**PROPOSAL 1**

**EWU Strategic Planning Proposal: Transfer Transition Center**

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**Introduction**

Approximately 61% of Eastern’s incoming undergraduate students are direct entry freshmen who, within the post admission transition process, receive appropriate support levels via specialized programs (e.g. STAR programs and orientations) and a sizeable cadre of dedicated staff from multiple campus constituencies (e.g. General Undergraduate Academic Advising, First Year Experience Office, Residence Life). By contrast, 39% of Eastern’s incoming undergraduate students are transfers who, unlike direct entry freshmen, do not have a single office, program, or staff person specifically dedicated to ensuring their successful transitions into the institution. Accordingly, significant numbers of transfer students either have extraordinary difficulty making the important campus connections they need, or they simply never make it through the institution’s doors. Such was the case with an admitted transfer student from Montana.

The student arrived on campus early one summer morning to explore her new educational environment and register for classes. After a brief, self-guided tour, she used her admission packet information to find the department under which the University listed her major. When she arrived and asked to speak with her faculty advisor, the department secretary told her the faculty member was unavailable and directed her to the General Undergraduate Academic Advising Office (GUAA).

Disappointed, the student walked back across campus to GUAA. Once there, she explained her situation and that the department secretary had directed her to GUAA for advising and registration assistance. Much to her dismay, the desk attendant explained that GUAA did not work with declared transfer students and redirected her to the department. Reluctantly, the student returned to the department and explained what had transpired in GUAA. Once again, however, the secretary indicated that there was no one who could assist her. Frustrated, the student left the department and decided to seek assistance from the transfer counselor in the Admissions Office.

Upon arriving at Admissions, the student learned that the transfer counselor was temporarily away from the office. With nowhere else to turn, the student had little choice but to sit and wait. After nearly two hours, however, she had had enough. Angrily, the student simply got up, walked out, and headed for the parking lot. Almost immediately thereafter, the transfer counselor returned to the office, learned of the student’s ordeal and that she had just walked out. She quickly headed toward the parking lot to try and catch the student, but it was too late. The last thing the counselor or anyone else at Eastern saw of the student was her rear bumper as she peeled out of the parking lot and headed back to Montana.
As disturbing as this actual account is from a student service/success perspective, perhaps more disturbing is the reality that similar transfer student transition experiences happen somewhat routinely. Clearly, as exemplified by this student’s experience, differentiated student support for the undergraduate transfer student population is an extraordinary need. This need is the chief rationale for the transfer transition center proposed here.

Transfer Transition Center: The Initiative
Student success is achieved in part by aligning University resources and organization with student needs. Using a model that has been successfully employed in other states, the proposed center will contribute to this alignment and, more specifically, transfer student success by providing a single campus location transfers can easily access to make the connections they need to efficiently and effectively achieve social and academic integration into the institution.

Though proposed as an Academic Affairs unit, the center represents a necessarily collaborative link between Academic Affairs and Student Affairs and will initially include a transfer transition center director who will implement and manage the center goals, programs, and activities. The center will further exemplify this link by seeking approval to locate in the third floor, Sutton Hall office previously occupied by the transitions to success coordinator. The original vision of both Eastern’s academic leadership and the Space Committee was for this office to evolve into a transfer center. Establishing the proposed transfer transition center in this location would allow the institution to actualize that vision.

The center also represents an opportunity to link with Spokane Community College (SCC), one of Eastern’s primary feeder institutions. In fall 2005, SCC established its own transfer center that is designed to help its transferring students (more than 70% of whom transfer to Eastern each year) connect with the institutions to which they plan to transfer. The SCC center staff members are working proactively to provide students with information that will make their transitions easier, which creates a significant opportunity window for Eastern to link its center goals and activities with those of SCC. Specifically, Eastern’s transition center will provide on-site programs to help move students from “admits” to “confirms” (a collaborative effort with Admissions), virtual campus orientation programs, and interinstitutional information sharing opportunities relative to student transfer trends. Although others of Eastern’s community college feeders may not have similar centers, these efforts could also be expanded to include them as well.

