


2016

The Impact of Self-Efficacy on Retention in Technical Colleges

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COLLEGE OF EDUCATION

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Percy Reed

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Walden University
2016

Abstract

The Impact of Self-Efficacy on Retention in Technical Colleges

by

Percy W. Reed

MEd, Cambridge College, 2004

Doctoral Study Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Education

Walden University

October 2016

Abstract

Vocational and career training institutes focus their energy and resources on student support services, increasing student retention as it relates to minority populations. Despite these efforts, a specific vocational and career institute in the southeast United States reports a 50% retention rate of students who are enrolled. This case study explored students' descriptions of how self-efficacy supported their perseverance while attending the vocational and career training institute. The conceptual framework included Bandura's notions of self-efficacy and Tinto's integration model. Purposeful sampling strategies were used to interview 10 successfully-retained students enrolled in their 4th term or beyond at the vocational and career institute under study. Data analysis included initial and axial coding, leading to category creation and the identification of key themes. The following themes emerged regarding self-efficacy in the form of support and perseverance: clear personal educational expectations, strong social relations, and various external supports. Further, perceived challenges to self-efficacy and perseverance included family problems, sickness, finances, incarceration, homelessness, and deployment, age, and instructor or student issues at the college site. Recommendations included the development and implementation of tailored and focused student support structures to improve student self-efficacy and perseverance at the local site. Implications for positive social change include providing research findings to the local administration, which may increase their understanding of retention issues and ultimately improve student retention.

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Dedication

This project study is dedicated to my wife, Toyja N. Reed, who has been my rock and relentless in her support. Toyja, you have been my biggest fan and rallied behind me on a daily basis. Toyja, you have seen me go through my most challenging moments and encouraged me not to give up or to quit regardless of what it looked like at times. So honey, this degree is for you!

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Section 1: The Problem

The Local Problem

The U.S. Census Bureau (2012) reported that more than 50 million adults in the United States, or 1 in 4, had obtained a professional certificate apart from a postsecondary degree awarded by colleges and universities. Ewert and Kominski (2014) demonstrated that attending a traditional college or university is not the only possibility through which adults receive training and develop proficiencies for the labor market. According to the website for the local technical college that served as the research site in this study, vocational and career institutes offer alternative credentials to help students attain livable wage careers through educational certifications.

Marks and Diaz (2009) said the number of first-year students who drop out of vocation and career institutes without earning a certification or diploma is significant. U.S. Department of Education (2014) published research that showed a greater emphasis placed on increasing enrollment than on decreasing student attrition. Lala and Polluck (2012) stated that vocational and career training institutes are moving away from focusing solely on enrollment numbers as the standard they use to evaluate student-centered performance. They also argued that vocational and career training institutions now focus their energy and resources on retention through offering better student support services. Technical college administrators are assessing the long-term benefits of satisfied students, which they hope result in new student referrals, higher graduation rates, and increased satisfaction (Gruber et al., 2012). Gruber et al. (2012) also reported educators teach students skills to gain experience for workforce preparation.

According to the technical college's website, the mission of vocational and career institutes is to provide high support, which is a high expectation model that combines marketable job skills to help students become employed. This model supports active faculty and student success advisors to provide academic and wrap-around services that include advisors, external counseling services, tutoring sessions, learning support centers, and student support centers. Two-year technical college administrators are applying more effective strategies to engage students, which include developing and providing activities, social clubs, and instructional creativity to retain students (Smith & Valentine, 2012). Among the tools they have used are group activities, less lecturing, and increased student engagement (AVID Institute, 2014). Further, many vocational and career institutes enjoy greater student involvement by providing supplemental learning activities such as social gatherings and sports (Nevarez & Wood, 2010).

Technical colleges and vocational school administrators focus on meeting industry standards by providing high quality trained students with marketable skills to meet the needs of the community (O'Gara, Mechur, & Hughes, 2009). A greater challenge exists to retain students at public 2-year institutions and private for profit institutions (Wood & Urias, 2012). The U.S. Census Bureau (2011) reported that for-profit technical colleges have higher graduation rates than do public technical colleges. The U.S. Census Bureau published findings that illustrated public 2-year technical colleges had the lowest graduation among Blacks at 13.8%. Conversely, their findings for private not-for-profit organizations showed a 37.1% graduation rate, and private for-profit institutions show a 42.4% graduation rate among Blacks. The U.S. Census Bureau

report also showed that the higher graduation rates are a product of successful supportive services.

Many technical colleges provide a holistic approach to students' professional and personal development, which places them on a viable path to economic self-sufficiency, as evidenced from the website for the technical college in this study. These colleges provide early alert systems, first-year academic advisors, tutoring, and community involvement. However, students belonging to racial and ethnic minorities in particular have a difficult time completing community colleges, so educators designed initiatives to help with retention (Christian, 2010). Nevarez and Wood (2010) examined the problem in one metropolitan city and concluded 2-year public colleges suffered from poor graduation rates among minority students. These colleges strive to offer a variety of certificates and associate degrees to meet the needs of urban students (Nevarez & Wood, 2010). According to Friedman and Mandel (2009), self-efficacy in relation to college persistence has a great impact on students' academic success and career development.

The Economic Policy Institute (2011) showed that minorities experience lowered family incomes and reduced educational opportunities. The Economic Policy Institute also reported that people of color and those from low-income families are significantly more likely than are others to feel disconnected from upward social mobility.

Definition of the Local Problem

A local vocational and career institute in the southeast United States (hereafter referred to as *Tech College*) has a retention problem in both their full-time and part-time student population. Tech College has an open enrollment policy where they admit 100%

of those who apply and pass admissions assessment, and the school confers 2-year degrees and certificates. The majority of the student population (by race) is African American, which comprised 75% of the student population as of 2015. Tech College has a full time retention rate of 50% (fall full-time cohort from 2014 minus exclusions from the fall full-time cohort that re-enrolled at the institution as either full- or part-time 2015 that is below the 68% for all such similar colleges. Further, Tech College's part-time student retention rate is 35% and is below the 56% retention rate for all such similar colleges. Moreover, 26% earn a degree in 100% of normal time with 40% earning a degree within 200% of normal time.

Bremer and Center (2013) reported that many students drop out of college due to the lack of adequate academic preparation for college-level coursework. Hirschy, Bremer, and Castellano (2011) argued that students in metropolitan cities face barriers that hinder their ability to persevere academically. These barriers include background characteristics, academic preparation, or status variables, such as age or race. The National Research Center for Career and Technical Education (2012) reported some causes of high attrition among technical programs. Hirschy et al. found certain factors, such as unemployment, childcare, transportation, and disconnection from family, important for student retention or persistence. Sixty percent of these urban adults at Tech College do poorly on admissions entrance exam math, reading, and English. Colleges then place these students in learning support classes before they permit them to start their general education classes. According to Marks (2013), 45% of minority students from

Atlanta metropolitan areas who transferred from 2-year colleges to 4-year institutions did not earn a credential.

Relationship to the Larger Educational Setting

Engle and Tinto (2008) reported that many first year students were nearly 4 times likely not to return to school after their first year than students that were sophomores. A common theme occurs that students who integrate well socially into their academic environment may not depart after their first year experience (Smith & Valentine, 2012). Sum (2008) explained that academic accomplishments among young men deemed less educated, especially young African American men, have declined sharply in recent years.

Greater educational attainment reduces the likelihood of unemployment (Carnevale, Stephen, & Cheah, 2009). College graduates experience the lowest unemployment rate (8.0%), while those without a high school diploma have the highest unemployment rate (33%; Carnevale, et al., 2009). Adult workers are concentrated in sectors of the economy that are particularly sensitive to business-cycle fluctuations, such as retail trade, leisure, and hospitality (U.S. Congress Joint Economic Committee, 2010). A key problem is that the primary federal law that finances workforce development programs, specifically the Workforce Investment Act (WIA), assists workforce education providers with the ability to offer short-term vocational skills training and job placement programs (Center for an Urban Future, 2012). In a 2008 Job Outlook survey conducted by the National Association of Colleges and Employers (as cited in Blanchett, Klingner, & Harry, 2009), the top desirable characteristics in new hires by 276 employer respondents were all soft skills: communication ability, a strong work ethic, initiative,

interpersonal skills, and team work. Meghan (2013) reported that certain basic skills, such as critical thinking, complex problem solving, decision-making, active listening, computer literacy, mathematics, and marketing, would enhance a person's employability. The National Youth Employment Coalition (2011) reported that a way to contribute to the emerging economy was by adults engaging and employing adults. According to Cappelli (2015), a gap exists between the skills employers seek versus the skills that job seekers possess. Cappelli stated skills shortages occur because of employment seekers skills are discordant with employer's desire; it is a skill mismatch. The President's Council on Jobs and Competiveness (2012) reported a great chance exists that the United States will have a shortage in the next few years of 1.5 million college graduates qualified to fulfill certain job responsibilities.

Rationale

Evidence of the Problem at the Local Level

Technical college students in metropolitan cities normally reside in urban communities that consist of a total population of adults who experience the national rate for unemployment (U.S. Census Bureau, 2014). Vocational and technical colleges in metropolitan cities serve socially disadvantaged and economically challenged adults. Nearly 30% of these adults are Hispanic or Black as compared to the 20% enrolled in 4-year institutions (O'Gara, 2009). The students served at educational institutions in metropolitan cities face barriers that include family obligations, childcare, financial problems, and poor levels of academic performance, which often hinder their education (O'Gara et al., 2009). O'Gara et al. (2009) reported there are a disproportionate numbers

of minority adults in metropolitan cities lack a high school diploma or General Education Diploma (GED; 22%).

Technical colleges in metropolitan cities present a plan for adults' academic achievements to increase retention. According to O'Gara et al. (2009), technical colleges' plan is to provide students with the access they need by ensuring guidance, providing counseling, and ensuring strong support systems to assist with retention. Moore and Shulock (2009) argued that when students have access to more services, student success is increased and perseverance toward educational attainment is higher.

Evidence of the Problem from the Professional Literature

According to the Southern Regional Educational Board (SREB, 2015), a revolution has occurred in public education and the student population. Helping prepare first generation students for postsecondary education is a challenge because a vast number of students drop out during their first year. Marks (2013) stated the United States is working diligently toward higher education attainment. Marks also stated student retention at 2-year career, occupational, workforce development programs is an eye sore even for the government. Moreover, the government pays careful attention to high attrition at 2-year institutions. According to the SREB (2015), in fall of 2011, colleges and universities enrolled 203,180 students, and public 2-year institutions enrolled 42% of these students.

O'Gara et al. (2009) stated, "The mission of community colleges is to provide access to postsecondary credentials to students who may not have had an opportunity to attend college" (p. 195). Vocation and career institutes have reported that learning

opportunities, associate degrees, diplomas, technical certificates of credit, customized business, industry training, continuing education, and other learning services using state-of-the-art technology are essential for student credentialing. Staff at Tech College reported that the integration of academics and applied career preparation enhances student learning as essential to meet the workforce demands, retention, and economic development needs of those served. In 2015, under the Workforce Investment Act, Congress considered the reauthorization of the country's largest job training program because of high unemployment and difficulties training quality workers in emerging and expanding fields.

According to Nathan (2012), adults need extensive job preparation and extensive soft skills to exceed in today's job market. Along these lines, The Center for an Urban Future (2012) reported, "A key factor that leads to the success of adults is forging a collaboration with employers" (p. 71). Tech College projected that those who complete career training will exhibit credence in and dedication to quality technical programs, which are applicable, prevalent, and susceptible to the stated possibilities of Georgia's businesses. Baxter (2011) explained public education has a major impact on the dropout crisis because of inadequate instruction, which limits the workplace options and lifetime earning potential of young adults who do not finish high school. Researchers and educators should focus attention on education and training outcomes, which studies have found to have value in the labor market (Hilliard, 2012).

Many poor adults desire to succeed; however, they do not possess self-efficacy, the soft skills, or hard skills needed to persevere (Conley & French, 2013). The Labor

Department (as cited in Lipka, 2010) clarified the educational environment by noting, “The more an internship program is structured around a classroom or academic experience as opposed to the employer’s actual operations, it is very likely the internship will be viewed as an addition of the individual’s academic experience” (p. 2). Students that have received internships will have a complete practical experience and will better prepare for the job market. According to the Center for the Future of Higher Education (as cited in Rhoades, 2012), across the nation, community colleges close their doors and defer education advancement for more than 400,000 prospective students. Without intervention, these adults will struggle to earn a living wage in the present day marketable workforce.

Definition of Terms

Each term used for the study has more than one definition and more than one application in various areas of study. The operational definitions outlined below are designed to guide the research. Society, educators, and stakeholders may interpret urban colloquial words differently as well as terminology associated with employment among urban adults.

Attrition: Attrition is a reduction in the number of employees or participants.

Attrition occurs when people leave because they resign, die, or retire and are not replaced (Smith & Valentine, 2012).

Careers: Career is an occupation or profession, especially one requiring special training, followed as one's lifework: a person's progress or course of action through life or through a phase of life, as in some profession or undertaking: It is measured solely

through external criteria such as hierarchical position and salary level (Roder & Elliott, 2011).

Career readiness: The United States Department of Labor (as cited in Rivera & Alex, 2008) defined foundational skills as skills that provide the foundation for success in the world of work because they are linked to job performance and are needed prerequisites to learning industry and occupation-specific skills.

College readiness: Students are able to master core content, develop key cognitive strategies, and take ownership of learning and acquiring the knowledge necessary to make a successful transition from secondary to postsecondary education with college readiness (Conley, 2012).

Distressed neighborhoods: Distressed neighborhoods are neighborhood that suffer hardship (unemployment, poverty, and so forth (Bloom, 2011).

Employment: Employment is the state of having a job (Heinrich & Holzer, 2011).

Inequality: Inequality is an aversion, not as a preference, for equal distribution (where there is also a change in the level of risk). It is a response to an increase in perceived inequality among participants in the economy that does not affect any other features (Mishel & Bernstein, 2007).

Low socioeconomic background: Socioeconomic status (SES) is a combination of factors, which include income, level of education, and occupation. It is a way of looking at how individuals or families fit into society using economic and social measures shown to impact individuals' health and well-being (Hurrell & Marie, 2011; Nickson, Warhurst, Commander, Scull, & Cuthill, 2010).

Persistence: Persistence occurs when students maintain or complete their enrollment at any postsecondary institution (Hirschy et al., 2011).

Racial discrimination: Racism is discriminatory or abusive behavior toward members of another race (Sites & Parks, 2011).

Retention: Retention is the act of completing or reducing risk for dropping out of school (U.S. Department of Education, 2015).

Self-efficacy: Self-efficacy is the belief in one's capabilities to achieve a goal or an outcome. Students with a strong sense of efficacy are more likely to challenge themselves with difficult tasks and be intrinsically motivated. These students will put forth a high degree of effort to meet their commitments and attribute failure to things in their control, rather than blaming external factors (Conley & French, 2013)

Soft skills: Soft skills are any skill facilitating interaction and communication with others (Heinrich & Holzer, 2011).

Student success: Student success involves engaging students through high-impact educational practices, which advance educational outcomes (American Association of Community Colleges, 2015).

Significance of the Study

The Economic Policy Institute (2011) explained that adults not connected to work or school lack the knowledge, skills, or experience needed to succeed in the labor market. The Institute compared workers who had earned a college degree or career training to the workers who had only completed high school or had not earned a high school diploma. They found that those with a college degree are employed and earned significantly more

than did those workers with a high school diploma or less education. According to the U.S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics (2015), a \$400 difference per week in earnings occurs between people with a high school diploma compared to those with a bachelor's degree. Ebersole (2012) reported that those who graduated from high school in 2011 were unemployed at a rate of 9.4%, compared to those who earned a bachelor's degree who were unemployed at a rate of 4.9%. Over a lifetime, a high school graduate can expect to earn on average \$1.2 million; those with a bachelor's degree earn \$2.1 million; and those with a master's degree earn \$2.5 million (Ebersole, 2012). The Economic Policy Institute concluded that since the 1970s, the real wages of workers with only a high school diploma has fallen.

Blanchett et al. (2009) showed that urban adults experience academic barriers that are not limited to institutionalized racism; they include encountering White privilege, poor resources, environmental stressors, and poor support. The goal of this study was to investigate student retention in a career-training program in a major metropolitan city in the southeastern United States. This study is significant for two reasons, which follow:

It has explored the local retention problem in a technical college in one metropolitan city.

The project has the potential to effect social change on a local level that may affect technical colleges' retention strategies.

Chertavian (2012) stated, "The United States spends eighteen billion dollars on forty-seven different workforce development programs" (p. 10). According to the SREB (2015), in the fall of 2008, 2-year public institutions' graduation rate was 17%, compared

to the national average of 20%. In 2015, the institution under study had a benchmark of 70% for each program (College Director, personal communications, March 18, 2015). The Electrical Engineering (ELCT), Drafting and Design (DDT), and Network Systems Administration were above 70%. The ELCT program was slightly below the benchmark with 60.78%. Overall, retention was 80% and the same quarter in 2014 was 69%, which was an 11% increase (College Director, personal communication, March 18, 2015).

The Atlanta Business Chronicle (2014) reported Georgia Governor Nathan Deal was extremely concerned about the number of students who dropped out of 2-year colleges without earning credentials. According to data from the research site, only 40% of young adults who have attended 2-year technical colleges earned credentials. Governor Deal's goal was to graduate 60% or 250,000 students by 2020. He set up an initiative, *Go Back Move Ahead*, to encourage students to return and earn credentials to assist them with employability. The governor's desire is to assist students earn economic stability resulted from the alarming job opportunities that require a college certificate or degree (Atlanta Business Chronicle, 2014).

The U.S. Census Bureau (2014) reported that in 2011, adults who had earned a 2-year technical degree earned \$26,700 more on average than those did who had a high school diploma, GED, or had dropped out of college. At public 2-year technical career preparation colleges, the students who enrolled in fall 2008 showed signs of progression by 2010-2011 with a 7% point gain over those who enrolled in fall 2011 (SREB, 2015).

Hirshcy et al. (2011) reported the federal administration and state government were focusing on ways to improve retention as a mode to increase student graduation to

meet the global economy. Hirshcy et al. further stated, “According to reports at the White House President Obama’s administration has identified community colleges and their lack of retention” (p. 300). President Obama has a desire to graduate 5 million students by 2020 through Community College and Career Training Initiative (Hirshcy et al., 2011). In 2010, the United States fell to fourth place; in comparison, Canada had 51%, Israel had 46%, and Japan had 45% (SREB, 2015), with 42% of working adults completing an associate’s degree program. According to the SREB (2015), a level of accountability must exist on the part of the educational leaders, and they must take into consideration the evolution of demographics and trends with the student population to take the proper action to close the attainment gap.

Research Questions

Either students enrolled in career technical college programs will continue their course of study to completion, or they will drop out. The purpose of this study was to explore influences of technical college students who persist toward certificate, diploma, or degree completion. This study examined barriers that lead to outcomes and contributing factors that lead to retention strategies. The research questions guiding this study were as follows:

1. How do students enrolled in a vocational and career institute describe their experiences of self-efficacy supporting their perseverance?
2. What barriers if any do vocational and career institute students describe that serve to challenge their perseverance?

Review of the Literature

Theoretical Framework

Bandura's self-efficacy model. The objective of this case study was to explore students' retention in an urban technical college setting based on the high attrition rates. For this study, I based the conceptual framework on Bandura's (1977) self-efficacy theory of behavioral change and cognitive development and functioning and Tinto's (1975) model of integration and student retention. Through the integration of Bandura's self-efficacy model and Tinto's student retention model, a concrete framework of environmental, distinctive, and institutional factors exist that affect student retention. This framework provides a clear context for examining precipitants and predictors that are associated with achieving the goal of this study.

According to Bandura (1977), an individual's self-efficacy develops because of his or her own emotional, developmental, or motivational process, or because of the work and social environments. Bandura postulated that people fabricate their self-efficacy beliefs based on the perceptions of others. Bandura believed when the thought of managing their home life, work, educational demands, or meeting deadlines overwhelm students, their emotional motivation processes are often traumatized. According to Hirschy et al. (2011), the characteristics of work, family, and finances can influence a student's level of commitment. Hirschy et al. stated, "Students have a difficult time coping with internal and external factors that is deemed as 'coping behaviors theory' which is concerned with how individuals adapt to challenges in new environments" (p. 305). When self-efficacy reaches a high plateau, a need for reliance should not develop

on others for inspiration because no further changes should decrease motivation. For example, first-year students may depend on peer students with proven success, student government associations, and teacher relationships to guide them through what they could perceive as a daunting process (Schmidt & Dishon, 2009). Reason (2009) noted that the student-peer environment is a factor that leads to a more balanced student level of persistence but should not be a determining factor for retention.

Although students face many obstacles, some level of accountability must occur on their part. The ownership of learning must include the four elements of learning: (a) motivation and engagement, (b) goal orientation and self-direction, (c) self-efficacy, and (d) self-confidence (Conley & French, 2013). Bandura (1991) stated behavior is purposeful and regulated by people's thoughts. Bandura explained people have capabilities, self-reflective, and self-reactive abilities that allow them to exercise control over their feelings, thoughts, actions, and motivations (Appendix A). Bandura said people could only influence their own motivation by *self-observation*. They must pay attention to their own actions, performances, and monitor their own behaviors. Bandura indicated that people have *self-motivating factors* to help them pay attention to their behaviors.

Students who are more likely to set goals are more prone for success even when they lack support. Bandura (1991) stated, "Behavior is easier to manage when it has independent objective indicants of adequacy" (p. 254). Some students do not believe or see themselves as successful if they do not earn their credentials. Bandura explained the concept of perceived performance determinants as how people perceive their abilities and efforts measure their own personal success. People's beliefs in their efficacy have a

strong bearing on the decisions they make, aspirations, perseverance in spite of challenges, and setbacks (Bandura, 1991). People are willing to pursue their aspirations in spite of difficult challenges and self-hindering thoughts.

Self-motivation is a multifaceted phenomenon through which a number of subsidiary cognitive processes, including self-observation, perceived performance determinants, evaluative judgment, and actions, are factors that depend on anticipatory proactivity rather than reactive pessimistic self-judgment. Bandura (1986, 1997) noted that students who believe they will succeed experience high levels of self-efficacy.

Tinto's student integration model. Tinto's (1975) student integration model focuses on the interaction between the individual and the institution. Tinto (1993) noted that an institution should understand fully a student's intention to understand actual attrition rate. Tinto (1975) also stated that college administrators should take a closer look at why they have failed to assist students to achieve reasonable goals. Student-centered learning is a philosophy that moves the attention from the teacher to the student. This learner-centered paradigm is a transformative learning approach that policy makers desire to adopt to improve learner outcomes (Clydesdale, 2009). Hirsch et al. (2011) listed social integration, campus support, community, and career integration as factors that help with retention.

Tinto and Braxton (1997) found no justification for a relationship between academia, community, and the institutions' commitment in 2-year institutions. O'Gara (2009) listed social engagement and academic integration as factors that assist with persistence among first-year students. Tinto (1975, 1988, 1993) compared Durkheim's

theory of suicide to students who dropped out of college. Tinto (1975) listed educational expectations, motivation, and goal commitment as factors that influence postsecondary education. Tinto argued that dropout at the college level results from the individual and their academic social systems measured by normative and structural integration.

Tinto revised his model based on students' financial resources and the role of communities to institutions (e.g., family, work, and neighborhood) play in students' retention. Students who have not learned how to manage environmental factors often are not successful completing credentialed programs. Baxton and Hirschy (2005) reported student environmental external factors that influence student's commitment to their institution.

A Review of Professional and Academic Literature

Literature review strategy. To identify resources used in the literature review, I completed an online search through several education-related databases available through Walden University Library: These databases included Sage, Google Scholar, Education Research Complete, Educational Resources Information Center (ERIC), Academic Search Complete, and ProQuest Central. In addition, I obtained information from websites that specifically focused on adult self-efficacy and perseverance. I retrieved articles and journals from Career Pathways, American Sociological Review, and the Pedagogy and Student Services for Institutional Transformation. I used search terms to identify resources, which included *student retention*, *student persistence*, *self-efficacy*, *urban minorities*, *career training*, *soft skills*, *student success*, and *vocational training*, among others.

Workforce development impact. Expanding the employability of otherwise unemployed or underemployed people grew from an evolving workforce development relating to varying policies of the United States. For example, the U.S. administration for regulating secondary vocational education programs, welfare-to-work, and other public assistance programs developed economic structured initiatives that use workforce development to describe their administration (U.S. Census Bureau, 2014). Several recent pieces of state and federal legislation in the United States used the term *workforce development* to describe various vocational training, adult training, retraining, and related employment initiatives (Bray, Galvin, & Cluff, 2011, p. 21). For example, the federal WIA of 1998 strengthened the integrated system of financing; the State of Georgia's crafted legislation in 2000 created Workforce Georgia, to handle both workforce and welfare policy (Reuters, 2013, p. 13).

According to Wellbeing and Tod (2010), adult retraining programs depend more and more on the delivery of community-based social services. Adult educators concluded that helping retain adults in occupational training depended on community-based social services (Routledge, 2010). Routledge (2010) determined adult students with great support systems and instructors acquire new sets of skills that can lead to employability. According to Hansen and Hansen (2015), some skills that can increase employability range from communications skills, analytical/research skills, computer/technical literacy, flexibility, interpersonal skills, management skills, multicultural sensitivity awareness, and organizational skills.

The Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) program has provided a plan for poor individuals by dispensing cash assistance and highlighting job training to transition recipients to employment (Baxter, 2011). Teachers trained for a bourgeois context who do not teach urban young adults (Hill, 2009) often label African Americans and other minority groups as valueless and unemployable. Research has demonstrated a greater need for instructors to improve their interpersonal skills to improve the classroom experience (Gruber et al., 2012). Voss (2009) stated the level of quality, professionalism, and ability for an instructor to reach students helps promote quality education. Because instructors are *contact personnel*, attributes of effective communication skills, versatility, rapport building, and ability to inspire students are intricate (Hefferman, Jarratt, Morrison, & Sweeny, 2009).

The U.S. Census Bureau (2011) reported credentials provide a path to higher earnings. The skills obtained in technical programs vary from information technology, business-writing skills, professionalism, to understanding corporate culture. The greatest jobs in demand are in the booming technology field (Casserly, 2013). Casserly (2013) found that 8 out of 10 jobs in demand were in technology. Capelli (2015) reported that because of the shortage of IT workers, an increasing requirement exists to expand education to focus on IT skills. The U.S. Census Bureau (2011) reported a full-time employee with median monthly earnings for someone with a professional certification or license was \$4,167 compared to \$3,433 for a person with only an educational certificate. The U.S. Census Bureau (2011) established that, nationally, a fairly stable and positive relationship exists between IT skills and workforce development.

As students acquire and apply these marketable skills, the newly rising trend of success among adults becomes a reality. Because of high unemployment, Georgia's workforce has moved into IT training that has provided an impact on properly trained individuals. The level of training that compliments workforce development training is making an immediate impact on employment in Georgia (Hotchkiss, Pitts, & Robertson, 2008).

Working students must balance their educational needs and employment to balance their budgets (Berlin, Furstenberg, & Waters, 2010). Many young adults strive to find work but cannot secure livable wage employment to live separately from their parents. Adults under the age of 24, especially those with little or no college education, experience a 16.7 % unemployment percentage, which is twice the rate of older adults (Light & Weber, 2011). Unqualified workers paralyze the economy. Some young adults have decided to bypass a college degree to look for livable wage careers (Light & Weber, 2011).

According to Georgia Workforce Development (2014), adults need defined skills, which include competency in applied math to hone the *soft skills*. In addition, the Georgia Workforce Ready Initiative that began in 2006 reported, Workforce development is a system that links workforce development and education together and aligns to the economic needs of the state, its regions, and local communities (Williams & Hufstetler, 2011).

Williams and Hufstetler (2011) said training, such as job profiling, skills assessment, and education/training, which adults need, should focus on job profiling to

determine the level of skills necessary to learn required job tasks. This component assists employers in building the workforce they need. These core skills are highly important to most jobs in the workplace, which include applications in mathematics, reading for information, and locating information (William & Hufstetler, 2011).

Barriers to completion. The Urban Institute (2009) found college and career readiness affects students in metropolitan cities. Bailey, Jeong, and Cho (2010) and Jenkins, Jaggars, Roksa, and Zeidenberg, (2010) found students who do poorly in remedial or developmental math and English had a tendency to drop out of college. Jenkins and Cho (2012) posited that students successful in program-specific, introductory courses had a tendency to obtain credentialing after completing college level math and English. Perin (2011) suggested if students had contextualized learning predicated on their career interest, their performance in math and English would improve. Zeidenber, Jenkins, and Scott (2012) argued if colleges are to increase students' retention that will lead to credentialing; they will need to examine student performance in a wider scope of courses besides math and English. If colleges want to increase retention, they need to work harder to improve academic and nonacademic services such as counseling services and tutoring (Zeidenber et al., 2012).

A college education is a predictor for students to earn higher wages and careers (Black & Huelsman, 2012). Despite these findings, students from low-income environments are earning a college degree at the lowest rate in three decades (Black & Huelsman, 2012). Urban students experience barriers impeding their opportunity for higher education. They often rely on financial aid and public assistance programs

designed to help students afford education; however, restrictions limit the amount of savings families can possess for students to receive these funds. Removing the parental savings barriers could expand the availability of college education for working adults.

According to the Urban Institute (2009), adults from low-income, high-work families are more likely to continue with schooling after age 18 than are young adults from low-income, low-work families. At age 23, nearly half (45%) of young adults from low-income, high-work families are in school, compared with just over a third (34%) of young adults from low-income, high work families (Urban Institute, 2009). Research shows that at age 24, adults from low-income, high-work families and young adults from low-income, low work families are equally likely to be employed (Urban Institute, 2009). The Council of Economic Advisers (CEA, 2009), reported employers typically require applicants to have educational credentials. According to Berzin (2010), in 2008, a rise in youth unemployment occurred after the crisis wherein many young adults needed occupational training. These young adults had low-levels of education. The trajectories from education to employment for young adults clearly showed this group as disadvantaged with low educational attainment in their process of transition into adulthood (Hango & Broucker, 2007). The impact of occupational training trajectories and the need to develop transition policies will stimulate positive transitions from secondary to post-secondary education. Research demonstrates 2-year college students face a variety of barriers from credentialing to college completion (O’Gara et al., 2009).

Investigations focus on the relative influence of supply-side factors (human capital) and demand side characteristics (labor-market segmentation, employer skill

demands, occupational segregation, and devaluation) on racial wage gaps (Sites & Parks, 2011). Sites and Parks explained skills mismatch is central to explanations of racial disadvantage with the claim that job loss had particularly acute impacts on the employment and earning of young African American adults. Sites and Parks noted that these adults were disproportionately concentrated and were less able to meet the skill demands of new jobs that emerged.

According to a Gulf Coast Community College report (2011), first generation college students need a great deal of support while attending college. Educators at 2-year colleges discussed best retention practices to assist adults in successfully completing their education. The report examined colleges that focused on academic advising, workshops, and early alert systems to reduce attrition. Various researchers have found self-efficacy has a direct impact on retention and greater persistence for college occupational students (Vuong, Brown-Welty, & Tracz, 2010). According to Vuolo, Staff, and Mortimer (2011), students with clear definite vocational and educational goals have stronger levels of motivation to work more efficiently until attainment of educational goals. Although initiatives enhance the students' experience, student success remains a problem at public colleges. Conley (2005, 2010, 2014) and Wagner (2006) suggested college readiness correlates to content knowledge, especially in math, reading, and writing (). Although many students who enter 2-year colleges take remedial learning-support classes, those who take ownership of their learning can be successful regardless of their academic challenges (Conley & French, 2013). Dweck, Walton, Cohen, Paunesku, and Yeagar

(2011) indicated self-efficacy values learning over-looking intelligent and responded to educational misfortunes by intensifying application or a new game plan.

