

Student Spotlight

Transfer Student Success Stories.

Courtney Lutz has an ASOT-Business degree from Portland Community College and is working toward a BS in Business Management and Leadership with a minor in Film Studies from Portland State University.

Q: Tell us about your transfer pathway. What was challenging, and what was helpful?

A: I was born and raised in Oregon. In 2015, I graduated from McNary High School, in Keizer. Then I got a two-year scholarship to community college, where I stayed for about two years. At that time, I really didn't know what I was doing or what I wanted to do with my life. So, I took a variety of classes, but I really wasn't ready for school and as a result, I took 4-5 years off to explore my options. In 2020, I decided to return to school—right at the start of the pandemic. This time, I went to Portland Community College (PCC). Two years later, I had a degree—an ASOT-Business, which I completed online. Then last fall I transferred to Portland State University (PSU), to pursue my dream of becoming part of the film industry by completing a BS in Business Management and Leadership, with a Minor in Film Studies.

COVID started about the same time that I decided to return to school. I really struggled with online school during the pandemic, especially since I had been away from the classroom for several years. In addition to having to remember how to “do college,” I had to learn how to “do school” completely online. Back in 2015, when I was last in college, the idea of online classes was novel—it existed, but few colleges had many online classes. I think less than 25% of professors taught online. Attending all my classes online made for a rough start, but eventually I got the hang of it. In person classes are more my speed, that's for sure.

I think a lot of students were thrown into the deep end of the pool when the pandemic started, just like me. One of the things I missed the most was the social aspect of being in the classroom and on campus with other people. While doing school online, I spent a lot of time alone in my room. I was isolated, even though I was taking classes. I wasn't meeting people or getting to know anyone, which was really hard. There was such a social disconnect because I was *in class* but I was *alone*. Now I'm at PSU—in person—and within the first couple of weeks in fall term, I was in study groups and making friends in class. Being able to connect with other students makes all the difference. Online, it was hard to actually connect with other students because you were just sitting at home watching a professor on a computer screen. I spent a lot of time alone, sitting on the couch, “doing school.” It was hard to keep motivated.

The transfer process from PCC to PSU went pretty smoothly. PCC has worked to streamline the transfer process, with lots of resources that helped me understand how my credits would transfer and which courses I needed to take. The only thing I would change is to meet with an advisor at PSU *while* I was still going to PCC because they could have helped me see how things were going to transfer before I actually enrolled. I didn't think about it at the time, but I think that would have been helpful. I thought I had completed all my 100 and 200 level classes at PCC, but after I transferred, I found out there were still a few classes I needed to take. I was able to take them at PSU, so it all worked out in the end.

My advisor at PCC was great, but all my advising took place over Zoom. At PSU, my advisor used Degree Audit to help me track my progress, but I'm not sure if my advisor at PCC did that. I did go to a PSU application workshop that was held at PCC, when I was getting ready to graduate and because of that, PSU waived my application fee, which was really nice. It was also held in person which was great because things were just opening back up again, on campus. I also think it would have been helpful to have had PSU visit while I was still at PCC, for an orientation or something.

At PSU, I was able to get the Transfers Finish Free scholarship, but I had to search for it. I stumbled on the webpage by accident. I think more students would be eligible for it if there was better outreach. Several of my friends who also transferred had never heard of it. I think most transfer students qualify for it, but I think they need to start in the fall and must attend full time. I would have liked to start classes in the summer, but by waiting

until fall, I was able to get the scholarship, which covered my tuition up to 15 credits. I have to cover other fees, but the scholarship really helps. Getting that scholarship helped all of the pieces fall into place for me. I still work, but only 18-20 hours a week which leaves a lot more time to focus on my education.

Yesterday I submitted an application to travel abroad to Italy this summer, to study cinema. PSU has some pretty extensive study abroad programs for all different majors. Through my program, I'll travel around Italy to see places and landmarks from some famous films, while learning about the film industry. PSU also offers scholarships for study abroad, which you can apply for at the same time as your program application.

When I graduate, I'll start looking for jobs in southern California, to be nearer to the center of the film industry. I'm not exactly sure how I'm going to use my business degree, but I love to travel and think it would be cool to be a location scout. I'm looking forward to learning more about the options available to me.