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Transfer student internal consulting project

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Transfer Student Internal Consulting Project

An Honors College Project Presented to
the Faculty of the Undergraduate
College of Business
James Madison University

By: Jennifer Helenek, Cory Petinga, & Ryan Wimble

Accepted by the faculty of the College of Business, James Madison University, in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Honors College.

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PUBLIC PRESENTATION

This work is accepted for presentation, in part or in full, at 9:00 am on Friday, April 20th to the JMU Advising Committee and at 2:15pm on Wednesday, April 25th to the College of Business Academic Unit Heads.
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Abstract

The transfer process that students are facing when transferring into both James Madison University (JMU) and the College of Business (COB) is not an ideal transition. The problem will be analyzed from both a national and a local perspective through both quantitative and qualitative research. Nationally, these problems include the inability for transfers to be both socially and academically involved, the cultural differences between community colleges and four-year universities, and the strained relationships between community colleges and four-year universities. Each of these national problems are apparent at JMU to some degree. These national problems are put into perspective by analyzing these issues within JMU’s environment and when considering the Virginia Community College System (VCCS). Key solutions include adding some components to the orientation program this population goes through to make it a more meaningful experience, increasing the resources offered to transfer students before they arrive at JMU, increasing the resources given to newly transitioned students, and facilitating a smooth social transition through a variety of ideas. These solutions, along with many others, are backed up by the data, and their significance in addressing the challenges transfer students face are highlighted as well. This project aims to help transfer students successfully assimilate into the College of Business and tries to make their college experience as ideal as the experience of native students.
Introduction

College is supposed to be a time when students are able to learn a plethora of new information, step outside their comfort zones through trying new things, and meet others who will change their lives. The college experience is truly magnificent; however, the college experience is not often the same for all JMU students. Transfer students at varying levels of their JMU career had some aggressive statements to make about their transfer experience. A Management major wishes both professors and students did not view transfer students as second class students. A Marketing major claims that if they could redo their entire transfer transition, they wouldn’t. A Computer Information Systems major claims that they have always felt unwelcome and unwanted by the James Madison community. These comments do not reflect the values of the same James Madison University that values inclusivity, has a 94% graduate satisfaction rate, and has one of the best retention rates in the nation. Although the treatment of transfer students is a problem everywhere, JMU is behind the curve.

Nationally, transfer students are not treated as well as native students- those who start attending the institution their first year. The main problems identified by peer-reviewed literature are the inability for transfer students to be both socially and academically involved, the cultural differences between community colleges and four-year universities negatively impacting transfer students, and the strained relationships between community colleges and four-year universities creating additional challenges for transfer students to navigate. With the publicity of these national problems, national solutions were also recommended. These solutions could apply to JMU students; however, it cannot be assumed that these are the perfect solutions as there is no cookie cutter solution to this massive problem. Some of the most relevant national solutions include strengthening transfer students’ orientation experience, increasing the relationships between community colleges and four-year universities, and helping transfer students feel a part
of the overall community through increased attention and resources being given to them. In order to increase the treatment of JMU’s transfer students, the transition of multiple students into JMU needs to be analyzed. The national problem highlights umbrella issues, but every university is different. Accordingly, the problems and solutions need to be conceptualized at a local level in order to be effective. After researching the positive and negative parts of their transition, solutions will be recommended that should allow transfer students to successfully assimilate into both JMU and the College of Business.

At JMU, transfer students are facing similar problems and these problems are further analyzed to reflect students’ individualized experiences. In order to find out more about the transfer transition, more about students’ perspective on their transition and more about their opinion on the resources offered to help them transition successfully, focus groups and surveys were facilitated. The information gathered from these research platforms will be used to create an implementation plan for JMU’s College of Business about how to address the challenges faced by transfer students. These focus groups helped acquire information on the experiences of recent transfers, transfers who have been around for a few semesters, and transfers about to graduate. The problem was better conceptualized through talking to key stakeholders around JMU’s campus, hearing more stories from transfer students, and having discussions on possible solutions with transfers. Information gathered here influenced the questions asked in the survey, which allowed for the maximum understanding of the problem and helped formulate solutions. The problem and data were then broken down using a Thinking Skills Model to further come up with innovative solutions. This model highlights divergent and convergent thinking techniques. In addition, both community colleges and similar four-year universities were reached out to in order to understand how other institutions are addressing the problem. From these informal
interviews, information was gathered on wisdom to share, mistakes to avoid, or successes to repeat. Overall, the solutions created are expected to have a significant impact on the transition of transfer students.

**Explanation of the Problem**

The main problems facing students who transfer to the business school revolve around three main categories: the social transition, the academic transition, and a lack of knowledge surrounding the transfer process. These general categories are present on both a national level, shown through peer-reviewed literature, and on a local level, shown through conversations with relevant stakeholders and information gathered from transfer students. Both problems are explained in detail below.

**Explanation of the National Problem**

According to the National Student Clearinghouse Research Center, more than one third of students enrolled in undergraduate programming have transferred schools at least once. Among these students, 45% of students transferred to more than one institution (Jenkins & Fink, 2016). Although the amount of transferring between institutions is increasing, the treatment of these transfer students is a key problem in higher education reform. A majority of universities have formalized first year orientation programs, dedicated copious resources for their first year students, and have successfully fostered a strong community for their first year students. Transfer students are usually given a shortened orientation, are unaware of the resources available to them, and have trouble assimilating into their university’s culture. The problematic inability for transfer students to assimilate into a school’s community is magnified by transfer student’s inability to academically perform well in their classes due to a change in academic culture and rigor. The unsuccessful academic performance of transfer students combined with the
unsuccessful assimilation into a transfer school highlights three root problems: the inability for transfers to be both academically and socially involved, the cultural differences between community colleges and four-year universities negatively impacting transfer students, and the strained relationships between community colleges and four-year universities creating additional challenges for transfer students to navigate.

Astin Alexander’s 1985 Theory of Student Involvement first fostered the idea that there is a strong correlation between the amount of physical and psychological energy that a student devotes to their academic experience and their success (Alexander, 1985). According to his widely confirmed theory, a motivated student should prioritize studying, participating in student organizations, and interacting with faculty members. This motivated student will have high levels of success and personal well-being. Wang and Wharton (2010) have expanded his theory and formulated the key highlights into a framework including four dimensions of student involvement: academic involvement, social involvement, participation in student organizations, and taking advantage of available resources. They then concluded that transfer students are lacking in these four areas in comparison to native students. Academic involvement refers to the effort students invest in coursework and activities related to academic study. Social involvement refers to non-academic related behaviors in connection with the campus community. Participating in student organizations fits within social involvement; however, student organization involvement is pivotal to students having a successful transition. Therefore, it is given its own category.

When comparing transfer students to native students, a similar level of academic involvement was observed. This shows that transfer students are engaged in their courses, pursuing research opportunities, and are involved in their academic area of interest. This is
backed up by the idea that transfers are not necessarily seeking the same involvement in their university as they are seeking involvement in their academic programming. They prefer to work with faculty members, perform research, participate in pre-professional endeavors, and prioritize academics more heavily. In contrast, native students are shown to prioritize involvement in less academic endeavors such as Greek life, service activities, and sports. Because of this, transfer student’s social involvement is significantly different than their native peers. Transfer students matriculate into universities not knowing other students and do not have a great orientation experience to facilitate friendship making. In addition, transfer students are forced to socially adjust to a new home while being thrown into more rigorous courses. Transfer students would like to meet other students, yet they do not have the proper opportunities to do so. This is why being involved in student organizations is critical to their success. Lastly, transfer students are often unaware of resources that could help them succeed. They lack the social network to informally ask questions to peers. Common resources they are not immediately aware of include academic, career-related, and advising resources. Each of these resources would be easier to navigate and figure out with an established social network.

While 81% of entering community college students indicate they want to earn a bachelor's degree or higher, only 33% of entering students actually transfer to a four-year institution (Jenkins & Fink, 2016). The purpose of community colleges is to allow students to transfer into another institution within a few years, after accumulating transferrable credits. After they transfer, they are told they can earn a Bachelor’s Degree in the same amount of time as their native student counterparts- in a total of four years. However, this does not seem to be the case in most students’ situations. The specific challenges of those transferring from a community college will be analyzed. The three main factors impacting the transition from a community college to a
four-year institution are information setbacks, imperfect program alignment, and community college resource limitations. Due to information setbacks, students are told imperfect information that results in wasted time, effort, and money. This causes frustration when students are taking courses at their prior institution that will not transfer and that do not benefit them in any way. Along with taking unnecessary courses that do not transfer, students may take courses that do not align with the program they are transferring into. For example, a student could take Calculus 1 at a community college yet the AACSB Business School they are trying to transfer into only accepts Business Calculus 1. Therefore, transfer students would need to retake the class to gain credit for it at their new institution. Along with certain courses not transferring, some courses transfer ineffectively. An ineffective transfer credit is when a student takes a prerequisite course at a community college and then are able to place into a high level course at a four-year institution. This sounds ideal; however, community college classes are known to not properly prepare students for their upper level courses through not teaching the material as thoroughly as an AACSB accredited school does. The same student who has taken Calculus I at a community college is able to be placed in Calculus II. Not only is the academic rigor of a university course more challenging than the student is used to, but the student does not have a strong foundation of knowledge and skills from the community college’s version of Calculus I. This course might have been easier at a community college, featured open note or group tests, or might have only brushed the surface of the mathematical concepts. As a result, program misalignment between the curriculum and community colleges is causing students many headaches after their transfer. This may cause academic setbacks and force transfer students to relearn the material that native students have already mastered.
Furthermore, it is a nationwide trend that institutions value an Associates Degree. This trend coincides with an increased emphasis on maximizing graduation rates and minimizing college costs. Only 29% of first-time, degree-seeking community college students who successfully transfer to four-year colleges do so after earning an associate degree or certificate (Jenkins & Fink, 2016). It is common for higher education to sell the possibility of students attending a community college for two years, earning their Associates Degree, successfully being able to transfer to another institution and, then, being able to graduate in another two years. The idea of attending community college and then being able to graduate in two years at their new institution is being exaggerated to encourage more students to pursue their education. This is a main problem with the transfer process as it is unethical to tell students they will be able to graduate in a total of four-years. When they realize this is nearly impossible to do, they become demotivated and, sometimes, give up. Community college students transferring into a four-year institution often have progression standards and other limitations impacting their ability to graduate as quickly as they would prefer. Community college students sometimes use these two years to academically prepare for the rigor of another institution. A Community College Research Center study of more than 250,000 students at 57 community colleges in the Achieving the Dream initiative found that 59% of entering students were referred to developmental math and 33% were referred to developmental reading (Bailey, Jeong, & Cho, 2010). These developmental courses are prerequisites needed for students to be able to take other courses. This shows that many students end up taking more classes than they initially anticipated, increasing the amount of time they are in community college. Accordingly, the lack of resources at community colleges make the entire transfer process harder to navigate and increases students’ risk of making a detrimental mistake or giving up and choosing not to transfer. Community
colleges often lack resources, full time faculty, and advisors who can help students plan which courses they need to take in order to transfer into another institution without experiencing a delay in their graduation date. If additional resources were provided, the culture shock that most transfer students face would not be as intense.

