

Removing Barriers: Transitioning Adult Education Students to Post-secondary Programs
Through Increased Access to Information

by

Michele Stiehl

A Dissertation Presented in Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Doctor of Education

Approved April 2023 by the
Graduate Supervisory Committee:

Brian Nelson, Chair
Lydia Ross
Emma Diaz

ARIZONA STATE UNIVERSITY

May 2023

ABSTRACT

Transitioning adult education students to post-secondary programs and community college requires deliberate intervention and support services. This dissertation study was part of a larger action research study aimed at increasing transitions to college for non-traditional adult students by providing support and resources to adult education providers and staff. Earlier cycles of the study examined student and institutional barriers to participation and revealed missing college bridge activities. This specific cycle of research addressed one of these barriers, the need for increased access to transition information, through the creation of an online resource toolkit for students and staff. This study explored the affect of the toolkit on staff attitude and motivation related to campus transition activities, their use of the online toolkit, and the need for additional resources and strategies to better implement transitions programs. The data for this project was collected through pre- and post-intervention surveys, technology acceptance model (TAM) questionnaire, semi-structured interviews, and website analytics. It included a concurrent mixed methods quantitative and qualitative approach to analysis. Overall, the resource toolkit was well received, useful, and easy to use. Staff attitude and motivation shifted toward stronger support and intention to participate in transition activities like college-talk and campus culture. Considerations moved away from perceived obstacles related to college transitions. As part of this study, participants shared strategies for further development and expansion of the toolkit, ideas for promoting equity and access to transition services for all students, aligning staff vision and institutionalizing practices, and building college-going cultures and student college identities through counseling and curriculum. All of these efforts are designed to have adult students see themselves as

successful learners and provide the support necessary to make college a real opportunity for all.

DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated to my husband for his unwavering excitement, solo weekends, study teas, and making it happen in our budget! And to my family, thank you for building my college-identity from pre-school. I am clear that *college talk* and a college-going environment make a difference.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I am sincerely grateful to my dissertation committee chairperson, Dr. Brian Nelson.

Thank you for keeping your guidance light and supportive. Thank you to Dr. Lydia Ross for helping me get my head around the statistics and pressing my choices with the right questioning. Thank you Dr. Emma Diaz for bringing your knowledge, expertise, and passion for adult learning to the team. I appreciate your support and ongoing partnership in our work in California.

Thank you Veronica Montes and Candace Lee for being collaborative administrators that inspire leadership in your staff. I am grateful to have worked with you and be mentored by you. I appreciate your help in applying to this doctoral program. Thank you Deanna Matsumoto for your mentorship as part of my coursework. I always learn so much through the simplest conversations with you.

I am grateful to my team at the LARAEC office, Lanzi Asturias and Justin Gorence, for helping me work through the development and implementation of the study and intervention. I am especially grateful to my inspiration team of adult teachers, advisors, and administrators who have been instrumental in driving this project forward. I appreciate your continued partnership in transforming transitions to college for adult learners in Los Angeles. Thank you for who you are for me and what you do for students Launa Prince, Mosies Gomez, Deanne Susino, Lisa Saperston, Barbara Milling, Monica Medina, Men Le, Michelle Cohen, and all of the study and spotlight videos participants. It has been a pleasure learning from the field and working with all of you to create products that make a difference.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
LIST OF TABLES	vi
LIST OF FIGURES	vii
CHAPTER	
1 INTRODUCTION AND PURPOSE OF STUDY	1
National Context	3
Local Context	8
Problem of Practice	19
Findings from Previous Cycles	19
Purpose of Study	25
Research Questions	26
2 REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE	29
Andragogy	30
Student Retention Models	34
Culturally Relevant Education	38
Fostering Change	39
Technology Acceptance	42
Conclusions	45
3 METHODOLOGY	47
Setting	47
Role of Researcher	50
Research Design	51

CHAPTER	Page
Analytic Strategy	65
4 ANALYSIS AND FINDINGS	70
Analysis of Quantitative Data	70
Analysis of Qualitative Data	84
Closing Thoughts on Analysis and Findings	98
5 DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS.....	100
RQs and Complementarity of Data	100
Connections to Existing Literature.....	106
Personal Lessons Learned.....	112
Limitations	114
Implications for Practice.....	117
Implications for Research.....	121
Closing Thoughts.....	122
REFERENCES	124
APPENDIX	
A TAM FREQUENCY TABLE	132
B RESOURCE HIGHLIGHT EMAILS	134
C INSTRUMENTS	141
D IRB DOCUMENTS	152

LIST OF TABLES

Table	Page
1. Cronbach's Alpha for Pre-Survey.....	73
2. Mean Scores fro Pre-Survey Attitude and Motivation	74
3. Paired Samples Test – Comparing Pre-Survey Sub-Constructs	75
4. Paired Samples Test: Pre- and Post-Surveys for Attitude and Motivation	77
5. Frequency and Percentage of Respondents Attitude and Motivation	78
6. Frequency and Percentage of Respondents on Considerations.....	79
7. Frequency and Percentage of Respondents from TAM	80
8. TAM Regression Coefficients	81
9. Website Analytics fro Student Resource Pages During Study Window	83
10. Website Analytics for Teacher Resource Pages During Study Window.....	83

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure	Page
1. Key Barriers and Supports from Cycle Zero and Cycle One	24
2. Technology Acceptance Model	45
3. Previous Cycles –Strategies and Activities Moving Forward.....	55
4. Mixed Methods Approach.....	66
5. Limitations Frequencies	84
6. A Model for Increasing AE Transitions to College.....	86
7. Daily Page Views During the Six-Week Study.....	111

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION AND PURPOSE OF STUDY

An education pioneer and public schooling advocate, Horace Mann, once said, “Education, then, beyond all other devices of human origin, is the great equalizer of the conditions of men, the balance wheel of the social machinery.” (Mann, 1849). Education institutions across the United States are often faced with decisions to make about how to address poverty and educational equity with students. Such decisions, and questions related to them, are even more in the forefront with the nationwide impact of COVID 19. Districts are experiencing a widening of the socioeconomic gaps between communities and students. Lower-wage workers were hardest hit by the pandemic due to slow low-wage job recovery, rising food and housing costs, and a changing job market. In attempts to remedy these gaps, districts are buying technology, negotiating community Wi-Fi contracts, providing school supplies and enrichment programs, and implementing massive food campaigns. All of these strategies provide only short-term solutions.

Twenty years ago, I was struck by something a past education director shared with staff. He indicated that as a district we can buy backpacks, provide childcare, and handout school lunches, but no matter what we do, children can never get themselves out of poverty. It is only through elevating the parents’ economic capital that we can hope to make a difference for families. This is the value of providing basic education and post-secondary programs for adults. Adult education programs meet adults where they are and create the opportunity to set them on a course for increased earnings and new careers.

The intention of this action research (AR) dissertation study was to provide adult students with support and resources needed to better connect them with post-secondary

program options and new pathways to higher wage careers. This study investigated the affect of several new avenues of transition information for adult education counselors and faculty. A web-based transition resource toolkit and spotlight sessions, offering information on use of the resource kit, were created to better connect adult education staff with resources they needed to support adult student transitions to college. This study explored the affect of the toolkit and spotlight sessions on staff attitude toward transitions programs, motivation to implement and participate in creating college-going cultures on adult education campuses, and their intention to utilize the toolkit with their students. This study also provided an opportunity for staff to discuss the content of the toolkit, and evaluate what resources are needed to better implement transitions programs that support adult students.

In preparation for the dissertation study, three cycles of preliminary research were conducted. These cycles focused on identifying adult student barriers to participating in higher learning and institutional barriers to providing pathways to post-secondary programs. The first cycle established several critical areas including access to transition information, level of collaboration between adult education programs and community colleges, varied counseling practices and approaches, and limited focus on activities that build college-going culture and student college identities. The second cycle of research provided a deeper understanding of the types of transition information needed by adult students and support staff, the challenges in accessing transition information, and ideas for building new models to support student transitions to post-secondary education in current adult education structures. The third cycle examined current online access to transition resources and information and revealed the limited amount of information that

is available or shared by schools on their online platforms. It was the intent of this dissertation study to build on these previous cycles by providing greater access to transition information and exploring the affect on the attitudes and motivation of counselors, faculty, and staff.

National Context

Need for Middle Skilled Workers

According to Georgetown Center for Education and Workforce (Carnevale et al., 2018), over the last 30 years access to good jobs has decreased for workers with a high school diploma or less, while jobs have increased for middle-skilled workers (more than high school but less than a BA). This phenomenon is attributed to the decline in manufacturing, increase in automation, globalization of the economy, and the introduction of AI, robotics, and analytics (Frady, 2021). These factors have increased the need for more skilled workers. An analysis of Bureau of Labor statistics data shows stronger than average job openings for middle-skilled workers between 2019-2029 (Frady, 2019). Mark Zandi, author of the *Monthly Labor Review* for the Bureau of Labor Statistics, argues that it is highly important for our economy to increase the skill level of our growing low-income and minority populations over the next decade to meet this demand (2016). If we don't help students develop new skill sets and increase their employment capital, market innovations will widen economic gaps (Zandi 2016) and continue to create a polarized workforce. Career technical education programs at adult schools and community colleges are in a unique position to fill the need for a skilled workforce. The United States Departments of Education and Labor, through the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA), are investing 10 billion dollars in

annual funding to “help job seekers access employment, education, training, and support services to succeed in the labor market and to match employers with the skilled workers they need to compete in the global economy” (USDOL, 2016). Providing awareness and access to these training programs has become a focus area for educational institutions, agencies working with job seekers or underemployed individuals, and workforce partners looking for trained candidates. It is more important than ever to assist populations in need with navigating through educational programs and building pathways to future higher-wage careers. Adult education programs are in a unique position to connect students with these pathways. This dissertation study focused on working with adult educators to provide increased access to information about these types of pathways that support students in filling the national need for middle-skilled workers.

Adult Education Programs

Adult education is often an overlooked set of programs that exists between K12 education systems and community colleges. These programs are designed for students who may need an alternative to the traditional course of study, may not have a high school diploma, and may not yet be ready for the rigor of community college. Adult education can include programs such as English as a Second Language (ESL), Adult Basic Education (ABE), Adult Secondary Education (ASE) including high school diploma or equivalency testing, and noncredit Career Technical Education (CTE). The United States Department of Education website indicates that adult education and literacy includes “programs that help adults acquire the basic skills they need including reading, writing, math, English language proficiency, and problem-solving to be productive workers, family members, and citizens” (U.S. Department of Education, n.d.). These

programs are typically offered through adult schools (as part of K12 districts), community college noncredit programs, county offices of education, and other community agencies.

According to California education code (State of California, 2021, EC 84906), adult education providers must have a plan that includes actions “to improve transitions to postsecondary education and the workforce.” This creates a focus for adult education programs to assist students in improving skills in order to transition to post-secondary programs, obtain gainful employment, or both. Adult education is also aimed at providing services to students in special populations or who may experience barriers to employment, including adults with disabilities (or learning differences), dislocated workers, workforce re-entry (previously incarcerated, displaced homemaker, veterans), low-skilled, limited English, low literacy, drop-out recovery, and credit deficient high school students (National Archives, 2016). These populations of students may not meet the entrance requirements or not yet have the skills to be successful in post-secondary programs. Adult education provides a unique entry point for those looking to upgrade job skills or earn the credential that allows for transition to college or a new career. With the charge of ensuring students are prepared for life, work, and supporting families, it has become more important than ever for adult schools to meet students where they are and successfully transition them to their next step. In support of these goals, this dissertation study examined several new avenues of access to transitions information for adult educators and counseling staff to provide direct and needed support to adult students as they move through adult education programs and transition to post-secondary.

The Non-Traditional Student and Barriers to Post Secondary

Most students served by adult education programs are considered *non-traditional*. Non-traditional students are typically over 25 years old and have a number of life circumstances and responsibilities that may hinder their participation in educational pursuits (Bloomberg, 2023 & Chen, 2017). These circumstances may include working full-time, caring for dependents, single parenting, financial dependence, and gaps in education (Bloomberg, 2023 & Chen, 2017). Non-traditional students may have difficulty working within typical institutional schedules, they may have greater demand on their time, and they may have difficulty accessing provided support services (Bloomberg, 2023). These circumstances can serve as personal barriers that not only affect attendance in adult education but also may cause additional challenges when transferring to college or other post-secondary programs.

As part of the commitment to transition students, schools must identify and develop solutions for overcoming student barriers to post-secondary education. The *Adult Education Pipeline* statistics (WestEd, 2019) show that 66% of students in adult education programs are over 25 years old. According to regional statistics reported annually as part of the California Adult Education Program, 82% of adult students report at least one barrier to employment (Tops Pro Enterprise, 2019). These employment barriers may include low literacy, low income, long-term unemployment, homelessness, cultural barriers ex- offender status, foster care, disability, or English language learner. Adult education also serves a young adult population ages 18-24 years. These young adults often enroll in adult education because they were unsuccessful in traditional comprehensive high schools or had special life circumstances (pregnant, parenting,

discipline, safety, etc.) that required an alternate setting (UCLA Center Program and Policy Analysis, 2015). According to the Adult Education Pipeline statistics (WestEd, 2019) from the greater Los Angeles area, 56% of adult secondary education students are young adults. All of these non-traditional students may need additional support in navigating the enrollment process in post-secondary institutions, understanding the benefits of further education, and avoiding predatory programs that target vulnerable populations. Equitable access and guidance are common considerations when supporting non-traditional students.

Adult education programs also need to examine institutional barriers that exist in local systems. Schools may experience counseling shortages, insufficient funding, shifting leadership, or lack of infrastructure. Institutional practices may create barriers for students in scheduling classes, navigating complex enrollment protocols, accessing services on evenings and weekends, and inability to transfer credits between institutions (Bloomberg, 2023). Bridges between community colleges and adult schools may not be fully developed (CDE & CCCCO, 2015). Institutional barriers in the school or college structure create challenges for students that may delay, complicate, or derail their pursuit of a post- secondary credential. Adult education providers might focus on developing ways to better support students by providing transition services, implementing innovative transition strategies, and developing ways to institutionalize transition practices into the counseling, communication, and teaching systems on campus (Mollica & Simon, 2021).

Adult Education Transitions

To assist students with overcoming some of these barriers to post-secondary education, adult education providers across the country have been implementing a variety

of transition strategies. A study funded by the National Center for the Study of Adult Learning and Literacy surveyed many adult education institutions across many states to look at various models for transitioning adult education students to college (Zaft et al., 2006). Findings from the research included some commonalities among program offerings. Most college transition programs fell into one of five models including: (1) Advising, (2) GED-Plus, (3) English for Speakers of Other Languages ESOL, (4) Career Pathways, and (5) College Preparatory (Zaft et al., 2006). A U.S. Department of Education funded report (Alamprese, n.d.) highlighted the Nellie Mae Education Foundation ABE-to-College Transition Project which provides a range of support services to students, including academic preparation, counseling, and mentoring. Although there is much research on types of programs that districts are using, there is a need for more research into the types of programs that are most effective. Further quantitative research on specific interventions would be useful, as well as longitudinal data on student success and transitions beyond the programs (Zaft et al., 2006). As local districts look to build and expand quality transition programs, it is helpful to continue to examine components of these and other existing models.

Local Context

Adult education program structures, funding sources, and program elements vary across the United States. Adult education can be governed by community colleges, K12 districts, libraries, county offices of education, jails, and for-profit entities. Some adult programs have strong connections with institutions of higher learning, while others operate independently. Some states have coordinated adult basic education services, while other states leave programs to local district discretion. To fully understand the

context for this dissertation study, it is important to consider both the state context for adult education as well as the local region. The state of California and the Los Angeles region have both undergone significant changes in adult education governance over the last several years.

Consortium Collaboration and Seamless Transitions

In 2014, the State of California changed the structure, funding, and focus of adult education. In an effort to coordinate adult education providers, California adopted a consortium model for all adult education funding. The state was broken into 71 individually funded consortia which consist of K12 school districts that provide adult education, community college district's noncredit adult programs, workforce and educational partners (WorkSource centers, AJCC, Workforce Investment Boards, apprenticeship programs), and community partners (sheriff jail education, county and city libraries, youth source, and city programs). The mission of the consortia model is to have "Educators in K-12 and community colleges work synergistically with workforce partners... to ensure that students are prepared for life, for work, and to support their families and strengthen communities, no matter where they are in their educational journey" (OpenDoors, 2017). The mission and funding criteria shifted adult education toward preparing students for work. This means programs that provide technical education or a pathway to college became the primary focus.

When establishing the California Adult Education Program (AEP), support was limited to only seven programs, including (1) elementary and secondary basic skills, high school diploma, and high school equivalency (2) English as a second language, citizenship, and workforce, (3) entry and re-entry into the workforce, (4) developing

skills in adults to assist school children to succeed academically, (5) adults with disabilities, (6) short term career technical education, and (7) pre-apprenticeship (State of California, 2021, EC84913). For purposes of this study, *adult education* will refer to programs consistent with those supported by California AEP. This dissertation study was conducted within a consortium governed by the California education code for the Adult Education Program (AEP) (State of California, 2021, EC 84906). One of the primary goals of California AEP is to provide for seamless transitions between schools, including consistent assessment practices, articulation agreements between campuses, alignment of career pathways, shared data, and coordination of programs (Legislative Analyst's Office, 2018). It is the intent of this model to have all consortia member-districts collaborate in supporting the adult population in the region and providing seamless pathways through AE programs toward college and careers.

New Legislation Lays the Groundwork

California has seen an influx of new legislation in the last several years that specifically targets adult education students, fills in gaps in services, and opens up pathways to post-secondary education for this population. Beginning in 2001, the state legislature has passed a number of bills that make up and actualize the California Dream Act. AB 540 provides the opportunity for students to qualify for in-state tuition, regardless of legal status, if they attended and graduated from a California high school (California Student Aid Commission, 2019). This was further expanded in 2011 to include an opportunity for these same students to apply for Cal Grants and financial aid to help cover the costs of college. In 2016, legislative requirements shifted the community college Board of Governors waivers to become the new California College

Promise Grant. This grant provided fees waivers for all first-time college students, including AB540 applicants, and essentially gave all students their first year free. In 2017, a new senate bill, SB68, extended the criteria for in-state tuition and AB540 qualification to include attendance in an adult school program as the same as attending a California high school (State of California, 2017). This expanded legislation fills in an important gap for transitioning adults to post-secondary programs. In 2018-19, California Assembly Bill 705 took effect in community colleges, eliminating the use of single entrance assessments for placement in English and mathematics and redesigned the use of developmental programs aimed to “maximize the probability that a student will enter and complete transfer-level coursework in English and math within a one-year timeframe” (California Community College Chancellors Office, n.d.). This legislation removed the hurdle of entrance testing and removed the more than likely placement into a developmental program experienced by approximately 68% of all entering community college students (Center for Community College Student Engagement, 2016). A final gap was closed in California beginning with the 2020-2021 school year with Senate Bill 554 (State of California, 2019) providing adult education students with the opportunity to participate in dual-enrollment programs at no cost just like high school students. Dual-enrollment provides a great opportunity for adult education providers to utilize an effective transition program that allows students to accelerate their high school diploma requirements while gaining valuable college readiness skills (Rodriguez & Gao, 2021). All of these legislative changes have paved huge roads for adult students and immigrants to transition and be successful in post-secondary programs. They do not just provide these pathways, but have illuminated the role that adult education plays in supporting and

eliminating barriers for non-traditional students. As part of this dissertation study, resources and access to information to help staff and students navigate all of these new legislative avenues were included in the design.

The Los Angeles Regional Adult Education Consortium

The Los Angeles basin is home to 18 of the 72 adult education consortia in the state, with the Los Angeles Regional Adult Education Consortium (LARAEC) as the largest. LARAEC aligns with the footprint of the Los Angeles Community College District (LACCD) and the Los Angeles Unified School District (LAUSD), each among the largest districts in the nation. In addition to these massive districts, LARAEC also includes three smaller adult school programs attached to K12 unified school districts. Altogether, the consortium has nine community colleges, 16 adult schools, and hundreds of branch locations in the community. In a typical year, the consortium serves nearly 120,000 adult students (not counting college for-credit enrollment), with the next largest consortium at nearly half that amount (WestEd, 2019). The consortium covers an area of nearly 900 square miles and encompasses many diverse communities. Although Los Angeles is predominately Hispanic (74%), there are pockets of other populations throughout the consortium (WestEd, 2019). Nearly 80% of the students in Los Angeles Unified School District, the largest district in the consortium, qualify for free or reduced lunch (LAUSD, 2019) based on household income. Just over 25% of the Los Angeles region lives near or below the poverty level (CAEP, 2021). LARAEC spans a large urban and suburban metropolitan area and many diverse communities. Connecting Los Angeles region adults to high quality education, transitions to post-secondary programs or training, and pathways to higher wage careers are vitally important.

Following the consortium model set up by the state of California, LARAEC is funded as a region. An executive board determines the funding allocation for each district member and provides for general management and oversight of the program. Day-to-day operations of each district are left to each district's leadership, however all districts are required to participate in writing and carrying out unified three-year and annual plans for providing services to adults in the region. These plans are meant to increase collaboration between districts, fill in gaps in services for students, allow districts to leverage funds, and provide for seamless transitions between institutions. To facilitate collaborative inter-district projects, each district selects staff and faculty members to serve as subject matter experts on a collection of action planning teams. These action planning teams focus on specific projects outlined in three year and annual plans. One of these teams was tasked with defining and strengthening pathways between programs, districts, and transitions to college. This team identified access to up-to-date and reliable information as a primary focus area for their work. To coordinate the efforts of the Executive Board and action planning teams, the consortium has a project director and staff.

The local and state contexts that currently govern adult education seem to be coalescing around the idea of strengthening pathways and transitions to post-secondary programs. New legislation in the state of California has created avenues to broaden the scope of students served to accommodate most all adult learners and provide equity in access through free college initiatives and supports for undocumented students. The consortium-level structures are designed to support inter-district collaboration in creating seamless pathways between institutions, including post-secondary transitions. Local consortium action planning teams and local regional plans are aligned with the

commitment to strengthening pathways and providing equitable access to college for adult students.

Personal Context

I have spent the last 23 years working in adult education, including 18 years managing drop-out recovery programs. As a program coordinator and advisor, I worked directly with students in Los Angeles to support them in completing their high school diploma requirements and figuring out what is next. I had first-hand experience building transition and dual enrollment programs at one campus in partnership with the local community colleges. Many of our early initiatives hit roadblocks and challenges both in student participation and institutional processes. Five years ago, I was moved to the central office, to work as an advisor on the consortium staff. Part of my position was to facilitate collaboration between member districts through supporting the action planning teams, as well as facilitate the creation of plans for strengthening transitions and dual enrollment programs. I have participated in focus group meetings with advisors, counselors, administrators, and curriculum developers in putting together an implementation plan for improving transitions to college and post-secondary programs. The consortium level provided a new vantage point in which to examine our existing structures, identify barriers, and outline new possibilities for adult students. In this role, for this dissertation study, I worked with consortium-level action planning team members to build new avenues for sharing transitions information with counselors and faculty and curated strategies that support the implementation of transition activities across member-districts.

Impact of COVID 19 and the Pandemic

At the start of this dissertation study, the consortium was beginning the fourth school year impacted by a global pandemic. It is important to consider how this has affected the local context. Preliminary cycles of research that influenced this dissertation study were conducted from the fall of 2020 through the fall of 2022. In March 2020, all of the districts in the consortium closed to in-person instruction due to the spread of COVID 19, a Los Angeles County health department safer-at-home recommendation, and an executive order from the governor of the State of California. After initial shutdowns, school districts had to pivot all programs to remote environments including instruction, counseling, registration, support services, and all faculty, staff, and administrators. As a highly populated urban area hit hard by the virus, most Los Angeles county school districts maintained remote schooling through the end of 2019-2020 school year and throughout the entire 2020-21 school year. Although schools re-opened in the fall of 2021-22, classes had not returned to pre-COVID offerings. In the fall of 2022, when this study commenced, some classes remained online, some took on hybrid formats with synchronous and asynchronous work, and some were opened for in-person classes with limited capacity. Many of the on-campus transition services and programs were suspended. Much of the counseling and orientation services continued to be offered online. The state of emergency in California due to COVID was lifted in February 2023.

The effect of COVID-19 on the Los Angeles community and adult education population was severe. Adult education programs showed a large decrease in enrollment. Nationally, adult student enrollment dropped 30% by the end of 2020 as compared to the prior year (Amour, December 2020). The Los Angeles Region showed a 43% decrease in

adult education students by the end of the 2020-21 school year as compared to the pre-COVID year of 2018-19 (WestEd, 2021). The UCLA quality of life survey of Los Angeles county residents indicated the 40% of households had a decrease in income (UCLA, 2021). Nearly 1 in 5 Angelinos surveyed had lost their job during the shut-down. The majority of those with the largest economic impact from the pandemic were people with less than a college education and earning below \$60,000 per year (UCLA, 2021). Parents of school-age children had to adapt to remote schooling and lack of childcare since schools and many after school programs closed. The United States census bureau found that 1 in 5 working adults had to suspend working due to changes in childcare (Heggeness & Fields, August 2020), with women ages 25-44 most impacted. This population also reported increased anxiety about affording food and housing (Heggeness & Fields, 2020). It is not surprising that adult education enrollment was significantly impacted by COVID-19 as the student population was majority female (54%) between the ages 20-50 years (64%), (WestEd, 2020) in a city with the median household income of \$62,000 (US Census Bureau, 2019). This population was hit the hardest. Although the last two years have shown some recovery in the consortium, the 2021-22 school year was still nearly 30% below pre-COVID enrollment LARAEC, 2023).

The transition to remote schooling changed the primary modes of interaction between home and school for many families. Teachers, administrators, and students had to rely on internet accessible devices to communicate, do schoolwork, and connect with classroom instructors during the early stages of the pandemic. “53% of Americans say that the internet has been essential during the COVID-19 outbreak” (Vogels et al., 2020).

As we move forward, internet access will likely remain an essential feature in adult education and connection with schools. Marketing and content development experts predict that school communications will be driven by multiple platforms and school leadership will need to distribute across a variety of mediums (Doverspike, 2023). As expanded programs are created, including transitions programs, attention should be given to ensure access to resources, services, and counseling for in-person, hybrid, and remote students with a variety of devices. Schools now exist in multiple modalities. In exploring the issue of equal access to transition information for all adult students, online and school-based systems of communication, counseling, information sharing, and environments were examined. Consequently, this dissertation study explored new avenues for sharing transitions information, with emphasis on providing easily accessible, on-demand, and online resources and their affect on faculty ability to support students with transitions to post-secondary programs.

Past Initiatives and Challenges

Although more recently the state has created new funding streams and removed some barriers, plans for transitioning students from adult education to post-secondary schools needs to be created locally. Although all California Community Colleges operate under a single state Chancellors Office, individual colleges each have their own academic senate and manage instructional decisions at each campus. Local school districts and adult schools create regional partnerships with each unique school site. This has sometimes created a challenge in establishing consortium-wide pathways for students from one institution to the next.

At the time of this dissertation study, transition programs on adult school campuses in the consortium varied widely. Based on interviews with consortium staff, students relied mostly on individual guidance provided by counselors, teachers, and support staff. Campuses with more developed programs were highly dependent on specific school personalities to keep them going, rather than institutional practices. Some schools connected with community colleges to exchange information, share contact and transition information with students, and host informational sessions at various points in the school year. Some sites had regularly scheduled college counseling on adult campuses, financial aid workshops hosted by community college faculty, and school tours. A few adult schools had students participate in dual-enrollment classes. Some school site staff shared that transition activities often changed along with leadership changes at both adult schools and colleges.

