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Institutional Factors that Pertain to Commuter Student Success

Heather Adams Kenney
University of North Florida

INSTITUTIONAL FACTORS THAT PERTAIN TO COMMUTER STUDENT SUCCESS

by

Heather Adams Kenney

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ABSTRACT

Institutional Factors That Pertain to Commuter Student Success

Heather A. Kenney

University of North Florida

Dr. Katherine Kasten, Chair

Department of Leadership, School Counseling, and Sport Management

The purpose of this study was to explore what institutional factors affect retention and student success at a Florida public, 4-year university for commuter students. This study included institutional factors controlled by the university that affect retention with students who commute to the institution. Today, student retention is at the forefront of college and university goals. Commuter students compose over 80% of enrollment at the nation's college and university campuses. This mixed-method study included both a survey and focus groups. In the first part of the study, quantitative data were collected, using the Noel-Levitz Student Satisfaction Inventory (SSI). The survey analysis of the data collected using the SSI indicated that the scores for the scales were not statistically significant in determining whether or not a student would choose the university again. In the second part, focus groups were conducted to better understand student satisfaction with the institutional factors. Four main themes emerged from data analysis: (a) location and other reasons to attend the institution, (b) connectedness to the institution, (c) institutional factors that assist with progression toward degree, and (d) obstacles to graduation. There are four major conclusions addressed: students who participated in this study had higher levels of satisfaction with library services and academic advising services than with other institutional factors, commuter students were not participating in

student organizations or social activities on campus because they needed to balance external obligations with their academic careers, that students in the focus groups appeared to have an instrumental view of their college experiences and are focused on what they needed to do to complete course and degree requirements, and commuter student desired to have increased regular interactions with faculty teaching courses in their major fields. In conclusion, because commuter student are the majority population on many campuses, college administrators and faculty will need to continue providing opportunities for commuter student engagement and academic success.

CHAPTER 1
INTRODUCTION

Student retention has been at the forefront of educational institutions' goals for many years. Colleges and universities rely on students to populate campuses and to graduate in order to increase the schools' reputations of producing high-achieving citizens. Most research has focused primarily on retention of residential students. Many students live on campus, but many do not. Within research and practice, commuter students are usually compared to residential students, and both are treated as a homogenous group (Jacoby, 1989). Although retention has been researched extensively throughout the years, current research on commuter students is limited.

Administrators and faculty often portray university life as an idealistic residential community. These idealistic notions may include the belief that all students attend university programming, utilize campus resources, and connect with peers (Kuh, Schuh, & Whitt, 1991; Ortman, 1995). Ortman (1995) noted that colleges where commuter students are either the majority or the total student population still treat these individuals as if they are residential students. That attitude can probably be attributed to administrators, staff, and faculty who have high levels of tradition that are based on residential college values.

In the mid-1980s, researchers studied commuter students to better understand their college experiences. In the last 10 years, research relating to commuter student retention has been limited. Commuter students are defined as students who live off

campus in their own residences, students who live in rental housing near the campus, and students who live on their own with families while attending college (Jacoby, 2000; Kuh, Gonyea, & Palmer, 2009). This is a broad definition, and some research has been conducted within the commuter population to help better define commuter students. Kuh, Gonyea, and Palmer (2001) defined commuter students based on the location of off-campus residence using the National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE). The researchers divided commuter students into two categories: (a) those living off-campus, but still within walking distance; (b) those living off-campus, but a driving distance from the institution. Others have defined commuter students differently. Roe Clark (2006) defined commuter students as dependent commuter students or independent commuter students. Dependent commuter students live at home with a parent, guardian, or relative, and independent commuter students live alone or with individuals other than guardians.

Commuter students usually attend classes and then leave the institution to return home, to go to work, or to engage in other activities (Ortman, 1995). Much of the research on this topic pertains to understanding ways to involve commuter students and to provide resources that enhance the experiences these students have at the institution. As the number of students accessing higher education in the United States increases, campuses are serving greater numbers of commuter students; therefore, an understanding of commuter student satisfaction and needs is important.

Knowing the reasons students leave college does not necessarily explain the reasons other students persist or the ways institutions can help students stay enrolled and succeed (Tinto, 2007). Commuter students may not be satisfied with their college experiences, due to isolation or lack of student support. Kodama (2002) showed how

transfer and commuters students are often marginalized, a problem ignored by many university administrators. Kodama described marginality as an aspect of dissatisfaction that related to students' feelings of isolation on campus and found that lack of on-campus support was a significant predictor of marginality. Kodama's study also revealed that commuter students find higher levels of support from off-campus sources than on-campus sources.

Relationships with faculty, residential status, academic achievement, social integration, and student demographics are only a few of the many factors linked to retention. Johnson (1997) found that many of the same personal factors that contributed to the retention of traditional, campus-based students were also significant to commuter students. However, commuter students often have different challenges than residential students. Such examples may include transportation to and from school, multiple life roles, integrating their support system into their collegiate world, and finding sources to connect them socially (Jacoby, 1989; Moore, Hossler, Ziskin, & Wakhungu, 2008; Ortman, 1995).

Campus administrators can learn from commuter students, to better understand which resources are important to these individuals and to determine what resources the institution can provide. Baum (2005) argued that it is institutions' responsibility to assess their student populations and understand the goals individual students possess for entering higher education. Baum further stated that models and initiatives would be more successful if the initiatives were targeted to specific students, with the goal of retaining those students at the institution.

The ways in which institutional factors affect commuter student retention and graduation rates have not been fully researched. Some studies have focused on specific institutional factors that affect students as a whole but have not examined the ways those factors specifically affect commuter students (Moore et al., 2008). Kuh (2002) noted that institutional culture has been shown to affect students' perceptions of their institutions, which in turn influences student satisfaction. Additional research is needed to understand the way institutional factors might be controlled to increase retention. Limited research is available on ways that institutional factors affect students who do not live or have never lived on a college campus.

Institutions primarily populated by commuter students must understand the resources needed to help these individuals succeed in college. Colleges and universities must recognize that every institutional policy and practice can impact how students spend their time and how much effort they devote to their educations (Astin, 1985). Satisfaction with the campus experience could encourage students to stay enrolled and finish their degrees. Knowledge of the factors that influence the commuter student experience can help institutions build programs designed specifically for commuter students or tailor current programs to incorporate new elements to include commuter students.

Statement of the Problem

The unique needs of commuter students have been neither adequately understood nor incorporated into policies, programs, and practices. Student services often overlook commuter students, and programs are rarely designed to meet their needs (Jacoby & Garland, 2005; Kodama, 2002). Understanding the complex institutional factors that affect commuter students' retention and graduation rates could enhance retention.

Another reason the institution should be concerned about commuter student retention is that commuters have competing demands the university cannot control. A myth exists that commuter students do not persist until graduation, but research shows that commuter students' educational goals are as equally high as on-campus students' educational goals (Jacoby, 1998). However, commuter students have different obstacles that may make balancing their lives more challenging. Many competing demands on commuter students' time, including work or family commitments, can distract them (Jacoby, 2000; Kuh, 2002). Similarly, the University of North Florida has a large commuter population. Administrators and faculty at UNF should attempt to understand factors that affect commuter student success.

The University of North Florida (UNF) is a four-year, public institution with over 16,000 students. The institution has a high percentage of commuter students and is a regionally-focused institution. Approximately 80% of UNF's undergraduate population is commuter students (University of North Florida, 2010). Commuter students who attend the institution may live at home with their parents, own their own homes, or rent housing facilities.

UNF administrators must strive to understand the factors that primarily affect retention of commuter students. Jacoby (2000) identified four needs impacting the commuter student experience, which should be tended to by higher education administrators: transportation issues, multiple life roles, integrating support systems, and developing a sense of belonging. Student satisfaction was the basis for identifying institutional factors that positively or negatively affect commuter student retention and

graduation rates at UNF, and the present study was designed to identify institutional factors that ensure commuter student success.

Research Questions

The main research questions of the present study are the following:

RQ1: Does satisfaction with institutional factors affect undergraduate students' decisions to stay at a public university in Florida?

RQ2: How do institutional factors influence commuter student success?

Originally, the intent was to include the research question, "How do the levels of satisfaction with institutional factors differ between students who commute to campus and students who live on campus?" Due to the low number of residential students who participated in the survey and the fact that the focus group data consisted only of commuter student responses, this question was removed. However, the focus group data delivered emergent themes from student responses, providing a more comprehensive description of student success.

Definitions of Terms

For this study, the following definitions applied:

Commuter student refers to any student who lives at home with family, who lives in rental facilities close to campus, or who lives in their own home while attending college (Jacoby, 2000). Commuter students can be defined as dependent (i.e., lives with parent, guardian, or relative) students or independent (i.e., lives alone or with individuals other than guardian) commuter students (Roe Clark, 2006).

Resident student is a student who lives or has lived on campus within an institution's residential facilities.

Institutional factors or *institutional levers* are synonymous terms and refer to programs, organizational structures, departments, or persons directly funded by an institution (Goenner & Snaith, 2004).

Individual factors or *student characteristics* are not controlled by the university and include socioeconomic status, demographic information, motivation, work ethic, and academic background and achievement.

For the purpose of this study, defined terms give the reader the ability to understand specific identification of the language used within education and the UNF community. This study employed both quantitative and qualitative research, which is described in the next section.

Methodology

This study explored institutional factors pertaining to commuter student retention and graduation rates at UNF.

Setting

UNF was the setting for this research. UNF is a four-year, public institution with a commuter student population exceeding 80% of the total student population. Located in northeast Florida, UNF provides postsecondary education to first-time-in-college (FTIC), transfer, post-baccalaureate, and graduate-level students. The university is the only public state institution in the region, providing resources to the community.

Design

The present study was a mixed-methods case study of upper division students at UNF, a regional university in the Southeast, and the study consisted of two phases. First, quantitative data were collected when students volunteered to take the Noel-Levitz

Student Satisfaction Inventory (SSI). This instrument was used to assess the level of student satisfaction with institutional factors.

Students at the junior and senior level and in the four colleges in which I had access to students were asked to volunteer for the study by filling out a contact sheet and indicating if they would participate in the survey and focus group. The contact sheet provided students the opportunity to participate in both the Web survey and focus groups, either the survey or the focus groups, or not to participate in either the survey or the focus groups. Students who volunteered for the survey were sent an email with the survey link. Each student was given a random access code selected by Noel-Levitz. To complete the survey, the student clicked the survey link in the email and entered the access code. Of the students contacted, 293 volunteered to complete the survey.

Commuter students who volunteered were also asked to participate in a focus group to understand why they were or were not satisfied with institutional factors. Focus group questions were designed based on institutional factors described in the SSI survey and the theoretical models. Examples of institutional factors discussed in the SSI survey were student services such as academic advising, tutoring, health promotions, women's center, and lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgendered (LGBT) services; One Stop Services for admission and academic records; faculty interactions; athletics; campus facilities; and co-curricular activities. On the contact sheet, 57 students indicated their interest in being contacted to participate in the focus groups. Twenty-one students participated in the focus groups, representing four of the five colleges. Four focus groups were conducted over a one-month period.

The findings described the respondents' level of satisfaction by item and subscale, correlations among subscales, and logistic regression analysis. The focus group analysis described how students were solicited to participate in the focus groups, participant demographics, and the themes identified in the focus group comments.

Delimitations and Limitations of the Study

This study was delimited to junior and senior undergraduate students at UNF. Junior and senior level students were chosen to participate based on the length of their experience in postsecondary education. The study was defined as a case study at a single, regional institution. The sample population represented undergraduate junior- and senior-level students from four of the five colleges at the institution. Data collected were perceptual data, with a particular population defined as commuter students. Residential students were not well represented in the survey data and did not participate in the focus groups. Even though such comparisons might be valuable to allow for a more in-depth of understanding regarding the primary population, commuter students were the target population in the study. The results of the study can only be generalized to similar populations.

One possible limitation of this study was the small sample size for the quantitative analysis. Vittinghoff and McCulloch (2006) described the rule of thumb for logistic regression as a minimum of 10 outcome events per predictor variable [EPV]. Hair et al. (2006), however, noted that the lower threshold for the ratio of cases to independent variables should be at least 5 to 1. The SSI survey had 9 predictor variables; therefore, the sample size should have been adequate by either of these guidelines.

Another limitation is that students from the College of Arts and Sciences (COAS) did not participate in the present study. COAS accounted for the largest student population at the university. Although students were obtained from the other four colleges, the data were not representative of the whole institution.

The third limitation is the low alpha coefficient for internal consistency reliability of scores on the *Safety & Security Scale* (α = .377). Cronbach's alpha ranges from 0 to 1. This suggests that the items in the scale have relatively low internal consistency. Also, the dependent variable, the survey question "All in all, if you had it to do over again, would you enroll here?" was used in a prior study by Schreiner (2009). Schreiner's study was the only one found that used this criterion as the dependent variable in the SSI survey to connect satisfaction level to retention and graduation.

The fourth limitation is that the upper level undergraduate population at UNF is primarily commuter students. Students who live in residential facilities on campus are traditionally freshman and sophomore level students; therefore the residential population in the upper level undergraduate population was limited. The data are not representative of both commuter and residential student populations at UNF.

The last limitation is that focus groups for research purposes present challenges. Students in the focus groups may have discouraged one another from discussing their experiences with institutional factors. Participants may also have influenced or discouraged certain individuals from participating, therefore limiting the range of useful input (McIntyre, 2011). The generalizations made from this research should be taken with caution in relating them to other institutions or student populations.

Chapter Summary

This study is organized into five chapters. Chapter 1 introduced the study and included the statement of the problem, the research questions, and the definitions of terms, an overview of the study design, and the delimitations and limitations of the study. Administrators and faculty at institutions with large commuter populations should try to determine if student retention is based on personal characteristics, institutional factors, or both. The present study contributes to understanding the institutional factors that impact retention and graduation rates. Specifically, the present study was designed to identify the institutional factors at UNF that affect commuter student retention and graduation.

Chapter 2 includes a literature review and the conceptual framework for this study. The review focuses on student characteristics and institutional factors that affect commuter students. The conceptual framework incorporates Tinto's student integration theory and Bean's student attrition theory.

Chapter 3 delineates the methodology and procedures used for this study, including descriptions of the SSI survey data collection procedures, analysis procedures, and limitations of the survey. A description of the focus group methodology includes characteristics of the focus group participants, design of questions, data collection, and data analysis procedures. Chapter 4 provides a detailed analysis of the data from both parts of the study.

Finally, Chapter 5 provides four major conclusions based on the data, major recommendations for student affairs professionals, and recommendations for future research and practice.

CHAPTER 2
LITERATURE REVIEW

In recent years, student retention and graduation rates have been the significant foci for many institutions. Colleges and universities have a responsibility to help students succeed in their academic and personal endeavors. Throughout the history of higher education, attrition has been a concern. Tinto (1982) described dropout and persistence as a reflection of the functioning of the higher education system. Attrition is a national phenomenon that is unlikely to be significantly altered without massive change to both the structure and functioning of the higher education system. Commuter student retention for institutions with large commuter populations is a particular concern for administrators.

Many institutions consider retention and graduation rates the ultimate signs of success. Higher education administrators must understand, however, that the decision to leave school is often the student's choice, based on his or her perception of the institution. Students who leave institutions usually have more than one reason for exiting. Often those reasons are a mixture of both individual and institutional factors that compound one another (Calcagno, Bailey, Jenkins, Kienzl, & Leinbach, 2008; Hermanowicz, 2006). Leaving school is a multidimensional process that results from the interaction between the individual and the institution (Jacoby, 2000; Tinto & Cullen, 1973). Overall, educators agree that students who attend college full-time, have stronger academic records, have a higher family income, have parents who attended college, and

receive some sort of financial aid are more likely to graduate (Calcagno, Corsta, Bailey & Jenkins, 2007).

This literature review addresses both the student and institutional characteristics that pertain to graduation and retention rates. Even though both types of characteristics are important when retaining students, colleges and universities should focus on characteristics and factors they can control within the academic setting, as part of their efforts to retain students. This chapter discusses both student characteristics and institutional factors as a means of understanding the ways they affect commuter student retention and graduation.

Student Characteristics

Student characteristics encompass distinct qualities that students possess and that impact postsecondary retention and graduation rates. These characteristics are defined as attributes that may include demographic characteristics, academic status and achievement, academic background and socioeconomic standing, and residential status. The university does not control these characteristics, but the institution can support students who have specific attributes, through the admission process, services, and programming initiatives.

Demographic Characteristics

Age, gender, race, academic excellence, and personality characteristics have been included in many studies to understand factors related to students staying in school and completing their degrees (Habley & McClanahan, 2004). Many theorists have argued that "fit" is a key reason students return to their institutions. The feelings that students acquire from fitting in with the campus community encourage learners to return; students

with senses of belonging to their institutions are more likely to stay. Age plays a large role in graduation rates of nontraditional students—older students are more likely to leave their institutions due to full-time careers, financial obligations, and families (Calcagno et al., 2007). Retaining nontraditional students is important. Liu and Liu (1999) found that nontraditional-aged commuter students had higher graduation rates than first-year commuter students. Also, adult learners tended to be more mature, with more family responsibilities than traditional-aged students. Lui and Lui described institutional fit as a way for students to bring meaning to their college careers and to connect with the faculty, staff, and other students.

Students feel a sense of belonging when they are involved with peers, faculty, and staff. Findings from a study by Hoffman, Richmond, Morrow, and Salomone (2002) showed that a sense of belonging stems from the level of involvement students have in their college careers, students' connections with their peers, and students' beliefs that faculty are compassionate. These interpersonal connections increase students' senses of belonging. Sense of belonging may also provide support for academic achievement. Hall, Smith, and Chia (2008) found that students who understood their own roles in college success could help to achieve academic competence. The sense of belonging and connection to the institution provides an opportunity for increased achievement.

One way that students contribute to their personal academic progress and subsequent degree attainment is through navigation of barriers. Hawley and Harris (2005) examined the Cooperative Institutional Research Program (CIRP) data of over 8,500 students and identified student barriers that may contribute to attrition, including the amount of developmental coursework that the students were required to complete,

their races, and their English proficiency levels. Additionally, Hawley and Harris (2005) found motivational variables that help retain transfer students: goals to transfer to four-year institutions and higher cumulative grade point averages (GPAs). Students who experienced these motivational factors were active on campus, were high academic achievers, and were more likely to persist to graduation. By assessing student satisfaction, Donohue and Wong (1997) found that commuter transfer students' motivation and work orientation levels were higher than those of their traditional student counterparts, and a positive correlation existed between college satisfaction and achievement—as satisfaction increased, so did student achievement. Academic and satisfaction predictors help college administrators to understand student motivation to stay at an institution.

First-Year and Sophomore Students

First-year students have different barriers to tackle than their sophomore-, junior-, and senior-level counterparts. Most traditional first-year students live on campus rather than commute. More than two-thirds of first-year students live on campus, yet many upper-class students live off campus (Kuh, Gonyea, & Palmer, 2001). As a result, first-year commuter students have a unique experience, because they do not live on campus. First-year students who do not live on campus often live with their family members or are older students who have permanent residences near campus (Kuh et al., 2009). These first-year commuter students encounter different experiences and barriers that may affect retention and graduation rates.

