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Advisor Perceptions on Relationship-Based Advising and Student Retention

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This is to certify that the doctoral study by

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Walden University
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Abstract

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MA, Walden University, 2013

BS, City University, 2011

Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

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Abstract

Research shows that relationship-based advising has a track record of producing better student outcomes and retention, thus local college administrators chose relationship-based advising as the advising model to be used at the campus. The problem addressed in this study was inconsistent implementation of the relationship-based advising model by the advisors at the local community college. The purpose of this basic qualitative study was to investigate how advisors were implementing the relationship-based advising method when advising students. Guided by Vygotsky's social interaction theory, the perspectives and experiences of advisors were explored regarding how relationship-based advising was implemented at the college. Ten advisors were interviewed about their knowledge and experience with relationship-based advising. Interview data were analyzed using inductive, open coding to identify emergent patterns and themes. Results indicated the advisors were using many elements of relationship-based advising but to varying degrees. Advisors identified inherent strengths and challenges in relationship-based advising, yet they reported that students who received relationship-based advising were more likely to stay connected to the college until their educational goals were met. Findings suggested that more focused efforts to consistently implement relationship-based advising were warranted. With the consistent implementation of relationship-based advising, community college students may be more connected with the school community and persistent in pursuing their educational goals, thereby producing positive social change for individuals and the greater community over time.

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Dedication

I dedicate this study to all my family and friends who have supported and encouraged me throughout this educational experience. Your love and encouragement have been the driving force to reaching this milestone. I would like to thank my mom and dad for standing beside me through this process, you have been my encouragement. I would not have made it this far without your support.

I would also like to dedicate this study to the hard-working advisors within Washington State's community and technical college system and the Point of Contact's for the Early Achievers Grant.

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Chapter 1: Introduction to the Study

Lakeview Community College (LCC; a pseudonym) has had a reputation of implementing change to strive for better student outcomes in retention and completion. For this reason, the college became an Achieving the Dream College and began looking for ways to decrease the achievement gap between minority students and White or Asian students, using guidance from Achieving the Dream organization. Achieving the Dream determined that by relentlessly addressing systemic inequities within higher education, a community benefits with an increase to social and economic accomplishments (Achieving the Dream, 2020). Through years of work, LCC became a top Achieving the Dream College (Achieving the Dream, 2021). However, advising and building relationships with students to encourage them to stay with their education goals has continued to be a struggle.

For nearly 50 years, the use of academic advising has been common and expected at LCC. Now, data have shown the positive results of relationship-based advising, but faculty advisors within the college were using the new advising model inconsistently across the college (faculty advisor, personal communication, July 23, 2020). In the 2015 fiscal year, LCC administrators realized that in order to bridge the achievement gap and improve retention and completion rates for all students, advising strategies needed to be addressed (faculty advisor, personal communication, July 23, 2020). College leadership and administration began to discuss the benefits of a relationship-based advising model and shortly thereafter, some advisors began to implement the model (faculty advisor, personal communication, July 23, 2020).

With the implementation of relationship-based advising, positive social change could be made in the mindset of all advisors by addressing systemic inequality through student retention in higher education institutions. Increasing student retention with the implementation of the relationship-based advising model could lead to systemic change against inequality and decrease achievement gaps between White and minority students (Crowe, 2020). The use of the relationship-based advising model could support positive social change by alleviating a system that has disproportionately impacted students of color by not having the same access to quality advising as their White peers (Crowe, 2020).

This chapter will contain the background of advising practices at LCC and identify the problem of inconsistent implementation of the relationship-based advising model by the advisors at LCC. The chapter will also highlight the purpose of this research to include the research questions outlined. An overview of the conceptual framework and the nature of study is also included in this chapter. Lastly, I include assumptions, limitations, and significance of the research, along with the scope of research and a list of definitions unique to this research.

Background

LCC has done work to focus on student success by creating models that work for all students and has focused on equitable student success. LCC has been in the top percentage of schools to receive the 1-million-dollar ASPEN prize (Aspen Institute, 2022). Based out of Washington DC, the goal of the Aspen Institute has been to advance higher education practices that improve student learning, retention, and completion

(Aspen Institute, 2022). Data have shown that almost half of all individuals seeking higher education select a community college, but fewer than half of these students finish what they started (Achieving the Dream, 2020). Aspen Institute has honored colleges with outstanding achievement through reflection of five critical areas, one being equity for students of color and students from low-income backgrounds (Aspen Institute, 2022).

LCC is a college where students have been able to realize their possibilities since the founding of the college in 1967. Ever since the founding of the college over 50 years ago, academic advising has not changed; it has continued to be the predominant practice of merely exploring general education options, reviewing campus services and policies, and advising on course options. Faculty advisors and student success coaches using an academic model of advising have been common and expected within the college culture.

The work LCC has done thus far with Achieving the Dream has identified a gap in practice regarding inconsistent advising practices at LCC. Achieving the Dream leads the most comprehensive non-governmental reform movement for student success in higher education history (Achieving the Dream, 2021). Achieving the Dream has a network of over 300 higher education institutions who are focused on providing community college students a better chance of realizing their dreams, reducing the gap that was identified with inconsistent advising (Achieving the Dream, 2021). Achieving the Dream is a national nonprofit organization based in Maryland that supports colleges in using evidence to make institutional improvements. Institutional improvement strategies include narrowing the achievement gap between White students and students of color (Achieving the Dream, 2020). This nonprofit has documented the benefits of having long-term and sustainable commitments to improving student success (Achieving the Dream, 2020). Achieving the Dream alleged that by relentlessly addressing systemic inequities within higher education, a community benefits with an increase to social and economic accomplishments (Achieving the Dream, 2020).

When LCC became an Achieving the Dream college, it quickly started putting measures in place to improve student services/advising for improving retention rates. These measures included strategies to improve course success, clear expectations and flexibility, and the inclusion of five Core Abilities Outcomes that include critical, creative, and reflective thinking, responsibility, information competency, effective communication, and multiculturalism. Between 2010 and 2014, LCC made suggested changes in their college systems that were recommended by Achieving the Dream while keeping academic advising the same. These implemented changes created a 58% increase in student retention overall and LCC realized an increase in retention and completions among students of color and first-generation students. Nationwide, the retention rates for community college students graduating within two years has been 13%, within three years 22%, and within four years has been 28% (Chen, 2021). LCC was identified and awarded as an Achieving the Dream Leader College in 2014 along with 16 other community colleges nationwide. At that time, LCC strived for continued improvement in achievement gap numbers between minority and low-income students, as compared to students who identify as White or Asian. With that in mind, LCC looked at strategies that would continue to increase student completion and close achievement gaps. In the winter of 2015, advisors from across LCC participated in a 1-day training that consisted of advising strategies including relationship-based advising (faculty advisor, personal communication, July 23, 2020). Relationship-based advising consists of academic advising elements built on a relationship foundation, which includes shared information through trust, communication, and connectedness (Higgins, 2019).

At the time of the 2015 training for advising strategies, LCC leadership spoke about the process and components of relationship-based advising, sharing that colleges nationwide who were rated higher than LCC used the relationship-based advising model (faculty advisor, personal communication, July 23, 2020). After the initial training in the winter of 2015 and immediately following, there was a desire to make an institutional change to relationship-based advising. However, at LCC, there was a need for additional training on how to implement the relationship-based advising model and additional staff needed to bring about full implementation, neither of these were offered or available (faculty advisor, personal communication, July 23, 2020). Shortly after that 2015 training, few academic advisors changed their advising method to relationship-based advising, a disappointing 1.5% of the total advisors on campus (faculty advisor, personal communication, July 23, 2020). Most advisors at the college continued with the original academic advising model stating that relationship-based advising was “too much hand holding” and did not provide the “initiative for students to do things independently” (faculty advisor, personal communication, August 17, 2021).

Since that initial training, LCC has indicated relationship-based advising as what was being used at the campus, contributing to an increase of almost 10% of advisors using the relationship-based advising model as of spring 2021 (student success coach, personal communication, May 3, 2021). Furthermore, LCC staff have reported that an average of 20% of current advisors were using a blended model of academic and relationship-based advising, selecting components of each as they see fit (student success coach, personal communication, August 1, 2021). Understanding the perceptions of advisors regarding the challenges and barriers faced with implementing the relationship-based advising model could help contribute to full implementation of the advising model across the campus. Greater use of the relationship-based advising model could lead to an increase in retention and completions, which would include positive social change (Martinez & Elue, 2020).

Systemic inequality in higher education institutions is a systemic array of implemented policies, laws, or frameworks put in place to make sure the White dominant culture held power (Crowe, 2020). Decreasing achievement gaps between White and minority students was just one way to fight against systemic inequality and increase student retention. The implementation of the relationship-based advising model could support positive social change by alleviating a system that has disproportionately affected students of color by not having the same access to quality advising as their White peers (Crowe, 2020). The relationship-based advising model is a type of advising that builds on the foundation of the advisor/student relationship. The advisor and student connect, check in, and communicate many times throughout the quarter. This relationship develops over time through interactions that engage both student and advisor, and promotes an engaging partnership, which supports the student in meeting their educational goals and increasing retention (Higgins, 2019). This close relationship has shown to alleviate inequities in education, including advisor access, wages earned after college, and number of years earned in college including completion of a degree (Crowe, 2020).

Using the professional relationship as a primary method supports the growth and development of adult learners (Department of Children, Youth, & Families [DCYF], 2021a). Relationship-based advising uses a cycle of inquiry to take a student through steps of goal setting, observation, assessment, action planning, reflection, and feedback (DCYF, 2021a). Within the three key elements of trust, communication, and connectedness (Higgins, 2019), there are practices which define the relationship-based model of advising. Some of those practices include the advisor being an emotional and mental support, reminding students of the goals they have set and providing needed supports to help students reach those goals, a general understanding of what the student needs to succeed and offering advising, guidance, and support where needed. Inequities in education can be narrowed by having an advisor who builds a relationship-based advising experience with the student (Crowe, 2020).

Problem Statement

The problem addressed in this study was inconsistent implementation of the relationship-based advising model by the advisors. On LCC's website, LCC declared their usage of relationship-based advising; however, based on the perceptions of faculty advisors, the practice was employed inconsistently (faculty advisor, personal communication, July 22, 2020). A faculty advisor at LCC stated that the use of academic advising is the preferred model by most fellow advisors at LCC in lieu of the more time-consuming relationship-based advising model (faculty advisor, personal communication, November 22, 2021). Early adopters of the new relationship-based methods seemed to be individuals new to the advising role, whereas long-standing advisors at the college continue to use the academic model of advising, even though relationship-based advising has shown positive outcomes across the nation (Hande et al., 2019). Implementing the relationship-based advising model has narrowed the achievement gap between minority and low-income students, compared to students who identify as White or Asian, which supports positive social change (Achieving the Dream, 2021). The impact relationship-based advising model has on retention may inform the practices of other advisors across LCC.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this basic qualitative study was to investigate how advisors were implementing the relationship-based advising method when advising students at LCC. Because there was inconsistent implementation of LCC's relationship-based advising model by the advisors, the purpose of this basic qualitative study was to investigate how advisors are implementing the relationship-based advising method when advising students at LCC. Advising has a positive influence on the success of students such as student retention (Gantt, 2019; Kappler, 2018). The use of a relationship-based advising model, which focuses on the whole student, has increased retention beyond the more common academic advising model (Gantt, 2019). Data were collected to understand advisor perceptions of advising practices employed to meet the needs of the students within the six advising departments at LCC. A participant sampling from each department examined how the relationship-based advising model is being used across the campus.

Research Questions

For this research, I explored the perspectives of advisors at LCC. The following research questions guided data collection regarding advisor perceptions to relationship-based advising:

- RQ 1: What were the advisors' perceptions about how relationship-based advising was being implemented at LCC?
- RQ 2: What have participant advisors experienced when implementing relationship-based advising?

Conceptual Framework

The social interaction theory is the interdependence of social and individual development within the co-construction of knowledge, while understanding the influence that social and cultural factors have on perception (Vygotsky, 1978a). Once immersed in a social environment that includes social, cultural, and interpersonal experiences, the connection proves to be influential in understanding appropriate cultural practices (Daneshfar & Moharami, 2018). Vygotsky explored the impact that society and culture have on an individual. Summarizing that connection and relationships between people and environment surroundings resulted in social habits, organizing abilities, and collective responsibilities (Topciu, 2015). The basis of Vygotsky's theory was that social interaction plays an essential role in a person's success or lack of success. Therefore, the basis of relationship-based advising plays a role in the success or lack of success a student achieves. Known as a social process shaped by human interactions within a culture or societal context, this part of the Vygotsky theory was that social relations played an important role in the process of engaged and connected (Daneshfar & Moharami, 2018).