Illiteracy among urban adults. Illiteracy is a problem among urban adults in metropolitan cities. Social, economic, and educational challenges affect these cities because of a lack of soft skills, social skills, vocational, educational opportunities, and poor life skills (Blanchett et al., 2009). Roder and Elliot (2011) explained how companies are reluctant to hire minority adults, especially Blacks, because employers see them as unreliable, dishonest, or lacking in social and cognitive skills. Only 12% of students from metropolitan neighborhoods obtain a degree (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 2009). The national rate is only 20% of students new to post-secondary training obtaining 2- or 4-year degrees (Marks & Diaz, 2009).

According to Georgia's Adult Education (2013), Georgia is behind the national high school graduation rate of 85.6%. The Technical College System of Georgia reported that over 1 million or 21.4% of all Georgia residents 25 and over do not have a high school diploma (as cited in U.S. Census, 2010). Approximately 40% of those adults have less than a ninth-grade education. A U.S. Department of Labor study revealed that employers in Georgia lose 2.1 billion dollars annually because of low literacy skills in the work place (Georgia Adult Education, 2013). Roder and Elliot (2011) said wages in recent history have declined for workers bearing only a high school diploma. Roder and Elliot also indicated these findings have led many observers to believe job training does not work: a sentiment that has contributed to a decline in public funding for adult employment programs over the past decades and high dropout rates in training programs.

According to the Georgia Task Force on Adult Literacy (2014), one out of three adult Georgians is functionally illiterate. It is necessary for adults to connect with vocational skills in order to successfully transition into the workforce marketplace (Georgia Task Force on Adult Literacy, 2014).

According to recent projections, over the next decade, occupations requiring postsecondary education will grow at compelling rates more than jobs requiring minimal educational preparation (Georgetown University Center on Education and Workforce, 2010; U.S. Department of Labor, 2009). Research shows that workers with college credentials enjoy employment more frequently and earn remarkably more than do employees who do not graduate from high school (Roder & Elliot, 2011). Only about one in three (35%) people between the ages of 18 to 24 from suburban neighborhoods are consistently connected to work or school compared to nearly two in three (62%) youth from urban neighborhoods (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 2009). The U.S. Census Bureau (2010) reported Whites tend to have higher educational attainment than do either Blacks or Hispanics/Latinos in Georgia. In 2014, the National unemployment rate was 6.2%; Georgia was 7.8%, which was the second highest in the nation (The Atlanta Daily World, 2014). The Technical College System of Georgia (2013) found economic conditions as prominent factors that contribute to low literacy in metropolitan areas. They also found social factors, such as limited resources and inadequate funding, inhibited academic success. Roder and Elliot (2011) concluded that concerned citizens must significantly invest in metropolitan areas to help students overcome the barriers they face accessing employment and educational opportunities.

With the proper resources, students can acquire the skills and education needed to make a successful transition to the labor market and become self-sufficient adults.

Low skilled workers. The educational and financial inequalities among low-skilled workers have exacerbated the educational divide and a lack of opportunities for the adults served at technical colleges (Advisory Committee on Student Financial Assistance, 2012). Many adults from various urban communities in metropolitan cities are more likely than are others not to be in school or be unemployed (Roder & Elliott, 2011). Only 44 % of adults from low-income families remain consistently connected to either school or the labor market, compared to 67% and 75% of adults from middle-and high-income families, respectively (Kuehn & McDaniel, 2009). According to Powell (2014), “a large percentage of adults preparing to enter the workforce over the next two decades are significantly lacking in the *soft* or applied skills, such as teamwork, decision-making, and communication, which will help them become effective employees and managers” (p. 3).

According to Manyika (2014), the McKinsey Global Institute reported 90 to 95 million low-skilled workers, or 2.6% of the global workforce, could face unemployment by 2020. According to their report, employers seek medium to high-skilled employees. They further explained those credentialed by a post-secondary institution, have vocational training, or have a college or post graduate degree are more likely to become employed. Reisman (2014) reported with higher-skilled laborers, the minimum wage needs evaluating to include an increase from \$7.25 to \$15.00 per hour. Low wages create a need for less-skilled workers to protect them from those who earned degrees or have

received vocational or career preparation through colleges. These results indicate that low-skilled workers with higher wages may keep their jobs longer.

The United States Department of Labor (2014) reported a great divide exists in the labor market and discrimination exists because of the unfair wages among different races. This report indicates 1 million women on Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) with low-skills are coached how to work in the market place to increase their earning potential. Lerman and Schmidt (2014) posited that despite education being a priority for low-skilled workers, many adults lack basic math and reading skills, work habits, and the interpersonal skills that most employers require. In addition, many low-skilled workers are vulnerable in the job market. Researchers indicate educational attainment helps with the decline of low-skilled workers (Lerman& Schmidt, 2014). In conclusion, metropolitan areas experience a gap between the skills employers require and the actual skills workers possess.

Unemployment among urban adults. Amadeo (2014) said unemployment results when people because of lay- offs, firing, or employees that resign. Amadeo indicated many people that lose their job opportunity are due to outsourcing or job company relocation. Whatever the reasons are, unemployment continues to be a problem in Georgia and the nation. This epidemic affects adults financially, physically, and emotionally. Heldric (2009) reported that most unemployed workers report emotional symptoms, which include stress, anxiety, agitation, and other negative effects. Bullock-Yowell et al. (2012) expressed unemployment affects many areas of a person's livelihood

other than economic stability. Unemployment has an effect on people socially, financially, and on their self-concept.

In 2012, unemployment among adults was below its recessionary peak of 10% in October 2009, unemployment remained at a high of 8.2%, and job growth was slow (Thiess, 2012). The Atlanta Urban League (2014) reported that in July 2014, the national unemployment rate was 6.2 %, and Georgia's was 7.7%. According to the *Atlanta Journal-Constitution* (Unger, 2014), in August 2014, Georgia's unemployment was at 8.1 % from a revised 7.7% in July 2014. This report indicated although the number of jobs had increased and a reduction of layoffs had increased, the unemployed workers had a difficult time gaining employment. Thiess (2012) said the jobs crisis did not subside with the official end of the recession with at least 25 million people unable to find gainful employment.

Workers still suffer from difficulties that materialized in the decades before the great recession such as deteriorating job quality and stagnant wages. The U.S. Department of Labor's Bureau of Labor Statistics (2014) explained that Georgia's Governor Deal's administration was under great scrutiny because of the number of unemployed people. According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, in July 2014, Georgia had the second highest unemployment rate in the nation. A growth span occurred economically from 2001 to 2007. For instance, a typical family income grew by less than one half of one percent between 2000 from 2007 (Bivens, 2011).

Shierholz (2012) explained that with an extreme job deficit, the government needed to create 9.9 million jobs to make an impact. In 2014, Georgia had created 24,700

jobs that were in need of skilled workers (Unger, 2014). Shierholz (2012) explained it is a daunting task for a nation grappling to generate enough jobs to keep pace with monthly population growth. Federal, state, and local planning often require adjustments across multiple levels of education, from elementary to higher education, as well as coordination with stakeholders outside the traditional educational system (Bloom, 2012).

The National Urban League (2013) presented a grant to the Urban League of Greater Atlanta for \$965,000 as part of the Jobs Rebuild America Educate, Employ, and Empower initiative. Jobs Rebuild America is a solution-based approach to the unemployment crisis that exists in Georgia and the nation. This initiative brings together resources, business, and the federal government to create job opportunities to surrounding communities throughout the Urban League's network. A component of this initiative specifically focuses on young adults 18 to 24 in Georgia, 60% of whom are ex-offenders and the remaining 40% are either adjudicated youth or high school dropouts. The goal of this program is to encourage job readiness and occupational training. Access to jobs with benefits and stability increases as academic attainment is achieved (Sherow, 2010).

Sherow posited that global shifts in the economy have resulted in a demand for workers with advanced and diversified skills and knowledge. In 2006, the Georgia Work-Ready initiative began to improve the occupational training and marketability of Georgia's workforce and to advance the state's future economic growth (Williams & Hufstetler, 2011).

College retention strategies. Student success in college, as measured by persistence and degree attainment, has not improved although access to higher education

has increased substantially over the past 40 years (Brock, 2010). According to the federal accountability movement, the Common Core State Standards initiative and the priorities of recent federal competitive grant programs have had some impact on the national level and with post-secondary education (Bloom, 2012). Bloom explained metropolitan schools are working within and outside of the federal groundwork to put into action procedures to improve vocational training and higher education outcomes for students even on a local level. College administrators should provide input on students' needs as they consider options to retain and help students understand the collegiate experience and career opportunities (Bloom, 2012).

Vocational schools provide resources to ensure student success (Gulf Coast Community College, 2011). According to Gulf Coast Community College, chief academic officers at community colleges in southeastern cities in the United States participated in a survey, which showed that students face multiple issues, such as personal motivation, finances, family issues, job responsibilities, and lack of academic preparation, which implicates retention. The survey additionally focused on student support, academic guidance, self –efficacy and interventions that specifically target all student populations to increase retention at vocational and community colleges. The report noted the need for vocational colleges to place a significant effort to retain first-year students by ensuring transition programs, proper orientations, and early warning systems as a means of increasing student retention. Reason (2009) explained the student peer environment as campus environment and academic support helps in student retention. Reason indicated students curriculum and classroom management by

instructors are important factors of student retention. He argued the college environment leads to a more nuanced comprehension of student persistence.

Successful retention means colleges will support students with disabilities and veterans with self-advocacy skills and a universal design for learning. O’Gara et al. (2009) indicated student services help disadvantaged students overcome their lack of information and academic preparedness. A National Center for Education (2014) report noted many students who attend vocational and community colleges do not intend to earn a degree or credential; therefore, it is imperative to uncover student academic intention. According to the Office of Community College Research (2014), student success centers are now a major part of community college campuses to support at-risk student.

The Office of Community College Research (2014) noted student success centers offer invasive advising strategies to help students because they are familiar with available support services, and they know staff and faculty. Georgia Work Ready (2011) explained when adults are adequately prepared and retained they are able to make an informed decision regarding their preparation for postsecondary education or workforce development. O’Gara et al. (2009) found students who use tutoring, learn time management skills, formalize relationships, and develop relationships with their professors frequently stay in school.

College and career readiness. Local colleges that offer 2-year degrees can better prepare students for post-secondary education and career readiness. According to Bloom (2012), educators should consider the bridge between high school and postsecondary education. Bloom said vocational training programs and colleges of higher learning share

similar ideas to assist adults prepare for college and career readiness. Researchers predict that careers requiring higher education will grow at more compelling percentages than do jobs requiring less educational preparation over the next decade (Georgetown University Center on Education and the Workforce, 2010).

Leaders of public institutions debate whether to view students as customers, partners, or products of higher learning (Yen, 2009). As partners in higher education, students can attain a more satisfying learning experience (Gruber et al., 2012). Although students have a responsibility to show motivation as they pursue their career goals, researchers should focus careful attention on instructor engagement (Gruber et al., 2012). As partners, students must take personal responsibility and have expectations of receiving a quality teaching experience (Gruber et al., 2012). Gruber et al. (2012) explained that students who have a positive educational experience with faculty and personnel often return to that particular institution.

Teachers need to connect with students by addressing the individual student's needs and by personalizing the learning experience (Hattie, 2009). Good customer service becomes amplified in formative feedback, coaching, and working effectively with students as clients (Dinham, 2013). Research indicates when students have a positive learning experience that includes empowerment, rapport-building techniques, a variety of teaching methods, and encouraging students to work harder, they help students in the learning process (Granitz, Koernigh, & Hirsch, 2009). According to *Career Pathways*, career training enlightens a systematic framework for rearranging educational curriculum to meet the current and future needs of employed and unemployed learners, employers,

and industry (Sherow, 2010). Barber, Whelan, and Clark (2010) suggested the impact of teaching depended on learning outcomes to help students take personal responsibility.

Educators must connect these learning outcomes to students taking personal responsibility and accountability for their learning (Barber et al., 2010). Research supports that students must exhibit persistence and self-efficacy as teachers and advisors support them to engage career choices (Barry & Finney, 2009). Such factors as negative thoughts, career interests advising, and career thinking, are interventions that educators should consider to help develop student career interests (Bullock et al., 2012). Conley and French (2013) noted students must take personal responsibility for learning, whether they are in a large classroom, online learning, or minimal instructor interaction platforms. In any environment, they can pursue career training. Conley and French concluded, regardless of complex assignments or difficult problems, career-minded students would thrive. Students who take ownership of learning and are willing to persist demonstrate key indicators for college and career readiness.

Researchers explained emotional engagement (showing interest and enjoyment in learning) and cognitive engagement (invested in learning) are necessary for students to engage appropriately in college readiness and career development. Richardson (2012) noted self-motivation and enjoyment for academic learning demonstrated a higher correlation with GPA than with extrinsic motivation. Students who normally do well academically are more likely to aspire to higher career aspirations (Gilkey, Sevrn, & Conley, 2011).

Implications

The conclusions drawn from this project may have direct and indirect implications on the academic leadership and faculty at 2-year technical colleges and on the community at large. The leadership at 2-year technical colleges could consider training programs based on the findings to strengthen staff.

Educational leadership could also introduce motivational trainings on how to manage external risk factors for students at various stages of their college and career training. Introducing meaningful incentives for regularly attending classes during first semesters could help inspire student satisfaction and improve their perceptions about their educational experience. Technical college leaders may become more deliberate to include department advisors and coaches to engage students deliberately.

Through interventions, advisors support can increase student self-efficacy related to academics and coursework to benefit their career development (Wright, Guarnieri, & Murdock, 2013). Students could leverage resources for their success and credentials. Students have a stronger desire to persist beyond barriers because they will have the support needed to complete their occupational training. Each department head should hold faculty and staff accountable for professional development training to cultivate discussions based on student interaction. The leadership could embrace empowerment classes, workshops, and orientation programs to teach students persistence despite external risk factors that affect their educational experience and factors that lead to attrition such as childcare, relationship issues, finances, stress, transportation, and unemployment.

Summary

A retention problem exists at a southeast United States vocational and career institute. Using Bandura and Tinto as the framework, this study explored students' descriptions of self-efficacy in persistence as well as barriers to perseverance. Section 2 offers a discussion describing the specific research methods used. Among those items discussed are the methods, participants, data collection and analysis. Section 3 offers a discussion on the project deliverable. This includes a discussion regarding the project's development and related literature. Section 4 discusses project strengths and weaknesses as well as my reflections on my growth as a scholarship, practitioner, and project developer.

Section 2: The Methodology

Research Design and Approach

The research method for this study was a qualitative case study that would allow me to examine student retention at technical colleges. According to Creswell (2009), qualitative research demonstrates different philosophical assumptions, strategies of inquiry, and methods of data collection, analysis, and interpretation. Creswell explained that although the process is similar, qualitative research focuses on text and image data and draws on diverse strategies of inquiry. Wisniewski (2010) offered the following about qualitative research: “Qualitative researchers’ focus is to answer questions based on words and actions of participants or those who respond for a study” (p. 86). Wisniewski further reported that researchers engage in conversations with individuals, observe behaviors, and gain a deep understanding of a phenomenon or process from a human perspective. This study explored students’ challenges, self-efficacy, and supportive services. It explored best practices that relate to student retention. The guiding questions examined barriers that lead to outcomes or contributing factors that lead to high retention. The research questions guiding this study were as follows:

1. How do students enrolled in a vocational and career institute describe their experiences of self-efficacy supporting their perseverance?
2. What barriers, if any, do vocational and career institute describe that serve to challenge their perseverance?

According to Merriam (2009), qualitative researchers are interested in understanding how people interpret experiences and how their worlds are constructed,

and researchers view the characteristics of a phenomenon or relationships between events and phenomena and groups. Quantitative researchers focus on how many or how much information to present in a numerical form. Creswell (2009) stated, “Qualitative research is a means for exploring and understanding meaning of groups in respect to social or human problems” (p. 4). Creswell said that quantitative research is a means for testing objective theories by examining the relationship between variables; I did not assess variables on a continuum of scores or measuring attitudes of behaviors. Quantitative research provides an explanation or prediction about the relationship among variables. Creswell explained that mixed method combines both qualitative and quantitative forms and involves philosophical assumptions that may include theory deductive testing and verification. In this study, I did not use a theoretical lens to guide the study; however, I explored and tried to understand relationships or comparisons among ideas

Bodgan and Biklen (2007) noted Chicago sociologists in the 1920s and 1930s emphasized “the intersection of social context and biography” that lies at the “roots of contemporary descriptions of qualitative research as holistic” (p. 9). According to Gorard and Taylor (2004), qualitative research or collecting qualitative (nonnumeric, observational, textual, visual, or unobtrusive) data entails the acceptance of certain epistemological theses.

Many qualitative researchers have defined, conceptualized, and presented with various versions of interpretivism, textualism, and relativism (Stake, 2010). For example, Stake (2010) reduced the qualitative element of qualitative research in human perception and understanding and rendered qualitative methods as interpretive, experiential,

situational, personal, and emic more than etic. Given the mission of technical colleges, the demographics of their student body, and their academic goals, educators and researchers must understand the challenges faced by technical institution students. A qualitative research design provided open-ended views of students' satisfaction, self-efficacy, or the lack thereof, during occupational training. I recorded, transcribed, and documented each individual's educational experience. I based this study on technical college program outcomes, social groups, and other phenomena.

Reviewing the landscape of qualitative procedures shows diverse perspectives ranging from social justice thinking (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005) to ideological perspectives (Creswell, 2007). I have not used a quantitative research design because certain methods, such as experimental and quasi-experimental designs, require pretesting and posttesting participants (Lodico, Spaulding, & Voegtler, 2010). In addition, researchers select quantitative research samples in such a way they can be generalized back to the larger population from which they were originally drawn (Creswell, 2009). Merriam (2009) said, "Qualitative research is an umbrella term that seeks to describe, translate, decode, and coming to terms with meaning, not the frequency, of certain more or less naturally occurring phenomena in the social world" (p. 13).

Hatch (2002) argued that researchers from many disciplines and many paradigms (qualitative and quantitative) "label their work case studies, and they generally agree on several important characteristics that define case study research" (p. 30). Case studies investigate processes, gain insight into, and provide an in-depth understanding of individuals, groups, or situations (Lodico et al., 2010). This study was an instrumental

case study to provide insight regarding the issue of retention. As Stake (2000) argued, instrumental case studies “provide insight into an issue or to redraw a generalization” (p. 437). This instrumental case study explored the bounded system of specific vocation, technical institute students’ ability to persevere.

Ethnography was not an appropriate design selection because I did not investigate a culture or community (Lodico et al., 2010). This research did not involve studying an intact cultural group in a natural setting for a prolonged period. Merriam (2009) stated ethnographic studies focus on a culture of a group. Moreover, phenomenological inquiry design was not appropriate because it explores the meaning regarding the essence of lived experience that one attributes to a phenomenon as opposed to a description of an experience (Moustakas, 1994). Finally, grounded theory focuses on the inductive method or *bottom-up* approach to build an abstraction (Glaser & Strauss, 1999; Lodico et al., 2010).

Participants

The participants were current students of a technical college. My sample selection included first-generation and second-generation status students. Criteria to qualify participants follow: The participants were at least 18 years old, fourth quarter students, which would have given participants enough knowledge to obtain key information. Each participant had full disclosure about the study and its purpose, which was to collect information related to his or her experience. The college director gave permission for me to post flyers that discussed my research topic and participation. When participants contacted me, I discussed the purpose of the study, criteria, confidentiality, and consent. I

informed participants that these would be recorded interviews and all information would be confidential.

Vuong et al. (2010) strove to understand the effects of college self-efficacy as a predictor of student persistence as it relates to retention. The current research study sought to understand the potential role of college student self-efficacy and persistence among technical college students. The participants were of different ethnicities, genders, and generational status. The sample frame included students drawn from the population of those registered at one technical college. The study focused on those students who started classes and stayed for at least four quarters. The study focuses on transfer students, veterans, and re-entry students who dropped from school and re-enrolled. Israel (2012) discussed the pertinent details to consider when determining sample size: (a) level of precision, which is sometimes called sampling; (b) the confidence level; and (c) the degree of variability.

Sampling. The purposeful sampling strategy captured different characteristics and traits of different age groups, ethnicities, and different dimensions that guide people's learning abilities in career training programs. It demonstrated a clear analysis of why some students stay and complete credentialing. The participants were of particular interest because of the educational and environmental challenges they face in their educational endeavors. A maximum case sampling was one sampling method to capture individuals that represent different views of their retention experience.

A technical college, referred to by the pseudonym Tech College, provided contact information for each participant. The director signed a letter of cooperation (Appendix D)

allowing me to post an informational flyer in the student lounge area. This flyer listed the study's limitations, access information, locations, and times of interviews and observations (Appendix B). I selected participants based on their knowledge regarding barriers and challenges to completion of Tech College. The study also focused on strategies that students used to progress in their education.

Researcher-Participant Working Relationship

In this study, I maintained a respectful and nonbiased relationship while collecting appropriate data. The relationship has been objective in an attempt to gather information. Creswell (2007) noted that if a researcher correctly facilitates an interview, the interview questions would contribute focus and an unbound structure. To help my participants become comfortable and establish a strong working relationship, I respected my participants' time, availability, and space. I designed the interview prompts in light of the research questions, to guide individual interviews (Appendix C). I contacted potential participants to ask for their participation per instruction of the college.

Ethical Considerations

Preserving confidentiality has protected participants. Signing an informed consent form was limited to me as the researcher and participants involved in the research process. Participants had full disclosure; this information did not reveal their names. I am keeping all participant information securely in a password-protected file and personal identifiers will store them for maximum 5 years, then strip and destroy it. Participants had full disclosure that participation was voluntary. Participants were also informed there would be no repercussions if they had chosen not to participate.

Each phase addressed ethical conditions. I complied with the Walden University Institutional Review Board (IRB). Denscombe (2010) stressed that researchers must be aware of things happening that might cause harm. To minimize some of these risks, Denscombe listed four measures the researcher needs to ensure: (a) anonymity of participants, (b) keeping data confidential, (c) making participants aware of the nature of the research and their involvement, and (d) ensuring the voluntary nature of participants. Measures to protect participants involved in this research were a high priority. A password-protected computer is protecting students' information. Participant information downloaded to a thumb drive, securely placed in locked cabinet, is for protection. Although there was minimal risk, some participants experienced fatigue, agitation, and were emotional during interviews. I informed all participants of their rights and made sure they understood that if they were uncomfortable they could have withdrawn without penalty.

Data Collection

According to Hesse-Biber and Leavey (2010), qualitative studies typically employ one of three interview designs: highly structured, semistructured, or low structured designs. A semistructured interview design with open-ended questions was used for the purpose of this study. An interview guide assisted in directing the questions that I asked each participant (Appendix C). Data collection consisted of one-on-one interviews and surveys. The interviews consisted of interview protocol, which contained instructions for the interview process, interview questions, and space for notes of responses from the

interviewer (Creswell, 2012). Interview questions allowed participants to speak freely about their experience, perseverance, challenges, and barriers to career education.

Generating Data

Flyers placed in the student lounge disclosed I was a doctoral student seeking volunteer participants to take part in a research study (Appendix B). Flyers contained the title of study, pertinent issues, and confidentiality. Pertinent information in the flyer included purpose of the study, how to contact me as the researcher, rules of participation, and criteria for participant selection. I worked effectively with a minimum of 10 of the students and I selected this number because the site under study was a small campus. I used a digital recorder to provide a detailed record of each interview, as discussed in Lodico et al. (2010). The digital recording provided me the opportunity to focus on the participant's discussion, which allowed insightful follow-up inquiries. This provided the means for a deeper exploration into the participants' experiences. The method used for analysis was recording interviews, transcribing, and documentation (Sandelowski & Barroso, 2007). This was important to the research regarding collecting unbiased data from students' level of satisfaction with occupational training. For this study, there were no right or wrong answers. Hesse-Biber and Leavey (2010) explained that researchers should not expect a certain answer from participants. However, researchers should allow the conversation to flow and go in any natural direction for the participant. According to King and Horrocks (2010), the researcher should practice the skill of listening and reading body language to elicit the in-depth, rich descriptions of experiences.

Interview Logistics

According to Holloway and Biley (2011), a planned research process and interviews are an intricate part of an outline to focus on open-ended questions and to maintain accurate record keeping of all responses. Participant's interviews last 30 minutes to one hour. Participant's follow-up interviews with their approval were encouraged via phone call or email. A day or two before the interview participants were reminded via phone call and email of the exact meeting time and day of interview.

Some participants found this form of data collecting helpful because they had an opportunity to express their thoughts and opinions without constraint. Student conduct rooms were location of each interview. This location was feasible for each participant.

Logging Data

After introductions, I asked for consent from each participant as I developed rapport, thereafter, met with each participant for an interview (Creswell, 2009). The participants provided credible information of their understanding of self-efficacy and persistence as they pertain to technical college occupational training. The researcher examined interview questions to those who were part of the sampling group to ensure they were appropriate for the selection process. Challenges that participants faced in completing their educational goals and support they needed were questions for participants. According to Clark (2010), the process of talking about particular experiences in a one-to-one situation can be an important supporting mechanism for those who engage. Particularly within interview situations, research engagement required individuals to explore their own thoughts and feelings; documenting these thoughts were

important in this qualitative research (Clark, 2010). The research data storing for preservation and future use is crucial to research projects (Jablonski, 2010).

Storing and Acquiring Data

Regarding safekeeping of data, Thomas and Hersen (2009) delineated the guidelines for safekeeping of research data to comply with IRB and the rules and regulations of Health Information and Personal Privacy Act (HIPPA), which included the use of passwords, encryptions, interview notes, and written transcripts. Regarding the safekeeping of data, Thomas and Hersen (2009) delineated the guidelines for safekeeping of research data to comply with IRB and HIPPA rules and regulation. The use of USB flash drives, passwords, encryptions, safely locked cabinets in locked rooms. Thomas and Hersen (2009) cited the Council on Governmental Relations (2006) that 3 years are a minimum to keep all records. The college registrar or dean will provide participant contact information.

Role of the Researcher

The role of the researcher as the primary data collection instrument necessitated the identification of personal values, assumptions, and biases at the outset of the study (Creswell, 2003). The researcher was a staff member of the college under study. I do not have any personal relationships with any of the potential participants. I used member checking and peer debriefing in which I sent the transcribed interviews and summaries of my conclusions to participants for review (Ezzy, 2010). I interviewed, recorded, and interpret data in this qualitative study. I monitored my own subjectivity and biases by recording reflective field notes and journals of personal thoughts without echoing my

own voice in the research (Mazzei, 2009; Smart, 2010). The role of the researcher began with acknowledging, understanding, and articulating the implications of the study. I am involved by being reflective and reflexive (Finlay, 2002). I upheld integrity and respect for the participants throughout the research process. I am committed to the process and face each barrier in a tranquil manner. It takes genuine interest and empathic understanding that participants present in order to have an effective investigation.

Data Analysis

Qualitative research managed successfully has the possibility to discover a diverse subject matter. Data analysis requires the researcher to seize complex phenomena and make it authentic. It involves a process of bringing meaning to information collected from the participants through numerous data sources. These data analysis will begin by organizing the vast amount of information collected from observations, interviews, and digital recordings. These data will provide Tech College insight through critical reflection and articulation as well as develop a complete and engaging analysis of each participant's experience. I will provide insight into proper comprehension of the phenomenon, interviews, meetings, observational notes, and provide an analysis of the open-ended questions asked of participants. I reviewed, compile, and categorize the data from observations and interviews. Interview transcripts will include coding to identify themes to help me analyze the data (Holloway & Todres, 2007).

In the second phase of the analysis, I transcribed and organized the digital recordings into a file. Password-protected files and a locked filing cabinet will keep the data safe and maintain confidentiality. The coding process segmented and labeled data to

form descriptions and themes and connect themes to present data in a meaningful manner (Grbich, 2012). Transcript margins tripled spaced for commenting, documenting, coding, and thematizing data. Data analysis through segmentation, color coding, and labeling text led to form descriptions and broad themes in the data. Reviewing the data and examining the text for redundancy helps with tightening the themes. I coded and printed the broad themes as well as read, and reread the data to determine similar themes of the study. To ensure optimal analysis, Yin (2004) stated data must do the following:

- Focus on the most significant research questions that initially led to the study.
- Examine all relevant evidence in an exhaustive manner
- Compare analytic procedures and findings to the prior research
- Address all major rivals and interpretations
- The collected data analyzes descriptive and inferential analysis techniques

Accuracy and Credibility

Qualitative inquirers triangulate among different data sources to enhance the accuracy of a study (Holloway, 2012). According to Pierce (2008), triangulation is one of the most common research practices to provide validity and reliability. Triangulation is the method I will use to corroborate evidence from the participants observed and interviewed. Triangulating through a peer reviewer helps increase credibility and trustworthiness of the findings (Anney, 2014). The peer reviewer has signed a confidentiality agreement (Appendix E). Additionally and for trustworthiness and credibility, member checking is used to compare and contrast information to validate the credibility of the information received, to support themes that will be used, and add

comments on accuracy of the interview transcript, interpretations, or conclusions (Houser, 2007). The study is accurate because of consideration of multiple sources of information, individuals, and groups. The use of participants' open-ended interviews to validate and reinforce the reliability of the questions will support the research.

Consistency in the data collection process validates and establishes reliability of the data analyzed (Yin, 2009). Pierce (2008) surmised that triangulation assists the researcher to identify contradictions. Creswell (2009) states that triangulation helps to validate different data sources of information by reviewing and investigating sources to build meaningful themes. When themes are rooted, consistent, and compared by reviewing several sources from participants, then the process is credible and adds validity to the study.

Discrepant Cases

Discrepant cases are those instances where new coding, or meaning, rise from the data such that it disconfirms the current themes (Erickson, 1986; Merriam, 2009). Lincoln and Guba (1985) argued that negative case analysis as being a, "...process of revising hypothesis with hindsight" (p. 309). Further, raw data does not simply exist as each research participant's experiences, behaviors, beliefs, and values implicate and inform the data (Freeman, deMarrais, Preissle, Roulston, St. Pierre, 2007). This means that the data collected through such means as interviews, observations, interactions, etc., are subject to the paradigm of those participants as well as the researcher's (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Because qualitative researchers often take a social constructivist or emancipatory, liberatory framework, they may not expect that all participants will share

the same perspectives (Lodico et al., 2010). In this light, I used procedures that managed discrepant cases and maintained an openness for themes that contradicted or disconfirmed those already found. No specific discrepant cases came to light in this study.

Data Analysis Results

This study of the impact of self-efficacy on student retention in technical colleges is an important subject of research. The qualitative approach used 10 participants for this study that yields findings that are important and emphasizes several perspectives on student retention and self-efficacy. Data gathered was individually expressed through surveys and individual interviews. Each interview was digitally recorded and transcribed for accuracy. Thereafter transcriptions were emailed to participants to check for accuracy and validity. This study explored students' educational experiences, challenges faced, and environmental risks factors that can inhibit students credentialing. Persistence can be attributed to the student's institutional commitment and goal commitment (Bean & Metzner, 1985; Cabrera et al., 1993; Tinto, 1975).

Technical and community colleges leaders, stakeholders, and policy makers understanding the relationship between student satisfaction, self-efficacy and challenges they face during their educational journey can translate into their demise or their academic achievement. The research questions are (1) how do students enrolled in a vocational and career institute describe their experiences of self-efficacy supporting their perseverance? (2) What barriers if any do vocational and career institute students describe that serve to challenge their perseverance?

All qualitative data has been self-coded, triangulated, and peer reviewed for accuracy. A narrative descriptive approach has been taken of survey results to clearly define students reported experiences. I transcribed each interview and maintained a master and copies of the data. This final process of data analysis was has been shaped by the data collection and the analysis accompanied the entire process.

Phase 1 Data Collection

The data in this study came from the Technical Institute, Douglasville, GA campus. Data collection began with the Dean of College, Registrar's Office, and Career Service Office. Flyers were placed in student internet cafe as I solicited participants. The college gave me permission to post flyers and go into electronic, drafting, and computer classrooms to speak with students. I explained the purpose of research to a group of students by going into several classrooms and explaining the nature of the research. The students were given surveys after the IRB had given approval for me to interview participants. I articulated their stories would be valuable and held in the strictest of confidence. They were told I would not use their names, but numbers would be used to identify who they were. The students that listened to me articulate information about my study and met criteria, agreed to take part in the surveys and interviews. A self-organized survey titled "Tech College Student Survey" was given to all qualifying candidates (Appendix C). The survey served the qualitative data question how students enrolled in a vocational and career institute describe their experiences of self-efficacy supporting their perseverance? Participants were fourth quarter students and alumni of the Technical Institute. Each student signed and received a copy of an informed consent that was

approved by Walden University IRB, to allow them to understand the study before deciding to take part. Data analysis was completed in Excel and Word tables and spreadsheets. The study followed procedures of digitally recording data, transcribing, surveys, and logging all data properly (See Appendices).

