Northern Illinois University surveyed NIU students who transferred to NIU in the spring, summer and fall of 2015. 2398 transfer students were invited to complete the survey, and 308 (13%) responded.

**Transfer Experience Summary**

- Picked NIU as first transfer choice: 73%
- Transferred all previous college credits to NIU: 62%
- Attended new student orientation at previous college: 63%
- Took the transfer student UNIV orientation course at NIU: 9%
- Notified advisor of plans to transfer to NIU: 45%
- Informed advisor of planned major at NIU: 55%

Over 87% of students found the transfer experience to be Very Easy to Manageable. Their difficulties included transferring credits, commuting, parking, adjusting, and socializing.

**Transfer Decisions**

NIU was the first choice for 73% of the survey respondents. They chose NIU for its location (31%), programs (32%), and affordability (23%).

**Transfer Scholarships**

Prior to attending NIU, 27% (84) of the transfer students were awarded transfer scholarships. Students rated the impact that receiving the scholarship weighed in their decision: Deciding factor (9, 11%); Quite a bit (20, 24%); Somewhat (21, 25%); Little (27, 33%); None (7, 8%).

**Transfer Degrees and Reverse Transfer**

More than 70% of the new transfer students entered NIU with a degree: AA (91, 33%), AS (78, 28%), AAS (13, 4%), and AES (4, 1%). Survey participants were asked if they were interested in applying NIU credits toward an associate degree through a reverse transfer program, and 24% of the students indicated that they were interested.

**Transfer Process**

Students received the most help from family and friends (54, 18%), advisors (81, 27%), NIU’s website (36, 12%), and admissions staff (15, 5%). Many students (98, 32%) said that they just figured it out on their own.
Feedback pertaining to how well their previous institutions guided them through the transitioning process to NIU varied: Very Helpful (55, 19%), Helpful (77, 27%), Neutral (86, 30%), Unhelpful (38, 13%), Very Unhelpful (31, 10%). Students were asked what their previous institution could have done to better prepare them for the transition to NIU. The main concern that students voice with their transfer institution was knowing which courses transferred.

**Orientation for Transfers**
Reactions to NIU new student orientation varied with 248 (83%) stating that it was Extremely Helpful, Helpful, or Neutral, 50 (17%) finding that orientation was Unhelpful or Very Unhelpful. Students were asked what changes were needed in orientation. Transfer students listed improvements in the campus tour, campus resources, interactions with faculty/staff, how to get around campus, and registration information.

**Transfer Advising**
Academic advising was sought by 166 (56%) of the transfer students before they enrolled at NIU. Transfer students seemed pleased with their academic advising at NIU with 89 (30%) rating the experience as Very Helpful; 122 (41%) Helpful; and 66 (22%) Neutral. Suggestions for improving advising follow below:

- “Maybe instead of the "degree maps" you can print off from the website, there could be an interactive online tool where you select which classes you’ve taken at your community college, and then the computer recognizes which class that transfers into NIU as, and fills out the degree map for you, which you can then print off.”
- “I would give students specific advisors because I feel like I go to different people and maybe they miss something or I forget and don’t remember who to ask. I would feel it was more personal if we got assigned an advisor, especially for honors. I would like an honors specific advisor. At Illinois State University they had a very nice advising system.”
- “I was never assigned a specific advisor, it would have helped if I had someone that I could have gone to directly, because they were assigned to me.”
- “More [academic advising] appointments available. I waited for months to be accepted even though all my paperwork had been turned in. Then I couldn’t get an [academic advising] appointment until the day classes started.’

