Three Comprehensive College Transition Programs: Practitioner and Researcher Perspectives
(Panel)

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Author Note

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Both the rates of college entry and the returns to college completion have increased in recent decades (Autor, Katz, & Kearney, 2008; MacFarland et al., 2017). Yet, college persistence and graduation rates remain a concern. For students beginning postsecondary education in 2010, only 55 percent completed a degree after 6 years (Shapiro et al., 2016).

Comprehensive transition programs are one way to improve student persistence and completion (e.g., Angrist, Autor, Hudson, & Pallais, 2016; Scrivener et al., 2015). The body of work on programs to support and retain college students is large (e.g., *Journal of The First-Year Experience and Students in Transition*) but there has been only a handful of rigorous evaluation of these types of programs. As persistence and completion rates have further to improve and as gaps remain, more can be learned to improve the success of such programs. Specifically, how has research informed the design, implementation, replication, and scaling of transition programs? By addressing these questions, the panel will provide insight into how evaluation researchers and practitioners can work together to improve transition programs in higher education.

To achieve this goal, the session brings together panelists representing different perspectives in the production and use of research in three different comprehensive transition programs. The panel includes researchers and a practitioner and is moderated by Jennifer Keup, Director of the National Resource Center for the First-Year Experience and Students in Transition. The format of the panel session is a discussion beginning with brief introductions and an overview of the session by the moderator (10 minutes), brief overviews of each program (context, purpose, program components, replicability to other settings) and recent evaluations (25 minutes divided among the three programs). This is followed by a discussion with panelists focused on the questions below (30 minutes). The panel concludes with an open question and answer discussion with the audience (20 minutes) and a closing by the moderator (5 minutes). The following questions serve as a foundation for the panel:

1. How did research inform the original program design and implementation? How could research have been more informative?
2. What were the practical constraints in designing and implementing the program? What was the role of the institution(s)? What was the role of the funding source(s)?
3. What has been the role of subsequent research and evaluations of your program or similar programs?
4. What was the impetus for past and current evaluations? How does the nature of the call for an evaluation influence subsequent research and uptake by practitioners?
5. What features of your program or setting make it more likely to be replicable in other settings?
6. What are common findings across the three programs? Are there generalizable findings?
7. What kind of research might be more informative and valuable? What constraints may limit the production and provision of such research?
8. What best helps practitioners in the use and production of research? What best helps institutions? Funders?

The panel brings together different perspectives on implementing, improving, and evaluating successful comprehensive college transition programs. The practitioner and

researcher perspectives as well as contributions from the audience and moderator promise to improve the production and use of evidence in designing, implementing, and scaling multipronged and comprehensive college transition programs.

Transition Programs and Panel Participants

City University of New York's Accelerated Study in Associate Programs (ASAP)

Panelist. Diana Strumbos is Director for Research and Evaluation for ASAP at the City University of New York. The panelist, with extensive knowledge of ASAP and its evaluation activities, provides both a researcher and practitioner perspective.

Susan Thompson Buffett Foundation's Thompson Scholars Learning Community (TSLC)

Panelist. Tatiana Melguizo is Associate Professor at the Rossier School of Education at the University of Southern California. The panelist, who continues to evaluate TSLC, provides a researcher's perspective with experience in research-practice partnerships in K-12 and higher education. The panelist will discuss evaluations of TSLC and the role of evidence in informing practice.

University of California, Berkeley, Fall Program for Freshmen (FPF)

Panelist. Patrick A. Lapid is an Economist at the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau (CFPB). Prior to joining the CFPB, Dr. Lapid's research covered college access and completion topics. The panelist, who evaluated FPF, provides a researcher perspective and will share possibilities and challenges working with institutional researchers, program staff, and administrators.

Panel Moderator

Jennifer Keup, Director of the National Resource Center for the First-Year Experience and Students in Transition, leads a national research and resource center focused on supporting and advancing efforts to improve student learning and transitions into and through higher education. The moderator's research areas include students in transition, first-year experiences, as well as high-impact practices and other institutional interventions.

Session Organizer

W. Edward Chi is a Ph.D. candidate in Urban Education Policy at the Rossier School of Education at the University of Southern California. The organizer evaluates K-12 and higher education policies.

References

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