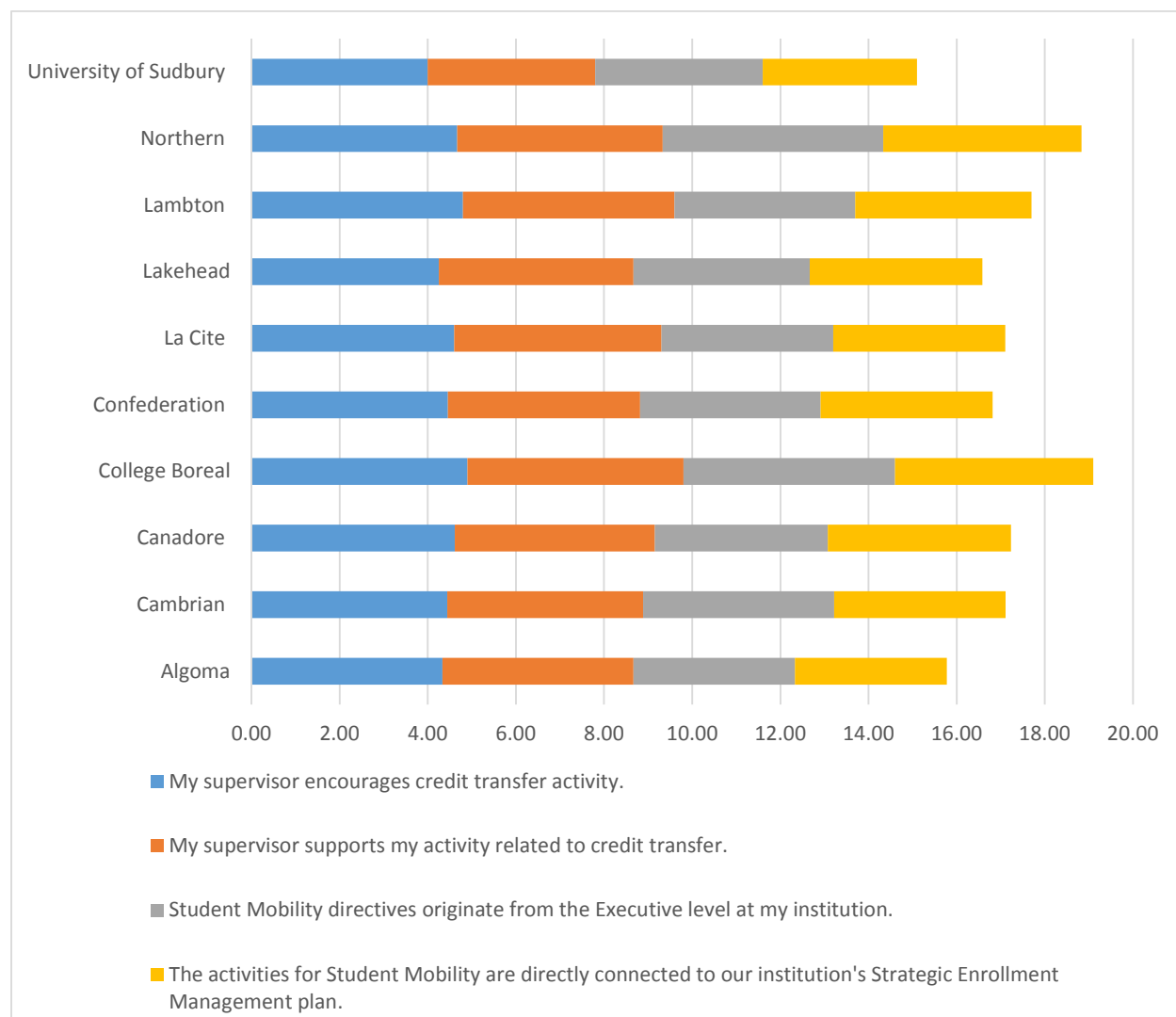


Figure 1 Aggregate totals for Strategic Enrollment Management and level of authority

Communication about processes is necessary to assure students access mobility opportunities. The survey had a series of statements dedicated to ease of access and use, both in terms of information and accompanying process. Statements reflect individual behaviours and institutional practices. The statements were: Information about credit transfer is easy to find for students; Information about credit transfer is easy to find for staff; Processes for credit transfer are easy to find; Processes for credit transfer are easy to use; I can explain student mobility options and decision steps to the students in our department; Our graduating students know about future mobility options when they leave our institution. Figure 6 shows the results of this section, by sector, college and university.

