



**Robinson Center for Young Scholars**

**ROBINSON CENTER**  
*for* **YOUNG SCHOLARS**

**TRANSITION SCHOOL and**  
**EARLY ENTRANCE PROGRAM**  
**HANDBOOK**

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2017-2018



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## **CHAPTER ONE**

### **INTRODUCTION: TRANSITION SCHOOL AND EARLY ENTRANCE**

The Robinson Center for Young Scholars at the University of Washington offers an Early Entrance Program (EEP) for students ready for an accelerated, challenging learning experience. The program is designed to serve the needs of young students who need to learn at an accelerated and advanced pace. Students enter, usually, after 7<sup>th</sup> or 8<sup>th</sup> grade, and attend a year-long Transition School (TS) on the University of Washington campus to prepare for entrance into the University. Based on their progress during this program, the decision is then made whether to admit them into the University as full undergraduates. Early Entrance Program students bypass high school and do not receive a high school diploma.

The Robinson Center is currently housed in Guthrie Annex 2 on the UW Seattle campus. The Transition School's classes are held in the building, and once students matriculate into the University they continue to make use of the facilities (a lounge, kitchen, and outdoor area). Until an "EEPer" declares a major, their advisor is the academic counselor at the Robinson Center. In addition to TS, programming is also offered to EEP students, including a Winter Quarter UW credit-bearing course that provides resources to help students navigate the University.

The Robinson Center's mission is threefold: education, research, and service. We are devoted to the task of providing students with challenging and often accelerative learning opportunities. Our research is wide-ranging, from instructional methodology to the socio-emotional needs of adolescents. Outreach through service is ongoing, as we work to bring our programming to new populations and regions in the Puget Sound region. We are committed to diversity and can offer financial assistance to all who are in need.

This handbook is meant as a resource not only to students and families currently enrolled in our Transition School but also to all interested students who wish to learn more about the Early Entrance Program. It covers everything, from the moment a student considers application to admission into EEP. It is our hope that whatever questions you might have, this handbook will provide you with what you need to know.

## **CHAPTER TWO**

### **THE ADMISSIONS PROCESS**

#### **The Optimal Match**

Is TS the right educational path for you? Would you benefit by skipping high school? Transition School and Early Entrance is a path, not a prize; it is important to match students to the program in terms of what that they want and can achieve at this point in their life. Most students look forward to some, if not all, aspects of high school, and have no interest in accelerating to college after 7<sup>th</sup> or 8<sup>th</sup> grade. But for some students, TS presents an attractive option that will provide them with a learning environment in which they will thrive. How does one know whether a student would benefit from Transition School and Early Entrance?

Students who benefit from Transition School and Early Entrance have most, if not all, of these qualities and skills in place:

- Self-motivation: the student eagerly seeks out learning opportunities and challenges.
- Achievement: strong ACT scores indicate the preparation needed to succeed in TS.
- Intellectual curiosity: the student has a range of scholarly interests and passions.
- Executive function: the student does well in any academic setting, manages time well, and is self-directed.
- Organizational skills: while these may not be fully developed at such a young age, the student should have some of these skills in place and awareness of what they still need to work on.
- Need: the student is under-challenged in their current learning environment.
- Maturity: the student is able to see “the big picture,” has some understanding of what the University entails, has goals, and can articulate these in a clear way.
- Stress: the student may experience stress from time to time but has strategies to cope with stress.

Students need to think very carefully about what kind of learning environment they seek. Transition School and the University of Washington share high expectations of their students. Students must be responsible for their own learning, be active learners, and collaborative peers. Although there is a strong support system (including advisors), students need to be able to make difficult decisions about their coursework and their academic career at a very early age. Once students enter the University, their grades are part of a permanent record and often determine what major they can choose. Parents, under FERPA legislation, are not allowed to access students' grades without the permission of the student. All of this requires a level of commitment and independence that is uncommon for students so young.

For students who are ready and interested, Transition School and Early Entrance have much to offer. TS combines high academic expectations with intensive support for a small class of up to 18 students. The curriculum is fast-paced and in-depth, and classroom teaching emphasizes discussion over lecture. The faculty members are experts in their fields, with advanced degrees and years of teaching experience. We also emphasize collaborative learning; it is vital to the success of these students that they develop a community amongst themselves and work together throughout the year. Once admitted into the University, they have available to them all of the resources of the University, from undergraduate research opportunities to travel abroad programs and more. A key to their success there will be the community they forged in Transition School.

### **Admissions Criteria**

In addition to these more general qualities and skills, a candidate for Transition School should meet the following criteria in order to be eligible for consideration:

- Recent ACT scores in the 85<sup>th</sup> percentile or above in English, Math and Reading
- Two years of grade transcripts that show a consistent level of excellence
- A birthdate that indicates the student will not yet be 15 as of September 1, 2018. (Students who miss this date by less than three months will be considered and wait-listed.)
- U.S. citizenship or permanent resident status

Students with these additional qualifications tend to perform better in Transition School and the University:

- Completion of 8<sup>th</sup> grade
- Completion of Algebra 2/Trig (this can be completed over the summer before classes begin)

These latter qualifications are not absolutes. We certainly do admit students who are ready after completing 7<sup>th</sup> grade, but more commonly we ask applicants to wait and re-interview. We do not encourage students under the age of 13 to apply to TS.

### **ADMISSIONS TIMELINE AND CHECKLIST**

For more information, see our website and go to the Transition School application instructions. Here, we provide a synopsis of the process.

We encourage families to schedule the ACT as soon as possible. Most applicants take the ACT in early December in order to have their scores back in time to apply, but test dates in January or February are not uncommon. For those who are unable to take the National ACT, the University of Washington's Office of Assessment offers the I-ACT for an additional charge, but with a more flexible schedule, and that is also accepted by our Admissions Committee. This testing service can be contacted at (206) 543-1171.

Requesting Early Decision: If in addition to Transition School, students are also applying to schools that require substantial non-refundable deposits before our usual Admissions notification in June, they might want to consider requesting Early Decision. With Early Decision, the application needs to be complete by early February (see our website for current dates and deadlines); if the application meets the criteria both for Early Decision and for admissions qualifications, we will schedule an interview and expedite the application process. It is important to keep in mind that we use somewhat different criteria for Early Decision; without a complete applicant pool against which to assess a student, the admissions committee must be confident and unanimous as to the applicant's readiness. If we decide against Early Decision, the applicant is returned to the regular pool of candidates to be considered again in June.

