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**The impact of Tennessee Promise on Community College Enrollment, Retention, and
Persistence**

by

Dawn N. Englert

A Dissertation

Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the

Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Education

Major: Leadership and Policy Studies

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Acknowledgement

Many years ago, I was told that I would never finish college after I got married to now finishing my doctorate, it has been a long journey.

I did it Papaw!!!!

I want to thank the few family and friends that knew I was on this journey. They encouraged me to not give up and to keep going. I love you all!

I also want to thank those on my Doctoral committee: Dr. Platt, Dr. Kitchens, Dr. Reddick, and Dr. Zanskas.

Now for a statement that I think represents this journey. This is not a direct quote, but the origins began with Abraham Lincoln.

I shall endeavor to persevere.

Abstract

This study examined the impact of the Tennessee Promise program on enrollment, retention, and persistence in three community colleges in Tennessee. The three colleges represented the three major geographical regions of Tennessee. The three community colleges were Jackson State Community College, Motlow State Community College, and Cleveland State Community College. The data collected was census data from the three colleges involved in the study. The three parts of the study focused on enrollment, measured by a trend analysis, retention, measured by a test of proportions, and enrollment, measured by a non-parametric test on the median number of semesters to graduation. The results for all three parts of the study showed mixed results. Enrollment showed an initial increase and then stagnated. Retention showed statistically significant results for some colleges and not statistically significant results for others. The benchmark for persistence showed mixed results. The results for students that were Tennessee Promise eligible or not and the time periods of pre-Tennessee Promise launch, Tennessee Promise launch, and post-Tennessee Promise launch showed no statistically significant results. The results for the number of semesters for graduation did not show statistically significant results.

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Chapter 1

The study examines whether the Tennessee Promise Program has had an effect on enrollment, retention, and persistence rates at Tennessee community colleges in western, middle, and eastern portions of the state. The study compares the enrollment, retention, and persistence numbers from the two years prior to the implementation of the Tennessee Promise program, the first two years of the Tennessee Promise Program and the two years after the Tennessee Promise Program was implemented. The benchmarks for the program are enrollment, retention, and persistence. Enrollment is defined as taking at least 12-credit hours in the community college (Davidson, 2015). Retention and persistence mean being continuously enrolled from semester to semester in the community college. A student is considered a graduate if the student received an associate degree or a certificate from the community college the student attended (Wild & Ebbers, 2002).

Background

The then Tennessee Governor developed an initiative called “Drive to 55” in 2014. This program strives for 55% of all Tennesseans to hold a degree or professional certificate by 2025 (*Governor Bill Haslam Launches Drive to 55 Initiative - Ut Advocacy*, 2013). The “Drive to 55” initiative partners with the private sector, community, and nonprofit leaders to create more awareness and support for the needs of the workforce. The “Drive to 55” initiative also strives to create awareness for identifying and closing the skills gaps and prepare the workforce and the state for the future. This program works with employers and higher education institutions to “recruit and attract more adults back into the higher education system” (*The Alliance*, 2014). “Drive to 55” also strives to “ensure student skills align with real workforce needs” (*The Alliance*, 2014). The Drive to 55 Alliance is a group of people from the private sector, the community leaders, and nonprofit leaders that are working together to support the Drive to 55

initiative which strives to have 55 percent of Tennesseans earn a certificate or degree by 2025. The “Drive to 55” Alliance is taking four steps to promote the “Drive to 55” initiative. These four steps are to Promote Tennessee Reconnect, to identify the highest-demand employment needs, to connect with local community and technology colleges, and to recruit Tennessee Promise mentors (*The Alliance*, 2014). The Tennessee Promise Program was developed and implemented in 2015 as part of the Drive to 55 initiative.

Tennessee Promise

Tennessee Promise was implemented in 2015 as a new program for Tennessee high school graduates called the Tennessee Promise Program, which is an end-dollar scholarship for all graduating Tennessee high school seniors that meet certain criteria. This program is for all students that graduate from high school in Tennessee. The program could potentially pay for the students first two years of college at a Tennessee community college, Tennessee College of Applied Technology School, or certain four-year colleges (Meehan et al., 2019). The community colleges are considered schools that offer only an associate degree and not a bachelor’s degree. A four-year college is a college that offers both associate and bachelor’s degrees. Tennessee Promise requires that the high school seniors meet certain criteria in the form of meetings, grades, and community service. If the students continue to meet all of the requirements during their senior year of high school and the time that the students are in the two-year program at the students chosen college, then the Tennessee Promise Program will pay the tuition that the students’ other scholarships do not pay (*Tn Promise Annual Report*, 2020).

The Tennessee Promise program is an end-dollar scholarship program, which means that the Tennessee Promise Program will pay tuition and mandatory fees that are assessed to students at the student’s chosen college that the student’s other scholarships do not pay. The Tennessee Promise Program does not pay for special fees assessed to individual students only, but for those

that are assessed to all students, such as tuition and other fees that all students are required to pay. If there is a fee that is specific to a certain class, such as a lab fee for a science class or nursing class, then the Tennessee Promise Program will not pay for that fee (*Tn Promise Annual Report, 2020*).

The Tennessee Promise Program also requires that students enroll in an eligible community college or technical school immediately after graduating from high school. The Tennessee Promise Program is intended only for those students who have not yet received a degree or certificate of any form. (*Tn Promise Annual Report, 2020*)

The three community colleges used for this study - Jackson State Community College, Motlow State Community College, and Cleveland State Community College - all have a first-year seminar. This seminar class in all three schools focuses on all aspects of college life, including research, time management, college resources, student goals, and many other topics that will help the student succeed. In the three schools, students are required to take classes that involve their major courses of study that are collaborative and share a common intellectual experience among the students in the classes and among the other classes that the student must take to graduate with their degrees. All students that take classes at the three colleges must take English Composition courses that are writing intensive. All students must take two classes in order to graduate. The two classes are English Composition I and English Composition II. The English Composition courses are writing-based and teach the students the process of writing and different forms of writing.

The last high-impact practice is community-based learning. Each student who receives the Tennessee Promise Program scholarship is required to complete at least eight hours of community service (*Tn Promise Annual Report, 2020*) to give back to the community and learn a new skill, or improve on a skill, that the student already has.

Program Benchmarks.

This study examines three benchmarks for the three community colleges included in the study representing the three geographical regions of west, middle, and east Tennessee. These three benchmarks are enrollment, retention, and persistence.

Enrollment. According to an article by Linda Serra Hagedorn, enrollment is defined as “those courses in which students remained past the ‘add-drop’ window” (Hagedorn, 2004, p. 25). Enrollment in Tennessee community colleges is defined as those students that are enrolled in at least twelve semester hours of credit. Enrollment is necessary for colleges to keep track of how many students are enrolled in the school and for funding. One way that the Tennessee Promise Program measures the success or failure of the program is through enrollment.

Retention. Retention “refers to the ability of an institution to retain a student from admission through graduation” (Seidman et al., 2012, p. 12). Another way to define retention is “when a student enrolls each semester until graduation, studies full-time, and graduates in about four years” (Bean, 2021). For the purposes of this study, retention is defined as those students that continue at their chosen institution from one semester to the next semester.

Factors that may influence student retention are faculty support, academic and cognitive skills, finances, and community involvement. Students want to believe that they are being prepared to succeed in the classroom and the workplace. One way to help the students feel as though they are being prepared begins with the instructors. If the students feel they are being heard, then they are more likely to continue in their college careers (Lampman, 2021). Students may lack the academic skills that are necessary for the student to succeed in college, so they need to be made aware of the resources that their chosen institution has to offer. Another factor that may affect retention is student finances. Ericksen (2020) states college is a large financial burden on many students; if the student does not feel as though the return on his or her

investment is worth the expense, then the student may not continue to attend college. Finally, students who are involved in the student community and extracurricular activities have a better retention rate than those students who do not get involved in activities outside of the classroom (Ericksen, 2020). Retention is one of the components of the Tennessee Promise Program. Students must be continuously enrolled in an eligible institution to continue receiving Tennessee Promise funds.

Persistence. Persistence “refers to the desire and action of a student to stay within the system of higher education from beginning year through degree completion” (Seidman et al., 2012, p. 12). Persistence is the “act of continuing towards an educational goal” (*Retention*, 2007). Four factors can influence college persistence: consistent student experiences, meeting students where they are, simple but effective tools, and sense of community belonging. Students need to feel like they have a consistent experience, especially when the student is taking online classes. Colleges need to meet the student’s needs at the time the student needs the resources available to them. The student needs to have all the tools necessary to succeed, but these tools do not need to be elaborate and interfere with the learning process. Finally, the students need to feel that they are part of the learning community. The faculty can assist in this feeling of community (Ericksen, 2020). The Tennessee Promise Program uses persistence to determine when a student has completed his or her community college career. When the student has graduated from his or her chosen institution, then the student is no longer eligible for the Tennessee Promise monies.

Program Components

The Tennessee Promise Program has five major components. These components are community service, mentorship, Free Application for Student Aid (FAFSA), grade point average, and meetings. Each student is required to attend two meetings. The student is assigned a mentor to help him or her navigate the components and give the student advice on college and

any other topic the student and mentor are comfortable discussing. The students are required to do eight hours of community service. Finally, each student must complete the FAFSA by the deadline set by the program and maintain at least a 2.0 grade point average.

Community Service. A component of the Tennessee Promise Program is community service. The students must complete eight hours of community service each semester to remain eligible for the Tennessee Promise Program. To remain eligible for the Tennessee Promise Program, students must perform community service. If the student does not complete and turn in the documentation for the community service, then the student will no longer receive Tennessee Promise Program funding (*Tennessee Promise, 2020*).

Mentorship. Another component of the Tennessee Promise Program is mentorship. Each student who applies for the Tennessee Promise Program is assigned a mentor, someone who helps the student remember the components to be met and helps the student through the application and enrollment process at the student's chosen institution (Bell, 2021). The mentors come from all backgrounds in the community that the students are from. Any person wanting to become a mentor must simply sign up on the Tennessee Promise Program website and attend an orientation meeting. Each mentor is then assigned 5-10 students who are interested in the Tennessee Promise Program. The mentors then meet with the students they are assigned at least one time before graduation from high school and then keep in touch with the students via email and telephone to remind the students of upcoming dates and deadlines that the students need to complete. The students can also take advantage of the knowledge that the mentors have regarding the transition from high school to college, the application process from college, the stresses that the student may be feeling about going to college, and any other issues that the mentor and student feel comfortable discussing.

FAFSA. One other component that the students must meet is to complete their Free Application for Student Aid (FAFSA) (*Tennessee Promise, 2020*). The information that the student, or the student's parents, provide on the FAFSA determines what kind of financial aid the student is eligible to receive (*Tennessee Promise, 2020*). The FAFSA is the document that enables the Tennessee Promise Program staff to receive information for each student eligible for financial aid. If the student is receiving financial aid from any other scholarship or grant that is covered on the FAFSA, the staff for the Tennessee Promise Program will know how much the student will receive from the Tennessee Promise Program (*Tennessee Promise, 2020*).

Grade Point Average. Another component of the Tennessee Promise Program is a student's grade point average. Students remain eligible for the Tennessee Promise Program if the student maintains a 2.0 grade point average in college (*Tn Promise Report 2018 Final, 2018*). A student that drops his or her grade point average below a 2.0 will no longer be eligible for the Tennessee Promise monies.

Meetings. A final component of the Tennessee Promise Program is mandatory meetings. Each student is required to attend two mandatory meetings (Meehan et al., 2019). A student may have more meetings if he or she meets with the mentor that is assigned to them. These meetings are to inform the students of the requirements for the Tennessee Promise Program and to help guide the students through the process (*Tn Promise Report 2018 Final*)

Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework used for this study is based on Vincent Tinto's 1993 model of student retention and Kuh's High Impact Practices model (2008). Tinto's 1993 model on student retention contains four factors of pre-entry attributes, goals and commitments, institutional experiences, and academic and social integration.

Kuh's High Impact Practices (2008) builds on Tinto's retention model. Tinto's theories were based on student integration into the social and academic aspects of campus life and have been used by many other researchers to determine factors that lead to student departure from or retention in the school of his or her choice (Kilgo et al., 2014, Wawrzynski & Baldwin, 2014). Kuh (2008) built on the theories of Tinto by expanding them into student engagement. Kuh states that for a student to succeed in college, the student must have high levels of engagement (Wolfe-Wendell et al., 2009).

Significance

The significance of this study is to determine whether the Tennessee Promise Program is benefiting the students and the schools that have implemented the program in Tennessee. The Tennessee Promise Program was created to help the general population of graduating Tennessee seniors fund a degree that they might not otherwise have been able to afford before the program was implemented. Research on this program is limited, and this study hopes to further the understanding of the program.

There are many states that have similar programs to the Tennessee Promise Program. One of these states is Indiana. Indiana's 21st Century Scholars Program has existed for more than 25 years. Early studies of the program showed that the students who were eligible for the program and signed up for the program were more likely to enroll in college than those students that did not sign up for the program. Early studies also showed that college aspirations, enrollment rates, and persistence rates were positive but there have not been any recent studies completed to follow up on these results. Another program similar to the Tennessee Promise Program is Missouri's A+ Program. A study on Missouri's A+ Program found that enrollment rates in colleges increased overall. The study also found that enrollment in two-year colleges increased while enrollment in four-year colleges decreased. The Kalamazoo Promise program in

Michigan is another program to help students with funds for college. Studies have shown that the Kalamazoo Promise program has achieved the two goals that the program set out to accomplish: improve enrollment and improve educational outcomes in public schools (Kelchen, 2017).

