

Transfer Connections: Welcoming New Transfer Students

by

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ABSTRACT

Focus has turned to the experiences of new transfer students in four-year institutions partially because of the mandate from President Obama for there to be more college graduates. Though transfer students are familiar with being college students, they still may not be accustomed to their new four-year institutions. At the time of this action research study, there were a very limited number of events to welcome new transfer students to the Arizona State University (ASU) Tempe campus. The purpose of this study was to create knowledge about the transition process of new transfer students to the Tempe campus. I worked with current transfer students to design a welcome event called Transfer Connections. By using a mixed methods design guided by retention and transition theories, a pre- and post-survey, individual interviews, and a focus group, I sought to answer questions about their transition process. In order to answer my research questions, this included exploring whether or not Transfer Connections had an influence on the success strategies they used, the type of support they gained, and their levels of feeling like they mattered. Since this was an action research study, I also explored my role as both a researcher and a practitioner. Results showed students did not learn specific success strategies, though they did learn about resources specific to ASU. The students also gained a level of support through the connections they made with other students. These connections influenced how the students felt they mattered to both ASU and other students. Future iterations of Transfer Connections will include more opportunities for new transfer students to develop connections.

This dissertation is dedicated to my two rays of Sunshine – Dave and Anderson. I would not have been able to fulfill this dream without you.

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Introduction and Context

In the competitive market for tuition dollars that defines higher education's landscape, retaining students from one year to the next becomes paramount as retention rates are used as a marker for whether "universities' educational efforts have been successful" (Copeland & Levesque-Bristol, 2010, p. 2). Adding to this discussion is President Obama's challenge "that by 2020 America would once again have the highest proportion of college graduates in the world" ("Higher Education," n.d.). Reaching this goal requires a broader base of students from a variety of backgrounds, ages, and educational experiences. For some students, this will mean graduating from a community college and joining the workforce, while for others it will mean continuing on to a four-year institution.

According to the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES), in the fall of 2013, there were approximately 4.5 million part-time and 2.9 million full-time students enrolled in community colleges across the country. Students at the community colleges made up 46% of all undergraduates enrolled (Ginder, Kelly-Reid, & Mann, 2014). The National Student Clearinghouse (2012) tracked U.S. transfer students from 2005 to 2012. Of these, 60% graduated with their bachelor's degrees in four years. Based on further disaggregation, students who transferred to a four-year institution after receiving their associate's degree went on to graduate in four years with their bachelor's degrees at a rate of 71%. To meet the growing industry demands for post-secondary degrees, an increase in the number of transfer students to four-year schools is expected to occur.

The Arizona Board of Regents (ABOR) has established the expectation that the three state public universities will increase their transfer student populations from the

Arizona community colleges in order to assist in meeting President Obama's national goal. In the 2012-2013 academic year, there were approximately 10,000 students who transferred from Arizona community colleges to one of the three four-year institutions. The goal is for that number to increase to 13,429 by the 2019-2020 academic year. Arizona State University (ASU) had 6,051 in 2012-2013 and the goal is to be at 6,629 by 2019-2020. Goals have also been set for the number of Arizona community college transfer students who obtain a bachelor's degree from one of the three four-year institutions. In 2012-2013, ASU had 4,391 graduates and the goal is to have 5,685 graduates by 2019-2020 (Arizona Board of Regents, n.d.). Based on these goals, new opportunities to increase transfer students' four year graduation success rates are needed.

The Council for the Advancement of Standards (CAS) in Higher Education published an updated version of their standards in 2012. The CAS Standards provide recommendations for institutions of higher education regarding the types of services which should be available to students. It includes specific information about not only the types of services but also how the offices providing these services should be staffed and budgeted. New from the 2009 edition is a section on *Transfer Student Programs and Services* (Mitsifer, 2012). As has been stated earlier, the continual increase in the number of students transferring between institutions and the renewed focus on retention and graduation rates have led to a focus on special programs for transfer students. The CAS standards represent suggestions, rather than mandates, for higher education institutions to implement as a way to better serve the needs of transfer students. CAS recommends the goal of transfer student programs be more intentional about assisting

students with every phase of their transition process. An example of the type of program CAS recommends includes the Transfer Connections program I designed.

Local Context

I work for ASU in the University Academic Success Programs (UASP) department that serves the five Phoenix campuses: Downtown Phoenix, Polytechnic, Tempe, Thunderbird, and West. Our department reports to the Office of the University Provost through University College. In a broad sense, UASP provides academic support in a variety of forms to ASU's students, including subject area tutoring, writing tutoring, supplemental instruction, and academic mentoring. As one of the associate directors, I supervise the full-time staff overseeing our services and am responsible for our student retention and transition programs. I am specifically responsible for programs that involve academically underprepared students, students who are on academic probation, and any other student population in need of extra academic support. In this role, I have full control over the design and implementation of UASP-sponsored support programs for these groups of students but not the courses they take.

It is not unusual for the Office of the University Provost or individual colleges to come to UASP to brainstorm ways to increase student retention. Current university initiatives often dictate the focus of our programs. To meet the goals of these initiatives, our department has a culture that embraces innovations which helps us to creatively develop programs to work with students. This often puts us on the cutting edge of program development on campus. Recently, UASP learned there are not many ASU initiatives in place for transfer students, regardless of what institution they transfer

from, and consequently has been charged with creating new programs to aid in their transition.

Transfer Students

ASU has expanded its partnerships with the community colleges throughout Arizona by working with ASU's Academic Partnerships Office. These partnerships continue to ease the transition of Arizona community college students to the four-year institution in terms of their articulation process. The articulation process involves the transfer of credits from the community college and the evaluation of whether or not those credits match courses at the four-year institution. The articulation process for transferring to ASU continues to improve, but there are other factors involved in the transition process outside of the transferring of credits.

In order to learn more about other factors besides the transferring of credits that impact the transfer student population at ASU, I conducted a series of individual interviews as well as a focus group and distributed a survey to students who were new to ASU in fall 2013 or spring 2014 and who were taking courses part-time in spring 2014, thus being in either their first or second semester at ASU. These students were a combination of in-state and out-of-state transfer students. One of the common themes was students' feelings about being on their own without institutional support during their transition process:

- "Since I started last fall I have been trying to figure this out all by myself."
- "Especially when you first come here, you don't know who to ask."

- “As transfer students we are thrown into ASU and not really given any sort of guidance like freshmen are.”

When asked about how connected they felt, 67 of the 101 respondents (66.3%) said they disagreed or strongly disagreed that there are staff on campus who they feel know them. Of the 101 respondents, 58 (58%) said they disagreed or strongly disagreed that they felt connected to other students on campus. This led me to research what more UASP could do to help connect new transfer students from all types of institutions to staff and other students at ASU.

Purpose of Study and Research Questions

Though transfer students have experiences with higher education, they are still first-time students at the university to which they transfer. Therefore, they need similar initial services and attention as traditional students. In this context, traditional students are those who attend college the fall after graduating from high school, even if they have college credit from some source. Transfer students would be those students who come to the university after having taken at least one semester at another institution and are not recent high school graduates. Based on the knowledge gained during previous action research cycles about new Tempe campus transfer students' need for more connection to the university, I designed a transition program with the assistance of current transfer students at ASU's Tempe campus. Currently, New Student Orientation for transfer students is available online, where students do not have any opportunities to interact with other students, and in person. There are limited programs for them during fall welcome, which is the university's week-long set of programs mainly designed for incoming traditional freshmen who come to college directly from high school. The

transition program I initially piloted in fall 2014 is called Transfer Connections and occurs during fall welcome and serves as a supplement to orientation activities targeted at new transfer students who are coming to the Tempe campus. The purpose of this study was to explore the impact that attending the Transfer Connections transition program during fall welcome 2015 had on new transfer students to the Tempe campus. At the time of initially proposing this study, the focus was going to be on comparing part-time and full-time transfer students who were taking classes at ASU. During the course of the study, this focus changed and the goal became to create new knowledge about the transfer student transition experience on the Tempe campus regardless of students' academic backgrounds, ages, in-state or out-of-state status, or number of credit hours. My research questions were as follows:

- 1) How and in what ways does attending Transfer Connections influence the transition processes of new transfer students to the Tempe campus, in particular the strategies they use for success and the support they have to be successful?
- 2) How and in what ways does Transfer Connections influence the transfer students' feelings of mattering?
- 3) How and in what ways do I, the researcher, apply the lessons learned during the research process to my role as a practitioner?

In the course of working with new transfer students, I began as an insider at the university but as an outsider to the transfer students themselves. To the students, I was a representative of the university. However, having worked collaboratively with transfer students over the last several semesters, I gained a level of insider status with the

students themselves. As described by Herr and Anderson (2015), I am an insider who was studying my own setting. As I was an active participant in the context, this dissertation research project is considered action research and not a traditional program evaluation.

A Review of Literature

Exploring the specific characteristics of transfer students has been the focus of many studies consistent with the view that new transfer students are first-time students to their incoming institutions. Issues found by researchers studying their own institutions include transfer students learning about academic standards and expectations, institutional policies, classroom expectations, and adjusting to class size (Duggan & Pickering, 2008; Grites, 2013; Lester, Brown Leonard, & Mathias, 2013; Townsend & Wilson, 2006). Transfer Connections sought to address many of these issues. Researchers have stressed the importance of an institution studying its own transfer students in order to understand their particular needs and to plan a response. This section will explore several research studies which have been conducted at individual institutions to study both transfer students and programs designed to assist them in their transition.

Grites (2013) explained how often assumptions are made about transfer students both by the institution and the students themselves. Transfer students may often isolate themselves and be afraid to ask questions when they do not see other transfer students on campus. This may be due to their desire to not appear inferior to other students. Faculty and administrators often assume that, since transfer students have already been to at least one institution, they must have the academic skills and knowledge about

higher education necessary for success at a four-year institution. These assumptions do not take into account the policies and procedures which may be different from one institution to another, thus potentially influencing student success at the new institution. All of these concerns connect to campus climate and if students feel they matter. If new transfer students do not feel like the campus environment is one where they can ask questions, they may feel like their experiences which make them unique from traditional first-time freshmen do not matter to the institution. Tailoring orientations, transitional programming, and success courses to meet transfer students' needs are all examples of suggestions for aiding in their success and in helping them to feel that they matter to the institution.

Townsend and Wilson (2006) gained understanding of the factors affecting academic and social integration through interviews with 19 transfer students who moved from a small community college to a large university geared toward traditional first-time students. Individual fit is based on each student's expectations and needs, which makes the transition process different for each student. A common theme was the students' wish for greater support during the initial time of their transition. Learning communities for commuter students, advising, and orientations were examples of programs that could provide opportunities for both the social and academic integration that was needed and desired by the transfer students. The researchers stressed the importance of providing support and not assuming that transfer students come in with the experience necessary to be successful.

Mayhew, Stipeck, and Dorrow (2011) found that transfer students who were mostly full-time students at their large public university achieved more effective

academic integration but not social integration by attending an orientation program. The academic integration offered by the orientation program included opportunities to attend workshops about study skills, time management, and adjusting to different academic expectations. The orientation program outlined in their research study was mandatory and unique for transfer students only. One recommendation from Mayhew et al. (2011) was to schedule opportunities for transfer students to interact with traditional students for part of the orientation to gain opportunities for increased social integration with other students.

The role of an orientation program in aiding in students' transitions was also highlighted by Marling and Jacobs (2011). They noted that each institution has its own definition of what an orientation entails. Their study outlined key elements for aiding in the transition process of transfer students through orientation programs. This included the role that peers and faculty can play. Including faculty in transfer student programming is one way for an institution to demonstrate the value it places on transfer students. Providing opportunities for transfer students to interact with peers already at the institution provides a safe way for the new students to ask questions and to feel they are not alone in their experience. The authors emphasized the importance of each individual institution coming to understand both its specific transfer student population and the campus culture toward transfer students in order to better design programs for this group.

Professionals at Slippery Rock University (SRU) took an integrated approach to working with transfer students. They created a Transfer Transitions Team that combined the elements of recruitment, enrollment/advising, and student peers. In

working with transfer students on their campus, they learned the main source of information come from students' peer networks. The peer network teams provided support at the community college and at the four-year institution. The student peers were trained by different offices on campus to better equip them to answer the questions of transfer students through all phases of their transition process (Lagnese, Riggs, & Panger, 2014). In creating such a program, SRU demonstrated how much they value transfer students.

For this research project the Transfer Connections program was designed to serve as a supplement to the orientation program already offered at ASU by providing an additional means for Tempe campus transfer students to learn about academic policies and procedures and to create a means for connecting to each other. Under ASU's current orientation model, new transfer students were exposed to policies, procedures, and resources available to them, but they missed the social interaction with other students. Their experience was also not personalized to address any special academic concerns they may have had. Through Transfer Connections they were able to attend workshops on topics to increase their academic integration to campus like how to use My ASU and Blackboard, two of ASU's technology tools, and additional campus resources. Social integration happened during breakout sessions, conversations during lunch, and from the peer student panel. Providing opportunities for both academic and social integration was one way to address transfer students' need for tools and information to support their academic and social success at ASU.

Theoretical Framework

Action research guided how I learned about the influence of my Transfer Connections innovation on new transfer students to the Tempe campus. This was done through the theoretical lenses of retention and transition theories. Retention and transition theories each describe components of how the university and students work together. Action research provides the framework for how the retention and transition theories blend for this research. Cochran-Smith and Lytle (2009) describe the dialectic as the process which involves the “symbiotic relationships of research and practice, analysis and action, inquiry and experience, theorizing and doing, conceptual and empirical scholarship, and being researchers as well as practitioners” (p. 43). This section explains action research, retention and transition theories, and how they were applied together within the action research model.

Action Research

Action research informs practice because it is about creating new knowledge and making change within a specific context through a cyclical process (Mills, 2014; Plano Clark & Creswell, 2010). It is authoritative and persuasive because researchers inform their own practices in contexts where they are the experts. The findings of action research are relevant to the researchers’ problems because they are applied in their own settings. Specifically action research provides a way to look at local problems and develop solutions unique to the setting (Mills, 2014). In this case, the local context was ASU, the institution where I work, and I developed an innovation to assist the students who transfer to that institution. While informing the practice itself, this research project also created new knowledge about the setting. This new knowledge can be used to

further inform practice and to implement changes in practice to benefit all individuals in my context (Herr & Anderson, 2015). What I learned during this study will inform future programs to improve the transfer student experience at ASU.

The action research process is reflective. It provides an opportunity for the researcher-practitioner to review current practices and reflect on processes in order to develop new plans for going forward (McNiff, 2008; Plano Clark & Creswell, 2010; Riel, 2010). In this way, action research is a dynamic process. The innovation that applies to one area has the potential to create larger societal change (McNiff, 2008) and results in reflective moments for the researcher. This reflection is collaborative in nature because the reflection is not done in isolation but in collaboration with research participants and colleagues. The researchers' colleagues are a part of evaluating and reflecting on the practices of their department, unit, or school. In the same way that it is collaborative, it is highly personal because I grew both as a researcher and a practitioner (Riel, 2010). Lessons learned as a researcher were lessons applied as a practitioner.

Retention Theory

In order to reflect on roles played by both the individual student and institution in transfer students' decision to continue at an institution, retention theory needs to be considered because it examines why a student may choose to depart from an institution while also emphasizing the importance of social integration in a student's decision to stay. The majority of research on student retention has been based on Tinto's (1993) interactionalist theory on student departure. Interactionalist or retention theory grew out of Van Genneep's (1960) theory on social anthropology and membership in tribal societies and Durkheim's (1951) suicide theory. Van Genneep (1960) explored rites of

passages including transitional rites of passages which may exist for certain populations. Van Gennep sought to place the rites into categories and to understand if there was a system to these rites of passages. Durkheim's (1951) work explored the role society plays in suicide with a specific emphasis on how social integration is experienced by individuals. The more socially integrated an individual is, the less likely he or she will be to commit suicide. In combining these two perspectives, Tinto (1993) found that postsecondary student persistence could be examined through a longitudinal sociological lens. Based on this viewpoint, students are described as going through the stages of separation, transition, and incorporation based on the interaction between their own personal attributes and the characteristics of the institution they are attending (Tinto, 1993). The goal of the retention theory is to "explain how interactions among different individuals within the academic and social systems of the institution and the communities which comprise them lead individuals of different characteristics to withdraw from the institution prior to degree completion" (Tinto, 1993, p. 113).

