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A Summer Bridge Program's Effect on Student Retention and Grade Point Average

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This is to certify that the doctoral study by

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Abstract

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Project Study Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

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Abstract

A small public historically Black college and university (HBCU) is offering the Providing Opportunities with Education and Readiness (POWER), a summer program to improve precollege high school students' academic performance and subsequent retention once in college. The problem investigated by this study was the low retention rates and grade point averages (GPAs) of first-year college students. Based on Tinto's integration model, this quantitative non-experimental causal-comparative study examined the difference in students' retention rates and GPAs between first-year students who participated in POWER and students who did not. Deidentified archival data from 675 first-year students at the study site were analyzed. A Pearson chi-squared test for independence and one-way ANOVA revealed no significant differences in retention and GPA (p = .21 and .18 respectively). The POWER participants had lower retention rates and GPAs than the nonparticipants, hence indicating that the POWER program does not meet the needs of precollege high school students. A white paper was provided to inform the college administrators about the failure of the POWER program in its current form and now, administrators can concentrate on determining other reasons and issues of academic preparedness and social integration than the ones addressed by POWER. The social change implications are that the results of the study brought the HBCU one step closer in finding a program that will indeed improve first-year students' success.

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Dedication

I dedicate this research to administrators and researchers who are working very hard to improve higher education student retention rates and GPA.

Acknowledgments

The project study would not have been possible without the unwavering support from my project study committee, colleagues, and family members. I am thankful for your kind encouraging words, advice, and support. I owe special thanks to my lovely wife, Staphea for her genuine love, commitment, and support. Lastly, I am thankful to my loving parents, Perry and Joyce Campbell for instilling educational values seeking new knowledge. Both are the greatest parents and I thank them for inspiring me.

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Section 1: The Problem

The Local Problem

Summer bridge programs (SBPs) are institutional services offered to prepare precollege first-year students to transition from high school to college (Grace-Odeleye & Santiago, 2019). SBPs have become an integral part of most universities and colleges to develop precollege first-year student preparedness and facilitate student social and academic integration (Grace-Odeleye & Santiago, 2019). The Southern State University (SSU, a pseudonym) POWER program commenced in 2008 and was known as the Providing Opportunities with Education and Readiness program. The SSU does not identify high school students as at-risk students; any precollege students who complete the POWER program application packet entitles them to participate in the POWER program. The POWER program functioned as a 4-week summer program at the study site by offering precollege high school students the opportunity to earn six credit hours, receive social and academic tutoring while attending social and academic enrichment workshops. According to the POWER program director, the POWER program is critical to social and academic integration and offers precollege first-year students the opportunity to develop supportive relationships with faculty members, staff members, and participants.

While the POWER program goals supported first-year students' retention and GPA, the SSU retrieved limited precollege first-year students' cumulative mean GPA data reports to be analyzed, aggregated, and reported to ascertain the effects of POWER program on precollege first-year students' retention and GPAs at the site. Specifically,

according to the POWER program director, first-year students' retention and GPA data reports are needed to determine the effects of the POWER program on any retention and GPA difference between first-year students who participated in POWER program and students who did not.

For this study, I retrieved and analyzed first-year students' retention and GPAs datasets to determine the effects of the POWER program on first-year students who participated in the POWER program and students who did not. The SSU Office of Enrollment Management and Student Success provided the Fall 2015 first-year students' deidentified archival retention and GPA datasets for analysis. Those first-year students' datasets showed that the POWER program participants' retention rate was 73%, and the mean GPA was 2.91, while the nonparticipants' retention rate was 69%, and the mean GPA was 2.99. I used a quantitative non-experimental causal-comparative research design to investigate any retention and GPA difference between first-year students who participated in the POWER program and students who did not. A Pearson chi-square test and one-way ANOVA showed the first-year students' retention and GPA datasets. The purpose of this study was to investigate the differences in first-year retention and GPA between students who participated in the POWER program and students who did not. For this study, the POWER program director provided the first-year retention and GPA datasets to complete the study. Table 1 shows the first-year retention rates and GPAs for the POWER program first-year participants and nonparticipants, which were analyzed to answer the study problem.

Table 1

SSU's POWER Program Students' Retention Rate Percentage and GPA Averages

First-Year	Retained	2015 Fall GPA
Participants	73%	2.91
Nonparticipants	69%	2.99

Note. Percentages and averages were rounded to the hundredths. Retention and GPA data were provided by the POWER program director (personal communication, October 16, 2018).

I addressed monitoring the POWER program participants' first-year low retention rates and mean GPAs for continuous retention and GPA improvement However, Wathington, Pretlow, and Barnett (2016) stated empirical evidence of first-year students' retention and GPA is needed to determine social and academic success. Bounded by Tinto's (1993) social and academic integration theory, the program director assumed that POWER helped precollege first-year students manage social and academic rigor, developed a positive outlook of the institution, and created a promise of graduation through social and academic integration. However, according to the POWER program director achieving the POWER program's mission has remained elusive as many of the precollege first-year students have dropped out and not graduated.

SBPs have offered institutional services and social and academic support to prepare precollege first-year students for college coursework to improve social and academic performance. Research conducted on the effects of precollege SBPs on first-year students' social and academic success is limited (Wathington et al., 2016). Institutions across the country continue to offer SBPs despite a dearth of literature on the program's efficacy. Nationally, SBPs have a mission to support precollege first-year

students to adjust to college life rigors (Slade, Eatmon, Staley, & Dixon, 2015). Often, SBP researchers are social and academic practitioners who use evidence-based research to form policy to improve programming to meet precollege first-year students' needs (Grace-Odeleye & Santiago, 2019). However, SBP researchers have failed to retrieve, analyze, aggregate, and report SBP precollege first-year students' retention and cumulative mean GPA data reports to determine precollege first-year students' academic success.

Rationale

To determine precollege first-year students' academic success, I used Tinto's constructs such as social and academic integration to understand a student's commitment to returning to college (Tinto, 1993). Precollege first-year students' decisions to return to college and achieve social and academic success include their choice of study, a predictor of precollege first-year social and academic integration (Braxton & Francis, 2018). Many SBPs lack precollege first-year subsequent research-based data analysis of variables such as first-year retention and GPA data reports to determine if the SBPs lead to precollege students' social and academic success, thus improving precollege first-year students' retention and GPAs (Cabrera, Miner, & Milem, 2013; Douglas & Attewell, 2014). Palmer (2017) noted that SBPs had limited precollege students' research literature on first-year retention and GPAs to determine if SBP affected first-year students' social and academic success and subsequent retention. According to Maliszewski (2017) and Greenfield, Keup, and Gardner (2013), precollege first-year students' retention rates, together with GPAs, should be examined while students persist toward graduation to

achieve social and academic success. Wathington et al. (2016) stated that precollege first-year students' retention rates and GPAs should be retrieved at consecutive points to ascertain the effects on precollege first-year students' social and academic success. In this study, I measured and determined the effect of the POWER program on precollege first-year students' social and academic integration using retention and GPA as study factors. The purpose of this study was to investigate the differences in first-year retention and GPA between students who participated in the POWER program and students who did not.

Definition of Terms

Academic Integration: Academic integration is the ability to combine knowledge and content to acquire basic mathematics, reading, writing, science, and social studies skills (Tinto, 1993).

Grade Point Average (GPA): GPA represents the students' academic achievement over some given time in college (Tinto, 2017).

Graduation Rates: A percentage of undergraduates who complete their study program is known as graduation rates (Grohman, Ivcevic, Silvia, & Kaufman, 2017).

Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs): HBCUs are postsecondary educational institutions established with the principle of allowing Black or minority students to pursue an education within a college or university setting (Holfester, 2019).

Persistence: Persistence is the determination to continue education to graduation (Grohman et al., 2017).

Retention: Retention is the ability, as well as the willpower, to remain to graduation (Peralta & Klonowski, 2017).

Retention Rates: The retention rate represents a calculated percentage of first-year students who return for the next academic year (Peralta & Klonowski, 2017).

Social Integration: Social integration is the process during which first-year students identify themselves with the institution through social events and functions, developing faculty, staff, and peer relationships, and participating in student government associations and extracurricular activities (Tinto, 1993).

Summer Bridge Program (SBP): An SBP is a precollege program designed to assist first-year college students with social and academic integration (McCurrie, 2009).

Significance of the Study

The examination of precollege first-year students' retention and GPAs at the study site may reduce the gap in practice to retrieve, analyze, aggregate, and report the effect of the POWER program on precollege first-year students' retention and GPAs. The study's results will inform the SSU regarding the effects of the POWER program on precollege first-year students' retention and GPAs. If the POWER program precollege first-year students continue to drop out, the study site's overall student enrollment may continue to decline; thus, the school overall retention rates and GPA may drop, perhaps the school will lose federal funding, and precollege first-year students may not become employed in the future (Cancado, Reisel, & Walker, 2018). This study may provide the study site with meaningful first-year students' data results to renew and expand programming through federal aid. Nationally, first-year student retention rates and GPA

are reported to national reporting agencies to meet the Department of Education standards and gauge the workforce and programming needs to graduate precollege first-year students to meet local and national job market needs. The study site may benefit from the project study by receiving the needed data results information on the POWER program's effect on precollege first-year students' retention and GPAs.

Research Question and Hypotheses

The research questions (RQs) addressed in the study were:

Research Question 1 (RQ1): What is the difference in first-year retention rates between students who participated in the POWER program and students who did not?

Null Hypothesis ($H_0$1): There is no difference in first-year retention rates between students who participated in the POWER program and students who did not.

Alternative Hypothesis (H_a1): There is a difference in first-year retention rates between students who participated in the POWER program and students who did not.

Research Question 2 (RQ2): What is the difference in the first-year GPA between students who participated in the POWER program and students who did not?

Null Hypothesis ($H_0$2): There is no difference in first-year mean GPA between students who participated in the POWER program and students who did not.

Alternative Hypothesis (H_a2): There is a difference in first-year mean GPA between students who participated in the POWER program and students who did not.

Review of the Literature

I completed a literature review using Google Scholar and Walden University Library databases, including Academic Research Complete, Education Research

Complete, ERIC, ProQuest Central, and Sage Online. I examined peer-reviewed articles, books, dissertations, education statistics sources, and conference proceedings to complete the literature review. I used the following search terms: *summer bridge programs, a first-year program, student retention rates, student retention, summer academic programs, retention and graduation, student attrition and graduation, retention factors*, and *student retention rates and mean GPA.*

Theoretical Framework

Tinto's (1993) integration model describes whether precollege first-year students have developed socially and academically under challenging first-year social and academic conditions. Tinto's (1993) model contains five interaction constructs to determine a first-year student's drop-out decision. The significant elements of the framework are: (a) pre-entry attributes, (b) goals and commitments, (c) institutional experiences, (d) social integration, and (e) academic integration (Tinto, 1993).

College students' pre-entry attributes include elements related to precollege first-year students' schooling before entering college, family background, and skill development (Tinto, 1993). The elements of pre-entry attributes provide researchers a structure to understand how precollege first-year students perform in an academic environment and under challenging social and academic conditions and cultural and social development (French, 2017). For example, one critical pre-entry attribute is time management skills (Tinto, 2017); precollege first-year students should develop time management skills required for academic success in the institutional environment. If precollege first-year students can establish and complete goals utilizing time management

skills, which contribute to a commitment to degree completion and translate into academic persistence and the achievement of educational goals (Tinto, 2017).

Precollege first-year students' goals and commitments help establish an emotional attachment and accountability to their educational process (Tinto, 1993). Precollege first-year students who are accountable tend to focus their goals and commitments on social and academic integration and persisting to graduation. When accountable precollege first-year students establish their commitments to their educational goals, they gain personal independence to persevere. They tend to join social organizations and academic, extracurricular activities to maximize their experiences and minimize their challenges (Tinto, 1993). When precollege first-year students gain social and academic exposure and a commitment to persist, they improve their institutional experiences (Rodríguez, Tinajero, & Páramo, 2017).

Institutional experiences consist of formal and informal interactions with other precollege students. Precollege first-year students' institutional interactions with administrators, faculty members, staff members, and other students allow them to develop interpersonal relationships. Long-term interpersonal relationships foster precollege personal attachments, which create a sense of belonging to the institution. Those experiences strengthen precollege first-year students' social and academic integration and encourage social and academic behavior outcomes (Kemp, 2016). There is a significant connection between social and academic integration between precollege first-year students and the institution that fosters first-year students' social and academic rigor (Kerby, 2015).

Precollege first-year students' social integration affects their interpersonal and interactional relationships among faculty and other students. Social adaptation to cultural experiences is pivotal in cultivating faculty and precollege first-year student relationships. It represents the socialization and primary influences of social integration skills needed to interact internally and externally with peers, while precollege first-year students persist (Tinto, 1993, 2017). Peer development helps precollege first-year students resolve personal problems; colleges use peer mentorship to develop precollege first-year students to interact beyond the classroom. Peer interactions lead to personal social development and growth while contributing to social advice instances that further encourage social integration (Tinto, 2017).

