


January 2012

# An Exploration of Undeclared Students' Expectations of Experiences for Faculty Interactions and Co-Curricular Involvement

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An Exploration of Undeclared Students' Expectations of Experiences  
for Faculty Interactions and Co-Curricular Involvement

by

Lorie Anne Kittendorf

A dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment  
of the requirements for the degree of  
Doctor of Philosophy  
Department of Adult, Career and Higher Education  
College of Education  
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Date of Approval:  
April 16, 2012

Keywords: CSXQ, academic majors, advising, freshmen, persistence, retention

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## **DEDICATION**

This paper is dedicated to Mr. Don Shipp for planting the seed that led to the pursuit of this Ph.D. During a class discussion in Honors Government & Economics my senior year of high school, Mr. Shipp, impressed by something I contributed to the conversation, said “Thank you, Dr. Kittendorf for that excellent point!” The title stuck and he referred to me as Dr. Kittendorf the rest of the school year. I liked the sound of it and knew that someday I would make it a reality.

To my mother, Linda, a life-long educator herself, who laid the foundation of my education and who has selflessly sacrificed for her children and grandchildren in more ways than anyone can begin to imagine. By providing child care and pep talks (and countless other tasks) throughout this process, she gave me the time and motivation needed to reach the finish line. She has always been my greatest support system and I would not be the person I am today without her.

And most of all, to my amazing and brilliant daughter, Olivia, who forever changed my life when she entered my world in September 2007. She reminds me every day how fascinating life is, how much fun it is to learn new things, and what the truly important things are in life. She is the love of my life and my happily ever after, and everything I do is for her. To the moon and back, to infinity and beyond!

## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

The pursuit of the Ph.D. has been an extremely long journey with significant obstacles and challenges. There are a number of people who provided support and guidance along the way, and I would not have accomplished such an important milestone without them.

To Mrs. Sherry Evatt, who introduced me to student affairs through my student employment position in my undergraduate years. I would not have discovered my passion for this field without you!

To Dr. Wilma Henry, who fostered my love and knowledge of the field as my professor, who hired me in my first post-master's professional position, who served as a mentor and friend throughout the years, and who has seen my journey to the end as a member of my dissertation committee. You are forever woven into the fabric of my professional identity!

To Dr. Tom Miller, chair of my dissertation committee, who tried (with all his might) to keep me focused on ONE topic and pointed toward the finish line with prodding emails, positive reinforcement, and his passion for this topic. Thank you for not giving up on me!

To Dr. Don Dellow and Dr. Jim Eison, members of my committee and two of my favorite doctoral program faculty. Thank you for asking tough questions and forcing me to re-evaluate my data and implications.

To Dr. Linda Devine, my supervisor and mentor at The University of Tampa, who allowed me the time necessary to complete this journey. Thank you for believing in me and being such a great cheerleader!

To Dr. Jeanne Roberts and Ms. Jen Pawelko in the Office of Institutional Effectiveness at The University of Tampa who provided me with tutorials on SPSS and how to interpret the data results. Thank you for your patience in explaining the answers multiple times.

To Ms. Casey McDaniel and Dr. Jody Conway, and all the ladies of the Tampa Toddlers Bunco night, who kept my sanity in-check (as much as possible) with laughter and friendship, and to all the family and friends (including those on Facebook) who supported me from afar with their positive and motivational comments. Your friendship is invaluable!

And, lastly, to all of my colleagues from NASPA and from the USF College Student Affairs program, who continue to inspire, motivate, and challenge me to never stop learning and growing, both personally and professionally. I could not ask for better colleagues in this amazing field!

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## **ABSTRACT**

Student persistence and achievement are areas of significant concern for institutions of higher education. With national college graduation rates hovering in the 50% range, it is important for colleges and universities to understand which student characteristics and campus environments lead to greater success, as well as the expectations students have of the college experience.

Research on undeclared students is vast and dates back more than 70 years, and many of the seminal studies and respected research data have led to the perception that they are at higher risk of attrition and have lower levels of academic achievement than their declared peers. Research also shows that the two most important ways to help students connect to institutions is through faculty interactions and involvement in clubs and organizations. A new and growing body of research on student expectations posits that students who have unmet expectations of the college experience are also at higher risk of attrition. This study sought to integrate those three research concepts and analyze the expectations of undeclared students to determine if undeclared students had lower expectations of the college experience than their declared peers, specifically as those expectations relate to interactions with faculty and involvement in clubs and organizations. This study also sought to determine if undeclared students had lower levels of academic achievement or persistence than their declared peers.

Using the College Student Expectations Questionnaire (CSXQ), this research analyzed the expectations of 3,219 first-time in college (FTIC) students at a large, metropolitan, public university in the South who responded to the CSXQ during summer 2008 orientation.

Results indicated that although differences were discovered between undeclared and declared students for expectations of student-faculty interaction and for expectations of involvement in clubs and organizations, the low effect sizes indicated that the differences could not be attributed directly to declaration of major. Results also indicated that undeclared students did not persist at rates that were statistically significantly different than their declared peers, nor did they achieve lower GPAs or fewer credit hours.

While this study did not reveal statistically significant differences for any of the dependent variables, this research is beneficial in that these results contribute to the research findings that undeclared students are not attrition prone or less likely to achieve. More current research is needed on the population of undeclared students to determine if the perceptions are outdated and no longer generalizable to today's generation of students. Additionally, more research is needed on the expectations of students, in general, to determine what impact, if any, those expectations have on student interactions with the college environment and on the outcomes of persistence, achievement, and graduation.

## **CHAPTER ONE**

### **Introduction to the Study**

Why some students complete a college degree and others leave prior to attaining a degree is a complex phenomenon that has been the subject of considerable research for decades (Tinto, 1999). Colleges and universities invest extensive resources conducting assessments and creating interventions to improve the persistence rates of the students who enroll. It is estimated that 40% of college students will leave without getting a degree (Porter, 1990), and 75% of those students will leave within their first two years of college (Tinto, 1993, 1999). Of all the students who do not persist, one half will leave during their freshman year, and many leave after the first six to eight weeks (Noel, Levitz, & Saluri, 1985; Tinto, 1997).

Many studies have been conducted to create and examine theories of student departure, student retention and student persistence (Berger, 1997; Sedlacek, 2004; Tinto, 1975). The overall goal of such theories is to account for the relationships between students and the colleges they attend so that institutions can put strategies into place to improve upon those relationships (Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005).

Such research has shown that there are a variety of factors that contribute to student persistence and attrition. A study conducted by Horn, Peter, and Rooney (2002) identified the typical risk factors of students who leave postsecondary education, including the delay of college enrollment for a year or more after high school completion,

being financially independent, being employed full-time, and having children or other caregiver responsibilities. Almost 75% of undergraduates reported having at least one of these risk factors (Horn et al., 2002; NCES, 2003).

Another factor that has been perceived to indicate a higher level of attrition among students is whether or not the student enters college with a declared major. Undeclared students are often considered one of the most at-risk populations because many of them are unsure about their career goals and why they are attending college in the first place. Yorke (1999) surveyed students who had withdrawn from six universities during two one-year periods and found that poor choice of major and lack of commitment to the chosen program had the greatest impact of all factors associated with departure from higher education. Also noteworthy was the fourth factor associated with the decision to withdraw, which was that the program did not match the student's expectations.

The National Longitudinal Study of the High School Class of 1972 (NCES, 1993), which "is the grandmother of the longitudinal studies designed and conducted by the National Center for Education Statistics," was also considered the "richest archive ever assembled on a single generation of Americans" (<http://nces.ed.gov/surveys/nls72/>). According to that study, the most common response for leaving school was being unsure about career goals, and the greatest level of dissatisfaction (68%) was expressed about the level of career advice received (NCES, 1994).

Some researchers (Gordon, 2007; Noel, Levitz, & Saluri, 1985) have found that postponing the declaration of a major is correlated to students having significantly lower grade point averages, taking fewer hours of coursework, and being less academically

motivated than students who declare their majors and careers early. In studies investigating persistence, Sandler (2000) found that students' confidence in their ability to make appropriate career-related decisions positively impacted persistence in college. Kreysa (2006) found that likelihood of persistence increased by 22% when students declared a major early.

Over time, the various research findings have led to a common conception that undeclared students are at risk for attrition because they are *uncommitted* students who have low aspirations, lack long-term academic plans, career goals, or sense of direction. (Astin, 1975; Noel, Levitz, & Saluri, 1985). However, other researchers have found no differences in the academic achievements of undeclared students. Lewallen (1993), in a study of 18,000 first-year students from over 400 institutions, discovered that being undecided did not have a significant effect on predicting or explaining student retention. In a subsequent study, he found that undecided students were actually more likely to persist to graduation and demonstrated higher GPAs (Lewallen, 1995). Additionally, Graunke, Woosley, and Helms (2006) found that the “commitment to a specific major or career is not related to degree completion” (p.17).

Frost (1991) stated that freshmen who are undecided about a major may actually be more advanced developmentally than those who enter the institution as a “decided” student and then change courses of study one or more times. If part of the liberal arts education is to help students develop the capacity to judge wisely and hone their critical thinking skills, then deferring a major until later in their college years allows students the time necessary to explore and analyze all possible career options before committing to

one. The lack of commitment to a major, however, is not unique to those students who enter the institution as undeclared.

There are more than 16 million students enrolled in the nation's colleges and universities, with 2.3 million being first time in college students (NCES, 2011a). National statistics show that 14.3% of FTIC students are documented as being undeclared (NCES, 2011a), although, researchers estimate that it is actually between 20 percent and 50 percent of this substantial group of new students who enter the freshman year undecided about their academic major and career goals (even if the students do not indicate that they are undeclared). Researchers also estimate that between 50 percent and 75 percent of the entire student population will change academic or career plans at least once during college (Astin, 1977; Gordon, 1984, 2007; Noel et al., 1985; Titley & Titley, 1980).

It is important to note, however, that the national statistics show a drop in the reported number of undeclared students, from 21.7% in 2003-04 to 14.3% in 2007-08 (NCES, 2011a). This could be a result of colleges and universities encouraging students to enter with a declared major, rather than a true reflection of students being more "decided" about a career path.

Even at the low end of the estimates, undecided/undeclared students account for a substantial proportion of the college-going population, most of whom require specialized counseling, advising, and resources. Regardless of being "declared" or not, it is clear that most students have a hard time selecting and committing to just one major for their entire college journey.

When students enter college, they are often overwhelmed at the number of major and career options open to them and admit to having very little knowledge about the requirements of careers that interest them and how their skills, interests, and abilities might relate to those careers. Yet, when college students are asked about the primary reasons for entering college, the overwhelming response (70%) for several decades was to get a better job and to be able to make more money, while 71% were expecting to get training for a specific career (Astin, Oseguera, Sax, & Korn, 2002).

According to the 2009 Cooperative Institutional Research Program (CIRP) study, 78.1% of undergraduates indicated that their chief objective in life is to be “very well off financially.” Attaining wealth ranks higher than raising a family (74.1%), helping others who are in difficulty (69.1%), and becoming an authority in their chosen field (58.5%). Additionally, 56.5% listed their primary factor in choosing a school program as whether the “graduates get good jobs,” the highest level seen on that question since it was introduced in 1983 (Pryor, Hurtado, DeAngelow, Palucki Blake, & Tran, 2009).

Having high expectations of securing financially lucrative and often romanticized careers after graduation becomes even more challenging for students who enter college unprepared academically.

“Postsecondary transcripts of 1992 12th-graders who enrolled in postsecondary education between 1992 and 2000 show that 61 percent of students who first attended a public 2-year institution, and 25 percent who first attended a 4-year institution, completed at least one remedial course at the postsecondary level” (NCES, 2004).

Considering that two of the most popular college majors are business and biology, both of which require high-level math skills, being unprepared to handle the academic



rigor of the major often leads to confusion regarding students' self-identity, frustration with faculty, and feeling disconnected from the institution as the students must often reconsider their major paths and career goals. Students who enter college on a path toward a career in fields such as medicine or accounting could find themselves in a state of being "undecided" after just one semester of enduring challenges in math and science courses. These students, who were once on a clearly defined career path, must reassess their original goals, identify alternatives, and adjust their *expectations* for the experience that they envisioned when enrolling in their institution of choice.

Having unmet expectations of the college experience is another reason that students have for leaving college. Students form expectations of college from many sources, including parents, friends, popular media, high school counselors, and both direct and indirect communication from their college or university. "Students' expectations for college matter because they form the foundation for the nature of the relationship students have with their college or university" (Miller, Kuh, Paine, & Associates, 2006, p. 3). Many students go to college with unrealistic expectations about college life that extend beyond choice of major and/or career, and if student expectations are unmet, there is early disenchantment with the social and academic communities (Pace, 1990; Tinto, 1988). Such disenchantments hinder academic and social integration which, in turn, influence subsequent institutional and goal commitments and, ultimately, student departure.

Student expectations are influenced by a variety of psychological and cognitive factors such as positive orientation to college, motivation, ability, and student aspirations (Miller et al., 2006). However, colleges and universities have the ability to help shape

student expectations, once they understand what those expectations are, and find ways to help the student match the college experience to those adjusted expectations. Institutions must also explore the influences that various diverse background characteristics (gender, race, age, etc.) have on student expectations (Dungy, Rissmeyer, & Roberts, 2006). This study will examine the potential relationships between student expectations of the college experience and declaration of major.

### ***Statement of the Problem***

Research on undecided/undeclared students is vast and dates back more than 70 years, as does research on student persistence and attrition. However, research exploring student expectations and the influence student expectations have on persistence is relatively new. The problem is that research examining the expectations of undecided/undeclared entering freshmen is extremely rare. It is hoped that this research might generate new insight and understanding about how expectations of undeclared students impact persistence and achievement.

### ***Purpose of the Study***

The purpose of this study is to investigate whether students who enter the university without a declared major have different expectations about their university experience than students who enter with an intended academic plan. If being an undeclared major is related to attrition and poor academic performance, and if level of expectation is also related to being undeclared, then having an understanding of the expectations of undeclared students may lead to interventions and programming that may lead to higher levels of academic achievement and persistence. Rather than focusing on the demographics of undeclared students, why they are undeclared, and how they can be

“fixed,” this study will focus on their expectations of college and how those expectations may impact their college experience and their rate of persistence.

Expectancy theory (Vroom, 1964), and goal-setting theory (Locke & Bryan, 1967; Locke, 2001) are two theories that are used extensively in business literature to examine motivation and performance. The expectancy theory of motivation states that motivation is derived from the perception that effort will result in a successful performance, and that the performance will result in outcomes that are positive and valued (Vroom, 1964). The goal-setting theory of motivation states that specific, relevant, and challenging goals along with appropriate feedback contribute to higher and better task performance (Locke, 2001). These theories, although not extensively tested with college students, are also applicable when discussing the motivation of students to persist to graduation and engage in behaviors that contribute to academic success (Issac, Wilfred, & Douglas, 2001).

The perception that effort will result in positive outcomes is based, in part, on past similar experiences in other educational settings. For example, students may have experienced high school teachers who were highly competent and effective at addressing the unique learning needs of the individual student, resulting in high academic performance. These students, therefore, may have increased beliefs that the same level of effort in college will result in the same level of academic performance. They will hold the belief that, “I didn’t have to study much in high school, so I shouldn’t have to study much in college.”

Past experiences also help frame the attractiveness of the anticipated outcome and whether it will lead to satisfaction. If effort (E) leads to performance (P), and

performance (P) leads to outcomes (O), and outcomes (O) lead to satisfaction, then greater effort will be expended to achieve the outcome (McShane & Von Glinow, 2005). “Expectancies include the anticipated outcome of a specific behavior in a situation, but also a person’s confidence that he or she will be able to perform a specific behavior in a particular situation” (Howard, 2005).

The expectations that students hold for the campus environment and their college experience often accurately predict behavior and satisfaction with that environment. Astin (1993) indicated that developing an understanding of those expectations can assist in determining, and influencing, the likelihood of student success. Gonyea (2001) described an expectation as "something the student believes will happen, anticipates doing or experiencing, or perhaps even requires from the institution" (p. 2). Goals are expectations that have been applied to one’s self, but when those expectations are applied to a college or university, they serve as a contractual requirement by which a student may measure contentment (Gonyea, 2001).

According to Rosseau (2005), a psychological contract, or “an individual’s subjective beliefs regarding the terms and conditions of an exchange agreement with another party,” (p. 24) exists between a student and the institution, and usually develops during the recruitment process. Students have beliefs regarding the role of faculty and the role of the institution, and expectations of receiving access to degree programs, grades, credit hours, faculty, student services, etc. in exchange for tuition fees (Howard, 2005). A student who perceives that the contract has been violated (i.e. inability to get needed courses, unsupportive faculty or staff, lack of social activities, unchallenging

courses, etc.) is at risk for disengagement and attrition due to lack of trust and dissatisfaction (Rousseau, 1995).

It is interesting to ponder if the attrition of undeclared students is not related to their lack of a major, but is instead tied to their expectations of the college experience. Research shows that regardless of educational/vocational goals, making connections on campus is key to persistence, whether it is through academic courses, faculty interactions, and major-related organizations, or through social organizations and athletic events (Astin, 1993; Kuh, 2005; Kuh, Kinzie, & Buckley, 2007; Tinto, 1993). Exploring the expectations that undeclared students have for student-faculty interaction and student-student interactions through clubs and organizations, may provide some important discoveries for how to better engage this population of students. If undeclared students have little expectation for building connections with either faculty or their peers, they may be less likely to seek out or take advantage of such opportunities, therefore impacting their persistence.

