

## Abstract

Davies, T., Kratky, R. (2000). Vital Connections Transfer Program: Learning the Transfer Process from the Transfer Student. *College Student Journal* 34, 409-416.

This qualitative study was conducted to evaluate the students' perceptions of the effectiveness of the Vital Connections Transfer Program. This transfer student assistance program was developed to facilitate the matriculation of students from community colleges in Wyoming and Colorado to Colorado State University (CSU). This was not a transfer guarantee, but administrative and academic assistance with the transfer procedure. The community college students benefited from a streamlined and free application process, inclusion in CSU transfer events, academic advising and scholarship opportunities. The benefits to CSU included good estimates of the quantity of inbound transfer students and their estimated admissions dates. Students participating in the transfer program were well-advised and arrived as academically prepared juniors who had accrued appropriate and applicable subject and unit credits.

Eight students who participated in the transfer program were randomly selected to participate in a focus group so that the authors could hear about the transfer students' experiences directly. Six questions were asked of each participant to begin the discussion and then the direction of the conversation was lead by the students themselves. The two-hour session concluded with the students summarizing their feeling about the program. Their conversations were transcribed verbatim and HyperRESEARCH-TM software coded the information using an inductive approach to grouping the ideas into general thematic areas for review.

Three main short-comings of the program emerged from the data: the need for step-by-step transfer information with checklists, a planned CSU campus visit with the opportunity to see classrooms and attend a university lecture, and a peer mentor program for the program participants once they matriculated to CSU. The research team also observed that the students in the focus group used the services provided by the transfer program in varying degrees. Students who used the transfer programs services to the greatest extent reported the greatest rewards. It was concluded that helping the students assume responsibility for their own administrative and academic needs was vital. Both the transfer students and the university benefited from the program.