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Student Adjustment: An assessment of transfer student transition

Eckart Werther

Edward A. Delgado-Romero

Josef M. Broder

Jean A. Bertrand

University of Georgia

Abstract

Research on transfer student adjustment has typically failed to examine the dynamics of the transfer student's transition into life at the new institution. The present pilot study explored college adjustment from a multidimensional perspective using the Student Adaptation to College Questionnaire (SACQ; Baker & Siryk, 1989). A sample of undergraduate transfer and non-transfer students ($n = 114$) yielded significant results using a one way analysis of variance (ANOVA). This study aimed to gather preliminary information to inform current student services and to be used in the development of future research exploring transfer student adjustment.

Introduction

Increasingly, colleges and universities are being pressured to improve undergraduate educational success and have become highly concerned with retention and attrition rates (Wlaszelek & Coulter, 1999; Rojas, Knauff, Broder, & Campbell-Burden, 2002). Low academic achievement and high attrition rates persist despite increases in undergraduate college enrollment (Hsieh, Sullivan, & Guerra, 2007). Ideally, institutions of higher education seek to have a low rate of attrition and dismissal (Bean, 2001). It has been suggested that as many as 50 % of students who enter higher education never earn a degree (Seidman, 2005), and that attrition rates as high as 20 % are not uncommon at many institutions (Gerds & Mallinckrodt, 1994). Consequently, many colleges and universities have addressed these issues through the implementation of programs that work with at-risk students. An example of this type of initiative is the Academic Counseling Program (ACP) in the College of Agriculture and Environmental Sciences (CAES) at the University of Georgia (UGA).

The University of Georgia is the flagship institution of higher education in the state of Georgia and was incorporated in 1785. It is the state's oldest, most comprehensive institution of higher education with a student population of more than 34,000 (University of Georgia, 2008). Admission to UGA has become highly competitive over the last several years. Current data (2008) indicates that 1st year students had an average high school GPA of 3.83 on a 4.0 scale and an average SAT score

of 1253 (University of Georgia, 2008). As evidence of academic rigor, 45 % of the 17,334 applicants for the 2008-2009 academic year were denied admissions to UGA. Students seeking admissions to UGA transferring from other higher educational institutions must also meet certain academic standards. Transfer students must have completed a minimum of 30 hours of transferable credit and dependant on the number of hours being transferred, have a college GPA between 2.5 and 3.2 on a 4.0 scale (University of Georgia, 2008).

The College of Agriculture and Environmental Sciences at UGA was founded in 1859. It is one of the oldest and most prestigious colleges of agriculture in the country with three campuses, research and educational facilities in 7 cities, and extension offices in 157 counties in Georgia (College of Agricultural and Environmental Sciences, 2008). The college grants bachelors, masters, and doctoral degrees in a variety of agricultural and environmental disciplines. The academic environment in the CAES is also challenging and rigorous. There have been rising admission standards and efforts to graduate top quality students (Rojas et al., 2002). The CEAS offers 12 certificate programs, 24 undergraduate and 19 graduate majors. The CAES also offers three pre-professional programs in law, medicine, and veterinary medicine. The college is relatively small compared to the larger university with a total student enrollment of 2,002 for fall 2008 semester, 1588 undergraduate, 414 graduate, with 52% female and 47% male. The college conferred 452 degrees in the 2007-2008 academic year: 353 bachelor's, 69 master's, and 30 doctorates (UGA Fact book, 2008). Employment opportunities in the agricultural environmental sciences are estimated to be greater than

the actual number of qualified college graduates produced each year (Goecker, Gilmore, Smith, & Smith, 2004). Ample opportunities exist in careers such as sales, marketing, engineering, biotechnology, medicine, law, education, animal and veterinary sciences, food sciences, and government services.

The ACP assists CAES students experiencing problems that may be affecting their academic success such as time management, decision making and personal issues. The ACP was implemented to provide services to any student within the college regardless of GPA. Primarily, the program serves students who are on academic probation or who are returning from academic dismissal. The program helps students to identify the sources of academic difficulty, assists them in designing an action plan to resolve the problem(s); identifies available resources within the university; and works to retain CAES students at risk of academic dismissal (Rojas et al., 2002).

