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The Relationship Between University Employees' Work Engagement and the Perception of Their Influence on Student Integration and Retention

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THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN UNIVERSITY EMPLOYEES' WORK

ENGAGEMENT AND THE PERCEPTION OF THEIR INFLUENCE

ON STUDENT INTEGRATION AND RETENTION

by

Janea Sims McDonald

Abstract of a Dissertation
Submitted to the Graduate School
of The University of Southern Mississippi
in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements
for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy

August 2015

ABSTRACT

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The retention of college students is an issue that affects the student, the university, and the workforce. When a student does not graduate, they often either earn less over the period of their lifetime, or are unable to find a job. The workforce is affected because this means fewer qualified applicants to fill positions.   Universities are impacted in many ways, including financially. Lower retention rates lead to less income from tuition and decreased funding from state and federal sources which base funding formulas on performance outcomes (National Conference of State Legislatures, 2014).

One way to increase the likelihood of student retention is through the integration of the students into the academic and social communities of the university (Tinto, 1987). Faculty and staff's interactions with students can aid in this integration (Seidman et al., 2012). Employees that are engaged in their work are willing to do more than their position requires and demonstrate vigor, dedication, and absorption at work (Markos & Sridevi, 2010; Schaufeli, Bakker, & Salanova, 2006). Organizations with engaged employees typically outperform organizations with disengaged employees (Cascio & Boudreau, 2011).

The current study, conducted at The University of Southern Mississippi, is cross-sectional, descriptive, and non-experimental by design and explores six research objectives. The findings of the study include: faculty and staff at The University of Southern Mississippi are engaged in their work. A direct, positive relationship exists between work engagement levels and faculty and staff's perception of influence on student integration and retention. Additional research should be conducted using a larger sample, to include other universities, to increase the generalizability of the results. It is also recommended that the relationship between work engagement and retention outcomes be measured.

The University of Southern Mississippi

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A Dissertation
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DEDICATION

This journey and realization of a lifelong dream would not have been possible without the support and love of my family. Andy- I cannot thank you enough for always encouraging me, especially on the occasions when I was convinced that I could not possibly complete this task. I might not always understand your unwavering faith in me but I always appreciate it. This is _our_ accomplishment. Emily and Jack- Thank you for understanding when I was distracted and consumed with each part of this process. Being your mama is my most important task in life and I hope you know I never lost sight of that. I hope this makes you realize that all of your dreams can come true, with determination and hard work. My parents- Willie and Charlotte Sims- thank you for being the best parents a girl could ask for and encouraging me every step of the way. Without your faith in me, this would not have been possible. I love you all.

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INTRODUCTION

Only half of the students entering college complete a degree while more

than half of the jobs in America will require a college degree by 2018 (Amdur,

2013). Barack Obama, current President of the United States, addresses the

discrepancy of the proportion of young people with college degrees stating the

discrepancy represents a threat to the United States' position as an economic

leader (O'Keefe, 2013). In the industrialized world, the highest attrition rates

(reduction in the number of students attending college) exist in the United States,

according to O'Keefe. The high attrition rates and, conversely, low retention

rates, remain a focus (Seidman, 2005).

Groups and individuals focused on economic development are interested

in the concept of student retention. According to Wimshurst, Wortley, Bates, and

Allard (2006),

> Governments have become increasingly serious about a range of
>
> performance indicators, and particularly those indicators that point to
>
> progress or otherwise in areas such as: widening access to higher
>
> education, student retention, and the measurement of quality teaching and
>
> education. (pp. 143-144)

Student retention presents a challenging problem for the academic community

and the opportunity to create student retention programs that will improve the

likelihood of qualified students remaining in college (Lau, 2003). Retention is

influenced by students' relationships with faculty and staff and integrating into a

university's academic and social systems, accomplished, in part, by the efforts of faculty and staff (Bean, 1980; Spady, 1971; Tinto, 1987).

Engaged faculty and staff typically go beyond position requirements. Engaged employees often exhibit dedication to the job and the organization, absorption in the activities required, and high energy in performing tasks (Schaufeli et al., 2006). The current study determines if a relationship exists between the engagement levels of faculty and staff and the perception of their impact on student integration and student retention. This chapter includes information regarding the background of the study, as well as the problem, purpose, research objectives and limitations of the research. The conceptual framework is also included.

Background

As early as the 1800s, Marshall, in his book *Principles of Economics*, states capital invested in human beings is the most valuable. Human capital is a concept first introduced by Schultz (1960), who proclaims education an investment a person makes in themselves and a source of capital as it "renders a productive service of value to the economy" (p. 571). Human capital, according to Becker (1993), is best developed through education and training. He further purports that, in the United States, education raises a person's income greatly (1993). "There is generally consistent evidence to suggest that as the amount of postsecondary education increases, workforce participation increases and the likelihood of being unemployed decreases" (Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005, p.

535). In addition to employment, earning a degree is an integral part of an individuals' financial success (Burnsed, 2011).

Despite understanding the importance of education, retention rates for students in college have remained around 50% for the last 100 years (Demetriou & Schmitz-Sciborski, 2011). Not having a college degree lessens a student's chance of succeeding in the workforce (Burnsed, 2011). O'Keefe (2013) states, "Student attrition has genuine repercussions: lost revenue for the higher education institution, the subsequent misappropriation of funds from state and federal governments, the weakening of the labour [*sic*] market and potential exclusion of young, low-skilled workers from employment" (pp. 611-612).

Throughout the years, researchers such as Bean, Spady, and Astin developed student retention models and theories (Seidman, et al., 2012). Tinto's 1987 model is the most referenced of the three and illustrates degree completion as more probable if a student integrates into the academic and social communities of a university (Tinto, 1987). Interactions between a student and faculty and staff often impact the student's integration (Seidman et al., 2012). Universities and colleges must find ways to aid in the integration of students in order to retain them (Braxton & McClendon, 2001; Cabrera, Nora, & Castaneda, 1993; Tinto, 1987). The behaviors associated with employees engaged at work could improve the likelihood of student integration.

Employee engagement, also called work engagement, is "a positive fulfilling work related state of mind and is characterized by vigor, dedication, and absorption" (Schaufeli et al., 2006, p. 702). Pleasure and high levels of

activation, as well as enthusiasm for performance of duties characterize employee engagement (Harter, Schmidt, & Hayes, 2002; Maslach, Schaufeli, & Leiter, 2001). Engaged employees are typically willing and able to do more than the position requires because of positive feelings (Markos & Sridevi, 2010). Research indicates organizations with engaged workforces outperform organizations with disengaged employees. Employee engagement contributes positively to an organization's success or, in other words, the bottom-line (Cascio & Boudreau, 2011; Harter et al., 2002; Markos & Sridevi, 2010; Wollard & Shuck, 2010). The bottom-line in a university setting is influenced greatly by whether or not students remain from admission to graduation.

Low retention rates have an adverse effect on colleges and universities in two ways. First, non-completion results in loss of income from a corresponding reduction in tuition. Second, the majority of schools have moved or are moving to a performance-based funding formula, basing funding allocations on the number of course hours completed instead of the number of students enrolled. In the United States the amount of funding allocated, based on performance, varies for each state. Montana, for instance, reserves 5% of allocations based on completion hours. The State of Maine currently reserves 5% which will increase by 5% each year until the amount totals 30%. Completion hours are one of the performance outcome measures that control 90% of the funding received by the state in Mississippi (Performance-Based Funding for Higher Education, 2014).

Eight public universities operate in the State of Mississippi: Alcorn State University, Delta State University, Jackson State University, Mississippi State University, Mississippi University for Women, Mississippi Valley State University, The University of Mississippi, and The University of Southern Mississippi. The three largest, based on student population, include The University of Mississippi, located in Oxford; Mississippi State University, located in Starkville; and The University of Southern Mississippi with campuses in Hattiesburg and on the Gulf Coast. Table 1 illustrates the graduation, or retention rates (based on a six-year completion) for each of the three largest schools. As noted in Table 1, The University of Southern Mississippi's retention rates are consistently the lowest among the three largest universities in the state. The lower retention rates equate to lower funding allocations from the state.

Table 1

Graduation Rates in Mississippi

School	Fall 2006 Cohort	Fall 2005 Cohort	Fall 2004 Cohort	Fall 2003 Cohort	Fall 2002 Cohort
The University of Mississippi	58.3%	60.4%	58.7%	60.5%	55.7%
Mississippi State University	57.8%	60.2%	58.0%	61.4%	59.9%
The University of Southern Mississippi	49.5%	46.9%	46.6%	44.5%	43.4%

Note: 2012 rates, based on the average six year completion time, are the most recently reported by the Institutions of Higher Learning (Mississippi Institutions of Higher Learning, 2014)

Statement of the Problem

The University of Southern Mississippi has the lowest retention and graduation rates among the three largest universities in the state (Mississippi Institutions of Higher Learning, 2014). According to Seidman et al. (2012), decreasing funding on the state and federal levels increases the emphasis for retaining students. The inability to retain students from admission to graduation affects the student personally, the university, and the workforce.

Previous studies show student integration into a university's academic and social communities increases student retention (Bean, 1980; Seidman et al., 2012; Tinto, 1987). A student's interaction with faculty and staff positively affects integration (Tinto, 1997). Engaged employees demonstrate vigor, dedication, and absorption (Schaufeli & Bakker, 2004) all of which have been shown to contribute to the financial success of organizations (Markos & Sridevi, 2010). Due to funding formulas for universities becoming more performance outcome driven, universities are looking for ways to improve student retention.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to determine if a relationship exists between university employees' work engagement levels and the perception of their influence on student integration and retention.

Significance of the Study

The current study is significant because it shows the relationship of employees' levels of engagement to their perception of their influence on student integration and student retention, important outcomes in a university setting.

Universities and colleges continue to search for ways to improve student retention (Seidman et al., 2012). In the State of Mississippi, a Student Retention Task Force is in place as part of the Institutions of Higher Learning, the governing body of the eight public universities in the state (Mississippi Institutions of Higher Learning, 2014). The engagement of faculty and staff at a university may have a direct or indirect influence on student retention. Universities can employ methods proven to increase work engagement such as: providing opportunities for work/life balance, recognition, information, organizational support and opportunities for career development (Lockwood, 2007; Roberts & Davenport, 2002; Rothmann & Jordaan, 2006) which can positively impact student retention.

<div align="center">Limitations</div>

Limitations of research include factors outside the control of the researcher. These limitations can affect the conclusions reached as a result of the research. One limitation of the study is the instrumentation. Based on the growing popularity of the concept of work engagement many data collection instruments exist. Engagement measurement instruments, such as the Gallup Q12, can be very costly to use on a large scale (Gallup: Employee engagement, 2014). The Utrecht Work Engagement Scale (UWES), created by Schaufeli (2003), is widely used in the private sector, but only one study could be found using this tool in an academic setting. The UWES9, the nine question version of the instrument, was used for the purposes of this study (see Appendix A).

The data obtained was self-reported, which is another limitation. One of the problems with self-reported data is that it cannot be verified independently. There is no way to cross-validate people's descriptions of feelings and intentions (Podsakoff & Organ, 1986). Another limitation of self-reported data is common method variance, which occurs when "measures come from the same source, any defect in that source contaminates both measures, presumably in the same fashion and same direction" (Podsakoff & Organ, 1986, p. 533).

This study is cross-sectional, with data collected at one point in time and "reflects current attitudes, opinions, and beliefs" (Rovai, Baker, & Ponton, 2014, p. 50). This, too, presents a limitation because it prevents the ability to define trends over time and will not allow illumination of true causal relationships (Bowen & Wierema, 1999). Ideally, a longitudinal study, with data collected over a period of time, would be conducted in which multiple observations could be taken over time to ascertain any changes due to specific interventions (Shadish, Cook, & Campbell, 2002).

The lack of generalizability of the findings is also a limitation. Research findings are generalizable when data can be used to "infer a general statement has applicability to other people, settings or times" (Ferguson, 2004). The generalizability limitation could be removed by using a random sample (Shadish et al., 2002) in which each participant is chosen randomly. However, an electronic survey was distributed to all faculty and staff that met pre-arranged criteria. Conducting the study at only one of eight public institutions in the State of Mississippi limits the generalizability of the results.

Delimitations

This study also has certain delimitations based on choices made by the researcher. A delimitation in this study is the collection of data concerning the perception of employees rather than the actual impact of work engagement on the retention rates at The University of Southern Mississippi. The study would have greater impact if actual change in the retention percentages could be measured. In addition, the majority of surveys were completed electronically which might have limited the number of responses collected in comparison to the surveys distributed to potential participants face-to-face.

Research Objectives

Research objectives outline the study's goals. The following research objectives have been determined for this study based on a review of the related literature.

RO1: Determine the demographics of participants (i.e., staff/faculty, campus location, length of employment).

RO2: Determine faculty and staff's work engagement levels based on feelings of vigor, dedication, and absorption while at work.

RO3: Determine faculty and staff's perception of influence on student integration based on relationship building and contributing to students' sense of belonging and comfort.

RO4: Determine faculty and staff's perception of influence on student retention based on accessibility to students, helping students attain academic goals and succeed.

RO5: Determine relationship between faculty and staff's work engagement (vigor, absorption, and dedication) and faculty and staff's perception of influence on student integration.

RO6: Determine relationship between faculty and staff's work engagement (vigor, absorption, and dedication) and faculty and staff's perception of influence on student retention.

The details of how these objectives were met as well as the analysis of the data will be outlined in further sections.

Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework of the study illustrates the following variables: engagement levels of faculty and staff, faculty and staff's perception of influencing student integration, and faculty and staff's perception of influencing student retention. The measurement of these variables is based on various theories. The first objective of the study is to determine the demographics of the individuals participating in the study. Information will be collected as to whether the participant is male or female; faculty or staff; located on the Hattiesburg campus or one of the Coast campuses (Gulf Park, Gulf Coast Research Lab or Stennis Space Center); length of employment with The University of Southern Mississippi; age; and EEO category (the code assigned to the type of job by the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission). The second research objective is to determine the engagement level of the individual. This objective was accomplished by the staff or faculty member answering questions previously proven valid and reliable in ascertaining work engagement levels in employees.

Determining the employees' perception of how they affect student integration is the third research objective. The fourth research objective covers the perception employees have on their influence on student retention. Comparing the data from research objectives three and four leads to the final objectives which determined if the employees' level of engagement affect their perception of the influence they have on student integration and student retention.

Several theories support the research objectives of this study. Human Capital Theory (Becker, 1993; Schultz, 1960) proposes investing in individuals through the acquisition of knowledge, skills, and education is the most important investment in human capital. According to Shultz (1961), "The most distinctive feature of our economic system is the growth of human capital [through education]. Without it there would be only hard, manual work and poverty" (p. 16). In order for this growth to take place, college students must persist until academic goals are accomplished. The theory of motivation supports goal achievement and declares individuals are motivated intrinsically and extrinsically to fulfill needs for achievement, affiliation, and power (McClelland, 1961). The self-concordance theory, according to Deci and Ryan (1985), is a subset of motivation theory. The theory states individuals find happiness and motivation when goals match values and interests.

Tinto's student retention theory (1987) confirms students fail to achieve academic goals by not completing degree requirements due to: individual attributes, interactions with faculty and staff, intentions, and skills. Of these, the only attribute universities can influence is the student's interactions with

employees. Engagement theory is based on the assumption that when an

employee is engaged in work, vigor, dedication, and absorption are

demonstrated in the performance of duties which enables going beyond the

requirements of the position, and this behavior improves the organization's

financial success (Markos & Sridevi, 2010; Schaufeli et al., 2006; Wollard &

Shuck, 2011). According to Cropzanzo and Mitchell (2005), social exchange

theory states certain social interactions generate obligations. This theory

supports the enagement theory because when employees feel they are receiving

positive outcomes from their employer (a university) they will feel the need to

reciprocate and perform duties beyond what is required. Additionally, students

feel obligated to remain in school if they surmise faculty and staff will do what is

necessary to support their endeavors. The current study determines the effect

the engagement of faculty and staff has on their perception of their influence on

the integration of students at the University. In addition, the faculty and staff's

perception of how they influence students remaining in school until reaching their

academic goals was determined. Figure 1 is a graphical representation of the

conceptual framework.

```
┌─────────────────┐
│  Work           │
│  Engagement     │
│ (vigor, absorption, │
│   dedication)   │
└─────────────────┘
```

Faculty and Staff Perception of Influence

Student Integration

Faculty and Staff Perception of Influence

Student Retention

Human Capital Theory	*Student Retention Theory*
Engagement Theory	*Motivation Theory*
Social Exchange Theory	*Self-Concordance Theory*
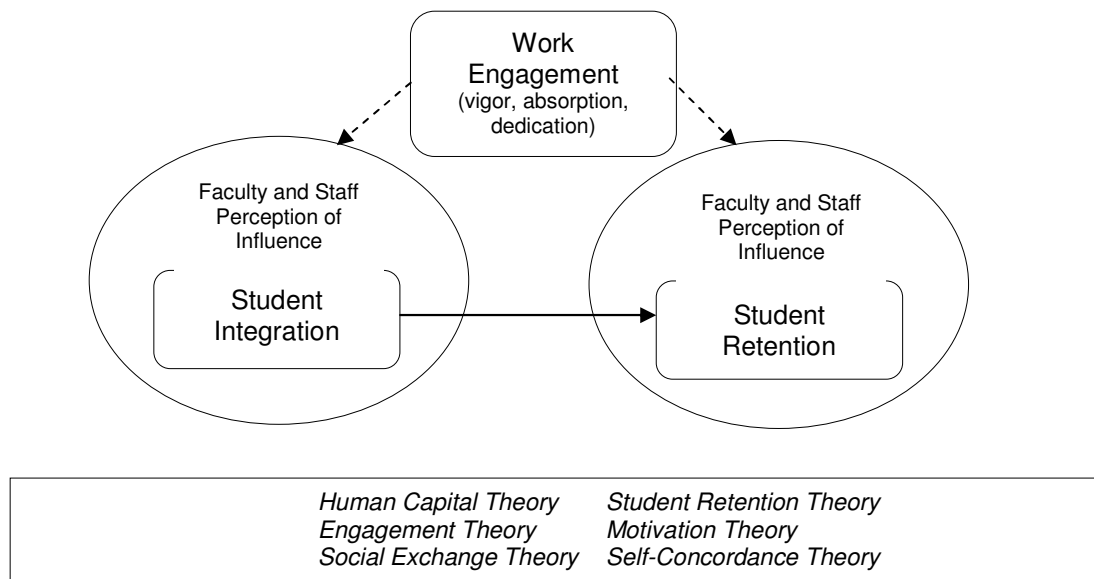
Figure 1. Conceptual Framework

Definition of Terms

Understanding the terms used in this research is imperative to comprehending the current study. Several of the terms in the study have multiple definitions. For the purposes of this research, the following definitions will be used.

1. *Attrition* -- reduction in the number of students attending college (Bean, 1980)

2. *Employee (work) engagement* -- "a positive fulfilling work related state of mind that is characterized by vigor, dedication, and absorption" (Schaufeli et al., 2006, p. 702).

