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TRANSFER STUDENT EXPERIENCES AT A FOUR-YEAR UNIVERSITY

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A Dissertation  
Presented to the  
Faculty of  
California State University,  
San Bernardino

---

In Partial Fulfillment  
of the Requirements for the Degree  
Doctor of Education  
in  
Educational Leadership

---

by  
Virginia Kay Stewart-Hattar

December 2016

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December 2016

Approved by:

Dr. Donna Schnorr, Committee Chair, Education

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## ABSTRACT

In recent years attention has been concentrated on the experiences of traditional college students, with very little research or attention on the experiences of transfer students. The purpose of this causal comparative mixed-methods study was to describe the experiences of transfer students who engage in the experiential learning activities of service learning and/or internship activities at a four-year public Hispanic Serving Institution (HSI) in the Inland Empire. Relationships were found between transfer students who participated in service learning and/or internship activities and those transfer students who did not participate in those activities on the following: level of satisfaction with their educational experience, current job/career, and sense of connectedness to the university, and beliefs about how much the university contributed to their acquisition of job- or work-related knowledge and skills. Predominant concepts regarding transfer students' beliefs about what the university could do to help them be successful, were the implementation of a transfer student orientation and creating a transfer student center.

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## CHAPTER ONE

### INTRODUCTION

#### Problem Statement

In recent years the persistence of traditional students has been a major focus of discussion within higher education (Tinto, 1998). According to Tinto (1998):

One thing we know about persistence is that involvement matters. The more academically and socially involved individuals are—that is, the more they interact with other students and faculty—the more likely they are to persist (e.g. Astin, 1984; Mallette & Cabrera, 1991; Nora, 1987; Pascarella & Terenzini, 1980; Terenzini & Pascarella, 1977). And the more they see those interactions as positive and themselves as integrated into the institution and as valued members of it (i.e., validated), the more likely it is that they will persist. (p. 168)

Astin's Theory of Student Involvement (1984) further supports Tinto's involvement claims and states that "the greater the student's involvement in college, the greater will be the amount of student learning and personal development" (pp. 528-529). A principle benefit of Astin's Theory of Involvement, over traditional education theories, is that it refocuses the attention away from the traditional academic curriculum and testing, to the involvement, motivation, behavior and engagement of students.

Attention has focused on the engagement experiences of traditional students, with very little focus on the experiences of transfer students. Colleges and universities spend a great deal of effort on first-time freshman, and due to this freshman to sophomore retention has begun to increase. However, transfer students aren't provided the same resources as first-time freshman (Handel, 2011; Davies & Casey, 1999).

“Student engagement has been found to have almost uniformly positive effects for all students...” (Wolf-Wendel, Ward, & Kinzie, 2009, pp. 422-433). According to the University of Minnesota (2015), “engagement is associated with desired academic, behavioral, cognitive, and affective outcomes, such as persisting in school and graduating.” More specifically, thinking critically and analytically, and acquiring job- or work-related knowledge and skills, both supports a student's cognitive engagement by providing relevance of schoolwork and making it applicable to real-work success (Appleton, Christenson, & Furlong, 2008). Additionally, educational experience, job/career satisfaction, and connectedness directly relate to a student's affective engagement and helps to promote a sense of belonging which promotes persistence (Appleton, Christenson, & Furlong, 2008; Lester, Leonard, & Mathias, 2013).

At the sample university in the fall of 2014 there were a total of 2,311 new transfer students enrolled, which was the highest number of transfer students over the past 7 years for the sample university, only 413 less than first-time freshmen during the same time period. National research shows that only 25.3%

of students transferring with an associate degree to a university receive their bachelor's degree, compared to 43.5% of those who entered without one (University of Southern California, 2011). At the sample university, there is a mandatory multi-day freshman program that students must participate in before beginning class in the fall, and a great deal of time and resources are focused specifically on that group. However, when it comes to transfer students there are limited resources provided to this group of students.

### Purpose Statement

The purpose of this study was to describe the experiences of transfer students who engaged in the experiential learning activities of service learning and/or internship activities at a four-year public Hispanic Serving Institution (HSI) in the Inland Empire. Multiple studies that were reviewed demonstrated the benefits of student engagement, experiential learning activities and persistence within the traditional student population. According to Kuh (2009), "engaging in a variety of educationally productive activities also builds the foundation of skills and dispositions people need to live a productive, satisfying life after college" (p. 5). In essence, this study was a continuation of those studies on traditional student populations, focusing primarily on the transfer student population and the potential benefits of student engagement.

### Research Questions and Hypotheses

The following questions and hypotheses were developed for this study:



- 1a. How satisfied are transfer students regarding their educational experience and job/career satisfaction at a four year public Hispanic Serving Institution (HSI) in the Inland Empire?
- 1b. What is the degree of connectedness that transfer students feel at a four-year public Hispanic Serving Institution (HSI) in the Inland Empire?
- 1c. How much do transfer students believe their experiences at a four-year Hispanic Serving Institution (HSI) in the Inland Empire contributes to thinking critically and analytically and acquiring job- or work-related knowledge and skills?
2. How do transfer students who participated in service learning and/or internship activities compare to transfer students who did not participate in these experiences at a four-year public Hispanic Serving Institution (HSI) in the Inland Empire?

Hypotheses:

- a) Transfer students who participated in service learning and/or internship activities will have a lower self-reported time to completion than those transfer students who did not participate in those activities.
- b) Transfer students who participated in service learning and/or internship activities will have a higher self-reported GPA than those transfer students who did not participate in those activities.

- c) Transfer students who participated in service learning and/or internship activities will have a higher satisfaction regarding overall educational experience than those transfer students who did not participate in those activities.
- d) Transfer students who participated in service learning and/or internship activities will have a higher self-reported perception of the university's contribution to their critical and analytical thinking.
- e) Transfer students who participated in service learning and/or internship activities will have a higher self-reported perception of the university's contribution to their acquisition of job- or work-related knowledge and skills.
- f) Transfer students who participated in service learning and/or internship activities will have higher job/career satisfaction than those transfer students who did not participate in those activities.
- g) Transfer students who participated in service learning and/or internship activities will have a higher satisfaction regarding their sense of connection to the university than those transfer students who did not participate in those activities.

#### Null Hypotheses

- a) Transfer students who participated in service learning and/or internship activities will not have a lower self-reported time to

completion than those transfer students who did not participate in those activities.

- b) Transfer students who participated in service learning and/or internship activities will not have a higher self-reported GPA than those transfer students who did not participate in those activities.
- c) Transfer students who participated in service learning and/or internship activities will not have a higher satisfaction regarding overall educational experience than those transfer students who did not participate in those activities.
- d) Transfer students who participated in service learning and/or internship activities will not have a higher self-reported perception of the university's contribution to their critical and analytical thinking.
- e) Transfer students who participated in service learning and/or internship activities will not have a higher self-reported perception of the university's contribution to their acquisition of job- or work-related knowledge and skills.
- f) Transfer students who participated in service learning and/or internship activities will not have higher job/career satisfaction than those transfer students who did not participate in those activities.
- g) Transfer students who participated in service learning and/or internship activities will not have a higher satisfaction regarding

their sense of connection to the university than those transfer students who did not participate in those activities.

- 3a. Why do transfer students choose to participate in service learning and/or internship activities?
- 3b. How do transfer students describe their overall experience when they participated in service learning and/or internship activities?
- 3c. Out of those students who participated in service learning and/or internship activities, how much do they believe that their participation in these activities made them feel more connected to the university?
4. What do transfer students suggest the university could do to support their success at a four-year public Hispanic Serving Institution (HSI) in the Inland Empire?

#### Significance of the Study

The significance of this study is paramount as it contributed to a better understanding of the engagement of transfer students. There have been a plethora of studies conducted on traditional students and what contributes to their successes; however, there are limited studies that look at the experiences of transfer students at four-year universities. Pascarella (2006) indicated that further research is needed on previously ignored populations of students, such as transfer students. The findings of this study can be utilized to provide necessary resources for this population.

## Theoretical Underpinnings

This study explored the impact of student engagement. According to Kuh (2008b), as a result of student engagement students will not only understand themselves better in a larger worldly scope, but they will also gain intellectual and ethical tools that will give them the confidence to help people overall. In addition, according to Astin's Theory of Student Involvement (1984), the more a student is engaged in activities while in college, the more the student will learn and further their personal development.

The Experiential Learning Theory expands on the previously mentioned theories as it focuses in on the two activities/HIPs that are the primary emphasis of this study. According to Kolb and Kolb (2005):

experiential learning theory draws on the work of prominent 20th century scholars who gave experience a central role in their theories of human learning and development...to develop a holistic model of the experiential learning process and a multilinear model of adult development. (p. 194)

## Assumptions

The study did not try to prove any of the following assumptions, but rested on these ideas as truths:

- There are factors beyond GPA that are important to explore in relation to the effects of HIPs, such as critical and analytical thinking, job/career satisfaction, job- or work-related knowledge and skills, educational experience and sense of connection.

- Two important and beneficial HIPs are service learning and internship experiences.
- These HIPs are good examples of practices that offer experiential learning opportunities.
- Student connectedness, job- or work-related knowledge and skills, and critical and analytical thinking are appropriate ways to measure aspects of student engagement, and each can be measured in a single survey item.
- The sample responded to the survey items honestly and accurately to the best of their knowledge.
- The interpretation of the data accurately represents the perceptions of the sample.

### Delimitations

The delimitations of this study were set out in order to gain a full understanding of a specific student population and their experiences. The first delimitation was to only observe students who attended a Hispanic Serving Institution (HSI) with historical numbers of transfer students. According to Quaye and Harper (2015), 38.3% of transfer students are Hispanic/Latino/a, the highest concentration of one ethnic affiliation. The second delimitation was the timespan of data that were observed. The data ranged from the academic years of 2009-2010, 2010-2011, and 2011-2012 as a sample of the most recent transfer students who had either graduated or departed from the university. Lastly, this

study did not take into consideration any other potential influences that the sample population were facing other than participating or not participating in service learning and/or internship activities.

### Definitions of Key Terms

For the purposes of this study, the following terms were defined as listed below:

- Affective engagement: “feelings of identification or belonging, and relationships with teachers and peers” (Appleton, Christenson, Kim, & Reschly, 2006, p. 249).
- Cognitive engagement: “Perceived relevance of schoolwork, personal goals, and autonomy, value of learning and success in school” (Appleton, Christenson, & Furlong, 2008)
- Connectedness: emotional or affective engagement (Fredricks, Blumenfeld, & Paris, 2004); “term used to refer to the study of a student’s relationship to school” (Libbey, H., 2006, p. 274).
- Critical thinking: In the article, *College Students on Critical Thinking in the Classroom*, by Massey (2014), “99% of students believe critical thinking is an important skill.” The article continues on to define critical thinking as “thinking outside of the box” and “going beneath the surface level of a topic, thinking of all possible routes and outcomes” and “using reasoning/common-sense skills to come

to conclusions, rather than just memorizing specific information (Massey, 2014).

- Educational experience: “any interaction, course, program, or other experience in which learning takes place, whether it occurs in traditional academic settings (schools, classrooms) or nontraditional settings (outside-of-school locations, outdoor environments), or whether it includes traditional educational interactions (students learning from teachers and professors) or nontraditional interactions (students learning through games and interactive software applications)” (Learning Experience, 2014).
- Experiential Learning: the process of learning through experience, and is more specifically defined as “any learning that supports students in applying their knowledge and conceptual understanding to real-world problems or situations where the instructor directs and facilitates learning” (Center for Teacher Learning at University of Texas at Austin, 2015).
- High Impact Practices (HIPs): “techniques and designs for teaching and learning that have proven to be beneficial for student engagement and successful learning among students. Through intentional program design and advanced pedagogy, these types of practices can enhance student learning and work to narrow gaps in achievement across student populations” (Association of American



Colleges and Universities, 2015). According to Kuh (2008a), HIPs have been “widely tested and have been shown to be beneficial for college students from many backgrounds” (p. 9).

- Internships: “a form of experiential learning that integrates knowledge and theory learned in the classroom with practical application and skills development in a professional setting. Internships give students the opportunity to gain valuable applied experience and make connections in professional fields they are considering for career paths; and give employers the opportunity to guide and evaluate talent” National Association of Colleges and Employers (NACE, 2015).
- Job/career satisfaction: “the feeling of pleasure and achievement that you experience in your job when you know that your work is worth doing, or the degree to which your work gives you this feeling” (Cambridge Dictionary, 2016).
- Service learning: “teaching and learning strategy that integrates meaningful community service with instruction and reflection to enrich the learning experience, teach civic responsibility, and strengthen communities.” Learn and Serve America National Service Learning Clearinghouse (2015)
- Student Engagement: “In education, student engagement refers to the degree of attention, curiosity, interest, optimism, and passion

that students show when they are learning or being taught, which extends to the level of motivation they have to learn and progress in their education” (Learning Experience, 2014).

- Time to Completion: the obtainment of a degree from a four-year university. Does not include separation from the university without a degree.
- Work-related knowledge and skills: for the purposes of this study this phrase will be defined as the knowledge and skills that are necessary to be successful in a work environment.

### Summary

In this chapter, the problem statement, purpose statement, research questions and hypotheses, significance of the study, theoretical underpinnings, assumptions, delimitations, positionality of the researcher, and the definition of key terms were all discussed in order to provide the reader a comprehensive understanding of the findings in the following chapters.

## CHAPTER TWO

### LITERATURE REVIEW

#### Introduction

The United States Census Bureau (2012) reported that there are over four million people in San Bernardino County, and only 9.4% of that population have a bachelor's degree or higher. According to the ACT, Inc. (2008 & 2015), retention/completion rates have fallen from 40.3% in 2008 to 36.4% in 2015 for four-year public colleges. Unfortunately, even though college degrees have replaced the power of a high school diploma, the trend of dropping out before completing a degree is continuing (Kuh, 2008b). In addition, Kuh (2008b), stated that:

earning a bachelor's degree is linked to long-term cognitive, social, and economic benefits to individuals—benefits that are passed onto future generations, enhancing the quality of life of the families of college-educated persons, the communities in which they live, and the larger society. (p. 540)

The California Postsecondary Education Commission (2011) reported that the average rates of completion for students attending a California State University institution is 14.2% in four years, 35.6% in five years, and 45.7% in six years. With suppressed numbers of completion, it is imperative to research why some students fail to complete their degree and others succeed. It has been estimated that by the year 2025 California will face a deficit of over one million

college degree holders necessary to sustain the workforce (California Community College Chancellors Office, 2015a).

Unfortunately, low student retention rates are prevalent at all levels of education in today's society. In the K-12 system, students are required by law to attend school and there are programs/strategies in place to help K-12 students stay in school. But what about retention in public four-year universities where attendance and completion are voluntary? How do the universities increase their retention rates when attendance is optional to begin with? In a report from Harvard University (2011), it was found that in the United States approximately 56% of students graduate from a public university within six years. However, in the state of California, the approximate graduation rate is 65% (The Chronicle of Higher Education, 2010), which is clearly above the national average, but still needs improvement.