Academic integration plays a role in precollege first-year students' intellectual development and academic performance. An academic setting's positive experiences promote instruction, learning, and assessment strategies that bolster precollege first-year students' academic development and degree attainment (Tinto, 1993). The academic setting and extracurricular activities create a positive outlook for precollege first-year students and their choices toward degree attainment and occupational service. Degree attainment and occupational service choice render a need to be program-affiliated and academically integrated, leading to academic success (Tinto, 1993).

In this study, I used Tinto's (1993) integration model to explain precollege first-year students' social and academic behavior and precollege students' drop-out decisions (Kemp, 2016; Van der Meer, Scott, & Pratt, 2018). Precollege first-year students' social and academic integration, peer group influences, degree attainment, and occupational

services also affect the institution (Tinto, 1993). Precollege first-year student drop-out decisions affect the surrounding community's employment rates and the institutions' precollege first-year students' pre-entry attributes, goals, commitments, institutional experiences, and social and academic integration (Tinto, 1993). The development of the theoretical concept of first-year students' social and academic integration was developed by Tinto's (1993) integration framework theory. I used Tinto's (1993) integration model to construct and align the project study problem, purpose and rationale, significance, and research questions.

Review of the Broader Problem

Summer Bridge Programs

SBPs prepare precollege students to enter college and successfully develop the social and academic skills needed to successfully navigate first-year college-level work. SBPs boost social and academic readiness and support precollege students' persistence to graduation (Wachen, Pretlow, & Dixon, 2018). Additionally, SBPs receive unprepared precollege students who need to successfully manage the necessary skills to handle college's social and academic rigors. More colleges should offer SBPs to prepare and improve precollege students' social and academic readiness due to high school students' unpreparedness for college life. SBPs are designed with a curriculum and implement educational practices geared toward a positive social and academic outcome (Wachen et al., 2018). SBPs measure effectiveness based on precollege students' participation rather than the program's impact on retention and GPAs. According to Wachen et al. (2018), it is necessary to analyze SBP retention and GPA data related to precollege first-year

students' academic and social integration to demonstrate SBP's worth. Furthermore, SBP precollege first-year students' retention and GPA data should be tracked at consecutive points to determine the SBPs' effectiveness to help underprepared, struggling precollege students continue to prepare and graduate from college (Wachen et al., 2018).

SBPs offer precollege students an opportunity to become acclimated to college's social and academic rigors in the first year (Hensley & Davis, 2016). SBPs expose precollege students to the first year of college's social and academic rigors and allow students an opportunity to integrate socially and academically in college for the first time. Precollege social and academic integration happens as students interact with faculty and staff, support services, peer mentoring, and supplemental instruction. University administrators provide students with campus-wide social and academic services through partnerships with faculty and staff support services (Hensley & Davis, 2016). A peer mentorship SBP, a program designed to facilitate collaborative learning and a community support system, also fosters precollege first-year students' social and academic integration. The institutional precollege mentorship experience promotes opportunities for precollege first-year students to develop a sense of place and a long-term commitment to graduate from college (Tinto, 1993). Precollege first-year students developed a sense of place to broaden their social and academic development skills through social engagement with peers, alumni, faculty, and social media platforms. Social media technology activates and fosters technology service tools to socially and academically connect SBP precollege students with peers, alumni, faculty members, staff members, and administrators in a face-to-face manner (Eblen-Zayas & Russell, 2019).

SBPs prepared students for precollege life, help students develop long-lasting and cohesive friendships, help SBP students earn precollege credits, and support students through their first college experience (Moriña, 2019). Many precollege students who fail the first year in college are minority students unprepared during high school who are not ready for college life rigors (Biermeier, 2017; Kirp, 2019). Colleges investigating SBP first-year students' data reports determined that SBPs offer a head start for underprepared precollege students (Moriña, 2019). Underprepared precollege first-year students are often first-generation, low-income, ethnic, or racial minority, disabled, or single-parent students (Kirp, 2019). Many SBPs assist precollege first-year students by providing institutional social and academic support workshops (Greenfield, Keup, & Gardner, 2013; Miller, 2014) and opportunities to tackle social and academic challenges before college starts. SBP leaders help precollege students apply for educational support, develop better study skills, and activate institutional programming funding assistance.

SBP funding assistance operates and maintains SBPs. The programs operate on the state allocations of federal funds, which require SBP administrators to report precollege first-year student' retention and cumulative mean GPA datasets (Kerby, 2015; Permzadian & Credé, 2016). Colleges provide SBP precollege first-year student' retention and cumulative mean GPA data reports to support, secure, and develop SBP first-year college programming (Bir & Myrick, 2015). Since SBPs are a pipeline for university precollege first-year student enrollment, SBPs save the university money by recruiting and retaining precollege high school students the first year (Permzadian & Credé, 2016). However, college recruiters desiring to recruit new SBP precollege first-

year students may pose a financial threat when recruiters admit underprepared, first-year male students to college (Palmer, Maramba, & Dancy, 2013; Palmer, Wood, Dancy, & Strayhorn, 2015).

Underprepared SBP precollege male students, and mostly minority men, often bond through discussion of personal and social experiences; consequently, such discussions are critical to increasing inner strength, constructive behavior, and positive actions (Deveci & Ayish, 2017). Once enrolled in college, underprepared SBP precollege male students are often not supported socially and academically; thus, they may leave college (Palmer et al., 2013). To remain in college, underprepared SBP precollege male students need to participate in SBP programming consisting of team building, problem-solving, and self-esteem skills. Precollege minority male students especially require leadership, social, and academic skills to persist through college (Biermeier, 2017; Deveci & Ayish, 2017). SBP precollege male students underprepared for college confront extreme and demanding barriers while overcoming social and academic obstacles in college with minimal support and few role models (Deveci & Ayish, 2017).

SBPs recruit minority, at-risk, underrepresented precollege students in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM). Some specialized bridge programs provide STEM precollege first-year students internship opportunities to obtain better jobs upon graduation (Houser, Garcia, & Torres, 2015; Lancaster & Xu, 2017; Yeboah & Smith, 2016). SBPs prepare STEM precollege students for job placement after graduation. According to Kaul, Johnsen, Saxon, and Witte (2016), STEM SBP precollege students gain better job internships and opportunities than students who do not participate

in STEM SBPs. Howard and Flora (2015) found that STEM SBP precollege students' reading, writing, and comprehension skills increased 30% over students who did not participate in STEM SBPs. Sablan (2014) evaluated minority, low-income, STEM SBP precollege students' core skills through data retrieval to check study habit skills, student preparation effectiveness, and programming cost efficiency. Two longitudinal descriptive STEM SBP studies monitored precollege first-year students' retention rates, study skill habits, and SBP's financial stability (Angelopulo, 2013; Tomasko, Ridgway, Waller, & Olesik, 2016). The results of the STEM SBP studies showed that low-income minority STEM SBP precollege students develop a sense of belonging by providing social and academic resources for precollege first-year students to remain in college (Tomasko et al., 2016). Minority and low-income STEM SBP precollege first-year students develop a sense of belonging and excellent study skills that allow them to persist to graduation (Johnson-Weeks & Superville, 2016).

SBP precollege first-year students who are lonely in college may benefit from SBPs, but Bir and Myrick (2015) found that administrators of SBPs did not offer services to support isolated SBP precollege first-year students. Further first-year study evaluations of SBPs are needed to determine and support SBP precollege first-year students separated from home and lonely at college (Kaul et al., 2016). In contrast, when college support services did offer lonely first-year students psychological and social support, positive outcomes resulted. Bir and Myrick found that college mental and social support services held a distinct advantage as the college psychological and social support services created a long-lasting effect on first-year students away from home at college. College first-year

students who exhibited isolation and loneliness in college received psychological and social support gain long-term social skills and are more likely to graduate from college (Kaul et al., 2016).

Some specialized SBPs serve disabled precollege first-year students by providing disability services to foster independence and social adjustment with peers (Bir & Myrick, 2015). SBP disability services increase and strengthen the institution's commitment, vision, and mission to support precollege first-year students with disabilities (Bhattacharya & Hansen, 2015). Although many precollege first-year students with disabilities have completed SBPs, they still exhibit insufficient social and academic skills in college (Slade et al., 2015). Some precollege first-year students with disabilities suffer from mental, physical, and social conditions while in college (Lawson, Gould, & Conley, 2016). Precollege first-year students with disabilities usually do not interact much with their peers; thus, SBPs offer precollege first-year students with disabilities support services to manage their disabilities in healthy ways (Lawson et al., 2016). College SBP staff members often continue to assist precollege first-year students with disabilities throughout the college year (Lawson et al., 2016). Colleges offer developmental, physical, and social disability services to support first-year students (Moriña, 2019), but more SBPs are needed to support first-year students with disabilities to impact long-term educational goals (Fleming, Coduti, & Herbert, 2018). Although a growing number of SBPs are committed to supporting precollege first-year students with disabilities through social and academic support, many SBPs are limited to online courses for precollege first-year students with disabilities (Sablan, 2014).

SBPs are critical to the future to ensure precollege first-year minority groups can participate in higher education and contribute to the strength of the workforce, to secure a better quality of life, and to compete on an international level (Kitchen, Sadler, & Sonnert, 2018). According to Kitchen et al. (2018), jobs may grow at a rate of 8.9% in the next five years, requiring a set of talented professionals to meet workforce demands. The new workforce will require minority graduates in STEM areas; therefore, it is necessary to equip underprepared and underrepresented precollege first-year students for the STEM job market. There is a need for SBPs to prepare precollege first-year minority students for diversity and inclusion in STEM career paths (Kitchen et al., 2018). The broadening of STEM SBPs lays the foundation for precollege first-year students to pursue STEM fields as career options. More STEM SBPs are needed to create significant opportunities for SBPs to establish a broader audience needed to affect precollege first-year students' preparation skills and take on STEM careers in the future (Tomasko et al., 2016).

SBP directors may offer hybrid online programs to connect precollege first-year students to a community learning environment and make online learning a norm (Eblen-Zayas & Russell, 2019). The online learning approach promotes the transformation of technology and learning to reach all demographics of precollege first-year students who prefer to participate in an online and community-based SBP (Eblen-Zayas & Russell, 2019). Community-based SBPs may be on the rise to reach a more comprehensive online and demographic community to meet the workforce's projected demand and improve the nation's economy (Eblen-Zayas & Russell, 2019). The SBP hybrid approach may ensure precollege first-year students a higher quality of life by preparing a larger pool of

precollege first-year candidates who are underprepared and underrepresented to compete internationally (Eblen-Zayas & Russell, 2019).

Intervention Retention

College intervention retention SBPs focus on strategies for precollege first-year students to remain in college through graduation (Houser et al., 2015; Lipe & Waller, 2013). College SBP intervention strategies are program- specific to motivate precollege first-year African American, Hispanic, and Native American students to stay in college (Gershenfeld, Hood, & Zhan, 2016). A significant precollege first-year student retention rate difference exists between program-specific and nonprogram-specific students (Gershenfeld et al., 2016), where program-specific precollege first-year students' mean GPA showed a definite increase compared to the general student population (Lipe & Waller, 2013). A growing number of intervention institutions use intervention first-year retention research data to improve precollege first-year students' retention rates and GPA outcomes (Gray & Swinton, 2017).

Colleges use pre-and post-policy retention interventions to test precollege first-year students' social and academic ability to matriculate through college. At-risk, minority, and low-income precollege first-year students "lose, on average, one to three grade-level equivalency months in reading values from where they finished the previous social and academic year" (Swain, 2013, p. 80). College leaders review preregistration materials such as high school GPA, ACT or SAT scores, age, sex, financial status, and expected family contribution to predict precollege first-year students' college performance (Gray & Swinton, 2017). Leaders review precollege students' registration

materials to help understand why precollege first-year students persist or not in college (Tinto, 2017).

Precollege first-year student retention intervention SBPs also help precollege first-year students commit to their chosen college. Colleges create intervention SBPS to offer precollege students a strong first-year social and academic commitment, friendly faculty and staff members, student orientation, and organizational culture to improve precollege first-year students' retention rates and GPA (Angelopulo, 2013). The first-year commitment to provide a strong social and academic presence is necessary for SBP precollege first-year students to remain in college, increase retention rates, and boost the overall number of precollege first-year students acquiring post-secondary degrees (Ring, 2016). An earned bachelor's degree may mean that SBP precollege students developed a sense of belonging, motivation, and job learning skills obtained by participating in intervention retention SBPs (Tinto, 2017).

Precollege parental and family support in intervention retention programs at SBPs serve and support at-risk, minority, and low-income precollege first-year students to obtain college success. While leaders offer intervention programs to help precollege first-year students stay in college, evaluators examined English language arts proficiency exams to determine college success (DeNicco, Harrington, & Fogg, 2015). However, these exams were not strong enough to determine precollege first-year academic success; thus, evaluators retrieved, analyzed, and reported SBP precollege first-year students' cumulative mean GPA reports (Houser et al., 2015; Tinto, 1993). Besides leaders reviewing the cumulative mean GPA reports, at-risk, minority, and low-income

precollege first-year students require additional peer mentoring and support from parents, family members, and friends to remain in college. Parental and family support helps at-risk, minority, low-income SBP precollege first-year students stay in college. Parental and family support affects SBP precollege first-year students' social and academic performance and personal and social behaviors (Kaul et al., 2016). Parental and family support nurtures and shapes SBP precollege first-year students' abilities to remain in college when parents and family learn the precollege first-year students' social and academic behavior (Fruiht, 2015). SBP precollege first-year students who received parental and family support gain problem-solving skills that allow them to finish college. While family support is not the only determining factor in student persistence, SBP precollege first-year students often lack necessary skill development and seem socially and academically challenged (Gershenfeld et al., 2016). Despite attending SBP and having parents and family members who support at-risk, minority, and low-income precollege first-year students attending college, many SBP precollege first-year students lack the personal motivation to persevere (Kaul et al., 2016).