3. *Human capital theory* -- the investment in people through the process of education (Schultz, 1960).

4. *Motivation theory* -- individuals are intrinsically and extrinsically motivated to perform certain tasks and all have a need for affiliation, achievement, and power (McClelland, 1961).

5. *Self-concordance theory* -- individuals find happiness when their goals match their values and interests (Deci & Ryan, 1985).

6. *Social exchange theory* -- suggests an implicit obligation to return a favor after receiving a favor or benefit from another person (Blau,1964).

7. *Student integration* -- the act of a student becoming acclimated and included in the various systems (academic and social) of a university (Tinto, 1987).

8. *Student retention* -- the ability of an institution to retain students from admission through graduation. Students leave college due to individual attributes, interactions with faculty and staff, intentions, and skills (Tinto, 1987).

Summary

Becker (1993) and Schultz (1960) state that education is crucial in the creation and development of human capital. Despite this, approximately 50% of the individuals who enter college actually complete a degree program (Amdur, 2013). Low completion rate has a negative effect on the workforce, the individual, and universities. A change in the funding formula for state allocation to universities creates an even stronger focus on student retention. Universities have the ability to affect the retention rate of students to encourage attainment of

academic goals (Bean, 1980; Seidman, 2005; Tinto, 1987). Tinto (1987) states

ensuring the student is integrated socially and academically is one of the best

ways to keep students from dropping out. Faculty and staff impact this

integration (Seidman et al., 2012). This study determines if engaged faculty and

staff, absorbed in their work and willing to do more than the position requires,

perceive they have an influence on student integration and retention, which, in

turn, has a positive effect on the bottom-line of the university.

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

Organizations, both private and public, continue to search for ways to improve financial standing. For institutions of higher learning, student retention influences financial success. In this chapter, work engagement, a construct proven to tie to an organization's financial success, will be discussed. The chapter includes historical foundations, contemporary research and findings, and the financial impact of work engagement. Student retention theories, including the importance of student integration as well as contextual factors, and the history of the study of student retention will be outlined.

Employee engagement has a direct, positive impact on the financial success of organizations (Cascio & Boudreau, 2011; Wollard & Shuck, 2011). The financial success of universities is predicated on the retention of students, via tuition and funding. According to Tinto (1987), students are more likely to remain in college if they integrate into the social and academic communities. Faculty and staff, employees of universities, aid in this integration (Seidman et al., 2012). The engagement of employees might increase the integration of college students and, therefore, the retention rates. Retention rates have always been an important performance measure for colleges and universities but recently that importance has increased (Seidman, 2005).

According to the National Conference of State Legislatures, 25 states have moved to a performance based funding plan for colleges and universities, and more are in the process (Performance-Based Funding for Higher Education,

2014). In the State of Mississippi, for example, 90% of state funding is now based on student completion hours, as opposed to enrollment (National Conference of State Legislatures, 2014). Historically, funds provided were based on the number of students enrolled at the beginning of the semester. Funds are now allocated based on student completion of credit hours. Consequently, there is a stronger emphasis on colleges and universities retaining students. In other words, retaining students has a direct impact on the bottom-line of higher education institutions (Seidman et al., 2012).

Retention rates remain around 50%, as they have for the last 100 years (Demetriou & Schmitz-Sciborski, 2011). Universities are seeking ways to improve student retention, some having departments dedicated to this initiative. Many theories about student retention, and the best ways to obtain it, exist. Based on the work of Tinto, one of the more prevalent student retention researchers, one reason students do not graduate is failure to integrate academically and socially within the institution (1987). Faculty and staff can have an impact on the integration of students (Seidman et al., 2012). In fact, according to Seidman, interactions between faculty, staff, and other students outside of formal classrooms provide students with opportunities to connect and engage with the university community which otherwise might not be possible (Seidman et al., 2012). Faculty and staff, employees of the university, possess the ability to increase retention of students (Bean, 1980).

Employee engagement is "the harnessing of organization members' selves in their work roles; in engagement, people employ and express

themselves physically, cognitively, and emotionally during role performances"
(Kahn, 1990, p. 694). When an employee is engaged, she will go beyond the
work requirements of her position (Markos & Sridevi, 2010). This behavior
positively affects the bottom-line of organizations (Cascio & Boudreau, 2011;
Harter et al., 2002; Markos & Sridevi, 2010; Wollard & Shuck, 2010).

Many studies ascertain the effect of employee engagement on
organizations in the public sector (Baldev & Anupama, 2010; Moussa, 2013;
Rasheed, Khan, & Ramzan, 2013; Saks, 2006). The question remains as to
whether the engagement of faculty and staff at a university has an influence on
student integration and student retention. The concepts of work engagement
and student retention are discussed.

Employee (Work) Engagement

Literature offers many definitions of the term *employee engagement.*
However, "common to these definitions is the notion that employee engagement
is a desirable condition, has an organizational purpose, and connotes
involvement, commitment, passion, enthusiasm, focused effort, and energy, so it
has both attitudinal and behavioral components" (Macey & Schneider, 2008).
Engagement is based on the relationship between employee and employer, with
the understanding that each side has responsibilities to make the relationship
successful (Markos & Sridevi, 2010).

The measure and study of work engagement has become increasingly
more important over the past few years. Engagement levels, according to Gallup,
have remained around 30% for several years. This means that only about 30%

of employees report being engaged in their work (Gallup: Employee engagement, 2014). Rashid, Asad, and Ashraf (2011) point out that employee engagement is a concept that is gaining more attention in the business and academic environment. Further, the researchers state, "every organization wants to gain competitive advantages over others and employee engagement is the best tool for it" (Rashid et al., 2011, p. 98). Markos and Sridevi (2010) state,

> Studies have found a positive relationship between employee engagement and organizational performance outcomes: employee retention, productivity, profitability, customer loyalty and safety. Researches [*sic*] also indicate that the more engaged employees are, the more likely their employer is to exceed the industry average in its revenue growth. (p. 92)

In other words, employee engagement has an affirmative effect on business results. To better understand the concept of employee engagement, a historical review follows.

Historical Foundations of Employee Engagement

The concept of engagement was first introduced by Goffman in 1961. According to Kahn (1990), Goffman suggests, "people's attachment to and detachment from their roles varies" (p. 694). While Goffman's work focuses specifically on face-to-face encounters, Kahn (1990) offers a different concept to fit and reflect organizational roles. The terms *personal engagement* and *personal disengagement* were developed to describe the pushing and pulling people feel during *self-in-role* processes that enable them to "cope with internal ambivalences and external conditions" (Kahn, 1990, p. 694). Kahn defines

personal engagement as "the harnessing of organization members' selves in their work roles; in engagement, people employ and express themselves physically, cognitively, and emotionally during role performances" (Kahn, 1990, p. 694). Alternatively, personal disengagement occurs when employees uncouple themselves from their work roles (Kahn, 1990). It is during disengagement when employees, according to Kahn (1990), "withdraw and defend themselves physically, cognitively, and emotionally" (p. 694).

Kahn (1990) used these definitions to guide his research. Kahn (1990) states "The premise was two-fold: first, that the psychological experience of work drives people's attitudes and behaviors, and second, that individual, interpersonal, group, intergroup, and organizational factors simultaneously influence these experiences" (p. 695). Kahn's intention was to outline the psychological conditions influencing an employee's engagement and disengagement at work. His aim was to "identify psychological conditions powerful enough to survive the gamut of individual differences" (Kahn, 1990, p. 695). Kahn (1990) assumes "people are constantly bringing in and leaving out various depths of their selves during the course of their work days", and he "sought to identify the variables that explained the processes by which people adjust their selves-in-roles" (p. 692-693). Kahn conducted two qualitative studies, one at a summer camp and another at an architecture firm (1990). The information obtained displays examples of "moments in which people personally engaged or disengaged" (Kahn, 1990, p. 699). Personal engagement is "the simultaneous employment and expression of a person's 'preferred self' in task

behaviors that promote connections to work and to others, personal presence (physical, cognitive, and emotional), and active, full, role performances" (Kahn, 1990, p. 700). An example of personal engagement emerging from the study consisted of a senior designer at an architecture firm giving of herself to the job physically when she was having to rush around the office; she gave of herself cognitively by working out details of design; and, she gave of herself emotionally by refusing to give criticism publicly (Kahn, 1990). The emergent definition of personal disengagement from the study was "the simultaneous withdrawal and defense of a person's preferred self in behaviors that promote a lack of connections, physical, cognitive, and emotional absence, and passive, incomplete role performances" (Kahn, 1990, p. 701). An example of disengagement in the study of the summer camps included a counselor disengaging during her time teaching windsurfing class. She withdrew physically by sending the students out and not going with them; she withdrew cognitively by not offering the students much guidance or help; and, she withdrew emotionally by being *bland* and *superficial* (Kahn, 1990, p. 702).

Kahn (1990) states when three certain psychological conditions are met "people can personally engage in moments of task behaviors" (p. 703). The three conditions are psychological meaningfulness, psychological safety, and psychological availability. The condition of meaningfulness is experienced when an individual feels she is contributing to the organization and is appreciated for her efforts. There are three factors, according to Kahn (1990), influencing psychological meaningfulness: task characteristics (challenging, varied, creative

tasks), role characteristics (role identities and status), and work interactions (interactions with co-workers and clients).

Psychological safety occurs when an individual feels she is "able to show and employ one's without fear of negative consequences to self-image, status, career" (Kahn, 1990, p. 708). When a person feels their engagement will not cause adverse consequences, they feel safe. Psychological safety is comprised of four factors: (a) interpersonal relationships (support and trust between co-workers), (b) group and intergroup dynamics, (c) management style and process (supportive and resilient managers, and (d) organizational norms, or shared expectations of behaviors of members (Kahn, 1990).

The final condition that Kahn (1990) mentions is psychological availability. Kahn (1990) states, "Psychological availability is the sense of having the physical, emotional, or psychological resources to personally engage at a particular moment. It measures how ready people are to engage, given the distractions they experience as members of social systems" (p. 714). Kahn's studies show four kinds of distractions influencing psychological availability: depletion of physical energy, depletion of emotional energy, individual insecurity, and outside lives (Kahn, 1990).

A wide range of influences (individual, group, intergroup, and organizational) determine a person's engagement or disengagement at work, according to Kahn. Kahn (1990) concludes, "It is at the swirling intersection of those influences that individuals make choices, at different levels of awareness, to employ and express or withdraw and defend themselves during role

performances" (p. 719). Kahn continues that a person could "express and defend, or employ and withdraw" at the same time (Kahn, 1990, p. 719).

Contemporary Research and Findings

After Kahn's initial work on the concept of employee engagement, the term and construct did not gain much attention until the 1999 publication of the book *First, Break All the Rules* (Buckingham & Coffman, 1999). This book present two studies conducted by the Gallup organization over a period of 25 years. The premise determines the characteristics of great managers, based on what they do differently. This book "helped the term *employee engagement* become an overnight sensation in the business consulting world" (Shuck & Wollard, 2010, p. 90) and inspired further research into the concept of employee engagement.

In 2001, Maslach et al. studied the concept of job burnout, considered by some as the opposite of employee engagement. The researchers report job burnout as the reaction to "chronic interpersonal stressors on the job" (Maslach et al., 2001, p. 399). They further report job burnout's three dimensions: overwhelming exhaustion, feelings of cynicism and detachment from the job, and a sense of ineffectiveness and lack of accomplishment (Maslach et al., 2001). The authors continue that the characteristics of engagement include energy, involvement, and efficacy, "which are the direct opposites of the three burnout dimensions" (Maslach et al., 2001, p. 416). Therefore, engagement is the positive antithesis of burnout (Maslach et al., 2001). The authors state engagement is "a persistent, positive affective-motivational state of fulfillment in

employees that is characterized by high levels of activation and pleasure" (p. 417).

Engagement is a person's involvement in the job, according to Roberts and Davenport (2002). When an individual identifies personally with the job, the work becomes motivating and the person becomes engaged (Roberts & Davenport, 2002). According to Rothmann and Jordaan (2006), "Engaged employees report that their jobs make good use of their skills and abilities, and are challenging and stimulating, and provide them with a sense of accomplishment" (p. 87).

Schaufeli et al. (2006) further state employee engagement is a positive behavioral state while at work, and note its duration as rather long lasting. Employee engagement is characterized by vigor, dedication, and absorption. Vigor occurs when the employee feels and demonstrates high levels of energy at work and is willing to invest excess effort in her work, even when facing difficulties. Dedication occurs when the employee is very involved in work to the point of enthusiasm, pride, and inspiration. Absorption occurs when the employee is "happily engrossed in work" (Schaufeli et al., 2006, p.102) so time passes quickly and when the employee has difficulty detaching from work.

Harter et al. conducted a meta-analysis of 7,939 business units in 36 companies in 2002 and were first to consider links between organizational profit and financial gains and employee engagement. The results indicate that employee satisfaction and engagement have positive average correlations with such outcomes of customer satisfaction, productivity, profit, and employee

turnover (Harter et al., 2002). Also, generalization exists among the links between engagement and organizational outcomes. "The correlations between employee satisfaction and engagement and business-unit outcomes will generalize across organizations for all business-unit outcomes. That is, these correlations will not vary substantially across organizations, and in particular, there will be few if any organizations with zero or negative correlations" (Harter et al., 2002, p. 269). Employee engagement is "the individual's involvement and satisfaction with as well as enthusiasm for work" (Harter et al., 2002, p. 269). According to Shuck and Wollard (2010), this definition adds "the expectation of an individual's satisfaction level, significantly altering the way engagement had been viewed" (Shuck & Wollard, 2010, p. 99).

In 2004, May, Gibson and Harter were the first to "empirically test Kahn's (1990) conceptualization of engagement" (Shuck & Wollard, 2010, p. 99). In a study at a Midwest insurance company, the researchers tested Kahn's theory. The results from the revised theoretical framework reveal the psychological conditions of meaningfulness, safety and availability, as suggested by Kahn, exhibit significant positive relations with engagement (May, Gibson, & Harter, 2004).

While the topic of work engagement was gaining popularity, little was known about the influences of and the results of engagement (Saks, 2006). According to Saks (2006) engagement falls in two categories: job and organization. Job engagement occurs when the individual exhibits behaviors based on the job they perform. Organizational engagement occurs more

broadly, when the individual exhibits behaviors based on occurrences in the organization, not just their job (Saks, 2006).

Social exchange theory supports the concept of work engagement. The theory states social behavior is the result of some sort of exchange, a give and take relationship (Saks, 2006). As it relates to the employer/employee relationship, employees receiving resources from the organization will feel "obliged to respond in kind and repay the organization. One way for individuals to repay their organization is through their level of engagement" (Saks, 2006, p. 603). Saks (2006) defines engagement as "a distinct and unique construct that consists of cognitive, emotional and behavioral components that is associated with individual role performance" (p. 602). As information increased in academic publications regarding work engagement, business publications and consulting firms also took notice and began researching the topic.

In 2006 and 2008, the Society of Human Resource Management (SHRM) and the American Society of Training and Development (ASTD), respectively, commissioned studies on the topic of employee engagement, according to Shuck and Wollard (2010). The studies "marked the entrance of professional societies into the engagement conversation" (Shuck & Wollard, 2010, p. 100). Of the two studies, ASTD presents a link to the academic community and the foundational work of Kahn and Maslach (Shuck & Wollard, 2010).

Rothamann and Jordaan (2006) studied engagement in a higher education institution in South Africa. The researchers investigated work engagement and the impact of job demands and job resources with academic

staff in three higher education institutions using the UWES and the Job-Demands

Resource Scale (Rothmann & Jordaan, 2006). The results show engagement

consists of two factors: (a) dedication and (b) vigor. Work engagement levels,

according to the study, are lower in academic institutions when compared to the

national level in the private sector (Rothmann & Jordaan, 2006). In addition to

engagement consisting of two factors, researchers offer three types of employee

engagement.

Shuck and Reio (2011) introduce three types of employee engagement:

(a) cognitive, (b) emotional, and (c) behavioral. Cognitive engagement can be

represented by "how an employee thinks about and understands his or her job,

company, and culture and represents his or her own intellectual commitment to

the organization" (Shuck & Reio, 2011, p. 422). Questions pertaining to an

individual's cognitive engagement often refer to feeling safe at work, as well as

having the necessary resources (both material and non-material) to do a job

(Shuck & Reio, 2011). Emotional engagement centers on "the emotional bond

one feels toward his or her place of work" (Shuck & Reio, 2011, p. 423).

Emotional engagement of employees is measured by the willingness of

employees to involve personal resources when accomplishing the tasks of a

position. These personal resources include "pride, belief, and knowledge"

(Shuck & Reio, 2011, p. 423). Lastly, behavioral engagement examines the

employee's willingness to do more than is expected in order to help the

organization succeed and is "the most overt form of employee engagement"

(Shuck & Reio, 2011, p. 423). Figure 2 is a timeline of the major publications related to employee engagement.

Goffman (1961) Attachment and detachment to and from roles	**1961**	
	1990	Kahn (1990) Foundational Framework
	1995	
Harter, Schmidt, & Hayes (2002) Linked engagement to outcomes	**2000**	Maslach, Schaufeli, & Leiter (2001) Developmental Theory
	2005	May, Gilson, & Harter (2004) Tested Kahn's theory
Saks (2006) First to research antecedents and consequences of engagement	**2010**	Wollard & Shuck (2011) Meta-analysis of antecedents

Figure 2. Major Publications on Employee Engagement

Antecedents of Employee Engagement

Research on the contributing factors to employee engagement continues to be conducted (Rasheed et al., 2013; Vaijayanthi, Shreenivasan, & Prabhakaran, 2011; Wollard & Shuck, 2011). Saks (2006) was one of the first to research possible antecedents and outcomes of employee engagement. According to Willard and Shuck (2011), "Antecedents of employee engagement are defined as constructs, strategies, or conditions that precede the development of employee engagement and that come before an organization or manager reaps the benefits of engagement-related outputs" (p. 432) , which include increased productivity and decreased turnover. Saks conducted a survey of 102

employees in different jobs and organizations. The survey "included measures of job and organization engagement as well as the antecedents and consequences of engagement" (Saks, 2006, p. 600). Saks (2006) reports the existence of little empirical research on employee engagement's antecedents and, based on the work of Kahn (1990) and Maslach et al. (2001), developed a list of possible antecedents to include job characteristics, perceived organizational support, perceived supervisor support, rewards and recognition, procedural justice, and distributive justice. The list of outcomes expected as a result of engagement included job satisfaction, organizational commitment, organizational citizenship behavior, and lessened intention to quit (Saks, 2006). Saks (2006) presents five conclusions,

1. A meaningful distinction exists between job engagement and organization engagement.

2. Job and organization engagement are predicted by a range of antecedent variables.

3. Individual consequences relate to job engagement and organization engagement.

4. The relationship between antecedent variables and consequences is mediated by job and organization engagement

5. The concept of employee engagement is supported by social exchange theory (2006).

According to Shuck and Wollard (2010), "Through his research Saks (2006) provided an important bridge between previous early theories of employee

engagement, practitioner literature, and the academic community and was the first to propose an empirical model" (p. 100).

