College Students in Transition

New Directions in Research and Practice

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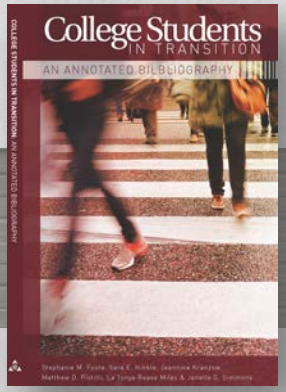

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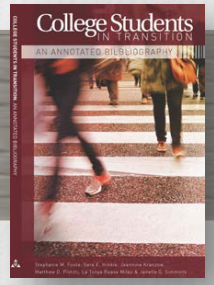
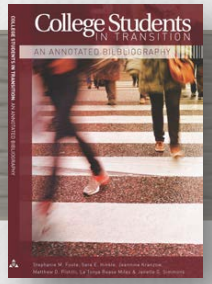
Parallel Session #6

Presentation Overview



- **Part I: Approaching Transitions**
  - Behaviors and characteristics of college students in transition
- **Part II: Taking Stock of Coping Resources**
  - Resources that support student success
- **Part III: Taking Charge**
  - Applying strategies to achieve a level of control over situation
- **Part IV: Creating Conditions for Retention and Success**
  - Interventions, practice, and policy with implications
- **Part V: Relating Research to Practice**

Authors



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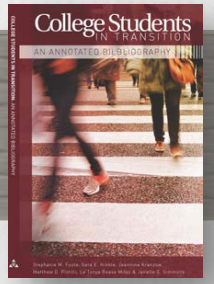


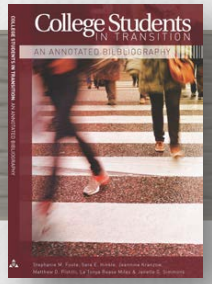
- **Chapter 1: The Sophomore-Year Transition**
  Academic Advising, Career Development/Major Exploration, and Student Success

- **Chapter 2: The Transfer Transition**
  Adjustment, Assessment, Barriers, Institutional Initiatives, Policies, and Two- to Four-Year Transition

- **Chapter 3: The Senior Year and Transition Out of College**
  Challenges and Pathways through the Senior Year, College-Career Transition, Mentoring, Senior Seminars and Capstone Experiences, the Transition Out of College, Undergraduate Research

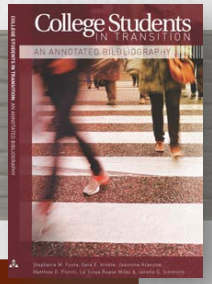
- **Chapter 4: Special Populations of Students in Transition**
  Adult Learners, Student Veterans, International Students, Study Abroad Students

Framework for Review



- **Research on college students in transition**
  - Seminal and contemporary sources
- **Influences from the literature**
  - Transition Model (Goodman, J., Schlossberg, N. K., & Anderson, M. L., 2006)
- **Authors had different areas of expertise and experience**
- **"Research" defined very broadly**
  - Quantitative and qualitative studies
  - Summative and reflective essays on practice
  - National reports

Transition Model*



Approaching Transitions

Type of Transition (anticipated, unanticipated, non-event)	Context of Transition	Potential Impact on Person

Taking Stock of Coping Resources

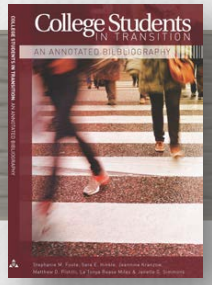
Situation	Self	Support	Strategies

Taking Charge

Individual in transition uses new strategies to achieve a level of control of the situation

*Goodman, J., Schlossberg, N. K., & Anderson, M. L. (2006). *Counseling adults in transition: Linking theory with practice* (3rd Ed.). New York, NY: Springer.