Understanding the barriers that commuter students face within the first year of college can help administrators gauge future graduation rates. At a predominate

commuter student campus, Bozick (2007) found that compared to other first-year students, low-income first-year students were 74% more likely to state that they are working to pay for college, and 72.8% were more likely to forgo living on campus to live with their parents. Students were found to commute between their parents' homes and campus. General knowledge of how student characteristics can be used to predict retention could help administrators build programs and provide services designed to encourage college completion.

Like the first year, sophomore year presents unique challenges for keeping students in school and maintaining satisfaction with their institutions. Many of the factors that lead to students' decisions to leave college during their sophomore years are personal, such as lack of commitment to school, absenteeism, incomplete educational goals, extracurricular activities, and negative perceptions of faculty-student interactions (Wilder, 1993; Williams, Offutt, Pennipede, & Schmid, 2006). These personal characteristics of sophomore students have been linked to both student attrition and lower graduation rates.

In addition, Tuman, Shulruf, and Hattie (2008) found that students who did not study intensively in their second year of college, who did not achieve steps toward degree progression, or had low first year GPAs were more likely to leave. These sophomore-year predictors should receive special consideration when attempting to understand the reasons students leave an institution.

Student Academic Achievement

Academic achievement is an important individual factor that relates to retention and graduation rates. The matching of students' academic abilities to their institutions'

social and academic factors shapes student commitment to the institution (Cabrera, Castandeda, Nora, & Hengstler, 1992; Metz, 2002). Commitment can be revealed through involvement in both academic and social activities. Pascarella, Bohr, Nora, Zusman, and Inman (1992) hypothesized that increased levels of involvement in the educational systems that are linked to living on campus foster greater cognitive growth in resident students versus their commuter student counterparts. Residential living was the most influential factor in fostering cognitive growth through the enhancement of social and intellectual involvement with peers. This type of peer interaction happens more frequently for students who live on campus versus those who commute.

GPAs have been used as predictors of retention and graduation rates. Students who are academically prepared in high school achieved higher first-semester GPAs in college (Lotkowski, Robbin, & Noeth, 2004). Grades play a larger role in the persistence to graduation than other student characteristics (DesJardins, Kim, & Rzonca, 2003; McGrath & Braustein, 1997). Suresh (2006) studied engineering students in their first two years of college to understand which barrier courses affected their persistence through college. A barrier course is one that potentially stops a student from proceeding because of the difficulty of the curriculum. Suresh used a survey to gather information on students' behaviors, attitudes, and perceptions of their programs. The study revealed that high school academic experiences, student behaviors such as study and work habits, and perceptions about faculty behavior stemming from teaching style influenced student performance in barrier courses. Students who did not perform well in barrier courses had higher attrition rates.

In a study that focused on student characteristics, researchers found that high school rank, intelligence, occupational aspirations, and socioeconomic status were positively correlated with college graduation rates (Wegner & Sewell, 1970). Also, research has shown that students' understandings of their own academic abilities are important in helping them succeed; students who have stronger study and time management skills are better equipped to handle college workloads (Duggan & Pickering, 2008).

First-Generation and Low Socioeconomic Students

First-generation students are defined as the first persons in their immediate families to attend college (Longwell-Grice & Longwell-Grice, 2008). Longwell-Grice and Longwell-Grice (2008) found that first-generation students were 1.3 times more likely to leave college than students with parents who had attended college. Other variables that have been found to be connected to departure are low family income, minimal educational expectations, poor high school rank, and nonselective admission processes (Ishitani, 2006).

The U.S. Congress founded three programs to help low socioeconomic students access higher education; these programs are now known as the TRIO programs (Council for Opportunity in Education, 2009). Using the TRIO programs to explore integrated support services for special populations, Thomas, Farrow, and Martinez (1998) studied long-term college graduation rates of TRIO participants at one university. The goal of the TRIO programs has been to graduate at least 50% of the entering cohorts of full-time, first-time students; Thomas et al. found that the mean graduation rate of the cohorts exceeded 50%, due to the inclusive support the university provided. Financial, academic,

career, and personal counseling were provided to students in the program that Thomas et al. explored, suggesting that use of an integrated service model is a key factor in strong graduation rates.

Commuter Students

In the early 1970s, research was conducted among students who lived on campus versus those who lived off campus or at home with their parents. The results of the studies showed that students living in residence halls were more likely to graduate in four years than those who commuted to school (Peltier, Laten, & Matranga, 1999). Researchers have linked higher graduation rates of on-campus, residential students to their increased abilities to become involved in campus activities and various social and academic systems, which is more difficult for their commuter counterparts (Pascarella et al., 1992).

Building friendships in college contributes to feelings of success at school, greater academic achievement, and connections to the institution (Jacoby & Garland, 2005; Skahill, 2003). Commuter students have difficulty building relationships in college. For example, commuter students may have more responsibilities within their family structures and often have difficulty developing social connections on campus. Non-classroom interactions with faculty and students are important to persistence and integrate students' classroom and non-classroom experiences (Johnson, 1997). Social connections built through interactions with faculty, staff, and peers allow commuter students to develop other campus roles that will help them succeed and persist to graduation.

Commuter students' on-campus social connections can be formed through participation in co-curricular activities. Tan and Pope (2007) examined nontraditional students' involvement in co-curricular activities; the students were primarily commuter students who visited campus only for classes. They found that students understood the value of participation in non-classroom activities, but their lack of connection to their institutions, their work obligations, and certain institutional factors, such as quality of the co-curricular activities and academic demands, limited commuter students' participation in co-curricular activities. Additional research produced at the University of California-Irvine (2007) found that residential students were significantly more likely to report they felt like they belonged and had greater levels of satisfaction with their overall social experiences. Learning communities created specifically for commuter students can create a coherent undergraduate experience. At Wiles University, commuter students had the opportunity to participate in two pilot learning communities. The instructors linked assignments to help give students a broader understanding of communicating in multiple forms. In addition to academic benefits, commuter students built a connection to the university and other students (National On-Campus Report, 2004).

Another factor impacting commuter students' campus connections is demographic diversity. Commuter students vary in age, gender, socioeconomic status, academic achievement, and type or location of their residences. Each type of commuter has special characteristics and needs. Research is limited in identifying different types of commuter students and their specific needs. Christie (2007) studied United Kingdom students who attended a local university while living at home. The study reported that students who lived at home had additional emotional and financial support from their parents.

Commuting was time-consuming, and students were vulnerable to any small change that impeded their ability to complete tasks. Students who live at home with their parents may have different needs from commuter students who live with roommates' off-campus.

Commuting to college influences the nature of students' educational experiences. For residential students, college and home are the same, but for commuting students the campus is a place they visit (Jacoby, 2000). By understanding the different roles and barriers commuter students face, institutions can organize their resources to meet students' needs and foster their success.

Residential Students

Like commuter students, students who live on campus have special needs that require specific services. Students who reside on campus require resources to connect them to the college campus, develop faculty-student relations, increase participation in social activities, and access academic services (Astin, 1999). Residential students have historically benefited from services provided to them to ensure their retention (The University of California at Irvine Office of Research and Evaluation, 2007).

Research has shown that residence halls can be conducive to enhancing intellectual growth. Students who reside in living-learning communities have more structured settings in which to integrate both academics and residence life. The ability to live with and meet students who have common interests enables students to build connections to their institutions. Learning communities have also been established for students who do not live on campus. Kuh et al. (2008) established that a learning community is an effective educational practice that is likely to help students perform better academically. However, institutional programs must be of high quality,

customized to meet the needs of students they are intended to reach, and firmly rooted in student success.

Residential students tend to persist at higher rates than commuter students, and students with higher GPAs tend to persist at higher rates than students with low GPAs. Nicpon et al. (2007) found significant differences in loneliness, academic performance, and academic persistence between students who lived on campus and students who lived off campus. Research was conducted with over 400 college freshman at a large, urban university in the Southwest. The findings showed that students who lived on campus had higher GPAs than students who lived off campus.

Student characteristics also affect graduation rates in different ways. Student demographics, residential experiences, satisfaction with the institution, academic achievement, and type of population play important roles in understanding reasons students leave an institution prior to graduation. Attention to institutional and personal characteristics allows for a holistic approach to retention and graduation rates.

Institutional Factors

Factors that an institution can control or change to enhance graduation rates are considered institutional factors. These factors range from programming initiatives and student support services to the organizational structure of the institution. In this section, institutional factors will be described that enhance student retention and graduation rates.

First-Year Seminars

Helping students within the first year of enrollment is a main focus of many institutions. Many campuses offer first-year seminars to connect students with other students, staff, and faculty; these programs also help students establish identities within

the institutions and develop feelings of purpose. The first-year seminar program was established to retain students within the first year of college and help them gain skills needed to persist and obtain their college degrees (Krause, 2007; Tinto, 1999). The seminar typically targets issues that confront students in the first year of college, and the courses are designed to help students adapt to the campus environment (Bean & Eaton, 2002). Many colleges have adopted first-year seminars as a tool to retain students. Researchers who have conducted studies on first-year seminars recommended that upper-level college administrators in higher education build retention programs focused on institutional practices that help students increase social and academic integration (Bean & Eaton, 2002; Tinto & Cullen, 1973). These institutional practices that build integration often lead to greater student retention.

Cuseo (2000) suggested that students' academic performances in first-year seminars may predict academic success during the first year of college. First-year seminar communities are valuable because they provide students with senses of belonging built around academic courses. The communities or courses are adaptable for different subpopulations, such as commuter students (Barefoot, 2000).

Student GPAs in first-year seminars appear to be related to other parts of the student experience. Noble, Flynn, Leed, and Hilton (2008) examined the four and five year graduation rates of students who took a first-year seminar course. The students primarily lived on campus and were traditional first-time-in-college (FTIC) students. The study found that female students were more than twice as likely as their male counterparts to graduate in four years and that GPA was independently related to graduation. Furthermore, the study results suggested that the college learning climate

was improved with inclusion of first-year experience programs because they boosted students' GPAs and increased their odds of graduating.

The premise of the first-year seminar is to incorporate the institution's mission and vision into the curriculum and foster student integration into the campus culture. First-year courses, whether tailored for students in specific majors or taught as general education courses, is ultimately designed to help foster integration into the campus community and align student and institutional goals (Noble et al., 2008). Some institutions have used these courses to complement their general education requirements; students enroll in these courses as electives, giving them the ability to develop strategies that promote success in school and in life (Higbee, Dwinell, & Thomas, 2002). Regardless of the way a first-year seminar is designed, studies have reported that students who participated in these programs tended to complete more coursework, to have higher GPAs, and to return to the college for the sophomore year (Hoffman et al., 2002).

Discipline-specific freshman courses are tools used to retain students within their majors (Lifton, Cohen, & Schlesinger, 2008). Lifton et al. (2008) examined the relationship between seminar curricula that are specific to students' majors and sophomore retention. Seminar courses were linked to students' majors through common courses, which gave students connections to their majors and to faculty members. Results of this longitudinal study demonstrated a link between the first-year seminar and increased graduation rates.

First-year seminars are a type of institutional factor that the institution can control. These seminars were established to build relationships between students and

their institutions. These relationships have been shown to enhance students' college careers and increase retention.

Learning Communities

As with first-year seminars, learning communities provide a curricular component that promotes greater academic and social involvement for students. Traditional lecture and instruction do not always support faculty-student interaction or peer-to-peer interaction within the classroom. The learning community enrolls a common cohort of students in linked or clustered courses and is typically organized around an interdisciplinary theme (Levine & Shapiro, 2002). Programs that foster active engagement, such as service learning and learning communities, promote academic success by increasing psychological and intellectual growth (Braxton & Mundy, 2002).

Living-learning communities have traditionally incorporated a living component for residential students that connect residential life to academia. Pike (1999) studied first-year students in residential living-learning communities. Students had significantly higher levels of involvement, interaction, integration, and gain in learning than students who lived in traditional residence halls. These types of communities exclude commuter student participation, due to their off-campus residential status.

Learning communities are an institutional factor that enables the university to connect commuter students to the institution. Connecting commuter students to the classroom setting and peers helps establish academic and social networks. Students begin to recognize the importance of peer interaction in the learning process, and students are more inclined to contact each other outside of class for academic support (Levine & Shapiro, 2000). An example of a successful commuter learning community is Seattle

University's Collegia Project. Clark (2005) described the program as being housed in the university's student center, library, and residence halls. It provides home-like lounge spaces for commuter students that are staffed with undergraduate and graduate student assistants. The Collegia Project also provides programming, including support groups, academic development workshops, and weekly breakfasts. The project is designed to minimize the differences between commuter and residential experiences.

Faculty Factors

Although first-year seminars and learning communities facilitate commuter students' senses of belonging at an institution, academic rigor and effective classroom instruction are considered the backbone of an institution. Colleges and universities pride themselves on their academic programs, faculty-to-student ratios, faculty credentials, and academically prepared students who become successful graduates. Faculty attitudes and behaviors have been shown to affect student retention. Lundquist, Spalding, and Landrum (2002) suggested that faculty can significantly contribute to student retention by supporting students and their needs, returning phone calls and email messages, and being approachable. Cokley et al. (2006) found that students desire faculty who are available for guidance, with whom they feel comfortable asking questions, and who are accessible outside of the classroom. These characteristics of faculty engagement give students the sense that instructors care about them and, as a result, encourage students to work harder.

Commuter student engagement with faculty can be limited. Kuh, Gonyea, and Palmer (2009) used National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE) data to understand student-faculty engagement. Their findings illustrated that students who lived on campus were more engaged in effective educational practices than commuter students.

Commuters had less contact with teachers and did not take advantage of co-curricular opportunities.

Even if faculty actively engage students, not all students feel comfortable approaching faculty. Longwell-Grice and Longwell-Grice (2008) found that first-generation and working students are often too intimidated to seek faculty support. The students included in their study felt a lack of attention and distance from the faculty and were struggling to negotiate both family and institutional expectations. Helping first-generation students understand ways to communicate and use the classroom as a means to connect with faculty is an important aspect of student retention.

Longwell-Grice and Longwell-Grice's study also revealed that students who lived farther away from campus were less likely to take advantage of educational resources than students who lived close to or on campus. Faculty need to be aware of the different student populations that register for their courses and learn ways to use their classrooms to engage commuter students. Understanding commuter students and their educational goals requires faculty to take many different approaches (human development theory, motivation theory, needs theory, and transition theory) to understand this specific student population (Jacoby, 1989).

Faculty members can use their instructional approaches and curriculum materials as learning tools to engage students. Effective instruction incorporates clear and organized teaching that helps enhance students' cognitive abilities and results in greater student satisfaction (Pascarella, Seifert, & Whitt, 2008). Students who share curricula with both fellow classmates and faculty enhance their cognitive abilities by connecting

their personal experiences to class content (Tinto, 1997). Both rigor and effective classroom instruction can help students progress toward graduation.

An institution's ratio of full-time to part-time faculty has been correlated with achievement differences among students (Ayers & Bennett, 1983). In a more recent study, Johnson (2006) found an overall negative association between first-year students' exposure to part-time faculty and retention. Increased exposure to part-time faculty decreased first-year students' retention rates. In light of these types of findings, institutions should carefully consider the ways part-time faculty members are utilized, especially with first-year courses. Goble, Rosenbaum, and Stephan (2008) found that high-achieving students who attended schools with higher proportions of part-time faculty had significantly reduced odds of completing their degrees. Institutions that employ part-time faculty members need to focus on professional development of their adjunct teaching faculty, especially those who teach introductory courses (Harrington & Schibik, 2001).

Faculty-student connections do not always have to happen in the physical classroom environment. Online courses have become a popular method of instruction for college students. Muller (2008) conducted a study that mapped respondents' experiences in their online courses against factors that facilitated persistence and factors that were perceived as barriers. Facilitating factors included engagement in learning communities, schedule convenience, personal growth, peer support, and faculty support. Barriers included multiple responsibilities, disappointment with faculty, face-to-face preference, and feelings of anxiety, technology, and feeling overwhelmed. Students valued the ability to engage in challenging communities that provided opportunities to learn from

classmates and faculty. Instructor availability through email, telephone, or online chat was critical to students' academic success, regardless of the course delivery format (Muller, 2008).

Universities that employ distance learning to educate their students must enhance both institution training for the faculty and the technology applications used to deliver such courses. Administrators must understand current developments in technology to be in positions to provide adequate support in the delivery of distance learning courses (Ibrahim, Rwegasira, & Taher, 2007).

Student-faculty ratios are important to the retention rates at many institutions. Student-faculty ratio is one of the most discussed policy issues within higher education (Astin, 1993). Student satisfaction with faculty has been positively correlated to higher graduation rates. Student-faculty ratio is important in determining student perception and satisfaction (Astin, 1993).

Faculty and administrators feel that low student-faculty ratios increase retention. Astin (1999) found that administrators believed lower student-faculty ratio fostered increased student learning and personal development. However, Goenner and Snaith (2004) found the opposite in doctoral universities, where higher student-faculty ratios correlated to higher graduation rates. The researchers maintained that institutions with high student-faculty rations may be more likely to have other academic support systems in place, such as advisement, tutoring, and honors programs, to offset any negative effects of a high student-faculty ratio. Those types of academic programs play large roles in student retention at institutions across the country.

Academic Support Programs

Academic support programs provide services that enhance academic success and can influence student retention. These services may include tutoring, developmental education courses, study groups, and supplemental instruction (Tinto, 1999). Although academic advising is a support service, this factor will be discussed in a separate section.

Many universities spend money on academic tutoring, academic advising, and skill building to help their students succeed. The effectiveness of any program designed to enhance academic success depends on the specific learning strategies, institutional approaches, and delivery agents employed (Ryan & Glenn, 2003). Gansemer-Topf and Schuh (2004) used Tinto's theory for institutional departure and identified instructional expenditures for academic support. The authors concluded that instructional expenditures and academic support expenditures predicted retention and graduation rates at Research I and II institutions. The more money institutions spent on these types of programs, the more the institutions' student retention and graduation rates improved.

Providing academic support services to commuter students can be challenging, particularly because commuter students need services that are easily accessible. Offering online services gives commuter students additional opportunities to enhance academic strategies, by providing resources beyond the physical campus facilities (Clark, 2005).

Academic Advising

As an academic support program, academic advising contributes to student retention and graduation rates. Advising is different at every university; there are many models for academic advising, ranging from a centralized advising system to a faculty-

based, decentralized system. In many cases, academic advising is the link between students' academic and social experiences in college. Mohr, Eiche, and Sedlacek (1998) found that participants in their study of college senior attrition were dissatisfied with the college experience because of the lack of academic guidance and access to school-related information. The study revealed that students who left the institution in the senior year were dissatisfied with faculty and advisor interactions.

Academic advising plays an important role within the university; students use academic advisement as a resource to find information about courses, programs of study, campus activities, faculty, and career planning. Johnson (1997) discovered that commuter students who spent time on campus before and after classes found it easier to get answers to their academic questions. This research suggested that students who receive help and the information they need might be more likely to persist. Students who left college in the senior year attributed their departures to economic factors, decisions to attend other institutions, or inadequate academic advising (Mohr, Eiche, & Sedlacek, 1998). Academic advising is a major academic and social domain of the college experience that can affect students' decisions to leave or stay.