While the completion and retention rate of all students is an issue, one specific demographic that needs additional focus is transfer students. In the "2013-14 academic year, 46% of students who completed a degree at a four-year institution were enrolled at a two-year institution in the past 10 years" (National Student Clearinghouse Research Center, 2015). National research shows that only 25.3% of students transferring with an associate degree to a 4-year university receive their bachelor's degree, compared to 43.5% of those who entered without one (University of Southern California, 2011).

There are multiple studies that focus on first-time freshmen that have “sought to develop, test and modify models dealing with patterns of “traditional students”...Conversely, very few studies have addressed the needs of “non-traditional” students such as transfer students...” (Monroe, 2006, p. 33). However, despite the few studies that show transfer students do not always complete their degree or may take longer to do so than traditional students who start in a 4-year institution (Adelman, 2005) the research is lacking clear and detailed results. “What affects transfer students’ persistence and time to degree is not well understood, in spite of research over several decades” (Townsend & Wilson, 2009).

Transfer students make up a major part of the overall population at today’s four-year universities (Monroe, 2006). However, attention on graduation is all too often focused on first-time freshmen, even though the numbers between the two groups is slowly becoming equal. “In 14 states, more than half of four-year degree recipients were previously enrolled at a two-year institution” (National Student Clearing House Research Center, 2015). The fall 2015 transfer cohort at the sample university was 2,493 students, which was the largest transfer cohort to date and only 512 students less than the incoming freshman class. Since the fall of 2011, there had been more than a 60% increase in transfer students, compared to a less than 45% increase of traditional students. At the sample university, the importance of transfer student retention was addressed in the 2015-2020 Strategic Plan. The plan stated that one of the main university

goals is to increase the graduation rates, while decreasing the time to graduation, of transfer students over the next five years.

In the attempt to further understand transfer student success, attention had been placed on the importance of student engagement and high impact practices (HIPs). High impact practices aim to integrate students into the campus. “The more connected a student is to the social and academic fabric of a campus, the more likely he or she is to persist in college” (Lester, Leonard, & Mathias, 2013, p. 203). In a study conducted by Kirk (2007), it was found that “student integration is an important issue in universities today because it can determine whether or not a student stays at the school, does well in classes, or completes a degree” (p. 2).

## Transfer Students

### Definition

There are many different types of transfer students. First, and the most common, is the two-year to four-year institution transfer student. Second, includes those students who transfer from one four-year to another four-year institution. The last, and the least common transfer students are those transferring from a four-year institution to a two-year institution. Transfer students are also known as non-traditional students in that unlike traditional students, they attended a two-year institution prior to attending a four-year institution.

## Transfer Completion Rates

According to the National Center for Education Statistics (2015), there were seven million two-year college students in 2013-2014, and according to the California Community College Chancellor's Office (2015b) there were a total of 198,492 community college students statewide in the winter of 2015. The Foundation for California Community Colleges (2014), reported that "almost 51 percent of graduates of the California State University system and 29 percent of the University of California system transferred from a California Community College." Completion rates for these students vary from that of traditional students, with "over half of these students completed the four-year degree within three years of leaving the two-year institution. More than three quarters of them did so within five years" (National Student Clearinghouse Research Center, 2015).

Similarly to these national results, at the sample university, 24% of transfer students graduate in two years, 60% in four years, and 68% in six years. Even though the transfer student completion statistics demonstrate relatively high success rates, the overall rate of transfer from a two-year to a four-year institution is low (Johnson & Sengupta, 2009). In an interview conducted by Smith (2015), according to Jason DeWitt, a research manager at the National Student Clearinghouse Research Center, "the idea that there is only one path through college is antiquated." (p. 1) and four-year universities must strive to

completely understand what tools transfer students need to complete their degrees.

### Transfer Student Grade Point Average (GPA) Levels

Multiple studies have detailed the differences in GPA levels of transfer students. In a study conducted by Carlan and Byxbe (2000), during the first semester transfer students' GPA levels fell below their community college GPA levels. However, native (traditional) students had fewer issues with their GPA levels (Carlan & Byxbe, 2000). On the flip side, in a study by Cejda, Kaylor and Rewey (1998), the opposite results were concluded. Transfer student GPA levels rose after their first semester of classes. Both of these scenarios have terms that have been associated with them. The first, where GPA levels drop, is known as transfer shock. The second, where GPA levels rise, is known as transfer ecstasy (Nickens, 1972).

In 1965, Hill coined the term "transfer shock", a term that is still used and referenced to today. Transfer shock "occurs when there is a dip in transfer student's grades during the first semester after transferring to a four-year institution" (Ishitani, 2008, p. 404). In multiple studies it was found that the GPA level of transfer students were generally lower than traditional students GPA (Peng & Bailey, 1977; Porter, 1999) and graduation rates were lower as well (Avakian, MacKinney, & Allen, 1982; Porter, 1999).

There are many attributes that have been tied to this phenomenon. Even though the research is scant on transfer students, there are a few studies that



have identified some of the reasons why many students have transfer shock and in turn have lower GPAs and take longer to graduate. Students “run into obstacles while transferring between colleges – such as losing course credits in the process – or because they make poor choices about their majors, can’t get the courses they need on time or have trouble making it out of a remediation pipeline” (Bidwell, 2014). According to Monroe (2006), “there is little urgency to assist these [transfer] students who are perceived to eventually work out their academic transition on their own” (p. 37).

On the other side, transfer ecstasy is a term coined by Nickens (1972) and is the direct opposite of transfer shock. This term, despite being created in 1972, is not well-defined and is often only used in opposition to transfer shock. According to Cejda, Kaylor and Rewey (1998), the term “need[s] further clarification” (p. 6).

### Orientation of Transfer Students

According to a report by The College Board, “helping students engage the campus community requires the development of some basic transfer services” (Handel, 2011, p. 25). Such services include an orientation for transfer students.

A report by The College Board stated that:

Freshman orientations dominate the college landscape and their importance in providing students with a good start to the college experience is generally unquestioned. Orientation programs for transfer students are less prominent and, even if an institution offers one, it is

almost always a slimmed-down version of the freshman event. (Handel, 2011, p. 26)

Even as far back as 1942, in the article *The Orientation of Transfer Students*, Robbins details the same issues. And to this day, the concept of transfer orientations is often misconstrued due to number of false assumptions that undermine transfer students integration at four-year institutions.

One assumption (Handel, 2011) is that because non-traditional students have experience on a college campus, they already have the knowledge and tools to be success in college and overall they require less consideration and fewer services than traditional students. In reality there are many differences between two-year and four-year institutions. “People say transfer students will take care of themselves. The reality is they won’t. If you really want to help them get the baccalaureate degree, you’ve got to have services for them when they get to the four-year institution” (Handel, 2011, p. 23).

Orientations for many freshmen last two or three days at many universities, however, orientation for transfer students only last a few hours (Handel, 2011, p.28). One example of this fact can be seen at the research setting. The incoming freshmen are offered a two-day, overnight stay that include seminars and class registration assistance. However, transfer students are offered a one-day program that includes learning about key services and are otherwise recommended to explore the university website and prepare to become a part of the [campus] community. Further supporting the idea that transfer

students need assistance as well, in a study by Townsend and Wilson (2006), they found that “transfer students may need *more* of a “hand hold” during their” first year in order to ensure academic and social integration.

### Student Engagement

In recent years persistence of both traditional and non-traditional students has been a major topic of discussion within higher education (Tinto, 1998).

According to Tinto (1998):

One thing we know about persistence is that involvement matters. The more academically and socially involved individuals are—that is, the more they interact with other students and faculty—the more likely they are to persist (e.g. Astin, 1984; Mallette & Cabrera, 1991; Nora, 1987; Pascarella & Terenzini, 1980; Terenzini & Pascarella, 1977). And the more they see those interactions as positive and themselves as integrated into the institution and as valued members of it (i.e., validated), the more likely it is that they will persist. (p. 168)

In addition, a report by Lotkowski, Robbins and Noeth (2004) summarized that Tinto “believes that social interaction has a positive effect on grade performance when students establish friendships with persons who have strong academic orientations” (p. 12).

Astin’s Theory of Student Involvement (1984) further supports Tinto’s involvement claims and states that “the greater the student’s involvement in college, the greater will be the amount of student learning and personal

development” (pp. 528-529). A principle benefit of Astin’s Theory of Involvement, over the traditional education theories, is that it refocuses the attention away from the traditional academic curriculum and testing, to the motivation and behavior of students.

Researchers have also found similar outcomes for both traditional and transfer/nontraditional students in regards to student engagement and involvement (Wolf-Wendel, Ward, & Kinzie, 2009, Astin, 1984). “Student engagement has been found to have almost uniformly positive effects for all students...” (Wolf-Wendel, Ward, & Kinzie, 2009, pp. 422-433). Astin (1984), expands and stated that “older students are probably affected by somewhat different forms of involvement, but I don’t see involvement as not being equally relevant to students of all ages” (p. 412).

### Components of Student Engagement

According to Appleton, Christenson and Furlong (2008), “engagement is typically described as having two or three components” (p. 370). However, after years of research and studies, “researchers have proposed an engagement taxonomy with four subtypes: academic, behavioral, cognitive and affective” (Appleton, Christenson and Furlong, 2008) (see Figure 1). According to the University of Minnesota (2015):

The subtypes of engagement are interrelated. For example, a student’s feelings of belonging (affective engagement) may promote greater effort and participation on the student’s part (behavioral engagement); teaching

practices that promote strategy use or self-regulation (cognitive engagement) may also facilitate greater time on task or homework completion with high success rates (academic engagement).

For the purposes of this study the cognitive and affective components were the primary focus.

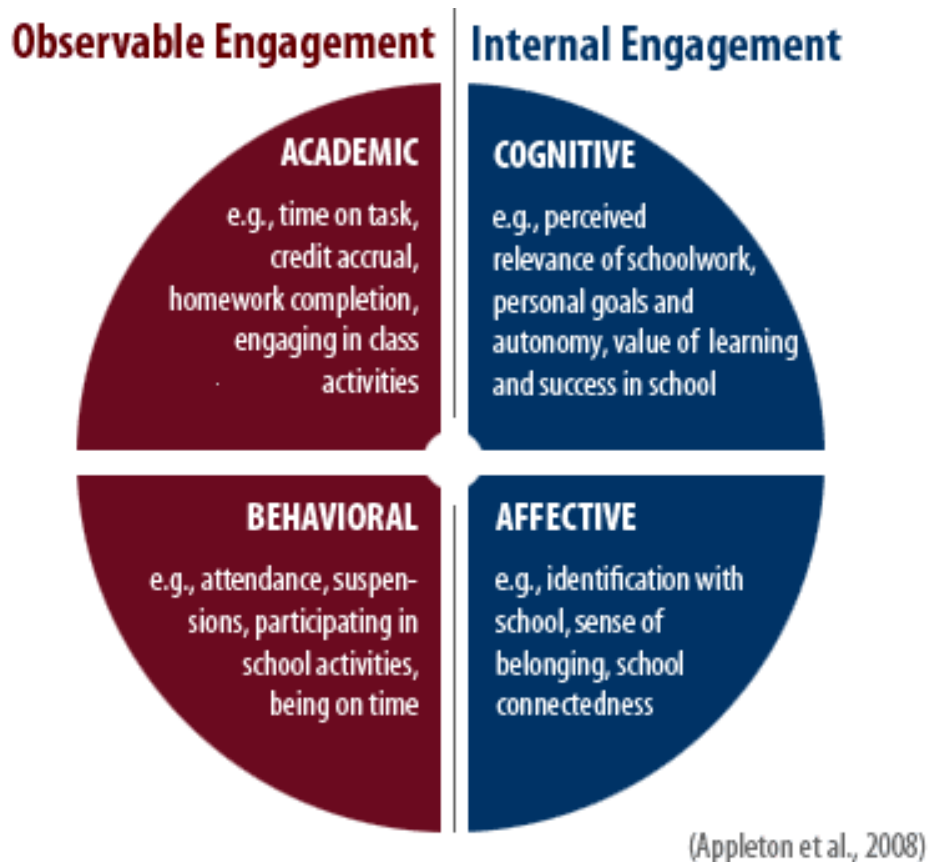


Figure 1. Appleton's Types of Student Engagement.  
Appleton, J. J., Christenson, S. L., & Furlong, M. J. (2008). Student engagement with school: Critical conceptual and methodological issues of the construct. *Psychology in the Schools*, 45(5), 369–386.

### Cognitive Student Engagement

According to Appleton, Christenson, and Furlong (2008) cognitive student engagement is defined as “perceived relevance of schoolwork, personal goals, and autonomy, value of learning and success in school.” Additionally, Appleton, Christenson, Kim, & Reschly., (2006) stated that cognitive engagement was “considered less observable and gauged with more internal indicators, including self-regulation, relevance of school-work to future endeavors, value of learning, personal goals and autonomy as indicators of cognitive engagement...” (p. 372).

### Affective Student Engagement

Affective engagement is commonly defined as “feelings of identification or belonging, and relationships with teachers and peers” (Appleton, Christenson, Kim, & Reschly., 2006, p. 249). According to Shephard (2008), “the affective domain is about our values, attitudes, and behaviours” (p. 88). In a study by Beard, Clegg, and Smith (2007), it was stated that “one of the purposes in rethinking studentship from the perspective of a fully embodied, affective, human self is to attempt to understand the processes which foster or inhibit learning” (p. 236). Affective engagement is often promoted and attained through education-based experiential learning such as community service and service learning.

### Experiential Learning

John Dewey (1925/1984) stated, “in order to be able to attribute a meaning to concepts, one must be able to apply them to existence” (p. 5). In 1938, Dewey would identify what he coined as the “theory of experience” which

later developed into experiential learning. According to Beaudin and Quick (1995), Dewey “emphasizes that there must be a relationship between experience and education. Dewey stresses that there is to be a *having* which is the contact with the events of life and a *knowing* which is the interpretation of the events” (p. 2).

According to Kolb and Kolb (2005):

experiential learning theory draws on the work of prominent 20th century scholars who gave experience a central role in their theories of human learning and development...to develop a holistic model of the experiential learning process and a multilinear model of adult development. (p. 194)

Kolb used this definition and developed a “Cycle of Experiential Learning” (see Figure 2). According to the Center for Teacher Learning at University of Texas at Austin (2015), the cycle includes these four steps:

- Experience: As a member of a team, students engage in hands-on experiments related to a research project, each situation providing a new experience.
- Reflection: Students reflect on their experience with peers, mentors, and research educators. Jointly, they make sense of what happened and note inconsistencies between the experience and their previous understanding.
- Conceptualize: Reflection may lead students to develop a new idea or modify an existing concept; in addition, they may participate

in a seminar with exposure to additional project-related concepts that may further clarify implications for action.

- Test: Students return to their project to apply the new and/or refined knowledge in the research environment to see what happens.

