

2018

Improving Attendance in an Undergraduate Business Program at a For-Profit College

Erica Schacht
Walden University

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Erica Schacht

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2018

Abstract

Improving Attendance in an Undergraduate Business Program at a For-Profit College

by

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MA, Iona College, 2007

BA, Salve Regina University, 2002

Project Study Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Education

Walden University

June 2018

Abstract

At a small for-profit college located outside of New York City, declining classroom attendance over the last few years has become a serious concern in the business program. Poor attendance is one of the major causes for enrollment dropping and poor student retention. The purpose of this qualitative case study was to identify factors that influence student attendance. The study was based on Tinto's (1975) model of student integration and Nora and Cabrera's (1996) student adjustment model, which relates environmental influences on student retention. The research questions were used to investigate why students attend or do not attend classes, and strategies to improve classroom attendance. Data collection included semistructured face-to-face interviews with a purposeful sample of 16 students, 3 teachers in the business program, and 3 administrators. Textual analysis of the data, and a qualitative data analysis software program was used to manage and analyze the qualitative data. The data analysis revealed the following themes: academic reasons, social influences, and financial challenges. These findings led to the development of a 3-day professional learning workshop for teachers, students, and administrators to improve class attendance. This study also has the potential to foster positive social change by providing strategies that facilitate retention and higher graduation rates, resulting in students graduating with a degree and skills to find better employment opportunities.

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Dedication

This proposal is dedicated to my parents and sister who made this all possible. And, to my best friend, Maria Gangi, who helped keep me sane throughout the whole process as well as edit my work for me and guide me throughout.

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I would like to thank my family, especially my parents for providing me with the tools necessary to make it this far in my education and for always believing I could make it this far. I also want to thank Dr. Robert Hogan, my committee chair, Dr. Lynn Orr, my second committee chair, and Dr. Jean Sorrell, the university research reviewer. Dr. Hogan, thank you for all of the guidance and patience you have had throughout my journey. It is appreciated more than you will ever know.

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Section 1: The Problem

Introduction

Universities and colleges across the United States are facing the challenge of keeping students motivated, engaged, and consistently attending classes (O’Keeffe, 2013). Instructors in various disciplines are dealing with students using a variety of excuses as to why they are absent from the classroom (Song, 2013). Since the 1990s, rates of degree completion from both four-year and two-year institutions have decreased substantially (Mortenson, 2005; Radford, Berkner, Wheelless, & Shepherd, 2010). The National Center for Educational Statistics (2014) reported that the retention rate in 4-year universities and colleges was 61%. In fact, the numbers of college students and degree attainment are on average 60% for White students and between 40-50% for all other races and ethnicities (Museus, 2014). In today’s college environment, as opposed to the last 40 years, the rates of completion are much lower due mainly to students of lower socioeconomic backgrounds who have low completion rates (Adams, Meyers, & Beidas, 2016). Although the enrollment rates of students from low-income families and those from other racial and ethnic backgrounds have increased, these students experience significant challenges, and there still exists a gap between persisting at the college and completing college (Baker & Robnett, 2012).

Statistics show that the population of the United States is changing vastly due to the evolving demographics and more low-income, minority, and first-generation students who are enrolling into 4-year institutions, making up 24% of undergraduates (Adams et al., 2016). Additionally, there is greater access to college education, which has resulted in

a doubling of students enrolled: approximately 9 million in 1980 to 20 million in 2011 (Tinto, 2012). This current trend shows that if universities and colleges do not do a better job with graduating students from college, the United States may slip even further behind in the workforce and, productivity, in the growth of our economy, especially as a competitive workforce in comparison to other nations (Tinto, 2012). Latif and Miles (2013) suggested attendance and completion of a degree are directly related. However, even when policies have been implemented to encourage attendance, students still struggle with regularly attending classes (Bati, Mandiracioglu, Orgun, & Govsa, 2013). In order to increase retention and thus graduate more students, the actions of colleges must focus on attendance in the classroom, which includes student motivation and engagement.

Eryilmaz (2015) suggested that universities, including faculty and administrators, should improve techniques, such as being more active and more approachable both inside and outside the classroom, thus guiding students in their attempt to understanding how to relate the content of their learning to their personal and professional development. Learning experiences are of value because of the student's expectations, the integration of the content into the course, and the effectiveness and usefulness of the learning material. These experiences relate to any material learned in the classroom both from an academic perspective and a social one. Additionally, college has a different format than high school and includes less direction from instructors (Pinto & Lohrey, 2016). High school follows a strict 8-hour schedule with set classes and teachers, Monday through Friday, and usually for the full school year. In college, it is entirely different as most

classes are taught by different professors, at different times, on different days, and scheduled on a semester basis occurring anywhere from 4-15 weeks. Therefore, students' academic success depends on how disciplined their study habits are. Self-motivation becomes critical at this stage, often becoming a predictor of the level of achievement (Torenbeek, Jansen, & Suhre, 2013). As a result, experiences both inside and outside the classroom are critical. It is the obligation of the college, once they have admitted a student, to help that student succeed academically and graduate by whatever means possible (Tinto, 2012).

Finally, attendance at the site, a local small for-profit college located outside New York City, and other for-profit schools are necessary to support a regulation that came into effect in 2011. This regulation from the Department of Education-Gainful Employment Regulations, as of 2016, was in the process of being lifted and/or reversed, but still holds programs accountable based on debt-to-earnings ratios. This regulation requires schools to report information such as enrollment, money students owe, collegial payments, graduation and job placement rates, potential occupations, the typical cost of program and median loan debt after completion, to the Department of Education (For-Profit Colleges and Universities, 2013). As a result, proprietary institutions are mandated to take attendance to make sure that they comply, primarily because of the high percentage of students receiving both federal and state aid. If students do not complete their education, they cannot meet the minimum quota required by government regulations such as gainful employment, to meet the debt to income rates of graduates, which means that students must make more money than the debt they have accrued from their college

loans. Failure to do so means that a college could lose federal financial aid with the possibility of closing.

Definition of the Problem

ABC College, a pseudonym for a 2 and 4-year college, is a private, for-profit career business school, located in an expanding city in a suburb outside of New York City. ABC has a non-traditional student body comprised mostly of minority, first-generation, and low-income students. Currently, ABC College has 839 active students: 492 during the day, and of those 492 students, 148 are obtaining a bachelor's degree—approximately 30% of the day population. The diverse population of students includes: 36% Hispanic, 34% Black/non-Hispanic, 21% White and 9% other ethnicities. This diversity poses challenges concerning retention and persistence throughout students' education. Many of these students struggle academically, socially, and emotionally, all of which may be detrimental to retention (Stephens, Hamedani, & Destin, 2014).

ABC College grants associate and bachelor's degrees in allied health, digital media, computer networking, business administration, and accounting. There are day classes Monday through Friday from 8:00 a.m. – 3:00 p.m., accommodating students who have just graduated from high school in addition to younger students who took some time off and are either attending college for the first time or coming back after some time off. There is also an evening college that offers classes Monday through Thursday from 6:00 p.m. – 9:30 p.m. with most students being adult learners who have been out in the workforce. For the purpose of the study, I only studied day classes.

A 2016 report indicated that ABC College is experiencing attendance issues such as low attendance in most bachelor level classes, which often becomes one of the major causes for enrollment dropping and poor student retention (Tinto, 1987). Student Profile documents (2016) noted that the majority of students at the local site commute from various counties within the New York metropolitan area. Commuter students struggle more with the social aspects of college (Ishitani & Reid, 2015) compared to students who live on campus. Students who reside on campus face fewer challenges than their commuter counterparts who often struggle with the balance and demands of family life, work, and social ties all while attending school and keeping their grades up without missing many classes, if any at all (Ishitani & Reid, 2015).

Rationale

Evidence of the Problem at the Local Level

There has been a significant decline in student attendance throughout the fall, winter and spring semester at ABC College, but specifically in the Bachelor of Business Administration (BBA) program. Because ABC College is an attendance taking college, attendance data are collected per school year as well as per course and instructor. Overall, 2016 college records indicated there was a significant drop in attendance throughout 2014-2016. Figure 1 shows the yearly attendance trends for 2014-2016 and demonstrates significance of the problem.

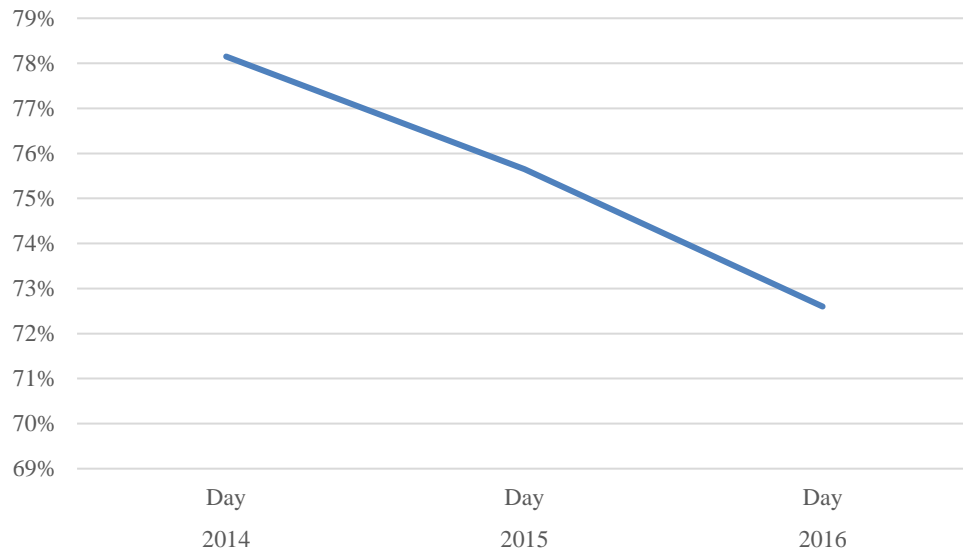


Figure 1. BBA attendance trend in day classes

The program experienced a drop in attendance rates for the years of 2014-2016. In addition, the program experienced low graduation rates from 68% in 2015-2016 to 42% in 2016-2017. The research findings of this study state that attendance is related to a student's success, retention, and ultimately, graduation rates. The purpose of the study was to explore factors that might influence both high, and, decreased student attendance and ways to improve attendance including strategies, solutions, and best practices.

Definitions

ABC College: An acronym for the for-profit school in this study.

Attendance: Refers to the student being physically present in the class (Westerman, Perez-Batres, Coffey, & Pouders, 2011).

Attendance Policy: Refers to the policy of ABC College which states that students enrolled in on-ground courses must have physical attendance in the classroom in order to maintain enrollment (www.█.edu).

Attrition: is defined as departure from an institution before completing a degree (Johnson, 2012).

For-Profit Colleges: For-profits (sometimes called “proprietary schools”) are in business to make money for owners and shareholders by offering a service, in this case, education (*Non-Profit vs. For-Profit Colleges: What You Need to Know*, n.d.). The terms proprietary colleges and for-profit colleges were used interchangeably in this study.

Persistence: An individual or student-level measure of success (Tinto, 2012).

Retention: An institutional-level measure of success (Tinto, 2012). Throughout the study, the terms retention and persistence have been used interchangeably.

Student engagement: Learning and development that occurs as a result of activities both in and outside of the classroom (Hu, 2011). In the classroom there is student engagement as well.

Student participation: Students are engaging in the classroom, demonstrating that they understand the material being taught and are involved in the classroom atmosphere (O’Connor, 2013).

Student performance: relates to how students perform on tests, assignments, and anything else related to classroom learning. It also includes assessments of the students including progress and learning outcomes (Mega, Ronconi, & De Beni, 2014).

Student support: Support provided to the student academically, socially, and, in some cases, financially (Tinto, 2012).

Significance

At ABC College, there is an enforced school policy that states if a student receives more than seven consecutive, unexcused absences, the school will withdraw the student and suspend all financial aid. The online college catalog, under academic standards, states that the college "...is officially an attendance taking institution and therefore, students enrolled in on-ground courses must have physical attendance in the classroom in order to maintain enrollment." Attendance is a significant problem for several reasons. First, when students stop attending class, they fail the classes due to lack of attendance and miss out on valuable information taught in the classroom. Second, consequences of low attendance rates include the student eventually failing a class, or even multiple classes, resulting in being withdrawn from the school and not receiving a degree. There is a significant amount of debt incurred by these students without completing a degree. Finally, the college itself is affected because many students receive federal aid from the government. A proprietary college like ABC College can receive up to 90% of its revenue from federal student aid (Federal Aid Program Integrity, 2014). If a student stops attending, the college loses money

Under-Preparedness

When a student withdraws from the college before graduating, the college loses income. This loss of the student results in the labor market being affected because it loses out on the young, low skilled workers who would potentially be entering the workforce as a result of their lack of skills (O'Keeffe, 2013). According to the United States Department of Labor, "employment of business and financial operations occupations is

projected to grow from 2014 to 2024, about as fast as the average for all occupations, adding about 632,400 new jobs” (Bureau of Labor Statistics [BLS], 2016-17). The information indicates there was a sizeable increase of jobs available in the business world, all of which require a bachelor’s degree or higher. As a result, underprepared workers can have a potentially adverse effect on the workforce. Students who do not earn a bachelor’s degree or higher do not generate high earnings per week and have a significantly higher unemployment rate (Bureau of Labor Statistics [BLS], 2016-17). These low rates result in negative consequences for everyone, including society as a whole. Low rates of degree attainment result in most potential employees earning less money throughout their lifetime, resulting in higher than average poverty levels (Museus, 2014). Without a degree and the skills acquired during their college education, it becomes harder for former students to find better employment opportunities. A student who earns a bachelor’s degree makes 10 times more than a student who either does not finish college or never attends (Bureau of Labor Statistics [BLS], 2016-17). A bachelor’s degree is not only necessary to prepare students for a better and more prosperous life; it is now a precursor to success (Dunston & Wilkins, 2015). Students not only benefit economically from a 4-year degree but also develop stronger social skills if they earn a degree (Cabrera et al., 2000).

Student Debt

Students who fail out of school or stop attending school without completing a degree incur significant debt. According to Dwyer, McCloud, and Hodson (2012) close to two-thirds of all graduates leave school with debt brought on by loans. This poses a

potential issue for the student to find a job that will support repayment of their school loans (Dwyer et al., 2012). The result is that students are in debt with no results or degree. If a student stops attending, there is still an obligation to pay for those classes. Failure to attend classes equates to a failed investment that could result in years of financial burden until the loans are paid off (Dwyer et al., 2012). However, if students successfully complete school, there is a better chance of finding a better paying job to pay off student loans.

Federal financial aid. Colleges are also affected, because without students completing their education, they cannot meet the minimum quota required by government regulations such as Gainful Employment, to meet the debt to income ratio of graduates (Gainful Employment, 2016). Failure to do so means those colleges could lose federal financial aid, with the possibility of closing. Therefore, the importance of student attendance is vital for many colleges to continue receiving federal aid from the government. Due to the high scrutiny of for-profit colleges, as a result of increased volume of both enrollment and student indebtedness, attendance taking has become more pivotal to prove that these students are attending so that the collection of all federal and state aid can be justified and proven (P. Lyon, personal communication, November 10, 2016). Federal- aid is the sustenance for many colleges. Colleges need students to attend their classes actively so that the aid can continue. Likewise, in order for students to receive the aid, they must show that they are meeting the standards required to obtain a degree or credential. Federal aid can be denied if a student drops out or fails too many classes (Field, 2011; Pinto & Lohrey, 2016).

In the broader context, understanding factors that relate to a student's attendance could help other colleges figure out how to approach attendance problems, thus securing student persistence, resulting in a higher enrollment and a more successful college, while developing well-prepared students who were entering the workforce. Accordingly, the findings from the research for this study show an understanding of students' perceptions as to why there is poor attendance at ABC College as well as provide an analysis for other colleges regarding classroom attendance.

Guiding/Research Questions

At the local site, attendance in the classroom has influenced the enrollment rate and the completion rate, thus affecting the graduation rate of the college. The guiding research question for this study was: What are factors negatively affecting student attendance? The subquestions were used to gather perceptions from faculty, staff, and students, on positive and negative factors that affect attendance. In addition, they were used to gather possible suggestions as to what can be done to see enrollment go up, students persist through the school, resulting in successfully graduating most, if not all, of the students.

Research Question 1 (RQ1). What do faculty, staff, and students perceive as reasons why students attend or do not attend classes?

Research Question 2 (RQ2). To what degree do faculty, staff, and students perceive that attendance is related to student performance?

Research Question 3 (RQ3). What do faculty, staff, and students, perceive may be possible approaches to improve attendance?

Review of the Literature

I conducted the review of literature through multiple databases, including: EBSCO, PROQUEST, ERIC, and SAGE, provided both through Walden University and the New York Public Library. I also used Google Scholar. The key terms that I used throughout the searches included: *attendance, teacher effectiveness, student engagement, classroom attendance, attendance in college, satisfactory academic progress and federal funding for college, and factors that prevent students from attending.*

Conceptual Frameworks: Student Integration and Student Adjustment

The framework of this study was constructed upon both Tinto's (1987) student integration model and Nora and Cabrera's (1996) student adjustment model. The student integration model focuses on factors that influence a student's success in college and/or decision to leave. Tinto's model limits the role of environmental factors that may influence a student's decision to leave or stay. However, the student adjustment model explores the reasons why students persist or do not persist, such as the interactions between students and their college environments (the academic and social aspects) as well as precollege characteristics (Nora & Cabrera, 1996). Combining both theories of college persistence provided a better understanding of the process in various institutions, specifically in institutions comparable to ABC College. The patterns that relate to college persistence, however, vary according to the type of institution as well as the student body and enrollment.

Tinto's student integration model. Vincent Tinto's (1987) theory and model of student retention is relative to student attendance and provides a better analysis and

understanding of student persistence. Tinto was the first to acknowledge that there are numerous reasons a student might leave college and that individual characteristics affect a student's attrition as well as success in college. Likewise, how well students succeed or fail in college is based primarily on the environments, both academic and social, of the college, as well as the connection the students have within the college itself including personal influences (Nora & Cabrera, 1996). Tinto called this the student integration model (SIM). This model explains all the reasons that could potentially influence a student's decision to leave college. Tinto's objective was to demonstrate that there are in fact different types of behavior that may result in a student leaving the college. According to Tinto, the major characteristics include the individual's goals, commitment to the college, academic performance and ability in addition to their race, sex, and social factors including socioeconomic status.

Tinto (2012) stated students are more likely to remain in college when four conditions are met. The first condition is the expectations that the students have themselves about college, the environment, and the academic workload (Tinto, 2012). The second is the support they receive from the staff, including academic advisors, admission counselors, financial aid counselors, and faculty. The third condition involves a positive assessment and feedback from their faculty including their progress in the class, what areas they may need to improve, as well as areas that they are excelling in. The last condition is overall involvement, which can be attained if the student is actively involved in their academic and social success in the college; this includes their peers, their faculty and advisors, and their participation in both academic and social related

events (Tinto, 2012). There are, of course, certain conditions that may be of greater importance to individual students. However, absence of even one of these conditions can undermine the effectiveness of the others (Tinto, 2012). In applying the SIM to the population at ABC College, it helped identify what characteristics of a student affect his or her attendance in the classroom, either negatively or positively. Tinto's model was used as a framework in the project study to look more closely at potential methods to increase student attendance at the college. I incorporated the student adjustment model because Tinto's (1987) theory lacks research on the role of external factors upon student success and persistence in college.

Nora and Cabrera's student adjustment model. The student adjustment model includes the persistence of students as a result of the interactions between students and their college environments which include the academic and social aspects, including their experiences with other students, faculty, and staff, as well as precollege characteristics (Nora & Cabrera, 1996). This varies from Tinto's model that emphasizes academic preparedness as a factor to college persistence. Nora and Cabrera (1996) found that race, socioeconomic status, and status as a traditional versus nontraditional student are precursors to persistence at the college level.

The student adjustment model compares factors such as environmental, motivational, and cognitive experiences among different gender and minority groups by examining how they impact the experiences and relationships of the students to persisting in college. Nora and Cabrera (1996) established that interactions with, and ability to develop close relationships with peers, correlated positively with persistence. Museums,

Jayakumar, and Robinson (2012) concluded that there was a relationship between persistence and race. In many situations, those students who were socially connected to their colleges were more likely to persist into their second year. However, the social connection was not nearly as important as relationships with parents and other networks of support for minority groups. Those networks demonstrated strong outside relationships which resulted in that student population to more than likely persist in college. Students' relationships with family, cultural and community support, and engagement at school are shown through their level of persistence at college and are critical in the first year. The model suggests that students who experience these types of relationships are more likely to develop academically and socially, resulting in more of an involvement, sense of belonging, and a commitment to the college (Nora & Cabrera, 1996). Furthermore, Museus et al. (2012) found that student success is impacted by racial differences and institutional factors.

