Dynamics that Influence Current Student Retention of Students Who Have Transferred

Capstone Project

Presented in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for

The Master of Education Degree in the

College of Education and Human Service Professions

By

Heather M Rondeau
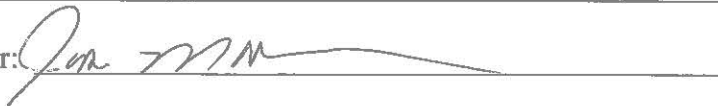

University of Minnesota Duluth

June 2017

Committee Signatures:

Chair: _____

Member: _____

Graduate Program Director: _____

Acknowledgements

Abstract

The purpose of this study was to describe the experiences of current students who have transferred from a community college over a two-year period of time. Three students were interviewed one-on-one for sixty minutes at a four-year, medium sized, regional, comprehensive, public university in the upper Mid-west region of the United States. Four themes emerged across the three participants' experiences at the four-year university which were: support, both academically and socially; financial aid which includes FAFSA and scholarships; transfer credits and the transfer credit policies that influence how credits transfer; and connections to faculty, students, and staff on the four-year university campus. The present study found that although Tinto's (1993, 2012) theories on student retention have similarities, there are differences between the experiences of first-year students at a university and students who have transferred. To ensure the retention of students who have transferred, different methods and techniques should be considered by practitioners and administrators when creating retention plans.

Table of Contents

Chapter One

Introduction

How does a student define success? For some students, their success is defined by the attainment of a baccalaureate degree from a four-year college or university. However, for certain students there are obstacles that stand in the way of this goal of baccalaureate degree completion. Obstacles that students face may look different, but ultimately the goal of each institution of higher education is to assist students in reaching their goals of degree completion. To assist students in reaching their goals, institutions of higher education have started to look more closely at student retention to ensure that students persist and graduate. Transfer students are often forgotten in retention efforts, but in recent years, transfer students have become a more important piece of retention efforts as more students are choosing to attend more than one post-secondary institution during their undergraduate academic career.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this qualitative study was to describe the dynamics experienced by current students who have transferred and the relation of these experiences to their persistence to graduation for students who have transferred from a two-year institution to a medium size, comprehensive, four-year, public university.

Background and Significance of the Study

The retention of transfer students is a relatively new topic in higher education as high school enrollment declines and the cost of college tuition increases. Retention efforts have been historically focused on first-year students due to the fact that those students pay tuition for the full four years of college and traditionally most students would go to a four-year university and

graduate from that same four-year university. Some high school students today though are choosing to start their college education at a two-year college to save money on tuition and then when they decide to pursue a baccalaureate degree program, will then choose to transfer to a four-year institution to complete that degree. The trend for students is not always a two-year to four-year transfer process though. There are also students who transfer from one four-year institution to another four-year institution. For the present study; however, the focus was on the two-year to four-year transfer students only.

According to Townsend and Wilson (2006), there is an abundance of literature that alludes to the importance of what is referred to as a seamless transfer process or a process of transferring without the loss of credits. Admissions will go and recruit a student from a community college, but once the admissions process is complete, students want to ensure their transfer credits count for degree requirements that are meaningful. Can those students not only persist at the institution to which they transferred, but can the institution also support them to graduation in a timely manner? Some students cannot afford to retake classes or waste time due to their financial situations such as running out of financial aid or scholarship eligibility. Therefore, institutional policy on transfer credit acceptance can have a huge impact on the retention of current students who have transferred.

According to Lane, Martin, and Henson (2015), researchers now have an opportunity to use a tool such as the University Attachment Scale (UAS; France, Finney, & Swerdzewski, 2010) with transfer students to see their level of engagement both socially and academically. The UAS can also show how this level of engagement affects a current student's persistence at the institution they transferred to, as well as their path to baccalaureate degree completion. According to Lester, Leonard, and Mathias (2013), more research is needed on the centrality of

engagement among transfer students, as well as the difference in engagement between students who are part-time and students who are full-time. However, for the present study, the focus will be on full-time students.

Townsend and Wilson (2006) suggested doing further research on pinpointing more precisely students' efforts to integrate themselves after they have transferred to their new institution. Does it make a difference in their persistence or is transfer student integration irrelevant to their retention? Since most transfer students tend to have other things going on in their life such as families, children, part-time/full-time jobs, etc., do they have time for or interest in social or academic integration or are they just at the institution to achieve their goals of degree attainment by attending classes? Townsend and Wilson (2006) state that seamless transfer:

"could also be viewed as an ideal for the literal transfer and integration of community college transfer students into the receiving institution, orientation to and availability of support services at the four-year institution, and opportunities for transfer students to become socially and academically integrated into their receiving institution." (p. 440)

Many current students once they have transferred, if no hiccups happen with their credits and the student can transfer without the loss of credits, the possibility of the student persisting to graduation could likely increase.

According to Berger and Malaney (2003), large gaps appear in the research on transfer students who are also students of color. Historically, many students of color are first-generation or low-income students; therefore, many of these students of color will choose to attend a community college to begin their post-secondary education to save money or to stay close to

home. Some, but not all students of color, may need extra resources throughout their transition to the four-year institution because students are navigating a new system and university landscape or students may not have anybody to help them through the transition process. Otherwise, resources that are needed or support needed may look different for students of color; especially at a predominantly white institution.

Allen, Robbins, Casillas, and Oh (2008) concluded that studying third-year enrollment statuses instead of first-year retention is important because:

"(1) third-year enrollment status may be a more reasonable proxy for degree attainment, (2) students who return for their second year may drop out or transfer by their third year (or vice-versa), and (3) the effects of motivation, social connectedness, and academic performance on long-term retention and transfer are not well documented." (p. 648)

Due to these reasons, many four-year universities are now looking more at retention, but also are focusing on recruiting students whom the university have deemed as successful based on some calculated criteria such as grade point average and/or test scores. Although many admissions reviews are done holistically or comprehensively, factors such as grade point average and test scores are still the primary determination of whether a student will gain admission to the four-year university.

Although progress has been made regarding campus culture and the integration of transfer students, a stigma remains about the preparation and quality of students who start at a two-year college. Stigmas that transfer students face include lack of preparation because the credits students took were at a community or technical college and therefore transfer students

have not taken courses that are equivalent based on the perceived academic quality of the course by some faculty at the four-year university. Another stigma that transfer students face is that the coursework that they have taken did not prepare them for success at the four-year institution because the rigor at the community or technical college is not equivalent to what they will experience at the four-year institution. There needs to be a reduction of the two-year college student stigma so that these students find a good fit and a good support system after they complete their transfer to ensure they persist to graduation. If students experience negative dynamics after their transfer it could decrease their motivation to complete their degree or it could increase their likelihood to stop out or transfer somewhere else.

The present study addressed one central question: What are the experiences of current students who have transferred from a two-year college and what factors influence whether they persist to baccalaureate attainment at the four-year university?

Setting

The present study was conducted at a medium-sized, comprehensive four-year public university in an urban setting. The four-year public university is located in the upper Midwest region of the United States. Participants will be students who have previously transferred from a two-year institution to the four-year university over a two-year time period from 2014 to 2016.

Assumptions

The present study focused specifically on transfer students rather than other populations of students such as first-year or international students. A reason for studying current students who have transferred in particular is due to my current role as a transfer coordinator for the office of undergraduate admissions at the medium-sized comprehensive university in this study. My current role is focused on helping students successfully transfer from one institution, two-

year or four-year, to the institution at which I currently work. I also assist students with the

transfer of their credits and do some pre-transfer advising to ensure as seamless of a transfer as

possible. At this time, my goal is to understand the post-transfer experience at an institution.

Since I work with transfer students on the admissions side, I want to understand what barriers

these current students encounter after their transition that may affect their retention and

persistence to graduation once they are beyond admissions and are a currently enrolled student.

Currently in the field, four-year colleges and universities know the many obvious

indicators as to why a student would choose an institution and remain for the duration of their

undergraduate study. Some of the indicators include, but are not limited to, cost of attendance,

the institution's location or proximity to home, and programs that are or are not offered at the

institution. However, for this study, the focus was on other indicators which are not obvious and

that have not been studied previously which include dynamics experienced post-transfer and the

transfer student story.

Scope and Limitations of the Study

This study was limited to a two-year period, 2014 to 2016, in which the participants

transferred. Limited to two-year to four-year transfer students, other students who have

transferred from another four-year institution, as well as those who have transferred from private

institutions, are excluded from this study. This study is not meant to be generalized for every

current student experience of a student who has transferred. This study is limited to one four-

year institution and a small sample population of students as only three students were

interviewed.

Summary

6

The study focused on the current student story of students who have transferred with a strong focus on different dynamics that the students experienced that may influence whether a student persists at an institution once they have completed their transfer. Dynamics that a student experienced are a significant focus because a gap in the literature exists. Gaps in the literature provide an urgency for researchers in the field to evaluate the landscape of higher education and the importance of transfer students in retention efforts as more students are choosing to transfer. This study brings in a new perspective as it provides a glimpse at the post-transfer experience as experienced by the student. Transfer student retention is analyzed through an educational theory lens rather than a student affairs lens. The next chapter provides a review of the literature currently available in the field about transfer students and current student retention and also provides important information as to why this study is necessary and important to the field.

Chapter Two

Literature Review

The cost of college tuition is on the rise nationwide in the United States and high school enrollment has been declining in the Midwest region; therefore, many high school students are choosing to attend two-year institutions to start their college journey. Due to these two reasons, as well as others, four-year colleges and universities need to consider adjusting their practices to provide the proper services and resources to serve and support transfer students. Since institutions of higher education are experiencing greatly reduced financial resources, colleges and universities appreciate and embrace the necessity of retaining as many of the students already enrolled as possible (Tinto, 1993). By making adjustments to current practices, the four-year institution's practitioners can ensure their success at meeting the expectations specified by their higher education administrators to meet admissions recruitment goals and then once enrolled, to meet the expectations of retaining current students who have transferred.

The four-year college or university should consider responding to the current trends in the field. Transfer is now the norm in higher education as 45 percent of all US undergraduate students attend community colleges (American Associate of Community Colleges, 2013). Throughout the literature there are some predominant themes that emerge which will be discussed throughout this review. The review will first describe the transfer experience, then will go on to address the topic of retention, and will conclude with a summary of the current thinking and the theoretical framework which has shaped retention in the field.

The Transfer Experience

Each student who decides to transfer has a unique transfer experience. However, when examining each student's unique experience during the transfer process, transfer students may

8

also share some common experiences. This section of the chapter will examine a transfer

student's preparation and the pre-transfer advising that is necessary to ensure they will be

successful. Then the section will go on to discuss academic achievement before and after

transferring to the four-year institution. Next, the section will address social engagement and

how students connect with others at the community college and then at the four-year university

which can help them feel a sense of belonging or fit. Lastly, this section will address resources

and accessibility of those resources and how transfer students navigate the transition between

community college and four-year university.

Preparation and Pre-Transfer Advising

Preparing for transfer at the community college is an important first-step for transfer

students. Proper advising and course planning can influence transfer student success and can

influence a transfer student's retention and completion at the four-year institution. Although the

mission of the community college has changed and evolved considerably over the years, getting

students ready to transfer to the four-year university is still at the core of their mission.

Community colleges create a very important pathway to baccalaureate degree attainment;

however, students can experience challenges and extended time to baccalaureate degree

attainment without proper preparation and advising.

Chin-Newman and Shaw (2013) identified some of the common challenges that

community college transfer students faced either before or after acceptance to the four-year

college or university. Before acceptance, many of the students in the study were unsure that the

credits that they took at the community college would transfer successfully to the four-year

university and that degree attainment would be possible within a reasonable time-frame based on

the coursework they completed already. With proper advising during their time at the

community college, these students who go on to transfer, will be transferring without loss of credits, which is referred to as a seamless transfer. This seamless transfer can ensure that transfer students make the most of their time at the community college and have not wasted their time or money on coursework they do not need.

Berger and Malaney (2003) found evidence that was not surprising. Transfer students who are actively preparing for their transfer are more likely to be satisfied and successful once they complete the transfer process to the four-year institution. If the four-year colleges and universities can create and promote pathways for community college students, this will result in greater access to four-year institutions and a baccalaureate degree for community college students.

Academic Achievement

Before acceptance to the university, Chin-Newman and Shaw (2013) found that community college students were concerned that they would not have the ability to succeed academically once they transferred. Since there is a stigma about the rigor of academics at a community college among four-year university faculty, there are many community college students who fear that they will not be academically prepared to enter the upper division coursework at the junior level at the four-year institution or that their courses are not on par with the work in the same class at the four-year college or university.