California is another state that's has programs similar to the Tennessee Promise Program. A study of the promise programs in California shows that there has not been enough research on the California programs to determine the effectiveness of the many different programs. The study indicates that more research needs to be performed to determine if the promise programs in California have had a positive or negative effect on enrollment, retention, and persistence in California public schools (Rios-Aguilar & Lyke, 2020). Another program similar to the Tennessee Promise Program is the New Haven Promise Program. A study by Lindsay Daugherty and Gabriella C. Gonzalez found that the New Haven Promise Program had a positive effect on enrollment (Daugherty & Gonzalez, 2016). A study by Judith Scott-Clayton on the West Virginia Promise Program found that the program did not have an effect on persistence rates but found that students graduated within five years due to the fact that the students had a higher GPA and earned more credits due to the program (Scott-Clayton, 2011).

Problem Statement

The Tennessee Promise program was created to reach a goal of a 55% graduation rate of Tennessee residents 18 years of age and older by 2025. At the time of conception for the Drive to 55 program in Tennessee, 2013, the percentage of adults that had college credentials was 37.8% (Tennessee Higher Education Commission, n.d.). According to the Lumina Foundation, the current graduation rate is 43% (Lumina Foundation, n.d.). The enrollment, retention, and persistence rates are key benchmarks of the success of any college. Knowing if a new program will be successful and impactful is essential to implementing and keeping the program. This study focuses on the enrollment, retention, and persistence rates at Tennessee community

colleges. This study examines whether the Tennessee Promise Program, that was implemented at Tennessee community colleges, Tennessee Technology Centers, and certain four-year universities in 2015 has been successful in its first two years of implementation using data from the three community colleges located in three geographic regions of the state.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to determine whether there is a statistically significant difference between the enrollment, retention, and persistence rates before the Tennessee Promise program was implemented and the years since the program was implemented at Tennessee community colleges. The dependent variables are enrollment, retention, and persistence rates defined as full-time equivalent (FTE) student counts. The independent variables are defined as the three state community colleges and the student's participation in the Tennessee Promise Program or not.

The data begins in the fall semester of 2013 and continue through the spring semester of 2018. Data was provided by the registrars of the community colleges included in this study for enrollment, retention, and persistence and the Tennessee Board of Regents website. No student identifying markers were provided. The guiding research question for the study is the following: What impact has the Tennessee Promise Program had on the performance of community colleges as measured by enrollment, retention, and persistence rates?

Summary

This study examines whether the Tennessee Promise Program has affected the enrollment, retention, and persistence rates at three community colleges in Tennessee. The study ties the three benchmarks of enrollment, retention, and persistence to the components of the Tennessee Promise Program. The components are mentorship, FAFSA, grade point average, meetings, and community service. The study examines the benchmarks of enrollment, retention,

and persistence through the lens of Tinto's theory on retention and persistence. The components of the Tennessee Promise Program are discussed through the lens of Kuh's High Impact Practices. The benchmarks of enrollment, retention, and persistence are important to colleges. The colleges need to know the rates for these benchmarks to assess the viability of new programs and to receive federal monies. This study focuses on the components of the Tennessee Promise Program that will help the colleges chosen for the study to determine whether the Tennessee Promise Program is a program that helps students complete their college goals or not.

Chapter 2

This chapter reviews the contributions of the works of Tinto (1993, 2004, 2006) and Kuh (2008) to the study of student success in post-secondary institutions. This chapter also reviews the history of post-secondary scholarships and the impact those scholarships have on enrollment, retention, and persistence in community colleges.

Tinto's Model of Student Success

Vincent Tinto is highly regarded as one of the top contributors in the field of retention (Connolly, 2016). Tinto believed that students did not continue their higher education for many reasons, such as “student characteristics and the extent of their academic, environmental, and social integration in an institution” (Connolly, 2016, para. 1). Tinto's 1993 model has four components: pre-entry attributes; goals, commitments; institutional experiences; and academic and social integration. Pre-entry attributes, according to Tinto, play a role in the retention and persistence of students in higher education (Connolly, 2016). These attributes are “family background, skills, abilities, and prior schooling” (Connolly, 2016, para. 4). Other researchers have identified different attributes that may affect a student's academic success in higher education. Some of the other attributes include “intellectual attributes in shaping the individual's ability to meet academic demands”, “personality, motivation, and disposition” (Connolly, 2016, para. 4).

The second component of Tinto's theory is goals, commitments. In this component, Tinto explains that the students' intentions and external commitments play a role in the students' retention rates (Connolly, 2016). Another part of this stage in Tinto's model is that “external commitments to others and entities outside of the institution, such as family, friends, and work obligation, have an ongoing effect” on the student's success in college (Connolly, 2016, para. 9).

These influences can be positive or negative in the students' journey throughout their college career (Connolly, 2016).

The third component of Tinto's model is institutional experiences. In this component, the non-academic staff and the academic staff has an influence on how the student sees his/her career at the institution. Also, internal, and external aspects of the student's life influence the decision to stay or leave the institution.

The last component of Tinto's model is academic and social integration. Tinto stated that the more involved the student is in social and academic activities on campus, the more likely the student will be to stay enrolled in the institution. The more involved the student becomes in social and academic activities, the happier the student will be (Connolly, 2016).

Tinto's research is used in many institutions for retention and persistence research. In one such study, researchers found that Tinto's model does have implications towards retention and persistence in the community colleges. The researchers found that the academic integration aspect of Tinto's model played the largest role in the retention and persistence of community college students (Halpin, 1990). Another study found that there was no correlation between academic and social integration, two of the aspects of Tinto's model, and retention (Kubala, 2000). Another aspect of Tinto's model is learning communities. One study suggests that for first-generation students, community colleges should focus on developing learning communities to help with retention of these students (McConnell, 2000). Another study by Melinda Karp, Katherine Hughes, and Lauren O'Gara also finds that learning communities are helpful for community college students. This study finds that the integration into the learning communities is both academic and social for the students. The study finds that the integration of the students into the learning communities can help with retention and persistence (Karp et al., 2010). A study at Seattle Central Community College found that using one aspect of Tinto's model,

involvement, the students at the community college were just as involved as students would be at a four-year college. This study found that students were able to bridge the social and academic aspects of college life to become more involved (Tinto & Pusser, 2006).

Kuh's High-Impact Practices

George Kuh and his colleagues define high impact practices as “achievement of deep learning, significant engagement gains, and positive differential impact on historically underserved student populations” (*High-impact Practices*, 2021, para.1). Kuh states that the high impact practices that are used by students and institutions vary depending on the students and the institutions. Kuh and his colleagues identified ten practices that “have been widely tested and have been shown to be beneficial for college students from many backgrounds” (Kuh, 2008, p. 9). The ten practices are first-year seminars and experiences, common intellectual experiences, learning communities, writing-intensive courses, collaborative assignments and projects, undergraduate research, diversity/global learning, service learning, community-based learning, internships, and capstone courses and projects (Kuh, 2008).

Kuh's theory of High impact Practices will frame this study by showing that the Tennessee Promise Program and the community colleges involved in the study have in effect some of the high-impact practices that Kuh and his colleagues identified as the high-impact learning practices. The four high-impact learning practices that all three of the community colleges in this study exhibit are first-year seminars, common intellectual experiences, writing intensive courses, and service learning, community-based learning.

A study using Kuh's High Impact Practices found that learning communities, service-learning courses, and first-year seminars had a positive effect on persistence. The study also found that student engagement also had an effect on persistence (Kuh et al., 2008). Another study focused on the High Impact Practice of social engagement for first-generation students.

This study found that the first-generation students, those students whose parent or guardian did not have a bachelor's degree, did not have as much social and academic integration as students that were second generation students, those students whose parent or guardian had at least one bachelor's degree (Pike & Kuh, 2005).

The first-year seminars are built into the curriculum for many institutions where the student works closely with a faculty member (Kuh, 2008). First-year seminars and experiences focus on building the students' skills in many different areas (Wawrzynski & Baldwin, 2014). These areas include "critical inquiry, frequent writing, information literacy, collaborative learning, and other skills that develop students' intellectual and practical competencies" (Kuh, 2008, p. 9).

Kuh's second practice, common intellectual experiences focus on "a vertically organized general education program" (Kuh, 2008, p. 9). The general education program can include integrative studies and participation in learning communities. The learning communities and integrative studies include a variety of curricular options for the students (Kuh, 2008).

Also, learning communities integrate learning across different disciplines. The learning communities have students take two or more classes that are linked and work closely with their professors and other students in the students' discipline. Many times, the courses are from a liberal arts perspective and a professional prospective, and the course may also include a service-learning aspect (Tukibayeva & Gonyea, 2014).

An important component for Kuh is writing. Writing-intensive courses focus on writing across all disciplines and all forms (Wawrzynski & Baldwin, 2014). Kuh (2008) states that "students are encouraged to produce and revise" their writing for different audiences and disciplines. Kuh also states that this repeated practice will lead to more effective oral communication and information literacy.

Kuh also believes that collaborative assignments and projects combine two goals. The first goal is to learn and work with others. The second goal is to listen to others to help with the student's own understanding, especially when there is a diverse group of students. The collaborative learning can take place in different forms such as study groups, team-based assignments, and cooperative projects (Kuh, 2008).

Kuh states that it is necessary for undergraduate research to be provided in all disciplines and not just the sciences. Reshaping courses to include the exploration of important questions will help students be involved early in key concepts and questions in research (Tukibayeva & Gonyea, 2014). Undergraduate research involves students “with actively contested questions, empirical observations, cutting-edge technologies, and the sense of excitement that comes from working to answer important questions” (Kuh, 2008, p. 10).

Another concept in Kuh's theory on high-impact practices is diversity/global learning. Diversity/global learning helps students explore different cultures and backgrounds as well as different aspects of gender and global struggles. These learning skills can be accomplished by using experiential learning and/or study abroad programs (Kuh, 2008).

Service-learning, community-based learning is also a concept that Kuh sees as a high-impact practice. Service-learning, community-based learning, can be accomplished by the students using experiential learning. Experiential learning gives the students an opportunity to practice what they are learning and then discuss what they have learned and practiced in the classroom (Brownell & Swaner, 2009). This type of learning gives the student a chance to “analyze and solve problems in the community” (Kuh, 2008, p. 11).

Internships are another vehicle that Kuh sees as an impact-learning practice. Internships are another form of experiential learning. Internships give the students a chance to work in their

respective fields of study with each student having access to a supervisor who guides the student throughout the experience (Wawrzynski & Baldwin, 2014).

The final impact-learning concept from Kuh is capstone courses and projects. Capstone projects are to be completed by the student near the end of the student's college career. The capstone project is a culminating project of what the student has learned throughout his or her college career (Wawrzynski & Baldwin, 2014). The project can be "a research paper, a performance, a portfolio of best work, or an exhibit of artwork" (Kuh, 2008, p. 11).

Community Colleges

This study examined the enrollment, retention, and graduation rates of community colleges. Community colleges had their beginnings with seven educational innovations. These innovations began in the 1880s and 1890s with "community boosterism and the rise of the research university" (Ratcliff, n.d., para 8). Between 1900 and 1916, "the advent of universal secondary education, the professionalization of teacher education, and the vocational educational movement" influenced the start of community colleges (Ratcliff, n.d., para 8). The last two innovations that influenced the beginning of community colleges happened post-World War II. These were "open access to higher education and the rise of adult and continuing education and community service" (Ratcliff, n.d., para 8).

Community colleges began as junior colleges with Joliet Junior College being one of the first junior colleges in 1901 (Ratcliff, n.d.). Community colleges were "founded on the belief that a more skilled workforce would result in a stronger economy" (Darby-Hudgens, 2012, para. 2), and thus, in the 1930s, began offering vocational training. The junior colleges offered classes on manual arts and handicrafts and also offered classes for white-collared careers such as civil engineering, nursing, finance, business, accounting, and marketing (Trainor, 2015). William Rainey Harper, president of the University of Chicago, spearheaded the junior college in 1901

(Drury, 2003). Harper based the junior college on the German way of teaching that believed that the first two years of college should extend high school by two years (Drury, 2003). The community colleges allowed the elitist colleges to focus on research and be selective about the students who were admitted to their schools (Barrington, 2019).

In the 1940s and 1950s, junior colleges began changing to community colleges and in the 1960s began opening at a high rate of about one per week. The community colleges were being used primarily by the veterans of World War II and the Korean War and also began admitting a diverse student body. The mostly male, white community colleges were now admitting “African American, Latino/a, and immigrant enrollment rates that roughly parallel these groups’ representation in American society” (Trainor, 2015, para 12).

As the number of community colleges grew, the affordability and diversity of training opportunities became more appealing to students. The community colleges evolved from being an extension of high school to a vocational training facility where a student could obtain an associate degree. Another innovation for the community colleges is that they allowed students to take courses to further the students career goals and also allow them to earn certificates. Presently, community colleges also have open enrollment that is not dependent on a student’s GPA, SAT/ACT scores or other factors. The community colleges are also more affordable than traditional four-year colleges. Community colleges can change and adapt. This ability has allowed community colleges to offer courses that change with the surrounding communities’ needs for the students graduating from them (Barrington, 2019).