Advising that is not thorough or complete can hinder graduation rates. One college found that inadequate academic counseling, long wait times, short consultations, and uncaring attitudes exhibited by counselors were reasons students did not persist (Northern Virginia Community College, 2000). Strong academic advising programs and one-on-one counseling can help institutions retain students and improve graduation rates. Continuous, urgent, business-like, and caring advisement enhances retention (White & Mosley, 1995). At Virginia Commonwealth University, administrators found that

students who met with their academic advisers at least two times per semester were more likely to be in good academic standing than students who did not meet with their academic advisors (Steingass & Sykes, 2008).

Student Support/Student Affairs Services

Student services provide support for students outside the classroom environment. Student affairs services may include housing and residence life, career services, first-year programs, student union administration, counseling, student activities and co-curricular organizations, study abroad, and student advocacy (Komives & Woodward, 2003). Students may participate in these programs to establish and develop their identities through interactions with faculty, staff, and peers. Students who considered leaving their institutions may have felt that the campus lacked diversity, that social experiences did not meet their expectations, they were emotionally unprepared for college, or they did not feel connected to the institution (Freeman, Hall, & Bresciani, 2007). For students, including commuter students, participation in extracurricular programs and use of student support services can affect students' decisions about whether or not to depart from their institutions.

Campus orientation is one type of institutional program that connects students to both academic and social integration levers. The main goal of orientation programs is to connect new students to the institution, faculty, administrators, and other students. Orientation provides information to help reduce student stress and to provide learning experiences that assist students as they adapt to major changes in their lives. Family members are usually invited to participate in the orientation experience, to gain

knowledge of university procedures and policies, and to help bridge the information gap that may lead to student departure (Robinson, Burns, & Gaw, 1996).

Traditional student affairs offices have been analyzed to assess their effects on student engagement and graduation rates (Kuh, Cruce, Shoup, Kinzie, & Gonyea, 2008). Student affairs programming allows students to connect with peers and other campus community members outside the classroom setting. One location in which students receive one-on-one interaction with college administrators is student counseling centers. Poor academic abilities often lead students to attend counseling centers. In one study, almost 70% of students who attended the counseling center said that their personal issues impeded their academic achievement (Turner & Berry, 2000); after attending the counseling center, the students who received counseling repeatedly had higher graduation rates than the overall student body.

Financial Aid Factors

Colleges have devoted many resources to finding the most academically talented students to attend their institutions. Students typically receive aid that is either merit or need based. Funding for both types of aid has increased over the past 20 years. Between 1982 and 1998, state funding for need-based grants for undergraduates increased 88%, and funding for merit-based programs increased 336% (Heller, 2001). Florida Bright Futures Scholarship Program is an example of merit-based financial aid. Merit-based aid programs seek to improve education by encouraging students to meet higher standards in high school and college (Henry & Rubenstein, 2002).

Need-based financial aid, which is often administered at the federal level, may consist of the Pell Grant, the Federal Supplemental Educational Opportunity Grant

(FSEOG), and federal work-study programs. The Pell Grant is a federal financial aid award determined by the expected family contribution (EFC). The EFC, which is computed with a federal formula mandated by law, is used by financial aid administrators to determine financial need (Wessel et al., 2007).

Many financial supports, including scholarships, financial aid, honors programs, and other campus features have been designed to help recruit students and to increase retention and graduation. Financial issues can impede both residential and commuter students from attending college or attending specific institutions. Research shows that students who are in the upper income brackets and are academically superior are more likely to persist. Students with low GPAs and those from lower-income families frequently do not persist, as a result of financial hardship (Braunstein, McGrath, & Percatrice, 2000). Many students depend on financial aid to assist them through their college careers; the types and amounts of funding are crucial when students are making decisions to stay at or leave institutions.

A study of a mid-size, public, research-intensive university in the Midwest showed that financial aid categories were reliable indicators of students who either withdrew or graduated from the institution. Students with greater financial need were more likely to leave the institution and not graduate. The study also revealed that academic ability was a better predictor of graduation than financial aid and that the amount of financial aid awarded impacted whether or not students stayed in school (Wessel, Bell, McPherson, Costello, & Jones, 2007). Several studies have found that students who stayed in college had lower loan amounts than those who left their institutions (Ishitani & DesJardins, 2003; Murdock, 1995).

Students at both private and public institutions are affected financially. Research has shown that graduation rates can be affected by state funding (Shin & Milton, 2004). With increases in state funding of 10% per student, four-year institutions realized approximately 64% increases in graduation rates. One explanation of this phenomenon might be that less funding may cause institutions to hire more part-time faculty, which in turn may lead to higher levels of student dissatisfaction (Zhang, 2009).

The other side of the financial aid issue is the ways student demographics affect financial aid. As the above-cited research demonstrated, students with lower loan amounts did not leave their institutions (Wessel et al., 2007). However, Wohlgemuth et al. (2007), in a study that considered both environmental (when students participated, financial aid variables) and input variables (demographics and academic preparation) to assess graduation rates, found that as gift aid increased, retention rates increased. Also, students who participated in work-study programs had higher retention rates in all four years of college. Ultimately, financial aid is an institutional factor that institutions can use to retain and graduate commuter students.

University Organizational Structure

Although universities are bureaucratic structures, individual university organization structures differ by institution type and size. Baldridge and Riley (1978) found major differences between academic institutions and other kinds of organizations. Researchers found there is less bureaucracy and regulation in larger, more prestigious schools and that faculty were highly satisfied with their working conditions.

One factor that an academic institution's organizational structure can impact is communication between students and institutions, which may affect commuter student

satisfaction and retention. Communication and personal interactions with students are essential for colleges and universities interested in developing strong relationships with students, as a means to increase retention and school loyalty (Ackerman & Schibrowsky, 2008). The ways in which universities' organizational structure affects commuter students and retention primarily centers on institutional leadership. Berger (2001) found that bureaucratic patterns of organizational behavior generally seemed to have negative effects on student persistence. This suggested that campuses that function in highly bureaucratic ways were likely to have higher attrition rates. Students only view the bureaucratic behavior of the university in a negative way if the behavior directly affects students or students feel the bureaucracy is dysfunctional.

In addition to the organizational structure and communication, size, type, and funding of institutions can affect graduation rates. Ishitani and DesJardins (2003) found that students from private institutions with enrollments of less than 2,500 were 77% more likely to drop out in the first 3 years than those attending larger public institutions. The study also found that the dropout rate for students at larger private institutions was double that of students who attended public institutions (Goenner & Snaith, 2004).

In general, organizational structure helps to define institutional and student responsibilities. Landrum (2002) found that college students understood their responsibilities to themselves, versus the responsibilities they expected the institution to fulfill. Students believed that financial aid, class scheduling, and curricula were key factors in their college experiences that were the sole responsibilities of their institutions. These factors, organizational behaviors and characteristics, are affected by the institutions' structures.

Both institutional and student factors influence commuter student retention and graduation rates. Commuter students represent more than 85% of U.S. college students across the country. Commuter students may represent a small percentage of students at small private, residential institutions, or they may compose the entire population of a community college or urban institution (Horn & Nevill, 2006; Jacoby, 2000). These institutional and student factors work simultaneously throughout students' college careers, allowing for different factors to influence students' decisions to drop out of college at any given time. Institutional factors are issues that universities can control and change, based on student needs, satisfaction levels, and campus culture, whereas student characteristics are generally outside the realm of institutional control.

The research design for the present study incorporated two theories structured to understand retention and graduation rates; these theories use both institutional and student factors as underpinnings. These theories represent my conceptual framework, which was designed to enhance understanding of institutional factors that affect commuter student retention and graduation at UNF.

Conceptual Framework

The conceptual models that serve as the foundation for this research are Tinto's (1975) student integration theory and Bean's (1982) student attrition theory. These two models are used to examine institutional factors and student characteristics that build strong institutional foundations designed to increase graduation rates. This study used both the Tinto and Bean theories as a framework for understanding the institutional factors that impact commuter student retention.

Tinto's Student Integration Theory

Tinto (1975) described social and academic integration variables that lead to student retention in his student integration model, incorporating environmental and social factors that may affect student persistence. Social factors that controlled retention were based on social support systems relating to institutional commitment. Tinto asserted that students who were integrated into their college communities had higher levels of commitment to their institutions. When these factors were lacking at the college level, student departure before graduation could result.

The second part of Tinto's (1975) theory involved academic integration into the college community. Academic integration included faculty-student interaction and the students' classroom experiences. Tinto suggested that students who succeeded academically and had commitment to goal completion finished college at higher rates than students who were not academically integrated into the college campus. Pascarella, Duby, and Iverson (1983) confirmed that when Tinto's model was applied to nonresidential campuses, the results were consistent with research conducted on residential campuses. Persistence was predicted to increase when students obtained sufficient support and were integrated into the college system. Tinto's (1975) model can be utilized to better understand different institutional factors that contribute to student and academic integration. For example, programs that incorporate activities that help commuter students integrate into the college community may strengthen student commitment to the institution. Student affairs programs that incorporate student involvement may increase student retention and help students persist toward graduation.

Academically based programs that prepare and integrate students through informal faculty-student interaction, low faculty-student ratios, academic advising, and academic enhancement have been shown to increase graduation rates. Finding which factors correlate to higher graduation rates for commuter students can help institutions provide or change institutional factors pertaining to increased graduation rates of this population.

Tinto's model described student social and academic integration as it pertains to retention. Bean furthered Tinto's theory by developing the student attrition theory, which incorporates institutional factors pertaining to student retention.

Bean's Student Attrition Theory

Bean's (1982) model of student attrition considered variables such as environment, organization structure, personnel, and intent to leave. Student "fit" with the institution and external factors affect students' decisions to stay at their universities. External factors are described as family approval of institutional choice, friends' encouragement to continue enrollment, sense of whether or not the student can fund college, and perceptions about opportunities to transfer or withdraw decisions (Cabrera, Nora, & Casteneda, 1993). Student "fit" with the institution depends on the external factor discussed.

Bean's (1982) research focused on the concept of student fit with institutions and used intent to leave to predict attrition. The study included an examination of environmental, organizational, and personal variables and their effects on student fit. Environmental factors included opportunity to transfer, marital status, financial situation, and family support. Organizational variables included student grades, contact with

faculty, program competiveness, course selection, and student absenteeism. Personal variables consisted of goal commitment, major, occupational certainty, and confidence. Intent to leave is determined by the student prior to the student's departure from the institution. This determination made by the student is based on the student's experience at the institution (Cabrera, Castandeda, Nora, & Hengstler, 1992). Bean's theory includes four attitudes: loyalty, certainty of choice, satisfaction, and value of the education.

Bean's (1982) model allows researchers to investigate ways institutional variables affect student attrition and ultimately graduation rates. Understanding the way institutional factors relate to personal fit may help institutions identify strategies to increase retention and graduation rates.

How the Models Complement Each Other

Bean's (1982) and Tinto's (1975) models are similar in that they both include components that incorporate institutional factors. Bean described organizational variables that may affect student attrition, while Tinto looked at academic integration variables that contribute to retention. Tinto's model excludes satisfaction with these variables as a predictor of retention, while Bean's model places significant emphasis on personal fit. For the purpose of this research, the conceptual framework utilized both theories related to commuter students' satisfaction. Comprehending how the Bean and Tinto models relate to each other facilitates an understanding of commuter students' satisfaction with their campuses, faculty, and services. Using satisfaction to understand what factors commuter students appreciate about their universities may help these institutions retain commuter students at higher levels.

Chapter Summary

The review of the literature shows that both student characteristics and institutional factors affect student retention. Although student characteristics are a significant part of the retention equation, institutions must focus on factors they can control. Additional research is needed when identifying institutional factors that relate to commuter student retention rates, such as faculty factors, student support services, academic advising, and university organizational structure.

Tinto's (1975) and Bean's (1982) models of retention and attrition identify factors that may hinder commuter student graduation. Using models that incorporate student retention and attrition provides a solid foundation for understanding commuter student retention.

Chapter 3 provides a description of the way this study obtained information that can help campus administrators better understand issues related to commuter student retention. Research was conducted at UNF as a case study. The methods incorporated the administration of a Web-based survey, the Noel-Levitz Student Satisfaction Inventory (SSI), to junior- and senior-level students who attended UNF. In conjunction with the Web-based survey, focus groups were conducted to collect in-depth data on commuter student satisfaction.

CHAPTER 3
METHODOLOGY

The purpose of the present study was to identify institutional factors that support commuter student success. This chapter provides a description of the methodology used to answer the research questions. The following paragraphs includes a description of the SSI survey data collection procedures, analysis procedures, and limitations of the survey. A description of the focus group methodology includes characteristics of the focus group participants, design of questions, data collection, and data analysis procedures.

To address the study's research questions, data were gathered from both commuter and residential undergraduate students at UNF. This research was considered a case study, collecting data only from UNF students. The data were collected using both qualitative and quantitative methods. A survey collected quantitative data, while focus groups provided a deeper understanding about commuter student success.

Both institutional and student factors may impact commuter student retention and graduation rates. These factors work simultaneously throughout students' college careers, influencing students' decisions to leave college. Student characteristics are factors over which universities do not have control, and the institutional levers and factors are items or issues that universities can control and change, based on student population, student satisfaction levels, and campus culture.

Research Questions

The main research questions of this study were the following:

RQ1: Does satisfaction with institutional factors affect undergraduate students' decisions to stay at a public university in Florida?

RQ2: How do institutional factors influence commuter student success?

The question "How do the levels of satisfaction with institutional factors differ between students who commute to campus and students who live on campus?" was removed from the research questions, due to the low number of residential students who participated in the research.

Setting

The University of North Florida (UNF) was the setting for this research. The institution is a four-year, public university which served over 15,000 students for the 2009 – 2010 academic year. The majority of the student population is commuter. The institution has five colleges: College of Arts and Sciences, College of Education and Human Services, Coggin College of Business, Brooks College of Health, and College of Computer Science, Engineering, and Construction Management.

Recruitment of Participants

Data were gathered from undergraduate students who live on campus and commute to the institution. For the purpose of this study, only UNF students participated in the survey and focus groups. Every effort was made to recruit students from all five colleges to participate in the study. Faculty and classes were not accessible in the College of Arts and Sciences. To keep the data anonymous, I requested that Noel-Levitz not include student names and email addresses in the raw data the company provided.

To obtain participants for the first part of the study, I visited summer 2011 classes. UNF does not define email addresses as publicly available information; I had to obtain permission from students to write to them via email. I contacted the chairperson from each department at UNF by email to gain permission to attend classes. After a chairperson gave his or her permission, I then contacted the professors in the department to receive permission to recruit participants in their classes. After I received permission from the department chairs (Appendix A), I contacted individual faculty members by email (Appendices B and C) to ask permission to attend their classes to solicit volunteers for both the survey and focus groups. When I met with the individual classes, I gave a brief, five-minute presentation about my study and provided contact sheets (Appendix D). The contact sheet collected student name, address, phone number, email address, major, commuter status, interest in participating in survey and focus groups, and days/times available to participate in focus groups. Students could either complete the form or leave it blank. At the end of the visit, I collected all contact sheets. From the information provided on the contact sheets, students were asked to volunteer for the survey and focus groups.

For the survey, students were asked to take the Noel-Levitz Student Satisfaction Inventory (Noel-Levitz, 2010) online, by following links sent to them via email. Students who completed the survey were residential or commuter students at the junior or senior level in any major. Originally, survey data were to be analyzed by comparing the responses of residential and commuter students. The residential student sample size was too small to complete the planned data analysis. Also, two sophomore students' responses were reported in the survey data. Residential and sophomore data were

retained within the survey data, although individuals from these groups were not invited to participate in the focus groups.

The focus groups were the second part of the data collection, and their purpose was to provide deeper knowledge of commuter students' experiences with institutional factors that affect their satisfaction and potentially their retention and graduation. Students in the focus groups were upper-level undergraduate commuter students who collectively represented four of the five colleges. Each focus group included participants from more than one college. Students from the Brooks College of Health (BCH) participated in the focus groups. The BCH students who participated had previous contact with me in the Academic Advising Office. However, I did not advise these students on a regular basis and had no personal relationship with them.

Four focus groups were conducted, with four to ten participants in each group. Focus group participants filled out an information sheet (Appendix E). The information sheet included demographic information: major, year in college, type of commuter, marital status, age, transfer status, and if a student had lived on-campus sometime during his or her college career. The information sheet was designed to gather important demographic information at the beginning of the focus group session. The traditional design for a focus group study is to conduct focus groups until the point of data saturation—that is, the point when no new information is revealed. The number of groups needed for saturation can vary, but studies usually begin with three or four groups (Krueger & Casey, 2000). In this study, saturation occurred after four focus groups were conducted. All participants signed the informed consent statement (Appendix F) and could rescind their agreements to participate in the focus groups at any time.

Student Satisfaction Inventory (SSI)

The Noel-Levitz Student Satisfaction Inventory (Noel-Levitz, 2010) is a copyrighted survey that can be used to assess student satisfaction with institutional factors. The survey consists of 73 questions, with 10 optional items that the institution can define. For this study, a supplementary demographic question was added to the survey, which identified marital status. Items are phrased as positive expectations that the institution may or may not meet. Respondents are asked to assess each item's importance to them, as well as whether or not the institution meets their expectations in regards to each item (Schreiner, 2009).

Because SSI respondents indicated the importance of an institutional factor to them, as well as their satisfaction with the service, another type of measurement that could have been included in the present study is the performance gap score, which is the importance rating minus the satisfaction rating. The performance gap provides an estimate of how well the institution is meeting the students' expectations. For this study, the gap score was not used, due to increased psychometric error. Burns, Graife, and Absher (2003) studied both the satisfaction-only item scores and gap scores (difference between importance and satisfaction level) and found that satisfaction-only measures were significantly more reliable indicators than the gap scores of overall satisfaction.

A 7-point Likert scale was used to determine levels of importance from "*not very important*" to "*very important*" and levels of satisfaction from "*not satisfied at all*" to "*very satisfied.*" The SSI could be completed via the Internet or in paper format. For this study, a survey link was sent to participants via email; each survey invitation cost 25 cents. In the email, each student was given an identification number to access the Web-

based survey. Identification numbers also were used to identify participants who had not taken the survey, allowing the company to send follow-up emails.

Noel-Levitz collected all responses and returned results as aggregated de-identified data. The SSI consists of 9 composite scales that analyze satisfaction based on institutional factors: Academic Advising Effectiveness, Campus Climate, Instructional Effectiveness, Admission and Financial Aid Effectiveness, Registration Effectiveness, Safety and Security, Student Services Excellence, Student Centeredness, and Campus Life.

The Academic Advising Effectiveness scale assessed student satisfaction with university advising. Questions related to expectations of academic advising as well as advising on nonacademic issues related to university process. The Campus Climate scale incorporated questions about how students feel about the campus. The Instruction Effectiveness scale contains questions about how effective students find faculty in delivering course material. The Admission and Financial Aid Effectiveness scale asked students how they feel about the recruitment process, enrollment, and financial aid. The Registration Effectiveness scale incorporated questions about how students feel about the registration process and their satisfaction with staff. The Safety and Security scale asked questions to assess how students feel about campus safety (e.g., noise and crime). The Student Centeredness scale included questions pertaining to students' opinion of university administrators' ability to be student-centered. The last scale, Campus Life, examined questions related to expectation and experience of social activities and facilities (Nadiri, 2007).