Tinto (1993) had 15 propositions about what influences retention. Four of those have been supported by further research and are outlined here. Both social and academic integration played into the original propositions, though only social integration had a role in the four that continue to be supported with empirical evidence. The role of social integration was a key aspect for this research project. First, it is agreed that a student's individual characteristics do have an effect on the student's level of initial commitment to the school of his or her choice. Second, the initial level of commitment to the institution also plays a role in a student's subsequent level of commitment. Third, the more socially integrated a student becomes, the more

committed he or she is to the institution. The influence of peers' attitudes and beliefs play a role in the integration. Lastly, a student will more likely be retained if his or her subsequent levels of commitment to the institution are high (Berger & Braxton, 1998; Braxton, 1999). Thus, each institution plays as important of a role in the retention of their students as do the individual students themselves. Because of the importance placed on the institution's role, researchers are in agreement that institutions must figure out for themselves the factors influencing their particular students' departure (Berger & Braxton, 1998; Bettinger & Long, 2009; Braxton, 2013; Smith, 2005; Tinto, 1993, 2007). Each institution is unique in the programs and services offered or not offered to students, thus making the departure factors different for each.

Tinto (1993) noted that barriers at the institutional level are part of why transfer students do not persist to graduation. The faculty and staff of the institutions do not think of transfer students as first-time college students, yet many of their needs are similar to those of the first-time traditional students. When students transfer, they are not first-time students to college in general, but they are first-time students to that particular institution. Thus, during transfer students' transition phase, they need many of the same programs that are in place for traditional students. Individual institutions have to determine the needs of their particular group of transfer students for themselves in order to increase their retention in the same way they do for other student groups (Tinto, 2012). In this way Transfer Connections provided an opportunity for new Tempe transfer students to learn about the institution in a safe setting which allowed them to tailor the experience to their individual needs.

Transition Theory

Schlossberg, Lynch, and Chickering's (1989) theory on transitions provides the next layer that informs my understanding of the transfer student experience at a new institution. It assesses "where they are in their learning experience and what their resources are for coping with it" (p.14). The transitions can be good or bad and can involve events and nonevents. In as much as each institution's transfer population is unique, so is each individual student's transition process.

Schlossberg et al. (1989) explain how these transitions have three parts: moving into, moving through, and moving on. While all three phases are important to students, the move into phase is particularly important to transfer students transitioning to a new four-year institution. When there is disconnect between students' expectations and the reality of the institution, the likelihood of student retention decreases. The strengths and challenges that students bring to their transition process are categorized as being about the situation, their support, their strategies, and themselves (self) (Goodman, Schlossberg, & Anderson, 2006; Schlossberg et al., 1989; Schlossberg, 2011). Situation refers to what is happening in the individuals' lives at the time of their transition. This includes roles which may be changing for them. For some students this may mean moving from being a full-time employee to no longer having a job (Schlossberg, 2011). Support is anything or anyone aiding in the transition process. It includes family and friends who help with the emotional process of making a transition (Goodman et al., 2006). Strategies include what individuals have in place for coping with the transition. This includes how to handle their new roles. It can also be those strategies in place to help them be academically successful in the case of a student (Schlossberg et al., 1989).

How individuals feel about their transition, including any other changes they experience with life, all play a role in their overall transition. The students' sense of self is just as important to the transition process as each of the other areas (Schlossberg, Lassalle, & Golec, 1990; Schlossberg, 2011). A balance is needed between each of these categories for students to be successful in their transition. Through this research project, the Transfer Connections program focused on the move into phase and the strategies and support which could be provided to the students as new tools for success.

Schlossberg et al. (1989) cite the importance of mattering when looking at what connects a student to an institution. Their research associated with mattering was drawn from the explanation offered by Rosenberg and McCulloch (1979). Individuals need to feel that others care about them and what they do. In other words, there is the need to feel, as individuals, that we are relevant to others (Elliott, Kao, & Grant, 2004). In this way, mattering is a part of an individual's identity and sense of self. Mattering has been explored by researchers studying a range of individuals from older adults (Dixon, 2007) to urban college students (Tovar, Simon, & Less, 2009). Rayle (2006) considered the role mattering plays within the dynamic of counseling relationships. These studies all support the important role mattering plays for all individuals across their lifetimes and in different stages of life.

In terms of college students' feelings of mattering, they have to feel as though faculty and administrators care about them and the decisions they make. Individuals also have to feel the institution matters to them. Thus, it can be a two-way street in the case of higher education where the students feel they matter to the institution and the institution matters to them (Goodman et al., 2006). The level of support from family

and friends and students' levels of mattering were explored by Rayle and Chung (2007) who studied first-year college students. They found that, if students had support from family and friends, this led to increased levels of feelings that they also mattered to both their college friends and their college environment. Likewise, if they felt their college friends supported them, the more they felt they mattered to the institution. Students who feel they matter and are connected to other students and the university are expected to be more likely to succeed and be retained (Tinto, 2012).

Transfer Connections

Throughout my previous action research cycles, both retention and transition theories were examined and applied to my context. Working in collaboration with current transfer students enabled me to test and reflect upon these ideas to design new innovations. The Transfer Connections program conducted on August 15, 2015 was designed by me in collaboration with transfer students who came from a combination of two-year and four-year institutions. The purpose of the action research cycle was to learn more about the influence of the Transfer Connections program on new transfer students to the Tempe campus regardless of academic background. It was hypothesized that participating in the Transfer Connections program would influence how the students connected to the university and would lead to increased long-term retention, though retention itself was not the focus of this study. Information was not collected on whether or not the transfer students were retained at the university other than the students sharing if they planned to return for the spring 2016 semester.

Previous action research cycles worked with transfer students who came from a variety of two-year and four-year institutions, and students expressed that they were not

aware of resources available to them on campus and that they had a limited amount of time to learn how to work within the university system. The university's New Student Orientation for new transfer students is conducted as a series of online modules or as an in-person full-day program. Students have the choice of which to attend. Therefore, a program was needed to bridge the gap between the time they enroll at the university and actually begin their classes. Working in collaboration with current transfer students, I created the Transfer Connections program to fill this gap.

This project embedded the Transfer Connections program in the fall welcome programs which happened at ASU's Tempe campus in August 2015. The program consisted of the following: a half-day (9am to 2pm) schedule of activities designed to connect new transfer students to other students; a demonstration of the online resources available to students; introduction to in-person academic resources; and an overview of university academic policies. This program was in line with retention theory and the importance of both social and academic integration of new students by their peers. To address the academic integration goals, all participants attended a presentation on ASU's academic policies. Drawing from transition theory, students were able to attend sessions to learn about the strategies and support available. Participants had three 50-minute blocks of time from which to select the concurrent sessions they wanted to attend, making the overall experience unique to each student. Their choices were as follows: a) Navigating ASU's Online Tools (My ASU & Blackboard); b) Barrett, The Honors College; c) Academic Success at ASU; d) Studying Abroad; e) Family Life at ASU; and f) Working on Campus (including research assistantships). During the provided lunch, participants had the opportunity to interact with other new transfer

students and current ASU transfer students in two different tutoring centers operated by UASP. All sessions except Barrett, The Honors College; Academic Success at ASU; and Working on Campus were facilitated by current transfer students, called Transfer Ambassadors, who were employed by ASU's Academic Partnership Office. See Appendix A for a copy of the complete schedule.

There were also several additional opportunities for social integration. The Transfer Connections program began with an ice-breaker for the students to get to know the other students in attendance, including learning which participants were in their college. The participants were able to ask questions of the current ASU transfer student staff who were facilitating the activities throughout the day, and there was a student panel consisting of the Transfer Ambassadors. Participants were encouraged to make appointments with the UASP academic mentors to discuss any questions or concerns. The Transfer Connections program was open to all new transfer students to ASU, though those who were enrolled on the Tempe campus were targeted through direct marketing.

Methods

Herr and Anderson (2015) outlined five goals for action research. These goals involve the creation of new knowledge; gaining knowledge through action; knowledge that informs both the participants and the researcher; knowledge about the local setting; and knowledge gained through a strong research methodology. This section will describe the specific methods used to collect data about transfer students in order to answer my three research questions and gain new knowledge. Included in this section

is information about the research design, quantitative and qualitative methods used, participant demographics, instrumentation, and coding and data analysis procedures.

Design

A sequential mixed-methods design was used in order to understand the transition experience of new transfer students (Creswell, 2014). Though the majority of the data collection methods were qualitative in nature, quantitative methods were used to supplement the data collected with information only possible through such methods. For example, the quantitative collection method explored specific areas of mattering, but did not go in depth on the topic. The qualitative collection methods were able to add this depth by providing student stories. Each method has its own strengths and weaknesses and in combining them they provided insight into each other (Plano Clark & Creswell, 2010). With a sequential design, each method was built on the others (Creswell, 2014; Michell, 1999; Nagy Hesse-Biber & Leavy, 2006). The quantitative collection method consisted of distributing a survey before the Transfer Connections program began and then one more time after the fall semester started during week seven. The qualitative collection methods consisted of two rounds of semi-structured interviews and a focus group. All procedures were approved by ASU's Institutional Review Board (IRB) on May 15, 2015. A copy of my IRB approval letter can be found in Appendix B.

Participants

On April 30, 2015 Transfer Connections was added as an event to ASU's Fall Welcome website, including an online registration form. On August 4, 2015, using the university's admission reports I receive as a regular function of my job with the

university, I pulled a list of students who were coded as new transfer students to the Tempe campus and who were already enrolled in fall 2015 classes. I sent these students the official email invitation to participate in Transfer Connections because up to that point only 26 students had registered to participate (See Appendix C for the email message.). Subsequently 228 students registered online for Transfer Connections. Transfer Connections was held on Wednesday, August 19, 2015, with 137 students in attendance. The program was scheduled from 9am to 2pm, and students were given the option to attend the program as long as they were able. Attending the Transfer Connections program did not automatically make a student a participant in the research project. During the introduction, I told attendees about opportunities to be involved in this doctoral research project. For all data collection points, participants were those students who attended the Transfer Connections program and who consented to participate in the follow-up study. This made the students a purposeful sample because they met the criteria of having attended the Transfer Connections program. Table 1 illustrates the participants' demographics for the pre-and post- survey as well as for the individual interviews and focus group. Race and gender information was not collected.

Table 1

Demographics for Surveys, Individual Interviews, and Focus Group

Demographic	Pre-survey			Post-survey			Round 1 Interview		Round 2 Interview		Focus Group	
	N	n	%	N	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
Have an Associate Arts/Science	64	39	67.2	44	31	70.5	15	71	10	76.9	2	66.7
Completed New Student Orientation online modules	64	56	87.5	45	45	100						
Previous institution was a 2-year college	64	47	78.3	43	35	77.8	15	71	9	69.2	2	66.7
Transferred from an institution in Arizona	64	35	54.7	45	27	60	14	67	10	76.9	2	66.7
Work 0 hours a week	64	32	62.8	42	17	40.5						
Attending ASU full-time	64	59	93.7	45	41	91.1	19	91	12	92.3	3	100
Were 20 years of age	64	20	31.3	44	8	18.2	7	33	5	38.5	0	0

Note. N = number responding to the survey question; n = number of respondents answering in the affirmative

Taking the pre-survey on mattering was an option for transfer students attending the Transfer Connections program when they checked in for the event. They were invited to complete the paper and pencil survey, whose first page was an informed consent letter, prior to the program's opening session and to place completed surveys in

a box located in the opening session room. There were 64 surveys collected at that time. All questions were answered by those who completed the survey, resulting in a total of 64 responses for each question. The ages ranged from 19 to 61 years old ($M = 24.11$, $SD = 7.44$).

An email invitation was sent to the 137 program attendees on October 5, 2015 to ask them to complete the post-survey on mattering. Three participants did not have a working email address; thus, 134 participants received the message. The email contained a link to the electronic version of the survey and they were given until October 14, 2015 to complete it. A reminder message was sent on October 10, 2015. See Appendix D for a copy of the initial email invitation. Fifty survey responses were collected, though two respondents did not answer any of the questions, thus leaving 48 usable results. Not all participants answered every question on the survey. The respondents' ages ranged from 18 to 61 ($M = 25.33$, $SD = 9.02$), though 20 individuals did not include their age.

Transfer students can offer unique insights into their experiences at the university, and these insights might not be captured by a survey alone. Therefore, two rounds of individual interviews were conducted to gain an understanding of students' experiences with Transfer Connections (Creswell, 2014; Nagy Hesse-Biber & Leavy, 2006; Stringer, 1999). Participants for round one of the interviews were based on students who volunteered after receiving an email request on September 15, 2015. See Appendix E for a copy of the email message. There were 21 individuals who consented to an interview. (See Appendix F for a copy of the informed consent document). Their ages ranged from 19 to 61 ($M = 25.75$, $SD = 9.92$). There were three participants, who

prior to attending ASU, had previously attended both a two-year institution and another four-year institution.

The same 21 individuals who participated in the first round of interviews were invited via email to participate in the second round. See Appendix G for a copy of the email message. There were 15 individuals who initially scheduled a second interview, but two were not able to attend. Thus, 13 interviews were conducted in the second round. Table 1 shows the demographics of the participants. The ages ranged from 20 to 35 ($M = 23.46$, $SD = 4.77$). There were three participants, who prior to attending ASU, had previously attended both a two-year institution and another four-year institution.

Like the individual interviews, the focus group's sample continued to be purposeful. All attendees of Transfer Connections were sent an email on November 23, 2015 inviting them to participate in a focus group. See Appendix H for a copy of the email message. Three students were able to attend and consented to the focus group. (See Appendix I for the focus group informed consent form). All three of them had participated in the first round of individual interviews, though only one had participated in the second round. Table 1 shows the demographics for the participants. The ages ranged from 22 to 40 ($M = 31.67$, $SD = 8.50$).

As researcher-practitioner, I played several roles in this study. First, I designed the Transfer Connections program. I welcomed the students, facilitated a program presentation entitled "Academic Success," and was present throughout the day. I served as the interviewer for each of the data collection methods. I was an active participant, being a part of the dialogue with the students both in the individual interviews and the focus group. Though my presence was as a researcher during different points in the

process, the student participants also saw me as a practitioner (administrator) since at the end of each method I reminded them about the academic support available to them through my department, UASP.

Instrumentation

The Transfer Connections program opened with an optional paper and pencil survey adapted from *The Maturing Scales for Adult Students in Higher Education* (Schlossberg et al., 1990) which was originally designed to study college students over the age of 23. The survey looked at the five constructs of advising, administration, peers, roles, and faculty. The advising construct asked questions about availability of academic advisors and their ability to answer various questions. The administration construct focused more on the policies and procedures for adult students versus traditionally aged students. The peers construct asked questions about the interactions the individuals had with other students, in particular if they were younger than themselves. The roles construct looked at the students' ability to balance the administrative tasks required by the university with their responsibilities outside of school. The final construct of faculty asked questions about the openness of faculty to having non-traditionally aged students in their classes. See Appendix J for a copy of the survey.

The maturing survey was not changed, except for my addition of several open-ended questions. After the four-point Likert scale questions for each individual construct, an open-ended question was added to ask for the students' thoughts about each individual construct. An open-ended question was also added that asked in which Fall Welcome events they participated. Demographic questions, including whether

students were transferring from a two-year or four-year school, how many hours a week they worked, if they were from out-of-state, and their age were recorded. Participants were asked to provide the identifiers of the first two letters of their last name and the last three digits of their ASU identification number. After the all the responses from the pre-survey were logged into surveymonkey.com, they were downloaded to Excel and saved on a secure drive protected by a password.