Transitions Goal Alignment

The local consortium saw many efforts over the last several years finally coalesce. The legislative solutions, previously mentioned, resolved enrollment barriers, expanded financial aid, increased access for undocumented students, and created new pathways to higher education for adult students. The local consortium had identified transitions as a priority area in the current three-year plan. Transitions to post-secondary and colleges have been flagged by the state as a success indicator for the California Adult Education Program and are included in annual reporting data (Adult Education Block Grant Office, 2016). The California Legislative Analyst's Office has included transitions to post-secondary as a success indicator for a new proposed funding formula (LAO, 2022). The consortium had an inter-district action planning team to establish and strengthen

pathways between institutions. Outside consortia around the state had already begun the process of implementing pathways, transitions, and dual-enrollment. All of the planets seemed to have aligned and prepared for the next innovation in transitions to college. This dissertation study was a first step in providing increased access to transitions information across all consortium schools.

Problem of Practice

The problem of practice for the consortium of study was to increase the number of adult education students in the consortium that successfully transition to college. To achieve this, the consortium needs to strengthen and support the development and implementation of local transition plans and collaboration between AE campuses and community colleges. According to Adult Education Pipeline data (CCC LaunchBoard, 2019), only 7% of ESL and academic adult students in the region were reported as transitioning to college. Some individual school sites in the region had implemented some transitional support programs; however, the level and access to services varied by member district and school site. Although California education code allows funding for coordination of seamless transitions from adult education to postsecondary, at the start of this study, the consortium did not have a coordinated plan for moving forward with supporting transitions to college, which may account for the limited results.

Findings from Previous Cycles

This dissertation study was part of a larger action research inquiry. Action research (AR) is defined as any systematic inquiry conducted by teacher researchers or other stakeholders in the teaching/learning environment to gather information about how

their particular schools operate, how they teach, and how well their students learn (Mills, 2011). Action research involves multiple cycles of inquiry, data gathering, and analysis. Action research was selected for this study since a teacher researcher was working collaboratively with consortium action planning teams and field personnel to find solutions for increasing student transitions to postsecondary programs. Three previous cycles of action research were conducted to explore the problem of practice in the local consortium context.

Cycle Zero

Cycle zero of this AR study was designed to identify the roadblocks and barriers to implementing transition programs on adult education campuses. Semi-structured interviews of three advising faculty at three adult school locations were open coded to look for common themes. Although there have been some local efforts to assist students with college connections, these interviews confirmed that most programs are currently on hold and in need of a clearer plan of action. Students' personal barriers were mentioned as areas to address, however more pressing considerations included access to transition information, collaboration with colleges, counseling practices, and tracking student transitions. All interviewees indicated that the primary source of information about transitions are school counselors and advisors who offer individual support as requested. Each of the study participants also commented on the need for providing support services to these students. Many adult students are challenged in navigating the transition process on their own. One interviewee stated "It is absolutely an equity issue. We're talking about first generation, we're talking about second language learners, we're talking about older adults, we're talking about people that are working or that have children or that are not

legal residents. So, there are so many more barriers for them.” Moving forward, study participants indicated that they would like to see some past transition programs return with a more structured format. A primary consideration of all interviewees was the importance of school culture in promoting college and career transition programs. One interviewee was clear that a “stronger college presence” is needed on campus. “When it’s in the air...and visual” then teachers, staff, and students start having conversations and participation increases. Another area of concern for the interviewees was having access to information for both students and counseling staff. All three participants indicated there was no centralized or easily accessible place for students or staff to go to find out information about transition programs, and this issue is compounded now with remote schooling. Cycle zero interviews confirmed much of the local context and clearly identified the need for coordinated transition programs across the districts and consortium.

Cycle One

The Cycle One study deepened understanding about faculty and student access to transition information. Transition information might include basic registration and financial aid procedures, contact with college counseling services, post-secondary program exploration, and student support services. This cycle explored the current sources and locations of information, types of transition information that were still needed, and how to make this information more accessible to counselors, students, and faculty. Cycle One initial findings indicate that student and faculty *access to information* is an area for growth. Using surveys from 16 participants, data showed that 93% of respondents indicated that it is the responsibility of adult education programs to provide

information and resources to students about transitions to college. However, respondents also indicated that only 50% of their schools have a transition plan in place and only 21% have transition information on their school websites. Further, respondents indicated that students have difficulty finding information on their own. Only 1 out of 14 respondents indicated that students can find transition information when needed, and 64% of those surveyed said that students have difficulty navigating the college enrollment processes.

As part of Cycle One, interviews were conducted with high school program coordinators at three adult education sites. These interviewees were asked general statements about the kinds of help students need and any challenges they or students experience in finding transition information. Interview data, in alignment with the surveys, confirmed that adult education students need direct support in finding information and walking through enrollment processes. The survey data indicated that professional development and information sessions for staff were the most preferred methods. Other ideas supported by the survey and interviews were quarterly collaboration meetings, school-based information sessions for students, and hiring transition specialists. Like the surveys, interviewees indicated that regular collaboration meetings between adult education staff and community college counselors would be beneficial for increasing information sharing. A compounding issue discussed by all interviewees was student identity and their relationship to college. Many students they have worked with not only need support in accessing information, but also regular reinforcement that college is an accessible and tangible goal given their current academic and cultural relationship to education. These interviews show a need for strategies that combine access to information, guiding students, and helping students build a college identity.

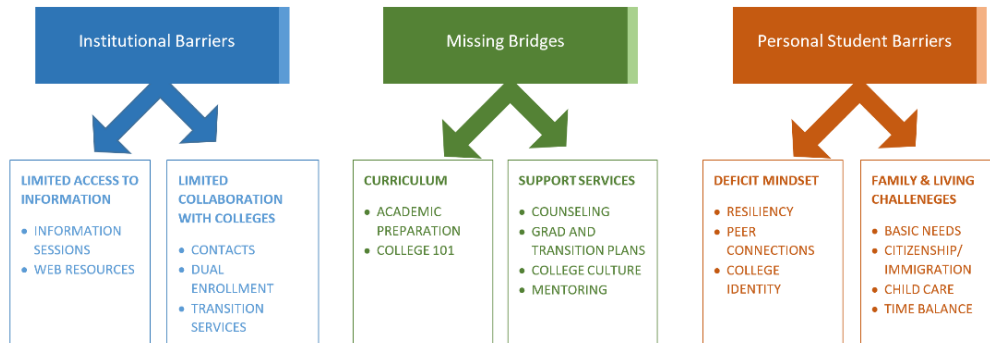
As part of this mixed methods research, pre and post intervention assessments were included in the survey to examine the effectiveness of staff information sessions as a mode of sharing transition information. Comparing pre and post levels of knowledge, participants showed statistically significant increases ($t_{15}=8.062, p<.001$) in their understanding and ability to help students with the college admission process, financial aid, contacting college personnel, and understanding undocumented student programs. These areas also show practical significance in moving participants up one knowledge level in each area, with mean scores moving from *minimal knowledge* to *moderate knowledge*. The interview and survey data in the Cycle One mixed methods action research study confirmed that access to information is an area for further intervention, along with the need for more intra-consortium collaboration, streamlined access to web resources, and the development of induction programs and college-going culture. Although nearly 80% of the participants in this study have been educators for more than 16 years, the mean pre-intervention score in all areas was *minimal knowledge*.

Cycle Zero and Cycle One findings established a need for expanded interventions in the area of transitions from adult education to post-secondary. Adult education programs need to design strategies for removing both institutional and student barriers and building better bridges to college. Figure 1 outlines the key barriers and supports identified in Cycle Zero and Cycle One. Moving forward with this dissertation cycle, the overall study addressed the first barrier, limited access to information, directly and incorporated resources and information addressing elements of all the other barriers in the content of the student and staff resource toolkits.

Figure 1

Key Barriers and Supports from Cycle Zero and Cycle One

Removing Barriers: Transitioning adult education students to post-secondary programs



Cycle Two

To gain a better understanding of the types of transition and college information available to students and faculty on consortium websites, a third study (Cycle two) was conducted. Cycle two was a qualitative content analysis study (Schreier, 2014) of eleven local adult education websites and social media pages. These websites were examined for their intentionality in providing transition support services to adult students. Analysis of data showed limited access to transitions information on school webpages. Of the 51 pages analyzed, there were only two pages that showed intentional activities designed to promote transitions to college. Looking at the data as whole, there was only one school out of the eleven reviewed that showed evidence of a committed effort to transition students to college. Of the eleven schools evaluated, ten schools had Facebook accounts and nine had postings in the date range for this study. Although five schools made one post each highlighting an event related to college, overall there is little to no information

about college or transitions shared on these social media accounts. Although there are many avenues to access transition information, having one online place for this type of information was identified as a priority by the consortium in the most recent annual plans. School website sites, social media, and learning management systems have become a vital part of the school community over the last two years due to COVID campus closures. Online environments may continue to provide critical contact points between staff, students, and resources even as schools move back to in-person and hybrid learning. This analysis points to a need for action in creating expanded online access to intentional support systems and resources that promote college transitions, and a need for further research to determine the extent of intentional college transition support on the wider campuses.

Purpose of this Study

Building on findings from the previous cycles, the dissertation study aimed to evaluate the affect of increased access to transition information on adult school personnel that support adult education (AE) students. As demonstrated in my previous cycles of research, transition support services for AE students were needed and adult school personnel are in a unique position to provide these services. *Access to transition information* was determined to be a primary element in supporting student transitions, but this area needed to be further developed. Before other support services could be created, access to up-to-date and relevant information had to be easily accessible by the faculty, counselors, staff, and students.

This study focused on implementing several new avenues for transition information and examined their affect on faculty attitude toward transitions programs,

motivation to implement and participate in creating college-going cultures on adult education campuses, and intention to use resources moving forward. To address increased access to information, participating faculty were given access to a web-based transitions resource toolkit and a series of spotlight sessions on how staff can utilize the resources. These resources were made available for a six-week study window. Study participants were asked to evaluate the resources content and consider additional areas of support that are needed for staff or students.

This study was conducted as a mixed methods action research study and included pre- and post-intervention surveys, interviews, and web analytics. This information helped to assess if increased access to information improved faculty and staff attitude and motivation to participate and support college transition activities on adult school campuses. This research allowed the consortium to establish basic transition information needs of faculty, in preparation for addressing some of the more collaborative, curricular, and environmental activities related to transitions in future cycles.

Research Questions

This AR study explored three research questions (RQs). The first question explored the viability of using an online resource toolkit. The second RQs investigated the affect of increased faculty and staff access to information. The third question examined the toolkit content and identification of gaps in resources. As greater access to information was provided, what new concerns arose? The research questions were:

RQ 1: To what extent do faculty and staff utilize the web-based transitions toolkit to support adult secondary education students?

RQ 2: To what extent does increased access to transition information, through the resource toolkit and spotlight sessions, affect faculty and staff attitude and motivation to participate in college transition support services and creating a college-going culture on campus?

RQ 3: What resources are needed for faculty and staff to better implement post-secondary transition programs on adult education campuses?

This study provided a foundation for creating a coordinated approach for implementing transition programs across districts and throughout the consortium. The web-based resource toolkit and related spotlight series provided a forum for the consortium member districts to collaborate in supporting student transitions. Study participants began to consider various methods and interventions for school sites and began to look for which transition models are most effective at guiding adult students toward post-secondary programs and college. It is the intent of this study to begin to close the learning gap for non-traditional students and help them along their paths to gainful careers.

Students often enter adult schools as a waypoint to improve skills or earn a high school credential as an access to college or a better job (NSC, 2021). Prior cycle interviews indicated that many students may not have had successful experiences with school and many adults may be returning to school after many years (Bloomberg, 2023). As adult educators, we get to not only help students build skills, but we get to transform their relationship to learning, help them gain confidence, and inspire a future of possibilities. We need programs that move beyond sharing the how-to of registration and financial aid forms, toward working with students on building college-going identities

(Knight-Manuel & Marciano, 2016). So many students think that college is for those people, not themselves. Transforming college transitions in adult education will take an ongoing culture shift on campuses. Teachers, counselors, and the school environment need to align with the message of college or post-secondary training as a logical next step. It is our obligation to not just teach English or Math, but to help students see themselves as capable learners who can have anything they want for their life. It was the aim of this study to use increased access to transition information as a first step in providing more equitable access to transitions programs across all adult education campuses in the consortium.

CHAPTER 2

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

This chapter provides a review of related literature to give insight into components that are related to adult education transitions to post-secondary and influenced the design of this dissertation study. An examination of research on transition models revealed a wide variety of implementations, institutions, student populations, and purposes. Much of the research on adult education transition programs tends to be informational in nature, covering program components, similarities, and areas for further development. To look at theoretical frameworks underlying transition programs, a broader search was conducted of adult learning theory and abundant research on college student retention models. Looking at adult learning practice and strategies, as well as the fuller continuum of persistence in college and pathways to career, the more practical components of transition programs emerged. This area of research is also complemented by renewed and emerging focus on critical perspectives and culturally relevant education models (CRE). CRE and critical perspectives deepened traditional education paradigms to include topics related to diversity and equity. All of these theoretical underpinnings impact advising practices, college preparation, support services, and academic and career planning. Another area of literature reviewed for this study included institutional change models and strategies for integrating new paradigms into existing systems. Due to the onset of the COVID 19 pandemic and the shift to remote learning and counseling platforms, the review of literature included models for measuring use and acceptance of supporting technology applications. The included studies provided foundational

understanding about both the context of this dissertation study as well as the methodology.

Andragogy

One of the foundational researchers that guides any adult education endeavor and provided a theoretical framing for the dissertation study, is Malcolm Knowles and his theory of Andragogy laid out in his source work *The Modern Practice of Adult Education* (1980). He contends that teaching adults is distinct from teaching children. Adult learning takes place in context of mutual inquiry between teacher and student and is best when self-directed, connected to prior experience, active, and serves a purpose for the learner (Knowles, 1980). In his book, Knowles provides direction for adult education practitioners on how to administer and organize experiences that support adult modes of learning by shifting relations toward teacher-as-facilitator and providing more self-directed learning opportunities. It should be noted that Knowles view of *adult education* encompasses a wider understanding of the term and includes the broad category of “the process of adult learning” (Knowles, 1980, P. 25). His research and theory include many varied contexts from personal growth, professional development, and higher education. To distinguish this all-encompassing view from contemporary adult education programs, this study used *adult learning* to refer to Knowles’ concepts and *adult education* to refer to programs that are consistent with California’s Adult Education Program areas listed in Chapter 1.

A key aspect of adult learning lies in Knowles understanding of its primary mission to “help individuals satisfy their needs and achieve their goals” (Knowles, 1980, p.27). AE educators must always keep the goals of students in the forefront. When needs

are not being met, AE students shift classes, change programs, leave schools, and drop out of education. Typical K-12 education models maintain a compulsory content-centered element, but adult learning program participation is consumer driven and learning must have purposeful application (Knowles, 1980). For Knowles (1980), the craft of adult learning includes teachers helping students to see new applications for learning, new possibilities for themselves, and new opportunities for filling gaps in personal development to achieve their goals. These components are at the heart of transitions. The goal of transition programs is to meet students where they are, fill in gaps in learning, and help them move on to what is next.

Knowles' andragogic principles have been applied to many studies and find their way into many transition program designs. A big part of transition programs is advising. The Center for Community College Student Engagement (CCSSE) released a study on underprepared community college students (2016) and found that only 44% of students indicated that an advisor helped them set goals and make a plan. Their research data showed that students who have an academic plan and established goals are more likely to complete preparation courses (CCSSE, 2016, p.14). Seeing how coursework fits into a student's overall goals can provide motivation and cause persistence. The CCSSE recommends that schools build in a counseling-for-all component where each student has a plan that connects to their overall career and education goal, as well as addresses any academic or non-academic support services needed.

A study of andragogy and adult coaching practices by Melissa Lubin (2013), added a new dimension to advising practices that aligns itself with Knowles' notion of adult educator as a change agent or guide, rather than dispenser of knowledge. Lubin

compared the principles of andragogy with best practices in adult coaching to look at the extent of the relationship. She found that coaching practices are very much aligned with adult learning through providing support and guidance toward defined goals, creating meaningful learning opportunities, addressing concerns, and facilitating coachee skills in self-directing their own learning (Lubin, 2016). Coaching is the craft of co-creating, rather than telling. Lubin's study provides insights into what adult education advising can be, moving it beyond scheduling and information sharing toward supporting student achievement of their own endeavors. Adult education advising and teaching could adopt a more self-directed coaching model.

Criticisms of Knowles' Andragogy come from a critical perspective on adult learning, which rejects the notion that there is a universal model for how adults learn. Andragogy focuses mainly on teaching practices based on the "ideology of the self-directed learner" (Welton, 1995). Critical critiques argue that the andragogical model neglects to consider its concepts as part of a social historical context and that it neglects other possible models. Welton in *In Defense of Lifeworld* (1995) and Habermas (1981), argue that education and learning does not exist in asocial and apolitical environments, and cannot be separated from their location and temporal setting. Critiques also argue that andragogical ideas of self-directed learning and teacher-as-facilitator creates a commodified relationship to education (Collins, 1995). This commodified education practice can be antithetical to the practice of self-directed learning as a "reflective practice, incorporating a greater awareness of social context and political contingencies" (Collins, 1995, p.94).

A dissertation on building critical pedagogy into university curriculum (Mathis Burnett, 2020) discussed the opportunity of not just looking at what we teach but how it is taught. Considering this dissertation study's focus area of college transitions, curriculum can move beyond information to take on an advocacy role. Burnett (2020) discussed "reminding marginalized persons of the power they already have, so they are able to speak in their voices and stand for themselves." One of the student barriers discussed during interviews in cycles zero and one preceding this study was students' lack of knowledge and ability to advocate for themselves. Non-traditional adult education students are often first-generation college students and do not have college-oriented familial support systems. Expanding on this idea, Daniel (2021) discusses the importance of looking beyond providing equitable program offerings to examine the student experience and develop skills in helping students create their own paths to post-secondary. Daniel explores the use of *counter-narrative storytelling* to ground students in what is possible for them and to "debunk deficit thinking mindset" (Daniel, 2021, p. 95). Building self-advocacy, self-determination, and other resiliency assets like these into a college and career curriculum may help students transition and be more successful in post-secondary programs.

Bringing andragogical principles and critical perspectives together has provided guidance in developing transition programs and support services. Understanding and meeting the needs of students is both a function of utility (connecting learning to commodified education and workforce goals) and their *lifeworld* (everyday interactions and communication that shape our beliefs and values) (Habermas, 1981). Most students enter adult education programs with a goal, like a high school diploma, that may perhaps

allow for moving up the socio-economic strata. Although critical researchers would argue for dismantling constrained education institutions and practices in favor helping adults “learn to be enlightened, empowered, and transformative actors” (Welton, 1995), many students are confronted with more immediate needs of food and housing insecurity and caring for their families. In terms of this dissertation study, critical considerations led to inquiry beyond the simple mechanics of transitioning students to post-secondary, toward understanding the larger socio-political context of our students and the systems they are trying to navigate. Support services and coaching that promote advocacy and self-advocacy should be a cornerstone of any transition program.

Student Retention Models

In the United States, 30% of college freshman drop out of school after their first year of college with 56% dropping out before their sixth year (College Atlas, 2018). In developing successful transition programs, it is imperative to look beyond the act of registration. The intention of transition programs is to not only facilitate enrollment in post-secondary, but to set students up for success and the academic and psychological rigor of the college experience. In this context, many of the retention strategies can be seen as an extension of transition programs. There has been extensive research on student retention at the college level. Three primary researchers capture the foundational considerations in this field of study. Vincent Tinto has been researching student transitions for many decades, with developing and expanding on his *Theoretical Model of Drop Out Behavior* (Tinto, 1975), student integration model (1987), and *Model of Student Motivation and Persistence* (2017). These studies reflect his initial work as well as further developments on earlier theories. Tinto’s early works focused on dropping out

as a function of a student's relationship with the institution and ability to integrate into the academic and social life (Tinto, 1975). Later studies shift to "school departures" rather than dropouts and attempt to apply concepts to commuter schools and community colleges (Tinto, 1987). Tinto found that students are more likely to persist in school when they are connected to the campus community and social structure, and when they have perceived themselves to be successful college students. Tinto's later works (2017) incorporate other researchers' notions of external and dispositional impacts, like goals and financial obligations, on student attrition, motivation, and persistence. A criticism of Tinto, highlighted in research conducted by Bean and Metzner (1985), is that he does not fully account for the rise in non-traditional student enrollment in 4-year universities and community colleges. Much of Tinto's research had examined residential colleges, and his research lacked empirical evidence to support application to the commuter-college population (Braxton, 2019).

Bean and Metzner's *Model of Non-Traditional Student Attrition* considers multiple factors that impact student persistence, including academic factors (preparation and performance), social-psychological factors (goals and social life), and environmental factors (economics and opportunity). Their research shows that environmental factors have a larger impact on student attrition than academic integration (1985). This points to more support needed around resolving barriers like lack of childcare, financial aid, work schedules, and personal support systems. Additional research by Cabrera et al. (1992, 1993) found that combining aspects of both Tinto and Bean & Metzner provided a better picture of factors related to student retention. This integrated approach discussed the connection between external, personal, and institutional factors and how they work

together to influence student persistence (Cabrera et al, 1992; Cabrera et al., 1993). Cabrera et al. conducted their research within the commuter school context and found that external factors are significant in this population, these factors add complexity to the study of student attrition (1992), and the impact of family and friends' encouragement and support plays a significant role in persistence (1993). Their findings suggest developing explicit intervention models that focus on areas within institutional influence, as well as focus support services specifically around student attrition (1993).

Several studies of student transition programs use elements found in these foundational retention models. John Tucker specifically considered Tinto's work when conducting a qualitative study of student transitions to community college (1999). Tucker focused on aspects that made transitions easier or harder for students. Emerging themes included vision, sense of community, student preparation, and institutional preparation. He found that students who had a clear picture of their future were better off, students who felt a belonging to the community transitioned easier, and students who were academically prepared were more likely to persist (Tucker, 1999). Tucker was critical of Tinto's focus on retention and felt that there was more that institutions could do to be more pro-active in supporting student transitions, including making connections with secondary programs and working with students to create clear plans for their future (Tucker, 1999, p. 172). Tucker's recommendation for institutions is to provide a broad range of supports and initiatives that reach a wide variety of students and promote a culture of welcome and belonging on campus (199, p. 173). Outreach efforts to secondary programs should be included in any transition initiative.

Another study looked at adult learners in a pre-college transition program to examine the factors that contributed to a successful transition experience (Karmelita, 2020). In looking at student-expressed barriers to higher learning, Karmelita made several suggestions for advisors and institutions. She contended that students need to be acclimated to college processes, academic expectations, and campus information (Karmelita, 2020). Many adult learners are non-traditional students from varied cultural and socioeconomic backgrounds and may not have any prior experience with college practices. Student academic confidence plays a role in student's persistence and as such advisors can ease transitions by ensuring students have the readiness skills needed for course enrollments (Karmelita, 2020). Other areas that advisors can assist students in transitioning to post-secondary are creating a network of support services and helping students to connect education with career goals (Karmelita, 2020, p.76). This study of community college transitions aligns with student retention models and provides institutions with practical strategies for improving the transition process and increasing the likelihood of student persistence.

All of these research studies on student attrition and retention show a need for addressing the multidimensional nature of the non-traditional student. All of the interviewees who participated in the cycle one study in preparation for this dissertation study discussed aspects of these findings in their local contexts. Interviewees shared that students often feel that they do not belong at college and that it is for other types of people. Interviewees discussed the value in hosting college tours and having students see that there are others just like them enrolled. As the toolkit items and interview questions were created for this dissertation study, many of the elements presented in these pre-

college and first-year transition programs were included in the resources, spotlight sessions, and data collection. As implications of the current study are discussed in chapter five, it is important to continue to address academic, psycho-social, and personal environmental barriers to college in this and future cycles of this research.

Culturally Relevant Education

Michelle Knight-Manuel and Joanne Marciano, in their book *Classroom Cultures: Equitable Schooling for Racially Diverse Youth*, share the experiences of educators that participated in their professional development series aimed to support the implementation of culturally relevant pedagogy in racially diverse classrooms. Their study was conducted over 2.5 years with 28 New York City schools and included more than 500 educators. In their research, the authors share the challenges experienced by leaders and teachers as they worked through the process of implementing *culturally relevant education* (CRE) in their schools. The authors define CRE as a “conceptual framework that recognizes the importance of including students’ cultural backgrounds, interests, and lived experiences in all aspects of teaching and learning” (Knight-Manuel & Marciano, 2014). The authors’ view of CRE shares foundations in research from Ladson-Billings’ theory of *culturally relevant pedagogy* (Knight-Manuel & Marciano, 2014) and Geneva Gay’s *culturally responsive teaching* (Brown et al., 2018). Both of these frameworks include validating students’ cultural backgrounds and using them as assets and sources of empowerment in their learning journeys. Knight-Manuel and Marciano engage educators in a dialogue that has teachers first look at their own experiences and interactions with topics, then examine how their personal experiences impact their relationships with students and the campus culture. Inside this new understanding, teachers can create new opportunities for their

relationships with students and curriculum, create new opportunities to engage students in their own learning, and create new opportunities to build an inclusive, empowering, and culturally aware school culture. Their inquiry-based model has teachers consider inequities that are woven in the fabric of the school as well as connected systems and the greater community. It is not just about incorporating cultural stories into lessons (although those ideas are included), but also looking to provide wraparound supports that students need to see themselves as worthy and successful learners, and engaging activities that have students empowered as players in the social arena. Knight-Manuel and Marciano discuss the need for educators to support students' strengths, build productive teacher-student relationships, facilitate culturally relevant peer interactions, promote college and career readiness, and build college identities (Knight-Manuel & Marciano, 2014). Providing access to higher education and career training options is an equity issue for many adult students. Culturally relevant support strategies discussed by Knight-Manuel and Marciano include access to information, access to financial aid, understanding the benefits of higher learning, undoing deficit thinking, engaging in college-talk, and creating college-going identities. All of these aspects were key components discussed by interviewees in cycle zero and cycle one studies leading to this dissertation study and will be integrated into transition programs moving forward.

Fostering Change

Directing and managing change in a large organization with many separate school sites is always challenging. A typical adoption and implementation cycle of new curriculum and programs can take one to two years in the larger districts in this consortium. For less mandated or less structured changes, it can take even longer for

implementation and only reach pockets of inspired practitioners. Providing access to college for adult students through transition programs and services is not just a program improvement idea, it is matter of equity (Knight-Manual & Marciano, 2014). Students at all consortium adult schools in Los Angeles should have transition services available and equitable access to college enrollment. Seamless transitions was a central objective in the original state legislation for adult education consortia (State of California, 2015) and all member-districts are required to include actions to improve transitions to postsecondary education and the workforce (State of California, 2021). To fulfill this task, appropriate models for institutional change need to be considered.

Two change theories researched for the dissertation study have some overlapping themes. John Kotter, in his book *Leading Change* (1996), lays out an eight-stage process for transforming organizations. His stages include (1) establishing a sense of urgency, (2) creating a guiding coalition, (3) developing a vision and strategy, (4) communicating the change vision, (5) empowering employees with broad-based action, (6) generating short-term wins, (7) consolidating gains and producing more change, and (8) anchoring new approaches in the culture (Kotter, 1996). These stages can provide a guide for action research implementation. *Diffusion of Innovations Theory*, developed by E.M. Rogers in 1962, categorizes people in change models as innovators, early adopters, majority, and laggards. A key determinate in spreading innovations to the majority is sharing evidence that the innovations work. Schools can use the excitement and energy of the innovators and early adopters to cascade to others.