Wollard and Shuck (2011) list individual antecedents of employee engagement, as well as organizational antecedents of employee engagement. Twenty-one antecedents make up each list. Some of the items on the individual antecedents list include dedication, emotional fit, work/life balance, and perceived organizational support (Wollard & Shuck, 2011). The organization antecedents include feedback, leadership, rewards, and talent management. Other factors contributing to employee engagement include meaningful work, job resources, workplace commitment, and involvement in decision making (Bakker, Hakanen, Demerouti, & Xanthoupoulou, 2007; Fairlie, 2011; Fornes, Rocco, & Wollard, 2008; Rashad, Asad, & Ashraf, 2011).

Haudan (2008) identifies four *roots* to engagement in organizations. The *roots* are the key to engaging employees. People want to,

- Be a part of something big.

- Feel a sense of belonging.

- Go on a meaningful journey.

- Know that their contributions make a significant impact or difference.

According to Vaijayanthi et al. (2011), an engaged employee is "one who is fully involved in, and enthusiastic about, his or her work and thus will act in a way that help [*sic*] to attain their organization's interests and will passionately be committed to live by its values" (Vaijayanthi et al., 2011, p. 60). The authors continue that engagement is a critical part of any retention strategy and

organizations are responsible for helping employees feel passionate about their work (Vaijayanthi et al., 2011). The researchers conducted a study at GE Power and Water to define factors that positively affect employee engagement and what factors might impede it (Vaijayanthi et al., 2011). The antecedents of employee engagement, as concluded from the study, include employee-job fit, a supportive work environment, the nurturing of feelings so the employee feels value and involved, and an environment where feelings of pride and involvement are encouraged.

Rich, Lepine, and Crawford studied Kahn's (1990) work in 2010. "The purpose of such was to develop theory that positions engagement as a key mechanism that explains the relationships among individual characteristics, organizational factors and job performance" (Rich, Lepine, & Crawford, 2010, p. 617). The study included firefighters and their supervisors and ultimately supports Kahn's theory. The researchers identify three antecedents of employee engagement as value congruence, perceived organizational support, and core-self-evaluations (Rich et al., 2010).

In 2011, Shuck, Reio, and Rocco focused on three particular antecedents of employee engagement: job fit, affective commitment, and psychological climate. They define job fit as "the degree to which a person feels their personality and values fit with their current job" (p. 430). Good fit provides employees with meaningful work and a sense of belonging, which have a positive relationship on work-related attitudes (Shuck et al., 2011, p. 430). The "sense of belonging and emotional connection with one's job, organization, or both" (Shuck

et al., 2011, p. 430) is affective commitment. Psychological climate is "the lens an employee uses to understand and interpret their work environment relative to the social and physical structures of environmental cues" (Shuck et al., 2011, p. 431). The researchers conclude a strong relationship among job fit, affective commitment, and psychological climate to employee engagement (Shuck et al., 2011).

Researchers in Pakistan sought to determine antecedents and consequences of employee engagement in the banking industry. The sample of their study consisted of 303 employees. The antecedents Rasheed et al. (2013) examine include perceived organizational support, perceived supervisor support, and organizational justice. Perceived organizational support occurs when the organization helps the employee perform in a job. The extent to which the supervisor cares about employees' well-being is perceived supervisor support. Organizational justice divides into two categories: distributive justice and procedural justice. Distributive justice occurs when the resources are allocated fairly to members of the organization. Procedural justice occurs when employees feel they have the right to give opinions about organizational procedures and processes (Rasheed et al., 2013). The researchers hypothesize that perceived organizational support, perceived supervisor support, and organizational justice positively relate to employee engagement. The results of the study support the hypothesis (Rasheed et al., 2013).

In a similar study in the same year, Moussa (2013) studied the engagement levels of Saudi Nationals versus non-Nationals. The sample

consisted of 104 individuals in health care and information technology. Moussa (2013) presents antecedents and outcomes of engagement. Moussa bases her engagement definition on Kahn's (1990) and supports Saks' (2005) assertion that employee engagement centers on social exchange theory. The results of the study show the antecedents of reward and recognition, value fit, and control predict Schaufeli's three engagement measures, which include vigor, absorption, dedication (Moussa, 2013).

According to Baldev and Anupama (2010), "engagement is actually the highest form of commitment wherein each employee wants to do whatever he can for the benefit of the organization" (p. 52). Organizational commitment and job involvement are two determinants of employee engagement. According to the authors, three types of commitment exist: affective, continuance, and normative. Affective commitment occurs when an employee has an emotional attachment to the organization and its goals. Continuance commitment is the "willingness to remain in an organization because of the investment that the employee has made with nontransferable investments" (Baldev & Anupama, 2010, p. 53) such as retirements and other benefits. Normative commitment occurs when an employee feels an obligation to the workplace (Baldev & Anupama, 2010). Job involvement happens when "an employee is fully involved in and enthusiastic about his or her work" (Baldev & Anupama, 2010, p. 53). As stated previously, studies of engagement antecedents, or predictors of employee engagement also test the consequences or outcomes of employee engagement, which is discussed in the next section.

Outcomes and Consequences

Shuck et al. (2011) examine organizational outcomes of employee engagement, as opposed to individual outcomes. The outcomes include discretionary effort and intention to turnover. Discretionary effort is "an employee's willingness to go above minimal job responsibilities" (Shuck et al., 2011, p. 431). The employee's intention to leave the organization is intention to turnover. The researchers resolved a significant relationship exists between employee engagement and discretionary effort and intention to turnover (Shuck et al., 2011). In addition to Shuck et al.'s examination of antecedents and outcomes of employee engagement, other researchers contribute to the body of knowledge on the topic.

Rasheed et al. (2013) outline the main drivers for employee engagement and its outcomes. The research focuses on one outcome of employee engagement, organizational citizenship behaviors, or OCBs. Individual initiative, sportsmanship, self-development and organizational loyalty are OCBs that are discretionary and helpful (Dekas, Bauer, Welle, Kurkoski, & Sullivan, 2013; Podsakoff, MacKenzie, Paine, & Bachrach, 2000). Dekas et al. (2013) state, "Research has shown that OCBs enhance productivity; help organizations compete with limited resources; and lead to greater coordination among employees; lower turnover; organizational adaptability; profitability; and customer satisfaction" (p. 220). The study conducted by Rasheed et al. (2013) concludes employee engagement positively relates to organizational citizenship behavior.

Saks' 2006 study, not only determined possible antecedents but also outcomes having a direct effect on the organization. Saks reports existence of sufficient data to support employee engagement relates to work outcomes. Engagement is a fulfilling work-related experience and is "related to good health and positive work affect" (Saks, 2006, p. 607). Saks includes the following outcomes: job satisfaction, intention to quit, organizational commitment, and organizational citizenship behavior (Saks, 2006). All of the outcomes ultimately affect the financial success of the organization.

Financial Impact of Employee Engagement

Shuck and Wollard (2010) were the first to mention how the organization is effected in their definition of employee engagement. Employee engagement is "directed toward organizational outcomes" (p. 103), according to Shuck and Wollard (2010). Markos and Sridevi (2010) note that business outcomes and employee engagement are woven together. In addition, industries with engaged employees are more likely to experience higher revenue growth (Markos & Sridevi, 2010).

Harter et al. (2002) conducted a meta-analysis with over 7,000 business units in 36 companies. The researchers illustrate the relationship between business-unit outcomes such as productivity, profit, and customer satisfaction (Harter et al., 2002). The analysis establishes "generalizable relationships large enough to have substantial practical value were found between unit-level employee satisfaction–engagement and these business-unit outcomes" (Harter et al., 2002, p. 268).

Employee engagement and organizational resources, according to Cascio and Bourdreau, have a positive effect on the service climate, which in turn affects customer loyalty. The researchers point out the relationship between employee engagement and organizational resources is not additive but rather multiplicative because if either of the elements is low or even zero, the resources cannot have a positive effect on the other elements (Cascio & Boudreau, 2011). Cascio and Boudreau (2011) offer a depiction of the impact of employee engagement on financial results, as shown in Figure 3.

Employee Engagement   **Organizational Resources**

X

| Vigor, Dedication, Absorption | | Training, Supervisor Support, Performance Feedback |

Service Climate

Employee Performance

Customer Loyalty

Financial Outcomes
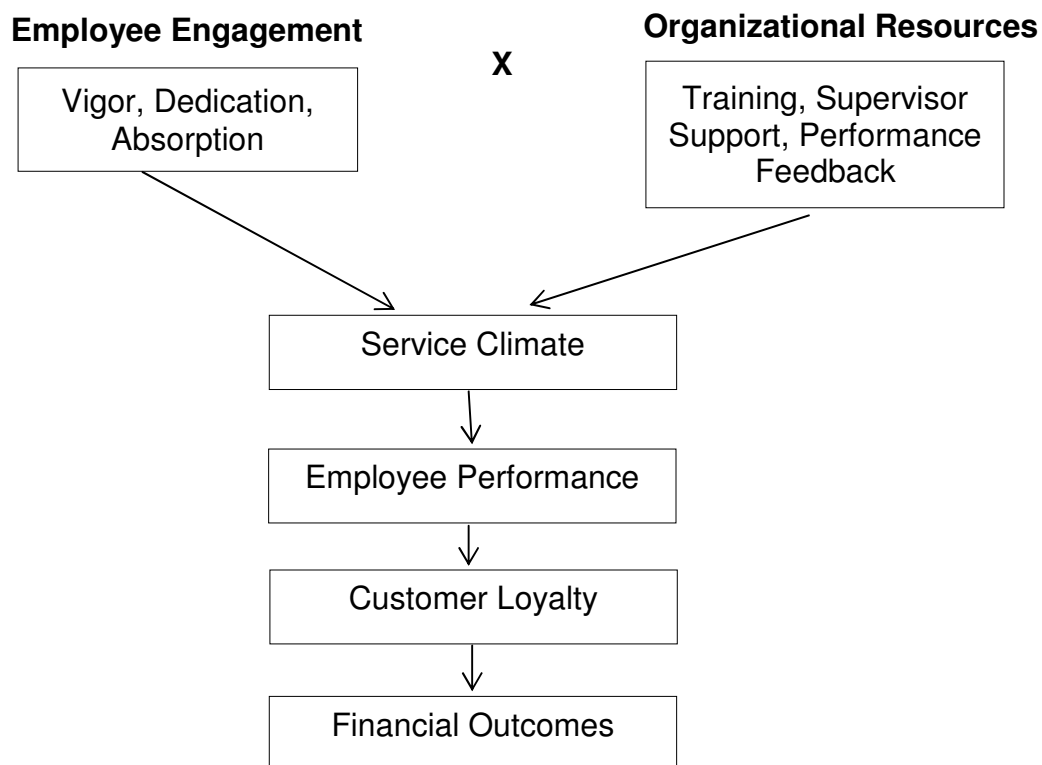
Figure 3. The Effect of Employee Engagement on Financial Outcomes. From "Investing in People: Financial Impact of Human Resource Initiatives (2nd edition) by W. Cascio and J. Boudreau, 2011, p. 150. Reprinted by permission of Pearson Education, Inc., Upper Saddle River, NJ. (See Appendix B)

In the higher education arena, positive financial outcomes are a direct result of student retention (Seidman et al., 2012). In other words, retaining students is critical to the financial success of educational institutions. The next section details the concept of student retention including historical perspectives, models, and financial impact.

Student Retention

The concept of student retention refers to the ability of an institution to retain (as the term implies) a student from admission through graduation (Seidman et al., 2012). For the purposes of this study, Seidman et al.'s definition is used. The term *institutions* refers to colleges and universities. In some of the literature, retention rates are measured on a semester or yearly basis, and the rates of students remaining from admission to graduation is sometimes called the graduation rate.

History of the Study of Student Retention

During the first 250 years of higher education, a focus on student retention did not exist (Seidman et al., 2012). Instead, the focus was survival of the institutions themselves (Seidman et al., 2012). It was during this time "college degrees had little or no importance in early American society and higher education was such a small enterprise that there was no reason to consider persistence toward a degree an issue" (Seidman et al., 2012, p. 14). Geiger (1999) notes large increases in college and university enrollment around the early 1900s. Increases are due partly to the nation becoming more industrialized and urban, creating jobs requiring professionals possessing college degrees

(Seidman et al., 2012). Admissions policies and procedures changed over the years (Seidman et al., 2012). Colleges and universities began to recruit on a national level and become more selective during the admissions process (Seidman et al., 2012). According to Seidman (1999), many new institutions opened at the turn of the 20th century.

Not until the 1930s did the concept of retention of university students become an issue. At the time, however, the concept of retention was referred to as *student mortality* and was defined as "the failure of a student to remain in college until graduation" (Seidman et al., 2012, p. 12). In 1938, McNeely was the first to study student retention. McNeely compiled a report for the U.S. Department of Education summarizing reasons for student departure from sixty institutions of higher education, and documented the reasons for departure (Seidman et al., 2012). According to Seidman et al. (2012), "This pioneering work was remarkable for the breadth and depth in which it covered the extent of and patterns of student attrition" (p. 18).

By the 1960s and 1970s, the idea of student retention evolved (Seidman et al., 2012). Spady's 1971 details the reasons a student leaves school related to the college environment (Seidman et al., 2012). After Spady's article, Tinto created the model of dropout decisions (Seidman et al., 2012). According to Demetriou and Schmitz-Scriborski (2011), Tinto theorizes "students who socially integrate into the campus community increase their commitment to the institution and are more likely to graduate" (p. 300).

Maguire created the concept of enrollment management in 1976, which is still popular in universities and colleges today (Seidman et al., 2012). Maguire uses the term to describe the alignment of efforts across departments such as admissions and financial aid in order to control enrollment (Seidman et al., 2012). Hossler (1988) said enrollment management activities enable institutions to influence student enrollment and these activities use of institutional research to guide institutional support services.

During the 1990s, retention became "a dynamic and full-fledged area of study and had become permanently established as an education priority throughout American higher education" (Seidman et al., 2012, p. 26). Braxton (2000) built on Tinto's research by suggesting one of the keys to understanding student retention is understanding the element of social integration in a higher education setting (Braxton, Sullivan, & Johnson, 1997). During this period a re-emphasis, according to Seidman (2012), emerged on academics, student learning, and student diversity. According to Seidman (2012),

> The early twenty-first century has dawned with retention fully entrenched as a major policy issue in higher education as well as a well established professional realm that has brought researchers and practitioners together in widespread efforts to better serve and retain college students throughout the country. (p. 26)

Nearly every college campus across the United States utilizes retention as a "key indicator of institutional effectiveness" (Seidman et al., 2012, p. 26). Numerous studies relating to the topic of student retention in the higher education arena

suggest increasing interest in this area (Astin, 1975; Bean 1980; Spady, 1970;

Tinto, 1987). The first published studies focus on "generic models that could

explain causes of attrition and suggestions for retention as a general phenomena

[*sic*]. Many recent studies focus on how specific types of students fare in terms

of retention at specific types of institutional settings" (Seidman et al., 2012, p.

11). Table 2 summarizes the major findings in the history of the study of student

retention.

Table 2

History of Retention

Era	Significance	Theorist
1930s	Concept of student mortality originates	McNeely, 1938
1970s	University dropout explained by interaction between academic social systems and students	Spady, 1970
	Retention influenced by student socialization	Meyer, 1970
	Personal and environmental factors affect retention	Astin, 1975
	Concept of enrollment management created and used throughout campuses in the United States	Maguire, 1976
1980s	Student integration essential to retention	Tinto, 1987
	Reasons student leave college very similar to reasons why employees leave jobs	Bean, 1980
1990s	Retention became a priority for colleges and universities	Seidman et al., 2012
2000s	Retention determined as a key indicator of organizational success	Wimshurst, Wortley, Bates, & Allard, 2006

Theories and Models of Student Retention

Theories surrounding student retention began with McNeely in 1937. The theories build on each other and evolve over time. The majority of the research on student retention centers on the work of Tinto, Astin, and Bean, all of which will be discussed further.

McNeely (1937) conducted what is believed to be the first study relating to university student retention. His sample consisted of 25 universities and included public and private institutions. McNeely's findings included public institutions had higher mortality rates than private institutions; students attending private institutions were more likely to obtain a degree; and men were more likely than women to return in the event they did leave. McNeely reports several factors contributing to mortality rates. The factors include academic failure, financial difficulties, age, location of home, participation in extracurricular activities, and academic achievement.

Summerskill (1962) conducted the next study of note in the area of student retention and recognizes motivational factors related to students' attrition. According to Seidman et al. (2012), "Summerskill suggested that students' behavior, attitudes, and satisfaction could be influenced by external and internal factors and recommended that further research be grounded in the social sciences, in particular psychology and sociology" (p. 66). Summerskill's work serves as a foundation for later work on student retention by Spady, Tinto, and others in the field (Seidman et al., 2012).

In 1970, Spady establishes the best explanation of the dropout process is in the interaction between the college academic social systems and the student (Spady, 1971). Spady's model is notable for three reasons: (a) synthesizing existing research into a more cohesive format, (b) being grounded in sociology instead of psychology, and (c) serving as the basis for Tinto's model (Seidman et al., 2012). One limitation to Spady's study is it was only appropriate for "the analysis of dropout behavior for a single institution as opposed to system-wide analysis" (Spady, 1971, p. 69). Meyer (1970) also reviewed the impact the institution could have on a student's decision to remain in college.

Meyer (1970) states colleges and universities have the ability to influence the socialization of students. Meyer argues students believing graduation from the institution allows graduates certain privileges and prestige encourages retention (Seidman et al., 2012). McClelland's (1961) motivation theory which states individuals are motivated, intrinsically and extrinsically, to perform tasks because of the needs for power, achievement and affiliation, supports this concept.

The work of Kamens (1971) focuses on the effect of institutional structures on students. Kamens reports the ability of a college degree to bestow a higher social status on its students', which impacts retention. He also concludes dropout rates are lower at larger universities and larger colleges have a stronger ability to help students find professional positions after completing college (Seidman et al., 2012).

Astin (1975) determines that, while many factors impact a student's decision to remain in college, all of the factors can be grouped in one of two categories: personal or environmental. Personal factors include family background, study habits, and marital status. Environmental factors include academic environment, employment, and characteristics of the college. The personal and environmental factors impact is supported by self-concordance theory, according to Deci and Ryan (1985), which states individuals find happiness when their goals match their values and interests. In addition, according to Seidman et al., Astin shows "the more directly involved the student was in the academic and social life of the college, the more likely that student would persist" (p. 68).

Among the literature regarding retention of students in colleges and universities, Tinto's work is the most widely referenced (Bean, 1980; Cabrera et al., 1993; Lau, 2003; Seidman et al., 2012,). Tinto claims when a student leaves college, it is because of individual attributes, interaction with faculty and staff at the college, intentions, and skills. The more students are involved in the life of the college, inside and outside the classroom, "the greater their acquisition of knowledge and skills" (Tinto, 1997, p. 600).