The post-survey distributed during the Transfer Connections program was emailed at the seven-week point of the semester on October 5, 2015 using the online survey builder surveymonkey.com. By this time in the semester, students had experienced at least one round of academic markers such as tests and papers and would have had more opportunities to interact with faculty, staff, and students. The hypothesis was that they would experience a higher level of mattering, especially in relation to peers and their understanding of the university, based on their participation in the Transfer Connections program. A reminder email to complete the post-survey was sent on October 10, 2015. The survey closed on October 14, 2015, and I downloaded the individual responses to Excel and saved the data to a password secured server.

To determine the reliability of the overall survey and the five constructs, Cronbach's Alphas (Cronbach, 1951) were calculated for both the pre- and post-survey using the Statistical Package of Social Sciences (SPSS 22). The overall pre-survey had a reliability of .706, putting it in the good range and reliable. Four of the five constructs all scored alphas of above a .700, with only the administration construct not being reliable. For the post-survey, the overall reliability rating was a .868, again placing it in the good range. Only three out of the five constructs had alphas of over .700. The rating

of .448 for the administration post-survey is considered unacceptable. Table 2 shows the alphas for each construct for the pre- and post-survey.

Table 2

Cronbach's Alphas for Pre/Post Survey by Construct

Construct	Pre-Survey Alpha	Post-Survey Alpha
Advising	.742	.852
Administration	.645	.448
Peers	.911	.798
Roles	.775	.908
Faculty	.845	.623

The first round of interviews happened during weeks five and six of the semester. They were scheduled for approximately 30 minutes and were semi-structured to allow for some level of standardized comparison because everyone was asked the same standard set of questions (Nagy Hesse-Biber & Leavy, 2006). The overall interview was semi-structured in order for the conversation to explore specific topics and participant answers further, as desired by myself and the interviewee. The standard questions asked during the interviews were based on the research questions regarding the strategies and support students felt they gained from Transfer Connections. Based on the initial data from the mattering pre-survey about areas in which the students expressed having lower or higher levels of mattering, I asked them to define mattering. Clarifying questions were asked as needed. The demographic questions asked in the survey, except for questions about participants' work schedules, were asked again in the interviews. See Appendix K for a list of the standard interview questions. Interviews were either conducted in my office on the Tempe campus or over the phone. At the time of volunteering the first time, the participants were told they would be given a \$10 gift

card at the start of each interview and that they could opt out at any time. All interviews were digitally recorded and stored on a secure server, which is password protected. The interviews were transcribed by rev.com. I wrote field notes at the end of each interview session in order to document my initial thoughts and themes which emerged during the interviews (Bogdon & Knopp Biklen, 2007).

The second round of approximately 30-minute, semi-structured interviews were conducted at weeks 10 and 11 of the fall semester with individuals who were interviewed during the first round. Part of the time was spent sharing initial coding and patterns with the participants in order to check for understanding on my part. I showed each participant a copy of his or her personal transcript with my coding notes and highlights in the margins. The participants answered questions that provided more details to those emerging codes, whether they agreed or disagreed with what I had found. I also asked standard questions based on themes about who they felt more connected to on campus and the importance of those relationships. These questions were meant to clarify the results from the open-ended questions on the pre- and post-surveys which showed a difference between relationships with faculty and staff versus those with other students. The interview itself was a dialogue of shared information (Mishler, 1986). Participants provided me, the researcher, with knowledge which needed to be checked in order to accurately portray their voices (Nagy Hesse-Biber & Leavy, 2006). The focus was not what knowledge I brought to this project but what I learned from the new transfer students in order to provide better services for them on campus to increase their ability to succeed (Creswell, 2014). Also discussed were questions about other activities they participated in during fall welcome and any life

changes they experienced over the first part of the semester. Participants were asked if any of their responses about their strategies and support changed since their last interview. See Appendix L for a sample of the standard questions.

The final data collection method with participants of Transfer Connections was one focus group held during finals week of the fall 2015 semester. The focus group lasted 84 minutes and light snacks were provided. The focus group was conducted to gain an overall impression of how Transfer Connections influenced their transition process and how they felt they mattered to ASU. Whereas individual interviews provided a personal account, the focus groups provided a description from the larger group (Michell, 1999; Nagy Hesse-Biber & Leavy, 2006). Focus groups can “challenge the notion that opinions are attributes of subjects at all rather than utterances produced in specific situations” (Kitzinger & Barbour, 1999, p.5). Questions were also asked based on the themes which emerged from previous data collected during the semester and the initial data analysis. A list of the initial questions can be found in Appendix M. I explained to the participants verbally the overall themes I was seeing thus far in my data analysis and they were asked how their experiences compared. Additionally, the demographics recorded during the pre- and post-surveys and individual interviews were also recorded as part of the focus group. The focus group was digitally recorded and loaded onto a password secured server. The recording was transcribed by rev.com in order to be analyzed.

The final data collection method was designed to address the last research question because action research involves personal reflection (McNiff, 2008; Plano Clark & Creswell, 2010; Riel, 2010). I kept detailed field notes, including initial

reactions to each of the data collection points, during the entire research process. I also documented what my overall thoughts, feelings, and impressions were of my research experience as I progressed through my data collection. These notes were kept in a journal not only to outline the details of the processes I was following but to also capture my thoughts. Using Schön's (1983) work on reflection-in-action and Tripp's (2012) work on asking questions of critical incidents, at each point during the data collection, I asked myself two key questions: a) What lessons did I learn from this activity? and b) How can these research lessons be applied to my role as a practitioner? Further journaling resulted from this 'dialogue' with myself.

Data Analysis Procedures

Through the data analysis, rich descriptions emerged providing a voice to the transfer student experience. The data collected via the surveys, interviews, and focus group were triangulated to add to the credibility of what the students shared (Patton, 2002; Plano Clark & Creswell, 2010). In this section I will outline how the data was analyzed individually and how I synthesized it.

I calculated basic descriptive statistics using SPSS 22 for each of the five constructs and each individual question for both the pre-and post-surveys which included mean (M) and standard deviations (SD) (Witte, 1989). The responses of Not Applicable (0) were not included when calculating the results for this study. I decided the Not Applicable responses meant the participant decided that the statement did not apply to him or her, and I made the decision to treat those responses as though the participant left the question blank. The pre- and post-survey results were analyzed to see if there were significant changes in the level of mattering felt by the participants for

each of the constructs (Schlossberg et al., 1990). A paired samples t-test was done using SPSS 22 for those results from participants who completed both the pre- and post-surveys to see if there was a significant change in the means. For those results which did not have a match, an independent samples t-test was run to see if there was a significant difference between the pre- and post-survey results (Witte, 1989). Both the paired and independent samples t-tests were run for each construct as a whole, as well as for each individual question. I calculated Cohen's *d* to determine the effect size. The effect size illustrates the standardized difference between the means. In order to interpret the effect size, I followed Cohen's (1988) benchmarks: .2 = small effect, .5 = medium effect, and .8 = large effect.

The open-ended responses from the surveys, the individual interviews, and focus group were analyzed using open coding methods, as described by Strauss and Corbin (1990), in order to compare the data and explore it further. First, I read through each set of data without making any notations or markings to gain an overall picture. After reading through the data, each sentence or paragraph was examined to determine what phenomenon it best represented and they were then each assigned a descriptive phrase. See Appendix P for a list of these phrases. All transcripts were uploaded to HyperRESEARCH software to conduct this analysis. In order to take a second view, the same process was completed again with hard copies of the data by highlighting and marking along the edges of each individual's transcript. Both the electronic HyperRESEARCH and hard copy of the transcripts were cross checked for additions or changes in order to create one list of phrases. This initial list of phrases was printed. Finally, these initial conceptualizations of the data were collapsed into categories which

became the themes (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). This process was conducted by reading the list and identifying concepts that were reoccurring in the list of phrases. Throughout this process I was guided by transition theory (Schlossberg et al., 1989), especially looking for concepts which answered the research questions. During the second round of interviews, the participants were given the transcript of their first interview with the highlights and themes. They were asked to review my initial themes against their transcript to account for the accuracy of my themes as a method of member checking.

The focus group data was analyzed using similar open coding methods as the survey and individual interviews, with the addition of relationship and social structure themes for the purpose of exploring the participants' interactions with each other (Bogdon & Knopp Biklen, 2007). Initial data analysis of the individual interviews was conducted prior to the focus group and this analysis revealed the theme of connections. As a result, during the focus group, participants were asked their thoughts about the theme of connections. Therefore a second part of coding the focus group data included exploring participants' interactions with each other by examining the nature of the dialogue between all members of the group including the questions they asked of each other and the insights they provided each other. I specifically looked for these interactions while reading through the transcript both in HyperRESEARCH and on the hard copy to find themes.

I kept a research journal during the entire research process in order to reflect on my experiences and to aid other researchers in being able to duplicate this study. To code the research journal, I conducted an initial read-through of the entire journal and marked those passages which explored my roles as researcher and practitioner. Open

coding was used to break down these passages as previously described above. The phenomena which emerged were placed into categories that became the themes (Strauss & Corbin, 1990).

Data Synthesis

The final cycle of coding occurred after all the data had been analyzed separately. This involved looking across the codes for all of the data to see where overall themes did or did not emerge. Each set of themes was printed and placed side-by-side to see where there were similarities and differences. This serves as the triangulation between the data sets to determine how they fit together (Patton, 2002; Plano Clark & Creswell, 2010). Triangulation refers to the process of collecting different types of data, analyzing them separately, and then considering the findings together in order to see how the results “support or contradict each other” (Plano Clark & Creswell, 2010, p. 302). The hypothesis was that the data points would support each other in the creation of the new knowledge created about the influence of Transfer Connections on the new transfer student transition process.

Results

The following section includes the results from the analysis of both the quantitative and qualitative data collected for this study. The order will follow the same pattern established in the methods section. The first part will focus on the results from the quantitative data collected from the pre- and post-mattering surveys. The second part will focus on the qualitative results from the two rounds of individual interviews and the final focus group. The third part will focus on the results from my research journal. All of the results are aimed at answering the three research questions:

- 1) How and in what ways does attending Transfer Connections influence the transition processes of new transfer students to the Tempe campus, in particular the strategies they use for success and the support they have to be successful?
- 2) How and in what ways does Transfer Connections influence the transfer students' feelings of mattering?
- 3) How and in what ways do I, the researcher, apply the lessons learned during the research process to my role as a practitioner?

Mattering Survey

The students received the mattering survey prior to the start of Transfer Connections and again at the five-week point in the fall semester. The mattering survey measured the following constructs: (a) advising, (b) administration, (c) peers, (d) roles, and (e) faculty. The survey questions had a five-point Likert scale, ranging from 1 for strongly disagree to 4 indicating strongly agree and 0 for not applicable. The goal of the surveys was to determine the level of mattering experienced by the students both before and after Transfer Connections, with the hypothesis that there would be an increase in the students' mattering scores because of their participation in the program.

Descriptive statistics were calculated for both the pre- and post-survey using SPSS 22. Table 3 shows the means and standard deviations for each of the five constructs for both the pre- and post-survey results. There were 63 pre-surveys and 48 post-surveys completed. Appendix N includes the pre and post descriptive statistics for every question asked on the survey.

Table 3

Construct Means, Standard Deviation, and Paired Samples t-test for Pre/Post Survey

Construct	N	Pre-survey		Post-survey		<i>p</i>	<i>d</i>
		M	SD	M	SD		
Advising	18	2.773	.742	2.878	.654	.862	.041
Administration	18	1.955	.761	2.216	.609	.405	.201
Peers	16	1.110	1.098	2.256	.765	.447	.196
Roles	18	2.140	1.069	2.260	1.049	.059*	.477
Faculty	4	.763	1.154	2.114	.946	.910	.062

Note. * Significance $p < 0.10$

The pre-survey was completed by students before fall semester classes started, and the post-survey was completed five weeks after classes started. The results from the pre- and post-surveys were matched based on a participant code. There were 18 participants who completed both a pre- and a post-survey. As there was an increase in the means for each construct, whether or not those increases were statistically significant needed to be determined. The construct of advising had the highest mean score, thus the highest level of mattering. The largest difference between means was in the faculty construct, though there were only four participants with a complete pre- and post-survey.

A paired samples t-test with alpha set at .05 was conducted for each of the constructs. For each of the constructs at $\alpha = .05$, there was no significant increase in the mattering score. The construct of roles did show a slight significant difference at $\alpha = .10$. Table 3 displays t-test results for pre- and post-survey constructs and the Cohen's *d*. In each case the effect size was small, except when the construct was significant, thus the effect size was approaching medium size. Paired samples t-test was also computed

for the individual questions. Again, at $\alpha = .05$ level, none of the questions showed a significant change. However, there were several showing a significant change at $\alpha = .10$. Table 4 illustrates those specific questions which had a significance at $\alpha = .10$. In each of these cases the effect size was medium, meaning the standardized differences in the means were larger. For two of the questions there was a significance based on the means going down instead of up (Q13 and Q16). This means they were less satisfied from before school start to when the survey was taken the second time.

Table 4

Pre/Post Survey Paired t-test for Individual Questions with Significance

	Pre-survey		Post-survey		<i>p</i>	<i>d</i>
	M	SD	M	SD		
Q9. The university's policy of transfer credit penalizes non-traditional students.*	2.462	0.877	2.692	1.032	.082**	0.526
Q13. The administration makes efforts to accommodate adult students.	3.090	0.539	2.550	0.934	.052**	0.665
Q16. I feel my activities fees are spent in a way that is meaningful to me.	2.670	0.724	2.333	0.976	.096**	0.459

*Notes. * Question responses were reverse coded since the question was stated in the negative.*

*** $p < 0.10$*

There were an additional 46 pre-surveys completed that did not have a corresponding post-survey. There were 30 post-surveys completed that did not have a corresponding pre-survey. An independent samples t-test was calculated for these

remaining surveys with $\alpha = .05$ and none of the five constructs showed a significant increase in mattering scores. Table 5 shows the results of the independent samples t-test. All of the constructs except faculty showed a decrease in the means. The effect size (d) was small for each of the constructs except roles which was a little larger than small at $d = .365$. The independent samples t-test was also performed for each individual question. There were four questions which showed significance at $\alpha = .05$. There was an additional question that was significant at $\alpha = .01$. Similar to the constructs each showed significance based on a *decrease* in the means. This means the students felt they mattered *less* as the semester progressed.

Table 5

Independent Samples t-test, Mean, Standard Deviations, and Cohen's d

Construct	Pre-survey			Post-survey			<i>p</i>	<i>d</i>
	N	M	SD	N	M	SD		
Advising	46	3.256	0.451	29	3.175	0.479	0.466	0.174
Administration	45	2.835	0.342	29	2.745	0.379	0.293	0.252
Peers	34	2.879	0.552	26	2.832	0.388	0.718	0.095
Roles	39	3.082	0.509	26	2.864	0.691	0.148	0.371
Faculty	17	2.9	0.417	25	3.067	0.471	0.255	-0.363

Table 6 highlights the questions that showed significance. In the case of each of the questions, the effect size was large; the variation in means is considered strong. Again, this is based on the means *decreasing* instead of *increasing*, which was the hypothesized direction. *Appendix O* displays the results for the independent samples t-test for all of the questions.

Table 6

Pre/Post Survey Independent Samples t-test for Individual Questions with Significance

	Pre-survey			Post-survey			<i>p</i>	<i>d</i>
	N	M	SD	N	M	SD		
Q8. My advisor has office hours at times that I am on campus.	36	3.500	0.507	26	3.120	0.766	.021**	0.613
Q10. The administration seems to consider adult student priorities as important as traditional student priorities.	28	3.000	0.544	23	2.480	0.665	0.003***	0.867
Q13. The administration makes efforts to accommodate adult students.	26	3.000	0.490	22	2.640	0.658	.034**	0.635
Q27. As an adult student, I feel welcome on campus.	19	3.160	0.375	16	2.810	0.544	.034**	0.752
Q30. I don't have time to complete the administrative tasks this institution requires. *	34	3.240	0.606	22	2.910	0.750	.079**	0.490

Notes. * Question responses were reverse coded since the question was stated in the negative

** $p < 0.05$ *** $p < 0.10$

The last question on pre- and post-surveys asked participants if they were planning on returning to the university for the following semester. For the pre-survey all 63 respondents said they were planning on returning. For the post-survey, of the 48 individuals who completed the survey, 44 (91.7%) said they would be returning the following semester. The remaining four respondents did not select “No.” Rather, they left the question blank. These same four did not complete any of the demographic questions at the end of the survey.