**Checklist for initial application:**

- Completed application, submitted online via our website
- Non-refundable \$75.00 deposit
- Uploaded copies of report cards/transcripts for the past two years
- ACT or I-ACT scores
- Two completed on-line teacher recommendations submitted online

**After notification of qualification for interview:**

- We may request conversational recommendations from one or more of the applicant's current teachers (via phone calls with Principal of Transition School, one from math/science, the other humanities/social science)
- School visit with student and family interview

**Visit/Interview**

Applicants and their guardians/parents visit the Transition School for an entire school day. They sit in on all of the TS classes, visit with the students, eat lunch in the classroom, and talk with the teachers between classes. They visit the Robinson Center student lounge and, if time, explore the UW campus. Often visitors tell us afterward how surprising it was to them, to see that the TSers were not "robot children" sitting neatly in rows, working constantly. They get to see our students hard at work in class, of course, but they also witness the camaraderie and fun that happens between classes and after school. This is all part of learning about TS. We ask that guardians/parents attend too because the experience of TS affects the whole family. They are free to ask the students any and all questions. After school, the applicant and the parents/guardians will be interviewed by the TS Admissions Committee. Part of the interview will be with the family as a whole; part of it with just the applicant; and part with just the guardians/parents. The entire interview takes approximately 45-60 minutes. This is an important part of how we get to know the applicant and family, and thus it is critical that the applicant not worry so much about preparation but simply answer the questions as honestly as possible.

### **Financial Aid**

The Robinson Center is committed to making sure that every student who is accepted into our program is able to come, regardless of financial status. We have a robust and growing scholarship fund. Families who would like to apply for financial aid must apply at the time of acceptance into the program. This requires that a FAFSA be completed and sent to the University of Washington's Office of Financial Aid, with a copy sent to the Robinson Center. If a family is eligible for the Federal Free/Reduced Lunch Program, they do not need to submit a FAFSA but can submit their most recent tax return instead. A financial aid committee that includes the Director and Robinson Center staff, in consultation with the UW financial aid office, determines need and award for each student.

### **Wait-List Status**

The class size of Transition School is limited. More qualified applicants apply than can be accepted. This does mean that, given a strong applicant pool, not all qualified applicants may be given a seat in the class. Some applicants are thus placed on a wait-list, to be notified should a spot open. This is most likely to happen by the end of June; after that, it is very unlikely that a spot will become available.

### **Deferment**

Students who apply who are young enough to apply again in subsequent years are usually encouraged to apply again, if they are not initially accepted. Sometimes, however, a candidate is strong enough that the TS Admissions Committee might offer that student a deferment. This would mean that the student, while not accepted for the upcoming year, is accepted for the NEXT year, if grades remain strong. The candidate would not have to re-apply or go through the application and interview process again. Instead, the family would simply have to notify us of their initial acceptance of the deferment and then confirm during the next admissions cycle.

### **Summer Stretch**

Sometimes we accept students even when one of their ACT subtests does not quite meet our requirement of the 85<sup>th</sup> percentile, or when they have not taken Algebra 2. In this situation, we will often require the student to take a course in the Robinson Center's Summer Stretch program, to develop those skills and acquire that knowledge that will make students more successful in TS. Sometimes students are given full admittance into TS but still required to take a Summer Stretch course; sometimes they are simply encouraged to take a Summer Stretch course; and sometimes their admission into TS is provisional, in that a final admissions decision won't be made until after the successful completion of the Summer Stretch course. These courses are intensive five-week classes that are at a very high level and intensity, and are excellent preparation for TS. If a student is prevented from taking a class because of scheduling conflicts, the parents need to confer with the TS Principal as to how to fulfill the requirement, via other programs. Provisional candidates *must* take the required Summer Stretch class.

## **Appeals**

If a student has not been accepted into the program and would like to appeal that decision, he/she has two weeks to submit an appeal, uploaded via their Robinson Center account. This should consist of a letter written by the student and signed by both student and parents, along with any additional documentation to support the appeal. This letter should address the grounds for appeal. The Admissions Committee will then consult with the Dean of Undergraduate Academic Affairs to review the appeal; a decision will be made within two weeks of receipt of the appeal. Once that has been completed, there is no further course of appeal.

## **GOALS OF THE ADMISSIONS PROCESS**

The entire admissions process is one of information-gathering, both on the part of the Admissions Committee and the family and student. We are all engaged in determining whether TS would be of benefit to the student or not. Transition School is a unique learning environment that can be delightful, creative, and transformative, but which is also very demanding. Students meet with difficult material that requires discipline to master, and while the subject matter is very interesting, the workload can be challenging. Not only that, but after completing Transition School successfully, students move into the University of Washington as full undergraduates. There, they will have to be able to navigate the complicated landscape of college coursework. Although they will have the assistance of our advising staff and the support of their peers, as well as the preparation that TS has given them, they will nevertheless need to take responsibility for their decisions and the coursework they complete will go on their permanent college record. It is important then for parents not only to visualize their students in the cozy “one-room schoolhouse” of Transition School, but ultimately in the rather large world of the University before committing to the program.

This is not to discourage students from applying; the application process itself is an information-gathering exercise, on both sides. Visit, ask questions, explore, and consider all the options.

## **CHAPTER THREE**

### **FALL ORIENTATION: PREPARING FOR TRANSITION SCHOOL**

What happens next, after the offer is accepted? There is, of course, the inevitable paperwork to be completed, but in addition to that the summer is often a period during which new TSers do some preliminary work to better prepare them for the rigors of TS. Depending on the particular student's needs, this can range from no requirements at all to actually taking an Algebra 2 course or a course in American Literature. We look at each student's record and test scores to evaluate the degree to which that student needs to prepare over the summer.

Towards the end of summer (early September), we send out a roster of the class, so that the new TSers can get in touch with each other and get to know each other before classes begin. Mid-month, there are opportunities to get together, such as the TS/EEP Welcome Picnic and, of course, TS Orientation, which culminates in an overnight trip for the students to Camp Huston. In the first case, we help students prepare academically to be ready for the TS experience; in the second, it's all about building the cohort, to provide the students with the scholarly community they will need to succeed both in TS and at the UW.

