EDITED Transfer Culture Mt SAC 11\_17\_2020

00:00:00 **Alana**

I know that everybody on campus, they create these bonds and this rapport with students and they truly want to help. And so, it's just adding a little bit more to what you already do for your students.

00:00:11 **Christina**

Hi, I'm Christina Barsi.

00:00:16 **Sun**

And I'm Sun Ezzell, and you're listening to the Magic Mountie Podcast.

00:00:19 **Christina**

Our mission is to find ways to keep your ear to the ground, so to speak - by bringing to you the activities and events you may not have time to attend, the resources on campus you might want to know more about, the interesting things your colleagues are creating, and the many ways we can continue to better help and guide our students.

00:00:37 **Sun**

We bring to you the voices of Mt. SAC, from the classroom to completion.

00:00:40 **Speaker 1**

And I know I'm going to achieve my goals, and I know people here are going to help me to do it.

00:00:44 **Speaker 2**

She is a sociology major and she's transferring to Cal Poly, Pamona! Psychology major, English major ...

00:00:51 **Sun**

From transforming part-time into full-time-

00:00:53 **Speaker 1**

I really liked the time that we spent with Julie about how to write a CV and a cover letter.

00:01:01 **Christina**

Or just finding time to soak in the campus.

00:01:03 **Speaker 1**

To think of the natural environment around us as a library.

00:01:06 **Christina**

We want to keep you informed and connected to all things Mt. SAC. But most importantly, we want to keep you connected with each other. I'm Christina Barsi, Mt. SAC alumni, and producer of this podcast.

00:01:18 **Sun**

As Sun Ezzell, Learning Assistance Faculty and Professional Learning Academy Coordinator.

00:01:23 **Christina**

And this is the Magic Mountie Podcast.

00:01:24 **Christina**

Mt. SAC is known for a lot of amazing things, and students come here for so many diverse and inspiring reasons. In fact, they love it so much that sometimes, it makes it hard for a student to leave. So, finding ways to make the transfer process easier and more informed is what this episode is all about.

00:01:52 **Sun**

Well, Alana, thank you so much for joining us today on the Magic Mountie Podcast. I'm so excited to talk with you and hear a little bit more about what it means to create a transfer sending-culture. I was wondering, would you go ahead and tell us a little bit about yourself and your work on campus?

00:02:11 **Alana**

Yeah, absolutely, Sun. So, thank you so much for having me. So, I'm Alana Bachor, so hello to all your listeners out there. I am a counselor in general counseling and I'm very blessed to be able to work with our students every single day. And so, I see students in appointments and I also teach counseling courses on campus.

00:02:35 **Alana**

I'm not currently teaching right now. And I praise all of my colleagues that are teaching right now on Mt. SAC's virtual campus because man, oh man, I did it in the summer and it's a very different world. And so yes, kudos to all of you that are teaching this semester in winter and spring.

00:02:58 **Alana**

And so, I am a general counselor, so I don't really specialize ... all counselors we all do transfer and work with transfer students, but Lupita could not be here today because she's doing transfer workshops and things ... it's very busy for them; the month of October and November, because it is transfer application season. And so, I'm here without my partner in crime.

00:03:24 **Alana**

So, I'm really the "how can we create this in a systematic way" type of person. That's my job and for Lupita, really, she has a strong passion for transfer, her and her team. She's always making sure that Crystal and Martin are included and they work really hard.

00:03:44 **Alana**

And they've been really great in terms of all the different initiatives that have come out of this grant in the six years that I've been here, full-time at Mt. SAC. Just wanted to see if there was ways of maybe creating a better system of spreading the word about transfer and the information about transfer, just because we are such a huge school.

00:04:09 **Alana**

And to me, it's amazing that we have three transfer specialists, but at one point, there was just one, and then it went to two. And then most recently, it was three. And even during that whole time, Mt. SAC has stayed in the top 10 as a transfer institution. And so, I just find it amazing.

00:04:30 **Alana**

But I'm a big picture person and I love systems that are efficient and that just get the work done. So, work smarter, not harder. And so, that's how the grant and the idea of creating a transfer sending-culture Mt. SAC came about.

00:04:47 **Sun**

That's so cool. I didn't know that we were in the top 10. Is that of community colleges sending students to transfer?

00:04:55 **Alana**

Yes.

00:04:55 **Sun**

That's so cool.

00:04:57 **Alana**

Yeah. We've consistently been in the top 10. And so, I think it's amazing. Like I said, we have a small, but mighty team in the transfer center doing the good work.

