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Faculty Roles in Student Retention at Historically Black Colleges and Universities

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Walden University

College of Education

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Dorothy Langley

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the review committee have been made.

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2017

Abstract

Faculty Roles in Student Retention at Historically Black Colleges and Universities

by

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MS, University of Texas, 2009

BS, University of Texas, 2008

BS, Texas College, 1986

Doctoral Study Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Education

Walden University

October 2017

Abstract

Implications for student dropouts include fewer career options and lower earning potential. The purpose of this study was to investigate faculty perceptions of their roles in the student retention process at a Historically Black College and University (HBCU) in the Southeast United States. Guiding the phenomenological study was Lewin's theory of change model. Data were collected using a questionnaire, interviews, and faculty-student intervention logs. The questionnaire was completed by 32 full-time faculty at the study site. Interviews with 5 participants were conducted after the completion of the questionnaire, and 5 participants provided information via a faculty-student intervention log about strategies used to retain students. Data were analyzed through coding of responses and recorded frequencies to identify themes. Participants reported that they should be involved in retention efforts, and primary retention efforts occurred through the student success program, the retention coordinator, first-year experience course, retention committee, and advising. Participants also reported that their role in student retention is as an advisor, and faculty engagement with students inside and outside of class improves student retention. A process change paper with recommendations for improving student retention was shared with the administration of the HBCU. Findings may be used by leadership at HBCUs to increase retention and graduation rates thereby allowing graduates to pursue careers and function effectively in society.

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Dedication

I would like to dedicate this journey to first and foremost, the Lord. God has been with me every step of the way. Dedication of love to my husband (Roger), daughter (Davina), and grandchildren (Nikayla and Josiah) who gave me support. To my family, church family, and friends, I dedicate this to you because you continued to encourage me to fulfill my dream.

Finally, to God be the glory!

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A special acknowledgement to Dr. Joseph Esin, Dr. Richmond Ibe, and Dr. Belinda Prihoda who encouraged me and provided scholarly advice and support. To my editor, Amy Gralewski, thank you. To my academic leaders, Dr. Lester Newman and Dr. Glenell Lee-Pruitt, thank you for your support. To my spiritual leader, Dr. David R. Houston, thank you. Special acknowledgment to Mr. James Atkinson for your continuous encouragement.

To the upmost, I acknowledge God, my Lord and Savior.

Jeremiah 29:11

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Section 1: The Problem

Because student retention is a problem for institutions of higher education (Tinto, 2010; Yook, 2012), most colleges and universities are engaged in efforts to curtail dropouts and improve graduation rates (ACT, Inc., 2010; Tinto, 2010). Strategies used across institutions include methods such as revising student orientation to incorporate sessions focused on retention and redesigning academic advising programs to help students plan their course load and persist in their programs of study. However, most colleges and universities have failed to reduce attrition (Coates, 2014; DeNicco, Harrington, & Fogg, 2015; Tinto, 2001; Tinto & Pusser, 2006), and dropout rates have remained mostly unchanged in recent years (Weissmann, 2014). The problem exists across all types of higher education institutions including community colleges (Hope, 2015) and Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs) (Powell & Rey, 2014).

Most institutional leaders acknowledge that implementing effective retention strategies will improve dropout rates on their campuses. They also recognize that to implement an effective and efficient plan of action for student retention, they must extend their efforts beyond the classroom to student services such as student orientation, advising, and tutoring (Tinto, 2001; Tinto & Pusser, 2006). Critical to the success of these institutions is support and participation from academic faculty and staff who first must be engaged in the process for programs to be successful (Cressy, 2011).

HBCUs often have retention rates far below the national average of 81% (Gasman, 2013). These institutions, which serve a unique population that is primarily low income, first generation, and Pell Grant eligible, enroll students who tend to be less

prepared for college based on scores from college entrance tests such as the ACT or SAT (Gasman, 2013). This population is more likely to face retention issues no matter the choice of school (Gasman, 2013). A local HBCU in the Southeast United States is one such HBCU with retention challenges. This institution, which is classified as open enrollment, serves a student population that is primarily low income, first generation, and Pell Grant eligible. The institution faces low student retention rates, especially from the first to second year.

Bain, Gandy, and Golightly (2012) found that effective participation and collaboration among faculty, staff, administrators, and students are needed for reducing attrition rates in colleges and universities. Furthermore, Bain et al. found that colleges and universities who engaged faculty and staff in their retention activities were more successful than those who did not. Moreover, student retention programs tend to fail without the active involvement of faculty, nonacademic staff, and students (ACT, Inc., 2010; Miller, 2007; Saret, 2009; Smith, 2003).

Of particular interest to educational researchers is the role that college faculty play in supporting student retention efforts on campuses. Evidence continues to mount suggesting faculty are critical to the success of college student retention programs and that programs without the active involvement of faculty members will not succeed (Campbell & Campbell, 1997; Williamson, Goosen, & Gonzalez, 2014). When it comes to students, faculty should not focus only on academics but also on nonacademic interactions with students that may help them persist in their studies (Saret, 2009). Miller (2007) and Smith (2003) suggested faculty play a major role in the character of the

learning environment and could have some influence on student retention by providing students with positive learning experiences.

Faculty members are busy individuals with full teaching and advising schedules (Russo-Gleicher, 2014). Asking them to engage in the student retention process within their routine and outside of it could be a challenge for institutions. Perhaps understanding how faculty feel they should support ongoing student retention efforts and what retention strategies faculty would likely adopt could help institutions of higher education gain insight into how to engage faculty in student retention initiatives.

In the current study, I investigated faculty perceptions of their roles and expectations in student retention. I focused on how faculty feel they should engage in the retention process and what institution-sponsored or self-adopted strategies they use or would use to help with student retention. Colleges and universities may use the results in formulating solutions to improve student retention through direct involvement by campus faculty.

Historically Black Colleges and Universities

Gasmin (2013), Funk (2008), and Henderson and Kritsonis (2007) noted that the existence of many HBCUs is threatened by continued student retention problems. According to Flowers, Scott, Riley, and Palmer (2015), a large segment of HBCUs is taking steps to implement campus-wide programs to reduce student attrition and that such initiatives are being coordinated to involve faculty, staff, and students. The assertion of Flowers et al. has been validated in many publications during the past 30 years (Ancis, Sedlacek, & Mohr, 2000; Astin, 1984, 1999). Toldson and Cooper (2014) conceded in the

U.S. Department of Education's Historically Black Colleges and Universities Data Dashboard, HBCU campuses must provide innovative ways to address student retention through academic and campus support strategies. Likewise, Townsend (2007) reported that faculty-student interactions are key components in improving student graduation rates. Flowers et al. (2015), Quarterman (2008), and Rendon, Jaloma, and Nora (2000) reported that the involvement of faculty can aid in improving student retention rates unique to HBCUs. Retention rates at HBCUs tend to be much lower because the population served tends to be low income, first generation, and Pell Grant eligible students who are less prepared for college as measured by college entrance exams (Gasman, 2013; Harrington, Lloyd, Smolinski, & Shahin, 2016).

Evidence of the Problem at Local Level

Student retention is a problem in many colleges and universities in the United States (Spittle, 2013; Tinto, 2010). The problem addressed in this study focused on the Southeast United States, where HBCUs struggle to improve student retention. *College Factual* reported that in comparison to the U.S. average of 73%, the study site college is currently below the national average, with a 55% retention rate. My study focused on an HBCU located in the Southeast United States, which had an average retention rate of approximately 56% between 2012 and 2015.

The targeted HBCU has a student population with the following characteristics: just under 1000 students enrolled, approximately 85% or more of the student population is African American, and 90% or more of the student population is Pell Grant eligible. This institution attributed the attrition problem to two factors: (a) recent human resources

changes on the campus that reduced the number of full-time faculty and increased the number of adjunct faculty and (b) lack of a comprehensive retention plan. To address the attrition problem on campus, administrators asked faculty during meetings prior to the fall 2012 semester to become more persistent and intentional in encouraging students to remain engaged in their studies and persist with their degree programs through graduation. Faculty response to these meetings was not measured via formal methods, and there was no follow-up. These meetings appear to have had minimal effect on retention, and retention has remained a problem over the last 5 years with retention rates averaging approximately 56%.

Evidence from Professional Literature

Evidence from professional literature published over the last 5 years supported faculty involvement in the retention process. Dwyer (2015), Gaytan (2015), and O’Keeffe (2013) have shown that faculty-student interactions beyond the classroom environment can enhance student persistence to graduation. Likewise, Cole and Griffin (2013); Cook-Salther, Bovill, and Felten (2014); and Romano and Connell (2015) found that institutions who consciously involve faculty in student retention efforts have seen retention improve. Nevertheless, little research has been conducted on faculty perceptions regarding engagement in student retention efforts. The current study was conducted to investigate faculty perceptions regarding their involvement in the student retention process so that colleges and universities can better understand how to involve faculty in student retention efforts.

Statement of the Problem

Student retention is a challenge for colleges and universities across the nation (Jackson, Stebleton, & Laanan, 2013). The student retention problem has implications for students such as limited career options, growing debt burdens, and lower earning potential, and implications for institutions who receive less capital to operate when fewer students are enrolled. Esin (2013), Kritsonis (2005), Peele (2010), and Quarterman (2008) suggested that the higher education student retention problem cannot be remedied without active, campus-wide involvement from faculty in student interactions beyond teaching. To be successful in recruiting faculty to engage in the retention process, colleges and universities must obtain endorsements and commitments from faculty. Faculty must be willing to expand faculty-student relationships to include the types of mentoring activity that keep students engaged and enrolled (Esin, 2013). Faculty must also engage in programs created by their institution (Kritsonis, 2005). The purpose of this study was to investigate faculty perceptions related to their involvement in student retention efforts. The goal was to study how faculty feel about their role in retention efforts within and outside of the classroom so that colleges and universities can formulate strategies that can be endorsed and adopted by their faculty.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to investigate local HBCU faculty perceptions of their role in student retention. The investigation concentrated on how faculty perceive their engagement in retention efforts and existing strategies they use, if any, to increase student persistence to graduation. The results of the study could be used by higher

education institutions in framing solutions to improve student retention that involve support from faculty.

Research Questions

The central question for this study was as follows: How do faculty perceive their role and responsibilities in student retention at the local HBCU? The subquestions for the study were as follows:

1. What are faculty perceptions regarding student retention efforts at the local HBCU?
2. What do faculty perceive their role in student retention should be?

Operational Definition of Terms

Historically Black Colleges and Universities: Institutions created primarily to educate minorities (Turner, 2015).

Perceived roles: The act of becoming aware of or achieving an understanding of a role or responsibility (McAllister, Kamdar, Morrison, & Turban, 2007).

Student retention: The percentage of students at an institution who persist in their studies from matriculation to graduation (Grantham, Robinson, & Chapman, 2015).

Review of Literature

The literature review consists of a thorough search of electronic databases in Walden University's library and Google Scholar. Some of the databases searched included EBSCO Information Services, Education Resources Information Center (ERIC), Educational Research Complete, and ProQuest. The following terms and phrases were searched either independently or in combination: *student retention, faculty and retention*

involvement, HBCUs and student completion rates, college retention strategies, and faculty perceptions of their role in student retention. During the literature search, four primary categories emerged as the most relevant to the study: retention problems at HBCUs, faculty involvement in student retention efforts, faculty perceptions on engagement in the student retention process, and faculty-student interactions. A theoretical framework was used to explore the phenomenon of faculty perceptions and expectations toward student retention efforts.

Retention Problems at HBCUs

Retention problems, although not unique to HBCUs, often manifest at HBCUs. One cause is that HBCUs admit a larger portion of the student body that are low income, first generation, and Pell Grant eligible with lower college entrance exam scores (Fletcher, Bronner, & Astatke, 2014; Gasman, 2013; Harrington et al., 2016). Rapid changes in higher education metrics have also negatively impacted HBCUs (Barringer-Brown, 2017). Metrics of success for higher education institutions have shifted from inputs, such as the number of students enrolled, faculty, facilities, and number of programs offered, to accountability measures, such as retention and graduation rates and production of career-ready graduates.

Because current higher education reform seeks to link federal funding with accountability measures, HBCUs risk being penalized for below average retention rates (Zhang, Fei, Quddus, & Davis, 2014). These federal policies do not consider institutional mission or the characteristics of the study body, such as income and college entrance exam scores. Loss of funding for HBCUs results in fewer minority students able to attend

institutions of higher education. Therefore, improving retention rates at HBCUs is an urgent and relevant issue.

Faculty Involvement in Student Retention Efforts

Anaya and Cole (2001); DeFreitas and Bravo (2012); Napier, Dekhane, and Smith (2011); O'Meara, Knudsen and Jones (2013); and Russo-Gleicher (2013) discovered that active involvement of faculty in student retention efforts can lead to improved student retention rates at colleges and universities. These researchers also found that when faculty engage in activities beyond teaching, such as academic and behavior mentoring and student counseling, they have the capacity to help students stay focused on their studies and remain enrolled in school. Similarly, Anaya and Cole (2001) and Tinto (2001) asserted that when faculty focus on effective instruction and engage in associated academic support services, such as advising, mentoring, and academic-related campus-sponsored activities, faculty-student interactions improve, students become more encouraged to complete their degree programs, and student retention rates improve. Anaya and Cole (2001) and Tinto (2001) agreed that to encourage faculty to become more involved in the student retention process, colleges and universities must establish professional training programs to assist their faculty in improving interactions with students, engaging in institution-supported retention efforts, and adopting strategies to help students remain enrolled in school.

Although consensus exists among researchers that faculty engaged in student retention efforts have the potential to help reduce overall student attrition rates at their institutions (Gajeski & Mather, 2015; Kemp, 2014; Powell & Rey, 2015; Teranishi &

Bezbatchenko, 2015), little research exists to identify how faculty have engaged in the retention process (Newman, 2011). Most of the research in this area is broad, such as a 2015 study by Bowman, Hertel, and Wathington that indicated that student retention can be improved by faculty engagement in student social activities. What is missing from their research are specific social activities that might lead to improved retention. One goal of the current study was to investigate the types of student retention activities in which faculty engage or would be likely to adopt.

Faculty Perceptions

Also important to the study were the perceptions faculty have regarding engagement in the student retention process, which can positively or negatively impact their participation in retention efforts (Shaw, Wu, Irwin, & Patrizi, 2016). Fishbein and Ajzen (1975) and Tittle (1967) first examined faculty perceptions about student retention in the 1960s and 1970s. A persistent factor in student retention efforts is faculty and how they perceive their role in student retention efforts (Lo, Reeves, Jenkins, & Parkman, 2016). In addition, how faculty understand their role in retention efforts is critical to faculty actively participating in local retention efforts (Wilson et al., 2016).

Researchers such as Nutt (1999) and Kinzie (2005) investigated faculty preferences for commitment to student retention efforts. Nutt confirmed that faculty believe they should be directly and actively involved in the student retention process and feel their involvement in student retention efforts should be moderate to substantial. Furthermore, Nutt found that faculty recognize they should be more involved in the

student retention process. Likewise, Porter (2005) suggested that faculty's active involvement in retention efforts promotes student success.

