

How ECU Reduces Student Outcome Gaps and Enhances Support for Transfer Students with EAB Research, Technology, and Consulting

East Carolina University (ECU)

ABOUT

East Carolina University (ECU) is a four-year regional public university in Greenville, North Carolina with 21,688 undergraduate students and 1,641 transfer-in enrollment.¹

KEY RESULTS

▶ **2,497**

ECU Credit Connector inquiries

▶ **9,204 Hours**

Total saved in one year

▶ **\$584K+**

Total saved in one year

“Since implementation of the Credit Connector, the inquiries in our CRM system have tripled which has given us an opportunity to conduct personalized outreach that led to an increase in transfer applications for the spring, summer, and fall 2024 semesters.”

Stephanie L. Whaley
*Director of Non-Traditional/
Post-Traditional Enrollment*

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OPPORTUNITY

ECU sought to reduce and eliminate gaps in student outcomes among transfer students.

ECU has experienced a consistent decline in traditional transfer student enrollment. Inefficient processes critical to transfer decisions are contributing to this issue. Since most ECU transfers come from the North Carolina Community College System and ECU aims to transform the region, enhancing transfer student support will strengthen partnerships and address regional workforce needs.

SOLUTION

ECU renewed their commitment to transfer student success and invested in resources to support this work.

ECU joined the Moon Shot for Social & Economic Mobility in May 2022 as a vanguard institution. As part of this initiative, the ECU team focused on transfer pathways and implemented the Transfer Portal technology, which was launched with students in June 2023. Through focus groups and a detailed mapping process facilitated by EAB’s Strategic Advisory Services and Moon Shot Team, opportunities for improvement were identified. As a result, ECU implemented several recommendations including better promotion of the Transfer Portal (named ECU Credit Connector), self-service resources, and other transfer-related support to improve engagement opportunities with prospective students.

IMPACT

The combined power of EAB Research, Moon Shot, and the Transfer Portal elevate transfer student support.

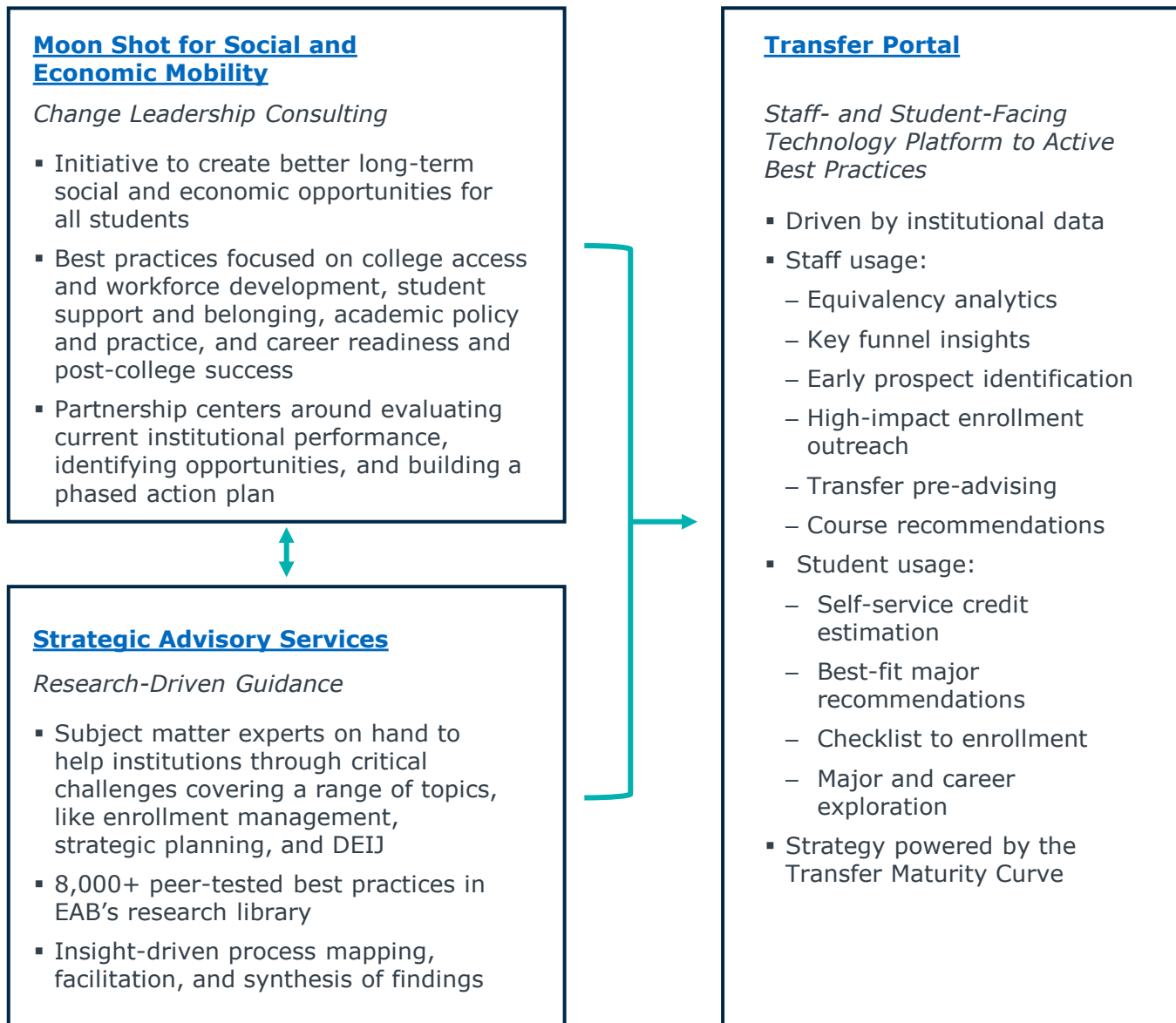
ECU identified three main areas of focus for supporting transfer students: improving the credit articulation process, increasing institutional knowledge about transfers, and promoting greater adoption of the ECU Credit Connector to engage prospective students. These initiatives aim to enhance the transfer student experience and streamline internal processes for staff. Use of the Credit Connector has resulted in time and cost savings for staff.