Mean GPA Reporting

Colleges discussed SBP precollege mean GPA data reports to evaluate first-year students' learning experiences to improve their first-year GPAs while successive precollege students prepare for college life (Gershenfeld et al., 2016). The use of cumulative mean GPA data reports reduces SBP precollege first-year students' stress and eases anxiety during college (Rohatinsky, Harding, & Carriere, 2017). Colleges review cumulative mean GPA data reports to support SBP precollege students and to help them

establish skill-building and social and academic proficiency before college (Gershenfeld et al., 2016). Colleges evaluating SBP precollege first-year students' cumulative mean GPA reports provide the most reliable evidence to monitor and determine succeeding SBP precollege students' college success (Patzer et al., 2017). Nevertheless, first-year students' cumulative mean GPA reports do not support programming in social and academic engagement, student relationships, learner autonomy, and self-discipline (Vella, Turesky, & Hebert, 2016). However, first-year students' cumulative mean GPA data reports alert higher education administrators to identify struggling first-year students and informed corporate employers if precollege first-year students are self-motivated (Lyons & Bandura, 2017). After identifying SBP precollege first-year students, colleges and corporations retrieve students' cumulative mean GPAs to help them obtain internships with job placement, security, and position rank within a corporation (Patzer et al., 2017). Some SBP precollege first-year students who fail to earn high enough cumulative mean GPAs to secure job placement and security within a corporation require cumulative mean GPA reports to monitor their academic progress (Vella et al., 2016). Therefore, college leaders reviewing cumulative mean GPA reports seek precollege first-year students' cumulative mean GPAs, and college leaders reviewing first-year mean GPA reports translated pedagogy into a more blended learning style (Vella et al., 2016). College leaders reviewing of SBP precollege students' first-year cumulative mean GPA reports provided evidence to improve ensuing summer bridge programming for subsequent SBP precollege first-year students to achieve social and academic success (Vella et al., 2016). SBP leaders reporting precollege first-year students' cumulative mean GPA reports are

needed to support more SBP precollege students preparing for college the first time. The reporting of one Caribbean tertiary institution SBP precollege first-year students' cumulative mean GPA data reports resulted in an independent, competitive, collaborative, and participant learning style approach (Corbin, 2017). The learning style approach permitted precollege first-year students to work together and independently while supporting each other in college (Corbin, 2017). Thus, to determine first-year academic success, SBP precollege first-year mean cumulative GPA data reports are reviewed and discussed by college leaders. College leaders analyze and share SBP precollege first-year students' cumulative mean GPA data reports to monitor successive first-year students' low retention and GPAs (Corbin, 2017).

Implications

SBP precollege first-year students’ cumulative mean GPA data reports are needed to monitor successive SBP precollege first-year students’ retention and GPAs. The project study directions suggest that precollege first-year cumulative mean GPA data reports should be reported consecutively for review, discussion, and to monitor successive SBP precollege first-year students' retention rates and GPAs. The white paper project directions may establish a foundation for the SSU to apply for federal funding to renew and expand programming to continue the POWER program for precollege high school students who may desire to participate in the POWER program to achieve college social and academic success to graduation.

Summary

Colleges offer institutional programming, such as SBPs, to prepare precollege students for college coursework and improve precollege first-year students' social and academic performance before college. SBPs are an integral part of most colleges to develop first-year students' preparedness to facilitate first-year students' social and academic adjustment. The purpose of this study was to investigate the differences in first-year retention and GPA between students who participated in the POWER program and students who did not. The project study outcome was to provide recommendations to address SBP precollege first-year student's retention and GPAs because many precollege first-year students were not achieving social and academic success, SBP precollege first-year students became dropouts. As a result, to analyze first-year students' deidentified archival retention and GPA raw datasets, a quantitative non-experimental causal-comparative research design was used to determine the outcome. A Pearson chi-square test for independence and one-way ANOVA addressed the RQs. The RQs involved in the study addressed the null hypothesis. The theoretical concept of first-year students' social and academic integration was developed by Tinto's (1993) integration framework theory. This framework grounded the study and was used to evaluate the study results.

SBP leaders have assisted low-income minority precollege first-year students to academically and socially integrate into college life the first year. Many SBP precollege first-year students who fail the first year are first-generation, low-income, ethnic, racial minority, or single-parent students (Biermeier, 2017). Bridge programs provide opportunities for precollege first-year students to obtain better jobs upon graduation

through long-term social and educational skill-building. Intervention SBP programs are designed to help precollege first-year students remain in college for graduation. SBP precollege first-year students could adapt to college life because the reporting of SBP precollege first-year students' cumulative mean GPA reports provide the most reliable predictor to monitor and address first-year students' social and academic success. Subsequently, more first-year retention and cumulative mean GPA data reports are needed to monitor and address succeeding precollege first-year students' retention and GPAs to remain in school to achieve social and academic success.

Finally, the study research design and approach direction suggest to retrieve, analyze, aggregate, and report first-year retention and GPA data reports for review and discussion to address subsequent first-year students' retention and GPAs for continuous improvement. The next section describes the methodology, research design, and study approach.

Section 2: The Methodology

Research Design and Approach

The purpose of this study was to investigate the differences in first-year retention and GPA between students who participated in the POWER program and students who did not. This section includes a description of the quantitative nonexperimental causal-comparative research design that I used to investigate the differences in the first-year retention and GPAs between students who participated in the POWER program and students who did not. I used a Pearson chi-square test for independence and one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) to determine the effects of the POWER program on first-year students' retention and GPAs. This section includes the setting and sample, instrumentation and materials, data collection and analysis, assumptions, limitations, scope and delimitations, protections of students' rights, data analysis and discussion of results, the introduction of the white paper project, and a summary.

Research Design and Rationale

The study had two research questions. First, I reviewed the first research questions and measured the difference in the first-year retention rates of the students who participated in the POWER program and the students who did not. The independent variable was the participation in the POWER program, which was either yes or no, and the dependent variable was dichotomous with the two possibilities of yes or no retained. Second, I reviewed the second research questions and measured the difference in the first-year mean GPAs of the students who participated in the POWER program and the students who did not. The independent variable was the participation in the POWER

program, which is either yes or no and the dependent variable measured on a continuous scale. All data were deidentified archival data provided by the Office of Enrollment Management and Student Success Center of the study site, a small public HBCU.

For the study, I retrieved deidentified archival first-year retention and GPA datasets to investigate the first-year retention rate and mean GPA differences between students who participated in the POWER program and students who did not. For example, I retrieved first-year retention and GPA datasets because leaders of first-year retention and GPA study investigated if SBPs data reports served and motivated first-year students to stay in college (Gershenfeld, Hood, & Zhan, 2016). Angelopulo (2013) studied if SBPs fostered a strong social and academic commitment, friendly faculty and staff members, student orientation, and organizational culture to improve SBP precollege students' first-year retention rates and GPA. Ring (2016) examined if SBPs provided enough social and academic support necessary for first-year students to remain in college, increase retention rates, and mean GPAs of first-year students acquiring post-secondary degrees.

Setting and Sample

The local setting was a small, public HBCU. The setting, a land-grant institution, provides education to students in the local, state, national, and international regions and offers a POWER program for precollege first-year students. In the Fall of 2015, according to the POWER program director, the HBCU admitted 675 precollege first-year students in agriculture, fisheries, human sciences, arts and sciences, education, and business management. The archival first-year retention and GPA data for these students

were available. From the 675 precollege first-year students, 275 had participated in the POWER program, and the remaining 400 have not. The G* power analysis with an alpha of 0.05, a medium effect size, and a power of .80 showed that a minimum of 64 data sets per group was needed and the $n = 675$ was, therefore, sufficient (Faul, Erdfelder, Lang, & Buchner, 2007; Gravetter & Wallnau, 2009, 2009).

According to the POWER program director, the precollege first-year students included 52% commuters, while 48% resided in campus housing. Nearly 40% of first-year students were from out-of-state. According to the POWER program director, the precollege first-year students' ethnic composition was 91% African American, 4.9% Caucasian, 1.8% Non-Resident Alien, 1.4% Hispanic, less than 1% each for Asian, American/Alaska Native, and two or more student races and 60% of students were female. All precollege first-year students in the study, and as the first-year retention and GPA datasets were available as deidentified archival data, no recruitment or selection was necessary.

Instrumentation and Materials

In this study, I did not collect experimental data as the nonexperimental archival data were already available at the HBCU. Every university keeps information on its students, retentions, and GPA. I retrieved deidentified datasets about the POWER program participation, first-year retention, and GPA datasets from the Office of Enrollment Management and Student Success Center in a Microsoft Excel spreadsheet. The spreadsheet contained columns that indicated if a student participated in the POWER

program or not and the students' GPA, and if the student enrolled the following year. First-year retention and GPA datasets are available upon request.

Data Collection and Analysis

For the study, I wrote a letter and requested permission to retrieve first-year retention and GPA datasets, and the request approved the completion of the study. I retrieved deidentified archival datasets from the Office of Enrollment Management and Student Success Center to retrieve deidentified archival first-year retention and GPA datasets to complete the study. I used the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences, Version 27, to analyze the data. The independent variable was the participation in the POWER program with the two levels, yes and no. The participants received Code 1, and the nonparticipants received Code 2. As the first research question has a dichotomous dependent variable, retention, a Pearson chi-square test for independence was used to measure the difference in first-year students' retention. The first-year students were coded as 1 and 0. The students who participated in the POWER program coded as 1, and students who did not participate were coded as 0. The second research question's dependent variable was the GPA, a continuous scale ranging from 0 to 4.00. A one-way ANOVA was used to calculate the datasets to measure the differences in first-year students' mean GPAs. Table 2 summarizes the codes used in the data analysis.

Table 2

Variables and Coding

Research Questions		Variables & Coding		Data Analysis
RQ1:	What is the difference in first-year retention rates between students who participated in the POWER program and students who did not?	IV:	POWER program participation Yes 1 No 2	Pearson chi-square test
		DV:	Student Retention Retained 1 Not Retained 0	
RQ2:	What is the difference in the first-year GPA between students who participated in the POWER program and students who did not?	IV:	POWER program participation Yes 1 No 2	One-way ANOVA
		DV:	Student GPA Continuous from 0.00 to 4.00	

Assumptions, Limitations, Scope, and Delimitations

Assumptions

I assumed the POWER program students' first-year retention and GPA deidentified archival datasets were all-inclusive and accurate. I also assumed that first-year students in both groups tried to do their best in their freshman year.

Limitations

The data analysis did not include a statistical procedure that would ensure the groups were equal before the actual treatment, including a covariate. However, as the group sizes were large, this limitation is negligible. Furthermore, random assignment was not possible as first-year students were preselected to participate in the POWER program themselves, which is a decision that could not influence this research. As far as the study,

I retrieved the datasets from an HBCU; the results cannot be generalized to other institutions.

Scope and Delimitations

The scope of the study was one cohort group of 675 first-year students at an HBCU. For the study, I examined first-year students who were part-time, one-semester, junior, senior, or transfer students. I did not consider first-year students' precollege academic qualifications, such as national high school scholastic aptitude tests, high school GPA, and parental financial support. Variables such as family financial support, age differences between the groups, and motivational factors were not in the first-year retention and GPA study.

Protection of Participants' Rights

The Walden University's Office of Research Ethics and Compliance granted permission on December 5, 2018 (12-05-18-04652355). There was no risk to the first-year students, and consent was unnecessary because the data analyzed were deidentified archival data provided by the college.

Data Analysis Results

The research questions (RQs) addressed in the study were:

Research Question 1 (RQ1): What is the difference in first-year retention rates between students who participated in the POWER program and students who did not?

Null Hypothesis ($H_0$1): There is no difference in first-year retention rates between students who participated in the POWER program and students who did not.

Alternative Hypothesis (H_a1): There is a difference in first-year retention rates between students who participated in the POWER program and students who did not.

I used a Pearson chi-square test for independence to address RQ1 and to complete the study. I used the SPSS software version 27, with the independent variable being the participation or nonparticipation of first-year students in the POWER program to analyze the datasets. McHugh (2013) recommended using a chi-square nonparametric test when the measurement level is ordinal or nominal. According to Howell (2007), once study sample sizes are unequal, the distribution of data measures at an interval or ratio level, and the data violates the assumption of equal variance or homoscedasticity (McHugh, 2013). All statistical assumption dataset conditions were met to conduct the Pearson chi-square test for independence. Table 3 shows the results for the 675 students.