The University of Georgia has established specific policies and procedures to deal with students who do not meet academic standards. The academic probation process at UGA is comprised of two levels, scholastic probation and continued probation.

Additionally, as students progress through these levels, they encounter two additional steps which consist of first academic dismissal and second academic dismissal.

Scholastic probation is the first level of probation and denotes that a student's cumulative GPA (for hours taken at UGA) at the end of a given semester has dropped below 2.0 on a 4.0 scale. Students on scholastic probation are required to maintain a 2.3 semester GPA and will remain on probation until their cumulative GPA is above 2.0. Students that fail to achieve the 2.3 semester GPA or 2.0 cumulative GPA at the end of the scholastic

probationary term, are placed on continued probation the following term. Continued probation standards are the same as scholastic probation with the exception being that if a student fails to meet the 2.3 semester GPA requirement, they will be dismissed. First academic dismissal requires that a student sit out for one entire semester (not inclusive of summer). Students may petition for readmission after sitting out the required semester. Upon readmission, students are placed on continued probation status and held under those requirements. Second academic dismissal occurs when students again fail to meet the minimum 2.3 semester GPA requirement. Students dismissed for a second time are required to sit out an entire calendar year. Students may seek readmission after sitting out the required calendar year. Readmission after second dismissal is difficult. If a student is readmitted, they are placed on continued probation status and held under those requirements. Students have few options if their petition for readmission is denied following a second academic dismissal. Some of the options include appealing the denial to the university and/or pursuing admission at another institution. The process of academic probation and dismissal can be devastating for some students.

Nationally, it is estimated that as many as 25 % of college students will be placed on academic probation at some point during their collegiate careers (Tovar & Simon 2006). Mathies, Gardner, and Bauer (2006) found that students placed on academic probation prolong their time at the institution, have lower rates of graduation, and have an increased risk of attrition. Additionally, they identified that only 5% of students on academic probation graduated within 4 years, 31% graduated within 6 years and as many as 30% dropped out. Academic probation is costly as many students lose eligibility to

receive different forms of financial aid. With the majority of students on academic probation receiving need-based financial aid (Mathies et al., 2006), they must remain eligible in order to continue to fund their education using these financial resources. Students must meet and maintain standards of satisfactory academic progress to remain eligible for financial aid (U.S. Department of Education, 2006). This entails making academic progress towards a degree and maintenance of a 2.0 cumulative GPA on a 4.0 scale (Office of Student Financial Aid, 2008). Students who get dismissed for academic reasons are not eligible for financial aid until they re-establish their academic standing. Students on academic probation also experience a large drop off in merit-based aid (scholarships) due to the high GPA requirement to remain eligible (Mathies, Gardner, & Bauer, 2006). Merit-based aid typically requires a GPA above 3.0 and students on academic probation typically have a GPA's lower than 2.0 on a 4.0 scale (Cruise, 2002).

Various factors have been identified by the ACP that impact the retention of students in the CAES. Adjustment difficulties were identified as being prevalent among CAES students who transferred to UGA from other institutions. Although no formal measurement of adjustment was utilized, transfer students in the CAES presented with a wide range of issues affecting their academic performance and seemed under-prepared for the demands of the college (Rojas et al., 2002). Transfer students appeared to be at a greater risk of being placed on academic probation and of being dismissed. Between fall 2003 and fall 2008 a total of 390 students have been involved in some aspect of the academic probation process in the CAES. The majority (52.6%) of these students

transferred from another institution. For the Spring 2009 semester, transfer students comprised 57 % of the students involved in the academic probation process in the CAES.

Transfer students in the CAES transfer to UGA from either a two-year college or a four-year college/university. Two-year colleges are post-secondary institutions of higher education that grant vocational certificates, associate of arts degrees, and associate of science degrees (Solarek & Solarek, 1998). They may be classified as community colleges, junior colleges, and technical/vocational schools. There are more than 1100 two-year colleges in the United States and 31 in the state of Georgia (American Association of Community Colleges, 2008; Solarek et al., 1998). Four-year colleges are post-secondary institutions of higher education that offer a variety of undergraduate and graduate programs. They grant bachelors, masters, and doctoral degrees and may be classified as colleges and/or universities. In the state of Georgia, there are more than 40 four-year colleges/universities (A2Zcolleges.com, 2009). From 2005 to 2007, a total of 2212 students have transferred to the CAES at UGA from another institution. Of these, 48.37% (n = 1070) have been students from two-year colleges.