Cronbach's alpha is used to measure the reliability of data collected, using a particular scale. The individual items or indicators on the scale should measure the same construct and be highly intercorrelated. The measure of internal consistency is the consistency among scores on the variables in a summated scale. The lower acceptable limit of Cronbach's alpha is .70 (Hair et al., 2006). The instrument has been shown to yield data with high internal consistency reliability, a Cronbach's alpha of .98 (Schreiner, 2009). Elliott and Healy (2001) and Nadiri (2007) conducted additional research that found exceptionally high internal reliability. Therefore, research supports the instrument's statistical reliability. Cronbach's alpha was used to assess the internal consistency reliability of the data collected using the SSI survey.

Scores for the SSI survey subscales were examined to measure the internal consistency of scores on each subscale. Obiekwe (2000) reported that the SSI subscale score measures of internal consistency ranged from .56 to .92 for satisfaction. Cronbach's alpha coefficients for data on the subscales from the present study are discussed further in Chapter 4.

In previous research, scale validity was measured by analyzing the correlation between the scales regarding overall satisfaction. Schreiner and Juillerat (1994) found that all correlations for the subscales were positive and statistically significant at the .01 level, indicating that each of the scales was associated with overall satisfaction. In the present study, a correlation matrix was used to measure how the scales were related because the correlation matrix shows the intercorrelations among all variables (Hair et al., 2006). The subscales are presumed to measure components of the overall construct of student satisfaction.

The Pearson correlation coefficient will have a value between -1.0 and +1.0, indicating the strength of the relationship (Heiman, 1995). The subscales scores should correlate but also should measure different constructs. Behavioral sciences interpret medium coefficients between .3 and .5 (Green & Salkind, 2008). The correlation matrix data is reported in Chapter 4.

Using data collected with the SSI to predict retention can be supported through the work of Schreiner (2009), who linked student satisfaction to retention by specifically looking at student loyalty to the institution. In the SSI survey, the question that Schreiner related to retention was the following: "All in all, if you had it to do over again, would you enroll here?" In other words, would the student choose the institution again if he or she could do so to complete his or her degree? This particular question was used to determine the relationship between students' satisfaction levels and their immediate sense of whether or not they chose the right institution.

Data Collection

The target population was all junior- and senior-level undergraduate commuter students at UNF. Since fall 2008, the university has enrolled approximately12,000 undergraduate commuter students and 2,800 residential students annually. The population for this research project was junior and senior undergraduate students. Approximately 8,800 upper-level undergraduate students attend the institution.

Participants who had completed the contact sheet were emailed an invitation to participate in the survey approximately two weeks later. Two weeks after the initial email, a reminder email was sent to participants who had not taken the survey. Because Noel-Levitz generated random identification numbers for individual participants, the

information received via the survey was anonymous. Cook, Heath, and Thompson (2000) showed that email surveys should expect response rates between 25% and 30%, but that those rates may be affected by reminder notices. In the present research study, the survey response rate was 40% of students who had volunteered to complete the survey.

Raw data contained participants' scores on each question, based on level of satisfaction and level of importance. All raw information was analyzed through Predictive Analytics Software® (PASW®), previously known as SPSS®.

Data Analysis

Descriptive statistics were used to depict the respondents. Descriptive statistics pertain to measures of different aspects of a population. They may include the mean and median as a measure of central tendency, the standard deviation or range of measures of scale, and the classical measures of skewness, kurtosis and correlation (Bickel & Lehmann, 1975). For the purpose of this study, descriptive statistics from the survey and the university were used to make comparisons between participants in the present study to the population of the institution. The descriptive statistics identified the percentage of each demographic, including gender, age, race, class level, GPA, current residence, employment, transfer status, choice of institution, membership in student organizations, major, and sources of financial aid. Cronbach's alpha was used to measure the reliability and internal consistency in the instrument and within the subscales. The lower acceptable limited of Cronbach's alpha is .70 (Hair et al., 2006). A correlation matrix is also provided to demonstrate how the scales were related. The correlation of subscales ensures the survey subscales measure different constructs within the survey. The

correlation matrix displays the intercorrelations among all variables (Hair et al., 2006). The analysis did not test the factor structure because of the low number of data points.

The use of logistic regression to identify relationships among variables has increased in the social sciences and in education research, especially in higher education (Peng, Lee, & Ingersoll, 2002). In the present study, logistic regression was used to test the relationship between student satisfaction and commuter student retention. Logistic regression is used for describing and testing hypotheses about relationships between a categorical outcome variable and one or more categorical or continuous predictor variables. Schreiner (2009) used logistic regression with the students' response to the question, "All in all, if you had it to do over again, would you enroll here?" as the criterion variable. The present study used the same criterion variable.

Focus Groups

Focus groups were formed to collect additional and more in-depth information about institutional factors that concern commuter students. Qualitative research allows for explanation of what cannot be said through numbers (Eisner, 1998). The goal of the focus groups was to gain information and differing opinions across several groups in an efficient amount of time; the data gathered from the groups can be compared and contrasted, and results can help inform decision makers. Focus groups have historically been used to understand customer satisfaction, identify the relevant ingredients of satisfaction, and discover the conditions that influence the satisfaction (Krueger & Casey, 2000). The advantage of focus groups is the flexibility and economy of time required to gather rich data (Kress & Shoffner, 2007; Krueger & Casey, 2000). Focus groups

allowed me to gather information quickly, while obtaining more data about institutional factors related to student satisfaction and retention.

Design of the Focus Group Questions

Questions for the focus groups were designed to gain additional information not captured in the survey (Appendix G). The questions were more specific to commuter students and their experiences at UNF. Participants were asked open-ended questions, and responses were monitored through discussion facilitation. Focus group question design was based on institutional factors described in the SSI survey and included the student's choice of institution, type of commuter, length of academic career, engagement in campus activities, and connection to the institution. Questions related to engagement and connection to the institution were supported by the theoretical framework of Tinto's (1975) student integration theory and Bean's (1982) student attrition theory. Two additional questions were added after the first focus group was conducted. Questions 14 and 15 were added to gain clarity regarding the students' work schedules and the most effective way the university could provide information to commuter students.

Data Collection

Students who indicated their interest in focus group participation were contacted via email to confirm interest. After intent to participate was confirmed, I scheduled the focus group meeting at a time that accommodated participants' schedules. Focus group members were provided pizza and soft drinks during the data collection. Walford (2001) suggested that an unthreatening location should be chosen to conduct focus groups and that the facilitator should be prepared to answer participants' questions. Focus group sessions were conducted face-to-face in the Brooks College of Health and College of

Education and Human Services building classrooms. The classrooms were both quiet and private, so others were not disturbed and the focus group conversations could not be overheard.

Participants were given consent forms to review and sign and were notified that at their request, they could be released from the focus group at any time. Each session was digitally recorded and transcribed. Participants were given code names to protect their identities. All recordings and transcripts were kept in a safe, locked desk drawer in my office at the University of North Florida. After transcription was completed, the recordings were destroyed.

Data Analysis

With the exception of the two questions added after the first focus group, each focus group was asked an identical set of questions. I conducted each focus group using the same questions in the same order. Information was also collected to present a detailed description of the participants without revealing their identities. Vaughan, Schumm, and Sinagub (1996) argued that a thorough description of the subjects in the group is as necessary to gain important information about the subject as is a description of incentives provided and the intent to which the researcher demonstrated appropriate efforts to obtain participation. In the present study descriptive information was collected to describe participants thoroughly. In the focus groups, students were provided pizza and soft drinks to encourage and maintain participation.

Digital recordings were used so that the responses could be transcribed. Responses were transcribed and reviewed to summarize key ideas and find emerging themes. Thematic analysis is a process that allows for encoding of qualitative

information or data. The patterns found in the data are organized and used to describe the themes identified in the data (Boyatzis, 1998).

During the analysis, coding was developed into three parts. Strauss and Corbin (1990) identified three different levels of coding: open, axial, and selective. Open coding allows for deconstruction of the transcribed data by looking at each participant sentence or statement; each phrase or sentence is then coded. Open coding uses indicators and concepts. An indicator is a word, phrase, or sentence that is being analyzed, and the concept is the label or name associated with indicator. The concept summarizes the meaning of the indicators (LaRossa, 2005).

The next level of coding, axial, allowed for reorganization of the codes to begin the thematic analysis process. This level allowed for elaboration of the initial open coding. During axial coding, interactions among participants, strategies, and consequences are linked. The relationships between or among the variables are examined during this level (LaRossa, 2005).

Selective coding, the third level, connects categories or relationships with each other. This process allows for themes to emerge from earlier coding (Strauss, 1987). This is the last level that collectively gathers the codes into themes. In the present study, coding of the focus group transcriptions incorporated Strauss and Corbin's (1990) levels of coding (Appendix H), and its application will be described in more detail in Chapter 4.

There are limitations with using focus groups for research purposes. Interviewing people can present difficulties. Participants can have inaccurate perceptions of the events that transpire in an interview or focus group and the results from the conversations. To reduce the pressure that interviewees may feel, the interviewer should try to explain the

nature of the interview and clearly articulate its purpose (Walford, 2001). At the beginning of each focus group, I discussed the purpose and importance of this research. I also described ways the questions would be asked, the expected focus group duration, and participants' ability to leave at any time during the focus group. By incorporating these steps, I hoped to eliminate inaccurate perceptions.

Timeline

The timeline for the present study included successful proposal defense in January 2011, followed by UNF IRB approval on May 6, 2011 (Appendix I). It took approximately five weeks to distribute and collect data from the SSI survey, including the communication with faculty, attending classes to gain contact information, and sending the survey to students who indicated they would like to participate. The first reminder email was sent two weeks after the initial message, and a second reminder email was sent a week after the first reminder. Noel-Levitz collected the responses, and raw data were sent to me.

Originally, the timeline for planning and conducting focus groups was three months. Students who volunteered for the focus groups were contacted within one week after contact information collection. Students were provided several dates to choose from to participate in the focus groups. Via email, students then indicated their preferred focus group time. The focus groups took five weeks to complete. After the data were collected, I took an additional four months to analyze both the survey and focus group data.

Ethical Considerations

Individuals taking the SSI survey and participating in the focus groups needed to be acknowledged and protected. IRB approval for the research project was granted in May 2011, and students were provided detailed information about the informed consent paperwork. Students who participated in the survey were provided the informed consent when they logged into the survey via the email link. The informed consent was also attached to the survey email to allow the student to print a copy. Students who participated in the focus groups were provided the informed consent via email prior to the focus group and again at the focus group session, where they then filled out the form.

Participants were asked to take 15 to 20 minutes of their time to complete the SSI survey. Focus group participants were asked to participate for approximately one hour. Participant identity was adequately protected in both the survey and focus group data collection. Noel-Levitz provided de-identified data via a secured online system. Students in the focus groups were provided the opportunity to use a pseudonym or code name that protected their identities. Pseudonyms were kept confidential, and only the pseudonym was used when transcribing the focus group data.

No risks were observed for students who took the survey or participated in the focus groups. No UNF students in this study demonstrated limited capacity for decision making, language barriers, or hearing difficulty.

Chapter Summary

This chapter described the methods for the present study, which included both the Noel-Levitz SSI (2010) and focus groups that were conducted throughout the summer 2011 semester. The survey was intended help to produce information specific to

institutional factors that affect UNF commuter students. Also, the survey addressed student satisfaction using subscales within the SSI survey. The focus groups allowed for a deeper exploration of what retention issues affect UNF commuter students, through discussing and analyzing their personal experiences. Focus group questions design was based on the SSI survey and the theoretical framework for the study.

In the following chapter, I will describe my experiences in conducting the study and present my findings, discussing the SSI data analysis, focus group results, and themes uncovered. The survey data will be used to describe participants' demographics and an analysis of the survey questions and scales. The focus group analysis incorporates development of four main themes.

CHAPTER 4
DATA ANALYSIS AND RESULTS

This chapter presents and describes the analysis of collected data. This study examined institutional factors that affect commuter student retention and graduation rates. A mixed-methods study was conducted that included two parts. In the first part of the study, quantitative data were collected, using the Noel-Levitz Student Satisfaction Inventory (SSI). This investigation was conducted by analyzing the survey data using descriptive statistics, correlations, and logistic regression. In the second part, focus groups were conducted to better understand student satisfaction with the institutional factors. These two parts allow for an overall view of institutional factors that relate to graduation and retention rates of the commuter student population.

The main research questions that guided this study are stated as follows:

RQ1: Does satisfaction with institutional factors affect undergraduate students' decisions to stay at a public university in Florida?

RQ2: How do institutional factors influence commuter student success?

The findings for this investigation are separated into two parts: the survey data analysis and the focus group analysis. The survey analysis starts with a description of the survey and how the scales were formed, then provides a description of the respondents, the correlation matrix, and a report of the data using logistic regression based on students' willingness to attend the institution again and the satisfaction scales. The analysis of students' comments within the focus group begins with a description of how

students were solicited to participate in the focus groups, then presents participant demographics and the themes identified in the focus group comments.

Student Satisfaction Inventory (SSI)

The first part of this study examined commuter student satisfaction with institutional factors. Quantitative analysis was conducted using the Noel-Levitz Student Satisfaction Inventory (SSI) survey. For the purpose of this study, only UNF students were given the survey. Participants were undergraduate students at the junior and senior level. To keep the data anonymous, I requested that student names and email addresses not be included in the raw data that Noel-Levitz provided.

To obtain participants for the online survey, I attended summer 2011 classes. Because UNF does not define email addresses as publicly available information, I had to obtain permission from students to contact them via email. I contacted the chairperson from each department at UNF by email to gain permission to attend classes. After the chairperson gave permission, I then contacted the professors in the department for permission to recruit participants in their classes.

I recruited through 19 undergraduate classes within four of the five university colleges. Participants were not recruited from the College of Arts and Sciences because only two department chairs responded, and both declined to participate. The history department chair declined to participate because of the lack of course offerings in the summer semester. The psychology department chair declined to participate because the potential participant pool within the summer is small, and priority is given to graduate students within the department who recruit research participants from the psychology major.

At each class, I provided a five-minute overview of the study and requested student participation. Students were given a contact information sheet to complete. Students who indicated they would participate in the study and take the survey were sent an email that provided a link to the web-based survey. Two weeks after the initial email was sent, students who had not taken the survey were sent a reminder email. A total of 293 students agreed to participate and were emailed a link for the survey. Of those emailed, 115 completed the survey. Of the 115 surveys completed, four surveys were from residential students and two were from sophomore-level students. Due to this low number, residential and sophomore student surveys were not removed from the data analysis. The total response rate was 40.4%, including both commuter and residential students.

Participant Demographics

Students responded to 17 questions about personal characteristics within the survey. The responses are reported in Table 1, along with comparable characteristics for all undergraduate and graduate students at UNF. As indicated in Table 1, female students were overrepresented in the survey sample, relative to the total UNF female student population. The transfer population that participated in the survey was substantially lower than the university transfer population. Of the students who took the survey, 59% were transfer students.

UNF does not keep comparable data on the number of commuter students within the university. Because students in classes offered through the College of Arts and Sciences were not recruited for the study, students from the other colleges within the university are overrepresented in the sample. More than 62% of the students in the

sample reported UNF as their first choice for college to attend, and 25.9% of students reported it as their second choice. In total, more than 87% of respondents declared UNF as either their first or second choice. Also, the majority of students were employed. Almost 69% of the students reported they worked off-campus either full or part time. Less than 5% reported working on campus.

Students in this sample were not involved in many student organizations. One third of the sample was involved with at least one or two student organizations, but more than 57% of the sample did not participate in any student organizations.

Survey Questions and Scales

The SSI included responses provided on a Likert scale with the following values: *Not satisfied at all* = 1; *Not very satisfied* = 2; *Somewhat dissatisfied* = 3; *Neutral* = 4; *Somewhat satisfied* = 5; *Satisfied* = 6; *Very satisfied* = 7. Questions with a score of 5 or higher demonstrated satisfaction with the institutional factor.

The SSI instrument total scale has been shown to yield data with high internal consistency reliability, a Cronbach's alpha of .98 (Elliot & Healy, 2001; Nadiri, 2007; Schreiner 2009); the lower acceptable limit of Cronbach's alpha is .70 (Hair et al., 2006). In this study, the overall Cronbach's alpha was .94.

Cronbach's alpha was also used to assess the internal consistency reliability of the scores on the SSI subscales. The individual items or indicators on the scale should measure the same construct (validity) and be highly intercorrelated (reliability).

Table 1

Participant Demographics

		N	% Sample	% University Population
Gender	Female	80	70.2	56.0
	Male	34	29.8	44.0
Age	18 and under	1	.9	.2
	19 to 24	76	65.5	70.1
	25 to 34	23	20.2	
	35 to over	9	12.1	
Ethnicity/Race	Asian	6	5.3	5.1
	Black/African American	9	7.9	9.6
	Hispanic or Latino	9	7.9	6.9
	Native Hawaiian	0	0.0	.01
	White/Caucasian	84	72.4	73.6
	Multiracial/Other	6	5.3	2.0
Class Load	Full-time	91	78.4	67.2
	Part-time	22	19.0	32.8
Class Level	Sophomore	2	1.7	
	Junior	35	30.2	
	Senior	73	62.9	
	Other	2	2.6	
Current GPA	2.0 – 2.49	3	2.6	
	2.5 – 2.99	24	20.7	
	3.0 – 3.49	47	42.7	
	3.5 – 3.99	36	31.0	
Employment	Full-time off campus	24	20.7	
	Part-time off campus	56	48.3	
	Full-time on campus	2	1.7	
	Part-time on campus	3	2.6	
	Not employed	28	24.1	
Current Residence	Residence hall	4	3.4	
	Fraternity/Sorority house	0	0.0	
	Own house	29	25.0	
	Rent rm/Apt off campus	44	37.9	
	Parent’s home	32	27.6	
	Other	5	4.3	

Table 1(Continued)

Participant Demographics

		N	% Sample	% University Population
Institutional Choice	1st Choice	72	62.1	
	2nd Choice	30	25.9	
	3rd Choice or lower	10	8.6	
Transfer Student	Yes	68	58.6	75.16
	No	45	38.8	25.94
Membership in Student organization	None	67	57.8	
	1 or 2	40	34.5	
	3 or 4	5	4.3	
Primary Source for Paying Tuition	Scholarships	22	19.0	
	Financial Aid	50	43.1	
	Family Contribution	18	15.5	
	Self-Support	18	15.5	
	Other	6	5.2	
Major	Health	28	24.13	10.78
	Business	32	27.58	14.99
	Comp/Eng/Const	17	14.65	5.56
	Arts & Sciences	2	1.72	30.72
	Educ & Human Srv	33	28.44	8.34
	Undecided/No Major	4	3.44	29.59

Note. UNF Data from UNF Pocket Fact Books 2009 – 2010: Fall 2011 Student Data.

Noel-Levitz identified 12 composite scales to analyze satisfaction. For the present study, a shorter SSI survey (Survey B) was used, which only included 9 of the possible 12 scales: Academic Advising Effectiveness, Campus Climate, Instructional Effectiveness, Admission and Financial Aid Effectiveness, Registration Effectiveness, Safety and Security, Services Excellence, Student Centeredness, and Campus Life. Scales that were not used were Concern for the Individual, Campus Support Services, and Responsiveness to Diverse Populations (Noel-Levitz, 2010).