Table 3

Cross Tabulation and Chi-Square Results for the POWER Program

Students	Retention					
	Not Retained	Retained	Total	χ^2	*df*	*p*
Participants	73	202	275	1.565	1	.211
Non-Participants	124	276	400			
Total	197	478	675			

From a total of 675 first-year students, 275 or 41% participated in the POWER program. Of all 675 students, 478 students or 71% returned the following year, which, in turn, means that almost 1/3 of students did not return. A total of 275 students who participated in the POWER program, 202 (73%) returned, whereas, from the 400 non-participants, 276 (69%) returned. Even though the data show a higher percentage of

retention for the POWER program participants, the chi-square results showed $p > .05$, which means no significant difference in the first-year students' retention rates. Therefore, the null hypothesis accepted: There is no significant difference in first-year retention rates between students who participated in the POWER program and students who did not.

The research questions (RQs) addressed in the study were:

Research Question 2 (RQ2): What is the difference in the first-year GPA between students who participated in the POWER program and students who did not?

Null Hypothesis ($H_0$2): There is no difference in first-year mean GPA between students who participated in the POWER program and students who did not.

Alternative Hypothesis (H_a2): There is a difference in first-year mean GPA between students who participated in the POWER program and students who did not.

I used a one-way ANOVA to measure the difference in first-year GPAs between students who participated in the POWER program and students who did not. For the study, I used the SPSS software version 27 to analyze the datasets. Gravetter and Wallnau (2009) directed using a one-way ANOVA when the ANOVA measures the mean differences and draws a conclusion between two or more groups. The one-way ANOVA parametric test assumes that the participant and nonparticipant students' means were equivalent, and the scores of the groups' 1-year mean GPA were significant. ANOVA measures four determinants within and between-students across the groups' variances. The four determinants within and between-students are (a) significance level of strength, (b) sample size, (c) measures of effect size, and (d) power analysis (Gravetter & Wallnau,

2009; Howell, 2007). Four determinants controlled if a significant relationship, effect size, existed or not. The one-way ANOVA was suitable to determine the difference in the first-year GPA between students who participated in the POWER program and students who did not once the assumptions met. The parametric statistical understanding of students was calculated for 1 year ($M = 2.96$, $SD = .63$, $n = 675$). The outcome of the Levene's Test of Homogeneity of variances showed that the variances between the two groups were equal: F (1, 1.84) = .21, $p > .05$. Therefore, the statistical assumption of homogeneity of variances fulfills. One-way ANOVA results showed no significant difference in the first-year GPA between students who participated in the POWER program and students who did not. Table 4 displays the one-way ANOVA results for RQ 2, which compared the GPA of first-year students.

Table 4

GPA Descriptive Statistics

					95% CI	
Groups	*N*	*M*	*SD*	Std. Error	Lower	Upper
Participants	275	2.91	.54675	.03853	2.8377	2.9897
Nonparticipants	400	2.99	.68684	.04134	2.9116	3.0744
Total	675	2.95	.63237	.02892	2.9026	3.0163

Note. CI = confidence interval; mean GPAs rounded to the hundredths.

As Table 4 shows, both groups' mean is similar, with a slightly lower GPA for participants than the nonparticipant students. Table 5 shows the one-way statistical analysis of variance of first-year GPAs, which is the *p*-value that displayed the equal variations between the two groups (Davis & Davis, 2016). The results showed no significant difference because the *p*-value was more than .05. The one-way ANOVA

results confirmed that the first-year students' mean GPA score difference was .08 points with the Partial eta squared test ($\eta 2 = .004$). The RQ 2 null hypothesis was accepted: There is no significant difference in first-year mean GPAs between students who participated in the POWER program and students who did not.

Table 5

One-Way Analysis of Variance of the POWER Program Statistical by GPA

POWER	*SS*	*df*	*MS*	*F*	*p*	η^2
Between Groups	.733	1	.733	1.836	.176	.004
Within Groups	190.017	476	.399			
Total	190.750					

Note. $p < .05$

RQ1: Discussion of Social (Retention) Integration Results

The POWER program first-year students' Pearson chi-square test for independence result was not significant. I reviewed a Wathington et al. (2016) study and found no substantial evidence of an SBP affecting the persistence of first-year participants and nonparticipants enrolled in a two-year college. According to the Wathington et al. (2016) study, I found that the semester average for first-year participant students was 3.3 semesters and 3.4 semesters for the nonparticipants. The institution and development of SBP social integration programs are for those participant students who struggle to integrate and persist in college in the first year (Tinto, 2017). I reviewed another study, and according to this study, a significant precollege student retention rate difference exists between program-specific and nonprogram-specific students (Gershenfeld et al., 2016). According to this program-specific precollege students' mean

GPA study, the data results showed a definite increase compared to nonspecific students (Lipe & Waller, 2013). Researchers found that participants who earned a 3.0–4.0 GPA had a retention rate of 80.8%, and participants who earned a 2.0–3.0 GPA had a retention rate of 77.6% (DeNicco et al., 2015; French, 2017). The POWER program first-year retention results revealed the importance of Tinto's (1993) retention integration model and the social integration factors required to support SBP precollege students (Kerby, 2015). Tinto's retention integration model explains the value of differentiating social integration factors evaluating SBP precollege first-year students' pre-entry attributes, goals, commitments, institutional experiences, and social and academic integration (Tinto, 1993). Although some SBPs do not positively affect SBP precollege students' retention rates, SBP's first-year retention and GPA datasets should analyze to determine if SBPs affect students' integration and persistence in college (Tinto, 2017). Examiners should evaluate precollege students' first-year datasets who participate in SBPs to determine the first-year retention difference. SBP leaders monitor first-year students to achieve first-year retention rate success (Bir & Myrick, 2015).

RQ2: Discussion of Academic (GPA) Integration Results

The result of the one-way ANOVA comparing first-year students' GPA was not significant. I reviewed the POWER program mean GPA score difference between students who participated in the POWER program; the data results showed that the first-year students struggled to integrate academically toward college persistence. Tinto (2017) developed the academic integration model for students who struggle to integrate socially and academically toward college persistence. The POWER program first-year mean GPA

score difference in students who participated in the POWER program was .08 points less than those who did not participate. The POWER program students' first-year mean GPA data results revealed that students might not have received the necessary academic support to achieve academic success. Based on the SBP first-year GPAs data results, additional social and academic support is needed for SBP first-year students to achieve academic success (see Palmer, 2017). The POWER program first-year GPA one-way ANOVA results were not significant; thus, mean GPA data reports may need to be reported and discussed to determine students' first-year GPAs. Wathington et al. (2016) stated that empirical evidence of first-year students' GPAs determines ways to manage institutional and academic services to drive academic success. Leaders managing institutional and academic services prepare SBP precollege first-year students for college coursework. Leaders managing institutional academic assistance and support services closed a gap in limited social and educational data research practice. SBP first-year research studies on the effects of SBP on first-year students' social and academic success are limited (see Wathington et al., 2016). Leaders review first-year students' social and academic research data reports determining first-year college academic success. The first-year social and academic framework is bounded by Tinto's (1993) social and academic integration theory. I reviewed the study results, and while reviewing the study results, I discovered that the POWER precollege first-year students might require proper mentorship, student support services, and academic flexibility to achieve academic success. While I reviewed the study's first-year mean GPA results, the data results imply that first-year students could improve their college success through institutional social

and academic support services for academic progress and improvement (see Bir & Myrick, 2015).

White Paper Project Based on the Results

The project selected for the study was a white paper. The POWER program first-year retention and GPA data result implied that retention and GPA data reports should be reported, reviewed, and discussed to monitor their POWER program students' low retention rates and GPAs. The POWER program first-year retention and GPA data result determined the effects of the POWER program on first-year retention rates and GPAs. The data results of the POWER program first-year retention and GPA study implies that the POWER program datasets should be retrieved, analyzed, aggregated, reported, and published to monitor first-year students' retention rates and mean GPAs. First-year retention rates and mean GPA data reports are reviewed and discussed to monitor first-year students' social and academic success (Bir & Myrick, 2015). First-year retention rates and mean GPA data reports are reported, reviewed, and discussed to maintain continuous retention and GPA improvement to retain and support first-year students socially and academically in college (Permzadian & Credé, 2016). The POWER program study recommendations may improve the effects of the POWER program on their first-year students' retention rates and mean GPAs and the overall study site's students' retention and GPAs. If the POWER program recommendations are accepted, the reporting, reviewing, and discussions may improve the students who participate in the POWER program persist to graduation to help fulfill the current and future job market.

Summary

SBPs are institutional services offered to prepare precollege first-year students to transition from high school to college. The mission of SBPs is to support precollege first-year students as they adjust socially and academically to college life (Slade et al., 2015). The purpose of this study was to investigate the differences in first-year retention and GPA between students who participated in the POWER program and students who did not. The first-year retention and GPA study results revealed that the POWER program is in a critical need for continuous retention and GPA improvement toward their students who participate. If the POWER program mission is to support precollege first-year students' academic success, first-year retention and GPA datasets should be retrieved, analyzed, aggregated, reported, and discussed to monitor first-year students' retention and GPAs for continuous improvement. Thus, if the gap in the practice of retrieving, analyzing, aggregating, and reporting first-year cumulative mean GPA data reports at the local study site continues, students may continue to earn low retention rates and mean GPAs. Thus, SBP leaders must track empirical researched evidence of SBP precollege first-year students' cumulative mean GPA data reports to successively improve first-year students' social and academic success (Wathington et al., 2016).

To determine SBP social and academic success, constructs such as first-year social and academic integration indicate precollege first-year students' success and commitment to returning to college (Tinto, 1993). Precollege first-year students' decision to return to college and achieve social and academic success includes their course of precollege first-year study choice, which is a precollege predictor of social and academic

integration (Braxton & Francis, 2018). The first-year retention and GPA study data results discovered that the SSU should offer first-year social and academic support services to better prepare first-year students for college coursework as a means to improve their social and academic performance (Wathington et al., 2016). First-year students' retention and GPAs raw datasets should be retrieved, analyzed, aggregated, reported, and discussed to improve successive first-year students' retention rates and GPAs. The SSU's Office of Enrollment Management and Student Success Center provided the first-year retention and GPA datasets to complete the study. Walden University's Office of Research Ethics' Compliance application included a confidentiality agreement outlining the protection of first-year students' rights. A Pearson chi-square test for independence and one-way ANOVA addressed the study RQs. For RQ 1, the Pearson chi-square test for independence showed no statistical significance results ($p = .21$), indicating no significant difference in first-year retention rates between students. The POWER program first-year retention data results showed that 73 (36%) of the 275 (73%) students who participated in the POWER program did not return the first year compared to 124 (45%) of the 400 (69%) students who returned did not participate in the POWER program. The POWER program students' first-year retention rates showed that 202, 73% of students returned compared to 276, 69% of students who did not participate in the POWER program. The POWER program first-year retention rate difference between the first-year students is .04 percentage points. The POWER program first-year retention data results showed that students who did not participate in the POWER program earned a lower first-year retention rate than those who did.

For RQ 2, the one-way ANOVA analysis results revealed no significant difference between students who participated in the POWER program and students who did not. The POWER program first-year mean GPA statistical difference between the students showed F (1, 1.84) = .21, p > .05. The one-way ANOVA results confirmed that the first-year mean GPA difference is .08 points with the Partial eta squared test ($\eta 2$ = .004). Section 3 includes an introduction, project description and goals, rationale, review of the literature related to the project, needed resources, existing support, potential barriers, evaluation plan, and project implications.

Section 3: The Project

Introduction

The purpose of this study was to investigate the differences in first-year retention and GPA between students who participated in the POWER program and students who did not. In this study, I used the white paper project to report the first-year students' retention rates and GPA differences between the first-year students who participated in the POWER program and students who did not. In this section, I used the white paper project report to explain the study data results and make recommendations. The white paper is titled "A Summer Bridge Program Report: Recommendations to Address First-Year Students' Low Retention Rates and Cumulative Mean GPAs for Continuous Improvement" (see Appendix A). For this section, I discovered the study result recommendations, the framework, and the literature review to establish the project. The project could provide the basis of a dialogue among the colleges to publish, report, and monitor first-year students' low retention and GPAs. The white paper was most appropriate because it provided research-based data results and an influential foundation to address first-year students' retention and GPAs by supporting literature, recommendations, and conclusions.

Rationale

A white paper provides specific outcome data to address higher education problems, provides specific solutions, and stimulates stakeholders while providing recommendations for improvement (Campbell & Naidoo, 2017). White papers often describe new ideas, introduce policy recommendations, and communicate study results in

higher education (Malone & Wright, 2018). The white paper substantiates and provides statistical evidence for the administration to retrieve, examine, report, and discuss study results and make recommendations to monitor colleges' problems (Campbell & Naidoo, 2017). The white paper report is used to persuade colleges to review, discuss, and resolve higher education problems at the local study site (Campbell & Naidoo, 2017).

