

2016

# The Role of the Faculty in Retaining Students

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*Walden University*

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# Walden University

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Alisha Edmonds

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Walden University  
2016

Abstract

The Role of the Faculty in Retaining Students

by

Alisha L. Edmonds

MS, Fort Valley State University, 2010

BSW, Fort Valley State University, 2005

Doctoral Study Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Education

Walden University

August 2016

## Abstract

Decreasing retention rates have become a serious issue at several universities in the United States. At a university in middle Georgia, retention rates have been steadily declining for the last several years. The purpose of this study was to explore how the faculty at this university might implement more educational services on campus to increase retention. Bandura's theoretical framework of self-efficacy was used in this qualitative case study. Key questions for the study asked faculty about what programs or instructional strategies they believe currently offer support to retaining students at this university, how faculty at the university perceive that they contribute to retention and graduation, and what factors faculty observe that affect student retention and graduation. Ten faculty members at the university were randomly sampled and participated in face-to-face interviews. The data was analyzed by hand using themes. The data analysis revealed that faculty believed student retention might be increased through improved student engagement, building better faculty and student rapport, developing concrete retention goals, and implementing a mentoring program. A 3-day professional development training program was designed for faculty members to increase their knowledge of student retention, student engagement, goal attainment, and services that could be beneficial in student retention. The project resulting from this research may encourage the faculty and the university to implement more resources and services for students so as to increase the retention rates. This study promotes social change by providing faculty members the results of the study and illuminating the ways to strengthen and increase the services on their campus.

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## Table of Contents

List of Tables .....	iv
Section 1: The Problem.....	1
Introduction.....	1
Definition of the Problem .....	2
Rationale .....	3
Evidence of the Problem at the Local Level.....	3
Evidence of the Problem From the Professional Literature.....	5
Definitions.....	6
Significance.....	7
Guiding/Research Question .....	8
Review of the Literature .....	8
Implications.....	21
Summary.....	22
Section 2: The Methodology.....	23
Introduction.....	23
Conclusion .....	48
Section 3: The Project.....	49
Introduction.....	49
Description and Goals.....	49
Rationale .....	52
Review of the Literature .....	53

Implementation .....	60
Potential Resources and Existing Supports.....	61
Potential Barriers .....	61
Proposal for Implementation and Timetable.....	62
Roles and Responsibilities .....	62
Project Evaluation.....	63
Implications Including Social Change .....	64
Local Community .....	64
Far-Reaching.....	64
Conclusion .....	65
Section 4: Reflections and Conclusions.....	66
Introduction.....	66
Project Strengths .....	66
Recommendations for Remediation of Limitations.....	67
Scholarship.....	69
Project Development and Evaluation.....	69
Leadership and Change.....	70
Analysis of Self as Scholar .....	71
Analysis of Self as Practitioner.....	72
Analysis of Self as Project Developer .....	72
The Project’s Potential Impact on Social Change.....	73
Implications, Applications, and Directions for Future Research.....	74



Conclusion .....	75
References.....	77
Appendix A: The Project .....	88
Appendix B: Eight Structured Interview Questions .....	135
Appendix C: Email and Flyer .....	136

List of Tables

Table 1. Student Data for School Years of 2012–2013 and 2013–2014. .... 4

Table 2. Participant Gender and Demographic Data.....33

## Section 1: The Problem

### **Introduction**

Achieving academic success is a goal that many students seek. It is a positive outcome and a valuable resource that enhances success in many other domains, including employment (Osgood, Foster, & Courtney, 2010). Successful college students are those who graduate from college with a degree in hand. Unsuccessful college students are students who start college but do not obtain their college degree, a failure that is ultimately reflected in the graduation rates of colleges and universities.

The lack of student engagement is a major factor that contributes to students' failure to make progress toward a degree, and ultimately it causes students to drop out of college (McCourt & Carr, 2010). Currently, faculty members at universities are concerned by the increasing number of students leaving or failing to pass, and due to this concern, student retention and engagement are a top priority at universities (McCourt & Carr, 2010). Talbert (2012) observed that "academic leaders are working toward this goal by creating a positive environment of academic excellence and developing systematic programs to assist all students with achieving academic success" (p. 22).

Implementing intervention strategies to increase student engagement has become a priority for students who are in need of more support in general. Student engagement strategies may include student workshops and a professional mentoring program to assist the student (Talbert, 2012). Talbert reasoned that when students feel a sense of belonging, especially to their academic environment, they have a greater likelihood of completing their college degree. Therefore, Talbert's research suggests "it is essential for higher

education institutions to have a thorough understanding of their students' academic goals and then apply this information to develop an independent student action plan for achieving them" (p. 23).

### **Definition of the Problem**

Too many students are not progressing or succeeding in college (McCourt & Carr, 2010). Due to student retention being a critical issue in higher education today, Edman and Brazil (2009) recommended that factors should be explored to determine what contributes to academic success and higher graduates rates. Some research has indicated that a lack of student engagement may be the root cause of this problem (McCourt & Carr, 2010). Kahu (2013) argued that to increase student engagement, the teachers, students, and the universities administration have to work together. Kahu believes there are four dominant approaches to understanding student engagement:

The behavioural perspective, which focuses on effective teaching practice; the psychological perspective, which views engagement as an internal individual process; the socio-cultural perspective, which considers the critical role of socio-cultural context; and finally a holistic perspective, which strives to draw the strands together. (p. 758)

Others have argued that when faculty or other staff members evaluate the progress of students and offer further guidance or direction, this increased level of engagement helps students be more successful (Talbert, 2012). As Kahu further explained "good relationships foster engagement, which in turn promotes good relationships; and engagement leads to better grades, which in turn motivates students to be more engaged"

(p. 767). According to McCourt and Carr, although lack of student engagement has been a key theme in discussions about retention, poor attendance, poor motivation, living independently, and students not being adequately prepared for higher education were also found to correlate with disengagement in a college setting.

Additional suggestions for increasing graduation rates may include developing mentors to help new students with the transition into college life and creating support groups for the students to attend on campus with other students (Day, Dworsky, Forgarty, & Damashek, 2011). Wilson, Iyengar, Pang, Warner, and Luces (2012) believed that technical training, professional development, and mentoring are successful strategies for helping students navigate their educational pathways.

Many students when entering college do not know what to expect. Research has suggested that guidance is needed from caring adults such as faculty members and not only academically but also for a lift in confidence (Cushman, 2007). Sutton (2011) recommended interviewing educators to see what types of training is needed to better aid the students, and the insight provided could promote change within the school. Building relationships between the faculty and the student will likely increase the graduation rates among college students.

## **Rationale**

### **Evidence of the Problem at the Local Level**

The continuous decrease in student retention rates is a concern for a local university in middle Georgia. All names used in the study are pseudonyms. See Table 1

Table 1

*Student Enrollment Data for School Years of 2012–2013 and 2013–2014*

<u>Semester</u>	<u>Students</u>	<u>Semester</u>	<u>Students</u>
Fall 2012	3,243	Fall 2013	2,843
Spring 2013	2,891	Spring 2014	2,513
Student loss	352	Student loss	330

*Note.* Student loss represents the number of students that did not return after the school year.

A telephone conversation with Juanita James, a faculty member at the University of Central Georgia, which is located in the middle Georgia area, reported that there are presently no specific services on campus to increase retention and the graduation rates (J. James, personal communication, January 28, 2014). Ms. James is the former director of The Center for Retention Services, which provides academic counseling, academic advising, tutorial services, and professional testing/assessment services. She noted that there were no services or a specific office with the specific mission of making sure that first-year students stay enrolled and graduate (J. James, personal communication, January 28, 2014). Ms. James stated that every student who leaves the university is sent a survey; however, most of the time, the university does not receive a response back (J. James, personal communication, January 28, 2014). Therefore, even though The Center for Retention Services exists, no one knows what effect it is having on retention. Ms. James also reported a possible need for other programs to specifically assist with helping

students transition into adulthood and would also encourage more educational programs with the specific aim of increasing graduation rates (J. James, personal communication, January 28, 2014).

### **Evidence of the Problem from the Professional Literature**

According to Helman (2010), “for the first time in 20 years, retention to the sophomore year dropped in the nation’s four-year colleges” (p. 123). Talbert (2012) reported that to keep students enrolled in educational institutions and to increase the retention rates, colleges have to be a competitive force in the global economy. Academic leaders are involved in planning and developing programs to increase enrollment, retention, and graduation (ERG) rates in higher educational institutions (Talbert, 2012). Some faculty members have stated that student retention is not their responsibility but an administrative matter (Braxton, 2008).

Braxton (2008) has noted that “institutional interests in increasing student retention arise from the negative effects of student departure on the stability of institutional enrolments, budgets, and the public perception of the quality of colleges and universities” (pp. 102–103). Braxton went on to argue that when trying to increase student retention, faculty members should adopt some additional professional practices in their teaching. These would include the use of active learning techniques, encouraging greater student and faculty contact, the communication of high expectations, and embracing the ideals of clarity in organization and preparation (Braxton, 2008). These choices will contribute to student persistence and the goal of student course-level learning (Braxton, 2008).

## Definitions

*Academic leaders:* Academic leaders are often viewed as a figure of power in higher education. Talbert (2012) defined *academic leaders* as “individuals working directly or indirectly to support student achievement and academic success” (p. 22). For this study, *academic leaders* are defined as faculty at a university of higher education.

*Educational programs:* Educational programs are programs that are located at an educational institution. Praslova (2010) defined *educational programs* as content learning, intellectual development, competencies, and relevant skills that prepare students at institutions of higher education. For this study, *educational programs* are defined as the current services that are being offered at the college for the students.

*Expenditures:* Expenditures are often viewed as one of the main reason why students leave college. Webber and Ehrenberg (2010) defined *expenditures* as “expenses for the admissions and registrars activities, for activities that contribute to students’ emotional and physical well-being and to their intellectual, cultural and social development outside of the institution’s formal instructional program” (p. 7).

*Mentoring:* *Mentoring* stems from the origin “mentor.” Crisp and Cruz (2009) defined *mentoring* as “a one-on-one relationship between an experienced and less experienced person for the purpose of learning or developing specific competencies” (p. 527). A mentor is able to connect with his or her chosen mentee on a one-on-one basis to provide productive feedback where the mentee can benefit. For this study, *mentoring* is defined as providing support to the student to increase academic success.



*Retention*: Bozonelos (2008), defined *retention* as “staying/intent to stay in the current position at the current school” (p. 150). For this study, *retention* is defined as a decrease or increase in the graduation rates at a university.

*Student engagement*: Student engagement is often viewed as students actively participating in activities on a college campus. Kahu (2013) defined *student engagement* as “time and effort students devote to educationally purposeful activities” (p. 759). For this study, *student engagement* is defined as students not actively showing interest in completing their academic journey.

### **Significance**

Kalsbeek (2013) wrote that “at every college and university students enroll with expectations about the kind of experience and the kind of outcomes that the institution delivers” (p. 49). Graduating with a degree is the outcome of successful matriculation at a university. Higher education is admirable, beneficial, and secures job stability (Salazar, 2013). Every tool that is needed for the student to succeed at the university should be given. Students will more than likely stay committed to their college choice when their expectations are met (Kalsbeek, 2013). Without more resources in postsecondary environments, student retention may continue to decrease significantly.

Chaden (2013) argued that faculty should place degree completion as a priority but that this can be difficult for two reasons: (a) research is typically emphasized as much as teaching for full-time faculty, and (b) adjunct faculty have limited engagement in long-term institutional efforts. Kalsbeek (2013) further explained that “colleges and universities, students and families, employers and communities, governments and

societies all place value on the learning outcomes of higher education and learning outcomes are, in fact, the core of the institution's educational promise" (p. 50).

The significance of this study includes identifying contributing factors that hinder student retention and the resources that could increase student retention. The findings of this study could be useful to high school students, college students, first-year college students, and college personnel at a university. In addition, the intent of the study was to possibly encourage the faculty at the university to implement supportive educational services to increase the retention and graduation rates of students.

### **Guiding/Research Question**

It was my intent to gain different perspectives through guided research questions and to understand whether faculty members know the kinds of supportive educational services on campus that may contribute to increased retention.

The research addressed the following questions:

Research Question (RQ) 1: What educational programs or instructional strategies do faculty believe currently offer support to retaining students at this university?

RQ2: How do faculty at the university perceive that they contribute to retention/graduation?

RQ3: What factors do faculty observe that affect student retention/graduation?

### **Review of the Literature**

The purpose of this review is to provide a detailed summary of the literature to understand what services can be implemented on a college campus to increase retention and graduation rates. In examining the research, I found numerous journal articles, books,

and data reports to support the literature review. The databases that I used for this research included SAGE, ERIC, and Education Research Complete. The search terms used were *retention*, *retention in college students*, *self-efficacy*, *retention and mentoring*, and *student engagement*. The theoretical framework and a critical review of the extant literature has been developed.

As education becomes more prominent and university enrollment increases, there should be an increase in graduation. Noltemeyer and Sansosti (2012) explained that “currently, students are entering schools with increasingly diverse needs, and, at the same time, teachers are expected to hold them to higher academic standards” (p. 118). This statement constitutes that changes can be made internally and externally to ensure progression of the school, faculty, and the students. Current findings have suggested that educators are searching new ways to serve students more effectively to improve outcomes, which can include graduating (Noltemeyer & Sansosti, 2012).

### **Theoretical Framework**

The theory of self-efficacy guided this study and provided the foundation and motivation for the students through goal setting and teacher assistance, because students who possess this trait will in fact complete their education in almost every instance. According to Schunk (1990), self-efficacy is a person’s belief in his or her own competence. Goals are set daily and this process is often referred to as goal setting. Self-efficacy and goals relate to each other because a person has to believe in himself or herself to accomplish a goal (Schunk, 1990). According to McCabe (2006), “self-efficacy beliefs are a powerful influence on motivation” (p. 253). Self-efficacy influences

motivation by increasing students' task interest, task persistence, the kinds of goals they set, the choices they make, and their use of cognitive, meta-cognitive, and self-regulatory strategies (van Dinther, Dochy, & Segers, 2011).

In the recent decades, self-efficacy has been receiving more attention on educational research in motivation and learning, and not only clinical problems such as phobias and depression (van Dinther et al. 2011). The relationship between self-efficacy and achievement shows the effects of students directly and indirectly relating to their grades and ability levels through various levels of educational research (van Dinther et al., 2011). According to van Dinther et al., "this considerable amount of research findings point out that self-efficacy plays a predicting and mediating role in relation to students' achievements, motivation and learning" (p. 97).