First- Year Experience

During students' first year of college, they are building a foundation for their whole college experience, as well as adjusting to challenges faced both academically and socially (Kreig, 2013). What they experience in the first year is crucial. In that first year, students' attitudes, habits, and perceptions are greatly influenced and developed and will continue to affect their experiences throughout their college journey. On average, those students who leave their first institution before graduating mirror the finding that attrition in institutions is always the highest in the first year with a noticeable decline after that. In fact, what happened or did not happen such as connections with peers and faculty, and

other academic influences in the first year is often reflected in the attrition in the second year (Goodman, 2014). For most students, the first year is often the hardest because of the transition from high school to college, and the effects of their ability to adapt both academically and socially (Pinto & Lohrey, 2016). There are many ways colleges try to integrate first-year students into the college environment, including first-year seminars, activities centered on freshmen life, and, even appointing faculty advisors to coach them throughout their first few semesters (Ishitani & Reid, 2015).

Underprepared students. Today, students who enter the world of higher education are often underprepared for various reasons, and as a result, are most often considered at-risk students by the institution (Tinto, 2012). These students will most likely skip classes, and as a result, stop attending altogether and drop out (Dunston & Wilkins, 2015). It is the effort a student puts into their academic environment that determines how successful they are throughout their college stay. Therefore, if a student does not attend, they miss out on valuable information that is being taught in the classroom as well as the opportunity to solidify any social connections with their peers and instructors. Stripling, Roberts, and Israel (2013), noted those students who do miss class more often than others tend not to understand that the classroom is a communal learning environment that they are a part of, and that when they are not there, it affects the entire class dynamic. As a result of this absent student or students, the learning process overall declines and so does morale of instructors and students, which compromises academic standards (D’Lima, Winsler, & Kitsantas, 2014).

Class attendance. Snyder, Forbus, and Cistulli (2012) found that student performance in a management communications course positively correlated with class attendance. Similarly, Latif and Miles (2013), conducted a study in a Canadian university, which examined the impact of regular class attendance upon a student's performance academically. Other studies (Romer, 1993; Durden & Ellis, 1995; Devadoss & Foltz, 1996; and Rodgers, 2002) also supported the conclusion that excessive absences negatively impacted students' academic performances.

In another study, Latif and Miles (2013) used data from undergraduate business students with a wide representation of cultures and ethnicities and reported that class attendance greatly impacted a student's grade. The more a student attended, the better chance they would have of a positive outcome with their overall grade. The study further concluded that grades become positively impacted as a result of a student's attendance, which correlates to results from previous studies (Romer, 1993; Durden & Ellis, 1995; Devadoss & Foltz, 1996; and Rodgers, 2002).

This concept was also confirmed in a study by Torenbeek et al. (2013), which indicated that if students attended classes on a regular basis, they would have more credits, and a higher overall GPA, resulting from better grades. Also, Pinto and Lohrey (2016) found that students who usually had good attendance throughout the semester had higher grades and that their final grades often improved despite their exam average. The research findings indicated that attendance is pivotal to a student's success, academic performance, and, completion.

Student success and learning experiences. Missing valuable information that is being taught in the classroom has an adverse impact on student success. Missing class equates to a student overlooking important soft skills, including people skills, effective communication, and creative thinking, which develop when learned within the classroom (Bati et al., 2013). Students do not have the confidence to be successful in the workforce; as a result, their interpersonal skills suffer because they are underdeveloped, and they do not have the skills to enter the job force and be successful (Seidman, 2012).

Attending classes is very important for multiple reasons. If a student does not understand the effect of not being present in the classroom, then how will he or she understand behaviors such as professionalism, being prompt to work, and multitasking that are required once they are on the job (Dunston & Wilkins, 2015). When a student stops attending college, they drop out or withdraw, resulting in negative lifetime consequences for the student. The biggest consequence is not being adequately prepared for the working world and missing out on learning opportunities.

Within the classroom, learning experiences are important because of the student's expectations, the integration of the material for the course, and the effectiveness and usefulness of the learning material (Ewell & Rodgers, 2014). The student who does not attend class is missing out on vital information experienced within the classroom setting. Pinto and Lohrey (2016) found a direct correlation between attendance and grades, noting that poor student performance may impact how students perform on their exams.

Student attrition. Student attrition is generally higher in the first year and declines significantly in subsequent years (Tinto, 2012). Factors such as socialization and

personality traits contribute to the success or failure of students and might also reflect a student's desire to attend classes on a regular basis. Motivations might be more internal and related to personal matters such as money, transportation, and family/work responsibilities. Students at ABC College are nontraditional, commute, work full-time, and come from lower income backgrounds than traditional students. Attending college and classes is one of the many demands they face on a daily basis. Their obligations vary greatly, and the time they can put into college depends on what they have going on at that moment.

Often the success of non-traditional students is based upon how they succeed in the classroom (Martin, Wilson, Liem, & Ginns, 2012). Their experience of college is relative to what they experience in the classroom. A student's expectations, especially the ones that shape their learning expectations, are most often influenced and framed by what the faculty present, teach, and establish in the classrooms. Additional factors, such as socialization and how the instructor delivers the content, as well as the subject interest, may also relate to why a student attends their courses. This also relates to a student's motivation to attend classes and to stay in college. Other factors to consider that may contribute to poor attendance include socioeconomic status, stress, time management or lack thereof, family obligations and commitments, and motivational factors (Martin et al., 2012).

External Student Factors

There are a variety of factors that may contribute to the motivation of students and positively or negatively affect their decision to attend classes. These other factors

such as student factors, socioeconomic status, course content, and motivational factors may contribute to reduced attendance both from the student perspective as well as the instructor's (Eryilmaz, 2015). Low motivation levels along with difficulty with course material and adapting to college life, may influence student attendance (Bati et al., 2013). Other elements such as family values, attitudes, and personal interest can also affect attendance both positively and negatively.

Ou and Reynolds (2014) found that encouragement from parents or guardians helps transition students into the college world. These social ties may help many students become successful in college and almost always result in a positive effect on the development of the students, academically and socially, including the ability to adapt to college life, and to eventually complete school, earning a degree (Ou & Reynolds, 2014). In fact, more often than not, these freshman/first-year students may experience an unpredictable period in their lives due to the transition into college which could interrupt their studies and persistence at the college (O'Keeffe, 2013). In addition to these factors, the difficulty of a student's commute, the distance from school, and parental or lack of parental guidance they are receiving from home may also affect their attendance patterns.

Faculty Factors that Impact Student Attendance

Obermiller, Ruppert, and Atwood (2012) stated that trust is essential between an instructor and a student; it was the instructor/student relationships that helped to provide a baseline for the students' lives and careers. Trust is especially true during the first year because students are trying to adjust to the demands of college life, both socially and academically, and are developing new behaviors and habits that may or may not, be

consistent with those they had acquired in their former years of education. The behavior of faculty members can be extremely critical during this stage (Tinto, 2012).

Among the various factors associated with attendance in this study is the role of the faculty in the classroom, and the relationships developed with their students. These factors were further explained from the qualitative data collected from the student interviews. In fact, instructors often play a vital role in the encouragement of attendance by students (Goodman, 2014). Previous researchers (Fessler, 2008; Guest, 2005, Taylor, 2005; Young, Robinson, & Alberts, 2009) had discovered in their studies that through engagement, students were motivated to attend and actively participate (Hu, 2011). The research also stated that engagement made the students feel like they were a part of the classroom. Additionally, they found that students were always changing and presenting new challenges. Instructors must be able to develop their strengths and work on their weakness in order to meet the needs of the students, and that ensuring that students are engaged and participating can often accomplish this. If a student is not satisfied with classes, whether it is the course content, the delivery or the instructor's methodologies, attendance begins to drop as there is no longer a desire to keep attending (Hu, 2011). If there is a lack of effort on behalf of a student, it could be suggestive that the faculty, through their actions, expect too little from their students and, quite possibly, as a result, fail to provide a setting in which students feel required to push themselves harder (Tinto, 2012).

Inconsistency amongst faculty. According to the research, there is a lack of consistency amongst teachers with respect to pedagogy, feedback, the number of

assignments, as well as assessment tools such as exams (Layne, 2012). How much time faculty devotes to classroom practices can provide very valuable information as well. The role of the faculty is critical in sustaining relationships with students since they have the most direct contact. In fact, students reported that they were more motivated, better satisfied, and would participate more often in the classroom as a result of positive interactions with their instructors. Therefore, the more teachers engage, the more likely students will develop higher academic and learning achievements (Eryilmaz, 2015).

It is in the classroom that expectations are the most important. A student's interaction with a faculty member can be crucial to their success and lays the foundation for both retention and graduation of the student (Tinto, 2012). The quality of an instructor's teaching is an important part of evaluating the instructor. This includes how much time is devoted to group work, discussions, in-class writing, and student presentations, rather than a simple lecture format. It can provide more insight into the subject matter while heightening the level of engagement occurring within the classroom. At times, the faculty, through their actions, may reveal expectation of too little from their students (Tinto, 2012). Students who have lower levels of engagement, do not show interest in any of their courses, and often are the students who are absent, and eventually drop out (Eryilmaz, 2015).

Student relationships with faculty. In addition, multiple past studies since the early 2000s (Fessler, 2008; Guest, 2005, Taylor, 2005; Young, Robinson, & Alberts, 2009), have also concluded that most students feel that their academic and student success could be related to relationships with their faculty; in fact, the positive

relationships may be a contributing factor as to why they remain at the college. The research suggests that relationships with faculty and staff have been a positive factor upon a student's academic success. These relationships can be examined by determining the amount of contact a student has with their instructor, which is evaluated through student opinion evaluations given at the end of each term. These student surveys ask the question of whether or not an instructor was in contact with them outside the classroom or made time available. Similar studies have found that students feel that even though a teacher is an expert in the field, this does not necessarily mean that they are a good teacher. And, that it is the motivation and competence from these teachers that play a valuable role in their regularly attending classes (Bati et al., 2013).

During their Freshman/first- year of college, students seek to make connections with their peers as well as faculty members. In fact, relationships fostered throughout their time in college are very vital to the success a student experiences (Tinto, 1987). Certain relationships, such as those formed in the classroom with their instructors may, in fact, influence them to remain in school. Torenbeek, Jansen, and Suhre (2013), found social and academic integration is most significant in activating teaching methods, thereby contributing to academic performance. Tinto (2012) found that a key factor in the success of students was involvement and engagement. The more academically and socially a student is engaged, the more likely they are to continue attending classes, thus reaching the end goal of obtaining a degree. Tinto also concluded that learning activities in the classroom accompanied with higher engagement, especially ones construed as both meaningful and validating, did, in fact, lead to more considerable effort and time that

students put into their studies, thus, heightening academic performance and overall retention. Therefore, a connection with faculty members must be sustained throughout their experience, especially in the first few semesters, to maintain a student's level of commitment to attending and graduating from college.

Research suggests that connections are essential to an individual in order to have a successful college experience (Torenbeek et al., 2013). What is even more interesting to note, is that many of these significant relationships were with faculty at the college. Additionally, students who experienced encouragement and helpful relationships with instructors felt they enjoyed their classes more including content and subject: in short, if student attendance is connected to faculty involvement, then it is essential for colleges to nourish and develop these relationships (Wang, 2014). What a college does after the students have enrolled to keep them interested, motivated, and engaged will ultimately retain them.

Tinto (2012) in his research noted that it is also important that expectations for the behavior of students are reinforced by all members of the college as well including advisors, admission counselors, staff and of course, the faculty. On the contrary, the absence of any of the above may result in the student's desire and motivation to attend their classes to be diminished eventually leading to withdrawal from the college altogether (Tinto, 2012).

Classroom effectiveness. Likewise, a related area of concern is the effectiveness of the classroom, defined in most studies as a teacher's performance (Layne, 2012) and this includes student-to-student interaction as well as teacher-student interaction, during

their first semester and beyond. The teachers and the students in the class engage the most since the instructors are the ones in the classroom, fostering relationships and connections with the students as well as challenging them and motivating them academically. Instructors face many challenges, and perhaps it is figuring out which is the most efficient and productive method to engage students in the class that is the most challenging. According to Lee, Kim, and Chan (2015) teachers who use a variety of strategies, such as teaching aids, and pacing the lesson, are often more prepared and labeled by students in the study as key factors in teaching effectively. Likewise, the level of interaction between the teacher and student as well as how engaged the student feels can potentially contribute to the attendance of the student, just as the quality of the teacher may relate to student and class participation (Demirtas, 2016). For example, how do some teachers get students to show up on time for their 8 a.m. classes? And, what teaching styles are proving a better attendance rate throughout the different periods?

Government Factors

Proprietary schools have more scrutiny from the government, and most colleges are mandated to take attendance to make sure that they are in compliance. A new regulation came into effect in 2011, from the Department of Education-Gainful Employment Regulations, which requires schools to report information such as enrollment; money student owes; collegial payments; graduation and job placement rates; potential occupations; typical cost of program; and median loan debt after completion, to the Department of Education (For-Profit Colleges and Universities, 2013). Colleges are

mandated to take attendance because of the high percentage of students receiving both federal and state aid.

If students cannot complete their education, they cannot meet the minimum quota required by government regulations such as Gainful Employment, to meet the debt to income rates of graduates. Failure to do so means those colleges could lose federal financial aid with the possibility of closing. Many colleges depend on federal aid in order to keep students enrolling and their doors open. Therefore, proprietary colleges need students to attend their classes actively so that the aid can continue. Likewise, for students to receive the aid, they must show that they are meeting the standards needed to obtain a degree or credential. If students should happen to drop or fail too many classes, the government can, and will, stop granting them federal aid (Field, 2011).

Results from McKinney and Burrige's (2015) study on the effects of loans on the persistence of students in community colleges, showed that students in two-year programs borrowed heavily to attend. In their first year, this had a positive relationship to their attendance and persistence, but, by their second year, it negatively impacted their persistence and completion at the colleges. In fact, if the students had little or no debt they were more likely to continue attending, persisting, and completing college: as compared to those students who had any significant amount of debt (McKinney & Burrige, 2015). The research also concluded that these students, when compared to other students with similar backgrounds and characteristics at various institutions, were more likely to borrow heavily from the federal government to finance college and had a higher chance of dropping out of college than those who did not borrow. The findings

also suggest that lower-income students afford to enroll and attend college only due to the availability of federal loans. Without federal involvement and loans, these students would more than likely struggle to pay for college and graduate (McKinney & Burrige, 2015). Another challenge with loans is that most students can borrow the maximum amount without ever demonstrating their academic success or completion of the course.

Employment and finances. Many students rely heavily on financial aid to attend college. Other students also depend upon parental support to finance their education, as well as themselves paying for college work-study position or a full-time job. According to Schuh and Gansemer-Topf (2012) in 2008 45% of college students work, on average, 20-34 hours, while attending college. Furthermore, the U.S. Department of Education (2016) reported that 30% of the students who did work throughout college stated that it limited their studies, the number of classes they could take, and their ability to make it to class. In fact, the more hours students worked, the more likely their choices regarding school, attendance and school work, and their schedules, would be impacted (Martin et al., 2013).

Demographics

With the changing demographics in the United States, colleges are seeing an increase in Hispanic students as well as African-Americans (Ou & Reynolds, 2014). However, graduation and completion rates were the lowest for African-American students with 53% completing at for-profit institutions according to the U.S. Department of Education's report (2016).

First-time freshmen struggle more with college adjustment than their European-American middle-class peers (Baker & Robnett, 2012). The research findings suggest that minorities struggle with respect to college retention, persistence, and graduation. Minority students often take out more loans, work more hours throughout the school year, and tend to have cultural and familial attachments that may affect their attendance and persistence in college (Nora & Cabrera, 1996). Inadequate student services and academic staff have also been challenges in respect to minority groups, especially in colleges where the majority of the staff and faculty are European American (D'Lima et al., 2014).

Ou and Reynolds (2014) found, within the last few decades college participation amongst African Americans and Hispanics, has been relatively low. Their research also found that many young adults from various ethnic groups are not as likely to enroll in college, persist in college, or complete college (Ou & Reynolds, 2014). In addition to these findings, both groups of students are more likely to not persist in college (Nora & Cabrera, 1996). Other studies, (D'Lima et al., 2014; Baker & Robnett, 2012) have also attributed this lack to persist upon additional factors such as financial aid, familial and social ties, socioeconomic status, and college under-preparedness. The first year for all college students is the hardest and presents several challenges especially regarding adjusting to college life, both socially and academically (Nora & Cabrera, 1996).

The research findings also support the conclusion that motivation is essential for all students, but especially incoming students (Martin et al., 2013). Motivation to continue in college and graduate is higher amongst Caucasian students than those from

other ethnic groups such as African-Americans and Hispanics. Students who are from an African-American background may be exposed to issues of isolation and peer support, which may impede their continued attendance at the college and their academic success (Ou & Reynolds, 2014). On the other hand, Hispanic students, according to the literature, are more likely to be motivated at the beginning of their college journey due to familial support and the desire to be successful after college (Stephens et al., 2014). However, Baker and Robnett (2012) concluded, this group of students is more likely to take out college loans, work throughout college to financially afford college with the result not completing college because of the multiple distractions and responsibilities.

Students from African-American and Hispanic backgrounds, more than likely come from a lower socioeconomic group and may, in fact, have to pay for college primarily by themselves. This may prevent them from being as available to college life, both socially and academically as their European American middle-class peers (Martin et al., 2013). Furthermore, it is the support that both groups of students receive from the college, both academically and socially, that affects their retention at the college (D'Lima et al., 2014).

Student experiences previously to attending college may further affect their decision to continue attending or to drop out. Tinto (2012) proposed in his findings that minority students, in order to be successful, in college, and to persist, would need more college preparation before they enrolled. This is consistent with the theory that precollege characteristics and environment may have an impact, both positively and negatively, on a student's success in college.

Implications

The local study site of a for-profit college has experienced a decrease in classroom attendance in the business program. Based on the findings of this study, future research may help to determine if attendance is a concern throughout the entire college by studying all divisions in the college. Implications for possible future research direction include studying the adult division, which comprises 30% of the student population and meets in the evenings, Saturdays, and online. The study may also identify opportunities to develop a brief, three-day professional development program to give both admission counselors and instructors ways to help promote higher student classroom attendance and that could assist faculty and staff to identify and remediate students with poor attendance.

Summary

Attendance in the classroom has become a challenge for many colleges, especially concerning student persistence and completion. However, ABC College has been experiencing a significant decline in student attendance in the BBA program. To better understand what factors might be involved, both internally and externally, it is necessary to interview students as well as staff and to gather data and comments based on their perceptions and their experiences. In so doing, perhaps the college can figure out a way to combat, and attempt to resolve some of the issues keeping students from attending classes, and thereby secure student persistence into the next grade level and onward to graduation. While the research varies in respect to different types of colleges, degree programs, and student enrollment, the findings are consistent with patterns found amongst college students with regard to specific characteristics. By using a qualitative

design, the goal is to identify those factors that are related to attendance. In Section 2, I describe the methodology that I used in this study, an overview, and a justification of the research design and approach. The section includes a description of the setting and sample, participants' rights, and steps taken to protect their rights. The section will also discuss the data collection and data analysis. The potential findings from the study will also be discussed in this section.

Section 2: The Methodology

Introduction

Low student attendance is a growing problem in most colleges, and the current demographic trends show low graduation rates are hindering the workforce and the economy (Ou & Reynolds, 2014). This section describes the research design and methodology applied to investigate this problem, including the approach and framework alignment. Additional topics include descriptions of the setting, sample, and data collection methods, and data analysis. The purpose of my study was to investigate student/faculty/administration perceptions that influence student attendance. Based on Tinto's student integration model, which relates environmental influences to student retention, a goal of this study is to help faculty and staff assist students in attending classes. Different approaches yield different results.

Research Design and Approach

There are several types of methodologies that I could have chosen for this study. These included a quantitative, qualitative, or mixed method approach. The quantitative, grounded theory, ethnographic methodologies and mixed methods approach were inappropriate for this study. Based upon the data rich information desired, a qualitative method, intrinsic case study design, was best for this particular study.

Quantitative research design. Using a quantitative research design, a researcher attempts to explain why change occurs through patterns and numbers (Yilmaz, 2013). The reason a quantitative research design was not suited to answer my research questions was that it did not allow for the in-depth analysis that derives from narrative accounts

such as interviews. In my study, the numbers act as a supporting foundation to the fact that there is a significant problem with student attendance. A quantitative researcher maintains that to avoid bias it is important to detach oneself from the study; as a result, this would not work in my study because I was involved in the research and the interviews. Furthermore, a quantitative study would not allow me to delve as deeply into the attendance problem at ABC College to understand why students are struggling with attending their classes consistently.

Qualitative Research Design

According to Merriam (2009), qualitative research involves understanding the current problem through investigation and observations. The researcher uses this methodology to understand what the problem means to those participating in the study. The primary instrument for data collection is the researcher, who is part of the phenomenon that is studied (Yazan, 2015). This design also helps the researcher have a better and more in-depth understanding of the problem (Creswell, 2013). The researcher, in turn, adds meaning to the problem through the collection of data (Kahlke, 2014). Additionally, qualitative research uses inductive methods to analyze further the data collected.

In my study, I chose a qualitative approach because qualitative researchers observe and interpret while studying things in their natural setting (Creswell, 2013). A qualitative researcher uses open-ended questions to gather information, in an attempt to understand a problem, while aiming to immerse themselves into the study, which is what occurred in my study in respect to the problem at ABC College (Creswell, 2013).

