

TRAILBLAZER
Terra Community College
Office of Advising and Transfer

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INTRODUCTION

The Office of Advising and Transfer was formed in 1995 as the Articulation and Transfer Office. At that time, the mission was to develop articulation agreements with four-year colleges and universities to facilitate the transfer of Terra students to those four-year schools, and to assist students with the transfer process. This office was formed as a result of the conversion from a technical college to a comprehensive community college, which resulted in the addition of the Associate of Arts and Associate of Science degrees. Initially much of the work of the office was to clarify and promote these two new degrees since Terra does not have an Arts and Sciences division. At that time the “office” was one person.

Since that time the office has expanded and taken on additional roles, including placement testing and advising for other programs, but advising transfer students, and developing relationships with four-year colleges and universities is still the primary function.

The office is now made up of the Associate Dean for Advising and Transfer, a full-time academic advisor, an administrative assistant, a 20 hour per week graduate intern from BGSU and a part-time academic advisor. The office is located in A-100, in a suite shared with Admissions.

The office is now responsible for the following:

- Places all new degree-seeking students by administering the COMPASS placement test, or evaluating ACT scores and maintains the COMPASS database.
- Advises all new students after COMPASS testing or refers them to technical divisions.
- Advises all Associate of Technical Studies students pursuing an individualized degree. This program will have more than 40 graduates in 2000.
- Advises new and continuing Associate of Arts and Associate of Science students. These students represent 30% of the student body.
- Advises Post Secondary Option high school students.
- Develops relationships with four-year colleges and universities.
- Develops and maintains articulation agreements and course to course transfer guides.
- Coordinates four-year school on-site visits and an annual transfer fair which attracts more than 30 four-year colleges and universities.

- Coordinates a quarterly new-student orientation.
- Represents the interests of transfer students on the Curriculum Committee.

Organizationally the Office of Advising and Transfer is a part of Student Services, under the direction of the Dean of Student Services.

CATEGORY 1, LEADERSHIP

The stakeholders of the Office of Advising and Transfer, in addition to students, include the academic divisions and faculty, the Center for Learning Achievement, the Records Office, high schools and four-year colleges and universities. Commitment of senior leaders to these stakeholders is demonstrated by the creation of the Office of Advising and Transfer in 1995, the switch to computerized placement testing, which was a tremendous improvement over the old ASSET test, and the resources to hire an extern from BGSU. For the 2000-2001 school year the budget has been increased to allow the hiring of a second intern. This “Trailblazer” is another example of the leadership’s efforts in this area. All of these efforts show a commitment to improvement of services to student stakeholders by the top management.

Additional support for continuous improvement comes through the Council for Academic and Student Affairs and the Plan for Growth and Improvement. The Council for Academic and Student Affairs, CASA, approves policy changes and promotes improvement through the formation of quality improvement teams. CASA members include representatives of academic and student services departments, and student representation. Examples of improvements brought about by CASA improvement teams include the adoption of a “prerequisite skills policy” and improvements to the new student orientation, both efforts to improve student success. A team is currently looking at improving the process for advising and registering on-going students in technical programs. The Plan for Growth and Improvement is an annual process to promote improvement campus-wide. This year’s goals for the office included a web

page for disseminating information to students and a study of students who have dropped out after achieving 50 credit hours.

Comprehensive community colleges have a commitment to community service. Terra demonstrates this through the Kern Center and programs such as “Music on Sundays,” Elder College and Kids College. The office demonstrates this commitment through its involvement with four-year colleges and universities in Northwest Ohio and its involvement with area high schools working with post-secondary enrollment options students, PSEO. The office also has memberships in the Northern Ohio Transfer Council and NACADA, the national organization for academic advisors.

Possible areas of concern deal with a lack of additional financial support as the office grows and a lack of college-wide planning and communication. While the office is adding a second intern, discussions about an additional full-time advisor have been dropped. Planning and coordination between departments in Student Services could be improved upon. Another area of concern is the lack of coordination between the office and the faculty advisors who work with ongoing technical students.

Score = Adequate

CATEGORY 2, STRATEGIC PLANNING

Strategic planning or goal setting is done both formally and informally. The office’s mission statement summarizes the overall goal of the office.

The mission of the Office of Advising and Transfer is to insure that students select the correct classes to meet their academic goal.

All of the activities of the office are consistent with this overall goal. Placement testing, advising, and developing articulation agreements all assist students in selecting the correct class to meet their academic goal.

In addition to the development of a mission statement, the office sets goals in both formal and informal ways. In a formal sense, the office participates in the college’s

Growth and Improvement Plan. This allows the office to set goals in conjunction with the rest of Student Services. These are goals, accomplishable in one year or more, that improve service to students. This year these goals were to establish a web page to improve student access to advising information, analyze the reasons for “50 hour dropouts” and clarify the pathways available to Terra students from high school programs such as TechPrep.

Since the office is a small close-knit group much planning is done informally in an on-going manner. This allows communication to take place regarding goal setting and also monitoring the attainment of goals. This informal atmosphere also allows the office to keep up with changing student requirements. An example of this is an ongoing discussion about the changes brought about by the Ohio Department of Education’s new requirements for K-12 teachers. This has required a change in our advising of students interested in elementary teaching.