**Transfers’ General Education Courses**
When students responded to whether or not they would take a general education course at NIU or another institution, they ranked Quality of Instruction (142, 49%) as the most important factor. Cost of Tuition (142, 49%), Course scheduling (131, 46%), and Convenience during academic year (123, 43%) were also rated as high in importance.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Students were asked to rank how important the following factors were when they decided whether to take a general education course at NIU, a community college, or another institution.</th>
<th>Extremely Important</th>
<th>Very Important</th>
<th>Neither Important or Unimportant</th>
<th>Very Unimportant</th>
<th>Not Important At All</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Cost of tuition</td>
<td># 142</td>
<td>% 49</td>
<td># 79</td>
<td>% 27</td>
<td># 60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quality of instruction</td>
<td># 146</td>
<td>% 51</td>
<td># 109</td>
<td>% 38</td>
<td># 31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Convenience during academic</td>
<td># 123</td>
<td>% 43</td>
<td># 114</td>
<td>% 40</td>
<td># 49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Course scheduling</td>
<td># 131</td>
<td>% 46</td>
<td># 126</td>
<td>% 44</td>
<td># 28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Convenience during summer</td>
<td># 82</td>
<td>% 28</td>
<td># 79</td>
<td>% 27</td>
<td># 97</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Difficulty of courses</td>
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<td>% 21</td>
<td># 135</td>
<td>% 47</td>
<td># 82</td>
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<tr>
<td>Size of classes</td>
<td># 47</td>
<td>% 16</td>
<td># 74</td>
<td>% 26</td>
<td># 120</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student life</td>
<td># 44</td>
<td>% 15</td>
<td># 71</td>
<td>% 25</td>
<td># 121</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Transfer Preparation**
The 2015 transfer students indicated that they felt Very Well Prepared or Well Prepared to Use MyNIU and online registration (186, 64%), to Navigate the financial aid process (122, 42%), to Find and join groups and organizations (78, 27%), to Find employment opportunities (64, 22%), and to Take on the financial commitment needed to attend a university (136, 47%).

**At NIU: What could NIU do to improve the transition?**
Student responses to the question regarding what NIU could do differently to prepare transfer students for life at NIU indicated that NIU did a good job helping the students to transition into NIU. Suggestions for improvement included to better
communications about academic advising, student involvement opportunities, orientation, and financial aid. Students also suggested non-standard office hours, courses, and services on campus to help students who work during regular hours.

**At Previous Institution: What could you and your previous institution do to improve the transition?**

Students were also asked what they would have done differently at the community college or previous institution to improve their transfer experience to NIU. Avoiding problems with transfer credits was the most frequent response. Obtaining an associate degree and seeking advising were also frequently mentioned. The impact of these decisions on financial situations was also discussed.

Students rated how well their community college experience prepared them in terms of academic behaviors/study skills. Students said that they were *Extremely Well Prepared or Well Prepared* in Communicating with professors (204, 73%), in Time management (189, 68%), in Text book reading (163, 58%), in Test preparation (167, 61%), Test taking (171, 62%), Research methods (165, 59%), Note taking(186, 67%), Communicating with advisor/counselor (180, 64%), Self-organization (195, 40%), Self-discipline (200, 72%), and Navigating the rules and procedures at college (208, 75%).

When asked how well their community college experiences prepared them with the thinking skills and the academic knowledge necessary for the course work at NIU, the majority of the students stated that they felt *Extremely Well Prepared or Well Prepared* in the following areas: Writing (204, 73%), Oral Communications (199, 71%), Math (185, 66%), Research skills (170, 61%), Critical thinking (198, 71%), and Problem-solving strategies (198, 70%).

**For Others: What do transfer students recommend others to do to improve their transition to NIU?**

Respondents offered advice that they would give to a friend who was interested in transferring to NIU. Students encouraged others to complete an associate’s degree so that all classes transfer. They emphasized that enlisting the help of a good advisor makes everything go smoother.

Students also highlighted the importance of starting the transfer process early and completing everything on the transfer checklist as soon as possible. Participants were quick to point out that not all credits transfer to NIU, so it is important to make certain that classes will articulate.

Some students suggested researching different living costs, highlighting the need for financial literacy education with new students. Many students noted that you need to study more to prepare for exams at NIU, which could be due to a lack of preparation for the transition to upper division courses within their major.