IRB approval for study #11-17-15-0186157 was obtained November 17, 2015. From the dean's and career services office I received the contact information regarding current fourth quarter and above students as well as alumni. A total of 50 surveys were issued 13 of which were returned. From the potential participant pool of 13, 10 participants were selected and interviewed in a first-response basis. Participants were a combination of current students and alum that included three African American females, three African American males, one White male, two White females, and one Other.

Findings

The precipitating problem that initiated this project study was student retention as they transitioned into their sophomore year. The two research questions were:

1. How do students enrolled in a vocational and career institute describe their experiences of self-efficacy supporting their perseverance?
2. What barriers if any do vocational and career institute students describe that serve to challenge their perseverance?

Hirschy et al. (2011), stated, the characteristics of work, family, and finances can influence a student's level of commitment. For the purpose of this final project self-efficacy is defined as one's belief in one's ability to succeed in specific situations or accomplish a task (Bandura, 1991). Qualitative research was used to uncover trends and

themes regarding student self-efficacy, perseverance, and student satisfaction that leads to increased retention or lack thereof.

Participants described their environmental challenges through family crisis and personal challenges while achieving credentialing. Several common themes of students desiring to quit due to the lack of family support, homelessness, and lack of employment played a huge role in their experience; however, they would not allow themselves to quit. Bandura (1991) indicated that people have *self-motivating factors* to help them pay attention to their behaviors.

Students who are more likely to set goals are more prone for success even when they lack support (Bandura, 1991). Two students reported they have been raised in abusive homes where they were molested, parent put in jail, feelings of abandonment, and financial struggles; yet they explained quitting was not an option. Five participants had experienced challenges of not being able to learn and retain information after so many years being out of school. These participants had common themes of discouraging family members, childcare problems, and losing family members through death. Although these participants have experienced great challenges all have reported quitting was not an option because they believe in their goals, aspirations, and desire to obtain a degree.

Educational Expectations

Seven participants reported they desired more hands on experience, they also discussed their desire for smaller classroom settings that give more individualized instruction and attention to students. 10 Participants report earning a degree gave them

the push needed when they were challenged by environmental risk factors. Although four reported they had frustrating experiences the overall quality and satisfaction with their education is good.

Participants reported consistently the impact that instructors have on their educational experience. Participants reported they would have experienced a more positive experience if they had instructors that were invested, not condescending, and were more practical as opposed to being facilitators. Seven students reported having poor instructors and unnecessary classes that led to many students dropping out of school. Four students reported they had instructors that made a positive impact in their educational journey, along with work study programs. Three students also reported e-books have made their educational journey more challenging than it should be.

Common trends were reported that if work study were available to more students they would have an opportunity to receive more hands on training, thus making their educational journey much better. When asked about preparation for job opportunities upon graduation 50% reported they would be prepared. The surveyed participants were asked what the most important relationship in post-secondary education was to them. Five reported student to instructor, one reported student to student, two student to community, and two student to course. Five participants reported that if they had to rely on their instructors they would have quit; however, students supported one another, had to be self-motivated, and lean on administrators to help maintain their educational journey.

Common practices reported were instructors being rude, instructors coming to class late, and unorganized. The study has examined the impact of quality instructors and their influence on students' self-efficacy when they feel supported, and they are provided with internships and work study programs. Participants reported in order to make their journey more fulfilled as they pursue their credentials it would be helpful to have flexible schedules, and more professionalism among staff. Participants reported they are not able to transfer for their credits to other institutions and it is quite disheartening.

Table 1

Transcript Example 1

Participant	Comments
Participant 0009	<p>PR: What has been the most impacting experience that you've had that have caused you to show self-efficacy that has caused you to really persevere? What had been the greatest thing or greatest challenge that you could have faced that at one time you could have said I want to quit but you didn't?</p> <p>SG: It was just recently I had a class the teacher wasn't very organized or it just didn't really and couldn't catch my full attention in the class.</p> <p>PR: You say the instructor wasn't organized. Was it because the instructor wasn't organized you couldn't learn from her. Or what was it about the person's style, what was the challenge?</p> <p>SG: I couldn't really learn from her.</p> <p>PR: What was it that she didn't do that you feel like you needed?</p> <p>SG: She didn't take the time with the students who help them understand what she was trying to teach. And what she was teaching, she didn't even understand, that's what she was telling us. She actually had another career so I felt like she was more focused on that then here at the school.</p>

Self-Efficacy

Participants described their experiences of self-efficacy through their educational experiences, and most influential relationship in post-secondary education. Seven participants reported patterns that lacked hands on experience and had to show great discipline and self-motivation so they would not quit their credentialing. They also reported thoughts of not being invested in by instructors when they are paying almost \$48,000 for a 2-year program that is mostly funded by student loans. Several students reported they desired to ask questions of their instructors; however, they were disregarded, did not take control of their classroom and belittled in front of other students.

Table 2

Transcript Example 2

Participant	Comments
	<p>PR: What is the most important relationship in an institution to you, meaning, and I want you to tell me why. Student to student relationship, student to instructor, the student to curriculum, or the student to community. And when I say student to community, meaning that educational community or the community that ITT has built in their community not external, but the community here. Student to student, that relationship has impacted you more, or student to instructor is most important. Student to community or student to curriculum? And tell me why?</p>
	<p>HG: I think that has impacted me, I think student to student.</p>
	<p>PR: Tell me why?</p>
	<p>HG: I say that because I've met a lot of good people and a lot of us has the same stories. So, it's almost like we're a team. When somebody is falling off, we're there to encourage one another or help them, or I mean, that's what has impacted me the most, the student to student relationship. Cause' some of the instructors, they don't care. They're here just to teach you and they really don't care if you get it or not. I mean, and they may act like it, but it's not sincere.</p>
	<p>PR: So if relationships with you and the other students were not as strong would you still have been here?</p>
	<p>HG: I would have, cause' I came for me. I didn't come to meet anybody, and I wasn't expecting to meet anybody. But I did.</p>
	<p>PR: But it does help to have positive...whether that was good or not, you still would finish.</p>

Table 3

Transcript Example 3

Participant	Comments
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Participant 0007

PR: So with that transition, tell me what are some of the areas of growth? Things that may have happened to notice we can approve upon? Things that have not been such a positive experience for you?

MA: Things that have not been such a positive experience are the students. I feel like the instructors...I don't know if they're not giving the opportunity to take control of their classroom but I feel like it's a trend that I've seen with instructors, not only here but also in Duluth. Not only in Douglasville but also in Duluth where you have disruptive students that are affecting my learning. Instead of the professor taking control of the environment they just continue to talk. In a university setting, a lot of times you have bigger classrooms, bigger classes and that can't happen. And you have some professors that just don't think they should put themselves into any harm's way to try and take control of the classroom.

Although participants have reported many experiences that could have deterred them from their goal they have demonstrated self-efficacy. As stated by Connley and French (2013), self-efficacy is the belief in one's capabilities to achieve a goal or an outcome. Students with a strong sense of efficacy are more likely to challenge themselves with difficult tasks and be intrinsically motivated. These students will put forth a high degree of effort to meet their commitments and attribute failure to things in their control, rather than blaming external factors.

When these behaviors happened the students reported they wanted to quit and enroll in another school; however, they had invested too much already into their education to walk quit. Most reported they had seen at least four instructors come and leave before they could get the content of what was being taught and another instructor

came in and they were lost. Several participants reported striving to learn how to use E-books is challenging and several instructors are not comfortable as well. Reportedly many students have quit due to students having an inadequate learning experience, lack of support in classrooms, surmountable student loans, taking classes not needed, and immature students.

Social Relations

Participants reported there are many environmental risk factors that stand in their way of persevering and completing their occupational training. The challenge of pursuing a degree as one participant reported (0009) “my mother is my support system; however, the thought of my mother going to jail is overwhelming”. However, she cannot quit because she dropped out of high school, earned a GED and always wanted to earn a degree is the pursuit of happiness. Six participants report they have to raise kids, have financial problems, emotionally, and mentally overwhelmed. Yet the positive experience of having a mother that raised a participant helped her to realize because her mother believed in her she must obtain her degree. Six participants report they do not have family support and are living with neighbors just to finish school. According to Hirschy et al. (2011), the characteristics of work, family, and finances can influence a student’s level of commitment.

Table 4

Transcript Example 4

Participant	Comments
	<p>A participant (0001) reported her personal challenge:</p>
	<p>PR: Describe for me (0001) what challenges have you had personally since you've been in school. Then I want you to tell me why you didn't quit.</p>
	<p>0001: Well, I've had a pretty difficult childhood so school has always been really important to me. Going to college was always something that I told myself I was going to do it no matter what, just something that I have to do. When I first started here I was struggling with stuff going on with my dad and he was having a hard time keeping a job and keeping a place to live.</p>
	<p>PR: Were you living with him?</p>
	<p>0001: No, I wasn't but my little sister was and I'm very protective of her.</p>
	<p>PR: So indirectly seeing your dad not having a job, seeing your little sister being affected, did it affect you and can you tell me a little more about that?</p>
	<p>0001: There was a three or four month period where they were living at my dad's work. He was working at a steel fabrication shop and he did not have a place to live and so they lived there and that was really difficult for me. Recently I've been going through a good bit of stuff with my mother. She's a drug addict and she hasn't really been a huge part of my life in the last couple years but she recently decided she was going to move in with my grandmother and try to get clean. That lasted about two weeks and she has moved back in with the man who molested me as a child. So that's been a very difficult thing to deal with mentally. It was kind of iffy for a while and nobody believed me just because I was so young when it all came out.</p>
	<p>PR: Ok, ok, um, what practices at this institution has influenced your educational goals? Has there been any instructional practices, any activities that made you say, well you know what let me stick this out? Has anything influenced you in a positive way?</p>
	<p>0002: Really, the friends I've made since I've been here. Has a lot to do with it. Because when we first started I basically found a couple of people that shared similar interests that were in it for the long hall. And that put forth the effort. And, by us having our little group, we were pushing each other through it.</p>

Student Support System

Each participant was asked about practices that have influenced their educational experience and several reported their relationship with other students influenced their decision to stay.

Table 5

Transcript Example 5

Participant	Comments
PR:	Ok, ok, um, what practices at this institution has influenced your educational goals? Has there been any instructional practices, any activities that made you say, well you know what let me stick this out? Has anything influenced you in a positive way?
(0002):	Really, the friends I've made since I've been here. Has a lot to do with it. Because when we first started I basically found a couple of people that shared similar interests that were in it for the long hall. And that put forth the effort. And, by us having our little group, we were pushing each other through it.

Table 6

Transcript Example 6

Participant	Comments
	<p>PR: So now, what are some other challenges you faced while you've been in school. Whether it be academically, personal, environmental risk factors meaning external things, external from here. As a lady, what are some things you've dealt with outside of here? So you've dealt with some frustration academically, what about external from here and that could have come over to here?</p>
	<p>0008: Going back to math again, that was the biggest challenge for me. I was like, oh my gosh these numbers, am I going to get it? I need this in order to succeed in this field. There were a lot of numbers. I need to buckle down, I had to study a lot, I had to write down everything that I needed to know. It was just I had a tutor with teachers. Whatever I had to do to get it, that's what I was gonna do. I wasn't gonna quit, that wasn't an option for me. Quitting was not an option.</p>
	<p>PR: Why not?</p>
	<p>0008: Because, my parents have done everything for me and my sister and my family. Put me through school. I'm not gonna quit. Not for them and not for me.</p>
	<p>PR: So quitting is not an option.</p>
	<p>0008: Not an option.</p>
	<p>PR: No matter how hard math was?</p>
	<p>0008: No matter how hard it was.</p>
	<p>PR: How does your parents feel about you soon to graduate in December?</p>
	<p>0008: They are very pleased and excited and proud.</p>

Table 7

Transcript Example 7

Participant	Comments
	(0006): Maybe my living situation. I moved here and I moved here and stayed with a family member and things just weren't right.
PR:	How soon was it when you moved here that you enrolled in school?
0006:	I moved here in May of 2014 and I started in June.
PR:	So you were right on it? You knew you had to do something immediately?
0006:	Well I couldn't find a job. Again wasn't able to find a job and the jobs that I did see, maybe it was pride, but they were like \$8 an hour, and I just felt like I was better than that. But at the same time I was getting unemployment so, I was ok.
PR:	So getting unemployment, you moved here, a month later you starting school in June. Now, let's go back to you living with a family member, or family members.
0006:	A family member.
PR:	Ok, so tell me about that. Was that challenging for you?
0006:	Yes
PR:	Can you talk about the challenge?
0006:	Sure. Well when I first came I thought about going back home to Ohio, that's where I'm from. And my cousin, you know told me, "Come here, you should come here, you can stay with me and you know I'll help you", but she really didn't. She has a small child and I'm good with kids, but I don't have any small kids. And I didn't want to be a babysitter. And I think they invited me so that I could help, and in the beginning I did; baths, feeding, but it was wearing me out cause' I don't have kids. I have grandkids, and I feel like if I wanted to play with somebody, I could play with my grandkids. So that was rough and then when I didn't want to do it anymore...
PR:	So did you feel manipulated?
0006:	Yes.

(table continues)

Participant	Comments
PR:	And then when you didn't want to do it anymore, what happened?
0006:	Things got rough.
PR:	Meaning?
0006:	I mean, just an attitude or just the way things were. When I said I was gonna go to school, they would always say things like, "Why would you do that, why you wanna go to school?" They have a master's degree, they went to school. So, I think, I don't know if it's jealousy. I feel like there's nothing to be jealous of. But, I had my kids at a young age, she's older and has a 5 year old.
PR:	Meaning your daughter, or your cousin?
0006:	My cousin. And I felt like she didn't want me to see me get it. You know I didn't do it in the beginning, she did. I had kids to raise. So now there's nobody but me and I've never met anybody that tries to discourage you from going to school.
PR:	How did that impact your education? You're dealing with stuff in your environment and then you coming to school but you know you're dealing with that stuff and you got to go back home and finish dealing with it. How did that impact your education?
0006:	I was always tired. Just tired. Just mentally tired. But I knew what I wanted, so I kept coming anyway.
PR:	Did it get better, or has it gotten better?
0006:	Actually no. I really didn't have anywhere to go. There was a neighbor. Then I moved in with a neighbor. So as far as that part is concerned yes, but we don't speak at all.

External Factors

There were students who have had a different perspective on their educational experience. Three participants reported they were very satisfied with their educational journey and four participants reported they were satisfied. Three participants reported they are overwhelmed due to not being able to sufficiently take care of their family. Participants reported if students were more involved in their academics they would excel. Eight reported although the journey is long, tedious, and, hard it cannot compare to the quality of life after earning a degree. Students face a great deal of adversity that demonstrates their self-efficacy. Seven participants reported having financial problems, personal issues, and there are some instructors that helped them not to give up.

Table 8

Transcript Example 8

Participant	Comments
	<p>PR: What are some of the challenges that you faced, that at one time made you feel, when you have that up and down battle, that I can't do this? What are some of the challenges that you face?</p> <p>(0003): Some of the challenges that I face is being raised with a single mother and two older sisters and a nephew now, it's like, ok now I need to be more, I need to stop going to school, and be more at home helping out. And sometimes you know personally that feels like, I'm just at school all day. My mom's by herself taking care of everyone in the house. It's just, I feel like I'm a burden sometimes. You know she cars me around and it just feels like it's not worth it, and then I just look back and say ok, I gotta graduate, I gotta get these jobs, I gotta make money, I gotta provide for my family. So, it's just a lot of that being the only male in the house.</p>

Summary of Results

Four main themes have emerged from the research: (a) educational expectations (b) self-efficacy (c) social relations (d) external factors. These themes were drawn from the coded quotes of the interview questions and surveys. The premise of the research questions for this study are, “**How do students enrolled in a vocational and career institute describe their experiences of self-efficacy supporting their perseverance?**” was addressed through themes as family members, student support, some instructor support and the lack thereof, and lack of hands on experience. The second question, “**What barriers if any do vocational and career institute students describe that serve to challenge their perseverance?**” was addressed with themes: Students reported they have experienced family problems, sickness, finances, incarceration, homelessness, deployment, disrespectful instructors, age, and immature students at college as being factors that challenged their self-efficacy. Participants reported if they had more faculty support, more hands on experience, and less personal distractions their journey to credentialing would be more successful and fulfilling.

Conclusion

This doctoral project was guided by a qualitative case study methodology. Retention at technical colleges that leads to credentialing is an ongoing problem that is an inherent problem associated with this institution. To explore the research questions, I used open-ended semi-structured interviews with 10 participants. Participants’ selection was based on purposeful sampling. This section described and supported the qualitative research design method that guided the research with adults who attend a technical

college. The research explored self-efficacy impacts on retention at a metropolitan technical college. The qualitative instrumental case study design is appropriate to solicit answers from participants. This design is more appropriate as compared to a quantitative or mixed method research designs. Moreover, I provided a description and justification for the participants selected for the study, which included the criteria for participants, justification for the number of participants, and procedures for gaining access to participants. In order to insure ethical consideration was given thoroughly, I used informed consent and ensured participant confidentiality. During the analysis procedure, coding, marking, grouping of ideas, and spreadsheets were used to identify the four emerging themes (a) educational expectations (b) self-efficacy (c) social relations (d) external factors. I validated accuracy through audio recording interviews, transcribing interviews, member checking, journaling, and peer review. Both the researcher and participants provided transparency that led to trusting relationships.

In the next section, I describe current policy recommendation with a detail position of existing policy/problem and analysis of findings. The information derived from this project study will culminate in a report to the stakeholders of the institution under study. The report anticipation is to guide discussions for academic improvement, bridge the divide between students and instructors, and fill gaps in practice that will align with students credentialing attainment. The report will provide pedagogical interactive learning and student support techniques that will enlist instructors' involvement that will lead to students overcoming external challenges. Thus increasing student satisfaction and retention. As Creswell (2008) noted, a research design is a plan or proposal used to

conduct research. Appropriate measures regarding ethical protection of participants assures participant protection from harm.

The chosen data collection method guides and justifies what data is specifically collected. The data consisted of responses to an interview protocol, which contain instructions for the interview process, interview questions, and space for notes of responses from the participants (Creswell, 2012). The data collection methodology is appropriate to the type of evaluation and the qualitative research design. The researcher's role is a nonbiased observer, interviewer, and data collector.

Strategies and procedures described data analysis as well as coding procedures. A discussion followed regarding best possible procedures ensuring accuracy and credibility through member checks, peer debriefing, triangulation, and clarifying researcher biases. Finally, I provide procedures for dealing with discrepant cases. I explored first generation and second generational students' self-efficacy and persistence as they pursue credentialing through occupational training.

Section 3: The Project

Introduction

The goal of this doctoral project was to explore the phenomenon of retention of students who attend technical colleges, the scope of student integration theory that describes the students' financial resources, and the role of communities to institutions (e.g., family, work, and neighborhood) play in students' retention (Tinto, 1975). Students who have not learned to manage environmental factors often are not successful completing credentialed programs. Baxton and Hirschy (2005) reported student environmental external factors that influence students' commitment to their institution. Previously, researchers have explored online course completion rates; however, institutions have not discussed on a larger scale students' ability to connect with one another and its impact, the power of self-efficacy while pursuing postsecondary education, and strategies needed to help student retention.

In many cases students reported they were not connecting with instructors and this had been a factor that caused several students to drop out. In addition, they were told the student learning experience would be hands on, with engaged instructors and a supportive environment. Among responses from the 10 participants interviewed, four themes were revealed: (a) three were satisfied with their educational experience, (b) two were dissatisfied, (c) two were neither satisfied nor dissatisfied; and (d) three were very satisfied. When students were asked what was needed to help improve their educational experience, (a) four students indicated more hands-on experience, (b) three reported

better equipped instructors, (c) one reported advisors, (d) one reported flexible schedules, and (e) one reported longer quarters.

This section outlines the project chosen based on the results of the research and literature review. This project will be a recommendation of policies and procedures that will improve students' academic experience. The project will describe the problem, framework and methods used to investigate the problem, and results of the research. The report offers solutions to faculty gaps and skill-building techniques to ensure an increase in retention. The position of this paper is to provide the background regarding the divide between faculty and students. The proposed project will provide recommendations to address the key issues: (a) lack of hands-on experience, (b) community connections, (c) meeting student expectations, and (d) how to assist with student external risk factors.

Description and Goals

The technical college wanted to address retention issues and why students were dropping out rapidly and not completing credentialing. Student success in college, as measured by persistence and degree attainment, has not improved, although access to higher education has increased substantially over the past 40 years (Brock, 2010). There are specific concerns as it relates to students' persistence while pursuing a degree. The project I created for this study is a position paper.

The position paper begins with a description of the challenges students incurred while pursuing their degrees. The paper provides a description about the research study methodology and results. I have made recommendations for changes in practices based on the results of research and current practices. The problem I address in this study and

project is poor retention in technical colleges. The project addressed the problem by providing Tech College with clear recommendations in reference to changes faculty can consider making in their procedures to increase retention and student satisfaction.

The goals of the project were to help Tech College understand the retention problems they are facing from the students' perspective; to inform Tech College of the research, theory, and practices related to the problem; and to provide recommendations on addressing students' problems based on the results of the research, literature, and theory. The final goal of the project position paper is to incorporate immediate changes that will increase retention of students that will lead to higher completion and credentialing.

Rationale

According to research, Tech College has experienced a great number of students dropping out of their schools, which caused them to have poor retention rates. There are many colleges that focus on enrollment; however, Tech College made a decision to focus on the retention of students. Lala and Polluck (2012) argued, vocational and career training institutions now focus their energy and resources on retention through offering better student support services. As stated in Section 1, Tech College administrators are assessing the long-term benefits of satisfied students, which they hope result in new student referrals, higher graduation rates, and increased student's satisfaction (Gruber et al., 2012).

Technical colleges in metropolitan cities serve a vast number of students who are unemployed, socially disadvantaged, and experience economic challenges, which has

caused many to drop out of their pursuit of a degree (U.S. Census Bureau, 2014). Students served at technical institutions in metropolitan cities face barriers that include family obligations, childcare, financial problems, and poor levels of academic performance, which often hinder their education (O’Gara et al., 2009). Technical colleges in metropolitan cities present a plan for adults’ academic achievements to increase retention. According to O’Gara et al. (2009), technical colleges’ plan is to provide students with access they need by ensuring guidance, providing counseling, and ensuring strong support systems to assist with retention. The participants in this study are concerned about their opportunities of earning a career after school and, if they do not, how they will pay back their student loans. Tech College has received some scrutiny in reference to the lack of policies and informing students of student loans, which has affected the self-efficacy of some students.

Therefore, research have indicated that students have dropped out do to this concern. According to Fain (2015), Tech College had a failure to report federal aid accounts in a timely manner, a lack of written policy to guide processes, and conflicting information about Pell Grant awards over several years, which has made students feel extremely uncomfortable. Information like this has been an ongoing challenge for students who attend and have dropped out of Tech College, thus hindering retention.

Program recommendation has been selected for the project because it will reflect informative feedback to Tech College stakeholders that will initiate positive change that can benefit Tech College retention of students and ensure students are more satisfied with their educational journey. This qualitative case study allowed me the opportunity to

explore participants' thoughts, feelings, and emotions that have added to their self-efficacy. Tech College has provided clear articulation about their concerns for the number of students that are dropping out of school and their desire to implement ideas that will assist with future success of their students and institute. Providing open-ended questions to participants provided a scholarly rationale for the interviews that led to information that led to my comprehensive data analysis and evaluation of program to make policy recommendation.

Participants have determined they need invested faculty, hands-on experience, duty from the institution to inform of career opportunities, and quality services from faculty that can lead to a greater retention. These students are presented with insurmountable challenges that could have added to their quitting the pursuit of their educational goals; however, they have exemplified great levels of self-efficacy. Therefore, I conducted a formative evaluation to provide recommendations for improvements that will lead to increase of retention of students and more efficiency among teachers.

Review of the Literature

I conducted an exhaustive review of the literature to adequately determine students' self-efficacy as they receive career training at Tech College. The literature evaluation includes theories and frameworks from relative literature that is current and previous referenced literature that has enhanced the program recommendations and policies. The Walden University Library was utilized to search peer-reviewed journals and articles relevant for program recommendations. The databases included: Education

Research, Sage, UMI ProQuest Digital Dissertation, Google Scholar, and Academic Research Complete. Key search terms included *position paper*, *engagement*, *interaction*, *hands-on*, *policies*, *procedures*, *recommendation*, *challenges*, *student retention*, *adult student*, *career training*, and *technical colleges*.

I divided the literature into two sections to focus on the policy and recommendation position paper. There were only a few articles that placed a direct focus on policy white papers, which focused more on technology and business. However, the literature provided a base that led to the identification of themes that emerged from the study. The literature provides an overview of the project genre, policy paper criteria, and how education is supported by the genre. The strategies also offered recommendations to the college faculty that can eliminate gaps in teaching.

Project Genre

After conducting numerous database searches, I determined the literature was sparse regarding this project genre, and information relative to policy papers is limited. Policy white papers are known as a type of *grey paper*, which includes academics, business, and industries that are not inclusive of commercial, or customary publications (Juricek, 2009). Lyons and Luginsland (2014) stated that policy papers do not necessitate a significant investment of time or resources on the stakeholder's part. Further, they are commonly used for academic audiences (Bly, 2010). Policy papers are used customarily as assignments for teaching students in business, communication, education, and orientation courses (Willerton, 2012). Moreover, policy papers are trying to sell something such as a product, a service, or a procedure change (Bly, 2010; Letterpile,

2016; Owl Purdue Writing Lab, 2016). According to Powell (2012), policy papers assist government agencies, as well as other organizations, to make policy changes. Moreover, policy papers are developed to make an informed and persuasive argument regarding some specific phenomenon (Juricek, 2009; Letterpile, 2016). For this study, a policy paper will present recommendations for the local study site regarding academic and support services to help struggling students to retain in college.

For this study, a policy paper will provide the tool in persuading the campus's leadership regarding student self-efficacy, as Bandura (2001) defined it, and retention as well as provide consideration to the recommendations given in the policy paper. A policy paper helps to guide campus leaders when considering formal policy and procedures with programs and support services offered to struggling students. Thus, to help address the original problem, a policy paper provides the focused discussion with recommendations from which positive social change can occur.

Policy papers are written in objective and unemotional language to provide deeper insight into some phenomenon (Bly, 2010). By articulating an objective insight into a problem, policy papers provide organizations the foundation from which to engage in conversations focusing on change (Lyons & Luginsland, 2014; Owl Purdue Writing Lab, 2016). Technical organizations, academic institutions, among others, have utilized policy papers to help assist with the promotion of change and ideologies (Juricek, 2009; Xavier University Library, 2014). Moreover, policy papers are well-researched documents that posit concise solutions to a problem (That White Paper Guy, 2016). This paper will introduce ideas for implementation to enhance the college experience for students that

contemplate dropping out of school. Additionally, the policy paper will provide recommendations to position students to have a more effective learning experience.

Policy papers have provided career training programs a direct connection to academia to make this impact (Powell, 2012; Willerton, 2012). The American Association of Community Colleges (2015) has a few research papers that only have sections that cater to research papers that are relevant to community colleges. Additionally, Educause (2015), an organization that is technology driven, has briefs and reports on policy/recommendation papers. These papers promote professional and academic skills, providing direction for organizations to better position students for success (Powell, 2012). My research data analysis and collection focused on career training and academics, which makes a policy/recommendation position paper the most effective project for my stakeholders. The policy paper with recommendations will be disseminated to the campus leaders who have responsibilities in student academic and support services.

Policy/Recommendation Paper Criteria

This recommendation policy paper is a problem-based paper that leads to solutions that can impact the retention of students. Bly (2010) stated, a policy paper should contain purposeful information that exposes the audience that will be served. Powell (2012) said the structure of the policy paper should identify the problem, history, problem, and a solid solution with an end result that leads to action. He also suggested the author should be creative with a consideration of images, color, and have content to support the paper. Using Powell's ideas, the policy paper for this study will begin with

outlining the problem specific to the study site and offer recommendations for the campus leaders to address the problem.

Because policy position papers connect students to hands on experience that is useful for career training and workplace skills, they need to be well-organized and contain an easy-to-understand message (Powell, 2012). Technical and community colleges that focus on technology are great audiences for policy position papers. In addition, policy papers blend professional and academic skills to provide insight for the organization to address a problem as well as promote and support positive social change. According to the Arab League (2015), a position paper is right to the point and straightforward. The position paper includes an introduction with a comprehensive breakdown of problems associated with the issue presented. In addition, it will help put information together succinctly on the topic being discussed and draw ideas that link the problems and solutions.

Students Educational Expectations

There are recurring themes that students have articulated that need to change immediately to make a positive impact on their educational journey. There is an alarming consensus that training programs need more program evaluation (Gorman, 2011). There is a great opportunity for technical colleges to review their growth areas and review process to assess the needs for the population that is served (Martin & Smith, 2011).

Technical colleges have been investigated by the Department of Education and some have been closed due to unlawful practices (Department of Education, 2015). Students have complained about their lack of hands on education. However, Jurmo

(2011) found students that have technical skills were likely to find jobs in the workforce. Students have complained that they are paying too much for their degrees at Tech College. They are perplexed due to the vast loan amounts and concerned they will not have appropriate career placement assistance to pay back their loans. Skolnik (2011) articulated that postsecondary schools should focus on students having a competitive edge that would assist them with skills needed to compete in the workforce. Students need practical experience from external stakeholders that would help to initiate more training that will prepare them for careers.

Furthermore, students need to be provided with up to date technology devices, electronics, and drafting capstone projects that will enhance their learning. According to Mendoza (2015), students need culturally adept technical instructors. The results of this study portrayed ideals that are synonymous with student practical hands on learning. The literature findings provide a stage that will give guidance, support, and credence to students' practical learning. The literature review from this study has been a review of recent articles and journals that has illuminated the ideas of the participants under study to move to a level of permeation.

Project Description

Potential Resources and Existing Support

Tech College has been an accredited institution since 1969 and has endured many tumultuous educational woes; however, they have served students privately and graduated more than 55,000 students. The Director/Dean has embraced research at the college that focused on students' self-efficacy. The research was based on open-ended

questions that honest, transparent responses were given without any personal biases. Tech College supports the student-to-student relationship, student to instructor, student to community, and student to curriculum relationship; therefore, there is a stakeholder investment to see a greater number of students earn their credentials and persevere through challenges they face.

The Director/Dean of Tech College has provided all the necessary resources to assist with appropriate means to reach students that were part of research to improve the quality of students' education. As new directors were added there was a desire to make immediate impact on the current students at Tech College. Administrative staff, instructors, marketing reps, and financial aid counselors made a conservative effort to support the recommendations made to improve the quality of the students' education. The implementation of more technical companies for work study, up to date networking equipment, more frequent capstone projects while students are near the end of their education, support with student education on effective means to handle external risk factors and students being exposed to more frequent hands on learning will increase retention.

Tech College has connected with electrical engineering companies, Drafting and Design, and Networking systems companies to help improve their curriculum by skills associated with current trends. Those whom are participants of the research exemplified perseverance, vocational skills, and soft skills that would prepare them for the workforce.

Potential Barriers

Tech College has many challenges; however, when some of the poor publicity

subsidies they will be in a better position to serve more students. Admissions, Career Services strive to make educational experience of the adult learners more enjoyable. Barriers for distributing the policy paper with recommendations will include allocated training time, and buy in from upper level management and Tech College Headquarter office. The content should be presented to the directorial team, faculty, financial aid, and curriculum stakeholders. Because faculty come to work at different times, there may be a challenge having all departments present for white paper recommendations. Although the college has supported the research, the possibility of making immediate changes may be a slow process due to requiring buy in from their corporate headquarters. During the project, time had been allocated by Tech College to meet with the participants. Throughout the study there was positive feedback and support given by the leadership team.