Interactions with faculty, regardless of setting, have been shown by several researchers (Astin, 1993, Kuh & Hu, 2001, Lau, 2003; Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005) to be key to the academic and personal development of students, as well as their overall satisfaction with the college experience. Research by Pascarella and Terenzini (2005) shows that the outcomes of informal (out-of-class) student-faculty interactions can be grouped into five categories: 1) career plans and educational aspirations; 2) satisfaction with college; 3) intellectual and personal development; 4) academic achievement; and 5) college persistence.

Kim and Sax (2009) observed that the effects of student-faculty interactions differ by gender and race on some outcomes, but found, overall, that research-related or course-related interaction with faculty resulted higher college GPAs, promoted degree aspirations, enhanced critical thinking and communication, and enhanced overall satisfaction with most gender, race, and socioeconomic groups. However, they also indicated that research is needed in a wider variety of student populations, and that the concept of “diversity” needed to be expanded beyond the traditional bounds of gender, race, religion, political, etc.

Bradley, Kish, Krudwig, Williams, & Wooden (2002) analyzed 14,511 students who completed the College Student Expectations Questionnaire between 1998 and 2000. They found that students’ *expected* levels of student-faculty interaction differed by background and institutional characteristics. However, in the analyses of the data across seven different major fields, they found that pre-professional majors were more likely than the other six major fields (business, social sciences, science and math, arts and letters, undecided, and other) to expect greater levels of student-faculty interaction. It is clear that further research is needed regarding the expectations of students from various majors for student-faculty interactions; however, this study will focus only on the differences between declared and undeclared majors.

Student expectations for involvement with their peers through clubs, organizations, and service projects, are another area that has not been extensively researched. Although extensive research has been done on student involvement and engagement in the campus community (Astin, 1975; Kuh, Kinzie, Schuh, Whitt & Associates, 2005; Tinto, 1993; Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005), and those studies have

shown that getting students connected is key to academic achievement and persistence, little is known about student *expectations* of involvement.

Miller and Murphy (2011) suggested that a logistical regression prediction model of student attrition has demonstrated that the intention to join clubs is a positive indicator of persistence. Additionally, they found that students who actually join student organizations, regardless of original intention, persisted at higher rates.

By further exploring student expectations of involvement in clubs and organizations through the subpopulation of intended major, administrators can develop an understanding of how to better frame the college experience so that joining an organization (and subsequently following through on the intention) is an expectation of greater numbers of students.

### ***Research Questions***

1. Prior to matriculation, are there significant differences between declared and undeclared students' expectations for interactions with faculty members?
2. Prior to matriculation, are there significant differences between declared and undeclared students' expectations for involvement in clubs and organizations?
3. Are there significant differences between declared and undeclared students in first year academic performance, as measured by GPA and credit hours earned?
4. Are there significant differences between declared and undeclared students in the rate of first year persistence?

### ***Conceptual Framework***

There is no single theoretical model in the literature that could be drawn on to frame this investigation. However, there are four key areas of research that best support

this research and which are explored in greater detail in chapter two. Astin's (1975) seminal research established that student persistence is dependent on the academic and social integration of students in the college experience. Tinto's Theory of Student Departure (1975) seeks to explain college student withdrawal based on the core concepts of pre-entry attributes, goals/commitments, institutional experiences, integration with the university, and outcomes. Gordon's (1984) research posited that undecided/undeclared students are a unique population of students and should be explored in the research. Finally, Miller's (2005) research explored the ideas that understanding student expectations of the college experience and campus community are key to helping students make a successful transition.

Astin (1975, 1984, 1999) posited a theory of student involvement relating to persistence, using large national data sets, which suggest that not only will students be retained in more significant numbers if they involve themselves at greater levels within the university, but will experience greater gains in student learning and personal development. Astin defines "involvement" as academic involvement, involvement with faculty, and involvement with student peers.

A number of research studies, which support Astin's theory (Kuh, 2003; Kuh, Branch Douglas, Lund, & Ramin-Gyurnek, 1994; Pascarella & Terenzini, 1991; Pascarella, 1985; Tinto, 1997), have found that the most important factor for university students' learning and development, and their satisfaction with the college experience, is their level of engagement, or involvement, in the learning process. This engagement takes place both in and out of the classroom environment, in formal and informal activities. These activities include interactions with faculty, academic and career



advising workshops, study abroad experiences, part-time work, conversations with peers, and study groups, to name a few.

In recent years, the concept of “student engagement” has received increased attention. At the heart of the concept of student engagement is the theory that what students *do* in college matters more than where they came from or what college they attend. Success is derived when students a) devote time and energy to educationally purposeful activities and b) when colleges and universities organize themselves in such a way and invest resources for the purpose of encouraging student participation in these educationally purposeful activities (Kuh, Kinzie, Schuh, Whitt & Associates, 2005). It suggests that while there is a behavioral component regarding student motivation that is involved in success, institutions play a significant role in creating environments in which behaviors that are likely to lead to success are encouraged and rewarded.

Students tend to succeed in universities that are committed to their success, hold high and clear expectations for achievement, provide needed academic, social and financial support, provide frequent and early feedback, and actively involve them with other students and faculty in learning (Tinto, 2000). Tinto’s model of institutional departure, which originated in 1975 and has had multiple revisions since, focuses on the important roles academic and social integration play in encouraging student persistence within colleges and universities, especially during the first year. The strength of a student’s academic goals can be positively or negatively influenced by their institutional experiences and their level of integration, academically and socially, within the campus community.

Tinto (1993) argued that institutions attempting to increase student retention should focus on the following six components: students' pre-entry attributes, goals/commitments, institutional experiences, integration, re-evaluation of goals/commitments and outcomes. The greater the amount of integration into the academic and social systems of the institution, the greater opportunity there is that the degree of student commitment and probability of persistence will occur.

Like few other areas studied in higher education, meaningful contact between undergraduate students and their faculty, regardless of venue, results in students having favorable educational experiences, greater academic gains in cognitive and affective student development, and enhanced personal development (Astin, 1993; Chickering & Gamson, 1987). Faculty-student interaction is touted as positive practice and a key part of the college experience that enhances student persistence (Halawah, 2006; Kuh & Hu, 2001; Nadler & Nadler, 2000; Pascarella & Terenzini, 1985, 2005). Astin (1999) argues that faculty interaction both inside and outside the classroom, and high quality programs and policies that are indicative of an institutional commitment to student development and learning, are necessary for student success and growth.

Pascarella and Terenzini (2005) state there is a modest body of research that estimates the impact that the amount and quality of student-faculty interaction has on students, especially in the areas of development of career-relevant skills, career choice, general cognitive development, and critical thinking skills. Pascarella and Terenzini (1991) reported that relationships with faculty and peers lead to intellectual outcomes, as well as changes in attitudes, values, and aspirations. They also state that extracurricular involvements enhance self-confidence, interpersonal skills, and leadership skills

However, recent studies also suggested that students may interact with faculty in out-of-class settings at less optimal levels and less than they expected to prior to arriving at college (Gonyea, Kish, Kuh, Muthiah, & Thomas, 2003). Yin and Lei (2007) stated that research studies have shown that certain student organizations and extracurricular activities promote student achievement, while also increasing general satisfaction with the academic experience. Involvement in these activities encourages social interaction and helps students engage in their campus community, resulting in more positive relationship while in college.

Astin (1993) discussed the impact that involvement in clubs and organizations has on students and reported that the strongest single source of influence on cognitive and affective development is a student's peer group; the greater the interaction with peers, the more favorable the outcome. Additionally, there is a correlation between the hours participating in clubs and organizations and attributes such as public speaking ability, leadership abilities, and interpersonal skills. Interaction with peers has also been shown to contribute to seniors' growth in interpersonal competence, cognitive complexity, and humanitarianism (Kuh, 1995; Terenzini, Pascarella, & Blimling, 1996).

Miller and Associates (2005) found that when students experience a dissonance between their expectations and reality, they are less likely to be satisfied with their college experience, less likely to be academically successful, and less likely to persist to graduation. Research examining student expectations and how they relate to attrition revealed that when college expectations were met, the students' persistence rate increased (Braxton, Vesper, & Hossler, 1995; Helland, Stallings, & Braxton, 2001).

Students typically form inaccurate expectations regarding the nature of the physical (campus environment), social (student demographics), and institutional (norms, values, traditions) components of the college environment (Moneta & Kuh, 2005). The first six to eight weeks are considered to be especially important in addressing expectations as students are forming impressions about the university environment and creating habits that will dictate how much they will engage in the activities that matter most to their success (Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005; Tinto, 1993).

An adjustment of the expectations a student has about the college experience is a process that occurs over time, which is why persistence beyond the first year is so critical (Miller, et al, 2005). Students who left during the first year were almost equally as likely to transfer again or leave higher education altogether, so helping a student persist at the original institution increases overall likelihood of completion (NCES, 2011a).

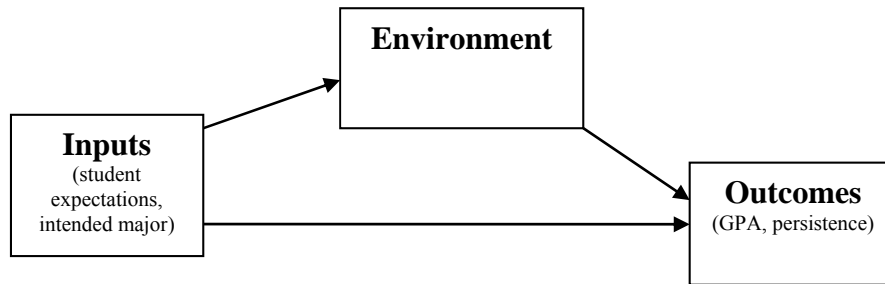
Côté and Levine (1997) conducted a study of the relationship between college student motivation and academic achievement, based on the work of Vroom (1964). They identified five student motivations for attending college: (a) CAR, career materialist -- to gain money, status, and finer things in life; (b) PER, personal-intellectual development -- for personal growth and to understand the complexities of the world; (c) HUM, humanitarian -- to change systems to help make the world a better place; (d) EXP, expectation driven -- to satisfy pressures from families and friends; and (e) DEF, default - - they don't know why they are attending college (which is also represented throughout the literature for students who are undeclared/undecided (Gordon, 1997).

Cote and Levine (1997) discovered that students who were categorized with expectation driven (EXP) or default (DEF) motivations presented poor prognoses for the

development of human capital skills (self-management, self-motivation, and technical skills). They stated that the absence of positive benefits associated with the EXP motivation suggests that institutions should attend to this motivation among their students with regard to selection, placement, and counseling, and that individuals who are higher on the DEF motivation are likely gaining less from their university experience and are perhaps wasting institutional resources, as well as their own. This study further supports the need for additional research on student expectations and motivations for attending college.

It would seem that the goal of achieving higher rates of student persistence would require understanding student expectations (individually and collectively), helping the students have realistic expectations of college, which include being an engaged and involved student with career goals, and then helping them meet those expectations. A student's expectations of the environment will shape that environment, which means that each student will encounter completely different experiences from the same environment, resulting in a variety of outcomes. Administrators often refer to this concept as "institutional fit."

For the purpose of this study, Astin's Inputs-Environment-Outcomes (I-E-O) Model (Figure 1) will serve as the framework viewing the impact of student expectations on outcomes. According to Astin (1993), "*inputs* refer to the characteristics of the student at the time of entry to the institution; *environment* refers to the various programs policies, faculty, peers, and educational experiences to which the student is exposed; and *outcomes* refers to the student's characteristics after exposure to the environment" (p. 7).



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**Figure 1 Inputs-Environment-Outcomes (I-E-O) Model (Astin, 1985)**

Outcomes may include grade point average, exam scores, course performance, degree completion, or overall course satisfaction, while Inputs refers to such things as demographic information, educational background, financial status, disability, motivations for attending college, career choice, and major field of study.

Astin (2003) stated that “any application of the I-E-O model to assessment data requires the inclusion of input data for two basic reasons 1) inputs are always related to outputs; and 2) inputs are almost always related as well to environments (educational programs and practices)” (p. 64). Inputs are related to both environment and outcomes and must be considered before analyzing any relationship between environments and outcomes. Although it is believed that expectations may significantly influence the Environment, this study does not address that aspect of research, but instead focuses on the relationship between the inputs of student expectations and major, and the outcomes of GPA and persistence.

### *Significance of Study*

Student persistence and degree completion play an important role in enrollment management strategy and budgeting (Braxton, 2000). Universities are on a perpetual quest to increase retention and graduation rates as their institutional outcomes are often associated with persistence, including institutional prestige and financial gains and losses (Volkwein & Grunig, 2005). College costs continue to increase and enrollments are at record highs, while the proportion of students completing degrees has been level for decades, making the study of student persistence vital (Kuh, Kinzie, Schuh, & Whit, 2005).

Institutions often find pockets of success and increase persistence and graduation rates when developing initiatives that focus on sub-populations of the campus, whether for athletes, first-generation in college students, minority students, or other “at-risk” populations. Students are at the highest risk of attrition prior to starting in their major courses as they are less likely to have developed a significant connection to the institution. With much of the research on persistence focused on the involvement, integration, and engagement of students within the university (Astin, 1975, Kuh & Associates, 2005; Tinto, 1993), this study provides valuable information to both student affairs and academic affairs practitioners who wish to have a better understanding of how to help undeclared students enhance their campus connections and improve their levels of achievement and persistence. This is an issue that directly impacts academic advisors, faculty, career centers, student life staff, residence hall staff, and new student mentoring programs.

## ***Research Design***

This study examines secondary data, plus GPA and credit hours, obtained by the Student Affairs Planning, Evaluation, and Assessment Department at the University of South Florida. During the summer orientation sessions beginning in 2006, the Division of Student Affairs partnered with the Office of Orientation to administer the College Student Expectations Questionnaire (CSXQ) with consent from the USF Division of Research Integrity & Compliance.

Completed CSXQ instruments were administered and returned to the orientation team leaders who entrusted them to the office of New Student Connections in the Division of Student Affairs. The instruments were then submitted to the Director of Student Affairs Planning, Evaluation and Assessment who scored and coded each instrument so that the researchers could not identify students. Student data from institutional databases was pulled in aggregate to analyze first-year persistence rates and achievement, as measured by GPA and credit hours earned, at the end of the first year.

In order to answer the research questions proposed in this study, a quantitative research design was used to determine if statistically significant differences exist in the variables measured. Descriptive statistics, including standard deviation, minimum/maximum values, skewness, and kurtosis are reported for all variables in this study. In addition, a multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA) was used to answer the first three research questions, and a chi-square test was conducted to answer the fourth research question.



### ***Delimitations***

The following delimitations were identified in this study. First, the study was limited to students from one large public university in Florida who participated in orientation during Summer 2008. This allows for limited generalization. Additionally, it was limited to students who completed the College Student Expectations Questionnaire (CSXQ) during their orientation experience and provided their student identification numbers, granting permission to connect their questionnaires to their student records.

### ***Limitations***

A limitation of this study is that, upon completion of the study, the chosen data is almost three years old. However, this was the first cohort who completed the CSXQ with a significant number also reporting their student ID number and it provides the University with important baseline data for replicating the study on subsequent cohorts.

Another limitation of this study that is common in all survey research is that of self-reported data. Participants may have responded to the CSXQ survey questions based on what they believed was the most socially acceptable answer, or may have responded apathetically without truly contemplating the questions. Additionally, the data analyzed for this study is secondary data. This means that the data was collected by another group or organization and the researcher had no control over the data collection process.

### ***Definition of Terms***

***Expectancy:*** the perceived probability that effort will lead to good performance.

Variables that could affect expectancy include: self-efficacy, goal difficulty, and perceived control.

**Expectancy theory:** the theory of motivation developed by Vroom (1964). It explains the process of individual decision making based on various behavioral alternatives.

Its theoretical formula: Motivation Force = Valence x Instrumentality x Expectancy.

**First time in college student (FTIC):** An undergraduate degree-seeking student who has no prior postsecondary experience other than summer term or those who entered with advanced standing (college credits earned before graduation from high school).

**First-year Retention/Persistence Rate:** The measure of the rate at which students persist in their educational program at an institution. Recognized on a federal level, it is the percentage of FTIC students who begin at a particular college or university in a Fall semester and return to that same institution for the subsequent Fall semester.

**GPA:** The grade point average measured on a 4.0 scale, achieved after one academic year of study including Fall 08 and Spring 09 semesters.

**Matriculation:** The point at which an enrolled student attends his or her first class at a college or university.

**Persistence:** The rate at which students who begin study at a college or university return to the college or university for subsequent semesters.

**Social integration:** Interactions with peers, faculty, and staff, in addition to involvement in extra-curricular activities (Tinto, 1975).

**Student engagement:** A combination of the amount of time and effort students exert towards activities that lead to student success, as well as the ways that universities

organize and allocate resources to encourage participation in positive learning experiences (Kuh & Associates, 2005).

***Student expectations:*** The beliefs that incoming students have about what the college-going experience will be (Miller & Associates, 2005).