However, D'Amico et al. (2013) saw that transfer GPA was negatively associated with what transfer students from the community college perceived as their academic fit in their early days at the four-year university. This shows evidence that although students are perceived to have academic skills which in turn shows evidence of their ability to succeed, some community

10

college transfer students still may experience some challenges in adjusting to the new system or expectations upon arrival at the four-year university.

Some further findings from the study by Berger and Malaney (2003) indicate that students who identified as White are more likely to receive higher grades which indicates that the university may need to do a better job of providing support for students of color who transfer from the community colleges to ensure that these students are transitioning to the four-year university in a more positive way. Without this support, community college students may not persist and may either drop out of school altogether, or may transfer elsewhere, including back to the community college. Since these findings are limited, the topic of students of color and their achievement in transferring from community colleges to four-year universities could use further study. There is also evidence that because community colleges serve a higher percentage of students of color that community colleges also serve as a pathway to four-year universities.

Berger and Malaney (2003) explained that their study found evidence that students who spent time studying at the community college were the least likely to believe that the academic support at the university was adequate. Some of these beliefs may stem from the size of the community college versus the size of the university. Faculty and staff, from the perception of the students who are transferring, seem to be more accessible at the community college than they are once they transfer to the university.

Since the university that was part of the study by Townsend and Wilson (2006) was a large research university, many of the community college transfer students perceived that it was harder to engage and interact with faculty at the university due to larger class sizes and the interest of the faculty being more focused on research than on teaching. For many of these transfer students, the community college would have attendance requirements where students

11

were expected to be in class or the professor would drop them. At the university; however, many students perceived that faculty did not care if they would attend class or not which did not help with the transfer students' motivation to attend class which lead to students not doing well academically.

Social Engagement

Berger and Malaney (2003) found evidence of differences in involvement for transfer students at the community college versus at the university. A common theme among community college transfer students in the study was that they had to reduce outside commitments and increase study time once they completed their transfer to UMass. The other interesting finding from the study was that transfer students' socializing increased from 10.31 to 14.96 hours.

Related, Townsend and Wilson (2006) found that social integration for community college transfer students was more difficult at the university than it was at the community college typically because many friend groups are already established. Students started at the university together and met each other through first-year programming and dorm style living. For many community college students, the residential experience on campus is not something community college students have experienced. Community college students typically commute to campus, go to class, and then leave. Based on commuter experiences, community college students may naturally have a tendency to be more disconnected from campus once they transfer to the four-year university.

Social integration and academic connections were associated with positive community college transfer outcomes according to D'Amico et al. (2013). The study also found that within 6-to-8 weeks of a community college transfer student attending the four-year university that if transfer students perceived a good academic fit, that transfer students were more likely to get

positive grades in their second semester and perceived academic fit was the most consistent indicator of success for the community college transfer students.

Resources and Accessibility

Once community college students were accepted to the four-year university, Chin-Newman and Shaw (2013) found evidence that community college students lacked the proper knowledge they needed to be successful at the four-year university. For example, if there was a transfer student who planned to be an online only student and orientation was only available to them if they came to campus, the orientation model would not make sense for the student and they would miss out on valuable resources and information. This model would prevent these online students from learning the new systems and processes that they would follow during their time at the four-year university. When transfer students are unable to access the information that they need, they feel a high level of stress and anxiety which can result in these students not feeling comfortable or welcome at the four-year university.

Townsend and Wilson (2006) presented findings that most of the transfer students who were interviewed felt that the community college basically left many things up to them in terms of setting up an appointment with an advisor or not wanting to help determine how credits would transfer to the university. Sixty-eight percent of the students in the study stated that they did not receive assistance from the community college even though a small number had asked for help.

Although a good number of the students in the study did not receive assistance from the community college, most of the students stated that they had received assistance from the university whether it was determining how credits would transfer or just receiving information by attending a welcome program for new students. Eighty-four percent of transfer students attended the welcome program for new students but did not feel like the large research university

13

did enough to prepare them to start classes at their institution. Since community college classes are typically smaller, the students stated that they felt overwhelmed by a class size of more than 40 people because that was what they were used to. The shock about size, as well as having a hard time navigating the four-year university's systems and campus were themes throughout the findings relating to the university's role in orientation for these community college transfer students.

College Student Retention

Since the present study was focused on the post-transfer experience, college student retention is the main focus to ensure that current students who have transferred can persist to baccalaureate graduation. College student retention is not always an easy or smooth task for institutions of higher education. Obstacles may present themselves such as the implementation of a retention plan or the many different reasons why a student chooses to leave a college or university. Another obstacle that institutions of higher education face with retention efforts is that solutions are not really generalizable when it comes to successful retention programs (Tinto, 1993). A retention program at one campus could be very effective and could fail horribly at a similar type of institution.

Administrators have a challenging enough time with creating a retention plan for first-year students, it can be even more challenging for administrators to come up with a retention plan for current students who have transferred due to their unique needs. After a community college student completes their transfer and enrolls at the four-year university, the university needs to ensure that current students who have transferred are satisfied with their choice as well as ensuring these students have a sense of belonging and feel that they fit well at their new institution. The feat of creating a successful retention plan for current students who have

transferred for institutions of higher education that offer baccalaureate programs can be immensely challenging since their students are unique and diverse individuals. Therefore, administrators must be creative when devising a plan for current student retention of students who have transferred and these same administrators must really know who their students are, what their students want out of their college experiences, and the common reasons why students choose to leave their institution.

Baccalaureate Persistence

Once a community college student has completed their transfer to the four-year university, according to Chin-Newman and Shaw (2013) the student faces the challenges of planning for graduation, how they can get to graduation based on the coursework they transferred in from the community college, and what remaining courses are needed to finish their baccalaureate degree. All of these challenges can be obstacles to baccalaureate persistence for current students who has transferred from a community college. Severiens and Wolff (2008) found that students who feel at home and are well connected to fellow-students and teachers as well as those who take part in extra-curricular activities are much more likely to graduate.

Planning for baccalaureate graduation can be an intimidating time for current students who have transferred from a community college. Some community college students may have graduated with a two-year degree while others may have only taken a semester or a year of coursework. Therefore, each student's graduation plan at the four-year university is going to look different. Many four-year universities advertise a four-year plan for students to follow to graduation. However, the four-year plan is more focused on first-year college students and what their graduation plan might look like and neglects to account for a plan for transfer students.

Although students sent in their college transcript(s) to their four-year university, transfer course evaluations are not instantaneous. Since course evaluations and equivalencies can take several weeks to be completed, current students who have transferred do not always know how their courses count for baccalaureate degree requirements, which can make understanding what requirements still need to be completed very difficult. Students may have challenges, due to how long course evaluations and equivalencies take, coming up with a graduation plan until they have been at the university for a couple of terms or semesters. Students were concerned that something would arise from their transcripts that they did not anticipate, and that they would have to take more classes or delay graduation (Chin-Newman & Shaw, 2013) because the students did not know how their courses would transfer. Therefore, current students who have transferred experience stress and anxiety when information that they need is not available (Chin-Newman & Shaw, 2013) which can lead to a student stopping out of college because they feel lost.

Integration

Prior to the Townsend and Wilson (2006) study, most of the institutional focus on fit and satisfaction had investigated the academic and social integration of first-year college students with the obligation to make sure these first-year students were academically successful and wanted to remain at their choice of four-year institution. Institutional leaders are starting to recognize that many community college students are seeking to transfer to a four-year college or university to attain a baccalaureate degree. The four-year college or university has a responsibility to ensure a successful transition for these community college transfer students.

Academic integration can be integration into a program or can be integration into the academic side of a student's post-secondary education. Social integration can be a meeting new

people and making new friends or could mean that a student feels like they fit or have a sense of belonging. Without social integration, it is more difficult to persist, and ultimately to graduate (Severiens & Wolff, 2008).

Student Support Services

Academic advising is another resource that can help facilitate student retention. Intrusive advising is a common practice at colleges and universities today. This type of advising means an advisor should be intrusive without intruding, should be warm and friendly, and should be inviting while still providing the tough love and information that students need to hear (Cannon, 2013). The advisor must be trained properly to assist students in first developing a realistic plan to reach the student's educational goals. Then the advisor must introduce the student to key courses that help the student explore their academic interests but to also meet career goals if the student has a set goal in mind. Building relationships with students as an advisor is wonderful, but the next step must be to connect students with the most useful and appropriate resources on the four-year university campus (Cannon, 2013).

Therefore, it is important to consider both prescriptive and developmental type of approaches to academic advising done by faculty (Smith & Allen, 2006). Prescriptive advising is when the advisor provides information and telling a student what they should do without much participation on their part (Braun & Zolfagharian, 2016). Developmental advising, on the other hand, is conceptualized as a form of teaching that is concerned with the participation and growth of the student (Braun & Zolfagharian, 2016). Students take a more participatory role in developmental advising by evaluating their own choices and opportunities in the decision-making process (Smith & Allen, 2006).

Once the advisor has a better grasp on the student's educational goals, the advisor is then responsible for providing referrals to the proper specialize support services that are available on the campus whether that is financial aid, career services, or tutoring (Kapraun & Coldren, 1982). Past research indicated that although students are generally content with academic programs at the four-year university, they are typically less satisfied with support services such as academic advising and career services (Braun & Zolfagharian, 2016). When a student has guidance, their advisor can play a big role in the retention of that student as well as the student's success at the college or university. An advisor has an impact on college performance that impacts a student's satisfaction by having good knowledge, being approachable, and being available (Braun & Zolfagharian, 2016).

Faculty-student interaction

Research has frequently established that faculty-student interaction is integral to a college student's development and achievement (Chang, 2005). Faculty members serve in multiple roles such as instructors, role models, employers, advisors and sources of support and guidance (Chang, 2005) which can heavily influence students' degree aspirations, self-efficacy and esteem, academic success, satisfaction, goal development, and adjustment to college (Chang, 2005). Faculty, therefore, play an integral role in a student's integration to campus but also in their development throughout college.

A student typically identifies a faculty member as a figure of authority. When a student understands how to utilize resources and establish relationships, students have a sense of confidence that allows them to engage more readily with their instructors (Chang, 2005). A sense of confidence can really influence a student's comfort level with their faculty members

which can in turn make the student feel a sense of belonging when they have a person who they trust and they know is on their side.

Students of Color and Low-Income Students

If a public university inadequately meets the demand for current students who have transferred, the consequences include the potential to disenfranchise a large number of individuals, especially those students who identify as low-income and students of color (Neault & Piland, 2014). Many of these students begin their postsecondary education at a community college and may not have other educational options to complete a baccalaureate degree (Neault & Piland, 2014). Ethnic minority students more often experience prejudice and negative contacts with peers, faculty, and staff which can presume that these students may drop out more often than majority students (Severiens & Wolff, 2008).

For students who do not identify as White, there can be many challenges that students may face in terms of persistence to graduation. For some students, they could be apt to leave an institution if the climate and culture of the campus are predominantly White and there are not proper resources to support them. This may not necessarily be because of the Black/White retention gap, but could possibly be because of a result of structural racism or Whiteness (Gusa, 2010). Power dynamics between dominant and minority cultures in college must be recognized within the cultural integration of minority students (Jensen, 2011).

Students who come from a low-income family may have many obstacles that they face in terms of their persistence to graduation. One of the obstacles that students could face is having the funds to pay for their studies (Neault & Piland, 2014). Another obstacle could be the absence of one parent or the other (Neault & Piland, 2014). Since many students rely on support at home

to be successful and sometimes to pay for school, this can add to a student's lack of persistence to graduation.

A study by Pavel et al. (1998) found that among American Indian/Alaskan Native undergraduates, students were twice as likely overall to be single parents, and were 35% more likely to be lacking financial support from their families. Many American Indian/Alaskan Native students come from poor backgrounds and are unaccustomed to overseeing the kind of money that comes with a financial aid package (Lee, Donlan, & Brown, 2010). Financial aid could help American Indian/Alaskan Native students persist through their undergraduate degree by utilizing financial counseling sessions, especially during their first year in their program (Lee, Donlan, & Brown, 2010)

For ethnically underrepresented minorities, however, knowledge of the educational system may be limited and assertiveness in seeking interaction at odds with their native culture (Chang, 2005). One finding of a study by Read, Archer, and Leathwood (2003) found that minority students sought out each other's company so as to increase their sense of belonging at the university. For students of color, the distance experienced within the social geography may be rather complicated and augmented when also considering the racial dimensions of the campus climate (Chang, 2005). Poor choices, lack of social support, and a lack of fit between the student and the institution were viewed as important factors underlying drop-out from the university (Severiens & Wolff, 2008).