Cronbach's alpha was computed for the subscale data in the present study to measure the internal consistency reliability among scores on the variables in each subscale. Obiekwe (2000) reported the SSI measures of internal consistency for the subscale scores ranged from .56 to .92 for the 12 scales. In the present study, 8 of the 9 scales had an alpha coefficient of .70 or higher, indicating high internal consistency reliability: Academic Advising Effectiveness = .84; Campus Climate = .81; Instructional Effectiveness = .77; Admission and Financial Aid Effectiveness = .85; Registration Effectiveness = .69; Safety and Security = .377; Services Excellence = .72; Student Centeredness = .81; Campus Life = .79. Safety and Security did not meet an alpha threshold of .70 or higher, but the scale was retained in the analysis to maintain the integrity of the instrument.

In the present study, subscale scores were acquired by calculating the sum of the scale scores, and then dividing the sum by the number of items in the subscale. The mean subscale scores include missing response data. The subscales that received the highest satisfaction scores were Instructional Effectiveness (M= 5.50), Academic Advising Effectiveness (M=5.46), Campus Climate (M=5.60), and Campus Services (M= 5.67). Instructional Effectiveness related to faculty availability, use of technology, and treatment by faculty. Academic Advising Effectiveness incorporated goal setting, availability of advisors, and advisors' understanding of major requirements. Campus climate included campus maintenance, diversity, safety, and price of attendance. The last scale was Campus Services, which included library services, computer lab services, online access, and counseling center services.

Survey questions that received the highest satisfaction scores included the institutional factors of library resources, treatment and availability of faculty, technology used by faculty, availability and knowledge of academic advisors, sufficient courses in program of study, online access to services, counseling services, and physical appearance of campus. The lowest item satisfaction scores pertained to parking services, the use of the student activity fee, and sufficient course selection for the program of study. The mean scores for the scales and items are reported in Table 2. The *N* number for the subscales was always 115 as indicated in Table 2. The SPSS program replaced the missing data in each scale with a mean although not all students answered the question within the scale.

Table 2

Survey Question Satisfaction Scores	***N***	***M***	***SD***
Student Centeredness	115	5.35	1.01
Students are made to feel welcome.	113	5.75	1.24
Campus staff are caring and helpful.	115	5.39	1.23
Administrators are available to hear concerns.	102	5.19	1.31
I seldom get the "run-around" when seeking information.	96	4.98	1.54
Campus Life	115	5.02	1.13
Student disciplinary procedures are fair.	76	5.55	1.29
There is an adequate selection of food available.	111	5.09	1.54
Residence hall staff are concerned about me as an individual.	39	5.03	1.33
Living conditions in the residence hall are comfortable.	40	4.97	1.53
Student activity fees are put to good use.	104	4.40	1.64
Instructional Effectiveness	115	5.50	.83
Faculty are usually available to students outside class.	110	5.96	.97
Faculty use a variety of technology & media in classroom.	114	5.83	1.16
The quality of instruction I receive in class is excellent.	114	5.61	1.15
Faculty are fair and unbiased in their treatment of students.	113	5.73	1.23
Content of the courses in major are valuable.	115	5.47	1.34
Faculty provide timely feedback about my progress.	112	5.39	1.40
There are sufficient courses within my program of study.	115	4.64	1.66
Recruitment & Financial Aid Effectiveness	115	5.09	1.28
Financial aid awards are announced in time.	97	5.40	1.30
Admissions accurately portray the campus when recruiting.	73	5.27	1.50
Financial aid counseling is available.	87	5.25	1.45
Institution helps me identify resources to finance education.	82	4.96	1.52
Admission staff provide personalized.	109	4.88	1.58
Campus Services	115	5.67	.83
Library resources and services are adequate.	109	5.95	1.02
Campus provides online access to services I need.	113	5.90	1.25
Counseling services are available if I need them.	85	5.88	1.16
Computer labs are adequate and accessible.	111	5.86	1.16
I receive help I need to apply my major to my career goals.	106	5.52	1.38
There are adequate services to help me decide upon a career.	80	5.21	1.48
Tutoring services are readily available.	79	5.04	1.39
Academic Advising Effectiveness	115	5.46	1.19
My academic advisor is available when I need help.	107	5.79	1.31
My academic advisor is knowledgeable	108	5.93	1.32

Table 2 (Continued)

Survey Question Satisfaction Scores	***N***	***M***	***SD***
My academic advisor helps me set goals.	107	5.28	1.61
I receive feedback about progress towards my academic goals.	109	5.17	1.56
Mentors are available to guide my career and life goals.	74	5.00	1.71
Registration Effectiveness	115	5.14	1.02
Able to take care of college-related business at times convenient	113	5.48	1.23
Registration processes are reasonable and convenient.	115	5.39	1.31
Able to register for classes I need with few conflicts.	114	4.93	1.76
Billing policies are reasonable.	113	4.80	1.38
Safety and Security	115	4.89	.98
Campus is safe and secure.	115	5.67	1.18
Parking lots are well-lighted and secure.	109	5.42	1.25
Security staff respond quickly to calls for assistance.	52	5.27	1.60
The amount of student parking on campus is adequate.	114	3.42	1.80
Campus Climate	115	5.60	.81
On the whole, the campus is well-maintained.	113	6.23	.91
Students are free to express their ideas.	106	5.75	1.13
There is a strong commitment to diversity.	107	5.69	1.21
Campus is safe and secure.	115	5.67	1.18
Tuition paid is a worthwhile investment.	112	5.38	1.47
Administrators are available to hear concerns.	102	5.19	1.31
I seldom get the "run-around" when seeking information.	96	4.98	1.54

Correlation Matrix

Pearson correlation coefficients were used to analyze the intercorrelations among the subscale scores; Table 3 presents the data related to this analysis. The correlation matrix displays the intercorrelations among all subscales (Hair et al., 2006). The analysis did not test the factor structure because of the low number of data points.

The Pearson correlation coefficient, symbolized as *r*, is a number that describes the type and strength of a linear relationship. The Pearson correlation coefficient will have a value between -1.0 and +1.0, indicating the relationship's strength and direction

(Heiman, 1995). The subscale scores should correlate positively but also measure different constructs. Behavioral sciences interpret medium coefficients between .3 and .5 (Green & Salkind, 2008). The critical value of the Pearson correlation coefficient ($df = n - 2$), with an $n = 125$, is approximately $r = .195$ or higher.

In the present study, the subscales were moderately correlated (between .2 to .5) in 35 of 36 pairs. Moderate correlation of the scales suggests that the subscale scores are related, but they measure different aspects of student satisfaction. However, the correlation between the Campus Climate subscale and the Student Centeredness subscale was .74. This finding suggests that the two scales share a large portion of variance and may not be independent variables.

Table 3

Correlation Matrix of SSI Scales

Scale	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
1. Student Centeredness	1.00	.34	.40	.43	.52	.44	.44	.28	.74
2. Campus Life		1.00	.20	.39	.36	.35	.27	.36	.40
3. Instructional Effect.			1.00	.23	.40	.33	.57	.33	.34
4. Recruit/Fin. Aid Effect.				1.00	.50	.59	.22	.18	.28
5. Campus Services					1.00	.50	.34	.28	.41
6. Acad. Advising Effect.						1.00	.30	.18	.40
7. Registration Effect.							1.00	.34	.30
8. Safety and Security								1.00	.32
9. Campus Climate									1.00

Logistic Regression

Logistic regression was used in this study to test the relationships between students' satisfaction with the institutional factors and students' response to the question "All in all, if you had to do it over again, would you enroll here?" Logistic regression examines relationships between variables. One variable, the outcome or response, is the

dependent variable, and the independent variable(s) are the predictors. The independent variable is either continuous or categorical and is used to predict or explain an issue (Huck, 2000). This approach allows determination of the relationship between students' satisfaction level, as measured on each subscale, and the decision to come to the university if the student were given the opportunity again. Schreiner (2009) used a similar approach in her analysis.

The response to the question "All in all, if you had to do it over again, would you enroll here?" is the dependent variable. In order to create a dichotomous variable from a continuous variable, responses to this question were coded into dichotomous values to use logistic regression. Answers "*definitely not*," "*probably not*" and *"maybe not"* were coded as 0. Answers "*I don't know*," "*maybe yes*," "*probably yes*," and "*definitely yes*" were coded as 1.

Table 4 presents the results of the logistic regression, which was conducted to determine which SSI subscales (independent variables) were predictors of the student's response to the question "All in all, if you had to do it over again, would you enroll here?" The Wald statistic is accompanied by a statistical significance test for each estimated coefficient (Hair et al., 2006). The table incorporates the coefficient for the constant or intercept (*B*), the standard error around the coefficient (*SE*), the Wald statistic, degrees of freedom, and the *p*-value, also referred to as statistical significance. The critical *p*-value should be less than .05. As Table 4 indicates, none of the scales was a statistically significant predictor of students' stated intent to choose the university again.

Table 4

Logistic Regression: Predictive Power of the SSI Scales (n=115)

Predictor (Scale)	β	*Se*β	Wald's X	*df*	*p*
Student Centeredness	.053	.339	.024	1	.876
Campus Life	-.244	.208	1.375	1	.241
Instructional Effectiveness	-/138	.268	.263	1	.608
Admission and Financial Aid Effectiveness	-.325	.220	2.173	1	.140
Services Excellence	-.263	.240	1.204	1	.273
Academic Advising Effectiveness	-.012	.223	.003	1	.956
Registration Effectiveness	.083	.289	.082	1	.774
Safety and Security	.377	.330	1.304	1	.253
Campus Climate	.183	.207	.783	1	.376

Correlation of SSI Questions and Dependent Variable

Pearson correlation coefficients were used to analyze the correlations of students' satisfaction as measured by each survey question and students' response to the question "All in all, if you had to do it over again, would you enroll here?" The dependent variable used in this analysis was continuous and was not collapsed into a dichotomous variable. These correlations are reported in Table 5. Correlation was used to investigate the relationship between the satisfaction questions and the dependent variable, "All in all, if you had to do it over again, would you enroll here?" For this analysis, the non-coded or original coding of dependent variable was used.

In the present study, survey questions were moderately correlated (between .2 to .5) in 30 of the 46 pairs. Behavioral sciences interpret medium coefficients between .3 and .5 (Green & Salkind, 2008). The critical value of the Pearson correlation coefficient ($df = n - 2$), with an $n = 125$, is approximately $r = .195$ or higher. Moderate correlation of the question "All in all, if you had to do it over again, would you enroll here?" in

relationship to the survey question suggests that some of the questions are related to commuter students coming to the institution again if provided the ability to apply again. Subscales that had at least 70% of the questions with moderate correlation were Student Centeredness, Institutional Effectiveness, and Campus Climate.

Low correlation was also found within Campus Life, Recruitment & Financial Aid, Campus Services, and Safety & Security subscales. This suggests that there is a weak relationship between these subscales and the reason why students may attend the institution. For example within the Campus Services subscale there was a low correlation between the satisfaction question "Counseling services are available if I need them," "Computer labs are adequate and accessible," and "Tutoring services are readily available" in relationship to the dependent variable. Another example was within the Recruitment & Financial Aid scale was a low correlation between "Financial aid awards are announced in time" and "Institution helps me identify resources to finance education" in relationship to the dependent variable. This suggests that these questions do not predict the student's decision to attend the institution.

Table 5

Correlations Between Survey Question Items and Enrollment Decision

Survey Question Item	Enrollment Decision
Student Centeredness	
Students are made to feel welcome.	.411
Campus staff are caring and helpful.	.299
Administrators are available to hear concerns.	.301
I seldom get the "run-around" when seeking information.	.281
Campus Life	
Student disciplinary procedures are fair.	.271
There is an adequate selection of food available.	.186
Residence hall staff are concerned about me as an individual.	.147
Living conditions in the residence hall are comfortable.	.049
Student activity fees are put to good use.	.208
Instructional Effectiveness	
Faculty are usually available to students outside class.	.368
Faculty use a variety of technology & media in classroom.	.221
The quality of instruction I receive in class is excellent.	.342
Faculty are fair and unbiased in their treatment of students.	.181
Content of the courses in major are valuable.	.393
Faculty provide timely feedback about my progress.	.251
There are sufficient courses within my program of study.	.151
Recruitment & Financial Aid Effectiveness	
Financial aid awards are announced in time.	.200
Admissions accurately portray the campus when recruiting.	.350
Financial aid counseling is available.	.217
Institution helps me identify resources to finance education.	.075
Admission staff provide personalized.	.251
Campus Services	
Library resources and services are adequate.	.225
Campus provides online access to services I need.	.203
Counseling services are available if I need them.	.171
Computer labs are adequate and accessible.	.117
I receive help I need to apply my major to my career goals.	.315
There are adequate services to help me decide upon a career.	.375
Tutoring services are readily available.	.158

Table 5 (Continued)

Correlations Between Survey Question Items and Enrollment Decision

Survey Question Item	Enrollment Decision
Academic Advising Effectiveness	
My academic advisor is available when I need help.	.076
My academic advisor is knowledgeable	.099
My academic advisor helps me set goals.	.370
I receive feedback about progress towards my academic goals.	.370
Mentors are available to guide my career and life goals.	.287
Registration Effectiveness	
Able to take care of college-related business at times convenient	.114
Registration processes are reasonable and convenient.	.233
Able to register for classes I need with few conflicts.	.231
Billing policies are reasonable.	.088
Safety and Security	
Campus is safe and secure.	.060
Parking lots are well-lighted and secure.	.057
Security staff respond quickly to calls for assistance.	-.029
The amount of student parking on campus is adequate.	.229
Campus Climate	
On the whole, the campus is well-maintained.	.178
Students are free to express their ideas.	.302
There is a strong commitment to diversity.	.274
Campus is safe and secure.	.060
Tuition paid is a worthwhile investment.	.341
Administrators are available to hear concerns.	.301
I seldom get the "run-around" when seeking information.	.281

Note: Enrollment decision was the score on the single item in the SSI survey

Exploratory Analysis

Additional exploration of the data was conducted after the basic analysis. I examined subgroup data and conducted additional analyses to establish if satisfaction was different for subgroups, including gender, transfer versus native students, and student's

current residence. An independent *t*-test was conducted to evaluate satisfaction differences within the nine SSI scales between male and female students, transfer from non-transfer students, and, students who live in own home or rent from students who live with their parents. The mean scores for subscales related to gender, transfer status, and current residence are presented in Tables 6 and 7. The tables list the mean for each subscale comparing male and female scores, transfer and non-transfer scores, and students who live in own home or rent from students who live with their parents scores.

The *t*-test was not statistically significant in the comparison related to student's gender, but statistical significance was found in one subscale when the mean scores examined by transfer status. In general, male and female scores were equivalent, but in 7 of 9 subscales, female mean scores were higher. Female students had lower mean scores in the Safety and Security subscale and a similar mean score in the Campus Services subscale. No statistically significant difference ($p < .05$) was found in the subscales scores of males and female students.

In comparing transfer and non-transfer subscale scores, transfer students consistently scored lower. Non-transfer students scored higher in 6 of 9 subscale mean scores. The critical *t*-value for a $df = 111$ is 1.66 at an alpha = .05. The *t*-test was significant in Scale 2, Campus Life, $t = -4.29$, $p = .05$. This suggests that satisfaction with services on campus (e.g., food available on campus, the student activity fee, and student disciplinary procedures) may differ between transfer and non-transfer students. In general, the subscale means were equivalent, but transfer students had either equal or higher scores in Instructional Effectiveness, Registration Effectiveness, and Safety and

Security. A statistically significant difference ($p < .05$) was found in the Campus Climate subscale for transfer and non-transfer students.

Table 6

Mean Comparison for Male v. Female and Transfer v. Non-transfer

	Male	Female	Transfer	Non-transfer
Scale	*M* (*SD*)	*M* (*SD*)	*M* (*SD*)	*M* (*SD*)
Student Centeredness	3.17 (0.96)	3.48 (0.75)	3.39(0.81)	3.42 (0.78)
Campus Life	2.62 (1.37)	2.75 (1.39)	2.29 (1.22)	3.35 (1.38)
Instructional Effectiveness	6.05 (1.27)	6.26 (1.14)	6.20 (1.15)	6.20 (1.25)
Recruitment/Financial Aid	3.00 (1.54)	3.52 (1.52)	3.19 (1.46)	3.66 (1.62)
Campus Services	5.55 (1.35)	5.54 (1.36)	5.41 (1.23)	5.82 (1.42)
Academic Advising	3.65 (1.29)	4.05 (1.26)	3.90 (1.11)	4.07 (1.38)
Registration Effectiveness	3.35 (0.91)	3.36 (0.96)	3.40 (0.93)	3.33 (0.95)
Safety and Security	2.70 (0.71)	2.66 (0.84)	2.69 (0.81)	2.64 (0.80)
Campus Climate	6.97 (1.02)	7.10 (1.31)	6.97 (1.33)	7.24 (1.02)

In comparing student current residential status subscale scores, students who owned their own home or lived with their parents were compared to students who rented housing. In SPSS, the categories were combined into two categories: students who owned their own homes or lived with parents were coded 1 and students who rented or lived on campus were coded 2. Students who lived with their parents consistently or owned their own homes had higher mean subscale scores. In general, the subscale means were equivalent, but commuter students who lived with their parents had either equal or higher scores in all subscales except Campus Life and Registration Effectiveness. A statistically significant difference ($p < .05$) was found in the Academic Advising subscale for commuter students' residential status, with the higher mean score for students who lived with their parents or who owned their own homes.

Table 7

Mean Comparison for Current Residence Demographic

	Own House/Parents	Rent/Live on Campus
Scale	*M* (*SD*)	*M* (*SD*)
Student Centeredness	3.43 (0.80	3.29 (0.85)
Campus Life	2.59 (1.32)	2.82 (1.43)
Instructional Effectiveness	6.15 (1.21)	6.25 (1.15)
Recruitment/Financial Aid	3.56 (1.40)	3.06 (1.68)
Campus Services	5.69 (1.35)	5.29 (1.33)
Academic Advising	4.09 (1.11)	3.68 (1.46)
Registration Effectiveness	3.28 (1.00)	3.44 (.085)
Safety and Security	2.67 (.079)	2.70 (0.83)
Campus Climate	7.19 (1.20)	6.85 (1.26)

In summary, the SSI survey allowed for initial analysis of commuter students' satisfaction levels with institutional factors. Noel-Levitz formed scales that were used to analyze student satisfaction with institutional factors, based on whether or not the student would return to the university, if given the ability to choose again.

Descriptive statistics, correlations, and logistic regression were used to analyze the survey data. Two general findings were drawn from the SSI. First, commuter students were highly satisfied with several institutional factors integrated into three scales: Academic Advising Effectiveness, Instructional Effectiveness, and Services Excellence. Second, commuter students were dissatisfied with services that included parking, registration effectiveness, receiving the "run around," and the existence of a student activity fee. On the survey, students were unable to describe their dissatisfaction

with these institutional factors. Therefore, the focus groups helped to define the reason for the level of satisfaction.

Exploratory analysis compared male versus female, transfer versus non-transfer, and commuter students who lived with their parents or on their own versus commuter students who rent or live on-campus within the nine subscales. There was no statistically significance found in the male and female subscale scores, but there was statistical significance found in Campus Climate subscale for transfer and non-transfer students and in the Academic Advising subscale for the commuter student's residential status.