Aligning with Kotter's stage one, the urgency of transition programs has been established throughout California and consortia by requiring transitions to college data as

a performance measure. Transitions to post-secondary has also been identified as a priority for the local consortium during annual planning process. The local consortium's Counseling and Transitions Action Planning Team already serves as the *guiding coalition* (Kotter, 1996, p.51-66) and core group of change agents for transitions program development. The current consortium action planning team model is consistent with Kotter's steps in bringing like-minded people together to solve problems of practice, share with the wider community, and inspire action. The nature of consortium-developed programs is supportive and voluntary. Field-based faculty and staff are not required to implement transitions programs. The integration of transition programs will need to utilize a diffusion strategy like Rogers and change model like Kotter. The more people participate and generate success, the more new schools and faculty will follow suit.

Improvement science (Lewis, 2015) is another model that provides some direction to the change processes implemented for the dissertation study. According to Lewis (2015), improvement science is distinct from experimental science. They both involve having basic knowledge of the focus of a study, however improvement science also includes "profound knowledge." Lewis explains that profound knowledge is knowledge of the system in which the study will be conducted. This profound knowledge can include knowledge of the school site and how it operates, knowledge of the faculty, knowledge of the community and students, knowledge of leadership at the site, and knowledge of resources (Lewis, 2015). The key idea in improvement science is that basic knowledge is not enough when dealing with schools. Improvement science is about integrating a new strategy into an existing system. An implementation model that incorporates profound knowledge is preferable when working with diverse consortium

districts and school sites. Instead of a one-size-fits-all approach to district-wide initiatives, a menu of options and resources can act as a springboard for individual schools. Faculties can discuss the problem of increasing the number of transitions at their school sites, then use the resource toolkit to stimulate ideas and begin creation. School teams can tailor these practices to address their populations and local school system design. Campus programs will be owned by school personnel and can easily flex to meet local demand, to adapt to changes in the school environment, or to be retooled to increase effectiveness. Implementation strategies can be shared with other schools.

These change strategies provided the basis for the intervention design for the dissertation study. For the interventions to be effective there needed to be a clear vision and purpose, a team of individuals driving the work, and a commitment to driving action in the field. Participation and integration of transitions programs allowed for each school to craft and develop their own format that fits their unique school environment and established systems. Transitions to college will not follow a canned program model but allow for a menu of options and best practices. To provide greater diffusion of new resources and continued energy for the project, efforts were made to identify early adopters for the study and keep them in the conversation of transitions through emailed resource highlights. These early adopters can be used to engage others in future cycles through Kotter's eight steps and release of the resource toolkit to the wider community.

Technology Acceptance

Given the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, the transition to remote learning and counseling, and the wide-spread geographic boundaries of the local consortium, adult

education practitioners stressed the importance of incorporating web-based access points for all resources and materials. Although the innovation implemented for the dissertation study was designed to increase access to information through an online toolkit and spotlight sessions, the underlying intent was to have this information be utilized ongoingly with faculty and staff as they work with students throughout the year. Technology based systems “cannot improve organizational performance if they are not used” (Davis et al., 1989). To address the integration of these online resources and tools, it was important to consider models for measuring the use of new technologies.

The Technology Acceptance Model, developed by Davis et al. (1989), is a short questionnaire designed to measure *behavioral intention to use* a specific technology or application. *Intention to use* is measured by two sub-constructs of perceived *usefulness* and perceived *ease of use*, which constitute attitude toward using specific applications (see Figure 3). These sub-constructs are measured through a series of questions. Originally the TAM included 28 questions along a 7-point Likert scale, however further versions paired down the list to 7-12 questions. Davis et al. (1989) conducted a series of studies that applied the TAM questions to various new technologies to determine if the sub-construct questions aligned with actual usage and self-predicted usage. Repeated testing for reliability and validity in sub constructs allowed these researchers to pare down the questions to the strongest predictors. Davis et al. (1989) found that reported *future use* had a strong correlation with both *ease of use* and *usefulness*. Further longitudinal data showed correlations between reported *future use* and *actual use*. These findings point to the possibility of predicting actual use of a new system. If users feel that an application is easy to use, and improves their job performance or makes life easier,

then they are more likely to adopt the new technology into their existing workflow (Davis et al., 1989). The questioning series is general in nature and does not take into consideration the content of the application, allowing it to be used for wide range of applications and populations (Davis et al., 1989).

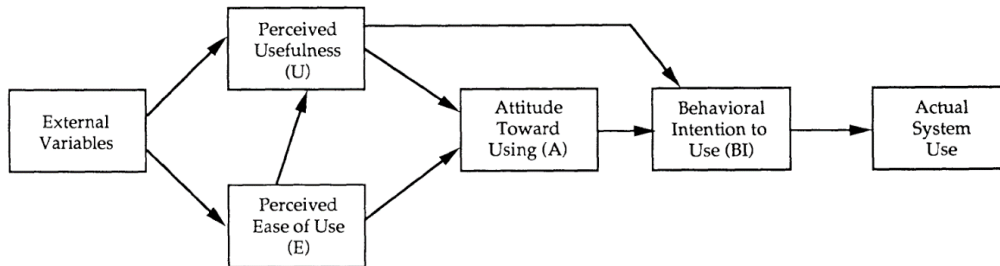
Criticism of TAM relates to the simplicity of the model. Critics argue that TAM does not take into account technology skill level of the user and does not consider institutional policies that dictate adoption of applications (Ajibade, 2018). Organizations often have policies in place that dictate the specific software to be utilized. In these cases, TAM scores may not predict actual use. Actual use may be required even if software is cumbersome, and conversely some great applications may not be utilized due to institutional policies. In considering the transitions resource toolkit and spotlight sessions, which were the focus of this dissertation study, there are no organizational policies that dictate use of these tools or alternate tools. Use of the toolkit and spotlight sessions was voluntary. Skills required to access the toolkit are basic and are already skills that all staff have practiced over the last several years. The elements critiqued in these studies did not present obstacles to use of the TAM.

Meta-analysis research conducted by Scherer et al. (2019) examined the usefulness of TAM in education with pre-service and in-service teachers. In analyzing over 350 studies, researchers found that there is evidence that measures of TAM variables are reliable and valid and that the TAM be used to predict behavior of technology use in teachers. (Scherer et al., 2019). Since action research studies often operate in short cycles of research and reflection, without long-term longitudinal data, TAM predictive

behavior questions were used to provide insight into the effectiveness of this study's use of the web-based transitions resource toolkit.

Figure 2

Technology Acceptance Model (Davis et al. 1989)



Conclusions

The review of literature covered three distinct areas related to this dissertation study, including transition program components, institutional change, and intervention effectiveness. Transition program components were drawn from principles of andragogy, critical adult learning theories, student retention models, and culturally relevant education. Some of the overarching themes included connecting transitions programs to personal goals, incorporating strategies that develop college identities and connecting students with the campus culture, providing wrap-around support services, and promoting student advocacy and self-advocacy. Institutional change theories reinforced the need for providing ongoing professional development, reflection, and motivation for transition program development. Allowing schools to grapple with integrating activities into their school structures provides a better model for institutionalizing practices than centralized diffusion approach. Lastly, looking at short-term models for predicting actual use of

intervention tools allowed for more responsive action research. It was the intent of this study to meet the identified need of greater access to transition information for faculty and staff, and create structures that are flexible and can pivot easily based on feedback and reflection. Although this study utilized a fixed transitions toolkit and series of spotlight sessions, it was the intent to have a structure that allows toolkit resources and spotlight sessions to be regularly added, updated, expanded, and reflect relevant content.

There is a wide variety of research available on the nature of student attrition, the barriers of non-traditional students, and the overall value of transition programs, however there is little empirical study of actual program components. There is a need for further research regarding the effectiveness of specific elements. With limited counseling resources on many adult education campuses, it is imperative that resources are allocated where they can be the most useful. A further limitation of prior research is the challenge of longitudinal data across multiple institutions. Most transition and retention data are limited to the institution of study. It is difficult to track students' movement between a wide range of institutions due to varied data systems, data sharing protocols, and the absence of universal identifiers. Non-traditional students are also very likely to experience gaps in enrollment, attend part-time over an extended tenure, and switch institutions to meet their needs. All of these phenomena make it challenging to track the student progress and success of transition programs. Statewide data systems may need to be developed to get a better sense of student academic journeys. Successful transitions, like adult learning, is a multi-dimensional phenomenon. Although student trends and themes can be identified, ultimately non-traditional student journeys are highly individualized and remedies need to reflect a personalized approach.

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

The previous chapter outlined some of the theoretical perspectives and research practices related to transitions to college, adult education students as non-traditional learners, change theories, and a technology acceptance model. This chapter provides a clearer picture of the local setting and participants that were included in the dissertation study. It also includes additional details of the previous cycles of research and findings that led to the dissertation study intervention. Chapter three outlines the role of the researcher, the specific components of the study intervention, instruments that were utilized, and overview analysis conducted. Although the previous chapters covered the breadth of adult student transitions to college, this study focused on one priority element identified during the first two cycles of research, increasing access to transitions information. This increased access to information took the form of an online transitions toolkit including spotlight sessions that highlight how to utilize some of the resources.

Setting

The dissertation study was conducted with adult education (AE) programs inside a local adult education consortium in Los Angeles County. This study included AE programs run by K12 unified school districts (AEUSDs). Staff from noncredit AE programs run by community colleges were included in the invitation to participate, but there were no volunteers. The AE programs at both types of institutions were selected because of their similarity in course offerings, student population, and enrollment and counseling practices. The AE programs tend to follow a typical structure of site administrator, assistant administrators, counselors, faculty, and staff. Some of the schools

also employ out-of-classroom certificated personnel that may provide instructional coordination, technical program assistance, and student support services. The AE programs operate year-round, have open-entry programs, and manage their own enrollment processes. Most AE students participate in some kind of initial assessment and placement, academic or program counseling, and orientation. State initiative funding through CAEP creates equity by allowing most programs to be offered free or at minimal cost to students. Some AE programs are offered through noncredit departments at community colleges and have distinct and separate enrollment protocols than credit level community college programs. Although AE on college campuses share governance structures with the larger campus, the AE component is unique enough that students transfer from noncredit to credit programs.

Early cycles of this study took place during the COVID-19 response, when consortium member school districts were delivering programs fully or the majority of the time online. At the start of the dissertation study, districts had recently returned to in-person learning, lifted mandatory masking, and removed weekly COVID testing. During the semester of study, AEUSDs operated in online, in-person, and hybrid formats. Over the last two years, enrollment, counseling, and orientation processes have shifted to predominately online, with some in-person options depending on the school site. Several districts also had policies that limited in-person meetings and professional development for staff. From March 2020 through October 2022, all consortium activities had transitioned to remote environments utilizing the consortium website and *Zoom* virtual meeting software for interactions. Over those two and half years, the consortium developed an online conference center that was used for larger inter-district events and

collaboration projects. As this study moved forward, it was designed to have all study components delivered remotely to participants. All faculty and staff from all districts have received training on implementing and utilizing remote schooling software programs from 2020-2022, and most staff had access to the internet from their primary work locations. Access to study materials and activities was not a barrier to participation. Consortium activities had shown increases in participation since moving to remote platforms, and it is clear that these platforms were an asset to this study and will continue to be an asset to the consortium moving forward.

Although the AE programs each have their own leadership structure, the dissertation study was conducted from the consortium perspective. Consortium staff play a supporting and coordinating role by working with inter-district action planning teams and implementing collaborative activities that benefit all districts. While district leaders can have autonomy in decision-making for their respective schools, consortium activities are discussed and agreed upon by the five member-districts. Each district has the opportunity to appoint members to action planning teams (APTs) that are aligned with the current consortium three-year plan. These APTs meet throughout each school year to discuss focus areas and implement collaborative projects. The Counseling and Pathways Action Planning Team (CP-APT), with input from several other APTs, had been discussing the creation of the web-based transition toolkit during the 2021-22 school year. The CP-APT was made up of 25 members, with 19 from AEUSDs and 6 from community colleges noncredit programs. The group was co-facilitated by an AEUSD and a community college representative. The group membership included teachers, counselors, advisors, an administrator, and a researcher. Part of this group's focus was to

sustain, expand, and improve pathways and transitions to community college credit programs (LARAEC, 2018). The work of this group was critical to the development of the transitions toolkit and spotlight sessions that are the focus of the dissertation implementation.

Role of Researcher

As a member of the consortium staff, I served as both researcher and coordinator for the intervention components of the study. I was a district subject-matter expert in this field of inquiry and have actively participated in creating and implementing transition programs for adult school students over the previous decade. In my position as consortium advisor during this study, I was charged with supporting the implementation of consortium plans and the work of the action planning teams (APTs), which include activities that assist adult students transitioning to post-secondary programs. As researcher and advisor, I worked directly with the Counseling and Transitions APT to create the resource toolkit and outline the components of the spotlight sessions that were used for this study. I worked with the consortium web developer to create the online platform for the resource toolkit. I was responsible for recruiting people to participate in this dissertation study (see participant section later in this chapter for recruitment description). I managed the distribution and collection of all study instruments as well as conducted interviews. Outside of specific planned events, my position did not include interaction with adult students. Since the position was at the consortium-level and not at a school site, the intervention and resources were targeted toward staff. This study explored how increased access to information via the transitions resource toolkit and spotlight

sessions affected staff attitude and motivation to support and participate in transition programs and services for adult students.

Research Design

The study utilized an action research framework (Mertler, 2020). Action research allows teachers and other stakeholders an opportunity to examine their own practices, apply new strategies, and examine outcomes that have “immediate and direct application” (Mertler, 2020). Action research is an iterative process of action and reflection performed by researchers as participants in their own context with the intent to gain a deeper understanding of current practices and related literature, and take action to produce change in educational practices, personal growth of researchers, and the local political climate. Action research was selected for this study as it best aligns with the three-year planning process and APT structures in the consortium, and allows local researchers the ability to implement practical innovations that address pressing and current problems of practice. This structure also allowed for direct participation of stakeholders from across the consortium to not only be part of the study participants, but also be included in the design of study elements. Including faculty as valued professionals may strengthen the overall products and increase participation in change activities. Action research is also characterized as flexible and responsive (Noffke, 2009) allowing the study to quickly adapt to pressing concerns or changing landscapes as we have found over the two years of COVID response. This AR dissertation study was part of a larger change effort designed to increase transitions to college for adult education students. Previous cycles of research provided direction for this study, as this study is expected to affect the next iteration.

Previous Cycles of Research

As described previously, three earlier research cycles have provided direction and validity to the dissertation study. In addition to exploring relevant literature, it is important to fully examine the local context in which the dissertation study took place. These earlier studies served as reconnaissance cycles (Mills, 2011; Mertler, 2020). Cycle Zero was designed to discover the critical components of the problem of practice. Cycle One looked more closely at the area of *access to information* to get a better sense of the kinds of information needed and how to best provide it to the field. Cycle 2, the content analysis cycle, looked specifically at the kinds of information currently provided on adult education websites. These three cycles helped to triangulate the problem and identify the direction for this dissertation study.

Cycle Zero. As mentioned in chapter one, Cycle zero consisted of interviews of field-based personnel who have worked to create transitions to college programs on adult education campuses. These interviews indicated that access to information was a primary concern. A huge barrier to college was a lack of information about transition programs and college structures, as well as a lack of the skills and support needed for students to navigate these structures successfully. Interviewees were clear that students need support in locating and navigating transitions to college information. While other student and institutional barriers to implementing transition programs were identified, access to information was looked at as a foundational piece that could be built on in future cycles.

Cycle One. The next cycle of research was a mixed methods study (outlined in Chapter 1) designed to deepen understanding about access to information by identifying both needed content and effective modes of delivery. Interviews and surveys confirmed

the need for a centralized information hub, guidance for students, and more collaboration with colleges. This study showed the effectiveness of information sessions in increasing knowledge of transition information even among seasoned staff. Interviews reiterated the desire to create a resource website and regular information sessions for adult education counselors and teachers. Interviewees also verified the ongoing need to develop student college identities and provide opportunities to connect students with college campuses and counselors. There was some discussion of future work on developing a College 101 curriculum that can guide students through college exploration and enrollment. This cycle created a need to evaluate current online resources and begin design of a transitions resource toolkit.

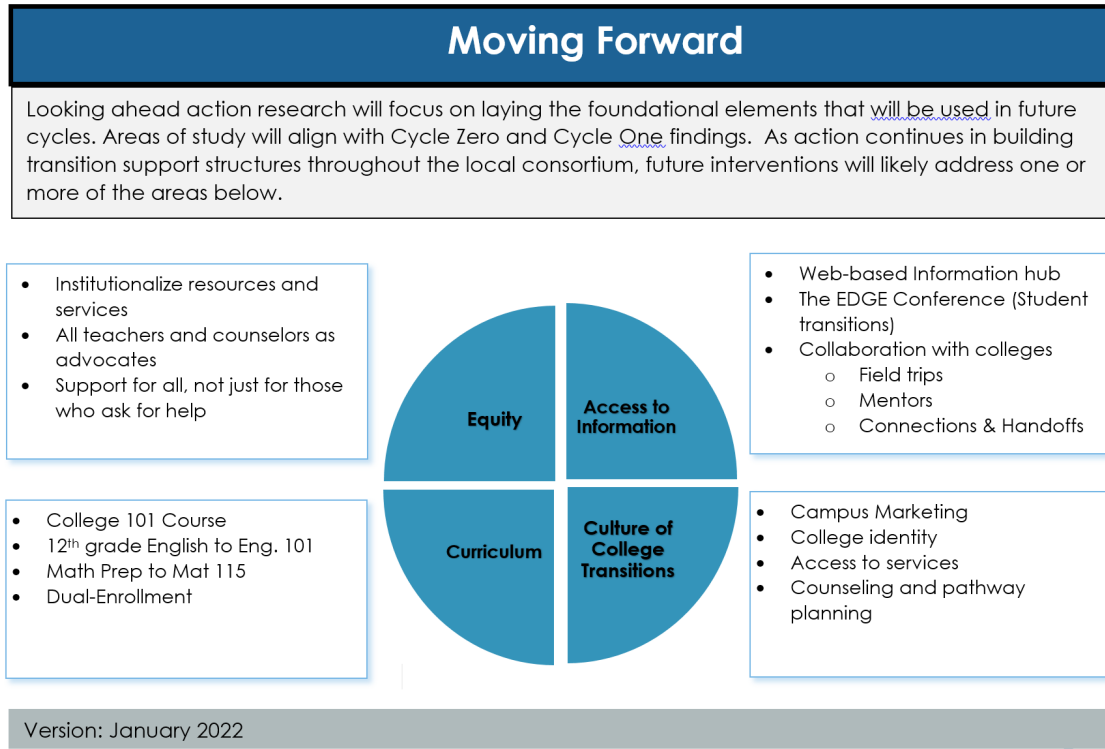
Qualitative Content Analysis. Websites and social media accounts of 11 adult schools in the consortium were analyzed for college transition information. Research included July 2020 through November 2021 social media posts (Facebook and Twitter), and November 2021 school websites. There were limited mentions of college and little to no information about transitions processes or events. As mentioned in chapter one, only one school website showed evidence of intentional student transition support. It is possible that transition information was disseminated to students directly from school counselors, posted on physical campuses, or available through learning management systems. However, for purposes of the current study, I was looking for information that is widely accessible to faculty, staff, and students. Since many students and faculty had been working in remote or online environments, accessibility needed to move beyond the campus walls. This content analysis study pointed to the need for uniform information

sharing, across the consortium, which provides equal access to all faculty, staff, and students.

Key Barriers and Implications of Previous Cycles. Looking at the previous cycles together, the key barriers identified include *Institutional Barriers*, *Student Barriers*, and *Missing Bridges* (See Figure 1 in chapter 1). Future cycles needed to put structures in place on campuses to provide and support access to transition information. Faculty and staff needed to implement intentional activities that help adult students develop college identities. Adult campuses needed to collaborate with community colleges to create effective bridges between the two types of institutions. Many strategies and ideas to address the chapter 1 barriers were communicated by participants in the previous cycles (see Figure 3). For this dissertation study, at least one item from each category of strategies (shown in figure 3) was incorporated into the toolkit or spotlight sessions specifically to address some of the *student barriers*, *institutional barriers*, and *missing bridges*. The toolkit structure provided a web-based hub of information that included strategies for creating college identities, helping students navigate enrollment, exposing students to college practices, and advocating for students. These strategies were initially addressed with the toolkit and spotlight sessions as part of this dissertation study and will be further developed in future cycles along with the other activities that provide greater access to information, equity, curricular enhancements, and college-going campus cultures.

Figure 3

Previous Cycles -Strategies and Activities Moving Forward



Dissertation Cycle

To address the priority areas identified in previous cycles and in alignment with current consortium action planning team priorities, the dissertation study examined the affect of increased access to transition information on adult education faculty and staff attitude and motivation to participate in transition activities, and the effectiveness of providing web-based resources. Specifically, the study examined the following research questions:

RQ 1: To what extent do faculty and staff utilize the web-based transitions toolkit to support adult secondary education students?

RQ 2: To what extent does increased access to transition information, through the resource toolkit and spotlight sessions, affect faculty and staff attitude and motivation to participate in college transition support services and creating a college-going culture on campus?

RQ 3: What resources are needed for faculty and staff to better implement post-secondary transition programs on adult education campuses?

This study incorporated current work of consortium action planning teams by creating a web-based transitions resource toolkit and conducting a series of spotlight sessions to highlight strategies for using these resources with adult education students. Additionally, this study provided an opportunity for participants to examine the current resources, identify new information gaps, and reflect on what additional resources would allow staff to better support transitions to college.

The study was conducted over a six-week study window in 2022. After completing a pre-intervention survey, study participants were given access to the web-based toolkit and spotlight sessions for six weeks. During the study window, participants were sent a weekly email highlighting one of the resources in the toolkit. At the conclusion of six weeks, participants were asked to complete a post survey, with some participants selected for an interview. The study utilized a mixed methods approach (Ivankova, 2014), by combining surveys, semi-structured interviews, and web analytics. A mixed method approach was utilized to explore the research questions, an approach that “develops a more complete picture of social phenomenon” (Plano Clark & Creswell, 2015) by including participant voices, along with a wider population of survey

respondents and actual use. A description of the intervention components and instruments is provided in the following sections.

Transitions Resource Toolkit. A barrier identified in cycle zero interviews was the lack of consolidated transition information available to faculty, counselors, and students. The Counseling and transitions APT has been curating and creating resources that are designed to support staff in assisting students with transitions to college. These resources included tools and information related to college registration, financial aid, contact information, and pathway options. They included videos, classroom materials, and strategies for building a college-going campus culture. In the current environment with mixed teaching and counseling modalities (in-person, online, and hybrid), faculty and staff do not always have access to school-based resources and students are not always at the school site. This resource toolkit exists online. The toolkit provides consistent access, is available to staff working across all locations and schedules, and provides a starting point for teachers to discuss pathway options with students. The online nature of this toolkit will allow for easy updates, inclusion of newly created resources, and quick dissemination to the field. For purposes of the dissertation implementation, the toolkit remained fixed during the six-week study window.

Spotlight Sessions. In collaboration with the consortium Counseling and Transition APT and community college partners, spotlight informational sessions were created. These sessions highlighted the information that makes up the transitions toolkit. Sessions focused on basic components of the web-based toolkit, using the resources with students, and interviews with experts that support adult student transitions to college. Spotlight session topics related to strategy areas identified in Figure 2. These sessions

were short compact spotlights rather than traditional professional development. The idea was to create a place where staff can get targeted information quickly. The spotlight sessions were pre-recorded with access provided through the transitions resource toolkit. The consortium currently offers session on a variety of relevant topics, which are distributed through the consortium website. Depending on the topic, these pre-recorded sessions can get over one hundred views during the year. Pre-recording and posting sessions allow faculty and staff flexibility in viewing time. Adult education programs do not typically have staff development time built into weekly schedules, many staff members work part time split shifts, and classes are typically spread out between the hours of 8AM and 9 PM. It is challenging to have participants meet at the same time. Recorded content allows participants to watch when it is convenient for them. These sessions were created during the summer of 2022 and were released with the resource toolkit in the Fall of 2022. Study participants were asked to use the toolkit and view spotlight sessions as they would naturally during the study window.

Resource Highlight Weekly Email

During the study window of six weeks, participants received a weekly email. This email included a brief highlight, description, and picture of one of the items in the toolkit and a web link to that item. These emails are included in Appendix B. This weekly email served two purposes. Since the toolkit did not come with any formal training, the resource highlight shared about some of the key items in the toolkit and how they could be used to support students and staff. The emails were also used as a reminder about the study and the website. There were many competing attentions for staff during the early part of the year and it was helpful to have reminders to bring people back to the study.

Since the study subjects were spread out across many school sites and districts, the researcher's only contact was through email.

Participants

Within these adult schools, this study specifically targeted faculty, staff, and counselors within the secondary education program. The secondary programs were selected as part of the study because they are traditionally one-step removed from credit-bearing college programs. Students completing secondary programs, with either a high school diploma or equivalency certificate, have transitions to post-secondary as a next possible step. Adult students in ESL, basic skills, and CTE programs typically have pathway options that can lead to workforce entry or remaining in adult schools rather than transitioning to college. Secondary program staff are also most directly involved with transitioning adult students to college and usually participate in any current transition support activities offered by their campuses.

Adult Education programs currently take place on 25 separate school sites in the consortium. Secondary staff at these schools include counseling and classroom-based personnel. Counseling staff includes Assistant Principals of Adult Counseling Services (APACS), counselors, and academic teacher advisors. These counseling staff members are typically part of the enrollment process, work with students in creating education plans, and coordinate transition programs on campus. Classroom-based staff include secondary education teachers and teacher assistants. Depending on the school site, teachers and assistants support student academic progress as outlined on their education plans, often provide individual guidance in meeting goals and transitioning, and promote campus activities. Together, these staff members represent the breadth of knowledge and

expertise of the secondary program departments and represent a wide view of current transition practices, barriers, and opportunities for moving forward.

For this study, 100 potential participants were invited from various groups of people. To allow for good cross-section of perspectives, participants were invited from the five districts in the adult education consortium and included classroom teachers, advisors, counselors, and administrators. As mentioned previously, point people for each district select a representative number of staff to participate in consortium-level action planning teams (APTs). One of these planning teams exclusively focuses on counseling and transitions. This Counseling and Transitions APT had 20 participating members and was invited to participate because of its direct content focus on transitions and counseling. Another 30 APT members from other groups were invited based on their work with adult secondary students. To ensure a representative sample of field-based staff, another 50 potential participants were invited which included teachers, secondary education advisors, adult counselors, and administrators with counseling oversight.

Since this study took place outside of the annual APT calendar and includes participation from many districts, invitations were sent via email with voluntary response. From the 100 invitations, 25 participants completed the pre-survey, 21 completed the post-survey, and 20 completed and matched pre and post surveys. Since analysis requires comparing pre and post surveys, surveys that did not have a pre and post survey pair were omitted from the study. The group of 20 matched surveys included 11 advisors and counselors, 6 classroom teachers, and 3 administrators. Half of the participants have been working in adult education for more than 20 years, seven have been working 16 – 20

years, the remaining three participants working 5 – 15 years. A random picker (<https://pickerwheel.com/>) was utilized to select two advisors, two teachers, and two administrators to invite for an interview, although only two responded. All the remaining advisors and administrators were emailed invitations and two additional participants responded. The study included four total interviewees, two teachers and two advisors.

Instruments

This mixed methods design used three primary data sources: surveys, interviews, and web analytics.

Surveys. All study participants were asked to complete two surveys. The first survey was administered prior to the intervention. This survey measured baseline attitude and motivation of staff to implement and participate in transitions to college activities (see Appendix C for survey questions). The second survey was administered after the six-week study window. This survey measured intention to use the resource toolkit, as well as measured any changes in attitude and motivation from the pre-intervention survey. Survey data was collected electronically using Qualtrics.