Current Students Who Have Transferred

Although there has not been much discussion in the literature regarding retention of students who have transferred, in the study by D'Amico et al. (2013), there are two strong predictions of community college transfer students persisting through to the second semester at

the university. Two positive predictors of second semester return among current students who have transferred were the student's perceived academic fit and their participation in class. (D'Amico et al., 2013). This is one of the first indications that community college transfer students find their connection while in the classroom, and not necessarily in other social situations once they have transferred.

There is not a term to define "current students who have transferred" in the literature. Most of the literature about retention terms students as transfer students still; however, many transfer students do not want to carry the term with them once they complete their transfer as there are connotations that are carried with that term. Some of the connotations include students who have transferred not being well received by a professor because they are considered less prepared because they went to a community college first or students feeling like they missed out on an experience because they did not start at the university as a first-year student.

Theoretical Framework

Access to higher education has increased from around nine million students in 1980 to nearly twenty million students in 2011; however, overall, college completion rates have only increased ever so slightly (Tinto, 2012). Vincent Tinto presupposed that undergraduate students' persistence is influenced by their social and academic experiences while in college and not just by their own characteristics, goals, and commitments (Tinto, 1993). Therefore, administrators must be looking at multiple factors when they create their student retention plans which really should be a course of action and not a step-by-step plan. Student retention plans must first address the educational goals of the institution and how those tie in with the goals of the actions they plan to put forth for retention. Secondly, administrators must look at why students leave their institutions.

Tinto's (2012) theory of student retention provides a framework to understand why a student leaves an institution such as lack of fit or belonging. His theory then offers a course of action for an institution of higher education to try to remedy the situation of student departure. However, limitations exist as to what the institution can do in some situations of student departure. Administrators have to remember that their institution is not always the best fit for every student and that is perfectly acceptable. Students may depart the four-year university because they have changed their major and the college or university that they are currently attending does not offer that program and the student chooses transfer to another institution that offers their program of choice. However, there are reasons why a student could depart the institution that administrators have some control over or could help to avoid such as lack of belonging or academic/social engagement by putting resources in those areas to help improve the integration process. Situations of student departure are instances where knowledge of why a student leaves an institution becomes incredibly valuable information for administrators when they are creating student retention plans. Without knowledge of why students leave their institutions, administrators will be unable to devise a successful plan.

Each institution of higher education has the responsibility of educating the students who attend their institutions because that is the reason why students pay thousands of dollars to be at the post-secondary institution. Since there is a phenomenon of student departure from post-secondary institutions throughout the United States, each institution of higher education needs to consider addressing student retention efforts to ensure that young people reach degree completion and finish what they started. Not all students are on the path of attending a four-year college or university and staying there for all four years. Some students choose to attend a community college first to save money. Other students choose military service and then utilize

their military benefits to pay for school. Other students attend a community college because they did not meet admissions criteria to be admitted to the four-year college or university and will do at least a year or two at the community college before transferring to complete their baccalaureate degree. Current students who have transferred come from a variety of backgrounds as outlined above which creates a challenge in developing a retention plan due to the nature of their unique experiences. Therefore, four-year universities and colleges need to consider focusing their efforts of retention on current students who have transferred to ensure the institutions meet their enrollment and budget goals each year.

Summary

This review of the literature has shown that there are many different facets to the four-year college student experience for students who have transferred. Each student who makes the decision to transfer has a unique experience; however, some experiences among current students who have transferred may be similar. How a transfer student prepares for transfer can make a big impact on their success at the four-year university once they transfer. Pre-transfer advising and how that is necessary to ensure the student will be successful and will reach graduation in a timely manner. Before transferring, if students did well, they have a better chance of experiencing less transfer shock, or a drop in their grade point average (GPA) once they transfer. Then the chapter transitions to talk about what we really want to know about which is retention of current students who have transferred. Many aspects of the current student experience can influence whether a student persists to graduation at a four-year university such as resources, faculty interaction, and academic advising. The next chapter focuses on the methods employed in this study.

Chapter Three

Methodology

The purpose of this research study was to describe the dynamics that current students who have transferred experience in relation to their retention and persistence to graduation at a four-year, medium, comprehensive public university. This chapter outline the research design and methods adopted for the study.

Research Design

According to Creswell (2015), qualitative research is best suited to address a research problem in which the researcher does not know the variables and needs to explore further. The literature might yield little information about the phenomenon of the study, and there is a need to learn more from participants through exploration (Creswell, 2015). The design of this study was phenomenology which according to Nuñez and Yoshimi (2016) the phenomenological methodology is focused on rich description of a phenomena that people experience. I chose phenomenology because I wanted to understand the post-transfer experience by exploring the experiences from the current students who transferred that had the experiences.

Setting and Participants

The institution where the study took place was a four-year, medium sized, comprehensive public university. The institution has a population of around 11,000 students total and a majority of the students who attend the university come from a large metropolitan area. The university was situated in the upper Mid-west area of the United States where students are actively engaged in the campus community and have access to different outdoor activities, as well as many indoor activities. Examples of activities include hiking, biking, boating, shopping, dining, volunteering and skiing depending on the time of year.

Participants were students who had transferred from a two-year institution to a four-year university between 2014 and 2016. One of the participants transferred from a tribal college. The other two participants transferred from a community and technical college. One student identifies as male, the other two identify as female.

Data Gathering and Analysis

Data were collected through in-person, one-on-one interviews with the researcher that were semi-structured and lasted approximately one hour. Participants were recruited through email communications and were identified by the researcher based on personal experience with that student through the transfer process. The researcher selected three students to participate in the study. Two of the students were still enrolled at the university, while one had recently graduated. All three students had made the choice to stay at the university.

Many topics were covered in the interviews with the three participants. Topics included acclimation to the campus community, acclimation to the major program, resource utilization, school and life balance, interactions with others (peers, staff, faculty, etc.), and expectations before and after transferring. All topics were chosen to encourage the participants to share their post-transfer experiences and what the experiences meant to them. (See Appendix I for the interview protocol.)

Analysis of the interview data involved the researcher listening intently to each interview to catalogue topics that emerged regarding the post-transfer experience of each of the three current students at the university. The second tier of analysis involved the researcher identified emerging themes across interviews based on the topics that emerged. The final tier of analysis was returning to the interviews to identify instances of the themes the current students experienced in order to define and describe each theme. The purpose of the study was to identify

25

and describe the experiences of the three current students post-transfer and to capture both their unique experiences as well as commonalities among their experiences.

The researcher then created a portrait of each of the three current students who have transferred as a form through which to discuss the themes. In this study, the portrait is a device through which a rich description of the post-transfer experience of each student and what the experience meant to them is offered. Lastly, a synthesis across all three students' post-transfer experiences to further illustrate the themes is provided.

Summary

The design and methods adopted in this study were phenomenological in order to describe the post-transfer experiences of three current students at a four-year university. During one-on-one interviews, three current students who had transferred shared their experiences at the four-year university and what that experience meant to each of them. Once the stories were collected, the researched identified themes from each experience and themes that emerged across all three experiences. In the chapter that follows, I will present the analysis of the interviews.

Chapter Four

Results and Reflections

In this chapter, I present the analysis of the interviews. The purpose of this study was to explore the current student post-transfer experience and what that experience means to the student. This study addressed one central question: What are the experiences of current students who have transferred from a two-year college and what factors influence whether they persist to baccalaureate attainment at the four-year university?

First, the chapter begins by presenting a portrait of the individual's post-transfer experience. Each student shared their experiences as a current student who had transferred from a two-year college and described what the experience meant to them. Each portrait provides a rich description of who the student is as an individual, what the acclimation process was like for each student, and what the experience meant to each student. Secondly, the chapter presents a synthesis across participants of the common themes that emerged across all three interviews.

Isabella

Isabella (pseudonym), a white woman in her mid-twenties, appears shy at first encounter, but after a brief period of time becomes the most talkative and bubbly person in the room. She described herself as incredibly friendly and loyal which is evident in how she talked about her family and friends. She recently married a wonderful man who has been incredibly supportive of her education and goals and who she's proud to have as her new teammate in life.

Isabella transferred to the four-year university in hopes of finding an affordable option to complete her baccalaureate degree. Her education began at a private four-year college in a different state. Due to the cost of the private college, she decided to take a big leap and moved

27

over six hours away to attend a two-year community and technical college. At the two-year college, she could complete her generals and save some money. After completing her generals and other lower division coursework, she transferred to her current institution where she is proud to be obtaining her bachelor's degree in Communications with a minor in Anthropology.

Isabella is aspiring to be a student affairs professional and hopes to someday help shape the current student experience for students who have transferred on a college campus. Graduate school may also be in her future as she would like to continue her education by pursuing a program in student affairs to learn more about how higher education operates. Her friendly personality and caring nature appears to be a great fit for a career in higher education.

Isabella is hoping to start her career, once she graduates, by working in the admissions field to help students find the correct college fit for them. Isabella recently joined the tour guide program at the four-year university and became a tour guide after being at the university for three semesters to gain some insight into what it takes to work in the field of admissions and "*part of the reason I joined* (the tour guide program) *was because I wanted to learn more about campus and be part of that first impression*" that perspective students have when they first experience campus. So far, she is loving the work she is doing as a tour guide. Isabella believes that due to her past experience, she can give perspectives to students and families that other students who have not transferred cannot, because she has experienced three different types of institutions.

Being a tour guide has allowed Isabella to learn more about campus and what resources are available to her to ensure she can be successful academically. She enjoys meeting new people and believes that being a tour guide has allowed her to be a better communicator which is valuable for a Communications major. Becoming part of the tour guide program has helped Isabella become more connected to campus and other students and staff. This tour guide program

has also helped her feel a sense of belonging and has created a whole new network of people. Had Isabella not stepped out of her comfort zone and signed up to give tours, she would not have experienced the sense of community that comes with being part of this program which has allowed her to truly feel like a Yeti (mascot pseudonym). Her decision to join the tour guide program has helped in her decision to stay at the university and persist to graduation.

Even though Isabella is now a current student at the university, she still embraces the identity of a transfer student because she believes "*transfer students have a desire to learn*" and that truly matches who she is as an individual. She described herself as always being a studious individual and academics are a major priority for her. Isabella believes that there are other students like her who may not have had issues at their first college, but instead needed to save money by attending a two-year college. She believes that some students will transfer as they have a desire to continue to learn and to finish their four-year degree as their end goal. "*This is why I embrace being a transfer student*" because she has been through a unique experience and can share with others why she chose the four-year university and decided to stay. She also stated that "*when you transfer, people will ask you where you transferred from and that can make for a nice conversation starter sometimes*" and since she has transferred twice, being a transfer student is how she identifies and is proud of that experience as a current student.

Isabella stated that the four-year institution that she is currently attending "was kind of the end goal" once she had made up her mind that she was going to transfer. However, she wanted to ensure that she had some more credits under her belt and finances set prior to making that commitment to finish her bachelor's degree. Therefore, she decided to attend a two-year college first to complete a two-year degree to save money to be able to pay for her four-year degree. She believed that "*attending a two-year community and technical college was practical*"

and this path allowed her to stress less about finances as a current student at the four-year university.

Isabella described herself as, "*non-traditional in the sense that I am married*" which was something that set her apart from her peers sometimes. She stated that it is sometimes an awkward topic to bring up because people will say "*I don't want to get married until I am out of college.*" Some peers would make comments such as "*you got married so young" or "why did you do it*" and that made Isabella uncomfortable sometimes. Some people would say "*that's so cool, can I see your ring*" but most of her peers were awkward about her being married so young. A particular peer of hers was uncomfortable with the fact that she was married at such a young age because this peer had heard horror stories or had experiences with young marriages that were negative. Isabella's peer made a comment once about "*I'm sorry, I'm just really uncomfortable with young marriages*" because her peer had a friend who was in a really bad relationship and got married and they should not have. For Isabella's peer, it was more of a personal thing and since her peer had seen somebody else experience that, it was hard for this peer to see past that for other people. Therefore, Isabella would "*not use the term 'husband' around a certain friend, but would just refer to my husband by name*" to ensure that her peer did not feel uncomfortable. Although the peer still knows that Isabella is married, if Isabella only uses her husband's name, she tends to get a better reaction.

Relating to getting married, Isabella experienced some challenges when she first started at the four-year university in regards to professors and financial aid that made things awkward for her. Professors had a class list that existed prior to her name change becoming official, so "*professors would use my maiden name which didn't really bug me but I would have to let them know so they didn't get confused*" which made some situations awkward for her.