Lastly, students experience a cultural shock when transferring to a new institution that negatively impacts their academics, their social lives, and their emotional well-being. The drastic differences between community colleges and four-year institutions results in many transfer students experiencing culture shock. Lanaan identified a series of challenges that transfer students are likely to face. These include differences in class sizes, differences in teaching styles, and differences in academic rigor (Lanaan, 2006). Another key difference is comparing the resources transfer students are given compared to native students. Most transfer students are leaving their home for the first time and are susceptible to experiencing homesickness, fear of not knowing other students, and the challenges relating to be fully independent. First-year students have a plethora of resources available to help them with their transition. Transfer students, at least from community colleges, are facing the same transition as their counterparts with unparalleled resources. In conclusion, transferring between institutions is increasing while the success of transfer students is decreasing.

Explanation of the Local Problem

According to the Director of University Advising at James Madison University, nearly 1,000 students transfer into JMU each year. It is not a secret that transfer students have a hard time transitioning into JMU and, specifically, the College of Business. Although there are numerous resources available to help students succeed, transfer students are unaware of many of these resources, increasing the difficulty of their transition. Without proper knowledge on the
resources, their ability to academically and socially succeed are impacted significantly. After conducting extensive research on this topic, evidence shows three main areas that make the transfer process challenging for students: the academic adjustment, the social adjustment, and the lack of knowledge surrounding the transfer process.

**Academic Problems**

Transfer students, specifically in the College of Business, struggle academically for numerous reasons. They are not prepared for the rigorous course load, the academic requirements needed to stay in the college, and the transfer credit process. In order to be accepted into the College of Business, students must pass eight lower level courses with a minimum 2.7 GPA. Native students have the opportunity to complete and have all eight of these courses averaged into their GPA. Transfer students have a more difficult time achieving this requirement because these students have fewer classes averaged into their GPA. Due to the VCCS curriculum not aligning with JMU’s curriculum, certain classes are not typically taken by students before transferring into the College of Business. These courses include COB 202- Interpersonal Skills, COB 204- Computer Information Systems, and COB 291- Business Analytics II. This creates problems for students who transfer after earning their Associates Degree because they are unable to apply into the College of Business until these prerequisites are fulfilled. Furthermore, these students already have their General Education (Gen-Ed) classes completed due to having their Associates Degree completed. Each of these courses are only offered at a handful of community colleges in the state, making it nearly impossible for students to transfer in with all their COB prerequisites completed. Therefore, the remaining prerequisite COB courses taken at JMU will be averaged together and determine the transfer student’s fate of being admitted into the business school. By having less classes weighed into this GPA, these classes are weighted more heavily
than they would be for native students. On top of these classes being weighed heavily, these classes are usually taken during the transfer students’ first semester at JMU, making it increasing more difficult to succeed. They are expected to maintain a strong GPA while taking difficult business courses and adjusting to the institution. The College of Business is known for its rigorous coursework and challenging classes. All students coming into JMU’s COB do not understand that it is going to require a different work ethic, different study patterns, and different time management techniques. After students are able to react to the differences in course structure, they are usually about to be admitted into the business school and start COB 300. However, transfer students do not have as much time to adjust before being thrown into one of the most challenging and time consuming courses at JMU. After being accepted into the College of Business, students take COB 300, an integrated and interdisciplinary course consisting of four courses in Finance, Management, Marketing and Operations. In addition to the challenging courses, students are placed into teams and assigned to create a business plan. This project is intense and accounts for 20% of a student’s grade in all four courses. Native students are challenged by its difficulty and time commitment, transfer students barely make it through, if at all.

Another problem faced by transfer students is that their accumulated credit does not transfer to JMU from their prior institution as a GPA. This creates an issue because many transfer students plan to graduate on-time or were told graduating on time is an easy endeavor. When transferring from a community college, it usually takes two years for students to earn their Associates Degree and another few years to earn their Bachelor's Degree. In Virginia, certain types of Associate's Degrees waive general education requirements for most schools, including JMU. When transferring from a community college without an Associates Degree that waives
Gen-Eds and from other four-year Institutions, each course is looked at individually and transferred in separately. When courses taken at prior institutions are not transferred into meaningful JMU courses, transfer students become frustrated and, often, need to stay longer than anticipated. This requires students to spend additional time and money at JMU. Even if all courses transfer through and students are able to complete all of their Gen-Ed requirements, degree requirements, and major requirements, all transfer students are required to take 60 credit hours from a four-year institution. Because of this, many transfers are unable to graduate on-time and some end up staying an additional semester to take random elective courses to fulfill this benchmark.

**Social Problems**

In addition to having a difficult time adjusting to their coursework, transfer students also struggle adjusting to JMU socially. There are many reasons for this difficult social transition, from transfer orientation being less than ideal, to being unaware of how to join student organizations to, simply not knowing their peers. These aspects make it difficult for transfer students to feel included at JMU and make their transition more burdensome. A tough academic transition can be made easier through a strong social network, yet lack of one magnifies the problem these students are facing. JMU is a public university with over 22,000 students. Because a bulk of these students enter as native students, the Orientation Office focuses on serving mainly first year students. Each year, the Orientation Office puts on two main programs for first year students: Summer Springboard and 1787 August Orientation. Summer Springboard is a one day program, in June and July, where students are put in a group of peers with the same academic major. An Orientation Peer Advisor (OPA) facilitates group discussions with students and answers questions. The students also listen to speakers from their major, learn more about their
major requirements, and have an opportunity to finalize their fall semester schedule. 1787 August Orientation is a five day program where the Orientation Office selects First year Orientation Guides (FROGs) to help first years transition from high school into college. This program is structured like a typical school day, with an academic focus during the day and entertaining events in the evening. All first year students are required to participate in both Summer Springboard and 1787 August Orientation. Attendance is mandatory at all events during the day. This ensures that students are learning about their academic field, having last minute questions answered by faculty and staff, and learning about the resources offered by JMU. FROGs are also a mentor to these first year students and are able to answer seemingly silly questions first year students may have. Because FROG groups are composed of students living in the same residence halls, the importance of facilitating a positive and open culture becomes a key part of the FROG’s role. During this week, first year students are also able to bond with each other through various ice breakers, games, and bonding activities that FROGs facilitate. This week provides students a time to become integrated into the JMU culture and a time to meet their peers in a safe and comfortable setting.

On the other hand, transfer students have a less impactful orientation experience than first year students. In addition, spring transfers have a less impactful orientation compared to fall transfers. Similar to rising first year students, fall transfers are given a Transfer Orientation Peer Advisor (TOPA) during Summer Springboard and 1787 Transfer August Orientation. Their Summer Springboard is very similar to the program native students go through. However, fall transfer students get a lesser version of 1787 Transfer August Orientation. Unlike first year students, fall transfer students are not required to participate in this program. Accordingly, attendance is minimal. The majority of fall transfer students that do choose to attend did not find
the program to be as useful as they had hoped, with 64% of surveyed students reporting they would have benefitted from a different orientation (Appendix A). Additionally, students are put into large groups, where some may not feel comfortable to socialize and connect with others in a new environment. This also creates an uncomfortable atmosphere where students are hesitant to ask small questions about JMU’s culture and resources on campus for fear of sounding ignorant. After the three day orientation program, these students do not usually communicate with each other or their TOPAs and are left to fend for themselves in figuring the ins and outs of JMU’s campus. In contrast, first year orientation groups are more likely so stay in contact due to living together in the same hall.

Spring semester transfer students have an even shorter orientation program. The orientation process for transfer students in the spring is much less structured than for those students in the fall. One student called spring orientation simply a program to receive their class schedule and leave. Accordingly, 75% of surveyed students reported they would have benefitted from a different orientation (Appendix A). Unlike those who transfer in the fall, spring transfer students do not receive monthly flyers of information called “Transfer Chronicles.” This increases the difficulty of the transition for spring transfers. The program in the spring is a one day, optional program where students listen to lectures, meet their advisors, and meet their TOPA. These orientation groups are not well bonded because they are only together for a few hours of the day. In addition, the groups do not create a comfortable atmosphere for students to feel comfortable asking questions that they are afraid to ask. These students are left to struggle on their own after not receiving the proper attention that they should during these orientation programs. Thus, both fall and spring transfer students are not as well assimilated into the JMU culture as well as their native peers. This is the first obstacle that transfer students face at JMU.
Another obstacle transfer students face is not knowing how to join clubs and organizations. First year students are made aware of the 350+ student organizations through their First year Orientation Guides (FROGs) bring them to Student Organization Night. Because transfer students do not have FROGs, they are often forced to attend the event alone or choose not to attend. This night can be overwhelming to students who are unsure of what organizations to join and many students prefer to go with a friend to sign up for organizations together. Many students also do not understand the importance of a student organization’s role in assimilating into JMU. Student Organization Night is a time for interested students to talk to the leaders of the various organizations around campus to find out more about the organization. From talking to involved members, they can see the impact the organization has made on their lives. Student leaders share their experiences in the organization and how these experiences have helped them find their home at JMU. Furthermore, some organizations, such as Greek life, are biased toward transfer students due to their status as upperclassmen. This is because many organizations must fulfill an official or unofficial quota of underclassmen in order to ensure their longevity. This is a key example of how transfer students are treated differently when trying to get involved in other organizations and make friends. In addition, many organizations at JMU are very competitive, discouraging transfer students from wanting to be involved. Many of the more selective organizations require a large time commitment in order to join. This makes it harder for students to join clubs. Accordingly, the importance of Student Organization Night increases because it is a time for students to become aware of organizations that are both less competitive and less advertised around campus. Moreover, many COB transfer students were unaware of the business organizations on campus and how to join. This is an area specific to the College of Business that may give transfers an opportunity to know more peers in their classes.
Additionally, transfer students have the option to live on campus when they enroll at JMU. Transfer students are assimilated into the pre-existing upperclassmen residence halls. Therefore, students that choose to live on-campus are placed in residence halls where the students already have friends and may not be looking to be a part of a community similar to their freshman year hall. This may lead to transfers feeling excluded in their living area and having a disconnect in their living space. Upperclassmen residence halls do not participate in the same bonding activities that first year halls do. First year halls play ice breakers after moving in, spend an entire week together, and their orientation leaders facilitate deeper conversations in an attempt to emotionally bond the hall. Furthermore, first year halls rely on each other to figure out the school’s culture. The atmosphere is completely different between upperclassmen halls and first year halls. Therefore, transfer students who choose to live on campus in order to form connections are unpleasantly surprised.

