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Satisfaction and Importance Analysis of Features and Services to Nontraditional Students: A Mixed Methods Approach

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Satisfaction and Importance Analysis of Features and Services to Nontraditional Students: A Mixed Methods Approach

(TITLE)

BY

Denise E. Corray

THESIS

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Abstract

The study examined the importance and satisfaction to nontraditional students (NTS) with features and services offered at Eastern Illinois University (EIU). Participants included students over age 25 who were currently or recently enrolled at the university at the time of data collection. A triangulation mixed-methods approach was utilized; a 40-item instrument was created to measure NTSs' EIU experience. Findings indicated that *Instructors' knowledge of course content*, *Overall quality of instruction*, *Relevancy of subject matter taught in classes I attend*, *Cost of tuition to attend EIU*, and *Clarity of degree requirements* were the most *important* to NTS at EIU. Participants were most *satisfied* with: *Interactions with instructors in class*, *Instructors' knowledge of course content*, *Instructors' ability to manage the classroom effectively*, *Relevancy of subject matter taught in classes I attend*, and *Overall quality of instruction*. NTS identified a need for *class times* that fit their busy schedules and *flexibility* in deadlines and course offerings. Most chose to attend EIU for its *location*, the *cost* of attending, the *program or major offered*, and the *reputation* of the school. They were motivated to remain enrolled due to an interest in reaching their goal of *graduation*, the *instructors* (they are knowledgeable, friendly, inspiring, and understand NTS), and the university's *location*. This study found a practical and significant difference between satisfaction and importance of features and services to NTS at EIU. A recommendation for student affairs professionals is to address areas that were identified as highly important with low satisfaction (*Cost of tuition to attend EIU*, *Perceived ability to secure a job after completing educational goals*, *Variety of classes within my major*, *Availability of online or distance learning courses for me to attend*, and *Times that classes are offered*).

Dedication

I dedicate my thesis to my loving husband Mike and our three wonderful children, Aidan, Jaren, and Shannon. Mike, you are my best friend and my biggest fan. You have supported me throughout this entire process with your understanding of my (temporary) decrease in time to dedicate to our family. You have honed your cooking skills, and spoiled our family with many delicious meals. Most importantly, though, your constant reassurance and, "You've never been closer!" have motivated me to continue through this process, regardless of feeling discouraged occasionally. I love you and I thank you.

Aidan, Jaren, and Shannon, I think we have all grown during this process. I know it was difficult at times when I had to sacrifice family time for school, but you took on more responsibilities at home so that I could focus on school work. Like your father, you have been very supportive, patient, and understanding, and I thank you for that. I know that you are proud of me, and I hope I have set a good example for you. I love you all to pieces!

Acknowledgements

To my thesis chair, Dr. Polydore, thank you for the vast expertise, patience, motivation, mentorship, and personal attention you have given me in the completion of this project. You sacrificed your personal time to meet with me often for statistical analyses and to provide feedback on the written aspect of my thesis. I am grateful for the guidance you provided me and the knowledge you shared with me to complete such a rewarding project. I could not have accomplished this without you, and I thank you very much!

Additional thanks to Mr. Hencken for agreeing to serve on my thesis committee. Your insistence on regular updates motivated me to have progress to report to you weekly. You always replied with encouraging words that inspired me to continue to move forward. Thank you for your positivity and reassurance - you certainly model the excellent leadership skills you teach in class.

Lastly, I would like to thank Dr. Nadler for also serving on my thesis committee. Not all students can say that the Vice President for Student Affairs was on his/her thesis committee, but you were willing to take time from your busy schedule to participate in mine. I appreciated your expertise in the creation of my survey instrument to gather the most relevant information possible for my research, and for your suggestions for how to present recommendations to the university for potential improvements. Thank you.

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CHAPTER I

Introduction

In 2000, there were about 9 million students 24 and younger and approximately 6.5 million students age 25 and older enrolled in degree-granting institutions. Ten years later, those figures increased to about 12 million and 9 million students age 24 and younger and over 25, respectively. Those numbers were expected to jump to over 13 million students age 24 and younger and almost 11 million students age 25 and older, effectively closing the gap on the number of traditional-aged students enrolled in college (National Center for Education Statistics [NCES], 2011). Data from the United States Census Bureau (2013) showed a recent decline in overall college enrollment driven primarily by nontraditional students. Yet they continue to be a significant part of the student body at many institutions of higher education. During the fall 2012 semester, Eastern Illinois University (EIU) enrolled 8,217 total students age 24 and younger and 2,220 total students age 25 and older (Eastern Illinois University, 2013). This trend demands that college administrators identify the needs of their nontraditional-aged students (students over the age of 25) and modify or create new programs to meet those needs if they are to increase the probability of their degree completion.

In Horn's (1996) study of enrollment trends of nontraditional students (NTS), an NTS was defined as possessing at least one of seven characteristics: "delayed enrollment into postsecondary education, attended part time, financially independent, worked full time while enrolled, had dependents other than a spouse, was a single parent, or did not obtain a standard high school diploma" (p. i). An NTS was further described as *minimally nontraditional* if they possessed only one of the aforementioned

characteristics, *moderately nontraditional* if they possessed two or three of the characteristics, and *highly nontraditional* if they possessed four or more of the characteristics. Data from Horn's study indicated a growth in *moderately nontraditional* student enrollment in four-year institutions. Additionally, NTSs were less likely to attain a degree after five years of attendance, and were more likely than traditional students to leave without returning to complete their educational goals. However, students categorized as minimally nontraditional were more likely to obtain a Bachelor's degree than those categorized as moderately or highly nontraditional. This data supports the notion that nontraditional characteristics can actually be considered "risk factors" associated with increased attrition among this population.

Furthermore, research has shown that nontraditional students have motives for attending or returning to an institution of higher education that are different from their traditional-aged counterparts (Brown, 2004; Hagedorn, 2005; Scala, 1996; Schaefer, 2010; Shields, 1995). These include a cognitive interest and desire to learn, personal growth and satisfaction, social interaction, career aspirations, life changes (i.e. job loss, unemployment, divorce), and self-fulfillment. They also experience different causes of stress while enrolled in higher education and cope with those stressors differently (Giancola, Grawitch, & Borchert, 2009; McGivney, 2004; Polson, 2003). Some of the barriers and causes of stress for nontraditional students include balancing multiple demands and roles (work, school, and personal life), financial commitments, unfamiliarity, fear, and transitioning into the role of student. These adult students also tend to cope with stress by relying on adaptive strategies, such as planning and positive reinterpretation, especially when stressors are viewed as challenges to overcome, as

opposed to denial and substance abuse, for example, which are maladaptive coping strategies more often employed by traditional-aged students (Giancola, Grawitch, & Borchert, 2009).

Purpose of the Study

Although there are well-documented differences between traditional and nontraditional students, the results are typically from studies conducted at large institutions of higher education with student populations that are more diverse. This study has elicited results from students surveyed at a midsized rural university with a NTS population that comprises approximately 20% of the total student enrollment. Given this significant proportion, a study which sought for an increased understanding of NTSs in this unique context is relevant and appropriate. As such, the purpose of the current study was to gain an increased understanding of the factors that may influence nontraditional students' attrition and retention by examining their levels of importance and satisfaction with features and services known to have an impact on their success. The study also sought to gain some understanding of areas in need for improvement by an examination of the recommendations from members of the population of interest.

Findings from this study can help inform administrators at the institution as well as other colleges and universities on these issues, and provide insight into practical solutions (e.g. modifying existing programs or creating new programs) for this growing student population. Since the needs of NTSs differ from those of traditional-aged students, it is important to first identify what those needs are, and then tailor features and services around them (Brown, 2004). One potential tactic to appeal to potential incoming nontraditional students is for colleges and universities to utilize recruitment

communication to identify how those students can incorporate higher education into an already busy schedule, to publicize the effortlessness of the application and enrollment processes, and to reduce the fear of classroom experiences with traditional-aged students. To retain or attract these students back to school, institutions can also focus on accessibility and convenience of courses, financial assistance, creative options for completion of programs, and proactive advising customized to their needs.

Research Questions

Due to the increasing numbers of nontraditional students on college campuses and their unique needs compared to those of their traditional-aged counterparts, I sought to gain an increased understanding of the factors that may impact their attrition and retention by examining the levels of importance and satisfaction with features and services known to have an impact on their success. This was addressed by answering the following research questions:

1. How important are the current features and services to nontraditional students at Eastern Illinois University? (Quantitative)
2. How satisfied are nontraditional students with the current features and services offered at Eastern Illinois University? (Quantitative)
3. What do nontraditional students at Eastern Illinois University identify as their unique needs? (Qualitative)
4. Why do nontraditional students choose to attend Eastern Illinois University? (Qualitative)
5. Why do nontraditional students remain at Eastern Illinois University? (Qualitative)

6. What recommendations do nontraditional students have for administrators and policy-makers at Eastern Illinois University? (Qualitative)

Hypotheses

The following hypotheses were formulated for the quantitative research questions.

1. The features and services offered at Eastern Illinois University are very important to nontraditional students.
2. Nontraditional students are not satisfied with the current features and services offered at Eastern Illinois University.
3. There is a difference in satisfaction level and level of importance of the features and services offered at Eastern Illinois University to nontraditional students.

Significance of the Study

As is too often the case, there is a disparity between stakeholders and those who are involved in the decision-making process. This study will reduce this disparity by forging a relationship with members of the group, and seeking their perspectives about their decisions for enrolling and remaining enrolled at the institution. This is significant because college enrollment has experienced a decline recently, driven primarily by nontraditional students with a decline of 419,000 in fall 2012 compared to 48,000 fewer traditional student enrolling in the same semester (United States Census Bureau, 2013). If smaller, more traditional institutions want to compete for the declining number of students enrolling in higher education, they will have to creatively recruit and retain a variety of different student groups within the population as a whole.

By identifying and understanding what motivates adult students as well as what barriers they encounter in their role as student, institutions will have a better chance at

retaining them until they reach their goals, whether or not that includes earning a degree (Gomez, 2010). Some of the motivators for adult students include personal or professional advancement, social integration, independence, practical learning, and opportunities to succeed. Conversely, some of the barriers faced by adult students include lack of time, lack of support of family or friends, confusion about degree requirements, and issues with child care or transportation. Adult student retention can be increased through enhancing the motivators and decreasing barriers. If the focus on retention of this growing population of students is increased, higher education institutions can take steps toward repairing some of the damage caused by recent budget constraints, increased competition, and the skyrocketing cost of delivering education (Hadfield, 2003).

Additionally, adult students contribute positive aspects to learning environments on college campuses, including possessing clear expectations of their learning experiences, openness to available academic resources, and sharing accumulated knowledge for the betterment of others (Worth & Stephens, 2011). It would be wise for higher education institutions to take steps to retain this population of students to subsequently retain those positive contributions to the classrooms.

Limitations of the Study

A number of factors limited the outcome or progress of this study. First, it can be difficult to track the educational journeys of NTSs since they tend to be intermittent and more varied than traditional students who follow a more linear path (McGivney, 2004). Nontraditional students have a tendency to proceed in one of four directions, including (a) upwards – gaining skills and qualifications, (b) sideways – continuing education at the

same level, (c) downwards – participating in a lower level of learning, and (d) zigzag – alternating between higher and lower levels of learning. Additionally, stopout behaviors are somewhat common among nontraditional students and can lead administrators to think they have dropped out when they are simply not enrolled during the current term (Hagedorn, 2005). In fact, Hadfield (2003) states that the only conditions in which students should be considered to not be retained are in the cases of transfer to another institution and death.

Another limitation is transferability of the findings. This study took place at a midsized (approximately 10,000 students) state university in the Midwest located in a relatively small town with a population of only about 10,000 residents. The larger community is rural; therefore, the findings may not be easily transferable to larger institutions or institutions in different geographical areas of the country that are not impacted by similar dynamics.

The definition of nontraditional student that I used for this study can be considered a limitation as well. I used age (25 years and older) as the only criterion for nontraditional student status. A more appropriate approach would have been to utilize Horn's (1996) definition, meaning the student possessed at least one of the identified nontraditional characteristics (delayed enrollment into postsecondary education, attended part time, financially independent, worked full time while enrolled, had dependents other than a spouse, was a single parent, or did not obtain a standard high school diploma). Then, I could have further examined the data more thoroughly by characterizing the participants as minimally (possessing only one nontraditional attribute), moderately (possessing two or three nontraditional attributes), and highly (possessing four or more

nontraditional attributes) nontraditional based on those characteristics. However, further examination of the characteristics of the participants revealed that more than 74% were either moderately or highly nontraditional by Horn's definition. Furthermore, a review of the literature revealed that many institutions use age as the sole criterion for determining traditional/nontraditional student status because it encompasses other characteristics typically used in defining this population of students, such as family responsibilities and full-time employment (Horn, 1996).

Additionally, the risk of low participation was a limitation of this study. In a research study on survey fatigue, Porter, Whitcomb, and Weitzer (2004) found that there is a marked decrease in participation of students who are administered multiple surveys. While response rates do appear to be stifled as a result of being asked to participate in more than one survey, individuals seem to experience the greatest amount of survey fatigue as a result of back-to-back surveys. Based on the number of surveys they had recently been asked to respond to, the target audience of this study may have been experiencing survey fatigue.

Another limitation was the use of an instrument that had not previously been tested. Since the survey instrument was created by the researcher, it had not been psychometrically tested to ensure its validity and reliability. This can lead to errors in measurement if responses are unrelated to research questions, can be misinterpreted, or lack homogeneity among participant responses (Coughlan, Cronin, & Ryan, 2009). Ideally, a measure of nontraditional student experience would be tested and undergone the scrutiny and critique of scholars.

Definitions of Terms

Attrition. Failure of a student to re-enroll at an institution in consecutive semesters (Seidman, 2012).

First-generation student. Student whose parents never enrolled in postsecondary education (National Center for Education Statistics, 2011).

Highly nontraditional student. Student who possesses four or more of the following nontraditional characteristics: 1) delayed enrollment, 2) part-time enrollment, 3) financial independence, 4) full-time employment while enrolled, 5) financial independence, 6) have dependents, and 7) did not receive standard high school diploma (Horn, 1996)

Minimally nontraditional student. Student who possesses one of the following nontraditional characteristics: 1) delayed enrollment, 2) part-time enrollment, 3) financial independence, 4) full-time employment while enrolled, 5) financial independence, 6) have dependents, and 7) did not receive standard high school diploma (Horn, 1996)

Moderately nontraditional student. Student who possesses two or three of the following nontraditional characteristics: 1) delayed enrollment, 2) part-time enrollment, 3) financial independence, 4) full-time employment while enrolled, 5) financial independence, 6) have dependents, and 7) did not receive standard high school diploma (Horn, 1996)

Nontraditional student. Student aged 25 years or older who attends college part-time or commutes to school, or any combination of those criteria (Allen, 1993). For purposes of this paper, this term will be used interchangeably with "adult student." In

this study, the criterion chosen to identify nontraditional students was age (25 years and older) (i.e. minimally nontraditional students).

Retention. The ability of an institution to retain a student from admission through graduation (Seidman, 2012).

Traditional-aged student. Student who enrolls in college immediately after high school and attends full-time until graduation (National Center for Educational Statistics, n.d.). For purposes of this paper, this term will be used interchangeably with "traditional student."

CHAPTER II

Review of Literature

Previous research proposes that there are differences between traditional and nontraditional students regarding their needs as students. The following literature review will examine how nontraditional students differ from traditional students, what causes attrition among the nontraditional student population, and what factors contribute to increased retention rates of nontraditional students.

The Nontraditional Student (NTS)

Nontraditional students differ from traditional students in a number of ways. Many are first-generation students, attend on a part-time basis, are working adults, have financial commitments, exhibit higher levels of self-direction, and have clear expectations of their learning experience (Giancola, Grawitch, & Borchert, 2009; Lee, McCool, & Napieralski, 2000). Horn (1996) further defined the NTS by the number of characteristics possessed by the student, which she identified as "delayed enrollment into postsecondary education, attended part time, financially independent, worked full time while enrolled, had dependents other than a spouse, was a single parent, or did not obtain a standard high school diploma" (p. i). Those with one characteristic are minimally nontraditional, those with two or three characteristics are moderately nontraditional, and those with four or more characteristics are highly nontraditional. These traits introduce barriers to NTSs whose time and energy cannot be solely directed toward school because they have work and family responsibilities competing for their resources. This fact contributes to the statistic that nontraditional students are less likely to remain enrolled after five years or earn degrees when compared to their traditional-aged counterparts.

Additionally, success inherently means something different for this population of students since they come to the classroom juggling the demands of family, careers, and children (von Lehman, 2011). They are focused on specific outcomes, such as realizing a lifelong dream or securing career advancement. Chaves (2006) points out the importance of offering and promoting adult-oriented support mechanisms on college campuses. These include placing adult students in the proper courses based on skills, recognizing the experience and contributions adults students bring to the classrooms, and remembering that adult students are experiencing identity development while in college.

Due to these distinctions, NTSs' needs are uniquely different from their traditional counterparts. As evidenced in a study by Blair et al. (2010), many adult students have doubts about their perceptions of themselves as students. Nine adult students were interviewed and all described their experiences in the higher education program as a major life transition and experienced guilt over their perceived neglect of other life responsibilities, particularly families. In fact, the mere presence of other life commitments contributed to these students' struggles with identifying as "student." Results of this study indicate that adult students do not follow a linear path, but rather experience the different elements toward identifying as student simultaneously, moving forwards and backwards, ultimately considering themselves to be on the threshold of studenthood. Horn (1996) also notes that a greater percentage of nontraditional students who also work consider themselves as primarily employees versus traditional students who also work. The gap between traditional and nontraditional students identifying as primarily employee increases as the nontraditional student status increases with 67% of

highly nontraditional students identifying as primarily employee while only 3% of traditional students identified as primarily employee.

Furthermore, Hagedorn (2005) points out that adult students struggle with trying to progress through higher education systems that are geared toward traditionally aged students, comparing this process to forcing a square peg into a round hole. She hypothesizes that this difficulty of adult students stems from society's perception of them as being out of sequence in life's typical norm of education, followed by work, followed by leisure in retirement. Although today's college campuses are seeing more adult students who attend throughout different life stages, higher education is still geared toward younger traditional students. This longitudinal study of 5,000 students in the Los Angeles Community College District illustrates four main areas of difficulty for adult students, which are (a) access, (b) success, (c) retention, and (d) institutional accommodation. In terms of access, adult students have other life obligations, so they tend to enroll in programs that have flexible schedules, are easily accessible, and often enroll in distance learning. Regarding success, this study examined grades as a measure of success and found that grade performance improved significantly as students aged. GPAs of students aged 17-21 averaged 2.25, students aged 22-30 averaged 2.53, students aged 31-45 averaged 2.78, and students aged 46 and older averaged 2.84. These results mirror that found by Hoyert (2009) in a study of 369 traditional and 71 nontraditional students, suggesting adult students possess a stronger endorsement of learning goals and earn higher grades than traditional students. Retention, while a prominent measure of effectiveness in higher education, is difficult to measure with adult students due to stop out behaviors and students transferring from one institution to another (Hagedorn, 2005).

However, similar to GPA results, the number of courses completed increased with each age step in this study as well. The last area studied, institutional accommodation, identified areas to address to attract and support adult students. These areas include flexible learning opportunities, allowing part-time enrollment, designing classes specifically for older students, and supporting the confidence of adult students through improved faculty, staff, and student interactions.

