Title
The new transfer student portal: understanding new transfer students' transitions to the research university

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The New Transfer Student Portal
Understanding New Transfer Students’ Transitions to the Research University

A thesis submitted in partial satisfaction of the requirements of the degree of Master of Arts

in

Teaching and Learning (Curriculum Design)

by

Douglas P. Easterly

Committee in charge:

Professor James Levin, Chair
Professor Claire Ramsey
Professor Alison Wishard Guerra

2008
The thesis of Douglas P. Easterly is approved and is acceptable in quality and form for publication on microfilm and electronically:

Chair

University of California, San Diego

2008
Dedication

I dedicate this thesis to my wife Sheri, who helps me remember what is possible and makes every day a joy.

I also dedicate this thesis to the members of my cohort: Carmen, Cindy, Jaime, Jesse, Kristin, Orletta, Romero, Suzi, and Yoon. They have been an inspiration, a sounding board and an occasional reality check throughout the writing process.
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ABSTRACT OF THE THESIS

The New Transfer Student Portal
Understanding New Transfer Students’ Transitions to the Research University

by

Douglas P. Easterly

Master of Arts in Teaching and Learning (Curriculum Design)

University of California, San Diego, 2008

Professor James Levin, Chair

In response to administrative concerns, the undergraduate colleges at the University of California, San Diego created a web-based advising and enrollment program for incoming transfer students. Despite interactive one-on-one advising opportunities through the site, few students used web-based advising. Interviews with six transfer students explored their transition, perceptions of academic advising, and integration to the university. Students were generally satisfied with the availability of advising, but their desire for more personal connections suggests that communication media affect how students experience advising. The author proposes a model of advising as a mediator of academic culture to analyze academic advising activity.
Chapter I: Building an On-line Transition Program for Transfer Students

UC San Diego, a large public research university in La Jolla, California comprises six undergraduate residential colleges: Revelle College, John Muir College, Eleanor Roosevelt College, Warren College, Thurgood Marshall College, and Sixth College. Each college has its own set of general education requirements and its own academic advising staff. The colleges exist separately from the major departments, allowing students from any college to declare any major. The majority of new students enter the university as freshmen, but transfer students comprise a significant minority (approximately 25%) of new students each year (UCSD, 2008). One of the six colleges, Muir College, has consistently enrolled between 20% and 24% of all incoming transfer students admitted to UCSD (UCSD, 2008). Academic advising at Muir College has worked to foster relationships between advisors and incoming transfer students that promote competence in understanding the goals, requirements, and expectations of the university experience. The Muir College Advising program focuses on connecting students’ personal goals with their academic plans and promoting strong membership in the university community.

Changes in Enrollment Processes

Until summer 2004, Muir College offered a pre-enrollment transfer student orientation that included brief one-on-one advising followed by on-site course enrollment supervised by academic advisors. Because of limited resources, UC San Diego’s Office of Admissions and Enrollment Services (AES) notified its six colleges that AES could no longer update transfer students’ records until August 15. This change included an agreement by the provosts of all six colleges to move to a campus-wide remote web-based enrollment
process for all new students. This process was to include on-line enrollment in classes after August 15, on-line advising, and in-person orientation programs focusing on support services and campus resources rather than on advising and course enrollment.

**Impact of Enrollment Changes on Freshman Pre-enrollment Advising**

Because freshman one-on-one course advising does not heavily depend upon timely posting of previous academic records, the freshman orientation program remained largely unchanged at Muir College. Freshmen pre-enrollment advising remained part of a two-day orientation program in June. During that program, incoming freshmen still had an opportunity to meet face-to-face with advisors and to discuss possible fall quarter schedules. The freshmen also had the opportunity to use on-line pre-enrollment academic advising, but because these students benefited from initial one-on-one advising, on-line advising became a supplement to in-person advising rather than a replacement.

**Impact of Enrollment Changes on Transfer Student Pre-enrollment Advising**

Transfer students posed a bigger challenge for pre-enrollment advising. Since placement, transferability of units, and completion of transfer agreements all depended on a full evaluation by AES, one-on-one advising during July became a problem. Furthermore, the enrollment period in late August discouraged use of campus facilities and staff for an on-campus advising program like the program for freshmen. Because of these changes, the college initially rescheduled on-campus orientation programs to the start of the academic year and focused the program on student life issues. The college eliminated face-to-face pre-enrollment academic advising and enrollment. Instead, all pre-enrollment advising occurred on New Transfer Student Portal, a web-based tutorial and advising system.
The New Transfer Student Portal

The New Transfer Student Portal uses web-based tutorials and interactions with academic advisors to help students understand their graduation requirements and select courses as part of their transition to the university. Incoming transfer students must complete the tutorials and propose a set of courses to enroll in during their first quarter. Once a student’s advisor approves the proposed courses, the transfer student is cleared to enroll in courses. During the process of completing the on-line tutorials, students may use text-based Internet communications to receive feedback on their schedules and send questions to advisors.

A Response to Changes in Administrative Procedures

In the fall of 2005, Muir College implemented its first version of the on-line enrollment process. In 2006, the college staff decided to change the program to include a July program of general group information sessions followed by on-line advising and enrollment in August. This change came as a response to a perception by advisors that new transfer students had more questions about and less understanding of their requirements than in previous years. In the summer of 2007, Muir College added the option of using an integrated chat program as part of the on-line advising and enrollment process to provide one-on-one real-time interaction to improve students’ opportunities to interact with staff.

Has Advising Made an Effective Response to Change?

Though decisions made by the provosts of the six colleges and the Office of Admissions and Enrollment Services led to the fundamental changes to the college’s pre-enrollment advising program, the college advising staff has struggled with implementing and
evaluating the system. The process of trying to implement an on-line pre-enrollment program for transfer students has since led the Muir College academic advising staff to reconsider the goals and expectations of an on-line pre-enrollment advising program.

Evaluating the New Transfer Student Portal involves considering the impact of technology, protocol, and academic advising remain central to understanding the New Transfer Student Portal. What are the qualitative changes that result from moving from face-to-face academic advising for incoming transfer students to advising through on-line media? Does the change in communications media promote a strong academic advising relationship for students using the system? And what theoretical models can be used to describe the ways that transfer students and academic advisors interact so that these interactions may be analyzed on individual and institutional levels?
Chapter II: Assessment of Need

Pascarella & Terenzini (1991, 2005) note that transfer students show cognitive gains similar to or better than those of four-year students after taking into account individual students’ differences in initial abilities and characteristics. However, Pascarella & Terenzini (2005) also noted that students who began their careers in two-year schools were still 15% - 20% less likely to complete an undergraduate degree. The reasons for these differences vary greatly based on several factors including students residence on campus, their previous academic preparation, and their access to resources (Zamani, 2001).

UC San Diego Transfer Student Data

Institutional data at the University of California, San Diego indicate strong success in retaining and graduating transfer students. One-year retention rates of transfer resemble the one-year retention rates of freshman admits, as noted in Table 1.
Table 1.

One-year Retention Rates of Transfer and Freshman Admits

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Transfer</th>
<th>Freshman</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1998</td>
<td>93%</td>
<td>94%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1999</td>
<td>91%</td>
<td>94%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2000</td>
<td>92%</td>
<td>94%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2001</td>
<td>92%</td>
<td>94%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2002</td>
<td>93%</td>
<td>94%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2003</td>
<td>92%</td>
<td>94%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2004</td>
<td>93%</td>
<td>95%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2005</td>
<td>93%</td>
<td>94%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mean</td>
<td>92%</td>
<td>94%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(UCSD, 2008)

However, these data may mask retention issues. Among students admitted as freshmen, students tend to be retained strongly after one year, but face larger retention barriers after the second year, as noted in Table 2. Institutional data do not provide explanations for the change that occurs between the first and second year. However, because students who graduate after the second year confound similar data collection for transfer students, comparison data regarding second-year retention of transfer students do not exist.
Table 2.

One-year and Two-year Retention Rates of Freshman Admits

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>First Year</th>
<th>Second Year</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1998</td>
<td>94%</td>
<td>87%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1999</td>
<td>94%</td>
<td>87%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2000</td>
<td>94%</td>
<td>87%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2001</td>
<td>94%</td>
<td>88%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2002</td>
<td>94%</td>
<td>87%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2003</td>
<td>94%</td>
<td>87%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2004</td>
<td>95%</td>
<td>89%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2005</td>
<td>94%</td>
<td>89%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Mean</strong></td>
<td>94%</td>
<td>88%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(UCSD, 2008)

A comparison of graduation rates shows clearer differences between transfer students and freshmen. As noted in Table 3, transfer students’ mean time to degree only begin to resemble freshmen enrollment rates when comparing the percentage of transfer students who graduate in three and four years to the percentage of freshmen who graduate in five and six years.
Table 3.

Graduation Rates for Transfer Students and Students Admitted as Freshmen

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Transfer 2 years</th>
<th>Transfer 3 years</th>
<th>Transfer 4 years</th>
<th>Freshman 4 years</th>
<th>Freshman 5 years</th>
<th>Freshman 6 years</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1997</td>
<td>28%</td>
<td>66%</td>
<td>80%</td>
<td>53%</td>
<td>78%</td>
<td>83%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1998</td>
<td>28%</td>
<td>69%</td>
<td>81%</td>
<td>50%</td>
<td>78%</td>
<td>83%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1999</td>
<td>31%</td>
<td>70%</td>
<td>81%</td>
<td>54%</td>
<td>80%</td>
<td>85%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2000</td>
<td>33%</td>
<td>71%</td>
<td>82%</td>
<td>53%</td>
<td>81%</td>
<td>86%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2001</td>
<td>31%</td>
<td>69%</td>
<td>81%</td>
<td>56%</td>
<td>80%</td>
<td>84%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Mean* 30% 69% 81% 53% 79% 84%

(UCSD, 2008)

When combined with a comparison of mean time to degree, the difference between transfer students and freshman admits becomes more striking. As noted in Table 4, the mean time to graduation for freshmen from 1997-2006 is 4.4 years. Thus, the average freshman will graduate in four years and one quarter. Time to degree places most freshmen in the position of graduating just one quarter after expected time to degree. For transfer students, time to degree during the same period is 2.8 years, which means that the average transfer student admitted as a junior is likely to take an extra year after expected time to degree.
Table 4.
Time to Degree for Transfer Students and Students Admitted as Freshmen

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Transfer</th>
<th>Freshman</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1997/1998</td>
<td>2.9</td>
<td>4.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1998/1999</td>
<td>2.9</td>
<td>4.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1999/2000</td>
<td>2.9</td>
<td>4.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2000/2001</td>
<td>2.8</td>
<td>4.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2001/2002</td>
<td>2.8</td>
<td>4.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2002/2003</td>
<td>2.7</td>
<td>4.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2003/2004</td>
<td>2.7</td>
<td>4.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2004/2005</td>
<td>2.7</td>
<td>4.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2005/2006</td>
<td>2.6</td>
<td>4.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Mean</strong></td>
<td>2.8</td>
<td>4.4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(UCSD, 2008)

Since community college transfer students have similar academic abilities as freshmen, then other issues may hamper their progress. Transfer students do not have on-campus housing and have a shorter period to build relationships with supportive staff and faculty mentors. Since all but two of California’s community college campuses are semester-based, the majority of incoming community college transfer students face the challenge of adjusting to the pace of a quarter system. Transfer students also face changes in teaching style and academic culture (Townsend & Wilson, 2006). Given these issues, can advisors improve the transitional process for transfer students?
Defining Academic Advising

Academic advising developed as college and university education expanded in the nineteenth century to provide a more secular, professional model of learning (Fenske, 1980). The further expansion of higher learning through the twentieth century, especially starting in the 1960s, transformed the demands on faculty for research and teaching. These changes led faculty to delegate some of their administrative and student development activities to professional support staff. Faculty retained their teaching and research roles, but other campus community members assumed elements of the traditional role in character development (Fenske, 1980).

Increased options for and flexibility of elective course choices led to the development of services to assist in making those choices. By the 1930s, academic advising had become a widespread practice (Tuttle, 2000). A more professional model of advising focused on educational development and student retention became standard after the introduction of theoretical models of advising in the 1960s and 1970s focused on theories of adolescent developmental psychology (Tuttle, 2000, pp. 15-16).

Existing Theoretical Models of Academic Advising

Starting in the late 1960s, academic advising professionals began building theoretical models of advising that focused on helping students through personal development crises of adolescence (Hemwall & Trachte, 1999). Starting in the 1970s and 1980s, theorists proposed models of college student retention and academic success based on institutional and social factors. Both theoretical frameworks stressed the importance of individual relationships between students and institutional representatives in aiding students’ transition to the
university. These models shaped the practice of a variety of student service practices on college and university campuses, including academic advising.

*Chickering’s vectors of development.* Originally published in the 1960s, Arthur Chickering’s vector model of college student development (Chickering & Reisser, 1993) outlines a set of developmental pathways for personality development in college students. Chickering proposed that adolescent development did not progress through a linear process of stages, but along seven different vectors that represent different sets of crises for identity formation. These seven vectors, as described in Table 5, became a foundational theory for college student affairs, including “developmental advising” theory in the 1960s and 1970s.
Table 5.

Chickering’s Seven Vectors of Personality Development

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Developmental Vector</th>
<th>Developmental Crises</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 Developing</td>
<td>Moving from low to high levels of intellectual, physical and social competence and toward a sense of mastery.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 Managing emotions</td>
<td>Moving from little emotional awareness and control toward emotional awareness, control, and appropriate expression.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 Moving through</td>
<td>Moving from poor self-direction and problem-solving toward autonomy toward a sense of freedom, internal direction and acceptance of interdependence.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 Developing mature</td>
<td>Moving from unawareness and intolerance of difference interpersonal relationships toward toleration and acceptance of differences; moving from unhealthy relationships toward nurturing and intimacy.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 Establishing identity</td>
<td>Moving from discomfort with self toward creating a strong sense of self in response to valued feedback.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6 Developing purpose</td>
<td>Moving from a lack of clarity toward clear personal and vocational goals, sustained personal interests and strong commitments to family and others.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7 Developing integrity</td>
<td>Moving from rigid thinking, unclear or untested personal beliefs, and entrenched self-interest toward values that respect the values of others, social responsibility, and authenticity.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Chickering & Reisser, 1993)
Chickering’s theories led campuses to develop extracurricular programs focused on promoting competence, identity, purpose, relationships, and independence within a social context. Academic advising in particular focused on promoting students’ sense of competence, independence and integrity through informed decision-making including students’ goals and values. The secondary focus of advising became the development of mature relationships with advising staff and faculty while helping connect students to the larger community of the campus. Activities focused primarily on one-on-one advising sessions combining elements of prescriptive planning, explaining and enforcing rules and regulations, and individual counseling about goals and educational opportunities. These practices still form the foundation of current standards, though some campuses have also expanded the academic advising model to include formal instruction and group advising.

