# GAINING INSTITUTIONAL BUY-IN FOR A STREAMLINED TRANSFER CREDIT EVALUATION PROCESS

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## LEARNING OUTCOME

### After participating…

…you will be able to take a strategic approach to gaining buy-in for a more streamlined transfer credit evaluation process.

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## AGENDA

- Brief background on case studies
- Conducting a self-audit of your process
- Gaining buy-in and making the case
- Moving forward

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## POLL

**What office do you represent?**

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## A LITTLE ABOUT ME…

- Have been in higher education for 20 years.
- I have experience working in Financial Aid, Admissions, Scholarships and the Registrar's Office
- For the past 5 years I have had the pleasure of serving as the Associate Registrar for Degree and Transfer Evaluation and the Military and Veteran Education Benefit Office.
- I have been successful in adding 4 additional FTE and 2 new software systems to the unit as well as streamlining processes and procedures.

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## OUR PROCESS

- Today, post-secondary transcripts arrive at the Office of Admission and are scanned into an imaging system (there are currently two being utilized).
- Based on the student's admission decision or continuing student status, a workflow is generated to the Degree Analyst alerting them that a transcript evaluation is needed.
- Coursework is manually transferred from the transcript in to the Transfer Equivalency system (u.achieve/DARS)

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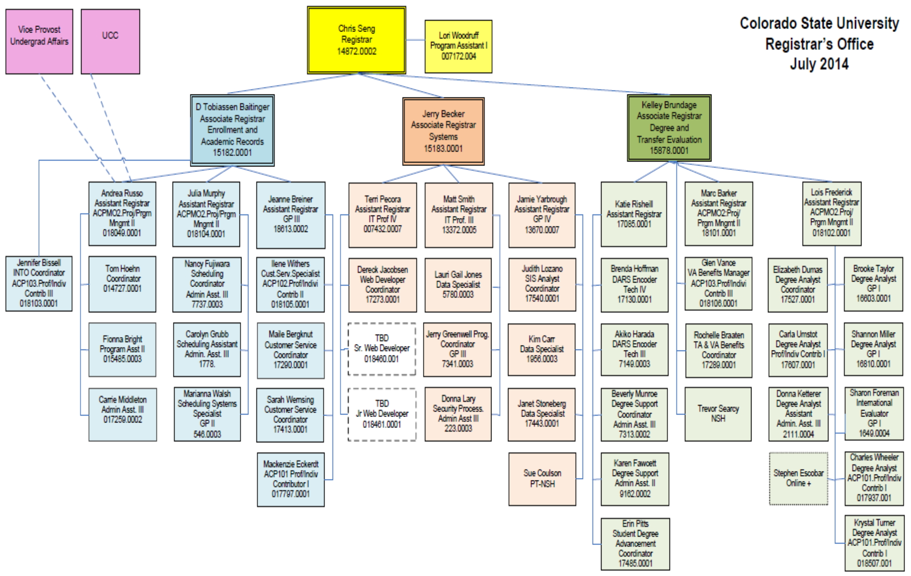


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## BRIEF BACKGROUND ON CASE STUDIES

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## CASE STUDY #1

When I was hired on at CSU 5 years ago, I was given three distinct directives:

1. The Registrar's Office did not have the best reputation on campus and we needed to work hard to change this image.

2. Don't automatically say 'No' to a request or idea – instead; consider, bring back, and discuss.

3. Get to the heart of policy vs. business practice with my unit staff.



## CASE STUDY #2

- In 2014, we experienced our first significant delay in evaluation. We have a Colorado Department of Higher Education (CDHE) mandate to evaluate domestic transcripts in 30 business days.

- For the first time in years we were above that 30 day marker – right before semester start

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## CONDUCTING A SELF-AUDIT OF YOUR PROCESS

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## POLL

**What is your top barrier to conducting a review/self-audit of your transfer evaluation process?**

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## THE QUESTION:

**DO WE HAVE A PROBLEM?**

- Our gut instincts told us that Transfer Credit Evaluation was growing and that staff resources were not enough.
- But we started asking ourselves: is there really a problem, or are we just feeling the pressure of more students applying?
- *Did we really have a problem?*

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## POLICY VS. BUSINESS PRACTICE

Needed to clarify what was built due to a mandated policy, versus something that was created or set up based on history/business practice.

Started asking the following questions:

- *Why do we do this?*
- *What drives the decision?*
- *If policy, where is it located?*
- *If a business practice, who decided and why?*

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## CONDUCTING A UNIT SELF-ASSESSMENT


- At CSU we decided to pull together the Functional unit (what we call our Degree Analysts) for a series of brainstorming meetings to discuss Transfer Evaluation.
- The meeting was run by the Registrar with the support of the Associate and Assistant Registrar for that unit.