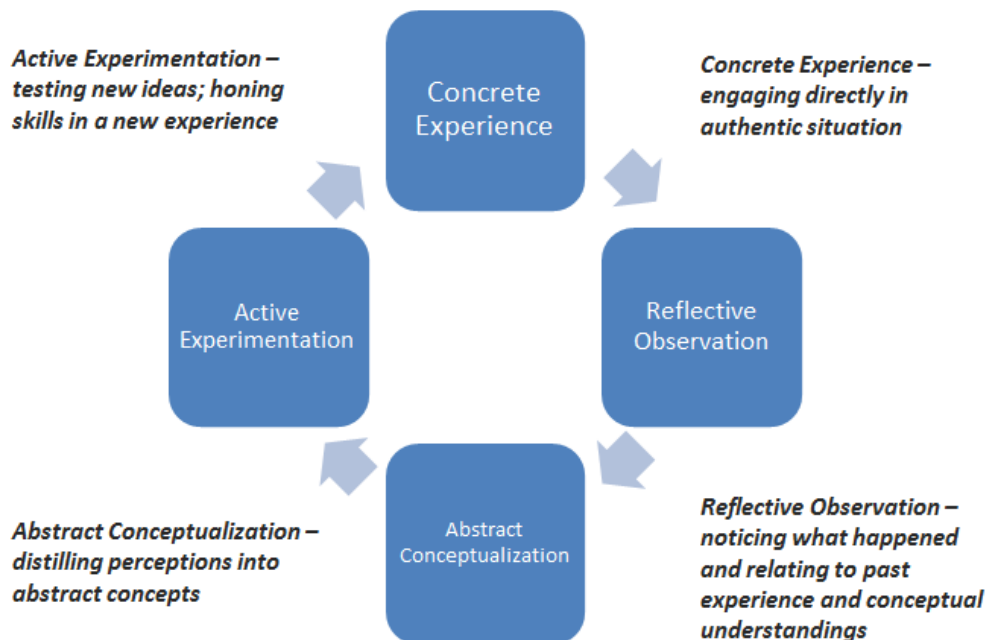


Figure 2. Kolb's Cycle of Experiential Learning. Center for Teacher Learning at University of Texas at Austin (2015). Retrieved from: <http://ctl.utexas.edu/teaching/engagement/experientiallearning/defined>.



This learning technique is used throughout multiple study areas and at many levels of education, both inside and outside of the classroom. Even though there are more ways for experiential learning to occur, two important modalities and recently coined high impact practices are service learning and internship activities. Through this style of learning students are able to achieve more from their studies overall. According to the Association for Experiential Learning, experiential learning is “a philosophy that informs many methodologies in which educators purposefully engage with learners in direct experience and focused reflection in order to increase knowledge, develop skills, clarify values, and develop people's capacity to contribute to their communities.”

### High Impact Practices

An increasing number of researchers (Wawrzynski & Baldwin, 2014; Keeling, 2006; Kuh, 2005, 2008) are suggesting that if higher education professionals want to increase retention they need to expand their focus to include the entire learning experience. The term “college success” no longer only refers to the obtainment of a diploma, it now expands to also include the level of preparation of a student (Kuh, 2008b). Success is based on readiness, knowledge and capabilities that a graduate carries with them. To help further this expanded definition of success, high impact practices have been identified.

According to the Association of American Colleges and Universities (AAC&U), high impact practices (HIPs) are defined as:

techniques and designs for teaching and learning that have proven to be beneficial for student engagement and successful learning among students from many backgrounds. Through intentional program design and advanced pedagogy, these types of practices can enhance student learning and work to narrow gaps in achievement across student populations. (2015)

Students don't always see the connection between the academic and the cocurricular experiences and how they can benefit each other (Wawrzynaki & Baldwin, 2014). But this is where students can benefit if educators guide and show them how HIPs can actually increase their academic performances. "High impact educational practices are tools educators can employ strategically to link diverse and often disjointed elements of the collegiate experience" (Wawrzynaki & Baldwin, 2014, p. 56).

According to a report by O'Neill (2010), in order for an activity to be considered a HIP it must comply with six common elements. Those elements include (pp. 4-5):

- They are effortful
- They help students build substantive relationships
- They help students engage across differences
- They provide students with rich feedback
- They help students apply and test what they are learning in new situations

- They provide opportunities for students to reflect on the people they are becoming

Based on these six elements there have been 10 HIPs identified, including: “first-year seminars and experiences, common intellectual experiences, learning communities, writing-intensive courses, collaborative assignments and projects, undergraduate research, diversity/global learning, service learning, community-based learning, internships, and capstone courses and projects” Kuh (2008a).

According to Kuh (2008b), there are five reasons or explanations as to why HIPs are effective with students. First, HIPs require a deepened student investment and students have to put forth more effort. Second, HIPs place students in situations in which they have to interact with each other and faculty. Third, participating in one or more HIPs exposes students to more diversity. Fourth, students receive frequent feedback on their progress. Finally, HIPs provide students with opportunities to learn how things differ from the “real world” and not strictly on campus.

For the general student population, participation in HIPs have shown multiple positive effects, such as “improvement in retention, persistence to degree, and post graduation attainment” (Kelly, 2011, p. 7). In a study conducted by California State University, Northridge (Huber, 2010) it was found that participation in two or more of these high impact practices had a positive impact on student success. For example, grade point averages were higher and time to completion was lower. However, despite research proving the great benefits,

getting students to participate in two HIPs is far from reality. Even though HIPs are experiential for students, the activities are a lot of work and take up a lot of a student's time (Kelly, 2011).

A longitudinal study conducted by Kilgo, Ezell, Sheets, and Pascarella (2014), sought to "estimate the effect of participation in the 10 "high-impact" educational practices" (p. 509). It was found that of 4,198 students from 17 institutions through a pretest/posttest design, "the implication for high-impact practices on student development and learning are far-reaching, as depicted within the literature and the current study" (Kilgo, Ezell, Sheets, and Pascarella (2014, p. 523).

As previously referenced, in the recently published 2015-2020 Strategic Plan (2015) the sample university used HIP participation as a method of measuring and increasing student success. It is the goal of the sample university for all undergraduate students to participate in a minimum of three HIPs by graduation. As of June 2014 at the sample university, 66% of the seniors had participated in HIPs. Of those students, 28% participated in one HIP, 19% participated in two, 11% participated in three, and less than 7% participated in four or more. Unfortunately, these statistics did not distinguish between traditional versus non-traditional (transfer) students.

### High Impact Practices and Transfer Students

In a recent quantitative study, the results of the STEM Student Success Literacy Survey (SSSL) collected from 15 community colleges in Iowa were used

to determine if student engagement matters with transfer students (Myers, Starobin, Chen, Baul, & Kollasch, 2015). Through exploratory factor analysis and confirmatory factor analysis four engagement constructs emerged. Those constructs are: “transfer engagement, faculty engagement on coursework, faculty/staff encouragement/assistance, and peer engagement” (Myers, Starobin, Chen, Baul, & Kollasch, 2015, p. 344). All of these constructs are in accordance with the outcomes and purposes of HIPs.

In a second study by Gilardi and Guglielmetti (2011), engagement styles and impact on attrition of non-traditional students were observed. The explorative study was “aimed at analyzing the relationship between the university experience in the first year and continuation of studies in the second year, with special reference to non-traditional students” (p. 33). Interviews were conducted across 95 universities with a sample of 228 students. Data were analyzed using a hierarchical step-wise logistic regression, and it was shown that non-traditional transfer students who invest “time in developing non-classroom relationships and in making use of all opportunities available in the university environment [had a] higher probability of continuing their studies” (Gilardi & Guglielmetti, 2011, pp. 46-47).

However, not all studies reveal consistent access for transfer students. In a study by Davies and Casey (1999), focus groups were used to compare student life at community colleges with that at four-year universities. There were 11 total groups that consisted on six to eight students each, and they met for a

period of two weeks for two hours each time. All of the groups were asked the same six questions and their responses were analyzed using qualitative coding. The results revealed that there was a lack of faculty involvement and interaction, and the students found it difficult to connect with their peers. The Davies and Casey (1999) study further supports the need for resources and attention to be directed at HIPs for transfer students.

Even though the majority of researchers have shown that student engagement and social integration have positive impacts on the retention and attainment of students (Wawrzynski & Baldwin, 2014; Keeling, 2006; Kuh, 2005, 2008) there have been very few studies to examine the implications of HIPs on transfer students. It has been documented that transfer students are among one of the groups who have the lowest levels of HIP participation rates (Kuh, 2008a). Of the transfer students that do participate in HIPs, it has been found that there are two foci for their involvement: service learning (43%) and internships (43%) (Kuh, 2008a). For the purposes of this study these two HIPs were the primary focus. Tinto (1998) stated that “there are many different pathways to integration, that involvement or integration may take place inside and/or outside of the classroom” (p. 2).

### Service Learning

According to the Learn and Serve America National Service Learning Clearinghouse (2015), service learning is defined as a “teaching and learning strategy that integrates meaningful community service with

instruction and reflection to enrich the learning experience, teach civic responsibility, and strengthen communities.” In addition, Brownell & Swaner (2009), found that:

service learning participants demonstrate gains in moral reasoning, in their sense of social and civic responsibility, in the development of social justice orientation, and an increased commitment to pursuing a service-oriented career. They are also more able to apply class learning to real-world situations. (p. 27)

Service learning has been adopted over time as both a means for community engagement and high impact practices among many institutional types and at multiple levels (Felten & Clayton, 2011).

In a study conducted by Astin, Vogelgesang, Ikeda, and Yee (2000), they found that:

Service participation shows significant positive effects on all 11 outcome measures: academic performance (GPA, writing skills, critical thinking skills), values (commitment to activism and to promoting racial understanding), self-efficacy, leadership (leadership activities, self-rated leadership ability, interpersonal skills), choice of a service career, and plans to participate in service after college. (p. ii)

Ehrlich (1996) also provided the following general framework, “service-learning is the various pedagogies that link community service and academic study so that each strengthens the other” (p. xi).

Furthermore, multiple researchers have also developed key elements necessary to create and further promote service learning. For example, in the article, *How to Create a Successful Service-Learning Project or Program* (2010), the author identified knowing your institution's history of service-learning and creating a vision of what success will look like (p. 3) as essential components. And in the article, *How to Build a Service-Learning Program that Lasts* (2004), another critical element identified was to integrate the program with your institutions mission (p. 6).

In further support of the evidence above, a study by Bringle and Hatcher (2000), took a look at the institutionalization of service learning. Questionnaires were distributed to two groups who attended specific meetings. There were a total of 179 respondents, and the findings determined that it is essential for service-learning to be part of the campus infrastructure. As with any of the other HIPs, the more resources and support that these activities receive the more likely they are to benefit the students.

Researchers have also provided empirical data that shows participation in service learning has positive outcomes for students, the institution, and the community (Ash, Clayton, and Atkinson, 2005; Felten & Clayton, 2011; Ehrlich, 1996; Astin, et al., 2006). In a study conducted by Kuh (2008a), 46% of the overall seniors and 43% of senior transfer students participated in service learning practices at some point in their college career. However, as with many



areas involving transfer student success, there is an extremely limited amount of research relating transfer students and service learning participation.

### Internships

According to the National Association of Colleges and Employers (NACE) (2015), internship is defined as:

a form of experiential learning that integrates knowledge and theory learned in the classroom with practical application and skills development in a professional setting. Internships give students the opportunity to gain valuable applied experience and make connections in professional fields they are considering for career paths; and give employers the opportunity to guide and evaluate talent.

Kuh (2008b) also stated that internships provide students with direct experience in working in a field of their choice with professionals available for guidance. In a study by Gault, Redington, and Schlager (2000), it was found that “internships provide students (and faculty) with a means of bridging the gap between career expectations developed in the classroom and the reality of employment in the real world” (p. 52). In addition, Keller (2012), reported similar results. “When internships are done well, they are like other high-impact educational practices that help students build relationships and engage across differences creating a sense of community” (Keller, 2012).

In the phenomenological study conducted by Keller (2012), internships were further reviewed as a HIP. Interviews were conducted on 19 undergraduate

students, and the results were developed using open coding. The data revealed that “internships connected the classroom to career by providing students with opportunities to contribute in meaningful ways” (Keller, 2012, p. 70). Overall, “internships done well developed the competencies of students, produced career-related crystallization, generated capital, and build confidence” (Keller, 2012, p. 98).

According to O’Neill (2010), internships are in-line with other HIPs when it is:

intentionally organized as an activity that leads to particular learning outcomes; when students apply what they have learned in courses to work experiences, reflect on these experiences, and receive feedback that helps them to improve; when students build mentoring relationships with supervisors, faculty, and peers; when students are exposed to differences across people and in ways of thinking; and when students are asked to use their experiences to clarify their values, interests, and personal goals—including, in this case, their values, interests, and goals related to careers. (p. 5)

However, all internships are not all created equally, and according to O’Neill (2010), for an internship to be a HIP “everyone—faculty, advisors, career development professionals, and employers— must agree to help students set and fulfill explicit learning *and* career development goals for internships” (p.8).

Even though there are multiple positive outcomes for students who participate in internships, the participation rates are still lacking. Similar to the results found when observing internships, the statistics for service learning among college seniors and transfer students are not that far off. According to Kuh (2008a), 53% of the overall seniors and 43% of senior transfer students participated in internships.

### Current Surveys and Instruments Being Used

#### National Survey of Student Engagement

The prominent instrument that has been developed over the past few years that is promoting the concept of student engagement is the National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE). George Kuh created the NSSE due to the lack of adequate instruments to accurately measure elements of student engagement. Kuh's main goal was to "assess the extent to which undergraduates are engaged in educational practices that have been linked to high levels of learning and development" (NSSE, 2014). This survey evaluates five benchmarks: "level of academic challenge, enriching educational experiences, active and collaborative learning, supportive campus environment, and student-faculty interaction" (NSSE, 2014). These five benchmarks correlate directly to activities that are termed high impact practices.

In 2014, over 700 universities and over 400,000 students participated in the NSSE nationwide (NSSE, 2014). According to Chen, et al. (2009), more than 1,300 colleges and universities have utilized the data collected since 2000. In

addition, the campuses that have retrieved the data that were generated will not only benefit from the general information, but will ultimately benefit from within-institution data as well. Such data will yield more relatable and actionable results, especially when drilled down into specific demographics (Chen, et al, 2009).

With the development of such tools as the NSSE and its growing validity, it is hopeful that new policies and procedures will come to fruition and spur necessary changes. Ideally, the data gathered from the NSSE will provide enough evidence to the campus administrators to inspire change at the institutional level.

When it comes down to transfer students, despite evidence that HIPs are beneficial, the NSSE revealed that transfer students are less involved in four of the five benchmarks listed above (Kuh, 2003). Kuh (2003), states that in reviewing the results for a NSSE reports, of the over 600 four-year universities, 40% of all senior respondents to the NSSE identified themselves as transfer students, and of those transfer students there were very few schools in which they performed as well as the traditional students.

#### Community College Survey of Student Engagement

Similar to the NSSE, the Community College Survey of Student Engagement (CCSSE) measures the level of engagement on the campus of 2-year institutions. According to the CCSSE (2015) official website:

Extensive research has identified good educational practices that are directly related to retention and other desired student outcomes. The Community College Survey of Student Engagement (*CCSSE*) builds on this research and asks students about their college experiences — how they spend their time; what they feel they have gained from their classes; how they assess their relationships and interactions with faculty, counselors, and peers; what kinds of work they are challenged to do; how the college supports their learning; and so on.

The correlation between the two surveys, NSSE and CCSSE, could offer some insight to educators in the attempt to get transfer students more involved in HIPs at 4-year institutions. According to Townsend and Wilson (2006), “understanding the institutional perceptions of community college students prior to transfer to particular institutions may provide information useful to four-year institutions during the recruitment process as well as after the students have transferred” (p. 451).