Alexander Astin and student involvement. Based on long-term studies of survey data administered to college students, Alexander Astin proposed a model of student development based on student involvement (Astin, 1984). According to Astin’s theory, the amount of “physical and psychological energy that the student devotes to the academic experience” (Astin, 1984, p. 297) reflects a student’s involvement. Astin uses this definition to propose a set of claims regarding involvement and the assessment of secondary education efforts:
Table 6.

Five Postulates of the Astin Model of Student Involvement

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Postulate</th>
<th>Claim</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>The investment of physical or psychological energy into an object creates involvement.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Students may invest different degrees of involvement in any given object; different students may have differing degrees of involvement in the same object.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Levels of investment may be measured based on qualitative and quantitative differences.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Students learn and develop to an extent directly proportional to their amount of personal involvement.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>The effectiveness of any policy or practice is directly proportional to its ability to encourage student involvement.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Astin, 1984, p. 198)

Like Chickering, Astin takes a psychological approach to discussing secondary education. He compares his model of involvement to Freud’s ideas of *cathexis* (Astin, 1984, p. 197), though Astin strips the idea of its connections to libido and instead focuses on the idea of investment of mental or emotional energy. In addition, Astin adds a physical element to the idea of investment, thus creating a model for measuring how student use of time, energy and activity reflect the level of involvement.
As an outgrowth of his theory, Astin stressed the value of support staff at the postsecondary level to affect learning outcomes, including academic advisors. He notes that because such staff “frequently operate on a one-to-one basis with students, they are in a unique position to monitor the involvement of their clients in the academic process and to work with individual clients in an attempt to increase involvement” (Astin, 1984, p. 305). Astin presents this theory as a useful way to unify the work of the university at all levels in the practice of improving student success.

Social models for understanding student transition. Several theorists proposed the importance of social involvement, the transition of students, and the role that advisors play in that process. Under such models, advisors can foster the development of values and relationships appropriate to collegiate success, facilitating interactional competence in the context of the college community. Mehan (1979), discussing classroom interactions defines interactional competence “in terms of effective participation or membership in the classroom” (p. 127). Such competence encompasses such elements as language, behavior, and social norms. Membership in an academic community requires both an understanding of academic material, and of the ambiguous and implicit rules that define membership in the academic community (Mehan, 1979, p 128).

Early mastery of social rules means that the initial point of contact between students and the academic culture is particularly important. Kuh (1991) points out the value of admissions and orientation in developing students’ appropriate expectations for college, reinforcing the values of the institution, and helping students feel welcome. Other authors suggest that by customizing such programs to transfer students, providing individualized advising, and helping students negotiate the difference between their expectations and the
institution’s ability to meet those expectations, schools are better able to assist transfer students through their transitional experience (Bell, 2004).

Viewing the transition into a new academic setting as a cultural shift acknowledges that the change is less a move from one state to another and more the development of a community membership (Mehan, 1979, p. 130). Social competency derives from community membership, and lack of competency can lead to alienation from the learning community.

Tinto (1993) postulates that departure from college follows from a lack of social and intellectual integration into the college community, leading to alienation. Tinto defines departure as failure to complete a two- or four-year degree, either from their current institution or another institution. Tinto’s model is directly based on Durkheim’s (1951, as cited in Tinto, 1993) suicide study, using the study’s finding that suicide stems from individuals’ lack of integration into society. Tinto uses suicide as a metaphor for student’s departure from college, and suggests the idea that students who fail to integrate will commit a sort of academic suicide, leaving the institution and failing to complete any degree. Tinto notes, “insufficient integration and the absence of community membership arise from the holding of values which deviate from those of other members of society” (Tinto, 1993, p. 101). The process of developing integration is dynamic, and failure to engage in the process will result in isolation leading to deviance.

Colleges, however, lack the level of homogeneity envisioned by Durkheim, having several subcultures in which students might conceivably find membership (Tinto, 1993). Persistence in the university thus requires connection to one of the many academic and social systems of the university, rather than to a single monolithic structure. Choosing to build a strategic competency in one of the two spheres increases the risk that a student will
not graduate, though the social and academic spheres are not equally important (Tinto, 1993, p. 107-108).

Because of the value of community membership, Tinto identifies orientation programs as a possible way to assist with the transition of students into the university (Tinto, 1993, p. 159), noting the need to improve programs’ provision of appropriate and complete information, and the need for such programs to create personal relationships, both formal and informal relationships. Tinto suggests a way in which academic advising can provide key interventions for students regardless of whether they are freshmen or transfer students.

*Advising as an intermediate process in students’ transition to the university.* Some studies suggest that advising may be a process that affects students’ transition to the university. Such studies suggest that the practices of advising do play a role in the process of students’ successful transition to the university.

Metzner (1989), in a survey of freshmen at a public university, noted that students who received advising that the students themselves rated as good showed a decrease in attrition, while those who received no advising showed an increase in attrition. According to Metzner, even students who received advising they rated as poor still showed decreased attrition compared to students receiving no advising.

Seidman (1991) compared incoming community college students placed into an experimental group receiving a comprehensive pre- and post-enrollment advising program to a control group. The results of survey, retention, and GPA data showed higher levels of satisfaction, slightly higher GPAs and significantly higher rates of retention for those who received the more comprehensive advising program.
Using Professional Standards to Define Academic Advising

Several professional organizations promote professional standards including models of college student development and success. Each provides a different insight into advising practice in the field.

The UNESCO standards for academic advising. The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) published a set of standards for student affairs programs after the 1998 World Conference on Higher Education. The report identifies the purposes of academic advising programs not only in terms of academic planning and providing information on requirements and resources, but also in terms of goal-setting, problem-solving, and providing personal contact between students and the institution (UNESCO, 1999). The UNESCO standards define advising as a partnership between students and advisors which helps students develop a connection to the university, the ability to make informed educational decisions, and a understanding of the cultural assumptions and structures of the institution.

The NACADA vision statement for academic advising. The National Academic Advising Association (NACADA) is a professional organization for academic advisors in the United States. The NACADA vision statement asserts that the role of academic advising is to respect the differences between individual students and to help them “develop and reinforce realistic self-perceptions and help them use this information in mapping out their futures” through a variety of activities that promote students’ educational success (NACADA, 2004). The NACADA standards stress the role of the academic advisor as helper, guide, mentor and sounding board for students’ decision-making process. Advising promotes self-awareness, institutional understanding, and self-reliance.
The NACADA standards define the learning outcomes of academic advising in terms of helping students to define goals, to make responsible decisions, and to become active and committed members of the academic community (NACADA, 2006). The advisor in the NACADA perspective serves as a facilitator of students’ process of socialization into the academic community of the university and to its expectations of practice.

*The CAS standards for academic advising.* According to the Council for the Advancement of Standards in Higher Education (CAS) Standards for Self-Assessment and Improvement, “the primary purpose of the Academic Advising Program (AAP) is to assist students in the development of meaningful educational plans” (CAS, 2005, p. 1). In order to achieve meaningful academic planning, programs must incorporate current theory and models of student learning and development, and enhance the overall learning experiences of students.

Like the NACADA standards, the CAS standards stress skills that reflect values associated with academic success, such as intellectual growth, self-assessment, goal-setting, independence, and collaborative peer interactions (CAS, 2005). As with the NACADA standards, the CAS standards frame learning outcomes in terms of assimilation to a set of social norms that define the core values and competencies of collegiate success.

*Academic Advising in Practice*

Academic advising can be arranged on a spectrum of practice that ranges from direct prescriptive to developmental. Prescriptive models cover many common expectations that students and faculty have of academic advisors, focusing on courses, prerequisite, deadlines, and requirements. This role places the advisor firmly in the role of external authority figure, and expects the work of the advisor to focus on transmission and clarification of information to students in a one-way relationship (Jordan, 2000). Developmental models,
however, take a more holistic approach toward the student-advisor relationship. The goal of developmental academic advising is to help students make rational decisions informed by a student’s personal sense of purpose and goals. (Creamer, 1980)

Most advising practice combines elements of prescription and development (Burton & Wellington, 1998; Hemwall & Trachte, 1999; Creamer, 1980). Though advisors may value the developmental aspects of their work, student expectations focus on practical service-oriented aspects of the advising relationship. A survey of students and faculty advisors in the mid-1980s at Rutgers University indicated that students’ strongest advising needs included scheduling and registration, adding and dropping courses, graduation requirements, and academic progress (Creeden, 1990). Another survey of undergraduate and graduate students at a state university in the southern Midwest showed that undergraduate students considered prescriptive advising as more important than developmental advising and received significantly more prescriptive advising than developmental advising when they met with advisors (Fielstein, Scales & Webb, 1992). Thus, advising practice includes both on the perceived needs of students, which are largely prescriptive, and the long-term learning needs of students, which are generally developmental.

Academic advising practice has focused on personal relationships to foster a sense of involvement (Astin, 1989) and integration (Tinto, 1989) with university life. The goal of advising relationships is to socialize students into the institutions and culture of the university. Academic advisors’ methods of relating to students include three different roles: counselor, scheduler, and teacher (Daller, Creamer & Creamer, 1997). The schedulers have the most prescriptive style with the least personalization. The teachers and counselors adopt more developmental styles, and show greater personalization. Surveys of undergraduates
from a state university in the southern Midwest found that students identified personal
caring by advisors a key priority in their interactions (Fielstein, 1987; Fielstein, 1989;
Fielstein, Scales & Webb, 1992). Thus, while students may express a desire for purely
prescriptive information, they also want developmental relationships with advisors.

Advising practice requires a careful balancing of students’ needs and sense of threat
from the authority of academic advisors. Surveys of 361 undergraduates at a Canadian
university (Alexitch, 2002) found that students who perceived that seeking help posed a
threat to academic and career goals avoided services such as academic advising. Advisors
posed a potential challenge to students’ goals when they might suggest changes in major or
career goals, or because advisors might enforce policies resulting in academic probation.
Thus, students in difficulty saw increased threat from programs established to provide them
with help. This may be especially true of transfer students who face issues of transferability
of units, preparation for their major, and balancing work and school. An ethnographic study
of participants in a freshman seminar class at North Dakota State University, however,
found that students who had an ongoing relationship with an advisor were more likely to
voluntarily seek advising (Schnell, 1998). A consistent, personalized relationship may mitigate
any sense of threat to students’ sense of self or goals. Consistent relationships may place
advising in a supportive context through an ongoing dialogue between student and advisors.

Special Concerns for Advising Transfer Students

Advising transfer students requires the advisor to help those students adjust to the
cultural differences between two and four year colleges. However, university staff and faculty
as well as transfer students often believe that transfer students do not need special
orientation or transition programs, even when transfer students have difficulty
understanding requirements and academic culture at the university (Herman & Lewis, 2004, p. 57). Harbin (1997), in a survey of community college transfer students found that the majority was not aware of general education requirements at the university to which they transferred. In addition, these students did not get their general education certified before transfer, did not complete all lower-division major requirements, did not know about advising resources, felt uncertain about using library resources, did not understand the financial aid application processes, and felt a sense of isolation from other students at the four-year institution. These issues point to the potential role advisors can play in assisting transfer students’ transition to the university.

Townsend and Wilson (2006), in an ethnographic study of transfer students to a large research university, noted similar issues faced by transfer students to a research university. They noted both the confusion resulting from changes in academic cultural expectations and how academic advisors can help students develop a greater understanding of academic requirements, resources, and procedures.

Students in the study discussed a sense of alienation on the academic level, noting that community college faculty were more caring than university faculty, and that the structure of university academic assignments felt less authentic (Townsend & Wilson, 2006). In addition, the students noted a sense of disconnection and difficulty forming both social and academic networks (Townsend & Wilson, 2006). However, by providing ways of helping transfer students adjust their concepts of and relationships with academic culture, academic advisors have the potential to help new transfer students integrate into the rules, structures and expectations of the research university (Townsend & Wilson, 2006).
What is the Effect of On-line Pre-Enrollment Advising?

Given the changes in the structure of pre-enrollment advising, several elements of advising for incoming transfer students have changed significantly. While pre-enrollment advising has maintained most of its prescriptive elements, it is not clear that most of its developmental aspects remain. By removing the human presence represented by one-on-one advising, it is not clear whether the change to on-line pre-enrollment has maintained the potential impact of advising on students’ connection to the institution. Questions remain whether implementing on-line pre-enrollment advising poses particular challenges to transfer students, who are more likely to believe they do not need advising support, even when they face greater challenges than freshman admits. By exploring the way that students use the New Transfer Student Portal and their attitudes toward it, I hope to develop an understanding of how the Portal serves or fails to serve this population, and ways to improve its effect on new transfer students.
Chapter III: Frameworks for Discussing the New Transfer Student Portal

Transfer students’ transitions from community college to the university involve a cultural shift from one setting (the community college) with its own terminology, expectations and rules to a new community (the research university) with similar but distinctive academic and institutional culture. The ability of students to make this transition relates to their ability to learn the skills to engage substantively with the culture of the university and demonstrate competent membership in the university community.

As discussed in Chapter II, academic advisors look at the transition to the university as a developmental process leading to individuation, independence and a stronger sense personal identity as described by Chickering (Chickering & Reisser, 1993) and as reflected in the standards for academic advising (UNESCO, 1999; NACADA, 2004; CAS, 2005). The developmental model of academic advising provides a useful framework for discussing individual students’ interaction with the social and environmental aspects of the college experience. However, the developmental model does not provide a way of considering the ways that interactions with students occur on broader institutional level.