Two-year colleges provide an economical means for students to obtain higher education as they are considered the most cost-effective way to begin the pursuit of a college degree (Rhine, Milligan, & Nelson, 2000). Some estimates predict that 11.5 million students will attend a two-year college in the United States (American Association of Community Colleges, 2008). In 2003-04, 43 % of all undergraduate students were enrolled at two-year colleges (Goan & Cunningham, 2007). Two-year colleges also provide students an opportunity to earn credits that may be used to transfer

to larger four-year institutions. Many students at the two-year college level plan to transfer to larger institutions to continue their education. It has been reported that one out of every five two-year college students will transfer to a larger school (Eggleston & Laanan, 2001). Jacobs (2008) estimates that as many as 2.5 million students will transfer from two-year colleges to four-year institutions in a given year.

College students who transfer into a four-year college/university from a two-year institution many times experience a phenomenon known as transfer shock (Rhine et al., 2000). Transfer shock refers to the drop in GPA that may occur after a student transfers into a four-year institution from a two-year college (Flaga, 2006). Because many transfer students do not perform well academically when they arrive at the four-year institution, two-year colleges have been criticized as being unsuccessful in preparing students for the educational demands of four-year colleges/universities (Carlan & Byxbe, 2000).

Dougherty, (1997) reported that community college transfer students were poorly prepared for the academic demands of upper-division courses. Grades that many two-year college students earn have also been criticized as being inflated and not on par with the grading standards at four-year institutions (Carlan et al., 2000). Townsend and Wilson (2006) reported that the more credit hours a student transfers with, the greater the likelihood of academic success at the four-year institution, thus a significant amount of transfer credits may ameliorate the potential for transfer shock. Students who graduated from a community college with an associate's degree prior to transferring were found to have GPA equal to or better than the native students at the four-year college/university (Marti, 2001).

College Adjustment

All students have to adjust to some degree as they begin their new life in college. Even the most able and socially mature students may experience some type of difficulty making the adjustment into a new college environment. Attending college requires an individual to adjust to the social and intellectual norms of the collegiate environment (Tinto, 1993). Students entering college experience transition in their social and academic lives (Tovar et al., 2006). The difficulty experienced by students entering college is said to arise from two sources: the students inability to separate from past forms of associations (local high school and peer groups/ separation from family) and from the new and often challenging demands of the college or university (Tinto, 1993). First year students will most likely only experience these adjustment difficulties during their initial year. Transfer students will likely experience an adjustment phase on two separate occasions, during their first year in college as well as after transferring to the four-year institution (Porter, 1999). Transfer students frequently face the same difficulties as do first-time college students although they are typically much older than traditional first year students (Pascarella, 1999; Tinto, 1993). Being older, transfer students many times have added responsibilities and different social aspects that affect their academic persistence and attendance patterns (Rhine, et al., 2000). Students transferring from two-year colleges have often delayed college attendance after high school, experienced vocational stressors, worked while attending school, completed fewer than 15 credit hours per semester and alternated between full-time and part-time enrollment (Fredrickson, 1998; Pascarella, 1999; Piland, 1995). Two- year college

students have typically paid their own tuition and living expenses while managing academic responsibilities (Rhine et al., 2000). Given these factors, transfer students from two-year institutions are susceptible to adjustment difficulties as they enter the four-year institution. Their chances of being placed on academic probation and/or of being dismissed are typically increased. Wlazelek and Coulter (1999) noted that students experiencing academic problems due to adjustment difficulties have an increased risk of attrition. Laanan (2001) noted that research examining the factors contributing to adjustment difficulties of transfer students is limited and that only a handful of studies have explored the issue.