00:05:09 **Sun**

Absolutely. And so, you mentioned a grant. Could you tell a little bit more about what the goal of the grant is?

00:05:16 **Alana**

Yeah. So, when I heard that there was money to be had, that could be put forth towards this idea of creating a transfer sending-culture, Lupita and I, we applied and received the GPS Grant, And our grant was entitled, Aiming for Completion; Cultivating a Transfer Sending-Culture at Mt. SAC.

00:05:38 **Alana**

And so, as part of this grant, we want to cultivate the transfer sending-culture by reducing informational and cultural barriers for transfer success for our students. Because as we have many first-generation students to higher education on our campus, and so, there are a lot of counselors on our team and on-campus. And I want to say that I think we have the best counselors out there.

00:06:04 **Alana**

I know I'm biased, but my colleagues are amazing and the passion and the love for students show in their work. And so, I'm very lucky that I get to see that and work with them, but there's only so many of us compared to the thousands of students on our campus.

00:06:19 **Alana**

And so, with our goal (so Lupita and I, with our goal), we want to advocate for transfer and we want it to become integrated and prioritized like on a structural level. So, that way everybody, and I'm talking about faculty, staff, administrators, they get more involved in the knowledge and support for transfer for our students, especially during the application season, because that can be the most stressful time for students. And so, I think by fostering collaborative efforts across campus, like in a systematic and well-advertised way, I think it really would ensure efficiency of the work being done.

00:07:01 **Alana**

And also, most importantly, it would really make sure our students know that they're well-supported and that they can go to anybody on campus; that we are a campus that says yes, reach for the stars. Do you want to try and go to Berkeley? There's people here that can help you, or they can talk about even their experiences there.

00:07:22 **Alana**

If we get more people involved to really listen to the student stories of how they made it to our campus and what they're going through, and also gives a chance for students to listen to our stories on the other end on how to do it and advice and just guidance. I think students feeling that support is just so important.

00:07:44 **Sun**

So, you mentioned something about reducing informational and cultural barriers. Could you talk a little bit more about that, maybe an example of a barrier that you've noticed?

00:07:55 **Alana**

Sure. So, one specific story comes to mind and actually it's really what got me thinking in terms of there has to be a better way.

00:08:06 **Alana**

So, my office is right outside the transfer center. Well, when my office was on campus and not my kitchen table. And it's an open area for those of you that have been in building 9B. And so, I can hear when students come in and out and I need to cross through the Transfer Center to pick up my student appointments.

00:08:29 **Alana**

And so, one day, I heard quite a bit of students come into the area. And when I was on one of my trips of coming back with one of my students, Lupita stopped me (the transfer specialist) and she asked me, "Hey, can you just like let these students know that I'm correct in telling them the application is not affected when it actually gets turned in?"

00:08:57 **Alana**

And so, I was like, "What?" I didn't understand it, but it turns out that in the class, these students professor had mentioned that for the Cal State application, it's first come first serve. And so, the sooner you get your application in, the better your chances are of getting into the school.

00:09:16 **Alana**

And this is not correct. I mean, Lupita was trying to tell them, "It doesn't matter if you turn in the first day or the last day, the only difference really is going to be your stress level. And so, it does not affect the application whatsoever."

00:09:29 **Alana**

But these students were so freaked out about it. They had no idea. And really, it took a transfer specialist and also a counselor to reassure them, "No, no, that's not the case." And so, I just thought, man, just faculty, they're so powerful in students' lives. Students see them every day or every other day or whatever the case is, for these classes. And students look up to them and really what they say is truth, it's gospel to them.

00:10:05 **Alana**

And so, I just thought "What a resource to tap into, to help spread the word about transfer." So, even if that professor had said, okay, it's ... if all they knew about transfer was Cal State applications are open and they know it's open October 1st through this year, it's December 4th. Normally, it's November 30th, but this year they've changed it to December 3rd.

00:10:30 **Alana**

So, if all that professor, if all they knew about transfer was that, that would be so helpful. And I get it. I'm sure a lot of faculty out there are going like, "Oh God, what do you want me to learn now? I gotta be everything to everybody?" No, I get that part of it. So, no.

00:10:47 **Alana**

And if students were to ask more questions past that, it's like, "Okay, well, go to the transfer center. Go and see a counselor," but just even helping, knowing those dates and the correct information about the deadlines is just that much better.

00:11:03 **Sun**

So, you mentioned like how faculty play a really powerful role in students' experiences. And it might be really meaningful for our students to hear from faculty, not only about the deadline or the transfer center, but also maybe even the faculty sharing their own story about their transfer experience or their experiences going to college, and just that more personal connection.