Although some credible and relevant literature exists in this area, little research exists specifically related to HBCU faculty and their perceptions of involvement in the student retention process. The study added to the existing literature with a novel focus (HBCUs) that has the potential to effect positive social change in the targeted college.

Faculty-Student Interaction

Esin (2013) argued that faculty must recognize and view their role as a credible vehicle for student growth and fulfillment of academic dreams so that students can become productive citizens and leaders. In realizing this role, faculty must engage in student interactions that extend beyond academic lecturing and include engagement in academic and behavioral mentorship tasks (McArthur, 2005). Students must be open to beyond-classroom faculty interactions if they are determined to succeed (Guiffrida, 2005). Guiffrida (2005), McArthur (2005), and Saret (2009) reported that students feel that retention efforts that support both academics and student life can reinforce their persistence to remain in school and complete their degree programs. Similarly, Shelton (2003) reported that students who receive faculty support tend to stay focused and remain enrolled in school.

The concentration for much of the research in this area has been on the potential for nonteaching faculty-student interactions to improve student success and persistence to stay enrolled in school. However, few studies have been conducted to identify the types of nonteaching student interactions in which faculty would likely engage. The focus of

the study was to investigate this area of nonteaching student interactions so that HBCUs can better understand how their faculty would likely participate in student retention activities outside of their teaching routine.

Theoretical Framework

When colleges and universities first emerged in the United States, it was a luxury for students to attend, and only the privileged had the opportunity to enroll (Tinto, 2006). During this time, faculty were seen as providers of instruction without expectation of formal engagement in the student retention process (Major & Palmer, 2006). Today colleges have open and flexible admission policies, and pursuing a college degree is not the exception that it once was. Furthermore, the role of faculty has evolved beyond teaching to include tasks such as mentoring, advising, and designing curricula.

The expanded role of faculty appears to have had a positive impact on student persistence, with extracurricular faculty-student interactions (those that go beyond the traditional faculty and student relationship) identified by a number of researchers as key to keeping students focused on course work and enrolled in a degree program (Cook-Sather et al., 2014; Kinzie, 2005; Shelton, 2003). Moreover, expanded faculty-student interactions have been connected to improved graduation rates (Coates, 2014; Horton, 2013; Knight, Davenport, Green-Powell, & Hilton, 2014; Micari & Pazos, 2012; Millis, 2012; Spittle, 2013). Student interactions with faculty appear to be fundamental to building student success (Micari & Pazos, 2012; Orehovec & Cox, 2016). Therefore, investigating faculty perceptions of their role in student retention is crucial to developing

and executing initiatives to empower current and future students to persist through graduation (O'Leary & Webb, 2011).

The purpose of this study was to investigate faculty perceptions of their roles and expectations in the student retention process. In developing the study, I reviewed several theories that were relevant to the goals of the research. The following sections highlight the principle ideas related to these theories and how they inspired the theoretical framework for the study.

Theory of Change

Theory of change refers to enabling a transformation based on a process. Connell and Kubisch (1998) defined theory of change as “a systematic and cumulative process of the links between activities, outcomes, and contexts” (p. 9). The purpose of the study was to explore and understand college faculty perceptions regarding involvement in student retention efforts, improve standards of teaching, and allow institutions to work together to develop strategies for improving student retention through enhanced faculty participation and support. The goal was to effect a positive ongoing change in student retention.

Several change models were examined to construct a solid theoretical foundation for the study. Two of the models focused on an analysis of behavior through diagnosing and assessing problems, identifying change elements and their role in the process of change, and managing the change (Lippitt, Watson, Westley, & Spalding, 1958; Prochaska & DiClemente, 1986). Both theories focused on planning and delivering interventions to bring about behavioral modification.

The model that fit best with the purpose of the study was Lewin's change model (1951). Although Lewin's model is similar to others, it predated them and served as the foundation for the change models explored (Kritsonis, 2005). Lewin's change model strongly supported the purpose of the study to examine human behaviors in hopes to identify pathways to change. The Lewin model focuses on implementing change and encouraging participation in activities that will help identify problems that might serve as barriers to change.

Lewin's Theory of Change Model

Figure 1 shows Lewin's (1951) three-step change theory that explores behavior change through unfreezing and disrupting activities, situations, and practices and structuring a means of transition to new, acceptable, and normal conditions. Lewin's model was viewed as a suitable corridor for guiding the investigation, which was conducted to provide colleges and universities with valuable information that can help them unfreeze current practices, construct a plan of action for improvement, and increase student retention through implementation of new conditions. Lewin's model also supports the concept of identifying barriers to successful implementation, which is useful for identifying opposition that arises from individuals during a change (Romano & Connell, 2015). Faculty responses from this study were collected and analyzed to help colleges and universities use faculty to improve student retention through a change process like the one theorized by Lewin.

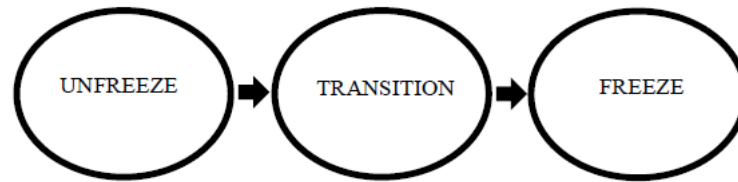


Figure 1. Lewin's (1950) three-step change theory.

Figure 2 illustrates Lewin's change model as it was applied in the study. Faculty perceptions and institutional expectations appear as the drivers of change, with improved student retention strategies as the goal.

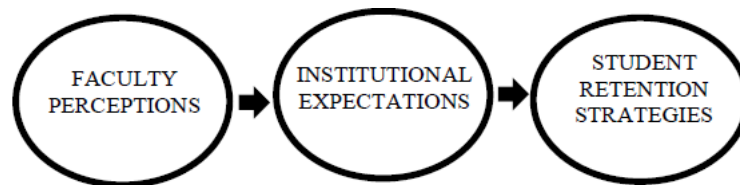


Figure 2. Lewin's (1951) change model as applied in the current study.

Phenomenological Inquiry

Yüksel and Yıldırım (2015) suggested that phenomenological methods are useful for investigating a given phenomenon through the perceptions of targeted participants. A phenomenological design can also be used for constructing a study designed to explore a phenomenon before implementing a plan for change. The current study was designed to examine faculty perceptions of self-adopted and institution-sponsored strategies used to keep students engaged in their studies and enrolled in college. Change theory supports phenomenological research because understanding phenomena is a critical step that must occur before developing and implementing any change plan (J. A. Hatch, 2002; D. K. Hatch, 2012).

Summary

Shelton (2003) indicated that faculty provide a direct link to student persistence to stay enrolled through faculty-student interactions such as mentoring and other beyond-classroom support. To better understand how faculty feels about engaging in student retention activity, faculty perceptions toward involvement in the student retention process were explored. The focus was not only on understanding how faculty perceive their participation in student retention, but also on faculty perceptions unique to HBCUs.

I chose a phenomenological design for this study. To answer the research questions for this study, I used three instruments to collect data on faculty perceptions about their role in the student retention process. Data collection included a questionnaire, interviews, and a faculty-student interaction log. The study was designed to investigate HBCU faculty perceptions so that the results could be used to improve student retention at the target Southeast HBCU as well as in other colleges and universities throughout the United States. Section 2 contains the theoretical foundations that guided the study. I also include a description of the research design and methodology.

Section 2: The Methodology

The purpose of this study was to investigate faculty perceptions of their roles and expectations in student retention. Specifically, the investigation focused on how to engage faculty in the retention process and what institution-sponsored and self-adopted strategies they use or would use to help with student retention. The results of this study may be used by higher education leaders in formulating solutions to improve retention that include direct involvement by campus faculty.

A phenomenological design was used for this study, with three qualitative data collection methods including survey, interview, and faculty-student logs.

Phenomenological research is common in the social sciences and recognized as a valid approach for collecting and analyzing data about human behaviors and perceptions (Berg, 2007; Creswell, 2009; Teddlie & Tashakkori, 2003). The focus of the phenomenological inquiry was to explore and attempt to understand how faculty perceptions can influence their participation in retention efforts (see Waters, 2016). Willis (2007) suggested that the phenomenological method of research is used to explore the experiences of participants and subjects related to a phenomenon. The current study focused on the phenomenon of how faculty members perceive their roles and expectations in the student retention process.

Prior to administering the survey, I piloted the measurement tools (survey and interview questions) with a panel of five administrators who are the main stakeholders in retention and student academic success at the selected HBCU. Each administrator

provided feedback on the survey questions including conciseness of the questions. This process was used to ensure the reliability of the instruments.

Following data collection, I analyzed all data to explore how faculty engage in student retention efforts and examined the types of retention activities that faculty are likely to adopt. The study targeted an HBCU in the Southeast United States. The research findings were shared with the targeted HBCU in a formal report so that leadership could use the results to improve student retention efforts.

Research Design and Approach

I used a qualitative research method and phenomenological design to explore HBCU faculty perceptions of student retention efforts and their involvement in these endeavors. A qualitative approach to investigate behaviors and attitudes is effective for understanding experiences and perceptions of a lived phenomenon and differs from quantitative data collection methods, which are used to investigate perceptions and behavioral changes (Cane, O'Connor, & Michie, 2012; McNabb, 2015; Waters, 2016). A questionnaire containing open-ended questions was used to collect data from faculty. The data collection tools included a questionnaire supported by interviews and intervention logs.

Interviews were conducted with faculty, and an interpretive phenomenological analysis of responses of their perceptions in retention efforts was conducted (see Cooperrider, Fleischer, & Cotton, 2016). Interviews were conducted with faculty who responded that they would be willing to participate as a follow-up to the questionnaire. The interviewed faculty provided additional data by keeping a faculty-student

intervention log (see Male, 2015). The following research questions fit the general model of a qualitative study and were used to guide this phenomenological study:

1. What are faculty perceptions regarding student retention efforts at the local HBCU?
2. What do faculty perceive their role in student retention should be?

Participants

The target population included full-time faculty at the local HBCU campus in the Southeast United States. There were approximately 33 full-time faculty members at the time that the study was conducted. All 33 full-time faculty members responded to the participation request and entered the informed consent page of the survey. I protected all human subjects from harm and privacy violations by following Walden University's human subjects' protection protocol and applying for approval to conduct the study through the Walden University institutional review board (IRB). The targeted institution's full-time faculty members were invited to participate in the study via an e-mail and were provided the opportunity to participate via a link in the e-mail. Full-time faculty members were informed of the nature of the survey and had the opportunity to opt out of the survey before responding to any of the survey questions. To begin the survey, participants had to check the statement that indicated that they understood that they were consenting to complete the questionnaire; a second option was available to allow the participant to indicate that he or she did not wish to participate. The survey was

conducted using SurveyMonkey, and no identifying questions were asked to maintain the anonymity of participant responses.

Data Collection

After approval from the Walden IRB (Approval Number 12-05-16-0169013), the anonymous electronic questionnaire was distributed to the 33 full-faculty members via e-mail with a link to the survey. All participants received instructions on how to complete the questionnaire as well as information related to human subjects' protection. The questionnaire was designed to provide responses immediately to me as each participant responded. All responses were anonymous and were used only for the purpose of the study. Following the questionnaire portion of data collection, I chose five faculty members from the first responders who indicated they were available for an interview. I also distributed faculty-student intervention logs to interview participants who indicated they would be open to journal nonteaching interventions with students.

A qualitative inquiry was conducted to investigate how faculty perceive their roles in student retention efforts through a triangulation approach. Data were collected using an online questionnaire, faculty interviews, and faculty-student intervention logs. The triangulation method was used to validate findings through data collection from multiple sources (see Thumburmung, Vasconcelos, & Cox, 2016).

Web-Based Questionnaire

I used a survey questionnaire (see Appendix C) as one measure for collecting data. Over the past 20 years, Web-based questionnaires have grown more prevalent in academic research (Buchanan & Hvizdak, 2009). Couper (2000) asserted that Web-based

questionnaires have proven to be very convenient for researchers, respondents, and the entire research process because responders can access them virtually any time as long as they have a mobile device or personal computer connected to the Internet. Monroe and Adams (2012) stated that Web-based questionnaires provide a faster and more reliable method for collecting data than paper-and-pencil methods. In addition, Web-based questionnaires have grown to be preferred among researchers because they tend to elicit a higher return rate (Schonlau, Ronald, & Elliott, 2002).

Cummings (2006) noted that questionnaires can be used by researchers to assess the preferences and attitudes of individuals through self-reporting psychometric scales to measure individuals' opinions and judgments about different items. An individual's attitude toward an object, institution, or event can be inferred from his or her response to a well-structured question (Cummings, 2006). Furthermore, Johnson and Turner (2003) posited that a Web-based questionnaire is a credible resource for collecting perception data, which was one of the tasks for the current study. Horton (2013) and Nutt (1999) used Web-based questionnaires to gain insight on faculty views and perceptions on student involvement issues.

The questionnaire instrument used for this study was similar to the Faculty Perceptions Survey (FPS) (Nutt, 1999) and was designed to address faculty perceptions toward student retention unique to HBCUs. A panel of five administrators who were the main stakeholders in retention and student academic success at the local HBCU validated the adapted FPS. The questionnaire was constructed to answer the research questions and to collect demographic data. The following questions were used to collect demographic

data: (a) what department do you work in at the HBCU where you are employed? (2) what is your teaching field? (3) what is your age range? and (4) how many years have you been teaching? To answer the first research question (what are faculty perceptions regarding student retention efforts at the local HBCU?), I included the following seven questions in the questionnaire: (a) are you aware of existing retention efforts on the local campus and how these efforts can affect student retention rates? (b) based on your perceptions and understanding of ongoing student retention efforts on your campus, do you feel that these efforts aid in improving retention rates? (c) do you currently feel involved in ongoing retention as faculty? (d) check any of the retention programs you are aware of on the campus where you teach; (e) what types of ongoing and potential future retention efforts do faculty perceive faculty should be involved in? (f) do you feel you should be involved in ongoing and potential future retention efforts on the campus? and (g) provide any additional comments on your perceptions of your role in student retention efforts as faculty at the campus.

The following 10 questions were included on the questionnaire to answer the second research question (what do faculty perceive their role in student retention should be?): (a) do you currently feel involved in ongoing retention as faculty? (b) are you aware of ongoing retention efforts at the HBCU where you are employed as faculty? (c) do you currently feel involved in ongoing retention as faculty? (d) do you feel that you are responsible for engaging in ongoing retention efforts at the HBCU where you are employed as faculty? (e) what types of ongoing retention efforts do you perceive you should be involved in as a faculty member? (f) do you feel you should be engaging in

ongoing retention efforts at the HBCU in the future? (g) what types of ongoing and potential future retention efforts do faculty perceive faculty should be involved in? (h) do you feel you should be involved in ongoing and potential future retention efforts on the campus? (i) to what degree do you feel that you are involved with talking to students about topics related to their overall academic success? and (j) do you feel that you are involved with talking to students about graduation or degree completion? The questionnaire ended by asking participants if they would be willing to be interviewed for 30 minutes and log their faculty-student interventions for 2 weeks.