Grounded theory design. Grounded theory design is a type of qualitative design that focuses mainly on changes over time and how these changes occur (Merriam, 2009). Grounded theory uses the results and literature gathered to develop a theory (Johnson, 2015). The main purpose of a grounded theory study is to study a process and generate a theory. This approach is useful when the researcher wants to develop or revise a theory (Creswell, 2013), as the theories shape and reshape as the process unfolds. The researcher looks for patterns which emerge from the data collection. The findings are influenced predominantly by the participants' perceptions collected from the interviews with comparison to some document data. This design is subjective, including themes from the data which pre-exist and not extracted from the collected data (Johnson, 2015). In this study, I wanted the themes to emerge from the data collected. Because I did not pursue a theory, this was not the right design to answer my research questions.

Ethnographic design. An ethnographic design requires the researcher to be immersed in the participants' environment (Lodico, Spaulding, & Voegtler, 2010). Furthermore, this type of study focuses on how culture and society influence a particular event (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2012). My study did not focus on culture or societal changes and effects, and while elements of this design could potentially be used in my study, there is a limitation concerning studying culture and societal influence upon the problem. Additionally, ethnographers study participants over a longer period by analyzing and closely examining their culture (Creswell, 2013). As a result, I did not choose this design because I determined it was not appropriate to address my research questions.

Case study designs. In a case study design, the researcher focuses on a specific program, setting, or, in the case of this study, a phenomenon such as why attendance is dropping throughout the semesters at the college. The result of a case study is a detailed description of the phenomenon, and provides insight into a setting, allowing the researcher to investigate the problem through multiple sources such as interviews, observations, and analyzing documents (Lodico et al., 2010). The case study method provided the college with guidance as to how they could better assess the attendance and retention trends to determine factors and solutions to increase both attendance and retention.

Case studies can be heuristic, meaning that the reader can discover new meanings and understandings of the phenomenon studied (Yin, 2014). In this study, the boundaries included interviewing students who are in their sixth through ninth semesters, focusing on attendance in a specific program, and interviewing a set number of participants. The site of the study also bounded the study. Thus, this design allowed for an in-depth study of the bounded system; in this case the bounded system was the business program.

There are various types of case studies such as explanatory, descriptive, exploratory, instrumental, collective, and intrinsic. An explanatory case study is used by the researcher when searching for answers to complex questions (Neri de Souza et al., 2016). A descriptive case study describes the problem studied and its sole focus lies in that description. A researcher who chooses an exploratory case study has no clear and/or defined outcomes (Yin, 2014). In an instrumental case study, the researcher focuses more on insight to accomplish the goal, rather than to understand the problem. This approach

provides insight into an issue or may illustrate a generalization. The case itself plays a secondary and supportive role while expanding our understanding of something else (Merriam, 2009). A collective case study relies on a number of case studies to examine a phenomenon or population. An intrinsic case study details a better understanding of the problem being studied by illustrating that problem through narratives and data collection. This type of case study requires a natural setting in which participants are familiar with and will not feel pressured or uncomfortable in answering questions during the interviews (Neri de Souza, Neri, & Costa, 2016).

Intrinsic case study model. For this study, I used an intrinsic case study because it enabled me to search for deeper meaning and understanding of the problem. This approach is useful when studying a situation that is unusual or unique to the setting (Yazan, 2015). I preferred this type of case study method because it provided further insight into the attendance problem at ABC College by identifying both factors and solutions to low student attendance in the business program. Additionally, in an intrinsic case study model, the researcher attempts to solve a specific problem while studying the subjects who participate. In this case, it was the perceptions of the faculty, administration, and students that were of interest. The natural setting studied is within the classroom of the college. As the researcher, I had an interest in the case and wanted to gather a better understanding of the problem. I gathered data from the participants to determine what they thought were the reasons for poor attendance and what they believed might be the possible solutions. I interviewed students, faculty, and administrators to obtain their

perceptions of the reasons for poor student attendance, consequences, and ways to improve student attendance.

Mixed method design. A mixed methods design combines the qualitative and quantitative approaches to study the problem, often using interviews and surveys (Creswell, 2013). This type of study provides an in-depth investigation into the problem due to the nature of both approaches. Mixed method researchers use participants' perspectives, statistics, surveys, and various charts to show the relationship which exists. As a result, participants' perspectives are not enough for this type of study, and it is often time-consuming. This design should be considered when dealing with problems or issues that need extensive data to support the argument (Creswell, 2013). In my study, I used interview data through the format of a narrative and did not need data or number to prove the problem existed; therefore, I concluded this type of design did not answer my research questions.

Pilot Study

When Walden University granted institutional review board (IRB) approval, I began with a pilot study to test for any flaws in the questions or structure of the interview process. I handed out the interview questions to a group of seven students who did not participate in the study to gauge the questions and to look for potential flaws before the study took place. The students in the pilot were mainly eighth and ninth semester students in the college's BBA program, which consists of nine semesters. Individuals had similar characteristics such as GPA, attendance rates, and their point in the program. The pilot survey allowed me to test for flaws, limitations, or other weaknesses related to the

interview questions. Participants in the pilot study were instructed not to answer the questions, but rather questions were asked to get clarity on each question as well as the tone of the questions. They were also encouraged to add additional questions that may have been left out. The survey was also handed out to one administrator, two professors, and one academic advisor.

I administered the pilot survey to gain a better understanding of responses to the questions and for input regarding the content of each question. Using a pilot study to test the interview questions and the use of certain interview techniques strengthens the study results (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007). In this way, I was able to make any needed modifications before the start of the study. All suggestions given by the participants were confidential to protect the confidentiality of the participants and to avoid any potential bias later in the actual study. Before the interviews, I revised some interview questions to make the participants feel more comfortable with the process.

Participants

Criteria for Selecting Participants

The participants I selected for the study included students and faculty in the BBA business program, and administrators at the college, with whom I do not have daily contact. I excluded the department I work for from the study. I used purposeful sampling because I selected specific individuals involved with the business program at ABC College. I also wanted to understand something from this specific group of participants who could provide the necessary information for understanding the problem. I collected the following identifying information about faculty: how long they worked for the college

study site, how long they taught in the business department, and their specific courses. I also collected information concerning the staff members: how long they had been at the college and how long they had been in their position. The identity of the participants was protected.

Students. To guarantee that I had never taught any of the participating students or encountered any of them, each student was asked if they knew me or had ever met me at any point in their education at ABC College. This measure was taken to ensure that the study was not influenced by the perceptions of the students I had previously taught and so that they would not feel coerced to participate. This group of students were selected through attendance data collected over the course of their time at the college. Choosing students in their sixth semester and beyond allowed the responses to be more candid because they had already attended the college for at least two full years. At the start of the sixth semester, most ABC students are at the midway point in their program. They have already completed a variety of classes such as introductory courses and courses specific to their major. I purposefully selected students with high attendance (attended 90% of the time or more), average attendance (attended 75% of the time), and, low attendance (attended 50% or less of the time). This was done according to their attendance records from the college so that I could make a comparative analysis of the responses. The majority of the participants were between 19 – 22 years old, with one adult student in her 50s participating. Each student invited to participate was selected according to their program of study, their semester, and attendance rates, which I gathered from the students' data.

Faculty. The next group of participants selected included faculty members and administrators at ABC College. It made more sense to select professors from the business department, who have taught in the school for more than five years, and, with experience outside of the education field with concentrations in finance and marketing since they come into contact with the participants on a daily basis.

Administrators. The third group of participants included three administrators—one from the Career Services, one from Admissions, and the former Dean of Student Success and Retention. I purposefully chose a participant from Career Services because they come in contact with students outside of the classroom, assisting students mainly with job placement. As a result, their perceptions can be very valuable when attempting to answer the research questions. Similarly, Admission Counselors identify attendance patterns and work with at-risk students. Lastly, the Associate Dean of Student Success is directly involved with academic and academic support units in implementing and evaluating college student retention. Therefore, her input was valuable to understanding the problem and attempting to find solutions.

The student data used in the purposeful sampling and the attendance data was obtained from ABC College's Office of Institutional Research. This data included student names, email addresses, what semester they were in, and attendance records. Once I generated the list of all active BBA students, emails were sent to the students who met the above criteria.

Justification of the Number of Participants

According to Marshall, Cardon, Poddar, and Fontenot (2013), the size of the participant pool chosen is dependent upon some factors related to the study. The sample for this case study included 16 students from the BBA program, three BBA professors, and three administrators in different departments in the college. I selected 16 students because having a lower number of students allows a more in-depth investigation into the potential factors involved in either high or low attendance. The participants were selected according to those who responded first. The first 16 students who met the criteria--high attendance (attended 90% of the time or more), average attendance (attended 75% of the time), and, low attendance (attended 50% or less of the time) participated in the study. I selected three BBA professors and three administrators because interviewing a smaller population allowed me to extract similar themes presented in the data and to focus on applicable solutions. Mason (2010) found that the number of participants in case studies, on average, is 21. In my study, the sample size interviewed is 22, and the problem studied can provide a deeper understanding of the attendance problem that ABC College is experiencing.

Gaining Access to Participants

After receiving approval from the IRB at Walden University, IRB approval # 09-21-17-0324589, I began contacting students, staff, and faculty to participate in my study. Currently, there are 177 students in total for the college's BBA Business program. Of the 177, 60 were students enrolled in their 6th through the 9th semester (known in traditional colleges as junior and senior level students). The participants invited to participate in the

study did not include any of my former students which shrunk the population pool down to 30 students who met the criteria. An invitation (Appendix B) was sent to all 30 students with a return rate of 20 students. Of the 20 students who responded, the first 16 were contacted about the interview via telephone and email. I then emailed invitations to the three faculty members and three administrators (Appendix B). I asked them what time and day would best meet their schedule, and once they had given that information, face-to-face interviews were then scheduled.

Establishing Researcher-Participant Relationship

There are several ways to establish the researcher/participant relationship. According to Glesne (2015) this includes gaining access to the participants; developing a rapport with the participants; fostering trust among the participants; and, always carrying out the study in an ethical manner. Using the steps above, I first began the researcher/participant relationship through email notifications. The first email to the selected participants was the letter of invitation to participate in the study. The letter of invitation included the purpose of the study, my educational experience, the interview process and selection, the length of the interviews, and a statement that all responses would be confidential. It also stated that the participation in the study was voluntary and that at the start of each interview, participants would be asked to sign a consent form to participate.

Protection of Participants' Rights

To protect the rights of the participants, I drafted a consent form used in the study. After seeking approval from ABC College, I then received a letter from the college and

conveyed it to Walden University. After Walden University's IRB approved the proposal, I began to contact the participants. I followed the National Institute of Health (NIH) policies on protecting participants by not harming the participants mentally, physically, or legally in any way. Also, I obtained each participant's informed consent to participate in the study before any data collection. When I presented the informed consent, I included the purpose of my study, and stressed the voluntary nature of their participation. I also highlighted that they may withdraw from the study at any time with no negative repercussions, protecting their confidentiality.

Once I contacted the participants, the participants then signed the consent form. The consent form stated that the participants have a right to withdraw from the study at any point if they are not able to complete the interviews since participation in the study was voluntary. The consent form also covered the requirements for participation. I also provided each participant with a detailed description of the study which included my contact information, the purpose of the study, and the research method that was employed. Participants were informed that their answers would remain confidential and their names would not be included in the study. This was necessary to ensure that their confidentiality was protected, especially if there was concern over whether student participation in the study could affect in any way their grades in any of the classes or their reputation at the college. It was my responsibility to make sure that all participants felt comfortable with the interview process as this leads to a positive relationship with the participants. All consent forms were stored in a locked cabinet in my home, and all data stored on a password-protected laptop. I was the only individual who had access to the

laptop. Using the IRB, NIH policies, and informed consent ensured that I protected the rights of my participants. All documents will be shredded, and all data deleted, after five years.

After transcribing the data into an MS Word document, it did not include any participants' names or anything else that could potentially reveal whose responses had been recorded. To further protect the privacy of the participants, I removed all personally identifiable data. Once that was done, I made sure that the data were secured and locked in a cabinet in my office. I uploaded all data onto a USB drive that was also kept in the locked cabinet, and I made sure that there was no remaining evidence on the hard drives of the computers that were used (home and office). Only I have the participants' information which remained separated from the data collected. Anyone who wishes to read this study, or to whom a copy was given directly to, will not know the participants' information but only the data responses that were collected. At the 5- year mark, written documentation information will be shredded, and information on the USB deleted.

Data Collection

Data collection for this study began once I received IRB approval from Walden University. The study consisted of data from the interviews with the three participant groups. By using three participant groups, I investigated the problem more in detail, and, from various perspectives. In qualitative studies, interviews are the most common source of data. They range from a predetermined question format to a more open conversational format. The former format helps gather information about demographics and such, while

the latter format provides open dialog and less structure (Thomas, Nelson, & Silverman, 2015).

Interview Protocol

The students, faculty, and administrators who were chosen to participate based on the criteria for the interviews, received in an invitation (Appendix B), and when they accepted they were asked to give a time that was convenient for them. Once the participants provided a day and time that was convenient for the interview, they arrived and signed their consent form on the day of the scheduled interview. At the arrival of the scheduled interview, participants were informed of the process and given a consent form, which I explained in detail to them informing them of their rights, the voluntary basis of the interviews, and that all interviews will be confidential. Once the participants signed their consent form, I began the interviews. The interviews lasted anywhere from 30-60 minutes, which was long to allow enough time for answers to all questions.

All of the interview questions were open-ended, and I used one-on-one semistructured interviews. The questions used are listed in Appendix C. The participants were asked 15-20 interview questions. There were a different set of questions for students, faculty, and administrators. The interview questions were predetermined which allowed for flexibility with the questions asked of the participants by delving deeper into their perspectives of student attendance (Hancock & Algozzine, 2011). A copy of the interview questions was provided to each participant during the interviews to help ease any concerns that may arise.

I followed proper interview protocol including a script (Appendix D) which included instructions for the researcher to follow, the interview questions, three probing questions, space to write the participant responses, and a final thank you at the end of each interview (Creswell, 2013). I audio recorded the interviews and took notes. The use of a recorder improved the validity of the data in addition to taking notes. Additionally, I had a backup recorder through my phone that was easily accessible should the first recorder not work. I also used a reflective journal to document what the participants were saying; this provided at the moment data and the availability of notations. As the interviewer and researcher, I avoided facial expressions, words, and tone that could bias participant comments. Each participant was assigned a letter (i.e., Student A, Student B, Faculty A, Staff A, etc.).

Role of the Researcher

In a case study, the primary instrument of data collection and analysis is the researcher (Merriam, 2009). Throughout the interview process, it is hard to predict the behavior of the participants or their responses. One way to strengthen the reliability of the interview process is to establish a rapport with the participants at the start of the interview by asking open-ended questions to start a conversation allowing natural ease into the remainder of the interview questions. Due to my role as a professor in the General Education Department at ABC College, (I teach 1st and 2nd-semester students) I purposefully selected students in their last four semesters whom I have never taught. This eliminated potential risk of student/researcher bias due to previous or future contact. Additionally, I only could interview faculty members who were not in my department,

and whom I did not supervise. Therefore, I eliminated all faculty members in my department from this study. At the present, I do not supervise any of the administrators and do not report directly to them. As a result, my position did not affect the responses given by the administrators nor faculty members. It is crucial that the researcher has a good rapport with the participants to establish trust. Through building trust, the participants were more likely to share and provide more detailed answers concerning their thoughts and perceptions. The interviewer must be able to allow the interviewee to believe he and/or she can speak freely. As an interviewer, the skill to listen must also be evident, and the interviewer must present themselves in a clear manner so that the participants understand all the questions.

Reliability

To promote reliability of my study, I administered a pilot study to check for potential confusion and misinterpretation of questions so that any revisions could be made before the actual study began. Also, the data collected from the interviews were recorded and transcribed first by hand, and then to a Microsoft word document. The literature informs us that it is imperative to be concerned with the validity of methods used. In a qualitative study, validity must represent as close to the perception of the participants as possible. In order to validate the findings, I used triangulation, member checking, and a peer debriefer (Creswell, 2013). The researcher must be self-reflective about their role in the study, their interpretation of the findings, as well as paying close attention to how their personal history may shape their interpretation. Included in my research study are the following measures to ensure reliability and to strengthen the

validity of the data and findings. After the data had been collected, I checked it for reliability by asking each participant to review the transcript for accuracy and to make sure all responses had been captured. Once all interviews were conducted with faculty, administrators, and students, I transcribed each participant's answers to the interview questions and then asked each participant to check that the analysis was accurate. I then reviewed it myself one more time, and a second time with a peer reviewer.

Potential problems addressed within the case study design included constraints of time and resources that could pose potential issues throughout the study. Several factors that could result in data that were unreliable would be questions that are unclear and confusing; the participants' misinterpretation of the interview questions; and, the physical and mental status of the participants at the time of the interviews.

Evidence of Quality and Procedures

The following measures were incorporated in the study to improve the trustworthiness of the data. I excluded any professors in my department from participating in the study to reduce the risk of bias, as well as any students I have come in contact with in my position. By removing my department from the participation pool, and, not interviewing former students, I eliminated any risk associated with conducting a study at one's worksite. I employed a pilot study to improve the quality of the interview questions. The questions were revised as needed based on the pilot and made before the actual study. To ensure that the data was both of quality and accurate, I asked each participant to review the transcript for accuracy (member checking) and to make sure I captured all responses. I then reviewed each transcript one more time, and a second time

with a peer reviewer. A detailed description of the results was provided and to provide validity to the data, I used triangulation.

Member Checking

Member checking occurred once I transcribed the interviews. It involved setting up a meeting with some or all of the participants to review my preliminary analysis of their interview responses to check for accuracy, and it also helps to identify the researcher's own biases and misunderstandings of what was observed (Merriam, 2009). At the time of the interviews, I informed the participants that within 2-5 days, they would be meeting with me for 10 minutes to go over their responses and make sure that I recorded everything accurately. I used member checking, with each participant, since there were only 22 participants, within two days of their interview, to confirm the accuracy and credibility of the research findings (Creswell, 2013). This is also referred to as respondent validation because I am asking for feedback on the findings that have emerged from the interviews; though I may have used different verbiage, it is still derived from their experiences. Likewise, this ruled out the possibility of misinterpretation because these participants were asked if the analysis of the data seemed accurate and factual (Merriam, 2009). The participants were allowed to provide any comments if they felt there were missing details. There were no changes requested.

Peer Debriefing

A peer debriefer is a colleague who works with the researcher while examining the researcher's notes and provides feedback. This enhances the credibility of the researcher's data analysis (Lodico et al., 2010). The peer debriefer I used was a professor

of English with experience in research and editing, and who has been in higher education for 20 years. After my interviews had been conducted, I transcribed the data electronically to written text and then took that information, created codes and themes, and, removed all identifying data and references to the participants. I then gave that information to the peer reviewer to edit the codes and themes and to check for reliability along with any bias that may have emerged. The peer reviewer did not have access to any of the interview transcripts, and did not participate in data collection. Consent is specific to participants, and therefore, the peer debriefer did not need to sign a consent form. Additionally, she did not have access to any identifiable data, and did not know the participants well enough where she could deduce who participated based on responses. However, she did need to sign a letter of participation which stated the role she would have as a peer debriefer.

Triangulation

I applied triangulation by gathering evidence from different participants to support the emerging themes from the interviews, and to strengthen the findings (Shenton, 2004). I evaluated discrepant responses and used peer debriefing by allowing a colleague, who was objective, to review the transcripts of the interviews, my final report, and the methodology chosen (Creswell, 2013). The feedback received not only enhanced credibility but helped in the discovery of any problems within the research. I also employed the technique of self-reflection, and, maintained a journal to identify possible biases and data errors that may influence the interpretation of the findings. By using

multiple sources of data, it allowed me to cross-check what I collected, with what I observed, and with what was transcribed.

Data Analysis

The interview process took about two weeks to complete, and after conducting the interviews with faculty, administrators, and students, I transcribed each participant's response to the interview questions within two days. At the end of two weeks, I then reviewed the transcriptions and began to code. The data were collected by me, the researcher, through verbal recordings using a recorder and written documentation as the participants were speaking. I then transcribed in a Microsoft Word document through careful analysis of the recordings and of my notes. The findings were coded according to responses and themes which were present in the participants' responses. I summarized the findings in a narrative format. Bogdan and Biklen (2007) stated that data analysis is a process of organizing data, breaking it down into units that are understandable, coding them, taking that data and information and synthesizing it, and finally, looking for patterns.