#### **Paperwork**

Once a TSer has signed on, we ask that several forms be completed and returned to the Robinson Center. These include:

- General information form
- Permission to treat medically in case of emergency
- Field trip permission
- Media/photo permission
- Measles immunization
- Vaccination record
- Hall Health (UW Student Health Center) forms relating to treatment and financial obligation

It is also important, if your new TSer was in the public school system, to notify your local public school that he/she will not be attending in the fall.

### **Kickoff: TS-EEP Parent Welcome Picnic**

In early September, sometime after Labor Day, we hold a welcome picnic for TS students and their families. It's a great opportunity to meet other new parents, veteran parents, and members of the Robinson Center staff, in a congenial, relaxed setting. Students get to know each other and to meet students who went through the program and who are now EEPers. While not a requirement, it is greatly encouraged that all new TSers attend!

### **EDS Drama Days**

The Robinson Center EEP and UW Academy students run their own drama society and have been putting on an annual play since 1992. This is a completely student-run organization. While TSers are not allowed to participate in the production of the play during their TS year, they ARE encouraged to attend Drama Days (held in early September, before classes begin), which is two days of activities, fun and socializing led by EDS. It's a great way to meet students in the program. The central activity is choosing a play and director for the new production.

### **EEP Mentors**

One of the most important keys to our students' success is the close connection between new and veteran students. EEP students are very interested in the progress of the TS class and eagerly volunteer to help with all activities, from the Orientation's tour of campus to giving helpful advice about college registration. We now have an established EEP Mentor organization which connects individual TS students with EEPers of similar interests and goals. The purpose of this organization is to help our new students build a relationship not only with the community of the Robinson Center but also with the University of Washington. They can seek help from their mentors for any number of concerns, from social to academic. There are a number of mentor activities planned throughout the year to foster these important connections.

### **TS Orientation**

The week before classes begin, we hold an orientation for TSers and their parents to give the TSers and their parents the information they need to move forward into Fall Quarter. Most of our activities revolve around simply getting to know the Robinson Center, the UW campus, and each other. A schedule for this is sent out in early September. Included are a tour of campus (led by EEPers), a tour of the UW library, a parent roundtable discussion, and a meeting with the Principal and Director of the Robinson Center. At the roundtable, TS parents are introduced to their "mentor" EEP parents, to provide perspective and advice throughout the TS year. All parents and students are required to attend.

### **Camp Huston**

The overnight trip to Camp Huston is an important component of TS Orientation. All TSers go on this trip; in addition, the TS TAs, first-year EEPers, and numerous RC staff (including some TS faculty) go on this trip. Camp Huston is at Wallace Falls, near Gold Bar, with excellent facilities for our group. There are boys' and girls' dorms, a cafeteria, a recreation room, and many trails. At the camp, students are allowed a good amount of unstructured time to allow them to get to know each other and to explore the camp. In addition, we hold an evening "fireside chat" so that the EEPers can share with the TSers their own hard-won wisdom. The second day is a hike to the top of the falls. All students are expected to make the hike, unless they have medical conditions that would preclude this.

A key goal of Orientation is to begin the process of building the cohort and also to bring the TSers into the larger community of the Robinson Center. The presence of older EEP students on the Camp Huston trip allows for the informal mentoring and sharing that will smooth the transition of these younger students into the Robinson Center community. As well, the new students get to know members of the faculty and staff in an environment outside the classroom. By the end of the trip, everybody is ready for the year to begin.



## CHAPTER FOUR

### TRANSITION SCHOOL CURRICULUM

The curriculum of Transition School has been developed with several related goals in mind. First and foremost, we are preparing our students to be successful undergraduate students at the University of Washington. This mandates not only a curriculum rich in content (from American literature to the history of early modern Europe, and beyond), but one that addresses the scholarly skills students will need to make the most of their University experience. Our students enter the University prepared to be thoughtful about their courses, passionate about their subjects, and thorough in their approach to their work. They are collegial, collaborative and engaged. They have learned how to close-read a text, analyze an essay, apply a concept, take good notes, meet their deadlines, and tackle a research project. They can write a lab report, give a presentation, and work in groups effectively. They know to go to a professor for help, to attend review sessions, and to sit in the front of the room and not the back.

The workload for our TS classes is substantial. This is because the students have so much ground to cover, in both content and skill acquisition, before they can be successful at the University. On average, there is one hour of homework daily for each class, but this will fluctuate depending on the nature of the assignments. Students generally find it a struggle to complete their work in a timely way Fall Quarter, but by Winter Quarter have established the kind of work habits and organizational strategies that help them to make progress through the material.

Our curriculum is not intended to replace the standard high school curriculum, nor does it bear much resemblance to AP or IB coursework. Our intention is to prepare our students to be strong scholars at the University, and so our coursework is shaped around what we see as the key ingredients to college scholarship:

- Completion of Precalculus with good understanding of mathematical principles
- Experience in a “lab science,” with preparation of lab reports
- Understanding of the scientific method
- Experience in the methodology of social science/humanities
- Acquisition of strong research skills
- Development of strong writing skills
- Experience with reading challenging texts and with textual analysis
- Experience with working in a collegial, collaborative scholarly environment

In the Fall, students begin the year with four classes. These are: English, History, Biology, and Precalculus. These courses continue through Winter Quarter. In the Spring, there is no Biology; instead, the students take a UW course of their choosing. As part of TS History in Spring Quarter, students will add a 20-hour service-learning commitment. A description of these core TS classes follows:

**English:** The TS English course is designed to introduce students to college-level writing and literary analysis. Fall Quarter is primarily devoted to writing skills; students draft, revise and complete essays. They learn how to provide productive peer critiques, how to respond to feedback, and how to work collegially with their fellow students both in class discussion and on projects. Students learn key aspects of writing, from developing a line of inquiry to incorporating evidence usefully. A major focus is to develop an awareness of writing across disciplines. During Winter and Spring quarters, students are introduced to college-level literary texts and work on their analytic skills, culminating in a substantial research paper Spring Quarter. The specific texts change from year to year but the focus in the Spring is on American literature.