Vygotsky's (1978a) theory was an attempt to explain consciousness as the product of socialization. The conceptualization of the zone of proximal development (ZPD) began with three structures social, cultural, and historical context (Vygotsky, 1978a). ZPD is the idea that a skill can develop when there is adult guidance or peer collaboration (Vygotsky, 1964). Vygotsky's insights gained from the field of education allow for a broader understanding of how the zone of proximal development can bring to light a participant's comprehension and institutional cognition. With relationship-based advising, the advisor and student have a genuine working relationship that focuses on the students' success, and ultimate retention, leading to the completion of a certificate or degree (He & Hutson, 2016). For example, at a statewide early education meeting in 2021 for community colleges, it was described that the advisor spends time with the student, getting to know about the students' goals and possible obstacles to reaching that goal, while an academic success plan is created (State Board for Community and Technical Colleges (SBCTC), personal communication, October 07, 2021). Additionally, the relationship-based advisor was a part of the success plan, being a contact person when a student needed resources, or help navigating the college system (SBCTC, personal communication, November 07, 2021). Thus, this conceptual framework aligned with the design of relationship-based advising while also guiding data points desired within the study. The social interaction theoretical framework supports the practices through establishing connections and relationships between the student, advisor, and college environment, which results in positive social habits, organizing abilities, and collective responsibilities (Wertsch, 1979).

Nature of the Study

I used a basic qualitative design. A qualitative study is employed in applied fields of practice and frequently used to conduct qualitative studies in education (Korstjens & Moser, 2018). A qualitative design allows the researcher to investigate how people interpreted their experiences. Qualitative research reflects on the iterative nature of the research process as qualitative research is mostly narrative and sometimes requires a unique/different structure.

For the study, qualitative interviews were conducted to understand the perceptions of advisor participants. My goal was to investigate how advisors were implementing the relationship-based advising method when advising students at LCC. This helped me understand how the elements of relationship-based advising were implemented. The use of semistructured interview questions from a list of predetermined questions (Appendix A) answered research questions about relationship-based advising. The participant responses were conducted through Zoom so that transcription could be uploaded, transcribed, and coded. This process allowed me to identify themes.

Definitions

Academic advising: A process between the student and advisor of exploring general education options (educational and career plans, and making appropriate course selections), reviewing services on campus and policies of the institution (Higgins, 2019).

Relationship-based advising: A relationship that develops over time through interactions that engage both student and advisor and promotes an engaging partnership with three key elements; trust, communication, and connectedness (Higgins, 2019).

Assumptions

The assumptions were based on my knowledge of the college and not on bias about LCC. The following assumptions influenced this study's methodology, findings, and generalizability. First, I assumed that all advisors understood the relationship-based advising model even if they do not use it entirely. Second, I assumed that all advisors at LCC used either an academic advising model, a relationship-based advising model, or a combination of the two. Third, I assumed that the participants would volunteer to participate in the interview, to provide data that would inform the research. Finally, I assumed that the participants would be truthful and forthcoming with their responses. Being mindful of researcher assumptions is important because assumptions are sometimes incorrect or misguided (Bistline et al., 2021). The findings could not be generalized to include other institutions because all interviews were conducted at one community college.

Scope and Delimitations

The scope of the study included perceptions of community college advisors who had an active advising load and were currently advising students and who used varying components of relationship-based advising on a regular basis at LCC. A total of 10 advisors participated in the study and answered open-ended questions. Data collected revealed participant perceptions of how advisors were implementing components of the relationship-based advising method when advising students at LCC. The research was delimitated to one community college in the Pacific Northwest. An additional delimitation was that the advisors were selected from the college's full-time and part-time advising staff who had a knowledge of relationship-based advising regardless of the level of use of the advising model.

Transferability refers to the extent to which the research findings of a study can be applied in other contexts or generalized for other situations (Korstjens & Moser, 2018). The focus of the study was narrowed to advising models employed at one urban community college. My intent was not to generalize the research findings for other settings. The intent was to comprehend the perceived understanding of community college advisors who used components of relationship-based advising at LCC. I also realized that the outcome of this study could potentially interest other researchers, educators, and administrators at similarly structured higher education institutions.

Limitations

Limitations influence the outcome of research; therefore, they needed to be identified. As the participants were only from one college campus, the research findings can only be attributed to the research college. Though the primary source of data was interviews, there were secondary sources in the form of my objective notes kept from the interview. Through these notes, it was possible to see if my documented responses reflected any possible biases (Gooch & Warren-Jones, 2020). Additionally, my personal bias needed to be considered. Although I previously was a full-time advisor in the School of Education, I have not been in that position since September 2019. I am, however, familiar with the advising models being researched. Currently, there were no advisors within the School of Education that were advisors while I was employed as a full-time advisor at the college. I am not familiar with and have had no connection to the advisors of the other five departments at LCC.

Additional limitations of this study included due to the Covid-19 pandemic, in-person interviews were not possible and limited recruitment to email, phone, and Zoom. Additionally, small/limited sample size used may not represent the true generalization of the college. The questions examined could provide valuable information of relationship-based advising. Finally, the study did not call for feedback from all advisors but would have representation from each of the six departments at LCC.

Significance

A gap in the research about practice exists because of inconsistent advising practices at LCC. The study focused on advising practices in the six departments within LCC. At the local State's Community and Technical College meeting, The Department of Children, Youth, and Family (DCYF) (2020) shared the projected increase of education students entering higher education. This enrollment increase was discussed in a statewide Early Childhood Teacher Preparation Council (ECTPC) meeting in the fall of 2021, where shared local data indicated enrollment in education courses increased (president of ECTPC, personal communication, October 21, 2021). Additional data shared that a potential increase of students within other high priority fields was likely due to the state funding availability for tuition and books (president of ECTPC, personal communication, October 21, 2021). This suggested an increased need for a student to obtain a degree as a requirement to meet new education laws surrounding high priority professions.

An advisor is valuable for early intervention strategies and support systems in place for students returning to college pertaining to increasing retention rates (Higgins, 2019). Research within this study suggested that relationship-based advising, over academic advising, could alleviate some of these barriers and completion hurdles. Having an advisor in a goal-oriented advising relationship, that includes both student and advisor actively being involved, has shown positive outcomes (Antoney, 2020; Green, 2016). Relationship-based advisors use a holistic approach that is comprehensive to address the emotional, social, ethical, and academic needs of students during advising. There is a concern that if more students do not meet their educational and graduation requirements, a qualified worker shortage in some fields would be realized. This could mean that communities would subsequently have fewer options of services needed in the community (Henry, 2018). In addition, findings of the research cannot be generalized beyond the study college. But the findings could potentially inform other community colleges in the best way to support students, and increase retention, while employing the most effective aspects of relationship-based advising.

Summary

Evidence has shown the desire for LCC to support students through achieving their educational goals, while outlining a process that shows responsibility of both the advisor and the student. There was an expressed desire documented on the college website, and by LCC administration, for advisors to use the relationship-based advising method. However, current literature and preliminary evidence suggested that there were barriers to full implementation of this advising model at the LCC. This study was conducted to investigate how advisors are implementing the relationship-based advising method when advising students at LCC. There has been a consistent increase in student enrollment since 2019 when the state increased education requirements for some early educator roles and opened funding for many newly deemed high priority early educator roles. Interview data collected from participants provided a clearer picture of how relationship-based advising is employed at LCC to support working students. Chapter 2 of this study will include a detailed review of literature related to relationship-based advising.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

Advising models are of particular interest to community colleges because of the influence on retention and other success markers (Martinez & Elue, 2020). A relationship-based advising model focused on the whole student can be pivotal to retention (Gantt, 2019). As previously defined, relationship-based advising is a relationship that develops over time through interactions that engage both student and advisor and promotes an engaging partnership with three key elements: trust, communication, and connectedness (Higgins, 2019). An advisor who uses the relationship-based method partners with students to help and support them through navigating college policies and procedures, course completion and success, developing and education plan and quarter registration, and other supports that would help a student be successful from tutoring services to food insecurity supports (Gantt, 2019).

The problem addressed in this study was inconsistent implementation of the relationship-based advising model by the advisors. I investigated how advisors are implementing the relationship-based advising model at LCC. This chapter includes information about the literature search strategy, a deeper analysis of the conceptual framework, and a comprehensive review of literature that is related to key variables and concepts of relationship-based advising.

Literature Search Strategy

The use of the following literature search strategy identifies seminal work and research literature to establish the relevance of the stated problem. Research was conducted searches using published books, Google Scholar as it pertains to advising for material for the literature review, and the Walden University Library electronic database as a source to identify relevant educational theories and theoretical works such as, constructivism, social cognitive theory, and behaviorism.

To narrow the results, I limited the search to peer-reviewed scholarly journals or articles using databases including ProQuest Central, Academic Search Complete, Academic Search Elite, Google Scholar, Higher Education Research Institute (HERI), and ERIC. Additional databases used include Sage Premier, Education Research Complete, Education Research Starters, and peer reviewed journals. To refine further, I focused on articles that were no more than 5 years old. However, some older articles were used for historical background.

I used key terms to focus on topics that were directly related to the study. Specific individual and combination of terms used in my search included *advising*, *advising models, relationship-based advising*, *relationships and advising*, *academic advising models, college advising*, *student success*, and *perceptions of students and advising*. Other keywords for my literature review were *community college advising*, *college success*, and *keys to student success*. This adjustment significantly reduced the result of possible articles. My research resulted in identifying the theorists and theories that were most relevant to my study.

Conceptual Framework

For my conceptual framework, I used Vygotsky's social interaction theory. Vygotsky's theory related to the idea of positive outcomes for the use of relationship-based advising at local community colleges was the focus of my study. The theory used guided research into student retention and completion at community colleges over the years (Williams & Johnson, 2019). Vygotsky's theory of social interaction provided the conceptual lens with which to explore what supports students within education programs at LCC.

Vygotsky's Social Interaction Theory

According to Vygotsky (1978a), there are two ways cultural development emerges in a person, on a social level and on an individual level. The basis of Vygotsky's theory is that social interaction plays an essential role in a person's success or lack of success. For example, the basis of relationship-based advising plays a role in the success or lack of success a student achieves. Vygotsky's theory is valuable to relationship-based advising because of the collaboration that is included within this type of advising model (Bistline et al., 2021). When analyzing the characteristics of relationship-based advising, an advisor using this model should observe higher student retention than with other models (Antoney, 2020).

Additionally, Vygotsky (1978b) developed the scaffolding theory. This theory suggests that social and instructional support for individuals is needed when learning a new concept. According to Vygotsky, the ZPD is assumed to be the distance between someone's ability for independent problem solving and their ability to problem solve when it is guided or facilitated by a more competent individual. ZPD is the idea that a skill can develop when there is adult guidance or peer collaboration (Vygotsky, 1964), therefore understanding of information can exceed what a person does alone. Vygotsky suggested that before the more knowledgeable individual removes the scaffolding, a person must be taught the new information or materials within their ZPD in order to develop a deeper understanding. Establishing levels of actual development through assessing potential levels of understanding of new information or concepts, what someone can do independently, within their ZPD (Bistline et al., 2021). When an advisor takes time to build a relationship with a student the attention shown should be at a level of the student's own collaboration with the advisor, representing that student's progress within their ZPD including a future without assistance (Bistline et al., 2021). Since Vygotsky's theory that the inclusion of social interaction is a necessity of learning, then the responsibility of the advisor is to provide information within a persons' ZPD and delivered in a way to develop cognitive and social understanding, while also assuring a person's needs are being met.

Literature Review Related to Key Variables and Concepts

In the 1970s, relational cultural theory emerged in response to women in psychology. According to Dipre and Luke (2020), key factors of this theory were to promote relationships and build connections, and this theory could be applied within a higher education context through an advising relationship, showing in their research that when advisors enhanced their practices to build relationships with students, retention was increased. Yet the relational component is often neglected (McGill et al., 2020b). Limited research has explored the relational component of advising, with a lack of training and professional development focused on the relationship-based advising method (McGill et al., 2020b).

There are many factors that can affect a student reaching completion of a certificate or degree, including a student's persistence in achieving their goal (Millea et al., 2018). Community colleges have one common goal, to help students complete a college certificate or degree and to assist them with a successful future career (Frohardt, 2019). Since community colleges serve a diverse group of students, advisors should have a reasonable understanding of the college supports and needs of a student (Parnes et al., 2020). Students often face social, academic, and intellectual challenges and community colleges should create structured programs designed to help students reach the completion of their academic goals (Parnes et al., 2020).