Because I am interested in the institutional effect of experiencing academic advising through the New Transfer Student Portal on students’ transition to the university, I will focus on two theoretical models. The first will be Tinto’s (1993) model of student departure, which considers student involvement with or deviance from college culture. The second will be a model of mediation from the perspective of sociocultural learning theory. By comparing these two models, I will explore ways to describe and analyze students’ experiences with the New Transfer Student Portal, and ways in which the institution is serving or failing to serve the needs of transfer students.
Elements of a Successful On-line Learning Environment

The New Transfer Student Portal has essentially created an on-line learning environment for its incoming transfer students by moving from an in-person academic advising experience for incoming transfer students to an exclusively on-line model. In discussing the Portal, I will also consider several elements of interactivity and immediacy in on-line learning environments.

Interactivity and its effect on distance learning. The key to the success of computer-based instruction is having a high level of interactivity for students. An observational study of 96 adults in West Virginia measured levels of concentration and attention level of participants using different instructional medium (Rodgers & Withrow-Thorton, 2005). The study included lectures, video, and computer-based instruction, and found that computer-based instruction had the highest ratings in areas of user attention, user sense of relevance, user confidence in their mastery of material, and user satisfaction. Students’ ability to be self-directed, to have more personalization of information, to get immediate feedback, and have ongoing interaction through the computer-based instruction helped foster a history of success, a sense of confidence, and greater motivation.

Interactivity through either synchronous (immediate response) or asynchronous (delayed response) methods involves several types of activity. The first key to interactivity is the creation of interactive loops. An interactive loop “is a circuit of messages flowing from an originating entity, then returning back to the originating entity” (Yacci, 2000, p. 6). Effective communication loops must be clear from the perspective of a student, rather than the instructor, so that students are clear that instructors have received and acknowledged communications. Thus the loop should always finish with the response of an instructor to
the student, either replying to the student or acknowledging receipt of information (Yacci, 2000). By completing this communication, the circuit becomes a “closed loop.” Feedback through either human interaction or dynamic elements of the content itself creates the perception of interactivity. The perception of interactivity reinforces content mastery by supporting the assimilation of values, mores and shared attitudes within the learning environment (Yacci, 2000).

Distance education thrives in an environment with strong learner-instructor interaction. This interaction may be synchronous, allowing learner and instructor to interact in real time, or asynchronous, allowing learner and instructor to interact on different schedules. Asynchronous interaction adds a degree of freedom and convenience for both participants, since parties are not constrained by time and availability, though the inherent delay in feedback may decrease student learning and satisfaction (Tuovinen, 2000). Synchronous interaction may improve satisfaction and learning because promptness and personalization of feedback for distance learners correlates directly to students’ satisfaction with their experience (Biner, et al., 1997; Collis, et al., 2001). However, synchronous communication requires all parties involved in the interaction to commit to a schedule of interaction that allows less flexibility and freedom. Because of these limitations, a combination of synchronous and asynchronous media may prove to be useful by providing both the flexibility and accessibility of asynchronous interactions with the promptness and directness of synchronous communication, even if there may be a difference in the values and effect of each type of interaction (Tuovinen, 2000).

In a traditional classroom, teachers build effective learning environments by incorporating the learner, the curriculum, assessment standards and the community context
The interactions between the four dimensions (learner, curriculum, assessment, and community) form the context for learning. In a distance learning setting, interactivity creates its own environments: learner-content, learner-instructor, and learner-learner (Moore & Kearsley, 1996; Tuovinen, 2000). Virtual interactions mirror the learning environments of the classroom.

*How immediacy affects interaction.* Yacci (2000) identifies message lag as a key variable in interactivity. Yacci describes message lag as the time between initiating and completing a message loop. Lag is a notable concern when considering asynchronous interaction. Message lag can lead students to forget the intent of their questions, so that the response they receive no longer fits into the context of the original question. As a result, lag can delay learning and confuse learners, leading to misconceptions or misunderstandings. A survey of participants in interactive college telecourses (Biner, et al., 2007) found similar problems, suggesting that the inherent elements of technology-mediated interactions with students may shape students’ learning process. When considering the New Student Portal, I will consider elements of self-direction, personalization, and interactivity in evaluating the site design and student experience.

*Student Integration and College Transition*

Tinto’s (1993) model of student departure addresses issues of how students interact with and become involved in the institutions of the university. This model discusses the transition of new students into college as both a rite of passage and a process of socialization and assimilation of institutional mores and values resulting from the development of relationships that nurture a sense of connection.
The Transition to College as a Rite of Passage

Tinto (1993) looks at the transition to college as a rite of passage in which students pass through three stages: separation from past associations, transition, and incorporation. In the separation stage, students show a decline in interaction with their past peer groups, changing the ways in which students conceive of themselves and their daily experiences. In the transition stage, students begin to interact in new ways with a new group and face a combination of isolation, training, and ordeals that lead to the learning of new skills. In the final stage, students take on new patterns of interaction and establish their competence in the new community. These processes end with the college community accepting the new students as competent members of the community as a result of their participation in its institutional life.

While the stages of transition are neither clear nor linear, the idea of these stages helps clarify the process of a stranger gradually earning membership in the community through interacting with social structures that help students develop both coping strategies and societal membership. Tinto (1993) describes the transitional processes as both social and therapeutic. Thus, “an institution’s capacity to retain students is directly related to its ability to reach out and make contact with students and integrate them into the social and intellectual fabric of institutional life” (pp. 204-205).

Integration and Community Membership

Rites of passage lead students to a sense of integration with the greater social structures of the university. Tinto describes the outcome of transitional processes for students in terms of integration on two levels—social and intellectual. Tinto uses the term integration as used by Durkheim, describing membership that individuals form on both
social and intellectual levels as the basis of social existence (Tinto, 1993). Social integration includes personal affiliations formed through everyday interactions between different members of society, while the intellectual integration encompasses the connections formed through the values shared with other members of society (p. 101). Lack of shared values, values in conflict with other members of society, or lack of social connections lead to deviance and conflict, and thus to departure from the university, usually by dropping out.

Successful membership in the university includes both structural (rules and expectations) and social (interpersonal interaction) dimensions of students’ lives on campus (Braxton, Shaw Sullivan & Johnson 1997). Both formal and informal systems of affiliation within the college are important to students, as are initial traits of students as they enroll in the institution (Tinto, 1993). The interaction of formal and informal systems creates a model of student retention that focuses on student membership within the college community based on both personal connection and shared values with the academic community.

Support for and criticisms of the Tinto model. Tinto’s theories create testable models of student retention. Braxton, Shaw Sullivan & Johnson (1997) note that Tinto’s theories are supported to varying degrees, but that the applicability of research results are stronger in residential colleges which house most of their first and second year students on campus than campuses which tend to have a largely commuter population. The researchers also note that consistency between male and female students is not reliable, and that the research supporting the empirical implications of his work are uneven.

Other critics note issues with Tinto’s methods of inquiry, including Tinto’s theoretical model which stresses processes of assimilation into a largely middle-class White institution as the basis for whether students are able to succeed in college (Braxton, et al,
1997). Others point out that Tinto’s model is best suited for situations where institutional culture is largely homogenous (Braxton, et al, 1997). While the criticisms of his theories have some value in appraising Tinto’s work, the amount of internal consistency in the theory and the mixed empirical support for Tinto’s theories make it a common organizing framework for doing research on student retention.

*A Sociocultural Model of Transfer Student Advising*

In Tinto’s (1993) model of student departure, the process of integration largely is a process of the individual interacting with social institutions, values, and expectations. Tinto’s perspective assumes a spectrum of membership ranging from social membership to deviance. Sociocultural theory, on the other hand, allows for a more complex idea of membership, identity, and activity involving individuals and institutions. By viewing academic advising as a mediating factor in students’ initial interactions with the university and its cultural contexts, a different picture of both advising and the role of the New Transfer Student Portal emerges.

Mediation theory has its roots in Vygotsky’s genetic theory of knowledge. The genetic theory identifies the use of language in the collaborative development of meaning as the central activity that develops consciousness (Wertsch, 2007). The Vygotskian model takes two forms: explicit mediation, in which signs are intentionally introduced in an ongoing flow of activity to facilitate social interaction; and implicit mediation, which involves natural language that evolves to serve communication, but later grows to serve other purposes. In both cases, the introduction of language creates a qualitative shift in the nature of interactions. The dynamic interaction between subject, object, and language develops participants’ understanding not only of the communication, but also of language itself.
leading to mastery of language, concept, and contexts. The process of “becoming more expert means being socialized into an existing social order, characterized by an existing set of cultural tools, and expertise is reflected in the ability to use these tools flexibly and fluently” (Wertsch, 2007, p.190). Using language, learners develop an understanding of the world within a greater social and historical context.

Michael Cole (1996) expands the idea Vygotskian idea of “cultural tools” to the larger realm of “artifacts”. Cole defines artifacts as “an aspect of the material world that has been modified over the history of its incorporation into goal-directed human action,” (Cole, 1996, p. 117). Use and context shape the value of artifacts. The mediation model thus applies equally to physical artifacts as it does to abstract tools such as language or culture.

Artifacts exist on three levels. Primary artifacts aid directly in interaction, such as words, symbols and communications technology. Secondary artifacts include representations of and modes of interacting with primary artifacts such as norms and beliefs. Tertiary artifacts develop their own autonomous world, such as social contexts or cultural systems (Cole, 1996).

Cole represents the mediation model as a triangle with its three vertices representing the subject, object, and the artifact mediating the interaction. As noted in Figure 1, the bottom leg of the triangle represents direct interaction. The other legs represent interactions between the subject and the artifact and the object and the artifact (Cole, 1996). The relationship creates a dynamic between the elements; in sociocultural theory, the mediator is not a conduit through which individuals interact, but an active part of a relationship where it is a participant interacting with and affecting the other portions (Cole, 1996).
In analyzing the New Transfer Student Portal and academic advising in general, the subject and object in the mediated relationship are the student and the institution of the university. Academic advising acts as a mediator of that relationship, providing context, meaning, and means of understanding institutional processes. The New Student Portal is a medium through which this mediated relationship can potentially develop.

Based on Engestrom (1987, as cited by Cole, 1996), Cole (1996) presents an expanded model, as represented in Figure 2. The triadic model forms the top triangle in the expanded model, but the expanded model also situates interactions in a social context, including rules, community, and the distribution of work between the subject and others (Cole, 1996, p. 140). Mediated relationships are multidirectional, modifying both the elements of the interaction and the relationships between the elements (Cole, 1996, pp. 144-145). Over time, these relationships create a developmental environment including all the elements and forming a larger cultural context that is itself part of the mediational dynamic (Cole, 1996, p. 145).
This expanded model illustrates the multiple levels and directions of mediated activity, creating complex networks in which specific tools serve different roles in different relationships. The expanded model postulates a view of mediated interaction as a way of relating to and understanding the world so that meaning arises from dynamic interaction between subject and object using language, culture, rules, and values. This expanded model of mediation provides a template for developing a model of analysis that addresses some of the limitations of models such as Tinto’s (1993) theory by addressing students’ dynamic interactions with academic language, academic culture, and institutional rules and values. This provides a set of tools for understanding transfer students’ experience of the university in several contexts and settings.

**Integrating Theories and Analyzing Activity**

A full consideration the New Transfer Student Portal will involve analysis of the site not only in terms of its value as learning environment, but also in terms of its role in assisting students in the transition to the academic and social setting of the university. In the
process, both Tinto’s model of integration and sociocultural models of mediated action will be evaluated as ways to analyze activity and to help in further study of how advising through the New Transfer Student Portal shapes the transitional experiences of incoming transfer students. In the process of reviewing the Portal, I will evaluate the role of communications media and advising in transfer students’ transition to the university. At the same time, I will compare the ability of both Tinto’s (1993) theory and mediational models to explain students’ responses and experiences. I will use the results of my review to propose new ways of integrating theoretical frameworks to consider a more complete picture of advising and its role in students’ transition to the university.
Chapter IV: Developing the New Transfer Student Portal

The advisors who developed the New Transfer Student Portal tried to replicate the experiences of face-to-face advising and orientation using both interactive elements and passive content. Initially, the Portal used only asynchronous media, but as technology for secure, confidential synchronous communication became available, the advising staff began to incorporate synchronous chat technology into the Web site to improve the effectiveness of the distance advising process for new students. In making initial design decisions, the advising staff focused on content delivery, an initial phase common in on-line education (Laws & DuBois, 2000). The inclusion of interactive elements through the schedule approval process and on-line advising, however, focused on replicating face-to-face advising rather than creating a new learning environment that capitalized on the strongest aspects of on-line learning environments.

The Goal and Purpose of the Portal

The New Transfer Student Portal provides pre-enrollment advising services to incoming transfer students in the process of selecting courses, understanding university requirements, and matriculating in the university. The Portal includes on-line tutorials and options for students and advisors to collaborate on developing an early educational plan. The Portal involves an on-line tutorial, help with course selection, and the opportunity for students to communicate with advisors to ask questions and clarify details of university policy and student goals.

The primary goal of the New Transfer Student Portal is to provide information on requirements and help students select courses. The secondary goal is to provide a sense of
connection to academic advisors by providing a means of open communication. The tertiary goal is to help students gain competent membership in the campus community by scaffolding distance interactions that provide context and structure to student-advisor interactions.

**Design Considerations**

The most pressing concern in implementing on-line pre-enrolment advising services at UCSD has been maintaining privacy of student records in compliance with the campus' interpretation of the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) (United States Department of Education, 2007) as well as state, University of California, and campus-specific policies, rules and regulations. The need to protect the privacy of academic records places restrictions on the types of technology that advisors can use in interacting with students. Interactions must involve the confirmation of student identities, since interactions between advisors and groups of students or between students may compromise privacy without allowing students to give written consent.

Changes to the Portal require input by all six colleges, and many changes require collaborative agreement. Information services may also require support and approval of other institutional units. Changes require approvals from multiple stakeholders, including advising staff, information technology staff, deans of academic advising, and admissions and enrollment services staff.

The constraints for technology implementation have resulted in incremental revisions to the Muir College transfer orientation program based on feedback from both advisors and students, and have included changes in both content and interaction, adding, removing or rewriting portions of the site to improve flow, clarify information, or to address
concerns for user interface. In order to evaluate the implementation of technology, advising staff have also had to consider aspects of desired outcomes as well as technological limitations. In response, a committee of Internet technology staff and academic advisors from all six colleges collaboratively develop the New Transfer Student Portal to provide information and interactivity in a summer distance learning environment.