Scholarship Program History

Scholarships for colleges began in the ancient world. Ancient Greeks and Romans had people that would subsidize students that were underprivileged, but an organized system was not established. In medieval and renaissance Europe, the University of Bologna had students form

“organizations known as ‘nations’” (Pallardy, 2020, para 18). These “nations” “granted loans and scholarships to fellow countrymen” (Pallardy, 2020, para 19).

In 1240 at Oxford, the first loan chest was established. The loan chests were for students to deposit valuables in exchange for the money for tuition for school. The chests also helped fund less wealthy student’s tuition by a wealthier individual. Religious organizations also funded educational institutions to gain followers in their religious beliefs (Pallardy, 2020).

Financial Aid in America started in 1643 at Harvard College. This scholarship was started by Lady Anne Radcliffe Mowlson (Downs, 2018). In 1713, this scholarship merged with other funding and became an individual scholarship in 1893 (Pallardy, 2020). A scholarship, started in 1815, mostly for aspiring ministers, failed because of delinquency.

Western expansion of new universities boomed between 1800 and 1850 with “14% of students receiving scholarships by 1870” (Pallardy, 2020, para 43). In 1890, a piece of legislation increased federal financial aid to fund scholarships (Pallardy, 2020). The next scholarship was established in 1902 in the will of Cecil John Rhodes, known as the Rhodes Scholarship (Downs, 2018). In 1935, the National Youth Organization (NYO) was involved with Franklin Delano Roosevelt’s New Deal which provided over \$600,000 in scholarship money (Pallardy, 2020).

In 1944, scholarships began developing every few years with the founding of the United Negro College Fund (UNCF) (Downs, 2018). Also, in 1944, the G. I. Bill was established for returning soldiers from combat overseas. Scholarships were deemed tax free by the Internal Revenue Service in 1954. Scholarships remained tax free until 1980. The Internal Revenue Code, through an amendment, made some forms of scholarships taxable income (Pallardy, 2020). In 1954, the College Scholarship Service began a standardized system to award scholarships to students in need.

In 1961, the College Scholarship Service formalized the premise that scholarships should be awarded based on need (Pallardy, 2020). In 1955, the National Merit Scholarship Corporation awarded scholarships based on talent to students that were academically advanced through a scholarship competition. The National Achievement Scholarship Program was established in 1964 for promising black students to provide financial support to further their education. The Higher Education Act was passed in 1965. This Act established federally backed loans that remain in use today. The Act created grants for students in need called the Educational Opportunity Grant. The Higher Education Act was adjusted in 1992 to form the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA). The FAFSA allows students to use one form to apply for federal aid, grants, and loans (Pallardy, 2020). In the article, Pallardy (2020) states “today, while most students will rely to some extent on borrowing to finance their educations, scholarships and grants remain an essential component to every aid package” (para 96).

Community College Scholarships

Scholarships in community colleges have many different impacts. One impact that scholarships have in the community colleges is that they encourage full-time enrollment more often (Richburg-Hayes, L. et al., 2011). Scholarship programs also increase the registration and credits that students accumulate during the summer semester (Patel & Rudd, 2012). Students who receive scholarships are likely to enroll in a community college and persist through to graduation. A study “found that the participation of students in the Oklahoma Higher Learning Access Program had a positive effect on persistence”. Similar results were found in a study of Georgia’s Hope scholarship (Pluhta & Penny, 2013, p. 725). Some scholarship programs, those that are performance-based, may also increase the number of credit hours that a student completes (Barrow et al., 2014).

Community college students are usually more nontraditional students and have a greater need for financial aid to attend college. Nontraditional students are defined as students that are 25 years old or older, have a family or employment obligations, or attend college on a part-time basis (Goncalves & Trunk, 2014). The students that attend community colleges do not always apply for financial aid, 1 in 5 do not apply. The amount of student's financial aid that community college students receive is less than half of the amount that students that attend a four-year institution. Financial aid is especially important for the non-traditional students that make up a large sector of the community college student body (Juszkiewicz, 2014). Studies have shown that in some states, the merit-based scholarships have reduced the dropout rate and had a positive effect on college outcomes.

For community college students to receive state scholarships, the student must complete the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA). The information in the FAFSA allows the school that the student applies to determine how much aid the student qualifies (Long, 2010). For many low-income and minority students, scholarships and financial aid are the only way these students will be able to attend college. Studies have shown that scholarships and financial aid are linked to the retention and persistence of students. Another source of financial aid to many community college students is work-study programs. The work-study programs have also shown to have a positive impact on community college student outcomes (Kennamer et al., 2010).

Tennessee Promise. There are many states that have similar programs to the Tennessee Promise Program. One of these states is Indiana. Indiana's 21st Century Scholars Program has existed for more than 25 years. Early studies of the program showed that the students who were eligible for the program and signed up for the program were more likely to enroll in college than those students that did not sign up for the program. Early studies also showed that college

aspirations, enrollment rates, and persistence rates were positive but there have not been any recent studies completed to follow up on these results.

Another program similar to the Tennessee Promise Program is Missouri's A+ Program. A study on Missouri's A+ Program found that enrollment rates in colleges increased overall. The study also found that enrollment in two-year colleges increased while enrollment in four-year colleges decreased. The Kalamazoo Promise program in Michigan is another program to help students with funds for college. Studies have shown that the Kalamazoo Promise program has achieved the two goals that the program set out to accomplish: improve enrollment and improve educational outcomes in public schools (Kelchen, 2017).

California is another state that has programs similar to the Tennessee Promise Program. A study of the promise programs in California shows that there has not been enough research on the California programs to determine the effectiveness of the many different programs. The study indicates that more research needs to be performed to determine if the promise programs in California have had a positive or negative effect on enrollment, retention, and persistence in California public schools (Rios-Aguilar & Lyke, 2020).

Another program similar to the Tennessee Promise Program is the New Haven Promise Program. A study by Lindsay Daugherty and Gabriella C. Gonzalez found that the New Haven Promise Program had a positive effect on enrollment (Daugherty & Gonzalez, 2016). A study by Judith Scott-Clayton on the West Virginia Promise Program found that the program did not have an effect on persistence rates but found that students graduated within five years due to the fact that the students had a higher GPA and earned more credits due to the program (Scott-Clayton, 2011).

The Tennessee Promise Program began as the Knox Achieves Program that served graduating high school seniors in Knox County Tennessee (Miller-Adams, 2018). The

Tennessee Promise Program began in 2015. The Tennessee Promise Scholarship covers tuition and mandatory fees for community colleges and technical schools for students that graduated from a Tennessee high school. The students must begin college the fall after they graduate high school. The students must maintain a 2.0 grade point average, attend mandatory meetings, complete the Free Application for Federal Aid (FAFSA), and complete community service hours (South College, 2018).

Enrollment. Many studies show that there is an increase in enrollment at colleges and universities when free tuition is introduced. In Knox County, Tennessee, a program called Knox Achieves, for Knox county high school graduates, was the first such program in Tennessee. Knox Achieves was the predecessor of the Tennessee Promise program. In the Knox Achieves program, any high school graduate of a Knox county high school could attend a community college for free. This program was not based on need or merit.

The Knox Achieves program began with the class of 2009. After three years, the Knox Achieves program became The Tennessee Achieves program, which then evolved into The Tennessee Promise program. One study conducted on the effects of the Knox Achieves program on enrollment in college found that “program participants exhibit substantial gains in college enrollment over matched peers” (Carruthers & Fox, 2016, p. 108). This same study found that the “seamless enrollment rates overall increased” (Carruthers & Fox, 2016, p. 103).

A study conducted by Thurston Domina (2013) entitled “Does Merit Aid Program Design Matter? A Cross-Cohort Analysis,” found that in states which implemented a merit aid program for college tuition, the enrollment in two-year colleges increased. This study also found that the enrollment at four-year colleges in states that implemented a merit-based tuition program did not experience a statistically significant increase in enrollment. And the study found that the enrollment rates for two-year and four-year colleges increased in states that did not have

a merit-based tuition program, but the states that did implement a merit-based tuition programs saw a faster improvement in college enrollment. The study states that for any state that implemented a grade-based aid programs, the enrollment in “public college going grew significantly faster” than in states that did not have a merit-aid programs (Domina, 2013, p. 22). Domina’s study also looked at means-tested merit aid programs and found that “two-year college enrollment rates surged over the study period, while non-selective, private, and out-of-state four-year enrollment barely kept pace” (Domina, 2013, p. 22). The study found that test-based merit aid programs provide no evidence of influence on enrollment (Domina, 2013).

An article on merit-based aid programs by Perna, Leigh, and Carroll (2017), discussed programs in Tennessee, Oregon, and New York. The article states that Tennessee’s free tuition program, Tennessee Promise, had “some positive effects” on enrollment (Perna et al., 2017, p. 1747). The Oregon program, Oregon Promise, also, according to the article, had a positive effect on enrollment in Oregon’s community colleges. The article states that this increase in enrollment in community colleges may be from a decline in the enrollment in four-year universities. The New York program, New York Excelsior Scholarship, has not been in existence long enough to supply any data for analysis. The article states that “free tuition programs may encourage college enrollment” and also that “free tuition incentives may have benefits beyond the financial award” (Perna et al., 2017, p. 1750).

A study by Page and Scott-Clayton (2016) found that in Nebraska, the Buffet Scholarship, provided free tuition and other monetary accommodations. The study revealed that there was a “small, insignificant effect on initial enrollment” (Page & Scott-Clayton, 2016, p. 8). The same study looked at the Kalamazoo Promise program and found that the program had “substantial effects on college enrollment” (Page & Scott-Clayton, 2016, p. 8-9). The Knox Achieves program that began in Knox County, Tennessee and was the precursor of Tennessee

Promise, also revealed a significant influence in college enrollment (Page & Scott-Clayton, 2016).

A study on the Bright Futures Program in Florida found that once the program was implemented, college enrollment for first-time full-time college students at four-year public institutions increased. The study also found that the college enrollment rates for part-time students increased (Zhang et al., 2013). Finally, a study on the Arizona Aims Scholarship found that the number of applicants to three colleges in Arizona increased. This study also found that the overall effect on enrollment at the three universities-- Arizona State University, University of Arizona, and Northern Arizona University-- increased at a statistically significant rate after the AIMS Scholarship was implemented in Arizona (Upton, 2014).

The studies discussed here show that college enrollment increased because of the availability of merit-based scholarships. If enrollment did not increase, the studies showed that the merit-based financial aid had a significant impact on the number of students enrolling in college for the first time.

Retention. Once students are enrolled in college, the students need to continue in their college career. One way that colleges track the student's continuation is through retention rates. One component included in Tinto's model shows that pre-entry attributes such as previous schooling, abilities, skills, and family background play a role in student retention rates (Connolly, 2016). A study by Feldman (1993) found that factors such as high school GPA, age, ethnicity, and/or the student's part-time or full-time status affected whether the student remained in school. The findings by Feldman match with Tinto's assumption that the abilities that a student brings with him or her to college will help to determine if the student stays in college.

In the first year of a student's college career, a student should be involved with the members of the institution that he or she has chosen. This involvement will help a student

transition into college life. Tinto states that “expanded and extended orientation, freshman seminars, and a variety of extracurricular programs” (Tinto, 2006, p. 3) will help a student become involved in college life. Tinto states that “one fact has remained clear. Involvement, or what is increasingly being referred to as engagement, matters and it matters most during the critical first year of college” (Tinto, 2006, p 4). Faculty involvement is an important element in student retention (Tinto, 2006).

Another of Tinto’s components that was a predictor of student retention was institutional experience. A study by David and Renea Fike also found that student support services affected student retention. Other factors that this study found to influence the retention rates of first-time students were “financial aid, parent’s education, the number of semester hours enrolled in and dropped during the first fall semester” (Fike & Fike, 2008, p. 68). The Fikes’ study revealed a strong positive correlation to student retention and the completion of a developmental reading course. Other positive correlations existed with the “completion of a developmental math course, receiving financial aid, taking an Internet course, semester hours enrolled in the first semester, and participation in student support services” (Fike & Fike, 2008, p. 73). The study also determined that there was a negative correlation between retention and the student’s age and the number of semester hours the students’ dropped in the first semester. The Fikes’ study found that ethnicity and the level of education of a student’s parents did not have an effect on student retention (Fike & Fike, 2008).

A study by Dustin Derby and Thomas Smith found that if a student completed an orientation course in the community college the student was less likely to drop out of college. This study also concluded that if a student took a break from college, dropping out, for one, two, or three semesters, a student who had taken the orientation course was more likely to re-enroll in

college as opposed to the student who had not taken the orientation course (Derby & Smith, 2004).

The study by Page and Scott-Clayton (2016) on the Buffet Scholarship in Nebraska found that the second-year impacts on enrollment were significant. This study found that the students in The Pittsburg Promise program were more likely to continue in college for the first two years (Page & Scott-Clayton, 2016).

Upton (2014) addressed retention in a study on the Arizona AIMS Scholarship showing that the retention rate of the students increased less than 2 percent for students who received the AIMS Scholarship at one of the three institutions that offer the scholarship in Arizona, Arizona State University, University of Arizona, and Northern Arizona University. Therefore, Upton states that the increase in retention rates is not statistically significant (Upton, 2014).