The questionnaire was administered through the Web-based tool Survey Monkey, which is currently one of the most commonly used resources by researchers for developing online surveys and accessing survey data in a secure method (see Hutchison & Reinking, 2011). The online questionnaire was distributed anonymously to faculty through the faculty list serve at the local HBCU in the Southeast United States, and faculty members were given 1 week to respond the survey. The expected response rate for the questionnaire was approximately 30%, which is typical for data collection using online questionnaires (see Granello & Wheaton, 2004).

Faculty Interviews

Faculty interviews served as the second data collection method for the study. Interview candidates were selected from the first five responders who agreed to be interviewed when they completed the faculty questionnaire. Selected faculty were contacted through e-mail or phone to coordinate a date and time for the interview. The interview lasted approximately 40 to 60 minutes. The interviews were not audio recorded,

but I took copious notes during the interviews. I decided not to record the interviews because the equipment might have caused some interviewees to be nervous and not elect to be interviewed. Administrators at the HBCU suggested that I would gain greater participation if the interviews were not recorded, citing the sensitive nature of audio recordings in today's educational environment. The interview script (Appendix E) was used to guide the interview. To protect confidentiality, the interviews took place in private conference rooms and offices on the campus where the faculty member teaches. The interview notes were locked securely in a filing cabinet in my office upon completion of the data collection.

The purpose of the interviews was to ask participating faculty directly about their perceptions of faculty-student interactions outside of teaching, any methods and strategies they have used with students to keep them engaged with their course work, and their preferences for engaging in additional campus-supported retention activities. I compared the interview data with both questionnaire data and faculty-student intervention log data to understand how faculty perceive their role in student retention efforts on the local HBCU campus.

Faculty-Student Intervention Logs

The third data collection tool was faculty-student intervention logs (Appendix F). The five faculty participants interviewed who completed the Web-based questionnaire were asked to complete a journal of nonteaching interventions with students. Each faculty participant was given a faculty-student intervention log to complete and further instructions on how to log interactions with students. Faculty recorded nonteaching

interactions with students for 2 weeks to provide additional insights on other techniques they may use to aid student retention efforts. All completed intervention logs were stored in a locked filing cabinet in my office to protect confidentiality.

Data Analysis

Data analysis for a qualitative design centers on identifying concepts and themes (Patton, 2002). The responses from all three data collection methods were organized in manageable data sets for the purpose of understanding faculty perceptions toward student retention efforts on the target campus. Coding techniques were used to identify themes to interpret faculty perceptions (Keegan & Turner, 2001). Each data collection method was adapted to the three phases used to build the theoretical framework: initial, focused, and axial coding (Saldaña, 2015). In the initial coding phase, themes were identified. In the focused stage, the coding was analyzed for associated themes. In the final axial coding phase, relationships were identified as a result of the initial and focused coding phases (Gunaldo, Andrieu, Garbee, Giovingo, Mercante, Tortu, & English, 2015).

To interpret perceptions as well as organize and report results, I organized the data by themes across all three instruments (Patton, 2002). Questionnaire responses and interview responses were categorized by data sets. I used a direct interpretation approach to code each response by similar theme and research question. Coding techniques provided insight about faculty perceptions of their roles in student retention efforts on the HBCU campus (Charmaz, 2006).

Similarly, interview responses were sorted and organized by similar theme and research question. A similar process occurred to interpret data from the intervention

logs, which supported faculty-student interactions in a non-instructional setting. The data sets included the feedback of faculty-student interactions, the nature of the faculty-student interactions, and the role of the faculty (i.e., mentorship, academic advising, and student support).

Delimitation of the Study

The population for this study was drawn from a local HBCU in Southeastern Region of the United States. The institution had approximately 75 faculty and non-academic faculty members employed during the 2015-2016 academic year, with a student-faculty ratio of 25 to 1.

Limitations of the Study

The sample for the study consisted of full-time faculty members selected from all full-time faculty currently employed by the HBCU. This study also was limited by the scope of the data collection tools and the items that were included in the tools. Additional questions may elucidate further data in future studies. Data analysis was driven solely by the data collected from the target participants in response to the three measuring instruments created for the study.

Data Analysis Results

Sample Characteristics

The questionnaire was e-mailed to 33 full-time faculty. Thirty-two full-time faculty (96.97%) agreed to participate in the study by checking the appropriate box on the consent form on the first page of the electronic survey. Questionnaire participants taught in the following divisions of the HBCU: 7 (21.88%) in the Division of Business

Administration, 18 (56.25%) in the Division of Arts and Sciences, and 7 (21.88%) in the Division of Education. This follows the normal distribution of faculty amongst the divisions at the target HBCU.

The departmental demographics of the sample was as follows: Business Administration – 5 (15.63%); Mathematics – 2 (6.25%); Biology – 1 (3.13%); Education – 3 (9.38%); English – 1 (3.13%); History – 2 (6.25%); Kinesiology – 0 (0.00%); Religion – 2 (6.25%); Speech – 1 (3.13%); Chemistry – 2 (6.25%); Criminal Justice – 2 (6.25%); Accounting – 0 (0.00%); Computer Information Systems – 1 (3.13%); Social Work – 2 (6.25%); Music – 2 (6.25%); Art – 0 (0.00%); and Other 6 (18.75%). The age range of participants was as follows: 20-29 years of age – 0 (0.00%); 30-39 years of age – 4 (12.50%); 40-49 years of age – 11 (34.38%); 50-59 years of age – 7 (21.88%); 60-69 years of age – 8 (25.00%) and 70+ years of age – 2 (6.25%).

The years of teaching experience of the participants was as follows: 1-5 years of teaching experience – 9 (28.13%); 6-10 years of teaching experience – 2 (6.25%); 11-15 years of teaching experience – 6 (18.75%); 16-20 years of teaching experience – 3 (9.358%); 21-25 years of experience – 7 (21.88%); 26-30 years of teaching experience – 1 (3.13%); and 31+ years of teaching experience – 4 (12.50%).

At the end of the questionnaire, participants were asked if they would be willing to be interviewed. Approximately 33.33% of the respondents to this question agreed to be interviewed and provided their name and phone number to schedule an interview. Of the five participants interviewed, all agreed to keep intervention logs.

Research Questions Linked to Methods

Faculty questionnaires were distributed online through SurveyMonkey, with each question designed to answer one or more of the study's research questions. Appendix D provides the relationship of each question with the research questions.

Survey questions Q1 through Q5 capture demographic information across four categories—academic department, teaching field, age, and tenure status. In survey questions Q24 and Q25, participants were invited to engage in a 30-minute interview and complete faculty–student intervention logs for 2 weeks. The interview allowed the collection of additional related data that could be cross-validated with responses to the questionnaire. The intervention log provided data on out-of-class faculty-student interactions. Faculty participants recorded all non-teaching interactions that the participant perceived to promote student retention. Data collected from both the questionnaire, interview instruments, and faculty-student interaction log were organized in data sets to gain a better understanding of faculty perceptions toward student retention efforts at the target HBCU. Data collected via all instruments organized by research questions. The faculty-student interaction log provided further evidence of non-teaching student retention activities faculty may not have reported on the questionnaire or during the interview process.

Findings Linked to Research Questions

The first research question was as follows: what are faculty perceptions regarding student retention efforts at the local HBCU? Responses from the questionnaire, interviews, and faculty-student intervention logs revealed two themes that related directly

to the first research question: (1) faculty perceived that they should be involved in retention efforts and (2) primary retention efforts at the local HBCU occurred through the student success program, the retention coordinator, first year experience course, the retention committee, and advising. However, faculty indicated that they perceive their primary role in retention to be through student advisement.

The second research question asked the following: what do faculty perceive their role in student retention to be? Again, responses from the questionnaire, interviews, and faculty-student interaction logs revealed the following themes that related directly to the second research question: (1) faculty perceived that their role in student retention is as an advisor and (2) faculty engagement with students, through communication both inside and outside of class through various media, improves student retention. While the majority of faculty perceived that faculty are responsible for engaging in ongoing retention efforts at the local HBCU where they are employed, a few faculty did indicate that they believed that faculty are not responsible for student retention. This discrepancy with the vast majority of participants may indicate a misunderstanding of the faculty member's role or of the definition of student retention and student retention strategies.

The questions and responses for all three instruments were organized and grouped in data sets by themes, which appear throughout the following sections. Table 1 contains faculty responses to their awareness of student retention efforts on the local campus; Table 2 includes faculty responses associated with faculty–student engagement; Table 3 contains faculty responses related to faculty involvement in ongoing and future retention

efforts; Table 4 contains faculty interview questions and responses; and Table 5 captures data from the faculty–student intervention logs.

Faculty Participation in Campus-Sponsored Student Retention Activities

Questions Q6 through Q12 focused on faculty awareness and perceived involvement in existing retention efforts on the local campus. Of the 32 faculty members who completed the questionnaire, 83.7% indicated they were aware of existing retention efforts on their campus and understood how these efforts had the potential to positively affect student retention. However, 16.3% of the participants indicated they were not aware of existing retention efforts on the local campus. Most faculty responders agreed they should participate in campus-sponsored student retention efforts. The data were cross-validated with the data collected from the 30-minute interviews with faculty who volunteered to do so as indicated above. The interview data showed commonalities with participant responses from the survey. For example, 85% of respondents to the questionnaire supported faculty involvement in campus-sponsored student retention activities, and 100% of the interview responders reported the same thing. After analyzing responses, a clear theme emerged: faculty perceived that they should be involved in retention efforts. This theme began to answer my first research question (what are faculty perceptions regarding retention efforts at the local HBCU).

Table 1

Faculty Awareness

Question	Faculty responses
6. Are you aware of existing retention efforts on campus and how these efforts can affect student retention rates?	Faculty responses (except for one) indicated that they were aware of student retention efforts at the HBCU.
7. As a faculty member at a HBCU, what are your perceptions regarding ongoing student retention efforts on the campus?	Faculty responses indicated overall that they were aware of student retention efforts at the HBCU.
8. Based on your perceptions and understanding of ongoing student retention efforts on your campus, do you feel these efforts aid in improving rates?	Faculty responses indicated overall that they participated in current activities at the HBCU.
9. Are you aware of ongoing retention efforts at the HBCU where you are employed as faculty?	Faculty responses indicated they understood the importance of student retention efforts overall.
10. Do you currently feel involved in ongoing retention as faculty?	Overall, faculty responses indicated that they were involved in ongoing retention efforts to a limited degree. A couple of faculty responded that they not feel that they were involved locally.

Faculty Responsibility for Engaging in Student Retention Activities

Questions 11 and 14 of the questionnaire focused on the responsibility that faculty feel regarding faculty engagement in student retention efforts. Most of the faculty who responded agreed they should be engaged in ongoing retention efforts and reported feeling responsible for engaging in local retention efforts. Only one respondent felt faculty should not be responsible for engaging in retention efforts. Faculty was also asked to report on the retention programs they were aware of on the local campus. Faculty responses included advisement, mentoring, and first year experience classes. Most faculty responses supported their willingness to engage in such retention programs. Analysis of

the responses to these questions led me to another theme related to my first research question: primary retention efforts at the local HBCU occurred through the student success program, the retention coordinator, first year experience course, the retention committee, and advising.

When asked whether faculty was responsible for engaging in ongoing retention efforts, the majority of participants indicated that they felt they were responsible for retention efforts with only 5.4% of the participants indicating administration was primarily responsible for student retention efforts. Campbell and Campbell (1997) and Williamson, Goosen, and Gonzalez (2014) reported mounting evidence supporting that faculty are critical to the success of college student retention programs. Furthermore, they stated programs without the active involvement of faculty will not succeed. Faculty responses to the questionnaire demonstrated most faculty felt a sense of responsibility for student retention efforts. When asked to provide feedback on campus retention programs, most respondents indicated they were aware of the campus retention program and participated in advising, mentoring, and faculty–student driven initiatives like career and major days. Faculty indicated this was in addition to office hours and classroom teaching time. Analysis of responses also led to a theme related to my second research question: faculty perceived their role in student retention is as an advisor.

Table 2

Faculty Engagement

Question	Faculty responses
11. Do you feel you are responsible for engaging in ongoing retention efforts at the HBCU where you are employed as faculty?	Some of the faculty (5) abstained from the question.
12. What types of ongoing retention efforts do you perceive you should be involved in as a faculty member?	Faculty responses supported that they felt they should be involved in student retention efforts.
13. Do you feel you are responsible for engaging in ongoing retention efforts at the HBCU where you are employed as faculty?	Faculty responses indicated that that they should be actively engaged in present and future student retention efforts.
14. Check any of the retention programs you are aware of on the campus where you teach	Faculty responses indicated that were aware of several retention efforts on the campus. Some responses indicated that they aware of advising, mentoring and first year experiences classes.

Ongoing and Future Involvement

Questions 15 through 19 of the questionnaire were used to address faculty perceptions about their ongoing and future involvement in existing or new retention strategies at the HBCU and/or their own strategies. Most faculty indicated they should be involved in retention strategies although many clarified via verbatim comments in open-ended questions that there were limits to their willingness to engage. For example, one responder reported that the administration is responsible while faculty and staff were simply involved. Another faculty member stated that he responded only when asked to provide assistance in retention efforts. Most faculty responded yes to the question; however, additional comments limited the involvement to a certain extent or only in the classroom.

Table 3

Faculty Involvement in Ongoing and Future Retention Efforts

Question	Faculty responses
15. Do you feel you should be involved in retention efforts as a faculty at the campus?	Faculty responses indicated that faculty perceptions were they should be involved in student retention ongoing efforts.
16. What types of ongoing and potential future retention efforts do faculty perceive faculty should be involved in?	Faculty responses to open-ended during in the interview process agreed that faculty should be involved.
17. Do you feel you should be involved in ongoing and potential future retention efforts on the campus?	Faculty responses indicated they did use their own retention strategies to connect to students.
18. Provide any additional comments on your perceptions of your role in student retention efforts as faculty at the campus.	Some of the strategies included encouragement and acknowledgment of student success, providing students with connection to professional organizations, interactions that involved the whole student, open communication and other faculty-student interactions.
19. Do you feel that you are involved with talking to students about topics related to their overall academic success?	Faculty responded that they felt they should be communicating with students related to their academic success.

Faculty–Student Interactions

Question 20 addressed faculty–student interactions (see Table 4). Faculty responses revealed their own retention strategies used with students. Faculty strategies included encouraging and acknowledging student success, providing students with connections to professional organizations, addressing the whole student, and communicating openly. Overall, faculty responses indicated they felt responsible for interacting with students about graduation and degree completion. Based on the responses, faculty perceived this to be a part of their responsibility, thereby promoting

student retention beyond advising. For example, one participant indicated that “calling students” and “counseling students” was an important retention strategy for faculty to employ while another participant indicated that developing “campus community partnerships” was an important retention effort. Another theme emerged related to my second research question: faculty engagement with students, through communication both inside and outside of class through various media, improves student retention.

Table 4

Faculty-Student Interactions

Question	Faculty Responses
20. Do you feel that you are involved with talking to students about their graduation or degree their completion?	Faculty responses indicated that they are feel that they are involved in talking to students about graduation or degree completion.

Like findings by Peele (2010), faculty appeared receptive to using their own methods of ongoing faculty-student interactions beyond the classroom. Of the 27 participants that answered this question, 85.19% indicated that they were involved in talking to students about graduation or degree completion with some respondents indicating that this was done daily.