One example of how the data gathered from the CCSSE is beneficial to educational institutions is seen in a study conducted by Price and Tovar (2014). In the study CCCSE data from 261 institutions, which equated to 162,394 students, were utilized to determine if there was a correlation between student engagement and graduation rates. Through a bivariate correlation analysis it was found that indeed student engagement was correlated to a significant degree with graduation rates (Price & Tovar, 2014).

With the endless possibilities of the reports that can be compiled with data from both the NSSE and the CCSSE, it is critical to define the measures that student engagement is based upon. According to Hatch (2012), “it is important now to investigate more closely the detailed structural and programmatic contexts of engagement in order to bring them to scale” (p. 910). These surveys and consequential studies have started conversations over the last decade that have led to the development of factors and elements defined as high impact practices (Hatch, 2012).

Additionally, researchers have begun to expand the traditional form and dissemination of the NSSE. In a study by Ahlfedlt, Mehta and Sellnow (2005), the following question was addressed: “Can a simple instrument be developed from the original NSSE survey to measure the level of student engagement in individual classes and compare the results with related questions on the NSSE survey of universities?” The researchers discovered that reliability and correlations were significant among the modified survey and the full version of the NSSE.

### Experiential Learning Survey

The Experiential Learning Survey (ELS) was developed by a group of researchers and was based on “previous work from the experiential learning literature” (Clem, Mennicke, & Beasley, 2013, p. 494). The ELS is based on “four pedagogical principles that help outline the components of experiential education or curriculum: authenticity, active learning, drawing on student experience, and

connecting that experience to future opportunity” (Clem, Mennicke, & Beasley, 2013, p. 494).

### Summary

Overall, the studies reviewed above lack answers to the questions posed in this research project. Through conducting the literature review, there is a clear absence of concrete information on the possible implications of HIPs among the transfer student population. In comparison, there is an abundance of information and research to support the positive impact of HIP participation on first-time or traditional students. Pascarella (2006) identified 10 directions for future research for how college affects students. One particular direction is to “extend and expand inquiry on previously ignored students and institutions” (Pascarella (2006, p. 513). The purpose of this study fully encompassed this direction. The primary focus of this study was to describe the experiences at the university for transfer students that engage the experiential learning activities of service learning and/or internships at a four-year public Hispanic Serving Institution (HSI) in the Inland Empire.

## CHAPTER THREE

### RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

#### Introduction

The purpose of this study was to describe the experiences at a university for transfer students who engaged in the experiential learning activities of service learning and/or internships at a four-year public Hispanic Serving Institution (HSI) in the Inland Empire. National research revealed only 25.3% of students transferring with an associate degree to a university received their bachelor's degree, compared to 43.5% of those who entered without one (University of Southern California, 2011). Multiple studies reviewed demonstrated the benefits of student engagement and experiential learning activities within the traditional student population; the present study was a continuation of those studies among the transfer student population. Chapter three outlines the research design, research questions and hypotheses, research setting, research sample, instrumentation, data collection, and data analysis.

#### Research Design

This study was a causal comparative mixed-methods design to explore transfer students' experiences at a four-year HSI in the Inland Empire. Comparative analyses were conducted to explore differences between transfer students who engaged in service learning and/or internship activities and those transfer students who did not. The limitations of a causal comparative design



include: presence of pre-existing independent variables and variables which the researcher can manipulate.

According to Leedy and Ormrod (2013), “the trickiest part of a mixed-methods study is in combining the two methodological traditions into a research endeavor in which all aspects substantially contribute to a single, greater whole” (p. 258). While there are potential pitfalls with mixed-methods study design (e.g., controlling for confounding variables, analyzing qualitative data, or calculating and drawing inferences from descriptive and inferential statistics), there are several beneficial reasons as to why a researcher would use this study design. The main purpose for mixed methods that guided this study was to gain a more complete picture of the transfer student population.

### Research Questions and Hypotheses

The following questions and hypotheses were developed for this study:

- 1a. How satisfied are transfer students regarding their educational experience, and job/career satisfaction, at a four year public Hispanic Serving Institution (HSI) in the Inland Empire?
- 1b. What is the degree of connectedness that transfer students feel at a four-year public Hispanic Serving Institution (HSI) in the Inland Empire?
- 1c. How much do transfer students believe their experiences at a four-year Hispanic Serving Institution (HSI) in the Inland Empire

contributes to thinking critically and analytically and acquiring job- or work-related knowledge and skills?

2. How do transfer students who participated in service learning and/or internship activities compare to transfer students who did not participate in these experiences at a four-year public Hispanic Serving Institution (HSI) in the Inland Empire?

#### Hypotheses

- a) Transfer students who participated in service learning and/or internship activities will have a lower self-reported time to completion than those transfer students who did not participate in those activities.
- b) Transfer students who participated in service learning and/or internship activities will have a higher self-reported GPA than those transfer students who did not participate in those activities.
- c) Transfer students who participated in service learning and/or internship activities will have a higher satisfaction regarding overall educational experience than those transfer students who did not participate in those activities.
- d) Transfer students who participated in service learning and/or internship activities will have a higher self-reported perception of the university's contribution to their critical and analytical thinking.

- e) Transfer students who participated in service learning and/or internship activities will have a higher self-reported perception of the university's contribution to their acquisition of job- or work-related knowledge and skills.
- f) Transfer students who participated in service learning and/or internship activities will have higher job/career satisfaction than those transfer students who did not participate in those activities.
- g) Transfer students who participated in service learning and/or internship activities will have a higher satisfaction regarding their sense of connection to the university than those transfer students who did not participate in those activities.

#### Null Hypotheses

- a) Transfer students who participated in service learning and/or internship activities will not have a lower self-reported time to completion than those transfer students who did not participate in those activities.
- b) Transfer students who participated in service learning and/or internship activities will not have a higher self-reported GPA than those transfer students who did not participate in those activities.
- c) Transfer students who participated in service learning and/or internship activities will not have a higher satisfaction regarding

overall educational experience than those transfer students who did not participate in those activities.

- d) Transfer students who participated in service learning and/or internship activities will not have a higher self-reported perception of the university's contribution to their critical and analytical thinking.
  - e) Transfer students who participated in service learning and/or internship activities will not have a higher self-reported perception of the university's contribution to their acquisition of job- or work-related knowledge and skills.
  - f) Transfer students who participated in service learning and/or internship activities will not have higher job/career satisfaction than those transfer students who did not participate in those activities.
  - g) Transfer students who participated in service learning and/or internship activities will not have a higher satisfaction regarding their sense of connection to the university than those transfer students who did not participate in those activities.
- 3a. Why do transfer students choose to participate in service learning and/or internship activities?
- 3b. How do transfer students describe their overall experience when they participated in service learning and/or internship activities?

- 3c. Out of those students who participated in service learning and/or internship activities, how much do they believe that their participation in these activities made them feel more connected to the university?
4. What do transfer students suggest the university could do to support their success at a four-year public Hispanic Serving Institution (HSI) in the Inland Empire?

#### Research Setting

In the “2013-14 academic year, 46 percent of students who completed a degree at a four-year institution” (National Student Clearinghouse Research Center, 2015) were transfer students. At the sample university in the fall of 2015 there were 20,024 students enrolled. During that same period, there were a total of 2,493 (12.45%) new transfer students, and 3,005 (15.00%) first-time freshman students enrolled. In the fall of 2015, the same university enrolled the highest number of transfer students in over the past 7 years. The student demographic is broken into 37% male and 63% female students.

#### Research Sample

The transfer student population at the sample university was identified by the Office of Institutional Research and included a total of 8,331 new and continuing transfer students. Email addresses for the identified population were compiled in coordination with Alumni Engagement, Community Engagement, and

University Advancement. The transfer student population was identified strictly based on their enrollment during the 2009-2010, 2010-2011 and 2011-2012 academic years. These specific years were selected to ensure there were an adequate number of potential participants in the sample, that potential participants had completely separated from the university, and that potential participants were the most current in order to obtain recent data. Potential participants were first identified by their enrollment at the four-year institution. After the participants volunteered to take the survey they were broken up based on ethnicity, gender, age, obtainment of an associate degree, time to completion, GPA, educational experience, job/career satisfaction, engagement in service learning and/or internship activities, and connectedness.

### Research Instrumentation

A self-developed survey was created for the purposes of this study. A review of the National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE) offered insight regarding aspects of survey item construction (i.e., thinking critically and analytically, and acquiring job- or work-related knowledge and skills). The survey was also reviewed by the director of the Office of Institutional Research, where it was suggested that examples of service learning and internship activities were provided on the survey. According to Foxcroft, Paterson, le Roux & Herbst (2004), seeking expert input on survey items can help increase the content validity of a survey. Additionally, the self-developed survey was piloted online among a group of six transfer students who had previously attended the sample

university. Feedback was obtained from the participants in regards to the clarity of the items, terminology, and overall structure of the survey. The feedback indicated the survey was appropriate for its intended purposes.

The survey consisted of a total of 28 items (see Appendix A). There were a total of 10 open-ended items, and 18 multiple choice items with Likert scale responses. The results of the multiple choice items were analyzed as categorical/ordinal data due to the lack of a true zero and no equal scale between the selections. All results of the study were based on the self-reported data of the participants and scored with a number one being the highest/best score, and five being the lowest/worst score.

Participants were asked on the survey if they may be contacted for interviews and if they agreed on the online survey they were only asked to provide their first name and phone number. The interviews consisted of the same three to five interview questions (see Appendix B) for all participants depending on their participation in service learning and/or internship activities (see Appendix B). The interview questions included:

1. Could you tell me a little bit more about your experiences at CSUSB?
2. Did you participate in service learning or internships?
3. What could CSUSB do to help transfer students feel more connected to the university?

In addition, participants were asked on the survey to follow a hyperlink to a Google Docs form if they wanted to enter a drawing to win the incentive of a \$25

Amazon gift card. The Google Docs form was maintained and secured within the campus domain. The entry form requested the participant's email address and was kept separate in order to keep the participant's survey responses unidentifiable.

### Data Collection

Data was strictly collected via Qualtrics survey (see Appendix A) and phone interviews conducted by the researcher (see Appendix B) from the participants who consented. The survey was distributed to the participants through email beginning on June 1, 2016 and concluded on June 30, 2016. The survey instrument included an informed consent statement at the beginning of the survey which included consent for both the electronic survey and phone interviews. The interviews were conducted July 7-9, 2016 and lasted approximately 10 minutes.

The independent variables of this study included: transfer students who experienced service learning activities, transfer students who experienced internship activities, transfer students who experienced both service learning and internship activities, and transfer students who did not experience either activity. The dependent variables included: obtainment of an associate degree, completion of a degree, time to completion, GPA, educational experience, institutional contributions to thinking critically and analytically, institutional contributions to acquiring job- or work-related knowledge and skills, job/career satisfaction, and sense of connectedness to the university.



Interviews were conducted to explore and obtain a deeper insight into transfer student experiences. Phone interviews were completed from the researcher's office where the researcher was secluded and the door was closed and locked. The interviews were recorded on a digital voice recorder from a speaker phone and transcribed by the researcher. Only the researcher had access to participant responses.

All survey and interview data from the participants were coded to secure confidentiality. All printed, transcribed, and digital voice recorded data were locked in the researcher's office in a locked file cabinet on the university campus and only the researcher had access to the information. All data was stored on a computer that followed the FIU/IRB Data Management/Security suggestions as provided by the university including: computer security (i.e., regular back up of data), password management, and physical security of equipment. Information was recoded and confidentiality of participants was maintained by storing data on a password protected computer. All data collected will be destroyed three years after the study.

### Data Analysis

The qualitatively oriented data were assessed using NVivo for patterns and frequencies using a thematic analysis approach. Trends and patterns were explored using the responses to the open-ended survey items and interview responses. According to Braun and Clarke (2006), thematic analysis is an independent qualitative descriptive approach that is described as "a method for

identifying, analy[z]ing and reporting patterns (themes) within data” (p. 6). The quantitatively oriented data were analyzed using Microsoft Excel and SPSS software.

The comparative research data, comparing transfer students who experienced service learning and/or internship activities with those who did not, was explored using chi-square and *t*-tests. The dependent variables which were measured through the survey as self-reported data under investigation for this causal-comparative analysis were: completion of a degree (ordinal), years to graduation (scale), GPA (ordinal), educational experience (ordinal), institutional contributions to thinking critically and analytically (ordinal), institutional contributions to acquiring job- or work-related knowledge and skills (ordinal), job/career satisfaction (ordinal), and sense of connectedness to the university (ordinal).

### Summary

This study was a causal comparative mixed-methods design to gain an understanding of the differences, if any, between transfer students who participated in the experiential learning activities of service learning and/or internship activities and those transfer students who did not participate in either activity. Further this study sought to gain ideas about how the university could promote transfer student success from the perspectives of those who participated in the study. The findings and results are reported in Chapter Four.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### RESULTS

#### Introduction

The purpose of this study was to bridge a gap in the literature and research of transfer student experiences at a four-year university. This chapter reviews the data gathered from the survey and interviews and includes the sample demographics, descriptive data and the results of the study.

#### Sample Demographics

The population identified by the sample university's Office of Institutional Research contained 8,331 new and continuing transfer students. A total of 339 (4.10%) participants took the online survey, and 124 (36.58%) of the participants agreed to a phone interview. Table 1 summarizes the complete demographics of the study transfer student participants that were ascertained through the survey (see Appendix A).

Table 1. Participant Self-Reported Demographics

Characteristic	Frequency	%
<i>Gender</i>		
Male	116	34.22
Female	205	60.47
Other	1	.29
Missing	17	5.01
<i>Age</i>		
18-24	16	4.72
25-34	231	68.14
35-44	45	13.27
45-54	21	6.19
55-64	15	4.42
65-74	2	.59
Missing	9	2.65
<i>Race/Ethnicity</i>		
White	146	43.07
Black or African American	29	8.55
American Indian or Alaska Native	4	1.18
Asian	17	5.01
Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander	1	.29
Latino/a	114	33.63
Other	15	4.42
Missing	13	3.83
<i>Associate Degree</i>		
Yes	227	66.96
No	100	29.50
Missing	12	3.54
<i>Degree Obtainment</i>		
Yes	330	97.35

No	0	0.00
Missing	9	2.65
<i>Participation</i>		
Service Learning	20	5.90
Internships	66	19.47
Service Learning and Internships	44	12.98
No Participation	196	57.82
Missing	13	3.83

*Note: n=339*

Based on the self-reported responses of the participants, the descriptive statistics for the sample indicated that 34.22% of the participants were male and 60.47% were female. The highest frequency of age reported was 25-34 (68.14%), and the highest frequency of self-reported race/ethnicity were 43.07% white and 33.63% Latino/a. In addition, 66.96% of participants obtained an associate degree prior to attending the four-year university, and 97.35% indicated that they obtained a degree prior to departing from the university. Lastly, 5.90% reported participation in service learning activities, 19.47% participated in internship activities, 12.98% reported participating in both service learning and internship activities, and 57.82% reported not participating in either activity.

Out of the 124 participants that agreed to a phone interview, a total of 11 (8.87%) responded to the calls and were interviewed. Among the participants

that were interviewed, only three had engaged in service learning and/or internship activities, and the other eight did not experience any service learning and/or internship activities.

