2019

First-Year Students' Reasons for Withdrawing From College

Margaret Ann Nelson
Walden University

Walden University

College of Education

This is to certify that the doctoral study by

Margaret Ann Nelson

has been found to be complete and satisfactory in all respects,
and that any and all revisions required by
the review committee have been made.

Review Committee
Dr. Laurie Bedford, Committee Chairperson, Education Faculty
Dr. Jennifer Mathes, Committee Member, Education Faculty
Dr. Tammy Hoffman, University Reviewer, Education Faculty

Chief Academic Officer
Eric Riedel, Ph.D.

Walden University
2019

Abstract

First-Year Students' Reasons for Withdrawing From College

by

Margaret Ann Nelson

MBA, Long Island University, 2010

MS, Long Island University, 2007

BS, Long Island University, 2007

Doctoral Study Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Education

Higher Education and Adult Learning

Walden University

June 2019

Abstract

Retention of first-year students was a problem at a private 4-year university in the Southeastern United States. The purpose of this qualitative case study was to examine the reasons entering first-year students who were part of the Promise Program withdrew from the university during their first year. Tinto's model of student attrition provided the conceptual framework for the study. Research questions addressed students' rationale for selecting the school, their perspectives on the main causes of first-year attrition, their expectations of campus support services, and their recommendations for how to decrease student attrition. Data were collected from semistructured interviews with 7 students from the spring 2016 and fall 2016 semesters. The interviews were transcribed and analyzed using manual coding and coding software. Findings indicated that students' sense of belonging was the most influential factor in their decision to withdraw from college. Recommendations included a training program for administrators and staff on customer service techniques. This study can bring positive social change to the profession by seeking out systemic changes to promote entering freshmen's college completion. Conclusively, the implications of positive social change is most benefical to students when more students are able to earn a degree, and better their livelihood. The university would benefit by graduating more students and the success of their college graduates could be seen as their own success of addressing student's social and academic needs. Finally, the positive social change for externalities would benefit from the investment in human beings and human capital as a critical input for change and innovations to society.

First-Year Students' Reasons for Withdrawing From College

by

Margaret Ann Nelson

MBA, Long Island University, 2010

MS, Long Island University, 2007

BS, Long Island University, 2007

Doctoral Study Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Education

Higher Education and Adult Learning

Walden University

June 2019

Dedication

I dedicate this journey to my family and friends. Thank you for your prayers, words of encouragement, hugs, smiles, and delicious meals you prepared for my family and me when you saw me struggling to balance my life. You all will forever be a part of this accomplishment. Mom (Bay), you have always called me Doctor, but you could not wait any longer to see the actual degree. I know you are in a place that has been prepared for you, so rest in peace and know that you will never be deceased in my heart and mind. I love you for all your great influence, decency, integrity, morals, and love you spread to everyone who came in contact with you. You never allowed anyone to leave your home without a delicious meal. I am so blessed to learn how to cook like you! You always said that there were no boundaries for your children, so thank you for believing in me and helping me get to a better place in my life. You have not passed away. You have only ascended to a higher realm than where I am able see you, touch you, or wrap my arms around your tiny frame.

Acknowledgments

I give the honor and glory to my Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. Lord I thank you for your grace, mercy, blessing, and favors you continuously bestow upon me. You are an amazing and loving God and everything that I am and ever hope to be, I owe it all to You! Thank You for loving me, hearing my prayers, walking with me in my lowest state of being, guiding me, preserving me, lifting me up, and giving me the strength I need to walk in Your holy ways. I lift up my husband, Benjamin; my son Vaughn; my daughter, Brittany; and my granddaughter, Sarai Noelle. Thank you from the depths of my heart for seeing my potential and passion for learning and for stepping in when I was weary. To my sisters, brother, aunts, uncle (especially Glenn), my big sister Estella, and Barbara, I am so grateful for the quality time we spent together. To my LIU friends (Cindy, Sheila, Monica, Cecilia, and Lydia) you were placed in my pathway and kept me laughing to the point of crying. There are no words that can describe how my heart pulsates thinking about our crazy times. You were either a leaf just passing through and blown away by the wind or a branch that supported me a little longer, or perhaps you are the root that is still adding to my growth.

I thank Dr. Laurie Bedford for picking up the torch as my chairperson and providing her instrumental and phenomenal leadership, experience, and knowledge in guiding my writing and thoughts on this journey. Thanks to Dr. Jennifer Mathes, my second committee member, for having such keen eyes on my methodology section and for all the recommendations that help made this capstone a solid read. Dr. Tammy Hoffman, my university research reviewer, your role in the entire process has also made

me a much better writer. I am more cognizant of my writing, and I know you expect nothing less than the best from your students. Dr. Bruch, you have been through so much with me, right to the very end, and you have been the wind beneath my wings. From my uncle's health problem to my sickness and finally to my mother expiring, your encouragement, patience, guidance, words of hope, and assurance impacted my life abundantly. I am forever grateful and inspired by your goodness and loving kindness. Thank you, Lord, for all these individuals.

Table of Contents

Section 1: The Problem

Introduction

Obtaining a college education can be a challenging undertaking socially, economically, and mentally. Entering students enroll in colleges and universities with the hope of obtaining a better quality of life. Factors that may cause entering first-year students to withdraw from the university according to Sparkman, Maulding, and Roberts (2012) and Tinto (2012, 2013) were identified as: (a) students' perception of not belonging; (b) students' relationship with peers, staffs, and faculty; (c) financial constraints; (d) cognitive and noncognitive variables; (e) personal reasons; (f) inadequate enrollment support services; (g) changing demographics of college and university students; and (h) conflicts between traditional and nontraditional students.

Measuring college student retention is confusing, complicated, and context dependent. Researchers have not reached a consensus on the best way to assess first-year student retention (Dennis, 2012; Thammasiri, Delen, Meesad, & Kasap, 2014). Universities and colleges may not be able to eliminate the problem of attrition among first-year students; however, higher education institutions may be able to enhance or change current practices to meet more of the students' needs. The purpose of this qualitative case study was to examine the reasons why entering first-year students who were enrolled in the Promise Program at a not-for-profit university in the southeastern region of the United States withdrew from the university during their first year of studies. Entering first-year students' needs were not being adequately met through current practices, techniques, and strategies, resulting in high attrition rates among this enteringgroup (VP of Enrollment Services, personal communication, May, 2014).

Structured first-year and learning community programs may be one way to meet the academic and social needs of enteringfirst-year college students. The university began to offer the Promise Program, an all-inclusive initiative created in September 2013 as a comprehensive, individualized mentoring and retention program. The program was tailored to enteringfirst-year liberal arts majors and students who were undecided in their degree program. According to the university's website, the program featured success coaches who were paired with students. The success coach was the student's point of contact, and the program's goal was to understand students from a holistic perspective from pre-enrollment to employment, with student services and engagement tailored to each student's preferences.

For over 40 years, researchers have discussed the issue of student attrition and retention (Astin, 1977, 1985; Darlaston-Jones et al., 2003; Harvey, Drew, & Smith, 2006; Heilbronner, Connell, Dobyns, & Reis, 2010; Jeffreys, 2012; Keys, 2013; Kicinski, 2014; Krause, Hartley, James, & Mclnnis, 2005; Roman, 2007; Tinto, 1975, 2012; Townsend & Wilson, 2009). Despite the extensive retention studies in higher education, administrators and faculty at the local university did not understand why students, especially first-year students, had withdrawn from their universities.

In their work for the National Center for Education Statistics, Chen and Soldner (2013) reported the following:

> Attrition rates in non-Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM) fields were as high as or greater than the STEM fields. At the bachelor's degree level, students in humanities, education, and health sciences had higher attrition rates (56%-62%) than did those in STEM fields (48%). (p. iv)

Educational institutions are held accountable for retention rates by state governments, policymakers, business leaders, consumer advocates, parents, and students (National Postsecondary Education Cooperative. Some of these groups had direct accountability measures that associated funding with retention rates (National Postsecondary Education Cooperative, 2011). Researchers documented that students were most likely to withdraw from college during their first year of study (Bremer et al., 2013; Keys, 2013; Kicinski, 2014). Therefore, the focus of this study was to determine why students had left and to identify the signs of at-risk students so they can be given the support and encouragement they need to complete their degrees.

Supporting entering first-year students in colleges and universities will increase their likelihood of finishing their degrees (Chen & Soldner, 2013). Student retention has been identified as an important measure of institutional effectiveness because student enrollments can be translated into revenue for educational institutions (Chen & Soldner, 2013). Although tertiary student attrition and retention are not new areas of research, researchers have found mixed outcomes on the significance of these two phenomena (Andrews, 2014; Ascend Learning, 2012; Cook, 2010).

According to Frelick (2013) and Jeffreys (2012), assessing students' attrition has created notable barriers for researchers and educational institutions alike, and these barriers affected student success. Retention not only had an impact on the individual and his or her family but also had a far-reaching impact on the postsecondary institution, the workforce, and the economy (Schneider, 2010). A college or university profile is one way students, parents, and stakeholders can make decisions on whether the institution is worth the investment (Noel-Levitz, 2013). A positive reputation increases a college's ability to

attract the best students and faculty (Conlin, Dickert-Conlin, & Chapman, 2013; Dearden, Grewal, & Lilien, 2014; Luca & Smith, 2013). Colleges' and universities' graduation rates, retention rates, and default rates are all reported on federal government websites. The same information is also reported to students and parents who complete the federal government Free Application for Federal Student Aid. Further, colleges and universities that participate in federal aid programs are required to provide information about the cost of attendance by supplying a net price calculator tool on their websites. According to the U.S. Department of Education (2015), the tool provides students and parents with an idea of how much they can expect to contribute to educational costs after taking into an account all grants and scholarships.

Definition of the Problem

It was not known why many enteringfirst-year students in the Promise Program withdrew from the university. Further, it was not known what student services the university could provide to retain its students (Provost, personal communication, October 22, 2014). If the withdrawal rate and loan default rate of entering first-year students continues to increase, the university's ability to receive federal, state, local, and private funding may be jeopardized (Dean of Student Success, personal communication, November 17, 2014). The university must be able to retain students, graduate them, and assist them with finding gainful employment to continue to receive federal, state, local, and private funding (U.S. Department of Education, 2015).

According to Irlbeck, Adams, Akers, Burris, and Jones (2014), most first-generation college students' families do not have sufficient information about college survival to support their student family member in adjusting to life at college. Therefore,

more extensive research on the nature and type of academic support systems needed for the student to fit into the college environment could be beneficial. College student retention is complex and can affect higher education at its core (Bettinger, Boatman, & Long, 2013; Jeffreys, 2012; Schneider & Yin, 2011). Higher education represents a shared relationship of personal and institutional factors and associated damaging costs and implications to all stakeholders (American Federation of Teachers, 2011).

Some students involuntarily withdraw because of academic failure or the inability to cope with the demands of the educational system. These factors contribute to lower self-esteem and confidence and potentially could have a negative, lifelong impact on these learners (Aspelmeier, Love, McGill, Elliot, & Pierce, 2012). Student withdrawals not only negatively impact the students who leave the university, student attrition also constitutes a waste of institutional resources, especially in an environment of limited financial and resources (Schneider & Yin, 2012). According to the Educational Policy Institute (2013), when students cannot achieve their full potential, the waste of talent and resources impacts not only the student but also the institution and society as a whole; the potential impact of this retention problem is far reaching.

Retention is a matter of economic survival because of the increasing cost of educating students. According to an analysis performed by the American Enterprise Institute for Public Policy Research (as cited in Schneider & Yin, 2012), over a 5-year span, federal and state agencies spent more than $9 billion to support students who left colleges and universities before their sophomore year. The U.S. Department of Education (2015) emphasized that a trend that threatens to undermine the nation's global

competitiveness and exacerbate inequality in the nation's income distribution is the stagnant or falling college completion rates among young Americans.

Evidence of the Problem at the Local Level

The local problem that exists at a not-for-profit, private, 4-year university in the southeastern region of the United States prompted this study; it was not known why 35% of the entering first-year students in the Promise Program withdrew from the university in their first year. In September 2013, the university introduced the Promise Program as an comprehensive, individualized mentoring and retention program. The program was tailored to enteringfirst-year liberal arts majors and students who were undecided in their major. The program features success coaches who pair with students. The success coach is the student's point of contact, and the goal of the program is understanding students from a holistic perspective from pre-enrollment to employment, with student services and engagement tailored to each student's preferences.

The administration and faculty of the college have observed a continuous decline in entering first-year students' retention in recent decades (Dean of Student Success, personal communication, September 25, 2014). As the number of enteringfirst-year students increases, the need for understanding college support systems grows. Therefore, to improve the experience for entering first-year students at the university, I examined how these students perceived their support systems and needs. By striving to meet the students' needs, the university can minimize its growing attrition issue (Adams, 2012; Bailey & Kang, 2014; Howard, 2013; Tinto, 1993).

In February 2008, a retention committee was formed at the study site, and the provost of the university charged the committee with the task of addressing the campus's

ongoing retention challenges of entering first-year students (Dean of Academic Advising, personal communication, February 10, 2008). In July 2013, the administration and faculty expressed concerns that despite previous and current program initiatives, entering first-year students' academic and belonging needs were not being addressed. The university piloted several successful programs: the Scholarship Assistance Program, the Office of Student Development and Retention, Triple E courses, Learning Communities, the Service for Veterans, Personal Counseling Services, the Division of Student Success, and First-Year Only Orientation Seminar. However, the university's entering first-year students' attrition rates continued to increase.

In 2012, the university's entering first-year students' attrition has increased to 38% from 17% in 2008 (Dean of Admission, personal communication, September 19, 2012). According to the U.S Department National Center for Education Statistics (NCES, 2015), 35% of first-time fall 2013 students at the university pursuing a bachelor's degree failed to enroll in fall 2014. Established in 1926 as an independent, regionally accredited, private, not-for-profit, 4-year university, the school has an enrollment of 23,026 students across seven campus locations. The average student-to-faculty ratio is 12:1, and according to its website, the university employs a total of 581 full-time faculty and 981 part-time faculty. Through its mission of access and excellence, the university community remains committed to the educational needs and interests of its diverse student body. According to its website, the university strives to cultivate and expand academic, professional, artistic, and cocurricular opportunities, enabling students to realize their full potential as ethically grounded, intellectually vigorous, and socially responsible global citizens.

The university seeks to achieve its mission by providing multiple educational programs and services to its community and beyond. The university offers over 500 academic degree programs, including five associate's degrees, 161 bachelor's degrees, 37 dual degrees, 219 master's degrees, eight doctoral degrees, and 65 advance certificates in fields such as vascular technology, sonography, and paralegal. Additional programs include those that support accelerated high school students and dual enrollment opportunities. The university offers many continuing education programs, including GED preparation, ESL courses, and the Center for Professional Development. The center provides recreational classes and workforce training initiatives to support economic growth through professional development.

The university is a multicultural campus with most of its programming requiring a minimum high school average of C+ (75 out of 100 scale) to be accepted. However, the university's website also acknowledges that "while the grade point average is a basic tool for admission, it is not the sole determining factor in the final decision for admission." One characteristics of an educational program that influences the student attrition rate is the program's admissions process and criteria (Bunch & Endris, 2012; Griffin & Muñiz, 2015; Tinto, 1975). The procedures admissions offices use to select students into a program have an impact on the characteristics of the student population. For example, if the university accepts a large number of students who barely meet minimum requirements, chances are that attrition rates will increase (Griffin & Muñiz, 2015; Lubbe, 2013; Soares, 2012).

The purpose of this study was to explore perspectives of students who enrolled in the Promise Program but withdrew from the university during their first year of study.

Given the university's mission, admission practices, and student population, a high attrition rate is conceivable. In 2012, during one of the monthly student council meetings (chaired by the provost of the university and attended by department deans, chairpersons, faculty, and enrollment services representatives), the registrar reported that the university lost over 20% of its incoming fall first-year and transfer students (full-time and part-time) after the first term of the semester. Between Terms 2 and 3, another 18% of entering freshmen and 11% of transfer students discontinued.

The university's efforts to retain students are not unique in higher education. Colleges and universities across the United States, as well as federal and state governments, face similar issues of finding ways to keep their first-year students in school (Deil-Amen, 2011; Tinto, 2012). Much is at stake for institutions; according to Woodall, Hiller, and Resnick (2014), "institutions/courses are frequently now subject to the same kind of consumerist pressures typical of a highly marketised environment" (p. 1). The risk is that a university with a high attrition rate may not be a desirable university to attend. Because of the study site university's open admission and rolling deadline policy, the high attrition rate was somewhat understandable. However, the steady decrease in retention numbers was a cause for concern.

In September 2013, the university began a Promise Program to ensure that entering first-year students would be provided with the right tools to integrate into the university academically and socially. The program featured Promise coaches, professionals who are cross-trained in admission, advising, financial aid, student accounts, and registration. The program's objective was to provide entering first-year students with a contact person who provided one-on-one assistance from the time of the

student's acceptance into the university. The Promise coaches served as the students' personal success guidance and support coaches. Chen and Soldner (2013) found that institutions that provide intensive advisement, supplemental instruction in courses with high failure rates, and small structured academic and social communities for first-year students have higher graduation rates, especially among high risk-students.

At the time of the study, the university did not have an exit interview process for collecting data on student attrition. Without a system of identifying reasons for student attrition, the university may continue to be challenged with the overall high rate of freshmen attrition. Angulo-Ruiz and Pergelova (2013) suggested a need for additional study on the attrition topic because of the complexity of the phenomenon of attrition among first-year students. The aim of the current study was to address the gap in research and the gap in practice.

The goal of this study was to gain a better understanding of students' perceptions of academic and social issues related to their withdrawal. The gap in practice derived from the perspectives of students who participated in the Promise Program and their views of the academic and social experiences at the institution. Litzler and Young (2012) noted that self-confidence, self-efficacy, university climate, opinions of a major, and quality of teaching are relevant in students' experiences and perceptions. Learners who complete degree programs signal both a positive student outcome and a successful university (Wray, Barrett, & Aspland, 2011), which may be facilitated by exploring reasons for student attrition and by implementing initiatives that meet the students' social and academic needs.

Evidence of the Problem from the Professional Literature

According to a 5-year study from the American Institutes of Research (2017), state and local governments spent billions of dollars to help pay for the educational costs of students who dropped out of community colleges. Costs totaled an estimated 4 billion dollars after adding in federal funds (Schneider & Yin, 2012). Furthermore, the estimates did not include out-of-pocket expenses students and parents contributed (Schneider & Yin, 2012). It is easy to see how the costs of student attrition can be an alarming issue for any institution of higher education. According to the American Enterprise Institute for Public Policy Research (as cited in Schneider & Yin, 2012), "cutting the dropout rate by half would generate substantial gains: the 160,000 'new' graduates would earn $30 billion more in lifetime income—and create an additional $5.3 billion in total taxpayer revenue" (p. 1). Federal and state governments, students, and families make significant investments in different forms of financial support (Powell, Gilleland, & Pearson, 2012). According to Powell et al. (2012), efficiency, productivity, and quality must be considered concurrently. In addition, Bowen (2012) indicated that college prices have increased about 50% over the past decade, and the price index in higher education has increased over 70%.

Conceptual Framework

Merriam (2009) noted that *theoretical base* and *conceptual framework* are often used interchangeably. The theoretical model that framed this study was Tinto's (1975, 1982, 1993, 1997, 1998) model of student attrition. Tinto (1975) stated that students' "quality of learning, and their success or failure in persisting in their educational careers, depends, among other things, on their integration in the educational community" (p. 253).

In addition, Tinto (1975) asserted that students are more inclined to persist in their studies when they participate in extracurricular activities, when they feel connected with their teachers and fellow students, and when they feel a sense of belonging to the environment. Tinto (1975) also posited that students who wish to persist in college and to graduate successfully should participate in the student culture, both within and outside the immediate context of the learning environment.

Although the campus seeks to provide a familiar atmosphere for students, this effort may not be enough to retain some of the students. Due to the increasing retention problem, administrators and faculty members were asked to reevaluate what the university was not doing right in order to retain more of its entering first-year students. In 2013, the Educational Policy Institute conducted an analysis of the average 6-year attrition rates at 1,669 4-year colleges and universities and suggested that "schools could improve their retention rates by up to 76% if they focus more on student needs and concepts of returns on investment" (p. 8).

Karp and Bork (2012) argued that success of a community depends on important skills, attitudes, and behaviors of people. Further, R. M. Brown and Mazzarol (2009) postulated that compared to the service quality in the context of higher education, an institution's image has a larger effect on a student's value and satisfaction. As a result of these factors impacting entering first-year students' attrition, studies reflected concerns of students' social and academic integration (Litzler & Young, 2012; McDonald & Farrell, 2012). The problem addressed in this qualitative case study was the lack of knowledge of why many entering first-year students in the Promise Program withdrew from the university what changes could be made by the university to retain these students.

Noel-Levitz (2013) reported that using an assessment to identify incoming students' strengths, weaknesses, needs, and concerns is among the top 10 effective internal operations at institutions. Chen and Soldner (2013) reported that

> Rising concerns about the ability of the United States to compete in the global economy have led to numerous calls for national efforts to increase the number and diversity of students pursuing degrees and careers in STEM fields . . . . In 2009, the Obama administration launched the "Educate to Innovate" campaign to improve the participation and performance of U.S. students in STEM. (p. 1)

Speaking to prominent leaders of the STEM community and local students, President Obama (White House, 2009) stated,

> Reaffirming and strengthening America's role as the world's engine of scientific discovery and technological innovation is essential to meeting the challenges of this century. . . . That's why I am committed to making the improvement of STEM education over the next decade a national priority. (para. 3)

For the purpose of this study, both social integration and academic integration served as the cornerstone factors of students' attrition. Insch and Sun (2013) mentioned that a number of issues such as social and cultural environment impact students' choice of where to study. Numerous researchers agreed that attrition from tertiary educational institutions is expensive and wasteful, but they also asserted that it has implications for the institutions because enrollment determines continuation of funding (Bettinger et al., 2013; NCES, 2015; O'Keeffe, 2013; Schneider, 2010; Tinto, 1993; Yorke, 1998). Also, Strayhorn (2012) described the relationship between students and institution as follows:

> A sense of belonging is relational, and thus there is a reciprocal quality to relationships that provide a sense of belonging, and each member benefits from the group, and the group, in a sense benefits from the contributions of each member. (p. 315)

Stakeholders become engrossed in the community of accountability in which members understand and acknowledge their roles to bring about students' academic achievement (Strayhorn, 2012). According to Litzler and Young (2012), students' commitment to the major and degree completion are linked to their encountering a certain type of experience. The focus of the current study was to acquire a better understanding of the participants' experiences in the Promise Program.

According to O'Keeffe (2013), first-year students are susceptible to attrition, and universities lose revenue because of attrition. O'Keeffe also noted that colleges and universities received $6.18 billion in subsidies from the U.S. government to fund the education of first-year students who, in turn, exited the universities within that first year. O'Keefe reported, "the creation of a caring, supportive and welcoming environment within the university is critical to creating a sense of belonging" (p. 1). My review of the literature addressed student retention in higher education from the early 1930s to the present.

Rationale

The rationale for this inquiry was threefold. First, the study addressed the evolutionary alignment between the accessibility of the U.S. higher education system and students' reasons for withdrawing during their first year of study. Second, the study added to the existing literature regarding the problems students face in trying to obtain a

bachelor's degree. Finally, the practical application of this research was significant, resulting in a professional development training that derived from what I learned from the participants in the study, with recommendations based on my findings and suggestions for staff development.

The purpose of this qualitative case study was to examine the reasons why entering freshmen students enrolled in the Promise Program at a not-for-profit university in the southeastern region of the United States withdrew from the university during their first year of study. The rationale for choosing this problem was to better understand and seek ways to help entering first-year students to integrate academically and socially into a college environment that fits their needs and provides a sense of belonging. In such an atmosphere, faculty and administration can assist the students in achieving a successful and engaging academic experience. Students' successful completion of their courses of study is not only in the best interest of the institution but also in the best interest of the students (Chen & Soldner, 2013).

Students' engagement and learning in a higher educational institution contribute to their preparation for a more prosperous and stable future. According to Schneider (2010), student attrition results in broader economic impacts. Students are major stakeholders in the survival of a growing and productive economy—locally, nationally, and globally. Students must have access to adequate financial aid, flexible class schedules, curricula that best fit their needs, faculty and administrators with welcoming personalities, and best services and student support to help them graduate (Schneider, 2010). Noel-Levitz (2011) proposed that under-prepared or unmotivated students want

greater collaboration and agreement with faculty, staff, and senior administration; these factors are among the most significant retention issues facing colleges and universities.

Colleges and universities that receive government assistance must be held accountable for students' achievements and job placement in sustainable employment (Chen & Hossler, 2017). These measures can help reduce existing attrition problems, enabling more students to graduate. Colleges and universities must take a more active role not only in admitting students but also in making sure that they succeed in their education. Locally, the need was to study and address this problem to ensure that money invested in these students' education results in students' successful completion of their bachelor's degrees. The U.S. Census Bureau (2012) reported that in 2011, more than 30% of adults 25 and older held at least a bachelor's degree. It is important to increase the number of college graduates in the United States. Further, the NCES (2015) reported

> that 21.8 million students are expected to attend U.S. colleges and universities, constituting an increase of about 6.5 million since fall 2000. Nearly 7.5 million students will attend public 2-year institutions, and 0.5 million students will attend private 2-year colleges (NCES, 2015). Approximately 8.2 million students are expected to attend public 4-year institutions, and about 5.6 million will attend private 4-year institutions (NCES, 2015). During the 2013-14 school year, colleges and universities are expected to award 943,000 associate's degrees, 1.8 million bachelor's degrees, 778,000 master's degrees, and 177,000 doctor's degrees (NCES, 2015).

When a welcoming environment is missing in a college or university, a gap exists between higher education, the college, and the student (Dean of Academic Advisement,

personal communication, January 23, 2015). Students feel alone, wanting and needing to return to their comfortable environment. Institutions could benefit from developing comprehensive learning programs that focus on creating relationships to engage entering freshmen students academically and integrate them socially into the college environment (Grahovac, Karuovic, & Egic, 2012; Kahu, Stephens, Leach, & Zepke, 2013; Wood, 2012). Researchers found a compensatory interaction between student and academic staff relationship variables, which provided a measure of social integration (kahu, et.al., 2013).

Definition of Terms

The following terms are defined as used in the context of this study:

Adult student: A person at least 24 years who attends classes (Knowles, Holton, & Swanson, 2014).

Attrition: The percentage of students in a particular year who neither graduate nor continue studying in an award course (official university course) at the same institution in the following year (Institute of Educational Science, 2012) (IES).

Declared major: The course of study students want to pursue that is most appropriate for their plans (U.S. Department of Education, 2014).

Dropout: Students who leave college before achieving their goals (IES, 2012).

Entering first-yeat student: Individuals who have never attended a college or university and who are in their first year of undergraduate study (U.S. Dept. of Education, 2014).

Nontraditional student: Students over age 24 who often have family and work obligations as well as other life circumstances that can interfere with successful completion of educational objectives (U.S. Dept. of Education, n.d.).

Open admission: A policy of rolling admissions for higher education programs. While most of the degree programs do not have an application deadline, the sooner a student submits a completed admission application for review, the earlier a student can receive a final admission decision. Therefore, a student can apply to the university the very last day of the enrollment period and be accepted into the university (Mullin, 2012).

Persistence: The percentage of students who return to college at any institution for their second year (National Student Clearinghouse Research Center, 2014).

Promise Program: A program tailored to entering first-year students in the liberal arts and undecided majors. The program consists of success coaches who pair with the entering first-year liberal arts students. The success coach is the student's point of contact for everything needed from academic support, career counseling, and campus activities to securing financial aid. The success coach's role is to ensure the student accesses the appropriate tools, guidance, and support to be successful through graduation.

Retention: The percentage of students enrolled in one year of a degree program who enroll again in the following year in the same institution (U.S. Dept. of Education, n.d.).

Rolling admission policy: A policy in which the university reviews admission applications as soon as they arrive. Students do not have to wait for the application deadline to end before getting their acceptance or denial decisions (Conway, 2016).

Traditional student: An undergraduate student under the age of 24 who goes to college because it is the next thing to do as opposed to going to work or something else (Johnson & Kestler, 2013).

Transfer student: A student entering the reporting institution with or without transfer credits for the first time but known to have previously attended a postsecondary institution at the same level (NCES, 2015). For this study, transfer students could be accepted into the Promise Program if they attended another college or university and transferred with 24 or fewer credits. The university accepts transfer credits of a C grade or higher toward the students' degree requirements.

Undeclared major: Students who are uncertain about what career path they want to pursue or which major is most appropriate for their plans (U.S. Department of Education, 2014).

Significance

This study was significant in several areas related to entering first-year students' retention. Information collected from the first-year students who were enrolled in the Promise Program and dropped out of the university provided relevant data that may may be used to improve future retention rates for first-year students. The study was also significant because it addressed the students' expectations of the university's roles and responsibilities. Findings provided the institution with insights regarding how to build learning communities that could keep students motivated and engaged at the institution. Findings also provided the institution with an understanding of how to establish a relationship on which students can rely (see Irlbeck et al., 2014) if they experience a lack of support from home.

The study was specific to the site and provided insight on students' reasons for withdrawing from college and contributed further understanding of the changing demographics in the student population. Although much of the data that were collected

were institution specific, the findings may contribute to the literature regarding student retention.

Research Questions

The purpose of this qualitative case study was to determine why many entering first-year students in the Promise Program withdrew from the university in their first year and what changes could be made by the university to retain these students. Academic tutoring, extra curricula, and supplemental instructions have been implemented at the university to support students who are at risk of withdrawing. Based on the problem of high attrition of entering first-year students at the university, and based on information from the literature, the following research questions guided this study:

1. What causes entering freshmen students in the Promise Program to withdraw from the university during their first year of enrollment?
2. What can the university do to improve its educational and support services that it provides its students?
3. What are the barriers that entering first-year students experience that lead to their withdrawal from their respective programs?
4. What changes can be made to reduce entering first-year students' attrition that could add to the university's existing practices, which could potentially be adopted by other higher education institutions?

Review of the Literature

The literature for this study contributed to a better understanding of retention, its supporting terminology, and proposed models of retention. The review of the literature covered the following:

- historical overview of retention in higher education;
- historical evolution of students' retention in higher education;
- historical background on retention models, conceptual framework, and factors that impact students' retention;
- students' relationship with peers, staff, and faculty;
- students' perceptions of not belonging, financial concerns, personal reasons for withdrawal, and cognitive and noncognitive factors;
- inadequate student support services provided by faculty, staff, and administrators;
- changing demographics of college and university students; and
- features of traditional and nontraditional students.

This review adds to the current study by providing research studies conducted by knowledgeable content experts. In the review of the literature, I incorporated various Boolean searches of journals, article, reports, online Department of Education reports, and books. This literature overview provides a comprehensive examination of relevant research regarding the reasons entering students withdraw from college during their first year.

Conceptual Framework

The conceptual model used to frame this study was Tinto's student integration model, which provoked the current national dialogue on undergraduate retention (Tinto, 1975). Tinto (1975) theorized that students who socially integrate into the campus community increase their engagement with the institution and are more

likely to graduate. Tinto's (1975) model influenced how researchers and practitioners view undergraduate retention and graduation. Tinto (1975) hypothesized that students enter higher education institutions with a variety of attributes, including family history, community backgrounds, and value orientations that contribute to their educational expectations and commitments. Tinto (1975) suggested that the level of students' integration into the social and academic systems of the college system determines the students' commitment to the institution and to the goal of college completion.

This study was grounded in the conceptual model of Tinto's (1975) exploration of student integration, socially and academically, which has been used to gain an understanding into college student persistence and retention. The integration model suggested the need for a match between the institutional environment and students' commitment and implied that a good match leads to stronger student integration into the academic and social domains of college life and to the probability of persistence.

The research questions in this study related to Tinto's model with the goal of gaining study participants' perspectives on their integration into the study site. The findings may provide administrators with a better understanding of students' needs and potential strategies to improve retention. Students who socially integrate into their institution increase their engagement and are more likely to persist and graduate (Tinto, 1975). This study provided data to improve understanding of Tinto's model with the overarching goal of helping the university develop a more effective integration and retention strategy for entering first-year students. In addition, the study findings revealed to the administration and faculty the need to devote more resources to staff development

in alignment with a holistic approach to servicing students. The following sections address these expectations.

Historical Overview of Retention in Higher Education

The earliest studies of undergraduate retention in the United States can be traced to the 1930s (Berger, Ramirez, & Lyons, 2012; Forsman, Linder, Moll, Fraser, & Andersson, 2014); researchers at that time used the term students' *mortality* to mean the failure of students to graduate. U.S. institutions of higher education were more concerned with attracting students than ensuring students' persistence, and colleges and universities catered to very select populations (Berger et al.). In the late 1800s and early 1900s, massive changes in higher education occurred because of the Morrill Land Grant Act of 1862 and the growth of cities and urban life (Huang, 2012). These two events created the demand for more institutions of higher education with more individuals seeking access to higher education (Huang, 2012). Emerging urban lifestyles created a greater need for postsecondary learning and degree attainment (Berger et al., 2012).

Although student attrition may be more explicitly defined within one particular field than another, it is generally characterized by a departure (dropout) from or a delay in successful completion of a college program (Berger et al.). One of the most widely used dichotomous measures in educational research and practice is retention and dropout, typically considered opposites (Berger et al., 2012). Astin and Bayer (1971) identified the dropout concept as an issue and added that defining dropout was further complicated by the prevalence of student enrollment in several different institutions. Tinto (1987) noted that that defining the term is complicated: "The label dropout is one of the more frequently misused terms in our lexicon of educational descriptions" (p. 3). Tinto further

asserted that many students see their time in postsecondary instruction as a positive process of self-discovery that has resulted in individual social and intellectual maturation, rather than as a failure. Concurring with Tinto, Bean (1980) acknowledged that students who drop out might have already achieved their goals during their limited time in colleges. Bean argued that neither the student nor the institution should be seen as a failure.

Historical Evolution of Student Retention in Higher Education and Some of the Retention Models That Emerged

The 1930s-1960s. McNeely (1937) conducted one of the first studies of undergraduate retention or student mortality at 60 institutions. During this examination of students' demographic characteristics, social engagement, and reasons for departure, McNeely theorized that some of the reasons students who left the institution were intangible" (p. 44). In other words, some of the reasons were impossible to describe and have no exact value. Seven themes—death, needed at home, disciplinary dismissal, sickness, lack of interest, financial difficulties, and dismissal for failure in work—emerged from McNeely's study. In addition, McNeely posited that several sociological factors impacted the students' decisions to leave the institution: (a) student's age at entrance to college, (b) distance of the student's home from college, (c) student's place of lodging at college, (d) student's participation in extracurricular activities, and (e) student's having to work part-time.

After World War II, the GI Bill provided the next impetus for growth in higher education (Huang, 2012) that had a significant impact on college student enrollment. During the 1950s, more than two million veterans enrolled in colleges and universities

using their GI Bill. Thereafter, institutions began to monitor student enrollment regularly (Huang, 2012). The increased enrollment in the beginning of the 1960s caused tensions on campuses across the country and resulted in greater access to higher education for middle- and low-income students. Institutions were unprepared to serve the diverse student bodies, and their influx stressed campus facilities (Huang, 2012). The general student unrest on college campuses in response to the Vietnam War, the Civil Rights Movement, the war on poverty, and political and social revolutions raised questions about who had access to college, who was succeeding in colleges, and whom the college graduates in American society in the 1960s would be (Berger et al., 2012). The Higher Education Act of 1965 increased access to higher education by providing students with financial support to enroll in colleges and universities and created on-campus support services to help students succeed academically (Kaiser et al., 2014). By the end of the 1960s, retention was a regular topic of discussion on campuses (Huang, 2012).

The 1970s and 1980s. College retention as a significant issue in higher education came to the forefront of discussion in academia in the 1970s (Forsman et al., 2014). Theories began to emerge related to retention, and the sociological model of student dropout in higher education was the first widely recognized model in retention study (Spady, 1970). Spady (1971) proposed that five variables (academic potential, normative congruence, grade performance, intellectual development, and friendship) contributed to social integration and could be indirectly linked to students' decisions to withdraw from school, considered through the intervening variables of satisfaction and commitment. Spady asserted that formal academic performance was the dominant factor in student attrition.

Tinto's (1975) model of student integration was designed based on the framework of Durkheim's (1951) suicide theory, which pointed to individuals' unsuccessful integration into society as an influential precursor of suicide. Durkheim's suicide model indicated that suicide was not an individual act but an invisible social act tied to social structures and compelled by social causes. Tinto (1975) posited that student attrition is linked to both formal and informal academic experiences as well as social integration. Tinto revised and added to his model over the past three decades since the initial publication of his student integration theory. Tinto (2000) proposed that the degree of success a student has in pursuit of higher education influences the level of commitment a student has to an institution, academic goals, and career goals.

By the end of the 1970s, a significant increase was evident in the number of students who dropped out of college once they had matriculated, and this trend required colleges and universities to focus more on students' performance and successful completion (Bean, 1980). The response from educators in the 1980s was the emergence of enrollment services (Bean, 1980). The hallmark of retention in the 1980s was the development of enrollment management as a practice and a field of study within colleges and universities (Berger et al., 2012). Bean (1980) stressed the importance of background characteristics such as prior academic performance, distance from home, socioeconomic status, and student satisfaction in determining students' departure from the college or university. Bean also found that men and women departed from higher education for different reasons.

Most dropouts leave college because they have trouble working to support their families and attending school at the same time (Dwyer, Hodson, & McCloud, 2013).

Women and men leave college for different reasons, but institutional commitment is the most important factor in explaining dropout for both genders (Bean, 1980). Men separated from higher education based on factors such as not being committed to the institution, having a low GPA, not being satisfied with the role of student, believing that education did not lead to personal development, being unfamiliar with the social and academic rules of the institution, and living with their parents (Bean, 1980). Conversely, women dropped out because they had not performed well in high school, they had no connection with campus life, they did not believe attending college would result in employment, or they were not committed to earning a bachelor's degree (Bean, 1980). In addition, women sometimes departed because they perceived an opportunity to transfer, did not believe that education leads to self-development, found daily life at college repetitive, had no voice in the decision-making, did not feel they were being treated fairly, or did not meet with faculty and staff informally (Bean, 1980).

Astin's (1984) model of student involvement described how students develop during the college experience. The model identified three elements that influenced a student's continued participation in higher education: (a) student demographics and prior experiences; (b) environment, including the experiences a student encounters during college; and (c) student characteristics including knowledge, attitudes, and beliefs post-college. What emerged from this growing awareness of student retention research and discussion was a university and college-wide approach from the admissions office to the specific departments to market and recruit students to equalize student retention and graduation (Hossler, 1990). Enrollment management administrators, departments, and committees worked to facilitate collaboration across academic and student affairs

divisions to encourage institutional recruitment, admissions, and retention (Shelton, 2012).

The 1990s. During the 1990s, the primary focus in retention literature had shifted to underrepresented populations, with an emphasis on retention for students of color and individuals from underprivileged backgrounds (Demetriou & Schmitz-Sciborski, 2011; Smith, 2015). In the 1990s, many researchers concluded institutions should accept differences and promote multiculturalism in college environments to support student retention (Smith, 2015). Furthermore, with all the changing retention dynamics from decade to decade, by the 1990s, Tinto (1993) revised his student integration model.

Tinto's (1993) revised model focused on the recognition of different student populations groups, such as transfer students and adult students with unique experiences who required group-specific interventions and policies such as those that emerged for African American students and students from low-income families. About midway through the decade, colleges and universities shifted their focus to providing quality enrollment services and understanding the first-year students' transition period (Sternberg, 2013). Overall, regardless of the type of institution, private or not-for-profit, colleges and universities nationwide struggled with student retention (Sternberg, 2013).

Therefore, to meet the needs of students in transition, researchers and best practices stressed collaboration across campus departments. Kim, Edens, Iorio, Curtis, and Romero (2015) emphasized the importance of strategic collaboration among recruitment and admissions, academic services, curriculum and instruction, student services, and financial aid, as well as the use of an efficient student monitoring system. Salzer (2012) asserted that a strong relationship exists between student engagement on

campus and academic outcomes and retention. The relationship keeps students stimulated, inspired, and working towards a meaningful purpose (Salzer, 2012). Mamiseishvili (2012) proposed that the interactions a student has with all university members (staff, faculty, administrators, and peers) influence the student's intent to remain at the university. Researchers (Salzer, 2012;Smith, 2015; Tinto, 1993) also stressed the need for effective counseling and advising programs for all students. Tinto (1999) emphasized that academic advising should be an integral part of a student's first-year experience and should promote student development.

2000-present. From the late 1990s into the early 2000s, most universities encouraged their faculty and staff to adopt a holistic approach to undergraduate retention (Tinto, 2000). Researchers in the first decade of the 21st century concurred on the necessity for continued and significant study of the retention issues, and colleges and universities tried to determine how best to decrease attrition through various types of retention programs (Luna & Zienkewicz, 2014; Mayo, 2013; Tinto, 2000, 2013). Researchers also agreed that programs and initiatives designed to support undergraduate retention should address both traditional and nontraditional students' experiences inside and outside of the classroom (Luna et al., 2014).

As the population of students seeking a post-secondary degree shifted, so did the demand for other options outside of the traditional, land-based college experience (Jobe & Lenio, 2014). The inflexible options of a traditional, land-based institution simply will not work for many of today's learners, who must work towards their educational goals while juggling many other responsibilities (Jobe & Lenio, 2014). Tinto (2004) postulated that to improve undergraduate retention, all institutions of higher education must take

responsibility for offering students easily accessible academic, personal, and social support services. Nontraditional students often return to school to retrain for a second career and must work while attending school, thus adding an additional stressor and academic hardship (Shelton, 2012). The overall problem continued to be how to identify and retain students who were likely to withdraw from college during their first year of study (Shelton, 2012).

This study addressed this problem among entering freshmen students in their first year of study. An often-cited retention model from Tinto (1975, 1993) introduced the importance of student integration, both social and academic, in the prediction of student retention. This framework was based on the work of Durkheim (1951), whose suicide theory pointed to an individual's unsuccessful integration into society as an influential precursor of suicide. In a similar manner, Tinto's (1987) integration model suggested that retention is related to the student's ability and effort to become an involved actor in her/his institution.

