

STUDENT-LED TRANSFER ACTION PROJECT

TRANSFER STUDENT INTERVIEW FINDINGS



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PROJECT SUMMARY

ONCAT is committed to elevating transfer students' experiences, priorities, and ideas to support transfer system transformation in Ontario. As such, ONCAT offers funding to support projects developed by transfer students for transfer students.

The scope of this particular project was to develop an easily digestible document that directly involves transfer student experiences. The transfer student author interviewed other transfer students and summarized the results into this finished, accessible product.

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- 03** Summary of Common Factors
- 04** Student Profile Summary: Curtis
- 05** Student Profile Summary: Valeriya
- 06** Student Profile Summary: Jane

FOLLOW US



SUMMARY OF COMMON FACTORS

MOTIVATIONS FOR TRANSFER

- All three respondents expressed a desire to attend university.
- All wanted to upgrade their skills and gain new experiences.
- All noted that college was more accessible and less expensive.

OBSTACLES TO TRANSFER

- The number-one obstacle to transfer is a lack of access to clear information.
- Students do not know or understand the process until they start it.
- Students lack guidance and advice from professionals in the field.
- Results are not predictable.

WHAT HELPED

- Pre-determined pathways, such as from Seneca to York, or Canadore to Nipissing, proved to be most helpful for those navigating the process.
- Pathway booklets offered by institutions were also beneficial; although not all information is provided through a booklet, at least it gives a starting point.
- Dedicated Staff were vital, even if certain staff members consulted were not even in the transfer departments at their institutions.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR SECTOR PARTNERS

- Provide more support for students and be more user-oriented.
- Hire additional support staff, and invest in crafting simpler explanations.
- Explain more carefully how transfer credits are calculated.
- Invest in additional and more widespread engagement and awareness campaigns.

ADVICE FOR STUDENTS

- Attend open houses and ask questions to current students and staff.
- Network with professionals already in the industry
- Collect information such as timelines, costs.
- Take your time; learning is not a race and should be done at a comfortable pace.



CURTIS TILBURY

Student Profile Summary

CONTACT

 /curtistilbury

“If I went in and asked any kinds of questions, the people working at Canadore College were willing to answer them — even if they weren’t about attending their institution.”

ABOUT

Curtis took a diploma in culinary management at Fanshawe College and worked as a cook for three years before returning to school as a mature transfer student. He started his business education at Canadore College and is finishing a Bachelor of Commerce at Nipissing University.

Curtis transferred laterally, from college to college (Fanshawe to Canadore, with three general electives and a communications course) and then from college to university (Canadore to Nipissing, with 60 credits, or the equivalent to two years of study).

MOTIVATION TO TRANSFER

- To further his education. Curtis wanted to take a business diploma and turn it into a degree, while taking advantage of both learning styles of college and university—and to prepare to be a CPA.
- Location. Nipissing class sizes seemed smaller than other business schools.
- Word of mouth. Curtis heard someone else had transferred a communication course from Fanshawe to Canadore with a positive outcome.

OBSTACLES TO TRANSFER

At first, the process sounded like too much work. Curtis questioned if he would get enough credits to justify the decision. Moreover, there were transfer costs and new program costs to consider.

WHAT HELPED

- Curtis worked in the Credit Transfer and Pathways Office at Canadore College, so he was able to navigate his part of the transfer process.
- Offices at each institution were helpful. In particular, Curtis found Canadore College staff very informative.
- Since Curtis had a history with OSAP and had already paid off a student loan, he found it easier to make financial choices related to the program cost of transfer.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR SECTOR PARTNERS

- Bring awareness of the pathways to students at the beginning of their postsecondary careers. Students are discovering pathways available to their program during, not before—and this prevents students from understanding the purpose of transferring and from customizing their education.
- Establish better communications between institutions where established pathways would benefit both institutions.



VALERIYA GAZIZOVA

Student Profile Summary

CONTACT

 /valeriya-gazizova-89b540b0

“Many international students don’t actually realize that transferring is an opportunity. In some countries, credits aren’t as readily accepted by other schools.”

ABOUT

Being an international student, and aiming to get a university degree eventually, Valeriya wanted to get a feel for the Canadian education system by entering college first. She transferred from Seneca College to York University.

MOTIVATION TO TRANSFER

Valeriya wanted to earn a few credits at college, understand how essay writing works and how the system is organized, then transfer to university. From her perspective, Canada provided a unique chance for international students to take courses and then have them transferred to other programs—something not offered in other systems!

OBSTACLES TO TRANSFER

When Valeriya came to Canada, her high school grades needed to be translated (from Russian) and notarized, and then she needed to pass a qualification test in Canada. Once she began her transfer process, she had to:

- specify she was an international student;
- provide extra documentation (especially hard with an “unclear process” with a “lack of guidance and advice”; and
- pay higher fees (tuition prices “completely remove” the idea of following a transfer pathway for most international students).

This was a to process all at once—which makes her believe that the biggest struggle for international students is time. Visas only last for so long and processes are strict.

WHAT HELPED

Aside from conducting research herself, Valeriya found Seneca College and York University had helpful, pre-established pathways that streamlined the process. The resource that provided the most help was a transfer booklet offered by York.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR SECTOR PARTNERS

- Be more user-oriented—and remember that users (and the primary group benefiting from transfer) are students.
- Offer more support staff, simpler explanations, better walk-throughs, and improved breakdowns of how transfer is calculated.

ADVICE FOR STUDENTS

- Do a self-reflection and examine your motivations. Ask yourself why you want to transfer.
- Make sure you understand where you can maximize the work you’ve already completed. Prepare to do a lot of research!
- Collect information such as timelines and costs. These are the most important factors for an international student because is tuition is steep and timelines are tricky because you’re working with visas and the Government of Canada.



JANE DAVIS

Student Profile Summary

Unique Issues

- Due to the type of work Jane had completed, she was unable to get a loan for tuition and had to attend her school on credit, resulting in her institution withholding her accreditation until the credit was paid off.
- She needed a high-interest loan to pay off her tuition to get papers from the school in order to work.
- Jane received a diploma instead of a degree due to not having a previous degree.

ABOUT

Jane has attended several different postsecondary institutions, going back 20 years. Step one was the International Academy of Design in 1999 (now known as York University). She started with a two-year interior design program, but found it difficult due to issues with teachers and students, the programs and software; she left the school after one year. Later, she went into carpentry, starting at Conestoga College. After earning a transfer credit there, she moved to the College of Carpenters and Allied Trades (a union-employer construction skills school) and eventually started teachers' college at Brock University in 2017.

MOTIVATION TO TRANSFER

- Jane wanted recognition for her hard work and prior learning.
- She realized needed a degree in order to progress in her career.

OBSTACLES TO TRANSFER

For Jane, there was a lack of guidance on pathways available for prior learning.

WHAT HELPED

Helpful faculty from another department made the transfer process easier.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR SECTOR PARTNERS

Provide clearer guidance to students. If better supports were in place, Jane would have never gone to a private school; she would have done more research and took her time choosing a proper pathway.

ADVICE FOR STUDENTS

- Attend open houses and post questions to other current students and staff. Network with professionals already in the industry.
- Take your time. Learning is not a race and should be done at a comfortable pace. This is key to understanding anything new and foreign!