Barriers of consideration consist of having instructors that have full time jobs come in for in-service training. Most of the instructors are not invested in Tech College because they are adjunct instructors. Therefore, addressing students' concerns can pose further problems because students may feel they have not been heard and changes will not happen. According to Berger (2014) professional development with recommendations for improvement may enhance students' educational experience.

Proposal for Implementation and Timetable

The policy paper will be presented to Tech College with hopes of a stakeholder meeting at the end of the quarter before a new cohort begins. Some stakeholders are students, directors, dean, and Tech College Headquarter executives. I will seek

permission of the Director to present findings in a weekly stand-up meeting attended by full and part-time faculty and staff. Results of the study will be prepared in a policy white paper with slides, which is included in Appendix A. The policy paper will include suggestions for improvement of Tech College career training program that will increase retention.

The presentation will provide simple, nonthreatening information that will give recommendations to address students' concerns. Tech College directors can then make the decision to utilize policy recommendations for their career training program based on the research findings. If Tech College decides to use the policy recommendations, it will be at their discretion to act on the recommendations presented in the policy paper. A meeting will be requested to speak with the college director of Tech College to present policy white paper recommendations. Upon approval of recommendation from Tech College Headquarters the director will then coordinate the best day and time to present findings. Because the college Director is the appointed designee by the Regional Director, he will be the liaison between myself and faculty. The Director will inform students of changes made in policy and procedures that will affect their educational experience.

Based on the participants' feedback, Tech College's methodology for teaching its curriculum through more hands-on training and interactive training is the premise of the policy paper. Moreover, having instructors that are engaged, organized, and invested will make a huge contribution to college completion. After interviewing participants and analyzing their experience, my expectation is that immediate changes occur that will

meet students' needs. Tech College is making changes to provide students with much needed hands on experience, a program that could teach them how to navigate environmental risk factors, and how teachers can develop positive relationships that will impact students learning.

Roles and Responsibilities

It is the role of the researcher to acquire pertinent information to disseminate relevant information to stakeholders that will be impacted by this research. I have chosen a formative evaluation as opposed to a summative evaluation so that my policy recommendations will make the greatest impact. The formative evaluation offered me an opportunity to meet the students' right where they were to receive data that was essential to the study, by participating in this research project it has given me a clear lens of students' self-efficacy and perseverance. Prior meetings with stakeholders before participants were allowed to participate had an expectation for me to provide policy recommendations.

The recommendations will provide clear instructions for faculty to follow in order to provide students with positive, relative information to produce higher retention rates. The role of faculty is to expose students to information so they will assist them in acquiring knowledge that can be used. Inspired instructors have a love for educating students and making a positive impact that will be a lasting experience. Students self-reported their most positive experience was from instructors that were invested, cared about their progress, took time to listen, and went above and beyond.

Project Evaluation Plan

Formative evaluation is the project's evaluation plan. Formative evaluations provide the structure that informs the consideration of potential changes necessary for project effectiveness in meeting its established goals (Black & Wiliam, 2009; Clark, 2012). In this specific project, this formative evaluation plan will gather the information assessing the effectiveness of those policies assisting student perseverance and retention through increased self-efficacy. Black and Wiliam (2009) argue,

A formative interaction is one in which an interactive situation influences cognition, i.e., it is an interaction between external stimulus and feedback, and internal production by the individual learner. This involves looking at the three aspects, the external, the internal and their interactions. (p. 11)

Using this as a springboard, the project's evaluation will provide insight into and feedback regarding the project's implementation's outcomes in achieving its goals (Weston, 2004). The project, once implemented, will be the foundation to help students persevere and retain into their second year.

The evaluation tool to assess the strategies implemented by Tech College will identify the student's perceptions and descriptions of self-efficacy developed through the external stimuli and support mechanism, their internal manifestation regarding acting upon their knowledge, and the social interactions with professors, administration, and other students as guided by the policy recommendations. The evaluation tool will be surveys helping to identify those policy aspects that may need immediate attention, opinions, emotions, feelings and other characteristics of importance (Creswell, 2012).

The survey has also ensured consistent data collection because all the participants had the same questions in the same order.

Outcome Measures of the Project

Recommended strategies presented in this project study represent an outcome derived from data collected. As the implementation of the recommended strategies are set into motion the college needs to be prepared to assess its success. The first recommendation is providing faculty with skills/tools that will assist in engaging students more effectively. A Likert scale will be used to measure student satisfaction that will have a range of one through five. The following should be considered:

- Value of one indicates student strongly agree
- Value of two indicates the student agreement
- Value of three indicates neither agree or disagree
- Value of four indicates the student disagrees
- Value of five represents the student strongly disagrees

The value range considered should capture the feelings of the participants and offer Tech College informative information to help necessary change. The scale will seek to understand the participants' perspective on their learning and engagement experience. The survey will help assist faculty with students' perception of their teaching skills and help meet students' needs. I will assist the faculty to develop a survey to gather information so data can be analyzed from the surveys. Tech College will have an opportunity to measure their desired outcome of higher retention and improve graduation rates.

Project Implications

This doctoral study will bring a widespread of social change not only on a local and national level. My plan will be to provide training to local and national colleges with tools that are essential to helping to retain students in technical colleges. The research project was guided by a white paper policy project that makes recommendation for adult students' increase in retention and self-efficacy strategies. The research presented in this white paper policy recommendation will report what students have indicated there need for more hands on activities, quality teacher engagement and strategies for managing educational challenges and environmental risk factors. The study has shown a direct correlation between environmental challenges faced by students and completion of credentialed programs. The implications of this policy recommendation paper includes increased awareness of faculty and administration of Tech College to embrace the problem that exist with retention. Although the study was conducted at one specific Tech College location, the policy recommendation strategies can reach other Tech College locations nationally. Researchers of qualitative case studies that focus on retention can benefit from the positive implications provided to technical colleges and glean retention strategies for assisting students with self-efficacy and challenges. The recommendations may spark ideas for approaching challenges faced at Tech College.

Section 4: Reflections and Conclusions

Amulya (2011) stated that reflection is a practice of analyzing things learned, documented, and experienced that will bring awareness to something meaningful. Challenges and experiences are known to be a great practice for the reflective process (Amulya, 2011). On a local level, the problem was not how many students Tech College could enroll, or how many could receive assistance for employment; the problem was what challenges could affect students' self-efficacy while pursuing their degree. These learned experiences become essential to students' reflective process that can create certain habits or experiences (Amulya, 2011). The doctoral process has made me more aware of my ability to process and reflect on experiences as a scholar. In this final chapter, I will reflect on the project study, policy recommendations, and the doctoral study, what I have learned, and the meaningful experiences gained from the study. I conclude the project with my recommendations for future research.

Project Strengths

The problem that this research addressed was barriers and contributing factors that lead to self-efficacy and retention strategies. The purpose was to understand how students enrolled in a vocational and career institute describe their experiences of self-efficacy supporting their perseverance. The project also explored what barriers if any do vocational and career institute students describe as their challenges and methods for perseverance. This project has led to a policy recommendation paper that is solution focused in its approach. The poignant recommendations are more hands-on exposure for students that will increase practicality of the educational experience, more balanced

teacher-to-student relationship building, and strategies for overcoming environmental challenges. Finally, my recommendation is to provide relative information on the four relationships that exist with education and its importance: the student-to-student relationship, the student-to-instructor relationship, the student-to-curriculum relationship, and the student-to-community relationship. This will add validity for faculty to understand the relativity of student's satisfaction. The maturation of this policy recommendation project addresses the problems at Tech College, why some students drop out, self-efficacy, and results at the local level.

The recommendation paper provided a guide for addressing students concerns and how to propagate stakeholders' buy-in for improvement consideration. The end result will be student achievement and credentialing. As stated by Tinto (2004) student retention effects graduation rates. He further stated, educators must face facts, truths, and live with the consequences when students drop out of school and do not earn their degrees. The goal of the project was to consider factors that led to students dropping out at alarming rates, what challenges they face, and how to facilitate corrective measures that will lead to students' success. Under new directorial leadership, Tech College has embraced recommendations for change. According to Crockett (2016), the measures of an institution's success are the outcomes that lead to completion, student satisfaction, and great retention rates.

The policy recommendation paper provided me an opportunity to focus on retention from an educational improvement perspective to improve programs and services for the students based on the interviews conducted. Bandura's model of self-efficacy acts

as a guide to an individual's self-efficacy and his or her own emotional, developmental, or motivational process. It has also given direct support to Tinto's (1975) model of integration and the importance of administration, academic support, and their effect on student behaviors. Therefore, this policy recommendation paper has addressed the objectives of student retention that other genres would not have addressed.

This policy recommendation paper has addressed an academic researched context that fulfills stakeholders concerns that will impact outcomes (Juricek, 2009). This paper outlines the literature, research methodology, theories, theoretical framework, and the research to give credence to the problem in this study. The recommendations provide guidelines on the appropriate ways to approach faculty and students to adopt policies immediately. Policy papers provide a point of origination for stakeholders to move into their action plan (Powell, 2012).

I suggest two forums for appropriate implementation of these recommendations:

- Staff meeting that includes teachers and administrators
- A town hall with students in the community room or Internet student café to address students' concerns and the plan of action to make changes

An additional manner for addressing the problems students have faced is to have one meeting with current students, and a second for students that come for orientations.

Addressing concerns of the students will bring back the credibility to Tech College if the plan is executed properly. This will allow students moving forward to develop their new culture and community with a sense of positivity and more students graduating.

Project Limitations

Tech College has been in existence since 1969 and has over 120 locations nationwide; however, the location under study in the southeastern United States has been opened for 3 years. Therefore, several things need to be corrected in order for Tech Colleges to effectively meet the needs of their students to increase retention. Because this location is not one of the older schools, students from an older location may describe their experience differently and have a more favorable account.

The nationwide systems to which Tech College belongs have small and large campus models. The school under study was a small campus model school that in most cases the director serves as the dean of the college as well. Campuses that have a student body over 300 students operate under the large model and the director and other staff member only fill one role. Conversely, larger Tech Colleges may not benefit from the training and paper project under study due to larger campuses having higher levels of supports for their students.

I recommend Tech College implement immediate changes and teachers take a more proactive, positive approach to meeting the needs of their students. In addition, Tech College should consider hiring instructors that are invested in their students and provide more hands-on practical teachings. If Tech College provides more hands-on experience, students reported their level of satisfaction would increase. Student success will be measured by improved student satisfaction surveys, higher retention, more students graduating, and improved student-to-instructor relationships. Tech College has a diverse student body; however, they should consider their true core values and teach with

a level of cultural awareness (Mendoza, 2015). Although Tech College is a school of technology, they are limited by technology not working properly causing student dissatisfaction. Gegler (2012) reported a student's choice of institution has an impact on his or her educational experience and attendance, thus making the learning experience and teaching experience extremely challenging. Teachers need training on technology for instruction to be effective (Connor & Beard, 2015).

Tech College was aware of these increasing concerns of students not being able to login correctly, e-book problems, and lack of up-to-date equipment to make the learning experience more pleasurable. Teachers are lacking the hands-on experience given through workshops that can increase their learning. While the project has several strengths, another limitation is having proper instructors or advisors that have time to focus on assisting students with their environmental risks that present a challenge to many students.

This formative evaluation includes several components to establish new creative ideas to increase retention. Do the months of training provide more hands-on experience? Did Tech College provide quality training that prepares students for employment? Did instructors invest quality time to ensure the success of their students? And what measures were taken to assist students work through their environmental challenges? If these issues are addressed properly and immediately, the limitations of the project can become strengths.

Recommendations

Based on the results of this study and the literature review, I concluded the study by recommending that Tech College hire instructors that are more invested in their students. Instructors should receive more workshop training, teach more practical hands-on training, and the school should continue education to instructors that will be on the four relationships in colleges (student to student, student to teachers, student to curriculum, or student to community) and provide training to students that will help them overcome environmental challenges.

Such training on the importance of relationships in technical colleges will provide instructors insight needed in order to support students effectively. Social integration has made a massive impact on students' retention, and Tinto (1975, 1993) reinforced that students who are socially integrated have higher persistence until graduation. Adult learners have a need to feel they are included in a community in which they can share struggles, ideas, successes, and failures (Sutton & Jones, 2015). Technical colleges should increase social interactions and community building among their students.

In order to make this effort successful, stakeholders would need to be informed and open for policy recommendations. Integrating more hands-on experience with up-to-date equipment for students will help students have more marketable skills. According to Oblinger and Oblinger (2005), students are experiential learners and hands-on experiences transfer to knowledge. Students have reported technology through e-books, Internet problems, and numerous login problems. The college accepting the

recommendation for more video technology will assist instructors with a more positive experience for students, instructors, and staff members (Lyons, Reysen, & Pierce, 2012). When students have fun, they enjoy the educational experience. Young (2012) stated that students who use virtual learning and games have a more satisfying experience that increases retention. Games in learning are a hands-on technique that increases students' motivation, will to study, and to compete against one another (Zechner & Ebner, 2011). When learning is an active process it allows students skills to assimilate skills to practical learning (Ebner & Holzinger, 2007).

Students who have engaged in projects may have feelings of satisfaction when they experience the implementation of new and creative ideas that meet their needs. McGlynn (2005) stated the younger generation needs more social interaction driven by hands-on experience. According to Roach (2006), institutions should investigate alternative measures to learning through technology that would simplify the learning process. Another recommendation is to provide support training for faculty that will be taken as a tool to train students how to overcome environmental risk factors (Appendix A). This policy recommendation paper will also place emphasis on quarterly satisfaction surveys to determine students' success.

Scholarship

Although the process of becoming a scholar is daunting and challenging, I have learned how to articulate data, literature pertinent to a study, and methods that lead to a complete research study. During the data analysis, I began to see and feel I had evolved into a scholar and I understand how to analyze data, coding, how to look for themes in a

project study, and how to create proper interview protocols. As I conclude this study, I have found enjoyment synthesizing participant interviews, while interpreting the data collected and procedures for completing research. I now understand the importance of how the appropriate research question and problem drive the study. I have evolved from my original thought of placing particular emphasis on students in urban cities to students from all walks of life that face academic challenges, thus expanding my knowledge and cultural competence.

This study has taken my therapeutic background to a greater understanding of pedagogy in higher education to understanding the challenges faced by students and faculty. I learned the values of research methodology that leads to outcomes that have aligned with the purpose of my study. This project has taught me patience on a level I did not know existed. The most valuable lesson I learned was persistence. I learned my scholarship is not based on the opinions of others, instructors that have misguided me, or how long it has taken to complete this project. Scholarship means hearing, being appropriately mentored, and being open minded for challenge in all my areas of opportunity. Finally, being a scholar has taught me that I have finally found a way to make social change without being judged but being part of a community of educators that live to dominate the world as we understand it.

Project Development and Evaluation

This project has been developed as a policy recommendation paper that emerged from a result of the research study. I have learned and gained so much respect for scholars that have come before me due to the intensity of research. I have learned the

importance of allowing the methodology to take its course as it emerges from the problem and thereafter the project is developed into a scholarly work that should impact social change.

Allowing participants to articulate their educational concerns without judgment validated the authenticity of what research should be and how it should be conducted. Therefore, each participant was fully engaged in the process and was excited about the possibility of change. As the project developed it was intriguing to see a blueprint that took on the form of a research question, to a problem, and thereafter to a solution-focused qualitative study. The new information presented in this study presents a level of unbiased, data collected, and analyzed truth that fortifies a foundation of change.

Through this research study, I have evaluated my own personal strengths and growth opportunities and now realize I have evolved as an Afro-American/Creole American that has expanded my view of the world and people from all different cultures. This qualitative study has given me an opportunity to embrace the form of research that has best suited my ability to interview, survey, and interpret data. It has allowed me to explore others feelings and emotions that caused me to embrace my listening skills, not give feedback but draw conclusions based on facts.

Leadership and Change

This doctoral process has validated me as the true leader I am and have been born to become. I realized my life was predestined to formulate and lay the foundation for others. However, the project pushed me beyond my natural abilities many times when I wanted to quit due to the misdirection of others. I had felt no one at Walden University

truly cared, the instructors did not appear to be invested, until I met my current mentor that guided me properly through the process.

I have become a leader and expert in retention of students and fully understand the substratum of what students need in order to help them become degreed and demonstrate self-efficacy. I have not only researched self-efficacy's impact on retention; however, I am product of what it takes not to quit or give up after almost seven years of being a student at Walden University. I know I have earned my stripes and true leadership is always predicated on not quitting or giving up because things do not go the way planned or when things become difficult. True leaders make good decisions under pressure and they can enforce change. Leaders provide a strategy that embraces change and then enforced by others (Morrison, 2013). This project provided clear direction and a strategy for how Tech College can implement efficient ways to engage students, with engaged faculty, more hands on experience for students, and training students on overcoming environmental challenges. Implementing ideas suggested in this policy recommendation paper can lead to positive social change. As a leader of social change, I now have the capability of impacting colleges from the knowledge, experience I have gained.

Analysis of Self as Practitioner

As I summarize my analysis of self as a practitioner, I thought I was a practitioner before starting the research study; however, I would have not considered myself a scholar. Jenlink (2001) referenced the act of producing knowledge becomes part of an administrative exercise leading to what is known as "knowledge-of-practice" (p. 10)

Through scholarship I have become qualified to be respected as a practitioner. I have always questioned why certain practices were in place at schools I have managed and sought ways to make changes based on their ineffectiveness. However, I did not have data as a scholar to back up the “why” behind my methods of change although I have been successful impacting colleges.

As I reflect as a former employee of Tech College, I made some assumptions before meeting with participants. Many of my assumptions proved to be factious and untrue. I removed myself from all biases and misconceptions and allowed myself to document, listen, and reflect as a practitioner and scholar. I have embraced the process of research, respect peer review thoughts and ideas, and removed myself from personal assumptions.

. Now I have learned so much about myself through this process, but what stands out the most, is I am more critical of others writings, how so many people do not synthesize information, and they do not like research. I used to despise proofreading my own writing, now I am more cautious and I proof read everything that I write. I read books that are inspirational that meet my needs; however, this study has pushed me to reading articles daily. The process of research has intrigued me so much I have made a decision to do one course that will earn me an EdS, degree in administration.

The Project’s Potential Impact on Social Change

This policy recommendation paper project has recommendations that have the potential to impact change at Tech College and make the students’ educational and career training experience more obtainable. Through the implementation of changing hiring

processes to employ invested teachers that are open to positive relationships with students will make an immediate impact. Instructors should be provided training on customer service and interpersonal skills that will impact learning. In addition, making sure instructors have continual workshops, in-service trainings that will be directed on the use of technology and more hands on practical teachings will expose students to more marketable skills that can be translated to a marketable career.

The research and literature has proven when students are engaged with instructors, have more social engagement that retention is higher and attrition is lowered. The research has demonstrated that retention is an ongoing problem at Tech College due to the lack of dissatisfied students. I have provided measures that will reduce the gap and barriers that exist between students and instructors, lack of hands on experience and higher levels of students' support.

This project recommendation paper has the potential to impact Tech colleges, support current and future students, on a local and national level. If students are supported and engaged properly Tech College completion rates and retention will increase. When students are retained at any institution, revenue increases economic sustainability. Moreover, students may have access to better equipment to increase their hands on experience. When students are engaged at their institutions they will refer more students to Tech College. Tech College economic growth and career completion programs will increase employability for companies in the surrounding areas and a more efficient lifestyle for graduates. Graduates will have an opportunity to have entry-level positions with an associate's degree and the possibility of earning a bachelor's degree.

The literature demonstrated the expectations of the participants, and benefits associated with addressing the needs of this population of students. Finally, this qualitative case study will have a lasting impact on 2-year technical college students and may also benefit students that attend four year colleges and universities,

Implications, Application, and Directions for Future Research

I must admit my greatest concern is whether or not the Director of the College will have the autonomy to implement the proposed recommendations on a local level or get the approval from Head Quarters. However, the director requested and supported the research and desire to have the outcome of the research. I would be highly interested in furthering my relationship with the college as it pertains to surveying future students to determine changes that have been implemented, its impact and applicability to the proposed recommendations. I would want to assess teacher to students' relationships, engaged learning, if instructors are more engaged by providing program evaluations, and monitoring whether or not students are receiving more practical exposure.

As I reflect on the project, I have provided research that can revolutionize education as a whole from two year colleges to four year universities. Because Tech College partners with stakeholders that help keep educational trends current, further consideration of stakeholders enforcing changes in curriculum to meet the needs of students should be a high priority. In order to measure future success, Tech College should consider policies that are working at other institutions and compare them to the recommendations of the researcher to determine career training effectiveness.

Because there is not a great amount of studies that focus on self-efficacy and its impact on retention at technical colleges it is a concept that should be explored more. One consideration is classes on how to manage environmental risk factors that affect students' ability to persevere is a recommendation that should be considered. In addition, Tech College can introduce an orientation for their students that will include the implementation of students viewing a video that demonstrates hands on experience. As a scholar I will continue my study on retention and students' self-efficacy and how it impacts credentialing.

Conclusion

After giving careful consideration to the complexities of this research project, I realize there will always be a need for qualitative research. It gives credence to participants' thoughts, feelings, and emotions that pertain to their educational journey. Qualitative research puts the researcher in the environment of their participants to fully understand what they are experiencing (Creswell, 2009). To create a more sustainable career driven institution it is paramount to train instructors that are innovative and engaged with students. A great portion of this section exemplifies my maturity as a scholar and development completing this doctoral study. The project illuminates the process of developing a solution to the problems faced with self-efficacy and its impact on retention at Tech College. Locally and nationally, Tech College completion rates need immediate attention. This study explored completion problem at Tech College and viewed it through the optic of student participants.

The results demonstrated that students did not feel a sense of connection to instructors, lack of hands on experience. Including work study programs and internships that align with the curriculum will assist students' practical hands on experience. Students also pointed out that replacing e-books due to its ineffectiveness, and more support as emergent theme. As a solution to the problem, the study results, along with research on theories and recent literature led to the development of a policy recommendation paper project. Although Tech College has an orientation consideration should be given to stitch in-events or classes before students start school that has a specific focus on assisting students to overcome environmental challenges. I also recommended hiring engaged instructors that will do a "teach for teach" class to staff before they are hired, get by in about how to treat students, how to engage students, and get a true understanding of the new instructor's educational discipline to support these initiatives

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Appendix A: Self-Efficacy and Retention—A Report on Findings

Background

This appendix has been prepared for the college director/dean of Tech College, staff and students associated with career training. This part of the research study presents a summary of findings and recommendations for future improvement to the existing career training college. The purpose of this research was to determine the effectiveness of the existing career training college for students seeking employment in the field of technology.

There were 138 locations of Technical Colleges at the time I began this research study. Tech College has partnerships with employers across the nation and they created training programs to provide graduates with marketable skills and knowledge to meet the needs of the technology industry. I chose a qualitative study to evaluate the opinions of Tech College's current students and graduates with respect to the quality of their educational experience. The research questions for this project initiated dialogue that assisted in me acquiring information from one on one interviews and surveys that included open-ended questions to achieve a desired outcome.

This research will assist the college in their quest to increase retention and have more students earn their degrees. In addition, employers can benefit from quality entry-level employees that will have a competitive edge due to their theoretical and practical approach. Tech College graduates would have the opportunity to improve their marketability, improve their personal well-being, and provide financial stability to their families. Greater educational attainment reduces the likelihood of unemployment

(Carnevale et al., 2009). College graduates experience the lowest unemployment rate (8.0%), while those without a high school diploma have the highest unemployment rate (33%; Carnevale et al., 2009). Adult workers are concentrated in sectors of the economy that are particularly sensitive to business-cycle fluctuations, such as retail trade, leisure, and hospitality (U.S. Congress Joint Economic Committee, 2010). Tech College has reduced and striven to add courses to their curriculum due to the ever changing needs of employers because some schools of education did not meet their needs of stakeholders. There is a transformation of how postsecondary education is perceived and there is an increase in the number of adults seeking postsecondary degrees from technical colleges (Matthews, 2008).

The United States continues to battle with education concerns. Low graduation rates at the high school level and unstable employment rates have cultivated an increasing number of adults disassociated from school and work (Heinrich & Holzer, 2011). Although we have achieved considerable success accessing education for students, we have a long way to go and there is still room for improvements within our educational processes. Combining theory and practical knowledge with the performance of a skill would provide recognizable advantages for stakeholders. Career preparation is constantly a process that is improving to meet the needs of employers. A reassessing of career readiness training on a national level and the training provided should be considered. Highly regarded career credentialing training programs offer skills desired by employers. Employers and stakeholders communicate job requirements and needs to Tech College to accomplish the goal of employment. Tech College is making a concerted

effort to meet the training and technical needs of employers. This research has provided changes and additions in order to assist Tech College make informed decisions to support their student body as their self-efficacy is challenged by environmental challenges and instructor disconnection.

The Problem

Tech College has a retention problem in both their full-time and part-time student population. Vocational and career institutes offer alternative credentials to help students attain livable wage careers through educational certifications. Marks and Diaz (2009) said the number of first-year students who drop out of vocation and career institutes without earning a certification or diploma is significant. Tech College implemented an open enrollment policy where they admitted 100% of those who applied but now in Georgia students must pass an admissions assessment. The majority of the student population (by race) is African American that comprise 60% and 39% white and 1% other of their student population. Tech College lost a total of 50 students in one month out of 64 students who were enrolled in the September, 2015 cohort and that is below the 68% for all such similar technical colleges. Further, Tech College's part time student retention rate is 35% and is below the 56% retention rate for all such similar colleges. Moreover, 26% earn a degree in 100% of normal time with 40% earning a degree within normal time.

Bremer and Center (2013) reported that many students drop out of college due to the lack of adequate academic preparation for college-level coursework. Hirschy et al. (2011) argued that students in metropolitan cities face barriers that hinder their ability to

persevere academically. The research demonstrates that many technical college students face insurmountable challenges that hinder their college completion. Some barriers from the lens of the participants were home and life challenges, to challenges with instructors.

The National Research Center for Career and Technical Education (2012) reported some causes of high attrition among technical programs. Hirschy et al. (2011) found certain factors, such as unemployment, childcare, transportation, and disconnection from family, important for student retention or persistence. According to Marks (2013), 45% of minority students from Atlanta metropolitan areas who transferred from 2-year colleges to 4-year institutions did not earn a credential. This policy recommendation proposes solutions that will help increase the number of students that will graduate and have an impactful learning experience

Importance

If Tech College does not resolve the problem of retention, they will continue to lose students. Students at Tech College do not have a history of referring students to the college because of what they deem as not have a positive environment. Before this study Tech College has not focused on data that would address students concerns. There is an incline on the students who are going back to colleges for career training. Therefore career colleges play an intricate role educating students that can play a vital part in contributing to making a social contribution (Boggs, 2011). Because Tech College has a policy that promotes accessibility for all those whom can pass the schools entrance assessment, it allows everyone to have an opportunity to return to college and have the possibility to earn a degree, start a career, and earn a livable wage. The students that

attend Tech College are mostly comprised of working adults who have families that cannot attend a traditional college with normal school hours. Earning a degree is most important for the students at Tech College because for some it is their last resort.

School Community Framework

The United States spends approximately eighteen billion dollars on career workforce development programs Chertavian (2012). According to the Southern Regional Educational Board (2013), in the fall of 2008, 2-year public institutions' graduation rate was 17%, compared to the national average of 20%. In 2015, the institution under study had a benchmark of 70% for each program (M. Delaney, personal communications, March 18, 2015). The Electrical Engineering (ELCT), Drafting and Design (DDT), and Network Systems Administration were above 70% at Tech College. The ELCT program was slightly below the benchmark with 60.78%. Overall, retention was 80% and the same quarter in 2014 was 69%, which was an 11% increase (M. Delaney, personal communication, March 18, 2015).

I have drawn from the conceptual framework on Bandura's (1977) self-efficacy theory of behavioral change and cognitive development and functioning and Tinto's (1975) model of integration and student retention.

Through the integration of Bandura's self-efficacy model and Tinto's student retention model, a concrete framework of environmental, distinctive, and institutional factors exist that affect student retention. This framework provided a clear context for examining precipitants and predictors that are associated with achieving the goal of this study.

Students must experience a connection to their institution, classroom size, faculty, staff, and the community (Chidress & Spurgin, 2009; Roval et al, 2004).

According to Bandura (1977), an individual's self-efficacy develops because of his or her own emotional, developmental, or motivational process, or because of the work and social environments. Bandura postulated that people fabricate their self-efficacy beliefs based on the perceptions of others. Bandura believed when the thought of managing their home life, work, educational demands, or meeting deadlines overwhelm students; their emotional motivation processes are often traumatized. According to Hirschy et al. (2011), the characteristics of work, family, and finances can influence a student's level of commitment. Hirschy et al. stated, "Students have a difficult time coping with internal and external factors that is deemed as 'coping behaviors theory' which is concerned with how individuals adapt to challenges in new environments" (p. 305). When students learn how to manage their environmental challenges their academic experience is more fulfilled. Students that spend a semester in school that have a positive experience with their instructors help build confidence needed to succeed and manage problems (Krug, Love, Mauzey, & Dixon, 2012).

Purpose and Design

The overall goal of the study was to synthesize, interpret, and analyze the data from surveys and interviews to develop an authentic understanding of retention of students who attend a Tech College and their self-efficacy. As the participants articulated their experiences it gave me great insight into their concerns and why some students did not complete their educational journey. This qualitative case study consisted of two

components: Surveys and in-depth interviews with current students and alumni using Bandura's model on retention and Tinto's integration model as a guide. The surveys were given to participants individually after they agreed to interview. There were a total of 10 participants that agreed to individual interviews. My data was gathered during individual interviews that were digitally recording and transcribed for accuracy. The purpose of this study was to explore influences of technical college students who persist toward certificate, diploma, or degree completion. This study has examined barriers that lead to outcomes and contributing factors that lead to retention strategies. The research questions guiding this study are:

1. How do students enrolled in a vocational and career institute describe their experiences of self-efficacy supporting their perseverance?

2. What barriers if any do vocational and career institute students describe that serve to challenge their perseverance?

Open-ended, surveys, semi-structured individual interviews conducted with 10 students was the method of data collection. Participants' selection was a purposeful based sample of students at Tech College using maximum variation. Each participating student was at least 19 years or older and was at least in their fourth quarter of education or alumni of Tech College.

Specific information about nationality, creed, race, or grades was not a criteria to be a participant. The students in the study discussed pertinent information about their plight as a student of Tech College, challenges faced at the institution, and personal challenges that could have detoured them from pursuing a credential. Five participants

were females and five were males. Three students were full time workers, five participants were unemployed, and two were work study students. Each participant received and signed an informed consent form prior to being a participant in the study, explained confidentiality, and that no compensation would be exchanged for their service. Participants also understood that study was voluntary, that contact information would be on my personal computer and data would be kept under lock and key in a private storage for 5 years. I received IRB approval on 11/17/15 from Walden University to finalize my project study.

Results of Study

Students had received surveys that focused on satisfaction, self-efficacy, and challenges they face while pursuing their degree. Each interview was transcribed and thereafter completed my data analysis of each interview. The surveys were coded and themes were derived by consistency of data. I then followed member checking and peer review of students' interviews. Additionally, I had given all the transcriptions back to each participants for validity and accuracy of information. I coded data by marking of text, grouping of ideas, cutting, sorting of all common themes, and ideas. Through my iterative processes, common codes emerged that gave rise to dominant themes 1. Educational Expectations 2. Self-Efficacy challenges 3. Social Relations 4. External Factors.

Educational Expectations

Although five participants reported they desired more hands on experience, they also implored their desire for smaller classroom settings that give more individualized

instruction and attention to students. Students must experience a connection to their institution, classroom size, faculty, staff, and the community (Chidress & Spurgin, 2009; Roval et al, 2004). Ten participants report earning a degree and completing what they started is far greater than dropping out of school. Although seven students reported they had frustrating experiences the overall quality and satisfaction with their education is good.