Munro (2011), whose study found strong effects of integration on persistence and no significant effect from social integration, disputed Tinto's (1975, 1993) postulation of approximate equality between academic and social integration and their effect on dropout. Later researchers (Bean & Metzner, 1985; Metzner & Bean, 1987) also reported insignificant effects of social integration on persistence; these studies did not take into account the beneficial nature of social and academic integration. As the author of the student attrition model, based on the Price/Mueller model of employee turnover behavior, Bean (1980) deviated from Tinto's model and stressed that students' beliefs, which subsequently shaped their attitudes, were the predictors of their persistence and that

moreover, the interactions between the students and different components of the institution affected the students' expectations.

Lundberg (2014) reported a mitigating interaction between students and academic staff, wherein their relationships were a measure of social integration. The researchers also reported that academic staff's concerns for student development and learning contributed to students' academic integration (Lundberg, 2014). While Tinto and Bean remained the early pioneers in the retention research and model concept, the importance of the issues has continued to escalate in the subsequent years (Mamiseishvili, 2012; Price & Tovar, 2014; Tinto, 2012). Thus, the interactions students have on campus with individuals in academic support service centers influence the students' sense of connection to the college or university as well as their ability to navigate the campus culture, meet expectations, and graduate (Price & Tovar; Tinto, 2012). Students are more apt to succeed when a college or university creates a learning and social environment that holds high expectations and actively involves students (Tinto, 2012).

Factors That Impact Student Retention

The literature is multifarious with potential benefits of student participation in community learning programs. These benefits include enhanced involvement (Tinto, 1993), multicultural awareness (Park, 2013; Park, Denson, & Bowman, 2012; Smith, 2015), and heightened academic and social engagement (Brinton et al., 2014; Kahu 2013). As noted by Luna and Zienkewicz (2014) and Tinto (2013), increasing numbers of colleges and universities are focusing on accelerated learning. Jackson, Stebleton, and Lannan (2013) stated that faculty and staff development, as well as student development, is one of the benefits community learning programs bring to the educational environment.

According to Jackson et al. (2013), faculty and students' collaboration can be extended to engagement in campus-wide retention efforts. Following Tinto's (1975) student integration model, the basic elements that define student attrition include characteristics that impact persistence and attrition, programmatic characteristics associated with student dropout, and characteristics related to students' interactions with the program.

Students' relationships with peers, staff, and faculty. Positive relationships between students and faculty are crucial to student retention and success across programs (Maurer, Allen, Gatch, Shankar, & Sturges, 2013; Thompson & Prieto, 2013). Faculty engagement with students is an essential component of retention and students' feelings of engagement (Jeffreys, 2012). Peers in the learning community play a critical role in supporting first-year students' adjustments to university (Mayo, 2013; Park & Kim, 2013). A diminishment in students' family and peer support is directly associated to changes in motivation (Pan & Gauvain, 2012). Students who tend to participate in assignments and make contact with their peers outside of class are more likely to continue their education. Making one or two friends at the university is another powerful predictor of students' intentions to remain in school (Smith, 2015).

The personal characteristics that the faculty bring to the classroom promote success or a failure from some students' perceptions (Deepa & Seth, 2014). Regardless of how knowledgeable an instructor is in his or her field, it is the manner and the way in which the instructor delivers the information to the students that is important to the students' persistence (Deepa & Seth, 2014). One implication of these findings is that an institution of higher education should employ faculty members with the potential and ability to be involved and actively engaged (Deepa & Seth, 2014). Further, frequent

interactions with peers and faculty increase students' satisfaction (Lundberg, 2014), and finding ways to encourage greater student interaction with peers and faculty could be a very productive activity in reducing students' attrition across college and university campuses.

Students' perceptions of not belonging. Strayhorn (2012) referred to a sense of belonging as "students' perceived social support on campus, a feeling of connectedness, or that one is important to others, in consonance with understandings rendered by previous scholars" (p. 572). Strayhorn reported that in higher education, a sense of belonging refers to "a feeling or sensation of connectedness, the experience of mattering, or feeling cared about, accepted, respected, valued by, and important to the group or others on the campus" (p. 435). S. K. Brown and Burdsal (2012) noted the absence of research relating student success to a sense of community. Both on and off-campus, faculty and administrators may be encouraged to connect students to the campus through co-curricular programming, learning communities, campus ministry services, and support of student organizations (Council of Independent Colleges, 2014, para.1). Often, when students transition from high school to college, they are unaware of what awaits them, including the demands of studying and the rigors of their sudden independence, both of which require increased self-discipline. Stebleton, Soria, and Huesman (2014) reported that most college students' educational pathways can be arduous. All of these and other adjustment factors are potential reasons for entering freshmen students to drop out after their first year of matriculation (Stebleton et al., 2014).

Frequently, when students do not have a smooth transition on campus and experience overwhelming anxiety, they struggle to fit in academically and socially, and

the experience leaves them discouraged and less likely to succeed in their first year (Hart, 2012). More important is the student's self-motivation to succeed or willingness to commit to academic rigor and develop the academic skills necessary to persevere (Hart, 2012). Intrinsic motivation (Wolters & Benzon, 2013) is the students' ability to develop plans to complete course work and engage in self-regulated learning. Some issues related to student intrinsic motivation become evident when students enter college without realistic expectations and without knowledge of the skills necessary for success (Rutschow, Cullinan, & Welbeck, 2012). Intrinsic motivation is directly related to student motivation and desire to do well in course work (Cox, 2012). In other words, more interventions may be needed to help students and families identify and develop the skills needed to find academic success.

Strayhorn (2012) speculated that "students' sense of belonging may be reduced, if not compromised, by 'pulls and tugs' back home" (p. 1,494). In their first year of college, when the support and guidance entering freshmen received as high school students is missing, students are left on their own to make decisions. Administrators must work to improve and widen the scope of their support system so that students may obtain full benefits of counseling and peer group interactions (Maramba & Museus, 2013) to help relieve their feelings of isolation and build a sense of connectivity to the institution. An important aspect of persistence is that students develop a sense of belonging and involvement in the life of the university during their first year (Marimba & Museus, 2013). Students who give serious consideration to continuing their education are more likely to be interested and involved in extracurricular activities at the college or university (Marimba & Museus, 2013). Students' perceptions of problems are important

because “there are lessons in our students’ failures and the reasons they opt to drop out of college” (Tabarrok, 2012, p. 1).

Financial concerns. Many students depend heavily on federal and state government subsidies to finance their educations (Raisman, 2013). However, the decline in colleges and universities endowments may seriously impede schools’ ability to attract and retain students based on awarding of merit scholarships to help offset students’ cost of attention. Bok (2013) hypothesized that “the long tradition of support from philanthropy, tuition, and other sources of private funds may cushion the effects of government cutbacks but cannot escape them entirely” (p. 512). Many students lack adequate support from student aid and parents or extended family (Raisman, 2013). Thus, students’ decisions to continue their education from one year to the next are heavily contingent upon their being able to receive enough federal and state grants, academic merit scholarships, parental support, and federal low interest student and parent loans (Raisman, 2013). Raisman (2013) reported that the federal government continues to fund schools that are unable to retain and graduate more than 20% of its students and proposed that consideration should be given to whether or not schools should continue to receive federal funding, especially if a school is not able to graduate at least 50% of its first-year cohort.

Therefore, regardless of the levels of financial aid, students often struggle to pay their tuition bills at the university and leave school with enormous debt that they find difficult to repay (Archuleta, Dale, & Spann, 2013). Often, grants and scholarships are not enough financial aid to cover a student’s entire educational costs (Jobe & Lenio, 2014. The potential emotional and psychological consequences of disappointment in

failing to complete a degree and the financial implications of college dropout are enormously expansive (Archuleta, Dale, & Spann, 2013; Jobe & Lenio, 2014).

The demand for students to earn degrees is at the forefront of the emphasis on accountability in higher education (Kelly & Schneider, 2012; Luna & Zienkewicz, 2014). On the other hand, Tinto (2012) posited that "success in college is measured one course or even one class at a time" (pp. 114-115) for some students. Archuleta et al. (2013) stated that "student loans and credit cards have been the two major types of debt receiving attention in scholarly literature pertaining to college students" (p. 2). Institutions must know the population of students they serve both academically and financially in order to address the affordability problems (Archuleta et al., 2013). College students with high levels of debt encounter negative psychological effects (Archuleta et al., 2013). The U.S. Department of Education (2011) requires that colleges and universities be more transparent with their cost of education and report to stakeholders why costs have gone up and how schools will address their rising costs.

Personal reasons. According to a report from the Educational Policy Institute (2013), one of the main reasons students drop out of college is the conflict between school, work, and family commitments. The report also indicated that the four major reasons that accounted for 84% of the attrition rate from colleges and universities: not caring, poor service and treatment, education not worth the cost, and challenges with course accessibility. The report also indicated that the psychological state of being of the students also contributed to their decisions to leave school.

In fact, research has shown that student characteristics are much more predictive than institutional factors in terms of attrition outcomes (Gramling, 2013; Reason, 2009).

Therefore, despite general differences in student demographics, market share, and business models (which appear to be eroding over time), student characteristics still supersede any institutional differences in terms of impact on retention (Grambling, 2013). Students who have low self-esteem or low self-confidence often do not learn skills and concepts well (Carr, Walker, Carr, & Fulwood, 2012). Often in the classroom and clinical settings, these students question their every thought and action, resulting in poor performance. Students who demonstrate low levels of self-worth often belief that they cannot manage a demanding academic course load (Carr, et al., 2012).

Many students must maintain employment while enrolled in school. These students often find it difficult to support themselves and their families and go to college at the same time. Kantrowitz (2009) reported that nearly three-quarters (71%) of students who dropped out of college stated that work contributed to their decision to leave college. Regan and Dillon (2015) reported that changes in employment status or family circumstances played a significant factor in determining students' withdrawal. Thus, the limited time left to students when they are employed and have family commitments is the reasons students discontinue their course of study(Regan & Dillon, 2015).

Inability to balance all their responsibilities may also lead to a student's leaving school. Strayhorn (2012) reported that the struggle students face in balancing their personal responsibilities and their educational pursuits becomes challenging and may impede students and their persistence in school. O'Keeffe (2013) further noted that "part-time students and those working long hours in paid employment are less likely to see themselves as a student and demonstrate a pattern of less attachment and commitment to aspects of the university" (p. 4). O'Keeffe (2013) argued that students' capacity to persist

in their studies can be disruptive with a period of instability in their lives, while Qingjiu and Maliki (2013) and Regan and Dillon (2015) suggested factors such as relocation for study, separation from family and friends, adjustment to academic life, expectations of faculty, and the desire to make new friends are all sources of stress that impact students' persistence.

Cognitive and noncognitive factors. Moreover, adding to the students' decision to continue their education, the analysis of variability goes far beyond identifying when stage-like changes occur and when they do not (Piaget (1964), 1976). The analysis of variabilty forms the foundation for analyzing processes of learning and development in general. Piaget (1964, 1976) argued that the stages of cognitive development characterize specific logical structures that shape the mind, including concrete and formal operations in adolescents.

Morra, Gobbo, Marini, and Sheese (2012) postulated that working memory is the subset of long-term memory that is in the focus of attention at a given moment; thus, humans adapt their skill level to the needs of the situation instead of being stuck at one level (Morra et.al., 2012). People never function at a single developmental level; instead, they vary the levels of their actions across a broad range of levels depending on context, bodily state, goals, and other factors (Morra et al.).

The theory associated with cognitive load holds that the more activities, pressure, and information added to an individual's short-term memory, the less capacity the individual has for processing and retaining the information (Morra, 2000). Thus, students may experience a feeling of being overwhelmed when they are overloaded with course work and the responsibilities of everyday survival. Stevens, Loudon, Yow, Bowden, and

Humphrey (2012) mentioned that stress is a factor that taxes and places demands on the human body. Many students are hesitant to share their feelings of being overwhelmed, stressed out, and discouraged with their professors. (Stevens et al., 2012) Therefore, often by the time key assignments are due, the students may already be experiencing a meltdown (Sutton & Gannon-Cook, 2013), and by the time mid-term and other measuring alert warnings are sent to the advisors and administration, the student often is already in jeopardy of failing the course.

Kaplan, Katz, and Flum (2012) noted that educators may face a challenge when different students in the same classroom are motivated by different processes. The facilitators may need to possess the capability of motivating and teaching all students (Kaplan et al., 2012). Today, students not only need to process and retain the course information but also learn how to use current technology (e.g., Blackboard) in order to navigate their courses effectively. These tasks, along with the processes related to higher-order thinking, such as problem-solving, knowledge transfer, and the complexities of learning, may lead to a multiplier effect that can intensify the levels of challenge and stress among students (Kaplan et al., 2012).

For example, retention of minority and ethnic groups of nursing students is a growing concern of many researchers. Swan (2012) conducted a quantitative, correlational study of student engagement among racial and ethnic minority students. The study found that academic performance may also be associated with academic preparation among different demographics of nursing students (Swan, 2012).

Futher, varying studies exist regarding how much information is too much, before an individual becomes overwhelmed. According to Farrington et al. (2012), noncognitive

factors marked a huge departure when researchers first discussed them as integral to college success against the backdrop of traditional measures of college readiness (i.e., high school GPA, standardized test scores, and high school rank). Farrington et al. (2012) mentioned that students who take a more challenging set of rigorous high school classes have more potential to complete a degree. Very few of the University's entering freshmen qualify for the University's top scholarships; most students receive the mid- to low-level scholarships (Dean of Admission, personal communication, December 15, 2013).

Today, students' knowledge base is still being assessed by their SAT or ACT scores, which were created in the 1930s and which have little predictive value to the students' graduation (Hauptman, 2011). Regardless of the SAT and ACT measurement that most colleges and universities use to determine students' academic abilities and potential to succeed (Hauptman, 2011; Luna & Zienkewicz, 2014), not-for-profit colleges and universities might consider the procedures of more open admission practices followed by for-profit institution. The for-profit schools are now the fastest growing sector in U.S. higher education (Luna & Zienkewicz, 2014).

Inadequate enrollment in student support services. Litzler and Young (2012) concluded that students' college experiences unfold in many different ways and that their experiences in and out of the classroom include the sense of community in their degree major, the quality of teaching and curriculum, and interaction with peers and professors (p. 322). The core concern of the University must be putting the student at the heart of every service available on the campus (Litzer & Young, 2012). While all students at the University have access to tutoring services and Academic Skill Enhancement Workshops through the Academic Reinforcement Center, as well as the Writing Center and Math

Center, only 52% of the fall 2013 freshmen reported they knew about the Academic Reinforcement Center, and 41% knew about the Math Center (Dean of AcademicAdvisement, personal communication, October 23, 2013).

In addition, the University admits over 250 students with low high school and college GPAs into the Plan for Academic Success (PAS) Program, which has only one advisor, limiting the advisor's ability to work with the students. According to the Director of the Higher Education Opportunity Program (HEOP), apart from the PAS advisor and the special program coordinator, all other advisors in the Advisement Center are generalists. Although this arrangement ensures the students are assigned to a counselor, the disadvantage is the wait time between the students' seeing an advisor and actually matriculating, a delay which weakens the relationship. Ideally, when an at-risk student receives advising, the advisement and thus the advisor are important contributors in making the student feel that the institution is interested in the success and wellbeing of the individual (O'Keeffe, 2013).

Consequently, it is important for students to be introduced to student services in ways that are relevant, appropriate, and affordable. Most entering freshmen need a one-on-one approach to help them transition smoothly into the college environment. It will take time for them to master the process of navigating the campus, making new friends, applying for financial aid, selecting the correct courses, looking for employment, and adopting the lifestyle of a responsible young adult (Dean of Student Success, personal communication, December 15, 2013).

The retention efforts to manage student enrollments are three to five times more cost effective than recruitment efforts (Rosenberg & Czepiel, 1984; Tinto, 1975).

Educators must understand how participants' perceptions and needs drive their decisions to make a commitment to themselves and the institution (Rosenberg & Czepiel, 1984). The consequences of student attrition are twofold; the student's life will be impacted by not furthering their education, and the institution loses other revenue besides tuition, such as room and board revenue of the students who resided in the dormotories (NCES, 2014).

Changing Demographics of College and University Students

Colleges and universities are under significant pressure from federal and state agencies to document student learning outcomes and to improve students' completion rates (Tinto, 2012). Parents wish to be assured that universities and colleges have plans in place to help their student graduate. With today's older (nontraditional) students returning to school, colleges and universities face even greater challenges in an already complex teaching situation (Lee, Poch, Shaw, & Williams, 2012; Smith, 2015; Xuereb, 2014).

Colleges and universities must face many challenges related to demography, particularly because of the limited prior research on changing demographics that embrace and encompass students' needs (Smith, 2015). Aud et al. (2013) reported that race and ethnicity is also an area wherein the student types differ between for-profit and nonprofit institutions. In for-profit institutions that awarded post baccalaureate degrees in 2011, White students made up 49% of the population, compared to public institutions and private nonprofit institutions where 72% and 69% of the student population, respectively, were White (Aud et al., 2013).

Furthermore, most research has shown that different students learn differently (Johnson & Nussbaum, 2012). So if a distinction could be made between traditional students and nontraditional students, possibly different teaching strategies could be

employed to accommodate the two groups effectively (Johnson & Nussbaum, 2012). However, if colleges and universities continue to be reactive in their approaches to students of various socioeconomic backgrounds, as well as ethnic minority students who enter college, and continue to focus attention on the specific cultural competencies commonly associated with the dominant cultures, the attrition rate will continue to be insurmountable across colleges' and universities' campuses (Johbnson & Nussbaum, 2012).

Traditional and Nontraditional Students

One tangential topic that is relevant to the general retention discussions focused on whether students were considered to be traditional or nontraditional students; traditional students were frequently considered to be those less than 24 years of age, and nontraditional students were frequently considered to be those 24 years of age or older (Johnson & Kestler, 2013; Merriam, Caffarella, & Baumgartner, 2007). However, this earlier classification may not still be accurate since age may not accurately identify whether students are traditional or nontraditional (IES, 2014, para. 1); instead, life-changing events may more appropriately define students of different ages. Hinsliff-Smith, Gates, and Leducg (2012) mentioned that nontraditional students are those who begin college after the age of 21. While some students might possess the characteristics of a traditional student all of their lives, others may exhibit nontraditional characteristics early in life (Gates & Leducg, 2012).

Nonetheless, scholars express different opinions. Merriam et al. (2007) posited that "adult educators are moving from description to theory building," (p. 438). Some scholars believe that age is not the driving variable that solely categorizes a student as

traditional or nontraditional; rather, the determining factor is whether students have had life experiences that moved them from being a traditional student to a nontraditional student (Johnson & Kestler, 2013). According to NCES (2014), "age acts as a surrogate variable that captures a large, heterogeneous population of adult students who often have family and work responsibilities as well as other life circumstances that can interfere with successful completion of educational objectives" (p. 1).

The conclusions of previous researchers implied that making a distinction between the two groups should be done on an individual basis, especially because many students clearly have a blended combination of traditional and nontraditional attributes (Johnson & Kestler, 2013). Johnson and Kestler (2013) posited, "Traditional students continue on toward obtaining a college education following high school graduation" (p. 2), as opposed to going to work or something else. Nontraditional students have a different perception of education, its value, what is and is not important, and the general approach of what to learn and how to learn it (Jeffreys, 2012). Traditional students are most focused on getting high grades so they can take the next class and/or be recognized as having earned high grades, while nontraditional students, although they desire to obtain high grades, are more concerned with what they can do with the knowledge they gain from a class (Johnson & Kestler, 2013). Further, life-changing events—and not age—may also differentiate traditional students from nontraditional students. Knowles (1990) posited that older students want to know why they must learn things. Nontraditional students in higher education is an increasing educational demographic (Jeffreys, 2012).

Therefore, if universities and colleges continue to employ current practices that derived from traditional students' needs to attempt to meet nontraditional students' needs, the probability of nontraditional students' retention increasing will be very unlikely (Jeffreys, 2012). Merriam, Caffarella, and Baumgartner (2012) stated that an adult learner can be anyone from a recent high school graduate to a grandmother. An adult learner is someone who needs a flexible program that assists them in balancing life and educational goals due to career or family responsibilities Merriam et al., 2012). Since few programs cater to adult learners, adult learners usually have to tailor their class schedule around their employment (Snyder, Tate, & Winters, 2010).

The literature review included an overview of retention in higher education; a historical evolution of student's retention in higher education; a historical background of retention models; factors that impact student retention from the literature; students' relationship with peers, staff, and faculty; students' perceptions of not belonging; students' financial concerns; students' personal reasons, the inadequate enrollment student support services; the changing demographics of college and university students; and traditional and nontraditional students—all topics that contribute to the significance of this research. Regardless of the students' rationale for leaving, their satisfaction is critical in improving their sense of belonging and retention (Smith, 2015). Specifically, satisfaction with faculty, peers, and college/staff is positively predictive of students' sense of belonging when controlling for additional retention factors. A blended academic and social integration structure is an important component of first-year students' transition to college (Smith, 2015). With the encouragement of faculty and student

interactions, the existence of a resourceful and forthcoming student support center, and a focus on change, retention can be improved among entering freshmen students.

Implications

For decades, the retention rate for freshmen students has been at the forefront of discussions and research studies (Smith, 2015). Many scholars have noted the importance of academic and social integration in promoting a successful transition and retention of entering freshmen students. Smith (2015) mentioned student integration into the campus as a key factor in challenging, supporting, and retaining students in their successful transition to college. Thus, providing students with a holistic sense of belonging to the institution of their choice could contribute to helping them make a smooth transition and achieve their educational goals (Smith, 2015). Orehovec (2015) noted that a student who continues at an institution for four years will generate the same income as four new students who depart after one year. Therefore, institutions will benefit from finding ways to retain enrolled students.

I will present the findings that emerged from this study to the study site community through a prepared white paper. With an intended audience of the faculty, staff, and administration, the anticipated white paper will be an informative document offering a summation of the students' perceptions regarding the causes and implications of student attrition. Provided as a professional development opportunity, the white paper will advocate for the students by identifying, based upon the data collected during the study, their recommendations for actions needed to reduce the attrition of entering freshmen students, not only in the Promise Program but across the university.

Understanding the students' reasons for withdrawing and formulating successful strategies to retain the students offers several implications. First, knowledge of the students' reasons for withdrawing from the University could serve as a chance for the institution's community to help maintain a socially and academically blended environment that integrates students' needs. According to the *U.S. News & World Report*'s "Freshman Retention Rate: National Universities" (2016), one of every three freshmen students do not return for their sophomore year. Second, findings from this study may provide professional development opportunities. The white paper will provide content including recommended actions to better support students for successful completion of their degree programs. As a result, the implications for social change from this study could support a paradigm change within the study site and possibly result in future changes to institutional policy.

Summary

Focused on the central phenomenon of entering freshmen students' retention in the Promise Program, the aim of this qualitative case study was to ascertain the causes and implications of some students' withdrawal from college in their first year. Another goal was to identify strategies that could increase retention rates. The framework of Tinto's model integration related to this study's approach and key research questions, as well as to the instrument development and data analysis, because it suggested the need to gather information from the students through interview questions that related to Tinto's social integration. A case study was appropriate (Merriam, 2009) because that research design provides a structure to examine the "phenomenon within its real-life context" (p. 40).

A review of related literature demonstrated the correlation between the expanding accessibility to higher education and entering freshmen students' retention. The following section will address the research design for this study, the methodological approach as it relates to the proposal stage, and the criteria for selecting and gaining access to the participants. Finally, Section 2 will present the data collection and data analysis processes.

Section 2: The Methodology

Introduction

The purpose of this study was to examine the reasons why entering students who were enrolled in the Promise Program at a not-for-profit university in the southeastern region of the United States withdrew from the university during their first year of studies. To achieve this goal, I interviewed students about their experiences in the Promise Program and their reasons for withdrawing from the university within their first year. Section 2 of this study provides a description of the research methodology and an analysis of the data.

Qualitative Research Design and Approach

For this study, I used a case study design with semistructured interviews to determine the participants' reasons for withdrawing from the local environment. Creswell (2007, 2009, 2012) acknowledged that when researchers seek to explore and describe the essence or meanings of participants' experiences, a qualitative approach is appropriate. Yin (2009) explained that *how* and *why* questions are answered using case studies because such questions "deal with operational links needing to be traced over time, rather than simple occurrences or incidents" (p. 9). Yin (2009) noted that the objective of case studies is to generalize the theories. According to Creswell (2012), a case study design is appropriate when the boundaries between the phenomenon and the context evidence are unclear. The following research questions guided this study, adhering to Creswell's (2012) recommendations:

1. What do the participants say causes entering freshmen students in the Promise Program to withdraw from the university during their first year of enrollment?

2. What do the participants say the university can do to improve its educational and support services that it provides its students?
3. What do the participants say are the barriers that entering freshmen students experience that lead to their withdrawal from their respective programs?
4. What changes do the participants say the university can make to reduce entering freshmen attrition that could add to the university's existing practices, which could be adopted by other higher education institutions?

To understand the entering freshmen's experiences, I interviewed freshmen students who had been enrolled in the Promise Program and withdrew from the institution during the 2015-2016 or 2016-2017 academic year. Understanding of a qualitative case study requires experiencing the activity of the case as it occurs in its context and its particular situation (Stake, 2005). Use of the case study design allowed me to make meaning of the functions and relationships among data to better understand the students' reasons for withdrawing. Researchers had addressed the experiences of entering first-year students and their perceptions (Astin, 1975; Boston, Ice, & Gibson, 2010; Caroni, 2011; Gury, 2011; Sutton & Gannon-Cook, 2013; Tinto, 1975, 1982, 1988, 1993, 2001, 2012; Willcoxson, Cotter, & Joy, 2011). This study added to the body of research on the problem of freshmen attrition at the study site.

How the Research Design Derived Logically from the Problem and Research Questions

Lodico, Spaulding, and Vogetle (2010) posited that qualitative research "focuses on giving voice to the feelings and perceptions of the participants under study" (p. 264). In qualitative inquiry, rather than focusing on outcomes or products, the researcher is

more concerned about the process. Creswell (2012) posited that in qualitative research, the researcher seeks to collect information on a single "concept—a central phenomenon" (p. 128). Bogdan and Biklen (2007) explained that "qualitative researchers are concerned with what are called participant perspectives" (p. 7), and Merriam (2009) posited that a case study is richly descriptive and provides readers with a vicarious experience of having been there. According to Yin (2009), *how* and *why* research questions are characteristic of case studies, which address the proposed relationships between various mechanisms of theory (Yin, 2009).

To better understand the entering first-year students' experiences, I used a qualitative case study design to gather the data from the entering first-year students who withdrew from the university in their first year of study. The qualitative exploratory case study design for this study derived logically from the problem and research questions. Face-to-face, one-on-one interviews were the most appropriate method for data collection to make meaning out of the participants' experiences (see Silverman, 2016). According to Stake (1978), case studies are well-suited for extensive and in-depth descriptions of complex social phenomena. The participants are pivotal in qualitative studies (Creswell, 2012); they offer their perspectives through their own language and stories and enable researchers to improve understanding of the different characteristics of the study's central phenomenon.

This study focused on the unique perceptions of the entering students who decided to leave the university during their first year of study. A qualitative, exploratory case study design provided the research framework to make meaning of the former students' experiences and the themes that emerged from the data analysis. It was

necessary and beneficial to the university's growth and sustainability to permit this study with the entering first-year students who were in the Promise Program and left the University (Director of Promise Program, Personal communication, January 21, 2014). This study could aid in minimizing the students' attrition and may be used to address similar problems beyond the study site.

The qualitative exploratory case study design provided the framework to make meaning of the first-year students' experiences that resulted in their decisions to leave the University. Merriam (2009) described four key characteristics of qualitative research. First, a focus on how people interpret and make sense of their experiences is pivotal (Merriam 2009). Qualitative researchers emphasize the natural setting as the direct source of data rather than the process of the researcher's drawing conclusions about the data (Merriam, 2009). Merriam posited that the "key word is understanding" (p. 14). The meaning is essential; therefore, the researcher is inquisitive about the "participants' perspective" (Merriam, 2009, p. 7), and the focus is to capture the individuals' perspectives as accurately as possible, including the assumptions the individuals make about their lives and what they may have taken for granted. The "understanding is an end in itself" (Merriam, 2009, p. 14). Qualitative researchers make no attempt to predict the future; rather, they attempt only to understand the nature of a phenomenon in its present setting. I anticipated that the findings would provide relevant and timely data to stakeholders who have an interest in the university.

The second characteristic of qualitative research is that it produces descriptive data that take the shape of words or pictures, as opposed to numbers, to express what the researcher has learned about a phenomenon. The descriptive data analysis resulted in

themes that presented a complex picture based on the participants' experiences. Third, Merriam (2009) indicated that another unique aspect of qualitative research is that the researcher is the primary instrument for data collection and analysis. Qualitative researchers should collect data in a thorough and methodical process aimed to capture the phenomenon "rather than simply the outcome or product" (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007, p. 6). Further, researchers must monitor their role to minimize the risk that they construct understanding and shape the data from their own perspective. In accordance with Merriam (2009), Bogdan and Biklen (2007) noted that qualitative researchers must aim to "objectively study the subjective states of their subjects" (p. 37); therefore, researchers must consider several methods for eliminating plausible biases.

The final step in the qualitative process is an inductive approach, which allows the theory to develop from the bottom up, grounding the theory in the data (Merriam, 2009). The intent of a qualitative case study is not to prove or disapprove hypotheses formulated before starting the study. Lodico et al. (2010) noted that a case study is an appropriate method to "gain insight into an in-depth understanding of an individual, group, or situation" (p. 269). A qualitative case study was the preferred research methodology for the current study because the purpose was to describe and understand the participants' perspectives regarding the causes and implications of the central phenomenon of entering first-year students' attrition.

The intent of qualitative study is to provide a holistic account from the participants' perspectives to illustrate the case, resulting in a "description of the phenomenon under study" (Merriam, 2009, p. 43). Case study methodology has been "underestimated" as it has the potential to lend itself to aid in the "generating and testing

of hypotheses" (Merriam, 2009, p. 53). The current case study contributed knowledge to the study of entering first-year students' withdrawal from college. Lodico et al. (2010) posited that a case study "focuses on individuals within a small group and documents the individuals' experiences in a specific setting" (p. 15). Utilizing a case study and conducting interviews provided the structure to collect data from the former first-year students who were in the Promise Program. The interview protocol (Appendix E) focused on questions designed to gain the participants' understanding, perceptions, and explanation of the causes that led them to withdraw from the university.

An ethnographic study design was inappropriate for this study because the objective of this study was not to investigate how the larger society influences the interactions in a cultural group (see Lodico et al., 2010). Because the goal of this study was not to develop a theory based on the data, I ruled out grounded theory as an option for this study. Finally, the phenomenological approach was not an option for this study because the goal was not to attempt to capture the human experience based on a phenomenon (see Lodico et al., 2010). I anticipated collecting data by interviewing the entering first-year students to obtain rich, thick holistic and descriptive data based on their perceptions of the phenomenon; therefore, a quantitative approach was not appropriate.

Qualitative Research Design

According to Yin (1981), a case study is a suitable systematic research design that can include qualitative or quantative data. Yin asserted that evidence from the case study can be achieved from fieldwork, observations, verbal reports, or archival reports. An explanatory case study was a justifiable research design for this study; the design

facilitated the exploration of the phenomenon within its context in an attempt to learn from the participants what factors contributed to their decisions to leave the university within their first year of study. Yin proposed that "a case study represents a research strategy to be likened to an experiment, a history, or a simulation, which may be considered alternative research strategies" (p. 59).

In comparison, Creswell (2012) recommended data sources such as interviews, direct observations, focus groups, and archival records (e.g., students' course evaluations). The use of different data sources ensures that researchers do not sutdy the phenomenon from only one perspective (Yin, 2009) but rather an array of perspectives, which allows for a more holistic and multifaceted exploration of the factors and contexts that contribute to the phenomenon. In this way, each data source represents a perspective from one participant and the data provide a more holistic understanding of the phenomenon (Yin 1984, 2009). Different participants' data from the interviews and other sources, triangulation of data (the combination of methodologies in the study with the same phenomenon), or cross-verification contributes to the overall validity of the study (Jonsen & Jehn, 2009). According to Yin (2009), interviews are guided conversations that are usually one of most important sources of case study evidence.

Additional support for the selection of a case study came from Creswell (2013), Duff (2014), Stake (1995), Yazan (2015), and Yin (1984, 2009, 2013). Yazan (2015) noted that a researcher can employ a case study as an appropriate strategy to explore and understand an event involving one or more individuals. According to Yin (1984), building explanations is another technique important to case studies attempt that can clarify the situation. According to Yin (2009), three strategies may improve construct

validity: maintaining a chain of evidence, using multiple sources of evidence, and having key informants review the case study report. Over a period of time, researchers can collect detailed information using a variety of data collection procedures (Stake, 1978, 1995).

"A case study is bounded by time and activity" (Creswell, 2011, p. 13) and may provide the framework to gain insight into students' perceptions. It may be possible to view case study analysis as achieving a rigorous level (Yin, 1982, 1984) even though statistical techniques are not applied. Lodico et al. (2010) noted that "what you may ask" or "whether there is a limit to the number of people involved you could be interviewed" (p. 269) is relevant because for the phenomenon to be bounded, it must have an end. According to Yin (1981), a case study is easier to read when "it is built on a clear and conceptual framework" (p. 64). A case study is used to collect direct evidence (Yin, 2009). The current study focused on first-year students who entered the university and were part of the Promise Program and subsequently withdrew from the university. Understanding the reasons students offered for withdrawing during their first year of study was the main focus of this study.

Research Designs and Their Foci

Finding the appropriate research design for a problem is necessary. This section provides a brief overview of two of the most basic type of research designs, quantitative and qualitative, and a rationale for the selection of an explanatory case study design. The focus of quantitative research is to quantify how much or how many. Its philosophical roots are positivism, logical empiricism, and realism. The goal of quantitative research investigation centers on prediction, control, description, confirmation, and hypothesis

testing. The sample is normally large, random, and representative, and the data collection devices are inanimate instruments (scale, tests, surveys, questionnaires, and computers). Its primary mode of analysis is deductive, statistical, and its findings are precise and numerical (Merriam, 2009). At the conclusion of any quantitative study, Lodico et al. (2010) stated, "there will be data in the form of numbers" (p. 242), and the researcher will be able to make sense of the data by summarizing it in the form of descriptive data, which may consist of bar graphs, histograms, measurements of central tendency and variability, and measurements of relationships.

In contrast to quantitative research, Merriam (2009) stated, "Qualitative research is a type of research that encompasses a number of philosophical orientations and approaches" (p. 19). The focus of qualitative research is the essence of a phenomenon, and its philosophical roots stem from phenomenology, symbolic interactionism, and constructivism. The goal of qualitative investigations is to gain an understanding of the participants' perspectives, while collecting descriptive and meaningful data to add voice to the participants' narratives. The design characteristics are flexible, evolving, and emergent; the sample size is small, and sample selection is nonrandom and purposeful.

The researcher is the primary instrument, and the data collection ranges from observations, interviews, and questionnaires. According to (2013), qualitative researchers aim to achieve analytical generalization, as opposed to the statistical generalization that is the goal in quantative studies. Qualitative inquiry's prime mode of analysis is inductive with use of a constant comparative method. Thus, since the aim of this study was to collect holistic descriptive meaning and gain an in-depth understanding of the entering freshmen students' experiences, a quantitative research design would not support the

intention of this study. However, a qualitative case study supported the study in describing and understanding the participants' perceptions of the causes and implications of the central phenomenon of entering freshmen students who withdrew from the University.

In addition to case study, theorists identified three other commonly used qualitative research designs: ethnography, phenomenology, and grounded theory (Lodico et al., 2010). Ethnography is a science used to write about a tribe or, more conventionally, a cultural group (Lodico et al., 2010). While ethnography is similar to a case study in that it provides rich narratives or a richly detailed description, its primary focus is discovering the essence of a community or culture and its unique situation to gain an understanding and "paint a portrait" (Lodico et al., 2010, p. 267). Ethnographic research is normally lengthy, and typically its findings are presented in a book format, as opposed to a case study, which results in a summative report.

In the second type of qualitative research, phenomenology, researchers focus on the participants' interpretations of their experiences and attempt to understand the meaning of the participants' perspectives by recognizing the many different ways to interpret the same experience and collect extensive amounts of data over time from the participants. This approach requires the researchers to observe and play a role in the process. Much of the researcher's role during the data collection phase involves spending time in "silent reflection" (Lodico et al., 2010, p. 271). The reflection time allows the researcher to focus on what constructs the reality of the participants. Therefore, this design objective was not appropriate to "capture the 'essence' of the human experience" (Lodico et al., 2010, p. 16) in this study.

The third approach, grounded theory design, allows the researcher to build a hypothesis grounded in the data. The design involves collecting data using multiple techniques over a longer period of time in order to construct a theory. Lodico et al. (2010) noted that "grounded theories are practical theories that are designed to be used in the context of the field studied, as well as other similar settings" (p. 271). The data analysis in grounded theory design compares components of the data to determine similarities and differences. Grounded theory differs from case study design in that grounded theory focuses on findings that can be generalized to other settings, and that feature was not appropriate for this study (Lodico et al., 2010). Furthermore, my decision not to employ grounded theory aligned with Merriam's (2009) assertion that grounded theory is beneficial in focusing on the evolution of a process, and that focus was not the goal of this study.

The focus of this study was a bounded system at a single university, a setting appropriate to a case study. The purpose of this research was to understand the participating students' perceptions of the causes, implications, and strategies needed to decrease entering freshmen students' attrition rate, not to primarily present the student's perceived experiences with the phenomenon. This qualitative approach was "interpretive" (Merriam, 2009, p. 22) in nature and focused on investigating and understanding individuals' experience within a specific setting (Lodico et al., 2010). The population for this study were entering freshmen students in the Promise Program who had decided to leave the University and consequently represent a bounded system. A case study can aid in creating and validating theories but is not limited to these activities (Merriam, 2009).

Selecting participants who have lived the experience warrants or necessitates a navigation system; therefore, "a logical plan of getting from here to there" (Merriam, 2009, p. 55) is necessary. Merriam (2009) noted that "once the general problem has been identified, the task becomes to select the unit of analysis, the sample" (p. 76). Further, the researcher must choose what, when, where, and whom to interview, using one of two basic sampling techniques for qualitative research.

Participants

According to Merriam et al.'s (2012) research, "generalization in a statistical sense is not necessary or even justifiable in qualitative research" (p. 76), and to understand the phenomenon, the qualitative researcher purposefully or intentionally selects individuals and sites. Thus, random sampling was not an appropriate method for this study. The goal of this study was to ascertain what the participants identified as the causes and implications of seven entering freshmen students' withdrawal from the University in their first year.

Criteria and Justification for Selecting the Participants

According to Creswell (2012), case study methods are appropriate to studies bounded by time and activity, and Merriam (2009) noted that "a case study is an in-depth description and analysis of a bounded system" (p. 40). Entering freshmen students in the Promise Program represented a system bounded by events and circumstances. According to Stake (2005), a case is bounded because of its situation, complexity, time, and activity, and consequently, a researcher's attention is drawn to the case as an object, rather than a process. Merriam (2009) further stated that in qualitative research, "the crucial factor is

not the number of respondents but the potential of each person to contribute to the development of insight and understanding of the phenomenon" (p. 104).

This study consisted of interviews with seven entering freshmen students who were in the Promise Program. The criteria for selecting the participants for the case study was a convenient purposeful sampling of volunteer entering freshmen who had never attended another college or university and who had earned at least a high school diploma or its equivalent. The participants entered the institution during the spring or fall semesters of 2016, were in the Promise Program, and withdrew from the University during the spring or fall semester of 2016.

The initial sampling of the spring 2016 semester students did not yield the required numbers of participants. Therefore, I submitted a request to change procedures to the Institutional Review Board (IRB) to incorporate participants from fall 2016 semester, due to lack of response from the spring 2016 students. Two levels of sampling are not unusual in qualitative case studies, and Merriam (2012) mentioned that researchers have a choice of selecting from one to several frequently used sampling strategies. In other words, to gauge the real number of participants necessary for the study depends on the point of saturation (Guba, as cited in Merriam, 2009). "Redundancy" (Merriam, 2009, p. 80) is the primary criteria for determining saturation.

In qualitative research, researchers seek individuals who can best help provide information about the central phenomenon (Merriam, 2009). Therefore, a purposeful sampling that would not allow generalization of the findings justified and supported this research design. The goal of the purposeful sampling was to make better meaning and understanding about the phenomenon. This study provides further understanding of the

experiences of the participants as freshmen students who were in the Promise Program and then withdrew from the University.

Therefore, selecting the participants incorporated the objective of making the research holistic and descriptive about why entering freshmen students were prone to withdraw from college within their first year of study. The number of participants was balanced with the depth of inquiry; therefore, the fewer the participants, the deeper the research became by permitting each participant adequate time to share his or her perceptions fully(Merriam, 2009). In purposeful sampling, according to Merriam (2009), the size of the sample should be guided by the amount of "informational" (p. 80) consideration; thus, the number of participants was justified by the depth of inquiry and saturation of data. Of the seven participants, four were female and three were male. Three females were African American, and one was Asian American. Of the males, two were African American, and one was Hispanic American. During their freshmen year, none of the participants lived on campus. Six of the participants resided in their parents' households, and one participant maintained a home with her daughter.

Gaining Access to the Participants

To gain access to the participants, I secured IRB 01-06-17-0305612 approval from Walden University. However, prior to obtaining Walden's approval, I contacted the study site to obtain a Letter of Cooperation that provided some assurance that I would gain approval to conduct my study. Once Walden University's IRB granted approval, I submitted a request to conduct the research at the University (Appendix B). Merriam et al. (2012) explained that gaining access to the site or individuals in qualitative research

involves obtaining permissions at different levels, such as the organization, the site, the individuals, and campus institutional review boards.

At the study site, I contacted the University Office of Sponsored Research to inquire about the IRB process. A letter to the Vice President of Academic Affairs informed him of my intentions and explained that this study was the required capstone project for my doctoral study. I also inquired about how to obtain permission to conduct my research, and I asked for the site's protocol for gaining access to the potential participants' contact information.

Once I received the approval to conduct research at the study site, I established communication with the Director of the Promise Program to obtain his endorsement for the project. Each student in the program received an invitation via e-mail to participate in the study (Appendix C). I contacted those who responded to the e-mailed invitation to determine if the potential participant met the four criteria for the study (Appendix F). The homogeneous sample of participants from the population of entering freshmen in the Promise Program met the following criteria: they had never attended another college or university, earned at least a high school diploma or its equivalent, entered the University in spring or fall 2016 and were in the Promise Program, and withdrew from the University during their first year of enrollment.

