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Research Article

STUDENTS' ATTITUDES TOWARDS THE ROLE OF ACADEMIC TECHNOLOGY TRANSFER: A CASE STUDY AT SAIGON UNIVERSITY

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ABSTRACT

This study explores the students' attitudes towards the role of academic technology transfer at Saigon University. Students surveyed are from three faculties: Information Technology, Environmental Sciences, and Natural Sciences Education, who are engaged in or have experience with doing research. Adopting a mixed-methods approach, the study collected data through surveys and focus group discussions with undergraduate students across these disciplines. The results indicate that although students recognize the significance of technology transfer in linking academic research with real-world applications, their understanding of its process and associated benefits remains limited. Students' attitudes are significantly influenced by factors such as academic discipline, exposure to entrepreneurial activities, and the level of institutional support. The study concludes by proposing strategies to enhance student participation in technology transfer activities, including raising awareness, implementing discipline-specific educational interventions, and strengthening institutional mechanisms to support research commercialization.

***Keywords*:** academic technology transfer; entrepreneurship in academia; innovation commercialization; student research; technology transfer awareness

1. Introduction

The convergence of academia and industry has garnered increasing attention as universities endeavor to translate research into practical applications. Academic Technology Transfer (ATT) plays a critical role in this endeavor by overseeing the dissemination of knowledge and technology from universities to both public and private sectors. This transfer is essential for stimulating innovation, fostering new business ventures, and ultimately contributing to societal economic development.

A substantial portion of the literature reviewed focuses on the transfer of technologies developed at universities or comparable research institutions to commercial entities. Over

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recent decades, universities have significantly expanded their activities in technology commercialization, extending beyond their traditional roles in education and basic research. This expanded role is often referred to as the 'third mission' of universities (Rothaermel et al., 2007; Link & Scott, 2010), encompassing activities such as patent licensing, corporate collaborations, and the creation of spin-off companies (Fini et al., 2010; Kroll & Liefner, 2008). These activities are categorized into three primary types. The first type explores various forms of university-industry collaborations aimed at technology commercialization objectives. The second type examines entrepreneurial initiatives by university researchers through the establishment of spin-off ventures. The third type investigates scenarios where the university or federally-funded research institute acts as both the technology developer and the market entity, although this particular channel has received comparatively less scholarly attention.

In recent years, collaborations between universities and industry have steadily increased (Caloghirou et al., 2001). From the industry perspective, this trend is driven largely by universities' greater willingness to license their technologies and by the alignment of university research efforts with industry needs (Thursby & Thursby, 2003). Companies also engage with universities to leverage research synergies and enhance their scientific knowledge base relevant to their respective industries (Caloghirou et al., 2001). Despite these advances, challenges persist, often attributed to a lack of mutual understanding between universities and industry stakeholders (Siegel et al., 2003).

Technology transfer from universities to industry can occur through informal or formal mechanisms. Informal methods include student-industry linkages (Boardman & Ponomariov, 2009), non-contractual interactions with industry professionals at conferences, and collaborative research publications (Boardman & Ponomariov, 2009; Grimpe & Fier, 2009). Formal technology transfer mechanisms typically involve contractual research agreements (D'Este & Patel, 2007) and agreements for patent licensing (Thursby & Thursby, 2003). The licensing of university-developed technologies to established corporations represents a traditional approach to technology commercialization (Powers & McDougall, 2005b), with Technology Transfer Offices playing a pivotal role. However, in recent decades, additional avenues for commercializing university technologies have emerged, including consulting services, joint publications, and collaborative research initiatives (Radosevich, 1995).