The pre-intervention survey was administered prior to access to the toolkit and spotlight sessions. This survey provided baseline data for attitude and motivation, as well as a few demographic questions. This focus on attitude and motivation came from concerns that were discussed in the Counseling and Transitions APT and with field-based personnel over the last several years. When discussing some of the barriers or challenges with implementing college transition programs, some AE faculty, staff, and administrators have voiced concerns about the level of collaboration between community

colleges and AE campuses, the perception that AE students are transitioned prematurely, and the lack of clear information available to AE staff and students. Additionally, college transition activities are sometimes viewed as solely a counselor job. Although these concerns are anecdotal in nature, attitude and motivation may potentially affect the use of the transitions toolkit and willingness to implement transitions programs on AE campuses.

Finding an existing research-based survey in this specific area of study was unsuccessful. Consequently, a new survey was created to look at attitude and motivation specifically around transition program elements. Survey items were created to address five sub-constructs related to attitude and current participation. The pre-survey considers beliefs about the importance of engaging in college-related talk, creating a college-going campus culture, providing student transitions support and advocacy, establishing partnerships with community colleges, and understanding personal considerations. These five areas were identified in previous cycles of research (See Figure 2 above). The survey items were presented as statements with 5-point Likert-type scales. Each construct has multiple questions which were used for reliability testing. Since this is a new survey, five subject-matter experts were used to evaluate content validity (Salkind and Frey, 2020) by determining if all aspects of the four constructs are covered. The subject-matter experts provided feedback on the understandability of the questions themselves. This pre-intervention survey provided a wide range of baseline data to compare to post-intervention survey results.

The post-intervention survey was conducted at the end of the six-week study window. This survey included questions in three areas, including attitude and motivation, toolkit usage and content, and the TAM questions. These three constructs are reflected in the study's research questions. Attitude and motivation questions followed the same five constructs from the pre-intervention survey, such that pre and post intervention data could be compared. Toolkit and spotlight usage questions determined the level of participant engagement in the study's intervention activities. Since the toolkit and spotlight sessions were housed on a webpage and individual online identifiers will not be tracked, participation in study activities was self-reported on the post-intervention survey. Through open-answer survey questions, participants were asked to comment on the content of the toolkit and identify any needed resources that would allow them to better implement transition programs.

The final element of the post-intervention survey measured intention to utilize the toolkit. This element incorporated the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) discussed in chapter 2. The TAM questions included the three TAM sub-constructs of perceived usefulness, perceived ease of use, and behavior intention toward using the toolkit. The questionnaire was presented as a set of 5-point Likert-type scale questions. Each sub-construct had four questions to use for reliability testing. As mentioned in Chapter 2, the TAM has been a well-researched model for measuring future use of a technology-based applications and has been proven valid and reliable in studies that predict behavior of teachers (Scherer et al., 2019). Quantitative Survey data was downloaded from Qualtrics and imported into SPSS for analysis. Open-answer data on the surveys was analyzed with qualitative techniques discussed later in this chapter.

Interviews. Selected study participants were recruited to participate in an interview. Four participants were selected from a pool of volunteers, ensuring two each of teachers and counseling staff. It is important to incorporate both classroom and non-classroom based voices in the research to fully understand both perspectives. I used a semi-structured life world interview (Brinkmann & Kvale, 2015) format with a list of prepared questions (See appendix C). The semi-structured model allows the researcher to ask open-ended questions and follow up questions based on responses. The goal of the life world interview is to gain an understanding of the life world of the participant (Brinkmann & Kvale, 2015). This model follows a phenomenological perspective that places value on the context and experiences of the study subjects from their perspectives (Adams & van Manen, 2008). The transitions toolkit and spotlight sessions are designed to play a supporting function for faculty and counselors as they help students transition to college. Understanding the complexity of each individuals' experiences, their school site politics, and interactions with their students is important to understanding how to best support and motivate participants. Interview questions explored current challenges, how they might utilize the resource toolkit, continued needs, and vision for transition programs. These questions, in conjunction with survey data, provide a deeper understanding of staff attitude, motivation, and needs related to implementing transition programs. Questions were open-ended. Interviews were conducted through Zoom video recording and then transcribed.

Web Analytics. Web analytic measures were to gain preliminary data on actual usage of the web-based toolkit and spotlight sessions. This data was collected during the 6-week window after the launch of the toolkit and spotlight sessions. The launch was

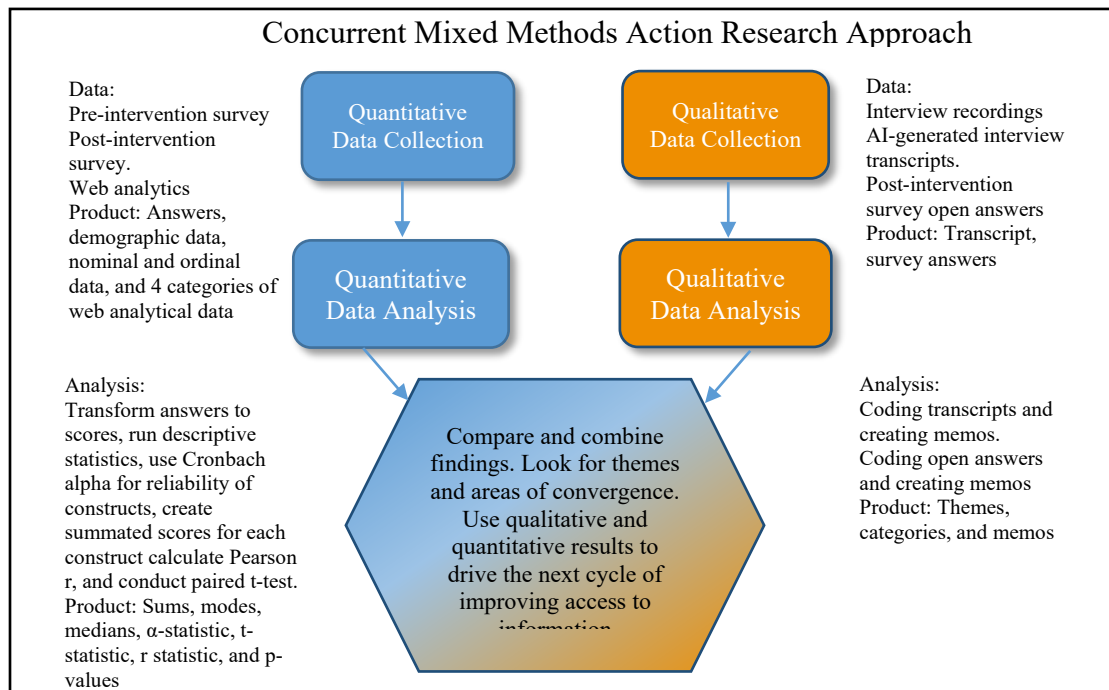
designated by the opening of the webpage to study participants. The spotlight sessions were pre-recorded and included as links on the toolkit webpage. During the six-week window, the resource toolkit was available to study participants as well as launched for the wider adult education community. Google analytics was used to collect data. Web analytic data includes count, visitor loyalty, and engagement analysis. Count measures page views for the toolkit. This shows level of traffic to each page on the toolkit during the study period. Engagement analysis looks at which resources were viewed. This data provides insight into what resources sparked the greatest interest and may be the most useful. Visitor loyalty provides frequency data for returning visitors. Ultimately, the resource toolkit is intended to be utilized on a regular basis by faculty and staff. This data will help qualify our page views between single visits and frequent use. Although Google analytics tracks frequency data, computer identification was not collected for the study and all website visitors remained anonymous. Even though the analytics data includes general population traffic and is not isolated to the study participants, the web analytics help determine the actual usefulness of the transitions toolkit. In conjunction with survey data, these analytics provide a better picture of the integration of the toolkit in supporting student transitions to college.

Analytic Strategy

This study incorporated the characteristics of a Concurrent Quan + Qual Mixed Methods Action Research (MMAR) design as described in Ivankova (2014), chapter 6. I collected and analyzed both quantitative and qualitative data independently and then combined results for further analysis (see Figure 1). This combined data analysis will be used to inform future cycles of inquiry.

Figure 4

Mixed Methods Approach



Quantitative data was collected from three sources, the pre-intervention survey, post-intervention survey, and web analytics. Survey data was collected from Qualtrics and transferred to SPSS software for analysis. Demographic and nominal elements of the pre and post intervention surveys data were analyzed using descriptive statistics. Ordinal data from Likert-style questions were analyzed using descriptive statistics as well as for reliability and inferential testing.

To establish reliability of survey constructs, Cronbach’s alpha was calculated for the questions in each sub-construct on the pre-intervention survey and the post-intervention survey individually. The sub-constructs tested for reliability include areas of attitude and motivation (listed in instrument description above), as well as the three TAM sub-

constructs, *ease of use*, *usefulness*, and *intention to use*. Cronbach's alpha scores greater than 0.7 (Salkind & Frey, 2020, p 115) are considered reliable. This test shows that questions in each area are measuring the same sub-construct and show internal consistency. This allows for better triangulation of subject attitude by combining multiple subject responses into single scores for each sub-construct. Although there is debate about treating Likert response data as an interval rather than ordinal, TAM creators (Davis, et al., 1989) used Likert scales with multiple summated items to create a more continuous variable for correlational testing which aligns with recommendations to mitigate some of the effects of using ordinal data with parametric tests (Grace-Martin, 2008; Boone & Boone, 2012).

The Pearson r correlation coefficient (Salkind & Frey, 2020, p.79) was calculated to examine possible correlations between mean TAM scores for *ease of use* and *usefulness* as compared to *intention to use* the toolkit. These scores show the connection between toolkit features and the subject's intention to use the toolkit. A moderately strong correlation is shown in Pearson r scores $>.4$ (Salkind & Frey, 2020, p. 87). Lastly, pre and post intervention survey sub-constructs for *attitude* and *motivation* were evaluated using a paired dependent samples t-test. This test compared mean differences between each administration of the survey. Analysis would show the effect of the intervention on faculty and staff attitude and motivation by each sub-construct. T-test significance values where $p < .05$ would indicate statistically significant findings (Salkind & Frey, 2020, P. 221). Significant findings were evaluated for practical significance of the intervention affecting attitude and motivation of participants. Cohen's d was used to evaluate effect size of significant differences. A d statistic greater than .2 indicates a medium effect and greater than .8 a large effect (Salkind & Frey, 2020, p.196).

Lastly, web analytics were collected through Google Analytics software. The toolkit is housed as subpages of the consortium website and includes links to external sites, PDF files, and search tools. Analytic components for count, visitor loyalty, and engagement (as described in *instruments* section) were coded into the elements on the toolkit main page. Google analytics software provided descriptive statistics and graphical displays of each component. Google analytics showed actual use of the toolkit during the study window and provide baseline data for future cycles of inquiry.

There were two sources of qualitative data, interviews and the open answer questions on the post-intervention survey. Qualitative data were coded using *grounded theory initial coding* (Charmaz, 2014, pp.116-120). For purposes of analysis, interviews and open answer survey questions were coded separately. Both sets of coding focused on identifying key actions discussed during interviews or mentioned in open responses without focusing on evaluation or concept formation (Charmaz, 2014). Initial codes of all interviews and initial codes for open answers were grouped into categories using a *constant comparative method* (Ivankova, 2015, p.241). Categories were further grouped into major themes bringing interviews and open responses together. Consistent with concurrent MMAR design described in chapter 6 of Ivankova (2014), after initial quantitative and qualitative analysis was completed, results were combined and compared to identify any substantive findings or areas of convergence.

RQ1: Web analytics and identified TAM questions from the survey and interviews were used to address RQ1. This data together provided a picture of the overall utility of a web-based resource toolkit. As schools have moved to utilizing online

platforms for instruction and counseling, this data showed the extent to which field-based staff utilize this tool on a regular basis to support transitions to college.

RQ2: Two data elements were used to address RQ2, surveys and interviews. Survey data includes pre-intervention and post-intervention scores for attitude and motivation. This data provided information about a change in attitude and motivation after having access to the toolkit and spotlight sessions. Interview data was used to deepen the understanding of attitude and motivation provided in the surveys.

RQ3: Both surveys and interviews included questions related to needed resources that support transitions to college. Descriptive statistics and interviews were combined to capture the current barriers and future implications for developing transition programs and resources that help adult education faculty and staff provide support to students.

CHAPTER 4

ANALYSIS AND FINDINGS

Data analysis for this mixed-methods study included quantitative data from surveys and qualitative data from interviews and open-ended survey questions. This chapter begins with analysis of the quantitative data broken into the three areas of (1) *attitude* and *motivation* data, (2) the Technology Acceptance Model, and (3) Use of the toolkit through web analytics. Qualitative analysis lead to the creation of a model for increasing adult education transitions to college. This chapter will examine interview data through the prism of this model including the areas of adding and expanding resources, creating equitable protocols and practices, aligning staff with a common vision, and creating college-going campus cultures. Using quantitative and qualitative data together provided a clearer picture of use of the resource toolkit, additional resources that are needed to support transitions to college, and the experience of this area of study for faculty and staff.

Analysis of Quantitative Data

Reliability of Quantitative Measures

Pre- and post-survey data included three main constructs, *attitude*, *motivation*, and *technology acceptance*, with several sub-constructs for quantitative analysis. To determine the internal consistency of each sub-construct, reliability testing using Cronbach's Alpha was performed. The first area, *Attitude toward College Transitions Programs*, measures beliefs about the importance of the sub constructs, which include: (1) the importance and difference that *college talk* makes for students continuing learning (4 items), (2) the support and encouragement that students get from a *college-*

going campus culture (4 items), (3) the belief that students need *college support* in navigating the transition process (4 items), (4) the belief that *partnerships between AE and community colleges* promote and support college transitions (4 items), and (5) *other considerations* and beliefs that may affect faculty participation in transition activities (3 items).

As shown in Table 1, each of these areas had a Cronbach's Alpha score that ranged between .615 - .861 with three areas showing a strong internal consistency (above .7) (Salkind & Frey, 2020) and two showing acceptable (above .6) (Ursachi et al., 2015). Removing items to look for increases in Cronbach alpha scores indicated for *college talk* removing the fourth item increased the Cronbach's alpha score to .832 and for *college support* the removal of item 2 increased the alpha to .651. Looking at the actual responses for these two items, 95% of the participants had a 5 scaled score indicating full agreement with the items. This skewness may produce decreases in alpha for ordinal Likert-type scales (Greer et al., 2006 and Gadermann et al., 2012)) with limited response options. Removing these two items pointed to removing two more items from each subconstruct. Based on the acceptable levels of internal consistency with the four original items, not wanting to remove 50% of the survey items, and the likely impact of skewness of responses, all items were kept as part of this study. Future studies may want to rework the original questions with a test group to ensure a stronger reliability. The second area of study, *Motivation to Implement Transition Strategies*, measures the current level of participation in transition activities, which include: (1) engaging in *college talk* with students (4 items), (2) supporting transition activities and creating *college-going campus culture* (4 items), and (3) actively assisting students by providing *student support and*

advocacy (4 items). These constructs had a range of Cronbach's Alpha scores between .657 - .745 as shown in Table 1. Removing questions to increase reliability in motivation sub-constructs showed only slight gains and such as all original items were kept. The post survey included survey items addressing the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM), which measures the three sub-constructs of: (1) *usefulness* of the toolkit in the participant's current position (4 items), (2) *ease of use* to operate the toolkit (4 items), and (3) *behavior intention* to continue using the toolkit (4 items). The TAM sub-constructs showed a strong internal consistency with Cronbach's Alpha scores from .788 - .955 (see Table 1). One additional question was included on the pre-survey to address perceived limitations. This item was added to address some of the practical issues that may affect participation in activities listed in the other constructs. This item contains responses that are unconnected to each other and were not developed to measure internal consistency. This data was analyzed and presented through descriptive statistics. Based on the moderate and strong reliability coefficient scores for each sub-construct, the survey tool appears reliable.

Table 1*Cronbach's Alphas for Pre-Survey*

	All Original Items	Cronbach's α
Attitude Toward College Transitions		
Student College Talk	4	.667
College-Going Campus Culture	4	.861
Student College Support	4	.615
Partnerships with AE & College	4	.760
Considerations	3	.756
Motivation to Implement Transition Strategies		
Student College Talk	4	.657
College-Going Campus Culture	4	.745
Student Support & Advocacy	4	.741
TAM Constructs on Post-Survey		
Usefulness	4	.788
Ease of Use	4	.955
Intent to Use	4	.867

Note: N=20 for each sub construct

Analysis of Attitude and Motivation Data

Attitude and *motivation* related to college transitions were measured by 5-point Likert-style questions on the pre- and post-surveys. Mean scores on the pre-survey for all *attitude* and *motivation* sub-constructs were high, ranging from 4.23 – 4.87(see Table 2). High scores for attitude sub-constructs means that on average participants *somewhat agree* or *agree* that it is important for educators to engage in college talk activities, create college-going campus cultures, and support students in transitioning to college. High scores for motivation mean that on average participants selected *somewhat true* and *true of me* when responding to personal participation in college talk, creating college-going culture, and advocating for students. This data showed that most participants were at the top of the scale before the intervention. Median scores were above the mean in all

categories except for *campus culture*. The higher median scores point to a skewness in the data. A skewness value between -1 and -0.5 points to a moderate skewness and a value less than -1 points to a serious skewness (Allen, 2017). These baseline scores before the intervention showed that all areas are negatively skewed (leaning toward the higher scores), with two areas moderately skewed and the other four seriously skewed. Since the study was looking for positive increases from pre- to post-survey scores, it may be challenging to show net gains when pre survey scores were already at the top of the scale for many subjects.

Table 2

Mean Scores for Pre-Survey Attitude and Motivation

	Items	Mean	Median	Skewness
<i>Attitude</i> (Importance)				
Student College Talk	4	4.87	5.00	-2.07
College-Going Campus Culture	4	4.68	5.00	-2.06
Student College Support	4	4.63	5.00	-0.93
Partnerships with AE & College	4	4.63	5.00	-2.60
<i>Motivation</i> (Participate)				
Student College Talk	3	4.63	5.00	-1.42
College-Going Campus Culture	3	4.23	4.00	-0.59
Student College Support	4	4.60	5.00	-1.50

Note: N=20 for each sub construct

In looking at pre-survey mean scores for *attitude* alongside *motivation*, motivation mean scores were lower than attitude in the comparative sub-constructs of *college talk*, *campus culture*, and *student support* (see Table 2). Using paired t-tests to look for differences, results showed significant differences between attitude about college talk activities and motivation to participate in the *college talk* ($p<.05$) and *campus culture* ($p<.01$) items (see Table 3). The effect size for *college talk* was $d=.46$ and campus culture

was $d=.62$, which indicate medium effect sizes (Salkind & Frey, 2020). The larger the effect size the greater the difference between *attitude* and *motivation* scores. Subjects, on average, agreed that engaging in college talk activities and building a college-going campus culture were important, however subjects rated themselves significantly lower on participation in those behaviors. Attitude and motivation measures related to providing *student support* in transition processes did not show significant differences ($p>.05$).

Table 3

Paired Samples Test – Comparing Pre Survey Sub-Constructs

	Mean Diff	t statistic	Degrees of freedom	Significance Two-Sided p
Talk Attitude – Talk Motivation	.242	2.344	19	.030
Culture Attitude – Culture Motivation	.442	3.179	19	.005
Support Attitude – Support Motivation	.038	0.292	19	.774

Note: A-M = attitude – motivation. N=20

Pre- and post-survey scores were analyzed for significant differences (see Table 4). A comparison of the mean scores showed increases in mean scores from the pre- to post-surveys in the four areas of *college talk* (+.15), *campus culture* (+.38), *student support* (+.19), and *partnerships* (+.01). These increases in mean scores depicted a move toward stronger agreement in support of transitions activities and intention to participate in those activities. The three *considerations* items showed a decrease in mean scores depicting a move away from agreement with perceived obstacles related to transitions to college. The mean score for *believing that encouraging transitions too early encourages students to leave before completing their programs* decreased by .40. The mean score for *believing that community colleges want to take students away from adult schools*

decreased by .35 and *preferring to talk to students only when close to graduation* decreased by .10. These mean scores showed movement toward transition supporting behaviors and away from strong beliefs that limit transition behaviors.

To determine if these differences were significant, paired samples t-tests were conducted. Results showed that *campus culture* pre- and post-surveys are significantly different ($p < .001$) (see Table 4) with large effect size ($d = 0.83$). Effect size indicates the magnitude of the difference, with 0.2 - 0.8 indicating a medium effect and greater than 0.8 indicating a large effect (Salkind & Frey, 2020). While the other measures (*college talk*, *student support*, and *partnerships*) showed a difference in means scores, the t-test did not support a significant finding ($p > .05$). The t-test for the considerations also showed no significant differences, even though means decreased from pre- to post-surveys (see Table 4). Paired t-test results may be affected by the skewness of the data and the small sample size. Paired t-tests are best performed with normally distributed data and with a larger sample size than 20 (Green & Salkind, 2016). For these reasons, nonparametric tests were also conducted to show potential differences with the small sample size with a non-normal distribution. A related-samples Wilcoxon Signed Rank Test showed similar findings to the paired samples t-tests. Significant differences were not shown ($p > .05$) for *college talk*, *student support*, *partnerships*, and all *considerations*. The nonparametric test only showed significant differences ($p < .01$) for *campus culture*. The parametric and nonparametric tests showed the same findings. Both indicated that *campus culture* showed a significant increase from pre-to post-surveys, however the other areas did not show significant differences.

Table 4

Paired Samples Tests: Pre- and Post-Surveys for Attitude, Considerations and Motivation Items

		Pre Mean	Post Mean	Mean Diff	t	df	p
<i>Attitude and Considerations</i>							
Post-Pre	Encouraging College Too Early	3.45	3.05	-.400	1.094	19	.144
Post-Pre	Colleges Taking Students	3.70	3.35	-.350	1.071	19	.149
Post-Pre	Talking Closer to Graduation	3.35	3.25	-.100	.248	19	.403
Post-Pre	Partnerships	4.63	4.64	.013	.081	19	.468
<i>Motivation (to Participate)</i>							
Post-Pre	College Talk	4.63	4.78	.150	1.577	19	.066
Post-Pre	Campus Culture	4.23	4.62	.383	3.708	19	<.001
Post-Pre	Student Support	4.60	4.79	.188	1.617	19	.061

Note: N=20

Since skewness and small sample size may have affected comparisons of mean paired scores and the ability to show significant increases, an examination of actual scores may better show changes in attitude and motivation. The number of subjects that indicated *true of me (5)* on the *college talk* scale increased 18% from pre to post survey, with *campus culture* increasing 52% and *student support* 18% (see Table 5). This data indicates that more subjects plan on participating in college talk, campus culture activities, and student support activities than was indicated on the pre-intervention survey. Attitude toward partnerships between community colleges and adult education campuses remained about the same showing a 3% decrease in the number of subjects that selected *agree*. The three *consideration* issues were evaluated individually. Table 6 shows the frequency of each response for each consideration. The data show fewer

subjects selected *agree* for considerations 1 and 3 on the post survey. While consideration 2 showed the same number for *agree*, there appears an overall shift away from agreement for the remaining responses. This data may provide evidence that beliefs were beginning to shift away from the big considerations because of access to the resource toolkit. Although frequency data doesn't provide evidence of significant differences, a change from pre survey to post survey is evident.

Table 5

<i>Frequency and Percentage of Respondents Attitude and Motivation</i>						
	1	2	3	4	5	Mean
<i>College Talk – combined 3 items</i>						
Pre Survey	0	1	4	11	44	4.63
		(2%)	(7%)	(18%)	(73%)	
Post Survey	1	0	2	5	52	4.78
	(2%)		(3%)	(8%)	(87%)	
<i>Campus Culture – combined 3 items</i>						
Pre Survey	0	2	9	22	27	4.23
		(3%)	(15%)	(37%)	(45%)	
Post Survey	0	0	4	15	41	4.62
			(7%)	(25%)	(68%)	
<i>Student Support – combined 4 items</i>						
Pre Survey	2	0	2	20	56	4.6
	(3%)		(3%)	(25%)	(70%)	
Post Survey	0	0	3	11	66	4.79
			(4%)	(14%)	(83%)	
<i>Partnerships – combined 4 items</i>						
Pre Survey	1	2	4	12	61	4.63
	(1%)	(3%)	(5%)	(20%)	(75%)	
Post Survey	0	0	8	13	59	4.64
			(10%)	(16%)	(74%)	

Table 6

Frequency and Percentage of Respondents on Considerations

	1	2	3	4	5	Mean
<i>Consideration 1– Encouraging college transitions too early encourages students to leave before they compete their high school or equivalency programs</i>						
Pre Survey	2 (10%)	4 (20%)	2 (10%)	7 (35%)	5 (25%)	
Post Survey	5 (25%)	2	2 (10%)	9 (45%)	2 (10%)	
<i>Consideration 2 – Community colleges want to take students away from adult school before they complete their programs</i>						
Pre Survey	1 (5%)	2 (10%)	4 (20%)	8 (40%)	5 (25%)	
Post Survey	4 (20%)	0	6 (30%)	5 (25%)	5 (25%)	
<i>Consideration 3 – Talk to students about transitions to college only when students are close to graduating</i>						
Pre Survey	4 (20%)	3 (15%)	2 (10%)	4 (20%)	7 (35%)	
Post Survey	4 (20%)	3 (15%)	1 (5%)	8 (40%)	4 (20%)	

Analysis of Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) Data

TAM data was collected as part of the post survey. Each of the three TAM sub-constructs (*ease of use, usefulness, and intention to use*) included 4 items on a 5 point Likert-type scale ranging from *disagree* (1) to *agree* (5). Mean scores for each sub-construct ranged between 4.2 – 4.8 (see Table 7). To create a more continuous variable and mitigate the effects of using ordinal data, the scores within each construct are added together. The sums of each sub-construct were correlated using Pearson r. A moderately strong correlation is shown if Pearson r scores >.4 (Salkind & Frey, 2020, p. 87).

Usefulness was significantly correlated with *intention to use* ($r=.69, p<.001$) and *ease of*

use was correlated also with *intention to use* ($r=.39, p<.05$). However, there was no significant correlation between *usefulness* and *ease of use* ($p>.05$). *Usefulness* showed a stronger correlation to *intention to use* than did *ease of use*. This suggests that subjects' use of the toolkit was more closely linked to the usefulness in their jobs than to how easy the toolkit is to navigate.

Table 7

Frequency and Percentage of Respondents from TAM

	1	2	3	4	5	Mean
<i>Perceived Usefulness</i>						
Improve performance	0	0	0	10 (50%)	10 (50%)	4.50
Improve ability to help	0	0	0	8 (40%)	12 (60%)	4.60
Make job easier	0	0	1 (5%)	8 (40%)	11 (55%)	4.50
Useful in job	0	0	1 (5%)	4 (20%)	15 (75%)	4.70
<i>Ease of Use</i>						
Learning is easy	0	0	3 (15%)	5 (25%)	12 (60%)	4.45
Easy to do what want	0	0	4 (20%)	6 (30%)	10 (50%)	4.30
Easy to be skilled	0	0	1 (5%)	7 (35%)	12 (60%)	4.55
Easy to use	0	0	3 (15%)	6 (30%)	11 (55%)	4.40
<i>Behavior Intention</i>						
Use in the future	0	0	1 (5%)	4 (20%)	15 (75%)	4.70
Use regularly	0	0	5 (25%)	6 (30%)	9 (45%)	4.20
Use helping students	0	0	2 (10%)	5 (25%)	13 (65%)	4.55
Would recommend	0	0	1 (5%)	5 (25%)	14 (70%)	4.65

To examine, the extent to which *ease of use* and *usefulness* predict a change in *intention to use*, multiple regression analysis was conducted. A one-tailed test was used since the TAM focuses on positive relationships between the independent and dependent variables. This analysis looked at how the two independent variables of *ease of use* and *usefulness* predicted the dependent variable of *intention to use*. Regression data shows

that both *ease of use* ($\beta=.306$, 1-tailed $p<.05$) and *usefulness* ($\beta=.646$, $p<.001$) are significant positive predictors of change in *intention to use* (see Table 8). As factors cause an increase in *usefulness* and *ease of use*, *intention to use* scores will also increase.