According to Cabrera et al. (1993), Tinto's model (seen in Figure 4) illustrates one of the reasons students do not remain in college is a lack of congruency between the student and the institution. "Tinto's theory basically asserts that the matching between the student's motivation and academic ability and the institution's academic and social characteristics helps shape two

underlying commitments: commitment to an educational goal and commitment to

remain with the institution" (Cabrera et al., 1993, p. 124). Pascarella and

Terenzini (1977) cite the leading reason students do not remain in college is the

lack of interaction with members of the college community. This interaction must

be beyond the formal classroom environment and must be sustained throughout

the students' time at the college (Pascarella & Terenzini, 1977). "[Tinto] claimed

that the more integrated the student was to the academic and social communities

of the college, the more likely the student would persevere toward their academic

goals" (as cited in Seidman et al., 2012, p. 71). A graphic representation of

Tinto's model can be seen in Figure 4.

In 1980, Bean asserts the reasons students leave college are very similar

to the reasons employees leave jobs. Bean's longitudinal study reveals student

interaction influences student persistence. Bean's student attrition model

"recognizes that factors external to the institution can play a major role in

affecting both attitudes and decisions while the student is still attending college"

(Cabrera et al., 1993, p. 125).

Seidman (2005) postulates colleges and universities with retention

programs strong enough to make substantial transformation are able to retain

more students. Seidman believes students' academic and personal deficiencies

should be determined as early as possible and addressed quickly in order to aid

in students' goal attainment (Seidman et al., 2012). Students should receive

continued support until their desired goals are met (Seidman, 2005). Each of

these theories reference different contextual factors.

```
┌──────────────┐      ┌──────────────┐      ┌──────────────┐
│    Family    │<···> │  Individual  │<···> │ Pre-College  │
│  Background  │      │  Attributes  │      │  Schooling   │
└──────────────┘      └──────────────┘      └──────────────┘
```

Figure showing Tinto's Model of Dropout Decisions with boxes connected by arrows:

Top row: Family Background, Individual Attributes, Pre-College Schooling

Commitments (first box):
- Goal Commitment
- Institutional Commitment

Middle row:
- Academic System: -Grade Performance -Intellectual Development
- Social System: -Peer- Group Interactions -Faculty Interactions

- Academic Integration
- Social Integration

Commitments (second box):
- Goal Commitment
- Institutional Commitment

Dropout

Figure 4. Tinto's Model of Dropout Decisions from *Leaving College: Rethinking the Causes and Cures of Student Attrition,* p. 152. Chicago, IL: Chicago Press. Included with permission of Vincent Tinto. (See Appendix C)

Contextual Factors of Student Retention

The following contextual factors are elements contributing to the concept of retention. The factors evolved over time and "define the unique stage of development for retention at different points of time" (Seidman et al., 2012, p. 8). Factors include,

- *Students* -- As student populations continue to change over the years, so does the retention issue. Levels of preparation, motivations, and other individual characteristics help determine if a person attends college and if they will remain until graduation (Seidman et al., 2012).

- *Campuses* -- According to the research, retention is campus-based. "By definition, retention focuses on the ability of a particular college or university to successfully graduate the students who initially enroll at that institution" (Seidman et al., 2012, p. 8). Each institution must ensure retention efforts meet the needs of its campus environment.

- *Educational Roles* -- Faculty and other educators, such as staff, impact retention issues (Seidman et al., 2012). In the early 1900s, faculty members handled all campus activities at many institutions. The system has evolved to one in which faculty are more focused on teaching and research. Others, such as student affairs personnel, perform more administrative activities (Seidman et al., 2012). "Recent trends have seen retention increasingly recognized as the responsibility of all educators on campus- faculty and staff- even when

there are specialized staff members solely dedicated to improving

retention on campus" (Seidman et al., 2012, p. 9).

- *Socioeconomic Conditions* -- Social, economic, and political issues

  also impact retention efforts. Social conditions influence the demands

  placed by society on the importance and need for higher education in

  order to obtain professional employment. Economic issues arise for

  the student and the institution. For the student, a college degree is

  needed for competitiveness in the workforce. For the institutions,

  policymakers are calling for publicly funded systems to obtain higher

  levels of retention due to the decreased ability to raise tuition (Seidman

  et al., 2012).

- *Policies and Interventions* -- National level retention policies and

  interventions are in place to address current needs. On the federal

  level, the GI Bill and financial aid have "increased the importance of

  and access to higher education" (Seidman et al., 2012, p. 10). At the

  state level, universities deem retention is a sign of success and "often

  a driver for at least partially determining funding for state campuses"

  (Seidman et al., 2012, p. 11).

- *Knowledge Base* -- As the knowledge and understanding of the

  importance and impact of student retention has grown over the years,

  so have the retention efforts throughout colleges and universities. The

  concept of retention originated in the 1930s with studies on student

  mortality and evolved to "focus on a number of mid-range theories that

explain the interaction between specific types of students and specific types of campuses, rather than continuing to search for more macro-oriented theories that try to explain retention for all types of students at all types of campuses" (Seidman et al., 2012, pp. 11-12).

The above factors, or a combination of the factors, contribute to a student's decision to remain in college or to dropout. The following section discusses the importance of students becoming integrated into the university setting, which influences a student's decision to remain in college (Bean, 1980; Tinto, 1987).

Importance of Student Integration

College communities are divided into two categories, according to the literature. Those two categories are the academic community and the social community. According to Bean (1980), Tinto and Spady believe that integration of students into these communities is one of the most important factors when a student is deciding to stay in college.

According to Spady (1971), if the college environment aligns with the student, this leads to the student socially and academically assimilating into the environment, which leads to the likelihood that the student will remain enrolled. This alignment with the college environment happens through relationships with faculty, peers, and administrators (Seidman et al., 2012). Tinto developed this theory further and states "early and continued institution commitment will impact student academic and social integration within the university" (Seidman et al., 2012, p. 23). Tinto further states contact with members of the college did not

guarantee congruence but lack of contact and relationships might separate the student from other members of the college. Cabrera et al. state, "Tinto's theory basically asserts that the matching between the student's motivation and academic ability and the institution's academic and social characteristics help shape two underlying commitments: commitment to an educational goal and commitment to remain with the institution" (p. 124). Bean (1980) supports this by stating "retention rates are related to the interaction between the students attending the college and the characteristics of the college" (p. 171). The following section details why student retention is relevant.

Relevance of Student Retention

The importance of student retention is divided into two groups: financial and personal. The financial issue relates to both the students and the institutions which they attend. A report by U.S. News and World Report in 2011 indicates, on average, individuals completing a bachelor's degree will earn nearly $1,000,000 more than individuals with high school diplomas only (Burnsed, 2011). In addition, when students are not retained, it adversely affects the college, and not only in lost tuition. According to Seidman (2012), "declining state and federal funding have provided new impetus for colleges and universities to be interested in student retention" (p. 62). In the past, many colleges and universities received state funding allocations based on the number of students enrolled at the beginning of the semester. However, the majority of states have either changed or are in the process of changing to a performance-based allocation system, according to the National Conference for State

Legislatures (2014). Under this new model, schools receive funds based on course completion, time to degree, transfer rates, the number of degrees awarded, or the number of low-income and minority graduates. In other words, student retention affects the amount of funding allocated by the state (National Conference of State Legislatures, 2014).

Remaining in college until graduation is also important on a personal level. Completing a college degree helps the individual develop critical thinking skills, inventiveness, and the ability to obtain employment (Seidman et al., 2012). Critical thinking skills are necessary for a range of activities including determining which car to purchase or which political candidate to choose. Inventiveness allows individuals to handle changes in their personal and work lives. The ability to obtain employment is becoming increasingly more difficult (Amdur, 2013). Research indicates by the year 2018, 60% of job openings will require a college education (Amdur, 2013). However, "despite the availability of copious literature on college student retention, the rates have remained essentially unchanged over the last two decades" (Seidman et al., 2012, p. 62). Colleges and universities must invest in the areas positively affecting student retention in order to improve retention rates (Lau, 2003; Martinez, 2001; Sydow & Sandel, 1998).

<div align="center">Summary</div>

Over the years, the retention of college students, or keeping students enrolled from admission until graduation, has become a priority to higher education institutions. Despite this renewed interest, retention rates have remained around 50% for the last 100 years (Demetriou & Schmitz-Sciborski,

2011). Colleges and universities search for interventions to improve student retention.

Tinto (1987) reports one way to increase retention is to ensure the student is acclimated academically and socially into the university or college. Seidman (2005) states faculty, staff, and other students can aid in this acclimation. This aid often requires a special effort on the part of faculty and staff. "Engaged employees are emotionally attached to their organization and highly involved in their job with a great enthusiasm for the success of their employer, going the extra mile beyond the employment contractual agreement" (Markos & Sridevi, 2010, p. 89). Shuck and Wollard (2010) define the term employee engagement as "an individual employee's cognitive, emotional, and behavioral state directed toward desired organizational outcomes" (p. 103). One of the desired organizational outcomes in institutions of higher education is student retention. Research shows for-profit organizations realize the benefit of employee engagement on their bottom line. However, while the retention of students has a direct impact on the financial success of institutions, no data exists showing a relationship between engagement levels of faculty and staff with the perception of how their efforts influence student retention. The following chapters detail the results of a study of the relationship of faculty and staff engagement to the perception of influence on student integration and retention.

CHAPTER III

RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

The University of Southern Mississippi has the lowest student retention and graduation rates of the three largest universities in the state (Mississippi Institutions of Higher Learning, 2014). Decreased student retention negatively impacts the student, university, and the workforce. These effects put an emphasis on retaining students through degree completion, which affects the institution's bottom line (National Conference of State Legislatures, 2014). Employee engagement is a concept with a positive effect on the financial success of organizations (Shuck & Wollard, 2010). The current study determined the relationship among the following variables: staff and faculty engagement; perception of influence on student integration; and perception of influence on student retention. Chapter III offers details of the current study including research design, population, and instrumentation. Survey data was collected from one organization at one point in time. A discussion of how the study was conducted and the data analyzed follows.

Research Design

The current study used a non-experimental, cross-sectional, descriptive design. According to Belli (2009), a study is non-experimental when the variables are studied as they are and are not manipulated by the researcher. The study was descriptive in that "the primary focus for the research is to describe some phenomenon or to document its characteristics" (Belli, 2009, p. 65). According to Phillips, Phillips, and Aaron (2013), a descriptive study uses a

survey to review the status of a situation. The study was cross-sectional

because the data was gathered at one point in time, as opposed to longitudinally

(multiple observations over time), prospectively (observations of events still to

come), or retrospectively (observations of previous events) according to Fink

(2003) and Shadish et al. (2002). No data exists concerning whether or not work

engagement in a university setting has a perceived influence on student

retention, one of the most important outcome measures in higher education

(Seidman et al., 2012).

Data was collected with electronic and paper surveys in order to conclude

if a relationship exists between the variables of work engagement, perception of

influence on student integration, and perception of influence on student retention.

Electronic (web) surveys are preferential to paper because paper surveys are

more costly and require an increased investment for the researcher (Dillman,

Smyth, & Christian, 2009). However, many employees in departments such as

Physical Plant and Residence Life do not have access to computers. Therefore,

paper surveys were administered to these groups. The instrument utilized in this

study is discussed later in this chapter.

Internal and External Validity

According to Shadish et al. (2002) the term validity is used "to refer to the

approximate truth of an inference" (p. 34). The validity of a research project is a

reflection of the conclusions drawn as a result of the study. Internal validity

addresses whether "the relationship between two variables is causal" (Shadish et

al., 2002, p. 508). Causal relationships exists when one variable causes another

variable to occur (Shadish, Cook, & Campbell, 2002). In the context of this

study, whether or not higher work engagement levels cause an increased

perception of influence on student integration or retention. External validity

addresses whether or not the results of the study can be generalized to other

populations and settings (Shadish et al., 2002). The threats to internal and

external validity vary based on the research project. For this study, the threats to

internal validity include history and instrumentation. History threats "consists of

specific events external to the treatment" (Rovai et al., 2014, p. 69). The concept

of student retention is being discussed in many different venues, including The

White House. United States President Barack Obama set forth the Student

Success 2020 initiative in 2009 and stated that by 2020 America would have the

highest number of college graduates of any country (Anne Arundel Community

College, n.d.). This information is coupled with news of cutbacks in higher

education (Mitchell, Palacios, & Leachman, 2014). Knowing these topics are of

importance might cause participants to indicate they perceive influencing student

integration and student retention in an effort to show the value of their job. This

could adversely affect the results of the study. The instrumentation can also

cause a threat to internal validity. This is caused by "the nature of a measure

changing over time" (Shadish et al., 2002, p. 55). Participants in this study will

have the opportunity to stop the survey and return at a later time. This ability to

start and stop the survey could have an impact on the results of the study if the

participant's feelings change over time.

Threats to external validity could be caused by "interactions of the causal relationship with settings" or "context-dependent mediation" (Shadish et al., 2002, p. 87). These threats mean that the results of this study cannot necessarily be generalized to other universities. In other words, if a relationship between university employees' work engagement and their perception of influence on student integration and retention is found as a part of this research, this does not mean that the same relationship would be found in other universities.

<div align="center">Population and Sample</div>

According to Phillips et al. (2013), "the population is the group we are interested in studying" (p. 59). The population for the purposes of the study included all faculty and staff of The University of Southern Mississippi. The University of Southern Mississippi was chosen because, among the three largest colleges in Mississippi, the retention rates of The University of Southern Mississippi are consistently the lowest and have been for years, according to the Mississippi Institutions of Higher Learning (2014). For instance, there is consistently a difference of 8-16% in the retention rates of The University of Southern Mississippi compared to Mississippi State University and The University of Mississippi (see Table 1). Low retention rates imply that The University of Southern Mississippi should be concerned with retaining students because, based on the new performance based funding formula, lower retention rates mean less funding from the state (National Conference of State Legislatures, 2014). Faculty and staff were surveyed because research on student retention has shown that one of the best ways to positively affect

retention is the integration of the student into the academic and social communities within the university (Seidman et al., 2012). The only group that was excluded from the sample was temporary employees because they may not be employed long enough to become engaged.

The number of faculty and staff at The University of Southern Mississippi eligible to participate in the survey was approximately 2,281 (L. Rasmussen, personal communication, February 17, 2015), signaling an appropriate sample size of 329. This calculation was determined using a sample size calculator and is based on a 5% margin of error and a 95% confidence level (Raosoft Sample Size Calculator). Dillman et al. (2009) offer suggestions on how to increase survey participation. Of Dillman et al.'s suggestions, ten strategies were utilized in this research project,

1. Say thank you -- Participants were thanked for their time.

2. Provide information about the survey -- Participants were provided with information about the survey in the notification email as well as on the first page of the survey. Participants that completed the paper version of the survey received background information on the survey as well.

3. Make it convenient to respond – Participants either clicked a link in an email to access the survey or completed a paper survey in a face-to-face setting.

4. Make the survey short and easy to complete -- The survey took no more than 10 minutes to complete.

5. Offer tangible rewards -- Participants were offered an incentive to complete the survey. If the participant supplied an email address, they were eligible to receive one of four $25 Barnes and Noble gift cards.

6. Make the questions interesting -- Participants were interested due to the visual layout and design, the main questions were placed the demographic questions, and the questions were easy to understand and answer. These three things, according to Dillman et al., (2009) make the survey more interesting.

7. Provide social validation -- Participants were notified in the reminder that some of their peers and colleagues had completed the survey. According to Dillman et al. (2009) "telling people that many others have already responded encourages them to act in a similar way and respond to the survey" (p. 25).

8. Repeat contact -- A preview email was sent to participants, informing them that the survey was coming. The survey was sent and a reminder followed. Participants in the Physical Plant and Residence Life received notifications and reminders from their department heads.

9. Ensure confidentiality and security of the information -- Participants were assured that information provided would be kept secure and confidential.

10. Show positive regard -- Participants were given the researcher's email address in case of questions.

The next section details the study's instrument and collection procedures.

Instrumentation

The survey instrument used in this research measured engagement levels of employees, as well as the perception of influence on student integration and student retention. In addition, demographic information was collected. Demographic characteristics included faculty or staff status, campus, division (administrative or academic department or college), EEO Category, age, gender, and length of employment with the University. Participants were assured that the data collected was held confidential. At the end of the survey, the participant was asked for an email address if interested in winning one of the four $25 Barnes and Noble gift cards. Participants were also asked to supply their email address if they were interested in receiving a report of the results.

In order to measure the engagement of employees, the UWES was used. The scale measures the absorption, dedication, and vigor exhibited by employees to determine levels of engagement. There are three versions of the UWES: a 9- question survey, a 15- question survey, and a 17- question survey. For the purposes of this study, the 9 question survey was used as it (a) is recommended because "the correlated three-factor structure of the UWES-9 remained relatively unchanged across both samples and time" (Seppala et al., 2009, p. 477) and (b) reduces "the likelihood of attrition a [*sic*] scale measuring a particular construct should have as few items as possible while remaining reliable and valid" (Seppala et al., 2009, p. 477). According to Dillman et al. (2009), participation in surveys increases if the survey is short and easy to complete. The survey was administered electronically through the use of Qualtrics, an

online survey tool, and via paper to two departments. Table 3 illustrates how

each question is mapped to a research objective of the study.

Table 3

Survey Map

Research Objectives	Survey Questions
RO1: Determine the demographics of participants (i.e., staff/faculty, campus location, length of employment).	Q1, Q4, Q5, Q6, Q7, Q8, Q9, Q10, Q11
RO2: Determine faculty and staff's work engagement levels based on feelings of vigor, dedication, and absorption while at work.	Q2 (Matrix question with 9 sub-parts)-Q2.1, Q2.2, Q2.3, Q2.4, Q2.5, Q2.6, Q2.7, Q2.8, Q2.9
RO3: Determine faculty and staff's perception of influence on student integration based on relationship building and contributing to students' sense of belonging and comfort.	Q3 (Matrix question with 8 sub-parts)- Q3.1, Q3.2, Q3.3, Q3.4, Q3.6
RO4: Determine faculty and staff's perception of influence on student retention based on accessibility to students, helping students attain academic goals and succeed.	Q3 (Matrix question with 8 sub-parts)- Q3.5, Q3.7, Q3.8

Questions 2.1, 2.2, and 2.5 measure vigor; questions 2.6, 2.8, and 2.9

measure absorption; and questions 2.3, 2.4, and 2.7 measure dedication based

on the UWES-9. Responses are based on a 7-point Likert scale in which

individuals determine the frequency in which certain feelings are present at work.

The scale ranges from never (0) to always/every day (6). A copy of the UWES-9

is found in Appendix A. In order to use the UWES-9, Schaufeli requires that

participants are also asked age, gender, and occupation. These questions were

added to the demographic section. Schaufeli's written permission to use the

UWES-9 can be found in Appendix D.