ATT engages in a diverse range of activities aimed at fostering innovation and commercialization, promoting collaboration, supporting entrepreneurship, and enhancing societal impact. These activities include patenting, licensing, start-up incubation, and collaboration with industry partners. Their primary objectives are multifaceted. First, ATT facilitates innovation and commercialization by assisting in identifying commercially viable

research and navigating the patenting and licensing processes. They play a crucial role in bridging the gap between academic research and market application, ensuring that valuable innovations reach the market efficiently. Second, ATT promotes collaboration by fostering partnerships between academia and industry, which enhances the flow of knowledge and technology. These collaborations are essential for leveraging the strengths of both sectors, driving innovation, and ensuring that academic research has practical, real-world applications. Third, ATT supports entrepreneurship by providing resources and support for the creation of start-ups and spin-offs based on university research. This support includes incubation services, funding, and business mentoring, which are critical for nurturing early-stage companies and ensuring their long-term success. Fourth, ATT enhances societal impact by promoting technologies that address social challenges. By focusing on innovations that contribute to the social economy, ATTP helps in developing solutions for issues in healthcare, education, and environmental sustainability, thereby improving the quality of life for the broader community.

Despite the increasing number of students at Saigon University engaging in scientific research, there is a noticeable gap in their understanding of the potential value and applications of their completed projects. Many students lack awareness of how to transfer their research outcomes to industry, commercialize their innovations, or leverage their work for future career opportunities, such as starting a business. This research is necessary to explore and address this gap, aiming to equip students with the knowledge and tools they need to maximize the impact of their academic work beyond the university setting. By understanding students' attitudes towards academic technology transfer and identifying the barriers to effective engagement, this study seeks to provide actionable insights that can enhance their ability to contribute to both their professional growth and the broader innovation ecosystem. This study aims to address two research questions:

1. How do students at Saigon University, particularly those involved in scientific research within the faculties of Information Technology, Environmental Sciences, and Natural Sciences Education, perceive the role of academic technology transfer?

2. What factors influence their understanding and engagement with the commercialization and application of their research outcomes?

2. Methodology

2.1. Research design

This study employs a mixed-methods research design, combining quantitative and qualitative approaches to gain a comprehensive understanding of students's attitudes towards academic technology transfer at Saigon University. The research was conducted at Saigon University, located in Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam. The study targeted students from three faculties: Information Technology, Environmental Sciences, and Natural Sciences

Education. The participants were undergraduate and graduate students from the aforementioned faculties, particularly those involved in scientific research activities. The list of participants was retrieved from the Decisions on the approval of student research issued by the principal of Saigon University from the school year 2022-2023 and 2023-2024.

In this study, two primary data collection instruments were used. First, a structured questionnaire was designed to capture quantitative data on students' awareness, attitudes, and perceptions regarding academic technology transfer. The questionnaire included both closed-ended and Likert-scale questions to measure students' knowledge of technology transfer processes, their views on the importance of commercialization, and their interest in leveraging their research for future career opportunities. To supplement the quantitative data, focus group discussions were conducted with selected students to delve deeper into their experiences and perspectives. These discussions provided qualitative insights into the factors that influence students' attitudes towards technology transfer, including their awareness of available resources, challenges they face, and their aspirations for utilizing research outcomes in their future work. Each focus group consisted of 6-8 participants and was facilitated using a semi-structured guide to ensure consistency while allowing for open dialogue.

2.2. Sample and sampling procedures

The questionnaires were distributed electronically to students, started in March 2024 and responses were collected over two weeks. These students were selected based on their involvement in research for the academic years 2022-2023 and 2023-2024. This ensured that all participants had direct experience with research projects relevant to the study's focus on academic technology transfer. Following the completion of the survey, focus group discussions were organized in collaboration with faculty coordinators. The discussions were conducted in a neutral setting within the university campus to encourage open and honest participation. A purposive sampling technique was employed to select participants who could provide relevant insights into the research objectives. The final sample size was determined based on the response rate and the need for a diverse representation of students across the three faculties. A total of 100 students who agreed to participate in both the questionnaire survey and focus group discussions, reflects the total number of eligible participants who met the study's criteria. Although this number is relatively small, it is justified by the study's focus on a specific group of students with active or recent research experience. This targeted approach ensures that the findings are highly relevant to the population most directly engaged in the processes of academic research and technology transfer. For the focus group discussions, three groups were formed, each consisting of 6-8 participants, providing a manageable size for in-depth discussions while allowing for a range of perspectives to be explored.

3. Results and discussions

3.1. Questionnaire survey

This section presents the findings from the questionnaire survey. The results are organized around key themes related to students' awareness, attitudes, and engagement with academic technology transfer.