Table 8

TAM Regression Coefficients^a

Model	Standardized	Sig.
	Coefficients	
	Beta	
(Constant)		.622
Sum Usefulness	.646	<.001
Sum Ease of Use	.306	.038

a. Dependent Variable: Sum Intention to Use

Use of Toolkit Analysis

Actual use of the toolkit and spotlight sessions were challenging to measure since they were (and continue to be) online and open to the public. Survey questions, interviews, and analytics together may provide the best look at actual use of the toolkit. According to survey data, 80% of study subjects indicated that they used the resource toolkit *a few times* during the study, with 15% using it weekly and 5% more than once per week. When asked about using the toolkit with adult students, subjects indicated 60% used it with students a few times during the study window, with 10% using it weekly, 5% more than once a week, and 25% never used it with a student. Of the spotlight videos included in the toolkit, the most popular were college registration, financial aid, student toolkit overview, and the staff toolkit overview (see Figure 5).

Website analytics provides a wider picture of actual use of the student and staff resources. Since the website analytics software does not track internet protocol (IP)

addresses and the resources are open access with no login, tracking users and returning visitors was done through cookies on users' devices. This may create an opportunity for some visitors being counted from each device they use and conversely some visitors may not be counted as a *returning visitor* if they used multiple different devices. During the study window, analytics data shows that the student resources home page was visited 530 times, from 133 unique devices, with 56 devices tagged as returning visitors. The faculty page had 225 views, from 105 unique devices, with 56 returning visitors. Based on this data 42% of student resource visitors came back again from the same device and 53% of teacher resource visitors returned. The data for the subpages in the toolkit showed an average of 44% returning visitors for student pages (see Table 9) and 45% for faculty pages (see Table 10). This data shows significant traffic to both student and faculty resource pages during the study window and indicates a large portion of repeat visitors. Page views for repeat visitors are shown in Tables 9 and 10. Data on returning visitors showed that specific pages were returned to from 3 – 10 times during the study window. Since the toolkit was designed to be a resource, repeated use indicated that the toolkit was being utilized as designed.

Individual resource data were not available for the study window in website analytics, however the video analytics for the spotlight sessions show that college registration, financial aid, student resources, and staff resource overview received the highest number of views. Although the website analytics data does not relate solely to the behavior of study subjects, it supports study subjects' self-reported data of toolkit use, repeat visits, and resources used.

Table 9*Website Analytics for Student Resource Pages During Study Window*

	Total Views	Total Users	Returning Users	Returning User Views	Views Per Returning User
Home Page	530	133	56	453	8.09
Academics	84	19	7	72	10.29
College	183	76	29	136	4.69
Career Explore	206	60	25	171	6.84
Support Services	61	23	19	57	3

Table 10*Website Analytics for Teacher Resource Pages During Study Window*

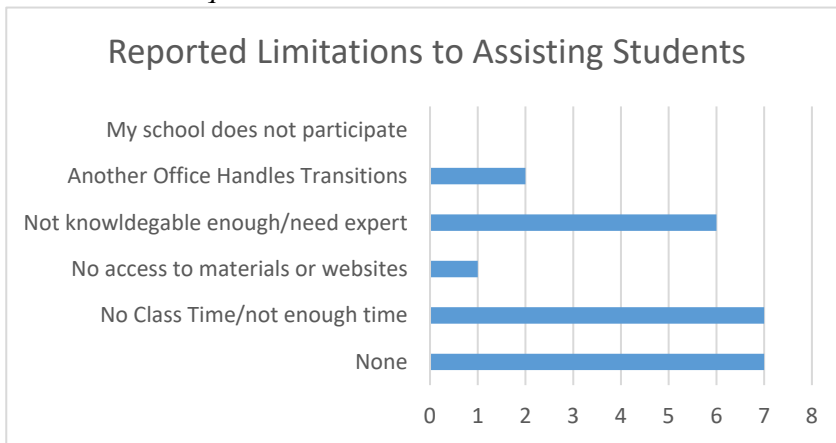
	Views	Users	Returning Users	Returning User Views	Views Per Returning User
Home Page	225	105	56	176	3.14
Professional Development	230	130	40	140	3.5
College & Transitions	86	36	22	72	3.27
Data	163	55	28	136	4.86
Classroom & Curriculum	53	30	15	38	2.53
Research Shorts	27	23	10	14	1.4
Engagement and Marketing	57	30	15	42	2.8

The last set of quantitative data came from the pre survey and included perceived limitations around assisting students with transitioning to college. There were several limitations that were communicated during cycle one and cycle two interviews conducted prior to the dissertation study. These questions were asked as part of the survey to get a better understanding of some of the perceived personal and institutional barriers that

some of the study subjects may have encountered. Of the study subjects, 35% indicated that they did not have enough time, 30% felt they were not knowledgeable enough or their questions needed experts, 10% indicated that another office handles transitions to college support, and 35% said that none of these limitations apply to them (See Figure 6). This data, along with interview data, helps create a clearer view of obstacles encountered in the field. It seems that faculty members continue to feel that they do not have enough time to support students transitions and may also feel that they are not knowledgeable enough to guide students and answer questions. This data may also be useful in looking at implications for the next cycle of program development and future research.

Figure 5

Limitations Frequencies



Analysis of Qualitative Data

Data Analysis procedures for qualitative data

Qualitative data included interviews and open answer questions on post intervention surveys. Interviews from four study subjects were recorded through Zoom meeting software. Zoom uses embedded artificial intelligence software to create a

transcript of recordings. Original transcripts were downloaded, compared to the video recording, and updated as appropriate. Condensed transcripts (Palus et al., 2014) were created for each interview. Final transcripts had names of subjects, individuals, schools, districts, and any other identifiable information removed. These edited transcripts were used for analysis. Transcripts were uploaded to HyperResearch Qualitative Analysis Tool, Version 4.5.3. to assist with the coding process.

Qualitative data was coded using *grounded theory initial coding* (Charmaz, 2014). For purposes of analysis, interviews and open answer survey questions were coded separately. Both sets of coding focused on identifying key actions without focusing on pre-determined codes or concepts (Charmaz, 2014). As each interview was coded, codes were grouped into loose categories and re-evaluated after each new interview using a *constant comparative method* (Ivankova, 2015). Initial coding included 153 codes with 17 categories.

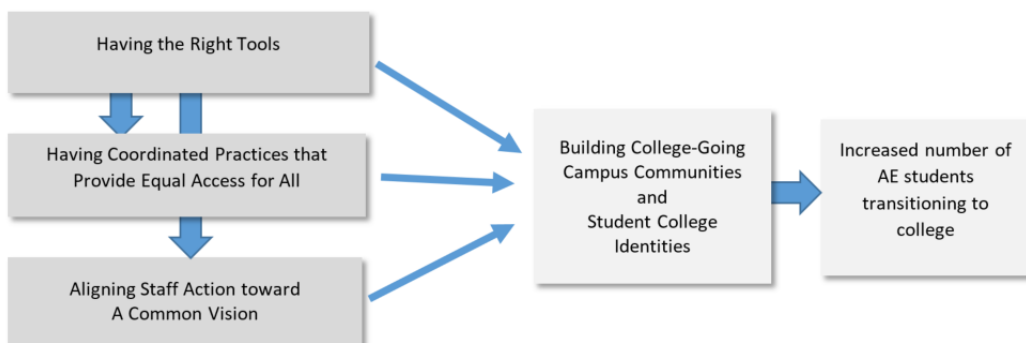
Second cycle coding utilized an *Axial Coding* model (Saldana, 2021) where relationships between categories were evaluated to determine key themes and how they relate to each other. Four major themes were identified (1) developing and expanding resources, (2) creating a college-going culture and building college identities, (3) improving processes to provide equal access for all students, and (4) understanding faculty mindset and concerns. Many aspects of college transitions are covered in each of these major themes. Taken as a whole, they cover aspects of the toolkit itself, student barriers, institutional practices, and faculty and staff perceptions that all affect the implementation of transition programs on adult education campuses. Looking at how

these areas interact with each other and speak to the purpose for this study, *exploring the effect of new access to information through the toolkit and spotlight videos on faculty attitude and motivation to engage in college transition activities*, a model was developed to show the connections between the major themes (see Figure 6). Increasing the number of students transitioning from adult education to college was the main driver for the study and the overarching purpose of all previous cycles of inquiry. Having the right tools to support students, creating equitable processes and practices, and aligning staff toward a common vision are ways to create a support a college going-culture on adult campuses.

For purposes of this study, data presented in this chapter will focus on the toolkit resources and spotlight videos, how they are related to the elements in the model (Figure 6), and what new elements need to be added to the toolkit in the future. Ideas will be presented from phenomenological and praxis-oriented contexts, including both the perspective of the interviewee in their local context and the practical application of existing and proposed resources in the toolkit. Interview data outside the scope of the toolkit is discussed in Chapter 5's "Implications for Further Study" section.

Figure 6

A Model for Increasing AE Transitions to College



Results of Qualitative Data

Having the Right Tools. The Transitions Resource Toolkit was designed to fill a practical need and provide direct access to information related to transitions to college for adult education staff and students. It was the intent of the intervention to connect school-based staff with what they need to have conversations about college with students, support the registration and transition process, and connect staff and students with needed experts. An assessment of the resource toolkit was conducted as part of the interviews and open answer questions on the post survey. This data addresses RQ1 and RQ3 of this study. RQ1 asks *to what extent do faculty and staff utilize this toolkit*, exploring the viability of using an online resource toolkit to support AE students. RQ 3 asks *what resources are needed for faculty and staff to better implement post-secondary transition programs on adult education campuses*, looking at what is needed to support transitions in their local contexts. As an action research study, with subjects spread across multiple school sites and districts within a consortium, it was important to provide resources that were grounded in theory, but that allowed for unique implementation and adaptation to diverse campus dynamics. Study subjects were given access to a full range of resources in the toolkit, but not a strategy or structure for their use. Interview and survey responses reflected needs for both content and use of resources on their campuses.

The toolkit was generally well received. Study subjects liked that the toolkit was easy to use, it was current and updated, and included elements that were very helpful. Surveys indicated that the most useful items were the videos, school and program search tools, direct links to colleges, and the teacher resource tab with articles. All interviewees indicated that the spotlight videos for college registration and financial aid were very

helpful. Interviewee 2 (INT2) stated “I feel [the videos] are the first thing we should all encourage...they’re really informative, short, and easy to understand.” Interviewee 1 (INT1) commented that she liked that the format of the spotlight videos since they were conversational with the hosts asking questions that students ask all the time. A common comment among interviewees was how helpful it was to have everything in one place and that direct links to college webpages saved time by eliminating confusing navigation and web searches. Interviewee 3 (INT3) indicated that the toolkit fulfills two purposes; “for myself, I am still learning new things...that I didn’t learn the first time, and to educate my students.” This data shows that the videos and centralized nature of the toolkit made the resources useful for students and helped staff fill in gaps in their own college transition knowledge.

Other helpful resources were the program search tools that allow staff and students to find school sites and program options within the consortium and the state. There were a number of detailed comments about how to enhance the search tools, however most interviewees commented on how easy they were to use and that they were a needed feature in the toolkit. INT2 shared that having the toolkit as an open online resource allows it to be used as a reference for students even when they have completed and moved on from classes, and gives students an opportunity to share the resources with other friends, family, and classmates. Based on interviews and surveys, the tools in the toolkit appear to meet expectations, are useful for students and staff, are user friendly and simple to operate, and easily accessible across consortium schools. This data supports the viability of the online toolkit as a resource for supporting transitions to college. Although the study window was only 6 weeks and it will take time for use of the toolkit to settle

into regular practice with the wider body of staff, the interview data is evidence of the usability, usefulness, and accessibility of the toolkit.

Interviewees and survey respondents shared many ideas for developing and expanding the toolkit resources. Technical and cosmetic changes were noted, however for purposes of this study, the focus of this section will include implementation and structural recommendations. Several of the survey respondents and interviewees commented on feeling overwhelmed by the amount of content and not knowing where to start. INT3 suggested breaking the information into smaller pieces and creating more step-by step guidance for how students navigate through the website. He recommended creating a “pathway in a sequence, watch this video, then do this, then watch this other video...build out their [student] understanding of community college.” INT4 suggested a paper-based guide or pamphlet that would direct students to the website and guide them through how to use it. These expansion ideas will elevate the toolkit from a collection of resources and web links to a purposeful curriculum-driven step-by-step transition approach.

INT4 has found that since COVID “hand holding is even more necessary...we can say ‘look there’s a link’ and if they’re really motivated they’ll do it themselves, but many of them will just flounder.” INT3 also mentioned the need for having direct contact person for each college rather than just a link. He indicated “it would be nice to have a [college] counselor that has been trained to work with adult students and their different challenges” to create a hand-off of students. The other three interviewees also discussed the challenges with knowing who to contact with questions and how to reach

an actual person. Having contact people on the toolkit would make it easy for school-based staff to reach out to the various colleges when students run into challenges or need support. INT1 and INT2 suggested adding a few more spotlight videos to cover some of the challenging questions related to the College Promise program, options for undocumented students, and understanding how college works (e.g. degrees, classes, schedule, transfer units, and college vocabulary). These interviewees felt the videos are a great way to connect students with experts when they can't meet them in-person. It seems that most interviewees felt that more direct contact and connections with colleges would better support student transitions. The toolkit seems to be a great starting pace to find contact information and answer immediate questions, but ultimately participants would like to have greater access to college experts.

Having Coordinated Practices that Provide Equal Access for All Students.

One of the benefits of having the toolkit online with open access is that staff and students from all districts can find what they need and get questions answered. Some of the interviewees did comment on the ability of students to find the website without the link. The toolkit is housed on the consortium website with a name that is irrelevant to students and that even staff have trouble remembering. INT4 quipped “you could have the best website in the world, but if people can't remember the name or how to get there” then it will not work. To enhance the accessibility of the toolkit, it was recommended that it have an easy to remember domain name for entering the toolkit in the future. An easier domain name with marketing qualities may make directing student traffic and distributing collateral material easier.

When asked about existing programs and support on adult education campus, all of the interviewees said that the schools provide some kind of college talk or counselor visit during the year. These visits are often seasonal and scheduled toward the end of the school year for potential graduates. These sessions often happen once or twice a year and are primarily scheduled for daytime students. INT2 shared that is “too bad [there are only daytime sessions]... adult education programs are designed to help students who work during the day, they’re not available, and if they miss one day [of work] that could be their groceries for a week.” INT2 went on to say that one of the best parts of the toolkit is that it gives students everything they need in manageable pieces. Some sites have college counselors that visit campuses more often during the school year, but typically these sessions serve limited students that schedule one-on-one time. Interviewees commented that the spotlight videos provide access to the information provided in many of the on-campus college sessions or counselor visits. INT2 said that a benefit of the spotlight videos is that teachers can use them with night classes and integrate them into synchronous Zoom sessions for online students. The toolkit provides on-demand access to resources for students who might not otherwise be able to attend on-campus activities or who missed the scheduled events.

INT4 added that in adult education students graduate throughout the year not just around the graduation ceremonies when typically transition activities are scheduled. INT4 commented that “we don’t have an exit interview, we don’t have an exit class, we don’t have exit practices, and we don’t have any certain piece of paper we hand someone when they’re completing.” She further discussed that having a document that every student gets when they are completing their program that directs students to the resources

on the website “will be hopeful...there might even be a cultural change in [district].” Interviewees commented that they know they do not reach all students when discussing college transitions. INT1 indicated she approaches students in her class who are doing well and “plants a seed about college,” sometimes talking about dual enrollment options. INT2 said she talks mainly to students who ask about college and she likes to “plant the seed especially with students who I feel have the stamina to be able to go on to college.” INT3 said he likes to inquire about students plans at the time of enrollment and “start planting the seed about what to do next.” INT3 indicated that he talks about college continuously with students but he is not sure about the rest of the school site. INT4 said “It is catch-as-catch can” since, as a counselor she doesn’t always know when students finish classes. Based on the interviews, there does not seem to be a standardized practice for supporting transitions, selecting which students to address, and deciding when and how to provide services. The toolkit, along with some new step-by-step guidance, may be able to provide a format for reaching most students and providing college-going activities for students throughout the school year.

Equity and access as seen through the interviewees is not just about having the resources online, but providing equitable support, equitable connections with college counseling, equitable opportunities for having conversations about college with school staff, and a mechanism for sharing and ensuring that all of these services are available. In answering RQ3, *what resources are needed*, these interviews indicate a need for strategies and collateral to bring students to the resources, a wider array of videos of college experts, and strategies and resources for schools to ensure that each and every student has a touchpoint with school staff about college possibilities. For RQ1, these

interviews provide evidence that having an online toolkit serves a valuable function for staff and students in addressing some of the equity concerns with transitions to college. Utilizing the toolkit connects populations of students that might otherwise have been missed.

Aligning Staff Action Toward a Common Vision. One of the challenges with implementing an innovation or new intervention is getting staff to align with a common purpose around producing a common outcome. There are many important issues on any campus. As indicated on the survey, faculty and staff identified not having enough class time as a limitation to helping students with transitions, and they often feel that other competing responsibilities get in the way. INT1 said that counselors at her school do not come to classrooms to talk with students about transitions and college. She wishes they would schedule time to talk with all of the students during a class period. INT4 mentioned that she would “hope for more college going culture in the future, but right now we are putting out so many fires that it feels like it is not a primary thing on the list.” INT4 also mentioned that she doesn’t know how much counseling remote student graduates are getting. In her interview, INT2 talked about a need for staff development on utilizing the toolkit. She mentioned that she sees college transitions as an area where all staff could use some training. INT2 indicated that when counselors don’t have time to put together classroom visits or events, they often say “just send them to me.” Several interviewees felt that their students have concerns with the “send to the office” model because students do not want to seem foolish, they are afraid of wasting someone’s time, they are not sure what questions to ask, and they don’t have an established relationship with the counselor. INT2 said “I am a firm believer in teaching everyone” so that no

matter who the student asks for help “they can sit down, get the information in front of them, pop around, and have the students’ questions answered...no one has to go to the office.” With respect to RQ1 and the usefulness of the toolkit, INT1 and INT2 both stated that they are excited to have access to the toolkit as it makes it much easier to have college conversations in their classrooms. They no longer have to spend lots of time looking for resources and navigating confusing websites, as they now have what they need in one place. Both INT1 and INT2 are excited about hosting their own sessions in their classrooms and online in the coming semester. Addressing RQ3 needed resources, these interviews indicate that staff development on use of the toolkit, time saving resources, and strategies for implementation would be useful additions to the program.

RQ2 asks about how access to the toolkit has changed faculty attitude and motivation to participate in college transitions activities. As discussed in the quantitative analysis, many of the study subject’s pre survey scores were at the top of the scale before the study began. The interviews also showed that these four study subjects were already engaged in college transition activities on their campus prior to participation in the study and prior to any access to the toolkit. When interviewees were asked the question, *has your opinion or interest in supporting or participating in transition activities changed since you have access to information online*, here is what each interviewee said.

INT1: In January, I am going to start sharing about these resources and use the video in class to have discussions with all of my students.

INT2: I always wanted to help students.... I think that's our job. In fact, when I think back at all the jobs I've had, they have been of service. I like the idea that I can have information is at my fingertips. It's going to be an easy tool to teach students as well, and here's the fun part ...once the students learn about it,... the word of mouth is going to be very hot on this little topic, and that's how the word

is going to be spread because it's a really useful tool. Maybe it'll be like a new Google for a community college transitions.

INT3: It [my attitude] has a changed in a positive way. Because I feel like participating with it. It gives me the opportunity to shape information that is available for our students and have a way that I see that it functions for most of us. Just being mindful that it [the toolkit] exists allows me to have the conversation with the students. Where before I would talk about it, but just on the surface, instead of getting a little bit deeper into to that conversation, and actually watching this through the process. So I think, just knowing that it exists... somehow changes my mindset as to how I approach my interactions with the students. And it is true you know... I was reading [about] the growth mindset ...and this is the same. Just knowing the website is there and the resources are available, it makes a my job a lot easier, and then and I think I am better able to advise the students

INT4: Yeah, some of it's actually just by being involved with the [consortium] group. I'm embarrassed that I've been content to just know what I know and to just be 'that's what I know' and if I don't learn more, for now that's okay. But when I realized that other people are doing other things, and when I realize that there are resources available on the [consortium] website, and I'm a person who says that I care? ...I didn't know and I still don't know all that is on the [consortium] site, and that prods me, and that's a positive thing... so that has helped.

Based on these responses, faculty and staff attitude has made a shift toward becoming more involved with utilizing the toolkit with students, expanding their knowledge about college, and looking for strategies to reach students on their campuses. Although staff have to work inside the realities of their school sites, with limited time, and other responsibilities, the interviewees have found ways to set aside some of their concerns and create new possibilities for helping students explore college options. These changes speak to RQ2 and demonstrate that simple access to the toolkit can positively affect attitude and motivation to participate in college transition activities.

Building a College-Going Culture and Student College Identities. As depicted in Figure 6, college-going cultures and student college identities are sourced by having

the *right resources, equitable practices*, and a *common vision*. When asked about ways their school promotes a college-going culture, interviewees shared a spectrum of activities and visuals. INT1 mentioned having college pennants in the counseling office, but most conversations happen in the classroom relationships between teacher and student. INT1 talks with individual students about college but sees that she can create opportunities to have college discussions with her entire class. INT2 said “I think this is maybe one of those things that is lacking at our school, we don’t really have a college center” and the current practice is to send students to the office. INT2 further believes training staff in use of the toolkit can mitigate not having a college center on campus. INT3 shared that he is not sure about the whole campus, but in his program area they start talking about college from the time of enrollment and have visuals of each staff member’s educational journey on the wall. INT4 shared that her school administrators feel that they are doing enough to support transitions by raising money for scholarships and hosting a workshop once a year. She further said “I personally don’t feel like that’s significant enough...it’s not the same thing as culture. It’s more like an event with seasonal emphasis.” Based on the interview responses, there is a varied approach on each campus and most college activities are a function of committed personalities over institutional practices. Providing professional development, creating engagement materials for students, and developing strategies for implementing college transitions at schools were suggestions for starting to build more college-going cultures on the adult campuses. These elements address both RQ 3 through added materials for the toolkit, and RQ2 by documenting these new opportunities for engagement in college transitions that are emerging for the study participants.

When interviewees were asked about what students request help with related to college transitions, all of the study subjects said students ask a version of, “can I do this, can I afford this, and how do I fit this in my life?” INT2 said, “These students are adult students, they're living on their own already, they've got full time jobs, and they've got children. So for them they have to factor all of these things [into] do I have the time?” INT2 commented that many students who come to adult education never finished high school and already have a lack of confidence. INT3 added that he thinks a big issue is the “mindset of students, because for many of them it has never crossed their mind that they can go to college.” All of the interviewees mentioned that it often takes faculty and counselors “planting the seed” for students to start to see themselves as potential college students.

For the students that are interested, college is often a mystery. INT3 shared that he has students that are confused when counselors use terms like GPA, transfer credits, associate degree, major, and undergraduate programs. He feels that we need to find ways to share college vocabulary with students. INT4 tries to educate students on the differences between public and private options for college and the availability of the college promise program to cover tuition. INT2 says we also need to share about how college works, how many classes they need to take, how to just get started with a few, and start sharing little by little. “I think when you give students bite size pieces of what the possibilities are for college, then it becomes more of a reality for them...instead of dreaming about it, they are thinking I can do this” says INT2. Some of the resources that interviewees want to see added to the toolkit include items that will help students develop a college identity and get students prepared for how different the college experience is

from adult education. One strategy suggested was to create a short course or series of materials that cover “College 101” topics. Many of the survey responders wanted testimonials added to the toolkit. They believe students seeing others like themselves transfer to college and be successful will open up new ideas and start conversations. INT2 believes it is her job to “help them build their confidence and say, you know what, you've already won because you made it up 3 flights of stairs to my classroom.” Having resources like testimonials, understanding college basics, and activities that develop college identity, along with classroom conversations can help students see the possibility of attending college and encourage them to take the first step.

Closing thoughts on analysis and findings

Looking at the quantitative and qualitative data together, there is an overall picture that the resource toolkit is well received, easy to use, useful, and that the study subjects have a high likelihood of continuing to use it with their students and for their own expanded knowledge. TAM scores for *ease of use* and *usefulness* are on the high end of the scale with means scores in each sub construct ranging from 4.2 – 4.7. This is consistent with interview and open-answer survey questions. Qualitative data showed that study subjects found the toolkit easy to use and useful for themselves and students. *Ease of use* and *usefulness* scores were significantly correlated with *intention to use* scores which, according to TAM developers, has been found to highly correlate with *actual use* (Davis et al., 1989). Qualitative data indicated that all study subjects interviewed have a plan for continuing to use the toolkit for themselves and expanding its use to their student population. Recommendations were made by study subjects for increasing the toolkit’s usefulness through adding additional resources and improving accessibility. As these

items are incorporated in future cycles, it is expected that *ease of use*, *usefulness*, *intention*, and *actual use* will increase.

Quantitative data showed that mean scores for *attitude* and *motivation* related to transitions to college increased after the intervention. Although paired samples t tests of pre and post surveys did not show significant increases, some of this may be due to the skewness of the data and small sample size. From pre to post surveys, there was an increase in strongly agree responses to motivation to participate in college talk (18%), campus culture activities (52%), and student support (18%). This shift is also evident in the interviews with study subjects communicating the need, desire and intent to share information with students, push for more activities on their campus, and connect students to those that can best help with their interest in transitioning to college. The quantitative data captured a good cross section of teachers, administrators, and counseling staff experiences with transition programs, working with students, and operating inside their various school site dynamics. The qualitative data provided a deeper and richer understanding the perspective of the staff, the frustrations and excitement, and the nuances of helping students on their journeys. These data showed that this is an area that needs continued development and expanded resources.

CHAPTER 5

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

This study aimed to examine one aspect of the transition program needs identified in cycle one research, increased *access to information*, and how addressing this area might affect faculty attitude and motivation related to transitions to college activities. Also, this study was designed to look at what additional resources are needed to best support transition programs on adult education campuses. Through the interviews and surveys, it is clear that access to information is a small but necessary part of a larger multi-layered problem of increasing transitions to college for adult education students. This dissertation study looked at the development and use of an online toolkit to determine if this affected motivation and attitude toward transition activities. In this chapter, each research question and how the quantitative and qualitative data worked together to provide an answer will be discussed. This chapter also provides discussion about how this study's outcomes related to other research studies, implications for further research and practice, lessons learned, and final thoughts.

RQs and Complementarity of the Data

As mentioned in chapter 3, this study utilized a concurrent (QUAN + QUAL) mixed methods action research approach. Qualitative and quantitative data were collected and analyzed separately, then brought together to look for areas of complementarity or dissonance. The benefit of using a mixed methods approach in this study was that it provided a more comprehensive picture of the attitudes and experiences of study participants. The quantitative data showed movement of attitudes and motivations from pre- to post-surveys, while qualitative data provided more depth of understanding why.

Both pieces of data worked together to answer the research questions. Quantitative and qualitative data in this study provided complementary support.

Utility of the Toolkit

RQ1 looked at the extent that faculty and staff would utilize an online transitions resource toolkit to support adult secondary education students. To predict future extended use of the toolkit, the study utilized the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) designed by Davis et al. (1989) to examine *usefulness*, *ease of use*, and *intention to use* among participants. The TAM questionnaire has been used to show a positive correlation between intention to use and actual use of technology (Davis et al., 1989). Quantitative data show high mean scores in all three sub-constructs indicating that participants found the toolkit useful, easy to use, and intend on using it in the future. A predictive relationship exists between the two independent variables (*ease of use* and *usefulness*) and the *intention to use* the toolkit. These high scores and predictive relationship may indicate that as long as the toolkit is useful and easy to use, continued use of the toolkit is likely.