30

In terms of financial aid Isabella experienced some issues because "*a lot of things change when you get married with your financial aid and stuff.*" The office on campus had "*the most patient and helpful people because we kind of had some issues at first where our* [Free Application for Federal Student Aid, (FAFSA)] *wasn't originally accepted*" which created some extra steps in the financial aid process for her and her husband. Although the process was stressful and frustrating, everyone in the financial aid office was "*incredibly helpful through the whole process and were understanding and truly just wanted to help*" which for a current student who had transferred made the process not feel so dire. Her aid took some time to be processed once the change was initiated and Isabella and her husband had to provide extra documentation to ensure that the aid she would be eligible for was accurate and reflected her new, married status.

One of the parts of Isabella's experience that has been most enjoyable for her as a current student who has transferred was the location of the four-year university's campus. She stated "*I do really like the environment*" and that "*it's close enough to home where I can go home if I want to, but far enough away from my parents that I can still have my own little utopia.*" Her utopia or blissful place may include date nights with her husband or study groups with friends which allow her to still focus on her studies, but also allows her to spend time with her peers. She talked about a simple date night with her husband as being something like "*ordering a pizza and sitting in the back of the pickup truck*" just enjoying each other's company. She also stated that if you have good friends "*they understand that your studies come first and respect that you want to get stuff done,*" which helps with balancing school and having a social life outside of school.

Isabella had help through the acclimation process from her husband, some peers, and the academic advising office. Her husband, who was in a master's program at the university at the time she started, introduced her to some of his friends in the music program. Isabella played an instrument and in her first semester got involved in a wind ensemble which was her way back into playing music. She had missed her music when she was at the community college and was able to bring that aspect of her life back again as "*I kind of missed my music.*" She stated "*although they were my husband's friends,*" she did have others that she connected with throughout her experience in wind ensemble. One of her peers who was a senior that she met through the music ensemble was able to help her with things like "*this is here and this is a good place to study.*" This connection with another student helped her feel more at home at the university during that first semester.

Isabella received help from her professional academic advisor in the collegiate unit advising office which helped her feel more at ease about her timeline to graduation and ensuring that she was staying on track. She stated that "*the academic advising office helped me a lot, at least not be so nervous about getting my classes in order.*" She also stated that she "*always appreciated that when I came in* [to the academic advising office], *there wasn't a stigma that I was a transfer student, but they would just find out what we needed to do to get me going and keep me moving forward.*" As Isabella keeps moving forward, she can get through her major coursework and is that much closer to walking across the stage at graduation.

As a current student who had transferred, Isabella compared the environment of the community college versus the environment at the four-year university. She stated that "*a lot of my Communications classes involved group work*" which helped her get to know people. She claims that "*I'm one of those weird people that do like group projects*" because she could at least

meet people and "*as a transfer student I am forced to talk to other people*" which really helped her feel more connected to other students in her same major program. When Isabella was at the community college, she felt like "*you get in, you get your degree, and you get out.*" She liked being back in an environment where she could go to a meeting for a club or organization if she wanted to participate. She also liked being back in an environment where "*more was expected out of me*" and where she would be challenged to a different degree then she was at the community college. "*It meant more late nights in the library, but I expected that*" and she was ready for the push towards "*being a better person from it*" as she experienced personal growth throughout the journey since "*that's what college is for.*"

One challenge that Isabella encountered in her department, although she has enjoyed her professors, was people knowing what grade level she was at as a current student who had transferred. She told a story about walking around the Communications department and people would ask her what grade (i.e. sophomore, junior) in college she was in and when she replied that she was a junior "*they would kind of give me this funny look because they think I'm a sophomore or freshman*" because they haven't seen her around before. She then had to go on to explain "*no, I'm a junior, but I transferred.*" People in the department would also react and state things like "*why are you taking all these classes? I thought you were a sophomore*" to which she would respond "*nope, I got the credits to be a junior*" by doing her generals for the past two years. She stated that this type of encounter with people in her department has been awkward and makes her feel uncomfortable sometimes.

Isabella felt the same way when she went to apply for current student scholarships through her department. She "*noticed on the scholarship application that they say transfer students can apply but will need two recommendations letters from your other university if that's*

33

better" which she felt was a good option but made her "*get the sense that if it's not from our university – you're probably not going to get considered as highly.*" She felt the scholarship application kind of discriminated against transfer students based on how the application information was worded. She hoped that she would have the same consideration as anybody else who was applying for the scholarship, but did not feel like they would consider her because "*she didn't have that reputation with the department.*" Since "*you have not been there since the beginning*" she felt like she would not be considered for something like a Teacher's Assistant position, so she decided not to apply. These situations made her feel even more strongly like a transfer student but also like an outsider.

One big transition that she experienced as a current student who had transferred was the class scheduling at the university. "*I didn't schedule my classes all Tuesday/Thursdays or something so I think I was so used to that schedule at my other college that like when I got here it was like, OK I do have classes Monday through Friday, so just kind of getting used to that again.*" She also holds a job off campus, so she needed to balance having a job working almost 20 or more hours while being a student. For a couple months, she was the sole income-earner in her household, as her husband had gotten very sick; therefore, Isabella had a lot on her plate and did her best to balance her obligations for class and at home, all while trying not to stress herself out too much.

Due to financial restraints, Isabella and her husband cancelled their internet at their apartment. This presented a challenge as "*most of my classes now have some materials online or you have to submit a paper in* [an online environment]" but they are fortunate to live near a business that has free internet access. Once she had completed her assignment or paper, she would run over to this business and utilize their internet access to submit her homework.

34

Although it was a challenge, Isabella and her husband were able to make the best of the situation and she stated that her husband "*understands that school is important*" and "*he has always encouraged me*" to complete her bachelor's degree since he has already completed his. He also told her that "*I don't want you to stop with your education because it's important*" and she appreciates having him as her teammate and someone who supports her throughout her education endeavors. She balances being a student and being married through good communication. "*I just always talk to him and I think it's good to be surrounded by people who know and understand that you need to do stuff.*" She also appreciates that her husband understands that when she isn't home "*I am at school or at the library or something and not just somewhere goofing off*" and he supports her spending the time on her studies.

Isabella stated "*that you have to find your group of people*" and it was challenging to connect with people during her first semester on campus and that at first, she did not expect that there would be so many other current students who had transferred on the four-year university campus. But once she figured out that there were other students who had transferred and non-traditional students on campus, she felt more settled. Isabella stated that:

> "*it was kind of nice to at least get a little bit of a sense that like there were more people out there that had transferred although I wish I didn't have to look for that -- I wish there just could have been a place maybe just like a, I don't know, like a meeting center or something – just to say hey this is just for transfer students and then people can you know just talk and kind of relate their own experiences or at least feel like it's not so uncomfortable. It's nice to know that the institution has a transfer community – it would be nice if it was just a little more forward so then people could feel like it was more visible.*"

Isabella wished that she had attended orientation and figured if she had, that maybe she would have organically made more connections with other students right away.

Isabella had no issues with transferring credits over to the four-year university. She stated that people told her that "*transferring credits will be the most difficult part of transferring*" but she ended up finding out that "*when I first transferred here, the credits transferring over was like the easiest thing.*" She was pleased about the ease of her credits transferring because it would have been awkward if she had to contact her old professors at her previous institution to ask for syllabi or other materials. She stated she was extremely happy that she did not have to fill out any petitions or extra paperwork and she just had to worry about registering for her classes. Since Isabella's credits transferred well, she had the ability to register for major specific courses to complete requirements for her program right away instead of having to take courses that were not necessary. She will graduate on the timeline she had predicted and she was very happy about that.

One of Isabella's favorite places to study at the four-year university is the library. "*It's my favorite place to study and learn stuff.*" During a career class, she utilized library resources to get a free headshot done for a class project. Isabella stated that "*if you want a resource or need help on something, they're right there*" which she really appreciated because the resource was visible to her right away and was an easy resource for her to access to accomplish something for class. Recently she discovered a new part of the library that has study spaces. She was very excited because she no longer has to climb four flights of stairs to find a quiet place to study.

Isabella spoke about many interactions with professors whether they were professors in her major area or not. She spoke of a professor she had her first semester who talk an intro class to American Indian Studies and stated she was "*one I still talk to and she always makes me feel*

welcome." "*I always appreciated that she's always smiling and I felt really bad because I had to miss the first day of her class because she was getting married*" but the professor was very flexible. If she met the professor in the hallway, "*she always says hi and knows my name.*"

Another professor, her bass professor, was another person who really made an impact on her experience at the four-year university. She stated "*you can talk to him about pretty much any life thing and he's got some good insight*" or "*he'll be able to tell you a good joke.*" She remembers him well and he made her feel welcome. She really appreciated that "*my professors cared about me and wanted me to succeed*" and she had structure and expectations that made sense to her. "*I felt more encouraged to try new things*" after she had been at the university for at least one semester and that made her feel a sense of belonging on the campus.

In closing, Isabella expressed that she "*did not expect there to be so many students who were transfer students*" at the four-year university. She enjoys feeling like "*I'm not stigmatized and I've met more transfer students. This is not a weird thing, it's a normal thing*" to be a transfer student. She thinks it is important to talk about transfer because "*there are a large majority of students who do that and I think that is would be nice to have a community*" of other current students who had transferred. "*People are making more sense of it now. It's being seen more about 'I get why you're doing it'*" instead of "*'why are you doing it'*" which is something that makes Isabella happy to know that the climate is changing.

Isabella expressed that she wishes she would have had a point person to mentor and guide her through the transition process throughout her first semester and perhaps beyond. She stated "*I wish we could have peer mentors that are for transfer students*" to help navigate the resources and other opportunities available for new students at the university who have transferred. Isabella really wants other students who have transferred to not feel so awkward and that they have

somebody who can help them through the transition and at least their first week at the university. "*It would be a good thing to have those students help others*" to learn about campus and they have "*one person that they know*" that knows their name on a campus with thousands of people.

Victoria

Victoria (pseudonym), a Native American woman in her late twenties, started the interview by asking, "*is it OK if I bead while we talk?"* She then proceeded to pull out a container of beads and a hat and we began to talk. Victoria described herself as a confident, genuine, and honest person and throughout the interview, that became very evident. She was very clear on what she wanted to accomplish in college and after graduation and is incredibly goal driven. Victoria believes that she can change the world by educating others and will not stop persevering until she has truly changed the world. She is aspiring to teach about the natural environment to help preserve it and also wants to help educate young people about her Native American culture and the natural environment. She wants to ensure that the work she does in respect to the sustainability of the environment will help young people to grow and find their own passions in a field related to the environment.

Victoria began her post-secondary education at a two-year tribal college where her love for the environment intertwined with her love for her Native American culture and traditions. She transferred to the four-year university in hopes of finishing a specific baccalaureate degree in Environment & Sustainability that was offered in a city that was ideal for learning about her field. The campus is in a city that has many opportunities for outdoor activities but is also close enough to a bigger metropolitan area where she could go and have the city experience as well. She was originally from the metropolitan area and is used to having a variety of restaurants and

38

activities to do, but also loves being outside. Therefore, the area where the university is located was the ideal fit for Victoria and helped her initially make the choice to transfer.

As a current student, Victoria is very focused on the natural environment and the sustainability of the natural world. Her goal after graduation is to work in grant writing and community development, with a focus on the environment and sustainable practices. She also hopes to keep educating young people on the environment and Ojibwe culture. Due to her interests, Victoria has made many connections in the community where the four-year university is located. She has participated in various internship and volunteer opportunities.

Victoria chose this four-year university because it had the program she wanted and stayed because the university was in the city which is located in the "*heart of Ojibwe nation*" which for Victoria was especially important because "*it has a lot of cultural significance for my tribe.*" This cultural significance was incredibly important to Victoria to ensure she would have connections to her tribe once she transferred and part of the reason why she stayed, especially since she was from a small tribal college where she knew everybody. "*When you get into indigenous populations, it's hard to go anywhere without knowing anyone*" because the community is very small and everybody is interconnected.

Victoria talked about one of her mentors at the four-year institution. She met him in the American Indian center on campus where she liked to hang out because it was quiet and had free coffee and free printing. Since he knew her family through the work he does with Native American tribes and being Native American himself, she made a connection with him easily. He was the only person she knew when she first transferred and he provided support to her during her first semester. She stated that "*it's nice that he always checks in with students and he always makes time for them to talk about other stuff or talk about life in general.*" Having this

connection with this mentor helped make Victoria's acclimation to the university a more comfortable and helped her persist through that first semester at the university.

