Buckle up!
Steering Commuter Students to Success
Rachel DeMooy & Sophie Braga de Barros
Introductions
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- Name
- Institution
- Position/Role
- Do you work with commuter students?
- Why this session?
Learning Outcomes:

- Be able to identify needs of commuter student population
- Be able to formulate strategies for commuter student engagement
- Learn about commuter student retention and what has been done to address this issue
- Learn how you can contribute towards increasing commuter student retention and engagement
Who are Commuter Students?
Key First-Year Commuter Student Challenges:

- Transition
- Engagement
- Building Community/Network
- Trusting/Relying on Services
- Participating in university life
Activity!

- In small groups, discuss how you currently work with commuter students.
- Have you tried to address commuter challenges in your work before?
- How can you keep the first year commuter student in mind while planning for the future?
Addressing Commuter Challenges
What Does the Research Say?

Programs and services at Ohio State meet my needs (for example, support offices, student activities) *

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>On-Campus</th>
<th>Off-Campus</th>
<th>Commuter</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Strongly Disagree/Disagree</td>
<td>4.7%</td>
<td>7.1%</td>
<td>8.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neither Agree nor Disagree</td>
<td>18.9%</td>
<td>16.9%</td>
<td>20.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strongly Agree/Agree</td>
<td>76.4%</td>
<td>79.0%</td>
<td>71.0%</td>
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I feel a sense of belonging to Ohio State **

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<th>Commuter</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Strongly Disagree/Disagree</td>
<td>5.2%</td>
<td>5.9%</td>
<td>11.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neither Agree nor Disagree</td>
<td>12.1%</td>
<td>9.9%</td>
<td>15.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strongly Agree/Agree</td>
<td>82.8%</td>
<td>84.2%</td>
<td>73.4%</td>
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</table>
What Does the Research Say?

Are you currently involved in the following?

- A student organization (for example, Psychology Club, Running Club, Buckeye Barbeque Club, Black Student Association)**
  - On-Campus: 62.5%
  - Off-Campus: 62.6%
  - Commuter: 33.0%

- A Student Life sponsored program (for example, Buck-i-SERV, Wellness Ambassadors)**
  - On-Campus: 10.9%
  - Off-Campus: 12.5%
  - Commuter: 2.6%

- A social fraternity or sorority***
  - On-Campus: 7.8%
  - Off-Campus: 18.0%
  - Commuter: 5.0%

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>What type of student organizations are you involved in?</th>
<th>On-Campus</th>
<th>Off-Campus</th>
<th>Commuter</th>
<th>Statistically Significant</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Academic/Departmental/Professional Organizations</td>
<td>64.1%</td>
<td>77.3%</td>
<td>86.1%</td>
<td>***</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
“Despite the commuter students’ lack of involvement in enriching educational experiences, they were academically engaged when it came to their studies.” (Burlison, 2015)

“Results also indicated that, although many commuter students’ time is constrained by work and family matters, they put forth just as much effort as resident students in areas that relate directly to what goes in the classroom.” (Jacoby & Garland, 2004)
What Does the Research Say?

“Balancing family roles and responsibilities presents difficult challenges for both traditional and nontraditional commuter students” (Burlison, 2015)
What Does the Research Say?

“Rational myths include the continued utilization of programs and interventions designed for residential students with commuter student populations under the assumption that the effect on learning will be equivalent” (Dugan, 2008)
The Work We Do
Commuter Liaison Responsibilities

- Office Hours
- Outreach Hours
- Commuter Mentor Program
- Community Projects
The Commuter Mentoring Program
Commuter Engagement Events

- Orientation
- Commuter Preview Day
- Events - Meeting them where they are
- Commuter Lounge/Kitchen/Lockers
What the future holds
Evolution of Commuter Mentoring Program

- Opt-In Vs. Opt-Out Program
- More group events
- Educating faculty and staff
- Different forms of outreach
- Commuter Appreciation Day
How Can You Continue Supporting Commuter Students?
References


The Ohio State University Center for the Study of Student Life (2015). *Comparing on-campus, off-campus, and commuter students*. Columbus, OH.
Questions?