Participants reported consistently the impact that instructors have on their educational experience. Participants reported they would have experienced a more positive experience if they had instructors that were invested, not condescending, and were more practical as opposed to being facilitators. Seven students reported having poor instructors and unnecessary classes that led to many students dropping out of school. Four students reported they had instructors that made a positive impact in their educational journey, along with work study programs. Students also reported e-books have made their educational journey more challenging than it should be.

Common trends were reported that if work study were available to more students they would have an opportunity to receive more hands on, thus making their educational journey much better. When asked about preparation for job opportunities upon graduation 50% reported they would be prepared. Students were surveyed and asked what the most important relationship in post-secondary education? Five reported student to instructor, one reported student to student, two-student to community, and two-student to course. Several participants reported that if they had to rely on their instructors they

would have quit; however, students supported one another, had to be self-motivated, and lean on administrators to help maintain their educational journey.

Common practices reported were instructors being rude, instructors coming to class late, and unorganized. The study has examined the impact of quality instructors and their influence on students self-efficacy when they feel supported, and they are provided with internships and work study programs. Participants reported in order to make their journey more fulfilled as they pursue their credentials it would be helpful to have flexible schedules, and more professionalism among staff. Participants reported they are not able to transfer for their credits to other institutions and it is quite disheartening.

What asked what do technical colleges need to implement in order to aid students successful completion of a certificate, diploma, or degree?

Table A1

Transcript Example 9

Participant	Comments
0001:	Students need the assistance of counselors
0002:	Students need to have more hands on experience and instructors need
0003:	Make sure there is more hands on training. Participant also reported: completing the program is of utmost importance.
0005:	Better equipped instructors
0009:	Students need access to more work study programs to be more Equipped to teach more hands on learning.

Self-Efficacy

Participants described their experiences of self-efficacy through their educational experiences, and most influential relationship in post-secondary education. Seven participants reported patterns that lacked hands on experience and had to show great discipline and self-motivation so they would not quit their credentialing. They also reported feelings of being disrespected by instructors when they are paying almost \$48,000 for a 2-year program that is mostly funded by student loans. Several students reported they desired to ask questions of their instructors; however, they shut down, and belittled in front of other students. Although participants have reported many experiences that could have deterred them from their goal they have demonstrated self-efficacy. As stated by Connley & French (2013), self-efficacy is the belief in one's capabilities to achieve a goal or an outcome. Students with a strong sense of efficacy are more likely to challenge themselves with difficult tasks and be intrinsically motivated. These students will put forth a high degree of effort to meet their commitments and attribute failure to things in their control, rather than blaming external factors.

When these behaviors happened the students reported they wanted to quit and enroll in another school; however, they had invested too much already into their education to walk quit. Most reported they had seen at least four instructors come and leave before they could get the content of what was being taught and another instructor came in and they were lost. Several participants reported striving to learn how to use E-books is challenging and several instructors are not comfortable as well. Reportedly many students have quit due to students having an inadequate learning experience, lack

of support in classrooms, surmountable student loans, taking classes not needed, and immature students.

Participant	Comments
	Participants were asked to discuss their academic challenges that allowed them to demonstrate self-efficacy and why they had not decided to quit?
0001:	Discussed being homeless, lack of employment; yet quitting is not an option because he must earn a degree
0009:	Discussed schedule for school is not flexible and does not fit into personal life, financial problems, and family issues, and lack of hands on, but cannot quit.
0010:	Described how her father lost his job, sister being homeless, mom addicted to drugs, and she living with a sexual molester; yet she had to earn a degree and more knowledge.

Social Relations

Participants reported there are many environmental risk factors that stand in their way of persevering and completing their occupational training. The challenge of pursuing a degree as one participant reports (0009) “her mother is her support system; however, the thought of her mother going to jail is overwhelming; however, she cannot quit because she dropped out of high school, earned a GED and always wanted to earn a degree is the pursuit of happiness. Some participants report they have to raise kids, have financial problems, emotionally, and mentally overwhelmed. Yet the positive experience of having a mother that raised a participant helped her to realize because her mother

believed in her she must obtain her degree. Some of these participants report they do not have family support and are living with neighbors just to finish school. According to Hirschy et al. (2011), the characteristics of work, family, and finances can influence a student's level of commitment.

Participant	Comments
When asked about contributing factors that have impacted learning experience and environmental challenges, participants reported:	
0006:	Tech College needs better instructors, my living arrangements are poor but nothing will stop me.
0007:	My mother always pushed me educationally, and my fourth grade teacher encouraged me to become a teacher. In addition, raising my kids and deployments helped me to persevere.
0008:	Reported, my personal challenges made me stronger and seeing others fail made me not want to give up.

Student Support System

Each participant was asked about practices that have influenced their educational experience and several reported their relationship with other students influenced their decision to stay.

Participant	Comments
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0006: Reported she had no family in the city where Tech College is located, and had to live with a neighbor to complete school. She also states, “one instructor in particular helped me not to give up”.

0008: Describes her support system very strong coming from a two parent home that pushed and supported her educational journey.

0009: I had to press through deaths, family issues, and financial problems with little to no support.

External Factors

There were students who have had a different perspective on their educational experience. Three participants reported they were very satisfied with their educational journey and four participants reported they were satisfied. Some participants reported they are overwhelmed due to not being able to sufficiently take care of their family. Participants reported if students were more involved in their academics they would excel. Some reported although the journey is long, tedious, and, hard it cannot compare to the quality of life after earning a degree. Seven participants reported having financial problems, personal issues, there are some instructors that helped them not to give up.

Participant	Comments
0004, 0005, 0008:	Described their educational journey is very satisfying
0006, 0007:	States, they are satisfied
0002, 0010:	Dissatisfied with their educational experience
0001, 0003:	Are neutral about their experience

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You are invited

To participate in a research study exploring strategies for college success

Your stories are valuable to help develop support programs for incoming students.

Further Information:

Please contact Mr Percy Reed at:

[XXXXXX](#)

>>Your voice is important - Hope to see you!<<

Appendix C: Interview Questions

Tech College Student Survey

1. (Informed Consent not included)

I agree I disagree

2. Please assign yourself for alias for future communication. Refer to this pseudonym in all future communications. _____
3. I am a student who attends Tech College _____

Yes No
4. What is your gender? _____
5. Which category below includes your age?

21-29 30-39 40-49 50-59 60 or older
6. Are you Black or African American, White, Latino, American Indian, Native American, Pacific Islander, or some other race not mentioned? _____
7. How many students do you know that started occupational training with you have quit school?

1-5 6-10 11-15 16-20 21-25 26-30 30+
8. What is your overall satisfaction with your academic training?

Very Satisfied Satisfied Neither Satisfied nor Dissatisfied Dissatisfied
 Greatly Dissatisfied
9. What are the contributing factors that have impacted your learning experience?

10. What has been the most impacting educational experience that you have had that has allowed you to show self-efficacy?
11. What instructional practices, student engagement, student interaction or engagement activities have influenced your educational goals?
12. How will you explain your experience in career training?
13. What do technical colleges need to implement in order to aid students successful completion of a certificate, diploma or degree?
14. In your general opinion what are reasons why some students have not completed a certificate, diploma, or degree program?
15. What can you foresee standing in your way of educational attainment?
16. What do you consider educational success?
17. Tell me about the quality of instruction you receive.
18. Tell me about your most academic challenges and why you had not decided to quit?
19. Tell me about any personal environmental issues that could have stopped you but you persevered through it?
20. Tell me about the campus environment, is staff and faculty welcoming?
21. Tell me what made you chose career training?
22. What is your financial aid experience like?
23. How does your class schedule fit into your personal life?
24. What is the treatment like from faculty and staff?
25. Have you thought about quitting and if so what kept you going?

26. What is most important to you at _____ College that helps you to persist?
27. Tell me about your experience being enjoyable or not?
28. Why do you attend this _____ Technical College?
29. What was your admissions experience like?
30. How helpful is your faculty or Student Success Advisors?
31. What relationship on campus is most important to you, and tell me why: (a) Student to Student (b) student to instructor (c) student to community (d) student to course
32. How responsive is faculty and staff to students' life circumstances: Likert Scale:
(a) Extremely responsive (b) helpful (c) moderately responsive (c) neutral (c)

Appendix D: Letter of Cooperation

ITT Technical Institute 5905 Stewart Parkway
Douglasville, GA 31035-2371(678) 715-2100
(678) 715-2150 (fax)
www.itt-tech.edu

Letter of Cooperation

ITT Technical Institute
5905 Stewart Parkway,
Douglasville, GA. 30135

Date: October 5, 2015

Dear Percy Reed,

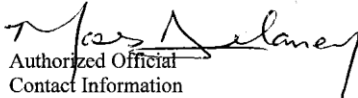
Based on my review of your research proposal, I give permission for you to conduct the study entitled "Self-Efficacy Impact on Retention in Technical Colleges." As part of this study, I authorize you to meet with participants, collect data, member checking, and results dissemination activities. Individuals' participation will be voluntary and at their own discretion. We understand that our organization's responsibilities will be to allow you to speak to students that can benefit from the study. ITT Technical Institute reserves the right to withdraw from the study at any time if our circumstances change. Mr. Reed has permission to meet with participants at an agreed upon location that is feasible for the students.

Interviews will be conducted with a minimum sample of 10 participants that are students of ITT Technical Institute. I will send correspondence to or post flyers for minimal 75 potential participants through hand delivered consent forms. Participant involvement will be supported by ITT Technical Institute's College Director. Participants will be randomly selected students at ITT Technical Institute. Interviewees must be available for 30-minute to an hour. Potential participants will be contacted through posted flyers. The participants will be able to provide credible information on occupational training, self-efficacy, and persistence. Notes will be taken on challenges faced while pursuing credentialing and what made them persevere. Participants will be asked about challenges they can foresee themselves facing in completing their educational goals and support that is needed.

I understand that data collected will remain entirely confidential and may not be provided to anyone outside of the student's supervising faculty/staff without permission from Walden University IRB. All information will be stored for five years in a confidential locked filed cabinet, and thereafter destroyed.

I confirm that I am authorized to approve research in this setting. I understand that the data collected will remain entirely confidential and may not be provided to anyone outside of the research team without permission from the Walden University IRB.

Sincerely,


Authorized Official
Contact Information

Appendix E: Confidentiality Agreement

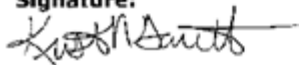
CONFIDENTIALITY AGREEMENT**Name of Signer: Dr. Kristi Garrett**

During the course of my activity in collecting data for this research: "Self Efficacy Impact on Retention in Technical Colleges." will have access to information, which is confidential and should not be disclosed. I acknowledge that the information must remain confidential, and that improper disclosure of confidential information can be damaging to the participant.

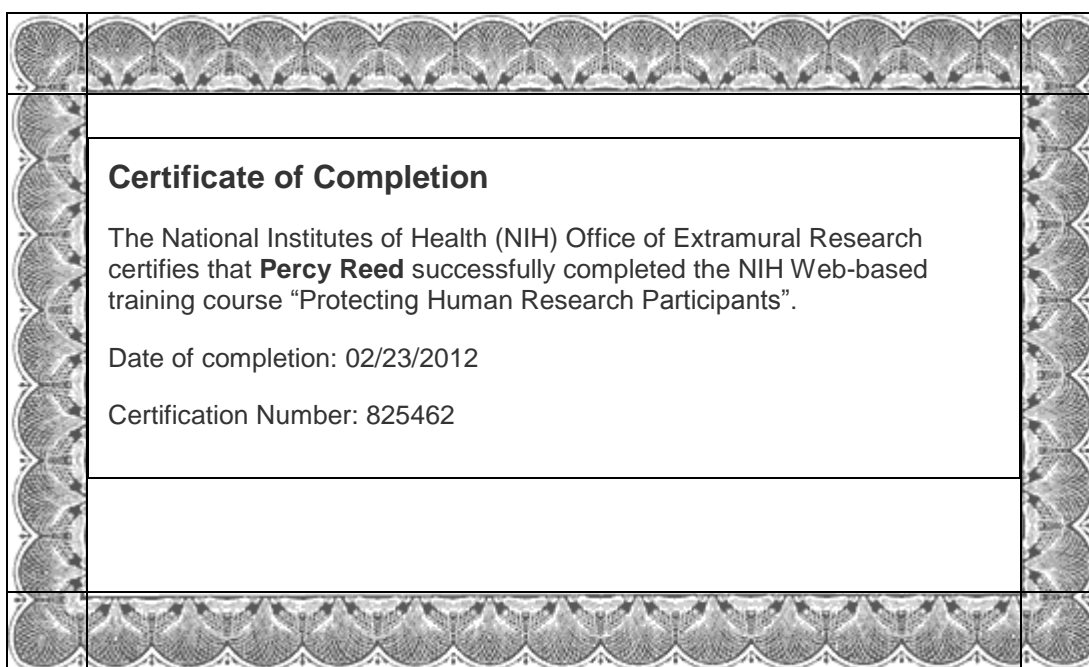
By signing this Confidentiality Agreement I acknowledge and agree that:

1. I will not disclose or discuss any confidential information with others, including friends or family.
2. I will not in any way divulge copy, release, sell, and loan, alter or destroy any confidential information except as properly authorized.
3. I will not discuss confidential information where others can overhear the conversation. I understand that it is not acceptable to discuss confidential information even if the participant's name is not used.
4. I will not make any unauthorized transmissions, inquiries, modification or purging of confidential information.
5. I agree that my obligations under this agreement will continue after termination of the job that I will perform.
6. I understand that violation of this agreement will have legal implications.
7. I will only access or use systems or devices I'm officially authorized to access and I will not demonstrate the operation or function of systems or devices to unauthorized individuals.

Signing this document, I acknowledge that I have read the agreement and I agree to comply with all the terms and conditions stated above.

Signature:**Date:** 10/28/14

Appendix F: Certificate of Completion



Appendix G: Telephone Script

Good morning or afternoon _____

This is P.W. Reed and I am a student at Walden University working on my doctoral degree. I am doing a research study entitled Self-Efficacy Impact on Retention in Technical Colleges. The purpose of the proposed exploratory study is to examine why some students stay in Technical Colleges despite high attrition associated with career and college readiness training: First generation and second generation students' persistence despite risk factors that are associated with hindering pursuit of credentials.

Your participation will involve completing a satisfaction survey via the internet, one on one interviews and helping me by asking three to five other students to participate in this study who or present or past students of this technical institution. You do have the right to decide to participate or not. Once you start, you can withdraw from the study at any time without any penalty or educational ramifications. The results of the study may be published but your identity will remain confidential and your name will not be made known to any external parties.

In this research, there are no foreseeable risks to you. Although there may be a direct benefit to you in changing how education is viewed by our academic administrators in Metropolitan Atlanta and on a national level. If you have any questions about the research study, please call me at 4xx-4xx-4xxx or email me at x. For questions about your rights as a study participant, or any concerns, or complaints, please contact Walden University Review Board via e-mail at IRB@Waldenu.edu.

As a participant in this study, you should understand the following:

1. You may decide not to be part of this study or you may want to withdraw from the study at any time. If you want to withdraw, you may do so without any problems or penalties.
2. Your identity will be kept confidential. You can choose an alias. Please only refer to yourself in this manner on all correspondence.
3. P.W. Reed, researcher, has fully explained the nature of the research study and has answered all of your questions and concerns.
4. If you decide to participate in interviews they may be recorded. If they are recorded, you must give permission for the researcher, P.W. Reed, to record the interviews. You understand that the information from the recorded interviews may be transcribed. The researcher will develop a way to code the data to assure that your name is protected. Your alias will not be associated with the school. The tapes will be destroyed as soon as transcribed.
5. Data will be kept in a secure locked area. The data will be kept for five years, and then destroyed.
6. The results of this study may be published.

7. Please do not discuss this study with a colleague until it is concluded-approximately one month thereafter.

By accepting the above terms, you agree that you understand the nature of the study, the possible risks to you as a participant, and how your identity will be kept confidential. Acceptance of this agreement means that you are 18 years old or older and that you give permission to volunteer as a participant in the study described.

I accept the terms listed above I decline to participate in terms listed above (Check One)

Signature of interviewee _____ Date _____

Signature of researcher _____ Date _____

A four digit code will be used throughout study for identification purposes: _____
4-digit code

Appendix H: Social Cognitive Theory Components

Social Cognitive Theory Components	Application to Practice
Behavior	
Self-Efficacy Collective Efficacy Incentive Motivation Outcome Expectancies Self-Control Incentives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Provide opportunities for enactive mastery experiences ● Create lessons that emphasize real-world applications ● Give positive, realistic feedback ● Embed realistic, challenging goals into instruction ● Promote mastery learning through skills training ● Model positive outcomes of desired behavior ● Present outcomes of change that have a functional meaning ● Provide opportunities for decision making, self-monitoring goal setting, problem solving and self-reward ● Promote self-initiated rewards and incentives ● Provide opportunities for enactive mastery experiences ● Develop group activities that allow individuals to get to know each other better and increase confidence to accomplish desired behavior change
Personal Factors	
Self-efficacy Beliefs Self-Regulation Personality Physical Characteristics Goal Setting	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Approach behavior change in small steps to ensure success ● Provide training and practice in problem solving and stress management skills ● Provide explicit instructional prompts, provide chances for self-appraisal and reflection, make visible the instructor's thinking processes ● Build in goal-setting activities throughout; work with participants to create realistic and measurable goals ● Tasks should be moderately challenging so that learners will do well and make progress when providing effort ● Make direct statements to learners to boost their confidence
Environmental Factors	
Observational Learning Modeling Social Persuasion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Provide frequent access to models of the knowledge, skills, and behaviors learners are expected to learn ● Model personal interest and value (instructor enthusiasm) ● Competent, credible, enthusiastic and similar models ● Provide opportunities for rehearsal and practice ● Offer credible role models who perform the targeted behavior ● Consider making changes to the environment

Appendix I: Interviews

0001

PR: What degree are you pursuing?

HD: NSA

PR: What quarter are you going in to?

HD: I'm going in to my fourth quarter.

PR: How would you describe your educational experience at ITT from the day you started until now?

HD: Hectic, it's been very...just hectic. A lot of the teachers don't have their classes organized in a good way to help us learn. I've had teachers that were really late to class and I've had teachers that were just flat out rude to me so it's been pretty hectic.

PR: When you say rude to you, what did they do to be rude?

HD: Actually last quarter I has an assignment that I failed and I was given the opportunity to redo the assignment for a better grade. So I redid the assignment and was trying to ask the teacher for help. I had questions on it, just general questions about it. When I went up to ask this teacher for help she told me that she didn't want to hear anything I had to say because she thought it was going to be some kind of excuse and it wasn't going to help my grade and she shut me down really quickly and sent me back to my seat. That upset me really bad, I mean this was in front of the whole class. I got up and left that day.

PR: Any other experiences you've had besides that?

HD: My first quarter I had a class that we had four different teachers throughout that whole quarter and it was...we couldn't learn anything. The first teacher, he was a good teacher then he ended up switching with a different teacher, and that teacher just came in and just did not care about the class, didn't care about teaching us what we needed to learn or anything. Then he left in the middle of the quarter, just up and left and we ended up with another teacher who...Oh, we had the dean who came in for like two weeks and sat in with the class. And the last teacher we had, had no idea what was going on in the class because it was so late in the quarter. We never ended up doing anything. I ended up passing the class but I had no idea how I passed it because we never did anything in that class. When I went in to my second quarter and went in to that post requisite class after that, I was very nervous about failing that class because I had not learned anything.

PR: What did you past the class with?

HD: I think it was an A.

PR: But you don't really feel like it was deserved?

HD: No

PR: A positive experience...has there been any?

HD: Yes, actually I've had some teachers that have done really well teaching. Mr. Chappell was one of them. He was one of my favorite teachers. So is professor Williams, the math teacher.

PR: So what did they do that connected well with you?

HD: It was organized. I'm big about being organized with my work. If I can't sit and have everything laid out in an organized manner, where I can look at what we did that day, what notes we took that day, what homework we had, what we can use for the homework, then that helps me to be able to learn stuff better. I've had quite a few classes here that just were not organized. We would never know what we did that day or what the homework was or what so.

PR: Since you been here how many students would you say has quit?

HD: I've known at least four or five students that have quit. Not to mention students that I don't know that have quit.

PR: Why do you feel some students quit?

HD: Because it's just been a hectic experience. I know one of my friends Kyle quit. He was trying to work and go to school and he felt like he wasn't learning anything here and he was just wasting his money and time and so he ended up quitting.

PR: What practices at ITT have influenced your educational goals? Any?

HD: The internship program, the work study program here has helped me out a lot. The stuff that I felt like I missed here, I was able to gain that in my internship. So that has been really helpful.

PR: Describe for me Hailey what challenges have you had personally since you've been in school. Then I want you to tell me why you didn't quit.

HD: Well, I've had a pretty difficult childhood so school has always been really important to me. Going to college was always something that I told myself I was going to do it no matter what, just something that I have to do. When I first started here I was struggling with stuff going on with my dad and he was having a hard time keeping a job and keeping a place to live.

PR: Were you living with him?

HD: No, I wasn't but my little sister was and I'm very protective of her.

PR: So indirectly seeing your dad not having a job, seeing your little sister being affected, did it affect you and can you tell me a little more about that?

HD: There was a three or four month period where they were living at my dad's work. He was working at a steel fabrication shop and he did not have a place to live and so they lived there and that was really difficult for me. Recently I've been going through a good bit of stuff with my mother. She's a drug addict and she hasn't really been a huge part of my life in the last couple years but she recently decided she was going to move in with my grandmother and try to get clean. That lasted about two weeks and she has moved back in with the man who molested me as a child. So that's been a very difficult thing to deal with mentally. It was kind of iffy for a while and nobody believed me just because I was so young when it all came out.

PR: How old were you?

HD: I was eight.

PR: How long did it happen for?

HD: Two years. She didn't believe me for a really long time. That hurt but I guess it was something I could deal with and now he's admitted it and she's still with him and it's been a very difficult thing to deal with and continue to go to school and not show that on my face every day.

PR: Any other challenges?

HD: Just life stuff. Trying to get out on my own and I'm really fresh out of high school.

PR: Who are you living with right now?

HD: Right now, my boyfriend and his mother.

PR: How are things working out with you?

HD: They're really good. I think actually if it wasn't for my boyfriend and his mother I probably would not have graduated high school.

PR: With all that's been going on, are you going to quit?

HD: No

PR: Why not?

HD: Because I've grown up in a very poor life and I don't want to live like that for the rest of my life so no matter what happens here, I'm going to do what I have to do to get to the end.

PR: How would you describe hands on experience at ITT or the lack there of?

HD: I've not really had much hands on experience here. There's been a couple of times in the lab and one class last quarter we actually made Ethernet cables which was really fun but there's not been much hands on.

PR: Would it have been a better experience for you if you had more hands on?

HD: Yes! I'm a hands on person.

PR: Tell me about e-books, positive or negative experience and tell me why.

HD: I personally do not like the e-books because I like to have a book in my hand to read. I like to have something that I can...like at home, I don't like to have to sit at my computer and stare at the screen and have to read chapters upon chapters off of the computer screen that effects my eyes. As far as the e-books go I really would rather have a regular paper book.

PR: What about tutoring? Is it important, is it not important? Do you have tutoring at ITT?

HD: I do not have tutoring. I don't know about any tutoring here. I think I would have like to have it in the first quarter. I think as far as this quarter goes, things are going better now so I think I'm good on tutoring.

PR: ITT typically has smaller classrooms as opposed to larger classrooms at the university. How do you feel about the small classroom?

HD: I like it a lot better.

PR: What do you get out of it?

HD: You get more one on one with the teacher and better relationships with the students and use them as help so.

PR: What can improve here?

HD: Organization among the teachers, how they organize their classrooms and how they keep up with things and stuff like that.

PR: If you were to finish school today, what would be next for you?

HD: Hopefully a job at Google.

PR: How do you feel about school being from 6 to about 10, 11 o'clock in the evening?

HD: I like it because it gives me the opportunity to be able to work and still come to school. I don't like how some of the teachers like to try to push the time limits a little bit. One class, I was here until 11:30. It was late.

PR: Like going beyond the time and you don't like that?

HD: No, I don't like that. I like to sleep sometimes.

PR: What are your thoughts about ITT for the most part, you can transfer your credits to another ITT but not a lot of other institutions?

HD: In my second quarter I actually thought about transferring because things were so hectic here. The only place from what I found out that would accept my credits was DeVry and they're like 45 minutes away from my house. So it's a little difficult, it kind of reduces my options as far as going forward from here. So I don't really like that all that much. I plan on sticking it out. Hopefully it won't be a big deal.

PR: If you were to graduate today would you be prepared to work in your career field?

HD: No

PR: Why not?

HD: As far as the classes I've already had, I feel like I should know by now. I feel like I don't know them. I feel like compared to a student on the same level as me at a different college would probably know more about computers and networking than I do.

PR: Why do some students quit in your opinion?

HD: Just because of the lack of organization.

PR: What is the most important relationship in post-secondary education in your opinion? I'm going to give you four. I want you to tell me the first one that comes to your mind and why. Then we're going to talk about the other three in order of importance and you don't have to tell me why, you can if you want to though. The first one I'm going to give you is student to student, is that the most important relationship? Second, student to instructor, third, student to curriculum in what you're being taught, and finally, student to community, meaning the community here not the community outside of the school. Which one do you think is the most important?

HD: I think the student to curriculum.

PR: WHY?

HD: To be able to one like what you're going in to and two, you want to be able to understand what curriculum you're going after and where that can get you in the future.

PR: Secondly, which would be the next for you?

HD: I think student and teacher because I feel like if you don't have a good relationship with your teacher it's going to be even harder to learn, and I learned that from my second quarter with that teacher that was rude to me. It ruined my ability to have a decent rapport with her. It made it really hard for me to be able to sit in class and learn.

PR: The third for you?

HD: The third would be student to community because you want to be able to have a good community behind you.

PR: And the last student to student?

HD: Yes

PR: Do you have any other questions for me?

HD: No

0002

PR: Alright, today is November the 19th 2015, would you be so kind to state your name sir

WW:

PR: WW

WW: Yes

PR: Yes, so “W”, I’m going to ask you some questions. This is for, my doctoral research. We’re going to be talking about self-efficacy and its importance, and how it impacts student’s retention ok?

WW: Ok

PW: And uh, so we talked about the informed consent, you signed that. Um, so, what I want to explain first and foremost is that self-efficacy is the strength of your beliefs that gives you the strength to persevere through challenges, um when starting tasks. Also, it’s about a person how long will a person stick to something, that is supposed to be important to them without giving up, that make sense?

WW: Yes

PR: So “W” uh, let me see, so what I’m going to do now, I’m going to ask you a series of questions. It’s about 10 questions. What degree uh, are you pursuing?

WW: Electrical engineering.

PR: Ok, And uh what gave you the desire to pursue a degree in electrical engineering?

WW: Well, before I came here I was in the navy. I did eight years in the navy and while I was in the navy I was an interior communicational electrician so, I already have a background in it. Cause’ I know a lot of people that go to college and don’t really, have any background in what they’re studying and me having a background puts me kind of like a head up. Since I already know the basics, I’ve already had interviews for it and when I have job interviews, they’re like hey do you have a degree and they keep asking that. They see I have the experience with no degree so, I came up here to get the piece of paper.

PR: Ok, so you have a background already in electrical engineering?

WW: Yes

PR: Ok, how would you describe your educational experience thus far?

WW: Eh, Since I been here?

PR: Yes

WW: It’s been hit or miss cause’ when I first got here we were still getting issued books and we had a different curriculum than we do now. Because that how my first semester was. The second semester, or second quarter they introduced the new e-books with the online modules and when they introduced that, it seemed like the instructors especially the new instructors didn’t know which way to go. So we would go halfway through the quarter and they were basically just giving us stuff to do. They didn’t exactly know what to give us.

PR: So when you said they didn’t know which way to go, meaning they possibly did not understand it themselves?

WW: Yes

PR: Ok, which caused it harder for them to articulate it to you all?

WW: Yes, because beforehand we had units 1 through 11. We had a unit every week and certain assignments. But then we see the modules we're like well I thought the modules were for online students because they're the online modules. So they didn't know exactly....Cause' at first they were like are we giving them the old units or are we making them do the online modules? And that was what was confusing. And now it's pretty much all modules and to me those modules are geared for online students not being here on campus.

PR: So, has that posed an issue for you?

WW: Yes

PR: And tell me more about that, how has it?

WW: Well, especially when it comes to the electronic classes.

PR: Yes

WW: Cause' we have a lot of hands on labs. And on, in those hands on labs that are on, in those hands on labs that are on the online modules, it requires equipment that we do not have. And, we pretty much kind of have to figure it out ourselves. And going to a college to learn, it should not be figure it out yourself. We should be getting instruction. It seems like going to these online modules we no longer have instructors we have facilitators. Cause' in a lot of classes, here's your work, do it. And that's all they do, and that's not what I'm paying for. And that's how an online experience is but that shouldn't be how a classroom experience is.

PR: What has made you, ok, so, from the day you started until now, basically we talked about how it's been for you, but has it been frustrating for you?

WW: Yes

PR: Why didn't you give up?

WW: One of the big reasons is these credits really don't transfer to Atlanta college and I'm already half way through. So, a degree is better than no degree.

PR: What quarter are you in?

WW: This is my fifth quarter. Next quarter will be my last.

PR: Ok, ok, um, what practices at this institution has influenced your educational goals? Has there been any instructional practices, any activities that made you say, well you know what let me stick this out? Has anything influenced you in a positive way?

WW: Really, the friends I've made since I've been here. Has a lot to do with it. Because when we first started I basically found a couple of people that shared similar interests that were in it for the long hall. And that put forth the effort. And, by us having our little group, we were pushing each other through it.

PR: Ok, ok, so, what has been the most impactful experience that you've had, that allowed you to demonstrate self-efficacy?

WW: Hmmm, I guess really just taking charge because my experience in the military, it seems like every class when it has group activities, everyone picks me as the leader. So everyone looks up to me, so being that I can't really just say nah I don't want to do this. Cause' when you got people looking up to you, you can't say no, you can't have bad days, you just gotta tough it out.

PR: So what is that like for you being a leader here?

WW: I don't mind it.

PR: Ok, so describe challenges that you've had while pursuing your credentials, then tell me, no describe challenges that could have been personal, in your personal life, going to work, or whatever it could have been for you but still outside of here it could have been challenging but you still kept pressing forward.

WW: Um, my challenges were before I came here. Cause' right before I came here, cause' I started September of last year, September 2014. March of 2014 I got a bad stomach virus so I was out of work. Then my dad passed away in May. Then I got fired, at the beginning of June, so I was like all this bad stuff happening to me at once and I was like you know what, I gotta find something to do. And, cause even when I was at that job I kept interviewing for like electronic technician positions.

PR: What type of work were you doing?

WW: Just general warehouse work, cause' a paycheck is better than nothing. And so, I was like you know what, I've got this G.I. bill, let me go ahead and out it to use. So I was searching electrical engineering type things and I saw ITT, cause' I've heard of ITT before, but I never knew this campus existed because I live right off of Lee Road. So this campus was close, I was familiar with the area and it was practically, it had only been here for like a year that's why I didn't know about it. So, I was like you know what let me come up here, I did the little walk through and everything, everything looked pretty good, and I went ahead and signed, I was like well you know what. Cause' at the time the quarter had just started in June and the guy was like I can get you in now. I don't wanna jump in behind, already two weeks behind, that's not good. Plus, the way my sleep cycle was, me being unemployed, I was like you know what I gotta get my head straight before I actually start college, so that gave me a couple of months to get mentally prepared for it.

PR: So did things, you said there was a lot going on before you started school. Did those things work themselves out before you started, when you got here?

WW: I was still a little sick when I first started, but.

PR: How did you manage it?

WW: I just kept bringing my butt up here.

PR: So, outside of what you shared in reference to your educational experience, no other challenges beside that?

WW: Yea so far the educational experience has probably been the biggest challenge. Cause' it's been a couple of times like why am I even here, it's not, I'm not learning anything. I don't wanna just get a paper, a degree on paper with no knowledge.

PR: So on a scale from 1 to 10 how would you rate your knowledge in electrical engineering seeing that you got one more quarter to go?