Data Coding

After member checking was employed, and each participant reviewed their responses and confirmed the transcriptions were accurate, I began coding the data, using the codes which emerged to create themes leading to the data analysis. I started the coding process within 24 hours of the member checking of the transcriptions, and began identifying the text segments from the sentences and paragraphs transcribed from the participants' responses. I used the recorder to replay the interviews to listen for

information that may have been missed or misinterpreted. On the right side of my interview notes were the codes discovered and on the left side of my notes, I placed themes that related to the text segment. The codes from the data I collected only had one or two words. I expected to use themes that are the most common amongst the participants. Once the data were organized into themes, I began to group parts of the interviews referring to participants by letters (i.e., participant A, participant B). To begin developing and describing the themes, I extracted data from the interviews and answered the research questions accordingly. Multiple perspectives were present during the interviews because the participants included students, faculty, and administrators. I also included dialogue from several participants to show the various perspectives present. Lastly, I uploaded the interview transcripts into Atlas.ti, a qualitative software program that aids the researcher with finding codes with similar themes while organizing the data and identifies possible codes (Atlas.ti, 2015). I used Atlas.ti after hand coding the transcriptions to check for accuracy, and to make sure that I did not miss any additional codes during the process of coding by hand. The codes that emerged from the software matched the codes that emerged from the hand-coded transcriptions.

Emerging Themes

Once the data were transcribed and coded, I used the codes to develop themes which emerged from the interviews. Tinto's (1975) model of student integration, and, Nora and Cabrera's (1996) student adjustment model, guided the research, providing a basis for understanding why students struggle with attending classes and the model was used to begin the evaluation of the data. Several themes emerged which consisted of sub

themes. This included academic influences, social reasons, and financial challenges. Tinto's (1975) conceptual framework was integrated within the interview questions (Appendix C).

Data Analysis Results

This section explains the findings from the student, faculty, and administrator interviews. The data analysis also related the results with the conceptual framework. Both the research questions and the findings from the interviews were used as foundations for the study. Three research questions guided this study to determine what factors affect attendance at the college and to identify measures to promote regular attendance and find potential solutions and strategies for low attendance. Several sub themes emerged from the three primary themes—academic reasons, social influences, and financial challenges, and included instructor and course content; work and finances; financial aid; socioeconomic; location and transportation; solutions; self-motivation, and, other external factors.

Findings

Research Question 1: What do students, staff, and faculty perceive as reasons why students attend or do not attend classes?

Faculty and administrator responses. The first research question asked the students, faculty, and staff what they perceived as reasons why students attend or do not attend class. Analysis of the data from the interviews helped to answer the first research question. The faculty and administrators who participated were labeled as Administrator A, B, C and faculty were labeled as faculty A, B, C to protect their identities. Participants

provided numerous reasons as to why they believe students struggle with attendance, as well as offered reasons as to why they felt some students had higher attendance. The reasons provided by both participant groups were based entirely on their experience in their position at the college, and, their relationship with the students. The six faculty and administrators interviewed felt attendance was a problem, and all of them stated it was a significant problem. This research question had eight interview questions from the set of interview questions listed in Appendix C that was asked of faculty and administrators. This research question identified academic reasons including course-content, and financial challenges such transportation, work, finances, and social influences including personal issues.

All six participants felt that attendance was a significant problem and that there were various reasons why attendance has been dropping. However, some of the participants felt it was only in certain classes; while others felt, it was a college-wide concern. Administrator A felt that it was only for certain classes, and, specific classes that were not a student's major, or were general education courses, tended to see lower attendance rates than the major classes. Faculty member A stated, "attendance at certain times, like during the spring and summer, was much more of a problem because students seem not to want to show up when it's warm and sunny." This same participant also noted that towards the end of a student's time at the school (usually their last two semesters) they are checked out and just stop showing up.

Academic Reasons

Course content. Several interview questions asked the participants about the courses and the content in the courses as a potential factor in attendance—both low and high. Five out of six participants felt the course itself, and the content of the course affected attendance. Faculty member C felt that “larger classes struggle more with the content and keeping up. And, many give up because the material being taught might be harder than expected.” In certain classes, especially those that might be easier, the participants noted that most students feel because they know the material, the course doesn’t matter much, and there was no need to attend regularly. In fact, Administrator B noted that “the level of engagement was lower if the students are not interested.” Likewise, Administrator C suggested in these types of situations, the teacher should try to make the boring classes, or the easy classes, more interesting. They could make it fun through the incorporation of games and even group work to keep students motivated and wanting to be in the class.

Financial Challenges

Transportation. Additionally, participants were asked to what degree transportation was a factor for students in attending classes on time, late, or not at all. Five out of six faculty members and administrator participants felt that transportation was a major factor in regards to attendance. Public transportation was noted as a challenge because buses and trains may run late, are overcrowded, or are delayed. Finances posed a problem in regards to transportation because if students did not have enough money for transportation, they just did not come to class. It was also a factor in relations to which mode of transportation students took—trains are more money, but get to school faster.

Most students cannot afford the metro north and opt to take the bus instead which results in a much longer commute, sometimes upwards of two additional hours of traveling time. Administrator A noted, “A train ride is an easier commute, but because they can’t afford the cost, they take a two-hour bus ride, which results in them often being late to class or simply not attending their first class of the day.”

Work was another factor with respect to transportation because a lot of students leave school early to catch their bus, and it may be the only bus available for an hour since buses do not run often. Weather was also identified as a factor affecting transportation. In fact, if it is too cold out, students will not walk to the bus or train station, and would rather stay home. Sometimes, bad weather may cause delays, causing students to be late to school, or, some of the local bus and train routes may not be operating if the weather is terrible. Faculty member A noted, “If the weather gets iffy, students decide not to bother coming to class because they do not want to wait out in the cold for their bus or walk from the train station to school; it is easier just to miss class altogether.”

Work. Finally, work was a significant factor as to why students have attendance issues. All faculty and administrator participants agreed that students would show up late, stop showing up, or withdraw due to their work responsibilities. Faculty member A stated “Some of my students work long hours, sometimes through the night. By the time they get home from work, they might have maybe two hours of sleep, and before they know it, it is time to get up and go to school. More often than not, the student decides just to skip their class so they can catch up on their sleep.”

Finances. The participants were also asked what external factors may cause students to miss class, be late, or stop attending. Money was a driving factor in attendance. Simply put, if students do not have money to get to school, they do not show up. If they do not have money to pay their tuition bill, they stop showing up and drop out. Five out of six participants felt money affected attendance. If students struggle with money, whether it's money to get to school or money to pay school bills, this can cause students not to attend daily or stop attending altogether.

Social Influences

Personal issues. Students who have personal issues such as child care or taking care of a parent or grandparent also struggle with attending school regularly. Sometimes, these burdens can often become overwhelming resulting in students just giving up and not coming to class or school, resulting in them dropping out and not finishing their degrees. Administrator A noted "A student the other day brought to my attention that his mom had just lost her job because her vision is failing and he has to be home with a more often to help out in the family. This is his last semester, and he has to put his life on hold to take care of his family. As a result, his grades have begun to slip, and his attendance is inconsistent." Likewise, administrator C mentioned that health issues often are main causes for students to stop attending or to attend when they feel like it; "I had a student who entered his 6th semester. The 6th semester is the entrance into the BBA program, and the workload increases ten-fold. He failed to tell his teachers and his advisors his medical condition. Once he became a 6th-semester student, the stress exacerbated his medical condition, and he just stopped attending, and his grades began to suffer."

Student responses. This research question that asked the students what they perceived as reasons why students attend or do not attend class had ten interview questions from the set of questions listed in Appendix C. Sixteen out of 16 students felt attendance was a problem with 13 out of the 16 stated attendance was a significant problem. Several interview questions asked the participants to respond to what challenges they face and/or other students face in regards to attending or missing class. Student's identified financial challenges such as work, transportation, and other finances, academic reasons including course-content, faculty, and time of day, and social influences including familial obligations, including childcare and taking care of relatives, and personal health as challenges students face concerning class attendance.

Academic Reasons

Course-content and faculty. Several interview questions focused on the course, reasons for attending or not attending specific courses, and the role of the instructor. Students felt that some classes were more boring than others and this could be a deterrent for either themselves or their peers to attend the class consistently. The participants stated that certain classes tend to have repetitive material, are not challenging enough, and some of the instructors teaching styles are archaic. Therefore, students don't show up because they only care about the classes in their major. Student M felt that "Students should get extra credit for doing work and being there." Student L stated:

Many of the students are underprepared, not ready for class or school, they often cut class, are immature and then, have to play catch-up. They haven't figured out yet that the school is not free. Their priorities are not in order.

It is worth mentioning that student L was an older student attending college in her mid to late 50s and some of her responses are very different from the other participants.

Participants also mentioned that many students lack commitment coming to school and they are not motivated. Student E noted:

Students just don't want to be here. If a student has a teacher who doesn't care if they are here or a parent that doesn't care if they come to school every day, then the student doesn't come to school. It's like they need to be forced or have incentives.

In respect to the experience of a teacher, the students interviewed thought that the definition of experience varied. For example, a student could have a professor who taught for 15 years but lacked the outside experience that connects the students to the material, or, the professor could have ample outside knowledge but lack experience in the teaching and delivery of the subject matter. The consensus from the interviews was that lack of experience could affect a student's desire to attend, or might make them question what they are getting out of that class, and if it's worth it to attend consistently.

Financial Challenges

Financial issues. Participants were asked if they felt financial aid issues are a challenge. Fourteen out of 16 students stated finances as a challenge, and if money is a factor, this could result in not being able to afford transportation for the day. Work may take precedent as well because they need to work to pay bills, for rent and/or to help their family out. Several students commented that "the school is too expensive and does not work for you financially." However, more than half of the students felt that the college

was generous with their financial aid, and, with the scholarship offerings. Out of the 16 students interviewed more than half had scholarships to the college.

Transportation. Student participants were asked about transportation possibly influencing a student's attendance. Fourteen out of 16 students felt transportation was a factor. The two that did not feel this way were 4.0 students who also had very high attendance and felt there are no excuses. Student B stated, "You either leave earlier, find someone to carpool with, or take the earlier bus or train." Student I mentioned that "most students who have transportation challenges and might have an early class, or only one class on that particular day, decide it's not worth the time and energy to travel that far." Likewise, student K pointed out "if students do not have money for bus fare, they just don't come to school. And, they usually do not tell anyone in charge that this is the reason."

Social Influences

Personal issues. If students have a child, or a parent to take care of, this affects their attendance in their classes, as well as their ability to complete work and persist. Familial obligations were a challenge that at least half of the students interviewed experienced at one point or another in their college career. Several students mentioned mental health issues as a big factor in whether they even made it to school that day, let alone on time to class. Those students identified that they were meeting regularly with a therapist including the school counselor and noted that if they were able to take charge of their mental health, they were more successful in school, but if they failed to take their

medications, or speak to someone, this would result in days, sometimes weeks of not attending their classes.

Summary. The results from the interviews found that there are various influencers in the attendance of students. The faculty and administrators interviewed stated course-content as a factor in why students attend some classes versus why they do not attend others. The findings also suggested that financial challenges such as transportation, work, and other financial obligations greatly impact a student's attendance, and almost always in a negative fashion. The student participants all felt strongly that both course-content and faculty were influential in a student's desire to attend or not attend class. Additionally, they felt strongly that finances such as paying for college, and paying for transportation also greatly affected a student's attendance. All participants interviewed agreed that social obligations such as childcare and taking care of other family members also influence a student's attendance in their classes, and can affect whether they attend often, or not at all.

Research Question 2: To what degree do faculty, staff, and students perceive that attendance is related to student performance?

The second research question asked all participants the relationship between attendance and student performance. This research question had four interview questions. These interview questions ask participants to identify reasons why students struggle to get to class on time, reasons they do not attend class, or, specific classes, and the engagement levels in morning and afternoon classes.

Faculty and administrator responses. Themes identified include time, self-motivation, course-content, and, faculty involvement which are all related to attendance and student performance.

Academic Reasons

Time of day and course-content. All six of the faculty and administrator participants felt that class time was a significant contribution to attendance. The time of class directly affects most students' motivation to attend the class, which in turn affects their performance in the class. In fact, most participants noted that the early morning class, the 8 am class, and the last class of the day, the 1:15 pm class, generally see lower attendance. Course-content is critical to why students chose to attend. If students feel a class is not interesting to them, they decide not to show up despite the consequences of that action. If a class is too easy, students might not show up, or, if the class is too hard, they might be too afraid to attend because they do not understand the material, or they are already falling behind. Faculty member B noted "Students find themselves becoming somewhat bored. They are familiar with how to play the system. They know how to get away with things. Some will come for five minutes to receive attendance, and leave because they know if they walk through that door, they must be marked present."

Self-motivation. All six participants felt that motivation – both internal and external impact a student's attendance. If a student lacked motivation to attend class, this impacted their performance in class. Simply put, the more unmotivated a student was to attend class, the more likely they had poor attendance and poor grades. Additionally, the more motivation a student had from family, friends, even the faculty, the more likely they

were to attend classes regularly. If a student was self-motivated, this desire to attend, do well, and be successful was even higher. Likewise, if a student did not have any motivation from someone in their life nor self-motivation, the lower their attendance was in classes. Administrator C believed that self-motivation was a crucial factor in how often a student shows up to class, and it plays a vital role in whether they decide to even go to school or their class that day. In fact, Administrator C states:

If they are willing to learn, they are going to show up because they are there to get as much as they can out of the class. They are motivated and want to be here.

They want to get a degree and have a successful career.

However, Administrator C also mentioned:

If they do not want to be in college, and they want to do something else, and they are being told they have to be here, they will not show the same levels of motivation to attend as those who willingly choose to be here.

Similar to motivation, faculty member C stated that “students need to and want to feel challenged. The more challenged they are, the more likely they will continually show up. If the class is too easy, they think they do not need to attend.”

Faculty involvement. The six participants were also asked to what degree they felt the role of the instructor has in relation to a student’s attendance and if the instructor influences attendance in classes. While this question can be answered with various responses, faculty involvement was mentioned by all six participants as both a positive and negative force concerning student attendance. The more engaged, energetic, and empathetic a teacher is, the higher the attendance. On the other hand, if a faculty member

was boring, has low-energy, lectured too much, and read from the textbook the less likely students were to have high attendance in their classes. The way faculty are in the classroom can directly impact a student's attendance, which then impacts their performance in that class. Administrator A stated:

I have spoken with particular students about particular professors, and they have a select few professors whose classes they attend often, and a select whose class they do not attend. Most of the time, it is either they are boring professors, the student is not motivated, or they have a personal issue with the professor.

Administrator C mentioned:

When a student is in class, it is the first experience they have with that faculty member that will determine if they want to be there, if they want to attend often, or if they just want to stop showing up. This could be the faculty member's personality, teaching experience, and even their delivery of the material.

Likewise, faculty member A felt that "there is an entertainment factor. Some of the faculty are better than others, some look better than others, and then there is some faculty I aspire to be more like because they have all the qualities students' desire in a teacher." Faculty member B noted "If the instructor is interesting, and the content is interesting, the students will show up. If the instructor is boring, then that becomes more challenging."

Finally, faculty involvement is crucial when it comes to attending class, being on time, and attending the classes that might be harder to attend due to the time period.

Faculty member A noted:

Expectations are much harder than what they've experienced in the lower level courses...there is an entertainment factor; some of us are more entertaining than others. Some of us give them a reason to show up to class, and others simply do not stress it enough. That right there affects the attitude and motivation of a student to attend their class.

Student responses. Themes present in the responses included social connections, including family obligations and family support; and academic reasons including course content, faculty involvement, self-motivation, and time of class.

Social Influences

Social connections. Fifteen out of 16 students stated that they struggled at one point in their college career with socialization. They felt they are too sheltered, and many stated they did not know how to socialize. Additionally, they felt if you have friends at the college, you were more likely to want to be in school and attending your classes. These participants agreed that socializing could make a difference. Solutions for this included offering student workshops on how students can socialize, and how they can be more social. Connections are vital as they can motivate you to attend. This also included relationships with professors who can provide advice or recommendations. Additionally, having parents who are actively committed to their child's life especially with school, are also helpful. Ten out of the 16 students interviewed had a great support system including their parents or other family members. As a result, their influence and guidance help students focus and to attend class actively. This also helps with transportation because these students either have a car, their parents drive them to school, or they give them

money for the bus or train. Four out of the 16 felt that if parents were not present or active in the student's academic life, these students struggled more with getting to school on time always attending. Two out of 16 did not have any opinions toward this question and felt showing up and doing well in school is entirely your self-motivation.

Academic Reasons

Course-content. This student noted that in most of their classes, attendance was on the lower side but these same students who do not show up, still get passing grades and as a result, this can be non-motivating to those students such as themselves who show up every day ready to learn and participate. Also, student P states "attendance should count more in the BBA program because it is a higher level of learning and work."

Student A answered:

Professors must help motivate students it is as simple as that. Some students don't like specific teachers, so they don't show up to certain classes. Perhaps if teachers found a way to make class interesting, and more lively and engaging students might attend regularly.

Student F felt that teachings should make attendance and participation high on the list, thus motivating students and giving them incentives to attend.

Faculty involvement. Furthermore, most of the participants answered that some students do not like certain professors, so they just do not show up to those classes. Most felt that some faculty members are unempathetic towards their students Ten out of the 16 participants had similar responses to the instructor question and felt that some teachers show up late, do not care to be there so why should the students, and that these same

instructors fail to explain the course material properly or effectively. As a result, this becomes a hindrance to students consistently attending those classes. In fact, student C answered “some teachers have only one method—their way or no way. This is not very compromising nor practical and drives students further away from attending that class all the time.” Similarly, student D mentioned, “teachers should show up on time, make sure to be present, and set an example.” Student A noted that “some of the teachers are overburdened with work and classes, and it shows when they are in front of the class.” However, all 16 participants agreed that good teachers make the classes enjoyable resulting in students wanting to be present. All participants observed in their classes that the ones with higher attendance are often the livelier ones and have increased participation.

Student participants were asked about the level of engagement from both the students and the instructors. The participants noted that teachers with low voices, who were close-minded and were not understanding posed more of a challenge with students feeling engaged in the class. They also agreed that teachers who overuse PowerPoint to teach the lesson fail to engage the class. On the other hand, they noted that a good professor uses all different methods, such as whiteboards, discussions, videos, and group work and they make sure students understand the lessons through these various delivery methods. They also use their experiences to relate to the students and the lessons. Student P stated, “teachers who motivate, love what they do, it shows through their work and teaching, and how they present it.”

Self-motivation. Additionally, students agreed that the more motivated a student is, the more likely they were in class, and the higher their grades are likely to be. The environment and the staff were listed high on the reasons for motivation to be there. Students with goals such as all as, those that had a scholarship, or were self-funding, all answered that they had high self-motivation. This response was from 10 out of 16 participants. The remaining six students had either failed a few classes, had poor attendance, low GPAs, or had other issues such as lack of support, or, had a mental health illness which precluded them from responding yes to this question.

Time of day. Students were also asked about the time of day they are most productive. Themes present included time of class, faculty involvement, and transportation. Sixteen out of 16 students felt they're the most productive mid-morning between 9:45 and noon. Fifteen out of 16 do not like the 8 AM classes and feel they should eliminate this class. Twelve out of 16 are not productive after 1:15 and that class should also be removed. Students stated they feel less likely to attend when they're tired when there are weather-related issues especially with traveling, and, when students have only one class one a specific day. Student G said that "the end of the day is a drag because the days are too long, especially if students are here all day."

Summary. The findings suggest that a student's performance in class is directly related to their attendance, and vice-versa. If a student attends class often, they have higher performance levels, and average to above average grades; likewise, if a student does not attend all that much, that will hinder their performance in that class, and subsequently, in school. All three groups mentioned that faculty involvement, course-

content, and self-motivation are important components to both class performance and attendance. If a student struggles with attendance, they are that much more likely to underperform in their classes. Furthermore, students stated that social connections and the time of the day also affected their attendance and performance in class. If they did not feel like attending a certain class because of these reasons, it was highly likely a pattern would emerge. If they had very low attendance, the students noted that their performance in those classes was affected.

Research Question 3: What are some measures to improve attendance that students, faculty, and staff can identify?

The last research question asked faculty, staff, and students what they believe are some measures to improve attendance. This research question had five interview questions for faculty and staff, and, seven for students.

Faculty and administrator responses. Several interview questions asked the faculty and administrator participants to mention solutions to improving attendance in the classroom, including strategies for teachers and students. Themes identified included academic reasons and measures such as faculty involvement and financial solutions such as transportation.

Academic Reasons and Measures

Faculty involvement. Most of the participants felt strongly that teachers in the classroom could benefit from a question and answer session at the start of the semester to ask students what their most significant challenges were leading to open discussion about the topic. Administrator C suggested a potential solution:

Before enrollment, administrators (specifically, admissions) could try to find out if they struggle with getting to school consistently and if they might have other outside problems such as family or mental health issues. Then if that has been identified, the school could work with these students before they even start and find a way to prevent the attendance issue before it starts.

Transportation. In respect to a potential solution to transportation issues, all six participants agreed that providing a school shuttle to pick students up from either the train station or a popular area where most students live, could help those that struggle with how to get to school daily. They also all suggested discounted bus and train fares, or, even including these fares in the tuition on a yearly basis so students would always have access from day one to transportation. Administrator A suggested vouchers; “other schools give vouchers for transportation that students can use for the major transportation providers in the area.” Faculty B believed if we adopted the shuttle system like colleges in the area have done, this could alleviate a lot of stress for those students that travel far. In fact, faculty member B felt that “a lot of our students travel two to three hours just to get to school; this is usually a result of taking both the bus and the train. If we had a shuttle to pick up in certain locations, most students could just take a bus to get there. This would also make the cost of transportation cheaper for students, and then we could guarantee they would get to class on time.”