Qualitative Data

The qualitative data consisted of open-ended responses in the pre-and post-mattering surveys, two rounds of individual interviews, a focus group, and a research journal. The individuals who participated in the second round of individual interviews had all been interviewed during the first round. All participants in the focus group also had participated in the first round of individual interviews. The first round of interviews were conducted with 21 participants with the interviews averaging 10 minutes. There were 13 individuals who were interviewed again for the second round, with an average interview time of 16 minutes. Three participants returned for the focus group which lasted 84 minutes. This section will first present the theme from the open-ended survey responses followed by the themes for the individual interviews before presenting those for the focus group. All participant names referenced are pseudonyms selected by the participants. This section ends with the themes from my research journal.

Open-ended survey responses. At the end of each set of construct questions, there was a place for participants to add anything else about that particular construct topic. The number of responses was limited, ranging from five responses (peers in pre-survey) to 17 responses (advising in pre-survey). One theme emerged that was relevant to the research questions, which was the feeling of disconnect with other students. Table 7 breaks down the theme, theme-related components, and the corresponding assertions.

Table 7

Theme, Theme-Related Components, and Assertions for Open-Ended Responses

Themes	Theme-Related Components	Assertions
Disconnect with College Experience	<p>Students feel connected to the university academically and to their advisors.</p> <p>Students overall do not feel they are a part of the college experience or connected to their fellow students.</p>	<p>Students overall have had positive experiences academically, but do not feel connected to the university in terms of their fellow students.</p>

Disconnect with college experience. Overall, students responded with positive comments about their interactions with the university as a whole as represented by the advising, administration, and faculty constructs, though they did not have much interaction at the time of the pre-survey. Academically they reported having a positive experience. One student described their experience with advising: “My major advisor has been very helpful and I feel that she enjoys her job which in turn has all led to a positive experience for me in terms of advising” (advising, post-survey). Similar thoughts were shared by a student when discussing their experiences with faculty: “So far, I have had very good experiences with my professors. I don’t really have anything negative to say about them” (faculty, post-survey). One student summed up their overall academic experience: “The academic portion of my experience here has been phenomenal and on-par with my highest expectations...” (roles, post-survey).

Though students reported having an overall positive experience academically, some students felt they were not connecting with other students. This led them to

express a disconnection to what they termed the “college experience.” One student acknowledged seeing the academic experience as being intertwined with the social side of being a student: “The whole ‘modern college experience,’ including those factors such as the social and living experiences are very intertwined with the academic portion and I have felt alienated by this to some degree” (roles, post-survey). Some expressed how this could be a result of age. One student expressed: “I feel like younger classmates have more opportunities to interact because they live on campus and have far more activities geared toward them. I also feel that my age deters most of them from trying to interact with me” (peers, post-survey). Another student seemed to be surprised that age was making a difference in their experience with peers:

There definitely are younger students who find it easier to be open with me than others. I am 23, which does not seem like there would be a significant age-barrier but I have been surprised at how much that has been the case. (peers, post-survey)

Others struggled to identify why they were having a more difficult time getting connected:

The thing that is much harder is trying to actually get involved with the university. I really want to get the “college experience” that I’ve never had and am finding that impossible. I would love to be able to get involved in clubs, student leadership, and all of the various events that ASU has going on. (roles, post-survey)

Individual interviews. The first round of coding from the individual interviews resulted in 54 individual phrases. Those phrases were then grouped into themes based on the research questions. This resulted in four different themes, each with theme-related components and assertions. Table 8 displays the themes, theme-related

components, and the corresponding assertions for the individual interviews. See Appendix P for a complete list of the individual phrases used to identify the themes.

Table 8

Themes, Theme-Related Components, and Assertions for Individual Interviews

Themes	Theme-Related Components	Assertions
Relevance of Student Connections	<p>Students' main source of support is from their parents, spouses, or significant others.</p> <p>Students realized the importance of taking responsibility to reach out to peers and faculty in order to make connections.</p>	<p>Having some kind of connection (support outside of school) is important, but making meaningful connections on campus with either faculty or other students is necessary for students' academic success and feeling like they were supported.</p>
Mattering	<p>Attending Transfer Connections aided students in not feeling alone.</p> <p>Attending Transfer Connections helped students to feel like they were as important as traditional freshmen.</p>	<p>Transfer Connections helped the new transfer students feel like they mattered to ASU.</p>
Success Strategies	<p>The students did not feel as though they learned new success strategies, but hearing them again affirmed what they already knew.</p> <p>Students appreciated the academic tips they heard from the current transfer students.</p>	<p>Coming in with prior academic experience meant students did not need to learn how to be academically successful, but they did learn about resources specific to ASU, including technology-related resources, and some additional tips from current transfer students.</p>

	Students appreciated learning about technology used by ASU.	
College Support	Students who had some kind of support directly from their individual college felt a level of connection and mattering.	Having support from individual colleges was important.
	Individual college support included having peer mentors available, courses for transfer success, a transfer student center, and inviting the new transfer students to fall welcome events.	

Relevance of student connections. Part of the first research question asked how Transfer Connections influenced the support the students have in place to aid in their transition. They were asked what support they have and whether they had gained support from attending Transfer Connections. Overwhelmingly, students talked about the support they had from individuals outside of school. This consisted of family support made up of a combination of parents, spouses, and partners. For out-of-state students, knowing someone local was important: “I have an old family friend that lives up in Carefree. She’s up there and she’s extended her support” (Trevor, September 23, 2015). Trevor is 28 years old and transferred from a two-year institution out-of-state where he received his associates of arts (AA) degree.

Other than family support, there were students who realized by coming to Transfer Connections that they needed to form connections on campus in order to be

successful. Kaitlyn, who is 22 years old and has attended both four-year and two-year institutions in order to earn her AA, defined the support she gained from meeting people in similar situations as herself:

I think support can be just from all the people I've met, too. I've met a couple people at transfer connections, not necessarily in my program but just like we're both in the same place. We both don't know what we're doing. It's been nice to be like, "Okay. I know someone else is in my place." Maybe we're not in the same program but at least we can talk about it and be like, "Oh, my gosh. This is crazy." I consider that support, too. We're in the same spot. We can go through with each other. (September 22, 2015)

Amy is 20 years-old and discussed how her lack of connections led her to not feeling as supported overall: "That's the only thing I'm really kind of struggling with is just because I feel like I've not found my little niche so far, but I kind of feel like I want to be supported more. A little bit" (September 28, 2015).

Later in her interview, Amy, who transferred from a two-year institution in-state, acknowledged she learned, during Transfer Connections, that she had to actively seek out connections with other students: "Even, you know, saying hi to someone in my class. I'm just getting to know them, I think, that's really the best thing that I've learned" (September 28, 2015). Other participants also realized that part of the responsibility for making connections was on them. This included making connections with both faculty and their fellow students. Without some kind of connection on campus, they felt less supported. Andrew, who is 30 years old, explained how he initially did not think he had to make any connections with other people, but he realized during Transfer Connections that this was something he did need to do for himself in order to develop a support structure:

Since your transfer event and talking about that, I've been trying to reach out to

faculty and other students a little bit more which wasn't really my original plan. My original plan was to sort of sail under the radar and just nail the stuff and get back to my job. I've decided it's probably going to be a little bit better if I'm a little more interwoven, I get a little more support structure there, so I've been working with a few. I hand out my business cards to a bunch of students and talking to some of the professors and things like that. That was one piece that has kind of changed. (September 22, 2015)

Andrew had previously earned his AA degree at a two-year institution out-of-state several years prior to attending ASU.

During the second round of interviews, I asked a follow-up question about whether the students felt it was more important to have a connection with their faculty or their peers. For some, it came down to where they spend the bulk of their time: “Definitely a peer group...I spend more time outside the classroom than in the classroom.” (Jim, October 26, 2015 – 20 year old from a four-year institution). Some felt like being with other students was not as important to them. Twenty year-old Isabela who has her AA from an in-state two-year school, thought it depended on who the other students were but admitted to not really feeling like she needed a peer group: “I guess it depends on who it is...I personally don’t need a lot of sort of peer interaction” (October 26, 2015). A similar sentiment was expressed by 30 year-old David: “I couldn’t really care less about some of these kids running around...The professor’s really the one that I want to get to know, want to get a relationship with” (October 26, 2015). David also attended a two-year in-state school and earned both an AA and associates of science (AS).

Student connections with faculty were seen as a means to an end. Jenna, who is 22 years-old, expressed the desire to form peer connections, but she understood the importance faculty will have in her life down the road: “I think it would be nice to make

connections with my peers just because I haven't really been able to yet especially since we just moved to the area...but I think it's good to make connections with the faculty, too, for references" (October 26, 2015). This thought was also shared by 20 year-old N: "Both [faculty and peers], but mostly my faculty, we connect more. I feel like they're the ones that can help me more than my peers. I feel like my peers are just socializing" (October 26, 2015). Both Jenna and N had earned their AA degrees from a two-year in-state institution. Students described the support they received from faculty as being more long term. Regardless of whether the support came from faculty, staff, or other peers, students came to understand it was necessary and something they had to take responsibility for in order to be successful.

Mattering. My second research question focused on how and in what ways Transfer Connections influenced new transfer students' feelings about mattering across many factors. When asked if they felt they mattered overall to ASU, several students explained how they felt they were just a dollar amount or number to ASU: "I feel like ASU does care, but at the same time, I feel like in this country it's about business. That's why I feel like ASU doesn't see me as something. Just as a number I guess" (N, September 21, 2015). Others equated their own success with success for ASU; thus if they are successful, it makes ASU look good: "Being accepted by ASU is feeling like I matter. Clearly they want me to succeed" (Ruby, September 28, 2015 – 21 years-old, AA from two-year in-state institution).

When asked if Transfer Connections made them feel like they mattered, the students talked about how they did not feel alone and that they were as important as first-time freshmen. Jamie, who is 20 years-old and transferred from a two-year

institution out-of-state, expressed how just being in the same room as other transfer students meant something:

Just having an event, that was an icebreaker for the first week of school, and somewhere to go... Even just in a room, knowing that there are other transfer students in there, that many, makes you feel like it wasn't just you, and you weren't alone. (September 21, 2015)

Joseph, also 20, explained how having an event for transfer students made him feel like he was a part of ASU and that he mattered: "It was very helpful; it made me feel like I was part of ASU because I didn't have that... It made me feel like I was actually an ASU student" (September 29, 2015). He had earned his AA from a two-year in-state institution.

Success strategies. The first research question also looked at the types of success strategies the students might have gained by attending Transfer Connections. During the first interview, I asked what success strategies they were using during the fall semester and if they learned any of these strategies as a result of attending Transfer Connections. Participants were asked during the second interview if there were any additional strategies they had started to use since their first interview. Aside from the assistance they gained in learning how to navigate ASU's technology like BlackBoard, participants felt as though the academic success strategies shared at Transfer Connections served more as a reminder of what they already knew. For some, this was an affirmation of skills they had already been using in their academic careers. They did learn about specific academic resources available to them at ASU. Thirty-six year old Cindy, who earned an AA from an in-state two-year institution, described both of these experiences:

My strategies I didn't learn in the meeting thing [Transfer Connections] that we went to but just from previously being in college. I learned at the meeting [Transfer Connections]... Resources for tutoring and stuff like that, the writing center and math. (September 23, 2015)

This affirmation of already knowing about strategies was also echoed by other participants. Jenna noted the strategies discussed were familiar to her but that it did not hurt to learn about them again: "I think it was kind of stuff that I already knew, but it was still good to I guess hear it again" (September 21, 2015).

For many participants, learning about the online technology available for them was an advantage. Some described how learning about BlackBoard helped them feel more prepared for their courses. Forty-year-old Mike, who earned his AA several years ago from an out-of-state four-year institution, explained how he had to use it even in his non-online courses:

I was somewhat familiar with BlackBoard, but not really, I had never used it before. They did cover some of the stuff with BlackBoard online for classes, so that was something else that obviously I'm making a great deal of use from because even my non online classes require you to check on BlackBoard. (September 24, 2015)

Joseph described how he made other transfer students envious because they had not attended Transfer Connections and how they missed an opportunity to learn something:

They showed you how to use BlackBoard because at our community college we didn't use BlackBoard. We used this thing called Canvas, and so they're like: "BlackBoard's different," and then I was like: "Yeah, they showed us at this transfer thing. You could've come." (September 29, 2015)

Individual success tips were shared by currently enrolled transfer students, who were Transfer Ambassadors present during Transfer Connections and were participants on the student panel. When participants were asked about the most important lessons they learned from Transfer Connections, they highlighted the interactions with the

currently enrolled transfer students. Ruby enjoyed their honesty in sharing their experiences: “It helped a lot to be able to talk to some of the transfer students from the year before because they are able to tell us a little bit more about their difficulties” (September 29, 2015). Often these tips did not have to do with academics directly. One of the Transfer Ambassadors talked about how many of their non-college attending friends did not understand the college student experience. This resonated with Joseph: “I think that a lot of the things that I learned was mostly from one of the guys sitting up front to definitely read...and friends...I remember him saying, ‘You’ve got to drop your friends’” (September 29, 2015).

College support. Students were asked about the role their specific colleges or departments had in aiding in their transition. The amount of support students received from their individual colleges or departments varied greatly. In some cases, it was an academic success course for transfer students (e.g., Barrett, the Honors College; College of Letters and Sciences; Ira A. Fulton Schools of Engineering). For others, it was more structured support varying from having peer mentors to an actual center where they could meet with other transfer students. Multiple students talked about a program that Ira A. Fulton Schools of Engineering has for their transfer students. David talked about the varied elements of this program from having a course to providing a space to utilize: “Have you heard of the METS Program?...It stands for Motivated Engineering Transfer Students....that’s been really helpful....METS has a center. Free printing” (September 28, 2015). There were also multiple students who talked about both the student organization and course for transfer students offered through Barrett, The Honors College. These students appreciated having Barrett be a part of Transfer Connections.

While having activities just for transfer students is important, two students described how their colleges offer activities that combine both new transfer students and new incoming first-time freshmen. Joseph explained about the mentors available through the Psychology Department: “Psi Chi has mentors for freshmen and they started having them for transfer students. They also started to have activities just for us” (September 29, 2015). Jenna explained how her college brought both groups together:

The second week of school, [The ASU School of] Sustainability had a camp, so I went to campus with all freshmen and transfer students, and some of our faculty, and Dean Boone from Sustainability. That was an ice breaker...that was cool. (September 21, 2015).

Focus group. The focus group was conducted at the end of the fall semester during finals week with three students. Two of the students who participated in the focus group participated in the first interview, whereas the third student participated in both rounds of interviews. The focus group dialogue centered on students’ final thoughts regarding their transition process during their first semester at ASU. Table 9 highlights the two main themes from the focus group.

Table 9

Themes, Theme-Related Components, and Assertions for Focus Group

Themes	Theme-Related Components	Assertions
Peer Learning	<p>Bringing students together provided an opportunity for them to learn from each other.</p> <p>Students discussed financial aid; involvement with Barrett, The Honors College; scholarships; and counseling services.</p>	<p>The focus group provided another venue for students to learn from each other.</p>
Disconnect	<p>Students acknowledged that the age differences between transfer students resulted in different levels of disconnect.</p> <p>Students felt as though there was a difference between feeling connections academically versus socially.</p>	<p>There were similarities and differences in the ways in which transfer students felt disconnected.</p>

Peer learning. The focus group provided an opportunity for participants to not only have a dialogue with me but also with each other. At times they led the conversation, asking each other questions. Students who participated in the focus group were able to share their unique experiences in a way that allowed them to help each other. Each participant had something to share with the others and described the conversation as being beneficial. They offered advice to each other on topics like applying to Barrett, The Honors College to financial aid to counseling services.

