

# Wellbeing of Missouri Transfer Students

Partners in Prevention (PIP) is a statewide coalition of 21 public and private colleges and universities in Missouri with the mission of building safe and healthy campuses. PIP tracks efforts to reduce high-risk behaviors with trend data gathered through the annual implementation of the Missouri Assessment of College Health Behaviors (MACHB) survey. By examining student stress levels, mental health concerns, and sense of belonging on campus, PIP can track the overall wellbeing of Missouri college students. This brief focuses specifically on the experiences of transfer students by utilizing a battery of questions from the 2016 and 2017 MACHB surveys.

## Overview

On the 2017 MACHB survey, around 25% of Missouri college students indicated that they transferred from a previous institution. Although a large portion (63%) transferred from a two-year institution, 37% were transferring from a four-year college. Of all Missouri students, one quarter (25%) responded that they considered leaving their current campus in the past year. There are several reasons Missouri students consider leaving their institution; lack of friends ranked highest at 39%, followed by not feeling like a member of campus (30%), lack of entertainment in town (28%), lack of money to pay for school (28%), and difficulty keeping up with academics (22%).

## Wellbeing, Mental Health & Stress

Overall, Missouri college transfer students are experiencing similar levels of stress and mental health concerns compared to the general college population. For instance, on the 2016 MACHB, 26% of students were experiencing either a considerable or great deal of stress regarding their academics, and transfer students indicated the same (26%). Further, the ratings for stress levels over the past two weeks were similar; 30% of transfer students and 28% of college students across the state responded that their stress was either overwhelming or unbearable. However, some areas of stress were higher among transfer students; for example, source of stress

from financial concern was indicated by 61% of transfer students, compared to 51% for the general population. Additionally, source of stress from a job was indicated among 46% of transfer students in comparison to 34% for students who did not transfer into their current institution.

There were also areas where transfer students ranked significantly lower. When assessing sources of stress, non-transfer students identified friends (21%), roommates (18%) and time management (52%) highest, compared to transfer students who ranked these areas lower (14%, 9%, and 48%; respectively).

According to mental health data from the 2017 MACHB, transfer students experience slightly higher rates of mental health concerns. For instance, 27% of transfer students have experienced major depression in the past year, whereas this number is slightly lower (24%) for the overall Missouri student population. A similar pattern exists for individuals experiencing anxiety in the past year; 52% of transfer students and 48% of overall students indicated this concern.

## Resources for Stress & Mental Health Concerns

Several on-campus resources were frequently utilized by Missouri college students when faced with personal concerns. For example, a large amount of students' feel comfortable reaching out to faculty

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members (24%) and this number is similar among transfer students (26%). Other common resources include academic advisors (20% among general student population, 21% transfer students) and the University Counseling Center (28% among transfer students, 31% overall Missouri students).

However, there are some resources that vary drastically among transfer students compared to other Missouri college students regarding where they go for assistance. For instance, 80% of students would

reach out to their friends with concerns; whereas this number is drastically lower among transfer students (57%). Further, 20% of transfer students indicated that they would go to 'no one' for assistance with concerns, whereas this number is lower among other students (9%).

## Summary

Transfer students comprise a sizeable number of Missouri college students (25%). Although there are some areas where transfer students differ, the data demonstrates that in many areas there is a similar level of functioning compared with non-transfer students. It is important to provide resources on campus to assist students' sense of belonging, mental health, and overall wellbeing. If your institution would like a campus-specific brief focused on transfer students, please request it at [pip.missouri.edu](http://pip.missouri.edu).

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