

Supporting Transitions: How Samford University Welcomed BSC Transfer Students

By: Ashley Armstrong

After 165 years, Birmingham-Southern College (BSC) announced its closure on March 26, 2024, leaving the community grappling with uncertainty and change. For students determined to continue their education and pursue their degrees, the question of where they would go next was a major decision. Just seven miles down the road, word of the closure quickly reached the administration of Samford University.

Samford's Initial Response

On March 29, 2024, Samford University released a statement: "The Samford University community is saddened by news of the closure of Birmingham-Southern College. We deeply empathize with the leadership, trustees, and entire Birmingham-Southern family in this incredibly difficult situation. Samford stands ready to assist the impacted students who seek to continue their academic pursuits."

Personal Stories of Transition

For Anna Morgan Shelton, a former BSC student, the closure marked the start of a challenging new chapter in her higher education journey. She described her initial reaction to the announcement as "Denial. It felt like coping with the loss of someone close to you. I didn't believe it, and I didn't have much time to process because I was playing in a softball game about an hour later. Then, I felt both upset and angry, and that lasted for quite a while."

Pictured: Former BSC student Anna Morgan reflecting on her initial reaction to the closure of BSC and its impact on her future.



Support from Samford's Administration

Dana Basinger, Assistant Dean of the Howard College of Arts and Sciences, played a key role in helping students transition academically and culturally to Samford University. Basinger provided data on the university's growth from transfer students, particularly from BSC. "Approximately 150 students have transferred from BSC, with a substantial number entering the Brock School of Business," Basinger shared.

Langston Strawbridge's Leadership

Basinger also shared how, in her meeting with BSC transfer student Langston Strawbridge, she recognized how he clearly articulated the feelings of BSC students entering a new chapter at Samford. Langston's communication and leadership skills were quickly recognized by Samford University President Beck Taylor, who appointed him as a representative for the BSC transfer students. Langston shared, "With the help of President Taylor and Dr. Basinger, I was able to create the BSC Student Advisory Council. This committee serves as a representative organization on behalf of all BSC transfers at Samford University. I created this organization because I wanted to establish a way to help my fellow BSC transfers transition into our new world at Samford."

Why Samford?

Langston Strawbridge, a senior transfer from BSC, was able to clearly articulate why he and many others chose Samford for the final chapter of his undergraduate education. He explained, “I chose Samford because, as a student at BSC, I fell in love with the personal learning environment, and I knew Samford offered a similar experience. I wanted to transfer to a place where I could stand out as an individual, rather than just being another face in the crowd.”

Samford’s Supportive Learning Environment

Samford Transfer & International Coordinator Jodi Powell, who works primarily with transfer students in the admissions office, echoed Langston Strawbridge’s sentiments, emphasizing the population and learning environment that attracted many BSC students. “Samford matched the size and culture that these students were used to, in a way that was comforting to both the individuals and their families.” She also highlighted the financial efforts Samford made to ensure the transfer process was as accessible and seamless as possible. “The Samford administration generously assisted students, with a promise to honor the credits and awards granted by Birmingham-Southern,” Powell said.

The Impact on Student-Athletes



The closure of BSC not only disrupted the education of many students but also impacted a thriving community of athletes. Montse Jasso, a student-athlete on the BSC soccer team, reflected on how the community within the athletics department had a profound influence on her time at the college. She shared, “My time there—especially as an athlete—was more than just about sports; it was about the community, the bonds, and the memories made.” For many like Jasso, leaving BSC meant parting ways with their athletic journey. Though that decision was difficult, she recognized that Samford’s strong academic reputation presented an opportunity worth pursuing. “Samford also has the same high academic standing and is located in the same city. When choosing to go to Samford, I had to decide between continuing to play soccer or retiring. But when it came time to choose a new path, Samford felt like where I needed to be.”

Pictured: Montse Jasso, a BSC Transfer Student-Athlete, reflects on the impact of the closure of BSC on her academic and athletic journey.

Adapting to Samford’s Larger Population

The biggest challenge students faced in adapting to Samford after transferring from BSC was the difference in population size. BSC's student population was approximately 975, while Samford University has a student body of around 5,700. Nicole Ramirez shared, “The population and size of the school are significantly larger than BSC, so that was definitely an adjustment. It’s a different group of people too, which was tough at first, but it got better once I found my group.” It’s also important to recognize Samford University’s Christian affiliation, which plays a large role in the culture of the university. For new students, the culture can initially feel strict due to certain standards, but with time, finding a supportive community at Samford is possible.

The Emergence of New Opportunities

Although the closure of BSC has deeply affected many, it also marked the beginning of new opportunities. The large influx of BSC transfer students highlighted the need for a dedicated resource to support them on Samford's campus. Langston Strawbridge, founder and representative of the BSC Student Advisory Council, has since expanded this resource to include all transfer students. He created the "Bulldog Bridge," which he explained, "The 'Bulldog Bridge' will serve as a transfer organization for all transfer students at Samford University. I created this organization because I believe the transfer population at Samford is underserved, and I strive to help others with similar experiences to mine."



Pictured: Anna Morgan and Montse Jasso, now current students at Samford University, sharing the challenges and joys of their life as students today.

Recognizing the loss of BSC and the stories of students continuing their education at Samford University is a narrative worth telling. The impact of this transition has prompted the university to create new initiatives to support all transfer students, which is worth noting.

While transitions bring challenges and uncertainties, Samford's support for this group has been inspiring. The resilience of these students, in turn, has become a source of inspiration for the entire Samford community.