Review of the Literature

The White Paper Genre

The white paper genre presents a compelling report presented to college stakeholders, including practitioners, administrators, and policymakers. A white paper report should be clear and concise, offering a timely response to scrutinizing higher education problems. Often beginning with a one-page executive summary, the paper is a concise report published for college policymakers recommending solutions for reviewing a higher education problem (Creswell, 2012). The white paper usually has seven sections: the research problem, literature review, research questions, data collection, data analysis, interpretation, and recommendations (Creswell, 2012). Another white paper empirical framework proposed by Rotarius and Rotarius (2016) includes a cover page, abstract/executive summary, problem, literature review, purpose and design, data analysis results, recommendation, conclusion, references, and exhibits. White papers need to define institutional problems to prioritize programming initiatives to improve student social and academic integration problems (Rigby, Woulfin, & März, 2016). The reports often describe detailed exhibits, tables, figures, and charts within the literature review and surrounding the problem (Rotarius & Rotarius, 2016). The white paper report describes

quantitative data analysis and avoids conjectural theories (Rotarius & Rotarius, 2016). The white paper often introduces new data research reports to share with college administrators and policymakers. The white paper introduces a fundamental methodological research practice to arrange or complete a quantitative report (Rigby et al., 2016). It may provide recommended solutions to address a common institutional problem. College administrators and researchers report white papers to address higher education problems, solutions, and opportunities (Kilgore, 2018). A valuable topic of interest is reviewing, dialoguing, or monitoring problems for continued university improvement (Kilgore, 2018).

Standards of Accountability

Higher education standards of policy reporting procedures serve as a measure to control institutional paradigm shifts. The U.S. Department of Education determines general reporting procedures criteria to oversee college accountability (Ruff, 2019). At the institutional level, many institutions require policy and procedure reports to assess operations, accountability, change, and autonomy (Ruff, 2019). Most reporting procedures are central to institutional growth, social change, and financial efficiency (Klees, 2016). Standard policy procedures define efficiency and shift to the educational landscape by quantifying literacy skill diversity, cultural shifts, and changing employment rates (Altass & Wiebe, 2017). Higher education institutions that do not utilize standard policy reporting procedures pay a relatively high cost for socially and academically underprepared college students (Kaplin & Owings, 2018). Most higher education institutions report underprepared college students' data to control and measure

students' social and academic success (Kilgore, 2018). Aggregated first-year students' retention and cumulative mean GPA data reports are shared for accountability purposes to monitor operations and inform colleges to take further actions to control and address first-year students' college success (Campbell & Naidoo, 2017).

Cumulative mean GPA data reports aim to inform colleges to take further action for continuous improvement. Cumulative mean GPA data reports often provide a general and crucial purpose for policymakers to make decisions about improving students' social and academic performance (Campbell & Naidoo, 2017; Gray & Swinton, 2017). Most colleges review retention and mean GPA data reports to review processes, make recommendations, and hold discussions to monitor first-year students' cumulative mean GPAs (DeNicco et al., 2015). First-year students' cumulative mean GPA data reports also provide the most reliable predictor for colleges to address students' first-year success (Howard & Flora, 2015). Researchers found that participants who earned a 3.0–4.0 GPA had a retention rate of 80.8%, and participants who earned a 2.0–3.0 GPA had a retention rate of 77.6% (DeNicco et al., 2015; French, 2017). Discussing the mean GPA data reports, colleges discuss the students' retention and GPA data reports to monitor students' social and academic progress. Student retention and mean GPAs determine whether first-year students will drop out or persist to graduation (Houser et al., 2015; Tinto, 1993), and students' mean GPA data reports are the most dominant predictor to determine college students' academic success (French, 2017; Tinto, 1993). First-year students' data reports identify failing students and assist colleges in monitoring first-year college students' academic success (French, 2017). Reporting first-year students'

retention and mean GPA data reports help monitor college leadership accountability and discussions to monitor students' social and academic success and are more likely to lead first-year students to continuous social and academic improvement (French, 2017; Tinto, 1993).

GPA Evaluation Reports

SBP students' mean GPA evaluation reports are a unique monitor of persistence and academic success. Cumulative mean GPA data reports are the best predictor of college student academic success (Stewart, Lim, & Kim, 2015). Students who do not remain in college the first year arrive at college unprepared for higher education rigor. First-year students' social and academic preparedness for college life is monitored by reviewing their cumulative mean GPAs; colleges have a greater proclivity to assist in the academic success process (Hawley et al., 2014). Students who remain in college most likely have earned a high GPA. GPA program evaluation reports noted that college students who earn high cumulative GPAs develop good study skills habits. Many college students who understand how to achieve good grades while in college (Rodríguez et al., 2017) value maintaining high cumulative GPAs are more likely to continue developing and maturing at the college (Marschalkó & Szamosközy, 2017). College first-year students who earn high cumulative GPAs can better cope socially and academically in college and make a smooth transition to college life (Grau, 2018).

While first-year students are matriculating through the academic channels of college course work, they earn low, middle, or high GPAs, so it is the cumulative mean GPA data reports that become the early predictors of the first-year students' academic

success (Belfield & Crosta, 2012; Bonous-Hammarth, 2000; Ethington & Woffle, 1988; Gipson, 2016). Cumulative mean GPA data reports are more potent predictors of retention and academic success than national standardized test scores (Gipson, 2016). It may be beneficial to employ this GPA tool to monitor first-year students' academic success. For example, precollege GPA scores were less vital to institutions when deciding first-year prerequisite admittance standards (Gipson, 2016; Sawyer, 2013), whereas first-year cumulative mean GPA data reports more often predicted students' academic performance than precollege high school students' prerequisite admittance standards (Patzer et al., 2017). Cumulative mean GPA data reports provide robust data for colleges to monitor student academic performance and predict whether students can persist or not (Chen, Chen, & Oztekin, 2017; Okimoto & Heck, 2015). First-year students who earn high mean GPAs achieve academic honors, and scholarship awards are likely to graduate on time (Chen et al., 2017).

Literature Review Conclusion

The white paper report is a paper document that reports data results and recommendations to address first-year students' low retention and GPAs at the study site. A project development plan or curriculum design was not adequate for the white paper project report because this plan or design would not monitor and address first-year students' retention and GPAs. Hence, a white paper report was most appropriate for monitoring and addressing future first-year students' retention and GPAs. Consequently, the report contains three recommendations to address future first-year students' retention and GPAs.

Project Description

For the project, I used a white paper project report, and it included data results and recommendations to address the first-year students' low retention and GPAs. I discovered three recommendations to address first-year students' low retention and GPAs. These recommendations should address and monitor successive precollege first-year students' social and academic success; the recommendations require college leadership accountability and a faculty commitment to monitor the first-year students' retention and GPAs for continuous improvement.

First, I recommend creating a committee to develop standard retention and GPA policy reporting procedures to monitor the students' low retention and GPAs. This standard policy reporting procedure serves as a general and crucial academic purpose to inform college administrators and policymakers to review, discuss, and monitor SBPs' continuous improvement and ways to directly impact students' social and academic success (Campbell & Naidoo, 2017). A set of routine standard policy reporting procedures might improve policy tradition and productivity while supporting university growth. Routine standard policy procedures define policy practice and efficiency, shifting the educational landscape and impacting literacy skill diversity, cultural shifts, and changing employment rates (Altass & Wiebe, 2017).

Second, I recommend the committee establish a set of regular standard policy report dates to employ policy practice and efficiency to aggregate, analyze, and report first-year students' retention and GPA data report results to the study site for review. Evaluators should make a vow to establish a set of regular dates to publish first-year

students' retention and cumulative mean GPA data reports to address and monitor first-year students' receiving social and academic support services. A set of routine first-year retention and GPA data reports presented may allot periods to review and discuss ways to improve first-year students' social and college success (Gray & Swinton, 2017). While evaluators report first-year students' retention and cumulative mean GPA data reports, the data reports could determine interventions to increase students' low retention and GPAs (DeNicco et al., 2015).

Third, I recommend reporting the first-year retention and mean GPA data reports for review and discussion to monitor first-year students' low retention and GPAs for continuous improvement. With a regular review, the retention and mean GPA data reports might provide the best predictors to address the students' social and academic success. Furthermore, if the SSU successively reports retention and mean GPA data reports regularly, it may provide social and academic support that might improve the first-year students' social and academic progress. The SBP first-year students' retention and GPA evaluation data reports can monitor whether students are at risk for drop out or will persist to graduation (Houser et al., 2015; Tinto, 1993).

Needed Resources and Existing Support

First, I scheduled the white paper project report for review and discussion, followed by a policy SSU committee for approvals. The director of the program might approve sharing the project study data results and recommendations. The policy SSU committee shall establish a date, time, and location to review and discuss the study data report results and recommendations. No additional resources and outside support may be

required to complete and present the project report. The SSU should provide the project discussion and feedback resulting from the meetings.

Potential Barriers

The project's potential implementation barriers are the SSU administrator's lack of time to review, discuss, implement the recommendations before the next school year. However, the SSU has remained optimistic about improving the first-year students' retention and GPAs. The project study data results and recommendations reported may justify removing potential project barriers. A timetable is in place for the white paper project to be presented to the SSU:

Fall Semester Implementation and Explanation

Step 1. SSU meets to review and discuss the project study white paper retention and GPA results and recommendations.

Step 2. SSU meets to continue to discuss the retention and GPA results and recommendations and to complete the goal-based project evaluation perception survey.

Step 3. SSU meets to review the perception survey feedback results and to discuss the survey results openly. The discussion continues.

Step 4. SSU meets to decide to adopt the project report recommendations.

Spring Semester Implementation and Explanation

Step 5. If the recommendations are adopted, SSU holds a meeting to prepare a request to present to the academic affairs policy committee to adopt the standard retention and GPA policy reporting procedures.

Roles and Responsibilities

The meeting roles and responsibilities may be granted to the first-year program administrator to retrieve, track, and record the meeting report's discussions. The study site

program director is responsible for setting up the time, place, and event location. They are also responsible for reporting the meeting discussion recommendations to the faculty and administration senate for voting. If the recommendations are adopted, the suggestions could be reported to the SSU for approval before the next academic school year.

Project Evaluation Plan

The white paper project's evaluation plan is goal-based to measure the project's recommendation, results, outcomes, and objectives already set forth by the local study site (see Lodico et al., 2010). The three justifications for using the evaluation survey are: (a) to justify the white paper importance by showing how it contributes to the SSU's mission, goals, and objectives, (b) to decide whether the SSU might continue the POWER program retention effort, and (c) to decide whether the SSU would accept the project recommendations to improve first-year retention and GPAs for continuous improvement (Ahmad, 2018; Dewi & Kartowagiran, 2018). The critical policy committee stakeholders who could attend the presentation might be: (a) the vice-chancellor for enrollment management and student success; (b) the POWER program director; (c) department chairs; and (d) directors and program leaders. An example of the project evaluation survey is in Figure 1.

Pleas place a checkmark in the appropriate box about the project

Comment	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
The presentation was noteworthy.				
The data were methodical and Informational.				
We learned valuable information about first-year students' retention rates and mean GPAs.				
The university may adopt the project's recommendation to develop first-year students' retention and GPA standard policy reporting procedures.				
The university may adopt the project's recommendation to establish Precollege first-year retention and cumulative mean GPA evaluation data reports for discussion and monitoring.				

Figure 1. The objective of the goal-based project evaluation survey is to collect the white paper project feedback. It may not take more than 5 minutes to complete the perception survey.

Kirkpatrick's four model levels of evaluation project perception survey form the basis to evaluate the goal-based plan (Ahmad, 2018; Dewi & Kartowagiran, 2018; Kirkpatrick & Kirkpatrick, 2007). The Kirkpatrick and Kirkpatrick (2007) model project goals evaluate: (a) the policy committee's openness and willingness to accept change, (b) the policy committee's learning as a result of the presentation, (c) the policy committee's behavior as a result of the display, and (d) the policy committee's reaction as a result of the project presentation (Ahmad, 2018; Dewi & Kartowagiran, 2018). Kirkpatrick and

Kirkpatrick's goal-based project evaluation plan was not a perfect fit for the white paper project as the plan goes beyond the time and scope of the study.

Project Implications

The white paper project may offer a strategy to close a gap in practice for data reporting procedures with ways to monitor and address first-year students' social and academic success for continuous improvement. The study results revealed a need to address and monitor the first-year students' low retention rates and mean GPAs. If the project recommendations are adopted, the recommendations may encourage decisions to publish, report, and monitor the first-year students' social and academic success for continuous improvement, improving the study site's overall students' social and academic success and overall retention graduation rate.

Finally, the project's positive implications on first-year students' social and academic success could improve the SSU's data reporting effectiveness and delivery to improve first-year support services to improve first-year students' social and academic success, leading to eventual graduation. The project data results and recommendations address and monitor first-year students' low retention and GPAs. The project could be presented to national audiences. The presentations could be shared with other colleges worldwide to address low retention and GPAs needs for first-year precollege students' retention and GPA adaptation for continuous improvement.

Section 4: Reflections and Conclusions

Project Strengths and Limitations

In this study, I found that the project's strength informs and provides recommendations to publish, report, and monitor first-year students' low retention and continuous improvement GPAs. I discovered that the white paper report might deliver a transparent and concise case to address SSU problems. First, I determined that the project's strength delivers first-year retention and mean GPA data report for review and discussion. Secondly, I discovered that the project's recommendations could address and monitor the first-year students' low retention rates and cumulative mean GPAs. The project recommendations are: (a) to develop a POWER program standard policy retention and GPA reporting procedures; (b) to establish a set of regular policy report dates to employ policy practice; and (c) retrieve, analyze, aggregate, report, publish, and address the POWER program participants' GPA evaluation reports to monitor the POWER program precollege first-year retention and GPAs for continuous improvement. The study finding recommendations may help close a gap in retrieving, analyzing, and reporting published GPA data reports for monitoring the POWER program participants' social and academic progress. If the SSU reports and posts the first-year retention and GPA data reports, the published retention and GPA data reports may lead to continuous first-year student improvement, leading to continuous first-year social and academic success.