A student's persistence is connected to the effectiveness of student/advisor interaction and can be enhanced by real interactions shared with the advisor (Baker et al., 2020). High persistence has been connected to a well-run advising program that encouraged one-on-one mentoring, a responsibility shared equally with the student, and the advising relationship between student and advisor (Carales, 2020). The availability of advisors and their advising is crucial to a student's resolution to remain in college through to completion (Carales, 2020).

Higher education administrators and leaders have the capability to structure advising, influencing the way advising is performed on community college campuses (Menke et al., 2020). The area of advising tends to face insufficient funding with advisors having higher caseloads (Martinez & Elue, 2020). Additionally, there is a lack of structure that leads to limited positive policies and advisors tend to fall back on mandatory academic advising (Martinez & Elue, 2020). These challenges can drive advisors to use more authoritarian advising models over developmental advising model approaches (Martinez & Elue, 2020). This misalignment sees lower retention of students (Martinez & Elue, 2020). There are significant differences between perceptions of advising roles and the retention of students within an advisor's caseload (Menke et al., 2020). The more students perceived themselves as having a role in advising and being in a partnership with their advisor, the greater the increase was for completing a higher education certificate or degree (Tajuddin et al., 2019). If the advisor is forthright in offering or sharing information on academic support available at the college, there is an increased chance of the student achieving academic success (Harris, 2018). Quality advising builds a relationship between the advisor and the student, influencing the success of students at historically Black colleges and universities (Harris, 2018).

There are many types of advising models that fall under two umbrellas, authoritarian and developmental. Under the authoritarian umbrella, there are models like prescriptive and academic. The bias of prescriptive advising is that the advisor tells the student what to do and the student does it (Tajuddin et al., 2019). This advising type constitutes linear communication from the advisor to the student, placing the responsibility on the advisor and not on the student (Bolkan et al., 2021). Academic advising is a process between the student and advisor; the advisor shares general education options (educational and career plans, and making appropriate course selections), reviews services on campus and policies of the institution (Higgins, 2019).

Under the developmental umbrella, there are advising models like intrusive and relationship-based advising. Intrusive advising includes proactive interactions with students with intervention strategies in place (Thomas, 2020). The goal is for advisors to inform students that they can seek advice or counsel from their advisor before and/or when problems occur (Alvarado & Olson, 2020). The intrusive model of advising is action-oriented, involving and motivating students to seek help when needed (Thomas, 2020). Relationship-based advising involves a supportive working relationship between the advisor and a student. Relationship-based advising is defined as a relationship that develops over time through interactions that engage both student and advisor and promotes an engaging partnership with three key elements: trust, communication, and connectedness (Higgins, 2019). The advising method with the highest rate of student completions were models under the developmental advising umbrella (Harris, 2018). For the purpose of this study, the focus is on the two models represented at LCC, academic and relationship-based advising.

Academic Advising

The academic advising structure is one of the oldest and most prescribed methods of advising (McIntosh et al., 2021). It has become the traditional way for faculty to engage with students (McIntosh et al., 2021). The academic advising model originated in the early 19th century (Gutiérrez et al., 2020) to a recognized need identified at Johns Hopkins University (White, 2020). Administrators realized students should not select electives without input and recommendations from a faculty member. The belief was that advice from a more knowledgeable person would guide students to a more meaningful and coherent education option (White, 2020). As the higher education framework changed to include the need for general education, electives, minors, the demand for academic advisors grew (Gutiérrez et al., 2020).

As time progressed and World War II veterans joined the student body, there was a clear picture that veterans were struggling with choosing courses and needed special interventions (White, 2020). In the 1970s, it was noted that first-generation and adult students also needed academic advising assistance (White, 2020). By 1980, academic advisors were a recognized part of college and university campuses across the country (Hilliger, 2020). Today, many campuses continue the use of academic advising without acknowledging the potential of the advising model's outdated features (Hilliger, 2020). To fill in gaps and retain students, community colleges added programs like freshman orientation (McIntosh et al., 2021).

Characteristics of Academic Advising

The academic advising model is a hierarchical relationship outlined as an advisor who provides information in a one-directional flow and the student or advisee as the passive recipient (McIntosh et al., 2021). The most common interaction consists of an advisor telling the student which course to enroll in next, offering guidance to students, and addressing any immediate concerns (McIntosh et al., 2021). Administrators at higher education institutions who use academic advising feel it is important for the institutions to understand how to support the advisor role (Hart-Baldridge, 2020). The perception of academic advisors is the understanding that the greatest advising responsibilities are to ensure students fulfill graduation requirements and to teach students to navigate the college's systems (Hart-Baldridge, 2020).

Academic advising tends to be a rote, bureaucratic experience that checks off required boxes (Carlson, 2020). Advisors under this model are usually inexperienced and are using advising to get a start in employment within the college system (Carlson, 2020). Advisors inside an academic model are not consciously thinking about how an advising position could lead to an unanticipated career. However, advisors are often disconnected from the students' needs and focus on the number of students seen that can open possible career options. Tippetts et al. (2022) found that the role of the advisor is instrumental in retention and persistence to graduation, noting the relationship between advising appointment is paramount. “Many institutions ignore the potential of those advising units, seeing them as a tool for crisis management among struggling students, rather than something more expansive, more creative, more essential” (Carlson, 2020, p. 9). Advising is about the whole student and meeting the student where they are in their journey and understanding of the college system.

The importance of academic advising is often communicated through an institutional or departmental mission statement, within outlines of faculty duties, or a combination of the two (Crecelius, 2020). Within higher education, the perception is that faculty are not interested in assisting in academic advising, they find the task to be cumbersome and not worth their time (Guerra, 2020). Guerra found this perception has made academic advising impersonally cold and not as helpful as other advising models.

Issues Within Academic Advising

The academic advisor is the front-line resource for a student in the higher education system, and can greatly influence the success of a student (Sarcedo, 2022). A student's social and cultural environment affects how they seek understanding of the world around them (Hilliger, 2020). Not unlike other interactions a person has, academic advising is a significant tool used in higher education to support student retention (McGill et al., 2020a). The use of academic advising has been known to assimilate a student academically and socially into the world of higher education (McGill et al., 2020a). College administrators often witness an academic benefit once a student has received academic advising that includes support on selecting courses and declaring a major (McGill et al., 2020a).

Academic advising is a process of helping students discover their talents and capabilities and has been described as teaching, counseling, mentoring, and encouraging students (McGill, 2019). The practices that administrators implement for academic advising have implications on students, such as who will perform the academic advising, the experience of the academic advisor, and understanding of nuances between academic programs. It is important to make sure the advisor has enough information to help the student (Menke et al., 2020). Menke et al. also found that there were gaps of knowledge an advisor has about their role, tasks they need to complete, and the depth of academic advising in some cases. Menke et al. also found that the knowledge of the history of academic advising and the role of the academic advisor play in higher education was low. Additionally, Crecelius (2020), noted that degree completion was a byproduct of the education experience and that academic advisors placed degree completion as the primary goal. If academic advising is the link to completion, then having a set of defined roles and responsibilities should be incorporated across higher education institutions (Hart-Baldridge, 2020). This understanding by an academic advisor would lead to enhanced outcomes for the student and increased metrics for academic advisors (Hart-

Baldridge, 2020).

Relationship-Based Advising

The relationship-based advising structure is part of the developmental umbrella. There is the element of facilitating a students' ability to problem solve, make their own decisions, develop rational processes for being successful, and awareness of their own behavior including impacts of their choices (McGill et al., 2020b). The behavior of the advisor influences the student attitude toward learning (Al Adawi & Al Ajmi, 2023). There are three components for being successful as a relationship-based advisor: conceptual, informational, and relational understanding of the advising model and the program students are seeking (McGill et al., 2020b). McGill et al. (2020b) defined conceptual understanding as student and institutional context, informational understanding includes procedure and policies or laws, and relational understanding includes interpersonal skills. The use of these three components were shown to reduce the negative attitudes and factors that hinder positive outcomes for students (Al Adawi & Al Ajmi, 2023).

History of Relationship-Based Advising

Originating in the 1500s, the Ignatian Pedagogy was a new approach to education, which provided a vision or methodology for learning. For this reason, learning, self-reflection, and awareness continue outside of class time (DeFeo & Keegan, 2020). Today, this pedagogy focuses on the role of the advisor as essential to student retention, as this relationship provides support, continuity, and a person who will celebrate all accompaniments whether large or small (DeFeo & Keegan, 2020). The use of advising historically has been viewed as a critical element to student success for persistence and retention (Holland et al., 2020). Yet, the process of advising has been the focus over student satisfaction that leads to retention (Holland et al., 2020). The Ignatian Pedagogy is a way that advisors can walk alongside the students. This journey is based on the relationship formed between the student and the advisor, which provides an avenue for students to have a sounding board when they are struggling with ideas, decisions, registration, selecting a major, and even career advice (DeFeo & Keegan, 2020).

The higher education environment has been making changes to be a place that is more equitable and serves the diverse community of enrollment (Holland et al., 2020). Shifts in societal norms have meant a change to a consumer-led viewpoint, resulting in students having a consumer perspective when looking at colleges (Durazzi, 2021). For these reasons, colleges have begun the marketization of advising, in some instances making proclamations of advising norms at the college that are not accurate or not always used by advisors (Durazzi, 2021). Since the concepts of relationships found in the Ignatian Pedagogy were introduced, relationship-based advising has always been on the fringe (DeFeo & Keegan, 2020). There are elements of the relationship-based advising found in other advising models, even academic advising, but it has only been seen with more importance recently (Carlson, 2020).

Characteristics of Relationship-Based Advising

Under the developmental umbrella, the relationship-based advising structure includes many of the elements of academic advising. There is the element of facilitating a students' ability to problem solve, make their own decisions, develop rational processes for being successful, and awareness of their own behavior including impacts of their choices (McGill et al., 2020b). There are three components for being successful as a relationship-based advisor, which includes having a conceptual, informational, and relational understanding (McGill et al., 2020b). McGill et al. defined conceptual understanding as advising that happens within a student and institutional context, with the informational understanding that includes procedure and policies or laws, and relational understanding that includes interpersonal skills. Key elements of the relationship-based advising model include trust, communication, and connectedness (Higgins, 2019).

Students deserve experienced, thoughtful mentors but often administrations do not understand what can stem from positive advising interaction (Carlson, 2020). Bowden et al. (2021) discussed the developmental theory of student involvement and found that frequent interaction with an advisor was strongly related to contentment with the college. Students felt a greater connection and sense of belonging (Bowden et al., 2021). Advisors and students both had perceived barriers until a relationship was established between the student and advisor (Hart-Baldridge, 2020). Once a relationship was established, the power differential between student and advisor essentially vanished (Bond et al., 2020). It is critical that advisors establish boundaries between being a friend and advisor (Bond et al., 2020).

Access, persistence, and retention were found to be key areas when it comes to reaching completion (Holland et al., 2020). Often, a community college is the best choice for an individual because of easy access (Elliott, 2020). For working individuals, easy access to community college is vital in leading to persistence, retention, and completion

(Elliott, 2020). Persistence is not something that can be supported through advising but advising has been linked to a student's drive for persistence (Holland et al., 2020). Supports offered by an advisor have provided additional connections to a student's persistence (Tippetts et al., 2020). Tippetts et al. (2020) found that the use of relationship-based advising increased a student's perspective of personal persistence by 62% compared to their counterparts who did not have access to a relationship-based advisor. Relationship-based advising develops over time through an engaging partnership. It is important for the relationship-based advisor to understand all possible supports within the college system as well as advising strategies that are available to a student (Higgins, 2019).