Previous studies, and therefore instruments, regarding the perception

faculty and staff have of their influence on student integration and student

retention do not exist. Based on previous research of student retention, 11

questions were created based on behaviors exhibited by faculty and staff that

influence student integration and student retention. These questions are

intended to measure faculty and staff's perception of their influence on student

integration and retention. The questions were answered via a 5-point Likert

scale ranging from strongly disagree to strongly agree. The questions, along

with sources, can be found in Table 4.

Table 4

Student Integration and Retention Question Foundations

Question Number	Question	Source
Q1.1	I directly contribute to the students' sense of belonging to the university.	Kuh and Love, 2000
Q1.2	I indirectly contribute to the students' sense of belonging to the university.	Kuh and Love, 2000
Q1.3	I indirectly contribute to the students' sense of comfort in their university surroundings.	Kuh and Love, 2000
Q1.4	I directly contribute to the students' sense of comfort in their university surroundings.	Kuh and Love, 2000

Table 4 (continued).

Question Number	Question	Source
Q1.5	I form relationships with students which helps them feel like they are part of the university community.	Spady, 1971
Q1.6	I aid in relationship building among students- helping them build relationships with other students.	Meyer, 1970
Q1.7	I work with other staff and faculty to create an environment that will help students succeed.	Seidman et al., 2012
Q1.8	I directly help students meet their academic goals.	Seidman et al., 2012
Q1.9	I indirectly help students meet their academic goals.	Seidman et al., 2012
Q1.10	When students complete their degree and graduate, I take that as a sign I have been successful in my efforts.	Seidman et al., 2012
Q1.11	I am openly available and accessible to students if they need guidance.	Turner and Thompson, 1993

The instrument, in its entirety, can be found in Appendix E. Validity and reliability issues are covered in the next section.

Validity and Reliability of the Instrument

An instrument is valid if it measures what it is "intended to measure based on the research objectives" (Phillips et al., 2013, p. 123). According to the authors, the four types of validity include the following:

- Content -- measures each part of the research objectives of the study

- Predictive -- predicts behaviors and results

- Construct -- measures the variable it is intended to measure

- Concurrent -- agrees with other instruments that measure the same facets (Phillips et al., 2013)

Reliability of the instrument refers to the consistency, or that subsequent "measurements of an item give approximately the same results" (Phillips et al., 2013, p. 125).

Cronbach's alpha is used to determine internal consistency of an instrument (Huck, 2008). The Cronbach's alpha for each construct measured by the UWES-9 are vigor = .84, dedication = .89, and absorption = .79 (Schaufeli & Bakker, 2004). The UWES-9 is valid and reliable according to several previous studies (Balducci, Fraccaroli, & Schaufeli, 2010; Littman-Ovadia & Balducci, 2013; Nerstad, Richardsen, & Martinussen, 2010; Yi-wen & Yi-qun, 2005).

The acceptable coefficient for Chronbach's alpha has been debated over the years. Nunnally (1978) recommends the minimum acceptable score falls 0.7 and 0.9, with the minimum score depending on the stage of research. According to Nunnally (1978), "In the early stages of research… reliabilties of .70 will suffice" (p. 245). However, Nunnally (1978) goes on to state "in applied settings… a reliability of .90 is the minimum that should be tolerated, and a reliability of .95 should be considered the desireable standard" (p. 246). Based on Chronbach's formula, if the number of items and the average interitem correlation increase, so should the coefficient alpha (Peterson, 1994).

The questions regarding the employee's perception of their influence on student integration and student retention have not previously been proven valid or reliable. In order to remedy this, faculty and staff from other universities pilot tested the survey questions that pertain to student integration and retention. The pilot group needed to consist of at least 30 faculty and staff members that work at universities other than The University of Southern Mississippi, a convenience sample. According to Warner (2012), if the sample is reasonably large, at least 30 participants, the distribution will be normal based on the central limit theorem. A list of thirty-seven possible particpants was created and those participants were contacted. The participants were asked to share the survey with others in an effort to obtain additional participation through snowball sampling (Fink, 2003). Snowball sampling is a process in which "previously identified members of a group are asked to identify other members of the population" (Fink, 2003 p. 18). An email (see Appendix F) was sent to the pilot group with a link to the survey containing only the integration and retention questions (see Appendix G). Once the data was obtained from the pilot group, a factor analysis was conducted to assess construct validity. Factor analysis is used in instrument development (Huck, 2008). According to Tucker and Lewis (1973), "Factor analysis offers effective procedures for statistical estimation of factor matrices and for statisitcal tests as to whether a factor analysis model respresents the interrelations of attributes in a battery for a population of objects or individuals" (p. 1). In other words, factor analysis can be used to determine construct validity, that the instrument measures what is intended to measure. Huck (2012) states

factor analysis helps "reduce the complexity of a data set" (p. 479) which makes the data easier to use. In addition, Cronbach's alpha was calculated for the student integration and retention questions. An acceptable α coefficient of 0.7 or above was met. To support the validity of the questions, they are tied specifically to research objectives of the study (Phillips et al., 2013).

Data Collection

Once the proposal was approved by the dissertation committee and the university Institutional Review Board (see Appendix H), the data collection process was started. A comprehensive email listing of faculty and staff did not exist. The email addresses were obtained through the use of an email extraction program called Email Extractor. The program found all email addresses listed on The University of Southern Mississippi website. Once the list was generated, all non-employee emails were removed. This list was used to create email distribution lists. An email was sent letting the participants know the survey was coming and the survey was distributed electronically.

At the same time, the Physical Plant and Residence Life departments were contacted to schedule a time when paper surveys could be distributed to employees in those departments because they do not have computer access. During week two, the survey was sent to faculty and staff. The employees were given one week to complete the survey. After three days, a reminder was sent to encourage further participation. The reminder was sent to increase the response rate, based on the suggestions of Dillman et al. (2009). At the week deadline, the number of participants that completed the survey was determined. During

this same week, face-to-face meetings were held with Physical Plant and Resident Life departments for completion of the paper surveys. According to the plan, since the appropriate sample size was not met, a request to appear in the "USM Mailout" was sent to the Department of University Communications. The "USM Mailout" is a detailed email sent to all faculty and staff, containing various university news, and is published twice a week (Wednesdays and Fridays). The narrative that accompanied the link to the survey asked participants to complete the survey within one week. See Appendix I for the communication pieces accompanying the survey. At the survey completion, winners of the gift cards were determined and notified. Winners of the gift cards were selected at random, after the survey completion deadline, by entering the interested participant's email addresses into Excel and using a random number generator to determine the number that corresponded to the row of the winner's email address. The researcher's advisor was present for this process. Winners were notified via email and the gift cards were mailed via postal mail.

The plan for collecting the data can be found in Table 5.

Table 5

Data Collection Plan

Week	Task
Week One	Sent preliminary email to faculty and staff that survey will be coming soon
	Contacted Physical Plant Department and Residence Life departments to schedule administration of paper surveys

Table 5 (continued).

Week	Task
Week Two- Day 1	Distribute the survey electronically to faculty and staff via email
Week Two- Day 3	Remind participants of the survey deadline via email
Week Two	Meet with Physical Plant and Residence Life departments face-to-face for completion of paper surveys
Week Three	If an acceptable number of responses (approximately 328) have not been returned, contact University Communications for placement of information regarding survey and a link in USM Mailout which will run on Wednesday and Friday
Week Four and Five	Gather survey results
	Determine gift card recipients randomly in the presence of dissertation chair
	Mail gift cards
Weeks Five and Six	Analyze Data using Excel and SPSS
Weeks Seven and Eight	Create report of results
	Send 1-2 page report to participants requesting it (after dissertation defense)

The data from the electronic surveys was collected via Qualtrics, an online survey tool, and can only be accessed with a username and password available to the researcher. The data from the paper surveys was entered directly into SPSS. The data were kept securely. In an effort to keep the data secure, none

of the survey responses were printed. A report of the data analysis is included in

Chapter IV. A brief report of the results was mailed to participants indicating an

interest in the findings. More information about the plan for analyzing the data

follows in the next section.

<div align="center">Data Analysis</div>

The data collected were imported, organized, and analyzed statistically

using IBM's Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) software (version

20.0). The data obtained falls in three categories: nominal, ordinal, and interval.

Nominal data is obtained when no quantitative connection exists between two

subgroups and ordinal data represent a scale of measurement (Huck, 2008).

Data is ordinal if "each person or thing being measured is put into one of several

ordinal categories" (Huck, 2008, p. 54). Interval data "are continuous with equal

distance between the response choices" (Phillips et al., 2013, p. 152). Table 6

shows the data category for each research objective, as well as the statisitcal

tests that were used in the analysis.

Table 6

Data Analysis Plan

Research Objective	Data Category	Statistical Test
RO1: Determine the demographics of participants (i.e., staff/faculty, campus location, length of employment).	Nominal, Ordinal, and Interval	Descriptive Statistics

Table 6 (continued).

Research Objective	Data Category	Statistical Test
RO2: Determine faculty and staff's work engagement levels based on feelings of vigor, dedication, and absorption while at work.	Interval	Descriptive Statistics (sample, minimum, maximum, mean, and standard deviation)
RO3: Determine faculty and staff's perception of influence on student integration based on relationship building and contributing to students' sense of comfort.	Interval	Descriptive Statistics (sample, minimum, maximum, mean, and standard deviation)
RO4: Determine faculty and staff's perception of influence on student retention based on accessibility to students, helping students attain academic goals and succeed.	Interval	Descriptive Statistics (sample, minimum, maximum, mean, and standard deviation
RO5: Determine relationship between faculty and staff's work engagement and faculty and staff's perception of influence on student integration.	Interval	Pearson's Correlation
RO6: Determine relationship between faculty and staff's work engagement to faculty and staff's perception of influence on student retention.	Interval	Pearson's Correlation

For the first research objective, the data collected was demographic in nature and categorized as nominal. The data obtained provides basic information about the sample, therefore it is descriptive in nature. For Research Objectives 2, 3, and 4- descriptive statistics were used to summarize the data.

Descriptive statistics are used because they describe what the data shows Huck,

2012). For each construct, the minimum, maximum, mean, and standard

deviation were calculated. According to Huck (2012):

- The minimum (min) is the lowest score obtained.

- The maximum (max) is the highest score obtained.

- The mean is "the point that minimizes the collective distances of
  scores from that point" (p. 28).

- The standard deviation is found by determining "how much each score
  deviates from the mean" (Huck, 2012, p. 35).

For Research Objectives 5 and 6, inferential statistics were used.

Inferential statistics "allow researchers to generalize their findings beyond the

actual data sets obtained" (Huck, 2008, p. 90). Researchers can use inferential

statistics to infer relationships between variables (Huck,2012). The data

obtained for Research Objectives 5 and 6 was Likert-type data which "is

composed of a series of four or more Likert-type items that are combined into a

single composite score/variable" (Boone & Boone, 2012, p. 2). This combining of

scores allows analysis at the interval level (Boone & Boone, 2012). For the

purpose of this study, the correlations between the variables of work engagement

and student integration and work engagement and student retention were

calculated via Pearson's Correlation (*r)* to determine if a relationship exists. The

result is a correlation coefficient that ranges from -1.00 to + 1.00 (Huck, 2008).

Results are interpreted as follows:

- Above 0 represents a positive correlation and a direct relationship.

- Below 0 represents a negative correlation and an inverse, or indirect relationship (Huck, 2008).

When the correlation coefficient is near either end, it implies a strong relationship between the variables (direct or indirect). When the correlation coefficient is close to the middle, or close to the 0, it indicates either no relationship or a weak relationship between the variables (direct or indirect; Huck, 2008).

Summary

This descriptive, cross-sectional study was conducted at The University of Southern Mississippi's two campuses: Hattiesburg and Gulf Coast. The work engagement levels of faculty and staff were measured using the UWES (9 - question version). The perception of faculty and staff of their influence on student integration and student retention was measured by asking questions related to research on factors that contribute to student integration and retention. The validity of this part of the survey was tested by using a pilot group of at least 30 faculty and staff members from universities other than The University of Southern Mississippi. A factor analysis and Cronbach's alpha were calculated on the results from the survey testing the validity and reliability of the questions pertaining to faculty and staff's perception of influence on student integration and student retention. If the factor analysis and/or Cronbach's alpha showed the questions were not valid, those questions were used. In the overall survey, respondents were asked demographic information such as location, faculty or staff status, and length of employment with the university. Descriptive statistics

were used to analyze the data from the demographic part of the survey as well

as the questions regarding work engagement and perception of influence on

student retention and student integration. Correlation coefficients were

calculated for the factors of work engagement and student integration and work

engagement and student retention to determine if a relationship exists between

those constructs. The survey was administered electronically via Qualtrics, an

online survey tool, as well as in-person to departments where employees do not

have access to computers. The results of the data collection were analyzed and

reported in Chapter IV. Chapter V will discuss implications for future research.

CHAPTER IV

ANALYSIS OF DATA

Changes in funding formulas, along with the impact of student attrition on the workforce, have created an impetus for universities to determine ways in which students can be retained from admission through graduation. Students decide to remain in college for many reasons. One such reason is the students' integration into the academic and social communities within the university (Tinto, 1987). Faculty and staff, the employees of the university, aid in this integration (Seidman et al., 2012). Engaged employees demonstrate absorption in their duties, dedication, and vigor (Schaufeli & Bakker, 2004). These behaviors have a positive influence on the financial success of organizations (Wollard & Shuck, 2011).

The present study determines if a relationship exists between university employees' work engagement levels and the perception of their influence on student integration and retention. Chapter IV details the analysis of the data collected as part of the current study. The research consists of two parts: testing the validity of the integration and retention questions and surveying university employees regarding their engagement levels and their perception of influence on student integration and student retention. The following section provides detail regarding the validity of the instrument.

Instrument Validity

A valid instrument measuring the perception of influence on student integration and retention did not exist. In order to collect data on these

perceptions, questions were created that centered on the behaviors exhibited by faculty and staff that, according to the literature, encourage student integration and student retention. This instrument was sent to faculty and staff at universities other than The University of Southern Mississippi in order to test its validity. Based on the central limit theorem, 30 responses were needed to ensure normal distribution (Walker, 2013). Snowball sampling was utilized to maximize participation in this phase of the study. The instrument was emailed to 37 potential participants who were asked to complete the survey and forward it to others from their institutions for completion. The participants were asked to select their agreement or disagreement with 11 statements. There were 66 surveys were completed.

Once the surveys were returned, a factor analysis was performed to determine question validity. Factor analysis is often used to determine construct validity (Huck, 2008). The factor analysis was calculated in SPSS and no reverse coding was used. The rotation selected was Varimax, which keeps the factors independent, statistically (Huck, 2008). The default Eigenvalue of one was selected. Confirmatory factor analysis was used due to the number of known. The results of the factor analysis showed that two factors were present, as predicted. The two factors were coded, based on the research from which the questions were derived, as student integration and student retention. The size of the factor loading indicated the factor represented in each question. The results of the factor analysis were sorted by size of the coefficient. Questions 2, 3, and 9 were eliminated because initial loading indicated they were unrelated to the

intended constructs. All three questions included the word "indirectly" which could have caused them to form a latent variable not associated with the initial constructs. According to Field (2009), a latent variable is "a variable that cannot be directly measured but is assumed to be related to several variables that can be measured" (p.788).

In addition, Cronbach's alpha was calculated as a way to measure the reliability of the scale. An acceptable Cronbach's alpha is 0.7 to 0.8 (Field, 2009). Cronbach's alpha was calculated as 0.902 indicating reliability, or internal consistency of the items.

After questions 2, 3, and 9 were removed, the factor analysis and Cronbach's alpha were recalculated. The new Cronbach's alpha was 0.907. After questions 2, 3, and 9 were deleted, the questions were re-numbered. The results of the second factor analysis can be found in Table 7.

Table 7

Factor Analysis Results of Integration and Retention Questions

	Factor Loading	
Item	Integration	Retention
1. I *directly* contribute to the students' sense of belonging to the university.	.811	
2. I *directly* contribute to the students' sense of comfort in their university surroundings.	.843	
3. I form relationships with students which helps them feel like they are part of the university community.	.779	

Table 7 (continued).

| | Factor Loading | |
| | Integration | Retention |
Item		
4. I aid in relationship building among students- helping them build relationships with other students.	.821	
5. I *directly* help students meet their academic goals.	.640	
6. I work with other staff and faculty to create an environment that will help students succeed.		.738
7. When students complete their degree and graduate, I take that as a sign I have been successful in my efforts.		.847
8. I am openly available and accessible to students if they need guidance.		.538

Data Collection Results

The population for the study consists of faculty and staff at The University of Southern Mississippi. The number of faculty and staff totals 2,281 (L. Rasmussen, personal correspondence, February 17, 2015). A comprehensive email list for faculty and staff did not exist, therefore an email extraction program was used to extract all emails listed on the www.usm.edu website. The email extraction resulted in a listing of 1,368 usable email addresses. The survey was sent to each of the email addresses. A total of 232 electronic surveys were completed. In addition, 71 paper surveys were completed as a result of face-to-face meetings with the Physical Plant and Residence Life Departments, areas in which employees do not have computer access. A total of 303 surveys were

completed, a response rate of 22.14%. The results of the data analysis are presented in the next section.

<p style="text-align:center">Cronbach's α Reliability Statistics for the Instrument</p>

As stated previously, Cronbach's alpha (α) is used to determine internal consistency of an instrument (Huck, 2008). According to Sprinthall (2012), identifying items and identifying if they are contributing to the overall reliability calculated using Cronbach's alpha. Coefficients for Cronbach's alpha typically fall between 0 and 1. According to Gliem and Gliem (2003), the closer the coefficient is to 1 demonstrates a greater internal consistency of the items in the scale. In other words, it determines the correlation of the test with itself. For the purposes of this instrument, Cronbach's alpha was calculated for the entire instrument, as well as the work engagement questions and perception of influnece on student integration and retention questions. The α for each part of the survey and the survey in its entirity range from .7 to .91, indicating that the instrument is internally consistent. The results of these calculations are found in Table 8.

Table 8

Cronbach's Alpha of the Instrument

Instrument Section	Cronbach's α	*N* of items
Work Engagement	.902	9
Student Integration	.887	5
Student Retention	.751	3
Overall Survey	.911	17

Results of Research Objectives

The study presents six research objectives. Each objective produced data that can be classified into the following categories: nominal, ordinal, and interval. The results of the findings and the interpretation of the results are discussed.