Transfer Transition Center: Goals
By providing academic and student support for undergraduate transfer students, the proposed center will address a broadly recognized need for differentiated student support and allow the institution to promote transfer student success in ways it never before has. In so doing, the University will significantly improve the probability of enrolling transfer students and retaining them through graduation, which is consistent with strategies outlined in goal number two (“Increase Eastern’s student retention and degree completion rates”) of the growth objective articulated in the Expanding Our Horizons strategic planning report. The Transfer Transition Center will help achieve this goal in the following ways:

1. To facilitate smooth and successful institutional transitions for incoming undergraduate transfer students

   A. Partner with the Admissions Office to produce post-admission transition publications, conduct yield enhancement programs, and provide transition orientations (on campus and at select community college “feeder” institutions)
B. Follow up with students who have confirmed their attendance but not registered
C. Serve as transfer students’ first point of contact for advising, providing direction and assistance when they have questions and/or encounter problems (facilitating the connection to departments and GUAA, occasionally serving as a back up advisor when faculty and/or GUAA advisors are unavailable)
D. Co-sponsor college/school/department orientations (facilitating connection between transfer students and faculty in their majors)
E. Connect with transfer students during their first quarter of attendance to ensure that the “transition sticks” (improving student success and retention by providing any assistance students need and connecting them with campus/community resources)

2. **To serve as an easily accessible campus connection point for incoming undergraduate transfer students**

   A. Maintain a student-friendly campus location with comprehensive campus resources and (department/program advisor lists and contact information, academic support and student life program information, referrals to campus services, etc.)
   B. Sponsor a transfer student organization and provide a campus location space for them to congregate (In the space proposed for this center, there will be little room for this function. It is, however, a long-term goal to provide this space for the transfer student population.)
   C. Sponsor a transfer student mentoring program and provide student to student transition support

3. **To serve as a campus resource relative to transfer students and transfer related issues**

   A. Assist faculty in both their work with undergraduate transfer students and in understanding key issues in Washington’s “transfer world”
   B. Serve as a resource to various campus constituencies relative to statewide transfer policy (center director to serve as one of Eastern’s representatives at the Intercollege Relations Commission meetings)
   C. Collaborate with the Office of Institutional Research, Demography, and Assessment to conduct follow up study with undergraduate transfer students to identify what the University did well in serving them and what could be improved
   D. Collaborate with the Office of Institutional Research, Demography, and Assessment and the Admissions Office to create an annual transfer student profile (Who are our transfer students and what do we know about them?)
   E. Produce annual reports on the quality and usefulness of our transfer transition services and how students are experiencing their transitions
   F. Establish and maintain a webpage with transfer-specific information and links
   G. Experimenting with new and innovative ways to serve the transfer population (non-traditional hours of operation, maintaining a Riverpoint/Spokane Center location, collaboratively exploring new transfer advising models)

**Transfer Transition Center: A Practical Perspective**
The story of the Montana transfer student can again provide a helpful illustration. With a little creative liberty and a rewind to the point at which the student first spoke with the department
secretary, one can begin to envision the ways in which a transfer transition center will be useful in creating a positive and ultimately productive transition experience for students:

After a brief, self-guided tour, the student used her admission packet information to find the department under which the University listed her major. When she arrived and asked to speak with her faculty advisor, the department secretary told her the faculty member was unavailable and directed her to the transfer transition center in Sutton Hall. Disappointed, the student left the department and walked to Sutton Hall where she met with the transfer transition center director. After a brief conversation the director learned that the student was an undergraduate transfer from the University of Montana who was prepared to declare a major. He also learned that her campus visit was unannounced and that she had assumed she could simply arrive, meet with her advisor, and subsequently register for classes. After briefly explaining how the process actually works, the director assured her that her advising and registration could, nevertheless, be accomplished, which allayed her fears of having missed her registration window.

The director accessed the student information system and retrieved her file from the Accorde document imaging system. Because GUAA had agreed to provide flex staff to assist declared undergraduate transfer students who are unable to connect with their departments, the director walked the student to the GUAA front desk to connect her with the service, which was offered on a first come, first served basis. Unfortunately, there was not an advisor available until early afternoon, and the student wanted to get back on the road as soon as possible. The director, having familiarized himself with academic advising, offered to help the student establish a schedule, explaining that she would need to reconnect with her faculty advisor prior to the start of classes to confirm that she was indeed on the right track.

After the brief advising session, the student picked up her Eaglecard before stopping at the bookstore to pick up a new Eastern sweatshirt and a GO EAGS! bumper sticker—a bumper sticker the director happened to see on the back of her car as she pulled out of the parking lot to head back to Montana.

