“Transfer Shock” refers to the academic and social disorientation experienced by students following a transfer from one institution to another. This is different than a “freshman year experience” in that most transfer students have already learned to navigate undergraduate life and feel comfortable with it. The adjustment derives from expectations and assumptions from a previous school that might not hold true at the new institution.

All of a sudden there is a need to learn about a new and different environment, new and different policies and academic expectations, and even a new and different “language” among students. This can result in frequent judgments and comparisons with prior experiences, which sometimes delay the acclimation process. A student may question whether transferring was the correct decision and reassess academic and professional goals based on new opportunities.

Transfer shock usually materializes in the middle of the semester. Transfer students may feel “behind the curve.” Likewise, transfer students may experience a temporary dip in grade point average during the first semester or two at a new school.

Fortunately, Transfer Shock is temporary and there are things you can do to keep transfer shock to a minimum.

- Acknowledge that some time is needed in order to feel completely comfortable in your new environment
- Be tolerant with yourself during this transition
- Introduce yourself to other students, staff, and faculty
- Engage in activities; projects; sports
- Explore the institution to learn more about available resources and services; learn how to navigate your new environment
- As your GPA does not transfer with you, be diligent about your academic responsibilities
- Ask for help!

~Information adapted from The New School; Idaho State University; Kansas State University