



TRANSFER Q AND A

Seattle Academy College Advising recommends each student carefully consider the resources at their current college before pursuing a transfer admissions process. Colleges want to help you find fulfillment and pathways forward. While over 1/3 of all college students in the United States transfer, the percentage of Seattle Academy students who transfer is much smaller, and around half of the Seattle Academy alumni who consider transferring choose to stay at their current school.

With some inquiries on your part, your present institution may help you move toward your academic goals through conversations with faculty and advisors, by identifying a mentor-professor, through independent study, through independent research, through work with pre-professional advising teams, through related clubs/organizations, via access to graduate courses (where available), or even by changing plans for your major. We outline here other techniques for simultaneously investing as fully and healthily as possible in College A while thinking about, and perhaps even applying to, Colleges B, C, D, and so on. Completing a full year at your current school makes the simultaneous transfer application process a more thorough, productive, and evaluative one.

Here are some guidelines to consider when considering a transfer:

- Get good grades. This is a no-brainer, but it is *the most important element on a transfer application*.
- Explore and choose courses for the second half of freshman year that are more general in nature. Not only will these classes expose you to a broader academic world, but they may allow you more flexibility if you do transfer. You don't want to lose too many credits when transferring.
- It is important to note that transferring to the University of Washington from other four-year colleges can be especially difficult. If transferring to the University of Washington is a major goal, research the process of transferring from a community college in Washington State. While admission to the University of Washington from a Washington State community college is not guaranteed, it can be a more effective path than transferring from another four-year college, inside or outside Washington State.
- The same process for first year applicants applies to transfer applicants, with some slight modifications. Begin the transfer process by thinking again about a range of schools (i.e. "reach," "target," and "likely"). That said, the transfer process can be more unpredictable in terms of the needs of the institutions, availability of space (classroom and housing), financial aid resources, and even athletic opportunities. This is especially true right now. Read on for ways to address that unpredictability.
- Simply thinking about transferring, even if you never act on it, forces you to take stock of where you are, talk informally to a few professors and maybe a dean, and perhaps set some goals for yourself. Another reason the transfer process is healthy is that its steps are simultaneously those steps that help students to better adjust to their current college -- with one caveat: that you don't make your desire too public. By that, we mean with roommate(s), teammates, and the like. As soon as you broadcast that you are considering a transfer, some friends and allies may consciously or subconsciously keep you at arm's length. You might also feel obligated to "make good" on your expressed desire to transfer when we've instead found that people considering a transfer were equally likely to remain at College A.
- Meet with your favorite professor(s) a few times and talk to a dean. These people are key because they not only have encountered students thinking about the same questions you have, but from your strategic admissions perspective, they write recommendation letters sometimes necessary for the transfer process. For the time being, they may not know you all that well. Even if the contact is a favorite TA, get to know them. Sit down for coffee with them. Tell them who you are.
- Get involved in a new activity. Not only does real investment in College A give you another dimension of thinking about your college, but it also gives the transfer admissions committee the confidence that you are involved and that you have given the college a shot. You may also meet some new people.

- Identify whether there are larger personal reasons for dissatisfaction that won't be solved by a transfer unaccompanied by heavy lifting and self-reflection. With some outside help and/or perspective, the college may not be the culprit. First seek out support for personal challenges. There is no magic formula that can make everything "right."
- If newfound independence and socializing have wreaked havoc on grades, consider whether the college itself is not a fit, or whether approaches to college need to change.

Trust your gut. Review your original criteria for colleges, think critically about new criteria, and call each of the colleges that you believe meet your criteria. Ask if you can speak to someone who evaluates transfer applications. Write down this person's name as your contact source and call him/her for all future inquiries. It is important to find the answers to the following questions to determine how to proceed in your college course work and also how to enhance your transfer application.

- What is the percentage of transfer students accepted as sophomores for the last two years? What is the percentage projection for the year you plan to apply?
- What is the percentage of transfer students accepted as juniors for the last two years? What is the percentage projection for the year you plan to apply?
- What was the average college GPA and SAT I score accepted in the last two years?
- How much weight is given to an applicant's secondary school record in the evaluation process? It is usually less if you are applying for junior (or even sophomore) status.
- How much weight is given to an applicant's SAT scores in the evaluation process? (Again, it is usually less if you are applying for junior, or even sophomore, status. Test optional admission can extend to transfer students as well.)
- What are the required courses the admissions office is looking for transfer applicants to have completed by the close of their first year? Usually, colleges evaluate transfer students more favorably if they have taken core transferable courses. This may not hold true for students attending a focused program (e.g. conservatory); they may be evaluated differently due to the courses and opportunities available. Many colleges have agreements with local community colleges or list recommended courses for specific majors, and you can use this information to determine what courses are most important to take.
- Does financial aid play a role in the transfer admissions decision? What steps do you need to take to apply for aid if needed?
- What was the percentage of aid given to accepted transfer students last year? What was the average grant for transfers?
- Does the college have a separate financial aid budget for transfers? Does this budget fluctuate each year? How much?

Email College Advising with plenty of notice if you need transcripts and recommendations (sometimes both if you're applying during your first year, when you might be considered a freshman applicant by some colleges). Last minute inquiries sometimes come in over the holidays, for example, and we will then send materials when the office reopens. Let College Advising know to which colleges you will apply and by which specific dates. If your colleges do require test scores and you took a standardized test, you would instead send those through College Board or ACT accounts. Contact customer service at SAT or ACT to reassess your account if needed.

Frequently, colleges will expect you to share your reasons for transferring in the application. Hopefully, the process of considering whether to stay at your current institution or whether to transfer generates a lot of positive thinking about what you seek. In writing about the transfer, avoid sharing a lot of negative comments about College A. Colleges want to view applicants as future contributors who are thoughtful about past experiences and eager for new ones.

Remember that you haven't transferred until you, well, transferred. This means that you need to stay as invested as possible, academically and socially, until you are eligible (by way of admission offer and sufficient financial aid package) to shift your focus to another school. Don't let dreaming of greener pastures (which may or may not be greener), or the work of applying to other colleges, distract you from commitment to your current home.

Perhaps ironically, the very things that will make you more satisfied at your current school – meeting with deans, getting involved in new ways, thriving in classes – are the very things that increase your options as a transfer applicant.

Your Seattle Academy education reinforced your many resources and skills. Using that toolkit as you research and think about current and future options can help you make thoughtful, mature choices. We know that the first year of college can be a perplexing time, where asking questions and evaluating options is normal and healthy. Beyond the above, please let us know if you have questions!

In assembling this document, Seattle Academy is indebted to the work of Peter Jennings at Concord Academy, Concord, MA.