The first aspect examined was the level of awareness among students regarding the concept and processes of academic technology transfer. Students were asked to rate their awareness of academic technology transfer on a scale from 1 (Very Low) to 5 (Very High). The mean scores and standard deviations for each level of awareness are shown in Table 1.

Table 1. *Awareness Levels of Academic Technology Transfer by Faculty*

Awareness	Information Technology		Environmental Sciences		Natural Sciences Education	
	Mean	**SD**	**Mean**	**SD**	**Mean**	**SD**
1. Very low	1.40	0.65	1.50	0.70	1.60	0.75
2. Low	2.20	0.70	2.50	0.75	2.40	0.80
3. Moderate	3.30	0.80	3.10	0.85	3.00	0.78
4. High	4.00	0.60	4.10	0.70	4.05	0.65
5. Very high	4.80	0.30	4.70	0.40	4.75	0.35

Table 1 shows the variation in awareness of academic technology transfer among students from different faculties. Information Technology students report the highest levels of awareness, with a mean score of 4.80 (SD = 0.30) for 'Very High' awareness and 4.00 (SD = 0.60) for 'High' awareness. This suggests that students in this faculty are most aware of technology transfer activities and their role. Environmental Sciences students also show strong awareness, with a mean score of 4.70 (SD = 0.40) for 'Very High' and 4.10 (SD = 0.70) for 'High,' indicating a high level of awareness but slightly lower than their Information Technology counterparts. Natural Sciences Education students have the lowest awareness scores among the three faculties, with a mean score of 4.75 (SD = 0.35) for 'Very High' and 4.05 (SD = 0.65) for 'High,' suggesting they are somewhat less aware compared to the other faculties. The lower scores in awareness among Natural Sciences Education and Environmental Sciences students could indicate less emphasis or fewer opportunities related to technology transfer in these fields compared to Information Technology. This may reflect differences in how research and technology transfer are integrated into the curriculum and student experiences within these faculties.

Students rated the importance of technology transfer to their education and future careers on a scale from 1 (Not Important) to 5 (Highly Important). The mean scores and standard deviations for each level of perceived importance are presented in Table 2.

Table 2. *Perceived Importance of Technology Transfer by Academic Faculty*

Perceived Importance	Information Technology		Environmental Sciences		Natural Sciences Education	
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean	SD
1. Not important	2.00	0.90	2.20	0.95	2.10	0.85
2. Slightly Important	2.80	0.85	3.00	0.80	2.90	0.80
3. Moderately important	3.40	0.85	3.50	0.80	3.60	0.90
4. Important	4.10	0.65	4.20	0.70	4.00	0.70
5. Highly Important	4.30	0.55	4.20	0.60	4.50	0.50

Table 2 shows varying levels of perceived importance of technology transfer among students from different faculties. Natural Sciences Education students rate its importance the highest, with a mean score of 4.50 (SD = 0.50) for 'Highly Important' and 4.00 (SD = 0.70) for 'Important.' This indicates a strong belief in the value of technology transfer. Environmental Sciences students also rate it highly, with mean scores of 4.40 (SD = 0.60) for 'Highly Important' and 4.20 (SD = 0.70) for 'Important,' showing substantial recognition of its importance but slightly less than Natural Sciences. In contrast, Information Technology students report lower mean scores, with 4.30 (SD = 0.55) for 'Highly Important' and 4.10 (SD = 0.65) for 'Important,' suggesting a more moderate perception. This difference may reflect how technology transfer is integrated and emphasized within each field, with Natural Sciences Education students showing the highest appreciation, followed by Environmental Sciences and Information Technology students.

Students rated their views on the benefits of technology transfer activities on a scale from 1 (Not Beneficial) to 5 (Highly Beneficial). The mean scores and standard deviations for beneficial levels are shown in Table 3.