***Student involvement:*** The amount of physical and psychological energy a student devotes to the educational experience (Astin, 1984).

***Undeclared/Undecided:*** Students who are “unwilling, unable, or unready to make educational or vocational decisions.” (Gordon, 1995, p.x) For the purpose of this study, data on major choice is limited to the students’ indication of major at the time of attendance at orientation (pre-matriculation).

### ***Organization of Remaining Chapters***

Chapter Two provides an overview of the relevant literature in five major areas. First is a review of the history of curriculum development and how that impacted the choice and availability of major selection. This is followed by a review of the research as it relates to the “undeclared” student, a discussion of expectancy theory and how student expectations impact their college experience, a review of Tinto’s concepts of academic and social integration as well as Astin’s theory of involvement; and finally a discussion of the research as it relates to the significance of the first year of college.

Chapter Three outlines the methodology for this study and describes the instrument which was used to gather the data. Chapter Four summarizes the analysis and results of the research, and Chapter Five explores the implications for practice as well as future recommendations for research.

## CHAPTER TWO

### Review of Related Literature

This literature review comprises six main sections: (1) a review of the history of majors and how that impacts the choice and availability of major selection; (2) a review of the research as it relates to the “undeclared” student; (3) a discussion of student persistence; (4) a discussion of how student expectations impact the college experience; and (5) a review of the concepts of academic and social integration (including theories of involvement) and (6) the importance of student-faculty interactions.

#### *The History of Majors*

Choosing a college major is a significant milestone in the life of every college student. For many students, this decision is an easy choice and is tied to a career goal they have dreamed of since their adolescent years. For other students, this decision is an overwhelming and vague quest for identity, spurred by the feeling that they should commit to a lifelong career.

In the early years of higher education, college was a place designed for the elite one-percent of society to confirm their social standing (Thelin, 1996). It was where young gentlemen (often as young as 14) prepared for life in politics, law, medicine, or the clergy. Mapping out a formal curriculum plan was not necessary as there were few professions to enter and only one set of courses to follow.

“The curriculum at Harvard from its founding through the eighteenth century was theological; early nineteenth-century studies expanded the curriculum to include Latin, Greek, mathematics (including astronomy), English composition, philosophy, theology, natural philosophy, and either Hebrew or French. This prescribed course of study established a pattern for American liberal arts colleges. The most common forms of instruction were oral exercises—the lecture, the declamation, and the disputation” (Education Encyclopedia online, 2011).

The Harvard University Annual Report of the President 1825-1826 (Harvard/Radcliffe, 2010) captures the course of instruction for a 38 week term and shows that the focus of the curriculum is on English, Grammar, Math, History, Greek and Latin. There is little indication that the colonial colleges, of which there were 9, provided any advanced instruction in learned professions, and going to college was not a prerequisite to the practice such professions as law and medicine (Thelin, 2004).

According to Solomon (1985), that curriculum remained relatively consistent across institutions until the number of academies began to grow. By 1800 there were 25 degree-granting institutions, by 1820 it had increased to 52, and by 1860 there were 241 (Thelin, 2004). The college-building boom also included academies, seminaries, scientific schools, normal schools, and institutes, as well as schools that were designed to enroll previously excluded groups, such as women, Blacks, and Roman Catholics. The various institutions began to expand the curriculum to include advanced studies in medicine, law, engineering, military science, commerce, theology, and agriculture.

As the debate of what defined an “appropriate” education for women continued, these academies added courses in chemistry, physics, botany, geology, mental philosophy

(psychology), philosophy, American history, geography, fine arts, dancing, music, drawing, singing, and piano playing. Between 1830 and 1870, 107 women's schools covered most of the subjects taught in the junior and senior years at men's colleges, as well as all of the newly created subjects (Solomon, 1985).

The University of Virginia became unique in its educational mission by adding modern languages and architecture, eliminating daily chapel requirements and links to religious denominations, and replacing the conventional student discipline system of demerits with a unique student code. Yet, even as the curriculum continued to change, there was still little emphasis on completing degrees and many students left after a year or two (Thelin, 2004). At the College of William and Mary, more than 90 percent of the students between 1880 and 1900 ended their studies after two years, just long enough to complete their License of Instruction (L.I) and gain immediate employment (Thelin, 2004). Until the end of the 19th century, students took in sequential order the faculty prescribed courses, which encompassed most of what was then known and which were also designed to enhance the students' moral and spiritual development.

Officials at The College of William and Mary state that they had the first elective system in 1779, which consisted of a system that seemed to allow for a choice between two prestigious faculty members for students willing to pay a higher premium, namely 1000 pounds of tobacco. For 1500 pounds of tobacco, they could have a choice among three prestigious faculty members (William and Mary College, 1900). However, the first system of electives as we recognize it today was created by Harvard.

In 1869, Charles William Eliot became president of Harvard and abolished all requirements for undergraduates. A column by President Eliot in the New York Times

(May 1885) announced that a student was required to take four courses during each of his last three years with practically unlimited choice of the 170 elective options. This system of electives proved to be so popular that by 1900 half the graduates had only taken introductory courses and did not have specialized knowledge in any one subject.

(McGrath, NYTimes, 2006).

Concerned over the lack of formal and structured education, the university's next president, A. Laurence Lowell, introduced a system in 1910 that required students to major in a subject and also to take courses outside their areas of concentration. Shortly thereafter, other colleges and universities began to follow Harvard's lead and allow students to have more input in the selection of their college courses with the "free elective system."

"Vassar was creeping towards a new kind of curriculum in which the course of study was determined by the student, not the college" (Vassar, 2005). The curriculum underwent a massive study, leading to the "Curriculum of 1927," in which the distribution requirements were revised into areas of study: Arts, Languages, Natural Sciences, and Social Sciences. For the first time in Vassar's history, no single course was required for all students. Students could build their general education curriculum from a variety of courses in each of the areas of study.

According to Levine (1978), the general education curriculum imparts knowledge, skills, and abilities drawn from the various realms of liberal learning and is the *breadth* component to the undergraduate degree. To this day, the breadth of the general education curriculum, what students should be exposed to and what courses it

should consist of, and how to assess that student learning has occurred, have remained issues for faculty throughout the higher education system (Carnochan, 1993).

Although students have always been directed towards specific courses of study and career paths, the first known reference to the terms *major* and *minor* did not appear until the Johns Hopkins Catalogue of 1877-78 (Levine and Nidiffer, 1997). The major required two years of study, while the minor required one.

The major is considered to be the *depth* component of the curriculum and provides the student with (a) terms, concepts, ideas, and events pertinent to the field; (b) models, frameworks, genres, theories, and themes that link phenomena and give them meaning; (c) methods of research and modes of inquiry appropriate to the area of study; and (d) criteria for arriving at a conclusion or making generalizations about that which is studied (Levine, 1978).

The major field of study is the most prominent and significant structural element of the American baccalaureate degree. For students, the availability of particular majors can often be the key to determining which college or university to attend. College catalogs frequently suggest that study in specific majors can impart certain specialized knowledge while also preparing individuals for graduate education and for specific jobs and careers (Donald, 1986).

Today, college education is pursued by more than 15 million students, and the quest for a degree that can lead to a well-paying career is considered to be a necessity for survival. Changes in the American economy, including a shift from manufacturing and heavy industry to service industries and information technology, have reinforced the



belief that attending college is critical for obtaining a good job and having a successful economic future (Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005; Reynolds & Pemberton, 2001).

Career or vocational choice can be a distant concern at college entry, primarily because the potential pool of choices is enormous. The number of potential majors at some institutions is staggering, with some colleges and universities offering more than 200 major options, each with a very specific curriculum. The College Board website lists more than 600 majors and careers for students to explore (College Board, 2011), the University of Toronto claims that students “can tailor their university experience from more than 800 different undergraduate programs” (University of Toronto, 2011), and the website MyMajors.com boasts that it has a “Complete List of 1,600+ College Majors” along with additional information and descriptions ([www.mymajors.com](http://www.mymajors.com)).

In 1977, Issacson stated that “It is commonly thought that the United States has more than 20,000 occupations sufficiently varied to be thought different” (p. 201). Clearly, the majority of students would have limited knowledge about most of those majors and occupations, let alone the ones which have been added in the last 30 years. As technology continues to advance, the number and type of courses offered, and the number of distinct majors and careers that are available, will continue to increase. The National Center for Educational Statistics currently has 1265 unique Classification of Instructional Programs (CIP) codes for identifying courses and programs of study (NCES, 2011b). The options for students are overwhelming.

However, there are varied paths for preparing for occupations. Solomon (1977) found that 50% of the graduates changed their career plans after leaving college. Thirty years later this statistic still rings true with a 1997 survey by the U.S. Department of

Education's National Center for Education Statistics which found that, 4 years after obtaining a bachelor's degree, only 55 percent of graduates were in jobs related to their major field of study (Dohm & Wyatt, 2002). "In 2008–09, more than half of the 1.6 million bachelor's degrees awarded were in five fields: business (22 percent), social sciences and history (11 percent), health professions and related clinical sciences (8 percent), education (6 percent), and psychology (6 percent)" (NCES, 2011c).

Most students assume that a major represents a specific field of professional study (e.g. education, engineering, accounting) and often do not realize that academic disciplines (e.g., history, physics, music) and interdisciplinary fields (e.g., African-American studies, ecological studies, Women's studies) can also lead to a variety of career paths.

Many students who enter college know little, if anything, about a majority of these options. Therefore it is difficult to make an informed choice about a field of study or future career with little knowledge about the options available at the time of college entry. Students may feel pressured by family or financial goals (or even university administrators) to select a college major without ever fully exploring it.

In 2006, the then Governor of the State of Florida, Jeb Bush, pushed a bill that required high school students to declare a major, similar to college students, in order to graduate, and also required career planning instruction for middle school students. This generated extensive controversy over the value of early college and career conversations versus the pressure of such decision making on immature fourteen-year-old children.

Most students (and their parents) recognize that college is the ideal place for a student to explore all academic and career options, and many students will remain undeclared, before fully committing to a specific path.

### ***The Undeclared Student***

The focus of concern about undeclared students can be traced back as early as the 1920s, and the reasons why students are undeclared has been a source of considerable discussion. It has been posited that students enter college with an undeclared major due to a variety of reasons. It is not surprising that the attitudes and opinions of family members, family interactions, family values, and parental influence all play a significant role (Eigen, Hartman, & Hartman, 1987; Kinnier, Brigman, & Noble, 1990; Schumrum & Hartman, 1988; Zingaro, 1983). However, other factors include dissatisfaction with an occupational role and having vocational choices that are not congruent with self-information (Holland, 1985), sex-role stereotyping, emotional instability, and inability to choose between two desirable options of equal strength (Lopez & Andrews, 1987), and multiplicity of interests, avoidance behavior, lagging behind developmentally, and undeveloped decision-making skills (Graef, Wells, Hyland, & Muchinsky, 1985).

It is not uncommon to find that much research on *undecided* students is conducted in comparison to students who are labeled as *decided*. The research typically falls into categories of: 1) studies on the reasons for indecision, 2) studies on the characteristics of an undeclared/undecided student, and 3) solutions to help undecided students become “decided” (Gordon, 1984).

Many studies about undecided students have indicated a tendency toward attrition, although other research has shown no difference in the persistence of undecided

and decided students (Gordon, 2007). In this new college environment, students encounter norms, values, diversity, policies and procedures that are foreign and create feelings of uncertainty in themselves and their goals. Some students will even question if college was the right choice as they attempt to balance their academics with other activities and feelings of fitting in.

Many first year students feel the pressure of selecting a career and a major. Students who are “unwilling, unable, or unready to make educational or vocational decisions have been referred to as *undecided* in the research” (Gordon, 1995, p.x). Although, recent research suggests that these students should instead be referred to as *Exploring, Open, Undeclared, or General Studies* students to focus on their state of options rather than a negative state of indecision (Gordon, 1984; Slowinski & Hammock, 2003). Regardless of the term used to identify these students, retention research suggests that the strongest factor associated with persistence to degree completion is a commitment to educational and career goals (Wyckoff, 1999).

Another explanation of why being undecided is not often associated with persistence is that the initial decision about major or career choice is very unstable. It is often assumed that students have developed enough of an understanding of themselves, along with knowledge about program requirements and career fields, to make academic major choices. However, studies have estimated that up to 75% of all students change their major at least once before graduation (Noel et. al, 1985). Apparently, large numbers of students are in a state of transition and it would be illogical to attempt to predict persistence based on initial choice of college major.

Reaching back to some of the earliest years of research on these students, studies found that the quality of a student's academic work improves when there is a clear occupational goal (Crawford, 1929). Decades later, researchers continued to find that declared majors achieved significantly higher cumulative GPAs (Chase & Keene, 1981; Anderson, Creamer, & Cross, 1989), were more internal in their locus of control (Taylor, 1982); and were more likely to expect high levels of achievement (Ruskus & Solmon, 1984).

Whereas other researchers, again reaching back to the earliest research, found that having a major was not predictive of academic scholarship (Williamson, 1937), and found no significant differences in the achievements of decided majors versus undeclared (Chase & Keene, 1981; Ruskus & Solmon, 1984, Lewallen, 1993). Micceri (2002) found that each major change increased a student's graduation rate possibilities by 40 percent. In addition, Micceri (2002) also found that those who change majors at least once show graduation rates between 70 and 85 percent, as compared to the rates of 45 to 50 percent for those who retain their original major.

Lewallen (1993) found that being vocationally undecided does not mean a student does not want to graduate and explained that the previous studies suggesting that undecided students are attrition prone "have confused the construct of commitment to college completion with educational and career choice" (p. 103).

Graunke, Woosley, and Helms (2006) found that "individuals who reported relatively high levels of commitment toward a specific career path were less likely to complete a degree in six years than were individuals who reported lower levels of commitment" (p. 17).

Another interesting phenomenon is that the highest percentage of undecided students has been found in the most selective institutions (Astin, Green, & Korn, 1987). This pattern holds for four-year colleges as well as universities and for men as well as women across institutional type. Astin's (1977) longitudinal study of college students found a pattern of predictors that suggest a stereotype of the college persister as a person with high grades in high school, high aspirations, affluent parents, and the ability to postpone gratification. Many students in highly selective institutions fit this stereotypical model of a college persister. Students exhibiting these characteristics have a high probability of persisting regardless of being undecided. Perhaps these students are undecided because they have more options available due to high academic ability and socioeconomic status.

Regardless, it can be an overwhelming process for traditional age students to engage in the developmental tasks of "recognizing and accepting the need to make career decisions, becoming aware of interests and abilities, obtaining information about the world of work and how their personal interests and abilities relate to occupations, identifying possible fields and level of work consistent with their interests and abilities, and selecting and following through with educational programs that can lead to satisfying careers" (Winston, 1996, p. 349).

While research and comparisons of undeclared students have been voluminous, few studies have focused directly on the *persistence* of undeclared students. Those that did, found that undeclared students were more likely to withdraw, not return for a subsequent term or year, or not persist to the completion of a degree (Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005). Although these findings should be viewed skeptically due to

generalizability issues and the limitations of those studies (sampling size, data collection procedures, conflicting definitions, etc.), they have contributed to the perception that undeclared students are attrition prone. Several studies found that when students felt their major would lead them to a secure career, they were more likely to persist than those students that felt that school was irrelevant and that their education was not worthwhile (Killeen, Sammons, & Watts, 1999; Orndorff & Herr, 1996; Peterson & delMas, 2001; Sandler, 2000).

Berger and Milem (2000) wanted to expand on the constructs of Tinto's Integration Model, and Astin's Theory of Involvement. They concluded that students with a major or career plan were more involved academically and therefore more likely to persist. Research supports that assisting students with their career decision process increases their motivation to persist due to the additional support and interaction from faculty and staff (Pascarella, 1983; Sandler, 1998). The result of that student support interaction may also lead to an overall increase in retention rates.

The undeclared students may not become fully integrated because they do not identify with an academic department (Young & Redlinger, 2000). Undeclared students may be disconnected socially from an institution because they do not have the same opportunities as their declared counterparts to interact on a regular basis with groups of students who have similar academic interests. Additionally, their options to participate in, or feel connected to, extracurricular academic programs offered by specific major departments are limited, and do not have the same opportunities as declared students to become connected to a network of professors within particular majors (Young & Redlinger, 2000).

In O'Banion's (1972, 1994), Advising Model, he outlined a method of academic advising that incorporates five elements of the advising process, with the first three being tied directly to career and major exploration: (1) exploration of life goals, (2) exploration of career goals, (3) selection of a major or program of study, (4) exploration of course choice, and (5) exploration of scheduling options. O'Banion further contended that lack of reflection on the first two steps often led students to select inappropriate programs or majors, perform poorly in classes, repeatedly change programs, or drop out altogether. However, if a career goal is fully explored and established early, then the more likely the student will be engaged and motivated.

Results from a study by Gordon (1985) mentioned the need to provide career self-assessment programs for students. By incorporating the career self-assessments into the curriculum, the institution has a better chance at reaching students, rather than hoping the students will recognize their uncertainty and seek out career assessments on their own. In a study on career development, Gordon (1985) contended that guidance is still needed by students even if they have picked a major, as those students still need assistance with understanding how to connect the major to the career.