This is but one example of the way in which the center can improve the student services Eastern provides its undergraduate transfer students. The student above did not have the benefit of knowing about the center before arriving on campus, but others—particularly those at our feeder community college campuses—will likely have that benefit and may even start their Eastern exploration with the center via onsite transition orientation programs or by beginning their on campus advising days in the center. Regardless, each and every undergraduate transfer student will hear from the center during their first quarter of attendance through both a survey tool designed to solicit feedback on how we served (or did not) them and a follow up connection to inquire about how they are doing.

**Transfer Transition Center: Assessment, Evaluation, and Outcomes**

The Transfer Transition Center will assess and evaluate how effectively it accomplishes its outlined goals and projected outcomes through formative and summative measures it will develop collaboratively with both the Office of Institutional Research, Demography, and Assessment and Student Affairs. Recognizing that the center cannot be solely responsible for students’ successful transitions into the University, it will publish and share its assessments and evaluations to help educate the broader campus community regarding ways it can collectively contribute to ensuring transfer students’ successful transitions.

**Ongoing Assessment of Center Effectiveness**
To ensure that the center is meeting transfer students’ needs, it will initiate the following formative evaluations:

A. Beginning in its first full quarter of student service operation, the center will track the students served, cataloging visit frequency (on an individual student level), student types (incoming versus current students, student level, etc.), and issues addressed. The data collected will tell us a great deal about who is most in need of center services and may expose trends that point to possible reasons why. Naturally, the “whys” will help us learn how to better serve our transferring student population.

B. After establishing a baseline based on data from previous academic years, the center will begin monitoring yield, retention, and graduation rates (note: “graduation rates” not to be confused with “graduation efficiency index” rates) at appropriate points beyond the center’s establishment. The data collected will help enable the center to evaluate the impact of its services and activities (recognizing the center will likely be one of many factors impacting these rates).

C. The center will create a primarily data driven “profile” of its incoming undergraduate transfer students to give the campus community a better sense of who its transfer students are. This, in turn, will highlight the rich diversity transfer students bring to our classrooms and the significant ways in which they help fit Eastern’s students for a multicultural world and enable them to contribute to a diverse democracy.

Evaluation of Outcomes:
To ensure that the center achieves its identified outcomes, it will initiate the following summative evaluations:

A. Eastern will increase by 10% annually the number of admitted undergraduate transfer students who confirm at Eastern. As both an initial benchmarking and ongoing assessment tool, the center will create and administer a research tool designed to learn about both students’ transfer experiences (what worked well and what did not) and their perspectives on how EWU could improve its services for future transfer students (what EWU should change and/or add). As mentioned above, the center would draw from the student feedback general themes that may point to specific ways in which the institution can improve its yield enhancement and transition programs to better serve students. Ultimately, the collective outcome of these efforts should be demonstrated in increased numbers of admitted students who confirm.

To assess this outcome and the strategy outlined to achieve it, the center will establish baseline data from previous academic years to track admitted to confirmed counts for undergraduate transfer students. It will subsequently juxtapose this baseline data with new data collected after the center’s inception to assess whether or not it successfully achieves the identified outcome.

B. Eastern will annually increase by 15% the number of confirmed transfer students who enroll. In late August 2005, just a few weeks before the start of fall quarter, Student Affairs discovered more than 200 transfer students who were confirmed to attend but not registered for classes. Several staff volunteers subsequently divided the list and contacted the students to both determine their enrollment intentions and direct them to appropriate campus resources if they demonstrated a need. As a result of this ad hoc
exercise, the staff volunteers pared the 200-student list of confirmed students who were not registered to a mere half dozen.

Based on the lessons learned from this exercise, the center will make earlier connections (via telephone and e-mail correspondence) with confirmed students who have not registered to: a.) assess their enrollment intentions, b.) determine what, if any, assistance they need to get registered, and c.) connect them with whatever campus resources they need to successfully register. In so doing, the center will decrease the number of confirmed students who have not registered.

To assess this outcome and the strategy outlined to achieve it, the center will establish baseline data from previous academic years to track undergraduate transfer student confirmations and subsequent registration trends. It will then juxtapose this baseline data with new data collected after the center’s inception to assess whether or not it successfully achieves the identified outcome.

C. Eastern will improve transfer student first-year retention rates by 15%, focusing on maximized campus connections for transfer students at and beyond the initial transition. To help ensure that new undergraduate transfer students achieve successful social and academic integration into the University, the center will reconnect with students to “check in” with them and provide resource referrals for any needs they may have. Subsequently, the center will catalog the reconnection encounters, drawing from them general themes that may point to specific ways in which it can enhance its services and activities.