Most of the research that has been conducted on transfer students has predominantly centered on the transfer shock concept. This research has typically focused on the transfer students' academic adjustment as measured by GPA (Laanan, 2001). Transfer shock research is limited in scope and fails to examine the dynamics of the transfer student's transition into life at a four-year institution. Flaga, (2006) noted that although academic performance is an important part of the transfer student experience, grades are the result of a complex set of dynamics. To be successful in college, students must do more than be successful in the classroom (Liptak, 2006). Academic persistence of students is due to a complex interplay between academic and non academic factors (Lotkowski, Robbins, & Noeth, 2004). One study identified non-academic factors that impacted the successful transition of transfer students at four-year institutions as including: larger classes, larger campus size, increased academic rigor, and negotiating a new social and physical environment (Laanan, 2004). Additional non academic factors

suggested to play a role in transfer student success include: academic goals, self confidence, contextual influences, social support, and extracurricular involvement (Lotkowski et al., 2004). A more complete understanding of these complexities is essential to implement programs that facilitate a successful adjustment process for transfer students (Laanan, 2007).

Research exploring the adjustment of transfer students has typically not focused on the emotional and psychological development at the four-year institution (Laanan, 2004). College students can experience a multitude of emotional and psychological problems adjusting to the higher educational environment. Pittman and Richmond (2008) report that many college students experience emotional maladjustment and depression as they encounter the stressors of college. Depression has been cited as one of the primary psychological disorders reported among college students (Gerdes et al., 1994).

Additional issues prevalent among college students include feelings of homesickness, loneliness, low- self esteem, indecisiveness, higher levels of stress, sleep disturbance, and anxiety (Gerdes et al., 1994; Twenge, 2001; Brissette, Scheier, & Carver, 2002).

Bojuwoye, (2002) noted that relocation, financial pressures, new social relationships, and increased personal responsibility were factors likely to cause intense psychological distress for college students. Eggleston and Laanan (2001) identified specific stressors that transfer students must deal with as they transition into life at the new four-year institution, these included housing, registration, academic advising issues, career planning, and involvement with student activities. College students with high levels of

stress have an increased risk of experiencing academic difficulty and tend to suffer from emotional problems (Chiauzzi, Brevard, Thurn, Decembrele, & Lord, 2008).

Understanding the factors impacting transfer student adjustment can be used to enhance retention programs and reduce attrition rates among this population of students. Rarely has the research on transfer students been used to implement new strategies that address their needs. The data obtained on transfer students is often merely reported to fulfill state requirements and not used to implement interventions (Kozeracki, 2001). It is essential that transfer students be provided with appropriate services that will assist them in becoming acclimated to the college/university they transfer to. Without assistance, they may flounder and not adjust to the life of the university, leading to failure, lack of satisfaction and/or inability to complete degree requirements (Tinto, 1993). Kozeracki (2001) noted that interaction with institutional services impacts the level of success of transfer students at four-year institutions. Eggleston and Laanan (2001) reported that transfer students desired counseling and advising services, knowledge of campus resources, and transfer student-centered programs that would assist their transition. Orientating transfer students to the norms of the new institution is vital for their success. The quicker a student adjusts, gets involved, and feels connected to the institution, the increased likelihood of persistence, success and reduced attrition (Kadar, 2001).

The goal of this pilot study is to examine possible factors that may be hindering the success of transfer students in the College of Agriculture and Environmental Sciences at the University of Georgia. The study explored multidimensional aspects believed to impact transition of students in college. The data collected addressed the following

questions: Do transfer students in the CAES experience increased adjustment difficulties compared to non-transfer students?, Do transfer students from two-year institutions experience more adjustment difficulty than transfers from four-year institutions?, Does the amount of hours a student transfers with impact their level of adjustment?, and Is there a difference in adjustment scores between transfer students on academic probation and transfer students not on academic probation? The data obtained from this study will be used to inform the office of academic affairs in the CAES, assist the ACP to better serve this population of students, and inform the development of future research.

Methods

Procedure

The data for the study were collected via an email sent to all undergraduate students in the CAES. The undergraduate student list serve was utilized to distribute the email. The email briefly introduced students to the broad aims of the study. Participation was entirely voluntary and interested students were connected to a secure internet survey website by clicking on the provided hyperlink. Participants were provided with an informed consent page. After consent was obtained, participants completed a demographical questionnaire and then completed the Student Adaptation to College Questionnaire (SACQ; Baker & Siryk, 1989). The information collected in the demographical questionnaire assisted in identifying a student's gender, age, transfer status, amount of hours completed prior to transferring, and previous involvement with

probation or dismissal. Completion time for the questionnaires was estimated to be between 15-20 minutes.