As studies have found, there are many factors in the retention of students in college courses from semester to semester. Some of them are family background, financial aid, ethnicity, and the student's choice of taking an orientation course his or her first semester. There are many other factors that will influence a student's decision to continue in college or to drop out of college. CollegeStats.org listed the top five reasons students leave college are lack of financial funding, lack of academic preparedness, lack of discipline, unhappy with the college experience, and personal issues such as family or work life (Staff Writers, 2020).

Persistence. Once the student has enrolled in college courses and then persisted through all of the courses for the student's major, then the student is ready to graduate. The study on the Buffet Scholarship in Nebraska by Page and Scott-Clayton (2016) found that the scholarship had substantial effects on college graduation rates. The study also found that a program in Pittsburg, Pennsylvania, called The Pittsburg Promise, improved persistence rates (Page & Scott-Clayton, 2016).

A study on the Bright Futures Program in Florida found that the graduation rates after the Bright Futures Program was implemented increased at four-year public institutions. The study found that the rate of students graduating from two-year public institutions also increased after the implementation of the Bright Futures Program in Florida (Zhang et al., 2013).

Tinto (2006) suggests that some students need to remain connected to their community, church, family, or tribe to persist through their college career. Although these attributes are known to influence persistence, officials in colleges find these less useful because the officials do not have control over these attributes (Tinto, 2006). Students that come from low-income backgrounds are less likely to persist than students that come from high-income backgrounds (Tinto & Pusser, 2006).

Many research theories have been developed on the gap between low-income and high-income student persistence, but no working practices have been put into place to lessen the gap. There are five conditions that Tinto believes leads to student success: institutional commitment, institutional expectations, support, feedback, and involvement or engagement. Institutional commitment does not involve only the highest officials in an institution; it also involves all officials in all departments. This involvement directly affects the teachers and the programs that the students need to succeed. Institutional expectations are set forth by the teachers in the classrooms and most importantly by the chancellor of the institution. Institutional expectations define how the students interact with the teachers and vice-versa. The expectations also set forth the behaviors for all interactions on campus. Support comes in many forms. Support can be in the form of financial aid, advising, academic support, and social support. Feedback is another condition for student success. Feedback is not only for the students but also for the institution. An institution will have not only feedback on the students in the form of grades to detect those students that are falling behind, but also on the teachers and the programs that the institution has

in place. Involvement, or engagement, is the most important aspect of persistence, according to Tinto. The more a student is involved in classrooms and campus activities, the more likely the student is to persist through college (Tinto, 2010).

Tinto, Kuh, and Tennessee Promise

Tinto's theory on retention fits the benchmarks of enrollment, retention, and persistence of this study. The four factors of Tinto's model, pre-entry attributes; goals, commitments; institutional experiences; and academic and social integration, all have to do with the benchmarks (Connolly, 2016). Pre-entry attributes line up with enrollment. If a student does not have certain attributes before enrolling in college, the chances of the student attending college are low. Retention lines up with the factors of institutional experiences and academic and social integration. Students need to feel as if they belong to the academic community. If the students feel as though they belong, then they are more likely to continue in their academic career. The last benchmark, persistence, lines up with the factor of goals, commitments. If a student does not have the goal of completing his/her college career, then the student will not be motivated to graduate.

Kuh's High Impact Practices line up with the components of the Tennessee Promise Program. The components of mentoring, meetings, FAFSA, community service, and grade point average line up with the high-impact practices of first-year seminars and experiences, common intellectual experiences, learning communities, writing-intensive courses, collaborative assignments and projects, undergraduate research, diversity/global learning, service learning, community-based learning, internships, and capstone courses and projects (Kuh, 2008). The component of community service is based on Kuh's service learning, community-based learning, and internships. Mentoring and meetings are paired with Kuh's practice of learning

communities. The grade point average and FAFSA are paired with first-year seminars and the capstone project.

This study will examine the trends in enrollment, retention, and persistence using a trend analysis, test of proportions, and ANOVA to determine whether the Tennessee Promise Program has had an effect on the three community colleges used for this study.

Summary

This review of literature shows that Tinto's Theory of Retention and Kuh's High Impact Practices influence the practices of the benchmarks and components of the Tennessee Promise Program. The review of literature shows that the history of community colleges and the history of scholarships play a role in the concept of new programs such as the Tennessee Promise Program. The literature review shows that enrollment, retention, and persistence are influenced by scholarships and the attitudes of the students. The analysis in this study will examine the impacts of the Tennessee Promise Program on enrollment, retention, and persistence using the theoretical frameworks of Tinto and Kuh.

Chapter 3

This study examined the impact the Tennessee Promise Program had on the performance of community colleges as measured by enrollment, retention, and persistence rates in three Tennessee community colleges. The purpose of the study was to determine whether there was a statistical difference in the enrollment rates, retention rates, and persistence rates between Tennessee Promise participants and those that were not Tennessee Promise participants. The data was collected from The Tennessee Board of Regents website and from each of the three community colleges: Jackson State Community college, Motlow State Community College, and Cleveland State Community College. The data was examined based on the school semester rates for each community college in the study. The guiding research question for the study was: What impact has the Tennessee Promise Program had on the performance of community colleges as measured by enrollment, retention, and persistence rates?

The Tennessee Promise Program allows all students that meet the preset components to receive the end-dollar scholarship. Students who received the Tennessee Promise Program scholarship in 2015-2016 and graduated in 2017-2018 will be matched with students that did not receive the Tennessee Promise Program in the two years prior to the implementation of the Tennessee Promise Program, 2013-2014, and graduated in 2015-2016. A trend analysis will be performed on the enrollment rates, a test of proportions will be performed on the retention rates, and an ANOVA will be performed on the persistence rates to determine if there are statistically significant differences between the group of students that were involved in the Tennessee Promise Program and those that were not involved in the Tennessee Promise Program. The data will be analyzed using a 0.05 level of significance.

Study Setting and Population

The population for this study is all first-time, full-time students enrolled in one of the community colleges in this study. The community colleges were chosen to represent each region of Tennessee: (1) Jackson State Community College represents West Tennessee, which is considered the part of Tennessee that reaches from the Mississippi River, on the state's western border, to the Tennessee River; (2) Motlow State represents Middle Tennessee, which reaches from the Tennessee River to the Cumberland Plateau; (3) Cleveland State Community College represents East Tennessee, which reaches from the Cumberland Plateau to the Appalachian Mountains, on the state's eastern border. The demographics of each school are similar and the towns the schools reside in are similar in size and demographics. The demographics are detailed in each college's section that follows. There will be four groups included in the analyses: first time, full time students enrolled in the fall of 2013; first-time, full-time students enrolled in the fall of 2014; first-time, full-time students enrolled in the fall of 2015; and first-time, full-time students enrolled in the fall of 2016.

Jackson State Community College

Jackson State Community College is located in West Tennessee with the main campus situated in Jackson, Tennessee in Madison County. Jackson State Community College serves fourteen counties in West Tennessee: Benton, Carroll, Chester, Crockett, Decatur, Gibson, Hardeman, Hardin, Haywood, Henderson, Henry, Madison, McNairy, and Weakley. Campuses exist in Milan, Bolivar, Brownsville, Henderson, Jackson, and Savannah. Jackson State Community College is a Tennessee Board of Regents school and is accredited by the Commission on Colleges of the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools. Jackson State Community College is a public, two-year school. The school offers Associate of Arts, Associate of Applied Science, and Associate of Science degrees Jackson State also offers technical

certificates and career advancement certificates. The 2012 to 2018 enrollment, student: teacher ratio, number of teachers, and diversity score have remained flat. Enrollment for the 2020-2021 school year was 4924, with 1987 students full-time and 2937 part-time. Seventeen percent of the student population was considered to be minority with the majority of those being Black. The racial make-up of the student body is 1% Asian, 2% Hispanic, 13% Black, 83% White, and 1% two or more races.

The completion rate for Jackson State Community College is 12%. Graduates earn an annual average of \$29,400 over ten years. The tuition for the 2020-2021 school year was \$3804 for in-state students and \$14,868 for out-of-state students. The tuition rates are lower than the state average of \$4573 for in-state tuition and higher than the state average of \$14,803 for out-of-state tuition. The acceptance rate for students applying to Jackson State Community College is 56%. Ninety-four percent of the students attending Jackson State Community College receive some type of financial aid. The student: teacher ratio is 38:1, which is higher than the state average of 30:1. The diversity score for the school is 0.29, which is less than the state average of 0.42. There are 129 teachers at Jackson State Community College. The average ACT score for incoming freshman is 18.3. Half of the students that attend Jackson State Community College transfer to a 4-year school upon graduation. (*Jackson State Community College, 2020*)

Motlow State Community College

Motlow State Community College which is located in Middle Tennessee. The school's main campus is in Tullahoma, Tennessee in Coffee County. Motlow State Community College serves eleven counties in Middle Tennessee: Bedford, Cannon, Coffee, Dekalb, Franklin, Lincoln, Moore, Rutherford, Van Buren, Warren, and White. Campuses are situated in Fayetteville, McMinnville, Smyrna, and Tullahoma. Motlow State Community College is a

Tennessee Board of Regents school and is accredited by the Commission on Colleges of the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools.

Motlow State Community College is a public, two-year school. The school offers Associate of Arts, Associate of Applied Science, and Associate of Science degrees along with technical certificates and career advancement certificates. The 2012 to 2018 enrollment, student: teacher ratio, number of teachers, and diversity score have remained flat. The enrollment for the 2020-2021 school year was 4758. There were 2093 students full-time and 2665 part-time. Thirteen percent of the student population was considered to be minority with the majority of those being Black and Hispanic. The racial make-up of the student body is 2% Asian, 3% Hispanic, 5% Black, 87% White, 1% two or more races, and 2% unknown races.

The completion rate for Motlow State Community College is 22%. Graduates earn an annual average of \$29,700 over ten years. The tuition for the 2020-2021 school year was \$3804 for in-state students and \$11,340 for out-of-state students. This rate is lower than the state averages of \$4573 for in-state tuition and \$14,803 for out-of-state tuition. The acceptance rate for students applying to Motlow State Community College is 42%. Eighty-four percent of the students attending Motlow State Community College receive some type of financial aid. The student: teacher ratio is 34:1, which is higher than the state average of 30:1. The diversity score for the school is 0.24, which is less than the state average of 0.42. There are 142 teachers at Motlow State Community College. The average ACT score for incoming freshman is 19 and the average SAT score is 1051. (*Motlow State Community College, 2020*)

Cleveland State Community College

Cleveland State Community College is the third college used for data in this study. Cleveland State Community College is located in East Tennessee. The school's main campus is in Cleveland, Tennessee in Bradley County. Cleveland State Community College serves five

counties in East Tennessee: Bradley, Meigs, McMinn, Monroe, and Polk. Campuses are situated in Cleveland, Athens, and Madisonville. Cleveland State Community College is a Tennessee Board of Regents school and is accredited by the Commission on Colleges of the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools.

Cleveland State Community College is a public, two-year school. The school offers Associate of Arts, Associate of Applied Science, and Associate of Science degrees along with technical certificates and career advancement certificates. The 2012 to 2018 enrollment, student: teacher ratio, number of teachers, and diversity score have remained flat. The enrollment for the 2020-2021 school year was 3500. There were 1500 students full-time and 2000 part-time. Seventeen percent of the student population was considered to be minority with the majority of those being Black. The racial make-up of the student body is 1% Asian, 3% Hispanic, 6% Black, 83% White, 1% two or more races and 6% unknown race.

The completion rate for Cleveland State Community College is 16%. Graduates earn an annual average of \$31,100 over ten years. The tuition for the 2020-2021 school year was \$4338 for in-state students and \$16,914 for out-of-state students. These rates are lower than the state average of \$4573 for in-state tuition and higher than the state average of \$14,803 for out-of-state tuition. The acceptance rate for students applying to Cleveland State Community College is 100%. Ninety-four percent of the students attending Cleveland State Community College receive some type of financial aid. The student: teacher ratio is 32:1, which is higher than the state average of 30:1. The diversity score for the school is 0.30, which is less than the state average of 0.42. There are 110 teachers at Cleveland State Community College. The average ACT score for incoming freshman is 19.5. (*Cleveland State Community College*, 2020) A table summarizing the demographic data for the three colleges in this study is in Appendix A.

Data Collection

The benchmarks for this study are enrollment, retention, and persistence. The enrollment benchmark uses data from the Tennessee Board of Regents website. Tennessee Board of Regents data will also be used for the retention benchmark in this study. The data for persistence was collected from each of the three schools in the study, Jackson State Community College, Motlow State Community College, and Cleveland State Community College. At the time of data collection, the Tennessee Promise Program had two graduating cohorts.

The Tennessee Board of Regents use Kuh's High Impact Practices to guide the research for data collection in the schools under their jurisdiction (*TBR High Impact Practices*, n.d.). The Tennessee Board of Regents collects enrollment data from each of the schools that reports to them. The Tennessee Board of Regents collects retention from semester to semester from each school that reports to them. The data is collected from each community college and compiled into public records.

Persistence data is collected from each of the three schools that are in this study. Each school in this study was contacted about data. The data from each school consisted of first-time, full-time students, if the student qualified for the Tennessee Promise Program, number of semester hours the student completed, and the demographics on the student such as race and gender. The files were either emailed or on a flash drive. No identifying markers were included in the files.