Goals are developed because they provide direction, motivation, and yield successful outcomes. They also reflect objectives that guide perception, emotion, thought, and action (Morisano, Hirsh, Peterson, Pihl, & Shore, 2010). The most challenging goals are set by students who judge themselves the hardest (Al-Harthy, Was, & Isaacson, 2010). Goals can be used as a starting point for guiding one's career and should serve as benchmarks for identifying when one has reached a particular objective (Cohen, 2003). Goal setting and planning requires an effort from the student to transition from education to work, starting a career, and social responsibilities (Shulman & Nurmi, 2010). Although goals are not easy to obtain and may need revising, the ultimate purpose for creating them is attainment and success.

Setting reasonable and attainable short-term and long-term goals is important to the success of the learner (Illinois Literacy, 2011). Short-term goals allow the student to recognize progress quickly, whereas long-term goals are more distant and take longer to achieve. Morisano et al. (2010) believed that goal setting has positive effects on students and their academic achievements. Personal goals can be set by the learner for something that you are trying to achieve in your personal life not related to career. Morisano et al. reported that “personal goals reflect consciously articulated and personally meaningful objectives that guide perception, emotion, thought, and action” (p. 256). Goal setting is prominent in academic achievement and when applied accurately, self-efficacy increases (Marisano et al., 2010).

Educational achievement is based both on strategies and coping abilities in its contribution to self-efficacy (Chemers, Hu, & Garcia, 2001). Shulman and Nurmi (2010) revealed that when a goal is not achieved a students, capabilities and personal characteristics are crucial. Aiming for a higher purpose in life will give one a great sense of gratification. Chemers et al. believed that “academic self-efficacy is related to students’ confidence in mastering academic subjects, which in turn predicted grades in school” (p. 56). Therefore, the effort that one puts into making good grades, individual progression, and perfecting their craft will be rewarded.

Bandura’s research analyzes how people exercise control over how well they function during life-changing events (Stanford University, 2015). In one line of research, Bandura studied how people regulate their motivation, thought patterns, affective states, and behavior through beliefs of personal and collective efficacy (Stanford University,

2015). A second line of research examined how people regulate themselves based on internal standards and the desire to develop, adapt, and change (Stanford University, 2015). Bandura (2000) believed that perceived efficacy affects a person's behavior by its effect on determinants, such as goals and aspirations, outcome expectations, affective proclivities, and perception of impediments and opportunities. Bandura further stated that:

Efficacy beliefs influence whether people think erratically or strategically, optimistically or pessimistically; what courses of action they choose to pursue; the goals they set for themselves and their commitment to them; how much effort they put forth in given endeavors; the outcomes they expect their efforts to produce; how long they persevere in the face of obstacles; their resilience to adversity; how much stress and depression they experience in coping with taxing environmental demands; and the accomplishments they realize. (p. 75)

Individuals with a high sense of efficacy experience positive outcomes in the changes that they seek (Bandura, 2005).

To understand the mechanisms of self-efficacy for goal attainment, one must first understand the history of self-efficacy theory. Bandura developed the concept of self-efficacy theory in the 1980s, which is centered on self-regulated learning, which teaches learners to observe performance and evaluate progress (Schunk, 1990). Two self-regulated learning processes are goal setting and self-efficacy. Goal setting involves establishing a goal and modifying it as necessary, and self-efficacy refers to beliefs concerning one's capabilities to attain designated levels of performance (Schunk, 1990).

According to Kolovelonis, Goudas, and Dermitzaki (2011), goal setting is a critical aspect of self-regulated learning. Students perform better when the goals are set and strived for; therefore, the focus can then be transferred to the outcome (Kolovelonis et al. 2011).

Schunk (1990) believed that “self-efficacy for goal attainment is influenced by abilities, prior experiences, attitudes toward learning, instruction, and the social context” (p. 72). The goal attainment for this particular research would be graduating from college. New ideas and skills can be adapted to help students continue their education, therefore, not dropping out and decreasing retention. Shulman and Nurmi (2010) explained that “goals and aspirations are frequently not attained, and individuals need every now and then to adjust their thoughts and behaviors to current realities” (pp. 3–4). Higher goals are set for learners who have a higher degree of self-efficacy, and they also achieve greater academic success than someone with lower levels of self-efficacy (Lundberg, McIntire, & Creasman, 2008).

Three mechanisms involved in self-efficacy for goal attainment are self-observation, self-judgment, and self-reaction (Schunk, 1990). Self-observation informs and motivates the aspect of one’s behavior (Schunk, 1990). Self-observation also encourages one to base their personal concerns about who they are as a person and how one is portrayed to the world.

Self-judgment involves comparing one’s present goals by the importance of goal attainment and performance attributions (Schunk, 1990). Progress goals should be made in accordance with their personal value. The adult learner should find a performance

attribution that he or she will excel. Adult learners who receive assistance for their performance attributions may have low self-efficacy and believe that they cannot accomplish success on their own; therefore, they may judge the learning progress and may not be motivated to work harder (Schunk, 1990). Low self-esteem and lack of confidence are barriers to success.

Self-reaction is based on the progress of goals. Acceptable progress enhances self-efficacy and motivation (Schunk, 1990). If the adult learner does not believe in progress that was made, he or she may not be motivated to succeed. Rewards are a critical aspect of motivation that brings many adult learners the ultimate educational experience.

Lundberg et al. (2008) suggested that self-efficacy may be a prominent aspect in adult student success. Evidence has suggested that sufficient resources increases self-efficacy, which increases engagement and greater self-beliefs (Kahu, 2013). Sufficient resources may include professional mentor programs and benefits workshops for the university understand how to retain his or her students (Talbert, 2012). The student mentoring program provides first-hand knowledge and experience from peers to students (Talbert, 2012). Talbert explained that “the mentor-mentee program offered students an opportunity to network with professionals who could provide an academic overview, afforded more interactions with their professional leaders, and allowed for direct hands-on programs to increase their knowledge and improve their skills” (p. 23).

### **Importance of Retention**

The factors that cause an increase in dropout rates are unique to institutions of higher learning, but some continuity does exist. According to Goncalves and Trunk



(2014), “retention and success rates for college and university students at 2-and 4-year institutions are positively correlated with the level of student engagement” (p. 164).

McCourt and Carr (2010) also believed that when students are more engaged in campus activities and are a part of a group, retention improves overall. Cochran, Campbell, Baker, and Leeds (2014) noted:

As institutions of higher education continue to face increasing pressure to decrease the time of progression from enrollment in a program to graduation, there has been significant focus within the current literature on retention rates and retention strategies, both for the university level and the course level. (p. 27)

Cochran et al.’s (2014) research indicated that several kinds of strategies may have a positive effect on reducing student withdrawal from an institution. These include student engagement activities, learning communities, information on student services, and learner-centered environment (Cochran et al. 2014). Expenditures for academic support and student services have improved persistence in some studies (Chen, 2012).

Chen (2012) later found that institutions that place a high priority on student services and expenditures for the student services have a lower percentage of student dropout. Every institution should have a budget for implementing supportive educational services for all students if they want student success. When institutions enroll high proportions of students, they should expand the support services at the school to include academic, personal, and social areas that may increase the student’s level of commitment to graduate (Laskey & Hetzel, 2011).

Students and faculty should develop a unique rapport with one another. Chen (2012) explained that “research in K–12 education found that schools with a higher student-teacher ratio tend to have higher dropout rates; it is worth considering the possible effects of student-faculty ration in higher education as well” (p. 489). This relationship should be open with an easy flow of communication, where the student will not feel intimidated to speak with the faculty and vice versa and the faculty should have expectations that all students can succeed and offer the appropriate services to ensure that they do. Brown (2010) argued that education in a diverse society need (1) to respect cultural differences, (2) be knowledgeable of cultural resources their student possess and the skill in teaching-learning process, (3) believe that all students are capable of learning in an enriched curriculum, and (4) maintain a strong sense of professional efficacy when evaluating students. According to Laskey and Hetzel (2011),

It is the responsibility of institutions of higher education to continue to provide and expand support services, especially given the trend of underprepared college freshman, and to create a climate in which degree completion can become a reality for a wider array of students. (p. 41)

### **Academic Success and Mentoring**

Lack of adequate financing is listed as an important factor for students leaving college decreasing retention (Wilson et al., 2012). Although financing is also listed as a factor in the student leaving school, lack of adequate financing does not mean that students were not competent to obtain a degree (Wilson, et al., 2012). Low-income students are likely to have difficulty affording the tuition at universities and fall into

achievement gaps that keep them from matriculating (Lawton, 2006). Students who face financial difficulties sometimes have the burden of relying on student loans or working long hours to pay the tuition fees of the university (Wilson et al., 2012). This burden leaves the students who are academically talented not able to reach their level of achievement consistent with their potential (Wilson et al., 2012). According to Wilson et al., an academic support program should be constructed to meet the needs of disadvantaged students to enhance their educational experiences. Hughes and Fahy (2009) also agreed that 4-year institutions should implement programs or academic support services that will assist with the transition to college.

Wilson et al. (2012) believed that technical training, professional development, and mentoring are successful strategies for navigating an educational pathway. These strategies are core beliefs in sustaining student interest and efficacy on their educational journey (Wilson et al., 2012). Developing a mentorship program at a college should be created to be productive and not counterproductive. If the university puts forth the effort to use all of their resources to encourage faculty to mentor a student, the students' academic success could be unlimited. Gazza (2008) described the mentoring relationship as a shared value experience between an experienced person and a less experienced person to enhance career and personal development. Gazza also reported that in education, administration will select teachers as mentors to students who have a compatibility with a mentee and will be beneficial in his or her education. Crisp and Cruz (2009) reported that the overall outcome of mentoring students have been positive and increased their grades.

Crisp and Cruz (2009) identified that mentoring relationships progress through four stages: (1) initial stage (beginning of the relationship, lasts between 6 months and 1 year); (2) cultivation stage (lasts between 2 and 5 years); (3) separation stage (changes in the organizational context); and (4) final stage (ending of the relationship). If all mentoring relationships at the college are following what Crisp and Cruz identified, the mentoring relationship should be successful. The student should be able to complete college within 4 to 5 years; therefore, this is ample time for a mentoring relationship to develop and expand academic success. Hughes and Fahy (2009) argued that “the nature of the mentor-student relationship is voluntary, primarily social, and very informal” (p. 464). They also believed that mentors and veteran students are the best resources for new students as they navigate through the college journey (Hughes & Fahy, 2009).

Cohen (2003) identified a complete mentor role that would enable the mentor to evaluate himself or herself to assess his or her competencies as mentors to students. This model shows that the mentor should establish each of these competencies to have a successful relationship with his or her mentee. Cohen developed the complete mentor role that provided six behavioral dimensions, which are (1) relationship, (2) informative, (3) facilitate, (4) employee vision, (5) mentor model, and (6) confrontive. Both the mentor and the mentee should be aware that the six dimensions are not expected to unfold in this order in matching the action to a particular dimension (Cohen, 2003). The dimensions may, at times, pose a challenge and visions may differ, but the importance of a mutual agreement should be understood in light of foreseeing different aspects of the competencies. Mekolichick and Gibbs (2012) revealed that “students expect their

mentors to be experts in their fields, to stand up for them and work on their behalf, to be accessible and approachable, to communicate clearly, and to be organized and supportive” (p. 44).

### **Faculty Roles**

Taylor (2010) reported a need for more competent teachers embracing pedagogy for multicultural students. The role of the faculty is paramount and should welcome all students to come into an environment where there is an enormous amount of support for them to receive. Evidence has suggested that public education is failing to reach students, and the need to address this issue is evident (Taylor, 2010). This evidence could decide whether the student will leave the college or stay to pursue his or her academic career.

An effective teacher should want to know how he or she could better influence or help his or her students. Mielke and Frontier (2012) stated that students that require more challenge or support should be guided by a teacher and the teacher should use alternative strategies to assist them. As Rosenbaum and Becker (2011) explained:

Previous research with college students has shown that when students struggle in college-level classes, it is usually because they are not used to the accelerated pace of the curriculum and are not prepared for the writing and critical thinking necessary to succeed at that level. In particular, there is a large disconnect between the minimal writing instruction in high school and the lengthy writing requirements in college. (p.17)

A teacher’s strategies or methods of teaching should be where the student believes they are benefiting and learning. Tutoring is an academic support program that often targets

students, such as, those that my drop out of college (Rheinheimer, Grace-Odeleye, Francois, & Kusorgbor, 2010).

Yen-Hsin and Kristjansson (2011) reported that more teacher training is needed to prepare teachers. The goal of the teacher training is to have more “good teachers” in the classroom. Ladbrook and Probert (2011) reported that “effective professional learning should be long term, school based, focused on the learning of all students, and linked to the curricula that teachers have to teach” (p. 118). Marston (2010) evaluated college teachers on the reasons they teach. Some teachers reported a love for teaching (Martson, 2010). However, they worried that they did not receive the support they needed from the administration (Martson, 2010). Lack of support can ultimately be a major problem for students because when teachers cannot get the support from the administration of the school, they cannot really help the students. Teacher preparation programs that specialize in cultural awareness, sensitivity, and competency will enhance multicultural education with students in the educational system (Taylor, 2010).

There has been an interest in tying student learning and educational accountability to evaluate schools and teachers (Newton, Darling-Hammond, Haertel, & Thomas, 2010). The school could develop a student-university partnership. Morgan-Fleming, Simpson, Curtis, and Hull (2010) reported that a student and university partnership has advantages because everyone has something to teach and something to learn. Although the faculty members at the school are more educated than the student trying to obtain a degree, faculty can learn from the student. Rice (2010) believed that:

Given the substantial evidence on the impact of the individual teacher on student learning, it is vital that systems explore what attracts the most effective teachers to a school, and design policy in such a way as to draw more of them to disadvantaged schools, in which student achievement is generally lower than in more advantaged settings. (p. 177)

If the school does not support the students and offer assistance in every manner possible, this could be an ongoing problem that could continue to go unnoticed. Not only is the partnership between the school and the student important, it is also vital to the field of education (Morgan-Fleming et al., 2010). Bozonelos (2008) noted that teacher efficacy and higher retention can be promoted by providing a less stressful environment, having more time for instruction, and better organization. As educators, it is necessary that we do our part, whatever that part may be to facilitate a productive college experience that will have an overall lasting effect for a lifetime. The student-university partnership should not stop at the dream of a student attending college, but graduating (Morgan-Fleming et al., 2010).

### **Implications**

The findings of this study specifically benefited first-year or freshman college students only. However, the study benefited the faculty at the college due to encouraging ways that they can better assist the students. Although the educational attainment may be challenging for students, achieving a degree is still attainable. According to Rice (2010), research has suggested that “schools and teachers face the challenge of ensuring every student achieves to a high standard” (p. 177). The first step will be acknowledging that a

problem exists with retention and student engagement, which is reflected when students do not obtain their degrees once enrolled. If no problem existed, the graduation rates would be increasing, not decreasing. Then, the college could ensure that students have access to resources available to them when needed. This could be as simple as making student organizations on campus free of charge to all students or having an open-door policy where students can come and address any concerns that they may have about his or her college experience or life with any faculty member. The changes that the proposed faculty could make might better prepare and be beneficial for students to stay enrolled in college and graduate. Results of the research showed a relationship between self-efficacy and goal attainment.