Participants

Data were obtained from 118 undergraduate students enrolled in the CAES at UGA during the Spring 2009 semester. Each participant was classified as non-transfer, two-year transfer, or four-year transfer based on responses obtained in the demographical questionnaire. Responses from four participants were removed from the study because they did not fully complete the research instrument.

The final sample consisted of 114 undergraduate students with a mean age of 20.75 years ($SD = 2.8$) with a range from 18 to 44 years. Although the female and male population in the CAES is relatively equal, 52% female and 47% male. Females were over represented in this study as they accounted for 74.6% ($n = 85$) of the sample, while males were underrepresented as they accounted for 25.4% ($n = 29$) of the sample. Participants self-reported their race/ethnicity as follows: African American, 3.5% ($n = 4$); Caucasian, 91.2% ($n = 104$); Latino/Hispanic, .9% ($n = 1$); Asian/Pacific Islander, 2.6% ($n = 3$); and 1.8% ($n = 2$) elected not to report their race/ethnicity. Participants reported being at UGA a mean of 3.62 semesters ($SD = 1.37$). With regards to class standing, 15.8% ($n = 18$) were 1st year students; 21.1% ($n = 24$) were 2nd year students; 33.3% ($n = 38$) were 3rd year students; 22.8% ($n = 26$) were 4th year students; 6.1% ($n = 7$) were 5th year students; and .9% ($n = 1$) were 6th year students.

In regards to transfer status, 73.7% ($n = 84$) of the participants were not transfers, while 15.8% ($n = 18$) transferred from a two-year institution, and 10.5% ($n = 12$)

transferred from a four-year institution. The mean age among the transfer student sample was 22.23 years ($SD = 4.33$) with a range from 20 to 44 years. Females accounted for 53.3% ($n = 16$) of the transfer student sample and males 46.7% ($n = 14$). The majority of the sample, 93.3% ($n = 28$) reported their race/ethnicity as Caucasian. Transfer students reported being at UGA a mean of 2.96 semesters ($SD = 1.43$) and transferred with an average of 52.66 hours earned ($SD = 13.63$). Thirty percent ($n = 9$) of the transfer students reported having earned an associate's degree. Transfer student class standing was reported as follows: 6.7% ($n = 2$) were 2nd year students; 53.3% ($n = 16$) were 3rd year students; 23.3% ($n = 7$) 4th year students; 13.3% ($n = 4$) were 5th year students; and 3.3% ($n = 1$) were 6th year students.

Measure

The *Student Adaptation to College Questionnaire* (SACQ; Baker & Siryk, 1989) was utilized to measure non-transfer and transfer student adjustment in the CAES. The SACQ is a 67-item self-report measure rated on a 9-point Likert scale, ranging from 9: *applies very closely to me* to 1: *does not apply to me at all* (Feldt, 2008). The instrument is comprised of four subscales that include: *Academic Adjustment*, *Social Adjustment*, *Personal-Emotional Adjustment*, and *Institutional Attachment* (Sandberg & Lynn, 1992). The subscales reflect the theoretical assumption behind the SACQ's construction that adjustment to college is a multidimensional process (Sennett, Finchilescu, Gibson, & Strauss, 2003). Higher scores on the full scale and subscales, indicate better adjustment to the institution.