Although there were some positive experiences at the four-year university, overall Isabella's acclimation to the university did not go well. She stated that "*the person who was supposed to be my* [Communications] *advisor – I didn't feel was very supportive*" which was really hard. At first, she thought maybe her advisor "*sees me as a student who can handle herself and that's a good thing*" but after more interactions she realized that her advisor "*just wants to skate by and that's the kind of feeling I continue to have about him.*" When she was working to get her credits figured out because she "*worked so hard at – worked really, really hard at doing her undergrad in four years*" that even having to take one extra credit or class landed her at the university for an extra year.

There was another instance where Victoria had gone to see her advisor one day and he was wearing a team's jersey that happened to be a Native mascot. In her spare time, she talks to elementary schools about disrespectful mascots, and why they should not use them. When she asked her advisor about the jersey, he said something like "*we had a different logo*" from a high school hockey team, but got together with old high school friends and recreated it. Victoria stated "*it looked like a knock-off of the Blackhawks or something like that."* She asked her advisor about it and he stated "*I probably shouldn't wear it to school*" therefore, she figured "*that was it*" but she saw him wearing it at least two more times. She tried to talk to people in different areas of campus such as the American Indian Studies department about the situation and "*nothing came out of it.*" She felt like this was another instance where she didn't "*know how to navigate this system and what the right course of action is going to be – and also with somebody who is supposed to be my advisor but is now also in charge of a lot of my grades.*"

40

Her advisor was also one of her professors and she felt that sometimes her personal disagreements with the professor would be "*reflected in her grades which was unfair.*"

Victoria also "*reached out to other people on campus who I thought might be people of help to me and they ended up not being those people for me, which was disappointing.*" When she later reached out for advice she was told to "keep your head down and keep going" which she did not think was good advice in any way. She stated that she sees her education as "*I'm the paying customer, I'm not happy, and something should change and that's not how I felt here.*" She had not run into the same issues at the two-year college and felt that more people were ready to "*listen to your problem and not pawn you off on the next person.*" Whereas, at the four-year university, she felt like she did a lot of running around and people would say things like "*'oh I can't do that.' or 'Oh, I wish I could help but my hands are tied.' or 'Oh yeah that sounds right but I have nothing to do with that process'*" which was very frustrating for her because then "*why are we talking then*?" and wasting time. "*It was very difficult to figure out how to get things done that I needed to get done*" and made for rather negative experiences with people on the four-year university campus.

One person in particular "*told me I couldn't save the world with one internship - which I thought was a weird comment.*" As she was searching for internships, which she needed for her program "*I was told 'no' several times.*" After searching around, she finally found a person off-campus at a local two-year college who "*runs the Environmental Institute*" and she ended up "*getting a Sea Grant internship*" based on the advice she received from this person who played a mentor role through her time at the four-year university. The Sea Grant internship was a paid internship which helped her balance school and other obligations because it meant she did not have to work long hours at a job while in school. "*When I could help her, I would*" with any

41

projects or anything else she needed help with at the Environmental Institute because she enjoyed the work. As a full scholarship student, everything was paid for, so again, she did not have to balance having multiple jobs while in school which opened the door to her being able to look for opportunities to speak at events or conferences, as well as opportunities to volunteer.

Victoria experienced what she referred to as "*culture shock*" after she transferred to the university. Although she was originally from a metropolitan area and had gone to a small, rural college, she sometimes had a hard time connecting with her peers from the metropolitan area because "*I'm not used to connecting to them.*" When she had to write an essay on what her biggest culture shock was from her time abroad in Ecuador was, she stated that hers was "*rolling around with these suburban kids – It was really weird*" while other students wrote about not being able to drink the water or the experience of being in another country.

When she got to the four-year university, Victoria had many different thoughts in relation to the expectations she had and how her expectations changed because they had to:

"*My no expectations changed into something really grey and kind of dingy which again pushed me out of being a student and kind of just going to school but also doing other things. In [the tribal college city] my top priority was being in school, studying, and getting the grades I knew I could get and then right below that was internship and making sure that I had a cushier life where I could buy food and gas and movie tickets I guess. So, when I got here, expectations of myself changed where I was like OK I'm going to do enough to get by and then do other things that make me happier. Which sucks because, you know, school should make you happy. Learning things is fun. At an institution where everyone else is doing the same thing and kind of have the same goals – It should have been a lot different experience for me and it wasn't, which is too bad.*"

Victoria talked about that her favorite thing about being a student at the university was the bus pass which she stated "*I know that's super minimal*" but she likes the freedom of jumping on the bus and being able to explore different places and "*made the decision to use public transportation really easy.*" She barely used the library at the university and mostly would take the bus to the public library instead.

Because of the experience she had transferring into the institution during her first semester, Victoria never truly felt like she belonged or that she was a Yeti (mascot pseudonym). Her experiences deterred her from being part of the campus community, but thankfully she made other connections in the community instead. She made these connections by becoming part of a commission off campus that connected her to resources off campus. She also was named an emerging leader through her work with that group not long after joining. Victoria stated that "*I would not recommend that path for anyone, but it was good because it lead to other things for me.*"

One of the positive experiences that Victoria talked about was "*being so welcomed so quickly*" into the community and the city. The first year, "*I kind of came to class and left.*" The second year, "*I think I got a little more comfortable.*" "*My last semester here I did an independent study*" with a professor in the sustainability office and her intern on climate change conversations. "*It was the first time I had had somebody in that role that was continuously supportive – the rest of the time here I felt like I was fighting the entire time.*" She was happy that she had finally found a person in that role who was supportive; however, she had to wait until her last semester to have that experience.

During the registration process, she stated that "*I was told several times to take lighter classes and take a lighter class load*" even though she had straight A's from her previous

43

college. "*I think there are a lot of stereotypes around tribal colleges in particular – that they're a little bit easier*" and although she was a very good student, the advisor had a hard time seeing past the fact that she was transferring from a tribal college. As a student who was on full scholarship, Victoria had to take at least fifteen credits to maintain her scholarship and since she came in with a two-year degree and two years of a NASA internship, she was expecting more and was again disappointed. She wishes she could have had "*a point person*" that helped her through her struggles and also a person "*who didn't have all of these stereotypes about tribal colleges.*" When somebody told her to take a remedial math course, they placed doubt in her and "*that was terrifying.*"

Victoria never really felt like she was part of her program or that she belonged there either. Part of the issue, she stated was that "*we didn't have a set school and we didn't have a set hall*" or building and "*my degree was all over the map*" of campus which made it challenging for Victoria to feel that sense of belonging or feeling like she was at home in her program. She talked about how other programs had a set building where their program was housed or specific study areas where students could hang out and would meet each other that way, but her program was not like that. She did; however, meet some people organically through classes and went through what she referred to as somewhat of a cohort model in her program which meant she had the same students in her classes; therefore, she was able to get to know them fairly well.

Victoria experienced hardships with trying to get her credits to transfer. One of her biggest challenge was the fact that her science courses from the tribal college transferred to the four-year university as American Indian Studies courses instead of science courses. She stated that "*I had to retake some basic science classes which I didn't think was necessary*" since she had already obtained a two-year associate's degree in environmental science and had already

taken the proper requirements. One professor in the biology department, who was responsible for making decisions on courses transferring, was one of the few people that Victoria found could help her get credit for what she had already taken. The professor, who she did not even have for a class, took time out of her busy schedule to meet with Victoria and was able to override the previous course decision and give Victoria credit for a biology course.

During her time at the four-year university, Victoria joined two different student organizations to help her make connections and become more involved on campus. One of the clubs was Anishinaabe Student Organization (ASO) and the other was the American Indian Science and Engineering Society (AISES). ASO was an organization for anybody interested in Native American culture and helped Victoria connect organically with others that she met through the organization. AISES was a national, non-profit organization that focuses on substantially increasing the representation of Indigenous Peoples of North America in STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Mathematics) fields by bridging science and technology with traditional Native cultures and values. "*I had been involved with AISES previously, so just joined the chapter here.*"

Victoria also spent time with a national group called the Indigenous People's Climate Change Working Group, so "*a lot of my time was spent with them, too, so having the city connections and the national group – I found ways to spend my time*" that made it worthwhile to be here. Through this group, she did an internship and travelled a bunch. She was able to create a national network of people who "*is still a large part of my life and any problems that I ran into here they were kind of my sounding board*" and because they were people who "*had been in academia for a while that I trusted, who weren't necessarily at this college – which made me feel better.*" The people in her national network provided a level of guidance that she was not getting

at the four-year university and provided good advice for her to persevere through all of her struggles throughout her experience.

Victoria's AISES advisor was a huge support person for Victoria during her acclimation process and also helped Victoria become connected with national resources to ensure Victoria had connections in a field that was of huge importance to her. A big event during her time at the four-year university was when one of her AISES advisor's left the university due to what she referred to as "*cultural incompetency*" and she realized that "*this really is what it's like across campus*" and there is a real problem with the climate on campus. "*We still keep in contact and she is still a mentor of mine*" but her leaving "*was kind of a weird situation*" where the advisor "*lost her funding*" which was not surprising to Victoria based on what she had heard about the department the advisor worked for at the time. As Victoria put it "*it sucks for me, but good for you*" that the advisor was leaving and moving on to other things.

Victoria experienced tokenism when she first came to the university. As a person who identifies as Native American, she was contacted by the university's media people within a month or two of starting at the university. She was interviewed and the four-year university basically took credit for all of the things she had done prior to attending the university. "*That's another pretty big thing that I continuously ask about to this day is how other native professionals and students deal with tokenism – it's a level of racism, is what it is. It's like 'hey, look at this native student that we have'*" and she had thought there was a larger native population and "*that was really confusing to me*" because she was one of around forty at a medium sized college. "*It was a really interesting time where from the institution itself hearing 'no you're not good enough'*" when it came to internships and transferring credits and such to "*and then we want to parade you around on the homepage*" of the website and show off all of

46

the things she had accomplished. She put it this way "*congratulations on all you have accomplished, but take remedial math please*" which was super confusing.

Victoria, who just recently graduated from the four-year university, contemplated leaving the four-year university and transferring elsewhere after being at the four-year university for just one semester. When "*I started hitting roadblocks, I looked at other universities*" because she felt that she had put up with enough of the four-year university. She heavily considered the other universities, but "*after thinking logically, it wasn't an option and I couldn't afford moving, again*" even though she was not happy with her experience. Ultimately, Victoria stayed at the university because "*leaving would have been too stressful.*" Therefore, Victoria made the tough decision to stay at the four-year university and make the best of where she was. Although her experiences on campus were not what she expected, she stated "*it was the best thing that could have happened to me because it pushed me out into the community*" which allowed Victoria to meet people that could help her enter the field she was interested in once she graduated.

Mark

Mark (pseudonym), a white male in his early twenties, is incredibly laid back and probably one of the most confident people anybody could ever meet. He described himself as honest and outgoing which was evident throughout the answers he gave during his interview.

He transferred to a medium sized, comprehensive four-year public university to complete his baccalaureate degree at what he referred to as a "*reputable institution*". His goal, once he graduates with his business degree, is to eventually move up to a more administrative role within a company he currently works for part-time. He would like to work in more of an office setting someday in a human resource type role, but after graduation, he intends to work construction

47

first. Mark's exact goal is to "*work construction for about twelve years and then transfer into a human resources role.*"

Mark had transferred among three different institutions prior to coming to the four-year university. All of these institutions were a two-year college setting; therefore, Mark was very familiar with the two-year college system. Mark decided to attend a two-year college prior to coming to the four-year university so he could "*save money and get a two-year degree and then take those credits and transfer into a four-year.*" Based on the way his credits transferred and the planning he did prior to his transfer to the four-year university, Mark had no issues with his credits transferring to the four-year university and was able to have his generals waived which allowed him to start in on his major specific coursework once he completed his transfer.

Mark's goal was always to get a bachelor's degree, but he knew that he would only be able to afford that degree if he went the two-year college route first. After transferring to the four-year university, he fell in love with the area due to the different outdoor activities and college town atmosphere which made his choice to stay an easy one. He also "*wanted to finish school, so I just stayed.*" His only challenge to staying in the area to attend the four-year university was the distance from his family and the metropolitan area where he grew up. He talked about how there was more to do in a close proximity and that he missed his family.

Since he had transferred in over 100 credits, he stated that "*after transferring so many times, and actually finishing a two-year degree, if I start here, I might as well stay because a majority of the credits have to be finished at that institution, so – there was no point in me leaving.*" Mark made connections quickly and "*I actually enjoyed most of the professors*" he had within the first semester; therefore, he decided to stay so he could finally finish his four-year degree.

Mark chose this four-year university because this university had a great reputation for their business programs; therefore, he felt it would be a great fit for him. His experiences within his program have been overwhelmingly positive; however, Mark has had some challenges. One challenge was related to some of his business school professors. "*If I am going to go to a school and pay thousands of dollars a year, the least you could do is have a professor speak relatively good English*" so that Mark could understand the course content and do well on assignments and exams. "*I don't expect them to speak perfect English*" but he had never experienced that at the community colleges he had attended and that became frustrating for him.