Participants also each expressed how much the experience of being together meant to them. Amy (20 years-old) explained how the experience was therapeutic: “I felt like I was just in a therapy session” (December 10, 2015). A similar sentiment was expressed by Kari (35 years-old): “This helps, like I was saying, just seeing people who are in the same boat as you” (December 10, 2015). Mike (40 years-old) was able to sum up the focus group experience in terms of how much they were able to learn and relate to each other, which surprised him:

I’m amazed how well that conversation went actually. We couldn’t be any more different, the three of us. You guys have similar interests, like where you were. We are totally different ages. Two different genders, obviously. Different generations. (December 10, 2015)

Disconnect. Since the role of being connected emerged as a theme from the individual interviews, the participants of the focus group were asked to describe their experiences. They talked about the level of disconnection they felt on campus. There were varying levels to the disconnection experienced by the participants. Even though they all felt some level of disconnection, it was for different reasons, whether because they were an online student or because of age. The disconnection they described was based on the separation they felt between themselves and their fellow students.

For Kari, it was because she is currently only taking courses online: “I feel like there’s such a disconnect. Everyone’s like, ‘Yay, you’re an ASU student.’ I’m like...I sit at home in my pajamas” (December 10, 2015). Amy and Mike both expressed disconnection as a result of their age, though from opposite ends of the age spectrum. Amy feels too young for most transfer students: “I haven’t been able to connect with a lot of transfer students, because I’m one of the younger ones, so that’s the issue that I’ve

been dealing with” (December 10, 2015). Mike explained how everyone seems to be so much younger than he is: “It’s different, because everybody’s half my age, so in that sense, yeah I’m disconnected, but one of my roommates is a grad student, so we have a lot more commonality there” (December 10, 2015).

Participants talked about how academically they felt the transition process was easier than the social transition; they felt connected academically but did not have those same connections outside of the classroom. Amy summed up her experience both in and out of the classroom as being different:

Yes, I do in a way feel like I am a part academically, because in my classes, I’m surrounded by people my age, so there’s no disconnect there I guess. It’s just when I seek extracurricular things, or I try to make friends outside of the classroom, that’s where I really feel the disconnect. (December 10, 2015)

In the end, all three concluded that having someone who understands their experience as a transfer student is important. Kari explained best what they are looking for from their fellow students: “Connect and have that conversation. . . I would love to have someone from school to talk to. . . no one right now in my life understands” (December 10, 2015).

Research journal. The final piece of qualitative data came from my research journal and answered my third research question and was focused on lessons learned during the research process. Table 10 shows the themes and assertions which came from coding the research journal.

Table 10

Themes and Assertions from Research Journal

Themes	Assertions
Assessment	Sound assessment instruments are essential for both research and daily practice.
Time Management	It was important to develop a thorough plan and allow enough time for the execution of that plan.
Connections	Making connections to research participants is similar to building relationships as a practitioner.
Knowledge Sharing	As a higher education administrator who creates programs for students, I have to strike a delicate balance between what I think might be best and what is appropriate within the specific political climate of the institution. Sometimes, these two factors might conflict.

Assessment. Strong assessment instruments, whether they are qualitative or quantitative in nature, are necessary in order to learn about both research and programs I create as a practitioner. With each type of assessment used in this research project, I was reminded of how limited my assessment design skills were and how these skills were becoming more of a necessity in my role as a practitioner. The value of asking questions that are a match for the topic of inquiry was an important lesson learned while

conducting the first round of individual interviews: “I wish I had figured out a better set of questions...I feel like there is some ‘lens’ that I am missing as a researcher. Right now I feel like I am being a program evaluator. Maybe that is the reality and how I make this experience practical” (September 21, 2015).

Time management. Multiple times throughout the data collection process, more time was needed to complete tasks than was originally expected. Making sure a thorough plan is in place, including being realistic about timelines, is also one of the keys to my success as a practitioner. In the case of managing logistics, such as the scheduling of interviews and the recruitment of participants, I was unprepared for the lead time necessary. I found myself feeling rushed and overwhelmed. With the amount of logistics required in my daily work, learning to manage my time effectively is vital. On September 26, 2015, while conducting individual interviews, I wrote, “Repeatedly lessons learned are about planning better in advance. My usual ‘just do it’ - I do not feel is putting my best foot forward.”

Connections. It was not possible to separate my role as a researcher from my role as a practitioner. During all of the individual interviews and the focus group, I spent time talking to the students about their academic experiences. I talked to them about resources and connections I felt they would be interested in or needed to know about. This was all done separately from the questions they were being asked by me in my formal role as a researcher. In these moments, I was reminded about the need for students to have someone, even if it is a staff member, with whom they can connect and feel comfortable. Being accessible to students and genuinely taking interest in them as people are the most important parts of my role as a researcher: “As has happened in the

past, I am getting a variety of questions...In most cases the impression is they [students] have not been contacted by anyone else and I am the first person they have contact with” (August 10, 2015). This statement reoccurred at many points throughout my research journal.

Knowledge sharing. By working with transfer students for this research project, I have increased my knowledge about the transfer student experience at ASU. As a researcher, this knowledge has helped me plan services for transfer students in my role as a practitioner. At the same time, it is difficult to know what information I can or should share, with whom, and when. I often wonder what is appropriate to share: “I met with [name omitted] from Engineering to talk about what I am doing with transfer students...My meeting with her reiterated how little communication there is at ASU about what is happening on campus” (December 1, 2015). This conversation also illustrated for me how little I knew about what was happening on campus for transfer students. The meeting with an engineering colleague was facilitated by a student who connected us. I was left feeling overwhelmed and frustrated by my new knowledge and not having a mechanism by which to both share and receive information about transfer students.

Discussion

The purpose of this study was to gain new knowledge about the transition process of new transfer students to ASU’s Tempe campus. This was done by using a mixed-methods design of both quantitative and qualitative collection methods to answer my first two research questions: a) How and in what ways does attending Transfer Connections influence the transition processes of new transfer students to the Tempe

campus, in particular the strategies they use for success and the support they have to be successful? and b) How and in what ways does Transfer Connections influence the transfer students' feelings of mattering? Throughout this entire process, I kept a research journal in order to answer my third research question: How and in what ways do I, the researcher, apply the lessons learned during the research process to my role as a practitioner?

This final section connects the quantitative and qualitative results presented in the previous section with the research questions. I start by briefly summarizing my findings. With the data triangulated, I take each research question and explore its theoretical and practical implications. Before concluding this section, strengths and limitations of this study and the project aspirations of both this study and Transfer Connections are discussed. How others can use these findings are shared as a part of the project aspirations

Brief Summary of Findings

The quantitative data collected in the pre-and post-mattering surveys showed very little statistically significant differences in the five constructs, though there were differences in the overall means. All participants who completed the pre-survey said they were expecting to return to the university for the following semester, as did all of those who answered the question in the post-survey. When looking at individual questions in the survey, those which asked specifically about feeling accommodated as an adult student and feeling welcomed both showed statistical significance.

The qualitative data collected from the interviews demonstrated there were varying definitions about how the students felt they mattered. Having an event like

Transfer Connections helped them to feel they were as important as the traditionally aged first-year students. The connections they were able to make during the program provided them with a level of support at the university and highlighted for many how they needed to take more responsibility for becoming more connected at the university. The role of peers and connections were a major theme in all the data. Participants felt they learned about being an ASU student from the currently enrolled transfer students who were involved with Transfer Connections. While Transfer Connections did not provide them with new success strategies, it did reaffirm the importance of those they already knew from their previous educational experience. The participants did find value in learning about the technology used by ASU like BlackBoard.

Serving as a researcher-practitioner means I was an active participant during the entire research process. As I progressed through my research experience I came to see how closely the roles of researcher and practitioner are connected to each other. The lessons I learned based on the themes of assessment, time management, connections, and sharing knowledge can be demonstrated in my position as a researcher and an administrator. In considering these themes together, a clear picture emerged of how I can better position myself as an administrator on campus who develops and shares new knowledge and experiences for students with stakeholders.

Research Question 1: How and in what ways does attending Transfer Connections influence the transition processes of new transfer students to the Tempe campus, in particular the strategies they use for success and the support they have to be successful?

The first research question sought to examine to what degree Transfer Connections influenced students' success strategies and support. To answer this question transition theory was used because of its ability to identify what is necessary for any successful life change. Transition theory identifies strategies and support as being two of the four areas which help determine the ease of transition on the individual (Rayle & Chung, 2007; Schlossberg et al., 1989). A key goal of Transfer Connections was to provide the participants with more strategies for academic success and more support for their academic career. The more successful the students could be academically and the more support they could feel from the university would in turn increase their likelihood of returning to the institution (Berger & Braxton, 1998; Braxton, 1999; Tinto, 1993, 2007).

Tinto (2012) and Grites (2013) both pointed out that transfer students do have prior academic experiences that they bring with them to a new institution. This matches the results found in this study. Students already came to ASU knowing what success strategies had previously worked for them. In fact, Transfer Connections served to remind them of what they already knew in many cases. Though transfer students come in with prior academic experiences, they do still need to learn how to be successful within the new institution's system (Grites, 2013; Tinto, 2012). This assertion was also supported by the data collected in this research study. What the participants gained from

Transfer Connections was information specific to being successful at ASU, especially the technology pieces of My ASU and BlackBoard.

Literature also emphasized the importance of peers in the support of new transfer students. Grites (2013) explained how transfer students may be hesitant to ask questions if they do not see other transfer students on campus. Marling and Jacobs (2011) and Lagnese, Riggs, and Panger (2014) found in their research on their individual campuses that transfer students responded positively to having peers from whom to learn and of whom they could ask questions. Similarly, in the case of the Transfer Connections' session on the specific technology used by ASU, a currently enrolled transfer student led the demonstration and shared what she felt was most important to know. The student panel also provided a safe space for new transfer students to ask questions of currently enrolled transfer students. Participants asked questions that may not have been voiced in any other setting. See Appendix R for a full list of the questions which were asked during the student panel. The sharing of knowledge between students was also evident during the focus group. Though all participants were new transfer students, they each shared knowledge they had gained from their own experiences during the first semester. These opportunities for peer learning were invaluable to the students. In a practical sense, more opportunities are needed for new transfer students to learn from other students in multiple settings. The bringing together of current and new transfer students is necessary for any transition program. Getting other transfer students involved in the transition process of transfer students is a key factor for anyone interested in creating a similar program at their

institution. From an action research standpoint, participants were creating and sharing new knowledge both with each other and with me.

The quantitative data supported the qualitative data in reference to peer learning. There were several questions in the mattering survey which spoke to the learning which happens between peers. Though there was no statistically significant increase in the scores between the pre- and post-surveys for the questions about peer learning, the means for the post-survey for questions 17, 20, 23, and 25 all were above a 2.9. In particular, question 23, “My classmates would help me catch up to the new technologies if I needed it,” had a mean of 2.97. Twenty-nine (85.3%) of the respondents either agreed or strongly agreed with this statement during the post-survey. In the case of the paired-samples the mean for this question did go down slightly for this question, but it still was above a 3.0. This data supports that, at least academically, transfer students felt other students would and could help them.

In terms of the role of support in students’ transition, they came to the university with strong support networks from their families, spouses, and friends. Townsend and Wilson (2006) found that support is different for each student; new transfer students want more support during their transition. Transfer Connections provided students with support simply by helping the students feel they were not alone in the experience.

Kaitlyn, during her interview on September 22, 2015, summed it up best:

I think support can be just from all the people I've met, too. I've met a couple people at transfer connections, not necessarily in my program but just like we're both in the same place. We both don't know what we're doing. It's been nice to be like, ‘Okay. I know someone else is in my place.’ Maybe we're not in the same program but at least we can talk about it and be like, ‘Oh, my gosh. This is crazy.’ I consider that support, too. We're in the same spot. We can go through with each other.

By virtue of bringing students together for Transfer Connections, the group felt supported.

The more disconnected the new transfer students felt, especially socially, the less positive their transition experiences. Though Transfer Connections helped students feel connected to others, it also highlighted how important it is for them to find other students and faculty with whom to connect and build a support network. Some students stated they had not initially realized how important it was to make connections. By the end of the fall 2015 semester, those who participated in the focus group expressed how they were still struggling to find their place socially at the university, and that led to them feeling disconnected. Addressing this concern would be a way to get student affairs division more involved with Transfer Connections.

Though Transfer Connections was not able to provide direct opportunities for support from students' colleges, many students did speak to the support they gained from their colleges during the course of welcome week. Mayhew, Stipeck, and Dorrow (2011) recommended that new transfer students be combined with other new first-time freshmen. One participant in this study talked about having such an experience from ASU's School of Sustainability and how much they enjoyed it. The experiences several of the participants shared about the support they had from their colleges demonstrated how more involvement by colleges is necessary for future iterations of Transfer Connections. Overall, Transfer Connections did not influence students' academic success strategies but did enable them to connect with other transfer students and provided them with additional support. Institutions who have different models for their

academic units would need to consider the departments or units that would be necessary for the new transfer students to feel connections with in order to have both the social and academic piece.

Research Question 2: How and in what ways does Transfer Connections influence the transfer students' feelings of mattering?

The second question asked about the influence of Transfer Connections on the participants' feelings of mattering. Support, connections, and mattering are closely tied together. Per the research on mattering, when the students feel like they are connected and supported, they feel like they matter and belong (Elliott et al., 2004; Goodman et al., 2006; Rayle & Chung, 2007; Tinto, 2012). Based on the results from the mattering survey, there was no statistically significant increase in the participants' levels of mattering within each of the five constructs. Though overall levels of mattering did not show a statistically significant increase, there were individual questions which did. Grites (2013) discussed how students' understanding of policies and procedures at a new institution can affect how they feel about the campus culture and their level of mattering. In both the paired and independent samples t-test, question 13, "The administration makes efforts to accommodate adult students," showed a statistically significant *decrease* between before and after the Transfer Connections event. This could be because students had limited experiences with administration before the start of the semester and initially rate their experiences higher. Questions specific to particular administrative policies and procedures did not show a statistical significance, but Transfer Connections did not specifically spend focused time covering those policies or procedures. One question that did show statistical significance is important

because it specifically asked about feeling welcomed on campus. Question 27 stated, “As an adult student, I feel welcome on campus.” An independent samples t-test indicated responses to this question differed between the pre- and post-surveys. There was a *decrease* in the means instead of an increase. Feeling welcomed on campus is an important component of feeling a sense of belonging and mattering. Many of the interview participants talked about how Transfer Connections made them feel welcomed to and a part of ASU. This could account for why there was a significance between the pre- and post-surveys. Having an event for them gave them a sense that they mattered when they took the pre-test. As the semester went on, it is possible those feelings decreased as they had more interactions on campus.

When considering both transition and retention theories, it is not unusual that Transfer Connections did not show a statistically significant change overall based on the constructs in the mattering survey. The constructs focused on areas which largely had to do with the institution: advising, administration, and faculty. When looking at the individual questions related to peers and roles, they are geared toward what happens in the classroom. Much of this information was not covered in Transfer Connections. Ongoing research on retention theory has explored more about the role of social integration, rather than academic integration, in whether or not students are retained at an institution (Berger & Braxton, 1998; Braxton, 1999). There were multiple points during data collection where students discussed feeling a connection to the university through their academics, but not socially. This was mentioned in the surveys, interviews, and the focus group. My research study supported the need for connecting transfer students to the institution through their individual academic colleges as well as

the important role peers play in making this happen. As mentioned previously, participants expressed having a positive academic transition, but not a social one. Students provided examples of how through the connections they gained from their academic departments, they felt like they mattered, but they did not feel connected socially. It is the partnering of the social and academic integration that is needed. Students do still need to feel a commitment, thus connection, to the institution in order to decide to stay.

