

Demystifying Transfer Shock

Triton Tools and Tidbits • Season 3, Episode 3 • Running Time 26:51 minutes

SUMMARY KEYWORDS

transfer, students, uc san diego, experiences, year, community college, institution, ucsd, community college students, community, angelica, transition, post graduation, studying, helping, gabriella, peers, classes, san diego, jesse

SPEAKERS

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Cesar Aceituno 00:00

Welcome Tritons, to Tritons Tools and Tidbits. I'm your host, Cesar Aceituno, and this week your episode is about the transfer experience featuring Jose Enrique, Angelica Bradley, and Gabriella Imai. So, the reason we are here today is to talk about the transfer community, because we want to dedicate this conversation to National Transfer Appreciation Week. I am a second-year transfer student and serve as a coach for the Triton Transfer Hub. Though you want to speak on experiences of the transfer community. There are recurring themes that we see that the transfer student experiences, such as transfer shock and transfer tax. Transfer shock is a theme that we have studied through education scholars that examine the transition from community college into university. We see students dropping grades and have trouble build the community. So, you want to cover that this is a process, but there's ways to get past it. Transfer Tax to the cost that transfer students carry, as a result for only having two years at the four-year institution - college struggled to adapt and take advantage of the various programs and resources that can prove positive outcomes post-graduation, into careers, or graduated programs. We're excited to have you here to experience our podcasts, let's dive in. To introduce you, my mentor himself, Jesse Enrique. Jesse, tell us about yourself and what made you interested and learning about transfer students.

Jesse Enrique 01:10

You know, I got the opportunity to work with Cesar this this summer and he got a glimpse of what you know what it means to do research, what it means to be a researcher, what it means to engage and be part of the university environment. This is something that community college transfer students, they're not participating as much as the general, traditional four-year student that comes in as a first year and is able to graduate in four years. What originally got me into the topic of kind of exploring and examining community college students and their experiences into four-year institutions was really, back when I was in high school. Everyone in my community in my high school, all went to community college. That was just the norm. I happen to be the one that out of all my peers to really go straight into a four year. Thinking about that almost 15 years later, many of my peers that went on to the community college never finished. They never got a degree. They never got that diploma.

Jesse Enrique 02:30

So, I always wondered, why was I the one that made it out? Why? Why didn't they all come with me, right? Why don't we all go straight to four-year university? That's what initially sparked my interest in studying and examining community colleges and community college students and their pathways two to four-year institutions. Then what really crystallized it and brought it home for me was when I was working for UC San Diego as a Student Affairs Admissions Officer, recruiting students of color. Specifically, community college students all over the state of California, in Los Angeles, in the Bay Area, and then here in San Diego. And just seeing firsthand kind of the hoops that they got to jump through and all the red tape, and all this bureaucracy, and all these prerequisites, and all these major prep requirements that they have in front of them as they attempt to transfer to selective institutions like UC San Diego.

Cesar Aceituno 03:34

Thanks, Jesse. That's very insightful. To pick up from what you're saying, from your perspective, what makes the transfer student experience distinct from other students?

Jesse Enrique 03:44

It's unique in so many ways. I think first and foremost, we have to acknowledge that community college transfer students are essentially first year students at a four-year institution. They come in new to the quarter system, a new academic environment that's fast paced, that is different. They're coming specifically to a research institution, where before they used to be in a community college setting, that was just very different. So, they're coming into this new academic environment. A lot of community college students are coming in also to a new social environment. They're coming to San Diego for the first time - living in La Jolla or the surrounding San Diego community for the first time. A lot of them, are just new to this new environment of the UC system. It's kind of like starting fresh, right? What I'm what seeing - I'm uncovering in my research is that there's a transition that happens that is often complex to navigate as well. But students - community college students come ready and highly motivated to come in and get the job done.

Jesse Enrique 05:07

Sometimes it comes so highly motivated, they just want to be in and out, because they've been through so much in the community college system. And they have overcome so many obstacles, that they are like, oh my gosh, how many more years do I need to go to complete this bachelor's degree? Sometimes that can be a good thing, because it could be a motivational factor, a motivational drive. What I'm going to coin - I'm coining this term transfer drive, this desire to come in and succeed. You know, hit the ground running. But it can also be a lot of pressure for students to be in and out. Because of there are some financial implications of being in school for X amount of years. There are expectations, a lot of times to be the first one in your family to get a degree. There's a lot of other expectations, that come along with transferring. Those are just some of the major things, themes that I've seen, that I've come across in interviewing and working with several transfer students at UC San Diego.