1) Fall 2022

Source: East Carolina University; EAB interviews and analysis.

Harnessing the Power of EAB Research and Technology to Activate Best Practices

Coalition for Learning Access and Success (CLAS) Leadership at ECU invited EAB to conduct a thorough evaluation of their transfer student experience to surface areas for improvement. ECU leveraged two EAB consulting partnerships called Moon Shot for Social & Economic Mobility and Strategic Advisory Services, as well as the Transfer Portal technology, to implement the initiative.



- ✓ Unparalleled focus on institutional success and the success of all students, especially underrepresented and transfer students
- ✓ Experience with hundreds of higher education institutions and thousands of conversations with leaders
- ✓ Research-backed best practices and recommendations
- ✓ Change management strategies activated by technology

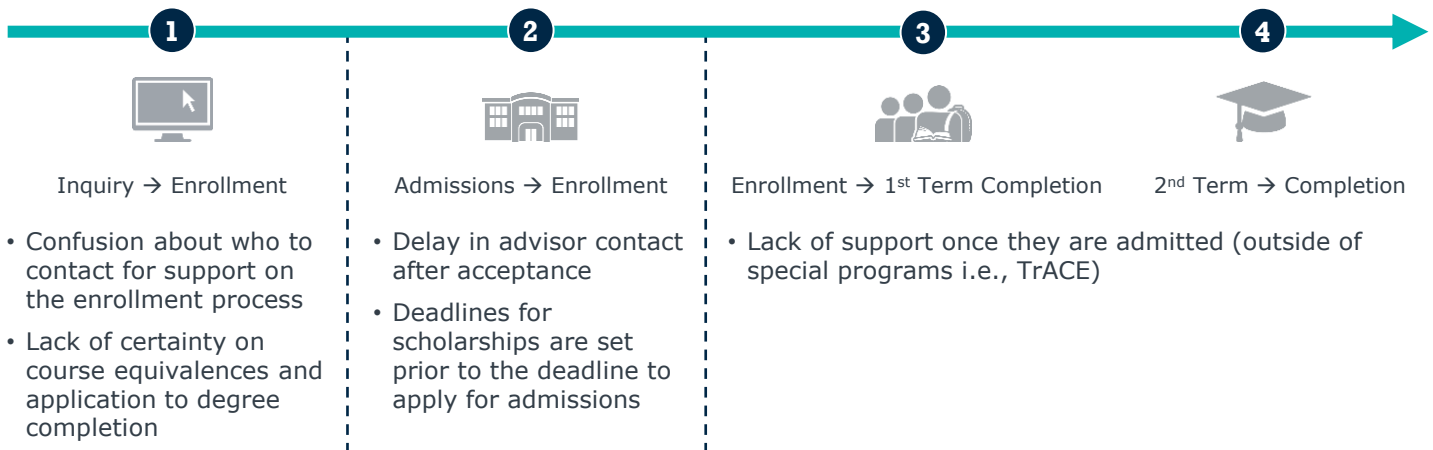
Source: EAB interviews and analysis.