Once the participants accepted the invitation to participate, they received via e-mail an Informed Consent Form (Appendix D). They brought the signed Inform Consent Form with them to the interview. The participants and I scheduled the date and time of the interviews based on the participants' availability. Several of the interviews had to be scheduled after the participants got off work. While the participants' demographic

information was easily attainable through the Univeristy's record-keeping system, gaining access to the participants who had left the University was more challenging and labor intensive. Many of the students no longer had access to retrieve their University e-mail, due to outstanding balances on their accounts, and most of the student seldom read their own personal e-mails.

Establishing a Working Relationship Between the Researcher and Participants

At the study site, I used several strategies to establish a positive researcher-participant relationship. First, the participants received an introductory e-mail that explained the purpose of the study, their role within the study, that participation was voluntary, and what the potential benefits could be. I emphasized to the students that it was important that they feel comfortable enough to be candid in their responses during the interviews. Participants were selected as they contacted me and met the criteria. The recruitment process was lengthy and extended over a six-week period. Therefore, only seven students were selected for the study.

Once the former students had agreed to participate in the study, I followed-up with a phone conversation to further explain the study and to start to build a rapport with the individual. I explained to the participants that their names would be kept out of the study, because I would assign a number to represent their identity. Thus, all names are withheld from the report. Finally, the participants learned that I, too, was being held accountable by both my learning institution and the study site where they had attended school and were part of the Promise Program and that all of the collected data would be used strictly for the purpose of constructing the study.

According to Bogdan and Biklen (2007), gaining acceptance at the study site is important: “It involves laying the groundwork for good rapport with those with whom you will be spending time, so they will accept you and what you are doing” (p. 84). Merriam (2009) noted that the researcher is the primary instrument of “data collection and analysis” (p. 52). Thus, trying to establish a relationship with participants in this study was crucial and as important as entering the study with no biases to ensure the transcription and analysis of the data derived solely from the participants’ perspectives of their experience and not from my biases.

Participants’ Protection and Consent

I took several measures to protect the participants from harm. Once the IRB at Walden University and the study site approved the study, participants received an informed consent form before scheduling their interview. The informed consent form provided the content for participant to understand the study before deciding whether to take part in the study and come to the interview. With the overarching goal of protecting the participants in this study, I included the following components in an e-mail communication: a detailed explanation of what would be expected of participants in terms of time commitment, an overview of the voluntary nature of the study including the risk of being in the study, an explanation of how their privacy would be protected by assigning each participant a number so no names or other identifying details would be disclosed, and information on how they could contact me prior to and during the study.

Another protection for the participants (Merriam, 2009) included a field test that I conducted prior to the interviews. For the field test, I asked the Associate Dean of the School of Business, the Director of Promise Program, and the Associate Director of

Enrollment Services to review the interview questions for appropriateness and clarity and to ensure that the interview questions aligned with the research questions. In addition to strengthening the questions, the field test added credibility to the study.

To further ensure credibility, I recorded the data collection with a digital recording device and completed the transcription of all interviews in the privacy of my home. I stored all data on my personal password-protected computer, so that no other person had access to the confidential material. Finally, further ethical protection included my dedication to an honest presentation of all data. No excessive demands were placed on the participants. I contacted the participants who met the criteria for this study via their university and personal e-mail addresses. Since the potential participants had already left the University, I used both e-mail addresses to contact the former students, because in some instances, participants no longer accessed the university e-mail system.

Data Collection

Creswell (2009) noted that data are ordinary pieces of information that are "concrete and measurable" (p. 85) or information that is difficult to measure, such as feelings. Data sources include but are not limited to interviews, direct observations, focus groups, and archival records from students' course evaluations (Creswell, 2013). Using an array of data sources ensures that a phenomenon can be studied from more than one perspective, which allows a more holistic and multi-faceted exploration that may contribute to understanding of the phenomenon (Creswell, 2012). Each datum source is a piece of the puzzle that is the phenomenon, and each source contributes to a complete picture of the understanding of the phenomenon (Creswell, 2012). The triangulation of data from different sources supported the overall validity of this study (Jonsen & Jehn,

2009). Sources of data included the interview with each participant, the follow-up phone interview with each participant, and the field notes I took during and after each interview.

My intention in this study was to identify the meanings of the participants' perceptions of the causes and implications that caused them, as entering freshmen students, to withdraw from the University. Since qualitative data, as noted by Creswell (2009), "consist of direct quotations from people" (p. 85) about their lived experiences and perceptions, the instrument to collect data in this study contained semi-structured open-ended questions (Appendix E) that allowed for the participants to share their experienced perceptions without being influenced by the researcher's views or by earlier research findings (Creswell, 2012, 2014). The most common way to interview—and the best way for one person to collect information from another—is "person-to-person" (Creswell, 2009, p. 89). Thus, an interview was the preferred instrument for this study, based on the one-on-one relationship it fostered with the participants.

The interviews took place at the study site, in the Enrollment Service Office. The interviews lengths ranged from 36 to 70 minutes. I recorded the interviews using a digital tape recorder (with the participants' permission) and then transcribed for coding and analysis. The audio recording ensured that everything the participants said during the interview was preserved for the data analysis. The audio recordings also ensured descriptive validity. In written field notes, I recorded the participants' nonverbal cues, such as body motions or facial expressions.

Field notes may add deep description of the phenomenon, according to Merriam (2009). I wrote the summaries an average of four to six days after the interviews to ensure I did not forget the details. The next steps were to e-mail a summary of the

interview for the participant's review and to request a second follow-up interview via telephone. Participants chose among several dates and times for the second phone interview. The follow-up interviews, which occurred by telephone, took between five and 10 minutes. The follow-up interview focused on whether the participant wanted to change anything from the summary. In addition, the participant had the opportunity to add anything else to their interview now that some time had elapsed since the first interview. One of the three male participants requested correction to his summary. The information from the field notes figured in the data analysis, as outlined in the upcoming section, Data Analysis.

Role of the Researcher

My role encompassed selection of the participants through a purposive sampling method; dissemination of the documents related to the study; establishment of the procedure for the interviews; conducting the interviews, analysis, and interpretation of the data; and reporting the findings. My relationship to the study site and to the participants were important considerations, as these relationships could have led to conflicts of interest and bias in the final research report (Creswell, 2014). The probability of potential bias due to professional affiliations or acquaintances with the study's participants was minimal because during the participants' selection, I was certain not to select any students with whom I was familiar by thoroughly vetting the potential participants through the University's ERP system.

At the study site, I work in the Enrollment Services Office (Financial Aid, Registrar, and Student Financials). While I do interact with students, the main areas of my work include counseling students and parents about paying for college, advising and

registering students in courses, and assisting students in clearing their financial obligations with the University. However, students would see several other staff (Director, Associate Director, Assistant Director, Counselor) before reaching my level of counseling. The vetting of the participants was facilitated by having access to students' assigned University ID numbers. The students' ID number ensured that those who were included in the selection process had no past interactions with me.

A peer de-briefer, member checking, and triangulation further mitigated my biases. The peer de-briefer reviewed my interview questions to ensure that they were clear and answered the research questions that guided this study. The peer de-briefer also reviewed the interview transcripts and my analysis of the data. This perspective was helpful in detecting any biases and added to the credibility of the study. Creswell (2009) noted that "involving an interpretation beyond the researcher adds validity to an account" (p. 192). At all times, I upheld professionalism, respect, and courtesy for the participants. Perhaps emphasizing my desire to learn and understand their perceptions enabled the participants to understand my aspirations to make a difference in improving the University experience for entering freshmen students. I was aware that the participants' comments might resonate with me or even reflect my own personal perspectives, and being sensitive to this was important and helpful in mitigating the influence of bias.

The interview schedule was flexible and accommodated the participants' availability, and I maintained a humble and low profile to avoid bringing any attention to the study to ensure as much privacy as possible. All of these efforts were imperative to protect the success of the study. The phenomenon of entering freshmen students' withdrawal during the first year is present and increasing within the higher educational

community, and the phenomenon carries with it negative implications, not only to that community but also to the larger community beyond the University (Tinto, 2012). The upcoming section describes the processes for data analysis.

Data Analysis

Merriam (2009) noted that making sense of data "involves consolidating, reducing, and interpreting what people have said, and what the researcher has seen and read, the process of making meaning" (p. 176). In this study, I employed a bottom up approach, as recommended by Creswell (2014). The first steps included preparation of the data and a preliminary analysis. Within four to six days after each interview, I transcribed the recorded interviews and field notes. I conducted a preliminary analysis of the information and prepared a summary of that initial analysis. Second, I e-mailed the summary to the participant with the request that he or she review it for accuracy, and I requested a brief follow-up telephone interview. The purpose of the follow-up interviews was to allow the participants to verify the accuracy of the summary and to offer any additional information. As stated earlier, only one of the participants requested changes to the summary. Finally, I reviewed the summaries multiple times to gain a general sense of the data before starting the next step in the analysis process.

Data analysis proceeded by a system that involved reviewing, comparing, and finally organizing the data into themes through a combination of manual coding and computer-assisted coding in Microsoft Word. The ATLAS.ti software substantiated manual coding and allowed for efficient organization, categorization, and filing of the data. Following Creswell's (2014) recommendations, I segmented the data using the ATLAS/ti program. The next step was to develop color codes (Saldana, 2013) in

Microsoft Word, which involved manually grouping sentences and phrases with like meanings.

I identified and eliminated redundant codes, reducing the number of codes to 29. Finally, the 29 codes were combined to create four themes, the major ideas participants mentioned most frequently and the ideas that had the most evidence to support them. Due to the consistency of the recurring themes, I determined that the data were saturated, and no additional participants were needed. The themes that emerged from the coding process derived from in-depth analysis, supported further understanding of the central phenomenon, and resulted in information that answered the research question (Creswell, 2014).

Accuracy and Credibility

I used a Microsoft Word software program (on my personal desktop) in the analysis to maintain and code the data following the data collection. I began open coding and transitioned to analytical coding, inserting words and phrases using a three-column approach recommended by Hahn (2008). Additionally, I used highlighting functions and text size and color as strategies during the coding process to identify emerging themes (Pierre & Jackson, 2014).

The coding procedure for reducing information into categories and themes was built upon Creswell's (2012) suggestion that the reduction of codes should result in five to seven themes (p. 244), which should be "exhaustive" and "mutually exclusive" (Merriam, 2009, p. 185). This procedure implies that all relevant data should specifically align to a discovered theme or subtheme (Merriam, 2009) in order to be presented in a narrative report. The adjustment in the number of codes occurred during the concurrent

processes of qualitative data analysis. During that process, I often returned to previously collected data to analyze for new emerging codes or themes. Inductive in its processes, coding the data allowed for themes to emerge (Creswell, 2012), and the nature of data analysis in qualitative research was adjusted throughout the coding process.

Merriam (2009) also noted that the objective in data analysis is to make "sense out of the data" (p. 175) and because an objective of qualitative research, by tradition, is to collect thick descriptive data, the "tolerance for ambiguity is most critical" (Merriam, 2009, p. 175). The process of analyzing data requires that the researcher shift between "concrete bits of data and abstract concepts, between inductive and deductive reasoning, between description and interpretation" in order to find meaning and insights regarding the studied phenomenon" (Merriam, 2009, p. 176). To organize and manage the data and easily retrieve specific pieces of the data, I consistently reviewed the interview transcriptions as the data were prepared for the analysis and interwoven with the raw data. Merriam (2009) noted that "the important task is to create an inventory of your entire data set" (p. 174), and the labeling and organizing scheme needs to make sense for the researcher to easily retrieve the information.

Creswell (2012) described a series of steps to take when analyzing qualitative data. Beginning with the collection of the data, I prepared the data for analysis within four to five days of each interview. I then transcribed the interview responses and field notes. All participants received a summary of their transcribed interview, with a request that they review the summary for accuracy. The second follow-up interview took place over the telephone; the second interviews ranged in length from five to 10 minutes. This

follow-up interview afforded the participant the opportunity to verify the accuracy of the summary or to offer any additional information.

After the follow-up interview, I read through the transcriptions multiple times to gain a "general sense" (Creswell, 2012, p. 237) of the collected data and then began to code the data. According to Creswell (2012), the adjustment in the number of codes may occur due to the concurrent processes of qualitative data analysis. The purpose of these procedures was to assure the best possible accuracy and credibility of the findings. Merriam (2009) noted that "all research is concerned with producing valid and reliable knowledge in an ethical manner" (p. 209); research findings should match reality; and the integrity of the researcher is key to the study being credible. Such was the intention and goal of this study.

As a result of this challenge, Maxwell (as cited in Merriam, 2009) noted that reality can never be fully achieved and validity "is a goal rather than the product" (p. 214); however, numerous strategies can be followed to enhance the validity and reliability of a study. Ratcliffe (as cited in Merriam, 2009) noted in every type of research, when assessing validity, researchers must remember these important things: "data do not speak for themselves; there is always an interpreter or translator"; words can be "abstract, symbolic representations of reality, but not reality itself"; and data is multidimensional and ever changing (p. 213). Triangulation, as noted by Creswell (2012, 2014) and Merriam (2009), is one of the most commonly used means to improve validity and reliability of a study and to acknowledge potential researcher bias.

While the acknowledgement of potential researcher bias has been discussed in the section entitled Role of the Researcher, I also had a peer de-briefer and used triangulation

and member checking to mitigate these risks. A peer de-briefer is a person who is familiar with the research project and qualitative design and one who can serve as a pivotal examiner and validator (Creswell, 2014). The peer de-briefer was an administrator at the case study site who was also experienced with conducting qualitative research. The peer de-briefer carefully reviewed the interview questions, interview summaries, and final report to look for bias, or detect if legitimate findings or discrepant data were overlooked. Since the peer de-briefer did not have access to the raw data, no confidentiality form had to be signed.

Creswell (2012) defined triangulation as the "process of corroborating evidence from different individuals, types of data, or methods of data collection" (p. 259). I interviewed seven participants for this study, and I employed triangulation and respondent validation (member checking) to further enhance and improve the validity of the data and findings.

Member checking was an additional measure of validity; Maxwell (as cited in Merriam, 2009) described member checking as the "single most important way of ruling out the possibility of misinterpreting the meanings of what participants say and do; the perspective they have on what is going on; identifying your own biases and misunderstanding" (p. 217). Member checking consisted of participants confirming the accuracy of both the field notes I took during the interviews and the preliminary analysis of the interview and field notes. Participants reviewed the summary before the brief follow-up telephone interview. Birt, Scott, Cavers, Campbell, and Walter (2016) explained member checking of interview data is an interactive method of member checking. This method provided a rigorous approach to facilitate the participants'

engagement and to provide confirmation, modification, and verification of the interview transcripts.

Lodico et al. (2010) also suggested that data credibility can be enhanced through member checks, wherein the participants review transcribed interviews. In my study, rather than sending out the entire transcribed interview, following Walden University's guidelines, I sent out a summary of each transcription to the participants. All participants accepted the results of the summaries with the exception of one of the male participants, who requested that I revise his statement about what the University could do to make freshmen students' transition more welcoming.

Procedures for Dealing With Discrepant Cases

In qualitative research, discrepant cases may present themselves, so in order to ensure inclusion of all accurate and credible information, I anticipated reporting discrepant cases. According to Lodico et al. (2010), discrepant cases or negative case analysis is the process of "examining the data for examples that contradict or disconfirm the hypothesis" (p. 276). Lodico et al. (2010) also suggested that "when conflicting perspectives are found, qualitative researchers must reexamine other data sources to see if the differences can be resolved, they may decide to simply present the different perspectives" (p. 309). To present negative or discrepant information that runs counter to the themes, a researcher should not be opposed to presenting the information that departs from the theme, since "the account becomes more realistic and hence valid" (Creswell, 2009, p. 192). Thus, since real life is made up of different perceptions that sometimes differ, discussing divergent information adds to the credibility of the report.

The implications for social change include improvement of individuals' lives and social conditions. The findings may also positively impact society in the form of changes in practice to address the entering students' needs. To ensure that the information was accurate and fully representative of the emergent data, I reported all discrepancies in the findings. Qualitative research can offer a richer and more personal insight into the thoughts and feeling of participants. The focus of Section 3 is to provide the qualitative findings based on the participants' perspectives.

Research Findings

The focus of this study was the perceptions of the seven entering freshmen students in the Promise Program who withdrew from the University in their first year of study. A faculty strike during the fall 2016 semester compounded the students' experience because some classes had to be taught by the administrative staff. Nonetheless, through a semi-structured interview of 15 questions, these participants provided sufficient information to address the four questions that guided the study:

1. What causes entering freshmen students in the Promise Program to withdraw from the University during their first year of enrollment?
2. What can the University do to improve its educational and support services that it provides its students?
3. What are the barriers that entering freshmen students experience that lead to their withdrawal from their respective programs?
4. What changes can be made to reduce entering freshmen attrition that could add to the University's existing practices in place, which could potentially be adopted by other higher education institutions?

The seven participants of the Promise Program at the study site contributed to interviews using a semistructured interview protocol (Appendix A) in which they described their experiences during their time at the institution. The participants seemed to be engaged in their interviews, expressed interest in the study, and felt that the topic of the study needed special attention. They seemed positive about being able to contribute to the study, but they also seemed a little unsure about the relevance of their experiences, and the value this information would be to the University.

The focus of sorting the data by theme was to provide significant information to answer the guiding questions of the study. The four core themes that emerged from the data analysis represented major factors and influences on the entering freshmen's transitions. This section includes a summary of background on the participants and discussion of the four themes: staff and faculty interactions, social and academic barriers, the need for student service support, and a sense of belonging, which all related to the research questions.

Background of the Participants

F01. F01 was a 19-year-old North African female, and she was a first-year student at the institution. At the time of the interview, she was pursuing a biology degree and planned to attend medical school and become a neurosurgeon. She was the oldest of two children and lived with her mother.

F02. F02 was a 20-year-old African American female, and she was a first-year entering freshmen student at the institution. At the time of the interview, she was pursuing a pharmacy degree but had not been accepted into the program. F02 was an only child and lived with her mother. All of her other family members were back in England.

Her grandfather lived in the United States, but because of a family breech, she did not maintain communication with him.

M03. M03 was a 19-year-old African American male, and he was a first-year entering freshmen student at the institution. At the time of the interview, he was pursuing a sports science degree. He loved playing baseball and wanted to play for the institution's team, but missed the tryouts. He goal was to work for a major league sports team as a sports trainer. M03 was the oldest of his siblings.

F04. F04 was a 19-year-old Haitian female, and she was a first-year entering freshmen student at the institution. At the time of the interview, she was pursuing a nursing degree. She initially planend to attend another university, but applied too late to begin the fall 2016 semester. F04 planned to attend one semester at the institution and then transfer. She had an hour-long commute to the institution and lived with her mother.

F05. F05 was a 35-year-old West Indie female, and she was a first-time entering freshmen student at the institution. At the time of the interview, she was pursuing her bachelor's degree in nursing. She had a daughter in middle school and had decided to go to college to be an example for her daughter. She was employed in a major hospital in an administrative role. F05 helped her mother get her GED and also get a job at the hospital where she worked. She said she started college late, because she always put others ahead of herself.

M06. M06 was a 20-year-old Hispanic male, and he was an entering freshmen student at the institution. At the time of the interview, he was pursuing his degree in accounting. He lived in a household with his parents. His mother graduated from college,

and his father had a high school diploma. M06 had attended private school and was the captain of the basketball team.

F07. F07 was an 18-year-old Asian female, and she was an entering freshmen student at the institution. At the time of the interview, she was pursuing her degree in pharmacy. Both parents graduated from college, and one of her parents attended the same institution whre she was enrolled. F07 had two siblings. She stated she enjoyed the urban campus and the convenience of public transportation.

Emergent Themes From the Data Analysis

The themes that emerged from data analysis provided answers to the guiding research questions regarding what caused entering freshmen students in the Promise Program to withdraw from the University during their first year. The four major themes were staff and faculty interactions, social and academic barriers, the need for improved student service support, and a sense of belonging. Discussions of the four themes follow.

Theme 1: Staff and faculty interactions. An overall consensus of the participants was that feeling isolated and lonely emphasized the problems freshmen students encountered that contributed to their withdrawal from the University in their first year. When participants described the main reason that motivated them to attend the University, they shared similar answers such as family and friends who attended the University or recommendations by a high school teacher or career counselor. Participants also mentioned being in the heart of the exciting city. Other reasons included the participant's wanting to attend a private University; the University's specialized programs; campus diversity including faculty, staff, and students; advertisement, and the school's close proximity to several of the participants' homes and jobs.

Some of the participants spoke at length, and others provided short answers. For example, F01 indicated that her friend recommended the school, and her friend was still attending. In addition, F01 stated, “The school has a pretty good biology program, and I love the craziness of the city.” The University offers specialized programs that other colleges and universities in the area do not offer, and these programs attract students. For example, F02 stated, “I heard the University has a great pharmacy program, and most of my colleague love their teachers.” M03, who was pursing a sports science degree, smiled and stated, “I wanted to be in an environment to get my thoughts in the right place and avoid the distraction in the street.” F05 stated, “I read about the students’ success and experience,” and she asked around and received positive recommendations from family. M06 said he wanted to attend the University “to obtain the skills and degree needed to accomplish my long-term career goals.” F07 mentioned, “My mother received her degree from the University, and following her footsteps, I hope to become a pharmacist and also obtain my degree from this institution.” F02 also wanted to attend because of the pharmacy program.

F01 stated, “I love my biology teacher. He did not assume we knew the material, and set up office hours for us to meet with him. He even gave us his cell phone number.” According to Sandoval-Lucero, Maes, and Klingsmith (2014), instructors who are helpful, accessible, and motivational impact students’ connection to college and contribute to better grades and academic pursuit. When participants described a time or event on campus furing which they felt connected to the University, they offered unequivocal statements that required little probing, and their answers were more congruent than different. Most participants shared at least one time they experienced

feeling connectedness to the University with either a professor, a Promise Coach, an advisor, an Enrollment Service Coach, or another student on campus. Several participants took the opportunity to emphasize the importance of having the connectedness across the curriculum and the University. I had to remind several of the participants that we needed to move along due to time constraints.

For instance, F02 indicated most of her teachers were "great." She also stated, "I depended on them for guidance on how to do well in their class." F03 stated that "the Promise Program looked like it could really help students if the coaches tried harder in connecting with students." F05, an older student, mentioned, "Most of my professors and I were the oldest among the other students in the class, so we primarily were on the same page as far as it not being high school and having to earn your grades." M06 shared, "I enjoyed a night out with the faculty to a basketball event. It was a good experience to get to see the social side of the faculty and administration."

When participants answered a question about what actions the administration and faculty as a community should take to meet students' academic and social needs, the answers varied from participant to participant. Probing was necessary, since four of the seven participants provided short responses, then asked that I repeat the question and paused before providing a more detailed answer. Some commonalities existed in the answers; most participants spoke about having a relationship with their professors and other administrative staff on campus. The participants described the type of interactions they desired with faculty and staff in various ways.

For example, F02 mentioned that the teacher's demeanor makes a difference in how students interact in the classroom: "We look up to the teachers as our role model and

should not feel dumb or intimated by their demeanor." Nonetheless, she went on to say that most of her teachers were "great," especially her philosophy teacher. She said, "I love my philosophy teacher. He is firm, but make sure you understand the material, and he had a sense of humor." According to Lillis (2011-2012), students often enter the postsecondary educational environment unprepared or underprepared for the rigorous academic environment. According to Turner and Thompson (2014), students who develop an interactive relationship with their instructors increase the chances of academic persistence.

Most of the participants' answers revealed that having relationship with faculty and staff was a factor in their perseverance. For example, M03 stated that professors needed to "understand that their class is not the only class students are taking," and professors should get to know their students better. He also stated, "students and professors need to work on that. . . . and personally, everybody wants to feel comfortable." M03 also mentioned that most of the professors were old and seem tired and sat down all of the time. He noted, "They read straight from the book or the PowerPoint slides." The advancement of communication technology devices, Turner and Thompson (2014) posited, impacted students' abilities to resolve conflict, think critically, and develop face-to-face communication skills; therefore, students may have difficulty meaningfully interacting with older faculty who are not technologically savvy. According to Turner and Thompson (2014), many millennial students expect faculty and staff to be readily available at all times as they have experienced this type of nurturing at home with their parent.

According to Spady (1970), the relationship between the student and professor can either a positive or negative outcome on the intellectual development, social adjustment, and student's willingness to persevere when facing academic challenges. In contrast to F03 and F02, F01 indicated she personally did not have any issues with her professors, but observing how several of her professors responded to some of the students in class "was a little disappointing." F01 further stated that "professors need to be more sympathetic and develop a better relationship with students when it come to their learning abilities."

Many freshmen students enter college believing that (a) they can rely upon their professors to be concerned about how well they are doing; (b) their professors know how to help them improve their reading skills; and (c) academically, college is just a transition from high school in regards to their teachers' demeanor, grades, and their ability to handle the course load. Because of these unrealistic expectations of higher education and not being able to fit in, these students may end up withdrawing (Nicholson, Putwain, Connors, & Hornby-Atkinson, 2013).

The classroom is just as important as the rest of the campus when it comes to engaging the students; Tinto (1993) proposed that the classroom was the most important place for a student to show involvement. Often faculty members spend more time with students than academic advisors or any other staff members on campus. The relationship that may develop between the faculty and student is important as it relates to helping the students fit into the campus and persist academically. F04 stated, "Faculty should pay close attention to students, help them make that transition whereby it can minimize their loneliness and isolation. Take small steps and not rush us into academics as if, we

supposed to already know the material." Roberts and McNeese (2010) talked about the need for faculty to use their classrooms as gateways for students to increase their campus engagement through different activities and learning experiences.

When the participants described the actions the University as a whole could take to ensure that entering freshmen complete their education and offered recommendations that could improve entering freshmen students' experience at the University, the participants described their needs in a variety of ways. Some identified specific actions. Several of the participants repeated having a relationship with faculty and staff. Unanimously, participants were clear and agreed that the University needed to provide more scholarships, lock in their tuition, provide timely communication related to changes that impacted students' ability to plan, and provide services that support freshmen's acculturation to the campus by helping students complete their education and improve their experience at the University.

Participants suggested the University could accomplish these tasks in several ways. For example, F01 stated, "Just find a way to make students feel we matter, and provide them with staff that's willing to help you. It starts from the top down." F02 mentioned that the University should find a way to help needy students with their tuition "especially if they accept the student into the college." M03 wanted faculty and administration to have discussions with freshmen and find out what they need. He also stated, "Take into consideration students with a silent voice." F04 stated the University should track students' progress a little better, comparing it to a parenting relationship, yet she stated, "They should not be breathing down their neck." She mentioned coming from high school to college is so much "bigger." In comparison, F05 mentioned,

> Faculty and staff must seek a better way of communicating with students and be more approachable and connected to students' lives. Make sure students are comfortable in the classroom academically and outside the classroom socially as it pertains to the campus activities. Students will feel much better. I did not have anyone at the University that I could talk with to help me with my transition and understand the struggle I encountered navigating this process. I did not feel comfortable at the University, because I did not know anyone. We need a community of helping and knowledgeable faculty and staff. Students should not have to struggle to be successful in college; that's what the teachers and administration are supposed to help them with.

M06 stated a staff or faculty member who is committed from the very first day to help a student succeed in obtaining his or her degree is important to a student perseverance. M06 also mentioned that "the University should continue to encourage the success coach and student relationship, and provide the Promise Coaches with the proper tools and training to successfully assist entering freshmen students." F07 believed the University should offer additional remediation for "poor performance" students, and should carefully evaluate each professor's curriculum to ensure that the workload is not too overwhelming. In addition to the interactions among participants, faculty, and administration, the social and academic barriers students encountered also contributed to their decision to withdraw from the University.

Theme 2: Social and academic barriers that lead to freshmen's withdrawal. During the spring and or fall semesters, the participants described spending time in class together, passing each other on the campus ground, sitting in the same library, eating at

some of the same eateries, and even seeing each other on the elevators. Thus, as posited by Belland, Kim, and Hannafin (2013), the social and academic elements of engagement, as related to self-efficacy beliefs, rest upon vicarious learning and the continuous comparing of one's performance to others. According to Belland et al., (2013), these activities help students foster relationships with other students.

Social challenges. Yang and Brown (2013) explained that the continuous comparing of one's own performance to others is a key component in social engagement, which can lead to perspectives regarding both the micro and macro influences of single friendships or society. This section examines how entering freshmen participants described their experiences with social engagement during and after their time at the University. The interviews began with an icebreaker question, "Tell me a little about yourself," to which each participant responded immediately with descriptions of his or her aspirations and family situation. The participants' descriptions of themselves were similar in that they all wanted a better life than their parent could afford, but their reasons for attending college and selecting their specific major differed. Overall, most of the participants said they lived in a one-parent household, their parent was not involved in helping them financially or morally in their decision to attend college, and they wanted to help their parent support their siblings or to provide a better life for their parent.

The participants spoke about themselves at length, and the atmosphere became more relaxed, providing an opportunity for the participants to share their stories. In fact, in some cases, I politely informed the participants we had to move along. There were moments during this question that I had to remind the participants that we needed to get

through the interview and that they would have an opportunity to add or revise any information during the second interview.

All except two of the seven participants lived in one-parent households. For instance, F01 stated her family consisted of herself, her mother, and her grandfather, but she and her mom did not speak with the grandfather. She also mentioned that she was happy to be in college, being away from home, hanging out, and just lounging around: "I love the feeling of being able to make my own decision." M03 mentioned that it was just him, his younger brother, and mom, and his dad was not a major contributor to the family. F05 was a participant who lived with her child; however, her mother and father never lived together, and she and her child's father were no longer in a relationship.

A certain significant insight into the social dynamics of engagement and its relation to self-efficacy was evident when participants described the most difficult adjustment they had to make during their enrollment at the University. Each participant specified the direct impact that hindered him or her from persisting and continuing their study. Their answers ranged from being the oldest in the classroom, self-efficacy of comparing one's age to the younger students in the class, being unprepared academically and socially, the length of time it took to travel to the school, comparing their knowledge base to other students in the classroom, not knowing any of the students in their classes or at the university, fitting in, and not having a support system within the University to help with the transition.

For example, F05 described the difficulties she experienced as follows:

> It might sound a little slow, but fitting in. My age, thinking I would be able to adjust and grasp the things being taught to me, and literally struggling with the

> subject. Simply because I had not made any friends, and was embarrassed to seek help, so I failed the subject. I feel like personally I should have dropped the class earlier.

Still, F05's personal account was based on her perceptions of how the other students around her appeared to be able to relate to the subject and teacher. She compared herself to others as she struggled with the learning and was embarrassed to seek assistance. F01 recounted her time at the University and how it impacted her performance socially and academically:

> Coming to [University] every day was hard. The commute of getting up 7:00 a.m. in the morning and trying to make it to a 9:30 a.m. class. Sometime I had to walk into the classroom late or miss the entire class. Most of the time I missed the bus. By not knowing anyone in the class to share their notes, I was behind in the class. Everything is different. Everyone is on their own. In high school, we were treated differently, and the teachers showed a lot more concern about you. Here it is laid out. Life gives you curve balls and if you cannot handle it, it is your problem.

The common social elements that affected most of the participants included insufficient moral and financial support from family, parents not having enough knowledge about the college process, high cost of college, the University administration and faculty's limited involvement in the students' transition to the campus, unfamiliarity with learning communities, and the lack of student life activities for freshmen. The participants talked about their specific needs in detail rather than providing a simple answer. According to Sandoval-Lucero et al. (2014), students perform better in college when family members are willing to help financially, take on more household

responsibility, and provide moral support and encouragement. The participants' answers varied and they were specific and detailed.

For example, F02 mentioned that while her mom supported her education, she was not willing to take out loans to help with the educational expenses. Conversely, F01 stated, "Mom did not have good credit to borrow the parent PLUS loan, and I had to ask my friend to co-sign my private loan." F04, a dependent student, indicated that because

> my mother was unwilling to borrow a loan on my behalf, and I could only borrow a set amount of loan as a dependent student, I had to get a co-signer for my Private Loan to help her pay for the tuition.

F04 further shared, "I helped my mother get her GED and a job at my place of employment."

F04's response further demonstrated the social need of freshmen students when she mentioned, "Not every freshman is aware of the Leaning Community where people gather to meet and greet." He mentioned that type of setting might help students meet new students and develop relationships with peers and mentors. M03 said, "Socially students feel alone. I long for meeting a friend. Maybe a freshmen club to connect freshmen could make the transition a little less stressful."

When participants shared how they would describe the culture of the University, their answers ranged from giving an example of their community to just making a general statement about what they encountered at the University. For example, F04 stated, "The culture is very diversified. You see a lot of different people on campus, Haitians, African Americans, Russians, Caribbean, Jewish, Chinese, Muslims. It is like all different colors hanging out together, a melting pot." Similarly, M03 came from a very diverse

neighborhood, and he stated, “The school reminds me a lot of my neighborhood. I like it, very diverse, and I like the environment. A lot of different people to learn from.” Conversely, F02’s statement was brief, and the participant described the culture at the school as “welcoming.”

According to Tovar (2015), college life extends beyond the classroom. A huge part of a college experience that makes it worthwhile and successful also happens outside the classroom, on campus, or other venues that include students, peers, staff, and faculty. F05 said since she works in a healthcare environment, she is exposed to people of all races, and she shared, “I see the same type of environment on this campus.” F07 indicated the University is very diverse and everyone seems to enjoy the experience of living in a “big city.” She smiled and said, “It is the urban culture of the University that makes it appealing, and my mother believes I can earn a good education.”

According to Sommerfeld and Bowen (2013), Sandoval-Lucero et al. (2014), and Wilkins (2014), determinants of students’ success in college include college assimilation, participation during high school, college programs geared toward college transition, and family support. As students begin college life, a very new lifestyle for them, they have many new experiences, including rooming with a stranger, leaving old friends behind, and having to start over again as a freshman. It is understandable that they would feel isolated. According to Wilkins (2014), along with college social capital and positive academic relationships, students are more likely to be educationally successful with family support. F07 indicated her parents fully supported and encouraged her to attend, but only with the understanding that she would follow in her mother’s career. M03 indicated his single parent supported his attendance with the hope of him helping the

family. Four of the seven participants indicated they were seeking the education without the support of their parent.

According to Turner and Thompson (2014), first-year students often face personal, family, academic, and social transitional adjustment issues, and any negative or unpleasant experience can either lead to the student withdrawing or transferring before the next semester. When the participants answered the follow-up question of what additional factors they believed led up to their withdrawal, the general consensus was that the strike of the faculty hindered their ability to connect with their professors and others at the University. Some of the participants spoke in general, but most were clear that the strike was a major factor in their ability to focus on their studies. The participants all agreed their learning was diminished by having the administrators as substitute teachers. M06 stated, "The whole walk out had me feeling indifferent; it was my first experience. The strike was a major distraction and impacted my learning." M03 stated,

> In the beginning, the whole walk out. It had me disappointed. Every class I went to, we had a sub. It was a kind of waste. I was relaxing, while I still had to pay for school. My first impression was one that was terrible and disappointing. It kind of felt like wow, you know. All my friends at other colleges was learning, while I was relaxing. Having substitute teachers in class that was trying to teach the subject. It sucks that it had to happen. We really didn't understand half of the time the reason for the strike. You have someone in front of the class trying to teach you something that they really don't know. What our bio substitute was trying to teach, we had learned in high school. I was totally on the teachers' side of the strike.

F05 also stated the strike was “very distracted” and students were the one impacted and no real consideration was given by the University of the “amount of money we pay.” F01, F05, M06, and F07 mentioned that while the substitute administrators were nice, they were not academically prepared to teach the subjects. M06 said he used the strike as a way to “hang out on campus, because many times no one showed up to the classroom to teach.” He continued, “Someone came around taking attendance, and they left.” Overall, the teacher strike disrupted the participants’ learning and prevented their achieving full benefits from their classes.

Most students perceive college as a way to acquire job-specific skills and credentials (Finch, Peacock, Levallet, & Foster, 2016). With the increasing numbers of students entering college and colleges pushing to increase retention and graduation rates, understanding the needs of entering freshmen students is more important than ever (Gibbons & Woodside, 2014). Feeling comfortable in a new environment and making new friends with administrators, faculty, and classmates are important because of the support they need socially and academically. Family background variables such as parent education level, career attainment, and, socioeconomic status of the family directly affect career expectations and outcomes (Gibbons & Woodside, 2014; Sandoval-Lucero et al., 2014).

When participants answered questions about how the institutional culture promoted or enabled entering freshmen students’ connection to the University’s environment, their answers were abstract. All of the participants spoke generally about the multicultural campus. F01, F02, M03, and F05 stated they were happy someone recognized the struggle entering freshman students encounter while transitioning from

high school. Several of the participants' answers did not address the question, and even following probing and requests to expand on how the institutional culture connected freshmen to the University, F01 and F02 mentioned they really did not know and would have to think about it.

Academic challenges. Many entering freshmen students are simply unprepared to handle differences they find between college and high school (Holmegaard, Madsen, & Ulriksen, 2013). First-year students often encounter a challenge to adopt a systematic approach to studying, taking exams, and keeping up with reading assignments (Terrion & Daoust, 2011, 2012). According to Hirsch (2013), the personal and academic transition to college is a great one, and even high-ability students do not always automatically make the transition smoothly. Hirsch (2013) further contended that the "causes of their academic difficulties are based not so much on lack of preparation, but rather in any number of other educational, social, and psychological factors which influence academic performance" (p. 5). In high school, teachers keep a watchful eye on students' progress and will contact the student or guardian if students fall behind; such attention may not be forthcoming in college settings.

In college, while the professor may well be aware of the students' progress or lack of it, most expect their students to initiate the discussions about any help they need or seek help from someone else on campus on their own (Warren, 2013). According to Turner and Thompson (2014), "an attempt by students to transition from high school to a college environment can be a challenging process" (p. 95). Participants supported this conception; for example, when F03 said when he was in high school, he knew everyone, and he was the "big fish in the river." However, coming into college, "the river is bigger

with bigger fishes, seniors, juniors," who have the attention of the college. One of the participants indicated that he did not feel he was ready for college: "I was not prepared for the transition of leaving an environment of caring high school teachers" (M03). The other participants mentioned they thought they were ready academically, financially, and emotionally. However, financially they could not afford the college, and thus could not utilize most of the services on campus.

When participants described the actions they thought the University could take to minimize entering freshmen students' attrition, the recommendations varied from participant to participant and included simple and extensive discordant answers. This question also generated conversations that required me to remind the participants of our time constraints and remind them they would have the opportunity to review the summary and provide any additional information during the second interview. In general, participants mentioned that the University needed to assess the barriers (financial, academic, social, motivational) that impeded freshmen's success and determine how knowledgeable students were about the resources the University offered from matriculation to graduation. Suggestions included developing first-year programs with a focus on building relationships among staff, faculty, and new students.

In addition, the participants believed that academic and financial aid advising should be more personal and individualized based on students' need and availability. The majority of the participants spoke about a freshmen curriculum tailored to freshmen students' acculturation, a locked-in tuition, and activities that connect entering students with peers and staff. Nonetheless, suggestions as a whole focused on a sense of belonging. For example, F04 stated,

> Get to know students better. We need that parent figure. When you are away in college, it's like no one cares. Our parents are not here. At least in high school, the teachers are following up on you. So having that same mentoring is important the first and second year.

M03 suggested the University should "build curriculums and students' activities that incorporate freshmen and design first-year student programs to keep freshmen connected with each other. Help them feel like they matter." F05 wanted faculty and staff to communicate information in a timely and effective manner especially when it came to tuition, fees, and documents needed for financial aid or where the classes were being held or had been moved. F05 continued, "Faculty and staff should be more like a community of help and not provide bits and pieces of information." Previous researchers also indicated the need for long-standing interactions. According to Roberts and Styron (2009), one or two meetings between students and faculty does not foster a successful advisement relation. Stephens, Hamedani, and Destin (2014) explained that students who experience less exposure to the college-going culture experience more difficulty integrating into the college setting, both socially and academically; thus, entering freshmen are more likely to struggle to find their place and may feel left out.

According to Monaco and Marti (as cited by Turner & Thompson, 2014), many entering freshmen students lack the critical intellectual skills required to demonstrate inductive and deductive thinking; thus, they are unable to create a structure that works well for them. Students feel apprehensive in the educational atmosphere because of their unrealistic expectations of personal academic performance (Turner & Thompson, 2014). Students may come from a different cultural background and also may have different

levels of college preparation than their classroom peers (Turner & Thompson, 2014). Thus, limited interactions among students, peers, faculty, and administrators create a gap in interests, experiences, and resources, and the differences add to students' low levels of academic self-esteem and ability in adjusting to the college setting (Turner & Thompson, 2014). However, academic and social engagement intensifies students' perceptions of belonging and has a lasting impact on the probability of degree completion (Tovar, 2015).

When the participants described what the University could do to help students be more successful, many of the participants mentioned challenges with achieving their goals. Several of the participants mentioned that their challenges arose from motivations and attitudes that undermined their ability to excel, including financial obstacles, indecision about career choice, and lack of social engagement with peers. Unanimously, participants agreed that the University should shape entering student orientation programs to meet the needs and motivations of freshmen students. When asked to name something specific, most participants mentioned that the University should not wait for the semester to begin to get students involved with the campus.

In general, most of the participants mentioned that targeted student success programs and planned student interventions could circumvent any roadblocks to graduating. The participants also mentioned unequivocally that the University should create an informal freshmen gathering for students to attend before and during the semester to meet new friends and learn about clubs and organizations on campus. For example, F05 mentioned, "It is hard to make new friends with strangers," and she indicated she would feel more comfortable in the environment if she had someone she

could engage with on and off campus. M06 stated that he was interested in the activities on campus and would have loved to get to know the University's staff, because the few people he had any encountered were friendly. F01 responded, "Be honest with students upfront, and be more explicit in communicating the true tuition." The participants indicated they wanted engaged, informative, and caring faculty and staff interactions, and having faced unanticipated social and academic barriers, they faced additional challenges because of the inadequate student support services at the University.

Theme 3: The need for improved student service support. The participants indicated the need for improved student services. Based on over 25 years of research, Astin (1993) established that students who were involved on campus, participated in campus clubs and organizations, lived on campus, worked on campus, and had more frequent interactions with faculty and others on campus were more likely to graduate from college than students who were not involved. Still, when asked to describe the student services at the University that appealed to them, most of the participants were unfamiliar with the services the University provided, and some of the participants mentioned they were too busy working or caring for a child or sibling to access the services.