Table 3. *Perceived Benefits of Technology Transfer by Faculty*

Engagement	Information Technology		Environmental Sciences		Natural Sciences Education	
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean	SD
1. Not Beneficial	1.80	0.75	1.90	0.70	1.85	0.80
2. Slightly Beneficial	2.50	0.70	2.60	0.75	2.55	0.75
3. Moderately Beneficial	3.40	0.80	3.00	0.85	3.35	0.80
4. Beneficial	4.00	0.65	4.20	0.70	4.10	0.70
5. Highly Beneficial	4.50	0.55	4.60	0.60	4.50	0.50

Table 3 presents the students' perceptions of the benefits of technology transfer across different faculties. Information Technology students perceive the highest benefits, with a mean score of 4.50 (SD = 0.55) for 'Highly Beneficial' and 4.00 (SD = 0.65) for 'Beneficial.' This suggests that they view technology transfer as highly advantageous and beneficial to their academic and professional growth. Environmental Sciences students also rate the benefits of technology transfer highly, with mean scores of 4.60 (SD = 0.60) for 'Highly Beneficial' and 4.20 (SD = 0.70) for 'Beneficial.' This indicates strong recognition of its advantages, though slightly higher than Information Technology students. Natural Sciences Education students rate technology transfer similarly to the other faculties, with a mean score of 4.55 (SD = 0.50) for 'Highly Beneficial' and 4.10 (SD = 0.70) for 'Beneficial.' Although their ratings are high, they are marginally lower compared to Environmental Sciences students. The overall trend shows that students across all faculties recognize the substantial benefits of technology transfer, with Environmental Sciences students having the highest perceived benefits, followed closely by Information Technology and Natural Sciences Education students.

Students identified barriers to their involvement in technology transfer. The mean scores and standard deviations for each barrier, rated on a scale from 1 (Not a Barrier) to 5 (Major Barrier), are presented in Table 4.

Table 4. *Barriers to Technology Transfer by Faculty*

Barriers	**Information Technology**		**Environmental Sciences**		**Natural Sciences Education**	
	Mean	**SD**	**Mean**	**SD**	**Mean**	**SD**
1. Lack of Knowledge	4.00	0.85	4.15	0.80	4.10	0.88
2. Insufficient Institutional Support	3.70	0.90	3.90	0.85	3.80	0.92
3. Lack of Relevance to Studies	3.20	0.80	3.40	0.78	3.30	0.85

Table 4 highlights the perceived barriers to technology transfer across different faculties. Lack of knowledge is reported as the most significant barrier, with mean scores of 4.05 (SD = 0.85) for Information Technology, 4.15 (SD = 0.80) for Environmental Sciences, and 4.10 (SD = 0.88) for Natural Sciences Education. These high scores indicate that students across all faculties recognize insufficient knowledge as a major obstacle to effective technology transfer. Insufficient Institutional Support is also a notable barrier, with mean scores of 3.70 (SD = 0.90) for Information Technology, 3.90 (SD = 0.85) for Environmental

Sciences, and 3.80 (SD = 0.92) for Natural Sciences Education. This suggests that while institutional support is a significant concern, it is perceived as slightly less critical than knowledge gaps. Lack of relevance to studies is the least cited barrier among the three, with mean scores of 3.20 (SD = 0.80) for Information Technology, 3.40 (SD = 0.78) for Environmental Sciences, and 3.30 (SD = 0.85) for Natural Sciences Education. This lower scoring indicates that students perceive the relevance of technology transfer to their studies as a less significant barrier compared to knowledge and support issues. Overall, addressing knowledge gaps and improving institutional support are critical steps to overcoming barriers to technology transfer as perceived by students across all faculties.

Students rated their interest in utilizing their research for future careers on a scale from 1 (No Interest) to 5 (High Interest). The mean scores and standard deviations for potential utilization are shown in Table 5.

Table 5. *Interest in Utilizing Research for Future Careers by Faculty*

Utilization Interest	**Information Technology**		**Environmental Sciences**		**Natural Sciences Education**	
	Mean	**SD**	**Mean**	**SD**	**Mean**	**SD**
1. No Interest	2.00	0.90	2.30	0.95	2.10	0.85
2. Slight Interest	2.80	0.85	3.00	0.80	2.90	0.85
3. Moderate Interest	3.40	0.80	3.50	0.75	3.60	0.70
4. High Interest	4.00	0.70	4.10	0.65	4.25	0.60
5. Very High Interest	4.20	0.60	4.30	0.55	4.30	0.55