The SACQ has demonstrated acceptable internal consistency, reliability, and criterion-related validity (Sandberg et al., 1992). The instrument was standardized with more than 1,300 college freshman and has been used in research with diverse populations in North America, Europe, China, Japan, the former Czech republic, Belgium, South Korea, and South Africa (Sennett et al., 2003; Beyers & Goossens, 2002). The SACQ yields a full scale score as well as scores on the four subscales that have been shown to be internally consistent in several studies with Cronbach's alphas greater than .80 (Beyers et al., 2002). The full scale ($\alpha = .92$) purports to measure overall adjustment to college, the academic adjustment subscale ($\alpha = .84$) purports to measure a student's ability to manage the educational demands of college; social adjustment subscale ($\alpha = .84$) purports to measure a student's ability to deal with interpersonal experiences in college; personal-emotional adjustment subscale ($\alpha = .81$) purports to measure a student's degree of general psychological distress; and institutional attachment subscale ($\alpha = .80$) purports to measure the degree of commitment a student feels towards the university (Cecero1, Beitel, & Prout, 2008). The SACQ has demonstrated statistically significant correlation with numerous other measures. These include the College Maladjustment Scale (Mt) on the MMPI-2, the College Student Stress Scale, the Dissociative Experience Scale, the California Psychological Inventory, the Scheier, Carver's Life Orientation Test, the Adult Nowicki-Strickland Internal External Scale, and the Student Anti-intellectualism Scale (Haemmerlie & Merz, 1991; Sandberg et al., 1992; Merker & Smith, 2001; Montgomery, Haemmerlie & Ray, 2003; Hook, 2004; Estrada, Dupoux, & Wolman, 2006; Feldt, 2008).

The SACQ has been used by many universities as a cost effective way of detecting adaptation problems that students may be experiencing in college and has been used to assist with retention efforts (Western Psychological Services, n.d.).

Results

Raw scores on the SACQ were converted into T-scores based on the sample norms provided in the manual by Baker and Siryk (1999). For the current sample, the Cronbach's alpha values for the full scale and four subscales ranged from .81 to .94. These alpha values suggested adequate internal reliability as they were consistent with those derived from the normative data reported Baker and Siryk (1999).

A one-way Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) was used to compare full scale and subscale scores among transfer and non-transfer students, to evaluate the relationship between SACQ scores and hours earned prior to transferring, and to explore the relationship between SACQ scores and academic probation among the sample of transfer students.

The ANOVA yielded a statistically significant difference at the $p < .05$ level when comparing SACQ scores between non-transfer and transfer students. The test was significant for the SACQ Full Scale score, $F(2, 111) = 6.78, p = .002$. The effect size calculated was large, η^2 (eta squared) = .11. Post-hoc comparisons were conducted using the Tukey HSD test revealed that the mean score for non-transfer group ($M = 54.55, SD = 9.3$), was statistically different from the two-year transfer group ($M = 45.89, SD = 11.03$). The four-year transfer group ($M = 49.5, SD = 9.19$) did not differ significantly

from either the non-transfer or two-year transfer groups on the Full Scale. This indicates that based on the full scale SACQ scores, two-year transfer students had significantly lower levels of adjustment when compared to the non-transfer student population in the CAES. These same scores did not indicate any differences between four-year transfers and the non-transfer or two-year transfer groups.

The ANOVA indicated statistically significant difference at the $p < .05$ level on three of the four SACQ subscales. The Academic Adjustment subscale, $F(2,111) = 3.97$, $p = .022$, yielded a medium effect size, $\eta^2 = .067$. The post-hoc test indicated that the non-transfer group ($M = 53.21$, $SD = 8.33$) was statistically different from the two-year transfer group ($M = 47$, $SD = 8.83$). The four-year transfer group ($M = 50.75$, $SD = 10.41$) did not differ significantly from the non-transfer or two-year transfer groups on the Academic Adjustment subscale. This means that in terms of adjusting to the academic demands of the institution, two-year transfer students had significantly more difficulty adjusting when compared to the non-transfer student population in the CAES. Four-year transfer students did not differ from the non-transfers or two-year transfer student groups.

The ANOVA yielded a statistically significant difference on the Social Adjustment subscale at the $p < .05$ level, $F(2,111) = 110.75$, $p = .000$. The effect size calculated by eta squared was large, $\eta^2 = .16$. The Tukey HSD post-hoc test indicated that scores for the non-transfer group ($M = 54.512$, $SD = 9.58$) were statistically different from the two-year transfer group ($M = 43.94$, $SD = 11.1$) as well as from the four-year transfer group ($M =$

47.08, $SD = 17.08$). The scores for this subscale did not differ significantly between the two-year and four-year transfer groups. This result indicates that both two-year and four-year transfer students in the CAES had significantly more difficulty adjusting to the social and/or interpersonal demands at UGA when compared to the non-transfer student population. Two-year and four-year transfers did not differ from each other with regards to institutional attachment.