Student responses. Several interview questions asked students administrator to mention solutions to improving attendance in the classroom, including strategies for teachers and students. Themes identified included academic reasons such as faculty

involvement; social influences such as social connections; and financial challenges such as transportation.

Academic Reasons

Faculty involvement. The majority of the students interviewed felt teachers should try to be more hands-on, learn different styles of teaching, become more knowledgeable about the learning styles of their students, change their methods by lecturing less, and finally, find balance. They further suggested that teachers should hand out surveys with questions like “How engaging is this class?” “How can I increase attendance?” “How to talk to a student?” “How to get the class more active and engaged?” Many felt that teachers could make the class itself livelier and engaging using games or activities in the class. In fact, several of the participants felt teachers could incorporate “learning one on one,” and, that teachers should gauge the energy of the classroom and gather feedback in the first few weeks. They can assess this and if need be, change their style to meet the needs of their students. Student M states “create engaging lectures, force us to speak, make the class more hands-on, and encourage participation.” Participants felt that stricter policies may encourage students to show up, the more relaxed the classroom policy was, they observed, the more students do not care to consistently attend class because they already know it will not affect their overall grade. Student H mentioned, “ask students to come and speak to the class and/or faculty members, and to give their perspective.”

Social Influences

Social connections. Finally, eight out of the 16 students feel that by providing real-world experiences such as spending a day in a medical clinic, or at an accounting firm could keep classes more interesting. Student A stated “getting to be hands-on motivates me a lot, especially in the early morning classes. Being able to see my end goal and the field I could potentially be working in, is encouragement for my future plans.” Student G noted “sometimes the textbook stuff doesn’t allow us to know what it is really like out there in the working world. Getting to experience it firsthand could change things up and encourage more students to attend more often.”

Financial Challenges

Transportation. In respect to a potential solution to transportation issues, the majority of the student participants agreed that providing discounted bus and train fares, or, even including these fares in the tuition on a yearly basis like colleges in the area offer, could help those students who take public transportation. Additionally, it could help out those students who struggle with getting to class on time, or who cannot afford the bus or train fare. Many felt that even helping out a little with the financial part of the cost of public transportation could greatly ease the burden of those students.

Summary. The participants interviewed all agreed that several solutions could improve student attendance. Faculty felt strongly that instructors could benefit from creating sessions for the students to ask questions at the start of the class period, and students agreed that faculty needed to be more involved and have a better understanding of different learning styles within their classrooms. All participant groups agreed that a

solution to transportation such as reduced fare or a school shuttle could help students get to school in time and affect attendance in a positive manner.

Summary of Findings

All faculty and administrators felt that class time, faculty involvement, personal factors, social connection, and self-motivation ranked high as influences affecting a student's attendance. They also felt strongly that course content, money, public transportation, and work were also reasons that a student may choose to attend or not attend. All student participants felt strongly that class time was a factor in student attendance. They also felt that social connections, including those with peers and faculty, were just as important to why students choose to attend or not to attend. Public transportation and money were also factors that students identified as relatively high influences in a student's attendance. Several other themes were identified including faculty and parental involvement; motivation; and non-parental involvement.

Treatment of Discrepant Cases

A discrepant case emerges when there is contradiction between the emerging explanations and the results of the data. These contradictions in the data can lead to unexpected findings; however, by searching for them, testing them, and adding them to the data results, the quality of the data strengthens (Morrow, 2005). Through member checking, each participant reviewed their responses and confirmed the transcriptions were accurate, and a peer debriefer further reviewed the findings for accuracy. This added credibility by helping to diminish discrepant cases (Creswell, 2013). The

participants gave similar responses to the reasons why students struggle with attendance in their classes. As a result, there were no discrepant cases among the findings.

Interpretation of Findings

This section explains how the findings from the interviews relate to the conceptual framework and the review of the literature. The faculty, administrators, and students shared similar reasons as to why attendance was a problem. The participants identified academic, social, and financial reasons as to why attendance in certain classes and programs was lower than others. These reasons corresponded with reasons proposed by the conceptual framework and was supported by the existing literature. Solutions to these challenges were included in Section 3.

Academic Reasons

According to the responses from the interviews, academic reasons were the number one reasons students did or did not attend their classes. Faculty, according to all participants' responses were one of the main reasons students were motivated or not motivated to attend. According to the results of the study this included course content, and faculty involvement with the students, such as their delivery methods, and the connections they have with their students. Termos (2013) noted the more engaged students are both academically and socially, especially with their faculty, the more likely they will persist. The participants cited that classroom involvement was critical, and the more engagement through class activities and group work can result in higher student motivation levels and their motivation to attend classes. Students indicated that the more contact students have with their faculty, both inside and outside of the classroom, the

better their attendance was, and, as a result, the better their grades were. It is apparent that the role of faculty members was critical with respect to overall student retention. The next section discusses possible solutions for faculty involvement that may encourage students to attend classes.

Social Reasons

Another reason indicated by the participants for why students struggled with attendance was social connections. This included familial obligations, personal, and academic. The participants also mentioned connections with others, motivation to be in college, motivation to succeed, and encouragement from others. While social involvement helps with a student's motivation to attend and stay in school, the lack of social involvement, or social isolation, can lead to loneliness and withdrawal from the student. It is imperative that students develop at least one connection throughout their time at the institution. The conceptual frameworks supported the results of the study. Tinto (2012) stated that there are internal and external forces which influence a student's sense of belonging. Connections both at home and school can help generate encouragement and motivation needed to persist. Nora and Cabrera (1996) suggested that parental support is vital to a student's motivation level. Students cited parental influence having a positive effect on them and could lead to higher attendance rates and increased retention rates. In the next section, I will discuss solutions to address the problems students face socially.

Financial Reasons

Finances, according to the findings of the study, were the second major reason students stop attending and eventually withdraw. Participants listed common financial barriers such as tuition, rent, and other obligations. The results showed that financial aid and scholarships were key predictors for the students interviewed remaining at the college. Research supports this idea that the more aid a student receives, the more likely they will persist at the institution (Adams et al., 2016; Olbrecht, Romano, & Teigen, 2016; Tinto, 2012). Tinto (2012) further stated that without financial support, students, primarily those underprepared, will have a harder time succeeding. According to Nora and Cabrera (1996), the role finances play in a student's academic preparedness is dependent upon multiple factors. One factor being the student's socioeconomic status and ethnic background. The findings of the study indicate that low levels of financial aid, especially among low-income students, affected their attendance, retention, and completion rates. In the next section, I will discuss solutions to the financial problems.

Limitations

The study was limited due to the small number of participants; the sample size does not represent the whole school and therefore does not reflect perceptions of the entire student body nor the entire staff and remaining faculty. The interviews were limited to only the Business faculty members, and not faculty members from our other large programs that could have offered greater insight into the attendance problem. The study was further limited because only 6th – 9th semester students from the BBA program were selected; the school has 839 students in 5 programs in addition to an adult evening

and online school; participants selected are from the day college only. As a result, the perceptions gathered only represent this small percentage of students and does not factor in students on probation, who have been suspended or have withdrawn from the institution. Finally, I was also limited with the attendance data that was used since it only covered 2014-2016, which was enough time to demonstrate there was a problem but not enough time to investigate if the problem has been on-going for a lengthy period. I also did not factor in certain weather scenarios that may have affected attendance throughout those two years such as snowstorms that frequent the area during December through March.

Conclusion

Through a qualitative case study, I was able to uncover why students had poor attendance. The reasons included faculty involvement, time of classes, course content, finances, transportation, working, social connections, parental involvement and self-motivation. The results of this study provided me with a better understanding of why students struggle with attendance in ABC College's Business program and allowed me to look for possible solutions. Section 3 includes the goals of the project, a rationale, a literature review, possible solutions, proposed implementation plan, and the tools for evaluating the workshop. It also contains implications for social change.

Section 3: The Project

Project Description and Goals

I developed a 3-day professional development (PD) based on the research findings to inform faculty, students, and administrators of the reasons for poor student attendance and to develop skills to improve student attendance. PD helps teachers understand new ideas and incorporate them into their teaching practices (Kennedy, 2016). The goal of the workshop is to develop faculty, staff, and administrator skills and strategies to improve student attendance. The goals include (a) evaluating the reasons students do and do not attend class, (b) improving student attendance with best practices and strategies for teachers, and (c) devising best practices for other staff and administrators by discussing and presenting tools to increase overall student attendance.

PD workshops function as a way to provide different approaches and serve as a means to develop strategies for student behavior, student participation, and curriculum challenges. The strategy behind PD, especially for teachers, is for group members to design and share their knowledge and how they handle challenges in their classes. Finally, PD is meant to provide continuing education to teachers. While they are experts in their field with comprehensive academic backgrounds, they may not have knowledge or skills beyond their scope of expertise. According to Kennedy (2016), PD can foster teacher learning, resulting in changed or improved teaching practices. Professional development workshops also provide an open forum for teachers to discuss best practices, curriculum and pedagogy, and delivery methods.

A facilitator with background knowledge of the problem will conduct the 3-day workshop. The participants for this workshop include faculty, students, and administrators. The design of the workshop will include opportunities for the participants to aid with collaboration, group activities to learn and share insights, role-playing exercises, and interactive presentations with administrators, while integrating various modes of technology and pedagogy. The purpose of this workshop is to provide opportunities for professional development to the college community. At the start of the first day, participants will receive a journal in which they can record their thoughts, suggestions, questions, and anything else of value. After each session, participants will get a chance to write in their journals, and at the end of each day, participants will be asked, through an anonymous questionnaire, to evaluate whether the presentations were effective and if the day's outcomes were met.

The business department will be required to collaborate with admissions and academic advising. Participants will also be asked to write down any questions, so that they may be discussed and answered the next day. Business faculty should attend all sessions for all 3 days. Students will be asked to attend sessions that focus on the role of students and faculty, and administrators will be asked to attend the final day, with the option to attend all 3 days for extra professional development credit. The guiding question throughout the three days is, what strategies and solutions can be developed and implemented that will increase attendance? The guiding question will be placed on each table. The daily workshop agenda is included in Appendix A.

Goal of Day 1

The goal of the first day is to introduce faculty in the business program to the factors that affect student attendance and to understand the role that they have regarding attendance. During the first day, attending faculty members will work with their business program colleagues. The first day will start with icebreakers. Icebreakers help to relax the participants while encouraging open communication. After the icebreaker, the facilitator will ask faculty members to write a list of reasons students do not attend their classes and why students consistently attend. Following this exercise, the group will discuss these reasons. After this group session, the participants will role-play to understand better why students struggle with attendance. After the role-play breakout session, all faculty members will return to the original table, and the facilitator will ask the group their results, by handing out Post-It notes and having each participant categorize the areas as transportation, work, family, money, and work. The purpose of this presentation is to explore other reasons students struggle with attendance. At the end of day one, participants will be asked to fill out an assessment of the day and to write down any questions they may have.

Goal of Day 2

At the beginning of the second day, the facilitator will address any lingering questions from the first day's session, allowing for the participants to openly discuss their questions. Day 2 will include students along with faculty to demonstrate and discuss their perspectives. The focus of this day will be to discuss and better understand student reasons for low attendance, understand Tinto's student integration model, identify

teaching and engagement styles, and address different student behaviors. Activities for the day will revolve around teaching styles, delivery methods, and how to engage and motivate students. Throughout the session, groups will have opportunities to brainstorm and discuss why students do or do not attend classes. There will also be time to write down any questions from the session, and any other reflections the participants have made. Before the session ends, participants will be asked to fill out an assessment of the day and the activities included.

Goal of Day 3

Day 3 is the culmination of the workshop. The day will begin with a summary of the previous day and will address any lingering questions from that session. The summary of the previous day will be followed with icebreakers that pairs up the administrators with the faculty in an effort to focus on collaboration and college-wide communication. The focus for the final day will be to understand how the larger college community is a part of attendance and retention efforts and to discuss solutions, strategies, and best practices for improving student attendance. Different administrators, including the dean of academic services and student support the director of retention and enrollment management, and the vice-president of admissions and enrollment management, will be asked to present on topics regarding higher attendance strategies, and ways to retain students in the classroom and at the college. Group sessions will include faculty and administrators and will provide opportunities to brainstorm strategies and best practices. After each group has developed strategies, both groups will discuss what emerges from their group discussions. The session for the day will end with

solutions and strategies that address how to increase attendance, thus keeping students. Participants will be given the final assessment for the PD workshop and will be asked to provide any final thoughts and comments.

Rationale

Based on the data analysis results in Section 2, I chose the 3-day PD workshop because of the need to train the faculty, administration, and staff on strategies and solutions to improve attendance. The workshops will also focus on areas of improvement both within the faculty and college-wide. Attending this 3-day PD workshop may increase efforts college-wide to improve attendance and as a result, increase retention. The data analysis in Section 2 revealed most students believed faculty influenced attendance in their classroom. I also found that students felt finances and connections were strongly associated with attendance. I identified several areas for future consideration, including office hours, student feedback, faculty and staff involvement, and faculty and staff's increased awareness of students' financial situations. Faculty and administration mentioned some but not all the reasons that the students did. This workshop will provide the college community with better insight, strategies, and solutions for handling attendance challenges in the classroom and within the college. The solutions may lead to improving overall attendance and provide newer teaching strategies that can lead to better engagement with the students.

Review of the Literature

The purpose of this literature review was to find evidence to support the 3-day professional development project based on my data collection and analysis. This section

focuses on solutions to attendance problems. The literature review covers three topics: academic influences and solutions, social influences and solutions, and financial influences and solutions. The review offers evidence of potential solutions, strategies, and support to improve student attendance at ABC College and improve retention.

Keywords used in the literature search were *academic support, faculty engagement, student perceptions, social connections, work, transportation, finances, mental health, faculty-student relationships, and academic performance*. The articles that I used were located in Walden University's online library databases and included searches of published work over the past five years from the ERIC database, Education Research Complete database, Sage database, and ProQuest. I also used Google Scholar search engine and the New York Public Library databases.

Academic Influences and Solutions

Students and faculty and administration most often mentioned that low attendance stemmed from the role of the faculty, ranging from engagement to delivery methods and the course content. Notably, faculty can provide students with academic and social support. The students who participated in the study commented that faculty needs to be more engaging and work on their delivery of the material they are teaching. Solutions from the participants, including faculty and administrators, included specific workshops for both faculty and students, more student feedback, a better understanding of different learning styles, and more observations by the faculty's department chairs. The literature examined ways to improve faculty and student with involvement. Making better use of office hours, active professional development for faculty, student feedback, and the

delivery methods of the faculty can have an impact on the student's motivation to attend class consistently.

Ultimately, instructors play a significant role in the academic success of their students. Teachers determine grades and are responsible for the students' understanding of the course material. Instructors' level of engagement can directly affect a student's motivation in the classroom as well as their motivation to attend (Goldman, Cranmer, Sollitto, Labelle, & Lancaster, 2017). Good teachers can positively influence students and encourage growth and development in their students; a teacher who is average or below average and does not generate positive feedback from their students can have the opposite effect (Goldman et al., 2017).

Faculty members struggle when it comes to identifying students' needs (Juklová, 2013). The three faculty members I interviewed suggested that all faculty could benefit from PD that focuses on the different challenges students face and ways to meet those challenges. Although solutions to faculty engagement and interaction are prevalent in the research, these solutions are not used, or widely discussed (Wirt & Jaeger, 2014). Obvious solutions include better training, more professional development, and developing various teaching methods.

Office hours. Guerrero and Rod (2013) analyzed the effectiveness of faculty office hours in conjunction with a student's performance and connection in the classroom. Associations include positive experiences, increased motivation, higher levels of confidence, and, ultimately, increased and regular attendance. The interaction between faculty and students has been a valuable pillar of pedagogy (Guerrero & Rod, 2013).

Although office hours allow students a chance to seek help outside of the classroom, most students do not take advantage of these opportunities, and both faculty and students hold negative attitudes toward office visits (Pfund, Rogan, Burnham, & Norcross, 2013).

Students might use office hours for numerous reasons including discussing their academic performance, seeking advice, understanding and discussing lectures, and to understand the assignments. Guerrero and Rod (2013) found that most students do not attend office hours because they are apprehensive and unsure of what to expect during that meeting. Students might think of office hours as a waste of time or feel they are an inconvenience to their instructors. On the other hand, students who perform well and consistently attend the course, generally have higher levels of motivation and do not need nor seek outside office hours (Pfund et al., 2013). Therefore, office hours are of extreme benefit to students struggling with the material or those that are not regularly attending. Furthermore, faculty members do not place office hours as a priority. Many often choose times to schedule office hours that are convenient for them and not necessarily for the students (Hoffman, 2014). Guerrero and Rod (2013) further noted that faculty members often have other responsibilities and might feel overburdened with workloads, thus diminishing the importance of office hours. With students rarely attending office hours, they can be perceived to be a waste of time.

Many students would prefer to email their instructors a question then find the time for face-to-face interactions. Similarly, instructors are relying on and encouraging alternative modes of interaction through the Internet (Hoffman, 2014). As a result, more faculty are encouraging computer-based interactions. Guerrero and Rod (2013) stated that

a balance of computer-mediated and face-to-face interaction could benefit both the students and instructors.

Guerrero and Rod (2013) suggested that faculty send out constant email reminders to students about office hours with an emphasis on those that have attendance issues or are struggling with the material. They also believed that office hours should be spread out during different blocks of time, and instructors should speak directly to students about the benefits of office hours. Finally, students who perform poorly or do not attend often fall into these categories because they failed to seek help, have no self-motivation, are consumed with outside problems, or lack confidence (Pfund et al., 2013). If the faculty personally invite them to their office hours, students will attend the first session out of obligation but may see the benefits of continued use of office hours. This could lead to increased attendance, ultimately leading to better academic performance (Guerrero & Rod, 2013).

Student feedback. Students noted that some faculty members tend not to show empathy toward their students. They teach using archaic methods such as overuse of lecture and textbook and fail to engage the students. Orzcan (2013) suggested faculty can benefit from both student and colleague feedback. Students who perform well often have favorable opinions of their instructors and their teaching methods, and that those who do poorly in class or do not attend regularly have negative views on their instructors (Orzcan, 2013), resulting in skewed evaluations given at the end of each term. According to Orzcan, students rated experienced teachers favorably in the study.

Orzcan (2013) found that faculty should have their students evaluate them often and make use of the student evaluations and opinions. Instructors should develop their lectures and teaching delivery methods on a semester basis, and, continue to modify and grow. Professional development workshops centered on new technology in the classroom can be beneficial. Orzcan also found that teachers do not always allow extra time for slow learners and do not focus enough on explaining the material and providing one-to-one interaction with students. At ABC College, the students interviewed stated that professors do not spend enough of the time understanding the needs of the class itself and tend to skip through and rush the material. Those who have a harder time understanding the material tend to stop showing up to class, leading to lower levels of attendance within certain classes and instructors.

Trammell and Aldrich (2016) noted the more understanding faculty are in student expectations, the more likely it is that they can directly enhance a student's learning and knowledge of the course and can increase the satisfaction of the students, especially regarding performance and classroom attendance. Indeed, faculty have the flexibility to adjust the student expectations and outcomes and can directly affect the experience of the students within their classroom (Hill & Christian, 2012; Tinto, 1988; Laird, Chen, & Kuh, 2008; Trammell & Aldrich, 2016).

The perception of students regarding instructors and the way they teach can influence the attendance, interaction, and understanding of the subject matter from the student (Hill & Christian, 2012). In turn, student perceptions and evaluations of their instructors can affect various areas such as faculty performance reviews, retention rates in

the program, and, the way a course is taught in the future. The personality of the instructors has a high value when it comes to the feedback from the students in the course. Professors who show empathy and encourage conversations outside of the classroom, respect the opinions of their students, and genuinely care about the success of their students and their well-being are held in higher regard and often have the higher attendance rates alongside positive reviews (Hill & Christian, 2012). In addition, Hill and Christian (2012) noted that the experiences of the students themselves, both within the college and outside, can also influence the perception and ideal of teaching. Hill and Christian found that students prefer a variety of traits in their instructors. They concluded that students preferred instructors who were approachable irrespective of the setting and the competence level was not as important as the previously mentioned characteristics.

Hill and Christian (2012) further determined that faculty who show a willingness to hear and meet the needs of their students, are often the ones more involved and invested in the inclusion of their students within the classroom. Their study concluded that instructors could show a commitment to the teaching of their students through characteristics such as empathy, kindness, and competence within their classrooms; it could in fact help with the perception of students and their willingness to participate, engage, and show up to class (Hill & Christian, 2012). On the other hand, negative or unpleasant experiences can lead to students dropping out (Turner & Thompson, 2014).