Analysis

A trend analysis is used to exam the enrollment data, a test of proportions is used to analyze retention, and an analysis of variance (ANOVA) compares the persistence of three groups: pre-Tennessee Promise, year Tennessee Promise was launched, and post-Tennessee Promise.

Enrollment

For the enrollment benchmark, a trend analysis will be conducted using Tennessee Board of Regents (TBR) data. A trend analysis is an analysis that tries to predict what will happen with a particular variable by analyzing historical trends. The Tennessee Board of Regents (TBR) data is used to determine if there is an upward or downward trend in the enrollment of the three schools in this study for the two years before the Tennessee Promise Program was introduced, 2013-2015, to the two years after the Tennessee Promise was implemented 2015-2018.

There will be a trend analysis conducted using Tennessee Board of Regents enrollment data from 2013-2018 for the total number of community colleges in Tennessee and for each of the colleges in this study. For students to receive the Tennessee Promise Monies, the students must be full-time students. A trend analysis will examine if enrollment has increased, decreased, or remained unchanged over the 2013-2018 study period. An analysis will be conducted for total state community college enrollment and for each of the three community colleges included in the study. The analysis will use the total full-time enrollment for students that were eligible for the Tennessee lottery scholarship.

Retention

For the benchmark of retention, a test of proportions will be conducted which is a test to determine if the sample from a population contains the true proportion for the population. The Tennessee Board of Regents retention data will be used to determine if the three schools in this study represent retention trends in the majority of the community colleges in the state of Tennessee.

The test of proportions will use 2013-2018 data from the Tennessee Board of Regents for 'home' college, one of the three community colleges in the study, and 'Tennessee Board of Regents school', all schools in the Tennessee Board of Regents jurisdiction, for the total number

of community colleges in Tennessee and each of the three schools in this study. A test of proportions will be used to determine if there is a statistically significant difference in retention from year to year.

Persistence

For the persistence benchmark, an analysis of variance (ANOVA) will be conducted. An analysis of variance (ANOVA) is a test to determine if there are differences between groups (Larose, 2016). In this study, a variable named 'Persistence' was created to test three groups: pre-Tennessee Promise (2013-2014), year Tennessee Promise was launched (2015), and post-Tennessee Promise (2016-2018).

The analysis of variance (ANOVA) will be conducted to determine if there is a difference between the three groups, pre-Tennessee Promise, year Tennessee Promise was launched, and post-Tennessee Promise. The variable Persistence was created to determine if there is a statistically significant difference between Tennessee Promise students and non-Tennessee Promise students and between each of the three schools in this study using the analysis of variance (ANOVA). The database contains the variables college (Jackson State, Motlow State, and Cleveland State), student gender and race, Tennessee Promise Program (pre, launch year, and post), and the number of semesters from first term to graduation. The resulting database contains 3,913 records.

Summary

The purpose of the study is to determine whether there is a statistical difference in the enrollment rates, retention rates, and persistence rates between the program participants and those that were not program participants. The data will be examined based on first-term fall semester, excluding spring and summer. The study compares Jackson State Community College, Motlow State Community College, and Cleveland State Community College, whether the

students were in the Tennessee Promise Program and persistence. Results of the analyses are now discussed in Chapter 4.

Chapter 4

This chapter discusses the results of the trend analysis for the enrollment benchmark, a test of proportions for the retention benchmark, and an analysis of semesters to graduation for the persistence benchmark.

Enrollment

Scholarships play a large role in the decision of students to attend college (Pluhta & Penny, 2013). Studies have shown that programs such as the Tennessee Promise program have had a positive impact on the enrollment in community colleges. Some of the programs that have shown positive impacts in other states are Indiana's 21st Century Scholars Program, Missouri's A+ Program, New Haven Promise Program, and Knox Achieves (Kelchen, 2017, Daugherty & Gonzalez, 2016, Carruthers & Fox, 2016)

The analysis for the benchmark of enrollment is a trend analysis. A trend analysis determines if there is an increase in the data, decrease in the data, or if the data remains constant over time (Glen, 2018). The trend analysis was used to determine if there was a change over time in enrollment. The following chart and graph show the trends for the three schools in the study: Jackson State, Motlow State, and Cleveland State. It also shows the trends for all community colleges in Tennessee. Table 4.1 provides the enrollment for Motlow State, Jackson State, Cleveland State, and all community colleges for the academic years of 2013 through 2018.

Table 4.1

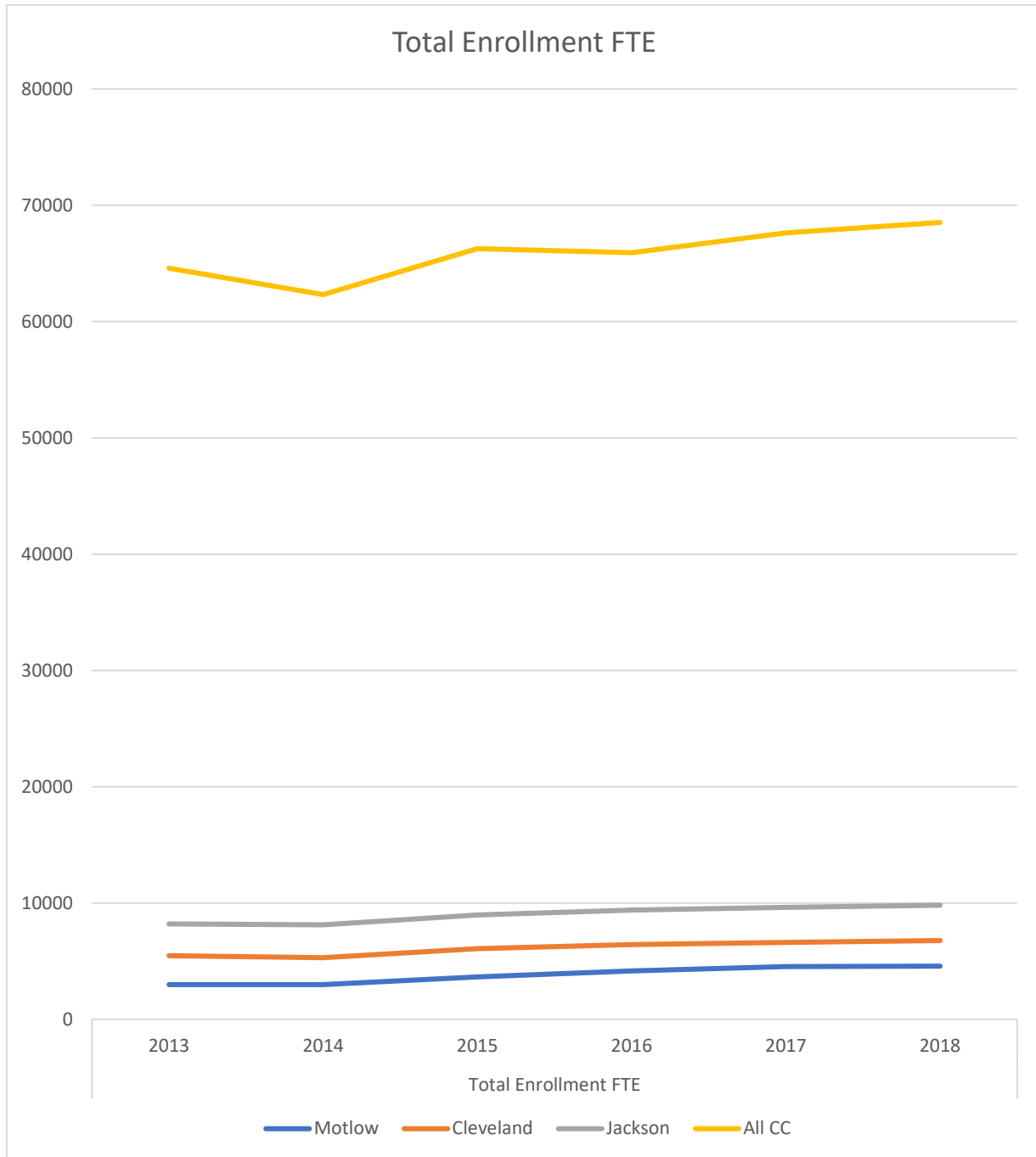
Total Enrollment FTE

	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018
Motlow	2,984	2,984	3,654	4,152	4,525	4,571
Cleveland	2,487	2,316	2,413	2,283	2,099	2,201
Jackson	2,722	2,825	2,907	2,968	3,007	3,039
All CC	56,392	54,192	57,290	56,511	58,005	58,712

Figure 4.1 shows that there was a slight increase in enrollment for all three schools in the study and for all community colleges in Tennessee between 2014 and 2015. Jackson State Community College remained constant after 2014. Motlow State Community College increased slightly again in 2017 and then remained constant through 2018. Cleveland State Community College remained constant through 2016 and then dropped slightly through 2018. The trend for all community colleges in Tennessee dropped from 2013 to 2014, then increased in 2015, the year Tennessee Promise was implemented. The enrollment for all community colleges in Tennessee remained flat through 2016, then increased slightly through 2018.

Figure 4.1

Total Enrollment FTE



Retention

Tinto's theoretical framework shows that academic integration and integration into learning communities can have an impact on retention (Halpin, 1990, Karp et al., 2010). Learning

communities are also part of Kuh's High Impact Practices (Kuh et al., 2018). One of the components of the Tennessee Promise program is based on the involvement of student's in learning communities in the form of community service and meetings with mentors.

A test of proportions was performed for the benchmark of retention for each school in the study between the pre-launch of the Tennessee Promise Program and the launch year of the program, between the launch year and the post-launch of the program, and between the pre-launch of the program and the post-launch of the program. The test of proportions was used to determine if there was a statistically significance between the pre-launch, launch, and post-launch of the Tennessee Promise Program.

Motlow State Community College

The test of proportions shows that for Motlow State Community College, the result was not significant for the years between the pre-launch and the launch of the Tennessee Promise Program ($z = -0.66, p = 0.51$). Between the launch year and the post-launch of the Tennessee Promise Program, the results for the test of proportions was also not statistically significant ($z = 1.64, p = 0.10$). Further, the results for the test of proportions from the pre-launch to the post-launch of the Tennessee Promise Program showed no statistical significance on the retention of the students ($z = 0.86, p = 0.39$).

Cleveland State Community College

The test results for Cleveland State Community College on the retention rates showed different results than Motlow State Community College. The results for retention rates at Cleveland State for the years between the pre-launch of the Tennessee Promise Program and the launch year of the program showed a significant result ($z = 6.16, p = 0.00$). For the years between the launch year of the program and the post-launch years of the program the results of the test of

proportions were also significant ($z = -3.46, p = 0.00$). The results between the pre-launch years and the post-launch years also showed a significant result ($z = 2.53, p = 0.01$).

Jackson State Community College

Jackson State Community college had mixed test results for the pre-launch, launch, and post-launch of the Tennessee Promise Program. The results of the test of proportion for the years between the pre-launch and the launch of the program showed significant results ($z = -3.15, p = 0.00$). For the launch year and the post-launch years of the program the result showed there was not a statistically significant difference ($z = 1.93, p = 0.05$). The results for the pre-launch years and the post-launch years showed there was not a statistical significance for the retention rates ($z = -1.29, p = 0.20$). Results for the test of proportions are provided in Table 4.2.

Table 4.2

Test of Proportions

	Retention Percentages	z-scores	p-value
Motlow			
Pre-launch	.580	-.66	0.51
Launch	.588	1.64	0.1
Post-launch	.570	0.86	0.39
Cleveland			
Pre-launch	.548	6.16	0.00
Launch	.460	-3.46	0.00
Post-launch	.511	2.53	0.01
Jackson			
Pre-launch	.481	-3.15	0.00
Launch	.523	1.93	0.05
Post-launch	.498	-1.29	0.20

Persistence

Kuh's High Impact Practices and Tinto's Retention model both have components for persistence at community colleges and the Tennessee Promise program. Both Kuh and Tinto integrate learning communities into their models (Karp et al., 2010, Kuh et al., 2018). Learning communities are an important part of the Tennessee Promise program for persistence.

For the analysis of the persistence benchmark, a numeric scale variable was created using the number of semesters that the students took to complete their degree was created. Two categorical variables were created: (1) a nominal dichotomous variable of yes or no if the student was eligible for Tennessee Promise funding, and (2) a nominal variable with the three groups based on the time periods for pre-Tennessee Promise, Tennessee Promise launch, and post-Tennessee Promise.

Analysis of Persistence

Parametric analyses such as t-tests and analysis of variance have three primary assumptions: (1) samples are drawn independently of each other, (2) each sample is normally distributed, and (3) equality of variances. Each of the three colleges in the study provided their data independently of each other. The data provided were population data rather than sample data. Therefore, the first parametric assumption was met.

The assumption of normality and equality of variance were then examined for the numeric variable of number of semesters to graduation. A value of +/- 1.0 is considered normal and anything between +/- 1.0 and 2.0 is considered acceptable (Field, 2000 & 2009; Gravetter & Wallnau 2014; Trochim & Donnelly, 2006). The skewness statistic for the number of semesters to graduate was 0.977, indicating the measure of normality fell within the acceptable range of +/- 1.0.

