

NISTS Webinar
July 28, 2025

Marjorie Dorimé-Williams, MDRC
Sophia Sutcliffe, MDRC

Insights & Strategies for Enhancing Transfer Student Success: How Faculty Members Influence Credit Transfer



01

Challenges & Key Findings

02

Transfer Student Outcomes

03

Recommendations

04

Transfer-Ready Framework & Toolkit

05

Q & A

Agenda

Current Landscape of Credit Transfer

The **credit transfer process** remains complex and varies significantly across institutions. In Texas, a complex context can impact faculty decision-making. Recognizing these factors is crucial for developing **effective strategies** to enhance transfer student outcomes and promote successful transitions between institutions.





Faculty Influence on Credit Transfer

Understanding the role of faculty in evaluating transfer credit efficacy and applicability

Key Findings & Challenges in Evaluating Transfer Credits

- 1 Credit Transfer vs. Credit Applicability
- 2 Disciplinary Differences and Field-Specific Approaches Matter
- 3 Data Systems and Information Infrastructure Challenges
- 4 Faculty Leadership and Perceptions Shape Outcomes
- 5 Faculty Decision-Making in Complex Systems





Transfer Student Outcomes

Findings & limitations of
cross-institutional data
analysis of transfer
students' outcomes

UTA Transfer Student Summary

Outcome	Mean	Sample Size
Enrolled after transfer (%)		
Semester 1	98.9	48,927
Semester 2	72.3	48,927
Semester 3	53.6	48,927
Semester 4	41.9	48,927
Semester 5	26.8	48,927
Semester 6	17.8	48,927
Earned bachelor's degree after transfer (%)		
Semester 1	0.0	30,658
Semester 2	1.3	30,658
Semester 3	6.8	30,658
Semester 4	17.9	30,658
Semester 5	27.6	30,658
Semester 6	36.7	30,658
Total credits		
Average number of credits earned upon graduation	151.2	16,390
GPA		
Average transfer GPA (all)	3.0	45,971
Average transfer GPA (graduating students only)	3.1	15,261
Average first-semester GPA after transfer (all)	2.8	48,927
Average first-semester GPA after transfer (graduating students only)	3.3	16,579
Average GPA upon graduation	3.4	16,579
Average GPA change between transfer and first semester (all)	-0.2	45,971
Average GPA change between transfer and first semester (graduating students only)	0.2	15,261
Average GPA change between first semester and graduation	0.1	16,579
Credit transfer (acceptance)		
Courses		
Average number of courses passed at sending institution	19.7	48,927
Average number of transfer courses that earned credit	18.6	48,917
Credit hours ^a		
Average number of transfer credits earned	54.6	48,917
Credit applicability ^b		
Average number of transfer credits applied at transfer	N/A	N/A
Average number of transfer credits applied at graduation	N/A	N/A
Sample size		48,927

UTEP Transfer Student Summary

Outcome	Mean	Sample Size
Enrolled after transfer (%)		
Semester 1	98.2	16,138
Semester 2	78.9	16,138
Semester 3	70.3	16,138
Semester 4	63.5	16,138
Semester 5	53.0	16,138
Semester 6	36.6	16,138
Earned bachelor's degree after transfer (%)		
Semester 1	0.0	10,323
Semester 2	0.2	10,323
Semester 3	1.4	10,323
Semester 4	6.6	10,323
Semester 5	12.4	10,323
Semester 6	22.0	10,323
Total credits		
Average number of credits earned upon graduation	139.9	6,657
GPA		
Average first-semester GPA post-transfer	2.8	15,913
Average first-semester GPA after transfer (graduating students only)	3.2	6,644
Average GPA upon graduation	3.3	6,657
Average GPA change between first semester and graduation	0.1	6,644
Credit transfer (acceptance)		
Average number of transfer credits earned	59.3	16,138
Credit applicability		
Average number of transfer credits applied at transfer	30.7	16,138
Average number of transfer credits applied at graduation	34.1	6,657
Sample size		16,138