Website analytic data and interviews also support the toolkit's utility for adult educators. Interviews indicated the toolkit's usefulness and ease of use from all participants. Although there are areas that could be expanded or further developed, interviewed participants all expressed ways that they would continue to use the toolkit and share it with others. Google analytics showed that both student and faculty toolkit home pages had over 100 visitors during the study window, with nearly half repeat visitors, representing 755 page views. This data points to faculty coming back to the

toolkit multiple times throughout the six weeks. One of the goals of the toolkit was that it be a regular place for students and faculty to access information throughout the school year. Having repeat traffic points to this tool serving an ongoing purpose. Since the toolkit is a new product, launched at the start of this study, the amount of web traffic seems to be a good starting point. As the wider population of adult educators learn about this toolkit, use is expected to increase.

Considering the current landscape of expanded online programs and the quantitative and qualitative data collected in this study, the need and desire to use an online transition toolkit is high. On the post-survey, 98% of responses agreed or somewhat agreed that the toolkit was useful, 86% agreed or somewhat agreed it was easy to use, and 89% agreed or somewhat agreed they intend to continue using it. Participants appreciated having the resources available online with access from anywhere and the ability to send students to the resources to explore themselves. Participants made several recommendations for making the tool kit easier to find and utilize for students that will hopefully expand its current use. The online nature of the toolkit adds to its effectiveness, with participants indicating that they liked the direct links to colleges, video interviews, and the 24 hour open access. As more faculty align with the value of promoting transitions to college for adult education students and awareness of the toolkit spreads, I believe that this online support website will become an integrated part of adult education counseling in the consortium and provide ongoing guidance for creating college-going cultures on AE campuses. The resource toolkit will be highly utilized to the extent that college transition activities are promoted and implemented on campus.

Changing Attitudes and Motivation

RQ2 examined the extent that increased access to transition information, through the resource toolkit and spotlight sessions, affected faculty attitude and motivation to participate in college transition support services and create a college-going culture on campus. This was measured through both the pre- and post-survey comparison and interview questions. Pre-surveys showed highly skewed scores for *attitude* and *motivation* indicating that participants felt that many of the college transitions activities were important and that they personally engaged in many of them. Pre-surveys showed significantly higher scores for *attitude* in *college talk* and *college culture* than motivation scores in these same sub-constructs, indicating that although participants believe these areas are important, they showed lower engagement in the activities themselves. Also, even though many participants scored themselves high on *attitude* and *motivation* on pre-surveys, post-survey scores still showed increases in motivation after access to the toolkit. Interviews supported these findings with participants indicating that were inspired to create more opportunities for college discussions with their students and engage in more transition activities after utilizing the toolkit. The most significant change and large effect size shown in the data was in motivation to create and participate in college-going campus culture activities. Surveys showed a significant increase in plans to engage in these activities and interviews shared plans to incorporate more class focused support instead of selective sharing with individual students.

Comparing pre- to post- surveys also showed attitudes changing with respect to some of the limiting considerations related to transitions to college. Participants moved away from agreement with beliefs about community colleges taking students from adult

schools, concerns about encouraging students to leave, and preferences for talking about college close to graduation. Although some participants still have concerns about losing students or engaging with students too early, there was a shift in mean scores toward being less concerned about these considerations at the end of the study window.

Interviews indicated that talking about college only during “graduation season” (March – June) was not enough. Participants felt that more conversations and opportunities were needed throughout the year to discuss college options, connect with counselors, and be introduced to the idea that college is available and affordable to anyone. In this dissertation study, participant interview responses were focused on how to provide more access to students and improve support services on campus. The concerns about colleges mentioned the needs for more collaboration, need for direct contacts at colleges, and concerns about not having the same level of resources as community colleges. There was concern mentioned by all interviewees that colleges had access to more resources than adult education campuses, like specialized counseling, legal services, food and housing support, and technology. One interviewee mentioned the need to convince teachers and counselors that colleges are not a threat and that we have to work with each other to support students. Two interviewees mentioned feeling conflicted about encouraging college instead of adult education career training, taking into consideration some mixed messages from administrators about supporting other school programs versus transitioning students to other campuses. Overall, as the survey responses indicated, interviewees seemed less concerned about students leaving before they complete their programs than indicated in prior research cycles or at the beginning of this study. Since staff attitude and motivation related to transition activities plays a role in student

exposure to materials and college conversations, future study cycles may want to more fully explore what resources are related to this shift in attitude and motivation. A wider study with more participants may better show the extent of these shifts.

Expanding and Developing Resources

RQ3 examined what resources faculty and staff need to better implement post-secondary transition programs on adult education campuses. This question was answered through the open-ended survey questions and interviews. Responses focused primarily on the toolkit, however some participants provided suggestions for implementing new school-wide protocols and strategies. These strategies and protocols will be addressed later in this chapter as part of the implications for practice. Toolkit expansion and development included recommendations for both content and navigation. Generally, participants indicated on both surveys and interviews that the toolkit was well-assembled, simple, and user-friendly. Additional videos were requested for a variety of topics including: College Promise, DACA and Dream Act programs, avoiding predatory loans, understanding college vocabulary and jargon, and testimonials from previous students. Participants felt that these additional videos might help students understand college processes and start to seeing themselves as college students. These video additions will also help students begin to develop their college-going identity. Participants also wanted more information to help connect with schools including hyperlinks in search tools and contact information for college counselors. In advocating for students, school staff need to make direct connections to get questions answered and hand off students to the next school.

Much feedback was provided through the surveys and interviews about navigation of the site. Participants would like to see easier navigation menus, less crowded displays on webpages, and more direction for students on how to flow through the website. The participants' experiences with their students had them recommend that student-facing pages be broken into smaller parts with lots of guidance. Self-directed students will often utilize college websites, but the large population of non-traditional AE students in the consortium may be better guided by a step-by-step approach. Lastly, a common concern was the challenge in navigating to the website itself. The website was suggested have a more easily remembered and searchable web address and keywords. Participants shared their own challenges with remembering the consortium website and trying to find it in Google searches. The more user friendly, easily-navigated, and straight forward the website is, the more likely it will be utilized as a resource for staff and students. In answering RQ3, the level of detail and exploration of new ideas that came out during the interviews were very useful to documenting future implications for practice and will provide the foundation for future development of the resource toolkit and spotlight videos.

Connections to Existing Literature

Several learning theories and change models, as discussed in chapter 2, influenced the design for this AR dissertation study. Adult learning theory and research on student retention models provided the foundation for the resource toolkit content and mode of instruction. Views on critical perspectives and culturally relevant education (CRE) provided a need for focusing on equity of delivery, outreach, support, and advocacy (Knight-Manuel & Marciano, 2014). Institutional change models provided insight into

how to disseminate the resource toolkit to the wider body of adult educators. Lastly, the technology acceptance model (TAM) provided a way for evaluating potential future use of the resource toolkit (Davis et al., 1989). All of the existing literature provided guidance in creating this dissertation study and provides direction in looking at future implications.

Adult Learning Theory and Student Retention Models

The intent of the resource toolkit is to not only provide access to information about the logistics of registering for college, but also to provide adult students with the supports needed for successful transition to college. Adult learning is about connecting education to achieving students' life goals (Knowles, 1980). Tools for exploring career options, considering the benefits of college, and connecting with support services were all part of the toolkit. Aligned with Knowles understanding of adult teachers as guides, study participants saw the toolkit as a way of starting conversations with students about future goals, how further education might support those goals, and how toolkit resources can connect them to their next step. Study participants indicated that they would like to see more guidance for students built into the toolkit and perhaps include worksheets or activities that students can work through while using the site. This aligns with Knowles' concept of adults as self-directed learners and positions teachers as facilitators or coaches (Lubin, 2013) in the process of exploration.

Student retention models look at what factors cause students to persist in college rather than drop out. Tinto found that students who were connected to the campus community and perceived themselves as successful academically were more likely to

persist (Tinto, 1975, 1987, 2017). Further research by Bean and Metzner (1985) showed the environmental factors had a larger impact on student retention than academics. A study of pre-college transitions models (Karmelita, 2020) showed a need for students' acclimation to college processes and expectations. Aligning with these models, study participants indicated the need to add items to the toolkit that expanded their understanding of college practices, familiarized them with college lingo, and learned how classes and grading work. Participants also indicated that many of the primary concerns of students are economic and environmental factors like money, childcare, and working full time. Participants also wanted to have better connections with college personnel so that students can have a handoff to someone they know.

Culturally Relevant Education

Supporting college transitions for adult education students can be seen as an equity issue. Knight-Manuel and Marciano (2014) discuss the need for providing access to higher education for all students through promoting college and career readiness, building college identities, and creating college-going campus cultures. All of the participants interviewed shared that student mindset is a major obstacle to transitioning to college. Many students do not see themselves as college material and may lack confidence in their academic ability. Participants also shared that students are concerned that they will not be able to attend college because of their life circumstances and money. Aligning with CRE research, study participants felt that more needs to be done to connect students with wrap around services, financial aid, direct connections to colleges, and testimonials from students like them. Knight-Manuel and Marciano (2014) discuss the value in creating productive teacher-student relationships and engaging in *college talk*.

They share about how teacher expectations impact outcomes for students of color and students living in poverty. Similarly, study participants shared that students relied on their teachers for guidance related to college transitions and that often teacher's *college talk* was able to shift student thinking toward new possibilities. Participants felt that more could be done to create a college-going culture on campus and more could be done to ensure that access to college transition information and planning reaches every student. Over the last several years, we have all learned that equal access and equity are not synonymous. Knight-Manuel and Marciano (2014) and interviewees all note that we need to walk students through processes, connect them with people and agencies who can help, and advocate for them when necessary. As discussed in Chapter 1, adult education in Los Angeles comprises non-traditional learners, predominately people of color, living in areas that face high poverty. Study participants shared that non-traditional adult students often need help with seeing how college can fit into their busy lives with many external demands on their time and resources. Making college accessible to these communities requires many wrap around services to level the playing field, such as counseling services, food and housing support, childcare, immigration services, tutoring, and student success initiatives.

Institutional Change

The best curriculum and tools make no difference if they are not shared and implemented across campuses. I have seen many wonderful programs fizzle without a solid implementation plan that includes administrative support and buy-in from the field. One of the key aspects of Lewis' *Improvement Science* (2015), discussed in chapter 2, is the importance of *profound knowledge* of the school site and its operations when

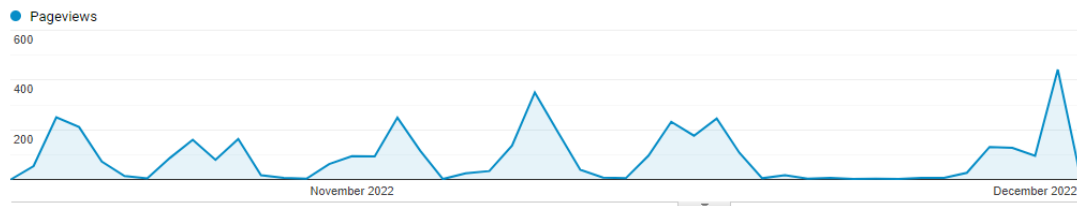
implementing change. In their interviews, study participants shared about various school site structures and counseling practices that made it challenging to identify potential graduates and implement a uniform strategy. Each school site is different in terms of administrative support, counseling protocols, classroom interaction with the office staff, and level of established connections with the local colleges. Moving forward, purposeful use of the resource toolkit may be helped by working with individual school site teams to create local protocols for reaching all students. Following Kotter's eight stage process for transforming organizations (1996), these school site teams can become what he termed a *guiding coalition*, developing and communicating their vision and empowering teachers to take action at their school sites. It is clear from the interviews that having a resource website is useful, however what makes the difference in transitions to college are the conversations teachers and counselors have with their students. The website is a useful aspect of a larger plan for transitioning adult education students to college.

As a way of maintaining engagement during the six-week window, study participants received a weekly email with a resource spotlight. This email was aligned with Kotter's fourth step of "constantly communicating the new vision and strategies" (1996, p.21). Since study participants did not receive training or guidance in using the website, these emails were a way to draw attention to some of the resources and remind participants that the study was still running. In looking at the website analytic data, there are peaks and valleys of activity on the website (see Figure 7). Engagement peaks coincided with the emails sent to study participants as well as similar communications sent to the field. Although the page views depicted in Figure 7 are not limited to study participants, they do show increased website traffic every time a resource highlight was

sent to the field. Several of the study participants mentioned that the site had an overwhelming amount of resources and that it was something they needed to explore over time. I believe the emails and resource highlights allowed people to focus on single features. Moving forward, continuing to communicate about transitions, resources available, and improvement efforts are ways to share the *change vision* (Kotter, 1996) and encourage staff to continue to take actions. Staff development on use of the toolkit may also provide guidance in utilization and navigation, especially as new elements and structures are implemented. Kotter's (1996) last step in his eight-stage change process is anchoring new approaches in the culture. As more faculty and staff are engaged in college-going campus activities and the toolkit and resources become part of the school support structure, I believe that weekly communications may not be a critical to driving traffic to the website, but may instead be utilized for sharing ongoing developments.

Figure 7

Daily Page Views During the Six-week Study



Technology Acceptance Model

Results from the TAM questions showed predictable results based on previous research studies conducted by Davis et al. (1989). The questions in each sub-construct were reliable. *Usefulness* and *ease of use* measures were correlated with *intention to use*.

Based on these outcomes, Davis et al. would predict that it is likely that *intention to use* will correlate with *actual use* of the toolkit. Moving forward with this study, it might be useful to incorporate ways to measure actual use of participants to further validate the application of Davis' work. The consortium's programs are now operating in a post-COVID environment inundated with many useful and easy to use web-based applications designed to support instruction and learning. It would be useful to know if the TAM sub-constructs maintain their connection in a technology-abundant setting. Future actual use may also be related to the urgency of transitions to college. Currently transitions to post-secondary is a reported measure in the California Adult Education Program, but it is not linked to performance-based funding. As this policy changes and transitions are included as a funded performance measure, it might cause increased actual use in toolkit resources. Based on findings from this dissertation study, it seems that Davis' model holds true and that continued attention should be focused on ensuring that the toolkit is useful and easy to use.

Personal Lessons Learned

Through this study, I have learned some personal lessons about the value of conducting action research. The first lesson is to listen. Action research is not about having the answers and implementing solutions. AR is about really listening to the experience of the participants, getting the world in which they operate their programs, and understanding the challenges they face inside their context and personal perspectives. There is nothing that is wrong or bad in the participants' experiences, AR is about capturing what is so for that participant and creating the next action. The extent to which I want to develop innovations or interventions to address circumstances must take into

consideration the phenomenological context that exists for each participant. How do we transform the occurring world so faculty and students can step into what's possible? Early reconnaissance cycles helped to listen from their needs, allowing for the creation of new avenues of innovations. A mixed methods design with surveys and interviews was utilized not to show the effectiveness of tools, but rather to more fully capture the participants' viewpoints and experiences. The second lesson I learned with action research, was letting go of the reins and letting the research take the study where it needed to go. In early cycles of the larger action research study, I set out to create programs that support transitions to college. In conducting the three preliminary study cycles, the participants moved this AR study toward *access to information* and the development of an online toolkit. Through interviews and data collected throughout these four cycles, I have found that this foundational need of *access to information* was necessary before we can build some of the more collaborative and institutional elements related to transitions to college. As this dissertation cycle moves to the next round, the toolkit design has moved from a collection of what I wish the field would do, to how to best support faculty and students on their way to what's next for them.

A third lesson I learned in this dissertation study was that the findings are the findings. I do not need to have the findings go any particular way to find value in the research and determine what is next. The innovations were designed from problems and needs, but do not need to be justified with data. I was clear with study participants that I wanted them to engage in the study as they would naturally and answer honestly about their experiences. The goal of the research is not to justify the design, but to create useful innovations that make a difference for students. With qualitative data, I learned that

coding is not just about reduction and grouping like items together. Coding is about “discovery of participant’s voice...motivations, values, attitudes,... and world view” (Saldana, 2021, p.21). In this context, coding became less about condensing multiple interviews or validating earlier findings, but more about capturing each participant’s unique viewpoint and seeing connections between them. Although this study and the toolkit have been sourced at the consortium level, the entire project feels driven by the field. Action research and mixed methods have provided a vehicle for continued collaboration and program development.

Limitations

There were three identified limitations of this study. The nature of voluntary consortium work limited the pool of participants, and the study may not reflect the views of all staff members at school sites. The second limitation was small sample size. Quantitative analysis was limited by having only 20 study participants. The last identified limitation was the limited study window. The six-week period limited research to looking at the toolkit’s *intended use* versus *actual use*. These limitations, which I discuss in more detail in the following paragraphs, may affect the applicability of the study results to the wider body of adult education faculty, however as action research this dissertation study was designed for this specific target audience.

Consortium activities are designed to support faculty and staff in all districts and provide opportunities for collaboration between districts, although a limited number of representatives participate. Consortium activities are voluntary and most collaboration participants come from a smaller sub group of district staff. The voluntary nature of

consortium participation typically includes staff that are open to sharing ideas, learning new strategies, problem solving, and working on joint improvement projects, and as such may not reflect all types of attitudes found in the field. Every effort was made to recruit participation from all consortium districts, however volunteers came from 3 out of 5 districts. To get a better sense of actual attitude and motivation of adult educators, it would have been necessary to survey all staff. Since there were only 20 participants, staff were looked at as one body and statistical analysis was not examined by position.

Teachers, advisors, and administrators were considered as one group. Although teachers, advisors, and administrators were included in the surveys, no administrator volunteered to be interviewed. Institutional barriers and process perspectives were provided by teachers and advisors only. It should be noted that with action research, I am trying to improve the educational practice in my current sphere of influence. As a consortium staff member, I work directly with limited segment of the adult education population. I do not have a direct connection to all school-based staff. My position is about providing opportunities for collaboration to a small segment of educators to take back to their own school sites for further development and implementation. It is my hope that the ability of study components to influence attitudes and motivation at the consortium level will eventually affect school site practices.

The second limitation of the study was small sample size. Some participants were excluded from the study because they did not complete pre- and post-surveys and one participant's test could not be matched. Paired samples t-test results may have been affected by the skewness of the data and the small sample size of 20 participants. Paired samples t-tests are best performed with normally distributed data and with a larger

sample size than 20 (Green & Salkind, 2016). Future testing may be enhanced with a survey tool that allows for a wider range of scaled responses to lower the skewness and include a larger sample size. A larger sample size may also allow for looking at nuances between different staff positions. Using the qualitative data was helpful in filling out a more complete picture of the experience and usability of the resource toolkit.

The third identified limitation is that this study measured *intention to use* of the resource toolkit rather than actual use. The study window was six weeks in the fall semester of 2022. In adult education, transitions to college activities are often spread throughout the year. Students enroll and complete programs on individualized schedules. Transition support is not limited to any specific time. The six-week window was selected so the study could be completed in one semester. Selection of six weeks did not allow for the collection of longitudinal data. Additionally, because the resource toolkit was intended to be open access on a public website, it was not possible to track actual use of study participants or their students. Tracking actual use would have required a login process that would not have allowed for open access and natural expansion of use by participants' students. The TAM tool was selected for surveys because it connected self-reported *intention to use* with future actual use. Future cycles of this study may examine actual use of the toolkit and resources across a year. Analytic data collection and analysis beyond this study's timeline will likely continue to be useful.

This dissertation study was designed to launch the toolkit as a preliminary solution to the problem of lack of easy access to transitions information. It is part of a larger action research study that will continue to address the resource toolkit and implementation at

school sites. It is the intention of the consortium to continue to develop these tools and resources to make them more useful, accessible, and widely utilized. Although there are limitations to the application of the study findings, the intent of the dissertation cycle of inquiry was to use the qualitative and quantitative data to give more immediate feedback to the researchers and support the next cycle of inquiry. While the six-week period of this study and small sample size are limitations, they are also part of the nature of action research design of working with individuals in a specific context through the ongoing process of trials, assessment, and further refinement.

Implications for Practice

In considering future practice, new ideas have emerged from this study related to: (1) further development of the resource toolkit and creation collateral materials that connect students to the website, (2) staff development and expanded use of the resources beyond the study group, (3) creation of curriculum that focuses on college knowledge and college identity, and (4) the establishment of school-based and consortium-level teams to develop new protocols that provide more equity of college support across campuses and the consortium. These strategies have emerged from recommendations of study subjects, analysis of qualitative and quantitative data, prior cycles of research related to this study, and connections to relevant literature. The transitions resource toolkit provides basic structure for delivering needed resources across a large consortium. Its online structure provides easy access for staff and students and allows for global updates to reach the field. The toolkit has been generally well received and participants look forward to expanding its use and ability to meet students' needs. Recommendations for further development will only enhance its usefulness to adult educators in Los Angeles.

New Developments and Collateral Materials

Survey and interviews indicated a need for redesigning the student-facing resources in a way that breaks down the content and provides more flow and direction for students. Participants felt that the current toolkit is very comprehensive but may be too overwhelming and does not provide students with clear guidance on where to start. Participants also shared about the ongoing challenges of locating the students' resources on the consortium website. Moving forward with the toolkit, the consortium will focus on launching a new domain name access to the website that is more user friendly and memorable. This new domain will include marketing collateral materials to direct students and staff through the new portal. Keywords and headings will be added to the toolkit pages to make them more searchable on Google. It was recommended that a student packet be created that guides students through using the website. This packet may have directions, worksheets, journal entries, and quick links that direct traffic to the toolkit in a thoughtful way. Google analytics will be able to map student journeys from the new domain name through toolkit pages. This packet will be part of a campaign to increase use of the toolkit by staff and students. School-based and consortium-level teams (discussed further in *equitable practices*) can use this packet and marketing materials as a way of expanding access to resources for all students.

Curriculum Development

Participant interviews and surveys pointed to a need for students to become more versed in college culture, understand college vocabulary and jargon, and learn about how higher education works in the United States. Many of our non-traditional students come

from immigrant families and do not have familial college history. Many students think that college is not for them or that it is a mystery. A recommendation for future practice is to create a *College 101* course at the adult school as a high school program elective. This course could provide foundational college knowledge, prepare students for the rigor of college coursework, introduce students to college support services, incorporate college planning activities, and begin development of college identity. As discussed in chapter 2, successful pre-college transitions programs need to acclimate students to college processes and expectations, build student academic confidence through readiness skills, and introduce students to a network of support services that can support them in reaching their personal goals (Karmelita, 2020). All of these elements can be built into a *College 101* course.

Staff Development

As the resource toolkit is shared with the wider body of adult educators, it will be useful to provide staff development in using a locating the tools online, how to best use the resources to support students, and the importance of engaging in college transition activities. Teachers and support staff need to learn about the collection of information available in the resource toolkit. Since students often have an established relationship with their teacher or assistants, it is likely that questions about college transitions will be directed to classroom personnel. Many of the participants indicated that students are reluctant to go to a separate office or counselor for questions. It becomes critical that classroom staff can provide some direction to students. Another consideration for training is having teachers understand the important role they play in promoting college through

college talk, student support, and creating college-going culture on campus. As I heard from many of the interviewees, planting the seed about college early opens up possibilities for students that they may not have otherwise seen for themselves. Additionally, the non-traditional student population needs teachers to help them navigate the process and sometimes advocate on their behalf. Having teachers aligned in this role needs to be part of initial staff development and included in ongoing school-site protocol creation.

Equitable Practices

A common theme among participants both in classrooms and among advisors was the hope of connecting with all students about college transitions. Participants indicated they often do not have enough time, sometimes do not have the information needed, are not always aware of all potential students, or do not have a uniform way of reaching everyone. These practices are complicated by the fact that adult schools teach classes all day, including in-person and online, and students complete programs individually all year long. There is no meeting time that covers all students. Future practices might include school-site and consortium-level teams collaborating on an implementation design that will better address providing equal access to college resources and counseling for all students. Creating teams of practitioners at school sites can serve as a guiding coalition (Kotter, 1996) for implementing change on the wider campus and allow profound knowledge of the site (Lewis, 2015) to be integrated in the creation of a unique implementation that works inside existing school structures. One strategy recommended by a participant included having an exit document or packet that all students receive when identified as a potential graduate. Another participant felt that regional support

personnel might be better equipped to work with individual schools and students in coordinating transition activities. A model for regional transition specialists has worked in other consortia (State Center Adult Education Consortium, South Bay Consortium for Adult Education, and Contra Costa Adult Education Consortium), providing a case management approach to college and career transitions. There is a need to institutionalize practices so that college transitions move away from a “catch-as-catch can” model toward equitable access for all students.

Implications for Research

There are many opportunities for continued research in the area of adult education transitions to college. As the next round of innovations are developed, it would be appropriate to start looking at the impact of these tools and strategies on actual student transitions. Adult education programs have performance measures that are reported to state and federal programs. New state-level research recommends adding measures for transitions to post-secondary programs (LAO, 2022). It would be a great next step for schools, districts, and the consortium to evaluate current and proposed methods for measuring transitions and the collection of baseline statistics. As new programs and protocols are implemented, schools can track progress and the effectiveness of specific interventions. The resource toolkit is useful and easy to use, but does it serve its purpose of helping students transition to college? Are students who utilize the toolkit more likely to transition than those who do not? Does school-level or consortium-level group implementation plans result in an increase in transitions over prior years or over school sites that don't have transition programs? If transition specialists are introduced, how many students do these positions serve? Are students more likely to transition when

receiving support? Do schools who have transition specialist show an increase in actual transitions? With potential funding for transitions programs tied to outcomes, it becomes important to shift research toward measuring actual transitions to college.

Closing Thoughts

Building college transitions programs and supporting transitions on adult education campuses is a multi-faceted endeavor. There are many components that make up effective transitions programs, including access to resources, staff motivation, institutional buy-in, AE and college partnerships, college readiness curriculum, and student supports. Building and implementing the resource toolkit was a first step in creating increased access to transition information. Continued cycles of research and innovation are needed to refine and expand resources, build better bridges to college for adult students, and engage all AE staff in campus-wide efforts to support students along their pathways to higher wage careers. It was a hopeful outcome that staff considerations decreased and motivation increased during this dissertation study with just simple access to resources. It is my hope that continued efforts in this area and professional development will create more equity in access to college for our non-traditional learners, immigrant populations, and students of color.

Through the literature review, interviews, and creating the resource toolkit, I am more clear than ever that *college talk* and a college-going environment makes a difference for students. As educators, we are given a unique opportunity to guide students and help them see what's possible for themselves through our expectations and beliefs. We can bring to our schools the belief that "all students are capable of learning, achieving

high academic success, and being prepared for college and careers” (Knight-Manuel & Marciano, 2019, p.5).

REFERENCES

- Adams, C. & van Manen, M. (2008). Phenomenology. In L.M. Given (Ed.), *The SAGE encyclopedia of research methods*. SAGE Research Methods.
- Adult Education Block Grant Office. (November 16, 2016). *Submission of quarterly and annual performance reports for AEBG* [Memo to AEBG Directors and Members]. <https://caladulthood.org/DownloadFile/190>
- Note: AEBG is now called California Adult Education Program.
- Ajibade, P. (2018). Technology acceptance model limitations and criticisms: Exploring the practical applications and use in technology-related studies, mixed-methods, and qualitative researches. *Library Philosophy and Practice (e-journal)*. Libraries at University of Nebraska-Lincoln.
- Alamprese, J. (n.d.). *Helping adult learners make the transition to post-secondary education*. U.S. Department of Education Office of Vocational and Adult Education.
- Allen, M. (2017). Skewness in The Sage Encyclopedia of Communication Research Methods. SAGE Publications, Inc. <https://dx.doi.org/10.4135/9781483381411>
- Bean, J. & Metzner, B. (1985). A conceptual model of non-traditional undergraduate student attrition. *Review of Education Research* Vol. 55, No. 4, p.485-540.
- Bloomberg, Linda Dale. (2023). Charting the path to success: The non-traditional adult student is the new normal. Teachers College Press. <https://www.tcpress.com/blog/charting-path-success-non-traditional-adult-student-normal/>
- Boone, H.N. & Boone, D.A. (2012). Analyzing Likert Data. *Journal of Extension*, Vol.50 Issue 2.
- Bowers, A & Bergman, M. (2016, September-December). Affordability and the return on investment of college completion: Unique challenges and opportunities for adult learners. *Journal of Continuing and Higher Education*, Vol. 64 Issue 3, p144-151. <http://doi.org/10.1080/07377363.2016.1229102>
- Braxton, J. (2019). *Leaving college: Re-thinking the causes and cures of student attrition by Vincent Tinto* [Review of the book]. Johns Hopkins University Press. <https://doi.org/10.1353/csd.2019.0012>
- Brown, B.A., Boda, P., Lemmi, C., & Monroe, X. (2018). Moving culturally relevant pedagogy from theory to practice: Exploring teacher's application of culturally relevant education in science and mathematics. *Urban Education*, Vol 54, Issue 6. SAGE Publications.

