
THE COLONNADE

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To stay or not to stay?

With transfer rates on the rise, the question to transfer becomes a more pressing one

The days when college students spend all four years at one school to earn a bachelor's degree are coming to an end, even at Georgia College.

One-third of all college students choose to transfer to a different school at least once before earning their degrees, according to the National Student Clearinghouse. Such a statistic prompts the question: What drives the decision to transfer? The answers are often complex and range anywhere from the financial to the emotional.

The high percentage of transfers may be shocking to some, but to most college students today, they are simply part of the landscape. With the stagnant economy, record unemployment and rising college tuition rates, it's difficult for some students to attend the same school for four years.

As young adults, students are becoming concerned about the future burden of student loans. Many students try to minimize or eliminate them by completing core classes at a less expensive school, according to a Sept. 2 article in the Atlanta Journal-Constitution. The article said nearly 41,000 students transferred into a University System of Georgia college in Fall 2011, about a 25-percent increase compared to the past five years as a whole.

GC is no stranger to this reality. Former GC student, Shelby Huckeba, shared her reasons for transferring.

"The reason I decided to transfer from Georgia College was because of money," she said. "It was costing me so much money to go to school there, as well as having to pay for housing. So I decided to transfer back home to Kennesaw State University so I could go to school for free because I would be living at home and then the Hope Scholarship would cover the rest."

Shelby's comments are echoed by many students across the state, especially those who experienced life in a private college with its higher costs. One can reach a point where the trade-off between price and academic credits is simply too much. Some people look at transferring as a bad thing because of how it can potentially keep a student from completing their degree on time, especially if they lose credits in the process. However, Tim Renick, associate provost from Georgia State University, sees things differently.

"When you admit transfer students, they have taken college courses and done well. It's a better indicator than an SAT score," he told the AJC.

Though GC has its share of transferees leaving for other schools, many new faces are joining the Bobcat family.

Duncan Walters, a transfer student from the University of Mississippi, decided that GC was a better fit for him. For the most part, he is happy with his decision.

"I like the fact that at Georgia College the teachers actually know my name and I am not just my student ID number," he said. "I feel like they actually care about their students' success and help them achieve in a much better way."

Like any choice made in life, the decision to transfer between colleges has benefits and drawbacks. One may save money, gain better facilities, have access to more majors or improve on the many intangibles such as "feel" or "fit," but these must be balanced with the fact that transferring colleges can result in lost academic credits, expensive moves or elimination of one's support network of friends.