Problems with Transfer Students’ Preparation

Finally, a lack of knowledge surrounding the transfer process can hurt a transfer student’s ability to progress through their major and graduate on time. This includes their overall preparedness for transferring to JMU, such as choosing courses at community colleges that will transfer into their desired program, knowing their major requirements before they enroll at JMU, and asking for information regarding the resources that are available to them once they come to JMU. A JMU Admissions Counselor stated that he could tell the difference between students who researched the requirements of JMU versus those who did not. These factors can influence how prepared transfer students are for their transition and how they are able to help themselves succeed in the process. As Benjamin Franklin once said, “By failing to prepare, you are preparing to fail.”
Transfer students are able to customize their schedules at community colleges to ensure that they are able to transfer with minimal obstacles. By having a plan and taking the appropriate business core courses, transfers can prepare themselves for the classes they will be taking at JMU within COB. Additionally, it is important for students to do their own outside research when they decide to transfer to another university. By doing this research, students will be able to learn about their major and understand the requirements of their chosen degree. This will also help transfer students learn more about the resources on campus that can help them succeed at JMU and in the College of Business. Advisors, professors, and other students are great sources for transfers to utilize before enrolling and while at JMU. However, it is up to the students to take advantage of the resources set in place to help them prepare and transition more adequately. Currently, JMU does not have the resources to optimally prepare students for this transition, specifically outside where the transfer advisors have a presence. Solutions will eventually be recommended increasing the transparency and communication coming from the College of Business. These solutions to better prepare students will not be successful without transfers taking advantage of them.

Overall, transfer students at JMU struggle with aspects of their transition. Academically, students are not adjusted to the rigorous course load and struggle to maintain academic success. Transfers are put at a disadvantage when they apply into the College of Business due to the lack of core prerequisites that are weighed into their business GPA and their lack of understanding of fundamental topics due to not taking the classes at JMU. Socially, transfers go through a less impactful orientation, are unaware of how to join organizations on campus and have a difficult time meeting new people outside of their classes and living arrangements. Additionally, transfer students have resources available to them, but are unsure how to access these resources. Students
should do research on their major requirements and resources offered to students prior to attending the institution, which will help them succeed. Although there are steps that transfer students can take to being successful at JMU, there are still many areas of improvement that JMU and the College of Business can make in order for students to feel more included within the JMU community.

**Methodology**

In order to ensure an objective approach to analyzing the challenges of the transfer process, multiple qualitative and quantitative forms of data collection were utilized. All research methods, including both focus group and survey questions, were reviewed and approved by JMU’s Institutional Review Board (IRB). The first qualitative data collection method included conversations with key stakeholders in JMU’s transfer process. These conversations were used to understand the problems associated with the transfer process and these individuals’ perspectives on them. Completed before any other primary research, the interviews conducted with JMU transfer advisors, members of the Admissions Office, and administrative leaders within COB provided insight and direction for all additional research. Furthermore, some stakeholders were able to provide quantitative data regarding this process. This qualitative and quantitative data, along with our understanding of the national problem, helped in identifying key areas of the transfer process to focus on during primary data collection.

The next phase of data collection involved gathering qualitative and quantitative data from transfer students. Focus group questions were created to gain insight on transfer students’ opinions towards their transfer process and their experiences at the university. All COB transfer students were split into three categories based on the amount of time they have been enrolled at JMU- those who just transferred here, those just officially accepted into the business school, and
those about to graduate. They were invited via email while flyers were also hung around Showker Hall to further publicize the event. Broad, guiding questions led to discussions of the challenges transfer students faced along with possible solutions on how to overcome these challenges. The qualitative data collected from the hour-long focus groups was used to begin generating potential approaches and ideas that could be used when solving the main problems identified. Following the focus groups, a survey was emailed to all transfer students within the College of Business. The survey allowed students to share their experiences through a combination of open-ended, closed-ended, and quantitative-based questions. The survey also included questions aimed at testing hypotheses generated from previous research data. The 30 question survey received around a 10% response rate and provided enough data to perform statistical analysis. Through generating descriptive statistics, running ANOVA tests, and creating pivot tables, trends in the data were identified, analyzed, and visualized.

The final method of data collection involved contacting key stakeholders, such as advisors, at surrounding four-year universities and VCCS schools. Conversations with four-year universities were focused on how their incoming transfer students are assimilating and what resources are provided to them. On the other hand, conversations with VCCS schools involved learning about the resources provided to help current students prepare for their transition to a four-year institution, specifically JMU. This data was then compared to current resources provided to transfer students by JMU and potential implementation ideas were created.

After being heavily involved with the transfer process for over a year, an extra step was taken to ensure a thorough and unbiased analysis of the data collected. This step, known as the Thinking Skills Model, emphasizes divergent and convergent thinking about a problem to encourage innovative/objective ideas and solutions. The first step in this model consists of
thinking of best and worst case scenarios. The second step involves trying to discover innovative ideas through creative thinking processes. The third step involves reviewing all generated ideas by ranking them against predetermined criteria. These criteria judged each ideas’ impact on transfers and feasibility of implementation. Following these steps, an amazing list of recommendations were created.

Data and Data Evaluation

As mentioned in the methodology, quantitative data collected from the survey was used to generate descriptive statistics, run ANOVA tests, create pivot tables, and visualize trends. The analysis was conducted with the intent to quantifiably support the claims and conclusions made from all other research. Notable results show trends in transfer students’ feelings towards orientation, academic preparedness/success, interest in potential resource ideas, and overall assimilation in the community. While certain trends were identified, more data from further research is needed to validate any potentially meaningful variables as statistically significant. All relevant charts and graphs generated from data analysis are listed in the Appendix Section.

During focus groups and interviews with stakeholders, transfer orientation was discussed repetitively. Because of this, multiple survey questions were asked about their experience. Appendices A and B show the trends reflecting these varying experiences for fall and spring transfer students. Appendix A reflects transfer students’ views on whether or not they would have benefitted from a different orientation based on which orientation they attended, fall or spring. The pie charts reaffirm transfer students’ negative view on their orientation experience. It also highlights the fact that the fall orientation, featuring both 1787 and Summer Springboard, was better received by students. However, with 64% of fall semester transfer students responding they would have benefitted from a different orientation and 75% of spring semester transfer
students saying the same, there clearly is not a huge separation between the two experiences despite the difference in length and content programing. Further looking at the transfer orientation, Appendix B shows the number of students who felt a certain level of preparedness following their orientation. This preparedness can include knowing the location of their classes, being aware of the resources available to them, and feeling involved in the JMU community. The graph is broken up by which semester the student transferred. While fall transfer students, with 56% of respondents reporting that they felt some level of preparedness following orientation, appear to be somewhat benefitting from their orientation, only 25% of spring transfers reported feeling any level of preparation. All three of these graphs quantitatively support that transfer orientation, especially in the spring, needs to be adjusted to provide more resources for the transfer students.

Another common trend when discussing the transfer process is the difference in academic rigor between community colleges and four-year universities. Courses taught at community colleges are less challenging and may feature easier assessments such as online tests, group tests, or no tests. In addition, these courses often feature multiple assignments that weigh into a student’s GPA in a single course. In contrast, a majority of a student’s grade in a JMU course is determined by how well they perform on tests. Even if this difference in academic rigour does not exist, or a student comes from a four-year university, the difference in academic and general culture can have serious adverse effects on a transfer student’s GPA. Appendix G visualizes this drastic difference in academic success for transfer students. As the survey shows, 98% of transferring students arrived at JMU with a 3.0 GPA or higher. On the other hand, only 41% of surveyed students reported having a 3.0 GPA or higher at JMU. This clearly demonstrates the
difference in academic rigor and the tough time students have academically transitioning into the College of Business.

To gather unbiased opinions about potential resources that could be offered to transfer students, respondents to the survey were asked to indicate if they would be interested in a few promising ideas that had been created from previous research. Respondents were able to click on all or none of the ideas that interested them. The resulting responses were used to generate Appendix C. While all ideas received some level of support, both the creation of a transfer organization and having a transfer mentor were the most favored ideas. An academic crash course, where students can review some skills they might have forgotten or not entirely learned at their prior institution, received the third most support. Organized transfer study groups received the fourth highest support, and a one credit transfer seminar course was the least voted for option. It is significant to note that the least favored idea still earned 38% favorability, highlighting transfer students’ interest in more resources being available and showing their likelihood to take advantage of them.

As mentioned previously, transfer students are usually given less classes than native students to achieve the necessary 2.7 GPA for the College of Business. To quantify the strain this can put on transfers, survey respondents were asked to list the COB prerequisites they have taken at JMU. They were then asked to rank these courses numerically, with a score of one being the most difficult. The ranking scores of students who had taken five or more classes were averaged together to generate Appendix D, showing the difficulty of each BBA Core class that impacts their business GPA. Conditional formatting has been added to visualize the resulting trends. As can be seen, COB 291 is by far the most difficult course, a sentiment generally shared by most native students as well. Considering COB 291 is offered at relatively no VCCS schools, almost
every COB transfer will have to take the course. If that is one of the two or three courses a transfer can use to earn their business GPA, getting a 2.7 can be extremely difficult.

One of the biggest trends found during research is the lack of information provided for students currently at other institutions who wish transfer into JMU. Misunderstanding academic requirements, not knowing what credits transfer, and being unaware of helpful contacts leads to students intending on transferring to JMU being unable to create accurate future plans. JMU transfer advisors are a resource that aims to help fix that lack of information. In order to observe how successful these transfer advisors are, survey respondents were separated into different categories based on the institutions they had transferred from. One category features students transferring from a community college without an assigned JMU transfer advisor, another features students transferring from a community college with an assigned transfer advisor, a third features students transferring from multiple past institutions before attending JMU, and the last features students transferring from another 4-year university. Grouped by these categories, two graphs were created using the data from transfer students’ responses to questions asking students’ academic preparedness for their first and second semesters. Second semester academic preparation was asked to conceptualize the impact of their first semester in preparing them for their second. A few trends stand out from these visuals, including the relatively strong academic preparation from students coming from multiple past institutions. The graphs also show that while students coming from 4-year institutions tend to be more academically prepared for their first semester, they generally don’t feel an improved sense of preparation to start their second semester. In regards to transfer advisors, there does not appear to be a significant trend among the different community college types for first semester academic preparation. However, students coming from community colleges with JMU transfer advisors appear to be slightly more
prepared for their second semester of academics with 70% of students coming from a community college with a transfer advisor reporting feeling moderately or significantly more prepared, compared to 50% of their non-transfer-advisor counterparts. This could suggest that the resources and information provided by the JMU transfer advisors could have positive impacts on their transfer students farther into their JMU careers. If all students coming into JMU received the same attention and information as the community colleges with a transfer advisor’s presence, there could be a significant increase in the success of all transfer students.

Survey data has also shown that transfer students are not feeling very socially prepared for JMU on their first day of classes. In addition, students are still feeling unassimilated into the JMU community following this first semester. According to the survey, only 31% of transfer students felt either slightly, moderately, or significantly prepared socially for their first semester at JMU. Following the first semester, 41% of transfer students felt either slightly, moderately, or significantly prepared. These results are shown visually in Appendix H. It was split fairly evenly between students feeling unassimilated versus assimilated entering the second semester. It is alarming that the resources put in place to ease the transition of transfer students are not effective and only helping a minority of its target population. These trends pave the way for a variety of recommendations.