Causes of Attrition Among Nontraditional Students

Exploring the reasons for non-completion of programs is a complex issue when it comes to nontraditional students because there are typically several factors influencing this decision and sometimes the actual reason(s) are not revealed (McGivney, 2004). While many reasons given by adults mirror those reported by traditional students, some are unique to those over age 25. One of those unique reasons is personal factors, which include motives pertaining to work, home, family, or health. Adult student attrition can be affected by child illness, increased pressure at work, and even school holidays. Sometimes adults withdraw after a series of interruptions due to fear that they will not be able to catch up on the work. Another unique reason for attrition is enrollment in distance learning. Adults can struggle with the discipline required to persist in a program that does not have set meeting times and face-to-face interaction with instructors. Additionally, financial problems can contribute to adult student attrition in that mature students tend to have greater financial struggles than younger students. Lastly, the lack of family support can lead to attrition in nontraditional students. This reason is also identified by Giancola et al. (2009), who conducted a study of 159 students aged 20 to 56 years in St. Louis University's School for Professional Studies. They found that gaining

support from family members may be critical to alleviating adult student's stress and that family support has been linked to retention in higher education.

In their study of the differences in first year and second year university experiences, comparing traditional and nontraditional students, Gilardi and Guglielmetti (2011) interviewed 228 students (154 continuing their studies and 74 who had dropped out). Their results suggest that age, high school attended, gender, and culture had no predictive effect on retention. However, being employed significantly increased the chances of a student dropping out after the first year, with a greater chance for students with temporary jobs as opposed to those with permanent positions. Gilardi and Guglielmetti suggest that employed students are going through a transition period requiring coping mechanisms. Additional predictors of attrition identified include social integration, meaningfulness of the learning experience, and use of services offered. Therefore, it is important for institutions to adapt to adult students' needs and encourage relationship-building to inspire persistence through completion of educational goals.

Contributors to Retention of Nontraditional Students

The concept of retention, based on the assumption that the primary goal in life of the group being identified is to finish a course of study in a set amount of time, does not apply to adult learners (Hadfield, 2003). In fact, during any term, up to 40% of students will not enroll, which does not necessarily mean they have not been retained. Adult students stop out for any number of reasons during the course of completing their education, including a job change, caring for aging parents, having a baby, and getting married or getting a divorce. However, there are factors that contribute to increased retention rates of adult students in higher education.

Course satisfaction, including how courses are taught, influences retention rates of nontraditional students, giving institutions an advantage in a highly competitive market (Howell, & Buck, 2012; Lee, McCool, & Napieralski, 2000). In a study of the course-related services that are most important to nontraditional students, satisfaction was shown to be effected by general classroom management, subject matter relevancy, faculty member subject matter competency, and perceived student workload (Howell, & Buck, 2012). Lee et al. (2000) studied 134 part-time adult graduate students in an effort to determine preferences for different learning activities, including lectures, in-class discussions, group-based projects, and individual projects. Results of this study confirm that adult graduate students prefer learning through discussion and reflection rather than lecture and prefer individual projects over group projects. With the preceding knowledge, institutions of higher education can develop programs and train instructors on the most effective teaching styles to attract and retain nontraditional students.

As the age of adult learners increases, so does the impact of the campus physical environment on this population of students. Moore and Piland (1994) illustrate this point with their study of 121 students age 55 and older. Results of a questionnaire completed by the participants suggest that ergonomically designed learning environments can assist older learners with overcoming challenges created by the physical barriers on campuses. Access, comfort, and physical safety were identified as important to these students, leading to increased retention. Scala's (1996) research findings also validate the importance of adequate access for adult students. In her study of 191 older students (over age 60), the category of transportation or environmental issues was the second most often cited area of difficulty for participants. Specific difficulties mentioned by respondents

included parking issues, poor transportation to and around campus, and managing stairs to reach classrooms located on upper floors.

Theoretical/Conceptual Framework

It is important to review existing literature on adult students in relation to theories of student development to better understand the factors influencing their retention on college campuses (Chaves, 2006). These factors include academic and social integration on campus. Therefore, administrators should understand what involvement means to adult students in order to develop academic and institutional support programs customized for adult students to positively influence their retention. Vincent Tinto's Interactionalist Theory presents a framework within which this can be understood. Vincent Tinto views student departure as a result of interactions the student has with the social and academic systems of the college or university attended (see Figure 2.1) (Tinto's Interactionalist Theory, 2004). Social integration refers to a student's perception of how consistent his/her values and beliefs are with those of the institution. Academic integration, according to Tinto, involves both the student's meeting the institution's explicit standards as well as the student's ability to identify with the educational goals and beliefs of the institution. Tinto believes that students who integrate with an institution, both socially and academically, develop greater commitments to the college or university as well as to the goal of graduation.

Tinto's (1997) research has provided insight into how the classroom experience has impacted student retention. He points out the importance of the relationship between the educational structure of the classroom, student involvement, and quality of student

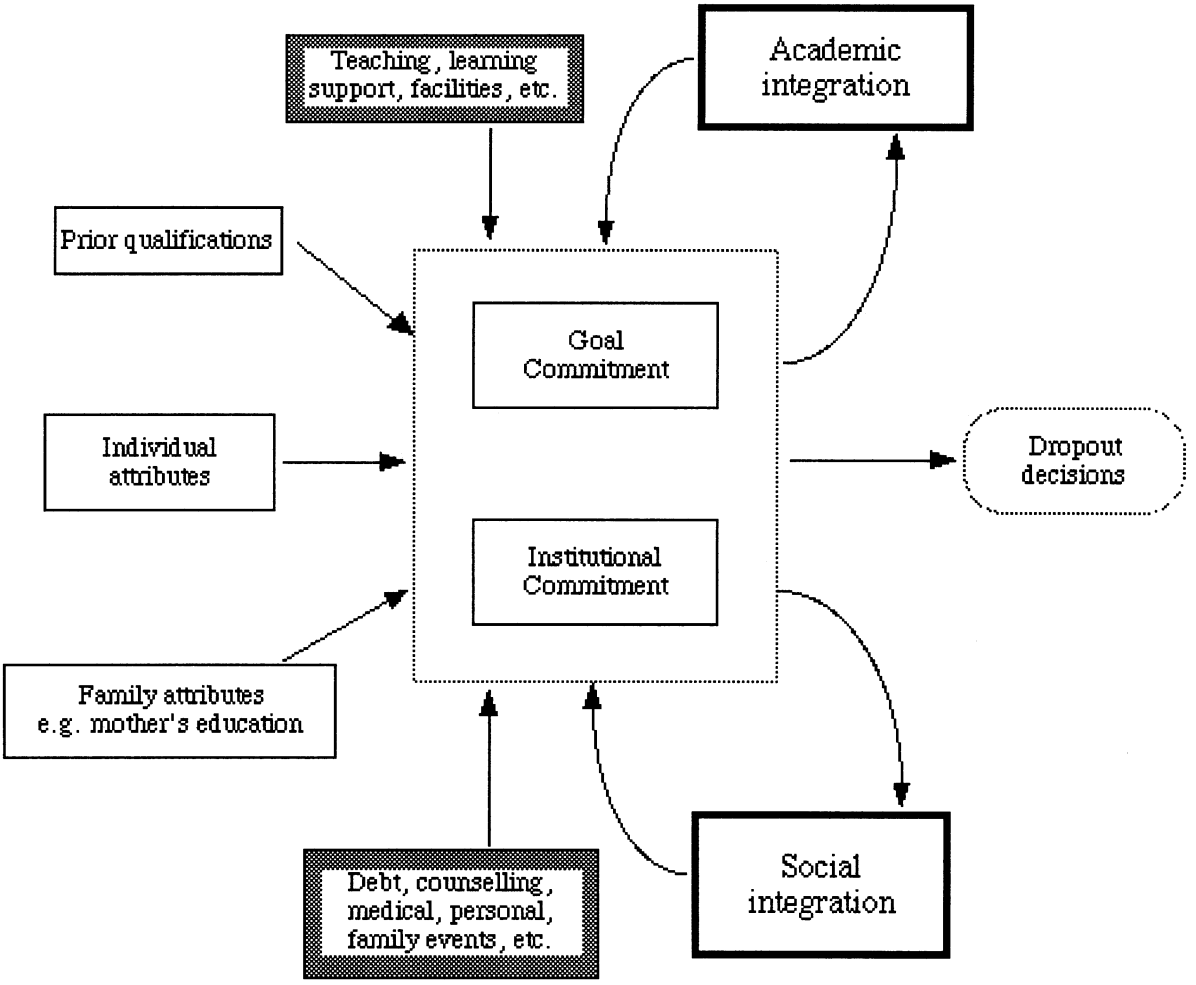

Figure 2.1. Tinto's Student Integration Model

effort. Additionally, he identifies the importance of the relationship between the quality of student effort, learning, and persistence. These relationships are particularly important to students whose involvement on campus is limited to classroom experiences due to work schedules, commuting to school, and living off campus, for example, which are prevalent characteristics in the adult student population. Therefore, the classroom must serve as a social and intellectual meeting place for students and faculty, bridging the gap to other academic and social involvement with the institution as a whole.

Research Questions

Based on the review of literature as well as the theoretical framework described above, the following research questions were formulated to address the purpose of the study:

1. How important are the current features and services to nontraditional students at Eastern Illinois University? (Quantitative)
2. How satisfied are nontraditional students with the current features and services offered at Eastern Illinois University? (Quantitative)
3. What do nontraditional students at Eastern Illinois University identify as their unique needs? (Qualitative)
4. Why do nontraditional students choose to attend Eastern Illinois University? (Qualitative)
5. Why do nontraditional students remain at Eastern Illinois University? (Qualitative)
6. What recommendations do nontraditional students have for administrators and policy-makers at Eastern Illinois University? (Qualitative)

Summary

In summary, nontraditional students differ from traditional students in their commitments outside of the classroom and definitions of success regarding their education. These differences lead to needs that require a new approach that is customized for adult students since most higher education institutions' systems are structured with traditional-aged students in mind. It is important to explore the causes of attrition in adult students, although this can be a difficult task. Adults tend to follow a

less linear path than traditional students and experience a myriad of reasons for dropping out or simply stopping out temporarily. Moreover, researchers have identified elements of the higher education system that encourage retention of adult students. Armed with this knowledge, administrators can develop programs and train instructors on the most effective teaching styles to attract and retain nontraditional students.

CHAPTER III

Methods

This study utilized a convergent parallel mixed-methods design for data collection and analysis. This means the researcher equally prioritized both quantitative and qualitative research techniques, implementing both types during the same phase of the data collection process (Creswell & Clark, 2011). The results were then merged to assess the findings of the study. Johnson and Onwugbuzie (2004) defined mixed methods research as "the class of research where the researcher mixes or combines quantitative and qualitative research techniques, methods, approaches, concepts or language into a single study" (p. 17). The mixed methods approach capitalizes on the strengths of the quantitative and qualitative paradigms and is a major justification for its utilization. Since the research questions driving this study were both quantitative (e.g. How satisfied are nontraditional students with their experiences at Eastern Illinois University?) and qualitative (e.g. Why do nontraditional students choose to attend Eastern Illinois University?) in nature, the mixed methods approach was appropriate.

Design of the Study

The study was conducted utilizing a cross-sectional survey sent via email. All full-time and part-time nontraditional students enrolled at a midsized Midwestern four-year state university at the time of data collection and the semester immediately preceding were contacted to complete the survey. The survey consisted of demographic questions as well as open- and closed-ended questions about the factors that may impact attrition and retention in nontraditional-aged college students.

Participants

Participants were 209 nontraditional aged students at a midsized Midwestern four-year state university who voluntarily completed all components of the 40-item importance and satisfaction survey in addition to the qualitative portion. Their mean age was 38 (*SD* = 10.2) years. Seventy-six (36.4%) participants were male, 131 (62.7%) were female, one (0.5%) identified as other and one non-response. Most (77.5%) identified as Caucasian or White, 14.4% as Black/African American, 3.8% as Asian/Pacific Islanders, 1.4% as Hispanic or Latino/a, 1% as other, and 0.5% as Native American or American Indian. Approximately 11% (*n* = 23) of the participants were veterans of the U.S. Armed Forces, and the mean number of college credit hours completed at the time of the survey was 98.47 (*SD* = 59.18).

Research Site

The research was conducted at a midsized Midwestern four-year state university located in a rural community of about 10,000 residents. At the time of data collection (the most recent data is from fall 2012), the demographics of the student population at the university consisted of 59.5% females (*n* = 6,199) and 40.5 % (*n* = 4,218) males. Most (73.5%) students were White, 15.2 % were Black, 3.8% were Hispanic, 1.5% were two or more races, 0.9% were Asian, 0.25% were American Indian/Alaskan Native, and 0.08% were Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander. The remaining students were classified as Non-resident Aliens (*n* = 152) and Unknown (*n* = 344). The total student headcount included 8,975 undergraduate students and 1,442 graduate students.

At the time of the study, 2,122 nontraditional students were enrolled or recently enrolled (within the last semester) at the institution. All of the aforementioned nontraditional students were contacted to complete the survey for this study.

Quantitative Instrumentation

Data was collected via an electronic survey created by the researcher, which was designed to identify what is important to adult students and how satisfied they are with the current features and services offered at EIU. The survey was created primarily due to the lack of sufficient existing surveys to accurately address the research questions posed. One existing survey that was discovered would have adequately addressed the questions in this study, but the cost was prohibitive. The quantitative portion of the survey consisted of a demographic, biographic, and academic background questionnaire and a satisfaction/importance measure.

Demographic, biographic, and academic background questionnaire. The survey for this research study included a number of demographic and biographic questions (e.g. "Which of the following best describes your racial or ethnic background?" and "What is your marital status?"). Participants were asked to choose from a list of options the one that best described their demographic make-up. To obtain further information about the characteristics of the participants, additional data was collected which included veteran status, if it is his/her first semester at EIU, current year in school, college credit hours completed to date, academic major, current student status, first-generation student status, marital status, employment status, if he/she ever had to discontinue schooling due to work or other obligations, number of children, if he/she cares for elderly or aging parents, if he/she has returned to school after taking some time

off, if he/she has taken classes on EIU's physical campus, and whether or not he/she is a transfer student.

Nontraditional Student Experience. A 40-item instrument was developed by the researcher designed to measure Eastern Illinois University's *nontraditional student experience* (NTSE) by the levels of importance and satisfaction among nontraditional students with current features and services offered at EIU (e.g. "Availability of instructors outside of class at times that are convenient to me" and "Accessibility of classrooms within campus buildings"). The questionnaire items were created through reviewing literature regarding nontraditional students' needs, studying similar research conducted on the subject, and including items relevant to the theoretical framework provided by Vincent Tinto's (1997) research on student departure. Participants were asked to rate the importance of the statements to them and their level of satisfaction with the institution regarding the items (see Appendix A for survey questions). The rating occurred on a five-point Likert-type scale ranging from (1) not important (or satisfied) at all to (5) very important (or satisfied) (McLeod, 2008). While several themes of questions were identified in the creation of the instrument (i.e. financial issues, campus physical environment, convenience), the researcher chose to list the questions in random order on the survey. This decision was made due to the fact that prior research has shown no definitive evidence that presenting questionnaire items either in groups or random order impacts internal reliability or validity of the instrument (Schriesheim, Solomon, & Kopelman, 1989).

Qualitative Instrumentation

Researcher. As a member of the nontraditional student population, I conducted this research to gain an increased understanding of the factors that impact retention and attrition of nontraditional students. My experiences as an adult student returning to higher education after 20 years left me feeling uncertain and alone in the process. I was unsure as to how to register for classes, the current technology used in enrollment and in the classrooms, and simply what to expect in the first days, weeks, and months. By identifying what nontraditional students view as EIU's strengths and weaknesses in meeting their needs, I can make recommendations to administrators and policy-makers regarding the creation of new programs or modification of existing programs to better address the needs of this student population. Ultimately, results from this research can assist EIU financially by improving retention and possibly even enrolling a greater number of adult students.

Researcher bias can be a problem in qualitative research, however, posing a threat to trustworthiness of results (Poggenpoel & Myburgh, 2003). The following have been identified as researcher characteristics that may serve as potential threats: mental or other discomfort, lack of sufficient preparation to conduct research, inability to follow up with participants, conducting inappropriate interviews, failing to provide demographic information about the participants, inability to analyze interviews in depth, and describing methodology and results superficially. Since this research, while important to me as a member of the population of interest, was not controversial, the issues of discomfort and participant follow-up were not threats to this research. Additionally, I felt sufficiently prepared for the research, the demographic information has been made

available, and both the methodology and results are described thoroughly in later chapters. The only potential threats to the credibility of this research could include researcher bias if the questions appear to be leading (conducting inappropriate interviews) or if the analysis of the data was conducted with pre-conceived ideas (inability to analyze interviews in depth).

Open-ended questionnaire. The last part of the survey included nine open-ended questions. Participants responded to the questions regarding their history and experience with EIU (e.g. "What are the reason(s) you chose to attend EIU for your education?" and "What recommendations do you have for administrators and policy-makers at EIU?").

Data Collection

The researcher contacted the School of Continuing Education at the university to inquire about obtaining contact information of nontraditional students for participation in the survey. The School of Continuing Education complied with the request, providing a Microsoft Excel® spreadsheet with the first and last name and personal emails of all recently enrolled nontraditional students (See Appendix B).

In July 2013, individuals were contacted to participate in a survey for the purpose of investigating the level of satisfaction that nontraditional students have with features and services offered at EIU to identify areas for improvement. Utilizing the survey program Qualtrics™, 2,122 surveys were distributed via email to all nontraditional students enrolled at the institution at the time of data collection, as well as students who were enrolled the semester immediately preceding the time of data collection. The survey

remained open for four weeks with reminder emails sent weekly after the initial distribution to encourage participation and increase the sample size.

After opening the survey email, only those who agreed to the informed consent approved by EIU's Institutional Review Board (see Appendix C) were allowed to proceed with the study. Participants were also offered the chance to win an incentive of a $25 gift card (four total were awarded) for their time taking part in the survey. To be considered, they provided their email addresses at the end of the survey for random drawing after the survey closed. The result of the survey was an approximate 20% response rate (437 participants started the survey and 332 completed it to some degree). The 209 respondents who completed all portions of the 40 importance and satisfaction survey items were used in further data analysis.

Quantitative Data Analysis

Pre-analysis preparation. At the end of data collection, data were exported into Microsoft Excel® for examination and cleaning (removal of columns created by Qualtrics, deletion of non-respondents, etc.). Respondents with incomplete data were deleted and not used in further analysis. Quantitative data were then exported into The Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 20, a statistical analysis tool, for analyses.

Descriptive analysis. Descriptive statistics were conducted on the demographic and biographic variables. In addition mean, median and percentiles were calculated to answer the first two research questions: 1. How important are the current features and services to nontraditional students at Eastern Illinois University? 2. How satisfied are

nontraditional students with the current features and services offered at Eastern Illinois University? Frequencies were also obtained for both rating scales.

Factor analysis. Principal component analysis with varimax rotation was utilized to determine the construct validity of the 40 items addressing importance and satisfaction with the college experience (the nontraditional student experience). Factor loadings less than .40 were suppressed in the creation of the rotated component matrix (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2013). The model for importance converged in 16 iterations. Initially, five of the original 40 items loaded onto multiple factors; applying conceptual sense, the researcher made a decision, based on the emerging factors, with which factor the item would most closely correlate, and deleted the item from the lower-correlating factor. Scree plot and eigenvalue of 1 were also used to determine the number of factors to retain. The Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin measure of sampling adequacy was .87, which is considered good because it is above the recommended value of at least .6 (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2013). Additionally, a Bartlett's test of sphericity identified an overall significance of $p < .001$ and all anti-image correlations were greater than 0.5. Therefore, the use of factor analysis was found to be appropriate for the importance instrument.