One of the challenges that institutions are facing is that students entering college are millennials. As a result, they are encountering difficulties with the persistence and retention of these students. Their learning styles, expectations, and the way they socialize

poses a problem to the traditional programs and instructional teaching styles (Turner & Thompson, 2014). Millennial students also possess impractical confidence and unrealistic expectations. Furthermore, many of these students enter underprepared, and the instructor-student relationship can be critical as it serves as an essential component and element in the academic success and achievement of the students (Lillis, 2011). In fact, students who develop a relationship with their instructors that is interactive increases their chance of persisting academically. This relationship is even more of value to both the students and the instructor because it is a critical component of not just the academic process but the social one as well (Turner & Thompson, 2014). These same students often expect that their faculty members and administration to be easily accessible and openly available (Turner & Thompson, 2014). Developing new techniques and strategies relating to teaching and initiating newer programs can foster a more collaborative learning environment with the goals of motivating millennial students to be more self-reflective by becoming active participants in their journey for knowledge and an education.

Classroom interaction. The interaction and engagement in the classroom are essential for increasing retention. This interaction between instructors and students is also critical for achieving social and academic integration, especially for first-generation students. Abu, Adera, Kamsani, and Ametepee (2012) noted that the attrition rate for first-generation students is 71%.

Within the classroom, ongoing interaction and communication has been proven helpful and creates an environment that allows both instructors and students to feel

comfortable and able to express their opinions openly. Other researchers (Kuh, 1996, 2003; Pascarella & Terenzini, 1979; Saunders & Kardia, 2010) have found that social and academic engagement within the classroom is essential to the success of the students. Furthermore, Abu et al. (2012) found that there is limited, if any, interaction between students and faculty outside of the classroom such as office hours, extra help, one-on-one. Faculty involvement is a valuable tool for increasing retention and too often institutions focus their energy and resources on developing unrelated programs to combat attrition and improve retention (Abu et al., 2012).

Several areas within the classroom to improve attendance include course content and how well versed are the instructors, knowledge of their students' backgrounds and skill sets, the number of class preparation times, and the ability to be aware of multicultural and diversity issues present (Morest, 2013). According to Tinto (2006), Saunders and Kardia (2010), and Zhao and Kuh (2004), if the curriculum or the course itself is not challenging or engaging, then students will less likely attend or persist.

Abu et al. (2012) noted that faculty should have complete control over the content. This includes the material that faculty teach and the inclusion of different perspectives within the classroom. Professors should have a thorough knowledge of the content being taught. These skill sets let students develop perspectives and identities that allow them to integrate what they learned into their various other experiences, including academic and social (Abu et al., 2012). Faculty members must be aware of their students' background learning styles, skills, and knowledge levels to help build relationships and connections between faculty and students.

Additionally, when faculty members make themselves more aware of multicultural challenges within the classroom, they allow an equal learning playing field for all (Wirt & Jaeger, 2014). Some instructors might need assistance, such as multicultural workshops, to find out ways students learn. Instructors can identify struggling students early on and encourage tutoring, or ask those students who are not doing well to attend their office hours (Pfund et al., 2013).

Delivery methods. Delivery methods include class preparation. Research has suggested many faculty members lack knowledge about specific groups of students and there must be ways to address this lack of understanding (Wirt & Jaeger, 2014). Suggestions include a professional development workshop on multicultural diversity, the incorporation of multicultural material such as readings and class discussions.

Within the classroom, Abu et al. (2012) suggested that teachers take attendance every class period, make the grading system fair to all students, plan to reach all students by educating themselves on all cultures, especially their students and include controversial topics in their teaching to allow for class discussions. This allows faculty to have their students explain cultural assumptions and stereotypes and finally form small groups, through group work, early on so students can interact with each other and with the instructor in a more one on one setting.

Social Influences and Solutions

Social influences were listed as another reason for low attendance and included family obligations, mental health, self-motivation, and social connections. The answers

ranged from family support, both positive and negative, to have little to no interaction with other students and college members.

Connections. Soria and Bultmann (2014) noted that students who come from working-class backgrounds struggle frequently with the transition to college. The transition to college is often a challenging one and includes adjustments due to personal, academic, social and familial (Turner & Thompson, 2014). All participants mentioned that at least one of the above factors affect student's attendance and can result in attendance issues if students are struggling with college adjustments. Woodside (2014) found that peer support and family support also influence the attendance and success of students. Likewise, students who come from a family with a strong working-class ethic tend to be more motivated to attending school. These students can bring values instilled in them from their family relationships (Soria & Bultmann, 2014).

Burlison (2015) found that nonacademic commitments such as family obligations also affect the amount of on-campus time commuter student's experience. However, Gefen and Fish (2013) noted that students who commute and live at home with their parents feel less stress due to the support they receive at home. However, this can cause a sense of guilt from not spending enough time with their families leading to low attendance and eventual attrition from the college. Research further suggests that colleges build relationships with both commuter students and their families (Clark, 2006). Further studies (Jacoby & Garland, 2004; Newbold et al., 2011) supported this idea and suggest it would positively impact students.

Students who work off campus and commute tend to have lower levels of school involvement, affecting their socialization on campus (Burlison, 2015). Commuter students work more than students who live on campus thus decreasing their connection with the institution. Accordingly, more services are needed to make commuter students perceive they are part of the college and engaging in the college experience (Morest, 2013). Time and travel also limit the amount of time commuter students spend on campus (Newbold, 2015). Finding space or creating an environment that is welcoming and inviting can help commuter students feel more connected to the college (Burlison, 2015).

Faculty and staff connections. Additionally, faculty connections are vital when it comes to encouraging students to attend more often, be better prepared, and stay engaged in school. This can result in higher retention and graduation rates (Soria & Stebleton, 2012). Students who feel a connection to the institution, receive feedback consistently from faculty, and who find the coursework to be relevant, are more likely to attend class consistently, and, thus persist (Sidelinger, Frisby, & Heisler, 2016). Faculty members who engage and take the time to form connections with students can be a valuable resource for students throughout their college journey (Hoffman, 2014). The students interviewed noted that those instructors who took the time to be more understanding and to show they care were more likely to have higher attendance than those instructors who lacked empathy, and who had no time or regard for their students outside of the classroom.

Academic advising can help build relationships as well as help students to persist. In their role, advisors serve as both mentor and advisor, helping students to understand

their academic success better (Young-Jones, Burt, Dixon, & Hawthorne, 2013). Advisors can help students find and connect with opportunities to motivate students to stay in school and to persist. The research discusses the role of advisors is critical (Vianden & Barlow, 2015). They are the ones who can help form connections with and for the students, and, help students find ways to connect with academic opportunities resulting in greater support for the student's success academically as well as socially. Likewise, advisors are also among the most important individuals with direct influence in the student's education, especially those who work regularly and those who do not feel connected to the college (Young-Jones et al., 2013). Interestingly, most participants interviewed did not know who their advisors were and ABC College should spend more time focusing on the role of advisors within the three-day PD workshop. However, more follow-up is needed, resulting in advisors being more involved with their students.

Students who are committed to the college and feel connected will more likely attend classes and graduate (Sollitto, Johnson, & Myers, 2013). Students who find peers and mentors that share similar experiences and backgrounds, especially those students who are from lower socioeconomic groups, minority groups, or first generation, will persist; however, students must make connections (Mechur Karp, 2016). Furthermore, the institution must stress and promote diversity. This can be done through cultural clubs and organizations, workshops, and in their mission. This social support is evident to motivate students to attend their classes and comes in a variety of ways but most importantly their relationships with peers, family, and faculty. Bers and Schuetz (2014) found that these relationships are essential to student retention, and if students lack any of these

relationships, the student will not attend consistently, failing to graduate on time or graduate at all.

Mental health. Mental health problems include diagnosing someone with a mental illness, high levels of anxiety, and sporadic bouts of depression. Notably, Soria and Bultmann (2014) and Adams et al. (2016) found that first-generation, low-income and minority students fall into these categories disproportionately compared to White students. In fact, the rate of mental health problems on campuses has risen significantly (Prince, 2015). Additionally, Adams et al. (2016) noted that mental health problems could lead to more mediocre academic performance, student attrition, and poor attendance in their classes. And, those students who have financial stress are at even higher risk. According to Adams et al. (2016) developing specific programs that focus on stress, finances, and the connection between the two can be beneficial to students. This includes guidance and input from student support services, the counseling center, academic advisors, and finally, financial aid counselors. Combining all services can increase attendance in classrooms, persistence, and degree completion.

It is imperative to prescreen for perceived stress beforehand. This could occur with their advisors or with faculty who are involved with freshman seminars. Implementing a class that is comparable to classes like the freshmen experience/freshmen seminars for students in their sixth or seventh semester or their junior year can identify stress levels at this point. When advisors and/or faculty can begin to prioritize high-risk students such as low-income and first-generation students, they will be able to determine their needs early on which can be useful if programs are implemented that focus on this

type of intervention (Bettinger, Boatman, & Long, 2013). This can include group sessions as well as with financial aid counselors, advisors, teachers, and the counseling center. Students can take workshops that stress coping mechanisms, along with ways to work through their stress, anxiety, or depression. It is not surprising that attrition and student mental health are connected. Both concerns are increasing at many colleges and universities. Students who share similar characteristics to the characteristics discussed above are more likely to drop out. Finances and mental health are also connected and lead to student attrition. If colleges, know this ahead of time, they can look for ways to improve these areas of concern and provide both support, and, a safe place for students to discuss their issues, thus preparing them for mental well-being, social, and academic success.

Financial Influences and Solutions

Financial influences were another top reason students in this study struggled with consistent attendance. Within this category were work-related issues, other financial obligations, transportation, and cost of college.

Finances. Financial influences include work, parental involvement, scholarships, cost of transportation, and rising tuition costs. The findings in the research show that students who have help, financially, from their family to cover the cost of college have higher retention rates (Olbrecht et al., 2016). Moreover, if the institution assists with finances, this too increases the likelihood of students staying at the institution. Consistent classroom attendance is directly related to student retention at the institution. Studies have also found that because of declining enrollments and declining state investments,

retaining students has become critical (Olbrecht et al., 2016). Because of changing regulations, institutions are focusing less on the number of students entering and more on the quality of a student's experience and education.

According to the research, family income is a significant factor in a student's decision to attend school. If students are receiving aid for school or from their parents, they are more likely to attend and have a higher chance of persisting (Attewell et al., 2011). Students who pay out of pocket for college themselves also struggle with consistent attendance because many of those students do not have financial support from their family or they receive limited financial support from the college. Most of the students who have higher work demands tend to be first-generation students. They also are more likely to be employed full-time. These students work more often and longer hours to afford the tuition. As a result, these students often do not persist because they are underprepared, lack motivation, and have low attendance (Soria & Bultmann, 2014). These same students are often less socially connected to the college and state a lack of belonging mainly due to their working full-time.

Adams et al. (2016) found many first-generation students struggle with financial strains. In their study, the authors found that most students reported personal finances as a top stressor in their lives. This was also the case with the students interviewed for this study. All but two students commented that they felt financial stress. Students also found that students who saw increases in financial aid had higher attendance and retention; whereas, students who had a higher loan debt was related to attrition (Adams et al., 2016). If colleges remove financial barriers, especially to low income, minority, and first-

generation students, this can encourage students to be more active on campus, participate more in the college experience, and attend their classes on a more regular basis. All the above conditions are linked to college success, including activities associated with social and academic achievement.

Working full-time and attending college full-time often equates to lower levels of academic involvement and success, often leading to students dropping out of college (Tinto, 2012). Tinto (2012) recommended that institutions offer short-term financial support to help keep students motivated to attend and to stay at the institution. This suggestion applies mainly to low-income students. The other suggestion is to offer unique programs and enhance the quality of education provided.

Implementing the Training

To successfully and effectively implement the professional development training program, I need to gain cooperation from the college to implement the training between May 2018 and August 2018. I chose this time frame because it is during the third semester of the college's school calendar. The spring semester is the lightest semester for faculty and will allow faculty to actively participate in the training without being burdened with larger classes during fall semester. Faculty will have time to develop strategies that can be implemented in the fall semester. The college has already reviewed the proposal and agreed to allow the study to be conducted at the college. The school's human subject committee consists of two faculty members and an outside advisor who may want to review the project and give approval for the training program to take place on the campus. The director of retention and her department must also be a part of the

professional development training to provide feedback across the college regarding retention efforts and strategies. Sharing and implementing the information learned from the participants in the training will better serve students. Throughout the presentation, attendance in the classroom, attendance challenges, the effects of attendance on retention, and how attendance is affected by student engagement and motivation will be explained.

Potential Resources and Existing Supports

The most important resources needed for this project study are faculty and time. While administrators will be invited to participate, it is essential that the business faculty are present. The presentation is slated to be delivered at the college during the spring semester of 2018. There will be several presentations of the training prepared to guarantee that all faculty can attend. In addition, a PowerPoint presentation will be distributed to all those participating in the professional development training. Throughout the training, the facilitator will present the PowerPoint along with notes with the intention of generating positive feedback from those attending. The training will be free of cost, with all materials being provided by the facilitator.

Potential Barriers

A potential barrier to this project being implemented is lack of participation and support from the college. Notifications will be sent via email to faculty and administrators of the professional development training. To ensure that there is both enough space and materials readily available for all those who attend, invitees must RSVP for the training. Although the college requires professional development training throughout the year and there is a need for administrators to participate, they may not be

willing to participate in the training. If that happens, the facilitator will contact the president of the college to make an appointment to discuss making this professional development training mandatory for all faculty members and administrators.

Proposal for Implementation and Timetable

The professional development program will be presented to faculty and administrators at the college during the summer of 2018. If there is a strong response, it will also be offered again in Fall 2018 to accommodate all interested parties. I would also like to provide the professional development training to students entering the college in Fall 2018. Faculty who attend the first session in the summer will be invited to share their views on strategies that they have implemented in their classrooms in regards to attendance. By Winter 2019, the facilitator will set up a meeting with the college to determine if the professional training has had any effect on student attendance.

Roles and Responsibilities of the Researcher and Others

All stakeholders must be aware of their role in student attendance and their relationships with the students by providing the necessary support tools to assist students on their path to success. The goal is to implement the solutions and strategies that have been developed and discussed throughout the 3-day PD. The implementation is the responsibility of everyone at ABC College. Faculty will be responsible for attending the 3-day PD training so they can share insights while gaining best practices for their teaching. Academic advisors, admission counselors, financial aid, and career development will be invited to attend the second or third day of the PD depending on their department and their role. Faculty will be responsible for incorporating and

implementing the strategies in their classrooms, and the other staff and administrators will be responsible for providing the support necessary to see these strategies and solutions to fruition. As facilitator of the workshop, I will ensure that the administrators and chairpersons of the various departments provide the tools necessary for their staff to continue to focus on best practices and strategies for improved classroom attendance.

Project Evaluation

The goal of this project is to create an environment that motivates and encourages students to attend and engage with their classes on a consistent basis. It is also designed to contribute to student success, both academically and socially. Project implementation depends on key stakeholders from ABC College, including academic advisors, faculty, the dean of student services, the dean of retention, admission counselors, the vice president of student enrollment, and the provost. Several of these stakeholders participating and presenting in the workshop.

Surveys will be handed out after each day of the PD workshop and will consist of a series of questions which ask the participants to evaluate the workshop, the facilitator, and the presenters. There will also be a section on the survey for any additional questions and concerns the participants would like addressed at the next session. For the workshop survey, I used summative assessments. Summative assessments seek to evaluate a program or an outcome. The goal of a summative assessment is to evaluate participant learning by comparing it against something else. In this workshop, summative assessments were used to compare what the participants learned over the course of three days, how their understanding of the topic has changed, and how it relates to similar

topics and scenarios. Furthermore, according to Caffarella and Daffron (2013), surveys ensure that the goals and objectives are met through the participation and involvement of the participants and provide opportunities to identify any recommendations for future PD workshops. All surveys will be anonymous, and the results will be collected, analyzed, and distributed afterward to the participants and key stakeholders.

Project Implication

Local Community

This project may impact student attendance in the business program at the bachelor's level and overall student attendance at ABC College. Through the implementation of best practices and strategies acquired from the workshop, faculty can have a positive impact on their students through feedback, engagement, and active communication to motivate them to attend class consistently, persist, and eventually graduate. Students will receive additional support, guidance, and mentoring from other members of the college, especially if they are struggling with attending their classes consistently or staying at the college, thus affecting retention.

Far-Reaching

The results of the study apply only to ABC College and cannot be generalized to other institutions. However, this study can help educate other institutions with strategies and solutions that can aid them in their student attendance challenges and retention issues. Understanding why students have poor or high attendance and what practices and tools can help address it can inform other colleges figure out how to approach their attendance problems. Student persistence can increase, along with enrollment and

success, producing prepared learners entering the workforce. Finally, other colleges and universities can benefit from the results of this study by developing and facilitating their training program in which these topics are discussed.

Conclusion

Section 3 details a PD workshop based on the problem from Section 1 and the results from Section 2 of the study. A review of the literature described support for the project and the areas that need to be focused on for the workshop by providing solutions grounded in scholarly research. The 3-day workshop emphasized solutions and strategies for improving student attendance. Integrated throughout the workshop was Tinto's (1975) theory of student integration and Nora and Cabrera's (1996) student adjustment model, which served as the study's conceptual framework. By implementing the PD workshop, ABC College can help improve student attendance, potentially leading to better retention at the college. In Section 4, concluding reflections about the project are summarized as well as the discussion of the scholarly practice of the researcher.

Section 4: Reflections and Conclusions

Introduction

In this study, I investigated the reasons why students in the business program were not attending their classes at ABC College by conducting interviews with faculty, administrators, and students and by using archival attendance data. Once the data were collected and analyzed, I created a 3-day PD workshop to convey the reasons for lack of attendance and to impart knowledge to the participants as to why students do not attend classes. I designed the workshop to provide skills and strategies to help improve student attendance. In this section, I will discuss the strengths and limitations of the project along with my reflections on the project and the process. I will also reflect on my experience of researching and writing the doctoral project. Finally, I will address how this project could potentially bring social change and conclude with the limitations of the project.

Project Strengths and Limitations

My project had several strengths and limitations. One of the strengths was the interviews conducted with the faculty and administrators. The interviews with faculty and administrators revealed that they felt services and resources would be an aid to improve student attendance. The faculty and administrators interviewed were willing to assist students with whatever needs the students had. A second strength was the in-person interviews with the students, which provided insight into various factors that affect students' attendance in classes. The students were open and honest with me and shared their reasons for low student attendance in the business program. Another strength were the results of the study, which revealed that participants felt that more resources, as well

as services, can be useful in aiding students with attendance. The final strength was the amount of literature on student attendance being influential on retention, student success, and graduation rates.

A potential limitation of this study was that it took place within a single institution, specifically the institution where I am employed. As a result, the findings will only be relative to ABC College itself and are not intended to represent any other colleges in the area. Also, the school offers both associate and bachelor programs and the participants in the study are BBA students, only. The information collected is represented of only those who participated.

Recommendations for Alternative Approaches

I recommend that the college place more emphasis on the role of the instructor by analyzing the data from faculty members' evaluations from the students and observations from their supervisors, in addition to specific class times. This could provide better insight into the attendance problem at the college on all levels. By focusing specifically on the data, patterns will begin to emerge. The problem may be successfully addressed by holding quarterly workshops for faculty to better address attendance issues. In addition, those that attended the workshop could help faculty devise similar student workshops that focus on areas such as time management, procrastination, punctuality, attitude and goals, motivation, and study skills. These workshops will help both faculty and students develop strategies for attendance as well as focus on challenging areas. Finally, implementing a yearly survey that includes student attendance and retention will help the college stay up to date with student attendance and retention. As a result, the college will be able to

implement services. These alternatives have the potential to remedy attendance problems with solutions that will help students develop better attendance habits, and, lead to the college retaining these students and then successfully graduating them.

Scholarship

The pursuit of my doctorate and completion of the doctoral project study revealed to me the importance of scholarship and how it can support the development of education. This journey was the most challenging and rewarding experience that I have encountered. When I began my prospectus, I had come to realize how challenging the entire process was. However, I had no concept of how to begin a doctoral project, how to formulate research questions, or how to write the problem statement, let alone how they all went together. Throughout that process, I gained skills that would help carry me throughout the remainder of the study including stronger research skills, and stronger analytical skills. I began to understand how literature that is grounded in the current research helped to formulate my research questions, and then later, my interview questions. At the start of the proposal, I often struggled with how to write a clear problem statement but also how to turn my ideas and analysis of the problem into research questions. Even though I knew what the problem was, it was difficult to write it out in a clear, scholarly statement.

Throughout these challenges, I developed a stronger sense of academic writing. I became very focused on the data collection, and then on the analysis. In fact, that section was very educating and informative in ways I had never observed prior. In the process, I learned how to write the results of a qualitative case study, something I had never done

before. I gained knowledge from the results to create something that could bring change to the college. Scholarship is rooted in the quest for knowledge. It involves learning more about what you are studying and using it to connect to others to help them understand concepts in a different way and to encouraging the growth of the college community. This process has helped me gain more respect and understand research and those who conduct it.