F01 mentioned he had seen on the University's website a link for students to follow and ask questions. F04 responded, "Hmm, well the Promise Coach was helpful to a certain extent. But I really did not have much interaction with anyone on campus." M03 indicated, "I missed the try-out for the basketball team" because he had not seen any information on campus about the event. While F07 said she was interested in the Delta Sigma Theta Soriety and student government but had never pursued her interest.

Basically, only two of the seven participants (F07 and F02) had met with their Promise Coach more than once. Five of the participants only knew of their Promise Coach because they initially had to meet with him or her to register for their courses and academic monitoring alert. M03 said, “Promise Program looks like it could really help students, if the coaches try harder in connecting with the students.”

Three or more of the participants indicated that they were selective about the people they selected as friends or study mates in school. According to Tucker (2014), instituting peer-to-peer programs helps students integrate academically and socially into college. The participants were not a part of any formal study group. F01 said that in her group of acquaintances, everyone was “kind of standoffish” and reluctant to create a study group to meet. F02 indicated, “I was not a part of a study group, many of the students in my classes “were too immature” and were more interested in “hanging out,” and M03 explained, “I just want to graduate and help my mother take care of my siblings.”

F05 did not associate with her classmates, but in regards to her personal life, she shared, “I am the oldest in the class, and since I attend in the evening, I don’t have time to hang around, because I have to get home to my daughter.” M06 claimed that participating in a study group did not work for him because he was too shy, and most of his classmates kept to themselves. When asked about her participation in study group, F07 stated she did not belong to any study group since she was able to do her work on her own, and she was not “the type of person that open up to people easily.”

When the participants were asked about utilizing the student services on campus, such as the tutoring center, most of their encounters were nominal, and they spoke about

their external support first. Several of the participants were clear that they did not have any interactions with campus staff to employ the support service. Participants talked about support systems in their personal lives that contributed to their persistence. The external support systems included church, employers, relatives, friends, and companions. Overall, participating in some sort of social engagement activity with peers is a factor in students' persistence (Tovar, 2015), and external factors may impact students' decisions to continue their education and graduate from college. F01 stated, "There was no specific services on the campus that was appealing, but I did receive additional financial aid assistance from Enrollment Services." In regard to the tutoring center staff, several participants mentioned the staff were not helpful. In addition, F02 stated that "the center was not opened at the time I attended school." M03 indicated that "most of the people in the tutoring center were students, and many times they were not able to provide any useful help." Rather than seeking support services, F04 shared, "In class, I usually try to sit with the students who appeared to be smart as me."

Participants also described their familiarity with the students' clubs on campus. While they offered various descriptive answers, the majority of the participants were unfamiliar with the campus life activities. Many of the participants were not aware of the activities, due to their own personal social and economic responsibilities, and having not been exposed to the clubs through any means by the University. Participants offered a combination of simple and protracted statements. For example, F01 stated he "did not have time to invest in the club." F02 stated she "had very little interactions with the clubs on campus." She saw flyers in the hallway, but because she worked, she could not get

involved. M03 mentioned, “I wanted to play baseball, but could not find the time when they were having try outs, and none of the other clubs interested me, because I was new.”

None of the seven participants were actively engaged even in the informal events on campus. Several participants worked, so they spent very little social time on campus. F04 stated she “lived too far to hang around the campus” and was not that familiar with the clubs. She mentioned that most of the time, when she heard about the clubs’ events, it was after the fact. Similarly, F05 heard about the clubs but was not very familiar with them. M06 and F07 both mentioned that they were overwhelmed with the workload and preferred to focus on their studies and not engage in social activities. M06 also mentioned that he was “not too familiar, first term of freshmen year. I was just learning how to find areas of interest.”

The inclusion of a peer, according to Lucas (2012), facilitates the transfer of institutional knowledge concerning the campus social and academic environments. This process is somewhat comparable with acculturation, wherein students transition from different geographical regions, bringing different views, attitudes, and ethics to the University. Ultimately, participation in first-year success courses or learning communities could help students understand the institution, learn essential skills, and socially integrate (Perry, 2017; Soria & Stebleton, 2012). Also, academic advising is related to student retention (Swecker et al., 2013).

Regardless of the challenges that led to the participants’ withdrawal, the lack of support service they had anticipated, or the social and academic barriers they experienced, the participants expressed most fervently their need to feel they mattered and were just not another body. The lack of a sense of belonging was a huge problem,

morally and ethically, and a prominent theme that derived from the guiding research question, What changes can be made to reduce entering freshmen attrition that could add to the University's existing practices in place, which could potentially be adopted by other higher education institutions?

Theme 4: A sense of belonging. According to Roberts and Styron (as cited in Turner & Thompson, 2014), involving students in campus social activities can make their transition into the college environment more meaningful and inviting. Social events appear to build a social connectedness that nurtures a sense of belonging to the institution and group (Tovar, 2015). When the participants answered questions about a time they felt connected to the campus, most of the participants mentioned that they had at least one experience; however, they did not have many of those encounters due to their short enrollment. Several of the participants spoke in detail about their encounter with either a faculty member or enrollment coach. However, in response to follow-up questions about making friends with other students on campus, none of the participants reported being befriended by another student on campus.

The answer to the interview questions varied from participant to participant, especially when differentiating their relationships with faculty, staff, and their peers. F07 mentioned she felt connected when she attended homecoming. F02 stated she felt her connection through her philosophy class: "I felt like my professor cared about me. Most of my teachers were great." Similarly, F05, being an older student, felt a sense of usefulness when her professor invited a guest speaker to the class, and F05s was able to connect with the professor and guest speaker when she was allowed to present her classmates with paid internship applications at her job.

In describing encounters with staff members, the majority of the participants mentioned that having a Promise Coach seemed like a great idea. M06 indicated, “It just seems they have a lot of things to do and no time to really get to know who you are.” According to Kot (2014), academic advising has transformed over the years and has an effect on students’ success. F01 shared that she knew a lady in the Enrollment Services office who advised her on dropping one of the classes, because chemistry and biology required a lot of work. Thus, she went from being enrolled from 18 credits to 15 credits. F01 asked, “How can a science student know the demand of a course, who have never been to college before?” Similarly, M03 said, “I was just told what classes to enroll in and I went to class.”

The probability of students’ persistence and retention, according to Dowd, Pak, and Bensimon (2013), is contingent upon students’ participation in select support programs, which provide students with the social capital for them to persist. A merging of students’ social and academic interactions (Dowd, et al. 2014) may contribute to increasing their sense of belonging on campus. According to Goldman and Goodboy (2014), making students feel better contributes to their sense of belonging. Administrators and faculty may also add to college students’ success by providing both psychological and instrumental support [Chang, 2005; Tovar (as cited by Barnett, 2010); Zalaquett & Lopez, 2006]. Thus, developing a sense of belonging to the institution is critical to entering freshmen students’ success (Astin, 1993; Hausmann et al., 2007; Morrow & Ackermann, 2012; O’Keeffe, 2013; Tinto, 1999, 2006). According to Roberts and Styron (2009), students establish a level of connection when they become

psychologically at ease or adjusted to their new setting in a condition known as "psychological comfort" (p. 3).

When students described how withdrawing from the university impacted their lives, overall, most of the participants were forthcoming in mentioning that their life had been negatively impacted due to not being able to continue their education. Some of the participants mentioned that not being able to return to school the following semester altered their plan of completing their education within a projected timeframe. They described the unanticipated need to get a job to help pay off their outstanding tuition or to contribute to the household income. Therefore, working and not attending school just did not feel right when they should have been in school. One of the seven participants mentioned that her life had not been negatively impacted by withdrawing from the university and did not provide any further explanation.

The participants who mentioned their lives had been impacted by their withdrawal from the university provided detailed, expressive answers. For example, F05 smiled and said,

> Well, I felt like something was missing. I had gotten used to at least going to school and checking my e-mail for homework. I felt like I needed to find a way to pay off my tuition balance and get back into school.

F04 indicated that she felt she was missing out on something by not being in school, yet she knew that life events like leaving school do happen. The participant went on to say, "I incurred an unexpected bill that my parents are struggling to pay off, so I can get a transcript for my new school." F01 recognized the importance of pursuing a degree when she stated,

> Jobs are really hard to find. I am staying out a semester, so I am a little behind of where I anticipated on graduating in 2020. But I probably will finish. I am not one of the first people in my family to go to college. But I will be the first to finish. I will attend a community college. I will definitely be somewhere. I do feel disappointed.

In contrast, F07 was optimistic about her withdrawal and stated, "My life hasn't been negatively impacted. I would have liked to have continued my education at the institution, and will try to pursue later." When participants were asked if there had been anything they could have done to resolve the issues they encountered, the provided similar answers. Most of the participants were straightforward and stated that they did not exactly know what they could have done to resolve the issues that led to their withdrawal until after the fact. Some of the participants provided lengthy statements.

The participants' answers involved finding out the cost of the tuition, knowing more about the financial aid process, focusing more on education, and not being caught up in the social distractions. For example, F01 stated she did not know, "but I wish I could be like other students. Because trust me I know it will take me years to finish my doctor degree." Consequently, F01 stated she was unsure as she looked back at the situation: "Could I have fixed it? I really don't know." F02 mentioned that if she had been informed early in the process on the alternative ways of covering her account balance, "I would have been able to cover my balance and register for the next term. I guess be on top of my finances." M03 answered, "Yes, focus more on my education, and not allow my outside life to distract me." He continued, "I did not realize how much

money my mother had to pay out of her pocket and how it hurt her that I am not in school."

F05, an older learner, mentioned that if she had asked earlier about additional financial assistance, "it would be a little easier, and I would have been able to continue, instead of withdrawing." The problem she had was not being able to secure her state grant, even with the assistance of her Promise Coach. F07 mentioned that the college environment is more independent, and "you have to pace yourself and have a plan on how to manage your own time and study." When the participants indicated whether they had any thoughts of returning to the University or continuing their education at a different school, their answers were unanimous that they were planning on continuing their education, whether it was at the University or another institution.

The majority of the participants had taken steps to move forward by obtaining their transcripts to transfer to another school, several were working to resolve the financial aid holds on their accounts so they could return to the University, and one was already registered at another school. F05 represented participants' steps to move forward when she said, "It is my intention to return to the University." She explained the location is convenient between work and home, and "I see myself as an alumnus." F04, however, stated that she was planning on attending another university and "that is why I am trying to pay off the bill and get my transcript to send to my new school." M03 simply replied, "I realize I need a college degree because life is way too hard for a high school diploma only and a part-time job." F02 described plans to return to school at a much later time: "I plan on returning fall 2018. I am getting a really good job that will contribute to my educational expense." Likewise, F01 also planned to return to college, indicating she is

not the first in her family to attend college but she "will be the first to earn a degree." She also mentioned that she would stay out a semester and return to a community college. She said, "I feel disappointed," for not attending and having to delay her study.

Answers to the Guiding Questions

The one-on-one interviews allowed the participants to provide data, which after being transcribed and coded, resulted in four themes. Based on data from the four themes mentioned above, information emerged to address the four guiding questions for this research. What follows below is a summary of the findings pertaining to each of the four guiding questions. Also, the data relating to the second guiding question were used to recommend an administrative training to aid in the development of programs to attract and retain entering freshmen students.

Question 1. The first question was What causes entering freshmen students in the Promise Program to withdraw from the University during their first year of enrollment? Many entering freshmen students are simply unaware of and unprepared for the challenges that await them as they attempt to attain their educational goals (Aljohani, 2016; Bean, 1980; Bean & Metzner, 1985; Pascarella & Terenzini, 1980; Pluut, Curseu, & IIies 2015; Tinto, 1993). Students are academically and socially impacted in various ways. During this study, it became evident that for some of the participants, a variety of academic and social issues, as well as factors outside the University's control, presented as challenges for students to continue their education. Thus, the University had little to no impact on improving students' persistence.

Participants reported a variety of issues that contributed to their attrition. The issues stemmed from students' expected relationships with faculty or staff, which never

materialized. Students' dissatisfaction with teaching quality, organizational adjustment, inability to integrate into the University, career choices, and the process of becoming more independent in their personal lives impacted their choices. Students also indicated their ability to manage school work and fit into the academic environment as major contributing factors to their ability to fully assimilate and feel connected to the campus. Students' measuring their learning skills against their classmates' learning skills was another critical factor in their decisions to withdraw.

This findings of this research study aligned with previous indications that entering freshmen student retention has been a long standing concern for colleges and universities (Meyer & Marx, 2014). Students' withdrawal has been a concern since the induction of performance indicators. Researchers are still trying to identify the common denominator that negatively impacts entering freshmen's persistence to succeed in their studies.

The findings of this study also aligned with previous findings regarding the prevalent factors in higher education that lead to entering freshmen students' withdrawals. For example, Brunner, Wallace, Reymann, Sellers, and McCabe (2014); Reilly (2014); and Hovdhaugen (2015) mentioned that entering freshmen students' commonly report the need for validation, recognition, and respect. During the interviews, participants clearly indicated that each participant's reasons for withdrawing varied across the spectrum. Students mentioned they experienced homesickness, loneliness, depression, isolation, and not feeling smart enough to pass some of their courses. When they did not feel connected several weeks into the semester, withdrawal from school resulted from lack of inclusivity.

According to Shuman (2014) and Pruitt and Absher (2015), students' reasons for withdrawing are multiplicities, and many students may start college with a strong ambition to graduate, but many face barriers to achieving their aspirations. Research by Cattarall et al. (2014), Higgerson and Buckley (1983), Noel (1978), and Terenzini et al. (1996) suggested that students do not always express their real reasons for leaving an institution, and no one negative encounter causes a student to withdraw. Many entering freshmen are uncertain about the pathways to college (Choy, Horn, Nunez, & Chen, 2000; Smith & Zhang, 2010). Also, many students have few resources to help them meet commitments and demands, and some students have limited access to resources, receive little encouragement from their families, and have fewer positive educational experiences (Collier & Morgan, 2008; Pruitt & Absher, 2015; Thomas, 2014).

Participants offered a range of reasons for withdrawing, ranging from the faculty strike to having too much work with not enough time to study and complete the assignments. They also provided more personal answers, such as not being ready for college, using the University as a place holder for one term, and experiencing minimal family support. The participants seemed positive about being able to contribute to the study, but they also seemed a little unsure about the relevance of their experiences and the value this information would be to the University.

Question 2. The second question was What can the University do to improve the educational and support services that it provides to its students? Students expect to feel valued; to receive welcoming, reflective, supportive, and autonomous academic leadership; and to perceive that consideration and insight has been applied to meeting their needs (Herbert, Baize, & Latz, 2018; Latz, 2017). While the students' answers to

what the University could do to improve its educational and support services varied, findings in this study aligned with those from past researchers (e.g., Delaney, 2008; Nilson, 2016; Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005), who reported that both formal and informal interactions with faculty positively impacted students' experience at the institution and improved the adjustment levels of university students. Findings indicated the University needs to assure that the strongest teachers instruct in critical introductory courses, especially in the areas in which students experienced the most difficulty.

In response to this question, each participant provided reasons that were relatively similar, including offer a forum for freshmen students to meet their peers, lock in tuition, offer more scholarships, employ caring staff and faculty, and provide more flexible class schedules that meet students' needs. According to Armstrong and Hamilton (2013), Lee and Kramer (2013), and Lehmann (2014), the usual cultural that determines campus life intensifies class differences, and social class shapes the behavior of college students. Students from similar class backgrounds share financial, cultural, and social resources, as well as lived experiences, which shape their college orientation and the agenda they can readily pursue (Armstrong & Hamilton, 2013). However, participants also suggested different measures related to their individual needs, such as developing a first-year freshmen curriculum to acclimate entering students to their new environment, allotting more time for academic advisors to really advise students, providing knowledgeable tutors, assigning fewer students to each Promise and success coach, employing Enrollment Coaches who are personable and receptive, providing clubs hours for evening students, providing less expensive residence, and paying more attention to the freshmen in their first year.

Many entering freshmen students are basically unaware of the expectations and stresses of the transition from high school into higher education (Holmegaard, 2013). One option would be for the University to focus more on establishing learning communities that enable freshmen students to progress as a cohort with the anticipation of fostering a student peer relationship. These communities would accommodate collaborative efforts to increase student success with more focus on informing students before they begin classes about the academic resources and support available on campus, financial aid, and curriculum advising. The University could provide more quality time for career mentoring by faculty, Promise Coaches, and Enrollment Services Coaches and improve students' awareness of and access to internal and external student activities.

Participants implied the University should continue to focus on providing personal attention and low faculty/staff-to-student ratio. Participants could benefit from a better financial aid package that encompasses institutional scholarships, grants, work programs on and off-campus, fewer loans, and a locked-in tuition for the four years until graduation. Relationships and a sense of security were also at the forefront of students' needs. Participants expressed congruent opinions during the interview process, such as that the University should require more involvement from administrators with entering student transition. Educational transitions are unavoidable from elementary school to college and on into the workforce or a post-secondary education (Holmegaard, 2013). Researchers have established that ignoring the importance of developing social relationships will negatively affect the development and subsequent building of learning communities (Brooman & Darwent, 2014; Fowler & Mayes, 1999; Kreijns, Kirschner, & Jochems, 2002; Laing & Laing; 2015; Rouke, Anderson, Garrison, & Archer, 1999;

Short, Williams, & Christie, 1976; Thomas, 2014; Tinto, 1975, 1987; 1997; 2000;) and that social presence creates a learning environment that students perceive as warm, collegial, and approachable, rendering group interactions appealing, engaging, and intrinsically rewarding.

Question 3. The third question was What are the barriers that entering freshmen students experience that lead to their withdrawal from their respective programs? Many entering freshmen students are simply unprepared to handle the differences they find between college and high school (Holmegaard et al., 2013). Students may be psychologically, socially, and financially unprepared for college. During this study, it became clear that for some of the participants, a variety of personal issues and factors outside the University (and over which the University could have little or no impact) challenged their ability to stay in school. Among these factors were health issues, changing employment or hours of employment; loss of job or parent's loss of job; excessive financial hardship; childcare issues; excessively long commute; wanting to be closer to home, friends, family; or the need to get further away from home.

Connectedness to the University was another major contributing factor to a student's sense of belonging, which was critical to retention. This sense of connectedness may occur on several levels, including with classmates, individual faculty or staff, administrators, enrollment and success coaches, advisors, or in clubs and other student organizations and activities. According to O'Keeffe (2013) and Sun, Hagedorn, and Zhang (2016), a student's sense of belonging within the higher education environment can be indescribable. When the participants were asked about peers, every one seem reserved in making friends, and this reticence may have contributed to their isolation.

While several of the participants had a tendency to gravitate towards students enrolled in the same major, not one ever mentioned meeting someone who became their friend.

Question 4. The fourth question was What changes can be made to reduce entering freshmen attrition that could add to the University's existing practices in place, which could potentially be adopted by other higher education institutions? Faculty members, administrators, advisors, success and enrollment coaches, secretarial staff, and all other personnel on campus have the potential to build relationships with entering students in meaningful ways, thereby contributing to their retention. Researchers (e.g., Braskamp, Trautvetter, & Ward, 2008, 2016; Donahoo, 2008; Holland, 2015; Kuh, 2007; Pope, 2006) explained that to holistically educate and promote student development, everyone from faculty, student affairs, coaches, and other professionals must be involved.

Findings suggested the University could enhance its existing mentoring relationship by engaging all the coaches, advisors, and other administrative staff in academic and social frameworks with a focus on allowing students access to institutional support and resources. The University could also communicate available on-campus resources to entering students and their families earlier in the acceptance stage and provide more new student orientation workshops.

Further, the University administrators should emphasize developing and expanding their roles. The role of each club and student organization, mentors, and advisors should be revised to incorporate training in an effort to improve work with entering freshmen to build students' leadership skills, and encourage active student participation in various activities. The freshmen students could be trained to provide the same mentorship to the next class of incoming freshmen students as ambassadors

completing an internship or community service, thereby building a sense of integration and belonging for all students. Also, given the lack of communication about campus activities, the office responsible for student life and leadership development should promote campus events in a timely and enthusiastic manner, so that students can efficiently see and plan for what is happening on campus.

Overall, the students who participated even minimally in social engagement activity with peers were considered to be a contributing factor in students' feeling connected. When students leave because they feel they have not received high-quality service for their tuition dollars or because the University has not offered them a choice of viable career possibilities or treated them with respect and care, the University must honestly question its position on whose fault it is and what can the University do differently.

Conclusion

A qualitative case study was conducted to investigate why first-time entering freshmen students withdrew from the University in their first year of study. I employed purposeful sampling to identify seven participants and collected data through semistructured interviews. After transcription and analysis of data, four themes emerged: (a) faculty and staff interactions, (b) student service support, (c) social and academic challenges, and (d) a sense of belonging. The data indicated that the most impactful factor in entering freshmen students' progression in their first year is a sense of belonging. A variety of factors, including interpersonal and intrapersonal relationships, feelings of support and belonging, and lack of communication from the University influenced students' sense of belonging. The lack of a sense of belonging permeated the students'

entire educational experience and resulted in behaviors that led to their withdrawal from the University.

Because the data revealed that students' interactions with faculty and staff were impacted by numerous factors, a number of projects may be considered to address the problem at the case study site. One proposal is development of a position paper that would provide recommendations for policies and practices to promote an all-inclusive structure for the faculty and administration. These recommendations might include the following: begin acclimating the students into the University before they leave high school, connect entering freshmen students with one another by incorporating activities prior to the start of the semester, focus on building a better relationship between students and administrators, augment the recruitment and onboarding processes by using more up-to-date technology (Twitter, Instagram, Snapchat, Periscope) for communicating and improving students' written and verbal interactions between the students, staff, and administrators. Another option is to revise the First Year Experience course, which centers around students and administrators helping students succeed. Each of the above-mentioned projects would positively impact significant numbers of students. However, a third option, an administrative training program, based on input from the participants, was determined to be the most effective approach to provide entering freshmen students with a sense of belonging.

The findings indicated participants highly valued even their few experiences with administration and faculty. Administrators exerted significant influence on students, both positively and negatively. Administrators were the most helpful resource for participants when they felt no one was listening or understanding their dilemma. Moreover, nearly all

of the participants mentioned the administrators as a whole, or a particular administrator or staff member who helped them to feel someone cared for and supported them. Some of the administrators built students' confidence and provided them with mentoring and encouragement. In many cases, it was an administrative staff who made the difference in students' decisions to leave or stay at the institution.

As a way of leveraging this powerful dynamic to benefit more students, the culminating project for this study will be a training program for administrative staff to better understand how they influence students' acclimation and sense of belonging to the University. Unfortunately, the Promise Program had little impact on the participants, due to administrators' limited training and knowledge. The training program is intended to provide front-line administrative staff with effective academic, financial aid, and social information, as well as strategies to promote a sense of belonging and positive attitudes in entering freshmen students and help them achieve timely degree completion. This project may provide extensive and long-lasting impact on the case study site.

The qualitative exploratory case study design provided a framework based on Tinto's model of integration to make meaning of the freshmen students' experiences that resulted in their decisions to leave the University. The methodological section focused on the research design for the study to be used, and the justification of the case study methodology. The methodology section focused on how I selected the participants, gained access to the participants, protected the participants, and established a working relationship with the participants. Content in this section also emphasized the procedures I will use for data collection, data analysis, and dealing with discrepant cases. Finally,

credibility, accuracy, and reliability strategies were presented since these areas are important to any research study.

Section 3: The Project

Introduction

Based on the findings of this case study, a nontraditional professional development training program (Appendix A) for the Promise Program coaches, admission staff, enrollment services coaches, and department coaches was developed. This training program was intended to encourage the university's administration to be actively engaged socially and academically with entering first-year students during their transition to college. The students' sense of belonging, emotions, motivation, engagement, and acclimation can all be influenced by the administrators' efforts. This section includes a description of the project; its purpose, goals, and rationale; and a review of the literature. Furthermore, the section includes a list of resources, existing supports, potential barriers, and potential solutions to these barriers; a timeline for implementing the project; and a project evaluation form. This section concludes with a description of possible social change that may result from implementation of this project.

Description and Goals

A professional development program for the administrative staff of the university was appropriate for this doctoral project because such a program may provide a practical solution to help administrators and staff connect entering first-year students socially and academically to the higher educational learning environment. This type of training may contribute to the students' ability to succeed in earning a college degree. All of the participants in the study conveyed their concerns about the importance of feeling they mattered and experiencing a connection with caring people on campus to help them with the transition to college. As the research participants expressed, college leaders need to

be more aware of their role of providing an inclusive, holistic approach geared toward attracting, retaining, and graduating entering first-year students.

Every personal encounter a first-year student experiences with an administrator, whether inside or outside the classroom (Wang, Hsu, Campbell, & Coster, 2014), has the potential to make a student feel he or she matters and belongs at the university. This type of student support service provides an opportunity for students' acculturation to the university and minimizes the students' feelings of isolation (Latham, Singh, Lim, & Tara, 2016). The three goals of developing a training program for administrators were (a) make administrators aware of their role in the development of entering first-year students' acclimation to the university; (b) increase administrators' awareness of the importance of connecting with the entering first-year students and the end results that lead to the students' earning a degree; and (c) identify and apply academic advising, financial aid advising, and social engagement strategies to empower students with the correct advising and counseling.

Learning Outcomes

The following list represents learning outcomes that may improve administrators' and staff's communications with entering first-year students.

1. Administrators and staff will be instrumental in assisting students to complete their degrees through effective advising, registration, and exploring ways to finance their 4-year education while enjoying the benefits of being both a college student and a learner.

2. Administrators and staff will be able to recognize any emotional, academic, and social support students need to enhance their first-year educational success at the university and refer them to appropriate support services.
3. Administrators and staff will be able to use the training from the professional development workshops to improve their financial aid literacy and sensitivity skills of thoroughly listening to the students' when supporting entering students visiting the office.
4. Administrators and staff will be able to nurture the development of the student.
5. Administrators and staff will be able to exercise active listening to influence entering students in reaching their academic goals by creating an action plan designed to meet and support entering students' educational needs as they pursue a higher education at the university.

Rationale

A nontraditional professional development training program was the best option for this project because it appeared to be the most effective and viable means to holistically engage the university's administrative staff. Findings from this study indicated that higher education administrative professional development training is not as common as faculty professional development training. The recommended training could broaden the knowledge of the administrative staff at the university. Another rationale for administrative training is its potential impact on the university's retention of entering first-year students. This study's findings revealed that participants wanted a relationship with administrators and faculty members, and even the few encounters students reported

with faculty and administrators impacted them and their perseverance. However, these types of encouraging and supportive interactions with administration were not consistent throughout the students' enrollment at the university. Holistic training may fill gaps in the administrators' knowledge and practice so that they may provide more consistent and effective support for entering first-year students' transitions.

Further, the administrative professional development program may provide the most extensive and lasting impact on the case study site. Because entering students' first encounters are likely to be with the administrative staff on campus, a professional training program for administrators may have a significant impact on connecting students to the campus and minimizing entering students' attrition. Training the admissions counselors, Promise coaches, department coaches, and enrollment service coaches to provide mentoring, connect students with resources, and support students socially and academically may decrease the social and academic gap for entering students. Students may have one less challenge to overcome prior to setting foot in a classroom. The information provided in a professional development program may prepare administrative staff to support entering students as they transition academically into the classroom with less tension because of the relationship the student has already established with administrators and peers. As Strayhorn (2009) expressed, a sense of belonging is not just one element; rather, it is related to a number of factors including students' engagement and persistence, classrooms, course grades, and academic motivation. Implementing a professional development administrative training program was appropriate to foster a positive experience for first-year students at the university, and this training may provide an extensive and lasting impact at the study site.

Review of the Literature

A thorough review of literature provided the framework for the project, a professional development training program. The aim of the training project (Appendix A) was to provide professional development training to administrators campus-wide. The purpose of quality professional development training was to help administrators and staff enhance the entering first-year students' experience, sense of belonging, motivation, retention, and academic progress. The key terms in the initial search for pertinent literature were *entering freshmen retention*, *students' sense of belonging*, *entering students' social*, *financial*, *and academic barriers*, and *administration development*.

The terms used for the second literature review were *student engagement*, *student psychological emotions*, *a sense of belonging*, *administrators and staff professional development*, and *professional development to construct the most relevant data.* The need for quality professional development is acknowledged at the highest levels of modern Western society (Phillips, 2008), and students' learning outcomes may be enhanced by improving administrators' value. The professional development training was appropriate to address the problem, and criteria from the research guided the development of the training.

A professional development training offers an opportunity for reflection followed by a sense of self-awareness (Phillips, 2008). According to Dong, Campbell, and Vance (2017), Kennedy (2016), and Phillips (2008), professional development is based on different learning theories for students and teachers, and the key to any educational or school reform is that professional development be relevant and systemic. The literature reviewed for this study indicated terminology and training models that supported the

reasons for conducting a professional development training. This literature review added to the current study by providing research studies conducted by knowledgeable content experts. This literature overview also provided a comprehensive examination of relevant and current research regarding the enhancement of individual growth. Change and reform are inevitable with constantly evolving ideas of best practices in educational and social settings.

Professional development involves educating, motivating, and/or teaching concepts or strategies that improve a learner's outcomes (Blau & Snell, 2013; Brack, Millard, & Shah, 2008). Professional development refers to the consistent and unwavering internal training of personnel on an individual and group basis for achieving improvements in productivity and practice (Bernhardt, 2015). Professional development is a collaborative long-term learning strategy that nutures the professional advancement of personnel, teams, and an organization as a whole (Bernhardt, 2015).

According to Pitman (2000), the administrative side of higher education has been overlooked when the issue of quality service has been considered. For several reasons, it is natural for universities to remain focused on teaching and research, with the administrative tasks existing to support those aims (Pitman, 2000). Most of the research about professional development has been written by academics, who focused on the areas that concerned them most (Phillips, 2008). Researchers have not addressed the role of administrative staff in tertiary organizational culture (Phillips, 2008). According to scholars, students' intellectual and personal development requires the cooperation of others who work with students where students spend most of their time, and the tasks cannot be accomplished solely by faculty (Banata & Kuh, 1998; Bean & Bradley, 1986).

To treat the student as a customer requires providing the perception of quality of service, not only in academics or teaching criteria but also in the extent to which the student enjoys campus life (Banata & kuh, 1998). Student services, including administrative services, have an important role to play in this respect. In dealing with students, administrative staff move beyond the domain of service providers and incorporate a mentoring role into their processes (Pitman, 2000). Administrative staff tend to relate closely to students, perceiving them as internal customers (Pitman, 2000). Professional identity development is pivotal because it provides a frame of reference for administrators to understand their roles and adds to a sense of belonging within the community (Pitman, 2000).

This literature review contains scholarly articles from the Walden Library, the local university's library, and the Google Scholar search engine. I conducted searches through ERIC database, EBSCOhost, Taylor and Francis, and SAGE Premier. Because some of the articles were not completely accessible through Google Scholar, I redirected the search to the Walden Library or the local university's library. I located approximately 55 peer-reviewed articles but selected only 30 articles to be part of the literature review. A custom search filter was used to limit the search to sources 5 years old or fewer. Most of the selected articles were published within 5 years, but a few articles were older than that.

The following review covers the topics of students' sense of belonging, student engagement, student social engagement, as well as psychological interventions that can assist with entering first-year students' mindset. The review also includes research on the professional development techniques that administrators may use to improve students'

sense of belonging, motivation, and academic progress. The literature review concludes with a discussion of four essential training components that will be incorporated into the project. The research in this section provides the background and framework to develop rich, relevant content and the most effective presentation for the administrative development training program.

Sense of Belonging

A sense of belonging within the college educational environment can mean different things in different contexts to different people. According to Taormina and Gao (2013), people exhibit a strong need to create and preserve a sense of affection. A sense of belonging helps online students to "avoid the feeling of isolation [and] gives students a sense of self-direction and management, thus reducing loss of control, contributing to learner satisfaction, and increasing motivation" (Lehman & Conceicao, 2013, p. 65). According to Osterman (2000), a sense of belonging is "a feeling that members matter to one another and to the group, and a shared faith that members' needs will be met through their commitment to be together" (p. 324). Another definition offered a similar approach, referring to belonging as "students' sense of being accepted, respected, involved, supported, and encouraged by others (staff, faculty, and peers) in the academic classroom setting and of feeling oneself to be an important part of life and activity of the class" (Goodenow, 1993, p. 25). Strayhorn (2012) defined a sense of belonging in higher education as "students' perceived social support on campus, a feeling or sensation of connectedness, the experience of mattering or feeling cared about, accepted, respected, valued by, and important to the group (e.g. campus community) or others on campus (e.g., faculty, peers)" (p. 17).

According to Thomas (2014), the exact types of interventions or approaches are less important than the ways these programs are implemented and their intended outcomes. Belonging can be accomplished through interventions that result in (a) supportive peer relations; (b) meaningful interaction between staff and students; (c) developing knowledge, confidence, and identity as successful learners; and (d) a higher educational experience that is relevant to interests and future goals (Thomas, 2013). Further, a sense of belonging has been associated with academic motivation success (Vaccaro, Cano, & Newman, 2015). Even though freshmen orientation courses and intentional programming models play a large role within first-year experience programs, a number of factors influence a first-year student's decision to stay or to discontinue their study (Vaccaro et al., 2015).

For example, extended orientation camps and intentional programming are two of the effective ways to increase student success and retention on college campuses (Lien & Goldenberg, 2012). Extended orientation camps typically are offered to incoming first-year students. The foci of these camps are typically the university's tradition, student acclimation, and an introduction to the community, resources, and the university system overall (Brown, 2012; Cabrera, Miner, & Milem, 2013; Gass, Garvey, & Sugerman, 2003).

Typically, students who attended such camps perceive a larger sense of pride in the school and they are inclined to do better in their first year than students who do not attend (Wolfe & Kay, 2011). This inclination results from the relationships, support, and connections that students form with their classmates, peers, and university administrators through interactions and experiences (Braxton, 2001). These camps help create social

integration, pre-college expectations and preparedness, pre-college experiences, relationships with administrators and faculty, involvement on campus and in the community, and an established support structure within the university (Braxton, 2001; Crede & Neihorster, 2012; Sparkman et al., 2012). The camps offer experiential programming through social interactions with faculty, staff, and fellow students to create a special sense of belonging (Bell, Gass, Nafziger, & Starbuck, 2014). The camps and intentional programming efforts include a service learning or community service component that further strengthens the students' civility and connection to the campus and surrounding community (Huda, Mat Teh, Nor Muhamad, & Mohd Nasir, 2018).

Leading educators in the field of student affairs, such as Astin (1984), Chickering and Reisser (1993), Pascarella and Terenzini (1991), and Tinto (1987), have studied whether students can experience many different milestones in college that lead them to the decision to persevere and graduate or to leave and perhaps embark upon a different path in life. Within the last 20 to 30 years, educational leaders such as Upcraft and Gardner (1989); Upcraft, Gardner, and Barefoot 2005) conducted research about the survival and success of first-year students addressing topics such as retention, matriculation, and graduation. These issues are priorities, not only for the advancement of the students in terms of graduation but also for the reputation and financial stability of the institution (Hagenauer & Volet, 2014; Palmer, O'Kane, & Owens, 2009).

A further look into the meaning of belonging reveals that Maslow implemented the hierarchy of needs in 1954, a theory often cited in discussions of human motivation. The hierarchy is designed as a pyramid and includes five levels. Maslow asserted that the lower-level needs must be met before progressing to higher-level needs on the hierarchy.

Maslow (1970) further stated that after a person fills the basic need for the physiological aspects of life (food, water, shelter, and warmth) along with fulfilling their safety needs (security, stability, freedom from fear), the next logical human needs are social, which include a sense of belonging and a feeling of being loved.

Communities, memberships in social and academic clubs, friends, and family may fill an individual's social needs. Maslow's theory held that love and affection and a sense of belonging will emerge if both the safety and physiological needs of the individual have been met, leaving the person with a sense of contentment and satisfaction at being accepted. In a review of the literature, Thomas (2014) indicated that pre-entry interventions contributed to improved retention and success in higher education by providing students with information, knowledge, and skills to improve pre-entry decision making, retention, and success and by fostering early engagement to promote assimilation and social wealth.

The previous literature and findings of this study implied that adjustment to college life is challenging for most entering students, especially getting accustomed to the college expectations and life transitions. Even if the entering freshman is viewed as intelligent, he or she is an alien in this new educational environment. Academic, intellectual, and social barriers may distract and impede students' transition into college. These factors leave the students overwhelmed emotionally, socially, and academically. Although the primary goal of college is to become academically equipped for the workforce, the social aspect of college integration is also crucial, because if students feel socially isolated, they will not enjoy the college experience (Thomas, 2013) and are more likely to stop attending.

A student's sense of belonging is debased when students perceive threats in the educational setting. When students feel isolated, criticized, or ostrasized, they may perceive those feelings as proof they are not a part of the institution; thus, the students' stress level increases and their motivation diminishes, which makes it hard for them to focus academically (Yeager, Walton, & Cohen, 2013). Therefore, a holistic approach that encompasses a team of staff and administrators to support students' acclimation to the environment is pivotal to the success of the students. The initiative should operate campus-wide and should not be the responsibility of one person or one department (Mayo, 2013).

College transition entails a multitude of growing challenges and anxieties (Conley, Travers, & Bryant, 2013). Students face academically vigorous curricula and must be able to manage their time effectively. Socially, college students leave behind close family, friends, high school peers, and counselors. Having services to support students with psychological adjustment and stress management skills can help them deal with the anxieties most commonly encountered in college, as well as prevent future issues. Nonetheless, engagement is pivotal to students' transitions into the college environment and to their academic success.

Student Engagement (SE)

Students' sense of belonging and engagement to any new environment is critical to identity acclimation and a sense of control. Once students feel included and more in control of their environment, they are more likely to persist and succeed (Taylor & Duke, 2013). Students' sense of belonging on college campus is a pivotal part of their success (Smith, 2015) and engagement. The intentional and collaborative time, energy, efforts,

and attention of students and staff foster a dedicated commitment to the students' success. The National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE; 2017) indicated full-time students who lived on campus and who started at the same time at the institution tended to be more engaged than their counterparts.

Different groups of students perceived their campuses' climates and cultures differently (Harper & Newman 2015). The study of student engagement has gained considerable attention over the last decade, primarily in response to demands from the public, legislators, and accreditors that colleges and universities demonstrate the link between college attendance and student outcomes (Mertes & Hoover, 2014). According to Bryson (2014), the core of the student experience in North America lies in the many studies on the whole college experience of students. A primary focus of higher education is to enhance the student experience, specifically student engagement (Bryson, 2014). Engagement supports the development of relationships with others and promotes connectedness. Kahu (2013) identified engagement as a "multifaceted, complex meta-construct" (p. 2), which is empirically linked to desired outcomes that lead to student success.

Since student engagement is multifaceted, for this study, I primarily focused on supportive peer relationships, meaningful interactions between staff and students, psychosocial interventions, and a sense of belonging. Windham, Rehfuss, Williams, Pugh, and Lader (2014) asserted that intentionally developing student activities on college campuses is a way to nurture and capitalize students' engagement and a way to retain students.

Social Engagement

Because U. S. colleges and universities seldom acknowledge how social class can affect students' educational experience, Stephens et al. (2014) hypothesized that many first-generation students lack insight about why they are struggling and do not understand how students like them can improve. Research focusing on the reasons for student withdrawal implies that students rarely withdraw from college for a single reason; instead, in most cases, the situation is complex, and students leave as a result of a combination of inter-related factors. According to Thomas (2014), student engagement nurtures a sense of belonging through supportive peer relations, meaningful interactions with staff, and developing knowledge.

Social engagement may create a sense of belonging and offer informal support through interaction with friends and peers (Thomas, 2002; Tinto, 1993; Wilcox et al., 2005). Social engagement takes place in other spheres of the institution, according to Thomas (2014), including social spaces, clubs, societies, the student union, and student accommodations and shared living arrangements. Research by Kift, Nelson, and Clarke (2010); Krause et al. (2005); Tinto (2012); and Yorke and Longden (2008) indicated improving student retention and success by easing the transition and first-year experience is widely accepted as an effective institutional strategy.

Findings from this study aligned with evidence from NSSE (2017) that these services often add to developing students' abilities to participate and belong in higher education (Mellard, Krieshok, Fall, & Woods, 2013; Wood, 2012). Therefore, increased student retention relates to student participation on campus outside of classes. Another important factor mentioned throughout the literature pertaining to institutional support

was the people who implement the programs and initiatives for students. Often, educational staff support programs and services designed to increase student success, but then leave their positions within five years (Alexander & Gardner, 2009; Bowles, Fisher, McPhail, Rosenstreich, & Dobson, 2014; O'Keffee, 2013).

Enhancing the transition and the first-year experience improves student retention and success, and is widely observed as a priority in higher education (Thomas, 2014). Therefore, creating a sense of belonging with and among entering freshmen is a holistic approach that must begin early and continue throughout the lifecycle of the students' studies (Wood, 2012). Furthermore, supportive peer relationships add to students' positive experiences.

Supportive Peer Relations

Human esteem needs include attention, confidence, freedom, independence, recognition, and self-respect (Maslow, 1954). Findings of this research implied a successful end result should achieve an effective all-inclusiveness with students from the same program and or interest over an extended period of time and formation of informal opportunities for students to get to know administrators. According to Crossing et al. (2008) and Harvey et al. (2006), an effective induction is pivotal to students' transition into higher education and to subsequent retention and success. Induction activities have an impact on retention and success through (a) socialization and formation of friendship groups that provide a support network and promote social integration, (b) informing expectations of higher education and helping students to be effective learners by developing their confidence and their academic skills, and (c) developing relationships

with members of staff, allowing students to approach them subsequently when they need to.

According to Luke, Redekop, and Burgin (2015), first-generation college students experience a variety of unique challenges in navigating college compared to non-first-generation-college-student peers online. College literacy must be up-to-date, compatable with industry demands, sufficient to meet students' needs, and appropriate to engage students in understanding the financial, social, and academic expectations and procedures. Having friends to discuss academic and non-academic issues both in the classroom and outside of the classroom, is crucial to the students' survival on campus. Friends' and peers' relationships can have a range of positive impacts on student experience. Facilitating social integration in the academic setting is particularly important as it develops cohort identity and belonging to the program. Many students do not have the opportunity to develop friendships in other settings. Therefore, academic staff can also promote social integration through induction activities, collaborative learning and teaching, field trips, peer mentoring and staff-organized social events.