### Sample Descriptive Data

The dependent variables (time to completion, GPA, educational experience, institutional contribution to thinking critically and analytically, institutional contribution to acquiring job- or work-related knowledge and skills, job/career satisfaction, and sense of connectedness) for the overall sample which were ascertained through the survey (see Appendix A) are detailed in Tables 2 and 3. The average self-reported time to completion was 2.93 years. The participants also self-reported that 185 (54.57%) had a GPA equivalent to a “B”.

Table 2. Self-Reported Variables (Scale Data)

Characteristic	Mean	Standard Deviation	Variance
<i>Time to Completion</i>	2.93	1.55	2.41

Table 3. Self-Reported Variable (Ordinal Data)

Characteristic	Frequency	%
<i>GPA (Q12)</i>		
A	123	36.28
B	185	54.57
C	16	4.72
Missing	15	4.42

Note: n=339

## Results of the Study

### Research Question 1a.

*How satisfied are transfer students regarding their educational experience, and job/career satisfaction at a four year public Hispanic Serving Institution (HSI) in the Inland Empire?*

According to the self-reported data there were 295 (87.02%) participants who were satisfied with their educational experience (see Table 4). The participants also self-reported that 254 (74.93%) were satisfied with their current job/career, and the job/career with the highest frequency of the participants was teacher (32), followed by manager (26) (see Figure 3).





Research Question 1b.

*What is the degree of connectedness that transfer students feel at a four-year public Hispanic Serving Institution (HSI) in the Inland Empire?*

When asked, “how connected did you feel to the university when you attended, a total of 129 (38.05%) felt a high connection to the university and 102 (30.09%) indicated a moderate amount (see Table 5).

Table 5. Self-Reported Sense of Connectedness

<i>Sense of Connectedness (Q35)</i>	Frequency	%
High	129	38.05
Moderate	102	30.09
Less Than Moderate	77	22.71
Missing	31	9.14

Note: n=339

Research Question 1c.

*How much do transfer students believe their experiences at a four-year Hispanic Serving Institution (HSI) in the Inland Empire contributes to thinking critically and analytically and acquiring job- or work-related knowledge and skills?*

When asked if their experience at the sample university contributed to their knowledge, skills, and personal development in regards to thinking critically and analytically, 248 (73.16%) participants indicated that they felt there was a high contribution. Additionally, when asked if their experience at the sample university contributed to their knowledge, skills, and personal development in regards to acquiring job- or career-related knowledge and skills 185 (57.57%) indicated a high level of contribution (see Table 6).

Table 6. Self-Reported Institutional Contribution

<i>Institutional Contribution to Thinking Critically and Analytically (Q13)</i>	Freq.	%
High	248	73.16
Moderate	64	18.88
Less Than Moderate	14	4.13
Missing	13	3.83
<i>Institutional Contribution to Acquiring job- or work-related knowledge and skills (Q14)</i>		
High	185	57.57
Moderate	82	24.19
Less than Moderate	60	17.70
Missing	12	3.54

Note: n=339

Additionally, a series of chi-square tests were conducted to determine if there were any differences among the overall participants experiences, regardless of participation in service learning and/or internship activities, based on gender, age, and ethnicity and GPA, educational experience, institutional contribution to thinking critically and analytically, institutional contribution to job- or work-related knowledge and skills, job/career satisfaction and sense of connectedness. In order to meet the assumption of the chi-square test and to have more equity among the groups, three of the variables were collapsed. GPA levels were collapsed accordingly, "A" contains A and A-, "B" contains B+, B, and B-, and "C" contains C+, C, and C-. Age was collapsed into two categories/ranges: 18-44 years of age and 45-74 years of age. Ethnicity was collapsed down into three categories: white, Latino/a, and other.

Based on gender, there were no significant relationships among GPA ( $p=.06$ ), educational experience ( $p=.52$ ), institutional contribution to thinking critically and analytically ( $p=.39$ ), institutional contribution to job- or work-related knowledge and skills ( $p=.55$ ), job/career satisfaction ( $p=.80$ ), or sense of connectedness ( $p=.42$ ). Based on age range there were also no significant relationships among, GPA (violated test assumptions), educational experience (violated test assumptions), institutional contribution to thinking critically and analytically (violates test assumptions), institutional contribution to job- or work-related knowledge and skills ( $p=.64$ ), job/career satisfaction ( $p=.06$ ), or sense of connectedness ( $p=.48$ ). Lastly, based on ethnicity, there were no significant

relationships among GPA (violated test assumptions), educational experience ( $p=.35$ ), institutional contribution to thinking critically and analytically (violated test assumptions), institutional contribution to job- or work-related knowledge and skills ( $p=.43$ ), job/career satisfaction ( $p=.14$ ), or sense of connectedness ( $p=.99$ ).

### Research Question 2

*How do transfer students who participated in service learning and/or internship activities compare to transfer students who did not participate in these experiences at a four-year public Hispanic Serving Institution (HSI) in the Inland Empire?*

In response to research question two, participants were asked to respond to survey items to gain descriptive and causal-comparative information between the different groups of transfer students. Items used included gender, age, race/ethnicity, obtainment of an associate degree, time to completion, GPA, educational experience, institutional contribution to thinking critically and analytically, institutional contribution to acquiring job- or work-related knowledge and skills, job/career satisfaction, and sense of connectedness. Tables 7 through 11 summarize these variables based on four groups: service learning, internships, service learning and internships, and no participation.

Table 7. Self-Reported Time to Completion by Experience (Scale Data)

	Service Learning (n=20)			Internships (n=66)			Both Experiences (n=44)			No Experiences (n=196)		
	$\bar{x}$	s	s <sup>2</sup>	$\bar{x}$	s	s <sup>2</sup>	$\bar{x}$	s	s <sup>2</sup>	$\bar{x}$	s	s <sup>2</sup>
<i>Time to Completion</i>	2.84	1.12	1.25	2.9	1.35	1.83	3.0	1.09	1.19	2.95	1.75	3.06

The average time to completion for participants who engaged in service learning activities only was 2.84 years. For participants who engaged in internship activities only the average time to completion was 2.90 years. The average time to completion for participants who engaged in both service learning and internship activities was 3.00 years. Finally, for those participants that did not engage in either service learning or internship activities, the average time to completion was 2.95 years (see Table 7).

The participants who engaged in service learning activities consisted of eight male (40%) and 12 female (60%) transfer students. The most frequently self-reported age range was 25-34 (65%). Nine (45%) of the participants self-reported their race/ethnicity as white, and eight (40%) indicated that they were Latino/a.

The participants who engaged in internship activities consisted of 16 male (24.24%) and 48 female (72.73%) transfer students. The most frequently self-reported age range was 25-34 (72.73%). It was also self-reported that 28 (42.42%) of the participants were white, and 23 (34.85%) were Latino/a.

The participants who engaged in service learning and internship activities consisted of 13 male (29.55%) and 30 female (68.18%) transfer students. The most frequently self-reported age range was 25-34 (63.64%). The participants also self-reported that 21 (47.73%) were white, and 12 (27.27%) were Latino/a.

The final group was those participants that did not experience service learning and/or internship activities. This group consisted of 78 male (39.80%) and 112 female (57.14%) transfer students. The most frequently self-reported age range was 25-34 (70.92%). In addition, 88 (44.90%) of participants self-reported that they were white, and 71 (36.22%) reported that they were Latino/a (see Table 8).

Table 8. Demographics

	Service Learning (n=20)		Internships (n=66)		Both Experiences (n=44)		No Experiences (n=196)	
	Freq	%	Freq	%	Freq	%	Freq	%
<i>Gender</i>								
Male	8	40	16	24.24	13	29.55	78	39.8
Female	12	60	48	72.73	30	68.18	112	57.14
Other	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0.51
Missing	0	0	2	3.03	1	2.27	5	2.55
<i>Age</i>								
18-24	0	0	3	4.55	2	4.55	11	5.61
25-34	13	65	48	72.73	28	63.64	139	70.92
35-44	3	15	9	13.64	6	13.64	27	13.78
45-54	2	10	4	6.06	4	9.09	10	5.1
55-64	1	5	2	3.03	4	9.09	8	4.08
65-74	1	5	0	5	0	0	1	0.51
Missing	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
<i>Race/Ethnicity</i>								
White	9	45	28	42.42	21	47.73	88	44.9
Black or African American	1	5	10	15.15	4	9.09	14	7.14
Indian or Alaska Native	0	0	1	1.52	2	4.55	1	0.51
Asian Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander	0	0	2	3.03	0	0	15	7.65
Latino/a	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0.51
Other	8	40	23	34.85	12	27.27	71	36.22
Missing	2	10	2	3.03	5	11.36	6	3.06
	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0

In regards to the academically related data, fifteen (75%) of the participants who engaged in service learning activities earned an associate degree prior to attending the university. The highest frequency of GPA was an “A” (55%) average. For participants who engaged in internship activities

indicated that 41 (62.12%) earned an associate degree prior to attending the university, and the highest frequency of GPA was a “B” (54.55%) average.

Out of the participants who engaged in both service learning and internship activities, 33 (75%) obtained their associate degree prior to attending the university, and the highest reported frequency of GPA was a “B” (54.54%) average. Among the participants that did not engage in service learning or internship activities 135 (68.88%) self-reported that they had obtained an associate degree prior to coming to the university and the most frequently reported GPA was a “B” (59.19%) average (see Table 9).

Table 9. Academics

	Service Learning (n=20)		Internships (n=66)		Both Experiences (n=44)		No Experiences (n=196)	
	Freq	%	Freq	%	Freq	%	Freq	%
<i>Associate Degree (Q6)</i>								
Yes	15	75	41	62.12	33	75	135	68.88
No	4	20	25	37.88	11	25	59	30.1
Missing	1	5			0	0	2	1.02
<i>GPA (Q12)</i>								
4.0 A	3	15	3	4.55	4	9.09	10	5.1
3.7 A-	8	40	23	34.85	14	31.82	58	29.59
3.3 B+	5	25	15	22.73	12	27.27	47	23.98
3.0 B	2	10	14	21.21	8	18.18	42	21.43
2.7 B-	1	5	7	10.61	4	9.09	27	13.78
2.3 C+	1	5	4	6.06	1	2.27	7	3.57
2.0 C	0	0	0	0	0	0	3	1.53
1.7 C-	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
1.3 D+	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
1.0 D	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Don't Know	0	0	0	0	1	2.27	2	1.02
Missing	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0



In order to describe the cognitive engagement of transfer students, results were ascertained through the survey that inquired about institutional contribution on thinking critically and analytically, and institutional contribution to acquiring job- or work-related knowledge and skills. The participants that engaged in service learning activities felt that their experience at the university contributed a high amount when it came to thinking critically and analytically (90%), institutional contribution to acquiring job- or work-related knowledge and skills (65%), and their sense of connectedness (50%). Additionally, participants that engaged in only internship activities felt that their experience at the university contributed highly to their thinking critically and analytically (80.30%), acquiring job- or work-related knowledge and skills (66.66%).

Participants that engaged in both service learning and/or internship activities highly indicated that their experience at the university contributed a great deal when it came to institutional contribution to thinking critically and analytically (79.54%), institutional contribution to acquiring job- or work-related knowledge and skills (63.63%). Finally, the participants did not engage in either activity felt that their experience at the university highly contributed to their thinking critically and analytically (72.44%), and acquiring job- or work related knowledge and skills (51.02%) (see Table 10).

Table 10. Cognitive Engagement

	Service Learning (n=20)		Internships (n=66)		Both Experiences (n=44)		No Experiences (n=196)	
	Freq	%	Freq	%	Freq	%	Freq	%
<i>Institutional Contribution to Thinking Critically and Analytically (Q13)</i>								
A great deal	10	50	30	45.45	19	43.18	71	36.22
A lot	8	40	23	34.85	16	36.36	71	36.22
A moderate amount	2	10	11	16.67	6	13.64	44	22.45
A little	0	0	2	3.03	3	6.82	5	2.55
None at all	0	0			0	0	4	2.04
Missing	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0.51
<i>Institutional Contribution to Acquiring job- or work-related knowledge and skills (Q14)</i>								
A great deal	7	35	24	36.36	19	43.18	48	24.49
A lot	6	30	20	30.3	9	20.45	52	26.53
A moderate amount	5	25	14	21.21	10	22.73	52	26.53
A little	2	10	8	12.12	4	9.09	30	15.31
None at all	0	0			2	4.55	14	7.14
Missing	0	0	0	0	0	0		

In order to describe the affective engagement of transfer students, results were ascertained through the survey that inquired about educational experience, job/career satisfaction, and sense of connectedness. Based on the highest responses to the survey items by participants who only experienced service learning activities, 18 (90%) of the participants were satisfied with their

educational experience and 14 (70%) were satisfied with their current job/career. In addition, participants that only experienced service learning activities were more likely to report that they felt a high (50%) sense of connectedness to the university. Participants that only engaged in internship activities also self-reported that they were satisfied with their educational experience (96.97%) and job/career satisfaction (91.22%). Additionally, participants felt that their experience at the university contributed highly to sense of connectedness to the university (45.97%).

The participants that engaged in both service learning and internship activities indicated that they were satisfied with their educational experience (96.97%), and their job/career satisfaction (79.55%). They also highly indicated that their experience at the university contributed a great deal when it came to their sense of connectedness (61.36%). Participants who did not engage in either activity responded that they were satisfied with their educational experience (87.25%) and job/career satisfaction (73.47%). Participants were also more likely to report that there was a moderate (32.65%) amount of connectedness to the university (see Table 11).

Table 11. Affective Engagement

	Service Learning (n=20)		Internships (n=66)		Both Experiences (n=44)		No Experiences (n=196)	
	Freq	%	Freq	%	Freq	%	Freq	%
<i>Educational Experience (Q25)</i>								
Extremely Satisfied	12	60	37	56.06	26	59.09	97	49.49
Somewhat Satisfied	6	30	27	40.91	15	34.09	74	37.76
Neither Satisfied nor Dissatisfied	2	10	0	0	3	6.82	15	7.65
Somewhat Dissatisfied	0	0	0	0	0	0	8	4.08
Extremely Dissatisfied	0	0	2	3.03	0	0	1	0.51
Missing	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0.51
<i>Job/Career Satisfaction (Q16)</i>								
Extremely Satisfied	9	45	32	48.8	22	50	75	38.27
Somewhat Satisfied	5	25	28	42.42	13	29.55	69	35.2
Neither Satisfied nor Dissatisfied	4	20	3	4.55	2	4.55	18	9.18
Somewhat Dissatisfied	0	0	1	1.52	3	6.82	17	8.67
Extremely Dissatisfied	2	10	1	1.52	4	9.09	14	7.14
Missing	0	0	1	1.52	0	0	3	1.53
<i>Sense of Connectedness (Q35)</i>								
A great deal	7	35	10	15.15	22	50	26	13.27
A lot	3	15	21	31.82	5	11.36	35	17.86
A moderate amount	5	25	22	33.33	11	25	64	32.65
A little	2	10	9	13.64	3	6.82	49	25
None at all	0	0	1	1.52	0	0	12	6.12
Missing	3	15	3	4.55	3	6.82	10	5.1

The participants were then collapsed into two groups (participation in service learning and/or internship activities and no participation in either activity) in order to have more equity in numbers between the groups (see Tables 12 and 13). The data revealed that 130 (38.35%) participants experienced service learning and/or internship activities, and 196 (57.82%) participants did not experience service learning and/or internship activities.

