



PROJECT SNAPSHOT

Transfer Student Ambassadors at Trent University

Type: Seamless Transfer

Project Number: S2251

Project Lead: Trent University

Project Summary

This project will support the implementation of a transfer student ambassador pilot. The Trent Transfer Student Ambassador will play an important role in developing and maintaining relationships between transfer students applying to Trent and the University and provide peer supports through the transfer process.

Project Rationale

Trent's Recruitment team did not have dedicated transfer student ambassador positions within their office. As Trent continues to place a greater emphasis on recruiting transfer students as a part of its overall strategic enrollment management plan, it was necessary to have transfer student ambassadors as a part of this plan. By hiring these ambassadors, it allowed for a greater breadth of academic experiences to be represented within the recruitment office.

Main Collaborators

- Office of Articulation and Transfer Pathways
- Recruitment Office
- Admissions Office

Key Steps

- Determine how many student ambassadors should be hired per campus (Peterborough and Durham)

- How long their contracts should be?
- What task should be assigned to them?

Results

Overall, the project allowed transfer applicants and prospective students to receive specific admissions and transfer information related to their academic background, provided to them by student ambassadors who came from similar experiences. This meant that not only were these individuals able to receive relevant information in a timely manner, but they were also able to develop a rapport with Trent representatives who had shared experiences. The results of this project were shown to have an increased attendance of Trent's transfer events at both campuses; and an increase in the amount of meeting scheduled with the Transfer Enrolment Advisor to discuss accepting offers of admissions. More results and details were provided in the final report.

Challenges

Challenges of this project are that many questions and transfers happen in the Winter semester. We see an uptake in transfers and inquiries in the Winter term as students are completing their Fall term at another institution then decide/start inquiring about transferring in the Winter term for the next Academic year. Finding transfer students of various programs and years, or students who are not yet graduating was a challenge, as well as engagement of students to apply for the position.

Student Outcomes

This project benefits transfer students in various ways:

- Prospective transfer students are able to connect with current transfer students and ask them about their experiences, this connection is genuine as current students have gone through the process - I think that lived experience is so important, as someone who is not a transfer student, I can only relate so much; but having a transfer ambassador helps with genuine answers and the ability to ask questions that are relevant.
- It helps prospective transfer students feel confident in their decision to transfer and study at Trent University.
- Transfer students feel more prepared, as they have their apprehensions alleviated and their questions answered.
- Lessens the stress and the gap of who to ask questions to. As an Enrolment Advisor students can come to me or reach out to me with questions, but most times students will not book time or not know who to reach out to. Having the transfer ambassadors be the ones reaching out to prospective students, they are taking the initiative and starting the initial conversation.
- It allowed for transfer applicants to know that there is a strong community of transfer students at Trent.

Student Time Savings

Having dedicated transfer ambassadors who were a part of a calling campaign allowed for transfer applicants to receive relevant information on next steps in the transfer process in a timely manner. This allowed for the students to make an informed decision on if and where they would like to transfer quicker. Providing answers to students' questions and giving them the necessary information to make a decision results in them making their decision faster and this project shows that.

Student Flexibility

This project made the transfer process easier on students because the transfer ambassadors were able to directly communicate with applicants and provide them with the information they needed on next steps. It also gave students an opportunity to ask any questions they might have. This meant that the student did not have to find this information on their own or perhaps make an uninformed decision when it came to transferring to Trent.

Institutional Outcomes

I debriefed with the transfer ambassadors every week to see what types of conversations they were having, but most importantly any feedback the transfer ambassadors had about the project. Having the transfer ambassadors for the first time, their feedback was key - this really helped in hearing what conversations they were having and what transfer students had questions about throughout the pandemic.

Consideration on maintaining transfer student ambassadors and continuing the transfer calling campaign will be taken under advisement by the Recruitment team for future intake periods.

Sector or System Implications

The connection with prospective transfer students is very crucial here, as our approach is student-centered as we are connecting firsthand with students and inquiring about any questions they may have. It allows for an open-ended conversation and expression of their thoughts on our transfer student process. It also allows for students to notify us about what is making them nervous. Collecting those themes in common answers helps drive our next task for the transfer ambassadors. It also notifies Trent of our transfer process and how it works and if it is what students are looking for. I would rather hear from students and share their feedback with our Admissions team.

It helps indicate what are stressors for students when applying and going through the process - transfer students are already a unique demographic that any information helps to get them to feel confident in any transfer pathway. It also helps see what types of communications are effective for transfer students, whether that be phone calls, emails, in-person events, or follow ups.

Tips

Advice I would give:

- Training transfer ambassadors prior and making sure they are confident in the transfer student process.

- Knowing where the gaps are in your transfer processes.
- Connecting with as many transfer students as possible, and getting contact information
- Researching on how other schools support their transfer students.
- Being flexible and having the ability to pivot to accommodate plans.

Tools and Resources

For this project, I developed a reference binder/manual for the transfer student ambassadors and developed a training. This was helpful for the transfer ambassadors to have as they referred to it when talking to prospective transfer students - no two transfer students are the same, by providing them with the proper tools makes for a more engaging conversation.