Faculty and Interview Questions

The interviews provided additional insight about faculty–student interactions via their own methods. In the interviews, faculty mentioned using some of the same self-adopted retention strategies noted in the questionnaire as well as additional strategies, such an open-door policy to be more available to students and faculty-student interaction

in non-classroom related events. Faculty responses to the interview questions suggested HBCU faculty work harder to retain students. For example, one interviewee said “overall, HBCUs work harder to attract and retain students.” Another interviewee said, “these efforts are very crucial efforts that have to be done to prevent declining numbers of minority students.” Faculty reported willingness to engage with students via campus-sponsored student retention activities. Faculty seemed to feel the strongest about faculty-student engagement. They reported a willingness to increase positive student contact and assist with early alert retention strategies, such as increased tutorials during office hours and personal contact (via email and/or text messages) with students absent from class. Faculty said additional advising and mentoring might inspire and stimulate student involvement. In addition, faculty indicated that retention efforts should be expanded to include mentoring, tutoring, and active listening to foster engagement and connectivity. During the faculty interviews, I also encountered a few faculty members who were disengaged from the process because they did not perceive themselves as key players in the retention process. One interviewee said, “efforts will only be effective if everyone buys into it.” Overall, interviewees agreed they should be more involved in student retention efforts. For example, one interviewee said, “the administration is responsible, but faculties [*sic*] and staff are involved in the retention efforts.” Another interviewee said that they believed “that the higher the level of student engagement on the campus (academics, social, and extracurricular) the greater the chance that the student will continue to completion.” The faculty interview responses provided further support for the themes identified previously.

Table 5

Interview Questions

Question	Faculty responses
1. What are your perceptions regarding student retention at the local HBCU?	Faculty interview responses indicated their perceptions were favorable.
2. What do you perceive faculty roles in student retention should be?	Faculty responses suggested faculty should take an active role in retention strategies.
3. Do you use any strategies or engage in any practices to help keep students engaged in their school work and motivated to stay enrolled?	Faculty interview responses overwhelmingly supported their engagement in student retention.
4. If so, what are some of the methods and strategies you use with students to keep them engaged in coursework?	Faculty interview responses suggested they were willing to devote hours to helping students to promote retention.
5. Where and when do you engage with students to keep them motivated and on target? Just in the classroom or in some other setting (counseling, extracurricular, etc.)?	Faculty interview responses revealed faculty felt continuous engagement throughout the semester was necessary to boost student retention.
6. If you engage with students outside of the classroom, do you use any different methods and strategies than those you use in the classroom to engage students?	Faculty interview responses indicated that they used different methods and strategies to connect with students outside of the classroom setting
7. In what kinds of student retention activities do you feel the campus should engage in?	Faculty interview responses supported activities students should be engaged including counseling, mentoring, and tutoring.
8. What is your preference in engaging in additional campus supported retention activities?	Faculty interview responses indicated that the faculty favored engaging in campus supported retention efforts.
9. How much time would you be willing to devote to non-classroom related retention efforts if they were a part of your institution's retention plan?	Faculty interview responses revealed faculty was willing to devote 1-2 hours to student retention efforts in addition to office hours.
10. Are you aware of any retention strategies used by your peers?	Faculty responses indicated they were aware of peer engagement initiatives involving student support efforts.

Faculty-Student Intervention Logs

Interviewees were also asked to log their interactions with students outside of the classroom for 2-weeks. Interventions logged included faculty–student engagement techniques such as advising, homework tutoring, scholarly mentorship, life skills, career counseling, and electronic communication (e-mail, texts, video conferencing, and telephone contacts).

Faculty who recorded faculty-student interventions in the log used most of the faculty-student interaction techniques identified in the questionnaire and interview (see Table 6). Through analysis of the faculty-student intervention logs, a theme previously identified was further verified: engagement with students, through communication both inside and outside of class through various media, improves student retention. This theme relates to my second research question.

Table 6

Two Week Period: Faculty–Student Intervention Log

Types of interventions	Faculty responses
E-mails/telephone calls	Faculty responses indicated this engagement technique allowed students the opportunity to participate and ask questions via e-mail and support telephone calls.
Group discussion during office hours	Faculty responses recommend that in addition to advisement, there should be early alert triggers where faculty provide additional support through weekly mentorship and follow-up.
Extracurricular group activities	Faculty responses supported extracurricular group activities to build partnerships with students. This process will allow students the opportunity to bond with faculty. Techniques included professional memberships and associations that link faculty to students in their disciplines.

Reliability and Validity

Consensus exists among social science researchers that appropriate steps need to be taken to ensure valid and reliable qualitative research (Morse, Barrett, Mayan, Olson, & Spiers, 2002). According to Maxwell (1992), validity is relative to purposes and circumstances and refers primarily to research observations rather than methods or data. Instruments in this study met descriptive validity (factual accuracy) and interpretive validity (perspectives of the panel used to validate the instruments). Reliability in qualitative research refers to consistency—the ability to apply or transfer the study to other situations (Golafshani, 2003). The panel, used to validate the instruments, allowed for wording changes that clarified the questions. The reliability of the instruments

increased because the clarity of the items increased. Thus, replication of the study utilizing the instruments may produce similar results provided that the characteristics of the sample population are similar. The instruments and methodology were constructed in such a way that this qualitative study may be replicated.

Assumptions

The study was based on the assumption that faculty provided genuine and honest responses to the questionnaire. The questionnaire was distributed electronically to all participants.

Bias

One known bias is that I was employed at the target HBCU for over ten years in a variety of capacities including Director of Human Resources, member of the President's Executive Cabinet, Dean of the Adult Education Program, and member of numerous academic and campus-wide committees. By serving the institution in these roles, the vast majority of the participants of the study knew the researcher. These roles and relationships might have affected the participants' willingness to participate in the study and caused participants to think about the relationship to me prior to responding to prompts in the questionnaire. To alleviate bias based on my roles at the institution, I did not supervise any of the participants; thus, I did not judge faculty on their responses regarding participation in the student retention process or hold any preconceptions or beliefs about their involvement or lack of involvement in the student retention process. To do this, I consciously reflected and maintained personal integrity to avoid possible biases and prejudices (Creswell, 2012).

As an employee at the institution, I was careful to not be biased by faculty responses to the topic of student retention. As a member of the President's Executive Cabinet, I was keenly aware of the need for student retention as well as the effect on the institution as student retention issues were discussed. To remove my bias, I attempted to connect myself to only the faculty responses.

Summary

HBCU faculty in the southeastern region of the United States were surveyed to explore perceptions of their roles in the student retention process. Whether through increased participation in student counseling, mentoring, or engagement in students' campus life beyond teaching, it is imperative that HBCUs find a way to encourage and empower faculty to become a more integral part of student retention efforts outside of the classroom. Upon IRB approval, data collection began. After all the data were collected, the analysis of the data was conducted and relevant findings reported. The project deliverable was a process change recommendation with concrete changes for implementation to improve student retention by clarifying the faculty role in retention at the institution and providing professional development on student retention strategies for faculty to implement.

Section 3: The Project

A discussion of the study project is presented in Section 3. A process change recommendation paper (Appendix A) was generated that includes recommendations based on findings from the current study as well as a thorough literature review. The rationale for selecting this particular project genre, a project description, and evaluation plan are also included in this section. This section concludes with project implications including the potential for social change in the targeted HBCU.

The goal of this process change paper and recommendations was to positively impact faculty perceptions about their roles and expectations in student retention and thereby increase the student retention rate and reduce attrition. This process recommendation not only informs practice but also provides research-based best practices that address faculty perceptions of their roles and responsibilities in student retention, including student retention strategies that can improve student retention. The goal was to increase student retention rates and decrease attrition by changing the current retention processes at the institution through evolution of faculty perceptions of their role in the retention process.

Rationale

Student retention is a concern for leaders of many colleges and universities (Tinto, 2010; Yook, 2012), and critical to the success of these institutions is active participation from faculty and staff in the retention effort process (Cressy, 2011). Researchers have suggested faculty and staff involvement has the potential to keep students engaged, thereby positively affecting retention (Cho & Auger, 2013). The

purpose of this qualitative research project was to investigate faculty perceptions about their roles and responsibilities in student retention efforts at an HBCU in the Southeast United States.

Faculty perceptions are vital in determining the effectiveness of a faculty-driven initiative to address student retention strategies (Wood & Newman, 2015). At the target HBCU, the administration does encourage faculty to engage in the retention process. Prior to this study, faculty perceptions about their engagement in the process were unknown. The goal of the study was to investigate faculty perceptions of their participation in the retention process so leaders of the target college could promote or adopt retention programs that have support from faculty.

The project was a process change recommendation paper. This genre was chosen because it most closely fit the needs of the targeted institution. It provided the local HBCU a description of the problem, background information, study results, and recommendations that, if implemented, may increase student retention rates.

Identifying concepts and themes played a key role in the analysis of the data collected through the questionnaire, interviews, and faculty-student intervention logs. Responses for all collected data were organized into manageable data sets and coded. After the initial coding phase, concepts were identified and analyzed for associated concepts or themes.

The problem addressed through the project was improving low student retention rates at institutions like the targeted HBCU. The project provided the HBCU with three recommendations that, if implemented, may increase student retention rates: (a) further

study of how faculty perceptions of their role in the student retention process change over time, (b) formation of an institution-wide retention committee with representation from all facets of the college community, (c) and professional development on faculty-student retention strategies.

Second-Level Review of the Literature

The strategy for the Section 3 literature review was based on the following project goal: to provide suggestions for leaders of the target HBCU for implementing student retention programs that have the support of faculty. The active involvement of faculty in the student retention process has the potential to improve overall retention on college campuses (Jupiter, Hampton, Webb, & Greer, 2016; Mansfield, O’Leary, & Webb, 2011; Morales, 2014; Sidelinger, Frisby, & Heisler, 2016). This second literature review provides further support for the project covering the topics of HBCUs, faculty involvement in student retention efforts including implementation of student retention strategies, faculty perceptions of student retention, and faculty-student interactions. This section contains details of how these topics directly relate to the formulation of faculty-inclusive policies and programs for supporting student retention. The literature review, along with the findings from the current study, will be shared with leaders of the target HBCU so they can use the results in the management of change, program development and implementation, and professional development and training.

For this literature review, I conducted an extensive search of electronic databases in Walden University’s library and Google Scholar. The databases searched included EBSCO Information Services, Education Resources Information Center (ERIC),

Educational Research Complete, and ProQuest. The search criteria involved combinations of terms and phrases that were searched independently or in conjunction with one another, such as *student retention, faculty and retention involving HBCUs and student degree completion rates, college retention strategies, and faculty perceptions of their role in student retention.*

HBCUs

HBCUs often enroll large numbers of low-income college students and have lower retention and graduation rates (Muraskin, Lee, Wilner, & Swail, 2004). Students from low-income families are more likely to have received an inferior K-12 education, not have received the same family support to attend college, and be unable to afford college. At college, the low-income student is more likely to drop out, and often at a later stage in the degree program than his or her wealthier peers (Muraskin, Lee, Wilner, & Swail, 2004). This results in a financial burden of repaying student loans without the benefit of a degree or certification. HBCUs with open-door policies attempt to educate larger numbers of low-income students than many of their predominately White counterparts. However, the retention and graduation rates for similar institutions (i.e., similar proportion of low-income, first-generation, and Pell-Grant-eligible students) do have similar retention and graduation rates (Gasman, 2013). More selective HBCUs (i.e., those with higher entrance requirements) have higher retention and graduation rates than HBCUs that are less selective.

Faculty Involvement in Student Retention Efforts

High student retention rates are considered as providing an added value for academic institutions, particularly for tuition-driven colleges and universities that rely on a sizeable student population to survive (Ishitani, 2016). According to Calcagno, Bailey, Jenkins, Kienzl, and Leinbach (2008), most institutions use retention rates as a part of their scorecard for recruitment and enrollment marketing. Nevertheless, retention rates have been progressively declining since the mid 1960s for all university students regardless of gender, ethnicity, or social class (Astin, Korn, & Green, 1987; Eagle & Arnold, 1990). A thorough review of the research literature from the last 20 years supports the adoption of well-structured campus-wide student retention initiatives that involve faculty in the process (Cho & Auger, 2013; DeFreitas & Bravo, 2012; Napier et al., 2011; Stanton, Black, Dhaliwal, & Hutchinson, 2017). Betts and Heaston (2014) conducted a study of faculty retention in online and blended education modalities and found that successful retention strategies begin when faculty are involved from the very beginning of the plan. In addition, faculty must perceive that their expertise is valued, must be supported in an ongoing basis, and must be recognized for their work, time, and commitment to not only academic work but all facets of the faculty role.

Campuses with faculty who are involved in the retention process in a more structured manner have seen marked improvements in student retention (Smith, 2003; Tinto; 2001; Yook, 2012). Smith (2003) found that instructors who taught key introductory courses and attended a 2-week faculty seminar dedicated to reformulating gateway courses to facilitate student success without decreasing the intellectual demands

of the courses improved student success and retention. Smith looked at a broad range of initiatives to improve student retention:

revising orientation to facilitate transition; revising key introductory courses; providing critical literacy courses; revising the mathematics curriculum; establishing the core curriculum; creating freshman interest groups; developing additional thematic living units; improving residence hall staff selection and training; increasing mentoring opportunities for minority and underachieving students; improving academic advising for undecided and upper-division students; integrating career development into the major; and coordinating campus retention efforts. (p. 4)

R. Smith (2003) found that some underrepresented groups showed modest retention rate increases.

In addition, Allen (2016) and Lei (2016) both concluded that administrators are now looking to faculty to assist with improving student retention initiatives through an investigation of faculty–student relationships and how faculty interactions can influence student persistence. Lei (2016) also indicated that student satisfaction can predict student success and perseverance to completion. Although institutional leaders have embraced the idea that faculty are expected to assist with retention efforts (Faranda, 2015), more research is needed to understand exactly where faculty are most likely to assist in retention efforts. Thus, this research project involved an investigation of faculty involvement in the student retention process in part to identify the types of retention efforts in which faculty would likely engage.

Although it appears to be clear that institutions should be utilizing faculty to assist in the retention process, how these institutions design and organize retention initiatives involving faculty remains unknown. Institutional leaders must ascertain how to involve faculty in the process. It is no longer a question of whether institutions should include faculty in their retention programs, but rather how they can involve faculty (Forsman, Linder, Moll, Fraser, & Anderson, 2014; Pattengale, 2010). According to Pattengale, many faculty do not understand why retention should matter to them. In the past, the prevailing thought was that it was students' responsibility to retain themselves by successfully completing assignments and matriculating through their degree programs on their own. In the current political climate of accountability, accreditation and governmental agencies are requiring colleges and universities to document efforts they are taking to aid students from entry to degree completion—a task that involves faculty (Pattengale, 2010).