Table 12. Participant Experience, 2 groups

Characteristic		
<i>Experience</i>	Frequency	%
Participated in service learning and/or internship activities	130	38.35
Did not participate in either activities	196	57.82
Missing	13	3.83

*Note: n=339*

Table 13. Participant Descriptive Data, 2 groups

Characteristic	Experienced/Participation (n=130)		No Experience/No Participation (n=196)	
	Frequency	%	Frequency	%
<i>Gender</i>				
Male	37	28.46	78	39.80
Female	90	69.23	112	57.14
Other	0	0.00	1	0.51
Missing	3	2.31	5	2.55
<i>Age</i>				
18-24	5	3.85	11	5.61
25-34	89	68.46	139	70.92
35-44	18	13.85	27	13.78
45-54	10	7.69	10	5.10
55-64	7	5.38	8	4.08
65-74	1	0.77	1	0.51
Missing	0	0	0	0.00
<i>Race/Ethnicity</i>				
White	58	44.62	88	44.90
Black/African America	15	11.54	14	7.14
American Indian or Alaska Native	3	2.31	1	0.51
Asian	2	1.54	15	7.65
Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander	0	0	1	0.51
Latino/a	43	33.08	71	36.22
Other	9	6.92	6	3.06
Missing	0	0	0	0.00
<i>Associate Degree</i>				
Yes	89	68.46	135	68.88
No	40	30.77	59	30.10
Missing	1	0.77	2	1.02

A series of chi-square and *t*-tests were conducted to determine whether there were any differences between experiences in service learning and/or internship activities (IV) and time to completion, GPA, educational experience,

institutional contribution to thinking critically and analytically, institutional contribution to acquiring job- or work-related knowledge and skills, job/career satisfaction, and sense of connectedness (DV). The survey items were all self-reported and scored with a number of one being the highest/best to five being the lowest/worst score.

Groups and Time to Completion

Hypothesis: *Transfer students who participated in service learning and/or internship activities will have a lower self-reported time to completion than those transfer students who did not participate in those activities.*

Based on the descriptive data, the average time to completion for participants who experienced service learning and/or internship activities was 2.93 years, compared to 2.95 years for participants who did not experience any service learning and/or internship activities (see Table 14).

Table 14. Self-Reported Time to Completion

	Participation/ Experience in Service Learning and/or Internship Activities (n=129)			No Participation/ No Experience (n=189)		
	$\bar{x}$	s	s <sup>2</sup>	$\bar{x}$	s	s <sup>2</sup>
<i>Time to Completion</i>	2.93	1.23	1.51	2.95	1.75	3.06

An independent-samples  $t$ -test was conducted to compare participation in service learning and/or internship activities and time to completion. The assumption of normality was evaluated and found tenable for all groups. The assumption of homogeneity of variances was tested and found not tenable using Levene's Test,  $F(312,310.91)=4.66, p=.03$ .

There were no differences ( $p=.89$ ) in the scores for participation ( $\bar{x}=2.93, SD=1.23$ ) and no participation ( $\bar{x}=2.95, SD=1.75$ ) conditions;  $t(312)=-.14, p=.89$ . Participants who engaged ( $n=125$ ) in service learning and/or internship activities did not graduate faster ( $\bar{x}=2.93$ ) when compared to participants ( $n=189$ ) who did not engage ( $\bar{x}=2.95$ ) in either activity. Since the  $t$ -test was insignificant ( $p=.89$ ) there is no evidence to reject the null hypothesis.

#### Groups and Self-Reported Grade Point Average (GPA)

*Hypothesis: Transfer students who participated in service learning and/or internship activities will have a higher self-reported GPA than those transfer students who did not participate in those activities.*

According to the results, the highest frequency of participants who experienced service learning and internship activities reported having a GPA of "B" (52.70%). The same follows for those participants who did not experience service learning or internship activities, the highest frequency of participants reported having a GPA of "B" (59.80%).

A chi-square ( $\chi^2$ ) test of independence was calculated to assess whether transfer students who experienced service learning and/or internship activities



had a higher self-reported GPA. Based on the assumptions, the following conditions were met: the variables were categorical and independence of observations. In order to pass the third assumption and obtain more than five responses per category, and to create more equity the responses were collapsed from 10 categories down to three categories accordingly, A contains A and A-, B contains B+, B, and B-, and C contains C+, C, and C-. There were no grades reported below a C- (see Table 15).

Table 15. Self-Reported Grade Point Average (GPA)

Characteristic	Experience/ Participation (n=129)		No Experience/ No Participation (n=194)	
	Frequency	%	Frequency	%
<i>Self-reported GPA</i>				
A	55	42.60	68	35.10
B	68	52.70	116	59.80
C	6	4.70	10	5.20

There were no significant differences found ( $X^2(2)=1.89, p=.39$ ). There is no evidence to reject the null hypothesis and conclude there is a significant difference in a transfer student's self-reported GPA based on their participation in service learning and/or internship activities.

#### Groups and Educational Experience

Hypothesis: *Transfer students who participated in service learning and/or internship activities will have a higher satisfaction regarding overall*

*educational experience than those transfer students who did not participate in those activities.*

Participants who experienced service learning and/or internship activities most frequently self-reported having satisfaction (94.60%) with their educational experience, and participants who did not experience service learning and internship activities highly reported that they were satisfied (87.70%) with their educational experience.

A chi-square ( $\chi^2$ ) test of independence was calculated to assess whether transfer students who experienced service learning and/or internship activities had a higher self-reported educational experience. Based on the assumptions the following conditions were met: the variables were categorical, and independence of observations. In order to pass the third assumption and obtain more than five responses per category, the responses were collapsed from five categories down to two categories (satisfied and less than satisfied) (see Table 16).

Table 16. Educational Experience

Characteristic	Experience/ Participation (n=130)		No Experience/ No Participation (n=195)	
	Frequency	%	Frequency	%
<i>Educational Experience</i>				
Satisfied	123	94.60	171	87.70
Less Than Satisfied	7	5.40	24	12.30

A difference was found ( $\chi^2 (1)=4.33, p=.04$ ). The strength of this relationship as determined by the Cramer's V is .12. There is evidence to reject the null hypothesis. However, when controlling for gender, the relationship between participation in service learning and/or internships and educational experience is no longer significant overall, but a partial association still remains for female ( $p=.00$ ) participants, but not for male ( $p=.95$ ) participants (see Table 17). Overall, female transfer students who participated in service learning and/or internship activities were more satisfied with their educational experience compared to those transfer students who did not participate in either activity, and male participants who did engage in service learning and/or internship activities.

Table 17. Educational Experience and Gender

	Experience/ Participation (n=127)				No Experience/ No Participation (n=189)			
	Male		Female		Male		Female	
Educational Experience Satisfied	Freq	%	Freq	%	Freq	%	Freq	%
	33	89.20	88	97.80	69	89.60	97	86.60
Less than Satisfied	4	10.80	2	2.20	8	10.40	15	13.40

### Groups and Institutional Contribution to Thinking Critically and Analytically

Hypothesis: *Transfer students who participated in service learning and/or internship activities will have a higher self-reported perception of the university's contribution to their critical and analytical thinking.*

Participants who experienced service learning and internship activities most frequently self-reported that their experience at the university highly (81.50%) contributed to their thinking critically and analytically. Participants who did not experience service learning or internship activities also were more likely to report that their experience at the university highly (72.80%) contributed to their thinking critically and analytically.

A chi-square ( $X^2$ ) test of independence was calculated to assess whether transfer students who experienced service learning and/or internship activities had a higher sense of institutional contribution to thinking critically and analytically. Based on the assumptions the following conditions were met: the variables were categorical and independence of observations. In order to create more equity between the responses they were collapsed from five categories down to three categories (high, moderate, and less than moderate) (see Table 18).

Table 18. Institutional Contribution to Thinking Critically and Analytically

Characteristic	Experience/ Participation (n=130)		No Experience/ No Participation (n=195)	
	Frequency	%	Frequency	%
<i>Institutional Contribution to Thinking Critically and Analytically</i>				
High	106	81.50	142	72.80
Moderate	19	14.60	44	22.60
Less than Moderate	5	3.80	9	4.60

There were no significant differences found ( $X^2(2)=3.43, p=.18$ ). There is no evidence to reject the null hypothesis and conclude that there is a significant difference in a student's self-reported institutional contribution to thinking critically and analytically based on their participation in service learning and/or internship activities.

Groups and Institutional Contribution to Acquiring Job- or Work-related Knowledge and Skills

*Hypothesis: Transfer students who participated in service learning and/or internship activities will have a higher self-reported perception of the university's contribution to their acquisition of job- or work-related knowledge and skills.*

The results revealed participants who experienced service learning and/or internship activities were more likely to report that their experience at the university highly (65.40%) contributed to acquiring job- or work-related knowledge and skills. Participants who did not experience service learning and/or internship activities were more likely to report their experience at the

university highly (51.10%) contributed to acquiring job- or work-related knowledge and skills.

A chi-square ( $\chi^2$ ) test of independence was calculated to assess whether transfer students who experience service learning and/or internship activities acquired a higher sense of institutional contribution to their job- or work-related knowledge and skills. Based on assumptions the following conditions were met: the variables were categorical, and independence of observations. In order to create more equity between the responses they were collapsed from five categories down to three categories (high, moderate, and less than moderate) (see Table 19).

Table 19. Institutional Contribution to Acquiring Job- or Work-related Knowledge and Skills

Characteristic	Experience/ Participation (n=130)		No Experience/ No Participation (n=196)	
	Frequency	%	Frequency	%
<i>Institutional Contribution to Acquiring Job- or Work-related Knowledge and Skills</i>				
High	85	65.40	100	51.10
Moderate	29	22.30	52	26.50
Less Than Moderate	16	12.30	44	22.40

A significant difference was found ( $\chi^2(2)=7.77, p=.02$ ). The strength of this relationship as determined by the Cramer's V is .15. There is evidence to reject the null hypothesis. However, when controlling for gender, the relationship

between participation in service learning and/or internships and institutional contribution to acquiring job- or work-related knowledge and skills is no longer significant overall, but a partial association remains for female ( $p=.02$ ) participants, and not male ( $p=.64$ ) participants (see Table 20). Overall, female transfer students who participated in service learning and/or internship activities were more likely to report that they felt that the institution contributed towards them acquiring job- or work-related knowledge and skills than those transfer students who did not participate in either activity, and male participants who did engage in service learning and/or internship activities.

Table 20. Institutional Contribution to Acquiring Job- or Work-related Knowledge and Gender

	Experience/ Participation (n=127)				No Experience/ No Participation (n=190)			
	Male		Female		Male		Female	
Job- or Work- related Knowledge and Skills	Freq	%	Freq	%	Freq	%	Freq	%
High	22	59.50	61	67.80	39	50.00	59	52.70
Moderate	9	24.30	20	22.20	23	29.50	26	23.20
Less Than Moderate	6	16.20	9	10.00	16	20.50	27	24.10

## Groups and Job/Career Satisfaction

Hypothesis: *Transfer students who participated in service learning and/or internship activities will have higher job/career satisfaction than those transfer students who did not participate in those activities.*

Participants who experienced service learning and/or internship activities most frequently self-reported that they were satisfied (84.50%) with their current job/career and participants who did not experience service learning and/or internship activities highly reported that they were satisfied (74.60%) with their job/career.

A chi-square ( $X^2$ ) test of independence was calculated to assess whether transfer students who experienced service learning and/or internship activities acquired more job/career satisfaction. Based on the assumptions the following conditions were met: the variables were categorical, and independence of observations. In order to create more equity between the responses they were collapsed from five categories down to two categories (satisfied and less than satisfied) (see table 21).

Table 21. Job/Career Satisfaction

Characteristic	Experience/ Participation (n=129)		No Experience/ No Participation (n=193)	
	Frequency	%	Frequency	%
Satisfied	109	84.50	144	74.60
Less Than Satisfied	20	15.50	49	25.40



There were significant differences found ( $X^2(1)=4.49, p=.03$ ). The strength of this relationship as determined by the Cramer's V is .12, and there is evidence to reject the null hypothesis. However, when controlling for gender, the relationship between participation in service learning and/or internships and job/career satisfaction is no longer significant overall, but a partial association remains for female ( $p=.02$ ) participants, but not male ( $p=.72$ ) participants (see Table 22). Overall, female transfer students who participated in service learning and/or internship activities self-reported being more satisfied with their current job/career compared to transfer students who did not participate in either activity, and male transfer students who did participate in service learning and/or internship activities.

Table 22. Job/Career Satisfaction and Gender

	Experience/ Participation (n=126)				No Experience/ No Participation (n=187)			
	Male		Female		Male		Female	
Job/Career Satisfaction	Freq	%	Freq	%	Freq	%	Freq	%
Satisfied	30	81.10	76	85.40	61	78.20	78	71.60
Less than Satisfied	7	18.90	13	14.60	17	21.80	31	28.40

### Group and Sense of Connectedness

Hypothesis: *Transfer students who participated in service learning and/or internship activities will have a higher satisfaction regarding their sense of*

*connection to the university than those transfer students who did not participate in those activities.*

Based on the descriptive data, the most frequently reported sense of connectedness for participants who experienced service learning and/or internship activities was high (56.20%), compared to a moderate amount (34.40%) for participants who did not experience any service learning and/or internship activities.

A chi-square ( $\chi^2$ ) test of independence was calculated to assess whether transfer students who experienced service learning and/or internship activities had a higher sense of connectedness to the university. Based on the assumptions the following conditions were met: the variables were categorical, and independence of observations. In order to create more equity between the responses they were collapsed from five categories down to three categories (high, moderate, and less than moderate) (see table 23).

Table 23. Sense of Connectedness

Characteristic	Experience/ Participation (n=121)		No Experience/ No Participation (n=186)	
	Frequency	%	Frequency	%
<i>Sense of Connectedness</i>				
High	68	56.20	61	32.80
Moderate	38	31.40	64	34.40
Less Than Moderate	15	12.40	61	32.80

A significant difference was found ( $X^2(2)=22.08, p=.00$ ). The strength of this relationship as determined by the Cramer's V is .23. There is evidence that we can reject the null hypothesis that there is no significance between participants who experienced service learning and/or internship activities and their sense of connectedness to the university. When controlling for gender, the relationship between participation in service learning and/or internships and sense of connectedness to the university remains significant for female ( $p=.00$ ) and male ( $p=.01$ ) participants overall (see Table 24). In conclusion, transfer students who did not participate in service learning and/or internship activities were more likely to report less connection to the university compared to transfer students who did participate.

Table 24. Sense of Connectedness and Gender

	Experience/ Participation (n=118)				No Experience/ No Participation (n=181)			
	Male		Female		Male		Female	
Sense of Connected- ness	Freq	%	Freq	%	Freq	%	Freq	%
High	19	57.60	48	56.50	21	27.60	36	34.30
Moderate	8	24.20	29	34.10	33	43.40	31	29.50
Less Than Moderate	6	18.20	8	9.40	22	28.90	38	36.20

Research Question 3a.