However, Levene's test of homogeneity indicated that the variances were not equal for number of semesters to graduate. Glen (2016) states the Brown-Forsythe test is less likely than the Levene test to incorrectly declare the assumption of equal variances has been violated. The B-F test was also conducted, and the result was a statistically significant difference in variance as well ($p = 0.000$). This difference is most likely due to the unequal number of students between Motlow State Community College ($n = 2375$), Cleveland State Community College ($n = 839$),

and Jackson State Community College (n = 698). When this occurs, (Glenn) suggests a non-parametric alternative may be more appropriate. Therefore, a non-parametric independent samples test was conducted comparing medians across groups.

Non-parametric Independent Samples Tests. Three tests comparing medians across groups were conducted to examine if there was a statistically significant difference in number of semesters to graduation for (a) Tennessee Promise eligible students vs. non-eligible students, (b) between the three colleges in the study, and (c) between the three time periods.

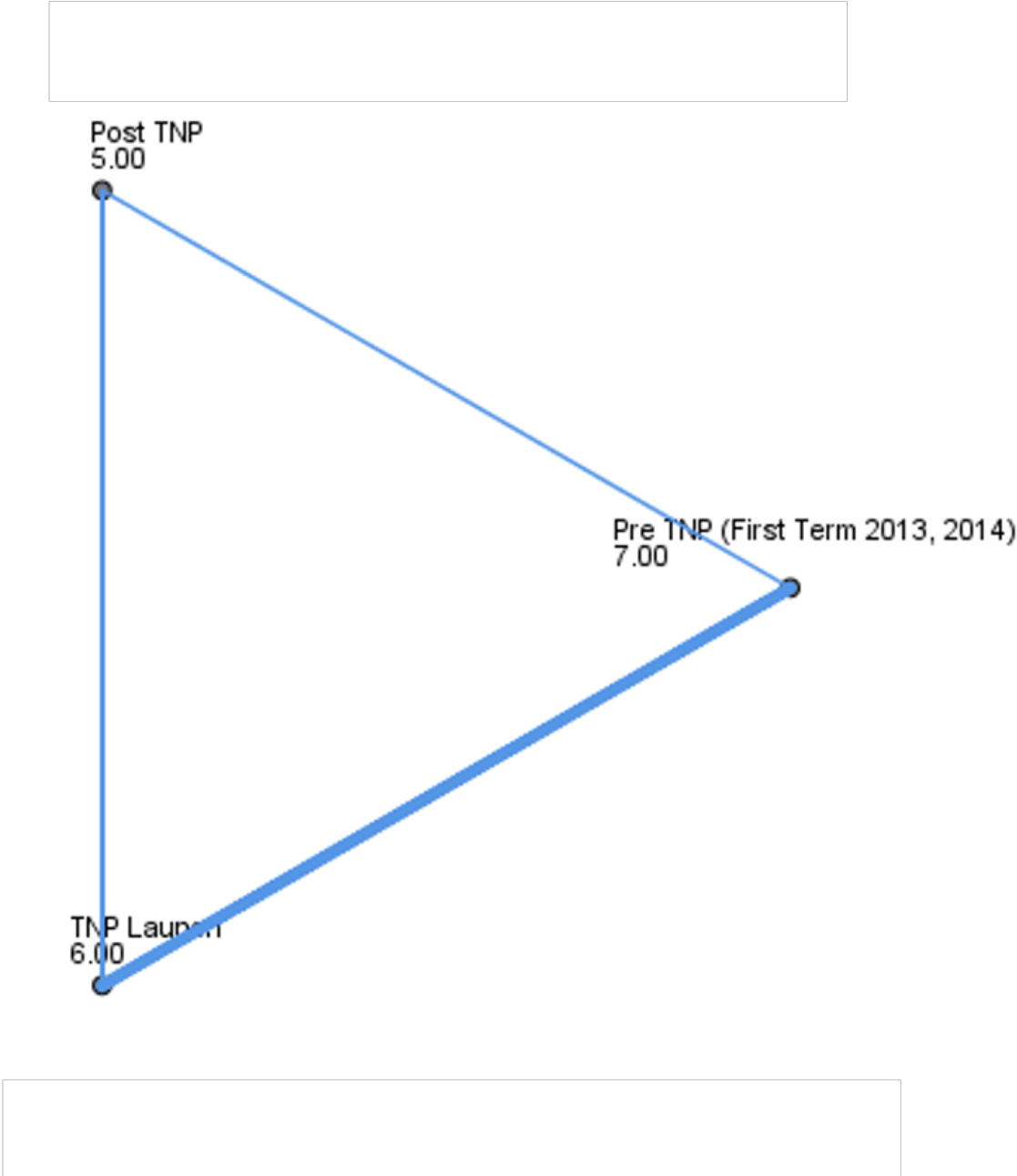
The test of the null hypothesis that medians of number of semesters were the same across categories of Tennessee Promise was rejected indicating there is a statistically significant difference between the two groups ($\chi^2 = 71.27, df = 1, p < 0.001$). The median number of semesters for the categories of Persistence for the time periods was also found to be statistically significant ($\chi^2 = 471.09, df = 2, p < 0.001$).

A pairwise comparison found that there was a statistically significant difference for Post Tennessee Promise to Tennessee Promise launch ($\chi^2 = 215.16; p < 0.01$), post-Tennessee Promise launch to pre-Tennessee Promise launch ($\chi^2 = 383.13; p < 0.001$), and Tennessee Promise launch to pre-Tennessee Promise launch ($\chi^2 = 66.17; p < 0.001$). Finally, the hypothesis for the medians of number of semesters for the categories of Colleges was not statistically significant ($\chi^2 = 2.58, df = 2, p = 2.74$).

Figure 4.2 shows the pairwise comparison of the three time periods, pre-Tennessee Promise launch, Tennessee Promise launch, and post-Tennessee Promise launch, and persistence. For the time period of pre-Tennessee Promise, the number of semesters that it took for students to complete their program was seven semesters. At the launch of the Tennessee Promise program, the number of semesters declined to six semesters. Post-Tennessee Promise program launch the number of semesters students took to graduate was five semesters. Figure

4.2 gives a graphical representation of how the number of semesters to completion decreased from the time period before the Tennessee Promise program was launched to the time period after the Tennessee Promise program was launched.

Figure 4.2



Summary

The analysis for this study consisted of a trend analysis for the benchmark of enrollment, a test of proportions for the benchmark of retention, and a non-parametric independent samples test of the medians for the three variables for the benchmark of persistence. The trend analysis showed that there was a slight increase for all three schools in the study between the years of 2014 and 2015. After these years there were mixed results for the three schools. The test of proportions for the benchmark of retention showed there was no statistical significance for the three time periods for Motlow State Community College, there was statistical significance for the three time periods for Cleveland State Community College, and there were mixed results for the three time periods for Jackson State Community College. The non-parametric test for the benchmark of persistence showed that there was a statistically significant difference in the two groups, Tennessee Promise eligible and not eligible, and the time periods, pre-Tennessee Promise launch, Tennessee Promise launch, and Post-Tennessee Promise launch, but there was no statistically significant difference in the median number of semesters to completion.

Chapter 5

Summary of Study

This study used three community colleges in Tennessee, Jackson State, Motlow State, and Cleveland State, to determine if the Tennessee Promise program had an effect on enrollment, retention, and persistence. The study was conducted using a trend analysis for the benchmark of enrollment, a test of proportions for the benchmark of retention, and a non-parametric independent samples test of the medians for the benchmark of persistence.

The discussion begins with a review of Tinto and Kuh's work in relation to the findings of this study.

Tinto's Theoretical Framework

Tinto's theoretical framework combines several attributes that tie into the benchmarks of this study. One part of Tinto's study is that pre-entry attributes, such as family background and economic status, play a role in whether a student enrolls in college and remains in college through the completion of their program of study (Connolly, 2016, Feldman, 1993).

Another aspect of Tinto's framework is academic integration. Academic integration of the student into the student's college of choice helps the student's retention and persistence through college (Halpin, 1990).

Learning communities are another important aspect of Tinto's framework integration into learning communities help students with retention and persistence in their college career (Karp et al., 2010).

Other aspects of Tinto's framework that contribute to the retention of students are student intentions, external commitments, and academic and non-academic staff (Connolly, 2016). These components of Tinto's model have an effect on the student and how the student sees their college career continuing.

The results of this study show that if the components of Tinto's Theoretical Framework are incorporated into a student's college career, the student has a higher likelihood of enrolling in college and staying in college until completion.

Kuh's High Impact Practices

Kuh's High Impact Practices have components that tie into the persistence of college students in community colleges. One of these components is student engagement. If the student is engaged in the college experience, then the student is more likely to complete their degree (Kuh et al., 2018).

Two other components of Kuh's High Impact Practices that contribute to a student's persistence are learning communities and service-learning courses. Learning communities help students by allowing them to interact with other students in an academic and non-academic way and encourage student engagement. Service-learning courses help the student integrate themselves into the college community and the surrounding community by allowing them to have internships and jobs based on the career path the student has chosen (Kuh et al., 2018).

The last component of Kuh's High Impact Practices that has an effect on persistence is first year seminar classes. The first-year seminar classes ease the student into college and provides the student with information about degrees and college life that the student may not have access to if the student did not take the class (Kuh et al., 2018).

The components of Kuh's High Impact Practices influence enrollment and completion of a student's college life. Kuh's High Impact Practices are reflected in the results of this study by showing that if a student is involved in all aspects of college life, then the student will persist until graduation.

Discussion Findings

The Tennessee Promise program is an end-dollar scholarship for students that graduated from a Tennessee high school. The students must meet certain components of the Tennessee Promise program. The Tennessee Promise program was implemented to help with Drive to 55 initiative that Governor Bill Haslam put into place for Tennessee. The Drive to 55 initiative strives to have 55% of Tennesseans hold a degree or professional certificate by 2025. Three community colleges were used in this study to examine the primary benchmarks of the Tennessee Promise program.

The study found that there were mixed results for enrollment, retention, and persistence in the three community colleges used for the study.

Enrollment

Motlow State Community College had a slight increase in enrollment for the Launch of the Tennessee Promise program, became flat, had a slight increase in 2017 and then became flat again. Jackson State Community College had an increase in enrollment at the launch of the Tennessee Promise program and then flattened out after the launch of the program. Cleveland State Community College also had a slight increase in enrollment at the launch of the Tennessee Promise program and then became constant through 2018. The trend for all community colleges in Tennessee increased the year Tennessee Promise was implemented, became flat in 2016, and then had a slight increase through 2018. This shows that the Tennessee Promise program had an initial impact on enrollment in the three community colleges in this study and in all community colleges in Tennessee. It also shows that the Tennessee Promise program did not continue the enrollment increase for the three community colleges in this study or across all Tennessee community colleges.

Retention

The retention for the three schools in the study showed mixed results. Motlow State showed no statistical significance for the three time period pairs studied per-launch to launch, pre-launch to post-launch, and launch to post-launch of the Tennessee Promise program. Jackson State had different results. The time period pairs of pre-launch to launch showed statistically significant results whereas the other two pairs showed no statistically significant results. Cleveland State showed a statistically significant result for all time period pairs. This shows that the Tennessee Promise program has different impacts on retention in community colleges based on which college is studied. The Tennessee Promise program could be beneficial for some community colleges, such as Cleveland State Community College, but not as beneficial to others, such as Motlow State Community College.

Persistence

For the benchmark of persistence non-parametric tests were used because the tests for equal variances were not met. The results showed that the null hypothesis was rejected showing a statistically significant difference between the two groups, Tennessee Promise eligible or not, and a statistically significant difference in the time periods. The tests also showed there was no statistically significant difference in the median number of semesters. The results show that the Tennessee Promise program did not make a difference on how many semesters the students needed to complete their degrees. It did, however, make a difference when the student attended college and if the student was eligible for Tennessee Promise funding or not.

One reason for the differences in the testing results may be due to the unequal number of students between Motlow State (n = 2375), Cleveland State (n = 839), and Jackson State (n = 698). The benchmark of persistence was created because of this large difference in the number of student records obtained for the study. Another reason for the differences in the results could

be the demographics of the three schools. Although the demographics are similar, Cleveland State serves fewer counties and has fewer campuses than the other two schools in the study. Cleveland State also has a 100% acceptance rate where Jackson State has a 56% acceptance rate and Motlow State has a 42% acceptance rate.

The average ACT score for Cleveland State is also higher than the other two schools. Since Motlow State has a larger student base and accepts fewer applicants, this could account for the results of the enrollment trend increasing in 2017 when the other two schools did not. Since Cleveland State has a smaller student base than the other two schools and accepts all students that apply, this could account for the statistically significant results in retention.

Implications

This study can help community colleges in Tennessee and other states by showing them that the Tennessee Promise program and programs like it can have an initial impact on enrollment, retention, and persistence, but may not have a lasting effect.

Enrollment

This study shows that the enrollment for Tennessee community colleges was affected by the Tennessee Promise program. The enrollment in the three community colleges did increase in the beginning stages of the Tennessee Promise program but did not sustain the increase in the years after the launch of the Tennessee Promise program.

Pluhta and Penny (2013) found that scholarship play an important role in the enrollment of students. Policy makers for the community colleges in Tennessee need to look at ways to improve the Tennessee Promise program to regain the initial increase in enrollment that the program had. One way that the community colleges could maintain the increase in enrollment is to use the Tennessee Promise as a recruitment tool for the school. The Tennessee Promise program is an asset for the community colleges and needs to be used as a major recruitment tool

for prospective new students. The Tennessee Promise program contributes financially to the schools and helps reach the goal of the Drive to 55 program.