The office benchmarks against other colleges by maintaining a dialog with peers at neighboring institutions such as Owens Community College and by membership in the Northern Ohio Transfer Council and NACADA. The Associate Dean is also a member of the University of Toledo’s External Transfer Advisory Committee.

The Office of Advising and Transfer should be more involved with strategic planning for the college as a whole. Recent changes in “Admissions” that had a direct impact on the office were not well planned and coordinated on a larger scale.

Score = Adequate

CATEGORY 3, STUDENT AND STAKEHOLDER FOCUS

Stakeholders of the Office of Advising and Transfer include students, as well as four-year colleges and universities, the Ohio Board of Regents, area high schools and other Terra Community College offices. The office demonstrates a commitment to the

needs of these stakeholders in a variety of ways. First, the office has a stated mission statement that defines, in an overall sense, the primary service and the primary stakeholders.

The mission of the Office of Advising and Transfer is to ensure that students are taking the correct classes to meet their academic goals.

Transfer requirements are determined by maintaining a relationship with four-year colleges and universities. This is done by maintaining an active membership in the Northern Ohio Transfer Council, by becoming involved with CAS, the state-wide computerized degree audit system and by serving on the University of Toledo's External Transfer Advisory Committee.

Internal requirements are updated by maintaining a seat on the Terra Community College Curriculum Committee. Representatives from the Office of Advising and Transfer have also served on CASA sponsored teams to research credit for prior learning through programs such as CAEL, and to improve orientation and advising. Representatives from the office also serve on CASA and attend all of the divisional meetings.

Stakeholder focus is also demonstrated by the extended hours of the office and the rest of Student Services. The divisional offices, for example, close at 4:30 while all of Student Services stays open until 8:00pm four nights per week.

Student stakeholder requirements are monitored by maintaining a face-to-face relationship with a large number of students. Student satisfaction is measured by direct feedback from the large number of students we serve. Feedback also comes from the Ohio Board of Regents Transfer Mobility Report, which reports the number of transfers from Terra Community College to other state colleges and universities.

While we don't have a great deal of historical data, current numbers seem to indicate the office has been successful. In the last year, the office had more than 1500

advising appointments. We are now tracking these appointments, as well as walk-ins to determine changes in the future. The available data, including the Transfer Mobility Report from Ohio Board of Regents, and reports from the University of Toledo and Bowling Green State University, indicate that we are transferring at least as many students, for our size, as other area two-year colleges. According to the Transfer Mobility Report, from the Ohio Board of Regents, 32 student transferred from Terra Community College to BGSU and 41 students to the University of Toledo in Fall of 1999. During this same period, 30 students transferred from BGSU back to Terra. Now that this data is available, the office will begin tracking it to observe trends.

Score = Excellent

CATEGORY 4, INFORMATION AND ANALYSIS

Since the primary goal of the office is to advise transfer students on the appropriate classes for transfer to a four-year college or university, the measure of success is the number of successful transfers. In response to an initial lack of state-wide transfer data, Terra Community College initiated the annual Student Transfer and Articulation Report, "STAR," in Fall, 1996. This report was the result of a survey of all schools to which Terra Community College sent a transcript. The survey asked if the student had matriculated and their success. The latest survey indicated that Terra Community College students had successfully transferred to 71 institutions of higher education within the past five years. These institutions are located in 18 states, from Florida ant the Carolinas to California and Hawaii. They include 50 four-year colleges and universities as well as 19 technical and community colleges. Of the 647 student transfers, 203 students are presently enrolled in and 63 have graduated from the receiving institution. GPA comparisons, from the institutions that provided them, show that Terra students perform as well and many case better, than the receiving institution's

native students. When comparing to past surveys, the growth in the number of successful transfers is evident.

The Ohio Board of Regents HEI system is now capable of supplying data showing transfers to, and from, other Ohio state institutions. The Ohio Board of Regents Transfer Mobility Report indicates that Terra Community College has at least as many transfers as other institutions of comparable size. A surprising finding is the number of transfers from Bowling Green State University and The University of Toledo to Terra Community College. This seems to indicate the acceptance of Terra Community College as an “equal” in the minds of students. Other indications of successful transfer are informal reports from area private colleges such as Tiffin University and The University of Findlay.

As a result of this data about transfers, two new concentrations have been added for the Associate of Science, “Pre-allied Health” and “Technology.” Additional cooperative agreements have also been initiated, including a new on-site bachelor’s completion degree from Tiffin University.

Score = Adequate

CATEGORY 5, FACULTY AND STAFF DEVELOPMENT AND MANAGEMENT

The Office of Advising and Transfer is a small work unit that informally makes decisions in a collaborative manner. Schedules are set in a cooperative way and advising decisions are discussed on a regular basis. The recent physical reorganization of the office, for example, was discussed by everyone affected, and the new arrangement meets the needs of everyone concerned. This kind of informal cooperation improves the service to students.