Average Number of Transfer Credits Applied to Degree, by Major Subject Area

Transfer Credits Applied to Degree	Applied at Transfer		Applied at Graduation	
	Mean	Sample Size	Mean	Sample Size
Business or marketing	30	1,030	32	966
Communications	28	256	33	256
Education	26	390	46	359
Engineering	23	858	29	851
General or multi-interdisciplinary studies	41	339	33	553
Humanities	26	347	35	329
Natural sciences	31	635	34	585
Non-nursing health	34	588	41	566
Nursing	30	850	28	791
Social sciences	35	1,350	37	1,401

Total Credits Earned at Graduation, by Major Subject Area

Total Credits Earned at Graduation	UTA		UTEP	
	Mean	Sample Size	Mean	Sample Size
Business or marketing	136	1,801	138	967
Communications	129	490	140	256
Education	140	259	138	359
Engineering	152	1,495	151	851
General or multi-interdisciplinary studies	132	739	138	553
Humanities	140	870	146	329
Natural sciences	144	657	147	585
Non-nursing health	137	722	141	566
Nursing	166	7,640	133	791
Social sciences	131	1,717	135	1,401



Recommendations for Credit Transfer

Strategies for enhancing interdepartmental coordination and best practices in credit transfer processes.

Enhanced Communication



**Foster regular dialogue among
departments.**

Standardized Processes



**Develop clear, uniform credit transfer
guidelines.**

Faculty Training



**Provide ongoing professional
development for faculty.**

The Importance of Coordination and Collaboration

Challenge: Inefficient and / or inconsistent transfer credit evaluations.



**Process Standardization
and Transparent Policies**



**Course Record
Governance**



**Cross-Unit Coordination
and Collaboration**



- Transfer Credit Evaluators, Advisors, and Academic Departments should co-create guidance to develop consistent procedures while maintaining disciplinary flexibility.
- Use data to communicate the *why*

Case Study: Process Mapping

Process Mapping to support cross-functional alignment

University of Texas at Arlington (UTA)

As a university that accepts transfer students from dozens of sending institutions, UTA focused on information technology and professional development to strengthen and streamline internal transfer enrollment processes.

The group reviewed findings from the process-mapping activities and refined a Transfer Credit Evaluation and Course Equivalency guide to establish shared expectations and standard operating procedures for working together to improve the efficiency of transfer-credit evaluations.

Resource: [Transfer Enrollment Process Mapping Tools](#)

Leveraging Data to Guide Transfer Student Success

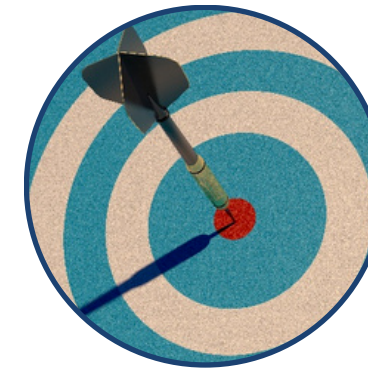
Challenge: Limited awareness of problems and accountability to progress



**Challenge Assumptions or
Provide Targeted Support**



**Data-driven Curricular
Reviews**



**Joint Strategy and
Accountability Framework**



- Data-driven Curricular Review: The UT System's [Exemplary Student Pathways Project](#)

Case Study: Joint Strategy and Curricular Review with Transfer Partners

Anchor transfer partnerships on student experiences and outcomes

University of Texas at Tyler (UTT)

UTT hosts annual Transfer Summits with each partner. Provosts, deans, chairs, and program coordinators gather to:

- Share and reflect on data on the success of the respective community college students at UTT
- Revisit its transfer guides for each academic pathway
- Discuss when to take courses and identify the most salient content needed to succeed in subsequent courses.

