



# You Belong With Me:

## The Importance of Mattering for Graduate Students

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### INTRODUCTION

#### Literature

- Empirical studies have shown that a sense of mattering is important to undergraduate students<sup>2</sup>, with beneficial effects to their well-being. However, limited research has been conducted among graduate students<sup>1</sup>.

#### Purpose

- This study examines graduate students' mattering to the university and its relation to mental health, well-being, and program persistency.

#### Hypotheses

- High mattering participants will report greater degree completion intentions
- Increases in mental health and well-being related with higher mattering mediates graduate students' intentions to stay in their program
- Women in STEM will have lower well-being compared to men in STEM

### METHOD

#### Participants

- $N = 227$ ,  $M_{age} = 29$ ,  $SD_{age} = 8.66$ , female = 157, male = 65, non-binary/other = 5
- Master's = 139, doctoral = 85, graduate certificate/other = 3
- White/non-Hispanic = 70.93%, Hispanic/Latino = 14.54%, Asian = 6.61%, Black/African American = 3.97%, Native American = 0.88%, Other = 3.08%

#### Measures

- **Mattering**
  - "How important are you to TCU?"
- **Satisfaction**
  - "I am well satisfied with my graduate studies"
- **Frustration**
  - "Being frustrated comes with being a graduate student" and "Overall, I experience very little frustration with graduate school"
- **Burnout**
  - "Is school emotionally exhausting?"
- **Depression**
  - "I feel depressed" and "I feel lonely"
- **Program Completion and Demographics**

### RESULTS

- All results were significant with high (vs. low) mattering associated with reduced depression, burnout, stress and frustration, quitting intentions, and intentions to transfer out of TCU.
- Results showed that for graduation importance and transfer intention, satisfaction was the only significant mediator.
- Depression and satisfaction were significant mediators between mattering and quitting intentions.
- Results revealed no significant main effects of gender.

### TABLE

**Table 2**  
*Correlations between demographic variables, mattering, and outcome variables (Study 1)*

Variable	Mean (SD)	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
1. Mattering	28.22 (13.71)	-								
2. Burnout	32.02 (12.42)	-.263**	-							
3. Satisfaction	30.91 (8.62)	.421**	-.652**	-						
4. Depression	3.26 (.93)	-.317**	.405**	-.446**	-					
5. Quit Intention	2.67 (2.32)	-.298**	.409**	-.534**	.426**	-				
6. Month in School	19.93 (15.27)	-.136*	.127**	-.186**	.146*	.169*	-			
7. Age	29.00 (8.66)	.027	-.205**	.131*	.068	.026	.202**	-		
8. Stress	18.38 (7.67)	-.371**	.715**	-.629**	.399**	.384**	.194**	-.065	-	
9. Frustration	11.76 (4.06)	-.292**	.627**	-.497**	.378**	.346**	.087	-.045	.637**	-

\* Significant at the 0.05 level.

\*\* Significant at the 0.01 level.

### CONCLUSIONS

#### Summary

- Mattering played an essential role in enhancing graduate student well-being and their likelihood to stay at TCU.

#### Discussion

- The current findings are consistent with past research on undergraduate students, which is that mattering plays a crucial role in promoting student well-being and program retention.

#### Limitations

- All measures across studies are self-report questionnaires.
- The current research only surveyed the intention to quit or stay, but intention does not necessarily lead to action.
- Lack of demographic diversity as majority of the participants were women and White.
- Given that the study was correlational, no causal link can be drawn from any of the results.

#### Future Directions

- Examine the longitudinal effects of mattering for graduate students by tracking their level of mattering from the start to the end of their degree programs.
- Focus on behavioral outcomes instead of self-report questionnaires, such as classroom participation or grades.

### REFERENCES

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