Meaningful Interaction Between Administrators, Staff, and Students

A study of the literature revealed a direct correlation between faculty and student interaction and student retention in higher education (Barnett, 2010; Braxton & McClendon, 2001; Cejda & Hoover, 2010; Deil-Amem, 2011; Halpin, 1990; Pascarella & Chapman, 1983; Tinto, 1987, 2012). To prevent students from leaving college early in the semester, McClenney (2007) argued that intervention must take place upon the students' arrival to the college, and engaging students early on campus could have a positive impact on retention. Thus, institutional efforts to create a meaningful interaction

with entering freshmen should be proactive, rather than reactive, because when most entering first-year students' expectations are met, they are more inclined to stay in school and succeed (Pleitz, McDougall, Terry, Buckley, & Campbell 2015).

One of the most important faculty student interactions, according to Ryan (2013), is academic advisement sessions. Based on Ryan's study, "first-time students do better during their first term and are more likely to be retained if they know their academic advisor and meet with him or her regularly during their first semester" (p. 133.). Activities should be created to entice students to become a part of the opportunities. According to Bers and Schuetz (2014), positive initial engagements with college staff, faculty, and advisors create students' confidence during the transition into college.

According to NSSE (2017), first-year students whose expectations for faculty interactions were met were more inclined to return to school the following semester. Administrators and counselors must pay close attention to the barriers (Windham et al., 2014) that keep students from returning to college. Offering activities that are relevant, informative, and pertinent to students' current interests and future aspirations is important to the students' experience. All activities should encourage collaboration and engagement with fellow students and University staff. In addition, the extent and quality of student engagement should be monitored, and staff should follow up and act to remedy evidence of low levels of engagement. According to Hossler, Ziskin, and Gross (as cited in Windham et al., 2014), administrators need not strive for "solving all retention problems with a single sweeping effort, but improve student persistence through organized programs supported by adequate funding, administrative oversight, and favorable campus policies" (p. 3).

Research by Baumgart and Johnstone (1977), Bentley and Allen (2006), Chickering and Hannah (1969), Dodgson and Bolam (2002), and Eaton and Bean (1995) indicated students who most need support often are the ones who decide to not participate in activities. To minimize student attrition, Windham et al. (2014) suggested counselors should focus more on increasing student retention by devoting time spent with students discussing what is important and directly related to students' goals. These efforts may result in an increase in student retention.

While Tinto's (1975) model is prominent in the literature, additional retention models have also emerged. For example, Bean, in his student attrition model, moved away from the sociological underpinnings of Tinto's model and focused on psychological factors (Bean & Eaton, 2000). According to Fike and Fike (as cited by Mertes & Hoover, 2014), Bean hypothesized that psychological factors, including intent, coping skills, self-efficacy, and locus of control, all interact with a student's background characteristics to influence how she or he interacts with the college or university. According to Mertes and Hoover (2014), community college students are often unprepared for college-level coursework, as indicated by their reading, writing, and mathematics scores and based on results of the National Education Longitudinal Study in 2007-2008, which indicated 40% of students took remedial courses. These variables, according to Mertes and Hoover (2014), put college students at risk of not succeeding academically.

A lack of institutional support around the social integration of a student can cause any first-year program to fail. To gain a successful commitment from university officials, First-Year Experience programs must be part of a strategic plan, one that involves more than any one individual, team, or department. The program must be inter-departmental

and rely on multiple departments and leaders (Alexander & Gardner, 2009; Barefoot, 2000).

In addition to the students' having meaningful interactions with staff, supportive peer relationships, and being socially engaged, nurturing the psychosocial aspects of students' beliefs and how they perceive themselves in comparison to other students requires psychological intervention resources. Every student deserves to feel and believe they fit in with people who have different backgrounds and deserve the same right to attend college and succeed. However, Mancuso, Newton, Kim, and Wilcox (2013) mentioned that "retaining students until graduation is said to be a direct fulfillment of the mission of institutions of higher education" (p. 243). According to Seidman (as cited by Mancuso et al., 2013), early detection of students' needs with related plans of action are important to promote the overall success of the student. Research by Krumrei and Newton (2009); Lounsbury, Fisher, Levy, and Welsh (2009); Peterson, Sasillas, and Robbins (2006); and Tinto (1987, 2005) revealed many factors associated with students' unsuccessful attempts at achieving their educational goals. Having positive emotions regarding their personal and college satisfaction is critical to students' successful outcomes in higher education. Although colleges and universities cannot be solely responsible for the students' decision to stay or depart, they can play a major role in influencing students' decisions to continue through graduation via the interactions they have with the student and the programs they implement.

Psychological Interventions: Bridging the Performance Gaps to Student Success

Based on a 2016 report by the Center for Collegiate Mental Health (CCMH), a major repository that collects mental health data on college students from over 400

colleges and universities, the incidence of college students' seeking mental health treatment increased over 50% since 2015. More than 150,483 college students sought mental health treatment from 3,419 clinicians in over 1,034,510 appointments.

Stress comes from an individual's realization that he or she is not able to manage the demands of many life situations (Durand, McNeil, Harding, & Dobransky, 2015). Similarly, according to Roy, Sailesh, and Doshi (2015), students may be impacted by stress that adversely affects their academic performance and aspects of their personal life. Steele, Spencer and Aronson (2002), Wilson (2011), and Yeager and Walton (2011) found that addressing students' social distresses or fears, or simply treating the anxieties such processes created, can make a significant difference in an individual's learning outcomes. Tresco, Lefler, and Power (2010) asserted that an intervention known as self-affirmation can curb these negative outcomes. The interventions bring about a more expansive view of the self and its resources, weakening the implications of a threat for personal integrity.

For an individual to preserve his or her integrity of self, Cohen and Sherman (2014) found that a sense of personal adequacy is important so to not increase stress and self-protective defenses, since these behaviors can impact performance and growth. Therefore, to support college students' success, institutions must incorporate psychosocial and psychological interventions to improve students' subjective experiences (Wilson, 2011). According to Spitzer and Aronson (2013, 2015), in addition to cultural influences and universal cultural norms, psychological issues impact students and affect academic success and retention; thus, these issues need to be acknowledged and addressed. Educational institutes should adopt simple relaxation activities that provide

support for students' success and wellbeing (Roy et al., 2015). Cohen and Sherman (2014) indicated that "timely affirmations have been shown to improve education, health, and relationship" (p. 333), and interventions and experiences can have lasting consequences when administered effectively.

Contrary to the findings of Cohen and Sherman (2014), Spitzer and Aronson (2013), and Kirp (2013) asserted that educational institutions question and potentially overlook the potential of psychological interventions as a means to bridging the performance gaps and improve learning in higher education. According to Farrington (2013), because of the lack of attention to educational reform efforts aimed at the psychological side of the students' experience, two students who are both receiving low grades in a course may manifest two different psychological reactions to the same experience. Educational innovations and extensive reforms have been common approaches to narrowing performance gaps among groups of students. Nonetheless, Spitzer and Aronson (2015) argued that psychological interventions can be administered with far greater efficiency and success than the general, costly approaches, traditionally used to change the culture of underachieving groups. These researchers determined that a more effective way of dealing with performance gaps is to acknowledge the highly social and psychological nature of learning, motivation, and performance. Although financial resources and academic skills are necessary, these two factors do not guarantee success for entering freshmen students as they transition into the world of higher education.

Psychological Influential Factors on Academic Success

Achievement gaps often result from a psychological dilemma in which students feel a threat to their identity or sense of belonging: "Psychological interventions work by

helping students cope with threats to identity, which can impair intellectual functioning and motivation identity" (Spitzer & Aronson, 2015, p. 4). Psychological interventions help with mindset because so much of teaching and learning is social. Psychological interventions can raise students' confidence and increase their willingness to work harder, while improving their feelings of belonging in school. These components are essential considerations in raising student achievement and reducing persistent achievement gaps (Yeager, Henderson, Paunesku, Walton, Mello, Spitzer & Duckworth, 2014).

The potential impact of psychosocial interventions is often hard to understand because the psychological factors that affect learning cannot be easily determined (Yeager & Walton, 2011). The complex and invisible psychological forces that impact learning include worries about ability, stereotypes, and belonging. Yeager and Walton (2011) compared this dynamic to the numerous, invisible, and interconnected forces that miraculously cause a plane to fly. Additionally, reasonable but often uncertain perspectives regarding the prevalent gaps in these types of psychological services persist. The cost for institutions to fully address these needs would be significant, and psychological interventions are often ignored because they seem trivial compared to traditional reforms, as individuals believe that large problems require large solutions.

It is important to realize that psychological interventions do not replace traditional educational reforms. Psychological interventions do not provide academic content or skills, nor do they improve teaching. Nonetheless, psychological interventions can change students' mindsets to allow them to be more prepared to learn (Yeager & Walton, 2011; Yeager et al., 2013). According to Sriram (2010), psychological interventions "open the door [to learning] and encourage students to walk through it" (p. 26). A student

would be more successful if he or she understood the importance of not yielding to familiarized behaviors and values and the value of embracing peers, faculty, and staff members with whom he or she interacts on a daily basis (Tinto, 1993).

Effects of Psychological Interventions

Some researchers refer to psychological interventions as a *holistic development* (Astin, 1991; Kuh, Shedd, & Whitt, 1987). Researchers have offered a consistent explanation for why psychological interventions are effective. Students who undergo psychological interventions experience a snowball effect; thus, small differences at an early stage can get magnified over time. The snowball effect can be particularly prominent in science and math, where subsequent learning builds on an earlier foundation of knowledge, making it increasingly difficult to catch up later (Miyake et al., 2010). The effect can also be seen as coursework gets more challenging and the potential for difficulty increases, compounding the impact of identity threat. Further, students' beliefs about ability and expectations for success can be fragile, especially when students face a challenge they have never encountered before (Schechtman et al., 2013). This reasoning validates decisions to incorporate psychological interventions in introductory and gateway courses. According to Farrington et al. (2012), correlation exist between mindset, perseverance, and academic performance. The researchers found that strong academic performance was predicated upon a positive mindset, and the opposite occurred with a negative mindset.

Psychological interventions work by eliminating the self-reinforcing cycle and redirecting the student on a more effective cycle wherein success and positive expectations are mutually inclusive. These slight changes in mental trajectory can cause

lasting improvements in academic achievement (Farrington et al., 2012). According to Thoitis (1986), when a student perceives his or her environment as supportive, the psychological impact of stressful events decreases. Spitzer and Aronson (2015) found that changes are needed to address the persistent and growing gaps in learning because of psychological, interpersonal challenges for students.

Contrary to Spitzer and Aronson's beliefs, Farrington et al. (2013) asserted that it is unclear that poor social skills are associated with negative outcomes and that most research on social skills comes from a broader spectrum. However, identifying the importance of psychological factors offers the possibility of emerging interventions that do not depend upon structural barriers or political change; nevertheless, these measures can empower staff and students to make the best of unequivocal opportunities (Fergus, Noguera, & Martin, 2014). Thus, a holistic intervention based upon the students' continual cost/benefit analysis; student engagement; faculty and administrative interactions; organizational, economical, and psychological factors; self-affirmation, and belongingness is likely to decrease threats to student identity and increase achievement.

Professional Development Training

Administrators and staff may improve students' transitions to the first year of college. Considering the amount of influence that administrators and staff have on participants at the case study site, providing the administrators and staff with strategies to improve students' sense of belonging is a potentially effective approach to addressing the problem of entering freshmen students' attrition. The strategies for improving entering freshmen students' retention will be shared through a professional development training program for administrators and staff at the case study site.

Professional development can be highly complex and multifaceted; it can be a long-term collaborative learning strategy that nurtures the professional advancement of personnel and teams; it is a way for practitioners to understand the need for change, and it involves continual learning; it focuses on the needs of participants and student learning requirements (Saroyan & Trigwell, 2015). According to Saroyan and Trigwell (2015), professional development is a phrase found in literature related to the quality of teaching. Bernhardt (2015) defined the term as a continuous and consistent internal training of personnel on an individual and group basis for achieving improvements in productivity and practice. It is a transformational change that needs to be brought to the forefront (O'Toole et al., 2014).

Professional development involves educating, motivating, and teaching concepts or strategies that improve a learner's outcome (Blau & Snell, 2013). Professional development improves a learner's outcome by altering academic, administrative, institutional, and community or instructional behavior for the administrators, staff, faculty, and student body in ways that generate academic success (Taylor & Znajda, 2015). The sessions generally provide learning goals, instructional techniques, learning strategies, outcomes, methodologies, networking opportunities, and evaluation that researchers use to improve teaching and learning (Hum, Amundsen, & Emmioglu, 2015).

The purpose of professional development training programs is to foster a team of skilled and competent leaders with knowledge, skillsets, and resources to advance their careers (Lino, 2014; Saleem, Masrur, & Afzal, 2014). When individuals participate in professional development training, the trainer often employs role-playing to increase the awareness and effectiveness of the training or teaching practice for the benefit of the

participants (Korthagen, Atteema-Noordewier, & Zwart, 2015). Professional development leaders must possess unique training abilities to make role modeling pertinent to those participating in the training (Korthagen et al., 2015).

All participants must be aware of the factors involved in organizing a professional development training, namely governance, strategic planning, the role of administration, and budgeting (Korthagen et al., 2014). *Professional development* refers to the development of a person within his or her professional role (Lino, 2014). According to Saleem et al. (2014), professional development in higher education is an intentionally designed, ongoing, and systematic process that focuses on improving the individuals' professional knowledge, skills, and attitudes so students' learning outcomes may be impacted positively. This process leads to changes in beliefs, which in turn lead individuals to see things through a different lens (Saleem et al., 2014).

Assessing Professional Development

The role of assessment or an evaluation component within a professional development training provides information on the impact of the sessions and solicits recommendations and ideas on techniques for making improvements (Newton & Ender, 2010; Suskie, 2018). Assessment-oriented outcomes are based on the impact the training has made, and ultimately, assessment should encompass a cohesive learning experience. Evaluations often include specific critical questions such as the following:

- What were the key techniques taught in this session?
- Can these techniques be used effectively in day-to-day situations?
- Was the session informative and was it applicable to the school's needs?
- Did the activities match the learning goals?

- What can be improved in future professional development sessions?

Often, the focus during measurement tends to be on output or, for instance, the number of participants attending the training (Miyamoto & Sono, 2012). The primary objective should initiate change that would require a collaborative effort between the administration, staff, and faculty. Meetings should be scheduled on a regular basis and should focus on increasing awareness of best practices (Bleicher, 2014). Resources such as campus life activities, student-faculty interactions, motivational speakers, professional webinars, and on- and off-campus workshops, the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator, and Toastmaster meetings should all be incorporated to guide the change forward (Cruise & Wade, 2016).

Based on the structure of the school, training sessions may be designed in various ways. According to Schnoebelen (2013) and Staman, Visscher, and Luyten, 2014), the sessions should be aimed at improving instructional practices with the intent to increase learning outcomes. The training sessions should consist of on-going conversations, goals, learning objectives, program evaluations, and planning objectives throughout the year. These sessions are geared to prepare administrators and staff to implement constructive techniques to effectively support entering students without costing the school (Harpell & Andrews, 2010; Nichols & Sheffield, 2014). Administrators and staff will have a better opportunity of effectively assisting entering freshmen students with their academic, social, and emotional needs through certain instructional techniques.

Many entering students struggle with the concept of enrolling in college. Transitioning from an old environment (high school), into a new environment, is often viewed by entering freshmen students as overwhelming and isolated (DiRamio & Jarvis,

2011). Entering freshmen students enter college for various reasons, such as to be the first in their family to earn a degree, to have a better quality of life, to obtain a college degree, to get away from home, to avoid domestic troubles, or to provide for their parents and siblings. It is vitally important that administrators, staff, and faculty fully grasp the underlying issues involved in the freshmen student transition process (DiRamio & Jarvis, 2011).

When administrators and staff receive adequate training through professional development opportunities, they become more effective and efficient in assisting entering students through the college transition. The principles that informed this report's framework were contingent upon the literature that focused on principles of (a) active listening, (b) building on the needs and concerns of participants, (c) providing transfer of knowledge, and (d) promoting engagement at the team and school levels (Zwart et al., 2015), notwithstanding that professional development can be accomplished through a myriad of approaches.

Active listening. Through active listening, effective communication can be accomplished (Brownell, 2016). During the training workshops, administrators and staff will be introduced to effective listening technique skills to assist freshmen students' onboarding process and transition to college. The participants mentioned that they did not feel that faculty, staff, and administrators took the time to listen to what they expressed as their needs, and until they are able to express their needs and feel heard, freshmen students will continue to face social and academic challenges, in addition to feeling lonely.

Therefore, increasing entering student retention involves focusing on students' needs, networking, creating a sense of community, and engaging the student with ongoing orientation to all characteristics of the university during the first year (Latham et al., 2016). Most of the time, the value of active listening is unintentionally disregarded; therefore, it is imperative for administrators and faculty to learn and know how to listen to entering freshmen students. Brownell (2016) provided several key concepts regarding listening skills and claimed that listening may be the single and most important skill in facilitating personal and professional development:

- Listening begins with being fully engaged to hearing the student by clearing your mind of distractions.
- Listen to yourself, but also be sensitive to how your behavior affects others.
- Maintain eye contact with students while they are speaking.
- Be open to constructive feedback.
- Acknowledge that your comments originate from your point of view.
- Respond with positive comments or gestures that indicate you heard the students and value their words.
- Wait to respond to the students until after they are finished speaking, and avoid interrupting the conversation.
- Ask open-ended questions, allowing the person to speak freely.

Administrators who desire to support entering freshmen students can be a great motivational influence in helping the students to succeed in college. Students need not only academic support but also emotional support in the form of a mentor (Mayhew,

Vanderlinden, & Kim, 2010; Turner & Thompson, 2012). Active listening skills are a primary component of serving as a mentor to entering freshmen students.

Building on the needs and concerns of participants. Building on the needs and concerns of the participants includes identifying the characteristics of today's college students and the impact of those characteristics on institutional service expectations. Administrators and staff must receive adequate cross-training that includes knowledge of service principles and expectations to provide high quality customer service. Administrators and staff must be empowered with the ability to identify and develop their aptitudes and attitudes to foster the university's mission and goals. They must be able to see congruences between their individual needs, institutional goals, goals of the professional development, and student learning (Allen & Penuel, 2014; Bayer, 2014).

Relevance is closely related to goal congruency, and relevance is also important for professional development to be effective (Bernhardt, 2015). It is important to allow a way for participants to provide feedback, perhaps in focus groups, surveys, or open discussions, so that everyone feels welcome to share their perspectives and suggestions and express whether the professional development training provided any benefits (Bayer, 2014).

Enhancing and promoting transfer of knowledge. Enhancing and promoting transfer of knowledge is the third professional development principle. When participants are able to continuously apply what they learned in their work environments, transfer of knowledge occurs with their students and colleagues. According to Johnson, Robbins, and Loui (2015), transfer of knowledge can be accomplished by participants keeping journals of their experiences and sharing them in sessions with trainers and colleagues.

To have a lasting impact on learners, professional development must allow for long-term engagement (Bayer, 2014) or follow-up sessions as educators seek to implement their ideas. Enhancing and promoting transfer of knowledge can also take place through coaching and mentoring sessions in the work environment. Effective transfer of knowledge requires time and resources that are often neglected in professional development activities. The discontinuity of the training occurs because development programs are often short-term and lack the depth necessary to have a lasting impact on teaching skills (Bayer, 2014).

Engagement at the team and institutional levels. An effective professional development facilitator encourages learners to critically reflect on their role within the institution and explore how they support the institution's mission. Participants who are deeply engaged form a common language that connects theory, vision, and practice. As a way to deepen commitment and engagement, participants should be encouraged to publically share the learning processes that take place with others at the institution. This process may help them form a shaper identity within the institution and critically reflect on their progress to determine what still needs to be achieved (Zwart et al., 2014).

To ensure success of entering freshmen students and sustainability of the university, administrators and staff need to be made aware of support issues entering freshmen students encounter, internally and externally, and the need for accurate, consistent, and quality service,that will add to student success in higher education. Awareness of best practices across the university is equally imperative if administrators and staff are to positively impact entering students' success. This relationship is pivotal

and could lead to increased student academic success and retention (Turner & Thompson, 2014).

The University must support and provide administrators and staff, with on-going professional development training. According to Spady (1970), first-year transition and academic persistence is directly related to the level of social and academic experience. Kazempour and Amirshokoohi (2014) found quality professional development training exerted a direct impact on student achievement and social wellness. However, the scope and depth of this impact are difficult to measure, and many argue that attempting to quantify the influence of students' challenges (e.g., a student's family structures, a student's moving around from school to school due to family situation of instability or military service, or differing socioeconomic backgrounds can affect the learning outcomes of students) is a hopeless endeavor that leads to reliance on researchers' assumptions.

Administrators and staff who are unaware of their indifferent behavior towards entering students often are unable to relate to the potential challenges entering freshmen students encounter, such as the students' real academic aptitudes, how the students compare themselves to other students in the course, or the students' impractical expectations of their personal academic performance (Turner & Thompson, 2014). These challenges should be identified and communicated through professional development training to empower administrators and staff to develop a better understanding of how entering freshmen students think and how educators can reasonably accommodate students (Kuh, Kinzie, Schuh, & Whitt, 2011). Some entering freshmen challenges may include the following:

1. Parents not supportive of student attending college,
2. Overall process of understanding and navigating the financial aid process,
3. Work or responsibility at home conflicting with classroom schedules,
4. Having to work to help pay for education, or
5. Anxiety of not knowing anyone on campus and being in a new environment.

Regardless of the type of training, professional development should address the following four objectives. First, students need an on-going collaborative relationship with an administrator or staff member, similar to what the student was accustomed to in high school (Turner & Thompson, 2014). Second, the challenges faced by entering freshmen students, both inside and outside the classroom and in both formal and informal environments, should be carefully taken into consideration. Third, various advising and coaching techniques and strategies should be designed that contribute to the educational experiences of the student (Turner & Thompson, 2014). Finally, learning goals should be established that incorporate both assessment and feedback and involve activities that are oriented toward learning (Anagnostopoulos, Sykes, McCrory, Cannata, & Frank, 2010; Suskie, 2018; Turner & Thompson, 2014). Assessments, as well as outcome-based objectives, should be created for establishing best practices content supported by extensive research (Suskie, 2018).

The training of administrators and staff should be developed by individuals who are devoted to the success of students and understand the various obstacles they face (Suskie, 2018). Professional development training from the workshops should include professional motivational speakers who understand entering freshmen students' obstacles at the university. Also, cross-training collaboration among coaches supports a better

understanding of how to support entering students' success. Utilizing professional development training may provide additional background information related to the problems of entering freshmen students transitioning into college. Change needs to be initiated by all parties to produce an enhanced synergy to support the entering students' educational experience.

Project Description

Interviewing entering freshmen students in one-on-one interviews allowed me to recognize their perceptions about the transition from high school to the classrooms of higher education at the University. The prospect of entering freshmen graduating from the university is dependent on their successful transition from high school dependency to the academic classroom and the support they receive from the University's administrators and staff. Many entering freshmen may not possess the skill sets to complete their higher education on their own. Therefore, a unique support system needs to be in place to assist these students in their quest for a higher education degree.

Findings from the study that led me to develop a professional development training were the interview data that supported the themes for the professional development training project (Appendix A). Four of seven participants indicated they believed the college lacked emotional and social support programs. In problem-solving this deficit, I developed a training module that can prepare administrators and staff to set up an entering freshmen students' support service. The goal of the project is to motivate and actively engage entering freshmen students to complete their college degree. This program is designed to provide entering freshmen students with several resources that support their emotional, social, and academic needs. With this program, resources would

be more available to entering students as a result of administrators' and staff members' participation in a professional development-training project.

This program involves administrators and staff becoming role models, guides or ambassadors, or mentors for students during their college years. Participants will include entering freshmen students who enrolled at the site as entering freshmen. The program will hopefully motivate entering freshmen students to complete their academic studies and ultimately obtain a college degree.

Potential Resources and Existing Supports

Colleges and universities around the world have attempted to increase student retention by providing supplemental instruction and academic, social, and financial counseling (Hutto, 2017). Many training and webinars are available online and provide an ideal opportunity to understand the challenges and experiences of entering freshmen students. The webinars offer information to administrators and staff about student learning, development, success in the first college year, communication, and supporting entering freshmen students' success. Also, administrators and staff have an opportunity to increase their understanding and education as they encounter entering students' concerns, accomplishments, and needs.

Some national organizations that provide entering freshmen-focused seminars are The Annual Conference on First-Year Experience, Students in Transition, The First-Year Assessment Listserv, Kognito Interactive, and The American Council on Education. Interactive online learning experience is available on Kognito Interactive for administrators and staff to better understand the experiences and needs of entering freshmen students. To assist educators, Kognito uses conversation to inspire, inform, and

help people change their lives. The focus of this training is to simulate an entering freshman's experience on the campus, as such experiences might prove to be rather perplexing for entering freshmen transitioning into their new environment.

The components of a successful development program incorporate learning goals, feedback and assessment measures, and other initiatives that present opportunities for learning (Berger, 2014; Noel Levitz, 2017). Practical application of formative assessment for the professional development training program can monitor skills the administrators and staff learned and allow them to demonstrate their understanding of concepts from workshop sessions. Facilitators, as well as administrators and staff, can employ feedback from formative assessments to improve services immediately and in the future. The formative assessments can also allow opportunities for administrators and staff to show their level of performance and provide the facilitator an opportunity to adjust the instruction as needed by the participants. In the professional development workshop sessions, several individuals contribute to the training material as it pertains to their expertise (Berger, 2014).

I chose to develop a professional development training program because it offered a distinctive approach to empowering entering freshmen students' transition and retention toward acquisition of a college degree. The rationale for designing this program was to enhance administrators' and staff's social and academic performance toward supporting entering freshmen students in attaining their objective of earning a college degree. The potential resources and prevailing support needed to adequately deliver the training consists of numerous resources, such as a large classroom with a sound system, a PowerPoint presentation, a large screen, a data projector, a video camera, round tables,

binders, notepads, pens, markers, and highlighters. The binders will be used throughout the training, and they are intended to be kept as a resource by the participants after the training. Each participant will receive handouts for the training at the beginning of the session, as well as a letter-size envelope with the assignments for the day and week.

Administrative support from institutional leadership will also be needed (Bond, Cason & Gray, 2015). In fact, administrative support will be important at any school that chooses to host the series of training. I would seek the approval of the Chief of Administration and Student Affairs, the Chief of Admission and Enrolled Strategy, and all academic departments and administrative offices that employ Enrollment Services Coaches. The potential participants will be selected by their supervisors, and they will receive an inter-department invitation to participate in the training.

Potential Barriers and Potential Solutions to Barriers

I anticipate several potential barriers; first, the timeframe for holding the sessions might conflict with other obligations administrators and staff members may have during the week. The amount of lead time may be an issue, since the institution's budget is prepared in the spring. The training proposal would have to be considered into the institutional budget no later than December, 2019. The allocation of financial resources to pay for the training and the priorities of the institutions is another potential barrier. Further, it is possibile that the funds for the training may not be available, which would also be another potential barrier.

The program consists of 3.5 days of training sessions for a total of 24 hours, and each participant will have to clear his or her calendar to attend the sessions. Another potential barrier is deciding which staff from the departments should attend the sessions,

since the departments cannot be left totally untended. However, participants will have to invest almost 3.5 days away from their daily tasks, which ultimately will be beneficial to students. Finally, the availability of space and number of occupants that could occupy the space could also be potential barriers.

Because administrators and staff have demanding schedules and workloads, and they are predominantly full-time employees, I will schedule appointments with the supervisors of the departments to ascertain the significance of the barriers. Having a good rapport with the departments will enable me to create the right strategies to promote the training.

Implementation

Implementation of the professional development training project will take place at the University in the spring semester of 2019. The 3.5-day training will deliver 24 contact hours. The first workshop session will feature a keynote speaker, myself, and a total of 30 participants including Promise Coaches, Enrollment Service Coaches, and Academic Department Coaches.

Day 1. During the first day's training session, administrators and staff will learn about each other's backgrounds and the importance of exceptional customer service. They will learn about the characteristics of exceptional customer service, the common problems entering students encounter transitioning into college, the importance of listening, the elements that influence effective listening, and how active listening can support entering freshmen. The goals of the first-day workshop are the following:

1. Provide everyone with an opportunity to get to know each other through ice breaker activities,

2. Make administrators and staff aware of effective customer service tools that can make entering freshmen students' transition into the University easier,
3. Make administrators and staff more aware of problems related to entering student success, and
4. Optimize proven research and interactive examples during this training session.

The findings from the interviews in this study indicated that entering freshmen students have concerns about transitioning from high school onto the campus and into the classroom. Participants also expressed the importance of support programs to enhance their academic progress. The keynote speaker, a tenured business professor, will serve as the workshop facilitator. His role of training administrators and staff about the importance of providing quality customer service to support entering freshmen students' success will be a positive step in incorporating the faculty to the training.

Day 2. On the second day, administrators and staff will learn how student employees fit into the mission and goals of the University. They will learn about the positive side of serving the public; how to address students in person, on the telephone, and via e-mail; how to assess situations, give referrals, or seek assistance; and how to lead with frontline strategies that support students in crisis. Participants will discuss the elements that support entering freshmen through academic remedial and developmental support and student services. A discussion of quality customer service will occur at the beginning of each session.

One of the themes derived from the student interview process was the lack of support they perceived because administrators, faculty, and staff treated them like

children and showed no interest in listening to what they had to say. The second-day workshop will bring awareness to administrators and staff about the significance of employing effective communication skills and of having accurate knowledge of the University's processes so they can enable students to navigate the University seamlessly. The participants also felt that administrators, staff, and faculty focused attention on the upper-class students and not on providing entering freshmen with the student services support to assist them in succeeding.

Day 3. The third workshop session with administrators and staff attending will focus on communication and helping entering freshmen students understand the University's enrollment process from completing their *to do* checklist in Admissions to securing financial clearance to continue their education without interruption. These issues emerged during the interviews with the participants as problematic. Therefore, this session will focus on the beginning phases of developing an action plan of best practices and administrators' and staff's support responsibilities.

The action plan will consist of making every administrator and staff aware of the issues entering students encounter and increasing communication among administrators. Participants will be requested to focus their action plan on ideas that may improve the culture and communication at the University to make it more welcoming and supportive to entering freshmen students. Participants will list no more than four suggestions in their action plans. The small groups of participants will share their ideas with each other and discuss the feasibility of the projects and how their suggestions align with others in the larger group. Participants will discuss the plans and record their ideas in journals for discussion on workshop Day 4. The collaboration and continuity of administrators and

staff working together will enhance communication and increase quality customer service skills, active listening, and sensitivity skills toward entering freshmen students' needs.

Day 4. The fourth session will continue with administrators and staff communicating ideas about how to implement their action plans. Participants will have the opportunity to reflect on their action plans and on what they have learned during the workshop. With the participation of the administrators, staff, keynote speaker, and myself, stakeholders will discuss where the development of the action plans goes moving forward. Suggestions will be encouraged from all participants in the open forum, and a representative will record the results on a white board for follow-up. After the four action plans have been identified, they will be presented to the University stakeholders for consideration. The report on the University-approved action plan by the University stakeholders will also require acceptance of the training, and the implementation process can begin. A progress meeting will be held during the following semester after the action plan is implemented. Attendees will be University stakeholders, administrators, and several entering freshmen students from the previous semester.

Roles and Responsibilities of the Researcher and Administrators

In my role as the researcher, it will be incumbent upon me to share the study's findings and the training proposal with the Chief of Administration and Student Affairs, Chief of Admission and Enrolled Strategy, the deans of the academic departments, the Dean of Students and Campus Life, and other stakeholders of the University. I will seek the assistance of the Associate Dean of the School of Business and Public Administration to request the assistance of Professor Aviles of the MBA Program as my keynote speaker to present training on customer service skills, and I will be responsible for the training on

the university's processes. I will develop and provide all the materials, outlined in the potential resources, and any additional materials that will be necessary for the development and presentation of the training program. I will coordinate with the information technology department to determine the training location and the available dates for training. The participants will be administrators and staff from the different enrollment services offices as approved by the academic departmental deans and administrative supervisors.

The participants will be full-time administrators and staff who work in various administrative areas. The participants will be active learners of the program and will also have the obligation to share their learning experience with their peers and immediate supervisors. The administrators will be responsible for continuously improving their techniques and applying what they learned in their day-to-day work. Once the training is completed, it is anticipated that all new staff will be required to participate in the training to be able to assist the entering students with their transition and address the students' needs. Additionally, the success of the training will come to fulfillment when the initiatives and strategies learned during the training are completed and results are evaluated.

I anticipate that once the content presented in the training is discussed and applied, administrators will have an opportunity to offer suggestions through the training assessment. Enrollment Services Directors, academic and administrative departmental deans, and trained staff will be key stakeholders who will initiate the implementation of the training for new hires. The training is intended to teach the administrative staff how to

instruct, lead, and guide entering freshmen students in their college transition and on to academic and social success.

Administrators will learn how to academically advise students. They will learn to teach students how to register online, complete their financial aid applications, navigate and understand their student self-service accounts. In addition, the participants will provide feedback on their satisfaction with the training and the learning experience. Lastly, the participants will have the opportunity to implement changes to the professional development training if the participants are not meeting the outcomes of the program. The administrators' ultimate mission is to motivate and encourage entering freshmen students and provide social, academic, and emotional support to them while they transition into college.

The keynote speaker will open each session by delivering training in customer service during the 3.5-day training. Administrators and staff will join efforts and suggestions to establish a university support guide. The key stakeholders for the project are the University administrators who manage the institution's resources, the administrators who will be the recipients of the training, and the entering freshmen students, who are expected to benefit from improved interactions with the administration.

Project Evaluation Plan

It is important to measure learning and satisfaction (Kirkpatrick, 1994; D. L. Kirkpatrick & Kirkpatrick, 2005, 2007; J. D. Kirkpatrick & Kirkpatrick 2016) to improve the way individuals can do their work and eventually add to the goals of an institution. Kirkpatrick's model encompasses four essential levels of evaluation, and each level is compressed with the following level. This evaluation focuses on the first level of

Kirkpatrick's evaluation model of evaluating the participants' perception of the training program, measuring the participants' satisfaction, and collecting information on how the participants felt about the training they received, and the third level of the learning that measures whether or not the learned knowledge, skills, and attitudes were transferable to the work environment to reflect positive changes in the behavior and job performance.

Therefore, measuring the learning that will take place is important in order to validate the learning objectives (Kirkpatrick, 2006). The evaluation of the training program will have three objectives: (a) to guarantee that the goals of each training session are delivered according to the initial plan by the response from the participants, (b) to allow participants to provide a genuine reaction regarding their satisfaction with the training and the learning experience, and (c) to implement changes to the professional development training if the participants are not receiving the intended results of the program. To meet these goals, a formative evaluation (Appendix A) will be administered after each training session and at the end of the program.

The justification for utilizing a formative evaluation is to ensure that participants achieve the institution's performance objectives (J. D. Kirkpatrick & Kirkpatrick, 2016). According to Bernhardt (2015), faculty should have the opportunity to evaluate professional development training to ensure that they are invested in the content and find it useful. Administrators will be asked to evaluate each training by way of a brief, written survey (Appendix A). Evaluation questions will be open-ended. Specifically, the questions will investigate whether or not participants' needs and concerns were met (Bayer, 2014; Bernhardt, 2015). The evaluation will also determine whether the participants felt the training led to changes in their perspectives (Saleem et al., 2014;

Zwart et al., 2015). Finally, the results of the evaluations will be shared with the college administrators. The goal of these presentations is to begin a conversation on how administrators could implement more effective approaches of incorporating instruction into their roles to help entering freshmen students succeed in graduating.

Implications for Social Change

The implications for social change associated with this program include the support of students to become better prepared college graduates who will be successful professionals, innovative thinkers, and productive employees. This project could have long-lasting effects since it will benefit college graduates, local companies, and the local community. Local companies may be more productive and competitive in the global market since employees will have better professional and personal skills. It is anticipated that entering freshmen students who earn a degree will be better prepared academically and socially and consequently be more effective and engaged citizens. The next section of this report includes a discussion of (a) project strengths and limitations, (b) recommended alternative approaches, (c) reflections, and (d) applications, conclusions, and directions for future research.

This project focused on addressing the factors and influences that challenged entering freshmen students, both socially and academically, as they transitioned into their first year of study at a mid-sized private university in the southeastern United States. This problem affected entering freshmen students' retention and their potential to earn a college degree and obtain above minimal earnings in the work environment. The findings of the study provided substantial confirmation that measures need to be taken to properly train administrators on how they can make a difference in entering freshmen students'

decision to continue their studies or leave the university. The study's findings provided the rationale and basis for the professional development training, as participants indicated that administrators had significant impact on their attitudes and decisions to persist. Therefore, a few initiatives were taken into consideration before designing the professional development training for administrators. The administrative professional development program was the best choice since a large number of students can be impacted if more administrators are exposed and have access to the training.

Once administrators have attended the professional development training, they will be equipped to help entering freshmen students make wiser decisions about whether they continue their education or leave the University. The case study site operates under a performance-based funding model that makes it imperative to retain and graduate this large and susceptible student population.

Several potential social changes may result if this project is implemented in the University. The knowledge can be used to construct strategic plans, interventions, and programs that can be systemically implemented to increase the opportunity for student academic success, increase freshmen retention, and optimize institutional resources. These changes could further lead to the development of effective educational administrative training that provides administrators with tools to actively engage entering freshmen socially and academically.

This project also has implications for the local community. The university serves a high-need community in which large numbers of entering freshmen students lack the education and skills needed to earn a more-than-minimal wage. More in-depth preparations and training for administrators will increase their thoughts, views, and

knowledge to apply new pedagogical skills fostering reflection based on feedback. This design aligned with those described in the literature, in particular with a framework proposed by Amundsen and Wilson (2012) and Taylor and Znajda (2015). Implementation could further lead to the development of effective educational practices, thereby increasing the institution's internal and external competitive position in a global industry (Sparkman et al., 2012; Tinto, 2005; 2012). Therefore, students who have graduated from college could gain access to better jobs opportunities.

Another expectation for social change is that college graduates will become more capable professionals; consequently, their employers will be able to contribute to a more vigorous economy. This project could lead to the development of effective educational practice. The success of this project in the local private university could serve as a model to be implemented in other higher educational institutions.

The results of the project study will be presented to the Chief of Administration and Student Affairs and the Chief of Admission and Enrolled Strategy, the deans of the academic and administrative departments, Deans of Students and Campus Life at the local private university. The goal of these presentations will be to instigate a conversation about how administrators could implement more effective approaches and incorporate instruction into their role to help entering freshmen students persist to graduation.

Conclusion

Section 3 described the rationale, the goals, the literature review, the implementation strategies, and a descriptive outline of a 24-hour comprehensive training program for administrators. This program is the proposed project for administrators' development; the overarching goal is to improve and emphasize administrators' roles in

assisting entering students. The content goals of the professional development training program for administrators are (a) to make administrators aware of their role in the development of entering freshmen students, (b) to increase administrators' awareness of the importance of entering freshmen students' retention and employability, and (c) to identify and apply teaching strategies to integrate and cultivate learning into their roles as administrators. The literature review provided a significant background on what strategies professionals in higher education have implemented to help entering freshmen students succeed in college, the implications of these strategies, and the results of these different initiatives.

Some of the potential barriers for the implementation of the program were the availability of administrators who have full-time commitments to the University to attend a 24-hour training, the allocation of financial resources to pay for the training, and the priorities of the leaders of the institution regarding training and professional development. Evaluation of the professional development will be conducted after each training session, and I will suggest that the University perform another evaluation after the administrators have implemented any of the initiatives to support entering freshmen students. This section also described the implications for social change associated with this program, such as better prepared college graduates who will be more successful professionals, more innovative thinkers, and more productive employees. The next section of this study will include a discussion of (a) reflections and conclusions; (b) project strengths and limitations; (c) recommendations for alternative approaches; (d) scholarship, project development, and leadership and change; (e) the importance of the

work; (f) implications, applications, and directions for future research; and (g) conclusions.

Section 4: Reflections and Conclusions

This section includes the final components of this study, including reflections, conclusions, project strengths and limitations, ways to address the problem, and recommendations for alternative approaches. As the researcher conducting this study, I share my thoughts on how this project has allowed me to grow as a scholar, a professional in higher education, and a community leader. This learning experience has shown me new ways to play an active role to initiate social change in my local community. This section concludes with recommendations for future research.

Project Strengths and Limitations

Various strengths were evident in this project. In addition to describing the strengths of this study addressing entering freshmen needs on transitioning from high school to college, it is also necessary to recognize the barriers to supporting entering first-year students. The first strength of this project was its ability to address the problem identified in Section 1. The entering first-year students who participated in the study reported that not feeling a sense of belonging and experiencing isolation affected their decision to withdraw from college and affected their success and professional growth. The students also reported that higher educational institutions could create and offer training to assist administrators in helping first-year students achieve a smoother transition and provide them with a sense of belonging. Previous researchers concurred that one of the primary predictors of students' persistence is a sense of belonging and inclusion (Crosta, 2014; Mertes & Hoover, 2014; Moschetti & Hudley, 2015; Reeves, 2016; Tinto, 1975).

The second strength of the project was its adaptability; each higher educational institution could adopt multiple solutions based on their individual financial resources and the availability and capability of their administrators (Moschetti & Hudley, 2015; Wild & Ebbers, 2002; Windham et al., 2014). The third strength of this project was that the professional development training for administrators and staff may prepare the participants with knowledge on the subject matter that leads to a better student-university relationship, which may contribute to the students' success. Finally, this project may benefit not only the administration and staff but also entering first-year students. The administration may also work more cohesively after learning how to collaborate to support entering students' acculturation.

Two of the most significant limitations of this professional development training were the length of the training and the cost of the training. A 24-hour professional development training will be a very demanding project if it is delivered in 1 week. Therefore, to provide another option, I will offer the participants the possibility of providing the training sessions once a week on a specified day, instead of clustering all the training in one week. Also, the training becomes more expensive if I take into consideration that the keynote speaker may need lodging accommodations. Nonetheless, the cost of the training should be viewed as a lifetime investment that benefits the institution, administration, faculty, and the students, who are the main reasons the institution must strive to be competitive.

The strategy to remediate these possible implementation obstacles will be to start working in advance with the chief of administration and student affairs, the chief of admission and enrolled strategy, the deans of the academic and administrative

departments, and the deans of students and campus life before the annual budget is approved for the upcoming fiscal year. Moreover, I will share the results of the study with department deans, administrative deans, and directors. It will be important to demonstrate based on the findings of the study that a real need exists to improve the retention of entering first-year students. Social change may be possible if local leaders and educational administrators take an active role in helping to implement effective solutions to prepare entering first-year students with a smooth transition into college and to support their persistence to graduation.