### **Summary**

The need for more supportive educational services at colleges has not decelerated but has continued to grow into a need that can easily be solved. After every school year, each university should evaluate the areas of weakness for improvements. The faculty are challenged to teach and prepare students for success outside of the classroom after graduating. However, a problem exists in progressing students to where they need to be academically for graduation. This issue cannot be resolved and affects many schools in the United States. Having a plan to increase student retention and to implement supportive educational services will have a lasting effect on the students and the college. In the following section, Methodology, I explain whether implementing supportive education services can increase student retention through self-efficacy and goal attainment.



## Section 2: The Methodology

### **Introduction**

The purpose of this research was to explore methods in which the faculty at the university can implement more educational services on campus to increase retention. More students are attending 4-year universities than ever before, but many are not graduating and the retention rates are decreasing. According to Morrow and Ackermann (2012), “even though enrollments are increasing, retention and graduation rates have remained relatively low” (p. 483). Students are not returning after their first year of college, and if they do, it is taking longer than 4 years to complete their degrees (Morrow & Ackermann, 2012). In Fall 2012, this university had a total of 3,243 undergraduate students enrolled, and only 2,891 students returned in Spring 2013 (Fort Valley State University, 2015). For the 2012–2013 school year, 352 students did not return to complete their degrees at this university (Fort Valley State University, 2015). In Fall 2013, this university had a total of 2,843 undergraduate students enrolled, and only 2,513 students returned in Spring 2014 (Fort Valley State University, 2015). For the 2013–2014 school year, 330 students did not return to complete their degrees at this university (Fort Valley State University, 2015). More research was needed to understand why retention is decreasing, what roles the faculty can play in increasing retention, and whether more services and resources are needed on the campus to increase retention. By exploring these possibilities, a work-shop was developed to encourage motivation and self-efficacy to students from faculty that may increase retention.

### **Qualitative Research Design and Approach**

The research design used was a qualitative research. Qualitative research explores and provides an understanding of a specific phenomenon (Creswell, 2008). A qualitative research design was used for this study to understand what role the faculty has in ensuring that students stay enrolled in school and whether more services are needed on campus to increase the retention and graduations rates. Qualitative research also allows the researcher to explore through the participants about the phenomenon of study, if the literature provides little information (Creswell, 2008).

Merriam (2009) defined a *case study* as “an in-depth description and analysis of a bounded system” (p. 40). However, Yin (2008) defined a *case study* as a contemporary phenomenon that is investigated when the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clear. A case study approach was used to gain a deeper understanding of ways the faculty can assist students with staying enrolled in school and graduating, thereby increasing retention. According to Merriam, “qualitative case studies share with other forms of qualitative research the search for understanding and meaning, the researcher as the primary instrument of data collection and analysis, an inductive investigative strategies, and the end product being richly descriptive” (p. 39). Creswell (2009) also supported the idea of using the researcher as the key instrument in the data collection process and not relying on questionnaires or other instruments developed by other researchers to gather data. Stake (1995) believed that case study research should provide a detailed description of the setting or participants, followed by the data analysis that will include themes.

Merriam (2009) believed “for it to be a case study, one particular program or one particular classroom of learners (a bounded system), or one particular older learner selected on the basis of typicality, uniqueness, success, . . . would be the unit of analysis” (p. 41). In this particular study, 10 faculty members at one university in middle Georgia constituted 10 cases within a bounded case study, and results from a cross-case analysis was used to present the case study. Researching the educational programs that faculty members at the university are currently using, and the services or programs that could be used, captured more insight into changes that can be made to increase retention. Studying the faculty as the bounded case assisted in addressing the needs of the university to keep students enrolled in school.

### **Research Participants**

The population for this case study was a group of faculty from a local university in middle Georgia. The criteria to participate in the study were faculty members who have been employed at the university for at least 2 years. This university employs more than 150 faculty employees, and an estimated 100 participants were eligible to participate in the research. According to Creswell (2009), with random sampling, equal probability was granted from the sample to signify the population. Keppel (1991) also believed that random sampling ensures that everyone has equal opportunity to be selected and the sample will represent the population. Lodico, Spaulding, and Voegtle (2010) believed that with random sampling one person does not hinder another person from being selected to participate in the study. This sampling was the best fit for this particular

study because only the faculty with 2 years of experience were able to participate in the study.

For the purpose of this study, 10 participants were selected at random out of the 100 faculty at the university who met the criteria of the study and were agreeable to volunteer in the study. The interviews were conducted using eight structured interview questions (Appendix B). Structured interview questions are a set of questions that the researcher prepares before interviewing the participant of the study and the same questions were asked to each participant (Lodico et al., 2010). All questions presented to the participants were open-ended with the intent that they can express his or her concerns if any without any penalties by the university. According to Creswell (2008), “in qualitative research, you ask open-ended questions so that the participants can best voice their experiences unconstrained by any perspectives of the researcher or past research and allows the participant to create the options for responding” (p. 218).

The researcher used one-on-one interviews as the data collection method, therefore, the interviewees felt at ease to express themselves individually. The interviews were taped with the permission of the participant to ensure that answers are taken accurately. Also, informed consents were required and signed of all participants to ensure that they are aware of the study and purpose and that they have the right to terminate the interview at any time. The five protocols that the interviewer followed when using a qualitative structured interview were: beginning the interview by reintroducing yourself, reminding the participants of the confidentiality of his or her responses, obtain general

descriptive information, strive for neutrality, and recording the interview data (Lodico et al., 2010).

Approval from Walden University Institutional Review Board (IRB) was required and the postsecondary institution where the research was conducted also required approval to conduct research through their Human Subject's Committee. Walden University IRB approval # is 10-15-15-0340101 and approval from the university was received via letter and given to Walden University IRB. After the postsecondary institution approval of the proposal, the committee chair of the Human Subject Committee provided the researcher with a list of faculty member names and email addresses at the university. The list contained 173 faculty members, 94 males and 79 females. After receiving approval from both Walden University IRB and the postsecondary institution where the research was conducted, an email and flyer (Appendix C) was sent to 42 faculty members on October 28, 2015. A second email requesting participants was sent to 15 faculty members on November 3, 2015.

Interviews with the participants were completed after the consent form was discussed in depth, which included revealing gender and years at the university, and the consent was signed by the participant. One on one interviews were conducted a public library in the city of the postsecondary institution on the days and times convenient for the participant. The one-on-one interviews gave the participants a chance to speak freely and a chance to be more open with sharing information. There are ethical considerations when conducting qualitative research due to interviewing human subjects and also because everything that occurs in qualitative research is not always at the beginning of

the study since unanticipated issues or questions may arise (Lodico et al., 2010). Ethics in qualitative research consists of informed consent, protection from harm, and confidentiality (Lodico et al., 2010). Eisner (1998) believed that “the notion of informed consent implies that researchers are able to anticipate the events that will emerge in the field about which those to be observed are to be informed” (p. 215). The researcher was responsible for making sure that all participants were comfortable with the interview process, which led to a great researcher and participant rapport.

The consent form included the researcher’s chair contact information and also made clear to the participants’ right to withdraw from the study at any time. A detailed description of the study was provided to all participants that included the qualifications of the researcher with contact information, purpose and significance of the study, summary of the literature, and the proposed research method. For the purpose of confidentiality, no real names were used in the study, and the information collected from the participants have remained in the researchers’ possession in a secure location, such as, a filing cabinet with a lock and key to protect the privacy of the participant responses. The researcher, participant, and chair member are the only individuals with access to the data. A copy of the research questions were provided to the participants during the interview to ease any apprehension he or she may have in reference to the study.

### **Data Collection**

Eight structured face-to-face interview questions were asked to 10 participants to collect data for this study. After Walden University IRB and the postsecondary institution approval was granted, emails were sent to eligible participants with the information being

provided by the institution. Data were collected from active faculty who have been at the college for a minimum of two years. The participants that responded to the email, gave the researcher a day and time that was convenient for the interview. A 30-minute interview was conducted with each participant and all interviews were audio recorded with the permission of the participant. The researcher also made notes of the answers provided by the participant during the interview.

Lodico et al., (2010) reveal that “qualitative research is characterized by flexible, naturalistic methods of data collection and does not use formal instruments to record data” (p. 116). Interviews allow the participant to share detailed personal information and the interviewer will have more control of the type of information received from the participant due to the interviewer being able to ask specific questions (Creswell, 2008). The data were organized in a file folder by participants. The data were explored by transcribing the data collected several times before they were separated into themes (Agar, 1980). In conducting interviews a great rule to follow is to think short during the interviews due to transcribing taking a lot to time (Bogdan & Biken, 2007). The data were analyzed to provide a narrative account of the findings one research question at a time. All the data were brought together field notes, recording, and transcription to be organized and then coded into themes. For this study, the researcher used themes to examine different aspects of why retention is decreasing and students not finishing college, and see if there is a connection between them and also the research questions (Lodico et al., 2010).

These results of the study are reported in a narrative manner using direct quotes from the participants and include a visual diagram to show the findings of the data analysis. Creswell (2008) reported that “a narrative discussion is a written passage in a qualitative study in which authors summarize, in detail, the findings from their data analysis” (p. 254). The data were interpreted by summarizing the findings, sharing what was learned in the data collection phase, comparing literature of past studies, and stating the limitations of future research (Creswell, 2008).

Member checks were conducted by asking participants in person to check the accuracy of the reports (Creswell, 2008). Member checking is when one receives feedback from a participant on the finding from the data collected from other participants (Merriam, 2009). During the data collection process, participants were informed of other participants responses to see if there was a similarity or difference in the responses. Majority of the participants agreed with their colleagues responses that more services are needed on campus to increase retention rates. It is with hope that member checks aided in accurately measuring why some students stay in school and are successful at graduating and some are not. Also, member checks ensured that I as the interviewer and researcher remained non-biased. Authenticity, helped determined the accurate findings from the participant and the researcher. Lodico et al., (2010) commented that “researchers continually monitor their own subjective perspectives and biases by recording reflective field notes or keeping a journal of their thoughts” (p. 274).



### **Data Analysis Results**

Analyzing the data included transcribing, coding, developing themes, and writing up results. According to Bodgan and Biklen (2007), “analysis involved working with the data, organizing them, breaking them into manageable units, coding them, synthesizing them, and searching for patterns” (p. 159). The interviews were transcribed using my personal computer and a Microsoft Word document. Each transcript was reviewed and coded into themes that were identified into a manual transcript. I reviewed each transcript twice to make sure that each answer was accurate. Similarities and differences in the participant responses were identified when transcribed.

There were three research questions that guided this study to determine if more educational services are needed on campus to increase the retention rates. The first research question asked what educational programs or instructional strategies do faculty believe currently offer support to retaining students at this university. This research question had three interview questions. The second research question asks how does faculty at the university perceive that they contribute to retention/graduation. This research question had three interview questions. The third research question asked what factors do faculty observe that affect student retention/graduation. This research question had two interview questions. These research questions and the findings from the interview questions are the foundation of this study.

Data reporting included a visual image and a narrative discussion. A narrative discussion is a written passage of the findings from the data analysis in a qualitative study (Creswell, 2009). Ten participants, 6 males and 4 females, were interviewed. The

participants had the following statistical data: Mean 14.6, Median 12, Mode 7, and Range 30. The information is summarized in Table 2.

Table 2

*Participant Gender and Demographic Data*

Participant	Gender	Years as Faculty Member
Tim	Male	2
Tammy	Female	6
James	Male	7
Marsha	Female	7
Pearl	Female	9
Chance	Male	15
Malcolm	Male	18
Donald	Male	22
Heather	Female	28
Damon	Male	32

*Note.* Years as faculty member represents the numbers of years that participant has been a professor at the university.

### **Interview Questions**

**Interview Question 1.** Interview Question 1 asked participants to describe services that are helping in ensuring that students stay enrolled in college. The themes identified included: financial aid, student professor rapport, and early alert programs. Financial aid included being able to pay for college whether through student loans or scholarships. Student professor rapport referred to the student and professor having a

relationship beyond academics. Early alert programs referred to teachers identify the needs of their students early and providing the support and guidance that they need.

Three participants found that financial aid is one of the problems that students face in determining if they will return back to college to obtain their degree. Chance and Malcolm both agreed that financial aid plays a big part in determining whether students stay enrolled in college. Monty reported that “90% of the students at the university are on financial aid and if they are not awarded their financial aid, they quit.” These participants found that not receiving financial aid to be barrier to finishing college.

Eight participants found that a student professor rapport was important to retaining students. Chance thought that “a support system from instructors for the students to talk about any problems and from someone that cares” was important. James felt that “mentoring programs because it is a collaborative effort between the student and professor to tutor them in terms of scholarship, research, academic performance, and it enhances the student ability to stay in college.” Tim acknowledged that student support services which are offered and referred by faculty for “students that need help in certain areas, whether it is skills on test taking or better study habits to master the content of their courses.” Marsha noted that faculty should “build relationships with students and advocate on behalf of students.” Tammy stated that professors should “provide guidance to students and embrace more technology services.” Damon reported that faculty should offer “learning support and engagement with students. Offer programs that require technology and incorporate it because this is the world we live in.” Pearl notes that faculty should have “monitored reading, writing, and math labs. Tracking and mentoring

are importation to helping students and also mandatory study halls.” Heather reported that “mentoring, more staff to recruit students, learning how to keep and retain students, and more alumni to come back to give to the school.” These participants found that with more affiliation with the students the university will thrive with excellence.

Two participants found that the university need of early alert programs. Pearl stated that “early alert programs are important because they will help with notifying students of available resources.” Donald notes that early alert programs are important “because more and more students are not prepared to come to college and some students are not ready when they arrive. Therefore, if we have systems or programs in place to identify this, the students will not suffer and resources and services can be placed to assist the student.” These participants found that identifying the needs of the student early is beneficial to academic success. More participants found that building a student professor rapport was helping in ensuring that students stay in enrolled in college and ultimately graduating.

**Interview Question 2.** Interview Question 2 asked participants how they would encourage self-efficacy to a student who wanted to leave college. The results of the participants’ responses identified three themes: motivation and building self-esteem, providing positive examples, and providing more encouragement. Motivation and self-esteem referred to believing in yourself to succeed. Providing positive examples referred to faculty giving insight and knowledge of someone who identified the same as the current student. Providing more encouragement referred to building up one’s self-esteem to thrive.