Cesar Aceituno 06:21

Thank you. I agree, we do see that there's a lot of elitism and gatekeeping. There's this culture that continues to uphold such ideologies. Your research coincides with a lot of ways in how to help these

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transfer students navigate these systems. How would you say is like an effective way to support our transfer students and incorporate them to actually access these resources?

Jesse Enrique 06:42

Well, we got to start off by addressing it and acknowledging that community college students, there are third of the population every year. That one out of three students at UC - and this is across the UC system - are coming through the community college pipeline pathway. We got to start by acknowledging that they're here. Acknowledging their intersectional identities. We got to acknowledge the strengths and assets that they come with, to these institutions. Institutions go to be responsive to community college students and their needs. So, when those things are in place, students can be successful. This is all the way from recruiting students, giving them accurate information about what it takes to transfer, to the transition to a UC or to any four-year institution, and really helping them seamlessly transition in a successful manner.

Jesse Enrique 07:49

Whether that's through programs or orientations that are not just a half a day - that are a day or two days or a whole week. Or that are really tailored to the needs of community college transfer students. Because what I hear when I'm interviewing students, and I hear this a lot, is that they come in for a day or two and they really don't get oriented as well as they should. Because they have all these questions and they just get kind of jumbled up with the general population of students. They're asking and they're seeking for tailored programming orientations, specifically for community college students. I think when you put those things in place, like the Transfer Hub, right, they make the transition and adjustment to the foreign institution a little easier.

Cesar Aceituno 08:43

Thanks, Jessie. And thank you for participating in this podcast. I think this is a good segue to talk to my peers and talk about their transfer experiences. I would like to introduce my peers, Gabriella Imai, Angelica Bradley. I would like to ask y'all, if you can briefly introduce yourselves. Can you talk about where you transferred from, your major, and what you want to get out of UCSD?

Gabriella Imai 09:10

Hey everyone, my name is Gabriella Imai. I'm from Thurgood Marshall College. My pronouns are she, her, hers. My hometown is Torrance, California. I transferred here from El Camino College. Basically, when I came to UC San Diego I was definitely looking for a community. Being in Torrance basically my whole life, incoming here was definitely a big transition for me. But it was relatively a smooth ride going into it.

Angelica Bradley 09:40

Hi, guys, I'm Angelica. I'm a marine bio major. Second year transfer. My hometown is Hardin, Missouri - you would never know where that is. What I want out of UCSD, honestly, I just want to be working in someone's lab. Preferably my own, eventually. But for now, I'll work in someone else's lab.

Cesar Aceituno 10:06

Thank you. Transfer students currently make up 1/3 of UC San Diego's undergraduate student body and our diverse demographic with unique needs. In 2016, 70% of incoming transfer students were

students of color. 50% were first in their families to go to college. Nine out of ten student veterans identify as transfer students. And one out of five international students are transfer students. Angelica is a student veteran and currently serves as a peer navigator for the Student Veterans Resource Center. Angelica, can you go over what led you to your pathway to UCSD being a veteran, being a non-traditional reentry student? Can you speak on that?

Angelica Bradley 10:46

I graduated high school forever ago, and I went to Mizzou [University of Missouri] for a year and decided that was way too expensive and it just didn't feel right. I felt like I applied because a lot of my friends did it and then I got there and it just didn't seem like it was for me. So, I kind of told my parents that I was joining the military as a joke. Then they were like, no, you're not gonna do that. I mean, it turns out I really wasn't kidding. Then I spent six years as a Farsi linguist for the Air Force. And my last two years, while in the military, I decided that I wanted to move to San Diego. Obviously UCSD was the choice. I moved here without even knowing that I was going to be accepted and I was just hoping that it would work out. And it did. marine bio was actually my second choice major. I applied for microbiology, but I mean, thankfully, I didn't get it because I feel really at home.

Cesar Aceituno 11:51

Yeah, of course. Can both of you cover on how your transition went into UC San Diego?

Gabriella Imai 11:57

I feel like it was definitely a little hard for me at first because like I said before, I lived in the same town 15 years or 17 years. And in the same house for the same amount of time, too. So, I was definitely a homebody I didn't really realize it until I moved to UC San Diego. I definitely realized I was also really comfortable as well, because I felt like coming here I didn't really know anyone. I didn't have a set group of friends and that made me feel kind of isolated in some way. But I definitely tried to put myself out there as much as possible. I went all like the club meetups went to - I interviewed for like AS the largest student government and then the Marshall - because I am in Marshall College, Marshall College Student Council. I finally found like a kind of place where I feel happy and comfortable with. I'm surrounded by people who have the same ideals and ways of thinking as me as well. Which is also like really nice and cool. But definitely the first quarter was a little bit hard going into. The second it was getting a lot better, really nice. And of course, COVID happened, but we're still we're still living. You're still doing great.