The theme components about mattering for the interviews focused on the students not feeling alone and feeling that they were just as important as new first-year students. As mentioned earlier, this was highlighted as important in both Tinto (2012) and Grites' (2013) work. The data points to the close ties between mattering and connections. Finding support through connections ended up playing a role in the students' feelings of mattering. When students feel like they have connections, they in turn feel like they have support. By being supported by either students, faculty, or staff, they feel like they matter. Coming to Transfer Connections did influence the new transfer students' feelings of mattering because they felt like they were important to somebody at the institution because they had a program made just for them and designed according to their needs. Transfer Connections provided an institutionally structured opportunity for the students to feel like they connected and mattered.

From a practical standpoint, this points to the importance of more on-going social interactions for new transfer students. As much as larger events like Transfer Connections can help, the colleges have their part to play in helping the students have more feelings of connection to other students and the university. The more connected

the students feel, the more they feel they matter to the university. The students who were provided means within their colleges for this type of support, felt they did matter throughout the whole semester. College support needs to be consistent across the whole university. As other research has indicated, institutions wishing to design programs for their transfer students need to assess the needs of their specific populations and find ways to bring all stakeholders together.

Research Question 3: How and in what ways do I, the researcher, apply the lessons learned during the research process to my role as a practitioner?

The final research question was about my role as both a researcher and a practitioner. Action research is designed to combine those roles, each being informed by the other (Riel, 2010). It is a dynamic process, where through personal reflection the researcher can develop new ideas and plans for going forward (McNiff, 2008; Plano Clark & Creswell, 2010; Riel, 2010). I found the lines blurring between my roles as researcher and practitioner throughout this research study. Without taking the time to reflect on my research processes and what I was experiencing in general, there could have been a gap in my own learning. By taking the time to reflect and ask myself critical questions about my experience, I was able to learn lessons important to both roles.

The research process illustrated for me the overlapping roles of researcher and practitioner in ways that I had not previously realized. For instance, I learned lessons about how designing appropriate assessments is vital to the outcomes of a new program initiative or research project. I also learned how managing the logistics of research tasks can either limit or empower a researcher-practitioner. When the time to complete

logistics, such as scheduling, recruitment, and analysis, is not managed effectively, researcher-practitioners might remain mired in the minutiae of their projects and lack the long-term vision needed for success. On the other hand, when this time is managed effectively, researcher-practitioners have more freedom to make connections between data or program points, make adjustments with enough lead time, and collaborate with partners and stakeholders.

The lessons learned about assessment, time management, and knowledge sharing directly apply to how I can be a better researcher going forward and how I can integrate research into my daily work. In this sense, I am finding my research role is not going away simply because this project is over. Research is involved with everything I do as a daily part of my practitioner experience. Though I may not be conducting research in a formal sense, by using the techniques of a researcher like developing sound methods for assessment, the better I can design future programs for students. As I continue to design retention and transition programs, I will be more cognizant of matching final outcomes with the end product via strong assessment. Since one of the goals of action research is to create new knowledge, how that new knowledge is shared with others plays an important part in my administrative position. The lesson of connections, on the surface, seems natural in my practitioner world, but being a researcher-practitioner allowed me to form relationships with students in a new way. I came to see the value of those connections as mutually beneficial in what I could share and what I could and did learn.

Strengths and Limitations

The purpose of this project was to explore the influence Transfer Connections had on the transition of new transfer students to the Tempe campus. A new body of knowledge about new transfer students emerged based on the experiences the participants shared. This project has both strengths which legitimized the knowledge created and limitations which impacted the outcomes. Each of the goals of action research outlined earlier are tied to specific areas of research validity. In this case validity considers how trustworthy or credible the knowledge which is being created (Herr & Anderson, 2015). The use of different data collection methods and bringing the data together during analysis, and triangulation, added to the credibility of the information collected (Herr & Anderson, 2015; Patton, 2002). This section will outline the methods used to illustrate the trustworthiness of the data collected and the limitations that exist.

A strength of this project is the collaborative nature of the design. Previous action research cycles, which all involved collaborating with transfer students, influenced the final design of the innovation used in this study. The knowledge created about the transfer student experience was not just from my viewpoint but also from the viewpoint of the transfer students who were involved in the process with me. This study was based both in practice and the theories which guided it. All of this added to the overall credibility of the new knowledge created because it came directly from those being studied (Herr & Anderson, 2015).

External validity looks at the results of the study in a slightly different way from outcome validity. The concern for external validity was whether or not the results are

trustworthy and can be generalized to a larger group (Herr & Anderson, 2015). This was considered during the semi-structured interviews. The very nature of the interviews being semi-structured leads to a level of validity. In semi-structured interviews there are standard questions which are asked of every participant. This standardization allows for comparison which can increase the generalizability of the knowledge gained (Nagy Hesse-Biber & Leavy, 2006). Overall, as has been found in other research studies, it is important for individual institutions to understand the dynamics of their particular transfer students. Though there was some generalizability with this study, there was knowledge specific to the transfer students to the ASU Tempe campus only. This illustrates the importance of studying the needs of the transfer students on the other ASU campuses in the future.

The design of the study also created some limitations in as much as it provided strengths. First, a stronger case for outcome and dialogic validity would be made if this study had more closely followed a participatory action research design. This would mean having transfer students be involved in the entire research process from design to conducting interviews to coding (Plano Clark & Creswell, 2010). Being involved throughout the process would have created a stronger tie between the knowledge created and those who are creating the knowledge.

Another limitation was the mattering survey used. The *Mattering Scales for Adult Students in Postsecondary Education* (Schlossberg et al., 1990) was designed for students over the age of 23. In previous cycles of action research, the majority of participants were over the age of 23, thus the selection of the survey. However, the population for this research study included transfer students who were as young as 18.

Many of the questions were not relevant to them and this could have accounted for the lower response rate and the number of not-applicable and blank responses. The innovation was not accurately reflected in the survey. Therefore, the responses to the survey did not provide direct insight into Transfer Connections.

The final limitation of the study was my narrow viewpoint of what academic integration and success strategies meant. I was focused on the specific student success strategies based on my role as a practitioner in UASP versus focusing on the important role that the colleges play for students' academic integration. As already mentioned, future Transfer Connections programs will rectify this assumption.

Project Aspirations

In action research, the cycles should never end. A researcher takes what he or she learns, makes adjustments, and implements the innovation again (Herr & Anderson, 2015; Plano Clark & Creswell, 2010; Riel, 2010). Though this research study and documentation is complete, Transfer Connections is not over. Since this research study began, the program has already had another iteration. Changes were made to the spring 2016 Transfer Connections program based on the data collected in the fall. This will continue to be the case going forward. The same is true for the research on transfer students. In addition to outlining how Transfer Connections will change in the future, ideas for how others can use this study will be shared. This section will end with ideas for future research that can address some of the concerns expressed in the limitations.

Transfer Connections provides a unique experience which appeals to some students, but not others. Transfer students come to the university with a variety of needs, experiences, and expectations. As a result, the program will continue to be more

conference style but will offer students more choices in terms of the number of concurrent sessions from which to select. These subpopulations of transfer students could have their own focus going forward. Veterans, international students, and out-of-state students are examples of populations that could benefit from having concurrent sessions designed specifically for them. I have already begun to receive requests from other departments and colleges at ASU who wish to participate in August 2016 to address some of these groups. This includes looking beyond the academic units at ASU and including those division that fall under student affairs. Transfer Connections' content was originally exclusive to what UASP provides students in terms of services. In order to truly be responsive to as many student needs as possible, that had to change. The program content changes will include opportunities for individual organizations, colleges, or departments to have a block of session time for students. In doing this the social and academic sides can truly be integrated providing a more holistic experience for the students. This also means transfer students need to continue to be involved in the planning and implementation of Transfer Connections. Their involvement was a strength to both Transfer Connections and the research itself. That has to continue going forward.

Another Transfer Connections change is based on the multiple times during the data collection process that students talked about wishing there was more time for social interactions with other transfer students. This would be an area to seek involvement from student affairs here at ASU. There could be opportunities both to educate the students about ways to become more socially involved at ASU and to bond them during the event itself. Some expressed a desire for there to be opportunities for follow-up time

together after the semester starts. This could mean having Transfer Connections last longer to allow for more time for students to interact whether in number of hours or days. I have also been encouraged by the administration at ASU to expand the program to the Downtown Phoenix, Polytechnic, and West campuses. The last change being planned based on this research study is to make sure the new transfer students feel like they are important to ASU, even in small ways. One of these ways is to give them a take-away gift which makes them feel included. Freshmen receive multiple t-shirts from ASU during welcome week. As a part of Transfer Connections, the same courtesy needs to be applied to the new transfer students.

Just as Transfer Connections continues to be redefined by the action research process, it can also guide future research which will continue to generate new knowledge. In the case of this research study, there are more questions to ask and explore. For example, how will the formal inclusion of other colleges and departments influence the transition process of new transfer students? Thus far, Transfer Connections was based on action research cycles with students from the Tempe campus. With the move to having Transfer Connections on every campus, are the needs different on each campus? Since differences between academic and social integration were evident in this study, the dynamic between the two needs to be explored further. In the long term, does not feeling connected socially influence the students' academic experience? Throughout the research process rich data was collected to be able to design a different type of assessment tool to determine students' levels of mattering and connection to the university. The last piece would be the inclusion of official retention data from the university. How do the retention and graduation rates of those students

who attend Transfer Connections compare to those who do not attend the transition program?

Closing Thoughts

Transfer Connections provided a one-time opportunity for outreach to new ASU Tempe campus transfer students in order to aid them in their transition. In spending time with these students both at Transfer Connections and during the study, I gained insight into their experiences. Though the use of the already established mattering survey did not shed light on whether students felt a change in their level of mattering as a result of their participation in Transfer Connections, the qualitative data did demonstrate how the students felt they mattered. The close relationship between having connections and feelings of mattering is an important piece of knowledge learned from this research study. The students may be successful academically because of their prior experiences, but not feeling socially integrated can affect the success of their overall transition. What this study did not consider is whether or not the lack of social integration negatively impacts academic success at any point.

Mattering equated to feeling important to the university. One of the ways the students felt the university could demonstrate this is to provide opportunities for them to feel welcomed in the same way that first-time students are welcomed. Transfer Connections provided this type of demonstration for them, but more opportunities would only strengthen the connections the students could feel both to the university and to other students. Though Transfer Connections did not influence students' success strategies either positively or negatively, it did provide a means for support and mattering.

In some cases, I became that support. The role that administrators play in aiding students feeling welcomed and a part of campus is important. To the students, I was first introduced as an administrator, and then I was a researcher. They were able to also re-connect with me as an administrator through my role as a researcher. In the end the two roles cannot truly be separated. I now see through this research project that I am no longer one or the other. I am a researcher-practitioner in all I do. As a researcher-practitioner it is my job to continue to share the knowledge I have gained about the transition process of the new Tempe campus transfer students with university colleagues. Even though this research project has concluded, I am still meeting with other administrators to talk about how we can continue to provide transition opportunities to all transfer students to ASU. In this way, the action research process continues and new knowledge continues to be built.

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APPENDIX A
FULL SCHEDULE OF TRANSFER CONNECTIONS

Transfer Connections Schedule

8:30-9:00 am	Check-in (LSA191)
9:00-9:30 am	Welcome/Ice Breaker (LSA191)
9:40-10:25 am	Choice of Workshops #1
10:30-11:15 am	Choice of Workshops #2
11:20-12:05 pm	Choice of Workshops #3
12:05-12:45 pm	Lunch (MTC North & Noble Tutoring Center)*
12:45 – 2:00 pm	Student Panel (LSA191)
2:00 pm	Closing (LSA191)

Lunch will be split between two locations to accommodate such a large group. You can either go to the Math Tutoring Center – North in PSA (Wexler) 116 or to the Noble Tutoring Center on the 2nd floor of the Noble Science Library.

Choice of Workshops #1:

- Navigating ASU’s Online Tools (My ASU, BlackBoard, etc) – in PSA118: Michelle Di Muria, who is an ASU Online student in the Criminal Justice and Criminology program and Psychology program. She transferred from Phoenix College.
- Barrett, The Honors College – LSA101: Sean Nonnenmacher, Student Support Specialist with Barrett, The Honors College.
- Academic Success at ASU – PSH151: Sarah L. Bennett, Associate Director, University Academic Success Programs.
- Studying Abroad – PSA203: Sarah Strem, Peer Advisor. Learn about study abroad options.

Choice of Workshops #2:

- Navigating ASU’s Online Tools (My ASU, BlackBoard, etc) – in PSA118: Michelle Di Muria, who is an ASU Online student in the Criminal Justice and Criminology program and Psychology program. She transferred from Phoenix College.
- Family Life at ASU – PSA103: Zachariah Tolliver, who transferred from South Mountain Community College and also took classes at Phoenix College. Anna Bermudez, who transferred from Glendale Community College and also took classes from South Mountain Community College.
- Academic Success at ASU – PSH151: Sarah L. Bennett, Associate Director, University Academic Success Programs.
- Studying Abroad – PSA203: Sarah Strem, Peer Advisor. Learn about study abroad options.

Choice of Workshops #3:

- Navigating ASU's Online Tools (My ASU, BlackBoard, etc) – in PSA118: Michelle Di Muria, who is an ASU Online student in the Criminal Justice and Criminology program and Psychology program. She transferred from Phoenix College.
- Family Life at ASU – PSA103: Zachariah Tolliver, who transferred from South Mountain Community College and also took classes at Phoenix College. Anna Bermudez, who transferred from Glendale Community College and also took classes from South Mountain Community College.
- Working on Campus (including Research Assistantships) – PSH151: Kristen Linzy, ASU graduate who was a transfer student. She is currently a Freshman Admissions Specialist.
- Studying Abroad – PSA203: Sarah Strem, Peer Advisor. Learn about study abroad options.

APPENDIX B

INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD APPROVAL LETTER

EXEMPTION GRANTED

Scott Marley
 Division of Educational Leadership and Innovation - Tempe
 -
 Scott.Marley@asu.edu

Dear Scott Marley:

On 5/15/2015 the ASU IRB reviewed the following protocol:

Type of Review:	Initial Study
Title:	Transfer Connections: Welcoming New Transfer Students
Investigator:	Scott Marley
IRB ID:	STUDY00002682
Funding:	None
Grant Title:	None
Grant ID:	None
Documents Reviewed:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mattering Survey consent.pdf, Category: Consent Form; • HRP-503a for Sarah Bennett, Category: IRB Protocol; • SLBennett Consent documents (2) (1).pdf, Category: Consent Form; • Bennett Focus Group Questions and Protocol.pdf, Category: Measures (Survey questions/Interview questions /interview guides/focus group questions); • Bennett Survey.pdf, Category: Measures (Survey questions/Interview questions /interview guides/focus group questions); • SLBennett Recruitment messages.pdf, Category: Recruitment Materials; • Bennett Semi Structured Interview Questions.pdf, Category: Measures (Survey questions/Interview questions /interview guides/focus group questions);

The IRB determined that the protocol is considered exempt pursuant to Federal Regulations 45CFR46 (2) Tests, surveys, interviews, or observation on 5/15/2015.

In conducting this protocol you are required to follow the requirements listed in the INVESTIGATOR MANUAL (HRP-103).

Sincerely,

IRB Administrator

cc: Sarah Bennett
Sarah Bennett

APPENDIX C

EMAIL INVITATION TO ATTEND TRANSFER CONNECTIONS

Name,

Congratulations on starting at ASU this fall. I am excited to welcome you to the Tempe campus. You have received messages encouraging you to participate in Fall Welcome.

Our department realizes many of the activities are geared toward the incoming freshman. We have decided to do something just for transfer students! I am pleased to invite you to Transfer Connections. I apologize if you have already registered and are still receiving this message!