**History:** The TS history course topics may vary from year to year, but the basic skills are the same: to understand and be able to implement analytical strategies in the reading of historical documents, to be able to construct a research paper with appropriate use of evidence, and to learn to access the “conversation” within historical debates. Students will gain a solid background in U.S. History. In the spring quarter, with an emphasis on current social/economic history, students will commit to twenty hours of service-learning in the Seattle community; this experience will be interwoven into their spring quarter curriculum (see below).

**Biology:** TS Biology, which runs during Fall and Winter quarters, introduces students to the main concepts of biology, with a focus on understanding the relationships between ideas and processes occurring across vastly different physical and temporal scales. The course is designed to mirror the nature of science as an active and ongoing process. Students perform laboratory investigations, design experiments, and collect, analyze, and create appropriate graphical representations of data. There is also an emphasis on the importance of scientific communication. Students learn to read and evaluate current primary literature in biology, and practice communicating the results of their own investigations through laboratory reports and oral presentations.

**Precalculus:** The Precalculus course runs for all three quarters. Students cover thoroughly and with depth the Precalculus curriculum and beyond. This course can be highly differentiated, because students in our program often have extremely various mathematical backgrounds. We use an on-line program, ALEKS, to provide students with the opportunity to work intensively on problem areas. There is substantial writing in this course, along with frequent student presentations and opportunities for collaborative work. Homework is substantial, because it is through practice that students learn the concepts. *If an incoming student has already had Precalculus, we evaluate on a case-by-case basis as to whether that student should be enrolled in a more advanced UW math course instead of the TS Precalculus course.*

**Service-Learning:** In collaboration with the University of Washington’s Carlson Center, Transition School includes a service-learning component during Spring Quarter. This experiential learning opportunity is also linked with the Transition School’s History course. During Winter Quarter, students sign up to be a volunteer, with several sites to choose from. They may also find their own site, with the approval of the TS Principal. Students participate in a range of activities. The purpose of this experience is threefold: to encourage students to “give back” to those less

fortunate; to help students understand the world outside themselves; and to give them opportunities to reflect on issues such as poverty, environmentalism, education and economics. We are careful to find sites that are amenable to minors, and students always are supervised at their sites. During Spring Quarter, students will bring their experiences into the TS classroom via the History class, both in discussion and in writing assignments. This will provide opportunities for students to share with each other insights about their service-learning.

**Tutorial:** Tutorials include self-reflective assignments that must be turned in on a weekly basis. Tutorials provide an opportunity for each student to meet with a faculty member weekly, for 30 minutes, to discuss topics generated by the journal assignments. Tutorial schedules are established at the start of each quarter. Topics discussed in tutorial might include time organization, note-taking, study habits, struggles in particular classes, and much more. Tutorial assignments are not graded in any way, but they provide an opportunity for students to write on particular topics and discuss those topics with a faculty member. The ability and habit of reflecting upon one's own learning is essential to becoming a scholar. Journals include, usually, a reflections journal; a study skills journal; and a "response" journal (in which they respond to another student's journal from a previous week). Students should plan to reserve at least one hour weekly to writing their tutorial journals. Tutorials continue throughout the academic year.

**Physical Fitness:** Although Transition School is very much a full-time job, with a substantial work load outside of class time, it is important that our students stay active. We encourage students to include daily exercise (whether it be a walk to a nearby park or biking to campus, or a weekly karate class---the main thing is to be active). In addition, there is a TS fitness class for an hour each week Fall and Winter terms, in which students play games and try out different sports activities. This is meant not only as an opportunity to get some much-needed exercise but also as a chance for the TSers to get to know each other in a setting other than the classroom.

### **Conclusion**

The Transition School curriculum is dynamic, and is constantly evolving to engage the students on every level. It is an ongoing conversation between student and teacher, and between the Transition School and the University. As such, although the core values remain the same, the texts, lectures, discussions and assignments vary. Our syllabi may be found on the Robinson Center website, and provide something of a window on the learning that goes on at TS; however these are but small artifacts of a much larger and richer experience.

## **CHAPTER FIVE**

### **PROGRESS AND ASSESSMENT**

#### **Goals and Standards**

It is the explicit goal of Transition School to prepare our students for success at the University of Washington. We ask our students to become self-motivated, independent, engaged scholars who will make the most of their University experience. Our unique grading system is designed to reflect this goal. We provide a narrative and two grades for each Transition School class, twice quarterly. One assessment is purely academic, having to do with mastery of the subject matter; the other has to do with the very essential acquisition of scholarly skills that will make possible a successful and positive experience at the University of Washington. Obviously these two assessments overlap in some ways, and often there is a strong correlation between the two. Nonetheless we feel it is important, in order that the student understand as much as possible about his/her progress, to provide both in our twice-quarterly student progress reports.

#### **Grading System for Academic Work**

- 4**– Exemplary work, over and beyond expectations
- 3**– Satisfactory work, making good progress towards college-level work
- 2**– Frequently unsatisfactory work; student is not making expected progress towards college-level work (placement on Focus or Probation might be recommended)
- 1**– Work is unsatisfactory and incomplete; intervention required.

#### **Academic Expectations**

- Mastery of subject matter as demonstrated in written and oral work for class
- Effective mobilization of analytic skills
- Ability to apply conceptual understanding to new problems and situations

#### **Grading System for Scholarly Skills**

This formula has to do with frequency. We look at how often a student is demonstrating the skills necessary to become a strong University student. We realize this is a gradual process and that students adopt these habits of mind and behaviors inconsistently until they are finally so internalized that they become core ingredients in the student's process.

***Often*** – Student actively demonstrates the skills necessary to becoming a strong university student often and with consistency

***Sometimes*** – Student is beginning to adopt these skills and is able to demonstrate them from time to time but is not consistent.

*Rarely*– Student is not demonstrating many of the key skills necessary to doing well at the university

### **Scholarly Skills Expectations**

While being aware that some of these skills may be implemented more in some classes than others, all are representative of the student’s engagement with the learning process and are essential to academic success at the University.