00:11:30 **Alana**

Right. No, absolutely. As part of what we're wanting to do as we build this transfer sending-culture at Mt. SAC is to create more network for students and possibly create these alumni listservs. So, this way, if a student came to the transfer center or a counselor, or they talked to somebody and they said, "I'm thinking of going to Cal State Long Beach for this major." And if over the years we can build up these listserves with professors, staff, with administrators that maybe went to Long Beach (everybody go Beach) in the major, we can connect a student with one of those people, so that way they can each kind of share their story and how it was for them and their experience there.

00:12:16 **Alana**

That's just so powerful. Like it's a very powerful tool just to be able to let students know where you did go for your education and the major and how you liked it and what you did, and what you did on campus to be involved and things like that, because it's very scary for students.

00:12:39 **Alana**

And I think too many students from my experience, they think, okay, Cal State, Cal Poly. It's already uncomfortable to have to transfer out after you've gotten used to in an area, especially Mt. SAC that's so amazing with our programs and our support and all the people that work here. So, I think being able to expose students to those experiences is just super important.

00:13:08 **Alana**

I've been going on the North Cal tour as one of the chaperones for the past - oh man, I think it's three years. They didn't have one this year, obviously (they did it virtually). But for the past three years, and so we would take a busload of students to the North Cal schools. And so, that was Cal State, San Francisco, UC Berkeley, UC Santa Cruz and UC Davis.

00:13:33 **Alana**

And so, students that went on this trip, just being exposed to the campuses and for even some of them, it was the first time that they had even stayed in a hotel or had been in Northern California. Like they had not experienced anywhere other than Southern California and their home. And so, it was very exciting. And the Transfer Center, they covered the cost of food and the hotel.

00:14:02 **Alana**

And so, it was nice to see them be so excited to one, be able to do this. It was such a special treat for them. But even more important, Lupita who ran the trip for that year, she set up these networks from alumni. So, Mounties that graduated from Mt. SAC were now at these different schools and she made it so that way they would meet our students and they had a panel and they did the tours. And for the last two years, these things were always happening like the fires, like two years ago.

00:14:41 **Sun**

That's right, oh my goodness.

00:14:42 **Alana**

Yeah. So, we were driving into the red smoke, but we carried on and this last year that we went on, was the power outage.

00:14:52 **Sun**

Oh, no!

00:14:52 **Alana**

But what saved us was our Mt. SAC alumni that Lupita had set up because they were there and ready and waiting and wearing their sweaters to let students know. And they were the ones that gave the tours. So, when the other schools actually just canceled on us, we still were able to tour the school and get a very good, very good insight as to what our students would experience. And especially, with the diverse panel that came out to help. And a lot of them were past participants of this Northern California Tour.

00:15:32 **Sun**

That's so neat.

00:15:35 **Alana**

They were telling our students, "I was in your shoes last year and look at me now" and sharing their stories that they were undocumented or first-generation or athletes that had their options of different schools; of UCLA or UC Berkeley, and why they chose the school that they were currently at, and what they loved about it.

00:15:56 **Alana**

And so, creating these networks and having support, and I think for our students to see, "Hey, it's been done, even though it's so scary." Because for a lot of them, like I said, it was their first trip and their first time in a hotel room to spend the night from their family and to be-

00:16:13 **Sun**

That's a big deal.

00:16:13 **Alana**

Right. And to be in Northern California, for them to actually get that idea in their head. Well, like, "Well, maybe I could do this. Maybe I can get out of my comfort zone. And if they did it, maybe I can do it too." And also knowing - and the students were so loving in that they were willing to be like, "Yeah, this is my phone number. This is my email. If you end up over here, I can help you out. I'll show you all the good places to eat." They were so amazing.

00:16:41 **Alana**

And so, that has been built up over the years and that does take time and effort. But I think if we continue to do that, I would love to see Mountie alumni in all 23 Cal States and all nine UCs. I would love to see that and to be able to connect students with other students so that way they can pursue, they can go after it.

00:17:03 **Alana**

We had students that said, "I never would have applied to Berkeley, and I did. And I'm there." We have students that are there from that trip. And so, it's so powerful.

00:17:16 **Sun**

It sounds like that personal connection can make all the difference.