Three participants found that motivation and building self-esteem encouraged self-efficacy. Chance reported that faculty should “tell students the value a college education, make them feel that they are going to be successful, and can do the job. Also, build their self-esteem and inform them of how a college degree can help them in life.” James stated that “being supportive to the students’ needs and challenges may help them make decisions of whether they stay in college or go. Faculty and staff in the institution as a whole should have a vital influence as well as motivation to encourage students to stay at the institution. For undergraduates students its different and difficult because it is a transition for students because they are leaving high school, family, and they are coming to a whole new world. Faculty and staff have more responsibility in helping students maintain their undergraduate studies.” Marsha reported that “career counseling, asking them what do they want to do and what is getting in the way. Then, explore the options and evaluate the pros and cons.” These participants found that providing motivation and building the students’ self-esteem contributes to the students staying in college.

Three participants found that the faculty should be providing examples to students who wanted to leave college. Tim stated that he found that “sharing your own experiences and struggles” with students is vital. Damon felt that faculty and the university should “make sure that the curriculum is on par, use the alumni to come back and tell what they learned and how beneficial an education can be. They can actually see what they can become and you are showing them examples.” Heather found that “offering the student positive examples of other success stories of people that have been

in their predicament” to be helpful. These participants found that providing positive examples for students can determine whether the students stays in college or leaves.

Three participants found that faculty should be encouraging students more. Malcolm reported that faculty should encourage students to “look at their options and the consequences of their options because sometimes it is hard for them to come back once they leave. Encourage them to accomplish their goals and find something that fits and works for you.” Tammy stated that she would ask the students “what they wanted to do and point out the college will help a person to succeed. Also, keep encouraging them to continue school.” Pearl noted that she would “find out what is wrong and why they want to leave school, encourage them to get into a learning community which gives them a network and support system. Show students the graduation process in chunks instead of the whole picture. Professors should break it down to where it is manageable where they understand that they can do it. Help them to do goal setting.”

One participant, Donald, stated that students should “think about what they want to do towards their career path because college is not for everyone.” However, although this statement is true, he never mentioned his role in encouraging the student, providing support, and helping the student to develop a career path. Student support is a shared responsibility by the university, because a predictor of degree completion is a relationship between student and faculty (Pearson, 2012).

**Interview Question 3.** Interview Question 3 asked participants if they felt the current services offered at the university aid in students completing college. Eight participants stated that they felt the current services offered at the university did not aid in

students completing college. Two participants stated that they felt the current services do aid in students completing college. The results of responses identified two themes: identifying students' needs to help them and make services knowledgeable and available to all students. Four participants did not elaborate as to why they do or do not agree that the services aid in student completion. James and Donald both stated that they do feel that the current services aid in student completion. Tammy and Heather both stated that they do not feel that the current services aid in student completion.

Four participants found that it was important to identify the needs of students. Chance stated he did not feel that the current services aid in student completing their degree because "we did not have a director of retention services. Recently one was hired and their job is to identify students that are not doing well and find out what are the reasons for them not doing well. They need to follow-up on students and try to encourage them to stay in school and if they are not doing well in the courses give them tutorial services." Tim also stated that he did not feel that the current services aid in students completing their degree because "more can be offered. We need to identify the students that need help earlier in the process instead of when they leave or when their grades are too bad where it is too late to help them. Identifying the needs early is important." Marsha stated that she did not feel that the current services offered aid in students completing their degree because "we can do better. There are too many hold-ups with getting students into school, their housing, and paying their tuition. What we have now is not working, retention is low, and if students are not retained they won't get a degree." Pearl also agreed that the current services do not aid in students completing their degree

because “they are not utilized. A lot of students become self-sufficient, self-reliant, and find a way to make a way. The library does not offer a lot of the books or computers that other colleges have.”

Two participants found that making services knowledgeable and available to all students is important. Malcolm did not feel that the current services offered aid in students completing their degree because “the counseling center could do more with making their presence known for the students and to have the same services available for undergraduate and graduate students.” Damon also stated that he did not feel that the current services offered that the university aid in students completing their degree because “they are doing the best they can with the little they have, but it is a need for significant improvement.”

**Interview Question 4.** Interview Question 4 asked do you think that faculty have an effect on student retention and students staying in college and graduating. All the participants agreed that faculty has an effect on student retention and students staying in college and graduating. Chance reported that “student retention depends upon how instructors are going to help the students with their courses, tutorial services for the students also helps, and for professors to help students when they know that they are not doing well. Make a group with students that are doing well in class to help the students in the class that are not doing well.” James believes that “the relationships that faculty has with the students will motivate them to stay focus and have a healthy supportive relationship. It will also provide a solid support system for the student to be successful.”



Malcolm felt that “students have the power to influence the teaching.” Tim stated that “faculty play a huge role because without faculty encouraging students and telling them successful stories of their struggle they will probably not be as successful. Several students at this university come from homes that are broken, and we have to understand those students and they need someone that they can trust and it should be their professor. We should get to learn the student and their background and learn them by name and not number.” Marsha reported that “students want to know more about their faculty members and building a rapport when they do.” Tammy noted that “the faculty should be available to a student when needed.”

Damon reported that “students come back when faculty show interest, inspiration, and motivation.” Pearl felt that “faculty has a direct effect on student retention. It is not enough to just teach the students but we have to be responsible to make sure that they got it. In teaching the student we have to work with the entire student not just when they are in your class. I have to capture the essence of the entire student.” Donald reported that he felt that faculty has an effect on student retention but did not elaborate more. Heather believed that faculty is the key because “they have a more hands on approach with the students.” All the participants realized that they have an effect on student retention and the graduation rates. They all seemed open to learning more on how to be more effective with their students and ways in which they can help increase retention.

**Interview Question 5.** Interview Question 5 asked to what extent does a faculty members’ self-efficacy contribute to student retention and student engagement. All participants felt that faculty should have self-efficacy if they are going to be teaching the

students. Chance reported that “professors should feel competent, have good knowledge and skills in doing their job to help the students because it will make a difference. A professor should also set positive examples and give the students examples of problems that they faced in school and how they overcame them.” James reported that “once you have faculty members that have been at an institution an extended period of time, then change becomes difficult. Then progression, innovation, and new ideas become robust and it is very difficult to get people to move in a different direction. When some faculty get tenure they bring the innovation and that is problematic. I feel that we as faculty sometimes fail the student.”

Malcom stated that he feels that faculty members “set the tone and if you have a can do faculty then inevitably one of the values that rub off on students is a can do attitude. The environment is not encouraging of self-efficacy. Not giving up and going to the next level with asserting yourself until you get what you need.” Tim stated that faculty members need to have self-efficacy because “students learn from faculty. If the students see that faculty wants them to succeed they will put more effort and energy into their studies.” Marsha reported that faculty should have self-efficacy and “get to know the students and help them succeed.” Tammy felt that faculty should “feel self-assured and good about their work so that they can convey that to students and convey examples to students.”

Damon believed that faculty members “go above their call of duty. They teach in the classroom, online classroom, and serve on committee. Faculty members are what is keeping the students that we have now.” Pearl reported that a faculty members’ self-

efficacy “plays a major part in helping to retain students. When you have a faculty member that is engaged with students, it gives that student a sense of community involvement through the university system. When you show students that you care, they will feel more comfortable coming to you and opening up telling you things because you have built that rapport. I feel confident that I am doing what I am supposed to do, that I know what I am charged to do, and I go above and beyond maximizing my potential by going to professional developments, and helping students learn different ways. The professor who has a high level of self-efficacy will be able to influence that student to want to model after that professor.” Donald stated that “some faculty don’t care about students, themselves, or to helping other people.” Heather reported that faculty members’ should have self-efficacy because they “need to be able to believe in their ability to help the students and give the best advice to increase retention.”

**Interview Question 6.** Interview Question 6 asked participants what experience do they have in helping or ensuring that students stay enrolled in college and increasing retention. All participants stated what they do to help students and what they feel is important to retaining students. Chance stated that he helps students by “encouraging them to stay in school, explain to them the value of having a college education, and how it helps their careers. Try to help them if problems arise, help with problem solving, help with study habits, financial problems and where they can go, and how to concentrate on studies.” James thinks that developing “life-long relationships with students” will increase retention. He also stated that some students will have “life events or relationships that will hinder progress, but ultimately as a faculty member when healthy

relationships are established they will remember that. Being a good professor and looking out for the best interest of the student. I was taught that whenever we as college professors forget that we work for the student, we can no longer serve. I understand that I work for the student and I give you 100%.”

Malcolm reported that his experience with helping student retention includes “meeting with them monthly to assess needs, keep them informed of what is going on in their program, and making sure that the programs stay accredited.” Tim reported that “identify the students that are struggling and having one on one sessions with students to discuss needs and dreams” are his experience in helping increase retention. He further stated that then he can see how I can assist them. Also, always ask the student “what is it that you want to do and love to do” because you would put you best effort forward. Marsha reported that she “reaches out to students, call to check in with them, making sure they have the right information, and educating students how to advocate for themselves.”

Tammy stated that “providing counseling and being a good listener” are her contributions to increasing retention. Damon reported that he “networks with alumni, encourage students to take courses in sequence, aligning the curriculum with other institutions so students transfer in and out easily, monitoring the progress of students, and provide interventions when students are not doing well.” Pearl noted that she is “the director of the women’s learning community which is an academic initiative designed to recruit and enhance the students’ educational learning experience and help retain and graduate a small cohort of students through their college experience.” She also stated that she “helps to broaden the experience of the students, serving as a role model, confidant,

and mentor to students.” Donald stated that he offers “advisement, recruitment, and counseling.” Heather stated that she “talks with students and offer advice when needed.”

**Interview Question 7.** Interview Question 7 asked what are some resources or services that can be created at the school to help increase retention. Two themes emerged: mentoring and tutoring. Mentoring referred to faculty helping students in areas of need whether it is personal, educational, or career services. Tutoring referred to assisting students with their academics. Chance reported that “tutorial centers and identifying students that are not doing very well, counseling center to help with other problems that the student may have.” He also thought that “mentoring programs are helpful as well and would be beneficial.” James believed that “study groups, encouraging students to do cooperative learning, mentoring, engaging them in the class discussions makes for a whole better learning experience. Encouraging students to work together as a team and that creates comradery, co-hortship, and helps retention because you have students working together that want to finish the program and work together to finish their degree.”

Malcolm felt that providing “short-term or low-interest loans for students” as a needed service to increase retention. Tim noted that “faculty can help in having a day set aside to help any student in the program.” He also believed that the university can “have senior students tutor their fellow students and develop a mentorship program because it creates a bond between the student and faculty.” Marsha reported that “identifying the needs of student by doing a needs assessment and offering students alternative options” will help increase retention.” She further stated that “mentoring can be beneficial if it is

done the right way, by focusing on more education and career and not personal.” Tammy stated that she wishes that “administration would reach out to students more, the school needs a more hands on approach, and an increase in more technology usage.” Damon reported that he believes that “more funding and faculty members” will help increase retention.” Pearl stated that “learning communities, mentoring programs, utilizing the resources that we have, and making some of the resources that are available now mandatory because most students are not aware of some of the resources that we have.”

Donald believed that faculty members should “work with high school students more to prepare students for college by letting that be an actual real pipeline to encourage and prepare students for post-secondary education.” Heather stated that more “professional development training and mentoring program” are needed to help increase retention on campus. All participants identified resources and services that they felt will help increase retention.

**Interview Question 8.** Interview Question 8 asked what would you recommend for increasing student retention. Chance stated that he would recommend “hiring a permanent director of student retention, inquiring about the financial problems of students, having tutorial centers for students that have academic problems.” James reported that he thinks “better relationships and collaborations” increase retention. He went on to state that there is “not enough collaboration at the school between student and professor, and I don’t think that I have ever had a problem with a student that I can’t resolve.” Malcolm stated that he would “make sure that the students understand the

program that they are enrolling in, more counseling with students, and have alumni come back and talk to students or have veteran students encourage first-year students.”

Tim believed that “identifying needs early of students and sharing your own struggles and problems that helped me finish my degree. Some students feel that they are on their own and they have some challenges to deal with being their first year in college.”

Marsha stated that “proper faculty training on what they can do to help with student retention” would be beneficial. She made sure to note that the training should not “blame or accuse anyone but provide them with information that helps to retain students.”

Tammy stated that she would put “more money into improving the facility and identifying the needs of students.”

Damon noted that “gathering and analyzing the data of students that are not staying, identify needs of students and offer help, and do a better job of tracking the students and why they leave.” Pearl recommended that the university needs “mandatory study hall for freshman and sophomores.” She also believed that having “mandatory reading, writing, math, and language labs outside of what the classroom is going to require is helpful.” She then recommended “helping students to see that there is not a thing different about them than the person next to them in class except their discipline and the way you are willing to study and commit.” Donald stated that “community service and mentoring” will help increase retention. Heather stated that she would recommend “mentorship program that offer encouragement to students and to have better prepared faculty and staff members that will really help the school and the students.”

These recommendations by the participant are important for the university to take into consideration when developing resources and services to increase retention.

This study proved to be beneficial in providing the university with a better understanding of what services or resources are needed on campus to increase retention. The interview questions aligned with the research questions in addressing what programs or instructional strategies currently offer support at the university, how faculty contribute to retention/graduation, and what faculty observe affect student retention/graduation. Through a professional development training program, the university will be more knowledgeable of how to identify the needs of students and what resources or services can increase retention.

### **Emerging Themes**

Four major themes emerged from this study and they were as follows: more services and resources are needed on campus, identifying the needs of students is essential, mentoring can be beneficial, and faculty has a major effect on student retention.

**Theme 1: More services and resources are needed on campus.** This theme emerged from research question number one. Interview questions one, two, and three were established by research question number one. All participants reported that services and resources on campus are beneficial and needed. Financial aid, early alert programs, and student professor rapport were specified several times by the participants as services or resources that are needed more on campus. Therefore, faculty members have a perception that students may stay enrolled in college if these services and resources were utilized regularly.



**Theme 2: Identifying the needs of students is essential.** This theme emerged from research question number two. Interview questions four, five, and six were established by research question number two. All participants stated techniques in which they assist their students whether it was by counseling, tutoring, mentoring, providing motivation, and giving positive examples to the students. However, none of these techniques except for tutoring are provided by the university to assist in retention/graduation. Several participants stated that by identifying the needs of the students, they could assist and provide them with the appropriate services or resources to increase retention.

**Theme 3: Mentoring can be beneficial.** This theme emerged from research question number three. Interview questions seven and eight were established by research question number three. Several participants noted the benefits of a mentoring program and how they would be in agreement to participate or volunteer their services if a program was created. Although this university does not have a mentorship program, some participants how they assist their own students with mentoring. Hence, several participants recognized the importance of a mentorship program and noted that implementing a mentorship program could have an effect on retention/graduation.