We expect our students to

- Be active and engaged in class discussion and activities
- Be on time for all classes and scheduled workshops, prepared for work
- Be responsive to suggestions for improvement
- Take responsibility for learning: meeting with faculty and TAs, asking for help, asking questions in class, bringing questions to meetings with faculty and TAs.
- Be an effective communicator: responding quickly to emails from faculty, staff and TAs.
- Be a member of the community: collaborating, when appropriate, with other students
- Turn in all work on time, including all tutorial assignments
- Have strategies in place to organize work (for example, a planner)
- Take opportunities to revise and improve work
- Take notes on material covered in class
- Be an active participant in tutorial

### **Conclusion**

Transition School progress reports are intended as, most simply, a way to communicate clearly and directly to students and their guardians how the student is progressing through TS and towards the University. The goal is not to label the student in any way but rather to provide help in moving the student toward college-level work. It is our hope that the narrative portion of the progress report is read with even more attention than the “shorthand” assessments that are provided at the end.

At the end of the year, the progress reports are retained in the student’s file. If there is a subsequent request for a student’s transcript by any school, scholarship committee, or other entity, this is provided with the permission to release the records from parents or guardians. This grade transcript does not contain the narratives but only the academic-work grade, and is accompanied by a thorough explanation of the grading procedures of Transition School. If necessary, we can also provide the twice-quarterly progress reports, but most commonly the final transcript is sufficient.

## CHAPTER SIX

### INTERVENTION AND DISMISSAL

The Transition School has an established set of policies and procedures for student discipline and dismissal. These procedures are based on the State of Washington mandated requirements for public schools and, to a lesser extent, on the Student Code of the University of Washington. It is important that all students and their guardians become familiar with these procedures. The goal of the Transition School is to provide a safe and positive learning environment for its students, and to make certain that each student who enters Transition School is given every opportunity to succeed. If in the unlikely event the student's actions or academic performance do not meet the standards of the program, the following procedures are to be followed:

#### Academic Concerns

Academic concerns include but are not limited to the following:

- An inability to keep up with the expected pace of learning as shown by low scores on tests, homework and projects, resulting in a "2" or lower on progress reports for any class.
- Lack of engagement with and/or responsibility for the learning process as indicated by frequent skipped or late assignments, a failure to take initiative in seeking assistance, missing scheduled appointments with Transition School staff, or other indicators of a lack of effort on the part of the student, resulting in a poor Scholarly Skills evaluation ("rarely" demonstrating these skills).
- Academic dishonesty evidenced by one or more instances of plagiarism (See the University of Washington's Student Code; also the Undergraduate Academic Affairs description of and disciplinary process for plagiarism: <http://www.washington.edu/uaa/advising/help/academichonesty.php#top>) ---also any other form of academic dishonesty including cheating on exams, copying other students' work, etc. *Please note that because plagiarism is an actionable offense at the University, the usual process of Focus/Probation might be abbreviated if the student commits plagiarism after the first offense/warning.*

#### Interventions for Academic Concerns:

1. **STUDENT MEETING WITH FACULTY:** One or more faculty member(s) will meet with the student to encourage them to address the issue of academic progress. At this stage, guardians will not be involved; it is very important that at this initial stage students take responsibility for their learning process. These discussions with the faculty may take place during tutorial meetings or other scheduled appointments and there will be follow-up on

the part of the faculty member, as well as consultation with the rest of the TS faculty and the Principal. As one outcome of this step, the TS faculty member(s) will give specific suggestions for improvement and set deadlines, with the student's input, within which the expected changes should take place. The student might be asked to regularly meet with the instructor and/or the teaching assistant for the course(s).

2. **FOCUS PERIOD:** If, after this initial process, the student does not meet stated improvement goals in the agreed-upon time period, the Principal will discuss the student's progress with the faculty. At this time, we will all agree upon a plan for improvement, indices of progress, and a time limit (usually 4-5 weeks). This plan might include, for example, required meetings with faculty and/or TAs, submission of drafts of work, strict adherence to due dates, and improved scores on tests and/or homework. We will also put these decisions into writing, resulting in a letter for the guardians and student will be placed in the student's Transition School file. The principal will have an individual meeting with the student to go over the terms of Focus. This is a period during which we hope, with even more attention from the faculty, staff and guardians, the student will be able to make suitable progress in Transition School. *Focus is meant not as a punitive measure but rather as an opportunity for more help and additional resources for the struggling student.*

There may be times when a student has made some progress towards the agreed-upon goals but insufficient progress in terms of the expectations of "Focus." In that case, the faculty and Principal may decide to simply extend "Focus" and possibly add or subtract some requirements depending on areas in which the student continues to need our help. In this situation, a new meeting would not be necessary but the Principal would (1) meet with the student to go over the new "Focus" requirements and (2) send a letter home to the guardians of the student, placing this letter in the student's Transition School file.

3. **PROBATION:** If upon completion of the agreed-upon time period the student has not fulfilled the requirements made of them in "Focus," the student is usually moved to Probation. The principal will meet with the faculty to agree upon requirements, goals, and schedule. These requirements might include more frequent meetings with faculty and teaching assistants, submission of drafts for papers or other homework, meeting all deadlines, and/or achievement of scores indicative of a good understanding of the material on tests and papers. Again, a letter outlining all of this will be sent to the student and their guardians, and placed in the student's Transition School file. The principal will meet with the student to go over the terms of probation. Often, there will be a meeting between the principal, parents and student. If a student does not fulfill these requirements described in discussions and the resulting letter, and barring any other mitigating circumstances, the student will be asked to leave Transition School.

Dismissal decisions may be appealed. The appeal process is initiated by writing a letter to the Robinson Center Appeals Committee.