**Implementation Plan**

**Preparation for JMU**

As previously mentioned, students are transferring into the College of Business without realizing which courses they need to take in order to graduate. This includes students passing all the BBA Core Courses with a 2.7 GPA. Students need to identify the eight BBA Courses, understand a little about each course and its relationship to their pending COB acceptance, and
need to formulate a plan as to when to take these courses and enroll into COB 300. The earlier a student is able to take COB 300, the earlier they can start taking their major courses and, eventually, graduate. The ideal course of action includes students transferring to JMU and finishing their BBA Core Courses in one semester with a 2.7 GPA. This will allow them to be officially accepted into the College of Business by their second semester at JMU. During this second semester, they will take COB 300. After taking COB 300, most students will spend three semesters taking their major courses and finishing up the rest of their graduation requirements—mostly non-business electives needed to fulfill the 60 credit hours required to receive a diploma from a four-year university. This shows that the ideal student who plans ahead, understands the BBA Core courses, and follows the BBA Core progression will still need about five semesters, or 2.5 years, in order to graduate. According to Sarah Sunde, Director of Orientation at JMU, the average amount of time for transfer students to graduate is 2.5 years, with students in the College of Business taking longer than this average. This shows that students transferring into the College of Business are usually expected to stay for three years, even though most students only plan for it to take two years to graduate. JMU needs to supply the resources so transfers can easily figure this out and plan accordingly. Many students transfer to JMU thinking they can easily graduate in two years; however, the ideal situation will take five semesters. JMU needs to make this ideal situation a reality for all transfer and this can be done through two main ways. Firstly, JMU’s College of Business needs to increase awareness of our curriculum through offering more resources for incoming transfer students such as a brochure that could be distributed to all interested transfer students highlighting keys facts about the College of Business, through all interested transfers being invited to attend a networking event with a
transfer student panel before officially coming to JMU, and through Madison Advising Peers in the College of Business serving as transfer advisors to prospective students.

After multiple phone calls with advisors in the VCCS, it became obvious that many community college advisors did not know important information regarding JMU or the College of Business. This may result in prospective students not receiving the necessary information they need regarding the curriculum, major requirements, and course equivalencies. In order to provide accurate information to these students, a brochure outlining the important facts about the JMU transfer process, specifically into the College of Business, should be distributed to each community college in the VCCS (Appendix I). In addition to the brochure, a flowchart addressing the transfer student’s journey from a community college to a 4 year institution can also be distributed to the community colleges. These resources will allow students to have a quick and easy resource featuring all important College of Business information, learn which courses to take before getting to the College of Business, and will allow them to start preparing for their future as a JMU Duke. In addition, this brochure and flowchart should be put online as an easy resource for students to utilize. This brochure can be redesigned, but the main components should remain intact such as the inclusion of the course equivalencies, academic information, tips to succeed, and contact information. The flowchart can also be redesigned how the College of Business sees fit. The Director of Integrated Marketing in the College of Business, Carolyn Wood, could edit these deliverables into formalized marketing tools that can be distributed widely. She has already agreed to do so.

A transfer student panel is a program that is thriving at William & Mary, a nationally ranked school for helping transfer students. Whitney Pitschke, Senior Assistant Dean of Admissions, shared insights on how important a successful transfer transition can be to a
student’s overall success. William and Mary increases the success of their transfer students’ transition through providing a monthly panel for prospective transfer students to attend and have their questions answered. The panel consists of current transfer students with diverse majors and experiences. For example, a typical panel would consist of a transfer student from the VCCS, a student from an in-state four-year institution, a student from an out-of-state institution, and a student with a special circumstance such as a veteran or a middle-aged student. During the panel, these diverse students are able to answer any questions that prospective transfer students may have. Once the panel is over, the prospective students are able to choose a current student to eat lunch with and continue discussing their potential transfer into the institution in a less formal setting. Students will be able to decide who to sit with based on their major, where they transferred from, or any other characteristic that they found interesting during the panel. This gives students ample opportunities to have questions answered by students who were once in their position. In addition to the panel and lunch with a current student, the prospective transfer student has a one-on-one meeting with Whitney Pitschke. This meeting allows students to gain an additional perspective on William & Mary and the transfer process. This program has been successful at William & Mary and continuously results in their high transfer success rate. Ideally, JMU or the College of Business can implement a similar event for prospective transfer students to attend. This would allow transfer students to feel less like nervous first year students and more like college students. By creating a panel at JMU, we will be able to show transfer students JMU’s inclusive environment, allow them to feel welcomed at our university, and address any and all questions they have about transferring.

Another way to improve transfer student’s preparation for JMU is to have the COB Madison Advising Peers (MAPs) act as a resource for prospective students inquiring more
information on the curriculum and the business school. Their contact information could be
distributed to interested students through the aforementioned brochure. Currently, the College of
Business has four MAPs who help advise students, present academic workshops, and help
answer prospective first year students’ questions. Their role could easily be modified to include
helping answer prospective transfer students’ questions. Accordingly, the MAP Coordinator,
Lorayah Lenore, is constantly looking for ways that the MAPs’ knowledge and interpersonal
skills can be used to further help students. Following specific training on the transfer process, the
MAPs will be able to effectively help answer questions and clear up some confusions about the
College of Business. They can even serve as a friendly face and a useful resource upon
matriculating into JMU. If MAPs can form a relationship with students prior to them arriving,
these students will be more likely to attend the Academic Workshops they facilitate and use their
peer perspective as a resource. The MAPs role in this process becomes more important when
considering a quotation from a JMU Admissions Counselor who works closely with this
population. He said, “Transfer students have been given incorrect information from adults and
they are significantly more likely to take the advice of their peers who have been through the
curriculum.”

After transfer students have all the knowledge they need to understand the curriculum
and general requirements within the College of Business, the appropriate courses need to be
offered within the VCCS to ease their academic transition. Currently, some of JMU’s BBA Core
Courses are only offered at a handful of community colleges. This is mainly an issue because
students are not able to take COB 291, perceived as the most challenging BBA Core Course
(Appendix D), before matriculating into JMU. According to the VCCS Transfer Guide, COB 291
can only be taken at Blue Ridge and Piedmont. This course equivalent to COB 291 should be
taught via Distance Learning. This implementation would allow students at community colleges not teaching COB 291 to take the course remotely and transfer this class into JMU as credit. For example, students across Virginia could remotely take this course taught by professors at Blue Ridge.

In a perfect world, students would be able to take all of the BBA Core Courses at their community college, transfer into COB 300 and graduate in two years. However, transferring straight into COB 300 has been a challenge for both the hardest working and brightest students. It is not recommended to take all of the courses before matriculation and to transfer straight into COB 300. Taking this course the first semester at JMU would be catastrophic to a student’s academic success and social life. As shown in Appendices E and F, 75.6% of students were more academically prepared for their second semester compared to their first. Therefore, transfer students are expected to spend their first semester at JMU taking the remaining BBA Core Courses, ideally excluding COB 291, and the necessary non-business electives needed to graduate with 60 credit hours from a four-year institution. This would make their first semester a transitory semester where they improve their study skills, time management techniques, and adjust to life at a four-year university before embracing COB 300. Offering COB 291 as a Distance Learning course would save many students’ GPAs and increase the chances of being admitted into the College of Business. Transfer students are expected to receive a 2.7 GPA with this course averaged together with a few other classes. This puts them at a disadvantage. Because it is not uncommon for a native student to drop COB 291 and then exit the College of Business, it is likely a transfer student will drop it and be forced to add another semester to their academic journey. With Distance Learning, they could take COB 291 at their community college and transfer it in as credit without the GPA. Ideally, they will take a few BBA Core Courses, not
including COB 291, their first semester, earn a 2.7 GPA, and be able to take COB 300 their second semester.

A second option to speed up transfer student’s graduation rate and the time spent taking the BBA Core Courses is to make reversing transfer credit an easier and more straightforward process. This process also needs to be better communicated to students. JMU is one of the few universities in the state that allows transfer students to finish up their Community College Associates Degree while taking JMU courses. These JMU courses fulfill the requirements of their Associates Degree. Following completion of these courses, they would transfer the credit backwards earning their Associates Degree and, therefore, waiving all of their Gen-Eds. This solves two problems that transfer students are having: their inability to complete 60 credit hours from a four-year university and their inability to graduate as quickly as native students.

Orientation
Orientation is one of the first programs that students participate in and it plays a key role in helping students transition into the JMU community. During orientation, students learn about JMU, its culture, their specific major, tips to succeed in college, and have a chance to meet their peers while starting to form relationships. It is an important time for students to get to know each other and to have the ability to ask questions in a safe environment. There are two orientation programs for students first entering JMU in the Fall: Summer Springboard and 1787 Transfer August Orientation. As previously mentioned, Summer Springboard is a one day program in June or July that is focused on ensuring students class schedules are ready for the first day of classes and to answer any questions students may have. The second orientation program is 1787 Transfer August Orientation. As mentioned previously, 1787 Transfer August Orientation is a three day program for transfer students. Its main goal is to prepare students for their first day of
classes at JMU. The days are structured with academic events, such as meeting with your advisor, learning about your major, and having planned activities with your orientation leaders. These leaders are supposed to be facilitating friendship making through an inclusive environment with their orientation group. The evenings consist of social events that help connect students and give them an opportunity to meet their peers while having fun. This orientation program is structured completely differently for first-year students and transfer students. The key differences are the length of the orientation program, the required attendance at events, and the role of the orientation guides. First year students are required to participate in the five day orientation program. Additionally, first year students are grouped into their orientation groups, by hall, and are given two First year Orientation Guides (FROGs). These FROGs serve as mentors to their students, help ease their transition into JMU, and, usually, form significant relationships with their first years. Transfer students do not have as close a relationship with their leader or as high satisfaction of the program as native students. This is because their 1787 Transfer August Orientation program is shortened to three days and is not mandatory for students to attend. In addition, transfers are not given FROGs, they are instead placed in a group with a single Transfer Orientation Peer Advisor (TOPA). Without full participation from each transfer student, this orientation program can, at times, feel forced and awkward. Transfer students often say that they feel like they are guests to the phenomenal orientation given to first years. They either need to feel more included in these events or be given a different orientation altogether. Furthermore, there are steps that should be taken in order to improve transfer student’s transition from the orientation perspective.

