

Looking Beyond the Eye: Transfer Student Narratives on Opting Out of IDS3003

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Introduction

Transfer Students represent a significant and growing population in higher education, including at Florida State University (FSU). Many transfer students enter completing coursework at another institution, often earning an Associate in Arts (A.A.) degree before transitioning to a four-year university. Unlike first-time-in-college students, transfer students typically do not participate in traditional first-year onboarding programs, which may create challenges related to social integration, navigating institutional engagement are strong predictors of student retention and academic success.

In response, universities have developed transfer-specific support programs. At FSU, IDS3003 is an optional course designed to support FCSAA transfer students by introducing campus resources and promoting academic and social integration. Despite its intended benefits, enrollment remains lower than anticipated, and little research has examined why eligible transfer students choose not to enroll. This study uses an exploratory qualitative approach to examine transfer students' perceptions of IDS 3003 and the barriers influencing their decision to opt out.

Methods

This study uses a qualitative research design to explore transfer students' perceptions of IDS3003 and the factors influencing their decision not to enroll. Participants will include Florida State University FCSAA transfer students from the Summer and Fall 2025 cohorts who were eligible for IDS3003 but chose not to enroll. Recruitment emails were sent by the research mentor to 1,603 eligible students, and participants volunteered through a convenience sampling approach. Individual semi-structured interviews will be conducted virtually via Zoom, lasting approximately 20 minutes, and participants will receive a \$20 gift card incentive. The study aims to conduct 7-10 interviews between late March and early April 2026. Interviews will be audio recorded, transcribed, and analyzed using a multi-stage thematic coding process to identify recurring themes while maintaining participant confidentiality.



Results

Data collection for this study is currently underway. Semi-structured interviews with eligible Florida State University FCSAA transfer students will begin on March 5, 2026. These interviews are designed to explore transfer students' perceptions of IDS 3003 and the factors influencing their decision not to enroll in the course.

Because interviews are currently being conducted, results are preliminary and full thematic findings are not yet available. Following data collection, interview transcripts will be analysed using a multi-stage thematic coding process to identify recurring themes across participant responses. The analysis will focus on patterns related to students' perceptions of the course, structural barriers such as scheduling or course load, and broader factors related to belonging, autonomy, and prior academic experience. Preliminary findings will provide insight into how transfer students evaluate transition support courses and why some students choose to opt out of IDS 3003.

Discussion & Future Directions

Understanding why transfer students choose not to enroll in IDS 3003 may provide important insight into how universities design transition support for transfer populations. By examining students' perceptions and the barriers influencing their decision-making, this study aims to identify ways institutions can better align support programs with the needs and expectations of transfer students. Findings from this research may help inform improvements to IDS 3003 and similar transition initiatives at Florida State University.

Because interviews are currently underway, results will be analysed following data collection using a thematic coding process. Future research may expand this work by examining transfer student experiences across additional institutions or by exploring how participation in transition courses influences long-term outcomes such as academic engagement, sense of belonging, and student retention.

References