00:17:19 **Alana**

Absolutely. Absolutely. And I think too, it's our students seeing themselves in these other students, and with very similar situation and seeing that they could, they could do it because the imposter syndrome, that's really real. I see our students are amazing and I see them and when they have amazing GPAs for what it is that they're doing, when they're working part-time and they're taking care of family members, and when it's their first time in college, they're trying to navigate all this stuff - and when I'm asking them, "Okay, so are you going to apply to UCs and Cal States, right?"

00:17:59 **Alana**

And they're just like, "Oh, I don't ..." They're scared about that. And so once you show them the information and say, "Hey, no, look, you already qualified for this." I mean, some of the UCs participate in what we call TAG (Transfer Admission Guarantee). And so six out of the nine, you can guarantee your admission into that school.

00:18:18 **Alana**

And so, I think our students don't necessarily know it or even take advantage of it. So, just information like that, I think it's helpful in having our students make informed choices and knowing their options. I think a lot of times they just may not realize that that option is there for them and that they can do it.

00:18:42 **Sun**

I think there's something really lovely about what you're describing that if students might not have somebody at home who has gone through the experience of applying to transfer, or like you said, going to a different part of the State, someplace they've never been to go away to school - but I feel like what you're describing is a Mt. SAC family, and that we can help each other out here in our community. And that's really just so lovely for people to have a chance to be a part of that and a part of students' stories in that way.

00:19:14 **Sun**

So, if folks are excited, I feel like it's so great to talk with you about this. I am excited about creating a more intentional transfer sending-culture. If our listeners are excited and they want to jump in and do something, do you have like a quick, easy thing they can do? And then maybe another way that they could get involved that might be a little bit more time-consuming or a little bit further off in the future.

00:19:40 **Alana**

Right. So, in trying to see ... especially we wrote the grant back before COVID hit. And so, it's been a little bit hard implementing things because things are not as visual, even if just putting the dates of October 1st through December 4th for Cal States, and November 1st through November 30th for UCs and making an announcement; a little reminder, "Hey, if you're applying and you need help, go ahead and visit the Transfer Center or visit their website."

00:20:09 **Alana**

Even something like that would definitely help because then it gets the word going, because then you'll have students that'll say, "Transfer, is that me? I don't know. I don't know if I have to transfer." And it's like, "Well, go see a counselor."

00:20:22 **Alana**

And then we are having what we call Transfer Champion trainings coming in the springtime. And those are going to be four-hour trainings where we want to do a little bit more in-depth rather than just the application themselves, and how to help students answer questions or where to go or things like that.

00:20:43 **Alana**

And then they would be deemed a transfer champion. And so, that way in their area, they could be the person that people say, "Well, I don't really know this, but let me check with our transfer champion, the answer to it." And so, that way, we have people that are supportive and informative. All around campus, I think that's how we can cover our ground when we get back onto campus. And just being willing to talk about their transfer experience in their classrooms.

00:21:13 **Sun**

Like you were saying earlier with student workers, maybe in the area.

00:21:18 **Alana**

Right, absolutely. Yeah, because in creating a transfer sending-culture, really is like everybody getting involved because students are everywhere. They're embedded everywhere on our campus. And this way, if you do have student workers, and you're in event services and you want to be a transfer champion - I know that everybody on campus, they create these bonds and this rapport with students and they truly want to help. And so, this way, it's just adding a little bit more to what you already do for your students.

00:21:49 **Sun**

Thank you so much for sharing with me and with the listeners today on the podcast. I'm really excited about our conversation and all the opportunities there are for folks to get involved or to get more involved. And we talk a lot about how our campus is so big and siloed, and we need to break down silos.

00:22:06 **Sun**

And it sounds like this project is really an opportunity for everybody in the community who wants to be involved to be involved. So, thank you for sharing with us today.

00:22:17 **Alana**

Yes, absolutely. I want to just leave maybe with like just an image in people's minds, just because I know it may feel like this seems like more work when you're trying to do something different. It feels like, "Oh, now I gotta do this and I gotta do this." It feels like more work.

00:22:36 **Alana**

But I think ultimately, once that has been done, it is easier. So, I think the image that I think of us, in our different silos, we're pulling up boulders on the Mt. SAC mountain. And this way, what we're trying to do is really like create a pulley system.

00:22:52 **Alana**

And so, yes, it's going to take some work in the beginning for all of us to come together to create that pulley system. But once it's done, it's a lot less work for us and it's just more efficient and hopefully, we can get more students up that mountain.

00:23:10 **Christina**

Thank you for listening to the Magic Mountie Podcast. Remember to subscribe on Apple Podcasts, Spotify, or wherever you like to get your podcasts, so you can listen in the car, in your office, or however, you like to listen.

00:23:24 **Christina**

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