Compared to fall transfer students, spring transfer students attend a significantly worse orientation. Spring transfer students only have the option to attend one shortened orientation
program. This orientation program mimics the Summer Springboard Orientation outline; however, it is crammed into a shorter period of time. These students are left to learn about JMU on their own because their orientation program seems both rushed and unimportant. Even students who participate in the orientation programs are not receiving the relevant information that they need to succeed both academically and socially. To counter the lack of academic information that transfer students receive, the College of Business may consider adding more valuable components into COB’s portion of orientation. This consists of students completing a graduation plan outlining all the courses they need to take in order to graduate, having a career liaison meet with students, having a panel of current students to address questions, placing students in smaller groups, and giving students a flyer of both JMU and COB resources. These ideas will give students a more productive orientation and provide students with the necessary resources that they may be looking for prior to classes starting. A version of this flyer was recently created by a TOPA. This flyer has been edited to be more relevant to College of Business students and is included in Appendix K.

In order to graduate as quickly as possible, it is important that transfer students develop a plan featuring which classes to take which semester. This plan will serve as an outline for the student’s time at JMU and can help prevent students from having to stay additional time due to poor planning. By giving students time during orientation to plan out the rest of their time at JMU, it will give them a glance into the future and let them know what steps they need to take in order to ensure that they are able to graduate on time. Additionally, creating a plan will allow students to ask advisors and peers questions about major requirements, course descriptions, and about planning ahead. By including this activity in orientation, students will feel more prepared for their future at JMU and more confident to take on the College of Business. The creation of
these future plans can be facilitated during orientation by career liaisons, which would also establish a very beneficial relationship for transfer students. Because transfer students are already two years into seeking their Bachelor’s Degree, there is a quick turnaround between starting JMU and starting to apply for internships and meaningful summer work. By having students speak to a career liaison, they can begin to prepare for their job search and will not feel as overwhelmed when adding professional development to their assortment of tasks to master here. Furthermore, students will be able to ask questions about resumes, interview tips, and when to begin applying for internships and jobs. The career liaison will be able to help students feel prepared for their future.

Similar to the panel for prospective students, the College of Business can create a panel of business transfer students to act as another resource for new transfer students during orientation. During this panel, new transfer students will be able to ask more major-related questions, questions about the College of Business, questions about professors, and even questions about getting involved within the College of Business. This panel will serve as another resource for students to learn about the College of Business from those who were once in their shoes. Additionally, students may feel more comfortable asking their peers questions rather than their advisors or other adult faculty members. This panel will create another resource that students can use to make sure that all of their questions are answered and that they feel prepared for their first day of classes. Furthermore, the College of Business can take their time during their portion of Summer/Spring Springboard to break students into smaller groups. This will create an atmosphere where students will feel more inclined to socialize and start forming connections because it is a more comfortable environment. The need for smaller groups is especially necessary during Spring Orientation, where students are not able to connect on a deeper level
with their peers. By the College of Business taking initiative to help transfer students feel included in the community, students will have a smoother transition. The College of Business should also provide students with a flyer of both JMU and COB specific resources. This can include information about their advisor, how to use canvas, and other important tricks and tips for students. This flyer will serve as another resource trying to maximize the success or preparedness of transfer students. Through the College of Business being proactive in their planning of orientation events, transfer students will feel more prepared for their academics and will be given the opportunity to meet more students, both current and new.

In addition to the activities mentioned above, it is important to improve the Spring transfer orientation process. Not only is their orientation cut short, spring transfer students do not have the option to participate in an orientation program similar to 1787 August Orientation. In order to counter this, the Spring Orientation should be longer to provide students with more opportunities to ask questions and to provide students with more information about campus life. It is imperative that these transfer students receive similar treatment as both fall transfer and all first year students, especially since transferring in the spring is proven to be more difficult both academically and socially. Additionally, Transfer Orientation Peer Advisors (TOPAs) should make it a goal to facilitate group discussions that can lead to creating long-term friendships. Having a support system at JMU, will be a great way to ease transfer students transitions.

**Academic**

Transfer students have a difficult time succeeding academically compared to their native counterparts. As mentioned earlier, this may be due to the misalignment in courses transferring into JMU, a difference in academic rigor between JMU and their previous institution, and due to not developing proper academic skills at their prior institution. Academic success is a major part
of each transfer student’s transition, especially into the College of Business. This is due to the fact that students must maintain at least a 2.7 GPA in the BBA Core Courses in order to be accepted into the College of Business and begin taking their desired major classes. Because transfer students usually receive credit for the majority of BBA prerequisite classes, it is harder to maintain this 2.7 GPA requirement because there are less classes being weighed into their business GPA compared to their native peers. This creates an unfair advantage to native students because they are given more opportunities to improve their GPA. In order to help transfer students academically, the College of Business may consider implementing the following ideas: a transfer seminar, a transfer academic crash course, transfer study groups led by upper level students, more PASS sessions, and priority registration for transfer students their first semester they enroll in classes.

Survey data shows that 38% of transfers would be interested in participating in a Transfer Student Seminar. This seminar would be a 50-minute, 1 credit, pass or fail, once a week class where students can learn about the academic resources at JMU, develop skills necessary to succeed such as time management and coping with stress, and to simply meet other transfer students. Many transfer students are unfamiliar with the resources that are available to them, so this seminar would be a way for students to learn about resources such as the Experiential Learning Office, the libraries, the Dux Leadership Center, and Career and Academic Planning. Both the Honors College and the College of Business have similar seminars for first year students that could serve as a model for the transfer seminar. Other topics covered could include teaching students how to navigate Canvas and MyMadison- the two biggest learning platforms used on campus. This course can also help students increase necessary skills in order to succeed at JMU such as time management techniques, study skills, and stress management. Additionally,
another popular idea that 53% of transfers reported they would benefit from is the implementation of an academic crash course for transfer students. This would be a course extending a few days that re-teaches students some of the key concepts they should know in order to be successful in their business courses at JMU. The concepts taught are still up for debate but they could include topics such as reading financial statements which would help them prepare for COB 300 Finance, Microsoft Excel tricks to succeed in COB 291, and statistic concepts to succeed in COB 300 Operations and other statistical courses in specific majors. These are a few examples. The College of Business would need to decide the gaps in knowledge between what students are expected to know from their time at their previous institution and what they actually do know. By providing these students with additional resources, the hope would be that transfer students are able to maintain a 2.7 business GPA and be accepted into the College of Business without having to retake classes. In addition, they would be able to perform better in COB 300.

Moreover, a study group for transfer students led by upperclassmen students or having more BBA Core PASS sessions was supported by 44% of surveyed transfers and may help students understand the course material more thoroughly. More PASS sessions could help all students, not only transfers. However, there could be an emphasis on putting PASS instructors in courses that are transfer heavy. This is a great way to reinforce foundational concepts that are taught in courses. Because transfer students receive credit for more of these courses, JMU professors assume that students remember the basics from the prerequisite course. For many transfer students this is not the case. By having these tutoring resources in-place for transfer students, transfer students will be able to better understand the material and succeed academically. Lastly, it is important to note that transfer students do not have an easy time
enrolling in their first semester of classes. It is important for transfer students to be able to enroll in all the necessary classes they need in order to continue their path to graduate on-time. If classes fill up before students are able to enroll, transfers may be pushed back another semester. Therefore, more seats should be saved in sections of COB 202, 204, and 291. As previously mentioned, these are the three specialized BBA Core Courses that are not commonly offered. Furthermore, giving transfer student’s priority enrollment or saving more seats will result in an easier time staying on track and the opportunity to have more choices between different sections and professors. Academic success is only half the battle that JMU and the College of Business has to address for their transfer student population.

Social

Transfer students are not able to assimilate into JMU as smoothly as native students due to a lack of an opportunity to meet other students. There should be more precautions in place to assure these students have a strong social transition into JMU. A strong social transition can make the academic transition easier through having a support network and through having friends to study with. Two key solutions were identified to help transfer students socially assimilate following the modified social opportunities available to them at Orientation. These include encouraging transfer students to be more involved in student organizations and talking to the Office of Residence Life about creating a transfer floor within a current upperclassmen residence hall. Many transfer students said they would have benefitted from being involved in more student organizations or through being involved in a specific transfer only organization. Being involved in student organizations is a key way that many native students are able to assimilate into JMU and make this institution their home. The main organizations that these transfer students can join include service organizations, greek life, and professional
organizations. In order to find out about all the organizations at JMU, attendance at Student Organization Night is critical. First year students are made aware of Student Organization Night’s importance; however, transfer students are not. This is a night where transfer students can browse all the organizations and sign up for different organizations’ mailing lists. Within the College of Business, there are over 30 organizations for students to get involved with. These range from selective business fraternities to inclusive organizations that allow anyone to join. Transfer students becoming more aware of the different ways to be involved in student organizations would significantly help their social transition. In addition, 60% of surveyed transfer students showed interest in starting a transfer-only organization.

This organization will help transfer students meet one another, perform service, and professionally develop. This organization can also be given a deeper meaning through having their members serve as ambassadors for prospective transfer students. They can also be the main participants in the aforementioned panels- at both orientation and for prospective students. With 60% of surveyed transfers stating they would be interested in a transfer mentor to help guide them through their transition into the College of Business, the organization can be a source of mentors for incoming transfer students. Lastly, they can partner with the Office of Admissions and have prospective transfers shadow their days to learn a lot more about JMU’s academic and social culture before officially coming here. Currently, Student Ambassadors have out of state prospective students follow them around for the day. During this day these students attend an information session about JMU, get introduced to the ambassador who they will be following around for the day, and then they hang out with the ambassador for about five hours. These five hours are filled with the ambassador showing off their favorite on campus spots, attending the ambassador’s class, grabbing lunch, and asking any questions they might have to a student
trained to deal with these types of questions. This program is very successful with prospective first year students as 60% of students who shadow ending up attending JMU. This highlights the impact that shadowing current students has on prospective student’s view on JMU.

Another solution to help transfers meet one another and develop their social network is to offer residence halls or floors within residence halls to specific transfer students. A key way native students are able to assimilate into JMU is through the facilitation of friendships in their residence halls by their orientation leaders. Through living with their peers who are going through a similar transition of adjusting to a new place, commonalities are formed. This creates an additional incentive encouraging students to step outside comfort zones in order to meet new people. In contrast to the open community of first year residence halls where everyone knows one another and tend to keep their doors wide open, upperclassmen residence halls tend to be closed environments where students do not really know their hall mates. This is due to upperclassmen finding their place on campus already and not being open to making new friends where they live. In addition, transfer only residence halls or floors would allow transfer students to have a group of peers to go through the transition with. They can figure things out together and share information they know about JMU such as where the hidden dining locations on campus are, where different resources are within buildings like our Student Success Center, our University Recreation Center, Madison Union and all information surrounding the on campus libraries. There is definitely a learning curve associated with a student at JMU and being able to tackle this curve with peers would be critical to a transfer students confidence and success.

Overall, transfer students have three main areas in their transition that contribute to a difficult transition: an lack of knowledge surrounding the transfer process stemming from a lack of preparation and a lack of resources, academic problems dealing with COB coursework and
progression, and social problems dealing with their unsuccessful assimilation into JMU. By JMU and the College of Business being aware of the difficulties that transfer students face, JMU and COB will be able to help transfer students succeed in all areas and create a welcoming and inclusive environment for students to join. Many significant recommendations were provided and they are summarized in Appendix L. It is time for transfers to stop feeling like second-class dukes by seriously considering these recommendations and their potential impact on the transfer transition.