Relationship-Based Advising and Attainment

Within higher education outcomes, attainment is defined as achievements by the student, which may include class completion and degrees awarded (Holland et al., 2020). Within advising literature, the term "student success" links to attainment, and often refers to retention and progression (Holland et al., 2020). Advising is an important aspect of the academic environment and attainment (Palmer et al., 2021). Students understand that good advising plays a role in the facilitation of skill and future employability (Palmer et al., 2021). Literature to date has focused on three key elements of attainment through advising: student success, persistence, and retention (Palmer et al., 2021). Rutschow et al., (2021) found there was a correlation between the elements of attainment and student satisfaction with their advisor. When there was an established relationship between the student and the advisor, and supports were available at the institution, there was a direct impact on a student's intentions to persist and complete their education (Rutschow et al., 2021). The student's perceived level of institutional support was influenced by the relationship between the student and advisor, and the number of supports offered by the advisor. This led to a higher instance of self-efficacy and increased use of study skills. Rutschow et al. referred to attainment in relation to academic performance where the student learning and advisor relationship are critical to success. So far, literature has suggested "how" an advising relationship can impact student attainment but not the "why" (Palmer et al., 2021). Research has suggested that advisors play a critical role in supporting the development of self-efficacy and student expectations (Hayes et al., 2020). Research findings have shown that advisors played a role in students developing realistic expectations about college (Hayes et al., 2020). While many students have had positive experiences with advisors, data analysis revealed some areas where academic advising failed the student and relationship-based advising created a positive link to student attainment (Hayes et al., 2020).

Retention as Connected to Relationship-Based Advising

Uddin (2020) found there was a link between a student's push to persist in college to reach completion and the student-advisor relationship. The established student-advisor relationship plays a role in shaping the students' experiences and in provoking students' retention leading to completions goals (Moore, 2020). The bulk of the relationship between the advisor and the student develops through positive interactions (Uddin, 2020). Moore's (2020) study suggested that positive interactions correlate with increased student outcomes. Therefore, the established relationship between the student and the advisor possibly settles the student's decision to remain in college until successful completion (Moore, 2020).

Additional results have confirmed the effectiveness of the student-advisor relationship that builds on positive interactions (Spight, 2020). Spight (2020) indicated that certain outcomes, like increased efforts and student engagement, pointed to retention and had a direct correlation between the relationship and the advisor. Sasso and Phelps' (2021) study similarly stressed the important role student relationships with their advisor is, and how that relationship plays in a student's attitudes and decisions of persistence. The effectiveness of the student-advisor relationship suggests a correlation between retention and a positive relationship with an advisor (Sasso & Phelps, 2021).

Detwiler's (2020) study highlighted the need for community colleges to invest in relationship-based advising. If there is a stronger student-advisor relationship, the student is more likely to commit to staying in college to completion (Detwiler, 2020). Smith and Van Aken (2020) stressed that informal discussions outside the advising setting between the student and advisor resulted in psychosocial development, increased motivation, and positive academic self-confidence. A student having access to their advisor in a casual setting increased the likelihood of establishing educational goals and reaching them (Smith & Van Aken, 2020). Kapinos (2021) emphasized the positive impact of student-advisor relationships and the impact on persistence in college to successful completion. There is a correlation between the level of relationship established with the advisor and retention of the student at the college (Kapinos, 2021).

Returning Adult Learners and Advising

The adult learner is part of a complex and diverse group that is not defined by age alone. Karmelita (2020) defined adult learners as being one or more of the following: delayed entry into college after high school, have dependents, a single parent, employed full time, financially independent, part-time student and not holding a high school diploma. Adult learners are an increasingly rising population of students enrolling in community colleges (Karmelita, 2020). The primary reason for adult learners to return to college is for advancement in their careers (Gordon, 2020). Advising has been found to be a critical component in the successful transition to higher education with initial supports like admission, registration, and financial aid guidance (Karmelita, 2020). More importantly, the ongoing relationship between the advisor and the student is what continues to support adult learners through challenges as they pursue higher education (Failing & Lombardozzi, 2020). More adult learners are returning to college than at any other time before and it is up to the college to meet the needs of the adult learner (Cassidy, 2020). Because of the high number of adult learners returning to college, higher education needs to understand how to better support returning students (Cassidy, 2020). When an adult learner returns to college, some factors can affect retention (Failing & Lombardozzi, 2020). Failing and Lombardozzi (2020) found that retention is linked to a relationship with an advisor. Study results have shown that a student's intent was important, but the support and relationship offered by an advisor was the most important factor to completion (Doyle, 2020). Community college efforts to support retention through advising have yielded positive results (Doyle, 2020). The shift of advising focus infers that community colleges are beginning to appreciate the value of relationship-based advising as it pertains to retention and student satisfaction (Doyle, 2020).

Another component of retention is support. As the relationship between the advisor and the student becomes more grounded, supports are more easily identified through ongoing conversations (Pelletier & Hutt, 2021). It was found that adult learners were more likely to express needed support to their advisor if there was an established relationship, thus increasing retention (Pelletier & Hutt, 2021). While support systems, including early alert systems, can encourage a student to continue and reach successful completion, the positive relationship between the student and the advisor has been found to be a far greater encouragement (Roessger et al., 2019). Collom et al. (2021) found that advisor support is an intricate concept that includes challenge, support, and readiness. This suggests that support is complex and can affect persistence in returning students (Collom et al.). Powers and Wartalski (2021) concluded that it is important to have support services in conjunction with an established relationship with an advisor. Explicitly, adult learners returning to college were more likely to accept intervention strategies if the relationship with their advisor was positive (Powers & Wartalski, 2021). While literature documents the adult learner's perceptions of returning to college, there is a lack of literature on the advisor's perceptions of the impact of the relationship-based advising role.

Appreciative Advising

The appreciative advising model is the foundation for relationship-based advising. Relationship-based advising takes the elements of appreciative advising and builds on them. The appreciative advising model is constructed on the concept of appreciative inquiry and takes into account positive psychology (Cassidy, 2020) This type of advising enables advisors to optimize the student's success through six phases (Cassidy, 2020). The purpose of the appreciative advising phases is to enhance positive interactions between students and advisors (Kenrick, 2019). The tenant of this model is the partnership between the student and the adviser with retention as a goal (Kenrick, 2019). Advisors focus on one student at a time, making that student their focus while they are together, in an effort of making the student feel valued and important (Kenrick, 2019). This advising model provides the opportunity for the advisor to nurture student abilities and strengths while being deliberate and intentional with advising and supports (Cassidy, 2020).

The six phases of the appreciative advising model are disarm, discover, dream, design, deliver, and do not settle (Schmidt, 2019). These first three phases are instrumental in supporting the development of the advisor-student relationship (Bigard, 2020). The appreciative approach urges those involved to interact in a positive advising relationship that will optimize the student education experience (Beri et al., 2020). Looking at the six phases of appreciative advising, the role of the advisor is clear.

Phase one is disarming. Disarming helps to support better interactions with students (Schmidt, 2019). This phase focuses on building trust, rapport, and engages all stakeholders in the process of collaboration to reach a common understanding about advising (Read et al., 2017). According to Tian and Louw (2020), students' perceived relationship with an advisor is a significant factor in success. Students who trust a college advisor have a lower probability of transferring or dropping out, therefore improving retention issues (Tian & Louw, 2020).

Phase two is discovery. Through discovery, the advisor can uncover strengths and skills a student may have (Schmidt, 2019). During this phase, the advisor will engage students with positive, open-ended questions while listening actively to the students' responses (Tian & Louw, 2020). The primary focus of this phase is to learn about the student and respect the best in that person (Read et al., 2017). There are several aspects of the discovery phase including sharing stories reflecting on those cherished moments, identifying what a person values most, and stating their three wishes (Tian & Louw, 2020).

Phase three is dream. The dream phase encourages students to pursue their dreams and envision their future (Schmidt, 2019). The advisor will ask the student what they see for their future (Tian & Louw, 2020). This activity is for the student to create a positive image of their dreams and lay the groundwork for creating an action plan (Tian & Louw, 2020). One question to answer during this phase is when has the dream been reached, what will it look like (Landaw et al., 2020)? The excitement for the future begins to shift toward the desired future reality (Landaw et al., 2020).

Phase four is design. Design is the phase when advisors and students work collaboratively to create the student's educational plan (Schmidt, 2019). This phase involves remembering the best of the past through stories to guide the student toward specific action steps for reaching their desired goal (Landaw et al., 2020). While reflecting, the advisor and student work on the co-construction of an education plan

(Landaw et al., 2020). The advisor and student have the ability to align the students' dreams and visions to become a reality, through collaborative planning (Landaw et al., 2020).

Phase five is deliver. Deliver is when an advisor provides the needed supports to assist a student in completing their plan (Schmidt, 2019). Through offering support and monitoring to students while they work towards achieving their goals, advisors encourage students with the confidence they have in the ability to succeed in achieving their education plan that was co-created (Tian & Louw, 2020). Landaw et al. (2020) described this phase as maintaining momentum for increased performance toward completion.

Phase six is do not settle. This final stage helps support a student in reaching the completion of their program (Bigard, 2020). This final phase encourages both the student and the advisor to engage at a deeper level while encouraging continued growth and performance (Schmidt, 2019). Tian and Louw (2020) found that through advising the highest display of aspirations to complete their goal were found during this phase.

Summary and Conclusions

The work LCC has done thus far with Achieving the Dream, a gap has been identified in the inconsistent practices of advising used. Advising models influence retention and other success markers, and for this reason are of interest to community colleges (Martinez & Elue, 2020). Administrators and other higher education leaders have the capability to structure their advising model, affecting the way advising is implemented on community college campuses (Menke et al., 2020). The purpose of this basic qualitative study was to investigate how advisors are implementing the relationship-based advising method when advising students at LCC.

Through the conceptual framework, I outlined with Vygotsky's social interaction theory (1978a), it was concluded that this theory showed a relation to positive outcomes when a relationship is formed. The two structures of advising are authoritarian and developmental, with each structure having many types of advising models. Since LCC uses academic and relationship-based advising, the attention of this literature review focused on these two advising models.

The academic advising structure is one of the oldest and most prescribed methods of advising in higher education institutions (McIntosh, et al. 2021). The academic advising model is often a bureaucratic experience that checks off boxes and the student experience or need is not considered (Carlson, 2020). The relationship-based advising structure includes elements of academic advising, but also includes a relationship that is supportive of a students' ability to problem solve, make their own decisions, develop rational processes for being successful, and awareness of their own behavior including impacts of their choices (McGill et al., 2020b). Key elements include trust, communication, and connectedness (Higgins, 2019), the relationship-based model gave students a feeling of greater connection and sense of belonging in their institution and education (Bowden et al., 2021).

Advising is a critical component in the successful transition to higher education (Karmelita, 2020), including establishing the ongoing relationship between the advisor and the student (Failing & Lombardozzi, 2020). Additional research is needed to address the problem of inconsistent implementation of the relationship-based advising model by the advisors. By conducting a basic qualitative research design, I will follow a 3-step outline that includes recruitment criteria, participant sample size, and plan for instrumentation to be used.

Chapter 3: Research Method

The problem addressed in this study was inconsistent implementation of the relationship-based advising model by the advisors at the study site. Information in this chapter includes my role as a researcher, the methodology used, and how it is relevant to the study. I also address participant selection, instrumentation, and procedures for recruitment, participation, and data collection. Further, I discuss the data analysis plan and refer to issues of trustworthiness. Finally, I describe ethical procedures and the treatment of data gathered from interviews, including the steps in data analysis used to interpret the data.

Research Design and Rationale

The main purpose of this basic qualitative study was to investigate how advisors were implementing the relationship-based advising model when advising students at LCC. Considering the research problem, I formulated research questions that would reveal the perceptions of advisors at LCC regarding their use of the relationship-based advising model: “What were the advisors’ perceptions about how relationship-based advising was being implemented at LCC?” and “What did participant advisors experience when implementing relationship-based advising?”

I used a basic qualitative research design (Dunn & Moore, 2020) to focus on the relationship-based advising model. Research design provides an appropriate outline for a study (Sileyew, 2019), and the qualitative research design focuses on establishing answers to the *why* and *how* of a particular topic (Dunn & Moore, 2020). This was achieved through having a small but focused sample size of 10 participants, which allowed me to focus on the depth as opposed to the quantity of findings (see Dunn & Moore, 2020). In qualitative research, the primary instrument of data collection is the researcher, leaving the product richly descriptive. Additionally, a qualitative study is interdisciplinary, which makes it a useful method of research for a wide variety of fields of practice and is frequently used in studies within the education field (Dunn & Moore, 2020). In this research, I sought to understand how people deduce their experiences and how they make meaning of their lives and experiences (Dunn & Moore, 2020). Exploring the perceptions of advisors at LCC would be difficult to quantify, which is why I did not select a quantitative methodology of research. The qualitative methodology was a better choice to collect data to answer the research questions.

A basic qualitative research study specifically is concerned with how people build meaning surrounding common characteristics of their lived experience (Zajda, 2020). The basic qualitative study tends to dive deep into data collection, exploring sources' perceptions while concentrating on the topic to be investigated (Zajda, 2020). In this study, I analyzed the lived experiences of advisors using the relationship-based advising model. I also considered using a case study but decided against it. I chose to focus on interviews as the only data collection method with one group of participants. This allowed me to collect a more definitive set of data points.