Several authors have suggested that there are developmental differences between types of individuals who have not made a career decision – dividing into separate categories those who are undeclared students versus those who are chronically indecisive students (Fuqua & Hartman, 1983; Heppner & Hendricks, 1995; Holland & Holland, 1977; Larson, Heppner, Ham & Dugan, 1988). Hartman, Fuqua, and Blum (1985) indicated that developmental indecision is characterized by a lack of skills to make a



career decision, and that chronic indecision is influenced by anxiety that causes a failure to use available resources to make a career decision.

Leppel (2001) stated that students whose major is oriented to a specific profession (such as business, education, or engineering), may have persistence rates that differ from students with other majors as the choice of professionally-oriented majors may reflect a greater goal commitment. Factors involved in persistence rates include perceived future monetary gain, goal commitment, interest in the subject matter, and even self-confidence.

Undeclared majors may also be undecided about attending college at all, or ever earning a degree, which could contribute to a lower level of academic involvement and integration. In addition, undeclared majors may not fully integrate academically or socially because of the lack of identity with a department, and lack of integration leads to lack of persistence.

### ***Student Persistence***

In the past twenty years, a great deal of attention has been paid to the importance of the first year experience on college campuses. This represents a change from the sink or swim attitude of earlier generations when student attrition was seen mainly as a problem of a student and his/her abilities or lack thereof (Upcraft, Gardner, Barefoot, & Associates, 2005). Part of this change in attitude is due to some rather dismal retention figures. While the terms “retention” and “persistence” are sometimes used interchangeably throughout the literature, it is important to note that retention is an institutional focus and persistence is a student outcome.

On average, of the students entering 4-year colleges and universities each year for the first time, over one-fourth of them will not return to the same institution their

sophomore year. Despite an enrollment of nearly 16 million students in 2009, only 2.5 million of those will graduate. With only 15% of students graduating each year, colleges and universities are searching for ways to help students get connected and stay connected so that they can finish their degrees (NCES, 2011a).

Attrition of students is greatest during the period between the freshman to sophomore year and declines with each successive year after. Some studies have even suggested that within this critical first year, it is the first 6 weeks that are most important in influencing whether or not a student will be retained. Levitz and Noel (1989) indicate that the most critical transition period for freshmen occurs during the first two to six weeks.

Upcraft and Gardner (1989) noted that the establishment of close friendships during the first month of enrollment is one of the factors leading to freshman success. Tinto (1993) also stressed the importance of the first few weeks of attendance at an institution by noting that this is the time the student is least integrated into the social and academic systems of the university. Therefore, the commitment to the university is at a low point which, in turn, may lead to an easy decision to separate from the institution.

Throughout the literature on persistence theory, five major themes seem to emerge. The most traditional view is that there are a set of pre-college characteristics that not only predict academic performance but also predict persistence behavior, among other outcomes (Astin, 1997; Lewallen, 1993; Strauss & Volkwein, 2004). A second group of theories line up with "student-institution fit models" (Strauss & Volkwein, 2004; Tinto, 1993). A third set of propositions highlight the value of campus climate and involvement (Astin, 1984; Endo & Harpel, 1982; Nora, 1987).

Fourth, there are structural or organizational perspectives that highlight the institutional variables as contributors to not only educational outcomes, but also persistence (Berger & Milem, 2000; Pascarella, 1985; Strauss & Volkwein, 2004). Examples of these variables would be things like campus size, institutional mission and institution wealth. For example, the location of a campus may have an impact on persistence, or amount of resources available to students may increase a desire to stay.

And finally, one of the more recent theories involves the idea that student expectations of the college experience, and whether those expectations are met, plays a significant role in persistence (Miller et al, 2005; Kuh, 2005). Most students enter college with the expectation that they will graduate in four years with a degree, but various research studies show that less than half of all students who enroll in college will earn a degree, and those who do usually take four to six years to do so (NCES, 2011a).

Understanding student expectations of the college experience is necessary for faculty in the development of course and instructional design, as well as for institutions to develop programs, policies, and practices that can effectively address student needs, academically and socially.

### ***Expectations of College***

Before ever beginning their college journeys, students have developed expectations of themselves, their professors, the institution, their peers, and their overall experience. When asked to describe their expectations, students presented details about everything from their residence hall life, to their social involvements and academic experiences. However, some students, especially those who are first generation in college students, have a limited understanding of college life and their expectations

reflect these limitations. In a study by Kalsner (1991), one of the four recurrent themes for student withdrawal was uncertainty both about what to expect from college and its rewards.

These expectations impact how students respond to their environments and also act as precursors as students make academic decisions, such as choice of major (Pike, 2006). Expectations can also influence how students respond to their academic surroundings and impact their decisions of whether or not to remain in certain fields of study, or college in general (Bosch, Hester, MacEntee, MacKenzie, Morey & Nichols, 2008; Kuh, Gonyea & Williams, 2005; Pike, 2006).

In order to design effective programs and services for the support of students, it is imperative that faculty and administrators understand the perceptions that students bring with them to college. Driscoll (2000) stated that literature throughout the fields of psychology and sociology posit that expectations are based on past experiences, perceptions, and attitudes.

Two theories that provide a theoretical foundation for studying college student expectations are ecological theory and expectancy-value theory. Ecological theory involves the idea that academic and social satisfaction are an outcome of the “fit” created by the combination of a students’ personal characteristics with the college environment. When there is no alignment between the environment and student characteristics, students experience dissonance, followed by regret, followed by a desire to leave the institution (Astin, 1993; Tinto, 1993). The lack of fit may be attributed to unrealistic student expectations or the perception that the institution is somehow in breach of a psychological contract, which Howard (2005) described as a “subjective interpretation of

the terms and conditions of the arrangement” (p. 26). College students develop uniquely personal psychological contracts with their college or university throughout the recruitment process, and violation of that contract, whether academic, financial, or social in nature, creates levels of distress.

Expectancy-value theory is a commonly accepted theory for explaining how individuals make decisions regarding behavioral alternatives, and how they select the option with the greatest motivation forces. This means a student’s motivation to learn is fueled by a positive outcome and likelihood of success. (Geiger & Cooper, 1995; Wigfield & Eccles, 2000).

Vroom’s (1964) expectancy theory of motivation is one of the most widely accepted ways for determining individual motivation (Ferris, 1977). Fudge and Schlacter (1999) indicated that this theory has received strong support after rigorous testing, and Chou (2010) found that Vroom’s theory has been used in a variety of fields and industries including: retailing, selling, education, psychology, organizational behavior, and health management.

Expectancy theory is a process theory of motivation, suggesting that expenditure of an individual’s effort will be determined by expected outcomes and the value placed on such outcomes in a person’s mind (Isaac, Zerbe, & Pitt, 2001). The theory consists of three parts: 1) a positive relationship between good performance and rewards, 2) a positive relationship between effort and performance, and 3) the delivery or achievement of valued outcomes and rewards (Hersey & Blanchard, 1988, p. 29). This means that if a student invests a high level of effort (E), which leads to increase performance (P), this

will lead to a justified outcome (O).  $E \rightarrow P \rightarrow O$ . The outcome must also have a level of attractiveness (Valence) to fuel the Effort.

Expectancy theory suggests that individuals are goal-oriented, intentional in their choices, and purposeful in their actions (Evans, Margheim, & Schlacter, 1982).

Hellriegel, Slocum, and Woodman (1983) present four assumptions about the behavior of individuals: 1) a combination of cognitive and environmental forces help determine an individual's behavior; 2) an individual makes his or her own decisions; 3) individuals have different desires and goals; and 4) decisions that an individual makes among various alternatives are based on the perceptions of which will lead to desirable outcomes.

This theory can be used to frame how students choose a major, a residence hall, courses, social activities, or even the college itself. Expectations of achieving a certain degree, career, lifestyle, college image or any other life experience, and the attractiveness of such, will help determine the effort the student invests to pursue it. However, in the first year of college and with the number of decisions that need to be made, this can be overwhelming which leads to unrealistic expectations and high levels of stress.

According to Greene (1998), first year students have the highest level of distress of all student cohorts. One reason for this may be that students have expectations of college that are not met, creating a level of dissonance that can lead to both academic and social challenges. Tinto (1993) stated "When expectations are either unrealistic and/or seriously mistaken, subsequent experiences can lead to major disappointments" (p.54).

These expectations may be academic ("I expect to earn all A's like I did in high school"), they may be social ("I expect to be an active member of several organizations"), or they may be personal ("I will meet my best friend and a significant other").

Regardless of the nature of the expectation, an unmet expectation could lead a student to withdraw from the institution. More than half of all students who withdraw from college do so during their first year (Tinto, 1993). “When institutions do not help freshmen develop realistic expectations of themselves and of their college, the demands of the new environment can be overwhelming” (Upcraft, Gardner, and Associates, 1990, p. 68).

Student expectations are shaped to varying degrees by their pre-college characteristic and experiences: strong academic achievement and involvement in high school means a student is predisposed to strong academic achievement and involvement in college (Kuh, et al, 2006). There is also a bit of self-fulfilling prophecy occurring with students who expect high levels of achievement and involvement being more likely to experience high levels of achievement and involvement. It could be that these students have a broader range of interests which involvement in the campus community easier than for those who have a narrow range of interests.

Kuh (2001, 2003, 2005) reported that there are differences in expectations, and experiences, by various student characteristics and institutional types. Younger students expect to have more experiences with peers from diverse backgrounds than they actually experience; students at smaller schools have higher expectations overall and experience greater involvement than students from larger schools; women expect to engage more than men, and typically do other than with sports and science-related activities; and all students expect to find their campus environments more supportive than they actually experience.

Another reason that understanding student expectations is important is that students are leaving high school and entering college with a deficit in attitude, study

skills, and learning strategies which already has them disengaged from the learning process (Levine & Cureton, 1998; NSSE, 2005; Kuh, 2008). Results of the National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE) show that about 70 percent of first year students reported that they work just hard enough to get by, with minimal study time, missed classes due to boredom or other obligations, and oversleeping.

Part of the college selection process is based on the students' expectations for what the college experience will be at each institution being considered. Students who attend a community college have expectations that are quite distinct from students who choose to enroll at a 4 year institution, or a public institution versus a private institution (Miller, 2005). Understanding a student's goals upon entering an institution will help faculty and staff better determine if those goals have been met. One difference between students expectations at a public or private institution is the expectation of the degree they anticipate learning. Students at private schools reported expectations of pursuing doctoral degrees, whereas students at public schools reported the bachelor's degree as the highest intended goal (Kuh & Hu, 2001).

Americans have been bombarded with imagery about college and university life from a variety of media resources – magazines, newspapers, reality television shows, sitcoms and dramas. Increased and more assertive marketing from colleges themselves inform students of the numerous options available and “sell” the necessity of the college experience (Kuh, 1991). All of these forces combine to shape perceptions and expectations about college, and influence students' behavior once they are enrolled in a college (Kuh, 1991; Maddux, 1999; Miller, 2005; Schilling & Schilling, 1999, 2005).



Sedlacek (2004) has found that formulation of expectations suggests that students are developing long-term goals, a non-cognitive variable found to be important to student success (Sedlacek, 2004). Having evidence of long-term goals were positive indicators of retention, graduation, and academic achievement (Tracey & Sedlacek, 1985). By understanding and acknowledging students' expectations for their college experience, institutions are better able to determine student outcomes and create more meaningful ways to engage them in the campus experience.

Heiland, Stalings, and Braxton (2001) examined the college student departure process in relationship to the fulfillment of expectations and discovered that when a student's social expectations were fulfilled, it positively impacted their social integration and commitment to the institution. The more those expectations were met, the greater the integration was within the social community of the university.

Kuh, Gonyea, & Williams (2005) reported that institutional variables do not explain much of the variance in students' expectations of College Activities and the Campus Environment models of the College Student Expectations Questionnaire (CSXQ), but student characteristics such as gender, race, and major had some effect, with math, science, and undecided students having lower expectations than other majors. This study hopes to reinforce the understanding that undecided/undeclared students have lower expectations of involvement in clubs and organizations and student-faculty interaction than declared majors.

### ***Academic and Social Integration***

Most of the 3 million students entering institutions of higher education each year enter with the eventual goal of graduation in mind (NCES, 2011a; Sax, Lindholm, Astin,

Korn & Mahoney, 2002). However, more students leave colleges and universities prior to receiving a degree than after (NCES, 2011a). Typically those students who choose to leave institutions do so during their first year in school (Tinto, 1993).

Research has shown that students leave institutions of higher education for a variety of personal reasons, including change of major, financial constraints, family responsibilities, and poor psychosocial fit, among others (Astin, Korn, & Green, 1987; Pascarella, 1983; Tinto, 1993). During the past few decades, research on student retention has been primarily focused on the constructs of social integration, lack of financial support and academic under-preparedness (Astin, 1993; Bean & Metzner, 1985; Cabrera, Nora, & Castaneda, 1992; Pascarella, 1983; Tinto, 1993).

Many current retention practices in higher education today evolved from the innovative theories of Vincent Tinto and Alexander Astin who started the retention movement in higher education. Tinto (1975) contended that students had to successfully *separate* themselves from their past life, make the *transition* to the new academic life, and then *incorporate* themselves in the social and academic activities of the higher education setting to persist. Tinto (1975) also posited that students enter college with individual characteristics that play a role in the departure decision and later (1993) identified the “dispositions of individuals who enter higher education” (p. 37) as one of the roots of student departure. Tinto’s (1993) model of student attrition, indicates that students’ goals, both initially and throughout time, strongly influence decisions to remain in school.

Astin’s (1984) involvement theory has four basic ideas: (a) involvement occurs along a continuum, meaning that different students exhibit different levels of involvement

in different activities at different times; (b) involvement has both quantitative aspects (how much time a student spends doing something) and qualitative aspects (how focused the student's time is); (c) the amount of personal development and learning that can occur is directly proportional to the quality and quantity of student involvement; and (d) the effectiveness of educational policies, practices, or programs is directly related to the policy, practice, or program's commitment to increasing student involvement (p. 298).

Along with social and academic integration which resulted in a "student-institution fit," both theories also identified the concept of "institutional commitment." Institutional commitment refers to the student's overall satisfaction with the school, the feeling of educational quality, sense of belonging and the readiness to attend the school again (Sandler, 2002; Strauss & Volkwein, 2004).

Students who do not feel like they "fit" on campus will feel marginalized which can lead to negative outcomes such as self-consciousness, irritability, and depression (Schlossberg, 1989), and leave students to wonder if they matter. Addressing this issue is important to student retention as it is a precursor to student involvement in college activities and academic programs that would help facilitate learning (Schlossberg, 1989).

Braxton, Hirschy, and McClendon (2004) proposed that the energy students invest in social interactions directly influences the extent to which they are socially integrated into college life. Students are viewed as active participants in their own persistence, but the environment also plays a central role by presenting opportunities for persistence-promoting experiences. In other words, persistence is impacted not only by whether and how the student reacts, but also by the nature and strength of the environmental stimulus (Lewallen, 1993).

Kuh (2003) defines student engagement as “the time and energy students devote to educationally sound activities inside and out-side of the classroom, and the policies and practices that institutions use to induce students to take part in these activities.” (p. 25). Kuh (1994, 2003) found that student engagement in both academic and interpersonal experiences lead to “student success,” defined by such desired outcomes as grades and persistence, and also suggested that engaged students develop habits that lead to continuous learning and personal development long after they have completed college.

In their review of the literature conducted for the National Postsecondary Education Cooperative, Kuh, Kinzie, Buckley, Bridges, & Hayek (2006) proposed that student success be defined as “academic achievement, engagement in educationally purposeful activities, satisfaction, acquisition of desired knowledge, skills and competencies, persistence, attainment of educational objectives, and post college performance” (p. 12).

One factor that has been an important predictor of first-year success, and is a significant factor in student engagement, is involvement in activities (Milem & Berger, 1997). When students participate in campus clubs and organizations, they are exposed to many of the principles that Chickering and Gamson (1987) outlined as best practices for undergraduates: student-faculty contact, cooperation and interaction with peers, active forms of learning, and devoting sufficient time to the organization.

Astin (1993) reported that the number of hours a student spends each week participating in clubs and organizations will positively impact public speaking ability, leadership abilities, and interpersonal skills. Astin (1996) later found that the three most powerful forms of involvement are academic involvement, involvement with faculty, and

involvement with student peer groups. “The strongest single source of influence on cognitive and affective development is a student’s peer group; the greater the interaction with peers, the more favorable the outcome” (Astin, 1996, p. 126). Peer groups have the power to create richer, more intense experiences for each other.

Involvement in clubs and organizations has been shown to correlate positively with several areas of psychosocial development in such areas as educational involvement, career planning, lifestyle planning, cultural participation, and academic autonomy (Cooper, Healy, & Simpson, 1994). Although the values of an organization can influence whether members experience positive or negative academic achievement (Feldman & Newcomb, 1970), memberships in campus organizations are generally found to be positively related to students' integration into the out-of-class social and intellectual life of the institution (Tinto, 1975; Pantages & Creedon, 1978).

In their description of the millennial generation, Howe & Strauss (2007) suggested that clubs and organizations may become increasingly popular as millennial generation high school students desire to establish bonds through this form of involvement. Today's students are characterized as being more goal-oriented, more communal, more structured, and more driven (Howe & Strauss, 2007), in contrast to the previous generation of students who were somewhat resistant to joining campus clubs.