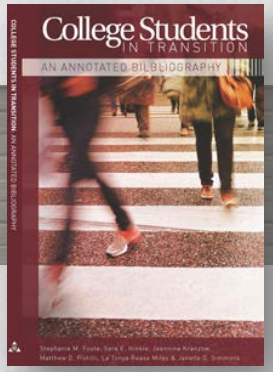
Definition of Transition



A point or period in which a student encounters an event or non-event that may impact his or her progression toward educational and personal goals.

A student in transition (or students in transition) refers to any student involved in a transition (beyond the transition to the first college year) that impacts his or her progression toward educational or personal goals.

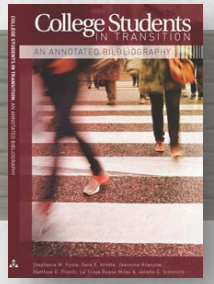
Approaching Transitions



Part I

What are the behaviors and characteristics of today's college students in transition?

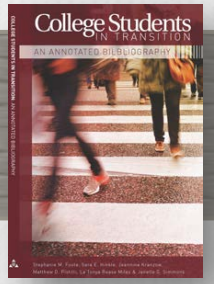
Approaching Transitions



- **College students in transition are diverse, and there is a need to understand who they are and what motivates them.**

- **Making social connections with peers, faculty, and staff is important.**
  - Often, connections were formed with faculty and staff who students saw as institutional agents and "providers of strategic guidance" (Deil-Amen, 2001, p. 61). These relationships helped students navigate process of adjusting to their new culture.

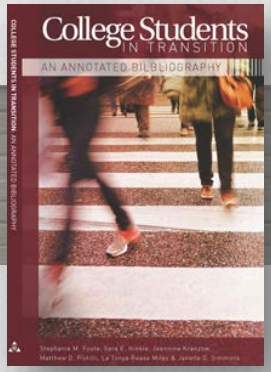
Approaching Transitions



- **Developing trusted relationships is not easy.**
  - Transfer students from a community college struggled when they had less access to faculty (Townsend, 2006). For student veterans, role incongruity can be magnified by interactions inside and outside of the classroom (Rumann & Hamrick, 2010; Ryan, Carlstrom, Hughey, & Harris, 2011; DiRamio, Ackerman, & Mitchell, 2008).

- **In the absence of meaningful interactions with faculty and staff, students rely on themselves or their peers for academic information (Lee, 2001).**

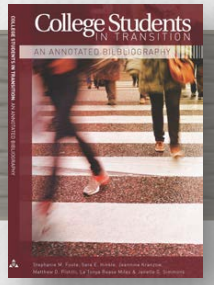
Taking Stock of Coping Resources



Part II

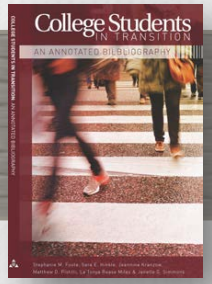
What are the resources that support the success of students in transition?

Coping Resources



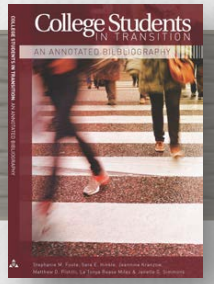
- **Co-curricular programming can help increase cognitive development, communication skills, and confidence among students in transition.**
  - In a study involving third year students, gains in cognitive and communication skills were associated with both academic and co-curricular involvement, and gains in self-confidence and interpersonal skills were associated primarily with co-curricular involvement and secondarily with academic involvement (Huang & Chang, 2004).
  - Service activities, experiential opportunities, and active learning through collaboration directly impacted the development of upper-level students (Cress, Astin, Zimmerman-Oster, & Burkhardt, 2001).

Coping Resources



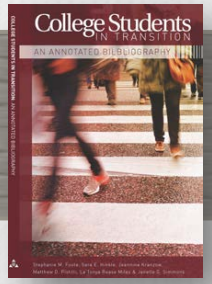
- **Academic and career development are needed earlier and must cross all academic years, involving collaboration between career services and academic departments to be of greatest benefit to students in transition.**
  - A study involving sophomores revealed that neither involvement in activities or institutional commitment were predictors of academic success. However, certainty of academic major and interactions with faculty were most significant and impactful (Graunke & Woosley, 2005).
  - Henscheid (2008) found that there is often a disconnect between supporting students' intellectual and vocational needs.