This study found that the enrollment in the three community colleges initially increased after the Tennessee Promise program was implemented. A study by Carruthers and Fox (2016) found that the Know achieves program also had an initial increase in enrollment. Another study by Domina (2013) found the same results.

After the Tennessee Promise program was implemented, the enrollment increase was not sustained. A study by Perna, Leigh, and Carroll (2017) found the same type of results. The results for their study found that the scholarship program had some positive effects on enrollment just as the Tennessee Promise program had on the three schools in this study.

Retention

This study shows that the Tennessee Promise program had an effect on some community colleges but not as much of an impact on other community colleges for retention. A study by Page and Scott-Clayton (2016) found that students were more likely to continue their college career if the student received a scholarship. But a study by Upton (2014) found that there was no statistically significant correlation between scholarships and student retention.

Community colleges need to use the Tennessee Promise program to increase retention in the schools. The Tennessee Promise program pays for up to five semesters of community college for the students. If the leaders of the institution reinforce the fact that the Tennessee Promise program will continue to pay for the student's education, up to five semesters, the retention rate may increase.

A way that the leaders of the community college could reinforce this is to have periodic meetings with the students that are receiving the Tennessee Promise funding. These meetings should be in small groups with the mentors of the students. The mentors could then talk to the

students and determine if the student has completed the requirements for the continuation of the Tennessee Promise funding.

Policy makers can also look at the student's pre-entry attributes to determine if the student would be a good fit for the Tennessee Promise Program. Pre-entry attributes consist of family background, prior education, economic and social background, among others. These pre-entry attributes align with Tinto's framework and determine if a student continues in their college career or not (Connolly, 2016, Feldman, 1993).

Persistence

In this study, the Tennessee Promise program showed that the number of semesters a student attended the institution did not have as much influence on the student's persistence as when the student attended or if the student was eligible for the Tennessee Promise funding. A study by Page and Scott-Clayton (2016) also found that scholarships had a substantial effect on college graduation. Another study by Zhang, Hu, and Senseing (2013) also found that with scholarships, graduation rates from two-year colleges increased.

Leaders of the community colleges should use the Tennessee Promise program to influence the student to continue their education until graduation. The leaders of the institution need to, once again, reinforce to the students that the Tennessee Promise program continues to pay for the student's education until graduation as long as the student continues to meet the components of the Tennessee Promise program.

As the student approaches graduation, the leaders of the institution should meet with the students and remind them to continue to meet the requirements for the Tennessee Promise program. The student's advisor could also remind the student that if the student continues through graduation, then the student will be helping the state reach its goal of having at least 55% of Tennesseans have a degree or certificate by the year 2025.

Another aspect that school leaders should consider with persistence is scholarships. Student scholarships encourage students to persist through completion. Scholarships also play an important role in the student's completion of their college career (Plhuta & Penny, 2013).

Study Limitations

There are limitations in this study. One limitation is that there were only three Tennessee community colleges used for the study. In this study, census data was used and not a random sample from the three community colleges. A way to make the study stronger would be to use a random sample from each community college in Tennessee.

Another limitation to this study is that data was collected from certain years. All years before and after the implementation of the Tennessee Promise program were not used. Now that more years have passed since the Tennessee Promise program has been implemented, more years should be included. The study should be continued to include more years and the results would continue to get better.

The final limitation to this study is that the number of student records collected from the three schools in the study were not equal. More colleges should be included in the study and a randomized sample from each community college should be included.

Future Research

Future research needs to be conducted to determine if the Tennessee Promise program is a program that the state of Tennessee should continue funding. The future research should consist of more Tennessee community colleges than the three in this study. The research should be longitudinal. There should be a random sample used instead of census data so that the number of student records from each community college is the same. Other research could include comparing the Tennessee Promise program to other programs from other states that are similar to the Tennessee Promise program.

Future research does not have to be only quantitative. A qualitative study could be conducted. Research could consist of interviewing administrators and leaders of the community colleges about their opinions of how the Tennessee Promise program is working or not working in their respective school.

The research could also consist of interviewing students that are eligible for the Tennessee Promise program and those that are not eligible to determine their opinions. Leaders of the community and others could also be interviewed to determine if they support or do not support the Tennessee Promise program or if they know what the Tennessee Promise program is.

This research can also be helpful for community colleges in other states. The research in this study shows that programs like Tennessee Promise can be helpful for initial enrollment and for the retention and persistence of students. This study can help other states develop similar programs in their state to help students obtain degrees and certificates and better themselves and the community in which they serve.

Programs similar to the Tennessee Promise program have succeeded. One example is the Knox Achieves program. The Tennessee Promise program was based on the Knox Achieves program. The Knox Achieves Program helped students in Knox County, Tennessee obtain a two-year degree and increased enrollment in the community college (Carruthers and Fox, 2016). Other states that do not have a similar program can use the Tennessee Promise program to help develop a program to increase enrollment, retention, and persistence. This research can also help states develop a better program by seeing what does not work with the Tennessee Promise program.

Conclusion

This study has shown that the Tennessee Promise program, which was implemented in 2015 by Governor Bill Haslam as part of the Drive to 55 program, has had mixed results on the

enrollment, retention, and persistence of Tennessee community colleges. The enrollment initially increased but the Tennessee Promise program but did not continue the initial increase after the implementation year.

The retention for the schools in this study were mixed. For some of the time periods the results were statistically significant and other time periods were not statistically significant. For the benchmark of persistence, there were also mixed results. The test results showed that whether the students were eligible for Tennessee Promise funding and the year the student started at the community college had a statistically significant result but the number of semesters it took the student to graduate did not have statistically significant results.

More research should be conducted to continue the investigation of how the Tennessee Promise program, and other scholarship programs like the Tennessee Promise program, can affect the enrollment, retention, and persistence rates for community colleges in Tennessee. The research should include more Tennessee community colleges and contain a random sampling for the colleges.

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Appendix A

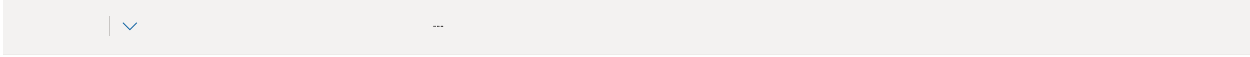
Table 1.

	Jackson State Community College	Motlow State Community College	Cleveland State Community College
Counties Served	Benton, Carroll, Chester, Crockett, Decatur, Gibson, Hardeman, Hardin, Haywood, Henderson, Henry, Madison, McNairy, and Weakley	Bedford, Cannon, Coffee, Dekalb, Franklin, Lincoln, Moore, Rutherford, Van Buren, Warren, and White	Bradley, Meigs, McMinn, Monroe, and Polk
Campuses	Milan, Bolivar, Brownsville, Henderson, Jackson, and Savannah	Fayetteville, McMinnville, Smyrna, and Tullahoma	Cleveland, Athens, and Madisonville
Degrees	Associate of Arts, Associate of Applied Science, Associate of Science, degrees technical certificates, and career	Associate of Arts, Associate of Applied Science, Associate of Science, degrees technical certificates, and career	Associate of Arts, Associate of Applied Science, Associate of Science, degrees technical certificates, and career

	advancement certificates	advancement certificates	advancement certificates
Enrollment 2020- 2021	4924 1987 full-time 2937 part-time	4758 2093 full-time 2665 part-time	3500 1500 full-time 2000 part-time
Student: Teacher Ratio	38:1	34:1	32:1
Number of Teachers	129	142	110
Diversity Score	0.29	0.24	0.30
Racial Makeup	1% Asian, 2% Hispanic, 13% Black, 83% White, and 1% two or more races	2% Asian, 3% Hispanic, 5% Black, 87% White, 1% two or more races, and 2% unknown races	1% Asian, 3% Hispanic, 6% Black, 83% White, 1% two or more races and 6% unknow race
Completion Rate	12%	22%	16%
Earnings Over Ten Years	\$29,400	\$29,700	\$31,100
Tuition 2019-2020	\$3804 in-state \$14,868 out-of-state	\$4573 in-state \$14,803 out-of-state	\$4338 in-state \$16,914 out-of-state
Acceptance Rate	56%	42%	100%
Average ACT Score	18.3	19	19.5

Appendix B

Email from University of Memphis IRB



Cc: Donna J Menke (djmenke)

Appendix C

Jackson State Community College IRB

From: Vonderheide, Sara
To: Dawn Nicole Englert (dnnglert)
Subject: RE: request for data
Date: Friday, March 1, 2019 2:12:58 PM
Attachments: image005.png
sig-logo_2b7d6f9c-84dd-44d4-aba0-362eed63d46.png

Dawn,

You have been approved by the JSCC IRB. I will work on pulling this data for you and getting your official approval letter next week.

Have a good weekend.

Sara

This project is for my dissertation in the Leadership Department at the University of Memphis. This dissertation will compare the differences in enrollment, retention, and graduation rates of students between the two years prior to the implementation of the Tennessee Promise program and the first two cohorts of the Tennessee Promise Program. The dissertation will determine if there was an impact of the Tennessee Promise program on enrollment, retention, and graduation rates since its implementation.

The data needed will be student data, including (but not limited to) race, gender, and enrollment status for the years 2013 – 2018. (Students that started in 2013 graduating in 2015/2016, started in 2014 graduating in 2016/2017, etc.) No identifying markers are needed for the students. There will be no recruitment of students and no direct risks to the students as identifying markers will be removed from the data before I obtain the data. The data source will be existing data from Jackson State Community College obtained from Sarah Vonderheide. There is no need for an informed consent from the subjects since the data will come from existing data. There will be no debriefing procedures.



Institutional Review Board

Research Application

No research is to be conducted without prior approval of the JSCC Institutional Review Board.

All research to be conducted requiring Tennessee Board of Regents (TBR) information or Regents Online Degree Program data will be done through the Tennessee Board of Regents.



Application for Review by the Jackson State Institutional Review Board

Date Submitted: Feb 26, 2019
Title of Research Project: Has the TN Promise Program Improved Enrollment, Retention, and Graduation Rates at TN Community Colleges
Principal Investigator/Project Director: Dawn N. Englebert
Department/Program: Doctoral Program at University of Memphis
Organization/University: University of Memphis
Email: dnglebert@memphis.edu Phone: (731) 267-8351
Co-investigator (1):
Co-investigator (2):
Anticipated Source of Funding:
Estimated Duration of Research: 6 months Projected Starting Date: Feb 26, 2019
Number of Subjects to be Recruited: 0

Project Status: [X] New Project [] Change to Existing Project [] Review of Ongoing Project
Type of Review Requested: [X] Exempt [] Expedited [] Full Review
Completed IRB/Human Research Participants (HRP) Training? [] at JSCC [X] Elsewhere [] None
If Training was done elsewhere, please state where: University of Memphis

Type of Project:
[] Faculty Research
[] Student Research under Faculty Supervision
[] Student Class Project under Faculty Supervision
[] Federal Grant Application
[] Non-Federal Grant Application
[X] Thesis or dissertation (Please give school name): University of Memphis
[] Other (specify):

Which, if any, of the following populations will be involved in this project?

- Children under the age of 18
- Veterans
- Elderly (65+ as defined by the American Medical Association)
- Individuals who are pregnant
- Individuals with Mental or Physical Disabilities ("physical, mental and/or sensory characteristics that affect a person's ability to engage in activities of daily life" as defined by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 2005).
- Economically Disadvantaged ("If a family's total income is less than the family's threshold, then that family and every individual in it is considered in poverty. The official poverty thresholds do not vary geographically, but they are updated annually for inflation with the Consumer Price Index (CPI-U). The official poverty definition uses money income before taxes and does not include capital gains or noncash benefits (such as public housing, Medicaid, and food stamps" as defined by the U.S. Census Bureau).
- Prisoners

Research Protocol Checklist

Yes No

- Does this study involve the collection of personal identifying data (name, Social Security Number, date of birth, etc.)?
- Will identifying data be shared (in published reports, presentations, or reports to funding agencies)?
- Will any tangible incentives (examples: extra credit points, money, gift certificates) be offered as a result of participation? If so, what? _____
- Will subjects be recorded in any way during the project? (examples: Video, audio, notes, etc.)
- Is an individual's participation in this study completely voluntary? If no, explain: does not apply, using existing data with no identifying markers
- Does this study involve the use of or testing of live animals?

Provide a memo that includes all of the following:

- A detailed description of the research project and its purpose.
- A description of protocol including the number of subjects needed, how subjects will be recruited, possible risks to participants, data sources (Interviews, existing data, grades, focus groups, ect), informed consent procedures, and debriefing procedures.
- A description of methods used to measure all sources of data (Interviews, grades, focus groups, ect) and/or observations.
- A detailed description of measures that will be taken to keep data confidential, including plans for publication, length of time, and how original documents/recordings will be destroyed.

Attach copies of the following (digitally):

- Consent Form
- Emails, Letters, or Flyers soliciting participants
- Surveys or Questionnaires (if applicable)
- Interview or Focus Group Questions (if applicable)

- Confidentiality and Privacy Policy
- HRP Training Certificate
- Funding Documentation (JSCC faculty, staff, and students ONLY)

Responsibility of the Principal Investigator:

- Any changes or additions made to the original research methods, procedures, or purpose must be submitted in writing to the IRB for approval *prior* to being implemented.
- Any adverse events (serious or minor) must be reported in writing to the IRB *immediately*.
- Any problems concerning human subjects that occur once a project has begun must be reported to the IRB.
- The Principal Investigator is responsible for retaining all documents pertaining to informed consent and adverse events for a period of three (3) years.