The resulting eight factors that extracted were named as follows using the highest loading factor to help guide the conceptualization process: (1) *On-campus experience* (i.e. "Accessibility of classrooms within campus buildings" and "Availability of parking on campus"), (2) *Ease/flexibility* (i.e. "Times that classes are offered" and "Availability of online or distance learning courses for me to attend"), (3) *Connection to university* (i.e. "Availability of social activities on campus" and "Availability of extracurricular activities [clubs, organizations, etc."] on campus), (4) *Instruction* (i.e. "Instructors' knowledge of

course content" and "Overall quality of instruction"), (5) *Help outside of class* (i.e. "Interactions with instructors outside of class" and "Availability of instructors outside of class at times that are convenient to me"), (6) *Cost* (i.e. "Financial Aid opportunities" and "Cost of tuition to attend EIU"), (7) *Major* (i.e. "Variety of classes within my major" and "Variety of majors to choose from"), and (8) *Convenience* (i.e. "Availability of advisors at times that are convenient to me" and "Access to campus offices at times that are convenient to me").

Similar analyses were conducted for the satisfaction instrument with largely similar results. A Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin measure of sampling adequacy of .89, a Bartlett's test of sphericity with an overall significance of $p < .001$ and all anti-image correlations were greater than 0.5, suggested that the data was adequate for factor analysis. Reliability analysis was then used to determine internal consistencies of the satisfaction instrument to determine the appropriateness of component structure.

Reliability analysis. The internal consistencies of the instrument as a whole as well as each of the eight factors were determined using Cronbach's Alpha. Aiken (2003) suggested that reliability coefficients of 0.60 to 0.70 are considered to be satisfactory in research. The subscales demonstrated reliabilities from poor (0.52) to good (0.89) with overall reliabilities of $\alpha = 0.93$ and 0.95 for the importance and the satisfaction instruments, respectively. The researcher utilized a conservative measure for reliability, 0.70, as the threshold for reliability for factor level analyses.

Test of Difference. Non-parametric Wilcoxon signed-rank tests were conducted at $\alpha = .05$ for each item to determine if there was a difference between participants' satisfaction with and importance of services to them or discover any occurrence of a

satisfaction-importance gap. Items with average rank satisfaction scores higher than average rank importance scores (Wilcoxon results based on positive ranks) were reported as strengths. Items with mean satisfaction scores lower than mean importance scores (Wilcoxon results based on negative ranks) were reported as areas for improvement. The researcher further analyzed the data to determine the relative importance and satisfaction at the factor level. Scores on the factors were summed to create a composite score for satisfaction and importance. High scores indicated higher levels of satisfaction and importance. These were compared to determine if differences existed at the factor level, using the Wilcoxon signed-rank test. This allowed the researcher to obtain additional information about the nontraditional student at Eastern Illinois University.

Qualitative Data Analysis

Responses to qualitative questions were imported into Microsoft Excel® for content analysis, which proceeded using Glaser's (1965) method of constant comparison. To do so, the researcher created separate spreadsheets to import the answers to each of the nine qualitative questions (See Appendix A). A second column was created in each spreadsheet to write keywords found within the participants' answers to each question. After reading through all of the answers to a question, the researcher wrote keywords in the appropriate column of the printed spreadsheet for each question. When this was complete, the researcher used descriptive coding by assigning a word or short phrase to each keyword or topic to summarize it (Saldana, 2013). When the complete list of codes was created for each question, it was added to the spreadsheet in a separate column. The frequency of each code was then identified by utilizing the "find" feature in Excel, and counting the number of occurrences of each code for each question. During the coding

process, if necessary (i.e. they were similar and had small counts each), codes were combined to create a new code that encompassed the previous ones. For example, in response to the question, "What motivates you to remain at EIU?" answers assigned to the words "spouse", "children", and "family" were combined into a new category of "family." Lastly, charts were created to illustrate the most frequently provided answer, or theme, for each of the nine questions. Summaries of themes and corresponding charts for each are provided in Chapter IV.

Treatment of Data

The data were collected through Qualtrics[tm] and then imported into Microsoft Excel® spreadsheet(s). The data were then imported into the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) software for statistical analysis. Before starting the questionnaire, participants were required to read and agree to an informed consent in order to continue (See Appendix C). All contact information was deleted from the data collection process and maintained in a separate file to ensure no contact information could be paired with participants' survey information. The only time the contact information was accessed was to contact the four winners of the random drawing for $25 gift cards. Additionally, all information was kept on one flash drive to maintain confidentiality of the participants. Data will be kept for three years after completion of the research, per IRB policy, after which the flash drive will be destroyed.

CHAPTER IV

Quantitative Results and Findings

The purpose of this study was to investigate the factors that influence retention and attrition among nontraditional-aged students at a midsized university in the rural Midwest through an exploration of their perceived level of importance and satisfaction with experiences relating to their tenure. Additionally, the study sought to gain some understanding of areas in need for improvement by an examination of the recommendations from members of the population of interest. This chapter presents the results of a survey conducted with nontraditional students enrolled at EIU as of the summer of 2013, designed to answer the quantitative questions: How important are the current features and services to nontraditional students at Eastern Illinois University? How satisfied are nontraditional students with the current features and services offered at Eastern Illinois University?

The following findings include descriptive statistics of demographic and biographic variables and reliability analyses conducted to determine the consistency of the instrument in measuring students' perceived levels of satisfaction and importance with their college experience. The medians, percentiles, means and standard deviations of importance and satisfaction scores of the five factors with the highest reliabilities were also calculated where appropriate for a measure of "nontraditional student experience" result.

Descriptive Statistics

Demographic and biographic variables. In order to get a clearer demographic profile of the participants, information known to be pertinent to nontraditional students

was obtained (Table 4.1). The sample of 209 participants was further analyzed using Horn's (1996) definitions of minimally nontraditional students (possessing one nontraditional characteristic), moderately nontraditional students (possessing two or three nontraditional characteristics), and highly nontraditional students (possessing four or more nontraditional characteristics). The data from this study that was used to determine the participants' nontraditional status per Horn's definition included delayed enrollment into postsecondary education (discontinued schooling because of work or other obligations), attended part-time, worked full time while enrolled, and had dependents other than a spouse (whether or not they have children). Based on these criteria, 15.3% of the participants in this study were minimally nontraditional, 58.9% were moderately nontraditional, and 15.8% were highly nontraditional (See Table 4.2).

Resulting from an open-ended question about the educational goals of participants, the most common goal listed was *Master's Degree* with 86 (35.5%) participants identifying this as an educational goal (some participants listed more than one goal). The next most common goal was *Better/Different job after graduation.* The 47 (19.4%) participants mentioning this as a goal provided responses such as, "Becoming an athletic director" and, "To teach or train at a higher level than the level I am currently teaching." Fifteen percent ($n = 37$) of respondents identified *Bachelor's Degree* as an educational goal, and 21 (8.7%) of participants would like to achieve a *PhD.*

Nontraditional student experience. Before conducting inferential statistics, the data for the 40 items on the satisfaction and importance questionnaire were explored in SPSS to ensure that the basic assumptions were met. This exploration revealed that all items on both measures were significantly different from normal as indicated by highly

Table 4.1

Demographic and Biographic Information of Sample of Nontraditional Students (N= 209)

Demographic/biographic category		*n* (%)
Year in school		
	Freshman	1 (0.5)
	Sophomore	3(1.4)
	Junior	26 (12.4)
	Senior	58 (27.8)
	Graduate Student	99 (47.4)
	Non degree-seeking	5 (2.4)
	Other	16 (7.7)
First semester at EIU		
	Yes	5 (2.4)
	No	203 (97.1)
Most common Majors		
	General Studies	52 (24.9)
	Educational Administration	27 (12.9)
	Technology	16 (7.7)
	Organizational & Professional Development	13 (6.2)
	Elementary Education	11 (5.3)
First generation student		
	Yes	87 (41.6)
	No	121 (57.9)
Marital status		
	Never married	59 (28.2)
	Married, Domestic Partnership, or Civil Union Partnership	120 (57.4)
	Widowed	3 (1.4)
	Divorced	25 (12.0)
Care for elderly or aging parents		
	Yes	23 (11.0)
	No	183 (87.6)
Return to school after taking time off		
	Yes	188 (90.0)
	No	19 (9.1)
Take classes on EIU campus		
	Yes	127 (60.8)
	No	81 (38.8)
Transfer student		
	Yes	131 (62.7)
	No	76 (36.4)

Table 4.2

Criteria for Nontraditional Status per Horn's (1996) Definition with Totals of Minimally, Moderately, and Highly Nontraditional

Demographic/biographic category		*n* (%)
Student Status		
	Part-time	119 (56.9)
	Full-time	85 (40.7)
Employment Status		
	Unemployed	35 (16.7)
	Work part-time	36 (17.2)
	Work full-time	133 (63.6)
	Retired	4 (1.9)
Discontinued school because of work obligations		
	Yes	71 (34.0)
	No	135 (64.6)
Discontinued school because of other obligations		
	Yes	73 (34.9)
	No	133 (63.6)
Children		
	Yes	128 (61.2)
	No	81 (38.8)
Minimally nontraditional		32 (15.3)
Moderately nontraditional		123 (58.9)
Highly nontraditional		33 (15.8)

significant ($p < .001$) in both the Kolmogorov-Smirnova and Shapiro-Wilk tests of normality. Outliers were identified using the box-leaf plots, but removal resulted in the creation of new outliers and brought the sample size precariously close to the 5:1 participants to number of items minimum ratio recommended for factor analysis. Therefore the medians and percentiles were reported instead (Table 4.3 and 4.4). The

median is more resistant to the effects of outliers than the mean. However, the means were reported for comparison (See Appendices F and G).

Table 4.3

Median and Interquartile Range for Importance Survey Items in Order of Decreasing Median (N=209)

Item #	Item Description	*Md*	Quartiles		
			25	50	75
1	Times that classes are offered	5	4	5	5
5	Variety of classes within my major	5	4	5	5
7	Instructors' knowledge of course content	5	5	5	5
12	Financial Aid opportunities	5	3	5	5
15	Cost of tuition to attend EIU	5	4	5	5
17	Interactions with instructors in class	5	4	5	5
26	Overall quality of instruction	5	4	5	5
27	Teaching styles of instructors	5	4	5	5
29	Perceived ability to secure a job after completing educational goals	5	4	5	5
32	Availability of online or distance learning courses for me to attend	5	4	5	5
33	Instructors' ability to manage the classroom effectively	5	4	5	5
34	Relevancy of subject matter taught in classes I attend	5	4	5	5
37	Flexibility to attend part-time or full-time	5	4	5	5
40	Clarity of degree requirements	5	4	5	5
2	Availability of advisors at times that are convenient to me	4	3	4	5
3	Access to campus offices at times that are convenient to me	4	3	4	5
6	Variety of majors to choose from	4	3	4	5
9	Availability of parking on campus	4	3	4	5
10	Lighting in classrooms	4	3	4	4
11	Comfort of classroom furniture	4	3	4	5
16	Understanding of technology used in classrooms	4	4	4	5
18	Interactions with instructors outside of class	4	3	4	5
19	Availability of instructors outside of class at times that are convenient to me	4	4	4	5
20	Interactions with classmates in class	4	3	4	5
22	Understanding of where to go for general questions or problems	4	4	4	5
24	Feelings of connectedness to other students in my program or classes	4	3	4	4

Item #	Item Description	*Md*	Quartiles		
			25	50	75
25	Feelings of connectedness to the university	4	3	4	4
28	Types of academic assignments required in my classes (i.e. group work, independent work, lecture, class discussions)	4	4	4	5
31	Availability of on-campus courses for me to attend	4	3	4	5
35	Physical safety on campus at EIU	4	3	4	5
36	Support with managing demands of school and other life responsibilities	4	4	4	5
38	Availability of support services specifically for non-traditional students	4	3	4	5
39	Ease of the application and enrollment process	4	4	4	5
8	Accessibility of classrooms within campus buildings	3	3	3	4
13	Availability of social activities on campus	3	1	3	3
14	Availability of extracurricular activities (clubs, organizations, etc.)	3	1	3	3
21	Interactions with classmates outside of class	3	2	3	4
23	Opportunities to interact with other non-traditional students	3	3	3	4
30	Availability of sufficient places to study on campus	3	2	3	5
4	Childcare on campus	1	1	1	3

Table 4.4

*Median and Interquartile Range for Satisfaction Survey Items in Order of Decreasing Median (*N*=209)*

Item #	Item Description	*Md*	Quartiles		
			25	50	75
1	Times that classes are offered	4	3	4	5
2	Availability of advisors at times that are convenient to me	4	3	4	5
3	Access to campus offices at times that are convenient to me	4	3	4	4
5	Variety of classes within my major	4	3	4	4
6	Variety of majors to choose from	4	3	4	4
7	Instructors' knowledge of course content	4	4	4	5
8	Accessibility of classrooms within campus buildings	4	3	4	4
10	Lighting in classrooms	4	3	4	4
11	Comfort of classroom furniture	4	3	4	4
12	Financial Aid opportunities	4	3	4	4
15	Cost of tuition to attend EIU	4	3	4	4

Item #	Item Description	*Md*	Quartiles		
			25	50	75
16	Understanding of technology used in classrooms	4	4	4	4
17	Interactions with instructors in class	4	4	4	5
18	Interactions with instructors outside of class	4	4	4	5
19	Availability of instructors outside of class at times that are convenient to me	4	4	4	5
20	Interactions with classmates in class	4	3	4	4
21	Interactions with classmates outside of class	4	3	4	4
22	Understanding of where to go for general questions or problems	4	3	4	4
24	Feelings of connectedness to other students in my program or classes	4	3	4	4
25	Feelings of connectedness to the university	4	3	4	4
26	Overall quality of instruction	4	4	4	5
27	Teaching styles of instructors	4	4	4	4
28	Types of academic assignments required in my classes (i.e. group work , independent work, lecture, class discussions)	4	4	4	4
29	Perceived ability to secure a job after completing educational goals	4	3	4	4
32	Availability of online or distance learning courses for me to attend	4	3	4	4
33	Instructors' ability to manage the classroom effectively	4	4	4	5
34	Relevancy of subject matter taught in classes I attend	4	4	4	5
35	Physical safety on campus at EIU	4	3	4	4
36	Support with managing demands of school and other life responsibilities	4	3	4	4
37	Flexibility to attend part-time or full-time	4	4	4	5
38	Availability of support services specifically for non-traditional students	4	3	4	4
39	Ease of the application and enrollment process	4	4	4	5
40	Clarity of degree requirements	4	4	4	5
4	Childcare on campus	3	3	3	3
9	Availability of parking on campus	3	2	3	4
13	Availability of social activities on campus	3	3	3	3
14	Availability of extracurricular activities (clubs, organizations, etc.)	3	3	3	3
23	Opportunities to interact with other non-traditional students	3	3	3	4
30	Availability of sufficient places to study on campus	3	3	3	4
31	Availability of on-campus courses for me to attend	3	3	3	4

Satisfaction-importance analysis. Results of descriptive statistics gauge the levels of importance and satisfaction of nontraditional students at Eastern with the institutions services and features revealed that 14 of the 40 items had a median of 5 for importance indicating that nontraditional students found those services and features very important to their experience. When examined closer, these fell heavily under *Ease/Flexibility* (five items), *Instruction* (four items) and *Cost* and *Major* subscales. When examining what students found were the least important, "Childcare on campus" stood alone with a median rank of 1. Nontraditional students reported an overall neutral (as indicated by a median score of 3) rating on six of the 40 items. Closer examination revealed those items were linked to *Connection to university* (four items). Students found all other items important to their experience.

Results of descriptive analysis for satisfaction, however, revealed that NTS were not very satisfied with any of the services and features at Eastern Illinois University as indicated by none of the median scores greater than 4 (Table 4.4). They were satisfied with most of the services and features offered at Eastern as indicated by a median rating of 4 on 33 out of the 40 items. Students were neither satisfied nor dissatisfied with the others. The neutral items spanned the *On-campus experience* and *Connection to university* factors with "childcare on campus", "social activities" and "availability of activities" sharing the lowest median score of 3 across all three quartiles.

Factor Analysis

Principal component analysis was conducted to reduce the number of items. Factor analysis was performed for the "importance scale" then the "satisfaction scale" using the previous in combination with reliability analysis (Table 4.5). The eight factors

extracted appeared to be conceptually sound with acceptable loadings and explained 62%-65% of variances observed for the two measures.

Table 4.5

Varimax Rotated Component Matrix with Factor Loadings Based on Principal Component Analysis for Importance Items (N = 209)

	Item Description	Component								
		1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
10	Lighting	.81								
9	Parking	.77								
11	Furniture comfort	.77								
8	Accessibility of classrooms	.69								
35	Safety on campus	.68								
31	On-campus courses	.66								
30	Places to study[a]	.50		.41						
38	Non-traditional support		.73							
39	Application /enrollment ease		.72							
37	PT/FT Flexibility		.70							
34	Clarity of degree requirements		.57							
36	Support with managing?		.55							
32	Online or distance courses		.49							
33	Instructors' classroom management [b]	.43	.44							
13	Social activities			.71						
14	Availability of activities			.68						
23	Interact w/other non-trad students			.68						
24	Connectedness to other students			.67						
21	Interactions with classmates outside of class			.64						
20	Interactions with classmates in class[c]			.62	.43					
25	Connection to university			.41						
26	Overall quality of instruction				.70					
7	Instructors' knowledge of course content				.69					
	Interactions with instructors in class				.64					
28	Types of academic assignments required in my classes (i.e. group work , independent work, lecture, class discussions)				.55					
34	Relevancy of subject matter taught in classes I attend				.55					

	Item Description	Component								
		1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
27	Teaching styles of instructors				.52					
18	Interactions with instructors outside of class					.81				
19	Availability of instructors outside of class at times that are convenient to me					.78				
22	Understanding of where to go for general questions or problems					.47				
15	Cost of tuition to attend EIU						.71			
12	Financial Aid opportunities						.70			
29	Perceived ability to secure a job after completing educational goals[d]						.54	.41		
36	Understanding of technology used in classrooms						.44			
6	Variety of majors to choose from							.66		
5	Variety of classes within my major							.47		
3	Access to campus offices at times that are convenient to me[e]	.42							.58	
2	Availability of advisors at times that are convenient to me								.57	
4	Childcare on campus								.42	
1	Times that classes are offered[f]		.43							.48

Note: PCA was used for extraction; Varimax rotation with Kaiser normalization; Rotation converted in 16 iterations; Items in red are complex or double loads.
a. Factor was assigned to Component 1; b. Factor was assigned to Component 2; c. Factor was assigned to Component 3; d. Factor was assigned to Component 7; e. Factor was assigned to Component 8; f. Factor was assigned to Component 9.

Reliability Analyses

The internal consistencies of the eight retained components/factors were determined using the Cronbach's alpha. Component 1 was labeled *On-campus experience* because of the relatively high loadings of "Lighting in classrooms", "Availability of parking on campus" and "Comfort of classroom furniture"; component 2 was labeled *Ease/flexibility* for similar reasons; Component 3 *Connection to university*; Component 4, *Instruction;* Component 5, *Help outside of class;* Component 6, *Cost* ; Component 5,

Major; and Component 8, *Convenience.* The reliabilities for the five components were considered good (>0.70) for both measures (importance and satisfaction) (See Table 4.6). Component 8 (*Major*) was also good for measure of satisfaction.