Kuh (2005) suggested that colleges and universities cannot force student participation in leadership roles or organized campus activities, but campus administrators and leaders should be intentional about creating conditions that promote involvement in these purposeful activities. Responsive colleges and universities support a

wide range of clubs and organizations that are designed to meet students' learning and developmental needs.

In general, students participate in groups on a voluntary basis for a variety of self-selected reasons: to develop a meaningful life, social interaction, connections with peers of similar interest, and leadership opportunities (Howe & Strauss, 2007); to develop a sense of community or belonging (Beilke, 1990); and to develop communication skills (Angell, 1980; Hill, 1990).

Another outcome associated with student involvement in clubs and organizations is the development of practical workforce skills. Astin (1993) found that involvement in clubs and organizations was significantly and positively associated with reported gains in public speaking ability and leadership skills among senior students.

Chickering (2006) suggested that clubs and organizations, along with other student development activities, bring added meaning and coherence to the curriculum; and involvement in these groups can enhance the developmental components of the academic curriculum.

In a meta-analysis of research conducted between 1991 and 2000, Gellin (2003) determined that campus involvement, including participation in clubs and organizations, yielded gains in critical thinking. Gellin (2003) speculated that gains in critical thinking may be attributed to the self-initiating process of finding a group, subsequent level of commitment, a sense of belonging, exposure to varied viewpoints through other students and advisors, and specific perspectives of clubs and organizations. Inman and Pascarella (1998) also found a positive association between first-year student participation in clubs and organizations and critical thinking scores at the end of the first year.

Bean and Creswell (1980) found that students actively involved in campus organizations are likely to be more extroverted and confident, which leads to a sense of self-development, which may also increase the likelihood of contact with faculty who are the advisors for co-curricular activities. This phenomenon makes students feel connected to and welcomed by their institution, making them more likely to stay in school and feel satisfied with their overall experience.

Miller and Murphy (2011) suggest that a logistical regression prediction model of student attrition has demonstrated that the intention to join clubs is a positive indicator of persistence. Additionally, they found that students who actually join student organizations, regardless of original intention, persist at higher rates in all categories.

Recent national survey data indicate that more incoming first-years than ever also believe there is a “very good chance” they will participate in student clubs or groups, at 47.1%, up from 44.1% when first asked in 2000. (Pryor, Hurtado, DeAngelo, Palucki, Blake, & Tran, 2010). Understanding this expectation can inform administrators as they guide students through the process of exploring the variety of academic or social involvement options available on their campuses.

### ***The Importance of Faculty-Student Interactions***

Frequent faculty-student contact inside and outside the classroom is an important factor in student motivation and involvement. This point was emphasized in Chickering and Gamson’s (1987) Seven Principles of Good Practice which stated that quality undergraduate education, "Encourages contacts between students and faculty" (p. 1).

Research shows that faculty exert a great deal of influence in their out of class contacts with students which, in turn, enhances students' intellectual commitment,

influences student development, persistence and academic achievement, and encourages students to think about their own values and future plans (Chickering & Gamson, 1987; Feldman & Newcomb, 1969; Lampion, 1993; Pascarella & Terenzini, 1994).

Pascarella (1980) investigated the extent of the student-faculty relationship and asserted that the more a student interacts with faculty, the stronger the personal commitment to the institution, making the student less likely to depart. During the first year, experiencing high levels of satisfaction with effective academic advising played a role in a student's positive perception of the institution and indicated that students would likely persist to degree completion (Borden, 1995; Peterson, Wagner, & Lamb, 2001). Students who were able to make the connection between their program of study and their eventual career goals, and who received effective, meaningful academic advising, felt more positive about the institution, on the whole (Noel, 1976). When the advisor is also a faculty member, the effect is even greater.

O'Banion's advising model (1994) suggested that faculty advising is the best way to integrate faculty into aspects of the institution beyond their discipline. It encourages the faculty to learn more about the institution and understand the multi-dimensional lives of the student. In addition, the student has the opportunity to see the instructor in a different role. Light (2001) stated that good advising may be the single most underestimated characteristic of a successful college experience. Additionally, Kramer (2003) stated that faculty are an integral part of the advising process, regardless of institutional mission, size, or advising model.

High levels of faculty-student interaction have also been shown to contribute to positive career and educational aspirations of college students, a greater sense of personal



identity, an increased ability to form close relationships with faculty members, and a greater interest and commitment to intellectual concerns (Cotton & Wilson, 2006, Kuh & Hu, 2001).

Elliott (2003) highlighted the role of faculty accessibility in increasing student satisfaction and positive feelings about the college, and Nagda, Gregerman, Jonides, von Hippel, and Lerner (1998) found that an undergraduate student-faculty research partnership had an especially profound impact on increasing the retention rates of African-American students and sophomores. Nadler and Nadler (2000) found that higher levels of informal contact with faculty correlated positively with students' academic performance, satisfaction with their college experience, and retention. A student's positive perceptions of academic programs and personal affiliations with faculty, staff, and students contribute to a feeling of "student centeredness" (Elliott, 2003).

Furthermore, faculty were found to serve as important socializing agents for students, helping students adjust to college life, achieve intellectually and personally, and work towards career and educational aspirations (Lamport, 1993). Cox and Orehovec (2007) found that interactions between students and faculty, even in non-academic settings, have a positive impact by making students feel more valued and important. A positive substantive relationship with faculty or staff created a sense of "well-being" for a student, thereby deepening institutional commitment which, in turn, may contribute to higher levels of student persistence (Peterson, Wagner, & Lamb, 2001).

Little is known, however, about what students *expect* in terms of their interactions with faculty. Bradley, Kish, Krudwig, Williams, and Wooden (2002) found that "students who expect to pursue an advanced degree and students who expect higher

grades in college expect lower levels of interaction with faculty members than their classmates” (p. 82). This finding appears to support the literature on motivation and drive theory which indicates that highly motivated and goal-oriented students may not anticipate the need for high levels of faculty involvement in order to be successful. They also found that students who planned to live off-campus expected higher levels of interaction than their residential counterparts, and students in pre-professional majors were more likely to expect greater levels of interaction than those in business, social sciences, science, math, undecided, and other majors.

### ***Summary***

In this chapter, literature was presented that frames this research study. By exploring the history of college majors, readers can see how higher education has changed to create an overwhelming decision making process for most students. Being undeclared should not be viewed negatively as the literature has shown that students are undeclared for a variety of reasons. However, these students have expectations of their college experience that may differ greatly from other students at similar types of institutions. Although research on undeclared students is vast, research on student expectations, especially those of undeclared students, is limited or non-existent. By understanding those students’ expectations and finding appropriate connections points in the institution, whether through enhanced student-faculty contact or involvement in clubs and organizations, administrators can help undeclared students become academically and socially integrated in the institution.

In the end, most researchers agree that highly satisfied students are more likely to remain in and graduate from college, and dissatisfied students often become drop-outs

(Bryant, 2006). While some student discontent is unavoidable, the best way to retain students is to effectively market the institution, ensuring an optimal student/college “fit” (Schertzer & Schertzer, 2004). When a mismatch occurs, it may lead to dissatisfaction which, in turn, results in a lack of commitment and increased attrition. Colleges with higher satisfaction levels enjoy higher retention and graduation rates, lower loan default rates, and increased alumni giving (Miller et al, 2005). Successful institutions realize that it is better to invest at the onset to retain their students by identifying what enhances student satisfaction (Elliott & Shin, 2002).

Chapter Three presents a description of the methods utilized for exploring the differences in expectations student-faculty interaction and involvement in clubs and organizations between undeclared majors and declared majors University of South Florida.

## **CHAPTER THREE**

### **Methods**

As the previous chapter illustrated, there are still many educationally significant and yet unexplored questions regarding the impact of college major on expectations and on academic success and retention. The purposes of this study are to investigate the nature of student expectations regarding interactions with faculty and with clubs and organizations as they relate to being an undeclared major, and to assess the impact of these expectations on persistence and GPA.

The following chapter describes the methodology and procedures used to assess the expectations of college for two groups of FTIC students at a large public institution: those with a declared major and those who are undeclared, as self-disclosed at the time of completion of the CSXQ during summer orientation. The chapter discusses the design of the study, instruments used, participants identified, and analyses conducted. The data collected and methodology used were selected to answer the following research questions.

#### ***Research Questions***

1. Prior to matriculation, are there significant differences between declared and undeclared students' expectations for interactions with faculty members?

2. Prior to matriculation, are there significant differences between declared and undeclared students' expectations for involvement in clubs and organizations?
3. Are there significant differences between declared and undeclared students in first year academic performance, as measured by GPA and credit hours earned?
4. Are there significant differences between declared and undeclared students in the rate of first year persistence?

In order to address these four research questions, this study used a quantitative approach to the research to identify the effects of student expectations on specific outcomes of the first year of college - persistence to the sophomore year, credit hours earned, and institutional GPA. The objective of the quantitative analyses was to explore differences between major (declared vs. undeclared), student expectations (of faculty-student interaction and involvement in clubs and organizations), academic success (as measured by GPA and credit hours earned), and persistence (returning for the sophomore year). The first three research questions were analyzed using a multivariate analysis of variance. The fourth research question was analyzed using the Pearson Chi-square test for significance.

### ***Sample***

This study uses the CSXQ and academic performance data collected at a large, metropolitan, public university to assess the expectations of an incoming class of first-time in college (FTIC) students. The University of South Florida is a young institution, founded in 1956, and is one of only 25 public research universities nationwide labeled as community engaged with very high research activity. The Tampa Campus, the site of

this study, is the only the doctoral granting, research intensive campus of the USF System, according to the Carnegie classification system. The Fall 2008 USF system-wide student population reported by the USF Office of Decision Support was 46,334 students, located at 4 campuses. This study focused on the 3,537 first time in college students who attended the main campus in Tampa, which is accredited by the Commission on Colleges of the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools (SACS). The total student population of the Tampa campus in Fall 2008 was 39,263 students, and more than 30 percent of the student body was African American, Hispanic, Asian, Asian/Pacific Islander, Native American or other ethnicity (non-Caucasian).

USF Tampa is located on a 1,748-acre tract of land, 10 miles northeast of downtown Tampa. In 2008, the population of Hillsborough County, where USF Tampa is located, was reported as 1.2 million (Bureau of Economic and Business Research, 2009), however, the Tampa campus actually serves a three-county area of over two million people. The campus includes 253 buildings housing extensive health, medical, and academic facilities, residence halls, research facilities, as well as student services and recreational facilities.

The University offers 232 degree programs in 11 colleges at the undergraduate, graduate, specialist and doctoral levels, including 89 bachelor, 97 master, two education specialist, 36 research doctoral, and four professional doctoral programs, with more than 1800 faculty members, and a student to faculty ration of 27:1 (USF, 2011). The institution also has more than 500 student organizations and has a residential population of about 4,000 students.

The criteria for participants for this study included those students who were first time in college (FTIC) freshmen who participated in orientation events during Summer 2008 at the University of South Florida. This includes students who were admitted for either Summer 2008 or Fall 2008. The students in this study were 19 years of age or younger at the time of the survey to ensure that they were traditional-age college students. Limiting the sample to traditional-age students helped to control for expectations of college that may have developed through other life experiences (full-time employment, world travel, etc.). The participants were also enrolled for both the Fall 2008 and Spring 2009 semesters, and were considered full-time students with beginning semester enrollments of 12 credits or more to ensure that GPA was not unduly influenced by extreme performance (great success or failure) in a single class.

Students attending orientation were asked to complete the College Student Expectations Questionnaire (CSXQ) (Kuh & Pace, 1998) during the second day of a two-day orientation and include their student identification number. Table 1 provides demographic data of the total FTIC population admitted for Summer or Fall 2008 (n=4,110). Table 2 shows the demographic data for those students who completed the CSXQ and provided their student identification number (n=3,537). However, several ethnic groups were excluded from reporting for privacy purposes due to small sample sizes. Despite the exclusion, the demographics of the students in the sample were representative of those in the overall FTIC cohort.

**Table 1: Demographics TOTAL FTIC**

	SUM 08	FALL 08	TOTAL	Percentage
Males	279	1,537	1815	44%
Females	275	1,918	2193	56%
Unknown	0	2	2	0%
<b>TOTALS</b>	<b>655</b>	<b>3,455</b>	<b>4,110</b>	<b>100%</b>
Asian or Pacific Islander	36	247	283	6.9%
Black, non-Hispanic	201	236	437	10.6%
Hispanic	111	547	658	16.1%
American Indian/Alaska Native	4	11	15	0.4%
Race/ethnicity unknown	9	70	79	1.9%
Non Resident Alien	8	34	42	1.0%
White, non-Hispanic	286	2,310	2,596	63.1%
<b>TOTALS</b>	<b>655</b>	<b>3,455</b>	<b>4,110</b>	<b>100%</b>

**Table 2: Demographics for CSXQ Respondents**

	SUM 08	FALL 08	TOTAL	Percentage
Males	215	1350	1,565	44%
Females	287	1683	1,970	56%
Unknown		2	2	0%
<b>TOTALS</b>	<b>504</b>	<b>3,033</b>	<b>3,537</b>	<b>100%</b>
Asian or Pacific Islander	28	222	250	7.1%
Black, non-Hispanic	137	209	346	9.8%
Hispanic	85	495	580	16.4%
American Indian/Alaska Native	0	0	0	0
Race/ethnicity unknown/not included	60	6	66	1.9%
Non Resident Alien	0	0	0	0
White, non-Hispanic	248	2,047	2,295	64.8%
<b>TOTALS</b>	<b>504</b>	<b>3,033</b>	<b>3,537</b>	<b>100%</b>

## ***Variables***

### **Independent variables**

The independent variables in this study included:

1. Declared major – students who indicated on the CSXQ that they intended to major in one of 22 pre-determined career fields, including “Other”.



2. Undeclared major – students who indicated on the CSXQ that they were “Undecided” on the list of pre-determined career fields.

### **Dependent variables**

The dependent variables in this study included:

1. Students’ expected interactions with faculty as measured by the total of responses for all seven items on this subsection of the CSXQ.
2. Students’ expected involvement in clubs and organizations as measured by the total of responses for all five items this on subsection of the CSXQ.
3. Academic achievement as measured by the institutional cumulative USF grade point average at the end of the Spring 2009 semester and the number of completed credit hours in Fall 2008 and Spring 2009.
4. Persistence from the first to second year as measured by whether students were enrolled at the end of the first week of classes during the following academic year (i.e. Fall 2009).

### ***Instrument***

As the number of students entering higher education continues to increase, colleges and universities are continually seeking ways to ensure that the programs and services provided are effectively meeting the needs of the incoming population. Student surveys are a popular tool in research as they are easy to develop, easy to administer, and are usually less expensive than other types of assessment.

Kuh (2003) and Pace (1985) state that self-reported student surveys reveal information about the student experience that other sources of information cannot,

including estimates of interpersonal skill development and the degree to which one's values and ethics have developed since starting college.

A fair amount of evidence indicates that student self-reports are valid and reliable under certain conditions: (1) the information requested is known to the respondents, (2) the questions are phrased clearly and unambiguously, (3) the questions refer to recent activities, (4) the respondents think the questions merit a thoughtful response, (5) the information requested is potentially verifiable, and (6) the question asks for information that is known to those answering the questions and does not threaten, embarrass, or violate their privacy or encourage the respondent to respond in socially desirable ways (Carini, Kuh, Klein, 2006, p. 2).

In 1997, the College Student Expectations Questionnaire (CSXQ) was adapted from the College Student Experiences Questionnaire (CSEQ), and was designed to assess new student goals and motivations. By assessing student expectations of the college experience and discovering how, and with whom, they will spend their time, administrators can develop and implement programs and initiatives that can directly impact achievement and satisfaction with college.

The CSXQ provides information on topics of interest to all colleges and universities regarding new student expectations. The CSXQ consists of 101 questions that ask students to self-report expected levels of interaction with people, activities, and services on campus. The activities items on the CSXQ are divided into the following 11 categories, with the categories researched in this study indicated in bold:

- Library and Information Technology
- **Student Interactions with Faculty Members**

- Course Learning Activities
- Writing Experiences
- Campus Programs and Facilities
- **Clubs, Organizations, and Service Projects**
- Student Acquaintances
- Scientific and Quantitative Experiences
- Topics of Conversation
- Information in Conversations
- Amount of Reading and Writing.

Additionally, student perceptions of the college environment are gauged. The last section of the questionnaire collects background information.

### ***Reliability and Validity***

The psychometric properties of the instrument are sound as indicated by intercorrelations and the Cronbach's Alpha scores indicated in the tables below. According to Allen and Yen (2002), Cronbach's Alpha is a statistic that is commonly used in the traditional, Classical Test Theory-based evaluations of psychometric scales and is used as a measure of internal consistency or reliability. Internal consistency refers to the overall degree to which the items that make up a scale are intercorrelated (Allen & Yen, 2002).

The intercorrelations and the Cronbach's Alpha scores for the scales being used for this study, as reported by the Center for the Study of Postsecondary Research, were generated based on the analysis of more than 50,000 national records and are indicated in

in Tables 3 and 4. Table 3 below shows the intercorellations for Experiences with Faculty range from  $r = .24$  to  $r = .58$  with a Cronbach's Alpha score of .84. Table 4 below shows the intercorellations for Clubs, Organizations, Service Projects which range from  $r = .41$  to  $r = .66$  with a Cronbach's Alpha score of .85.