Focus Group Data

The second data analysis was conducted on the focus group data; focus groups were conducted after the initial survey distribution. The focus group questions were designed to generate a deeper understanding of student satisfaction with institutional factors displayed within the survey. Focus groups were conducted during the summer 2011 semester. The findings reported are based on four focus groups with commuter students.

Focus Group Participants

When I attended the classes to recruit participants for the study, I gave a five-minute presentation on the research study, delineated expectations for participants, and answered questions. Students were provided a contact sheet that allowed them to indicate interest in taking the survey, interest in participating in the focus groups, interest in both the survey and focus groups, or to indicate no interest in participating. A total of 294 students filled out the contact sheets. Of the 294 students who filled out contact sheets, 57 indicated that they would participate in the focus groups. An email was sent to all 57

students who indicated they were interested in participating in the focus groups. Each student was given options of several available days and times. Twenty-four students responded, and four focus groups were formed. The plan was to form a fifth focus group after initial data collection, if additional data were needed; however, that proved unnecessary. Each meeting was confirmed by email the week of the focus group.

Out of the 24 students who signed up for a focus group day and time, 21 students attended the scheduled focus group. The overall participant information for the focus groups is reported in Table 5. Each focus group was scheduled for one hour; the durations of the focus group sessions ranged from 30 to 50 minutes. The sessions were recorded for transcription. Students were given informed consent forms and information sheets to fill out prior to the focus group conversation. The information sheet served to gather personal information from the students and allowed them to concentrate on the focus group questions during the recorded session.

Focus group participants varied in age, gender, marital status, transfer status, and living arrangements. Of the 21 students, 17 were females ranging in age from 20 to 34 years old. The majority of students were between 20 and 25 years of age. Four of the five UNF colleges were represented. No students within the College of Arts and Sciences participated in the focus groups. Participants lived in a rental unit, owned their own home, or lived with their parents. The majority of participants lived in a rental property and had transferred to UNF. Participants were asked to give their marital status; students could select from the responses of *Married, In a relationship,* or *Single*. Students were evenly distributed across the three categories. Andrea, Molly, Erica, Maria, and Amanda had lived on a college campus at some point in their college careers.

Of students who participated in the focus groups, 23% had lived on campus at some point. Also, 66% of students lived in a rental property, while 19% percent lived at home with their parents. Participants who were either married or in a relationship constituted 57% of the focus groups participants, and 76% were seniors in college.

Table 8

Focus Group Participants

Name	Major	Year	Off-Campus Status	Married	Transfer or Non-transfer	Lived on Campus	Age
Amanda	EE	Senior	Own	Yes	Transfer	No	29
Paul	NUT	Senior	Rent	Relationship	Transfer	No	25
Jason	CS	Junior	Own	Yes	Transfer	No	28
Sam	EE	Junior	Rent	Relationship	Transfer	No	22
Andrea	ACC	Senior	Rent	No	Native	Yes	23
Scarlett	EE	Junior	Rent		Transfer	No	31
Ilyssa	EE	Senior	Parents	Relationship	Native	No	23
Sara	EE	Junior	Parents	No	Transfer	No	22
Molly	EE	Senior	Rent	No	Transfer	Yes	20
Erica	EE	Senior	Parents	No	Transfer	Yes	24
Christine	EE	Senior	Rent	No	Transfer	No	25
Eason	EE	Junior	Rent	Relationship	Native	No	21
Maria	EE	Senior	Rent	No	Native	Yes	21
Kelly	EE	Senior	Rent		Transfer	No	
Maverick	BUS	Senior	Rent	No	Native	No	23
KK	EE	Senior	Rent	Yes	Transfer	No	26

Krystle	EE	Junior	Parents	Relationship		No	
Jed	SM	Senior	Own	Yes	Transfer	No	34
Blur	BUS	Senior	Rent	Yes	Transfer	No	
Amanda	HAD	Senior	Rent	No	Native	Yes	21
"B"	EE	Senior	Rent	Relationship	Transfer	No	22

Note. Major Codes: ACC = Accounting; EE = Elementary Education; HAD = Health Administration; BUS = Business; SM = Sports Management; CS = Computer Science; NUT = Nutrition. Off-campus Status: Rent = In rental property; Own = Own my own home; Parents = Live with parents. Married: Yes; No; Relationship= In a relationship

Focus Group Process and Guiding Questions

After collecting the focus group information sheets, I reintroduced myself and asked each student to introduce him or herself with a pseudonym. All members had the opportunity to select a fictitious name to protect their identities. Focus group questions were established prior to the start of the first focus group (Appendix G).

After the first focus group, two additional questions were added to the focus group questions to extend conversation on the topic. Questions 14 and 15 were added to gain clarity of both the students' work schedules and the most effective way the university could provide information to commuter students.

Coding and Thematic Analysis

I transcribed the four focus group tape recordings. After all focus group recordings were transcribed, the coding process began. Using the first focus group, I developed the codes that would be used to code the remaining focus group data (Appendix H). Three levels of coding were used, based on Strauss and Corbin (1990). Open, axial, and selective coding were used in the data analysis. Open coding was used

initially to examine the words participants used to describe their experiences and satisfaction with institutional factors. Sentences or words were categorized and then coded. Some concepts had multiple codes. For example, a student might have felt that the tutoring services were helpful because he or she used them on a regular basis. This sentence could be coded with a "T" for tutoring, a "VH" code for the service being very helpful, and a "U-Y" for using the service.

The second step was to use axial coding to reorganize the coding to help identify themes. During this step of the analysis, I created links between different questions of satisfaction and identified relationships among the open codes. This allowed the codes to be grouped into categories.

The third level of coding was selective coding. Selective coding is the last coding processes and involves the selection of a core category, which accounts for most of the variation of the central phenomenon of concern and integrates all other categories (Kendall, 1999). The categories defined by axial coding established core categories, or themes, encompassing all similar categories into one topic area. The four themes that emerged from the data are discussed in the next section.

Focus Group Themes

I identified four main themes that emerged throughout the focus group data analysis: location and other reasons to attend the institution, connectedness to the institution, institutional factors that assist with progression toward degree, and obstacles to graduation.

Location and Other Reasons to Attend the Institution

According to the data collected in the focus groups from open-ended questions, students discussed several reasons to attend and stay at the university. Location of the university, the value or cost of the university, and the size of the institution were the main reasons.

The location of the institution was discussed as a reason to attend. The students reported that being close to family or a spouse, growing up in the Jacksonville area, and transferring from the local community college were reasons the location of the university was attractive. While reporting why they picked the institution based on location, one student stated, "This was my first choice because I was moving here from Virginia, and I had to find a school in the area that my boyfriend was stationed at." Another student, Maverick, stated, "I grew up in Jacksonville; I like Jacksonville, so I wanted to stay in Jacksonville." Several other students also discussed wanting to stay in the local area to be closer to family and friends. Other students discussed that they picked the institution because they moved to the area, and it was the only state institution. Erika stated, "I lived in Alabama, and my mom came down here after my parents' divorce, so I followed her down here." Several students discussed picking the institution due to relocation. KK said, "I had to come here because I was moving to Jacksonville, and I just didn't want to stop going to college, so I … but it was not by choice."

Other students discussed transferring from the local community college as a reason to stay in the area. One student indicated her plan to go to community college to obtain her associate of arts degree and then transfer to UNF. Sam said, "It was my first

choice. But I knew I was going to go to a community college my first two years, because it was cheaper. It was close to home."

In addition to location, the value of the education and cost of tuition was another reason to attend the institution. Several students chose the institution because they felt the value of education was good for the cost of tuition. Jed, a senior majoring in sports management, indicated,

> Well, I went to another university first and had an athletic scholarship to play football and then transferred to a Florida institution and never finished there. So I took a10-year hiatus, and then it came down to price and location. So this was my first choice the second time in college, I guess.

Later Jed went onto say,

> It has just worked out very well for me. It is a good value, and the actual education is fairly respected in the state. There are schools that are bigger and have football and stuff like that. But when you talk to people that are hiring students, UNF is right there with UF and FSU.

Alicia, from another focus group, stated, "It was close to home, and I heard a lot of really good things about the education program. I heard when there are job opportunities; UNF students get the job over [students from] other colleges."

Students also chose the institution based on school size. UNF is the fifth smallest university in the Florida State System. The institution has over 16,000 students at both the undergraduate and graduate levels. A student in elementary education stated, "I would come again too. I like the small classes. I never had any problems with class availability; it [UNF] has always been great."

Location and value of the institution were the two main reasons commuter students wanted to attend and remain at the university. Students attending the institution wanted to be close to their families and the places where they grew up. Many

participants chose UNF as an opportunity to transfer from a local community college and finish their bachelor's degree. The value of the school was another main reason to attend. Being within the state system provides in-state students with reduced tuition. The low cost of the institution, along with the reputation of the institution, helps to retain students.

Connectedness to the Institution

This theme revolved around elements that connected students to the institution. There were two main areas that connected commuter students in the focus groups to the institution, caring faculty and being involved with on-campus student organizations or friends. Participants also discussed factors that deterred them from being connected to the campus. Students felt that they did not know about events happening on campus and wanted to see increased school spirit. They also discussed the issue of traveling to and from the campus as a hindrance to becoming more involved. These items were important to students' developing senses of belonging to the institution while they commuted to campus.

Building faculty connections and faculty involvement were two ways students felt bonded to the campus. Students felt a deeper connection to faculty who taught classes in their major areas and liked their major courses because they related to their intended careers. Molly stated, "Since I have been in education [classes], I like my professors a lot more. It is related and [they] have all had experiences in what they are teaching." Erica said, "I feel like they know me on a personal level, and they know my name. I like that." The student-faculty connection is important to maintain. Commuter students use the time they are on campus to meet with their professors. Jason stated, "Most of my teachers have office hours, and they have used them to speak to me. Um, so they have been quite

helpful, and the hours are documented on their syllabus. My professor right now is really good, because if you can't meet with him during his hours, he will meet with you on weekends, weeknights, at the library, in his office, wherever he can, he will help."

Paul discussed his determination to have a relationship with the faculty outside the classroom. His was not a standard practice for the students in the focus groups. Paul explained,

> My experience with all my professors have been generally positive. Um, I do spend a lot of time outside the classroom to meet with them and talking with them about different stuff. For example, I go and talk with one faculty member a lot about just what it is like to be a leader of a big organization, the skills you need. And just trying to get to know them personally and not just, "Hey, I am a student in your class." I try to get to know them, and I feel that in the evening, if something does happen, if you do have a personal relationship they will cater more towards your needs, and they will be more helpful.

Building faculty relationships connected some focus group participants to the university and their major or career. Paul's ability to interact with faculty provided both faculty support and the ability to build relationships.

Being involved on campus or having a group of friends affiliated with the institution helped students connect to the institution. Maverick discussed being part of the ministry club on campus. He stated, "I don't know…it helped me build an awesome network of friends." Amanda agreed, "It [pre-med club and softball] provided the same thing—more variety of friends and networking." Maria, who was involved in a sorority, said, "We get connected through the events we have on campus. They come to us and stuff that is happening on campus." These students were the minority in the focus groups. The majority of the students did not get involved with campus organizations or events.

Students were deterred from participating in campus functions or on-campus student organizations for various reasons. Many students described traveling to and from campus as a deterrent; many only came to campus to attend class. When asked whether or not she comes back to campus for activities, Amanda, an elementary education major, stated, "Not really, and I don't really come back to campus. I just go to school and just go home." Referring to traveling, KK said, "I live in Orange Park, and I only want to come out here when I have to."

Several older students felt that there were not many events geared toward them. When asked if there are programs on campus for them to get involved with, Jed answered, "If I was a younger student." Paul also stated,

> I think that has to do with what year you are and your age. I am 25 now, but when I was a younger undergrad, I wanted to do stuff around campus to meet people. But now that I am older, I have my own schedule, and I have different things to do. I don't have time to stick around campus and be a part of different events. It really depends on the person.

Commuter students in the focus groups had social networks that were not on campus. Blur stated, "Actually, I have no interest. I have a life outside. School is school. I have friends at school, but a lot live outside of school."

Institutional Factors Assist with Progression Toward a Degree

Students discussed factors that have helped them progress toward obtaining their degrees. The four main factors were taking summer courses, correct information provided by academic advisors, One Stop Student Services, and library services. These services provided by the institution could help or hinder a student in the achievement of getting the bachelor's degree.

UNF's summer course offerings allow students to maintain coursework for their major and progress toward graduation, a situation many students use to stay on track to graduate in a timely manner. When students were asked how long it has taken to graduate and what hindered or promoted their progress, one student replied, "I am on four years, but I was behind for a little while. I have taken excessive numbers of summer school [courses]. Last summer I took eighteen credits." Another student in the same focus group agreed and stated, "I recently changed my major, and I added a minor. It is not pushing me to five years, but I am taking five classes this summer, so I can graduate on time." Sam discussed taking summer courses, so she would not have a break in her schedule and could obtain a professional job. She said,

> I just want to keep going. I have only taken off one summer since I started. I don't want to sit back and never want to go back. I just push myself. I bartend to go to school, and I hate it. So that is my drive to go to school and be done.

Summer courses provide an additional avenue to help students obtain their degrees.

Other programs that can provide assistance or hinder students in progression toward a degree are services such as academic advising, One Stop Student Services, and the library. Academic advising at UNF is divided into freshman and sophomore advising, along with academic advisement offices within the separate colleges. Students in the present study said they were using the academic advising offices in the colleges as their primary source of advisement. One student said, "I found that they are extremely helpful. More helpful than the school I transferred from. They help me pick classes." Paul described his experiences with advising: "Before I transferred here I took a trip up here and spoke with an advisor and program director. And they were very helpful on what I needed to get done and what prerequisites I had to have done before I transferred

in." Students discussed how they appreciated the specialization in college advising. Alicia stated, "I love how the academic advisors are education or nursing and are separate. It is too confusing for them to remember everything."

Students who had a positive experience with their advising unit said that they used the services more often. Sam stated, "I really like the advisors here. When I went to the community college, I think I saw an advisor once, and I don't think that I knew any more knowledge than when I went in. I was always researching the Internet to make sure I was on track. Here, they are available. I can ask them about classes and other things. They are flexible like that." Jed described the opportunity to meet with his advisor at any time. He said, "As for advising for sports management, you can basically walk in and see him whenever you want … The most I have ever had [to wait] to see him is 15 to 20 minutes. So you don't even make an appointment—you just walk in." These experiences allow students the opportunity to meet with the advisor at any time to discuss their degree progress.

Students who had a negative experience did not want to use the advising services again and independently searched for information to maintain their progress. Maverick stated, "As far as advising goes, it is really crappy. Like the advisors we have aren't even from here and not business majors. It makes me skeptical. Like how can you give me advice on something you just read in a book? I really don't like that. I would like someone who just got done taking courses I have taken and can relate a little better." Blur concurred, saying,

> I completely agree; like I said before, I would prefer not to go. It is a waste of time. I would like to do everything online on myWings and do it myself. You just waste a lot of time in there waiting, and then you are only seen for about 10 minutes, and you don't get what you want out of it.

Availability of the advisors is also important. Jason explained,

> Another issue with the advisors is that most of them work the same times that I do, nine to five, so it is difficult to see them during my hours, except for lunch times, and they need to take lunch too. So the timing doesn't exactly work out. I have to take a day off, or I can't get them into two different time period that isn't in their normal times.

Along with advising, One Stop Student Services provides assistance with academic records and registration, veteran's affairs, and financial aid. Many new students said they talked with staff in One Stop before and during their tenure at the institution. Krystle stated,

> I feel like they are always very very busy, but they try to get you in as quick as they can. Even if it is to just drop something off or pick something up, they will try to get you in and out as soon as possible.

Jed agreed, "I had a good experience with admissions, and then I had to take an online class as a transient student at another university, and they were really helpful with that. Went pretty smooth."

Providing proper information is an important key to increased student satisfaction. One student described her interaction with One Stop as confusing. She stated,

> They have been pretty helpful, but it feels like every time I go there I have to make a follow-up visit to finish what I started there. It is usually not just one [visit]. They are not really helpful, not fully knowledgeable. They just tell you one thing, then the next person tells you another. When I go there once, I know I will be there at least two more times.

The final service discussed in every focus group was the library. Students said that the library provided a quiet place for them to study and excellent customer service that attracts the students to use the services repeatedly. Students discussed that they came back to the institution to use the library services in the evening. One student articulated, "The late hours are great because I work nine to five and take classes in the evening and have to study sometime. So it is great to get in and use facilities when not a lot of

students are on campus." Paul stated, "I love that the library is open late, and the computer lab is open till late. I am a late studier, and I can stay there to study."

Institutional factors that help commuter students' progress toward their degrees are important to understand, as these factors can impact both retention and graduation rates. Students within the focus groups discussed summer courses, academic advising, One Stop Student Services, and library services as important for them to advance through their degrees and to graduate.

Obstacles to Graduation

Students in the focus groups described several factors that deterred them from graduating on time or being able to participate more on campus. Students discussed working, changing majors, poor academics, and transferring to the institution as reasons they did not expect to graduate within four to six years.

Work schedules were the primary reason students provided to explain why they could not participate in activities on campus or they were delayed in graduation. Students discussed working 30 hours a week, on average, to pay for school, family items, and children. Some students had support from a spouse or family members, but these students were the minority. KK described her previous work schedule and school,

> I worked 40 hours, and I was being a mom, and I was going to school full time. It pushed me to want to do well, so I actually did well in classes. I have cut back on my hours. I just tried to do some school work before I got here, and I had my daughter. It just makes it difficult.

One student said, "I have four classes. I work 40 hours a week. I mean, I know there is stuff to do, but I can't go."

Students work these hours to provide additional funding to go to school and support themselves. A student named "B" recalled, "I am out of state now, and [the

tuition] is absolutely astronomical. So when I am done with this, I will be owing a lot back." Alicia explained that she took time off from school to save money. She said, "I took a year and half off to work to afford books and gas. I graduated in 2006 from high school, so I am within the six years. I went to the community college to get my AA in elementary education." Due to long work weeks, some students said they were unable to manage full-time class schedules, thus delaying graduation. Jason, a computer science major who works full time, stated,

> I am working [a] full 40 hours a week. Um, Monday through Friday. I try to squeeze in classes. My work has been very lenient and let me take a couple hours off here and there. I make it up at the end. I try to take Monday, Wednesday, and Friday classes or Tuesday/Thursday classes, so I can work on the opposite days. Just so I can cover my hours.

Other barriers to graduate in four to six years that students reported were changing their majors and poor academic performance. Amanda, Sam, and Jed said they had changed their majors. Amanda said, "I recently changed my major and added a minor. It is not pushing me past five years, but I am taking five classes this summer to graduate on time." Jed described his lack of academic achievement when he began school: "I didn't take school too seriously, and then once I did, I am on a regular pace I would say." Krystle also discussed how her low academic performance deterred her from graduating on time. She had to retake some courses: "I messed up in school. I got a semester behind because I messed up in class."

Out-of-state transfer students also had difficulty meeting the four- to six-year graduation window. "B," a transfer student from Virginia, lost a year of credits that she was unable to transfer. She stated, "It is because my classes didn't transfer for a whole year worth from Virginia to here. Because I guess the prerequisites here for the

communication major are completely different from my other school." B had to take many hours of summer classes to maintain her own schedule for graduation. Scarlett also changed schools and described her experience with transferring as part of her excessive moving from location to location.