The Learning Environment

The New Transfer Student Portal consists of four on-line curricular interactions: a web-based tutorial, the proposal of first-quarter schedules, asynchronous E-advising, and synchronous LiveChat. Each incorporates varying levels of self-direction, personalization, and interactivity to help advisors and students gain information to foster informed decision-making and to provide opportunities for direct advisor-student interaction. The Portal is described in detail in Appendix I.

Web-based Tutorials

The web-based tutorials provide content-based lessons that include text and images. The on-line tutorials focus on providing scaffolding for later interactions between students and academic advisors. The tutorials cover information such as procedural instructions, deadlines, and explanations of rules, regulations, and academic requirements. Some pages also include forms to obtain additional information from students. The pages, as seen in Figure 3, present information in a linear progression, based on text and graphics presented through a standard web browser.
The web-based tutorial offers strong user-content interaction (Moore & Kearsley, 1996; Tuovinen, 2000), but lacks feedback, personalization, and opportunities to interact with instructors or other students, elements of successful computer-based instruction as noted by Rodgers and Withrow-Thornton (2005). Students using the web-based tutorial have limited self-direction, information is not highly personalized, and there is little opportunity for feedback. Instead, the site passively presents text-based information regarding requirements and course planning.

**Proposing a First Quarter Schedule**

The next task students are required to complete on the New Transfer Student Portal is to develop and propose a set of courses for the first quarter. This process requires students to use the information in the web-based tutorial to propose a set of three courses for their first quarter at UCSD to be reviewed by an academic advisor. The tutorial offers students a sample schedule, and gives information on researching major requirements and options for elective courses. Once the proposal is submitted, an advisor will offer comments and additional options for the student based on the student’s proposed major, previous
coursework, and expressed interests, as shown in Figure 4. Proposing a list of first quarter courses in a structured way provides a student with a model of shared responsibilities in academic advising, and provides a structured method for students to familiarize themselves with information resources for academic planning.

Figure 4. Students are able to propose a set of courses they wish to take in their first quarter for review, comment, and correction by academic advisors.

The process of proposing of courses requires strong self-direction and allows for high levels of personalization and feedback. The Web site provides some direction for students to research their proposal, and a scaffold that notes the number and kinds of courses to propose. However, the interactions between students and advisors during this process are limited in context and involve delays between submitting proposals and responses by advisors, leading to limited immediacy (Yacci, 2000). These limits on student-
instructor interaction (Moore & Kearsley, 1996; Tuovinen, 2000) may restrict the effectiveness of the schedule proposal as a learning environment. The process of proposing fall quarter courses provides the potential student-instructor interaction. However, feedback delays of 1-2 working days and a lack of feedback during the process of researching course options undermines students’ ability to build a strong understanding of their choices and options through interaction with experienced advisors or peers. Course selection thus lacks a strong foundation of understanding and guidance, leading students to find external sources for such support.

The E-advising system. E-advising is an asynchronous communication tool that allows students to leave questions for their academic advisors to answer later. Each student works with an individual advisor to provide students with a consistent contact within the academic advising program. The advisor assigned at this point will remain the advisor who responds to course proposals and any E-advising questions, assisting students throughout the transition and enrollment process. E-advising is available at any time, but does not provide immediate feedback. Instead, advisors respond within up to two working days to questions posed on E-advising.

E-advising allows high levels of interaction and a low to moderate level of immediacy (Yacci, 2000). E-advising allows for a high level of self-direction and personalization (Rodgers & Withrow-Thorton, 2005). Students have the freedom to interact on their own schedule without rigid structure determining the content of questions. Some limited scaffolding is given in the instructions for using E-advising, which lists several possible topics for questions, including first quarter classes; degree requirements; major, minor and career plans; scheduling questions; and general academic questions, as shown in
Figure 5. The focus in this interaction is primarily on learner-instructor interactions supported by learner-content interactions (Moore & Kearsley, 1996; Tuovinen, 2000.)

The LiveChat system. The LiveChat program provides real-time communication tools for students. LiveChat launches from a link on the E-advising web page and allows students to ask questions of advisors in a more informal live setting. LiveChat provides a different mode of communication for students that eliminates the delays inherent in asynchronous communication. The live nature of interactions requires students to ask their questions during a set schedule for live chats, and does not guarantee that students continue to interact with the same advisor with whom previous interactions may have occurred. The LiveChat program, however, is only active when an academic advisor logs in to chat with students.
LiveChat thus provides an enhancement to E-advising by providing a different mode of communication for on-line advising.

By selecting LiveChat, students activate a new window, as shown in Figure 6, that allows direct text-based interaction with an academic advisor. LiveChats add to the E-advising log for students and other advisors to refer to in the future, and the LiveChat software allows students to print out a copy of the transcript from the chat window.

Figure 6. A LiveChat window.

Concerns and Criticism Regarding the New Transfer Student Portal

The New Transfer Student Portal provides an interactive setting for students' initial interactions with advisors and with both the academic and administrative cultures of the university. Students are engaged in two levels of interactivity, student-content interaction and
student-advisor interaction. Student-staff interaction involves opportunity for both asynchronous and synchronous interaction structured around tasks of developing initial academic plans based on information provided on the Web site.

Interactions focus on developing solutions to the problem of developing academic plans, but include prompts of planning degree and career options, and clarifying degree requirements and transfer course equivalence. Incoming transfer students choose the level and amount of interaction they engage in, though at a minimum, students and advisors must interact when the student proposes potential courses and the advisor responds with comments on that proposal.

The New Transfer Student Portal includes strong measures for record keeping, security of records, and uniformity of experience for students. However, the development of the structure and features of the site were driven by administrative timelines and staffing limitations. These limits were in turn the result changes in the admissions process for transfer students and shaped by the needs of academic advisors and their concerns for helping transfer students with the transitional and learning process. As a result, questions of the effectiveness of on-line pre-enrollment advising through the New Transfer Student Portal involve issues of both the effectiveness of the general idea of on-line advising and of the design of the Portal itself.

Several elements of the New Transfer Student Portal require attention. The lack of strong student self-direction in activities, limited opportunities for immediate feedback, and the lack of student-student interactions create an incomplete learning environment. Because of this, the New Transfer Student Portal does no take advantage of the strengths of computer-based instruction in providing a combination of access and interactivity. The lack
of student-student interactions and the constraints on student-advisor interactions throughout the process limit the ability for students to engage in construction of meaning and internalization of information through semiotic mediation. The lack of consistent social interaction throughout the Portal may also undermine any sense of integration (Tinto, 1993) for transfer students, may do not have sufficient opportunities to build strong formal or informal relationships with staff or other students.
Chapter V: Questions Arising from Initial Research

The first question I had when reviewing the New Transfer Student Portal was how the Portal affected the pre-enrollment interactions between new community college transfer students and their university academic advisors. After reviewing the design of the Portal and comparing the Portal to existing research on building effective on-line learning environments, my questions focused on how elements of the existing design affected efforts to advise incoming transfer students. My review of the Web site led to the following questions:

1. How do students’ perceptions of on-line communication affect their use of the New Student Portal?

2. How do students’ previous experiences with academic advising affect their use of the Portal?

3. How do students’ pre-existing assumptions about being in college influence their use of the Portal?

I hoped to observe which elements of web-based communications media helped promote interaction, and which elements hampered interaction. I also hoped to review students’ interactions with advisors to uncover ways in which context shapes those interactions. In this case I was hoping to see how students’ pre-existing understanding of academic advising and academic culture informed their interactions with academic advising.

How Advisors Had Intended the New Transfer Student Portal to Help Students.

In planning the New Transfer Student Portal, the site design revolved around providing some key features to the new transfer students, as noted in chapter IV, including
accessibility, security, feedback, and an opportunity to engage with and integrate to campus culture.

Accessibility. The site would provide accessibility by providing open and flexible opportunities for advisors and students to leave messages for each other without requiring students to travel to campus.

Security. The site would provide security by ensuring that academic information and communications required the student’s personal identification number and personal password—a level of security not available in phone or email contact.

Feedback. The site would provide feedback using both asynchronous and synchronous communications.

An opportunity to engage with and integrate into campus culture. The site would provide engagement through ongoing personal contact mediated through Internet technologies.

The advising staff hoped that by providing personalized attention through distance technology, advisors could develop a professional relationship with students that built understanding of regulations and course selections, guided students through the process of selecting courses, and encouraged the development of the kinds of personalized relationships that result from face-to-face advising. The design of the site resulted from an attempt to take previous practices and translate them literally to a web-based interface.

Blind Alleys and New Avenues of Inquiry

My initial concept of the study was to review the transcripts of asynchronous E-advising contacts and synchronous LiveChat contacts to see if different technologies
promoted different types of communication between students and advisors. I expected to see that asynchronous and synchronous communication would be different in character and duration. I also expected to see different levels of engagement between advisors and students reflected in how much of discussion was proscriptive in nature, explaining only rules and requirements, and how much focused on broader issues of personal and career planning, discussion of college in general, and developing long-term plans. I had expected to observe that different technologies interacted in different ways as they mediated the communications between students and advisors.

However, after reviewing a random sample of 50 students chosen from the Fall Quarter transfer student group of 350 students, I found that 16 students used the asynchronous E-advising system, and 9 students used synchronous LiveChat. The remaining students’ interactions with Muir academic advisors were limited. All students had received notes advisors made regarding the courses students had proposed to take in their first quarter. Thus, while all students had passive responses from advisors, only a few had active communication with an advisor. Rather than having a strong pair of groups to support a comparison of technology-mediated academic advising, I observed that the great majority of students in a random sample did not use any interactive technology at all. As noted in Table 7, Fall and Winter students showed little use of both E-advising and LiveChat. Only the Spring Quarter transfer students used on-line advising at a high rate, but the Spring sample represented the smallest group of transfer students.
The low rates of student use of on-line advising left me with a large number of research concerns, a lack of clear hypotheses, and a need for more investigation to clarify what was occurring with the new incoming transfer students. It was not clear if the fact that students were not using LiveChat and E-advising was a sign that students were not receiving help, or that they were seeking help elsewhere. As a result, I decided to revise my study to uncover reasons students did not use on-line communications to interact with academic advisors.

*A Revised Study*

Observing the lack of interaction, I wanted to understand why transfer students did not interact with academic advisors. Was the lack of interaction a matter of Web site design and implementation, or was there an inherent flaw with the idea of using on-line communication for pre-enrollment advising? The revised research questions that grew out of these observations became:

1) Does electronic communication lead to a lack of personal interaction?

2) Is the amount of on-line communication affected by students’ previous experiences with advising or counseling?
3) Is the amount of on-line communication affected by students’ pre-existing assumptions about being college students?
Chapter VI: Studying the New Transfer Student Portal

As I reviewed the way students used the New Transfer Student Portal, the initial data told me a story I found compelling enough to shift my focus away from the content of students’ interaction with staff and toward the reasons that students did not use Internet technologies to communicate with advisors. Early observations in Fall and Winter quarters showed that the great majority of students did not use any of the on-line advising tools, despite the fact that we did not offer any other opportunity for pre-enrollment individual advising. As a result, my research concerns turned toward trying to discover why the incoming transfer students generally did not use on-line advising tools. I hoped that preliminary investigations into the reasons behind this phenomenon would help me evaluate the college’s method of working with new transfer students before enrollment as well as the issues that transfer students face in their transition to the university.

The Muir College advising office used the New Transfer Student Portal three times in the 2007-2008 academic year: in July and August of 2007 for 351 incoming Fall Quarter students; in December for 38 incoming Winter Quarter students; and in March for 28 incoming Spring Quarter students.

*The Fall Quarter student population.* The Fall Quarter 2007 student population included students admitted from community colleges, California State University campuses, other University of California campuses, and private colleges and universities. While most of the Fall Quarter students had completed general education requirements through specific agreements with the university (TAG or IGETC), many did not. As a result, some students in the Fall Quarter group had very divergent requirements for general education coursework. Since the publicly posted database of course equivalencies for transfer students from
the Articulation System Stimulating Interinstitutional Student Transfer (ASSIST) program focuses almost entirely on courses from California community colleges, those students who had transferred to UCSD in Fall Quarter without completing TAG, IGETC, or courses posted on ASSIST did not know how their courses would apply to their degrees. These students had to appeal to academic departments for course equivalency for most or all of their courses.

The college offered the Fall Quarter students a summer orientation program before on-line advising that included large-group information and advising sessions that discussed students’ general education requirements, how to determine courses for students’ majors, and how to use the advising and enrollment systems on campus in addition to campus life presentations. One-on-one advising with Muir College advisors, however, was not available to these students. The Fall Quarter students then enrolled later in the summer after on-line advising. All students participated in the on-line advising program through the New Transfer Student Portal. Seventy-five percent of the group participated in the summer orientation program.

Winter and Spring Quarter students. Due to logistical constraints, the Winter and Spring Quarter programs did not include pre-enrollment orientation programs, though they did include the same pre-enrollment on-line advising through the New Transfer Student Portal that Fall Quarter transfer students received. The Winter and Spring Quarter groups consisted entirely of incoming community college students who had completed transfer agreements. Because all students had completed TAG or IGETC agreements, the students in Winter and Spring Quarters had fewer general education requirements to complete at UCSD than a significant portion of the Fall Quarter students. In addition, since all students
were coming from community colleges, the Winter and Fall Quarter students were more likely to have completed community college courses with course equivalencies posted through the ASSIST Web site and did not need to petition a large number of courses completed at other four-year institutions. The Winter and Spring Quarter student groups were much less heterogeneous in their academic needs and more able to look up the requirements of their degree programs before enrolling.

After reviewing satisfaction surveys conducted jointly by the college’s student life and academic advising offices in the Fall Quarter, the advising staff at Muir College noted student dissatisfaction with the process of developing and submitting a proposed set of courses for advisor review. Students in Fall Quarter were asked to review a tutorial, look at their posted transcripts, and following direction from a major advisor, propose three courses for their first quarter of enrollment. A Muir College academic advisor would review the course proposal and respond to the courses proposed with corrections, clarification, or notations of where the proposed courses could pose difficulty.

In practice, students expressed frustration with the process. Many stated that they had difficulty reaching their major advisors. Others expressed difficulty reading the course equivalencies on the web-based ASSIST course equivalency database or on their UCSD academic record because they lacked instruction and guidance in using these tools. Others noted that they did not believe that it helped them to look up academic information on their own and were frustrated that they could not simply sit down with an advisor and have relevant information researched for them.