**Conclusion**

Overall, more than one third of students enrolled in undergraduate programming have transferred schools at least once (Jenkins & Fink, 2016). This shows that transfer transitions are inevitable. In order to help transfer students have a smooth transition, universities should have resources put in place to help students in every stage of the transfer process. Specifically, these should include resources for students preparing to transfer, resources needed for students to succeed academically, and resources needed for students to succeed socially. It is important to recognize the value that transfer students bring to each university. Specifically at JMU, transfer students feel excluded and unwelcomed when they arrive on campus. When asked about her experience at 1787 Transfer Orientation, one student said “I hated orientation for transfers. We were just looped in with all the freshmen- we did all the same events that were specifically geared towards freshmen, which made me feel like I was an outcast and like I didn’t belong. Nothing is really encouraged for transfers to go to, so a lot of the people stopped showing up after the first day too. The process was very negative for me, especially since so many people love their orientation week, but for transfers it’s just a weird time of transition where you don’t fit in as a freshmen or as a returning student”. This shows the true feelings of transfer students
during their first few days on campus. It is disconcerting that JMU is a school that values inclusivity yet excludes transfers during the first steps of their transition. In order to prevent more students from feeling so negatively about their first moments at JMU, it is important to implement changes and provide resources that can make a positive impact on these students. In addition, these resources will greatly impact students as they are transitioning and assimilating into JMU. These key resources include: the inclusion of a panel featuring current transfer students addressing concerns of prospective transfer students, an informational brochure and flowchart with key facts being distributed to prospective students, an increase in communication surrounding course equivalencies for COB, a transfer academic crash course, more transfer social opportunities, and the creation of a transfer organization. By providing these resources, among many others, to transfer students, they will feel more prepared, welcomed, and included throughout their time as Dukes.
References


Appendices

Appendix A

Percentage of Spring Semester Transfer Students who Reported Wanting a Different Orientation

- Yes: 36%
- No: 64%

Percentage of Spring Semester Transfer Students who Reported Wanting a Different Orientation

- Yes: 25%
- No: 75%
Appendix B

![Bar chart showing Students' Reported Level of Preparedness after Orientation by Transferring Semester.]

Appendix C

![Bar chart showing Percentage of Total Respondents in Favor of Transfer Resource Ideas.]

- Study Group: 44%
- Mentor: 60%
- Academic Crash Course: 53%
- Transfer Seminar: 38%
- Transfer Club: 60%
Appendix D

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>COB Core Prerequisites</th>
<th>COB191</th>
<th>COB202</th>
<th>COB204</th>
<th>COB241</th>
<th>COB242</th>
<th>COB291</th>
<th>ECON200</th>
<th>ECON201</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Average Difficulty Rating (1 = most difficult, 9 = least difficult)</td>
<td>4.60</td>
<td>6.00</td>
<td>5.65</td>
<td>3.52</td>
<td>3.76</td>
<td>1.61</td>
<td>5.29</td>
<td>5.90</td>
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Appendix E

![Percentage of Students' Reported Level of 1st Semester Academic Preparedness by Previous Institution Type](image-url)
Appendix F

Percentage of Students' Reported Level of 2nd Semester Academic Preparedness by Previous Institution Type

- Community College without IM3 Transfer Advisor
- Community College with IM3 Transfer Advisor
- Two or More Previous Institutions
- Four-Year Institution

REPORTED LEVEL OF 2ND SEMESTER ACADEMIC PREPAREDNESS
Appendix G

Transfer Students' GPAs at JMU

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>GPA RANGE</th>
<th>PERCENTAGE OF RESPONDENTS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>&lt; 2.0</td>
<td>8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.0 - 2.49</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.5 - 2.99</td>
<td>36%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.0 - 3.49</td>
<td>36%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&gt; 3.5</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Transfer Students' GPAs at Previous Institution

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>GPA RANGE</th>
<th>PERCENTAGE OF RESPONDENTS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2.5 - 3.0</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.0 - 3.24</td>
<td>13%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.25 - 3.49</td>
<td>24%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.5 - 3.74</td>
<td>30%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&gt; 3.75</td>
<td>30%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix H

Students' Reported Levels of Social Preparation on Their 1st Day of Classes

Students' Reported Levels of Assimilation After Their 1st Semester
Appendix I – Prospective Transfer Student Brochure

Outside Cover

**TIPS & TRICKS TO SUCCEED**
- Contact an academic advisor to learn more about a major that interests you
- Make a graduation plan, so you know what classes transfer over and which classes you need to take at JMU
- Attend workshops presented by the Madison Advising Peers. They will give you advice on study tips, test taking tips, and more!
- On average, it takes 2.5 years to graduate from COB. Plan ahead and create a Plan for Graduation!

**COB RECOGNITIONS**
- 1 of 186 business schools with both Business and Accounting accreditation
- #18 among public undergraduate Business Schools
- #25 Employer Ranking
- #39 in top 50 Best Colleges for Business Majors
- #10 B-School that creates Best College Experience

---

**Transferring to JMU & COB**

**START YOUR JOURNEY AS A DUKE DOG RIGHT**

**Contact Details**

**MICHELLE DUNCAN**
Director, Academic Success Center
duncanml@jmu.edu

**MADISON ADVISING PEERS**

COB student leaders who can share their perspective and answer questions!

cobmapadvising@gmail.com
MAJOR COURSES

After completing COB 300, you start taking major courses. The possible majors in the College of Business include:

- Accounting
- Computer Information Systems
- Economics
- Finance
- International Business
- Management
- Marketing
- Quantitative Finance

ACADEMIC ADVISORS

- Accounting
  Anne McGuigan, mcguigam@jmu.edu
- Computer Information Systems
  Lorayah Lenore, lenorel@jmu.edu
- Economics
  Anne McGuigan, mcguigam@jmu.edu
- Finance
  Doreen Liccione, licciodi@jmu.edu
- International Business
  Sharon Newman, newmanse@jmu.edu
- Management
  Shannon Mercer, taubesm@jmu.edu
- Marketing
  Emilie Bradshaw, okelleed@jmu.edu
- Quantitative Finance
  Michelle Duncan, duncanm@jmu.edu

BBA CORE

In order to be accepted into the business school, students must complete the 8 BBA Core Courses with at least a 2.7 GPA for courses taken at JMU. Please refer to the course equivalencies table below to see which courses you will need to complete at JMU, while averaging a 2.7 GPA.

COB 300

Upon entry into the business school, students all take a 12 credit interdisciplinary course in finance, management, marketing, and operations while simultaneously creating a business plan.

What do I Need to Graduate?

GEN-ED COURSES

These courses provide students with a well-rounded knowledge of specific topics. There are 5 cluster requirements students must fulfill. If you are transfer to JMU with your Associates Degree, your Gen-Ed courses are automatically fulfilled.

NON-BUSINESS ELECTIVES

These classes are additional credits that need to be taken in addition to your business courses. In order to graduate with a JMU diploma, students must take at least 60 credit hours at JMU.

COURSE EQUIVALENCIES

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>JMU Course</th>
<th>VCSS Equivalences</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>COB 191. Business Analytics I or MATH 220. Elementary Statistics</td>
<td>BUS 216, BUS 220, BUS 221, BUS 224, or MTH 241</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>COB 202. Interpersonal Skills</td>
<td>BUS 270 from Blue Ridge</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>COB 204. Computer Information Systems</td>
<td>CSC 110 from New River</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>COB 241. Financial Accounting</td>
<td>ACC 213</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>COB 291. Business Analytics II</td>
<td>BUS 227 from Piedmont and Blue Ridge</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ECON 200. Introduction to Macroeconomics</td>
<td>ECO 201</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ECON 201. Introduction to Microeconomics</td>
<td>ECO 202</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Math 205. Introductory Calculus or Math 235. Calculus I</td>
<td>MTH 175, MTH 211, MTH 281, MTH 270, MTH 271</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>COB 142. Managerial Accounting (Potentially taken alongside COB 300)</td>
<td>ACC 212</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix J - Flowchart Describing the Journey into the College of Business

The Roadmap into JMU's College of Business

Are you planning to transfer in with your Associates Degree? (i.e. having all gen-eds waived)

Reminder: The process for Guaranteed Admission includes completing the appropriate degree with a 3.0 or higher.

Have you taken any BBA Core Course Equivalences yet?

Do you think you can receive a 2.7 GPA between your remaining BBA courses while at JMU?

Look at the VCCS Equivalency Guide to see which courses to take that will transfer into COB successfully & those to take at JMU.
https://www.jmu.edu/coblass/advising/transfer-credit.shtml

Can you possibly finish your Associates Degree at JMU in order to waive all gen-eds?

Look at the VCCS Equivalency Guide to see which courses to take that will transfer into JMU successfully & those to take at JMU.
http://www.jmu.edu/gened/VCCSCourseEquivalents.pdf

Have you checked which gen-eds are going to transfer in?

After you have taken some courses...

The 8 BBA Core!

Reminder: You need to take all 9 BBA Core Courses while maintaining a 2.7 BBA GPA. This GPA excluding COB 242 and Math 205/235.

Have you considered taking more courses through VCCS?

Reminder: courses taken before manipulating into JMU are transferred in as pass/fail CR, not a grade.

Consider taking one of the courses with either the lowest average GPA or that you know will be challenging at the appropriate VCCS school.
https://www.jmu.edu/coblass/advising/transfer-credit.shtml

Reminder: in order to graduate from JMU, you need 60 credit hours from a 4 year institution.

Study hard, develop time management techniques & study skills that will help you get the 2.7 BBA GPA.

JMU College of Business 9 BBA Core (6 Their Average GPA)

COB 191: Business Analytics I (2.57)
COB 202: Interpersonal Skills (2.25)
COB 204: Consumer Information Systems (3.03)
COB 241: Financial Accounting (2.42)
COB 242: Managerial Accounting (2.35)
COB 251: Business Analytics II (2.41)
ECON 200: Microeconomics (2.36)
ECON 261: Macroeconomics (2.36)
Math 205/235: Intro to Calculus (2.36)

The following average GPAs are from VCCS equivalencies.
Appendix K - Transferring into JMU Resource Flyer

**TRANSFERRING TO JMU?**

*A FEW THINGS TO KEEP IN MIND...