Cesar Aceituno 13:10

Thank you, Angelica, what did you do to navigate after finding your footing post first quarter?

Angelica Bradley 13:16

I guess I got comfortable by Fall. Yeah, it was like after a few quarters, because quarter system was pretty rough, really quick. I basically put everything about my life into Google calendars and kind of lived that way. I didn't even like apply to work for the SVRC [Student Veterans Resource Center] till - over the summer I saw a job ad through handshake. At that time, I figured like I was comfortable enough with how things go at UCSD that I could even handle something else other than my classes. But just being organized in that way really helps. You think that - at least for me, I thought I could just keep it all on my head and just do things the way I had been doing them. But that just doesn't work.

Because to me things pop up at the same time and then you lose one and then it's just downhill from there. So, just being organized helps a lot.

Cesar Aceituno 14:19

Thank you for sharing. Gaby, what are your post-graduation aspirations? And what are you doing to prepare for that?

Gabriella Imai 14:26

Yeah, so right now I'm studying for the GRE which is very it's a very daunting process especially since I'm I feel personally, I'm not the best at standardized testing. Especially since I didn't really do the SATs - well it wasn't required for transfer students. I only took it once, didn't really study for it, didn't really get good score. So that has definitely been a process, but as of right now that's kind of what I've been studying for the math portion. Because it's pretty intense. I noticed a lot of colleges actually not requiring GRE scores, which is kind of nice. So that's kind of an upside to that as well. But I'm applying for, depending on the school, my master's in public policy or public affairs. That's kind of what I've been looking into, I know that I have with my degree right now - or the degree I will be getting in sociology, I won't be able, or I'll be able to do as much good as I can. But I know that with a master's degree, I'll be able to do more good for - places I want to work in such as immigration or social justice kind of realm. So, that's kind of where I'm heading right now.

Cesar Aceituno 15:50

Wishing you the best of luck, Angelica, can you also touch on what are you doing to prepare for your aspirations post-graduation?

Angelica Bradley 15:57

For sure. I've only recently figured out more or less what I want to do. I want to - well, I am actively pursuing the master's program in biological oceanography. It was kind of like a toss-up between the BS-MS program, which basically just adds one more year on to your undergrad and then you get a Master's. Or just go ahead and do the full master's program, which I decided because that's the only way you can do the biological oceanography pathway. Right now, what I've been doing is just emailing professors, which has been really awkward because I haven't met almost all of them. And kind of blowing up their inbox like, hey, this is weird, I've never met you but I'm a fourth year. and I would really like the chance to volunteer if that's possible. But I mean, we're in a pandemic, and they're not really taking many volunteers and labs. So, a lot of us like have to keep going, keep emailing them even though it's awkward. And I've been talking to the graduate advisors to make sure that I'm taking the right classes.

Cesar Aceituno 17:09

Thank you both for sharing. I have one more question for you. Looking back, what has been all the difference within your experiences at UCSD? What grounded yourself, and what's been transformative for your time here?

Gabriella Imai 17:22

Okay. I feel like for me, while I've only experienced two full or some full quarters at UCSD in person, I've definitely valued my experiences, like in student government and finding a team there. I think since

I was also in Student Government at Community College, they were the people who helped me kind of believe in myself and motivated me to even apply to UCs. I didn't even know I was capable enough to get into a UC, I was just going to apply to state schools. So, transferring going into like the UC environment, going back into Student Government, I feel it's kind of the same atmosphere. We're all motivated, all wanting to do the most for people. All wanting to strive for better and just to help people in general and feel like that's an experience that I will cherish forever and that I will take with me wherever I go. Also, into my grad years.

Angelica Bradley 18:30

For me, what has made a lot of difference with my experiences here, is honestly just like being thankful for it. Because I think it's really easy to get caught up in complaining about things. Especially when we're in person, you'd complain about a class you don't like, or a certain professor, or when your classes are back-to-back and you have to run from your one class to the next. I just have to remind myself like, this was my dream and I'm here and I made it. You have to embrace all of it and you don't get to pick like the negative things and take them out. It's all part of the process. Also, none of my peers that I grew up with will ever get this chance. I grew up in the middle of the country and now I'm here on the coast, studying marine biology in San Diego. I'm just really thankful for it.

Cesar Aceituno 19:21

Yeah, I would have to say that it's been a very surreal moment, just taking it all in and just be appreciative of the time being here. Jesse has one more question for the both of you, if you all feel comfortable speaking on it.