Coping Resources



- **Specialized programs (i.e., advising, orientation and transitional seminars) and resources are needed to support the success of students in transition.**
  - Marling and Jacobs (2011) suggest offering a variety of orientation programs that represent the diverse student populations. Robertson, Trapani, & Hopkins (2011) found that offering academic advising that was connected to a transfer student seminars made an impact on the success of those students.
  - If given a choice, students in transition often do not choose to use these specialized campus resources (Wang & Wharton, 2010).

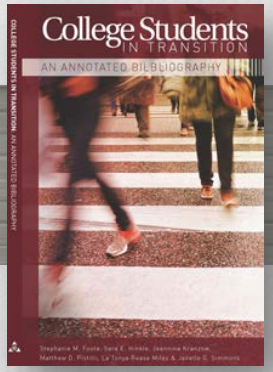
Coping Resources



- **While students may not see the need to utilize resources like academic advising, the research shows that transitions in academic areas are challenging for most students.**
  - Struggling with major choices, understanding the significance of general education, developing relationships with peers and faculty, and staying motivated enough to persist were identified as issues affecting sophomore students' academic transition (Anderson & Schreiner, 2000; Gordon, 2010).
  - In addition to advisors, faculty mentors can also help students navigate the academic transition (Campbell & Campbell, 1997; Girves, Zepeda, & Gwathmey, 2005).

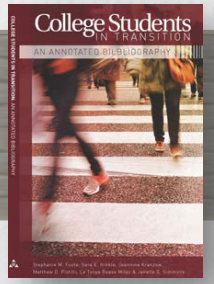
Taking Charge

Part III



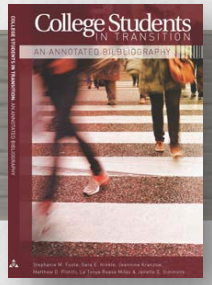
How do students in transition apply strategies to achieve a level of control over their situation?

Taking Charge



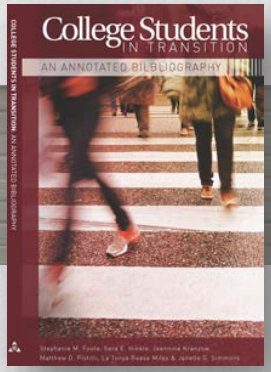
- **Service learning can help students in transition form interpersonal identity and cognitive development (Jones & Abes, 2004), which in turn, may help them to take charge of their experience.**
  - Service learning can help students achieve academic success. In one study, students who participate in a course with a service learning component outperformed their peers who were in the same class but without a service learning component (Strage, 2000).
  - The impact of these experiences can be long-lasting, and can result in continued service, even after the student graduates (Keen & Hall, 2008).

Taking Charge



- **Participating in undergraduate research allows students in transition to become more confident both through the student-faculty interaction, and through the hands-on learning that takes place in these research settings (Nikolova Eddins, Bushnek, Porter & Kineke, 1997).**
  - These experiences can also have positive outcomes on the academic success because they help students develop cognitive and analytical skills (Craney, McKay, Mazzeo, Morris, Prigodich & de Groot, 2011; Ishiyama, 2002).
  - Further, participating in undergraduate research may solidify an interest in pursuing graduate-level education (Nnadozie, Ishiyama & Chon, 2001).

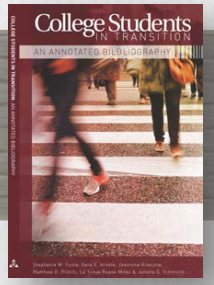
Creating Conditions for Retention and Success



Part IV

What institutional practices and local and national policies are contributing or complicating the retention and success of students in transition?