- Research different organizations on campus and get involved. Attend student organization night and talk to a few different organizations. Be sure to research different organizations beforehand to make the most of this night!
- Driving home on the weekends can be very tempting. Avoid leaving every weekend and have fun locally. This will allow you to fully connect with other students.
- Try and eat at all the different dining halls. JMU is rated top 10 in the nation for their food.
- Be sure to attend a conference that the DUX Leadership Center puts on such as the Strength Finders Conference
- If things get overwhelming, be sure to check out the Counseling Center in the Student Success Center
- Peer Assisted Study Sessions (PASS) are a great way to learn class concepts from an additional perspective
- The Office of Experiential Learning in the College of Business is a great way to start developing your professional network
- The Community Service Learning Office is a great way to make a difference while making life long friends through alternative breaks
- The libraries have a lot more than just books—from a virtual reality room to 3-D printers to a librarian matching every majors
- Harrisonburg has a lot to offer outside of JMU! They have a wonderful downtown scene from restaurants, entertainment, and shopping.
  — Try the brownie batter ice cream from Kline’s.
  — Listen to a local band at The Golden Pony.
  — Bowl at Ruby’s Arcade.
  — Try the sticky nugs at Billy Jacks.
- Check out JMU’s off campus housing site for apartments, townhouses, and houses off campus. This is a great site to find roommates and compare prices of different complexes!
- Always make sure you hold the door open for the person behind you, it’s a JMU tradition.
- Go to O’Neill’s for a cookie skillet! Or go to Clementine’s on Tuesdays for Trivia Night.
- Nice outside? Go to the quad! Students eat lunch, hammock and hang out in between classes.
- Don’t be afraid to initiate conversation with students on campus. The people at JMU are extremely friendly and always willing to help!
- Attend the tailgates and football games. You will miss football season when it is over, so take advantage of the home games. Tickets are free to students!
- Pay $5 and drive 15 minutes to play with golden retriever puppies at Gap View Kennels!
- Always have fun, but put your studies first. GPA is extremely important and does NOT transfer. As transfer students, we have less time to show for our GPA.

*Created by Morgan Epps; Edited by Cory Pettinga*
## Appendix L– Summary of Recommendations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Problem</th>
<th>Explanation of Problem</th>
<th>Impact</th>
<th>Solution</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Preparation for JMU</td>
<td>Transfer students are unsure of the BBA courses that transfer into JMU, the curriculum, graduation requirements, and who to contact for questions. In addition they are not given enough opportunities to ask their peers questions about the College of Business.</td>
<td>Students are coming to JMU unprepared and are taking classes that may not fit best into their schedules. This also can create problems for students down the road as there is a strong correlation between not being prepared for JMU and taking longer to graduate.</td>
<td>Create a brochure that the College of Business can give to prospect students. This will help students with their transition and help them prepare academically before they enroll in classes at JMU. Community colleges, advisors, and the Academic Success Center in the College of Business can hand out a flowchart showcasing the steps transfer students can take to earn credit for their courses taken at community college. Allow the College of Businesses Madison Peer Advisors (MAPs) to help provide students with the necessary information about resources and answer any questions students may have. Offer Distance Learning Courses (specifically COB 291) for transfer students to enroll in while still attending community college. This will decrease the amount of time needed to graduate from JMU and students will be able to take less BBA courses their first semester at JMU, hopefully helping their Business GPA. Inform students on reverse transfer credit. This will allow students to take the necessary classes at JMU to complete their Associates Degree, which will waive their Gen-Eds, but will also count towards the 60 credits that transfers need at a four-year institution. Create a student panel where current transfer students are able to answer questions, provide information, and act as a resource for these students to utilize. This will give prospective transfer students perspectives of others who were once in their shoes.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Orientation</td>
<td>Transfer students are not given a proper orientation program in both the fall and spring semesters that meets all of their needs and helps them feel prepared for JMU.</td>
<td>Students feel disconnected from JMU academically and socially.</td>
<td>Have students develop a &quot;Road Map to Graduation&quot; plan, where students can plan out which classes to take for upcoming and future semesters. Create a panel of COB transfer students to answer questions related to majors, the College of Business, and resources that CDB provides to students. Organize a better orientation program for transfer students to help them feel included at JMU and learn more about the resources on campus. Have the College of Business’ CAP liaison present to transfer students during orientation.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social</td>
<td>Transfer students do not want to be treated like first year students, but also do not have the social connections upperclassmen do when living on campus.</td>
<td>Transfer students have a hard time forming connections with other peers and do not feel connected to JMU or their peers.</td>
<td>Inform students of Student Organization Night, where students can go and learn about all of the organizations that are offered at JMU. Have the Office of Residence Life create a &quot;Transfer Only&quot; floor in an upperclassmen dorm where transfer students are able to live with each other and form those connections. Create a transfer organization that will help transfer students meet one another, perform service, and professionally develop. This organization can also be given a deeper meaning through having their members serve as ambassadors for prospective transfer students. Allow transfer students to receive priority registration during their first semester enrolled at JMU. Create a study group for transfer students, so students are able to study together and help each other succeed. Create a transfer student seminar where students are able to learn about the academic resources at JMU and develop skills and tricks to succeed academically, while meeting other students. Have PASS instructors provide study sessions for transfer students to review the foundations of courses in order to develop a deeper understanding of the content.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Academic</td>
<td>Transfer students are not prepared for the academic rigor of the coursework at JMU. The courses are taught different from community college courses and students often struggle their first semester.</td>
<td>Students grades are lower than their grades in community college. Some students may even have to retake courses to be admitted into COB.</td>
<td>Create a transfer academic crash course that re-teaches students some of the key concepts students should know in order to be successful in their business courses at JMU. The concepts taught are still up for debate but they could include topics such as reading financial statements, Microsoft Excel knowledge, and statistic concepts.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix M- Thinking Skills Model used for Divergent Thinking and Idea Generation

**CLARIFICATION STAGE**

**Step 1: Exploring the Vision**

🔗 Wishful Thinking (DT)

Tool to help you think about many possible future outcomes, both positive and negative.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Wouldn’t it be nice if…</th>
<th>Wouldn’t it be awful if…</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. All transfer students succeeded in both the BBA core courses and their major courses</td>
<td>All transferred failed out</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. All transfers went to an orientation that they thought was beneficial (better mentors)</td>
<td>Transfers did not choose to come to JMU because they knew about the less than ideal transfer process</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Transfer students felt included at JMU</td>
<td>They felt excluded from our campus</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. JMU offered more resources for transfers</td>
<td>Transfers did not know the copious resources offered on our campus</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Transfers were aware of every resource available to them (working on a brochure to distribute to CC’s)</td>
<td>They transferred out of JMU</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. All transfers got guaranteed admission into COB</td>
<td>They failed out of COB and did not meet GPA requirements to continue the major</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. All transfer students could finish their intended major</td>
<td>Transfers entered into 300 unprepared (not knowing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. All transfer students understood requirements of their major/degree before getting to JMU to avoid surprises</td>
<td>They took forever to graduate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. Transfer students have an easier time meeting people and building their social network</td>
<td>Transfers have to apply to COB 300 multiple times</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. JMU accepted transfer credit of all courses taken</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11. All community colleges offered each of the lower BBA core courses</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12. If JMU accepted more meaningful transfer credit in general</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
13. Transfers did not need 60 hours at a 4 year to graduate

14. All transfers graduated on time

15. If there were more “transfer only” courses to facilitate meeting other transfers and catering the course to this distinct population (All transfer 300 section could help. COB 300 Finance could be a transfer only course)

16. Transfers had a timeline of each of their semesters ready to go before they come here (make a 4 year plan at orientation, with advisor when first get here or with the potential transfer seminar)

17. Transfers had the option to live on campus with only other transfer students (transfer floors or transfer resident halls) Organized in orientation group by hall versus major to meet people you are living with.

18. If not, distant learning classes can be offered so a CC that teaches a business course can teach the topic to students at other CCs

Success Zones (CT)

Enables you to examine competing future images to determine which are the most promising to pursue.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Probability of Success</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Low</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>High</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Medium</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Low</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Step 2: Formulating Challenges

Web of Abstraction (DT)

A tool to help you fully examine a diverse range of challenges associated with your vision or desired outcome. The most relevant challenges were highlighted.

- WIBNI \(\rightarrow\) Why? \(\rightarrow\) How? \(\rightarrow\) What’s stopping me?

1. All transfer students succeeded in both the BBA core courses and their major courses
   - We cannot control how much effort these students are putting in their courses
   - Student are not fully prepared for JMU courses based on academic rigor at previous institution
   - Not enough tutoring options or PASS sessions
   - Students learn differently

2. All transfers went to an orientation that they thought was beneficial (better mentors)
   - Transfer students cannot attend due to scheduling conflicts
   - Challenges associated with working with the Orientation Office
   - Beneficial is a subjective measure
   - Time constraints with spring transfers (over winter break?)
   - Resources needed to help with orientation (student volunteers, professional staff, etc.)

3. Transfer students felt included at JMU
   - Transfer students have an easier time meeting people and building their social network
   - Personalities don’t click
   - Introverted students have a harder time opening up and meeting people
   - JMU’s culture can have a learning curve

4. JMU offered more resources for transfers (know how to apply to on-campus jobs)
   - Even a large university can only provide so many resources to their students
   - Funding issues
   - Students do not take advantage of resources

5. Transfers were aware of every resource available to them (working on a brochure to distribute to CC’s)
   - Not every student will read the brochure
   - Not every student will properly plan beforehand

7. All transfer students could finish their intended major
   - GPA requirement (Need at least a C in 291 to do Finance)
   - 2.7 BBA Core GPA required to get into COB 300

8. All transfer students understood requirements of their major/degree before getting to JMU to avoid surprises
   - Transfers had a timeline of each of their semesters ready to go before they come here (make a 4 year plan at orientation, with advisor when first get here or with the potential transfer seminar)
   - All students will not do this
   - Requirements sometimes change
   - Students might be concerned about the College of Business’s rigorous course load and pursue another institution
   - Requirements sometimes change - have to keep schedule updated

11. All community colleges offered each of the lower BBA core courses particularly COB 202, COB 204, and COB 291.
   - Each community college will have to implement a course similar enough to the ones JMU teaches
   - JMU will have to change requirements if community colleges are not perceptive to adding a new course(s)
   - CC’s don’t know where students can take the courses
   - JMU would have to accept these courses from the CC’s

14. All transfers graduated on time
   - Credit requirements (need at least 60 from JMU)
• Change of majors (especially outside of COB)

15. If there were more “transfer only” courses to facilitate meeting other transfers and catering the course to this distinct population (All transfer 300 section could help. COB 300 Finance could be a transfer only course)
  • Limited COB professors
  • Too few transfers to viably fill a class
  • Transfer students may not want to feel isolated from rest of students in 300/their group

17. Transfers had the option to live on campus with only other transfer students (transfer floors or transfer resident halls)
  • Transfers are not usually organized by hall, but my major
  • Transfers in the spring may feel excluded from this
  • Space can be limited

18. If not, distant learning classes can be offered so a CC that teaches a business course can teach the topic to students at other CCs.
  • Do CC have the technology/resources to do this?
  • How much money will it cost?
  • Outside JMU’s control to a degree
  • JMU/COB wanting to control competitive advantages- must have plans to JMU to enroll in this course

TRANSFORMATION STAGE

Step 3: Exploring Ideas

➡️ Forced Connections (DT)

Intentionally encourages flexible thinking by challenging you to generate solutions to the problem by using objects that are unrelated to the situation.