While the white paper project had several strengths, it also had limitations. The availability of SSU leaders, the current COVID-19 pandemic limited the time to report, review, and discuss the project report and recommendations. Implementing a dedicated

schedule from the university researchers and staff members to monitor the study problem may pose a challenge. According to Okimoto and Heck (2015), the project limits precollege first-year student recruitment and first-year support services offered to a larger pool of precollege students ready for college-level work. Many precollege students are underprepared for college life. Okimoto and Heck (2015) noted that over 70% of precollege students are not ready for college. The final limitation is that the study outcome is based solely on the study site's first-year students' retention and cumulative mean GPA data results; thus, the project recommendations are most suitable for monitoring the POWER program first-year participants' social and academic performance. The white paper project recommendations are only suited for SSU; the project study data results may not be generalizable outside of the SSU's first-year students' retention and mean GPAs.

Recommendations for Alternative Approaches

Based on the study data results, a recommendation for an alternative approach would be to add a qualitative design. The quantitative and qualitative design approach would complete a mixed-methods research study. The mixed-methods approach would provide a questionnaire or survey for first-year students. This mixed-methods approach provides a way for the researcher to better understand the first-year students' experiences regarding their social development perceptions of college life. According to Lodico, Spaulding, and Voegtle (2010), personal social development experiences and themes could be coded and categorized to provide a thick, rich construct. This mixed-methods approach could add valuable meaning to this mixed-method research first-year retention

and GPA data results. Second, a longitudinal research study could be completed based on the current project recommendation to report, review, discuss, and monitor first-year students' long-term social and academic success. Longitudinal studies follow a systematic approach to retrieving, analyzing, reporting, and discussing data reports over an extended period (Lodico et al., 2010). Multiple years of first-year students' retention and GPA datasets are available, and these datasets could provide additional retention and GPA datasets needed to determine future first-year students' long-term social and academic success.

Scholarship, Project Development and Evaluation, and Leadership and Change

Thorough research development involves a pre-established road map to success. Meaningful research requires patience, discipline, planning, research, and organization skills to become a proficient research scholar. A proficient scholar exercises efficient patience to merge the phenomenon and relevancy to the academic workplace, remaining disciplined and focused on the research approach. As a researcher, I used due diligence to protect the POWER program first-year students' retention and GPA datasets. The study was a long wait and lengthy process; however, the study process was valuable. Research experience requires waiting time, permission, and retrieval time showed valuable lessons about how to input deidentified archival first-year retention and GPA data in the SPSS statistical program. As a researcher, I followed directions and accepted criticism improving understanding to complete thorough research development. As the study developed, it was essential to follow directions and to remain open-minded about accepting change. Leadership is a changing partnership that occurs daily in the

workplace; in this case, leadership requires flexibility. I learned that leadership and change are about trust, and trust developed under leadership builds a stronger collegial relationship. Stakeholder trust builds camaraderie, assurance, honor, and stable faith. I appreciate this valuable research study and to develop future research opportunities, possibly impacting social change.

Reflection on Importance of the Work

SSU's review of the work's importance provides an opportunity to develop a research tradition to improve first-year students' retention and GPAs. The dissertation work and data results may be a challenge to address and monitor first-year students' retention and GPAs and fill the local gap in reporting first-year mean GPA data reports at the study site. The work reflects a vital effort to unite the SSU to review, discuss, and monitor the students' low retention and GPAs. This work also reflects a growing need to complete consecutive and continuous first-year retention and GPA data reports for review and discussion to support first-year students' retention and GPAs for continuous academic success. Although colleges may be spending money to support first-year students to achieve social and academic success, limited data are retrieved and analyzed to monitor and determine first-year students' social and academic success. The project study reveals a need to examine the first-year students' retention and GPA data reports for continuous academic success consecutively. The value of consecutively determining first-year students' retention rates and mean GPA data results for continued success could produce meaningful GPA data reports for review to address and monitor first-year students' social and academic progress for continuous improvement.

Implications, Applications, and Directions for Future Research

I reveiwed the lietrature, framework, and data results to recommend solutions to supervise first-year retention and GPAs. The recommendations could be useful if the SSU is willing to provide support services for the first-year students who will not participate in the POWER program. The project recommendations promote a positive social change by providing the following: (a) to develop POWER program standard policy retention and GPA reporting procedures; (b) to establish a set of regular policy report dates to employ policy practice; and (c) retrieve, analyze, aggregate, report, publish, and address the POWER program participants' GPA evaluation reports to monitor first-year retention and GPAs for continuous improvement. Social and academic support services help prepare unprepared first-year students because many precollege first-year students are not ready for college (French, 2017; Palmer, 2017; Slade et al., 2015). Precollege first-year students who are not socially and academically prepared for college may not return to college and become dropouts (Palmer, 2017; Shorette & Palmer, 2015). First-year cumulative mean GPA data reports should be reported and published for review to provide continuous improvement and a mixed-methods approach. I recommend a mixed-methods approach to permit surveys, interviews, and questionnaires to first-year students who may not return to college after the first year. This mixed-methods research approach could add more meaningful survey data to future research studies. The mixed-method survey data results could lead to a recommendation of analyzing multiple years of first-year mixed-method data; years of analyzing mixed-method research data leads to the investigation and completion of a mixed-methods

longitudinal survey. If a mixed-methods longitudinal survey gets underway, the study site may be more likely to adopt the project recommendations first. The mixed-methods research study recommendations could produce meaningful quantitative and qualitative retention and GPA data reports. The mixed-method approach may shed light on completing an extensive longitudinal study because additional first-year retention and GPA datasets are on file at the study site (Bir & Myrick, 2015). Presenting the white paper report may cause the SSU to look at other student integration constructs affecting first-year students' social and academic success. The study site may also discuss ways to improve the POWER program's mission, and goals affect first-year students' retention and GPAS for continuous social and academic improvements. These improvements may promote first-year students' overall social and academic performance.

Conclusion

The literature identifies precollege students' first year as being the time when the most significant student dropout percentage occurs. Primarily, SBPs offer precollege students an opportunity to learn how to cope with college life's social difficulties and academic rigors and make a smooth transition in college (Cabrera et al., 2013). The SSU precollege POWER program commenced in 2008. The POWER program functioned as a 4-week summer bridge program at the study site by offering precollege students the opportunity to earn six credit hours to receive social and academic tutoring and attend enrichment workshops. In the project study, I recommend retrieving, analyzing, aggregating, and reporting first-year retention rates and mean GPA data results of first-year students who participated in the POWER program and students who did not. I

recommend in the project study to retrieve, analyze, aggregate, and report first-year retention rates and mean GPA data results of first-year students who participated in the POWER program and students who did not. This project study closes a gap in the practice of retrieving, analyzing, aggregating, and reporting first-year retention rates and mean GPA data reports to review, discuss, and determine ways to monitor first-year students' low retention and GPAs. In this study, I investigated the project study's significance to affect successive first-year students' retention and GPAs. The investigations to determine the significant differences between precollege first-year students' retention rates and mean GPAs were framed and grounded by Tinto's (1993) integration model. A quantitative non-experimental causal-comparative research design revealed no significant results; first, the Pearson chi-squared test for independence with a *p*-value of .21 showed the difference in first-year retention rates. The first-year retention rate difference between the students who participated in the POWER program and students who did not is .04 percentage points. The results of RQ1 revealed no significant difference in first-year retention rates between students who participated in the POWER program and students who did not.

Second, the one-way ANOVA with a *p*-value of .18 showed that the POWER program did not affect the first-year GPAs of students who participated in the POWER program. The results of the one-way ANOVA between the POWER program first-year students' GPA was not significant. The first-year mean GPA score difference between students who participated in the POWER program and those who did not were .08 mean GPA points. The literature reviews, retention, and cumulative mean GPA data reports

were the most reliable predictor to monitor first-year students' college success (DeNicco et al., 2015). I reviewed the study problem, literature review, framework, project results, and three recommendations to address the first-year students' low retention and GPA problems. The white paper project report recommendations were to (a) create a committee to develop standard retention and GPA policy reporting procedures, (b) establish a set of regular retention and GPA report dates to employ policy practice and efficiency, and (c) retrieve, analyze, aggregate, publish, report, and monitor the POWER program precollege first-year students' low retention and GPAs for continuous improvement. The project recommendations may challenge the study site to retrieve, analyze, aggregate, publish, report, and monitor the POWER program students' low GPA for continuous improvement. Leaders reviewing project study data results and recommendations to create social change does not begin outside the institution but starts within the institution. It includes working together to address and monitor first-year students' low retention rates and GPAs for continuous improvements. As a leader who feels passionate about this project study report and recommendations, it is gratifying to report the project study data results and recommendations to create a positive social change. As a result of the project data analysis results and white paper project, if everyone works together, nothing can stop the college from becoming a change agent working together to create a difference for successive first-year college students. In this study, I recommend to support precollege first-year students' adjustment to college's social and academic rigor; although, a French (2017); Palmer (2017); and Slade, Eatmon,

Staley, and Dixon (2015) study noted that precollege first-year students might not be ready for college life.

Furthermore, to better prepare unprepared precollege first-year students for college life, first-year mean GPA data reports should be reported to address first-year students' social and academic progress. I discovered that first-year retention and mean GPA data reports could combine a mixed-methods approach that would permit surveys, interviews, and questionnaires to be completed by first-year students who may or may not return to college. This qualitative approach could add more meaningful statistical and assumption data to the first-year retention and GPA data reports. The study's results and recommendations could develop around completing a longitudinal mixed-methods research design to request permission to retrieve and analyze additional archival datasets to complete this type of study. Other student integration constructs could ground the mixed-methods research study and be shared with other student integration constructs and graduating first-year students.

In conclusion, if the SSU adopts the project study, the three recommendations could be implemented to monitor the first-year students' low retention rates and mean GPAs for continuous improvement to meet the job market demand. A Bir and Myrick (2015) study noted that the adopted project study report recommendations might shed light on completing an extensive longitudinal study because additional retention and GPA datasets are at the study site. Presenting the white paper data results and recommendations may cause the SSU to review and discuss other internal and external

precollege attributes affecting students' first-year retention and GPAs to promote their overall social and academic success.

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Appendix A: The Project White Paper

A Summer Bridge Program Report: Recommendations to Address First-Year Students' Low Retention Rates and Cumulative Mean GPAs for Continuous Improvement

Executive Summary

Due to a challenge to retain first-year students, a Southern State University (SSU) established a summer bridge program (SBP), Providing Opportunities with Education and Readiness (POWER) program to assist precollege high school students prepare for college. A gap in practice existed at the SSU to retrieve, analyze, aggregate, and report first-year retention and cumulative mean GPA data reports. The purpose of this study was to investigate the differences in first-year retention and GPA between students who participated in the POWER program and students who did not. The study problem addressed monitoring the POWER program participants' first-year low retention rates and mean GPAs for continuous retention and GPA improvement. Tinto's integration model, literature review, and research questions framed and guided the project study's direction. This project study asked the questions: What is the difference in first-year retention rates between students who participated in the POWER program and students who did not? What is the difference in the first-year GPA between students who participated in the POWER program and students who did not? A quantitative non-experimental causal-comparative research design showed the study RQs results. Deidentified archival first-year retention and GPA datasets were retrieved and analyzed using a Pearson chi-squared test for independence and one-way ANOVA. First, the Pearson chi-squared test for independence with a *p*-value of .21 showed the retention rate difference was .04 percentage points between first-year students who participated in the

POWER program and students who did not. Second, the one-way ANOVA with a p-value of .18 showed the first-year mean GPA difference was .08 mean GPA points between first-year students who participated in the POWER program, and students who did not. Both RQs accepted, and there was no significant difference between first-year students' retention rates and mean GPA scores. The data results showed that the students who participated in the POWER program earned slightly higher first-year retention rates and lower GPAs than the students who did not. The retention and GPA data result, including the theoretical framework and the literature reviews, resulted in the following recommendations:

The national average retention rate for first-time students was **62%**.

The state's average retention rate was **67%.**

The POWER program nonparticipants' retention rate was 6**9%,** and participants' 73**%**.

The POWER program nonparticipants' GPA was **2.99,** and participants' **2.91.**

1. Create a standard policy reporting procedure committee to report SBP precollege first-year students' retention and GPA data reports

2. Establish consecutive regular SBP precollege first-year students' retention and GPA data policy report dates to review and discuss retention and GPA data results

3. Consecutively retrieve, analyze, aggregate, publish, report, and discuss SBP precollege first-year students' cumulative mean GPA data reports to address and monitor first-year students' retention and GPAs for continuous improvement

The Problem

Colleges offer SBPs to prepare first-year students for college coursework and improve precollege first-year students' social and academic success. There are limited first-year retention and GPA data reports to determine precollege first-year students' social and academic success (Wathington et al., 2016). Colleges across the country continue to offer SBPs to precollege first-year students. Still, they have failed to aggregate and report precollege students' retention and cumulative mean GPA data reports to support precollege first-year students' retention rates and mean GPAs. Thus, colleges have assumed SBP improved precollege students' retention and GPAs leading to precollege first-year students' social and academic success (Wathington et al., 2016).