Role of the Researcher

As the researcher, I conducted one semistructured interview with each participant to generate data for my study. Each advisor was interviewed once, with the option of participating in the member checking process related to their interview. The interview process is an important qualitative data collection tool (McGrath et al., 2019). Interviewing for data collection is complex and takes skills to manage and analyze the wide-ranging data (Williams & Moser, 2019). Along with skill, data collection in this manner takes an understanding of the experiences of participants (McGrath et al., 2019). While conducting interviews, I processed interview transcriptions immediately to maintain accuracy. I followed up with participants for clarity when summarizing the data. As the researcher, I needed to have tolerance for ambiguity because this type of research does not follow a set structure (Ewa Krautz, 2021).

Professional Relationships

The participants included in my research were advisors who used varying aspects of relationship-based advising at LCC. At the time of conducting this research, I had a limited professional relationship with some of the target population that I recruited to interview for my research. While I previously was a full-time advisor in the School of Education at LCC, I have not been in that position since September 2019. I am familiar with the advising model being researched in this study. There were no advisors within the School of Education who were advisors while I was employed at the college. Further, I am not familiar with and have no connection to the advisors of the other five departments at LCC. Our professional relationship consists of working colleagues, but we do not hold the same position, role, or job responsibilities. I do not hold any power or influence over anyone who would participate within the study.

Researcher Bias

During my professional career, I have been an advisor in higher education at the community college level. This experience led me to an interest in relationship-based advising. Regarding possible bias, my past experiences have impacted my lens, but my priority was with finding the best possible advising model to support students. Because my focus was on supporting students, I do not feel my bias interfered with the research. As an assurance, I monitored my objectivity throughout the data collection process by keeping notes. The material within my notes was limited to procedural information, personal thoughts, and reactions to the process. Being sensitive, observant, and analytical, using notes assisted in the process of reaffirming that data remained objective and free of personal bias (O'Connor et al., 2021).

Ethical Issues Based on Researcher Role

The research was conducted within the college I work for part time, but the work of this study was out of scope for my role and responsibilities as part-time staff at the college. Therefore, there was no conflict of interest as I conducted this research. As the participants had advising as part of their employment responsibilities, they were assigned an advising caseload of students. This did not create a power differential between our roles. Lastly, other than my appreciation and thanks, there were no incentives offered to those participating in the study.

Methodology

In conducting this basic qualitative research, I followed a 3-step outline that included recruitment criteria, participant sample size, and plan for instrumentation. By following this 3-step process, I was able to ensure the sample size represented all departments at LCC. In this section, I describe each of these steps in more detail.

Participant Selection

The participant population for this study was advisors who are knowledgeable of relationship-based advising methods with students. It was anticipated the characteristics of relationship-based advising used by each would vary slightly from participant to participant based on knowledge, training, and experience with the relationship-based advising model. The six departments within LCC are the School of Education, Business, Healthcare, STEM, Social and Behavioral Science, and Arts, Humanities, and Communication. I recruited 10 advisor participants representing the six departments across the LCC campus to gather data on their use of the relationship-based advising model. Because all advisors were expected to be using the characteristics of relationship-based advising, it was assumed each participant had some experience and knowledge with relationship-based advising. The criteria led to participants with a sufficient depth of experience and ensured that the experience was realistically fresh in their memory. When additional participants were needed, I requested nominations from other interviewees that were conducted successfully. This action ensured I located a sufficient assortment of participants who met the criteria for my study.

Purposeful sampling allowed me to access participants who were available, interested, and willing to be interviewed for the study. Purposeful sampling helped me identify participants who were able to communicate their perceptions and experiences in an expressive and reflective manner (McGrath et al., 2019). While using the purposeful sampling, I also implemented the snowball method. The snowball methodology is used to study hidden populations that would otherwise be hidden to the researcher (Von der Fehr et al., 2018). I used the snowball method when the initial nomination and referral approach did not yield enough participants.

To conduct my research, I interviewed 10 participants at LCC representing all six departments across the LCC campus. Selecting this sample size allowed me to generate clear themes that emerge from the data (McGrath et al., 2019). Ten participants provided adequate data to reach data saturation, which supported my attention to the research questions. A larger participant pool would not harvest further meaningful results once saturation in the data have been reached (McGrath et al., 2019). I knew that saturation in the data had been reached when data no longer revealed unique and emerging themes. Additional participants would impede the timely completion of the research study (McGrath et al., 2019).

Once I established institutional review board (IRB) approval from Walden University (IRB approval Number 11-04-22-0330899), I invited potential participants at LCC to be part of my study by contacting them through email. Contact information for potential participants was obtained through the public LCC directory. In the initial contact with the participant, there was a brief description of the study, its purpose, and the reason for the request to participate. This initial contact was sent through email in letter form and included the informed consent. The initial invitation letter also included multiple ways for potential participants to contact me, including my Walden University email and personal phone number.

Instrumentation

I collected data through synchronous one-on-one semistructured interviews on

Zoom, using questions that aligned with the research questions. With consent from the study participants, I recorded the audio from the interview, and saved it as an encrypted file. I followed up with each participant after the interview to offer them a chance to include any further information or comments through email using a process called member checking (Candela, 2019).

When conducting interviews, I used open-ended semistructured questions in an interview protocol (see Appendix A; see Pecukonis, 2021). In gathering data of the advisors' perceptions, I explored (a) the advisors' perceptions about how relationship-based advising was being implemented at LCC, and (b) the participant advisors experience when implementing relationship-based advising. This was explored through interview questions such as:

1. What advantages and barriers do you perceive when using relationship-based advising?
2. What methods do you use to establish a trusting relationship with your advisees?
3. What do you see as the advisee's role in the relationship?

Additional interview questions can be found in Appendix A, the interview protocol. Interviews took place over a 2-week period. I conducted 10 participant interviews, each taking approximately 1 hour to complete.

I started the interview process with an overview of my research and the purpose. This included a brief reminder of consent and confidentiality. I asked general background questions followed by questions that are specific to my research as suggested by literature

(Solarino & Aguinis, 2021). Identification of the research problem helped to form the research questions used for this study. The two primary research questions and Vygotsky's social interaction theory (1978a) provided the foundation for the interview questions. Examples and follow up questions asked only when clarification was needed (Pecukonis, 2021). If there was a need, I used probing question to gather further details (Pecukonis, 2021). As a researcher, I provided a safe, nonjudgmental space to conduct interviews. The interview process is complex in nature, I used the semistructured interview protocol to ensure the interview stayed on track and participants had an opportunity to fully convey their perspective.

Before the interview was concluded, I asked each participant if they had any additional statements or remarks to add. I arranged for member checking using a method of contact that was preferred to the participant (Candela, 2019). All participants were provided a week to review the questions and their responses, based on a transcript review, to add clarification or changes as needed. This gave me a method for follow up communication if there was a need for any participant clarification of the collected data (Solarino & Aguinis, 2021). At the conclusion of each interview, I reviewed any notes to ensure content validity, clarify issues and note the context in which each interview occurred (Pecukonis, 2021).

Procedures for Recruitment, Participation, and Data Collection

Potential participants were contacted through email. The contact information for potential participants was acquired through the LCC public directory. My plan for obtaining participants was to contact advisors representing the six departments at LCC who had an advising caseload, and who indicated in their response that they were knowledgeable of relationship-based advising. If further participants were needed, I depended on the knowledge of LCC's Director of Advising to obtain the nomination of potential participants. This information allowed me to contact the nominees from LCC's director of advising to request their participation in my study. When further participants were required, I asked those that I interviewed for nominations of other potential participants. In the initial contact with any potential participant, there was a brief description of the study, its purpose, and the reason for the request to participate. This initial contact was in the form of a letter sent through email and included an informed consent. Additionally, the letter included the time required and the nature of participation. The initial letter also included multiple ways for potential participants to contact me, including my Walden University email or personal phone number. At the start of the Zoom interview, I had the participant confirm that they agreed to the outlined information in the informed consent letter.

After agreeing to be a part of the study, but before the interview, I provided each participant with an informed consent letter through their desired mode of communication. This informed consent letter reminded each participant that participation in the study was voluntary and explained in simple terms policies regarding participants' confidentiality, rights to privacy, withdrawal from the study, and data protection (Nakkash et al., 2017). The informed consent letter outlined how I intended to protect their rights as participants', ensure confidentiality, and protect data (Nakkash et al., 2017).

Data Collection

To be prepared to collect data, I needed to get institutional review board (IRB) approval from Walden University. Once participants agreed to be a part of the study, I scheduled interview times. I used the participants' preferred method of communication for advance reminders of the scheduled interview date.

I used 1:1 semistructured interviews as my data collection method. I used Doodle Pol to schedule virtual face-to-face interviews on dates and at times convenient to both parties. I used Zoom to record the audio of the interview for better transcription and precise data collection. I started each interview meeting with a restatement of the interview procedures, the purpose of my study, and my expectations of the interviewee. To reaffirm the participant's readiness to join the study, I completed this process with a review of the letter of informed consent. Once each interview was completed, I immediately transcribed the Zoom recordings to assist in the analysis of collected data. The transcription was done to avoid misplacing or misinterpreting data which may jeopardize the credibility of the study.

The semistructured interview process contained open-ended questions that are intended to explore the perceptions of advisors using the relationship-based model at LCC. Open-ended questions were designed to introduce a topic and invite reflection as a response. This type of question structure allowed participants to elaborate on their experiences or observations using elements of the relationship-based model of advising.

During the semistructured interview process, participants described what they perceived as valued aspects of the relationship-based advising model and how those aspects supported students toward completion and any other positive influences (Weller et al., 2018). The use of open-ended questions also provided me, as the interviewer, an opportunity to ask follow-up questions to seek further clarifications on points that arose during the interviews (Frey, et al., 2021). There were no additional commitments required of the participant once the interview had concluded. The use of open-ended questions gave participants the flexibility to respond in a comfortable approach that supported a deeper reflective point of view (Weller et al., 2018). The use of this process ensured that my research questions were fully addressed, and data collected were relevant. Once an interview had been concluded, the participant received a final exit email thanking them for their participation during this study. The email also included a reminder that while I appreciated their participation, no incentives were provided for their participation in this study.

Once I established IRB approval for my proposal, I began the interview process. Nakkash et al. (2017) stated that interviews are a fundamental approach of inquiry for a qualitative research study. The interview process was a formal conversation designed to produce information that addresses the research questions through collecting and reaping the meaning participants made from their experiences (Nakkash et al., 2017). For my study, I used the interviews gathered to discover and understand the perceptions of advisors using the relationship-based model of advising at LCC.

Data Analysis Plan

The primary source of data for analysis were interview transcripts, with secondary data being my notes. Naganathan et al. (2022) stated data analysis involves discovering meaning in what the researcher sees and hears through the data collection process. Accurately analyzing the data are crucial to constructing meaningful results (Kalpokas & Radivojevic, 2022). For this study, the analyzed data consists primarily of interview transcripts of participant recordings during each interview to accurately capture the perception of each advisor in the study. The interview audio was recorded using Zoom for better transcription and precise data collection. All participants were provided a week to review the questions and their responses, based on a transcript review, to add clarification or changes as needed (Candela, 2019). Participants did not respond with any additional edits, revisions, or change requests after reviewing the transcript of their interview.

The overall goal of qualitative data analysis was to establish emerging themes from the experiences and perceptions of each participant interviewed. Thematic analysis is defined as the process used to identify patterns or themes within qualitative data (Maguire & Delahunt, 2017; Yeung & Yau, 2022). The steps for thematic analysis included preparing for data analysis, examining all the data, performing accurate data coding, using the coding to generate descriptions (people, setting, common themes), articulate the results of the analysis, and interpretation of the results (Maguire & Delahunt, 2017; Yeung & Yau, 2022). Further, Maguire and Delahunt (2017) noted that the use of these steps requires the researcher to sort and arrange the data in a meaningful way.

Data analysis for the study used open coding to find emerging patterns and themes within the interview data (Saldaña, 2021). I used open coding to better identify emerging themes that require classification of transcribed text according to content (Williams & Moser, 2019). Coding encompasses identifying words or short phrases that are significant or capture valued information. During data analysis, codes were developed, then patterns, and then themes of those codes (Saldaña, 2021). Emerging themes were fully descriptive, stand on their own, and provided a potential answer to a research question. Through the data analysis process, I manually analyzed data at the earliest possible time after the interview. Doing this enabled me to look for emerging themes. To understand the common phenomenon, I created a comparison table or graph to help explain results (Lungu, 2022). Discrepancies were not anticipated because all participants came from LCC and followed the same policies and procedures. There might be differences in approach, but the overall intent was the same.