Instead of utilizing people or other resources, Mark turned to looking for a job in student services to learn the system and how to navigate. He stated, "*I ended up getting a job in admissions which I ended up learning about the system and how it all works.*" The admissions office gave him the opportunity to learn about the university system and the different tools or resources he needed to be successful. He liked the atmosphere in admissions because "*everybody was kind of like a close family and they respected each other realistically was what it was*" and that was the atmosphere that helped him feel connected to campus and feel like he had a place here.

When Mark decided to leave the admissions office to look for other opportunities after two semesters, he worked in the sports department where he was able to meet people and make connections in that office in two different ways. One way was through having superiors who were other students who could "*empathize and sympathize what you were going through because they've been there*" and the second way was by getting involved in intramural sports. These experiences in the sports department allowed Mark to make connections with other students and helped to make his experience as a current student who had transferred a very positive one.

49

Mark had problems getting his financial aid dispersed on time so he could pay for housing his first semester at the four-year university. He stated that "*financial aid apparently lost the forms and had to take some time to look for them, so it delayed me getting the aid I needed to pay for housing, food, and other expenses.*" He expressed how stressful this process was and how frustrating. He also mentioned that, "*the price – it's really expensive compared to a two-year college*" and that he had to put forth more effort to come up with a plan on how to pay for college and "*I'm still here so there must have been something good out of it.*" Mark experienced sticker shock due to always paying for credits at a community college and now transferring, he was shocked by the price.

Mark felt like he finally connected with other students and felt like a Yeti (mascot pseudonym) for the first time when he and his roommates were welcoming new students to campus during move-in day during his second semester at the university. Him and his roommates lived off of the street where new students and parents were driving and waiting in line with their vehicles to unload their personal belongings. Their group decided to have a party and celebrate new students coming to campus. He stated "*at that moment, you had all these people together that were like cheering and having fun and connecting with one another.*" He thought to himself "*Wow, I'm kind of excited about these new freshmen coming in and they can learn stuff. -- Like woohoo, go Yetis!*" At that moment, he finally felt an overwhelming sense of belonging and knew that this university was where he was meant to be.

Since Mark is a huge sports fan, he was following one of the sports teams that made it to the national tournament. He was going to make the long road trip with friends to go cheer on the Yetis. As he's been watching this team progress through the season, and now into the

championship, he has felt another level of connection with the university and again feels a sense of belonging. He is excited to go cheer on the Yetis and is proud to be a part of this university.

Mark also made some great connections with other students during intramural sports. He stated that "*actually playing on teams, it was really fun because we didn't care if we lost a game, we were just out there to have fun and participate and communicate and connect with new people.*" Connections with others on campus was of huge importance to Mark since he did not have much of that at the community college he attended. These connections at the four-year university helped him become a more connected and engaged member of the campus community and have helped him persevere to be as far into his degree as he is today. Mark cannot wait to finish his degree and will graduate during the time-frame he set up for himself.

Mark talked about one class that he had taken that focused on advanced writing. He stated that when it comes to writing drafts "*it's so bad 'cause like I just want to get through it, get a rough draft out there, and see what it is and there are just so many mistakes*" but he had a professor for this class that he really enjoyed. "*Talking with him one on one after class*" was something that Mark really enjoyed. When the professor asked for helped, he would volunteer because the professor was odd but Mark really enjoyed that about him and liked participating.

When he worked in admissions, Mark connected with a handful of the admissions counselors. If he was having a bad day "*I'd just pop into one of their offices*" and they would greet him and just be somebody that would listen and provide guidance if he needed it. He really appreciated having a go-to person that he trusted that he could go to. He knew that it was a judgement free zone and that the person wanted what was best for him and had his best interest at heart.

As soon as Mark got admitted to the upper division of his program in human resources, he stated that he felt as though he was part of his program right away. "*I'm super excited and I was like that for a little bit and then I had this really big upset*" where he almost switched his major to something else. He realized that he felt this way due to a professor that he did not see eye to eye with and after some reflection "*dropped the class*" and at that moment, he reconnected with the program.

Since Mark is a business major, he talks about doing many group projects which has helped him meet other students in his program. When we talked, he was currently in the middle of two different group projects. "*We just finished one of our group projects so that was kind of cool. Where we actually had to sit down and have labor negotiations for a union – it was a mock union bargaining type thing.*" He is getting real, hands on experience in the business school. Since he is going into human resources, he does a lot in groups because in the real-world different groups interact with one another, so "*often times they will work with other groups to accomplish one goal.*"

Most group projects have gone well; however, there have been some that have not. One example that Mark gave was "*you had one or two students who – I'm just going to swoop in at the end because somebody did my part and I'll just present that part*" when the rest of the group who actually did the work talk to the professor about points being given out. The professor's response in this instance was firm on his stance that "*well in real situations, you wouldn't give somebody different points for it because that's just what you got to do is pick up the slack.*" Mark reacted to this by saying "*This is so unfair - if anything you should teach them a lesson by giving them a poor grade*" and not cater to them in college because that student will not have the ability to just coast through life once they enter the real world.

Mark is incredibly outgoing, so to meet new people, he would spontaneously sit next to a new person and try to strike up a conversation with them. However, he has heard from many current students that it can be "*really hard to make friends – especially if you don't know anybody and being random will only get you so far.*" As a current student who has transferred, this was important to help Mark meet new people outside of work. He enjoys "*out of nowhere, be the most random, outgoing person*" and saying things like "*what's up dude? I don't know you, but let's be friends*" to people he has just met. He originally thought that he would transfer to the four-year university and be super private and not talk to anybody, but because of his role in student services, he was forced to talk to people which helped him become more outgoing. Since he was forced to talk to people, once he transferred he had an expectation that people would be friendly and welcoming, and he was thankful that that expectation was met.

One of the big transitions that Mark experienced was when he transitioned from working in admissions to working in the sports department. He went from "*sitting behind a desk and looking at a computer screen for like anywhere from four to eight hours a day to being put into an active role where you were running up and down a field or you were constantly helping people so that was kind of big.*" Mark thought the experience was interesting, but was definitely a big adjustment for him because it was totally different.

Another transition that Mark experienced was going from working during the morning to working at night. "*Preferably I'd rather work at night anyways, because I'm up most of the nights so it makes it hard to get up during the day*" but most of his classes have shifted and are now night classes. Mark is not a huge fan of having classes at night because he believes that "*when it comes to school, from my experience, there's a prime time for me*" in which Mark will be focused and most willing to learn and that would be somewhere around 10:00 AM until

around noon. He believes that anything "*after 2:00 PM is just a no-go and it's downhill from there*" and when he is sitting in a night class he will watch the clock and wait for his first break to happen.

One of the reasons why Mark decided to transition away from working at the admissions office was due to staff changes.

"*The first semester working in admissions I loved, loved. loved it. It was honestly so phenomenal and it was much better than working at [the community college]. Even though there was more work, I didn't mind it but going into the second semester – with the new people that came into the office, it made things a little rough because you literally went from having this flat expectation from the first semester to having totally different expectations that were changing on like a monthly or weekly basis sometimes. So that made things really difficult and often times was stressful.*"

These changes made Mark put in his notice and move to working more hours with the sports department.

Discussion

Each student who chooses to transfer, has a unique experience once they complete their transfer to the four-year university. Current students who have transferred each experience the four-year university in a different way based on their background, prior experience with transferring, level of engagement with the campus community, and many other factors. Each student is a unique individual and their experiences may reflect their individuality. Although each of the current students who have transferred had different interactions and experienced different dynamics during their time at the four-year university, different themes emerged across

the three interviews. Four themes emerged as I synthesized across their interviews which were: support, financial aid, transfer credits, and connections.

Support

An important theme that emerged in the analysis of the interviews was support which encompasses resources at the university such as programming, support staff, and academic advising. However, support can also be a family member or friend outside of the academic world who provides information, guidance, or encouragement to persist through the hard times and complete the four-year degree. Academic support could be tutoring, academic advising, and mentoring programs which provide resources to help students do well at the university by setting them up for academic success.

Programming for current students who have transferred could be advisement programs that help students learn about academic requirements and expectations, mentoring programs meant to connect current students who previously transferred with current students who have just transferred, and connection programs that allow students to meet each other and feel a sense of belonging. Advisement programs provide the current student who has transferred an idea of what requirements must be completed to graduate and to graduate in a specific timeframe. Mentoring programs help to connect students to one another and provides a current student who has just transferred a point person to help guide them through their transition and acclimation at the university. Connection programs invite current students who have transferred to meet one another and build relationships with other current students who have transferred. All of these programs can help support the academic and social success of a current student who has transferred to ensure the student completes their baccalaureate degree at the four-year university.

55

Staff meant to support current students who have transferred could be staff who work in orientation and transition programs or could work in an office to support a specific population of students such as the American Indian Center. Their job at the university is to ensure students who have transferred know about the resources and opportunities that are available to them at the university. Resources that are available to the students may include the advisement and mentoring programs that allow students to recognize the expectations that the university has of them, as well as connect with a student who has been through the experience already and give guidance to ensure the current student who has just transferred has a better chance of staying.

All of them received support to help them persist and continue their education at the four-year university. Much of the theory on student retention and the literature speak to social and academic engagement for current students who had transferred, but little information is given in regards to support services or support staff to help with the acclimation process for current students who have transferred. However, throughout all three of the students' interviews, each student referenced support that they had received from somebody that helped enhance their experience at the four-year university and made them feel either at home or a sense of belonging. Two of the students also referenced people in their households that helped support them through their acclimation process to help them stay at the four-year university which was either a significant other or roommate.

From the interviews, there is evidence that the students could have used a little more support both academically and socially from staff and faculty at the four-year university to help enhance their experience. Overall, the university should consider evaluating the services, staff, and faculty that interact with students who have transferred during their first semester to ensure that students who have transferred to the university are not feeling as though they do not have

support through this big transition in their life and that the university is meeting whatever expectations that the students have who choose to transfer and attend.

Financial Aid

Another important theme that emerged was financial aid. Financial aid can refer to the completion of the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA), financial aid packages, and scholarships. Students may rely more heavily on the FAFSA results and what type of financial aid package they receive at the four-year university once they have transferred from a community college. Many students who have transferred are on their own and rely less on financial support from their parents to pay for tuition and other expenses at the four-year university. Scholarships can play a big role in a student's persistence to graduation since students who have transferred do not have to pay scholarships back to the federal government.

The FAFSA is important for all college students as it provides financial support; however, the process of filling out the FAFSA or receiving aid once a student has transferred can be uncertain or challenging to figure out how aid transfers from one institution to another. The FAFSA can become a complicated process when a student gets married or a change occurs such as independence from their parents when a student reaches a certain age. As a current student who has transferred, their FAFSA typically looks different from a FAFSA of a first-year student since they may have these nuances in their financial situations.

A student's financial aid package can be challenging to understand for current students who have transferred. The cost of community college is significantly lower than the cost of the four-year university; therefore, students who transferred from a community college may sometimes have to look for additional money outside of their financial aid package to be able to afford their tuition and other fees associated with attending a four-year university.

57

Scholarships can be a method for a student to pay for their tuition without having to pay back the money later. Scholarships can have a big influence on the current student who has transferred and their experience at the four-year university. First-year students have a greater chance of obtaining scholarship money from the four-year university as the university offers more options for first-year students. Transfer students have a small chance of obtaining an admissions scholarship if they have done well at their previous college; however, most may have to wait until they have enrolled as a current student and spent a whole year at the university before scholarship opportunities may become available. Outside scholarships may be available for current students who have transferred. For example, a student may get full scholarship from their tribe as long as they maintain a certain grade point average and number of credits each semester.

Each of the current students who had transferred talked about finances and the impact that finances played in their decision to stay at the four-year university. One student referenced that they had a hard time getting aid disbursed. Another student mentioned having difficulties getting aid changed from a single marital status to a married marital status on their FAFSA. The third mentioned having complications with their full scholarship status due to being advised to take less than fifteen college credits their first semester at the four-year university. All three were able to overcome this hurdle to stay, but one student even referenced the cost of the institution and experiencing a sort of sticker shock at the four-year university because each credit is twice as much as a credit at the community college.

Transfer Credits

An additional theme that emerged across the interviews was transfer credits. Transfer credits refer to any credits that the students earned prior to enrolling at the four-year university.