  • CT here ➔ Apply CT principles and circle and organize ideas that stand out.

How can we help transfer students succeed?

Trampoline (random object #1)-

*We listed all the characteristics of a trampoline and then highlighted the connections between random object #1 and the transfer transition.*
Billy Jacks Restaurant (random object #2)-

We listed all the characteristics of a local restaurant and then highlighted the connections between random object #1 and the transfer transition.
Terms Relating to Transfer Students:

We compiled all the highlighted words from above. We then highlighted the connections between these two objects and a successful transfer transition.

- Active
- Big or small
- Billy jack’s
- Sleep
- Cheap
- Circular
- Downtown
- Eating outdoors
- Employment
- Entrepreneur
- Expensive
- Food
- Friends
- Hang time
- Harrisonburg
- Have fun
- Hot spot
- Indoor or outdoor
- JMU
- Job
- Loud
- Many different flavors
- Menu
- Money
- Multiple parts
- Multiple sizes
- Music
- Night Out
- Okay service
- Out of breathe
- People
- Philanthropy
- Play
- Socializing
- Summer Fun
- Tables
- Thursdays- “Transfer Student Thursdays”
- Time consuming to set up
- Tips
- Used for training
- Virginia
- Working out

Terms Relating to Helping Transfer Students Succeed:

We used abstract thinking to discuss how these terms each relate to the success of transfer students

- Sleep- sleep is important to a transfer student succeeding.
- Downtown- students need to take advantage of some of Harrisonburg’s “hidden gems” in order to fully assimilate into the JMU community and Harrisonburg.
- Employment- Transfer students may be seeking on campus jobs and would need to know the process necessary to secure on campus employment. In addition, students are looking for employment after graduation from JMU.
  - Transfer students need to start looking for internships and such as soon as they get to JMU. Therefore, they need to know the resources such as Recruit-a-Duke, Career and Academic Planning, and the Experiential Learning Office.
- Expensive- College is very expensive and we need to expedite the graduation time of transfers to minimize their cost of attending JMU.
- Summer Fun- Transfers need to start looking for summer employment as soon as they arrive to JMU. This employment should relate to their career and personal goals.
- “Transfer Student Thursday’s”- Transfer students need a sense of community and weekly meetings/ hang out sessions can help build this community while introducing transfers to each other and the JMU community.
- Working out - transfer students need a positive outlet to relieve stress
- Socializing - transfer students are able to socialize with other students at JMU to form connections and friendships
- Play - transfer students can “play” with other students and make more friendships and connections
- Philanthropy - transfer students can learn JMU’s corn values and participate in community service to feel more connected to the JMU and Harrisonburg communities
- People - transfer students can use other people (other students, professors, advisors, etc) as a resource to help them learn about JMU, their major, course material, etc
- Night Out - transfer students can hang out together and with other students and spend a night out in Harrisonburg (going downtown, going bowling, going to a movie, etc)
- Music - transfer students and use music as a stress relief outlet or as a similarity to get to know someone better. There are also many music related organizations/clubs on campus so this can be the first step in the outlet
- Money - transfer students need money to go to JMU, to pay for food, pay for fun things, etc (everyone needs money)
- Friends - having friends really impacts how well a transfer feels adjusted socially to JMU
- Harrisonburg - Harrisonburg is a really cool place for college students, and transfer students knowing about all the city has to offer can help their social adjustment
- Have fun - having fun is a crucial aspect of any person, let alone transfer students, in balancing out a difficult workload or challenging responsibilities
- Jobs - transfer students sometimes need to hold part-time (or full-time) jobs for financial reasons and this can impact the time they have to allocate towards academics
- Virginia - JMU is located in VA so students will have some connection to the state (same hometown, love VA, etc)
- Used for training - transfer students can participate in orientation programs where they are essentially “trained” on how to do things the “JMU way”
- Tips - other students, faculty, and staff can give transfer students tips to succeed
- Many different flavors - each student is unique and has a different background. Learn from each other and grow in the process (We are JMU event at orientation)
### Step 4: Formulating Solutions

#### Criteria Matrix (DT + CT)

Establishes benchmarks for evaluating ideas and helps to identify strengths and weaknesses of ideas.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ideas</th>
<th>Criteria 1 (Will it help Transfer Students academically?)</th>
<th>Criteria 2 (Will it help Transfer Students socially?)</th>
<th>Criteria 3 (Will transfer students take advantage of it?)</th>
<th>Criteria 4 (Will it require a large amount of resources (money, research, technology, personnel, knowledge, space, etc)? (1 = a lot 5 = not much))</th>
<th>Criteria 5 (How difficult will it be to implement in regards to changing current policies? (1= very difficult, 5= very easy))</th>
<th>Impact Score (Avg of Criteria 1-3)</th>
<th>Feasibility Score (Avg of Criteria 4-5)</th>
<th>Overall</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Transfer Seminar (8 week, once a week course with other transfers)</td>
<td>4.33</td>
<td>4.00</td>
<td>3.67</td>
<td>2.67</td>
<td>3.00</td>
<td>4.00</td>
<td>2.83</td>
<td>3.53</td>
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<tr>
<td>Transfer Academic Crash Course</td>
<td>4.33</td>
<td>3.00</td>
<td>3.33</td>
<td>3.33</td>
<td>3.33</td>
<td>3.56</td>
<td>3.33</td>
<td>3.47</td>
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<tr>
<td>Transfer Student Organization</td>
<td>2.00</td>
<td>5.00</td>
<td>4.00</td>
<td>4.33</td>
<td>5.00</td>
<td>3.67</td>
<td>4.67</td>
<td>4.07</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transfer Only Courses (Ex: COB300 Fin, 291, 202, etc.?)</td>
<td>4.33</td>
<td>3.33</td>
<td>3.67</td>
<td>2.33</td>
<td>1.67</td>
<td>3.78</td>
<td>2.00</td>
<td>3.07</td>
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<tr>
<td>Transfer Mentor Program</td>
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<td>3.67</td>
<td>3.33</td>
<td>4.33</td>
<td>4.00</td>
<td>3.67</td>
<td>4.17</td>
<td>3.87</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transfer only residence halls and/or floors within halls (learning community?)</td>
<td>2.67</td>
<td>5.00</td>
<td>4.00</td>
<td>2.67</td>
<td>3.33</td>
<td>3.89</td>
<td>3.00</td>
<td>3.53</td>
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<tr>
<td>Transfer Study Groups led by upper level student in that major</td>
<td>4.67</td>
<td>3.33</td>
<td>3.00</td>
<td>3.67</td>
<td>3.33</td>
<td>3.67</td>
<td>3.50</td>
<td>3.60</td>
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<tr>
<td>Mandatory Transfer Orientation Program (They have frogs)</td>
<td>2.33</td>
<td>4.67</td>
<td>4.33</td>
<td>3.00</td>
<td>3.33</td>
<td>3.78</td>
<td>3.17</td>
<td>3.53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>COB Only Orientation (increased awareness of COB, meeting people, etc.)</td>
<td>3.67</td>
<td>4.00</td>
<td>4.33</td>
<td>3.33</td>
<td>3.00</td>
<td>4.00</td>
<td>3.17</td>
<td>3.67</td>
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<tr>
<td>Distance learning courses offered through VCCS</td>
<td>4.00</td>
<td>1.33</td>
<td>3.67</td>
<td>2.00</td>
<td>2.67</td>
<td>3.00</td>
<td>2.33</td>
<td>2.73</td>
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<tr>
<td>More tutoring/PASS sessions</td>
<td>4.67</td>
<td>2.00</td>
<td>3.33</td>
<td>3.33</td>
<td>3.33</td>
<td>3.33</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Step 4: Formulating Solutions

Criteria Matrix (DT + CT)

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<tr>
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<th>Criteria 2</th>
<th>Criteria 3</th>
<th>Criteria 4</th>
<th>Criteria 5</th>
<th>Impact Score</th>
<th>Feasibility Score</th>
<th>Overall</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>MAPs contact information is given to the VCCS system as a resource for potential transfer students</td>
<td>3.67</td>
<td>1.67</td>
<td>3.33</td>
<td>3.67</td>
<td>4.33</td>
<td>2.89</td>
<td>4.00</td>
<td>3.33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Distribute a brochure to CC’s to inform potential transfer students and to let students know where to take certain BBA Courses at</td>
<td>4.00</td>
<td>1.33</td>
<td>3.33</td>
<td>5.00</td>
<td>5.00</td>
<td>2.89</td>
<td>5.00</td>
<td>3.73</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Distribute similar brochure to students on resources at JMU that will help them succeed (CAP, Experiential Learning, Organizations, Counseling Center, etc.)</td>
<td>3.67</td>
<td>2.67</td>
<td>4.33</td>
<td>5.00</td>
<td>5.00</td>
<td>3.56</td>
<td>5.00</td>
<td>4.13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Have students create 4 year plans during orientation or before classes</td>
<td>4.33</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>4.33</td>
<td>4.67</td>
<td>5.00</td>
<td>3.22</td>
<td>4.83</td>
<td>3.87</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Easier Registration for transfers and more saved seats (They could have priority)</td>
<td>4.33</td>
<td>1.67</td>
<td>5.00</td>
<td>4.67</td>
<td>3.33</td>
<td>3.67</td>
<td>4.00</td>
<td>3.80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inform students of student org night (especially business clubs)</td>
<td>1.67</td>
<td>5.00</td>
<td>3.67</td>
<td>5.00</td>
<td>5.00</td>
<td>3.44</td>
<td>5.00</td>
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<tr>
<td>Career liaison (from CAP) during the orientation process</td>
<td>3.33</td>
<td>1.33</td>
<td>3.33</td>
<td>4.00</td>
<td>4.33</td>
<td>2.67</td>
<td>4.17</td>
<td>3.27</td>
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<tr>
<td>Have a networking day featuring a panel of transfer students to address questions prospective transfer students might have</td>
<td>2.67</td>
<td>2.67</td>
<td>4.00</td>
<td>3.67</td>
<td>4.33</td>
<td>3.11</td>
<td>4.00</td>
<td>3.47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Have prospective transfer students shadow current transfer students to better understand JMU</td>
<td>2.67</td>
<td>3.67</td>
<td>3.33</td>
<td>3.67</td>
<td>4.00</td>
<td>3.22</td>
<td>3.83</td>
<td>3.47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Have a panel during orientation so students can have a smoother transition</td>
<td>3.00</td>
<td>4.00</td>
<td>4.33</td>
<td>3.67</td>
<td>4.00</td>
<td>3.78</td>
<td>3.83</td>
<td>3.80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“If you take the credit, take the GPA” Maybe count a student’s prior GPA at CC as a course to help equal out 291 and other BBA courses.</td>
<td>4.33</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>4.33</td>
<td>4.67</td>
<td>2.67</td>
<td>3.22</td>
<td>3.67</td>
<td>3.40</td>
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