As a result, the college advising staff agreed to experiment in Winter Quarter with a process of having advisors suggest a set of courses for Winter Quarter to students rather
than having students propose courses themselves. Looking at the students’ academic records and their declared or proposed majors, advisors posted a set of suggested courses or noted that students should contact their major advisors with specific questions about course placement based on courses that did not have specific course equivalency on file.

Advisors expressed frustration that proposing courses to incoming transfer students in Winter Quarter involved more work on the part of advisors with little sense of improved service to students. In staff meetings, the advisors expressed their anecdotal observation that students enrolled in recommended courses but did not seem to understand why they were taking the courses recommended to them. Advisors observed that students they had talked to did not understand and how their courses applied to graduation requirements. In addition, advisors brought up anecdotal evidence that students they interacted with had not contacted their major department advisors. Based on feedback from academic advisors in Winter Quarter, the advising staff decided collectively to return to having students propose a set of courses just as they had in Fall Quarter.

**Dealing with Questions Without Clear Hypotheses**

Usage data and student contact records did not provide any information that explained why Fall and Winter Quarter transfer students generally did not use E-advising and LiveChat. In order to explore how students perceived and interacted with the Portal, I focused on building data based on grounded theory. I wanted to develop new hypotheses that challenged the assumptions made by the advisors who had developed the New Transfer Student Portal. Grounded theory provided a methodology in which “research issues are found by looking for perspectives that are left out, and assumptions that need to be challenged” (Auerbach & Silverstein, 2003, p. 15). Interviews with transfer students
would provide insight into their perceptions, experiences, and previous experiences with academic advising.

The Research Design

In April 2008, I emailed potential interview subjects a web-based survey about their experiences in pre-enrollment advising programs. The final question on the survey asked students if they wished to participate in interviews to discuss their experiences in person. However, of over 400 students emailed, I received 27 responses to the survey, and two volunteers for interviews, and neither responded to follow-up emails. The surveys had been intended to serve a screening process for interview subjects and a means of gathering broad information about student attitudes and opinions. Instead, the low response rate to electronic communications led me to pursue direct contact with students and face-to-face recruitment of transfer students for interviews.

In order to recruit subjects, I met with a group of students hired to work as orientation leaders for the following year’s on-campus orientation programs, a transfer student organization at Muir College, and talked to students with whom I had worked in academic advising. I knew that the sample of students that resulted from this recruitment strategy would likely skew toward students who successfully integrated with the institution either socially or academically. However, I hoped to find in these students a group of more vocal informants, and some possible patterns of attitudes and experiences that might provide useful insights into the ways in which such student begin to become engaged with the university.

Summary of interview strategies. Individual interviews began with an open-ended question regarding students’ experiences with transferring to the university. A series of optional
follow-up questions (see interview strategies in Appendix II) pursued particular topics if they did not arise in the course of the interview. Interview questions included direct questions regarding students’ perceptions of technology, students’ previous experiences with academic advising, and students’ perceptions of the purpose of academic advising. Finally, I asked students for suggestions for improving the New Transfer Student Portal. I reviewed, coded, and analyzed for recurring themes and topics as well as outlying responses.

**Understanding Transfer Students’ Transition to the University**

Initial review of student contacts suggested that students were generally unlikely to interact with advisors through the New Transfer Student Portal. The smaller cohort in Spring Quarter, as noted in Chapter V, were more likely to use distance advising. Though differences in student composition between Fall and later quarters and differences in structured activity in Winter and other quarters may have been tied to some of these differences, there was no clear reason for such variations in percentage of students using both the E-advising and LiveChat systems before enrollment. I hoped to uncover students’ views on the transitional experience and learning about how the students’ experiences with advising were or were not influenced by the New Transfer Student Portal. In the process, I hoped to uncover patterns of perception and behavior that would illuminate the influence of students’ experience with technology, academic advising, individual institutions, and perceptions of academia on their initial experiences with the university.
Chapter VII: Student Perspectives on the New Transfer Student Portal

The interview subjects consisted of six community college transfer students. This group included two students who were hired to work for our transfer orientation program (participants 1 and 3); three members of a transfer student organization at Muir College (participants 1, 3, and 5); and three students who have had several previous contacts with me as an academic advisor (participants 2, 4, and 6). Information on the student participants is included in Table 8.

Table 8.
The Interview Participants

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant</th>
<th>Sex</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Transfer Institution(s)</th>
<th>Initial Quarter of Enrollment</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>San Diego City College</td>
<td>Fall, 2007</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>Fresno City College</td>
<td>Fall, 2007</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>Cabrillo Community College</td>
<td>Fall, 2007</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>Grossmont College</td>
<td>Fall, 2007</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>Fresno City College</td>
<td>Spring, 2008</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Representation and Student Integration in the Sample Pool

The interview participants in the sample represented the typical ages and geographic diversity found in the general population of transfer students. The students also represented
all three quarters of initial enrollment, with greater representation from fall quarter. The group was equally divided between men and women. However, the fact that I recruited interview participants from students who had existing relationships with academic advisors or involvement in student organizations, as noted in Chapter VI, meant that the participants had a potential over-representation of students with high levels of academic or social integration. As a result, I anticipated the interview subjects to show a strong sense of membership in campus communities, either academic or social.

This also meant that I expected limited success in exploring issues relating to students who were unable to integrate into the social and academic life of the university. Instead, I hoped to uncover the strategies and experiences of students who managed to make a successful transition to the university. As a result, the analysis of the interviews focused on how students integrated into the university, used the New Transfer Student Portal, and perceived the role of advising. In analyzing the interviews, I looked for evidence that advising and other transitional experiences played a role in students’ sense of integration. I also looked for signs that academic advising serves as a mediator of transfer students’ transitional experiences.

Other studies (Harbin, 1997; Townsend & Wilson, 2006) have found that transfer students experience difficulties integrating into university culture. The way that I recruited interview subjects is thus not necessarily indicative of the typical experiences of transfer students in terms of integration to the university. The experiences these students should be viewed with an understanding that the pool of subjects over-represents students who are engaged with the university and under-represents students who have not been able to become engaged with the university.
Further research should consider a broader population of students in order to uncover some of their issues and concerns with integrating the academic and social networks of the university into their existing social and personal affiliations. Such research would be able to consider differences between students with different levels of integration in order to provide greater insights into the transition process.

Integration and Tinto’s Model of Retention

According to Tinto (1993), student departure from the university arises from the inability of students to integrate successfully into the culture of the university. Adapting concepts from Durkheim’s suicide study, Tinto discusses integration along two dimensions: academic, which includes a connection to courses, content, faculty and the values of the institution; and social, which includes the development of networks with one or more subcultures of the university. In developing a sense of integration in both of these dimensions, students develop what Mehan (1979) describes as competent membership in the classroom, in which students have an understanding of both the explicit and implicit formal and informal rules of the academic setting.

Because of the ways in which I recruited these students, I expected to observe strong levels of integration in all students along at least one of the dimensions of academic and social integration. The participants I recruited were involved on campus or had previously sought academic support services. Three of the six students were involved in transfer student organizations on campus, and one had met with faculty members over the past year. All had worked with a college academic advisor since transferring to UCSD. I did observe what I expected in the interviews, though the results showed a complex set of tensions.
**Academic integration.** The students I interviewed expressed a generally positive experience with academic integration. Students felt that they had managed to understand academic requirements and feel part of their classes. Participant 4 noted:

> I have actually connected with quite a few of my professors and, as busy as they tell me they are, they still set some time aside to be able to meet with me. I got to meet with [a professor], and he set aside a whole hour in the middle of a busy day, spent time on both my academic and personal life.

Participant 2 noted that “I didn’t talk to anyone [in my program] until the first day, but it was on that first day that I did [talk to someone].“

Participants 3 and 5 noted regular contact with an academic advisor in their major departments. None of the students noted difficulties being engaged with their academic life, though some noted that they had initial confusion when trying to understand the full scope of their academic requirements or problems adapting to the quarter system after going to school under the semester system.

Interviews with students presented a recurring tension between students’ conception of themselves as independent students with no need of support services and their perception of the importance of assistance. Both emerged as common themes, as noted in Table 9.
Table 9.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Student Expressions of Independence vs. the Need for Assistance</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Independence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Going to a community college, being older, I have learned how to deal with stuff on my own, and so I don’t really have huge complaints when the system isn’t babying me.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I didn’t feel like I needed (on-line advising) because the orientation, the transfer admit day, I think that those gave me enough information.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I really don’t have problems with Web sites, I know how to figure it out.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>It was very clear to me, I didn’t need much more.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Need for Personal Assistance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I wished I had gone to orientation because I had to use the on-line advising a lot.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I feel like you can’t really expect everyone to read every line and really fully grasp what they’re saying.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I really just wanted to call somebody, but that didn’t seem like it was an option you were pushing for us. It seemed like you wanted us to be all on the computer, so that was a little hard.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The subjects who stressed independence expressed the idea that advising was either unnecessary or less necessary for them. They proposed that availability of information was sufficient to allow them to make most relevant decisions about their academic planning and progress. The students who expressed a need for personal assistance (two of whom had noted their strong sense of independence) expressed either a regret that they did not receive additional personal assistance or a desire for interpersonal guidance. They felt that some on-
line interactions with advisors did not feel as satisfactory as personal contact. As subject 6 noted:

>I’m scared because I have to trust that whoever’s looking at my stuff is making the right decision for me, and then I was reading the recommendations, and I say that’s what they say I should be taking. But I’m like, but is that really the right thing? Because I don’t know, but here in person, I know that you’re looking at my file for sure, and you’re not looking at someone else.

The subjects expressed a need for guidance, but a sense of vulnerability that did not diminish after using text-based on-line communications. The students identified a qualitative difference in communication between text-based Internet communication and direct interpersonal contact that meant that they were unable to experience the reassurance and assistance they needed through web-based advising.

*Social integration.* Just as students expressed confidence in their academic integration, they also expressed a similar level of confidence in their level of social integration with the campus. As shown in Table 10, three of the interview subjects expressed struggles with social integration and involvement on campus, but all of the students discussed ways in which they moved from a sense of social disconnection to some sort social connection related to the campus. In comparison to similar research by Townsend & Wilson (2006), these students showed a general sense of connection that I had not expected.
Table 10.

Students' Perceptions of Social Integration

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Struggles with Integration</th>
<th>3 students</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I really felt lost until I became friends with a lot of my transfer friends.</td>
<td>Subject 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I don’t know if there’s much social.</td>
<td>Subject 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not really. First quarter here I was hesitant. My thing was to focus academically. I didn’t fill my schedule with any sort of social things. I was working, so I had to work in order to live, but I was trying not to put too much on my plate.</td>
<td>Subject 4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Successful Social Integration Strategies</th>
<th>6 students</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>It was just a matter of adjusting to a huge campus and meeting new friends.</td>
<td>Subject 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>And then I got involved in some of the transfer organizations, and that was really helpful. That really helped me get along.</td>
<td>Subject 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I ended up moving down here about two months before school actually started, because I knew I was going to be working and I wanted to get used to working before I had to get used to school.</td>
<td>Subject 3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I had driven around UCSD a few times just to check it out, and I had friends that had attended that said, “hey, let’s get lunch at Price Center.”</td>
<td>Subject 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I’m a really social person, so I adapt easily to different situations. So for me, it was fine. I didn’t have any difficulty.</td>
<td>Subject 6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not until the third quarter that I’ve been here have I just started to connect to other people, and that’s usually because in (my classes) I’m seeing the same people over and over again. So in that way I’m feeling more connected.</td>
<td>Subject 4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

While two students noted the role of attending an on-campus orientation in facilitating this process, all of the students identified ways of making social networks on campus unrelated to formal programming. Instead, these students developed a sense of
social integration through informal networking, connecting to existing social networks
through friends, churches and student groups.

Three students discussed work as a barrier to connecting with other transfer
students, while two students noted that they did not know at first how to connect with other
students. None, however, voiced a concern with such difficulties. While lack of an easy
means to connect to other students was a problem, none felt it detracted strongly from their
experiences on campus. While some students may have felt that social integration might
have added to their experiences, none expressed concerns that such integration was essential
to their success.

Effects of On-line Advising on Integration.

The students’ descriptions of on-line advising indicated an appreciation for the
information that resulted from on-line advising services. These students also expressed
concerns with delivery of services, especially a general distrust of on-line media as a way of
communicating meaningfully with advisors. These attitudes toward electronic
communication recurred in my struggles to recruit interview subjects.

Initial attempts to recruit potential students using electronic mail and to elicit
information through web-based surveys resulted in a very low rate of return on surveys and
no interview subjects. Students only began to volunteer for interviews after direct, personal
recruitment. Though the campus treats Web sites and electronic mail as official methods of
communicating with students, transfer students were largely unresponsive to electronic
communications without a personal context. Subject 4, when personally approached to
participate in an interview readily volunteered based on our previous contacts. However, he
also said “they had emailed me something about doing some study on transfer students.”
Even though he had received an email from my personal email account and I had stated that the interviews were part of my study of transfer students, the student had treated the email as an impersonal contact due to the context of email contacts from the university.

The lack of student response suggests a general disengagement from the electronic communications that the university relies upon as its primary channel of communication, despite students’ facility with on-line communications tools. The reasons for the sense of disengagement are unclear, though several students interviewed expressed a sense of email and web-based information being overwhelming, difficult to navigate, and impersonal. However, unfamiliarity with on-line communications did not appear as a theme. Instead, students all expressed comfort with and extensive previous experiences with on-line communications. Experience rather than inexperience likely shaped their use of on-line media. Students receive a great deal of communication from both commercial sources and from the university. Most of this is impersonal and focused on marketing or providing information of unclear value to students. Without a personal context to signify the value of electronic communications, students have few clear means to differentiate useful messages from messages that have trivial value to them.

The participants’ responses suggest that communicating effectively requires personal context to engender trust and elicit student interaction. Thus, using electronic communication as an exclusive way of interacting students is a flawed model. Responses from interview participants suggest that communicating with transfer students requires a multimodal approach that includes a strong interpersonal element to encourage personal investment from students in the processes of the university in addition to electronic media that provide students with convenient access to information. The conflict between students’
desire for convenient access to information and their desire for engaging interpersonal relationships reflects a tension between convenience and sense of distance that result from use of Internet communications media, as noted in Table 11.
Table 11.