Table 4.6

*Reliabilities and Mean and Standard Deviations of Components Based on Principal Component Analysis (*N = *209)*

		Importance		Satisfaction	
Component Item Description	# of items	α	*M (SD)*	α	*M (SD)*
Component 1 - On-campus exper.	8	0.89	3.63 (0.94)	0.78	3.59 (0.59)
Component 2 - Ease/flexibility	7	0.80	4.27 (0.64)	0.82	3.77 (0.72)
Component 3 - Connection to univ.	7	0.84	3.11 (0.90)	0.84	3.50 (0.62)
Component 4 - Instruction	6	0.80	4.58 (0.46)	0.87	4.07 (0.68)
Component 5 - Help outside of class	3	0.76	4.11 (0.76)	0.74	3.90 (0.74)
Component 6 - Cost	3	0.59		0.52	
Component 7 - Major	3	0.52		0.72	
Component 8 - Convenience	3	0.65		0.65	

Nontraditional Student Experience

Descriptive statistics. Descriptive statistics were calculated for each of the five factors with the greatest reliabilities (*On-campus experience, Ease/flexibility, Connection to university, Instruction, and Help outside of class*) (Table 4.6). The researcher used a threshold of 4.0 to determine "satisfied" and "important". These results suggest that students perceived *Connection to university* as neither important nor not important and are most satisfied with *Instruction.* In addition, a total composite score was also calculated for each subscale. This allowed the researcher to see how the mean total scores compared with the maximum possible score. Table 4.7 presents the results of this exploration.

Table 4.7

Means and Standard Deviations, Minimum and Maximum of Composite Scores for the Factors with Reliabilities of .70 or Higher

Composite item	Possible Range	Min	Max	*M*	*SD*
On-campus experience _imp	8-40	8	40	29.01	7.55
On-campus experience _sat	8-40	12	40	28.75	4.73
Connection to university _imp	7-35	8	35	22.53	6.04
Connection to university _sat	7-35	9	35	24.76	4.28
Ease/flexibility _imp	7-35	11	35	29.90	4.47
Ease/flexibility _sat	7-35	9	35	26.39	5.05
Instruction _imp	6-30	12	30	27.49	2.77
Instruction _sat	6-30	7	30	24.40	4.07
Help outside of class _imp	3-15	3	15	12.33	2.29
Help outside of class _sat	3-15	3	15	11.70	2.20
total_major_imp	3-15	3	15	12.57	2.09
total_major_sat	3-15	3	15	10.67	2.56
total_convenience_imp	3-15	3	15	9.48	2.84
total_covenience_sat	3-15	3	15	10.59	2.05
total_cost_imp	3-15	4	15	12.76	2.16
total_cost_sat	3-15	3	15	10.78	2.22

Additional analysis was conducted to determine the frequencies of answers chosen for each of the importance survey items. Items with the answer of "Very Important" chosen with the greatest frequency included: Instructors' knowledge (79.9%), Quality of instruction (72.7%), *Class times* (69.9%), *Cost of tuition* (68.9%), and *Interact w/instructors in class* (67%) (See Table 4.8). While these items are all in the top scores for mean importance results (mean score of at least 4.0), they are not the top five, and there are three other items (*Relevance of subject matter, clarity of degree requirements, and Instructor teaching styles*) with mean importance scores as high or higher than the aforementioned that did not have the greatest frequency of the answer "Very Important."

Table 4.8

Percentages of Responses to Each of the Importance Items (N = 209)

Survey item	%				
	Very Important	Important	Neutral	Somewhat Important	Not Important at all
Class times	69.9	20.1	3.8	2.9	3.3
Advisor Times	35.9	35.4	16.7	6.2	5.7
Campus Office Times	27.8	34.9	22.5	5.7	9.1
Childcare on campus	9.6	2.4	23.0	1.0	64.1
Variety of classes in major	50.7	40.7	6.2	1.4	1.0
Variety of majors	34.0	37.3	19.1	2.9	6.7
Instructors' knowledge	79.9	18.7	1.4	0.0	0.0
Accessibility of classrooms	19.6	27.8	32.1	5.7	14.8
Parking	34.4	30.6	15.3	6.2	13.4
Lighting	19.6	35.9	21.5	10.0	12.9
Furniture comfort	24.9	37.8	17.7	7.2	12.4
Financial Aid	51.2	21.5	17.2	1.9	8.1
Social Activities	7.7	12.0	33.0	7.2	40.2
Availability of Activities	8.1	9.6	33.5	6.2	42.6
Cost of tuition	68.9	23.9	4.8	1.9	0.5
Understand technology	41.6	38.8	13.4	2.4	3.8
Interact w/instructors in class	67.0	25.8	3.3	1.4	2.4
Interact w/instructors out of class	36.8	37.8	14.8	5.3	5.3
Instructors avail out of class	36.4	47.8	9.1	3.8	2.9
Interact w/classmates in class	25.8	42.6	14.4	9.1	8.1
Interact w/classmates out of class	13.9	28.7	28.7	11.5	17.2
Know where to go w/questions	38.8	53.6	4.3	2.4	1.0
Interact w/other nontrad students	16.3	24.9	35.4	9.1	14.4
Connection to other students	22.5	37.8	20.6	11.0	8.1

Survey item	%				
	Very Important	Important	Neutral	Somewhat Important	Not Important at all
Connection to university	21.1	34.0	23.0	13.4	8.6
Quality of instruction	72.7	25.8	1.0	0.5	0.0
Instructor teaching styles	57.4	37.3	3.8	1.4	0.0
Required assignments	47.8	44.0	4.3	3.3	0.5
Ability to get a job	56.9	24.9	12.0	2.9	3.3
Places to study	26.3	20.1	27.8	6.2	19.6
On-campus courses	32.5	23.9	25.4	4.3	13.9
Online or distance courses	55.5	21.1	12.4	3.8	7.2
Instructors' classroom management	53.1	39.7	3.8	1.4	1.9
Relevance of subject matter	65.6	31.1	1.9	0.5	1.0
Safety on campus	42.6	22.0	22.0	3.3	10.0
Support	42.6	38.8	11.0	2.9	4.8
PT/FT flexibility	55.0	31.6	10.0	1.4	1.9
Nontrad support services	36.8	34.0	18.7	3.3	7.2
Application/enrollment ease	47.4	40.7	7.2	3.8	1.0
Clarity of degree requirements	64.1	32.5	2.4	0.0	1.0

The same analysis was conducted to determine the frequencies of answers chosen for each of the satisfaction survey items. Items with the answer of "Very Satisfied" chosen with the greatest frequency included: *Interact w/instructors in class* (43.1%), *Instructors' knowledge* (42.6%), *Relevance of subject matter* (34.9%), Application/enrollment ease (34.9%), and PT/FT flexibility (33.0%) (See Table 4.9). These results mirror the results for importance in that all of the aforementioned items are also in the in the top scores for mean satisfaction results (mean score of at least 4.0), but they are not the top five, and there are two other items (*Instructors' management of*

classroom and *Quality of instruction*) with mean satisfaction scores as high or higher than the above-mentioned that did not have the greatest frequency of the answer "Very Satisfied."

Table 4.9

Percentages of Responses to Each of the Satisfaction Items (N = 209)

	%				
	Very Satisfied	Satisfied	Neutral	Somewhat Satisfied	Not Satisfied at all
Class times	27.3	46.9	8.1	12.9	4.8
Advisor Times	29.7	39.7	22.0	5.3	3.3
Campus Office Times	17.2	40.7	28.7	10.5	2.9
Childcare on campus	5.3	9.1	82.3	0.5	2.9
Variety of classes in major	19.1	45.5	12.4	17.2	5.7
Variety of majors	20.1	42.6	25.8	8.6	2.9
Instructors' knowledge	42.6	43.1	5.7	7.7	1.0
Accessibility of classrooms	21.1	33.0	41.6	2.9	1.4
Parking	8.1	29.7	31.1	18.2	12.9
Lighting	16.7	50.2	28.7	3.8	0.5
Furniture comfort	10.0	40.2	29.2	12.9	7.7
Financial Aid	19.1	36.4	32.1	7.2	5.3
Social Activities	7.2	16.3	70.8	4.3	1.4
Availability of Activities	7.7	16.3	72.2	2.4	1.4
Cost of tuition	17.2	47.8	12.9	16.7	5.3
Understand technology	20.6	56.5	15.3	6.2	1.4
Interact w/instructors in class	43.1	48.8	5.3	1.4	1.4
Interact w/instructors out of class	29.7	46.4	19.1	3.8	1.0
Instructors avail out of class	24.9	55.5	13.4	4.3	1.9
Interact w/classmates in class	23.4	47.4	23.0	5.3	1.0
Interact w/classmates out of class	13.4	39.2	42.6	2.4	2.4
Know where to go w/questions	18.2	54.5	12.0	12.4	2.9

	%				
	Very Satisfied	Satisfied	Neutral	Somewhat Satisfied	Not Satisfied at all
Interact w/other nontrad students	11.5	33.0	44.5	5.7	5.3
Connection to other students	18.2	41.1	29.2	7.2	4.3
Connection to university	12.4	42.1	32.1	10.5	2.9
Quality of instruction	30.1	56.0	6.7	6.7	0.5
Instructor teaching styles	23.0	56.0	7.2	12.0	1.9
Required assignments	17.2	60.8	11.5	9.1	1.4
Ability to get a job	14.4	38.3	30.6	10.5	6.2
Places to study	18.7	27.8	46.4	5.7	1.4
On-campus courses	15.3	31.1	40.2	9.6	3.8
Online or distance courses	19.6	33.5	22.5	17.7	6.7
Instructors' classroom management	32.1	55.0	10.5	1.9	0.5
Relevance of subject matter	34.9	49.8	9.1	5.3	1.0
Safety on campus	23.4	35.4	34.9	5.3	1.0
Support	15.3	50.2	22.5	9.6	2.4
PT/FT flexibility	33.0	44.5	15.8	5.3	1.4
Nontrad support services	16.7	37.3	28.2	11.5	6.2
Application/enrollment ease	34.9	49.8	7.2	5.7	2.4
Clarity of degree requirements	32.5	46.4	5.7	12.4	2.9

Test of differences. Non-parametric Wilcoxon signed-rank tests were conducted at $\alpha = .05$ for each of the 40 items to determine whether there was a difference in means and to discover any "satisfaction-importance gaps" which would indicate a possible areas of strength (in cases where the level of satisfaction was higher than the level of importance) or possible areas where improvement can be made (in cases where the level of satisfaction is less than the level of importance). Results revealed a statistically

significant difference between satisfaction and importance (ranked satisfaction score minus ranked importance score) for 31 of the 40 pairs (See Table 4.10) (See Appendix D for full names of pairs of importance and satisfaction items with shortened pair names used in this report).

Table 4.10

*Results of Wilcoxon-Signed Rank Test (Satisfaction – Importance) (*N=*209)*

Item #	Item Description	z	*p*	*r*
1	***Class times***	***-6.116[a]***	***.000***	***0.30***
2	*Advisor Times*	-.081[a]	.936	
3	*Campus Office Times*	-.383[a]	.702	
4	***Childcare on campus***	***-9.227[b]***	***.000***	***0.45***
5	***Variety of classes in major***	***-7.566[a]***	***.000***	***0.37***
6	***Variety of majors***	***-2.156[a]***	***.031***	
7	***Instructors' knowledge***	***-7.767[a]***	***.000***	***0.38***
8	***Accessibility of classrooms***	***-4.505[b]***	***.000***	***0.22***
9	***Parking***	***-4.507[a]***	***.000***	***0.22***
10	***Lighting***	***-4.993[b]***	***.000***	***0.24***
11	***Furniture comfort***	**-1.768[a]**	**.077**	
12	***Financial Aid***	***-4.367[a]***	***.000***	***0.21***
13	***Social Activities***	***-7.618[b]***	***.000***	***0.37***
14	***Availability of Activities***	***-8.342[b]***	***.000***	***0.41***
15	***Cost of tuition***	***-9.178[a]***	***.000***	***0.45***
16	***Understand technology***	***-2.652[a]***	***.008***	*0.13*
17	***Interact w/instructors in class***	***-4.059[a]***	***.000***	***0.20***
18	Interact w/instructors out of class	-.789[b]	.430	0.04
19	*Instructors avail out of class*	-1.855[a]	.064	0.09
20	*Interact w/classmates in class*	***-2.413[b]***	***.016***	*0.12*
21	***Interact w/classmates out of class***	***-5.452[b]***	***.000***	***0.27***
22	***Know where to go w/questions***	***-5.984[a]***	***.000***	***0.29***
23	*Interact w/other non-trad students*	***-2.258[b]***	***.024***	*0.11*
24	Connection to other students	-.897[b]	.370	0.04
25	Connection to university	-1.056[b]	.291	0.05
26	***Quality of instruction***	***-8.799[a]***	***.000***	***0.43***
27	***Instructor teaching styles***	***-7.638[a]***	***.000***	***0.37***
28	***Required assignments***	***-6.695[a]***	***.000***	***0.33***

Item #	Item Description	z	*p*	*r*
29	***Ability to get a job***	***-7.528[a]***	***.000***	***0.37***
30	*Places to study*	***-3.323[b]***	***.001***	*0.16*
31	*On-campus courses*	-.854[a]	.393	0.04
32	***Online or distance courses***	***-5.548[a]***	***.000***	***0.27***
33	***Instructors' classroom management***	***-4.257[a]***	***.000***	***0.21***
34	***Relevance of subject matter***	***-6.545[a]***	***.000***	***0.32***
35	*Safety on campus*	-.531[a]	.596	0.03
36	***Support***	***-4.672[a]***	***.000***	***0.23***
37	***PT/FT flexibility***	***-4.526[a]***	***.000***	***0.22***
38	***Non-trad support services***	***-3.835[a]***	***.000***	*0.19*
39	*Application/enrollment ease*	***-2.519[a]***	***.012***	*0.12*
40	***Clarity of degree requirements***	***-7.293[a]***	***.000***	***0.36***
	Overall satisfaction-importance	***-4.311[a]***	***.000***	***0.21***

a. Based on negative ranks.
b. Based on positive ranks.
bolded = medium to large effect sizes.
italicize = significant p value.

Sixteen of the statistically different pairs had mean importance scores higher than mean satisfaction and had medium to large effect sizes, indicating areas for improvement (i.e. *Instructors' knowledge, Quality of instruction, Relevance of subject matter*). A final Wilcoxon signed-rank test was conducted using the mean total satisfaction score and mean total importance score. Possible range was 40 to 200. The results showed a statistical difference at the .001 level for all factors except *On campus experience*, indicating that a gap existed in nontraditional students' level of satisfaction and importance with most features and services at EIU (See Table 4.11). A medium effect size of 0.21 suggests a practical significance to the results.

Summary of Quantitative Findings

The results of this study suggest that nontraditional students find the features and services offered at EIU to be less satisfying than they are important. They rated four out

of the five of the identified factors lower in satisfaction than importance, indicating a less-than-satisfying total on-campus experience. Individual items were rated lower overall in satisfaction than importance as well, resulting in 23 individual items identified as areas for improvement. The items with the greatest disparity between satisfaction and importance were: *Cost of tuition, Ability to get a job, Variety of classes in major, Online or distance courses*, and *Class times*.

Table 4.11

Results of Wilcoxon Signed Rank Test for Factors

Factors	*Z*	*p*	*r*	
On campus experience	-1.209	.227		
Ease/Flexibility	-7.688	.000	0.38	medium
Instruction	-9.526	.000	0.47	large
Help outside of class	-3.722	.000	0.18	small
Cost	-8.603	.000	0.42	large
Major	-7.812	.000	0.38	medium
Convenience	-5.122	.000	0.25	medium
Connection to university	-5.483	.000	0.27	medium

CHAPTER V

Qualitative Results and Findings

This chapter presents the results of a survey conducted with nontraditional students enrolled at EIU as of the summer of 2013, designed to answer the following qualitative questions: What do nontraditional students at Eastern Illinois University identify as their unique needs? Why do nontraditional students choose to attend Eastern Illinois University? Why do nontraditional students remain at Eastern Illinois University? What recommendations do nontraditional students have for administrators and policy-makers at Eastern Illinois University? Findings include themes resulting from coding the qualitative information provided by participants in response to open-ended questions about their college experiences as nontraditional students. This information includes their views about the following: challenges they face, their unique needs, reason(s) for choosing EIU for their education, motivator(s) for remaining at EIU, barrier(s) to remaining enrolled at EIU, offices or campus departments that have assisted in achieving their goals, support they receive from family, and recommendations they have for administrators and policy-makers at EIU.

Participants responded to open-ended questions regarding their history and experience with EIU. Following are the results of the coded responses to each of those questions answered by the 209 participants. In the case of all of the questions, most participants provided more than one answer. The results reflect all answers given; therefore, there may be more answers than the number of participants (i.e. when asked for the reason[s] for choosing to attend EIU, one participant said, "I went here for my undergraduate degree. It is a good school. The Master Teacher program would help me

professionally. I get tuition waivers to attend EIU. IT was a cohort program. All classes took place when I could attend them." This one response had answers that fit into five of the identified themes for reasons students chose to attend EIU).

Challenges

The first qualitative question on the survey was: A nontraditional student is a student over age 25 who potentially works full-time, cares for their children and/or elderly parents, and is returning to school to complete a degree after taking time off. What, if any, challenges have you faced as a nontraditional student at EIU? After coding analysis, three major themes emerged as responses to this survey question: *Time*, *Class times and locations*, and *Balance*. Below is a description of those themes with specific examples of each in the participants' own words.

Time. Out of a total of 230 responses to this question, there were 51 instances (22.2%) in which time was mentioned as a challenge faced by the student. Students expressed a struggle with finding enough time to complete the requirements of specific courses and programs. Examples of this answer include, "I have faced challanges [*sic*] in having adequete [*sic*] time to complete class requirements while managing work, family, children and school" and "Finding time to get the homework done."

Class times and locations. With 26 occurrences of responses including this as a challenge of nontraditional students, 11.3 % of respondents identified class times and locations as challenges they faced. Students voiced dissatisfaction with the university's ability to meet their need of class times held far enough outside of working hours to allow for attending and commuting. They also expressed a challenge with finding enough classes offered at distance locations for students who do not live near campus at all.

Some examples of this theme include: "Finding the classes that I needed at the time that I needed them," "Making class times fit with my schedule," and, "Classes that are available on and off campus. The times are mostly for traditional students. and [sic] or there are no online classes for Nontraditional students to take. Therefore, it takes longer for nontraditional students to graduate."

Balance. The third theme that emerged as a result of this question was identified by 22 (9.5%). They expressed a struggle with balancing all of the demands that they face on a regular basis, such as school, work, families, and children. The following are examples of answers given that fit into this theme: "Balancing family, work and school work is at times very challenging" and "I find it can be a struggle trying to balance life since I have returned to EIU to complete my degree. I work at the University of Illinois and there are times when my job can be very demanding."

Other themes of challenges identified by the participants included *Children/Child care*, the struggle with finding care for their children while they attend school, *Financial*, the monetary challenge of being a college student, especially if one is attending school full-time and not working, *and Juggle multiple demands*, the challenge of managing a busy schedule (See Table 5.1).

Table 5.1

Summary of Themes Regarding Nontraditional Student Challenges

Challenges	# of Occurrences
Time	51
Class times & locations	26
Balance	22
Children/Child care	16
Finances	15
Juggle multiple demands	13

Unique Needs

The second qualitative question that participants responded to was: What, if any, unique needs do you have as a nontraditional student (as opposed to traditional students)? This question elicited 169 total responses from participants. Of those responses, three major themes emerged after coding analysis, including *None*, *Class times*, and *Flexibility*. Following are descriptions of each of these themes with examples provided by survey participants.