Pattengale (2010) offered six reasons why faculty should be concerned about student retention. First, retention is important for institutions to remain accredited (Pattengale, 2010). Increased institutional requirements in the area of student success and retention force institutions to document all efforts to improve retention—documentation that often requires faculty to document retention efforts. Second, retention is a financial necessity for institutions because each student who remains enrolled for an additional semester positively impacts the institution's finances. Third, there is a civic expectation that institutions retain students. Most institutions have wording in their mission statements about developing citizens to improve society. Institutions not retaining

students and producing graduates do not fulfill their mission. Fourth, retaining students is individually fulfilling for faculty members. By making a positive difference in a student's life, faculty members feel fulfilled in their careers. Fifth, retention is important professionally, especially during this time of increased accountability. Faculty members who align their classroom objectives with the institution's overall strategies and long-term goals improve their chances for professional success and advancement. Finally, retention is important because institutions should want every student to succeed not just academically or professionally but for the benefit of society as a whole. For institutional leaders to be able to understand how to proceed necessitates a collaborative approach involving the institutional staff who are responsible for developing retention programs and faculty (Pattengale, 2010). Understanding how faculty feel about their involvement in the process is a necessary first step for institutions.

Faculty Perceptions of Student Retention

Over the past two decades, researchers have investigated how faculty involvement in the student retention process can positively affect students' determination to finish their degrees (Flegle, Pavone, & Flegle, 2009; Kim & Lundberg, 2016; Orehovec & Cox, 2016; Trolan, Jach, Hanson, & Pascarella, 2016; Wlodkowski & Ginsberg, 1995). However, little research exists on faculty perceptions of engaging in the student retention process. Therefore, understanding how faculty perceive their roles and responsibilities within the student retention process is needed so leaders of institutions can begin to understand how to successfully involve faculty in student retention efforts beyond the classroom and advising environments (Qablan, 2017).

Faculty tend to believe student retention plays a vital role in the sustainability of the college; however, there is little research to support an investigation into their perceptions or views of student retention initiatives (Hoffman, Wilkinson, Xu, & Wiecha, 2014; Kelleher, 2015). To assist in the retention process, faculty tend to believe that academic advising represents their level of involvement in the student retention process. By understanding faculty perceptions regarding their role and responsibilities in student retention efforts, institutional leaders can begin to enhance efforts to promote faculty involvement in student retention efforts beyond the classroom and advising environment (Qablan, 2017). For example, Pattengale (2010) cited 12 ways to improve retention: “relate coursework to the student’s life purpose” (p.11); “get to know students on a more personal level” (p.13); “if you suspect a student is considering dropping out, ask him or her about it” (p. 15); “have an “endowed chair” at a local restaurant” (p. 16); “learn about “millennial” students” (p. 17); “provide options and choices” (p. 18); “review student profiles before class begins” (p. 20); “help students find peer support” (p. 22); ““frontload’ assistance” (p. 22); “get involved with orientation” (p. 23); “run an engaging classroom” (p. 24); and “make your retention efforts ‘intrusive’” (p. 25). By using these strategies, faculty can begin enhancing retention efforts beyond the classroom environment.

Faculty-Student Interactions

When faculty engage in regular interaction and contact with students, it helps to reinforce their learning endeavors, determination, and persistence to stay on campus as well as go to class and fulfill their degree graduation requirements (Dwyer, 2015;

Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005; Powell & Rey, 2015; Romano & Connell, 2015; Tinto, 2006). In addition, faculty involvement in student recruiting efforts enhances student retention, specifically focusing on initial faculty contact with incoming first-year students (Harlow & Olson, 2016; Kuh, 2016; Tull, Rutledge, Carter, & Warnick, 2012). Belcastro and Purslow (2006) and Lei (2016) asserted that a student's profile consists of three extended attributes: student relationships, foundation needs, and sense of belonging. Modern-day students must be prepared to acquire these three components during their undergraduate studies through graduation. The regression in higher education retention could be directly related to a lack of continuing and enduring faculty–student interactions, advising, and mentorship. Dwyer (2015), and Powell and Rey (2015) found that faculty–student interactions in and outside the classroom environment increased student persistence to graduation.

Dumbrigue, Moxley, and Najor-Durack (2013), Chandler (2008), and Carey-Butler and Myrick-Harris (2008) noted that over 50% of institutions used contact through social media outlets as their strongest recruiting tool relating to faculty interactions with students during and outside classroom sessions. Cox and Orehovec (2007) studied the faculty-student interaction via a one-year qualitative study that explored the complex nature of faculty-student interaction outside of the classroom. They found that five types of interaction occur: disengagement, incidental contact, functional interaction, personal interaction, and mentoring. They noted that even non-academic interaction between students and faculty can be a meaningful interaction from the student's perspective. Thus, the decrease in student retention could be directly related to a lack of student–faculty

interactions outside regular classroom sessions (Dumbrigue, Moxley, & Najor-Durack, 2013, Chandler, 2008, Carey-Butler & Myrich-Harris, 2008, Cox & Orehovec, 2007).

For decades, leaders of HBCUs have prided themselves on their faculty's ability to connect with students (Arroyo & Gasman, 2014) and play a significant role in students' lives (Jupiter et al., 2016). Flowers, Scott, Riley, and Palmer (2015) suggested HBCU faculty reach beyond the classroom to nurture students to graduation. Likewise, Ericksen and Walker (2015) expressed that faculty–student interactions within HBCUs promote student success. Faculty–student interactions on HBCU campuses have helped increase students' persistence from year to year (Palmer, Davis, & Maramba, 2010). Myrick, Gipson, and Mitchell (2016) suggested that HBCU faculty involvement in faculty–student interactions improved student persistence rates.

Summary

The second literature review explored HBCU retention needs and student retention strategies involving faculty (Gasman, 2013). As faculty better understand their role in the retention process, they are more likely to increase retention efforts outside of the classroom and advising roles (Pattengale, 2010). This study focused faculty perceptions of their roles and responsibilities in existing or future initiatives designed to increase student retention rates. Having a greater understanding of how faculty feel about their involvement in retention efforts can lead to more faculty involvement in local strategies (Zerquera, Ziskin, & Torres, 2016). As there is little to no research targeting faculty perceptions of their roles and responsibilities in student retention efforts, this

project served as a beginning step in understanding faculty perceptions in the hopes of increasing their level of involvement on the local campus.

Project Description and Goals

The project was a process recommendation that researched faculty perceptions of their roles and responsibilities in student retention efforts at a HBCU. The administration of the target HBCU does not accept policy recommendations unless the policy recommendation moves through a specific process. However, the administration did accept a process recommendation. Therefore, the genre of this project was a process recommendation. The audience for this project was the administration of the target HBCU. The goal of this project was to increase student retention rates at the HBCU. The project has the following objectives: (1) make a recommendation that increases faculty involvement in retention strategies and (2) make a recommendation that provides faculty development regarding student retention strategies that elucidates faculty's role in the retention process. Summaries of the study's data analysis and findings can be found in this section. Evidence from both literature and research on faculty perceptions, change theory, and student retention supported this process recommendation. Recommendations, connected to the evidence, were made to enhance or implement intentional faculty-focused retention programs that would involve faculty input and support based on the findings in this study.

Three recommendations were made to improve retention rates and change faculty perceptions about their role in the student retention process. The first recommendation was that the institution form a retention committee composed of institutional leaders,

faculty, staff, and students. Secondly, the institution needs to increase faculty involvement in the entire student retention process. Finally, the institution needs to conduct additional surveys to determine how faculty perceptions about their role in the student retention process change over time. By implementing these changes, student attrition will decrease.

An institutional student retention committee should be created that actively engages all stakeholders in the student retention process. This committee should be composed of institutional leaders, faculty, staff, and students. Through this collaborative effort, faculty may become actively engaged by taking ownership of the retention process and firmly establish themselves as valued stakeholders in the effort to increase student retention. The findings of this project showed that although some faculty know about current retention efforts, most faculty seek increased engagement in the retention process. Styron (2010) indicated that effective retention strategies are developed that are specific to the institution when faculty members collaborate with administration.

All faculty members need to be actively involved in the process of developing a more robust and intentional retention plan. Historically, faculty members were not expected to play a major role in retaining students but engaged as a quality control measure for sorting students according to performance (Pattengale, 2010). The educational paradigm has shifted. A changing higher education climate that includes budget cuts and fewer potential students requires faculty to become fully engaged in student retention and accept accountability for student success during the students' matriculation (Sorcinelli & Austin, 2006; Tinto, 2012). According to the findings of this

study, faculty were utilizing their own limited retention strategies that were primarily focused in the classroom. There was no evidence of collaboration between faculty on retention strategies. There are many ways faculty can become more engaged in the process, such as utilizing retention strategies inside and outside of the classroom, serving on departmental retention committees, and facilitating discussions with colleagues about retentions. For example, faculty teaching first-year gateway courses may decide to revise those courses or develop thematic units that also transfer to the residence halls (Smith, 2003). Pattengale (2010, p. 10-25) cites even more strategies that faculty can employ to improve retention: “relate coursework to the student’s life purpose” (p.11); “get to know students on a more personal level” (p.13); “if you suspect a student is considering dropping out, ask him or her about it” (p. 15); “have an “endowed chair” at a local restaurant” (p. 16); “learn about “millennial” students” (p. 17); “provide options and choices” (p. 18); “review student profiles before class begins” (p. 20); “help students find peer support” (p. 22); “‘frontload’ assistance” (p. 22); “get involved with orientation” (p. 23); “run an engaging classroom” (p. 24); and “make your retention efforts ‘intrusive’” (p. 25). However, to be successful, faculty need to understand and agree to these strategies for implementation to occur.

Faculty perceptions of their roles and responsibilities about student retention efforts often predict their involvement in retention efforts (Porter, 2015). Currently, there is no information about how faculty perceptions about student retention change over time. Additional data collection over time may provide additional insight into how faculty perceptions about student retention evolve as well as how other factors effect

promoting faculty participation in the retention process. Additional data as well as dissemination of results to the faculty will provide the opportunity for the faculty to understand their overall current perceptions of their role in student retention, select faculty professional development relevant to their unique situation, and engage with administration to help facilitate the requested professional development. A cycle may be developed whereby faculty members are surveyed, professional development is provided, and faculty make changes to their retention activities.

The needed resources for this project include the formation of a campus-wide student retention committee with all stakeholders represented; thus, time and service are important resources. This will require expenditures by the institution to provide professional development to faculty on retention strategies that may be incorporated campus-wide and to conduct further study into changes in faculty perceptions as a function of student retention.

Currently, the college has the necessary stakeholders to form the campus-wide retention committee. However, many of these individuals are involved in a variety of activities. Time to serve on a committee may be a premium. To overcome this barrier, the institution needs to prioritize this committee and perhaps offer some form of compensation to members of the committee (release time, stipend, etc.).

Faculty professional development about retention strategies that may be used both inside or outside of the classroom will be another expenditure. Since many institutions with low retention rates also face limited financial resources, it is recommended that the institution utilize current human resources to provide initial professional development. To

begin the process, the research in this project could be presented to faculty and staff at one of the institutes at the beginning of each semester.

As the institution makes changes to its processes, it will be important to see how faculty perceptions change as the retention rate changes. The institution has an Office of Institutional Effectiveness that gathers and analyzes survey data. This office could be tasked with administering and analyzing data related to faculty perceptions.

Project Evaluation Plan

A goal based project evaluation plan was utilized to disseminate the findings of this study that may be used to inform and change processes, based on research, and adopt the process recommendations made to the targeted institution (Appendix A). The objective of this project was to investigate how local faculty viewed their roles and responsibilities in the student retention process. Evaluation of this project will determine if the process recommendation is adopted by the targeted HBCU's stakeholders—administration, faculty, staff, and students.

The overall evaluation goal was for the target HBCU to adopt the new process recommendations to increase the student retention rate. This study's results were presented to the local administration in a process recommendation that explored faculty perceptions of their role in retention as well as their efforts in the student retention process. The recommendations from the study may lead to a more robust retention process with more faculty involvement.

Upon implementation of the recommendations, the project will be evaluated based on change in fall-to-fall student retention rates for first-time-freshmen. The goal

was to see a 5% increase in the retention rate within two years of implementation. This evaluation plan was justified based on the needs of the target HBCU. This evaluation was related to the stakeholders as well. The institution benefits from an increased retention rate, especially in the current accountability climate. An increase in the retention rate allows faculty members to see the fruits of their implementation of student retention strategies. Students remain in college allowing them an increased probability of earning a college credential that will open doors to higher paying jobs enabling them to pay back student loans.

Project Implications

The importance of the process recommendation was that it provided a means of improving student retention rates by understanding faculty perceptions about their roles in student retention. The recommendations provided an opportunity for the institution to implement new processes that may increase student retention rates and decrease student attrition. The social change implications were significant to the institution, the student, and society. Student retention was important for both the institution and the student. Colleges and universities, such as the target HBCU, spend considerable time, effort, and fiscal resources to recruit first-time freshmen. If these students don't matriculate, the institution must spend additional resources to recruit replacements for the students that leave the institution. Students, who choose to transfer to another institution, may lose time and credits and ultimately spend more money on their education. Students, who choose to drop out of higher education, earn less money than their counterparts who did

earn a degree. In the end, this effects society because more and more jobs require knowledge and skills that only those with a college degree possess.

My research provided leaders of the target HBCU an understanding of the value of faculty perceptions and involvement in promoting student retention. Kinzie (2005) found that faculty–student interactions increased the success of college students through increased familiarity with academic and social support initiatives. Tinto (2006) reported that faculty contact with a student was a key predictor in that student’s persistence.

Finally, through understanding how existing faculty felt about their involvement in student retention efforts, the college administration gained insight on how to address and encourage faculty to take a more active role in promoting student persistence beyond the classroom environment. The data collected from the faculty instruments can be used in addressing faculty involvement in future student retention strategies. This project provided local stakeholders with recommendations to improve student retention at the target institution. In the larger context, both students and the institution benefit--more students will persist to obtain degrees and better jobs and the institution must expend fewer resources to recruit new students to replace the ones lost through attrition.

The focus of Section 4 was on my reflections and conclusions of the study. In this section, strengths and limitations were presented as well as results of the findings, recommendations for future research, and alternative approaches to address the project.

Section 4: Reflections and Conclusions

The purpose of this study was to investigate faculty perceptions of their roles and expectations in student retention at an HBCU in the Southeast United States. In this section, I discuss the strengths and limitations of the study and present recommendations for alternative approaches to increase faculty engagement in college student retention activities. I follow with reflections on the importance of the work to the study's target site and discuss how an understanding of faculty perceptions at the target HBCU can be applied to all colleges and universities. Also included in this section are implications, applications, and directions for future research and reflections of lessons learned in my role as a practitioner, scholar, and researcher in my doctoral journey.

Project Strengths

The strength of this process recommendation project is its ability to provide recommendations that, if implemented, may increase faculty involvement in the student retention process and ultimately increase the student retention rate. The study results provided evidence that faculty perceptions about their role in the retention process are important considerations when devising a plan to increase student retention rates. Researchers have suggested the first step in understanding any phenomenon is to understand participants' perceptions of the subject (Bennett et al., 2011). According to data I collected via three methods (an online questionnaire, interviews, and a faculty-student engagement interview logs), faculty reported an overall willingness to participate in student retention efforts on their campus. Overall, faculty reported a willingness to participate in either their own retention strategies or ones initiated by their campus.

Understanding the two factors has the potential to serve as a benchmark in formulating solutions for student retention problems at the target HBCU and other colleges and universities whose leaders are seeking to improve student retention.