Perceptions of Convenience vs. Impersonality in On-line Advising

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Convenient Access</th>
<th>4 students</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Actually, I prefer (on-line advising) because it is harder to schedule a time</td>
<td>Subject 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>when the office is open when you are so busy with other things.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>When you come here, you do have the on-line stuff so you can deal with things</td>
<td>Subject 4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>better because they have more information either published or more ways to access</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>what you need to without being in person.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I think that for people who really take advantage of (on-line advising), it</td>
<td>Subject 3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>must be infinitely helpful, because you don’t have to come here to get all your</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>questions answered.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>You guys did a great job. When I emailed a question, the response time was</td>
<td>Subject 6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>like 48 hours or less, which I thought was really helpful.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Impersonality</th>
<th>3 students</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I wished I had gone to orientation because I had to use the on-line advising</td>
<td>Subject 3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a lot.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I really just wanted to call somebody, but that didn’t seem like it was an</td>
<td>Subject 6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>option you were pushing for us. It seemed like you wanted us to be all on the</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>computer. So that was a little bit hard.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I did the on-line stuff, but it’s always nicer to talk to someone in person.</td>
<td>Subject 5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Four of the six students interviewed noted positive regard for on-line advising
services based on convenience of access to information. None of the students interviewed
felt that on-line advising was inadequate. Indeed, one student stated a preference for on-line
advising. Subject 6, who felt noted a strong sense of distance from Internet communications
noted:

I don’t think you should take it away, because I see how it helps you
guys, but I was thinking maybe it would help me if after the e-
advising, maybe a phone call, you know, after I registered. Maybe you
guys could see that I had registered for classes, maybe you could call
me, be like “we see you’ve complete e-advising and we see you’ve
registered for those classes, and did you have any questions. Because
then, if you had called me after I had registered for my classes and
reassured me that I had done the right classes or signed up for the
right stuff, then I would have felt really good.

For this student, the qualitative limitations of on-line advising are rooted in
emotional and interpersonal contact represented by personal contact. Even telephone
contact, which still does not involved face-to-face contact, provided the student with a sense
of personalization she did not find in on-line media. The student’s response supports the
idea that different media provide qualitatively different value to students.

Subjects’ Conception of Academic Advising

Students valued convenience and access to personal information represented by on-
line advising services. The on-line delivery of advising services served the purely prescriptive
elements of the advising process. However, many of the developmental aspects of advising
focused on helping students improve independence, decision-making skills, and a greater
engagement with their academics are not achieved effectively by on-line advising.

Students may find access to information an acceptable model of advising due to their
general concept of academic advising as largely prescriptive. When asked what they saw as
the purpose of advising, subjects focused on the prescriptive nature of the relationship. Four
of the six students provided definitions of academic advising. All, as noted in Table 12, had a
strong prescriptive component to their definition, focused on the completion of graduation
requirements. Only one focused on building a developmental relationship, noting the
importance of the academic advisor as a mentor and sounding board.
Table 12.

Definitions of Advising as a Prescriptive or Developmental Process

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Prescriptive Definitions of Academic Advising</th>
<th>4 students</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The purpose of advising is to help students understand what they need in order to graduate.</td>
<td>Subject 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>So you can graduate.</td>
<td>Subject 3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The way that I use it is to make sure that I’m fulfilling all the requirements for graduation. And to make sure that I’m moving along smoothly, that I’m not going to have to say here longer than necessary.</td>
<td>Subject 4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>When have I visited you in the office? It’s been for my AHI troubles, it’s been with classes that don’t show up on my transcript. It’s been for me to sit and count and go, “okay, will 180 units get me out of here, and did I do my math right?”</td>
<td>Subject 2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Developmental Definitions of Academic Advising</th>
<th>1 student</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I think it’s nice to get the opinion of someone else, someone who is older and wiser to give you some options of where you can go.</td>
<td>Subject 5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

However, the students did value the developmental nature of personal relationships. Participant 4, 5 and 6 cited the importance of previous or current contact with academic advisors. Participant 5 spoke of her experiences with advising at the community college:

I went to the transfer center and I would see (my advisor) every semester and talk to her about what classes I was taking, just to freshen up and make sure I was on the right track. I liked it because you were always talking to the same person. Whereas sometimes in high school and here, you aren’t really guaranteed to see the same person every time. I like that consistency of someone who is older and wiser to give you some opinions of where you can go.
Similarly, participant 4 spoke of his experiences in finding an advisor for regular guidance:

Eventually, I actually found a guy who used to be an academic advisor at UCSC who went to (my community college). He knew the UC system, and he helped me out a lot with the IGETC, made sure I filled out the classes.

Participant 6 spoke specifically in terms of needing to have personal contact with advisors to feel affirmed in her academic choices:

I wanted to come and talk about my first quarter. It was a big deal, my first quarter at UCSD, and I couldn’t talk to anyone. I had to do it on the Internet and luckily I had some friends here so I could [talk to someone].

Despite a largely prescriptive definition of academic advising and the purposes it serves, students value and develop complex relationships with advisors. These relationships encompass elements of both prescription and development. As students build relationships with advisors, advisors are able to act not only as information resources, but also as sounding boards and mentors. Such relationships reflect the ideals of developmental advising as expressed in Chapter II. A reliance on electronic media provides a focus solely on the information aspects of advising rather than the relationships that lead to developmental advising.

Mediation as a Model of Academic Advising

While models such as Tinto’s (1993) model of student integration or Astin’s (1984) model of student involvement provide some insights into individual student success, neither provides sufficient tools to discuss some of the initial observations that arose from the interviews of transfer students. A mediational perspective allows a framework to discuss the role of advising, the value of different modalities of communication, and the types of social
networking I observed in my interviews. By incorporating a wide variety of social and personal contexts and providing a perspective focused on a variety of types of activity, mediation provides ways to consider activity, settings, and context that models of integration and involvement do not.

**Mediation and the Role of Advising for Transfer Students**

Interview subjects spoke broadly of academic advisors assisting them with their relationship with the university. As noted in Table 13, four mediational roles appeared in students’ descriptions of their relationships with advisors: assisting students with interpreting academic requirements, assisting students with interpreting rules and regulations, acting as a sounding board for decision-making, and evaluating career or academic goals.

*Table 13.*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Mediational Role</th>
<th>Subjects</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Interpreting academic requirements</td>
<td>1,2,3,4,5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interpreting rules and regulations</td>
<td>1,2,4,5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sounding board for decision-making</td>
<td>5, 6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Evaluate career or academic goals.</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Interpreting academic requirements included such activities as asking about degree requirements, prerequisites, and course equivalencies. All but one of the students considered interpreting academic requirements an essential part of the advising relationship. Interpreting rules and regulations included assistance with campus procedures, processes and restrictions. Four of the six students considered interpreting rules and regulations an essential part of the
advising relationship. Acting as a sounding board included such activities as seeking advice on choices or getting reassurance regarding the appropriateness of choices. Two of six students considered such reflection an essential part of the advising relationship. Finally, one student identified evaluating career or academic/major goals as essential to the advising relationship.

Students situated advising in a relationship that included the university and themselves, and noted the value of the relationships between student and advisor and the advisor and the university. Participants 3, 5, and 6 expressed the importance of advisors having personal knowledge of and connection to students, either in previous or past advising relationships. Furthermore, all students discussed the importance of advisors’ role as liaisons with the university and as content experts. The responses of subjects 3, 5, and 6 suggest that these students see the academic advisor as a bridge between the student and the university, helping them interact with the bureaucratic and academic aspects of the university.

**Different Mediational Values for Different Media**

The interview subjects had very different responses to communications through the New Transfer Student Portal. While all appreciated aspects of E-advising for convenience and access to information, some students remarked that electronic media were impersonal and did not meet their personal needs. Participant 5 noted that she wanted more personal contact. “I did the on-line stuff, but it’s always nicer to talk to someone in person.”

Participant 6 found on-line advising more challenging compared to more direct personal interaction:

That was kind of hard, I won't lie. I spent a lot of hours hanging out at the e-advising site. You guys did a great job. Like when I emailed a question, the response time was like 48 hours or less, which I thought was really helpful,
but it was frustrating because I didn't feel like... because I really just wanted to call somebody, but that didn't seem like that was an option you guys were pushing for us... like for us to call or come in. It seemed like you guys wanted us to be all on the computer, right? So that was a little bit hard. I didn't really like it because I wanted to do this (face-to-face conversation), like before when I transferred, what I wanted the most was to come in and speak with someone like this. Like one-on-one and just discuss my first quarter at UCSD.

Different modes of communication served different roles in students' perceptions of their interactions with advisors, even when the information exchanged was structured to replicate the one-on-one interactions between students and advisors that had previously occurred during on-campus orientation programs. However, on-line media differ qualitatively from personal interactions, and different media create different responses and different perceptions.

Students’ discussion of text-based on-line communication media as the primary or sole medium for developing an advising relationship with incoming transfer students built on their existing expectations. Such communications may support the idea that advising consists of purely informational and prescriptive guidance. Because of this perception, students may fail to develop a relationship with an academic advisor that includes interpersonal connection and mentorship that serve to provide a more effective advising relationship.

From a mediational perspective, the cultural tools used in building communications play a vital role in the dynamic that develops. As noted in Chapter III, mediational theory proposes that the historical and cultural contexts of communication serve central roles in the formation of meaning. Different media have different contextual values and thus change the message and the understanding of the message. From a mediational perspective, we would
expect that students would perceive different media in different lights, and that multiple
modes of communication would be preferable to a single mode in helping student form
meaning from communication with advisors.

Previous experiences shape these contextual values. In the case of the New Transfer
Student Portal, students’ experiences with and conceptions of academic advising, college
culture, and on-line communication shape their experience of on-line pre-enrollment
advising. Developing a full understanding the interactions between advisors and new transfer
students using communications media such as New Transfer Student Portal will require
developing a better understanding of how students conceive of the purpose of pre-
enrollment advising, their concept of the goals of university education, and their
expectations and experiences of both university culture and on-line communications.

Integration vs. Social Mediation

Students’ responses to questions of integration suggest that Tinto’s (1993) model of
departure may have limited value in describing key processes for transfer students on several
levels. First, Tinto’s depiction of the transition to college as a rite of passage in which
students leave their home community to become members of an academic community
assumes a high level of immersion and separation from previous communities. Both Tinto
(1993) and his critics (Rodgers & Withrow-Thorton, 2005) note limits to the description of
college as a rite of passage for some students. But with transfer students, this is complicated
because their transition to the university is not their first transition to college. Even within
Tinto’s model, transfer students have already undergone some rites of passage from high
school to community college, from adolescence into adulthood. In age and experience, these
students resemble new students less than they resemble older continuing students.
Rather than the transitions that freshmen experience, transfer students interacted with broad social networks including on-campus and off-campus connections that suggest a rich network of community memberships that did not end with the transition to college. Students seemed to experience college as an expansion of community memberships and identities rather than a transition. Transfer students come to the campus with existing social networks and a social identity separate from the campus. The research participants in this study referred to a broad variety of affiliations including family, co-workers, fiancéés, former supervisors, professors at both institutions, former professional connections, church groups and student organizations. These social affiliations and the students’ previous college, vocational, and life experiences built a distinct context for why and how they made new connections at the university.

Tinto (1993) appropriates Durkheim’s (1951, as cited in Tinto, 1993) model of membership to discuss college communities despite the fact that college communities lack the permanence Durkheim intends in his definition of societies. In fact, Durkheim’s model of integration, alienation and deviance (Durkheim, 1951 as cited in Tinto, 1993) proposes a model of separate and largely exclusive communities to which individuals belong. This model underlies Tinto’s theory of student departure from the university, and is one of the major limitations of using his model of student integration as a way of discussing transfer students’ transition to the university. Because Tinto’s model allows for tangible understanding of the transitional experience, many studies of the effect of college student services such as academic advising have focused on using Tinto as a starting point for analysis. But the complexities of transfer student associations, identity and membership call for a different and more multimodal way of viewing advising and its impact on students.
Mediation provides a model of social life that allows for multiple levels of membership and context. Building on Vygotsky’s idea that intrapersonal phenomena arise from interpersonal interactions (Holland & Valsiner, 1988, p. 247), a model of socially mediated identity would propose that activity situated in social context forms individual identity (Holland & Cole, 1995, pp. 475-476). Membership in a society within this view is dependent on context and activity. Social contexts and values serve as mediators of action, helping individuals form meaning and new contexts as well as shaping an individual’s self-concept (Shaw, 1994). As a result, individuals take on multiple identities and memberships in different settings and contexts rather than simply experiencing membership or deviance. The mediational model is a much more accurate description of the sense of community involvement described by transfer students. Compared to the integration model, it provides a way of looking at students’ connections to the campus that allows for a more complex and flexible perspective on student experiences.

_Potential for Future Study and Expansion_

Most transfer students at UCSD make a successful transition to the university, despite evidence that transfer students often face difficulty making a transition to the research university (Harbin, 1997; Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005; Townsend & Wilson, 2006). However, the participants interviewed in this study noted concerns that on-line advising could be impersonal and distant, even though students valued convenient access to information to assist with academic planning. The conflict between these desires led to tensions that complicated students’ use of Internet communications media for pre-enrollment advising, tensions that were exacerbated by transfer students’ strong sense of self-reliance.
Many of the difficulties faced in communicating with transfer students recurred in the interview process. Successful communication required attempts to recruit students through several modes of communication, including email, personal appearances at transfer student groups, and personal appeals to students who participated in academic advising. The difficulties faced in communicating with the transfer student population suggest that a model of on-line advising that includes only variations on a single mode of on-line communication fails to provide sufficient options for communication and interaction with transfer students. Better support for transfer students may require multiple modes of communication during the pre-enrollment advising process to allow options for substantial interpersonal contact using multiple modes of communication while still working to support concerns for confidentiality and continuity of records. Such interactions would not involve additional services or expenses. Instead, changes in communication involve a shift of focus leading to changes in priorities and a re-allocation of work priorities. Advisors may make these changes by creating opportunities for students to work with advisors over the telephone and in person based on protocols that consider issues of confidentiality and place limits on time allocated to transfer students. Setting up new transfer advising hours, answering questions by phone during certain hours, or providing more opportunities for formal or informal contact with advisors can provide different channels of access for transfer students that improve their perception of the quality of advising and foster personal, developmental relationships.