None. Accounting for 32 (18.9%) of the unique needs identified by participants, this was the most popular answer to this question. A large percentage of respondents stated that they do not think they have any needs specifically related to their membership in the nontraditional student population.

Class times. The survey participants expressed a need for classes to be offered during times that fit into their busy schedules. They desire classes that are offered outside of working hours, at night and in the evenings, on weekends, and during the summer so that they can complete degree requirements in a timelier manner. Twenty (11.8%) respondents mentioned class times as a unique need they have as a nontraditional student. Some examples of answers involving the class times theme include, "The need for more online or evening/weekend classes, so the classes don't interfere with a full-time work schedule," "Need for class times that may be irregular," and "More classes offered in the evening."

Flexibility. The nontraditional students responding to this survey voiced a need for more flexibility in deadlines and course offerings, for example, than traditional-aged students. They identified this need as a result of having to try to fit classes into an

already busy schedule with work (usually full-time) and other obligations. This answer was given 21 times (12.4%), with examples such as, "Flexibility in schedule, some leeway for homework, although I've never copped a plea if I had an obstruction to getting work done; I've just readjusted schedules to make it happen. The degree was the priority," "Flexibility and consistency in course offerings, times, and locations each semester," and "Unlike traditional students, I don't live on campus and need flexibility in deadlines and requirements."

Fifteen (8.8%) answers to this question were made up of *Other* unique needs, such as the need for a place to rest and store lunch items when on campus all day and a need for less posting of discussions in online classes. Fourteen (8.2%) participants mentioned *Time for classes, studying, etc.*, expressing a need for more time to get classwork done since they have additional full-time commitments outside of school (See Table 5.2).

Table 5.2

Summary of Themes Regarding Nontraditional Student Unique Needs

Unique Needs	# of Occurrences
None	32
Class times - evening, weekend	21
Flexibility	18
Other specific need(s)	15
Time for classes, studying, etc.	14

Reasons for Attending

The third qualitative question included in the survey was: What are the reason(s) you chose to attend EIU for your education? Five major themes emerged as a result of coding the answers provided to this question, including *Location, Cost/Tuition*

waivers/Graduate assistantship, *Program or major offered*, *Reputation/Quality education*, and *Online courses*. Below is a description of those themes with examples of each.

Location. Answers to this question included something about location in the greatest portion (16.7%) of the 322 total answers regarding why participants chose to attend EIU. The respondents indicated that EIU was close to home, in the town where they currently live, or easily commutable. "Location, close to home" and "Location in relation to the town I [*sic*] where I live" exemplify answers that were included in this theme.

Cost/tuition waivers/graduate assistantship. Next in popularity were responses involving something related to the cost to attend, availability of tuition waivers, and graduate assistantships to assist with the cost of attending EIU. These were all factors impacting the decision to attend EIU as reported in 50 total responses (15.5%) to this survey question. Some examples of answers included in this theme are, "The school where I work also offers waivers for tuition and fees for EIU," "Also the tuition is reasonable," and "Free tuition and room & board from assistantship."

Program or major offered. Another popular reason for attending EIU was due to the program or major offered at the university, which was included in 50 (15.5%) of the total responses. Students chose EIU for their education because it offered the program, major, or degree that interested them. Respondents offered answers to this question such as "Affordability [*sic*] and program choices" and "It had a good school psychology program."

Reputation/quality education. With 29 responses, 9% of participants mentioned something about the reputation of the school or a particular program and/or the quality of education received as having an influence on their choice to attend EIU. Examples of responses in this category are, "The quality of education was of major importance to me and so far I haven't been disappointed," "good curriculum, good status of the university, variety of majors, and financial assistance helped me chose EIU as my college" and "It is known for producing quality teaching, and I knew that I would return to EIU for my Masters because of its reputation and because it is close to where I live."

Online courses. Close behind, with 8% of responses, is the category of responses included in the theme of online classes. Students have identified that a reason they chose to attend EIU is due to the fact that EIU offers online classes. The nontraditional students responding to this survey expressed a need for online classes for the flexibility they offer and as a way to complete their degrees more quickly. Some examples of responses fitting in this theme include, "Also, the ability for me to work & take online classes is very important" and "EIU is a great college that offers many online classes."

With 5.5% (n = 18) of respondents providing keywords for this category, *Distance program* was a reason identified for attending EIU, including those who chose the university due to their ability to attend classes offered at a satellite location. An equal number of participants identified a reason that fell into the theme of *Alma mater/Attended EIU before*, meaning that they chose EIU either because a family member had attended the school or they had attended EIU previously (See Table 5.3).

Table 5.3

Summary of Themes Regarding Reason(s) for Choosing EIU

Reasons	# of Occurrences
Location	54
Cost/Tuition waivers/Graduate assistantship	50
Program or major offered	50
Reputation/Quality education	29
Online courses	26
Distance program	18
Alma mater/Attended EIU before	18

Contributors to Retention

Participants responded to the fourth qualitative question on the survey: What motivates you to remain at EIU? This question elicited 239 total responses, fitting into three major themes: *Degree/Graduation/Finish*, *Instructors*, and *Location.* The following describes those themes with examples of each provided by survey participants.

Degree/graduation/finish. Fifty-four (22.5%) of responses to this question included keywords involving receiving a degree, graduating, and finishing. The participants who responded to this survey were motivated to remain at EIU so that they could complete their degree requirements, whether it was a Bachelor's Degree or Master's Degree, and graduate; they expressed an interest in reaching a goal and finishing what they had started. Examples of responses in this group are, "Getting my degree," "Graduate," "Finish line in sight," and "I'm almost finished."

Instructors. The next most popular answer included mention of instructors as a motivator to remain at EIU, including 22 total responses (9.2%). Participants expressed a belief that instructors are knowledgeable, understand nontraditional students, are friendly, and inspiring, all of which influence their decision to remain enrolled at EIU. Some

examples of responses to this question include: "The professors I have worked with have been wonderful," I anticipate having magnificent instructors in the coming semester, just as I have had in my two previous semesters there" and "I've been really inspired by some instructors . . ."

Location. Approximately 7.5% (n = 18) of the responses included answers related to the theme of location as motivators to remain at EIU. Based on answers provided to this question, such as, "Closeness," ". . . proximity to home . . .," and, simply, "Location," participants are influenced by the convenience of the location of EIU in their decision to remain enrolled.

Fifteen (6.2%) participants identified *Cost/Tuition waivers* as a motivator to remain at EIU, expressing that the affordability of attending and the availability of tuition waivers influences this decision. *Job* (the potential to secure a better job later) and *Program offered* (satisfaction with the degree or specific program offered at EIU) each elicited 5% (n = 12) of the total responses (See Table 5.4).

Table 5.4

Summary of Themes Regarding Motivators for Remaining at EIU

Motivators	# of Occurrences
Degree/Graduation/Finish	54
Instructors	22
Location	18
Cost/Tuition waivers	15
Job	12
Program offered	12

Causes of Attrition

The fifth qualitative survey question was: What barriers threaten your ability to remain enrolled in classes at EIU? A total of 196 responses were generated from this question. After coding analysis, four major themes emerged, named *Cost/Finances/Money*, *None*, *Classes/Class times*, and *Time*. Below are descriptions of those themes with examples of each.

Cost/finances/money. Approximately 31% (n = 61) of answers to this question contained keywords included in this theme. Participants expressed challenges in meeting the financial demands of attending school while supporting families as well. They expressed concerns about student loans, financial aid, and potentially losing the benefit of tuition waivers through their places of employment. Example of responses included in this theme are: "It is financially diffcult [*sic*] to pay for school in addition to the demands of my 'real life'," "It is difficult to afford the cost to attend EIU since my daughter is also attending college," and "The cost of attending."

Inconvenient/classes/class times. This theme was identified through the 19 answers (9.6%) that included keywords all related to the concepts of classes and times that classes are offered. Participants in this research struggle with the times that classes are offered and the lack of availability of online classes for them to attend. They identified conflicts with work schedules and struggles with required internships that have to be completed outside of regular work schedules. Some examples of answers in this theme are, "Lack of Online Classes, but it is improving as I gain seniority and over time," "My job and core classes not being offered on Fridays or weekends," and "Not offering summer classes."

Other themes included *Time* with 10% of the total responses given (the time commitment required as a student), *Personal reasons* with 7% of total responses (family issues and financial difficulties), and *Job* with 5% of total responses (work schedule, work load) (See Table 5.5).

Table 5.5

Summary of Themes Regarding Barriers Threatening Ability to Remain Enrolled at EIU

Barriers	# of Occurrences
Cost/Finances/Money	61
Inconvenient/Classes/Class times	19
Time	19
Personal reasons	13
Job	10

Assistance with Educational Goals

Participants responded to the sixth qualitative question: What offices or campus departments have assisted you in achieving your educational goals? This question elicited the greatest diversity of responses, with 242 total responses and 67 different offices and departments identified as assisting with the achievement of educational goals. Three major themes emerged, named B.A. in General Studies (BGS), Advisors, and Financial Aid; those themes are described below.

BGS. The department mentioned in 10.3% ($n = 25$) of responses was BGS (B.A. in General Studies) program. Participants said, "BGS Advisors and instructors of courses I have taken." and, "BGS Adult Degree Program."

Advisors. Another office/campus department that was mentioned nearly as often with 24 responses (9.9%) was coded as "Advisors." Participant provided answers such as, "The advisors offices," ". . . EIU advising at Parkland," and, "My advisor."

Financial aid. Also with 24 responses (9.9%) was the mention of the Financial Aid office, with comments such as, "The office of Financial Aid helped me a lot with funding and making sure I was able to pay for my classes."

Other offices mentioned were *Continuing Education* with 6.6% of occurrences and *Educational Leadership* with 4.9% of occurrences (See Table 5.6).

Table 5.6

Summary of Themes Regarding Offices or Campus Departments Assisting with Goals

Offices/Departments	# of Occurrences
BGS (B.A. in General Studies)	25
Advisors	24
Financial Aid	24
Continuing Ed	16
Ed Leadership	12

Family Support

The seventh qualitative question that participants responded to was: Describe the support you receive from your family to achieve your educational goals. Participants in this survey provided 205 responses to this question. As a result of coding those responses, three major themes emerged, named *General support*, *Encouragement/Moral support*, and *Time for school/Miss other things*. Below is a description of the themes with specific examples of each.

General support. The most popular answer, which accounted for 24.8% ($n = 51$) of the total 205 responses to this question, mentioned some sort of general support provided by family members. Examples of answers fitting this theme include, "My family has been very supportive," "My family supports my returning to school to seek a new career in life," and "My husband is very supportive."

Encouragement/moral support. Thirty-eight (18.5%) of respondents mentioned keywords that fit into this theme. Participants shared that their family members, including spouses, parents, and children, provide them with encouragement and emotional support to achieve their educational goals. One example of a response that fit into this category was, "I have receive [sic] much emotional support and encouragement from my family." Additionally, comments such as, "My family has always given me moral support . . ." and, "Lots of emotional support and cheerleading." were provided by participants.

Time for school/miss other things. A third theme that emerged involved family members allowing participants time for school, even if it meant missing other things, such as family dinners. This theme accounted for (10.2%) of responses provided to this question. Some examples include, "My husband makes sure I have the time I need for classes," "Scheduling around my classes-understanding that I cannot be there for everything-for now," and, "They try to accommodate my need for time to study."

Other themes identified were *Financial assistance*, including those participants whose family members have assisted with the cost to attend school, *Child care*, meaning that participants have received assistance with the care of their children while they attend school, and *Do more/Pick up the slack.* This theme included participants whose family members took on more responsibilities, typically around the house, as a way to provide support to the family member in school (See Table 5.7).

Recommendations

The final qualitative question on the survey was: What recommendations do you have for administrators and policy-makers at EIU? This question evoked 193 responses

Table 5.7

Summary of Themes Regarding Support Received from Family to Achieve Goals

Support	# of Occurrences
General support	51
Encouragement/Moral support	38
Time for school/Miss other things	21
Financial assistance	19
Child care	19
Do more/Pick up the slack	15

from participants, which, after coding, created three major themes of answers. Those themes included *Understanding nontraditional students*, *More online courses, degrees offered*, and *Class times*. Following are descriptions of each of these themes with examples provided by survey participants.

Understanding nontraditional students. Twenty-one (10.8%) of the 193 total answers included keywords fitting into this theme. The participants expressed a need to be understood, for administrators to remember or realize that they are different from traditional-aged students, that school is only one component of their busy lives, and that they have experiences to share in the classroom. Some of the participants' responses that fell into this theme included, "People need to understand that we have to focus on other things in addition to academics when we're adults with families and other responsibilities," "Don't forget about the nontraditional student. They are as valuable as the traditional student. Often times we have life experience to add to the learning process," and "Remember that being a student is just a small, yet rewarding, part of a nontraditional student's life."

More online courses, degrees offered. Seventeen (8.8%) responses were included in this theme. Recommendations given by the survey participants indicated nontraditional students enjoy the flexibility of online classes and degree programs. They think EIU has a limited selection of such classes and programs from which to choose. Some specific examples of these recommendations are, "More online classes please!" and, "Provide more opportunities for online degrees from EIU."

Class times. Participants also recommended that EIU provide a wider variety of class times, such as evening, weekend, and classes with flexible schedules. The 14 individuals (7.2%) who included keywords falling into this theme provided statements such as, "There needs to be more flexibilty [*sic*] in the scheduling of under-graduate courses, so those with daytime conflicts can take classes during non-traditional hours," "Allow for more flexible class scheduling and options," and "In my major especially, the flexibility in course schedules is lacking. There are very few classes available for students who work day hours."

Some other responses fell into the themes of *EIU employees (better customer service)*, suggesting that they behave more courteously over the phone and have patience and support for nontraditional students who have questions, and *Classes, programs, etc. designed for NTS*, such as a combination of online and traditional classroom courses as well as curriculum that moves quickly and allows nontraditional students to interact with each other (See Table 5.8).

Summary of Qualitative Findings

The findings suggest that nontraditional students at EIU do have unique needs compared to their traditional-aged counterparts. The most common of these unique needs

Table 5.8

Summary of Themes Regarding Recommendations for Administrators and Policy-Makers

Recommendations	# of Occurrences
Understanding Nontraditional students	21
More online courses, degrees offered	17
Class times	14
EIU employees (better customer service)	10
Classes, programs, etc. designed for NTS	10

include: None (the nontraditional students' needs are not uniquely different from traditional students), Class times (a need for classes to be offered during times that fit into their busy schedules), and Flexibility (a need for more flexibility in deadlines and course offerings).

Participants in this survey identified a variety of reasons for choosing to attend EIU. Among those reasons, the most popular included: Location (EIU is close to home, in the town where they currently live, or easily commutable), Cost/Tuition waivers/Graduate assistantship (the cost to attend, availability of tuition waivers, and graduate assistantships to assist with the cost of attending EIU), Program or major offered (EIU offered the program, major, or degree that interested them), Reputation/Quality education (reputation of the school or a particular program and/or the quality of education received), and Online courses (EIU offers online classes).

Additionally, the reasons for remaining at EIU were revealed as a result of this study. Those reasons were varied, but included the following most often: Degree/Graduation/Finish (to complete their degree requirements, whether a Bachelor's Degree or Master's Degree, and graduate), Instructors (instructors are knowledgeable,

friendly, inspiring, and understand nontraditional students), and Location (participants were influenced by the convenience of the location of EIU).

Lastly, nontraditional students were asked to make recommendations to administrators and policy-makers at EIU. The recommendations made most often by the participants were: Understanding nontraditional students (a need to be understood, for administrators to remember or realize that they are different from traditional-aged students, that school is only one component of their busy lives, and that they have experiences to share in the classroom), More online courses, degrees offered (they prefer the flexibility of online classes and degree programs), and Class times (a wider variety of class times, such as evening, weekend, and classes with flexible schedules).

The results as a whole suggest that EIU has areas that can be improved to increase the overall satisfaction levels of nontraditional students. Since this is a growing population of students on the campus of EIU as well as campuses nationwide, the information provided as a result of this survey can positively benefit EIU in its delivery of features and services to this student population. Results can further be generalized to other institutions of the same size and demographic make-up.

Chapter VI

Discussion and Conclusion

This study was conducted to investigate the factors that influence retention and attrition among nontraditional students (NTSs) at a midsized university in the rural Midwest through an exploration of their perceived level of importance and satisfaction with experiences relating to their tenure. Additionally, the study sought to gain some understanding of areas in need for improvement by an examination of the recommendations from members of the population of interest.

Discussion

The study was designed to gather demographic/biographic information about the population of interest and to answer quantitative research questions about what features and services are most important to them and how satisfied they are with those features and services. Additionally, the qualitative questions were intended to give the participants a voice in identifying their unique needs as nontraditional students, why they chose to attend this institution, what contributes to their continued enrollment at the institution, and the recommendations they have to improve services for this population. The following research questions were asked at the outset of the study, and results of the findings are discussed below.

Research Question #1: How important are the current features and services to nontraditional students at Eastern Illinois University? (Quantitative) The 209 participants in this study responded to a series of 40 questions about features and services offered at EIU. They rated how important each of the 40 items was to them, on a scale of (1) Not important at all to (5) Very important. It was hypothesized that the features and

services offered at Eastern Illinois University are very important to nontraditional students. The results of non-parametric and descriptive statistics indicate (majority medians of 4 and 5 corresponding to important and very important, respectively) that nontraditional students find the current features and services at EIU to be important to them. Based on this information, I reject the null hypothesis that the features and services offered at Eastern Illinois University are not important to nontraditional students. Furthermore, 14 of the survey items had 50% or greater frequency of the response *very important* and six items had 40% or greater frequency of the response *important,* while only one item, Childcare on campus, received 50% or greater frequency of the response *not important at all.*

Nontraditional students at EIU find the following features and services as important or very important "Instructors' knowledge", "Quality of instruction", "Relevance of subject matter", "Cost of tuition", "Clarity of degree requirements", "Interact w/instructors in class", "Instructor teaching styles", "Class times"," Instructors' management of classroom", "Variety of classes in major", "PT/FT flexibility"," Required assignments", "Application/enrollment ease", "Ability to get a job", "Know where to go w/questions", "Online or distance courses", "Understand technology", "Instructors avail out of class", "Support", "and Financial Aid." This mirrors past research on the ways that NTSs differ from their traditional-aged counterparts. Howell and Buck (2012) reported general classroom management, subject matter relevancy, faculty member subject matter competency, and perceived student workload have all been previously identified as services that are most important to that population of students. Additionally, adult graduate students have been found to prefer learning through discussion and

reflection rather than lecture and prefer individual projects over group projects, which parallels the "required assignments" item as one that was identified as most important in this study (Lee et al., 2000). The importance of times that classes are offered, the availability of online or distance courses, and support of nontraditional students are themes that have been forefront of nontraditional students' minds at EIU for almost ten years. In similar studies conducted at EIU previously, the participants suggested these features as some that needed improvement (Brown, 2010; Crone, 2005).

Research Question #2: How satisfied are nontraditional students with the current features and services offered at Eastern Illinois University? (Quantitative) Study participants also rated the 40 questions in terms of how satisfied they were with those features and services. None of the items had a median satisfaction score of 5, which would have indicated an overall rating of very satisfied and only two had greater than 40% frequency of responding with very satisfied ("Interact w/instructors in class" and "Instructors' knowledge"). Thirty-three (83%) of the items had a median satisfaction score of 4, which corresponds to satisfied. Additionally, nine items had 50% or greater frequency of receiving the score *satisfied.* However, the greatest frequency of the score *not satisfied at all* was only 12.9% and was in response to the item about parking on campus.