This project, a process recommendation, is appropriate for recommending changes to current retention practices at the target institution that may increase student retention rates and decrease attrition. Institutional changes may promote student retention changes beyond the local institution and impact similar institutions across the nation. The project provides an opportunity to apply best practices to address student retention. The best practices identified for student retention are to (a) conduct additional surveys to determine how faculty perceptions about their role in the student retention process change over time; (b) form a retention committee composed of institutional leaders, faculty, staff, and students; and (c) increase faculty involvement in the entire student retention process.

Limitations of the Project

I investigated faculty perceptions about student retention at a single HBCU. The results showed faculty members at the local site perceived the following: faculty members want to be more involved in student retention efforts, they seek to be involved in the overall campus student retention plan, and they are currently engaged in their own student retention strategies outside of the classroom. However, these findings may not translate to faculty at other institutions because the study considered faculty at a single site. Nevertheless, the findings were positive in that they revealed that, overall, faculty members seemed interested in helping improve student retention.

Recommendations for Alternative Approaches to Increasing Faculty Engagement in Retention Activities

Faculty Beliefs and Perceptions

One recommended alternative approach to address the limitations of this study is to explore faculty perceptions about institutional initiatives designed to increase retention. Faculty perceptions of their roles and responsibilities in student retention efforts can predict their active involvement in retention efforts (Porter, 2015). Because my study was limited to one data-gathering site, I recommend that further research be conducted so that institutions and other researchers have access to a broader collection of results, which could provide additional insight into how faculty perceptions about student retention evolve and how this can aid in promoting faculty participation in the retention process. I recommend that the target HBCU conduct additional and more frequent surveys of faculty so that they may gain insights into faculty perceptions about retention and how these perceptions/attitudes change or evolve over time. Disseminating the results of these surveys to the faculty will provide an opportunity for faculty to understand their overall current perception of their role in retention, may assist in selecting faculty professional development opportunities relevant to their unique situation, and may help faculty engage with administrators to facilitate the requested professional development. Over time, a cycle may be created whereby faculty members are surveyed, professional development is provided, and faculty make changes to their retention activities. In addition, faculty perceptions about retention may change as a result of continued emphasis on student retention and additional professional development.

Faculty Collaboration

A second recommendation relates to the role that faculty play in collaboration with administration in the retention process. Styron (2010) found that when faculty members collaborate with administration, effective retention strategies are developed that are specific to that particular institution. Because my study addressed individual faculty perceptions and strategies related to student retention without interaction with a retention committee, I recommend that the institution form a retention committee. Some participant faculty members expressed an interest in such a committee. This committee, composed of institutional leaders, faculty, staff, and students, may provide additional input about ways to engage students. Through this collaborative effort, faculty may become actively engaged in the retention process by taking ownership of the retention process and firmly establishing themselves as valued stakeholders in the effort to increase student retention. Further research in collaborative retention committees composed of administrators, faculty, staff, and students may also provide valuable data on the effectiveness of these committees.

Faculty Involvement

My research also led to a third recommendation: All faculty members need to become involved in the process of developing a more robust and intentional retention plan. Historically, faculty members have not been expected to play a major role in retaining students but instead have been engaged as a quality control measure for sorting students according to performance (Pattengale, 2010). Today, the educational paradigm has shifted due to a changing higher education climate; budget surpluses and a plentiful

supply of students no longer exist (Pattengale, 2010). The new paradigm requires faculty to become fully engaged in student retention as well as accountable for student success during students' matriculation. Faculty who share the perception that they are not key players in addressing student retention may easily become disengaged from the process.

Several activities may be used to encourage faculty members to engage in the process, including retention strategies that can be implemented inside or outside of the classroom, serving on departmental retention committees, or facilitating discussions with colleagues about student retention. Faculty members who share the perception that they are not key players in addressing student retention on the local campus need to become more involved in the retention process (Sorcinelli & Austin, 2006; Tinto, 2012). My research findings indicated that faculty members who indicated that they were involved with informally sharing their ideas with others appeared to be more engaged in the student retention process. Therefore, I recommend that administrators encourage faculty to take an active role in developing new or enhancing current retention strategies so that they will be more involved and visible in the retention process at their campus. Further research into the degree of faculty involvement in the retention process as it relates to student retention may show strategies that are particularly effective in student retention.

Scholarship

When I started this journey in 2009, I never expected the activity of scholarship to affect me so profoundly. My involvement in this project pushed me to seek a higher level of academic achievement. As an academic officer, my participation in this process

strengthened my ability to engage in scholarly research. I have a new respect for the development and evaluation of a research project.

Project Development and Evaluation

With respect to the development and evaluation of a research project, this journey has been a learning experience. I gained insight on how to research peer and scholarly resources to develop a qualitative research project. I learned that there is not only an order to scholarly research, but also that the research process is a constant evolution of an idea. In addition, I have learned the importance of matching a method and design to address a given phenomenon. Choosing the best method allows a researcher to answer his or her research questions. The development of my project included understanding the selection and use of an online faculty questionnaire, faculty interviews, and faculty-student intervention logs for data collection.

This project enabled me to experience the entire process in its totality, including initial concepts, literature research, research questions, methodology and design, data collection, data analysis, and conclusions. Through the development and implementation of the methods chosen, I honed my skills to collect and analyze data, recognize themes, and draw conclusions to report my findings. Through this process, I feel I am more experienced in conducting research studies.

Reflective Self-Analysis as a Scholar-Practitioner

As I reflected on this journey, I was amazed at the wealth of knowledge gained. My role as a scholar-practitioner was to research faculty perceived roles and responsibilities in current student retention processes on a local HBCU campus. Through

this process, I have become more aware of the act of being a reviewer of scholarship research. I have strengthened my ability to research scholarly work. Regarding being a practitioner, I feel that I can now use the knowledge gained to develop and evaluate any research topic. I feel that as a scholar-practitioner, I am more self-confident in the process. As a scholar-practitioner, I can use my role as an academic officer to help prepare students in higher education to become not only critical thinkers, but researchers of scholarly work. My goal is to continue to pursue work that requires me to research and be an active practitioner of the work as a project developer who effects social change.

Leadership and Change

Leadership and change were among the most valuable components of my scholarly research process. I gained knowledge and support from various leaders in academia. I found leadership to be a key factor when working to influence change or implement new ideas to support my study. Likewise, the leadership at my institution was more than willing to entertain or welcome change to improve student retention efforts. The local campus leaders, including the president, have been supportive of this investigation of faculty perceptions of their perceived roles and responsibilities in student retention efforts. It is imperative that leadership be receptive and favorable to change or intervention (Larsson, Sandahl, Söderhjelm, Sjøvold, & Zander, 2017). The success of academia is dependent on student success.

The findings of the current study will be presented to the leadership team of the targeted institution in the form of a paper that outlines the investigation, findings, and recommendations on faculty perceived roles and responsibilities in student retention

efforts. The leadership will receive an electronic copy of the document that will be distributed through e-mail. A printed copy will be given to the president and the executive leadership team.

Reflection on Importance of the Work

When I selected my project study, I wanted to focus on ways to improve student retention at the local HBCU campus. As an academic officer and dean of a program, I chose to study student retention strategies and faculty involvement. The purpose of my study was to address how faculty perceived their roles and expectations in retention efforts. This work was important because it allowed faculty to voice their views about their involvement with student retention. The results may promote a more intentional role of faculty in retention efforts beyond the classroom.

As I reflected on the study, it became apparent that faculty perceptions influenced their current participation in retention efforts. Faculty had never been asked about their perceptions of their roles and responsibilities in student retention efforts. Their responses were highly favorable in supporting student retention, and the study enabled them to express what they thought they should be doing in current and future initiatives.

Implications and Applications

I conducted a qualitative study to gain insight from faculty about their perceptions of their roles and responsibilities in student retention efforts on a local HBCU campus. My hope was to collect data that would help me understand how faculty felt about their current involvement in these efforts, as well as how they perceived their involvement in future initiatives. The implications from the study include two commonalities of faculty

perceptions. The first commonality is that many faculty members were aware of student retention efforts on the local campus. Faculty responses indicated they were aware of retention efforts and they frequently interacted with students outside of the classroom environment. The second implication relates to future student engagement initiatives. From the data collected, it was evident that most faculty were convinced that their involvement would improve the retention process. Although a few faculty members felt the administration was solely responsible for student retention on the local campus, most faculty realized that many factors affect retention and that they were one of those factors. The question remains how the administration can actively engage all faculty in the retention process allowing the faculty to realize their important role in this process.

Directions for Future Research

Previously discussed in this section were recommendations for the local campus, including some thoughts on further research. Seidel (2016) indicated more research is needed to determine best practices and improvement of retention processes. Further investigations of faculty perceptions of their roles and responsibilities toward student retention may help in enhance student retention initiative and develop student retention strategies that are supported through active faculty engagement. These initiatives and strategies needed to address both commonalities include a more robust retention process model that includes faculty from the inception. I learned from the responses that some faculty were engaged with students while others were somewhat reluctant to go beyond faculty–student interactions in the classroom or office hours. To apply direction, I suggested that further, more in-depth research might investigate why faculty responded as

they did. Research has shown that faculty beliefs affect their present and future participation in ongoing efforts (Chory & Offstein, 2016). Further research may also investigate student expectations of faculty to help with student retention efforts.

Conclusion

My journey with this study started with the concept that faculty are key players in addressing student retention issues at the target HBCU. I wanted to identify ways to help with the problem student retention from inception to graduation. The investigation consisted of a qualitative approach to address the phenomenon of faculty perception of their roles and responsibilities in student retention efforts and their view of future involvement.

As I concluded the study, I learned that faculty were aware of their roles and responsibilities in student retention overall. As a graduate of an HBCU, faculty played a major role in my journey to graduation. Faculty–student relationships beyond the classroom were influential in my completion. When I started this quest, leaders on the local campus struggled with low retention rates. Since the inception of study, I have had the opportunity to interact with faculty to understand their perceptions regarding student retention efforts, particularly with future endeavors. In my current role, I work directly with adult learners and this project was driven by my passion to help students obtain their lifelong educational aspirations. Through this research project, I not only gained an appreciation for the local faculty, I identified areas of improvement. Genuinely, faculty members were willing to engage students; however, student engagement must be

intentional and ongoing. I am hopeful that the findings can be used to improve or implement new strategies of retention efforts locally.

Having completed this qualitative project study, my scholarship goals include:

- Share the findings with leaders on the local campus to help in the implementation of a more inclusive retention process that includes faculty input.
- Benchmark faculty involvement from future retention efforts through additional post questionnaires, interviews, or intervention logging.
- Solicit student perceptions and expectations of faculty–student engagement and its role in student retention efforts.

I want to thank my chair, committee members, and scholars for helping me with this journey. Through this process, I gained valuable insight into how investigating phenomena can facilitate social change. This study only touched the surface of faculty perceptions of their roles and responsibilities in student retention efforts. I suggest that additional research be conducted to gain more insight into faculty perceptions.

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Appendix A: The Project

Faculty Perceived Roles in Student Retention

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Executive Summary

Dramatic changes in higher education have occurred over the last decade primarily due to increased accountability requirements from the federal government (Pattengale, 2010). Of primary importance to all institutions of higher education is the retention of students. Implications for institutions with lower student retention rates include fewer tuition dollars needed to operate. Fewer students require fewer faculty to teach them, which in turn requires fewer administrators. Students who drop out often face a problem of lacking a college credential and having to pay back student loans. Indeed, accrediting agencies, gatekeepers to an acceptable accreditation status that allows the institutions' students to receive federal financial aid, are reviewing institutions with retention and graduation rates below a set standard. Students who do not complete a degree face fewer career options and lower earning potential (Pattengale, 2010).

HBCU's often face additional retention challenges. They often enroll a large number of low-income college students and thus have lower retention and graduation rates (Muraskin, Lee, Wilner, & Swail, 2004). Students from low-income families are more likely to have received an inferior K-12 education, not receive the same family

support to attend college, and be unable to afford college. At college, the low-income student is more likely to drop out, and often at a later stage in the degree program, than their wealthier peers.

A study was conducted to investigate faculty perceptions of their roles in the student retention process at a Historically Black College and University (HBCU) located in the southwest region of the United States where student retention rates remain a challenge. The research questions explored faculty perceptions about their roles in the student retention process and how they currently engage in student retention efforts. The study was guided by Lewin's Theory of Change Model as well as the Theory of Change and phenomenological inquiry. Three instruments were utilized to collect data: questionnaire, interviews, and faculty-student intervention logs. My findings revealed how existing faculty felt about their involvement in student retention efforts. Recommendations for improving student retention rates by positively impacting faculty perceptions about retention are included.

Recent retention rate data indicate a decrease in retention rates at the target institution, which could lead to increased institutional expenditures on student recruitment because more students will need to be recruited to replace those lost. If enrollment drops significantly, the institution will face budgetary cuts, which will lead to a reduced workforce at the institution. A process change is strongly recommended to adopt the recommendations set forth in this document. These changes could serve as an excellent model for other small HBCUs as well as enable the institution to further stabilize its fiscal foundation.

Process Recommendation

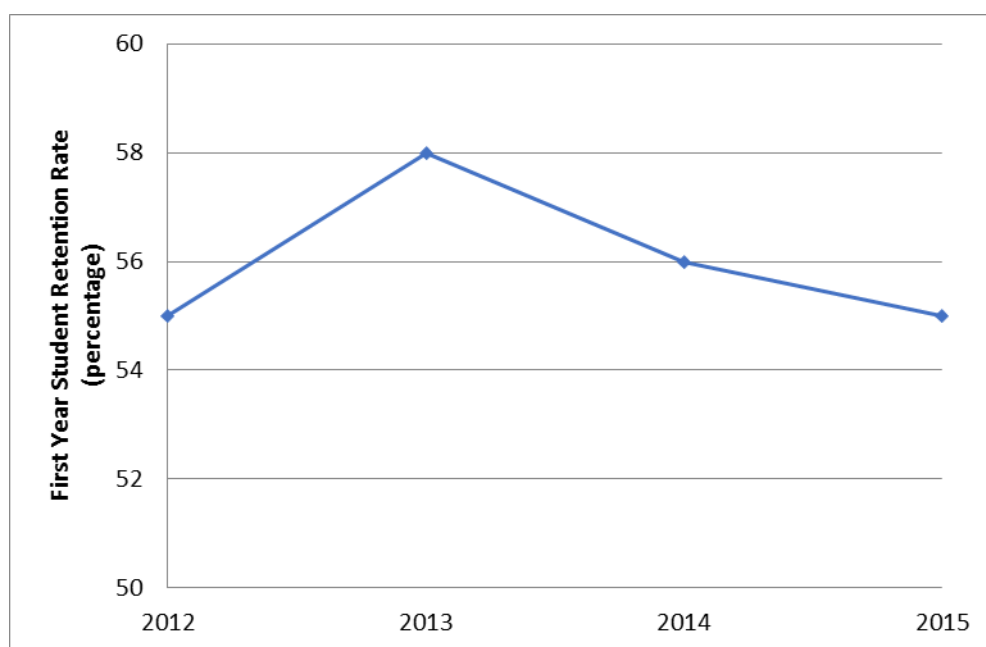
To address the local problem of student retention, a study was conducted that explored faculty perceptions about student retention and their roles in the student retention process. According to data obtained from IPEDS for the institution, student retention is a concern for the institution. The study was conducted at a local campus identified as a Historically Black College and University (HBCU). Items that show faculty perceptions and their roles in student retention provide an avenue for institutional change to improve the student retention rates since faculty interact with students more than another other aspect of the institution. Therefore, the following is a process recommendation to adopt new retention committees and professional development. This process recommendation provides a summary of the existing problem along with a summary of the findings of this study. Major evidence from both literature and the research are included. The recommendations will be connected to the evidence provided. The goal of this process recommendation is to understand current faculty perceptions about their role in student retention, provide avenues to change or enhance faculty perceptions about student retention, and increase student retention.