58

Transfer credits can be credits earned through test credits such as Advanced Placement (AP), International Baccalaureate (IB) or the College Level Examination Program (CLEP). Transfer credits could have been earned through concurrent or dual enrollment during their time in high school through programs like the Post-Secondary Enrollment Options (PSEO) or Youth Options. Transfer credits could be earned through the military and through military service. Or finally, transfer credits can be earned by a student attending another post-secondary institution before enrolling at the four-year university such as a community college.

Transfer credit policy at the four-year university can influence the academic success and persistence of a current student who has transferred. If a four-year university has a generous transfer credit policy, students who have transferred have a greater chance of completing their four-year degree in the timeframe the students had set up for themselves because their credits will fulfill graduation requirements. If a four-year university does not accept many of the credits that a student had completed at their previous institution, transfer students may get frustrated and stop out of the four-year university due to their timeframe being extended and their previous credits being deemed as non-equivalent to the classes at the four-year university. Transfer credit policies should be considered for evaluation during the creation of a retention plan for current students who have transferred.

All of the students interviewed were current students at the time of interview, but a big part of their experience at the four-year university, depended on how their credits transferred and how those credits fulfilled graduation requirements. If students planned ahead and knew in advance what credits to take at the community college to fulfill core course requirements, the students would have a better chance of credits transferring over to the four-year university and having their credits count for meaningful credit that would count towards their four-year degree.

59

Therefore, the ease of credit transfer and transfer credit policy can have an impact on whether a student persists to baccalaureate attainment at a four-year university.

Connections

Connections was another important theme that emerged from the interviews. Connections look different for each student who has transferred, but making connections with others is known as a key component in a successful post-transfer experience. A student could make connections with other students, with staff members, or with faculty at the four-year university, once they have transferred. A student could also make connections off-campus within the city where the four-year university is located. Connections are an important part of a student feeling a sense of belonging that ensures the student feels as if they can stay at the four-year university.

Connections with other students can be made through student organizations or clubs, through going to class and doing group projects, or through programming meant to help with integration to the campus community. Student organizations and clubs give students who have transferred an opportunity to meet other students with like interests, as well as giving these students a connection to the campus community. If a student is regularly attending class and participates in class, there are opportunities for students to organically make connections with other students in their program or just through taking one class together and getting put together for a group project. Another way for a student to make connections with others is through programming at the four-year university. Programming could be an event such as a bonfire that is planned by a transition program coordinator where current students who have transferred are invited to come hang out with other students. Any method to help students meet one another can be an opportunity to help current students who have transferred persist to graduation by feeling a sense of belonging.

60

Connections with staff members could come from students taking advantage of work study programs such as a student becoming an office assistant for the admissions office. Staff members take on a mentorship role by training the student and being an open door for their student workers if they are having a bad day or need advice. Another way that current students who have transferred could make connections with staff members could be through utilization of resources such as speaking with a librarian in the library to find a book or other resource for a homework assignment. These connections with staff members can make a difference in the retention of current students who have transferred because the students have a point person who works at the university and could help them through any problems or point them in the right direction to somebody who can help them.

Faculty members can also play a big role in retention efforts of current students who have transferred. If students have positive interactions with their faculty in their program, the chances of a student being happy with their experience at the four-year university increases. Students can make connections with their faculty just in the classroom, but could also take advantage of opportunities to do research or be a teacher's assistant if they so choose. Since students who have transferred have already been to college, most are usually more focused and studious because they understand the expectations on what they must do to succeed at finishing their four-year degree. Faculty can also be academic or program advisors for students and through that connection may impact retention of students who have transferred through positive and negative experiences. If faculty do a proper job of advising and giving the student proper direction, the student who has transferred is more likely to finish their degree because they'll do so in a timely manner or in the timeframe they expected.

All three students made connections with other students on the four-year campus; however, all three students also made connections with staff, faculty, or community members, as well. Although the connections with other students were very important to each of the students in the study, connections with staff, faculty, and community members seemed to hold a whole other level of importance. Among fellow students, current students who have transferred get a sense of comradery, whereas, the connections with staff, faculty, and community members is more of a connection where that person will play a mentorship type of role in the students' lives.

Summary

This chapter paints a portrait of each of the three students as individuals and what experiences each student had throughout their post-transfer experience at the four-year university. Although each experience is unique to the individual who lived the experience, when examining across all three of the students' experiences, four different themes emerged. The four different themes that emerged from the interviews were support both academically and socially; financial aid which could mean scholarships, FAFSA, or the financial aid package the student receives; transfer credits which refers to how credits transfer and policies set up by the university; and connections with faculty, students, and staff. All four of the themes that emerged give a small picture of what these three students experienced after transferring to a four-year university and how it influenced their retention and persistence to baccalaureate attainment. The next chapter will provide a discussion about current students' post-transfer, ideas for future research, and finally a conclusion with final thoughts on the topic.

Chapter Five

Implications and Conclusions

The intent of this study was to describe the experience of current student acclimation to the university post transfer. More specifically, three students who transferred from a two-year college to a four-year, public, medium-sized university and had completed the transfer process were interviewed in order to describe their experiences as current students from the perspective of a student who had transferred. Since the method adopted in the study was phenomenological individual interviews, the study had the advantage of capturing experiences for three current students who transferred and what their experiences meant to them. While their recent research focused on the transfer student experience once the student enters the receiving institution (e.g. Nuñez & Yoshimi (2016), there is not comparable research on students' experiences post-transfer. This study intended to address a gap in the current scholarship by introducing a new conversation about the post-transfer experience and contribute to the literature on the dynamics that current students who have transferred have experienced and how that influences the students' retention at the four-year university.

This study addressed one central question: What are the experiences of current students who have transferred from a two-year college and what factors influence whether they persist to baccalaureate attainment at the four-year university? In the discussion below, there will be an examination of these questions and what answers the study produced.

Discussion of the Current Student Post-Transfer

Roughly 44%, nearly half of post-secondary students in the United States, are choosing to begin their undergraduate education at a community college (Nuñez & Yoshimi, 2016). Therefore, due to this influx in students who may be looking for a place to complete their

bachelor's degree, four-year post-secondary institutions must consider recognizing the importance of transfer students not only in their recruitment plans, but also in their retention plans. According to Nuñez and Yoshimi (2016), students face two key stumbling blocks on their way to baccalaureate degree attainment. The first stumbling block is actually transferring to the four-year institution which can be a scary step for many transfer students due to all the uncertainty they may feel. The second stumbling block is the completion of their four-year degree once they enroll at the four-year university. Transfer students are also shown to complete their four-year degrees at lower rates than their counterparts who began their studies at the same four-year institution (Long & Kurlaender, 2009; Melguizo et al. 2011). The retention of current students who have transferred is an understudied phenomenon. Practitioners and administrators do not know what current students who have transferred experience at the four-year university, how these students identify themselves once they enroll, or what current students who have transferred need in terms of resources and support to be successful both academically and socially to persist to baccalaureate graduation due to lack of data on such experiences which the present study sought to understand.

Tinto's (1993, 2012) models of student retention can inform models for the retention of current students who have transferred. However, although there are similarities between the present study and the theory, there are also differences between the needs of first-year students and those students who have transferred. Although each of the students in the study persisted, all three of them experienced hurdles and challenges along the way that other students may not have been able to overcome. Tinto's (1993) theory on student retention is focused on social and academic experiences and not particularly on the student's characteristics, goals, and commitments. However, when considering the post-transfer student experience, elements of both

parts in the students' experiences are equally important to the students once they have completed their transfer to the four-year university. Although the present study is small and only included three interviews, as practitioners and administrators, the present study gives a small glance into the post-transfer experience. The present study cannot and should not be generalized to a population or institution, but the themes can be generalized back to the theories on student retention by Vincent Tinto (1993, 2012).

Tinto (2012) produced a framework for institutional action by outlining the different conditions for student success. Four different conditions that Tinto (2012) outlined were expectations, support, assessment and feedback, and involvement. Expectations referred to what students expected of themselves, as well as the level of expectations set by the professor of the class that the student was attending. Support was based on what the university did to support students academically, socially, and in some cases financially. Assessment and feedback referred to students' likelihood to succeed if their performance was assessed and feedback was provided frequently to enable students, faculty, and staff the ability to adjust their practices and behaviors. Involvement was the most important condition for success according to Tinto (2012). Involvement was based on students being academically and socially engaged with faculty, staff, and peers. If students were involved, Tinto (2012) believed that students were more likely to succeed in college. When all four conditions exist, students are more likely to remain in college, although, certain conditions may be more important for some students than others (Tinto, 2012).

In the present study, four themes emerged across the participants' post-transfer experiences which were support, financial aid, transfer credits, and connections. As practitioners, the themes that emerged can help inform some of the decisions that we make in regards to current students who have transferred based on Tinto's (1993) theory on student retention. The

overlap in themes between this study and Tinto's (1993) four conditions for student success can help us evaluate our own practices to ensure we are serving this unique population of students who have transferred.

Support and financial aid have some crossover with Tinto's (2012) theory. Support to these current students who have transferred was focused on resources at the university that helped them be socially or academically successful, but those university resources were not the only form of support the students experienced. These students also had community members and folks at home that supported them and helped to ensure they were successful at staying at the university. In Tinto's (2012) theory, the four conditions of student success are focused on the university and what resources are available, but forget that students have other forms of support that can sometimes be just as helpful in enhancing their persistence.

The crossover with Tinto's (2012) theory and financial aid also relates to support. Tinto's (2012) theory talks about how the university can support students financially. However, in the present study, students mentioned FAFSA and financial aid, but did not mention scholarships or other aid at the university being helpful and financially supporting them. Instead, the students talked about wondering how they were going to pay for school since there is a difference from the expense of the community college. One of the students was on a full scholarship from her tribe, so her financial support came from the tribe instead of the university. These differences between Tinto's (2012) theory and the study are important because the differences are evident between first-year college bound students and students who enroll that transferred from a community college. Current students who transferred from a community college experience the university in a different way than first-year students who spend their whole college experience at the same place.

66

In regards to involvement, Tinto's (2012) theory mentions students being socially and academically involved with faculty, staff, and peers. Each student in the study described their involvement on campus and that they were involved in something whether that be a club, intramurals, or an organization such as the tour guide program. However, for current students who have transferred, their successful retention was based more on positive connections with others than it was on sheer involvement at the university. As many current students who have transferred do not choose to live on campus, making connections with peers is crucial, but much more challenging because there are fewer opportunities and programs available to help current students who have transferred meet other people. Practitioners should consider evaluating the programming that is offered on their campus to see if the programming offered to current students who have transferred is conducive for these students to make connections. If no opportunities to make connections are available, sometimes students can work to make them on their own, but it presents another obstacle to persist to graduation if they do not feel a sense of community or belonging.

The final condition for student success is assessment and feedback in Tinto's (2012) theory. There was not a theme that emerged across the interviews in the present study that was similar to this notion of consistent assessment and feedback increasing the likelihood of a student to be successful. However, current students who have transferred were more concerned about their timeline to graduation and how their credits transferred into the university. How transfer credits would count for the requirements the students who have transferred needed to graduate with their bachelor's degree was much more important than the assessment of their performance or the feedback they would receive from faculty at the four-year university. Again, another difference between what a current student who has transferred is needing from the four-year

67

university to be successful academically and what Tinto's (2012) theory stated in regards to a student being successful academically. Although assessment and feedback are a natural part of the college experience, practitioners may need to consider focusing more on ensuring that transfer credit acceptance policies allow for current students who have transferred to make the most of the credits they have already earned at their previous institution.

Most experiences that the students had were positive during their time at the four-year university; however, inhibiting factors were present across all three students' post-transfer experiences. Starting at a two-year college was the only way the participants of the present study would be able to afford obtaining their baccalaureate degree. Most students continue to work while they go to the four-year university to help pay for the completion of their bachelor's degree. One of the participants had a hard time making connections and did not feel supported on the four-year university campus, so the participant needed to overcome those feelings to stay and continue forward towards degree completion. As practitioners, there is an importance to focus on both positive and negative experiences of current students who have transferred and try to improve both. Campus communities need to be welcoming to all students regardless of their backgrounds, and we have a duty as practitioners on our college campuses to continue to consider evaluating policies and procedures to ensure current students who have transferred have what they need to be successful both academically and socially to persist to baccalaureate graduation.

Future Research

      This study focused on three current students who transferred from a two-year college to a four-year public university; however, the topic of retention of students who have transferred is understudied. Future research on the same topic would be beneficial for the field as more students are choosing to transfer and four-year universities are focusing more on retention. The present study gave only a snippet of the post-transfer experience at a public, medium-sized, four-year university and what that experience means to the student who experienced it. More research could be done to expand on the present study and give an image of the retention of current students who have transferred.