### **Non-Academic Concerns: Behavior**

Non-academic concerns include (but are not limited) to the following:

- Actions endangering others (staff, students, visitors)
- Actions endangering oneself
- Any and all speech or actions that harass others on the basis of gender, race, religion, sexual orientation, socio-economic background, or disability
- Refusal to follow directions given by staff

If a student is found to have engaged in any of the actions or behavior listed above, the Transition School staff will take the following steps:

1. The student will meet with the Principal of Transition School, at which point the student will have an opportunity to explain his/her actions, after which they will be given suggestions for behavioral changes. At this point, the student's guardian(s) may or may not be called, depending on the severity of the behavior. Depending on the severity of the behavior, the University of Washington's Safe Campus unit might be notified.
2. If the situation merits it, we would take the further step of notifying guardians, including them in the conversation with the student, as well as the Director of the Robinson Center.
3. If the situation involves the safety of other students or staff, the Principal might require the student to be suspended from classes for an agreed-upon time period, during which the student's guardians will seek out and obtain the help deemed necessary for the student. This time period shall not initially exceed ten days, as mandated by RCW 28A.600.015, during which time guardians have the right to appeal the suspension. This appeal should be in the form of a letter and should be directed to the Appeals Committee of the Robinson Center for a final decision.
4. If there is no improvement in the student's behavior and actions, the student can be dismissed from the program. Guardians have the right to appeal this decision as per RCW 28A.600.015 by submitting a letter to the Robinson Center Appeals Committee.
5. Any illegal behavior that would constitute dismissal from the University of Washington according to the University's Student Code (<http://apps.leg.wa.gov/WAC/default.aspx?cite=478-120>) will result in immediate dismissal from the program. Dismissal decisions may be appealed. The appeal process is initiated by writing a letter to the Robinson Center Appeals Committee.

It is extremely important for all Transition School students to know that they must report any harassment or endangerment in order for the Robinson Center staff to take action. Often staff members do not witness the offending behavior. The reporting student should first speak with a Transition School faculty member or the Principal. Faculty will protect the anonymity of the reporter as much as is possible (sometimes this is not possible). Students may also contact authorities outside the Robinson Center if they feel that necessary.

### **Emotional Health**

Transition School can be a very stressful as well as an exhilarating and positive experience for students. Occasionally, previous emotional or mental conditions can resurface in the midst of such stress. The Robinson Center staff is very attuned to the needs of this population and we will do everything we can to mitigate the stress and also promote the emotional health of our students. It is important, therefore, for guardians to share with us any pre-existing health or psychological diagnosis. We will then be able to provide the student with the appropriate help (which might include counseling referral) early on and work together with the family to address the student's social, emotional and academic needs.

Since this is a situation that often does not fit within the parameters of Focus or Probation, it requires its own highly individualized process. Although each situation might be different, the critical ingredients are as follows:

- Open and clear communication between TS Faculty and TS family
- Clearly delineated interventions and deadlines
- If necessary, counseling referral
- Final decision by Principal, TS faculty, and Director
- Appeal, if desired, to Robinson Center Appeals Committee

Sometimes mental health issues are sufficiently severe to preclude academic progress. In this situation, it is in the best interest of the student to leave Transition School and return to a learning environment in which they can be successful. This decision is only made after the agreed-upon interventions have not led to the student's academic success and emotional well-being.

### **Matriculation into the University of Washington**

The decision to send a Transition School student forward as a fully matriculated student at the University of Washington is made once the final grades are in after the completion of spring quarter. The Transition School faculty meets as a body, with the Principal, in consultation with the Director of the Robinson Center, to make these decisions. The RC staff recommends Transition students for admission into the university if the student has demonstrated the motivation and ability to thrive and excel as a fully matriculated college student. A student's current academic status and their performance in the spring quarter University course are the most significant factors in the decision. There is, as with all of our decisions, an appeals process, with an Appeals Committee.

No matter at what point during the Transition School year that a student might leave the program, whether voluntarily or involuntarily, the Robinson Center staff will offer to help in arranging for a more appropriate educational placement. The student's guardians are expected to have in place an Alternative Educational Placement Plan (filed with the principal at the beginning of fall term) that they can implement once the student leaves the program. This means researching and connecting with other schools in the Seattle area, being familiar with admissions requirements and deadlines, and having serious family discussions about "what if." We know this can be hard, given the level of commitment and dedication required in TS, but it is important.

Also, at the end of the school year when the Transition School Faculty meets to serve as the Admissions arm for the University of Washington in regard to Transition School students, we reserve the right to make the decision we feel is best for the student at that time. Again, an appeal is possible through the Robinson Center Appeals Committee, but it is our hope that, given a year of open communication and clear expectations, we can all be in agreement as to the appropriate placement of every student.

### **Conclusion**

It is important to remember that all of these steps are in place in order to help the student succeed in Transition School. We know that Transition School needs to be a demanding and intensive academic experience in order to prepare these students to be independent and responsible scholars at the University of Washington. The faculty and staff of the Robinson Center are all devoted to helping students transform and grow from middle school to college students. The overwhelming majority of students in our Transition School program go on to be very strong students at the University of Washington. A certain percentage of those students were placed on Focus and/or Probation during their Transition School year, and found it a helpful process by which to "turn things around" and make excellent progress towards the University. These steps are not meant to be punitive but are rather fully intended to provide a structure of supports for our students. And while this process is entirely confidential, it is also meant to be, within the particular set of individuals involved, transparent and straightforward.

## **CHAPTER SEVEN**

### **LEARNING OUTSIDE THE TS CLASSROOM**

Although much of the academic year is spent within the confines of the Transition School classroom, as the year progresses we introduce our students to the larger world of the University of Washington and the Puget Sound region. During Winter Quarter, our EEP advising staff holds regular “Pre-EEP workshops,” which are meant to introduce TSers to the resources available to them at the UW, as well as to provide them with information about registration, financial aid, and other basic “how-to” facts. Then, during Spring Quarter, students take a 5-credit UW undergraduate course, so that we can get an idea of how they will do as future full-time undergraduates. Finally, we include 20 hours of service-learning during Spring Quarter which encourages students to explore and reflect on the world around them.

#### **Pre-EEP Workshops**

The University of Washington is a large institution with what can seem like a confusing array of programs, policies and opportunities. To navigate this complicated world, the EEP advising staff has prepared a series of workshops for the TSers. These workshops meet weekly, after class, during Winter Quarter (the exact schedule is announced towards the end of Fall Quarter). Topics include: registration procedures and tips; financial aid; the Honors Program; student health and counseling programs; study abroad opportunities; and others. In one session, the advisor works with the students to fill out their applications for UW admission; in another, the topic is CADRs and what that means for course choices in the freshman year. This is a good opportunity for students to ask questions about what’s ahead and to begin to visualize themselves as University students. Parents are invited to both the Honors session and the session on financial aid.