Trustworthiness

The validity of a qualitative research study hinges on trustworthiness because professionals in applied fields often depend on research results (Amin et al., 2020). Professionals in applied fields need to have assurance and trust the results are credible (Amin et al., 2020). The benchmarks of trustworthiness are credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability, and the techniques used to establish authenticity (Amin et al., 2020). Issues of trustworthiness in qualitative research are often revealed through techniques of reliability and validity or both (Rose & Johnson, 2020). Researchers should concentrate on the overall trustworthiness of qualitative research by more directly addressing issues associated with reliability and validity (Rose & Johnson, 2020). Establishing authority and credibility in a qualitative research study is vital in establishing the trustworthiness of the research findings.

To establish the credibility of my study, I employed several strategies. The first strategy I used to establish credibility was member checking. Member checking is a common practice in qualitative research to retain validity (Candela, 2019). Member checking encompasses providing the participants an opportunity to review the transcript of their interview and to provide feedback (Ningi, 2022). Using member checking provides a way to ensure the accurate representation of each participant voice by allowing the opportunity to validate or refute the accuracy or interpretation of data, adding integrity to the study (Candela, 2019). Within 48 hours of all interviews being completed, I provided each participant with a copy of their interview transcript. I gave each participant a week to look over the transcripts before data analysis began. Participants did not respond with any additional edits, revisions, or change requests after reviewing the transcript of their interview.

Another strategy I used is probing and iterative questioning, as both can establish the credibility of results (Regan et al., 2019). My study looked at the perceptions of advisors who used relationship-based advising and who advise students at LCC. Therefore, the use of probing and iterative questioning established credibility because the findings were connected to reality. The use of probing questions allowed me to produce more organized data and findings (Regan et al., 2019). The focus of this study was narrowed to advising models employed at one urban community college, LCC. My intent was not to generalize the research findings for other settings, preventing direct transferability for other institutions. The intent was to comprehend the perceived understanding of community college advisors who used components of relationship-based advising at LCC. I also realized that the outcome of this study could potentially interest other researchers, educators, and administrators at similarly structured higher education institutions. To further establish the trustworthiness of this study, I carefully sorted through my data to identify emerging themes. Determining trustworthiness is essential to research and it is the responsibility of the researcher to determine trustworthiness and dependability of emerging themes (Candela, 2019). Identifying themes in participant responses helped me to recognize when data had reached the saturation point and no new themes were developing (Regan et al., 2019). Using the aforementioned strategies provided me the opportunity to identify contradictions and falsehoods that emerged and rejected suspicious data (Candela, 2019). Furthermore, Candela (2019) understood that the use of the mentioned strategies provided increased transparency by emphasizing findings, contradictions, and falsehoods. As the researcher, I acknowledged that my feelings and biases might be unintentionally inserted into data, this was why member checking was used to review my notes after each interview, implementing reflexivity, a strategy for establishing confirmability (Olmos-Vega et al, 2022).

Ethical Procedures

Ethics and ethical behavior are the fundamental pillars of research (Sivasubramaniam et al., 2021). As part of my ethical procedure, I established approval from Walden University's institutional review board (IRB) before I started to conduct interviews or collect any data. I also sought approval from LCC to interview any employees needed for my research. Once I secured the necessary approvals, I sent an invitation letter through email correspondence to potential participants, with an invitation to participate in my study.

Ideally, the researcher should contact each potential participant directly as this strategy cuts out the need for third-party communication and starts building a relationship between the researcher and the potential participant from the start (Haugom et al., 2019). A strong relationship can yield additional data during the interview process, leading to successful interviews and data collection (Glasziou et al., 2021). During initial contact with potential participants, there is an opportunity to gain respect as well as trust, which increases the likelihood of having a positive relationship with the participant (Haugom et al., 2019). In an effort for each participant to feel comfortable, I reminded them of the research plan for their privacy and communicated that I want them to speak frankly and freely when responding to questions. My hope was that each participant shared as much information they feel is pertinent to the question and did not feel under any obligation to answer questions that made them uncomfortable with their response.

Once interested participants were recognized, I reminded them of the purpose and nature of the study and asked for their consent to participate. This consent was verbal as well as an email confirmation. The letter of informed consent explained in detail interview protocol, including the policies and procedures in place to protect a participant's privacy and data confidentiality. I reminded them that their participation was voluntary, and they could exit the study at any time if they felt uncomfortable or found it inconvenient (Haugom et al., 2019). None of the participants chose to exit the study, therefore none of the data collected from any participant was discarded. I made it clear that there were no incentives or compensation of any kind for participating in the study.

Maintaining confidentiality and privacy was the chief principle while collecting data. I held myself to a high standard of confidentiality and privacy while collecting data for my study and during the analysis process. With the use of pseudonyms, I ensured that the identities of each participant who contributed to the study remained confidential and were not shared. No information or details that might identify participants was not revealed, which included any personal information that is identifiable and the location of the study. I communicated to each participant that their identity would not be included in the study, nor would any information they provided be the exclusive data for this research study.

I used a data storage system to protect participants' information. In a secure filing cabinet in my personal office, I have included all digital and hard copies of data collected for example notes, storage devices, and printouts of transcribed interviews (Haugom et al., 2019). I encrypted all digital data and protected it with password access that was only known to me. All data will be destroyed 5 years after the completion of my study (Sivasubramaniam et al., 2021).

A conflict of interest in research occurs when the researcher is able to influence the research or when the researcher or their family is in a situation to benefit monetarily or receive personal gains from the research (Arifin, 2018). This study was not funded in any manner by any organization, group, individuals, or institution (LCC) where the research was conducted. Other than working with students in my professor role capacity, I personally have not held a position of authority at LCC; therefore, I was unable to pressure or coerce individual faculty advisors into participating in this study. Faculty advisors were full-time faculty who also have a small advising caseload as part of their faculty contact. In my faculty position at LCC, it was unlikely that I would manipulate their participation or interview responses.

Summary

I used the basic qualitative research design to examine the perceptions of advisors who are knowledgeable of the relationship-based advising model at LCC. I chose to focus on the elements of relationship-based advising to concentrate on participant experiences and perspectives. Elements of this chapter include outlining the selection and relevance of the qualitative research design and method for this study. I selected the use of the basic qualitative method as a guide to complete my study (McGrath et al., 2019). I used virtual face-to-face interviews as a means for collecting data. Thematic analysis was completed to analyze the data, which requires the researcher to arrange the data in a meaningful way (Maguire & Delahunt, 2017). Lastly, I spoke about my role as a researcher, which includes ethical concerns and processes used to establish the trustworthiness of the study.

Chapter 4: Results

The purpose of this study was to investigate how advisors were implementing the relationship-based advising method when advising students at LCC. The research questions addressed advisors' perceptions and experiences with implementing relationship-based advising at LCC. The information in this chapter will include setting details, such as number of participants and setting of the college. This chapter will also include data collection methods used and how data analysis was performed. Additionally, this chapter includes the results of the research data collected and evidence of trustworthiness of the data collection.

Setting

The setting of this study was LCC. Ten participants were interviewed for the study. I established rapport with each participant from LCC through positive facial and body expressions, being grateful for their assistance, engaging in insignificant small talk before beginning interview questions, and reminding each participant of my confidentiality practices. Interviews were conducted virtually through Zoom. The focus of the research was one urban community college located in the Pacific Northwest. Participants represented the six departments across the LCC campus with at least one participant from each department. Participants also provided perspectives from a range of experiences from 1–23 years. Participants were all female from diverse racial and ethnic backgrounds that included Pacific Islander, African American, Asian, Middle Eastern, Eastern European, and White.

Data Collection

In this basic qualitative study, I used one-on-one semistructured interviews as my data collection method. I used a doodle poll and email to schedule virtual face-to-face interviews on dates and at times convenient to both parties. I used Zoom to record the audio of the interview for better transcription and precise data collection. I started each interview meeting with a restatement of the purpose of my study and an affirmation of their informed consent.

Semistructured interviews containing open-ended questions were intended to explore the perceptions of advisors using elements of the relationship-based model at LCC. Open-ended questions were designed to introduce a topic related to relation-based advising and invite participant reflection as a response. This type of question structure allowed participants to elaborate on their experiences or observations using elements of the relationship-based model of advising. During the semistructured interview process, participants described what they perceived as valued aspects of the relationship-based advising model and how those aspects support students toward program completion and any other positive influences such as retention and an increased grade point average (Weller et al., 2018).

Nothing further was required of the participants once the interview concluded, but they were invited to review the transcript of their interview to add any comments or edits to what they stated. Once each interview was completed, I transcribed the Zoom recordings to assist in the analysis of collected data. In preparation for the analysis, no variations were found during the collection period. At the completion of the interview, participants received a final exit email thanking them for their participation in this study. The email also included a reminder that while I appreciated their participation, no incentives would be provided for their participation in this study.

Data Analysis

The primary source of data for analysis were interview transcripts, with secondary data being my researcher notes. I analyzed data consisted primarily of interview transcripts of the participant recordings during each interview to accurately capture the perception of each advisor in the study. The interview audio was recorded using Zoom for better transcription and precise data collection. Member checking confirms that the researcher has correctly and accurately documented the participants responses (Candela, 2019). Member checking provides the participants an opportunity to review the transcript of their interview and provide feedback (Ningi, 2022). Using member checking provides a way to ensure the accurate representation of each participant voice by allowing the opportunity to validate or refute the accuracy or interpretation of transcript data, adding integrity to the study (Candela, 2019). Within 48 hours of all interviews being completed, I provided each participant with a copy of their interview transcript. I provided a week for each participant to review the questions and their responses to add clarification or changes as needed. Participants did not respond with any additional edits, revisions, or change requests after reviewing the transcript of their interview.

Data analysis for the study included open coding to find emerging patterns and themes within the interview data (Saldaña, 2021). I used open coding to better identify emerging themes that required classification of transcribed text according to content

(Williams & Moser, 2019). Coding encompassed identifying words or short phrases that were significant or captured valuable information. Codes were developed, then patterns, and out of the patterns, themes were developed during data analysis (Saldaña, 2021). Emergent themes are to be fully descriptive, standing out on their own, and provide a potential answer to a research question (Saldaña, 2021). Prior to beginning the data analysis process, I transcribed the interview Zoom recordings at the earliest time possible, but within 24 hours after the interview. Following transcription, I read through the data to get a general idea of the information (Ningi, 2022). Doing this enabled me to provide a transcript to each participant to review their contribution. Once each participant confirmed my transcripts were accurate and complete, the process of coding began (Ningi, 2022). To understand the common phenomenon, I created a comparison table or graph to help explain results (Lungu, 2022). All participants came from LCC and followed the same procedures outlined for the study to ensure a consistent interview protocol.

Results

The problem addressed in this study was inconsistent implementation of the relationship-based advising model by the advisors. I aimed to understand first, the advisors' perceptions about how relationship-based advising was being implemented at LCC. Second, what participant advisors experienced when implementing relationship-based advising. The interview questions were structured to support the answers to the two research questions. Interview data were coded into patterns and then themes that were aligned to the research questions (Saldaña, 2021).

Coding

Coding is a process of organizing the data collected and categorizing the data to form codes (Ningi, 2022). Coding is assigning a short designation to various aspects of the data so that it can be easily identified (Lungu, 2022). To begin the coding, I assigned words or phrases to explain the emerging themes in the data that pertain to the framework and related literature (Ningi, 2022). The data were organized into patterns, with themes emerging from the patterns. Once member checking had been completed, manual coding was used to organize the data, allowing the findings to be identified (see Saldaña, 2021). I used member checking to confirm the reliability of data, validity, and clarity of the shared transcripts. The coding process gave me the opportunity to discover commonalities in the data. I used a color identification system to look for patterns and used colors to note similarities shared by participants. I then organized the codes into themes and linked them to the appropriate research question. For confidentiality, each participant advisor was provided an alpha-numeric indicator as a pseudonym, participant advisors were referred to as Advisor 1 (A1), Advisor 2 (A2), and so on.

RQ 1: What are Advisors' Perceptions About How Relationship-Based Advising Was Being Implemented at LCC?

The results related to Research Question 1 are indicated in Table 1. Table 1 shows a summary of the patterns related to the themes pertaining to Research Question 1.