Despite seeing academic advising as a largely prescriptive process, students’ perceptions of academic advising provide reasons to believe that students who interact with advisors do treat advisors as mediators of their experience with the university. Advisors fill several roles, from providing information and feedback to developing relationships that
serve to inform and develop transfer students’ relationship with the university. Students’
descriptions of their experiences suggest that advisors serve to help students understand and
interact with academic culture and expectations at the university. Advisors serve as tools for
cultural understanding by providing context for understanding academic rules, regulations,
expectations, and procedure and by acting as sounding boards to understand the cultural
contexts of actions.
Chapter VIII: Conclusions

While existing models of retention of undergraduates and theories of developmental academic advising provide useful concepts, many of these theories include assumptions that students’ cultural contexts for education and experience at the university are largely homogenous. The changing demographics of undergraduate students over the past four decades and ongoing development in communication technology have led to changes in both the composition of the student body and to students’ attitudes toward college and independence. From 1965 to 2005, the number of two-year college degrees awarded in the U.S. has more than tripled, while the number of four-year college degrees have more than doubled (NCES, 2007). College has increasingly become a requirement for career preparation, and students’ perception of college is shaped by a context that involves economic opportunity, rising tuition costs and student debt. In the meantime, the growth of personal communications through electronic mail, chat, social networking sites and cellular phones allows students to easily maintain distant relationships with friends and family. Advisors may need to reconsider old models of college retention, advising, and professional practice to maintain relevance to and effectiveness with the students they advise. The assumption that college is a time of individuation and personal exploration for students may run contrary to the contexts, experiences, and conceptions of students. Conflicting values and expectations between advisors and students may foster a sense that advisors’ values are a threat to the values of students (Alexitch, 2002), which may discourage students from seeking help from advisors.
Improving the New Transfer Student Portal

The implementation of the New Transfer Student Portal included problems on several levels. The learning environment only included two of three levels of effective online learning interactions. The presence of learner-content and learner-instructor interactions without learner-learner interactions (Moore & Kearsley, 1996; Tuovinen, 2000) limited the amount of mediated interaction using the site. Limited interaction had the effect of reducing students’ opportunities to form meaning through language and interaction. The site also has limited opportunities for student self-direction, limited feedback on most of the site, as well as limited personalization of the content (Rodgers & Withrow-Thorton, 2005). Because of these factors, the Portal did not provide an optimal learning environment for transfer students.

The lack of clear, consistent and multimodal communication created another barrier for student use. Some students found the types of communication offered on the Portal alienating. Others considered on-line communications helpful, but only for limited types of advising activity. In considering ways to improve the Portal, advisors can consider the focus of activities within the site in terms of whether they serve the goals of the Portal. A more carefully scaffolded site will help students develop a better sense of requirements, a better understanding of academic culture at the university, and a stronger relationship with an academic advisor.

A Mediational Model of Academic Advising

Mediation provides a model of advising that allows an analysis of institutional practice over individual practice. Using mediation as a model provides a framework for studying medium– and large–scale organizations and their professional practices. Using
mediation, advisors can study a variety of communication technologies and structures, as well as the full spectrum of advising practices from prescriptive advising to developmental advising. It also allows for a theoretical placement of advising within a context of other university and personal support networks.

Building on the Cole-Engestrom expanded model of mediation, I propose a new model for considering academic advising within the context of students’ interaction with the university, as noted in Figure 7. This figure incorporates the larger context of the student’s life and the campus, which applies to students regardless of changing contexts for communication, transfer, and residential experience.

![Figure 7. The mediational model of academic advising](image)

The mediational model encompasses the student, the university in both its academic and institutional roles, the formal and informal rules of both the institution and academic culture and the community of the university as a whole. Community includes the university’s various sub-cultures and the contexts in which students form their identities, and the various responsibilities students have to the institution, to each other, to families, and to their communities. Such a model includes the kind of integration that Tinto (1993) describes in
his model of student departure. The mediational model removes some of the problematic assumptions of Tinto’s theory, which applies most directly to residential four-year university education and provides a less nuanced idea of integration. The mediational model also provides a context for understanding the spectrum of prescriptive to developmental advising, considering their function on both the individual level and the institutional level.

Because of its focus on activity, the mediational model also allows for study of the learning environment of on-line and off-line communications, considering the combination of student-content, student-instructor and student-student interactions in on-line settings (Moore & Kearsley, 1996), as well as more traditional classroom environments incorporating the students, curriculum, assessment standards and the community context (Bransford, et al., 2000). Rather than creating new contexts for interpreting advising, mediation allows a new way of understanding existing contexts and dynamics, and for situating advising practices within those contexts. Currently, the research on academic advising lacks a strong model of activity, comparing advising either to models of counseling or teaching (Schulenberg & Lindhorst, 2008), neither of which provides a model that truly encompasses academic advising practice. The mediational model of academic advising allows advisors to consider practice in terms of both activity and context. The model also allows analysis of advising activity on both institutional and individual levels without requiring an analogy to dissimilar educational or developmental practices. Such analysis provides opportunities for advisors to describe, analyze, and improve their services in terms of general effectiveness, specific campus settings, and specific student context.

The mediational model focuses on activity. Using mediation as a model of understanding academic advising focuses research on the role of situated activity. Advising is then looked at
as one of the activities in the life of the student. By seeing activity as “goal-directed human action” (Cole, 1996, p. 117) mediated by social interaction, the mediational model of advising allows analysis of activity in terms of actions rather than trying to frame indirect results such as grades, satisfaction, or retention as direct results of advising. Previous studies of academic advising have tended to treat academic advising as a form of counseling or as a form of teaching, neither of which provides an accurate model of practice (Schulenberg & Lindhorst, 2008). A focus on advising activity will allow practitioners to develop ways of analyzing, evaluating, and improving delivery of advising services based on the specific needs and demands of actual practice. For example, future studies of the New Transfer Student Portal using the mediational model could look at students' interaction with the New Transfer Student Portal or studies could focus on the individual activities involved in the site, such as proposing courses, E-advising, and LiveChat. Advisors could use the mediational model of academic advising to evaluate the effects of individual advising, orientation programs, or group activities by studying specific activities.

The mediational model focuses on contexts. Mediation situates experience and activity within multiple social, historical and cultural contexts. Transfer students at the University of California in particular do not undergo a rite of passage from pre-collegiate to college life, as Tinto (1993) describes the transitional experience for college students. With increasing numbers of students maintaining strong social networks through media such as cellular phones, text messaging, and social networking sites such as Facebook and MySpace, assumptions that students are leaving old social networks to pass into new ones may become increasingly less appropriate. Furthermore, students who participate in distance learning and on-line classrooms do not engage in the same sorts of social transitions as traditional
students. Understanding context and setting will provide ways to evaluate the changing nature of college students' experience in making the transition to the university that can help advisors, administrators, and student affairs staff understand the impact of existing services on student retention, development, and assimilation to university culture.

**Reflections on the Research Process**

This project has set the stage for further inquiry into advising. I have worked on building a foundation for viewing advising as part of the mediated relationships between undergraduate students and the university. In addition, I have learned the value of qualitative research in uncovering potential issues for future study.

*Using qualitative studies to assess practice.* One of the great limitations of evaluating academic advising practice is the difficulty of determining useful metrics for success. Evaluating the frequency of students’ visits to advising offices is unsatisfactory since successful advising may not require frequent visits. Retention and grades are unsatisfactory because the effect of advising on those outcomes is not direct, and results of such studies may conflate several unrelated factors. Surveys of satisfaction may give distorted pictures based on students’ perceptions of the purposes of advising and students’ desired outcomes. Despite the theories of academic advising developed over the past three decades, it is not clear that academic advisors have strong hypotheses to discuss effective advising. Qualitative studies provide a methodology for exploring the relationships, goals, and perceptions of students and academic advisors. Such studies can develop a clearer picture of effective practice and reasonable learning outcomes by listening to both students and advisors.
**Moving Into the Future**

Students’ relationships to electronic communications media and to advisors through those media are too complex to easily portray as positive or negative. Future studies may expand on the nature of electronic advising relationships, particularly by comparing new freshman and transfer students’ perceptions of tools such as E-advising and LiveChat. Studying the differences and similarities between these groups may provide some insight into whether the ambivalent feelings of transfer students are related to their previous experience or whether their responses reflect the limitations of electronic communication media.

The literature on transfer students and professional standards stresses the value of a strong orientation program (Kuh, 1991; Tinto, 1993; Zamani, 2001; Herman & Lewis, 2004; Townsend & Wilson, 2006). Future studies may review the experience of both in-person orientation programs and on-line pre-enrollment advising. Such study may help uncover ways in which a combination of the two can improve transfer students’ transition to the university.

Finally, the idea of considering advising as a mediator of transfer students’ understanding of university culture needs to be developed more fully. A strong sociocultural model of advising can provide a useful framework for analyzing the practice of academic advising. A sociocultural model like the mediational model of academic advising can create a framework for considering advising as a structured activity in a social context. Such a framework has the potential to move advising beyond a practice of individual counseling to one of institutional action focused on improving student success through integration between students and the university.
Appendix I: The New Transfer Student Portal

This appendix involves screenshots and an overview of the entire New Transfer Student Portal Web site as implemented in 2007-2008. Due to limits of how the Portal creates interactivity, I could not present some previous quarter information and thus some of the screen shots include dates for upcoming summer 2008 orientation sessions.

The Portal is a linear presentation. Students must move through the different pages of the site in order, though they may return to previously visited pages on the site. Students cannot skip ahead to later pages. Early implementations of the Portal allowed more free-form presentation of information, but feedback from students indicated that students felt unclear how to proceed through the site without more explicit guidance.

Welcome and Sign-up for On-campus Orientation

The New Transfer student Portal begins with a general student welcome from the college provost followed by an overview of how to use the site and a list of important dates. Students are then required to register and confirm their campus email address, since it is used by the system to send notices and updates of changes to their advising record.
Welcome to Muir

Provost’s Welcome

All of us at Muir are delighted that you’ve made the decision to join us and congratulate you on your acceptance. We look forward to having you as a part of our community, and we hope that you’ll take the opportunity to connect with both staff and students at Muir.

As transfer students, you’re not just coming to another school — most of you are launching a new phase of your college experience. As you start to work more intensively in your major field and to prepare for your eventual career, you’re ready to begin taking advantage of the opportunities that a major research university such as UCSD has to offer, whatever your interests might be. UCSD’s world-class faculty is your most important resource. Get to know your professors and explore opportunities such as the Faculty Mentor Program that lets you work one-on-one with the faculty and gain first-hand experience of the career you hope to pursue.

Muir’s Academic Advising staff and the staff and faculty advisers in your major departments can show you how. Don’t wait! The next two to three years will go by like a flash, so get started now.

One more piece of advice — get involved. You’ll hear this a lot at Muir. There are many good reasons. Getting connected with college organizations will help you get to know people, feel part of things, and develop networks of friends and colleagues that can be a support system for you even long after you graduate from UCSD. Involvement in college and campus organizations can also help you develop leadership and organizational skills that may be just as important as your academic performance in landing the job you want or pursuing graduate and professional schools that you’re the candidate for them. So I urge you not to treat your classes as a “job” that you commit to then “call home”. Muir College and UCSD have more to offer than that! — don’t miss out!

Remember that the staff at Muir, whether in Academic Advising, Student Affairs, Muir Writing, or Payroll Services, are here to help you get where you want to go (maybe even help you figure out where that is). We look forward to getting to know you. Good luck. Work well. (And get involved)

[Signature]

Welcome to Muir

How to use this site

This web site is built to help you sign up for our orientation program, answer your questions as an incoming transfer student, and prepare you to enroll in courses using TritonLink, the online portal for UCSD students.

There are five steps you will need to complete to make the transition to being a UCSD student:

1. Confirm your UCSD Email account.
2. Sign up for an on-campus orientation program.
3. Go through online advising, review the courses we recommend for your first quarter, and ask an advisor questions about your first quarter.
4. Learn how to enroll in courses through TritonLink.
5. Learn how to start the quarter by getting involved, setting up advising appointments, and taking advantage of campus services.
Students then sign up for an on-campus orientation program. For the past three years, the college has presented advising and orientations as separate activities when serving incoming transfer students. As a result, the orientation program focuses on helping students meet other students, learning about procedures and support programs, and introducing staff. For logistical reasons, students are encouraged to sign up for orientation programs early in the process, especially in the summer before Fall Quarter. In that instance, the orientation programs are more substantial and have academic information sessions for students reinforcing the later on-line individual advising.
About the orientation program
Orientation is a two-part process. Part of the orientation process is completing your advising and enrolling in classes. That will begin by completing this web site. You must go through this web site completely to enroll in classes. The second part of orientation will be a one-day on-campus program in January, after you enroll in classes.

What will be covered?
The program will introduce you to the college, give you a sense of the services available to you, and review the requirements and expectations of you as a Muir student. The program is constructed to help you find your way around campus, make full use of the programs included in your student fees, and understand the academic requirements and demands that you must meet to finish your degree.

When is the on-campus orientation program?
The program is on March 14, 2008 – shortly after you sign up for courses in spring. There is no make-up program. This will occur just before classes begin.

How long is the program?
This is a day-long program, with check-in starting at 9:00am, and lasting until about 3:00pm.

Who can come?
The program is only open to new transfer students. There is no component or accommodation for family, friends, or guests.

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About the On-Campus Advising & Orientation Program
Transfer students are charged $45 to cover both the on-campus session and the online advising and enrollment process. If you decide not to enroll at UCSD, or if your financial aid award is lower than you expected, you will still be billed - and are expected to pay this fee. This fee will be rolled into the your regular UCSD Billing Statement.

An additional administrative fee of $20 will be assessed for any orientation reservation or changes to reservations made after the deadline.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Select Session</th>
<th>Session Number</th>
<th>Session Start Date</th>
<th>Session Length</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>✔️</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>07/08/08</td>
<td>1 day(s)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>✔️</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>07/10/08</td>
<td>1 day(s)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>✔️</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>07/11/08</td>
<td>1 day(s)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

If you need special accommodations for physical challenges, please inform us here:

Save My Session Selection
After signing up for orientation, students read an academic tutorial and participate in on-line advising. Students then verify academic information such as major, transfer programs, in-progress courses, and unreported Advanced Placement and International Baccalaureate programs.
Students then walk through the process of reviewing their records and identifying courses to take in the first quarter at UC San Diego as part of developing a course proposal for their first quarter.
Your Plan

One of our academic advisors is reviewing your academic records and will suggest to you a set of 3 courses to take your first quarter. You will need to consult your schedule and the schedule of classes to see how to make those recommendations work. We will suggest the following:

1. Writing or US Cultural Diversity course:
   - Most transfer students this quarter will have completed TAG. If you have, take MCWP 50 or 125.
   - Otherwise, take a US Cultural Diversity course.
   - This will fulfill one of the courses required by the college for your degree.