#### **University Courses During Winter and Spring Quarter**

Math 124: Occasionally students enter TS who are advanced beyond the Transition School’s Precalculus class. Usually all students take the TS math course during Fall Quarter; sometimes TS students might be advanced into UW math courses in the Fall. More commonly, if a student can demonstrate readiness and if they are doing well in all of the other TS courses, then the TS Faculty may decide to allow the student to move ahead into Math 124 Calculus or higher at the University for Winter Quarter. Parents are responsible for the tuition for this course. We make this decision sufficiently early so that the student has time to register in advance, but even so it is sometimes difficult, at a very crowded University, to gain access to this class. Sometimes it is not until well into the first week of classes Winter Quarter that a student can find a slot. It is important to remember too that sometimes the TS faculty will ask that the student remain in TS Precalculus if the student is struggling in one or more TS classes. While it is our goal to challenge every student and allow students to move swiftly through the material, we also have as part of our mission that we help our students become well-rounded scholars who will be successful in all of their coursework at the University.

Spring Quarter University Class: We ask all of our TS students to take a University undergraduate course during Spring Quarter. This is meant as a means by which we can determine readiness, in part, for the University. Tuition is paid by the parent. We provide students with a list of “recommended” courses, “see advisor before registering” courses and “off-limits” courses. Our main criteria here is that the course represent a relatively typical undergraduate survey course that includes regular reading assignments and exams. We do not allow students to take courses that prioritize rote memorization (language classes) or technical skill in which they are likely to have some background (introductory computer science courses). We also do not allow students to take courses with labs because of the time commitment. Courses range from “Introduction to Psychology” to “History of Modern American Film” to courses in Atmospheric Sciences or Political Science. We “check in” with students on a regular basis and ask about grades so that we can help them problem-solve and complete the course with success. Another goal of taking a University class is to inspire our students, to allow them to catch a glimpse of what is ahead once they graduate from Transition School. We encourage them to find a class that truly interests them. At the end of the term, we include the University grade as one of the items we consider when making the decision to move a student into the Early Entrance Program and the University.

Service-Learning: Although some Transition School students have been involved with community service or even service-learning before, most students at this age have not. We feel it is very important that our students reach out into the community to both learn from others but also to give to others in ways that are meaningful and valuable. We arrange our service-learning via the University’s Carlson Center for Experiential Learning, which coordinates most service-learning opportunities that occur on campus. The Carlson Center, in consultation with the Transition School Principal, develops a list of possible sites; students choose the one that best suits their interests. If a student has a site in mind that does not appear on our list, he/she may certainly make arrangements to work at that site as long as permission is granted by the TS Principal. In the past, our most popular service-learning sites have included: tutoring at various grade schools in the area; maintaining parks with Earth Corps; and working in area food banks, including the University Food Bank. Students are asked to complete 20 hours of service over the course of Spring Quarter (approximately two hours per week).

The essential component of the service-learning program is the learning. Opportunities to prepare, reflect, and share about their service-learning experience is provided via the TS History course. Beginning in Winter Quarter, students start grappling with issues that will come front-and-center as they embark upon their chosen activity Spring Quarter. Classroom discussions and assignments will revolve around service-learning to help students place their experience within the larger context of ethical concerns.

### **Conclusion**

Throughout all of these experiences—the pre-EEP workshops, the University coursework, and the service in the community—Tsers begin to see themselves not simply as students in TS but as members of a much larger community. And just as we ask our students to take responsibility for each other and for the class itself in Transition School, we expect them to seek out and take responsibility in the larger communities of the University and the Puget Sound region.

## **CHAPTER EIGHT**

### **THE ROBINSON CENTER COMMUNITY**

The Robinson Center houses several programs in addition to Transition School/Early Entrance. There is the UW Academy, an early entrance program for students after 10th grade; the Saturday Program, for K-8 grades; the Summer Program for 5th-10th graders, and our Interlake High School Humanities program. All of our programs have a common mission, which is to provide challenging learning opportunities within a strong peer network of motivated, interested students. This can make for a very crowded building: not only do we have some of these programs running simultaneously, meaning lots of kids are coming and going out of our building, but we also have staff to serve all these populations. There are also many visitors who come to the Center over the course of the year. It is very important to us that we create and maintain a climate for all of these people that is supportive, positive and inclusive.

Every fall, the RC community meets and reviews our Operational Rules, which provide an easy reference to a basic code of conduct. While the staff was the initiator of these rules, the entire community can contribute and comment on them. They address everything from kitchen cleanliness to rules about listening to music. We want to keep the RC an enjoyable place to hang out but also a place where everyone can feel comfortable; this means keeping up with the dishwasher and picking up stray papers and wrappers off the floor once in a while. And while the RC can be a social place, it is also a place of work and academics, which is why we have restrictions about entertainments such as computer gaming.

#### **Building Hours and Use**

Students are welcome at the Robinson Center from 8 a.m. until 4:30 p.m. weekdays. If students arrive earlier than 8:00 AM, they are welcome to wait on the front porch until the office staff arrives. We have kitchen facilities (microwave, fridge, stove) available for student use; also, our college students make use of the RC Lounge. During the academic year, it is a rule of the RC that the TS classroom is only for TSers, TAs and staff between 8:00 and 3:30; after that time, other students may visit the classroom. The RC Lounge is not available for TSers until 3:30 pm. This rule is to allow each group to have its space, and to provide valuable quiet study space to the TSers. All have access to the kitchen and to the side-yards for socializing with each other.

There are times during the year, when the University is not in session, that the RC is “closed to students.” This is to allow for basic maintenance of the building.

#### **Storage Facilities at the RC**

TSers are each assigned a mailbox and a storage cubby at the start of the year. They are expected to keep their space clean.

Older students in the RC Lounge have access as well to mailboxes and cubbies on demand.

### **Computers at the RC**

The TS classroom has a number of computers available to the TS students. These are ONLY for academic pursuits. Students are welcome to bring their own computers to campus if they wish, but they are responsible for keeping these items secure and safe.