Mapping Out the Transfer Student Experience to Identify Improvement Opportunities

There were three components to the initiative. The team conducted focus groups with fourteen transfer students across nine majors, an interactive workshop with HUB members, and an evaluation of data from the Transfer Credit Connector.

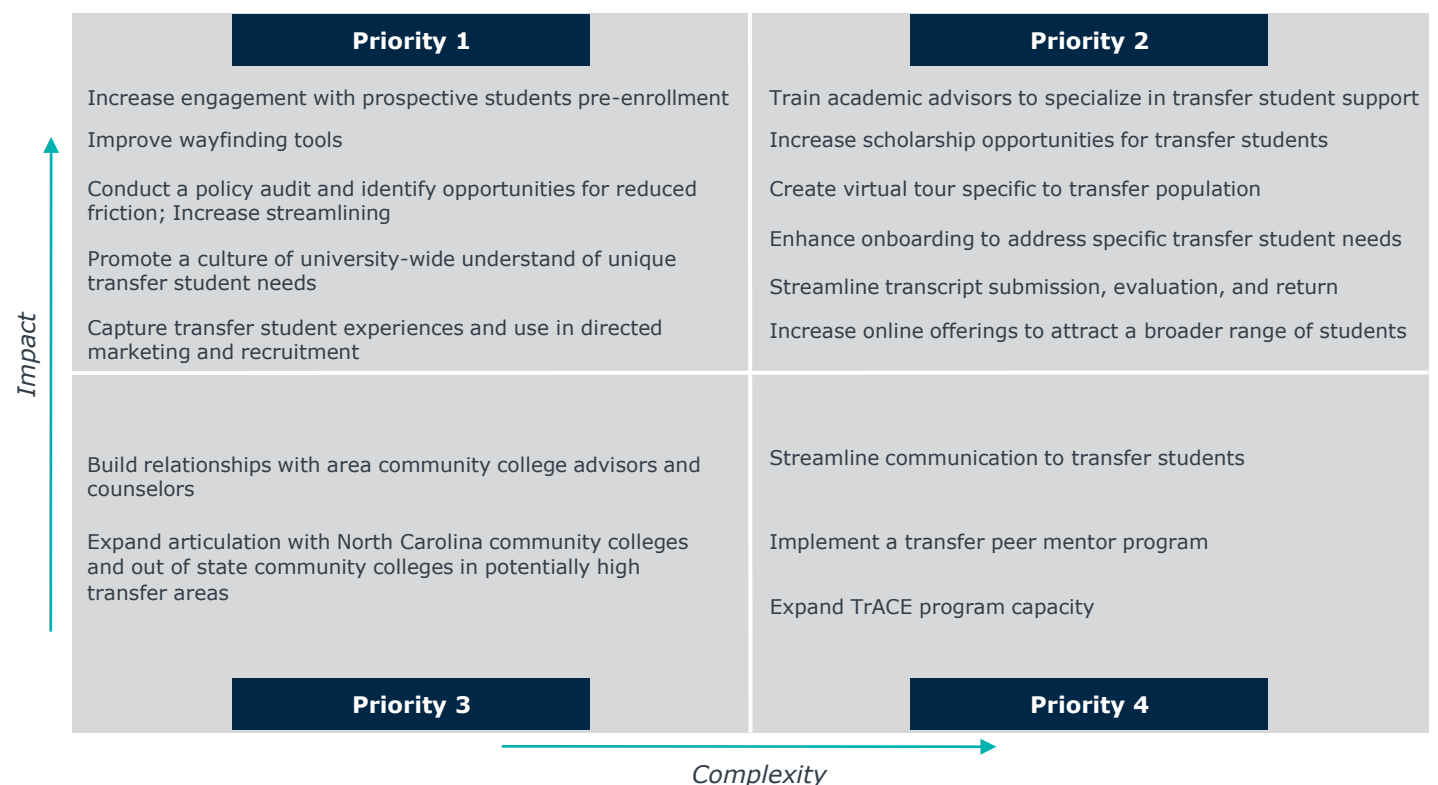
Focus Groups

Most of the focus group participants transferred from a two-year institution and participated in a transfer-specific support program or event (e.g., TrACE and Pirate Promise). Findings are summarized below in four phases.