Summary of Qualitative Findings

In summary, a number of themes were identified during focus group data analysis. The first theme discussed was location and other reasons to attend the institution. Students identified location and value of the school as the main reasons why they chose the institution. Many students came to the institution based on the location. It was close to their families, or they grew up in the area. Some students attended local community colleges, then transferred to the institution. The value of the institution for the cost and reputation were additional reasons to attend the institution. Students felt that the tuition cost of the institution for the degrees they were obtaining would help them to find jobs and start their careers. They also felt the institution's faculty was strong, and students wanted to attend because of the institution's reputation.

The second theme was student connectedness to the institution. Students described caring faculty and being involved on campus as ways they connect to the institution as commuters. The students explained how their interactions with faculty help them understand their fields of study and feel that the faculty members care about them as students. Students took time out of their schedules to meet with faculty to discuss coursework and to build relationships. Other students found that contacts with faculty were crucial in better preparing them in their majors and for their careers. Students also felt that having friends from the institution helped them meet other people and connect to

the campus. Being involved in student organizations and having friends from the institution allowed students to attend more events and feel connected. Students discussed traveling to campus as one deterrent to feeling integrated in the campus community. Traveling discouraged some students from staying on campus, because they came to school only to attend class and then went home. Students did not want to return to campus after they already went off campus to go home.

The third theme included institutional factors that assist with progression toward a degree, on-campus services the university controls, which could have a positive or negative impact on progression toward a degree. Commuter students described summer courses, academic advising, One Stop Student Services, and the library as main institutional factors that have helped or hindered their progress. The summer courses the institution provided were important to help students finish their degrees without delay. Students described taking up to five classes in the summer to maintain a full course load to graduate on time. Along with summer courses, students reported that obtaining correct information about the courses needed for their degrees or other administrative items needed to graduate was important. Students did not like receiving incorrect information or being sent to different locations on campus to get the correct information, a situation the One Stop Student Services resource often eliminated. Students also discussed their use of the library to help maintain good grades, by providing them a quiet place to study, computer access, and flexible hours that accommodated their schedules. The library was the one facility that most students returned to campus to use on a regular basis.

In the fourth theme, obstacles to graduation, commuter students discussed hindrances that prevented them from graduating on time or from feeling connected to the

campus. The majority of the commuter students in the focus groups worked to support themselves and their families. Some students had financial support from family, but most students worked while attending school. Students worked an average of 25 to 40 hours a week. Students described being too busy to participate in on-campus events in addition to time they needed to study or go to class. Students also changed their majors or did not perform well academically. Poor academics stopped students from progressing in their academic programs. Students that changed majors or transferred to the institution also had difficulty graduating on time.

Commuter students in these focus groups provided thorough and poignant information that detailed both their lives as commuter students and their views of the institution. Understanding the institutional factors that increase commuter students' satisfaction, as well as understanding commuter students' needs, can allow programs and services to ensure increased retention and graduation for this student population.

Chapter Summary

Chapter 4 reported the findings and data analysis findings for the two parts of this study. My analysis of the data collected using the SSI indicated that the scores for the scales were not statistically significant in determining whether or not a student would choose the university again.

Two general findings were drawn from the SSI. First, commuter students were highly satisfied with several institutional factors integrated into three scales: Academic Advising Effectiveness, Instructional Effectiveness, and Services Excellence. Students indicated their highest satisfaction was with using computer labs and online services, treatment by faculty, faculty availability, and the faculty's use of technology. Students

were also satisfied with the knowledge of academic advisors and the counseling services. Second, commuter students were dissatisfied with services that included parking, registration effectiveness, receiving the "run around," and the existence of a student activity fee. On the survey, students were unable to describe their dissatisfaction with these institutional factors. Therefore, the focus groups helped to define the reason for the level of satisfaction.

Four main themes emerged from the focus group data analysis: location and other reasons to attend the institution, connectedness to the institution, institutional factors that assist with progression toward a degree, and obstacles to graduation. Relating to location and other reasons to attend the institution, commuter students stated that reasons to attend the institution included location and value. With the second theme, institutional factors that assist with progression toward a degree, commuter students described services that facilitated their degree pursuit, including summer courses, obtaining correct information from academic advising, One Stop Student Services, and the library. In regards to the third theme, connectedness to the institution, commuter students discussed elements, such as caring faculty and being involved with student organizations or friends on campus, that bonded them to the university. With the fourth theme, obstacles to graduation, commuter students discussed difficulties that prevent them from graduating on time or from feeling connected to the institution. Both parts of the present study, along with the findings of commuter student satisfaction, will be addressed in the next chapter.

CHAPTER 5
SUMMARY AND DISCUSSION

The purpose of chapter 5 is to provide an overall summary of the study and to present conclusions drawn from the research findings, recommendations for student affairs professionals, and recommendations for future research. Limitations of the research are also discussed in this chapter, to allow for better understanding of the findings.

Study Summary

Commuter students are one type of student population on university campuses. When I attended undergraduate school, I was considered a commuter student. I lived at home with my parents and worked near my house to support myself while attending college. The transition to college as a commuter student was difficult. I did not connect with the institution at first, and at the end of my first year, I needed to determine whether or not attending the next year was beneficial. I decided to get involved with one student organization, the Commuter and Off-Campus Student Association. This interaction and engagement encouraged me to pursue the profession of student affairs. As UNF is similar to my undergraduate institution, it was important for me to better understand what institutional factors student affairs professionals can implement or control to help commuter students succeed and graduate at UNF.

Commuter students are defined as students who live at home with family, live in rental facilities close to campus, or own their own home; their needs often differ from

those of residential, on-campus students. Commuters have multiple life roles, transportation issues, and needs to balance demands of their family and work lives with those of college life. They also may have trouble developing a sense of belonging to the campus community (Jacoby, 2000).

For higher education institutions, high graduation and retention rates are viewed as signs of success. Pascarella et al. (1992) discussed the connections between higher graduation rates and involvement of commuter students on campus, within both academic and social settings. The present study was conducted to examine institutional factors that affect commuter student retention and graduation rates at UNF. Satisfaction with the campus experience was identified using the SSI survey, which organized questions into nine scales. These scales included services such as the registrar, financial aid, university facilities, parking on campus, and faculty and staff involvement. For each question, students rated their satisfaction with the institution.

The second part of the research included conducting focus groups, which were used to collect more in-depth information about student satisfaction with institutional factors described in the SSI survey. Overall, 115 students took the SSI survey, and 21 students participated in the focus groups.

Two overarching research questions that guided this study of institutional factors affecting commuter student retention and graduation at the UNF:

RQ1: Does satisfaction with institutional factors affect undergraduate students' decisions to stay at a public university in Florida?

RQ2: How do institutional factors influence commuter student success?

The topics addressed in Chapter 5 will consist of discussion of quantitative and qualitative data in relation to the research questions, major conclusions, limitations of the

research, recommendations for student affairs professionals, and recommendations for future research and practice.

Major Conclusions Based on Findings

Institutional factors are described as factors that an institution can control or change to enhance student satisfaction and graduation rates. Factors range from programming initiatives and student affairs support services to faculty interaction and university facilities. Tinto's (1975) student integration theory and Bean's (1982) student attrition theory provided a framework for interpreting results from the survey and focus groups used to collect data for this study. Tinto (1975) defined academic and social integration variables that lead to student retention. Tinto's (1975) model was designed to integrate environmental and social factors that affect persistence. The model also included faculty-student interaction and experiences within the classroom as factors that pertain to persistence. Bean's (1982) student attrition model also included factors pertaining to environment, organizational structure, faculty and staff, and student's intent to leave the institution. Bean used student "fit" to describe how institutional and external factors affect student retention.

To answer the first research question, I sought to determine how satisfaction with institutional factors affects commuter students' decisions to stay at a four-year, public institution. The quantitative survey data were analyzed using logistic regression to test the statistical significance of the scale scores as predictors of the dependent variable. None of the scale scores was a statistically significant predictor of the dependent variable. The small sample size may have decreased the ability to find statistically significant relationships in the data.

The second research question sought to determine how institutional factors influence commuter student success. The qualitative focus group data were analyzed using Strauss and Corbin's (1990) levels of coding, by collectively gathering codes into themes. The four themes—location and other reasons to attend the institution, connectedness to the institution, institutional factors that assist with progression toward a degree, and obstacles to graduation—describe commuter student experiences related to student success.

The analysis of the data reported in Chapter 4 provides some support for the claim that commuter student satisfaction with institutional factors may determine the student's decision to stay and complete his or her degree at the university. The data also support how institutional factors influence commuter student success at UNF. Although quantitative data did not indicate that satisfaction with institutional factors predicted the outcome variable, the qualitative data supported findings from the reviewed literature and previous research.

Despite the small sample size and lack of statistical significance for the variables in the logistic regression, data were collected from the focus groups that acknowledged institutional factors are important to commuter students. Four major conclusions can be drawn from the quantitative and qualitative data.

The first major conclusion is that students who participated in this study had higher levels of satisfaction with library services and academic advising services than with other institutional factors. Students' satisfaction also increased students' participation and use of those services. For example, students indicated high satisfaction with items pertaining to use of the computer labs (M = 5.86) and online services (M =

5.9). The SSI survey scales of Instructional Effectiveness, Academic Advising Effectiveness, and Services Excellence contained the questions with the highest satisfaction scores.

In the focus groups, commuter students said that they used the library and computer labs frequently, more than any other services on campus. In addition to high satisfaction scores pertaining to computer labs and online services, commuter student use of library services produced high satisfaction scores (M = 5.95). Students articulated that they used the library to study and connect with peers. The library provided a quiet place to study, and many students said that they came to campus specifically to use library services. This finding supports Gansemer-Topf and Schuh's (2004) research, where they concluded that academic support expenditures predicted retention and graduation rates. Institutions that invested funds in such resources as library services also invested in student success.

Satisfaction with academic advising was contingent on whether or not students had been provided with proper information (M = 5.93) and on advisor availability (M = 5.79). Students who used advising services more often found the service helpful and felt that receiving correct information about courses allowed them to graduate on time. Students who were dissatisfied with advising services obtained incorrect information and had to wait long periods of time to see advisors. Both quantitative and qualitative data collected supports students' satisfaction with campus support services, including academic advising, counseling, and library services.

The institutional factor that received the lowest satisfaction score was parking services. This score indicated dissatisfaction with commuting to the institution. The

Safety and Security scale included security of parking lots and campus, amount of parking, and response for assistance. This scale received the lowest mean satisfaction score of all scales (M = 4.89). These findings about parking are important, due to commuter students' use of transportation. Jacoby (2000) found transportation to be the number one student concern for commuter students. Transportation and parking services are critical services for commuter students, and these services must be addressed to increase the likelihood of student satisfaction.

The second conclusion that can be drawn from the data is that commuter students were not participating in student organizations or social activities on campus because they needed to balance external obligations with their academic careers. Students who participated in the focus groups said that they did not have time to accommodate extracurricular activities that did not pertain to coursework. Commuters said they did not have time to participate in programs that were not conducted during the times they were on campus to attend classes.

Various types of student support and students affairs programming, both social and academic, have been developed to connect students to their institutions. Ortman (1995) observed that institutions where students were predominantly or totally commuters often treated these students as if they were residential students. Administrators, staff, and faculty may have expectations based on residential college values; therefore, they treat commuter students as residential students. In the present study, commuter students used support services more often than they attended social functions or were involved with student organizations. Of the students surveyed, 57.8%

did not participate in on-campus student organizations. Students were not connected to the campus through traditional residential programming or student organizations.

Students indicated responsibility to family and not wanting to drive back to the institution at night for campus events as reasons they were not more involved in on-campus activities. Kodama (2002) related commuter student dissatisfaction to students' feelings of isolation on campus and found that lack of on-campus support was a significant predictor of marginality. Kodama's study also revealed that commuter students found higher levels of support from off-campus sources than on-campus sources.

The third major conclusion drawn from this study is that students in the focus groups appeared to have an instrumental view of their college experiences. They did not seem to be enrolled in any programs to enjoy the college life, but instead seemed to be focused on what they needed to do to complete course and degree requirements. They appeared interested only in support services that helped them achieve those goals. For these individuals, being a commuter student was perceived as another job or role that the student must maintain to fulfill life obligations. Commuters obtain their education to enhance their lives and obtain a job after graduation. College was not viewed as a time to participate in activities unrelated to their degrees and careers.

Based on the data, the fourth major conclusion is that commuter student desired to have increased regular interactions with faculty teaching courses in their major fields. The SSI survey indicated high scores for treatment of commuter students by faculty (M = 5.73), faculty availability (M = 5.96), and faculty use of technology (M = 5.83). During the focus groups, students said that their connections with faculty enhanced their experience at the university. In the "connectedness to the institution" theme, students

provided insight about their feelings regarding faculty availability and involvement. Students felt connected to the institution when they had increased positive interaction with faculty. Students expressed higher satisfaction with faculty based on faculty's knowledge of the field, availability through office hours and email, and discussions with faculty outside the classroom.

This finding corroborated previous research indicating that faculty contributed to student retention by supporting student needs, being approachable, and being accessible to commuter students. Faculty engagement provides a sense of support to the student (Cokley et al., 2006; Lundquist, Spalding, & Landrum, 2002). The university should encourage faculty to make intentional connections with commuter students and provide resources to allow faculty the opportunity to provide programming that will bring commuter students to campus.

Despite the lack of statistical significance found in the analysis of the quantitative data, generalizations can be made from the levels of satisfaction and student comments addressing institutional factors that affect retention and graduation. These finding can help to provide recommendations to higher education administrators pertaining to commuter student retention and graduation.

Limitations of the Study

One possible limitation of this study was the small sample size for the quantitative analysis. Vittinghoff and McCulloch (2006) described the rule of thumb for logistic regression as a minimum of 10 outcome events per predictor variable [EPV]. Hair et al. (2006), however, noted that the lower threshold for the ratio of cases to independent variables should be at least 5 to 1. The SSI survey had 9 predictor variables; therefore, the

sample size should have been adequate by either of these guidelines. However, Vittinghoff and McCulloch noted that "the rule of thumb of 10 or more EPV . . . is not a well-defined bright line" (p. 717), and Homer and Lemeshow recommended sample sizes greater than 400 (see Bewick, Cheek, & Ball, 2005). Thus, the relatively small sample size may have been problematic.

The sample used for this study does not fully represent the population at UNF. Students from the College of Arts and Sciences (COAS) did not participate in the present study. COAS has the largest student population at the university. Brick and Kalton (1996) discussed missing data occurs because an element in the target population is not included in the survey's sampling frame, because the sampled element does not participate in the survey, and because a responding sampled element fails to provide acceptable responses. In the present study, COAS chairpersons and faculty members were contacted via email to recruit volunteers, but the response rate was low.

Another limitation was the low alpha coefficient for internal consistency of the Safety and Security scale scores (α =.377). Cronbach's alpha ranges from 0 to 1, and the Safety and Security scale alpha score suggests that the items in the scale have relatively low internal consistency. Also, the dependent variable, the survey question "All in all, if you had it to do over again, would you enroll here?" was used in a prior study by Schreiner (2009). Schreiner's study was that only one using that dependent variable in the SSI survey, to connect satisfaction level to retention and graduation. Single item predictor variables can be unreliable and unstable. The same bias may also occur in logistic regression models where variables of this type are used as dependent variables (Frost & Thompson, 2000).

In addition to statistical limitations, focus groups for research purposes provide challenges and potential limitations. Some focus group participants might have discouraged others from discussing their experiences with institutional factors, therefore limiting the range of useful input (McIntyre, 2011). However, interviewing people in the focus groups was not difficult. To gain information from all participants, questions were directed to specific participants who had not discussed their perspectives with the group.

The conclusions drawn from this research should be taken with caution in applying them to other institutions or student populations. In spite of these limitations, recommendations for student affairs professionals can be made, based on the data analysis and major conclusions.

Recommendations for Student Affairs Professionals

The findings from the current research indicate conclusions and recommendations to be considered by student affairs professionals and college administrators to increase satisfaction with institutional factors related to commuter student retention and graduation. Recommendations discussed include increasing faculty and student engagement; providing relevant, targeted, and convenient programming and support services; and addressing transportation concerns specific to commuter students.

Findings suggest that commuter student engagement is accomplished within the classroom. Commuter students at the upper level are interested in major coursework and programming designed to enhance their degree. Faculty can provide this connection to both the major and the institution. Johnson (1997) found that faculty and staff interactions and connections were the most important characteristic distinguishing retained students from students who left the institution. Results from the present study

show that faculty availability and openness to students supported increased satisfaction with faculty and courses. Faculty should provide office hours and out-of-classroom activities that allow commuter students to communicate and bond with faculty. This participation increases the sense of connectedness to the institution. For example, Paul, a focus group participant, illustrated his relationship with a faculty member. He described his interactions: "I do spend a lot of time outside the classroom to meet with them and talking with them about different stuff. I feel that in the evening, if something does happen, if you do have a personal relationship they will cater more towards your needs, and they will be more helpful." This connection enhanced the student's college experience.

The second recommendation is to provide programming and support services offered between class times, to facilitate commuter student involvement. Commuter students frequently use academic advising, One Stop Student Services, and library services. Providing a place for commuter students to gather, meet peers, and interact with university administrators allows for increased time on the campus. The findings showed that students did not want to return to campus after they left; they preferred to participate in events that occurred while they were already on campus. Because most students were full time and attended classes during the day, increased social programming and academic events could be scheduled during that time. Intentional outreach to students may increase attendance at university events, as well as provide commuter students opportunities to build relationships with peers, faculty, and administrators.

Faculty and administrators also need to be aware of commuter students' transportation concerns. Commuter students do not live on campus, and many drive to school on a daily basis. Jacoby (2000) described transportation as an obvious concern that included parking, traffic, transportation schedules, and transportation costs. Convenience of courses, services, and programs is of paramount importance to commuter students. The process of driving to campus, finding a parking space, and getting to class takes time and planning. Although parking is a problem on many university campuses, administrators should not overlook parking and transportation for commuter students.

Another recommendation is that the university should help to provide on-campus resources that will help commuter students balance life, work, and school roles. It is important to provide access to institutional services that are equitable to all students regardless of residential status. Commuter students are the majority population at the institution and should be considered when designing programs and policies at the institution.

One example of an additional campus resource is increased opportunities for on-campus work. Commuter students have increased family commitments and work extensively outside of the classroom. The findings in the present study showed that over 78% of the students attended school full time and worked off campus. Over 48% of survey respondents worked part time, and another 20% worked full time while attending school. During the focus groups, students stated they were working on average 30 hours a week to help pay for school and support their families. Increased work outside the university campus means less time spent in the classroom, studying for courses, or immersed in the university culture. Commuter students' work schedules, along with

family obligations, travel, classes, homework, and studying, can produce stress and prevent commuter students from engaging in campus programming, using campus facilities, or interacting with faculty. Providing student support systems that allow for work on campus may increase students' abilities to stay on campus for longer periods of time.