**Theme 4: Faculty have a major effect on student retention.** This theme emerged from research question number two. Interview questions four, five, and six were established by research question number two. All participants agreed that faculty effects student retention and graduation. Building a rapport with the students, encouraging self-efficacy, and providing motivation and guidance were listed as having an effect on

students. Although some participants stated that they provide support to the students, more training is needed because retention is continuing to decline.

### **Conclusion**

Using a qualitative case study design, the researcher explored additional services through the perspective of the faculty that will best assist the students and ultimately increase retention. The researcher interviewed faculty at a local university in middle Georgia. The data was analyzed by hand using themes. The researcher reported the findings of the study in narrative form and visual images. The response of the study allowed the researcher to gain a better assessment of what support services are offered at the school now, and what support services could be implemented to ensure successful matriculation of the students. The following section, the project, discussed the professional development training program design in detail. A project was designed to recommend supportive education services at the university to ensure that students stay to continue his or her education. This study has a probable success rate to improve the retention rates of the school, increase the graduation rates of students, and promote social change among the university as an entity.

## Section 3: The Project

### **Introduction**

This section describes a 3-day professional development training that will provide information and encourage faculty members to become more proactive and zealous in acquiring the students' needs at this university. This research found that the faculty members all agreed that more educational services are needed on campus to increase retention and they were all willing to learn and contribute their time in assisting students and the university in that aspect. The data analysis generated several themes that could increase the retention rates and provide better outcomes for the students and the university. Some of the themes which emerged from the faculty members suggested directions that could be followed to increase student retention were. These included the needs for alumni to volunteer at the university, more faculty to support and encourage students in areas needed, and a mentorship program at the university. Also integrated in this section will be the description and goals, rationale, review of literature, and implementation.

### **Description and Goals**

The data analysis of the interviews of faculty members yielded four themes; if these themes were addressed thoroughly, more services and resources could be implemented to increase the retention rates at the university. Based on the findings, it would be beneficial for faculty members to learn how to identify the needs of the students at the university. Identifying the needs of the students will help the faculty members and

the university understand what the students need, their challenges, and their overall perceptions of why the students are leaving and what can be done to help them.

The data collection and data analysis presented a desire from the faculty members to learn new ways to retain students at the university. The professional development training program will be titled “Increasing Retention: We Can, We Will.” The primary goal of the professional development training is to inspire and educate faculty members to be more aware of students’ needs and recommend ways in which they can assist them. The findings from this project helped to design the PowerPoint presentation that will be presented to the faculty members with the substance based on best professional practice techniques in regards to retention.

Professional development seeks to enhance educators’ knowledge and equip them with the skills, strategies, and tools needed to respond to students in the aspect of motivation and engagement (Kennedy, 2010). The professional development training was 3 days, inspired faculty members to be more aware of students’ needs, and recommended ways in which they can assist them. Day 1 consisted of understanding student retention and student engagement, discussing learning objectives and goals of training, and explaining the roles of faculty and students. Day 2 consisted of understanding self-efficacy, goals, and how faculty can assist student with making and obtaining goals. Also, several scenarios will be discussed in group settings and faculty members will have to discuss how they will help each student in the scenario. Day 3 consisted of learning professional practice techniques such as active learning techniques, encouraging greater

student and faculty contact, improving the communication of high expectations, and embracing the ideals of clarity in organization.

The professional development training will educate individuals on methods that can be implemented to create change. This project will help bring about awareness of the need to increase the retention rates at the university and how the faculty can assist in that aspect. The goal for this training will be to educate the faculty in ways to increase student retention, encourage more faculty and student engagement, understand self-efficacy theory, and setting goals. Learning outcomes of the 3-day professional development training include:

- Participants will be able to identify the needs of students early in the semester.
- Participants will learn how to build a rapport with students.
- Participants will share updated information with students as it becomes available in reference to university news and academics.
- Participants will utilize the information learned in the professional development training and put into best practice.
- Participants will verbalize the understanding of self-efficacy theory.
- Participants will identify three services that are beneficial to students at the university.
- Participants will learn how to encourage and help students to set goals.
- Participants will provide direction and motivation to students when a need is identified.

By faculty members successfully achieving these outcomes, retention at the university may increase and so will the graduation rates. Students may see an increase in student engagement and academic success.

### **Rationale**

A professional development training was chosen to address this problem because it brings to the forefront that student retention is decreasing and it offers options to the faculty of ways to increase student retention which in turn will enhance student success. Also, giving options to the faculty at the university is beneficial instead of relying on a particular department to allocate services when and if they choose to do so. The data analysis in Section 2 revealed that faculty are willing to help in increasing retention and what they think the university needs to help the students. In order for the university to know how effective the data analysis will be, the results must be shared with the university of the issues surrounding student retention to increase their knowledge. This knowledge was addressed via a professional development training program, where faculty members are able to learn how to recognize students' needs and develop a rapport with the students.

Designing a professional development training to increase retention rates at this particular university was chosen because I am a product of this university and each year student enrollment and retention rates are steadily declining. It is important as an alumnae to give back to the university in a way that seems fit and rewarding. The problem will be addressed through the professional development training by offering solutions and recommendations on how student retention can be increased and also receiving input

from the faculty. I see this project as a solution to the problem because it will involve faculty members to develop a rapport with their students and during this time an assessment of the students' needs can be determined and the appropriate services can be offered. The research participants stated through the data analysis that more knowledge and training was needed to help the students. The professional development training program is a step to ensure that the participants' results are broadcasted and will provide the knowledge that faculty need to better assist their students.

### **Review of the Literature**

This literature review was conducted to help identify ways services can be implemented on campus by faculty members to increase retention rates. An extensive search of the following databases included: multidisciplinary, SAGE, ERIC, and Education Research Complete. The search terms used were *professional development*, *learning outcomes*, *goals*, *self-efficacy*, *retention and mentoring*, and *student engagement*. Numerous journal articles, books, and data reports will support the literature review and findings from the data collection. Several themes emerged from the data collection process that included: more services and resources being needed on campus, the importance of identifying the needs of students, the belief that mentoring can be beneficial to student retention, and faculty can have a major effect on student retention. The professional development project will provide the knowledge and training that the faculty needs to ensure that students stay enrolled at the university and graduate. The primary objective was to understand what services can be implemented to ensure that students stay enrolled and increase student retention.

### **Services and Resources Needed on Campus**

More than one half of the faculty members who participated in the study agreed that more services and resources can be used on campus. Although, there were a few that stated that the university as a whole is offering the programs, they are not making the students aware of the resources that are provided. It was also noted that some faculty members expressed concerns that students were not as prepared for college as they should be and some guidance would be beneficial. Richardson and Tate (2013) believed the importance of faculty members making it a priority to prepare students for the university life. Although I agree with this statement, one cannot hardly put all the blame on university faculty in reference to a student being prepared for college or not. The responsibility should be shared by the student, family, and faculty at the current university. Turner and Thompson (2014) agreed that the transition process from high school to college is challenging due to personal, family, academic, and social adjustment issues. According to Alexander, Bozick, and Entwisle (2008) students who are expected to attend college are less prepared academically and less likely to meet their educational goals.

Once the student enters college, then faculty members can encourage students to be more prepared and stay enrolled in college which will ultimately reflect in the student engagement, retention, and graduation rates. Soria and Stebleton (2012) believed that:

When students are not as engaged in college, their overall experiences can be isolating and disconnecting; unfortunately, these challenges can be magnified



when students enroll at large research universities, where classes tend to be larger and interactions with faculty can be limited. (p. 675)

Implementing services and resources on campus could be the first step in encouraging students to stay enrolled in college. Students participating in the services or resources on campus, can help them to better understand the process of college life and encourage them to take a more active role in their college experience which promotes student engagement. Woelk and Weeks (2010) agreed that student engagement and college resources significantly influence student learning and growth. Some examples of resources or services can include: counseling services, mentoring, learning communities, career services, and spiritual communities.

At this particular university where the research was conducted a counseling center and career services center do exist, however, some faculty members stressed their feelings of the students not knowing the services exist. Therefore, more promotion of the actual services on the campus needs to be prominent. Goncalves and Trunk (2014) reported that students who are active on campus inside and outside of the classroom are more successful and satisfied. Richardson and Tate (2013) concluded that it is essential to provide new college students with more usable information and mentoring as it increases the retention rates with degree programs.

### **Identifying the Needs of Students**

Faculty members often fail to identify the needs of students. Several faculty members also identified that this was a need that the university is currently not advanced in. Identifying the needs of students could also possibly increase the retention rates and

student engagement that will ultimately affect the graduation rates. Gibbons and Woodside (2014) found that social support is necessary for first-generation college students, peer support is necessary for college success, family support influenced college attendance and success, and mentoring was vital to college success. Spittle (2013) noted that not only retaining but also graduating students demands clarity and dedication from the university in terms of thinking and effort. The university including faculty and staff can easily identify the needs to students by simply engaging in conversation.

Engaging in conversation can help build a rapport and form connections between the student and faculty member. Building connections is paramount to establishing resources for students to be able to use throughout their college journey. These resources can be a vital asset during college and after college. Once the students' needs are identified, the faculty member can assist with giving them the tools, resources, or services that they need and overall guidance. According to Hughey (2011), "the nonacademic factors of institutional commitment, academic goals, social support, academic self-confidence, and social involvement have a strong correlation to retention" (pp. 22-23).

These nonacademic factors also enhance the opportunity for the student and faculty to build a rapport based on trust and respect that could result in successful student outcomes (Hughey, 2011). Two key foundations to assist students after their needs have been identified are to help the student establish goals and a sense of self-efficacy. Messersmith and Schulenberg (2010) argued that individuals should goal strive using their current reality and if that goal is unmet, restructuring the goal as they continue to transition to adulthood until the goal is met. Also, by continuing to strive for his or her

goals, the student will maintain a domain specific self-efficacy due to being engaged in completing their goal (Messersmith & Schulenberg, 2010).

### **Mentoring Can Be Beneficial**

Several faculty members expressed the importance of mentoring college students. This particular school currently does not have a mentorship program for students to have a mentor assigned to them to encourage them to stay in college and graduate. Some faculty members stated that they provide mentoring to some students that they teach. Corso and Devine (2013) points out that providing mentoring as a support program, forms an ongoing collaboration with faculty, staff, and students which incorporates teaching and learning. Scielzo, Neeper, and Smith-Jentsch (2012) reported mentoring as “assisting students in overcoming personal and educational problems, identifying personal and systemic issues that may limit students’ chances of success, helping students understand academic policies and procedures, and familiarizing students with campus resources” (p. 44). A mentoring program will help students with career choices, reinforce the students confidence in their capabilities, provides a direct role model, and gives the mentees a perspective of what the future holds (Poor & Brown, 2013).

Mentoring on a college campus can only be beneficial and could not have any negative effects for the students or mentors. According to Evans and Forbes (2012), mentoring is a process where the mentor transfers experience and knowledge to the mentee and it facilitates development and empowerment. Many students could benefit from mentoring services to help them with their college journey of graduating from college and pursuing careers in their fields of study. Holland, Major, and Orvis (2012)

suggested that students should capitalize to develop their future careers by voluntary learning, development, involvement in academic setting, and commitment. Students who find success through mentoring or capitalization are presumed to have self-efficacy. Successful outcomes raises self-efficacy along with regulating human well-being and attainment (Pajares, 2003).

Holland et al., (2012) revealed capitalization as “a form of proactive coping that involves making the most out of one’s circumstances by participating in voluntary opportunities that provide professional growth and development” (p. 345). All students should be willing and open to taking advantage of any opportunities at the university that will aid in them completing their degree. Also students that have a mentor or that will be willing to establish a mentor, will need to establish an open line of communication with his or her mentor to have the best results. Research suggests that mentoring increases student persistence, enhances a commitment with the university, and has an impact on degree completion (Hu & Ma, 2010).

### **Faculty Effects on Student Retention**

Several state-funded universities are being forced to show evidence of improvement in student retention rates to reduce costs (Crumbley, Flinn, & Reichelt, 2012). Some faculty members agreed that they play a vital role in student retention and some faculty members did not. Some faculty members stated that student retention is decreasing due to students not being as prepared for college as they should be and their unwillingness to learn. However, others reported decreasing retention rates on the fact that the services or resources that are offered at the university are not advertised for

students to know about them. O’Keeffe (2013) thinks that students attending counselling sessions along with faculty and student relationships will increase retention rates at universities. However, Raelin et al., (2014) believed that the following will increase retention rates:

More targeted recruitment, reduction of experience of racial discrimination and prejudice on campus, improved chance for early academic success, better and more frequent advising, more active experiential instruction, more informed career planning, improved social acclimation and student-institution match, and an adequate level of need-based financial aid. (p. 601)

Both authors make very valid arguments in reference to improving retention rates and they are both correct in their statements. It takes all of these noted themes to improve retention and increase the graduation rates. One item that can also be added would be self-efficacy. According to Raelin et al., (2014), self-efficacy is linked to retention and is more crucial during a student’s freshman year because he or she is able to be assessed in order to enhance his or her perception of succeeding in college. Raelin et al., (2014) expanded on how self-efficacy developed the social cognitive career theory and characterized it as a “conceptual framework aimed at understanding the processes through which people develop educational/vocational interests, make career-relevant choices, and achieve performances of varying quality in their educational and occupational pursuits” (p. 62). Although faculty has some effect on student retention, Bandura, Caprara, Barbaranelli, Regalia, and Scabini (2011) points out that a person’s

self-efficacy is their foundation and contributes to their beliefs, actions, and life circumstances.

Some evidence has been noted to focus on faculty training in reference to making sure that the students have the tools needed to succeed in life. Chen and Kristjansson (2011) reported that students are able to pick up on when their professor is not fulfilling the learning process in the classroom. When students feel that they are getting the education that they deserve, they will strive for the best and receive their degree and when they feel they are not getting the education that they deserve, more than likely they will start seeking an educational opportunity from another school which in turn affects retention. Overall, faculty have some influence with students staying in college and finishing their degree.

### **Implementation**

To implement the professional development training program effectively, the university will need to be cooperative in dedicating time and effort. The implementation will take place between September and November of 2016. This period was selected due to this being the beginning of a new semester and this gives time for some changes to be implemented if a positive response is received. This school has a human subject committee which consists of faculty members and they have already reviewed the proposal of the project and agreed for the study to be conducted at their school. It is possible that this committee will have to review the project and give approval for the professional development training to take place on their campus. The Center for Retention Services at this school is responsible for tracking student retention, therefore, it

would be essential for this department to also be a part of the professional development training. It is with hope that the Human Subjects Committee and The Center for Retention Services department will give feedback on the training, share information learned with other faculty members, and implement what was learned in the training to better serve the students.