Research Objective 1: Determine the demographics of participants (i.e., staff/faculty, campus location, length of employment). For the first research objective, demographic data were collected and categorized as nominal. The data obtained provides basic information about the sample. Two hundred and ninety-eight respondents answered a question referring to gender. The majority of respondents were female (n = 192, 64.4%). One hundred and six respondents, or 35.6%, were male. Of the 300 participants that answered the faculty or staff status question, 78.3% (n = 235) classified themselves as staff, as compared to 21.7% classified as faculty (n = 65). This is representative of the distribution of faculty (28%) and staff (72%). See Figure 5 for a graphical representation of the data.
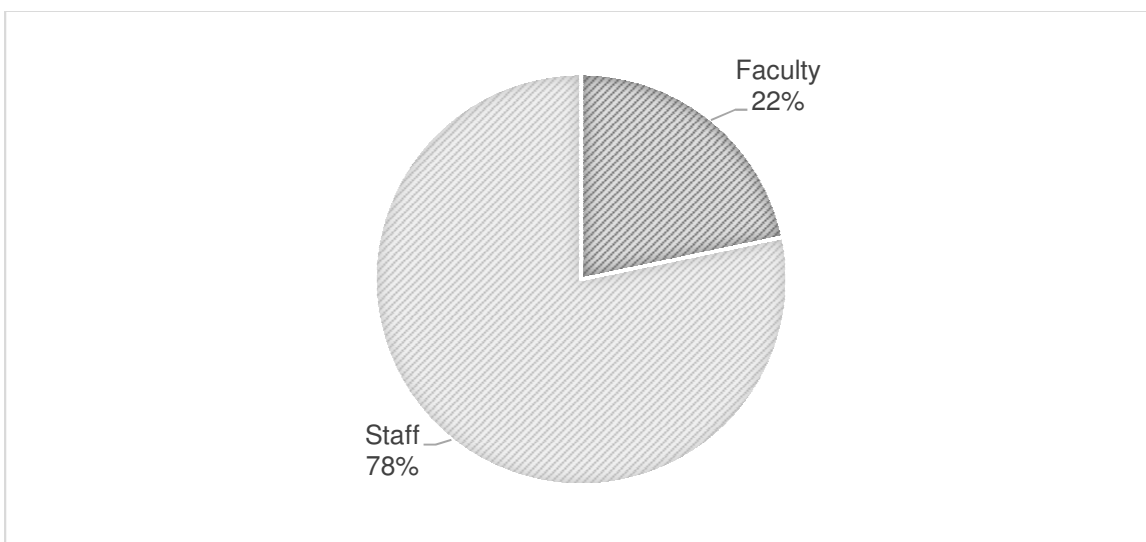

Figure 5. Distribution of respondents based on employment category.

The survey participants were also asked to select the campus at which they are located. The majority selected the Hattiesburg campus (n = 235, 78.3%), followed by Gulf Park (n = 44, 14.7%), Gulf Coast Research Lab (n = 4, 4.7%), and Stennis Space Center (n = 7, 2.3%). This distribution can be seen in Figure 6 and is representative of the total number of employees at each location.
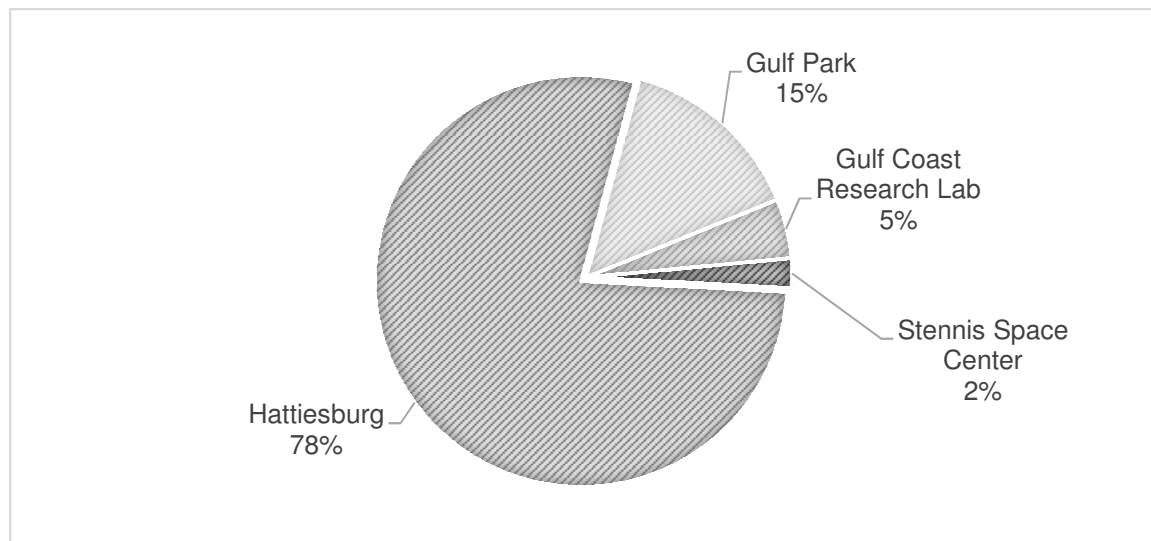
Figure 6. Distribution of respondents based on campus location.

As a condition for using the UWES, Schaufeli requests that position title be gathered as part of the demographic data. Due to the varying nature of position titles across the University, EEO categories were collected. The Equal Employment Opportunity Commission assigns EEO categories to jobs based on the job duties and responsibilities of the position. As shown in Figure 7, most of the survey respondents classified themselves in EEO3, the Professional category (*n* = 99, 33.4%). The number of respondents in the EEO1 (Executive) category was 26, or 8.8%. The number of Faculty that responded, or EEO2, was 57 (19.3%). Fifty-two of the respondents, or 17.6%, were classified as EEO4, or Clerical. The number of respondents in EEO5 (ParaProfessional) was 12, or

4.1%. Twenty-three respondents (7.8%) were considered Skilled Crafts (EEO6).

The number of Service/Maintenance employees, EEO7, was 25, or 8.4%. Two

respondents (0.7%) indicated they were unsure of their EEO category. The

results can be found in Figure 7.
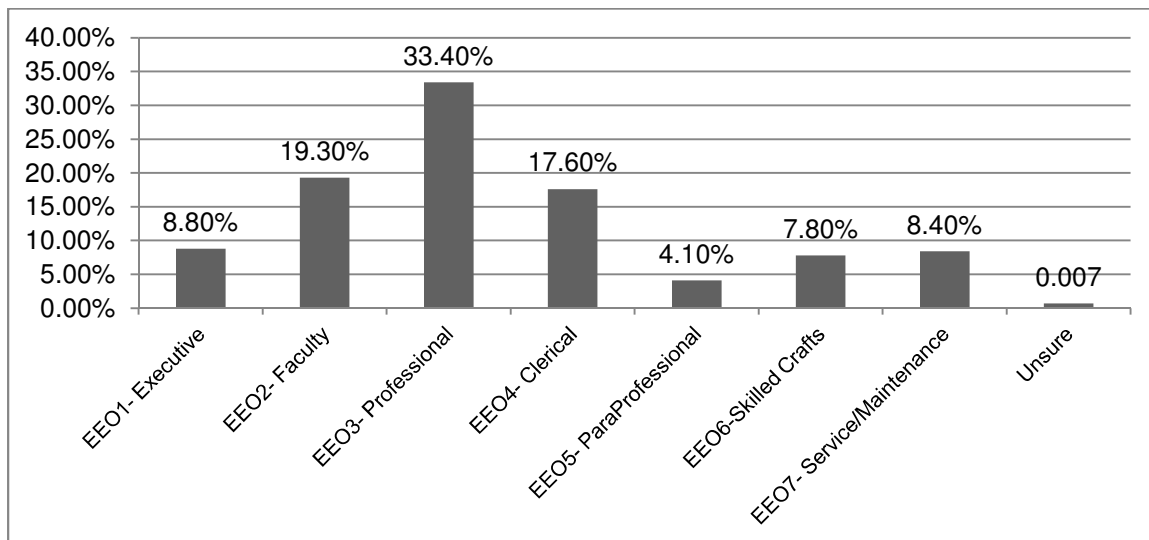
Figure 7. EEO Category of Respondents.

Schaufeli also requests the age of respondents be collected if using the

UWES. Most of the respondents were between the ages of 32 and 45 ($n = 108$,

36.2%). Only 1 respondent (0.3%) was over 73 years old. The age distribution

is presented in Figure 8.
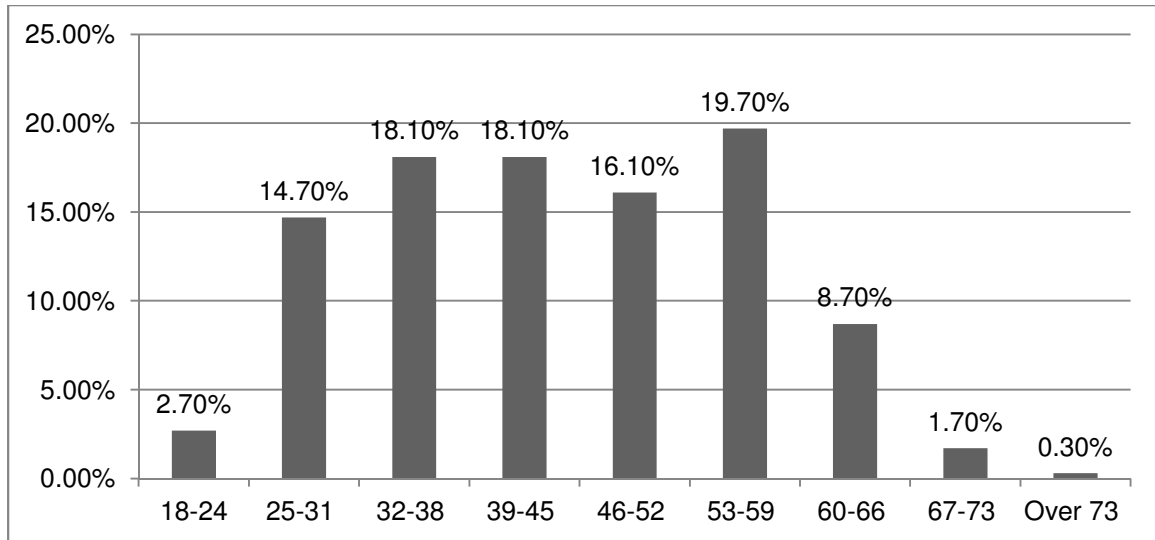
Figure 8. Distribution of Ages of Respondents.

Survey participants were asked about their length of employment with the University. The responses ranged from less than 6 months to 43 years. Most of the respondents (*n* = 121, 39.9%) have been employed with the University five years or less, as seen in Table 9.

Table 9

Respondents Length of Employment with the University

Length of Employment	N	%	Cumulative %
0-5 years	121	39.9	39.9
5.5 -10 years	80	26.4	66.3
10.5 – 15 years	45	14.9	81.2
16 – 20 years	33	10.9	92.1
20-25 years	12	4.0	96.1
25+ years	7	2.3	98.4

Note: 5 respondents did not answer this question- resulting in a 1.7% difference.

Respondents were also asked whether they work in an administrative or academic department. Of the 302 respondents answering this question, the majority were employed in an administrative department ($n = 174$, 57.6%) rather than an academic department ($n = 128$, 42.4%). In addition, respondents who selected an academic department were asked to note the college of their department. For this section, the University Library was listed as a possible selection because of the academic reporting structure to the Provost, as with other academic departments. Of the participants that work in an academic department, most are employed in the College of Science and Technology ($n= 43$, 32%. The distribution of respondents per college can be seen in Figure 9.
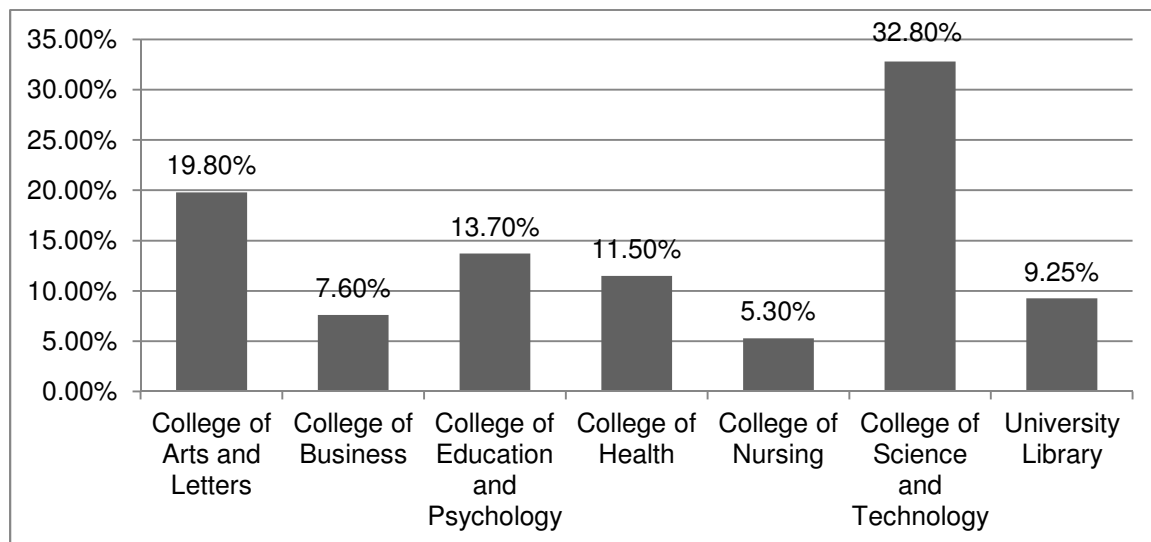
Figure 9. Colleges of respondents employed in academic departments.

For Research Objectives 2, 3, and 4, descriptive statistics were used to summarize the data. For each construct, the minimum, maximum, mean, and standard deviation were calculated. The minimums and maximums of each are discussed later with each research objective. The mean, *M*, is the "arithmetic average of all the scores" according to Sprinthall (2012, p. 38). The standard

deviation, *SD*, is the "deviation in a given distribution" (Sprinthall, 2012, p. 56). The results of these calculations will also be discussed with each research objective.

Research Objective 2: Determine faculty and staff's work engagement levels based on feelings of vigor, dedication, and absorption while at work. The work engagement levels were measured using the Utrecht Work Engagement 9 Question Scale. Participants were asked to express how often, if ever, they exhibited behaviors at work that are characterized by vigor, dedication, and absorption. Questions 2.1, 2.2, and 2.5 measure vigor. Questions 2.3, 2.4, and 2.7 measure dedication. Questions 2.6, 2.8, and 2.9 measure absorption. The Likert-type scale ranged from 0 (*never*) to 6 (*always*). The mean for vigor, dedication, and absorption ranged from 4.07 to 4.71, with an overall mean for the work engagement construct of 4.42. The results indicate that faculty and staff exhibit vigor, dedication, and absorption, all behaviors associated with work engagement, at least once a week, an average level of engagement (Schaufeli & Bakker, 2004). The results can be seen in Table 10.

Table 10

Results for Objective 2

Construct	*N*	Min	Max	*M*	*SD*
Work Engagement	303	0.00	6.00	4.42	0.96
Vigor	303	0.00	6.00	4.07	1.10
Dedication	303	0.00	6.00	4.71	1.09

Table 10 (continued).

Construct	*N*	Min	Max	*M*	*SD*
Absorption	302	0.00	6.00	4.47	1.08

Research Objective 3: Determine faculty and staff's perception of influence on student integration based on relationship building and contributing to students' sense of belonging and comfort. Participants were asked to report their level of agreement with statements pertaining to exhibited behaviors that influence student integration. Questions 3.1, 3. 2, 3.3, 3.4, and 3.5 centered on student integration behaviors. These questions include topics such as aiding in relationship building among students, contributing to students' sense of comfort and belonging, and developing relationships with students. The scale for the responses ranged from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 5 (*strongly agree*). The mean for faculty and staff's perception of influence on student integration is 3.71 (*SD* = 0.88). The results indicate that faculty and staff, on average, agree with the statements regarding their perception of influence on student integration through relationship building and contributing to students' sense of belonging and comfort. The results of the statistical analysis for Research Objective 3 can be found in Table 11.

Table 11

Results for Objective 3

Construct	N	Min	Max	M	SD
Student Integration	301	1.00	5.00	3.71	0.88

Research Objective 4: Determine faculty and staff's perception of influence on student retention based on accessibility to students, helping students attain academic goals and succeed. Participants were asked to report their level of agreement with statements pertaining to exhibited behaviors that influence student retention. Questions 3.6, 3.7, and 3.8 centered on these behaviors. These questions include topics such as feeling successful when students graduate, working with other staff and faculty to ensure students' goals are met, and being available to assist students. The scale for the responses ranged from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). The mean for the construct of faculty and staff's perception of influence on student retention is 3.98 ($SD = 0.79$). The results indicate that, on average, faculty and staff agree with the statements pertaining to their perception of influence on student retention based on being accessible to students and helping students attain their academic goals and succeed. The results of the statistics for this research objective are presented in Table 12.

Table 12

Results for Objective 4

Construct	N	Min	Max	*M*	*SD*
Student Retention	301	1.00	5.00	3.98	0.79

For Research Objectives 5 and 6, inferential statistics were used. For these objectives, Pearson's Product-Moment Correlation (*r*) was calculated. Pearson's *r* is the "numerical statement of the linear relationship between two variables" (Sprinthall, 2012, p. 290).This calculation was used to determine if a relationship exists between the variables of work engagement and student integration and work engagement and student retention. According to Guilford (as cited in Sprinthall, 2012), a correlation value between 0.2 and 0.4 indicates a small but definite relationship. The significance level for each variable was less than .01, indicating a significant result (Field, 2009). This significance indicates that it is unlikely the results occurred by chance.

Research Objective 5: Determine relationship between faculty and staff's work engagement (vigor, dedication, and absorption) and faculty and staff's perception of influence on student integration. Results yielded correlation coefficients for student integration with work engagement, vigor, dedication, and absorption between 0.30 and 0.40. In each instance, a positive, direct relationship between student integration, work engagement, vigor, dedication, and absorption was shown to exist. In other words, as vigor, dedication, and absorption increase, so does faculty and staff's perception of influence on

student integration. The results also indicate a correlation between work

engagement with vigor, dedication, and absorption, with coefficients ranging from

0.86 to 0.91, which supports information found in the literature. The results of the

correlations are found in Table 13

Table 13

Correlation Coefficients of Variables- Research Objective 5

Constructs	Work Engagement	Vigor	Absorption	Dedication	Student Integration
Work Engagement		.88	.86	.91	.39
Sig. (2-tailed)		.000	.000	.000	.000
N		303	302	303	301
Vigor	.88		.58	.73	.30
Sig. (2-tailed)	.000		.000	.000	.000
N	303		302	303	302
Absorption	.86	.58		.68	.33
Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000		.000	.000
N	302	302		302	300
Dedication	.91	.73	.68		.40
Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.000		.000
N	303	303	302		301
Student Integration	.39	.30	.33	.40	
Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.000	.000	
N	301	301	300	301	

Note: *p<.01, two-tailed.

Research Objective 6: Determine relationship between faculty and staff's work engagement (vigor, dedication, and absorption) and faculty and staff's perception of influence on student retention. Results yielded correlation coefficients for student retention, work engagement, vigor, dedication, and absorption between 0.31 and 0.41. In each instance, a positive, direct relationship between student retention, work engagement, vigor, dedication, and absorption was shown to exist. In other words, as vigor, dedication, and absorption increase, faculty and staff's perception of their influence on student retention also increases. The results of the correlations are found in Table 14.