WW: I'd say about a good 6 or a 7. Because when it comes to trouble shooting background that stuff I know. Like you put the equipment in my hand and I could figure it out. But having like the high end knowledge they expect you to have and a degree that...cause' you know there's a difference between actually working on something knowledge and book smart knowledge. To me I'm lacking in the book smart, which is the reason why I'm here, but I still know the hands on stuff. Cause' I already had a background in it. Now the students that are up here that had no background in it, I feel bad for them.

PR: So would you be prepared for a career opportunity when you graduate, if you were to graduate in another month or two?

WW: I would only because I have the background in it.

PR: But if you didn't, you'd be concerned?

WW: I would probably be, yes.

PR: What is the most important relationship in higher education in your opinion? Teacher to student? Student to community? Student to curriculum? Or student to student and tell me why?

WW: I'm thinking, cause' matter of fact that was one of the questions on the handout you gave me and I was debating about that for a while. And I'm thinking student to student. Only because of the whole networking aspect. Cause a lot of, especially at a college here, the students vary in age a lot because a traditional college everybody's usually 19, 20, 21. But at a college like this, you still have your guys right out of high school, then you have people like me that are in their 30's that already have work experience and you even have people older than that. So, being able to network with students, it's like you know, being able to keep in touch with them once they get out to see how they're doing. I know we got stuff like LinkedIn and stuff like that, that helps a lot too. But to me the student to student relationship is probably, cause' they're the ones that really, cause' every now and then you'll have a teacher that will try and motivate you, but to me, the students motivate each other kind of thing. Cause' they're...students are on the same playing field.

PR: So if the relationship between you and other students was not as strong, would you be at the level that you are now?

WW: Probably not, cause' just like I said when I first started I found our little group, and we been working together pretty much since I would say the second quarter. Cause' the first quarter of the classes were a little easier and you know. And then once we got to the second quarter, cause' I was always good at math, and when we had Dr. Pitts for math, like one of my friends Anthony for instance I'm going to school with, he sat on the other side of the classroom. He didn't really know what was going on, and he took the effort to come to me for help. And the way I am, I don't mind helping you but I'm not giving you any answers. I'll sit there and help you to learn it. And his grade went from 60's to an A. And ever since then we been helping each other out cause' like I'm bad at communications when it comes to like, well not communications but uh composition, when it comes to writing papers and stuff like that. I'm not good at that but he is. So where I help him out in math, he helps me out. So we're helping each other out which is always good to have.

PR: That is good. Describe the importance of teacher to student relationship in your opinion? Or instructor to student.

WW: Well with that, cause' some teachers they have their certain way of teaching and that's fine especially the teachers that have been doing this forever they have their set way, but not every student learns the same way. So we'll get in a class and like, it seems like some of the teachers like whoever the lowest person is, they try to bring it down to their level which is good and bad because to me in a college setting, if you're dumbing it down to like I'm in elementary school, I find that insulting. And, not all people do, some people are like hey if I learn it this way I learn it this way but trying to treat people like

kids is not the way to do it. Cause' when they get out in the real work, you're just hurting them. But you also don't want to have it too high where no one understands it. So finding that happy median, than you got the people that are book smart you can just sit there, hey read these chapters and then they'd know it. Then you got people like me, yea I can read it and kind of understand it but I gotta get my hands on it, which is the reason why I'm bad at composition cause' I can't really get my hands on. That's the way it is but that's why I'm good at the electrical stuff, the stuff I can actually get my hands on. Cause' that's how I learn. Not having the hands on aspect would hinder me a lot. That's the big reason why I chose here because of the hands on.

PR: So you're more of a practical learner?

WW: Yes

PR: How important is curriculum in education in your opinion?

WW: Well the curriculum is what your filed is based off of so it's got to be up to date. You have to have the right equipment. Having antiquated equipment to work on isn't helping us either. Cause' when they get out, cause' matter of fact that's one of the, getting the hands on here with the equipment we have here I'm not used to it. Cause' I've used oscilloscopes before. I've used high tech oscilloscopes before, but when I got to the oscilloscope here, I'm getting frustrated cause' I don't, cause' not all oscilloscopes are the same, they do the same thing but they're not the same. Just like multimeters aren't the same, you have that learning curve, and I guess what might have hindered me a little bit because I had an electronic background before, I had some transfer credits. So when most people start out with ACDC since I'm already familiar with it, that's one of my transfer credits. So not, I guess not starting in at the bottom, might have hindered me when it comes to learning the specific equipment here. But from what I was told by the people that went to ACDC, they really wasn't familiar with it either so. We were still on the same playing field, and they keep looking to me like well you've done this before. I was like yea but not with this equipment.

PR: Often times at ITT there have been like social gatherings, food or whatever have you. How important it is to build a community at your institution?

WW: To me it's great cause' you gotta...cause' like for the NSA guys for instance, they may not really mingle with the other degree people here, like the engineers or the drafters or whatever. So, getting everybody in one spot to mingle, to talk like hey this is what we're doing, oh this is what...cause' you can find out stuff you don't necessarily know and a lot of it, like especially with the NSA guys and the engineer guys, a lot of our stuff in kind of interchangeable. Like the way I've always looked at it, as an engineer, I could do your job but you can't necessarily do my job. So, being able to kind of cross communicate like that would end up helping both. Like I can learn something I didn't really know that could help me in my future, so getting everybody together to kind of mingle, on a kind of relax setting lets you open up more. Cause' usually when you're in the classroom, you're single minded, you're focused on learning. Then having little events like that to kind of bring everybody together you can relax a little bit.

PR: Do you have any questions for me?

WW: Not that I can think of right off hand.

PR: Sir, I appreciate the time that we shared together. I appreciate the interview. If I have any questions or follow up questions I'll let you know and also after I transcribe all the information that you've given, I will give you a copy of it to make sure you have articulated what I have typed. Is that fair enough?

Percy Reed/0003
November 20, 2015

PR: What degree are you pursuing?

JB: My Associates degree

PR: Associates degree in what?

JB: Computer Science

PR: And what gave you a desire to pursue a degree in computer science?

JB: Honestly it was more of a, I didn't do good in high school so I couldn't, I wasn't eligible for a 4 year college, so I told myself I'm not working right now and I just need to get a degree quick so I came to ITT Technical.

PR: Since you came to ITT Tech, what gave you the desire to say that "I can do this"?

JB: The first four quarters was kind of rough, you know, we didn't have a lot of hands on activities, and it was a lot of theory and I'm not really good with book stuff until I started working with the new SST Donna and she just, you know, changed everything. We started doing everything hands on, she took me under her wing, and that kind of made me say ok, we got someone at the school that actually is trying to show me what to do in the real world. So, that's what made me stick it out and want to finish.

PR: So, describe your educational experience to me Jarell.

JB: I always suffered with education because you know growing up I was born at 5 months, it was just a hard time, so I struggled with math, reading and situations like that. So it was kind of rough trying to get into the flow of college life, you know having four papers due at the same time, multiple classes a week and just, it was a big burden at first. I never had to deal with any of that. So, I felt overwhelmed. Honestly it was multiple times that I wanted to quit and just said, you know I can come back years later until I talked to other people, and they said, "Aye man don't give up because look at me, I'm forty something years old trying to go back to school. Knock it out while you're young".

So all the people behind me and just keep saying, keep going, just knock it out while you can. That's what really played a big role into it.

PR: So, from the day you started until now, what has it really been like for you as a student?

JB: Personally, it's been up and down roller coaster. You know, some days, some weeks I feel good about coming to class, I'm excited, and then other weeks I'm just like what's the point, you know it's just an Associate's degree. It's not like I'm guaranteed a job when I get out, and sometimes I do feel like I'm wasting my time because it's a lot of instances where it's just like I can be doing, I can go out there and get a full time job and make more money or go overseas and...it's an up and down situation but for the most part, I see the light at the end of the tunnel and with all of the people at this school backing me up, it's just, it's a little more way to stay then to leave.

PR: What are some of the challenges that you faced, that at one time made you feel, when you have that up and down battle, that I can't do this? What are some of the challenges that you face?

JB: Some of the challenges that I face is being raised with a single mother and two older sisters and a nephew now, it's like, ok now I need to be more, I need to stop going to school, and be more at home helping out. And sometimes you know personally that feels like, I'm just at school all day. My mom's by herself taking care of everyone in the house. It's just, I feel like I'm a burden sometimes. You know she cars me around and it just feels like it's not worth it, and then I just look back and say ok, I gotta graduate, I gotta get these jobs, I gotta make money, I gotta provide for my family. So, it's just a lot of that being the only male in the house.

PR: What has been the most impacting education experience you've had that have allowed you to show self-efficacy? And let me explain what self-efficacy is. It's a strength of your beliefs that gives you the strength to persevere through those challenges that you face when starting something that you want to complete even though at times you want to give up, but it's that inner strength that makes you feel like I can go on. So with that being said, what has been the most impacting educational experience that you've had that allowed you to demonstrate perseverance of self-efficacy?

JB: I would have to say when I first got here, it was, when I first made the director's list, I had a 4.0 gpa and I've never made an achievement that high in my life. I never made the dean's list, I graduated with a 1.84 in high school. So when I seen that, it hit me like, "Jarell, you can actually, you can actually do this, you can actually graduate

valedictorian, and you can actually graduate top of your class." And most of my doubts went away of me saying, "Ok maybe I'll pass this class with a D or, it just made it feel like I can do anything I can because with that one piece of paper, it was there right in front of me. All I could do was take it and keep going on the way I was going.

PR: So, you said you've dealt with some challenges. There have been people that have been in your corner, but why haven't you quit, and what quarter are you in?

JB: I seen a lot of people quit. I'm in my fifth quarter right now. I have two more quarters to go, and I've had a lot of friends that quit high school their senior year, senior, junior year, and I just look back and say, you did the hard part. You finished the freshman, sophomore year, your first two years. You got a couple more months to go, what's the point of quitting now? You basically could have just quit the freshman year and not did three more years of high school. And to quit when I first got here, when I did financial aid, and I was gonna have to pay back the student loans anyway, it's like, might as well get something out of it. Even if I don't get a job, at least I know, ok I gotta pay these loans back but I got something out of it.

PR: Which is what?

JB: The education, the training, the career in the end, the longshot, the money.

PR: Would you get a degree from it?

JB: Yes sir. And now I'm actually thinking about pursuing my bachelor's degree because of the training that I'm getting now. But it's, for me it feels like a coward way out to go so far in school and then just quit. And I'm not a coward at all and that's just what I feel I gotta finish.

PR: What is the most important relationship in post-secondary education in your opinion? Teacher to student? Student to community? Student to curriculum? Or student to student? And tell me why.

JB: I would say student to community. I would choose that because I've seen a lot of instances where college students, high school students have been so apart of their community, they go and participate with kids with needs, like disabilities. And when you see them, that can't go to college and get a degree and career because they're physical and mental state it's like, ok, I have the ability to do this. So, if you look at them and you get close by participating, it's like I have to do this for them. I don't want to just have all my talents and just throw them away because this person right here who wants, who really wants to actually do something with their life, they're not capable of doing it. So, I feel

like teacher to student is ok. Like certain people have teachers that make sure they stay in school, but at the end of the day that's not your...you have no debt to them.

PR: Let's look at it like this too. And we just talking about...and when we say student to community, talking about, this community. Like the community in campus, like activities, things that are fun. That and building a community in here. Or that student to teacher relationship, and you can still stick with student and community. I'm not telling you to change that, but I just want to make sure you understood that student to community means student to this community. Or student to the instructors here. Student to the curriculum that you're being taught here. That make sense? So what relationship is the most important while you're pursuing your education that's what I'm saying.

JB: It would still be student to community because being here for so long, everyone builds a bond. Everyone's brothers or sisters. You know, we have a person that is like a grandmother to a lot of people. It's just so close as a family. So you feel like, alright I'm the youngest of the family, I gotta finish. I gotta do this for my sister, I gotta do this for my brother and we been together so long, it's almost like a slap in the face if you don't finish. So it's just like that moral support, that bond that you have with someone. So you just want to do better for them.

PR: Would you be prepared for a career after you graduate here? If you were to graduate today?

JB: Of course

PR: Why do you feel that way?

JB: With the training that I've got at ITT Tech, from my SST, from my past director, from a lot of the staff, I feel like I'm adequate to handle the career, if I was to get the job today.

PR: What do you feel you need at this point to help you be successful?

JB: I feel like I've gotten enough training to...all I need is someone to offer me a job and say Jarell we need you to do this, and I would be able to knock it out.

PR: What's the most challenging situation, thing, you've had to overcome since you been in school?

JB: Probably being the youngest in the class. A lot of the ages are way older than me and coming straight out of high school, it's just sometimes, I feel like distant, out of my place. Like this is...just feels like I'm not supposed to be here at this time. So sometimes I get

down cause' it's like all these guys is 10, 15, 20 years older than me and I'm just you know a kid still. And that just makes when they're talking, they have more experience and knowledge than I do, it's sometimes, it's discouraging. But then I think to myself, we're in the same class, I'm making the same A's and B's they are, so what makes them better than me? So that's what makes me...is the hardest conflict, it's just a big age gap, but it's no difference really when you get down to the books.

PR: What do you do to keep you going?

JB: I just think of my career that I plan on doing. The money that I'm making...honestly, when you think of the money that you can make and is out there to make, that wipes out all doubts. Like when I graduate it's like, I can be eligible to make \$85k a year, 90 and year, 100 a year. So it just...if I can make that much money I can just, it's nothing worth giving up for.

PR: Why do you feel some students quit school Jarell?

JB: A lot of students quit school because it's a lot of instances. They don't have the support back home. They don't have the support in the classroom. They don't have the mentality of wanting to get better. Personally, I feel like...it's kind of a hard personal question. It's easy to quit school I feel, anybody can say I don't want to come back to school. I'm not a weak minded person. I'm very strong mentally, and that's why I haven't dropped out yet.

PR: Anything else you want to add? Sir this concludes this interview, and if you don't have no questions, this will end this session.

Percy Reed/0004

PR: Tell me what degree are you pursuing right now?

ZH: Right now I'm pursuing the Network Systems Administration Associate's.

PR: How long have you been in school?

ZH: I've been in school for three quarters.

PR: And you'll be going in to your fourth quarter...

ZH: This December.

PR: What gave you a desire to go in to Network Systems Administration?

ZH: I have a love for gaming software so this school kind of like fit in to where I'm trying to get to, kind of like a stepping stone. After getting my associate's here in the networking field and getting some more experience in doing that, I plan on taking what I've learned and going and working for a company I want to work for which is Bandai Namco America.

PR: Have you started investigating that company?

ZH: I've been investigating that company since I was 14 years old. Watched the stock a little bit. Definitely have seen how they've grown especially since they've joined with Nomico.

PR: Describe for me from when you started school here until now your educational journey for me, the good, the bad, and the ugly.

ZH: Well just my personal opinion as far as colleges go, core classes I can understand how those can be beneficial for students but then some of them I don't really see how they play a role in that educational program.

PR: What type of classes are your referring to that you feel that they did not play a role in your program?

ZH: Well my program being Network Systems Administration, I don't really feel like that American government really has anything to do with that. That's a course you know, everyone has to take in elementary, middle school to high school. Why should we then have to pay for it in college to get our degree? Things like that I don't really see the point in. I can totally understand having to take English classes, math classes because a lot of students may have been out of school for a long period of time, 10 plus years and need a refresher, but things like that I don't see my playing a role in finding a job.

PR: Were there any other courses you felt that were not needed?

ZH: There was a start off course, I can't remember the exact name, but Mrs. Swinney was doing that course. Basically it was a combination of a math course and an English course. It wasn't even a composition course. That's just more money out of the student's pockets they're going to have to worry about paying back. And a lot of that deters students to actually stay. I mean they're looking like I'm taking all these classes that I've taken in high school and I know it's not really going to have anything to do with the field I'm in but they're stacking a whole bunch of these classes that are basically the same thing on top of each other.

PR: Have you heard students actually share because of some courses that are not needed they decided not to stay. Tell me more about that.

ZH: I definitely heard complaints from the class that I came in with. Especially when they got done taking this class that was a combination of math and English and then the following quarter they had math and English. They were basically going over the exact same things and a little further in to it.

PR: Students dropped out?

ZH: Not that I know of. So far there's been four students that started with me that have dropped and that was after the second quarter.

PR: What practices at ITT has influenced your educational goals?

ZH: The professors are well educated in their field. A lot of people here have military background which is always beneficial. I would say the work study program. It's kind of what drew me to the school. Understanding that if you graduate with either a bachelor's or a master's that doesn't account to anything if you hadn't already had experience in the field while still in school.

PR: Are you doing the work study program right now through ITT and it's been a benefit to you?

ZH: Yes sir, tremendously. The client server course and the cabling class I've taken this past quarter, I've actually been learning hands on throughout the work study program at the location that I'm at.

PR: What are some of the personal challenges if any that you've had to deal with, overcome and still be in school since you've been here to show a level of self-efficacy and perseverance?

ZH: Same as everybody else, bills, family, making enough time to study, understanding material. It was a little bit of a switch going from maybe taking like a 3.5 hour course at a university to taking a 4.5 hour course at ITT, but it has been a challenge for me. It can get a little dull in class especially if there's not a lot of hands on things going on in the class and there's a lot of lecturing. I'm more of a hands on guy, I learn better when I actually get to mess around with things especially with the field that I'm going in to. There's going to be a lot of hands on. I'm going to have to troubleshoot things and I'm going to have to see if that work or if it didn't work if I have to try something else. And I don't really feel like we've had a lot of that here thus far.

PR: I want to talk about two things. I want to go back to the challenges and I want to talk more about the hands on in a moment. What has been the most wean thing that you've had to deal with and at times kind of made you feel like, I can't go to school, I need to stop, should I stop, should I go through with this? Have you had moments like that?

ZH: In the past I have but not here at ITT Tech. This is my first go around so, I've had to already establish what I'm here for prior to even coming to school. I have a good net, support outside of school, my family, friends, loved ones. Anything that might be lacking, they're helping me to make up for so that I can focus on school.

PR: You went to another school and did you stop?

ZH: Yes sir.

PR: What caused you to stop at that time?

ZH: The job that I was working was paying good enough with good benefits and the drive started to weigh me down. The school was actually out here in Douglasville but, my work was in the city so Atlanta traffic I'm looking at like 45 plus minutes one way. And if everybody is getting off work at the same time we might be sitting in traffic for an hour or so coming back. I really wasn't in the field that I needed to be in.

PR: I want you to talk to me about ITT. Supposedly it's a place that is hands on. If I heard you correctly, it doesn't seem like you were articulating you have gotten the hands on experience that you feel like you deserved or you needed?

ZH: Correct. So starting off a lot of the students including myself were basically told before we enrolled at the school it's going to be hands on. On top of that there's going to be a certification course to help us get a certification whether it be A+, C++, CISCO, anything like that nature. Once here though, we were then told that the course isn't like a thorough nitty gritty everything you need to know, it's like kind of just a breakdown of the basics that you need to know. But there's gonna have to be a lot of outside studying on that individual person to be ready to take the test. Now to me that tells me that well, I could have just did this myself. There's classes online that I can pay like \$157 to \$200 for and it's a thorough class of everything you need to know for the test and save hundreds of dollars versus coming here. That was something else that kind of enticed me to come

here. They're offering the students a chance to get a certification that is gonna definitely be beneficial coming out of school. Not only being able to do an intern while in school, getting certifications while in school, I mean you're gonna stand out on paper.

PR: Were you told you would receive certification here or you would be prepared for certification?

ZH: I was told that we would be prepared for certification and that we would be able to receive one while here.

PR: Let's say you finished school today. What's next for you?

ZH: After finishing school, the boss that I'm doing the work study program for right now, is actually been saving to bring someone on as an employee for himself for his business. That would be the work for him. Probably starting off around \$27,000 to \$37,000 which is not great but it's not bad considering majority of households are \$32,000 to \$35,000. And then after taking what I can learn from him and help him grow his company and teach someone else that can help him with his company, I can plan on taking that reference and going forward from there. Maybe to go work for a firm somewhere, maybe go back to a hospital and do some more work there. And then at that point once I've actually had everything established and I got a little bit of money flow coming in, I can actually start focusing on getting on with Bandai Namco. The American branch, it's very tedious. They're very slacks in a lot of areas and they kind of high roll over. I would like to get in there and try to fix that.

PR: Do you feel ITT has adequately prepared you to work in network systems?

ZH: Not yet.

PR: What do you feel like you need going forward?

ZH: I would say as far as the hands on goes, maybe if we went over the lesson, you know ok outside reading, which the eBooks is definitely another issue I wanted to talk about. But outside reading, then come to class, we can possibly do a slight review but I feel like it should be hands on over what we just read. Cause' I mean we've already read it, there's no point in us having to read it again when we get to the class. I rather us read at home then when we come to class and be like let's just do this. You already read what we're going to do, and then we'll have a quiz afterwards. Ok cool that's fine with me, that makes sense. But having to come in and actually go through slides that just summarized what I just read and maybe it's just hitting on the points that I need to read so I did all this extra reading, but you're just going to give me all the points that I need to read. It seems a little backwards to me.

PR: You were about to say something about eBooks. Tell me about the eBook experience. Tell me your honest opinion.

ZH: I've used eBooks once before at University of West Georgia for one course and that was a math course. For one course, yea it's ok, for every class that you have, it is definitely an issue because first not everybody has computers at home. Ok well, they're going to have to drive up here to use computers. Then there's the whole issue of the system itself. Some students aren't always able to get on to the eBooks and then when they need to get on there they can't get on there. And then when they can get on there they just try to read as much as possible and take notes but the notes that they're taking on there, like the highlight notes and everything are going to be saved to the eBook, to the

file. You still have to be online to see your notes unless you copy and paste over to a word document and save it that way on a thumb drive. And I was told that, and this was from the dean from the Kennesaw location because he was here the previous week, and he said that his students over there actually catch the books. So there's a way to catch the books so that you don't have to go online no more. It's saved to your laptop, the desktop, your tablet or whatever, it'll actually catch everything so you don't have to go online no more you can just read it like a regular book. No one here has been able to assist us in doing this.

PR: Catching the book.

ZH: Yes sir. That has been a very big issue for a lot of students cause that's all I hear them complain about during breaks is, "I need a hardback book, I'm used to having a hardback book I could open up and read. Looking at a screen all the time and having to scroll is straining on the eyes.

PR: So from your understanding, that if they catch the book, it'll be able to be downloaded on to like an iPad or whatever have you?

ZH: Right, so basically you're saving the information. You have it, and you can get to it at any time whether you're online or offline. There is a app for devices called bookshelf that allows you to actually sign in to get to the books, but I thought that was maybe a way to catch it that way but I still haven't figured it out. I click on one of the books, it looks like it's downloading one of the books, but then when I take it from online to offline, I can't even log in to the book shelf.

PR: Let's talk a little bit about smaller class setting as opposed to university. How does that fit in to your lifestyle, your education? You love it, you like it, dislike it? Tell me what are your thoughts?

ZH: I mean, it has its ups and downs. I would say the positive could be it's a smaller class so everyone can actually hear the professor speaking. If someone asks a question, chances are half of the class would want to ask that question than just waiting for that individual that always asks the questions. The bad side I've seen is there's not really a lot of one on one which you would expect from smaller classes. You can get a little bit of one on one times during breaks but if you hadn't eaten all day and then you come in to a class that starts at 6 and ends at 10:55 and your longest break is that first break, you're gonna go get something to eat. You'll try to talk to them at one of the other breaks if they're available and even then might not be able to answer your question right then. So I thought maybe like some tutoring classes would be beneficial for students. A sign in sheet to show how many people would actually show up to these tutoring courses. But then again you would have to get that approved with the professors to see if they would be available on days that they're not already scheduled to teach.

PR: What can improve at this institution in your opinion as a student?

ZH: Fixing the issue with the eBooks. More hands on experience and each of the individual fields that are offered here, it should be like the art class where they're always drawing everything in art class, everything like hands on. I feel like that should be the same way for electrical engineering and the NSA program. I mean we have tools here so why aren't we using them? Besides that, it's a friendly environment, I mean everybody's nice, everybody's genuine, but it's just slacking in some areas.

PR: School time is normally from 6 to 10 or 11:00 in the evening. What are your thoughts about that?

ZH: I've gotten adjusted to it.

PR: Tell me your thoughts about ITT, your credits are not normally going to be transferrable to other institutions outside of the ITT system, what are your thoughts about that?

ZH: A lot of technical schools are like that. Strayer University. You take what you can get. If transfers will come in to the school ok, if they won't go outside the school that just means that I need to either get my bachelors here or take my associate's and run with it and see what I can do with that. And if I need to go back to school elsewhere to further that education in that field, then I might have to retake the two years depending on how that school perceives my associate's degree. I'm really on the fence about it.

PR: Can you tell me some of the reasons you think some students really quit, that drop out from a program like this?

ZH: Money is always going to be number one, whether they have a job or someone that can support them, driving back and forth to school. After looking at how much they are starting to accumulate in student loans, what grants the school will allow students to bring in. Will any of their transfer credits come over to the school? Do they feel like they're learning what they need to know for their field they're going in to? Or do they feel like they can learn more outside of school than here?

PR: What relationship is the most important in post-secondary education in your opinion and tell me why. There are four I'm going to mention. First one, student to student, second, student to instructor, third, student to curriculum in which you're learning, the fourth, student to community whatever happens here at ITT Tech. What relationship is the most important to you and tell me why?

ZH: I believe that it is student to curriculum because at the end of the day it's like you're going for an interview every day when you come to school. When you get out there in the workforce and you're trying to get one of these "career jobs" you're going to have competition. To me, all of the students are competition. Not to say that I don't want them to do well as well, but if I have that mindset it's like a competition to me to do better in class and when I have that feeling of this other person is doing good in class too, they're doing the steps that you're supposed to take to have a career when they come out of school even with an associate's. It motivates me to want to do better as well. A little competition is always good and it's just kind of how life is.

PR: Second one to you in order of importance, what would be the second one to you?

ZH: The second one would be student to student. The competition then on top of that you want to help out your fellow man, fellow woman especially if you get to know people up here and you make friends. You know their life stories and stuff like that, you want to see them succeed in life as well. You help each other out. If you're trouble or an issue with a problem and the teacher might be busy.

PR: Last two, student to instructor or student to community in order of importance to you? The third one?

ZH: I would say student to community and I know that sounds weird that I'm putting student to teacher last but there's a reason for it. But student to community because what

we can give back to the community is also going to be beneficial for us. You gotta be able to help out in the community. What we learn here we should be able to take it and help someone else. I would say the work study program kind of falls in that.

PR: Zavier, what's the most important question on the survey that stood out for you and tell me why?

ZH: Question number 12, what do technical colleges need to implement in order to aide students successful completion of a certificate, diploma or a degree? I found that to be the most important because I can see a few things that would help benefit me and my fellow students and gathering a career after we graduate which would be starting tutoring groups. I actually attempted this last quarter and it didn't really pan out too well just because not a lot of people knew about it. We tried to spread the word for it and get a roster going. We had a president, a vice president to kind of like keep track of that and shoot emails out to everyone but after 3 weeks, it was down to like two or three people in there. We tried to start that for certification for A+. One of the professors was trying to help us with that. He was actually coming in and going over some of the questions that have been on previous A+ certifications, but they didn't assign him to a class on the day he normally did have class so he had to start doing that class and couldn't assist us. But yea having a tutoring group and a certification group I feel would benefit the students tremendous.

Percy Reed/0005
November 30, 2015

PR: Mr.0005, what degree are you pursuing?

LH: Drafting and Design

PR: Did not you complete another degree before this one?

LH: Yes sir, at here at ITT.

PR: What program was that for?

LH: Electrical engineering, I got the Associate's degree.

PR: Why did you pursue the electrical engineering degree?

LH: Two reasons, one reason I didn't want to break in to school while I was here and I wanted to get the bachelor's but they wouldn't start until March of 2016. And so, I was finishing up the quarter for electronics and I went in to the library to get something ran off. That was a God given presentation on drafting and design. I couldn't get my paper run off because I would interrupt his class. All of a sudden when I sat down, sparkles flew off and I said there's my opportunity. I don't want to break in school. Within two days I had enrolled.

PR: So you came here two years ago when you started, and that was electrical engineering. What kind of experience did you have the first time? What made you want to come back the first time and now made you want to come back the second time for another program?

LH: When I came out of high school, I went in to a course of radio and repair and I took a two and a half year course. Being a young fella and coming out of the country, I was in the city, there was some things that were going on in my life that I didn't appreciate. My grieving to my Uncle Sam. To me that was an opportunity to get away from that so I did that. I did that and went in to the military. I was in Vietnam a couple of times and then I got out and I decided I was going to go a little bit further in to the electronics field. You have to have a survival job or something like that and there was an opportunity for me to take a welding course. So I did and I completed it. After I completed it I wanted to take it to a higher level. I contacted my instructor from the school I finished with and he told me about aviation. I went in to aviation, which I had my A&P license. While I was there, there was a course in avionics and what I did was I took a couple of maintenance courses in helicopter and I did a little flying, piloting. I didn't get my license but I know how to fly. So I went in to avionics and I took two quarters of avionics, and I guess it wasn't as easy as I thought but still I wanted to complete it because I started in radio and field electronics.

PR: That was back then right?

LH: Yes

PR: What made you desire those two degrees?

LH: One led in to the other. Like I said, I had my mind set in electronics in getting my bachelor's. Then when I sat in that presentation, it wasn't three minutes and all of a sudden flares just went off.

PR: What is it that you like about ITT?

LH: It's kind of like family oriented and the instructors are very helpful. Somebody want to know something all you have to do is ask questions because if you don't know, you won't get no answers. I have yet to have someone refuse me when I have needed assistance.

PR: Describe your experience here at ITT, the positives and some of the challenges you've had at ITT.

LH: Well, being a senior citizen the challenge is getting started back in to school and being more familiar with the computer. As I go I'm still learning. There's lots of things I'm still learning. I like the idea that I am learning and it's a challenge.

PR: How comfortable are they in making you get to a place where as you are learning some of those things about the computers and electronics? How comfortable are you with the training that you're receiving?

LH: Very comfortable because I'm very familiar with my smartphone so I don't mind going in to something and figuring it out. I'm going in to another field and exploring. That's what it is with this computer.

PR: What are some educational practices at ITT makes it a good experience for you? What are some things that go on here that you said I'm glad I'm there because they do this and they do that and I'm glad I'm there? What is it for you?

LH: Well, my grandma. That was very good because as you go in life you have to be able to present yourself and your ideas and you have to do it in an orderly fashion and professionally. So as I've been here, communication skills and stuff that we was going through, which was very good, and some of the things that I found out, I used my

experience. My greatest challenge is being able to discipline myself because you have to study if you want to get something.

PR: What has been the most impacting educational experience that you've had that have allowed you to show self-efficacy or to persevere through challenges that you have had?

LH: My past cause' I'm a firm believer that if you start something you need to finish. Me I'm trying to shape up the past cause' I done started some things that I really wanted in my mind a completion.

PR: Were there times when you would not complete things when you were younger?

LH: There were many diversions but as I go, the idea of completion like in the military, the idea of completion is very important in being responsible and that's been my push. I have to be very careful cause' what you don't want to do is put too many things on your plate at one time that you can't do what you're supposed to do.

PR: So your push if I'm hearing you correctly things in your past that you did not finish but you're a man now so you're like I have to complete it now?

LH: Yes that's a fact.

PR: Quitting is not an option?

LH: That's correct.

PR: Describe any challenges that you have had in your personal life while you've been in school. Just maybe a few challenges that you've had that could have made you stop but you did not quit.

LH: The opposition in knowing what you have to do. You have to be a quick learner because the things that I didn't pick up in high school, I have to go and get it and figure it out and make it happen because that's the only way you gone have a good grades. It's always been good to me to take my challenge and understand that this is now and it's not like it was then when I was in a group or a community where most of the students were my age. I have some time in my experience I can help them and they have some things they can help me with. I make sure I befriend all my peers that's in class with me.

PR: What is the most important relationship you feel in higher education that is the most important in your opinion? I'm going to give you four. After I give you four I want you to tell me the most important and why. First is student to student relationship, student to instructor, student to curriculum, or student to community that it the community inside of the school not outside. What relationship you feel is the most important in higher education?

LH: I think the first one comes with the instructor. I'm a martial artist and a master in Kung Fu. Your focus is on the instructor cause' that's the one that's gonna really teach you.