To assess this outcome and the strategy outlined to achieve it, the center will utilize CSRDE (Consortium for Student Retention Data Exchange) baseline data from previous academic years to track undergraduate transfer student, first-year retention rates. It will subsequently juxtapose this baseline data with new data collected after the center’s inception to assess whether or not it successfully achieves the identified outcome.

Transfer Transition Center: Implementation Timeline

A. January, 2006:
  a. Begin work with Space Committee to Establish center location on Sutton Hall’s third floor
  b. Transition Director of Community College Relations away from former role, into new one (Director of the Transfer Transition Center)
  c. Attend the Institute for the Study of Transfer Conference in Dallas, Texas
  d. Begin conceptualizing assessment tools in collaboration with the Office of Institutional Research, Demography, and Assessment and Student Services
  e. Begin conceptualizing center webpage

B. February, 2006:
  a. Establish center location on campus
  b. Initiate conversations with Admissions and the SCC transfer center to outline collaborative transition programs
  c. Create assessment tools as appropriate and feasible (Some tools may have Banner implications that may require a delay until Banner is functional.)
  d. Establish center webpage

C. March-April, 2006:
a. Streamline academic advising connections for students using Accorde’ (collaboration with academic departments; include short term communication methods to pull in fall 2006 undergraduate transfer students)

b. Center collaborates with Admissions to offer transition orientations on select community college campuses

c. Begin promoting the center with students and internal and external constituencies

D. May-June, 2006:
a. Center begins helping undergraduate transfer students connect with campus (advising appointments and otherwise)
b. Center begins connecting with confirmed students who have not yet registered

E. July – September, 2006:
a. Center finalizes assessment tools and prepares for fall quarter administration
b. Center continues helping undergraduate transfer students connect with campus (advising appointments and otherwise)

Transfer Transition Center: The Budget

The center’s total budget for the January-September ASP grant period is $36,900.00 with approximately $29,000.00 coming from the current director of community college relations’ salary and benefits line in Graduate and Undergraduate Studies. Subtracting the $29,000.00 the total ASP start-up request is $7900.00.

(Transfer Transition Center Director -$29,000.00)

The funding used to support the current director of community college relations position will be used to fund the new transfer transition center director position, which will be filled by the Brian Spraggins (see vita in appendix A) who currently serves as the director of community college relations.

Goods & Services $4000.00

In addition to the probability of increased printing costs, the goods and services line represents one time costs for a new laptop computer and an accompanying projector, which the center would use to conduct its off-campus yield enhancement and transition orientation programs. The projector would also be used for on-campus programs and could be shared within the Graduate and Undergraduate Studies Unit.

Office Set-up/Reconfiguration (one time) $2500.00

Whether it occupies the third floor office in Sutton Hall or an entirely new location, there will likely be costs for appropriately reconfiguring the space and acquiring furnishings to fill it. These costs are typically high, which is the rationale for including the amount identified here.

Institute for the Study of Transfer Students Conference $1400.00

Supported by the National Orientation Directors Association, the University of North Texas (UNT) Division of Student Development initiated the Institute for the Study of Transfer Students in January 2003. In response to increasing transfer student numbers, UNT founded the institute to better understand the factors affecting transfer student success during the transition process. The institute continues to host annual conferences and is growing in popularity among transfer transition professionals from across the U.S. and Canada. Attending the conference will provide Eastern access to these professionals and the wealth of best practice knowledge they possess.

Total Budget Request $7900.00
Given the significant need for the transitional services outlined in this proposal, the proposed center’s costs (mostly one time) are relatively low given the potential benefit both undergraduate transfer students and the institution will realize far beyond the ASP pool grant period. Given this reality, it is not outside of the possibility realm to assume the Graduate and Undergraduate Studies Office will absorb the minimal costs associated with the center after the ASP funds are utilized. It should also be noted that with the probable exception of printing cost growth, the ongoing costs associated with the center are very similar to the costs associated with the current director of community college relations position, which are already accounted for in the Graduate and Undergraduate Studies budget.

Transfer Transition Center: Scaled Down
Optimally, the Transfer Transition Center should be implemented as outlined due to the necessity of the services and activities proposed here and the relatively small investment required to implement them. If, however, the ASP pool selection committee does not wish to fund it at the full amount requested, the budget request could be scaled back by approximately $2500.00, which is the cost for a new laptop computer.