**Table 3: Cronbach's Alpha for Experiences with Faculty (National)**

	1	2	3	4	6	8	10
FAC1	1.00						
FAC2	0.58	1.00					
FAC3	0.46	0.56	1.00				
FAC4	0.39	0.56	0.57	1.00			
FAC6	0.24	0.34	0.36	0.43	1.00		
FAC8	0.40	0.46	0.49	0.48	0.41	1.00	
FAC10	0.30	0.38	0.44	0.41	0.43	0.48	1.00

Cronbach's  $\alpha = 0.84$

(Center for the Study of Postsecondary Research, Bloomington, 2010)

**Table 4: Cronbach's Alpha for Clubs, Organizations, Service Projects (National)**

	1	2	3	4	5
CLUBS1	1.00				
CLUBS2	0.66	1.00			
CLUBS3	0.41	0.49	1.00		
CLUBS4	0.47	0.55	0.47	1.00	
CLUBS5	0.49	0.57	0.53	0.60	1.00

Cronbach's  $\alpha = 0.85$

(Center for the Study of Postsecondary Research, Bloomington, 2010)

However, to verify the reliability of the survey for the population being studied, the Cronbach's Alpha scores were analyzed again with the results indicated in Tables 5 and 6. Table 5 below shows the intercorellations for Experiences with Faculty range from  $r = .20$  to  $r = .55$  with a Cronbach's Alpha score of .82. Table 6 below shows the intercorellations for Clubs, Organizations, Service Projects which range from  $r = .41$  to  $r$

= .63 with a Cronbach's Alpha score of .82. These results are consistent with the nationally obtained results.

Table 5: Cronbach's Alpha for Experiences with Faculty (USF)

	1	2	3	4	6	8	10
FAC1_	1.00						
FAC2_	0.55	1.00					
FAC3_	0.40	0.52	1.00				
FAC4_	0.36	0.52	0.54	1.00			
FAC6_	0.20	0.27	0.34	0.39	1.00		
FAC8_	0.40	0.42	0.43	0.44	0.36	1.00	
FAC10_	0.24	0.34	0.41	0.37	0.42	0.42	1.00

Cronbach's  $\alpha = 0.82$

Table 6: Cronbach's Alpha for Clubs, Organizations, Service Projects (USF)

	1	2	3	4	5
CLUBS1_	1.00				
CLUBS2_	0.63	1.00			
CLUBS3_	0.36	0.47	1.00		
CLUBS4_	0.40	0.48	0.41	1.00	
CLUBS5_	0.46	0.55	0.45	0.56	1.00

Cronbach's  $\alpha = 0.82$

This study focuses on student responses to the sections for Faculty-Student Interaction and for Clubs, Organizations, Service Projects, along with demographic data. Seven variables have been selected that provide insight into student expectations of faculty-student interaction. The seven questions ask the students to state the frequency of expected activities:

**FAC1\_** Ask your instructor for information related to a course you are taking (grades, make-up work, assignments, etc.)

**FAC2\_** Discuss your academic program or course selection with a faculty member.

**FAC3\_** Discuss ideas for a term paper or other class project with a faculty member

**FAC4\_** Discuss your career plans and ambitions with a faculty member

**FAC6\_** Socialize with a faculty member outside the classroom (have a snack or soft drink, etc.)

**FAC8\_** Ask your instructor for comments and criticisms about your academic performance

**FAC10\_** Work with a faculty member on a research project

Response options are coded using a Likert scale with scores of: very often (4), often (3), occasionally (2), and never (1). Each student's expected level of Faculty-Student Interaction score was the sum of his or her responses to the seven individual questions.

Five variables have been selected that provide insight into student expectations of involvement in clubs, organizations, and service projects. The five questions again ask the students to state the frequency of expected activities:

**CLUBS1\_** Attend a meeting of a campus club, organization, or student government group.

**CLUBS2\_** Work on a campus committee, student organization, or service project (publications, student government, special event, etc.).

**CLUBS3**\_Work on an off-campus committee, organization, or service project (civic group, church group, community event, etc.).

**CLUBS4**\_Meet with a faculty member or staff advisor to discuss the activities of a group or organization.

**CLUBS5**\_Manage or provide leadership for an organization or service project, on or off of the campus.

Response options are coded using a Likert scale with scores of: very often (4), often (3), occasionally (2), and never (1). Each student's expected level of Club Involvement score was the sum of his or her responses to the five individual questions.

These data are used to compare the expectations of students who have declared a major with those who chose the option of "Undecided" on the CSXQ. The Major variable on the CSXQ allows students to choose one of 23 different options, including "Other" and "Undecided". Only the option of "Undecided" was singled out as a separate population. The other 22 career-related majors (including "Other") were grouped into one population of Declared Majors (DM), as this study did not seek to determine if the type of major impacts student expectations.

While the administration of the CSXQ varies between institutions, each student completes the survey before the end of the first academic semester. Some institutions administer the questionnaire during orientation while others use introductory classes to contact students. Participation is voluntary and each individual school is responsible to their own Human Subjects Committees' guidelines. Therefore, the individuals distributing the survey vary between institutions.

### ***Data Collection Procedures***

As stated earlier, secondary data collected by the Director for Student Affairs Planning, Assessment and Evaluation was analyzed for this study. The data collection point occurred during the eight orientation sessions that occurred throughout the summer. Surveys were distributed and collected during a “Bull Breakout #2” session that occurred the morning of the second day of a two-day orientation. Completed instruments were entrusted to the Director for Student Affairs Planning, Assessment and Evaluation who scored and coded each instrument so that the researcher could not identify students. The Director also pulled academic data from the student information system for each survey with a student identification number (n=3,537).

### ***Data Analysis***

A statistical analysis of the data was completed using SPSS software. Descriptive statistics, such as variability, standard deviation, minimum/maximum values, skewness, and kurtosis are reported for all variables in this study.

Questions 1, 2, and 3: The methodology for data analysis consisted of a multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA) to examine any differences that may exist between declaration of major and the aggregate dependent variables of:

- a. students’ expected interactions with faculty as represented by the total of responses for all seven items this subsection of the CSXQ.
- b. students’ expected involvement in clubs and organizations as represented by the total of responses for all five items this subsection of the CSXQ.
- c. GPA (with a minimum of 12 credits attempted each semester Fall/Spring).



- d. Credit hours earned (with a minimum of 12 credits attempted each semester Fall/Spring)

MANOVA is a widely-used statistical procedure to test the hypothesis that one or more independent variables, or factors, have an effect on a set of two or more dependent variables. The analysis compares the amount of between-groups variance in individual's scores with the amount of within-groups variance when there is more than one dependent variable (Gall, Gall, & Borg, 2006).

Question 4: A Pearson chi-square test of independence will be used to test a relationship, if any, between the quantitative variables of declared major and persistence, and undeclared major and persistence. The Pearson chi-square test is the most common test for significance of the relationship between categorical variables.

### ***Summary***

The methodology of this study included both presentation of the design and setting in which the study will occur. Utilizing secondary data, the study includes analysis of the expectations of first time in college students at the University of South Florida. A data file from the Director for Student Affairs Planning, Assessment and Evaluation was obtained during in January 2012 and all statistical analyses were completed utilizing SPSS 19.0 software.

## **CHAPTER FOUR**

### **Analysis of Data**

This study was conducted to assess how first time in college (FTIC) students with undeclared majors differed from those with declared majors on expectations of experiences with faculty and involvement in clubs and organizations. Students completed the College Student Expectations Questionnaire as a part of their summer orientation experience. Additionally, aggregate data regarding the demographics of the population, GPA, credit hours earned, and persistence were provided by the USF Director for Student Affairs Planning, Assessment and Evaluation.

#### ***Survey Responses***

Upon analysis of the data, it was discovered that 318 students did not include a response for Major on the CSXQ inventory. These 318 students were removed from analysis resulting in useable data for 3,219 respondents. The 22 categories of major listed on the CSXQ do not always directly correspond to individual major codes at the University of South Florida. It is assumed that the students who did not provide a response for Major were unsure of how their chosen USF major corresponded to the CSXQ categories.

The categories listed on the CSXQ include: agriculture; biological/life science; business; communication; computer and information sciences; education; engineering;

ethnic, cultural, area studies; foreign language and literature; health-related fields; history; humanities; liberal general studies; mathematics; multi/interdisciplinary studies; parks recreation or sports management; physical sciences; pre-professional; public administration; social sciences; visual and performing arts; undecided; other. These categories were collapsed into “0” for undecided/undeclared and “1” for all others.

The following sections will consider the sample and demographic profile of the population and the analysis of the four research questions.

### ***Sample Population and Demographic Profile***

Demographic data were collected including gender, ethnicity, and high school GPA. The demographic analysis for the 3,219 respondents who indicated a major on the CSXQ is shown in Table 5 and included 1794 (55.7%) female students and 1425 (44.3%) male students. The undeclared students constituted 6% of the sample (n=197) and the declared students constituted 94% (n=3022). Since the sample of undeclared students in this study (6%) is lower than the national average (14.3%), admissions application major data were reviewed for the 3,537 who responded to the CSXQ. Results indicate that 588 students (16%) out of 3,537 identified as being undeclared, which corresponds to the national data. Since the data used in this study was received in aggregate, it is not possible to determine which of the 588 undeclared students did not indicate a major on the CSXQ (which would have eliminated them from the 3,219 students in the sample) or which may have identified a major between the completion of the admissions application and completion of the CSXQ.

The ethnic make-up of the respondents included 2096 (65.0%) Caucasian students, 527 (16.4%) Hispanic/Latino/Latina students, 224 (7.0%) Asian/Asian

American students, 311 (9.7%) Black/African American Students, and 62 (1.9%) students whose ethnicity is either unknown or unable to be reported for privacy reasons.

The tables below further dissect the gender and ethnicity data into the categorical variables of Undeclared and Declared majors. Table 7 shows the gender data and Table 8 shows the ethnicity data for the population of students who completed the major category on the CSXQ.

**Table 7: Gender by CSXQ Major**

	CSXQ_Major		Total
	Undeclared	Declared	
Unknown	0	2	2
Female	107	1683	1790
Male	90	1337	1427
Total	197	3022	3219

**Table 8: Ethnicity by CSXQ Major**

	Undeclared	Declared	Total
Unknown	3	51	54
Asian	11	222	233
Black/African American	16	292	308
Hispanic	26	504	530
White	141	1953	2094
Total	197	3022	3219

High school GPA data were collected to ensure that there were no significant discrepancies in pre-college academic performance that might skew the data for the students' college academic performance. The mean weighted high school GPA for Undeclared majors was a 3.71, the mean weighted GPA for Declared majors was 3.70, resulting in no statistically significant differences. The minimum weighted GPA for Undeclared students was 2.40 with a maximum of 4.69. The minimum weighted GPA for Declared students was 2.37 with a maximum of 4.87. Because high school GPA has

shown to be a more accurate predictor of college success than standardized test scores, analysis of SAT/ACT scores was not included in this study (Sedlacek, 2004).

**Table 9: HSGPA by CSXQ Major**

CSXQ Major	Mean	N	Std. Deviation	Med	Min	Max	Range	Variance	Kurtosis	Skewness
Undeclared	3.71	198	.40267	3.75	2.40	4.69	2.29	.162	-.106	-.258
Declared	3.70	3021	.41304	3.70	2.37	4.87	2.50	.171	-.271	-.001
Total	3.70	3219	.41236	3.71	2.37	4.87	2.50	.170	-.265	-.016

### ***Analysis of Research Questions***

Four questions were developed for this research, three of which were analyzed using an analysis of variation (MANOVA). The fourth was analyzed using a Chi-Square analysis. There are several assumptions which must be tested before the use of the MANOVA.

The assumption of cell sizes was not violated due to the large sample sizes. The assumption of dependence does not appear to be to be violated as students' answers on their surveys were a result of their own independent work and this research did not utilize a pre-test/post-test option.

The data were examined for homogeneity of the covariance matrices which was important because this study involved multivariate analysis of grouped data (Gall, et al., 2006). In order to test for the equality of the group covariance matrices, a Box's M test was conducted. Because Box's M is sensitive to violations of the assumption of normality, it is recommended that testing is conducted at the .001 level, especially when sample sizes are unequal. When the sample is sufficiently large, a nonsignificant value

means there is insufficient evidence that the matrices differ. The results of this analysis revealed no statistically significant differences in the covariance matrices,  $F(19.013, M\text{-test}) = 1.887, p = .042$ ).

Since there are multiple dependent variables, it is also required that their intercorrelations (covariances) are homogeneous across the cells of the design (Gall, et al., 2006). Wilks' Lambda is the ratio of within-groups sums of squares to the total sums of squares and is a measure of the percent of variance in the dependent variables that is not explained by differences in the level of the independent variable. Lambda varies between 1 and zero, with a goal of being near zero. A Lambda of 1.00 occurs when observed group means are equal (all the variance is explained by factors other than difference between those means), while a small lambda indicates that group means appear to differ. The associated significance value indicates whether the difference is significant (Gall, 2006).

A one-way MANOVA revealed a significant multivariate main effect for CSXQ Major, Wilks'  $\lambda = .989, F(5, 3190) = 6.99, p < .001, \text{partial } \epsilon^2 = .011$ . Power to detect the effect was .999. This result indicates that there are differences between declared and undeclared students when compared simultaneously on expectations of faculty interactions, expectations of involvement in clubs and organizations, cumulative GPA Spring 2009, credit hours earned Fall 2008, and credit hours earned Spring 2009. However, the multivariate partial  $\epsilon^2 = .011$  indicates that only 1% of multivariate variance of the dependent variables is associated with the group factor. This means that no conclusions can be drawn regarding the impact of major on these variables.

Given the significance of the overall test, albeit small, the univariate main effects test was performed to examine if significant differences existed on any of the individual variables between students with declared versus undeclared majors. Based on the results of the CSXQ Major data presented below, significant univariate main effects for Undeclared students were obtained for Student Faculty Interaction,  $F(1, 3217) = 16.83$ ,  $p < .000$ , partial  $\epsilon^2 = .005$ , power = .984; and Involvement in Clubs and Organizations,  $F(1, 3217) = 27.867$ ,  $p < .000$ , partial  $\epsilon^2 = .009$ , power = 1.0. However, the low effect sizes ( $\epsilon^2 = .005$  and  $\epsilon^2 = .009$ ) indicate that less than one percent of the variance can be attributed to declaration of major. This means that the differences in student expectations are influenced by factors other than being a declared or undeclared major. There were no significant differences found in number of credits achieved or in academic achievement between the two categories of major. The results are presented in the tables below.

**Table 10: Independent Variables MANOVA**

Source	Dependent Variable	Type III Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig	Partial Eta Squared	Observed Power <sup>b</sup>
CSXQ_ MAJOR	Sum of Clubs	289.918	1	289.918	27.867	.000	.009	1.000
	Sum of Faculty	240.418	1	240.418	16.834	.000	.005	.984
	Cumulative GPA Spring 2009	.038	1	.038	.100	.752	.000	.062
	Credit Hours Fall 2008	.062	1	.062	.008	.927	.000	.051
	Credit Hours Spring 2009	27.013	1	27.013	2.236	.135	.001	.321

Table 11: Independent Variables Means

	CSXQ Major	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Sum of Clubs	Undeclared	197	11.30	3.075	.219
	Declared	3004	12.56	3.234	.059
Sum of Faculty	Undeclared	196	17.33	3.740	.267
	Declared	3018	18.47	3.777	.069
Cumulative GPA Spring 2009	Undeclared	197	3.01	.63604	.04532
	Declared	3022	3.02	.61816	.01124
Credits Earned Fall 2008	Undeclared	197	13.12	2.541	.181
	Declared	3022	13.09	2.719	.049
Credits Earned Spring 2009	Undeclared	197	12.48	3.491	.249
	Declared	3022	12.85	3.477	.063

**Research Question 1.** Prior to matriculation, are there significant differences between declared and undeclared students' expectations for interactions with faculty members?

To answer this question, a MANOVA was conducted to compare the effect of being undeclared on students' expectations of involvement with faculty members based on their self-reported responses on the CSXQ.

The results indicated that there was a significant difference between declared and undeclared majors' expectations of involvement with faculty at the  $p < .05$  level,  $[F(1, 3212) = 16.82, p = .000; \text{partial } \epsilon^2 = .005]$ . Because the effect size was calculated at .005, which is extremely low, this means that the significant difference discovered in the means may be due to the large sample size and cannot be directly attributed to being undeclared. Although not statistically significant, the mean score for the undeclared students ( $\mu=17.33$ ) was slightly lower than the mean for the declared students ( $\mu=18.47$ ).



Source	Dependent Variable	Type III Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.	Partial Eta Squared	Observed Power <sup>b</sup>
CSXQ_ MAJOR	Sum of Faculty	240.418	1	240.418	16.834	.000	.005	.984

	CSXQ Major	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Sum of Faculty	Undeclared	196	17.33	3.740	.267
	Declared	3018	18.47	3.777	.069

**Research Question 2.** Prior to matriculation, are there significant differences between declared and undeclared students’ expectations for involvement in clubs and organizations?

To answer this question, a MANOVA was conducted to compare the effect of being undeclared on students’ expectations of involvement in clubs and organizations based on their self-reported responses on the CSXQ.