Recommendations for Alternative Approaches

Various options exist to address the research problem, according to the findings that emerged from the study. The appropriate solution for each institution will depend on the institution's interests and current orientation programs that focus on entering first-year students' acculturation. The findings from this study support the recommendation to develop a training that allows administrators and staff to master the concept of educating entering first-year students, as well as learn about the different methodologies to incorporate the learning skills. This solution may be effective because more administrators will be trained; therefore, more students may benefit. Further, the value of this approach is that administrators and staff may be able to incorporate the lessons from the training without disrupting any existing first-year orientation programs or course content topics.

An alternative approach would be to revise the university's first-year orientation program, which includes entering first-year student orientation and convocation, an enrollment coach, and a peer mentor. This holistic onboarding approach presents

extensive opportunities to connect and retain entering first-year students and set them on an early path to success. A third possibility would be to extend the conversations around entering first-year students' retention to the entire institution. Although commuter students' college experiences take place in the classroom, numerous interactions occur outside of the classroom that may influence commuters' sense of belonging. The participants in this study identified administrators, faculty, peers, advisors, coaches, and deans who impacted them in significant way; therefore, enhancing students' cocurricular experiences and social experiences may be a worthwhile investment. All of these approaches may positively affect entering first-year students.

Scholarship, Project Development, and Leadership and Change

Because of this project, I have learned to be more analytical. I have challenged myself and others in the reasoning process. When a professional discussion arises with my coworkers, I can articulate logical arguments based on real and academically supported facts. I see myself as a more self-assured person because this educational program has increased my confidence and knowledge. When working with students, I feel that I can provide them with critical and well thought-out guidance and support regarding their professional and personal expectations. Colleagues from various academic departments have assisted me in developing and writing this study and have helped me identify the strengths and weaknesses of my critical thinking and analytical skills. Due to my chairperson's mentorship, I have become a much better writer and have been able to overcome many of the obstacles that affected my scholarly writing.

During this program, I have had the opportunity to meet phenomenal individuals who were my classmates and who have earned their doctoral degrees. They have become

not only my classmates but also my role models, friends, and mentors who have helped me along this journey. Their support and persistence challenged me, and because of their accomplishments and encouragement, I have continued this journey. Walden University empowered me with exceptional leadership skills and a broader view of higher education. Because my leadership skills have improved through this program, I feel more knowledgeable to perform complex assignments and professional projects. This study has benefited me, my church, my coworkers, my organization, and the local community.

Before I began my doctoral journey, I did not have any experience developing a project. When I began working on this project, it was difficult to realize the extent of the work. It was difficult because I did not know where to start. I remembered reading in my earlier course work that scholars who publish their work use other scholars' works to build the foundation for their research. I looked at several researchers' projects, and although the subject matter was different from mine, I began to formulate a pattern for writing my drafts. I divided the project into sections to make it more manageable.

The findings of the study and the literature review provided me with a foundation from which to develop this professional development training. This procedure was a good example for me to follow, and I knew the meaning of citing and using ideas from other scholars' works. I took several factors into consideration to develop this project, including required resources, participants, content of training, the benefits of the training, the potential barriers, and the demographics of the local community.

I thought it would be important to develop a program in which participants would have an opportunity to learn, discuss, and apply the theories and methodologies they learned. I produced a training content that I expect will be appropriate for the participants

and the students they serve. I developed the program based on what I learned from the participants and the needs of educators, college students, and local companies. After my challenging start in becoming a developer, my acquired skills have made me a confident developer from whom students, staff, faculty, and coworkers may benefit. It is gratifying to have a draft of a training program because it represents my proposed solution to the problem of entering first-year student attrition. I also see this training as my personal contribution to other professionals in higher education and to college students.

Reflection on the Importance of the Work

When I began this doctoral journey, I had no idea what it took to become a scholar until I began communicating with my classmates and following the advice of my committee chair and second committee member. The most important lessons this project taught me are discipline, patience, perseverance, gratitude, and humility. I learned to follow the advice I shared with my nephew and sister-in-law (both of whom recently graduated with their doctoral degrees), students on campus, and my work colleagues: get organized, establish a routine, develop a plan of action, and follow it. Most important, I learned to dedicate at least 3 hours a day to working. These strategies have served me well throughout this journey, especially while writing this section of my project study and after losing my mom to cancer 4 hours before 2018.

It was necessary to apply my time management and organizational skills to accomplish the day-to-day tasks of family, work, church, and study. Most of my reading took place on the trains riding to and from work. Persistence was one of the most significant lessons I learned during the research project after I lost my mom toward the end of this journey and one of my favorite uncles battled amputation of his right leg and

almost lost the left leg. Many nights I was working on my capstone study when the sun came up. Often my immediate family had to travel without me or not travel at all to stay home and support me. Many weekends and nights we stayed home because I needed to work on finding articles to support my writing. In addition, I had begun looking for a new job. Due to the high demands of my job and the stress level, there were many nights I did not get home until after 12:00 a.m., not to mention riding public transportation to get home.

Additionally, getting students to reply to my interview request took over a semester, and I had to request a revision from the IRB to incorporate another semester to the study due to not having a sufficient number of students respond to my e-mail. I found out that many of the students did not read their e-mails, and they were more inclined to use a different social media source such as Twitter, Instagram, or the like. Nonetheless, I learned how to remain optimistic despite all the barriers and uncertainties.

The interview process helped me to become a better listener and to be more patient and more communicative. Asking the right questions at the right time is one of the most valuable strategies to get students to open up and trust you. My first interview set the stage for the remaining interviews. The first interview lasted almost an hour. I wanted to interrupt the participant; however, she was so involved in sharing her perspective on her experience at the university, and I could not find myself putting a limitation on the meeting. The note taking after the interviews helped me identify nonverbal communication that particpants expressed through body language and facial expressions. These nonverbal messages provided me with valuable information during data collection.

The data analysis was another interesting exercise during which I learned how to be impartial and reduce biases. It was very difficult to separate myself from the study; therefore, I asked the associate director of enrollment services, who is also studying for her doctoral degree and had research experience in higher education, to read the findings once my paper was complete. She assisted me in detecting potential expressions and texts that conveyed any type of bias. Also, by allowing participants to read the summary of their interviews and add changes, I was able to increase the accuracy and credibility of the information.

Implications, Applications, and Directions for Future Research

The significance of this project was identifying the needs of entering first-year students as they transitioned from high school to college and to successful careers. The training program may enable administrators and staff to serve entering first-year students in a more holistic manner; the result may be that more students complete their college degrees and become valuable and educated employees. The training could also increase administrators' awareness of how much they positively impact the progression of college students as future employees and industry leaders. Consequently, companies may grow faster and be more competitive. If companies are more productive as a consequence of highly educated employees, these companies could positively affect the economy of the entire geographical area. These potential positive outcomes could benefit college students and future employees. Also, for higher education leaders, the success of their college graduates could be seen as their own success due to their institution's delivering a more effective academic and social training with the focus of sustaining freshmen from the beginning to the end of their study.

The focus of this project was addressing the transition and acculturation of entering freshmen students from a medium-sized, private, four-year university in the southeastern United States; the problem of attrition affects students' potential ability to earn a degree and their position and performance in the work environment and society. The results of the study provided generalized knowledge and insight into how students in the Promise Program described and reflected on their freshmen college transition at the institution.

The study provided comprehensive and meaningful knowledge regarding the factors and influences that served as challenges or assisted entering freshmen students in having a seamless social and academic transition into the college environment. Hearing about the problems entering freshmen students encountered in transitioning from high school to college and their revelation that they received very limited support, I anticipated that the training would greatly improve communications between administrators, staff, and students, allowing improved support for entering students seeking a college degree. The findings of the study provided significant evidence that measures needed to be taken to better prepare administrators and staff to serve entering freshmen students holistically. Therefore, I considered several initiatives before deciding to design an administrative professional development training for administrators and staff. The holistic professional development training was the best choice since a large number of students can be impacted if more administrators have access to the training.

Previous researchers (Baptiste, 1999; Nicholls, 2014; Watson & Taylor, 1998) in various debates related to professional development and the learning society expressed the thought that change is evitable and endless. Professional development can be used as

one means of learning and a way in which administrators and staff can understand the need for the training (Bayer, 2014; Fitzgerald, Burns, Sonka, Furco, & Swanson, 2012; Nicholls, 2014; Vu, Cao, Vu, & Cepero, 2014) to assist entering freshmen. Thus, the University may benefit from helping entering students to achieve their academic standards once the training has been implemented. The expectation for social change is that prepared graduates will add to the existing population of knowledgeable professionals; consequently, their employers will be able to contribute to a more dynamic economy. Hopefully, the students who become community leaders will be better able to engage with the local population to address societal issues and produce positive social change. The success of this project in the local private University could serve as a model to be implemented in other higher education institutions. There will always be room for improvement, regardless of how a training may initially support a community, based on the evolving diversity and cultural differences of communities and society. Finally, the results of the project study will be presented to the administrators of the local private University.

Conclusion

The focus of Section 4 was to present a reflection on the study and the alternative approaches to address the problem. Also, it included the strengths and limitations of the suggested project and my self-reflections as a scholar, practioner, and project developer. I took a personal interest in presenting my reflections for this study because I saw how entering freshmen students were withdrawing or simply not returning for their second semester and how they struggled with receiving the right support at the University.

Significant changes in the way colleges and universities assist entering freshmen students can happen only if higher educational leaders are willing to evaluate current academic and social practices at the campus. An ongoing assessment of what is being taught and learned at colleges and universities is required to empower college students for the challenges ahead with the evolving job industry. Ongoing professional development training must focus on the development, attraction, and retention of entering freshmen students. The learning could become an integral class component that is attached to the freshmen learning communities, orientations, and academic development process.

Further, administrators and staff at the University have an important role in helping freshmen students succeed in college, an important part of preparing college students to enter the job market. Therefore, an administrative development program surfaced as a valuable concept to accomplish this goal, based on the findings from the data collection. Also, an administrative development training could ultimately impact course content and teaching strategies and subsequently impact a large number of entering freshmen students. Through this training, administrators could learn, understand, and apply appropriate methodologies to embrace entering freshmen students, ultimately resulting in improved retention for the University and positive changes in the lives of entering freshmen students, administrators, and staff throughout the University now and in the near future.

References

Adams, C. J. (2012). Colleges offer incoming freshmen a summer "bridge." *Education Week*, *31*(30), 8. Retrieved from http://www.edweek.org/ew/articles/2012/05/09/30bridge. h31.html

Alexander, J. S., & Gardner, J. N. (2009). Beyond retention: A comprehensive approach to the First College Year. *About Campus*, *14*(2), 18–26. https://doi-org.ezp.waldenulibrary.org/10.1002/abc.285

Aljohani, O. (2016). A Comprehensive Review of the Major Studies and Theoretical Models of Student Retention in Higher Education. *Higher Education Studies*, *6*(2), 1–18. Retrieved from https://search-ebscohost-com.ezp.waldenulibrary.org/login.aspx?direct=true&db=eric&AN=EJ1092026&site=eds-live&scope=site

Allen, C. D., & Penuel, W. R. (2015). Studying teachers' sensemaking to analyze teachers' responses to professional development focused on new standards. *Journal of Teacher Education*, *66*(2), 136-149. doi:10.1177/0022487114560646

American Federation of Teachers Higher Education. (2011). Student success in higher education. Retrieved from http://www.aft.org/sites/default/files/studentsuccess0311.pdf

American Institutes of Research. (2017) College dropouts cost cash-strapped states billions. Retrieved from https://www.air.org/news.

Amundsen, C.; Wilson, M. Are we asking the right questions?: A conceptual review of the educational development literature in higher education. Review of Educational Research, [s. l.], v. 82, n. 1, p. 90–126, 2012. Disponível em: <https://search-

ebscohost-com.ezp.waldenulibrary.org/login.aspx?direct=true&db=eric&AN=EJ958038&site=eds-live&scope=site>. Acesso em: 19 abr. 2019.

Anagnostopoulos, D., McCrory, R., Cannata, M., & Frank, K. (2010). Dollars, distinction, or duty? The meaning of the national board for professional teaching standards for teachers's work and collegial relations. *American Journal of Education*, (3), 337. Retrieved from https://search-ebscohost-com.ezp.waldenulibrary.org/login.aspx?direct=true&db=edsgea&AN=edsgcl.227254697&site=eds-live&scope=site

Andrews, N. (2014). Advancing toward an 80% BSN workforce by 2020: Learn about the steps one Connecticut hospital is taking to increase its BSN nurses. *American Nurse Today*, *9*(1). Retrieved from https://www.americannursetoday.com/

Angulo-Ruiz, L. F., & Pergelova, A. (2013). The student retention puzzle revised: The role of institutional image. *Journal of Nonprofit & Public Sector Marketing*, *25*(4), 334-353. doi:10.1080/10495142.2013.830545

Archuleta, K. L., Dale, A., & Spann, S. M. (2013). College students and financial distress: Exploring debt, financial satisfaction, and financial anxiety. *Journal of Financial Counseling and Planning*, *24*(2), 50-62. Retrieved from https://eric.ed.gov/?id=EJ1043230

Armstrong, E., & Hamilton, L. (2013). *Paying for the party: How college maintains inequality*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Ascend Learning, LLC. (2012). *Student attrition: Consequences, contributing factors, and remedies* [Research report]. Leawood, KS: ATI Nursing Education.

Aspelmeier, J. E., Love, M. M., McGill, L. A., Elliot, A. N., & Pierce, T. W. (2012). Self-esteem, locus of control, college adjustment, and GPA among first- and continuing-generation students: A moderator model of generational status. *Research in Higher Education*, *53*(7), 755-781. doi:10.1007/s11162-011-9252-1

Astin, A. W. (1977). *Four critical years: Effects of college on beliefs, attitudes, and knowledge*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

Astin, A. W. (1985). Involvement: The cornerstone of excellence. *Change*, *17*(4), 35-39.

Astin, A. W. (1991). Assessment for excellence. New York: Macmillan.

Astin, A. (1993). What matters in college?: Four critical years revisited. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass. doi:10.1080/00091383.1985.9940532

Astin, A. W. (1999). Student involvement: A developmental theory for higher education. *Journal of College Student Development*, *40*(5), 518–529. Retrieved from https://search-ebscohost-com.ezp.waldenulibrary.org/login.aspx?direct=true&db=psyh&AN=1999-01418-006&site=eds-live&scope=site

Astin, A. W., & Bayer, A. E. (1971). Antecedents and consequences of disruptive campus protests. *Measurement and Evaluation in Guidance*, *4*(1), 18-30, doi: 10. 1080/00256307.1971.12022476

Aud, S., Wilkinson-Flicker, S., Kristapovich, P., Rathbun, A., Wang, X., & Zhang, J. (2013). The condition of education 2013 (NCES Publication No. 2013-037). http://nces.ed.gov.

Bailey, A. W., & Kang, H.-K. (2015). Modeling the Impact of Wilderness Orientation Programs on First-Year Academic Success and Life Purpose. *Journal of*

Adventure Education and Outdoor Learning, *15*(3), 209–223. Retrieved from https://search-ebscohost-com.ezp.waldenulibrary.org/login.aspx?direct=true&db=eric&AN=EJ1074209&site=eds-live&scope=site

Bailey, T. R., Jaggars, S. S., & Jenkins, D. (2015). *Redesigning America's community colleges: A clearer path to student success*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University

Banta, T. W., & Kuh, G. D. (1998). A Missing Link in Assessment: Collaboration Between Academic and Student Affairs Professionals. *Change*, *30*(2), 40–46. Retrieved from https://search-ebscohost-com.ezp.waldenulibrary.org/login.aspx?direct=true&db=eric&AN=EJ562819&site=eds-live&scope=site

Barefoot, B. O. (2000) The first-year experience: Are we making it any better? About Campus, 12--18. Press.

Baum, S., Ma, J., & Payea, K. (2013). Education pays 2013: The benefits of higher education for individuals and society. Retrieved from https://trends.collegeboard.org/sites/default/files/education-pays-2013-full-report.pdf

Baumgart, N. E., and Johnstone, J. N. Attrition at an Australian university: a case study ■. Journal of Higher Education, 1977,48

Bayer, B. (2014). Students as tenuous agents of social: Control professional misconduct. CrossRef Google Scholar

Bean, J. P. (1980). Dropouts and turnover: The synthesis and test of a causal model of student attrition. *Research in Higher Education*, *12*(2), 155-187. doi:10.1007/bf00976194

Bean, J. P., and Bradley, R. (1986). Untangling the Satisfaction-Performance Relationship for College Students. Journal of Higher Education, 57(4): 393-412.

Bean, J. P., & Eaton, S. (2000). A psychological model of college student retention. In J. M. Braxton (Ed.), Reworking the departure puzzle: New theory and research on college student retention. Nashville: University of Vanderbilt Press

Bean, J.P. and Metzger, B.S. 1985. "A Conceptual Model of Non-traditional Undergraduate Student Attrition." Review of Educational Research, vol. 55, no. 4., pp. 485-540

Bell, B. J., Gass, M. A., Nafziger, C. S., & Starbuck, J. D. (2014). The State of Knowledge of Outdoor Orientation Programs: Current Practices, Research, and Theory. *Journal of Experiential Education*, *37*(1), 31–45. Retrieved from https://ezp.waldenulibrary.org/login?url=https://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=eric&AN=EJ1058789&site=eds-live&scope=site

Belland, B. R., Kim, C., & Hannafin, M. J. (2013). A framework for designing scaffolds that improve motivation and cognition. *Educational Psychologist*, *48*(4), 243–270. https://doi-org.ezp.waldenulibrary.org/10.1080/00461520.2013.838920 doi:10. 3102/00346543055004485

Berger, J. I. (2014). Role of professional development associations in the future of our field. *Adult Learning*, (1), 31. https://doi-org.ezp.waldenulibrary.org/10.1177/1045159513510149

Berger, Sandra L. College Planning for Gifted Students: Choosing and Getting into the Right College. *School Library Journal*, (1), 144. Retrieved from https://ezp.waldenulibrary.org/login?url=https://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=edsgea&AN=edsgcl.158155790&site=eds-live&scope=site

Berger, J. B., Ramirez, G. B., & Lyons, S. (2012). Past to present: A historical look at retention. In A. Seidman (Ed.), *College student retention: Formula for student success* (2nd ed.; pp. 7-34). Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield.

Bernhardt, P. E. (2015). 21st Century Learning: Professional Development in Practice. *Qualitative Report*, *20*(1), 1–19. Retrieved from https://ezp.waldenulibrary.org/login?url=https://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=a9h&AN=100293719&site=eds-live&scope=site

Bers, T., & Schuetz, P. (2014). Nearbies: a missing piece of the college completion conundrum. *Community College Review*, (3), 167. Retrieved from https://ezp.waldenulibrary.org/login?url=https://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=edsgea&AN=edsgcl.374766908&site=eds-live&scope=site

Bettinger, E. P., Boatman, A., & Long, B. T. (2013). Student supports: Developmental education and other academic programs. *The Future of Children*, *23*(1), 93-115. doi:10.1353/foc. 2013.0003

Birt, L., Scott, S., Cavers, D., Campbell, C., & Walter, F. (n.d.). Member Checking: A Tool to Enhance Trustworthiness or Merely a Nod to Validation? *QUALITATIVE HEALTH RESEARCH*, *26*(13), 1802–1811. https://doi-org.ezp.waldenulibrary.org/10.1177/1049732316654870

Blau, G., & Snell, C. M. (2013). Understanding undergraduate professional development engagement and its impact. *College Student Journal*, (4), 689. Retrieved from https://ezp.waldenulibrary.org/login?url=https://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=edsgea&AN=edsgcl.356906584&site=eds-live&scope=site

Bleicher, R. E. (2014). A Collaborative Action Research Approach to Professional Learning. *Professional Development in Education*, *40*(5), 802–821. Retrieved from https://ezp.waldenulibrary.org/login?url=https://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=eric&AN=EJ1043208&site=eds-live&scope=site

Bogdan, R. C., & Biklen, S. K. (2007). *Qualitative research for education: An introduction to theories and methods*. Boston, MA: Pearson.

Bok, D. (2013). *Higher education in America*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.

Bond, M. L., Cason, C. L., & Gray, J. R. (2015). The adapted model of institutional support for Hispanic student degree completion: Revisions and recommendations. *Hispanic Health Care International*, *13*(1), 38–45. https://doi-org.ezp.waldenulibrary.org/10.1891/1540-4153.13.1.38

Boston, W. E., Ice, P., & Gibson, A. M. (2011). Comprehensive assessment of student retention in online learning environments. *Online Journal of Distance Learning Administration*, *14*(1). Retrieved from ERIC database. (EJ921846)

Bowen, William G. 2012. "The 'Cost Disease' in Higher Education: Is Technology the Answer." The Tanner Lectures, Stanford University.

Bowles, A., Fisher, R., McPhail, R., Rosenstreich, D., & Dobson, A. (n.d.). Staying the distance: students' perceptions of enablers of transition to higher

education. *HIGHER EDUCATION RESEARCH & DEVELOPMENT*, *33*(2), 212–225. https://doi-org.ezp.waldenulibrary.org/10.1080/07294360.2013.832157

Brack, A. V., Millard, M, & Shah, (2008), Are peer educators really peers: journal of American college, health 5(65) 566-568

Braskamp, L. A., Braskamp, D. C., & Merrill, K. (2009). Assessing Progress in Global Learning and Development of Students with Education Abroad Experiences. *Frontiers: The Interdisciplinary Journal of Study Abroad*, *18*, 101–118. Retrieved from https://search-ebscohost-com.ezp.waldenulibrary.org/login.aspx?direct=true&db=eric&AN=EJ883693&site=eds-live&scope=site

Braskamp, L. A., L. C., Trautvetter & Ward, K. (2006). Putting students first: How colleges develop students purposefully. San Francisco, CA: John Wiley & Sons, Inc.

Braxton, J. M., & McClendon, S. A. (2001). The fostering of social integration and retention through institutional practice. *Journal of College Student Retention: Research, Theory and Practice*, *3*(1), 57–71. https://doi-org.ezp.waldenulibrary.org/10.2190/RGXJ-U08C-06VB-JK7D

Bremer, C. D., Center, B. A., Opsal, C. L., Medhanie, A., Jang, Y. J., & Geise, A. C. (2013). Outcome trajectories of developmental students in community colleges. *Community College Review*, *41*(2), 154-175. doi:10.1177/0091552113484963

Brinton, C. G., Chiang, M., Jain, S., Lam, H. K., Liu, Z., & Wong, F. M. F. (2014). Learning about social learning in MOOCs: From statistical analysis to generative

model. *IEEE Transactions on Learning Technologies*, *7*(4), 346-359. doi:10.1109/tlt.2014.2337900

Brooman, S., & Darwent, S. (2014). Measuring the beginning: a quantitative study of the transition to higher education. *Studies in Higher Education*, *39*(9), 1523–1541. https://doi-org.ezp.waldenulibrary.org/10.1080/03075079.2013.801428

Brown, K. M. (1996). The role of internal and external factors in the discontinuation of off-campus students. *Distance Education, 17*(1), 44-71. doi:10.1080/0158791960170105

Brown, R. M., & Mazzarol, T. W. (2009). The importance of institutional image to student satisfaction and loyalty within higher education. *Higher Education*, *58*(1), 81-95. doi:10.1007/s10734-008-9183-8

Brown, S. K., & Burdsal, C. A. (2012). An exploration of sense of community and student success using the National Survey of Student Engagement. *The Journal of General Education*, *61*(4), 433-460. doi:10.1353/jge.2012.0039

Brownell, J. (2016). Listening, attitudes, principles, and skills. (5th ed.) New York, NY: Routledge.

Bryson, C. (2014). Clarifying the concept of student engagement. In C. Bryson (Ed.), *Understanding and developing student engagement* (pp. 1–22). Abingdon: Routledge. [Crossref] , [Google Scholar]

Bunch, G. C., & Endris, A. K. (2012). Navigating “open access” community colleges: Matriculation policies and practices for U.S.-educated linguistic minority students. In Y. Kanno & L. Harklau (Eds.), *Linguistic minority students go to*

college: Preparation, access and persistence (pp. 165-183). New York, NY: Routledge.

Carr, J., Walker, W., Carr, M., & Fulwood, D. (2012, May). Reflect for success: Use of mentor recommendations to help failing students. *British Journal of Community Nursing*, *17*(5), 226-228. doi:10.12968/bjcn.2012.17.5.226

Caroni, C. (2011). Graduation and attrition of engineering students in Greece. *European Journal of Engineering Education*, *36*(1), 63-74. doi:10.1080/03043797.2010.539676

Catterall, J., Davis, J., & Yang, D. F. (n.d.). Facilitating the learning journey from vocational education and training to higher education. *HIGHER EDUCATION RESEARCH & DEVELOPMENT*, *33*(2), 242–255. https://doi-org.ezp.waldenulibrary.org/10.1080/07294360.2013.832156

Cejda, B. D., & Hoover, R. E. (2011). Strategies for Faculty-Student Engagement: How Community College Faculty Engage Latino Students. *Journal of College Student Retention: Research, Theory & Practice*, *12*(2), 135–153. Retrieved from https://search-ebscohost-com.ezp.waldenulibrary.org/login.aspx?direct=true&db=eric&AN=EJ952076&site=eds-live&scope=site

Center for Collegiate Mental Health. (2016). Penn State Counseling and Psychological Services. Retrieved from https://sites.psu.edu/ccmh/files/2017/01/2016-Annual-Report-FINAL_2016_01_09-1gc2hj6.pdf

Chang, J. C. (2005). Faculty-student interaction at the community college: a focus on students of color. *Research in Higher Education*, (7), 769. Retrieved from

https://search-ebscohost-com.ezp.waldenulibrary.org/login.aspx?direct=true&db=edsgea&AN=edsgcl.151255333&site=eds-live&scope=site

Chen, J., & Hossler, D. (n.d.). The Effects of Financial Aid on College Success of Two-Year Beginning Nontraditional Students. *RESEARCH IN HIGHER EDUCATION*, *58*(1), 40–76. https://doi-org.ezp.waldenulibrary.org/10.1007/s11162-016-9416-0

Chen, X., & Soldner, M. (2013, November). *STEM attrition: College students' paths into and out of STEM fields: Statistical analysis report* [NCES 2014-001]. Retrieved from http://nces.ed.gov/pubs2014/2014001rev.pdf

Chickering, A. W., & Hannah, W. (1969). Institutional differences and student development. *Journal of Educational Psychology*, *60*, 315–326. https://doi-org.ezp.waldenulibrary.org/10.1037/h0027840

Chickering, A. W., and Reisser, L. (1993). *Education and identity*, Jossey-Bass, San Francisco.

Choy, S. P., Horn, L. J., Nunez, A.-M., & Xianglei Chen. (2000). Transition to College: What Helps At-Risk Students and Students Whose Parents Did Not Attend College. *New Directions for Institutional Research*, *2000*(107), 45. https://doi-org.ezp.waldenulibrary.org/10.1002/ir.10704

Cohen, G. L., & Sherman, D. K. (2014). The Psychology of Change: Self-Affirmation and Social Psychological Intervention. *ANNUAL REVIEW OF PSYCHOLOGY, VOL 65*, *65*, 333–371. https://doi-org.ezp.waldenulibrary.org/10.1146/annurev-psych-010213-115137

Collier, P., & Morgan, D. (2008). “Is that paper really due today?”: differences in first-generation and traditional college students’ understandings of faculty expectations. *Higher Education (00181560)*, *55*(4), 425–446. https://doi-org.ezp.waldenulibrary.org/10.1007/s10734-007-9065-5

Conley, C. S., Travers, L. V., & Bryant, F. B. (2013). *Promoting Psychosocial Adjustment and Stress Management in First-Year College Students: The Benefits of Engagement in a Psychosocial Wellness Seminar*. *Journal of American College Health* (Vol. 61, pp. 75–86). Retrieved from https://ezp.waldenulibrary.org/login?url=https://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=eric&AN=EJ1011966&site=eds-live&scope=site

Conlin, M., Dickert-Conlin, S., & Chapman, G. (2013). Voluntary disclosure and the strategic behavior of colleges. *Journal of Economic Behavior & Organization*, *96*, 48-64. doi: 10.1016/j.jebo.2013.09.007

Conway, B. (2016, April 25). The advantages and disadvantages of rolling admission. Retrieved from https://www.petersons.com/college-search/rolling-admissions-advantages-disad vantages.aspx

Council of Independent Colleges. (2014, January). Program development grant summaries. Retrieved from http://www.cic.edu/Programs-and-Services/Programs/NetVUE/Pages/ 2014-Grant-Summaries.aspx

Cox, B. J. (2012). College students, motivation, and success. *International Journal of Learning & Development*, *2*(3), 139-143. doi:10.5296/ijld.v2i3.1818

Credé, M. & Niehorster, S. (2012). Adjustment to College as Measured by the Student Adaptation to College Questionnaire: A Quantitative Review of its Structure and

Relationships with Correlates and Consequences. *Educational Psychology Review*, *24*(1), 133–165. https://doi-org.ezp.waldenulibrary.org/10.1007/s10648-011-9184-5

Creswell. J. W. (2007). *Qualitative inquiry and research design: Choosing among five approaches* (3rd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Creswell, J. W. (2009). *Research design: Qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods approaches* (3rd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Cresswell, J. (2011). Controversies in mixed methods research. In N. Denzin & Y. Lincoln (Eds.), The Sage handbook of qualitative research, (4th edition), (pp. 269-283). London: Sage.

Creswell, J. W. (2012). *Educational research: Planning, conducting, and evaluating quantitative and qualitative research* (4th ed.). Upper Saddle River, NJ: Pearson Education.

Creswell, J. W. (2013). *Research design: Qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods approaches*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Creswell, J. W. (2014). A concise introduction to mixed methods research. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Crosling, G. Thomas, L. & Heagney, M. (2008) Improving student retention in higher education, New York: Routledge Falmer.

Crosta, P. M. (2014). Intensity and attachment: how the chaotic enrollment patterns of community college students relate to educational outcomes. *Community College Review*, (2), 118. Retrieved from

https://ezp.waldenulibrary.org/login?url=https://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=edsgea&AN=edsgcl.374766885&site=eds-live&scope=site

Cruise, S., & Wade, R. (2016). Practical Suggestions From the Literature for Student Retention in Nonprofit Programs. *Journal of Nonprofit Education & Leadership*, *6*(2), 144–158. https://doi-org.ezp.waldenulibrary.org/10.18666/JNEL-2016-V6-I2-7347

Darlaston-Jones, D., Pike, L., Cohen, L., Young, A. S., Haunold, S., & Drew, N. (2003). Are they being served? Student expectations of higher education. *Issues in Educational Research,* 13. Retrieved from http://www.iier.waier.org.au/iier13/darlaston-jones.html

Dearden, J. A., Grewal, R., & Lilien, G. L. (2014). Framing the university ranking game: Actors, motivations, and actions. *Ethics in Science and Environmental Politics*, *13*(2), 131-139. doi:10.3354/esep00138

Deepa, S., & Seth, M. (2014). An exploratory study of student perception of instructor traits in effective learning. *Universal Journal of Management*, *2*(1), 1-8. doi:10.13189/ujm.2014. 020101

Deil-Amen, R. (2011). Socio-academic integrative moments: Rethinking academic and social integration among two-year college students in career-related programs. *The Journal of Higher Education*, *82*(1), 54-91. doi:10.1353/jhe.2011.0006

Demetriou, C., & Schmitz-Sciborski, A. (2011). Integration, motivation, strengths and optimism: Retention theories past, present and future. In *Proceedings of the 7th National Symposium on Student Retention* (pp. 300-312). Retrieved from

https://studentsuccess. unc.edu/files/2012/11/Demetriou-and-Schmitz-Sciborski.pdf

Dennis, M. (2012). The impact of MOOCs on higher education. *College and University, 88*(2), 24-30. Retrieved from ERIC database. (EJ995763)

DiRamio, D., & Jarvis, K. (2011). Veterans in higher education: when Johnny and Jane come marching to campus. San Francisco, Calif.: Wiley/Jossey-Bass.

Dodgson, R & Bolam, H 2002, Student retention, support and widening participation in the north east of England. Universities for the North East.

Donahoo, S. (2008). Putting Students First: How Colleges Develop Students Purposefully. *Journal of Higher Education*, (2), 234. Retrieved from https://ezp.waldenulibrary.org/login?url=https://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=edsgea&AN=edsgcl.177025196&site=eds-live&scope=site

Dong, S., Campbell, A., & Vance, S. (2017). Examining the facilitating role of mindfulness on professional identity development among counselors-in-training: A qualitative approach. *Professional Counselor*, *7*(4), 305–317. Retrieved from ERIC database. (EJ1164910)

Dowd, A. C., Pak, J. H., & Bensimon, E. M. (2013). The Role of Institutional Agents in Promoting Transfer Access. *Education Policy Analysis Archives*, *21*(15). Retrieved from https://ezp.waldenulibrary.org/login?url=https://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=eric&AN=EJ1015338&site=eds-live&scope=site

Duff, P. A. (2014). Case Study Research on Language Learning and Use. *ANNUAL REVIEW OF APPLIED LINGUISTICS*, *34*, 233–255. https://doi-org.ezp.waldenulibrary.org/10.1017/S0267190514000051

Durand-Bush, N., McNeill, K., Harding, M., & Dobransky, J. (2015). Investigating stress, psychological well-being, mental health functioning, and self-regulation capacity among university undergraduate students: Is this population optimally functioning? *Canadian Journal of Counselling & Psychotherapy / Revue Canadienne de Counseling et de Psychothérapie*, *49*(3), 253–274. Retrieved from https://search-ebscohost-com.ezp.waldenulibrary.org/login.aspx?direct=true&db=eue&AN=112569175&site=eds-live&scope=site

Durkheim, E. (1951). *Suicide: A study in sociology*. New York, NY: The Free Press.

Dwyer, R. E., Hodson, R., & McCloud, L. (2013). Gender, debt, and dropping out of college. *Gender & Society*, *27*(1), 30-55. doi:10.1177/0891243212464906

Eaton, S. B., & Bean, J. P. (1995). An approach/avoidance behavioral model of college student attrition. Research in Higher Education, 36, 617–645.

Educational Policy Institute. (2013, February). *Policy perspectives: The cost of college attrition at four-year colleges & universities.* Retrieved from: http://www.educationalpolicy.org/ pdf/1302_PolicyPerspectives.pdf

Farrington, C. A., Roderick, M., Allensworth, E., Nagaoka, J., Keyes, T. S., Johnson, D. W., & Beechum, N. O. (2012, June). Teaching adolescents to become learners: The role of noncognitive factors in shaping school performance—A critical literature review. Retrieved from ERIC database. (ED542543)

Farrington, C. A. (2013). Academic mindsets as a critical component of deeper learning. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago

Fergus, E., Noguera, P., & Martin, M. (2014). *Schooling for resilience: Improving the life trajectory of Black and Latino boys*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard Education Press.

Finch, D. J., Peacock, M., Levallet, N., & Foster, W. (2016). A dynamic capabilities view of employability: Exploring the drivers of competitive advantage for university graduates. *Education + Training*, *58*(1), 66-81. doi:10.1108/ET-02-2015-0013

Fitzgerald, H. E., Bruns, K., Sonka, S. T., Furco, A., & Swanson, L. (2016). The Centrality of Engagement in Higher Education. *Journal of Higher Education Outreach and Engagement*, *20*(1), 223–243. Retrieved from https://ezp.waldenulibrary.org/login?url=https://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=eric&AN=EJ1097192&site=eds-live&scope=site

Forsman, J., Linder, C., Moll, R., Fraser, D., & Andersson, S. (2014). A new approach to modelling student retention through an application of complexity thinking. *Studies in Higher Education*, *39*(1), 68-86. Retrieved from ERIC database. (EJ1027335)

Fowler, C. J. H., & Mayes, J. T. (1999). Learning Relationships from Theory to Design. *Association for Learning Technology Journal*, *7*(3), 6–16. Retrieved from https://ezp.waldenulibrary.org/login?url=https://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=eric&AN=EJ610034&site=eds-live&scope=site

Frelick, M. (2013, March 11). Need for advanced nursing education rises. Retrieved from https://news.nurse.com/2013/03/11/need-for-advanced-nursing-education-rising/

Freshman retention rate: National universities. (2016). Retrieved from *U.S. News & World Report*: http://colleges.usnews.rankingsandreviews.com/best-colleges/rankings/national-universities/freshmen-least-most-likely-return

Gass, M. A., Garvey, D. E., & Sugerman, D. A. (2003). The Long-Term Effects of a First-Year Student Wilderness Orientation Program. *Journal of Experiential Education*, *26*(1), 34. https://doi-org.ezp.waldenulibrary.org/10.1177/105382590302600106

Gibbons, M. M. ., & Woodside, M. (2014). Addressing the Needs of First-Generation College Students: Lessons Learned From Adults From Low-Education Families. *Journal of College Counseling*, *17*(1), 21–36. https://doi-org.ezp.waldenulibrary.org/10.1002/j.2161-1882.2014.00045.x

Goldman, Z. W., & Goodboy, A. K. (2014). Making students feel better: Examining the relationships between teacher confirmation and college students' emotional outcomes. *Communication Education*, *63*(3), 259-277. doi:10.1080/03634523.2014.920091

Goodenow, C. (1993). The psychological sense of school membership among adolescents: Scale development and educational correlates. Psychology in the Schools, 30, 79-90

Graham, J. M. Royer, & M. Zeidner (Eds.), *APA educational psychology handbook* (Vol. *2*, pp. 165-194). doi:10.1037/13274-007

Grahovac, D., Karuovic, D., & Egic, B. (2012). Informal learning as an educational resource. *New Educational Review*, *29*(3), 174-182. Retrieved from http://www.educationalrev. us.edu.pl/dok/volumes/tner_3_2012.pdf#page=174

Gramling, T. (2013, July-September). How five student characteristics accurately predict for-profit university graduation odds. *SAGE Open*, 1-16. doi:10.1177/2158244013497026

Griffin, K. A., & Muñiz, M. (2015). Rethinking the structure of student recruitment and efforts to increase racial and ethnic diversity in doctoral education. *International Journal of Doctoral Studies*, *10*, 199-216. Retrieved from http://www.informingscience.com/ ijds/Volume10/IJDSv10p199-216Griffin0749.pdf

Gury, N. (2011). Dropping out of higher education in France: A micro-economic approach using survival analysis. *Education Economics*, *19*(1), 51-64. doi:10.1080/09645290902796357

Hagenauer, G. G. H., & Volet, S. E. (2014). Teacher–student relationship at university: an important yet under-researched field. *Oxford Review of Education*, *40*(3), 370–388. https://doi-org.ezp.waldenulibrary.org/10.1080/03054985.2014.921613

Hahn, C. (2008). *Doing qualitative research using your computer: A practical guide*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Halpin, R. L. (1990). An application of the Tinto model to the analysis of freshman persistence in a community college. *Community College Review*, *17*(4), 22. https://doi-org.ezp.waldenulibrary.org/10.1177/009155219001700405

Harpell, J. V., & Andrews, J. J. W. (2010). Administrative Leadership in the Age of Inclusion: Promoting Best Practices and Teacher Empowerment. *Journal of Educational Thought*, *44*(2), 189. Retrieved from

https://ezp.waldenulibrary.org/login?url=https://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=edo&AN=57856586&site=eds-live&scope=site

Harper, S. R. 1,., & Newman, C. B. . (2016). Surprise, Sensemaking, and Success in the First College Year: Black Undergraduate Men's Academic Adjustment Experiences. *Teachers College Record*, *118*(6), 1–31. Retrieved from https://search-ebscohost-com.ezp.waldenulibrary.org/login.aspx?direct=true&db=eue&AN=115486898&site=eds-live&scope=site

Hart, C. (2012). Factors associated with student persistence in an online program of study: A review of literature. *Journal of Interactive Online Learning*, *11*(1), 19-42. Retrieved from ERIC database. (EJ976760)

Harvey, L., Drew, S., & Smith, M. (2006). *The first-year experience: A review of literature for the Higher Education Academy* [Executive summary]. Retrieved from https://www.heacademy.ac.uk/sites/default/files/first_year_experience_full_report.pdf

Hauptman, A. M. (2011). Increasing higher education attainment in the United States: Challenges and opportunities. In M. Schneider & A. P. Kelly (Eds.), *Getting to graduation: The completion agenda in higher education* (Chapter 1). Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins Press.

Hausmann, L., Schofield, J., & Woods, R. (2007). Sense of Belonging as a Predictor of Intentions to Persist Among African American and White First-Year College Students. *Research in Higher Education*, *48*(7), 803–839. https://doi-org.ezp.waldenulibrary.org/10.1007/s11162-007-9052-9

Heilbronner, N. N., Connell, E. E., Dobyns, S. M., & Reis, S. M. (2010). The "stepping stone phenomenon": Exploring the role of positive attrition at an early college entrance program. *Journal of Advanced Academic, 21*(3), 392-425. doi:10.1177/1932202x 1002100303

Herbert, K. J., Baize-Ward, A., & Latz, A. O. (2018). Transformative Pedagogy with Innovative Methodology: Using Photovoice to Understand Community College Students' Needs. *Community College Journal of Research and Practice*, *42*(7), 536–549. Retrieved from https://search-ebscohost-com.ezp.waldenulibrary.org/login.aspx?direct=true&db=eric&AN=EJ1177570&site=eds-live&scope=site

Higgerson, M. L., & Buckley, D. (1983, August). Student retention: A top priority for the 80s. *Association for Communication Administration Bulletin*, (45), 61-64. Retrieved from ERIC database. (EJ283741)

Hinsliff-Smith, K., Gates, P., & Leducg, M. (2012, January). Persistence, how do they do it? A case study of access to higher education learners on a U.K. diploma/BSc nursing program. *Nurse Education Today*, *32*(1), 27-31. doi:10.1016/j.nedt.2011.01.015

Hirsch, G. (2013). Helping college students succeed: A model for effective intervention. Philadelphia, PA: Brunner Routledge.