Nontraditional students at EIU were satisfied with most of the services and features investigated (at least 4 on the Likert-type scale ranging from (1) not important [or satisfied] at all to (5) very important [or satisfied]). These included "Interact w/ instructors in class", "Instructors' knowledge", "Instructors' management of classroom", "Relevance of subject matter", "Quality of instruction", "Application/enrollment ease",

"PT/FT flexibility", and "Interact w/ instructors out of class." However, they were neutral with regards to services and features such as "Childcare on campus", "Availability of parking on campus", "Availability of social activities on campus", "Availability of extracurricular activities (clubs, organizations, etc.)", "Opportunities to interact with other non-traditional students", "Availability of sufficient places to study on campus" and "Availability of on-campus courses for me to attend". It was hypothesized that NTSs are not satisfied with the current features and services offered at Eastern Illinois University. The results from this study suggest that nontraditional students are satisfied, though not very satisfied, with the current features and services offered at Eastern Illinois University. Therefore, I will fail to reject the null hypothesis that nontraditional students are satisfied with the current features and services offered at Eastern Illinois University. Given the robustness of the non-parametric tests used to examine the data, a safe conclusion can be drawn that NTS are systematically not very satisfied with the services and features that they receive from the institution as whole. However, it is interesting to note that most of the items the participants were most satisfied with involved instructors and activities related to the classroom.

These results echo Hagedorn's (2005) findings that adult students are attracted to flexible learning opportunities, allowing part-time enrollment, classes designed specifically for older students, and supporting the confidence of adult students through improved faculty, staff, and student interactions. Since adult students are typically juggling many responsibilities while attending school, all of which are competing for their limited time, it seems positive that participants in this study are satisfied with the

quality of instruction, their interactions with instructors in an out of the classroom, and that they find the subject matter relevant.

Hypothesis #3: There is a difference in satisfaction level and level of importance of the features and services offered at Eastern Illinois University to nontraditional students. Results of multiple Wilcoxon-signed rank tests revealed significant differences between the levels of satisfaction and importance of the features and services offered at Eastern Illinois University to NTSs. Based on these results, I will reject the null hypothesis that there is not a difference in satisfaction level and level of importance and conclude that there is a difference. Furthermore, tests of differences at the factor level revealed satisfaction-importance gaps exist for *instruction* and *cost* with large practical significance, and *Ease/flexibility, Major, Convenience,* and *Connection to University*, each with medium practical significance. This has led me to conclude that NTS at EIU are less satisfied with the overall experience when compared to the level of importance that they place on the services/features.

Research Question #3: What do nontraditional students at Eastern Illinois University identify as their unique needs? In response to an open-ended question about their unique needs, participants identified needs that they felt were unique to their nontraditional student status. Those needs include the following: *Class times - evening, weekend* (a need for classes to be offered during times that fit into their busy schedules). One participant said, "Having to have the classes fit into my busy schedule. I have had to pass on some classes and try to take them in different semesters due to the other obligations I have had." *Flexibility* (a need for more flexibility in deadlines and course offerings). An example of an answer that fit this theme was, "More flexibility. Unlike

traditional students, I don't live on campus and need flexibility in deadlines and requirements. For instance, the requirement to get a panther card meant an extra trip to campus and taking time off work. I never used the card." *Other specific need(s)* (such as a need for a place to rest and store lunch items when on campus all day and a need for less posting of discussions in online classes), *and Time for classes, studying, etc.* (a need for more time to get classwork done since they have additional full-time commitments outside of school).

Prior research suggests that nontraditional students differ from traditional students in a number of ways. Many are first-generation students, attend on a part-time basis, are working adults, have financial commitments, and have clear expectations of their learning experience (Giancola, Grawitch, & Borchert, 2009; Lee, McCool, & Napieralski, 2000). Additionally, according to Hagedorn (2005), adult students tend to enroll in programs that have flexible schedules, are easily accessible, and often enroll in distance learning due to having other life obligations outside of being a student. The results from this study support the prior research in that participants identified times that classes are offered, flexibility, and the need for additional time for coursework and studying as needs that are unique to them as nontraditional students. This population of students has frequently made sacrifices, including less time with family, work sacrifices, or financially putting other things on hold while attending school. They do not want to spend time commuting if online classes are available, as stated by one individual, "The unique needs are those of availability of classes to balance completing educational goals and work and kids. Online classes and more classes at a nearby campus work best for my busy lifestyle."

Research Question #4: Why do nontraditional students choose to attend Eastern Illinois University? In response to an open-ended question about their decision to choose to attend EIU for their schooling, participants identified several reasons most frequently. One of those reasons was due to EIU's *Location* (EIU was close to home, in the town where they currently live, or easily commutable). One participant said, "It is so convenient to my home." Another said, "I work in civil service at EIU. One of our benefits is to be able to attend 6 credit hours a semester for free. I also live in Charleston so it just makes sense." *Cost/Tuition waivers/Graduate assistantship* (the cost to attend, availability of tuition waivers, and graduate assistantships to assist with the cost of attending EIU) was another reason for choosing to attend EIU. Participants stated reasons such as, "Mainly for cost, it is thousands less than the U of I, even after calculating travel expenses." *Program or major offered* (EIU offered the program, major, or degree that interested them) was a frequently offered response to this question. Participants responded with statements such as, "Because they offer the BGS program and the education received is top notch!" *Reputation/Quality education* (the reputation of the school or a particular program and/or the quality of education received) was an important feature to nontraditional students in their choice of school. One respondent said, "I attended EIU many years ago for my BA in Education. It is known for producing quality teaching, and I knew that I would return to EIU for my Masters because of its reputation and because it is close to where I live." *Online courses* (EIU offers online classes) was another popular answer to this question. As discussed earlier, this is very important to busy nontraditional students. They responded with answers such as, "The availability of online classes, the ability to take EIU classes at the local community

college and cost were all factors in why I chose EIU." Several participants chose EIU because of the opportunity to attend a *Distance program* (the ability to attend classes offered at a satellite location). Similar to the importance of online classes, nontraditional students have expressed the importance of distance programs if they do not live in the area, and this was one of the themes of reasons nontraditional students chose EIU for their education. Lastly, *Alma mater/Attended EIU before* (either a family member had attended the school or they had attended EIU previously) was a reason for choosing EIU. One respondent offered the following answer: "Eastern Illinois University is a Great place to move forward with my education and plan for our future. My Father also attended EIU and I must say a part of me is following in his footsteps."

Most of the answers provided to this research question support prior research on the reasons nontraditional attend or return to school, which are different from those of traditional-aged students (Brown, 2004; Hagedorn, 2005; Scala, 1996; Schaefer, 2010; Shields, 1995). This research indicates that some of the barriers and causes of stress for nontraditional students include balancing multiple demands and roles (work, school, and personal life), financial commitments, unfamiliarity, fear, and transitioning into the role of student. The barrier of balancing multiple demands and roles can be alleviated by the location of the school for those who chose it for the close proximity to their homes. The financial barrier can be alleviated by the cost and availability of tuition waivers and graduate assistantships, as mentioned by some. The barrier of unfamiliarity can be lessened due to having attended EIU before or having family or friends who attended EIU, which fits the theme called *Alma mater/Attended EIU before.* Lastly, *Distance program* and *Online courses* might help those nontraditional students struggling with the

transition to student status by allowing them to attend classes in their home towns or from the comfort of their own homes.

Research Question #5: Why do nontraditional students remain at Eastern Illinois University? In response to an open-ended question about their decision to remain enrolled at EIU, respondents identified the following reasons most frequently: *Degree/Graduation/Finish* (they want to complete their degree requirements, whether a Bachelor's Degree or Master's Degree, and graduate), *Instructors* (the instructors are knowledgeable, friendly, inspiring, and understand nontraditional students), *Location* (the convenience of the location of EIU), *Cost/Tuition waivers* (affordability of attending and the availability of tuition waivers), *Job* (the potential to secure a better job later), and *Program offered* (satisfaction with the degree or specific program offered at EIU).

There are a myriad of factors that influence retention rates of nontraditional students, some of which include course satisfaction, including how courses are taught, general classroom management, subject matter relevancy, faculty member subject matter competency, and perceived student workload (Howell, & Buck, 2012; Lee, McCool, & Napieralski, 2000). Additional issues that affect nontraditional student retention include campus physical environment, access to and around campus, comfort, and physical safety (Moore, & Piland, 1994; Scala, 1996). The fact that three items related to instructors (*Instructors' knowledge, Quality of instruction*, and *Interact w/instructors in class*) were rated highest in importance on this survey is evidence that of what happens in the classroom has an effect on the nontraditional students at EIU. However, *Safety on campus, Parking, Furniture comfort, Lighting*, and *Accessibility of classrooms* all had mean importance scores below "Important," indicating that these factors that have been

known to influence retention rates in prior studies may not be considered reasons for the nontraditional students at EIU to remain enrolled.

Research Question #6: What recommendations do nontraditional students have for administrators and policy-makers at Eastern Illinois University? In response to an open-ended question about recommendations nontraditional students have for administrators and policy-makers at EIU, the most frequently occurring responses included: *Understanding Nontraditional students* (a need to be understood, for administrators to remember or realize that they are different from traditional-aged students, that school is only one component of their busy lives, and that they have experiences to share in the classroom), *More online courses, degrees offered* (nontraditional students enjoy the flexibility of online classes and degree programs), and *Class times* (a wider variety of class times, such as evening, weekend, and classes with flexible schedules).

The NTS in this study would like to be better understood by faculty, staff, and administrators at EIU. One respondent stated, "People need to understand that we have to focus on other things in addition to academics when we're adults with families and other responsibilities." Another participant in the survey offered, "Understand that not all Non-traditional students are alike. I was last in a college level classroom one year before starting this program. There are some non-traditionals that have not been in a classroom for 20+ years!" This is relevant support for conducting an additional study at EIU based on Horn's (1996) definition of minimally, moderately, and highly nontraditional students. Since students in this population of students differs so greatly, a more specific

investigation into their recommendation can further assist EIU with any program modifications to help address their needs.

Another recommendation was for EIU to offer more online courses and complete degree programs. One participant stated, "For students beyond a Bachelor's Degree they need to expand their online programs. There are a lot of opportunities out there and people will choose to go elsewhere." Another participant said, "Provide more opportunities for online degrees from EIU. Most companies want a specific degree, not general studies. Those students going for the general studies degree need to know, this degree may do nothing for them." These findings mirror Hagedorn's (2005) study of nontraditional students' struggles with navigating a higher education system designed for traditional-aged students. Flexible learning opportunities, allowing part-time enrollment, and designing classes specifically for older students were found to be areas to address when attempting to attract and retain nontraditional students.

A recommendation similar to offering more online classes and degree programs was to offer a wider variety of class times, such as classes scheduled in the evening, on weekends, and classes with flexible schedules. One participant offered the following suggestions: "Continue to make courses available outside "normal" hours (after work, evenings, weekends, etc.) to students who work or have family responsibilities during the daytime hours. I also greatly appreciated the weekend format classes - those were amazing! A good variety is the key to retaining non-traditional students and witnessing their success!" Another said, "Please, just try to offer more classes in the afternoon, so all the full time workers are able to take classes in the evening." These results also

support Hagedorn's (2005) prior findings that offering flexible learning opportunities help to attract and retain NTS.

Implications for Research and Practice

I utilized Vincent Tinto's (2004) Interactionalist Theory as a framework to help understand student departure in terms of interactions the student has with the social and academic systems of the college or university attended. Tinto believes that students who integrate with an institution, both socially and academically, develop greater commitments to the college or university as well as to the goal of graduation.

However, the data from this study does not support nontraditional students' need for social and academic integration with the university. On the contrary, of all the survey items aimed at addressing this topic (*Social Activities, Availability of Activities, Interact w/instructors in class, Interact w/instructors out of class, Interact w/classmates in class, Interact w/classmates out of class, Interact w/other non-trad students, Connection to other students, and Connection to university*), only one, *Interact w/instructors in class*, was in the list of highest importance scores, with a mean importance score of 4.54. In fact, four of the items, *Interact w/other non-trad students, Interact w/classmates out of class, Social activities, and Availability of activities*, had mean importance scores of 3.20 or lower. Regarding satisfaction levels of these items, *Interact w/instructors in class* actually had the highest mean satisfaction score, which was 4.31. One other item, *Interact w/instructors out of class*, had a mean score of 4.0 while the others were all below 4.0. This information would seem to point to Tinto's theory not being applicable to nontraditional students.

Since nontraditional students have frequently made sacrifices to attend school, such as time with family and disrupted routines, administrators and policy-makers have an obligation to make the necessary efforts to meet their needs on campus. This includes providing support services and understanding the unique characteristics of the nontraditional student population since they are inherently different from their traditional-aged counterparts. Through this increased understanding, features and programs can be modified or created to meet their needs more effectively, thus assisting with the retention of these students.

Student Affairs professionals who work with nontraditional students can benefit from the findings of this study. Since college enrollment has experienced a decline recently, driven primarily by nontraditional students, institutions will need to be creative if they want to compete for the declining number of students enrolling in higher education. There is a need to creatively recruit and retain a variety of different student groups within the population as a whole, and the results from this study can assist institutions with recruiting and retaining the nontraditional student population. Colleges and universities who address the features and services that are most important to this student group, and ensure they are satisfied with how those features and services are being delivered, will have an advantage in the recruitment and retention of nontraditional students.

Recommendations for Administrators and Policy-makers

The following recommendations are intended for administrators and policy-makers at EIU specifically. However, data from this research study can be generalized to

other institutions of similar size and demographic make-up to improve features and services offered to nontraditional students.

1. Improve the features and services identified as areas for improvement at EIU (mean satisfaction was lower than mean importance and differences were statistically significant), including *Cost of tuition to attend EIU, Perceived ability to secure a job after completing educational goals, Variety of classes within my major, Availability of online or distance learning courses for me to attend*, and *Times that classes are offered.*
2. Continue to offer features and services identified as strengths at EIU (mean satisfaction was higher than mean importance and differences were statistically significant), including *Interactions with classmates in class, Lighting in classrooms, Accessibility of classrooms within campus buildings, Interactions with classmates outside of class*, and *Availability of sufficient places to study on campus*.
3. Address the unique needs identified by nontraditional students:
    a. Offer classes at times that fit into their busy schedules (i.e. evening, weekends).
    b. Increase the flexibility in deadlines and course offerings.
    c. Other specific need(s) (i.e. places to rest when on campus all day and a need for less posting of discussions in online classes).
    d. Allow more time to complete classwork since they have additional full-time commitments outside of school.

4. Recruit more nontraditional students based on the reasons identified for choosing EIU:
    a. Location of the school (close to home, easily commutable).
    b. Cost of attendance, including the availability of tuition waivers and graduate assistantships.
    c. Program, major or degree offered was of interest.
    d. Reputation of the school or a particular program and/or the quality of education.
    e. Online classes offered at EIU.
    f. Ability to attend classes offered through a distance program or satellite location.
    g. A family member attended the school or the participant had attended EIU previously.
5. Retain nontraditional students by supporting factors identified as motivations for remaining enrolled:
    a. Completing degree requirements, graduating, and/or achieving a personal goal.
    b. Instructors who are knowledgeable, friendly, inspiring, and understand nontraditional students.
    c. Convenience of the location of EIU.
    d. Affordability of attending, and the availability of tuition waivers.
    e. Potential to secure a better job later.
    f. Satisfaction with the degree or specific program offered at EIU.

6. Implement changes based on recommendations from nontraditional students:
    a. Increase the understanding of nontraditional students (i.e. remember/realize that they are different from traditional-aged students, that school is only one component of their busy lives, and that they have experiences to share in the classroom).
    b. Increase the number of online courses and degree programs offered.
    c. Provide a wider variety of class times, such as evening, weekend, and classes with flexible schedules.
    d. Improve the level of customer service provided by EIU employees.
    e. Design classes, programs, etc. for nontraditional students specifically.

Recommendations for Future Research

The following recommendations are suggested for future studies to be conducted by researchers interested in understanding more about nontraditional students.

1. Repeat this survey again in the fall of 2014 to test the reliability and validity of the instrument since it had not been psychometrically tested prior to this study.
2. Conduct a similar study utilizing Horn's (1996) criteria for defining nontraditional students. Data can be further analyzed based on minimally, moderately, and highly nontraditional students. Are the features and services that are most important to them different based on nontraditional status? Do satisfaction levels with features and services differ based on nontraditional status?

3. Conduct a follow-up survey with the participants from this study to determine if their nontraditional status affected enrollment after five years and/or completion of degree at EIU, per Horn's (1996) findings.
4. Conduct a qualitative survey with nontraditional students at EIU, interviewing the participants for richer data.
5. Administer the same survey at different times of year to determine if survey fatigue may have been an actual limitation of this study.

Limitations

Four potential limitations of this study were identified. The following is a description of each and what the researcher did to minimize the effects of the limitations.

The utilization of a mixed methods research design was a limitation in itself. Because the researcher was not well-practiced in the methods of quantitative and qualitative data collection and the subsequent techniques used for analysis, the inexperience may have been a limitation (Creswell & Clark, 2011). Creswell and Clark stress the importance of researchers having an understanding of quantitative data collection, awareness of testing hypotheses, ability to interpret statistics, and an appreciation for the rigor associated with quantitative research (i.e. testing reliability, validity, and generalizability). The researcher must also be able to present meaningful questions to participants, have a familiarity with qualitative data collection methods, have an aptitude for analyzing text data, and understand the issue of persuasiveness in qualitative data collection (i.e. credibility and trustworthiness).

Another potential limitation of this study was survey fatigue. More than 2,000 nontraditional students were contacted for their participation, and only 437 started the

survey with 332 completing it to some degree. Of those, only 209 participants completed all components of the 40 importance and satisfaction survey questions, which were used for the data analysis in this study. Survey fatigue has been found to be caused by an increase in the number of surveys students are asked to complete, but the timing of surveys can impact the number of participants even further (Porter, Whitcomb, and Weitzer, 2004). If my survey was distributed at such a time that it overlapped with another survey or was administered back-to-back with another survey, the participation rates could have been affected.

The third limitation of this study was misunderstanding the survey itself. After receiving the results, it became apparent that the participants did not understand that they were asked to rate both importance and satisfaction for all 40 survey items. Many participants only answered the importance portion of the survey, even though the satisfaction scale was listed in the same section as the importance scale (see Appendix A). This lack of understanding resulted in fewer participants' responses able to be used in calculating the results of this study.

Lastly, the use of an instrument that had not previously been tested was a limitation. Since the survey instrument was created by the researcher, it had not been psychometrically tested to ensure its validity and reliability. This can lead to errors in measurement if responses are unrelated to research questions, can be misinterpreted, or lack homogeneity among participant responses (Coughlan, Cronin, & Ryan, 2009). However, results of the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin measure of sampling adequacy and Bartlett's test of sphericity identified an overall significance in the correlation between the variables in the matrix created using principal component analysis. These results

point to reliability of the relationships of the pairs of variables. Additionally, the Cronbach's alpha scores for six of the eight factors were above 0.60, which is considered satisfactory in research (Aiken, 2003).

Conclusions

Peggy Brown (2010) conducted a needs analysis survey to determine the things that were currently working as well as what was needed to support the continued success of nontraditional students at EIU. Some of the results of Brown's study mirror those of the current study, such as the need for more online classes, a need for classes to be offered at times more convenient for nontraditional students (after 6:00 p.m., on weekends, or early in the morning), more distance learning classes, financial assistance, and designated spaces for nontraditional students.