- Brinkmann, S. & Kvale, S. (2015). *InterViews: Learning the craft of qualitative research interviewing*, third edition. SAGE publications, Ltd.
- Cabrera, A, Castaneda, M., Nora, A., & Hengstler, D. (1992). The convergence of two theories of college persistence. *The Journal of Higher Learning*, Vol. 63, No.2, p.143-162.
- Cabrera, A., Nora, A., & Castaneda, M. (1993). College persistence: Structural equations modeling test of an integrated model of student retention. *The Journal of Higher Education*. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/2960026>
- California Adult Education Program (CAEP). (2021). *American community survey 2015-2019 demographic estimates by key subgroup* [online database]. California Adult Education Program. <https://caladulthood.org/2021FactSheets>
- California Association of African American Superintendents and Administrators (CAAASA) et al. (2021). *Advancing equity in an era of crisis*. CAAASA. https://www.caaasa.org/_files/ugd/2651b4_15917a14cb0144e7a9095bb44b863c1f.pdf
- California Community College Chancellor's Office. (n.d.). *What is AB 705*. <https://assessment.cccco.edu/ab-705-implementation>.
- California Community Colleges LaunchBoard. (2019). *Adult education pipeline: Transitions to non-developmental credit college course* [Data set]. <https://www.calpassplus.org/LaunchBoard/Adult-Education-Pipeline.aspx>
- California Department of Education (CDE) & California Community Colleges Chancellor's Office (CCCCO). (2015). *Adult education regional planning*. <https://ahed.assembly.ca.gov/sites/ahed.assembly.ca.gov/files/hearings/AB%2086%20Consortia%20Final%20Report.pdf>
- California State University. (n.d.). *About AB 540/AB 2000/SB 68 and the California dream act*. <https://www2.calstate.edu/attend/student-services/resources-for-undocumented-students/Pages/about-ab-540-and-the-california-dream-act.aspx>
- California Student Aid Commission. (September 2019). *California dream act FAQs for students and parents*. https://www.csac.ca.gov/sites/main/files/file-attachments/california_dream_act_faq.pdf?1570034690
- Cambridge Lewis, C. (2015). What is improvement science? Do we need it in education?. *Educational Researcher*, 44(1), 54-61.
- Carnevale, A.P., Strohl, J., Ridley, N., & Gulish, A. (2018). *Three educational pathways to good jobs: high school, middle skills, and bachelor's degree*. Georgetown

- University Center on Education and the Workforce.
<https://1gyhoq479ufd3yna29x7ubjn-wpengine.netdna-ssl.com/wp-content/uploads/3ways-FR.pdf>
- Center for Community College Student Engagement. (2016). *Expectations meet reality: The underprepared student and community colleges*. The University of Texas at Austin, College of Education, Department of Educational Administration, Program in Higher Education Leadership.
https://www.ccsse.org/docs/Underprepared_Student.pdf
- Chandra, S., Chang, A., Day, L., Fazlullah, A., Liu, J., McBride, L., Mudalige, T., Weiss, D., (2020). *Closing the K–12 digital divide in the age of distance learning*. Common Sense Media & Boston Consulting Group.
https://www.common Sense Media.org/sites/default/files/uploads/pdfs/common_sense_media_report_final_7_1_3pm_web.pdf
- Chen, J. (2017). Nontraditional adult learners: The neglected diversity in postsecondary education. *SAGE Open*, Vol.7 (1). DOI: 10.1177/2158244017697161
- College Atlas. (June 2018). *U.S. college dropout rate and dropout statistics*.
<https://www.collegeatlas.org/college-dropout.html>
- Collins, M. (1995). Critical commentaries on the role of adult educator. In Welton, M. (Ed.), *In defense of lifeworld: Critical perspectives on adult learning*. State University of New York Press.
- Daniel, C. (2021) *Gearing up to clear the path: Understanding black students' motivation for pursuing Post-Secondary Education* (Publication No. 9798728271932) [Doctoral dissertation, Arizona State University]. ProQuest Dissertations Publishing.
- Davis, F.D., Bagozzi, R.P., & Warshaw, P.R. (1989). User acceptance of computer technology: A comparison of two theoretical models. *Management Science*, Vol.35 (8), pp 982-1003. INFORMS.
- Doverspike, K. (2023). *5 digital trends that will drive school communications in 2023*. Finals site. <https://www.finalsite.com/blog/p/~board/b/post/5-digital-trend-for-school-communications>
- Frady, K. (2021). Media analysis of middle skill learning opportunities shaped by COVID-19. *New Horizons in Adult Education and Human Resource Development*, Vol 33, No.2. Wiley Periodicals, Inc.
- Gadermann, A., Guhn, M., & Zumbo, B. (2012). Estimating ordinal reliability for Likert-type and ordinal item response data: A conceptual, empirical, and practical guide. *Practical Assessment, Research, and Evaluation*, Vol. 17. DOI: <https://doi.org/>

10.7275/n560-j767

- Grace-Martin, K. (2008). *Can likert scale data ever be continuous?* Article Alley. http://www.articlealley.com/print_670606_22.html
- Green, S. & Salkind, N. (2016). *Using SPSS from Windows and Macintosh: analyzing and understanding the data, 8th edition*. Pearson.
- Greer, T., Hunter, S., Dunlap, W., & Berman, M. (2006). Research report: Skew and internal consistency. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, Vol 91, No.6.
- Habermas, J. (1981). *The theory of communicative action: Reason and the rationalization of society*, Vol. 1. McCarthy, T. (trans.) Beacon Press: Boston
- Heggeness M.L. & Fields, J.M. (August 2020). *Working moms bear brunt of home schooling while working during COVID-19*. United States Census Bureau. <https://www.census.gov/library/stories/2020/08/parents-juggle-work-and-child-care-during-pandemic.html>
- Ivankova, N.V. (2015). *Mixed methods applications in action research: From methods to community action*. SAGE publications, Inc.
- Karmelita, C. (2020). Advising Adult Learners During Transition to College. *NACADA Journal*, Vol.40(1), p.64-79.
- Knight-Manuel, M.G. & Marciano, J. (2019). *Classroom cultures: Equitable schooling for racially diverse youth*. Teachers College Press.
- Knowles, M. (1980). *The modern practice of adult education: From pedagogy to andragogy, revised and updated*.
- Kotter, J.P. (1996). *Leading Change*. Harvard Business School Press.
- Legislative Analyst's Office. (2018, February 15). *The 2018-19 budget: Adult education analysis*. <https://lao.ca.gov/Publications/Report/3752>
- Legislative Analyst's Office. (2022, December 13). *Redesigning California's adult education funding model*. <https://lao.ca.gov/Publications/Report/4652>
- Lewis, C. (2015). What is improvement science? Do we need it in education? *Educational Researcher*, Vol 44 (1). American Education Research Association.
- Los Angeles Regional Adult Education Consortium. (2018). *2019-2022 Three-year plan*. <http://prod-nova-attachments.s3-us-west-1.amazonaws.com/documents/proposal/4082/2019/06/04/205547/LARAEC%202019-2022%20Three-Year%20Plan.pdf>

- Los Angeles Regional Adult Education Consortium (LARAEC). (2023). *LARAEC regular board meeting: Board packet February 15, 2023*. <https://laraec.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/02/2023-0215-LARAEC-Board-Packet-F.pdf>
- Lubin, M. (2013). *Coaching the adult learner: A framework for engaging the principals and processes of andragogy for best practices in coaching* [Doctoral dissertation, Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University]. https://vtechworks.lib.vt.edu/bitstream/handle/10919/22017/Lubin_MM_D_2013.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y
- Mann, Horace. (1849). Twelfth annual report of the secretary of the board of education. Dutton and Wentworth State Printers. <https://archive.org/details/annualreportofde18471848mass/mode/2up>
- Mathis Burnett, M. (2020). *Building a framework: Critical pedagogy in action research* (Publication No. 9798557027397) [Doctoral dissertation, Arizona State University]. ProQuest Dissertations Publishing.
- Mertler, C. (2020). *Action research: Improving schools and empowering educators*, sixth edition. SAGE Publications, Inc.
- Mills, G.E. (2011). *Action research: A guide for the teacher researcher, fourth edition*. Pearson.
- Mollica, J. & Simon, P. (2021). *Supporting transition from adult education to postsecondary education and employment in California*. High Road Alliance. <https://caladulted.org/DownloadFile/1121>
- National Archives. (2016). Code of federal regulations: Part 463 adult education and family literacy act. <https://www.ecfr.gov/current/title-34/subtitle-B/chapter-IV/part-463>
- National Skills Coalition. (2021). *Adult education: A crucial foundation for middle-skill jobs*. National Skills Coalition. https://nationalskillscoalition.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/04/9.26-NSC-AdultEd-factsheet_final.pdf
- Noffke, S. (2009). Revisiting the professional, personal, and political dimensions of action research. In Noffke, S. E., & Somekh, B. *The SAGE handbook of educational action research* (pp. 6-24). SAGE Publications Ltd doi: 10.4135/9780857021021
- OpenDoors Adult Education. (2017). *Educate and elevate adult education: An investment in america's future*. <http://educateandelevateca.org>

- Palus, T.M., Lester, J., Dempster, P. (2014). Transcribing Audio and Video Data. In *Digital tools for qualitative research*. SAGE Research Methods.
- Plano Clark, V. & Creswell, J. (2015). *Understanding research: A consumer's guide*. Pearson.
- Ritt, E. (2008). Redefining tradition: Adult learners and higher education. *Adult Learning*, Vol. 19 Issue 1/2, p12-16. <https://web-b-ebshost-com.ezproxy1.lib.asu.edu/ehost/pdfviewer/pdfviewer?vid=2&sid=7964b904-c46b-4547-bb21-7050805236ab%40pdc-v-sessmgr06>
- Rodriguez, O & Gao, N. (2021). *Dual enrollment in California: Promoting equitable student access and success* [report]. Public Policy Institute of California. <https://www.ppic.org/?show-pdf=true&docraptor=true&url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.ppic.org%2Fpublication%2Fdual-enrollment-in-california%2F>
- Rogers, E. M. (1962). *Diffusion of innovations* (1st ed.). Free Press of Glencoe.
- Salkind, N.J. & Frey, B.B. 2020. *Statistics for people who (think they) hate statistics*, seventh edition. SAGE Publications, Inc.
- Scherer, R., Siddiq, F., & Tondeur, J. (2019). The technology acceptance model (TAM): A meta-analytic structural equation modeling approach to explaining teachers' adoption of digital technology in education. *Computers & Education*, Vol 128, pp.13-35. Elsevier.
- Schreier, M. (2014). Qualitative content analysis. In E. Flick (Ed.), *The SAGE handbook of qualitative data analysis* (p. 170-183). SAGE Publications Ltd, <https://www-doi-org.ezproxy1.lib.asu.edu/10.4135/9781446282243>
- St. Amour, M. (December 2020). Few positives in final fall enrollment numbers. *Inside Higher Ed*. <https://www.insidehighered.com/news/2020/12/17/final-fall-enrollment-numbers-show-pandemics-full-impact>
- State of California. (October 4, 2019). *Senate bill No. 554: Public schools: adult school students: Advanced scholastic and vocational training program*. http://leginfo.legislature.ca.gov/faces/billTextClient.xhtml?bill_id=201920200SB554
- State of California. (October 5, 2017). *Senate bill No.68*. California legislative information. https://leginfo.legislature.ca.gov/faces/billTextClient.xhtml?bill_id=201720180SB68

- State of California. (2021). *Education code 84900-84920*. California Legislative Information. <https://leginfo.legislature.ca.gov/>
- State of California (2015). Article 3 adult education consortium program. *Education Code California 84830*. https://leginfo.legislature.ca.gov/faces/codes_displayText.xhtml?lawCode=EDC&division=7.&title=3.&part=50.&chapter=5.&article=3.
- Strauss, A., & Corbin, J. (1998). *Basics of qualitative research: Techniques and procedures for developing grounded theory*. Sage.
- Tinto, V. (1975). Dropout from higher education: A theoretical synthesis of recent research. *Review of Educational Research*, Vol. 45, No.1. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/1170024>
- Tinto, V. (1987). *Leaving college: Rethinking the causes and cures of student attrition*. University of Chicago Press.
- Tinto, V. (2017). Through the eyes of students. *Journal of College Student Retention*, Vol. 19(3) p.254-269. Sage.
- Tops Pro Enterprise (2018- 2019 school year). *Barriers to employment*. [Unpublished raw data by school district within the Los Angeles Regional Adult Education Consortium].
- Tucker, J. (1999). Tinto's model and successful college transitions. *College Student Retention*, Vol 1(2), p.163-175.
- UCLA Center Program and Policy Analysis. (2015). *Dropout prevention*. School Mental Health Project, Department of Psychology, UCLA. <https://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/pdfdocs/dropoutprev/dropout.pdf>
- UCLA Lewis Center for Regional Policy Studies. (March 2021). *Los Angeles County quality of life index: Final report 2021*. UCLA Lewis Center for Regional Policy Studies. <https://www.lewis.ucla.edu/programs/data/qualityoflife/>
- United States Census Bureau. (2019). *Quick facts: Los Angeles city, California* [Online database]. United States Census Bureau. <https://www.census.gov/quickfacts/fact/table/losangelescitycalifornia/RHI125219>
- United States Department of Education. (n.d.). *Adult Education and Literacy*. Office of Career, Technical, and Adult Education. Retrieved April 7, 2022, from <https://www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/ovae/pi/AdultEd/index.html>

- United States Department of Labor Employment and Training Administration. (June 2016). *Workforce innovation and opportunity act: Final rules*. United State Department of Labor. https://www.dol.gov/sites/dolgov/files/ETA/wioa/pdfs/WIOA_Factsheets.pdf
- Ursachi, G., Horodnic, I. & Zait, A. (2015). How reliable are measurement scales? External factors with indirect influence on reliability estimators. *Procedia Economics and Finance* Vol. 20, p. 679-686.
- Vogels, E.A., Perrin, A., Rainie, L., & Anderson, M. (April 2020). *53% of Americans say the internet has been essential during COVID-19 outbreak*. Pew Research Center. <https://www.pewresearch.org/internet/2020/04/30/53-of-americans-say-the-internet-has-been-essential-during-the-covid-19-outbreak/>
- Welton, M. (Ed.). (1995). *In defense of lifeworld: Critical perspectives on adult learning*. State University of New York Press.
- Wenger, E. (1998). *Communities of practice: Learning, meaning, and identity*. Cambridge University Press.
- WestEd. (2018-2019). *Launchboard: Adult education pipeline*. [Data set]. <https://www.calpassplus.org/Launchboard/Adult-Education-Pipeline.aspx>
- WestEd. (2019-2020). *Launchboard: Adult education pipeline*. [Data set]. <https://www.calpassplus.org/Launchboard/Adult-Education-Pipeline.aspx>
- WestEd. (2020-2021). *Launchboard: Adult education pipeline*. [Data set]. <https://www.calpassplus.org/Launchboard/Adult-Education-Pipeline.aspx>
- Zafft, C., Kallenbach, S., Spohn, J. (2006, December) *Transitioning adults to college: Adult basic education program models*. National Center for the Study of Adult Learning and Literacy. http://www.ncsall.net/fileadmin/resources/research/op_collegetransitions.pdf
- Zandi, M. (2016). *Monthly labor review: Labor market will shape U.S. economy in years to come*. U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics. <https://www.bls.gov/opub/mlr/2016/article/labor-market-will-shape-us-economy-in-years-to-come.htm>

APPENDIX A
TAM FREQUENCY TABLE

Table 13*Frequency and Percentage of Respondents from TAM*

	1	2	3	4	5	Mean
<i>Perceived Usefulness</i>						
Improve performance	0	0	0	10 (50%)	10 (50%)	4.5
Improve ability to help	0	0	0	8 (40%)	12 (60%)	4.6
Make job easier	0	0	1 (5%)	8 (40%)	11 (55%)	4.5
Useful in job	0	0	1 (5%)	4 (20%)	15 (75%)	4.7
<i>Ease of Use</i>						
Learning is easy	0	0	3 (15%)	5 (25%)	12 (60%)	4.45
Easy to do what want	0	0	4 (20%)	6 (30%)	10 (50%)	4.3
Easy to be skilled	0	0	1 (5%)	7 (35%)	12 (60%)	4.55
Easy to use	0	0	3 (15%)	6 (30%)	11 (55%)	4.4
<i>Behavior Intention</i>						
Use in the future	0	0	1 (5%)	4 (20%)	15 (75%)	4.70
Use regularly	0	0	5 (25%)	6 (30%)	9 (45%)	4.20
Use helping students	0	0	2 (10%)	5 (25%)	13 (65%)	4.55
Would recommend	0	0	1 (5%)	5 (25%)	14 (70%)	4.65
Valid N (listwise)	20					

APPENDIX B
RESOURCE HIGHLIGHT EMAILS

Intervention Weekly Highlight Emails

Subject: Week 1 – Resource Highlight

Hello Everyone,

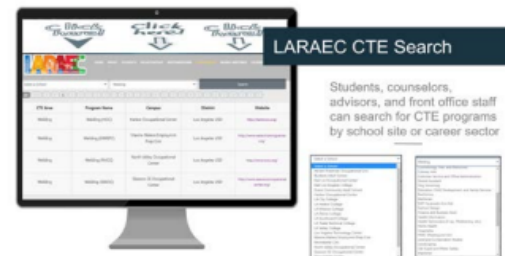
Thank you for participating in our pilot of the LARAEC Student and Staff Resource toolkit, which we have included on our website. We are excited to share these resources with you and hear your feedback. It is our hope that we might use these and future resources to support our adult students in persisting and transitioning to post-secondary programs and careers.

As part of this 6-week pilot, you will receive a weekly email highlighting items that we have included on the resource website. You are welcome to explore and use any of the resources as you work with your students.

This week we would like to introduce you to our two new program finders. LARAEC has built in a google map with a program area menu. Students cannot only find a school site that offers their program, but the app will also share basic program information and the contact person for that program at the school site. This will help students and staff to connect with the right people as they transition to a new school. To find the app [click here](#).



LARAEC has also built a Career Technical Education (CTE) search tool. This will allow staff and students to quickly find where certain CTE programs are offered. If a student asks for a program that your school doesn't offer or if your class is full, then you can use the finder to quickly direct them to an alternative location somewhere in the consortium. The search result links students to the school website. The CTE search can be reached [here](#).



Subject: Week 2 – Resource Highlight

Hello Everyone,

Your week #2 resource highlight is the [College Resources](#) for students. We have collected many of the college transitions resources that students need in one location. We know that the nature of our program is that students enter and complete throughout the year. Students may need college help when you are not currently hosting a school-wide college event. We hope this resource will help with students that need something now.

This page has many resources including:

- **An interview with an LACCD outreach advisor.** This 8-minute short video explains the process of registering, the steps to follow in what order, where to go for help, and what to do if you never got your college ID.
- **An interview with an LACCD financial aid advisor.** This 8-minute video walks through the process of applying for financial aid, where to go for help, what to do if you are not a citizen of the U.S., and how to find a cash4college event near you.
- **Helpful links.** There are links on this page for CCC Apply, FAFSA, and the California Dream ACT application (for non-citizens).
- **Contacts for local colleges.** This page includes links to the college, live chat at each college, and the email addresses for outreach and admissions advisors. All of the LACCD schools are included, as well as, CSU Northridge, CSU Los Angeles, and CSU Dominguez Hills.

To check out these resources, click [here](#).

The screenshot displays the 'College Resources' webpage. At the top left, there is a photo of a diverse group of students. The main navigation bar includes three circular buttons: 'College' (blue), 'Career' (orange), and 'Support' (red). Below this, a section titled 'College Resources' asks 'How can we help answer some questions about college...?' and features four video thumbnails: 'Where do I begin in registering for the college?', 'How do I find out about financial aid to help pay for college?', 'What is the Los Angeles College...?', and 'How do I access college and financial aid in services a...?'. The right side of the page is titled 'Contact Information for Local Colleges' and lists various institutions with their logos and contact details. At the bottom, there are logos for 'CCC Apply - California', 'FAFSA Financial Student Aid', and 'California Student Aid Commission California Dream Act'.

Subject: Week #3 – Resource Highlight

Hello Everyone,

Your week #3 resource highlight is the [WLAC Program Mapper](#) and [CCC Career Coach](#). The community college career coach allows students to take a career assessment, explore possible careers, look at earning potential, and learn about the education necessary for each field. The WLAC program mapper will show the typical course sequences for each semester at the community college. Students can see the classes needed for completion or transfer. These tools give students a great place to start when planning their possible college journeys.

Career Assessment and Career Coach can be found [here](#)

The screenshot shows the 'Assessment' interface. On the left, there's a 'Select your assessment' section with buttons for 'Quick Start Assessment' and 'Detailed Assessment'. The main area displays a list of categories under 'Agriculture, Food and Natural Resources':

- Agribusiness
- Animal and Aquaculture Management
- Crops and Plants
- Environmental Services
- Food Production
- Natural Resources
- Power, Structural, and Technical Systems

Two detailed views are shown on the right:

- Geothermal Production Managers:** Manage operations at geothermal power generation facilities. Includes a bar chart showing education requirements: Associate's Degree (80%), Bachelor's Degree (20%), and Certificate (0%).
- Biofuels Production Managers:** Manage biofuels production and plant operations. Includes a bar chart showing education requirements: Associate's Degree (50%), Bachelor's Degree (30%), and No Required Degree (20%).

The WLAC Program Mapper can be found [here](#)

The screenshot shows the 'Communication Studies' program page for an Associate in Arts for Transfer at West Los Angeles College (60.0 Units). The course sequence is organized by term:

- 1st Term (15.0 Units):** COMM 101 (Public Speaking), CINEMA 001, ARTS23, or COMM 122 (Choose a course), ENGLISH 101 (College Reading and Composition I), and ADT Area E (Choose a course).
- 2nd Term (15.0 Units):** COMM 121 (Interpersonal Communication), Communication Studies - Major Electives List C (Choose a course), Math 215, Math 227, or Math 230 (Choose a course), and ADT Area C1 (Choose a course).
- 3rd Term (15.0 Units):** COMM 104 (Argumentation and Debate), ADT Area B1 (Choose a course), ADT Area B0 (Choose a course), ADT Area C2 (Choose a course), and ENGLISH 102 (Composition and Critical Thinking).

Subject: Week #4 Resource Highlight

Hello Everyone,

Your Week #4 resource highlight are transitions to college resources for counseling and advising staff.

We have heard from many LARAEC counselors and teachers that one of the challenges in helping students is that resources are often spread out over many websites or they are hard to find quickly. LARAEC team members have begun to collect some of the more frequently used links and resources into one easy to access and navigate website. Along with the student college resources shared in week 2, we have page designed just for counselor, advisors, and teachers who assist students with college enrollment. Here you can find:

- Information about attending or hosting a Cash4College event on your campus
- FAQs for your undocumented students
- Financial Aid workshops and online training for counselors
- Support Service referrals and contact information
- Dual enrollment information
- And tips for helping students stay motivated and persist.

Check out the resources available [HERE](#)

The screenshot displays a website interface with two main sections. The left section, titled "Connecting Students with Support Services", features a graphic of blue puzzle pieces with the word "Community" written across them. Below the graphic, there is introductory text and a link to a list of Los Angeles resources. The right section, titled "Financial Aid Support", is a grid of resource cards. It includes logos for CSAC (Cash for College), DreamAct, and the California Student Aid Commission. The cards provide information on hosting cash-for-college events, resources for undocumented students, and financial aid FAQs. A "LARAEC Student College Resource Page" card is also present, describing its content and providing a link to visit the page.

Subject: Week #5 Resource Highlight

Hello Everyone,

Your Week #5 resource highlights are related to **creating college-going campus culture**. Building a college-going culture takes participation from all staff and faculty. A **college-going culture** can help students see that post-secondary education (including career training) is **an avenue for creating a future that inspires them**. Transitions to college don't happen by just providing access to information and a process of registration; **transitions to college happen when all students see the real possibility of attending and being successful**. Sometimes the hardest part of transitions is helping students develop a college-identity and the belief that they can do it!

Some of the resources included in this section are:

- **List of simple ways to create a college-going campus culture.**
You can work with your counseling and faculty teams to pick a few new strategies to implement this year. You would be surprised how small actions can open up ideas for students. What do they see and what do they hear when walking around campus?
- **College Talk and College Conversations**
These resources list some discussion topics and writing prompts that can be integrated into classrooms and conversations with students at any level. Just talking about our own college experiences can open doors for students and start a deeper conversation. Make college and post-secondary training a common topic on campus.

To access these resources and more, [CLICK HERE](#).

The image displays a collection of resources related to creating a college-going campus culture. On the left is the CollegeBoard logo. Next to it is the cover of the 'CollegeEd Creating a College-Going Culture Guide', which features a photograph of three students talking. In the center is a worksheet titled 'SMALL WAYS TO CREATE A COLLEGE-GOING CULTURE' with a 'COLLEGE' sticker, listing various strategies. On the right is a document titled 'College Conversations' which includes a list of 23 discussion prompts for students to explore their college aspirations and campus culture.

Subject: Week #6 Resource Highlight

Hello Everyone,

Your Week #6 resource highlight is **Book Geek Picks and Research Shorts**.

Book Geek picks include resources that support adult education priorities. Check out some recommended reading! Categories include: *Leadership, College & Career Readiness, Classroom Engagement & Learning,* and *Tech Stuff & Remote Teaching*. [Click Here](#)



Book Geek Picks

Recommended and research-based books and articles that support our consortium goals.

Research Shorts Do you get excited about new research, but don't have the time to scour the internet or read lengthy studies? Drop by our new blog where we bring some relevant research and interesting findings to you as **Research Shorts**. What are those small moves and adjustments we can make that make all the difference for our students or schools? Let's take a look at some educational studies, see how we might try on some of these **Research Shorts** and apply them to our programs. We can keep what fits and return the rest. [CLICK HERE](#)



Research Shorts

APPENDIX C
INSTRUMENTS

Pre-intervention Survey

Note: Prior to the survey questions, participants will be shown information about the study and asked to acknowledge consent. Participants will also be asked to create a unique identifier using the first three letters of their mother's name and last three digits of their zip code. This will allow for matching of pre and post survey responses.

Survey Items

Attitude Toward College Transition Programs

Please respond to the following statements using the provided scale. For purposes of this survey *college* refers to credit-bearing programs at community colleges or universities.

Disagree (1) Somewhat Disagree(2) Neither agree nor disagree (3) Somewhat Agree (4)
Agree (5)

Student College Talk

1. It is important for teachers to talk to students about college
2. Talking about college with students makes a difference in their decision to continue their education
3. Sharing my experiences with college and higher learning can be valuable to students making their own decisions about college
4. Talking with students about goals and future plans makes a difference in students continuing to higher learning.