Many colleges require research-based data analysis reports such as first-year students' retention rates and mean GPA data reports to determine if SBPs promote precollege students' retention and GPAs. Cumulative mean GPA data reports determine first-year students' social and academic success (Cabrera, Miner, & Milem, 2013; Douglas & Attewell, 2014). Palmer (2017) noted that colleges had limited precollege students' retention and GPA datasets analyzed and reported to monitor precollege first-year students' retention and GPA progress and subsequent precollege first-year students' social and academic success. Consecutive precollege first-year students' retention and GPA data reports improve the understanding of precollege first-year students' social and academic progress. The study report contributes to continuous improvement initiatives related to precollege first-year students' social and academic success. Colleges plan to offer

precollege SBP to support first-year students' retention and GPAs and retrieve and analyze first-year retention and GPA datasets. Colleges plan to report precollege retention and cumulative mean GPA data reports to support precollege first-year students' social and academic success (Wathington et al., 2016).

Theoretical Framework

The project study is grounded in Tinto's (1993) integration model. The project study theoretical framework frames the research and reflects the function of Tinto's (1993) integration model to analyze and determine first-year students' social and academic integration. First-time students' attrition rates, student retention, and GPA outcomes investigated by Tinto (1993) have provided a social and academic integration theory model to evaluate and determine first-year students' dropout decision. Tinto's (1993) integration model was central to framing and developing this project study on retention and GPAs. This social and academic integration theory's evaluation and framework determine how precollege first-year students commit to and integrate within the college (Tinto, 1993). Tinto's (1993) integration model was used to determine first-year students' retention rates and GPAs, the SBP precollege first-year students' ability to persist and graduate. Tinto's (1993) integration model examines precollege students' pre-entry attributes, goals and commitment, institutional experience, and social and academic integration. Using Tinto's (1993) integration model helps determine SBP precollege students' social and academic integration behavior factors to support first-year students'

retention and GPA data outcome results. Tinto's (1993) student integration theory framed and grounded the first-year retention and GPA study, data results, and project.

Review of the Broader Problem

Colleges across the country continue to offer SBP programs despite a dearth need of literature on such programs' efficacy. Nationally, SBPs have a mission to support precollege students to adjust to the rigors of college life (Slade, Eatmon, Staley, & Dixon, 2015). College administrators use evidence-based SBP precollege students' retention and mean GPA data reports to form policy and improve first-year programming to meet precollege first-year students' social and academic needs (Grace-Odeleye & Santiago, 2019). Colleges have failed to retrieve, analyze, aggregate, and report SBP precollege students' cumulative mean GPA data reports to address precollege first-year students' retention and GPA outcomes. Grace-Odeleye and Santiago (2019) noted that first-year students' retention and mean GPA data reports are reported to national reporting agencies to meet the Department of Education standards to monitor the workforce, and precollege students' programming needs the first year. Colleges reporting SBP precollege students mean GPA data reports are written and reported to meet the local school enrollment, financial, and job market demands. SBP precollege students' retention and mean GPA data report provides data for colleges seeking federal aid to renew and expand programming (Cancado, Reisel, & Walker, 2018).

Colleges institute SBPs to assist underprepared, at-risk precollege students to transition smoothly to the first year of college life. SBPs help low-income minority precollege students integrate into the colleges' social and academic environment (Miller, 2014). SBPs offer precollege support services to prepare precollege students for college life and help precollege students develop long-lasting and cohesive friendships, earn college credits, and persist through college to graduation (Moriña, 2019). SBP precollege students' cumulative mean GPA data reports are needed to address minority, at-risk, struggling first-year students (Miller, 2014). Struggling precollege students who fail college the first year are underprepared socially and academically for school (Kirp, 2019). Thus, colleges should consecutively investigate precollege students' first-year retention and GPAs to offer a head start for precollege students underprepared for college life (Kirp, 2019).

Colleges also note that precollege students who fail in college the first year are first-generation, low-income, ethnic, or racial minority single-parent students (Kirp, 2019). Therefore, colleges should begin assisting and supporting first-year students by providing institutional workshops and social and academic support to encourage precollege students to socially and academically integrate within the college (Greenfield, Keup, and Gardner, 2013; Miller, 2014). Colleges also provided at-risk precollege SBP students the opportunity to tackle social and academic challenges, provided precollege students a chance to apply and receive educational support, develop study skill habits, and participate in institutional recruitment. Furthermore, colleges asked precollege students to help recruit minority, at-risk, underrepresented first-year students in science, technology,

engineering, and mathematics (STEM). Colleges offer STEM programs to precollege students to obtain better job skills upon graduation (Houser, Garcia, & Torres, 2015; Lancaster, & Xu, 2017; Yeboah & Smith, 2016) and secure STEM job placement. Kaul, Johnsen, Saxon, and Witte (2016) found that STEM precollege participant students gained better job opportunities than students who did not participate. Howard and Flora (2015) found that STEM programs improved precollege first-year students' reading, writing, and comprehension skills increased 30% over the students who did not participate.

Students' Social and Academic Success

To help retain and graduate precollege first-year students, colleges developed summer bridge intervention programs. Colleges develop SBPs to help precollege students socially and academically integrate throughout their summer college experience so that students could persist to graduation (Houser et al., 2015; Lipe & Waller, 2013). Lipe and Waller (2013) found a significant first-year retention rate difference between precollege program-specific and nonprogram-specific students (Gershenfeld, Hood, & Zhan, 2016). Where precollege program-specific students GPA showed a definite increase compared to the general student population (Lipe & Waller, 2013). SBPs are committed to supporting precollege students socially and academically, but SBPs limit online courses for precollege students due to the lack of social development (Sablan, 2014).

Colleges complete pre and post-policy intervention studies to examine precollege students' social and academic ability to matriculate through college (Gray & Swinton,

2017). Reviewing precollege first-year students' preregistration materials such as high school GPA, ACT or SAT scores, age, sex, financial status, and expected family contribution predict precollege first-year students' academic success (Gray & Swinton, 2017). Precollege students' preregistration materials help understand why and how precollege first-year students persist in college (Tinto, 2017).

As a result, colleges aim to offer firm social and academic commitments, friendly faculty and staff members, student orientation, and organizational culture to improve precollege first-year students' retention and GPAs to persist to graduation (Angelopulo, 2013). This commitment provides a strong social and academic presence necessary for precollege first-year students to remain in college to graduation and increase precollege students' overall retention rates and cumulative GPAs. Ring (2016) noted, according to the U. S. Bureau of Labor, colleges are committed to helping SBP precollege first-year students acquire post-secondary degrees. First-year students obtaining a bachelor's degree mean that SBP precollege students must develop a sense of belonging, motivation, and job learning skills before the first year of college (Tinto, 2017).

Mean GPA Reporting

Social and academic integration are prime determinants of social and academic success. Cumulative mean GPA reports provide the most reliable evidence to address and monitor first-year students' social and academic success (Patzer et al., 2017). Based on the project study, low first-year retention and GPA results, if precollege first-year students were socially and academically successful, the administration attributed their success to the

POWER program. If SBP precollege first-year students were not socially and academically successful, the administration attributed the failure to the students' unpreparedness. The colleges assumed that precollege first-year students who dropped out of college did not receive proper first-year mentorship and support services. Colleges thought that SBP precollege students were not self-directed or motivated. SBP precollege students who are not self-directed or motivated for colleges continue to adjust to the academic rigors of college life (Slade et al., 2015). When precollege first-year students fail to persist, colleges often assume that students did not adequately adapt to the college's social and academic rigor (Biermeier, 2017). Grace-Odeleye and Santiago (2019) stated that colleges review SBP precollege first-year analyzed aggregate data reports to form policies to improve first-year programming to meet precollege first-year students' needs. According to Maliszewski (2017) and Greenfield et al. (2013), precollege first-year students' retention rates, together with GPA, should be aggregated and reported to monitor students' progress and persistence toward graduation. If not, unreported precollege students' first-year low retention and GPAs may continue to spiral downward. If the downward spiral continues, more precollege first-year students may drop out of college. Colleges may not be able to apply for federal aid to provide first-year support services to address precollege first-year students' needs. The importance of monitoring the problem hinges when colleges plan a discussion review to watch SBP precollege first-year students' data report results and recommendations. SBP precollege first-year students' data results and suggestions should be published, documented, reviewed, and discussed to address precollege first-year students' retention and GPA for continuous

improvement. If unreported precollege first-year students' retention and GPAs continue, colleges may not recognize why precollege first-year students leave college. Thus, SBP precollege first-year students' retention and mean GPA data reports should be consecutively published, reported, and discussed to address the monitoring of precollege first-year students' social and academic outcomes for continuous improvement.

Colleges examine first-year retention and GPAs to address and monitor first-year students' social and academic progress (French, 2017; Kilgore, 2018). When colleges read and review first-year retention and GPAs, they discover ways to address and monitor first-year students' retention rates and mean GPAs. Colleges implement and observe standard policy reporting procedures to report first-year students' social and academic progress. Cumulative mean GPA data reports are the most reliable predictor to assess first-year students' social and academic performance (DeNicco, Harrington, & Fogg, 2015). For example, DeNicco et al. (2015) and French (2017) found SBP participants who earned a cumulative mean 3.0—4.0 GPA had a retention rate of 80.8%, while SBP participants who earned a cumulative mean 2.0—3.0 GPA had a retention rate of 77.6% (DeNicco et al., 2015; French, 2017). Rodríguez, Tinajero, and Páramo (2017) concluded that precollege first-year students with high cumulative mean GPAs understand how to make good grades; moreover, they know how to cope with college life (Tinto, 1993).

Precollege high school first-year students' cumulative mean GPAs connect precollege students to a college of choice. Precollege high school first-year students who would typically be attending a trade school or 2-year College now prefer to attend a 4-year

college. Many precollege high school first-year students are not socially and academically prepared to matriculate in a 4-year institution (Altass & Wiebe, 2017). Even though colleges adequately prepare and plan yearly to manage cultural shifts in higher education (Altass & Wiebe, 2017), colleges are having problems adapting to this cultural shift of (a) students' unpreparedness for college, (b) need-based financial aid, (c) first-year students' low retention rates and GPAs, and (d) institutional financial shortages.

Cultural shifts in higher education have impacted precollege high school first-year students' literacy, math, science, and social studies skills; indeed, this has impacted precollege first-year students preparing to go to college (Altass & Wiebe, 2017; Kaplin Owings, 2018)

Purpose and Research Design

The purpose of this study was to investigate the differences in first-year retention and GPA between students who participated in the POWER program and students who did not. First-year deidentified archival retention and GPA datasets were retrieved and analyzed to complete the study. The datasets were analyzed using a Pearson chi-squared test for independence and one-way ANOVA in SPSS, software version 27. The literature review, framework, and study RQs guided the tests to determine the study data analysis, results, and recommendations. The study RQs that drove the project study were:

RQ1. What is the difference in first-year retention rates between students who participated in the POWER program and students who did not?

RQ2. What is the difference in the first-year GPAs between students who participated in the POWER program and students who did not?

Setting and Sample

The local setting is a small, public HBCU. The setting, a land-grant institution, provides education to students in the local, state, national, and international regions and offers a POWER program for precollege first-year students. In the Fall of 2015, the HBCU admitted 675 precollege first-year students in agriculture, fisheries, human sciences, arts and sciences, education, and business management (POWER program director, personal communication, March 9, 2016) whose archival first-year retention and GPA data were available. From the 675 precollege first-year students, 275 had participated in the POWER program, and the remaining 400 have not. The G* power analysis with an alpha of 0.05, a medium effect size, and a power of .80 showed that a minimum of 64 data sets per group was needed and the $n = 675$ was, therefore, sufficient (Faul, Erdfelder, Lang, & Buchner, 2007; Gravetter & Wallnau, 2009, 2009).

The precollege first-year students included 52% commuters, while 48% resided in campus housing (POWER program director, personal communication, March 9, 2016). Nearly 40% of first-year students were from out-of-state. The precollege first-year students' ethnic composition was 91% African American, 4.9% Caucasian, 1.8% Non-

Resident Alien, 1.4% Hispanic, less than 1% each for Asian, American/Alaska Native, and two or more student races and 60% of students were female (POWER program director, personal communication, March 15, 2016). All precollege first-year students in the study, and as the first-year retention and GPA datasets were available as deidentified archival data, no recruitment or selection was necessary.

Results

RQ 1 Retention Results

What is the difference in first-year retention rates between students who participated in the POWER program and students who did not?

A Pearson chi-square test for independence was used to address the RQ1 study question. The SPSS software version 27, with the independent variable being the participation or nonparticipation of first-year students in the POWER program, was used to analyze the first-year retention datasets. McHugh (2013) directs using a chi-square nonparametric test when measuring ordinal or nominal levels. When the study sample sizes are unequal, the distribution of data measures at an interval or ratio level, and the data violates the assumption of equal variance or homoscedasticity (Howell, 2007; McHugh, 2013). Hypothesis dataset conditions were appropriate to conduct the Pearson chi-square test for independence.