Table 5 displays the students' interest levels in utilizing research for their future careers across different faculties. Natural Sciences Education students demonstrate the highest levels of interest, with a mean score of 4.30 (SD = 0.55) for both 'Very High Interest' and 4.20 (SD = 0.60) for 'High Interest.' This indicates a strong inclination towards leveraging their research experiences for future career opportunities. Environmental Sciences students also show considerable interest, with mean scores of 4.30 (SD = 0.55) for 'Very High Interest' and 4.10 (SD = 0.65) for 'High Interest,' reflecting a significant engagement with applying research outcomes in their careers. Information Technology students have slightly lower interest levels, with a mean score of 4.20 (SD = 0.60) for 'Very High Interest' and 4.00 (SD = 0.70) for 'High Interest,' suggesting a high but slightly less pronounced enthusiasm compared to their peers in the other faculties. The lower scores in 'No Interest' and 'Slight Interest' across all faculties further highlight the generally positive attitude towards utilizing research for future careers. Overall, while students from all faculties exhibit a high level of interest in using their research for career advancement, those from Natural Sciences Education and Environmental Sciences show slightly higher enthusiasm compared to Information Technology students.

The variation in perceived importance across faculties suggests that while all students recognize the value of technology transfer, Natural Sciences Education students have the highest appreciation for its role, followed by Environmental Sciences. Information Technology students also acknowledge its importance but generally rate it slightly lower. Interest in utilizing research for future careers is generally high but varies slightly by faculty. Natural Sciences Education students showed the highest interest, possibly due to the practical applications of their research. These differences may reflect the varying degrees to which technology transfer is integrated into their respective fields and curricula. The varied levels of interest in utilizing research for future careers indicate that while there is a strong overall interest, additional support and clear pathways are necessary to enhance the practical impact of technology transfer.

3.2. Focus group discussion

The focus group discussions revealed several key themes regarding students' attitudes towards academic technology transfer. Information Technology students demonstrated a high level of awareness and enthusiasm for technology transfer, recognizing its benefits and expressing a strong interest in utilizing research for future careers. They highlighted well-organized workshops and industry partnerships as crucial elements of their positive experience. Some of them said:

> We've had several workshops on how to commercialize our research projects. I feel pretty confident about what technology transfer involves and how it can help us get our innovations into the market.
>
> I'm very interested in using my research for my career. I'm already thinking about how to turn my project into a startup.

Conversely, Environmental Sciences students showed moderate awareness and interest but felt that the resources provided were too generic and not tailored to their specific field. They acknowledged the potential benefits but struggled to see direct applications for their careers. Two of them articulated this as follows:

> Sometimes I feel I lack institutional support. It would help if there were more resources or connections provided by the university.
>
> I'm interested in using my research for future work, but I need clearer guidance on how to make that transition effectively.

Natural Sciences Education students exhibited varying degrees of awareness and interest, with some feeling well-informed due to their involvement in relevant projects, while others lacked exposure. Barriers such as insufficient knowledge, inadequate institutional support, and practical implementation challenges were commonly identified across all faculties. Despite these barriers, there was a general interest in leveraging research for career advancement, though students expressed a need for more targeted support and clearer pathways to effectively integrate their research into future professional opportunities.

Some of us are involved in projects that have tech transfer components, so we understand it well. But others of us feel like we don't get enough information or exposure.

I'm keen on using my research for future career opportunities, but I'd like to see more structured support to help make that transition.

The focus group discussions provided nuanced insights into the attitudes and experiences of students regarding academic technology transfer. Information Technology students exhibited the highest level of awareness and perceived benefits, reflecting their active engagement with technology transfer through university-organized events and a clear understanding of its impact on their career prospects. Their strong interest in utilizing research for future careers is driven by their familiarity with commercialization and industry collaboration opportunities.

In contrast, Environmental Sciences and Natural Sciences Education students showed varying degrees of awareness and enthusiasm. While they recognized the potential benefits of technology transfer, they faced challenges related to the relevance of initiatives and practical implementation. Environmental Sciences students highlighted the need for more tailored programs that align with their specific research areas, while Natural Sciences Education students expressed a need for improved guidance and support structures.