College-going Campus Culture

5. College-oriented campus events can encourage students to transition to college
6. A college-going environment on campus and in classrooms can encourage students to continue education.
7. Adult schools need to create a college-going environment for students.
8. Creating a college-going environment will also support engagement and completion of high school diploma or equivalency programs.

Student College Support

9. Many of my students need support in navigating the transition process to college (applications, counseling, financial aid, etc.)

10. Many students do not have a familial support system that can help them understand the college transition process.
11. Many students give up when they are not able to get the answers they need about transitioning to college
12. Many students have difficulty finding someone to help them through the process of transitioning to college.

Partnership between AEs and Community Colleges

13. I believe that AE campuses and community colleges should partner in creating transition programs for students
14. Joint AE and college activities like college days, college registration events, and college field trips make a difference for students registering for college.
15. Partnering with community colleges to offer on-site counseling (at the adult school) can encourage and support student college enrollment.
16. Dual-enrollment programs (students concurrently enrolled in college and AE programs) can promote transitions to college.

Considerations

17. I believe that encouraging college transitions too early can encourage students to leave adult schools before they complete their high school or equivalency programs.
18. I believe that community colleges want to take students away from the adult schools before they complete their programs
19. I prefer to talk about transitions to college only when students are close to graduating.

Motivation to Implement Transition Strategies with Students

Please respond to the following statements using the provided scale. For purposes of this survey *college* refers to credit-bearing programs at community colleges or universities. *Students* refers to ASE students to which either teach or provide counseling/advising services.

Untrue of me (1) Somewhat untrue (2) Neutral (3) Somewhat true (4) True of me (5)

College Talk

20. I talk with my students about college
21. I talk with my students about my college experiences
22. I talk with students about their future goals and plans

College-Going Campus Culture

23. I support and promote student participation in college-oriented campus events
24. I support and create a college-going environment on my campus or my classrooms (bulletin boards, pennants, information, curriculum, etc.)
25. I support and promote campus activities that partner with community colleges (dual-enrollment, field trips, college information days, financial aid workshops, counseling, and other joint events).

Student Support and Advocacy

26. I initiate discussions about college with students
27. I make a point to discuss college transitions with all students, not just those who ask for help.
28. I ensure that students who need help with making college decisions are able to get the support they need from staff on campus.
29. I take actions or advocate for students when they need help with college transitions.

Limitations

30. Please respond to these statements about limitations you might have around assisting students with transitioning to college (check all that apply)
 - a. No class time available
 - b. I don't have access to materials or websites
 - c. I don't feel I am knowledgeable enough
 - d. The questions need an expert
 - e. It is my school protocol to send students to another office
 - f. It is my school protocol to not participate in these activities
 - g. Other _____.

Demographic Questions

31. What is your current position at your adult education site?
 - a. Counselor
 - b. Advisor/transition specialist
 - c. Adult school teacher
 - d. Administrator or dean
 - e. Clerical or support personnel (classified)
 - f. Other___.

32. How many years have you worked in adult education programs (any position)
 - a. Less than 5 years
 - b. 5-10 years
 - c. 11-15 Years
 - d. 16-20 Years
 - e. More than 20 Years

Post-intervention Survey

Resource Toolkit

Please respond to the statements below about your experience using the transition toolkit. For purposes of this survey, *job* refers to the work you do in supporting and assisting ASE students transitioning to college.

Disagree (1) Somewhat Disagree(2) Neither agree nor disagree (3) Somewhat Agree (4)
Agree (5)

Perceived Usefulness

1. Using the toolkit would improve my performance in doing my job
2. Using the toolkit at work would improve my ability to help students
3. Using the toolkit would make my job easier to do.
4. I would find the toolkit useful in my job.

Perceived Ease of Use

5. Learning to operate the toolkit would be easy for me
6. I would find it easy to get the toolkit to do what I want it to do
7. It would be easy for me to become skillful in the use of the toolkit
8. I would find the toolkit easy to use.

Behavior intention

9. I intend to use the toolkit in the future
10. I intend to use the toolkit regularly.
11. I intend to use the toolkit while helping students
12. I would recommend the toolkit to other teachers or counselors

Please answer the following questions in the space provided

Content of Toolkit and Spotlight Sessions

13. What was aspects of the toolkit were most helpful or useful?
14. What needs to be added or changed to make the toolkit more useful?
15. What can be done to the toolkit to make it easier to use?
16. What spotlight videos or information would be helpful to add to support transitions to college?
17. Which spotlight sessions did you view? (check all that apply) *List here

Motivation to Implement Transition Strategies

Now that you have had access to the toolkit and spotlight sessions, please respond to these statement about your support and participation in transition activities. For purposes of this survey *college* refers to credit-bearing programs at community colleges and universities.

Untrue of me (1) Somewhat untrue (2) Neutral (3) Somewhat true (4) True of me (5)

College Talk

19. I plan to talk with my students about college
20. I plan to talk with my students about my college experiences
21. I plan to talk with students about their future goals and plans

College-Going Campus Culture

22. I plan to support and promote student participation in college-oriented campus events
23. I plan to support and create a college-going environment on my campus or my classrooms (bulletin boards, pennants, information, curriculum, etc.)
24. I plan to support and promote campus activities that partner with community colleges (dual-enrollment, field trips, college information days, financial aid workshops, counseling, and other joint events).

Student Support and Advocacy

25. I plan to initiate discussions about college with students
26. I plan to make a point to discuss college transitions with all students, not just those who ask for help.
27. I plan to ensure that students who need help with making college decisions are able to get the support they need from staff on campus.
28. I plan to take actions or advocate for students when they need help with college transitions.

Attitude Toward Transitions Programs

Please respond to the following statements using the provided scale. For purposes of this survey *college* refers to credit-bearing programs at community colleges or universities.

Disagree (1) Somewhat Disagree(2) Neither agree nor disagree (3) Somewhat Agree (4)
Agree (5)

Partnership between AEs and CCs

29. I believe that AE campuses and community colleges should partner in creating transition programs for students
30. Joint AE and college activities like college days, college registration events, and college field trips make a difference for students registering for college.
31. Partnering with community colleges to offer on-site counseling (at the Adult school) can encourage and support student college enrollment.
32. Dual-enrollment programs (students concurrently enrolled in college and AE programs) can promote transitions to college.

Considerations

33. I believe that encouraging college transitions too early can encourage students to leave adult schools before they complete their high school or equivalency programs.
34. I believe that community colleges want to take students away from the adult schools before they complete their programs
35. I prefer to talk about transitions to college only when students are close to graduating.

Interview Questions

Note: a recruitment letter and informed consent will be provided to each interviewee prior to the interview. Interview questions will be given to interviewees a day before the interview.

Questions

- What kinds of assistance do students ask for related to transitions to college?
- What is your experience with college transitions at your school? What kinds of activities do you or your campus promote or participate in that support college transitions?
- In what ways does your school promote a college-going campus culture. Is this different with in-person and remote campuses?
- What challenges do you encounter with supporting and promoting college transitions?
- What do you think can be done better, on your campus or in the consortium, to support college transitions?
- What was your experience with the Transitions toolkit?
- In what ways do you see the Transitions Toolkit assisting you with helping students with transitions to college?
- In what ways is Transitions Toolkit useful or not useful?
- What items or information would you like to see on the toolkit to make it more useful?
- Has your opinion or interest in supporting or participating in transition activities changed since you have new access to information online?

Recruitment Email

Hello LARAEC Counselors and Advisors,

We would love your help.

As part of our 2022-2025 Three-Year Plan, LARAEC has revamped the consortium website to provide more tools and resources for students and staff. We are currently in the process of looking for volunteers to participate in a pilot study of a new resource toolkit. As a volunteer you will have access to use the toolkit for you and your students. You can use it as you would naturally. Over the 6-week study, we will send you a weekly email highlighting various resources included in the toolkit. You will be asked to complete a short pre and post survey and for selected individuals an interview. Our goal is to continue to develop these web-based resources to support you and your students.

This study is being conducted through a graduate program at Arizona State University. Specific details about the study will be provided when you click the link below.

If you wish to participate or find our more information,
Start Here : https://asu.co1.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_6neWVbTytXcYg50

Thank you for your consideration,
Michele

Dear Colleague:

My name is Michele Stiehl and I am a doctoral student in the Mary Lou Fulton Teachers College (MLFTC) at Arizona State University (ASU). I am working under the direction of Dr. Brian Nelson, a faculty member in MLFTC. We are conducting a research study on access to college transition information and resources. The purpose of this study is gain a better understanding of current access to college transition information and resources by adult education staff and students. This study will evaluate the impact of increased access to college transition information on adult school personnel that support adult education students.

We are asking for your help, which will involve your participation in completion of an online pre-survey (10 minutes), use of the resource toolkit over the next 6 weeks (use as is useful for you), completion of an online post-survey (15 minutes), and for a few selected individuals, participate in a zoom interview (about 20 minutes) concerning your knowledge, experiences, and attitudes about the resource toolkit. Your responses to the surveys and interviews will be anonymous. You will be asked to create an anonymous reproducible ID# to connect your two survey responses. We will also collect data on toolkit use through google analytics. This data will not be linked to individual participant usage; analysis will be of aggregated data usage.

Your participation in this study is voluntary. If you choose not to participate or withdraw from the study at any time, there will be no penalty whatsoever. You must be 18 years of age or older to participate.

The benefit to participation is the opportunity for you to have your experience, ideas, and needs reflected in this research study. Interview responses will also inform future iterations of the study. Thus, there is potential to enhance the experiences of our colleagues and students. There are no foreseeable risks or discomforts to your participation.

For those randomly selected for interviews, I would like to audio record this interview. The interview will not be recorded without your permission. Please let me know if you do not want the interview to be recorded; you also can change your mind after the interview starts, just let me know. Audio recordings will be deleted from the original recording device upon transfer to the password protected computer and then deleted from computer/cloud once transcribed. I will ask for your oral consent at the time of the interview.

Your responses will be confidential. Data collected as part of this study will not be shared with others for future research purposes or other uses. Results and findings from this study may be used in reports, presentations, or publications but your name will not be used.

If you have any questions concerning the research study, please contact the research team – Brian Nelson at Brian.nelson@asu.edu or Michele Stiehl at mstiehl1@asu.edu or (310) 200-2549.

Thank you,

Michele Stiehl, Doctoral Candidate
Dr. Brian Nelson, Clinical Assistant Professor

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.

APPENDIX D
IRB DOCUMENTS

Permission to Conduct Research

September 19, 2022

Dear Institutional Review Board, Arizona State University:

The purpose of this letter is to inform you that I give Michele Stiehl permission to conduct the research titled *Removing barriers for adult education transitions through strengthening access to information*, as stipulated in the IRB application, within the Los Angeles Regional Adult Education Consortium.

Sincerely,



Lanzi Asturias, Project Director
Los Angeles Regional Adult Education Consortium
Los Angeles Unified School District
Lla64551@lausd.net
714-296-6959

		Page: 1 of 7
	PREPARED BY: IRB Staff	APPROVED BY: Heather Clark
DOCUMENT TITLE: HRP 503 A Social Behavioral Protocol	DEPARTMENT: Office of Research Integrity and Assurance (ORIA)	EFFECTIVE DATE: [9/8/2021]

INSTRUCTIONS

Complete each section of the application. Based on the nature of the research being proposed some sections may not apply. Those sections can be marked as N/A. Remember that the IRB is concerned with risks and benefits to the research participant and your responses should clearly reflect these issues. You (the PI) need to retain the most recent protocol document for future revisions. Questions can be addressed to research.integrity@asu.edu. **PIs are strongly encouraged to complete this application with words and terms used to describe the protocol is geared towards someone not specialized in the PI's area of expertise.**

IRB: 1. Protocol Title: Removing barriers for adult education transitions through strengthening access to information

IRB: 2. Background and Objectives

- 2.1 List the specific aims or research questions in 300 words or less.
- 2.2 Refer to findings relevant to the risks and benefits to participants in the proposed research.
- 2.3 Identify any past studies by ID number that are related to this study. If the work was done elsewhere, indicate the location.

TIPS for streamlining the review time:

- ✓ Two paragraphs or less is recommended.
- ✓ Do not submit sections of funded grants or similar. The IRB will request additional information, if needed.

Response:

2.1 This study will address the need for greater access to college transition information for adult education staff and students. This study will evaluate the impact of increased access to college transition information on adult school personnel that support adult education students. This study will focus on implementing several new avenues for transition information, through an online toolkit and spotlight sessions, and examine their impact on faculty attitude toward transitions programs, motivation to implement and participate in creating college-going cultures on adult education campuses, and intention to use resources moving forward. This information will help assess if increased access to information improves faculty and staff attitude and motivation to participate and support college transition activities on adult school campuses.

2.2 This study is low risk, action-research based, and is intended to support the local context.

2.3 Previous studies include STUDY00012641 and STUDY00013493

IRB: 3. Data Use - What are the intended uses of the data generated from this project?

Examples include: Dissertation, thesis, undergraduate project, publication/journal article, conferences/presentations, results released to agency, organization, employer, or school. If other, then describe.

Response: The data will be used in a dissertation and may be used in presentations or publications. Results may be provided to the participants and their institutions.

IRB: 4. Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria

4.1 List criteria that define who will be included or excluded in your final sample.

Indicate if each of the following special (vulnerable/protected) populations is included or excluded:

- Minors (under 18)
- Adults who are unable to consent (impaired decision-making capacity)
- Prisoners
- Economically or educationally disadvantaged individuals

4.2 If not obvious, what is the rationale for the exclusion of special populations?

4.3 What procedures will be used to determine inclusion/exclusion of special populations?

TIPS for streamlining the review time.

- ✓ Research involving only data analyses should only describe variables included in the dataset that will be used.
- ✓ For any research which includes or may likely include children/minors or adults unable to consent, review content [\[here\]](#)
- ✓ For research targeting Native Americans or populations with a high Native American demographic, or on or near tribal lands, review content [\[here\]](#)
For research involving minors on campus, review content [\[here\]](#)

Response:

4.1 Participants will include teachers, advising staff, and administrators. Minors, adults who cannot consent, prisoners, undocumented individuals, and non-English speakers will not participate in the study. Native Americans may participate, but they are not being specifically recruited.

IRB: 5. Number of Participants

Indicate the total number of individuals you expect to recruit and enroll. For secondary data analyses, the response should reflect the number of cases in the dataset.

Response:

The total number of participants expected to be recruited and enrolled is 30 faculty members.

IRB: 6. Recruitment Methods

- 6.1 Identify who will be doing the recruitment and consenting of participants.
- 6.2 Identify when, where, and how potential participants will be identified, recruited, and consented.
- 6.3 Name materials that will be used (e.g., recruitment materials such as emails, flyers, advertisements, etc.) Please upload each recruitment material as a separate document, Name the document:
recruitment_methods_email/flyer/advertisement_dd-mm-yyyy
- 6.4 Describe the procedures relevant to using materials (e.g., consent form).

✓

Response:

The Co-PI will conduct the recruitment process. The Co-PI will recruit participants through an email invitation and by using a recruitment consent letter, which is attached. The email invitation and recruitment consent letter will be distributed to identified potential subjects (adult education counselors, advisors, and teachers) within the Los Angeles Regional Adult Education Consortium with which the Co-PI is a program advisor. The Co-PI currently works with this group of potential subjects throughout the year through organizing staff development, consortium events, and collaboration meetings. The letter of support was provided by the director or the Los Angeles Regional Adult Education Consortium. The consent letter will be presented to study participants in electronic format with a required button click for agreement.

IRB: 7. Study Procedures

- 7.1 List research procedure step by step (e.g., interventions, surveys, focus groups, observations, lab procedures, secondary data collection, accessing student or other records for research purposes, and follow-ups). Upload one attachment, dated, with all the materials relevant to this section. Name the document: supporting documents dd-mm-yyyy
- 7.2 For each procedure listed, describe **who** will be conducting it, **where** it will be performed, **how long** is participation in each procedure, and **how/what data** will be collected in each procedure.
- 7.3 Report the total period and span of time for the procedures (if applicable the timeline for follow ups).
- 7.4 For secondary data analyses, identify if it is a public dataset (please include a weblink where the data will be accessed from, if applicable). If not, describe the contents of the dataset, how it will be accessed, and attach data use agreement(s) if relevant.

TIPS for streamlining the review time.

- ✓ Ensure that research materials and procedures are explicitly connected to the articulated aims or research questions (from section 2 above).
- ✓ In some cases, a table enumerating the name of the measures, corresponding citation (if any), number of items, sources of data, time/wave if a repeated measures design can help the IRB streamline the review time.

Response:

Intervention:

Participants will be given access to a web-based transitions resource toolkit and a series of spotlight sessions on how staff can utilize the resources. Participants will receive a weekly email highlighting various resources. These resources will be made available for an six-week study window.

Surveys. A survey will be administered by the Co-PI to the participants prior to the intervention and at the conclusion of the intervention. The pre-survey will take approximately 10 minutes and the post survey 15 minutes. The survey items are attached.

Interviews. At the conclusion of the intervention, a sample of 6 participants will be selected to participate in an interview. Interviews will be conducted by the Co-PI through online video conferencing and will take approximately 20 minutes. Interviews will be audio-recorded after consent of the participant. The interview questions are attached.

Google Analytics: Data on the toolkit use will be collected through *google analytics*. This data will track site visits, resource use, and returning visitors during the study window. IP addresses of visitors will not be collected or linked to individual users. Participants will not sign into the website with identifiable credentials, but will access the resources through an anonymous secure portal. All analytic data will be presented as aggregate statistics. The PI and CO-PI will not collect individually identifiable data.

IRB: 8. Compensation

8.1 Report the amount and timing of any compensation or credit to participants.

8.2 Identify the source of the funds to compensate participants.

8.3 Justify that the compensation to participants to indicate it is reasonable and/or how the compensation amount was determined.

8.4 Describe the procedures for distributing the compensation or assigning the credit to participants.

TIPS for streamlining the review time.

- ✓ If partial compensation or credit will be given or if completion of all elements is required, explain the rationale or a plan to avoid coercion
- ✓ For extra or course credit guidance, see “Research on educational programs or in classrooms” on the following page:
<https://researchintegrity.asu.edu/human-subjects/special-considerations>.
- ✓ For compensation over \$100.00 and other institutional financial policies, review “Research Subject Compensation” at:
<https://researchintegrity.asu.edu/human-subjects/special-considerations> for more information.

Response:

Participants will not receive any compensation or credit for their participation.

IRB: 9. Risk to Participants

List the reasonably foreseeable risks, discomforts, or inconveniences related to participation in the research.

TIPS for streamlining the review time.

- ✓ Consider the broad definition of “minimal risk” as the probability and magnitude of harm or discomfort anticipated in the research that are not greater in and of themselves than those ordinarily encountered in daily life or during the performance of routine physical or psychological examinations or tests.
- ✓ Consider physical, psychological, social, legal, and economic risks.
- ✓ If there are risks, clearly describe the plan for mitigating the identified risks.

Response:

There are no risks to participating in the study.

IRB: 10. Potential Direct Benefits to Participants

List the potential direct benefits to research participants. If there are risks noted in 9 (above), articulated benefits should outweigh such risks. These benefits are not to society or others not considered participants in the proposed research. Indicate if there is no direct benefit. A direct benefit comes as a direct result of the subject’s participation in the research. An indirect benefit may be incidental to the subject’s participation. Do not include compensation as a benefit.

Response:

Benefits include learning about college transition information and resources. In turn, these can be used to support students transitioning from adult school to community colleges. Additionally, participants may benefit from being able to reflect on issues discussed during the interviews.

IRB: 11. Privacy and Confidentiality

Indicate the steps that will be taken to protect the participant's privacy.

- 11.1 Identify who will have **access to the data**.
- 11.2 Identify where, how, and how long data will be **stored** (e.g. ASU secure server, ASU cloud storage, filing cabinets).
- 11.3 Describe the procedures for **sharing, managing and destroying data**.
- 11.4 Describe any special measures to **protect** any extremely sensitive data (e.g. password protection, encryption, certificates of confidentiality, separation of identifiers and data, secured storage, etc.).
- 11.5 Describe how any **audio or video recordings** will be managed, secured, and/or de-identified.
- 11.6 Describe how will any signed consent, assent, and/or parental permission forms be secured and how long they will be maintained. These forms should separate from the rest of the study data.
- 11.7 Describe how any data will be **de-identified**, linked or tracked (e.g. master-list, contact list, reproducible participant ID, randomized ID, etc.). Outline the specific procedures and processes that will be followed.
- 11.8 Describe any and all identifying or contact information that will be collected for any reason during the course of the study and how it will be secured or protected. This includes contact information collected for follow-up, compensation, linking data, or recruitment.
- 11.9 For studies accessing existing data sets, clearly describe whether or not the data requires a Data Use Agreement or any other contracts/agreements to access it for research purposes.
- 11.10 For any data that may be covered under FERPA (student grades, etc.) additional information and requirements is available at <https://researchintegrity.asu.edu/human-subjects/special-considerations>.

Response:

Only the PI and Co-PI will have access to the data. The data will be stored on a password-protected computer for a period of four years and then deleted or destroyed. Audio recordings will be deleted from the recording device after they have been transferred to the password-protected computer. Transcripts will be made of the recordings. As noted in the interview protocol, respondents will be informed they are not to use any names in their responses to interview questions. The surveys will be anonymous. To connect pre and post intervention surveys, participants will be asked to create a unique identifier using the first three letters of their mother's name and the last three digits of their zip code. The survey will be conducted using Google Forms. No IP addresses or identifying information will be connected to survey answers. Participants' names and email addresses will be collected as part of the consent process, be used to send weekly emails highlighting resources (see section 7), and used to contact interview participants. Personal identifiers in the email addresses will not be connected to specific responses.

IRB: 12. Consent

Describe the procedures that will be used to obtain consent or assent (and/or parental permission).

12.1 Who will be responsible for consenting participants?

12.2 Where will the consent process take place?

12.3 How will the consent be obtained (e.g., verbal, digital signature)?

TIPS for streamlining the review time.

- ✓ If participants who do not speak English will be enrolled, describe the process to ensure that the oral and/or written information provided to those participants will be in their preferred language. Indicate the language that will be used by those obtaining consent. For translation requirements, see Translating documents and materials under <https://researchintegrity.asu.edu/human-subjects/protocol-submission>
- ✓ Translated consent forms should be submitted after the English is version of all relevant materials are approved. Alternatively, submit translation certification letter.
- ✓ **If a waiver for the informed consent process is requested, justify the waiver in terms of each of the following: (a) The research involves no more than minimal risk to the subjects; (b) The waiver or alteration will not adversely affect the rights and welfare of the subjects; (c) The research could not practicably be carried out without the waiver or alteration; and (d) Whenever appropriate, the subjects will be provided with additional pertinent information after participation.** Studies involving confidential, one time, or anonymous data need not justify a waiver. A verbal consent or implied consent after reading a cover letter is sufficient.
- ✓ ASU consent templates are [\[here\]](#).
- ✓ Consents and related materials need to be congruent with the content of the application.

Response:

The Co-PI will conduct the consent process. For the survey, the consent letter will be presented in electronic format (using google forms) with a required button click, name, and email for agreement. Oral consent for the interviews will be obtained prior to conducting the interviews.

IRB: 13. Site(s) or locations where research will be conducted.

List the sites or locations where interactions with participants will occur-

- Identify where research procedures will be performed.
- For research conducted outside of the ASU describe:
 - Site-specific regulations or customs affecting the research.
 - Local scientific and ethical review structures in place.
- For research conducted outside of the United States/United States Territories describe:
 - Safeguards to ensure participants are protected.
- For information on international research, review the content [\[here\]](#).

For research conducted with secondary data (archived data):

- List what data will be collected and from where.
- Describe whether or not the data requires a Data Use Agreement or any other contracts/agreements to access it for research purposes.
- For any data that may be covered under FERPA (student grades, etc.) additional information and requirements is available [\[here\]](#).
- For any data that may be covered under FERPA (student grades, homework assignments, student ID numbers etc.), additional information and requirements is available [\[here\]](#).

Response:

Interviews will take place via zoom. Faculty interviewees and Co-PI will both be in their work locations (school site and district office in greater Los Angeles area). Surveys will be conducted electronically through email and online survey tool (GoogleForms). Co-PI has obtained consent from the consortium administrator to conduct interviews and surveys.

IRB: 14. Human Subjects Certification from Training.

Provide the names of the members of the research team.

ASU affiliated individuals do not need attach Certificates. Non-ASU investigators and research team members anticipated to manage data and/or interact with participants, need to provide the most recent CITI training for human participants available at www.citiprogram.org. Certificates are valid for 4 years.

TIPS for streamlining the review time.

- ✓ If any of the study team members have not completed training through ASU's CITI training (i.e. they completed training at another university), copies of their completion reports will need to be uploaded when you submit.
- ✓ For any team members who are affiliated with another institution, please see "Collaborating with other institutions" [\[here\]](#)
- ✓ The IRB will verify that team members have completed IRB training. Details on how to complete IRB CITI training through ASU are [\[here\]](#)

Response:

Michele Stiehl, CITI Training completed on April, 8, 2020

Brian Nelson, PI, CITI Training Certificate on file; training completed

General Tips:

- Have all members of the research team complete IRB training before submitting.
- Ensure that all your instruments, recruitment materials, study instruments, and consent forms are submitted via ERA when you submit your protocol document. Templates are [\[here\]](#)
- Submit a complete protocol. Don't ask questions in the protocol – submit with your best option and, if not appropriate, revisions will be requested.
- If your study has undeveloped phases, clearly indicate in the protocol document that the details and materials for those phases will be submitted via a modification when ready.
- Review all materials for consistency. Ensure that the procedures, lengths of participation, dates, etc., are consistent across all the materials you submit for review.
- Only ASU faculty, full time staff may serve as the PI. Students may prepare the submission by listing the faculty member as the PI. The submit button will only be visible to the PI.
- Information on how and what to submit with your study in ERA is [\[here\]](#). Note that if you are a student, you will need to have your Principal Investigator submit.
- For details on how to submit this document as part of a study for review and approval by the ASU IRB, visit <https://researchintegrity.asu.edu/human-subjects/protocol-submission>.



EXEMPTION GRANTED

Brian Nelson
Division of Educational Leadership and Innovation - Tempe
480/727-4550
Brian.Nelson@asu.edu

Dear [Brian Nelson](#):

On 9/30/2022 the ASU IRB reviewed the following protocol:

Type of Review:	Initial Study
Title:	Removing barriers for adult education transitions through strengthening access to information
Investigator:	Brian Nelson
IRB ID:	STUDY00016621
Funding:	None
Grant Title:	None
Grant ID:	None
Documents Reviewed:	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Consent 29-09-2022, Category: Consent Form;• Intervention Overview_27-09-2022, Category: Other;• IRB Protocol 27-09-2022, Category: IRB Protocol;• Permission to Conduct Research 19-09-2022, Category: Off-site authorizations (school permission, other IRB approvals, Tribal permission etc);• Recruitment Email 27-09-2022, Category: Recruitment Materials;• Supplemental Documents 29-09-2022, 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)(i) Tests, surveys, interviews, or observation (non-

identifiable), (2)(ii) Tests, surveys, interviews, or observation (low risk) on 9/30/2022.

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

If any changes are made to the study, the IRB must be notified at research.integrity@asu.edu to determine if additional reviews/approvals are required. Changes may include but not limited to revisions to data collection, survey and/or interview questions, and vulnerable populations, etc.

REMINDER - - Effective January 12, 2022, in-person interactions with human subjects require adherence to all current policies for ASU faculty, staff, students and visitors. Up-to-date information regarding ASU's COVID-19 Management Strategy can be found [here](#). IRB approval is related to the research activity involving human subjects, all other protocols related to COVID-19 management including face coverings, health checks, facility access, etc. are governed by current ASU policy.

Sincerely,

IRB Administrator

cc: Michele Stiehl