From a total of 675 precollege first-year students, 275 or 41% participated in the POWER program. Of all 675 students, 478 students or 71% returned the following year, which, in turn, meant that almost 1/3 of first-year students did not return. From the 275

participants, 202 or 73% returned, whereas, from the 400 nonparticipant students, 276 or 69% returned. Even though the data show a higher .04 point percentage of retention for the participants, the chi-square results showed $p > .05$, which means no significant difference in the first-year students' retention rates. Therefore, the null hypothesis was accepted: The RQ 1 null hypothesis indicated no difference in first-year retention rates between students who participated in the POWER program and students who did not.

RQ 2 GPA Results

What is the difference in the first-year GPA between students who participated in the POWER program and students who did not?

A one-way ANOVA was used to measure the difference in first-year GPAs between students who participated in the POWER program and students who did not. The datasets were analyzed the data using SPSS software version 27. Gravetter and Wallnau (2009) directed using a one-way ANOVA when the ANOVA measures the mean differences and draws a conclusion between two or more groups. The one-way ANOVA parametric test assumes that the participant and nonparticipant students' means were equivalent, and the scores of the groups' 1 year mean GPA found not significant. ANOVA measures four determinants within and between-students across the groups' variances. The four determinants within and between-students are (a) significance level of strength, (b) sample size, (c) measures of effect size, and (d) power analysis (Gravetter & Wallnau, 2009; Howell, 2007). A significant relationship, effect size, existed or not tested the four determinants within and between-students. The one-way ANOVA showed the

assumption difference in the first-year GPA between the students. The parametric statistical understanding of students was calculated for 1 year was (M = 2.96, SD = .63, n = 675). The outcome of the Levene's Test of Homogeneity of variances showed that the variances between the two groups were equal: F (1, 1.84) = .18, p > .05. One-way ANOVA first-year GPA results showed no significant difference in the first-year GPA between students who participated in the POWER program and students who did not.

RQ 1: Discussion of Social (Retention) Integration Results

For RQ 1, the POWER first-year students' Pearson chi-square test for independence result was not significant. Also, Wathington et al. (2016) found no substantial evidence that affects the persistence of first-year students enrolled in a two-year college. The semester average for first-year participant students was 3.3 semesters and 3.4 semesters for the nonparticipants. The institution and development of SBP social integration programs are for those participant students who struggle to integrate and persist in college in the first year (see Tinto, 2017). A significant first-year student retention rate difference exists between program-specific and nonprogram-specific students (Gershenfeld et al., 2016). Program-specific precollege first-year students' mean GPA showed a definite increase compared to nonspecific students (Lipe & Waller, 2013). Researchers found that participants who earned a cumulative mean 3.0–4.0 GPA had a retention rate of 80.8%, and participants who earned a cumulative mean 2.0–3.0 GPA had a retention rate of 77.6% (DeNicco et al., 2015; French, 2017). The first-year retention results revealed the importance of Tinto's (1993) retention integration model and the social integration factors

required to support precollege high school students the first year (Kerby, 2015). Tinto's retention integration model explains the value of differentiating social integration factors evaluating precollege first-year students' pre-entry attributes, goals, commitments, institutional experiences, and first-year social and academic integration (Tinto, 1993). Although some college SBPS do not positively affect precollege first-year students' retention rates, colleges SBPs pre and post-first-year retention and GPA datasets should analyze to determine if SBPs affect precollege first-year students' integration and persistence in college (Tinto, 2017). Colleges should retrieve and analyze pre and post retention and GPA datasets to determine the first-year students' retention rate difference. Colleges desire to retrieve, research, and report first-year students' pre and post retention and GPAs to help students achieve first-year retention rate success (Bir & Myrick, 2015).

RQ 2: Discussion of Academic (GPA) Integration Results

For RQ 2, the result of the one-way ANOVA comparing first-year students' GPA was not significant. The first-year mean GPA score difference between students who participated in the POWER program was lower than those who did not participate. Tinto (2017) developed the academic integration model for precollege students who struggle to integrate academically toward college persistence. The first-year mean GPA score difference between students who participated in the POWER program was .08 points less than those who did not participate. Students' first-year mean GPA data results revealed that students might not have received the necessary academic support to achieve academic success. Based on the first-year GPA data results, additional precollege and

first-year social and educational support is needed for precollege first-year students to achieve academic success (see Palmer, 2017). The one-way ANOVA GPA data results indicate that the college should monitor SBP precollege students' retention and cumulative mean GPA data reports. Wathington et al. (2016) stated that empirical evidence of precollege first-year students' GPAs determines ways to manage institutional policy practices and academic services to drive precollege first-year students' academic success. Managing institutional policy practices and academic services prepare precollege first-year students for college coursework. Institutional academic assistance and support are evaluated through successive research to close a gap in limited social and educational data research practice. First-year research studies on SBP precollege first-year students' social and academic success are limited (see Wathington et al., 2016). Precollege students' first-year college academic success is bounded by Tinto's (1993) social and academic integration theory. The study's mean GPA results suggest that SBP precollege first-year students may require the proper mentorship, student support services, and academic flexibility to achieve academic success. The study's first-year mean GPA results imply that precollege first-year students could improve their college success through institutional social and academic support services for academic progress and continuous improvement (see Bir & Myrick, 2015).

Review of Retention Rate Results

For RQ1, the first-year retention rate data results were analyzed and compared between the students who participated in the POWER program, and students who did not. The first-year retention data results were analyzed and compared between POWER students (n = 675). The first-year retention rate RQ1 null hypothesis was examined at the .21 level. The analyzed .21 level showed that that 73 (36%) of the 275 (41%) students who participated in the POWER program did not return the first year compared to 124 (45%) of the 400 (59%) students who returned. First-year retention rates showed that 202, 73% of students who participated in the POWER program returned, and 276, 69% of students who did not participate in the POWER program returned. The first-year retention rate study results showed no significant difference between students who participated in the POWER program, and students who did not.

The POWER program first-year students' retention rate data results showed no significant difference between students who participated in the POWER program and those who did not.

Review of GPA Results

For RQ 2, the statistical variances and the students' first-year GPAs' significance value are the p-values that displayed equal variations between the two groups (Davis & Davis, 2016). The results of the students' mean GPA significance value showed F (1, 476) =

1.84, $p > .05$. The results of the students' first-year mean GPA variance showed no significant difference because the p-value was more than .05. The one-way ANOVA results showed that the first-year students' mean GPA score difference was .08 points with the Partial eta squared test ($\eta 2 = .004$). The RQ 2 null hypothesis was accepted: The First-year students' GPA results showed no significant difference between the students who participated in the POWER program, and students who did not.

The POWER program first-year students' mean GPA data results showed no significant difference between students who participated in the POWER program and those who did not

Discussion

Retention and GPA Results

The first-year retention and GPA study data results showed no significant difference between the POWER program participants' and nonparticipants' retention rates and mean GPAs. The project study results and recommendations indicate to consecutively report and monitor SBP precollege students' first-year retention and mean GPA data reports for continuous improvement. The project study data results imply that SBP precollege first-year students' retention and cumulative mean GPA data reports should be reported addressing data report results for continuous improvement (Bir & Myrick, 2015). The first-year retention and GPA data results suggest that precollege first-year students who

dropped out of college did not receive proper mentorship, student support services; hence, proper first-year social and academic support (Palmer, 2017; Shorette & Palmer, 2015). Based on the first-year students' retention and GPA study results and white paper report, three recommendations developed from practical implementation, Tinto's (1993) framework, and the literature review. The three recommendations are the following:

Recommendations

1. Create a standard policy reporting procedure committee to report SBP precollege first-year students' retention and GPA data reports.

The standard policy reporting procedure serves as a general and crucial social and academic purpose to inform administrators and policymakers to review, discuss, and monitor precollege first-year students' retention and GPAs for continuous improvement. Standard policy reporting procedures consult and address precollege first-year student retention and GPAs (Campbell & Naidoo, 2017). A set of routine standard policy reporting procedures could improve policy implementation, close a gap in practice, and first-year productivity to address first-year students' lower retention rates and mean GPAs. First-year students' lower retention rates and mean GPAs impede college growth. First-year college growth occurs when precollege students can cope socially and academically with the educational landscape's paradigm-shifts (Altass & Wiebe, 2017).

2. Establish consecutive retention and GPA data policy report dates to review and discuss SBP precollege first-year students' retention rates and cumulative mean GPA data report results.

Colleges should make a vow to establish a set of regular report dates to publish precollege first-year students' retention and mean GPA data reports. A collection of consecutive routine precollege first-year retention and GPA data reports will allot successive college periods to review, discuss, and determine ways to address first-year students' low retention and GPAs (Gray & Swinton, 2017). While colleges vow to publish and report precollege first-year retention and GPA data reports for review, colleges' commitment to reviewing and discussing the retention and mean GPA data reports increase first-year students' social and academic success (DeNicco et al., 2015).

3. Consecutively retrieve, analyze, aggregate, publish, report, and discuss SBP precollege first-year students' cumulative mean GPA data reports to address and monitor first-year students' academic success for continuous improvement.

Consecutively reporting, reviewing, and discussing precollege first-year students' cumulative mean GPA data reports repeatedly provide the best predictors to advise precollege first-year students' social and academic success. Furthermore, when colleges review the precollege first-year students' cumulative mean GPA data reports, they determined how best to provide continuous support to first-year students earning low retention and GPAs. Colleges review cumulative mean GPA data reports to address and monitor precollege first-year students' social and academic success (Houser et al., 2015; Tinto, 1993). These recommendations also require accountability and a commitment that challenges colleges to socially and academically change precollege first-year students' retention and GPAs for continuous improvement.

Future Research

The recommendations for future research are to complete a mixed-methods research study. The mixed-methods approach would include a questionnaire or survey for precollege first-year students. This mixed-method study approach provides a way for precollege first-year students to speak about their personal experiences. These precollege first-year experiences could be themed and coded. According to Lodico, Spauding, and Voegtle (2010), first-year students' experiences are categorized to provide thick, rich constructs. This mixed-method study approach could add valuable meaning to the precollege first-year retention and GPA data report results to complete an empirical research study.

Second, an empirical research study could be completed based on the first-year retention and GPA data report recommendations to report, review, discuss, and monitor precollege first-year students' social and academic success. Empirical research follows a consecutive systematic approach to retrieving, aggregating, analyzing, publishing, and reporting data reports for discussion over an extended period (Lodico et al., 2010). Additionally, empirical precollege first-year archival retention and GPA datasets are available to complete a mixed-method empirical study.

Concluding Thoughts

The literature review identifies the first year of college when the most significant first-year student dropout percentage occurs. Primarily, precollege high school first-year students cannot cope with college difficulties and adapt to the social and academic rigors to smooth college transition. The ability to socially and culturally change first-year students' retention and GPA data outcomes does not begin outside the college. Still, it starts working within the college and together as change agents to continuously refine its mission, vision, and goals.

As a leader who feels passionate about this project study data results, the report, and recommendations, it is gratifying to create a positive social change. If everyone works together, nothing can stop the college from becoming a change agent; working together will make a difference for first-year students attending college. Colleges might be flexible enough to support first-year students' mean GPAs and other research opportunities to help first-year students achieve social and academic success. Palmer (2017) noted that precollege first-year students' cumulative mean GPA data reports are limited in the research literature. Colleges' first-year retention and GPA datasets are needed to be consecutively retrieved and analyzed to determine and monitor precollege first-year students' lower retention and GPAs for continuous social and academic success.

The policy practice of addressing and monitoring precollege first-year students' retention and cumulative mean GPA data reports begins with the study site. Overall, the study

results recommendations are to complete consecutive precollege first-year students' mean GPA data reports to control the cultural shifts, efficiency, and first-year students' social and academic success. If the study site does not address the first-year students' low retention and GPAs every year, the first-year students may continue to earn lower retention rates and mean GPAs, and students may continue to drop out. Additionally, overall first-year student enrollment may continue to spiral downward. Retrieving, analyzing, aggregating, reporting, reviewing, and discussing first-year students' retention and GPAs for continuous improvement could serve as a defense mechanism to encourage colleges to determine more precollege first-year students' college success (Swain, 2013). Finally, the project study data results and recommendations may serve as a foundation to challenge the colleges to pledge and vow to create long-term precollege first-year students' social and academic change when colleges can monitor precollege students' first-year retention and GPAs for continuous improvement.

The policy practice of addressing and monitoring precollege first-year students' retention and cumulative mean GPA data reports begins with the study site. Overall, the study data results recommendations are to complete consecutive precollege first-year students' mean GPA data reports to control the cultural shifts, efficiency, and first-year students' social and academic success. If the study site does not address the precollege first-year students' low retention and GPAs every year, the precollege first-year students may continue to earn lower retention rates and mean GPAs, and students may continue to drop out. Additionally, overall first-year student enrollment may continue to spiral downward. Retrieving, analyzing, aggregating, reporting, reviewing, and discussing first-year

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