

# From the Ground Up

How Shelby Knuth has developed  
UW-Madison's Transfer Transition Program

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March 9, 2020





# From the Ground Up

The Development of the Transfer Transition Program

**S**helby Knuth is not only a Transfer Transition Coordinator for the Transfer Transition Program (TTP), she was once a transfer student herself at UW-Madison. Knuth is adamant that all transfer students should feel a sense of belonging and are a core aspect of what Knuth said “makes the Wisconsin Idea happen.”

UW-Madison transfer students come from backgrounds of varying degrees. Transfer students are more likely to be first generation college students, to come from low-income families, be international students, adults returning to college, parents and veterans Knuth explained. Knuth came from a background of being a low income, first generation college student who was never expected to attend college. Knuth’s goal is to help transfer students feel like they belong and are accepted at UW.

Before attending college, Knuth was working full time at a gas station and as a barista. She enrolled at Alverno College where she dropped out on the first day. Knuth then enrolled at her local community college, UW-Washington County.



Shelby Knuth, A UW Transfer Transition Coordinator. Photo obtained from the UW-Madison Transfer Transition Program website.

After that, Knuth transferred to UW-Madison where she worked as a transfer ambassador. At the time the program was very small so Knuth had the opportunity to build it up. After graduating, Knuth moved to Chicago where she was an AmeriCorps and worked for an education nonprofit that helped “low income first-gen students in higher ed,” Knuth said. Eventually, the position she now works for opened up.

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Knuth explained how unique the opportunity was to return to her old place of work. Explaining that it is something clearly personal and close to her heart. “I can feel when students come into my office and talk to me about the way they’re struggling, like I can feel it,” Knuth said.

Before the Transfer Transition Program existed Knuth said “I was one of the first people hired in that cohort,” speaking about being a Transfer Ambassador when she was a student.



Before the Transfer Engagement Center (TEC) was opened in the Middleton Building, transfer students had a difficult time finding and attending the events, they were not always at the same location, space would have to be rented from various places. In the fall of 2012, the Transfer Transition Program began to take off.

Before that, events were workshop driven and drew very little attendance, sometimes no one would come, sometimes twenty people would show up.

When the TEC opened, there was a designated place for transfer students. The events began to draw in more people, Knuth said that “With this space, it’s a lot easier to make community organically.” Earlier this semester, the TTP hosted a murder mystery party that drew about 60 students which is considered good attendance.

Since the Transfer Transition Program was founded in 2010, the goal has been to help transfer students feel a sense of belonging, that their diverse backgrounds are essential to campus life and are key contributors to the Wisconsin Idea. Knuth has been a key contributor to the development and success of the TTP. The job she now has and a degree from UW-Madison gave her “a quality of life I never thought I could have,” said Knuth.