The Existing Problem

HBCUs, like other institutions, have found themselves the target of increased accountability standards (Powell & Rey, 2014). The federal government and accrediting agencies have placed an increased emphasis on the graduation rates and first year retention rates (ACT, Inc., 2010; Tinto, 2010).

Institutions with an open-door admissions policy can be particularly impacted by these new standards. When compared to other institutions in the United States, the local campus's fall-to-fall retention rate for first-time freshmen of 55% is currently below the national average of 73% (see Figure 1).

Figure 1. First Year Student Retention Rate



This lower student retention rate may be caused by two factors: 1) human resources changes in recent years reduced the number of full-time faculty while increasing the number of adjunct faculty and 2) no comprehensive retention plan that involves faculty exists. While the administration has asked faculty to become more persistent and intentional in encouraging students to remain engaged in their studies and persist with a degree program at the institution, effective participation and collaboration across the institution is needed to increase student retention rates. Other colleges and

universities have shown that when faculty and staff actively engage in student retention activities, student retention rates increase (ACT, Inc., 2010; Bain, Gandy & Golightly, 2012; Miller, 2007; Saret, 2009; Smith, 2003). Thus, educational researchers are particularly interested in the role that college faculty play in supporting student retention efforts on campuses.

This study investigated faculty perceptions of their roles and expectations in student retention at the local HBCU. Specifically, the investigation focused on how faculty feels they should engage in the student retention process and what institution-sponsored or self-adopted strategies they use or would use to help with student attainment. The research questions that this study was designed to answer are the following: 1) what are faculty perceptions regarding student retention efforts at the local HBCU? and 2) what do faculty perceive their role in student retention should be? The goal is that you will use these recommendations, which include direct involvement by campus faculty, to improve student retention.

Summary of Analysis and Findings

This qualitative study utilized three instruments to investigate how faculty perceive their roles in student retention efforts: survey instrument, interviews, and intervention logs. The data was analyzed by thoroughly reviewing responses, organizing responses by theme and sub-theme to interpret perceptions, and reporting results.

The aim of this study was to answer two questions about faculty perceptions about student retention. The bulleted information below provides a concise summary of the concepts and themes gained from this study:

1. What are faculty perceptions regarding student retention efforts at the local HBCU?

Theme 1: Faculty perceived that they should be involved in retention efforts.

Theme 2: The primary retention efforts at the local HBCU occurred through the student success program, the retention coordinator, first year experience course, the retention committee, and advising. However, faculty indicated that they perceive their primary role in retention to be through student advisement.

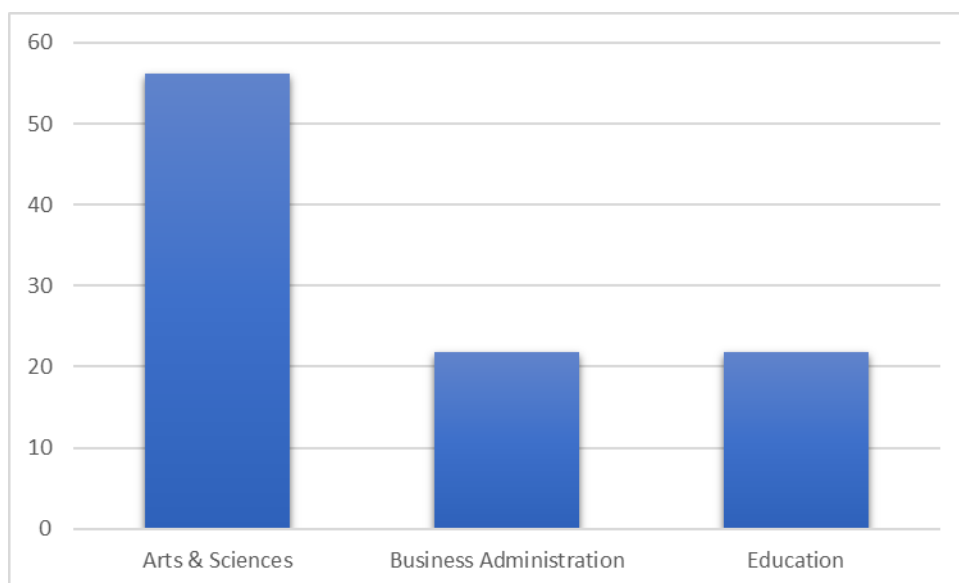
2. What do faculty perceive their role in student retention to be?

Theme 1: Faculty perceived that their role in student retention is as an advisor.

Theme 2: Faculty engagement with students, through communication both inside and outside of class through various media, improves student retention.

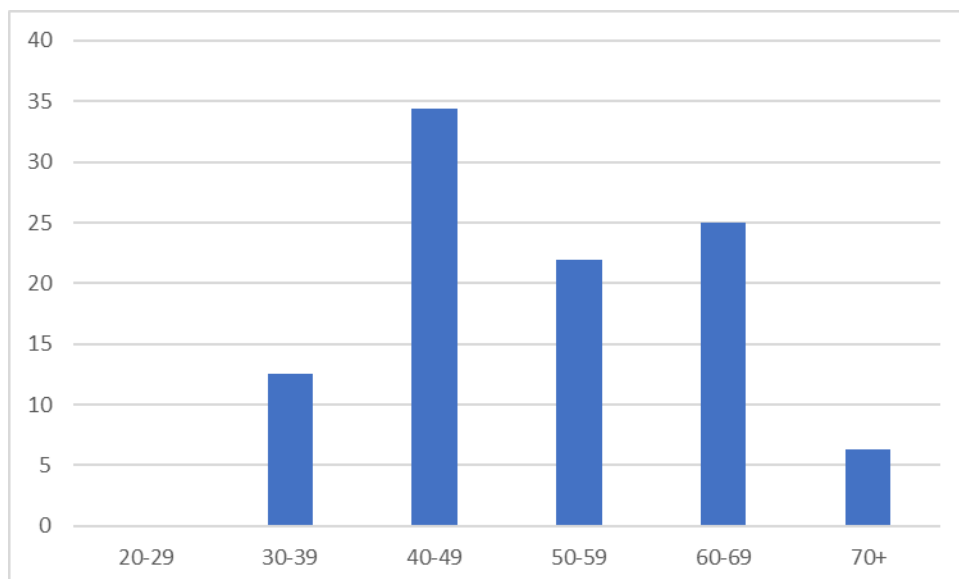
Questionnaire, Interviews, and Student Intervention Logs

A survey questionnaire was administered via the internet to full-time faculty at the local HBCU. Of the 33 full-time faculty members, 32 (96.97%) agreed to participate in the study. Questionnaire participants taught in the following divisions: 7 (21.88%) in the Division of Business Administration, 18 (56.25%) in the Division of Arts and Sciences, and 7 (21.88%) in the Division of Education.

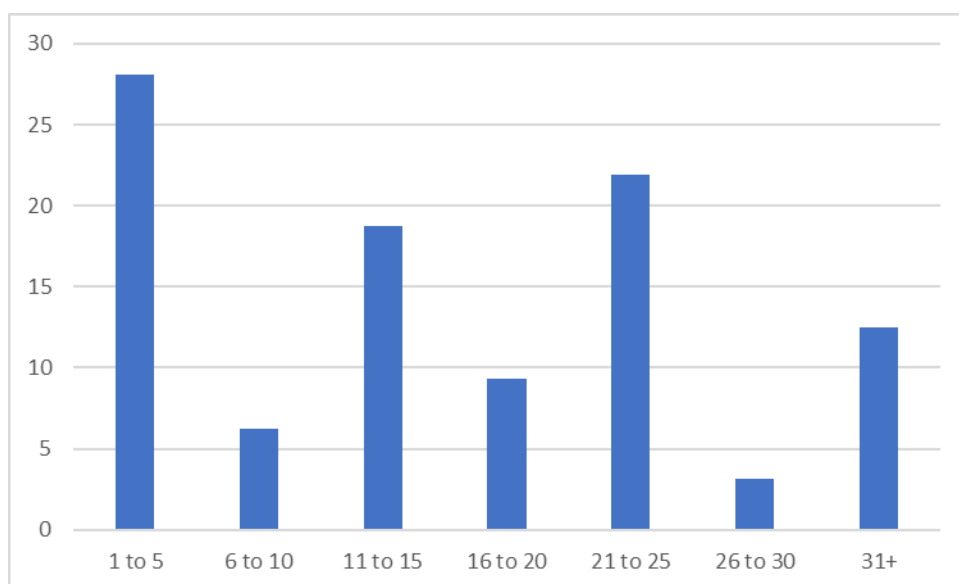


This follows the normal distribution of faculty amongst the divisions at the target HBCU.

The age range of participants is as follows: 20-29 years of age – 0 (0.00%); 30-39 years of age – 4 (12.50%); 40-49 years of age – 11 (34.38%); 50-59 years of age – 7 (21.88%); 60-69 years of age – 8 (25.00%) and 70+ years of age – 2 (6.25%).



The years of teaching experience of the participants was also used to characterize the sample: 1-5 years of teaching experience – 9 (28.13%); 6-10 years of teaching experience – 2 (6.25%); 11-15 years of teaching experience – 6 (18.75%); 16-20 years of teaching experience – 3 (9.35%); 21-25 years of experience – 7 (21.88%); 26-30 years of teaching experience – 1 (3.13%); and 31+ years of teaching experience – 4 (12.50%).



At the end of the questionnaire, participants were asked if they would be willing to be interviewed. Approximately 33.33% of the respondents to this question agreed to be interviewed and provided their name and phone number so that I could set up an interview time. Faculty interviews allowed the researcher to directly ask faculty about their perceptions of faculty-student interactions outside of teaching, any methods and strategies used to keep students engaged in course work, and preferences for engaging in campus-supported retention activities. Of the five participants that were interviewed, all five agreed to keep intervention logs. Participants were provided a faculty-student intervention log and instructions on how to record interactions with students. The faculty-

student intervention log allowed the researcher to gain insight into other techniques that faculty may be using to aid in student retention efforts.

Data Analysis Methodology

Data from all three instruments were organized into manageable data sets to understand faculty perceptions about student retention efforts on the target campus. The data analysis used coding to identify concepts and themes in the participant responses so that commonalities amongst faculty perceptions could be identified (Keegan & Turner, 2001; Patton, 2002). Research question responses were organized and categorized by data sets according to themes. A direct interpretation approach, which draws meaning across parts of a single set of data, was used to code each response by a similar theme according to the research question (Charmaz, 2006).

Results

Data from the questionnaire were broken into five sections: Demographics, Faculty Awareness (Table 1), Faculty Engagement (Table 2), Faculty Involvement in Ongoing and Future Retention Efforts (Table 3), and Faculty-Student Interactions (Table 4). The Demographics section of the questionnaire asked respondents to report data about academic department, teaching field, age, and tenure status. Respondents reported on their awareness and perceived involvement in existing retention efforts on the local campus in the Faculty Engagement section of the questionnaire. It is important to note that 83.7% of respondents indicated that they were aware of existing retention efforts and understood how these efforts had the potential to positively affect student retention. This information was cross-validated in the interviews.

In the Faculty Engagement section of the questionnaire, respondents reported on the responsibility that they feel about faculty engagement in student retention efforts. The majority of respondents agreed that they should be engaged in ongoing retention efforts and felt responsible for engaging in local retention efforts). However, one respondent felt that faculty should not be responsible for engaging in retention efforts. Faculty identified the following retention efforts on the campus: advisement, mentoring, and first year experience courses.

The Faculty Involvement in Ongoing and Future Retention Efforts section of the questionnaire provided data about how faculty perceive their involvement in existing or new retention strategies at the campus. The majority of respondents agreed that faculty should be involved in retention strategies. Respondents, who clarified their positions in the open-ended comment, stated that there were limits to their willingness to engage. For example, one respondent indicated that the administration is responsible for retention while the faculty and staff are simply involved in retention. Another respondent state that he only responded when asked to provide assistance in retention efforts. Other respondents indicated that involvement was limited to the classroom and only a certain extent outside of the classroom.

The Faculty-Student Interactions section of the questionnaire allowed respondents to report about their own student retention strategies. Faculty strategies included encouraging and acknowledging of student success, providing students with connections to professional organizations, interacting in a manner that addresses the whole student, and communicating openly. Faculty responses show that they believe that they should

interact with students about graduation and degree completion, especially in the advising process.

Faculty responses to interview questions suggested that HBCU faculty must work harder to retain students. Faculty reported willingness to engage with both campus-sponsored student retention efforts as well as their own as well as to engage in positive student contact and assist with early alert retention strategies (such as increase tutorials during office hours and personal contact via email and/or text messages).

The Faculty-Student Intervention Logs showed that faculty participate in a variety of retention strategies: advising, homework tutoring, scholarly mentorship, life skills, career counseling, professional club advice, and communication (email, texts, video conferencing, and telephone contacts). The logs also allowed the researcher to confirm the retention strategies mentioned in the questionnaire.

Major Evidence

A thorough search of the literature was completed to provide a foundation for this study. During the literature search, three primary categories emerged as the most relevant to the study—faculty involvement in student retention efforts, faculty perceptions, and faculty-student interactions.

Faculty Involvement in Student Retention Efforts

Faculty involvement in student retention efforts can lead to improved student retention rates at colleges and universities (Anaya & Cole, 2001; DeFreitas & Bravo, 2012; Napier, Dekhane, & Smith, 2011; O’Meara, Knudsen & Jones, 2013; Russo-Gleicher, 2013). When faculty engage in student engagement activities outside of the

classroom (such as academic and behavior mentoring and student counseling), they have the capacity to help students focus on their academic studies and matriculate through the degree plan. Faculty who focus on effective instruction and engage in academic support services, advising, mentoring, and academic-related campus sponsored activities, student retention rates improve, and more students complete their degree programs (Anaya & Cole, 2001; Tinto, 2001). By establishing professional training programs that improve faculty interactions with students, colleges and universities may increase student retention rates and improve student degree completion. Faculty who are engaged in student retention efforts have the potential to help reduce overall student attrition rates at their institution, but little research exists to identify specifically how faculty engage in the retention process (Gajeski & Mather, 2015; Kemp, 2014; Newman, 2011; Powell & Rey, 2015; Teranishi & Bezbatchesko, 2015).