We strongly encourage TS families to have conversations with their students about computer use and gaming. The TS academic year is very intense, the workload very heavy; students who game more than a couple hours a week are, in our experience, taking grave risks with their academic work. The staff strives to be aware of problems in this area but we cannot ultimately be responsible for a student's choices. Students may not play computer games prior to 3:30 PM at the Robinson Center. At that time, if they have their own computers, they may use them for entertainment. The RC computers in the classroom are off-limits to gaming at all times.

### **The Kitchen**

One of the advantages of our building is the presence of a kitchen, which students may use. We do ask that students use good judgment in cleaning up after themselves. Used dishes must go into the dishwasher or be washed by hand; they may not be left in the sink for others to wash. Food items must be removed from the refrigerator if past their pull-date. If the kitchen is not kept clean, it will be closed to students.

### **Special Activities**

We encourage TSers to come together and organize activities that can be a fun break from their studies. Sometimes students will bring in a DVD to show in the classroom on Friday afternoons, or they might organize a Baking Day activity in the kitchen. The rule here is to be sure to complete an event request and get permission for the activity from a senior member of the RC staff: the Director, Associate Director, or Academic Advisor. This permission must be granted one week in advance, at least, of the planned activity.

### **A Community Based on Respect**

Finally, it is important to recognize that we must all be respectful and considerate of each other at the Robinson Center. Absolutely no bullying, hate-speech, or other forms of disrespectful behavior will be tolerated. All members of the RC are complicit in this: if you witness such an act you must be responsible and take action. Always notify any staff member. Everyone should feel welcome, supported, and included in our community.

Part of what makes the Robinson Center community such a positive place is that there is an acknowledgment and acceptance of individuality alongside that sense of community. We believe that the only way to keep a community strong is to know that it is the sum of its parts. All students who enter the RC should feel safe, valued, respected and accepted.

## **CHAPTER NINE**

### **HELPING YOUR TSER (*FOR PARENTS ONLY*)**

Transition School is a transition for students, certainly, but in some ways it is even more a transition for parents. The all-encompassing enterprise that is TS can transform family life, if only for nine months. This can be good (a student who is happy in their work) but also hard on parents and siblings. Often the greatest stress for parents is trying to figure out what their role should be during this TS year. Here are some things to think about as you navigate this very exciting, challenging, extraordinary year.

#### **An Environment for Studying**

One of the most important keys to success in TS is having a good work-space at home. This need not be totally cut off from family, but it should be relatively quiet, with adequate space so that the TSer can organize his/her work. Siblings should be able to respect the student's privacy and need to concentrate. Ideally this should be a private room. Don't be surprised if your TSer disappears behind the closed door for hours on end.

#### **Meals and Sleep**

This is a vital role for parents: making sure your TSer is eating properly and is able to join the family for the dinner hour. TSers often feel they need to be studying at all times; they should be encouraged to take breaks and step away from work, knowing that such a break will help them do better work afterwards (along with other benefits, of course). Often TSers struggle with sleep; organizational deficits and other problems can keep them from finishing their work in a timely manner (especially Fall Quarter) and so they may insist on staying up quite late. It is, of course, very important for them to get their sleep, so when this becomes an issue:

- Suggest they get up a little earlier in the morning to finish the work (if feasible)
- Recommend that they turn in incomplete work but then they need to meet with their instructor to strategize re future assignments and organization
- Encourage a pre-sleep regimen (even as little as fifteen minutes) of light reading and relaxing before lights out

### **When the Work Gets Hard**

It is often tempting to try to help when a student is struggling, by working with them on assignments. We are trying to help our students become independent, responsible University students, and so we encourage you to NOT work with a student on an assignment or try to manage their schedule. Instead,

- Engage your TSer in a general conversation about the topic to help them think through their own ideas
- Offer to read assignments but only for clarity (“I don’t understand this—could you say a bit more here about what you mean?”)
- Encourage your TSer to seek out their TA and their instructor for help

### **Computer Use at Home**

While you may not want or be prepared to monitor your TSer’s moment-to-moment use of the computer, it is definitely important to have a conversation about appropriate computer use. We often encounter TS students who misuse the computer in a number of ways. They sometimes use it to procrastinate (chatting with friends, surfing the web, especially gaming addictively) or multi-task with the mistaken idea that they can do equally good work on three different projects, while maintaining a steady chat conversation, all at the same time. We advocate the use of programs that shut students out of the Internet for periods of time to prevent these kinds of problems. If your TSer isn’t willing to sign on to this, try a short-term experiment of a week. Usually students realize that they actually do better work faster when they are not doing five things at once on the computer.

It is also important to know, however, that our students do communicate with each other, and provide valuable help on assignments, via the internet. We encourage collaboration and mutual support. Thus it is important to talk with your TSer about the difference between briefly helping another student understand a difficult problem and chatting about various topics for an hour while neglecting one’s own work.

### **Communication**

In addition to encouraging the TSer to communicate with TS instructors and TAs, you too can certainly communicate with us. You may contact any TS instructor, or the TS Principal, at any time to address any concerns you might have. It is also important to share with us any concerns you have about your TS student’s stress level. In addition, there will be regular, organized opportunities to discuss your child’s progress throughout the year.

We hold mid-quarter parent-teacher conferences Fall and Winter Quarter, and in addition the TS Principal hosts a parent coffee during the third week of Fall Quarter. Written progress reports from each instructor are sent home at mid-quarter and at the end of each quarter.

The parent roster is an opportunity for you to connect with other TS parents. This can be a huge help!

### **Gifts and Tokens of Appreciation**

It is the policy of the Robinson Center that staff not accept gifts from Transition School families. The only exception to this is if the gift is homemade (cookies, jam, etc.). We understand how much families want to show their appreciation of our staff, but we ask that that appreciation be expressed by a general donation to the Robinson Center rather than through individual gifts.

### **Conclusion**

Transition School is a unique experience that every TSers will remember for the rest of their lives. The students will form life-long bonds with many of their fellow students, and begin a scholarly journey that will last long after TS is over. By the time they complete their year of Transition School, students not only possess a rich understanding of core academic subjects but the scholarly skills necessary to move forward and make the most of university-level coursework. They come to know themselves very well, and to have confidence in their skills and abilities. They become useful and valued members of both the Robinson Center community and the world around it. It is our privilege and delight to work with these students and their families.