*Why do transfer students choose to participate in service learning and/or internship activities?*

In addition to the quantitatively oriented data, there were four open-ended survey items that were specific to those participants who experienced service learning and/or internship activities. Table 25 details why transfer students chose to participate in service learning and/or internship activities.

Table 25. Participation

Why did you choose to participate in service learning? (Q19)

Theme: Service Learning Interrelates with Career Opportunities and Giving Back

Concept	Frequency	Key Statements
Experience	20	"Experience and Diversity Exposure - to learn more about other areas"
Community	7	"To gain applied research experience and to give back to my community" "to get more experience and connection with the campus community"
Learning	6	"I am in a service learning job I wanted to enhance my knowledge"
Career	4	"Hands on experience for my career path"
Requirement	4	"Learning experience and requirement"

Why did you choose to participate in an internship? (Q33)

Theme: Internship Activities Interrelates Career Opportunities and Learning

Concept	Frequency	Key Statements
Experience	35	"I wanted experience so that getting a job would not be as difficult as it would have been without one."
Requirement	33	"Federal scholarship requirement; also made it easier to obtain first job in federal government entity"
Work	12	"To gain more real life work related experience"
Gain	10	"Gain experience and it was required. It also helped me network and try out my chosen career."
Learning	8	"It was a research group and I was interested in learning more about research and building my resume."
Research	5	"I garnered research experience working with a professor."

When asked why they chose to engage in service learning activities, the theme that emerged through a thematic analysis approach was, "service learning interrelates with career opportunities and giving back." Participants most frequently responded that "experience" was the reason they chose to participate in service learning activities. One participant stated that they participated in

service learning activities to gain “experience and diversity exposure - to learn more about other areas.”

When asked why they chose to engage in internship activities, the theme that emerged through a thematic analysis approach was, “internship activities interrelates career opportunities and learning.” “Experience” was the most frequent concept for transfer students who engaged in internship activities. In response to why they chose to participate in internship activities one participant stated that it was to “gain experience and it was required. It also helped me network and try out my chosen career.”

#### Research Question 3b.

*How do transfer students describe their overall experience when they participated in service learning and/or internship activities?*

When asked to describe their overall experiences from their participation in service learning activities the theme that emerged through a thematic analysis approach was, “service learning as a gateway to giving back to your community.” The highest concept reported was experience, followed by community, learning, career, and requirement. One participant stated that “my experiences were great in that I enjoyed giving back to the community, while also learning and improving my professional development.” (see Table 26).

Table 26. Overall Experiences

Please describe your overall experiences when you participated in service learning. (Q20)

Theme: Service Learning as a Gateway to Giving Back to Your Community

Concept	Frequency	Key Statements
Experience	12	"It was a fantastic experience for me. I was allowed to work with some terrific people."
Learned	12	"We learned that there is a big need on education in our community"
Great	9	"Great experiences..."
Community	8	"I was happy to serve those in need. I felt I was helping the community."
Helped	5	"I loved it, it helped me feel more connected to the campus and surrounding area."
Positive	5	"Positive, moving, incredible"

Please describe your overall experiences when you participated in an internship. (Q22)

Theme: Internship Activities as a Gateway for Understanding and Opportunities

Concept	Frequency	Key Statements
Experiences	27	"I absolutely loved my internship experience at [the university]."
Learning	23	"Learn how to apply the knowledge and skills to practical situations or settings"
Great	22	"Fantastic. Great opportunities to learn in a hands on environment."
Working	14	"I learned how to work with real clients, talk and behave professionally."
Loved	9	"Loved how it challenged my critical thinking skills"
Skills	9	"Great experience. Had the opportunity to practice some of the skills learned."

When asked to describe their overall experiences from their participation in internship activities the theme that emerged through a thematic analysis approach was, "internship activities as a gateway for understanding and opportunities." The highest concepts reported included: experience,

requirement, work, gain, learning, and research. One participant stated, that “it was a great experience to apply the knowledge and skills I gained through my graduate and undergraduate training (see Table 26).

Further qualitative oriented data was obtained through the phone interviews. Among the participants that were interviewed, only three had engaged in service learning and/or internship activities, and the other eight did not experience any service learning and/or internship activities. Based on the interviews of the participants that did engage in service learning and/or internship activities their experiences varied. One participant indicated they experienced an internship as part of their degree program, but felt it was not as beneficial as it could have been and stated that it was more or less, “here you go, go do it and you’ll be done.” However, the other two participants who also experienced service learning and/or internship activities felt very connected and were able to gain a great deal experience to help decide if they were in the correct field.

Research Question 3c.

*Out of those students who participated in service learning and/or internship activities, how much do they believe that their participation in these activities made them feel more connected to the university?*

There were four items on the survey that were only seen by participants if they indicated that they engaged in service learning and/or internship activities on the survey the inquired about connectedness to the university. Table 27 is



broken down into the three groups: participation in service learning, participation in internships, and participation in both service learning and internships.

Table 27. Participant Self-Reported Experience, 3 groups

<i>Service Learning (n=20)</i>		
Connection to the university (Q21) due to service learning		
Strongly agree	6	30.00
Somewhat agree	6	30.00
Neither agree nor disagree	5	25.00
Somewhat disagree	0	0.00
Strongly disagree	0	0.00
Missing	3	15.00
<i>Internships (n=66)</i>		
Connection to the university (Q23) due to internships		
Strongly agree	16	24.24
Somewhat agree	18	27.27
Neither agree nor disagree	17	25.76
Somewhat disagree	7	10.61
Strongly disagree	4	6.06
Missing	4	6.06
<i>Service Learning and Internships (n=44)</i>		
Connection to the university (Q21) due to service learning		
Strongly agree	20	45.45
Somewhat agree	13	29.55
Neither agree nor disagree	6	13.64
Somewhat disagree	1	2.27
Strongly disagree	0	0
Missing	4	9.09
Connection to the university due to internships (Q23)		
Strongly agree	13	29.55
Somewhat agree	13	29.55

Neither agree nor disagree	10	22.73
Somewhat disagree	3	6.82
Strongly disagree	0	0
Missing	5	11.36

When asked about their connectedness based on their experiences, participants that engaged in service learning activities indicated equally for “strongly agree” (30.00%) and “somewhat agree” (30.00%), however, participants that only engaged in internship activities indicated “somewhat agree” (27.27%) and “neither agree nor disagree” (25.76%). When asked if participation in internship activities made them feel more connected to the university, 16 (24.24%) indicated that they strongly agree, 18 (27.27%) indicated that they somewhat agree.

Among the participants who engaged in both service learning and/or internship activities 20 (45.45%) participants self-reported that they strongly agree, and 13 (29.55%) indicated that they somewhat agree that they had a stronger connection to the university due to participation in service learning activities. Additionally within this same group, 13 (9.03%) indicated that they strongly agree that participating in internship activities made them feel more connected to the university.

#### Research Question 4

*What do transfer students suggest the university could do to support their success at a four-year public Hispanic Serving Institution (HSI) in the Inland Empire?*

In response to research question four, the self-reported data from the open-ended survey items and interview responses were analyzed (see Table 28). When asked, "What could the university do that would help transfer students be more successful?", the theme of "focusing on transfer student resources" emerged through a thematic analysis approach of the reported concepts.

Table 28. Concepts of Transfer Student Success

What could the university do that would help transfer students be more successful? (Q37) Theme: Focusing on Transfer Student Resources		
Concept	Frequency	Key Statements
Students	112	"A curriculum that teaches students to succeed in short term goals as well as long term."
Classes/Courses	87	"Better course guidance. Maybe a mandatory guidance counselor meeting once a quarter."
Transfer	86	"Conduct Transfer Workshops for students to attend where they can have all questions answered" "Help more transfer students live on campus and educate them about the resources that [the university] offers."
Help	44	"Have more programs share during transfer orientation with tabling"
Programs	32	"Offer or promote resources for first generation college students with information about career opportunities."
Offer	29	

The most frequent concept identified was “students”. The participants described a need for the university to focus more on student success in the long term. One participant stated, “encouraging students to participate in internships would make those students more successful once they graduate. Maybe have presentations in regards to the benefits of internships and what could be expected.”

Another prominent concept identified was “classes/courses”. One participant stated that one way that the university could help transfer students be successful is to, “help to ensure all incoming transfer students have a meeting with an academic adviser prior to registering for their first classes to ensure they know exactly what classes transferred and which ones did not.” Participants also highly stated “transfer” as a primary focus to help transfer student be more successful. One participant stated that it is critical to “inform transfer students better of services and activities around the campus. I honestly did not know the school had a career center until after I graduated!”, additionally, another participation suggested that the university could “provide a way for more of their classes to transfer over.”

In addition, another participant stated that it would be helpful to: Somehow introduce the new transfer students to the graduating class of seniors for advice. Normally, these two groups would not meet as they are at different stages and take different classes. Maybe have more activities or classes that

allow juniors/seniors to mix from the same concentration. This is particularly noticeable in the first quarter of a transfer student's experience.

Furthermore, one participant summed up the concept of "programs" by stating:

It was a difficult transition at first, I think because as a transfer student you have already been enrolled in some form of higher education there is an assumption that you will know what to do once you transfer. There should be similar programs offered to transfer students as there are to those coming directly from high school.

The last frequently reported concept in response to the success of transfer students was "offer." One participant stated:

Inform students about programs at [the university] that help them work towards their educational goals in the areas they want to work in. When I left school, I learned about services that were offered to students like me but since I was already on my out, I wasn't able to participate in them.

When participants were asked "What could the university do that would help transfer students feel more connected to the university?" the theme that emerged through a thematic analysis of the concepts was, "promoting transfer student connectedness through communication and engagement." The top concepts were identified as students, events/activities, campus, transfer, and feel (see Table 29).

Table 29. Concepts of Transfer Student Connectedness

What could the university do that would help transfer students feel more connected to the university? (Q39)

Theme: Promoting Transfer Student Connectedness through Communication and Engagement

Concept	Frequency	Key Statements
Students	130	"A mandatory orientation with other students who did the same transfer would have been nice."
Events/Activities	44	"Better communication of events and opportunities and extension of them to different times and places"
Campus	59	"Campus tour and list of services/clubs/organizations available to students"
Transfer	55	"Be more receptive with a transfer acceptance center."
Feel	39	"Make them feel like they are a special. Save space in classes for them, have a meet and greet for them."

The most prominent concept was “students.” The responses ranged from suggesting the creation of a transfer student center, to transfer student orientation, to more guidance. One interview participant stated, “Have...a transfer student center to have current students or students that have been there longer, as a reception committee. Definitely a peer-to-peer with collaboration with faculty in possibly each department...”

The second most frequently reported concept among the transfer student participants was “events/activities.” One participant suggested that there should be a “bigger push to attend organized events”, and another one suggested, “host events to introduce them to the different programs and organizations on campus similar to how they have for the freshmen.” Another highly reported concept was “campus”. To help transfer students feel more connected one participant

suggested that the university should “offer transfer students that live locally more ways to participate in the on campus experience”, additionally, another participant stated that the university should provide an “orientation or a campus tour. I know that when I spoke with other students they attended an orientation their first year at the university, while as a transfer student, I was not aware of an orientation.”

Another concept identified was “transfer”. One participant stated that there should be “more workshops for transfer students to identify what career path should they choose, and internships or programs that help transfer students prepare for the university.” The final prominent concept was “feel.” The participants indicated a range of suggestions that the university could do to help transfer students feel more connected to the university. First, one participant simply stated, “I think [the university] currently does a great job to make transfer students feel connected.” Another participant stated, “more involvement on a department level would ideally bring a more connected feeling to the university. It all starts with the departments and then it would broaden to the campus as a whole.”

### Summary

Based on the literature reviewed in chapter two and the results detailed in this chapter, this study provides vital information about transfer student experiences. Through the analysis of the self-reported data, there were relationships among transfer students who participated in service learning and/or



internship activities and educational experience, the development of knowledge, skills and personal development in regards to institutional contribution to acquiring job- or work-related knowledge and skills, job/career satisfaction and connectedness to the university. Based on the results in this chapter, chapter five reviews recommendations for educational leaders, as well as propose recommendations for future research and address the limitations of the study.

## CHAPTER FIVE

### RECOMMENDATIONS AND CONCLUSIONS

#### Overview

The purpose of this study was to describe the experiences of transfer students who engaged in service learning and/or internship activities at a four-year public Hispanic Serving Institution (HSI). Multiple studies that were reviewed in chapter two demonstrated the benefits of student engagement and experiential learning activities within the traditional student population; this study in essence was a continuation of those studies among the transfer student population.

The relationships among educational experience, institutional contribution to acquiring job- or work-related knowledge and skills, job/career satisfaction, and sense of connectedness among transfer students who participated in service learning and/or internship activities supports both affective and cognitive engagement as described in the literature. Thinking critically and analytically, and acquiring job- or work-related knowledge and skills, both support a student's cognitive engagement by providing relevance of schoolwork and making it applicable to real-work success (Appleton, Christenson, & Furlong, 2008).. Connectedness directly relates to a student's affective engagement and helps to promote a sense of belonging which promotes persistence (Appleton, Christenson, & Furlong, 2008).

Additionally, the qualitative themes such as, “service learning interrelates with career opportunities and giving back,” and “internship activities as a gateway for understanding and opportunities” further promoted the triangulation between transfer student success, student engagement (affective and cognitive), and experiential learning activities (service learning and internships). These findings guided the recommendations for higher educational leaders and for future research needed to further promote the success of transfer students.

### Recommendations for Educational Leaders

Based on the results, there are three pertinent recommendations that are proposed to educational leaders in higher education. These recommendations are suggested in order to endorse the achievement of transfer students and are supported by the literature reviewed in this study.

#### Build Connectedness

As reported, connectedness and service learning and/or internship activities were significant factors among transfer students, but unfortunately, only 38.5% of the participants indicated they participated in either service learning and/or internship activities. According to Lester, Leonard, and Mathias (2013), “the more connected a student is to the social and academic fabric of a campus, the more likely he or she is to persist in college” (p. 203).

In alignment with the theme of “promoting transfer student connectedness through communication and engagement,” this recommendation supports the promotion of participation in service learning and/or internship activities as a tool

for building connectedness. Additionally, the promotion of male student satisfaction with regards to educational experience, institutional contribution to job- or work-related knowledge and skills, and job/career would strengthen the overall sense of connectedness while further promoting transfer student success.

### Promote the Benefits of Service Learning and Internship Engagement

According to a study by Gilardi and Guglielmetti (2011), it was shown that non-traditional transfer students who invest “time in developing non-classroom relationships and in making use of all the opportunities available in the university environment [had a] higher probability of continuing their studies” (pp. 46-47).

Through the promotion of the benefits that pertain to service learning and internship participation, specifically as it pertains to a sense of connectedness to the university, it further promotes the engagement of transfer students. As indicated through the open-ended survey items and internship transcripts, often times transfer students are unaware of the opportunities available to them, such as service learning and internship activities. One participant suggested that “maybe have presentations in regards to the benefits of internships and what could be expected.”

Additionally, to further promote service learning and internship opportunities it would be beneficial to use transfer students’ comments about their experiences in the promotion of these activities in order to add personal context to those benefits. By placing those comments prominently on all communication related to transfer student resources it promotes a sense of

integration and validation of their contributions to the university. According to Tinto (1998), students that see “themselves as integrated into the institution and as valued members of it (i.e., validated), the more likely it is that they will persist” (p. 12).