### **Potential Resources and Existing Supports**

Faculty members at the university and time will be the most importation resources needed for this project study. Preferably this presentation will be delivered to all the faculty at the university during the Fall semester of 2016. Several presentations of the training will be made during the Fall semester to ensure that all faculty can attend when time prevails. Also, a data projector, paper, and pen/pencil are the materials that will be needed for the training. A copy of the PowerPoint presentation will be given to all faculty members that participant in the professional development training. The facilitator will present the PowerPoint presentation and the facilitator notes will be read along and hopefully positive feedback will be recognized from the faculty members. The professional development training will be free, and all materials will be provided by the facilitator. Understanding retention, student engagement, and how to recognize students' needs will be clearly explained.

### **Potential Barriers**

The potential barrier for implementing this project effectively is the lack of support and participation from the university. The faculty members will be notified by email, phone, and a letter delivered to their offices of the professional development

training. All faculty members will be required to RSVP for the training to make sure that enough space and materials will be available for the attending participants. Although there is a need for a professional development training at this university, there is a possibility that faculty members will not be willing to participate in the training. If this happens, the facilitator will make an appointment with the president of the university and try to have the professional development training to be made mandatory for all faculty members.

### **Proposal for Implementation and Timetable**

The professional development program will be presented to the faculty at the university in the Fall 2016. The proposal on student retention was approved by the university and they are a community partner with the facilitator. The professional development program will also be offered in the Spring of 2017 if an abundant amount of feedback is received from the faculty. I will also like to open the professional development training up to staff and students in the Spring of 2017, and hopefully by then some faculty members that attended the training in the Fall 2016 can give their feedback on things that they have implemented with their students. In the Summer 2017 after the program has been implemented, the facilitator will have a meeting with the university to see if the professional development training has had any effect on student retention.

### **Roles and Responsibilities**

The role of the faculty is to attend, participate, and incorporate some of the learning objectives from the professional development training into their daily interaction



with their students. The responsibility of the faculty member would be to actually demonstrate to his/her students what was learned from the professional development training in reference to building a rapport with them. Information or guidance/support will be available for faculty members when needed by simply making a phone call to the facilitator. I will develop, implement, and facilitate the professional development training program for this university to increase retention and student engagement.

### **Project Evaluation**

Evaluating professional development programs is important because it will provide evidence of whether the program added any value to university and will acknowledge if the learning outcomes were achieved (Treat, 2009). The design of the professional development program will provide faculty at the university the knowledge and guidance to better understand the services are needed on campus, how to increase student retention, how to increase student engagement, setting reasonable and attainable goals, and understanding best professional practice. The goal of the project evaluation is to determine if the professional development training program was beneficial in helping faculty understand the students and their needs in reference to keeping them retained and engaged at the university. The results of the professional development training program evaluation will be shared with the university administration to determine the effectiveness of the outcomes that were established. There will be group discussions of scenarios and videos to engage faculty in active learning.

A post-test will be given at the end of the training that will test the knowledge and skills learned from the training. There are 10 post test questions, and all are true and

false. A summative evaluation will be provided to each participant at the end of the professional development training consisting of Likert-style questions. All the questions will be closed ended; however, there will be a section on the survey for additional comments that the participants may want to share for further recommendations to the professional development training program. The feedback will allow the researcher to make needed revisions to the training program and incorporate any information necessary to ascertain the overall effectiveness of the training.

### **Implications Including Social Change**

#### **Local Community**

The research participants provided alternatives and insight into the services that are needed on campus to increase retention. This data helped to align a professional development training program offered to faculty members at the university to improve student retention. Social change can be improved through this project by exploring the needs of the students and offering the services on campus that will increase their chances of staying enrolled. Improving the faculty knowledge and training can have a positive effect on student engagement which may lead to an increase in student retention. This study is designed for a university in middle Georgia; however, it potentially could meet the needs of other universities that are seeking knowledge on how to increase their retention rates.

#### **Far-Reaching**

The project study and professional development training program will better assist faculty members in understanding the needs of students and providing an outline to be

applied. The results of the professional development training program will provide the faculty the ability to incorporate the learning outcome and techniques into to overall interaction with the students. The professional development training program is about making a difference and building relationships with the students at the university and will serve as a strong foundation in student engagement and student retention. An increase in student retention will lead to positive social change shared by the faculty, staff, students, and university as a whole. This professional development program will be useful to the faculty by understanding the needs of students through increased learning and implementing more services on campus to retain the current students.

### **Conclusion**

The professional development training program was designed and developed to explain how identifying the needs of students and implementing services on a university campus can increase student retention. The basis was formed with the opinions and views of the faculty members who participated in the case study. Although this project study was developed specifically for a university in middle Georgia, it could be beneficial to other universities that need help in increasing the retention rates. This project was developed with social change leading the sector for improving the faculty members knowledge of identifying the needs of students and guiding them in the right direction for academic success.

## Section 4: Reflections and Conclusions

### **Introduction**

For this project study, I interviewed faculty members who have been employed at a university in middle Georgia to understand what services or resources are needed on campus to increase student retention. The case study examined 10 participants who have been employed at the university for at least 2 years. The data obtained from face-to-face interviews and current research assisted in developing a professional development training program. The professional development training program was designed to provide knowledge and inform faculty members of services that can be beneficial for students at the university. The training program will be beneficial for students, faculty, and the university to provide options/support to increase student retention and student engagement.

### **Project Strengths**

The strengths of this project study include faculty members who agreed to participate in the research and other universities that are facing decreased retention rates could benefit from the professional development program. The in-person interviews provided an insightful perspective of the services that faculty believed helpful to keeping students retained at a higher educational institution. The data collected were used as a guide to develop the professional development training. The results revealed that the participants were all in agreement that more services/resources can be useful in retaining students and were all open to assisting student with their needs. The project study data and self-efficacy theory were used as a guide to develop the professional development

theory. The additional strength of this project is that other universities that are having problems with a decrease in their retention rates could benefit from this professional development program. This program is also flexible where other universities are able to adjust/restructure the program to meet the needs of their students. Restructuring the programs will also be cost effective for other universities. The stakeholders are committed to continuing to promote the professional development regarding student retention.

### **Recommendations for Remediation of Limitations**

This project study has some limitations. First, a small sample of 10 was taken from one university. Although the sample was small, it provided great insight to what was needed at the university. Therefore, although the study was small, other universities could use this as a representation when problems arise with their retention rates. Second, only faculty members were interviewed from the university and not staff. This was done because faculty members have more interaction with the students due to being in the classroom. However, a study could be beneficial interviewing staff members to get their perspective of why retention is decreasing. Even though staff members are not in the classroom with the students, they may have some awareness of why the retention is decreasing. Third, only faculty members that have been at the university for 2 years or more were invited to participate in the research study. Although the 10 faculty members who participated in the research study helped to design the professional development training program, faculty members that have been at the university for 2 years or less are not equally valued. The faculty members who have been at the university longer were

able to provide insight of what was needed from the faculty, university, and students to increase retention from their experience at the university.

The recommendations for remediation of this project's limitations include having a larger sample size, including faculty and staff to participate in the research, having the research open to all faculty and staff regardless of how long they have been employed at the university, and conducting a student retention study yearly. These components help with the expansion of the professional development training program to increase retention and make the university better. Everyone employed at the university will be able to provide their thoughts, opinions, and learned practices regarding what will help retain students. The more stakeholders involved in making the university better will increase student retention and student engagement.

Conducting a student retention study yearly will help the university stay updated on the number of students entering and leaving the university. This will also help the university identify and understand the needs of the students. Also, the university will be able to address the problem, implement services if needed, and alternate any teaching practices that will retain the students. Alternatively, the problem with student retention may be successfully addressed in a monthly student/university forum. The purpose of the forum is for the students to address any concerns with the faculty, staff, or university that they are having, and guidance/feedback will be provided. This forum should be held monthly on the campus and open to all students and university employees. These alternatives have the potential to rectify problems with solutions that will help the students to become academically successful.

### **Scholarship**

Scholarship is the process of a growing movement in learning. I hope to influence students, faculty, staff, community leaders, and anyone that has a drive to learn new material and apply it to everyday life. Through this journey of scholarship, I learned that patience, time, and persistence were vital in learning the way that educators think. Coming from the field of social work and transitioning to the field of education is different and similar. However, both careers share two common goals, and that is providing services to individuals in need to promote social change and the journey of promoting scholarship. Integrating previous research to the current research and creating new ideas all generate social change and scholarship that will ultimately provide growth. Scholarship is about discovering something new to learn and enhance, therefore making the world a better place.

### **Project Development and Evaluation**

I learned that developing a project takes research and time. In developing my project study for this doctoral degree, I learned a lot about myself and why I want to become a scholar in the field of education. I chose my project study topic on retention and student engagement because it was something that I was passionate about after seeing this university retention rates steadily declining. My project study was based on the theory of self-efficacy. In developing my project, I interviewed faculty members at a local university. Interviewing faculty members helped me to design a professional development program that will educate faculty members with assisting the students with any need that they may have.

The literature that was researched for this project study helped to deliver a strong foundation of recommendations for the university to implement to increase retention. It is my hope that the university will actually use the professional development training as a guide to retain more students. This training program can be used at several universities and amended as needed for lifelong learning. It is important that a project support the mission and vision of the university. The mission and vision of this university is to advance the cause of education. Advancing the cause of education is very broad and can vary in terms of social change, increasing retention, increasing funding for the school, and unification. All of these elements are key to advancing the cause of education through scholarship.

This project study was developed with a lot of time and effort from the beginning to the end. At the end of the project development training, there was a summative evaluation and post-test. This evaluation was provided and designed to determine if the program was successful. The post-test was designed to allow the participants to demonstrate the knowledge learned from the training. Also, this evaluation will allow for any changes to be modified and will only enrich the program. Through this evaluation, a better program can be designed and implemented.

### **Leadership and Change**

Through this doctoral journey, I have improved my leadership skills tremendously personally and professionally. Personally, I can identify a problem at a local level, design a program that will provide a solution to that problem, and implement a program that will help bring about a positive change in society. Becoming a leader in today's society has



helped me to be more focused in my career and open to possibilities that I would have never thought of before. My ultimate goal that I hope to obtain from this degree is to become an educator at a university and help bring about social change. I hope to inspire other young individuals that if they dream big and put in the work, anything is possible to achieve. Leadership involves setting positive examples, overcoming obstacles, providing help and knowledge to those in need, and even starting your own company where you will be able to make the day to day decisions.

Professionally, I have learned to communicate more and set career goals. During my career I learned that communicating more effectively will enhance more career opportunities and will open the pathway to networking in your profession. This allotted a leadership position within my career that eventually lead to better career opportunities. Basically, I identified a problem within the department and provided a solution, and the solution was implemented. This change gave me the courage to set more goals for my professional career. This doctoral journey has taught me that communicating with other successful individuals in the educational field and setting goals has improved my leadership skills. I also learned that change is okay and needed personally and professionally.

### **Analysis of Self as Scholar**

My doctoral journey has encouraged me to be great in all areas of my live. I have improved my communication, creative thinking, problem-solving skills, and networking skills to better create positive outcomes in my life. I have learned to collaborate effectively with other scholars. This strong collaboration has given me the

encouragement to become a well-rounded professional. While on this road to becoming a scholar, I have more appreciation and understanding for educators. Qualitative research has taught me to have deeper understanding for learning and the literature. I have also realized the importance of learning your craft or passion to be effective in your position. As a scholar, I feel competent to provide education and direction to individuals seeking knowledge. Overall, this educational journey has properly prepared me for my place of purpose.

### **Analysis of Self as Practitioner**

Although I am not an educator in the school system, I do provide education to my peers and individuals through my position in healthcare. Developing the skills associated with critical thinking and research, I have gained the knowledge and support to provide forward thinking. I have also learned the importance of using current research that will provide forward thinking concerning adult learning. This forward thinking will keep educators aware and knowledgeable that the world is changing and we have to change with it. During my doctoral journey in reference to research, I have gained the strength and support in becoming an expert in the field of education.

### **Analysis of Self as Project Developer**

Developing the professional development training program has been an amazing experience. I never thought that I could develop a training program that would provide knowledge to educators. I dreaded the idea of developing the project for months due to fear. However, when I sat down and thought about what I would like to see in a training program about student retention, all of my ideas started coming together. I also had to

keep in mind not to bore the people that I will be training per my mentor. The most important thing I learned in developing my project is to always have faith in yourself. The project was always in my mind and I was thinking, researching, and wondering how I will get my point across to other scholars that will make a difference at this university.

I started designing my project by thinking back to my freshman year as a student at this same university that I conducted my research. There were several things that I needed during that time that I did not receive on campus, did not know existed on campus, or did not feel that I could go to my professors. Therefore, my project began with defining retention and student engagement and then providing the participants with the data. The data analysis and professional literature aided in addressing the needs of the students at the university and designing the project. Overall, this project was designed with the mindset of providing an opportunity to everyone.

### **The Project's Potential Impact on Social Change**

My project will impact social change on any university campus due to the fact that student retention and student engagement are something that can always be improved. When this project was designed, I kept in mind that other universities will be able to use this project as a guide to helping retain students. This project is able to be amended because it is a guide that will show what faculty can do to help students and what students are looking for in reference to staying at a university. Although every university may not be retaining students for different reasons, some of the same tools used to help retain students can be used, such as, effective communication, student faculty rapport, mentoring, and learning communities.

The knowledge that I gained from my in depth interviews and the literature was shared in my professional development program. Social change will be apparent if the faculty uses the findings from the project into their daily lives with their students. Faculty and student relationships will be enhanced and the retention rates at the university will increase which is ultimate end result. Social change is all about growing and changing for the better of a community. Every university is its own community, and the improvements of that university will show by how much one put into the university as a whole.

### **Implications, Applications, and Directions for Future Research**

The case study examined the responses of the 10 faculty members that participated in the research on retention and student engagement at a university in middle Georgia. The faculty members provided their perceptions of what services they thought would be helpful in retaining students at this university. The services that the participants shared and what the literature recommended were incorporated into the professional development training program. The results indicated that services are important to retaining students and the faculty is open to establishing more services to help increase student retention. Establishing more services on campus will assist in retaining the students and promoting academic success among the students at the university.

Future research would allow for more exploration of services or resources that are needed at universities to increase retention and student engagement. This future research will be conducted at the university where this study was conducted and other universities as needed. Other universities will be able to adjust the project specifically to needs of that university. Future research could be more specific in helping to identify other resources

related to financial aid, graduation rates, and support systems. Additional inquiry into student retention and student engagement related to career endeavors could increase working relationships in the community amongst students and community leaders.