The Jackson State Community College Institutional Review Board reserves the rights to change the review determination or to discontinue the study at any point during the research review and procedures. The IRB also reserves the right to request additional information from the Principal Investigator at any time during the research process.

I certify that the protocol and method of obtaining informed consent as approved by the Jackson State Institutional Review Board will be followed during this research project. Any changes that to the research project will be submitted to the IRB in writing for review and approval prior to implementation.


2-26-19

 Principal Investigator/Project Director signature Date

 Co-investigator signature (If appropriate) Date

 Jackson State IRB Chair signature Date

For IRB Use Only

Project Identification Number: _____		Year: _____	
<input type="checkbox"/> Approved	<input type="checkbox"/> Approved with Restrictions	<input type="checkbox"/> Tabled	<input type="checkbox"/> Disapproved
Determination: <input type="checkbox"/> Exempt <input type="checkbox"/> Expedited <input type="checkbox"/> Full Review			
_____	_____	_____	_____
Signature of IRB Chair	Date	President's Signature	Date

- This project is for my dissertation in the Leadership Department at the University of Memphis. This dissertation will compare the differences in enrollment, retention, and graduation rates of students between the two years prior to the implementation of the Tennessee Promise program and the first two cohorts of the Tennessee Promise Program. The dissertation will determine if there was an impact of the Tennessee Promise program on enrollment, retention, and graduation rates since its implementation.
- The data needed will be student data, including race, gender, date student became first time freshman at Jackson State, whether they are Tennessee Promise recipients or not, semester to semester retention, and when the student graduated (two years or three years) for students beginning in 2013 and graduating in 2018. (Students that started in 2013 graduating in 2015/2016, started in 2014 graduating in 2016/2017, started in 2015 graduating in 2017/2018, started in 2016 graduating in 2018/proposed 2019.) No identifying markers are needed for the students. There will be no recruitment of students and no direct risks to the students as identifying markers will be removed from the data before I obtain the data. The data source will be existing data from Jackson State Community College obtained from Sarah Vonderheide. There is no need for an informed consent from the subjects since the data will come from existing data. There will be no debriefing procedures.
- The data will be existing data from a data file received from Sarah Vonderheide.

- The data will be kept in a password protected data file. There will be no identifying markers for the subjects. The data file will be deleted after the completion of the dissertation and all revisions have been completed. The data will be used in the dissertation as a chart. There are no plans to publish this dissertation at this time. The dissertation will be kept on file at the University of Memphis.

**COLLABORATIVE INSTITUTIONAL TRAINING INITIATIVE (CITI PROGRAM)
COMPLETION REPORT - PART 1 OF 2
COURSEWORK REQUIREMENTS***

* NOTE: Scores on this Requirements Report reflect quiz completions at the time all requirements for the course were met. See list below for details. See separate Transcript Report for more recent quiz scores, including those on optional (supplemental) course elements.

- **Name:** Dawn Englert (ID: 4926752)
- **Institution Affiliation:** University of Memphis (ID: 2176)
- **Institution Email:** dnglert@memphis.edu
- **Institution Unit:** Mathematics

- **Curriculum Group:** Students conducting no more than minimal risk research
- **Course Learner Group:** Students - Class projects
- **Stage:** Stage 1 - Basic Course
- **Description:** This course is appropriate for students doing class projects that qualify as "No More Than Minimal Risk" human subjects research.

- **Record ID:** 22961552
- **Completion Date:** 25-Feb-2019
- **Expiration Date:** 24-Feb-2021
- **Minimum Passing:** 75
- **Reported Score*:** 100

REQUIRED AND ELECTIVE MODULES ONLY

	DATE COMPLETED	SCORE
Belmont Report and Its Principles (ID: 1127)	25-Feb-2019	3/3 (100%)
Students in Research (ID: 1321)	25-Feb-2019	5/5 (100%)
History and Ethical Principles - SBE (ID: 490)	25-Feb-2019	5/5 (100%)
Defining Research with Human Subjects - SBE (ID: 491)	25-Feb-2019	5/5 (100%)
The Federal Regulations - SBE (ID: 502)	25-Feb-2019	5/5 (100%)
Assessing Risk - SBE (ID: 503)	25-Feb-2019	5/5 (100%)
Informed Consent - SBE (ID: 504)	25-Feb-2019	5/5 (100%)
Privacy and Confidentiality - SBE (ID: 505)	25-Feb-2019	5/5 (100%)
Research with Prisoners - SBE (ID: 506)	25-Feb-2019	5/5 (100%)
Research with Children - SBE (ID: 507)	25-Feb-2019	5/5 (100%)
Research in Public Elementary and Secondary Schools - SBE (ID: 508)	25-Feb-2019	5/5 (100%)
International Research - SBE (ID: 509)	25-Feb-2019	5/5 (100%)
Internet-Based Research - SBE (ID: 510)	25-Feb-2019	5/5 (100%)
Research and HIPAA Privacy Protections (ID: 14)	25-Feb-2019	5/5 (100%)
Vulnerable Subjects - Research Involving Workers/Employees (ID: 463)	25-Feb-2019	4/4 (100%)
Conflicts of Interest in Human Subjects Research (ID: 17464)	25-Feb-2019	5/5 (100%)
University of Memphis (ID: 14523)	25-Feb-2019	No Quiz

For this Report to be valid, the learner identified above must have had a valid affiliation with the CITI Program subscribing institution identified above or have been a paid Independent Learner.

Verify at: www.citi-program.org/verify/?k5cd80730-f205-4f22-b6a9-e3b7e2b21655-22961552

Collaborative Institutional Training Initiative (CITI Program)
 Email: support@citi-program.org
 Phone: 866-529-5929
 Web: <https://www.citi-program.org>

COLLABORATIVE INSTITUTIONAL TRAINING INITIATIVE (CITI PROGRAM)

COMPLETION REPORT - PART 2 OF 2

COURSEWORK TRANSCRIPT**

** NOTE: Scores on this Transcript Report reflect the most current quiz completions, including quizzes on optional (supplemental) elements of the course. See list below for details. See separate Requirements Report for the reported scores at the time all requirements for the course were met.

- **Name:** Dawn Englert (ID: 4928752)
- **Institution Affiliation:** University of Memphis (ID: 2176)
- **Institution Email:** dneglert@memphis.edu
- **Institution Unit:** Mathematics

- **Curriculum Group:** Students conducting no more than minimal risk research
- **Course Learner Group:** Students - Class projects
- **Stage:** Stage 1 - Basic Course
- **Description:** This course is appropriate for students doing class projects that qualify as "No More Than Minimal Risk" human subjects research.

- **Record ID:** 22961552
- **Report Date:** 25-Feb-2019
- **Current Score**:** 100

REQUIRED, ELECTIVE, AND SUPPLEMENTAL MODULES

	MOST RECENT	SCORE
University of Memphis (ID: 14523)	25-Feb-2019	No Quiz
Belmont Report and Its Principles (ID: 1127)	25-Feb-2019	3/3 (100%)
Research and HIPAA Privacy Protections (ID: 14)	25-Feb-2019	5/5 (100%)
Students In Research (ID: 1321)	25-Feb-2019	5/5 (100%)
Defining Research with Human Subjects - SBE (ID: 491)	25-Feb-2019	5/5 (100%)
The Federal Regulations - SBE (ID: 502)	25-Feb-2019	5/5 (100%)
Assessing Risk - SBE (ID: 503)	25-Feb-2019	5/5 (100%)
Informed Consent - SBE (ID: 504)	25-Feb-2019	5/5 (100%)
Privacy and Confidentiality - SBE (ID: 505)	25-Feb-2019	5/5 (100%)
Research with Prisoners - SBE (ID: 506)	25-Feb-2019	5/5 (100%)
Research with Children - SBE (ID: 507)	25-Feb-2019	5/5 (100%)
Research in Public Elementary and Secondary Schools - SBE (ID: 508)	25-Feb-2019	5/5 (100%)
International Research - SBE (ID: 509)	25-Feb-2019	5/5 (100%)
Internet-Based Research - SBE (ID: 510)	25-Feb-2019	5/5 (100%)
History and Ethical Principles - SBE (ID: 490)	25-Feb-2019	5/5 (100%)
Vulnerable Subjects - Research Involving Workers/Employees (ID: 483)	25-Feb-2019	4/4 (100%)
Conflicts of Interest in Human Subjects Research (ID: 17464)	25-Feb-2019	5/5 (100%)

For this Report to be valid, the learner identified above must have had a valid affiliation with the CITI Program subscribing institution identified above or have been a paid Independent Learner.

Verify at: www.citiprogram.org/verify/?k5cd80730-f205-4f22-b6a3-e3b7e2b21655-22961552

Collaborative Institutional Training Initiative (CITI Program)

Email: support@citiprogram.org

Phone: 888-529-5929

Web: <https://www.citiprogram.org>

Appendix D

Motlow State Community College IRB

From: Motlow State <no-reply@wufoo.com>

Sent: Wednesday, April 24, 2019 1:11 PM

To: DataHelp <datahelp@mscc.edu>; Ashley Broadrick <abroadrick@mscc.edu>; Tiffany Phillips <tphillips@mscc.edu>; Sunny Cao <scao@mscc.edu>; Amanda Bowers <abowers@mscc.edu>

Subject: Data Request Form [#24]

Institution/Organization/Department: University of Memphis/Department of Leadership

*

Name *

Dawn Englert

Email * dnnglert@memphis.edu

Phone Number * (731) 267-8351

Status I am a faculty member at The University of Memphis but I am also a doctoral student. The data is for the student role that I am in.

Request description: What type of data? For what group? Examples: first-time college student retention, graduation rates of English majors, etc. *

I would like the gender, race, enrollment, retention, and graduation information on first time freshmen for Fall 2013 thru Spring 2019.

Purpose of the request: How will it be I am working on my doctorate and this data is for my used? Who is the intended audience? dissertation.

Examples: program review, accreditation, department meeting, etc. *

Semesters *

- Academic Year (Summer, Fall, Spring)

Year(s) * 2013-2019

Please provide any additional information about the request:

I have data from two other community colleges, one in east TN and one in west Tn. I would like to have data from a community college in middle TN to round out the study. I am looking at the enrollment, retention, and graduation number of the first two cohorts of the TN Promise Program compared to the two years prior to TN Promise being implemented. If there is more information needed, I will provide it if possible.

Date Friday, May 31, 2019

Office of the Provost

**360 Administration
Building
Memphis, Tennessee
38152-3370**

www.memphis.edu



July 16, 2019

Matlow State Community
College Institutional
Research Board
P.O. Box 8500
Lynchburg, TN 37352-8500

This letter confirms The University of Memphis' participation in Dawn Englert's dissertation research project at the university, called "Has the Tennessee Promise Program improved enrollment, retention, and graduation rates at Tennessee community colleges and technology schools?," to explore the impact of the Tennessee Promise Program on student enrollment, retention, and graduation rates. We understand that as part of this study, Dawn Englert will collect existing data from Matlow State Community College on student demographics, no identifying markers, from the fall 2013 through spring 2018.

Furthermore, we also understand that this data collection and analysis will be used in Mrs. Englert's dissertation research and related doctoral candidacy completion requirements. We are aware that this dissertation research will be made available to Matlow State Community College's administration upon completion of Mrs. Englert's dissertation submission. The data collected by Mrs. Englert will be kept in a password-protected file.

July 16, 2019

Thomas Nenon, PhD
Executive Vice President
and Provost University of
Memphis

Appendix E

Cleveland State Community College IRB

This is a request for data to help me complete my dissertation for the Leadership Department at the University of Memphis.

Date Submitted: March 26, 2019

Title of Research Project: Has the Tennessee Promise Program Improved Enrollment, Retention, and Graduation Rates at Tennessee Community Colleges

Principal Investigator: Dawn N. Englert

Department/Program: Doctoral Program at the University of Memphis

Organization/University: University of Memphis

Email: dnnenglert@memphis.edu

Phone: (731)267-8351

Type of Review Requested: exempt

Completed IRB/Human Research Participants Training: Training was completed at the University of Memphis

Population that may be involved: Children under the age of 18, individuals that are pregnant, individuals with mental or physical disabilities, economically disadvantaged

Protocols: There will be no identifying markers needed for this research, there will be no incentives given to participants, the participants will not be recorded in any way, the data requested is existing data with no identifying markers, there will be no testing of live animals

Attached is a memo of the data requested and how the data will be stored/kept until this dissertation and all of its revisions are completed. If there are any changes to the project, Cleveland State Community College will be notified of the changes. If there are any questions, please call, text, or email me at the number or email address above.

Thank you for this consideration.

Dawn N. Englert

From: Knopp, David <dknopp@clevelandstatecc.edu>

Sent: Tuesday, March 26, 2019 12:14:46 PM

To: Dawn Nicole Englert (dnnglert)

Subject: Re: Data for dissertation

Certainly willing to assist you, what specific information would you like to have?

David Knopp

Director, Institutional Research & Effectiveness

Cleveland State Community College

P.O. Box 3570

Cleveland, TN 37320

423-473-2390

- You can't CONNECT all the dots until you COLLECT all the dots.