4. Conclusions and Recommendations

The study underscores the diverse experiences of students across faculties at Saigon University regarding academic technology transfer. Information Technology students show high awareness, perceived benefits, and career interest, thanks to effective workshops and industry connections. In addition, the establishment of the Institute of Data Science - Artificial Intelligence and its activities have helped students majoring in information technology have research orientations as well as career development. However, Environmental Sciences and Natural Sciences Education students face challenges due to generic resources and practical application issues. Common barriers include insufficient knowledge and inadequate support. To address these issues, it is recommended that the university enhance tailored workshops and seminars, improve institutional support, ensure initiatives are relevant and practical, foster cross-disciplinary collaboration, and provide clear pathways for integrating research into career opportunities. A comprehensive technology transfer curriculum at Saigon University could play a transformative role in bridging the gap between academic research and real-world application, addressing current limitations in student engagement with technology transfer. The curriculum would be designed to provide students with structured learning opportunities, giving them the knowledge and skills to turn their research into practical, marketable solutions. Beginning with an Introductory Course on Technology Transfer and Intellectual Property (IP), students would learn the fundamentals of technology transfer, including IP rights, patents, copyrights,

and trademarks, with content tailored to each faculty's area of expertise. Real-world case studies—such as environmental technologies, educational tools, and innovative software solutions—would help students contextualize these concepts and see their relevance. Through these cases, they would gain a foundational understanding of the legal, ethical, and procedural aspects of protecting their intellectual property, preparing them to navigate the initial steps in the commercialization process.

Building on this foundation, an Applied Commercialization and Market Analysis module would guide students in evaluating the commercial potential of their research. They would learn market research techniques, customer discovery, competitive analysis, and industry-specific needs assessment. Each faculty would provide workshops to help students apply these skills directly, whether they are exploring trends in environmental technology, assessing needs in educational tools, or analyzing market demand for software solutions. This module could also include guest lectures from industry professionals, offering practical insights into market demands and challenges. Students would gain the tools to understand the relevance of their research beyond academia, enabling them to visualize its potential applications and appeal to industry stakeholders.

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THÁI ĐỘ CỦA SINH VIÊN ĐỐI VỚI SỰ CHUYỂN GIAO CÔNG NGHỆ HỌC THUẬT: NGHIÊN CỨU TRƯỜNG HỢP Ở TRƯỜNG ĐẠI HỌC SÀI GÒN

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TÓM TẮT

Nghiên cứu này khám phá thái độ của sinh viên đối với vai trò của chuyển giao công nghệ trong học thuật tại Trường Đại học Sài Gòn, tập trung vào các sinh viên từ ba khoa: Công nghệ Thông tin, Khoa học Môi trường, và Sư phạm Khoa học Tự nhiên, những người đã hoặc đang tham gia vào đề tài nghiên cứu khoa học. Nghiên cứu sử dụng phương pháp hỗn hợp, thu thập dữ liệu thông qua các cuộc khảo sát và thảo luận nhóm tập trung. Kết quả cho thấy mặc dù sinh viên nhận thức được tầm quan trọng của chuyển giao công nghệ trong việc kết nối nghiên cứu học thuật với các ứng dụng thực tiễn, nhưng hiểu biết của họ về quá trình này và các lợi ích của nó vẫn còn hạn chế. Các yếu tố như lĩnh vực học tập, sự tiếp xúc với các hoạt động khởi nghiệp, và mức độ hỗ trợ từ nhà trường ảnh hưởng đáng kể đến thái độ của họ. Nghiên cứu kết luận với các khuyến nghị nhằm tăng cường sự tham gia của sinh viên vào các sáng kiến chuyển giao công nghệ, đề xuất rằng việc tăng cường nhận thức, các chương trình giáo dục phù hợp, và sự hỗ trợ mạnh mẽ hơn cho thương mại hóa có thể trang bị tốt hơn cho sinh viên trong việc tận dụng nghiên cứu của họ ở các cơ hội tương lai.

Từ khóa: chuyển giao công nghệ học thuật; thương mại hóa đổi mới; nhận thức chuyển giao công nghệ; khởi nghiệp trong học thuật