On Wednesday, August 19, 2015 from 9am to 3pm we are going to be offering a special day just for you. Check-in will start at 8:30am. This event is free! We will be offering two different workshops for you to choose to attend. The topics range from using ASU's technology (My ASU, DARS, Blackboard, etc) to making the most of your large lecture classes to learning about the resources available to you. There will also be a student panel – made up of students who have transferred to ASU successfully! A light lunch will be provided. There is limited seating, so please register by Monday, August 17th.

Transfer Connection will be a wonderful opportunity to meet and connect with other transfer students and the staff who are here to support you at ASU! You are busy, so if you are not able to attend the whole time, that is okay.

If you would like to be a part of this fun, interactive event, please visit the website at: <https://tutoring.asu.edu/transfer-success>. The registration link is part-way down the page. You will need to be logged in to your My ASU in order to access the registration link.

If you have any questions, do not hesitate to contact me at slbennett@asu.edu or 480-727-1457. I look forward to seeing you in a few weeks.

Go Devils!

Sarah ☺

Sarah Bennett

Associate Director

University Academic Success Programs

University College

Arizona State University

P.O. Box 873201. - Tempe, AZ 85287-3201

Telephone # **(480) 727-1457** Fax # (480) 965-1091

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APPENDIX D

EMAIL INVITATION FOR POST-SURVEY

Name,

Happy October! I cannot believe we are almost half-way done with the fall semester. Hopefully your semesters are going well, and tools you gained during Transfer Connections are coming in handy.

During Transfer Connections you had the opportunity to complete a survey about your experiences on campus. I know many of you did not complete it – and that is fine. Many of the questions were not yet applicable, as well. Now it is time for me to ask you if you would be willing to complete the survey – either again or for the first time. It is fine if you did not fill it out earlier – you can still complete it now.

It should not take you more than 15 minutes to complete. Skip any questions you do not want to answer. The link to the survey is: <https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/BTLZ8C7>. I am going to close the survey at 11:59 on Sunday, October 11, 2015.

Thank you for your assistance in completing this survey. I learned a lot of great things while conducting the individual interviews over the last few weeks. This just adds another piece to the puzzle. If you have any questions, do not hesitate to contact me.

Enjoy your fall break next week.

Go Devils!

Sarah ☺

Sarah L. Bennett

Associate Director

Arizona State University

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APPENDIX E

EMAIL INVITATION FOR INTERVIEW ROUND 1

Dear NAME,

I hope your first several weeks of the semester have been going well. During the Transfer Connection program you attended on August 19, 2015, I talked about how there will be opportunities for you to participate in my research about transfer student transitions.

As a reminder, I am a doctoral student in the Education Leadership and Innovation Program. Over the next couple of weeks I will be conducting 30 minute individual interviews. I would like to talk to both full-time and part-time students. If you are interested in speaking to me, please respond sign-up for a time slot at the link (<http://vols.pt/xLpiKM>) below my signature line by Friday, September 18, 2015. Interviews will be conducted September 21 through October 2, 2015. Some evening and weekend times are available. Interview slots will be filled on a first-come, first-serve basis. If you would like to participate, but the times/dates do not work for you, please email me. Participants will receive a \$10 gift card. I look forward to hearing from you.

There will be other ways to participate later in the semester, including an opportunity to participate in an online survey. That email message will be coming in the next few weeks.

I can be reached at slbennett@asu.edu. Thank you for your time and consideration. I apologize for the duplicate messages.

Go Devils!

Sarah ☺

Sarah Bennett

Associate Director
University Academic Success Programs
University College
Arizona State University
P.O. Box 873201. - Tempe, AZ 85287-3201
Telephone # [\(480\) 727-1457](tel:(480)727-1457) Fax # [\(480\) 965-1091](tel:(480)965-1091)
slbennett@asu.edu
<http://studentsuccess.asu.edu>
Follow us on [Twitter](#) or Like Us on [Facebook](#)

I'm using VolunteerSpot (the leading online Sign-up and reminder tool) to organize my upcoming interviews.

Here's how it works in 3 easy steps:

- 1) Click this link to see our Sign-Up on VolunteerSpot: <http://vols.pt/xLpiKM>
- 2) Review the options listed and choose the spot(s) you like.

3) Sign up! It's Easy - you will NOT need to register an account or keep a password on VolunteerSpot.

Note: VolunteerSpot does not share your email address with anyone. If you prefer not to use your email address, please contact me and I can sign you up manually.

APPENDIX F

INDIVIDUAL INTERVIEW INFORMED CONSENT

Interview Informed Consent

Title of research study: Transfer Connections: Welcoming New Transfer Students

Investigators:

Sarah L. Bennett, Doctoral Candidate, Arizona State University

Dr. Scott Marley, Faculty, Arizona State University

Study Overview:

My name is Sarah Bennett and I am working on my doctorate in Education Leadership and Innovation at Arizona State University.

You are invited to participate in this study to provide me with an understanding of your transition experience at ASU. The study is part of a 14 week project. The interview should take no longer than 30 minutes and will be recorded.

The information gained from these interviews will be shared as a part of my dissertation project, in research publications, conference presentations, and to guide future programs for transfer students. Any information that can be used to identify participants will be excluded from any presentations and papers.

Voluntary Participation:

Your participation in this study is completely voluntary. You can skip questions if you wish and you may withdraw from the study at any time. There is no penalty for participating or not-participating. You will receive a \$10 gift card regardless.

You will be contacted about conducting another interview and it will be voluntary as to whether you wish to participate in the second interview. You will be asked to create a code name which will be used to link your interviews. The second interview will also only last 30 minutes and you will have the option to stop at any time. You can skip questions if you wish and you may withdraw from the study at any time. There is no penalty for participating or not-participating. You will receive a \$10 gift card regardless.

Risk and Benefit:

There is minimal risk for participating in this study. The project presents no more risk than is experienced in everyday life. You must be 18 years old to participate. There are not costs to you for your participation in this study. You will receive a \$10 gift card for participating whether you answer questions or not.

I cannot promise any benefits to you or others from your taking part in this study. However, long term information gained from this study will be used to guide future programs and policies for transfer students at ASU.

Person to Contact:

If you have any questions concerning the research study, please contact my faculty, Dr. Scott Marley (Scott.Marley@asu.edu) or (480) 727-7237 . If you have any questions about your rights as a participant in this research, or if you feel you have been placed at risk, you can contact the

Chair of Human Subjects Institutional Review Board, through the ASU Office of Research Integrity and Assurance, at (480) 965-6788 or by email at research.integrity@asu.edu.

Consent:

By signing this consent form, I confirm that I have read and understood the information and have had the opportunity to ask questions. I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time, without giving a reason and without cost. I voluntarily agree to take part in this study.

Signature participant:	Date:
Printed name of participant:	Date:
Signature of person obtaining consent:	Date:
Printed name of person obtaining consent:	Date:

APPENDIX G

EMAIL INVITATION FOR INTERVIEW ROUND 2

Name,

Happy Monday! Thank you for taking the time a few weeks ago to share with me your experiences so far at ASU. As I mentioned at that time, I would like to do a follow-up interview with you. Like the last one, it should last less than 30 minutes and you will receive a \$10 gift card for your time.

This time around time slots in the evening will be conducted over the phone. If you need an interview between 8:30am & 5pm to be over the phone, just put that in the notes section when you sign-up. I did not pre-build any weekend slots this time, but that is what would work best for you, please email me because I am flexible.

Here is the link to the sign-up: <http://vols.pt/D6jLVa>

I cannot say thank you enough for your time. I look forward to speaking with you in the next several weeks.

Go Devils!

-sarah☺

Sarah Bennett

Associate Director
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APPENDIX H

EMAIL INVITATION FOR FOCUS GROUP

Name,

Hello! It is hard to believe the end of classes is only a week and a half away. The semester has really flown by – at least from my perspective! I hope your first semester here at ASU has gone well. As was mentioned during the Transfer Connections event you attended the day before school started in August, I will be ending my data collection with a couple of focus groups.

There are two different times/dates for the focus groups. I realize the times are during the last week of classes (12/2) and finals week (12/10), but I hope you will be able to take a little break to come and talk at one of them. What is great about a focus group is everyone has an opportunity to share and to see how their (your) experiences are similar/different from other participants. Somebody else may bring something up about their experience that you realize you had not thought about before.

I have scheduled the focus groups for two hours, but they should not take that long. If you need to leave early to get to class/work, I understand. I will be providing some light snacks. Please click on this link: <http://vols.pt/nY9x2Z> to sign up. Hopefully one of the times will work for you. Again, you only attend one. Please sign up by Monday, November 30th so I know how many people to expect. If the turn-out is low (less than 3), I will send out a message for another time.

Thank you again for all of your support this semester. I would not be able to complete my dissertation without your input and feedback. Best wishes as you wrap-up your semester.

I apologize for the duplicate messages.

Go Devils!

-Sarah☺

Sarah Bennett

Associate Director

University Academic Success Programs

University College

Arizona State University

P.O. Box 873201. - Tempe, AZ 85287-3201

Telephone # **(480) 727-1457** Fax # (480) 965-1091

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APPENDIX I
FOCUS GROUP INFORMED CONSENT

Focus Group Consent

Title of research study: Transfer Connections: Welcoming New Transfer Students

Investigators:

Sarah L. Bennett, Doctoral Candidate, Arizona State University

Dr. Scott Marley, Faculty, Arizona State University

Study Overview:

My name is Sarah Bennett and I am working on my doctorate in Education Leadership and Innovation at Arizona State University.

You are invited to participate in this study to provide me with an understanding of your transition experience at ASU. The study is part of a 14 week project. The interview should take no longer than 30 minutes and will be recorded.

The focus group will last about 90 minutes. During the focus group, the group will discuss topics related to the transition experience. I will also be gathering your thoughts on my preliminary data analysis. Group dialogue is encouraged. I will facilitate the discussion. The focus group will be recorded.

The information gained from these focus groups will be shared as a part of my dissertation project, in research publications, conference presentations, and to guide future programs for transfer students. Any information that can be used to identify participants will be excluded from any presentations and papers.

Voluntary Participation:

Your participation in this study is completely voluntary. You can skip questions if you wish and you may withdraw from the study at any time. There is no penalty for participating or not-participating.

Risk and Benefit:

There is minimal risk for participating in this study. The project presents no more risk than is experienced in everyday life. You must be 18 years old to participate. There are not costs to you for your participation in this study.

I cannot promise any benefits to you or others from your taking part in this study. However, long term information gained from this study will be used to guide future programs and policies for transfer students at ASU. Complete confidentiality cannot be guaranteed.

Person to Contact:

If you have any questions concerning the research study, please contact my faculty, Dr. Scott Marley (Scott.Marley@asu.edu) or (480) 727-7237 . If you have any questions about your rights as a participant in this research, or if you feel you have been placed at risk, you can contact the Chair of Human Subjects Institutional Review Board, through the ASU Office of Research Integrity and Assurance, at (480) 965-6788 or by email at research.integrity@asu.edu.



Consent:

By signing this consent form, I confirm that I have read and understood the information and have had the opportunity to ask questions. I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time, without giving a reason and without cost. I voluntarily agree to take part in this study.

Signature participant:	Date:
Printed name of participant:	Date:
Signature of person obtaining consent:	Date:
Printed name of person obtaining consent:	Date:

APPENDIX J
MATTERING SURVEY

My name is Sarah L. Bennett and I am working on my doctorate in Educational Leadership and Innovation at Arizona State University. You are invited to participate in this survey to provide me with an understanding of your transition experience at ASU. The study is part of a 14 week project. The survey should take no more than 15 minutes to complete.

The information gained from this survey will be shared as a part of my dissertation project, in research publications, conference presentations, and to guide future programs for transfer students. Any information that can be used to identify participants will be excluded from any presentations and papers.

Answering the survey is completely voluntary and will be anonymous. You are asked to create an identification code because a second survey will be administered later in the semester. The hope is to match your responses to look at any potential differences. You can skip questions if you wish and you may withdraw at any time. There is no penalty for participating or not-participating.

This survey will be administered twice. You are asked to include the first two letters of your last name and last three digits of your ASU identification number in order to link your results. Each time it should take approximately 15 minutes to complete.

There is minimal risk for participating in this study. The project presents no more risk than is experienced in everyday life. You must be 18 years old to participate. There are not costs to you for your participation in this study.

I cannot promise any benefits to you or others from your taking part in this study. However, long term information gained from this study will be used to guide future programs and policies for transfer students at ASU.

If you have any questions concerning the research study, please contact my faculty, Dr. Scott Marley (Scott.Marley@asu.edu) or (480) 727-7237. If you have any questions about your rights as a participant in this research, or if you feel you have been placed at risk, you can contact the Chair of Human Subjects Institutional Review Board, through the ASU Office of Research Integrity and Assurance, at (480) 965-6788 or by email at research.integrity@asu.edu.

Consent:

Filling out this survey acknowledges that you are at least 18 years old and that you voluntarily agree to participate in this study.

Please enter the first two letters of your last name:

Please enter the last 3-digits of your ASU ID:

Please circle the response which represents your feelings.

4 = Strongly Agree 3 = Agree 2 = Disagree 1 = Strongly Disagree N/A

Advising

1. My advisor seems to remember things we have discussed before.
2. The administrative rules and regulations are clear to me.
3. If my advisor didn't know the answer to my questions, I'm sure they would seek out the answers.
4. There has always been someone on campus who could help me when I had a question or problem.
5. There has always been an advisor available to talk with me if I need to ask a question.
6. Administrative staff are helpful in answering my questions.
7. Classes are offered at times that are good for me.
8. My advisor has office hours at times that I am on campus.

Do you have any additional comments about your advising experiences?

Administration

1. The university's policy of transfer credits penalizes non-traditional students.
2. The administration seems to consider adult student priorities as important as traditional student priorities.
3. The faculty and administrators are sensitive to my responsibilities.
4. The administration sets things up to be easy for them, not the students. *
5. The administration makes efforts to accommodate adult students.
6. The university offers alternatives to the traditional semester-length courses.
7. Campus rules and regulations seem to have been made for traditional-age students.

8. I feel my activities fees are spent in a way that is meaningful to me.

Do you have any additional comments about your experiences with administration?

Peers

1. I get support from my classmates when I need it.
2. I sometimes feel alone and isolated at the university. *
3. The classroom atmosphere encourages me to speak out in class.
4. I feel my classmates react positively to my experience and knowledge.
5. I feel like I fit in my classes.
6. I have a good relationship with my younger classmates.
7. My classmates would help me catch up to the new technologies if I needed it.
8. Fellow students do not seem to listen to me when I share my life experiences. *
9. I have had adequate opportunities to get to know fellow students.
10. My age sometimes gets in the way of my interactions with fellow students. *
11. As an adult student, I feel welcome on campus.

Do you have any additional comments about your experiences with peers?

Roles

1. I will have a hard time finishing my degree because of time limits on completing course requirements. *
2. It is hard for me to go back to the school environment. *
3. I don't have time to complete the administrative tasks this institution requires. *
4. The administration offices are not open at times when I need them. *
5. Unless I have another student my age in class, no one really understand how hard it is to be here. *
6. Departmental rules sometimes make my goals difficult to impossible.

Do you have any additional comments about your multiple roles?

Faculty

1. My professors interpret assertiveness as a challenge to their authority.*
2. My professors seem to recognize the younger students but not me.*

3. Sometimes I feel out of date in the classroom.*
4. My experience-based comments are accepted by my professors.
5. My professors sometimes ignore my comments or questions.*
6. I sometimes feel my professors want me to hurry up and finish speaking.*

Do you have any additional comments about your experiences with faculty?

What is the highest level of education you have completed?