Beyond these formal small group discussions, however, support for professional development is not apparent. Two members of the office just recently joined NACADA,

the national organization for academic advisors. Last year, funds for one person to attend this organization's national conference were taken out of the budget. Members of the office have attended training for transfer advisors at Kent State, Akron and BGSU, and have joined the Northern Ohio Transfer Council. These were all done on the employees' own initiative. Employees are not encouraged to attend state and national meetings. Tuition reimbursement is available, but no incentive is in place to encourage the completion of additional degrees. This is unlike faculty, who have "Professional Growth Incentives" available to encourage degree completion.

Score = Needs Improvement

CATEGORY 6, EDUCATIONAL AND SUPPORT PROCESS MANAGEMENT

Stakeholder requirements are built into the processes in many ways.

COMPASS, the computerized placement testing, for example, was implemented to replace the old paper and pencil ASSET test at the recommendation of a team that was formed because of feedback from various stakeholders about the inefficiency of the old paper test. The need for a website to provide up-to-date transfer information became apparent through student feedback. The website then became a part of the "Plan for Growth and Improvement" for next year.

We keep up the quality of our services by listening to our students and by maintaining an awareness of changing requirements and by observing what the competition is doing. We do this by actively participating in the Northern Ohio Transfer Council and maintaining a professional relationship with other area colleges. These activities allow us to benchmark their best practices and share ours. Owens Community College, for example, has not yet changed to COMPASS testing but has been discussing the move with us, since we were the first two-year college in the region to adopt it.

As mentioned earlier in this report, we solicit information through our STAR report, through feedback from area four-year colleges and universities, and through the Ohio Board of Regents' HEI Transfer Mobility Report.

Simplification of process and reduction of ineffective and wasteful activities are done on an ongoing basis. COMPASS testing, which greatly improved the student flow, is being further improved by the conversion to the Windows version. The CASA sponsored Advising Team is looking at ways to improve advising and registration of technical students. The office will soon be physically reorganized in a plan developed by members of Advising and Transfer and Admissions.

Score = Adequate

CATEGORY 7, COLLEGE PERFORMANCE RESULTS

The key measures of success of the Office of Advising and Transfer are measured by the success of the transfer students we serve. As outlined in earlier categories, feedback from students and feedback from the colleges and universities indicate a high level of success. Terra's STAR report and The OBR Transfer Mobility Report indicate a high level of success. Details are sited earlier in this report. The "Student Satisfaction Survey," administered by the Office of Institutional Research, also shows a level of satisfaction in most areas. The improved orientation program developed for next school year came about because of this survey.

Key measures of productivity are show by the number of students served by a relatively small staff. In 1999, as sited earlier, we had more than 1500 scheduled advising appoints, plus a large number of walk-ins. We also administered the COMPASS test to virtually every new incoming student.

Employees in the Office of Advising and Transfer are evaluated once every year by the Associate Dean for Advising and Transfer. They are also evaluated every day by

our students. In both the formal evaluation and the informal student feedback, the employees are doing an excellent job.

Looking at these measures alone, the Office of Advising and Transfer is doing an excellent job. The problem is that the office has not been in existence for long enough to observe any trends. Another problem is that the goals of the office are not always clearly stated, especially in regards to the relationship with the goals of other departments. We do compare ourselves to the competition, and to other similar organizations, but not in any formal quantifiable manner. This need for goal setting and for coordination mutual planning with other related departments has been discussed in earlier categories.

Score = Adequate

OPPORTUNITIES FOR IMPROVEMENT

The self-assessment exercises generated a list of opportunities for improvement. Discussion of the opportunities lead to the conclusion that they all tended to fall into one of four areas. Those “vital few” areas were formal planning, communication, data collection and analysis, and professional development. These areas were used to generate the following plan.

ACTION PLAN

1. Develop and implement a formal planning process.
 - Look at defining and clarifying areas of improvement to promote consistency.
 - Review and coordinate department goals with college goals.
 - Improve process of stating goals, so measurement is easier.
2. Develop a communication process/system to disseminate information to students and stakeholders.
 - Develop a Web page and a quarterly newsletter mailing.
 - Establish a promotional plan to increase awareness of services offered.

- Make information on transfer & transfer institutions more accessible to students.
 - Develop a specific registration letter for transfer students.
 - Reinstate mailing of unofficial transcript and letter.
 - Examine students who do not persist and develop a procedure to deal with this.
 - Organize ACT info (tutoring, career planning) and distribute to appropriate parties & Instructional Research.
3. Further develop & implement process for collecting, analyzing and comparing data.
- Review placement data and Compass scores with lead instructors and Learning Achievement Center.
 - Re-examine tracking method of transfer students.
 - Look closer at retention, especially of transfer students.
 - Finish developing database with ACT scores & then analyze data trends.
 - Survey of transfer students to 4-yr colleges after leaving TCC.
 - Look at areas for additional data, review areas to be collected, analyzed and communicated.
 - Formalize student feedback or investigate other surveys, etc to determine satisfaction, etc.
4. Develop and implement a departmental professional development plan.
- Explore possibility of incentive plan to encourage professional development such as formal course work.