Holland, A. E. (n.d.). The Lived Experience of Teaching About Race in Cultural Nursing Education. *JOURNAL OF TRANSCULTURAL NURSING*, *26*(1), 92–100. https://doi-org.ezp.waldenulibrary.org/10.1177/1043659614523995

Holmegaard, H. T., Madsen, L. M., & Ulriksen, L. (2014). A journey of negotiation and belonging: Understanding students' transitions to science and engineering in higher education. *Cultural Studies of Science Education*, *9*(3), 755-786. doi:10.1007/s11422-013-9542-3

Hossler, D. (1990). The role of financial aid in enrollment management. *New Directions for Student Services*, *89*, 77-90. doi:10.1002/ss.8906

Howard, J. S. (2013). *Student retention and first-year programs: A comparison of students in liberal arts colleges in the Mountain South* (Doctoral dissertation). Retrieved from ERIC database. (ED556508)

Huang, F. (2012). Why did universities precede primary schools? A political economy model of educational change. *Economic Inquiry*, *50*(2), 418-434. doi:10.1111/j.1465-7295.2010.00 308.x

Huda, M., Mat Teh, K. S., Nor Muhamad, N. H., & Mohd Nasir, B. (2018). Transmitting leadership based civic responsibility: insights from service learning. *Humanomics*, *34*(1), 20. Retrieved from https://search-ebscohost-com.ezp.waldenulibrary.org/login.aspx?direct=true&db=edb&AN=128033518&site=eds-live&scope=site

Hum, G., Amundsen, C., & Emmioglu, E. (n.d.). Evaluating a teaching development grants program: Our framework, process, initial findings, and reflections. *STUDIES IN EDUCATIONAL EVALUATION*, *46*, 29–38. https://doi-org.ezp.waldenulibrary.org/10.1016/j.stueduc.2015.02.004

Hutto, P. N. (2017). The Relationship between Student Retention in Community College Courses and Faculty Employment Status. *Community College Journal of Research and Practice*, *41*(1), 4–17. Retrieved from https://search-ebscohost-com.ezp.waldenulibrary.org/login.aspx?direct=true&db=eric&AN=EJ1119093&site=eds-live&scope=site

Ian, J. D., Roger, W. & Richard, H. (2003). A longitudinal cohort study of burnout and attrition in nursing students. *Journal of Advanced Nursing*, (1), 71. Retrieved from Lodicohttps://ezp.waldenulibrary.org/login?url=https://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=edsovi&AN=edsovi.00004471.200307010.00010&site=eds-live&scope=site

Insch, A., & Sun, B. (2013). University students' needs and satisfaction with their host city. *Journal of Place Management and Development*, *6*(3), 178-191. doi:10.1108/jpmd-03-2013-0004

Irlbeck, E., Adams, S., Akers, C., Burris, S., & Jones, S. (2014). First generation college students: Motivations and support systems. *Journal of Agricultural Education*, *55*(2), 154-166. doi:10.5032/jae.2014.02154

Jackson, D. L., Stebleton, M. J., & Laanan, F. S. (2013). The experience of community college faculty involved in a learning community program. *Community College Review*, *41*(1), 3-19. doi:10.1177/0091552112473145

Jeffreys, M. R. (2012). *Nursing student retention: Understanding the process and making a difference*. New York, NY: Springer.

Jobe, R. L., & Lenio, J. (2014). Common ground: Addressing attrition across diverse institutions in higher education. *Higher Learning Research Communications*, *4*(2), 11. doi:10.18870/ hlrc.v4i2.209

Johnson, M. L., & Kestler, J. L. (2013). Achievement goals of traditional and nontraditional aged college students: Using the 3× 2 achievement goal framework. *International Journal of Educational Research*, *61*, 48-59. doi: 10.1016/j.ijer.2013.03.010

Johnson, M. L., & Nussbaum, E. M. (2012). Achievement goals and coping strategies: Identifying the traditional/nontraditional students who use them. *Journal of College Student Development*, *53*(1), 41-54. doi:10.1353/csd.2012.0002

Johnson, E. C., Robbins, B. A., & Loui, M. C. (2015). What Do Students Experience as Peer Leaders of Learning Teams? *Advances in Engineering Education*, *4*(4). Retrieved from https://search-ebscohost-com.ezp.waldenulibrary.org/login.aspx?direct=true&db=eric&AN=EJ1077832&site=eds-live&scope=site

Jonsen, K., & Jehn, K. A. (2009). Using triangulation to validate themes in qualitative studies. *Qualitative Research in Organizations and Management: An International Journal*, *4*(2), 123-150. doi:10.1108/17465640910978391

Kahu, E. R. (2013). Framing student engagement in higher education. *Studies in Higher Education*, *38*(5), 758-773. doi:10.1080/03075079.2011.598505

Kahu, E. R., Stephens, C., Leach, L., & Zepke, N. (2013). The engagement of mature distance students. *Higher Education Research & Development*, *32*(5), 791-804. doi:10.1080/ 07294360.2013.777036

Kaiser, F., Maassen, P., Meek, L., van Vught, F., de Weert, E., & Goedegebuure, L. (Eds.). (2014). *Higher education policy: An international comparative perspective*. Oxford, England: Elsevier.

Kantrowitz, M. (2009, December 17). Why do students drop out of college? Retrieved from http://www.fastweb.com/financial-aid/articles/1965-why-do-students-drop-out-of-college

Kaplan, A., Katz, I., & Flum, H. (2012). Motivation theory in educational practice: Knowledge claims, challenges, and future directions. In K. R. Harris, S. Graham, T. Urdan, S. Graham, J. M. Royer, & M. Zeidner (Eds.), *APA educational psychology handbook* (Vol. *2*, pp. 165-194). doi:10.1037/13274-007

Karp, M. M., & Bork, R. H. (2012). "They never told me what to expect, so I didn't know what to do": Defining and clarifying the role of a community college student [Community College Research Center Working Paper No. 47]. Retrieved from http://ccrc.tc. columbia.edu/publications/defining-role-community-college-student.html

Kazempour, M., & Amirshokoohi, A. (2014). Transitioning to Inquiry-Based Teaching: Exploring Science Teachers' Professional Development Experiences. *International Journal of Environmental and Science Education*, *9*(3), 285–309. Retrieved from https://ezp.waldenulibrary.org/login?url=https://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=eric&AN=EJ1031455&site=eds-live&scope=site

Kelly, A. P., & Schneider, M. (2012). *Getting to graduation: The completion agenda in higher education*. Baltimore, MD: John Hopkins University Press.

Kennedy, M. M. (2016). How does professional development improve teaching? *Review of Educational Research*, *86*(4), 945–980. Retrieved from ERIC database. (EJ1121554)

Keys, M. (2013). *College student persistence in the two-year setting: Identifying risk early to guide early integration* (Doctoral dissertation). Retrieved from http://hdl.handle.net/ 11299/155883

Kicinski, L. R. (2014). *Student success and service-learning: Exploring the relationship at a two-year public institution* (Master's thesis). Retrieved from http://scholarworks.gvsu. edu/theses/657/

Kift, S., Nelson, K., & Clarke, J. (2010). Transition pedagogy: A third generation approach to FYE - A case study of policy and practice for the higher education sector. *International Journal of the First Year in Higher Education, Vol 1, Iss 1, Pp 1-20 (2010)*, (1), 1. https://doi-org.ezp.waldenulibrary.org/10.5204/intjfyhe.v1i1.13

Kim, Y. K., Edens, D., Iorio, M. F., Curtis, C. J., & Romero, E. (2015). Cognitive skills development among international students at research universities in the United States. *Journal of International Students*, *5*(4), 526-540. Retrieved from ERIC database. (EJ1066270)

Kirkpatrick, D.L. (1994). Evaluating training: The four-levels (2nd ed.). San Fransisco: Berrett-Koehler.

Kirkpatrick, D. L., & Kirkpatrick, J. D. (2005). *Transferring learning to behavior: Using the four levels to improve performance*. San Francisco, CA: Berrett-Koehler.

Kirkpatrick, D. L., & Kirkpatrick, J. D. (2007). *Implementing the four levels: A practical guide for effective evaluation of training programs*. San Francisco, CA: Berrett-Koehler.

Kirkpatrick, J. D., & Kirkpatrick, W. K. (2016). *Kirkpatrick's four levels of training evaluation*. Alexandria, VA: Association for Talent Development.

Kirp, D. L. (2013). Improbable scholars: The rebirth of a great American school system and a strategy for America's schools. New York, NY: Oxford University Press.

Knowles, M. S. (1990). Fostering competence in self-directed learning. In R. M. Smith (Ed.), *Learning to learn across the life span* (pp. 123-126). San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

Knowles, M. S., Holton, E. F., III, & Swanson, R. A. (2014). *The adult learner: The definitive classic in adult education and human resource development* (8th ed.). Korthagen, F. A. J., Attema-Noordewier, S., & Zwart, R. C. (2014). Teacher–student contact: Exploring a basic but complicated concept. *Teaching and Teacher Education*, *40*, 22–32. https://doi-org.ezp.waldenulibrary.org/10.1016/j.tate.2014.01.006

Kot, C. F. (2014). The impact of centralized advising on first-year academic performance and second-year enrollment behavior. *Research in Higher Education*, *55*(6), 527–563. https://doi-org.ezp.waldenulibrary.org/10.1007/s11162-013-9325-4 New York, NY: Routledge.

Krause, K.-L., Hartley, R., James, R., & Mclnnis, C. (2005, January). *The first year experience in Australian universities: Findings from a decade of national studies*.

Retrieved from https://www.griffith.edu.au/__data/assets/pdf_file/0006/37491/FYEReport05.pdf

Kreijins, K., Kirschner, P. A., & Jochems, W. (2002). The Sociability of Computer-Supported Collaborative Learning Environments. *Educational Technology & Society*, *5*(1), 8–22. Retrieved from https://ezp.waldenulibrary.org/login?url=https://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=eric&AN=EJ645644&site=eds-live&scope=site

Krumrei-Mancuso, E. J., Newton, F. B., Kim, E., Wilcox, D. (2013). Psychosocial factors predicting first-year college student success, (3), 247. https://doi-org.ezp.waldenulibrary.org/10.1353/csd.2013.0034

Kuh, G. D. (2007). What student engagement data tell us about college readiness. *Peer Review*, (1), 4. Retrieved from https://ezp.waldenulibrary.org/login?url=https://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=edsgea&AN=edsgcl.162234826&site=eds-live&scope=site

Kuh, G., Kinzie, J., Schuh, J., & Whitt, E. (2011). Fostering student success in hard times. *Change*, *43*(4), 12–19. https://doi-org.ezp.waldenulibrary.org/10.1080/00091383.2011.585311

Kuh, G.D., J.D. Shedd, and E.J. Whitt. 1987. "Student Affairs and Liberal Education: Unrecognized Common Law Partners." Journal of College Student Personnel 28: 252-60

Laing, C. L., & Laing, G. K. (2015). A conceptual framework for evaluating attrition in online courses. *E-Journal of Business Education and Scholarship of Teaching*, *9*(2), 39-55. Retrieved from Education Research Complete. (120818340)

Latham, C. L., Singh, H., Lim, C., Nguyen, E., & Tara, S. (n.d.). Transition Program to Promote Incoming Nursing Student Success in Higher Education. *NURSE EDUCATOR*, *41*(6), 319–323. https://doi-org.ezp.waldenulibrary.org/10.1097/NNE.0000000000000262

Latz, A. O., Ozaki, C. C., Royer, D. W., & Hornak, A. M. (2017). Student Affairs Professionals in the Community College: Critically Examining Preparation Programs from a Social Justice Lens. *Community College Journal of Research and Practice*, *41*(11), 733–746. Retrieved from https://ezp.waldenulibrary.org/login?url=https://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=eric&AN=EJ1153497&site=eds-live&scope=site

Lee, A., Poch, R., Shaw, M., & Williams, R. (2012). Engaging diversity in undergraduate classrooms: A pedagogy for developing intercultural competence. *ASHE Higher Education Report*, *38*(2), 1-132. Retrieved from ERIC database. (EJ1013206)

Lee, E. M., & Kramer, R. (2013). Out with the old, in with the new? Habitus and social mobility at selective colleges. *Sociology of Education*, (1), 18. https://doi-org.ezp.waldenulibrary.org/10.1177/0038040712445519

Lehman, R. M., & Conceicao, S. C. O. Motivting and retaining online students; Research-based strategies that work. (2013). One Montgomery Street, Suite 1200, San Francisco, CA 94104. Copyright 2014, John Wiley & Sons. Jossey-Bass

Lehmann, W. (2014). Habitus transformation and hidden injuries: successful working-class university students. *Sociology of Education*, (1), 1. https://doi-org.ezp.waldenulibrary.org/10.1177/0038040713498777

Lien, M. and Goldenberg, M. (2012). Outcomes of a College Wilderness Orientation Program. *Journal of Experiential Education*, *35*(1), 253–271. https://doi-org.ezp.waldenulibrary.org/10.1177/105382591203500104

Lillis, M.P. (2011-2012). Faculty emotional intelligence and student-faculty interactions: Implications for student retention. *Joumal of College Retention, Research, Theory and Practice, 13(2),* 155-178.

Lino, D. (2014). Early childhood teacher education: How to enhance professional development. *Journal Plus Education / Educatia Plus*, *11*(2), 200– 209. Retrieved from https://search-ebscohost-com.ezp.waldenulibrary.org/login.aspx?direct=true&db=eue&AN=99987543&site=eds- live&scope=site

Litzler, E., & Young, J. (2012). Understanding the risk of attrition in undergraduate engineering: Results from the project to assess climate in engineering. *Journal of Engineering Education*, *101*(2), 319-345. doi:10.1002/j.2168-9830.2012.tb00052.x

Lodico, M. G., Spaulding, D. T., & Voegtle, K. H. (2010). *Methods in educational research: From theory to practice* (2nd ed.). San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

Lounsbury, J. W., Fisher, L. A., Levy, J. J., & Welsh, D. P. (2009). An Investigation of Character Strengths in Relation to the Academic Success of College Students. *Individual Differences Research*, *7*(1), 52–69. Retrieved from https://ezp.waldenulibrary.org/login?url=https://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=a9h&AN=37564290&site=eds-live&scope=site

Lubbe, I. (2013). *Choice factors and the perceived value that influence prospective university students' intention to enroll: A choice model* (Doctoral dissertation). Retrieved from http://hdl.handle.net/10210/8742

Luca, M., & Smith, J. (2013). Salience in quality disclosure: Evidence from the *U.S. News* college rankings. *Journal of Economics & Management Strategy*, *22*(1), 58-77. doi:10. 1111/jems.12003

Luke, C., Redekop, F., & Burgin, C. (2015). Psychological Factors in Community College Student Retention. *Community College Journal of Research and Practice*, *39*(3), 222–234. Retrieved from https://ezp.waldenulibrary.org/login?url=https://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=eric&AN=EJ1048401&site=eds-live&scope=site

Luna, G., & Zienkewicz, L. (2014). Increasing postsecondary retention and graduation through strengths-based education. *GSTF Journal on Education*, *2*(1). Retrieved from http://dl6. globalstf.org/index.php/jed/article/view/688

Lundberg, C. A. (2014a). Peers and faculty as predictors of learning for community college students. *Community College Review*, *42*(2), 79-98. doi:10.1177/0091552113517931

Lundberg, C. A. (2014b). Institutional support and interpersonal climate as predictors of learning for Native American students. *Journal of College Student Development, 55*(3), 263-277. doi:10.1353/csd.2014.0027

Mamiseishvili, K. (2012). International student persistence in U.S. postsecondary institutions. *Higher Education*, *64*(1), 1-17. doi:10.1007/s10734-011-9477-0

Maramba, D. C., & Museus, S. D. (2013). Examining the effects of campus climate, ethnic group cohesion, and cross-cultural interaction on Filipino American students' sense of belonging in college. *Journal of College Student Retention: Research, Theory & Practice*, *14*(4), 495-522. doi:10.2190/cs.14.4.d

Maslow, A. (1954). *Motivation and personality*. New York: Harper.

Maslow, A. H. (1970a). Motivation and Personality. New York: Harper & Row.

Maurer, T. W., Allen, D., Gatch, D. B., Shankar, P., & Sturges, D. (2013). Students' academic motivations in three disciplines. *Journal of the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning*, *13*(5), 77-89. Retrieved from http://josotl.indiana.edu/article/view/2153

Mayhew, M., Vanderlinden, K., & Kim, E. (2010). A Multi-Level Assessment of the Impact of Orientation Programs on Student Learning. *Research in Higher Education*, *51*(4), 320–345. https://doi-org.ezp.waldenulibrary.org/10.1007/s11162-009-9159-2

Mayo, T. (2013). First-year course requirements and retention for community colleges. *Community College Journal of Research and Practice*, *37*(10), 764-768. doi:10.1080/ 10668921003723292

McClenney, K. M. (2007). The Community College Survey of Student Engagement. *Community College Review*, *35*(2), 137–146. https://doi-org.ezp.waldenulibrary.org/10.1177/0091552107306583

McDonald, D., & Farrell, T. (2012). Out of the mouths of babes: Early college high school students' transformational learning experiences. *Journal of Advanced Academics*, *23*(3), 217-248. doi:10.1177/1932202x12451440

McNeely, H. (1937). Project in research in universities: College student mortality. [Bulletin No. 11]. Retrieved from ERIC database. (ED542540)

Mellard, D., Krieshok, T., Fall, E., & Woods, K. (2013). Dispositional factors affecting motivation during learning in adult basic and secondary education programs. *Reading & Writing*, *26*(4), 515–538. https://doi-org.ezp.waldenulibrary.org/10.1007/s11145-012-9413-4

Merriam, S. B. (2009). *Qualitative research: A guide to design and implementation*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

Merriam, S. B., Caffarella, R. S., & Baumgartner, L. M. (2007). *Learning in adulthood: A comprehensive guide* (3rd ed.). San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

Merriam, S. B., Caffarella, R. S., & Baumgartner, L. M. (2012). *Learning in adulthood: A comprehensive guide* (3rd ed.; E-book). San Francisco, CA: John Wiley & Sons.

Mertes, S. J., & Hoover, R. E. (2014). Predictors of First-Year Retention in a Community College. *Community College Journal of Research and Practice*, *38*(7), 651–660. Retrieved from https://ezp.waldenulibrary.org/login?url=https://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=eric&AN=EJ1022797&site=eds-live&scope=site

Metzner, B. S., & Bean, J. P. (1987). The estimation of a conceptual model of nontraditional undergraduate student attrition. *Research in Higher Education*, *27*(1), 15-38. doi:10. 1007/bf00992303

Meyer, M., & Marx, S. (n.d.). Engineering Dropouts: A Qualitative Examination of Why Undergraduates Leave Engineering. *JOURNAL OF ENGINEERING EDUCATION*, *103*(4), 525–548. https://doi-org.ezp.waldenulibrary.org/10.1002/jee.20054

Miyamoto, Y., & Sono, T. (2012). Lessons from peer support among individuals with mental health difficulties: A review of the literature. *Clinical Practice and Epidemiology in Mental Health*, *8*. https://doi-org.ezp.waldenulibrary.org/10.2174/1745017901208010022

Morra, S. (2000). A new model of verbal short-term memory. *Journal of Experimental Child Psychol*ogy, *75*(3), 191–227. doi:10.1006/jecp.1999.2536

Morra, S., Gobbo, C., Marini, Z., & Sheese, R. (2008). *Cognitive development: Neo-Piagetian perspectives*. New York, NY: Lawrence Erlbaum.

Morrow, J. A., & Ackermann, M. E. (2012). Intention to persist and retention of first-year students: the importance of motivation and sense of belonging. *College Student Journal*, (3), 483. Retrieved from https://ezp.waldenulibrary.org/login?url=https://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=edsgea&AN=edsgcl.302464012&site=eds-live&scope=site

Moschetti, R. V., & Hudley, C. (2015). Social Capital and Academic Motivation among First-Generation Community College Students. *Community College Journal of Research and Practice*, *39*(3), 235–251. Retrieved from https://ezp.waldenulibrary.org/login?url=https://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=eric&AN=EJ1048402&site=eds-live&scope=site

Mullin, C. M. (2012). Why access matters: The community college student body [AACC Policy Brief 2012-01PBL]. Retrieved from http://www.aacc.nche.edu/Publications/Briefs/Pages/ pb02062012.aspx

Munro, L. (2011). “Go bold, dream large”: The challenge confronting non-traditional students at university. *Australian Journal of Education*, *55*(2), 115-131. doi:10.1177/000494411105 500203

National Center for Education Statistics. (2018). Fast facts: Back to school statistics. Retrieved from http://nces.ed.gov/fastfacts/display.asp?id=372

National Postsecondary Education Cooperative. (2011). Financing postsecondary education in the United States. Retrieved from https://nces.ed.gov/npec/products.asp

National Student Clearinghouse Research Center. (2014). Snapshot report: Persistence-retention. Retrieved from http://nscresearchcenter.org/snapshotreport-persistenceretention14/

Newton, F. B., and S. C. Ender. 2010. Students helping students: A guide for peer educators on college campuses, 2nd ed. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Nichols, S. C., & Sheffield, A. N. 2. (2014). Is there an elephant in the room? Considerations that administrators tend to forget when facilitating inclusive practices among general and special education teachers. National Forum of Applied Educational Research Journal, 27(1), 31-44.

Nicholson, L., Putwain, D., Connors, L., & Hornby-Atkinson, P. (2013). The key to successful achievement as an undergraduate student: Confidence and realistic expectations? *Studies in Higher Education*, *38*(2), 285-298. doi:10.1080/03075079.2011.585710

Nilson, L. B. (2016). *Teaching at its best: A research-based resource for college instructors* (4th ed.). San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

Noel, L. (1978). First steps in starting a campus retention program. In L. Noel (Ed.), Reducing the dropout rate (pp. 87-98). New Directions for Student Services, No. 3. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass

Noel-Levitz, LLC. (2011). Student retention practices at four-year and two-year institutions. Retrieved from

https://www.ruffalonl.com/documents/shared/Papers_and_Research/2011/2011STUDENTRETENTIONPRACTICES.pdf

Noel-Levitz, LLC. (2013). *The attitudes and motivations of college transfer students*. Retrieved from https://www.ruffalonl.com/upload/Papers_and_Research/2013/2013TransferStudent AttitudesReport.pdf

O'Keeffe, P. (2013). A sense of belonging: Improving student retention. *College Student Journal, 47*(4), 605-613. Retrieved from http://www.ingentaconnect.com/content/prin/csj/2013/00000047/00000004

Orehovec, E. (2015). *The influence of academic and social self-concept on college student withdrawal* (Doctoral dissertation). Retrieved from http://scholarcommons.sc.edu/ etd/3138/

Osterman, K. F. (2000). Students' need for belonging in the school community. *Review of Educational Research*, *70*(3), 323–367. https://doi-org.ezp.waldenulibrary.org/10.2307/1170786

O'Toole, J. K., West, D. C., Starmer, A. J., Yu, C. E., Calaman, S., Rosenbluth, G., … Spector, N. D. (2014). Placing faculty development front and center in a multisite educational initiative: lessons from the I-PASS Handoff study. *Academic Pediatrics*, *14*(3), 221–224. https://doi-org.ezp.waldenulibrary.org/10.1016/j.acap.2014.02.013

Palmer, M. J., O'Kane, P., & Owens, M. (2009). Betwixt spaces: student accounts of turning point experiences in the first-year transition. *Studies in Higher Education*, *34*(1), 37–54. https://doi-org.ezp.waldenulibrary.org/10.1080/03075070802601929

Pan, Y., & Gauvain, M. (2012, February). The continuity of college students' autonomous learning motivation and its predictors: A three-year longitudinal

study. *Learning and Individual Differences*, *22*(1), 92-99. doi:10.1016/j.lindif.2011.11.010

Park, J. J. (2013). *When diversity drops: Race, religion, and affirmative action in higher education*. New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press.

Park, J. J., Denson, N., & Bowman, N. A. (2012). Does socioeconomic diversity make a difference? Examining the effects of racial and socioeconomic diversity on the campus climate for diversity. *American Educational Research Journal*, 50(3), 466-496. doi:10. 3102/0002831212468290

Park, J. J., & Kim, Y. K. (2013). Interracial friendship and structural diversity: Trends for Greek, religious, and ethnic student organizations. *The Review of Higher Education*, *37*(1), 1-24. doi:10.1353/rhe.2013.0061

Pascarella, E. T., Chapman, D. W. (1983). Validation of a theoretical model of college withdrawal: interaction effects in a multi-institutional simple. Research in Higher Education. 19(1):25.48

Pascarella, E. T., & Terenzini, P. T. (1980). Predicting persistence and voluntary dropout decisions from theorectical model. Journal of Higher Education. 51, 60-75

Pascarella, E. T., and Terenzini, P. T. (1991). How college affects students: Findings and insight from twenty years of research Jossey-Bass, San Francisco.

Perry, J. E. (2017). *Virginia's middle college program: Factors of completion, community college success, and participants' perceptions of student support services* (Doctoral dissertation). Retrieved from https://vtechworks.lib.vt.edu/handle/10919/77401

Peterson, C. H., Casillas, A., & Robbins, S. B. (2006). The Student Readiness Inventory and the Big Five: Examining social desirability and college academic performance. *Personality & Individual Differences*, *41*(4), 663–673. https://doi-org.ezp.waldenulibrary.org/10.1016/j.paid.2006.03.006

Phillips, P. (2008). Professional Development as a Critical Component of Continuing Teacher Quality. *Australian Journal of Teacher Education*, *33*(1). Retrieved from https://ezp.waldenulibrary.org/login?url=https://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=eric&AN=EJ1069624&site=eds-live&scope=site

Piaget, J. (1964). Part I: Cognitive development in children: Piaget development and learning. *Journal of Research in Science Teaching*, *2*(3), 176–186. doi:10.1002/tea.3660020306

Piaget, J. (1976). Piaget's theory. In *Piaget and his school* (pp. 11-23). Berlin, Germany: Springer.

Pierre, E. A. S., & Jackson, A. Y. (2014). Qualitative data analysis after coding. *Qualitative Inquiry*, *20*(6), 715-719. doi:10.1177/1077800414532435

Pitman, T. (2000). Perceptions of Academics and Students as Customers: a survey of administrative staff in higher education. *Journal of Higher Education Policy & Management*, *22*(2), 165–175. https://doi-org.ezp.waldenulibrary.org/10.1080/713678138

Pleitz, J. D., MacDougall, A. E., Terry, R. A., Buckley, M. R., & Campbell, N. J. (2015). Great Expectations: Examining the Discrepancy between Expectations and Experiences on College Student Retention. *Journal of College Student Retention: Research, Theory & Practice*, *17*(1), 88–104. Retrieved from

https://ezp.waldenulibrary.org/login?url=https://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=eric&AN=EJ1076250&site=eds-live&scope=site

Pluut, H., Curseu, P. L., & Ilies, R. (n.d.). Social and study related stressors and resources among university entrants: Effects on well-being and academic performance. *LEARNING AND INDIVIDUAL DIFFERENCES*, *37*, 262–268. https://doi-org.ezp.waldenulibrary.org/10.1016/j.lindif.2014.11.018

Pope, M. L. "Meeting the Challenges to African American Men at Community Colleges." In M. C. Cuyjet and Associates (eds.), African American Men in College. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2006.

Powell, B. A., Gilleland, D. S., & Pearson, L. C. (2012). Expenditures, efficiency, and effectiveness in U.S. undergraduate higher education: A national benchmark model. *The Journal of Higher Education*, *83*(1), 102-127. doi:10.1353/jhe.2012.0005

Price, D. V., & Tovar, E. (2014). Student engagement and institutional graduation rates: Identifying high-impact educational practices for community colleges. *Community College Journal of Research and Practice*, *38*(9), 766-782. doi:10.1080/10668926. 2012.719481

Pruett, P. S., & Absher, B. (2015). Factors influencing retention of developmental education students in community colleges. Delta Kappa Gamma Bulletin, 81(4), 32-40.

Qingjiu, S., & Maliki, N. Z. (2013). Place attachment and place identity: Undergraduate students' place bonding on campus. *Procedia-Social and Behavioral Sciences*, *91*, 632-639. doi:10.1016/j.sbspro.2013.08.463

Raisman, N. A. (2013, February). The cost of college attrition at four-year colleges and universities: An analysis of 1669 U.S. institutions. Retrieved from http://www.educationalpolicy.org/pdf/1302_PolicyPerspectives.pdf

Reason, R. D. (2009). An examination of persistence research through the lens of a comprehensive conceptual framework. *Journal of College Student Development*, *50*(6), 659-682. doi:10.1353/csd.0.0098

Reeves, S. (2016). Why we need interprofessional education to improve the delivery of safe and effective care. *Interface: Comunicação, Saúde, Educação*, (56), 185. https://doi-org.ezp.waldenulibrary.org/10.1590/1807-57622014.0092

Regan, E., & Dillon, J. (2015). A place for STEM: Probing the reasons for undergraduate course choices. In E. K. Henriksen, J. Dillon, & J. Ryder (Eds.), *Understanding student participation and choice in science and technology education* (pp. 119-134). New York, NY: Springer.

Roberts, J., & McNeese, M. N. (2010). Student involvement/engagement in higher education based on student origin. *Research in Higher Education Journal, 7*.http://www.aabri.com/manuscripts/09346.pdf.

Roberts, J., & Styron, R. (2009). Student satisfaction and persistence: Factors vital to student. Research in Higher Education Joumal, 6, 1-18.

Roman, M. (2007). Community college admission and student retention. *Journal of College Administration*, (194), 18-23. Retrieved from ERIC database. (EJ783945)

Rosenberg, L. J., & Czepiel, J. A. (1984). A marketing approach for customer retention.

Rourke, L., Anderson, T, Garrison, D. R., & Archer, W. (1999). Assessing Social Presence in Asynchronous Text-Based Computer Conferencing. *Journal of Distance Education*, *14*(2), 50–71. Retrieved from https://ezp.waldenulibrary.org/login?url=https://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=eue&AN=31735553&site=eds-live&scope=site

Roy PP, Sailesh KS, Doshi MA. Depression, anxiety and stress among first year undergraduate medical students. Asian Journal of Biomedic

Journal of Consumer Marketing, *1*(2), 45-51. doi:10.1108/eb008094

Rutschow, E. Z., Cullinan, D., & Welbeck, R. (2012, April). *Keeping student on course: An impact study of a student success course at Guilford Technical Community College*. Retrieved from ERIC database. (ED531183)

Ryan, M. me. ryan@qut. edu. a. (2013). The pedagogical balancing act: teaching reflection in higher education. *Teaching in Higher Education*, *18*(2), 144–155. https://doi-org.ezp.waldenulibrary.org/10.1080/13562517.2012.694104

Saleem, A., Masrur, R., & Afzal, M. T. (2014). Effect of Professional Development on Enhancing the Knowledge Level of University Teachers in Pakistan. *Journal of Research & Reflections in Education (JRRE)*, *8*(2), 162–168. Retrieved from https://ezp.waldenulibrary.org/login?url=https://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?

Salzer, M. S. (2012). A comparative study of campus experiences of college students with mental illnesses versus a general college sample. *Journal of American College Health*, *60*(1), 1-7. doi:10.1080/07448481.2011.552537

Sandoval-Lucero, E., Maes, J. B., & Klingsmith, L. (2014). African American and Latina(o) community college students' social capital and student success. *College Student Journal*, *48*(3), 522–533. Retrieved from

https://ezp.waldenulibrary.org/login?url=https://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=psyh&AN=2015-40643-021&site=eds-live&scope=site

Saroyan, A., & Trigwell, K. (2015). Higher education teachers' professional learning: Process and outcome. *Studies in Educational Evaluation*, *46*, 92–101. https://doi-org.ezp.waldenulibrary.org/10.1016/j.stueduc.2015.03.008

Schechtman, E. & Shachar-Lavie, I. (2013). More than a face: A unified theoretical perspective on nonverbal social cue processing in social anxiety. *Frontiers in Human Neuroscience, Vol 7 (2013)*. https://doi-org.ezp.waldenulibrary.org/10.3389/fnhum.2013.00904/full

Schneider, M. (2010, October). *Finishing the first lap: The cost of first-year student attrition in America's four-year colleges and universities*. Retrieved from http://www.airorgfiles/ air%5fschneider%5ffinishing

Schneider, M., & Yin, L. M. (2012, April). Completion matters: The high cost of low community college graduation rates. *American Enterprise Institute Education Outlook*, (2), 1-10. Retrieved from ERIC database. (ED530791)

Schnoebelen, A. (2013, January 9). College enrollment will grow more slowly, education department projects. The Chronicle of Higher Education. Retrieved from http://chronicle.com/article/College-Enrollment-Will-Grow/136547/

Shelton, E. N. (2012). A model of nursing student retention. *International Journal of Nursing Education Scholarship*, *9*(1), 1-16. doi:10.1515/1548-923x.2334

Short, J., Williams, E., & Christie, B. (1976). The social psychology of telecommunications. Hoboken, NJ: John Wiley & Sons, Ltd.

Shuman, R. B. (2014). College dropouts: An overview. *The Journal of Educational Sociology*, *29*(8), 347-350. doi:10.2307/2264496

Silverman, D. (2016) *Qualitative research*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Smith, D. G. (2015). *Diversity's promise for higher education: Making it work*. Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press.

Smith, W. L. & Zhang, P. (2010). The impact of key factors on the transition from high school to college among first- and second- generation students. Journal of the First-Year Experience and Students in Transition, 229(2), 49-70.

Snyder, P., Tate, P., & Winters, L. (2010). How boomers can help the nation go green: Emerging encore career opportunities in the green economy. Retrieved from http://www.encore.org/ files/research/JobsGreenPaper3-5-10.pdf

Soares, J. A. (2012). *SAT wars: The case for test-optional admissions*. New York, NY: Teachers College Press.

Sommerfeld, A. K., & Bowen, P. (2013). Fostering Social and Cultural Capital in Urban Youth: A Programmatic Approach to Promoting College Success. *Journal of Education*, *193*(1), 47–55. Retrieved from https://ezp.waldenulibrary.org/login?url=https://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=eric&AN=EJ1054542&site=

Soria, K. M., & Stebleton, M. J. (2012). First-generation students' academic engagement and retention. *Teaching in Higher Education*, *17*(6), 673–685. https://doi-org.ezp.waldenulibrary.org/10.1080/13562517.2012.666735

Spady, W. (1970). Dropouts from higher education: An interdisciplinary review and synthesis. *Interchange,* 1(1), 64–85. doi:10.1007/bf02214313

Spady, W. (1971). Dropouts from higher education: Toward an empirical model. *Interchange*, *2*(3), 38–62. doi:10.1007/bf02282469

Sparkman, L., Maulding, W., & Roberts, J. (2012). Non-cognitive predictors of student success in college. *College Student Journal*, *46*(3), 642-652. Retrieved from ERIC database. (EJ996963)

Spitzer, B., & Aronson, J. (2015). Minding and mending the gap: Social psychological interventions to reduce educational disparities. *British Journal of Educational Psychology*, *85*(1), 1–18. https://doi-org.ezp.waldenulibrary.org/10.1111/bjep.12067

Sriram, R. (2014). Rethinking Intelligence: The Role of Mindset in Promoting Success for Academically High-Risk Students. *Journal of College Student Retention: Research, Theory & Practice*, *15*(4), 515–536. Retrieved from https://search-ebscohost-com.ezp.waldenulibrary.org/login.aspx?direct=true&db=eric&AN=EJ1076282&site=eds-live&scope=site

Stake, R. E. (1978, February). The case study method in social inquiry. *Educational Researcher*, 5-8. doi:10.3102%2F0013189X007002005

Stake, R. E. (1995). *The art of case study research*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Stake, R. E. (2005). *Multiple case study analysis*. New York, NY: Guilford Press.

Staman, L., Visscher, A. J., & Luyten, H. (2014). The effects of professional development on the attitudes, knowledge and skills for data-driven decision making. *Studies in Educational Evaluation*, *42*, 79–90. https://doi-org.ezp.waldenulibrary.org/10.1016/j.stueduc.2013.11.002

Stebleton, M. J., Soria, K. M., & Huesman, R. L. (2014). First-generation students' sense of belonging, mental health, and use of counseling services at public research universities. *Journal of College Counseling*, *17*(1), 6-20. doi:10.1002/j.2161-1882.2014.00044.x

Steele CM, Spencer SJ, Aronson J. 2002. Contending with group image: the psychology of stereotype and social identity threat. In Advances in Experimental Social Psychology, ed. MP Zanna, vol. 34, pp. 379–440. San Diego, CA: Academic

Stephens, N. M., Hamedani, M. G., & Destin, M. (2014). Closing the social-class achievement gap: A difference-education intervention improves first-generation students' academic performance and all students' college transition. *Psychological Science*, *25*(4), 943–953. https://doi-org.ezp.waldenulibrary.org/10.1177/0956797613518349

Sternberg, R. J. (2013, February 7). Research to improve retention. Retrieved from *Inside Higher Ed.*: https://www.insidehighered.com/views/2013/02/07/essay-use-research-improve-student-retention#ixzz2QAelwRP5

Stevens, R. E., Loudon, D. L., Yow, D. A., Bowden, W. W., & Humphrey, J. H. (2013). *Stress in college athletics: Causes, consequences, coping*. New York, NY: Routledge.

Strayhorn, T. L. (2009). An examination of the impact of first-year seminars on correlates of college student retention. The Journal of The First-Year Experience and Students in Transition, 21(1), 9–27.

Strayhorn, T. (2012). *College students' sense of belonging: A key to educational success for all students*. New York, NY: Routledge.

Sun, J., Hagedorn, L. S., Zhang, Y. (2016). Homesickness at college: Its impact on academic performance and retention. *Journal of College Student Development, 57*(8), 943-957. doi: 10.1353/csd.2016.0092

Suskie, L. (2018) Assessing student Learning: A common sense guide. 3rd Ed. San Francisco, CA. Jossey Bass.

Sutton, R., & Gannon-Cook, R. (2013, March). More hard lessons learned in online student retention. In R. McBride & M. Searson (Eds.), *Proceedings of Society for Information Technology & Teacher Education International Conference* (pp. 2,659-2,673). Chesapeake, VA: Association for the Advancement of Computing in Education.

Swan, V. J. (2012). *Predictors of engagement among minority nursing students: Examining the use of collaborative teams, project-based assignments, authentic 163 learning activities and web 2.0 technologies* (Doctoral dissertation). Retrieved from Proquest Dissertation and Theses. (Pub. No. 3502730)

Tabarrok, A. (2012, March 9). Turning in to dropping out. *Chronicle of Higher Education*, *58*(27), B4-B5. Retrieved from http://chronicle.com/article/Tuning-In-to-Dropping-Out/130967/

Taormina, R. J., & Gao, J. H. (2013). Maslow and the motivation hierarchy: Measuring satisfaction of the needs. *The American Journal of Psychology*, *126*(2), 155–177. https://doi-org.ezp.waldenulibrary.org/10.5406/amerjpsyc.126.2.0155

Taylor, B. M., & Duke, N. K. (2013). Handbook of effective literacy instruction: Research-based practice k-8. New York, NY. Guilford Press.

Taylor, K. L. L. T., & Znajda, S. K. (2015). Demonstrating the impact of educational development: The case of a course design collaborative. *Studies in Educational Evaluation*, *46*, 39–46. https://doi-org.ezp.waldenulibrary.org/10.1016/j.stueduc.2014.11.003

Terenzini, P. T., Springer, L., Yaeger, P. M., Pascarella, E. T., & Nora, A. (1996). First-generation college students: Characteristics, experiences, and, cognitive development. Research in Higher Education, Vol. 37, pp. 1□22.

Terrion, J. L., & Daoust, J.-L. (2011). Assessing the impact of supplemental instruction on the retention of undergraduate students after controlling for motivation. *Journal of College Student Retention: Research, Theory and Practice*, *13*(3), 311–327. https://doi-org.ezp.waldenulibrary.org/10.2190/CS.13.3.c

Terrion, J. L., & Daoust, J.-L. (2012). Assessing the Impact of Supplemental Instruction on the Retention of Undergraduate Students after Controlling for Motivation. *Journal of College Student Retention: Research, Theory & Practice*, *13*(3), 311–327. Retrieved from https://ezp.waldenulibrary.org/login?url=https://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=eric&AN=EJ945739&site=eds-live&scope=site

Thammasiri, D., Delen, D., Meesad, P., & Kasap, N. (2014). A critical assessment of imbalanced class distribution problem: The case of predicting freshmen student attrition. *Expert Systems with Applications*, *41*(2), 321-330. doi:10.1016/j.eswa.2013.07.046

Thoits, P. A. (1986). Social support as coping assistance. *Journal of Consulting and Clinical Psychology*, *54*(4), 416–423. https://doi-org.ezp.waldenulibrary.org/10.1037/0022-006X.54.4.416

Thomas, G. (2014). Closing the policy-practice gap for low SES students in higher education: The pedagogical challenge. *Higher Education Research & Development*, *33*(4), 807-820. Retrieved from ERIC database. (EJ1030978)

Thomas, N. (2002). Children, Family and the State: Decision-making and Child Participation. *International Social Work*, (1), 140. Retrieved from https://search-ebscohost-com.ezp.waldenulibrary.org/login.aspx?direct=true&db=edsgea&AN=edsgcl.83755765&site=eds-live&scope=site

Thompson, L. R., & Prieto, L. C. (2013). Improving retention among college students: Investigating the utilization of virtualized advising. *Academy of Educational Leadership Journal*, *17*(4), 13. Retrieved from https://www.abacademies.org/journals/academy-of-educational-leadership-journal-home.html

Tinto, V. (1975). Dropout from higher education: A theoretical synthesis of recent research. *Review of Educational Research*, *45*(1), 89-125. doi:10.3102/00346543045001089

Tinto, V. (1982). Limits of theory and practice in student attrition. *The Journal of Higher Education*, *53*(6), 687–700. Retrieved from ERIC database. (EJ272879)

Tinto, V. (1987). *Leaving college: Rethinking the causes and cures of student attrition*. Chicago, IL: The University of Chicago Press.

Tinto, V. (1993). *Leaving college: Rethinking the causes and cures of student attrition* (2nd ed.). Chicago, IL: The University of Chicago Press.

Tinto, V. (1997). Classrooms as communities: Exploring the educational character of student persistence. *Journal of Higher Education*, *68*(6), 599–623. doi:10.2307/2959965

Tinto, V. (1987). Rethinking the causes and cures of student attrition (2nd ed.). Chicago, IL: The University of Chicago Press.

Tinto, V. (1998). Learning communities: Building gateways to student success. The National Teaching and Learning Forum, 7(1), 1-11. Retrieved from http://www.ntlf.com/html/lib/ suppmat/74tinto.htm

Tinto, V. (1999). Taking retention seriously: Rethinking the first year of college. *NACADA Journal, 19*(2), 5-10. doi:10.12930/0271-9517-19.2.5

Tinto, V. (2000). Linking learning and leaving: Exploring the role of the college classroom in student departure. In J. M. Braxton (Ed.), *Reworking the student departure puzzle* (pp. 81–94). Nashville, TN: Vanderbilt University Press.