### Provide Transfer Student Resources

According to a report by The College Board, “helping students engage the campus community requires the development of some basic transfer services” (Handel, 2011, p. 25), however, such services and resources are often impeded by false assumptions about transfer students. For example, one false assumption is that transfer students already have college experience from their two-year institution, and therefore don’t need any additional assistance (Handel, 2011). However, this population of students may need more of a “hand hold” during the transition (Townsend & Wilson, 2006). Equity and equality in resources is critical for the success of all students, both traditional and transfer students.

In accordance with the theme of “focusing on transfer student resources,” one specific resource that has been missing for many years is the presence of a quality mandatory transfer student orientation. The emphasis is often placed on freshman orientations, and transfer student orientations are practically nonexistent (Robbins, 1942; The College Board, 2011; Handel, 2011). Through the open-ended survey items and interview process, 17.50% of participants’ that responded to the items mentioned the necessity of a mandatory transfer student

orientation. One participant indicated "...they kind of have a transfer orientation, but I wasn't able to go to it, so what they said was read this PowerPoint and then fill out the questions, and you're good to go." Additionally, a participant also suggested that there should be a:

transfer student orientation that is mandatory and that really takes around the campus and shows you, basically the way that the freshmen get it, because I think it's hard because sometimes it's like as a transfer student you feel like you're older, you're a junior, but you feel like a freshman, so you're kind of like "crap, I don't know what's going on on this campus", I want to feel connected.

Furthermore, the creation of a transfer student center would ultimately provide all information in a central location that is easily accessible to transfer students. One interview participant stated, "have possibly a transfer student resource center to have current students, or students that have been there longer, as a reception committee." Clearly, transfer students are a growing population in need. Transfer students now make up approximately 50% of incoming students and in the "2013-14 academic year, 46% of students who completed a degree at a four year institution were enrolled at a two-year institution at some point in the previous past 10 years" (National Student Clearinghouse Research Center, 2015).

## Recommendations for Future Research

Based on the results and criteria of this study, there are three main recommendations for future research that would benefit educational institutions, educators, and transfer students.

### Study Design

Due to the limitations and threats to this study in regards to design and sample, future research should use a quasi-experimental design. A quasi-experimental design would allow the researcher to conduct pre- and post-test measures around connectedness, and to assign the conditions of the participants in the attempt to lower the number of pre-disposed participants.

### Additional Qualitative Research Items

In the attempt to further develop and understand transfer student experiences, the following open-ended items should be posed in order to further define the concepts and measures:

- Why did you feel you were successful?
- What does success mean to you?

### Observe Transfer Students Who Did Not Obtain a Degree Prior to Departing

Due to the lack of randomization of the sample of this study, a key recommendation would be to research those transfer students who did not obtain a degree prior to departing from the university. In order to get a complete picture of transfer student experiences, it is critical to observe all aspects of the

population. One main aspect would include why some transfer students obtain a degree and others do not.

#### Observe Differences Between Traditional and Transfer Students

This study examined only the experiences of transfer students, however, future research could expand and duplicate this study and compare traditional students and transfer students based on the same variables and experiential learning activities.

#### Types of Service Learning and Internship Activities

This study specifically observed the experiential learning activities of service learning and internships, however, future research could expand and observe other forms of experiential learning activities or high impact practices (HIPs).

#### Limitations of the Study: Threats to Validity

Detailed below are the limitations and threats to this study.

#### Content Validity

According to Creswell (2014), this traditional form of validity is addressing the items, “do the items measure the content they were intended to measure?” (p. 191). On the self-developed survey distributed for the purposes of the present study there was only one item on the survey that addressed the variables of educational experience, institutional contribution to critical and analytical thinking, institutional contribution to acquiring job- or work-related knowledge and skills, job/career satisfaction, and connectedness. Additional survey items on



this instrument would improve the overall questions, format and scales (Creswell, 2014, p. 191).

### Internal Threats

- The groups were not equivalent on one or more important variables. Due to various and unknown factors, some transfer students may have been more inclined than others to participate and get involved in the different activities at a university due to previous experiences.
- Instrumentation- Survey: Participants were left to interpret and define the meaning of the survey items (e.g., connection, satisfaction, etc.). The participant responses were also exclusively self-reported on the survey items, which means that they could have either over or under reported their responses. In addition, the inclusion of set definitions of critical thinking and connectedness on the survey items might have increased the validity of the instrument.
- Instrumentation- Interviews: According to Creswell (2014), during the interview process “not all people are equally articulate and perceptive” (p. 222) in their responses, and it was evident in the participants who opted to be interviewed for this study. The phone calls ranged from three to 15 minutes, and the transcripts were extremely varied in the detail of the responses provided. Additionally, the previous satisfaction of the participants who opted to be interviewed may have also swayed the qualitative results. Interviewees more frequently reported that they

were already more satisfied than those who opted not to participate in the interviews and this may have created a limitation.

### External Threats

- Lack of randomization among the participants: 97.35% of participants self-reported that they received a degree prior to departing from the university, despite the population being identified regardless of degree obtainment. In addition, there was a lack of randomization between the participants in regards to gender. It was reported that 61.01% of the participants self-identified as female, 34.52% self-identified as male, 30% self-identified as other, and 4.17% did not respond to the question.
- Location: the university may not be representative of all universities as a whole, and the results may not be generalizable to the larger population, based on the demographics of the student population.

### Conclusion

With the increasing demand for a college-educated workforce it is critical to promote success among all college students. The primary attention of the literature and research has been focused on traditional students, while the growing population of transfer student is falling through the cracks. This study begins to bridge the gap and described critical information on the success of transfer students. The experiential learning activities of service learning and internships promoted educational experience, institutional contribution to job- or

work-related knowledge and skills, job/career satisfaction and connectedness to the university. Additionally, through the development of prominent themes it provided transfer students a chance to express their experiences at the university and voice their suggestions as to what can be done to further promote the success of future transfer students. Overall, educators should provide all students with the tools and resources necessary for a lifetime of success.

APPENDIX A:  
TRANSFER STUDENT EXPERIENCES AT A FOUR-YEAR UNIVERSITY  
QUALTRICS SURVEY



## Transfer Student Experiences at a Four-year University Survey

Q1 Dear [REDACTED] alumni or former student, I invite you to participate in a research project conducted by Virginia Stewart-Hattar in the College of Education doctoral program at California State University, San Bernardino (CSUSB). You are being asked because you were identified as a transfer student at [REDACTED]. The purpose of this study is to describe the experiences at the university for transfer students and to determine indicators of success. You will be asked to answer questions on a survey and provide information with regard to your thoughts, feelings, and experiences regarding your time at [REDACTED]. We expect your participation to take about 10 minutes. There is also an opportunity to participate in an interview should you choose to that would take about 30 minutes. There are no anticipated risks associated with this study. We expect the project to benefit future transfer students. The information provided may be used to enhance program development and services for transfer students. You will receive no monetary compensation for your participation. You may choose to be entered into a drawing to win a \$25 Amazon gift card. Please understand that participation is completely voluntary. Your decision whether or not to participate will in no way affect your current or future relationship with [REDACTED]. You have the right to withdraw from the research at any time without penalty. You also have the right to refuse to answer any question(s) for any reason, without penalty. Your individual privacy will be maintained in all publications or presentations resulting from this study. All information you provide will remain confidential and will be kept in a secure database at CSUSB. If you have any questions or would like additional information about this research please contact the researcher at [stewart@csusb.edu](mailto:stewart@csusb.edu). The CSUSB Institutional Review Board has approved this project. By selecting agree you acknowledge that you have been informed of, and that you understand, the nature and purpose of this study, and you freely consent to participate in this survey. Additionally, if you choose to participate in the interview process by providing your first name and phone number on the survey you agree and acknowledge that you have been informed of, and that you understand, the nature and purpose of this study, and you freely consent to participate.

Agree

Q2 Ethnicity

- White
- Black or African American
- American Indian or Alaska Native
- Asian
- Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander
- Latino/a
- Other

Q3 Gender

- Male (1)
- Female (2)
- Other (3)

Q4 Age

- Under 18
- 18 - 24
- 25 - 34
- 35 - 44
- 45 - 54
- 55 - 64
- 65 - 74
- 75 - 84
- 85 or older

Q5 Where did you transfer to [REDACTED] from?

- Community College
- Four Year University
- Other\_\_\_\_\_

Q6 Did you obtain an associate degree prior to transferring to [REDACTED]?

- Yes (1)
- No (2)

Q7 What year did you transfer to [REDACTED]?

Q8 What year did you graduate or depart from [REDACTED]?

Q9 Did you obtain a degree from [REDACTED]?

- Yes (1)
- No (2)

Q10 If you did not obtain a degree at [REDACTED], did you continue your education and obtain a degree at another institution?

- Yes
- No

Q11 If you did not obtain a degree at [REDACTED], what were your reasons for leaving CSUSB prior to obtaining a degree?

Q12 Which is the closest to your [REDACTED] grade point average (GPA)?

- 4.0 A (1)
- 3.7 A- (2)
- 3.3 B+ (3)
- 3.0 B (4)
- 2.7 B- (5)
- 2.3 C+ (6)
- 2.0 C (7)
- 1.7 C- (8)
- 1.3 D+ (9)
- 1.0 D (10)
- Don't Know (11)

Q25 How would you evaluate your entire educational experience at [REDACTED]?

- Extremely satisfied (1)
- Somewhat satisfied (2)
- Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied (3)
- Somewhat dissatisfied (4)
- Extremely dissatisfied (5)

Q13 How much has your experience at this institution contributed to your knowledge, skills, and personal development in the following area? Thinking critically and analytically

- A great deal (1)
- A lot (2)
- A moderate amount (3)
- A little (4)
- None at all (5)

Q14 How much has your experience at this institution contributed to your knowledge, skills, and personal development in the following area? Acquiring job- or work-related knowledge and skills

- A great deal (1)
- A lot (2)
- A moderate amount (3)
- A little (4)
- None at all (5)

Q15 What is your current job/career?

Q16 How satisfied are you in your current job/career?

- Extremely satisfied (1)
- Somewhat satisfied (2)
- Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied (3)
- Somewhat dissatisfied (4)
- Extremely dissatisfied (5)

Q17 Select the best statement that reflects your participation at [REDACTED] prior to graduating or departing from the university.

- I participated in service learning (i.e., community-based project, community service) at [REDACTED] (1)
- I participated in internships (i.e., fieldwork, professional experience) at [REDACTED] (2)
- I participated in both service learning and internship activities at [REDACTED] (3)
- I did not participate in either at [REDACTED] (4)



Q18 About how many of your courses at [REDACTED] have included service learning activities?

- All (1)
- Most (2)
- Some (3)
- None (4)

Q19 Why did you choose to participate in service learning?

Q20 Please describe your overall experiences when you participated in service learning.

Q21 My participation in service learning activities made me feel more connected to the university.

- Strongly agree (1)
- Somewhat agree (2)
- Neither agree nor disagree (3)
- Somewhat disagree (4)
- Strongly disagree (5)

Q32 About how many of your courses at [REDACTED] have included internship activities?

- All (1)
- Most (2)
- Some (3)
- None (4)

Q33 Why did you choose to participate in an internship?

Q22 Please describe your overall experiences when you participated in an internship.

Q23 My participation in an internship made me feel more connected to the university.

- Strongly agree (1)
- Somewhat agree (2)
- Neither agree nor disagree (3)
- Somewhat disagree (4)
- Strongly disagree (5)

Q35 How connected did you feel to [REDACTED] when you attended the university?

- A great deal (1)
- A lot (2)
- A moderate amount (3)
- A little (4)
- None at all (5)

Q37 What could [REDACTED] do that would help transfer students be more successful?

Q39 What could [REDACTED] do that would help transfer students feel more connected to the university?

Q41 Would you be willing to be contacted for a 30 minute interview on July 7-9, 2016 to further discuss your experiences?(Please note that you may not be contacted based on the number of participants willing to be interviewed.)

- Yes (1)
- No (2)

Q43 If yes, please enter your FIRST name and phone number below:

APPENDIX B:  
INTERVIEW ITEMS

### Transfer Student Engagement Interview Items

1. Could you tell me a little bit more about your experiences at [REDACTED]?
2. Did you participate in service learning or internships? (If no, the researcher will proceed to question 5.)
3. Could you tell me a little bit more about your experiences in service learning?
4. Could you tell me a little bit more about your experiences in internships?
5. What could [REDACTED] do to help transfer students feel more connected to the university?

APPENDIX C:  
INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD LETTER



Academic Affairs  
Office of Academic Research • Institutional Review Board

May 31, 2016

Ms. Virginia Stewart-Hattar and Prof. Donna Schnorr  
College of Education Doctoral Studies  
California State University, San Bernardino  
5500 University Parkway  
San Bernardino, California 92407

**CSUSB  
INSTITUTIONAL  
REVIEW BOARD**  
Expedited Review  
IRB# 15074  
Status  
**APPROVED**

Dear Mrs. Stewart-Hattar and Prof. Donna Schnorr:

Your application to use human subjects, titled "Transfer Student Experiences at a Four-Year University" has been reviewed and approved by the Institutional Review Board (IRB). The attached informed consent document has been stamped and signed by the IRB chairperson. All subsequent copies used must be this officially approved version. A change in your informed consent (no matter how minor the change) requires resubmission of your protocol as amended. **Your application is approved for one year from May 26, 2016 through May 25, 2017. One month prior to the approval end date you need to file for a renewal if you have not completed your research. See additional requirements (Items 1 – 4) of your approval below.**

Your responsibilities as the researcher/investigator reporting to the IRB Committee include the following 4 requirements as mandated by the Code of Federal Regulations 45 CFR 46 listed below. Please note that the protocol change form and renewal form are located on the IRB website under the forms menu. Failure to notify the IRB of the above may result in disciplinary action. You are required to keep copies of the informed consent forms and data for at least three years. Please notify the IRB Research Compliance Officer for any of the following:

- 1) **Submit a protocol change form if any changes (no matter how minor) are proposed in your research protocol for review and approval of the IRB before implemented in your research,**
- 2) **If any unanticipated/adverse events are experienced by subjects during your research,**
- 3) **To apply for renewal and continuing review of your protocol one month prior to the protocols end date,**
- 4) **When your project has ended by emailing the IRB Research Compliance Officer.**

The CSUSB IRB has not evaluated your proposal for scientific merit, except to weigh the risk to the human participants and the aspects of the proposal related to potential risk and benefit. This approval notice does not replace any departmental or additional approvals which may be required.

If you have any questions regarding the IRB decision, please contact Michael Gillespie, the IRB Compliance Officer. Mr. Michael Gillespie can be reached by phone at (909) 537-7588, by fax at (909) 537-7028, or by email at [mgillesp@csusb.edu](mailto:mgillesp@csusb.edu). Please include your application approval identification number (listed at the top) in all correspondence.

Best of luck with your research.

Sincerely,

*Judy Sylva*

Judy Sylva, Ph.D., Chair  
Institutional Review Board

JS/MG

909.537.7588 • fax: 909.537.7028 • <http://irb.csusb.edu>

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