A Transfer Champion Tune-Up:
Reflecting on Practice as Agents, Connectors, and Advocates

Practices to Try

Agent

Transfer agents are people whose role gives them access and insight students don't have. They proactively use their insider knowledge to help students navigate the institution. Crucially, they build relationships where students feel affirmed as capable learners who belong here and safe enough to keep asking questions.

Validate students' strengths and aspirations

- ☐ Ask transfer students about their prior learning experiences and what they've already been told, then build your explanation from there.
- ☐ Name a specific strength you notice, such as persistence, resourcefulness, or a sharp question.
- ☐ Talk about transfer as a valued route to a degree, and about students' goals as within reach. Be candid about what getting there will take.
- ☐ If a transfer student's grades dip or plans stall, let them know that's common after transferring and often temporary, then work out next steps together.

Explain the written and unwritten rules

- ☐ Translate terms that might be unfamiliar (like "applicability," "equivalency," and "articulation") into plain language.
- ☐ Share expectations that aren't written down, such as how office hours work, which offices may take a while to respond, and when to follow up if questions and requests seemingly go unanswered.
- ☐ Explain how policies play out in practice, including where there's flexibility and where there isn't.
- ☐ Share information close to when transfer students can act on it, so it's easier to absorb.
- ☐ Write policies, emails, and webpages in plain language, and ask current transfer students to point out what's still unclear.

Offer ongoing encouragement and support

- ☐ Tell transfer students early on that you're invested in their success, and let them know how and when to reach you.
- ☐ Answer "basic" questions with the same care as complex ones.
- ☐ When a transfer student is working through something difficult, stay involved until there's a resolution or clear path forward.
- ☐ Help transfer students practice asking for help, such as drafting an email to a professor together.
- ☐ Follow up after a conversation to see how things turned out.

Connector

Transfer connectors link students to people and experiences beyond their own office, and often beyond their institution. They know what other offices and departments offer and who's best to contact, so students don't have to rely on being in the right place at the right time to find what they need.

Expand students' networks and coordinate on their behalf

- ☐ Introduce transfer students to peers who've made the same transition and to people in your own professional network.
- ☐ Ask transfer students who else is helping them, such as family, coworkers, or staff from other offices/schools, and help them draw on those relationships for support.
- ☐ Make referrals with a direct introduction: copy the student on the email and explain in a sentence why they should talk. Check back later to see whether it helped.
- ☐ Get to know the people in other offices and at partner institutions who handle transfer questions well, and stay in touch so those relationships are ready when students need them.
- ☐ Coordinate with colleagues in other offices, departments, and partner institutions so transfer students don't have to carry information between you.

Make opportunities visible and reachable

- ☐ Name specific experiences that fit a transfer student's interests, such as honors, research, internships, study abroad, leadership roles, or mentoring, and help them picture themselves there.
- ☐ Check whether opportunities in your area reach transfer students and fit their timelines. Many are promoted mainly through first-year programs or have deadlines and eligibility rules built around students who start as first-time freshmen.
- ☐ Personally invite transfer students to programs where they're usually underrepresented, and offer to write recommendations or nominations on their behalf.

Tie decisions and next steps to students' larger goals

- ☐ Learn a transfer student's educational and career goals early, and refer back to them when you recommend a course, deadline, or decision that might affect their time and cost to degree.
- ☐ Show transfer students how their prior coursework, work, and life experience apply to where they're headed.
- ☐ Help transfer students explore and settle on a major and career direction as early as possible, so the credits they earn count toward their educational goals.
- ☐ Revisit the educational plan with transfer students whenever their goals, job, or personal/family situation changes.

Advocate

Transfer advocates work to improve the systems, policies, and practices transfer students navigate. When the same problem keeps coming up, they bring the pattern, along with data and student stories, to people who can change it. Their role shapes what they notice and how far they can take it.

Intervene when possible and document trends

- ☐ If a transfer student has been sent from office to office, contact the offices involved on the student's behalf to get the issue resolved.
- ☐ If a decision about a transfer student doesn't seem right, ask a colleague to take a second look.
- ☐ Keep a simple log of recurring problems: the date, what happened, and how it affected the transfer student.
- ☐ When a problem keeps coming up, compare notes with colleagues and look at which policy or process might be causing it.
- ☐ Find out what your institution or system already tracks about transfer students, such as retention, credits applied, and time to degree. Where transfer outcomes aren't reported separately, ask for them to be.

Raise transfer perspectives wherever they're overlooked

- ☐ In meetings and planning sessions that aren't focused on transfer, ask how decisions might affect transfer students.
- ☐ Whenever you hear assumptions or stereotypes about transfer students, offer context on what they often navigate and on the assets they bring to our institutions.
- ☐ Share anonymized transfer student stories, quotes, and relevant research or data with colleagues and decision-makers.
- ☐ When a policy, program, or service is being designed or reviewed, suggest ways to hear from transfer students directly.

Help fix what isn't working

- ☐ Bring concerns to your supervisor along with at least one idea for improvement.
- ☐ Find colleagues who see the same problem and raise it together.
- ☐ Join, or send input to, committees and work groups whose decisions affect transfer students.
- ☐ When drafting or reviewing a policy, walk it through a real transfer student's path to see where it breaks down.
- ☐ Where you have a say in plans, budgets, or reports, make sure transfer students are counted.

AI-assisted draft for reflection and discussion purposes only. Concepts are drawn from transfer research, and wording was carefully reviewed by the presenter. Please adapt to your campus context and apply professional judgment.