PR: So your first one sounds like you chose student to instructor. How about student to student? What are your thoughts about that?

LH: That's part of your community. You have to have a good relationship with your community. You have to have a good relationship with your peers.

PR: Let's imagine you finished school now, what's next for Mr. Lawrence?

LH: The universe because I'm an adventurer. I want to be able to go anywhere on the planet and I can take my knowledge and what I learned from here and I can interject to any society I'm in to.

PR: ITT normally have smaller classes. How do you feel about that?

LH: That's fine with me, I don't have no problem because you get to know your people more. You create and good reap hole. You check with each other and compare and stuff like that.

PR: What can improve at this institution? What can we get better at?

LH: Yall put out a lot of stuff in a short period of time. I just say keep on doing what you're doing and perfect it as you go.

PR: School times are normally from 6 to 10 or 6 to 11 in the evening. What are your thoughts about that?

LH: I'm a night person, always have been. That's a good time for me. I have the day to do what I want. I just stay up and I sleep when I feel like it.

PR: How do you feel about ITT for the most part? Not able to transfer credits to most institutions outside of ITT system.

LH: Now that can create a problem because I see if you are part of the same institution, and same state, you should be able to go to another school. Because for myself there are two or three schools that are in Atlanta that are closer to me than out here. It just so happen that I came here first but the thought ran across my mind to maybe transfer to another school but at the same time I don't want to have a problem that's why I'm still here, all the credits that I have are here. I don't want to go through all that.

PR: Why do you think some students quit post-secondary education?

LH: Well, I can give you a number of reasons but a lot of them have jobs, a family and that's all part of responsibility. My thing is if you commit yourself to it, you have to commit yourself to it and you should probably already prior to coming to school, look at your whole situation and see if you had time to work, the family and study. You got to look at your program and your lifestyle.

PR: So you think people quit because they haven't learned how to manage those things?

LH: I think that's a good reason why they have.

PR: Mr. Hughes I thank you for your time. We're going to stop the recording now.

Percy Reed/0006

November 21, 2015

PR: What degree are you pursuing?

HG: NSA

PR: Which is what?

HG: Network Systems Administration

PR: What quarter are you in?

HG: I'm in my 6th quarter.

PR: And you're scheduled to graduate when?

HG: March 2016

PR: So, what gave you the desire Holli, to pursue a degree in Network Systems Administration?

HG: I was in the legal field, and there were always layoffs. I was always getting laid off from a job, so I decided to go into computers.

PR: Now when you say you were in the legal field, what exactly were you doing?

HG: Paralegal work

PR: How long did you do that for?

HG: 8 years

PR: When did you start pursuing your degree in Network Systems Administration?

HG: In 2014

PR: How would you describe your educational experience since you been at ITT? And that's from the day that you started up until now.

HG: The day that I started, it was a struggle. In the beginning, because I hadn't been in school for so long.

PR: How long has it been since you been in school before you started?

HG: Over 20 years.

PR: So, you would be considered a non-traditional student?

HG: Yes

PR: And what a non-traditional student is, is someone that did not go right after high school to get their degree or they started, then they stopped the program then they went back. Non-traditional students are also those that are working adults that work and come to school after years of not being in school as well. So, you hadn't been in school for 20 years, and now you're back in school. So take me through that. Describe that ride for me.

HG: Well in the beginning it was rough because, I think I had to work a little bit harder maybe than everyone else cause I didn't understand a lot, and the field was totally different. And also just the math part was just really really a struggle for me.

PR: What type of math were you taking?

HG: I was taking algebra and trig.

PR: I hadn't algebra and trigonometry since high school, so that would be a struggle for me right now. Was there ever a time when you started taking algebra and trigonometry that you doubted yourself?

HG: Yes, every day.

PR: And did you ever say I can't do this and I'm out of it? Did you ever make a comment like that to yourself?

HG: No

PR: Ok, so you knew you weren't going to quit?

HG: I knew I wasn't going to quit. I had a good instructor though. And he would talk to me anytime. I could call him on a Sunday during football and he would stop watching the falcons play and he'll help me with work. And he kept on telling me, "You'll be ok, you'll be ok".

PR: So that made a difference for you?

HG: It made a difference.

PR: Did you start catching on to algebra or trigonometry, or how did you feel?

HG: Nope, not until the very end. I went outside and got tutoring. I came for tutoring in school and still I just couldn't get it from my instructor. He was a good instructor but, I just couldn't get it so, I went to a tutoring. It's like a math camp for kids, and I learned.

PR: Now did you go to tutoring outside of ITT?

HG: Outside of ITT.

PR: Ok, did you have to pay for tutoring?

HG: I had to pay.

PR: So, why did you invest paying for tutoring for yourself?

HG: Because I wanted to get it.

PR: That makes a lot of sense, so I understand that part of the struggle. Now, take me another step further. So we have some academic challenges with math, anything else whether good, bad or ugly?

HG: Once again, in the beginning, I felt like I was already in and I don't know if it was just me or the school but, I felt like I wasn't learning what I came here for.

PR: So, when you got to a place when you were feeling that you weren't learning what you came here for, what was that like for you?

HG: It was frustrating.

PR: How did you handle that frustration?

HG: I talked to the dean. I told him, you know, how I felt but nothing ever changed. So, I just worked harder. I didn't know if it was just me not getting it, or if it was my instructors. I thought it was my instructors. But...so that just meant I came every day. I read, studied, learned, met people, asked for help. Some people helped me and a lot of people, they didn't know just like I didn't. So we were all in it together.

PR: So, academically, I'm hearing two things; math was a struggle, then there were some things you felt like you weren't getting it. You felt like you didn't know who it was, whether it was you or the instructor. You were frustrated. What did you do? Alright, you started connecting with other students, they weren't getting certain things, you weren't getting it, but you're still here. You didn't quit, so I don't want to put the horse before the car, but that's the early on stage right? You didn't stop.

HG: No, I didn't stop.

PR: Although you were frustrated, there were some things you weren't getting, you kept pursuing. What made you keep going forward even though you started connecting with other students, they weren't getting it, you weren't getting, you didn't quit. Tell me about that?

HG: I think I just wanted better quality of life so, I just worked harder. I just worked harder, and I did it on my own. And I felt like I was already in it and I didn't want to move around. I didn't want to go to another school. I just didn't have the patience to go through that all over again so, I just worked harder on my own.

PR: So, you worked harder, how did that get you through the frustration?

HG: Well actually I prayed. That's what got me through. That's it.

PR: Ok, you started praying?

HG: That's it.

PR: Did you get your breakthrough through praying?

HG: I did. I kept coming. I really didn't know. All I know is that I'm still here. So, prayer does work. I fuss and complain but then I was here another week. I fuss and complain, I was here another week. And now I'm almost done and so, prayer works.

PR: So now, what are some other challenges you faced while you've been in school. Whether it be academically, personal, environmental risk factors meaning external things, external from here. As a lady, what are some things you've dealt with outside of here? So you've dealt with some frustration academically, what about external from here and that could have come over to here?

HG: Maybe my living situation. I moved here and I moved here and stayed with a family member and things just weren't right.

PR: May I ask a question?

HG: Sure.

PR: You say you moved here. It makes me feel like you moved here from somewhere else.

HG: I did.

PR: Where did you move from?

HG: From Charlotte, North Carolina.

PR: So you moved from North Carolina. What year was that?

HG: 2014.

PR: How soon was it when you moved here that you enrolled in school?

HG: I moved here in May of 2014 and I started in June.

PR: So you were right on it? You knew you had to do something immediately?

HG: Well I couldn't find a job. Again wasn't able to find a job and the jobs that I did see, maybe it was pride, but they were like \$8 an hour, and I just felt like I was better than that. But at the same time I was getting unemployment so, I was ok.

PR: So getting unemployment, you moved here, a month later you starting school in June. Now, let's go back to you living with a family member, or family members.

HG: A family member.

PR: Ok, so tell me about that. Was that challenging for you?

HG: Yes

PR: Can you talk about the challenge?

HG: Sure. Well when I first came I thought about going back home to Ohio, that's where I'm from. And my cousin, you know told me, "Come here, you should come here, you can stay with me and you know I'll help you", but she really didn't. She has a small child and I'm good with kids, but I don't have any small kids. And I didn't want to be a babysitter. And I think they invited me so that I could help, and in the beginning I did; baths, feeding, but it was wearing me out cause' I don't have kids. I have grandkids, and I feel like if I wanted to play with somebody, I could play with my grandkids. So that was rough and then when I didn't want to do it anymore...

PR: So did you feel manipulated?

HG: Yes.

PR: And then when you didn't want to do it anymore, what happened?

HG: Things got rough.

PR: Meaning?

HG: I mean, just an attitude or just the way things were. When I said I was gonna go to school, they would always say things like, "Why would you do that, why you wanna go to school?" They have a master's degree, they went to school. So, I think, I don't know if it's jealousy. I feel like there's nothing to be jealous of. But, I had my kids at a young age, she's older and has a 5 year old.

PR: Meaning your daughter, or your cousin?

HG: My cousin. And I felt like she didn't want me to see me get it. You know I didn't do it in the beginning, she did. I had kids to raise. So now there's nobody but me and I've never met anybody that tries to discourage you from going to school.

PR: How did that impact your education? You're dealing with stuff in your environment and then you coming to school but you know you're dealing with that stuff and you got to go back home and finish dealing with it. How did that impact your education?

HG: I was always tired. Just tired. Just mentally tired. But I knew what I wanted, so I kept coming anyway.

PR: Did it get better, or has it gotten better?

HG: Actually no. I really didn't have anywhere to go. There was a neighbor. Then I moved in with a neighbor. So as far as that part is concerned yes, but we don't speak at all.

PR: You and the cousin don't speak?

HG: Me and the cousin don't speak.

PR: But you lived with a neighbor in her neighborhood? So tell me about that.

HG: Well she actually moved, so I don't know where she lives.

PR: The cousin? So the cousin moved out, you moved with a neighbor. How things are working out with you and the neighbor?

HG: They're good. They're supportive, as far as you know, finish school.

PR: So has it made the transition with you going there a bit easier for you?

HG: Somewhat, somewhat.

PR: On a scale from 1 to 10, what would it be when you say somewhat?

HG: I mean, it's better. I have more of a piece of mind, at the same time I guess I can say I'm grateful. Cause' I could always go home to Ohio. And my family wants me to go home, but a lot of things they don't know because I'm far away. Everybody will be worried. Sometimes I don't understand why I live the way I live instead of just going back but, my family is the type that everybody depends on me to make everybody else's life better. So that's probably a reason why I just won't go until I get myself together because I'm always putting everybody else's needs before mine. So, I mean it's better, because I do have a piece of mind. I mean I know I'm somewhere safe, but at the same time, I feel like I'm too old to be living like this. But I know it won't last forever.

PR: And when you say, living like this, you're there, you say somewhat, what is the challenge of being there and still coming to school?

HG: It's not my own place. We live different. Just different. As far as like housekeeping, things are just different. I mean everything is open. You know I can do what I want, but I kind of stay in my own little place. My own room. I try to stay out of the way but it's not like it's a problem, but I don't I'm a roommate type of person.

PR: Does that weigh on you when you come to school?

HG: It does.

PR: How does it weigh on you?

HG: I'm just tired. Maybe my mind is always going. I'm just tired.

PR: Tired emotionally, physically or both?

HG: Emotionally.

PR: What practices at ITT if any, has influenced your educational goals? What goes on here that makes you say, I got to keep pressing forward?

HG: I don't know. What goes on here that makes me...well actually, maybe it's some of the students, some of the younger students here.

PR: So you would say the relationship with students?

HG: Yes

PR: How does that impact you?

HG: There are a lot of younger students and I see them kind of playing around so, when I talk to them, I tell them you know, get it now. You're smart, you live with your mom, dad, you don't have any bills. Get it now, don't wait until you get older or my age and you then decide to try to get your life together. And when I finish I really don't wanna go into security or anything like that, I wanna open up my own school. So I wanna work with kids anyway.

PR: So you're saying you wanna have your own school? What type of school would that be?

HG: I want to open up a school for autistic children.

PR: What gives you the passion to want to work with autistic kids?

HG: I see them and they're really smart, but people think that they're crazy or not so smart but they're really intelligent. And I just think they need somebody, you know, that really cares, and understands and has the patience.

PR: What has been the most impacting, don't want to sound redundant, but the most impacting educational experience you have had, that have allowed you to show self-efficacy or perseverance? Since you been in school, what has been the most impacting thing that has happened that is educational driven, that has allowed you to show perseverance and self-efficacy, that, "I can't give up?"

HG: One of my instructors.

PR: Tell me about that.

HG: He cares and he showed that he cares.

PR: How did that person demonstrate that?

HG: Every time I would doubt myself, he would always say, you'll be ok. You gone get it. And, I didn't believe him. I just didn't believe him but, he never ever gave up on me, ever. He helped me as much as he could with whatever as far as with learning, or talking to me. Like he didn't know my issues, he didn't know how I was living, what was going on. But he didn't care. It's like he saw beyond that. He didn't care about the outside or whatever but he was always positive. Always, always positive.

PR: What is the most important relationship in an institution to you, meaning, and I want you to tell me why. Student to student relationship, student to instructor, the student to curriculum, or the student to community. And when I say student to community, meaning that educational community or the community that ITT has built in their community not external, but the community here. Student to student, that relationship has impacted you more, or student to instructor is most important. Student to community or student to curriculum? And tell me why?

HG: I think that has impacted me, I think student to student.

PR: Tell me why?

HG: I say that because I've met a lot of good people and a lot of us has the same stories. So, it's almost like we're a team. When somebody is falling off, we're there to encourage one another or help them, or I mean, that's what has impacted me the most, the student to student relationship. Cause' some of the instructors, they don't care. They're here just to

teach you and they really don't care if you get it or not. I mean, and they may act like it, but it's not sincere.

PR: So if relationships with you and the other students were not as strong would you still have been here?

HG: I would have, cause' I came for me. I didn't come to meet anybody, and I wasn't expecting to meet anybody. But I did.

PR: But it does help to have positive...whether that was good or not, you still would finish and get your credentials?

HG: I still would have finished it.

PR: Describe why it is so important for you to graduate and not quit.

HG: Because I want a better life.

Percy Reed/0007

November 24, 2015

PW: What degree are you pursuing at ITT?

MA: Associates in drafting and design

PW: What made you desire to pursue a degree in drafting and design?

MA: The place I work, they use it to, well they use drafting designers to create the machine that I work with. So, I thought it was interesting and I decided to go ahead and see what it was about.

PW: Now when you say you thought it was interesting and you wanted to see what it was about, tell me more about that.

MA: Watching the drafters create items, different parts of this machine, seeing the machine go from creation to actually being built. The whole thing just seemed interesting to me so I decided I wanted to see basically how they did it. Didn't really take into consideration how much drafting and designing is used in the world today as a whole. Not only for architectural but for creating simple things, templates for things that we use every day.

PW: What machines were they designing and building?

MA: I worked with Coca Cola freestyle.

PW: Ok, can you tell me more about that?

MA: Freestyle machine is the Coca Cola machine that you can select 120 or 130 different versions of coke and all coke products. It's basically instead of you going to a vendor and being able...you either want a coke, or a diet coke, cherry coke, sprite, Fanta. Most

machines are set up with those 8. Freestyle machine has all those in there with different variations. So, my favorite is the cherry vanilla coke, which you can't really find bottled anywhere. You can find a cherry coke, you can find a vanilla coke but you can't find a cherry vanilla coke. Freestyle machine allows me to do that. So, I can get a cherry vanilla coke and I can mix it with another flavor if I want to or I can make several flavors. So this particular machine allows you to come up with a whole bunch of varieties of coke products to put different spins on them.

PW: How does that relate to drafting and design that create an interest for you?

MA: The machine itself, what the guys do at my job, guys meaning men and women, the drafters, the cad designers do at my job is they design the actual machine. Outside the machine, inside the machine, everything to create the machine from bottom up so you have...tryna see how to say this. It can be something as big as the front panel including the logo, or something as small a screw. They create every part of that machine through cad design.

PW: When are you slated to graduate?

MA: June of 2016

PW: What quarter are you in?

MA: I'm not sure. I know I have 2 more quarters.

PW: You should at least be in your 4th or going into your 5th quarter. How would you describe your educational experience from the time you started until now?

MA: Only at ITT or as a whole?

PW: ITT. How would describe your educational experience, the road to where you are, the good the bad and the ugly?

MA: The good, I've learned a lot with what I joined ITT for as far as cad designing. I found that a lot of the things that I thought was simple was not as simple as I thought it was going to be but I have a better understanding of the software that we use. I have a better understanding of everything that goes in to the mindset of designing. I used to think that you can just draw a floor plan, make a couple of boxes, cut out a couple of windows, the doors and you good to go. Now I realize that there is more in to it. There's different layers. There are things that you have to take in to consideration of different elements such as green design and sustainability. What types of materials to be used on certain designs? Structural information, structural codes that are governed by not only the state you live in but the United States as a whole. And then as even as far as the world as a whole. Things to take in to consideration as far as weather elements that affects certain parts of the country, certain parts of the world when designing certain things. So, I've learned all that through ITT.

PW: So number one you've had a positive academic experience thus far?

MA: Yes

PW: Any other positives?

MA: The teachers that I've had to deal with. Douglasville is my second campus. But the teachers I've had to deal with are very helpful. One very in particular, she's no longer...I started off at Duluth. Ms. Sally is no longer with Duluth because of family situations but sometimes she was annoying because she went in to so much detail but in the end you'll appreciate why she went in to so much detail. When you taking classes late at night, you just ready to go home. And she would keep us there until the lesson was taught but in the end you appreciate why she went in to so much detail. Cause' it all made sense. She and the other instructors that I've had to deal with if I asked questions, they're able to help me figure out certain things. If I get stuck in certain places they're able to help me out. And I've even gone as far as emailing or texting teachers and they've returned with an answer to help me get through these assignments and get my projects done.

PR: So that was in Duluth or ITT?

MA: Both

PR: You started off at Duluth. How long were you there and why did you change from Duluth to Douglasville?

MA: I was there for I wanna say 3...I've only done 2 quarters in Douglasville. This is my 2nd quarter in Douglasville. And I changed locations because I moved. And Douglasville is closer to here and I was in Lithonia.

PR: I've heard a positive academic experience. Any other positives?

MA: The administrative staff have been very helpful as far as getting me the classes that I need. And giving me alternate opportunities such as not having to come in to the school 3 days a week and being able to take some classes online, the ones that I can. For instance, this upcoming semester, Ms. Tina at the Douglasville campus has actually referred me to the Kennesaw campus. So it will be the 3rd campus I'm going to for next semester because the classes that I need aren't going to be offered at the Douglasville campus next term. So instead of me getting pushed back next semester, she referred me to go over to the Kennesaw campus so I can make sure I stay on track.

PR: So how do you feel about that?

MA: I appreciate that. I hate the fact that Kennesaw is so far away, but I appreciate that that was an alternate. Would I have preferred to have stay at Douglasville? Yes. One thing that I'm not a fan of with ITT is the fact that we can't mix campuses. I understand that's the way the system...you guys have no control over it. But that's the way the system is set up. But if I could take one class in Douglasville and take one class in Kennesaw, would I have preferred to have done that? Definitely. But because you can't mix campuses, I don't even have the option to go to Douglasville for anything, I have to go to either Kennesaw or Douglasville.

PR: So with that transition, tell me what are some of the areas of growth? Things that may have happened to notice we can approve upon? Things that have not been such a positive experience for you?

MA: Things that have not been such a positive experience are the students. I feel like the instructors... I don't know if they're not giving the opportunity to take control of their classroom but I feel like it's a trend that I've seen with instructors, not only here but also in Duluth. Not only in Douglasville but also in Duluth where you have disruptive students that are affecting my learning. Instead of the professor taking control of the environment they just continue to talk. In a university setting, a lot of times you have bigger classrooms, bigger classes and that can't happen. And you have some professors that just don't think they should put themselves into any harm's way to try and take control of the classroom. But you also have that option of moving around. With ITT the classes are smaller so there isn't a lot of places you can move around to, but it is very disruptive when these students have conversations, listen to cell phones and... I mean I've gone through music blasting in the classroom. And this is both in the Douglasville and Duluth campus. Students watching videos on their cell phones and showing it to each other. Conversation being had, faculty members coming in to interrupt the class, joking and playing around with the students. Students having different visitors whether they're a faculty member or other students. It's just... it's irritating because when the teacher is sitting there trying to go over the lesson and I'm trying to listen, that's distracting to hear you have a side bar conversation. And then when it's time for us to go, now you have a million questions. Well if you had of listened to the lesson in the first place you may not have so many questions. So that I would say is the worst that I've had to deal with ITT Tech.

PR: Anything else?

MA: No, I can't really complain about anything else. Everything else I signed up for. I know that the classes are 6 to 10, 25 to 30.

PR: How do you feel about the time of school?

MA: It's beneficial for me because I go to work. It's tiring and it's a sacrifice that I have to make. I knew that going in. That I can deal with because I signed up for it. I don't have an issue with it, because in the long run it is beneficial for me.

PR: So you spoke about students being disruptive. Is it with the talking, cell phones, that being an issue, but also teachers not being able to cater that and bring that to a halt?

MA: Right. I'm wondering is that do they? Because it's frustrating to sit there and I'm looking at the teacher like I know you hear them. I've been told over on the Duluth campus by one of the instructors over there attendance is everything and keeping the students happy is everything so sometimes we look past those things and that's frustrating. But, I'm not an instructor, a professor or a faculty member at the school so I

have no problems telling a person to reel it in. But at the same time I shouldn't have to be the one to do that.

PR: So what practices at the institution have been very positive for you? What practices have influenced your educational goals?

MA: Can you give me an example?

PR: What are some things you happen to notice that really work well for you that the institution does, whether it be instructors, whether it be management, administration. What have you noticed you say they need to keep this, they need to take this out? What are some of those practices? I don't want to give you no example, because I don't want to skew your thoughts, but is there anything you say I like that they do this?

MA: It's the instructors that are there for you to guide you through. The fact that they offer tutoring is also very beneficial. The fact that you can use the classroom even when you're not...it's not a class day for you. There are labs available for you to go in and use the computers. Those things are things that I think ITT goes above and beyond on. I would say though, I'm sorry that I have to follow that by a negative, but the software that we use, they need to fix it. Because I mean, we'll be in classroom and all of a sudden auto cad just kicks out and we lose all of our work. Or there are sometimes that you can't even log in and it's coming up with license issues. You try to log in three or four times and it's not working and then we're switching from one computer to another computer and you run in to the same problem, then all of a sudden it wants to work. The software needs to be fixed.

PR: What has been the most impacting educational experience that you've had that have allowed you to demonstrate self-efficacy or perseverance? When I speak about self-efficacy not that you don't know what it means, but it's talking about if there have been any...then we're going to talk about challenges, but the strength of your beliefs that have caused you not to quit.

MA: Are you talking about ITT or just overall?

PR: Overall now, that impacts your educational experience.

MA: My mom. My mother has been a huge influence in our life as far as education is concerned. My culture pushes on education and she has been the cheerleader for education since I was in elementary school, since I came to the United States and I started school here. Education has always been the number one push forward. My mom has four kids and three and a half of us are college graduates. The half, he is a technical institute graduate and matter of fact he does graphic design. But the other three of us are university graduates and two of us have master's degrees. She's just always pushed the issue of education, education, education. My mom has demonstrated to us what education can do for us. Listening to those things that she said, it's just never been a doubt that you're going to go for higher education. And in the long run I see how it's been beneficial.

You know at first when she's saying it you're like yea yea yea, but in the end then you see ok, it's definitely a beneficial thing.

PR: Let's talk about external risk factors, or environmental risk factors. What challenges if any have you had since you been in school for the last four or five quarters, that could have been a part of your own personal life? Has there been any challenges you've ever had that has been part of your own personal life and you still had to go forth in your educational life and not quit? Have you had any personal challenges that have gone on to school but you know what you were dealing with, but you still said I can't quit. Can you talk about that?

MA: I've served twenty years in the army so I've had challenges of deployments, change of duty assignments. The army has this thing called the ACAD program, which says that any schools that are on military campuses, your credit hours will roll over to the next school. You know how you go from one school to another and they won't accept all your credits for whatever reason? We won't get in to that about ITT, but ok. But the ACAD program, they roll over your credit hours from one school to another. Now it's not as simple as I said it, you know because there are some classes that are not accepted to meet the requirements but from school to school. But they are least accepted as electives. In some cases you will have to take over but a lot less than doing it out of the ACAD program, let me put it that way. So, with that being said, you go from one duty assignment to another and my degree was in education. Now a lot of the degrees on military campuses are behind. Business, criminal justice, logistics...my degree is education. A lot of times I been sent to do the assignments, where there is a college or university in the area and they colleges and universities on base, on post sorry, but they don't offer the classes needed for an education degree. So that's the biggest challenge that I've had to deal with. Having to leave one university and go to another university that don't offer my program. Then in the middle of a class semester, or class semester I know is coming up, and I'm gonna get deployed alright. And I might be deployed anywhere from six months to a year to over. Alright, so then I'm missing out on all that class time because I'm deployed. That's another issue. And then having kids is another issue to deal with. Taking classes and making sure I have someone to watch them and so on and so forth. I've gone as far as taking my kids with me to class. So those are some of the challenges I've run in to as far as continuing to go. Not to mention working a full day I mean cause' with the company I work with now, I work pretty much 8 hours a day roughly give or take. With the military, you're working way more than that, and then you're going to class on top of it. So those are challenges you have to deal with.

PR: I have to ask you, how do you feel or what are your thoughts in reference to ITT credits not being transferrable to other institutions?

MA: That part I didn't know. I didn't know about ITT's credits not being transferred to other institutions. What I had an issue with, with ITT and credits is the catalog system doesn't say anything about how many classes are required to be on ITT campus. Some colleges and universities you go to it says on there, we accept transfer students but we'll only accept these amount of credit hours. Couldn't find that in ITT's catalog anywhere. I

came to ITT with an associate's degree, a bachelor's degree and two master's degree, and I was still required to take core classes, and I'm saying to myself, and I'm not downgrading ITT in any way, but I have two masters degrees and you're telling me that between two masters, a bachelors and associates I'm still missing my composition, my physics, my statistics and my economics?

PR: Were those classes you've taken at some other school?

MA: Of course. Those are core classes in any degree program that you have and they were not transferable to ITT and I'm sitting here like ok. I've been to several universities between my military career having to transfer from one to another. And ITT would not take these classes.

PR: Thoughts about that?

MA: I believe it's a money issue. ITT needs to be funded. They accepted to pacify me, they accepted my English one, my math one, and I think it was my language one, but the other classes that my...like I said my English two, my math two, my physics, my economics. I mean I could have been done with this program a long time ago if they would have accepted that, those things. And even though it is Uncle Sam's money paying for these classes, I could use that fund to maybe even look at a bachelor's degree with ITT as opposed to an associates because they didn't accept those classes I can't. To me I just didn't think it was right but, like I said, bit the bullet and kept it moving.

PR: What is the most important relationship in a post-secondary institution in your opinion? Imma give you four choices, but I'd like for you to tell me why. Number one, the student to student relationship? The student to instructor relationship? The student to curriculum meaning, what is the curriculum, how it's designed, how it's being taught. Or finally, the student to community meaning the institutional community. Not external to the institution. What do you feel is the most important relationship?

MA: The student to instructor because you can always refer back to the instructor after you graduate. You're not expected to know everything. But you have a reference point to go back to bounce things off of. You can talk to an instructor let's say for instance that you graduate from ITT and you're given an opportunity to work for an organization and they want you to do a task and you're stuck. You can go back to the teacher and say you know hey can you help me out. I'm sorry Google only takes you but so far. Reading a book only takes you so far. A lot of these applications sometimes there are things that the book doesn't even cover. So you can back and say hey I'm trying to do this and it's not working for me. Have you ever run in to this problem and can you guide me how to get passed it? Number one...number two, and I tell my daughter this all the time, the person that's going to write your letter of recommendation, your first letter of recommendation most likely is going to be your professor because you've had that relationship with them for the past four years or so. They're the ones that know your study habits, how dedicated you are, whether or not you'd be a good fit for this particular program. So I believe that the student teacher relationship is the most important of all of them.

PR: What are your thoughts about smaller classes as opposed to an institution that have larger classes?

MA: I prefer smaller classes. Like I said, I've been through several types of learning; online learning, in classroom learning... Smaller group classes versus big auditorium type university classes, I prefer the smaller group because when you run in to a problem, again, that teacher is there. I believe...my degree is in education, so I believe a teacher must teach. A part of teaching is being able to answer questions being asked. Not to just read off of what the curriculum says or what the lesson plan tells you to read off but to be able to go in to detail on the lesson and be able to address any questions that are being asked. So when you're in a smaller setting, things especially with in a technical school, there's a lot of hands on application right. The smaller setting is a lot better for me because if I run in to a problem I can ask that teacher could you help me out, can you explain to me...don't do it for me, but explain to me how to fix this issue.

PR: In order of importance, student to instructor is the most important. Now, you don't have to explain the others in reference to in relative terms of why they're important but in order. Student to instructor, what would be the second important to you?

MA: Student to curriculum.

PR: And then after student to curriculum which one?

MA: Community.

PR: And then finally student to student...thank you. If you were to finish school today, what would be next for you?

MA: My mom asked me not to take any more classes.

PR: Your mom said not to take any more classes but what would you do?

MA: Probably find something else to take classes in.

PR: So you would go back to school again?

MA: Probably so.

PR: School time is from 6 to 10, sometimes 6 to 11. How do you feel about that? What are your thoughts?

MA: Like I said I signed up for it. I don't have a problem with it. Would I prefer to be in my bed, yes. The fact that I have a 30 minute drive from Douglasville versus an hour and 20 minute drive from Kennesaw which is coming up next semester in the winter, not too keen on that. But I have no choice in the matter because...well I do have a choice cause' it's either don't take next semester or make that sacrifice. So I'm gonna do what I have to do to make sure that I don't fall behind, but we know that Georgia's not the best on ice, in the roads. I'm just gonna have to take my time coming back from Kennesaw.

PR: I had given you an interview questionnaire survey. Out of the questions that are here, what stood out for you most in relative to your education? Is there anything that stood out for you that really made you think and thought that was a good question and that you'd like to elaborate on and talk about a little bit?

MA: I guess number 13. It says in general opinion, what are your reasons why some students have not completed certificate or diploma degree program? The quality of a student today, compared to the quality of a student when I was growing up, compared to the quality of a student when my mom was growing up, and so on and so forth, has diminished tremendously in the United States in my opinion. Kids are eager to quit nowadays because they...I'm sorry but my generation has failed the next generation in enforcing how important education is. We raise our kids to be more like the Jones. To strive for monetary things, I believe that our kid's values are lacking. So therefore when it comes to sticking through anything, a lot of our kids are just too easy to give up.

PR: Any final comments that you would like to add?

MA: Can't think of anything.

PR: Well if you do think of any well you let me know. This concludes our interview for this time.

Percy Reed/0008
November 23, 2015

PR: What degree are you pursuing?

AF: I am pursuing a degree in drafting and design.

PR: What made you go into drafting and design?

AF: As a little girl, I've always loved to draw. I've always been good with my hands. I just love to just build things. It's just exciting to be able to look at something and say I did that.

PR: So you draw very well, what are some of the things you draw?

AF: I'm really good with bubble letters. I want to be a graphic designer. That is one of my goals in the future. I'm really good with graphics, I can draw things from like an art scenery. Let's say a vase and some fruit and stuff like that, I'm really good with everything with that.

PR: What is it that you want to do once you finish your degree?

AF: Once I finish my degree, I'm hoping to get a job in my field where I can get extra training and learn more about drafting and design and all that it entails. As I get older, maybe, I'm 21 now, so maybe once 25 hits I can go back to school and get my bachelors for graphic design.

PR: What quarter are you in?

AF: 7th

PR: You're in the 7th quarter. So you are about to graduate in December?

AF: Yes sir December 16th.

PR: Are you excited?

AF: I am

PR: Does it seem like it's been a long road for you?

AF: It has been a long road. It has been, but it's been worth it.