In a similar study by Nancy Crone (2005) regarding nontraditional student use of and satisfaction with support services at EIU, respondents indicated they would be more likely to use services such as a computer lab and textbook rental if evening or weekend hours were offered. When asked for recommendations for existing services, the participants suggested extending hours for certain offices and they expressed dissatisfaction with the Career Services and Health Services departments. Other suggestions included better parking for commuter students and a better understanding of nontraditional students. These results mirror some of those found in the current study.

One of the goals of this study was to identify which biographic and demographic characteristics commonly associated with nontraditional students were exhibited by the participants of this study. Since age was used as the sole criterion for nontraditional student status, all participants met the minimum requirement. However, after further

analysis utilizing Horn's (1996) definitions of minimally, moderately, and highly nontraditional students, it was discovered that more than74% were either moderately or highly nontraditional, meaning they possessed at least two of the following characteristics: delayed enrollment into postsecondary education, attended part time, financially independent, worked full time while enrolled, had dependents other than a spouse, was a single parent, or did not obtain a standard high school diploma.

Another interesting characteristic of the participants of this study was that a greater majority of the participants reported that they have not had to discontinue their schooling because of work obligations or other obligations, at 65% and 64% respectively. However, 90% (n = 188) indicated they have returned to school to complete a degree after having taken some time off. Very few of the participants (12%) reported caring for elderly or aging parents, which can also be a characteristic associated with nontraditional student status. Lastly, the participants identified their academic majors; twenty-five percent (n = 52) of participants identified General Studies as their major at the time the survey was distributed. The next most popular majors identified were Educational Administration (n = 27), Technology (n = 16), Organizational & Professional Development (n = 13), and Elementary Education (n = 11).

The primary purpose of this study was to ascertain how important the features and services at EIU are to nontraditional students currently and recently enrolled at the institution and how satisfied they are with those features and services. As a result of the survey conducted, the following features and services were identified as *most important* to nontraditional students at EIU: Instructors' knowledge, Quality of instruction, Relevance of subject matter, Cost of tuition, and Clarity of degree requirements. There

were 20 items with mean importance scores of 4.0 or greater on a Likert-type scale ranging from (1) not important at all to (5) very important, meaning the mean scores were *important* or *very important* for 50% of all items on the survey. We can infer from these results that the features and services at EIU are very important to nontraditional students.

Nontraditional students who participated in this study identified the following features and services as those with which they were most satisfied: Interact w/instructors in class, Instructors' knowledge, Instructors' management of classroom, Relevance of subject matter, and Quality of instruction. Eight of the total 40 survey items received mean importance scores of 4.0 or higher, meaning the mean scores were *satisfied* or *very satisfied.* This number is significantly lower than the mean importance scores, which totaled 20 (50%) of all survey items with mean scores of 4.0 or higher. We can infer from this information that nontraditional students find the features and services at EIU to be high in importance but low in satisfaction. In fact, the overall mean importance score was statistically different (higher) from satisfaction, indicating an overall dissatisfaction with features and services at EIU.

Additionally, the study provided this population of students with an opportunity to identify what their unique needs are as members of this population, why they chose to attend EIU, and what motivates them to remain enrolled at EIU. A few of the most commonly identified unique needs identified included classes offered at times that fit their busy schedules and flexibility in deadlines and course offerings. Nontraditional students at EIU chose to attend EIU most often due to its location, the cost of attending, the program or major that was offered, and the reputation of the school. Lastly, nontraditional students at EIU were motivated to remain enrolled primarily due to an

interest in reaching a goal and finishing what they had started. They also think the instructors are knowledgeable, friendly, inspiring, and understand nontraditional students and are motivated to remain at EIU due to the location of the university.

As the number of nontraditional students continues to rise on campuses nationwide, college and university administrators need to be aware of the demographics of this population and understand their unique needs if they are going to effectively provide services to this population. This is becoming increasingly important because, although the increase in this population is well documented, college campuses have not adjusted to this change, forcing the nontraditional students to attempt to navigate a system that is geared toward the traditional student (Hagedorn, 2005).

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Appendix A

SURVEY QUESTIONNAIRE – NON-TRADITIONAL STUDENT SATISFACTION

What is your age?

What is your gender?
- Male
- Female
- Other

Which of the following best describes your racial or ethnic background?
- Asian/Pacific Islander
- Black or African-American
- Caucasian/White
- Hispanic or Latino/a
- Native American or American Indian
- Other (please specify)

Are you a veteran of the U.S. Armed Forces?
- Yes
- No

What is your current year in school?
- First-year
- Sophomore
- Junior
- Senior
- Graduate Student
- Non degree-seeking
- Other

Is this your first semester at EIU?
- Yes
- No

How many college credit hours have you completed to date?

What is your academic major?

What is your current student status?
- Part-time student
- Full-time student

Are you a first-generation student (your parents never enrolled in post-secondary education)?
- Yes

No, at least one of my parents enrolled in postsecondary education, even if they didn't complete a degree

What is your marital status?

Never married
Married, Domestic Partnership, or Civil Union Partnership
Widowed
Divorced
Separated

What is your current employment status?

Unemployed
Work part-time
Work full-time
Retired

Have you ever had to discontinue your schooling because of work obligations?

Yes
No

Have you ever had to discontinue your schooling because of other obligations?

Yes
No

How many children do you have?

None
Below the age of 1 year
Between 1 and 5 years old
Between 6 and 12 years old
Between 13 and 17 years old
18 years old and older

Do you currently care for elderly or aging parents?

Yes
No

Have you returned to school to complete a degree after having taken some time off?

Yes
No, I have attended college consistently since high school graduation

Have you taken a class(es) on the physical campus of EIU?

Yes
No

A transfer student is a student who has completed some credit hours at an institution and then transfers to a different institution. Are you a transfer student?

Yes
No

Please rate the following statements in reference to their importance to you/your educational experience as well as your level of satisfaction with your experience at Eastern Illinois University regarding each statement:

Importance:	**Satisfaction:**
1 - Very Important	1 – Very Satisfied
2 – Important	2 – Satisfied
3 – Neutral	3 – Neutral
4 – Somewhat Important	4 – Somewhat Satisfied
5 – Not Important at all	5 – Not Satisfied at all

1. Times that classes are offered
2. Availability of advisors at times that are convenient to me
3. Access to campus offices at times that are convenient to me
4. Childcare on campus
5. Variety of classes within my major
6. Variety of majors to choose from
7. Instructors' knowledge of course content
8. Accessibility of classrooms within campus buildings
9. Availability of parking on campus
10. Lighting in classrooms
11. Comfort of classroom furniture
12. Financial Aid opportunities
13. Availability of social activities on campus
14. Availability of extracurricular activities (clubs, organizations, etc.) on campus
15. Cost of tuition to attend EIU
16. Understanding of technology used in classrooms
17. Interactions with instructors in class
18. Interactions with instructors outside of class
19. Availability of instructors outside of class at times that are convenient to me
20. Interactions with classmates in class
21. Interactions with classmates outside of class
22. Understanding of where to go for general questions or problems
23. Opportunities to interact with other non-traditional students
24. Feelings of connectedness to other students in my program or classes
25. Feelings of connectedness to the university
26. Overall quality of instruction
27. Teaching styles of instructors
28. Types of academic assignments required in my classes (i.e. group work, independent work, lecture, class discussions)
29. Perceived ability to secure a job after completing educational goals
30. Availability of sufficient places to study on campus
31. Availability of on-campus courses for me to attend
32. Availability of online or distance learning courses for me to attend
33. Instructors' ability to manage the classroom effectively
34. Relevancy of subject matter taught in classes I attend
35. Physical safety on campus at EIU

36. Support with managing demands of school and other life responsibilities
37. Flexibility to attend part-time or full-time
38. Availability of support services specifically for non-traditional students
39. Ease of the application and enrollment process
40. Clarity of degree requirements

A non-traditional student is a student over age 25 who potentially works full-time, cares for their children and/or elderly parents, and is returning to school to complete a degree after taking time off. What, if any, challenges have you faced as a non-traditional student at EIU?

What, if any, unique needs do you have as a non-traditional student (as opposed to traditional students)?

What are the reason(s) you chose to attend EIU for your education?

What are your educational goals?

What motivates you to remain at EIU?

What barriers threaten your ability to remain enrolled in classes at EIU?

What offices or campus departments have assisted you in achieving your educational goals?

Describe the support you receive from your family to achieve your educational goals:

What recommendations do you have for administrators and policy-makers at EIU?

Would you like to be entered in a drawing for one of 4 $25 gift cards?

Yes
No

Please provide us with an email address at which you would like to be contacted.

Thank you for taking the time to complete this survey!

Appendix B

Nontraditional Student Contact emails for Survey

Denise E Corray

From: Denise E Corray <decorray@eiu.edu>
Sent: Thursday, March 20, 2014 9:19 AM
To: decorray@eiu.edu
Subject: FW: Top Priority - Need email addresses for Thesis Research!

From: Cheryl Clapp [mailto:csclapp@eiu.edu]
Sent: Tuesday, July 23, 2013 2:49 PM
To: 'Denise E Corray'
Cc: 'Pam Collins'; 'Beth Craig'
Subject: RE: Top Priority - Need email addresses for Thesis Research!

Hi Denise,

Attached please find the report of non-traditional students. Please let me know if you need anything else.

Thank you,

Cheryl Clapp
Technology Support
School of Continuing Education\Minority Affairs
Eastern Illinois University
Blair Hall
csclapp@eiu.edu
217-581-7227

Appendix C

Informed Consent

You are invited to participate in a research study conducted by Denise Corray, a graduate student in the College Student Affairs program at Eastern Illinois University. You are being asked to participate because you have been identified as a non-traditional student attending EIU. The purpose of this study is to investigate the level of satisfaction of non-traditional students with programs and services offered at EIU to identify areas for improvement.

This survey should take approximately 10 minutes to complete. Your participation is completely voluntary and you can withdraw at any time without penalty. Your involvement in this research will be kept confidential; the data will be averaged and reported in the aggregate. Group data from this research project will be shared with administrators on campus to promote improvements in programs and services. Because I appreciate your participation in this study, you will be given the opportunity to win 1 of 4 $25 gift cards. To enter the in the drawing, you will be asked to provide your email at the end of the survey, which is completely optional. Your email address will be assessed in a separate file so as to keep your response to the survey anonymous.

If you have questions about this project, you may contact the course instructor, Dr. Catherine Polydore at 217-581-7237, or at cpolydore@eiu.edu.

Please print a copy of this consent form for your records, if you so desire.

I have read and understand the above consent form, I certify that I am 18 years old or older and, by clicking the submit button to enter the survey, I indicate my willingness to voluntarily take part in the study.

Your decision to participate, decline, or withdraw from participation will have no effect on your current status or future relations with Eastern Illinois University.

Do you wish to continue?

Yes

No

Appendix D

Full Names of Pairs of Importance and Satisfaction Items with Shortened Pair Names Used for T-Tests

	Original Pair Names	*t*-test Item Pair
1	Times that classes are offered	Class times
2	Availability of advisors at times that are convenient to me	Advisor Times
3	Access to campus offices at times that are convenient to me	Campus Office Times
4	Childcare on campus	Childcare on campus
5	Variety of classes within my major	Variety of classes in major
6	Variety of majors to choose from	Variety of majors
7	Instructors' knowledge of course content	Instructors' knowledge
8	Accessibility of classrooms within campus buildings	Accessibility of classrooms
9	Availability of parking on campus	Parking
10	Lighting in classrooms	Lighting
11	Comfort of classroom furniture	Furniture comfort
12	Financial Aid opportunities	Financial Aid
13	Availability of social activities on campus	Social Activities
14	Availability of extracurricular activities (clubs, organizations, etc.) on campus	Availability of Activities
15	Cost of tuition to attend EIU	Cost of tuition
16	Understanding of technology used in classrooms	Understand technology
17	Interactions with instructors in class	Interact w/instructors in class
18	Interactions with instructors outside of class	Interact w/instructors out of class
19	Availability of instructors outside of class at times that are convenient to me	Instructors avail out of class
20	Interactions with classmates in class	Interact w/classmates in class
21	Interactions with classmates outside of class	Interact w/classmates out of class
22	Understanding of where to go for general questions or problems	Know where to go w/questions

	Original Pair Names	*t*-test Item Pair
23	Opportunities to interact with other non-traditional students	Interact w/other nontrad students
24	Feelings of connectedness to other students in my program or classes	Connection to other students
25	Feelings of connectedness to the university	Connection to university
26	Overall quality of instruction	Quality of instruction
27	Teaching styles of instructors	Instructor teaching styles
28	Types of academic assignments required in my classes (i.e. group work , independent work, lecture, class discussions)	Required assignments
29	Perceived ability to secure a job after completing educational goals	Ability to get a job
30	Availability of sufficient places to study on campus	Places to study
31	Availability of on-campus courses for me to attend	On-campus courses
32	Availability of online or distance learning courses for me to attend	Online or distance courses
33	Instructors' ability to manage the classroom effectively	Instructors' management of classroom
34	Relevancy of subject matter taught in classes I attend	Relevance of subject matter
35	Physical safety on campus at EIU	Safety on campus
36	Support with managing demands of school and other life responsibilities	Support
37	Flexibility to attend part-time or full-time	PT/FT flexibility
38	Availability of support services specifically for non-traditional students	Nontrad support services
39	Ease of the application and enrollment process	Application/enrollment ease
40	Clarity of degree requirements	Clarity of degree requirements

Appendix E

Varimax Rotated Component Matrix with Factor Loadings Based on Principal Component Analysis for Satisfaction Items ($N = 209$)

	Component								
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
Instructors' knowledge of course content	0.78								
Overall quality of instruction	0.77								
Teaching styles of instructors	0.67								
Types of academic assignments required in my classes (i.e. group work , independent work, lecture, class discussions)	0.65								
Relevancy of subject matter taught in classes I attend	0.64								
Interactions with instructors in class	0.61								
Instructors' ability to manage the classroom effectively	0.59								
Availability of instructors outside of class at times that are convenient to me	0.57								
Interactions with instructors outside of class	0.51								

	Component								
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
Availability of support services specifically for non-traditional students		0.76							
Support with managing demands of school and other life responsibilities		0.73							
Flexibility to attend part-time or full-time		0.61							
Feelings of connectedness to the university		0.54							
Availability of online or distance learning courses for me to attend		0.40							
Availability of advisors at times that are convenient to me			0.73						
Access to campus offices at times that are convenient to me			0.66						
Understanding of where to go for general questions or problems			0.62						
Clarity of degree requirements			0.54						
Ease of the application and enrollment process			0.51						
Physical safety on campus at EIU				0.73					
Lighting in classrooms				0.65					
Accessibility of classrooms within campus buildings				0.57					

	Component								
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
Availability of sufficient places to study on campus				0.54		0.46			
Comfort of classroom furniture				0.47					
Interactions with classmates outside of class					0.82				
Interactions with classmates in class					0.76				
Feelings of connectedness to other students in my program or classes		0.46			0.60				
Opportunities to interact with other non-traditional students		0.50			0.52				
Availability of extracurricular activities (clubs, organizations, etc						0.82			
Availability of social activities on campus						0.81			
Cost of tuition to attend EIU							0.73		
Financial Aid opportunities							0.54		
Understanding of technology used in classrooms									
Variety of majors to choose from								0.57	
Variety of classes within my major								0.51	
Availability of on-campus courses for me to attend				0.41				0.48	

	Component								
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
Perceived ability to secure a job after completing educational goals								0.47	
Times that classes are offered									
Childcare on campus									0.71
Availability of parking on campus							0.44		0.50

Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis.
Rotation Method: Varimax with Kaiser Normalization.
a. Rotation converged in 14 iterations.

Appendix F

Importance and Satisfaction Survey Items in Order of Decreasing Mean Importance

	Importance		Satisfaction	
Survey Item	*M*	*SD*	*M*	*SD*
Instructors' knowledge	4.78	0.45	4.19	0.92
Quality of instruction	4.71	0.51	4.09	0.82
Relevance of subject matter	4.60	0.65	4.12	0.85
Cost of tuition	4.59	0.72	3.55	1.12
Clarity of degree requirements	4.59	0.64	3.93	1.07
Interact w/instructors in class	4.54	0.83	4.31	0.76
Instructor teaching styles	4.51	0.64	3.86	0.97
Class times	4.50	0.95	3.79	1.12
Instructors' management of classroom	4.41	0.80	4.16	0.72
Variety of classes in major	4.39	0.75	3.55	1.15
PT/FT flexibility	4.36	0.87	4.02	0.91
Required assignments	4.35	0.76	3.83	0.87
Application/enrollment ease	4.30	0.84	4.09	0.93
Ability to get a job	4.29	1.01	3.44	1.06
Know where to go w/questions	4.27	0.74	3.73	0.99
Online or distance courses	4.14	1.21	3.42	1.18
Understand technology	4.12	0.99	3.89	0.85
Instructors avail out of class	4.11	0.93	3.97	0.85
Support	4.11	1.04	3.67	0.93
Financial Aid	4.06	1.22	3.57	1.05
Interact w/instructors out of class	3.96	1.10	4.00	0.86
Non-trad support services	3.90	1.15	3.47	1.09
Advisor Times	3.89	1.13	3.87	1.01
Variety of majors	3.89	1.12	3.68	0.98
Safety on campus	3.84	1.29	3.75	0.91
Interact w/classmates in class	3.69	1.19	3.87	0.87
Campus Office Times	3.67	1.20	3.59	0.99
Parking	3.67	1.36	3.02	1.15
On-campus courses	3.57	1.35	3.44	0.99
Furniture comfort	3.56	1.28	3.32	1.07
Connection to other students	3.56	1.19	3.62	1.00
Connection to university	3.45	1.21	3.51	0.94
Lighting	3.39	1.27	3.79	0.78
Accessibility of classrooms	3.32	1.27	3.69	0.88
Places to study	3.27	1.43	3.56	0.91
Interact w/other non-trad students	3.20	1.24	3.40	0.95
Interact w/classmates out of class	3.11	1.28	3.59	0.84
Social Activities	2.40	1.32	3.23	0.71

Availability of Activities	2.34	1.33	3.26	0.70
Childcare on campus	1.92	1.35	3.13	0.64

Appendix G

Importance and Satisfaction Survey Items in Order of Decreasing Mean Satisfaction

	Satisfaction		Importance	
Survey Item	*M*	*SD*	*M*	*SD*
Interact w/instructors in class	4.31	0.76	4.54	0.83
Instructors' knowledge	4.19	0.92	4.78	0.45
Instructors' classroom management	4.16	0.72	4.41	0.80
Relevance of subject matter	4.12	0.85	4.60	0.65
Quality of instruction	4.09	0.82	4.71	0.51
Application/enrollment ease	4.09	0.93	4.30	0.84
PT/FT flexibility	4.02	0.91	4.36	0.87
Interact w/instructors out of class	4.00	0.86	3.96	1.10
Instructors avail out of class	3.97	0.85	4.11	0.93
Clarity of degree requirements	3.93	1.07	4.59	0.64
Understand technology	3.89	0.85	4.12	0.99
Advisor Times	3.87	1.01	3.89	1.13
Interact w/classmates in class	3.87	0.87	3.69	1.19
Instructor teaching styles	3.86	0.97	4.51	0.64
Required assignments	3.83	0.87	4.35	0.76
Class times	3.79	1.12	4.50	0.95
Lighting	3.79	0.78	3.39	1.27
Safety on campus	3.75	0.91	3.84	1.29
Know where to go w/questions	3.73	0.99	4.27	0.74
Accessibility of classrooms	3.69	0.88	3.32	1.27
Variety of majors	3.68	0.98	3.89	1.12
Support	3.67	0.93	4.11	1.04
Connection to other students	3.62	1.00	3.56	1.19
Campus Office Times	3.59	0.99	3.67	1.20
Interact w/classmates out of class	3.59	0.84	3.11	1.28
Financial Aid	3.57	1.05	4.06	1.22
Places to study	3.56	0.91	3.27	1.43
Cost of tuition	3.55	1.12	4.59	0.72
Variety of classes in major	3.55	1.15	4.39	0.75
Connection to university	3.51	0.94	3.45	1.21
Non-trad support services	3.47	1.09	3.90	1.15
Ability to get a job	3.44	1.06	4.29	1.01
On-campus courses	3.44	0.99	3.57	1.35
Online or distance courses	3.42	1.18	4.14	1.21
Interact w/other non-trad students	3.40	0.95	3.20	1.24
Furniture comfort	3.32	1.07	3.56	1.28
Availability of Activities	3.26	0.70	2.34	1.33
Social Activities	3.23	0.71	2.40	1.32