Jesse Enrique 19:34

Thank you for the opportunity to ask a question. And thank you for sharing. What would you say was the hardest challenge for you coming from the community college system to the four year, for you? And then if you could speak to a little bit about how you overcame that challenge or obstacle as you transitioned in.

Gabriella Imai 19:58

Going in from community college to UC San Diego, it was really hard for me to navigate and know every little thing that I'm supposed to do. I feel like UC San Diego doesn't try to help us through that process as much. Because I remember logging on to WebReg for the first time to go into classes and I was very confused on what exactly to do. I was kind of just there alone trying to guess what classes are I needed and it was just very hard. Then kind of going when moving here after that, I feel like there's just not a lot of preparation. That's also what you talked about earlier, Jesse I know. And I'd just like to amplify that as well, because I feel like it's quite a big jump from community college to the UC system. It's definitely a lot more fast paced and that's what we were talking about as well. We tend to get left behind when going through that experience. They don't really take that into account, they just kind of push us in, and hopefully we'll make it through. I feel like that's something that they need to help us navigate through and focus on more for transfer students. But I definitely again, I cannot emphasize on how much I value my community and teamwork for helping me when I have questions, they'll help me do this or they'll will help me do that. I've definitely valued my community and friendships for helping each other out in any which way we can.

Angelica Bradley 21:31

I agree with what Gabby said. But - the hardest thing is finding your niche, at least for me. Because I just feel - well, I am, and then I also feel a lot older than a lot of the students. I feel like all the students know that I'm older and I'm just like, oh my God, this is so awkward. How I kind of got over that was just sticking to what I know - I'm here, I deserve to be here just as much as the first year, four-year students. Then finding communities that you fit into, like the SVRC because - at least with nuances with student veterans. We come from a community where you go to one person, and that one person can tell you all the things that you need. Whereas when you're at UC, every little department has a point of contact. And I'm not used to like having to set up for myself.

Cesar Aceituno 22:28

I have one closing question. This podcast is going to be released to the transfer community in all of UC San Diego students. What do you want the UC San Diego community know about transfer students? And this question can be answered by all of you.

Gabriella Imai 22:42

I'd want them to know that we're here, there's a lot of us and there needs to be more focused around us. I guess, just more concentration on helping us navigate through everything. Also, making us feel that we deserve here, because I know a lot of us also doubt that as well. In making sure that we belong here, especially because I know I've heard some stuff about - I know, for a couple of transfers, they didn't get to experience a Transfer Hub. Thankfully, that was being built. I know that was being built. But I recently just heard that transfer housing isn't going to be done for another two years. There's just a lot of different things that definitely affect transfer students in ways I don't think administration really thinks about. I just kind of like to echo transfer students' voices, and I just want them to know that we're here and that we need as much support and help as they give other students.

Angelica Bradley 23:44

Yeah, I think that's so true. I feel like UC San Diego, like they cater to four years students who come here and they're like, okay, these students are gonna need their degree plan written out. Whereas, when I first went to my advisor, she's like, oh, yeah, just take these classes. And I was wondering, there's no way I'm gonna graduate in two years. And she was like, oh, no, you'll get there, it's fine, just keep doing what you're doing. And I'm not gonna graduate next year. I learned that it's more realistic that transfers graduate in three years. So, just more attention and don't automatically assume that just because we're transfers that we just know already what we're doing when it's a completely different environment.

Jesse Enrique 24:30

I think that UC San Diego is making strides to become a more transfer receptive culture and environment and welcoming for transfer students. Hence, the Transfer Hub. I think a couple of you alluded to a couple of opportunities on campus that you can get - you can participate in like AS - that the colleges have some specific programming tailored for community college students. So, there's definitely supports and programming that is again, tailored for incoming community college students. I think we just need to be - as an institution do a better job of reaching out to all third of those students that are coming in, again here every year. And being more intentional in really making it seamless, from beginning to end.

Ceasar Aceituno 25:33

Thank you all for participating in this podcast. I'm very passionate about the transfer community and the transfer community at UCSD. I hope this makes a difference to all of you who are listening and creates a positive change in your transition to UCSD. Our discussion centers around how to navigate the system at the university, once transfer students arrive. We are hoping that our transfer community is listening, that they realize that there are ways to overcome these barriers and create positive experiences during the time here. Another thing as a closing thought is we see a lot of elitist ideologies and gatekeeping that exists within the university culture. So, one thing I want to emphasize that we need to dismantle such ideologies and create a culture that is inclusive towards all the communities that exist at the university, and not just a select few, who know how to take advantage of these opportunities. Thank you for experiencing our podcasts on the transfer experience. I am Ceasar Aceituno. I hope you all have a great week and we'll see you back next week on Triton Tools and Tidbits.