Project Development and Evaluation

For this project study, I interviewed students who attended a for-profit college in a suburb outside of New York City, as well as faculty members and administrators who are currently employed at the college, to understand what resources and services are needed to increase student attendance. I examined 16 students who are in their sixth through the ninth semester at the college in addition to three faculty members who have been employed for more than 5 years at the college and three administrators who have also been with the college for more than 5 years. The data obtained from current research as well as face-to-face interviews aided the development of a PD training program designed to help teachers and administrators to better assess student attendance by providing resources and services to assist the students who struggle with attending classes while promoting higher student attendance. The training program is intended to be beneficial to students, faculty, and the college by yielding strategies which provide solutions, options, and support on how to keep students in the classroom ultimately retaining them and helping them graduate.

Leadership and Change

The process of completing this project study has improved my leadership skills, and as a result, opportunities for leadership at my institution have begun to open up, allowing me to develop these skills further. Niccolo Machiavelli (1532), in his book *The Prince*, stated that leaders give their energy to the accomplishment of something great, of something memorable, not just the pursuit of power or profit. To be an effective leader, one must observe the situations that need to be changed, determine the problem, unearth reasons for the problem, and create changes that are grounded in the research and literature. A leader must also be open to change and not to be afraid of it or avoid it. While I have been in leadership positions previously and understood how the problem affected others, I did not know how to evaluate the problem and find a solution. A leader is one who can identify the issue or challenge present, look to understand that issue or challenge and explore options on how to solve the issue for the better. My experience at Walden University has taught me these valuable skills and provided me with an understanding of what a leader is in higher education. It also has afforded me with a greater appreciation that change is both a necessary and useful tool if as educators we want to stay ahead of the curve and continue to move forward.

Analysis of Self as Scholar

Ever since I was young, I always wanted to make a difference and positively impact someone's life. I began this journey after years of teaching and realized that I wanted to learn more, develop better strategies, and become an expert in higher education. In my mind, I had a goal of attaining this degree within ten years of graduating

from my master's program. It was not a difficult decision to make except I was concerned about the return this investment would generate. When I began this process, I thought I would have my doctorate within 4 years; I had no idea how challenging and arduous the process would be. I did not understand the commitments, both personal and financial, that obtaining an doctorate would bring. I also was unaware of how this journey would test me in countless ways. Life does not always go as we plan.

Throughout my doctoral journey, I have grown as a student, but more importantly, as a scholar. Completing my doctoral study provided me with many opportunities including further developing my research, writing, and critical thinking skills. The various stages of this journey have allowed me to explore problems and identify solutions regarding higher education, but specifically concerning attendance and at ABC College. Finally, my research skills and writing skills, which I thought did not need any more improving, have improved significantly and I have witnessed my writing morph into writing worthy of being published. My experience in the pursuit of my doctorate has enhanced my confidence to accomplish things I never imagined I could and has provided me with the skills necessary to be a successful scholar while promoting positive social change for the students, ABC College, and higher education.

Analysis of Self as Practitioner

This experience has helped me grow in my position at my institution, as well as in my profession. It has enhanced my self-confidence, and I now feel like I am an expert not only in attendance and retention but also in higher education. I am immensely grateful for and appreciative of the opportunity this program has afforded me. Through the research

and analysis of the literature, I became more confident in suggestions I would give my colleagues and in decisions that I needed to make. I felt I was able to teach them something new and different.

I began this degree as an instructor, and throughout my journey became assistant chairperson of general education, then associate chairperson, and finally, chairperson of general education. I will earn this degree as senior chairperson. The wisdom gained from my experience in this program, and completing this project study, has helped me develop and enhance my talents I believe it was in part because of the skills and abilities gained through earning my doctorate.

Analysis of Self as Project Developer

My new position involves assessing our various programs and their faculty. On occasion, I will need to develop and implement PD workshops on topics within higher education. Developing and completing the 3-day PD workshop has provided me with a vast amount of experience and the knowledge to design and implement workshops based off of best practices and research. Developing a workshop for professionals is very similar to designing lessons for my students. They both involve planning objectives, strategies, and assessments using related resources. Creating this PD workshop was both enjoyable and gratifying, and I hope that I can facilitate more in the future. Lastly, this doctoral project has provided me with the experience to create other PD workshops and projects by parting me with useful skills that I learned through the development of this project. As a result of this doctoral study, I can successfully generate other projects.

The Project's Potential Impact on Social Change

My project has the potential to impact social change on any college campus because many colleges are experiencing attendance issues and struggling with how to keep students engaged and motivated. Understanding what factors are related to a student's attendance could help other colleges figure out how to approach attendance problems, thus securing student persistence, resulting in a higher enrollment, a more successful college, while developing well-prepared students who will be entering the workforce. When I designed this project, it was with the intent to provide an analysis for other colleges regarding classroom attendance. Although every college may not be experiencing the same issues with attendance, the feedback and strategies developed can help improve classroom attendance.

Reflection on Importance of the Work

This section is the most crucial section of the study because it reflects my challenges and triumphs that I have faced in writing this doctoral project. I have written numerous research papers, even obtained my master's degree in English literature, but nothing has been as rewarding and challenging as this process. When I first began my doctoral studies, I believed I would be done in 4 years, outpacing and surpassing all my classmates. I wrote the prospectus with the idea in my head that I would solve my school's attendance problem, and subsequently save hundreds of students from withdrawing and disappearing. While I had the idea for this study for a very long time, I struggled with how to present that information in the format of a doctoral study. Every time my prospectus was rejected, I wanted to give up. When my prospectus was finally

approved, I felt more confident moving forward and continuing this journey. Throughout the process, I learned how to develop patience and how to use constructive criticism to my advantage.

What I did not know was that I was very sick and it happened right as I started my proposal. Due to the nature of my illness, I had to take a 6-month sabbatical from school and to ensure my speedy recovery, I had to stop all components that focused on this project. When I returned to school, I had fallen behind as well as lost my way—I was not sure if I wanted to continue with my project study let alone finish it and obtain my Ed.D. My chairperson provided me with the right amount of guidance and confidence, and I began to believe in my study again. I even started to attend Skype sessions with my chair and my peers on a regular basis. These sessions helped me understand the direction of my project study as well as the pace I needed to go at to finish. By the time it arrived to complete the second half of my project study, I felt I was ready and energized to complete it in a timely manner. The time I had off, and the struggles I faced when I returned, only pushed me harder. For the remainder of the study, I was focused and driven to finish strong.

Implications, Applications, and Directions for Future Research

The anticipated benefits of this research for individual participants are to help students feel important and that they matter. Students could recruit their colleagues and friends to apply for this college due to its improved reputation and excellent rapport with its students. Academic advisors can gain strategies to help strengthen their craft.

Administrators and professors can gain insight on where to provide more support between the academic advisors and students.

Possible future research direction includes collecting data college-wide through attendance records as well as potential focus groups from the adult division, who comprise of 30% of the student population and meets in the evenings, Saturdays, and online. This future research may help to determine if attendance is a concern throughout the college. Also, other colleges, especially for-profit organizations, may benefit from this research study and develop effective strategies to keep students in the classroom consistently.

Conclusion

This section reflected the project study's strengths and limitations with recommendations found in the literature. The self-reflection that was included in this section helped me gain a better understanding of scholarship and research but also of myself as a scholar and researcher. Throughout the study, I learned new information and strategies that have made me a stronger researcher. As a result of the process, it helped me develop and realize my potential as a leader with the assertiveness to competently deal with challenges that come my way, while being someone who can affect change. A great deal can be accomplished if you never give up. Finally, this doctoral project is a first step to investigate the problem with attendance at ABC College. The findings of the research serve as a guide to the solutions and strategies discussed. More research will be needed to determine if any of the strategies and solutions discussed are effective. Recommendations regarding future directions for research have been provided. These

recommendations have the potential to influence the field of higher education and retention.

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Appendix A: Professional Development Workshop

Title: Improving Attendance in ABC College's Business Program

Purpose: The purpose of this professional development is to provide business faculty, students, and administration with necessary skills and strategies for improving student attendance.

Goals: The goals include (a) evaluating the reasons students do and do not attend class, (b) improving student attendance with best practices and strategies for teachers, and (c) devising best practices for other staff and administrators by discussing and presenting tools to increase overall student attendance.

Desired Outcomes: The desired outcome of this 3-day professional development workshop is to provide the participants with best practices and strategies to improve student attendance in the classroom.

Target Audience: The target audience is business faculty, students, and administrators.

Timeline: The timeline for this professional development workshop is three days.

Training Activities and Presentations: Presentations and activities will include various strategies including small group discussion, large group discussions, group exercises and games, individual time for reflection, and various learning strategies. The presentation is outlined following the description of each day's agenda.

Day 1

8:30- 9:00 am: Breakfast and Check-In

9-9:30 am: Welcome, Introduction, and Ice-Breakers

9:30- 10:30 am: Why Do You Think Students Are Not Attending?

10:30-10:45 am: Break

10:45-12:30 pm: Understanding Why Your Students Are Not Attending?

12:30-1:15 pm: Lunch

1:15-2:15 pm: What Drives Our Students to Success?

2:15-2:30 pm: Break

2:30-3:30 pm: What Is Your Role and What Can You Do?

3:30-3:45 pm: Summary and Day 1 Survey

Materials

2 projectors with screens, 2 laptops, markers, Post-It notes, journals, and tape

Day 2

8:30- 9:00 am: Breakfast and Check-In

9:00-9:45 am: Day 1 Summary and Introduction to Day 2

9:45- 10:30 am: What do Our Students Say?

10:30-10:45 am: Break

10:45 am-11:15 am: Tinto's student integration model

11:15 am- 12:45 pm: Teaching Styles and Delivery Methods

12:45-1:30 pm: Lunch

1:30-2:30 pm: Engagement Matters

2:30-2:45 pm: Break

2:45-3:30 pm: Summary and Day 2 Survey

Materials

2 projectors with screens, 2 laptops, markers, Post-It notes, journals, and tape

Day 3

8:30- 9:00 am: Breakfast and Check-In

9:00-9:30 am: Day 2 Summary and Introduction to Day 3

9:30-10:00 am: Identify the Correct Support Services

10:00-10:15 am: Break

10:15-10:45 am: Academic Support Presentation by Dean of Academic Support

10:45-11:15 am: Retention Presentation by Director of Retention

11:15-11:45 am: How Can Admissions Help You?

11:45 am -12:30 pm: Lunch

12:30-1:00 pm: Mental Health and Your Students Presentation by Director of Counseling

1:00-1:30 pm: Interactive session with Financial Aid

1:30-1:45 pm: Break

1:45-3:00 pm: What Can You Do? Solutions for All

3:00-3:30 pm: Final Assessment Survey

Materials

2 projectors with screens, 2 laptops, markers, Post-It notes, journals, and tape

Training Activities and Presentations

Day 1

Icebreaker: Attending faculty members will work with their business program colleagues. The first day will start with icebreakers in the format of questions placed on a hexagon ball that can be tossed around from participant to participant. There will be various questions ranging from what is your favorite food to what is your preferred format of teaching? After the icebreaker, the goals for day 1 will be explained.

Question that drives our discussion: After discussing the purpose and goals for day 1, the question that will drive the discussion will be presented. The guiding question throughout the three days is, what strategies and solutions can be developed and implemented that will increase attendance? The guiding question will be placed on each table as well as read. The group will be asked to write their responses down in the journal provided to them for the entirety of the workshop.

Why Do You Think Students Are Not Attending?: As the facilitator, I will ask faculty members to write a list of reasons students do not attend their classes and why students consistently attend. Handouts will include the top reasons students attend or do not attend. Following this exercise, the group will discuss these reasons.

Understanding Why Your Students Are Not Attending: After this group session, the group will pair up with another member and role-play, with someone playing the student and someone playing the teacher, to demonstrate the various perspectives and scenarios that could emerge within classrooms. After the role-play breakout session, all faculty members will return to the original table, and the facilitator will ask the group their

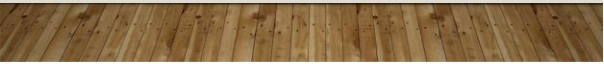


results, by handing out Post-it notes and having each participant categorize the areas as transportation, work, family, money, and work. After each person has filled in the various categories, the facilitator will then list the faculty members' reflections and observations about the role play session on a flip chart in front of the room.

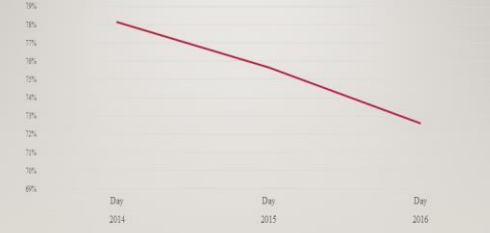
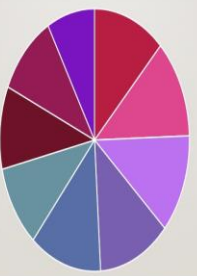

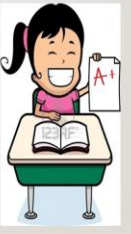
What Is Your Role and What Can You Do?: The faculty members at their tables will discuss their role in student attendance and retention. The tables will each have a set of questions to guide the discussion. These will include:

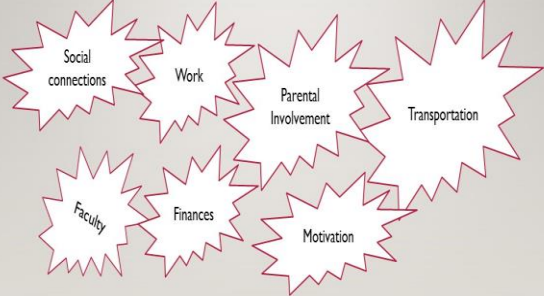
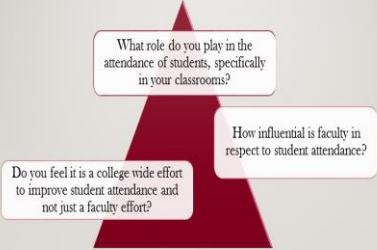

- What role do you play in the attendance of students, specifically in your classrooms?
- How do you get students to attend your classes?
- How important is faculty with respect to student attendance?
- Do you feel it is a college-wide effort to improve student attendance and not just a faculty effort?
- How can the faculty and the rest of the college community help students understand the importance of consistently attending their classes?

Once the tables are done discussing their roles, their original lists that they filled out earlier in the session, will be collected and shared.

Day 1 Survey: Each day of the presentation will end the same way. The participants will be asked for their final thoughts. At the end of day one, participants will be asked to fill out an assessment of the day and to write down any questions they may have.

<p style="text-align: center;">IMPROVING ATTENDANCE IN AN UNDERGRADUATE BUSINESS PROGRAM AT A FOR-PROFIT COLLEGE</p> <hr style="width: 25%; margin: 10px auto;"/> 	<p>The facilitator will open the workshop by introducing herself, the purpose of the 3-day PD, and the supplies provided at each table. Each table will have writing utensils, paper for notes, Post-it notes, and different colored markers. The participants will also be provided with a copy of the PowerPoint slides that will be used.</p> <p>At the start of the first day, participants will receive a journal in which they can record their thoughts, suggestions, questions and anything else of value.</p>
<p style="text-align: center;">DAY 1 GOALS</p> <hr style="width: 25%; margin: 10px auto;"/> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Participants will discuss reasons students do not attend classes • Participants will have better insight into reasons students provide for low attendance • Participants will be able to identify their specific role in student attendance 	<p>The facilitator will explain the goals for the day</p>
<p style="text-align: center;">WORKSHOP DRIVING QUESTION</p> <hr style="width: 25%; margin: 10px auto;"/> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The guiding question throughout the three days is, what strategies and solutions can be developed and implemented that will increase attendance? 	<p>This question will drive the discussion for the next 3 days. The question comes directly from the study and findings from various research. It will help shape the conversation and provide perspective. Each table will be given 5 minutes to consider this question and write down their answers. We will refer back to their answers later in the workshop.</p>

<p style="text-align: center;">BUSINESS PROGRAM STATISTICS</p> <hr/> 	<p>This slide shows the decline in the business program and provides a visual for the group to work from.</p>
<p style="text-align: center;">WHY DO YOU THINK STUDENTS ARE NOT ATTENDING?</p> <hr/> 	<p>This slide will accompany an activity that asks the participants to match the reasons with the color. On their tables will be the reasons. As the facilitator, I will ask faculty to pick a reasons and match it to the color on the slide. Once the activity is complete, I will provide them with the correct answers and will distribute handouts will include the top reasons students attend or do not attend. Following this exercise, the group will discuss these reasons.</p>
<p style="text-align: center;">WHAT DOES YOUR STUDENT FEEL?</p> <hr/> <p style="display: flex; justify-content: space-around;"> Negative Positive </p> <div style="display: flex; justify-content: space-around; align-items: center;">   </div>	<p>Following the activity in which the participants identified reasons for low attendance, the group will be handed color coded cards with the different reasons they may or may not attend. They will then be instructed to put these cards in the correct column in an effort to identify what students might perceive as negative or positive.</p>

<p style="text-align: center;">REASONS STUDENTS ARE NOT ATTENDING</p> <hr/> 	<p>This slide will provide the foundation for the group activity. Participants will pair up and role-play. One will play the role of the teacher, and the other will play the role of student. The objective is to demonstrate various perspectives and scenarios that could emerge within classrooms. After the role-play breakout session, all faculty members will return to their original tables, and the facilitator will ask the participants to discuss their results from the exercise.</p>
<p style="text-align: center;">WHAT IS YOUR ROLE AND WHAT CAN YOU DO</p> <hr/> 	<p>The facilitator will list the reflections and observations from the previous activity on a flip chart. The facilitator will begin the discussion using the corresponding slide. Each table will have a set of questions to guide them through the discussion. After all the tables have discussed their roles, the original lists that were filled out earlier in the session will be collected and shared.</p>
<p style="text-align: center;">FINAL THOUGHTS FOR THE DAY</p> <hr/> 	<p>Each day of the presentation will end the same way. After each session, participants will get a chance to write in their journals, and at the end of each day, participants will be asked, through an anonymous questionnaire, to evaluate whether the presentations were effective and if the day's outcomes were met.</p>

Day 2

Address Questions from Last Session: At the beginning of the second day, I will address any lingering questions from the first-day session. Once all questions have been addressed, participants will remain at the long table until further instructed.

Summary of the Day: The goals of the day will be discussed and a summary for what to expect will be provided by the facilitator. The participants for the day will include students and business faculty members.

What do Our Students Say?: In this session, participants will be given handouts which include reasons students who were interviewed gave regarding challenges associated with attendance. This activity will involve both students and faculty. Each table will consist of both students and faculty, and they will be provided reasons for low attendance and must match the reason to what color of the slide they believe it belongs. Once the activity is completed, there will be an informal 20 minute discussion on the findings. They will also be provided the reasons students gave from the study.

Tinto's student integration model: In this section, I will briefly explain to the audience both Tinto's model. Understanding the student integration model will provide necessary information for the remainder of the day's session and will lead to the discussion on the third day.

Teaching Styles and Delivery Methods: Before faculty members are given the task for this session, the facilitator will discuss the different formats of delivery in the classroom. The discussion will focus on what works and what does not work according to the

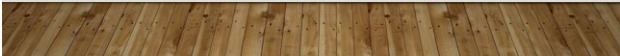




research and the results from the study. The exercise that accompanies this slide will have each faculty member create a 10-minute traditional lecture lesson with a topic of their choosing, and one 10-minute engaging lesson. The facilitator will collect these lessons, and then distribute, randomly to the audience. When presenting to the group, the faculty will be unaware of which lesson the other participants were given. After this session is completed, each participant (eight in total) will present within a 15-minute time frame.

Reflection: Once everyone has presented, the audience will then be asked to complete a reflection entry that focuses on the following: What did you like about the lesson? Did you think anything could be changed? Would students be motivated by this lesson? If yes, then why would this lesson or how would this lesson motivate the students? Would they be engaged? Would they be bored? And any other comments they wish to include. To keep the responses confidential, I will collect everyone's responses and read a few to the audience. After the responses have been read, the audience will be asked to discuss the findings openly.

What Would You Do? The session on teaching styles will end with participants watching video clips on delivery methods. This slide will have 3 videos that show what not to do. The audience will be asked to note what these teachers do that might be ineffective and discourage students. Participants will then take 5 minutes to reflect on what they observed. After the participants have watched the videos on what not to do, participants will then watch a video clip on effective delivery methods. The audience will be asked to note what the teacher did that was effective, engaging, and motivation to the students. Participants will then take 5 minutes to reflect on what they observed.

Engagement Matters: Using a memory game, the participants, at their tables, will compete in a game where they will attempt to match the engagement style that corresponds with the topics from the PowerPoint. Pictures will be displayed in the front of the room displaying certain student behavior (i.e., sleeping, talking, paying attention, participating) and each group must match student behavior with faculty delivery methods. For example, a 90-minute lecture might match with a student sleeping or being bored. After the group has matched all pictures with the behaviors, they will be put into mixed groups consisting of both faculty and students, and will be tasked to come up with solutions for that specific student behavior. Once everyone has written their answers, I will discuss the corresponding slide and potential strategies.

Day 2 Survey: The day will finish with before the session ends, participants will be asked to fill out an assessment of the day and the activities included.