Table 1

Overview of Patterns and Themes Addressing Research Question 1

Research Question	Patterns	Themes
RQ 1: What are advisors' perceptions about how relationship-based advising was being implemented at LCC?	• Student Focused Support • Personal Contact	1. Advisors perceive elements as part of the relationship-based advising model.
	• Accessibility/Connection • Preparation • Active listening	2. Advisors declared the elements they use of relationship-based advising when advising students.
	• Professional Technical Programs • Whole College • Unsure	3. Advisors perceive the percentage of use of the relationship-based advising model at LCC varies.

In regard to the three themes that emerged from the coding of the interviews, advisors responded consistently across the themes. Responses were similar with a variety of viewpoints that were expanded upon during the interviews. The identified patterns were directly categorized into themes based on the answers presented (Williams & Moser, 2019).

Theme 1: Advisors Perceive Elements as Part of the Relationship-Based Advising Model

Theme 1 applies to RQ 1. In this first theme, two patterns emerged that embodied advisor perceptions of elements of relationship-based advising, nine out of 10 (90%) of the advisor participants indicated student focused supports and personal contact. The first pattern to emerge for this theme was student focused support. It was clear that the use of support system tools like ctcLink, Starfish, and campus resources were perceived to be an integral element to relationship-based advising. ctcLink was the student portal that includes student information, registration, and access to the Canvas classroom. Starfish was LCC's student success platform that provides advising scheduling, early alerts, and other tools, such as text alerts and notifications. Campus resources were many, including food lockers, mental health counseling, and financial aid. As A4 noted, "Knowing the tools that we have available to provide to students, it's that full wrap-around piece to have them be as successful as possible." Meeting students where they were in their educational journey and life demands is an important aspect of retention. As mentioned by A6, "I think it's important to remember them and their stories, so that they feel like more than just a number." Other important aspects indicated by the interviewees include being open-minded, celebrating each step with a student, and sharing their life story as an applicable.

The second pattern to emerge for this theme was personal contact. Personal contact should include walking alongside a student around campus, having ongoing honest communication, taking the time to get to know the student as a person, and being available to build collaborative and trusting relationships. As A2 stated, "You can't really have a relationship without having mutual trust." Additionally, A7 stated, "Cultivate a relationship with them where they feel safe."

Theme 2: Advisors Declared the Elements They Use of Relationship-Based Advising When Advising Students

Theme 2 applies to RQ 1. In this second theme, three patterns were revealed by

10 out of 10 (100%) participants that embodied advisor perceptions of elements of relationship-based advising, accessibility/connection, preparation, and active listening. This second theme encompassed advisor declarations of what elements they use of the relationship-based advising model when advising. The first pattern to emerge for this theme was accessibility/connection. Making a true supportive connection with a student takes ongoing communication, trust, upholding confidentiality, and humanizing the college system and processes. Noted by A9: “I do not try to be above them in my mannerisms or in my speech. I try to be very down to earth, very human, and not authoritarian.” Connection is the element that relationship-based advising is built upon. A10 stated, “Connecting with students right away, helping them with goal setting, to explore options, and develop a trusting relationship between them and their advisor.”

The second pattern to emerge for this theme was preparation. This includes providing opportunity for advisors to work on the skills needed to support a student and to take time for self-reflection. One of the skills needed to support students would be for the advisor to understand how supports are accessed from a student’s point of view. Reflection should include an advisor checking their own bias and being open to feedback that points out an unconscious bias. As stated by A1, being prepared includes “anticipating potential needs and providing those resources early.” An advisor must think holistically about the student and understand the student’s perspective. A8 agreed by stating “I make sure to have all of the things needed to support students individually.” A9 declared, “If they need any help with overcoming obstacles I’m here for them.” For example, being able to identify the student’s feelings or reservations about entering a college system.

The third pattern to emerge for this theme was active listening. A3 put it best when they stated, "part of this model is listening to their needs and trying to support them as they are trying to achieve their educational goals." This includes being an active listener and giving the student time to speak, not rushing them through an appointment, rather taking the time to answer all their questions and connecting them with resources they may need, and being a dependable support while the student is attending the college. Advisors need to be able to ask questions to not only know a student but to also know what the student's needs are. This was said best in an interview response by A2, "listen for barriers, and then encourage the student to use the resources that would help solve those barriers." Questioning gently and getting to know the student on a personal level allows the advisor to offer supports was a common response within this theme.

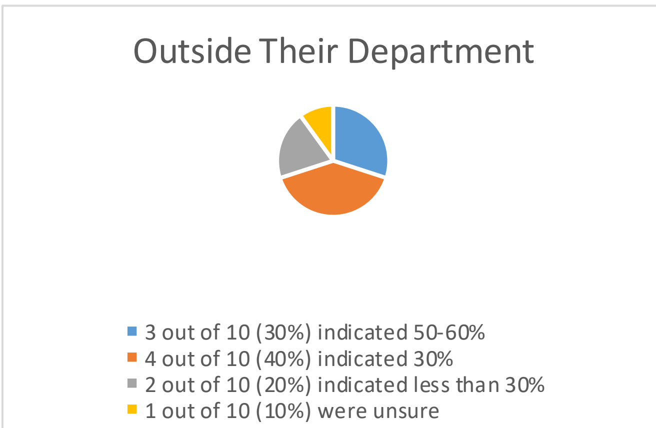
Theme 3: Advisors Perceive the Percentage of Use of the Relationship-Based Advising Model at LCC Varies

Theme 3 applies to RQ 1. In this third theme, three patterns emerged that indicated the advisor perceptions of the percentage of use of the relationship-based advising model at LCC. This third theme indicated that the advisor's perceptions of use of the relationship-based advising model differed between their own department and the college as a whole.

Within this theme advisors indicated both the perceived percentages of the use of relationship-based advising at LCC within their own department and outside their department. The best way to display these data findings is in Figure 1, showing two pie charts that indicate the perceived percentages of the use of relationship-based advising at LCC within their own department and outside their department. Within their own department, eight out of 10 (80%) of advisors indicated the relationship-based advising was used 100% within their department. But outside of their department, the perception was that the advising model was being used less than 60% of the time (see Figure 1).

Figure 1

Perceptions of Relationship-Based Advising Use



RQ 2: What Did Participant Advisors Experience When Implementing Relationship-Based Advising?

The results related to Research Question 2 are indicated in Table 2. Table 2 shows a summary of the patterns related to the themes pertaining to the research question 2.

Table 2

Overview of Patterns and Themes Addressing Research Question 2

Research Question	Patterns	Themes
RQ 2: What did participant advisors experience when implementing relationship-based advising?	• Institutional Systems • Student Readiness	1. Advisors perceive challenges and barriers of the relationship-based advising module.
	• Retention/Completion • System Improvements • Student Attentiveness	2. Advantages and strengths participants perceived when using a relationship-based advising.
	• Feel it contributes • Unsure of impact • Feel there is no connection	3. Participants perceive their relationship-based advising process as contributing to retention.

In respect to the three themes that emerged from the coding interview responses associated with Research Question 2, advisors responded consistently across the themes. As in Research Question 1, responses were similar with a variety of viewpoints that were expanded upon during the interviews. To address Research Question 2, I asked interview questions pertaining to participant perceptions and concluded with three themes.

Theme 1: Advisors Perceive Challenges and Barriers of the Relationship-Based Advising Model

In this first theme for Research Question 2, two patterns emerged that captured how participants perceived challenges and barriers of the relationship-based advising model. The participant responses to perceived challenges and barriers were strong. Each of the 10 (100%) participants indicated institutional systems to be both a challenge and barrier, with student readiness indicated as well.

The first pattern to emerge for this theme was institutional systems. This included advising structures mandated by the college. The current advising institutional structure adds to the challenges and barriers of the relationship-based advising model. These institutional structures of advising include the available capacity to advise and fully support the number of students assigned to an advisor, the current advising structure at the college, and time. A2 stated, “Time, time, and caseload size. My caseload of students is approximately 360 students. Building a relationship takes time.” Overwhelmingly, all participants indicated that not having enough time to build relationships with a student was the biggest challenge. With caseloads being between 100 and 500 students, depending on other duties assigned to the advisor, the capacity was not there to build meaningful, supportive relationships. The more students assigned to an advisor reduces the time that could be spent with each student. A3 stated, “I don't have enough time to build a relationship with all the students that I would like to or that are assigned to me.” Another institutional structure that is an instrumental part of the relationship-based advising model are available recourses. Resources are not always available to all students depending on their availability during the day and resources are typically only available during office hours when students have other commitments. This means students are not supported in an equitable way. Other system structures in place include the outline for advising that the college mandates. A9 explained the advising mandate which states, “one-hour appointments for new students and half-hour appointments after that. Often the student is not even allotted this amount of them because advisors try to wrap appointments up early, so they have time to make notes and send all the supportive things that they said that they would to the student before they had to move to the next student." The system mandated time structure was not realistic and did not align with the perceived student needs and desires, as the students need support outside of typical office hours.

The second pattern to emerge for this theme was student readiness. A student's willingness and readiness to establish a relationship with their advisor was another challenge and barrier of the relationship-based advising model indicated. A8 indicated this by stating, "I make the effort and make the time for a student, but then they don't show up for an advising meeting." Not showing up, not responding, and inability to maintain boundaries were identified with a student's readiness for the relationship-based advising model. It is the understanding that advising is a two-way street and student participation is vitally important to the success of the advising model. Making a connection with a student, as an advisor, had the risk of feeling like a transaction in the advisor's day, and can discourage students from engaging. It is taking the time to establish a meaningful connection and bring unique life experiences to the role of advising that can support engaging a student in the advising experience. It was important to be aware of how things look from the student's point of view. Participants thought that from the student's perspective, the student may ask themselves: Was there access to the advisor when needed? Does the student feel bounced around when needing support? Does the student have a clear understanding of what an advisor is and their role? A4 expressed, "Because of capacity concerns we typically connect students with other resources across campus, and that can feel like being bounced around." Even when the advisor is aware of the student's point of view, they may not be able to change it as quickly due to the limitations of the institutional system.

Theme 2: Advantages and Strengths Participants Perceived When Using Relationship-Based Advising

Theme 2 applies to RQ 2. In this second theme, eight out of 10 (80%) participants supported these three patterns that embodied advantages and strengths participants perceived when using relationship-based advising. These three patterns were retention/completion, system improvements, and student attentiveness. As noted by A5, "I think an advantage is that it includes the student bringing their whole self to the college to gain knowledge." This second theme encompassed advisor declarations of what they perceive to be the advantages and strengths of this advising model.

The first pattern to emerge for this theme was retention/completion. Higher education is always concerned with retention and completion rates (Kapinos, 2021). As perceived by the participants, these markers were increased through constant advisor contact, a student's sense of belonging, and increased student retention through expanded resources. A7 shared, "I can think of the students I lost touch with and who didn't finish, and I can think of the stories of the students that I had constant contact with, and they did finish, it becomes clear that retention and completion is linked to the advisor/advisee relationship." Ensuring that advisors were well trained in the college system supports the students as the advisor is then able to decode for the student. A5 stated,

> This is what the system looks like for us. I will walk you through, I will help you, and be there. That is a major strength that the academic model just doesn't have, it feels a little bit more impersonal. It feels as though here are the requirements, here

> is how you meet them, done. Not how can I help you meet them? So, I think the strength is that the relationship-based model makes it possible.

The model's advantages and strengths as perceived by advisors are the ability to identify student strengths, listen and be personable, and be the support network the student needs to achieve academically.

The second pattern to emerge for this theme was system improvements. Participants' perceived that the relationship-based advising model supported eliminating barriers and closing the equity gap by providing advising and guidance to all students based on their needs and goals. A1 stated, "Someone is there to help them navigate a system that was not made for everyone, through relationship-beaded advising, we're trying to decolonize and dismantle to rebuild a system that works for all." When a system is improved to meet a student's needs, recruitment into the college becomes easier (faculty advisor, personal communication, July 23, 2020), students recommend the college, and there is overall trust in the college. A8 shared,

> The advantages that I see are that student's feel like they chose the right college, and it also puts the word out that maybe this is a really good college to go to. Because, man, those advisors, they're really on top of it, and they really care about us, and they respond.

System improvements should be student centered and include communication that is direct, honest, and no-nonsense by the actions of the advisors. A10 said, "It's the idea that advising is helping to build a student up and give them all of the tools they need to be successful." Participants shared this view by indicating mutual learning that takes place on both the advisor's and student's side.