Faculty Perceptions

Faculty perceptions regarding engagement in the student retention process can positively or negatively impact their participation in retention efforts (Shaw, Irwin & Patrizi, 2016). This was first explored in the 1960s and 1970s (Fishbein & Ajzen, 1975; Tittle, 1962). A persistent factor in student retention efforts is how faculty perceive their role in student retention efforts (Lo, Reeves, Jenkins & Parkman, 2016). How faculty understand their role in retention efforts is critical to faculty actively participating in local retention efforts (Wilson, Murphy, Pearson, Wallace, Reher & Buys, 2016).

Researchers, investigating preferences for commitment to student retention efforts, found that faculty should be directly and actively involved in the student retention

process and feel their involvement in student retention efforts should be moderate to substantial (Kenzie, 2005; Nutt, 1999). Overall, faculty recognize that they should be more involved in the student retention process and that this promotes student success (Nutt, 1999; Porter, 2005).

Faculty-Student Interactions

Faculty engagement in student interactions that extend beyond academic lecturing and include engagement in academic and behavioral mentorship tasks is critical to student growth and fulfillment of academic dreams (Esin, 2013; McArthur, 2005). Likewise, students must be open to faculty interactions outside of the classroom (Guiffrida, 2005). Students believe that retention efforts that support both academics and student life can reinforce their persistence to remain in college and complete their degree programs (Guiffrida, 2005; McArthur, 2005; Saret, 2009). Indeed, students who receive faculty support tend to stay focused and remain enrolled in college (Shelton, 2003).

Theory of Change

Theory of Change is defined as “a systematic and cumulative process of links between activities, outcomes, and contexts” (Connell & Kubisch, 1998, p. 9). Several change models exist. The best fit model for this study is Lewin’s change model, a foundational model that focuses to specifically implement change and encourage participation in activities that identify problems that might serve as barriers to change (Kritsonis, 2005; Lewin, 1950).

Lewin’s three-step change theory (Figure 1) explores behavior change through unfreezing and disrupting activities, situations, and practices as well as structuring a

means of transition to new, acceptable, and normal conditions (Kritsonis, 2005; Lewin, 1950). Lewin's model is a suitable methodology to provide institutions with the guidance to unfreeze current practices, construct a plan of improvement, and increase student retention through implementation of new conditions. The model also aids in identifying barriers to successful implementation (Romano & Connell, 2015).

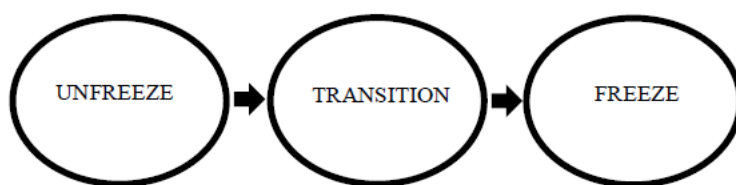


Figure 1. Lewin's (1950) Three-step Change Theory

Figure 2 illustrates Lewin's change model as applied to this study. Faculty perceptions and institutional expectations are drives of change. Improved student retention strategies is the ultimate goal.



Figure 2. Lewin's (1950) Change Model Applied to the Current Study

Phenomenological Inquiry

Phenomenological methods are useful for investigating a given phenomenon through the perceptions of targeted participants (Yüksel & Yıldırım, 2015). It may also be used to explore a phenomenon before implementing a plan for change. Change theory supports phenomenological research because understanding phenomena is a critical step

that must occur before developing and implementing any change plan (Hatch, D.K., 2012; Hatch, J.A., 2002).

Recommendations

Three recommendations are made to improve retention rates and change faculty perceptions about their role in the student retention process. The first recommendation is that the institution form a retention committee composed of institutional leaders, faculty, staff, and students. Secondly, the institution needs to increase faculty involvement in the entire student retention process. Finally, the institution needs to conduct additional surveys to determine how faculty perceptions about their role in the student retention process change over time. By implementing these changes, student attrition will decrease.

An institutional student retention committee should be created that actively engages all stakeholders in the student retention process. This committee should be composed of institutional leaders, faculty, staff, and students. Through this collaborative effort, faculty may become actively engaged by taking ownership of the retention process and firmly establishing themselves as valued stakeholders in the effort to increase student retention. The findings of this project show that although some faculty know about current retention efforts, most faculty seek increased engagement in the retention process. Styron (2010) indicates that effective retention strategies are developed that are specific to the institution when faculty members are allowed to collaborate with administration.

All faculty members need to become actively involved in the process of developing a more robust and intentional retention plan. Historically, faculty members have not been expected to play a major role in retaining students but instead engaged as a

quality control measure for sorting students according to performance (Pattengale, 2010). The educational paradigm has shifted. A changing higher education climate that includes budget cuts and fewer potential students requires faculty to become fully engaged in student retention and accept accountability for student success during the students' matriculation (Sorcinelli & Austin, 2006; Tinto, 2012). According to the findings of this study, faculty are utilizing their own limited retention strategies that are primarily focused in the classroom. There was little evidence of collaboration between faculty on retention strategies. There are many ways faculty can become more engaged in the process, such as utilizing retention strategies inside and outside of the classroom, serving on departmental retention committees, and facilitating discussions with colleagues about retentions. For example, faculty teaching first-year gateway courses may decide to revise those courses or develop thematic units that also transfer to the residence halls (Smith, 2003). Pattengale (2010, p. 10-25) cites even more strategies that faculty can employ to improve retention: "relate coursework to the student's life purpose" (p.11); "get to know students on a more personal level" (p.13); "if you suspect a student is considering dropping out, ask him or her about it" (p. 15); "have an "endowed chair" at a local restaurant" (p. 16); "learn about "millennial" students" (p. 17); "provide options and choices" (p. 18); "review student profiles before class begins" (p. 20); "help students find peer support" (p. 22); "'frontload' assistance" (p. 22); "get involved with orientation" (p. 23); "run an engaging classroom" (p. 24); and "make your retention efforts 'intrusive'" (p. 25). However, to be successful, faculty need to understand and agree to these strategies in order for implementation to occur.

Faculty perceptions of their roles and responsibilities about student retention efforts often predict their involvement in retention efforts (Porter, 2015). Currently, there is no information about how faculty perceptions about student retention change over time. Additional data collection over time may provide additional insight into how faculty perceptions about student retention evolve as well as how other factors effect promoting faculty participation in the retention process. Additional data as well as dissemination of results to the faculty will provide the opportunity for the faculty to understand their overall current perceptions of their role in student retention, select faculty professional development relevant to their unique situation, and engage with administration to help facilitate the requested professional development. Over time, a cycle may be developed whereby faculty members are surveyed, professional development is provided, and faculty make changes to their retention activities.

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Appendix B: Pilot Study Memorandum

This memorandum presents the introduction document for the pilot study to examine the validity and reliability of the proposed survey questions.

Memorandum

To:

From:

Date:

Re: Pilot Dissertation Survey Questions

My name is Dorothy Langley, Dean, Adult and Continuing Education, Jarvis College, in Hawkins, Texas. I am completing the work for my Doctorate of Education in Higher Education and Adult Learning at Walden University. The following questionnaire is for my dissertation research which focuses on how faculty perceive their roles, responsibilities and expectations in supporting student retention.

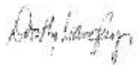
As you are aware, student retention is one of the top issues facing higher education institutions today. In addition to graduation rates, institutions are now measured on student retention rates. Researchers over the past 10 years suggest that faculty have the potential to play an important role in the retention of students. The problem appears to exist that retention of student starts in enrollment and student services; however, retention

is a shared effort by all facets of an institution, especially faculty because of their direct interactions with the students. Student retention impacts the entire school as it relates to the individual student success and graduation rates.

The target subjects for this study will include full-time faculty members at Jarvis Christian College. The method of data collection will be a research questionnaire. Prior to delivering the questionnaire, I will petition Walden's IRB to ensure all requirements for human subject protection are followed and adhered in the study. This is a voluntary questionnaire and confidentiality will be maintained. The questions will be available to you through Survey Monkey for comments and feedback.

Thank you in advance for your time and assistance in my completion of my dissertation.

Sincerely,



Dorothy Langley

Appendix C: Faculty Questionnaire

The following questionnaire will be used to poll full-time faculty on their perceptions regarding their role in student retention efforts at the colleges that are the target of this study.

Dear Faculty,

Student retention is one of the top issues facing higher education institutions today.

Institution retention rates are used as a form of measurement of student completion by some governing bodies. In addition to existing retention efforts of first year experience, residential life, advising and tutors, faculty involvement is a critical component in student persistence efforts. In an attempt to understand faculty awareness of retention efforts and the role faculty plays, please respond to the provided survey questions.

Demographic Information

Q1: What department do you work in at the HBCU where you are employed?

- Business Administration
- Arts and Sciences
- Education

Q2: What is your teaching field?

- Business
- Math
- Biology

- Education
- English
- History
- Kinesiology
- Religion
- Speech
- Chemistry
- Criminal Justice
- Accounting
- Computer Information Systems
- Social Work
- Music
- Art
- Other (Please describe in the space provided)

Q3: What is your age range?

- 20-29
- 30-39
- 40-49
- 50-59

- 60-69
- 70+

Q4: How many years have you been teaching?

- 1-5
- 6-10
- 11-15
- 16-20
- 21-25
- 26-30
- 31+

Q5: Are aware of existing retention efforts on the locate campus and how these efforts can affect student retention rates:

- Yes, I am aware of retention strategies on the HBCU campus.
- No, I am not aware of retention strategies on the HBCU campus.

Q6: As a faculty member at a HBCU, what are your perceptions regarding ongoing student retention efforts on the campus?

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Q7: Based on your perceptions and understanding of ongoing student retention efforts on your campus, do you feel that these efforts aid in improving retention rates?

Q8: Are you aware of ongoing retention efforts at the HBCU where you are employed as faculty?

Q9: Do you currently feel involved in ongoing retention as faculty?

Q10: Do feel that you are responsible for engaging in ongoing retention efforts at the HBCU where you are employed as faculty?

Q11: What types of ongoing retention efforts do you perceive you should be involved in as a faculty member?

Q12: Do feel you should be engaging in ongoing retention efforts at the HBCU in the future?

Q13: Check any of the retention programs you are aware of on the campus where you teach -list these then have check boxes.

- Student Success Programs
- Retention Coordinator
- First Year Experience Classes
- Retention Committee
- Advising

Q14: Do you have your own retention strategies that you use?

- Yes
- No

If your answer is yes, please describe any methods you use?

Q15: Do you feel you should be involved in retention efforts as a faculty at the campus?

Explain your answer.

Q16: What types of ongoing and potential future retention efforts do faculty perceive faculty should be involved in?

Q17: Do you feel you should be involved in ongoing and potential future retention efforts on the campus? Explain your answer.

Q18: Provide any additional comments on your perceptions of your role in student retention efforts as faculty at the campus.

Q19: Do you feel that you are involved with talking to students about topics related to their overall academic success? Explain your answer.

Q20: Do you feel that you are involved with talking to students about graduation or degree completion? Explain your answer.

Q21: Are you willing to be interviewed for 30 minutes?

- Yes
- No

Q22: If you are willing to be interviewed, please include your email or phone number?

Appendix D: Questionnaire Justification

Questionnaire Questions	Research Question Addressed
Q1: What department do you work in at the HBCU where you are employed?	N/A
Q2: What is your teaching field?	N/A
Q3: What is your age range?	N/A
Q4: How many years have you been teaching?	N/A
Q5: Are you aware of existing retention efforts on the local campus and how these efforts can affect student retention rates:	RQ1: What are faculty perceptions regarding student retention efforts at the local HBCU?

Q6: Do you currently feel involved in ongoing retention as faculty?	RQ2: What do faculty perceive their role in student retention should be?
Q7: Based on your perceptions and understanding of ongoing student retention efforts on your campus, do you feel that these efforts aid in improving retention rates?	RQ1: What are faculty perceptions regarding student retention efforts at the local HBCU?
Q8: Are you aware of ongoing retention efforts at the HBCU where you are employed as faculty?	RQ2: What do faculty perceive their role in student retention should be?
Q9: Do you currently feel involved in ongoing retention as faculty?	RQ1: What are faculty perceptions regarding student retention efforts at the local HBCU? RQ2: What do faculty perceive their role in

	student retention should be?
Q10: Do feel that you are responsible for engaging in ongoing retention efforts at the HBCU where you are employed as faculty?	RQ2: What do faculty perceive their role in student retention should be?
Q11: What types of ongoing retention efforts do you perceive you should be involved in as a faculty member?	RQ2: What do faculty perceive their role in student retention should be?
Q12: Do feel you should be engaging in ongoing retention efforts at the HBCU in the future?	RQ2: What do faculty perceive their role in student retention should be?
Q13: Check any of the retention programs you are aware of on the campus where you teach -list these then have check boxes.	RQ1: What are faculty perceptions regarding student retention efforts at the local HBCU?

<p>Q15: Do you feel you should be involved in retention efforts as a faculty at the campus?</p>	<p>RQ1: What are faculty perceptions regarding student retention efforts at the local HBCU?</p>
<p>Q16: What types of ongoing and potential future retention efforts do faculty perceive faculty should be involved in?</p>	<p>RQ2: What do faculty perceive their role in student retention should be?</p>
<p>Q17: Do you feel you should be involved in ongoing and potential future retention efforts on the campus?</p>	<p>RQ1: What are faculty perceptions regarding student retention efforts at the local HBCU?</p> <p>RQ2: What do faculty perceive their role in student retention should be?</p>
<p>Q18: Provide any additional comments on your perceptions of your role in student retention efforts as faculty at the campus.</p>	<p>RQ1: What are faculty perceptions regarding student retention efforts at the local HBCU?</p>

<p>Q19: To what degree do you feel that you are involved with talking to students about topics related to their overall academic success?</p>	<p>RQ2: What do faculty perceive their role in student retention should be?</p>
<p>Q20: Do you feel that you are involved with talking to students about graduation or degree completion?</p>	<p>RQ2: What do faculty perceive their role in student retention should be?</p>
<p>Q21: Are you willing to be interviewed for 30 minutes?</p>	<p>N/A</p>
<p>Q22: Are you willing to log your faculty-student interventions for 2 weeks?</p>	<p>N/A</p>

Appendix E: Faculty Interview Script

Faculty Participant		Date of Interview:	
Interview Start & End Times:		Notes taken by:	

Interview Guide – Part One

1. Introduction
2. Explain the interview process
 - a. Radom Selection
 - b. Limit 10-15 Minutes
 - c. Confidentiality

Interview Questions

1. What are your perceptions regarding student retention efforts at local HBCUs?
2. What do you perceive faculty roles in student retention should be?
3. Do you use any strategies or engage in any practices to help keep students engaged in their school work and motivated to stay enrolled?
4. If so, what are some of the methods and strategies you use with students to keep them engaged in coursework?
5. Where and when do you engage with students to keep them motivated and on target? Just in the classroom or in some other setting (counseling, extracurricular, etc.)?

6. If you engage with students outside of the classroom, do you use any different methods and strategies than those you use in the classroom engage students?
7. In what kinds of student retention activities do you feel the campus should engage?
8. What is your preference in engaging in additional campus-supported retention activities?
9. How much time would you be willing to devote to non-classroom related retention efforts if they were part of your institution's retention plan?
10. Are you aware of any retention strategies used by your peers?