[Beyond Articulation Agreements](#)

Articulation and Curricular Alignment

Challenge: Aligning diverse and evolving curricula



**Course Equivalency
Policies and Strategic
Articulation**



**Technology- Assisted
Articulation**



**Deep Partnership on
Program Alignment**



- [ACCRAO Guide to Awarding Transfer and Prior Credit](#) and [Guide to Best Practices: Articulation Agreements](#)

Case Study: Co-enrollment and Co-curricular Design

“Two institutions, One Journey”

University of Texas at El Paso (UTEP)

The EPCC | UTEP Engineering Academy is not a standard 2+2 articulation agreement or transfer pathway, but a holistic program accomplished through the partnership of these two institutions. Graduates of the program will earn their associate's degree at EPCC and bachelor's degree at UTEP in civil, industrial, materials, electrical or mechanical engineering.

- Faculty members at EPCC and UTEP collaborated over the course of two years to align the curriculum and course schedules of both degree programs.
- Students are co-advised by a team of advisors from both institutions using a shared set of advising forms and degree

- [UTEP | EPCC Engineering Academy](#)

Toward a Transfer-Ready Student System

Smoothing the transfer path requires aligning people, processes, policies, and technology across departments and institutions.



Improving the Future of Transfer

Transfer-Ready Systems Assessment and Action-Planning Toolkit

- Developed by MDRC and the University of Texas System, provides a comprehensive framework for institutions to self-assess their transfer processes, identify gaps and opportunities, and develop evidence-driven solutions to improve transfer-readiness.
- The toolkit includes practical tools such as:
 - A [Transfer-Ready Systems Assessment Framework,](#)
 - [Self-assessment tools for institutional reflection,](#)
 - [Process-mapping tools to visualize workflows,](#)
 - [Focus group protocols to gather stakeholder input](#)

Collaborative Self-Assessment

The University of Texas System, University of Texas at Arlington, University of Texas at El Paso, University of Texas at Tyler

To implement sustainable, system-level changes to the transfer process, an action learning research project led by MDRC and the University of Texas System (UT) established two types of teams: the System Change Team and the Campus-Ready Team.

SYSTEM CHANGE TEAM

The System Office invited institutions to join the initiative, and two administrators from each participating university were selected to represent their institutions.

The System Change Team met monthly to shape the direction of inquiry, plan for broader stakeholder engagement, and share insights emerging across campuses.

CAMPUS TEAMS

Coordinators gathered progressively larger groups of their colleagues at three points in this project. First, to come up with a set of topics to explore and identify who or what should be incorporated in assessment activities. Next, to reflect on themes that emerged in assessment activities. Finally, to create, refine, or plan implementation of a solution.

Transfer-Ready Systems:

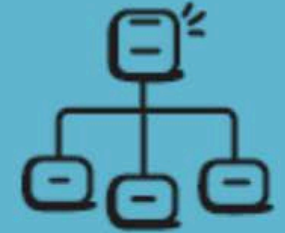
An Assessment and Action-Planning Toolkit

The activities within this toolkit were used to build and engage cross-functional teams at three universities to identify gaps and opportunities for their institutions to become more transfer-ready.

[Transfer-Ready Systems Assessment and Action-Planning Toolkit](#)

STEP 1: REVIEW FRAMEWORK

Review Transfer-Ready Systems Framework



STEP 2: BUILD TEAM

Bring Together a Transfer Ready Team



STEP 3: COLLECT INPUT

Collect Input and Evidence Using Self-Assessment Tools Provided



STEP 4: ENGAGE STAKEHOLDERS

From “Aha” to Action!

Engage stakeholders to interpret insights from self-assessment and identify leverage points