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## THE MEETING

**Tasked and Led by the Registrar**
*Associate and Assistant Registrar were observers and sometimes facilitators.*

**Asked for volunteers from the functional unit**
*We did not want to make it mandatory.*

**Then, we invited a few others from other Registrar units to be involved.**

*Total participation:* ***11 people***

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## SET THE GROUND RULES

**BEST PRACTICE**

- Have some pre-planned ground rules
- Start out by asking the group to list what *they* think should be included in the ground rules

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## MEETING GROUND RULES

- #1 goal = not to agree, but to gain deeper understanding
- Value added conversations
- Listen respectfully (no side conversations)
- Be engaged – participate
- Speak from your experience – no generalizing; don't invalidate someone else's story or idea
- Be conscious of body language & nonverbal responses
- Most importantly – think outside the box & have FUN!

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## THE MAIN QUESTION TO KEEP IN MIND

- When evaluating a process or discussing a particular item, the staff were also tasked to keep in mind…..
  1. What drives the process?
  2. Is this a policy or business practice (procedure)?
  3. How do I know this?
  4. What research have I done (if any)?
- *Example: 30 business day requirement for evaluation of transcripts. Staff swore it was state law, but……*

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## TOP 4 QUESTIONS WE DISCOVERED

**What Works?**
No changes are needed or desired by the group.

**What Doesn't Work?**
What changes are needed or highly desired?

**What Is A Quick Fix?**
With few resources or outside conversation, it can be fixed today.

**What Is a Future Item?**
The idea will either take additional resources or outside conversation to solve.

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## DATA, DATA, AND MORE DATA

- Take stock of what you know about your process
  - The gut-check
  - What are the functional users saying?
- What (if any) data elements do you have at your disposal?
  - What reports do you have today?
  - What are you missing?
- Use your Resources!

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## MY DATA CHECKLIST

1. If I were _______________, what would I want to know about ____________?
2. Do I have _______________ that will get me that information?
3. Does the ________________ or _______________ in my state have any data available?
4. What _______________ is the __________ stored in? Do I have __________?

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## GATHER AND REVIEW DATA

1. Important to gather existing and missing data elements
2. Get the data/report(s)
3. Review and Analyze
4. Summarize

Pull that data back in to your conversations with your *Functional Users* and discuss results. Does it change any of the recommendations or discussion?



## EXAMPLE: TOP DATA ITEMS

Full Transcript Evaluation for a 2nd Bachelor's Degree-Seeking student

*Current policy:*

We evaluate **all** post-secondary transcripts for all 2nd Bach admits.

*Our Gut Instinct:*

We do a lot of work (average of 4-6 transcripts/admit) for very little outcome.

## DATA DISCOVERIES

**Started with our internal IT resources and expanded to our Institutional Research Office**

2nd Bachelor's from Fall 2007 to Fall 2014

| | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Admitted | Enrolled | % | |
| | 2594 | 585 | 23% | |
| New | 1 | | | |
| Transfer | 981 | | | |
| Non Degree | 2 | | | |
| Readmit | 754 | | | |
| Continuing | 9 | | | |
| | 1747 | + | 847 Blanks | 2594 |

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## DATA DISCOVERIES

**Started with our internal IT resources and expanded to our Institutional Research Office**

| | Admitted | Enrolled (New or TRNS) | % | Total Enrolled all 2nd BA std types | Completed 2nd BA | Changed to GR/PR | Avg Transfer Cr - Admitted | Avg Cr over 10 Yrs - Admitted | # of Stds with over 10 ys | % of Admit with Older Wk |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Overall Avg: | 118 | 48 | 31% | 85 | 7 | 2 | 71 | 26 | 17 | 11% |

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## PULLING IT ALL TOGETHER

*IMPORTANT: Take notes (assign an official note-taker) for every meeting.*

- Create a comprehensive report from all of your notes and meetings
- Incorporate any and all data into the report
- Make sure to cover the Key Items

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## KEY ITEMS FOR THE REPORT

1. Overview/Background
2. Committee Membership
3. Discussion and Discoveries
4. What Works
5. What Doesn't Work
6. Recommendations
7. Appendix showing Data

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## QUESTIONS



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## GAINING BUY-IN AND MAKING THE CASE

## WHO ARE MY STAKEHOLDERS? - EVEN IF THEY DON'T KNOW IT YET

- Make a quick list of Key Players that are currently involved with your office
- Then, make a list of those that you **need** to be involved



## CSU STAKEHOLDERS

What was obvious to us:

Students, Academic Advisors, Staff Support for Departments

Specialty Groups: Athletics, International Students, Veterans

Academic Key Players:

Vice Provost for Undergraduate Affairs

Associate Deans

Department Chairs

Key Faculty Advisors

## MAKING A CONNECTION

- Overcoming our Reputation
  - We were known as the “No” people and not the office you wanted involved in the conversation.

- SO….We created a plan at our Leadership level to change that perception. We began a targeted campaign to make connections across offices.

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## MAKING A CONNECTION

BEST PRACTICE

“The small things” count:

Ask other offices questions, and ask for guidance on topics related directly to their area of expertise or job function.

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## CONNECTION STRATEGIES

- **Why was a particular area an opponent?**
- Discovered that it was because they really didn't know what we did and how it connected to them
- **How could we make them an ally?**
- Began to be intentional with our messages and language when working with these areas. Always staying positive and giving praise and thanks when we could.
- **Who are your nay-sayers?**
- Constant reinforcement that we want to be in alignment with the Academic intent of a policy or process.

