

“Cathy, can you meet with me to review my courses for next year and answer some questions?”

The request came in an email, sounding very efficient and well-organized, from a colleague who is well-respected for those very qualities; a person who is not only a full-time employee but is also a transfer student. I replied immediately that I would be glad to help however I could. The reply came back immediately: “Thanks for getting right back to me. I’m so discombobulated!”

Who knew? Here’s a person who is usually very composed and professional, not rattled by a fast-paced and demanding job, suffering the same ‘transition anxiety’ common to all transfer students, no matter what their level of achievement.

The Office of New Student Transfer is dedicated to helping students like this make the transition with as little anxiety as possible. Coming to a new school, especially making the change from a smaller two or four-year college is an adjustment, no matter how accomplished you might be. Transfer students have usually had a year or two of college, some have associate degrees like the student described above, but all of them face the same the uncertainty of a new location, new faces, and unknown challenges. While that can be exciting too, it can also be overwhelming.

My job is to let these students know, even while they are applying for admission, that once they are accepted and make the decision to come here, they have a office and staff who are committed to them and their needs. We help them arrange early registration if they are eligible, answer questions about their transfer credits, consult department chairs to get correct equivalencies where none exist, work with academic advising to finalize schedules in the weeks approaching orientation, help the new students make a connection to their advisors and to COIN, keep them informed on various requirements of enrolling (immunization record, placement tests) and just generally be a “safe harbor” in the ensuing weeks.

Providing extra transfer student support through the office of New Student Transfer here and through the Transfer Coordinator at Bridgewater State College was the brainchild of the CONNECT Partnership, a consortium of schools in the southeastern Massachusetts region whose mission is to improve the quality of life in the region by making high-quality educational opportunities affordable and accessible. Although the two positions are still new, we hope they are making a difference in the lives of transfer students.