The ANOVA yielded a statistically significant difference in the Institutional Attachment subscale at the $p < .05$ level, $F(2, 111) = 6.83, p = .002$. The effect size calculated by eta squared was large, $\eta^2 = .11$. Tukey's HSD test indicated that scores for the non-transfer group ($M = 54.7, SD = 7.32$) was statistically different from the two-year transfer group ($M = 47.83, SD = 9.31$). The four-year transfer group ($M = 50.67, SD = 6.43$) did not differ significantly from either the non-transfer or two-year transfer groups on the Institutional Attachment subscale. This means that two-year transfer students feel less connected to the institution when compared to the non-transfer student population in the CAES and that four-year transfers did not differ significantly from non-transfer and two-year transfers.

The ANOVA yielded no significant difference in scores among the means of the Personal-Emotional Adjustment subscale, $F(2, 111) = 1.309, p = .27$. This means that transfer students (two-year and four-year) did not present with increased emotional or psychological distress when compared to the non-transfer student population in the CAES.

The ANOVA did not yield any statistically significant difference at the $p < .05$ level when evaluating the relationship among SACQ scores and hours earned prior to transferring among the transfer student sample. The ANOVA also did not yield any significant differences at the $p < .05$ level when it explored the relationship between previous academic probation involvement and SACQ scores among the two-year and four-year transfer groups. This means that the amount of hours earned prior to transferring and previous involvement with academic probation did not impact adjustment levels among the transfer student sample (two-year and four-year).

An independent-samples t-test was conducted to compare the mean on SACQ Full-Scale and subscales scores between the two-year and four-year transfer groups. The test did not identify any statistically significant differences in means. Table I presents mean scores for the two transfer student groups. As can be seen, although no significant differences were indicated, two-year transfer group means were consistently lower than the four-year transfer group means on the Full Scale and subscales of the SACQ. This may indicate that there could possibly be a significant difference present that the current analysis was not able to capture. Further analysis would be required to determine this difference.

Table I

SACQ scores for Two-year and Four-year Transfer students

SACQ Scale	Transfer Student Type	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
Full Scale	Two-year	45.89	11.03
Academic Adjustment	Four-year	49.5	9.2
	Two-year	47	8.83
Social Adjustment	Four-year	50.75	10.41
	Two-year	43.94	11.1
Personal Emotional Adjustment	Four-year	47.08	7.08
	Two-year	46.88	10.83
Institutional Adjustment	Four-year	47.83	11.34
	Two-year	47.83	9.31
	Four-year	50.67	6.43

Limitations

The gathering of data using an internet-based approach was limiting in many ways. This survey attracted a high percentage of non-transfer students. Although enough transfer students participated to be able to generate statistical results between non-transfers and two year-transfer students. The low participation by four-year transfer students raised the question regarding if a difference may be present between them and

non-transfer students in terms of adjustment. Also, the question concerning if there is a significant difference between two-year and four-year transfer student adjustment levels still remains. Additionally, the internet-based survey attracted a high percentage of students on regular academic status. Not enough students reported involvement with academic probation, specifically among the transfer student groups. This prevented the use of statistical analysis to explore the relationship of academic probation and adjustment among transfer students. The low number of transfer students is also believed to have impacted the exploration of the relationship between previous hours earned and adjustment.

Future research in the CAES exploring transfer student adjustment would need to obtain a larger sample of transfer students from two-year and four-year institutions as well as a larger sample of transfer students that have been on academic probation. This would allow researchers to better explore the relationships that the current study was unable to adequately explore. In addition to using an internet-based approach, future research may consider using approaches such as individual or group administration of the SACQ. The ACP may also wish to target all students on probation and attempt to gather voluntary responses from this population of students to compare with the current data.