Table 14

Correlation Coefficients of Variables- Research Objective 6

Constructs	Work Engagement	Vigor	Absorption	Dedication	Student Retention
Work Engagement		.88	.86	.91	.40
Sig. (2-tailed)		.000	.000	.000	.000
N		303	302	303	301
Vigor	.88		.58	.73	.31
Sig. (2-tailed)	.000		.000	.000	.000
N	303		302	303	301
Absorption	.86	.58		.68	.34
Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000		.000	.000
N	302	302		302	300

Table 14 (continued).

Constructs	Work Engagement	Vigor	Absorption	Dedication	Student Retention
Dedication	.91	.73	.68		.41
Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.000		.000
N	303	303	302		301
Student Retention	.40	.31	.34	.41	
Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.000	.000	
N	301	301	300	301	

Note: *p<.01, two-tailed.

The Pearson's Product Moment Correlation was also calculated for the relationship between student integration and student retention. While this was not an objective of this study, the results support the literature which states that student integration is influenced by the students integration into the university. Based on the data collected, $r = 0.817$, a strong, positive, and direct relationship exists between the variables. In other words, as student integration increases, so does student retention.

Summary

The purpose of this study was to determine if a relationship exists between the engagement levels of faculty and staff and their perception of their influence on student integration, as well as student retention. A valid and reliable instrument was used to measure work engagement. In addition, an instrument

measuring employees' perception of their influence on student integration and student retention was tested and proven valid. The two instruments were combined and emailed to a sample of the population. In addition, paper copies were distributed to employees in the Physical Plant and Residence Life Departments. These delivery strategies resulted in 303 usable survey responses. Based on the data, faculty and staff in this study often (once a week) exhibit behaviors associated with work engagement, which is considered an average level of engagement. In addition, the employees agreed with statements regarding the perception of their influence on student integration and student retention. The correlation calculation shows that the data is significant and a positive relationship between work engagement and student integration and student retention exists for this study's population. When work engagement levels increase, so do the faculty and staff's perception of their influence on student integration and student retention.

CHAPTER V

SUMMARY

Due to universities' funding formulas becoming more performance

outcome driven (National Conference of State Legislatures, 2014), universities

are looking for ways to improve student retention. The University of Southern

Mississippi has the lowest retention and graduation rates among the three largest

universities in the state (Mississippi Institutions of Higher Learning, 2014). The

present study determines if a relationship exists between engagement levels of

faculty and staff and their perception of their influence on student integration and

student retention. Previous studies show student integration into a university's

academic and social communities increases student retention (Bean, 1980;

Seidman et al., 2012; Tinto, 1987). A student's interaction with faculty and staff

positively affects their integration into the university (Tinto, 1997). Engaged

employees demonstrate vigor, dedication, and absorption, all of which have been

shown to contribute to the financial success of organizations (Schaufeli, Bakker,

& Salonova, 2006). This chapter discusses the results of the study. A summary

of the study, along with findings, conclusions and recommendations are

provided. Areas for future research are discussed.

Introduction

The retention of college students has become a focus for universities and

those interested in economic development because of the effect retention has on

the student, the university, and the workforce. Student retention rates have

remained around 50%, indicating that only half of the students that start college

actually graduate (Demetriou & Schmitz-Sciborski, 2011). This low retention rate affects the university financially in two ways. One, when a student does not remain in school, the university no longer receives tuition from the student. Two, the amount of state funding is affected. In the State of Mississippi, the legislature allocates funds for base operational support for universities and additional funding is determined by performance measures such as retention and graduation rates (National Conference of State Legislatures, 2014). Of the three largest Universities in the state, The University of Southern Mississippi has the lowest retention and graduation rates, and, therefore, based on the new funding formulas, receives less state-allocated funds. According to the literature, retention is affected positively when students feel academically and socially integrated within the university (Tinto, 1987). Faculty and staff aid in this integration (Seidman et al., 2012).

Employees who are engaged in their work go above and beyond the requirements of their position (Wollard & Shuck, 2011). They exhibit behaviors such as dedication, absorption and vigor (Schaufeli et al., 2006). These behaviors have a positive effect on the financial success of organizations (Markos & Sridevi, 2010; Schaufeli et al., 2006; Wollard & Shuck, 2011).

The current study determines if a relationship exists between faculty and staff's work engagement levels and their perception of their influence on student integration and student retention. The UWES9 was used to measure work engagement of employees. Participants were asked to determine how often, if ever, they felt and exhibited certain behaviors at work. The responses were

reported using a 7-point Likert type scale ranging from never to always. The perception of influence was measured using an instrument. This part of the survey consisted of eight questions. Participants were asked to determine their agreement with certain statements. The responses were reported using a 5-point scale and ranged from strongly disagree to strongly agree. In addition, various demographic questions were asked of the participants. Data was collected online via Qualtrics and in-person with the use of paper surveys.

There were 303 usable surveys collected. The information was analyzed using SPSS. The findings, conclusions, and recommendations derived from the study are found in the next section.

<div align="center">Work Engagement</div>

This study utilizes the definition of employee engagement that states it is "a positive fulfilling work related state of mind and characterized by vigor, dedication, and absorption" (Schaufeli et al., 2006, p. 702). Employee engagement is defined by Shuck and Wollard (2010) as the cognitive, emotional, and behavioral energy that is directed at positive organizational outcomes by employees. Employees who exhibit these behaviors often go above and beyond the requirements of their position (Markos & Sridevi, 2010).

Findings

The work engagement section of the survey centered on vigor, dedication, and absorption behaviors. The responses were based on a 7-point scale, ranging from 0 to 6. The results of the survey included an overall mean score for work engagement as well as scores for vigor, dedication, and absorption. The

mean score for work engagement was 4.42 (*SD* = 0.96), while the scores for

vigor, dedication, and absorption were 4.07 (*SD* = 1.10), 4.70 (*SD* = 1.09), and

4.47 (*SD* = 1.08), respectively. These scores, based on the UWES Preliminary

Manual, indicate the faculty and staff exhibit behaviors associated with work

engagement "at least once a week" (Schaufeli & Bakker, 2004, p. 34).

Compared to findings from other studies using the UWES9, this is considered an

average level of work engagement (Schaufeli & Bakker, 2004).

Conclusion

The results of the study indicate that faculty and staff are engaged in

their work. There is consistency among the outcomes for work engagement and

the components of work engagement (vigor, dedication, and absorption). Faculty

and staff demonstrate high energy at work, are dedicated to their jobs, and

become engrossed in their work, according to the results of the survey.

Recommendation

The University should further research the concept of work engagement

among the faculty and staff to include determining what interventions could

increase work engagement levels and increase frequency of associated

behaviors. The University might benefit from determining ways to encourage

employees to exhibit behaviors associated with engagement more often, a

couple of times a week or daily. A goal to increase engagement from average to

high, or very high, should be set. This could be done through implementation of

talent management strategies, rewards and recognition programs, and role

clarity.

Student Integration and Student Retention

Student retention is the ability of a college or university to retain a student from admission to graduation (Seidman et al., 2012). There are various factors that influence a student's decision to remain in college. These include individual characteristics of the students, the campuses, socioeconomic conditions, and educational roles. One way that faculty and staff influence retention of students is through aiding in the integration of the students into the academic and social communities of the university (Bean, 1980; Tinto, 1987).

Finding

Faculty and staff at The University of Southern Mississippi perceive they exhibit behaviors that encourage student integration and student retention in a university setting. The survey results indicate the mean for student integration totals 3.71 ($SD = 0.88$). The mean for student retention totals 3.98 ($SD = 0.79$). The scale for this part of the instrument was a 5-point scale, ranging from 1 to 5.

Conclusion

Previous research indicates that when faculty and staff aid in integration and retention, they exhibit such actions as forming relationships with faculty, staff, and other students, being available to guide students, and feeling successful when students graduate (Kuh & Love, 2000; Meyer, 1970; Spady, 1971; Turner & Thompson, 1993). The questions pertaining to the perception of influence on student integration and student retention were based on these types of practices. The overall results of this part of the survey suggest that employess at The University of Southern Mississippi perceive they exhibit such behaviors.

Recommendation

Human capital is an organization's greatest asset. Faculty and staff require a full understanding of the role they play in the integration and retention of students at the University. The importance of retention should be broadcast to the University community often and through a variety of mediums. In an effort to improve awareness, faculty and staff should be informed of their importance and how they can further impact the critical performance measure of retention.

Relationship between Work Engagement, Student

Integration and Student Retention

Behaviors associated with employee engagement positively affect the bottom-line of organizations (Cascio & Boudreau, 2001; Harter et al., 2002; Markos & Sridevi, 2010; Wollard & Shuck, 2010). Retention rates, according to Seidman, have been an important performance measure for colleges and universities but the focus on these measurements has recently increased (2005). The changing of federal and state funding formulas for universities to more performance-based plans that offer more funding based on higher retention rates has precipitated this focus (National Conference of State Legislatures, 2014). Integrating students into academic and social communities within the university is one way to positively affect retention rates, according to Tinto (1987). University employees, faculty and staff, aid in this integration through interactions with students (Seidman et al., 2012). Faculty and staff engaged in their work exhibit behaviors that could influence their perception of influence on student integration and student retention.

Finding

According to the results of this study, there is a positive, direct relationship between the overall work engagement and faculty and staff's perception of their influence on student integration. The relationship between student integration and the components of work engagement (vigor, dedication, and absorption) was also calculated. The results show a positive, direct relationship between these variables.

The relationship between overall work engagement and the perception of influence on student retention can also be classified as direct and positive based on the outcome of the Pearson's Product-Moment Correlation. The correlation coefficients were also calculated for student retention, vigor, dedication, and absorption. The results indicate a positive, direct relationship between all of the variables.

Conclusion

As engagement levels of faculty and staff increase, faculty and staff's perception of their influence on student integration and student retention also increases. This means that behaviors exhibited by employees that characterize work engagement, including vigor, dedication, and absorption (Schaufeli et al., 2004), have an influence on faculty and staff's perception of their influence on student integration and student retention. The more engaged an employee, the more they perceive to have an influence on integrating students into the university's academic and social communities and influencing a students' decision to remain in college.

Recommendation

Administration of the University should demonstrate to faculty and staff the importance of student integration and its effect on student retention. This importance should be shared with faculty and staff through a variety of means to include communication pieces and through informational training sessions. In addition, proven means to improve engagement, such as talent management, rewards and recognition, perceived supervisor support, perceived organizational support, contribution toward organizational goals, and role clarity should be employed (Saks, 2006; Shuck & Reio, 2011).

Limitations of the Study

Limitations in research are items that impact the study but that are outside of the researcher's control. Limitations can affect the interpretation of the results of the study. One limitation of the study was the absence of a validated, reliable measure of the perception of influence on student integration and student retention. The measure used for this study was proven valid but further studies should be conducted for further validation of the questions. In addition, the instrument used to measure work engagement levels, the UWES9, has received criticism because some researchers propose it more accurately measures burnout, a construct considered the antithesis of work engagement (Schaufeli & Bakker, 2004).

The results of the survey are also limited because only one university was studied and the population of that university was difficult to contact. While 2,281 faculty and staff employed at The University of Southern Mississippi met the

requirements for participation in the study (permanently employed) only 1,368

emails were extracted using the email extraction program. Of those, only 232

responded to the survey electronically. The use of the paper surveys yielded a

higher response rate (23%), resulting in an additional 71 completed surveys. A

total of 303 surveys were completed and returned.

<center>Implications for Further Research</center>

While this study seeks to be comprehensive and answer questions

regarding the relationship between university employees' work engagement and

the perception of their influence on student integration and retention, the

conclusions of the study also create additional questions. These questions are

the basis for recommendations for further research.

- Examine the differences in the outcomes between various demographic

  groups. For instance, determine if staff are more engaged than faculty, if

  faculty more often perceive to have an influence on student integration

  and retention and if the perceptions are different based on campus

  location. These determinations would allow for more targeted human

  capital development interventions.

- Examine the relationship between work engagement and actual retention

  of university students. This examination would require a longitudinal

  study, tracking work engagement levels and student retention rates over a

  period of time.

- Use qualitative analysis techniques to further investigate the relationship

  between work engagement and faculty and staff's perception of their

influence on student integration and student retention with the use of qualitative research methods. This could include focus groups and interview of staff and faculty, as well as students.

- Replicate this study using another measurement tool for work engagement. There are several options available. The UWES9 was chosen for this study based on its use in a variety of settings and cost. Further research should be performed to determine if another instrument would be more applicable in a university setting. It is possible that a new instrument could be created for use in this specific environment.

- Examine and determine human capital development interventions to increase work engagement levels of faculty and staff. Engagement, as shown by this study, will increase faculty and staff's perception that they influence student integration and student retention.

Discussion

One of the most important performance metrics in a university setting is the percentage of students who remain in college from admission to graduation (Seidman, et al., 2012). This retention has a multi-layered effect on the student, the university, and the workforce. Students are affected by the inability to find a job without possessing a degree. The workforce is affected when there is a shortage of qualified individuals to fill job vacancies and complete needed work. Universities are affected in many ways, most notably financially by a lack of tuition dollars if a student does not remain in school and also by receiving less

financial assistance from the state and federal government when retention numbers are low.

One of the ways that universities can increase student retention is through the integration of students into the academic and social communities of the college (Seidman et al., 2012). Faculty and staff play a key role in this integration (Bean, 1980; Tinto, 1987). This integration is accomplished by faculty and staff providing students with a sense of comfort and belonging to the university as well as forming relationships with students and helping them form relationships with others. The results of this research indicate that there is a strong, positive, direct correlation between student integration and student retention. While determining a correlation between student integration and student retention was not one of the research objectives of this study, it is important to note it supports that the two constructs are tied closely together. Therefore, if students feel more integrated into the university community, this research indicates the likelihood of students remaining enrolled.

Employees who are engaged in their work tend to be invested in the organizations in which they work and exhibit behaviors that aid in the success of the organizations. According to Shuck and Reio (2011) "multiple lines of research evidence suggest that engaged employees outperform their disengaged counterparts on a number of important organizational metrics" (p. 421). The results of the current study indicate that the work engagement levels of faculty and staff at The University of Southern Mississippi positively correlate with the

faculty and staff's perception of their influence on student integration and student retention, one of the organizational metrics used by universities.

According to a study by Rothmann and Jordaan (2006), work engagement levels are lower in academic institutions when compared to the national level in the private sector (Rothmann & Jordaan, 2006). Gallup measures employee engagement levels in the private sector every year and the levels have remained around 30% for several years (Gallup: Employee engagement, 2014). The results of the current study indicate, however, that on average, the employees at The University of Southern Mississippi that participated in this study are engaged in their work. Research in the area of employee engagement indicates that organizations with more engaged employees tend to outperform their counterparts financially (Markos & Sridevi, 2010). Based on the changes in funding formulas from state and federal funding sources, it would benefit universities to emphasize work engagement behaviors in order to increase student integration and student retention.

Summary

Capital invested in human beings is deemed the most valuable, not only to the individual but also to the economy (Marshall, 1890; Shultz, 1960). Becker (1993) states that education and training are the best ways to develop human capital. Despite this understanding, only 50% of individuals entering college exit with a degree (Demetriou & Schmitz-Sciborski, 2011). According to Burnsed (2011) not having a college degree lessens the student's chance of succeeding in the workforce. Low retention rates have an adverse effect on the student, the

university, and the workforce. One way to improve student retention is through the integration of the student into the academic and social communities of the university (Tinto, 1987). Faculty and staff can impact the student's integration (Seidman et al., 2012). Employees that are engaged are willing to do more than their position requires (Markos & Sridevi, 2010). Organizations with engaged employees outperform organizations with disengaged employees (Shuck & Wollard, 2010). This study centered on the work engagement levels of faculty and staff at The University of Southern Mississippi and the relationship of engagement to the employee's perception of their influence on student integration and student retention.

The results of the study indicate that the faculty and staff at The University of Southern Mississippi are engaged in their work, demonstrating behaviors associated with vigor, dedication, and absorption often, or at least once a week. Additionally, the results indicate that faculty and staff agree with statements regarding the perception of their influence on student integration and student retention. The purpose of this study was to determine if a relationship exists between faculty and staff's work engagement levels and their perception of their influence on student integration and retention. An analysis of the results from the survey show that a positive, direct relationship between work engagement levels of faculty and staff's perception of their influence on student integration exists. There is also a positive, direct relationship between work engagement of faculty and staff and their perception of influence on student retention. The engagement

of employees in a university could be an area of development for universities in an effort to aid in the retention of students.

Further research should be conducted to determine if the engagement levels of faculty and staff have a true impact on the student retention numbers of universities. It should be determined if the positive behaviors of faculty and staff encourage students to remain in college from admission to graduation. Universities that invest in their human capital by increasing levels of work engagement could see an increase in the perception of employees' influence is on important and financially beneficial performance measures, such as student retention.

When employees are engaged in their work, everyone wins. The employee benefits because they feel energetic, are happy when they are working intensely, and are proud of the work they do. The University wins because these positive work-related behaviors exhibited by employees mean that the employees go above and beyond requirements of their position, investing time and energy to do their jobs well. When faculty and staff perform their jobs well, they help students at the University integrate into the social and academic communities. This help with integration can be seen throughout every college, every department and all positions, ranging from department heads to groundskeepers. The integration encourages students to remain in college until they complete their degree. By remaining enrolled through graduation, the university benefits from tuition and increased funding from the state. The student benefits by having access to more career opportunities and ultimately more

money earned over their lifetime. The workforce also benefits by hiring qualified

individuals to perform the functions of the position well, especially if the employee

is in engaged in their work. Work engagement is a concept with many positive

benefits for all stakeholders.

APPENDIX A

UWES-9

Work and Well-being Survey (UWES) ©

The following 9 statements are about how you feel at work. Please read each statement carefully and decide if you ever feel this way about your job. If you have never had this feeling, write "0" (zero) in the space preceding the statement. If you have had this feeling, indicate how often you feel it by writing the number (from 1 to 6) that best describes how frequently you feel that way.