Creating a Culture of Mobility: Needs of Small Institutions

Executive Summary

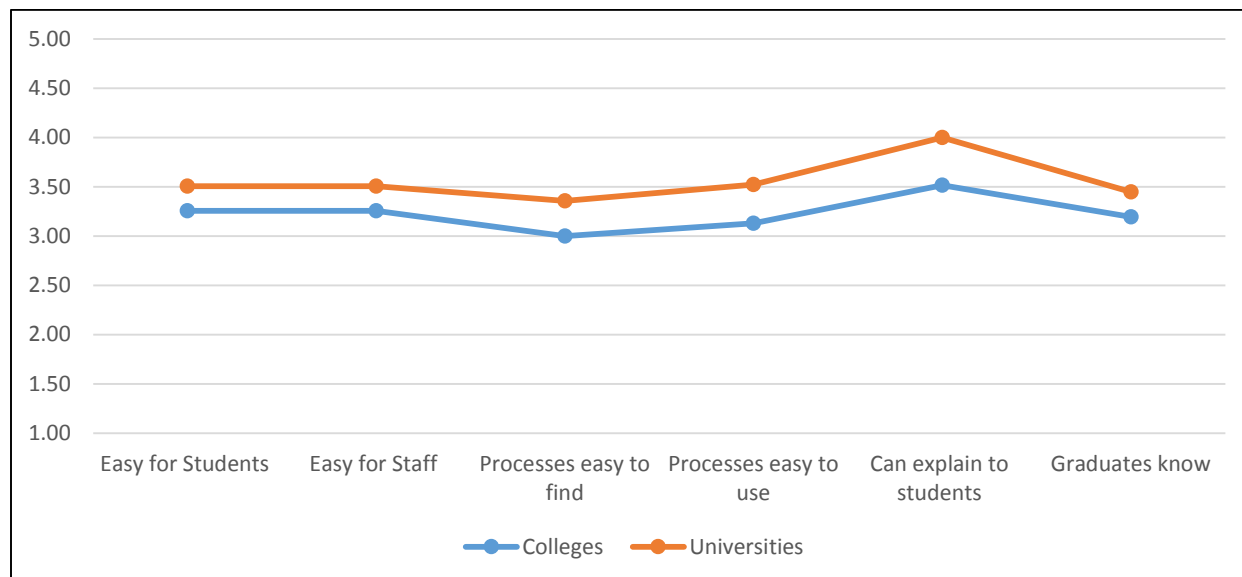


Figure 2 Comparison by sector for information on decision making

Interesting to the researchers, was the pattern of almost parallel lines that occurred. The overall results for this section show lower averages then previous sections, with a range of 3.26 by Universities when responding to “it is easy for me to explain to students their mobility options” to a high of 4.00 by Colleges in response to “I can explain student mobility options and decision steps to the students in our department.

Best Practices and Lessons Learned

What is a culture of mobility?

In the literature review, a preliminary definition of the culture of mobility was given as “a culture of mobility indicator could be defined by demonstration of these key principles” referring to the ten principles identified by Katzenbach, Oelshlegel, & Thomas, 2016. The researchers theorized, a culture of mobility exists on a spectrum. This spectrum has stages the researchers have identified as forming, established, mature and ideal.

Why is a culture of mobility important?

Culture reflects what is important to an institution (Watkins, 2013). A culture of mobility positions the institution for seamless program delivery, improved access for learners, a stronger success strategy, and participation in a system wide approach to education. This was noted in the environmental scan, articulated in the qualitative data, and supported in the quantitative data. Credit transfer, pathways, and articulation are priorities for the province (Ontario Council on Articulation and Transfer, 2016), and the need for student mobility will increase as global approaches to student mobility become a reality (Voorhees & Harvey, 2005).

Creating a Culture of Mobility: Needs of Small Institutions

Executive Summary

What are the key determinants of a culture of mobility?

The key determinants of a culture of mobility are those behaviours/practices which demonstrate mobility being achieved within their institution (Kuka, 2012). Returning to Mueller's 2014 work, culture is expressed, demonstrated, and exhibited. Most notably those determinants are the values expressed, communication about mobility with evidence of information sharing, language, including a lexicon around student mobility, and engagement at all levels of authority in the commitment to student mobility.

What values are demonstrated in a culture of mobility?

Values associated with a culture of mobility are identified in this study: access, student success, faculty engagement and mobility. This does not mean there are no other values associated with student mobility, further exploration would undoubtedly find more however, and these four values were clearly defined within this study.

Why do small institutions want or need a culture of mobility?

Given the mandate for all institutions in Ontario to promote student mobility, credit transfer and articulation, the need for a culture of mobility is clear (Ontario Council on Articulation and Transfer, 2016). Mobility is a government priority, the need for mobility is going to grow and understanding mobility with all of its nuances will increase. The environmental scan gives more detail on the global nature of student mobility.

How can a culture of mobility be created and sustained?

Based upon the findings in this study, the ten participating institutions can be plotted on a mobility spectrum to identify their cultural stage. Using this benchmark, an institution can make an informed choice as to which stage of the spectrum it should be. Setting a goal of movement on the spectrum would generate practices that demonstrate values, further entrenching their culture of mobility.

Conclusions

Culture is a dynamic organism in an organization. The culture of mobility seen in this research exist on a spectrum. The spectrum has four distinct stages: forming where the culture tends to be dispersed; established where the culture is centralized and more automated; mature where the activities become proactive and future focused and ideal where there is perfect alignment between mission, values and behaviours/practices. The ten institutions in this study appear to be in the late 'forming stage to the early 'mature' stages, and each institution has a unique story to tell. Institutions are willing to make the investments in mobility to assure they are meeting the values they espouse around access and student success. The interest and enthusiasm for this project encouraged the researchers and point to many new areas of exploration in relation to the culture of mobility spectrum.

Creating a Culture of Mobility: Needs of Small Institutions

Executive Summary

Recommendations

The researchers view this study as a middle point in exploring culture as it relates to mobility. There is much work to do, to assure seamless mobility for students in Ontario. Recommendations from this study are made based upon that idea.

Recommendation One:

An inventory of underutilized pathways be compiled with an assessment of why the pathways are underutilized

Recommendation Two:

A trial of best practices applied to specific cultures be tested to determine impact and movement on the culture of mobility spectrum

Recommendation Three:

An exploration of processes for student application to a college or university which results in an automated pathway generated for the student be completed

Recommendation Four:

A formal corporate lexicon of mobility be established provincially and published on the ONCAT website

Recommendation Five:

An exploration of a formal process to share waitlists for oversubscribed programs in colleges or universities be considered