10 Transfer System Change Levers...


 **Public Commitment
and Leadership**

 **Institutional
partnerships**

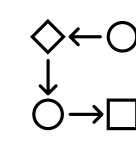
 **Policy**

 **Information
technology**

 **Professional
development and
rewards**

 **Curriculum
and co-
curriculum**

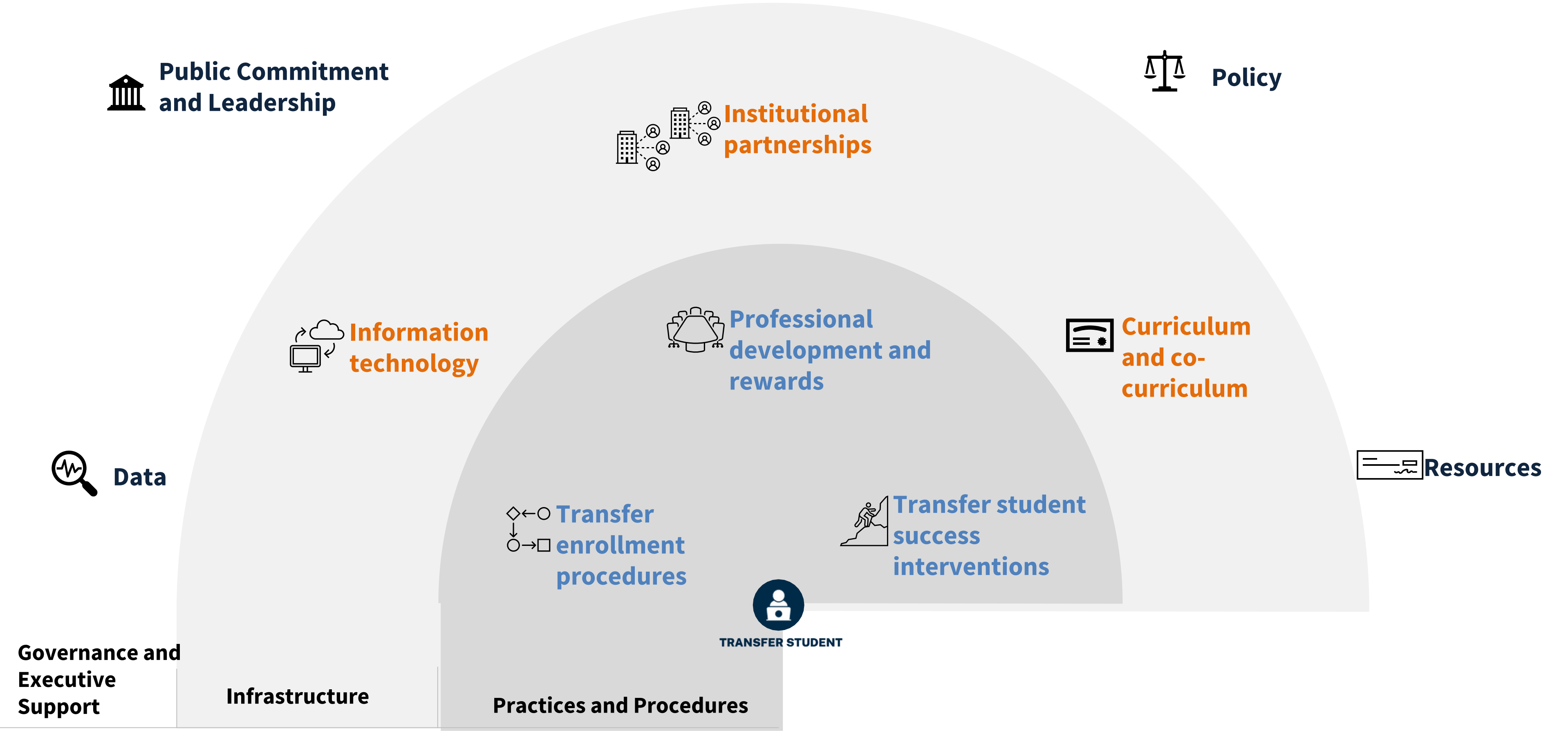
 **Data**

 **Transfer
enrollment
procedures**

 **Transfer student
success
interventions**

 **Resources**

Organized into 3 spheres of influence...



Potential applications

How might you use these self-assessment tools to create transfer tools for your institution?

Project	Transfer System Change Lever & Best Practice
Credit Evaluation Decision Trees	Policy - <i>Institutional Course Equivalency Policy</i>
Discipline-specific curricular alignment templates	Curriculum and Co-curriculum - <i>Degree Plan and Pathway Design</i>
Documentation templates – for recording credit evaluation rationale	Transfer Enrollment Procedures – <i>Transfer Credit Evaluation Operations</i>



Questions?