2. Major Requirement:
   - Based on the prerequisites you have completed before transferring, your advisor will recommend at least one course for your major.
   - This may be either a lower or upper-division course, depending on your record.
   - If there is an appropriate second major course, that will also be suggested.
   - If not, your advisor will suggest you enroll in an upper-division elective, and will offer you a list of alternatives to choose from.

12 units is considered full-time enrollment. As a new UCSD student, you should take only 3 courses to bring you to full-time status, but still give you room to adjust to the quarter system and the different instructional style at UCSD.

Muir Writing

Your advisor may recommend a Muir writing course this quarter. All Muir transfer students must fulfill a writing requirement in the first three quarters:

If you have completed IGETC or TAG before enrolling at UCSD:

- you must take either MCWP 125 or MCWP 50.
  - Take one of these two courses this quarter or next quarter.

If you have transferred from another UC campus:

- you must take both MCWP 40 and MCWP 50. You may use approved courses taken at another UC campus to fulfill this requirement, but you cannot use AP credit, I/6 credits, or community college courses to fulfill these requirements.
  - If you have not completed the appropriate approved courses at another UC campus, take MCWP 40 next quarter, followed by MCWP 50 the following quarter.

Other Transfer Students:

- must take both MCWP 40 and MCWP 50. You cannot use AP credit, I/6 credits or community college courses to fulfill these requirements.
  - Take MCWP 40 next quarter, and MCWP 50 the following quarter.

If you are unsure of which Muir Writing class to take, click here to read about the difference between MCWP 50 and MCWP 125.

Each section of MCWP 50 and MCWP 125 has a different topic. View the list of MCWP 50 or MCWP 125 topics.
U.S. Cultural Diversity

Alternatively, your advisor may recommend you take a U.S. Cultural Diversity course. All Muir students must complete one course covering the diversity of cultures within the United States.

This course may be taken as an lower- or upper-division course. Upper-division US Cultural Diversity courses also count as an upper-division elective.

A U.S. Cultural Diversity course offered this quarter can be viewed at [http://provost.ucsd.edu/muir/courses/G2.htm](http://provost.ucsd.edu/muir/courses/G2.htm)

Choose Your Major Courses

Your major department has given the instructions below to decide on courses you should take for your major. Generally, you should select 1-2 courses for your major.

Depending on the courses you have completed at your community college, these two courses may be lower-division prerequisite courses that you must complete before you enroll in your upper-division requirements.

Welcome to UCSD and the Economics Department

Academic advising at UCSD is shared by two sets of advisors: your College Advisor (ERC, Muir, Marshall, Revelle, Sixth, and Warren College) and Major Advisor (Department Advisor).

There are two undergraduate advisors for Economics, Management Science, and Joint Math-Economics majors: Marisol Nieves-Magana and Kimberly Newmark; you can reach either of us through email at econadvising@ucsd.edu.

Advisors are not assigned to specific students. As your major advisors, you may contact us for questions related to your Economics Department major. This can include: major requirements, double majors, prerequisites, course planning, honors programs, independent research, etc.

In order to register for your first quarter, please follow the steps below:

**Step 1:** Print your major requirement checklist and quarter-by-quarter plans from here.

**Step 2:** Check UCSD assist.org, the official source for articulation and student transfer information. You will see how your lower-division courses transfer. Please be aware that if a course transfers from your community college to UCSD, it does not mean that it is equivalent unless it appears on assist.org. If you took an Economics course that does not appear on assist.org and you think it is equivalent, you must file an undergraduate student petition with the Economics Department. If you took a Math class that does not appear on assist.org, please contact the UCSD Math Department.

Upper-division Elective Courses

In addition to courses taken specifically to satisfy Muir Writing requirements, the US Cultural Diversity requirement, or your major requirements, you may opt to take elective courses to fulfill unit requirements for graduation. In particular, all Muir students must complete a total of 72 upper-division units before graduation. For most majors, that means that you will need to take upper-division courses beyond your major requirements in order to graduate. You may take those upper-division courses in any subject.

If you need an additional course for your first quarter, you can take an upper-division elective course. Upper-division courses are UCSD courses numbered 100-199, and represent more advanced topics and material. There are, however, many courses which are upper-division and have no prerequisites—meaning that you can take those courses to help you complete your upper-division unit requirement.

You can find a list of these courses for this quarter at [http://muir.ucsd.edu/documents/UIElectives.pdf](http://muir.ucsd.edu/documents/UIElectives.pdf)
Students may use E-advising and LiveChat to clarify any questions before proposing a schedule.
Course Enrollment Tutorial and Advising

In the next section of the Portal, students walk through the process of enrolling in classes. They are able to get feedback on their course proposals, and advisors leave students instructions on how to deal with the process of course enrollment on-line.

This portion of the site includes a second opportunity to use E-advising and LiveChat to help them through the enrollment process, and is intended to guide them through the process of course enrollment.
Check for Holds

Holds are administrative blocks that may prevent you from enrolling in classes. You want to make sure that all holds are removed before your priority enrollment time.

- If Admissions has put a hold on your enrollment due to incomplete records, contact Admissions immediately to clear this up. The college cannot remove Admissions holds.
- To see if there is a hold on your enrollment, log into Triton Link and look for the following line:

UC San Diego • Current Students

Announcements and Deadlines

If you're not a current student, visit the ucsd.edu home page or go directly to information for prospective students, parents and families or faculty and staff.

February

• Spring enrollment appointment start times available (undergraduates)

February 1

• Spring 06 Schedule of Classes available mid-morning

• Class Planner available mid-morning

• Enrollment Calendar

Current Students

Survey: UCSD traditions

Do you have a favorite UCSD tradition? Or ideas for new campus traditions? Take our online survey and be eligible to win a prize.

Speak up

Headlines

Back

Next
Using WebReg

After your enrollment start time, you can enroll in classes by logging in to WebReg. Click on "Home" at the top of the page, then click on "WebReg" in the "Tools" menu on the left side of the screen.

Choose Courses

To enroll in a course, you can enter the course names suggested by your advisor in the search fields under the "Add a Class" section at the bottom of the page and click on "List Sections."

Add a Class

| Subject Code & Full or Partial Course # |  |
|----------------------------------------|  |
| MATH 10A                               |  |

This will give you a list of possible sections to enroll in. When you look at the screen, make sure that you:

- Read the information about the course and enrollment policies.
- Note that courses will generally require you to attend all lecture (LEC) hours listed (generally 3-4 hours per week).
- Courses generally require an additional discussion section (DIS) for another hour or more per week.
- You will sign up for some classes based on the lecture time, and others by discussion. Just click on the six-digit section ID number on the left of the page.

Mathematics (MATH)

Prerequisites are strictly enforced for all lower-division Math courses. For more information, please refer to the UCSD
Confirm your courses

Once you have chosen a course, you will be given a chance to confirm that you are selecting the right course and grading option. Your course will not be confirmed until you click 'Add'.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section ID</th>
<th>Subject / Course #</th>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Grade Option</th>
<th>Units</th>
<th>Days</th>
<th>Time</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>597182</td>
<td>MATH 10A</td>
<td>A01</td>
<td>Calculus</td>
<td>C Letter</td>
<td>4.00</td>
<td>Th</td>
<td>8:00a-8:50a</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Add | Cancel

Once you do this, you will return to the main WebReg window, where you can continue adding classes.

Review Your Schedule

Once you have added your second class, you should check your schedule to look for any conflicts. Click on the 'Weekly Planner' button on the main WebReg screen, below the 'Enrolled Classes' section and above the 'Add a Class' section.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section ID</th>
<th>Subject / Course #</th>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Grade Option</th>
<th>Units</th>
<th>Days</th>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Action</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>604296</td>
<td>EDS 250</td>
<td>A00</td>
<td>Equitable Educ/Res &amp; Practice</td>
<td>Letter</td>
<td>4.00</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>9:00a-11:50a</td>
<td>Change</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>604320</td>
<td>EDS 230A</td>
<td>A00</td>
<td>Research on /Conf in Design</td>
<td>Letter</td>
<td>4.00</td>
<td>W</td>
<td>5:00p-7:50p</td>
<td>Drop</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Weekly Planner | Final Planner

Add a Class

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section ID</th>
<th>Add a New Section</th>
<th>Subject Code &amp; Full or Partial Course #</th>
<th>From the Schedule of Classes</th>
<th>List Sections</th>
<th>Find a Section</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

The weekly planner shows the selected time slot and any specific days those sections you signed up for. If there are time conflicts between classes, they will appear.
Graduation Requirement Tutorial

The final two stages of the process include information that various units in the college considered essential to provide to incoming students. The first is a review of the requirements for graduation from Muir. For two years, this information was included early in the tutorial, but feedback from students indicated that many felt that this information made it difficult for them to understand which courses they needed to take, so the information was moved toward the end of the process.
University Requirements
Every student must complete the following requirements to graduate from UCSD:
- American History and Institutions
- Entry-level Writing Requirement
Most transfer students will already have cleared both of these requirements.

American History and Institutions
If you have completed a year of U.S. history, government, or a mix of the topics in high school, if you have completed a college course in U.S. history or government; or if you are an international student with an F-1 visa, you will have already completed this. If none of these apply to you, contact a Muir College advisor to talk about your options to fulfill this requirement.

Entry-Level Writing Requirement
As a transfer requirement, you should have cleared this already by completing one or more transferable college or university level composition courses.

General Education
In addition to the writing requirement, you may need to complete general education courses to graduate from Muir.
- If you have completed TAG or IGETC, no additional GE sequences are required.
- If you are a UC transfer and have completed the general education requirements at your original campus, no additional GE sequences are required. You must submit an official letter from your original college certifying that you have completed the general education at your previous campus.
- All other students must complete four year-long sequences in these different categories, as noted below.

Muir College General Education Sequences

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category I</th>
<th>Social Sciences</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Category II</td>
<td>Mathematical Sciences</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Category III</td>
<td>2 different categories from Fine Arts, Foreign Language or Humanities</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Remember...
1. A sequence consists of one year of college credit in a single subject. Your transfer courses may apply fully or partially towards these sequences.
2. No more than three courses required by your major can also be used to satisfy general education sequences.
3. GE sequences can only be completed by college credits, including AP or IB higher level exams. High school coursework and previous fluency in a foreign language do not count toward satisfying these requirements.

U.S. Cultural Diversity
In addition to your writing requirement and any General Education courses, all Muir College students must complete one approved four-unit course focusing on the diversity of cultures within the United States.

This course is not subject to the General Education overlap rule.
If you have already completed a transferable college or university course that you believe should fulfill this requirement, you can always talk to a Muir College academic advisor to see if a course you have completed will fulfill this requirement.
Major Requirements

1. There is no general studies major. You must complete a major to graduate from UC San Diego.
2. You must complete all of the lower- and upper-division requirements of your major.
3. GEIC and TAG do not clear the lower-division requirements of your major. You must show completion of equivalent coursework.
4. You must complete at least 12 upper-division courses (48 upper-division units) in your major. If a lower-division course clears an upper-division requirement (such as an organic chemistry course completed at a community college), it will not count toward this minimum number of units.
5. Any exceptions to major requirements must be made by petition with your major.

Unit Requirements

Minimum Units For Graduation
- You must complete a minimum of 180 units, including your transfer units.
- You must complete a minimum of 72 units of upper-division courses, which can include courses used toward a major or minor.
- Complete a maximum of 200 units for a single major. 230 units for a single major in engineering; or 240 units for a petitioned and approved double major.
- Complete no more than 4 units of undergraduate seminars numbered 60 or 192.
- Meet minimum progress toward a degree by completing 36 units in each academic year.

Pass/No Pass Units
- You can take no more than 25% of total UCSD units on a P/NP basis.
- Most major or minor courses must be taken for a letter grade.
- Courses offered only on a P/NP basis (such as research courses numbered 197 or 199) still count toward this limit.

Senior Residency
- You must complete 36 of your last 45 units as an enrolled Muir student (senior residency requirement).

Minimum Units for Honors
- You must complete a minimum of 60 letter-graded UC units to be eligible for Latin honors at graduation.

Grade Point Average Requirement

1. You must have a UC GPA of 2.0 or higher to graduate. Only courses taken at University of California campuses count toward this requirement.
2. In most cases, you also must have a GPA of 2.0 or higher in the upper-division courses for your major.
Starting the Quarter

The final stage of the New Transfer Student Portal includes reminders of the start of the quarter (and, in Fall Quarter, a reminder of Welcome Week activities), as well as encouragement for students to come to Academic Advising and to become involved in college activities.
Appendix II: Interview Protocol

Students completed a brief questionnaire before the interview. The questionnaire included the following questions:

*New Transfer Student Portal Questionnaire*

1. What is your sex: Male   Female
2. What is your age: _______
3. Where did you attend college before UCSD?
4. Did you use the E-advising system to leave questions of for an academic advisor before your first quarter at UCSD? Yes   No
5. How would you rate your satisfaction with E-advising?
   Very satisfied   Satisfied   Unsatisfied   Very Unsatisfied   Did Not Use
6. If you did not use E-advising, what is the main reason you did not?
7. Did you use the LiveChat system to work with an academic advisor in real time before your first quarter at UCSD? Yes   No
8. How would you rate your satisfaction with LiveChat?
   Very satisfied   Satisfied   Unsatisfied   Very Unsatisfied   Did Not Use
9. If you did not use LiveChat, what is the main reason you did not?
**Interview Questions**

I asked students a single, open question:

What was your experience like transferring to UCSD?

Based on students’ responses, I asked several follow-up questions. Standard follow-up questions included:

- How did using the Internet for your course planning and advising affect your experience?
- Did you feel connected to the campus?
- How were your classes?
- What was your experience with academic advising before you transferred?
- What do you see as the purpose of academic advising?
- What are your suggestions for improving the on-line advising system?
- Are there any questions that I didn’t ask today that I should have asked?
References


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University of California, San Diego Office of Student Research (2008), accessed March 4, 2008 from http://studentresearch.ucsd.edu/