A study following the effectiveness of the professional development training program might prove to be helpful in the field of education. A review with the same faculty members that participated in the original study, current retention rates compared to the previous year, and a report from the students will help with evaluating the goals and outcomes of the training. This follow-up will determine if the professional development training program was successful or not. The follow-up should be scheduled after every semester to show that the university will be proactive in adjusting the program to increase student retention and student engagement for social change.

### **Conclusion**

More research needs to be conducted in reference to increasing retention and student engagement. However, my professional development training program is a start for universities learning how to incorporate more services at the school. All of the participants provided responses to the research questions to better understand what will help with increasing retention. I have gained insight that research and learning is needed for any training program to be successful. The impact of the professional development training program will improve student retention, student engagement, and academic excellence. The program will also be valuable personally and professionally. In addition this program will provide faculty members a road map of how to prepare for incoming students. This doctoral process has provided me with an opportunity to be great and

follow my dreams and aspirations of being an educator. Personally and professionally this process is a victory leading in the right direction. I also realized that I have a hunger for success and this will surely be a supreme foundation in chasing my dreams.

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## Appendix A: The Project

This project is a 3-day professional development training program for faculty members at a university in middle Georgia. The goal of the professional development training program is to educate faculty members of services that are needed on campus to increase retention rates. The training will provide participants a better understating of the needs of students at the university. The content for this training addressed the themes that emerged during the data analysis phase and also content from the literature. The professional development training program discusses the roles of the faculty in retaining student and analyzes Albert Bandura's theory of self-efficacy for goal attainment. Specific outcomes that will be addressed in this professional development training program are identifying the needs of students, learning to build a rapport with students, and encouraging self-efficacy. The participants will participate in group scenario discussions and video discussions utilizing best practices for helping the students at the university.

## **Increasing Retention: We Can, We Will**

### Day 1 Understanding Student Retention

#### **8:30 a.m.-9:00 a.m.**

Welcome. Facilitator and faculty members will introduce themselves and everyone will receive a name badge and copy of PowerPoint presentation. This will also be the time where the facilitator will discuss the learning objectives and outcomes of the training.

#### **9:00 a.m.-10:30 a.m.**

1. What is Retention?
2. What is Student Engagement?
3. Can Faculty Help with Retention and Student Engagement?

#### **10:30 a.m.-10:45 a.m.: Break**

#### **10:45 a.m.-11:50 a.m.**

Discussion of the roles of faculty in retaining students at the university.

1. Preparation
2. Partnership
3. Support

Watch a video of professor discussing the goals of both her and the students for the semester.

#### **11:50 a.m.-1:00 p.m.: Lunch**

#### **1:00 p.m.-2:30 p.m.**

Discussion of the importance of retention and the understanding of educational needs of students in a diverse society. Discussion on the services that are provided by the university and the services that faculty members stated were needed in retaining students.

#### **2:30 p.m.-2:45 p.m.: Break**

#### **2:45 p.m.-3:30 p.m.**

Discussion of academic success, watch video, and wrap-up session.

**Materials For Day One**

1. Internet access, LCD projector, screen, flash drive, sound system, personal laptop, tables, chairs, pens/pencils, and hand out of presentation for day one.

# Increasing Retention:

WE CAN, WE WILL

DAY 1

## Learning Outcomes

- ▶ • Participants will be able to identify the needs of students early in the semester.
- ▶ • Participants will learn how to build a rapport with students.
- ▶ • Participants will share updated information with students as it becomes available in reference to university news and academics.
- ▶ • Participants will utilize the information learned in the professional development training and put into best practice.
- ▶ • Participants will verbalize the understanding of self-efficacy theory.
- ▶ • Participants will identify three services that are beneficial to students at the university.
- ▶ • Participants will learn how to encourage and help students to set goals.
- ▶ • Participants will provide direction and motivation to students when a need is identified..

## What is Retention?

- ▶ Staying or the intent to stay in the current position at the current school.

*Student Data for School Years of 2012-2013 and 2013-2014*

Semester Students	Fall 2012 3,243	Spring 2013 2,891	Student Loss 352
Semester Students	Fall 2013 2,843	Spring 2014 2,513	Student Loss 330

### Facilitator Notes:

Ask three faculty members to define retention. How many of you know what the student retention rates of the university for the last 2 years? Discuss the table that provides the amount of students that left the university. Then asked them what do they think will help improve retention.




## What is Student Engagement?

- ▶ A time and effort students devote to educationally purposeful activities.
  - ▶ This may include:
    - ▶ 1. Workshops
    - ▶ 2. Mentor program
    - ▶ 3. Campus activities
    - ▶ 4. Learning environments/support groups

### Facilitator Notes:

Due to student retention being a critical issue in higher education today, it was recommend that factors should be explored to see what contributes to academic success and higher graduates rates. Some research indicates that a lack of student engagement may be the root cause of this problem and some argued that in order to increase student engagement, the teachers, students, and the universities administration have to work together.



Can faculty help?



Facilitator Notes:

The role of the faculty is paramount and should welcome all students to come into an environment where there is an enormous amount of support for them to receive. A good teacher should want to know how he or she could better influence or help his or her students. Students that require more challenge or support should be guided by a teacher and the teacher should use alternative strategies to assist them. A teachers' strategies or methods of teaching should be where the student feels they are benefiting and learning.

## Role of Faculty



### Preparation

Be prepared to educate the students



### Partnership

Develop a student-university partnership



### Support

Have support from the university

### Facilitator Notes:

Research reported that more teacher training is needed to prepare teachers and the goal of the teacher training is to have more “good teachers” in the classroom. Effective professional learning should be long term, school based, focused on the learning of all students, and linked to the curricula that teachers have to teach. College educators were evaluated on why they teach. Some teachers reported that there was a love of teaching, however, they worried that they did not receive the support they needed from the administration. Lack of support can ultimately be a major problem for students because when teachers cannot get the support from the administration of the school, they cannot really help the students. Teacher preparation programs that specialize in cultural awareness, sensitivity, and competency will enhance multicultural education with students in the educational system.

Has anyone ever heard of a student-university partnership?

There has been an interest in tying student learning and educational accountability to evaluate schools and teachers. The school could develop a student-university partnership. A student and university partnership has advantages because everyone has something to teach and something to learn. Although the faculty members at the school are more educated than the student trying to obtain a degree, does not mean that there is not anything to learn from that student.





Facilitator Notes:

Watch Video and Discuss

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TyRG85LqaJc>

## Why is Retention Important?

- ▶ Retention correlates with student engagement.
- ▶ Development of student/teacher rapport.
- ▶ Helps increase the graduation rates of the university.

### Facilitator Notes:

Retention and success rates for college and university students at 2-and 4-year institutions are positively correlated with the level of student engagement. It was also believed that when students are more engaged in campus activities and are a part of a group, there is an overall improvement in retention. When institutions enroll high proportions of students, they should expand the support services at the school to include academic, personal, and social areas that may increase the student's level of commitment to graduate. Students and faculty should develop a unique rapport with one another. Research in K-12 education found that schools with a higher student-teacher ratio tend to have higher dropout rates; it is worth considering the possible effects of student-faculty ration in higher education as well. This relationship should be open with an easy flow of communication, where the student will not feel intimidated to speak with the faculty and vice versa and the faculty should have expectations that all students can succeed and offer the appropriate services to ensure that they do.

## Educational Needs in a Diverse Society

- ▶ 1. To respect cultural differences
- ▶ 2. Be knowledgeable of cultural resources their student possess and the skill in teaching-learning process
- ▶ 3. Believe that all students are capable of learning in an enriched curriculum
- ▶ 4. A strong sense of professional efficacy when evaluating students.



### Facilitator Notes:

It is the responsibility of institutions of higher education to continue to provide and expand support services, especially given the trend of underprepared college freshman, and to create a climate in which degree completion can become a reality for a wider array of students.

## Services Currently Offered

- ▶ 1. Academic Counseling
- ▶ 2. Academic Advising
- ▶ 3. Tutorial Services
- ▶ 4. Professional Testing/Assessment Services



### Facilitator Notes:

Here is a list of current services offered by the student of retention services. What do you think about these current services that are offered to the students? Could more be offered? If so, what? Do you think the current services offered are retaining students?

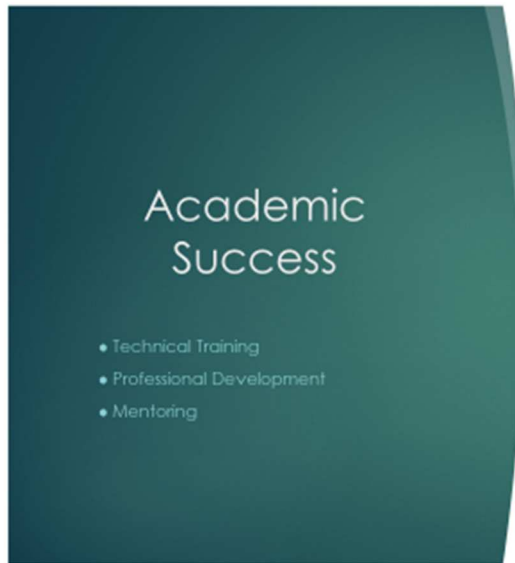
## Recommended Services Needed on Campus

- ▶ 1. Early Alert Programs
- ▶ 2. Student Professor Rapport
- ▶ 3. Personal Counseling
- ▶ 4. Mentoring
- ▶ 5. Provide motivation and guidance
- ▶ 6. Provide positive examples
- ▶ 7. Encouraging self-efficacy



### Facilitator Notes:

Discuss with faculty members about the data collected from 10 of their colleagues at the university. Provide the data analysis and explain what the faculty members shared about services. Do you agree with these services that were recommended by your colleagues?



#### Facilitator Notes:

How would you define academic success?

An academic support program should be constructed to meet the needs of disadvantaged students to enhance their educational experiences. Also, four-year institutions should implement programs or academic support services that will assist with the transition to college.

Technical training, professional development, and mentoring are successful strategies for navigating an educational pathway. These strategies are core beliefs in sustaining student interest and efficacy on their educational journey. Developing a mentorship program at a college should be created to be productive and not counterproductive. If the university puts forth the effort to use all of their resources to encourage faculty to mentor a student, the students' academic success could be unlimited.



Facilitator Notes:

Watch Video & Discuss

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=U7tx98xzGo4>

Any Questions



## **Increasing Retention: We Can, We Will**

### **Day 2 Understanding Self-Efficacy Theory**

#### **8:30 a.m.-9:00 a.m.**

Welcome back. Facilitator will answer any questions that faculty members may have about Day 1 training. Also, a quick overview of what was learned yesterday will be discussed.

#### **9:00 a.m.-10:30 a.m.**

1. What is self-efficacy?
  - a. Albert Bandura
2. What are goals?
3. Why are goals developed?

#### **10:30 a.m.-10:45 a.m.: Break**

#### **10:45 a.m.-11:50 a.m.**

Discuss different types of goals: short-term, long-term, and personal goals. Examples of each will be given.

Watch video

#### **11:50 a.m.-1:00 p.m.: Lunch**

#### **1:00 p.m.-2:30 p.m.**

Discuss the three mechanisms involved in self-efficacy for goal-attainment. Faculty members will be divided into groups of 5 by counting off 1-5. All participants will be grouped together by the same number. Each group will be assigned a scenario and they will work together to provide the best support services for the student.

#### **2:30 p.m.-2:45 p.m.: Break**

#### **2:45 p.m.-3:30 p.m.**

Continue with Scenarios and wrap-up session.



**Materials For Day Two**

1. Internet access, LCD projector, screen, flash drive, sound system, personal laptop, tables, chairs, pens/pencils, and hand out of presentation for day two.

# Understanding Self-Efficacy

DAY 2

## What is Self-efficacy

- ▶ Self-efficacy is a person's belief in their own competence.



### Facilitator Notes:

Who encourages students to have self-efficacy? Why? How would you encourage your student to have self-efficacy? Do you think faculty members should have self-efficacy?

Self-efficacy has been receiving more attention on educational research in motivation and learning, and not just clinical problems, such as, phobias and depression. The relationship between self-efficacy and achievement, shows the effects of students directly and indirectly relating to their grades and ability levels through various levels of educational research. This considerable amount of research findings point out that self-efficacy plays a predicting and mediating role in relation to students' achievements, motivation and learning.

A dark teal banner with a red square on the right side. The name "Albert Bandura" is centered in white text.

## Albert Bandura

- ▶ Developed the theory of self-efficacy and believed that efficacy affects a person's behavior by its impact on determinants such as:
  - ▶ 1. Goals and aspirations
  - ▶ 2. Outcome expectations
  - ▶ 3. Affective proclivities
  - ▶ 4. Perceptions of impediments and opportunities

### Facilitator Notes:

Bandura studies how people regulate their motivation, thought patterns, affective states and behavior through beliefs of personal and collective efficacy. Also, how people regulate themselves based on internal standards and the desire to develop, adapt, and change.

## What are Goals?

- ▶ A goal is what an individual is consciously trying to accomplish.



Facilitator Notes:

Can anyone tell me if self-efficacy and goals relate to each other? If so, how?

Self-efficacy and goals relate to each other, because a person has to believe in themselves to accomplish a goal. They differ in the aspect that a person has self-efficacy regardless of the situation or effort to accomplish a goal depending on if it is used or not, but a person does not have to have a goal to have self-efficacy. A goal can be used to enhance your self-efficacy.



## Why are goals developed?

- ▶ 1. Helps put life on track
- ▶ 2. Helps one be productive and successful
- ▶ 3. Gives direction for life
- ▶ 4. Gives motivation

### Facilitator Notes:

Goals are developed because they give direction, motivation, and yield successful outcomes. Also they reflect objectives that guide perception, emotion, thought, and action.

Do you think faculty or students set the most challenging goals?

The most challenging goals are set by students who judge themselves the hardest. Goals can be used as a starting point for guiding one's career and should serve as benchmarks for identifying when one has reached a particular objective.



## Short-Term Goals

- ▶ 1. Passing your current class with an A.
- ▶ 2. Find a mentor
- ▶ 3. Picking a major
- ▶ 4. Pledging a sorority or fraternity
- ▶ 5. Find a job

Facilitator Notes:

Can anyone give examples of some short-term goals?

Setting reasonable and attainable short-term goals is important to the success of the learner. Short-term goals allow to you to recognize progress quickly usually between 3 months and 3 years.

## Long-Term Goals

- ▶ 1. Become president of the United States of America
- ▶ 2. Obtaining a doctorate degree



Facilitator Notes:

Can anyone give examples of some long-term goals?

Setting long-term goals are also important to the success of the learner. Long-term goals are more distant and take longer to achieve, usually between 4-10 years.



## Personal Goals

- ▶ 1. Buying a home
- ▶ 2. Getting married
- ▶ 3. Having children
- ▶ 4. Writing a book



Facilitator Notes:

Can anyone give examples of personal goals?