The results indicated that there was a significant difference between declared and undeclared majors’ expectations of involvement in clubs and organizations at the  $p < .05$  level,  $[F(1, 3199) = 27.84, p = .000, \text{partial } \epsilon^2 = .009]$ . Because the effect size was calculated at .009, which is extremely low, this means that the significant difference discovered in the means was most likely due to the large sample size and cannot be directly attributed to being undeclared. Although not statistically significant, the mean score for the undeclared students ( $\mu=11.30$ ) was slightly lower than the mean for the declared students ( $\mu=12.56$ ).

**Table 14: Independent Variables MANOVA – Clubs & Organizations**

Source	Dependent Variable	Type III Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.	Partial Eta Squared	Observed Power <sup>b</sup>
CSXQ_MAJOR	Sum of Clubs	289.918	1	289.918	27.867	.000	.009	1.000

**Table 15: Independent Variables Means – Clubs & Organizations**

	CSXQ Major	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Sum of Clubs	Undeclared	197	11.30	3.075	.219
	Declared	3004	12.56	3.234	.059

**Research Question 3.** Are there significant differences between declared and undeclared students in first year academic performance, as measured by GPA and credit hours earned?

To answer this question, a MANOVA was conducted to compare the effect of being undeclared on students' first year academic performance. The variables used for this test included the credits earned for Fall 2008, the credits earned for Spring 2009, and the cumulative GPA at the end of Spring 2009.

The results indicated that there was no statistically significant difference between declared and undeclared majors' academic performance as measured by credit hours earned at the end of Fall 2008 at the  $p < .05$  level [ $F(1, 3194) = .008, p = .927$ ], or the end of Spring 2009 at the  $p < .05$  level [ $F(1, 3194) = 2.23, p = .135$ ]. Both groups earned approximately 13 credits per term, for a total of approximately 26 credits for the academic year.

**Table 16: Independent Variables MANOVA – Academic Achievement**

Source	Dependent Variable	Type III Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.	Partial Eta Squared	Observed Power <sup>b</sup>
CSXQ_ MAJOR	Cumulative GPA Spring 2009	.038	1	.038	.100	.752	.000	.062
	Credit Hours Fall 2008	.062	1	.062	.008	.927	.000	.051
	Credit Hours Spring 2009	27.013	1	27.013	2.236	.135	.001	.321

**Table 17: Independent Variables Means – Academic Achievement**

	CSXQ Major	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Cumulative GPA Spring 2009	Undeclared	197	3.01	.63604	.04532
	Declared	3022	3.02	.61816	.01124
Credits Earned Fall 2008	Undeclared	197	13.12	2.541	.181
	Declared	3022	13.09	2.719	.049
Credits Earned Spring 2009	Undeclared	197	12.48	3.491	.249
	Declared	3022	12.85	3.477	.063

Nor was there a difference in academic performance as measured by the Spring 2009 cumulative GPA  $p < .05$  level [ $F(1, 3219) = .100, p = .752$ ]. Undeclared majors had a mean cumulative GPA of 3.01, while declared majors had a slightly higher GPA of 3.02. This result helps to support the research that being undeclared is not related to poor academic performance.

Although this result is contrary to a number of seminal studies which have framed the overriding perception of undeclared students, the result supports the more current and lesser known research on undeclared students and was, therefore, not surprising.

Academic success and motivation are apparently such individually driven characteristics and are often tied to significant core values that should not be influenced by a variable as fluid as choice of major. Additionally, many universities, USF included, have created

marketing campaigns and/or tuition structures which encourage students to complete 15 or more credits each semester. Therefore it is not surprising that the completed credit hours for these groups are the same.

**Research Question 4.** Are there significant differences between declared and undeclared students in the rate of first year persistence?

To answer this question, a Chi-Square analysis was conducted to determine if there were significant differences in the categorical variables of persistence (yes/no) and major (undeclared/declared). Although Undeclared students persisted at a rate (87.8%) lower than the Declared students (90.9%), the results of the chi-square analysis indicated that there was no statistical difference in persistence for students with undeclared majors compared to those with declared majors ( $\chi^2(1, N = 3,219) = 2.035, p = .154$ ).

This result also counters the overall perception that undeclared students are less committed to academic goals and are at higher risk of attrition than their declared counterparts. It is a surprising result, however, since USF reported a six-year graduation rate of 48% for the 2001 cohort. The students are being lost in the system at some point, therefore it was expected that being undeclared might be a factor which contributes to the high attrition rate.

Table 18: Persistence to the 2<sup>nd</sup> Year

	Persistence		Total
	No	Yes	
Undeclared	24	173	197
Declared	276	2746	3022
Total	300	2919	3219

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**Table 19: Persistence Crosstabulation**

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		Persistence		Total
		No	Yes	
Undeclared	Count	24	173	197
	% within CSXQ Major	12.2%	87.8%	100.0%
Declared	Count	276	2746	3022
	% within CSXQ Major	9.1%	90.9%	100.0%
Total	Count	300	2919	3219
	% within CSXQ Major	9.3%	90.7%	100.0%

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### *Summary*

The purpose of this chapter was to analyze the results using statistical techniques consistent with the research questions. The study sought answers to four research questions through statistical analysis of self-reported data on the College Student Expectations Questionnaire (CSXQ), as well as analysis of gender, ethnicity, and high school GPA. Chapter 5 will present a summary of the results, the limitations of the study, implications for practice, and recommendations for future research.

## CHAPTER FIVE

### Conclusions and Recommendations

#### *Summary of Findings*

There were two main goals of this research. The first goal was to determine if students who identified as “undeclared” in their choice of major held different expectations than their “declared” counterparts for two key aspects of the college experience: interactions with faculty and involvement in clubs and organizations. Research shows (Howard, 2005; Kuh, 1999, Tinto, 1973) that what students generally expect to have happen when they start college will actually shape their behavior. These expectations, therefore, have the ability to affect academic performance and social integration, as well as persistence. Astin’s Inputs-Environment-Outcomes research is widely supported and this research attempted to further his theory that student *Inputs* impact student *Outcomes* and has implications for how higher education administrators shape the environment based on those inputs.

The second goal was to determine if students who identified as “undeclared” in their choice of major persisted to the sophomore year at levels different than “declared” students, or had higher levels of achievement as measured by first year GPA and credit hours earned. Although the perception has been that undeclared students are at higher risk of attrition and low academic performance, more current research has found evidence to the contrary. Much of the research upon which the perception is based (Astin, 1975;

Noel, Levitz, Saluri, 1985) is highly respected, however, it was also conducted and published 20-30 years ago. Today's generation of students has very different life experiences and perceptions of college, career, and societal expectations than previous generations. Today's institutions also have different expectations regarding when a student should declare a major. It is worthwhile to continue analyzing these perceptions of various subpopulations to see if they hold true today or if it is time to change the perceptions.

The study was conducted with first-time in college students at the University of South Florida who responded to the College Student Expectations Questionnaire during their summer orientation experience. This chapter will explore the findings of each research question and discuss the limitations of the study, implications for practice, and recommendations for future research.

### ***Research Question 1***

Prior to matriculation, are there significant differences between declared and undeclared students' expectations for interactions with faculty members?

To answer this question, the each student's responses for the seven items on the CSXQ subscale of "Experiences with Faculty" were combined into one sum score. The mean sum of scores for undeclared students ( $\mu=17.33$ ) were compared with the mean sum of scores for declared students ( $\mu=18.47$ ). Although the results indicate that there was a statistically significant difference between declared and undeclared majors' expectations of involvement with faculty at the  $p<.01$  level [ $F(1, 3212) = 16.82, p = .000$ ], the effect size was low (.009) indicating that the significant difference cannot be directly attributed to the declaration of major. Although not statistically significant, the mean score for the

undeclared students was slightly lower than the mean for the declared students, indicating that undeclared students may have lower levels of expectations for engaging with faculty than declared students. However, it is likely that there are multiple factors beyond the major which are contributing to that lowered level of expectation.

In a review of national CSXQ and CSEQ data, Kuh (2005) found that student expectations often surpass their actual experiences. For example, he discovered that 77 percent of students reported that they expect to “frequently” ask faculty for information about the course, but only 54 percent actually did so. If undeclared students are expecting lower levels of interaction with faculty than their declared peers, then it is likely that their actual experiences will be even lower than predicted. With key researchers (Astin, 1993, Kuh, 2005, Tinto, 1993) all agreeing that student-faculty interactions are an important factor in the student success model, the expectations of any subpopulation of students are an area worthy of exploration.

Although this research study did not find that the differences in undeclared and declared students’ expectations for faculty interaction are statistically significance, continuing to explore student expectations of, and experiences with, faculty would help institutions discover which populations of students, if any, are experiencing dissonance in their expectations and their experiences. If a student is hesitant to approach a faculty member, he or she may not receive the academic support, guidance, or campus connection that is needed to be successful. Additionally, the results of this study may not be generalizable to the FTIC undeclared students at other institutions, so lack of statistical significance should be viewed cautiously.



## ***Research Question 2***

Prior to matriculation, are there significant differences between declared and undeclared students' expectations for involvement in clubs and organizations?

To answer this question, each student's responses for the five items on the CSXQ subscale of "Clubs, Organizations, and Service Projects" were combined into one sum score. The mean sum of scores for undeclared students ( $\mu=11.30$ ) were compared with the mean sum of scores for declared students ( $\mu=12.56$ ). The results indicated that there was a significant difference between declared and undeclared majors' expectations of involvement in clubs and organizations at the  $p<.001$  level [ $F(1, 3199) = 27.84, p = .000$ ]. However, since the effect size was low (.005), the significance cannot be attributed directly to declaration of major.

Although not statistically significant, the mean score for the undeclared students was slightly lower than the mean for the declared students. This could indicate that undeclared students have lower levels of expectations for involvement in clubs, organizations, and service projects than declared students. However, it is likely that there are multiple factors beyond major which are contributing to that lowered level of expectation.

Paul and Brier (2001) found that that attaching to a significant other or peer group influences one's identity and sense of self and is the factor that is most predictive of student success and retention. Those who seek out and build large social networks have better coping mechanisms and a more successful college adjustment. This research shows that although undeclared students have somewhat lower levels of expectations than their declared peers, it is not statistically significant. Therefore, it cannot be

assumed that undeclared students are any less likely to seek out that peer group.

However, it would first need to be explored what other factors are contributing to the lowered expectation levels since the difference cannot be attributed solely to being undeclared.

It is important again to note that USF had a 2007-08 first year retention rate of 81% with a significant first year programming curriculum. It could be assumed, based on the high retention rate, that student expectations are being met during that first year of college. It is worth continued exploration of student expectations to determine if the differences in expectations of the undeclared student become statistically significant at the sophomore or junior level, especially in light of the 48% 6-year graduation rate (2008). The study of student expectations and their impact on college outcomes is still relatively new, so there are multiple opportunities available to continue this line of research.

### ***Research Question 3***

Are there significant differences between declared and undeclared students in first year academic performance, as measured by GPA and credit hours earned?

To answer this question, student credit hours for the Fall 2008 and Spring 2009 semesters were analyzed, along with the cumulative GPA at the end of Spring 2009. The results indicated that there was no statistically significant difference between declared and undeclared majors' academic performance as measured by credit hours earned at the end of Fall 2008 at the  $p < .05$  level [ $F(1, 3194) = .008, p = .927$ ], or the end of Spring 2009 at the  $p < .05$  level [ $F(1, 3194) = 2.23, p = .135$ ]. Both groups earned approximately 13 credits per term, for a total of approximately 26 credits for the academic year.

Nor was there a difference in academic performance as measured by the Spring 2009 cumulative GPA  $p < .05$  level [ $F(1, 3194) = .100, p = .752$ ]. Undeclared majors had a mean cumulative GPA of 3.01, while declared majors had a slightly higher GPA of 3.02. This result is important in that it helps support the research which indicates that being undeclared is not related to poor academic performance (Frost, 1991; Lewallen, 1993, 1995; Graunke, et al, 2006).

There are few current studies available (Frost, 1991; Lewallen, 1993, 1995; Graunke, 2006) which provide counter arguments for the long-standing perceptions that undeclared students are less likely to have academic success than their declared counterparts. However, considering that much of the research that forms the negative perceptions of undeclared students was published 20-30 years ago, it is time for researchers to begin reviewing and replicating these older studies. It may be that being undeclared in today's society does not mean the same thing as it did for previous generations.

Many universities, USF included, also have campaigns or tuition structures which encourage students to complete fifteen or more credit hours each semester. Therefore measuring student achievement by credit hours earned may not be an accurate assessment of student achievement, especially in the first year of college. Both GPA and student credit hours may become more accurate assessment variables after the sophomore or junior year.

#### ***Research Question 4***

Are there significant differences between declared and undeclared students in the rate of first year persistence?

To answer this question, a Chi-Square analysis was conducted to determine if there were statistically significant differences in the categorical variables of persistence (yes/no) and major (undeclared/declared). Although Undeclared students persisted at a rate (87.8%) lower than the Declared students (90.9%), the results of the chi-square analysis indicated that there was no statistical difference in persistence for students with undeclared majors compared to those with declared majors ( $\chi^2(1, N = 3,219) = 2.035, p = .154$ ). Again, this result helps to dispel the long held belief that being undeclared relates to higher levels of attrition (Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005).

It is important to note again that USF reported a 2007 first year retention rate of 81% and a 2008 6-year graduation rate of 48%. If being undeclared is not a factor in the attrition rate, additional research is needed to find out which factors are significant. Exploring high-risk majors, such as those in STEM (science, technology, engineering, mathematics) fields may produce more statistically significant results or, it is possible, that major is not at all a contributing factor to the attrition rate.

### ***Limitations***

As indicated in Chapter One, several limitations for this study were identified. Additional limitations became apparent as the research unfolded.

The study was limited to students from one large public university in Florida who attended orientation during the Summer 2008 semester. This allows for limited generalization. It may be appropriate to generalize these results only to other large, public, metropolitan universities who have similar academic profiles and first year retention rates.

The study was limited to the 86% of the 2008 FTIC students who completed the College Student Expectations Questionnaire (CSXQ) during their orientation experience and provided their student identification numbers, granting permission to connect their questionnaires to their student records.

The incomplete data generated by students who opted to not select a major category on the CSXQ survey reduced the sample to 78% of the 2008 FTIC students and created some challenges with understanding the quality of the student responses for the category of major. Realizing that students may not be able translate their choice of major into a predefined category such as “pre-professional” generated a perception that the incomplete major data from the CSXQ may not provide the full picture. The incomplete data also contributed to the sample of undeclared students in this study (6% of the population) being lower than the level of undeclared students found in national statistics (14.1%).

Additionally, the population of 3,219 students who were analyzed in this study may have some characteristics that are different than the 819 students who were excluded from the 2008 cohort. The retention rate of the 3,219 students analyzed in this study was approximately 89%, however, the overall retention rate reported by USF for the Fall 2008 cohort was 86%. Had the 819 students been included in this study, the statistical significance of the results may have been different.

### ***Implications for Practice***

The idea for this study was generated with the concept of discovering information that could be used by academic advisors, orientation staff, and first-year experience faculty to improve their interactions with undeclared students, based on the perceptions

of those students predominant in the literature. This research does not support the long-standing perceptions that undeclared students exhibit lower levels of academic performance and are less likely to persist. This research also fails to support the hypothesis that the expectations of undeclared students (inputs) are related to one or more of the outcomes (persistence, credit hours, GPA).

If undeclared students' are persisting and achieving at rates similar to their declared peers, are resources being appropriately allocated to address the needs of the USF student population? Additionally, if student expectations are not contributing to attrition rates after the first year, than what are the significant factors that lead to attrition?

The University of South Florida has steadily increased the academic profile of the incoming class of freshmen each year. The profile of the Fall 2008 cohort includes an average SAT score of 1166 (1.5% increase from previous year), an average ACT score of 26 (4% increase), and an average high school GPA of 3.75 (0.8% increase). They also boasted an 81% overall FTIC retention rate in 2007 (88% in 2010) (USF InfoCenter, 2012), which is higher than the national average for other four-year public institutions (74%) (ACT, 2012). It is possible that the academic profile of the students is related to the academic achievement and persistence of the undeclared students, regardless of their expectations. However, since USF reported a six-year graduation rate of 48% for the 2001 cohort, the students are being lost in the system at some point.

USF has considerable levels of programming and a high frequency of touch points for first year students, therefore, it may be the sophomore or junior year experiences which are in need of review. Intentional and intrusive advising, career development

programs, identity development discussions, and significant academic support, are all infused into the first year curriculum, but if they are not continued into the second and third year, the net effects of the initial interventions may be lost (as evidenced by the low graduation rates).

Intrusive Advising (Earl, 1987) is a model of proactive academic advising that involves discovering the core issue of what might be causing difficulty for a student and recommending an appropriate intervention *before* a student spirals into a situation that may not be possible to fix (Upcraft & Kramer, 1995). Merging the best practices of prescriptive advising (university expertise, communication of programmatic needs) with developmental advising (addressing the holistic aspect of the student), creates a dynamic that allows students to be intervened with at crisis points (Earl, 1987). These crisis points continue beyond the first year, so should the intrusive advising.