GED High School AA/AS BS/BA

Did you attend a new transfer student orientation either in-person or online? Yes No

Where did you transfer from? Two-year institution Four-year institution

Are you from out of state? Yes No

What new transfer student activities are you participating in this fall, including any classes for transfer students? Open ended

How many hours a day do you work? (drop down with 0 – 40+ as individual numbers)

Are you a part-time (less than 12 credits) or full-time student (12 or more credits)? (drop down)

How old are you? (drop down starting at 18-90, do not wish to answer)

Do you plan on enrolling for classes at ASU for Spring 2016. Yes no

APPENDIX K

FIRST ROUND OF SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

1. Describe your experience at ASU up to this point in the semester.
2. What other events did you participate in during Fall Welcome? Are you taking any courses geared toward new transfer students?
3. Transition theory explains there are four areas which influence how successful a transition is. Talk to me about:
 - a. What strategies for success are you using?
 - b. What support do you have in place?
 - c. How did Transfer Connections influence each of these?
4. In what ways do you feel you matter to the university?
5. As of right now, are you planning on returning to ASU in the spring?
6. How are you doing academically up to this point?

APPENDIX L

SECOND ROUND OF SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

1. Last time you shared.... As your experience. Describe your experience now.
2. How have you connected here at ASU – whether people or offices?
Students/Faculty/staff.
3. How do you think the freshman experience compared to that of new transfer students?
4. You talked about.... Strategies earlier. Have you added to that list?
5. Previously you shared you felt you mattered because.... In what ways do you feel this has changed?
6. Do you feel welcomed on campus?
7. What are your plans for post-graduation? Graduate school?
8. Now, how are you doing academically?
9. Are you still planning on returning to ASU in the spring?

APPENDIX M
FOCUS GROUP QUESTIONS

1. How would you describe your transition process? What is the timeline?
2. Are there differences between what you consider to be your academic transition and your social transition?
3. In the interviews people talked a lot about different types of connections. Where do you feel connected?
4. I also heard about ways Transfer Connections helped with connections. For some it was academic, others social. Did Transfer Connections help with your transition? Did it play a role in your connections?
5. I heard about the importance of learning about ASU technology – maybe as a one-shot program. What would an on-going program look like to better help with connections?
6. What would you say for you are the most important issues as a new transfer student?
7. Did anybody have anything they would like to share, just in terms of things you feel are really important to your experience?

APPENDIX N

PAIRED SAMPLES T-TEST FOR INDIVIDUAL QUESTIONS

Advising	Pre-survey		Post-survey		<i>p</i>	<i>d</i>
	M	SD	M	SD		
1. My advisor seems to remember things we have discussed before.	3.100	0.568	3.000	1.247	0.758	0.100
2. The administrative rules and regulations are clear to me.	3.280	0.575	3.389	0.608	0.495	0.164
3. If my advisor didn't know the answer to my questions, I'm sure they would seek out the answers.	3.130	0.719	3.375	0.619	0.3	0.268
4. There has always been someone on campus who could help me when I had a question or problem.	2.930	0.730	3.214	0.802	0.104	0.468
5. There has always been an advisor available to talk with me if I need to ask a question.	3.080	0.641	3.310	0.480	0.19	0.385
6. Administrative staff are helpful in answering my questions.	3.330	0.492	3.000	0.853	0.104	0.512
7. Classes are offered at times that are good for me.	2.940	0.556	2.706	0.919	0.216	0.313
8. My advisor has office hours at times that I am on campus.	3.330	0.651	3.333	0.492	1	0

Administration	Pre-survey		Post-survey		<i>p</i>	<i>d</i>
	M	SD	M	SD		
9. The university's policy of transfer credits penalizes non-traditional students. *	2.462	0.877	2.692	1.032	.082**	0.526
10. The administration seems to consider adult student priorities as important as traditional student priorities.	2.380	0.916	2.250	1.035	0.685	0.149
11. The faculty and administrators are sensitive to my responsibilities.	2.91	0.831	2.545	1.036	0.221	0.393
12. The administration sets things up to be easy for them, not the students. *	2.560	0.527	2.330	0.866	0.347	0.333
13. The administration makes efforts to accommodate adult students.	3.090	0.539	2.550	0.934	.052**	0.665
14. The university offers alternatives to the traditional semester-length courses.	3.000	0.471	2.900	0.568	0.591	0.176
15. Campus rules and regulations seem to have been made for traditional-age students. *	3.000	0.655	3.267	0.799	0.164	0.379
16. I feel my activities fees are spent in a way that is meaningful to me. *	2.670	0.724	2.333	0.976	.096**	0.459

Peers	Pre-survey		Post-survey		<i>p</i>	<i>d</i>
	M	SD	M	SD		
17. I get support from my classmates when I need it.	3.000	0.816	3.000	0.816	***	
18. I sometimes feel alone and isolated at the university. *	2.130	0.835	2.130	0.991	1	0.000
19. The classroom atmosphere encourages me to speak out in class.	3.250	0.500	2.750	1.258	0.391	0.500
20. I feel my classmates react positively to my experience and knowledge.	3.330	0.577	3.333	0.577	***	
21. I feel like I fit in my classes.	3.000	1.000	2.667	1.155	0.423	0.577
22. I have a good relationship with my younger classmates.	3.330	0.577	3.000	1.000	0.423	0.577
23. My classmates would help me catch up to the new technologies if I needed it.	3.330	0.577	3.000	1.000	0.423	0.577
24. Fellow students do not seem to listen to me when I share my life experiences. *	3.000	0.000	3.000	0.000	***	
25. I have had adequate opportunities to get to know fellow students.	2.500	1.069	2.375	1.303	0.836	0.076
26. My age sometimes gets in the way of my interactions with fellow students. *	2.500	0.548	2.170	1.169	0.363	0.041
27. As an adult student, I feel welcome on campus.	3.090	0.539	2.818	0.874	0.277	0.347

Roles	Pre-survey		Post-survey		<i>p</i>	<i>d</i>
	M	SD	M	SD		
28. I will have a hard time finishing my degree because of time limits on completing course requirements. *	2.930	0.829	2.640	0.842	0.263	0.313
29. It is hard for me to go back to the school environment. *	2.860	0.864	2.640	0.842	0.512	0.180
30. I don't have time to complete the administrative tasks this institution requires. *	3.080	0.484	2.920	0.494	0.436	0.223
31. The administration offices are not open at times when I need them. *	2.920	0.793	2.830	0.577	0.754	0.093
32. Unless I have another student my age in class, no one really understands how hard it is to be here. *	3.100	0.568	3.200	0.632	0.343	0.316
33. Departmental rules sometimes make my goals difficult to impossible. *	3.000	0.707	3.000	0.500	1	0

	Pre-survey		Post-survey		<i>p</i>	<i>d</i>
	M	SD	M	SD		
Faculty						
34. My professors interpret assertiveness as a challenge to their authority. *	2.000		2.000		**	
35. My professors seem to recognize the younger students but not me. *	3.500	0.707	3.500	0.707	1	0
36. Sometimes I feel out of date in the classroom. *	2.670	0.577	3.330	0.577	0.184	1.154
37. My experience-based comments are accepted by professors.	3.000	0.000	2.000	0.000	***	
38. My professors sometimes ignore my comments or questions. *	2.670	0.577	2.330	0.577	0.667	0.289
39. I sometimes feel my professors want me to hurry up and finish speaking. *	2.670	0.577	2.667	0.577	1	0

APPENDIX O

INDEPENDT SAMPLES T-TEST FOR INDIVIDUAL QUESTIONS

	Pre-survey			Post-survey			<i>p</i>	<i>d</i>
	N	M	SD	N	M	SD		
Advising								
1. My advisor seems to remember things we have discussed before.	33	3.330	0.595	24	3.170	0.637	0.315	0.272
2. The administrative rules and regulations are clear to me.	42	3.310	0.643	28	3.210	0.499	0.511	0.161
3. If my advisor didn't know the answer to my questions, I'm sure they would seek out the answers.	45	3.420	0.690	25	3.320	0.748	0.567	0.144
4. There has always been someone on campus who could help me when I had a question or problem.	40	3.150	0.864	28	3.210	0.686	0.744	-0.081
5. There has always been an advisor available to talk with me if I need to ask a question.	40	3.250	0.588	26	3.190	0.749	0.728	0.088
6. Administrative staff are helpful in answering my questions.	41	3.170	0.771	26	3.310	0.679	0.461	-0.186

7. Classes are offered at times that are good for me.	46	3.150	0.631	28	2.890	0.737	0.112	0.385
8. My advisor has office hours at times that I am on campus.	36	3.500	0.507	26	3.120	0.766	.021*	0.613

	Pre-Survey			Post-survey			<i>p</i>	<i>d</i>
	N	M	SD	N	M	SD		
9. The university's policy of transfer credits penalizes non-traditional students. *	31	2.581	0.807	22	2.636	0.581	0.783	-0.0772
10. The administration seems to consider adult student priorities as important as traditional student priorities.	28	3.000	0.544	23	2.480	0.665	.003*	0.867
11. The faculty and administrators are sensitive to my responsibilities.	33	2.910	0.459	23	2.870	0.458	0.752	0.0864
12. The administration sets things up to be easy for them, not the students. *	35	2.690	0.583	22	2.860	0.64	0.284	-0.294

13. The administration makes efforts to accommodate adult students.	26	3.000	0.490	22	2.640	0.658	.034*	0.635
14. The university offers alternatives to the traditional semester-length courses.	27	3.190	0.483	25	3.000	0.577	0.214	0.349
15. Campus rules and regulations seem to have been made for traditional-age students. *	36	2.810	0.624	26	2.920	0.845	0.531	-0.162
16. I feel my activities fees are spent in a way that is meaningful to me. *	33	2.580	0.830	25	2.320	0.748	0.231	0.321

	Pre-survey			Post-survey			<i>p</i>	<i>d</i>
	N	M	SD	N	M	SD		
Peers								
17. I get support from my classmates when I need it.	16	2.880	0.806	26	2.920	0.628	0.83	-0.069
18. I sometimes feel alone and isolated at the university. *	27	2.520	0.802	25	2.320	0.748	0.362	0.256
19. The classroom atmosphere encourages me to speak out in class.	17	2.530	0.514	25	2.800	0.645	0.157	-0.0454

20. I feel my classmates react positively to my experience and knowledge.	18	2.940	0.539	24	2.830	0.637	0.554	0.186
21. I feel like I fit in my classes.	14	3.070	0.475	26	2.960	0.599	0.557	0.197
22. I have a good relationship with my younger classmates.	13	2.920	0.641	22	3.000	0.436	0.675	-0.151
23. My classmates would help me catch up to the new technologies if I needed it.	16	2.940	0.443	22	2.950	0.375	0.899	-0.042
24. Fellow students do not seem to listen to me when I share my life experiences. *	17	3.000	0.612	23	3.040	0.562	0.817	-0.075
25. I have had adequate opportunities to get to know fellow students.	26	2.850	0.732	25	2.720	0.614	0.509	0.187
26. My age sometimes gets in the way of my interactions with fellow students. *	19	2.840	0.834	20	2.700	0.979	0.629	0.156
27. As an adult student, I feel welcome on campus.	19	3.160	0.375	16	2.810	0.544	.034*	0.752

Notes. ****p* and *t* not run because the standard error of difference is 0.

Roles	Pre-survey			Post-survey			<i>p</i>	<i>d</i>
	N	M	SD	N	M	SD		
28. I will have a hard time finishing my degree because of time limits on completing course requirements. *	34	3.030	0.933	26	2.810	0.801	0.651	0.119
29. It is hard for me to go back to the school environment. *	34	3.030	0.797	22	3.090	0.684	0.767	-0.082
30. I don't have time to complete the administrative tasks this institution requires. *	34	3.240	0.606	22	2.910	0.75	.079*	0.49
31. The administration offices are not open at times when I need them. *	30	3.000	0.587	22	3.090	0.61	0.59	-0.152
32. Unless I have another student my age in class, no one really understands how hard it is to be here. *	24	3.000	0.722	18	2.830	0.707	0.46	0.233
33. Departmental rules sometimes make my goals difficult to impossible. *	28	3.000	0.720	24	2.710	0.859	0.189	0.371

Faculty	Pre-survey			Post-survey			<i>p</i>	<i>d</i>
	N	M	SD	N	M	SD		
34. My professors interpret assertiveness as a challenge to their authority. *	11	2.730	0.467	22	3.000	0.617	0.207	-0.476
35. My professors seem to recognize the younger students but not me. *	12	3.000	0.426	20	3.150	0.489	0.386	-0.321
36. Sometimes I feel out of date in the classroom. *	15	2.930	0.704	21	2.900	0.944	0.922	0.033
37. My experience-based comments are accepted by professors.	13	2.850	0.376	20	2.700	0.733	0.513	0.236
38. My professors sometimes ignore my comments or questions. *	15	3.000	0.378	25	3.200	0.577	0.24	-0.39
39. I sometimes feel my professors want me to hurry up and finish speaking. *	Blank			23	3.220	0.600		

*Notes. ** Correlation & t cannot be computed because the sum of caseweights is less than or equal to 1. *** The correlation & t cannot be computed because the standard error of the difference is 0.*

APPENDIX P

INITIAL PHRASES FOR INDIVIDUAL INTERVIEW

Being a number to ASU
Being busy
Being more than a statistic
Classes are good
Connecting with Barrett
Didn't know about events
Different situation than freshman
Faculty are good
Feeling like not alone
Get homework done early
Going to graduate school
Having a routine
Hearing about strategies again
How doing in classes so far
How experience has been
How feeling overall
Ideas for TC
know about tutoring centers
Know campus support is available
Learning for learning
Letting go of old friends
Living situation
Lots of events for freshman
Maing connections with advisor
Making connections with faculty
Mattering to ASU
Meeting people
Meeting people in similar situation at TC
Missing human connection with faculty
More reading
More workload
Non-traditional student
Online stuff
Out of state disconnect
Outside support
Parent session
Retention important to ASU
School is expensive
Size of ASU
Spent time searching for events
Stay busy
Staying on top of what is going on
Study abroad
Success strategies
TC and feeling like matter
Time management
Transfer connections helping with success strategies

Transfer course
Transfer shock
Welcome events
Welcome events were helpful
What community colleges like
What has been hard
Work

APPENDIX Q

INITIAL PHRASES FOR FOCUS GROUP

Academic connection
Academics constant
Age differences
Appreciation for FG experience
Campus differences
Campus environments
Connection to me
Course workload
DARS & GPA
Difference from CC
Difference of online environment
Difficulty getting classes
Difficulty in making friends
Disconnect with peers
Encouraged to take courses at CC still
Feel of Temp as University
Feelings about faculty
Feelings about other students
Financial Aid
Finding connections
GPA
Grade importance
Having a place to go
Helping each other
Living environment impact
Looking for others
Mindset
New major
Non-traditional student
Online disconnection
Peer input
Peer question
School and social balance
School worth
Social disconnect
Student organizations
Suggestions for TC
TC and connections - feelings
Technology learned from TC
Transferring of credits
Transition end point
Transportation
Work

APPENDIX R
QUESTIONS ASKED DURING STUDENT PANEL

- How did you adjust to ASU Tempe?
- Do you recommend I take three upper-division courses while working?
- How do you manage the reading for upper-division courses?
- How can I get involved with engineering research with faculty?
- Are there computer labs to work on for classes?
- What is the best way to stop procrastinating?
- Are there any fridges and microwaves on campus to use?
- Have you done any psychology research yet? (asked of psychology student on panel)
- Can I work on campus and still take classes? Are they flexible with scheduling you to work?
- What main resources did you use to help you become successful?
- Where is Career Services?
- Have any of you done study abroad as a transfer student? Does the timeframe allow for this before graduation?
- Do you suggest purchasing books now or on/before first day of class?
- What is the workload like for upper-division courses?
- Do you know anyone who found free parking, free textbooks, and free printing? If so, how did they do it?
- What is the best time to get to campus to beat traffic?
- Is it as difficult to park a bike? Busy?
- Are the bike valets responsible for and liable for bikes not getting stolen?
- I saw in my tuition they took out a health and gym fee? Does that mean I can use the gym for free?
- How do you get access to bike lockers on campus?
- Is the gym really crowded too? Are there times when it's not as crowded?
- I'm taking an online class and my professor said for 1st time something about a lockdown browser. What is that?
- Can we join a club at any time?