The third pattern to emerge for this theme was student attentiveness. With shared words like, whole self, self-belief, confidence in their choices, happier, connected, and empowered, it is clear to see why the student attentiveness is an advantage and a strength to the relationship-based advising model. A6 commented, "It's about getting to know them as a person, and that makes them feel connected, not just to their educational goals but to the community as well, then they want to stay with us."

Theme 3: Participants Perceive Their Relationship-Based Advising Process as Contributing to Retention

Theme 3 applies to RQ 2. In this third theme, three patterns emerged that indicated the advisor perceptions of the relationship-based advising process as contributing to retention. These three patterns within this theme indicate the perceived idea of the impact relationship-based advising has on retention at LCC. Of the participating advisors, seven out of 10 (70%) indicated feeling strongly that advising contributes to retention. Participants indicated that there needed to be consistent communication and that the advisors should be on the student's side, supporting the student and their feelings of belonging. Additionally, retention was the consequence of relationships between advisor and student with the student expressing to their advisor that they felt acknowledged and valued as an individual. Not every advisor indicated a strong connection with their students, two out of 10 (20%) advisors were unsure, and one out of 10 (10%) advisors identified that there was no connection. However, when attrition was talked about with participants, it was not deemed an issue with advising or the advising model, attrition was contributed to personal or financial reasons, opting or advised to attend a different school based on education goals, and academic struggles.

Evidence of Trustworthiness

Issues of trustworthiness in qualitative research are often revealed through techniques of reliability and validity or both (Rose & Johnson, 2020). I concentrated on the trustworthiness of the research by using consistent data collection and analysis procedures and directly addressing issues associated with reliability and validity. For example, member checking, reviewing any notes, and the use of probing and iterative questioning helped to establish credibility of the results (Regan et al., 2019). I created tables and data files in a Microsoft Word document to keep track of all data and saved it as an encrypted file.

To establish credibility of my study, I employed several strategies. The first strategy I used to establish credibility was member checking. Member checking is a common practice in qualitative research to retain validity (Candela, 2019). Member checking is a process of providing the transcript of the interview and presenting each participant the opportunity to check for agreement (Candela, 2019). Each participant was given a week to look over the findings before I continued data analysis. Another strategy I used was probing and iterative questioning, as both established the credibility of the results (Regan et al., 2019). I sought to understand the perceptions of advisors who use relationship-based advising and who advise students at LCC. The use of probing and iterative questioning established credibility because the findings are connected to reality. Meaning, the use of probing questions allowed me to produce more organized data and findings (Regan et al., 2019). The focus of this study was narrowed to advising models employed at one urban community college, LCC. My intent was not to generalize the research findings for other settings, preventing direct transferability for other institutions. The intent was to comprehend the perceived understanding of community college advisors who used components of relationship-based advising at LCC. I also acknowledged that the outcome of this study could potentially interest other researchers, educators, and administrators in conducting similar structured studies at their higher education institutions. To further establish the trustworthiness of this study, I carefully sorted through my data to identify emerging themes. Determining trustworthiness was essential to my research and it was the responsibility of the researcher to determine trustworthiness and dependability of emerging themes (Candela, 2019). Identifying themes in participant responses helped me recognize when data had reached the saturation point and no new themes were developing (Regan et al., 2019). Using the aforementioned strategies provided me the opportunity to identify contradictions and falsehoods that may emerge and reject suspicious data (Candela, 2019). Furthermore, Candela (2019) understood that the use of the mentioned strategies provides increased transparency by emphasizing findings, contradictions, and falsehoods. As the researcher, I acknowledged that my feelings and biases might have been unintentionally inserted into data, this was why member checking was used to review my notes after each interview, implementing reflexivity, a strategy for establishing confirmability (Olmos-Vega et al, 2022).

Summary

In response to Research Question 1: What are the advisors' perceptions about how relationship-based advising was being implemented at LCC, the data showed the lack of understanding of who and how relationship-based advising was being used at the college. While all participants stated that relationship-based advising was being used 100% of the time within their department, it was also clear that they did not feel it was being used in other departments within the college campus. There were also system changes that were expressed as needing to be met before the relationship-based advising model could be used for each student attending the college.

In response to Research Question 2: What do participant advisors experience when implementing relationship-based advising, it was clear that participants felt relationship-based advising contributed to retention and thus increased completion rates. There were a number of challenges and barriers that made it hard to use the relationship-based advising model. Some of those barriers and challenges included time, capacity, caseload, and student readiness. It was clear that the system would need to be changed and student expectations of the advising relationship be communicated. Through conducting this basic qualitative research design, conclusions and recommendations based on the data collected related to the two research questions will be addressed in the upcoming chapter.

Chapter 5: Discussion, Conclusions, and Recommendations

The purpose of this basic qualitative study was to investigate how advisors were implementing the relationship-based advising method when advising students at LCC. For this study, I used a basic qualitative design to explore the perspectives of advisors at the college, LCC. In reply to the research questions, a total of six themes were identified, three for each research question. Themes included participants' perspectives of the percentage of the advising model being used within their department and outside their department, perceived challenges and barriers of the relationship-based advising model, and the responsibility of the college and institutional system with implementing the advising model. Further, themes indicated participants' perceived advantages that included retention, completion, and student attentiveness.

Interpretation of the Findings

Based on the findings of this study, the data collected from participants extended the knowledge that was outlined in the peer-reviewed literature described in Chapter 2. The knowledge that was extended included the advisors' perceptions of what elements of the relationship-based advising were being used when advising students at this one college. Additional knowledge learned was the perceived impact on students as the student engaged in relationship-based advising at one community college.

In response to RQ 1 (What are advisors' perceptions about how relationship-based advising was being implemented at LCC?), the data produced three themes. These themes were critical of the lack of relationship-based advising across the campus and showed the participants' perception that relationship-based advising was being used within their department but outside their department perception was quite different. Though all 10 participants suggested they used relationship-based advising or many elements of the advising model, they also indicated that other departments at the college were not using relationship-based advising. Emerging themes also suggested how participants were implementing the relationship-based advising model by expressing elements they perceived as part of the advising model and what elements they used when advising students.

In response to RQ 2 (What did participant advisors experience when implementing relationship-based advising?), the findings also produced three themes. These themes suggested a connection between student support and relationships with students as a key factor to the relationship-based advising model contributing to retention. Additional themes included perceived challenges and barriers of the advising model and advantages and strengths when using relationship-based advising. Each of the 10 participants indicated institutional systems to be both a challenge and barrier, with student readiness stipulated as well. Participants perceived the advantages and strengths when using relationship-based advising were retention/completion, system improvements, and student attentiveness. Lastly, the themes indicated how participants perceive their relationship-based advising process as contributing to retention, with seven of 10 participants stating they feel the relationship-based advising model contributes to retention.

Limitations of the Study

Having an advisor in a goal-oriented advising relationship, that includes both student and advisor actively being involved, has shown positive outcomes (Antoney, 2020). My research was focused on one community college in the Pacific Northwest; findings of this research cannot be generalized beyond the study college. The findings could potentially inform other community colleges about the best way to support students and increase retention while employing the most effective aspects of relationship-based advising. Additional limitations of this study included:

1. Due to the Covid-19 pandemic, in-person interviews were not possible and limited recruitment to email, phone, and Zoom.
2. Small/limited sample size used may not represent the true generalization of the college. The questions examined could provide valuable information of relationship-based advising.
3. The study did not call for feedback from all advisors but would have representation from each of the six departments at LCC.

Aside from the ability to generalize to other colleges as participants were only from one college campus, other limitations to the study include the primary source of data being limited to interviews. My objective notes from the interviews served as secondary sources. Through these notes, it was possible to see if my documented responses reflected any possible biases (Gooch & Warren-Jones, 2020). Additionally, my personal bias needed to be considered. However, though I previously was a full-time advisor in the School of Education and am familiar with the avdvising models being researched, I have not been in that position since September 2019. At the time of the study being conducted, there were no advisors within the School of Education who were advisors while I was employed as a full-time advisor at the college. I am not familiar with and have had no connection to the advisors of the other five departments at LCC.

Recommendations

Justified by the results and limitations of my research, I recommend future studies be expanded with the inclusion of face-to-face interviews and extending participants to include other areas of advising within the college. This expansion could embrace the full LCC campus and advising body, not just the six departments within the college. This expansion could also widen the scope to explore perceptions of college success coaches and others who participate in general or transfer advising within the college. The inclusion of these two factors could provide a broader perspective of the use of relationship-based advising at LCC.

Going beyond LCC, other researchers could use this study as a starting point for additional qualitative studies in similar campuses, including regional or state community colleges. Alternative research opportunities could come from using my themes to frame a hypothesis that could be tested in a quantitative or mixed-method study. The mixed-method approach would allow a researcher to use multiple data sources in union with one another to capture the whole picture the data described (Olaghere, 2022).

Implications

Expressing their perceptions, participants indicated what was working well and where improvements were needed to fully implement relationship-based advising across LCC. Participants shared stories and examples that included situations that students face. Through participants' perceptions, implementation of suggested changes could address positive social change. The results of this study can lead to more focused efforts to implement relationship-based advising which embraces the idea that the current structure was not made for all. With a change of the advising structure, all could be met where they are. Through advisor perceptions it was understood that with the implementation of relationship-based advising positive social change could be made in the mindset of all advisors by increasing student retention while addressing systemic inequality in the higher education institution, and decreasing achievement gaps between White and minority students (Crowe, 2020). Systemic inequality in higher education institutions could be hard to alleviate because it does not stem from one person. It is a systemic array of implemented policies, laws, or frameworks put in place to make sure the White dominant culture held power (Crowe, 2020). Greater use of the relationship-based advising model, as perceived by participants, showed an increase in retention and completions, which would include positive social change (Martinez & Elue, 2020). The relationship-based advising model was viewed as alleviating a system that has disproportionately affected students of color by not having the same access to quality advising as their White peers.

Conclusion

Advising is an essential element to a college. Advising involves an advisor understanding the college system well enough to be a support to a student who attends. Using relationship-based advising has shown to have a positive effect on retention and completions rates, which would include positive social change (Martinez & Elue, 2020). The results of this study can lead to more focused efforts to implement relationship-based advising. Through advisor perceptions, it was understood that students who had an advisor implementing the relationship-based advising model were perceived to stay connected to the college until their educational goals were met. When advisors are provided with the tools and support from the college administration to effectively use the relationship-based advising model, they will be able to better support students through the completion of their educational goals. Through cooperative actions on behalf of the advisor, and the students, positive change is possible in removing achievement gap barriers.

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Appendix: Interview Protocol and Questions

Overview of research and purpose:

- I will start recording this interview now. First, I will go over the purpose of my study, my expectations of you, I will ask you to reaffirm your readiness to join the study and acknowledge your informed consent. Once that is complete, we will start the interview questions.

This study is looking into how relationship-based advising and the elements and outcomes of its use at the college. The purpose of this study is to investigate how advisors are implementing the relationship-based advising model when advising students at LCC. Expectation of the Interviewee:

- There are 4 basic expectations to participate in this study, some you have already completed. They are:
  - Agree to be a part of the study
  - Provide inform consent to be a part of the study
  - Be willing to participate in a recorded interview simple background questions and 10-12 data-finding interview questions with possible follow up or clarifying questions included.
  - Review and confirm accuracy of your transcribed interview once emailed to you

Affirmation to join the study:

- After hearing the expectations, are you still willing to participate in this study?

Brief reminder of consent and confidentiality:

- As a reminder you emailed consent to me. Do you have any questions about the informed consent or confidentiality?

Pseudonym Given:

- Each participant will be provided a pseudonym to ensure confidentiality of responses.

General Background Questions:

1. What is your position title?
2. How long have you been in this position?
3. How would you define your main position responsibilities?
4. What advising model do you identify using? Relationship-based, or a combination of academic and Relationship-based advising?

Questions Specific to Research:

1. How would describe your relationship building process when advising students?
2. Are there any elements to advising that you consider part of the relationship-based model, what are they?

3. What elements of the relationship-based advising do you use when advising students?
4. What would you say is the percentage of use at the college of the relationship-based advising model?
5. What challenges do you face using relationship-based advising?
6. What barriers do you perceive when using relationship-based advising?
7. What methods do you use to establish a trusting relationship with your advisees?
8. How do you see your advising relationship contributing to the student staying at the college?
9. What advantages do you identify with using a relationship-based advising model?
10. What are your perceived strengths to using a relationship-based advising model?
11. What do you see as the advisee’s role in the relationship?
12. What changes would you make to your current advising structure?
13. If someone was new to the relationship-based advising model at LCC, what advice would you give them to help them be successful?