The last recommendation is that UNF administrators and faculty should embrace the institution's location and connection to the community. Commuter students at UNF decide where to acquire their educations based in part on the institution's location and appearance. In this study, commuter students had a high satisfaction score with the campus being well-maintained ($M = 6.23$). Data from the "location and other reasons to attend the institution" theme described commuter students as wanting to be close to their families and wanting to be a part of the community where they were raised. Students transferred to the institution based on its geographical proximity to the community colleges they attended. This finding was not discussed within the background literature reviewed. Earlier research did not discuss location of institution in relationship to retention and graduation.

When working with commuter students, university administrators should consider the recommendations offered, which are based on students' satisfaction with institutional factors. Commuter students' needs should be addressed at UNF to help support this student population—with an aim to increase retention and graduation, and ultimately to build a stronger institution.

Recommendations for Future Research and Practice

From this study on institutional factors that affect commuter student retention and graduation, I have devised three recommendations for future research related to commuter students. Additional qualitative research should be conducted to define the commuter student in more detail. Research should also be conducted to study the differences between the subpopulations within the commuter group and the relationship between location of institution and commuter student retention. Additional research is needed to identify types of programming that engage commuter students and work experiences, as they relate to commuter student retention.

The literature that was reviewed for this study did not include extensive qualitative research involving the commuter student population. The literature is limited to Jacoby's (2000) definition that commuter students are students who live off campus in their own residences, students who live in rental housing near the campus, and students who live on their own with families while attending college. This definition restricts the differences that may appear among these subpopulations.

Future researchers should pay attention to the difference between commuter statuses. Not all commuter students are alike, and all have specific needs based on their proximity to the institution. For example, students who live off-campus but live in facilities that are like university housing may have different needs from those students who live at home with their parents. Limited research has been conducted to describe differences within the commuter population as it relates to satisfaction with institutional factors.

In the present study and in previous research, the literature showed the importance of engagement for commuter student retention. Additional research could further understanding of the types of on-campus programming commuter students participate in on a regular basis. Research should also redefine engagement for the commuter student population. Identifying commuter student needs and defining what motivates them to stay at the institution is important. Commuter students want to connect to the institution through programs, faculty interaction, and use of student services. For example, students may participate in programs that incorporate interactions with faculty (research programs or faculty mentor programs). As previously discussed in Chapter 2, learning communities could also be developed specifically for commuter students that incorporate a common course sequence for students in a cohort. Appropriately defining engagement specifically for commuter students will help to develop programming that connects commuter students to the university.

Third, future research needs to be conducted on commuter students' work schedules and how they relate to student retention. Limited research exists that describes commuter student work schedules and how the number of work hours affects engagement and retention. Research could focus on the issue of on-campus work versus off-campus work. Such research would enable administrators to analyze on-campus work-study programs, allowing commuters to work and attend class on-campus, instead of going off campus to work. As discussed in this study, institutions must focus on important institutional factors, when connecting commuter students to the institution.

Conclusion

As I reviewed the literature on retention and graduation rates for this dissertation, I began to realize the need for additional research specifically related to commuter students. My passion for commuter students comes from my own personal experiences as a commuter and my interactions with faculty, staff, and other students during my tenure at my undergraduate institution. My passion increased for the student affairs field when my undergraduate mentor discussed working with college students as a career. My work with college students over the past 12 years has increased my desire to learn more about student development, retention, and engagement. I felt the desire to better understand the commuter population and their needs, as they relate to the institution.

Commuter students view college differently than traditional residential students. Commuter students want to obtain a degree to find a job. Attending classes is a means to an end. Commuter students vary in age, gender, and race, but still have similar characteristics. Commuters often work, have increased family obligations, and do not want to participate in activities that will not yield return for their careers. They want to finish their degrees so they can begin their intended careers.

Engagement with faculty and using resources on campus within academic advising and library services enhance satisfaction. Commuter students need services or programs that provide engagement revolving around the commute to school and classes. They want programming that relates to their lives and careers.

The literature on retention and graduation rates was primarily based on residential students' academic achievement and institutional factors. Research was limited as to what institutional factors related to commuter student retention or why commuter

students attended the institution and stayed. Participants in the present study reported institutional factors that contributed to their success but also how institutional factors impeded progress toward graduation. Students provided insight for reasons they remained at the institution, such as faculty interaction and communication, accurate information provided by academic advising and support services, and the institution's location. Students also discussed obstacles that impeded retention and graduation, which indicates that UNF and other similar institutions can do more to effectively reach out to commuter students and support their success. Redefining commuter students' engagement and addressing their needs are important to making a difference on campuses where commuter students are the majority of those attending the institution. Hopefully, recommendations for practice and future research will increase awareness about commuter students within the student affairs profession and the university community.

APPENDIX A
EMAIL TO DEPARTMENT CHAIRPERSONS FOR PARTICIPANT RECOMMENDATIONS

Dear <Chairperson>,

My name is Heather Kenney. I am a doctoral student in the Educational Leadership Program at the University of North Florida. My dissertation topic is on how institutional factors affect commuter student retention and graduation. This study and research methodology used has been approved by the UNF Institutional Review Board and my doctoral committee.

As a part of the research proposal, I would like to identify commuter students within the different colleges. Because email addresses are not considered university directory information, I would like to have permission to enter your junior and senior level classes to obtain volunteers to participate in focus groups. There will be a total of five (5) focus groups.

Based on your recommendation of senior level course, I will contact the professor of the course you recommend to ask permission to talk with their class about this study. If the professor is unable or uninterested, I will contact the subsequent professors to gain access.

The Chair of my dissertation committee is Dr. Katherine Kasten. She is currently a professor within the Department of Leadership, Counseling, School Counseling, and Sport Management at UNF. Please contact her regarding my study at 904-620-1789 or via email at kkasten@unf.edu.

Please feel free to contact me for additional information or questions at 904-563-6031 or at heather.kenney@unf.edu.

Sincerely,

Heather Kenney

APPENDIX B
EMAIL TO CHAIRPERSONS CONFIRMING PROFESSORS

Dear <Chairperson>,

Thank you for identifying <professor's name>, <professor's name>, and <professor's name> as possible classes to obtain students volunteers.

I will be contacting these professors soon to set up a date and time to meet their class. Please feel free to forward my original email that I sent to you with my correspondence. Please notify <professor's name>, <professor's name>, and <professor's name> with the possibility to participate in this study.

Thank you again for you time and consideration.

Sincerely,
Heather Kenney

APPENDIX C
EMAIL OF INVITATION TO PROFESSORS TO OBTAIN VOLUNTEERS

Dear <Professor>,

My name is Heather Kenney. I am a doctoral student in the Educational Leadership Program at the University of North Florida. My dissertation topic is on how institutional factors affect commuter student retention and graduation. This study and the research methodology used have been approved by the UNF Institutional Review Board and my doctoral committee.

As a part of the research proposal, I would like to identify students in your classes who are commuter or residential students. Because email addresses are not considered university directory information, I would like to have permission to attend your class to obtain these volunteers. I will review the consent form with the students and have them sign-up. I anticipate this time in the classroom will last about 5 to 10 minutes.

Specifically, I will be asking students to participate in the Student Satisfaction Inventory via the internet and a one hour focus group that will examine issues pertaining to institutional factors that affected their college career at UNF. Students will be asked to contact me at my phone and email address if interested in participating. Once they have contacted me I will discuss a date and time of the focus group meeting. Once I obtain a list of volunteers, I will no longer need to come to your classroom again.

I understand your full calendar and I appreciate your consideration of my request. If you are interested, please contact me at 620-1287 or at heather.kenney@unf.edu with a day and time to attend your class.

Thank you again for your consideration,

Heather A. Kenney

APPENDIX D
INSTITUTIONAL FACTORS THAT AFFECT COMMUTER STUDENT RETENTION
CONTACT SHEET

Name: _____

Address: _____
_____

Phone number (cell): _____

Major: _____

College (Please check one):
Brooks College of Health ☐
Coggin College of Business ☐
College of Arts and Sciences ☐
College of Computing, Engineering, & Construction ☐
College of Education & Human Services ☐

Email Address: _____

Do you commute to campus? Yes ☐ No ☐

Are you interested in completing a survey for our research study? ☐ No ☐

Are you interested in participating in our Focus Groups? ☐ No ☐

Days/Times Available to participate in Focus Group:

APPENDIX E
FOCUS GROUP INFORMATION SHEET

Name: _____

Major: _____

Year in College: _____

Where do you live off-campus? Circle One

With parents In rental property Own my own home

Married? Yes No In a relationship

Age: _____

Native or Transfer Students? (Circle one)

Lived on-campus sometime during your college career? Yes No

APPENDIX F
INFORMED CONSENT STATEMENT FOR COMMUTER STUDENT FOCUS GROUPS

Heather Kenney
University of North Florida
Institutional Factors that Affect Commuter Student Retention

INTRODUCTION

Thank you for agreeing to participate in this study which will take place on <date>. This statement describes the purpose of the student, procedures, your involvement, and your rights. Also described are your right to withdraw from the study at any time. You may refuse to sign this form and not participate in the study.

PURPOSE OF STUDY

The purpose of this study is to understand institutional factors that affect retention of commuter students at the University of North Florida. In order to maintain and increase graduation rates of commuter students, UNF must understand what factors primarily affect retention of commuter students. The research question is: Does satisfaction with institutional factors affect a commuter student's decision to stay at a 4-year, Florida public institution?

PROCEDURES

You are being asked to participate in this research project to investigate your attitudes and perceptions of institutional factors that affected your college career. Focus groups will be conducted with five (5) to ten (10) participants from each college: College of Arts and Sciences, Coggin College of Business, Brooks College of Health, College of Computing, Engineering, and Construction, and College of Education and Human Services. You will be asked open ended questions that will last between 45-60 minutes. Focus groups will be conducted in person and on the UNF campus. Focus groups will be tape recorded, transcribed, and tapes will be destroyed after dissertation defense. Personal identification will not be revealed in tapings. All tape recordings and notes will be kept in a locked and secured location during data collection and analysis.

RISKS

You will not be at physical or psychological risk. There is no known risk associated with this research.

BENEFITS

There is no direct benefit to participating in this focus group. The benefit to this study is to find institutional factors that help retain commuter students.

PAYMENT TO PARTICIPANTS

There will be no cost to the participants as a result of participating in this study. Compensation will not be awarded in this study to participants.

PARTICIPANT CONFIDENTIALITY
Your identity in this study will not be revealed in a study or publication. Pseudonyms will be used to conceal your identity. Only the researcher and dissertation chair, Katherine Kasten, will have access to the research materials.

REFUSAL TO SIGN CONSENT AND AUTHORIZATION
Your participation in this study is voluntary. If at any time you refuse to participate there will be no penalty. You are free to withdraw from the study at any time without prejudice from the institution. If you refuse to sign the consent form you cannot participate in the study.

CANCELLING THIS CONSENT AND AUTHORIZATION
You may cancel your participation in this research study at any time with written notification to:
Heather Kenney at heather.kenney@unf.edu.

QUESTIONS ABOUT PARTICIPATION
All questions about participation should be directed to the researchers listed at the end of this form.

PARTICIPATION CERTIFICATION
I understand this agreement states that I have received a copy of the informed consent. My signature below shows that I understand all my rights as a participant and agree to participate in this study. If I have concerns about my rights as a participant in this research, I may call Dr. Kareem Jordan , Vice Chairperson, University of North Florida Institutional Review Board (IRB) at 904-620-1723.

By signing this form I affirm that I am at least 18 years of age and that I have received a copy of this consent form.

_____ _____
Print Participant's Name Date

_____
Participants Signature

Researcher Contact Information:

Heather Kenney
Principal Investigator
Brooks College of Health (39/3025)
University of North Florida
1 UNF Dr.
Jacksonville, FL 32224

Dr. Katherine Kasten
Dissertation Chair & Advisor
Department of Leadership, Counseling & Institutional Technology (57/3420)
University of North Florida
1 UNF Dr.
Jacksonville, FL 32224

APPENDIX G
FOCUS GROUP INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

1. Why did you pick UNF as your institution for your bachelors degree?
2. Was UNF your first institution choice? Why?
3. What type of commuter student are you? A. lived on campus at some point in your college career, B. live at home with your parents, C. lived off campus whole college career.
4. How long did it take you to graduate? What supported or hindered that timeline?
5. What student services have been important to you? For example, the Women's Center, Health promotions, Academic Advising, academic tutoring services, LGBT services, etc.
    a. How were they helpful?
    b. How many times did you use them?
6. Have you used One Stop student services? For example, records/registration, admissions, cashiers office, One Stop front desk, etc. If yes, please explain your experience and satisfaction with the service.
7. Did you have interactions with your faculty outside the classroom (i.e., university functions, study sessions, etc.)?
8. Do you feel as a commuter student part of the UNF campus? Why or why not?
9. What facilities have you used on campus and what was your satisfaction with those facilities. For example, Dottie Dorian Fitness Center, Athletic Fields, Student Union, Academic Facilities, etc.
10. Did you participate in athletics? If so, what was your level of satisfaction with athletic support services?
11. Did you participate in on campus co-curricular activities? For example, Greek Life, Student Government, student organizations in your college, other clubs, intramurals, etc. Please explain your experience and satisfaction.
12. Where there any barriers that prevented you from participating in events on campus?
13. If you could do it all over again, would you pick UNF?

APPENDIX H
FOCUS GROUP CODING AND CONCEPTS

Code	Meaning
1CL	1st choice location
1CP	1st choice price
NCL	Not first choice - location
NCP	Not first choice - price
NCO	Not first choice - other
TLG	Time-late graduation
TOT	Time-on time graduation
SC	Support graduation - summer classes
SF	Support graduation - family
SFT	Support graduation – full-time attendance
SS	Support graduation - class schedule
HCM	Hinder graduation - major change
HT	Hinder graduation - transfer
HF	Hinder graduation - family
HW	Hinder graduation - work/financial
HP	Hinder graduation - poor academics
T	Service - Tutoring
L	Facility -Library
A	Service - Advising
F	Service - Food Service
S	Service - Shuttle
G	Facility- Gym
I	Service -Intramurals
B	Facility - Bookstore
CL	Facility - computer lab
RE	Organization - religious
SO	Organization - social
GL	Organization - Greek life
AC	Organization - academic
AT	Organization - athletic
WC	Service - Women's Center
P	Peers
V	Value of education
PR	Professors
CS	Class schedule
W	Work
LH	Home life
VH	Very helpful
H	Helpful
NH	Not helpful
UY	Use service - yes
UN	Use service - no

CI	Correct information
II	Incorrect information
NP	Not personable
OR	Other resources - roadmaps
IY	Interaction - yes
IN	Interaction - no
OF	Office hours
E	Email
F	Functions
PI	Personal interaction
EV	Events
NE	Networking
SC	Small classes
FL	Flexible
PA	Parking
TI	Time issue
ST	Study
NS	Not satisfied
SA	Satisfied
VS	Very satisfied

APPENDIX I
IRB APPROVAL

Office of Research and Sponsored Programs
1 UNF Drive
Jacksonville, FL 32224-2665
904-620-2455 FAX 904-620-2457
Equal Opportunity/Equal Access/Affirmative Action Institution

MEMORANDUM

DATE: May 6, 2011

TO: Ms. Heather Kenney

VIA: Dr. Katherine Kasten
Leadership & Counseling

FROM: Mr. Richard Buck, IRB Member
On behalf of the UNF Institutional Review Board

RE: Review by the UNF Institutional Review Board IRB#11-015:
"Institutional Factors that Pertain to Commuter Student Retention and Graduation Rates"

This is to advise you that your project, "Institutional Factors that Pertain to Commuter Student Retention and Graduation Rates," has undergone "expedited, category #6 & 7" review on behalf of the UNF Institutional Review Board and was approved.

This approval applies to your project in the form and content as submitted to the IRB for review. Any variations or modifications to the approved protocol and/or informed consent forms as they relate to dealing with human subjects must be cleared with the IRB prior to implementing such changes. Any unanticipated problems involving risk and any occurrence of serious harm to subjects and others shall be reported promptly to the IRB within 3 business days.

Your study has been approved for a period of 12 months. If your project continues for more than one year, you are required to provide a Continuing Status Report to the UNF IRB prior to **4/06/2012** if your study will be continuing past the 1-year anniversary of the approval date. *We suggest you submit your status report 11 months from the date of your approval date as noted above to allow time for review and processing.*

As you may know, **CITI Course Completion Reports are valid for 3 years**. Dr. Kasten's completion report is valid through 3/30/2014 and Ms. Kenney's completion report is valid through 12/04/2012. If your completion report expires within the next 60 days, please take CITI's refresher course by following this link: http://www.citiprogram.org/. Based on your research interests we ask that you complete

either the “Group 1 Biomedical Research Investigators and Key Personnel” CITI training or the “Group 2 Social Behavioral Researcher Investigators and Key Personnel” CITI training.

Should you have questions regarding your project or any other IRB issues, please contact Kayla Champaigne at 904-620-2312, or K.Champaigne@unf.edu.

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HEATHER ADAMS KENNEY

EDUCATION

Doctorate, Educational Leadership (Ed.D), Fall 2012

University of North Florida, Jacksonville, FL (ABD, Starting Summer 2009)

Master of Science in Health (MSH), Geriatric Management, Fall 2012
University of North Florida, Jacksonville, FL

Master of Science (M.S.), Higher Education; Minor: Counseling April 2002
Florida State University, Tallahassee, FL

Bachelor of Arts, Psychology December 1999
West Chester University, West Chester, PA

PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE

Director, Brooks College of Health Advising Office, January 2009-Present
University of North Florida, Jacksonville, FL

Associate Director, Student Activities August 2006- 2008
Embry Riddle Aeronautical University, Daytona Beach, FL

Educational Specialist/Academic Advisor August 2004- 2006
Embry Riddle Aeronautical University, Daytona Beach, FL

Residence Life Coordinator June 2002- 2004
Jacksonville University, Jacksonville, FL

INSTRUCTIONAL EXPERIENCE

Instructor, Healthcare Careers, HSC2000
University of North Florida, Jacksonville, FL

Instructor, Strategies for Success in College, SLS1103
Florida State College of Jacksonville, Jacksonville, FL

Instructor, University 101
Embry-Riddle Aeronautical University, Daytona Beach, FL

Co-Instructor, First Year Experience Course
Florida State University, Tallahassee, FL

Co-Instructor, Career Development and Planning Course, SDS 3340 *Florida State University, Tallahasse, FL*

RELATED EXPERIENCE

NASPA Summer Symposium, Co-Chair of Hospitality — Summer 2010
National Association of Student Personnel Administrators

Training Coordinator, Academic Center — August 2005-2006
Embry-Riddle Aeronautical University, Daytona Beach, FL

Coordinator, University 101 Peer Mentor program — 2004-2006
Embry-Riddle Aeronautical University, Daytona Beach, FL

Conference Activities Chair, NASPA — 2004-2009
New Professionals and Graduate Students Knowledge Community,
National Association of Student Personnel Administrators

Facilitator, Suicide Prevention — 2005- 2009
Embry-Riddle Aeronautical University, Daytona Beach, FL

INVITED PRESENTATIONS

Kenney, H & Betz-Cabrera, J. (2011). Academic Advising: Fostering Collaborations with Students Affairs. National Association of Student Personnel Administrators.

Kenney, H & Austin, K (2006). Making Sure First Generation Students Don't Finish Last! National Academic Advising Association, Indianapolis, IN.