	Almost never	Rarely	Sometimes	Often	Very often	Always
0	1	2	3	4	5	6
Never	A few times a year or less	Once a month or less	A few times a month	Once a week	A few times a week	Every day

1. _____ At my work, I feel that I am bursting with energy

2. _____ At my job, I feel strong and vigorous

3. _____ I am enthusiastic about my job

4. _____ My job inspires me

5. _____ When I get up in the morning, I feel like going to work

6. _____ I feel happy when I am working intensely

7. _____ I am proud of the work that I do

8. _____ I am immersed in my work

9. _____ I get carried away when I'm working

_____Supervisor's Unique Identifier

APPENDIX B

PERMISSIONS TO REPRINT "THE EFFECT OF EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT

ON FINANCIAL OUTCOMES"

Permission to Use Graphic
5 messages

Janea McDonald <janea.mcdonald@eagles.usm.edu>　　　　　　Fri, Sep 12, 2014 at 1:58 PM
To: wayne.cascio@ucdenver.edu, john.boudreau@usc.edu

Hello! I am currently in the dissertation phase of my PhD and I was wondering if I could use a graphic from your book "Investing in People: Financial Impacts of Human Resource Initiatives". The graphic I am referencing is included below. My topic, in case it has any bearing, is looking at whether employee engagement levels have any impact on faculty and staff's perception on their impact on student retention at a university. Your approval is greatly appreciated!
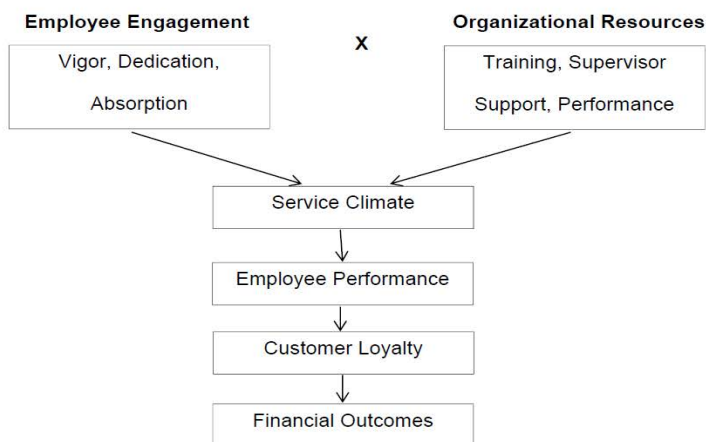
Many thanks,
Janea McDonald

--
Janea S. McDonald, PHR
228.265.2593 (cell)

Cascio, Wayne <Wayne.Cascio@ucdenver.edu>　　　　　　Fri, Sep 12, 2014 at 4:47 PM
To: Janea McDonald <janea.mcdonald@eagles.usm.edu>

Dear Janea,

Thanks for contacting me. You have my permission to use the graphic with appropriate acknowledgement of the source and page number.

Good luck with your dissertation!

Wayne Cascio

Wayne F. Cascio, Ph.D.
Distinguished Professor, University of Colorado, and
Robert H. Reynolds Chair in Global Leadership
Senior Editor, Journal of World Business
Academic Chair, CU Executive MBA Program
The Business School, University of Colorado Denver
Email: Wayne.Cascio@ucdenver.edu

Thanks for writing. You certainly have my permission to use the graphic. I am so pleased you find it useful. That said, the rights are also held by the publisher. I don't know their policy regarding the use in dissertations, so it may be wise to check their website.

Cheers,

JB

John Boudreau
Professor of Management and Organization, Marshall School of Business and
Research Director, Center for Effective Organizations
University of Southern California
DCC 200
3415 South Figueroa
Los Angeles, CA 90089-0871
http://ceo.usc.edu/
http://ceo.usc.edu/now_playing_ceo.html
Center main phone: 213-740-9814
Center Fax: 213-740-4354
John.Boudreau@usc.edu
http://ceo.usc.edu/research_scientist/boudreau.html

PEARSON

Legal/Permissions
One Lake Street
Upper Saddle River, NJ 07458
Fax: 201-236-3290
Phone: 201-236-3275
Celia.Traverso@pearson.com

Oct 20, 2014   PE Ref # 187289

JANEA MCDONALD
16 Scott Station Cove
Long Beach, MS 39560

Dear Janea McDonald:

You have our permission to include content from our text, *INVESTING IN PEOPLE: FINANCIAL IMPACT OF HUMAN RESOURCE INITIATIVES, 2nd Ed. by CASCIO, WAYNE; BOUDREAU, JOHN,* in your dissertation for your course at The University of Southern Mississippi.

Content to be included is:
Page 150 ; Figure 6-3

Please credit our material as follows:
CASCIO, WAYNE; BOUDREAU, JOHN, INVESTING IN PEOPLE: FINANCIAL IMPACT OF HUMAN RESOURCE INITIATIVES, 2nd Edition, © 2011. Reprinted by permission of Pearson Education, Inc., Upper Saddle River, NJ

Sincerely,

Celia Traverso,
Permission Administrator

APPENDIX C

PERMISSION TO USE VINCENT TINTO'S MODEL OF DROPOUT DECISIONS

Use of Model in Dissertation
3 messages

Janea McDonald <janea.mcdonald@eagles.usm.edu>   Fri, Sep 12, 2014 at 2:03 PM
To: vtinto@syr.edu

Hello, Dr. Tinto!

I am writing to obtain permission to use a copy of your model of Dropout Decisions in my dissertation. I plan to research the engagement levels of staff and faculty at a university and relate the engagement levels to whether or not staff and faculty perceive they have an impact on student retention.

If you need further details, please let me know. Your approval is greatly appreciated.

Thank you!

Janea McDonald

--
Janea S. McDonald, PHR
228.265.2593 (cell)

Vincent Tinto <vtinto@syr.edu>   Fri, Sep 12, 2014 at 2:50 PM
To: Janea McDonald <janea.mcdonald@eagles.usm.edu>

Dear Janea:

Please feel free to use a copy of my model in your dissertation.

Sincerely

Vincent Tinto
[Quoted text hidden]

Janea McDonald <janea.mcdonald@eagles.usm.edu>   Fri, Sep 12, 2014 at 2:56 PM
To: Vincent Tinto <vtinto@syr.edu>

Thank you so much, Dr. Tinto. Have a great weekend!

Janea

Sent from my iPhone
[Quoted text hidden]

APPENDIX D

SCHAUFELI'S APPROVAL FOR USE OF UWES-9

Request to Use UWES-9 for Dissertation Research

3 messages

Janea McDonald <janea.mcdonald@eagles.usm.edu>   Thu, Oct 23, 2014 at 11:11 AM
To: w.schaufeli@uu.nl

Dr. Schaufeli,

Hello! I am writing to secure permission to use the UWES-9 as part of my dissertation research. My topic is determining if a relationship exists between employee engagement and staff/faculty's perception of their impact on student integration and student retention.

It is my understanding that I will need to share my data with you and that you would prefer that I also ask about participants age, gender and occupation. In regards to occupation, would it suffice for me to ask about EEO category (executive, faculty, clerical, professional, technical, skilled crafts, service/maintenance)?

Thank you so much for your time!

Janea McDonald

--
Janea S. McDonald, PHR
228.265.2593 (cell)

Schaufeli, W.B. (Wilmar) <w.schaufeli@uu.nl>   Thu, Oct 23, 2014 at 1:34 PM
To: Janea McDonald <janea.mcdonald@eagles.usm.edu>

Dear Janea,

You may use the UWES for non-commercial scientific purposes. Like your PhD.

The categorization of your respondents seems fine to me.

With kind regards,

Wilmar Schaufeli

Wilmar B. Schaufeli, PhD | *Social and Organizational Psychology* | P.O. Box 80.140 | 3508 TC Utrecht, The Netherlands |

Tel: (31) 30-253 9093 | Mobile: (31) 6514 75784 | Fax: (31) 30-253 7842 | Site: www.wilmarschaufeli.nl | **twitter** |

Linked in |

APPENDIX E

SURVEY

Information About the Study

As part of my dissertation research on employee engagement, please answer the following questions relating to workplace behaviors, as well as demographic questions.

There are no known potential risks or benefits to the participants for completing this survey. This survey should take no longer than 15 minutes to complete. Your responses will be compiled electronically in a spreadsheet and statistical software and will not be linked to you. All data will be stored in a password protected electronic format. All records are kept private and confidential.

As a participant who completes the survey, you may choose to be entered in a drawing for one of four $25 Barnes and Noble gift cards. Winners will be chosen randomly. You may also choose to receive a copy of the results. Your email address will be kept separate from your responses.

This project has been reviewed by the Institutional Review Board, which ensures that research projects involving human subjects follow federal regulations. Any questions or concerns about rights as a research participant should be directed to the Chair of the IRB at 601.266.5997. Participation in this project is completely voluntary and participants may withdraw from this study at any time without penalty.

If you have any questions, feel free to contact me at janea.mcdonald@eagles.usm.edu.

By clicking the "continue" button, you acknowledge that you have read the information regarding the research and agree to participate in this research. You are free to withdraw your participation at any time, without penalty.

Note: If you discontinue participation in the survey, you forfeit the chance to win a $25 Barnes and Noble gift card.

Q1. Is your employment status considered regular or temporary (not to exceed 4.5 months, as defined by the USM Employee Handbook)?

○ Regular- no definitive time limit on period of employment

○ Temporary- period of employment is limited (this includes adjunct faculty due to the fact they are appointed on a semester-to-semester basis)

Default Question Block

Q2.
The following 9 statements are about how you feel at work. Please read each statement carefully and decide if you have ever felt this way about your job. If you have never had this feeling, select "0" for the statement. If you have had this feeling, indicate how often you feel or have felt it by selecting a number between 1-6 (as indicated on the scale) that best describes how frequently you feel that way.

	0- Never	1- Almost Never- A few times a year or less	2- Rarely- Once a month or less	3- Sometimes- A few times a month	4- Often- Once a week	5- Very often- A few times a week	6- Always- Every day
1. At my work, I feel that I am bursting with energy.	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
2. At my job, I feel strong and vigorous.	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
3. I am enthusiastic about my job.	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
4. My job inspires me.	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
5. When I get up in the morning, I feel like going to work.	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
6. I feel happy when I am working intensely.	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
7. I am proud of the work that I do.	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
8. I am immersed in my work.	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
9. I get carried away when I am working.	○	○	○	○	○	○	○

Q3. Please select your agreement or disagreement with the following questions.

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
1. I *directly* contribute to the students' sense of belonging to the university.	○	○	○	○	○
2. I *directly* contribute to the students' sense of comfort in their university surroundings.	○	○	○	○	○
3. I form relationships with students which helps them feel like they are part of the university community.	○	○	○	○	○
4. I aid in relationship building among students- helping them build relationships with other students.	○	○	○	○	○
5. I work with other staff and faculty to create an environment that will help students succeed.	○	○	○	○	○
6. I *directly* help students meet their academic goals.	○	○	○	○	○
7. When students complete their degree and graduate, I take that as a sign I have been successful in my efforts.	○	○	○	○	○
8. I am openly available and accessible to students if they need guidance.	○	○	○	○	○

Q4. Are you classified primarily as faculty or staff?

○ Faculty

○ Staff

Q5. At which campus are you primarily located?

○ Hattiesburg

○ Gulf Park

○ Gulf Coast Research Lab

○ Stennis Space Center

Q6. Which EEO category classifies your position?

○ EEO 1- Executive (Department Heads, Directors, Vice Presidents, etc.)

○ EEO 2- Faculty (Professors, Associate Professors, Deans, Assistant Professors, Instructors, etc)

○ EEO 3- Professional (Managers, Advisers, Coordinators, Assistant Directors, Counselors, Specialists, etc)

○ EEO 4- Clerical/Secretarial (Secretaries, Receptionists, Clerks, etc.)

○ EEO 5- Technical/ParaProfessional (Computer Programmer, Technicians, Draftsman, etc.)

○ EEO 6- Skilled Crafts (Plumbers, Electricians, Machinists, Craftsman, etc.)

○ EEO 7- Service/Maintenance (Custodians, Groundskeepers, Security Officers, etc.)

○ Unsure

Q7. Are you male or female?

○ Male

○ Female

Q8. How old are you?

[▼]

Q9. How long (in years) have you been employed with The University of Southern Mississippi?

[   ]

Q10. Are you employed in an administrative or academic department?

○ Administrative- outside of a college

○ Academic- within a college

Q11. If you are employed in an academic department, to which college do you belong?

○ College of Arts and Letters

○ College of Business

○ College of Education and Psychology

○ College of Health

○ College of Nursing

○ College of Science and Technology

○ University Library

Thank you so much for your participation!

If you are interested in being registered to win one of four $25 Barnes and Noble gift cards (winners to be chosen at random), please enter your email address or Name and Phone Number. Your name will not be associated with the answers you've provided. All information will be kept confidential.

[   ]

Are you interested in receiving a report of the final results of this research project? If the answer is yes, be sure to include your email address in the box below. Your name will not be associated with the answers you've provided. All information will be kept confidential.

[   ]

APPENDIX F

EMAIL TO PILOT GROUP (TESTING VALIDITY OF INTEGRATION AND

RETETNION QUESTIONS)

Please take a few minutes (7 at the most) to complete the quick survey linked to

this message. As I am progressing with my dissertation research, I need to be

sure that part of my survey that I will be distributing actually measures what it is

intended to measure. I need all the participation I can get so if you could forward

it to a couple of your colleagues (staff or faculty) at your university, I would be

very appreciative. I need all responses by _____. Thank you, in

advance, for your time and assistance.

APPENDIX G

INTEGRATION AND RETENTION SURVEY FOR PILOT GROUP

Information About the Study

The purpose of this survey is to determine if survey questions for my dissertation research actually measure what they are intended measure. You will be asked to answer a series of questions relating to workplace behaviors, as well as one demographic question.

There are no known potential risks or benefits to participants completing this survey. This survey should take less than 10 minutes complete. Your responses will be compiled electronically in a spreadsheet and statistical software and will not be linked to you. All data will be stored in a password protected electronic format. All records are kept private and confidential.

This project has been reviewed by the Institutional Review Board, which ensures that research projects involving human subjects follow federal regulations. Any questions or concerns about rights as a research participant should be directed to the Chair of the IRB at 601.266.5997. Participation in this project is completely voluntary.

If you have any questions, feel free to contact me at janea.mcdonald@eagles.usm.edu.

By clicking the "continue" button, you acknowledge that you have read the information regarding the research and agree to participate in this research. You are free to withdraw your participation at any time, without penalty.

Q1. Please select your agreement or disagreement with the following questions.

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
1. I *directly* contribute to the students' sense of belonging to the university.	○	○	○	○	○
2. I *indirectly* contribute to the students' sense of belonging to the university.	○	○	○	○	○
3. I *indirectly* contribute to the students' sense of comfort in their university surroundings.	○	○	○	○	○
4. I *directly* contribute to the students' sense of comfort in their university surroundings.	○	○	○	○	○
5. I form relationships with students which help them feel like they are part of the university community.	○	○	○	○	○
6. I aid in relationship building among students– helping them build relationships with other students.	○	○	○	○	○
7. I work with other staff and faculty to create an environment that will help students succeed.	○	○	○	○	○
8. I *directly* help students meet their academic goals.	○	○	○	○	○
9. I *indirectly* help students meet their academic goals.	○	○	○	○	○
10. When students complete their degree and graduate, I take that as a sign I have been successful in my efforts.	○	○	○	○	○
11. I am openly available and accessible to students if they need guidance.	○	○	○	○	○

Q2. Are you classified primarily as faculty or staff?

○ Faculty

○ Staff

APPENDIX H

APPROVAL FROM INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD

THE UNIVERSITY OF SOUTHERN MISSISSIPPI.

INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD
118 College Drive #5147 | Hattiesburg, MS 39406-0001
Phone: 601.266.5997 | Fax: 601.266.4377 | www.usm.edu/research/institutional.review.board

NOTICE OF COMMITTEE ACTION

The project has been reviewed by The University of Southern Mississippi Institutional Review Board in accordance with Federal Drug Administration regulations (21 CFR 26, 111), Department of Health and Human Services (45 CFR Part 46), and university guidelines to ensure adherence to the following criteria:

- The risks to subjects are minimized.
- The risks to subjects are reasonable in relation to the anticipated benefits.
- The selection of subjects is equitable.
- Informed consent is adequate and appropriately documented.
- Where appropriate, the research plan makes adequate provisions for monitoring the data collected to ensure the safety of the subjects.
- Where appropriate, there are adequate provisions to protect the privacy of subjects and to maintain the confidentiality of all data.
- Appropriate additional safeguards have been included to protect vulnerable subjects.
- Any unanticipated, serious, or continuing problems encountered regarding risks to subjects must be reported immediately, but not later than 10 days following the event. This should be reported to the IRB Office via the "Adverse Effect Report Form".
- If approved, the maximum period of approval is limited to twelve months.
  Projects that exceed this period must submit an application for renewal or continuation.

PROTOCOL NUMBER: 15011401
PROJECT TITLE: The Relationship Between University Employees' Work Engagement and the Perception of Their Influence on Student Integration and Retention
PROJECT TYPE: New Project
RESEARCHER(S): Janea S. McDonald
COLLEGE/DIVISION: College of Science and Technology
DEPARTMENT: Human Capital Development
FUNDING AGENCY/SPONSOR: N/A
IRB COMMITTEE ACTION: Expedited Review Approval
PERIOD OF APPROVAL: 01/16/2015 to 01/15/2016
Lawrence A. Hosman, Ph.D.
Institutional Review Board

APPENDIX I

COMMUNICATION PIECES

Preliminary Email

Dear Faculty/Staff member of The University of Southern Mississippi,

Would you like the chance to win one of four $25 Barnes and Noble gift cards?

Information is coming soon about how you can be eligible to win just by

participating in a quick survey regarding workplace behaviors and their influence

on organizational outcomes. Stay tuned!

2nd Email

Dear Faculty/Staff member of The University of Southern Mississippi,

Would you like the chance to win one of four $25 Barnes and Noble gift cards as

mentioned in the email you received on (date)? Then please take a few minutes

of your time to complete the survey linked to this email. This survey is part of the

research for my dissertation in the Department of Human Capital Development.

The topic of this survey is relating certain workplace behaviors to perceived

influence on certain organizational outcomes. It should take no more than 15

minutes to complete. If you are interested in winning one of four $25 Barnes and

Noble gift certificates as a result of your participation, please include your email

address in your response. Also, if you would like a report of the findings, you will

have the opportunity to let me know. All responses will be kept confidential. You

may discontinue your participation in the survey at any time, without penalty.

Please complete the survey by _____. Thank you so much for your time.

Reminder E-mail

Dear Faculty/Staff member of The University of Southern Mississippi,

You still have time to participate in a survey that could win you one of four $25

Barnes and Noble gift cards! If you haven't done so already, please complete

the survey found below. This survey will take no more than 15 minutes to

complete and relates workplace behaviors to the perceived influence on certain

organizational outcomes. Many of your colleagues have completed the survey…

you should too! Thanks so much for your time!

Information for USM Mailout

Participants Sought in Research Relating Certain Work Behaviors to Perceived

Influence on Organizational Outcomes

A graduate student researcher would like your help in collecting data for a study

about certain behaviors in the workplace and the perception of how they

influence a set of organizational outcomes. The research is being

conducted under the supervision of Dr. Heather Annulis.

Please take the time to participate in the questionnaire by clicking on the link.

The survey will take 10-15 minutes to complete and you can register to win one

of 4 $25 Barnes and Noble gift cards. Participation is voluntary and you have the

right to withdraw from the study at any time. The information collected will be held confidential.

This project has been approved by The Institutional Review Board (IRB) at the University of Southern Mississippi. Any questions or concerns about participant rights should be directed to the chair of the Institutional Review Board, The University of Southern Mississippi, 118 College Drive # 5131, Hattiesburg, MS 39406, 601.266.997.

Thank you for your participation.

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