The race and ethnicity of the sample for this study also presents as a limitation. The sample for this study was primarily and heavily Caucasian, 91.2%. It is difficult to generalize the results obtained to ethnic/racial minority groups and therefore the results should be interpreted cautiously. Past research has suggested that African American students at primarily White institutions have scored lower on various SACQ scales, see

(Sennett et al., 2003). This might warrant exploration of how race and ethnicity impact adjustment with CAES students at UGA. Given the small percentage of minority enrollment in the CAES, about 13%, it might seem more appropriate for future research to employ qualitative methods of investigation in exploring adjustment among this population of students in the CAES. Also, future research may wish to explore the relationship between ethnic/minority status and adjustment at the university wide level as apposed to a specific college within the university.

Other limitations of this study were that it did not explore for gender differences in adjustment nor did it explore for differences in adjustment scores and time at the university. Gender demographics were collected for descriptive purposes and information regarding time at the university was obtained for scoring purposes of the SACQ. It is unsure how these variables impact adjustment among the CAES student population. These are also areas that future research endeavors may wish to explore.

Discussion

The results of this pilot study suggest that students who transferred to the CAES at UGA from another institution experience increased adjustment difficulties when compared to students who enrolled as freshman. Particularly, the analysis of SACQ scores revealed that transfer students from two-year colleges in the CAES experience increased difficulty coping with the high educational demands, managing interpersonal and societal expectations, and presented with decreased levels of commitment to the institution. Although the sample did not report elevated involvement with academic

probation, the results support previous research claims which suggest that transfer students appeared to be at a greater risk of being placed on academic probation. The results seem to indicate that transfer students from two-year colleges are at a greater risk than transfer student from four-year institutions. Transfer students from two-year colleges in the CAES also seem to be at greater risk for experiencing interpersonal and social problems after they arrive at UGA. Additionally, the results suggest that transfer students from two-year colleges in the CAES are experiencing a lower sense of connection and attachment to the university. Although the results indicated that transfer students from four-year colleges/universities are faring better than their two-year college counterparts. The data suggests that they also seem to be experiencing increased difficulty in adjusting to the interpersonal and social demands of the institution when compared to non-transfers.

Given these findings and the high concentration of transfer student that have been involved in academic probation, the Academic Counseling Program (ACP) in the CAES seems as an appropriate resource to assist new transfer students as they transition to life at UGA. As previously mentioned, the ACP was designed to assist students in the CAES who are experiencing personal and/or academic difficulties. The academic counselor can utilize the data from this study when working with transfer students to explore if adjustment difficulties are impacting their academic performance and may utilize the SACQ as an assessment tool when working with students. The academic counselor may also be in an appropriate position to develop and/or facilitate transfer student seminar

sessions. These seminars may function as an additional informational session which can complement the orientation sessions that new transfer students already participate in.

All new incoming students in the CAES attend an orientation session that provides them important information on the CAES, the university, and with an opportunity to meet with their academic advisor. Although this is a program for all new students, it is not designed specifically for the needs that transfer students present with. Eggleston and Laanan, (2001) noted that there is a need for orientation programs designed exclusively for transfer students, to help them navigate institutional structures and the campus community. These programs should be designed to specifically address the needs of transfer students and assist them in transitioning to the new institution. Such programs can orientate transfer students to the new academic expectations, discuss the new interpersonal and social demands, provide information on social and networking opportunities, and inform them of the resources available to them.

Conclusion

Although students may transfer to the CAES at UGA for many reasons, primarily it is to further their academic achievements. Unfortunately, they seem to experience increased difficulty adjusting once they arrive. Transfer students, particularly those from two-year colleges, seem to be experiencing increased difficulties in areas that place them at higher risk for academic failure and which may impact their level of academic achievement at UGA. As the ACP has identified, a large percentage of transfer students have been involved in academic probation and dismissal. The data from this study helps

to better conceptualize possible factors which have contributed to the high numbers observed. The data also provides important information that could be utilized for advisement, counseling, and orientation purposes. Supporting transfer students academically, providing them with increased networking or social opportunities, and fostering a greater sense of connection to the university seems appropriate given the preliminary results of this study. The pilot study generated questions and identified limitations that may be addressed in future studies. It is hoped that this preliminary data is helpful and utilized to better serve transfer students as they transition and adjust to the College of Agriculture and Environmental Sciences at the University of Georgia.

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