Portland State University

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University Studies Assessment Research   University Studies Assessment

2018

Assessment Brief: Transfer Student UNST Enrollment

Portland State University. University Studies Program

ASSESSMENT BRIEF

The large majority of PSU students do not experience UNST as a four-year curriculum. Instead, some enter at the sophomore level and the majority enter as juniors, meaning they experience only three or two years of our curriculum, respectively, and often miss out on the introduction to the program that Freshman or Sophomore Inquiry can provide. A group of faculty convened to try to better understand the experiences and challenges of transfer students as they enter the UNST program. We reviewed enrollment data for transfer students to determine whether new students enroll in the appropriate UNST course and if they do not, whether that seems to matter to future success. We discovered that almost half of transfer sophomores do not enroll in a SINQ course during their first year and that not enrolling in SINQ is related to lower retention rates.

BACHELOR'S RECIPIENTS

Using data out of the Degree Audit Reporting System (DARS) for students graduating with bachelor's degrees during the 15-16 academic year, we confirmed that **only 20% of students will encounter all four levels** of UNST before graduating from PSU. **Another 20% begin at the sophomore level** and the **majority (60%) experience only the Upper Division Cluster and Capstone** elements of the program, indicating that they started as junior or senior transfer students.
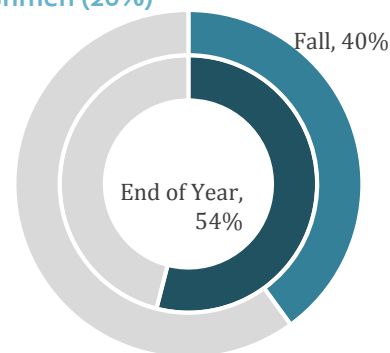
ENTERING TRANSFER ENROLLMENT

Another way to look at transfer enrollment in UNST is to look at whether students enroll in the appropriate UNST course when they enter PSU. 40% of transfer sophomores entering PSU during fall 2015 and 2016, enrolled in a SINQ course fall term; just over half had enrolled in a SINQ course by the end of their first year at PSU. Junior and senior transfers were more likely to enroll in their required course (Cluster), with 54% enrolling in a cluster course during fall term and 78% having enrolled in at least one cluster course by the end of the year. Considering this is a requirement for graduation, we were concerned about sophomores not completing their requirements and whether that held consequences for future success.

60% of PSU graduates have taken only the UNST Cluster and Capstone

Capstone
Cluster
SINQ
FRINQ

JR/SR Transfer (60%)

Sophomore Transfer (20%)

Freshmen (20%)
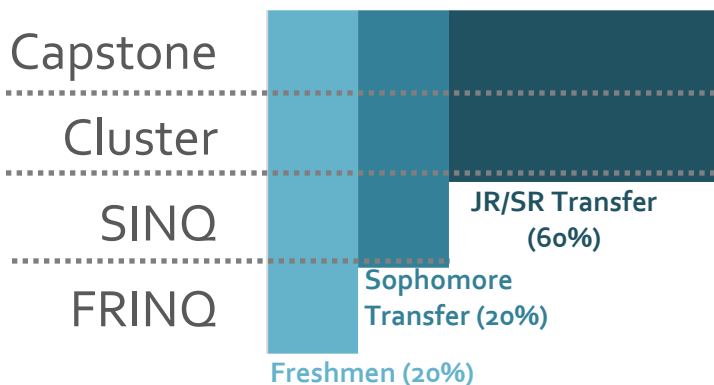
54% of new SO transfers enroll in SINQ by the end of the year.

Fall, 40%

End of Year, 54%

78% of new JR and SR transfers enroll in Cluster courses by the end of the year.

Fall, 54%

End of Year, 78%
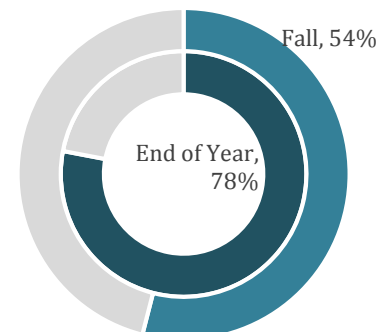
TRANSFER SOPHOMORE RETENTION

Given that only half of new sophomore transfers enrolled in a SINQ course by the end of the academic year, we wanted to know whether waiting to take this required course would be associated in any way with student retention defined as returning to PSU for a second fall. In order to investigate, we conducted a logistic regression analysis predicting second fall retention controlling for a number of variables and including the number of SINQs a student enrolled in during their first year at PSU.

For new transfer sophomores, **students who enrolled in at least one SINQ course during their first year were more likely to return for a second fall term** than those who had not enrolled in a SINQ course. International students, students who earned more credits fall term, and students with higher fall GPAs were also more likely to be retained. Non-residents and students who were undecided or exploratory in their major were less likely to return than residents and students who had declared majors.

Predictors of fall-to-fall retention for sophomore transfers

Academic	
Any SINQ enrollment (1st year)	Pos.
Major – undeclared	Neg.
1st fall credits earned	Pos.
1st fall GPA	Pos.
Full-time status	n/a

Demographic	
International student	Pos.
Non-resident of Oregon	Neg
Race/ethnicity	n/a
Sex	n/a
Age	n/a
First-generation status	n/a

REFLECTION

There are at least two possible explanations for the relationship between SINQ enrollment and retention. SINQ courses are designed to include supportive features (mentoring) and high-impact practices (writing intensive) which likely contribute to new transfer student retention. It may also be the case that students who are savvier understand their requirements better and thus enroll in SINQ and are also more likely to be retained. However, In either case, we would like to see more new transfer sophomores enroll in SINQ during the first year so that they get started meeting this important degree requirement, get oriented to our general education program, and get support from a mentor which is attached to the SINQ course.

ACTION STEPS

- We have shared this information with PSU's academic advising council and will share it more widely with the broader advising community so that we are working together to be sure students enroll in their UNST requirements in a timely fashion.
- Through qualitative research with transfer students and academic advisers, we know that students often find the UNST requirements confusing, particularly the transition between SINQ and Cluster. We will work with the advising and admissions community to build messaging that can help students understand what they need to do to meet UNST requirements.

For information about UNST Assessment and Research, see https://www.pdx.edu/unst/university-studies-assessment-reports or contact Rowanna Carpenter, Director of Assessment and Research (carpenterr@pdx.edu).