      Future research on current students who transferred from a diversity of backgrounds would add to the conversation initiated by this study. Due to the changing landscape of higher education, the rising cost of college tuition, and the increased mobility of post-secondary students, transferring post-secondary institutions has become the norm. More research on the retention of current students who transferred from different types of institutions, for instance private colleges, could add to the conversation initiated by the present study. Research on the retention underrepresented populations of current students who have transferred and students who transferred from a four-year college or university to another four-year college or university has scarcely been studied and could also add to the conversation initiated by the present study. Gaps in the literature present themselves pertaining to specific populations of students such as non-traditional students, transfer students with disabilities, veterans, and first-generation transfer students. Further research could be done on each of these specific populations to better understand their experiences as they acclimate to becoming students post the transfer experience.

69

Implications for Practitioners

The findings of this study offer a number of implications for the broader field of higher education. Since post-secondary students are becoming more mobile, which in turn makes transferring the norm in higher education, four-year institutions of higher education should consider taking a closer look at what their campuses can provide to current students who have transferred by studying the post-transfer experience. As a campus considers evaluating the institution's current practices regarding students who have transferred, Tinto's (2012) theory on student retention has many facets that could be helpful, but Tinto's (2012) primary focus is on first-year student retention. Institutions could still utilize Tinto's (2012) theory on student retention, but must also learn more about students who have transferred to their campus and what themes may emerge that compare or contrast to Tinto's four different conditions of student success.

First, four-year institutions should consider evaluating the strategic plans in place on their campuses that prioritize and guide the work of administrators and practitioners alike. Current students who have transferred should be considered as an integral part of each institution's strategic plan. To accomplish changes in strategic plans on a four-year campus, a consideration of implementing an institutional commitment to transfer students and students who have transferred is imperative. Although some practitioners have good intentions, without an institutional commitment of resources such as specific program funding and dedicated staff that understand the needs of current students who have transferred, it is unlikely that this unique population of students will receive the academic and social support they deserve through their transition and acclimation processes to help them persist to baccalaureate attainment.

Second, institutions should consider evaluating what resources are available on their campuses to support current students who have transferred such as specific programming (e.g. a peer mentoring program and the funding and staffing to support that programming). One of the findings from the study was that these three students sought out ways to meet other people and make connections with peers or other students who had also transferred. Therefore, another consideration could also be made for institutions to evaluate what types of clubs or organizations may appeal to these students who have transferred to help them integrate into the campus community, especially those clubs or organizations that are related to their academic or career interests and goals.

Third, four-year institutions should also consider what focus, if any, that the institution may have on transfer student retention. Historically, institutions of higher education have focused retention efforts on first-year college students. One of the main reasons for this focus is that students tended not to be mobile and would go to a college and stay there for the full four years to complete their degree. Transfer students or students who had transferred were an afterthought in the process as students were historically not as mobile. Due to the increase in post-secondary student mobility, institutions should recognize the importance of evaluating retention efforts. Transfer students and students who have transferred should be recognized as important in accomplishing budget and enrollment goals for four-year colleges and universities.

Since each student who has transferred is unique, there cannot be a one-size fits all approach to working with these students; however, by studying the themes that emerge from this study and comparing them to the student retention theory by Vincent Tinto (2012), practitioners can begin to understand some of the needs of these students and respond appropriately.

71

Nuñez and Yoshimi (2016) found that many students used technical tools, which refers to websites, to help them navigate the transfer process; however, participants in this study did not address such tools being helpful or otherwise. People were the resources that the participants in this study utilized as their main source to help them integrate into the university and to help them navigate the new learning platform (e.g. Moodle) at the four-year university. Since websites and other technology tools are usually less costly to implement and maintain than hiring staff persons, institutions will usually choose the bottom line of their budget. However, based on the findings of the study, people were more important resources to current students who had transferred than technology tools.

Conclusion

Research on the retention of students who have transferred is becoming much more important as the landscape of higher education changes and student mobility becomes normal. As a practitioner who works with transfer students every day, the value of understanding the post-transfer experience is crucial to ensure my ability to recruit quality transfer students that fit well at my university. Knowledge of post-transfer experiences, both positive and negative, is useful for an institution when practitioners and administrators are evaluating their efforts towards supporting and retaining current students who have transferred. Efforts by the institution could be focused on current student retention or efforts could be focused on allocating resources such as funding for programming or staffing to support current students who have transferred. Either way, the results of this study support a call to attention to the retention of students who have transferred and suggests that administrators and practitioners evaluate their own institutions' practices and resources allocated to support students who have transferred. Transfer is becoming the norm in higher education as post-secondary students become more mobile. If four-year

72

institutions plan to survive in today's changing higher education landscape, four-year institutions should consider the value of students who have transferred and the diversity of experiences that these students bring to their campuses. Once an institution has determined to make an institutional commitment to students who have transferred, practitioners and administrators can then consider where to allocate their resources to ensure these students enroll and persist to baccalaureate graduation.

References

Allen, J., Robbins, S. B., Casillas, A., & Oh, I. (2008). Third-year College Retention and Transfer: Effects of Academic Performance, Motivation, and Social Connectedness. *Research in Higher Education,49*(7), 647-664. doi:10.1007/s11162-008-9098-3

American Association of Community Colleges (2013). *Fast facts from our fact sheet*. Retrieved from: http://www.aacc.nche.edu/AboutCC/Pages/fastfactsfactsheet.aspx

Anglin, L. W., Davis, J. W., & Mooradian, P. W. (1995). Do Transfer Students Graduate? A Comparative Study of Transfer Students and Native University Students. *Community College Journal of Research and Practice,19*(4), 321-330. doi:10.1080/1066892950190404

Bahr, P. R. (2009). College Hopping: Exploring the Occurrence, Frequency, and Consequences of Lateral Transfer. *Community College Review,36*(4), 271-298. doi:10.1177/0091552108330903

Berger, J. B., & Malaney, G. D. (2003). Assessing the Transition of Transfer Students from Community Colleges to a University. *Journal of Student Affairs Research and Practice,40*(4). doi:10.2202/1949-6605.1277

Braun, J., & Zolfagharian, M. (2016). Student Participation in Academic Advising: Propensity, Behavior, Attribution and Satisfaction. *Research in Higher Education,57*(8), 968-989. doi:10.1007/s11162-016-9414-2

Cannon, J. (2013, March). Intrusive Advising 101: How to be Intrusive Without Intruding. Retrieved June 11, 2017, from https://www.nacada.ksu.edu/Resources/Academic-Advising-Today/View-Articles/Intrusive-Advising-101-How-to-be-Intrusive-Without-Intruding.aspx

Chang, J. C. (2005). Faculty Student Interaction at the Community College: A Focus on Students of Color. *Research in Higher Education,46*(7), 769-802. doi:10.1007/s11162-004-6225-7

Chin-Newman, C. S., & Shaw, S. T. (2013). The Anxiety of Change: How New Transfer Students Overcome Challenges. *Journal of College Admission*. Retrieved February 16, 2016.

Creswell, J. W. (2015). Educational research: planning, conducting, and evaluating quantitative and qualitative research. Boston: Pearson.

D'Amico, M. M., Dika, S. L., Elling, T.W., Algozzine, B., & Ginn, D.J. (2013). Early Integration and Other Outcomes for Community College Transfer Students. *Research in Higher Education, 55*(4), 370-399. doi:10.1007/s11162-013-9316-5

France, M. K., Finney, S. J., & Swerdzewski, P. (2010). Students' group and member attachment to their university: A construct validity study of the university attachment scale. *Educational and Psychological Measurement, 70*, 440-458.

Gusa, D. L. (2010). White Institutional Presence: The Impact of Whiteness on Campus Climate. *Harvard Educational Review, 80(4*), 464-490. doi:10.17763/haer.80.4.p5j483825u110002

Jensen, U. (2011). *Factors Influencing Student Retention in Higher Education.* Summary of *Influential Factors in Degree Attainment and Persistence to Career or Further Education for At-Risk/High Educational Need Students,* by Pacific Policy Research Center. Honolulu, HI: Kamehameha Schools–Research & Evaluation Division.

Kapraun, E. D., & Coldren, D. W. (1982). Academic Advising to Facilitate Student Retention. *NACADA Journal,2*(2), 59-69. doi:10.12930/0271-9517-2.2.59

Lee, J., Donlan, W., & Brown, E. F. (2010). American Indian/Alaskan Native Undergraduate Retention at Predominantly White Institutions: An Elaboration of Tintos Theory of College Student Departure. *Journal of College Student Retention: Research, Theory & Practice,12*(3), 257-276. doi:10.2190/cs.12.3.a

Long, B. T., & Kurlaender, M. (2009). Do community colleges provide a viable pathway to a baccalaureate degree? *Educational Evaluation and Policy Analysis, 31*, 30–53.

Melguizo, T., Kienzl, G., & Alfonso, M. (2011). Comparing the educational attainment of community college students and four-year college rising juniors using propensity score matching methods. *Journal of Higher Education, 82*, 265–291.

Neault, L. C., & Piland, W. E. (2014). Facing the Closed Door: What Community College Students Do After Being Denied Transfer Admission. *Community College Review,42*(3), 184-200. doi:10.1177/0091552114529813

Nuñez, A., & Yoshimi, J. (2016). A Phenomenology of Transfer: Students' Experiences at a Receiving Institution. *Innovative Higher Education*. doi:10.1007/s10755-016-9374-7

Pavel, D. M., Skinner, R., Farris, E., Cahalan, M., Tippeconnic, J., & Stein, W. (1998). *American Indians and Alaska Natives in postsecondary education* (NCES 98-291). Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics.

Read, B., Archer, L., and Leathwood, C. (2003). Challenging cultures? Student conceptions of belonging and isolation at a post-1992 university. *Studies in Higher Education, 28*(3), 261-77.

Severiens, S., & Wolff, R. (2008). A comparison of ethnic minority and majority students: Social and academic integration, and quality of learning. *Studies in Higher Education, 33*, 253-266.

Smith, C., & Allen, J. (2006). Essential functions of academic advising: What students want and get. *NACADA Journal, 26*(1), 56-66.

Tinto, V. (1993). *Leaving college: Rethinking the causes and cures of student attrition* (2nd ed.). Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Tinto, V. (2012). *Completing college: rethinking institutional action*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press.

Townsend, B. K., & Wilson, K. (2006). "A Hand Hold for A Little Bit": Factors Facilitating the Success of Community College Transfer Students to a Large Research University. *Journal of College Student Development,47*(4), 439-456. doi:10.1353/csd.2006.0052

Appendices

Appendix I

Interview Questions and Interview Protocols

Interview Questions:

What are you studying at the four-year institution?

What do you want to do after you graduate?

What motivated you to transfer from your previous institution to this four-year institution?

1. So, you are now a current student at the four-year institution and you stayed, why?

    a. Was it an easy decision?

    b. What specific resources did you utilize that helped you acclimate to the four-year institution?

    c. Was there anything that you had to overcome to stay?

2. Was there a moment when you felt you were now fully a "Yeti (mascot pseudonym)" and that you belonged here?

    a. Were there different ways that you got involved that helped you feel like you belonged at the four-year institution?

    b. Were there people who helped you feel like you belonged at the four-year institution?

3. When did you feel you were now part of the XXXX program?

    a. How have you made connections with other students in your program?

4. Have there been any other kinds of transitions you have experienced while attending the four-year institution?

    a. How have these transitions shaped your experience (positively or negatively)?

5. How do you balance being a college student and other obligations that you may have in your life?

    a. Were there any resources that you utilized to help balance being a student and these other obligations?

6. What interactions with others have you had that have shaped your experience?

    a. Examples of positive.

    b. Examples of negative.

7. What expectations did you have about being a university student?

    a. How do you feel about these expectations now?

8. What do you enjoy most about being a university student?

9. What would you change about your experience as a university student if you could?

10. If you could give two pieces of advice to a current student at the university who recently transferred, what would those pieces of advice be?

Interview Protocol:

Project: Dynamics that Influence Transfer Student Retention

Interviewer: Heather Rondeau

Purpose of the study: To identify the dynamics that current students who have transferred experience that determine why they persist at a 4-year public institution.

The individuals and sources of data being collected: Talking to transfer students regarding their experiences post-transfer or after they have become a current student at the four-year institution.

What will be done with the data to protect the confidentiality of the interviewee: Data

will be collected and recorded via audio recorder. Original data collected will

only be viewed/heard by the researcher. Names will be changed to protect identities of

participants.

How long the interview will take: About 40-60 minutes

Questions: (see above)

Thank you for your cooperation and participation in the interview and in this study!

Appendix III

Any pertinent additional analysis if applicable