Tinto, V. (2000). Part I: Revising Tinto's Theory: Linking Learning and Leaving. In *Reworking the Student Departure Puzzle*(p. 81). Retrieved from https://search-ebscohost-com.ezp.waldenulibrary.org/login.aspx?direct=true&db=edo&AN=50545743&site=eds-live&scope=site

Tinto, V., & Pell Institute for the Study of Opportunity in Higher Education. (2004). *Student Retention and Graduation: Facing the Truth, Living with the Consequences. Occasional Paper 1*. *Pell Institute for the Study of Opportunity in*

Higher Education. Pell Institute for the Study of Opportunity in Higher Education. Retrieved from https://search-ebscohost-com.ezp.waldenulibrary.org/login.aspx?direct=true&db=eric&AN=ED519709&site=eds-live&scope=site

Tinto, V. (2006). Research and practice of student retention: What next? Journal of College Student Retention: Research, Theory and Practice, 8, 1-19. doi:10.2190/4YNU-4TMB22DJ-AN4W

student departure puzzle. Nashville, TN: Vanderbilt University Press.

Tinto, V. (2012). *Completing college: Rethinking institutional action*. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press.

Tinto, V. (2013). Isaac Newton and student college completion. *Journal of College Student Retention: Research, Theory, and Practice, 15*(1), 1-7. doi: 10.2190/CS.15.1.a

Tovar, E. (2015). The Role of Faculty, Counselors, and Support Programs on Latino/a Community College Students' Success and Intent to Persist. *Community College Review*, *43*(1), 46–71. https://doi-org.ezp.waldenulibrary.org/10.1177/0091552114553788

Townsend, B., & Wilson, K. B. (2009). The academic and social integration of persisting community college transfer students. *Journal of College Student Retention: Research, Theory & Practice*, *10*(4), 405-423. doi:10.2190/cs.10.4.a

Tucker, G. C. (2014, March 7). First generation. Diverse: Issues in Higher Education: pp. 24-28

Turner, P., & Thompson, E. (2014). College retention initiatives meeting the needs of millennial freshmen students. *Journal of College Student*, *48*(1), 94-104. Retrieved from ERIC database. (EJ1034162)

Upcraft, M. L., Gardner, J., & Associates. (1989). The freshman year experience. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass Publishers.

Upcraft, M., Gardner, J.., & Barefoot, D. (Eds.). (2005). Challenge and support: Creating climates for first-year student success. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

U.S. Census Bureau. (2012, February 23). Bachelor's degree attainment tops 30 percent for the first time, Census Bureau reports [Press release]. Retrieved from https://www.census.gov/newsroom/releases/archives/education/cb12-33.html

U.S. Department of Education. (2015). *The Condition of Education 2015*. Washington, DC: National Center for Education Statistics, Institute of Education Sciences.

U.S. Department of Education. (2015, August). *School eligibility and operations 2015–2016* (Vol. 2). Retrieved from https://ifap.ed.gov/fsahandbook/attachments/1516FSAHbk Vol2Master.pdf

U.S. Department of Education, Institute of Education Sciences, National Center for Educational Statistics. (n.d.). Glossary. Retrieved from http://nces.ed.gov/ipeds/glossary/?charin dex=T

Vaccaro, A., Daly-Cano, M., & Newman, B. (in press). A sense of belonging among college students with disabilities: An emergent theoretical model. Journal of College Student

Vu, P., Cao, V., Vu, L., & Cepero, J. (2014). Factors driving learner success in online professional development. International Review of Research in Open and Distributed Learning, 15(3), 120–139.

Wang, S.K., Hsu, H.Y., Campbell, T., Coster, D., & Longhurst, M. (2014). An investigation of middle school science teachers and students use of technology inside and outside of classrooms: considering whether digital natives are more technology savvy than their teachers. *Educational Technology Research & Development*, *62*(6), 637–662. https://doi-org.ezp.waldenulibrary.org/10.1007/s11423-014-9355-4

Warren, S. T. (2013). *Inflated expectations: An investigation into college students' academic entitlement beliefs* (Doctoral dissertation). Retrieved from ProQuest Dissertations & Theses Global. (Order No. 3603489)

Watson, D. &Taylor, R. (1998) Lifelong Learning and the University: a post-dearing perspective (London, Falmer Press).

White House. (2009, November 23). President Obama launches "Educate to Innovate" campaign for excellence in science, technology, engineering & math (STEM) education [Press release]. Retrieved from https://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/president-obama-launches-educate-innovate-campaign-excellence-science-technology-en

Wilcox, P., Winn, S., & Fyvie-Gauld, M. (2005). It was nothing to do with the university, it was just the people: the role of social support in the first year experience of higher education. *Studies in Higher Education*, *30*(6), 707-722

Wild, L., & Ebbers, L. (2002). Rethinking Student Retention in Community Colleges. *Community College Journal of Research and Practice*, *26*(6), 503–519. Retrieved from https://search-ebscohost-com.ezp.waldenulibrary.org/login.aspx?direct=true&db=eric&AN=EJ650979&site=eds-live&scope=site

Wilkins, A. C. (2014). Race, age, and identity transformations in the transition from high school to college for black and first-generation white men. *Sociology of Education*, (3), 171. https://doi-org.ezp.waldenulibrary.org/10.1177/0038040714537901

Willcoxson, L. l., Cotter, J., & Joy, S. (2011). Beyond the first-year experience: The impact on attrition of student experiences throughout undergraduate degree studies in six diverse universities. *Studies In Higher Education*, *36*(3), 331-352. doi:10.1080/030750709035 81533

Wilson TD. 2011. Redirect: The Surprising New Science of Psychological Change. New York: Little, Brown

Windham, M. H., Rehfuss, M. C., Williams, C. R., Pugh, J. V., & Tincher-Ladner, L. (2014). Retention of First-Year Community College Students. *Community College Journal of Research and Practice*, *38*(5), 466–477. Retrieved from https://search-ebscohost-com.ezp.waldenulibrary.org/login.aspx?direct=true&db=eric&AN=EJ1022801&site=eds-live&scope=site

Wolfe, B. D. & Kay, G. (2011). Perceived Impact of an Outdoor Orientation Program for First-Year University Students. *Journal of Experiential Education*, *34*(1), 19–34. https://doi-org.ezp.waldenulibrary.org/10.5193/JEE34.1.19

Wolters, C. A., & Benzon, M. B. (2013). Assessing and predicting college students' use of strategies for the self-regulation of motivation. *The Journal of Experimental Education*, *81*(2), 199-221. doi:10.1080/00220973.2012.699901

Wood, J. L. (2012). Leaving the 2-year college: Predictors of Black male collegian departure. *Journal of Black Studies, 43*(3)*,* 303-326. doi:10.1177/0021934711424490

Woodall, T., Hiller, A., & Resnick, S. (2014). Making sense of higher education: Students as consumers and the value of the university experience. *Studies in Higher Education*, *39*(1), 48-67. doi:10.1080/03075079.2011.648373

Wray, J., Barrett, D., & Aspland, J. (2011, September 21). Staying the course: Soliciting the right kind of support can help students to complete their training. *Nursing Standard*, *26*(3), 64. doi:10.7748/ns2011.09.26.3.64.p6378

Xuereb, S. (2014). Why students consider terminating their studies and what convinces them to stay. *Active Learning in Higher Education*, *15*(2), 145-156. doi:10.117/169787414527 395

Yazan, B. (2015). Three approaches to case study methods in education: Yin, Merriam, and Stake. Qualitative Report, 20, 134–152.

Yeager, D. S., Henderson, M. D., Paunesku, D., Walton, G. M., D'Mello, S., Spitzer, B. J., & Duckworth, A. L. (2014). Boring but important: A self-transcendent purpose

for learning fosters academic self-regulation. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, *107*(4), 559–580. https://doi-org.ezp.waldenulibrary.org/10.1037/a0037637.supp (Supplemental)

Yeager DS, Walton G, Cohen GL. Addressing achievement gaps with psychological interventions. Phi Delta Kappan. 2013;94(5):62–65. [Google Scholar]

Yin, R. K. (1981). The case study crisis: Some answers. *Administrative Science Quarterly*, *26*(1), 58-65. doi:10.2307/2392599

Yin, R.K., (1984). *Case Study Research: Design and Methods*. Beverly Hills, Calif: Sage Publications.

Yin, R. K. (2009). Case study research: Design and methods (4 ed.). Los Angeles, CA: Sage.

Yorke, M. (1998). Non-completion of undergraduate study: Some implications for policy in higher education. *Journal of Higher Education Policy and Management*, *20*(2), 189-201. doi:10.1080/1360080980200206

Yorke, M. and B. Longden. 2008. The first-year experience of higher education in the UK: Report on phase 1 of a project funded by the Higher Education Academy. UK:HEA

Zalaquett, C. P., & Lopez, A. D. (2006). Learning from the Stories of Successful Undergraduate Latina/Latino Students: The Importance of Mentoring. *Mentoring & Tutoring: Partnership in Learning*, *14*(3), 337–353. Retrieved from

https://ezp.waldenulibrary.org/login?url=https://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=eric&AN=EJ819689&site=eds-live&scope=site

Zwart, R. C., Korthagen, F. A. J., & Attema-Noordewier, S. (2015). A strength-based approach to teacher professional development. *PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT IN EDUCATION*, *41*(3), 579–596. https://doi-org.ezp.waldenulibrary.org/10.1080/19415257.2014.919341

Appendix A: Professional Development Administrators and

Staff Training Workshop

Facilitators: Dr. Aviles and Margaret Nelson

Day 1 - Session 1 (7.0 hours)

Learning Objectives

The learning objectives are formulated to help participants:

- understand the importance of exceptional customer service
- be able to identify the characteristics of exceptional customer service
- develop a student-centered approach and culture around customer service
- be able to identify at least three common problems entering freshmen possibly would encounter transitioning from high school to college
- Bring awareness to administrators and staff about the importance of listening
- Identify elements that influence listening
- Discuss how administrators and staff can support entering freshmen students utilizing active listening

Training Resources and Materials

- Large classroom with round tables and seating for 30 participants
- Sound system, screen, data projector, laptop and PowerPoint – 45 slides
- Video camera
- White board with markers and eraser
- Microphone
- 30 name tags

- 30 notepads/journals (3-hole punched)
- 30 pens, pencils, and highlighters
- 30 binders
- 30 sets of handouts of the PowerPoint Presentation (3-hold punched)
- 30 training agendas
- 30 evaluation forms
- 30 envelopes with the classroom activity forms

Training Agenda

- Welcome remarks, participant introduction, dissemination of day one materials
- Training objectives
- Video: Front Desk First Impression Nordstrom's Customer Service Tips
- Small Group Table Discussion (Customer Service)
- Large Group Table Discussion (Customer Service)
- Break
- Video: Freshmen's video on Loneliness of College Transition"
- Listening Exercise "Whispers"
- Small Group Table Discussion (Active Listening)
- Large Group Discussions (Active Listening)
- Lunch Break
- Video: "Transitions: Are You Ready? The College Transition"
- Small Group Discussion (College Transition & strategies to Support Success)
- Large Group Discussion (College Transition & Strategies to Support Success)

- Break
- Q & A Session, Reflections of the Day Training
- Review of Training
- Complete the Evaluation Form

Day 1 - Lesson Plan

Time	Description
8:30 am – 10:00 am	• Workshop Registration • Facilitators introduction • Administrators and staff introduction (name, years at the University, brief description on their work area, and expectations on the training) • Participants will be provided with the needed training information The facilitators will discuss an overview of the first day workshop and the purpose of the training: Ground rules will be discussed, and a hard copy of the rules will be provided in the PowerPoint Presentation ➢ Group activities are time sensitive ➢ Be respectful of colleagues' opinions ➢ Discussion are about experiences and are not about specific individuals • Foundation of Customer Service • Quick tools to use for exceptional customer service ➢ What are some characteristics of exceptional customer service? ➢ The definitions of exceptional customer service ➢ What are the value of demonstrating exceptional customer service? ➢ Why is exceptional customer service important? **Video**: "Front Desk First Impressions" http://www.ahlei.org Educational Institute
10:00 am- 10:30 am	**Small Group Table Discussion** Each small group will select one individual to take the group notes and a spokesperson to speak on behalf of the small group to the larger group. Participants will discuss the contents of the Loneliness of College

	Transition video with the following in mind: • What stuck out most to you about the video • Do you feel entering freshmen students at the university have similar encounters? • How did you feel after watching the video? • How do you think we can make our entering freshmen student have a more positive experience? • Was this an objective presentation?
10:30 am - 10:45 am	**Morning Break**
10:45 am - 11:15 am	**Large Group Table Discussion** The facilitators will lead the discussion with administrators and staff. The flip chart will be used to communicate with the entire group discussing what the small groups were assigned and focusing on recognizing interpersonal skills that may enhance communicating styles with • the importance of exceptional customer service and being sensitive to entering freshmen students' needs. • The value of demonstrating exceptional customer service • Ways of demonstrating exceptional customer service An introduction of how delivering exceptional customer service requires active listening, and the role it plays in enhancing entering freshmen student communication
11:15 am - 11:30 am	**Video "Freshmen's video on Loneliness of College Transition** cornellsun.com/2017/.../freshmans-video-on-loneliness-of-college-transition This video will emphasize the importance of listening to and recognizing students struggle in acculturating onto the college campus. We can never know enough about the students and their needs.
11:30 am – 12:00 am	**Listening Exercise "Whispers"** The Whispers exercise demonstrates the necessity of validating the information received from participants (Skills Converged, 2015). Individuals will line up and whisper two messages, one at the beginning, and one at the end of the participant line. While this takes place, the facilitator will play distracting music to create some confusion. As soon as the message reaches the final individual, he/she asks the originator of the message to repeat it for verification and accuracy. This activity will demonstrate to the participants a lack of concentration when communicating with student veterans, and bring awareness about

	how they can improve their active listening skills. Participants will go to their respective small groups and discuss the results of the "Whispers" activity and keep notes for feedback.
12:00 pm – 1:00 pm	**Lunch Break**
1:00 am – 1:30 pm	**Small Group Discussion on Active Listening** • What experiences did you identify from the video and the exercise that may apply to your listening skills? • Have you ever just allowed a freshmen student to express his or her problem as it relates to internal or external issues without interrupting their conversation? • Do you think active listening is an acquired skill? • Do you think entering freshmen are faced with new challenges and needs as they enter a new environment? Serving the entering student in your role as administrators and staff, active listening is importance to be able to recognize homesickness, loneliness, and anxiety and how to properly assist the student.
1:30 pm – 2:00 pm	**Large Group Discussion on Active Listening** The facilitators will lead the discussion with administrators and staff. The flip chart will be used to communicate with the entire group discussing what the small groups were assigned and focusing on: learning how to listen to the student, as opposed to providing an answer.
2:00 pm – 2:30 pm	• Entering students' transitions to the campus • Understanding how administrators and staff fit into the mission and goal of the university **Video: "Transitions: Are You Ready? The College Transition"** This video will emphasize the importance of communicating, sensitivity, understanding what entering freshmen encountered while transitioning into college.
2:30 pm – 3:00 pm	**Small Group Discussion** • **Identify three strategies to assist entering student transition** • **Identify three ways to stay connected to the student** • **Identify four ways to build student trust in you having their best interest at stake**
3:00 pm – 3:15 pm	**Afternoon Break**
3:15pm – 3:45 pm	**Large Group Discussion on Strategies to Support Entering Freshmen Success** The facilitators will lead the discussion with administrators and staff. The flip chart will be used to communicate with the entire group discussing what the small groups were assigned and focusing on: building the student trust and confident in the administrator /staff

3:45 pm – 4:30 pm	**Q and A Session** **Reflections of the day training.** • Reflect on appropriate approaches to incorporate active listening • Record reflections in the journal.
4:30 pm – 5:00 pm	• Introduce the Agenda for the Third Day Training • Complete the Evaluation Form

Day 1 - Evaluation

Date: _____

Please respond to the effectiveness of the following subject matter:	1 Poor	2 Fair	3 Good	4 Excellent
Overall usefulness of training				
Training could be useful in my job duties				
Organization of training				
Topics were presented in a timely manner				
Activities were easily understood				
Workshop training materials were effective				
Please respond to the effectiveness of the presentation goals				
Presenter was experienced in customer service training				
Training subject matter was interesting				
Clearly understood the presentation of materials				
Your questions were effectively answered				
The atmosphere created engagement with participants				
How would you rate this training session?				

Professional Development Administrators and Staff Training Workshop

Facilitators: Dr. Aviles and Margaret Nelson

Day 2 - Session 2 (7.0 hours)

Learning Objectives

At the end of the second day workshop, administrators and staff will:

- Identify how student employees fit into the mission and goals of the institution
- Understand the positive side of serving the public
- Learn quick tools to use for conflict management
- Learn how to address in person, phone and email issues with the highest level of customer service even in complex situations
- Learn how to say no effectively
- Learn how to assess situations, give referrals or seek assistance as appropriate
- Leave with frontline strategies that support students, faculty, and staff in crisis

Training Agenda

- Facilitators: Review of Agenda
- Dissemination of day two materials
- Training objectives
- Video: Front Desk First Impression Nordstrom's Customer Service Tips
- Small Group Table Discussion (Customer Service)
- Large Group Table Discussion (Customer Service)
- Break
- Video: Freshmen's video on Loneliness of College Transition"

- Listening Exercise “Whispers”
- Small Group Table Discussion (Active Listening)
- Large Group Discussions (Active Listening)
- Lunch Break
- Video: “Transitions: Are You Ready? The College Transition”
- Small Group Discussion (College Transition & strategies to Support Success)
- Large Group Discussion (College Transition & Strategies to Support Success)
- Break
- Q & A Session, Reflections of the Day Training
- Review of Training
- Complete the Evaluation Form

Training Resources and Materials

- Large classroom with round tables and seating for 30 participants
- Sound system, screen, data projector, laptop and PowerPoint – 45 slides
- Video camera
- White board with markers and eraser
- Microphone
- 30 name tags
- 30 pens, pencils, and highlighters
- 30 sets of handouts of the PowerPoint Presentation (3-hold punched)
- 30 training agendas
- 30 evaluation forms

- 30 envelopes with the classroom activity forms

Day 2 - Lesson Plan

Time	Description
8:30 am – 10:00 am	• Workshop Registration • Recap of first day training • Open floor discussion for any after thoughts that was not shared during the first day Q &A • Participants will be provided with the needed training information The facilitators will discuss an overview of the second day workshop and the purpose of today's training: • Understanding how administrators and staff fit into the mission and goal of the university **Video**: "When the Phone Rings: Telephone Skills for Better Service" http://www.kantola.com?When-the-Phone... The facilitator will discuss elements that support entering freshmen student success:
10:00 am- 10:30 am	**Video:** ***Reduction of Summer Melt 2:27*** http://success.gsu.edu/initiatives/reduction-of-summer-melt/ **Intervening Early 1:58** http://success.gsu.edu/approach/ These two videos will emphasize the techniques used to increase entering student retention. Exercise #1 In the Shoes of the Student-Customer
10:30 am – 10:45 am	**Morning Break**
10:45 am – 11:15 am	**Small Group Table Discussion** Each small group will select a new individual to take the group notes and a new spokesperson to speak on behalf of the small group to the larger group. Participants will discuss the contents of the videos and identify positive ways of impacting students' transition to the college environment. • How did you feel after watching the video? • What are some of the positive attributes of serving the public? • How do you think we can make our entering

	freshmen student have a more positive experience? • What do students worry about? (p.16)
11:15 am – 11:30 am	**Video**
11:30 am – 12:00 pm	**Large Group Table Discussion** The facilitators will lead the discussion with administrators and staff. The flip chart will be used to communicate with the entire group discussing what the small groups were assigned and broadening the discussion to be more inclusive to promote student transition and success. Participants will be able to accomplish the following: • Empathy • Responsiveness • Personal Awareness and abilities • Leave with frontline strategies that support students, faculty, and staff in crisis. • Learn how to assess situations The discussion will lead into academic, and student services support • Group learning, peer mentoring Active listening and its role in enhancing entering freshmen student education will also be a topic for discussion.
12:00 pm – 1:00 pm	**Facilitator Continue to Discuss Elements That Support Entering Freshmen Student Success** **The story behind GPS Advising 2:48** http://success.gsu.edu/initiatives/gps-advising/ This video will emphasize how relevant and important academic remedial and development support and student services as it relates to supporting entering freshmen students
1:00 pm – 1:30 pm	**Small** The group will discuss the contents of the Success Student Video with the following in mind: • Learning Communities, Summer Bridge Programs • Mentoring ➢ Peer mentoring

	➢ Faculty and staff mentoring ➢ Group Learning • Advising ➢ Proactive advising ➢ Early academic progress and warning monitoring
1:30 pm – 2:00 pm	**Large Group Discussion on Academic and Student Services Support** The facilitators will lead the discussion with administrators and staff. The small group will assemble back into the large group and each small group spokesperson with primarily represent their group during the large group discussion. The flip chart will be used to communicate with the entire group discussing what the small groups were assigned and focusing on: • Bringing creative ideas to the discussion for possible remedies to the problem areas • Discuss the feasibility of the ideas or solutions
2:00 pm – 2:30 pm	**Lunch Break**
2:30 pm – 3:00 pm	The facilitator will discuss elements that support entering freshmen student success: • **Academic Remedial and Developmental Support** ➢ Learning Communities ➢ Summer Bridge Programs ➢ Mentoring ➢ Advising • **Student Services Support** ➢ Peer mentoring ➢ Memory and concentration skill building ➢ Early academic progress and warning monitoring ➢ Freshmen Seminar Courses ➢ Faculty and staff mentoring ➢ Group learning ➢ Proactive Advising
3:00 pm – 3:15 pm	**Afternoon Break**
3:15 pm – 3:45 pm	**Large Group Discussion on Active Listening** The facilitators will lead the discussion for administrators and staff. The flip chart will be used to communicate with the entire group discussing what the small groups were assigned and focusing on

3:45 pm – 4:30 pm	**Q and A Session** **Reflections of the day training.** • Reflect on appropriate approaches to incorporate active listening • Record reflections in the journal
4:30 pm - 5:00 pm	• **Introduce the agenda for the third day training** • **Complete the Evaluation Form**

Day 2 - Reference

Beaty-O'Farrell, M. E., & Johnson, F. W. (2010). Using supportive team building to promote improved instruction, student achievement, and collaboration in an urban professional development school. *School-University Partnerships*, *4*(1), 56-64.

Day 2 - Evaluation

Date: _____

Please respond to the effectiveness of the following subject matter:	1 Poor	2 Fair	3 Good	4 Excellent
Overall usefulness of training				
Training could be useful in my job duties				
Organization of training				
Topics were presented in a timely manner				
Activities were easily understood				
Workshop training materials were effective				
Please respond to the effectiveness of the presentation goals				
Presenter was experienced in customer service training				
Training subject matter was interesting				
Clearly understood the presentation of materials				
Your questions were effectively answered				

The atmosphere created engagement with participants				
How would you rate this training session?				

Professional Development Administrators and Staff Training Workshop

Facilitators: Dr. Aviles and Margaret Nelson

Day 3 - Session 3 (7.0 hours)

Learning Objectives

At the end of the second day workshop, administrators and staff will:

- Identify how student employees fit into the mission and goals of the institution
- Understand the positive side of serving the public
- Learn quick tools to use for conflict management
- Learn how to address in person, phone and email issues with the highest level of customer service even in complex situations
- Learn how to say no effectively
- Learn how to assess situations, give referrals or seek assistance as appropriate
- Leave with frontline strategies that support students, faculty, and staff in crisis

Training Agenda

- Facilitators: Review of Agenda
- Small Group Table Discussion
- Break
- Large Group Table Discussion
- Lunch Break
- Video:
- Small Group Table Discussion
- Break

- Second Day Workshop Review
- Complete Evaluation Forms

Training Resources and Materials

- Large classroom with round tables and seating for 30 participants
- Sound system, screen, data projector, laptop and PowerPoint – 45 slides
- Video camera
- White board with markers and eraser
- Microphone
- 30 name tags
- 30 pens, pencils, and highlighters
- 30 sets of handouts of the PowerPoint Presentation (3-hold punched)
- 30 training agendas
- 30 evaluation forms
- 30 envelopes with the classroom activity forms

Day 3 - Lesson Plan

Time	Description
8:30 am – 10:00 am	• Workshop Registration • Facilitators introduction and review of first day agenda • Participants will be provided with the needed training information The facilitators will discuss an overview of the first day workshop and the purpose of today's training: **Video:** "Nordstrom Customer Service Tips" https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=56m5CtJpTR4 The facilitator will discuss elements that support entering freshmen student success: • **Academic Remedial and Developmental Support**

	➢ Learning Communities ➢ Summer Bridge Programs ➢ Mentoring ➢ Advising • **Student Services Support** ➢ Peer mentoring ➢ Memory and concentration skill building ➢ Early academic progress and warning monitoring ➢ Freshmen Seminar Courses ➢ Faculty and staff mentoring ➢ Group learning ➢ Proactive Advising
10:00 am- 10:45 am	**Video: Reduction of Summer Melt 2:27** http://success.gsu.edu/initiatives/reduction-of-summer-melt/ **Intervening Early 1:58** http://success.gsu.edu/approach/ These two videos will emphasize the techniques used to increase entering student retention. Exercise #1 In the Shoes of the Student-Customer
9:45 am – 10:15 am	**Small Group Table Discussion** Each small group will select a new individual to take the group notes and a new spokesperson to speak on behalf of the small group to the larger group. Participants will discuss the contents of the videos and identify positive ways of impacting students' transition to the college environment. • How did you feel after watching the video? • What are some of the positive attributes of serving the public? • How do you think we can make our entering freshmen student have a more positive experience? • What do students worry about? (p.16)
10:15 am – 10:45 am	**Large Group Table Discussion** The facilitators will lead the discussion with administrators and staff. The flip chart will be used to communicate with the entire group discussing what the small groups were assigned and broadening the discussion to be more inclusive to promote student transition and success. Participants will be able to accomplish the following: • Empathy • Responsiveness

	• Personal Awareness and abilities • Leave with frontline strategies that support students, faculty, and staff in crisis. • Learn how to assess situations The discussion will lead into academic, and student services support • Group learning, peer mentoring • Active listening and its role in enhancing entering freshmen student education will also be a topic for discussion.
10:45 am - 11:00 am	**Morning Break**
11:00 am - 11:30 am	**Facilitator Continue to Discuss Elements That Support Entering Freshmen Student Success** **The story behind GPS Advising 2:48** http://success.gsu.edu/initiatives/gps-advising/ This video will emphasize how relevant and important academic remedial and development support and student services as it relates to supporting entering freshmen students
11:30 am - 12:00 pm	**Small** The group will discuss the contents of the Success Student Video with the following in mind: • Learning Communities, Summer Bridge Programs • Mentoring ➢ Peer mentoring ➢ Faculty and staff mentoring ➢ Group Learning • Advising ➢ Proactive advising ➢ Early academic progress and warning monitoring
12:00 pm- 12:30 pm	**Large Group Discussion on Academic and Student Services Support** The facilitators will lead the discussion with administrators and staff. The small group will assemble back into the large group and each small group spokesperson with primarily represent their group during the large group discussion. The flip chart will be used to communicate with the entire group discussing what the small groups were assigned and focusing on: • Bringing creative ideas to the discussion for possible remedies to the problem areas • Discuss the feasibility of the ideas or solutions

12:30 pm – 1:30 pm	**Lunch Break**
1:30 pm – 2:00 pm	**Large Group Discussion on Active Listening** The facilitators will lead the discussion for administrators and staff. The flip chart will be used to communicate with the entire group discussing what the small groups were assigned and focusing on
2:00 pm – 2:30 pm	**Video**
2:30 pm – 3:00 pm	**Small Group Discussion on identifying three strategies to support entering freshmen success** • **Help** • **Safe** • **Students**
3:00 pm – 3:15 pm	**Afternoon Break**
3:15 pm - 3:45 pm	**Large Group Discussion on Strategies to Support Student Success** The facilitators will lead the discussion with administrators and staff. The flip chart will be used to communicate with the entire group discussing what the small groups were assigned and focusing on:
3:45 pm – 4:15 pm	
4:15 pm – 4:45 pm	**Q and A Session** **Reflections of the day training.** • Reflect on appropriate approaches to incorporate active listening • Record reflections in the journal.
4:45 pm – 5:00 pm	• **Introduce the agenda for the third day training** • **Complete the Evaluation Form**

Day 3 - Reference

Beaty-O'Farrell, M. E., & Johnson, F. W. (2010). Using supportive team building to promote improved instruction, student achievement, and collaboration in an urban professional development school. *School-University Partnerships*, *4*(1), 56-64.

Day 3 – Evaluation

Date: _____

Please respond to the effectiveness of the following subject matter:	1 Poor	2 Fair	3 Good	4 Excellent
Overall usefulness of training				
Training could be useful in my job duties				
Organization of training				
Topics were presented in a timely manner				
Activities were easily understood				
Workshop training materials were effective				
Please respond to the effectiveness of the presentation goals				
Presenter was experienced in customer service training				
Training subject matter was interesting				
Clearly understood the presentation of materials				
Your questions were effectively answered				
The atmosphere created engagement with participants				
How would you rate this training session?				

Professional Development Administrators and Staff Training Workshop

Facilitators: Dr. Aviles and Margaret Nelson

Day 4 - Session 4 (7.0 hours)

Learning Objectives

At the end of the fourth day workshop, administrators and staff will:

- Identify how student employees fit into the mission and goals of the institution
- Understand the positive side of serving the public
- Learn quick tools to use for conflict management
- Learn how to address in person, phone and email issues with the highest level of customer service even in complex situations
- Learn how to say no effectively
- Learn how to assess situations, give referrals or seek assistance as appropriate
- Leave with frontline strategies that support students, faculty, and staff in crisis

Training Agenda

- Facilitators: Review of Agenda
- Small Group Table Discussion
- Break
- Large Group Table Discussion
- Lunch Break
- Video:
- Small Group Table Discussion
- Break

- Second Day Workshop Review
- Complete Evaluation Forms

Training Resources and Materials

- Large classroom with round tables and seating for 30 participants
- Sound system, screen, data projector, laptop and PowerPoint – 45 slides
- Video camera
- White board with markers and eraser
- Microphone
- 30 name tags
- 30 pens, pencils, and highlighters
- 30 sets of handouts of the PowerPoint Presentation (3-hold punched)
- 30 training agendas
- 30 evaluation forms
- 30 envelopes with the classroom activity forms

Day 4 – Lesson Plan

Time	Description
10:00 am- 11:30 am	• Workshop Registration • Facilitators introduction and review of first day agenda • Participants will be provided with the needed training information The facilitators will discuss an overview of the past three days workshop and the overall purpose of the entire training: • Understanding how administrators and staff fit into the mission and goal of the university **Video**: "When the Phone Rings: Telephone Skills for Better Service" http://www.kantola.com?When-the-Phone... The facilitator will discuss elements that support entering freshmen student

	success: • **Academic Remedial and Developmental Support** ➢ Learning Communities ➢ Summer Bridge Programs ➢ Mentoring ➢ Advising • **Student Services Support** ➢ Peer mentoring ➢ Memory and concentration skill building ➢ Early academic progress and warning monitoring ➢ Freshmen Seminar Courses ➢ Faculty and staff mentoring ➢ Group learning ➢ Proactive Advising
11:30 am- **11:00 am**	**Video: Reduction of Summer Melt 2:27** http://success.gsu.edu/initiatives/reduction-of-summer-melt/ **Intervening Early 1:58** http://success.gsu.edu/approach/ These two videos will emphasize the techniques used to increase entering student retention. Exercise #1 In the Shoes of the Student-Customer
11:00 am – **11:30 am**	**Small Group Table Discussion** Each small group will select a new individual to take the group notes and a new spokesperson to speak on behalf of the small group to the larger group. Participants will discuss the contents of the videos and identify positive ways of impacting students' transition to the college environment. • How did you feel after watching the video? • What are some of the positive attributes of serving the public? • How do you think we can make our entering freshmen student have a more positive experience? • What do students worry about? (p.16)
11:30 am – **12:00 am**	**Large Group Table Discussion** The facilitators will lead the discussion with administrators and staff. The flip chart will be used to communicate with the entire group discussing what the small groups were assigned and broadening the discussion to be more inclusive to promote student transition and success. Participants will be able to accomplish the following: • Empathy • Responsiveness • Personal Awareness and abilities • Leave with frontline strategies that support students, faculty, and

	staff in crisis. • Learn how to assess situations The discussion will lead into academic, and student services support • Group learning, peer mentoring • Active listening and its role in enhancing entering freshmen student education will also be a topic for discussion. **Q and A Session** **Reflections of the day training.** • Reflect on appropriate approaches to incorporate active listening Record reflections in the journal **Complete the Evaluation Form**

Day 4 – Evaluation

Date: _____

Please respond to the effectiveness of the following subject matter:	1 Poor	2 Fair	3 Good	4 Excellent
Overall usefulness of training				
Training could be useful in my job duties				
Organization of training				
Topics were presented in a timely manner				
Activities were easily understood				
Workshop training materials were effective				
Please respond to the effectiveness of the presentation goals				
Presenter was experienced in customer service training				
Training subject matter was interesting				
Clearly understood the presentation of materials				

Your questions were effectively answered				
The atmosphere created engagement with participants				
How would you rate this training session?				

Appendix B: Email Letter of Invitation to Participate in the Study (NOT SENT)

Invitation to participate in the study of Entering Freshmen Student Withdrawal

Dear Student,

Thank you for taking the time to consider this request to participate in a doctoral research study on entering freshmen students' withdrawal in the first year of study. I am currently a doctoral student at Walden University. I am also an Administrator at the University. The purpose of this doctoral study is to gather information from entering freshmen students who have lived the experience and have withdrawn from the University during spring 2016. It is through your perceptions, this study seeks to gain an understanding of what entering freshmen students believes to be the causes and implications of having to withdraw from the University, and identify what the University can improve or modify to meet the entering freshmen students' need.

Many studies have been conducted studying entering freshmen students' retention and their expectations. This study is unique as it is centrally focused on the perceptions of the student.

The following criteria for participation in the study are as follows:

- the participants must have earned a high school diploma or its equivalent

- the participants must have never attended college before
- the participants must have entered the University in spring 2016
- the participants must have been in the Promise Program
- the participants must have withdrawn from the University in spring 2016.

I am seeking entering freshmen student volunteers who were in the Promise Program at the University, and withdrew from the University in their first year of study to participate in the study. In order to learn about your perspective, a one-on-one semi-structured interview will be conducted. The interview will be audio recorded and should only take about fifty minutes of your time. Participants may answer all of the questions, opt to answer questions of their choosing, or may elect to withdraw from the study at any time. All interviews are confidential. Any reference to a students' perception in the data analysis will be via a pseudonym. You have no risk of disclosure of confidential information, psychological stress, social or economic loss, perceived coercion, experimental deception, or health effects from the researcher. If you choose to share your experiences regarding your participation in the study with individuals other than me, it is done on your own accord. The identity of the University will also remain confidential. All participants will be able to review their transcribed interview before the start of the data analysis. Once the participant's review is completed he or she will participate in a ten minute telephone meeting with me to verify the accuracy of the transcription or to offer any additional information. While there is no offered compensation for your

participation, your contributions may help institutions understand and effectively address entering freshmen students' attrition.

You may ask any questions you have now. Or, if you have questions later, you may contact me via phone at [redacted] or by email at [redacted]. You may also contact my doctoral study chair, Dr. Elizabeth Bruch, by email at [redacted]. If you would like to talk privately about your rights as a participant, you can call Dr. Leilani Endicott. She is the Walden University representative who can discuss this with you. Her phone number is [redacted].

Thank you for considering participating in this project!

Sincerely,

Margaret Nelson

Doctoral Student

Walden University

Appendix C: Consent Form for Interview Participants

You are invited to take part in a research study that seeks to understand entering freshmen students' perceptions of the causes and implications of withdrawing from the University. You were selected for the study because you are a student who attended [name redacted] in spring 2016, you were assign to the Promise Program, and have withdrawn from [name redacted] during your first year of study. This form is part of a process called "informed consent" which is developed to allow you to understand this study before deciding whether to take part.

This study is being conducted by Ms. Margaret Nelson, who is a doctoral student at Walden University studying Higher Education and Adult Learning. You may already know the researcher as an administrator, but this study is separate from that role.

Background Information:

The purpose of this study is to understand what entering freshmen students perceive as the causes and implications of withdrawing from the University during their first year of study, and identify strategies to minimize attrition.

Procedures:

If you agree to be in this study, you will be asked to participate in a personal interview with the researcher that will last approximately fifty minutes. Subsequently, you will also be asked to review your transcribed interview and participate in a ten minute telephone

meeting with the researcher to verify the accuracy of the transcription or to offer any additional information.

Voluntary Nature of the Study:

Your participation in the study is voluntary. This means that everyone will respect your decision of whether or not you choose to participate in the study. No one at the University will treat you differently if you decide not to be in the study. If you decide to participate in the study now, you can still change your mind prior to the study beginning, and even during the study. If you feel uncomfortable any time during the study you may discontinue your participation. You may also choose to decline to answer any question during the scheduled interview.

Risks and Benefits of Being in the Study:

The benefit of participating in this study is that your input may be used to understand the causes and implications of entering freshmen students' decision to withdraw from the University, and acknowledge recommendations for minimizing entering freshmen attrition.

The participant has no risk of disclosure of confidential information, psychological stress, social or economic loss, perceived coercion, experimental deception, or health effects from the researcher. If you choose to share your experiences regarding your participation in the study with individuals other than the researcher, it is done on your own accord.

Payment:

There is no compensation for your participation in this study.

Privacy:

Any information you provide will be kept confidential. The researcher will not use your personal information for any purposes outside of this research project. Also, the researcher will not include your name on anything that could identify you in the study reports. Data will be kept securely in the researcher's private home office on her personal password protected computer. Data will be kept for a period of at least five (5) years, as required by Walden University.

Contacts and Questions:

You may ask any question you have now. Or, if you have questions later, you may contact the researcher via phone at [redacted] or by email at [redacted]. If you would like to talk privately about your rights as a participant, you can call Dr. Leilani Endicott. She is the Walden University representative who can discuss this with you. Her phone number is [redacted]. Walden University's approval number for this study is pending and it expires on _____.

You will be given a copy of this form for your records.

Statement of Consent:

I have read the above information and I feel I understand the study well enough to make a decision about my involvement. By signing below, I understand that I am agreeing to the terms described above.

Printed Name of the Participant _____

Date of consent _____

Participant's Signature _____

Researcher's Signature _____

Appendix D: Interview Protocol

Name: _____

Date: _____

Time: _____

Introduction Script:

Thank you for taking the time to meet with me today. Our interview should take about 50-minutes and will include a series of questions to find out about your lived experiences, and perceptions about withdrawing from the University during your first year. It is through interviews with former students of the University that this study seeks to understand what entering freshmen students consider to be the causes and implications of withdrawing from the University in their first year of study, and what actions the students believe should be taken to minimize the students' attrition. .

With your permission, I would like to audio record our interview so that I may be able to accurately document your experiences and perceptions. All of your responses, as well as the identity of the college, will be kept confidential, so please feel comfortable to answer all of the questions. However, if you wish to refrain from answering a certain question (s), you do not have to respond. Also, during our discussion, if you would like for me to discontinue the use of the recording device, please do not hesitate to inform me.

After we conclude our interview, I will transcribe our conversation. I will then provide you with a copy of the transcription. I ask that you review the transcribed interview and then participate in a ten minute telephone meeting with me to verify the accuracy of the transcription or to offer any additional information.

As identified in the provided consent form, your participation in this interview is completely voluntary. If you would like to take a break or return to a previous question, please inform me. Also, you may also withdraw your participation at any time without any consequences. Do you have any questions for me, or concerns before we begin? Then, with your permission, we will begin our interview.

General background questions:

1. Please tell me a little about yourself.
2. What were your primary reasons for wanting to attend the University?
3. How would you describe the culture of the University?

General questions regarding student decision to withdraw from the University:

1. Are there any student services at the University that appealed to you?
2. How familiar were you with the students' club on campus?
3. Was there ever a time or event on campus that you felt connected to the University?

Questions regarding the causes and/or implications of student withdrawal from the University:

1. What would you identify as the primary reason for withdrawing?

   a. Follow-up: What additional factors do you believe lead up to your withdrawal?

2. Is there anything you could have done to resolve the issues you encountered?

3. How has your life been impacted after withdrawing from the University?

   a. Follow-up: Do you have any thoughts of returning to the University or continuing your education somewhere else?

4. What do you believe overall academically and socially affects the University?

   a. Follow-up: How does institutional culture promote or enable entering freshmen students' connection to the University's environment?

   b. Follow-up: What was the most difficult adjustment you had to make at the University?

Questions regarding actions to take to minimize entering freshmen student's attrition:

1. What actions do you believe the University could take to minimize entering freshmen students' attrition?

2. What actions should the administration and faculty as a community take to meet students' academic and social needs?

3. Do you have any recommendations that could improve entering freshmen students' experience at the University?

4. What actions could the University as a whole take to ensure that entering freshmen complete his or her education?

Final Question: Before we conclude our interview, is there anything else that you would like to add?

Conclusion Script:

It is my plan to have our interview transcribed within the next four calendar days. I will email the transcription of our interview to you, using your college email address. Please review the transcription and offer any comments or clarification points as necessary. Again, thank you for allowing me to interview you about entering freshmen students' withdrawal.

Appendix E: Telephone Script in Response to Potential Participants' E-mail Declaring Intent to Participate in Study

Hello. My name is Margaret Nelson. You have recently responded to my email inviting you to participate in my doctoral study regarding Entering freshmen student withdrawing from the University in their first year of study. The purpose of the study is to research what entering freshmen students identify as the causes and implications of having to withdraw from the University within the first year. Furthermore the study seeks to identify strategies to minimize the entering freshmen attrition rate.

Let's take a moment to make certain that you meet the criteria for this study:

1. Have you earned your high school diploma or its equivalent?
2. Have you ever attended another college or university?
3. Was spring 2016 your first semester at the University, and you were in the Promise Program?
4. Did you withdraw from the University in spring 2016?

(If the respondent answered "no" to one of the above questions, she or he do not meet the criteria of the study and will therefore be excused. Follow this script:

Thank you for taking the time to answer these questions. I am sorry, but you do not fit the criteria of this study because _____. Thank you for your interest in participating in the study.

(If the respondent answered "yes" to all of the above questions, they do meet the criteria of the study and can therefore be scheduled for the interview. Follow this script:

Thank you for taking a moment to answer the criteria question. You fit the criteria for this study. Would you be interested in participating in the study?

(Answer any questions, schedule the time and place for the interview, and gather information to send participant the informed consent form.)