Childcare on campus	3.13	0.64	1.92	1.35
Parking	3.02	1.15	3.67	1.36

Appendix H

Results of Paired Samples T-test for Measure of Nontraditional Students' Satisfaction with Features and Services (Satisfaction Minus Importance)

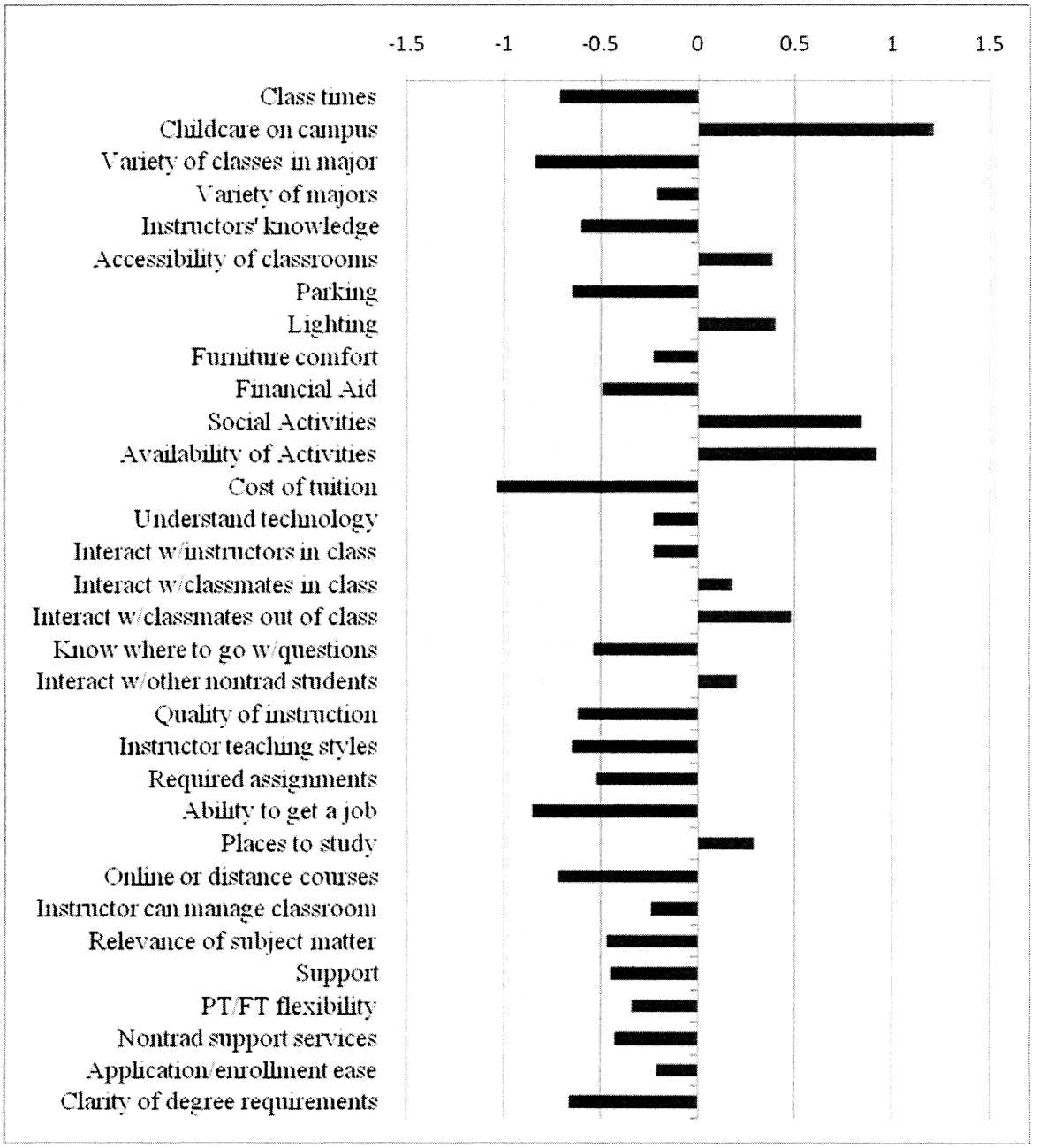
	Item Pair	*M*	*SD*	*t*	*df*	*p*	Cohen's *d*
1	***Class times***	***-0.71***	***1.49***	***-6.93***	***208***	***<0.001****	***-0.68***
2	*Advisor Times*	*-0.02*	*1.38*	*-0.25*	*208*	*0.802*	
3	*Campus Office Times*	*-0.08*	*1.44*	*-0.77*	*208*	*0.444*	
4	**Childcare on campus**	**1.21**	**1.50**	**11.71**	**208**	**<0.001****	**1.15**
5	*Variety of classes in major*	*-0.84*	*1.37*	*-8.81*	*208*	*<0.001***	*-0.20*
6	*Variety of majors*	*-0.21*	*1.41*	*-2.10*	*208*	*0.037**	*-0.20*
7	***Instructors' knowledge***	***-0.60***	***0.97***	***-8.90***	***208***	***<0.001****	***-0.81***
8	Accessibility of classrooms	0.38	1.21	4.53	208	<0.001***	0.34
9	***Parking***	***-0.65***	***1.91***	***-4.89***	***208***	***<0.001****	***-0.52***
10	**Lighting**	**0.40**	**1.18**	**4.88**	**208**	**<0.001****	**0.38**
11	*Furniture comfort*	*-0.23*	*1.65*	*-2.05*	*208*	*0.041**	*-0.20*
12	***Financial Aid***	***-0.49***	***1.41***	***-5.01***	***208***	***<0.001****	***-0.43***
13	**Social Activities**	**0.84**	**1.38**	**8.79**	**208**	**<0.001****	**0.78**
14	**Availability of Activities**	**0.92**	**1.37**	**9.73**	**208**	**<0.001****	**0.87**
15	***Cost of tuition***	***-1.04***	***1.27***	***-11.78***	***208***	***<0.001****	***-1.10***
16	***Understand technology***	***-0.23***	***-1.11***	***-3.05***	***208***	***0.003****	***-0.87***
17	*Interact w/instructors in class*	*-0.23*	*-0.91*	*-3.64*	*208*	*<0.001****	*-0.29*
18	Interact w/instructors out of class	0.04	1.06	0.59	208	0.557	
19	*Instructors avail out of class*	*-0.14*	*1.10*	*-1.82*	*208*	*0.070*	
20	Interact w/classmates in class	0.18	1.16	2.26	208	0.025*	0.17
21	**Interact w/classmates out of class**	**0.48**	**1.25**	**5.60**	**208**	**<0.001****	**0.44**
22	***Know where to go w/questions***	***-0.54***	***1.21***	***-6.47***	***208***	***<0.001****	***-0.62***
23	Interact w/other non-trad students	0.20	1.42	2.04	208	0.043*	0.18
24	Connection to other students	0.06	1.36	0.66	208	0.508	
25	Connection to university	0.05	1.32	0.58	208	0.566	
26	***Quality of instruction***	***-0.62***	***0.89***	***-10.09***	***208***	***<0.001****	***-0.91***
27	***Instructor teaching styles***	***-0.65***	***1.09***	***-8.59***	***208***	***<0.001****	***-0.79***
28	***Required assignments***	***-0.52***	***1.05***	***-7.17***	***208***	***<0.001****	***-0.64***
29	***Ability to get a job***	***-0.85***	***1.35***	***-9.13***	***208***	***<0.001****	***-0.82***
30	Places to study	0.29	1.39	3.05	208	0.003**	0.24
31	*On-campus courses*	*-0.12*	*1.48*	*-1.22*	*208*	*0.224*	
32	***Online or distance courses***	***-0.72***	***1.66***	***-6.29***	***208***	***<0.001****	***-0.60***

	Item Pair	*M*	*SD*	*t*	*df*	*p*	Cohen's *d*
33	*Instructors' classroom management*	*-0.24*	*0.84*	*-4.20*	*208*	*<0.001***	*-0.33*
34	***Relevance of subject matter***	***-0.47***	***0.95***	***-7.20***	***208***	***<0.001****	***-0.63***
35	*Safety on campus*	*-0.09*	*1.29*	*-0.97*	*208*	*0.336*	
36	***Support***	***-0.45***	***1.27***	***-5.10***	***208***	***<0.001****	***-0.45***
37	***PT/FT flexibility***	***-0.34***	***1.05***	***-4.66***	***208***	***<0.001****	***-0.38***
38	***Non-trad support services***	***-0.43***	***1.48***	***-4.20***	***208***	***<0.001****	***-0.38***
39	*Application/enrollment ease*	*-0.21*	*1.08*	*-2.75*	*208*	*0.007***	*-0.24*
40	***Clarity of degree requirements***	***-0.66***	***1.16***	***-8.15***	***208***	***<0.001****	***-0.75***
	Total satisfaction score	*-7.32*	*26.88*	*-3.94*	*208*	*<0.001****	*-0.25*

Note. * indicates significance at p=0.05; ** indicates significance at p=0.01; *** indicates significance at p=0.001; italics indicate importance is greater than satisfaction; bolded indicates medium to large effect sizes.

Appendix I

Results of Paired T-tests (Mean Satisfaction Score Minus Importance Score) Reported in Terms of Statistical Difference at $\alpha < .05$



Appendix J

Expanded Results of the Wilcoxon-Signed Ranks Tests, Showing the Number of Participants with Negative Ranks, Positive Ranks, and Ties

		N	Mean Rank	Sum of Ranks
Times that classes are offered - Times that classes are offered	Negative Ranks	27	63.80	1722.50
	Positive Ranks	104	66.57	6923.50
	Ties	78		
	Total	209		
Availability of advisors at times that are convenient to me - Availability of advisors at times that are convenient to me	Negative Ranks	59	53.17	3137.00
	Positive Ranks	53	60.21	3191.00
	Ties	97		
	Total	209		
Access to campus offices at times that are convenient to me - Access to campus offices at times that are convenient to me	Negative Ranks	55	65.55	3605.00
	Positive Ranks	67	58.18	3898.00
	Ties	87		
	Total	209		
Childcare on campus - Childcare on campus	Negative Ranks	138	81.70	11274.50
	Positive Ranks	20	64.33	1286.50
	Ties	51		
	Total	209		
Variety of classes within my major - Variety of classes within my major	Negative Ranks	18	41.69	750.50
	Positive Ranks	100	62.71	6270.50
	Ties	91		
	Total	209		
Variety of majors to choose from - Variety of majors to choose from	Negative Ranks	39	50.05	1952.00
	Positive Ranks	62	51.60	3199.00
	Ties	108		
	Total	209		
Instructors' knowledge of course content - Instructors' knowledge of course content	Negative Ranks	11	49.14	540.50
	Positive Ranks	97	55.11	5345.50
	Ties	101		
	Total	209		
Accessibility of classrooms within campus buildings - Accessibility of classrooms within campus buildings	Negative Ranks	73	55.02	4016.50
	Positive Ranks	30	44.65	1339.50
	Ties	106		
	Total	209		
Availability of parking on campus - Availability of parking on campus	Negative Ranks	49	60.87	2982.50
	Positive Ranks	95	78.50	7457.50
	Ties	65		
	Total	209		
Lighting in classrooms - Lighting in classrooms	Negative Ranks	72	60.84	4380.50
	Positive Ranks	34	37.96	1290.50
	Ties	103		
	Total	209		
Comfort of classroom furniture - Comfort of classroom furniture	Negative Ranks	56	59.63	3339.50
	Positive Ranks	71	67.44	4788.50
	Ties	82		

	Total	209		
Financial Aid opportunities - Financial Aid opportunities	Negative Ranks	32	63.77	2040.50
	Positive Ranks	89	60.01	5340.50
	Ties	88		
	Total	209		
Availability of social activities on campus - Availability of social activities on campus	Negative Ranks	102	65.72	6703.00
	Positive Ranks	21	43.95	923.00
	Ties	86		
	Total	209		
Availability of extracurricular activities (clubs, organizations, etc - Availability of extracurricular activities (clubs, organizations, etc	Negative Ranks	111	71.27	7911.00
	Positive Ranks	21	41.29	867.00
	Ties	77		
	Total	209		
Cost of tuition to attend EIU - Cost of tuition to attend EIU	Negative Ranks	7	68.29	478.00
	Positive Ranks	127	67.46	8567.00
	Ties	75		
	Total	209		
Understanding of technology used in classrooms - Understanding of technology used in classrooms	Negative Ranks	29	54.81	1589.50
	Positive Ranks	66	45.01	2970.50
	Ties	114		
	Total	209		
Interactions with instructors in class - Interactions with instructors in class	Negative Ranks	18	55.47	998.50
	Positive Ranks	68	40.33	2742.50
	Ties	123		
	Total	209		
Interactions with instructors outside of class - Interactions with instructors outside of class	Negative Ranks	45	47.58	2141.00
	Positive Ranks	43	41.28	1775.00
	Ties	121		
	Total	209		
Availability of instructors outside of class at times that are convenient to me - Availability of instructors outside of class at times that are convenient to me	Negative Ranks	33	46.38	1530.50
	Positive Ranks	55	43.37	2385.50
	Ties	121		
	Total	209		
Interactions with classmates in class - Interactions with classmates in class	Negative Ranks	61	49.63	3027.50
	Positive Ranks	36	47.93	1725.50
	Ties	112		
	Total	209		
Interactions with classmates outside of class - Interactions with classmates outside of class	Negative Ranks	77	52.95	4077.50
	Positive Ranks	23	42.28	972.50
	Ties	109		
	Total	209		
Understanding of where to go for general questions or problems -	Negative Ranks	16	44.22	707.50
	Positive Ranks	79	48.77	3852.50

Understanding of where to go for general questions or problems	Ties	114		
	Total	209		
Opportunities to interact with other non-traditional students - Opportunities to interact with other non-traditional students	Negative Ranks	65	48.76	3169.50
	Positive Ranks	35	53.73	1880.50
	Ties	109		
	Total	209		
Feelings of connectedness to other students in my program or classes - Feelings of connectedness to other students in my program or classes	Negative Ranks	56	44.04	2466.00
	Positive Ranks	38	52.61	1999.00
	Ties	115		
	Total	209		
Feelings of connectedness to the university - Feelings of connectedness to the university	Negative Ranks	57	59.62	3398.50
	Positive Ranks	53	51.07	2706.50
	Ties	99		
	Total	209		
Overall quality of instruction - Overall quality of instruction	Negative Ranks	4	57.00	228.00
	Positive Ranks	102	53.36	5443.00
	Ties	103		
	Total	209		
Teaching styles of instructors - Teaching styles of instructors	Negative Ranks	10	51.35	513.50
	Positive Ranks	96	53.72	5157.50
	Ties	103		
	Total	209		
Types of academic assignments required in my classes (i.e. group work , independent work, lecture, class discussions) - Types of academic assignments required in my classes (i.e. group work , independent work, lecture, class discussions)	Negative Ranks	13	56.31	732.00
	Positive Ranks	90	51.38	4624.00
	Ties	106		
	Total	209		
Perceived ability to secure a job after completing educational goals - Perceived ability to secure a job after completing educational goals	Negative Ranks	14	68.96	965.50
	Positive Ranks	112	62.82	7035.50
	Ties	83		
	Total	209		
Availability of sufficient places to study on campus - Availability of sufficient places to study on campus	Negative Ranks	67	57.72	3867.00
	Positive Ranks	39	46.26	1804.00
	Ties	103		
	Total	209		
Availability of on-campus courses for me to attend - Availability of on-campus courses for me to attend	Negative Ranks	47	55.71	2618.50
	Positive Ranks	60	52.66	3159.50
	Ties	102		
	Total	209		
Availability of online or distance learning courses for me to attend -	Negative Ranks	28	61.13	1711.50
	Positive Ranks	97	63.54	6163.50

Availability of online or distance learning courses for me to attend	Ties	84		
	Total	209		
Instructors' ability to manage the classroom effectively - Instructors' ability to manage the classroom effectively	Negative Ranks	13	44.35	576.50
	Positive Ranks	58	34.13	1979.50
	Ties	138		
	Total	209		
Relevancy of subject matter taught in classes I attend - Relevancy of subject matter taught in classes I attend	Negative Ranks	10	49.25	492.50
	Positive Ranks	80	45.03	3602.50
	Ties	119		
	Total	209		
Physical safety on campus at EIU - Physical safety on campus at EIU	Negative Ranks	41	56.73	2326.00
	Positive Ranks	58	45.24	2624.00
	Ties	110		
	Total	209		
Support with managing demands of school and other life responsibilities - Support with managing demands of school and other life responsibilities	Negative Ranks	27	66.11	1785.00
	Positive Ranks	90	56.87	5118.00
	Ties	92		
	Total	209		
Flexibility to attend part-time or full-time - Flexibility to attend part-time or full-time	Negative Ranks	19	43.92	834.50
	Positive Ranks	66	42.73	2820.50
	Ties	124		
	Total	209		
Availability of support services specifically for non-traditional students - Availability of support services specifically for non-traditional students	Negative Ranks	34	51.43	1748.50
	Positive Ranks	75	56.62	4246.50
	Ties	100		
	Total	209		
Ease of the application and enrollment process - Ease of the application and enrollment process	Negative Ranks	33	42.83	1413.50
	Positive Ranks	56	46.28	2591.50
	Ties	120		
	Total	209		
Clarity of degree requirements - Clarity of degree requirements	Negative Ranks	8	38.00	304.00
	Positive Ranks	83	46.77	3882.00
	Ties	118		
	Total	209		

Appendix K

SPSS Output of Wilcoxon Signed Ranks Test for Connection to University

Descriptive Statistics

	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Minimum	Maximum	Percentiles 25th	50th (Median)	75th
Total_CONNECTION_SAT	209	24.7608	4.28438	9.00	35.00	22.0000	25.0000	27.0000
Total_CONNECTION_IMP	209	22.5311	6.04313	8.00	35.00	18.0000	23.0000	27.0000

Ranks

		N	Mean Rank	Sum of Ranks
Total_CONNECTION_IMP - Total_CONNECTION_SAT	Negative Ranks	129[a]	94.76	12223.50
	Positive Ranks	53[b]	83.58	4429.50
	Ties	27[c]		
	Total	209		

a. Total_CONNECTION_IMP < Total_CONNECTION_SAT

b. Total_CONNECTION_IMP > Total_CONNECTION_SAT

c. Total_CONNECTION_IMP = Total_CONNECTION_SAT

Test Statistics[b]

	Total_CONNECTION_IMP - Total_CONNECTION_SAT
Z	-5.483[a]
Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed)	.000

a. Based on positive ranks.

b. Wilcoxon Signed Ranks Test