Personal goals can be set by the learner for something that you are trying to achieve in your personal life not related to career. Personal goals reflect consciously articulated and personally meaningful objectives that guide perception, emotion, thought, and action. Goal setting is prominent in academic achievement and when applied accurately, self-efficacy increases.



Facilitator Notes:

Watch Video and Discuss

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TX8cZvZPDgE>

## Three Mechanisms Involved in Self-Efficacy for Goal Attainment

- ▶ 1. Self-Observation
- ▶ 2. Self-Judgement
- ▶ 3. Self-Reaction



### Facilitator Notes:

Do you agree with these mechanisms for self-efficacy in goal-attainment?

Self-observation informs and motivates the aspect of one's behavior. Observing your behavior continuously with self-recording will help reflect on time, place, and duration of occurrence to monitor progress.

Self-judgment involves comparing one's present goals by the importance of goal attainment and performance attributions. When an individual's performance does not go well, their goal attainment can be affected. Progress goals should be made in accordance to their personal value

Self-reaction is based on the progress of goals. Acceptable progress enhances self-efficacy and motivation. If the adult learner does not believe in progress that was made, he or she may not be motivated to succeed. Rewarding your progress towards your accomplishments will also enhance your self-efficacy and motivation for learning.



## Scenario 1

- ▶ Jack is an active student in your class who seems to be a hard worker. After failing the first major assignment in your class Jack comes to talk to you about how he can improve. He still fails the second major assignment even after he had tried to complete the assignment properly. You realize that Jack just doesn't seem to have the skills needed to pass your class.

### Facilitator Notes:

Faculty members will be divided into groups of 5 by counting off 1-5. All participants will be grouped together by the same number. Each group will be assigned a scenario and they will work together to provide the best support services for the student. Each scenario and the support services provided will be shared. Participants will be able to comment on other scenarios and give feedback of what service they would provide to the student.

## Scenario 2

- ▶ It is midway through the term and Bill has repeatedly asked if he can have an extension on each of the out-of-class assignments. Bill sends you an email to once again ask for more time. None of his work has been substandard but he doesn't abide by the timelines set forth for all students. Even when given an extension, he barely turns in his work by those deadlines. It is obvious that Bill does not have a propensity to finish his work on time.

## Scenario 3

- ▶ It is the fourth week of the term and thus far, Sally has only attended about half of the class meetings. You would like to talk to her about it but when she does attend class she arrives just as you are starting, and promptly leaves before you can catch her.



## Scenario 4

- ▶ Jill turns in an assignment that doesn't fit what you were looking for. Because it seems she has misunderstood the assignment, you turn it back to her with "Please See Me" on it so you can discuss it with her. Two weeks later she still hasn't come to see you and has now turned in another assignment with the same problem.



## Scenario 5

- ▶ Jim performs poorly on the first exam in your class partially because he was unable to finish the exam in the time allotted. Jim asks if you can give him extra time on the second exam.

## Scenario 6

- ▶ It's the third week of class, you've assigned one short paper, and two journal assignments based on class reading. It's obvious in class that Steve has read the material and thought about it carefully. He asks insightful questions in class and refers to the text in class discussion. He has been in class every session. He has not, however, turned in any of the written assignments. You've mentioned to him that you've noted their omission and showed him the effect on his grade. He agrees to get them done. It's the fifth week and there have been three more written assignments. Still Steve participates actively in class but so far has not turned anything in.

## Scenario 7

- ▶ Susan is in your class and has been doing fine, but begins to miss classes, fails to hand in assignments, and generally is falling behind. You approach Susan after class and set up a time to talk to her. During this conference, Susan says: "I'm feeling totally overwhelmed by everything. My job is taking more time than I expected. I'm supposed to work 20 hours a week, but lately they want more hours from me, and now it's more like 30 hours a week. I'm behind in all my classes, not just WR 121, and I have a math exam next week. Besides that, I had a fight with my boyfriend and I've had to move out of my apartment and find another place, so I've been busy with moving my stuff. Now, on top of everything else, I have this chest cold--I feel terrible. I just don't know where to start, or what to do next. I feel like dropping out of school."

## Scenario 8

- ▶ April is a good student who seems to put lots of pressure on herself to maintain a 4.0. She is currently getting a B in your class. It is week 8 and she insists she needs to drop if there is no way she can get an A in your class.

## Scenario 9

- ▶ Antoine, an older student in his late 20's, is just starting college after an injury brought his career as a professional dancer to an end. Although, he loved the world of dance, he is excited to be in college and understands that success requires commitment. A few weeks after the start of the term Antoine and his girlfriend become parents. Because of the high cost of day care Antoine and his girlfriend take turns providing childcare; Antoine cares for the baby during the day while his girlfriend works, and she cares for the baby in the evening while Antoine goes to classes. Financially strained, Antoine takes on a part time job working nights at UPS. Then he starts to miss class and turns in work only sporadically. Although having completed 3/4 of the course work, as the term comes to a close Antoine stops attending altogether and informs you that he intends to withdraw from your course as he is unable to keep up with his school work in addition to childcare and working part time?



Any Questions?



Reference

- ▶ Portland Community College, Student Retention, *Student Scenarios*, Retrieved January 30, 2016, from <http://www.pcc.edu/resources/academic/retention/StudentScenarios.html>

## **Increasing Retention: We Can, We Will**

### **Day 3 Professional Practice and Overview**

#### **8:30 a.m.-9:00 a.m.**

Welcome back to the final day of training. Facilitator will answer any questions that faculty members may have about Day 2 training. Also, a quick overview of what was learned yesterday will be discussed.

#### **9:00 a.m.-10:30 a.m.**

Faculty members will sit with their assigned group members from yesterday. Discussion on professional practice with faculty members. Watch video and discuss.

#### **10:30 a.m.-10:45 a.m.: Break**

#### **10:45 a.m.-11:50 a.m.**

Discussion of data analysis themes in detail. Receive feedback from faculty members on how to incorporate the themes/services at the university. Also, what department should be responsible for the service provided?

#### **11:50 a.m.-1:00 p.m.: Lunch**

#### **1:00 p.m.-2:30 p.m.**

Overview of information learned in the training. Participants will answer the questions randomly when the facilitator asks. Watch videos and discuss.

#### **2:30 p.m.-2:45 p.m.: Break**

#### **2:45 p.m.-3:30 p.m.**

Facilitator will answer questions from participants in reference to the professional development training. Participants will complete a post test and summative evaluation.

### **Materials For Day Three**

1. Internet access, LCD projector, screen, flash drive, sound system, personal laptop, tables, chairs, pens/pencils, hand out of presentation for day three, post test questions and summative evaluation.



# Professional Practice and Overview

DAY 3

## Professional Practice

- ▶ 1. The use of active learning techniques
- ▶ 2. Encouraging greater student and faculty contact
- ▶ 3. The communication of high expectations
- ▶ 4. Embracing the ideals of clarity in organization and preparation



### Facilitator Notes:

Institutional interests in increasing student retention arise from the negative effects of student departure on the stability of institutional enrollments, budgets, and the public perception of the quality of colleges and universities. When trying to increase student retention, faculty members should adopt some additional professional practices in their teaching. These would include: the use of active learning techniques, encouraging greater student and faculty contact, the communication of high expectations, and embracing the ideals of clarity in organization and preparation. These choices will contribute to student persistence and the goal of student course-level learning.

The communication of high expectations involves not only setting high expectations for students but also expecting them to meet them.

The encouragement of student and faculty contact entails frequent interaction between students both in and out of the classroom.

The use of active learning techniques contribute to multiple forms of student success through their positive impact on college student retention and student course-level learning.



Facilitator Notes:

Watch Video and Discuss

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oAYaueESwMA>

## Emerging Themes

- ▶ Services and resources are needed on campus
  - ▶ Personal counseling services
  - ▶ Mentoring
  - ▶ Learning communities
  - ▶ Career services
  - ▶ Spiritual communities



### Facilitator Notes:

How can these services be provided on campus and what department should provide the service?

Student engagement and college resources significantly influence student learning and growth. Since the university provides academic counseling, personal counseling could be easily added as a service for the students. A mentor program could be started by a few faculty members and eventually transferred to the center for retention services to make available for all students and will include career services. Learning communities will bring students together with different learning styles and also will provide mandatory math, reading, and writing classes. Spiritual communities can be held on campus where students who don't have transportation will be able to engage in spiritual services.

## Emerging Themes Cont.

- ▶ Identifying the needs of students
  - ▶ Social support
  - ▶ Peer support
  - ▶ Family support
  - ▶ Faculty and staff engage in conversation with students to build rapport



Facilitator Notes:

How can these services be provided on campus?

Social Support-emotional support, financial support, or informational support

Peer Support-friends or co-workers

Family Support-mom, dad, brother, sister, aunts, or uncles

Faculty/Staff engage in conversation with students to build rapport-university as an entity

## Emerging Themes Cont.

- ▶ Mentoring can be beneficial
  - ▶ Ongoing collaboration with faculty and staff
  - ▶ Provide direct role model
  - ▶ Reinforce student confidence in the students capabilities
  - ▶ Gives the mentee perspective of what the future holds



### Facilitator Notes:

How can this service be provided at the university? How many of you will be willing to be a mentor? What department should oversee a mentorship program?

This service could be provided by the center for retention services.



## Emerging Theme Cont.

- ▶ Faculty effects on student retention
  - ▶ Improved chance for early academic success
  - ▶ Better and more frequent advising
  - ▶ More active experiential instruction
  - ▶ More informed career planning
  - ▶ Improved social acclimation and student-institution match



### Facilitator Notes:

How many of you believe that faculty members play a vital role in student retention?  
Who thinks that this is a university effort and not just a faculty effort?

Explain to the faculty members that students want to feel belonged and be helped when needed.



## Overview

- ▶ What is retention?
- ▶ What is student engagement?
- ▶ What is self-efficacy?

### Facilitator Notes:

1. Retention-staying or the intent to stay in the current position at the current school. Have participants explain why retention is important and ways in which they can help increase retention.
2. Student Engagement-a time and effort students devote to educationally purposeful activities. Have participants explain why student engagement is important and ways in which they can help keep students engaged.
3. Self-efficacy-is a person's belief in their own competence. Ask participants who developed the theory? Why do they feel that self-efficacy is important?



## Overview

- ▶ How can the needs of students be identified early?
- ▶ How do you build a rapport with students?
- ▶ How would you provide direction and motivation to a student?

### Facilitator Notes:

1. Engaging in conversation and asking the students about their support system. The faculty members can then give them the tools, resources, services, and overall guidance that is needed.
2. Engaging in conversation with the student to build a connection. Getting to know your student to build a rapport on trust and respect and that will result in successful student outcomes.
3. By using the self-efficacy theory, goal-setting, and teacher assistance.



## Overview

- ▶ Does self-efficacy exist in goal-attainment?
- ▶ How would you encourage a student to set goals?
- ▶ Name 3 services that would be beneficial to students.

### Facilitator Notes:

1. Yes, because one has to believe that they can accomplish the goals.
2. By setting short-term and long-term goals that are attainable.
3. Personal counseling, mentoring program, learning communities, career services, and spiritual communities.



Facilitator Notes:

Watch Video and Discuss

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BIICoH8VnVM>

# Student Engagement, Retention, and Success

Dr. Denise Swett

Facilitator Notes:

Watch Video and Discuss

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=heviLnxzqpw>

Any Questions?



**Post Test Questions**

1. Student engagement is the root cause of decreasing retention rates.
  - a. True
  - b. False
  
2. The role of the faculty is to encourage preparation, partnership, and policy.
  - a. True
  - b. False
  
3. Faculty members cannot assist the university with student retention.
  - a. True
  - b. False
  
4. Developing a student/teacher rapport will help increase retention.
  - a. True
  - b. False
  
5. Mentoring was the only service recommended as being needed on campus to increase retention.
  - a. True
  - b. False
  
6. Self-efficacy is a person's belief in their own competence.
  - a. True
  - b. False
  
7. Alberta Bandura developed the theory of self-efficacy.
  - a. True
  - b. False
  
8. Self-efficacy is not related to goals.
  - a. True
  - b. False
  
9. Goals are developed to give direction, motivation, and yield successful outcomes.
  - a. True
  - b. False
  
10. Three mechanisms involved in self-efficacy for goal attainment are: self-observation, self-judgement, and self-reaction.
  - a. True
  - b. False

### Summative Evaluation

Please check the box that best represents your response.

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
1. Did the facilitator deliver the content clearly?				
2. Would you use any of the information provided in the training with your students?				
3. The facilitator kept my interest during the training.				
4. Did the facilitator encouraged classroom participation?				
5. Was the training program aligned with the learning outcomes?				
6. Did the training provide knowledgeable information?				
7. Was adequate timing provided for the training and questions?				
8. I will be able to apply the knowledge learned with my students and colleagues.				
9. The facilitator provided all materials needed for the training.				

In one word, please give your overall opinion of this training. \_\_\_\_\_

Please provide any recommendations that you think will help improve this profession development training program.

Comments?

**Thank You For Your Participation!!!**



## Appendix B: Eight Structured Interview Questions

1. Can you describe what services are helpful in ensuring that students stay enrolled in college?
2. How would you encourage self-efficacy to a student who wanted to leave college?
3. Do you feel that the current services offered at this university aid in students completing college?
4. Do you think that faculty have an effect on student retention and them staying in college and graduating?
5. To what extent does a faculty members' self-efficacy contribute to student retention and student engagement?
6. What experience do you have in helping or ensuring that students stay enrolled and increasing retention?
7. What are some resources or services that can be created at the school to help increase retention?
8. What would you recommend for increasing student retention?

## Appendix C: Email and Flyer

Hello,

My name is Alisha Edmonds, and I am a doctoral candidate at Walden University. I am conducting research on retention rates with faculty members at FVSU. Walden University and Fort Valley State University have both approved my research to interview participants and this will not take up a lot of your time. Please take a look at the attached flyer and thank you in advance for your participation.

**PARTICIPANTS NEEDED!!!**

ARE YOU A FACULTY MEMBER AT  
FORT VALLEY STATE UNIVERSITY AND HAVE BEEN FOR AT LEAST 2  
YEARS?

**IF SO YOU CAN HELP!!!**

PARTICIPANTS ARE NEEDED FOR A BRIEF INTERVIEW IN PERSON!!

A study is being conducted to explore methods in which the faculty at the university can implement more educational services on campus to increase retention. You will be asked general questions in reference to retention and services/resources.

**THIS WILL TAKE ABOUT 30 MINUTES OF YOUR TIME!!!**

For questions or information, please contact:

Alisha Edmonds at [alisha.edmonds@waldenu.edu](mailto:alisha.edmonds@waldenu.edu)

This study is being conducted by Alisha Edmonds a student at Walden University.