

## **Campus Transitions and the New College Student Experience: Book One of the New College Student Experience Series**

By Dr. Kent D. Beeler

*Indianapolis, Indiana: University of Indianapolis Press, 1998.*

Reviewed by

**Marty Takimoto**

A recent addition to the growing library of ‘how to do college’ publications is Kent D. Beeler’s, *Campus Transitions & the New College Student Experience: Book One of the New College Student Experience Series*. This pocket-sized booklet presents general overviews of personal and academic transitions for college freshmen with the underlying purpose of helping them to understand ahead of time what they might expect and, armed with this knowledge, to have a more successful collegiate experience.

In part one of his book, Beeler provides a general overview of the changing demographics of college student populations. Unfortunately, he does not go beyond describing these changes as he examines transitional issues. He does not, for example, address ways in which individual student experiences may be different due to one’s race, ethnicity, gender, or cultural background. Also in part one, Beeler examines eight developmental passages which occur during young adulthood and discusses the transition issues which likely occur as a result. Citing student development theory, Beeler lists benchmark tasks such as:

- Developing a value system;
- Handling personal freedom; and
- Establishing a personal identity.

In analyzing these eight developmental objectives, Beeler accurately identifies what (ironically) may be problematic in marketing this publication to young adults matriculating to college. He states, “To [young adults], the future allows plenty of time to do and see everything and to be anything.” The college tee shirt slogan, “Why do today what you can put off until tomorrow?” is ominous when considering whether or not young adults would use this booklet as they go off to college. Beeler highlights the fact that college orientation staffs often witness new college students with their “wait until later” attitudes come face to face with parents who want them to progress through college on a more expeditious timeline.

After discussing the eight developmental tasks of young adults, Beeler examines transitional passages unique to young adults in college environments. Many of his

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“campus passages” form a fundamental basis for orientation program design and content, as well as for first year orientation courses. He cites, for example, that resolving physical separation from home, competing in a new environment, and selecting a major field of study are key transitional issues.

In the second half of part one of *Campus Transitions & the New College Experience*, Beeler examines the academic transitions associated with the experience of new college students and their parents. Once again, the author’s approach is to examine the transitional experience of new students in the classroom based upon predictable behavior. The learning patterns identified deal with “what a student knows” and “when does he/she know it?” Beeler examines a student’s increased awareness and competency as he or she learns, struggles, and grows in the classroom through the first year of college. For example, initial challenges students face when starting fall term classes may be more focused on their previous academic preparation (or lack thereof) in high school. As new students progress through the first year, new challenges evolve as they become more familiar with college teaching and the expectations of faculty, and as they learn to become critical thinkers.

In part two of *Campus Transitions & the New College Student Experience*, Beeler takes readers chronologically through the first year of a new student’s college experience. He seems to accurately understand that students do progress at different levels and at different times throughout the first year. He discusses the issues involved during the first year beginning in the summer before college, when soon-to-be college students already face personal change and transition as they move from the celebratory end of high school to the excitement and anxiety of starting college. As he discusses the year, the reader is exposed to the ups and downs of new student social and academic experiences. Beeler concludes his discussion of the year with a review of student issues that may arise during the summer after the first year of college and before the beginning of the sophomore year.

*Campus Transitions & the New College Student Experience* is somewhat general to be considered an outstanding publication. However, its quick-read, easily digestible format would be appropriate and helpful for high school counselors, parents of new college students, college or university student transition staff, and especially students working as orientation leaders. Beeler’s book provides a general introduction to issues and challenges related to the experiences of new students and, as such, may be useful as one source of information for institutions developing or expanding orientation or transitional programming.