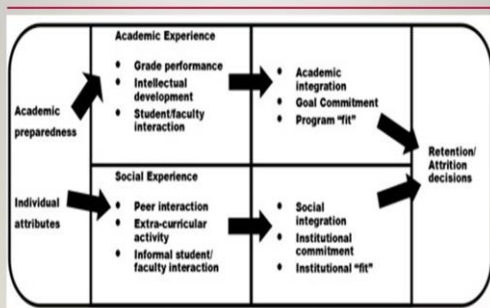
<h2>DAY 2 GOALS</h2> <hr/> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Participants will better understand student reasons for low attendance • Participants will be able to define and incorporate Tinto's Student Integration Model and Nora and Cabrera's Student Adjustment Model • Participants will be able to identify their teaching and engagement styles • Participants will address different student behaviors 	<p>At the beginning of the second day, the goals for the session will be discussed.</p>
<h2>THOUGHTS AND QUESTIONS FROM DAY 1</h2> <hr/>  	<p>After the goals have been discussed, the facilitator will address any lingering questions from the first-day session. The facilitator will also introduce the student participants for the day's session.</p>
<h2>STUDENT REASONS</h2> <hr/>  	<p>This slide provides the reasons students who were interviewed gave regarding challenges associated with attendance. This activity will involve both students and faculty. Each table will consist of both students and faculty, and they will be provided reasons for low attendance and must match the reason to what color of the slide they believe it belongs. Once the activity is completed, there will be an informal 20 minute discussion on the findings.</p>

WHAT DO OUR STUDENTS SAY?



The students interviewed noted that those instructors who took the time to be more understanding and to show they care were more likely to have higher attendance than those instructors who lacked empathy, and who had no time or regard for their students outside of the classroom.


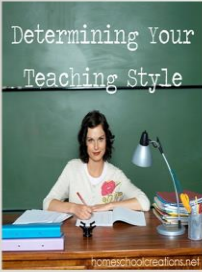

TINTO'S STUDENT INTEGRATION MODEL






This slide will focus on Tinto's theory and model of student retention from 1987 through 2012, and will provide the basis for the day's session.

FOUR CONDITIONS FOR REMAINING IN COLLEGE

The facilitator will provide a brief introduction to Tinto. Afterwards, the tables will be asked what they believe the four conditions for remaining in college are. Each table will be given 15 minutes to come up with the conditions, and when the time is up, they will be asked to provide answers on a flip chart. When this exercise is over, the facilitator will take all of the flip chart answers to the front of the room so that the entire audience can partake in a 15 minute reflection.

<p style="text-align: center;">REASONS STUDENTS STRUGGLE WITH ATTENDING CLASSES</p> <hr style="width: 30%; margin: auto;"/> <div style="text-align: center;">  </div>	<p>This slide will begin the discussion on why students struggle with attending classes. Both students and faculty will partake in this activity. There will be 3 tables for this activity—one table for academic reasons, one for social reasons, and one for financial reasons. Each table will have markers and flip charts, and the participants will be instructed to list reasons according to the topic they were given at the start of this activity.</p>																
<p style="text-align: center;">TEACHING STYLES</p> <hr style="width: 30%; margin: auto;"/> <div style="display: flex; justify-content: space-around; align-items: center;"> <div style="text-align: center;">  </div> <div> <p style="text-align: center;">The Learning Pyramid</p>  <table border="1" style="margin-left: auto; margin-right: auto; font-size: small;"> <thead> <tr> <th>Learning Style</th> <th>Percentage</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>Lecture</td> <td>5%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Reading</td> <td>10%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Audio Visual</td> <td>20%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Demonstration</td> <td>30%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Discussion Group</td> <td>50%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Practice by Doing</td> <td>75%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Teach Others</td> <td>90%</td> </tr> </tbody> </table> <p style="text-align: center; font-size: x-small;">Source: National Training Laboratories, Bethel Maine</p> </div> </div>	Learning Style	Percentage	Lecture	5%	Reading	10%	Audio Visual	20%	Demonstration	30%	Discussion Group	50%	Practice by Doing	75%	Teach Others	90%	<p>This activity will focus on teaching styles. Before faculty members are given the task for this session, the facilitator will discuss the different formats of delivery in the classroom. The exercise that accompanies this slide will have each faculty member create a 10-minute traditional lecture lesson with a topic of their choosing, and one 10-minute engaging lesson.</p>
Learning Style	Percentage																
Lecture	5%																
Reading	10%																
Audio Visual	20%																
Demonstration	30%																
Discussion Group	50%																
Practice by Doing	75%																
Teach Others	90%																
<p style="text-align: center;">REFLECTION</p> <hr style="width: 30%; margin: auto;"/> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What did you like about the lesson? • Did you think anything could be changed? • Would students be motivated by this lesson? If yes, then why would this lesson or how would this lesson motivate the students? • Would they be engaged? Would they be bored? • And any other comments they wish to include. 	<p>Once everyone has presented, the audience will then be asked to complete a reflection entry that focuses on the following slide. To keep the responses confidential, I will collect everyone's responses and read a few to the audience.</p>																

<p>TYPES OF TEACHERS</p> 	<p>The session on teaching styles will end with participants watching video clips on delivery methods. This slide will have three videos that show what not to do. The audience will be asked to note what these teachers do that might be ineffective and discourage students. Participants will then take 5 minutes to reflect on what they observed.</p>
<p>O' CAPTAIN, MY CAPTAIN</p> 	<p>After the participants have watched the videos on what not to do, participants will then watch a video clip on effective delivery methods. The audience will be asked to note what the teacher did that was effective, engaging, and motivating to the students. Participants will then take 5 minutes to reflect on what they observed.</p>
<p>ENGAGEMENT MATTERS</p> 	<p>Pictures will be displayed in the front of the room displaying certain student behavior (i.e., sleeping, talking, paying attention, participating) and each group must match student behavior with faculty delivery methods. Participants will then compete in a game where they will attempt to match the engagement style that corresponds with the topics that have emerged from the day's session.</p>

BEST PRACTICES

- What are some examples of strategies used in the classroom to combat some of these behaviors?



Tone of Voice



Different Lessons



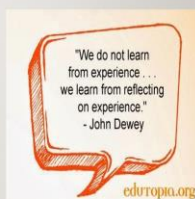
Real-Life Experiences



Students teach the class

After the exercise that focuses on student behavior and engagement, the groups will be tasked with coming up with solutions. Once everyone has submitted their answers, the corresponding slide will display suggested best practices.

REFLECTION AND SURVEY FOR THE DAY



This will be the final slide for this day. The participants will be asked to fill out the assessment for the day and will be asked to write down, in their journals, any additional questions they may have that were not answered for tomorrow's session.

Day 3

Questions from Previous Session and Icebreakers: I will address any lingering questions from the second-day session. Once all questions have been addressed, participants will remain at the long table until further instructed. The session will begin with an icebreaker that pairs up the administrators with the faculty. Faculty will be split into two groups of four with one administrator.

Identifying the Correct Support Services: The faculty participants will be divided into groups of two. Scenarios will be provided to the groups, and they will be instructed to determine the best support services for the student. Each scenario and the support services provided will be shared. Participants will be able to comment on other scenarios and give feedback on what service they would provide to the student.

Academic Support Presentation by Dean of Academic Support: The dean of academic services will be asked to present on topics regarding higher attendance strategies, and ways to retain students in the classroom and at the college.

Early Warning/Early Alert and Retention Presentation by Director of Retention: This session will include a presentation by the Director of Retention. The director will discuss our current alert systems; improvements to the system; additional point people; and the role the advisors and success coaches play in attendance. She will also include current strategies and will include what has worked and what has not.

How Can Admissions Help You?: The vice-president of admissions and enrollment management will present on topics regarding higher attendance strategies, and ways to

retain students in the classroom and at the college. Strategies will include new programs designed by the admission counselors to create efforts starting from enrollment to retain students. Admission counselors will create profiles for their incoming students identifying any challenges (academically, socially, and/or financially).



Mental Health and Your Students Presentation by Director of Counseling: The director of counseling will present a 30-minute session on the struggles college students face outside of the classroom and the mental issues they encounter on a daily basis. This session will allow an outside expert to present on topics that may be deemed sensitive. In the process, the director of counseling will provide materials on how best to handle these cases.

Interactive session with Financial Aid: The financial aid session will cover topics that deal with student's finances and how they can better understand financial aid. Financial Aid counselors will be hand for this interactive session and present on ways they can help the students with their financial aid literacy.




What Can You Do? Solutions for All: An opportunity to brainstorm strategies and best practices will occur immediately following the presentations. After each group has developed some strategies, both groups will discuss what emerges from their group discussions. The session will end with solutions and strategies that address how to increase attendance, thus keeping students. Potential solutions from both the research and the findings from the study suggest that teachers take attendance every class period, make the grading system fair to all students, plan to reach all students by educating themselves

on all cultures, especially their students and include controversial topics in their teaching to allow for class discussions. Social solutions include creating an atmosphere for students to feel comfortable, promoting clubs, and encouraging students to engage in college activities. Students who are committed to the college and feel connected will more likely attend classes and graduate. There must also be connections with their faculty members, and this can include interaction between students and faculty outside of the classroom such as office hours, extra help, one-on-one. Financial influences include work, parental involvement, scholarships, cost of transportation, and rising tuition costs. If the institution assists with finances, this too increases the likelihood of students staying at the institution. Consistent classroom attendance is directly related to student retention at the institution. Students who pay out of pocket for college themselves also struggle with consistent attendance because many of those students do not have financial support from their family or they receive limited financial support from the college.

Final Assessment Survey: Participants will be given the final assessment for the PD workshop and will be asked to provide any final thoughts and comments.

<p>DAY 3 GOALS</p> <hr/> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Participants will understand how the larger college community is a part of attendance and retention efforts • Participants will engage with administrators from academic services, retention, admissions, counseling center, and financial aid • Participants will discuss solutions, strategies, and best practices for improving student attendance 	<p>The goals for the final day will be discussed before the session begins.</p>
<p>THOUGHTS AND QUESTIONS FROM DAY 2</p> <hr/> 	<p>The facilitator will ask the audience if they have any questions or feedback from Day 2, and as a group will address any remarks.</p>
<p>WHAT SUPPORT SERVICE IS BEST?</p> <hr/> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Scenarios will be provided to the groups and they will be instructed to determine the best support services for the student. 	<p>This slide will introduce the group exercise “Where Would You Send the Student?” Each group will be provided scenarios, and they must determine which support service will meet the student’s need in the most effective manner.</p>

<p>ACADEMIC SUPPORT</p> <hr/> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Presentation by Dean of Academic Support on topics regarding higher attendance strategies, and ways to retain students in the classroom and at the college. 	<p>This slide will introduce the Dean of Academic Support who will present on attendance strategies that involve her department.</p>
<p>EARLY WARNING/EARLY ALERT AND RETENTION</p> <hr/> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• The director will discuss our current alert systems; improvements to the system; additional point people 	<p>This slide will introduce the Director of Retention and will feature a presentation on the current alert system and the roles the advisors and success coaches play in student attendance and retention.</p>
<p>HOW CAN ADMISSIONS HELP YOU?</p> <hr/> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• The vice-president of admissions and enrollment management, will present on topics regarding higher attendance strategies, and ways to retain students in the classroom and at the college.	<p>This slide will focus on the role admissions has in attendance, and the Vice-President of Admissions will present on new strategies and ideas from his department.</p>

<p>MENTAL HEALTH AND YOUR STUDENTS</p> <hr/> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The director of counseling will present a 30-minute session on the struggles college students face outside of the classroom and the mental issues they encounter on a daily basis. 	<p>This session will allow an outside expert to present on topics that may be deemed sensitive. In the process, the director of counseling will provide materials on how best to handle these cases.</p>
<p>INTERACTIVE SESSION WITH FINANCIAL AID</p> <hr/> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Financial Aid will cover various topics that will cover helping students with financial problems; helping students understand their finances; financial planning; how to utilize your financial aid to the fullest 	<p>This slide will accompany the Financial Aid session and will cover topics that deal with student's finances and how they can better understand financial aid.</p>
<p>SOLUTIONS AND BEST PRACTICES</p> <hr/> 	<p>This slide begins the solutions, strategies, and best practices session of the final day. It also will serve as an opportunity for the participants to brainstorm individually and as a group.</p>

<p style="text-align: center;">ACADEMIC, SOCIAL, AND FINANCIAL SOLUTIONS</p>	<p>The last slide before the session ends with concluding remarks, will focus on solutions. This slide discusses academic, social, and financial solutions. Before the slide will be shown, the audience will be asked to list solutions they have come up with for the academic, social and financial issues which might impact attendance. The facilitator will then show this slide to the audience and provide handouts that lists areas where they can focus on to help students improve their attendance.</p>
<p style="text-align: center;">FINAL WORDS, THOUGHTS, AND QUESTIONS</p>	<p>This slide concludes the workshop. Participants will be given the final assessment for the PD workshop and will be asked to provide any final thoughts and comments.</p>

Assessment for Day 1 and Day 2

Directions: Please circle your response to the questions provided below.

1. The goals of the day mentioned at the beginning of the day were met.
Very Satisfied = 5, Satisfied = 4, Neutral =3, Dissatisfied = 2, Very Dissatisfied = 1
2. The facilitator had expert knowledge and was prepared.
Very Satisfied = 5, Satisfied = 4, Neutral =3, Dissatisfied = 2, Very Dissatisfied = 1
3. The content was presented in a clear, useful, and relevant manner.
Very Satisfied = 5, Satisfied = 4, Neutral =3, Dissatisfied = 2, Very Dissatisfied = 1
4. The facilitator provided adequate time for discussion and created an environment that encouraged discussion.
Very Satisfied = 5, Satisfied = 4, Neutral =3, Dissatisfied = 2, Very Dissatisfied = 1
5. The facilitator stimulated my interest in the subject.
Very Satisfied = 5, Satisfied = 4, Neutral =3, Dissatisfied = 2, Very Dissatisfied = 1
6. I will use the content from the sessions in the future.
Highly likely= 5, Likely = 4, Neutral = 3, Not Likely = 2, Not at All = 1
7. Did the open format for table discussion work well?
 - Yes, it was beneficial
 - No, I did not think it worked well

Explain your response below:

Please answer the following questions:

8. What are some areas of improvement for tomorrow?
9. Our table had enough time to discuss and take away some ideas we could use?

Final Assessment for Participants

Directions: Please circle your response to the questions provided below.

- I. This PD Workshop helped me better understand student attendance and how it applies to student success.
Highly Agree = 5, Agree = 4, Neutral =3, Disagree = 2, Highly Disagree= 1
- II. The PD Workshop helped me understand and provided me with various strategies for improving student attendance.
Highly Agree = 5, Agree = 4, Neutral =3, Disagree = 2, Highly Disagree= 1
- III. The PD Workshop helped me understand how to incorporate best practices and strategies for student attendance in my classroom.
Highly Agree = 5, Agree = 4, Neutral =3, Disagree = 2, Highly Disagree= 1
- IV. I will use the information I learned in this PD Workshop often.
Highly Agree = 5, Agree = 4, Neutral =3, Disagree = 2, Highly Disagree= 1
- V. The PD Workshop helped aid in building a collaborative relationship with my colleagues.
Highly Agree = 5, Agree = 4, Neutral =3, Disagree = 2, Highly Disagree= 1
- VI. What did you take away from this workshop?
- VII. Final Comments or Thoughts:

Appendix B: Participation Email

Student Protocol

Dear student:

I am currently a doctoral student at Walden University seeking my doctorate. You have been invited to partake in a study involving attendance at the college. Because you are a student in their 6th, 7th, 8th, or 9th semester in the BBA program, you have met the requirements. The process is simple. If you are interested, please email me back expressing your interest to participate in the study. Not everyone who responds was interviewed. It is on a first come basis. The first 16 students to respond will then hear back from me and if you agree to participate, you will sign a consent form at the beginning of the interview. Upon confirmation, an interview date and time was sent to you. All your responses to the interview was confidential. Your participation in the study will greatly help the school in regards to attendance challenges they are having by providing your perspective, and help develop possible solutions. The interviews was approximately 30-45 minutes long. You will meet with me and I will ask you a series of questions which will then be transcribed in the study. Any questions please feel free to contact me.

Thank you!

Faculty/Administrator Protocol

Dear faculty/administrator:

I am currently a doctoral student at Walden University seeking my doctorate. You have been invited to partake in a study involving attendance at the college. Because you are either in the BBA program and/or are familiar with our student population, you have met the criteria. If you are interested, please email me back expressing your interest to participate in the study. Upon confirmation, an interview date and time was sent to you. All your responses to the interview was confidential. Your participation in the study will greatly help the school in regards to attendance challenges they are having by providing your perspective, and help develop possible solutions. The interviews was approximately 30-45 minutes long. You will meet with me and I will ask you a series of questions which will then be transcribed in the study. The process is simple. If you are interested, please email me back confirming your participation in the study. Once you agree to participate, you will sign a consent form at the beginning of the interview. Any questions please feel free to contact me.

Thank you!

Appendix C: Interview Questions

Interview questions for students:

1. To what degree do you feel attendance is a problem at the college? Why do you think that is?
2. Can you describe challenges you believe students face regarding class attendance?
3. What do you perceive as major reasons that contribute to low attendance?
4. What factors may cause students to miss class, be late, or stop attending altogether? (For example, relationship issues, family issues, money issues, etc.)
5. Do you have challenges that cause you to be late or to miss classes? If so, what are they?
6. Would you say financial aid issues are a challenge?
 - a) Do you feel that finances influence attendance? If so why?
 - b) Have you ever received financial aid to attend the college? Scholarships?
7. Do you feel that transportation is a challenge that influences a student's attendance?
8. Have you noticed any relationship between the course subject and student attendance?
9. Could you describe in detail possible reasons you attend or do not attend specific classes?
10. What role do you think instructor(s) have when it comes to whether you participate actively or not?
 - a) What are ways instructors encourage you to attend or participate?
 - b) What are some ways that make you not want to go to class or to participate in class?
11. Do you feel that students who are more engaged in class are more likely to attend?
 - a) What are some ways teachers engage students and make them want to come to class?
 - b) What would make you not be engaged?
12. What do you think would be a reason to attend class on a more regular basis if you do not regularly attend?
13. When do you feel less likely to attend school?
 - a) Do you have better attendance in some classes? If so, why?
 - b) What time of the day are you most productive?
 - c) Do you feel the time of day may affect your attendance? If so, please explain.
14. How do you believe attendance in the classroom can be improved?
 - a) Could you say something more regarding suggestions in terms of solutions?

Interview questions for staff/faculty

1. To what degree is attendance a problem at the college?
2. What do you think are reasons students consistently attend their classes?
3. Could you say something about the degree the content of the course affects the interest the student has in the subject and upon their attendance?
 - a) How do you believe the content of the course affects a student's lack of interest and attendance in the course?
4. Can you describe some challenges you believe students face with getting to school, especially on time?
5. To what degree is transportation for students a factor in their attending classes on time or late or not at all?
6. How do you feel external factors may cause students to miss class, be late, or stop attending altogether? (For example, relationship issues, family issues, money issues, etc.)
7. Could you say something more about what you perceive as major reasons that contribute to low attendance?
8. Do you have further examples of some specific reasons students do not attend school and/or specific classes?
9. To what degree is the role of the instructor in relationship to a student's attendance?
10. What do you perceive as potential solutions to improve student attendance?
 - a) Could you say something more regarding suggestions in terms of solutions?
11. Have you noticed any relationship between the course subject and student attendance?
12. Have you found that students do not attend specific classes? If so, why do you think that is?
13. Can you describe how performance and engagement levels may be related to attendance in morning classes versus afternoon classes?
 - a) Could you say something more about the level of engagement in your classes?
 - b) Would you say the level of engagement is related to attendance in a specific class?
14. Do you feel attendance is important with respect to performance in class? In the program?
15. Does the instructor of a course influence attendance in class?
16. For students who do not regularly attend classes, what might be a reason to attend on a more regular basis?
 - a) What might be an additional course offering/improvement/change to curriculum that would lead them to attend more regularly?

17. How do you believe attendance in the classroom can be improved?
18. What do you think could be potential solutions to promote regular attendance?

Appendix D: Interview Protocol

Interview # _____

Date _____/_____/_____

Interview Protocol for Participants

Script

Good morning/afternoon! Thank you for participating today in this study. My name is Erica Schacht. I am a doctoral candidate at Walden University conducting my project study as part of the degree requirement. The interview will last anywhere from 30-60 minutes and includes various questions regarding your experiences with student attendance. I would like your permission to record this interview so I may document your responses accurately. If at any time during the interview you wish to discontinue the use of the recorder or want to stop the interview itself, please feel free to let me know. Your responses are confidential and will remain confidential; no one will have access to these responses. Your responses will be used to develop a better understanding of what factors are associated with student attendance. The purpose of this study is to determine why the business program has low attendance rates at [REDACTED]. I would like to remind you of your written consent to participate in this research project, Improving Attendance in Undergraduate Business Program at a For-Profit College. I am confirming your participation in the study. We have both signed and dated each copy of consent, certifying that we agree to continue this interview. Once you have signed the copy, you will receive one copy for your record, and I will keep the other copy safe and secure, separate from your responses. Thank you