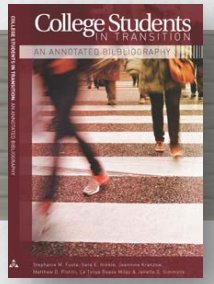
Creating Conditions



- **There is a need for more published research or evidence of assessment and evaluation of programs and services that improve the student transition.**

- **From the limited information, assessment connected to courses and course assignments appears to be promising.**
  - Authentic assessment described in Rhodes and Agre-Kippenhan (2004)
  - Assessment embedded in common course assignments (Schaeiwitz, 1996)

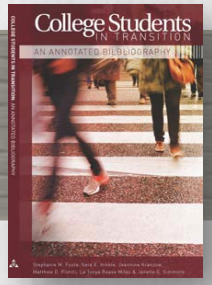
Creating Conditions



- **Shared assessment may also be a viable alternative for institutions.**
  - There are documented efforts on the part of community college and 4-year institutions to share assessment resources and opportunities (Anderson & Sundre, 2005).

- **There is also a movement to use research and assessment to better understand student success.**
  - Emerging research that attempts to find more equitable ways to measure transfer student performance and success (Cohen, 2005; Bahr Riley, Hom, & Perry, 2005).

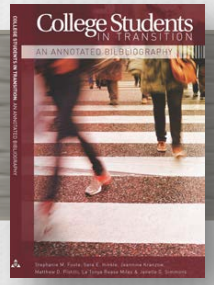
Creating Conditions



- **Many of the state and federal policies are aimed at advancing the efforts that attempt to increase enrollment and success in college, and ultimately, postsecondary degree completion.**

- **Research involving degree access and completion policies are revealing areas for potential improvement.**
  - Students from poor families have significantly lower completion rates, but students from affluent backgrounds are also taking longer than expected to complete degrees (Bowen, Chingos, & McPherson, 2009).
  - Examining students who are and those who are not successful "completers" may help us discover the factors that lead to high performance (Ehrenberg & Smith, 2004).

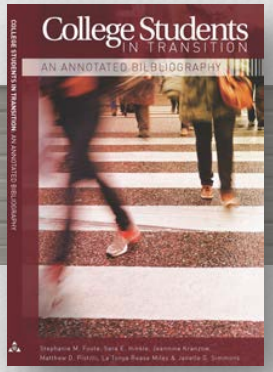
Creating Conditions



- **Even in a difficult economy, some institutions can sustain programs and resources that support student success.**
  - A follow-up study conducted with institutions in the Documenting Effective Educational Practices (DEEP) project were able to maintain or increase graduation rates from those reported in 2002, when the original study was conducted (Kuh, Kinzie, Schuh, & Whitt, 2011).

- **Effectiveness of state policy/grant programs varies greatly.**
  - Data collected longitudinally from several state scholarship program were inconsistent. There is a need to create comprehensive assessment programs for these efforts (St. John, 1999).

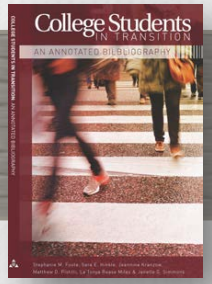
Relating Research to Practice



Part V

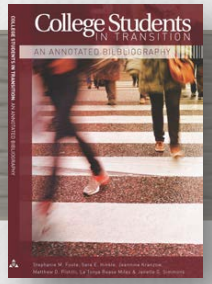
How can we related the research and significant findings to our practice?

Research to Practice



- Who are the students in transition on your campus?
- What does the experience of these students look like?
- How do you/your institution support students as they move into, through, and out of their transitions? What type of programs and services do you offer?
- What is the “path forward” or future direction of these programs and services?

Research to Practice



- How much of your current practice is influenced (or informed by research)?

- In your present role, how do you contribute to the research and/or practice involving students in transition?

Final thoughts, other considerations, etc.?