PR: Have you been interviewing with companies?

AF: Yes, I've had about 3 interviews since I've been here.

PR: So how is it working out for you?

AF: It's going well, it's going well. I had an interview last week, and it was with a company called Miller Zell. They're a retail design firm and they were looking for a junior auto cad drafter, so I'll be hearing something before this week is out.

PR: So you feel optimistic, that you're gonna get hired?

AF: I do.

PR: Congratulations.

AF: Thank you

PR: So Autumn, how would you describe your educational experience for the last, almost 19 months that you've been at ITT? From the day you started until now, how has it been for you?

AF: I think it's been...it's been a challenge and it's also been hands on. The hands on part was ok. The challenge was me focusing on the math. Throughout this 22 months I believe it's been, the math course was the one that kind of scared me the most because I hadn't really been good with math throughout my schooling, so that was what kind of drove me away from it a little bit. But hey, gotta get it done and that's what I want to do so, it's gonna be a challenge but I gotta do it.

PR: So math has been the most challenging part of your career?

AF: That's it.

PR: So with that being said, let's go back a little bit. Have there been any other personal challenges since you've been in school that you've had to overcome?

AF: Being able to I guess, adapt to change.

PR: Ok tell me about that.

AF: I think once you get kind of set in your ways or this is what you want to do, this is it, you kind of become like in a box. And you have to know how to get out of that box in order to succeed. So it's like, me not being good at math, I had to take a step forward and try to learn it, try to get good at it in order to succeed at drafting and design cause' that's a big part of the field.

PR: So math was a big part of it?

AF: Mm hmmm

PR: So what the other greatest challenge in math for you?

AF: I'd say the fractions, cause in drafting and design we deal with a lot of dimension. And the dimensions are fractions. You have to know...ok let's say this...with this being right here (referencing a paper) if half of this is supposed to be cut off, if I leave this here, it's not right.

PR: So now, you spoke about change, how about change of instructors, people coming and going. Were there any challenges in that way that you kind of had to overcome?

AF: Yes, because we did have a lot of instructors that would come, be there one week, and the next they weren't even there anymore. So it was like you had to get used to different people coming in. And once you've already been learning from this one person, it was kind of hard to jump over here and take whatever somebody else is giving you. Each person teaches differently. And you learn from a person differently, so it was a bit of a struggle there cause' it's like ok this teacher keeps leaving, and then when this person comes in are we gonna be given the same work that this other teacher brought in or, you know.

PR: How did you manage that as a young lady seeing the different changes with instructors?

AF: I just kept a track and log of everything that I had done before the new instructor came in. I always keep copies of everything that I do so that if something were to come up, here's what I've done, this is it and there you go.

PR: What practices at ITT has influenced your educational goals? What are some things that have happened here that were positive that made you say, “I can do this, I can make this happen”?

AF: When I first started, Ms. Marian Bentford was awesome. That’s who brought me in and before I came here, I had just graduated high school in 2013 and I was originally gonna go to Savannah State University. Well, I love...I am African American and I do love us but I wanted diversity. I didn’t wanna just be around one group of people. I wanted to be around many people cause’ you learn from everybody. Different people have different things to offer you.

PR: On that note let me just tear off of that if you don’t mind. You were going to Savannah State. Did you enroll?

AF: I had enrolled but I didn’t start.

PR: So there was not enough diversity for you?

AF: It wasn’t. There was not enough diversity and a month before I got ready to go down there I talked to my advisor and she had completely forgotten who I was. We talked and she was like, well what’s your major again? I told her cause’ I was pursuing graphic design. She said well we don’t have that major but I can put you in to some classes. I was like oh no mam’! I don’t want to spend all this money and just be put somewhere.

PR: And that’s at Savannah State?

AF: Mmm hmmm And so this one I said, nope and had to refigure out everything and what I was gonna do and that’s when I saw ITT. And I came and Ms. Bentford introduced me to drafting and design and there it was. And that’s when I was kind of skeptical because of oohhh math is involved and blah blah blah, I had to get used to it.

PR: And so your experience working with your representative Ms. Bentford sounded like it was a positive.

AF: It was.

PR: What has been the most impacting educational experience you have had that have allowed you to demonstrate self-efficacy. And let me break self-efficacy down. Self-efficacy is the strength of your own personal beliefs that gives you the ability to persevere through challenges, through obstacles. It causes you to stick to something that you started. So, my question is, what has been the most...describe the challenges that you had to pursue in your credentials and why didn’t you quit?

AF: Going back to math again, that was the biggest challenge for me. I was like, oh my gosh these numbers, am I gonna get it? I need this in order to succeed in this field. There were a lot of numbers. I need to buckle down, I had to study a lot, I had to write down

everything that I needed to know. It was just I had a tutor with teachers. Whatever I had to do to get it, that's what I was gonna do. I wasn't gonna quit, that wasn't an option for me. Quitting was not an option.

PR: Why not?

AF: Because, my parents have done everything for me and my sister and my family. Put me through school. I'm not gonna quit. Not for them and not for me.

PR: So quitting is not an option.

AF: Not an option.

PR: No matter how hard math was?

AF: No matter how hard it was.

PR: How does your parents feel about you soon to graduate in December?

AF: They are very pleased and excited and proud.

PR: Autumn, what is the most important relationship to you in post-secondary education in your opinion and I'm gonna describe four. One is student to community. Student to community not external of ITT but within ITT, that community. Is that the most important one? Secondly, student to instructor or student to student? Or student to curriculum, meaning what is being taught? If you need me to go back over them again I will, if you don't say you don't and you can tell me, just take a moment to think about what relationship is the most important to you?

AF: I think student to instructor is the most important because with them teaching and you learning, asking questions is very important. If you don't understand something, you don't know always ask and they're there to help you. So I feel like that's the most important. And second to that I would say student to community. I was thinking when I read that, I was thinking community as far as outside of ITT, but now that you clarified inside, it is important to have relationship with everybody because you never know who you may need. You never know, people can help you. Networking is key so...

PR: So let's look at those two. Student to instructor. Has there been an instructor that impacted you educationally that you can remember, you don't have to say their name. But if they have, what did they do that really stuck out for you?

AF: My sustainability and design teacher. She taught us, she said, "Learn as much as you can, while you can, as fast as you can. Learning isn't limited. Knowledge is power, but you gotta get it". And within that class we had to do a big project incorporating ITT and Georgia Highlands. Now, that was a lot. We were just...that was probably my 6th quarter and that was one of the biggest things I had done so far since I had been here. So that

alone kind of helped me to see, ok, this is what you're gonna be doing in the field. You're gonna have to work with a lot of people. You're gonna have things thrown at you that you gotta be able to pick up and go.

PR: When you think about student to community how has that impacted you?

AF: That's been awesome. The career service advisor, the recruitment people, everybody just there. Even the librarian. They're here to help. They've been a big part of me succeeding and getting where I am.

PR: I happen to know you seem to be very positive every single day that you're in school. What causes you to be so positive about your experience?

AF: God.

PR: Tell me more about that? You can be completely transparent.

AF: I'm just blessed. I'm really blessed.

PR: That seem like that's very personal to you. And if you don't mind, tell me when you say God, and how blessed he has made your life, what impacts you right in this moment when you think about the Lord in your life?

AF: My family. They sacrificed so much and I just want to make them proud as well as myself so...

PR: Ok, but I'm still going to ask you, when you say God, you're not going to be ashamed. And I know you're not. How has He played a part in your experience?

AF: Cause' even before, I think, everything happens for a reason, and because I'm so young, there's still a lot that I still have to learn and know. But, I feel like me being here was his way of showing me like, different paths, you're gonna fall, you're not gonna be...everything is not gonna be straight, straight, straight, straight, gonna get it. You're gonna be having some bumps in the road and things that may not work out at first but in the end you'll be ok.

PR: And has he taken you through that? Do you feel that God has given you the strength to make it?

AF: I think so. I think so because I wouldn't be here if it wasn't for Him.

PR: If you were to graduate today, would you be prepared for you career move?

AF: I would.

PR: Why would you be?

AF: I'd be prepared because I feel like I have learned a lot. I'm steadfast, and I'm gonna do what I have to do to make it. So with everyone that's helped me, after everything I've learned, I can only go up from here. I'm pretty sure they'll be other trials and tribulations but you gotta keep it moving. You can't just fall or crumble. It's a harsh world so you gotta be able to take a couple punches and keep on going.

PR: If you would finish school today, what would be next for Autumn?

AF: Working in my field, and going back to school to get my bachelors.

PR: What makes you happy about education?

AF: Learning. I love to learn and I feel like growth is unlimited. You always grow, you always learn.

PR: What was it that stuck out most for you on the survey questions? Can you think of anything that stuck out for you?

AF: What do you consider educational success...

PR: Ok, and why did that stick out for you?

AF: Because I feel like, people often limit themselves. And like me, may be kind of scared of the things that come their way. But nobody can stop you. You are your biggest critic I feel like and matter of fact that was number 15, what can you foresee standing in your way of educational attainment. And I said, if I did not have to strive to succeed, the only thing standing in my way would be me. Meaning, if I didn't get up every day and come up here and go to school, and be up here early working on projects and everything, I would be the only one standing in my way. Nobody else.

PR: Often times I see you here early in the morning and you have school at night. What causes you to come in the morning and you normally have class until about 11:00 at night. Tell me about that.

AF: I gotta get it done. I gotta get it done.

PR: But you come in so early and your class start at 6:00 and you're here sometimes until 11:00 right?

AF: For a while I was in an internship and I was coming up here working as an auto cad drafter and that was like a 6 week training. So me coming and doing all that was a part of me succeeding, was a part of me getting to where I wanted, to graduation and furthering that.

PR: That's almost 13 to 14 hours a day.

AF: That's fine with me.

PR: So you would do all that just to succeed? So you would do that all over again?

AF: I would do it all over again.

PR: Do you have any questions for me?

AF: No

PR: Well Autumn this concludes our interview, thank you so muc

Percy Reed/0009
December 3, 2015

PR: What degree are you pursuing?

SG: Network Systems Administration

PR: Where are you pursuing it?

SG: At ITT Tech

PR: What gave you the desire to pursue post-secondary education, and a degree in Network Systems Administration?

SG: I wanted to better my life. I wanted to pursue my education. To do something with myself, I wasn't doing anything.

PR: Describe for me what has been your experience in career training since you've been at ITT. I want to know from the day you started up until now, what has it been like?

SG: It's been good. I love it here actually.

PR: What do you love?

SG: I love the staff, I love the teachers, the students. It's kind of not big so everybody kind of knows everybody.

PR: So you like the smaller setting?

SG: Yes

PR: How do you feel about how smaller classroom settings as opposed to larger college or a university that has bigger classes and more students?

SG: You get more one on one kind of time with the teachers. It's more focused, it's not a lot of distractions in the class.

PR: How would you describe your educational experience from just some of the things you may have found to be positive and some things you found that may have not been so positive? What are the most positive things for you and what are some of the challenges educationally you have found, if there be any?

SG: I don't know.

PR: What are some personal challenges you've faced since you've been in school if any and why did you not quit?

SG: I've had a few deaths in my family. I've had financial issues, family issues.

PR: When you say deaths, can I take it one by one?

SG: Sure

PR: So who has passed or transitioned in your family that you had to deal with or external of your family?

SG: My aunt and I recently I just had a cousin and two close friends.

PR: How difficult was that one for you and which was the most difficult?

SG: It was pretty difficult.

PR: Is it difficult for you to talk about it? Would you like for me to stop talking about it?

SG: Yes

PR: Tell me about some financial difficulties you've had but still had to persevere that showed a level of self-efficacy and you didn't quit.

SG: I was in between jobs then I financed a car. The payments and the insurance just dug deep in my pockets but it was better than paying gas money every day to get back and forth to work and school.

PR: Are you working?

SG: I am.

PR: What type of work are you doing?

SG: I'm actually federal work study at ITT.

PR: How has that helped you out financially?

SG: It hasn't really yet.

PR: You have a car note? So how is that working out with the income you have coming in?

SG: It's working out. They're nice so they work with me.

PR: Then finally you say you have some family issues, can you talk about that?

SG: Yea I can. Stability, going through some things with my mom. She recently got in to some trouble so she's probably going to be gone for a little while. That was really my biggest supporter besides my brother who also comes here. Just dealing with that.

PR: Just so I have a full understanding, when you say stability. Are you saying stability or a level of instability?

SG: Instability.

PR: Instability in what way?

SG: I'm currently living at my moms and I don't like it there.

PR: What's been the hardest thing for you being there and what don't you really like?

SG: My biological grandfather lives there and he's a registered sex offender and he's just racist and I just don't like him.

PR: Him being a registered sex offender, do you feel any level of uncomfortableness for yourself?

SG: I used to.

PR: Did he hurt someone, a female, young lady, young boy?

SG: A young lady.

PR: What has gotten you to a level of being a bit more comfortable around him?

SG: He went to prison then he had a stroke. He's really messed up. He doesn't speak very well. He has a home nurse that comes at 9 in the morning until in the afternoon. So she's

there during the day except for the weekends. I just really stay away from there to deal with it.

PR: So you try to stay away from home as much as possible?

SG: Yea

PR: Then you mentioned your mom. What has happened with your mom because you said she was your biggest supporter?

SG: She's about to go to prison.

PR: How hard is that to think about her going to prison?

SG: The whole thing, just everything. I don't want her to go to prison. She's not a bad person she just has bad habits.

PR: How close are you all?

SG: Well me and my mom's relationship have been on and off. We've been rocky really. We bump heads a lot. I'm very close with my brother.

PR: How supportive is your brother?

SG: Very supportive. That's my rock.

PR: What practices at ITT institution has influenced your educational goals? What do they do really well that has really made you say this is my safe haven, this is where I want to be, what is it here?

SG: It's really just the whole environment that make you feel really welcome.

PR: What has been the most impacting experience that you've had that have caused you to show self-efficacy that has caused you to really persevere? What had been the greatest thing or greatest challenge that you could have faced that at one time you could have said I want to quit but you didn't?

SG: It was just recently I had a class the teacher wasn't very organized or it just didn't really and couldn't catch my full attention in the class.

PR: You say the instructor wasn't organized. Was it because the instructor wasn't organized you couldn't learn from her. Or what was it about the person's style, what was the challenge?

SG: I couldn't really learn from her.

PR: What was it that she didn't do that you feel like you needed?

SG: She didn't take the time with the students who help them understand what she was trying to teach. And what she was teaching, she didn't even understand, that's what she was telling us. She actually had another career so I felt like she was more focused on that then here at the school.

PR: Did it affect your grades at all and in what manner?

SG: I failed her class.

PR: How did that make you feel?

SG: Bad.

PR: If you could have changed anything about that situation with that instructor what would it have been? What would have made it more better for you?

SG: I'm not sure. A different instructor.

PR: What is the most important relationship in post-secondary education in your opinion, I'm going to give you four and I want you to think about what I share with you, and I want you to share what is the most important relationship and why. Then after that I'll ask you another follow up question on what is the second one make sense? The first one is student to student, second one is student to instructor, third, student to curriculum in that which you are learning, and the final one is student to community. Not external to this community within ITT. Which one would you say is the most important relationship in your opinion and why?

SG: It would have to be student to instructor because when you have a relationship with an instructor it's easy for you to pass that class or talk to that person. Obviously they're experienced in what they're doing. I guess it would make you want to come to school more.

PR: That's it? What's the second most important relationship to you?

SG: Student to community because for me when I come to school, and I like said it's a small school and everybody knows you, it just makes you feel good.

PR: Third, in your opinion?

SG: Student to curriculum because you want to know what you're learning and that's going to be your career. That's your future. The last one student to student because you

know you can have study group, things like that to help you with your homework, if you don't have anybody at home.

PR: How important is tutoring in your opinion?

SG: I haven't had tutoring myself but it's important if you're having trouble with a course and you want to pass.

PR: What are your thoughts about Ebooks?

SG: The Ebooks personally I like it because you don't have to carry around big heavy books. You can just go to the computer and they're right there. You can even look them up on your phone.

PR: If you were to finish school today, would you feel like you are adequately prepared to go and work in your career?

SG: NO.

PR: What more do you feel like you would need?

SG: I need more hands on.

PR: What can improve at this institution?

SG: Keeping the same staff. I don't know right off.

PR: There seem like there was some reluctance in you sharing that, can you tell me why?

SG: I've seen a few of the teachers leave and those were probably the most important people to the students. A lot of the students looked up to them.

PR: How do you feel and what are your thoughts about the school time, 6 to 10, 6 to 11 in the evening. What are your thoughts about that?

SG: It works for me. At first I didn't too much like it because I think they should offer morning classes because you know a lot of the students have kids and 10, 11:00 is a little late. They need to go home and cook dinner.

PR: What are your thoughts about ITT credits not transferring to most institutions?

SG: I think they should because if somebody wants to go to a different school and they want to move, I think they should transfer their credits.

PR: Why in your opinion do you feel that some students quit post-secondary education or even quit this particular institution?

SG: I feel like because maybe they don't have the time to study the curriculum so they fail classes, they miss days. These are grown people so life happens. Maybe they missed a few times and they'll get dropped. Or they just don't like it I guess. They thought they wanted to pursue it and they didn't.

PR: Will you quit?

SG: I won't.

PR: Why not?

SG: Because I don't quit things I start and this is very important to me.

PR: Why is it so important for you not to quit?

SG: It's important for me because just to show...I dropped out of high school. My family really didn't think that I would ever go back to school to pursue my education but I've always wanted to so it's really for me though not for them.

PR: You said this is more for you. Why now can't you quit? What is it about you that you have to make it happen?

SG: Because I just want that seal of accomplishment. I want that feeling when I walk across the stage and knowing that I've done something. I have skills that I can show off.

PR: Who do you want to show it off to?

SG: Everybody.

PR: Is there anything you want to conclude?

SG: I love ITT.

PR: Thank you and this concludes our time.

Percy Reed/0010

PR: When did you graduate?

MA: I'm still in ITT until September.

PR: What quarter are you in?

MA: I'm in my fifth quarter.

PR: What degree are you pursuing?

MA: An Associates in electrical engineering.

PR: What gave you the desire to pursue a degree in electrical engineering?

MA: My main focus is, I want to own my own Motorcycle Company and doing that you need project development.

PR: What gave you interest in owning a motorcycle company?

MA: I've been riding since I was 14. Before I came to ITT Tech, I worked for motorcycle mechanics. That's what my current job is, I build motorcycles.

PR: Who are you doing that for?

MA: I work for Event Cycles in Mableton, GA.

PR: How would you describe your educational experience at ITT from the day you started until now?

MA: In the first semester I thought it was a joke. The classes that you start off with are basic general classes which is offset because I've been to prior colleges before. It was also a hindrance because there were a lot of credits I had that didn't transfer into this. So I was like, should I do it, should I not do it, should I go to a better school type or deal just trying to figure out what's going to go on, how I was going to proceed from here.

PR: How did you feel about for the most part classes not being able to transfer to ITT?

MA: That was the worst part. Taking psych 1, psych 2, accounting 1, accounting 2, even government classes and you just sit there like, those are hard classes. Other schools are going to want them so they count towards a degree here.

PR: Knowing that they were not able to transfer were kind of disappointing sounds like.

MA: Yea, it was disappointing but now they're starting to fix their credentials and more schools are starting to accept it. So I'll get the education I want, I can have a temporary job, and I'm able to still work and go to school at the same time. I have to support my daughter as well.

PR: Tell me a little bit about the good, the bad and the ugly.

MA: The good is it is a hands on school. The bad is a lot of the instructors aren't hands on. They're more book knowledge but when it comes to hands on, I know that I'm more hands on than some of our instructors.

PR: You saying they're hands on but like the hands on, tell me about that.

MA: They want us to be hands on, we have all the equipment we need. Most of the teachers know how to use the equipment, but haven't done it in so long that during the physical experiments, and all of the labs and projects that we do, some of our teachers have a hard time comprehending that.

PR: So they have a hard time comprehending the equipment that's there?

MA: Right. And actually doing the experiment because they haven't done it in forever. To me, with me building motorcycles I do a lot of electrical on a daily basis and I literally saw a state device class, was the only person in class that could do every single lab and showed everybody how to do a lab. Even showed my instructor how to do a lab.

PR: If you were not already building motorcycles, and doing that type of work, you don't think that you would be prepared for a job?

MA: I do not. Cause' how stuff is put together, if I didn't have the knowledge beforehand, I wouldn't have been able to catch on and been able to grasp what was supposed to happen.

PR: What practices at ITT has influenced your educational goals if any?

MA: Actually nothing at ITT tech has influenced how I feel about my education.

PR: How do you feel about that?

MA: It's ups and down. We're in a time and age where right now we don't have a blue collar work force. Therefore if people wanted to they can find jobs doing whatever they want and I'm not going to school for a job, I'm going to school for my education so I know what I need to make myself better and accomplish the goals that I set for myself.

PR: If you were finished today, what would be your next move?

MA: I would be going to Georgia tech and starting on my mechanical degree.

PR: What made you want to pursue a mechanical engineering degree?

MA: As far as what I want to do because I want to own my own motorcycle company and not just own a motorcycle shop, I need to know every aspects of the engineering when it comes to designing the bike, designing the engine, designing the electrical panels, how I want everything set up in the fuel mapping and everything. That's why I need both, the mechanical knowledge which I already have, and the mechanical engineering.

PR: So you beyond just working on them now, you want to build them from scratch?

MA: Right. I want to build them from scratch.

PR: What's your time frame to make that happen Marcus, what are you giving yourself?

MA: I'm actually giving myself until I'm 35. I'm supposed to be starting up my company this year. I already have the capital for it.

PR: So you said until you're 35 how old are you now?

MA: I'm 26 years old now.

PR: You have the money right now?

MA: I have the money to start, it's a performance enhancement company and I'll be strictly doing performance enhancement on motorcycles in a mobile truck going to different race events and biker events. It's going to be before the end of May when the truck is ready.

PR: Describe to me the challenges you have faced while pursuing your credentials and then tell me why did you not give up?

MA: While I was in school, I went through a period while I was homeless, carless, jobless, didn't have any money to send my daughter, didn't have any way for me to get back and forth to where I was going, was sleeping outside for a minute, was in the gym everyday so I could take a shower. Had a membership at the gym I paid for so I would walk there so I could take a shower then walked to school.

PR: How long did that period last for?

MA: It was about 4 months.

PR: How did you weather that?

MA: It was hard, but it was more of I know where I want to go and I know what I want to do. My self-esteem took a major hit and my dad would call it being as part of depression. I'd be lacking some motivation.

PR: What caused you to persevere through homelessness, not being able to send your daughter money and how were you able to keep it all together?

MA: Actually when my daughter's mother called me and was like hey we don't have any diapers. I just knew I had to press through because I knew I needed to support my daughter. I wasn't raised like that so I wasn't going to let my daughter be raised that way.

PR: How did you turn it around?

MA: Luckily it was by the grace of God cause' I had been applying for jobs and stuff. I was getting told I'm over qualified and that was as far as motorcycle positions. There were baseline positions but I wasn't taking it being stubborn because I was like, hey I already have the credentials, you guys are going to get x amount more dollars just because I already have the credentials. Some of the credentials I have for a motorcycle shop, they actually get paid more and cheaper rates on the product.

PR: How did you survive with no money coming in? How did you take care of yourself?

MA: I was doing odd jobs even to raking people's yards. Anything that I could possibly do I was doing so I could have an income. When I did get a job, I was literally walking from Chapel Hill road to Mableton parkway. It's about 11 miles and for about 3 weeks. 11 miles one way.

PR: When you walked back where did you go?

MA: When I got a job, my friend let me stay with him so I was bouncing from friend's houses. Even during that it was tough here and there but I had to make it work.

PR: Have you taken off a semester to be in Pennsylvania?

MA: I did. I took off this last semester to be in Pennsylvania. That was because when my nephew died it was at the end of the semester. Literally my sister just got out of rehab, my mother just got out of rehab being in and out for drugs.

PR: How difficult has that been for you?

MA: It's hard because I don't have any support when it comes to them and me being my mother's son and my sister being her younger brother, it feels like I have to support everybody. Luckily my aunt was up here and I had to come help them get everything situated.

PR: Then you had your nephew die. Tell me the story about that.

MA: My nephew was 18. He was following his girlfriend down the road and the cop came to pull him over. I guess he was in somebody else's car without a license and there was a gun in the car so he ran from the cops. It was not his gun, it was not his car, and he ran from the cops. He ended up running in to a bank and he passed away upon impact.

PR: When are you planning on coming back to Atlanta?

MA: January for the next semester. I already started doing some of my work online.

PR: Describe to me your experience with tutoring if you had to have any experience at ITT?

MA: I haven't had to have tutors at ITT but I have been tutoring people at ITT Tech.

PR: What has that been like for you?

MA: It first started in my third semester with Dr. Pitts. I already knew all the hard work, the physical aspects of making an electrical system so it was easy for me to show people how to do it. When it came to the calculations, I'm dyslexic and numbers come to me super easily.

PR: What's the challenge with you being dyslexic?

MA: Comp...English and writing. We'll have timed writings in class and literally it takes me probably twice as long to do them. I had comp two and I didn't have as much time as I needed to do the assignments before class so I tried to hurry up and do them in class. I was making simple mistakes and misspelling a lot of words.

PR: Educationally, has that been a challenge for you your whole life?

MA: My entire life and that's only because I won't accept any help when it comes to that. When I started high school I stopped doing simple things like going to classes.

PR: You've been like the model student at ITT. How have you accomplished that?

MA: Practice, persistence, self-motivation. When it comes to speaking in front of people, I literally go through and write out what I have to say beforehand even when it's simple.

PR: Is it difficult for you to hear the question or do you have to always write it out.

MA: It depends on the types of questions. I have no problem if it's something that I know off the top of my head. I have no problem being able to articulate it. If it's something in depth where I need exact answers, definitions for the answers, just to clarify for myself even if I do know it, I'll still write it out that way I know what it is.

PR: Describe your experience with e-books.

MA: E-books are the worst thing known to man. It's not like I can flip a page, have it out, highlight it myself and actually refer back to it at any given second. If I have a book I can mark a page, I can tag it up and do whatever I want to do so I know where stuff is in that book. When it comes to e-book you have to remember a page number, remember where its located and how to get to it. It's a longer process and I'm not a fan of it.

PR: What are your thoughts about smaller classrooms at ITT as compared to a university?

MA: I've been in both. The smaller classes, I don't have a problem with it unless it's like a comp class, and that's because even though it's smaller classes, people still are on the same learning experience. You have the people that know what's going on already to the people that have no idea and still have to figure everything out. So that gap between hey it's a smaller class, the teacher can be more in depth with you in how to figure stuff out and work really well because you still have the gap. But the teacher still have to work for the slowest person in the class to catch them up to speed with the other class.

PR: What would you prefer a larger or smaller setting?

MA: For me it does not matter.

PR: With ITT did you receive enough hands on experience up until this point or not and could it have been better?

MA: I have.

PR: What can improve at the institution in order to make it better?

MA: It would be the functions of the school period. Right now it seems like there's a lot of disconnect with what's going on or when it's happening, what's supposed to be done, what's the overall goal. We know we're all here to learn, to advance our education but ITT Tech is supposed to be more hands on and you see a lot of students not receiving instruction the way they're supposed to. There's a lot of change that happens on a daily basis. As far as instructors on how they run their classes, there's not a given aspect like hey at 6:00 we're coming to class, then lessons and right after lessons we're going straight in to lab. We don't get that opportunity. We'll get lessons and go in to lab but

when we go in, we go in half way. In lab it's more of the instructor trying to figure out what needs to happen. They're not prepared.

PR: If you were speaking to upper level management, how would you articulate the message that ITT needs to change this, this and that. How would you describe that point by point?

MA: ITT Tech needs to have instructors prepared to do the lessons for the day. They need to know what the lesson is before they come to class. They need to know what their experiments are before they come class. They need to know how implement their experiments in actually what's in the experiment. It is a hands on school and how are you going to be able to teach someone when you have to relearn it yourself?

PR: Thoughts about school being from 6 to 11:00?

MA: School being from 6 to 11:00 is fine because most of us that go to school do work. We have families, we have kids, and we have other stuff that we have to do. Being at a traditional school, most of them don't offer night classes. It eats up time you could be spending with your family but would you rather better yourself for your family.

PR: What are your thoughts about credits not being able to transfer to another institution for the most part?

MA: It's horrible. Credentials are a big thing. Some of the stuff that we're doing in ITT Tech is some of the stuff that I did at another university. I had one math class to transfer over.

PR: When you leave here and go to Georgia Tech, a lot of your credits may not be transferring over, what are your thoughts about that? Is it going to be like you're starting over?

MA: When I talked to an advisor at Georgia tech, they said when you finish a degree, whatever credentials you come in with, they might let my credits transfer over. If I don't complete a degree with ITT tech, none of my credits will transfer over.

PR: Why do you feel some students quit and have several quit since you been there?

MA: Students quit for a lot of reasons and several quit since I been there. I want to say it was a total of 67 students at orientation. I want to say now that there is probably about 28 of us that are still there.

PR: In your opinion, why do you feel like they quit?

MA: Some of the students that I still talk to, they quit because they couldn't transfer their classes. Some quit for hardship reasons, or they didn't have the motivation to make it work. I've seen students quit for financial reasons.

PR: Why didn't you quit?

MA: I didn't quit because I know where I want to be in life and I can't get there without an education. When it comes to education, my parents have always been behind me.

PR: What is the most important relationship in post-secondary education in your opinion; teacher to student, student to student, student to curriculum, and student to community?

MA: I would have to say student to curriculum. If you don't have a passion for what you're going to school for, how do you expect to have the motivation to succeed? How do you expect to see and put the effort in to what's going on? How do you expect to go through challenges if you don't have a passion for what you're learning?

PR: What would be the next one for you?

MA: Student to student because if you don't have the support of your fellow class mates, you're not going to be able to ask for support when you need it or they won't be able to ask for it when they need it. They might know something you don't know. To help you understand it, you might need a student to help you that you can talk to.

PR: The third relationship in your opinion?

MA: Student to community because the environment in which you go to school in is what helps you learn. That's actually pretty self-explanatory.

PR: The last one is student to instructor to you?

MA: Right. The student to instructor is not strong to me because the fact that they're there to teach. The teacher doesn't necessarily have to be your friend. You don't have to like the instructor. They're there to give you the information.

PR: What do you feel like you need for these last 2 quarters to be successful?

MA: I need time to be able to do all the work. When I get out of here I would like to retain all the information. It would help if we had more organization.

PR: That concludes this interview if you don't have any more questions for me.

Appendix J: Cover Letter

Percy W. Reed, M.Ed., M.A.

Date:

Dear Human Resources, This letter is to express my sincere interest in your organization. Based on my skills and qualifications, I am confident that I am a seasoned leader that can add value to the students you serve. Currently, I am working on a contract with [Tech College] as an Achievement Coach and Curriculum specialist. I currently coach instructors to work effectively with students, as well as well as empower students that live in urban communities to be successful. I have also started several ministries and led them successfully.

My resume highlights my ability, knowledge, and expertise in Admissions, Management, advising students, education management, treatment, assessments, clinical support and youth mentoring. During my time at Year Up, and other vocational institutions, I have successfully increased admissions productivity with demonstrated marketing techniques that are relatable to students increased enrollment by 70 % of original goals that were set.

In addition, I have effectively monitored budgets to ensure expenditures are within budgetary constraints. Therefore, I am extremely confident my organized approached to set priorities meet departmental deadlines and I am a highly effective leader. Consequently, I have been celebrated as a Director of Admissions, Director of Student Services at several post-secondary educational institutions. In addition, I have

utilized my motivational techniques and clinical background to leverage my relationships with student retention and success.

Moreover, I provide effective admissions and educational leadership, fluent writing manuals, hiring employees, as well as setting human resource policies and procedures in motion. Consequently, I am fluent in program management and program evaluation as I analyze statistics strategically through qualitative and quantitative data that produces effective outcomes. I am overwhelmed with excitement about a leadership role within your organization. My desire is to make your organization more fluent. I would appreciate the opportunity for your Human Resource department to review my qualifications in more detail and look forward to your call me at 404-908-6599.

Respectfully,

P. W. Reed, M.Ed., M.A.