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## CONNECTING WITH PROVOST'S OFFICE

**1. Started with an Introduction**

Registrar introduced the new Associate Registrar.

**2. We sent emails and made phone calls**

Asking for guidance, assistance with a question, interpretation of a policy, etc.…

**3. Explained along the way our intent and role at the university**

Constant reinforcement that we want to be in alignment with the academic intent of a policy or process.

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RESOURCE

# EXAMPLE EMAIL

FOR INTERPRETATION OF POLICY

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## THE OUTCOME

- Grew into invites to meetings, and then the creation of a monthly standing meeting with just the Registrar's Office to discuss multiple items.

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## USING DATA ALONG THE WAY

Going back to the Data Checklist

Sending out FYI's

- I think this information might be of interest to you
- Did you know ___________?
- Some interesting facts about our Transfer Students

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## STRATEGIC PLAN


- We began to use the data to our advantage, and at every possible point tried to align the message and data with a point in the University's Strategic Plan.
- *If your change initiative is tied to the strategic plan, and if you can properly articulate that, it is going to look much more compelling to the decision-makers!*

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## EXAMPLE - VOLUME OF EVALUATION OF TRANSCRIPTS

- Memo format that could be distributed up the Administration ladder. Started with the Registrar and our VP for Enrollment and Access
- We tied the data (numbers, volume, comparisons to previous years, break-outs of the groups of students involved) back to the student success initiatives, retention initiatives, and overall graduation.

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## RESOURCE

# MEMO

FOR NEW FT INTERNATIONAL EVALUATOR

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## GAP AREAS

**Where (or Who) are the gap areas &**
**How do you get invited to the table?**

- Be strategic!
- Does your boss or boss's boss know those in question on your list?
- Can you get invited or get a introductory meeting?
- What do they know about you or the office now?
- Have they ever been involved with anything related to Transfer Evaluation?

**Use your contacts and resources across campus to be seen.**

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## QUESTIONS

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## MOVING FORWARD

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## OUR NEXT STEPS

**Based on our most recent analysis, we are looking at the following items….**

- Movement of evaluation to a centralized process
- Evaluation prior to Admissions decision
- Elimination of the 64 credit cap from 2-year institutions
- Possible use of ‘OCR’ – optical character recognition technology

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## IMPORTANCE OF COMMUNICATION AND BUY-IN

If you begin cultivating those important relationships and keeping them in the loop (even on the little things), they start to see you as an invaluable and genuine resource.

Just sending the occasional FYI--some data they might find useful, an article that you ran across that may have an impact on something you know they are involved--helps cultivate and continue the relationship.



## CONTINUE COLLECTING DATA

- Don't let this falter! And don't remove an item from your data collection unless you really haven't utilized it.
- We collect a lot of data items (automatically and a few manually) that have proven invaluable, even if we have only utilized it once.
- Having all of this data gives the whole picture of the unit/office/division – not just the hot topics

## IT'S NOT PERFECT, BUT…

**Our process is definitely not perfect, and is not the only way to make this all work, BUT:**

- We have seen success.
- We now have a better reputation and connection across campus.
- We get called to the table more as an office.
- When we do run into an issue with '*any*' topic, we have the relationship already established.

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## USE ALL OF YOUR RESOURCES

- Professional associations
- Partner universities and community colleges
- Your College of Business
- Your boss and other higher-ups
- Anyone in your office that has made a connection!

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## BE PATIENT


- In my experience, some items have taken months--if not a few years-- to make headway
- I have submitted some proposals on a yearly basis and just needed to find the right timing to really make the change happen

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## TAKEAWAYS

# NOW WHAT?

**Today:** Go back and brainstorm with your group – who are your major stakeholders and what is your reputation, what meetings or groups should you be involved with across campus, what areas are you really strong in now?

**Tomorrow:** Invite a key player that you work with or need to get to know to coffee. Get an introduction or invite to a meeting or group that you think you should be involved with.

**The Future:** Begin reviewing your data and building those relationships! Start thinking about your targeted campaign to advertise what you do as an office and how you are here to help.

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## RESOURCE

Six Sigma:
http://www.isixsigma.com/tools-templates/brainstorming/brainstorming-rules/

Carpenter Group LLC:
http://www.quality-improvement-matters.com/effective-brainstorming.html

Edchange:
http://www.edchange.org/multicultural/activityarch.html

Web resources that provide guidelines for running successful meetings.

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## RESOURCE

**AACRAO's Professional Development Guidelines for Registrars: A Self-Assessment - 2012**

This book was published as a tool to develop the registrar staff, to improve and update compliance and service delivery for institutions, and to support the implementation of best practices in the Office of the Registrar.

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## QUESTIONS

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## EVALUATION

# Thank you!

Please remember to complete the event evaluation. Your comments will help us continually improve the quality of our programs.

https://www.surveymonkey.com/s/CYWRMQM



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