Heisserer and Parette (2002) stated that “the only variable that has a direct effect on student persistence is the quality of a relationship with a significant member of the college community” (p. 72). Light (2001) stated that for some students, the single biggest contribution an advisor can make is to encourage the students to join a campus organization or group that will give them social and personal support. Additionally, Kuh (2005) found through NSSE data that the quality of academic advising is the single most powerful predictor of overall student satisfaction. Students who rate their advising as good or excellent are more likely to “interact with faculty in various ways, perceive the institution’s environment to be more supportive overall, are more satisfied with their overall college experience, and report they gain more from college in most areas” (Kuh, 2005, p. 92).

Understanding that some students (declared or not) may have lower expectations of connecting to the institution can help college and university administrators, faculty, and advisors engage with them in more proactive and meaningful ways. Cuseo (2005) stated that by adding an academic and career planning course to the curriculum, or by including the topic as a significant component of a first-year experience seminar, students will learn to make the connections between their college experiences and their future academic goals. In light of the outcomes of this research, however, the bigger question is, what about the second year of college? Or the third? It could be possible that universities are front-loading all of the identity development and career planning components into the first year and then not revisiting them as the student matures.

This research shows that undeclared students may not need (or expect) different levels of intervention than their declared peers. It appears that differences in expectations of the college experience are tied to factors beyond major (e.g. gender, ethnicity, socio-economic status, first generation, etc.), or they could be tied to chosen career paths (e.g. business vs. engineering vs. pre-med). Until researchers have explored the full spectrum of expectations of various subpopulations on a variety of outcomes, there are few definitive statements that can be made as a result.

However, since institutions find increased retention and graduation rates among those small student subpopulations where there are high levels of contact (athletes, honors, Trio, etc.), those programs should be used as models for the general student population. Analyzing and helping students adjust their expectations at every transition point in their college journey can help them better connect to faculty, university



personnel, and their peers, while also allowing the students to continue the development of a support network for career exploration.

### ***Recommendations for Future Research***

Several of the findings of this study did not prove to be intuitive and did not resonate with existing literature on undeclared students or student expectations of the college experience. The lack of statistically significant results do make this an interesting study, however, and opens additional avenues of research that are worthy of attention. Based on the findings generated by this research, there are several recommendations that would help future researchers continue to develop an understanding of student expectations, as well as those who enter colleges and universities as “undeclared.”

1. Realizing that college students may not have an understanding of how their intended major fits into a more broadly defined category such as “pre-professional,” it is recommended that future researchers assign specific institutional majors to the major fields indicated on the CSXQ instrument. By providing students with a key regarding how their intended major, as defined by that particular institution, fits into the CSXQ categories, the researcher will collect more robust and complete data.
2. The declaration of major is a fluid process since students have multiple points throughout the college admission, matriculation, and enrollment process to declare and, subsequently, change their majors. At which point in a student’s academic journey is the “undeclared” category of student most accurate and representative of the student’s true mindset? For this study, the major category indicated on the CSXQ was used, however, it is recommended that future

researchers consider using major data from other key points in the academic journey (i.e., admissions application, first semester, end of first year, end of sophomore year, etc.).

3. It was determined that being undeclared created some differences in students' expectations of their college experiences in relation to faculty interactions and involvement in clubs and organizations. It would be interesting to determine if these differences were also present (and more statistically significant) on the remaining nine categories of the CSXQ. Determining if expectations differed for all categories would provide an enhanced understanding of the extent to which programming for, and interactions with, undeclared students should be adjusted.
4. Although there were no statistically significant differences found in the persistence, credit hours earned, or GPA after the first year, the long-term effects of being undeclared were not researched. Future research might consider if there is a difference in the graduation rates and/or final GPAs of students who begin their academic career as "undeclared."
5. Expanding this into a longitudinal study of this particular population would help the University determine if the expectations of the undeclared students manifested in academic performance and/or persistence at the sophomore or junior level. It would also be interesting to see how many students from this FTIC cohort who graduate at the four-year or six-year mark began their academic careers as an undeclared student.
6. Recreating this study with larger populations at different types of institutions is also recommended. Students who attend a liberal arts institution might feel more

comfortable identifying as “undeclared,” whereas students at a Research I institution with a reputation for prominent fields of study might feel less inclined to identify as such.

7. Additionally, adding a qualitative component to this study would help to provide a more complete picture of the students’ mindsets with both the selection of a major and the expectations of the college experience. This could be conducted with focus groups at the end of orientation, between orientation and matriculation, or shortly after matriculation.
8. This study analyzed the persistence of students by the major categories of undeclared and declared. However, it would be interesting to analyze the expectations of students who did not persist against those who did persist, regardless of major category, to determine if persisters have higher expectations than non-persisters.
9. Since no statistically significant differences were found in the expectations of undeclared students, it would be interesting to analyze if there is a difference in satisfaction or involvement (experience) levels (as measured by instruments such as the CSEQ or NSSE) of students who began their academic career as “undeclared.”

Although the research on undeclared students dates back more than 70 years, much of the research is outdated and, based on this research, the perceptions may no longer stand true. There are multiple new avenues to explore to better understand this population of students. The number and complexity of academic majors continues to

increase as society and technology changes, and it may become even more challenging for students to decide on and commit to just one academic major during their college experience. Additionally, each generation of college students has different expectations of the college experience which should be fully explored.

### ***Concluding Remarks***

This quantitative study was intended to advance the understanding of undeclared students' expectations of two key aspects of the college experience: interactions with faculty and involvement in clubs and organizations. By examining the differences in expectations held by students who identify as undeclared and those who identify as declared, institutions of higher education can examine whether their current programs are best meeting the needs of this particular population of students. This study revealed some differences in the expectations of undeclared students, but no conclusions can be drawn regarding whether the differences can be attributed directly to declaration status.

Additionally, this study examined academic achievement as measured by completion of credit hours, achieved GPA, and persistence to the sophomore year. Some research has demonstrated that career indecision among students and delays in choosing a major are often significant factors in a student's decision to withdraw from college. However, finding that there were no significant differences in the academic performance or persistence of the undeclared students in this study raises questions about the previously held beliefs that undeclared students are more prone to attrition and decreased levels of academic performance, at least in terms of first-year academic performance.

Theories of student retention and social integration, as posited by Astin, were used as the theoretical framework for this study. More specifically, Astin's inputs-

environment-outcomes theory hypothesizes that students enter the institution with a set of inputs which include demographics, student background, skills, knowledge and previous experiences, all of which inform student expectations of the college experience. This research provided no statistical evidence that the inputs in this study (expectations and intended major) had any direct impact on the outcomes (persistence, credits achieved, GPA). However, based on the literature regarding student expectations and the research that indicates lowered expectations can become a self-fulfilling prophecy for experiences, it is believed that the expectations of any population of students should be taken seriously and addressed accordingly.

Colleges and universities have an obligation to understand the students who are admitted to their institutions and develop services and programs to meet the needs of those students so they persist to graduation. Although there is no one theory or model than can completely explain student attrition from a particular institution, by continuing to develop an understanding of why students leave college, institutions are better positioned develop strategies and programs to aid in the retention all populations of students.

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## **APPENDICES**



# College Student Expectations Questionnaire

**Welcome!**

You have not yet experienced life as a student here. But you have some ideas about how you will spend your time, what you will be doing and so forth. We are interested in these ideas. More specifically, what do you expect to do this year as a student? Please complete the items on the following few pages in a way that answers this question. It takes less than 15 minutes to complete this survey.

Your responses are confidential. Keep in mind that the questionnaire will be read by an electronic scanning device, so be careful in marking your responses. Please use a #2 black lead pencil. Marks made by ink pens cannot be scanned. Do not write or make any marks on the questionnaire outside the spaces for your answers. Erase cleanly any responses you want to change.

The benefits from this or any other survey depend on the thoughtful responses of those who are asked to help. Your willingness to participate is very important and very much appreciated. Thank you!

## COLLEGE ACTIVITIES

**DIRECTIONS:** During the coming year in college, how often do you expect to do the following? Indicate your response by filling in one of the circles to the right of each statement.

	Very Often	Often	Occasionally	Never		Very Often	Often	Occasionally	Never
<b>Library and Information Technology</b>					<b>Experiences with Faculty (cont'd.)</b>				
Use the library as a quiet place to read or study.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Discuss ideas for a term paper or other class project with a faculty member.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Use an index or database (computer, card catalog, etc.) to find material on some topic.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Discuss your career plans and ambitions with a faculty member.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Read assigned materials other than textbooks in the library (reserve readings, etc.).	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Socialize with a faculty member outside the classroom (have a snack or soft drink, etc.)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Develop a bibliography or set of references for a term paper or other report.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Ask your instructor for comments and criticisms about your academic performance.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Use a computer or word processor to prepare reports or papers.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Work with a faculty member on a research project.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Use e-mail to communicate with an instructor or classmates.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<b>Course Learning</b>				
Participate in class discussions using an electronic medium (e-mail, list-serve, chat group, etc.).	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Complete the assigned readings before class.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Search the World Wide Web or Internet for information related to a course.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Take detailed notes during class.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Use a computer to retrieve materials from a library not at this institution.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Contribute to class discussions.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
					Try to see how different facts and ideas fit together.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
<b>Experiences with Faculty</b>					Apply material learned in a class to other areas (a job or internship, other courses, relationships with friends, family, co-workers, etc.).	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Ask your instructor for information related to a course you are taking (grades, make-up work, assignments, etc.).	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Summarize major points and information from your readings or class notes.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Discuss your academic program or course selection with a faculty member.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Use information or experience from other areas of your life (job, internship, interactions with others) in class discussions or assignments.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
					Explain material from a course to someone else (another student, friend, co-worker, family member).	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
					Prepare a paper or project where you had to integrate ideas from various sources.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>



Appendix A: College Student Expectations Questionnaire (CSXQ) - Continued

**DIRECTIONS:** During the coming year in college, how often do you expect to do the following? Indicate your response by filling in one of the circles to the right of each statement.

	Very Often	Often	Occasionally	Never
<b>Writing</b>				
Ask other people to read something you wrote to see if it is clear to them.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Refer to a book or manual about writing style, grammar, etc.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Revise a paper or composition two or more times before you are satisfied with it.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Ask an instructor or staff member for advice and help to improve your writing.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Write a major report for a class (20 pages or more).	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
<b>Campus Facilities</b>				
Go to an art exhibit/gallery or a play, dance, or other theater performance, on or off campus.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Attend a concert or other music event.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Use a campus lounge to relax or study by yourself.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Meet other students at some campus location (campus center, etc.) for a discussion.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Attend a lecture or panel discussion.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Use a learning lab or center to improve study or academic skills (reading, writing, etc.).	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Use recreational facilities (pool, fitness equipment, courts, etc.).	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Play a team sport (intramural, club, intercollegiate).	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Follow a regular schedule of exercise or practice for some recreational or sporting activity.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
<b>Clubs, Organizations, Service Projects</b>				
Attend a meeting of a campus club, organization, or student government group.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Work on a campus committee, student organization, or service project (publications, student government, special event, etc.).	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Work on an off-campus committee, organization, or service project (civic group, church group, community event, etc.).	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Meet with a faculty member or staff advisor to discuss the activities of a group or organization.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Manage or provide leadership for an organization or service project, on or off the campus.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
<b>Student Acquaintances</b>				
Make friends with students whose interests are different from yours.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Make friends with students whose family background (economic, social) is different from yours.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Make friends with students whose race or ethnic background is different from yours.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Have serious discussions with students whose philosophy of life or personal values are very different from yours.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Have serious discussions with students whose religious beliefs are very different from yours.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

	Very Often	Often	Occasionally	Never
<b>Student Acquaintances (cont'd)</b>				
Have serious discussions with students whose political opinions are very different from yours.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Have serious discussions with students whose race or ethnic identification is very different from yours.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
<b>Scientific and Quantitative Experiences</b>				
Memorize formulas, definitions, technical terms and concepts.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Express a set of relationships using mathematical terms.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Explain your understanding of some scientific or mathematical theory, principle, or concept to someone else (classmate, co-worker, etc.).	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Read articles about scientific or mathematical theories or concepts in addition to those assigned for a class.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Complete an experiment or project using scientific methods.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

**CONVERSATIONS**

**DIRECTIONS:** In conversations with others at college during the coming school year, how often do you expect to talk about each of the following?

	Very Often	Often	Occasionally	Never
Current events in the news.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Social issues such as peace, justice, human rights, equality, race relations.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Different lifestyles, customs, and religions.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
The ideas and views of writers, philosophers, historians.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
The arts (painting, poetry, theatrical productions, dance, symphony, movies, etc.).	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Science (theories, experiments, methods, etc.).	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Computers and other technologies.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Social and ethical issues related to science and technology such as energy, pollution, chemicals, genetics, military use.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
The economy (employment, wealth, poverty, debt, trade, etc.).	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
International relations (human rights, free trade, military activities, political differences, etc.).	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

**DIRECTIONS:** In these conversations, how often do you expect to do each of the following?

	Very Often	Often	Occasionally	Never
Refer to knowledge you acquired in your reading or classes.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Explore different ways of thinking about a topic or issue.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Refer to something one of your instructors said about a topic or issue.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>



Appendix A: College Student Expectations Questionnaire (CSXQ) - Continued

**CONVERSATIONS, cont.**

**DIRECTIONS:** In these conversations, how often do you expect to do each of the following?

	Never	
	Occasionally	
	Often	
	Very Often	
Subsequently read something related to the topic or issue.	○ ○ ○ ○ ○	
Change your opinion as a result of the knowledge or arguments presented by others.	○ ○ ○ ○ ○	
Persuade others to change their minds as a result of the knowledge or arguments you cited.	○ ○ ○ ○ ○	

**READING/WRITING**

During the coming school year, about how much reading and writing do you expect to do? Fill in one response for each item listed below.

	More than 20	
	Between 11 and 20	
	Between 5 and 10	
	Fewer than 5	
	None	
Non-assigned books	○ ○ ○ ○ ○	
Textbooks or assigned books	○ ○ ○ ○ ○	
Term papers or other written reports	○ ○ ○ ○ ○	
Essay exams for your courses	○ ○ ○ ○ ○	

**OPINION ABOUT COLLEGE**

How well do you think you will like college?

- I will be enthusiastic about it.
- I will like it.
- I will be more or less neutral about it.
- I won't like it.

**THE COLLEGE ENVIRONMENT**

During the coming year, to what extent do you feel that each of the following will be emphasized at this institution? Fill in the circle that best represents your impression on each of the following rating scales.

Emphasis on developing academic, scholarly, and intellectual qualities  
**Strong emphasis** (7) (6) (5) (4) (3) (2) (1) **Weak emphasis**

Emphasis on developing aesthetic, expressive, and creative qualities  
**Strong emphasis** (7) (6) (5) (4) (3) (2) (1) **Weak emphasis**

Emphasis on developing critical, evaluative, and analytical qualities  
**Strong emphasis** (7) (6) (5) (4) (3) (2) (1) **Weak emphasis**

Emphasis on developing an understanding and appreciation of human diversity  
**Strong emphasis** (7) (6) (5) (4) (3) (2) (1) **Weak emphasis**

Emphasis on developing information literacy skills (using computers, other information resources)  
**Strong emphasis** (7) (6) (5) (4) (3) (2) (1) **Weak emphasis**

Emphasis on developing vocational and occupational competence  
**Strong emphasis** (7) (6) (5) (4) (3) (2) (1) **Weak emphasis**

Emphasis on the personal relevance and practical value of your courses  
**Strong emphasis** (7) (6) (5) (4) (3) (2) (1) **Weak emphasis**

The next three ratings refer to relationships among people at this college. To what extent do you feel that each of the following will be emphasized?

Friendly, Supportive, Sense of belonging (7) (6) (5) (4) (3) (2) (1) Relationships with other students or student groups (7) (6) (5) (4) (3) (2) (1) Competitive, Uninvolved, Sense of alienation (7) (6) (5) (4) (3) (2) (1)

Approachable, Helpful, Understanding, Encouraging (7) (6) (5) (4) (3) (2) (1) Relationships with faculty members (7) (6) (5) (4) (3) (2) (1) Remote, Discouraging, Unsympathetic (7) (6) (5) (4) (3) (2) (1)

Helpful, Considerate, Flexible (7) (6) (5) (4) (3) (2) (1) Relationships with administrative personnel and offices (7) (6) (5) (4) (3) (2) (1) Rigid, Impersonal, Bound by regulations (7) (6) (5) (4) (3) (2) (1)

**BACKGROUND INFORMATION**

**DIRECTIONS:** Indicate your response by filling in the appropriate circle next to the correct answer.

**Age**  
 19 or younger     24-29     40-55  
 20-23     30-39     Over 55

**Sex**  
 Male     Female

Are you beginning college here or did you transfer here from another institution?  
 starting here  
 transferred from another institution

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### ***About the Author***

Lorie Anne Kittendorf received a B.A. in Visual Communications with a minor in American Sign Language from the University of South Florida in 1994, and an M.Ed. in College Student Affairs from the University of South Florida in 1999. She held administrative positions at the University of South Florida in the office of the Vice President for Student Affairs and as a program coordinator for the College Student Affairs M.Ed. program. She also held positions in academic advising for both elementary and early childhood students and for the School of Mass Communications, and worked in the departments of Housing & Residential Education and New Student Connections. Additionally, she has more than 13 years of experience teaching first-year experience courses. Lorie currently serves as the Director of Student Success at The University of Tampa.