Journey Mapping

Participants created a student persona to evaluate the transfer student experience. They identified critical points of engagement, barriers, current readiness to support students, and other gaps in each phase. Using the Transfer Maturity Curve, the EAB Team prioritized opportunities to provide guidance.



Source: East Carolina University; EAB interviews and analysis.

Providing Tailored Recommendations to Guide ECU's Transfer Strategy

The EAB team distilled findings and observations, prioritizing recommendations based on the [Transfer Maturity Curve](#). The Transfer Maturity Curve is driven by seven best practices which span the student's life cycle starting with foundation, moving to awareness, and ending with transfer student yield and support. This tool is designed for partners to assess progress towards optimal adoption and strategic utilization of the Transfer Portal and prioritization of transfer best practices over time.

1

Foundation

- Prioritize Institutional Support for Transfer Students
- Build Community College Partnerships and Transfer Pathways



- Increase cross-institutional knowledge of transfer student needs
- Streamline transfer student recruitment, admission, and enrollment processes (e.g., credit articulation)
- Identify and train transfer specialists to provide focused and personalized support
- Implement specialized academic advising, like that in ECU's Partnership Team program



2

Awareness

- Promote Transfer and Provide Detail on Cost, Credit, and Completion
- Create Transfer-Friendly Website and Self-Services Resources



- Use YouVisit to create a virtual tour that focuses on the interests of transfer students, not just first-time students (current video)
- Create a Credit Connector Promotion Plan to increase adoption and support transfer enrollment goals.



3

Yield & Support

- Qualify and Engage Prospective Transfer Students
- Conduct Timely and Consistent Credit Evaluations
- Provide Early Transfer Advising, Onboarding, and Support



- Improve transcript evaluation, including visibility into transcript status for applicants
- Evaluate transfer student onboarding efforts to identify improvement opportunities

Create Implementation Plan to Act on Recommendations

Outline timeline, key people, executive sponsorship, and resource consideration



Source: East Carolina University; EAB interviews and analysis.

Making Data-Informed Decisions to Enhance the Transfer Student Experience

ECU is in the process of implementing several of the recommendations to better engage prospective transfer students. In just one year, their strong utilization of the Credit Connector has enabled time and cost savings for staff by enhancing lead generation and credit evaluation processes.

Initiatives Underway



Improve Credit Articulation Process

ECU is working to streamline the credit articulation process. For example, they observed a consistent submission of courses not transferable to ECU via the Credit Connector. The team implemented a nontransferable course in Banner, enhancing transparency for prospective students and streamlining the evaluation process by eliminating duplicate efforts in reviewing the same courses. Additionally, ECU is developing a Standard Operation Procedure (SOP) to be used across the institution. **The SOP will serve as a model for the entire University of North Carolina System.**

Create Widespread Understanding

Throughout the fall 2024 semester, the team is **expanding internal marketing efforts** to make transfer a campus-wide priority such as through National Transfer Student Week. The team is meeting with deans to share findings and recommendations, allowing deans to better understand the gaps and how they can help.

Continue Growing ECU Credit Connector Adoption

Due to strong promotion efforts, ECU has already achieved high utilization of the Credit Connector in their first year. Their strategy includes promoting the Credit Connector through various web pages, events, email campaigns, and targeted digital advertising. **Their digital ads have been seen over 1.5 million times and have generated over 14,000 click-throughs to the website.** Impressively, utilization is on par with institutions who have had the Transfer Portal technology for three or more years. ECU will continue to expand their promotion to further grow adoption and transfer enrollments.

Large Savings in Just One Year

Lead Generation

The accounts generated in the ECU Credit Connector serve as transfer leads, which are then exported into TargetX. This eliminates the need for ECU to purchase transfer student inquiries.

2,497 ECU Credit Connector inquiries

\$124k+ Saved in one year²

Staff Time Savings

Use of the Credit Connector has removed the need for ad-hoc and unofficial credit evaluations and program-related conversations by the Admissions Team, allowing the team to reallocate time to other strategic priorities.

29,639

Automatic course evaluations added

3,609

Programs explored

9,204 hrs.

Total saved in one year³

\$460K+

Total saved in one year

1) Data from June 1st, 2023- June 1st, 2024

2) \$50 = estimated price of inquiry

3) 15 minutes = Estimated staff time per course review, 30 minutes = Estimated time per program review

Source: East Carolina University; EAB interviews and analysis.